40th e-IRG delegates meeting
Riga, Latvia, 16 February 2015

Public Summary

Reports and News

e-IRG Chair and Board:

The Chair informed that the Executive Board had two meetings, on 17 December 2014 and on 19 January 2015. The issues discussed included the White Paper and e-Infrastructure governance and coordination. Other meetings/events in which the e-IRG Chair was present are:

- H2020 Expert Advisory Group on Research Infrastructures including e-Infrastructures, November 13, Brussels.
  - The Advisory Group has been asked to provide comments on the draft Work Programme 2016-17 (WP2016-17). There was an add-on document from Danny Vandromme and Peter Wittenburg to be distributed later also. The Program Committee for Research Infrastructures will receive the draft WP2016-17 on 17 February with the request to comment by 3 March. e-IRG has been also requested by the EC to comment on the WP2016-17 presentation also by 3 March in particular commenting on e-IRG's possible role in the governance process.
  - RI Stakeholders meeting on the Charter for Access, November 24, Brussels (the charter is being finalised)
- ESFRI meeting, November 28, Brussels.
- Digital ERA Forum (ex eIPF) December 9, Brussels.
  - The Chair presented the collaboration with ESFRI and also gave the ESFRI presentation about the Roadmap.
- Research Data Alliance and global Data and Computing e-Infrastructure challenges, December 11-12, Rome.
- Science Europe workshop on Strategic Priorities for Research Infrastructures, January 22-23, Lisbon.
- H2020 Expert Advisory Group on Research Infrastructures including e-Infrastructures, February 4, Brussels.
- European Council Research Working Party, February 9, Brussels.
  - The Chair presented e-IRG and the White Paper. There was also a presentation by ESFRI and a presentation by EC on the Charter of Access.

European Commission

DG Connect:

Anni Hellman informed that the results of the evaluations of the calls have been announced. Seven topics had at most 1-2 proposals and two topics more proposals. 6 projects have been selected for E-INFRA1. INFRASUPP-7 had oversubscription. 4 projects were selected. Many good projects remained under the threshold including e4ERA. There was no project on policy and strategies.

e-IRG
e-Infrastructure
Reflection Group

There was massive response to the 3 topics of the January call. VRES: 95 proposals of which maybe 8 can be funded. Centres of Excellence: 23 proposals; 8-10 will be funded. Skills: 20 proposals. The evaluation has started and the first results will be available within 5 months in June 2015.

The future events organised by the EC are:
- EC Workshop on e-Infrastructure Commons, 25 March, Brussels.
- e-Concertation meeting in November. No date set yet.
- Digital Assembly 17-18 June, Riga. High political level. Trying to include e-Infrastructures in the assembly agenda.
- ICT 2015, 20-22 October, Lisbon (it will include sessions on e-Infrastructures, HPC, etc.)

DG RTD:

Philippe Froissard informed that the 3 calls with 7 topics in September were evaluated in October-November and the results were sent in January. For clusters (bringing together user communities of RIs and working together to solve problems with common solutions- linked to data/data management) 6 projects were selected.

Regarding the integrating activities, many proposals were received and after evaluation 16 areas are covered. 7 proposals are from starting communities and the others from advanced communities that received support in the past. There is a concern that the competition between new and advanced may be unfair and therefore in the future budget will be earmarked for new communities.

On 14 January closed the call topic: support of prior ESFRI projects. These are the 3 priority projects that were identified last year by ESFRI plus another 12 also identified by ESFRI. Each of these 15 projects has submitted a proposal. Evaluation is taken place now until mid-March.

The grants for the cluster projects will be signed in April.

Report of recent developments in the member countries

Mark Asch informed that France will submit a proposal for an ERANET to coordinate policies on big data and extreme computing. The ANR agency (that already has the FLAG-ERA ERANET) will submit the proposal.

Kees Neggers informed that SURF has finalised its restructuring. SURF is no longer a foundation but a cooperative. A cooperative has owners who own the assets. The structure is more flattened. Much closer integration of services is possible.

