

Lasers4EU Access Policy

1 Preamble

The Access Policy of Lasers4EU was continuously developed and improved by the Consortium during Laserlab-Europe contract implementations. The present document describes the general policy by which Lasers4EU organises transnational access in a coordinated way. The main features of this Access Policy are

- a coordinated implementation of the access opportunities, including the option of remote access, provided to the European User community,
- the coordinated selection of access proposals submitted by this community, and
- a strong involvement of the Lasers4EU users in the access management (as well as in other boards) particularly through the User Representatives Committee.

The present document summarises the decisions taken by the consortium and its users' representatives. It complements the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement, of which it is part.

Parts of the Access Policy, which have been incorporated into the Grant Agreement or the Consortium Agreement will not be repeated here.

2 Access Policy: General guidelines

2.1 Access will be provided by the infrastructures, called "Access Providing Infrastructures (APIs)", listed in the Grant Agreement, Annex 1 – "Description of Action".

2.2 The total access budget of the Project as specified in the Grant Agreement (Annex 1 – "Description of Action") is assumed to remain unchanged by the implementation of the Access Policy.

2.3 The total minimum number of Access Days provided by the Consortium is defined as the sum of all individual minimum numbers as given in the Grant Agreement (Annex 1 – "Description of Action"). It is considered to be an untouchable Objective of the Project and shall not be affected by the implementation of this Access Policy.

2.4 The overall implementation of the access activity specifying the allocation of access units and of the budget onto the APIs (Grant Agreement, Annex 1– "Description of Action") is assumed to represent a reasonable guideline for implementation of the Access Policy. It may, however, be changed under the rules given below.

2.5 Propositions for the implementation of the access programme are provided by the Access Board through the Management Board to the General Assembly, following the rules and procedures given below. Such propositions shall reasonably and responsibly take into account:

2.5.1 the Overall Implementation Plan as a default guideline,

2.5.2 the Overall Objective of the Consortium regarding the total amount of access days within the given total access budget over the duration of the Project,

2.5.3 substantial changes in user demands, not foreseen or accounted for in the overall Implementation Plan, if any,



2.5.4 substantial irregularities in the quality of access provided by individual infrastructures, which justify adjustments to the overall Implementation Plan,

2.5.5 unexpected changes in individual infrastructures' abilities to provide the amount or the quality of access on which the overall Implementation Plan is based,

2.5.6 explicit wishes of individual access providing infrastructures to re-allocate their access between years.

In preparing such propositions the Access Board shall make every effort to balance continuity and planning security with the benefits of flexible reaction to user needs. Any unavoidable boundary conditions and time constraints arising from the operation mode of infrastructures shall be duly taken into account.

2.6 Evaluation and selection of user proposals as described in section 5 of this Access Policy;

2.7 Eligibility of user proposals as described in section 6 of this Access Policy.

3 Access Board

3.1 The Access Board is the main organisational body responsible for propositions to implement the Access Policy. The Access Board reports to the Management Board. Decisions regarding the implementation of the Access Programme are made by the General Assembly.

3.2 The Access Board is described in Section 6.3.4 of the Consortium Agreement.

4 Rules of implementation of the transnational access programme

4.1 The access activity of Lasers4EU extends over the whole duration of the grant agreement. Twice per year, the access providing infrastructures report to the Access Board on their activities for the respective periods of operation.

4.2 During the first two years of the project duration, the access providing infrastructures are expected to provide on average approximately 50% of their respective individual minimum quantity of access as specified in the Grant Agreement (Annex 1 – “Description of Action”).

4.3 Based on the APIs access activities performed during the first two years of the project duration, and the reported quality of access (e.g. users' evaluations, etc.), the Access Board can propose modifications to the access units allocations between APIs in order to address the users' demand at best. If necessary, the Access Board seeks the additional advice from external experts appointed by the Management Board. This is the so-called “dynamic access” procedure. The access units' reallocations proposed by the Access Board must then be validated or modified by the Management Board within three (3) weeks.

4.4 The “dynamic access” procedure is first implemented by the Access Board at the end of second year of the contract. It can then be repeated as often as necessary, especially as the end of the contract approaches with the double objective of serving the user demand and achieving the consortium access commitments.

5 Remote access

5.1 Remote access are access projects carried out by the host infrastructure's staff with no external user present in the lab, but supervising the experiments remotely according to the rules in article 5.3 below. Remote access does not include “mail-in access”.



