

# *Progetto ELIXIRxNextGenIT*

**Progetto ELIXIRxNextGenIT**  
**“ELIXIR x NextGenerationIT: consolidation of the Italian Infrastructure for Omics Data and Bioinformatics”**  
**Area ESFRI “Health and Food”, finanziato da: European Commission – NextGenerationEU**  
**Codice N° IR0000010**

# *Guidelines for National Open Access (NOA)*

1<sup>st</sup> Call

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# 1. Definitions

**National Open Access (NOA):** Free-of-charge access to laboratory facilities on a national scale for Applicants/Users employed in the same country as the host institution, with the exclusion of ELIXIRxNextGenIT partners.

**Facility:** A component of the Project's Operative Units along with its associated services, typically located at the same physical address. A facility may comprise one or multiple pieces of equipment and it serves as a NOA provider.

**Facility Manager:** The individual responsible for a specific facility handling all matters related to the NOA activities at the facility.

**NOA activity:** The execution of a granted NOA proposal at a facility within the project, which can involve either physical access or remote service.

**Equipment:** A single analytical device located at NOA facilities, to which Applicants/Users apply for access.

**Organisation:** The Operative Unit of the Research Infrastructure serving as NOA provider, granting access or offering service(s) to equipment and associated laboratories as part of a facility.

**Installation/Laboratory:** This represents the physical location where equipment associated with facilities are housed, and thus it is the place where NOA activities take place.

**Physical access:** NOA activity where the Users physically visit the facility to perform sample analysis.

**Remote service:** NOA activity where the Users benefit from services, such as sample analysis performed by the operator at the facility.

**Applicant/User:** Individuals who apply as principal investigator (PI) for the proposed research activity, which can be conducted using the selected equipment at the hosting facility or via remote service. Individuals eligible for this role include, but are not limited to researchers, doctoral candidates, technical staff and PhD students actively participating in research within the framework of their studies.

**User Access Agreement:** The agreement signed between the facility and the Users under a single approved NOA project, encompassing all aspects of service provision and regulations.

**Access provider:** The person responsible for granting access to a specific service within the facility.

**Review panel:** An advisory panel of experts selected to evaluate the scientific excellence of proposals received during the NOA call and the positive outcome of the technical evaluation.

## 2. Introduction

Research Infrastructures (RIs) are large-scale facilities, resources, and services that support scientific research on an international scale. These infrastructures are collaborative, often involving multiple countries and institutions, and are designed to provide researchers with cutting-edge tools and outstanding capabilities that are often beyond the reach of individual nations. European RIs cover a wide range of scientific disciplines and fields, including but not limited to data and digital computing, energy, environment, health and food, physical sciences and engineering, social and cultural innovation.

RIs are pivotal in initiating and maintaining collaborative efforts within the research community and fostering the principles of open science, open innovation, and global accessibility. They form the cornerstone for realising the European Commission's three strategic imperatives (Open Science, Open Innovation, and Open to the World), working collectively to unify, disseminate, boost and optimise the use of fundamental national and regional research assets. This collective synergy opens the path for scholars and researchers from academia and research institutes, ensuring their access to these facilities and resources to foster shared excellence, innovation, development and mutual progress.

In this contest, Trans National Access and National Open Access (TNA and NOA) programmes are initiatives aiming at supporting scientists by providing them free access to facilities, equipment, expertise, services and resources of RIs that they do not usually have access to.

Within the project ELIXIRxNextGenIT it has been decided to establish a NOA for the remote services of the ELIXIR-IT omics platform. This first NOA call is coordinated and managed in the framework of the activities of work package 1 “Management, Exploitation, Access Program and integration in the Life Science RI Network”.

**NOA activities involve a scientific investigator (hereafter, “User”) exploiting a service at a research facility located in Italy from different institutions partners of the ELIXIRxNextGenIT project. These guidelines provide general information regarding the first call for access to ELIXIR-IT Omics facilities.**

**As stated above, the access is free of charge and includes the remote access to the scientific analysis provided by the research facilities and a time limited (3 months) storage for the results.**

A catalogue of available laboratories and offers has been defined ([Annex 1](#)). The catalogue provides technical specifications of analysis provided and contact details of service providers and their respective organisational affiliations.

