Milestone 35: Completion of evaluation of Calls 6 and 7

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ATMO ACCESS
Access to Atmospheric Research Facilities

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1 Introduction

ATMO-ACCESS (Solutions for Sustainable Access to Atmospheric Research Facilities) provides opportunities to access some of the most advanced atmospheric research facilities in Europe. These include ground-based observatories, mobile platforms, atmospheric simulation chambers, and central laboratories for analyses and calibrations. ATMO-ACCESS offers free of charge access to these facilities, including specific training in addition to the logistical, technological, and scientific support. Users may also benefit from a contribution to their travel and local subsistence costs.

During the project, ATMO-ACCESS opened more calls for Trans-National Access (TNA) than originally planned. Therefore, this document (MS35, initially entitled *Completion of evaluation of final call*) reports about the evaluation of the applications to Calls 6 and 7, which were both completed ahead of the date of this report.

2 Description of the application evaluation process for Calls 6 and 7

The evaluation process did not change compared to calls 3-5. TNA-specific application forms were submitted by the applicants using the PASS platform and went through an evaluation process consisting of 4 steps:

1) Eligibility check by the Service and Access Management Unit (SAMU) [1], which evaluated the overall application eligibility, according to TNA rules in H2020;
2) Feasibility check by the access provider of the requested facility, in terms of technical capacity, agenda, human resources, etc.;
3) External review by experts selected from the ATMO-ACCESS Access Evaluation Panel (AEP) [2], whose composition and functioning are further described in ATMO-ACCESS Deliverable 9.1 [3]. Experts were asked to award points to each proposal according to a specific series of criteria depending on the driver of the access request (namely scientific excellence, technical need, innovation and market, and training need). These criteria include:
    - scientific relevance
    - technical value
    - novelty and innovation
    - applicants' quality
    - learning objectives.

    ATMO-ACCESS application forms guided applicants to provide the reviewers with the information needed to evaluate their proposals based on the criteria listed above.

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Three reviews were expected for each application, but although many experts were solicited, this was evidently challenging.
A rapporteur was appointed among the reviewers, with the task of balancing and summarizing the reviewers' assessment reports.

4) The final selection was made by the ATMO-ACCESS Strategic Trans-national and Virtual Access Board (STVB), with the support of the project Coordination and the SAMU primarily based on the main score obtained by the proposals. Proposals on the edge were further revaluated from reviewers' comments.

2.1 Evaluation of call #6

Call #6 was open from November 22nd, 2023 to February 5th, 2024 [4]. Focus was on multidisciplinary proposals going beyond Atmospheric Science, i.e. addressing questions related to e.g. health, ecosystems, etc… through access to atmospheric research facilities. Therefore, it was required that applicants also include non-atmospheric scientists, for example ecologists, biologists, oceanographers, toxicologists, physicians… Physical (and/or remote) access to 61 European facilities was offered. As usual, new or unconventional access to facilities was promoted, by allocating up to 5 more points during the evaluation process. Seventeen (17) applications were submitted in due time, involving 59 users and 15 facilities, relating to access to observatories (55%), simulation chambers (30%), and mobile platforms (15%). Being restricted to multidisciplinary proposals, this call received fewer applications than the previous open call (Call #5, 51 applications).

The proposal evaluation process started as soon as the call was closed, and was completed according to the agenda planned by the Project Coordination (Fig. 2.1.1). Four (4) applications were deemed ineligible by the ATMO-ACCESS STVB, being insufficiently multidisciplinary, and were bounced to the 7th Call (4) and the Private Sector Call (1). Two (2) more proposals were not considered feasible by the access providers. The other 11 proposals were individually evaluated by 2 experts each. Three applications for which less than 2 reviews were received from the ATMO-ACCESS AEP were additionally reviewed by 1 or 2 members of the ATMO-ACCESS STVB. The final selection was made based on these reviews during a dedicated meeting of the STVB held on February 23rd, 2024. The meeting focused on the appraisal of those applications getting a number of points close to the accept/reject threshold. Nine (9) proposals were eventually selected, bringing the success rate to 53%. Successful proposals addressed questions related to human health (4), solvents and organics at workplace (2), soils (2) and oceans (1). Applicants were notified of the results of the selection process by SAMU on April 12th, 2024, through the PASS platform (see Deliverable 9.3 [5]).

