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**D2.1**

**Selection of host country and location of Central Hub**

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Abstract (for dissemination)	This deliverable outlines the criteria and decision-making process that was followed in EHRI-PP to provisionally select the Netherlands as the hosting country of the Central Hub of the future EHRI-ERIC. It demonstrates that there exists agreement within the science communities served by EHRI about the siting of the Central Hub, and it outlines how EHRI-PP intends to broaden this consensus by consulting political stakeholder about the siting question.
Management Summary	(required if the deliverable exceeds more than 25 pages) [Max. 500 words]

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# 1 Introduction

The aim of the EHRI Preparatory Phase (EHRI-PP) project is to advance EHRI's organisational, financial and legal maturity to the point that it can be implemented as a permanent European Research Infrastructure (RI) with its own legal personality and long-term funding streams. Within this overall framework, Work Package (WP) 2 is charged with advancing EHRI's maturity with regards to governance and legal issues.

The EHRI-PP project plan foresees that WP2 is facilitating two important strategic decisions early on in the project: (i) the siting of the Central Hub and (ii) the preferred legal framework of the future EHRI organisation. The question about the preferred legal framework has been addressed in *D2.2 Selection and Analysis of Legal Frameworks*, submitted in June 2020.<sup>1</sup> This deliverable concluded that the legal form of the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) provides the best fit for the purpose of establishing EHRI as a permanent distributed RI. The present deliverable, in turn, will outline the reasons why the EHRI-PP Consortium has selected the Netherlands as its preferred hosting country for the future EHRI-ERIC Central Hub.

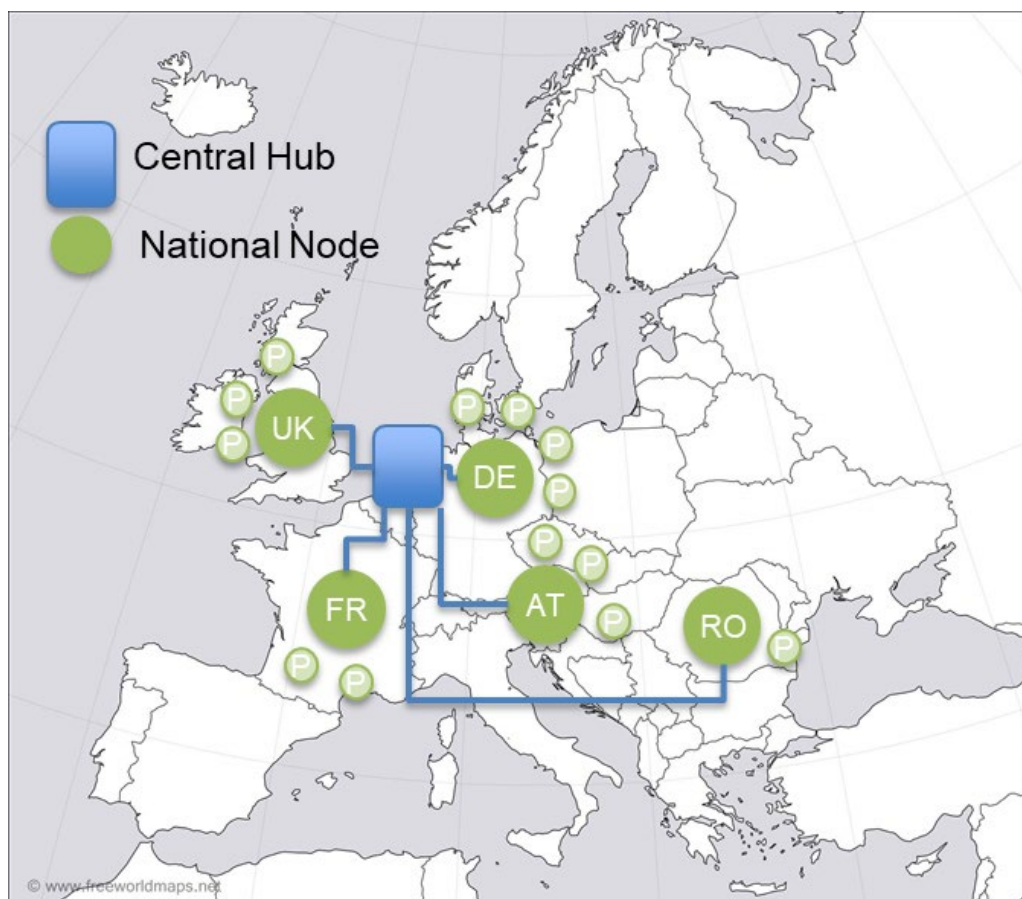
Section two of this deliverable provides context to the siting question by presenting a high-level overview of the planned distributed EHRI organisation that sketches the roles and responsibilities of the future Central Hub and the linked National Nodes, respectively. A third section lists the core requirements that the hosting country of the future Central Hub needs to fulfill. Section four outlines the overall decision-making process that EHRI follows to decide on siting, while section five highlights how the Netherlands fulfills the requirements set out in section three.

