



A4L_ACTIONS

Alliance for Life Sciences: From Strategies to Actions in Central and Eastern Europe

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D2.5 - Impact assessment of Open Access to Alliance4Life facilities



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Editors: Katerina Hoskova,
Lenka Bojanovska
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1 SUMMARY

The aim of this report is to evaluate the impact of Open Access on Alliance4Life facilities and is directly connected to deliverable D2.4. Call for Open Access to Alliance4Life facilities. The following parts are the subject of this report:

- Receipt of open access applications
- Evaluation process
- Implementation phase (service provision)
- Final reporting and impact assessment

Altogether, 2/3 of eligible institutions participated, which resulted in 37 applications, 28 funded projects and 5 publications thus far. Only two projects out of 28 were not implemented.

2 RECEIPT OF OPEN ACCESS APPLICATIONS AND EVALUATION PROCESS

In accordance with the Call for Open Access to Alliance4Life facilities published on the 1st of April 2022 on the [Alliance4Life website](#), we received 37¹ applications from users from 8 Alliance4Life Institutions until the deadline of 15th of June 2022. The first deadline, set to the end of May 2022, had to be prolonged due to the low number of received applications. After the first deadline, more intensive promotion at Alliance4Life partner institutions was done in cooperation with FG 7 Science Communication to boost the activity of potential users. Internal communication tools used for dissemination were - newsletters, targeted outreach to group leaders, outreach to heads of facilities, communication leaflets posted in visible places, and TV screens. There is a separate e-mail address, A4Lopenaccess@ceitec.muni.cz, for communication with users.

The **Database of received applications** was created to get a comprehensive overview of all applications and their status (e.g., under review, accepted, rejected, etc.). Each application has been assigned a unique identification number. The date in database indicates when the application was received.

Database contains personal information about the applicant, such as first and last names, e-mail addresses. The project title describes the research focus, and the applicant's institution signifies their affiliation, including the respective country. Verification of affiliation confirms this association. Details about the requested institution, and the country for research are specified in relevant columns of database. Technical feasibility status is outlined, including the evaluator's name and potential comments regarding the project implementation. For the project to proceed, obtaining confirmation from the provider and approval from the advisory board was essential, and this information is documented in the database as well. The budget

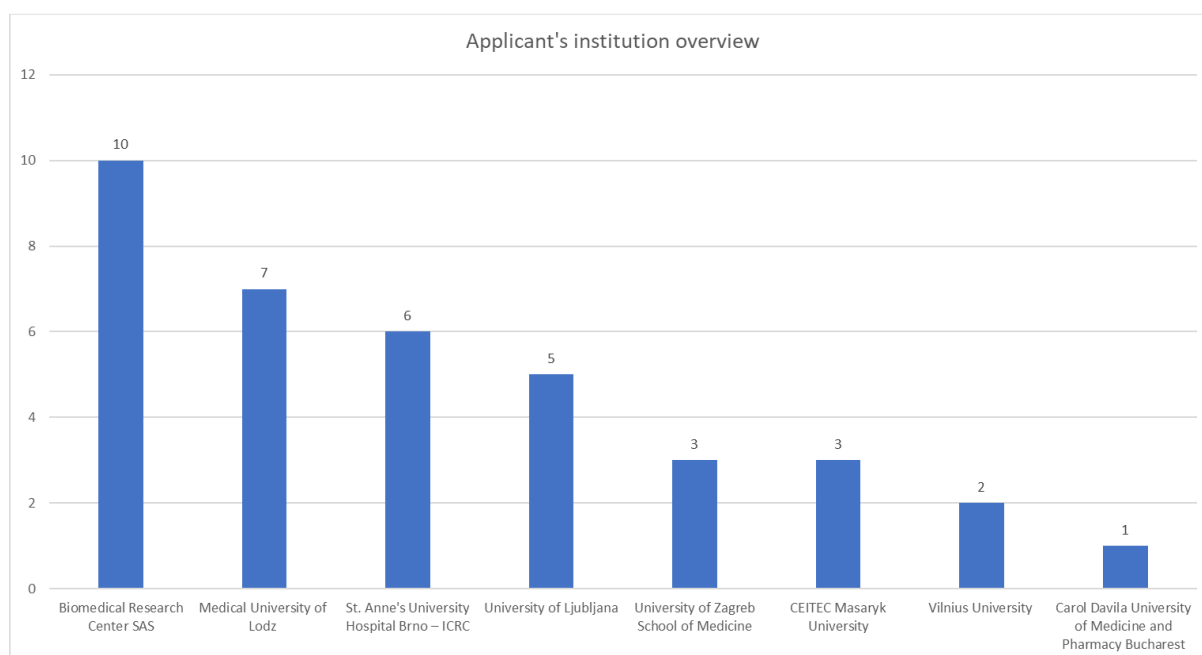
¹ Three applications were submitted twice. Duplicities were captured in the database.

and real spending columns reveal financial aspects of specific projects. Updates on project status in April 2023 and July 2023 are in separate columns. The final report column notes the submission status for each project.

