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D6.4 – First report on the liaison and contribution to EOSC and other EU initiatives

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Terminology

Terminology/Acronym	Description
EOSC	European Science Cloud
EC	European Commission
EOSC	European Open Science Cloud
FAIR	Findable; Accessible; Interoperable; Reusable
GA	Grant Agreement to the project
KER	Key Exploitable Results
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
SRIA	Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda

Executive Summary

Since its inception, FAIR-EASE has developed a strategy to actively engage in dialogue with pertinent initiatives, notably the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), which stands as a key collaborator.

FAIR-EASE cooperation is multifaceted, serving several critical purposes:

- To situate FAIR-EASE and its outcomes within the broader context of EOSC;
- To ensure that the results and services developed by FE are applied effectively and meet the EOSC requirements and technical specifications;
- To facilitate a mutual exchange of technical knowledge, benefiting from the insights of other projects while also promoting the FAIR-EASE approach towards innovation.

In pursuit of these goals, FAIR-EASE has implemented structured actions across various sectors, utilising dedicated resources based on a strategic plan. While this activity is led by WP6, it includes contributions from all FAIR-EASE work packages, ensuring a collaborative and integrated approach.

The outcomes thus far demonstrate that FAIR-EASE is effectively integrated within its operational landscape and that the project has successfully shared its approaches and results, benefiting the wider ecosystem.

Collaboration has been established with multiple entities, including 5 EU projects, national initiatives, and the broader EOSC community. These partnerships are set to continue and will be further developed in the project's next implementation phases.

Our ongoing objective for the next phase is to strengthen these existing relationships and to forge new collaborative opportunities, enhancing the impact and reach of FAIR-EASE.

Introduction

The FAIR-EASE project is part of the broader ecosystem of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), alongside many other European initiatives working together to support open science. As a component of this ecosystem, FAIR-EASE aims to contribute to the shared objective of enabling seamless access to research data and services across Europe.

The European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) is an ecosystem designed to support the entire research data lifecycle through access to research data and related services. Building on earlier achievements, the INFRAEOSC destination in which FAIR-EASE responded aimed to further develop the EOSC into a more cohesive and structured ecosystem—one that fully enables open science and supports all stages of research and innovation.

EOSC is set to enhance the data space for science, aligning it with other thematic data spaces identified in the European Strategy for Data. Numerous European projects and initiatives, including FAIR-EASE, contribute to shaping EOSC's structure, delivering valuable tools, services, and policy recommendations through inclusive and participatory approaches. While these efforts have been impactful, they have also resulted in a somewhat fragmented landscape. The EOSC—marked by the creation of the EOSC Association and a reinforced EOSC Partnership—focused on consolidation, coordination, co-design, and alignment. Stronger collaboration among all stakeholders is needed to unite scientific communities in a truly multidisciplinary effort. To enable such collaboration is a central focus of the FAIR-EASE project and the activities of Work Package 6.

This document is structured to present the FAIR-EASE strategy for liaising with and contributing to the European Open Science Cloud and other relevant European initiatives. It begins with an overview of the strategic approach and its evolution, followed by updates to the liaison strategy. The final section provides a detailed report on the concrete actions, collaborations, and contributions made by FAIR-EASE within the EOSC ecosystem.

1. FAIR-EASE strategy on the liaison and contribution to EOSC and other EU initiatives

1.1. FAIR-EASE strategy

The FAIR-EASE project has been structured around two main pillars, namely, (i) the involvement of research communities in the co-design of the project and consequently their direct engagement in each phase of the development until the validation against the Use Cases and Pilots; and (ii) the experience from other EOSC related projects and initiatives in which the most of the partners are or have been involved.

That is why from the very early stages of the project, FAIR-EASE was designed to put a strong focus on the liaison and contribution to EOSC and other EU initiatives with concrete actions. In this regard, a dedicated task, as part of the work package 6 “Dissemination, User Engagement and Outreach” was described in the Grant Agreement of the project. This task, entitled “*Liaison with and contribution to the EOSC and relevant European initiatives*” aimed for transverse coordination and developing a consensus-based transversal vision for the expansion of an EOSC landscape and elaboration of ecosystem-level recommendations, through analysis of said ecosystem and ensured liaisons with EOSC and related initiatives and organisations.

The analysis of the ecosystem started by taking into consideration the objectives of EOSC as detailed in the EOSC Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)¹ in 2021. In this document, the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) was guided by three core objectives. First, EOSC sought to ensure that Open Science practices and skills are properly taught, supported, and rewarded, making them the ‘new normal’ for researchers across disciplines. Second, it aimed to support the definition of standards and the development of tools and services that enable researchers to find, access, reuse, and combine research results efficiently. Third, EOSC is committed to establishing a sustainable and federated infrastructure that facilitates the open and trusted sharing of scientific results.