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<sup>1</sup> Luyten, D., Babeş-Fruchter, A., et al. "Deliverable D2.2: Selection and Analysis of the Legal Frameworks for Distributed Research Infrastructures and the preferred model for European Holocaust Research Infrastructure", *EHRI-PP Deliverable*, June 2020.

## 2 Central Hub and National Nodes

Since its inception in 2010, EHRI's overriding ambition has been the trans-national integration of existing national, regional and local Holocaust RIs (Archives, libraries, museums, research centres, memorial sites). While so far this integration has been undertaken in the context of time-limited project consortia, the aim of EHRI-PP is to prepare the establishment of a permanent RI of European dimension. As explained above, the preferred legal form for this permanent RI is the ERIC. Members of the EHRI-ERIC may be European Union Member States, EU Associated Countries, Third Countries other than Associated Countries, or Intergovernmental Organisations. As EHRI-ERIC will be organized as a *distributed* RI, it will have two operational levels: several National Nodes and one Central Hub – see also Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Central Hub and National Nodes. Please note: the selection of the Central Hub and National Nodes are for illustrative purposes only.**

The EHRI National Nodes will consist of the major centres of excellence in Holocaust documentation and research in each member country of EHRI-ERIC. Typically, these

national nodes will be formed by national consortia consisting of several partner institutions in the field. Alternatively, in countries where Holocaust research and documentation is concentrated in one national institution, a National Node may consist of a single institution only. The National Nodes will carry out most of EHRI's activities in areas such as research, providing access to local and/or national resources, training, and dissemination at national level.

The Central Hub, on the other hand, will be the statutory seat of the ERIC. It will act as a coordinating European layer across all national nodes, and it will be responsible for the legal, financial and administrative running of the ERIC; the development of harmonised strategies; and the operation of the integrated infrastructure such as the EHRI Portal. From a user perspective the Central Hub will act as a single, unified access points to all the services offered by EHRI.

The precise relationship between Central Hub and National Nodes with regards to governance, finances and activities will be further elaborated in *D2.3 Governance structure* and *D2.6 Agreed statutes and necessary legal documents*.

### 3 Requirements

Under the assumption the EHRI will be established as an ERIC, there are only two formal requirements that need to be fulfilled by the hosting country of the ERIC's statutory seat. Article 8 of the Council Regulation (EC) no 723/2009 stipulates that an ERIC "shall be located on the territory of a member which shall be a Member State or an associated country."<sup>2</sup> The ERIC Practical Guidelines further elaborate upon this article by stating that the statutory seat "should be located in a place (address) where some or all of the activities [of the ERIC] are carried out. It is not sufficient to have a mailbox in a country where no actual operations are carried out."<sup>3</sup>

The (formal) requirement to establish the Central Hub of EHRI-ERIC in a member state or associated country where EHRI undertakes significant activity does not significantly narrow the field of potential hosting countries. However, we have identified at least three additional criteria that need to be fulfilled by the host of the Central Hub if EHRI-ERIC is to be run as efficiently as is possible.

- Sufficient *capacity* needs to be available at the hosting country to run the Central Hub productively.
- The hosting country needs to have the *trust* of the other members of the consortium.
- The hosting country must demonstrate strong *commitment* to the establishment and long-term operation of the ERIC.

Section 5 below provides a summary assessment of our preferred hosting country – the Netherlands – against these criteria.

