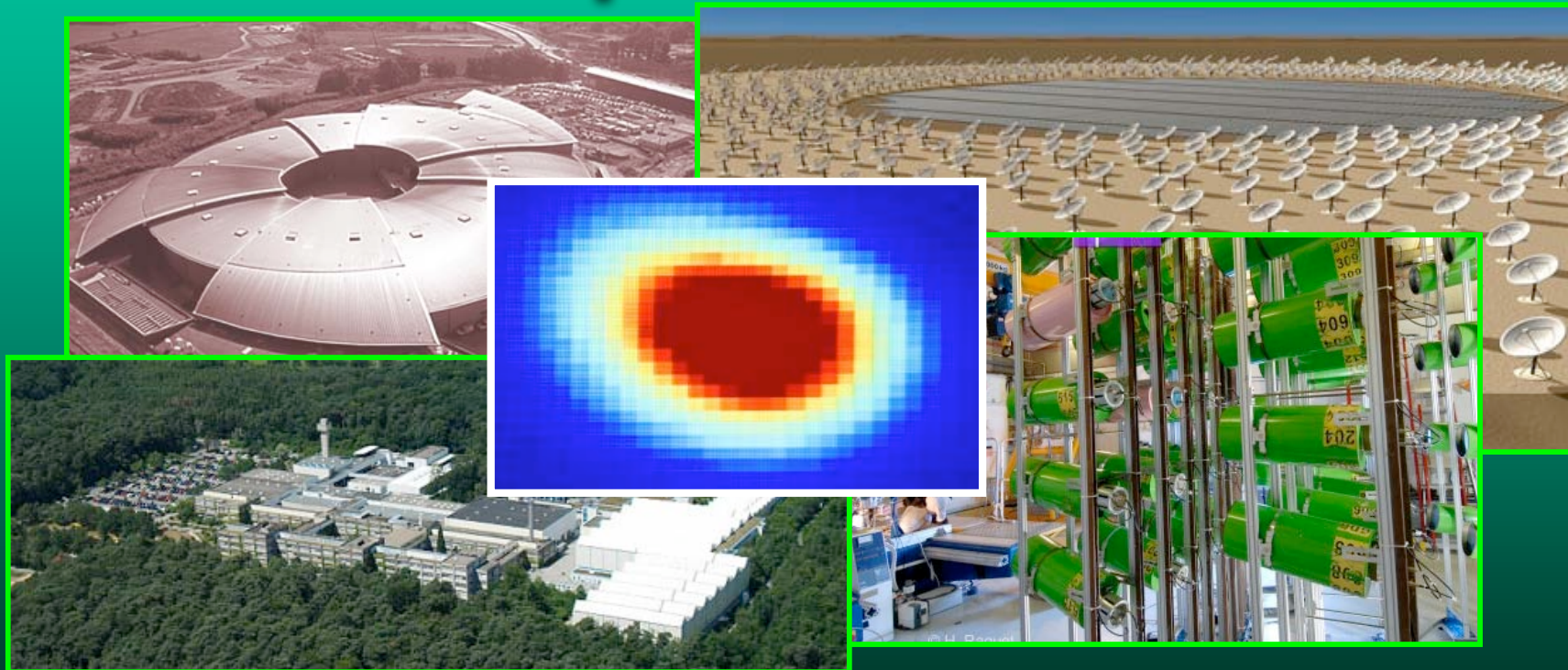


Evaluation: review on criteria and methodology for defining the open access



Giorgio Margaritondo

Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)

Future Access to European Research Infrastructures - Lund 2009

We start from excellent foundations:

1. The long, practical and positive experience with open access in existing European infrastructures
2. A large collection of European success stories
3. Europe in this case is ahead of the rest of the world



The 2009 success story for open access at large (mostly European) facilities:

Nobel Prize in Chemistry for Ramakrishnan, Yonath and Steitz

The specific case of synchrotrons and FELs:

Round
Table



Three decades of
EC-supported
cooperation and
coordination with
open access

Byproduct: solid and extensive
data on the impact of open access:

