

**Acronym: ASSEMBLE Plus**

***Title: Association of European Marine Biological Laboratories Expanded***

**Grant Agreement: 730984**

## **Deliverable D2.2**

# **Final Meeting Minutes**

**December 2022**

**Lead parties for Deliverable: SU**

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## ASSEMBLE Plus – Closing Assembly

### September 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> 2022

Participants		
First name	Last name	Institution
Adelino	Canário	CCMAR
Alessandra	Petrucciani	Università Politecnica delle Marche
Ana	Cavadas	CIIMAR - EMBRC-PT
Ana Margarida	Amaral	CCMAR
Andreja	Ramšak	NIB
Avril	Hanbidge	AquaTT
Axel Edward	Miller	SAMS
Ben	Williamson	Marine Scotland Science Aberdeen
Cécile	Cécile	EMBRC-France
Christian	Galasso	SZN
Claire	Jolly	OECD
Davide	Di Cioccio	EMBRC-ERIC
Eleni	Galliopoulou	University of Thessaly
Enric	Thomas	SU
Estefania	Paredes	UV
Euan R.	Brown	Heriot -Watt University
Eva-Maria	Brodte	Alfred- Wegener Institut für Polar
Gemma	Gimenez Papiol	EMBRC-France
Georgios	Kotoulas	HCMR
Giorgio Maria	Vingiani	Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn
Giovanna Cristina	Varese	University of Torino
Heidi	Tillin	MBA
Ian	Probert	SU
Ibon	Cancio	UPV/EHU
Joanna	Norkko	University of Helsinki
Jorune	Sakalauskaite	Life Sciences Centre, Vilnius University
Julie	Boeuf	SU OOB
Katrina	Exter	VLIZ
Marion	Amalfitano	EMBRC-France
Mark	Johnson	NUIG
Matthias	Obst	GU



Mercedes	Arjona	SU
Nathalie Turque	Turque	EMBRC-France
Nicolas	Pade	EMBRC-ERIC
Niklas	Andersson	GU
Oystein	Varpe	UIB
Panagiotis	Kasapidis	HCMR
Philippe	Agard	SU
Pierre	Quertenmont	EREA
Piotr	Kukliński	Institute of Oceanology Polish Academy of Sciences
Rafał	Lasota	University of Gdansk
Raffaella	Cattaneo	EMBRC France - IMEV
Simon	Berkowicz	Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Suncica	Bosak	Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb
Suzanne	Williams	Natural History Museum
Wiebe	Kooistra	SZN
Xabier	Lekube	UPV/EHU

Meeting venue: Centre International de Conférences Sorbonne Universités Jussieu campus – Paris, France

### **Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> – 14:00 - 19:30 (CEST)**

The coordinator Nicolas Pade (NP) opened the plenary session and welcomed the participants. He mentioned that we were essentially there to sort of rouse things up and celebrate what we managed to achieve in the past five years. He remarked that we should have done these four years, but with COVID, we had a big issue with our transnational access. We had to extend the project for another year in order to be able to provide all that access.

NP presented some thoughts about the project: how much this project was successful and well received and effective. The huge number of users the project had, and also the outcomes as well. He also launched set of questions that were to be answered during the meeting: what were the major achievements that we had, what have we done over the past five years?, what does the future hold for us?, what are we going to do with all the results that we have?, etc.

NP passed the word to Philippe Agard, Vice Chancellor of research, innovation and international at Sorbonne Université. He said that it was really his pleasure to participate. He was proud because beyond science, this infrastructure and the human network behind addressed a major societal need.



## Work packages presentations

### *JRA1 Genomics observatories*

#### **Georgios Kotoulas (GK), HCMR**

GK explained the outcome of the WP and he highlighted that that nobody was in favour of sharing the data as a negative found. He argued that the objective was to improve and to build new services so it would be good to offer data in the stations.

He presented the OSD stations with sequence data that was already open. The JRA1 went beyond the proof of principles having impact via several activities, such as:

- Bringing FAIR data and standards culture to a very broad community
- Impacting collaborations between Infrastructures: EMBRC – LifeWatch – ELIXIR
- Development of work flows for data management and analysis

They had a community with 23 partner institutes and 25 observatories. They coordinated this community to organise sampling events.

