

## Milestone 2.4: Mid-term report on ACTRIS operation support and service validation

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## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

A full validation of the ACTRIS operation support and service provision is considered crucial for the implementation of ACTRIS as a research infrastructure. The activity should include the validation of both the operation support and the service provision, considering as much as possible all the relevant aspects from the technical to the financial and legal ones, and addressing the issue of sustainability.

Extensive validation of all ACTRIS operations is complex and time consuming. A 1st round of validation started in 2019 and was closed at the end of 2020 to ascertain the relevance of the activities and the sustainability of costs for the Central Facilities (CF)s operation support and partially for service provision to prepare the 5-year financial plan for the ERIC Step 2 submission.

The purpose of this document is to provide a mid-term report of the activities of the first round of validation performed under ACTRIS-IMP and the work planned in the project for the definition of the methodology for a standard and recurrent validation process.

The document is structured in different chapters starting from the main aspects of the first round of ACTRIS CF validation. Chapter 2 illustrates the main elements that made up the methodology followed in the first validation (purpose and subject of the validation, evaluation criteria, actors involved in the process, overview of the planned and realized schedules, validation material, etc.). Conclusions are provided in chapter 3 together with an overview of the work planned to review and capture the results, experiences and recommendations of the first validation process, and to absorb them into the next activities to set a recurrent and ongoing ACTRIS validation process.

Specific information of the first validation round are reported in the annexes, namely the templates prepared for collecting the information from the CFs and the evaluators, and other public documents used during the process.

## THE FIRST ROUND OF THE VALIDATION PROCESS

### The Interim ACTRIS Council (IAC) mandate

IAC mandated a group of individuals to prepare and outline the validation process in its 6th meeting (12/2018).

A first proposal introduced to IAC in its 7th meeting (Barcelona 23–24.1.2019) included two bodies: Validation Task Group (VTG) preparing and coordinating the work and Validation Advisory Group (VAG) overseeing the work and advising from the perspective of the countries. The composition of the VTG and VAG was approved in the same meeting and a mandate was given to them to prepare the process in more detail.

The details of the validation process were presented to IAC in the 8th IAC meeting (6/2019) and are reported in the following of this chapter.

### Actors in the process and their roles

The following actors were identified as crucial to perform, each in its role, the planned tasks of the validation process.

**Interim ACTRIS Council (IAC):** The council of country delegates making the final decision if the planned activities and costs are realistic enough for the CF to proceed in its implementation.

**Validation advisory group (VAG):** A group of IAC delegates with a task to follow the validation process from IAC perspective and advise the VTG in its work.

**Validation task group (VTG):** A group of individuals with the task of organizing, managing, and monitoring the CF activity and cost validation.

**CF host consortia:** The RPOs approved to host the ACTRIS CFs. Individuals representing the RPOs as experts in the planned activities and costs of the CFs to provide the material upon which the CFs were evaluated.

**External evaluators:** Independent experts evaluating the planned activities of the CFs. The experts, external to the CF being validated, worked in teams of 3–4, each team evaluating the planned operation of one CF.

More details on the mandate and composition of the VAG, VTG and evaluation teams are reported in the following.

#### 1.1.1 VAG mandate and members

The VAG was intermediate actor between IAC and VTG. The planned role was to monitor, oversee and advise the validation process including selection of evaluation teams into a direction that IAC could approve the process and the outcomes. IAC gave VAG a further mandate to act on behalf of IAC in the validation process in order to speed up the process preparations.

VAG members were mostly IAC delegates representing the countries, but several of them were also directly involved in the preparation of the CFs.

As it was acknowledged that there might be direct or indirect conflict of interest among the members of the VAG, rules of procedure regarding conflict of interests in the VAG were written and considered along the process (see Annex 0).

#### 1.1.2 VTG mandate and members

IAC mandated VTG to facilitate and run the validation process, according to the principles and decisions agreed by IAC. The role of the VTG in the process was to organize, prepare and facilitate the process, to transfer materials between the CF consortia, evaluators and the VAG, and to prepare and provide the related meeting materials for the IAC meetings. VTG did not participate in the evaluation and didn't take position regarding the evaluation results.

The group for running the validation process, VTG, consisted of individuals from the ACTRIS Preparatory Phase Project (ACTRIS PPP) and later from ACTRIS Implementation Project (ACTRIS IMP) who were familiar with the ACTRIS processes. This group was for most part the same that facilitated the ACTRIS CF host selection process.

VTG members were nominated by IAC, and they signed a declaration to state that they had no conflict of interests (see Annex 0). VAG and VTG were deciding whether a VTG member with specific cases of future conflict of interests could continue in the VTG.

#### 1.1.3 Evaluation teams and assignments

ACTRIS IMP ([www.actris.eu](http://www.actris.eu)) is supported by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 – Research and Innovation Framework Programme, H2020-INFRADEV-2018-2020, Grant Agreement number: 871115

In the first validation round each CF was evaluated by a team of 3–4 experts external to the CF in question. The evaluators were expected to have knowledge of ACTRIS and expertise on the required technology and potential user base for the activities, and thus there were a different evaluation teams for each CF.

Each evaluation team was expected to produce a single written evaluation report of the CF evaluated (consensus among evaluators was not required). This report could have included questions and comments to the CFs, and a summary to be presented to the IAC. Each evaluation team was encouraged to choose their working mode as best suited them. The evaluation team selected a rapporteur among the team members, who collected and combined the information from each team member and provided it further to the VTG. VTG guided that rapporteur should preferably be from outside of ACTRIS community.

