

# EU-SOLARIS

## Third General Assembly Meeting

**MINUTES**

28 NOVEMBER, 2023

Jülich PTJ  
Berlin (Germany)

MEETING CALLED BY	Ana ARICHA (MCIU) Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (MCIU)
CHAIR PERSON/HOST	Ana ARICHA (MCIU)
MINUTE TAKER	Diego MARTINEZ (EU-SOLARIS ERIC)
ATTENDEES	<p>FULL MEMBERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SPAIN: Ana ARICHA (MCIU), Julián BLANCO (PSA-CIEMAT)</li> <li>- GERMANY: Tarik SCHWARZER (FZ-JUELICH), Manuel BLANCO (DLR)</li> <li>- CYPRUS: Nestor FYLAKTOS (CYI) (in place of M. Georgiou)</li> <li>- FRANCE: Gilles FLAMANT (CNRS), Xavier MONTAGNE (French Ministry of Higher Education and Research)</li> </ul> <p>OBSERVERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PORTUGAL: João CARDOSO (LNEG)</li> </ul> <p>Diego MARTINEZ (EU-SOLARIS ERIC, Managing Director and GA Secretary)</p>
ABSENT	Christos Aspris (Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy, CYPRUS)
RELATED MEETING FILES	<p>Annex 1: Agenda of the meeting</p> <p>Annex 2: Presentation by the MD</p> <p>All other documents referred to in these minutes are available in the Intranet of the EU-SOLARIS ERIC's website.</p>

List of acronyms used in this document			
AI	Action Item	GA	General Assembly
BNN	Board of National Nodes	KPI	Key Performance Indicator
EC	European Commission	MD	Managing Director
ERDF	European Regional Development Funds	SLA	Service Level Agreement
ERIC	European Research Infrastructure Consortium	STC	Scientific & Technical Committee

## Agenda topics

TOPIC	<b>Welcome and <i>Tour de Table</i></b>
<p>Welcome to the attendees by the Chair Person, Ms. Ana Aricha.</p> <p>All parties represented. After checking that the quorum is set up, as stated in Article 4 of the Statutes the EU-SOLARIS General Assembly is formally constituted.</p>	
TOPIC #1	<b>Adoption of the Agenda</b>
<p>The agenda is adopted by unanimity but given that the French representatives are leaving at around 13:00 h, some changes are made in order to discuss first all topics needing of an agreement. The original order has been followed in the minutes but the points discussed in the afternoon session are noted.</p>	
TOPIC #2	<b>Approval of last meeting minutes and e-mail voting decisions</b>
<p>The draft minutes of the Second GA Meeting, held virtually on 15 June 2023, are formally approved.</p> <p>The Secretary quickly reviews the e-mail votes of this year. It is suggested by the Chairperson, for future meetings, to send just the results to the GA members and not the text of the corresponding proposals again.</p>	
TOPIC #3	<b>Review of the ‘List of Action Items’</b>
<p>The ‘List of Action Items’ is discussed by the attendees (pgs. 8 &amp; 9 of former meeting’s minutes, Annex #2-a). Most of them have been closed but some still remain open:</p> <p><b>#2. Secondment agreement for the Managing Director (MD)</b></p> <p>An English version of the working draft has been circulated before this meeting. Last week, it has been informed by the State Lawyers of CIEMAT.</p> <p>It is presented for the approval of the General Assembly in this session.</p> <p>Decision: Close this A.I.</p> <p><b>#3. Amend some versions of the Statutes at the Official Journal of the European Union</b></p> <p>After an informal discussion of the MD with EC staff, it is agreed to wait for a suitable opportunity in the future.</p> <p>The Chair proposes to do it for the Spanish version right at the Spanish Official State Gazette (BOE) as, from her experience, she knows that even the incorporation of new Members is not reason enough to cause an official release at the Official Journal of the European Union.</p> <p>Decision: Close this A.I.</p>	

## **#6. Status of Service Level Agreements to be signed between partnering institutes and EU-SOLARIS ERIC**

The MD explains that SLAs are becoming more and more necessary as the participation in some joint projects demands the existence of agreements between the ERIC and the R&D partners.

It will be discussed later in this meeting, under section 5 'Institutional Framework'.

Decision: Keep this A.I. open

## **#7. Access Policy**

This item will be discussed later on, under section 8 'Pending Documents'.

Decision: Close this A.I.