The access should be carried out under the “ELIXIRxNextGenIT NOA annex 4 user access agreement” signed by the Access provider and the User. This is a legally binding document in which rights, obligations and technical and logistical details of the NOA service are specified.

The Applicants should list in the project proposal which services they would like to use as stated in the catalogue of services and the number and the kind of samples provided (see the details in the “ELIXIRxNextGenIT-NOA\_annex\_3\_project proposal” document).

NOA funding includes:



- Consumables and other costs required to perform the analysis listed in the catalogue of services.
- Data/Results repository for 3 months since the termination of the service agreement.

### 3. Modality of access

The general NOA programme provides three means of access: physical, remote, and virtual access.

Physical access can be defined as the hands-on access of any User, i.e., the Users physically visit the Access provider and use its laboratories and equipment.

Virtual access can be defined as any access through communication networks in which resources can be simultaneously accessed by an unlimited number of Users. This is the typical case of the access to data and on-line applications.

Remote access can be defined as the non-physical access to the services of the Access provider. There are two modalities of remote access:

- Set of experiments carried out at the Access provider's location, but the User is not physically present at the installations (e.g., sample analysis and processing).
- Shipping of biological materials, based on the Users' requests.

**The ELIXIRxNextGenIT NOA program offers access to facilities only through the remote way. The modality used is the so-called "send-in-sample". Under this modality, resources and services are offered free-of-charge without Users physically visiting the facility. Instead, Users send samples for analysis to the facility, where an operator conducts the experiments and analyses. This approach offers significant advantages, such as minimising the carbon footprint associated with facility access in compliance with the DNSH principle and reducing sample analysis costs.**

Access to the services and resources provided by the ELIXIR-IT platforms is strictly subject to prior acceptance of the ELIXIR-IT Terms of Use and Acceptable Use Policy and Privacy policy for ELIXIR-IT Services ([Annex 5](#)).

Each user must subscribe to and accept the ToU and AUP for access to ELIXIR-IT services.

## 4. Eligibility

The first call of the ELIXIRxNextGenIT NOA programme applies the following criteria:

- Applicants may be based in Italy or in other countries.
- Open to Post-graduates, PhD students, postdocs, researchers or senior researchers working/studying in recognised academic or research institutions,;
- Master and bachelor students are not eligible;
- Applicants must be affiliated with institutions that are not part of the ELIXIRxNextGenIT project. Therefore, the following institutions are not eligible: Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR), University of Bari, University of Bologna, University of Milano, University of Milano Bicocca, University of Naples Federico II, and University of Padova.
- Applicants must have an active contract with their home institution during the entire period of the access;
- Applicants must have complete support and validation of their home institution, responsible for the service agreement;
- Only proposals submitted before the call deadline will be accepted;

Other aspects regarding the application to the NOA programme:

- Collaborations with the access provider's staff is encouraged but not mandatory;
- Applicants could contact the Access Provider for technical verification and feasibility of their proposals before application;
- Early career researchers, multidisciplinary proposals and Applicants are encouraged to apply;
- Proposals will be evaluated based on their feasibility and scientific merit by an internal peer review.
- All data obtained during the NOA should be Open Access, The User/Administrator is required to inform the Service Manager and include an acknowledgement test and/or citation to ELIXIR-IT and the Service used if the use of the service provided by ELIXIRxNextGenIT results in a scientific or educational outcome, publication, poster, abstract, or oral presentation.



## 5. Facility Managers and Access Providers

The ELIXIRxNextGenIT NOA programme provides access to services to User's research project in one of the following facilities across Italy:

- Facility at Operative Unit of CNR-IBIOM, Facility Manager: Dr A. Tullo.
- Facility at Operative Unit of University of Bari, Facility Manager: Prof. A.M. D'Erchia
- ELIXIR-IT-OASI Metabolomics Facility at O.U. CNR-IBSBC. Facility Manager: Prof. D. Porro

Each facility includes Facility managers and Access Providers; together they are responsible for delivering the service. Facility Managers and Access Providers are available to assist users by providing clarifications on service features and the feasibility of the proposed project. To contact them please write to [elixir.it.iib@gmail.com](mailto:elixir.it.iib@gmail.com),

Services available at ELIXIRxNextGenIT 1st NOA call are listed in the service catalog ([Annex 1](#)).