He talked about “Best practices” included in Handbook, Molecular protocols, Guides to Access & Benefit, Sharing (ABS), Data Management Plan (DMP). And he finished his intervention listing the achievements:

- Numerous manuscripts of scientific studies based on ARMS MBON data
- Many partners (new and old) seem prepared to continue after Assemble+ and ready to pay for sequencing & analysis
- Great data set for MSc students and exchange students Policy impact Policy impact
- Sweden: National Environmental Agency (SwAM) co-financed 2020 sampling events and public tenders for hard boom monitoring include ARMS
- Denmark: ARMS added to annual monitoring of hard rocky reefs Industry demand
- Strong interest by SMEs (environmental consultancies) to add DNA-based monitoring to their profile

Matthias Obst (MO) explained how this WP contributed to the impact of the project and as lessons learnt, he mentioned that data management was priory complex and may be the last bottleneck to fully leverage GO networks.

MO remarked that they also developed a spin off from the recordings and they created tutorials, and some of them were become quite popular. He looked up the statistics and within eleven months. They had seven hundred views. They also promised to deliver the best practices so they produced four core documents used as handbook, which is basically describing the field and laboratory processing concerning molecular protocols. Also, the guidelines to abs and the data management plan.



MO concluded saying that with the data set that accumulated over three years, they can go and look at the diversity on a continental European scale and across different environments, with varying human impact or human pressures in this environment.

Matthias's iPhone: across these habitats on the hitchhiker State. These are species that, coming from far away from another continent, and they are almost absent in marine protected areas while they are actually very present, and very often in these ports and marinas. So, these kinds of things are possible now, and what we see here is this possibility of really data driven science, and it's now lifting off the ground that we have good, well created data sets.

## **JRA2 Cryobanking of Marine Organisms**

### **Estefania Paredes (EP), ECIMAT**

EP summarized the different WP tasks and their objectives. She remarked the development of 2 workshops and the different between these 2 events.

She explained how to ship samples between different stations in the same country and between different countries. Finally, she introduced the Lessons learnt, Exploitation of results and Impacts:

- Cryopreservation of new species and cell types. Protocols available in: web ASSEMBLE Plus
- Spreading knowledge about the uses and benefits of cryopreservation: meetings, workshops, networking with other projects (like Aquaexcel or Synthesis), Organization of a brokerage event at the Assemble conference 2020.
- Brockerage event on Cryopreservation: they had 4 speakers ranging different interests and points of view/needs: from a private company, a researcher awarded by SHERPAdoMar for their entrepreneurship on aquaculture, a researcher working on conservation of marine biodiversity and a representative of JRA2 that presented the CRYOMAR Protocol Toolbox and new protocols developed. Attendance 32 people.
- Communications to meetings  $\geq 10$  In person + Online presentations.
- Results obtained range from Proof of concept- application of cryopreserved cells, Coordination and standardization of protocols, Expand / implement marine biological resources in biobanks, Shared Good practices in biobanking cryopreserved cells, equipment options, liquid nitrogen handling and safety.
- Strengthen or created links in the cryo-users community that will last in time. There have been several TAs attracted by the knowledge on Cryopreservation/Biobanking.

## **NA1 Improving TA provision**

### **Wiebe Kooistra (WK), SZN**

WK explained the four tasks of the NA1 work page mentioning that there were two categories of activities. One is to facilitate the transnational access and second to improve the transnational access.



Concerning task 1, the actions completed were: TA documents, templates and forms updated and 9th Call organised to use up remaining TA budget. He also mentioned that as legacy they had TA-documents as templates for future use that would need to be adapted for new needs, regulations, user types

Regarding task 2, the actions completed were: Info about services easily accessible, ARIA proposal submission and processing system and Data Management Plan for TA users based on H2020 format. And as legacy, they have good experience with ARIA system and specifics about instruments and liaison officers

The task 3 funding were: when queried users and COVID: access to single providers challenging.