The FAIR-EASE project tends to contribute to the realisation of these objectives. However, the EOSC landscape is an ecosystem that keeps evolving very fast. In order to be able to keep in touch with the EOSC governance and the evolution of the various policies, also to make FAIR-EASE results and services sustainable, the project has decided to put in place several actions :

- Mapping of existing EOSC projects and initiatives and their contact points
- Taking part into EOSC Association activities (Working Groups, Task Forces and Opportunity Areas)
- Attending several EOSC Association events, such as the Winter Schools.

¹ <https://eosc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/SRIA-1.0.pdf>

2. Report on liaison and contribution to EOSC and other EU initiatives

2.1. FAIR-EASE participation to EOSC Association activities

Several members of the FAIR-EASE project have actively contributed to the work of various Task Forces and Working Groups established by the EOSC Association, thereby reinforcing the project's alignment with the broader strategic objectives of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC).

FAIR-EASE partners have been engaged in the **FAIR Metrics and Data Quality Task Force**², which is responsible for implementing the FAIR metrics proposed for EOSC by assessing their applicability across diverse research communities and testing relevant tools to support their adoption. This Task Force also undertakes a comprehensive review of existing approaches to data quality, including the execution of case studies aimed at identifying common features and dimensions to inform a coherent EOSC-wide framework.

Other project partners have also participated in the **Researcher Engagement and Adoption Task Force**³, which focuses on fostering the participation of a wide range of research communities in EOSC. This includes engagement along disciplinary lines, leveraging existing ESFRI infrastructures and thematic services, as well as at the national level through collaboration with research-performing organisations and scientific institutions. The Task Force addresses a dimension currently not covered in the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) and is developing concrete measures to facilitate researcher onboarding and adoption of EOSC services.

In addition, Neovia Innovation, WP6 coordinator, has taken part in the **Communication and Engagement Working Group**, which plays a role in shaping the EOSC Association's outreach and engagement strategies.

Through these various contributions, FAIR-EASE strengthens its involvement in the strategic and operational development of the EOSC landscape and meanwhile adapts its implementation plan to the most recent inputs and guidelines from external experts.

2.2. FAIR-EASE participation to the EOSC Opportunity Areas

FAIR-EASE participates actively through its Consortium's partners in the Opportunity Areas Expert Groups which were introduced during the first EOSC WinterSchool in Greece (January 2024).

² <https://eosc.eu/advisory-groups/fair-metrics-and-data-quality/>

³ <https://eosc.eu/advisory-groups/researcher-engagement-adoption/>

The project takes actively part in two OA groups :

OA2 – Metadata, Ontologies and Interoperability

FAIR-EASE actively engages in interoperability discussions on the EOSC Forum and contributes to the development of the Cross-Discipline Interoperability Framework (CDIF), endorsed by CODATA. The FAIR-EASE approach, particularly through the FE-DCAT-AP within the IDDAS framework, has influenced work on data integration and discoverability. In addition, FAIR-EASE members have joined the new Interoperability Task Force.

OA4 – User and Resource Environments

Building on its ambition to establish a Virtual Research Environment (Earth Analytics Lab) for on-demand visualisation and analysis of environmental data, FAIR-EASE makes significant contributions to OA4. These include:

- regular participation in OA4 meetings and presentation of its technical architecture,
- contributions to the development of guidelines on VREs, technical collaboration with EuroScienceGateway and AquaInfra to improve the Galaxy platform, making it more user-friendly, scalable, and well-integrated with EOSC cloud services.

Furthermore, the project also contributes to the discussion regarding Sustainability within the EOSC landscape.

Sustainable Pathways to Impact

FAIR-EASE is engaged in the cross-cutting group on “Sustainable pathways to impact.” The project focuses on ensuring long-term exploitation of results beyond its lifetime, for instance by strengthening links with national and European initiatives and by promoting the idea of a “project federation” to broaden user communities and sustain technical outcomes.

2.3. FAIR-EASE collaboration with EOSC projects

2.3.1. FAIR-IMPACT Project presentation

The FAIR-IMPACT project⁴ aims to expand FAIR solutions across the EOSC. It focuses on persistent identifiers, metadata, ontologies, and interoperability. FAIR-IMPACT will identify domain-specific solutions and promote their uptake across scientific disciplines. The project aims to achieve a FAIR EOSC, emphasizing FAIR data and services. By addressing challenges related to research objects, including software, FAIR-IMPACT contributes to improving public trust and reproducibility in science. Scientific communities are actively involved, ensuring practical solutions are tested and adopted.

⁴ <https://fair-impact.eu/>

Starting date of the collaboration : 06/2023

Areas of Collaboration and Synthesis of Results achieved

The collaboration between FAIR-EASE and FAIR-IMPACT has led to a number of concrete synergies across three key areas: semantic technologies, FAIRness metrics and certification, and communication and dissemination activities.

