

# POLARIN

POLAR  
RESEARCH  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
NETWORK

## **Deliverable 1.2. Report on Procedure for Provision of Transnational Access**

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## Summary

This report details the procedure for provision of Transnational Access (TA) within the Horizon Europe project POLARIN “Polar Research Infrastructure Network”. Integrated, challenge-driven and combined TA (in person or remote) will be provided free of charge to 64 top-level Research Infrastructures (RIs) in key areas from the polar regions that are particularly vulnerable to climate change. The report outlines the comprehensive procedure involved in the provision of TA covering various stages: (1) call scientific framework and topic definition, (2) proposal submission, (3) evaluation, (4) logistic preparation and implementation, (5) transnational access field work, and (6) reporting. Additionally, this report details the Eligibility Criteria and Terms and Conditions for TA.

## 1. Introduction

On the first of March 2024, a consortium of 51 partners from all over Europe and beyond launched the European project POLARIN “Polar Research Infrastructure Network”, funded by the European Commission Horizon Europe Framework Programme (HORIZON) as a “HORIZON- Research and Innovation Action” on the topic “HORIZON-INFRA-2023-SERV-01-01 - Research infrastructure services to enable R&I addressing main challenges and EU priorities”.

POLARIN’s overall aim is to provide efficient and customised Research Infrastructure (RI) services to address the scientific challenges of the polar regions, including access to a wide portfolio of complementary and interdisciplinary top level RIs.

Whilst TA to arctic RIs is well established thanks to the successful INTERACT and ARICE projects, the access to Antarctic RIs has never been offered before, reenforcing the strength of such a RI portfolio. Integrated, challenge-driven and combined Transnational Access (TA) to these infrastructures facilitates interdisciplinary research on complex processes in the polar regions and is offered either through on-site or remote access, free of charge, to selected “user groups”, i.e. teams of one or more researchers (users) led by a “user group leader”.

This document is prepared within the context of the activities of the POLARIN project, as a deliverable of Work Package 1 (Enabling science for understanding and predicting key processes in polar regions), with the aim of describing the procedure for the provision of TA to polar RI (either in person or remote) and their services. The procedure involved in the provision of TA covers various stages: (1) call scientific framework and topic definition, (2) proposal submission, (3) evaluation, (4) logistic preparation and implementation, (5) transnational access work, (6) reporting, as indicated in Figure 1. The Eligibility Criteria and Terms and Conditions for TA are also provided to support the POLARIN *challenge-driven calls for proposals*.

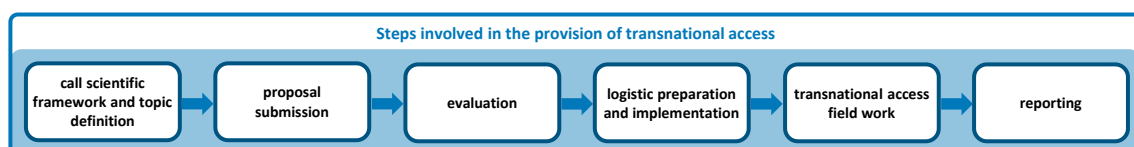


Figure 1 - Procedure for provision of transnational access in the POLARIN trans-national access calls.

For Remote Access, a modality of TA where there is no physical visit to the infrastructure, the proposal follows the same stages as for in-person TA. Instead of conducting the study in person, it’s the RI staff that conducts the study/sample collection for the users.

## 2. Main Objectives

The main objective of this report is to describe in detail the process for provision of TA, covering various stages: (1) call scientific framework and topic definition, (2) proposal submission, (3) evaluation, (4) logistic preparation and implementation, (5) transnational access field work, and (6) reporting. Detailing how the TA will be provisioned will ensure objectivity, transparency, equality of treatment, and confidentiality throughout the entire process of accessing the RIs offered by POLARIN.

