



**MIRRI** **IS21**  
IMPLEMENTATION AND  
SUSTAINABILITY FOR  
THE 21ST CENTURY

MICROBIAL RESOURCE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

IS\_MIRRI21  
Transnational Access Programme

Guidelines for TNA Applicants

1<sup>st</sup> Call 2021

December 2020

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The application to the IS\_MIRRI21 Transnational Access programme should be made via the TNA portal available in <https://ismirri21.mirri.org/project-platforms/tna/>

## 1. IS\_MIRRI21 Transnational Access – TNA

The Transnational Access (TNA) programme aims to support financially and logistically the access (on-site and remote) of external users to carry out their research projects at the facilities of 14 partners of the IS\_MIRRI21 project across Europe. This initiative offers access to a wide variety of microbial resources, laboratories and state-of-the-art facilities and technological platforms.

The TNA offer includes:

- ✓ Technical and scientific support.
- ✓ Administrative and logistic support.
- ✓ Access to the products, services and facilities offered in the IS\_MIRRI TNA catalogue.
- ✓ Hands-on training needed to access the facilities.

The IS\_MIRRI21 TNA programme sponsors researchers'

- Access to the partners' facilities including: platforms, laboratories, standard consumables, chemicals and disposables.
- Travel expenses (one round trip, economy class). Up to 800 EUR/project
- Subsistence (meals and accommodation up to 30 days, weekends included).
- Shipping costs of project material from the IS\_MIRRI21 facility to the home institution (up to 400 EUR).

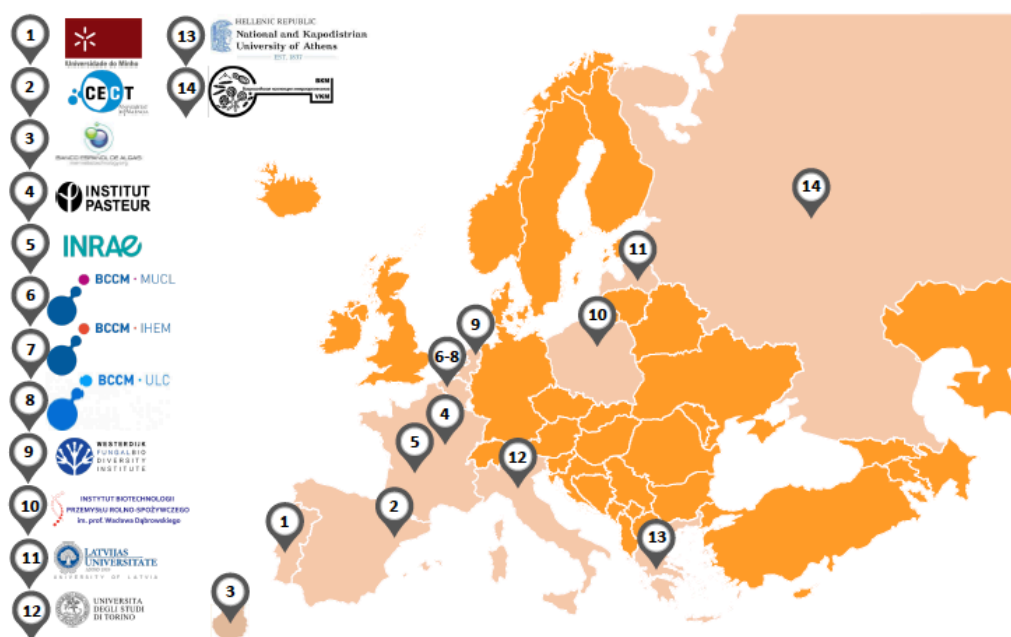


Figure 1. Microbial facilities participating in the IS\_MIRRI21 TNA call 2021.

TNA funding does not include:

- Non-standard consumables.
- Expenses required before or after the TNA visit (experiments, assay development, etc).

## 2. MODES OF ACCESS

The TNA programme provides two means of access: on-site and remote access.

**On-site access:** in this type of access, the users visit the infrastructure and carry out their research projects on-site. The facility provides scientific, technical and logistic support.

**Remote access:** this does not involve an in-person visit of users to the infrastructures. There are two types of remote access:

- *Shipping of strains/biological material:* The User request a specific “Product” from the Access provider (e.g. samples, strains and their derivatives such as DNA).
- *Remote Services:* A set of experiments are carried out at the Access Provider but the User is not physically present at the installations (e.g. sample analysis and processing).

