

EMBRC HQ Update - N.08

15th October – 15th December 2017

Prepared by: *Arnaud Delimoges and Ilaria Nardello.*

Background: *The EIB requested the ED to regularly prepare an update on the work progress, with a monthly-bimonthly frequency. The present report covers the period 15th October-15th December.*

Scope: *to Update the EIB on progress of main items of the work activity at the Headquarters.*

ERIC Application

- The Commission informed us of the outcome of the Inter-service consultation for a decision on our ERIC application: **EMBRC has quite extraordinarily passed the Inter-service consultation without any comments of substance.** The Statutes have however been editorially divided into two parts, as per the new format requested by the Commission: the “Essential Elements” shall be published in the legal (L) section of the Official Journal of the European Union; the full Statutes will be published under the Communication section.

The publication timeline has now shifted to end of February 2018. No further delays are envisaged.

At the moment, the Statutes exclude Spain. However, if their letter of support reaches the Commission by the 5th of January, they will be re-instated in the Statutes by the Commission.

- The **first General Assembly** of EMBRC-ERIC will be held in Paris, during the second half of April 2018, with a date to be confirmed to also allow for a **launch event**, at the presence of National/regional representatives as well as EU authorities.

Towards the operational phase

- **EMBRC-ERIC is in the extraordinary position to have built an operational budget since the end of the preparatory phase.** Thanks to the Members availability to start contributing an operational budget since 2016, **EMBRC can now seamlessly transition into the operational phase, with a budget and an established Secretariat.** I wish to underline the exceptionality of this circumstance, brought about by our **exemplary government of the preparatory process.**
- **ASSEMBLEPlus**, the EU H2020 project coordinated by EMBRC/UPMC, has kicked off in mid-October 2017, in Paris (Annex1). With its **€10Million** grant, and involving **all the EMBRC-ERIC partners**, this is a fundamental and perfectly timed resource for the **implementation of the EMBRC-ERIC business plan 2017-2022** (I. Nardello et al, 2017).
- EMBRC-ERIC has a fully functional governance structure, including the EIB/GA and the Committee of the Nodes, with an established pivotal role of the Executive Director on both bodies, an operational Secretariat, and a suite of Liason Officers. Mid-long term continuity of governance is recommended for the sustainability of EMBRC-ERIC. **A plan of action is urgently needed to clarify the functioning of the GA and the position of the Executive Director, at a minimum, before the first GA** (April 2018).
- **EMBRC-ERIC RoOs & Policies:** after discussion at EIB 17th, on the 17 of October, the RoOs will be circulated to the EIB for review in January 2018, after a revision by the Chair and Vice Chair. They shall also contain the HR and Ethics policies of EMBRC-ERIC, while IPR, Procurement, Access and Dissemination Policy may require the establishment of working groups.

Administrative & Financial Reporting activity

- **EMBRC-ERIC Budget:** At the next EIB, the ED will submit a workplan and associated budget for 2018, and the report on expenditures 2017. As agreed with Chair and Vice Chairs during a phone call on Dec 19, 2017, a budget template will only be prepared after this discussion, to ensure that it matches the expectations of either side (EIB and ED).

- **EMBRC-ERIC transfer of assets:** An inventory of the Assets to be transferred to the ERIC from UPMC is being prepared and shall be presented to the EIB at the next meeting. It shall contain at least these elements:
 - **Headquarters' office space:** A hosting agreement is under preparation for the rent of EMBRC-ERIC headquarters on UPMC campus. It will include office space, phone, mail, internet and network support, parking space, access to meeting rooms, library and restaurant for the personnel. The rent/services prices will be included in the host premium contribution.
 - **Member's contributions:** all members' contributions already received by UPMC for 2016-2017, or not yet received but with a signed financial agreement with the Member (a total amount of € 585 643) will be fully transferred to EMBRC-ERIC with a specific transfer agreement once the legal entity is created. The France national contribution is on a separate account and cannot be transferred as is (Plan d'Investissement d'Avenir) but this account can remain and be used for EMBRC expenses (€63k still available).
 - **Host premium monetary contribution:** It will be transferred annually by a subsidy agreement. UPMC now employs 4 people at the EMBRC Headquarter under this host premium contribution. They will remain with a UPMC contract and be seconded to EMBRC-ERIC. New employments will be contracted by EMBRC-ERIC.
 - **Projects:** The remaining overheads from the PP2 project, corresponding to EMBRC headquarters (IN salary) will be transferred through the transfer agreement. In Assemble+, a separate budget for EMBRC Headquarters is defined, which will be allocated to EMBRC-ERIC when it is created.

State of the Union

Only three out of nine of the EMBRC-ERIC MoU signatories still needed to provide a support letter to the establishment of the ERIC. Their updated status is as follows:

- **Norway:** A letter of support to the ERIC by Norway has now been received. Norway is included in the EMBRC-ERIC Statutes as a founding Member of the EMBRC-ERIC.
- **Belgium:** A letter of support to the ERIC by Belgium has now been received. Belgium is now included in the EMBRC-ERIC Statutes as a founding Member of the EMBRC-ERIC

- **Spain:** Spain has received a final green light to join the ERIC. A letter of Support should be received by France by the end of the year. Under those circumstances, Spain will also be among the EMBRC-ERIC founding Members. Our hopes are high!