WK continued his intervention explaining task 4 about to share best practice and he gave few ideas about legacy such as:

- Raise service staff awareness about possible improvements in their services, raise quality, competitiveness
- They did a set workshop until COVID-19 arrived. So workshop should be organised in a different way.

WK finished his intervention talking about task 5: Improving efficiency of service provision. The conclusion of a survey of 26 responses was that “much to be improved”.

The project officer Pierre Quertenmont (PQ) made an intervention. He remarked that is good to report things work and did not work. It is important to report all those aspects in the final report mainly for the EC policies. It is important to know what works and what does not work and the reasons.

NP argued that pooling together the calls for transnational access in different research infrastructure was more burden than actually making their life easier.

PQ responded that they want a more integrated landscape, and the project showed very well how diverse and complex the landscape of research infrastructure is. But they also want the researchers' life to be facilitated. So there is a balance to find there, and we they have to think how to do it.

## **TA Transnational Access**

### **Davide Di Cioccio (DD), EMBRC**

DD mentioned that in the project there are 36 marine stations in 15 countries on site or remote access. DD explained the application process, what we offer, standard consumables, reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses, shipping of biological resources and/or analysed samples. There were 9 calls were the last access was in July 2022. In the preparation phase, stations established a network of TNA-liaison officers, a service catalogue and an access portal and executed procedures described in the TNA-policy document.

As main outcomes, DD mentioned 740 application by which 527 were accepted. In call 8 and call 9 they received a lot of applications.



DD remarked that the project has hosted 542 users with different profiles (PhD, postdoc, early career, senior, etc.) but there were not users that come from the industry. Concerning the TA users' feedback there was high percentage of satisfaction. DD detailed how the real results of the project were aligned with the foreseen achievements.

Concerning the industry feedback about whether or not the TNA is a good instrument for companies, the statistics showed that:

- Private companies want more direct interactions with the institutions
- Access should happen at proximity and not at transnational scale
- Extended period of access compared to our TNA programme (30 days)

### **Feedback from the stations about TNA**

**Moderator: Nicolas Pade**

In this session, meetings participants made comments and talk openly about their feedback from the stations about TNA.

They discussed about the paperwork during the application process, the unwillingness of uploading publications to the open data portal, budget restrictions, how to improve the services, the attractiveness of the project during the calls, the preferences between remote or in site access, among other issues.

NP commented about the enormous problems for the ninth call related to the budget allocations among partners and having to balance it. It was removing budgets from one part to the other, which can't just be moving, but it has to be according to the unit of access. The necessity to open several amendments to do so. This was just not effective and not good use of time, and definitely not that good uses money.

PQ responded that they will move more and more to different kind of mechanism to give budget flexibility to the partners. The way to calculate costs will be completely different. This is because your feedback is so appreciated.



**Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup> – 9:00 - 17:30 (CEST)**

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Ben	Williamson	Marine Scotland Science Aberdeen
Cécile	Cécile	EMBRC-France
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Georgios	Kotoulas	HCMR
Giorgio Maria	Vingiani	Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn
Giovanna Cristina	Varese	University of Torino
Hector	Escriva	OOB-SU
Ian	Probert	SU
Ibon	Cancio	UPV/EHU
Jorune	Sakalauskaite	Life Sciences Centre, Vilnius University
Julie	Boeuf	SU OOB
Katrina	Exter	VLIZ
Marion	Amalfitano	EMBRC-France
Mercedes	Arjona	SU
Nathalie Turque	Turque	EMBRC-France
Nicolas	Pade	EMBRC-ERIC
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Raffaella	Cattaneo	EMBRC France - IMEV





Simon	Berkowicz	Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Suncica	Bosak	Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb
Suzanne	Williams	Natural History Museum
Wiebe	Kooistra	SZN
Xabier	Lekube	UPV/EHU

### **JRA3 Functional genomics**

#### **Hector Escriva (HE), SU**

HE presented an overview about the context of junctional genomics. The combination of systemic and small-scale approaches to establish links between genomic information and phenotypes is a central issue in modern biology. While systemic approaches have been developed for several model marine organisms, small-scale functional approaches are significantly lagging. In this JRA3 they proposed to fill this gap by implementing functional genomics approaches for a panel of emerging marine model organisms and several techniques for generation of genetic resources were well established in the laboratories of partners participating in this JRA.