All terms and conditions of the access should be stipulated in either a user access contract or a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) signed by the access provider and the user home institution.

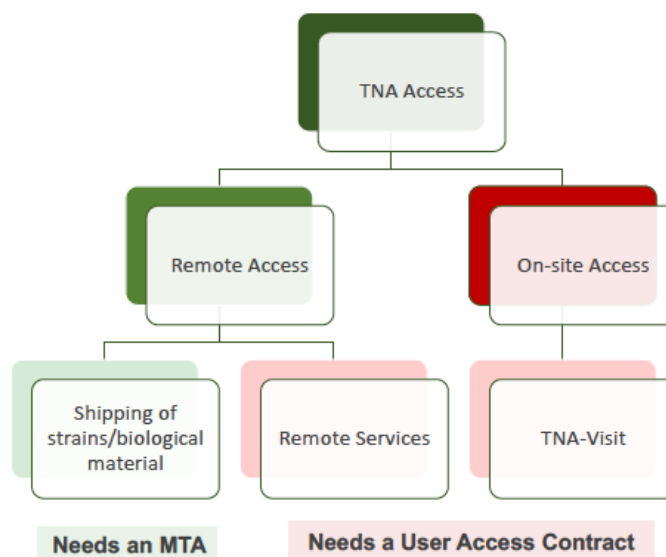


Figure 2. Modes of access in the TNA

### 3. WHO CAN APPLY FOR THE TNA?

#### 3.1 Eligibility

The first call of the IS\_MIRRI21 TNA programme applies the following criteria:

- ✓ The access must be **transnational**, users should apply for access in a country other than the country of their home institution.
- ✓ The call is open to worldwide applications.
- ✓ The call is open to PhD students, postdocs, researchers or research engineers working/studying in recognised academic or research institutions, non-profit organisations or biotechnology companies.
- ✓ Master and bachelor students are not eligible.
- ✓ The TNA programme funds the access for a period no longer than 30 days (20 working days).
- ✓ Visits during the 1<sup>st</sup> call must be carried out within the time between the signature of the contract to November 2021.
- ✓ The applicants must have an active contract with their home institution by the period of the access.
- ✓ The applicants should have the complete support and validation of their home institution.
- ✓ All proposals should be completed and submitted by eligible researchers before the call deadline.

**Applicants should contact the Access Officer** for technical verification and feasibility of their proposals **before application**.

**Users coming from outside the EU will need to make their own visa and travel insurance arrangements.**

Other aspects regarding the application to the TNA programme:

- The applicant must be the principal investigator (main executor of the access project) in case the proposal is accepted.
- Collaborations with the access provider's staff is encouraged but not mandatory.
- All data obtained during the TNA should be Open Access (except in the case of the SMEs), and publications using this data should include the IS\_MIRRI21 acknowledgement text.
- Early career researchers, multidisciplinary proposals and applicants from non-microbiology fields are encouraged to apply.

### 3.2 Access Providers

The TNA programme provides access to carry out a research project in any of the 14 IS\_MIRRI21 partners across Europe.











The offer of the **TNA catalogue** includes access to microbial resources, experimental facilities, technology platforms and the expertise and experience of their staff. The **TNA catalogue** is available for downloading from the TNA portal on <https://ismirri21.mirri.org/project-platforms/tna/>.

Users could also carry out their projects within the workflow strategy. These research approaches were particularly designed for users who aim to deepen their research outcomes or mature their innovations.

Each access provider has a **Liaison Officer**, who is the person to discuss the technical feasibility of the TNA proposal.

You will find below the list of access providers and their respective **liaison officers**.