## **#8. Status of the Hosting Agreement**

Julián Blanco explains that CIEMAT is handling the pending agreements one at once, this one will be considered right after the agreement for the secondment of the Managing Director.

It is proposed by the Chair to make a written procedure for approval of the GA if everything gets ready before next GA meeting.

Decision: A.I. #8 remains open.

## **#11. Signature of agreements on behalf of EU-SOLARIS ERIC**

The Chair strongly suggests to seek a service of legal assistance to this matter, as well as others to come in the future.

In principle, attending the statutes, it is understood that the General Assembly is competent to decide about the person who can sign any agreement on behalf of the ERIC ..

Decision: Close this A.I. All the members agree that a service of legal assistance is needed. The MD takes the action to look at it and present a proposal.

***A.I. #14 The MD will seek external legal assistance. Present a proposal about it on the next GA meeting.***

***#12 (all GA members): Propose and appoint two additional (female) members for the STC before the next GA meeting in November.***

The MD will propose (section 5 of this meeting) two new members of the STC.

Decision: Close this A.I.

***#13 (Scientific GA members): Give comments to draft versions of Strategic Plan, Access Policy Propose and other policy documents.***

Done.

Decision: Close this A.I.

TOPIC #4

## Information about Projects

### Status of ERIC-funded projects: call 2023

The MD reports about the process, the number of proposals received (just one) and the outcome of the evaluation process by the STC. It is agreed that the MD sends a 'Letter of Acceptance' asap to the project coordinator, setting the official starting date of the project. The duration of the assigned project is 18 months.

The Project Coordinator will be asked to sign a 'Letter of Commitment', where the consortium agrees on the conditions of the grant. Such LoC must include all the conditions as specified in the call, as well as the deliverables associated to the payment milestones. The MD is charged with the preparation of such LoC.

It is agreed that the MD will seek the approval of the GA (through an e-mail vote if necessary) for the upfront payment.

***A.I. #15 The Managing Director will send a 'Letter of Acceptance' to the Project Coordinator of the proposal. The conditions of the grant will be attached as a 'Letter of Commitment' to be signed by the Project Coordinator. After that, the MD will seek the approval of the GA for the upfront payment.***

Gilles Flamant: Reports the GA that there is a SolarPACES-funded activity in the same field. The Project Coordinator will be asked to explicitly link both actions (guideline and method).

It is agreed to conclude this preliminary process by the end of January, at the latest.

### Internal Project: Call 2024

It is stressed by the GA that the dissemination of the call is very important. The number of proposals must rise substantially this year. The MD is requested to take measures to improve this.

It is agreed also to improve the process of future calls, and the evaluation criteria as follows:

Include a threshold and fix weights per category or per evaluation criteria (depending on what the ERIC pretends to promote). Ask the STC for a proposal about this.

- Prepare a list of specific topics of interest for EU-SOLARIS with the support of STC.
- Allow for half numbers, also.
- Insert a box for evaluators' comments in the evaluation template.

It is agreed that the MD will submit copy of the STC evaluation reports to the GA in advance to the GA meeting to have all the information before taking any decision.

***A.I.#16. The Chair proposes the MD to activate the STC and to arrange at least one (virtual) meeting per year. The first one to be convened in 2024 before the GA's Spring meeting.***

**Status of RISEnergy, ENERGYTRAN and CACTUS**

The MD presents a brief summary of the status and budget of these new projects.

At this point, the Chair asks to separate the budget coming from projects and the budget coming from the Members' fees. It is agreed also to distinguish between technical people working for the projects and management people working for the ERIC, making a share assignment of staff dedication to each project.

The GA agrees on that, though some flexibility will be necessary about this, particularly during the first operation years.

It is agreed that it may be necessary to hire a second person asap, to deal with the upcoming workload from these projects.

**Proposal by the MD for ENERGYTRAN:**

The MD explains about the WP1 Mobilities (to be managed by EU-SOLARIS) and proposes to arrange a system to assign the stays into the different labs and to compensate economically for the extra burden.

The idea is this compensation to be paid with indirect costs from the same project.

The Chair considers this is a good opportunity for the ERIC dissemination and networking.

In order to compensate the host for the dedication of staff and any expenses related with the support to the guest, an amount of 2000 €/month of stay is proposed by the MD to be transferred by EU-SOLARIS to the host institute for every mobility.

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At this point the Chair states that it would be necessary to have a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or at least, some kind of external financial assistance in the ERIC.

The MD explains that there are not enough funds for it, but hiring an external financial assistance could be an option.