## 6. Application process

### a. NOA service catalogue

Applicants should review the NOA service catalogue ([Annex 1](#)) and identify the offer of interest. Before the submission of the project proposal they may write to [elixir.it.iib@gmail.com](mailto:elixir.it.iib@gmail.com) to discuss the general features of the project. This contact is strongly recommended and allows the User to discuss the technical feasibility (e.g., equipment to be used, sample type and quantity, general feasibility of the proposal).

### b. Proposal submission

The application for participation, drawn up according to the template attached to this notice (Application form - [Annex 2](#)), accompanied by the Research proposal draft according to the parameters described in the [Annex 3](#), and by all required documentation (see below), must be received no later than 23:59 on **15/04/2025**, under penalty of exclusion, sent via email, at: [elixir.it.iib@gmail.com](mailto:elixir.it.iib@gmail.com). The email must have as subject the following wording "name and surname of the Applicant – NOA project ELIXIRxNextGenIT". User's data will be kept private and will be accessible only by those involved in the selection procedure of the call. Personal information is required for statistical records of the project. The data will be used for writing a report in anonymous form. Its use will follow EU laws on data protection (Reg. 2016/679 - GDPR).

Applications are eligible if:

- received within the deadline;
- drawn up on the specific form attached to this notice ([Annex 2](#)), signed and completed in all their parts and completed of all required documentation, including the research proposal;
- presented by eligible candidates (see Art. 4 of this notice);

### c. Additional Required Documentation

The signed application must be accompanied by the following documents:

- Curriculum vitae of the Applicant;
- Photocopy of a valid identification document.

The presentation of incomplete documentation or the lack of the required data will result in automatic exclusion from the competition.

## 7. Evaluation procedure

The evaluation and selection of the NOA proposals will be completed within 10 days after the call has closed.

The evaluation of proposals will be based upon the information provided by the Applicant, and it will be carried out taking into consideration the following steps:

### Eligibility check.

Only the proposals that fulfil all requirements enlisted in the eligibility section 4 to continue in the evaluation process. Incomplete proposals will not be considered.

### Scientific review.

Selection of proposals is based on peer review evaluation with scientific merit as the main criterion. The evaluation and selection of proposals will be carried out under the principles of excellence, transparency, fairness and impartiality, confidentiality, efficiency, ethics, and research integrity considerations. The scientific review commission (Review panel), composed by the 3 Facility Managers, scores the research projects and the highest ranked proposals are selected to receive funded access to the research infrastructures. The evaluation will consider the following criteria:

- a. Originality and impact of the research project - maximum 20 points. Are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art? Do they propose original concepts, approaches or development between or across disciplines? Is the proposed research high-risk/high-gain? Could the outputs of this research be envisaged to have an impact on: future research or technology?
- b. Scientific Approach - maximum 20 points. Is the experimental plan adequate? Are the required methodologies appropriate to achieve the goals of the project? Are the expected results for the selected methods reasonable?
- c. Knowledge and expertise of the Applicant deduced from the scientific curriculum vitae (maximum 20 points).

### Feasibility check.

Facility managers will determine the feasibility of the projects regarding technical/economical/logistical aspects and their coherence with the NOA offer. This is done prior to the scientific review. The Facility manager may make minor amendments to the proposal (e.g. adjusting the number of samples to fulfil the research objectives or verify details regarding research methodologies to be adopted), which will be included in the User Access Agreement (Section 8).

The applications will be scored using the following definitions:

Score	Definition
5	<b>Excellent.</b> Proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion (from 50 to 60 points).
4	<b>Good.</b> Proposal addresses the criterion very well. Any shortcomings are minor (from 40 to 49 points).
3	<b>Fair.</b> Proposal addresses the criterion, but a number of shortcomings are present (from 30 to 39 points).
2	<b>Poor.</b> The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses (from 20 to 29 points).
1	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information (less than 20 points).

In the case of proposals with the same score, priority will be given to younger scientists.

Only Users who are allowed and willing to disseminate results of the NOA project in compliance with the ELIXIR-IT data policy ([Annex 5](#)) can be granted access.