5.2 Remote access may be offered in exceptional cases. Remote access can only be granted when the Principal Investigator and the host infrastructure have reached an agreement on how to proceed.

5.3 The projects will have to strictly respect the following rules:

- Remote access must be based on a strong and auditable involvement of the user(s).
- The user(s) should be directly involved, usually on a daily basis, via video link, and must actively participate in the different steps and decisions during the experiment.
- Proofs of such involvement (e.g. minutes of the video discussions on the lab books) shall be kept for audit purposes. The remote users shall fill a form certifying the amount of remote access provided to them (available from the host infrastructure).

6 Evaluation and selection of users' proposals

6.1 The Lasers4EU website <http://www.lasers4.eu> describes the access procedures and the participating facilities. The application process is handled by an online electronic system for submission, transfer and archiving of proposals. Selection is done by an independent Selection Panel composed of three external members who supervise the evaluation procedures and the cooperation with a pool of referees: the Chair of the Panel, a Co-chair, and a User Representative. Members and chairperson of the Selection Panel are nominated by the Access Board and appointed by the General Assembly. Each proposal is evaluated by two referees chosen by the Selection Panel among a pool of more than one hundred referees covering as much as possible all domains of laser science. Whenever necessary, this pool can be completed with new referees appointed by decision of the Access Board.

6.2 In detail the procedure is as follows:

6.2.1 Proposals are submitted by applicants on an electronic form available on the Lasers4EU webpage. The applicant can request access to one or more specific access providing infrastructure(s) or s/he can leave it open to the Access Board who will determine the best suited infrastructure. The representative(s) of the chosen infrastructure(s) check(s) the eligibility and the technical feasibility of the project as well as the availability of financial resources. If all criteria are fulfilled, the infrastructure representative forwards the application electronically to the Chair of the Selection Panel and suggests up to four referees from the pool of referees of Lasers4EU. The Selection Panel Chair sends the proposal to two (2) referees who are external to the applicants' laboratories and to the host infrastructure. These referees can be part of the four referees suggested by the infrastructure but the Chair can also select them directly out of the pool of referees.

6.2.2 The referees are requested to evaluate the scientific content of the proposal, the suitability of the methods, the pertinence of the selected site, and the ability of the researchers involved. The evaluation should be completed within two weeks. If after two weeks, one referee has not submitted a report, s/he receives a reminder and an additional delay of one week. If the report is not submitted after three (3) weeks, the Selection Panel Chair chooses new referees who are again asked to provide a report within two weeks. If the new referee(s) fail to submit the report after a period of three weeks, the proposal is then evaluated directly by the Selection Panel who will make every effort to send a report within two (2) additional weeks. The objective is to keep the duration of the evaluation process below eight (8) weeks. In case of conflicting evaluations, the Chair may appoint a third referee.



6.2.3 The Selection Panel chairperson seeks a final decision by the Selection Panel, taking into account the referees' reports, and sets the level of priority of the project.

6.2.4 Once accepted by the Selection Panel, the experiment must be scheduled by the host infrastructure, and completed by the user group, within a validity period of twenty (20) months. In case the host infrastructure is unable to schedule the project within this validity period, it will alert the Access Board, which will make every effort to find another infrastructure where the project can be scheduled in due time.

6.2.5 A project that has not been carried out, or completed, during the twenty (20) months validity period must be resubmitted via Lasers4EU website.

6.2.6 In the case of facilities operating with their own access procedures, the members of the individual access committees are automatically included in the Lasers4EU pool of referees. In this arrangement, the evaluation performed by Lasers4EU referees acts in an advisory capacity in providing additional information for the local committee to consider, the final decisions on access being taken by the individual facility advisory committees.

7 Eligibility of the proposals for transnational access

7.1 To be eligible, a proposal for transnational access must be in compliance with the general regulations of the Granting Authority, as outlined in the Grant Agreement Art. 18.1 / Annex 5 "categories of users that may have access". This implies that, to be eligible, the user group leader and the majority of the users must work in an institution established in a country other than the country where the infrastructure is established.

7.2 According to Grant Agreement Art. 18.1 / Annex 5, up to 20% of the total amount of access units provided under the contract can be granted to user groups for which the majority of the members is not working in a EU or associated country. This is so-called "third country access".

7.3 In order to monitor the third country access, each API is offered the possibility of providing 20% of its total amount of access units to projects conducted by user groups with a majority of members not working in a EU or associated country.

