

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the ASSEMBLE Plus Transnational Access (TA) program

This document presents a series of questions regarding the various phases of TA. If you cannot find the answer to a question here, we advise you to consult the TA Policy document at www.assembleplus.eu/access/download-area. If you cannot find the answer here either, contact the ASSEMBLE Plus Access Officer (access@embrc.eu).

If your question is specific to a particular Access Provider, please contact the relevant liaison officer. You can find addresses at <http://www.assembleplus.eu/access/site-and-remote-access>.

Eligibility

1. Who can make use of the TA program of ASSEMBLE Plus?

TA is provided to single Users and to teams of two Users. You should be employed by a Home Institution (recognized university or research institution, a not-for-profit organisation, a registered company). You should possess a PhD-, Master's and/or Engineer's degree.

2. My home institution is based in a country outside the EU. Am I eligible for TA?

The Home Institution of the User should be based in an EU Member State¹ or Associated Country². Access for single Users or User Teams not from an EU or Associated Country is limited to 20% of the total number of units of access provided under the grant.

3. Why does the Access need to be Trans-national?

The Access must be Trans-national, i.e., the Home Institution of the User(s) must be situated in a country different from that of the selected Access Provider. This is requested by the European Commission, which strives to foster mobility of European researchers and pan-European research collaboration.

4. I am a PhD student: can I apply?

Yes. You need a support letter from your supervisor, on official letter head of your institute. This letter needs to be uploaded in the "upload file" before submitting. Only pdf files can be uploaded in the system.

¹https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries_en

²http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cpart/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf



5. I am a Master student: can I apply?

No.

6. I am employed by one of the ASSEMBLE Plus partners: can I apply for TA?

Yes.

7. I work for an SME / Industry. Can I make use of the TA program and its funding?

Yes.

8. My employer/I wish(es) to cover the full costs of my Access. How should I proceed?

If you would like to access the scientific Research services at your own cost - that is, at full cost - then please write the Access Officer (access@embrc.eu) explaining in general terms what you would like to achieve. We will then assist you with finding the Access Providers that can best respond to your needs.

The Application process

1. Can my proposal include more than one applicant?

Yes, funding covers a TA visit of up to two Users per project. In case there are multiple Users in your User Group, one among you must serve as the Project Leader. If agreed upon with the Access Provider and if specified in the User Access Contract, a User Group can include more than two Users, but ASSEMBLE Plus can reimburse only two Users per User Group for travel, accommodation and sustenance.

2. Can I submit more than one Application?

Yes, but you need to complete a separate application form for each Project Proposal you wish to submit.

3. What is the role of the Liaison Officer during the Application process?

Each Access Provider has appointed a Liaison Officer who should be queried regarding details of technical and logistical feasibility of your Project Proposal and possible periods.

4. Why do I need to contact the Liaison Officer(s) at my preferred Access Provider(s) prior to proposal submission?

You are requested to contact the Liaison Officer to check the feasibility of your Project Proposal prior to submission and to make informed choices regarding the most suitable Access Provider. This way you foster the probability that your Project Proposal will pass the feasibility check. A list of contact addresses of the Liaison Officers can be found on the ASSEMBLE Plus TA webpage at <http://www.assembleplus.eu/>

5. Can I reapply if my Proposal was unsuccessful?

Yes.



6. Can I apply for a repeat TA to the same or another ASSEMBLE Plus Access Provider?

Yes, but a slight priority is given to first-time users.

7. How many TA Calls are planned?

Seven calls are planned in the ASSEMBLE Plus TA program.

The Proposal Evaluation Process

1. What happens with my Project Proposal following submission?

Once you have submitted your Project Proposal, the Access Officer checks the application for eligibility. If eligible, your proposal will be reviewed for technical feasibility by the Liaison Officer(s) at your selected Access Provider(s). If feasible, it will be passed on to the User Selection Panel for scientific evaluation. If evaluated positively, the Liaison Officer will check if the Access Provider has sufficient funds to allow you to perform your work plan. If so, your project will be approved pending the results of the negotiation of a User Access Contract.

2. How does the scientific evaluation proceed?

A User Selection Panel (USP) composed of six Project Implementation Committee members (in turn) and six members of the Advisory Board will evaluate your Project Proposal. The following evaluation criteria apply:

- Scientific excellence and novelty of the proposal,
- Scientific feasibility/probability of delivery,
- Why is access to the selected Access Provider needed?
- A slight priority to external users (i.e., outside the ASSEMBLE Plus consortium), new users, users from non-marine disciplines and from countries where state-of-the-art marine research infrastructure is unavailable,

3. How and when will I be informed if my Project has been approved?

The application evaluation process takes 5-6 weeks from the submission deadline. If your Project Proposal has been accepted, you will receive a letter of acceptance from the Access Officer. If unsuccessful, you will be informed by the Access Officer.