## 2.1. Call Scientific Framework and Topic Definition

To provide efficient and customised RI services to address the scientific challenges of the polar regions, POLARIN aims at launching at least four challenge-driven calls for proposals for TA to integrated and customised RI and RI services between 2024 and 2028. To ensure that the research performed at POLARIN's RIs will contribute to the key research challenges identified by international organisations and programmes, such as the EU PolarNet 2 (<https://eu-polarnet.eu>), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (<https://www.ipcc.ch>), the European Space Agency (<https://www.esa.int>) and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (<https://oceansdecade.org>) for both polar regions, the International Arctic Science Committee (<https://iasc.info>) for the Arctic, and the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (<https://www.scar.org>) for the Antarctic, as well as past and ongoing EU Polar Cluster projects. Calls for proposals will be directed towards addressing the key research challenges or research gaps in the polar regions. All the international organisations and programmes point towards a similar set of challenges, whose consequences are of high societal relevance. Proposals submitted to the POLARIN calls, must contribute to addressing at least one of the following topics with a polar region perspective:

1. Sea Ice and Polar Oceans in the Climate System
2. Polar Ice Sheets, Glaciers and Sea Level
3. Terrestrial Carbon Cycle and Permafrost
4. Polar Ecosystems and Biodiversity:
5. Atmosphere dynamics and chemistry:
6. Paleoclimate Processes and Variability
7. Humans, societies and global changes

Successive calls might be redirected by encouraging proposals (at equal scientific merit) addressing specific research questions to ensure that POLARIN activities target the most pressing data and knowledge gaps, taking into account the available research infrastructures.

The scientific framework for the TA calls to POLARIN RIs is developed by Work Package 1 (WP1) that evaluates, defines, and updates overarching science priorities as inputs to the call design. The existing science priorities covering the seven overarching science themes identified by POLARIN and identified by major Arctic and Antarctic science organisations and networks (e.g., AMAP, IASC, SCAR, EU-PolarNet, EPB) will be reviewed, and validation/calibration needs by the Earth Observation (e.g., ESA, Copernicus, EMODnet) and modelling (e.g., WCRP-ESMO/CMIP) communities will be identified. Task 1.3 will optimise the scientific outcome of the access programme by identifying knowledge gaps and evaluating the capacity of POLARIN RIs in addressing them. The background of research challenges is then established to ensure that (i) access to POLARIN RIs contributes to the identified specific challenges by the international organisations and programmes; (ii) promotes excellence and interdisciplinarity in research; and (iii) resources based on multiplatform access (e.g., research stations, vessels, data infrastructures) are optimally utilized and exploited. Annual updates of new science priorities identified by major science organisations and networks will be provided to the extent in which these changes are relevant to the design of subsequent calls. The scientific framework

(priorities) for each of the subsequent calls for proposals will be updated. Nevertheless, proposals addressing priorities within the general topics specified above will be accepted.

The development of the scientific framework and establishment of the topics for the calls performed by the WP1 will be assisted by the Scientific Liaison Panel (SLP), described in detail in D1.1, comprised of internationally recognised experts in polar research, and with good understanding of fieldwork practices. The SLP will advise WP1 in identifying critical research questions that need to be addressed urgently, with particular attention to promoting interdisciplinarity and multi-platform operations.

## 2.2. Proposal Submission

A web-based easy access portal is being implemented under Work Package 2 (WP2) to allow proposal submission requesting TA (for in person or remote access), to all RIs offered by POLARIN, integrating the full proposal management process, from application to reporting and feedback. This will allow researchers to apply for access to any RI (or a combination of several RIs) offered by POLARIN. The users or user groups must request access by submitting through the POLARIN access portal a written description of the scientific objectives and the work to be conducted and their relevance to the call content. For that, the INTERACCESS on-line application evaluation and reporting system for proposal management, developed and implemented in the EU-funded project INTERACT has been modified to include the variety of RIs from POLARIN. The new system, the POLARIN Transnational Access Platform (TAP), has been expanded to handle all kinds of research infrastructure offering access, and to include several new features for streamlined and efficient access provision across domains and geographical regions. The developers and operators of this portal are consortium partners and members of WP2.

## 2.3. Evaluation

The proposal evaluation will take place in two-steps, building on the evaluation systems of the previous EU projects EUROFLEETS (I, II and +), ARICE and INTERACT (I-III) and adapted to address the diverse nature of POLARIN's RIs. The first evaluation step is the "scientific evaluation", while the second step is the "logistic evaluation" to ensure that only excellent proposals are recommended for logistic evaluation and TA implementation.

The scientific evaluation process, evaluation criteria, code of conduct and guidelines for external reviewers are described in detail in D1.3.

The logistic evaluation process is described in detail in D2.1.

