



AQUARIUS Annual Report Year 1

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AQUARIUS has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation under grant agreement No 101130915. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

About this document

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AQUARIUS: Aqua Research Infrastructure Services for the health and protection of our unique, oceans, seas and freshwater ecosystems is a Research and Innovation action (RIA) funded by the Horizon Europe Work programme topics addressed: HORIZON-INFRA-2023-SERV-01-01 - Research infrastructure services to enable R&I addressing main challenges and EU priorities. Start date: 01 March 2024. End date: 29 February 2028.



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Project Coordinator Foreword	4
Who We Are and List of Project Partners	5
AQUARIUS Year 1 - Status Update	6
AQUARIUS Year 1 - Key Activities.....	7
AQUARIUS Project Objectives - Alignment Year 1	8
AQUARIUS Year 1 - Examples of Project Activities	11
AQUARIUS Year 1 - Work Package Progress - Summary	12
AQUARIUS Year 1 - Work Package Progress - Detailed Overview	14
Work Package 1 Coordination and Project Management	14
Work Package 2 Transnational Access	21
Work Package 3 RI Call Design, Management, Evaluation and Access Platform.....	22
Work Package 4 RI Access Facilitation, Management and Governance.....	29
Work Package 5 RI Technical Training.....	34
Work Package 6 Data Management and Open Science Practices	38
Work Package 7 Impact: Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication	41
In Conclusion - Year 2 Look Ahead	51

Project Coordinator Foreword

I am delighted to present to you to the first Annual Report of the AQUARIUS project. This Annual Report marks the end of the first year of the AQUARIUS project. It has been an extremely productive year in which we have met all our milestones and delivered on all our planned activities.

AQUARIUS is an important and ambitious project with the overall aim to provide Transnational Access to a comprehensive and diverse suite of integrated research infrastructures, enabling collaborative research on our marine and freshwater ecosystems. Addressing the challenges facing these aquatic ecosystems requires a holistic and integrated approach and that is exactly what AQUARIUS is enabling. This broad geographic and cross-domain scope of AQUARIUS is only possible because of our large network of 41 partners from 18 countries.

Fostering the integration of research infrastructures is at the core of AQUARIUS. AQUARIUS will implement two Transnational Access Calls, seeking proposals from collaborative projects that can demonstrate how they will integrate these infrastructures to address challenges that align with the objectives and thematic scope of the EU Mission: Restore Our Ocean and Waters.

Some first-year highlights included the development and launch of the online Research Infrastructure Catalogue; the identification of data gaps and scientific challenges in Mission Lighthouse areas to inform the design of our first Transnational Access Call; the AQUARIUS Data Management Plan to implement our Open Data strategy; our series of sea-basin brokerage events to promote our first Call and engage with the community and, of course, the successful design and launch of our first Transnational Access Call. All these activities have been supported by our partner-wide communication, dissemination and outreach activities.

We were delighted with the excellent response to our first Call. Scientific evaluation of the eligible proposals is ongoing, and we expect to announce the first tranche of successful projects by May 2025.

I invite you to read the detailed overview of our activities and achievements during this past year, and to visit our website or social media channels to stay informed about activities yet to come.

With best wishes,

Aodhán Fitzgerald
AQUARIUS Project Coordinator Marine Institute



Who We Are and List of Project Partners

Coordinator:



Who: The Marine Institute are the Irish State agency responsible for marine research, technology development and innovation in Ireland.

**41
Partners
4
Affiliates**



AQUARIUS Year 1 - Status Update

AQUARIUS Year 1 Status Update: The AQUARIUS project has progressed extremely well throughout its first year of operation. The project is reported as on schedule, within budget and operating within scope.

Throughout year one a strategic focus was placed on data identification, call establishment, outreach and engagement and project management in alignment with the grant agreement. 15 of its 39 scheduled deliverables and 12 of its 37 scheduled milestones have been completed on time and within scope. AQUARIUS continues to deliver on its objectives showing key alignment and outputs in relation to all project objectives and aims. (See *Project Objectives – Alignment Year 1 Page 8.*)

Project awareness and significance continues to grow resulting in 18 proposals submitted to the AQUARIUS first Call, over 360 participants at various AQUARIUS brokerage events and over 1500 LinkedIn followers. Internal project engagement is positive with consistent and regular partner buy in and representation via regular team meetings, executive board meetings and one general assembly.

Early impact has been delivered to researchers across the maritime and freshwater sectors through the integrated AQUARIUS offering of 57 diverse infrastructures, a Transnational Access Call, technical training and a FAIR data management approach.

AQUARIUS Vision: 'Integrating Research Infrastructures ~ Connecting Scientists ~ Enabling Transnational Access'
 "For healthy and sustainable marine and freshwater ecosystems"

AQUARIUS Mission: Research Infrastructure Access | Open Data | Training | Maximizing Impact

AQUARIUS Delivery: Delivery on the AQUARIUS Mission and Vision over 4 years with 39 project deliverables and 37 project milestones.



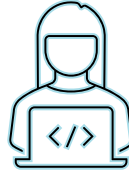
Figure 1 - AQUARIUS Overall Project Progress Visual

AQUARIUS Year 1 - Key Activities

- 1. Transnational Access Call
- 1. Transnational Access Platform



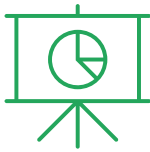
- 57. Diverse Infrastructure Made Available via 1 Research Infrastructure Catalogue



- 15. Project Deliverables, Prepared, Reviewed and Submitted on Time.



- 2. Webinars
- 26. Poster and Workshop Sessions



- 18. Proposals submitted with a Total Estimated Budget of €6.6million



- 4. Executive Board Meetings
- 3. Brokerage Events
- 1. Kick Off Meeting
- 1. General Assembly



- 1. Project Website
- 3. Social Media Platforms
 - 1. Brochure
 - 1. Promotional Video
 - 2. Newsletters
 - 2. Blog Posts
- 130. Social Media Posts
- 1500. Followers



Plocan Summer School and Marine and Freshwater Internships Open



- 1. Active, engaged and motivated consortium of 41 partners from 18 countries.



AQUARIUS Project Objectives - Alignment Year 1

AQUARIUS Objective	AQUARIUS Objective - Alignment Achieved Year 1	AQUARIUS Objective - Associated Outputs Achieved Year 1
<p>Objective: Coordinate the enhancement and integration of a diverse range of top-level infrastructure services.</p> <p>Objective: To provide efficient, single-point, transnational access to a broad range of integrated research infrastructure.</p>	<p>Alignment: The AQUARIUS project has made available a portfolio of 57 diverse infrastructures, ranging from satellites to research vessels, and from drones to laboratory facilities.</p> <p>Alignment: Free on site, remote and virtual access to the research infrastructures will be provided through multiple transnational access funding calls.</p>	<p>Output: D4.1 AQUARIUS Project Infrastructure Catalogue</p> <p>Output: Transnational Access Logistics Evaluation</p>
<p>Objective: To design, develop, and manage Transnational Access Calls to the research infrastructure.</p>	<p>Alignment: The identification of data gaps and scientific challenges in Mission Lighthouse areas informed the design of the first Transnational Access Call.</p> <p>Alignment: The AQUARIUS Calls were designed to target both scientific and societal challenges and opportunities for research infrastructure integration.</p> <p>Alignment: A dedicated and user-friendly call access platform provided an EU-wide online application system, providing information on call themes, the scientific and logistical evaluation process and follow-up reporting for the successful projects.</p>	<p>Output: D3.1 AQUARIUS Call Priority Report</p> <p>Output: D3.3 AQUARIUS Design and Definition of Transnational Access Calls Documentation</p> <p>Output: D3.2 AQUARIUS 1 Transnational Access Platform (TAP)</p> <p>Output: M6.AQUARIUS Call 1 (November 11th 2024 - January 20th 2025)</p> <p>Output: Transnational Access Scientific Expert Panel and Transnational Access Operational Expert Panel</p>

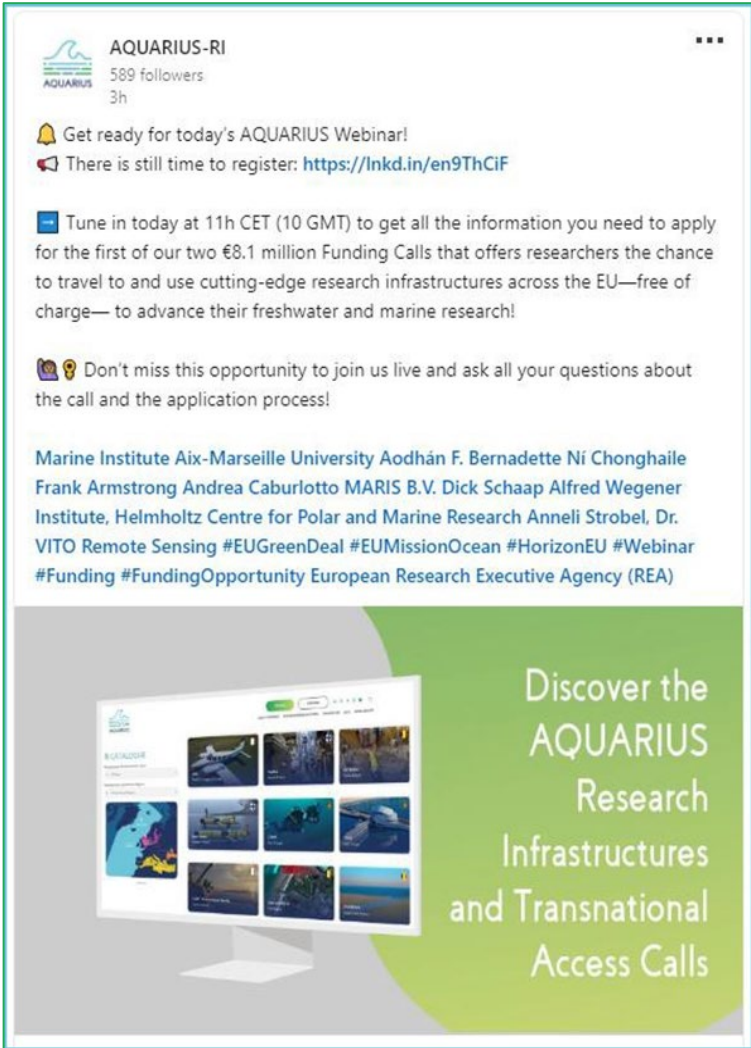
AQUARIUS Project Objectives - Alignment Year 1

AQUARIUS Objective	AQUARIUS Objective - Alignment Achieved Year 1	AQUARIUS Objective - Associated Outputs Achieved Year 1
<p>Objectives: Ensure advanced data management to make data FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, & Reproducible), according to open, global standards.</p>	<p>Alignment: AQUARIUS has formulated a FAIR Data Management flow scheme. This included analysis and design of a federated data flow scheme to ensure the flow of data from TA projects involving multiple RI's towards uptake in the leading European marine data infrastructures.</p> <p>Alignment: An AQUARIUS Dataflow Dashboard (ADD) that will give up-to-date information about the TA project plans, their implementation, and data management follow-up has been developed.</p>	<p>Output: D6.2 AQUARIUS Data Management Plan</p> <p>Output: D6.3 Operational AQUARIUS Dataflow Dashboard (ADD) Phase 1</p>
<p>Objectives: Deliver scientific & technical training to apply for & use the research infrastructures.</p>	<p>Alignment: AQUARIUS has developed an in-depth training approach for Transnational Access users and early career scientists.</p> <p>Alignment: AQUARIUS has shared training materials via the AQUARIUS training hub.</p>	<p>Output: AQUARIUS Training Needs Analysis</p> <p>Output: D5.1 Database of AQUARIUS Research Infrastructure User Training Requirements</p> <p>Output: D5.2 Training on use of AQUARIUS Access Platform</p> <p>Output: Floating University and Internship Open Calls</p>

AQUARIUS Project Objectives - Alignment Year 1

AQUARIUS Objective	AQUARIUS Objective - Alignment Achieved Year 1	AQUARIUS Objective - Associated Outputs Achieved Year 1
<p>Objective: Maximise the impact of the project through dynamic dissemination, exploitation and communication activities, ensuring that the projects using the integrated research infrastructures can support the Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030.</p>	<p>Alignment: The AQUARIUS project's thematic scope is informed by the Missions objectives. The AQUARIUS project's geographic scope corresponds to the Mission Lighthouse regions.</p> <p>Alignment: The AQUARIUS project has a detailed and comprehensive communication and dissemination plan.</p> <p>Alignment: The AQUARIUS project is aligned with best practise project management oversite including risk management, management of project resources, deliverable coordination and integrated project reporting.</p> <p>Alignment: AQUARIUS has delivered effective collaboration within and across the AQUARIUS project including external stakeholders, which will foster a culture of co-operation between research infrastructures, scientific communities, industries and other stakeholders, and ultimately help develop a more efficient and attractive European Research Area.</p>	<p>Output: AQUARIUS Call themes and objectives aligned with the Mission Ocean Lighthouse Regions and Objectives.</p> <p>Output: D7.1 AQUARIUS Communication Plan, D7.3 AQUARIUS Project Website, AQUARIUS Social Media Platforms, AQUARIUS Promotional Materials. 28 Communication and Dissemination Events and Sea-Basin Brokerage Events. AQUARIUS Deliverables And Resources Disseminated Via Website, Zenodo, At Workshops And Conferences.</p> <p>Output: AQUARIUS Project Management Processes, D 1.2 AQUARIUS Brokerage Event Report and AQUARIUS Partner Budget Oversight.</p>

AQUARIUS Year 1 - Examples of Project Activities



AQUARIUS-RI
589 followers
3h

🔔 Get ready for today's AQUARIUS Webinar!
📣 There is still time to register: <https://lnkd.in/en9ThCif>

📌 Tune in today at 11h CET (10 GMT) to get all the information you need to apply for the first of our two €8.1 million Funding Calls that offers researchers the chance to travel to and use cutting-edge research infrastructures across the EU—free of charge—to advance their freshwater and marine research!