The Chair states that it is not acceptable to show a budget with such a huge carry over, so the use of the available funds must be better analysed.

It is agreed that there is a need to organize the financial management structure of the ERIC.

The MD is charged to arrange it asap.

***A.I.#17. The MD is charged to hire an external financial service to support the organization of***

***the financial management structure of the ERIC.***

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The MD gives further details about ENERGYTRAN's background.

There is agreement on the MD proposal about the Mobilities, but the details must be clarified and agreed.

The Chair suggests the MD to advance the documentation related to this kind of topics, that may be subject to discussion, with sufficient time before the GA meetings take place, in order to increase efficiency at the meetings.

**Discussion about RISEnergy**

Introduction of the project by the MD.

The 'Affiliated Entities' issue is explained by the MD. It is mandatory to have a 'permanent link' (either economic or legal link, beyond the project lifetime). SLAs are needed for this activity as many R&D institutes participate as Affiliated Entities of EU-SOLARIS ERIC in this project.

The explanations of the coordinator Olga Suminska are delivered by the MD.

No further reactions. The GA members will keep working on a solution to this matter, for which the legal assistance may also be of help.

**Proposed Activities for the Common Interest**

The MD proposes a number of activities for the common interest of the consortium to be carried out 'ex officio' by the Central Hub, subject to availability.

Collection of KPIs

The MD explains about the KPIs. They'll be requested at certain time in the near future for evaluation purposes by ESFRI.

The MD presents a list of KPIs which was agreed with the partners in a round of conversations by June 2022. It is agreed to refine the list and agree on the boundaries for each category.

The Chair suggests the MD to look for the already available information on this ESFRI evaluation exercise and also suggests the MD to contact similar ERICs to EUSolaris (i.e. EMSO ERIC) to learn on this topic.

Xavier Montagne remarks the importance of stressing the weight of the industries.

It is also agreed to focus on 'pure EU-SOLARIS activities' as an outcome of its initiatives for the definition of such KPIs.

***A.I#18. Refine the list of KPIs, focusing on 'pure EU-SOLARIS' activities, and agree on the boundaries for each category.***

### Summer School and Doctoral Colloquium

Concerning the organization of the Summer School & Doctoral Colloquium in year 2024, the MD proposes EU-SOLARIS to cover the costs of hosting the events in France.

There is a discussion about the restriction of the attendance just to Member & Observer countries.

It would be organized in one of the 4 Member countries, but people from every country may attend.

Non-members would pay a small fee for both events. EU-SOLARIS would collect the fees!

The proposal is approved.

### E-infrastructure

The MD is considering to apply for ERDF funds in Spain to build the e-infrastructure. He asks for the opinion of the Chair on this possibility.

The Chair informs that the Spanish Ministry expects to have available ERDF funds for the period 2021-2027, that will be addressed to Research Infrastructures placed in Spain, although the process is not open yet, as the ERDF coordinating entity has not been nominated and the eligibility criteria are not defined yet. The execution period of the projects that will be ultimately funded with these ERDF must conclude before 2029.

Two Important key criteria concerning the evaluation of the proposal:

-Involvement of the Industry

-Socio-economic impact.

Attending to this information, the Chair suggests to prepare a draft investment project in advance, in anticipation of the call opening, and being able to submit the funding application. As a reference, the information shown in MCIU's web site related to the former call, can be useful.

### **Further proposal preparation planned for year 2024 (Afternoon session)**

Proposal submission plans are presented by the MD.

Positive thoughts about applying to COST Program from both Portugal and Cyprus.

INFRADEV Africa: Watch out existing cooperation before starting anything is suggested by N. Fylaktos. Tentative partners suggested: Egypt, Morocco, South Africa

No objections from the GA concerning the plans for proposal submission as presented by the MD.

TOPIC #5

### **Information on Institutional Framework**

#### **Secondment agreement with CIEMAT**

A version translated to English of the draft agreement has been proposed from CIEMAT to all GA members in advance.

After a brief explanation of the process followed, the GA approves the current version and authorizes the Chair to sign it on behalf of EU-SOLARIS ERIC.

Later, there is a brief general discussion about the current status of the National Nodes, the SLAs



and the incorporation of new Members/Observers.

### **Proposal of new STC members (Afternoon session)**

Two candidates are presented by the MD: Nesrin Ozalp (U. of Illinois in Bloomberg-Normal) and Vassiliki Drosou (CRES).

An absolute majority is required for approval, according to the statutes. The GA approves the two newly proposed STC members.