The WP1 will coordinate the entire scientific evaluation and recommendation for access of the proposals submitted in response to the access calls. WP1 will also follow-up the selected projects after their implementation and prepare all call documentation related to the evaluation of proposals. The Code of Conduct on conflict of interest and confidentiality for the proposal evaluators, the evaluation criteria, templates and guidelines for external reviewers will be defined by the WP1, in collaboration with the SLP, to ensure objectivity, transparency, equality of treatment, and confidentiality throughout the call procedure.

All applicants receive an access decision accompanied by a Consensus Evaluation Statement and a Logistic Evaluation Statement (see D1.3).

## 2.4. Negotiation phase

Selected users or user groups will undergo a logistic negotiation phase where detailed arrangements will be made between the hosting infrastructure(s) and the funded researchers. This phase includes finalizing access dates, preparing necessary documentation (e.g., legal agreements, safety protocols, permits), and arranging travel and accommodation logistics if applicable.

At this time the user group leader must **submit a Data Management Plan** for the data collected during the access. A template will be provided by POLARIN.

Access contracts will be signed between:

- a) the user group leader and POLARIN, and
- b) user group leader's institution and the infrastructure operator (if required by the RI operator)

laying out terms and conditions and mutual rights and obligations.

## 2.5. Implementation: Transnational Access Phase

During the access phase, funded users or user groups conduct their experiments, data collection, or other agreed-upon activities at the host infrastructure(s). For Remote Access, the access phase follows up the same stages as for in-person TA, except there is no physical visit of the users to the RI and it's the RI staff that conducts the study/sample collection for the users. They adhere to the established protocols and collaborate with local staff as necessary. This phase aims at maximising the scientific output while ensuring that resources based on multiplatform access (e.g., research stations, vessels, data infrastructures) are optimally utilised and exploited. Selected proposals will be implemented in the RI regular schedules.

## 2.6. Reporting

Following the completion of the access period, the user group leaders are required to submit a Project Report detailing the achieved field work, their findings, outcomes, and any challenges encountered. These reports will contribute to the overall assessment of the TA impact and effectiveness in addressing the scientific objectives of the project. The approval of the project reporting will trigger the reimbursement of expenses incurred by the TA users in full.

Host research infrastructures will provide a RI Implementation report in the POLARIN TAP, with feedback on the access provided.

Reports summarizing the outcomes and progress of the provision of TA will be submitted to the European Commission, according to the POLARIN deliverables schedule and during the Periodic Reporting.

# 3. Eligibility Criteria

Proposals for access received by the notified submission date will be only accepted for evaluation if they meet the following Eligibility Criteria:

## 1. Affiliation:



- a) The user group leader, and at least the 80% of users of a project must work in countries other than the country(ies) where the legal entity operating the requested infrastructure is based (when the infrastructure is composed of several research facilities, operated by different legal entities, this condition must apply to each facility), except when access is provided by an International organisation, the Joint Research Centre (JRC), an ERIC or similar legal entities with international membership.
- b) User teams with more than four users must include researchers from at least two different countries.

**2. Expertise:** The user group leader must have the appropriate expertise to lead the research at the requested research infrastructure.

**3. Duration of the period of access to RIs:** The maximum duration of granted access at a RI is limited to the units of access offered in POLARIN and in any case less than three months.

**4. Key research challenges:** Proposals must contribute to addressing at least one of the key research challenges in the polar regions as detailed in the call text. More information available at [www.eu-polarin.eu](http://www.eu-polarin.eu)

**5. Dissemination:** Only user groups that are allowed and willing to disseminate the results they have generated under the project are eligible for access (unless the users are working for SMEs).

**6. Data policy:** User groups must agree to comply with the POLARIN data policy.

The non-fulfilment of any of the previous criteria implies the non-acceptance of the proposal for further evaluation.

## 4. General Funding and Access Conditions

1. The EU project POLARIN **provides transnational access (TA) free of charge to selected user groups** to research infrastructures that are part of the POLARIN consortium (from 01.03.2024 to 28.02.2029). Transnational access can be **either in person (hands-on)**, provided to selected users that visit the installation to make use of it, **or remote**, through the provision to selected user groups of remote scientific services (e.g. provision of reference materials or samples, remote access to a high-performance computing facility).
2. **Affiliation of applicants and RI users:**
  - 1) The user group leader of a proposal is automatically the designated user group leader (Chief scientist of the project's TA user team). The user group leader's institution has the responsibility to sign the access agreements.
  - 2) Applicants (and user groups) must comply with the rules based on which the access is granted. Any change in the user group composition must be notified to POLARIN and will be subject to approval. If affiliation regulations are not complied, the access will be denied.
  - 3) Researchers must be affiliated with an institution both at the time of application and during the project implementation, due to insurance requirements.
3. **The selection of proposals** for access is based on a competitive process, implemented through calls for proposals launched by POLARIN, and through the POLARIN Transnational Access

