

Guidelines for Applicant

The following guidelines were established by the ASSEMBLE Plus Consortium together with the European Commission for this Service Offer activity:

1. Eligibility

To be eligible for Access, a User or User Team must satisfy the following conditions:

- The Project Leader must submit an innovative Project Proposal, details of which are explained further down;
- The Home Institution(s) of the User(s) should be based in a EU Member State or Associated Country. Access of a single User -or a User Team- not working in the EU or an Associated Country is eligible with some limitations;
- The users must work in countries other than the country where the legal entity operating the ASSEMBLE Plus infrastructure site applied for is established;
- The total number of access days (i.e., working days) per project proposal should not exceed 30;
- Only user groups that are entitled to disseminate the knowledge they have generated under the project are eligible to benefit from access free of charge to the infrastructure under this grant agreement.

2. List of Services

33 marine stations distributed over 16 countries provide TA in the ASSEMBLE Plus project.

This distributed partnership provides access to a variety of highly biodiverse marine ecosystems along the European coastline. In addition, it gives access to ecosystems in the Red Sea, the Caribbean, the Arctic and the Antarctic.

In order to enable the User to carry out the planned research Project, access is provided to laboratories with basic equipment and standard disposables as well as to a comprehensive set of Core Services equipped with sophisticated equipment and operated by dedicated service staff. The Core Services are organized in the following general categories:

- Culture collections / biobanks of microalgae, cyanobacteria, bacteria, seaweeds, viruses, zooplankton, and fish,
- Sampling facilities, which include research vessels for coastal sampling, sample equipment, SCUBA diving, and remote operated vehicles,
- Isolation and preservation of marine organisms, which includes strain isolation and purification, optimization of cultivation, fermentation and preservation conditions as well as revitalisation of cryopreserved and lyophilised material,
- Cultivation and rearing facilities, comprising aquaria, tank facilities, climate rooms, incubators, and photo-bioreactors,
- Microscopy and bio-imaging services, which include fluorescence microscopy, TEM and SEM imaging, confocal microscopy, flow cytometry and micro-CTbio-imaging,
- Taxonomic services, which include morphological and molecular identification, phylogenetic analysis, barcoding, and mass spectrometry,

- Molecular biology and –omics, which comprises genotyping, sequence analysis, qPCR, next generation sequencing as well as bioinformatics analysis
- Biochemical analysis, which includes protein structure, protein interaction, and recombinant protein expression,
- Bioassays, which includes phenotypic assays, protein assays, (anti-) microbial assays, quality control of raw materials and products, and verification of microorganisms associated with novel products,
- Structural and chemical analysis, which comprises HPLC, mass spectrometry, pre-metabolomic screening, metabolomics profiling, and structural elucidation.

For more information, contact the relevant local liaison officer while exploring the services offer (click on “see details” under the service provided then “For more information contact institute liaison”).

3. Access modes

Physical access: User(s) visit(s) the premises of the Access Provider, which provides scientific, technical and logistical support as stipulated in the User Access Contract. During the TA Visit, the User is encouraged to give a presentation about the Project to the staff and students at the Access Provider

Remote access: Includes access modes in which the User does not visit the Access Provider’s premises. The User can request shipment of biological material or requests the Access Provider to perform a research workflow according to Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) agreed-upon and specified in the User Access Contract.

4. Project proposal template

1. Select ASSEMBLE PLUS Research Infrastructure services

Choose from the available locations, which Access Provider and its services you would like to access. By clicking the 'Advanced selection' button, you can specify the desired technologies/services for conducting your Project. If you need further advice on this selection, choose the Access Provider only and provide further details in the textbox 'Visit Detail'.

2. Confirm technologies and services selection

Please confirm the technologies and services you have selected by activating/clicking on the checkbox above the ASSEMBLE Plus logo and continue with your application.