**Table 1.** TNA Access Providers

Country	Access provider	Acronym	Liaison officer	Contact
	Spanish Type Culture Collection	UVEG - CECT	David Ruiz Arahal	arahal@uv.es
	Spanish Bank of Algae	ULPGC - BEA	Antera Martel	amartel@marinebiotechnology.org
	Culture collections of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens	NKUA - CCUoA	Paris Laskaris	plaskaris@biol.uoa.gr
	Agro-food & Environmental Fungal Collection	BELSPo - MUCL	Sylvie Cranenbrouck	sylvie.cranenbrouck@uclouvain.be
	Fungi Collection: Human & Animal Health	BELSPo - IHEM	Pierre Becker	pierre.becker@sciensano.be
	Cyanobacteria Collection	BELSPo - ULC	Anne-Catherine Ahn	acahn@uliege.be
	Culture Collection of Industrial Microorganisms	IAFB - CCIM	Joanna Bucka-Kolendo	joanna.bucka@ibprs.pl
	Westerdijk fungal biodiversity institute	KNAW - CBS	Gerard Verkleij	g.verkleij@wi.knaw.nl
	Micoteca da Universidade do Minho	UMinho - MUM	Nelson Lima and Célia Gonçalves Soares	nelson@ie.uminho.pt celia.soares@ceb.uminho.pt
	Centre International de Ressources Microbiennes	INRAE - CIRM	Marwa Zaarour and Emmanuelle Helloin	marwa.zaarour@inrae.fr emmanuelle.helloin@inrae.fr
	Centre de Ressources Biologiques de l'Institut Pasteur	IP - CRBIP	Liliana Avila Ospina	liliana.avila-ospina@pasteur.fr
	Microbial Strain Collection of Latvia	UL - MSCL	Vizma Nikolajeva	vizma.nikolajeva@lu.lv
	All-Russian Collection of Microorganisms	RAS - VKM	Alexander Vasilenko	vanvkm@gmail.com
	Mycotheca Universitatis Taurinensis	UT - MUT	Cristina Varese and Valeria Prigione	cristina.varese@unito.it valeria.prigione@unito.it

### 3.3 IS\_MIRRI21 workflows

This initiative proposes an interconnected set of products, services and resources offered by clusters of IS\_MIRRI21 partners that will allow the users to refine and mature their research and innovation projects. Through this approach, users also benefit from the experience and expertise of several access providers. The TNA programme offers 3 workflows:

**WF1.** Mass collection to extract metabolites from cyanobacteria developed by BELSPO-BCCM/ULC and UPLGC/BEA.

**WF2.** Identification of taxonomically related *Streptomyces* strains from extreme Greek environments using mass spectrometry profiles developed by NKUA/CCUoA and CRBIP.

**WF3.** Coupling MALDI-TOF mass spectrometry protein and molecular biology techniques to identify taxonomically related *Alicyclobacillus* strains developed by IAFB/CCIM and CRBIP.

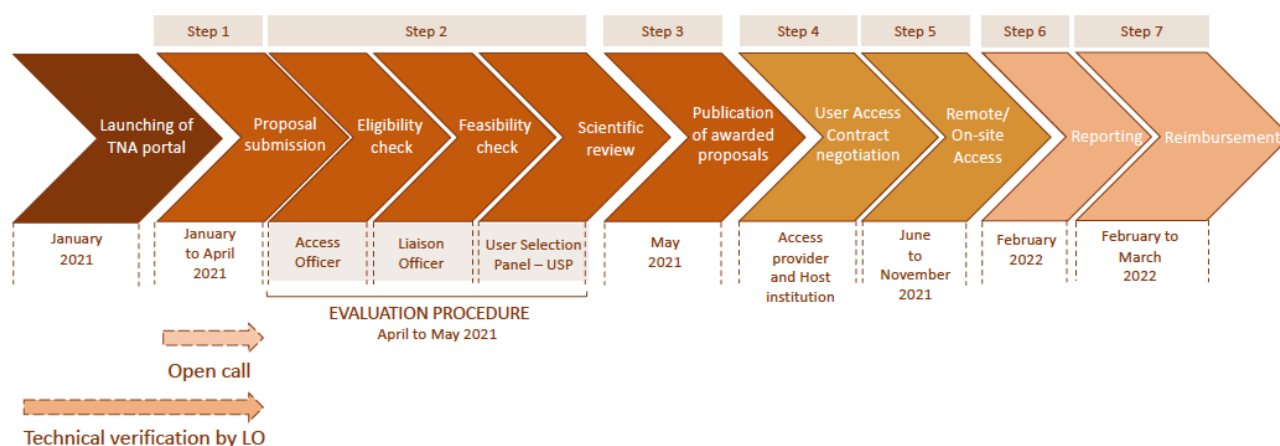
Find the detailed description of our TNA workflows in the **TNA catalogue**.

#### 4. HOW TO APPLY

The 1st IS\_MIRRI21 TNA Call will open in January 2021.

##### 4.1 Application and selection process timeline

The TNA call involves 7 steps outlined in Figure 3. Proposals must be submitted online through the TNA portal.