Evaluators with the following profiles were considered for each CF:

1. Representatives of ACTRIS user communities, including both users of data and users of physical access relevant to the CF evaluated
2. Representatives of foreseen ACTRIS National Facilities benefitting from the operation support of the CF evaluated
3. Representatives of other ACTRIS CFs, being familiar with the ACTRIS CF concepts and the information-collecting process
4. Representatives of other Research Infrastructures
5. Financial experts familiar with Research Infrastructures

VTG contacted around 40 potential evaluators during summer 2019 to find suitable evaluators following the given evaluator profiles. In the end, VTG engaged seven evaluation teams consisting of 24 individuals. The evaluators were anonymous towards the CF during the process but after the end of the validation process their names could be revealed if requested. Evaluators were not anonymous towards each other within the team, nor towards the VTG.

Each evaluator was asked to sign a declaration of non-conflict of interest in their position (see Annex 0). In case of conflict of interest with the evaluation of a CF, the evaluator was required to withdraw from the evaluation of that particular CF.

### **Subject and scope of the validation**

The first round of validation was intended to verify whether the CFs were in a position of providing the planned operation support and services to ACTRIS and to external users, and to check that the planned activities are feasible, necessary and adequately dimensioned, and that the respective costs are justified, reasonable and well defined. It was also intended to assure the ACTRIS member and observer countries of the reliability of the estimation of the operational costs needed for the preparation and approval of the related 5-year financial plan of ACTRIS.

As most of the CFs were still in the preparatory or early implementation phase, CFs were not in a position to provide specific details and binding numbers for activities planned several years ahead, therefore the first round of validation was considered as a validation of the CF operational plans with the level of detail available. In this sense, the first round of validation could also be seen as a demonstration of a methodology for the subsequent validation rounds.

Each CF had to be validated as one entity, but the information required for the validation had to be more detailed, allowing separation by activity, CF Units and host institutions. The host institutes (research performing organizations) of the CFs were defined as those listed in the CF host consortia approved by the IAC in its 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> meetings (Lyon 25–26.10.2018 and Brussels 12–13.12.2018).

## Evaluation criteria

In the first round of validation the activities of the CFs were evaluated against the following criteria:

### Criteria for the technical validation:

1. Technical feasibility and adequacy of the procedures. The planned activities have to be technically feasible, reliable, and suited for purpose.
2. Relevance and justification of planned resources. The resources needed for any planned activity need to be justified, realistic and comparable among different units offering the same or similar activities.
3. Adequacy of the CF capacity. The CF capacity needs to be appropriately dimensioned with respect to the foreseen need for operation support and services to external users.
4. Relevance of the activities to ACTRIS.

### Criteria for the financial validation:

5. Adequacy of the costs; The planned salary levels and overheads must follow the accounting principles of the host organizations.
6. Adequacy of the methodology; The methodology for calculating the costs has to be sound and reasonable.

## The process steps and schedule

The steps of the first round of CF validation and their schedule are outlined in the table 1 below.

For each step the responsible actor is reported and duration is provided as the elapsed time that was originally planned for the completion.

With this schedule the evaluation process started in January 2019 and was expected to be completed by Spring 2020. However, it was noted that the process or its schedule could be adjusted if seen necessary.

# STEP	DURATION	ACTIVITY	ACTOR
<b>PREPARATION OF THE VALIDATION</b>	4 months	<b>Preparation of the validation process.</b> Definition of evaluation criteria, evaluator profiles and schedule; preparation of the documents and templates to be used in the process; identification and engaging the potential evaluators	VTG
		<b>Discussion and approval</b> IAC to approve the validation schedule and material	IAC
<b>1</b>	3 months	<b>Submission by CF consortia</b> to provide the completed validation documents with information on the planned activities.	CF consortia
<b>2</b>	1 month	<b>First review</b> by evaluation teams. Evaluators evaluate the information provided by CF consortia against the listed reference documents, using the required templates. Each evaluation team evaluates one CF and provides its initial report (one report per team) including written comments and questions to the CF consortia and a short overall report to be presented to IAC Feedback and questions are provided to VTG	Evaluation teams
<b>3</b>	2 weeks	VTG inform VAG about the information collected by evaluation teams and further questions are collected from VAG. VTG provide CF consortia with all questions and comments.	VAG/VTG
<b>4</b>	3 weeks	<b>Re-submission by CF consortia.</b> CF consortia provide written answers to the questions and comments.	CF consortia
<b>5</b>	<i>If required</i>	<b>Face-to-face consultation</b> between CF consortia, evaluators and VAG.	CF consortia, evaluation teams and VAG
<b>6</b>	1 month	<b>Final review.</b> Each evaluation team checks the answers by CF consortia to their comments and questions and judges in its final report whether each question has been properly answered and if something is still unclear. Final consensus report is provided to VTG.	Evaluation teams
<b>7</b>	2 weeks	<b>Preparation of final report and recommendations for IAC</b>	VAG/VTG
<b>8</b>		<b>Discussion and approvals</b> Final validation report approved by IAC.	IAC

Table 1: Planned steps and duration of the first round of ACTRIS CF validation, and the respective actors.

## Relevant material for the validation

A dedicated webpage<sup>1</sup> was developed on the ACTRIS website to provide the actors of the validation process with the general principles of the validation, the process description, time schedule of the planned activities, and the document templates to be used in the different steps of the process.

An application form (see Annex 0) was prepared for collecting the information from the CF consortia about the operation of their activities. The document was composed of different sections to describe general information of the CF, the participating host institutions, a financial confirmation section, the summary and description of all the activities detailing the contribution of the host institutions, annual effort and costs, annual capacity, scalability, etc.

An evaluation form (see Annex 0) was prepared for collecting the evaluation of experts in the evaluation teams. The document was composed of different sections and questions. For each question the evaluators were asked to indicate whether it was properly answered in the CF application form by checking *yes/partially/no*. The evaluators were also asked to provide written comments to justify the choice and to give further comments and suggestions or express concerns.