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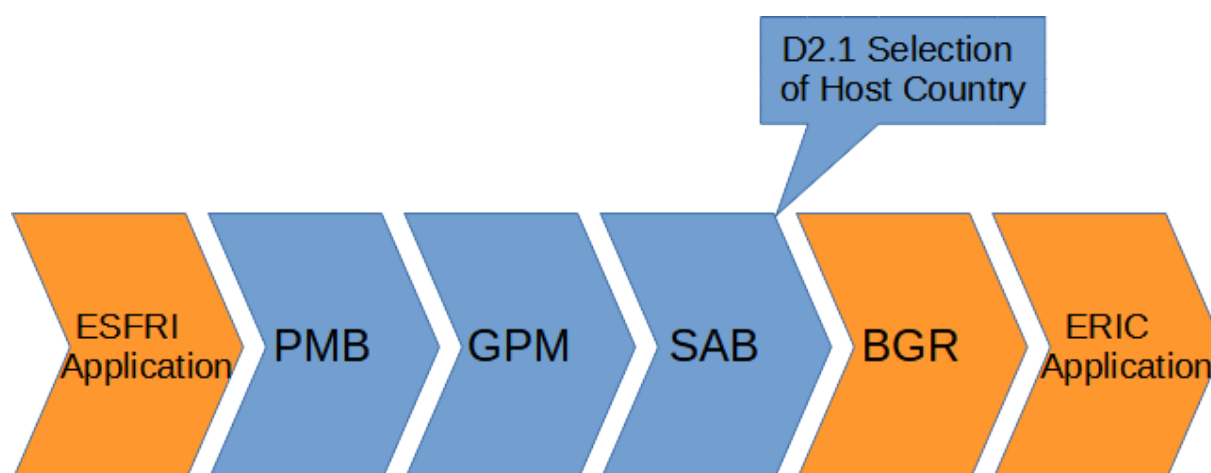
<sup>2</sup> European Commission. "Council Regulation (EC) No 723/2009 of 25 June 2009 on the Community Legal Framework for a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC)," 2009, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32009R0723>.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, "Legal framework for a European Research Infrastructure Consortium – ERIC: Practical Guidelines," April 2010, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/pdf/eric\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/pdf/eric_en.pdf).

## 4 Decision-making process

As the statutory seat of the ERIC and as the harmonising European layer across the distributed EHRI National Nodes, the EHRI Central Hub will be a crucial component in the overall EHRI organisation. The question of the siting of this Central Hub is therefore of paramount strategic importance, and will have a considerable impact upon the success and efficiency of EHRI's future implementation and operation.

Given this importance, we have taken great care to develop a robust decision making-process that is geared towards building wide consensus around the chosen option. As Figure 2 below illustrates, the present document is one important step within this overall decision making-framework.



**Figure 2: Decision-making process. Orange chevrons indicate consultation with, and decisions by, political stakeholders; blue chevrons denote consultations with, and decisions by, scientific communities.**

Importantly, consensus around siting must be built in consultation with at least two broad stakeholder groups: (i) partners institutions in the EHRI consortium and the scientific communities they represent on the hand, and (ii) political stakeholders, on the other. EHRI-ERIC will be a consortium of countries, and it is therefore crucial that agreement about the location of its Central Hub is reached among governmental representatives of the prospective founding members of the ERIC.

The decision making-process already started in 2017 when the successful application to put EHRI on the ESFRI Roadmap was submitted by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and



Science with six other countries providing political support. While the ESFRI application itself did not explicitly specify the location of the Central Hub, it nevertheless implied that the Netherlands will also take the lead in the establishment of the permanent EHRI organisation.

Since the beginning of the EHRI-PP project, we have sought to verify the initial assumption of a Dutch hosting. In the first instance we have done this by undertaking consultation with the scientific institutions and fields involved in EHRI. Our consultation in this regard has successively expanded its reach. We started with a discussion among members of the EHRI-PP Project Management Board (PMB) which represents seven EHRI-PP partner institutions in February 2020. The PMB affirmed its unanimous support for the Netherlands as its preferred option for the hosting of the Central Hub. The PMB further decided that the emerging consensus should be strengthened by taking the siting question to the EHRI-PP General Partner Meeting (GPM).

The siting question was consequentially put on the agenda of a (virtual) EHRI-PP GPM meeting that took place on 14 September 2020. Following a presentation and discussion about the location of the Central Hub, the following question was put to an indicative vote among GPM members: “Should the Netherlands be the preferred option for EHRI’s future central hub?”.