Norbert Meyer mentioned a HPC workshop on 10-12 May in Stockholm. Topics will include data centres environment and new technologies according to the requirements of new machines.

e-Infrastructure coordination and governance

The Chair summarised the e-Infrastructure Commons as described by e-IRG and the input previously given by e-IRG to the EC on the preparation of the H2020 Work Programme 2016-2017 He emphasised the following aspects:
- The set of services, provisioned by several e-Infrastructure providers to fulfil the specific needs of the users should be constantly evolving to adapt to changing user needs.

- In WP 2016-2017, an analysis and preparation phase is needed to further identify and isolate the services to be included in the Commons and to enable the creation of a coordination platform for operational e-Infrastructure provisioning.
- The process of consolidating service provisioning for the Commons has been partly initiated in WP 2014-2015. A stronger role should be established for European user communities as drivers of the process. WP 2016-2017 should introduce requirements on consolidation of the Commons in all its stages. In particular, the coordination should involve (and name explicitly) the organisations that formally commit to provide services within the Commons.
- In the Commons vision, e-Infrastructure providers have the freedom to innovate, and users enjoy the freedom to choose the services they need. In order to enable this vision, an ecosystem of e-Infrastructure providers is needed, and innovation projects motivated by advanced and demanding user communities.

Anni Hellman presented ideas on coordination and governance in the e-Infrastructure draft Work Programme 2016-2017. The main points are:
- The three major challenges identified by e-IRG White Papers and the Expert Advisory Group for Research Infrastructures are: sustainability, innovation and data exploitation.
- Sustainability can be attained through appropriate service lifecycle management.
    - Decisions are made during the life cycle. The three basic decisions are: will funds be devoted to the development of a new research e-Infrastructure service?, will a newly developed research e-Infrastructure service be integrated in the operational platform?, and when will an existing operational service be decommissioned?
    - The current EU funding mechanism for research e-Infrastructures relies almost exclusively on projects that are meant to cover the costs of both development and operation. The lifecycle decisions if made within the projects tend to be suboptimal since they only take into account the services in a narrow scope and not the complete portfolio of services funded with EU budget.
    - Fund development and operations through two different funding streams. Put in place a light governance mechanism to take at least the three basic decisions from the perspective of the full collection of research e-Infrastructure services funded by the EU.
- Innovation through the direct involvement of all actors in the innovation chain.
    - One could categorise innovation as: platform-driven (supply-side), user-driven (demand-side), and industry-driven.
    - Structure funding streams according to the type of e-Infrastructure innovation to foster the involvement of research communities and industrial actors in the innovation process.
- Data-driven science through the convergence of networking, data and computing.
    - Data-driven science makes even more explicit the relation between data and computing in such a way that data and computing challenges can only be solved if addressed hand-in-hand. This is even more evident in scientific areas that rely on big-data.
    - The current EU funding mechanism for research e-Infrastructures still favours silo solutions, which miss potential synergies among data, computing and networking services.
    - Integrate, to the extent possible, funding streams for the development of innovative data, computing and networking services. Promote bottom-up initiatives for e-Infrastructure interoperability.

- Proposed WP structure:
  1. Integration and consolidation of e-Infrastructure platforms supporting European policies and research and education communities.
  2. Prototyping innovative e-Infrastructure platforms and services for research and education communities and the citizens at large.
  3. Support to policies and international cooperation.
- Mid/long term open issues
  - Governance of the integration of new services in the operational platform.
  - Instrument to provide sustainable funding to the operation platform, e.g. Framework Partnership Agreements.
  - Decisions on transfer from prototyping to integration platform.
  - Decisions on decommissioning.
- Next steps
  - The Programme Committee will receive the WP 2016-2017 draft on Tuesday 17 February.
  - Comments from the Programme Committee are expected by 3rd March.
  - e-IRG is requested to comment on the WP presentation by 3rd March.
  - The EC welcomes in particular comments on the role that the e-IRG could play in the governance process.

e-IRG should acknowledge its previous advice to separate innovation and operations, but it should convey the message that this is complicated and has to be done very carefully. Operations are funded in a sustainable way and innovation in a competitive scheme. What will happen if the large e-Infrastructures do not get the projects for innovation? It is important to have balance and sustainable operations. There are many open questions and e-IRG needs to get and give more information on how it will be implemented.