**Figure 3.** Timeline for the 1<sup>st</sup> TNA call 2021

**Step 1. Initial contact with the Access officer.** Applicants should review the TNA catalogue and identify the offer of interest. Afterwards, they should contact the **access officer** before the submission of the proposal. The **access officer** will guide the applicants throughout the process and will refer the proposal to the respective **liaison officer** to prepare a feasible project. Applicants who fail to check the technical feasibility of their project with the **liaison officer** before submission, run the risk that the project is not selected due to feasibility issues at the selected access provider.

**Step 2. Proposal submission.** After discussing the technical feasibility of the project with the **liaison officer(s)**, the applicants should draft a research proposal according to the parameters described in the application form. Applicants should complete the online application and upload the requested documents.

**Step 3. Evaluation procedure.** The evaluation of proposals will be based upon the information provided by the applicant which should be correct, sufficient and adequate, and it will be carried out taking into consideration the following steps:

- *Eligibility check:* The **access officer** will select only the proposals that fulfil all requirements enlisted in the eligibility section to continue in the evaluation process. Incomplete proposals will not be considered.
- *Feasibility check:* **Liaison officers** determine the feasibility of the projects regarding technical/logistical aspects and its coherence with the TNA offer. This feasibility check is done prior the User Selection Panel (USP) scientific review.
- *Scientific review:* Selection of proposals is based on peer review evaluation with excellence as the main criterion. The scientific review uses a panel-based system called **User Selection Panel (USP)** to avoid conflict of interest. This panel of external high-level scientist and scholars scores the research projects. The highest ranked proposals are selected to receive funded access to the research infrastructures.

**Step 4. Publication of awarded proposals.** Applicants will be notified of the final decision *via* Email and selected proposals will be announced through the web page of IS\_MIRRI21.

**Step 5. User access contract.** The access should be carried out under the terms of a contract signed by the access provider and the users' host institution. This is a legally binding document in which rights, obligations and technical and logistical details of the TNA visit/project are specified.

**Step 6. Reporting.** Within 3 weeks after the TNA access is finished, users from both on-site and remote access are required to sign a "Confirmation of Access" form, deliver an "Activity Report" and to answer a "user group questionnaire" and a survey about the TNA Access experience. **The reimbursement of expenses incurred by the Users during the TNA Access will take place only after these documents are delivered.** These forms and documents can be downloaded on <https://ismirri21.mirri.org/project-platforms/tna/>

**Step 7. Reimbursement.** The reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs will be done according to the access provider's national laws and procedures. It is expected to be completed within the first month after finishing the access. Failure to provide a report will result in the user being billed for the entire cost of the access.

## 5. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

To submit a research proposal, users must register first in the TNA platform. Once registered, applicants must follow the specifications (select the offers and access providers,



fill the forms, upload the documents requested and accept terms and conditions) before submitting the proposal. After the call is closed, applicants can monitor the status of their application via the TNA web platform and being notified about the results.

Applicants will be able to modify their proposals, if necessary, before submission.

The TNA web platform allows the **access officer** to manage and follow-up the application and evaluation process, the access and reporting from users. It also allows the applicants to be informed about their application status in fulfilment of our transparency principles.

Users data will be kept private and will be accessible only by those involved in the selection procedure of the IS\_MIRRI21 TNA call. Personal information is required for statistical records of our programme and reporting to the European Commission, its use follows EU laws on data protection.

