EPOS-ERIC, soon a reality

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The European Plate Observing System, EPOS, is mid-way in its implementation phase and one of the two key objectives of this phase, namely the legal establishment of the EPOS-ERIC, has been achieved. The Italian Ministry, on behalf of the hosting country of the EPOS-ERIC legal seat, just submitted to the European Commission the final request (Step 2) for the ERIC constitution. It is expected that EPOS-ERIC will be formally established in the fall 2018. The Step 2 submission of EPOS-ERIC is the follow up of the unanimous approval of the EPOS Statutes and Scientific and Technical Description by the Board of Governmental Representatives (22 countries voted for this approval).

Fourteen countries declared their willingness to join EPOS-ERIC since its foundation. Therefore, concrete conditions do exist to build the pan-European distributed research infrastructure for solid Earth science by sharing resources and knowledge to provide access to multidisciplinary data and products through novel services.

EPOS is a distributed ERIC because four countries are providing hosting premium to the ERIC’s components:

- Italy is providing cash and in-kind contributions for hosting the legal seat of EPOS-ERIC.
- United Kingdom and France are providing cash and in-kind contributions to host the Central Hub of the integrated Core Services (ICS-C).
- Denmark is providing in-kind contributions to support the technological management of the Central Hub.

The second key objective of the EPOS implementation phase is the provision of multidisciplinary scientific data and services through the Thematic and Integrated Core services (TCS and ICS, respectively). This is assigned to the EPOS IP project.

According to the EPOS implementation roadmap, the EPOS-ERIC will be operational at the beginning of 2019, while EPOS IP project will terminate in October 2019. This implies that there will be almost one year overlapping between EPOS-ERIC and EPOS IP project to share efforts for launching the operational phase planned in 2020.
The EPOS architecture and its governance model emphasize the relevant work to be done for the transition from the implementation to the operational phase (2019-2020), which corresponds to the construction of the EPOS-ERIC components.

EPOS is innovative in terms of (i) pan-European dimension, (ii) diversity of data and metadata that will be accessible through the TCS and ICS, (iii) innovative IT solutions to adopt FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable) to scientific data and products for solid Earth science, and (iv) novel services and products that will be provided to different stakeholders including society. EPOS is indeed original and timely in the global framework of scientific research infrastructures. The decision to govern such a distributed research infrastructure through a ERIC is corroborating the efforts dedicated by the European Commission and the National Authorities.

For all these reasons, the submission of the Step 2 for the EPOS-ERIC legal establishment represents a cornerstone in the roadmap for the implementation phase. The achievement of this result in time with the envisioned roadmap is a measure of EPOS progress and success. EPOS team is now addressing the other challenging activities with the motivation that the ERIC is becoming a reality and with the awareness to corroborate the trust demonstrated by the National Authorities and the European Commission.