The Database is annex number 1 of this Deliverable on page 10.

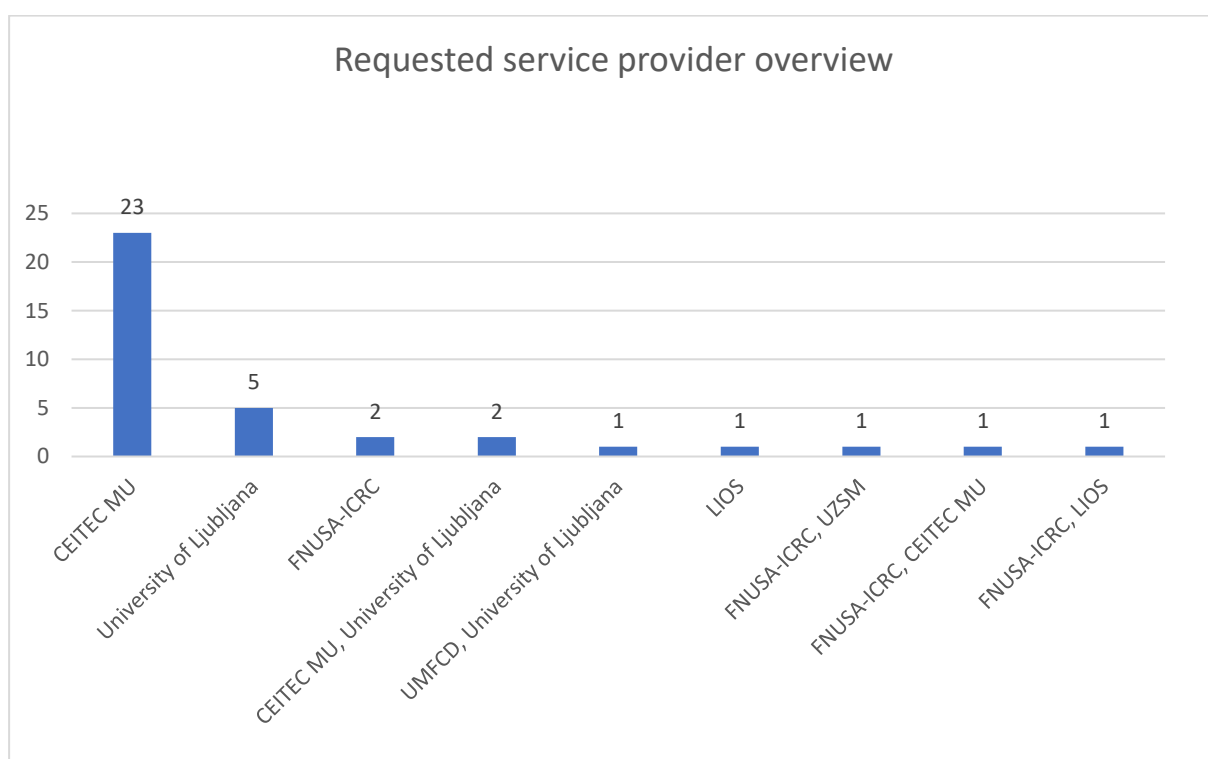
An overview of the applicant's institution and provider's institution is given in the tables and graphs below.

Applicant's institution	Number of applications
Biomedical Research Center SAS	10
Medical University of Lodz	7
St. Anne's University Hospital Brno – ICRC	6
University of Ljubljana	5
University of Zagreb School of Medicine	3
CEITEC Masaryk University	3
Vilnius University	2
Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy Bucharest	1
Total	37



A total of 8 institutions participated, 4 institutions out of 12 eligible did not submit any application. The highest number of applications (10) came from Biomedical Research Center SAS.

Requested service provider	Number of applications
CEITEC MU	23
University of Ljubljana	5
FNUSA-ICRC	2
CEITEC MU, University of Ljubljana	2
UMFCD, University of Ljubljana	1
LIOS	1
FNUSA-ICRC, UZSM	1
FNUSA-ICRC, CEITEC MU	1
FNUSA-ICRC, LIOS	1
Total	37



Roughly 60% of applicants requested research services from CEITEC MU. The next highly requested institution was the University of Ljubljana.