### 5.1 Application step by step

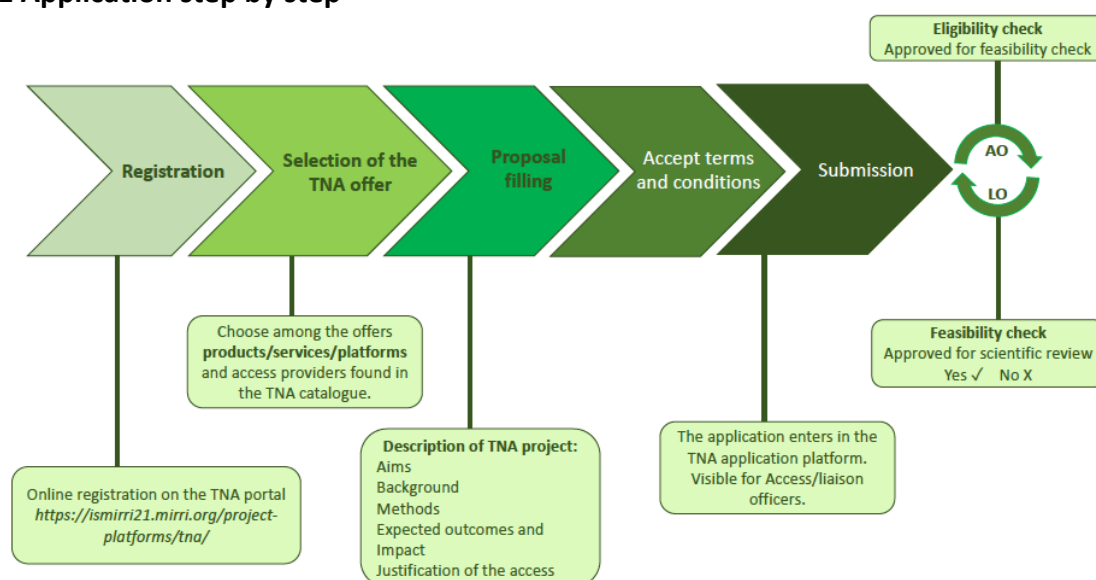


Figure 4. TNA online application workflow

#### **Registration**

Applicants can register in the TNA portal on <https://ismirri21.mirri.org/>

After registration users can log in to their TNA space to complete the application form before the call deadline.

#### **Selection of the TNA offer**

Applicants will find a list of TNA offers provided by the access providers. The 1<sup>st</sup> TNA call of IS\_MIRRI21 offers the access to 14 facilities located in 10 countries across Europe. Applicants should select the offer of their interest among the products, services and facilities described by each access provider and confirm the selection.

To select more than one offer click on “safe and add another service/technology”, if not, continue with the next step of the application by clicking on “add and continue”.

### ***Proposal filling***

Research proposals must be drafted in English, clearly and with no jargon. Applicants should fill the details of their research proposal. This proposal can be saved and completed afterwards or submitted when it is completed by clicking “safe and continue”.

The application proposal form asks a description of:

- the objectives of the project,
- relevant background,
- methods,
- expected outcomes and impact and
- the reason why the chosen research infrastructure is essential to carry out the project.

Applicants should upload a CV and an **access planning form**. A **CV format** (which use is optional) and the **access planning form** are available for download in the TNA portal. A **support letter** from the applicant supervisor at the host institution should be also uploaded. In case the applicant is a group leader or head of facility, no support letter is required.

### ***Accept terms and conditions***

Applicants should accept the terms and conditions in order to submit their proposal. This step is done only when the proposal is completed and all additional documents are uploaded.

### ***Submission***

Applicant should submit the proposal. after the submission, the proposal can no longer be modified. The proposal status can be followed-up through the dashboard at the applicants' personal space on the TNA portal.

Applicants will be notified by Email about the results of the selection process over a period of 6 weeks.

## **6. EVALUATION PROCESS**

The selection of proposals for the IS\_MIRRI21 TNA is based on peer review evaluation with scientific excellence as the main criterion. The TNA programme uses a panel-based evaluation system called **User Selection Panel (USP)**. This panel of independent, high-level scientists and scholars score the proposals for funding the access to the IS\_MIRRI21 partners. A minimum of 2 evaluators will be assigned to each proposal. The entire USP should have at least 4 members.

Individual reviewing consists of:

- Awarding scores for the two main elements of the proposal: the research project and the applicant.
- Providing brief explanatory comments sustaining the score given to the research projects and the applicant. These comments will be summarised in a final statement called “evaluation report”.

The applications will be scored using the following values:

Score	Definition
<b>5</b>	<b>Excellent.</b> Proposal successfully address all relevant aspects of the criterion.
<b>4</b>	<b>Good.</b> Proposal addresses the criterion very well. Any shortcomings are minor.
<b>3</b>	<b>Fair.</b> Proposal addresses the criterion, but a number of shortcomings are present.
<b>2</b>	<b>Poor.</b> The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
<b>1</b>	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.

There are 9 evaluation criteria. The maximum grades for all selection criteria sum 45 points for each reviewer. The final score will be the sum of the individual scores given by the two reviewers.