He recalled the work packages, participants, deliverables, publications, scientific production and results.

NP argued that he was really pleased that we have got all these protocols, and he was wondering: Do you have any idea how much they would use? Do you have any colleagues that have used them to reproduce the results, or that we had any feedback at all on the publication from anyone about the utility, whether the people being able to reduce it whether they pay?. HE replied that he did not do this work.

### **JRA4 Development of instrumentation**

#### **Ian Probert (IP), SU**

IP introduced the work package. There were two tasks in the work packages. One was designing, improving up and harmonizing different types of experimental systems and the second task was the establishment of technical design specifications. Each of the partners had their particular interests so they developed quite a wide variety. Different types of experimental system, and at least go from kind of in situ systems to outside.

IP explained the achievements of this work package: UH: “Hotbox” experimental system, Outdoor mesocosms with flow-through sea water supply, HUJI: Red Sea Simulator, Indoor mesocosms with multiparameter control, SU-SBR : Tidal Simulator, UGENT: pH manipulation system, SU-IMEV:



Multiparametric aquarium system, SZN: Seagrass mesocosms, SZN: Pholia light system, etc. He mentioned the difficulties encountered such as delays in renovation of aquarium facilities (IMEV, UH, NUIG) and restrictions on testing / using systems and partner exchanges due to COVID. He concluded with the legacy: new experimental systems open for internal and external access and research Aquarium Infrastructure database opened to additional marine stations and integrated into EMBRC site.

***Intervention of Euan Brown for the memory of recognised member of the Advisory Board Michael Charles Thorndyke 1946-2022.***

## ***NA2 Improving virtual access to marine biological stations data, information and knowledge***

**Katrina Exter (KE), VLIZ**

The scope of this work packages was: 1. Data management, 2. Virtual access to data and publications, 3. Managing the OSD and ARMS data and 4. Creating the virtual access platform for OSD and ARMS data. She explained each activity and the outcomes of each of one.

Then she continued with the legacy. KE explained in details the four main assets:

1. FAIR course. This is free for all, and we could potentially expand the course in the future. She said that she would have liked to have resources to help much more with the individual ASSEMBLE Plus partners as needed, as there clearly is a knowledge gap.

### 2. EMO BON

As Georgios explained, this is a legacy of JRA1: lesson learned from the FAIR data management work with JRA1 has contributed much to EMO BON's data management.

### 3. DM BON

A data management system (VLIZ) which has evolved out of the need to be more efficient in managing and publishing JRA1 data: making the available to scientists, developers, to data portals and for use in genomics workflows.

### 4. Datasets and publications

Publications and deliverables, as are those datasets which were made available and open access.

## ***FAIR Data for Marine Biologists course presentation***

The ASSEMBLE Plus course FAIR data for marine biologists aim to obtain practical understanding of what FAIR Data means for researchers to learn about and to practice some of the steps that can be taken to achieve that. It is necessary to produce some experimental data before starting to do this course. The course contents: approx. 1 hr per lesson and it has 5 lessons.



### **NA3 Engaging with users' community**

**Adelino Canario (AD), CCMAR**

AD presented the specific objectives of the work package:

- To build strong RI capacity in value creation, impact and stakeholder engagement
- To ensure effective consultation with key end-users in order to strengthen the positioning of European marine biological stations as hot-spots for excellent marine science
- To carry out dedicated Knowledge Transfer to relevant industry and policy stakeholders
- To facilitate Knowledge Exchange (encouraging both formal and informal science education) amongst the marine biological scientific community with the aim to build capacity in individual scientists.

