ASSEMBLE

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN MARINE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES EXPANDED

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
for the
ASSEMBLE Plus Transnational Access (TA) program

Please, read the Frequently Asked Questions in case you have queries about the ASSEMBLE Plus Transnational Access (TA) program. If you cannot find the answer here, contact the ASSEMBLE Plus Access Officer (access@EMBRC.eu). If your question is specific to a particular Access Provider, please contact the relevant local liaison officer at http://www.assembleplus.eu/access/site-and-remote-access.

Eligibility

1. Who can make use of the TA program of ASSEMBLE Plus?

TA is provided to single Users and to teams of two Users. Users can be researchers, students and engineers from academia, universities, not-for-profit organisations and industry.

2. My home institution is based in a country outside the EU. Am I eligible for TA?

The Home Institution of the User should be based in a EU Member State[1] or Associated Country[2]. Access for single Users or User Teams not working in a EU or Associated Country is limited to 20% of the total number of units of access provided under the grant.

3. Why does the Access need to be Trans-national?

The Access must be Trans-national, i.e., the home institution of the Project Leader must be situated in a country different from that of the selected Access Provider. This is requested by the European Commission, which strives to foster mobility of European researchers and pan-European research collaboration.

4. Do I need to have a PhD degree in order to be eligible for TA?

No.

5. I am a PhD student: can I apply?

Yes. You need a support letter from your supervisor. The letter must be signed by your supervisor and then sent as PDF to the Access Officer (access@embrc.eu), specifying the name of your Project proposal.

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[1] https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries_en

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cpart/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf

6. I am employed by one of the ASSEMBLE Plus partners: can I apply for TA?

Yes, but a slight priority is given to external users.

7. Can I receive training during a TA visit?

Hands-on training can be a component of your access, for instance to train you to use equipment needed to accomplish your work plan, but it is not the main purpose of the TA program. The visit is expected to deliver a research output (e.g. publications, presentations in scientific meetings, scientific reports, doctoral thesis, patents, etc.)

8. Can I request collaboration with local staff in my TA proposal?

Yes. In that case you are encouraged to organize this collaboration with the intended collaborators during the proposal-writing phase, to specify it in the proposal and explain briefly why you consider it necessary or beneficial. It is you who asks for this collaboration; local staff cannot request you to collaborate with them, e.g., as a condition of access. The collaboration should be new in the sense that you should not share publications with your prospective collaborators over the last five years (exceptions to the discretion of the User Selection Panel).

9. I work for an SME / Industry. Can I make use of the TA program and its funding?

Yes, but only if your results are destined to become publicly available.

10. I work for an SME / Industry *and* my company wishes to cover the full costs of my Access. How should I proceed?

If you would like to access the scientific Research services at your own cost - that is, at full cost - then please write the Access Officer (access@embrc.eu) explaining in general terms what you would like to achieve. We can then connect you with those ASSEMBLE Plus partners that can best respond to your needs. This way your project bypasses proposal submission deadlines and the scientific selection. In addition, you can have access also to an access provider in your own country.

The Application process

1. Can my proposal include more than one applicant?

Yes, funding covers a TA visit of up to two Users per project. In case there are multiple Users in your User Group, one among you has to be identified as the Group Leader. If agreed upon with the Access Provider and if specified in the User Access Contract, a User Group can include more than two Users, but ASSEMBLE Plus can reimburse only two Users per User Group for travel and subsistence.

2. Can I submit more than one Application?

Yes, but you need to complete a separate application form for each Project you wish to submit.

3. What is the role of the Local Liaison Officer during the Application process?

Each Access Provider has appointed a Local Liaison Officer who can be queried regarding details of available of biological resources, offered Core Services and other amenities, technical and logistical feasibility of proposed projects, and possible periods of a proposed visit.

4. Why do I need to contact the Officer(s) at my preferred Access Provider(s) prior to proposal submission?

You are strongly encouraged to contact these officers in order to check the feasibility of your Proposal prior to submission and to make an informed choice regarding the most suitable Access Provider. A list of contact addresses of these officers can be found on the ASSEMBLE Plus TA webpage at http://www.assembleplus.eu/

5. Can I reapply if my Proposal was unsuccessful?

Yes, but are kindly requested to fix possible issues with the application before resubmitting.

6. Can I apply for a repeat TA to the same or another ASSEMBLE Plus Access Provider?

Yes, but a slight priority is given to first-time users.