3 EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process was done in three steps. In the first step, the application was formally checked to determine whether all the compulsory fields were filled and whether the user is an employer or student from the Alliance4Life's member institution. Secondly, Heads of all requested core facilities and service laboratories assessed the technical feasibility of the submitted research project. In several cases, when the project could not be implemented in

the facility the applicant initially requested, Heads were able to propose a different facility within another Alliance4Life institution, which was suitable to provide the service. Together with a technical feasibility check, Heads sent the preliminary budget necessary to provide the service. The unit cost calculation was done under the common methodology valid for Horizon 2020, or Horizon Europe projects for transnational access. Within calculations, only consumables, materials, other services, and energy costs were considered eligible. Personnel costs connected with the service provision were provided as an in-kind contribution of each institution.

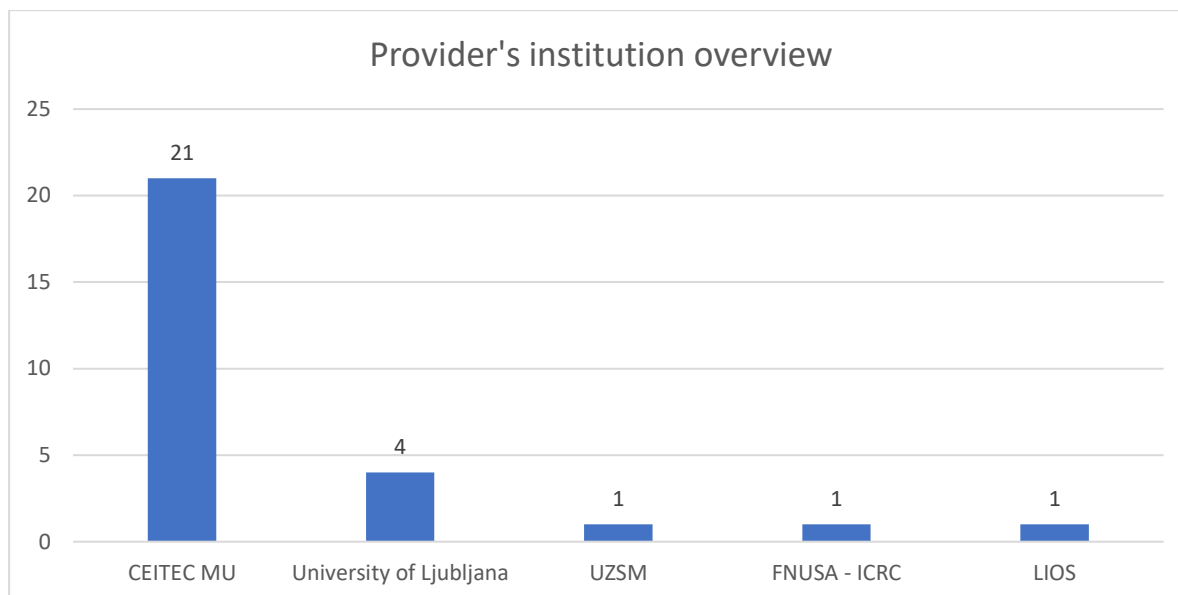
Finally, all applications with their technical feasibility were sent to the Advisory Board for final approval. All applicants were informed about the project evaluation result. Successful applicants received a certificate by email on October 13, 2022. One user sent an appeal (ID 011122- Grgurevic) and his application was re-evaluated and accepted after the change of experimental design as it was proposed in the technical feasibility check. Out of 37 received proposals, **28 were granted support** from the open access scheme. This table shows the final allocation of the open access budget (95 000 EUR) among providers after the approval from the Advisory Board to date September 30, 2022:

Confirmed provider	Budget
LIOS	3 115,00 €
University of Ljubljana	18 291,73 €
CEITEC MU	67 708,40 €
FNUSA - ICRC	3 480,00 €
UZSM	2 117,50 €
TOTAL	94 712,63 €

4 IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

In October 2022, the implementation phase started, and Heads of respective facilities contacted users to arrange the measurement.

In total, 28 open access projects were allocated in 5 provider institutions, as illustrated in the chart below.



In April 2023 and July 2023, the status of the service was checked to get a progress overview of the services.

About 14 projects were initiated before April 2023. At this time, two projects have already been completed. Another eight users planned the measurements with their Heads of respective facilities. Communication got stuck with four users.

In July 2023, two more projects were finalized. Sixteen users had their measurements running smoothly and anticipated no delays. Four projects had just begun. However, two users did supply samples late in August 2023. Unfortunately, two projects were not implemented. The first one stopped (ID 013222- Stawski) due to complicated discussions with the user (see Annex 2 Final reports). Nevertheless, costs connected with ethical approval occurred and were approved as feasible to be covered from the open access budget. The second one (ID 013922- Dovč) was interrupted because the user did not submit any samples and ceased communication.