7.4 If one or several APIs receive proposals for third country access which exceed 20% of their total amounts of access units, whereas other APIs have not reached the 20% limit, the Access Board will implement a procedure similar to the "dynamic access" procedure in order to reallocate third country access unit rights between APIs, with the double objective of serving the third country access demand at best while making sure that the 20% limit is not exceeded at the consortium level.

7.5 Finally, a Lasers4EU transnational access project shall 1) be led by an external Principal Investigator (PI) and 2) include at least 50% of external participants, external meaning scientists not affiliated to one of the access providing infrastructures (API).

7.6 For the avoidance of doubt: A "joint experiment", not to be confused with transnational access, shall be led by an internal PI, i.e. a scientist affiliated to one of the access providing infrastructures (API), and the experimental team shall include researchers from the host lab and from at least one other internal partner. These "joint experiments" are not considered eligible for reimbursement of unit costs of the host institution under the transnational access programme. However, the travel and subsistence expenses of the visiting researchers are eligible for reimbursement.



8 Extension of an access experiment

8.1 A request for extension of an experiment beyond the duration approved by the Selection Panel during the evaluation process should be sent to the chair of the Access Board by email, explaining the reason for the need for an extension. A decision on a request for extension of:

- up to three (3) days is taken by the Access Board;
- up to five (5) days is taken by the Access Board following advice from the chair of the Selection Panel.

Beyond five (5) days, a new application is necessary.

8.2 The twenty (20) months validity rule also applies for experiment extensions: this means that the extension has to be carried out within twenty (20) months of the acceptance of the proposal by the Selection Panel.

9 Conflict solving procedures

9.1 In case of disagreement between an access providing infrastructure and the Access Board on matters of allocation of access within the access programme the following appeal procedure may be applied:

(i) The applying infrastructures will be routinely heard before the access-partitioning proposition is sent to the Managing Board. Both the applying infrastructures and the Access Board are expected to settle any disagreement there.

(ii) In case that disagreement persists the infrastructure may submit a formal appeal to the Management Board together with the Access Board proposition within two (2) weeks after the hearing.

(iii) The Management Board considers both the Access Board proposition and the appeal when making a recommendation for a final decision by the General Assembly. All relevant documents in this matter will be made available to the General Assembly before the final decision.

9.2 In case of severe violations of the access-related objectives, of the Grant Agreement or of the Consortium Agreement, or in case of other severe violation of the Project's access requirements, access can be reduced or even stopped for any partner. If the Access Board becomes aware of such a case it first tries to settle the case in direct negotiation with the respective partner. If that fails the case will be forwarded to the Management Board which, after hearing all sides involved, prepares a recommendation for the General Assembly. The final decision will be made by the General Assembly.

9.3 For cases of user dissatisfaction the User Representatives Committee and the Access Board will be the initial contact points for the users. They will make every effort to act as a mediator between the unhappy users and the involved infrastructures. In case of non-resolvable disagreement the Access Board will bring the case to the attention of the Management Board which will decide on further actions.

10 Access Policy for oversubscriptions

Host infrastructures that accept proposals at any time must be prepared to handle possible oversubscriptions, i.e. situations when too many positively evaluated proposals are aimed to a particular infrastructure for a given period. They must also be prepared to schedule the



approved proposals within a limited time interval following the evaluation. The following rules should generally apply:

- (1) Whenever they are asked by the Access Board, the APIs will report on the scheduling of all proposals that have been received after positive review by the Selection Panel (accepted proposals).
- (2) In filling up the available beam-time periods the host infrastructure should consider the available access budget¹ and the average rate of incoming proposals. This may lead to the necessity of ranking and locally scheduling only part of the proposals.
- (3) Ranking is primarily based on the scientific excellence of the proposal. If several proposals are judged of comparable quality, priority should be given to new applicants.
- (4) If local scheduling under the above rules appears not possible, the applicant(s) will be immediately informed and the "excess proposals" will be turned over to the Access Board for further consideration. The initial host infrastructure shall at this time provide a statement explaining the ranking for the present period and the reasons for not scheduling the proposal. The Access Board is responsible for the approval of this selection. It is also responsible for coming to a final decision about the scheduling of the proposal, including possible re-direction to other host infrastructures, within three (3) months. Re-direction requires the consent of both the applicants and the new host infrastructure.

¹ In rejecting proposals the Access Board acts on behalf of Lasers4EU. It has to make sure that rejection is ultimately based on financial constraints only. Board members coming from the original host infrastructure may not participate in rejection decisions ("external" decision). Rejected applicants may appeal to the Management Board.