If e-IRG is going to work further after March 3rd, a working group is needed that will work on this issue during spring. Sverker Holmgren will chair this group. He will prepare a short ToR and invite by email the delegates to participate. The working group will be appointed by the Executive Board.

White Paper 2014

Rosette Vandenbroucke explained the process followed. A first draft was available in November and new versions were created after receiving inputs, also from projects. The document was restructured after receiving comments on that the structure might not be optimal. The last version is from 10 February. Comments were received after this date from Bob Day, Arjen van Rijn, Fiorenzo Scaroni, Enzo Valente and Sergi Girona.

The Overarching Working Group (OAWG), editorial board of this document, had a meeting just before the delegates meeting and came to the conclusion that it is better to say that the White Paper provides practical information to ESFRI proposers. On the other hand, the draft White Paper has been downloaded over 400 times and that it has been presented as White Paper at several ESFRI meetings and elsewhere. Changing the name might cause confusion. The OAWG proposes to keep the name and make very clear that this is not a standard White Paper. It is a document that gives best practices and in particular for ESFRI proposers.

Fiorenzo Scaroni proposed to add a layer of middleware besides networking, computing and data. This should become a layer with an own identity. Focus should be given on Authentication and Authorisation Infrastructure (AAI).

The Chair stated that he likes the idea of creating a series of guidelines documents. It should be explained that the document was first initiated as a White Paper.

e-IRG should have a stronger statement recommending that existing e-Infrastructures are used and that if they do not provide enough capacity then these should be extended or upgraded. This document is not only to support the ESFRI proposers but can also be used for evaluating them. e-IRG has to leverage the information it is asking and providing for them. E.g. include access models (free, pay-per-use, etc.).

The Chair summarised the main points of consensus: Rename the White Paper to e-IRG Guidelines document. Let it be practical and pragmatic, more open and not only deal with large infrastructures. It will be very difficult to get a complete list of all e-Infrastructure initiatives. For national initiatives and developments e-IRG will refer to the e-IRG Knowledge Base. This stresses the need for updating this information. e-IRG will request from the e-Infrastructures specific information such as access modes and costs.

Roadmap 2014

Norbert Meyer proposed the following updates and extensions of existing aspects for the Roadmap 2015:
- Underline the insufficient scientific cross-domain collaboration and coordination as the result of lack of integrating services. Strongly encourage the provision of resources, tools and solutions for cross- or multi-domain scientific work.
- New models in research, innovation, and learning should cover services providing the following functionality:
  - European Science Knowledge Base (ESKB): common data services; new data and data exchange ontologies; facilitation of reusing data.
  - Collaboration in Virtual Research Environments (VREs).
  - New scientific workflows using existing services.

New aspects for the Roadmap 2015 are opening e-Infrastructures for massive data collection using new (mobile) technologies. Examples are:
- The Internet of Things especially in aspects of sensors.
- Crowd sensing.
- Machine to machine technologies (both wireless and wired).

The Chair reminded that the Roadmap should follow a rolling update model and proposed that the aspects presented today are elaborated with more text and discussed in the next meeting in Riga. This was approved with no comments.

Task Forces on Long tail of Science and Data Analytics

Task Force on Data Analytics and Computing
Sergi Girona presented the draft Terms of References (ToR) of the Task Force on data analytics and computing. He invited the delegates to volunteer to contribute or to propose experts for the data analytics part before the end of the week. The timeline is to present the document in the June meeting and have the final version endorsed in the September meeting. The document will include recommendations for the EC and the Member States. The ToR was accepted.

Task Force on Long Tail of Science
Fiorenzo Scaroni presented the draft ToR of the Task Force on the Long Tail of Science. The draft ToR needs some adjustments, e.g. it is too data oriented and should also include compute resources. He invited delegates who are interested to contribute.

