

Declaration

on supporting the access to pan-European research infrastructures by scientists of small and medium-size countries

Debrecen, 2 December 2015

Large-scale research infrastructures (RIs) are key elements of science and technology; they play an indispensable role in research, education and innovation. RIs significantly contribute to solving societal challenges and serve as exceptional knowledge centres shaping scientific communities. Major RIs can only be built and operated by big countries or by international collaborations. Small and medium-size (SMS) countries may need to focus their science and technology activity to a limited number of fields of research. Nevertheless, most pan-European RIs – like synchrotrons, free-electron lasers, neutron sources, extreme-intensity lasers and ion accelerators – serve a great variety of research fields in physics, chemistry, materials science, earth sciences, biology, archaeology and many other disciplines. Therefore necessary limitations to the number of research fields within an SMS country must not be automatically converted to limitations to participation in pan-European international RIs. Consequently, access to pan-European international RIs (mainly but not exclusively those of the EIROforum collaboration) needs to be possible for scientists of all countries irrespective of their nationality.

Researchers of SMS countries, especially those from less-developed regions of Europe, are doubly-handicapped in their access to such facilities. On one hand, only a very small number of pan-European RIs are operating or being built in these countries, on the other hand, such countries often cannot afford individually to contribute the required minimum membership fee. However, consortia of shareholders can meet the financial conditions of full or associate membership of international RIs. As already demonstrated by several successful examples, this scheme may solve the access problem of scientists in SMS countries, provided that all actors follow existing best practices:

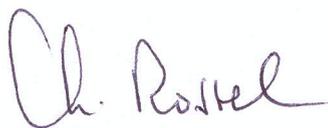
- 1) *Potential users* of pan-European RIs shall organise themselves into *national interest groups*. These groups shall be built in a bottom-up process that can be efficiently fostered by, for example, non-governmental organisations such as *learned societies* as well as national and European *scientific associations*. National interest groups shall seek contact to each other and to their governments in order to form new consortia or to join existing ones. This process needs to be supported by European scientific associations and by the managements of the RIs.

- 2) *Governments* shall regularly elaborate and publish medium- and long-term national RI strategies including the country's involvement in constructing, upgrading operating and utilising international RIs directly or through consortia. RI strategies shall be elaborated based on proposals from the interest groups. Evaluation of these proposals as well as regular medium-term evaluation of the impact of an RI to the country's research, education and innovation shall take place in a transparent peer-review process. Governments shall aim at developing stable and predictable RI strategies, an ideal environment for efficient topical research.
- 3) *Pan-European international RIs* should be open to host consortia as full or associate members. They shall be open to ways of paying significant part of membership fees in non-cash form (e.g. in-kind contributions) supporting the local economies and industry of member countries.

We invite all Governments, pan-European RIs, potential users of major international RIs, their interest groups, learned societies and scientific associations to follow the recommendations of the present Declaration and to join it as further Signatories. It is the common interest of all European countries to promote access to all pan-European RIs for all scientists in Europe.



László Lovász
President
Hungarian Academy
of Sciences



Christophe P. Rossel
President
European Physical Society



John Womersley
Chair
European Strategy Forum
on Research Infrastructures