HR Recruitments

- **Financial and Administration Officer (FAO):** on the 5th of December, two candidates were interviewed for the position of EMBRC-ERIC Financial and Administration Officer. The candidates were not found suitable for the position offered. The position remains open.
- **Administrative Assistant (AA):** Brunella Lhuillier resigned; the position shall open again soon.

EU Projects

- **Assemble Plus: led by EMBRC/UPMC (I. Nardello),** the project Kicked-off on the 19-20 October 2017, in Paris. More than 50 people attended the KoM. A press release is available, in Annex I. The first call for projects will be launched in late December 2017.
- **EUROPEAN MARINE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE CENTRE BIOBANK (EBB):** led by University of Vigo (A. Villaeuva), the project kicked-off on 22-23 November, in Vigo (ES). EMBRC was requested on the Steering Committee and on the Capitalization Committee of the project.
- **CORBEL:** General Assembly, 25-26 October, Amsterdam, NL
- **EMBRIC:** Microalgae Company Forum, 5-7 Dec 2017, Berlin, DE. EMBRC was represented at the EMBRIC booth.

EVENTS

Committee of the Nodes Meetings (CoN)

- CoN meeting, Dec 2017, Paris – Status of EMBRC involvement in project proposals. EMBRC decided to participate the BMS consortium for the INFRAEOSC call.
- “mini-CoN” , 20th of October, on the back of the Assemble Plus meeting, focusing on future funding opportunities for the EMBRC-ERIC Community. An additional CoN meeting will take place on the 13th of December in Paris to go further on the reflexion on EMBRC’s participation in EU proposals and start to assign contribution

responsibilities. A main topic will certainly be the INFRAEOSC BMS, and the Microbial Resource Centre proposal led by MIRRI.

Other Events

- **Food Microbiome Forum**, Invited Experts, EU Commission, Brussels. G. Kotoulas in attendance, Dec 2017.
- **ERIC Forum**, 16-17 November, Gratz, AT. This event was the occasion to exchange best practices with other ERICs and also to exchange on the RoOs.
- **BMS Strategic Group** meeting, 26 October, Amsterdam, NL

Upcoming events

- **ESFRI Meetings (new DATES)**
 - **ESFRI Hearing**, 29th Jan-2nd Feb 2018.
- **CoN Meetings (new DATES)**
 - **CoN Meeting**, Feb 2017, Faro, PT (on the back of the Assemble Plus PIC meeting).
- **EIB/GA Meetings (new DATES)**
 - **EIB Meeting** (new date): 21-22 February, 2018
 - **1st GA Meeting & EMBRC-ERIC Launch:**
15-30 April, 2018 (precise date to be confirmed):
 - **2nd GA:** 17-18 July, 2018
 - **3rd GA:** 20-21 November, 2018

Annex I: Press release of the Assemble Plus Kick-off Meeting

PRESTIGIOUS EUROPEAN MARINE BIOLOGICAL STATIONS SHARE RESOURCES FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH CAPACITY IN 'ASSEMBLE PLUS'



Release: 6 December 2017

Over 50 participants representing 32 organisations and 14 countries converged in Paris, France, from 19 - 20 October 2017, for the kick-off meeting of the **ASSEMBLE Plus** project. A Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Action, the project represents the second phase of the European Union's FP7 research infrastructure initiative, ASSEMBLE.

Under the leadership of the **European Marine Biological Resource Centre (EMBRC-ERIC; www.embrc.eu)**, **ASSEMBLE Plus** will activate important research resources **and** provide scientists from academia, industry and policy with a quality-assured programme of access to the marine biology and ecology research infrastructure. This programme includes direct access and virtual access to marine biological stations offering: a wide variety of marine ecosystems; unique marine biological resources; state-of-the-art experimental and analytical facilities with integrated workflows; historical observation data; and, advanced training opportunities. In addition to the above access mechanisms, Joint Research Activities involving all partners will aim to develop innovative research technologies and/or methodologies. Furthermore, a coherent series of Networking Activities will strengthen the culture of cooperation within and beyond the consortium partnership, providing a benchmark for practices of service provision, disseminating interoperable protocols, engaging with novel user communities, and sharing insights into sustainable business strategies.

The sum of the actions envisaged in **ASSEMBLE Plus** will increase the number of users of marine biological stations and shape their business strategy perspective, ultimately improving their long-term sustainability perspectives.

The kick-off meeting allowed the partners to better understand these significant objectives at a micro and macro level, and how they can contribute to each task. Work package leaders hosted working groups to plan for and initiate the project's activities, discuss the access operating systems, and, design the external communications and dissemination strategy. The meeting was a success, with the partnership eager to begin work immediately.