📍🗨️ Don't miss this opportunity to join us live and ask all your questions about the call and the application process!

Marine Institute Aix-Marseille University Aodhán F. Bernadette Ní Chonghaile Frank Armstrong Andrea Caburlotto MARIS B.V. Dick Schaap Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research Anneli Strobel, Dr. VITO Remote Sensing #EUGreenDeal #EUMissionOcean #HorizonEU #Webinar #Funding #FundingOpportunity European Research Executive Agency (REA)

Discover the
AQUARIUS
Research
Infrastructures
and Transnational
Access Calls



Funding Call
for Transnational Access
to Research Infrastructures

Open for applications
11 November 2024 – 20 January 2025

aquarius-ri.eu/access

Figure 2 -5 (L-R)

- 2.AQUARIUS Brokerage Webinar LinkedIn Post
- 3.AQUARIUS Call Social Media Promotional Post
- 4.AQUARIUS Project Table at MARBLUE 2nd International Joint Conference
- 5.AQUARIUS General Assembly






AQUARIUS Year 1 - Work Package Progress - Summary

Work Package Progress Report Key:

- Excellent - All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget. No reported risk to delivery.
- Fair - Some deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget. Moderate risks to be mitigated and actively controlled.
- Poor - Varied delivery of deliverables and milestones, with noted quality, scope and budget risks.

Work Package	Status	Deliverables Complete	Milestones Complete	Lead
1 Coordination and Project Management	● Excellent – All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget.	D1.1 Report on AQUARIUS Kick-Off Meeting D1.2 Report of AQUARIUS Brokerage Event D1.3 AQUARIUS Annual Report Year 1	1. Project Kick Off Meeting 2. Project Brokerage Event	Marine Institute (MI)
2/ 4 RI Access Facilitation, Management and Governance	● Excellent – All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget.	D4.1 Infrastructures’ Catalogue	13. Call Management Platform Populated	Marine Institute (MI)
3 RI Call Design, Management, Evaluation and Access Platform	● Excellent – All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget.	D3.1 Call Priority Analysis Report D3.2 AQUARIUS’s Transnational Access Platform D3.3 Design and Definition of Transnational Access Call D3.4 Call Documentation for the Transnational Access Call	4. Technical Specification for AQUARIUS TNA Platform 3. TNA Calls Designed 5. AQUARIUS TNA Platform Established 6. AQUARIUS TNA Call 1 Open	Alfred-Wegener-Institut Helmholtz-Zentrum Fur Polar-Und Meeresforschung (AWI)

<p>5 RI Technical Training</p>		<p>Excellent – All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget.</p>	<p>D5.1 Database of Research Infrastructure User Training Requirements D5.2 Training on use of AQUARIUS Access Platform</p>	<p>17. Database RIs Training Requirements</p>	<p>Istituto Nazionale Di Oceanografia E Di Geofisica Sperimentale (OGS)</p>
<p>6 Data Management and Open Science Practices</p>		<p>Excellent – All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget.</p>	<p>D6.1 Data Gaps Report D6.2 Data Management Plan D6.3 Operational ADD – Phase 1</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>MARIS</p>
<p>7 Impact: Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication</p>		<p>Excellent – All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget.</p>	<p>D7.1 Communications & Dissemination Plan D7.2 AQUARIUS Website</p>	<p>22. AQUARIUS Communications & Dissemination Plan 23. AQUARIUS Project Website Launched 24. AQUARIUS Promotional Video Ready 25. Launch Of Promotional Campaigns for TA Calls 1</p>	<p>Seascope Belgium (SSBE)</p>

AQUARIUS Year 1 - Work Package Progress - Detailed Overview

Work Package 1 Coordination and Project Management

- Overall Status - Excellent - All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget. No reported risk to delivery.

Task 1.1 Kick Off Meeting (MI) - Complete

The AQUARIUS project Kick Off Meeting (KOM) was held online via MS Teams on April 23rd and 24th 2024. The meeting was hosted by the Marine Institute (MI) as Project Coordinator. The plenary session took place on day one and individual Work Package meetings were held on day two. Ninety-nine participants in total representing the forty-one beneficiaries and four affiliated entities attended.

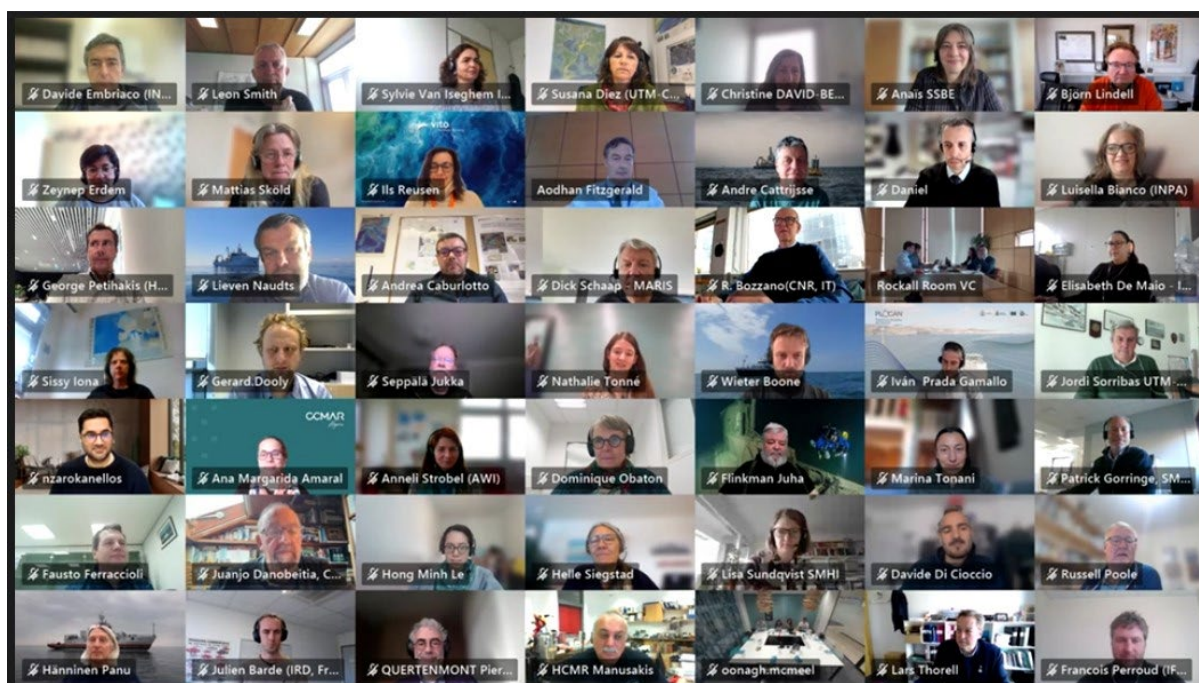


Figure 6 - AQUARIUS KOM Meeting Participants

Task Objective: The main objective of the Kick-Off Meeting was to bring all beneficiaries together for the first time and review the technical, managerial and administrative aspects of the AQUARIUS project.

Key Actions: To be achieved within the Kick-Off Meeting included:

- Present the project objectives and structure.
- Review contractual reporting and schedule.
- Overview of management, financial and communication issues.
- Introduce the AQUARIUS infrastructure.
- Discuss all activities and Work Packages (WP): work plan, objectives, roles and tasks for each beneficiary including deadlines
- Define actions for the next 12 months.

All actions were noted as achieved within the associated deliverable D1.1 Report on AQUARIUS kick-off meeting.

Associated Deliverable: D1.1 Report on AQUARIUS kick-off meeting, submitted May 2024.



Figure 7 & 8 - Examples of AQUARIUS promotional material

Task 1.2 Project Management (MI) - In Progress (M1-M48)

Task Objective: WP 1 is responsible for daily project oversight to ensure the delivery of the AQUARIUS project within budget, schedule and fulfilling its overall project objectives and requirements. The enclosed visual provides an overview of these daily project oversight initiatives and their associated actions. Some of the project management tools put in place in Year 1 and that continue to be updated include a project handbook, consortium agreement, online SharePoint site containing project resources, templates and contacts list. WP1 also managed the pre-finance payments to all partners of the non-Transnational Access budget and will manage the upcoming pre-finance payments of Transnational Access budget to relevant partners based on the outcome of TA Call 1.

Figure 9 - AQUARIUS Work Package 1 Project Oversight Examples

Project Oversight	Associated Action
Manage and Distribute Project Resources	<i>E.g. Personnel cost tracking and reporting across all 7 work packages, budget tracking and partner payments.</i>
Deliverables Submitted on Time	<i>E.g. All previous deliverables X14 submitted on time, Maintenance of project schedule and plan.</i>
Main Contact Point for the EC	<i>E.g. Submits project outputs, Communications and escalates questions or issues.</i>
Organize Project Meetings	<i>E.g. General Assemblies, Executive Board Meetings, Project Brokerage Events, Webinars.</i>
Project Communications	<i>E.g. Project updates, Deliverable reminders and questions regularly actioned.</i>
Risk Management Plan	<i>E.g. Risk Register actively managed and updated.</i>
Gender Action Plan	<i>E.g. Gender Action Plan to be developed and monitor gender throughout the project.</i>

Task 1.3 Aquarius Brokerage Event (MI) - Complete

Task Objective: The AQUARIUS brokerage events were designed to introduce the AQUARIUS Transnational Access Portfolio to the Marine and Freshwater Research Community prior to the first Transnational Access call. This included three significant in-person events held at major conferences, one online webinar, and several smaller working group meetings and presentations and outreach activities.

Task Approach: Team members decided that instead of a single large brokerage event, to which people would have to travel to attend at their own cost, multiple smaller events would be held alongside major conferences to reach a wider audience and ensure a regional balance.



Figure 10 - AQUARIUS Project Team Attending 1st Brokerage Event at ICES

Event Content: These events would focus on the Mission Ocean Lighthouse regions: Atlantic/Arctic, Mediterranean, North Sea/Baltic, and Black Sea/Danube. Information shared included the AQUARIUS project overview, its format, design and its Transnational Access funding Calls, the AQUARIUS Calls for proposals, call design and application platform, AQUARIUS training opportunities and the AQUARIUS data management and open science practices.

Brokerage Events Delivered:

1. ICES Annual Science Conference, Newcastle, UK - 9th September 2024
2. MonGOOS General Assembly and Workshop, Malaga, Spain - 1st October 2024
3. Marblue Conference 23rd - 25th October, Constanta, Romania
4. Brokerage Event Webinar - 6th November 2024, Online

Key Comments and Event Outputs:

The AQUARIUS brokerage events were highly successful, effectively promoting the AQUARIUS Transnational Access (TA) portfolio, TA Calls, training opportunities, and data management approach to a broad audience, including early career scientists, women scientists and vulnerable groups. With approximately 360 attendees participating directly and hundreds more reached through social media, flyers, and the website, including having direct access to the Webinar recording, the outreach exceeded expectations.

The events met and surpassed the target of engaging over 500 stakeholders, as outlined in the AQUARIUS description of action, achieving significant visibility and engagement ahead of the first TA Call opening. Notably, this figure excludes additional outreach efforts made by the 45 consortium members, who also actively promoted the brokerage events and TA Call among their extensive contacts' lists.

Associated Deliverable: D1.2 Report on AQUARIUS kick-off meeting, submitted November 2024.



