The EPOS Portal will be successful when users recognize it as an attractive platform that allows them to find, access, and use research data quicker and simpler than before. To be able to develop a user-oriented platform, the EPOS developers have dedicated several meetings in the last year of the EPOS implementation phase (EPOS-IP) that allowed them to closely interact with potential users of the portal. While users in a wider sense have always been all members of the EPOS thematic core services (TCS), this year saw the establishment of the “user feedback group” (UFG), which consists of two nominated experts per TCS that are entirely external to the EPOS project itself. This UFG has the goal to provide comments, suggestions, and critics on the Integrated Core Services (ICS) developments and the performance of the EPOS infrastructure.

After nomination by TCS leaders, the experts participated in a first introductory webinar and telephone conference on 6-7 March 2019. During the webinar, Jan Michalek introduced experts to EPOS, its motivation, current state of the web portal, the experts’ role, and the following offline testing workshop. The main UFG testing workshop took place on 3-5 June 2019 in Prague, where 18 experts from 10 solid Earth science domains and 12 countries attended alongside 12 EPOS members (including developers and decision makers). During this workshop, the experts were asked to test the functionality of the EPOS portal by following three predefined use cases that consisted of a range of tasks, including tasks on how to find, access, visualize, and download data. Experts recorded their feedback by filling out seven surveys in total. Besides feedback on the three use cases, these surveys also asked experts about their general impression on (i) EPOS as a research infrastructure, (ii) the user-friendliness of the graphical user interface (GUI), and (iii) their expectations for future developments in EPOS.

Generally, the EPOS ICS members had the impression that the expert users joined the workshop with a very positive and constructive attitude. They provided a comprehensive list of highly valuable comments, while clearly being aware that the system was not yet in its operational phase. Rather, the pre-operational phase implies that there were still a number of bugs, incomplete descriptions, and slow responses from some services. Despite such issues, the participants were actively involved in testing every task.
of the use cases, trying to investigate all available functionality in
the portal, and suggesting new potential features. They recognized
that the portal would be a great asset for their research, and
supported the effort to further develop and integrate various
datasets to encourage cross-disciplinary research. Following the
workshop, the experts’ comments helped the ICS team to prioritize
developments toward the deadline in September 2019.

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