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NFFA-Europe Pilot

**Rules and Procedures on How to Claim Travel and
Subsistence Costs incurred within the Frame of the
Transnational Access Activity**

A practical Guideline for Users

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INTRODUCTION

This guideline concisely collects all the transnational access activity reimbursement rules and procedures. NFFA-Europe - Nanoscience Foundries and Fine Analysis-Europe is a Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Action, submitted under Call H2020-INFRAIA-2018-2020 and coordinated by CNR-IOM with Prof. Giorgio Rossi as Primary Coordinator Contact. Among its objectives, NFFA-Europe aims at offering to individual researchers or teams of researchers, from both academia and research institutions, public and private, industry included, the possibility of 'free of charge' trans-national access to one or more infrastructures among those operated by the Partnership.

Scope

NFFA-Europe offers European and Third Country users the possibility of carrying out multidisciplinary all-encompassing research projects at the nanoscale, extending from lithography, growth to nano-characterisation, theory, and numerical simulation.

Users will be able to perform access sessions in six different types of Installations: (a) Lithography & Patterning (Litho/Patt); (b) Growth & Synthesis (Grow/Synth); (c) Structural & Morphology Characterisation (Struct/Morph); (d) Electronic & Chemical & Magnetic Characterisation (Ele/Chem/Mag); (e) Nano to Micro/Macro (nm to mm); and (f) Theory and Simulation (Theory).

Each type of installation includes laboratories located on different NFFA-Europe sites. When needed, limited access to co-located large-scale facilities for Fine Analysis can be offered in the Struct/Morph and the Ele/Chem/Mag characterisation installations.

Proposals submitted to NFFA-Europe must request access to more than one type of installation, such as Litho/Patt and Grow/Synth, Grow/Synth and Theory, Struct/Morph Characterisation and Ele/Chem/Mag Characterisation. Proposals cannot also be limited to Fine Analysis only. The Technical Liaison Network (TLNet) will possibly assign access to a single NFFA-Europe access site for all project steps. However, multi-site scheduling, including more than one site, is also possible. The Single-Entry Point (SEP) on the NFFA-Europe website portal allows users to access a wide-ranging list of tools and methods available in the online catalogue and submit a complex and all-inclusive proposal. Once closed the call and collected all the proposals, the TLNet carries out eligibility and technical feasibility checks for each project step. Feasible proposals are then forwarded to the Access Review Panel for a peer-reviewed scientific evaluation and the final ranking. The best-ranking proposals are awarded access and assigned to one or more NFFA-Europe sites, ensuring free-of-charge access to the most suitable combination of methods and instruments.

The EU financial support to trans-national access covers the access costs incurred by the access providers to provide access to the selected researchers and the refund of travel and subsistence costs incurred by the researchers to visit the infrastructure.



GENERAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

Rules in a nutshell

EU funding, up to the maximum budget available, will be allocated to travel and subsistence support to NFFA-Europe users, according to the following criteria:

- NEP reimburses up to two users per proposal.
- The maximum contribution per person per site accessed is **500€ for travel expenses**. The refund is capped to the upper ceiling if the travel costs incurred exceed this limit or are equal to the cost incurred if lower. The user must provide evidence of the travel titles (ticket invoice/receipt, boarding cards) incurred only on the onward and return journey days per each access site visited. No reimbursement is due for the local transportation costs incurred in the in-between days.
- The maximum contribution per person per day is **100€ for subsistence**. The refund is capped to the upper daily ceiling if the travel costs incurred exceed this limit or are equal to the cost incurred if lower. The user must provide evidence of the subsistence titles (meal tickets, invoices/receipts, hotel bills) incurred on the two travelling days (onward and return journeys) and per each day of stay per access site visited, or alternatively lump sum/per diem requests, if allowed by the beneficiary. No compensation is allowed between days in which the daily subsistence ceiling is exceeded and those in which the daily subsistence costs are lower than the daily subsistence ceilings.
- A proposal may require multi-site accesses. In such cases, each refundable user can benefit from the standard reimbursement terms and conditions per geographical site accessed.
- A proposal may also require multi-leg access sessions to one single access site. In such cases, the overall maximum contribution for travel expenses cannot exceed 500€ in total. Conversely, the contribution for subsistence per day will be 100€ per person for each access leg session following the total number of units of access (UoAs) assigned.
- The overall duration of each access must be consistent with the number of UoAs assigned (e.g., a user who is granted 5 UoAs cannot request support for a two-week stay).
- The reimbursements are based on the accountancy standards and procedures *en force* at the access provider' site. Therefore, be aware the reimbursement rules and procedures may vary from site to site.
- Once access is granted, more detailed guidelines specific to the assigned NFFA-Europe site will be provided. The user group leader of the awarded proposal will be contacted by the local coordination of access activities for further instructions.



Best practice #1

Users are supposed to arrive/depart as close as possible to the beginning/end dates of the access session. One day before and one day after the scheduled access are acceptable and will be reimbursed. If users extend their stay, no additional subsistence costs will be refunded. Travel costs will only be refunded if the extension is due to activities on the same scientific topic complementary to the NFFA-Europe access session. In such cases, users must justify the extra days with a note in the reimbursement claim.