Figure 11 & 12 - AQUARIUS Brokerage Event Social Media Posts

Task 1.4 Clustering and Networking with RI projects (CNR)

In year one, activities were focused on creating cooperation with international initiatives and foster the use and deployment of global standards; the main effort was put to establish a close collaboration between the AQUARIUS project and the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, Integrated Activity. Main benefits of the mentioned collaboration were:

- Avoiding duplication between similar initiatives.
- Promoting synergies between projects funded by different initiatives.
- Ensuring a homogeneous and comprehensive presentation of the infrastructure and services offered with reference to the RI catalogues.
- Agreeing on standards within TA activities.

Furthermore, an extensive analysis has been carried out to identify all potential events already planned in the coming year that are relevant for the AQUARIUS project. These events are crucial for promoting the AQUARIUS communities and outcomes and fostering new collaborations. As enclosed is the list of identified events so far along with their respective dates:

- Ocean Business 2025, 8-10 April 2025
- European Maritime Day, 21-23 May 2025
- Baltic Sea Science Congress 2025, 26-30 May 2025
- MarTech: The 12th International Workshop on Marine Technology, 28-29 May 2025
- United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3), 9-13 June 2025.
- Blue-Cloud Second Federation and Digital Twins of the Ocean Interoperability Joint Workshops, 16 June 2025
- Oceans Conference and Exposition, 16-19 June 2025
- Freshwater Biodiversity Summit, 12 September 2025
- ICES Annual Science Conference, 15-18 September 2025

These events represent significant opportunities to showcase AQUARIUS, engage with stakeholders, and establish new partnerships that will enhance the project's impact and reach.

Close collaboration has been developed with the POLARIN project (Polar Research Infrastructure Network). A joint AQUARIUS and POLARIN workshop proposal, titled "Research Infrastructures supporting Mission Ocean" was submitted to European Maritime Day. A joint AQUARIUS and POLARIN booth is planned at EGU General Assembly Conference in Vienna, in April 2025.

AQUARIUS Coordinator and project manager attended a networking Transnational Access Workshop organised by the European Commission in Brussels on January 30th and availed of the opportunity to network with other TA project coordinators, build relationships and exchange ideas and experiences. Links have been established with Mission Ocean Coordination and Support Actions such as Blue Mission Banos, Blue Mission AA, EcoDalli and Blue Mission Med and projects such as Prep4Blu and Doors to inform them of the AQUARIUS Infrastructures, Calls and Training opportunities. AQUARIUS has endorsed the Mission Ocean charter and participated and has submitted a poster to the Third Mission Ocean and Waters Forum, Brussels in March 2025.

Task 1.5 Project Reporting (MI) - In Progress (M1-M48)

Task Objective: WP1 is responsible for coordinating all project reporting throughout months 1 - 48. This reporting allows for a detailed progress perspective and continuous oversight on several key project components including progress and completion, budget, resource alignment, tasks, deliverables and milestones.

Reporting Approach: WP1 aligns with both Horizon Europe project management compliances, obligations and protocols, Marine Institute recommendations and practices and has incorporated elements of the Project Management Institute's project processes to allow for a completely integrated and well managed project management approach.

Year 1 Reporting Approach: Throughout Year 1 key project progress and oversight indicators were established with the intention of supporting the project throughout its four-year lifespan. This takes an amalgamated approach of continuous reporting that ensures overall project delivery, quality and alignment and mandatory reporting that ensures Horizon Europe and Marine Institute compliance. This included a combination of processes, templates, meetings and governance alignments to best support and integrate the project, examples and additional information as enclosed.

Mandatory Reporting: Templates and processes have been developed in Year 1 to support all reporting requirements (as outlined below) over the duration of the project, Years 1 - 4.

Interim Report - Reporting Period: Month 01 - Month 24. Contributors: All Partners.
- Reporting Period: Month 25 - Month 48. Contributors: All Partners.
Report Content: An up-to-date view of project budget, spend rate, personnel costs, use of resources, project progress, TA activity, deviations from the Description of Action and any potential roadblocks.

Annual Report - Reporting Period: End of March Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4. Contributors: All Partners.
Report Content: Project status and progress updates with budget and resourcing overviews.

Provisional Financial Report - Reporting Period: Month 22 and 46.

Report Content: Report on AQUARIUS budget allocations to beneficiaries and transnational access provision before project end including updated Annex 2.

Continuous Reporting

- **Work Package Reporting:** Work package progress is reported via quarterly executive board meetings, quarterly progress reports and regular meetings or email updates. All progress is saved and documented within a work package progress report, the integrated issue risk action log and meeting minutes.
- **Schedule Reporting:** Milestone, deliverable and task progress is monitored weekly at the AQUARIUS Coordination team meeting via an integrated Microsoft Excel tracker and Microsoft Project schedule. Key delivery dates are documented within all WP1 team calendars.
- **Integrated Issue, Risk and Action Reporting:** Issues and risks are located with a project register where risk probability, impact and status are assigned and regularly updated. Project actions are in this log also, where they are assigned, actioned and closed.
- **Quality Management:** Quality is managed via continuous oversight by the work package leader and their specific team members, by the WP 1 lead and via an assigned reviewer where appropriate.
- **Partner Budget and Personnel Reporting:** A combined all-partner reporting tracker was developed and shared with all partners for an end of Year 1 update.

This included a breakdown of their budget as per the description of action combined with a breakdown of their personnel resources per work package. All content was consolidated for an overall status report on Year 1 spend and resourcing allocations. See Figure 13 below. Input was requested from all partners and received from all but one in the preparation of the Year 1 financial summary report.

All inputs received were checked against Annex 2 and Table 3.1h (Purchase Costs) and any deviations were flagged with the beneficiary and either corrected or explained.

Year 1 Overall Expenditure: Is as expected with no red flags to report in terms of use of resources or costs reported to date. As no Transnational Access has been implemented in this period, no TA costs have been reported so expenditure is relatively low with approximately 90% of the budget remaining but approximately 55% of this is allocated to the provision of Transnational Access. 19% of the estimated resources (Person Months) have been utilised to date which is to be expected considering that 10% of Person Months are TA provision related.

Beneficiary		Cost Category	Estimated Eligible Cost	Annual Report 1 Period M1-M12	EU Grant Amount Remaining
ALL		A. Personnel Costs	€4,831,467	€980,460.18	€3,851,006.82
ALL		B. Subcontracting Costs	€171,589	€0.00	€171,589
ALL		C.1 Travel and Subsistence	€806,018	€62,877.39	€743,140.61
ALL		C.3 Other Goods, Works and Services	€1,344,124.74	€29,033.15	€1,315,091.59
ALL		D.3 Transnational access to research infrastructure unit costs	€5,601,399	€0.00	€5,601,399
ALL		E. Indirect Costs	€1,745,402.44	€268,092.68	€1,477,309.75
		F. Total Budget Costs	€14,500,000.18	€1,340,463.40	€13,159,536.77

Work Package No.	Work Package Description	Estimated Work Package Effort	Annual Report 1 Period M1-M12	WP PM Amount Remaining
WP1	Project Management	101.00	28.04	72.96
WP2	Transnational Access	68.60	0	68.19
WP3	RI Call Design, Management, Evaluation and Access Platform	103.00	22.43	80.57
WP4	RI Access Facilitation, Management and Governance	74.50	13.88	61.02
WP5	RI Technical Training	70.50	10.33	60.17
WP6	Data Management and Open Science Practices	143.00	27.77	115.23
WP7	Impact Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication	99.50	24.32	75.18
	Total WP Effort	660.10	126.78	533.32

Figure 13 - Year 1 Financial Status All Partners

Work Package 2 Transnational Access

Please note activity is described in WP 4 as WP2 is a placeholder for the Transnational Access Infrastructures and associated budget.

Examples of AQUARIUS Research Infrastructure available as enclosed.



Figure 14 - 17 (L-R)

- 14. Baltic Gliders (FMI)
- 15. ARNI Friedrikson (MFRI)
- 16. OGS Aircraft (OGS)
- 17. RV ARANDA (SYKE)



Work Package 3 RI Call Design, Management, Evaluation and Access Platform

- Overall Status - Excellent - All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget. No reported risk to delivery.

Task 3.1 TA Call Priority Analysis Requirements (SYKE) - Complete

Task Aim: Task 3.1 is to identify the key research and innovation actions, from which the Transnational Access Calls will be framed. This was done by analysing the challenges across marine and freshwater environments while prioritising the research needs, data and knowledge gaps and other deficiencies already identified in the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030".

Task 3.1.1. Analysis Of Challenges Across Marine and Freshwater Including Analysis of Knowledge Deficit and Data Gaps

Task Objective: Task 3.1.1. had an objective to support the first TA Call, by setting up call priorities after analysing the EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030 challenges and objectives for the four regions identified as Mission Lighthouses. The actual workload was divided among the partners in the task, a team representing a wide geographic and thematic expertise including representatives from AQUARIUS partners Syke, MI, FMI, CNR, EMBRC, EMSO ERIC, GEOECOMAR, UPC.

Task Approach: The work was facilitated by online meetings to define the goals of the work and to distribute the responsibilities in analysing call themes and regions among the team.

Close contact was created, including several meetings, with Task 6.1 "Analysis of data gaps priorities" to present the task goals and approaches, and align the work of different tasks where suitable as both fed directly to the TA Calls.

The resulting Deliverable 3.1 "AQUARIUS Call Priority" was submitted on 28.06.2024. This deliverable lists a comprehensive number of priorities for each EU Mission Lighthouse region under categories of "Knowledge Gaps", "Scientific Challenges" and "Societal Challenges and Opportunities". These listings are derived and interpreted from the Mission documentation, and they form front-line topics, for the implementation of which the AQUARIUS research infrastructures can offer support via TA Calls.

Associated Deliverable: D3.1 AQUARIUS Call Priority, submitted June 2024.

Task 3.1.2. Set Scientific Challenges and Goals for the Transnational Access Calls

Task Objective: Task 3.1.2 had the objective to frame scientific challenges and goals for the TA Calls around the infrastructures offered for TA, to provide a roadmap of how the outcomes of the funded projects will contribute to the Restore our Oceans and Waters by 2030 development phase, and to create Use Case Scenarios and examples on Super Integration Projects.

Task Approach: The task started by reviewing Deliverable 3.3 "Design and Definition of Transnational Access Calls" and cross-checked that the given scientific challenges match the ones described in Deliverable 3.1 and also asked to include societal challenges in Deliverable 3.3.

A spreadsheet was created to act as a checklist and roadmap on how the availability of AQUARIUS infrastructures in the different Lighthouse regions and their capacities for various types of studies, match with the identified knowledge gaps and challenges.

This work allowed AQUARIUS to analyse how well the infrastructure offered through TA Calls is fit-for-purpose to meet the Mission challenges and objectives, and to guide the call specifications.

Various Use Case scenarios were developed and published on AQUARIUS website to provide examples of how 'Super Integration Projects' can be developed to implement multidisciplinary projects with maximum impact.

3.1.3. Evaluation of Scientific Impacts of Implemented Projects Against Call Priorities

Not started yet.

Task 3.2 TA Call Design and Development (CNR) – Complete

Task Objective: The AQUARIUS Calls were designed to address both scientific and societal challenges and opportunities for integrating research infrastructure. The design process considered several key factors:

1. The heterogeneity of facilities, which includes both fixed and mobile research infrastructures.
2. The diverse ocean, freshwater, and environmental variables that are measured, such as physical, chemical, biological, and geophysical data.
3. The geographical coverage of the research, ensuring broad and relevant reach.
4. The range of disciplines that the calls aim to support.

Task Aim: The aim was to define and identify the type and level of integration to adequately and effectively address the call topics. The scientific challenges and the integration of research infrastructures was assessed by a selected expert panel, which also advised on the criteria for the call design & development.

TA Programme Design: The design of the Transnational Access (TA) Programme was shaped by the insights gained from Task 3.1, which analyzed challenges across marine and freshwater ecosystems, including knowledge deficits and data gaps, and Task 6.1, which further investigated data gaps. These analyses fed into Task 3.3, which focused on integrating access procedures and implementing the calls.

According to Deliverable D3.1, the AQUARIUS TA programme consists of two calls for access aimed at supporting research projects from a broad range of scientific disciplines and thematic areas, particularly those related to the Lighthouse Regions and the EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters. The programme encourages interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and participatory approaches, fostering collaboration among researchers from various fields, sectors, and stakeholders, including the public, private and civil society sectors.