3. Proposal details

a) Overview of the Project

- **Research Project title**
Provide a title for your Project (100 characters maximum).
- **Scientific background, significance and objectives**
Describe the aims of the proposed project within the bigger picture of your research (2000 characters maximum);
- **Benefit of ASSEMBLE PLUS access for your Project**

Describe the importance of the proposed Project for your overall research (2000 characters maximum).

b) Description of the Project

- **Scientific description of the Project**

Provide a succinct scientific description of your Project, highlighting the originality and innovative nature of the Project. Identify the research gaps the Project intends to fill (2000 characters maximum).

- **Technical description of the Project**

Describe the work you would like to conduct at the Access Provider including information about the planned timetable (2000 characters maximum).

- **Expected results and deliverables**

Describe expected results (2000 characters maximum).

- **Motivation to visit the selected Access Providers**

State your motivation for using the selected Access Provider (1000 characters maximum).

- **Scientific collaboration foreseen?**

State here if scientific collaboration is intended or has been established in the past few years with any person at the selected Access Provider.

- **Technical pre-screening of the Project**

Indicate if you have already communicated with the Local Liaison Officer at your preferred Access Provider concerning the feasibility of your proposal.

c) Timeline of the Project

Requested (and alternative) start date and expected (and alternative) end date to the Access Provider
A visit requiring more than 30 working days is possible, but the extra costs of access to the Access Provider's facilities in excess of those 30 working days will not be covered by ASSEMBLE Plus.

d) Applicant information

- **Applicant details**

Provide the contact detail of the primary User: Name, e-mail address and phone number and organisation.

- **Applicant profile**

Provide a short CV of all members of the User Team, highlighting the expertise relevant to the proposal. If you are a PhD student, provide a support letter from the PhD supervisor.

- **Relevant publications**

Indicate up to six publications providing information on potential impact of the work and the likelihood of success. You are invited to provide information that allows the User Selection Panel to judge if the work is feasible and of a suitable scope. Applicants are strongly encouraged to focus on their own research to show their strength in the field, but can include relevant high-impact references from other groups.

- **Expertise level in using the selected services**

Declare your level of expertise in using the requested technologies/services.

- **Research Infrastructure affiliation**

Indicate if your home institution is affiliated to an ESFRI Research Infrastructure.

- **Country of the Home Institution of the Project Leader**

Indicate the country where the Home Institution of the Project Leader is based.

- **Repeated Access**

Indicate whether you have previously accessed the selected Access Provider. If yes, when.

5. Submit your proposal

Applications must be written in English. The proposal can be saved at any step of the submission process to continue the submission at a later time. **The Platform opens on 5 January 2018 (17:00CET) and closes on 2 February 2018 (12.00 CET) at www.assembleplus.eu.**

6. Selection criteria

The selection panel bases its selection on scientific merit: excellence of project and competence of applicants. Priority will be given to user groups composed of users who:

- Have not ever (for research purposes) used the ASSEMBLE Plus infrastructure site applied for before (main applicant);
- Have not previously been funded by ASSEMBLE Plus (main applicant);
- Are working in countries where no such research infrastructure site exists (including marine material for shipping);
- Are not working/collaborating at ASSEMBLE Plus sites;
- Have no pre-existing scientific contacts with local scientists;
- Are using local ecosystems, species or models rather than bringing own (marine only) samples;
- Are from a non-marine discipline.

7. Selection process

- **Eligibility check:** the Access Officer checks successfully submitted Proposals for compliance with EU regulations and ASSEMBLE PLUS TA eligibility rules.
- **Technical feasibility:** the Access Officer passes on Proposals that have passed the Eligibility check to the National or Local Liaison Officers of the indicated Access Providers. The Local Liaison Officer checks received proposals for on-site technical feasibility (timing, availability of biological resources, capacity and capability of research infrastructure, logistics). Scientific procedures on certain organisms (e.g., vertebrates, cephalopods, genetically modified organisms) may require permits from regulatory bodies and the time between requesting and obtaining these permits will often be incompatible with the timing of the proposal review process. In such cases the review process can be completed and if selected the Transnational Access may take place outside the time-window of the call once the permit is granted. The Applicant must signal permit issues in the Proposal.
- **Scientific review:** 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. Each Project Proposal will be evaluated by one external and one internal USP member who will be required to agree on one final score per proposal. If agreement is not reached, a third external panel member will adjudicate on the final score.
- **Selected project:** Applicants and Access Providers will be notified about acceptance/rejection of Project proposals 5-6 weeks after the proposal submission deadline. The Applicants of successful Proposals are informed by means of a letter of acceptance.