7. How many TA Calls are planned?

Seven calls are planned in the ASSEMBLE Plus TA program.

8. My Proposal contains ideas that are my Intellectual Property. How are my IP-rights guaranteed during the evaluation?

During and following the eligibility and feasibility checks, the respective officers are bound not to distribute –or use for their own end- any information in your proposal. They are bound not to share with third persons any information in your proposal other than that needed to perform their checks. The User Selection Panel members reviewing the proposals need to promise that they keep the information private and don't use it to their own end.

The Proposal Evaluation Process

1. What happens with my Project Proposal following submission?

Once you have submitted your Project proposal, the Access Officer checks the application for eligibility. If eligible, your proposal will be reviewed for technical feasibility by the Local Access Officer(s) at your selected Access Provider(s). If feasible, it will be passed on to the User Selection Panel for scientific evaluation. If evaluated positively, the Access Officer will check if the Access Provider has sufficient funds to allow you to perform your work plan. If so, your project will be approved.

2. How does the scientific evaluation proceed?

Proposals that have passed the technical feasibility check are distributed to members of a User Selection Panel (USP) composed of the Coordinator, six Project Implementation Committee members (in turn) and six members of the Advisory Board. The following criteria apply:

- Scientific excellence and novelty of the proposal,
- Scientific feasibility/probability of delivery,
- Why is access to the selected Access Provider needed?
- A slight priority to external users (i.e., outside the ASSEMBLE Plus consortium), new users, users from non-marine disciplines and from countries where state-of-the-art marine research infrastructure is unavailable,
- Compliance with the ASSEMBLE Plus ethics policy.

3. How and when will I be informed if my Project has been approved?

The application evaluation process takes 5-6 weeks from the submission deadline. If your proposal has been accepted, you will receive a letter of acceptance from the Access Officer. If unsuccessful, you will receive an email from the Access Officer, providing a brief explanation why your proposal was not accepted. The titles and proposers of the successful applications will be published on the website.

The User Access Contract

1. What is a User Access Contract?

The User Access contract is a legal agreement between the User(s) and the Access Provider in which the terms and the conditions of the TA visit at the Access Provider are specified. It regulates the details of the TA visit in term of availability of disposables, laboratory space, use of the Research services, reimbursement and so on.

2. Why it is important to agree with the provisions of the User Access Contract?

The User Access Contract establishes what is expected from the User Group and the Access Provider, during and after the TA visit. This document has legal status and is intended to set a frame for the activities to be performed during the TA visit.

3. Who needs to sign the User Access Contract?

The User Access Contract has to be agreed upon and signed by all the Parties involved in your Project (you, the other member of your User Group (if applicable), your Employer as well as the legal representative of the Access Provider and other relevant Parties in your Project)**.** All Parties need to have signed the contract before the TA visit can commence.

4. Who needs to keep originals / copies of the User Access Contract?

The parties should agree on how to conduct the signing and exchange of signed documents, as some require originals whereas others are satisfied with PDF copies of the signed documents.

Transnational Access

1. When will I be able to visit the selected Access Providers?

Your TA visits can commence after all involved parties (see above) have signed the User Access Contract and have received copies or originals (depending on institutional or national regulations) of the signed document. Regarding the first Call, the TA must be performed between end of March and the end of September 2018. During the TA visit you will need to be employed by your Home Institution, which covers your work insurance.

2. What is the maximum visit duration?

The maximum TA visit duration is 30 working days (Sunday to Thursday at IUI, Monday to Friday at other access providers). Longer TA visits will need your financial coverage for the extra days. In accordance with the Access Provider, you are free to work also over the weekends, but should not expect full availability of research services.

3. Do I actually need to visit the Access Provider in person?

Not necessarily. You can request the Access Provider to perform a research workflow according to Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) agreed-upon and specified in the User Access Contract.

Examples include sample- and species collection, processing and rearing, as well as analytical procedures.

4. Can I request shipment of biological material (samples, organisms, strains) from the Access Provider to my home institute?

Yes. Proposals restricted to shipment of culture strains or specimens can be submitted any time and flow through the Eligibility- and Feasibility Checks immediately upon receipt –independent from call windows– and can be granted immediately, upon a simple OK from the Project Coordinator.

