

ACCESS COMMITTEE REGULATIONS

PREAMBLE

The Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for 2013-2020 establishes the promotion of scientific and technical research of excellence as one of its general objectives, based on an advanced network of scientific-technical infrastructures and equipment, and the availability of access to top-flight international infrastructures, such as the Outstanding Scientific and Technical Infrastructures (ICTS in Spanish).

When referring to the consolidation and use of Outstanding Scientific and Technological Infrastructures, this strategy also establishes as one of its specific objectives that access to these facilities is one of the most important assets for maintaining leadership in research, enhancing specialist training capability in R+D+I activities and for attracting talent. It also establishes that consolidating those that are in operation must be re-examined with sustainability criteria, in accordance with the feasibility of their scientific and technological bases and also ensuring that a it specifies a regime of use that provides services to potential national and international scientific-technological and industrial users as a whole, in an efficient manner, paying special attention to opening up these initiatives to the demands of the business sector and to the associated technological and industrial return.

Article 3 of the statutes of the Consortium regarding the design, construction, equipping and running the Oceanic Platform of the Canary Islands (hereinafter PLOCAN Consortium) establishes that PLOCAN will be an infrastructure devoted to scientific and technological experimentation and research in all aspects concerning marine sciences and technologies and those whose development requires scientific-technical laboratories situated in the marine environment. The Platform shall be at the service of the entire national scientific and technological community and open to international collaboration and it will be fully involved in present and future initiatives of European co-ordination and co-operation in this field. Article 13 establishes that the director proposes the protocol of access to users of the platform to Executive Board for their approval.

The Access Committee is the advisory body to the Director, which will report on applications for access to PLOCAN from researchers, research groups and companies. Its composition, procedures and regulations are governed in this document.

This document shall be used provisionally until such time as the PLOCAN Executive Board approves the access protocol.

PRELIMINARY ARTICLE. PURPOSE OF THE REGULATIONS

The objective of these Regulations is to establish the rules that govern how the POLCAN Access Committee works.

TITLE I

COMPOSITION AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ACCESS COMMITTEE

ARTICLE 1. NATURE

The Access Committee is the collegiate advisory body to the Director regarding applications for access to PLOCAN.

ARTICLE 2. COMPOSITION

The Director will appoint the members of the Access Committee for a period of three years. Members shall be experts in the field of Sea, Life and Earth Sciences, and their associated technologies, and they must meet at least two of the following requisites:

- Be or have been lead researcher on some project
- Be or have been member of some national or international access committee
- Be a user of national or international scientific-technical facilities
- Have at least 3 or 4 acknowledged five/six-year periods of research/teaching activity in the aforesaid fields.

At least one of the members shall belong to PLOCAN and the rest must belong to external institutions. The Director of PLOCAN shall designate one of them as Chairperson of the Committee, who will be appointed for three years. The Secretary of the Access Committee, who shall not have a vote nor the right to voice their opinion, shall be chosen by the Director from among the PLOCAN staff.

For each call for projects, and in light of the access applications received, the Director of PLOCAN shall designate the members of the Access Committee who will review the proposals, taking into consideration their experience and thematic or inter-disciplinary specialisation. If possible, and provided that the main requisites are met, consideration shall be given to aspects such as a balance of genders or the representation of agencies or countries.

The number of members of the Access Committee shall be determined in accordance with the number of applications received or their degree of complexity. Consideration will also be given to the capacity of dedication or availability of time of the members of the Access Committee for the work of the Committee.

Should it prove necessary for an appropriate analysis of any of the applications received, a report may be required and/or one or more experts in some field or matter may be co-opted onto the Committee as **external advisors** with the right to express opinions but not to vote.

In the event that it were necessary to set up sub-committees, a **spokesperson** shall be appointed for each of these, who will be the oldest member of such sub-committee. The spokesperson shall be responsible for moderating the sub-committee's debates and for presenting its conclusions at the meeting of the Access Committee.

ARTICLE 3. FUNCTION

The function of the Access Committee is to review the scientific and/or technical quality of the competitive access applications, in a public call for projects, and to produce a list of these applications

with reasons and priorities.

