



# EU Insight - 2nd International Conference on Research Infrastructures

Since 2012 the former biennial European Conferences on Research Infrastructures have been opened to address an **international audience on global research infrastructures**. Under this new scope, the second International Conference on Research Infrastructures (ICRI) was held in Athens, from 2-4 April, 2014.

ICRI 2014 offered a high level international forum where key stakeholders could meet, discuss and contribute to bringing forward global issues related to Research Infrastructures. It was co-organised by the European Commission and the Greek EU Presidency of the European Union.

The conference attracted more than 800 international participants during three days and included an exhibition of demonstrations and videos of international research infrastructure projects.

In her launching keynote speech, the European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn stressed ***“the importance of Research Infrastructures as centres of innovation and of knowledge transfer to industry and society at large.”***

Research infrastructures play a vital role in the advancement of knowledge and technology. Scientific progress would be impossible without state-of-the-art super-computers or, for instance, large-scale laser systems. Responding to challenges like climate change is also greatly helped by environmental research facilities such as deep-sea-floor observatories or icebreaker research vessels, to name only a few.

The key objectives of the ICRI 2014 included:

- highlighting the essential role of global research infrastructures in addressing grand challenges at all scales: national, regional, continental and global
- reflecting on the needs and challenges that arise during the development and operation of global research infrastructures at all these levels
- presenting the main characteristics of global research infrastructures and identifying the challenges and drivers for collaboration at an international level.

The [European Research Infrastructures](#) have a place within the Excellent Science pillar of Horizon 2020 with an allocated budget of 10% in the whole pillar, a total of 2.5 billion euro to develop and support:

- 1000 research infrastructures available for all European and non-European researchers through the EU's support
- 60% of ESFRI infrastructures must be launched by 2015



Interviews from the ICRI highlighting the objectives of different participants can be found [here!](#)

Plenary sessions were held on the issues of *big data management, innovation potential for research infrastructures, governance of research infrastructures and research infrastructures for global challenges*. The key topics of the parallel sessions at ICRI 2014 included *marine research infrastructures, palaeoanthropology and cultural heritage, food security and e-infrastructures*.

A major difficulty in setting up such research infrastructures between EU countries is the lack of an adequate legal framework allowing the creation of appropriate partnerships. Existing legal forms under national law do not fulfil the needs of these new European infrastructures. The same applies to legal forms under international or EU law.

It is in this context that the European Commission, responding to requests from EU countries and the scientific community, proposed a legal framework for a European research infrastructure (ERI) adapted to the needs of such facilities.

In August 2009, the community legal framework for a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) entered into force. This specific legal form is designed to facilitate the joint establishment and operation of research infrastructures of European interest.

Member States, Associated Countries, third countries and intergovernmental organisations can be members of an ERIC. However, a state may decide to be represented by one or more public entities or private entities with a public-service mission, e.g. research organisations or research councils. Following the application to the European Commission, the typical timing for the decision could be between 4 and 8 months.

Sources:

- [1] [International Conference on Research Infrastructures](#)
- [2] [Launching speech ICRI by Máire Geoghegan-Quinn](#)
- [3] [European Research Infrastructures Consortium \(ERIC\)](#)