The judging commission will proceed to draw up a list of appointees based on the evaluation. The list will contain the name of the candidate, the title of the project and the services awarded. Once ranked based on their scientific evaluation, the Infrastructure will grant access to a number of proposals until the available budget is exhausted. In case of renounces of one or more candidates the scroll of the list will be possible up to the limit of the budget.

## Publication of awarded proposals

Applicants will be notified of the final decision via email and selected proposals will be announced through the web page of ELIXIR-IT.

## 8. User Access Agreement and MTA/DTA

After the awarded proposals announcement, a “User access agreement” should be agreed between the User and the Facility Manager specifying the terms and conditions of the access and the MTA [Material Transfer Agreement] and DTA (Data Transfer Agreement) (for shipping of strains/biological material).

The User access agreement is a document that specifies mode of access, data processing, management and publication specifics, confidentiality, and liability, related to the NOA project.

The agreement is signed by the Representatives of the Access provider of the User’s home Institution, and of the Project. The parties should agree on how to conduct the NOA project and on legal and administrative requirements of local organisations.

Access to the services and resources provided by the ELIXIR-IT platforms is strictly subject to prior acceptance of the ELIXIR-IT Terms of Use and Acceptable Use Policy ([Annex 5](#)).

The project starts officially as soon as the agreement is signed according to the dates and conditions specified in the document.

## 9. Reporting

After the NOA access is finished, Users are required to

- sign the “Confirmation of Access” report,
- submit a survey about the NOA Access experience.

### Confirmation of Access

A Confirmation of Access form should be completed and signed by Users and Access providers after the NOA. The document (in PDF format) should be delivered via email to: [elixir.it.iib@gmail.com](mailto:elixir.it.iib@gmail.com) within **3 weeks** after the release of data.

### Survey about the NOA Access experience

Each User will receive a link to answer the “USER SATISFACTION SURVEY FOR NOA ACCESS EXPERIENCE - ELIXIRxNextGenIT”. This questionnaire should be completed within **3 weeks** after the end of the NOA access. Through this User feedback, the Users will express their outcomes and experiences of their access at the infrastructures. These exchanges will give rise to improvements for the future NOA programme.

## 10. User responsibilities

Upon approval of the NOA access, the User is required to adhere to the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and Terms of Use (ToU) of the ELIXIR-IT Omics platform ([Annex 5](#)). Conformity to this plan is an integral part of the User Access Agreement signed between the User and the Access provider.

Within **7 days** from the notification that the project is granted access, the User must sign the User Access Agreement with the host facility.

After completing the project, the User is required to provide the NOA Confirmation of Access and the NOA activity report within **3 weeks** after the end of the access period.

## 11. Confidentiality of personal data

All personal data collected from the User during the application process are only used for the operational management of TNA/NOA activities and the proper performance of its legal tasks and duties for communication and research, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR – Regulation (EU) 2016/679). No personal data is shared with the external review panel during the review phase, nor will personal data be rented, sold, or otherwise shared with or provided to third parties other than for reporting purposes. Applicants are requested to review and consent to the above-mentioned privacy policy upon application.

The processing of personal data is governed by the privacy policies for access to ELIXIR-IT services. Applicants are required to review and consent to the aforementioned privacy policy upon application.



## 12. Dissemination of results

ELIXIRxNextGenIT follows the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) and Open Access principles suggested by the European Commission. All projects receiving NextGenerationEU funding are required to make sure that any peer-reviewed journal article they publish is openly accessible, free of charge.

Scientific research data, which is the data underlying publications and/or other data (such as curated but unpublished datasets or raw data) should be **open access** when there is no case of conflicts of interests regarding commercialisation of the scientific information, Intellectual Property Rights, privacy concerns and security.

User undertakes to send any publication concerning the data obtained during the NOA programme to the Access provider.

## 13. Acknowledgements

Any subsequent publication resulting from the work carried out in the framework of the ELIXIRxNextGenIT NOA programme must acknowledge the support of the project and the funding from the European Union via the following sentence:

This work (or Part of this work) was granted by the European Commission – NextGenerationEU, Project ELIXIRxNextGenIT, “ELIXIR x NextGenerationIT: consolidation of the Italian Infrastructure for Omics Data and Bioinformatics”, project code n. IR0000010.