



The eLTER H2020 Transnational Access (TA) Scheme

Version 19 December 2016

eLTER H2020 offers free-of-charge opportunities for multi-national teams of researchers or for individual researchers to visit selected LTER¹ and CZO² sites for the purpose of small to medium scale ecological and socio-ecological research projects. The scheme will support both single-site and multiple-site (i.e. requiring multi-site, co-ordinated work and cross-site data synthesis) research projects. Funding provided to user-groups or individual researchers for TA projects will be awarded on a competitive basis.

This text describes the operational and administrative processes regarding Transnational Access (TA) in the framework of the eLTER H2020 project. TA refers to in-person, physical, hands-on work at one or more of the LTER and CZO sites involved in the scheme.

All sites included in the eLTER H2020 TA Scheme are equipped with state-of-the-art instrumentation to enable comprehensive ecological measurement and experimental campaigns. Likewise, state-of-the-art socio-economic research is conducted at several of them. IT facilities are provided for data upload, storage and processing. The sites are described on the eLTER H2020 website and in a separate eLTER H2020 TA Brochure.

¹ Long Term Ecosystem Research

² Critical Zones Observatories

1. Support offered

Technical/scientific support

Supervision and training: Users will be introduced to the site, the scientific questions it addresses, its ongoing operations and the existing instrumentation. They will receive access to past data and scientific results from the permanent monitoring programmes. Site personnel will provide training to use the site's facilities and instruments, and also any supervision needed for the users' preparatory work.

Use of instrumentation: Users may take part in all ongoing routine measurements. Likewise, jointly with site personnel, particular measurement activities may be specifically set up for the users' own research. Users may also bring and use their own instruments, subject to the prior consent of the site owner.

Financial support

Free of charge access: Users selected to benefit from the eLTER TA Scheme will not be charged, and can thus enjoy free access to the site(s) and the services provided. Instead, the eLTER H2020 project will reimburse the eligible costs incurred by the site's host organisations.

Cost reimbursement for users: Users will receive a financial contribution towards least-cost travel expenses to and from the site. Private or rental car travel will be supported only if travel by public transportation is not possible. If available, on-site accommodation and/or on-site meals will be offered at no cost to the users. If not, the costs of reasonable accommodation in the vicinity of the site will be reimbursed. Site staff will assist users in finding suitable accommodation in the vicinity of the site.

Personnel costs: Users' personnel costs will not be covered.

Subsistence rates: All-inclusive subsistence rates will also be provided to contribute to the costs of out-of-pocket expenses. The amount will depend on whether meals are provided on-site or not. Paid subsistence rates will usually be determined in accordance with national regulations of the country where the site is located, and/or the usual practices of the site's host organisation.

Pre-payments: The scheme foresees costs reimbursement after users have fulfilled their reporting obligations (see section 2.7). However, in justified exceptional cases, a pre-payment (e.g. to cover a flight ticket) may be granted.

Total funds available

eLTER H2020 will make a total of 575.000 € available through its TA Scheme. These funds will support costs incurred by user groups as described above, and costs incurred by site host organisations during TA visits.

The host organisations of all the involved sites are Beneficiaries of the eLTER H2020 project, and they will handle the financial contributions to the user groups.

Maximum duration of TA

Per user group, a maximum of 40 days at one site for all the users combined will be supported. E.g. a group of three users could spend up to 13 days at one site or up to 26 days if they conduct a study spanning two sites. Owing to the limited funding per site, applications requesting shorter stays are more likely to receive approval than longer stays. If the study requires several stays, e.g. related to seasonality, these maximum days may be split into two visits. In such cases, depending on funding available, two journeys to and from the site may be covered as well.

Oversubscription of sites

If users apply for access to a site, the TA funds of which have already been used up, they may be offered to perform a comparable study at another site that has unspent TA funds. As far as possible, the alternative site(s) offered will have similar biogeographical characteristics.

2. Eligibility

eLTER H2020 will provide TA to user-groups or to individual researchers. In the former case, one of the group members must act as the group leader.

This user group leader, or the sole user, must work in a country other than the country where the site they wish to access is located. In the case of a group of users, the majority of the group's members must also work in a country other than the country where the site they wish to jointly access is located. For multi-site projects, this rule applies to all the sites to be accessed.

Users working for an organisation which is an eLTER H2020 Beneficiary are, in principle, eligible for receiving TA funding, however, limitations apply. This programme will not support users wishing to access a facility his/her own organisation owns.

Users not working in a European Union Member State, or Associated Country³, are eligible, provided they do not form the majority within the respective user group. However, well-founded exceptions are possible.

There is no formal prerequisite as to the users' education or their degrees held.

³ As of 17 August 2015, the following countries are associated to Horizon 2020: Iceland, Norway, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Israel, Moldova, Switzerland (*partial association*), Faroe Islands, Ukraine

3. Dissemination of results and data policy

Prior to receiving access, user groups must confirm that they intend to disseminate the outcomes of their study conducted under the eLTER H2020 TA Scheme. Users representing SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) are exempt from this rule. However, also to them, publishing their results is strongly recommended, e.g. through a company newsletter.