Then he summarised the main achievements:

- Survey of partners soft skills requirements (46 responses). Report on guidelines, tools & resources to support target members of RIs. Based on findings, a training series were developed covering the topics: Intellectual property; Knowledge Transfer (KT); Media skills; Networking; Outreach & Stakeholder Engagement; & Policy Development.
- Training in Outreach & Stakeholder Engagement. Internal workshop "Best Practice in KT & Impact Creation" at 2<sup>nd</sup> GA in 2018, 28 attendees representing 20 organisations

CCMAR also organised two conferences: ASSEMBLE Plus Conference 2021 (18–29 January 2021) - 574 registered participants and Assemble Plus Conference 2022 (13-24 June 2022) - 246 registered participants.

### **NA4 Long-term sustainability**

**Ibon Cancio (IC), UPV/EHU**

IC introduced the objectives of the work package: 1. Analyse the past/present scientific, technological & social performance of MBSs, 2. Analyse the business models of MBSs Infrastructures & projection into the future, 3. Funding streams into the future.

IC indicated that the Book was completed and images produced and gathered, the edition process was initiated and 500 copies were ready for sharing with project partners.

They carried out workshops on SWOT and business model analysis: one workshop in presence and two workshops on-line.

In this work packages a business plan of MBSs was developed in which the following aspects were addressed:

- Strengthen networking (wider ecosystem)
- Balance of activities between multidisciplinary research activities and service provision



- Strengthen governance for innovation realigning mission to EU needs
- Strengthen marketing strategy & service/pricing policies (dedicated staff)

Concerning the sustainability, IC listed set of actions: mainly conducted along discussions for next EMBRC budgetary cycle, regional Innovation Ecosystems in Blue Bioeconomy, internationalisation (Japan, Australia, South-Africa, EU-LAC Res INFRA, RI-VIS), new countries (MBSs) joining EMBRC and relationships with RIs (inter)nationally among others.

## ***Ocean Economy 2045***

**Claire Jolly (CJ), OECD – invited speaker**

CJ introduced the topic “Looking ahead at THE Ocean economy in 2045” and some thoughts on the value of Research Infrastructure. She remarked the OECD STI Ocean Mission: Improve the measurement of ocean economic activities, and provide evidence on the role of science, technology and innovation as drivers of ocean sustainability to support policy-makers.

She mentioned the six selected international milestones to improve ocean sustainability in 2022 and the benefits from the research & innovation networks such as: improved cross-sector synergies, accessing various research facilities and specialised knowledge, building new scientific capacity and knowledge (and retaining skills), developing & bringing to market brand new products for industry, developing new schemes to support blue SMEs and start-ups and diffusing knowledge beyond the ocean economy. Independent assessments suggested positive impacts within and beyond the ocean economy. So she remarked that EMBRC could be a good case in point facilitating marine biology research for users across Europe.

## ***WP2 – Management***

**Mercedes Arjona (MA), SU**

MA presented an overview about the project from the management point of view. She talked about ASSEMBLE Plus at glance, budget status, amendments and pending deliverables and 3rd (and last) reporting period. She remarked that 4 amendments were submitted during the project life in order to change partners name, budget reallocation, project duration and deliverables status. She explained what are the documents needed for the last reporting and the foreseen deadlines.



## **WP2 – Communication**

### **Avril Hanbidge (AH), AquaTT**

AH introduced the objectives of this work package: Management of internal communication of the project objectives, partnership, expected impacts, outputs and results of the project; Facilitation of communication flow of project partners; Development and updating of plan for internal communication.

She summarised the activities carried out during the project and mainly during this last period. She also mentioned the update of the D2.4 which includes: update of the Advance Notice protocol, update of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Patents, progress update of the Knowledge Management and Transfer process, inclusion of the Internal Code of Social Media conduct and adjustments according to feedback from the previous phases of the project to ensure effectiveness of efforts going forward post-project. She talked about press releases, stakeholder database, social media, website, promotional materials, branded merchandise, video and the four e-newsletters

At the end of this session, the question arose as to whether or not the website will continue to function. This discussion finished without clear answer.

