



MERIL

MAPPING OF THE EUROPEAN
RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE
LANDSCAPE



The MERIL Portal – The Gateway to Research Infrastructure in Europe



The RRS James Clark Ross during the JR240 ICEBell Cruise in the Bellingshaussen Sea

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British Antarctic Survey

Research Infrastructure – the foundation of research

Modern research in virtually all domains of science and scholarship relies on a vast range of facilities, equipment and physical and digital resources, collectively known as research infrastructure. Excellent research infrastructure is now a prerequisite for excellent research and for attracting top-level scientists and promising early career researchers.

The construction, operation and maintenance of individual research infrastructures represent a high proportion of national and European-level investment in science and technology. Collaboration and common purpose among all actors in the area of research infrastructures – in terms of strategic planning, funding, management, access and exploitation – are indispensable if we are to maximize their utility for European science and society.

The Mapping of the European Research Infrastructure Landscape (MERIL) Portal has been developed to facilitate and foster such collaboration by providing a unique and authoritative public source of information on internationally significant, openly accessible research infrastructure in Europe, across all categories and scientific domains. MERIL simplifies an increasingly complex research environment by providing a dynamic map of the research infrastructure landscape in Europe.



Library

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What MERIL offers

- High quality, up-to-date information on existing, openly accessible research infrastructure of more than national relevance all across Europe;
- An authenticated database wherein research infrastructure units have been validated by national and international authorities as meeting common eligibility criteria pertaining to quality, access and management;
- An open access resource that is publically available online;
- A valuable resource for researchers from academia and enterprise to search for the most convenient equipment and services to support their research and find out who to contact to gain access or support;
- A network for research infrastructure operators to identify communities of practice, synergies and complementarities, and initiate cooperation;
- An opportunity for facilities and initiatives, particularly those that are less well known, to raise their profile by inclusion in MERIL and find new customers;
- A high potential resource for policy-makers and strategic planners at national and international level containing baseline information which can be further elaborated for informed decision-making, including on cross-border and cross-sector investment and policy.

Where MERIL is going in 2014-2015

- Expanding the data collection to include more information, on more research infrastructures, in Europe and beyond;
- Linking and mining relevant other sources of data to enrich the data collection;
- Producing a monitoring and evaluation tool through the collection of data on inputs, processes and output of research infrastructures;
- Working towards making pricing policies of research infrastructures transparent;
- Producing high-quality, systematic reviews of the research infrastructure landscape over time to assist decision-making for policy-makers.

What is a research infrastructure?

MERIL employed the following definition of a research infrastructure:

A European Research Infrastructure is a facility or (virtual) platform that provides the scientific community with resources and services to conduct top-level research in their respective fields. These research infrastructures can be single-sited or distributed or e-infrastructures, and can be part of a national or international network of facilities, or of interconnected scientific instrument networks. An infrastructure should:

- offer top quality scientific and technological performance, recognised as being of 'more-than-national' relevance;
- offer access to scientific users from Europe and beyond through a transparent selection process on the basis of excellence;
- have a management structure.



Artist impression of
the Herschel spacecraft

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Hubble Space Telescope image
(NASA/ESA/STScI)

The great contribution MERIL will make to the S&T system is the provision of reliable and fast access to the relevant information, for policy, enterprise and research.

Background

MERIL emerged in the framework of a European Science Foundation Member Organisation Forum on Research Infrastructures which ran from 2010-2012. Complementing the work of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) on future needs for pan-European Research Infrastructures, the 'Mapping of the European Research Infrastructure Landscape' (MERIL) project (2010-2012) addressed the need for an accurate and up-to-date overview of existing research infrastructures in Europe, both as a baseline for strategic policy-making and as a source of information for scientists and other stakeholders in research and innovation.

The stakeholders behind the project were the ESF, EUROHORCs (now Science Europe), the European Commission, ESFRI, the European Association of National Research Facilities (ERF), EIROforum, the wider scientific community and ministries. Most of these organisations and groups are represented in MERIL's governance through its Steering Committee.

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Find out more

For more information on the MERIL portal, including how to add an RI to the database, visit <http://portal.meril.eu> or contact the MERIL team at meril@esf.org.

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