4. My Proposal contains ideas that are my Intellectual Property. How are my IP-rights guaranteed during the evaluation process?

During and following the Project Proposal selection, the USP members and respective officers are bound not to distribute –or use for their own end- any information in your Project Proposal. Liaison Officers are bound not to share with third persons any information in your Project Proposal other than the information strictly needed to perform the feasibility checks.

The User Access Contract

1. What is a User Access Contract?

The User Access Contract is a legal agreement between the User(s) and the Access Provider in which the terms and the conditions of the TA at the Access Provider are specified. It regulates the



details of the TA visit in term of availability of disposables, laboratory space, use of the Research services, reimbursement and so on.

2. Why is it important to agree with the provisions of the User Access Contract?

The User Access Contract establishes what is expected from the User Group and the Access Provider, during and after the TA. This document has legal status and is intended to set a frame for the activities to be performed during the TA.

3. Who needs to sign the User Access Contract?

The User Access Contract has to be agreed upon and signed by all the Parties involved in your Project (you, the other member of your User Group (if applicable), your Employer as well as the designated representative of the Access Provider and other relevant Parties in your Project). All Parties need to have signed the contract before the TA visit can commence.

4. Who needs to keep originals / copies of the User Access Contract?

The parties should agree on how to conduct the signing and exchange of signed documents, as some require originals whereas others are satisfied with PDF copies of the signed documents.

5. In what kind of cases is a User Access Contract not needed?

In case you request strains or their derivatives from the Access Provider, no need exists for a User Access Contract, though you are bound by conditions of material use set by the Access Provider by means of a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA). You then obtain the right to use this material for research and technological development purposes, respecting national, European and international legislation as stipulated in the MTA.

The Data Management Plan

1. What is a Data Management Plan

A DMP describes the data management life cycle for the data to be collected, processed and/or generated in your Project. As part of making research data findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable (FAIR), a DMP should include information on: i) the handling of research data during & after the end of the Project, ii) what data will be collected, processed and/or generated, iii) which methodology & standards will be applied, iv) whether data will be shared/made open access, and v) how data will be curated & preserved (including after the end of the Project). For more information, see http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/open-access-data-management/data-management_en.htm

2. Why do I need to fill out a Data Management Plan

The EU requests that data generated in EU projects, such as ASSEMBLE Plus, and therefore also all ASSEMBLE Plus-funded TA research projects must be properly stored and are expected to be freely accessible unless the User declares to opt out of this. In order to manage this process, the User(s) are asked to prepare and deposit a Data Management Plan (DMP) before the project starts.



3. How do I fill out a Data Management Plan

The User(s) are asked to prepare and deposit a DMP before the Project starts. A template can be found at www.assembleplus.eu/access/download-area. The filled-out document should be named "<User Project number>_TA_DMP.pdf" and be sent with the document name in the subject to data@embrc.eu before the Project commences.

Transnational Access

1. When will I be able to visit the selected Access Providers?

Your TA visits can commence after all involved parties (see above) have signed the User Access Contract and have received copies or originals (depending on institutional or national regulations) of the signed document. TA windows for each call will be announced at www.assembleplus.eu. Until the end of your TA visit, you must remain an employee of your Home Institution, which covers your work insurance, social security, etc.

2. What is the maximum visit duration?

The maximum TA duration is 30 days per project per person and includes weekdays, weekend days and holidays. Depending on Access Provider regulations, you are free to work over the weekends at the Access Provider's premises if allowed, but should not expect full availability of research services.

3. Do I actually need to visit the Access Provider in person?

Not necessarily. You can request "Remote Access," which means for instance that the Access Provider performs a research workflow according to Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) agreed-upon and specified in the User Access Contract. Examples include sample- and species collection, processing and rearing, as well as analytical procedures. Request for culture strains also belongs under "Remote Access." Note also that a Project may involve Physical Access, Remote Access, or a combination of these two.

4. Can I request shipment of biological material (samples, organisms, strains) from the Access Provider to my Home Institution?

Yes, for Remote Access.

5. What are the functions of a "Person in Charge?"

The Person in Charge is the person at the selected Access Provider who is asked by the Liaison Officer to be your main scientific contact prior to and during your TA. The Person in Charge is a staff member of the Access Provider. This person may be your local collaborator.

6. My research requires the sampling/use of marine bio-resources from local habitats.

In principle this is fine, but your request needs to be assessed by the Liaison Officer. Prior to submitting an application, please contact the Liaison Officer at the Access Provider and explain what you would like to do or request their policy on sampling/use of marine bio-resources and/or its derivatives) from local habitats.