A list of technical documents, public and valid at the time of the first round of validation, was proposed as reference for the CF consortia and evaluators to provide the required information:

1. D3.1 ACTRIS Cost Book (delivered in January 2019, in its 3<sup>rd</sup> release)
2. ACTRIS Stakeholder Handbook 2018.pdf for the overall framework (delivered in February 2019)
3. ACTRIS\_IAC\_03\_04a\_concept and services.pdf (approved in Feb 2018, 3rd IAC meeting)
4. ACTRIS\_IAC\_02\_07\_ACTRIS\_Central\_Facility\_Baseline.pdf (acknowledged by IAC in Oct 2017, 2nd IAC meeting)
5. ACTRIS\_IAC\_04\_05b\_CF-specific-description.pdf (approved in June 2018, 4th IAC meeting)
6. ACTRIS-PPP deliverable "D4.1 Concept document on ACTRIS Central Facilities structure and services

## Outcome of the first validation round

As reported before, the validation process started in January 2019 was intended to be completed by Spring 2020. However, along the process arose needs to modify the plans and adjust its timeline. For example, for some CFs there were minor delays due the capability or availability of CFs or evaluation teams to provide the requested material on time. For some of the CFs, IAC agreed to have additional validation or evaluation steps resulting in a longer delay compared to the planned time schedule. VTG acted case by case basis to the changes of CFs occurred during the first round of CF validation as there was no precedent process or rules for these situations.

Additional documents were progressively produced to answer specific cases and needs. They mainly consist of responses of the CF consortia to the comments raised by the evaluation team, comments to the CF replies from the evaluation team, explicative letters describing the changes in the CF consortia, updated host application document, proposals for resolution by VAG and IAC resolution on the validation of each CF. Most

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<sup>1</sup>[ACTRIS Central Facility validation webpage](#)



of these documents are intended as confidential documents to support the IAC discussion and work. In particular, they were discussed and/or approved as specific agenda points in the following IAC meetings:

- IAC - 9<sup>th</sup> meeting November 13-15, 2019, Warsaw, Poland – Agenda Item No.6
- IAC - 10<sup>th</sup> IAC meeting February 12–13, 2020, Brussel, Belgium – Agenda Item No.4
- IAC - 11<sup>th</sup> IAC meeting June 3–5, 2020 Remote meeting– Agenda Item No.10, Agenda Item No.11
- IAC - 12<sup>th</sup> IAC meeting June 18, 2020 Remote meeting– Agenda Item No.6
- IAC - 13<sup>th</sup> IAC meeting November 9-11, 2020 Remote meeting– Agenda Item No.2

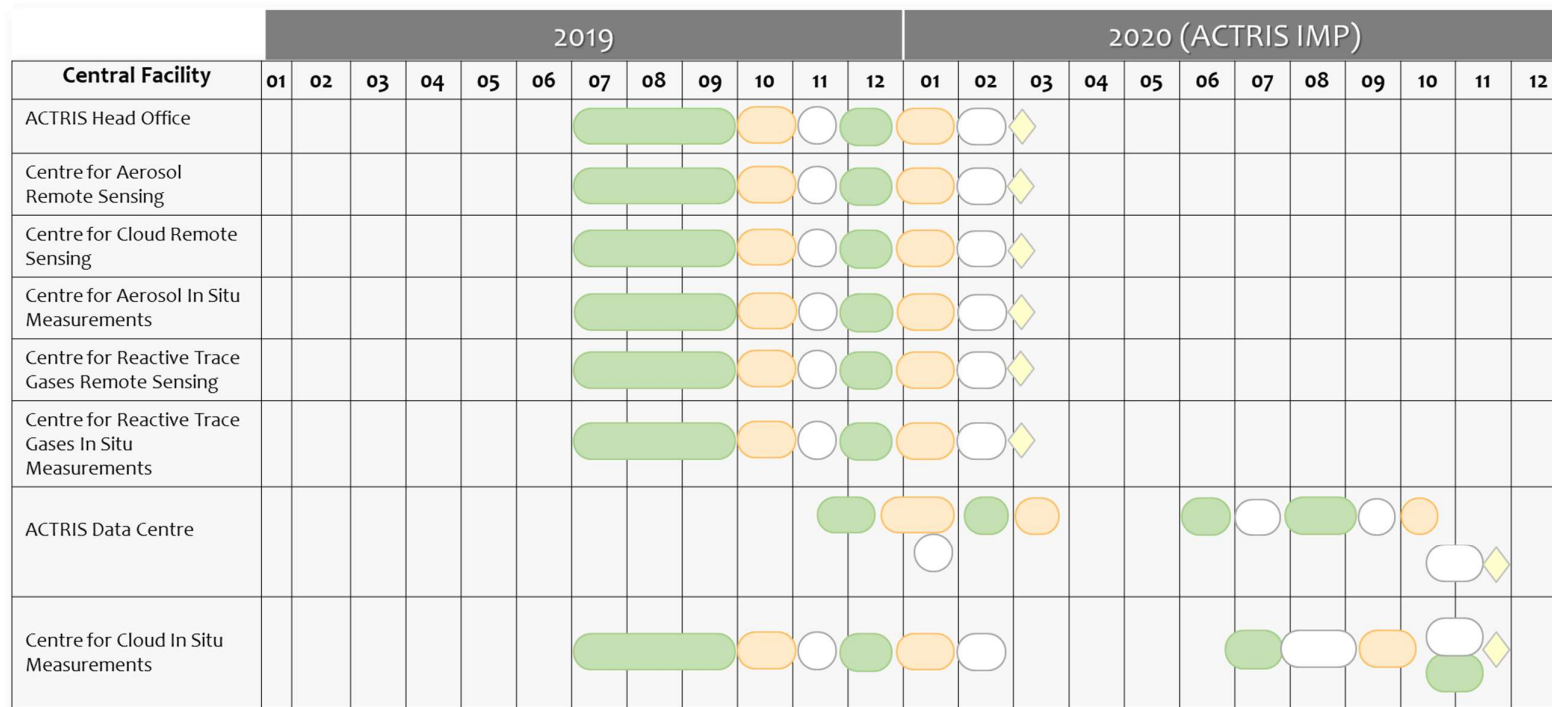
In the end, the first round of validation was completed in November 2020 and IAC approved the validation of all the CFs. Final resolutions on the validation were given by IAC with the aim to support CF consortia in the implementation process and encourage the RI to make an internal harmonization of CFs.