Call 1, the "Regional Lighthouse Access Call" prioritizes scientific and societal challenges in the EU Lighthouse Regions, with each region identifying several specific lines of action. Call 2, the "Super-integrated Lighthouse Call," is designed to be adaptive and responsive, influenced by the outcomes of Call 1. This second Call will focus on emerging issues, themes that were not adequately addressed in Call 1, or new developments within the Mission Ocean framework. It will also address cross-cutting action lines that span more than one region, ensuring flexibility to respond to evolving research community needs and stakeholder priorities.

The call design guidelines specify the objectives, topics, and eligibility criteria (aligned with the European Charter for Access to Infrastructure), terms and conditions, funding rules, and the dates and deadlines for the two AQUARIUS TA Calls.

- The first TA Call opened on November 11, 2024, and remained open for approximately two months, with the submission deadline set for January 20, 2025.
- The second TA Call is scheduled to open on September 2, 2025, and will remain open for two months, closing on October 28, 2025.

Associated Deliverable: D3.3 Design and Definition of Transnational Access Calls, submitted June 2024.

Task 3.3 Integration of Access Procedures and Call Implementation (AWI)

Tasks:

- Implementation of a central evaluation system and process.
- Documentation for each of the AQUARIUS Calls.
- Updated database of external experts.
- Establishment of a Scientific Expert Panel (SEP) and Operational Expert Panel (OEP).
- Launch of at least two phased calls in Month 9 and 18.

Central Evaluation System: In Month 1, the implementation of a central evaluation system and process for the AQUARIUS project began. This included preparing call documentation, which consisted of proposal templates, application guidelines, and evaluation guidelines. As part of the application guidelines and deliverable 3.3, eligibility criteria were established. The eligibility criteria defined in D3.3 for the first TA call were:

- Affiliation: user group leader and majority of users must work in a country other than the country that owns and operates the infrastructure.
- International collaboration (min. 3 partners from 3 different countries)
- Dissemination
- Scientific expertise
- Alignment with call theme and challenges.
- Access for user groups with a majority of users not working in an EU or associated country is limited to 20% of the total amount of units of access provided under the grant.

Evaluation Criteria: Evaluation criteria for proposals were also determined, including scientific excellence, alignment with the call theme and challenges, the quality of the work program with clearly identified challenges, the scientific merits of the user group leader and members, technical capability and data exploitation, team composition, and training, dissemination, and communication practices.

Terms and Conditions: The Terms and Conditions for Funding were adapted for the large number and variety of research infrastructures offered in AQUARIUS. They now include information about the eligible costs, non-eligible costs, conditions or Remote Access, conditions concerning access time, liability, signature of agreements, ethics, data management and the encouragement of collaboration and the integration of multiple infrastructures in the application. The detailed Terms and Conditions are listed in the "Guidelines for Applicants" in deliverable 3.4.

Scientific Expert Panel and Operational Expert Panel Overview: The work on establishing a Scientific Expert Panel (SEP) and an Operational Expert Panel (OEP) has been completed in December 2025.

- For the SEP, an online nomination form was launched at the AQUARIUS Kick-Off Meeting and distributed within the AQUARIUS consortium. Project members were encouraged to nominate scientific experts through this form. Currently, the SEP consists of 28 scientific experts from inside and outside the consortium, covering major scientific disciplines and geographic areas relevant to AQUARIUS. Terms of reference for the SEP were developed, and service contracts defining the roles and responsibilities of SEP members were prepared. All 28 SEP members signed the service contracts, which were collected and stored at the Call Management Office.

The SEP includes:

- 28 members, with 50% from non-AQUARIUS partner institutions.
- SEP Chairs: Louise Allcock (University of Galway) and Caterina Morigi (University of Pisa).

The SEP is responsible for evaluating proposals based on members' expertise, proposing external experts for additional evaluations, providing a written statement (Consensus Summary Report) on evaluation outcomes, and assessing final reports from completed Transnational Access projects to confirm that scientific objectives were met. The SEP undertakes a consensus evaluation of submitted TA proposals, ranks the positively evaluated proposals, and recommends them for funding. Two SEP consensus evaluations are scheduled within AQUARIUS to rank proposals based on external reviews. A first SEP meeting, introducing the AQUARIUS evaluation process and the roles and responsibilities of the SEP, took place on 12 December 2024.

The OEP has also been established and consists of five members representing all EU Lighthouse areas. The members are:

- Aodhan Fitzgerald (MI)
- Lieven Naudts (RBINS)
- Simo Cusi (EMSO)
- Gerard Dooly (UL)
- Dr. Dan Vasiliu (GeoEcoMar)

Both expert panels are featured on the AQUARIUS website

D3.4 Call Documentation for the Transnational Access Call Overview: Deliverable D3.4, which includes all call documentation for the AQUARIUS Transnational Access Calls, was finalized and submitted by 30 October 2024. This deliverable contains key information for TA Call applicants, including guidelines and document templates for application submission. Importantly, the "Guidelines for Applicants" document provides all relevant details for the application process. Additionally, D3.4 offers an overview of the application and evaluation process, the available infrastructures, and the terms and conditions of the AQUARIUS TA Calls, including funding conditions.

The annexes of D3.4 include:

- Guidelines for applicants
- Research plan template
- Online submission guidelines for the TA access platform (TAP).
- CV template
- Initial DMP template
- Evaluation guidelines and criteria

All the documents/annexes of D3.4 are also available and accessible on the AQUARIUS website.

AQUARIUS Database of External Experts: A continuous task within Task 3.3 is updating and maintaining a database of external experts for evaluating submitted TA proposals. An online registration form has been established where scientists can register to become potential reviewers in the AQUARIUS expert pool/database. Based on the scientific disciplines required for AQUARIUS calls, registered scientists may be invited to review applications for AQUARIUS TA calls. Scientists can register in the scientific expert pool via the following link: <https://forms.gle/apyKkNnsUUK1itRr6>.

AQUARIUS First Call Results Overview: The first TA Call – Regional Lighthouse Access Call – closed on 20 January 2025. The Call sought applications that address scientific challenges in the EU Lighthouse regions. All infrastructures offered in AQUARIUS were available for application in the first TA Call. The submission of the proposals was through the AQUARIUS TAP, developed in Task 3.4.

Overview of first TA Call:

- 18 applications were received.
- 17 applications were deemed eligible for AQUARIUS TA funding. One application was deemed ineligible, as it neglected the eligibility criterion “International collaboration (min. 3 partners from 3 different countries).
- 25 different infrastructures were requested from the 65 offered.
- Most applications (11) were from the scientific field “Marine science/Oceanography”, followed by 3 applications from the scientific field Ecosystems and Biodiversity and 2 from the Earth Sciences.
- 1,099 units of access were requested.
- A total of 220 users applied.
- User group leaders represented 10 different countries.
- Three early-career researchers led groups.
- Among group leaders, 14 were men and 4 were women.

Status of the scientific evaluation:

- By 28 January 2025, 15 of the 28 SEP members had been assigned to evaluate the 17 eligible applications.
- By 18 February 2025, all 17 proposals had been reviewed by three to four external reviewers.
- The deadline for the scientific evaluation is set for 7 March 2025.
- Scientific Expert Panel Consensus Evaluation meetings are planned for 21 and 27 March 2025.
- The SEP ranked list and funding recommendations will be forwarded to the OEP in the first week of April 2025.

Finally, the second TA Call is scheduled to launch on 2 September 2025.

Associated

Deliverable: D3.4 Call Documentation for the Transnational Access Call, submitted October 2024.

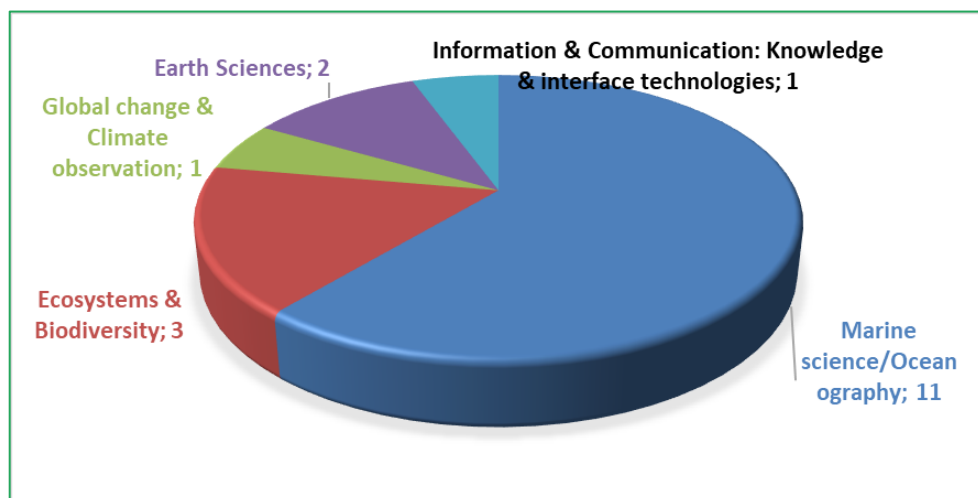


Figure 18 - Main Scientific Disciplines of The Submitted Applications to First TA Call

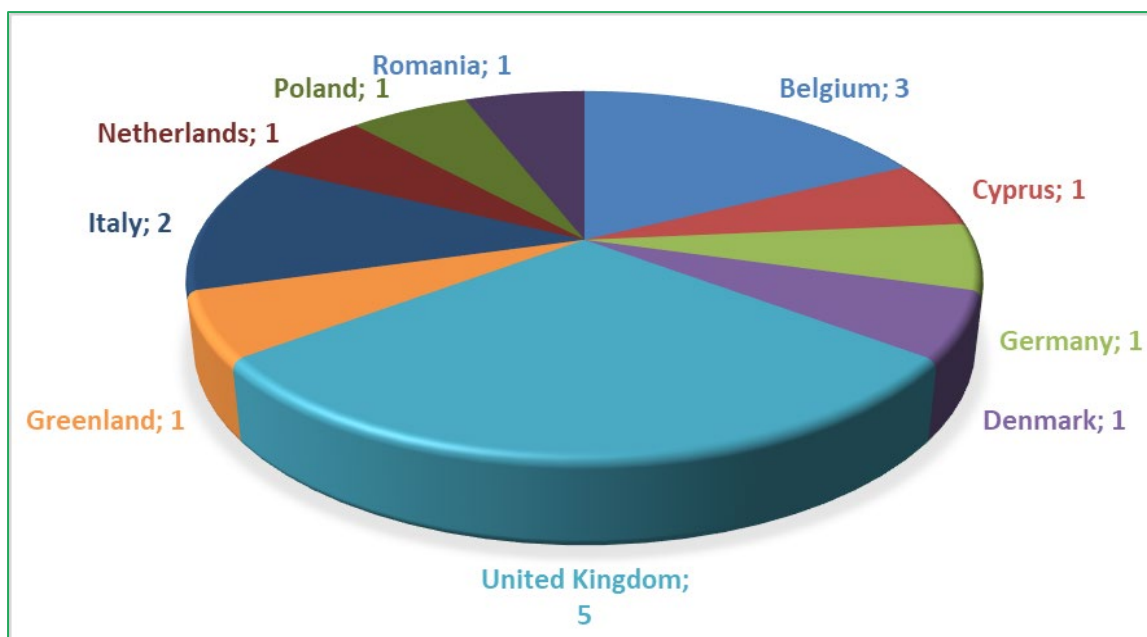


Figure 19 - Country Affiliations of The Current Affiliations of The User Group Leaders

Task 3.4 Access Platform Customisation and Development (INPA/INKODE)

The INTERACCESS platform was based on nine Transnational Access (TA) calls of the INTERACT projects. The platform was customized for AQUARIUS.

Task Approach: Activities began in 2023, leading to the release of the technical specifications (Milestone 4) in Month 2. The platform was designed to accommodate different user profiles with varying levels of access and rights:

1. **Administrator** - Managed calls, performed eligibility checks, and oversaw evaluation management.
2. **RI Administrator** - Managed infrastructure pages and TA cost reporting.
3. **Applicant** - Provided project (scientific and logistic) information, user group details, document uploads, TA reports, and feedback.
4. **Evaluator** - Assessed applications based on specific evaluation criteria and a weighted evaluation score.

Deliverable 3.2, "AQUARIUS TA Platform," was submitted on August 27, 2024. This deliverable introduced the Transnational Access Platform (TAP) for the AQUARIUS project, outlining its overall architecture and workflow at the state of the art.

The TAP aimed to manage Transnational Access (TA), covering both physical and remote access, integrating the entire access process from call opening to proposal submission and reporting. The first demo version of the TAP was tested by the AQUARIUS management and WP3 team. Following initial testing and updates, testing was extended to a broader group, including external project members.

Associated Deliverable 3.2 AQUARIUS TA Platform submitted, August 2024.