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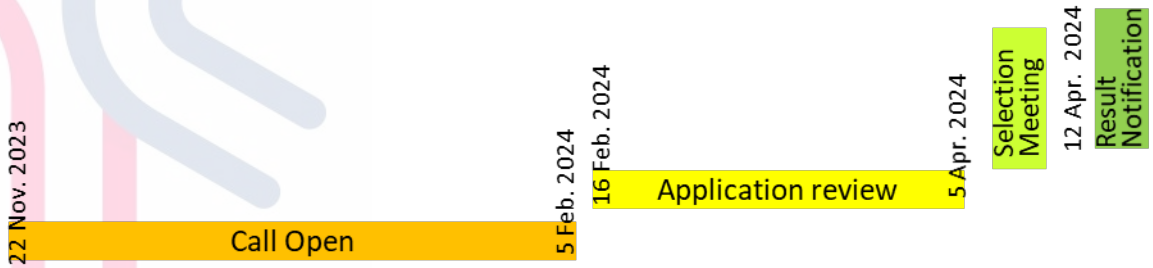

Figure 2.1.1: Timeline of the evaluation process of the 6th call for TNA.

Table 2.1.1 shows the success rate of applications under call #6 according to their main driver and the type of facility to be accessed. Applications to access Atmospheric Simulation Chambers were the most successful (5/6), and while no applications driven by technical needs were accepted (0/2). The significance of these statistics is low due to the limited number of applications to Call #6.

Table 2.1.1: Success rate of applications under the 6th call according to their main driver and the type of facility to be accessed.

	Research and Innovation	Technical Services	All Categories
Observatories	44%	0%	36%
Atmospheric Simulation Chambers	83%	N/A	83%
Mobile Platforms	33%	N/A	33%
All Facilities	60%	0%	53%

2.2 Evaluation of call #7

ATMO-ACCESS final Call (#7) [6] provided access to 61 of the leading European atmospheric research facilities, including the new ATMOBox service developed at the ICOS Atmospheric Thematic Centre. Applications were open from February 15th to April 3rd, 2024. Call #7 was open (no specific topic), new and unconventional access to facilities being strongly encouraged as previously. Forty-nine (49) applications were submitted in due time, and three were bounced from Call #6. A total of 182 users requested access to 32 different facilities, of which observatories (60%), simulation chambers (23%), mobile platforms (11%) and central laboratories (6%).

The evaluation process proceeded as initially planned by the ATMO-ACCESS project coordination. Proposals were rated by 55 experts from the AEP, one of whom reviewed 13 applications. Only 19% of the proposals were reviewed by 3 reviewers, 79% were reviewed by two reviewers and 2% (1) by only one reviewer from the AEP. Applications were eventually selected based on these evaluations during a dedicated meeting of the STVB, the project Coordinator, and SAMU held on June 3rd, 2024 (Fig. 2.2.1). One (1) application did not fulfil the eligibility rules set by ATMO-ACCESS. Forty-two (42) proposals were eventually selected (81%

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success rate). Applicants were notified by SAMU the results of the selection process via the PASS platform in the first weeks of June 2024 (see Deliverable 9.3 [5]).

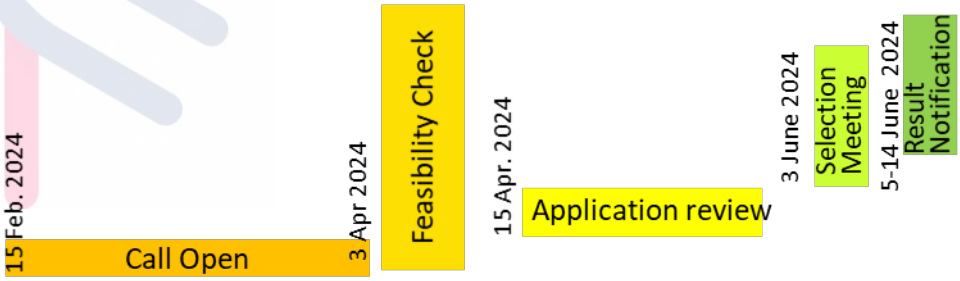

Figure 2.2.1: Timeline of the evaluation process of the 7th call for TNA.

Table 2.2.1 show the success rate of applications under call #7 according to their main driver and the type of facility to be accessed. Requests for access to training (11) and technical services (1) were almost all successful. The success rate of Research and Innovation driven applications was fairly similar across the different types of facilities.