The evaluation and selection of proposals will be carried out under the principles of **excellence, transparency, fairness and impartiality, confidentiality, efficiency, ethics and research integrity considerations** and according the following criteria:

***Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project***

- How many of these challenges are addressed by the current proposal: (1) environmental, (2) food and feed, (3) biodiversity, (4) innovation, (5) health.
- Are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art? It proposes original concepts, approaches or development between or across disciplines?
- Is the proposed research high-risk/high-gain? There is a higher-than-normal risk that the research project does not entirely fulfil its aims but if successful the payoffs will be very significant.

***Scientific Approach***

- Are the proposed research methodology and the access arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- Does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology or the use of technology non-commonly applied in the field?

- Are the use of the facility, the proposed access planning, resources and applicant's commitment adequate and properly justified?

### ***Impact***

- Could the outputs of this research be envisaged to have an impact on: future research or technology?

### ***Intellectual capacity and creativity of the applicant***

- Does the applicant have the required scientific expertise and/or capacity to successfully execute the project?
- To what extent the new competences and skills that will be acquired during the access are relevant to the researcher's existing professional experience or will give a boost her/his future career?

In case of having two applications for the same facility, a set of additional conditions for selection will be reflected in the call for proposals. The financing will be awarded in the following priority order:

- Has the highest score
- Is working in a country where no equivalent facility exists.
- Has not previously used the installation
- Is in an early stage of the scientific career.
- Does not have joint publications in the last 5 years. The access would be an opportunity of making collaborations.
- Comes from a non-microbiology discipline.

## **7. ACCESS**

### **7.1 Support provided before, during and after the access**

The **access officer** is the main contact for the applicants during the TNA call. She will assist the applicants during the application, evaluation and reporting process.

The **liaison officer** will provide support to the users during the access. This assistance is provided to fulfil the terms and conditions agreed upon by the user and the access provider.

### ***Logistical support***

The **liaison officers** together with the facilities' local staff will advise and assist users with logistics including bookings, travel itineraries, on-site accommodation, local transportation...

### ***Technical support***

For the on-site access, users will have access to a laboratory, services, machines, products and assistance during the TNA. The **liaison officer** or an appointed person in charge, takes care of the day-to-day needs and challenges of the user within reasonable expectations.

The **liaison officer** should guaranty the access to core facilities, machines, resources and data necessary to carry out the TNA project. If needed, training will be provided for the proper and safe use of the facility.

In case of remote access, the **liaison officer** should guarantee the implementation of user access programme (previously agreed in the user access contract) and to liaise between the user and the infrastructure staff. The “user access programme” is the planning of all activities that will be carried out by the user during the TNA visit (research activities, logistics, ....) and it is described in detail in the TNA proposal. This programme should be reviewed and approved by the **liaison officer** before the access.

When shipping of material is required for the project execution at the access provider, the user should take charge of the shipping, covers the costs and to inform the **liaison officer** about the details of the shipment schedule. If shipping of material produced during the TNA visit is required, then the access provider handles the shipping (and its costs up to 400 EUR) to the users' home institution.

### ***Scientific support***

The facilities provide with basic equipment to the users who request on-site access. Experimental support includes the supply of standard disposables and the use of standard laboratory equipment (all should be specified/listed in the research proposal and the user access contract). The applicants should list in the project proposal the equipment and disposables needed for executing their work. During the initial contact with the access providers and during the feasibility check, the **liaison officers** specifies what items in this list constitutes “standard” and which are not. Items outside the aforesaid definition of “standard”, such as unusual and/expensive consumables are not included in the access and either must be supplied by the user or ordered by the access provider and then charged to the user.

Research staff from the access provider might collaborate with the users. In that case, users and collaborators at the facility share all foreground knowledge developed during the TNA visit. Both should specify, in a signed agreement, which relevant background knowledge will be excluded from such collaboration.

The provision and transfer of biological material (living resources and their derivatives, such as DNA, proteins,...) should be ruled in an MTA or their use should be specified in the user access contract. Field material is provided under the terms of the user access contract and its use by the user shall be subjected to the European and international legislation. Cultured material is provided under the rules and regulations established by the access provider.

In case the TNA proposal is accepted; the user and access provider will directly negotiate the final details of the access implementation. The terms of the access will be established in a document called “**user access contract**”. To enable this step, the applicant should contact both the **liaison officer** and the host institution about the further procedure for organizing and implementing the access to the infrastructure including dates of visit, travel and accommodation.