Task 3.5 - Scientific and Logistic Evaluation (AWI)

Task Objective: Task 3.5 activities are based on the robust, tried-and-tested evaluation structures from previous TA projects. The evaluation and selection criteria established in previous TA Calls were extended and updated and are available for the evaluators in the TAP.

Task Approach: The Scientific Evaluation of the proposals submitted to the first TA Call are overseen by the SEP and based on open, transparent, merit-based, impartial, and fair evaluation and selection procedures, strictly following the principles of equal opportunity.

The evaluation workflow was initiated on 21st of January 2025, after the closure of the 1st AQUARIUS TA Call.

1. The first step in the evaluation will be the eligibility check of all applications received by the call deadline to ensure that all eligibility criteria and call requirements are met.
2. A preliminary review by an Operational Expert Panel (OEP) to check whether the logistical framework for the TA is fulfilled (e.g. availability of infrastructure for the requested period, requested costs, requested places for participants) took place on 28th of January 2025.
3. Eligible proposals were allocated to SEP members with respective expertise. Proposals are currently being evaluated by external, independent scientific experts. The evaluation is performed in the TAP. Evaluation deadline is 7th of March 2025
4. Two consensus evaluation meetings are scheduled for 21st and 27th of March 2025.

Task 3.6 - Follow-up Implementation (AWI)

Task Objective: Work Package 3 will carefully monitor AQUARIUS-funded projects throughout all stages, from implementation to final reporting. This ongoing oversight is intended to ensure that the implementation process fully adheres to the eligibility criteria outlined in the call. The earliest possible commencement date for a TA project is May 2025. From that point onward, the follow-up on implementation, as outlined in Task 3.6, will begin.

Work Package 4 (MI) RI Access Facilitation, Management & Governance

- Overall Status - Excellent - All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget. No reported risk to delivery.

Task 4.1 Online Infrastructures Catalogue Created (MI) – Complete

4.1.1. Overview and Infrastructure Typology

Task Approach: Creating the Online Research Infrastructures Catalogue was a key step in enabling Transnational Access to the AQUARIUS RI suite. The process started by categorising the 57 infrastructures by typology to allow applicants to filter the catalogue by which infrastructure they required. The initial 5 types of infrastructure that were set out in the grant agreement were as follows:

1. Research Vessels
2. Mobile Marine Observation/Platforms
3. Experimental Facilities
4. Fixed Marine Observation Platforms
5. Airborne infrastructure

It was decided that to better improve the resolution of filtered RI types, the infrastructures would be re-classified under the following RI types:

1. Research Vessels
2. Marine Mobile Observation Platforms
3. Fixed Marine Facilities
4. Experimental Research Facilities
5. River & Basin Supersites
6. Aircraft
7. Drones
8. Satellite Services

4.1.2. Infrastructure Profile Templates

Task Approach: To collect consistent technical and accessibility information across all infrastructures, RI Profile Templates were developed. These templates were adapted from previous Transnational Access projects (i.e., Eurofleets+) and customized for each RI type to ensure relevance for potential applicants. In total, eight unique templates were drafted.

To refine the templates, feedback was sought from RI operators, particularly for infrastructure types not previously included in TA projects. Specifically, experts from EMSO-ERIC, GeoEcoMar, OGS, UL, and VITO reviewed the templates for Fixed Marine Facilities, River & Basin Supersites, Aircraft, Drones, and Satellite Services. The table below details the AQUARIUS RI partners who provided input:

RI Type:	AQUARIUS partner that reviewed draft template:
Experimental Research Facilities	EMSO ERIC (IT)
River & Basin Supersites	GeoEcoMar (RO)
Aircraft	OGS (IT)
Drones	UL (IE)
Satellite Services	VITO (BE)

Figure 20 - AQUARIUS Partners that Reviewed the Draft Template

After incorporating feedback, the final templates were developed as interactive Microsoft Forms. This approach allowed RI operators to input their data in a standardised and streamlined workflow.

To further reduce administrative burden, questionnaires from Task 6.1 (Analysis of Data Gaps) and Task 5.1 (Training Needs Analysis and Ad Hoc Training for RI Users) were integrated into the templates. This consolidation minimized email exchanges and ensured that all required information reached the relevant work package leaders efficiently.

The finalized templates were distributed to AQUARIUS Infrastructure Operators on Friday, April 26, with a submission deadline of Friday, May 17.

4.1.3. Profile Data Collation and Catalogue Publication

Task Approach: Infrastructure operators submitted their RI profiles, which were quality-checked, cleaned, and standardized. Infrastructure profile data were added to a SharePoint spreadsheet which was accessible by WP 7 colleagues who used the information to create profiles on the AQUARIUS website. Meanwhile, responses to the WP5 Training and WP6 Data Questionnaires were extracted and sent to the relevant work package leaders.

SSBE, the WP 7 leaders, extracted the information from the SharePoint spreadsheet and created a research vessel profile to test the online catalogue's layout. Based on MI's feedback, a preliminary design was set. SSBE then uploaded one profile for each of the seven remaining RI types. After further feedback and adjustments, a final layout was agreed.

MI conducted a final review of the website's content and layout while it remained password protected. Follow-ups were made as needed to clarify particular details with infrastructure operators. After edits were completed, the URL and credentials were shared for operators to review their profiles and provide feedback. MI collected and forwarded any feedback to the developers. The official catalogue was launched on August 29, 2024, and continues to be regularly updated based on feedback from our RI providers, i.e., to add or remove infrastructure equipment as necessary, or to adjust availability periods or contact details.

Associated Deliverable: D4.1 Infrastructures' Catalogue, submitted August 2024.

Task 4.2 Transnational Access Logistics Evaluation (MI)

4.2.1. Overview and OEP

Task Approach: As part of the Transnational Access granting process for Call 1, and in support of Task 3.5, an initial logistics feasibility review was conducted on the 27th of January. This was to determine if all 17 eligible proposals from the first AQUARIUS Call were realistic and achievable given the nature of the diverse infrastructures involved, and to assess whether there were any glaringly obvious issues that may arise due to proposed time or year or research location, for example.

This task was executed with the help of one AQUARIUS operator from each lighthouse region, each of whom represent a different infrastructure type, and are referred to as the Operational Expert Panel (OEP). This panel consisted of the following AQUARIUS infrastructure operators:

Atlantic/Arctic Lighthouse:	
Gerard Dooly (UL)	Lecturer in robotics & automation at the University of Limerick and co-director of the Centre for robotics & intelligent systems (CRIS)
Baltic & North Sea Lighthouse:	
Lieven Naudts (RBINS)	Coordinator RV Belgica & Head of the Measurement Services Ostend at the Institute of Natural Sciences, Belgium
Black Sea Lighthouse:	
Dr. Dan-Lucian Vasiliu (GEOECOMAR)	Director of the Constanta Branch, National Institute for Research and Development on Marine Geology and Geoecology - GeoEcoMar
Mediterranean Sea Lighthouse:	
Simo Cusi (EMSO-ERIC)	Engineering and Logistics Officer at EMSO ERIC, focuses on technology development and best practices at EMSO regional facilities

Figure 21 - AQUARIUS Operational Expert Panel (OEP)

Once these individuals agreed to be part of the OEP, they were each issued with a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Declaration Agreement, to be signed and returned to the AQUARIUS Coordinators. The agreement ensures that members of the OEP conduct impartial and confidential logistical evaluations of AQUARIUS proposals. It requires panellists to declare and recuse themselves from assessments where conflicts of interest exist and to maintain strict confidentiality regarding application details, using the information solely for evaluation purposes.

4.2.2. Initial Logistical Feasibility Review

To streamline the process of the Logistical Feasibility Review (also referred to as a Logistical Pre-Check), a list of evaluation criteria was drafted that would be used to assess each eligible proposal. Feedback was received from members of the (OEP) on the selection of criteria chosen, and a final list was agreed upon. The questions served to identify the feasibility of each proposal, and to ensure that they were realistic and achievable. The table below includes these questions, grouped into 7 sections:

AQUARIUS Call 1 Logistical Pre-Check Review Criteria 28.01.2025:

1. Operational Areas
1.1. Is the requested infrastructure capable of operating in the proposed location? (e.g., ocean basin, depth, range, proximity to base facilities)
2. Infrastructure and Availability
2.1. Can the RIs be scheduled during the requested time?
2.2. Are the requested RIs interoperable?
2.3 Can RI host the number of scientists who want to go on board/use it?
3. Permits and Authorizations
3.1. Does the project require any specific permits (e.g., diplomatic clearance, environmental permits etc)?

4. Environmental Conditions
4.1. Are seasonal conditions (e.g., storms, ice, daylight hours) favourable during the proposed time?
6. Safety and Risk
6.1. Are the proposed operations safe for the infrastructure and personnel?
7. Budget and Costs
7.1 Any severe mistakes in calculating the estimated access, travel and shipment

Figure 22 - AQUARIUS Call 1 Logistical Pre-Check Review Criteria

The Logistical Pre-Check was carried out by the OEP and the AQUARIUS Coordination Team on the 28th of January 2025, with the idea being that only logistically feasible proposals would then be passed to the Scientific Evaluation Panel for their evaluation and recommendations. Based on the questions and discussions raised in regard to the evaluation criteria, it was decided that all the 17 eligible proposals were logistically feasible and were passed to the Scientific Liaison Panel (SEP) for evaluation.

After recommendations have been made by the SEP, a further in-depth logistical evaluation will be carried out by the OEP, who will propose the best suited infrastructure, or combination of infrastructure (if applicable), and the recommended time allocation for those proposals that are accepted. If the outcome of the Logistical Review is positive, the applicant is contacted with an initial offer for TA funding (including the number of days) and the T&S budget will be issued on the Transnational Access Portal (TAP).

Task 4.3 Create and Maintain Online Schedule of TA Projects (MI)

Task Approach: Once agreements have been finalised between applicants and research infrastructure operators, a Transnational Access (TA) schedule will be published to allow for the promotion of training, intern placements and for remote/opportunistic sample collection to be carried out as well, if possible.

This will also interlink with WP7 (Task 7.3), which will support researchers in the dissemination and exploitation of their project results, during and after their TA work.

Task 4.4 Transnational Access Administration (MI)

Task Approach: All 57 infrastructures (consisting of 65 installations in total) have been listed on the Transnational Access Platform (TAP), with most managers now registered and assigned to their respective infrastructure(s). 18 RIs are yet to be assigned to their respective managers. TAP profiles have been detailed with relevant information, specifically related to budgets and costs. RI operators are asked to review these details once they register for the TAP and have been assigned to their infrastructure.

Generic Transnational Access Agreement: A Generic Transnational Access Agreement has also been drafted; this should serve as a suitable agreement for all AQUARIUS Research Infrastructures providing TA based on information pertaining to the project provided on the TAP. A draft of the TA Agreement was reviewed by a legal team who were procured by the AQUARIUS Coordination Office. Their feedback and recommendations have been incorporated into the TA Agreement, and it is now being reviewed by WP leaders before being marked as ready.

Task 4.5 Deviations from Description of Action (DoA)

4.5.1 Infrastructure Categorization

Original Action: The Description of Action originally defined five infrastructure categories for the 57 AQUARIUS infrastructures in the Infrastructure Catalogue, see task 4.1 above.

Deviated Action: To improve classification accuracy and enhance filtering options, the infrastructures were reclassified into eight categories.

Outcome: This refined categorization provides greater resolution, ensuring that applicants can more easily identify relevant infrastructures for their needs.

4.5.2. Transnational Access Agreement

Original Action: The Description of Action initially specified that Transnational Access (TA) Agreements would be tri-party or multiparty agreements involving Principal Investigators, Infrastructure Operators, and the Project Coordination Office.

Deviated Action: To streamline the process, and due to the diverse nature of the infrastructures, a Generic TA Agreement was developed, requiring only the applicant's signature. Under this revised workflow:

- The AQUARIUS TAP platform hosts all terms of access.
- Infrastructure Operators and the AQUARIUS Coordination Team can evaluate and approve proposals directly through TAP.
- Approved applicants agree to the terms by downloading and signing the Generic TA Agreement, eliminating the need for multiple signatures.
- If Infrastructure Operators require additional agreements specific to their own infrastructure to be signed, it is their responsibility to organise this.

Outcome: This approach simplifies the TA process while maintaining transparency and accountability.

Work Package 5 RI Technical Training (OGS)

- Overall Status - Excellent - All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget. No reported risk to delivery.

Task 5.1 Training Needs Analysis & Ad hoc Training for RI Users (OGS) – Complete

Task Approach: A questionnaire on RI technical training was prepared and sent to each RI operator to obtain information on the need for specific and/or the possibility of organising training. To streamline the process and reduce the need for multiple requests for input to RI operators, the decision was made to include the WP5 training questionnaire within the RI profile data collection forms.