Table 2.2.1: Success rate of applications under the 7th call according to their main driver and the type of facility to be accessed

	Research and Innovation	Training Services	Technical Services	All Categories
Observatories	83%	90%	100%	86%
Atmospheric Simulation Chambers	71%	100%	N/A	73%
Mobile Platforms	80%	N/A	N/A	80
Central Laboratories	75%	N/A	N/A	75%
All Facilities	78%	91%	100%	81%

3 Conclusion

The evaluation of applications for access under calls 6 and 7 was completed by the time MS35 was due (M46). Based on the experience gained from the previous calls, the STVB carried out the selection processes smoothly.

For Calls 6 and 7, 63 proposals were reviewed by 60 different reviewers in 3 months. All applications that were not discarded upstream of the review process for ineligibility or unfeasibility have been reviewed by at least one independent expert from the AEP. Only 22% of the eligible applications were reviewed by 3 reviewers from the AEP as originally planned (Deliverable 9.1 [3]), but 95% of the eligible applications) were reviewed by at least 2 reviewers from the AEP (Figure 3.1). There was no significant change in the number of applications reviewed by 2 or 3 reviewers from the AEP for Calls 6 and 7 compared to Calls 3, 4 and 5.

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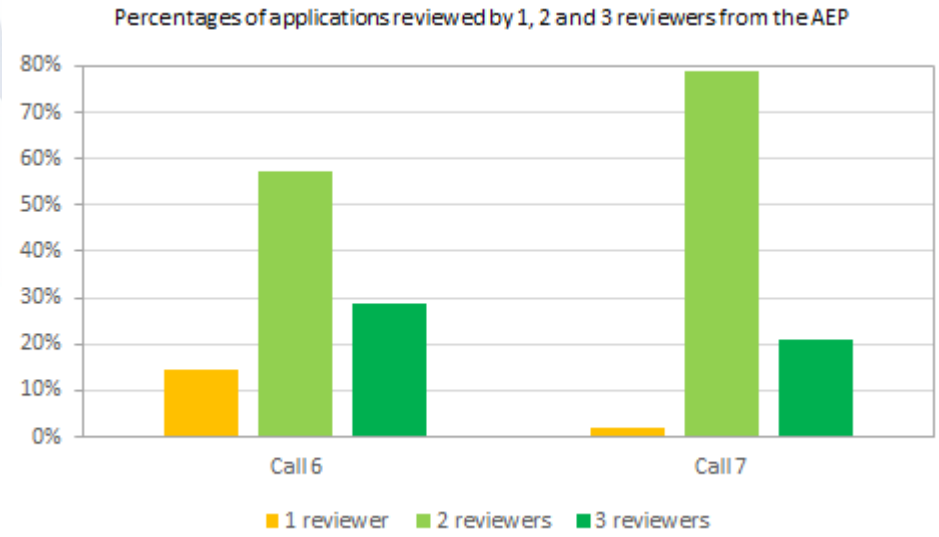

Figure 3.1: Percentages of applications getting 3, 2, 1 or no reviews from the AEP.

Members of the ATMO-ACCESS STVB and the Coordination supplemented the AEP when needed, so that each application was reviewed by at least 2 reviewers.

During the final selection meetings, limitations of the review process by the AEP were noticed by the STVB as for the previous calls (see MS34 [7]). Nonetheless, the STVB never modified the ranking coming from the review process of the AEP. Their decision was limited to setting a numerical value for the pass / no-pass threshold, so that only applications getting clearly positive appraisals were granted.

Application success rates as a function of the type of facility requested or the main driver for access vary across the different calls. A comprehensive analysis of this statistics will be provided in the final evaluation report on access programme (Deliverable D7.2, due in M48).

4 References

[1] ATMO-ACCESS Milestone 40: Description of application, review and selection process for TNA to ATMO-ACCESS facilities

[2] ATMO-ACCESS documentation: Terms of Reference for the ATMO-ACCESS Access Evaluation Panel

[3] ATMO-ACCESS Deliverable 9.1: First assessment of TNA provided to ATMO-ACCESS facilities

[4] ATMO-ACCESS webpage of the 6th call: https://www.atmo-access.eu/a-6th-call-for-trans-national-access-beyond-atmospheric-science/

[5] ATMO-ACCESS Deliverable 9.3: Third assessment of TNA provided to ATMO-ACCESS facilities

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[6] ATMO-ACCESS webpage of the 7th call: https://www.atmo-access.eu/7th-call-for-access/

[7] ATMO-ACCESS Milestone 34: Completion of evaluation of Calls 3, 4 and 5

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