## **Legacy and Sustainability of ASSEMBLE Plus**

### **Nicolas Pade (NP), EMBRC**

NP presented the achievements in the three areas of the project: the Transnational access, Networking activities and Joint Research activities. He talked about the impact of the project that is materialised in these aspects: demonstrated the worth of marine stations, strengthened and matured service provision, contributed significantly to the establishment, running, services and protocols of EMBRC, a suite of new tools, protocols, platforms and resources open and accessible to all and built strong links between service providers.

He also deeply talked about the legacy and sustainability. As next steps NP suggested to ensure all assets preserved and accessible at the end of the project, to clarify that the spirit of ASSEMBLE Plus will continue in EMBRC and to prepare a message for the ASSEMBLE Plus website to point people to EMBRC.

The Closing Assembly was closed by the project coordinator, thanking the attendees and the project participants for their attendance at the event, effort and work.



## ASSEMBLE Plus – Closing Assembly Agenda

### September 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> 2022

**Paris, Campus Pierre et Marie Curie (4 place Jussieu - 75005 Paris)**

**Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> – 14:00 - 17:30 (CEST)**

**Room 107: corridor in the towers 44-54; 1st floor. Access from tower 44.**

For the remote connection to the Plenary session of the Closing Assembly on September 14, click here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82599413691?pwd=TU54TDdDbnpVVFVrek1jVFBCVGphZz09>

Meeting ID: 825 9941 3691; Passcode: **627991**

Plenary session		
from 13.30	Registration	
14:00 - 14:15	Introduction	Nicolas Pade (EMBRC)
14:15 - 14:25	Welcome from SU	TBD
14:25 - 14:55	JRA1 Genomics observatories	Georgios Kotoulas (HCMR)
14:55 - 15:25	JRA2 Cryobanking of Marine Organisms	Estefania Paredes (ECIMAT)
15:25 - 15:50	<i>Coffee break</i>	
15:50 - 16:20	NA1 Improving TA provision	Wiebe Kooistra (SZN)
16:20 - 16:50	WP2 - Transnational Access	Davide Di Cioccio (EMBRC)
16:50 - 17:20	Feedback from the stations about TNA	Moderator: Nicolas Pade
17:20 - 17:30	Wrap-up	Nicolas Pade (EMBRC)



## Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup> – 9:00 - 17:30 (CEST)

**Room 107: corridor in the towers 44-54; 1st floor. Access from tower 44.**

For the remote connection to the Plenary session of the Closing Assembly on September 15, click here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81687369283?pwd=OTR4cVEwNURseGZja1psSXVIZDVFQT09>

Meeting ID: 816 8736 9283; Passcode: **209061**

Plenary session		
9:00	Registration & welcome	Nicolas Pade (EMBRC)
9:05 - 9:35	JRA3 Functional genomics	Hector Escriva (SU)
9:35 - 10:05	JRA4 Development of instrumentation	Ian Probert (SU)
10:05 - 10:35	JRA5 Scientific diving	Martin Sayer (TSL)
10:35 - 11:00	<i>Coffee break + poster session</i> <i>Room 102 - Hall de réception</i>	
11:00 - 11:30	NA2 Improving virtual access to marine biological stations data, information and knowledge	Katrina Exter (VLIZ)
11:30 - 12:00	FAIR Data for Marine Biologists course presentation	Katrina Exter (VLIZ)
12:00 - 12:30	NA3 Engaging with users community	Adelino Canário (CCMAR)
12:30 - 14:00	<i>Lunch break + poster session</i> <i>Room 102 - Hall de réception</i>	
14:00 - 14:30	NA4 Long-term sustainability	Ibon Cancio (UPV/EHU)
14:30 - 15:00	Ocean Economy 2045	Claire Jolly (OECD)
15:00 - 15:30	WP2 - Management	Mercedes Arjona (SU)
15:30 - 15:55	WP2 - Communication	Avril Hanbidge (AquaTT)
15:55 - 17:30	Legacy and Sustainability of ASSEMBLE Plus	Nicolas Pade (EMBRC)
19:30	<i>Social dinner</i> <i>Péniche on the bank, opposite 3 Quai de Montebello 75005 Paris.</i> <a href="https://www.lanouvelleseine.com/">https://www.lanouvelleseine.com/</a>	