***A.I.#19. The MD is requested to send an official letter to invite the new members and inform about their duties.***

TOPIC #6

### **Information on Administrative Matters**

The MD informs that all Member contributions have been duly received. The bank account is already open and the signature of a GA member, Julian Blanco, is also requested for any transaction.

The MD reports that the ERIC has been validated by the European Commission services at the beginning of August, so it is fully operational now to participate in EC-funded projects.

TOPIC #7

### **Personnel matters**

#### **Staff recruitment**

The MD reports about the recruitment of a Project Manager to serve in the Central Hub.

This person will have an indefinite contract starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2023. The MD is suggested to double-check with the advisor if it is still possible to use project-related contracts under the Spanish law.

TOPIC #8

### **Status of Corporate Documents**

The MD presents briefly the current status of the pending corporate documents and the plans to develop further ones, identified as necessary.

#### **Strategic Plan**

The Chair points out that the yearly Workplan documents should emanate from the SP.

According the Statutes (Art 25.6) the SP has to be updated every two years.

It is agreed to keep the current document (once the comments from the GA members are included) for the period 2023-2026, with an update at the end of year 2024.

***A.I.#20 All GA members will send their comments asap to the MD, in order to deliver a consolidated version to be approved through an e-mail vote.***

#### **Catalogue of Facilities and Technical Services offered by the Members**

The MD explains the current version of the catalogue. He also shows several options from other

ERICs.

Julián Blanco proposes to put on the table all SLAs agreed first and take just the facilities offered there by the Members. The proposal is accepted.

The Chair asks about the current status of SLAs and a list of potential entities belonging to the National Nodes.

-Germany: Possibly, Jülich should be added to DLR and Fraunhofer as a partner in the German node.

-Cyprus: It might be necessary to involve the Cyprus University.

### **Policies of the ERIC**

#### Access Policy

The draft document has been updated and sent in advance to the GA members.

It is approved in its current version.

#### Other Policies

An integrated document with the proposed policies for procurement, scientific evaluation, human resources, IPR and data management was sent in advance by the MD.

The Chair states that, in particular, the 'Tendering and Procurement' procedure needs further development. More details should be given, particularly the different procurement procedures that could be followed (open, restricted, single source procurements...) depending on the cases or on the thresholds, etc., defining the cases when the MD can make a decision without the need to ask for GA authorizations, etc.

It is agreed that the 'Procurement Procedure' should be defined in an independent document. This is considered a priority, as some procurements such as those related to the legal and financial assistances are needed shortly.

It is proposed to hire a financial advisor to assist the MD in preparing better Procurement policies. Another possibility is to benchmark it to other ERICs.

The GA agrees to approve it as a very draft version but knowing that it needs to be improved as soon as possible.

### **Other documents 'Good-to-Have'**

The MD proposes to develop other documents like a code of conduct, a quality assurance handbook for the documentation, etc...

It is agreed to proceed, depending on the availability of the Central Hub to carry out this task.

The draft Workplan 2024 was sent well in advance to the GA members and is presented by the MD. It is formally approved although a list of objectives for the MD needs to be attached to it.

***A.I.#21. The MD is requested to prepare a draft proposal of objectives associated to the Workplan 2024, which will be eventually approved by the GA by an e-mail vote procedure.***

TOPIC #10

**Financial matters**

**Balance of 2023 and Budget for year 2024**

The MD presents the figures for both years 2023 & 2024. There are different chapters for the general operation of the ERIC and for the externally funded projects.

The Chair suggests several changes in order to improve this section:

1-Add a comparison between the budget approved for year 2023 and the expenditure finally executed.

2-Show the values for the CIEMAT's in-kind contribution in the calculations. The PSA director, Julian Blanco, is kindly requested to provide a declaration about the economic value of such in-kind contribution. This should include: use of offices, transportation of personnel, IT support, etc.

3-Separate income from projects and Members' contributions as well as the expenditures, even the personnel costs.

It is agreed to approve a draft once the comments are integrated and updated with consolidated figures. To achieve these consolidated figures, it is agreed that the MD must hire an external assistance service to carry out a professional accounting analysis and a cash flow analysis.

***A.I. #22 The MD will seek external support to carry out a professional accounting analysis and a cash flow analysis.***

**Designation of the auditor**

The MD proposes a local company 'AUNA' to be hired for the mandatory audit related to year 2023. This company has been pre-selected because of their experience working for another ERIC, LifeWatch.

