Briefing note - Ciro Franco, Emanuele Gennuso, Marta Donolo - May 2023

MODULE 2 - SHARING RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

SHARING RESEARCH POTENTIAL OF CIVIS ALLIANCE AND FOSTERING ITS EXTERNAL VISIBILITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Infrastructures (RIs) are highly attractive elements for researchers, representing the physical or virtual place open to all, allowing to conduct cutting-edge research, to experiment and to innovate. According to these premises, the Module 2 of RIS4CIVIS project (Horizon 2020) aims to find a way to seamlessly share Research Infrastructures of the CIVIS Alliance member universities.

We started with mapping the open RIs interested to joint this effort, followed by a benchmarking of the main policies regarding the usage of the RIs and an overview of the most frequent barriers hampering their openness and shared use. An IT tool and on-line interactive platform showing all CIVIS open RIs in CIVIS was developed, and a Joint strategy for the creation of a CIVIS Research Infrastructure Network and a CIVIS Research Label were created.

These key results (currently being tested) will allow the identification of a way to seamlessly share the use of the RIs within all CIVIS Alliance members. In addition, they will enhance the networking potential of CIVIS RIs with other Alliances and R&I poles of excellence at a global level.

INTRODUCTION

Module 2 of RIS4CIVIS focuses on developing ways to share research infrastructures between CIVIS member universities, as well on providing access to third parties.

"Research Infrastructures", as stated in the European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures, are the facilities, resources and services used by the research community to conduct research and foster innovation. This notion of infrastructure therefore covers all the tools which researchers need to achieve excellence, including:
- Scientific equipment, such as laboratories and sets of instruments
- Knowledge-based resources such as collections, archives and scientific data
- E-infrastructures, such as data and computing systems
- Communication networks

Research Infrastructures are at the core of the knowledge triangle of research, education and innovation, and they play a vital role in an efficient research and innovation environment. Quality RIs empower researchers to develop new knowledge and technologies, and they foster their exploitation for real social impact.

We now aim to find a way to seamlessly share RIs across the CIVIS Alliance. Our main objectives are to:
- Map and identify available RIs – including e-Infrastructure – that could be used to implement the long-term joint R&I strategies of the Alliance;
- Develop political principles and practical methodologies for sharing this infrastructure within the Alliance and with other relevant stakeholders (i.e. Other Universities Alliances, Research Centres, Businesses, Public entities, etc.)
- Make CIVIS RIs more visible to the researchers and private actors who might use them.

To reach these objectives, we have followed a 3-step approach. Firstly, we catalogued the open Research Infrastructures of CIVIS member universities which want to participate in the RIS4CIVIS strategy. Secondly, a consensus-building phase aimed to define a CIVIS Research Infrastructure Strategy, for sharing relevant research infrastructures through two distinct approaches:

(1) defining a proposal for a common access point to information on open Research Infrastructures available, covering the financial, IP, legal, regulatory, logistical or other conditions of use;

(2) designing a Joint Strategy for the creation of a CIVIS Research Infrastructure Network (for the short term) - containing possible measures and actions for removing the current barriers (financial, IP, legal, regulatory, logistical or other) and also proposing a model for sustainability through the creation of a CIVIS Research Label, based on acceptance of the principles and the require- ments set in the CIVIS Research Infrastructure Charter for Research Infrastructure access and use.

Third, the ongoing case-study phase aims to implement, test and validate the Joint Strategy, through the launch of an online database and an interactive platform that both promote access to, and sharing of open CIVIS RIs, enhancing their visibility throughout the Alliance's scientific community and towards external stakeholders and through the pilot phase for the creation of a CIVIS Research Infrastructure Network/Label.

KEY FINDINGS & OUTPUTS

The main outputs at this stage include:

(1) An IT tool/database and an online interactive Platform including all of the 172 open Research Infrastructures interested to be part of the RIS4CIVIS strategy. The "Sharing Research Infrastructures Platform" is directly connected to the database and aims to enhance the visibility and sharing of open RIs not only throughout the Alliance's scientific community but also towards third parties and external stakeholders, including businesses, with the aim of fostering public-private interactions and technology-transfer practices. The Platform enables the search of information on main characteristics of the Ris and on how to access them.

(2) The definition of a Joint Strategy for the creation of a CIVIS RIs network, at a short term and of a CIVIS RIs label, at a medium-long term. The label is reserved for the (currently 22) CIVIS open Ris committed to adopting the same general principles in terms of sharing and use regulation. The proposed labeling model is based on a common set of principles and requirements, in terms of transparency, quality of procedures, openness of access, etc., as defined in a project of CIVIS Charter for Research Infrastructure access and use and in a procedure leading to the awarding of CIVIS RIs label. At this moment, the CIVIS Research Infrastructures Label is being piloted in order to validate the awarding and maintaining of the label and to ensure its sustained use also after the end of the RIS4CIVIS project.

These key findings and outputs are closely linked to the overall objective of the RIS4CIVIS project, i.e. to produce an integrated, long-term Research & Innovation (R&I) Strategy that will over time enable the members of the CIVIS European University to integrate their know-how, expertise and resources in the service of R&I that effectively addresses current and future societal challenges, at local, regional and international level". From this perspective, RIs are horizontal resources and drivers - operating in any R&I sector - for the development of a joint R&I strategy at a CIVIS level, able to gather critical mass of competencies, foster networking, share competencies and expertise on Alliance level.

CIVIS RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

RECOMMENDATIONS

At this stage, as there are no specific national/EU-level barriers identified with regards to the shared use of Research Infrastructures among CIVIS universities, we do not move forward any policy recommendations. As we aim to create a path that can be replaced or be used as a source of inspiration by other European Alliances and/or European universities wishing facilitate the access and the sharing of Research Infrastructures, we hope that the work carried out and final results achieved will support the relevant entities of the European Commission in designing its future programs and policy, like as, for example, European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) an d ESFRI Roadmap process.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Research and Innovation Strategy for CIVIS (RIS4CIVIS) is 3-year project co-financed by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 «Science with and for Society» programme. RIS4CIVIS will define a common Research & Innovation strategy for the CIVIS European University Alliance and transpose the strategy into an Institutional Transformation Model to serve as a source of inspiration for other European Alliances and universities.

Further resources :

- Guide for scientists in charge of Research Infrastructures ([PDF])
- Project of CIVIS Charter for Research Infrastructure access and use ([PDF])

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