TITLE II

WORKINGS OF THE ACCESS COMMITTEE

ARTICLE 4. COMPETENCES

4.1. COMPETENCES OF THE CHAIRPERSON

- To convene meetings and set the agenda, bearing in mind the petitions of other members formulated with sufficient notice, if any
- Chair meetings, moderate debates and suspend them for justified reasons
- Distribute access applications among Committee members
- Co-ordinate the work of the members of the Committee and sub-committees, if any
- Compile assessment reports
- Endorse the minutes and certifications of the committee resolutions

4.2. COMPETENCES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ACCESS COMMITTEE

- Study, review and report on applications for access to PLOCAN, pursuant to both the general and specific assessment criteria that may have been established in each call for projects
- Propose a list of applications, accompanied by reasons and priorities

4.3. COMPETENCES OF THE SECRETARY

- Draft the final reports on each application submitted with the conclusions adopted at the general meeting
- Draw up a prioritised list of applications in accordance with the resolutions of the general meeting
- Help the Chairperson in their work and try to ensure that the Committee works properly by providing its members with the advice and information necessary to achieve the objectives of the calls for projects

ARTICLE 5. BASIC PRINCIPLES

The actions of the Access Committee shall be governed by the following basic principles:

- **Assessment by experts:** Members of the Committee shall be experts with appropriate knowledge and experience
- **Prioritising proposals:** Applications shall be prioritised by applying the assessment criteria set out in the call for access and in line with the access Policy
- **Ethics:** Members of the Committee shall review applications showing respect for fundamental ethical principles
- **Transparency:** The assessment process shall be transparent for all taking part therein, based on clear rules and procedures
- **Impartiality:** All access applications submitted must receive the same treatment, irrespective of the origin and identity of the applicants
- **Confidentiality:** On the one hand, the identity of the assessors shall remain anonymous;

although the names of the members of the Access Committee shall be public. On the other hand, members of the Access Committee must treat all applications received confidentially, as well as any other information or documentation related to them.

- **Declaration and resolution of conflicts of interests:** Members of the Access Committee must report whether they have any conflict of interest with applicants for access. Should they have any conflict of interest, the assessor shall not take part in the assessment or discussion of the proposals of that call for proposals.

Conflicts of interest include the following:

- a) A member of the Access Committee applies for access
- b) The assessor would benefit directly if a specific application were accepted
- c) The assessor is or has been a collaborator, member of the same research group, co-author or assessor of an applicant for access
- d) The assessor is a member of the same institution as one of the applicants for access
- e) The assessor is a relative of an applicant for access
- f) The assessor finds themselves in a situation that could limit their capability to review a proposal impartially. However, if the small number of experts able to review the applications made it necessary, an assessor finding themselves in the situation of a conflict of interests described in letters c and/or d may form part of the Access Committee, provided that there are no other circumstances that would disqualify them from participation. Such an expert shall only participate in the assessment and discussion of the applications in which there is no conflict of interest.

ARTICLE 6. WORKINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

6.1. ASSIGNMENT OF APPLICATIONS TO THE ACCESS COMMITTEE

At the time of deciding the date of opening a new call for projects and establishing the deadline for submitting applications, the deadline will also be indicated for delivering the proposals to the members of the Access Committee, the deadline for members of this committee to issue their reports and the date on which the meetings are to be held to discuss select and prioritise the proposals.

The Chairperson will distribute the applications among the members of the Access Committee in accordance with their area of specialisation and ensuring an equitable distribution of the work load among them. Each application will be reviewed individually applying the assessment criteria established in the call for projects.

The Secretary will ensure that they all receive the documentation regarding the call for projects, a copy of the Access Committee Regulations and whatever documents are used in the process.

6.2. EXAMINATION AND APPRAISAL OF APPLICATIONS

Each assessor shall examine the applications assigned to them within the established deadline.

With a view to reducing the costs of the Access Procedure in terms of time and money, every attempt will be made to ensure that the individual assessments of each application are made remotely by each assessor.

If a reviewer finds themselves with a conflict of interests, they will inform the Chairperson of this fact and the Chair, along with the Director of PLOCAN shall appoint a new reviewer to replace them or, if

this is not possible, the process will proceed pursuant to article 5 “Basic Principles”.

Should the assessor consider it necessary for the applicant to provide additional information for a proper assessment of a proposal, they shall inform the Chairperson, who, should they see fit, will pass the request on to the applicant through the Secretary. Once the information requested has been received, the Secretary will pass it on to the Chair and to the assessor.