Out of the 15 institutions represented in the EHRI-PP GPM, 14 cast their votes. The result of the votes was unanimous support of the GPM for siting the Central Hub in the Netherlands.

Our consultation with the scientific communities was continued at a meeting of the EHRI Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) that took place on 16 September 2020 and where the siting question was put on the agenda for discussion. Out of eleven SAB members, seven attended the meeting, representing the core EHRI communities of Holocaust research, archives and digital humanities. All present SAB members unanimously supported the preference for the Netherlands as expressed by the EHRI-PP GPM.

The next step in the decision making-process will be to take the emerging consensus among the scientific community to political representatives. This will be done by taking the siting question to the EHRI-PP Board of Governmental Representatives (BGR). The BGR, which is currently being established, will be composed of representatives from relevant ministries and/or funding bodies of the prospective funding members of EHRI-ERIC. It is currently anticipated that the BGR will hold its first meeting in early 2021, and that the siting question will be put on the agenda of this meeting.

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The outcome of the BGR's discussion on the location of the Central Hub will be reported outside the context of this deliverable in the first periodic report of EHRI-PP.

## 5 Evaluation of Netherlands against selection criteria

The selection of the Netherlands as the EHRI-PP GPM's preferred location of the EHRI Central Hub was informed by an evaluation of the Netherlands against the formal and informal criteria that are outlined in section three above. Schematically, we might summarise this evaluation as follows:

*Located in a Member State or Associated Country with significant activity:* The Netherlands is a Member State of the European Union, an anticipated founding member of EHRI-ERIC. Furthermore, it is a place where EHRI-ERIC is to undertake substantive activity once established. It therefore fulfills all the formal requirements as demanded by the ERIC regulation.

*Capacity:* the necessary capacity is available. This is true on an institutional level. Through its long leadership of EHRI since 2009, NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam, has developed significant expertise in managing large international consortia. NIOD is also the leading Dutch Holocaust institution, and hosts important national infrastructures such as Oorlogsbronnen.nl. Dutch capacity is also strong more generally. In 2018, a total of 19 ERICs had been established, 3 of which are located in the Netherlands, including CLARIN, an important ERIC in the humanities and social sciences. This indicates that the Netherlands is perceived as a dependable and capable host of ERICs.

*Trust:* Through its long leadership of the successive EHRI projects, the Netherlands has won the trust of the EHRI community as a competent coordinator and mediator between the institutions and countries that form the EHRI family.

*Commitment:* Already at the application stage to enter the ESFRI Roadmap, EHRI received significant institutional commitments both from NIOD and its parent organisation, the Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), which pledged a total of in-cash and in-kind contributions of 100,000 Euro per year for the establishment of EHRI for a period of 5 years. Since then, NIOD senior management has reinforced its commitment to hosting EHRI, and has pledged to make significant resources available to facilitate the establishment of the Central Hub. At governmental level, EHRI's application to the ESFRI Roadmap was accompanied by a letter of political support from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and an initial national in-cash commitment of 50,000 Euro per annum for a period of 4 years via the Clariah-NL consortium. EHRI currently is in advanced negotiations with the

three Dutch Ministries – Education, Culture and Science; Foreign Affairs; Health, Welfare and Sports - to extend these initial commitments.

*Continuity:* In addition, the Netherlands is the option of continuity. NIOD has been coordinating EHRI since 2009, and locating the Central Hub in the Netherlands would mean continuing EHRI's established successful trajectory.

## 6 Conclusion

As outlined above, the Netherlands has been provisionally selected as the preferred hosting country of the EHRI-ERIC Central Hub by the EHRI science community as represented by the EHRI-PP PMB, GPM and SAB. In the course of our consultation no other hosting candidate was identified. Moreover, our consultation resulted in consensus that the Netherlands would constitute a capable, trusted and committed host of EHRI-ERIC.

However, and as outlined in section three above, this provisional selection must now be verified among EHRI-PP's other stakeholder groups, and particularly among representatives from those national ministries and/or funding bodies that are politically committed to the implementation and operation of the long-term EHRI organisation. This will now be pursued as a priority via consultations with the EHRI Board of Governmental Representatives.