The Chair concluded that the ToR is not ready for adoption and that it might be good to have only one of these two Task Forces working at the time. It was decided to adapt the Terms of Reference and bring it up for approval at the June meeting.

e-IRG Action Plan

The following remarks were made on the updated e-IRG Action Plan:
- The policy groups document should be updated regularly.
- Anni Hellman will check the status of the EC led actions on Common evaluation principles and Alignment of EU and national approaches to eRI.

The e-IRG Action Plan was approved.

Knowledge Base (contents and updating process)

This information is needed as the White Paper does not include national information but refers to the Knowledge Base. The other countries are urged to send a.s.a.p. at least the basic information to the secretariat.

On the template for information and the Knowledge Base it was mentioned that:
- The requested information is very extensive and cannot be easily maintained, e.g. when changes happen at the providers.
- Having as much links as possible keeps the burden to keep the information up-to-date as low as possible. Of course these links have to be kept up-to-date too.
- Obsolete information should be removed. It is better not to have any information than wrong information.

It was decided that the support project should create a form with less "questions" and asking for more links. This approach converges to less ambition and more indirect information. It was also decided that the layout of the Knowledge Base should be changed so that the information on countries is easily available.

Update on INFRASUPP-5 and INFRASUPP-7

Fotis Karayannis informed that the Str-ESFRI proposal in the INFRASUPP-5 call received a very good mark. It is now in the phase of Grant Agreement preparation. STFC is the coordinator of the project and the project might have a retroactive start to cover expenses for evaluating the 2010 ESFRI Roadmap projects.

Gabriele von Voigt said that the e4ERA proposal in the INFRASUPP-7 call was rejected. More targeted projects received higher marks in the evaluation.

Activities during the Latvian EU Presidency

Ilmars Slaidins informed that the delegates meeting will be on June 2nd. It will start at 11:00 and end at 18:00. There will be a dinner for the delegates on June 2nd.

The workshop will be a full day event on June 3rd. It will be co-located with the WIRE (Week of Innovative Regions in Europe) conference that takes place on 4-5 June. A workshop dinner will be organised on the June 3rd. On June 4th there will be a session on RI e-Infrastructures in the WIRE conference. The support project should announce the workshop a.s.a.p.

It was decided that the theme of the workshop will be Open Science and that the theme HPC will be taken into consideration for the Luxembourg workshop.

Activities during the Luxembourg EU Presidency

Antoine Barthel informed that the first meeting has been fixed on 17 September 2015 with a dinner on the 16th. It will be an official EU Presidency event in which case the hotel might be covered. He will send additional information a.s.a.p. He advised to book flights early. Luxembourg can also be accessed easily from Paris by the TGV fast train. The second delegates meeting and the workshop will probably be in the second week of December.

The Chair informed that it is being examined if then a joint meeting with ESFRI can be organised then. ESFRI will have a meeting on 8 December that possibly can be moved to Luxembourg. But first ESFRI has to agree and also Luxembourg has to agree and examine how to organise it.

Mid-March Antoine Barthel will enter into discussions with universities about the workshop. He asked the delegates for topics.

AOB

Anni Hellman informed that she had just received confirmation that the draft Work Programme 2016-17 will be sent tomorrow to the RI Programme Committee.

Anni Hellman said that it could be interesting to have a monitoring report to see how many of the e-IRG recommendations have been followed-up, how many became redundant and how many not taken up yet. The Chair proposed to discuss at the June meeting how to look at the impact of the work of e-IRG.

Fotis Karayannis informed that the support project during its All-hands meetings has created a list of issues relevant to e-IRG:

- The ESFRI member in the e-IRGSP4 Advisory Board is David Bohmert, Switzerland
- e-IRG vision/mission (included in the web site under e-irg.eu/about) may need to be updated to include the e-Infrastructure Commons notion. The Objectives part is much outdated and e-IRGSP4 will update this part based on Rosette's presentation,
- e-IRGSP4 will be preparing a newsletter before June and the delegates can send relevant material

The Chair informed that for the workshop in the Netherlands the Dutch delegates propose the topics:
- Integration of data services in the e-Infra commons.
- Integration and coordination of international e-Infrastructures.