The **ASSEMBLE Plus** website will be coming soon at www.assembleplus.eu. If you would like to know more about the **ASSEMBLE Plus** project or to receive regular updates on its progress, please contact the Project Manager, A. Stécy Jombert [email: alice.jombert@upmc.fr, tel: +33 (0) 1 44 27 71 53]

Notes for Editors

The **ASSEMBLE Plus** project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement no. 730984 (ASSEMBLE Plus). The project began in October 2017 and will

run until September 2021. Université Pierre and Marie Curie (UPMC) is coordinating the project. AquaTT is the project dissemination partner.

For press queries, please contact:

Project Manager, A. Stécy Jombert [email: alice.jombert@upmc.fr, tel: +33 (0) 1 44 27 71 53]



Fig 1 : The **ASSEMBLE Plus** partners at the kick-off meeting at the Université Pierre and Marie Curie, Paris, France from 19 - 20 October 2017.

Annex II: Press release of the European Marine Biological Resource Centre Biobank (EBB) Kick-off Meeting

The European Marine Biological Resource Centre Biobank (EBB) project starts

The kick-off meeting for the European Marine Biological Resource Centre Biobank (EBB) project took place in Vigo on the 21st and 22nd of November 2017. The main objective of this project, led by the Marine Research Center of the University of Vigo, is to create the largest and most diverse marine biobank in the world. It is financed through the Interreg Atlantic Area Program with 1.5 million euros, with a further 500,000€ furnished by the partners themselves. Over the next three years, new technologies and common protocols for the *ex-situ* maintenance of marine biological resources will be developed, and existing ones will be harmonized. All with the goal that the different biobanks work in a coordinated manner under the umbrella of the European Marine Biological Resources Centre (EMBRC).

The project will also develop a guide of best practices on how to comply with the new legislation on access to genetic resources, known as the Nagoya Protocol. This legislation was developed within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity of the United Nations, with the objective of protecting the interests of the countries of origin of the resources. It is currently in the implementation phase at national level and represents an important bureaucratic barrier to entities interested in carrying out research utilizing genetic resources.

The project participants include the world's main marine biobanks, located in Norway, Ireland, United Kingdom, France, Spain and Portugal; four clusters of marine biotechnology from Spain, France, Portugal and the United Kingdom; six companies active in the field of marine biotechnology; and the relevant government departments in Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom responsible for the access to genetic resources.



Launching of the EBB project

The kick-off meeting, organized by the University of Vigo, was coordinated and chaired by the project manager Cristina Secades, was held on November 21 and 22, at Vigo's Port Authority facilities. It was the first time all project partners met in person. The meeting was opened jointly by Jesús Souza Troncoso, director of the Center for Marine Research of the University of Vigo, and Carlos Botana, responsible of Sustainability at Vigo's Port. "This is the first initiative to promote a long-term transnational coordination of marine biobanks," said

Souza Troncoso, explaining that, as a marine biologist, he usually has to collect samples around the world or apply for loans from museums, universities or marine stations. "This is a difficult issue, as each country has its own regulations and protocols. Therefore, this initiative to implement a common strategy towards accessing marine biological resources is paramount," said Troncoso, who as an example detailed how he had traveled to the United States the previous week to visit Harvard University. "I took with me a jar with several samples collected a few years ago in Antarctica and, upon arrival at Harvard's museum, I had to complete a long series of forms; if I had travelled to another country, the requirements would have been completely different," Troncoso highlighted

Carlos Botana stressed the close relationship maintained between Vigo's Port and the University of Vigo, "as it could not otherwise be, in a city that lives off the sea, as in Vigo's case". Vigo's port planning strategy, called Blue Growth, aligns perfectly with the EBB project objectives and promotes the creation of sustainable quality employment linked to the sea. " For Vigo's Port, we have identified 14 sectors linked to the blue economy, from biotechnology, fishing and tourism, to blue energy and sea highways" said Botana.



Following the inaugural session, the day started with a general presentation of the project, carried out by Antonio Villanueva, Responsible for the Environmental Quality Unit of the Station of Marine Sciences of Toralla, who was also responsible for explaining the characteristics of the Marine Research of the University of Vigo. After him the different partners commenced presenting their own entities.

Throughout the two days, the work plan for the coming months was established and the main roles and responsibilities of the partners was agreed upon. "The University of Vigo is responsible for the coordination of the entire consortium and that will require a big effort" noted Villanueva.

The meeting participants, besides various representatives of the University of Vigo, included experts from the University of the Basque Country, the Interdisciplinary Center for Marine and Environmental Research of Portugal, the University of the Algarve, the Pierre and Marie Curie University, the Marine Research Institute of Norway, Fórum Oceano, Pôle Mer Bretagne Atlantique, Anfaco-Cecopesca, the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre of the University of Strathclyde, the Association of Marine Biology of the United Kingdom, and the National University of Ireland.

Source: [Duvi](#)