Successful users may be asked to provide a description of their visit, including photographs, and they may be invited to write a blog and/or social media messages during their visit, describing their experiences.

Whatever data is collected during the visit should be made available to the site owner organisation and to the wider scientific community within a reasonable time frame and without significant delays (recommended time frame: at most two years). The data policy should presume a timely pathway towards Open Access. At the end of the project, or when publications arise during the project, data should be released using a standard Open Data license and be free of intellectual property rights (IPR).

4. Application procedures

eLTER H2020 calls for proposals requesting Transnational Access

Research teams are encouraged to apply for Transnational Access by submitting a project proposal to eLTER H2020. The application procedure is set up as a single-stage call for proposals.

Structure and content of proposals

Applicants should download and fill in the *Proposal Template* (Word document), which is available at the eLTER H2020 project website together with this document. Supporting documents may be submitted as well, if needed.

Timing

For the exact deadlines and other important dates, please refer to the eLTER H2020 website under TA Scheme.

E-mail address to send the proposals to

eLTER-TA-applications@list.ilternet.edu

Questions about the calls

Any enquiries by applicants regarding the eLTER H2020 TA Scheme may be sent to the same e-mail address. They will usually be answered within 3 working days.

5. Evaluation procedure and criteria

Eligibility and feasibility check

Proposals received will first be checked by the eLTER H2020 TA Coordination Team for formal compliance with the above eLTER H2020 TA Scheme rules. Incomplete proposals, with the template being filled in only partly, will automatically be rejected.

Furthermore, a check as to the feasibility of the proposed work will be performed in advance with the respective site manager. This check will, in particular, make certain that both the natural setting, structural conditions and facilities of the site(s) are suitable for the proposed work, and that the proposed work is appropriate and does not contravene any restrictions (e.g. in terms of health and safety, environmental regulations, etc.).

Scientific evaluation

All applications received by the call deadline will be ranked in terms of their scientific merit, which will be the primary criterion for selecting TA projects. eLTER H2020 has put together a selection/review panel consisting of researchers with a respected reputation in the community. To ascertain transparency, fairness and impartiality, half of its members are independent of the consortium. This panel will conduct both the evaluation and selection of TA proposals and annual reviews of the TA scheme. The panel may require amendments or improvements of the applications.

Further criteria

Several further criteria will be applied with less weight: Preference will be given to promising young scientists at the start of their career, to scientists who have not previously used the installation, to those who are working in countries where – to the best of our knowledge – no equivalent research infrastructures exist, and to those who are not employed by one of the eLTER H2020 beneficiaries. Not least, the gender dimension will be taken into consideration.

6. Contractual regulations

TA Agreement

Once a user or group of users is selected for TA, the eLTER H2020 TA Agreement will need to be signed by the site(s) host organisation(s) and by the user (or in the case of a group of users, by each group member).

The TA agreement will regulate the following matters:

- Title of the accepted TA project
- Site(s) to be accessed
- Name and affiliation of the user group leader
- Names and affiliations of any other user group members
- Timing (may be approximate) of the planned TA
- Maximum total financial reimbursement to the user group
- Bank accounts where this reimbursement should be deposited
- Agreement of the User Group to fulfil the reporting obligations (submit the reporting template after completion of the TA)
- Agreement of the User Group to have parts of their report or the entire report published on the eLTER H2020 Project website
- Confirmation of the user's intention to publish the research results obtained through the eLTER H2020 TA scheme
- Data policy regarding data gathered by the users
- Legal matters associated with the TA journey and stay, e.g. insurance of users, travel documents, environmental regulations, etc.

Attachments to the TA Agreement:

- Forms to claim eligible cost reimbursement (one per user group member)
- Template to fulfil the reporting obligations (one per user group/TA project).

7. Obligations

Within one month after a user group has completed their TA visit, they must submit the filled in *TA Summary Report template*. It covers the work performed at the site and the outcomes of their study.

Together with the report, user groups should submit the *Travel costs claim form* detailing the transportation and, if needed, accommodation costs. For both, the invoices (e.g. flight e-ticket, B&B bill, etc.) must be provided. No justifications regarding subsistence rates will be needed because these are all-inclusive.

Financial reimbursement will be provided only after the TA Summary Report has been accepted.

Users are expected to publish the outcomes of their TA. Thereby, they must mention that their work has received financial support by the project eLTER, GA 654359, under H2020. The host organisation who provided support during the TA shall also be acknowledged.

Users may offer co-authorship to host organisation researcher(s) based on common practice as currently used in science, relating to intellectual input to the respective publication. However, the mere hosting of users should not suffice for co-authorship.

8. The eLTER H2020 Transnational Access User Forum

All TA users will be invited to provide feedback on the TA scheme. Selected users of eLTER H2020 TA will also be invited to attend a TA User Forum meeting to exchange experiences and to foster cross-site research. This forum is planned toward the end of the project, and it will be designed to present and analyse TA users' ideas, suggestions, impressions and experiences, to gather feedback and to further improve access opportunities in the field of ecosystem and socio-ecological research. Travel costs of these users will be reimbursed.