- After the Access Officer has sent the Letter of Acceptance, a draft User Access Contract is established from a template, including the Project title, details of the Applicant and Employer of the Applicant, details of the institution representing the Access Provider, as well as general terms and conditions of the TA visit. The User is strongly advised to contact the legal services of their home institution as soon as the Letter of Acceptance is sent.

8. User obligations

Once the access at the Access Providers has come to an end, each User Group of the Transnational Access program is requested to provide to the Access Officer (access@embrc.org) the following information:

1. Confirmation of Visit at each Access Provider

- Download here the "[Confirmation of Visit](#)" template.
- Complete the timetable detailing the Research services accessed during the TA visit at each Access Provider.
- Sign the document for each Access Providers you have visited during your Project.
- The document must be countersigned and returned (in pdf format) to the Access Officer (access@embrc.org) by the Local Access Officer (or the Person in charge) of each visited Access Provider within 14 days after the TA visit.
- This document is mandatory for the re-funding of expenses incurred during the TA visit.

2. Transnational Access Activity Report

- Please download the "[Transnational Access Activity Report](#)" template.
- Describe herein the objectives, method, and preliminary results of your Project.
- Return the document (in pdf format) to the Access Officer (access@embrc.org) within 30 days after the TA visit.
- This document is mandatory for the re-funding of expenses incurred during the TA visits.

3. User questionnaire on Transnational Access

- Please complete the "[User group questionnaire](#)".
- At Question 1 of the questionnaire, "Number and Acronym of the Project", please insert "730984_A+".
- After completion, create a pdf of your completed questionnaire. To do this, use the online tool on the right column of the webpage.
- Send this pdf to the Access Officer (access@embrc.org), with the subject "A+: User group questionnaire".

4. Acknowledgments

Outcomes (publications, presentations, Patents, etc.) resulting from work carried out under the TA activity must acknowledge Assemble Plus project as follows: "The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 730984, Assemble Plus project".

5. Participation to the User Feedback Workshop

Users are encouraged to attend a User Feedback workshop to present outcomes and experiences of their access at the visited Access Providers. Suggestions for improvements will be taken in consideration for the next Transnational Access call and to cluster facilities within the consortium. Date and place of the User Feedback Workshop will be communicated to Project leaders in due time.

9. Confidentiality

The access provider shall ensure that the users have the same rights and obligations in regard to confidentiality as referred to for the access provider in Article 16 of the Grant Agreement.

10. Rights to knowledge

The access provider shall ensure that the users enjoy, on a royalty-free basis, access rights to the background of the access provider and to the knowledge generated in the ASSEMBLE Plus project, if needed to carry out their own work under the project. The access provider shall inform, as soon as possible, the users of any restriction which might substantially affect the granting of access rights.

11. Insurance

Full health/travel insurance and pre-flight cancellation insurance is obligatory. It must cover the full period from arrival to departure, cover pre-existing medical conditions, and include world-wide travel assistance and emergency air transportation services. This is a private cost not covered by the grant. Certain activities (e.g. diving) may require the visitor to obtain additional special insurance cover.

12. Ethics

For all applications involving vertebrates and/or cephalopods, many countries will require that such applications need to be approved by a national ethical committee, a procedure which can take up to 2-3 months. In this case, users should apply one year in advance. Their application will then be postponed to the next call.