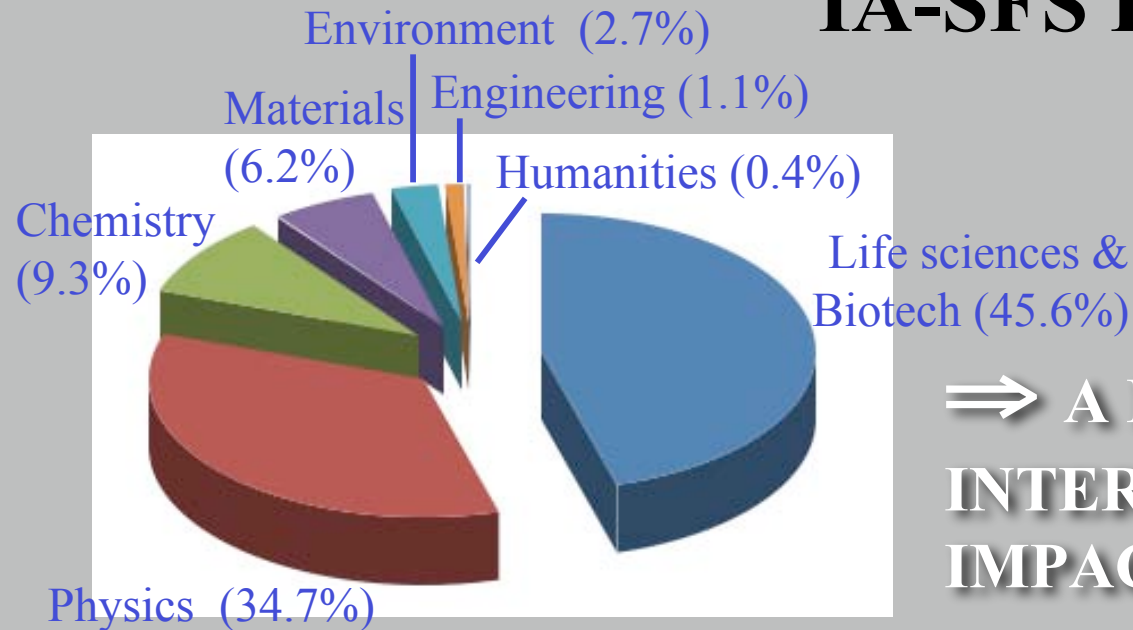
IA-SFS (entire duration):

Proposals eligible for support:	7,954
Selected:	3,441
Rejected:	4,513

Only 43% accepted
proposals (based on
merit) after the filters
to obtain other types
of funding

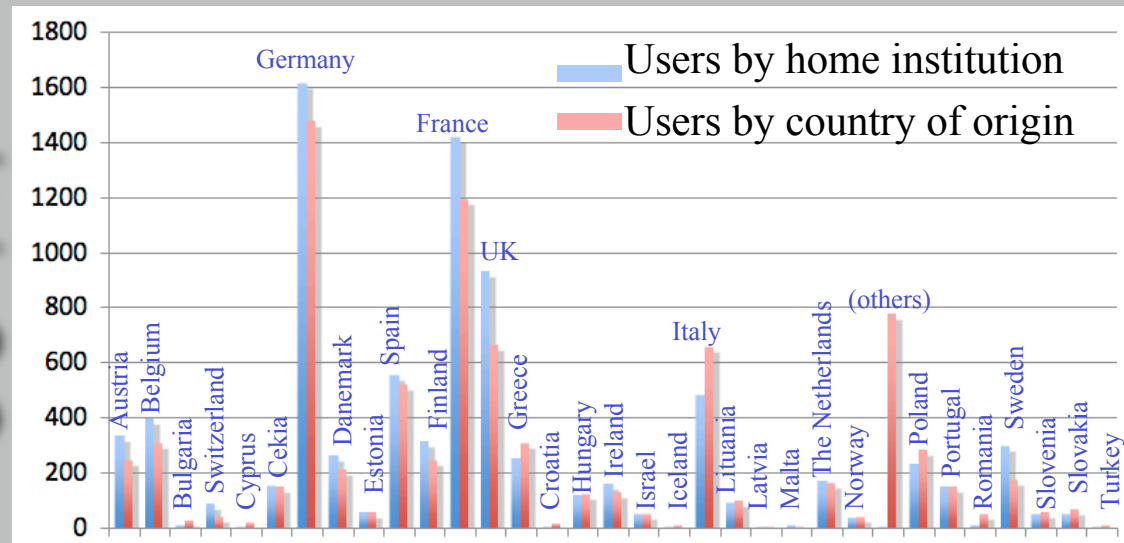
⇒ A VERY RIGOROUS AND FAIR SELECTION

IA-SFS I3 (entire duration)