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) contains 9 questions for the RI operators:

Q 1. Are Infrastructure Users required to undertake any training prior to accessing your infrastructure?

Q 2. Do you (Infrastructure Operator) provide the training or is it provided by an external organization?

Q 3. Do you organize the training for the Users or is it Users' responsibility to organize training?

Q 4. Is there training material available to ensure that the RI can be used appropriately and efficiently to maximize the benefit for the researchers and their projects?

Q 5. What kind of material is available online?

Q 6. Do you plan to provide any online training materials before the 1st TA Call(November 2024) / or before the end of JUNE?

Q 7. Are you willing to share available training material (if any) on the AQUARIUS Training Hub?

Q 8. Is on-site training necessary for TA users to utilize the RI?

Q 9. If requested by TA users, will you arrange an on-site or on-line training course?

Training Gap Analysis: As soon as all the templates became available, the GAP analysis was arranged. The completed gap analysis resulted in very useful information on training needs and training materials (where available) provided by RI Operators to support the TA applicants. These are available on the Infrastructure Profile pages of the relevant infrastructure. Additional relevant training materials are also available in the Training Hub on the AQUARIUS website (Task 5.3, below).

Associated Deliverable: D5.1 Database of Research Infrastructure User Training Requirements, submitted November 2024.

Task 5.2 Training on Use of the AQUARIUS Access Platform (OGS) – Complete

Task Overview: The webinar "How to use the AQUARIUS Access Platform" was delivered on Wednesday, November 27th, 2024, with logistical support from the MI and SSBE. Twenty-four participants registered for the webinar training, and sixteen of them took part in the webinar.

Presentation	Presenter	Organization
Welcome & Intro	A. Caburlotto	OGS
AQUARIUS Infrastructure Catalogue	F. Armstrong	MI
Call Design & Eligibility Criteria	L. Evangelista	CNR
How to use the Call Platform	A. Strobel & E. De Maio	AWI - INKODE
Evaluation Process	A. Strobel	AWI
Q&A Session	All	

Figure 23 - AQUARIUS "How to use the AQUARIUS Access Platform" Webinar Agenda

The webinar has been recorded and is available in the [AQUARIUS Training Hub](#) and on [YouTube](#), so far the video has been viewed 54 times.

The questions from the webinar were also included in the [FAQ section](#) on the website.

Associated Deliverable: 5.2 Training on use of AQUARIUS Access Platform, submitted January 2025.

Task 5.3 AQUARIUS Technical Training Hub – Marine Training Material Repository (OGS)

Task Approach: In collaboration with WP2 and WP7, the Training HUB was organized in 2 categories:

1. Training Hub related to the training needs and the webinars:
 - Research Infrastructures technical training resources – RI technical training material has been uploaded.
 - AQUARIUS webinars – 2 webinars available: "*Transnational Access to Research Infrastructure Funding Call – How to Apply*", and "*AQUARIUS Training – Learn to use the call application platform*".
 - Data Management and Analytics – uploaded the "AQUARIUS Data Management Plan".
 - Healthy Ocean and Waters - materials developed across other European Funded projects and EU RI networks addressing 'Healthy Ocean and Waters' topic uploaded to provide a single source for all resources.
2. Training Opportunities related to training for early career and young technicians training:
 - Marine and freshwater internships
 - Summer schools
 - INFOMAR seabed mapping programme internships
 - Floating universities

Task 5.4 Floating University & Internship Open Calls (OGS)

5.4.1 Floating University

Task Overview: Aimed at early career scientists, Floating universities will be established based on the highly successful programme developed in the Eurofleets+ project and be adapted to marine and freshwater themes in AQUARIUS.

The Eurofleets+ [Floating University Training Toolkit](#) has been adapted for AQUARIUS and improves and consolidates the organization and development of Floating University courses by:

- Defining common procedures and templates, to ensure a standardised approach to course development.
- Providing information on how to produce module descriptors, learning outcomes, organize pre- and post-cruise workshops.
- Developing digital learning resources.
- Identifying on-board social media and outreach activities.
- Supporting the courses organizers by providing a suite of e-modules.

This guide is aimed to help course organizers to plan and conduct the course by providing information on the main steps and stages in sequence from designing a training course, to evaluation for feedback into further development.

Floating University Overview:

An application form has been developed, and preparations are ongoing for the following two Floating University courses planned in 2026/2027:

- CNR RV Gaia Blu, with a focus on pollution in the Mediterranean lighthouse area, in collaboration with other Research Infrastructures.
- SLU RV SVEA with a focus on environment monitoring in the Baltic Sea.

5.4.2 Internship Open Calls

The Internships call and application forms have been developed. There will be 3 open calls:

1. Marine and Freshwater Open Call Internship – Open Call 1st February 2025.
2. Plocan Glider Summer School – Open Call 1st February 2025.
3. INFOMAR Seabed Mapping Programme Internships – 2025 /2026.

The applications for all 3 Internships have been developed.

In the RI Technical Training survey, RI operators were also asked about the possibility to host young researchers and technicians at their RI for the Marine and Freshwater Internships. Their questions were as follows:

- Please confirm if you can host young scientists/technicians to complete Internships (during TA and non-TA activities, like i.e. periodic cruises, maintenance of RI, etc)
- If Yes, please provide detail (in what capacity, when, for how long etc).

RI Technical Training Survey Results: 28 RI operators indicated their availability to host young scientists/technicians, as follows; 11 Research Vessels, 5 Mobile Marine Observation Platforms, 6 Fixed Marine facilities and 2 river and basin supersites.

This will be further developed as applications are received from those interested in internships and as TA projects are confirmed and scheduled.

Task 5.5 Data Management and Data Stewardship Training (HCMR)

Task Objective: The primary objective of the activity is to provide the awarded Transnational Access (TA) scientific teams with knowledge about the European data management landscape and guidance on ensuring that the projects' newly collected data and resulting products are compatible with the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) principles facilitating their seamless integration into European data infrastructures.

During the first year, no data management training webinars are foreseen in the project workplan as the TA teams of the first Call will be defined during the second year of the project. Consequently, efforts during this reporting period focused on outlining the training programme and its components.

Task 5.5 is being carried out in close collaboration with WP6 to ensure the effective deployment of the project's data management strategy as described in the DATA Management Plan (D6.2) and the successful implementation of its Open Data Strategy. Two cycles of webinars will take place, prior and after the TA events and their content will differ per lighthouse region, research infrastructures involved and data types collected, laying the basis for supporting the TA scientific teams in managing their data efficiently and in alignment with the European standards.

Task 5.6 Virtual Access and Analytics Training (CNR)

Not started.

Task 5.7 Training Monitoring and Assessment (OGS)

Not started.

Work Package 6 Data Management & Open Science Practices (MARIS)

- Overall Status - Excellent - All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget. No reported risk to delivery.

Task 6.1 Analysis of Data Gaps (IFREMER) - Complete

Task Approach: Task 6.1 was undertaken between M3 and M5. Several meetings were organised with Task 3.1 “Call Priority Analysis Requirements (SYKE)” at the beginning to present and discuss the goals and approaches of each task and to align the work of the two different tasks.

Task T6.1 involved analysing data gaps and data availability. This analysis aids in formulating the TA Calls for proposals and selecting proposals for each TA Call through the review of existing and known data availability for European waters in RIs, EMODnet, Copernicus, and beyond.

For each Lighthouse region, Task 6.1 identified and listed a comprehensive number of data gaps within the four thematic.

- Biology and Ecosystems,
- Bathymetry, Geology, Physics and Atmosphere,
- Biogeochemistry (with cross discipline and environment)
- Human Activities.

As a data gaps analysis summary, it can be said that.

- The “Biology and Ecosystem” theme is a very important topic with lots of data gaps identified including genomics data, high frequency observations of phytoplankton and microbe’s biomass and diversity, transversal data needs on the deep sea (waters below 200 m), etc.
- The “Biogeochemistry” theme presents also data gaps and in particular for carbonate system, carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus linked to the average marine acidity.
- Data gaps on the “Bathymetry, Geology and Physics” thematic are mainly about bathymetry and acoustics data. It is recommended that bathymetry surveying is included in any TA proposals that concerns organising scientific cruises with research vessels.

Specific data needs have been identified for each Lighthouse. Task 6.1 insists on the fact that data collection itself is not sufficient to solve data needs challenges. The selected TA projects have to include a Data Management Plan for the data to be preserved, retained and made accessible for analysis and application by current and future users.

Associated Deliverable: 6.1 Data Gaps Report, submitted July 2024.

Task 6.2 FAIR Data Management of Data to be Collected and Processed During and After TA projects (MARIS)

Task Approach: The first activity was to formulate a federated and FAIR Data Management flow scheme, led by MARIS. This included:

- Analysis and design of a federated data flow scheme to ensure the flow of data from TA projects involving multiple RIs towards uptake in the leading European marine data infrastructures.

- Specifying an overarching online AQUARIUS Dataflow Dashboard (ADD) that will give up-to-date information about the TA project plans, their implementation, and data management follow-up.

The activity included a brainstorming meeting in June 2024 with the WP6 data centres on how to formulate the approach and support the data flow.

To make the DMP more known, several WP6 promotion activities took place as follows:

- 10 September 2024, WP6 leader presented the AQUARIUS Data Management and Open Science approaches at the AQUARIUS brokerage event as a side meeting of ICES ASC 2024 Conference in Newcastle – UK.
- 23-25 October 2024: MARIS participated in the MarBlue 2024 Conference in Constanta - Romania and gave a presentation on AQUARIUS Data Management and Open Science practices.
- 29 October 2024: MARIS was interviewed for the AQUARIUS video.
- 6 November 2024: MARIS presented the AQUARIUS Data Management and Open Science approaches at the AQUARIUS Webinar related to the launch of the TA Call.
- In addition, the DMP is available on the AQUARIUS website and on Zenodo.

For further elaboration of the DMP plans, a Task 6.2 meeting took place in October 2024 to formulate the metadata form for the log that TA teams will be requested to maintain during TA events to log observations carried out, instruments used, and researchers involved. The log will become part of an APP that will be provided to TA teams, preconfigured on a TABLET, for entering the required information during TA events for hand-over to the WP6 data management teams afterwards. The meeting resulted in an agreement on the metadata model for the LOG APP and for describing AQUARIUS Data Centres in the AQUARIUS RI Catalogue.

As follow-up, MARIS started the development of the AQUARIUS LOG APP. The APP visuals have been styled with the support of SSBE, who oversee the AQUARIUS promotion and dissemination. MI has provided an export of part of the metadata of the RI catalogue for inclusion as pull-down lists in the APP. RBINS has analysed possible terms for post-processing. Other lists are supported by SeaDataNet vocabularies. The APP development has progressed very well and in March 2025 a version was shared with 2 WP data centres (Ifremer and RBINS) for Beta testing.

The WP6 leader worked together with WP3 - Anneli Strobel, for testing and reviewing the TA Call portal, considering the Data Management Approach guidance and the procedure for applying TA proposals. TA Call applicants are required to complete and submit a draft Data Management Plan (DMP) as part of the TA submission, using a prescribed template. This DMP will later be refined for the TA winners in cooperation with the WP6 data management experts.

Moreover, progress is being made with the first release of the AQUARIUS DATAFLOW DASHBOARD (ADD) which will be a subsite of the AQUARIUS website where users will be able to follow the data management activities for the TA projects and where different components of the Data Management approach will be published.

Recently, D6.3 - Operational AQUARIUS Dataflow Dashboard (ADD) Phase 1 – has been released. This provides technical details on the LOG APP and the structure of the ADD. Recently, SSBE as WP7 leader has provided a styling for the ADD, which will be configured by MARIS, in gradual steps.

The APP and the initial ADD should be ready in April – May 2025 in time for the start of the TA projects. This will be achieved. From that moment on the WP6 data centres and Research Infrastructure operators will be activated more for coaching and giving guidance to the TA teams, while aiming for ensuring a FAIR metadata and data flow.

Associated Deliverable: 6.2 Data Management Plan, submitted August 2024.

Associated Deliverable: 6.3 Operational ADD - Phase 1, submitted February 2025.

Task 6.3 Applying Open science by Analyzing and Valorizing Collected TA Project Data in a Web-based Research Environment (MARIS)

No activity yet for Task 6.3.

Work Package 7 Impact: Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication (SSBE)

- Overall Status - Excellent - All deliverables and milestones achieved on time, within scope and within budget. No reported risk to delivery.