5 FINAL REPORTING AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A total of 28 projects were approved for implementation by the advisory board, and 26 users have successfully completed their projects. Altogether, 24 applicants submitted their final reports, and 2 users failed to submit the report. Six users asked for specific parts of their report to be kept confidential until their publications are published. We treat these six reports under a non-disclosure regime.

All Heads of facilities were asked to fill in actual spending in the Database. The result of spending and the difference from the allocated budget is visible in the following table:

Confirmed provider	Allocated budget	Real spending	Difference
LIOS	3 115,00 €	- €	3 115,00 €
University of Ljubljana	18 291,73 €	13 733,00 €	4 558,73 €
CEITEC MU	67 708,40 €	68 229,47 €	-521,07 €
FNUSA - ICRC	3 480,00 €	3 380,43 €	99,57 €
UZSM	2 117,50 €	- €	2 117,50 €
TOTAL	94 712,63 €	85 342,90 €	9 369,73 €

Due to formal accounting reasons, two providers (LIOS and UZSM) were not able to report budget properly and therefore, their spendings were not reimbursed. In the case of the University of Ljubljana, one project was not implemented (ID 013222- Stawski, initial allocation 4 958,73 EUR), but expenditure for ethics committee approval in the amount of 400 EUR was accepted to be reimbursed. In the case of CEITEC MU, the allocated budget was overspent, even though one project was not implemented (ID 013922-Dovč, initial allocation 852 EUR). Excess expenditure is related to more expensive chemicals; however, it fits into the limit of 10% of the possible overdraft, which was agreed between partners.

A brief survey of the users was performed to assess the expertise and professionalism of the laboratory staff, user-friendliness of the service, promptness of service and results, presentation and accessibility of results, and quality and reliability of results. Users were requested to rate the criteria in a low – medium – high scale. Free form comments were possible as well. The survey revealed very high user satisfaction level.

The acknowledgment in future publications/scientific results was requested in the following format:

A4L_ACTIONS project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 964997, is gratefully acknowledged for the financial support of the measurements at the CF [name of the unit/CF].

Or in a short version: We acknowledge [name of the unit/CF] of A4L_ACTIONS, supported by European Union's Horizon 2020 under grant agreement No. 964997.

There are already **five publications** in the Web of Sciences database indexed resulting from the cooperation under open access scheme:

1. Jorgacevski, J; Potokar, M: Immune Functions of Astrocytes in Viral Neuroinfections, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MOLECULAR SCIENCES, 2023, 10.3390/ijms24043514.
2. Potokar, M; Zorec, R; Jorgacevski, J: Astrocytes Are a Key Target for Neurotropic Viral Infection, CELLS, 2023, 10.3390/cells12182307.

3. Sadzak, A; Brkljaca, Z; Erakovic, M; Kriechbaum, M; Maltar-Strmecki, N; Pribyl, J; Segota, S: Puncturing lipid membranes: onset of pore formation and the role of hydrogen bonding in the presence of flavonoids, *JOURNAL OF LIPID RESEARCH*, 2023, 10.1016/j.jlr.2023.100430.
4. Verdev, PT; Potokar, M; Korva, M; Rus, KR; Kolenc, M; Zupanc, TA; Zorec, R; Jorgacevski, J: In human astrocytes neurotropic flaviviruses increase autophagy, yet their replication is autophagy-independent, *CELLULAR AND MOLECULAR LIFE SCIENCES*, 2022, 10.1007/s00018-022-04578-7.
5. Žugec M, Furlani B, Castañón MJ, Rituper B, Fischer I, Broggi G, Caltabiano R, Barbagallo GMV, Di Rosa M, Tibullo D, Simčič S, Stokin GB, Jorgačevski J, Zorec R, Potokar M. Plectin plays a role in the migration and volume regulation of astrocytes: a potential biomarker of glioblastoma. *J Biomed Sci. (Springer nature)* 2024 Jan 23;31(1):14. doi: 10.1186/s12929-024-01002-z.

6 ANNEX 1: DATABASE OF RECEIVED APPLICATIONS

Due to the large size of the database, we are including it separately in attachment as “A4L Proposals_230424.”

7 ANNEX 2: FINAL REPORTS

This Annex is prepared separately as a zip file due to its size. Two versions are prepared due to the non-disclosure regime in case of some reports. It is necessary to treat this Annex as a **confidential part of this deliverable** and only the version with the suffix "publishable" should be published (e.g. "A4L_final report_open_access-011722_Mirosevic_publishable.pdf"). The reports labelled as confidential must be regarded as not suitable for publication. (e.g. "A4L_final report_open_access-011722_Mirosevic_confidential.pdf").