Excite Network

Integrating Advanced Research Infrastructures for Environmental Challenges: Insights from EXCITE²'s Transnational Access Program

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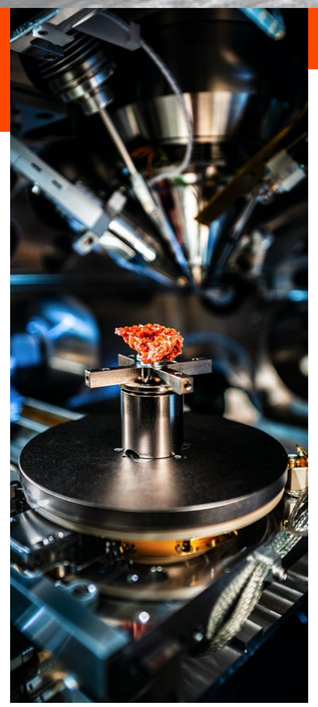
Exploring Earth and Environmental Materials for a Sustainable Future

Earth and environmental materials play a crucial role in many natural and industrial processes, making their study essential to achieving a carbon-neutral, sustainable future. The **EXCITE Network,** a European Commission-funded research infrastructure, offers **free access** to cutting-edge imaging facilities, enabling researchers worldwide to apply state-of-the-art analytical techniques in their work.

From **electron microscopy** (SEM, FIB-SEM, (S)TEM) and **X-ray tomography** to **nanoSIMS**, **atom probe tomography**, and beyond, EXCITE spans a broad suite of advanced methods. Our network empowers researchers at all career stages - including new and non-expert users - by providing direct access to expertise and instrumentation across 40 imaging and data processing facilities in 14 countries. With 22 partner institutions, EXCITE fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, helps bridge knowledge gaps, and opens new frontiers in the study of Earth and Environmental materials.

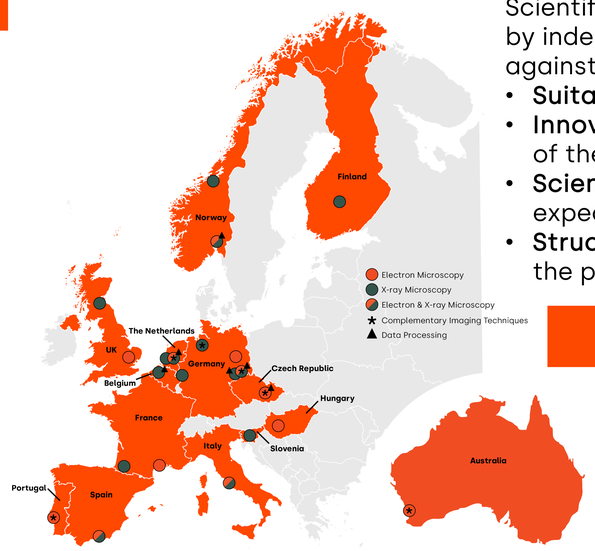


Facility Access System (FAST)

The Transnational Access (TA) process in EXCITE² is coordinated via **FAST** - a central web platform developed at Utrecht University. FAST serves as the central access management portal for:

- **call advertisement**,
- **proposal submission**,
- **technical feasibility checks**
- **scientific review**.

Designed to streamline and automate the TA workflow as much as possible, FAST also acts as a secure database for storing information about facilities, equipment, users, and ongoing activities.
FAST provides end-to-end support: guiding applicants through submission, helping facility managers track equipment and visits, enabling reviewers to deliver structured feedback, and assisting coordinators with reviewer assignment and monitoring call progress.



EXCITE² Transnational Access call process

1 Eligibility

Users from EU institutes and non-EU institutes are eligible if they:

- Work in a **country other than** the applied-to facility
- Can **disseminate their results** in compliance with the TNA data policy

2 Proposal

Users are **required to contact the facility** while drafting their proposal

3 Feasibility

Feasibility is assessed on:

- Rationale for the **requested methodology**, equipment, sample quantity, and access units
- Compliance with **facility specifications** regarding sample material, size, geometry, and preparation

4 Selection

Scientific excellence is assessed by independent reviewers against:

- **Suitability** of the methodology
- **Innovativeness** and timeliness of the research
- **Scientific significance** of expected outcomes
- **Structure and writing style** of the proposal

5 Access

Once selected, access period is agreed upon with the facility
Access is granted under one of two access modes:

- **Physical Access**: hands-on visit to the facility
- **Remote Service**: send-in-sample; user does not visit the facility

6 User Responsibilities

Once access is complete, users must:

- Acknowledge **EXCITE²** in all publications
- Ensure resulting **data are published openly** in a repository
- Ensure publications are **Open Access**

What can EXCITE do for you?

EXCITE² invites researchers from all career stages and backgrounds—across academia and industry—to apply for access to cutting-edge imaging facilities in Earth and environmental sciences. All costs related to equipment use, travel, and subsistence are fully funded by EXCITE². Facility access calls are held twice a year — the current call is open **until 23 May 2025**!

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Interested in using the EXCITE facilities?

Visit us
excite-network.eu