Task 7.1 Designing an Impact-driven Communications & Dissemination Plan (SSBE) – Complete

Task Approach: The first version of the AQUARIUS Communication and Dissemination Plan was delivered on August 30th, 2024 (D7.1). This Plan details the approach to the AQUARIUS communication and dissemination activities.

Communications and Dissemination Plan Overview: The plan is designed to maximise the impact of AQUARIUS activities across all Work Packages, in particular, through raising awareness, mobilising engagement and promoting uptake of AQUARIUS opportunities and results with target stakeholder groups. The plan describes a strategic approach to the AQUARIUS communication and dissemination activities and key performance indicators (KPI). It includes a preliminary indicative calendar of activities for the current period (M1-M18), which will be updated regularly.

The plan connects key project activities, across all WPs, to tailored communication and dissemination activities to maximise impact. It also established the project branding, communication toolkits and materials.

The implementation of the plan is supported by monthly WP7 partner meetings to keep track of opportunities to promote the project, co-create outreach materials, and plan for upcoming events.

This plan will be reviewed for efficacy and updated by month 18 as “AQUARIUS Communication and Dissemination Plan II”.

Associated Deliverable: D7.1 Communications & Dissemination Plan I, submitted August 2024.

Task 7.2 Promoting Project Outreach, Engagement & Dissemination of Results (SSBE)

Task 7.2.1. Communication and Outreach Toolkit and Materials

AQUARIUS Branding: AQUARIUS branding was developed in Month 1 based on the AQUARIUS logo and in consultation with the project coordination team. A user-friendly branding guideline and branded templates were shared with the project consortium in Month 2 to create a consistent and recognisable visual identity for the project.

AQUARIUS Communication and Outreach Toolkit: A project communication and outreach toolkit were developed in stages during the first six months of the project and included an infographic, poster, slide deck and project brochure. All material was developed iteratively with feedback from partners. The toolkit was also supplemented with two pull-up banners.

Branded AQUARIUS merchandise (stickers, pens, lanyards with USB, and chocolates) were developed for dissemination at AQUARIUS events. These were chosen with sustainability and usability in mind and included website URLs or QR codes where space permitted.



Figure 24 - Examples of AQUARIUS Promotional Materials as Part of The AQUARIUS Communication Toolkit

AQUARIUS Website: The first version of the AQUARIUS project website at “AQUARIUS-RI.eu” was developed for the online AQUARIUS kick-off meeting (April 2024) to provide an official information channel for interested stakeholders alerted by social media activity. It launched with general information on the project, contact details, and call-to-action buttons to encourage newsletter subscriptions.

A substantial upgrade to the website was delivered in August 2024 for D7.3 “AQUARIUS Website” and to support the launch of the online Research Infrastructure Catalogue developed with WP4. In addition, to initial summary information pages on other aspects of AQUARIUS work, the website includes a news and events page highlighting relevant project activities, a gallery and a resources section where all public project deliverables and useful resources are available for download.

The website has continually been animated and further developed as activities in other WP advanced, in particular a series of pages containing all the information on Transnational Access Calls and how to apply, provided by WP3. These pages included a link to the Transnational Access Platform which became live on 11 November 2024 and closed with the closure of the first Call at midnight (CET) on 20 January 2025.

Since its launch, the website has seen a steady growth in activity, with 4,600 active users in the first year. Clear peaks in activity were associated with the launch of the Research Infrastructure Catalogue, the launch of the first Transnational Access Call, and most significantly the opening of the first Calls for training opportunities for Early Career Scientists. The primary channel from which users come to the website is direct (searches, email links, QR codes, etc), followed by organic social media and then organic search. These active users cover a broad geographic range.

Associated Deliverable: D7.3 AQUARIUS Website, launched August 2024.

AQUARIUS Social Media: Independent social media accounts were established for AQUARIUS under the “project” category on X, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. LinkedIn has been the primary channel in the first year of the project. X was also activated and regularly animated but will be replaced by Instagram as the main second platform to reach a wider societal audience and complement LinkedIn.

AQUARIUS LinkedIn has been extremely successful in its first year, amassing a current total of 1,500 followers. Partners have been active in liking and reposting posts in their own networks contributing to the success of this channel.

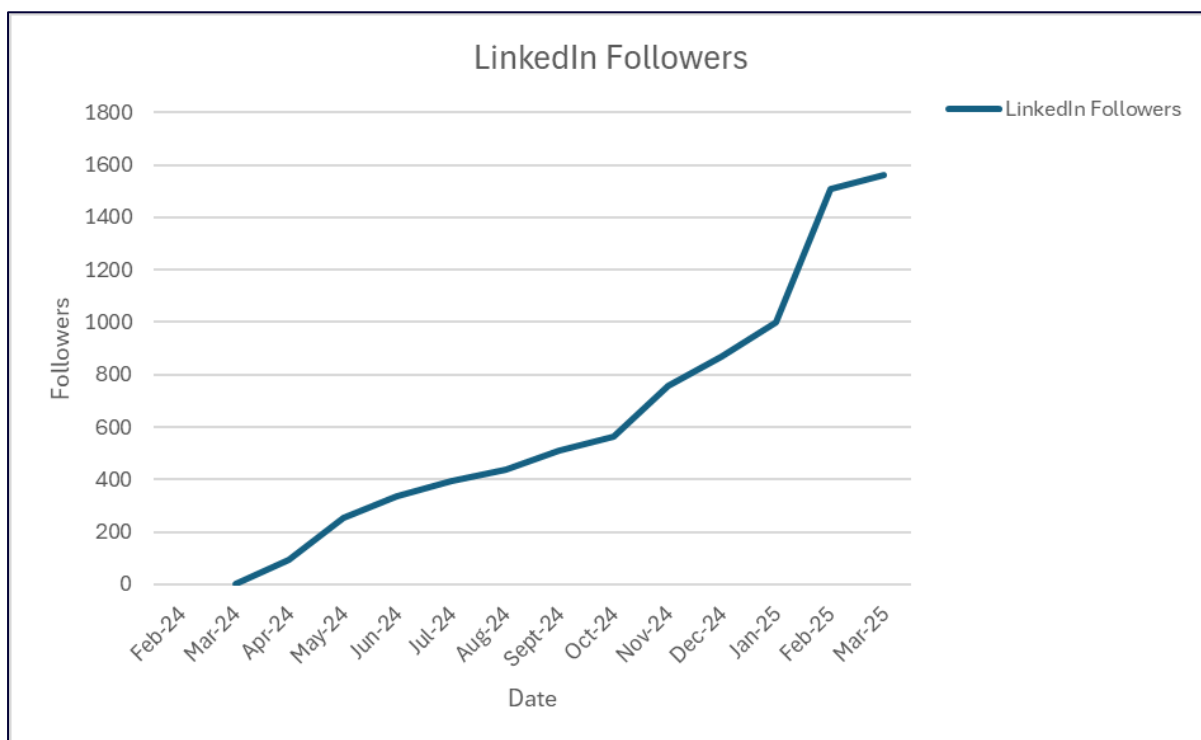


Figure 25 - Growth in LinkedIn followers in Year 1.

Note: Significant growth periods followed the first AQUARIUS brokerage event, the launch of TA Call 1 and the launch of training opportunities.

Aquarius Newsletter: The first AQUARIUS newsletter was launched in October 2024 via the EUDONET platform (a GDPR compliant customer relations management system) in advance of the opening of the first Call. Subscription was encouraged via emails and social media posts. The first Newsletter was sent to 98 subscribers.

A short newsflash issued to subscribers to coincide with the launch of the first Call went to 114 subscribers and the second newsletter was sent at the end of February to 206 subscribers. As part of the registration process, potential subscribers are asked to indicate their stakeholder group as one of either academic/research scientists, civil society, government/policy or industry and their sea-basin area. The majority of subscribers to date are from the “scientific” stakeholder group, with most (to date) indicating Mediterranean and then Atlantic as their relevant sea basin area.

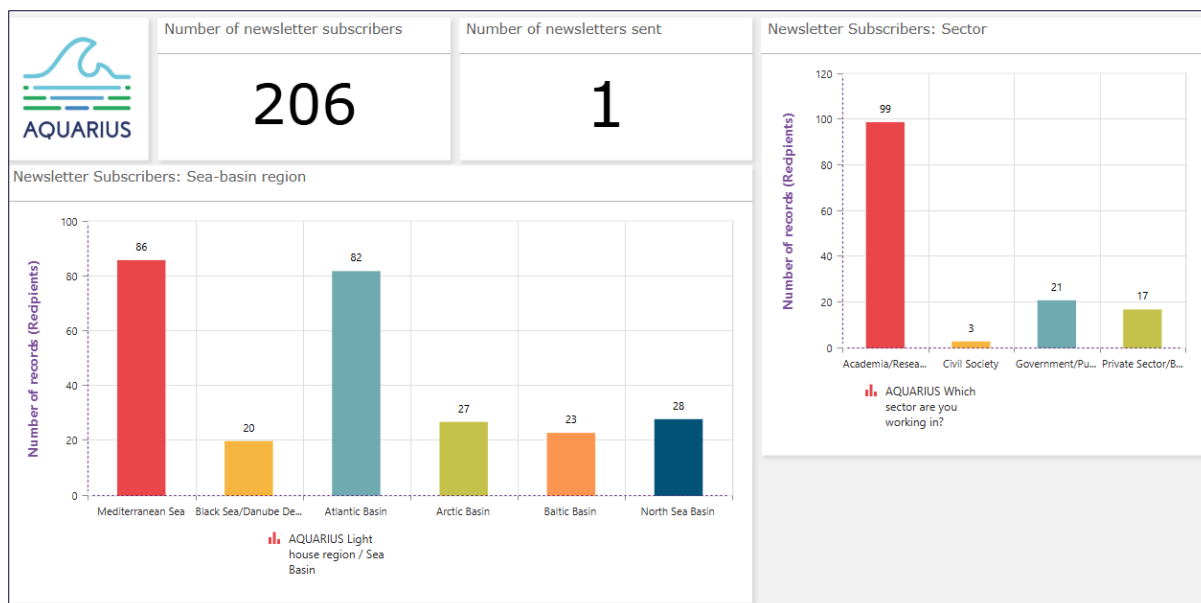


Figure 26 – *AQUARIUS Newsletter Dashboard* indicating number of subscribers to whom the second newsletter was sent, together with their sectoral and geographic group.

AQUARIUS Blogposts: The initial series of AQUARIUS blog posts were planned to coincide with important project milestones and focus on the relevant partners or work package leaders. The first blog post, with Frank Armstrong (WP4 Lead), was launched in Month 7 to coincide with the recent launch of the Research Infrastructures Catalogue and promote the upcoming brokerage events. The second blog, with WP3 Lead, Anneli Strobel, followed the opening of the first Transnational Access Call and focused on the application process. The blogs are posted on the website and highlighted on social media.

7.2.2. Outreach and Engagement Campaigns To Promote Transnational Calls

Task Approach: The outreach and engagement campaign for the First TA Call was a cross-partner and cross-work package effort. While arguably all AQUARIUS communication and outreach activities from the start of the project focused attention towards the launch of the First Call (given the need to establish the identity of AQUARIUS as a new project providing transnational access to research infrastructure), the first campaign kicked off with the first of a series of sea-basin brokerage events, organised by the MI in WP1.

This followed the communication around the launch of the Research Infrastructure Catalogue to highlight what was available for applicants. Communication and outreach activities to highlight the first TA Call focused on the updated AQUARIUS website with all the information on the application process which had been provided by WP3 (AWI), including also on the data management plan (WP6, MARIS).

Two webinars were also organised, the first as an “online brokerage event”, led by the MI in WP1 and the second as a “training webinar” on the use of the Transnational Access Platform (WP5, led by OGS). WP7 has supported promotion and engagement of all of these activities through dedicated communication toolkits, logistical support at events, promotion on social media, website and networks and by leveraging all partners' networks through reminders at the monthly WP7 meetings and email exchanges.

Dedicated material was developed, including a flyer with details on how to apply to the first call for wide dissemination, a professional promotional two-minute video to launch the Call, news flash (via the newsletter platform), and a dedicated Communication Toolkit to support partners in spreading the word. Targeted emails were sent to multipliers in partners networks, including amongst others, mailing lists (where GDPR allowed), contacts in networks such as the European Marine Board, ENVRI hub, JPI Oceans, EMODnet; etc, and relevant projects including Mission Ocean CSAs.