## 7.2 User access contract and MTA.

An **MTA** (shipping of strains/biological material) or a “**user access contract**” (on-site access and remote services) should be agreed between the user and the access provider specifying the terms and conditions of the access.

The **user access contract** is a legal document that specifies the rules, obligations, logistics and technical details of the TNA visit.

This document should also specify the administrative procedures for the reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses. The user can accept or negotiate details with the **liaison officer** or the **legal office** from the access provider.

Users are encouraged to check in advance with the **liaison officer** the provisions and the administrative procedures of the access providers for the reimbursement of the expenses planned for the TNA visit.

As the user access contract is a legally binding document, both parties must be advised by their legal officers in the negotiation procedure. If the document is approved by both parties, the contract is signed by:

- The legal representative of the access provider.
- The legal representative of the user’s home institution.
- The user

The parties should agree on how to conduct the signing and exchange of signed documents, since it depends of legal and administrative requirements of local organisms (some require originals whereas others are satisfied with PDF copies of the signed documents).

As soon as the parties have signed the user access contract, the project can officially start according to the dates and conditions specified in the document.

A copy of the signed user access contract must be also provided to the **access officer**.

Users should ultimate the details regarding the access logistics with the **liaison officer** before the visit, such as the detailed timeline of the proposed work, previous arrangements for the start of the experiments or others actions as specified in the contract.

## 8. REPORTING

After completion of the project, the users are requested to provide a confirmation of access and a TNA activity report (only for on-site access and remote services) within 3 weeks after the access is finished via Email. Additionally, a User group questionnaire and a feedback survey must be filled by the users to evaluate and improve the quality of access. These questionnaires should be completed within 2 weeks after the end of the TNA visit though the on-line reporting portal.

### 8.1 Confirmation of access

A format of the confirmation of access should be downloaded from the TNA portal on <https://ismirri21.mirri.org/>

Users and access providers should complete and sign this document for each access provider visited during the TNA. The document (in PDF format) should be deliver to the **access officer** *via* Email within 2 weeks after the end of the TNA visit. The confirmation of access is mandatory for the on-site and remote access.

Failure to provide this document will result in no-reimbursement of the entire access costs.

### 8.2 TNA activity report

A form of the TNA activity report form should be downloaded from the TNA portal on <https://ismirri21.mirri.org/>

Users should describe in this document the objectives, methods, and preliminary results of the research project carried out during the TNA visit and deliver it to the access officer (and cc the liaison officer) via Email. This report is mandatory only for the on-site access and the remote services.

One document for each access provider visited during the access should be filled and signed by the user within 3 weeks after the end of the TNA visit.

Failure to provide this document will result in no-reimbursement of the entire access costs.

### 8.3 User group questionnaire and TNA Feedback survey

Each user from a project funded by an EU Research Infrastructure is requested to complete the "User Group Questionnaire". The questionnaire enables the Commission to evaluate the

Research Infrastructures Action, to monitor the individual grant agreements, and to improve the services provided to the scientific community.

Please complete the User group questionnaire found in the link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/RIsurveyUSERS> within 2 weeks after the end of the TNA visit.

Answer the questions and create a PDF file by clicking the option “download the PDF version” on the webpage before submitting. Users should send this PDF file to the **access officer**.

Users should write in the Question 1, Number and Acronym of the Project: "871129 IS\_MIRRI21"

Failure to provide this document will result in no-reimbursement of the entire access costs.

For the TNA feedback survey, the user will receive a link to answer a questionnaire within 2 weeks after the end of the TNA visit.

Through this user feedback, the users will express their outcomes and experiences of their access at the visited infrastructures. These exchanges will give rise to improvements for the future TNA calls of the IS\_MIRRI21 project.

## 9. DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IS\_MIRRI21 follows the **FAIR** (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) and **open Access** principles<sup>1</sup>. All projects receiving Horizon 2020 funding are **required** to make sure that any peer-reviewed journal article they publish is openly accessible, free of charge (article 29.2. Model Grant Agreement).

Scientific research data, which is the data underlying publications and/or other data (such as curated but unpublished datasets or raw data) should be open access when there is no case of conflicts of interests regarding commercialisation of the scientific information, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), privacy concerns and security. SMEs are excluded from this rule.

### ***Acknowledgements***

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<sup>1</sup> Guidelines to rules on open access to scientific publications and open access to research data in Horizon 2020. European Commission – Directorate General for research and innovation. Version 3.2, 21 March 2017.