7. My research involves work on organisms requiring permits from national regulatory bodies. Will this be possible within the TA program?

Yes. In cases where scientific work requires such permits, Project Proposal evaluation and selection can proceed before the permits are obtained and the TA can, if necessary, be transferred to a subsequent access period, within the limits of ASSEMBLE Plus deliverable deadlines and project lifetime, and of course provided the permits are obtained. The applicant must inform the Liaison Officer of this issue. National regulatory bodies may require the Project Leader to apply directly for permits or to apply together with a local collaborator.

8. How should I proceed in case of a conflict with the Access Provider during or following my visit?

First, you are kindly requested to consult the signed User Access Contract and try to resolve the issue together with the Liaison Officer based on what is agreed-upon in this contract, finding a reasonable solution satisfactory to both parties. If this does not resolve the problem, please contact the Access Officer who will help you finding a solution.

9. How are my IP-rights over results obtained during my TA guaranteed during and following the TA?

The staff at the Access Provider are bound not to disclose your work plan or your results thereof to any third parties not involved in your research prior to you publishing it.

10. Can I request collaboration with staff at the Access Provider in my TA proposal?

Yes, but it is not needed. In case you wish to collaborate, you are encouraged to organize this with the intended staff members at the Access Provider during the proposal-writing phase, to specify it in the Project Proposal and to explain briefly why you consider it necessary or beneficial. It is you who asks for this collaboration; local staff cannot request you to collaborate with them as a condition of access.

11. Am I the exclusive owner of the results obtained during my TA?

Yes, you are the sole owner of the foreground knowledge developed by you during the TA visit; that is, if you made use exclusively of Standard Operational Procedures offered by the scientific services available at the Access Provider. Instead, if you, upon your request, collaborated with local staff and they provided you with constructive intellectual input, then you share the foreground knowledge, or part thereof, with them. In the case of any proposed exploitation of such shared results, a separate agreement needs to be further negotiated to set up the modalities for protection, use and exploitation of these Joint Results.

12. Can I receive training during TA?

No, unless the Access Provider offers such training strictly connected with the safe and proper use of tools and equipment necessary for executing the Project. The TA is expected to deliver a research output (e.g. publications, presentations in scientific meetings, scientific reports, doctoral thesis, patents, prototypes, datasets etc.)



Post-TA procedures and obligations

1. What do I need to do following the TA?

You will need to complete the following documents:

- Sign the “Confirmation of Access” form, generally no later than 30 days after the TA. The Liaison Officer at the Access Provider will provide you with the already filled-out form, specifying the units of access you have used during your TA. You as User or as Project Leader of a User group will be asked to check the details.
- The “Transnational Access Activity Report.” Within 30 days after the end of the TA Period, the User or Project Leader must submit a TA Activity Report describing objectives, methods, and preliminary results of the TA. A template is available at <http://www.assembleplus.eu/access/download-area>. The report must be submitted as "<User-Project number>_TA_Activity_Report.pdf" and be sent with the document name in the subject to access@embrc.eu and cc'd to the Liaison Officer of the Access Provider.
- You need to fill out the User Group questionnaire at the following link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/RIsurveyUSERS>
At question 1 ("Number and Acronym of the Project"), please insert "730984 ASSEMBLE Plus". Before submitting, create a pdf with the online tool on the right column of the webpage. This pdf must be sent to the Access Officer access@embrc.eu with the subject “<User Project number>_User_group_questionnaire.pdf”.

2. What does the TA funding cover?

The funding of the TA covers laboratory fees (laboratory equipped with standard lab equipment, use of standard disposables and access to Research services). The funding also covers the cost of your travel and accommodation to certain limits, depending on national rules and regulations. All of these funding aspects are specified in the User Access Contract.

3. How will I be reimbursed for my travel and subsistence costs?

Following the end of the TA visit you will be asked by the Liaison Officer or Person in Charge to submit a reimbursement claim, providing all the requested documents (receipts, tickets, boarding cards, etc.) as specified in the User Access Contract. Reimbursement can follow only when you have signed the “Confirmation of Access,” submitted the “Transnational Access Activity Report,” and sent a copy of the filled-out User Group questionnaire to the Access Officer.

4. When will I be reimbursed for my travel and subsistence costs?

Reimbursement procedures follow rules specified in the User Access Contract, as different reimbursement rules apply for the different Access Providers. In any case, the Access Provider is expected to process your claim and reimburse you within 60 days after you have submitted the reimbursement claim to the Liaison Officer at the Access Provider, provided that: all receipts and other requested documents in the reimbursement claim are in good order, you have signed the "Confirmation of visit" form, you have submitted the “Transnational Access Activity Report,” and you have sent a copy of the filled-out “User Group questionnaire” to the Access Officer.