Specifically, the first Transnational Access WP7 outreach and engagement campaign activities included the following:

- Dedicated webpages (AWI content)
- Support to MI with pre- & post-communications for three physical and one online brokerage events.
- Animated social media campaigns: Countdown to launch of the RI Catalogue and launch of first Call, video launch and FAQ series.
- Launched newsletter (+100 subscribers)
- Launched News “flash” on Nov 11th with link to Transnational Access page.
- Communication and logistical support to two webinars.
- Promotional Video with “call to action”
- News items and partner blog (“How to apply”).
- Webinar recordings edited and shared on website and social media.
- Targeted emails to contacts/networks (resulting in inclusion of AQUARIUS in newsletter and media).
- Informative flyer with details on how to apply for dissemination.
- Partners disseminating flyers/brochures at third-party events.
- Paid Ad in Eco magazine.
- Social media pay-per-click campaign.
- Communication Toolkit comprising a Press release, social media posts, links to supporting visuals and above materials.



Open for applications!

Funding Call
for Transnational Access
to Research Infrastructures

What to do next?

1. Visit aquarius-ri.eu/access/ for all the Call information.
2. From 11 November 2024 register on the AQUARIUS Transnational Access Platform (TAP) and activate your account.
3. Check our Research Infrastructure Catalogue and contact the operators to find out whether your proposal can be implemented as planned.
4. Fill in the Transnational Access application form in the TAP.
5. Review and submit your application.

Open: 11 November 2024 – 20 January 2025

AQUARIUS

Figure 27 - Flyer for dissemination for the first AQUARIUS Transnational Access Funding Call

7.2.3. Dissemination (Targeted)

Task Approach: WP7 has been supporting partners to disseminate key projects outputs via various channels. All deliverables are uploaded to the resources page of the website and to Zenodo (by the project manager). Where deliverables are of interest to the wider community, such as reports of data gaps and scientific challenges or the AQUARIUS data management plan, their release is accompanied by a news article on the website and social media post. The AQUARIUS newsletter also features links to download the relevant materials.

Relevant training materials, including webinars, are uploaded to the website training pages.

Task 7.3 Activating Pathways Towards Exploitation of Results (MARIS)

Task Approach: The following key exploitable results (KER) were identified at the proposal stage. A meeting was held in January and work is ongoing to develop the Exploitation Plan Outline template for D7.2.

Further KER will be developed with the successful TA projects and exploitation pathways developed.

Work Package	Output	Exploitation Path	Lead
WP6	1 report on "data gaps" towards Mission "Restore our Ocean and waters by 2030"	Key conclusions will inform calls for TA projects and will further feed WP7 Policy Brief, including recommendations towards the future EU Green Deal Data Space	FREMER
WP6	10+ Data management Plans for each funded TA project	SeaDataNet, Copernicus Marine, EMODnet, EDITO-Infra	MARIS
WP3	Operational Reports for the 10 "super integration" Transnational Access projects implemented	Lessons learned brought into Exploitation Plan (D7.3)	AWI
WP3, WP4, WP6, WP7	10+ "super integration" Transnational Access projects implemented	Exploitation of KERs described, characterised and planned in Exploitation Plan (D7.3)	MARIS
WP6	Data Management Plan (D6.7) for new data captured by integrated infrastructure	SeaDataNet, Copernicus Marine, EMODnet, EDITO-Infra > EU DTO scenarios & policy frameworks	MARIS
WP3	A European Call Management System (INTERACCESS) for AQUARIUS	Future calls for transnational access to integrated research infrastructures	INTERACT (INPA)
WP4	Integration and management of multiple Infrastructures across TA	Lessons learned conveyed in Policy Brief	SSBE
WP7	Vision for marine research infrastructures of the future	Policy Brief & legacy video addressing the science-to-policy interface and bringing key messages to policy & decision makers, including recommendations towards the EU Green Deal Data Space	SSBE

Figure 28 - Key exploitable results for AQUARIUS activities in Year 1

Task 7.4 Ensuring Legacy through Strategic Foresight (SSBE)

Task Approach: Work has just recently been initiated on this Task, with a short discussion and interviews at the General Assembly and a Slido session to invite partners to share their thoughts on what the AQUARIUS vision and legacy should be. The next steps were outlined (below), with partners invited to volunteer to be part of a working group:

Questions

- What do you think should be a part of this vision?
- What will be our legacy and how will it contribute to this vision?
- What does success look like for excellence of European marine and freshwater RI in 2030? Are we making progress?

Next steps

- Outline process and scope (ToR / concept note for brainstorming)
- Working group - 6-10 experts (from consortium) – volunteers?
- Develop the first draft to share with the consortium for feedback.
- Circulating first draft among consortium for feedback to develop V1 deliverable Month 24.
- V1 shared with wider community towards final version (February 2026 onwards).

Overview and KPIs

Communication and dissemination activities in Year 1 of AQUARIUS have been successful in reaching and surpassing most KPIs for Year 1. These will be reviewed and considered in the update to the Communication and Dissemination Plan at Month 18.

AQUARIUS						
Type	KPI	Target Y1	Target Y2	Target Y3	Target Y4	Total (1ST YEAR)
Outreach						
	N° Twitter/X followers	-	-	-	500	115
	N° LinkedIn followers	-	-	-	500	1508
	N° leaflets distributed at events + online				2000	~500
	N° use case scenarios developed		5	-	-	2
	N° of researchers targeted	-	-	-	3000	~1000
	N° citizen science groups contacted				500	~50
	N° of industry stakeholders targeted				500	~50
	N° meetings with relevant trade associations to share project results with blue economy and industry				5	0
	N° participation to conference, exhibitions and trade fairs				20	25
	N° Mission Actions informed about AQUARIUS tools and/or services				5	5
Technical Training Hub						
	N° Visits to the repository				3000	341 (training-resources) 834 (Open-call-internships) 82 webinar views
Communication material						
	N° Visits to the SEO-driven AQUARIUS website	-	-	-	3000	28k page views; 4.6k unique visitors; 10k sessions; 5.8k engaged sessions
	N° newsletter subscribers					216 Eudonet
	N° newsletters	-	-	-	10	2
	N° downloads of infographic				500	12
	N° downloads of factsheet				500	?
	N° downloads of published resources from Zenodo and Blue-Cloud catalogue				300	228 (downloads from Zenodo)
	N° views digitally stored training products				300	182 webinar views
	N° Toolkits				1	2
	N° roll-up banners				2	2
	N° videos				2	1
	N° video views				500	Tube 110, LinkedIn 5549 + 3257 (8806 LinkedIn total)
	N° PPC campaigns clicks				5000	3 campaigns, 54,000 impressions - 1011 clicks (TBD)
Dissemination channels						
	N° scientists participated in floating academy training workshops				50	N/A
Final event						
	N° participants				50-75	N/A

Figure 29 - Key performance indicators for AQUARIUS outreach and engagement activities in Year 1

Year 1 Communication and Dissemination Activities (ALL Partners)

Institute (s)	Dissemination activity name*	Date	Type of Dissemination Activity *	Who? Target audience reach *
MARIS	Presentation of AQUARIUS at Blue-Cloud 2026 General Assembly, during session "Synergies & Exploitation"	5/7/2024	Meetings	Research communities
MI	Presentation at 'Pint of Science' festival	13-15/05/2024	Other	Citizens
EMSO-ERIC	Presentation at EMRA'24 (Workshop on EU-funded Marine Robotics and Applications)	27-29/05/2024	Conferences	Research communities
IHO	Proceedings of the 8th IAHR Europe Congress, Lisbon – Portugal, 4-7 June 2024	4-7/06/2024	Conferences	Research communities
VLIZ	Poster at International Underwater Glider Conference (IUGC)	10-14, June 2024	Conferences	Research communities
MI	Presentation on AQUARIUS at the 26th European Research Vessel Operators (ERVO) meeting	11-13/06/2024	Conferences	EU institutions
MI	Presentation of AQUARIUS at JERICO-S3 Final General Assembly.	18-21/06/2024	Conferences	Research communities
MI	EuroGO-SHIP Workshop	27/06/2024	Clustering activities	Research communities
IHO	Presentation at International Radiowave Oceanography Workshop (ROW) 2024	3-5/09/2024	Meetings	Research communities
AWI	Poster presentation at EU Polar Science Week	3-6/09/2024	Conferences	Research communities
All partners	AQUARIUS Brokerage event, as side event to the ICES Annual Science Conference	10/9/2024	Conferences	Research communities

Institute (s)	Dissemination activity name*	Date	Type of Dissemination Activity *	Who? Target audience reach *
IHO	Presentation at the 3as Jornadas Luso Espanolas de Hidrografia (3JLEH)	9-11/10/2024	Conferences	Research communities
All partners	Second AQUARIUS brokerage event, at MonGOOS General Assembly & Workshop	01/10/2024	Meeting	Research Communities
MARIS	Presentation on AQUARIUS at EGI 2024	30/9 -4/10 2024	Conference	Research Communities
SYKE, NIVA	Presentations at 11th FerryBox Workshop	1-2/10/2024	Meetings	Other
MI	Presentation to ICES Ecosystem Observation Steering Group (EOSG)	2/10/2024	Meetings	Research communities
MI	Presentation to the ICES Scallop Assessment Working Group (WGScallop)	10/10/2024	Meetings	Research communities
MARIS	Presentation at the MarBlue 2024 Conference on MDM in AQUARIUS	24/10/2024	Conferences	Research communities
MI	Presented to the Explorer Education Program	10/17/2024	Meetings	Citizens
MI	Marblue Conference Observing the Black Sea session Presentation, Poster and exhibition area	23/10/2024	Conferences	Research communities
MI, SSBE, MARIS, AWI, OGS	AQUARIUS brokerage webinar	6/11/2024	Other	Other
SLU	Presentation of AQUARIUS at the SLU Aqua research collegium	7/11/2024	Conferences	Research communities

Institute (s)	Dissemination activity name*	Date	Type of Dissemination Activity *	Who? Target audience reach *
VITO, CzechGlobe	HYPERPECTRAL 2024	13-15/11/2024	Conferences	Research communities
SLU	<u>Pull-up-banner at the final conference on Project Marine Management and Climate (Nordic Council)</u>	13/11/2014	Conferences	Research communities
SLU	Poster and presentation about AQUARIUS at the Swedish Marine Research Days 2024	26-28/11/2024	Conference	Research communities
SLU	Tour of SLU's research vessel R/V Svea for participants at the Swedish Marine Research Days 2024	27/11/2024	Other	Research communities
OGS, MI, AWI, INKODE	AQUARIUS Training Webinar	27/11/2024	Education and training events	Research communities
MI	AQUARIUS Project and Call	02/12/24 & 4/12/24	Collaboration with EU-funded projects	Research communities
NIMRD	AQUARIUS Poster at the BS-SEOS Project meeting	17/12/2024	Collaboration with EU-funded projects	Research communities
IFREMER	Presentation of the AQUARIUS to the French Regional & Offshore scientific commissions	04/12/2024 & 06/12/2024	Meetings	Research communities
IFREMER	Poster including Aquarius Project at IMDIS Conference (Marine Data and Information Systems)	27-29 May 2024	Conferences	Research communities

In Conclusion: Year 2 Look Ahead

AQUARIUS Year 2 Look Ahead: The AQUARIUS project advances into its second year with a positive trajectory, demonstrating a clear path to achieving its project objectives with defined outputs, and complete grant agreement alignment. This path to success is complimented with the project maintaining an excellent overall project health with no significant risks to delivery across key project areas including schedule, budget, and scope.

In Year 2, AQUARIUS will continue to focus on its core mission of providing Transnational Research Infrastructure Access, promoting open data, offering training, and maximizing the impact of these consolidated efforts. To achieve this mission, AQUARIUS will deliver 12 reported deliverables and accomplish 13 project milestones throughout the year. The project is on track to meet all these projected Year 2 targets and deliverables.

The upcoming year will feature several notable developments, including a second Call for proposals, the initiation of various integrated Transnational Access projects, the launch of the AQUARIUS Dataflow Dashboard, and a comprehensive array of training initiatives including the PLOCAN Glider Summer School.

AQUARIUS is driven by an active, engaged, and motivated consortium comprising of 41 partners from 18 countries, ensuring a diverse and dynamic approach to achieving our objectives throughout Year 2 and beyond, AQUARIUS is a transformational project which will continue to have impact to researchers across the maritime and freshwater sectors.

Key events planned for Year 2 where the AQUARIUS team will engage with stakeholders, announce details of the upcoming second Call and leverage training support include:

- ✓ Mission Ocean and Waters Forum - Brussels / 4th March 2025
- ✓ EGU General Assembly - Vienna, Austria / 27th April - 2nd May 2025
- ✓ European Maritime Day - Cork, Ireland / 21st May 2025
- ✓ 27th ERVO Meeting - Tórshavn, Faroe Islands / 2nd - 4th June 2025

Our social media channels provide regular updates on all progress and information or alternatively we can be contacted by email at aquarius@marine.ie, where the project coordination team look forward to collaborating.

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