Platform (POLARIN TAP). Proposals submitted in another way will not be accepted. The access to any RI in POLARIN will be regulated according to the **Excellence-driven access mode**. This mode of access is dependent on the scientific excellence, originality, quality and technical and ethical feasibility of an application evaluated through peer review conducted by external experts. This Access mode enables collaborative research and technological development efforts across geographical and disciplinary boundaries.

#### 4. Access limitation:

- a) Access will be provided to conduct research, with an exclusive focus on civil applications in compliance with ethical principles. Access to the POLARIN RIs may be limited, amongst others, by the following: national security and defense, privacy and confidentiality, commercial sensitivity and intellectual property rights and ethical considerations in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
- b) Access to users not working in an [European Union Member State](#) or [HORIZON EUROPE associated country](#) is limited to 20% of the total units of access provided by the project POLARIN.
- c) Researchers who are affiliated with and/or based at institutions in Russia will not be granted access to research infrastructures through this call.

#### 5. Units of access:

- a) Access to a RI is limited to the units of access offered by the RIs in POLARIN and in any case to less than three months. Units of access can be user/day, time for instruments installation, sensor deployment, sampling day or RI/day, depending on the type of RI. For services, facilities, and units of access offered within each of the RIs, please refer to the respective RI profile in the POLARIN website.
- b) Allocated RI time does not include mobilisation in the place of departure and demobilisation at the end of the project (vessels) or journey to and from the RI (research stations).
- c) If the number of funded units of access is reduced by POLARIN for any reason or if the RIs are prevented from working (e.g., by adverse weather and ice conditions, technical difficulties, outbreak and spread of any disease with impacts on native wildlife and/or humans, or other natural phenomena) no form of compensation shall be payable in respect of any time lost. It should be noted that RI schedules/itineraries are subject to change.
- d) If agreed by the RI operator, the length of the access can be extended if the applicant provides sufficient complementary funding. The leveraging of funds from other sources for a portion of the total amount of infrastructure time applied for is encouraged and should be clearly stated in the application. However, please be aware, that cross funding from other EU projects is not permitted.

#### 6. Eligible and ineligible costs:

##### A. Eligible costs:

##### In person access:

POLARIN will cover:

- the use of the infrastructure (for a limited number of users) subsistence (meals and accommodation at the RI) and other standard costs associated to the use of the infrastructure, such as the logistical, technological and scientific support, and the

specific training that is usually provided to external researchers using the infrastructure.

- Travel expenses of the selected users or user groups, and transport of equipment/samples to and from the RIs to the institutes of origin up to the granted amount.

**Remote access**

The use of the infrastructure and logistics costs (freight) into the budget.

**B. Ineligible costs**

Grantees will not invoice the POLARIN Consortium or respective RI operator for any additional or third-party costs, such as salary costs, equipment manufacture, insurance costs, repair and rental of (scientific) equipment, consumables, sub-contracting and assistance, publication costs and overheads.

- 7. Liability:** RI users should note that installation and operation of any equipment that they bring to the RI is done at their own risk, even when it is carried on board or deployed from the vessel or used at a research station. Further details will be provided during the negotiation phase. Users are responsible for the insurance coverage of their own instrumentation.

**8. Signature of agreements:**

Two agreements will be signed by the user group leader's institution to accept the access grant in the negotiation phase:

- a) Between the user group leader's institution and the POLARIN Consortium laying out the responsibilities and obligations (e.g. reporting, acknowledgement of POLARIN in publications).
- b) Between the user group leader's institution and the RI operator giving access laying out the terms and conditions of access, including the support granted, liability, applicable safety/security regulations, and the modalities of reimbursement for travel and subsistence costs of the TA user group.

**9. Special access conditions for Arctic research stations and core repositories:**

In general, access to Arctic terrestrial research stations will be implemented in the following summer and winter season to the application time, unless otherwise stated in the access description. E.g. for a call opening in 2024, the research projects will be implemented spring-summer 2025 and autumn-winter 2025-2026. For some RIs, the implementation may take place until April 2026.