6.3. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

A. General assessment criteria

The assessment criteria that will generally be applied to the applications for access submitted at each call for proposals shall be:

- ✓ Scientific-technical quality or excellence:
 - Quality and originality of the project and research plan (methodology, objectives and rationale).
 - A. Scientific-technical importance in comparison with other applications submitted
 - B. Novelty and importance of the objectives with regard to the state of knowledge on the issue
 - C. Suitability of the methodology, design of the research and work plan regarding the objectives of the project
 - Scientific-technical or academic excellence of the researchers and their collaborators (scientific track record, publications and institutions they belong to)
 - A. Capability of the lead researcher and the rest of the research team to carry out the activities scheduled
 - B. Previous results obtained and recent contributions of the research teams in the thematic area proposed
 - C. Scientific-technical contributions to be expected from the group applying for access
- ✓ Potential impact
 - Contribution to the scientific community and innovative and development potential in a specific field of science or technology
 - Social, economic and industrial importance of the expected results
 - Impact for the entities involved (competitiveness, growth and jobs)
 - Whether there is an appropriate and sufficient plan to disseminate and transfer the results of the project
 - Possible exploitation of the results (intellectual property and patents)
- ✓ Talent promotion and opening up to new users
 - Complementarity of participating research teams and benefits of co-ordination
 - Participation of young researchers
 - Access to PLOCAN for the first time for the researchers
 - Participation of researchers from foreign institutions

B. Specific assessment criteria

- ✓ These, if any, will be determined in each public call for proposals

- ✓ Members of the Access Committee shall exclude any proposal that contravenes fundamental ethical principles

6.4 DRAFTING BRIEF REPORTS AND INITIAL SCORING OF APPLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE ACCESS COMMITTEE

Once each application has been examined, the assessor will fill out an assessment, that will be sent by e-mail to the Secretary and the Chairperson of the Committee within the deadline set.

6.5. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

As a general rule, a general meeting will be held, face-to-face or by video-conference. Should other contacts between the members of the Access Committee be considered necessary, apart from this final meeting, this shall be done preferably using new technologies (video-conference, I.T. systems, chat forums, etc.).

6.6. HOLDING MEETINGS

The Chair of the Committee will convene the general meeting on the date indicated.

Once the members of the Access Committee are at the meeting, the Chair will direct the preliminary meeting to review the assessment criteria and establish a work plan. The Access Committee will discuss the applications and reach a consensus on their conclusions concerning the final rating of the projects, which will be classed in one of the following groups:

A Applications approved and with access time assigned

B Applications approved but with no access time assigned. They may have access in the end if access time should become available because an applicant from group A renounces their access time

C Applications that have not satisfactorily passed the assessment, because they are not of interest from a scientific and/or technical standpoint, despite being technically feasible

6.7. DRAFTING REPORTS AND PRIORITISED LISTS BY THE ACCESS COMMITTEE

The Access Committee will make a written record of the final report on each application. The Secretary will draft these reports that will be filed and kept for a minimum of five years. The conclusions of this report will be sent by e-mail to the applicants, together with the final decision on access.

A prioritised list of the applications from groups A and B will be drawn up and justified, grouped by facility or equipment. In the case of Group A, priority may be given to applications from young researchers, researchers gaining access for the first time or to researchers from foreign institutions. The Secretary will be responsible for drafting the list pursuant to the resolutions of the meeting.

6.8. ACCESS AUTHORISATION

The Committee Secretary will send a copy of the final reports and the list to the Chairperson of the Internal Access Committee and to the Director of PLOCAN, who will make the final decision on authorising access, seeking an optimum use of all the Centre's resources to maximise its performance.

ARTICLE 7. ACCESS COMMITTEE FUNDING: FEES AND EXPENSES

Members of the Access Committee will have their travel, accommodation and out-of-pocket expenses

for attending face-to-face meetings refunded.

SOLE ADDITIONAL PROVISION. SUPPLEMENTARY LAW

Anything not provided for in these regulations shall be covered by the Consortium Statutes and, subsidiarily, by the Legal Regimen of Common Administrative Procedures Act, Act 39/2015, 1st October, (*Ley 39/2015, de 1 de octubre, del Procedimiento Administrativo Común de las Administraciones Públicas*) and by the Legal Regimen of the Public Administrations Act, Act 40/2015, 1st October (*Ley 40/2015, de 1 de octubre, de Régimen Jurídico del Sector Público*).

SOLE FINAL PROVISION. COMING INTO EFFECT

These Regulations will come into effect from such time as the access protocol is approved by the PLOCAN Consortium Executive Board.