

# SUMMARY of the 1st meeting of the E-infrastructure User Forum

CERN, 18-19 November 2013

## 1. Background

The e-infrastructure user forum (“Forum”) as described in the EIROforum paper “Science, Strategy and Sustainable Solutions, a Collaboration on the Directions of E-Infrastructure for Science<sup>1</sup>” aims to “understand the issues facing emerging and future activities in the science and technology domain such that policy makers can react accordingly and e-infrastructure providers can have a coordinated response”. The Forum, which constituted in the first instance invited representatives of different representative activities (both users communities and their service providers) met for the first time on 18-19 November 2013 at CERN. This document provides a summary and outcome of the discussion.

## 2. Remit and aims of the Forum

- The forum aims to serve communities of end users. The main participants should be those who can translate common end user issues to e-infrastructure services. As such it is positioned between the individual end user (scientist) and the e-infrastructures.
- The Forum is run by the users and has the clear expectation to be able to talk about, decide and prioritise user needs vis-a-vis the e-infrastructures to make ensure that e-infrastructure are more in line with user expectations.
- The Forum must have added value compared to existing initiatives and not duplicate the work of existing fora, user workshops, etc..
- The Forum must be rooted in scientific discussions (science use cases/needs drive e-infrastructure, not vice versa).
- The Forum aims to ensure that e-infrastructure is more in line with user expectations: discussions must start from a definition of the needed services, rather than starting from how to use what the existing e-infrastructures can provide. This is in contrast to other, existing user fora where it is felt that individual projects or e-infrastructures want to advertise their services to potential users.
- The Forum will not duplicate the work of existing fora, user workshops, etc.
- The Forum recognises that is not possible to unambiguously define what exactly constitutes a “user”: for example, there are very knowledgeable “power-users” who themselves operate at the edge of what is possible within the current e-infrastructure

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cds.cern.ch/record/1545615/files/CERN-OPEN-2013-017.pdf>

support (e.g. the astrophysics community), or community-driven service providers that develop bottom-up, discipline-specific services while themselves being (potential) users of broader (“top-down”/overarching) e-infrastructure services (e.g. EMBL-EBI). Finally, there are (end-)users who are not interested in the underlying technology/not even aware that they are using it - this may include e.g. clinicians and many researchers. For the latter it would be impossible to ever get them interested in detailed discussions of technical support requirements.

- Forum members are “brokers” of user/end-user (or community) requirements - they mediate between users and service providers and translate scientific requirements into necessary e-infrastructure services, rather than starting from how to use what the existing infrastructures can provide. This organisation also addresses the risk of duplication with e-infrastructure providers developing solutions that (some) communities may have already developed themselves (and often in a more suitable way).
- The Forum may represent large-scale communities as well as the “long-tail of science”; it is up to the respective communities to organise representation
- The Forum shall provide a validated, authoritative source of requirements to the e-infrastructure service providers and/or policy makers. It does not take decisions, but creates a critical mass body that can be recognised as representative of many communities.
- Trust in the user forum must be established.

### **3. Organisation of the forum**

- Activities should be agile
- Develop a clear and independent set of criteria to take decisions
- Use output from other existing meetings and user fora
- Where possible, coordinate dates with existing user fora
- Representation in the Forum: it has to be up to each community who represents it.
- The Forum is to be organised in three bodies:
  - the main User Forum (steering body? activities to be defined)
  - some regular conference mechanism
  - dedicated workshops on specific topics with technical people (workshop topics may be identified by the forum, focus groups would then report back to the larger group/forum)
- A three year plan with the following schedule is to be developed:
  - Year 1 - Ramp up
  - Year 2 - Core activities
  - Year 3 - Activities supported by funding e.g. from H2020

## Action items/next steps

- Set up steering/organisational body
- Identify communities to address and invite to the Forum in the first instance
- Communities to appoint representatives
- Develop terms of reference for the Forum
- Schedule next meeting/s (last week in Feb or first three weeks in March)
- Prioritise initial topics for discussion (see list below), including a possible Horizon 2020 proposal to fund Forum activities
- Investigate the possibilities and opportunities to join the RDA interest group on engagement
- Evaluate the possibility of submitting a Horizon 2020 proposal to support Forum activities by 2 September 2014 (NOTE: this would have to be drafted over the next few months/summer 2014)

## Open questions and topics for future discussions

- How do individual domain-specific activities fit into the bigger picture - e.g. are there solutions that are developed by one community that can be used by others? Where does each community have expertise, where is it lacking?
- Business models for e-infrastructures: in future, users may have to pay for services, how could this be done?
- How do community-driven and community-owned solutions mature into community-driven but sustainably delivered (by e-infrastructure) services?
- Is there a need to identify “best-of-breed” for technical solutions and services (and in turn reduce duplication)? How would this be achieved (politically sensitive!) - rating mechanisms, service marketplaces? Need to make sure the Forum does not issue statements that cannot be supported; however, there is an opportunity to actually succeed, since assessments would be driven by the user communities themselves and not high-level bodies.
- Should the Forum select/provide backing for pilot projects and studies?
- How can interactions with/feedback from users be organised most efficiently? (Could be up to each Forum representative how to engage “end-users” in their community.)
- How to include users that are not (yet) represented (e.g. small communities) - long tail of science? (Start with a subset of communities to be pragmatic.)

## Overarching topics between communities for discussion or focus groups (list not comprehensive)

Based on the papers submitted for the meeting:

- data storage facilities

- distributed and federated archives
- data mining
- New computing models: cloud, private-public paradigms, sustainability
- AAI, federated identities, common attribute scheme
- Data identity and data identity continuum
- software identity
- concept identity
- data standards and formats
- service discovery and service market places
- integrated data access and discovery
- data curation
- privacy and security
- dynamic data management
- semantic annotation and bridging
- reference models

## List of attendees

Dr. ANSARI, Salim	ESA	Noordwijk	NETHERLANDS
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