⇒ A BROAD
INTERDISCIPLINARY
IMPACT

⇒ AN IMPORTANT
ROLE THROUGHOUT
EUROPE... AND
BEYOND



IA-SFS I3: summary of the 5-year quantitative impact of open access to synchrotrons and free electron lasers in Europe

- A consortium of **15 national facilities** (synchrotrons and free electron lasers) plus **ESRF**, including all major European players in the field
- The **largest network of research facilities in the world**
- Support for **8343 users** (9437 access trips) from all over Europe
- Support for **3441 projects** in many different disciplines
- Total funding: 27 million Euro, of which **19.35 (72%)** for transnational open access -- 2 kEuro per access trip

IA-SFS I3: examples of the special positive impact of open access

- Of the supported users, **>45% were young researchers** (≤ 35 years of age)
- And **30% were women**
- We supported for three years the work of the team of the 2009 Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan.

⇒ OPEN ACCESS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG SCIENTISTS, WOMEN AND RESEARCHERS FROM LESS-FAVORED COUNTRIES

⇒ BUT TO BE EFFECTIVE IT MUST BE PROACTIVE AND FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED: ACCESS OPEN ONLY “IN PRINCIPLE” DOES NOT HELP!

*Cowardice asks the question - is it safe?
Expediency asks the question - is it politic?*

*Vanity asks the question - is it popular?
But conscience asks the question - is it right?*

*And there comes a time when one must take
a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor
popular; but one must take it because it is
right.*

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Generalizing the vision of Open Access: “WHY OPEN ACCESS?”

Three key reasons, one European motivation:

1. Open access boosts the scientific and technological return of the large investments in central facilities
 2. Transnational open access enables scientists from less-favored countries to perform top-level research without emigration and brain drain
 3. Open access enhances the research opportunities of women and young researchers
- **Europe is more advanced than other parts of the world in providing “proactive” open access to its facilities: it is at the top, let us keep it there!**

“HOW TO IMPLEMENT OPEN ACCESS?”:

5 principles

1. Selection based on merit, assessed by peer review
2. “Proactive” open access: merit-selected scientists must receive financial support and local technical assistance -- otherwise open access is just a virtual notion
3. Hosting facilities providing open access must receive adequate financial support for this task
4. Open access must be transnational, within and beyond Europe
5. Effective open access requires long-term planning and timely funding and implementation of new state-of-the-art facilities

“WHAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED IN OPEN ACCESS?”

- 1. User fees must be rejected: the corresponding overheads are nothing more than a waste of money**
- 2. Open access should be timely and flexible, avoiding needless red tape. Innovation should be stimulated, not discouraged**
- 3. Nothing can ever justify the use of national quotas in open access**
- 4. Any “hidden way” to sabotage open access should be rejected -- such as the infamous “user tickets”**

“HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OPEN ACCESS?”

1. Targeted funding for young investigators and researchers from less-favored countries
2. Coordinated handling of access requests by multiple facilities (e.g., “one request for all European synchrotrons”)
3. More flexibility with short waiting time in special cases
4. Expanded use of “block” allocations of open access (e.g., blocks of beamtime at synchrotrons for certain domains)
5. Better infrastructure for remote-control experiments
6. Better communications with political leaders, the public and potential users, in particular from “new” domains

“WHAT WENT WRONG SO FAR”?

- **Open access is a clear success story for Europe. Then, why is the financial support for open access becoming increasingly difficult to obtain?**
- **Why are new communities (e.g., medical researchers) so difficult to convince about the notion of open access?**
- **Why should we often hide open transnational access to politicians rather than being proud of its smashing success?**

...and, above all:

- **Elettra is a typical example valid for all similar facilities**
- **More than 50% of its operation provides open access to transnational users**
- **The open-access-related contributions from Europe are less than 1.7% of its operating budget**

Open Access in Europe: Good reasons for being optimistic:

- **The difficulties notwithstanding, open access is steadily increasing**
- **National bigotries and barriers are progressively decreasing**
- **Users are generally very satisfied overall, the system is working**
- **New generations of scientists are much more psychologically ready and prepared to use centralized facilities than the “old guard”**
- **The case for open access is so clear that is becoming self-evident**

**We need a new
European
partnership!**