5. What are the functions of a "Person in Charge?"

The Person in charge is the person at the selected Access Provider who is asked by the local liaison officer to be your main scientific contact prior to and during your TA visit. The Person in charge is staff member of the Access Provider, and can be your local collaborator.

6. My research requires the sampling/use of marine bio-resources from local habitats.

In principle this is fine, but your request needs to be assessed by the Liaison Officer. Prior to submitting an application, please contact the Liaison Officer at the Access Provider and explain what you would like to do or request their policy on sampling/use of marine bio-resources and/or its derivatives) from local habitats.

7. My research involves work on organisms requiring permits from national regulatory bodies. Will this be possible within the TA program?

Yes. In cases where scientific work requires such permits (for example for experimentation on vertebrates or cephalopods), project evaluation and selection can proceed before the permits are obtained and the TA can, if necessary, be transferred to a subsequent access period, within the limits of ASSEMBLE Plus deliverable deadlines and project lifetime, and of course given the permit is obtained. The Applicant has to alert the Local Liaison Officer of this issue and the Local Liaison Officer is responsible for submitting the request.

8. How should I proceed in case of a conflict with the Access Provider during or following my visit?

First, you are kindly requested to consult the signed User Access Contract and try to resolve the issue together with the Access Provider based on what is agreed-upon in this contract, finding a reasonable solution satisfactory to both parties. If this does not resolve the problem, please contact the Access Officer and the legal representative of your home institution who will help you finding a solution.

9. How are my IP-rights over results obtained during my TA-visit guaranteed during and following the TA?

During and following the TA visit, the service providers at the Access Provider are bound not to disclose your work plan or results thereof to any third parties not involved in your research prior to you publishing it.

10. Am I the exclusive owner of the results obtained during my TA visit?

Yes, you are the sole owner of the foreground knowledge developed by you during the TA visit; that is, if you made use exclusively of standard operational procedures offered by the scientific services

available at the Access Provider. Instead, if you –upon your request- collaborated with local staff or they provided you with constructive intellectual input then you share the foreground knowledge, or part thereof. In the case of any proposed exploitation of such shared results, a separate agreement needs to be further negotiated to set up the modalities for protection, use and exploitation of these Joint Results.

Post-TA procedures and obligations

1. Do I need to write a report after the TA-visit?

Yes, you will need to complete the following documents:

- The "Confirmation of Access" form no later than two weeks after the TA visit. The Local Liaison Officer at the Access Provider will provide you with this form. It specifies the Units of access you have used during your TA visit. You as User or as Project Leader of a User group will be asked to check and sign this form.
- The "Transnational Access Activity Report." You need to deliver this report no later than one month after the completion of the TA Access.
- You need to fill out the User Group questionnaire at the following link: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/RIsurveyUSERS
  A copy must be sent to the Access Officer with the subject "ASSEMBLE PLUS TA: User group questionnaire <User-Project number>" within 45 days following the TA visit. The Access Officer sends the National or Local Liaison Officer a confirmation of receipt of this document.
- A filled-out reimbursement form (see next topic).

2. What does the TA funding cover?

The funding of the TA covers laboratory fees (laboratory equipped with standard lab equipment, use of standard disposables and access to Research services) as well as the costs of shipping biological resources from the Access Provider to the Users' home institution (up to €400). The funding also covers the cost of your travel and accommodation to certain limits, depending on national rules and regulations. All of these funding aspects will have to be specified in the User Access Contract.

3. How will I be reimbursed for my travel and subsistence costs?

Following the end of the TA visit you will be asked to submit a reimbursement claim to the Local or National Liaison Officer at the Access Provider, providing all the requested documents (receipts, tickets, boarding cards, etc.) as specified in the User Access Contract. Reimbursement can follow only when you have signed the "Confirmation of Access," submitted the "Transnational Access Activity Report," and sent a copy of the filled-out User Group questionnaire to the Access Officer.

4. When will I be reimbursed for my travel and subsistence costs?

Reimbursement procedures follow rules specified in the User Access Contract, as different reimbursement rules apply for the different Access Providers. In any case, the Access Provider is expected to process your claim and reimburse you within 60 days after you have submitted the reimbursement claim to the Local or National Liaison Officer at the Access Provider, provided that: all receipts and other requested documents in the reimbursement claim are in good order, you have signed the "Confirmation of visit" form, you have submitted the "Transnational Access Activity Report," and you have sent a copy of the filled-out "User Group questionnaire" to the Access Officer.