The actual timeline for the validation of each CF is reported with the image below (figure 1), highlighting the lead time to complete each main step and the whole process, and the amount of work performed in 2020 under the ACTRIS IMP project.

Extensive details of the process steps actually realized in the first round of validation are provided with the table 2.

# ACTRIS IMP

## WP2 / Milestone 2.4



- Submission by CF consortia
- Evaluation
- Coordination (VTG), recommendations to IAC (VAG)
- IAC resolution on the CF validation

Figure 1. CF validation timeline

ACTRIS IMP

WP2 / Milestone 2.4

time	description of step	CAIS	CARS	CIS	CCRES	GiGas	CREGARS	HO	DC
June 2019	Preparation of the validation process including process description, schedule, validation template etc.	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG
1.7. 2019	CFs receive the information template (validation document) for filling in. Information and schedule available in ACTRIS website.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
August/September 2019	Engagement of the evaluators, preparing of the evaluation template, RoP for VAG, declaration for evaluators	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG
30.9-11.10.2019	CFs provide the validation documents to VTG	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
2.10. – 4.11.2019	Technical and cost evaluation, including feedback and questions to CF by the evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	
31.10-4.11.2019	VTG distributes evaluation reports to VAG	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
6.11.2019	VTG distributes the evaluation reports to IAC and CFs for information	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
13.11. – 15.11.2019 (IAC09)	Status of the process and received evaluation reports presented and discussed in IAC	VTG, VAG, IAC	VTG, VAG, IAC	VTG, VAG, IAC	VTG, VAG, IAC	VTG, VAG, IAC	VTG, VAG, IAC	VTG, VAG, IAC	VTG, VAG, IAC
18.12.2019?	VTG informs CFs that the process proceeds as planned.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5.12. – 20.12.2019	CFs provides written responses to the first evaluation report to VTG	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
19.12.2019	DC provides the validation document to VTG								x
5.12-21.12.2019	VTG distributes material from CFs to the evaluator teams	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
19.12.2019 – 27.1.2020	Technical and cost evaluation, including feedback and questions to DC by the evaluation team								evaluation team
10.1.-28.1.2020	Evaluation teams give their written response to the answers and provide their final reports to VTG	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	evaluation team	
14.1-30.1.2020	VTG distributes the reports from the evaluation team to VAG once received, final evaluation reports to IAC on 28 Jan and DC report on 5 Feb. CFs were informed on 30 Jan 2020.	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG	VTG, VAG

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time	description of step	CAIS	CARS	CIS	CCRES	GiGas	CREGARS	HO	DC
13.1. – 22.1.2020	VAG prepares recommendations to IAC based on the second reports by the evaluators	VAG	VAG	VAG	VAG	VAG	VAG	VAG	
12.2. – 13.2.2020 (IAC10)	Status of the process and DC initial and other CF's final evaluation reports presented and discussed in IAC. IAC decision on the resolution and next steps.	IAC resolution on validation	IAC resolution on validation	CIS to provide more information	IAC resolution on validation	additional evaluation step	IAC resolution on validation	IAC resolution on validation	validation process continues as planned
18.2-24.2.2020	VTG informs CFs on the outcome of IAC10 meeting and next steps if any	VTG	VTG		VTG	VTG	VTG	VTG	VTG
17.2. – 28.2.2020	DC provides written response to the first evaluation report to VTG								x
11.3.2020	Evaluation teams gives their written response to the answers and provide their final report to VTG								evaluation team
8.4.2020	GiGas provides the requested material for the additional evaluation step to VTG					x			
13.2-14.4.2020	VTG prepares and VAG approves a questionnaire as annex to the evaluation template					VTG, VAG			
15.4-12.5.2020	Additional evaluation of CIGAS by the evaluation team					evaluation team			
	VAG prepares recommendations to IAC based on the reports by the evaluators					VAG			VAG
3-6.6.2020 (IAC11)	Status of the process and received evaluation reports presented and discussed in IAC. IAC decision on the resolution and next steps.			additional validation step		IAC resolution on validation			additional validation step
25.6.2020	DC provides the requested additional documents to VTG. CIS agreed with the process and informed VTG about their timeline			x					x
26.6-21.7.2020	VTG/VAG prepares the DC evaluation annex. VAG checks the received material and request revisions and signatures from DC consortium. VTG is in contact with the evaluators.								VTG, VAG

ACTRIS IMP

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time	description of step	CAIS	CARS	CIS	CCRES	GiGas	CREGARS	HO	DC
21.7.2020	CIS provide the requested material for the additional validation step			x					
21.7-3.9.2020	VTG/VAG prepares the CIS evaluation annex. VAG checks the received CIS material before VTG shares them with evaluators.			VTG, VAG					
30.7.-9/11?9.2020	DC provides the updated requested material including new signed letter.								x
3.9-2.10.2020	Additional technical and cost evaluation for CIS, evaluator team provides updated evaluation report			evaluation team					
12.9-22.9.2020	VTG/VAG finalize the DC evaluation annex and VTG distributes the VAG checked material to the evaluator team								VTG, VAG
22.9-19.10.2020	Additional DC validation step, evaluator team provides updated initial evaluation report (annex document)								evaluation team
3.10-6.11.2020	VTG distributes additional validation material to VAG and VAG prepares recommendations to IAC based on the reports (including annex) by the evaluation team. VTG distributes the addition evaluation reports/annex to CF in question			VTG, VAG					VTG, VAG
14.10-30.10.2020	VTG sends updated evaluation report and resolution proposed by VAG to CIS and recommended to reply to the evaluation report. CIS receives an invitation to participate IAC11 meeting.			VTG, VAG					
2.11-5.11.2020	CIS provides answers to the updated evaluation report and statement on the VAG proposed resolution to be presented in IAC13 meeting			x					
9-11.11.2020 (IAC13)	Status of the process and received evaluation reports presented and discussed in IAC. IAC decision on the resolution.			IAC resolution on validation					IAC resolution on validation

Table 2. Realized time schedule of the first round of ACTRIS CF Validation from June 2019 onwards.

