



ARI ASMI

provides a personal perspective on the role of the ENVRI community in the development of European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)

When ENVRI-FAIR, the latest follow-up of the projects supporting the environmental research infrastructure (ENVRI) community was planned, I was asked to participate in the project coordination as a co-coordinator. The idea was to create some level of continuation of project management practices that has started with the ENVRIplus, and to share the responsibility of representing the project outside the Consortium. In the time I agreed, I have not fully realised how important it is to have a second representative of the project. Each and every month there seem to be at least one (but usually several!) either ESFRI (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) or EOSC related workshop, conference, or other meeting where the ENVRI-FAIR and ENVRI community needs to be represented and our position towards the initiative is queried. In addition, there are all the questionnaires and interviews discussing our viewpoints, including questions to which we sometimes cannot (yet) provide the answers. It now seems that we should have even more co-coordinators of the project to be able to share our perspective in all these meetings.

The European Commission services (and by extension many Commission funded projects) seem to be very interested in getting a close involvement of the Research Infrastructures (RIs), in the definition, development, and realization of the EOSC.

Many ENVRI community RIs are approached also directly, and most of the readers of this newsletter are quite familiar with emails requesting the participation in questionnaires gathering information on some aspect of EOSC from projects usually having either "FAIR" or "EOSC" in their names. Often these questionnaires even ask the very same questions.

Where does this interest come from? Why should we participate? What is EOSC? I can try to clarify my opinions on the first two. For the last one, I think we need more visionary writers for this newsletter.

The ENVRI community opinion and viewpoints on the EOSC are crucial. Why? Firstly, they are seen as major clients of the EOSC core services. These services (which are still being developed!) are meant to be lower level components, such as provision of persistent identifiers, or controlling access to services. In this context the ENVRI RIs, and the developed community standards in ENVRI-FAIR, are naturally attractive as they set the needed interfaces and use cases to develop these services. Secondly, the ENVRI community RIs are seen as potential service providers for the EOSC – or the science communities using the EOSC. The concept is then somewhat turned around here, since the existing or potential services need to conform to the (still undeveloped) criteria to be included in the EOSC service catalogues. Third point – which I personally feel is quite dangerous – is to consider the ENVRI RIs as representatives of the scientific communities, since many of the RIs do have large user bases. It is true that the ENVRI RIs can in some way represent

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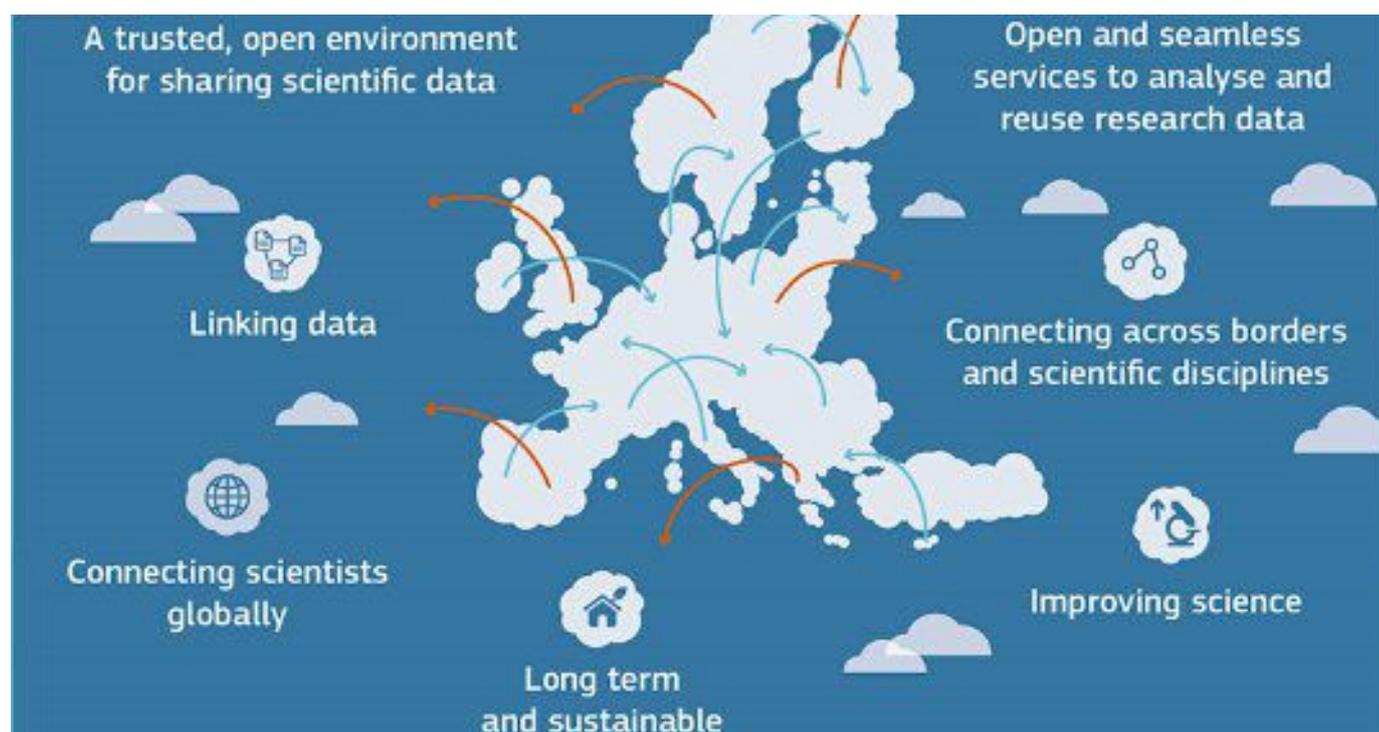
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their communities – especially in respect to the services they have already been providing, and sometimes developing. They do often have also a good idea of other aspects in their field – but I do believe they do not have a mandate to represent their scientist users or their overall future needs to anyone. Many potential EOSC user groups (I would say most), currently do not use the ESFRI RIs, and even if they do, they might have many ideas which we, in the RI world, do not even yet fathom.

The second question of why the ENVRI RIs should participate in the development of EOSC, is partially answered by the above. One could say that the EOSC is clearly moving towards being an e-infrastructure for research infrastructures, which is obviously useful for the development of the ENVRI RIs. There is a little opposition of considering to use common e-services to build better interoperability of ENVRI RI products which each other, or with the other relevant scientific products. This kind of increased interoperability has great potential to enable scientists to better answer the Societal Development Goals (SDGs), among other challenges.

The challenges of service provision for EOSC can be considered to be a natural part of the ENVRI RI service integration, and the support of the EOSC projects is naturally giving useful resources for them. Perhaps this service provision helps to better serve the scientific communities, also outside the current user base of the ENVRI community RIs?

There are extremely high hopes for the EOSC, but as the overall vision is cloudy (not a pun) and most crucially, the actual user communities are not being consulted, I am afraid of a cynical backlash. **How do we make the ENVRI RI users to utilize the EOSC? Could we use the EOSC to get new users, new services, new ways to solve SDGs? I think there is a clear potential, but the scientists themselves must be more involved.** We should organize hackathons, competitions and townhall meetings to get ideas what could be done. I think that RIs could build better virtual laboratories, but even more importantly, they could create platforms where such workflows would be easily shared, connected to ENVRI RI services, and directly used as a research outcome.



Ari is the co-coordinator of ENVRI-FAIR. He recently also coordinated the RISCAPÉ project and acted as a director of ENVRI PLUS project. He is a co-leader of WP4 working on common FAIR data and service policies.