**10. Special access conditions for Antarctic research stations**

Access to Antarctic terrestrial research stations might be implemented anytime in the duration of POLARIN (until 28.02.2029).

Applicants should be aware that the stay at the station might be longer than the time requested due to logistic constraints.

**11. Special access conditions for research vessels and icebreakers**

Access to research vessels and icebreakers might be implemented anytime in the duration of POLARIN (until 28.02.2029), unless otherwise stated in the access description.

POLARIN funded research icebreaker and vessel-time may form part of longer cruises with different working groups embarked. Applicants should be aware that the allocated ship-time might be distributed over a longer onboard stay.

## 5. Reporting

### 5.1. Project report

Following completion of a funded project, the TA user group leader is obliged to comply with the project reporting and must submit a digital **Project Report** (in English) to POLARIN TAP on-line system, within two months after project completion. The Project Report is designed to describe the transnational access activity implemented. It must explicitly refer to the fulfilment of objectives outlined in the proposal. Further information/clarifications (or resubmission of the report) might be requested within a reasonable timeframe.

### 5.2. Publications and Acknowledgements

- a) Users should acknowledge the contribution of the Research Infrastructure in any output (i.e. publication, patent, data, etc.) deriving from research conducted within its realms. In accordance with good scientific practice, users are encouraged to offer co-authorship to those working at the Research Infrastructure having made genuine scientific contributions to their work.
- b) All results/publications/presentations/publicity arising from an POLARIN funded TA project should carry an acknowledgment explicitly referring to the access granted by **POLARIN (Grant Agreement No 101130949)**, and the **Research Infrastructure** used.
- c) References and/or a copy of every publication generated arising from the funded project and with POLARIN benefits must be submitted to the POLARIN TAP on-line system for the project records.

Logos for presentations will be provided.

## 6. Data policy and data protection

### 6.1. POLARIN Data Policy concerning TA

All digital research data (including any alterations and transformations of the data) generated or supported by POLARIN will be managed in accordance with the POLARIN Data Management Plan (DMP), which adheres to the FAIR principles. Applying the FAIR principles means making the research data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable. POLARIN, through its data management system, will ensure all data generated by POLARIN and its TA cascade projects are interoperable and accessible in full compliance with an open data policy.

According to the POLARIN DMP, all project data will be made available as soon as possible. An embargo is permitted, which is the period during which access to a dataset is temporarily restricted. Usually, embargoes are applied while researchers are awaiting publication or pursuing a patent. The data

publisher can choose to put an embargo on the project data of up to 24 months from the data collection time. The embargo must be requested in the DMP of the individual Transnational Access (TA) projects. Requests from external users for data access during the embargo period will be forwarded to the data originators for their decision.

The EU recommends having data "as open as possible, as closed as necessary"; hence, POLARIN recommends adopting the Creative Commons schema and using the CC BY 4.0 license on digital data wherever possible. The use of a more restrictive license is allowed but should be justified by the data publisher.

## 6.2. Personal Data Protection

Personal data is needed to contact the applicants that submit a proposal to POLARIN or apply for any of its services. The data will be the minimal necessary for contact information and EC reporting (name, address, email, institution, country, nationality). POLARIN will request the explicit consent of applicants to store their data for the duration of the project and five years after the POLARIN project ends. Contact data from applicants to POLARIN services will be treated with rigorous care. POLARIN will use General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)-compliant tools to collect, process and store research subjects' personal data.

Personal information supplied to the POLARIN Consortium will be stored by electronic means (e.g. database) for use only in connection with the handling of proposals, provision of access and project reporting. All personal data supplied to the POLARIN Consortium shall be processed in accordance with the highest ethical standards and all applicable international, EU and national law (in particular, the GDPR, national data protection laws and other relevant legislation). It will ensure fairness, transparency and accountability of the data processing, data quality and confidentiality.

Users or user groups will have the right to access and update their personal information and to ask for such information to be deleted when it is no longer necessary for the purposes collected. All applicants who wish to query the outcome of their application and/or regarding the treatment of personal data may contact POLARIN.

## 7. Language of Communication

All documentation and exchange of information between POLARIN and users or user groups will be made in English.

## 8. Conclusions

The procedure for the provision of TA to polar RIs and their services, the Eligibility Criteria and Terms and Conditions for TA, provide an objective, transparent and reliable structure to support the *POLARIN calls for proposals*.

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