## CONCLUSIONS

The first round of ACTRIS CF validation was started in January 2019 and was intended to be completed by Spring 2020. As detailed in the previous chapter, the process steps and timelines evolved to follow VAG recommendations and IAC directions, with many activities of the process carried out throughout the entire year 2020 under the ACTRIS IMP project.

Ultimately, IAC approved the validation of all the CFs, with the last resolutions made during their 13<sup>th</sup> meeting in November 2020. The aim of all the resolutions was to adjust the plans and focus the CF consortia on the implementation of the relevant validated activities and to prepare the 5-year financial plan required for the ERIC Step 2 submission.

The first round of validation provided input and lessons learned that could be essential for setting up a recurrent validation of the ACTRIS operational activities. It brought up difficulties and complexities that require consideration for setting up and optimizing a validation process when approaching the ACTRIS operation phase.

A questionnaire (milestone “MS2.1 Methodology and criteria for validation of ACTRIS operation support and service provision”) has been developed to solicit feedback from the actors that were involved in the first round and get their views, recommendations and suggestions to setup a next round of an improved and efficient validation process. It will be distributed through specific tools (e.g. google forms) addressing specific questions only to selected actors. Answers to the questions will be analyzed by WP2 and discussed with the ACTRIS governing bodies in the process that will set the methodology for the recurrent validation process in the operation phase. In the end, the questionnaire could be also considered as permanent and living tool to assess the effectiveness and to continuously improve the ACTRIS validation process.

## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1 - Rules of Procedure Regarding Conflict of Interest in the Validation Advisory Group

#### Background

The Interim ACTRIS Council (IAC) has set up a Validation Task Group (VTG) and a Validation Advisory Group (VAG) to facilitate the first round of validation of the ACTRIS Central Facilities.

The members of the VAG are representatives of the IAC and it has been acknowledged that there may be a direct or indirect conflict of interest among the members of the VAG. The conflict of interest may arise from the following roles: An IAC and VAG member is also involved/has also been involved in the Central Facility preparation or implementation or is otherwise in a position where his/her objectivity could be compromised.

**Therefore, the following rules have been defined for the VAG for the validation process:**

1. Each member of the VAG has the responsibility to be aware of his/her conflict of interest, acknowledge it and address it openly in every meeting or discussion on the relevant Central Facilities.
2. In written documents, the possible conflict of interest should be openly addressed and pointed out.
3. Members with a conflict of interest cannot in any way be involved in an evaluator selection.
3. If the evaluators want to interview the Central Facility representatives and a hearing is arranged for this, a VAG member with a conflict of interest shall not attend such hearing of the relevant Central Facilities.
4. When the results of the validation are discussed in the IAC and a VAG member has a conflict of interest concerning a Central Facility, he/she cannot attend the discussions about that Central Facility but needs to leave the meeting room.
5. Members with a conflict of interest cannot participate in the decision-making process relating to the Central Facility concerned.

## ANNEX 2- VTG Declaration of non-conflict of interest

### ACTRIS Central Facility (CF) Validation Task Group member

ACTRIS Central Facility Validation Task Group (VTG) plans and facilitates the validation process but does not participate in the actual validation. The composition of VTG is approved by Interim ACTRIS Council with a principle that the VTG members are individuals from ACTRIS Preparatory Phase Project without a conflict of interest for this task. The conflict of interest is defined as:

1. The person is included in the host application of any ACTRIS CF.
2. The person is named in the documents as a potential resource for any ACTRIS CF.
3. The person is in a position where he/she makes decisions on funding, other resources or approval of any ACTRIS CF.
4. The person has other clear conflict of interest not listed above.

As people may change jobs, it is possible that a conflict of interest appears during the process. In such cases the Validation Task Group member should declare his/her conflict of interest to Validation Task Group and Validation Advisory Group (VAG) for decision whether he/she can continue in the Validation Task Group.

**I hereby declare that I do not have any of the above-mentioned conflict of interests as a member of the ACTRIS CF Validation task Group. In case a conflict of interest comes up later in the process, I declare that I shall inform the Validation Task Group and Validation Advisory Group.**

Date:

Name:

Organisation:



### ANNEX 3 -Evaluators declaration of non-conflict of interest

#### ACTRIS Central Facility evaluators

During the evaluation process of the ACTRIS Central Facilities an evaluator may have direct conflict of interest in the following situations:

5. The person is involved in completing the CF template being under evaluation.
6. The person is named in the documents as a potential resource for the evaluated Central Facility.
7. The person is in a position where he/she makes decisions on funding or other resources for the evaluated Central Facility.
8. The person has participated in writing the concept of the evaluated Central Facility and/or is a member in the Central Facility Validation Task Group or Advisory Group or is a delegate in Interim ACTRIS Council.
9. The person has other clear conflict of interest not listed above.

As people may change jobs, it is possible that a conflict of interest appears during the process. In such cases the evaluator should declare his/her conflict of interest and withdraw from the evaluation of the particular Central Facility.