Best practice #2

In case of restriction to mobility due to the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, users should book/purchase travel tickets that allow changes of dates and fares or buy travel tickets from companies that foresee a contractual clause of force majeure. The reason is that article 51 of the grant agreement on force majeure does not apply to users.

Best practice #3

Tickets, receipts, bills, invoices printed on thermal paper tend to fade away quite soon. It will be the user's responsibility to preserve the legibility of the receipt by producing a PDF scan or a photograph. Similarly, QR codes that replace boarding passes, air- and train tickets are acceptable if this is the practice in use at the administration of the access provider. It will be the user's responsibility to produce a readable transcript of the QR code.

- Anticipate the payment out of their own pockets of all their expenditures such as air, train, local transportation fares, meal receipts, accommodation invoices, and bills.
- If home institutions prepay tickets on their behalf, users must declare the amount of these expenses on the travel and subsistence claim form in the proper space. Consequently, neither the administration nor the employees shall receive any reimbursement.
- If the T&S expenditures exceed NFFA-Europe's established ceilings, users have two options. Either they (a) accept the partial refund of the costs renouncing to the refund of the exceeding amount, or (b) they can waive the reimbursement of the total amount of the exceeding expenditure, requesting a full refund instead from their administration.
- It may also happen that the total subsistence costs are below the ceilings set by the project. However, if a user exceeds a daily ceiling, the total reimbursement cost decreases accordingly. Access provider administrations cannot compensate between daily subsistence costs higher and lower than the established ceilings.

Travel Expenses

Upon notification of being awarded the access period, the user should promptly purchase a travel ticket/e-ticket to get the lowest fares.

Only one round-trip ticket per user can be supported up to a ceiling limit of **500€**. In the case of multi-site assignment, each of the two users can receive support for each geographical site accessed with a maximum contribution of **500€** per accessed site. The total max contribution for



proposals envisaging periodic access to the same site(s), i.e., multiple travels to the same site(s), will not exceed **500€** per person and site. The contribution can never exceed the actual travel cost-effectively incurred, i.e., if the cost of travel is lower than **500€**, the user will be refunded for the cost paid.

Users must provide evidence of the travel titles (ticket invoice/receipt, boarding cards) incurred only on the onward and return journey days per each access site visited. No reimbursement is due for the local transportation costs incurred in the in-between days.

Users must hand over to the Access Provider's Administrations all original documentation for reimbursement. Documents can be handed in or shipped by post no later than 60 calendar days after the access termination. Failure to comply with this timeframe will absolve the access provider from any obligation to reimburse travel expenses.

Air Travel

NFFA-Europe access providers will reimburse each authorised user a single return economy class airfare for one person for each authorised access session. Whenever available, booking low-cost flights is recommended.

Original tickets OR e-Ticket OR original invoices AND boarding cards must be collected by each user and sent to the access provider in charge of the reimbursement. The invoice must clearly show information relating to the date of the journey, the price and the class of travel.

Travel by Railway

Train: the preferred fares foresee the shortest and cheapest routes.

Original tickets OR e-Ticket OR original invoices must be collected by each user and sent to the access provider in charge of the reimbursement. The invoice must clearly show information relating to the date of the journey, the price, and the class of travel.

Other Travel Costs

Local transportation means such as airport shuttles, metro, bus coaches, taxis, rented cars, and ferries are eligible for reimbursement only if incurred on the days of the onward and return journey per each site visited. No refund is due for the local transportation costs incurred in the in-between days. The reimbursement terms and conditions follow the standard procedures and practices used by the access provider administrations.

Original tickets OR e-Ticket OR original invoices must be collected by each user and sent to the access provider in charge of the reimbursement. The invoice must clearly show information relating to the date of the journey, the price, and the class of travel.



Meals and Accommodation

A maximum contribution of **100€** per person per day can be granted for subsistence (i.e., meals and accommodation).

As for the travel costs, users are invited to seek cheap accommodation arrangements and avail themselves of the cafeteria, canteens located on campus, IF ANY, and local restaurants.

Subsistence costs will be supported for: working days during the access session(s), one day before and one after the scheduled access. Accommodation costs will be reimbursed also on weekend days, but the meal costs will be refunded only if the weekend days are actually worked as required by the scheduled access.

Original tickets OR e-Tickets OR original invoices must be collected by each user and sent to the access provider in charge of the reimbursement. The invoice must clearly show information relating to the nature, the date, and the price of all subsistence costs (for accommodation also the hotel category). Beneficiaries may alternatively grant per diem/lump sum reimbursements. In such case, users must produce a written request as evidence.

Multi-purpose online travel and subsistence claim form

Work in progress.

Commencement and transitional provisions

This guideline for users comes into force on the day it is released on the NEP website.

The provisions herein set by NFFA-Europe Pilot must be observed by all users, along with the additional regulations and procedures that the access providers establish.

Therefore, users must also comply with the specific internal regulations of the sites to which they are assigned.