

SERVICE HOST SELECTION PROCESS

The distributed eLTER Research Infrastructure (RI) will encompass a number of Central Services provided by Central Components like the Head Office and Topic Centres. They will collectively cover all services across the eLTER Thematic Service Areas (TSAs). For these Central Services, host organisations will be selected via a sequence of steps: (1) Call for host applications; (2) processing of the received files including eligibility and plausibility checking; (3) evaluation of the applications and hearing of candidate host organisations of host consortia; (4) suggestion of host institutions to the eLTER Interim Council; (5) possible approval by the eLTER Interim Council. After hosts have been selected, they will operate in the overall context of the eLTER Integrated Governance and in close interaction with the Head Office.



Items to be hosted

The eLTER Research Infrastructure (RI) will consist of the Central Components and the distributed National RIs. The planned Central Components providing the Central Services are: the Head Office, which provides the overall RI leadership, serves as the contact point for all interested parties and operates the Service Portal, which will be the user interface for all eLTER services; and the Topic Centres, which will be entities operating the eLTER Services across the Thematic Service Areas (TSAs). In 2023 we started the process of discussing which Topic Centres could cover which set of services. Specifically the core services from the TSAs have to be covered, which are needed to operate the Skeleton eLTER RI (first phase). There is no plan to map each TSA 1:1 to a Topic Centre, but to find the most cost-efficient and robust long-term solutions in line with the capabilities of the potential hosts. More details are provided in [InfoSheet 17](#).

Internal organisation

The eLTER Technical Host Selection Team will consist of experts of organisations currently active in the ongoing eLTER related European projects. This team will manage the host application and selection process, but it will not be involved in the evaluation or selection of applications by potential hosts.

1

Calls for host applications

2

Processing of the received files including eligibility and plausibility checking

3

Evaluation of the applications and hearing of candidate host organisations of host consortia

4

Suggestion of host institutions to the eLTER Interim Council or General Assembly

5

Possible approval by the eLTER Interim Council or General Assembly

Another group, the eLTER Host Application Evaluation Committee, consisting of independent, internationally acknowledged experts, will appraise the possible host proposals.

Thereafter, the eLTER Interim Council, that is, the representatives of the countries involved in developing the eLTER RI, will decide who will be hosting the individual eLTER Central Services.



Finally, the eLTER RI Interim Council or General Assembly will appoint the host organisations. Before the eLTER RI legal entity is established, the future host organisations will each sign a unilateral confirmation that they will set up the Central Components providing Central Services as agreed.

Call for host applications

The call for proposals to host eLTER Central Services will be published providing all the necessary information to potential applicants, including: the purpose of the call, eligibility criteria, evaluation criteria, technical requirements, and, for further information, references regarding eLTER.

Host applicants can be single institutions or consortia of institutions. Among other items, for the Central Service they wish to host, they are expected to provide information on the strategy and design, the expected timing and work plan, the financial business model, and also the management and governance model of the related Central Components (Topic Centres).

The eligibility criteria will be that each applicant organisation should either have signed the eLTER Memorandum of Understanding or be a beneficiary in an ongoing eLTER European project. Moreover, they should have relevant experience regarding the eLTER RI business.

Application processing

All received applications and supporting files will be documented and kept in a secure file store. The applications will be checked for completeness and correctness. The eligibility of the applicant will be determined and an initial plausibility check will be made, i.e. does the application appear realistic, with a clear link to eLTER work.

Application evaluation

The eLTER Host Application Evaluation Committee will perform a scientific and managerial evaluation of the received applications, placing emphasis on the following matters:

- The overall design, including the technical scope and the implementation plan should be clearly in line with the given technical requirements for the respective eLTER Central Service.
- Science and capacity planning should reflect pertinent proficiency and existing experience in the respective fields. Also, an adequate managerial/administrative record should exist.

- The operational aspects should contain a realistic plan that is achievable within the given time frame and the available resources. Likewise, the planned internal operational structure and governance should be adequate for the proposed entity.
- Commitment and sound financial planning should be evident through long-term political and financial support by the countries the hosting institutions are situated within. Human and other resources planning must be realistic and complete for at least five years.
- Where an application is submitted by a consortium of organisations who wish to jointly host an eLTER Central Service, the applicants must clearly show how information and procedural flows will be organised among them.
- Interfaces with LTER should exist and the potential host institutions should be well embedded within the European LTER community.

Subsequently, the eLTER Host Evaluation Committee will invite each applicant individually to a hearing to further examine the quality of the application and to clarify details.

Possible approval

Based upon the outcomes of the overall evaluation, the approval of particular applications will be recommended to the eLTER Interim Council. The reasoning for these recommendations will be explained in detail. The eLTER Interim Council members will then select the hosting institutions or consortia.

All applicants will be formally informed about the outcome of the host selection process and receive an evaluation report regarding their application.

eLTER RI Governance will regulate the interactions between eLTER Central Components and service hosts, in particular with the Head Office and with other structural elements of the RI.

References

eLTER PPP Deliverable 5.4 Specification of the process for Core Service Host Selection (2021) <https://elter-ri.eu/storage/app/uploads/public/62c/ea1/242/62cea12420f82138600319.pdf>