**I hereby declare that I do not have any of the above-mentioned conflict of interests as an evaluator of the Central Facility identified below. In case a conflict of interest comes up later in the process, I declare that I shall withdraw from the process.**

Central facility being evaluated:

Date:

Name:

Organisation:

## ANNEX 4 – Application form

### About this document

**The CF validation applies to activities and costs of ACTRIS Central Facilities (CFs) in operational phase, or when the activities are ready for operational use. Construction and implementation of activities is not included in the validation.**

Following the request of Interim ACTRIS Council, the operation support to National Facilities (NFs) and services provided to users by any ACTRIS Central facility (CF), and the related costs have to be validated by experts external to the CF in question. **This includes validation of all CF activities which comprise operation support to NF, services to users, management of the CF, training, etc.).**

The first round of validation is needed before countries can sign ERIC Step 2 proposal. This round of validation is intended to verify the reliability of the estimation of the operation costs of ACTRIS CFs, and it is needed for the preparation of the 5-year financial plan of ACTRIS ERIC. As most of the CFs are still in the preparatory or early implementation phase during the first round, this validation should be considered as a validation of what the CFs plan to have when they will be operational, with the level of detail available at the time of filling the template.

**This template is intended for collecting information from the CF consortia. The CFs will be evaluated according to this information against the set of reference documents available on the ACTRIS web portal ([http://www.actris.eu/Projects/ACTRISPPP\(2017-2019\)/ACTRISCFvalidation/MaterialsforACTRISCentralFacilityvalidation.aspx](http://www.actris.eu/Projects/ACTRISPPP(2017-2019)/ACTRISCFvalidation/MaterialsforACTRISCentralFacilityvalidation.aspx)).**

The following sections of this template shall be filled for the entire Central Facility, including all of its Units. The CF will be evaluated as one entity. The planned activities and the related costs shall be described at the level of information available, giving the best possible estimate for operational use and allowing a more solid validation. Please consider that the validation shall be done by external evaluators that may not be familiar with all the details of the processes.

CFs are asked to describe the activities of the CF and the related effort and costs for the time and dimension when the activity will be in operational use. All ACTRIS-related operational activities of the CF shall be included, so that the planned annual sum of costs of the activities equals the annual sum of costs of the CF in the operational phase of ACTRIS. Activities and costs linked only to the construction or implementation of the Central Facility are not within the scope of the validation process and shall not be included, neither any costs linked to activities other than ACTRIS operations.

The activities may be grouped together into groups that lead to a common output (e.g. calibration of a specific instrument instead of each individual calibration step or management activities of the CF as one group). The grouping, however, has to enable the validation of “cost per service”.

Some of the questions are not directly applicable to all CFs or all activities. In such case the CFs are advised to mark “not applicable” and explain why this is the case. In the template the *grey italic* texts are instructions what to write in those points. They are to be replaced by the answers from the CF consortium. Specific terminology used in this template is explained in the end in chapter 7

## General information of the CF

Central Facility: *Name and acronym of the CF*

Leader of the Central Facility consortium: *Name and e-mail of the current leader of the CF consortium*

Deputy leader of the Central Facility consortium: *Name and e-mail of the current deputy leader of the CF consortium*

List of CF units:

CF Unit	Host institute(s)	CF Unit Head
<i>Name and acronym of the unit</i>	<i>Host institution(s) name(s) and acronym(s), and respective country(s)</i>	<i>Current CF Unit head, affiliation, and e-mail address</i>

## 2 Host institutions

Fill this table for each host institution participating in the CF. Include only the efforts and costs related to activities specific to the ACTRIS CF.

Host institute	Country	Annual total effort (in PMs) at each expertise level	Typical annual salary (in €) used in the calculation at	Annual staff costs allocated for the activity (in €)	Other annual direct costs, in €)	Annual indirect costs (in €)	Annual subcontracting costs, if any (in €)	Total annual cost of all ACTRIS CF activities at

			each expertise level					this host institute (in €)
<i>Host institution acronym</i>	<i>Country of the institution</i>	<i>L1 Expert manager L2 Qualified officer L3 Administrative assistant L4 Expert Scientist L5 Qualified operator L6 Technician</i>	<i>L1 L2 L3 L4 L5 L6</i>	<i>Sum of annual costs for work for ACTRIS CF</i>	<i>Other annual direct costs that are not included in the salaries (travel, use of equipment, use of rooms and laboratories, consumables, external services needed for operating the CF)</i>	<i>Absolute value of the indirect costs calculated according to internal rules, allocated to ACTRIS CF activities</i>	<i>Annual costs for subcontractin g parts of the work</i>	<i>Sum of all costs for the ACTRIS CF- activities at the host institute</i>
<b>Total</b>		<i>Total effort for all activities at the CF</i>		<i>Total cost of work at the CF</i>	<i>Total of other direct costs at the CF</i>	<i>Total indirect costs at the CF</i>	<i>Total subcontractin g costs at the CF</i>	<i>Total costs at the CF</i>

### 3 Financial confirmation

ACTRIS IMP ([www.actris.eu](http://www.actris.eu)) is supported by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 – Research and Innovation Framework Programme, H2020-INFRADEV-2018-2020, Grant Agreement number: 871115

Each host institution participating in the activities of the Central Facility has to clarify how the costs are calculated, in the check-list below. Consultation with the financial administration of the institute is expected. Please mark “Yes” or “No” in each box below.