It is agreed by the GA to work with AUNA this year but opening the door to shift to another company next year, depending on their performance.

TOPIC #11

**Assessment of MD's performance**

The MD briefly presents the outcomes of his activities, according to the objectives established.

The MD's performance in year 2023 is formally approved by the GA.

TOPIC #12

**Open Questions and Final Discussion**

**Next GA meeting**



It is agreed to hold the next GA meeting in virtual mode, on next **20<sup>th</sup> May**, 10:00 to 13:00 h.

The venue and date for the year 2024's physical meeting is also discussed. The Cyl kindly proposes to host it in Cyprus, tentatively on 13<sup>th</sup> November. The GA agrees and thanks the Cyprus' representative for the offering.

Last but not least, the parties thank Mr. Schwarzer for hosting today's meeting on behalf of Germany in a so pleasant location in Berlin.

## LIST OF RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### Third GA Meeting 28 November, 2023

- #18. The proposal of the MD about the **Mobilities** to be managed under **ENERGYTRAN** Project is approved, though the details must be further clarified and agreed.
- #19. It is approved that the ERIC supports economically (at least, partially) the 2024 edition of the **Doctoral Colloquium** (and Summer School, if possible), to be hosted by PROMES.
- #20. The GA approves the current version of the **Secondment Agreement** between CIEMAT and the ERIC and authorizes the Chair to sign it on behalf of EU-SOLARIS.
- #21. The GA approves the nomination of the two **new STC members** proposed by the MD.
- #22. Concerning the **Strategic Plan**, it is agreed to keep the current document (once the GA member comments are included) for the period 2023-2026, with an update at the end of year 2024.
- #23. Concerning the update of the **catalogue of facilities and testing services**, it is agreed to include just the facilities offered at the SLAs by the Members.
- #24. The **Access Policy** is approved in its current version.
- #25. The proposed **Workplan 2024** is formally approved but a *proposal of the objectives associated to this document will be annexed, after the approval from the GA by an e-mail vote procedure.*
- #26. It is agreed to approve a draft of the **year 2023's accounts** once the comments from the GA are integrated and updated with consolidated figures. To achieve these consolidated figures, it is agreed that the MD will hire an external financial assistance service to carry out a professional accounting and cash flow analysis.
- #27. It is approved to work with the **auditing company** proposed by the MD, as they have experience working with another ERIC, LifeWatch. This choice will be re-evaluated for next year's auditing exercise.
- #28. The **performance of the Managing Director** in year 2023 is formally approved.
- #29. It is agreed to hold the **Fourth GA meeting**, virtually, on **20<sup>th</sup> May, 2024**.

### LIST OF ACTION ITEMS

A.I. #	Responsible	Description	Status
6	All partner institutes	All concerned institutes are urged to advance SLAs asap, if possible, with a deadline on 31st March, 2023.	As of 15 June, Members are requested to advance the setting-up of the National Nodes and the SLA's.
8	CIEMAT	CIEMAT is urged to advance this Hosting Agreement and deliver a draft to the GA asap.	Pending
14	Managing Director	The MD will seek external legal assistance. Present a proposal about it on the next GA meeting.	Pending
15	Managing Director	The Managing Director will send a 'Letter of Acceptance' to the Coordinator of the proposal. The conditions of the grant will be attached as a 'Letter of Commitment' to be signed by the Coordinator. After that, the MD will seek the approval of the GA for the upfront payment.	Pending
16	Managing Director	The Chair proposes the MD to activate the STC and to arrange at least one (virtual) meeting per year. The first one to be convened in 2024 before the GA's Spring meeting.	Pending
17	Managing Director	The MD is charged to hire an external service to organize the financial management structure of the ERIC.	Pending
18	Managing Director	Refine the list of KPIs, focusing on 'pure EU-SOLARIS' activities, and agree on the boundaries for each category.	Pending

A.I. #	Responsible	Description	Status
19	Managing Director	The MD is requested to send an official letter to invite the new members of the STC and inform about their duties.	Pending
20	GA members	All GA members will send their comments (on the SP) asap to the MD, in order to deliver a consolidated version to be approved through an e-mail vote.	Comments have been already delivered by the GA members
21	Managing Director	The MD is requested to prepare a draft list of objectives for year 2024 for an e-mail vote like the one in year 2023.	Pending
22	Managing Director	The MD will seek external support to carry out a professional accounting and cash flow analysis.	Pending

## ANNEXES