



EUFAR the unique portal for airborne research in Europe

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Created in 2000 and supported by the EU Framework Programmes since then, EUFAR was born out of the necessity to create a central network and access point for the airborne research community in Europe. With the aim to support researchers by granting them access to research infrastructures, not accessible in their home countries, EUFAR also provides technical support and training in the field of airborne research for the environmental and geo-sciences.

Today, EUFAR2 (2014-2018) coordinates and facilitates transnational access to 18 instrumented aircraft and 3 remote-sensing instruments through the 13 operators who are part of EUFAR's current 24-partner European consortium. In addition, the current project supports networking and research activities focused on providing an enabling environment for and promoting airborne research.

The EUFAR2 activities cover three objectives, supported by the internet website www.eufar.net: (i – Institutional) improvement of the access to the research infrastructures and development of the future fleet according to the strategic advisory committee (SAC) recommendations; (ii – Innovation) improvement of the scientific knowledge and promotion of innovating instruments, processes and services for the emergence of new industrial technologies, with an identification of industrial needs by the SAC; (iii – Service) optimisation and harmonisation of the use of the research infrastructures through the development of the community of young researchers in airborne science, of the standards and protocols and of the airborne central database.

With the launch of a brand new website (www.eufar.net) in mid-November 2015, EUFAR aims to improve user experience on the website, which serves as a source of information and a hub where users are able to collaborate, learn, share expertise and best practices, and apply for transnational access, and education and training funded opportunities within the network. With its newly designed eye-catching interface, the website offers easy navigation, and user friendly functionalities. New features also include a section on news and airborne research stories to keep users up-to-date on EUFAR's activities, a career section, photo galleries, and much more. By elaborating new solutions for the web portal, EUFAR continues to serve as an interactive and dynamic platform bringing together experts, early-stage researchers, operators, data users, industry and other stakeholders in the airborne research community.

A main focus of the current project is the establishment of a sustainable legal structure for EUFAR. This is critical to ensuring the continuity of EUFAR and securing, at the least, partial financial independence from the European Commission who has been funding the project since its start. After carefully examining different legal forms relevant for EUFAR, the arguments are strongly in favour of establishing an International non-profit Association under the Belgian law (AISBL). Together with the implementation of an Open Access scheme by means of resource-sharing to support the mobility of personnel across countries envisaged in 2016, such a sustainable structure would contribute substantially toward broadening the user base of existing airborne research facilities in Europe and mobilising additional resources for this end. In essence, this would cement EUFAR's position as the key portal for airborne research in Europe.