Cost condition	Acronym of the host organization					
	Host 1	Host 2	Host 3	Host 4	Host 5	Host 6
Costs result from the estimated resources needed for the ACTRIS activities as described and quantified in validation template and are calculated based on objective and verifiable information.	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
Costs are estimated avoiding any possible double counting.	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
Personnel costs are limited to salaries including during parental leave, social security contributions, taxes and other costs included in the remuneration required under national law and the employment contract or equivalent appointing act.	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
Indirect costs are estimated in accordance with national laws, regulations and the Institute’s usual accounting practices, and apportioned to the ACTRIS activities pro-quota.	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
Expenses like depreciation; unrealized gains; unrealized losses; deferred income taxes; provisions and contingencies for future losses; etc. are not included.	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
Future costs are forecasted according to realistic assumptions and are net of inflation.	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No

If there is any box marked with “No” in the table, please give further details here:

## 4 Summary of activities of the CF

Please list here all the activities of the CF. Activities should be detailed at a reasonable level, to keep the document concise and in the same time understandable, and the costs quantifiable. It is recommended to list management of the CF as activity number 1 and management of units as number 2.

Activity number	Activity name	Unit(s) participating in the activity	Annual capacity of the activity (in a relevant unit)	Is this a service available to external users, operation support or both	Access to the activity	Importance of the activity	Total cost of the activity (in €)
<i>Running number</i>	<i>A descriptive name of the activity</i>	<i>List of all Units participating in the activity (acronyms)</i>	<i>How many units of output can the CF provide annually?</i>	<i>Service / operation support / both</i>	<i>For users: Physical / virtual / remote For operation support: hands-on / communication network</i>	<i>Crucial / necessary / added value (please check terminology from chapter 7)</i>	<i>Total cost of the activity</i>

## 5 Detailed description of each activity

Please fill this section for each individual activity listed in section 2. Fill the information in reasonable units and only where it is applicable (e.g. capacity or access are not relevant to management activities). Please make a different sub-chapter (heading level 2) for each activity. The information on any single activity should preferably not exceed three pages.

## 5.1 Activity 1: Name of activity as in section 4

1. **Name of the activity:** *Name as in section 4*

2. **Output of the activity:** *What does the activity produce?*

3. **Description of the activity:**

*A short description of the activity, and its process*

*Technical feasibility (existing and solid technology, state of the art versus long-term sustainability, etc.*

*If this has been already used by candidate NFs and with which kind of access (physical, remote, or virtual) and what capacity*

*If the activity is/will be open to users as service*

*If more than one unit is involved, what is the work flow / reason for duplication?*

*In specific cases links to external documents (e.g. available work flow diagrams) can be made here*

4. **For each host institute participating in the activity:**

Host institute	Contribution to the activity	Annual effort allocated for the activity (PMs per level of expertise)	Annual staff costs allocated for the activity (in €)	Other annual direct costs allocated for the activity (in €)	Annual indirect costs allocated for the activity (in €)	Annual subcontracting costs allocated for the activity (in €)	Total Annual costs related to this activity at the host institution (in €)
<i>Host institution acronym</i>	<i>How does the host institution contribute to this activity?</i>	<i>Annual effort for this activity in PMs for each level of expertise L1 Expert manager L2 Qualified officer</i>	<i>Annual costs for work in this activity</i>	<i>Other annual direct costs that are not included in the salaries</i>	<i>Absolute value of the indirect costs calculated according to</i>	<i>Annual costs for subcontracting parts of the</i>	<i>Total annual cost at the host institution for this activity</i>

		L3 Administrative assistant L4 Expert Scientist L5 Qualified operator L6 Technician		(travel, use of equipment, use of rooms and laboratories, consumables, external services needed for operating the CF)	internal rules, allocated to ACTRIS CF activity	work in the activity	
<b>Total:</b>		Total effort for this activity	Total cost of work for this activity	Total of other direct costs for this activity	Total indirect costs for this activity	Total subcontracting costs for this activity	Total costs for this activity

**5. Costs of the activity to be covered at the NF / user side:** *What costs are left to be covered at the NF / user side for participating in the activity (e.g. shipment of instrument to the TC, travel to training etc.)?*

**6. Estimate of annual need for operation support via this activity (in a relevant unit):**

*Estimate of operation support need annually in a reasonable unit, source of estimation and potential further assumptions made.*

**7. Estimate of annual need for service to external users via this activity (in a relevant unit):**

*Estimate of need by external users annually in a reasonable unit, source of estimation and potential further assumptions made.*

**8. Annual capacity of the activity (in a relevant unit)**



*Planned annual capacity of the CF for this activity.*

**9. Scalability of the capacity for this activity:**

*Describe here how easy it is to scale the capacity of this activity / category of activities to smaller / larger number, and how would the scaling affect the cost for this activity?*

**10. Has this or similar activity been provided in the past by the participating host institutions?**

*Describe here what has been provided, since when and in what quantity.*

**5.2 Activity 2: Name of activity as in section 4**

**5.3 Activity 3: Name of activity as in section 4**

## 6 Additional information

*Please insert on this page here any relevant information of the CF that is not included in the sections 1-5.*

## 7 Terminology

Explanations of specific terminology used in this template:

### **Access:**

“Access” means the legitimate and authorised physical, remote and virtual admission to, interactions with and use of an ACTRIS Central Facility or National Facility and to services offered to users.

“Physical access” means physically access of Users to the services of an ACTRIS Central Facility or National Facility.

“Remote access” means access to an ACTRIS Central Facility or National Facility without Users physically visiting the facility.

“Virtual access” means Free access provided through communication networks.

Hands-on: The person or instrument visits the facility (or vice versa) physically

via communication network: The needed information is provided without physical visit

### **Importance:**

“Crucial activities” are those without which ACTRIS cannot operate; to be urgently implemented

“Necessary activities” are those which are required in order to preserve the quality of ACTRIS data and services over time (e.g. to compensate for changing personnel and instrumentation); to be implemented soon after entering into operational phase

“Added value activities” are activities which are required for maintaining the state-of-the-art of ACTRIS operations (e.g. by developing and taking up new technologies and algorithms, or extending the list of ACTRIS variables); to be implemented in the first 10 years of the operational phase

## ANNEX 5 – Evaluation form

This evaluation template is used in the first round of the ACTRIS Central Facility (CF) validation process.

