

## Minutes NMI3-II WP5 „Integrated User Access“ Meeting

June 19, 2013, HZB BESSY II, Berlin-Adlershof, Germany

Participants: Rozsa Baranyai (BNC), Menno Blaauw (TUD), Flavio Carsughi (JCNS), Thomas Gutberlet (HZB), Stefan Janssen (PSI), Alain Menelle (LLB), Jürgen Neuhaus (FRM II), Klaus Pranzas (HZG), Florian Staier (HZB), Pavel Strunz (NPI)

The meeting was opened by Thomas Gutberlet, who gave a short update of the status of the activities of the work package.

Main activities within the last six months were on Task 5.2 ‘Development of a generalized integrated user registration’, Task 5.3 ‘Harmonized proposal forms and templates’, Task 5.4 ‘Web based proposal peer review process’ and first discussions within Task 5.5 ‘Platforms for cross source independent beam time access’.

- Task 5.2 ‘Development of a generalized integrated user registration’ and Task 5.3 ‘Harmonized proposal forms and templates’,

Thomas Gutberlet (HZB) gave a report on the result of the user survey on ‘Proposal Procedures’. The survey was done web based and was addressed to all NMI3 users at the participating neutron facilities. 259 individual responses were collected. As reported the survey shows a high activity of the users.

About 50% of all users have submitted between 5 and 20 proposals within a 5 year period. On average each users submits between 2 and 4 proposals each year to the facilities. The proposal activity also generates a high frequency of visits to the facilities. 37% made 1-4 visits within this period, 23% between 5-9 visits. On average each users performed 1-2 visits to the facilities per year. The majority of users (51%) do experiments at 2 to 3 facilities in parallel for their research. Methods used in the users research are mainly diffraction methods (36%) and SANS (22%), but a majority of users use more than one method in their research. Financial support of the users for their visits and usage of the neutron facilities is based on EU access funds (53%) and on internal resources (26%). Nearly all proposals are submitted by web based user portals (96%) which are considered very useful (70% give rating of 8-10), and user friendly (78%). The vast majority considers current frequency of proposal deadlines as sufficient (74%) with two dates per year (33%). 30% of current users would like to have between 3 and 4 deadlines for proposals per year. The majority of users are not in favor of a continuous proposal submission scheme (52%). Only 27% would consider this as useful. The majority of users favor a time delay between proposal submission and experiment Between 2 to 4 months (2 months: 21%, 3 months: 28%, 4 months: 14%).

A clear majority of 78% is in favor of a harmonized proposal form and procedure and also favors a single entry point to get access to the current digital user office platforms (65%). Regarding harmonized proposal deadlines nearly half of the users are in favor (43%), half against (43%), being the remaining 14% still uncertain. 52% would like to share submitted proposal to several facilities for review or move rejected proposals for review to another facility (58%). The majority of users even would favor an automatic move of rejected proposals due to overload to other facilities (60%). A joined facility review committee is favored by 42% the users, 34% are against.

The corresponding survey on “Proposal Procedures” for reviewers received 29 individual responses. The survey showed that a single reviewer usually is active in 1 or 2 committees (69 %). The majority works for a certain committee between 2 and 3 years (41 %) but nearly 1/3 is active also more than 5 years (31%). Most reviewers evaluate between 30 and 50 proposals (31 %) or more (50-100 proposals, 28 %) per year. On average they invest between 0.5 (28%) and 1 (34%) hour time to review a single proposal.

The reviewers prefer in their majority printed documents (56 %). Most reviewers submit their reviews electronically (83 %), which is also the preferred option (68 %). Nevertheless a large fraction of the reviewers prefers to meet in a personal review panel (56 %), this was rated as important (rate 8-10) by 83% of them. Video conferences are clearly not in favor (45 % no). Most reviewers consider current existing web based user office systems as helpful (62 %). Only a minority considers them as “too complicated” (14 %). A clear majority is in favor of harmonized forms or procedures to review proposals across individual facilities (48 %). On the other hand only a minority considers a centralized review process or review panel across the facilities as useful (24 %), the majority is uncertain (maybe, 48 %).

The complete results of both surveys are added in the Annex of the minutes. The participants discussed the relevance of the survey with respect to the number of responses and a possible bias by receiving mostly responses from users active in NMI3. In particular the high fraction of financial support by EU funding was discussed, as a large fraction of national users at the facilities rely on internal funding. Also the time span between proposal submission and experiment was seen critical as this time maybe triggered also by the availability of samples to be measured.

- Task 5.4 ‘Web based proposal peer review process’

Menno Blaauw (TU Delft) made available an overview of current existing and used web-based peer review proposals procedures at the participating NMI3 facilities. The overview was received by the participants without further discussion. The overview is also added to the Annex of the minutes.

- Task 5.5 ‘Platforms for cross source independent beam time access’

Klaus Pranzas (HZG) presented the current status of the discussion on cross facility beam time access. He reviewed in particular the current efforts by GEMS to establish such a process for the beamlines operated by GEMs at the facilities FRM II (neutron facility) and DESY (synchrotron facility). A main problem is the information flow between different review panels and the deadlines for proposal submission and panel meetings. A procedure should be developed how to deal with administrative aspects of such a process.

The next meeting was proposed for the end of 2013 to discuss the planned presentation of harmonized proposal form templates and more details on the possibilities of cross facility beam time access.

Annex:

Report on user survey "Proposal procedures"

Report on reviewer survey "Proposal procedures"

Report on currently used web based peer review procedures

Status discussion on cross facility beam time access