For each question the evaluator team is asked to give a mark whether the question is properly answered in the CF validation document by checking *yes* / *partially* / *no*. The evaluators are also asked to provide written comments to justify the choice and to give further comments and suggestions or express concerns.

**Date of evaluation:**

**Names of the evaluators:**

**Name of the rapporteur (evaluator drafting the single report):**

**Signature of the rapporteur:**

### *Identification of the ACTRIS Central Facility*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Head Office (HO)                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Data Centre (DC)                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centre for Aerosol In Situ Measurements              | <input type="checkbox"/> Centre for Cloud In Situ Measurements          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centre for Reactive Trace Gases In Situ Measurements | <input type="checkbox"/> Centre for Aerosol Remote Sensing              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centre for Cloud Remote Sensing                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Centre for Reactive Trace Gases Remote Sensing |

## 1 General information of the CF

<PLEASE COPY AND PASTE HERE BELOW THE CONTENT OF THE *SECTION 1* FROM THE CF VALIDATION DOCUMENT>

Leader of the Central Facility consortium:

Deputy leader of the Central Facility consortium:

List of CF units:

CF Unit	Host institute(s)	CF Unit Head
<NAME AND ACRONYM OF THE UNIT>	<HOST INSTITUTION(S) NAME(S) AND ACRONYM(S), AND RESPECTIVE COUNTRY(S)>	<CURRENT CF UNIT HEAD, AFFILIATION, AND E-MAIL ADDRESS>

## 2 Host institutions

This section aims to evaluate the host institutions participating in the CF and their share of the total work, and relates to *section 2* of the CF validation document, which defines the host institutions participating in the CF and their share of the total work. It includes only the efforts and costs related to the specific ACTRIS CF activities.

Host Institutions	
<b>2.1 Are the contributions of the host institutions adequately justified and dimensioned?</b> If not or only partially, do the evaluators see potential problems arising from the size and share of responsibilities of the participation of different host institutions.	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no
<INSERT YOUR COMMENT>	

### 3 Financial confirmation

This relates to the information given in Section 3 of the CF validation document and refers to the financial methodology used for estimating the costs.

Financial confirmation	
<b>3.1 Are the costs at different host institutions calculated with the same conditions (i.e. all the units declare the same yes/no in the financial confirmation)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no
<INSERT YOUR COMMENT>	
<b>3.2 In case a condition was answered with 'No', do the evaluators see that the potential exceptions from the methodology are justified? (see also any additional information presented below the table of Section 3)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no
<INSERT YOUR COMMENT>	

## 4 Activities of the CF

This section allows to evaluate the CF activities according to Section 4 (Summary of activities of the CF) and Section 5 (Detailed description of each activity) of the CF validation document. Each CF activity, including the access, capacity and costs related to the activity, should be separately evaluated. CFs are instructed to provide details at a reasonable level, to keep the validation document concise and at the same time understandable, and the costs quantifiable. They are recommended to list management of the CF as activity number 1 and management of CF units as number 2.

The list of activities in the first two columns of the table below should be conform with the table found in Section 4 of the provided CF validation document. Please make sure that each activity is being evaluated.

Question 4.1: Is the technology or methodology feasible, efficient, reliable, and suited for the purpose?

Question 4.2: Are the planned resources justified and realistic? If not, would there be a possibility to lower the efforts and still get the same output at the same level of quality?

Question 4.3: Is the CF capacity appropriately dimensioned to the foreseen user needs and operation support?

Question 4.4: Do the evaluators see the importance of the activity (crucial / necessary / added value\*) in the same way as the CF does? If not, please provide your view on the importance of the activity.

**\* Importance of an activity:**

- *“Crucial activities” are those without which ACTRIS cannot operate; to be urgently implemented*
- *“Necessary activities” are those which are required in order to preserve the quality of ACTRIS data and services over time (e.g. to compensate for changing personnel and instrumentation); to be implemented soon after entering into the operational phase*
- *“Added value activities” are activities which are required for maintaining the state-of-the-art of ACTRIS operations (e.g. by developing and taking up new technologies and algorithms, or extending the list of ACTRIS variables); to be implemented in the first 10 years of the operational phase*

CF Activities						
Activity number	Activity name	Q4.1	Q 4.2	Q 4.3	Q4.4	Comments
<PLEASE COPY HERE THE FIRST COLUMN OF THE TABLE IN SECTION 4 OF THE PROVIDED CF	<PLEASE COPY HERE THE SECOND COLUMN OF THE TABLE IN SECTION 4 OF THE PROVIDED CF	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially	<INSERT YOUR COMMENT>

VALIDATION DOCUMENT.>	VALIDATION DOCUMENT.>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> no	
		<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no	<INSERT YOUR COMMENT>
		<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no	<INSERT YOUR COMMENT>

## 5 Evaluation summary

Specific observations	
5.1 Are all CF activities well-described?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no
5.2 Are the CF activities – as a whole – reasonable and justified?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no
5.3 Is the capacity of the CF – as a whole – adequately dimensioned to cover the needs of users and operation support to NFs?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no
5.4 Are any relevant CF activities missing?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no
5.5 Are any CF activities irrelevant or unnecessary?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no
5.6 Are the planned resources realistic and justified?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> partially <input type="checkbox"/> no



<b>Overall assessment</b>
<INSERT YOUR COMMENT>
<b>Major critical issues</b>
<INSERT YOUR COMMENT>
<b>Recommendations</b>
<INSERT YOUR COMMENT>
<b>Specific questions, if applicable, addressed to the CF consortium concerned</b>

<INSERT YOUR QUESTIONS>