Ontologies and Metadata

One of the core areas of collaboration concerns semantic interoperability, particularly the use of ontologies and metadata to enhance discoverability and reusability of data. A significant interaction occurred between Task 4.2 of FAIR-IMPACT, which developed the FI EarthPortal, and Task 2.2 of FAIR-EASE, which focuses on the development of a Semantic Analyser⁵. The FI EarthPortal was successfully integrated and tested within the FAIR-EASE Semantic Analyser, enabling advanced semantic exploration capabilities for environmental and Earth system science datasets. This integration supports the wider EOSC ambition of fostering machine-actionable, interoperable research data.

Furthermore thanks to its WP4 and 5, FAIR-IMPACT provided direct support to FAIR-EASE partners during the first Open Call on Semantic Artefact FAIRness, specifically through the FAIRness assessment challenge⁶. This contributed to the development of shared practices for evaluating the FAIRness of semantic artefacts.

Metrics, Certification and Guidelines

FAIR-EASE has also actively contributed to ongoing discussions and developments around FAIR metrics and certification frameworks, particularly through its engagement in the FAIR-IMPACT Synchronisation Force. Project partners participated in dedicated workshops and sessions focused on metrics and the assessment of FAIRness, contributing insights and feedback from the perspective of the Earth system and environmental science communities.

FAIR-EASE has also developed a dedicated use case⁷ on FAIRness assessment tailored to the specificities of these communities. Early work within the project has explored the evaluation of both data FAIRness and the FAIRness of research software, aligning with emerging recommendations and tools under development in FAIR-IMPACT. Furthermore, FAIR-EASE has provided input to FAIR-IMPACT activities on software assessment⁸, contributing practical perspectives and early testing experiences from its own project outputs.

Communication and Dissemination

⁵ <https://zenodo.org/records/10606930>

⁶ <https://fair-impact.eu/support-offer-1-fairness-assessment-challenge-datasets-and-semantic-artefacts>

⁷ <https://fair-impact.eu/use-cases/assessing-fairness-earth-and-environmental-data-use-case-dataterra-and-pangaea>

⁸ <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10890043>

In the area of communication and dissemination, collaboration has been facilitated through mutual invitations to project-level events, enhancing visibility and knowledge exchange between the two projects. The FAIR-IMPACT coordination team was invited to the FAIR-EASE Annual Meeting in 2023 in Naples, while the FAIR-EASE technical coordination team participated in the FAIR-IMPACT Annual Meeting held in October 2023.

2.3.2. EuroScience Gateway

Project presentation

As many scientific domains now rely on data-driven approaches, but exploiting data remains complex and manual, the EuroScienceGateway project⁹ aims to create an adaptable, seamlessly integrated open infrastructure for better data management. It will serve users in 13 EU countries by providing tools, workflows, and computing and storage infrastructure. Since researchers often lack the necessary computing skills for platforms like HPC or Cloud, EuroScienceGateway will leverage a distributed computing network across Europe, accessible via user-friendly web portals.

The project aims to produce high-quality FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data for researchers in various disciplines and therefore will ultimately contribute to the new digital age of science.

Starting date of the collaboration : Mai 2023

Areas of Collaboration and Synthesis of Results achieved

FAIR EASE focuses on making data accessible, which aligns with EuroScienceGateway's goal of providing easy access to computational resources and data repositories. The collaboration ensures that data made accessible through FAIR EASE can be readily used within the EuroScienceGateway infrastructure. Tools and services developed under FAIR EASE, such as data management and sharing platforms, are integrated into the EuroScienceGateway. This integration helps in providing researchers with robust tools for data handling, which are essential for effective computational research facilitated by EuroScienceGateway. Both projects work together to support the user community through common training and outreach. FAIR EASE's expertise in FAIR principles and data management complements EuroScienceGateway's focus on computational resources, providing a complete approach to training researchers. Regular collaboration ensures that the governance frameworks of the two projects are aligned. This alignment helps to create a coherent and supportive environment for data sharing and computational research across Europe.

2.3.3. Blue-Cloud 2026

⁹ <https://www.egi.eu/project/eurosciencegateway/>

Project presentation

The Blue-Cloud 2026 project aims to evolve the pilot Blue-Cloud initiative into a federated European ecosystem. Its goal is to provide FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) open data and analytical services for ocean research. Over 42 months, Blue-Cloud 2026 will develop additional analytical services, new Virtual Labs, and data sets from various sources. It focuses on deepening research of oceans, EU seas, and coastal and inland waters. The project also contributes to the Digital Twin Ocean and aligns with the EU Green Deal, Destination Earth, and UN Sustainable Development Goals. Blue-Cloud 2026 key elements are:

- Federated Data Discovery & Access Service (DD&AS)
- Virtual Research Environment (VRE)
- Virtual Labs and workbenches focussing on specific scientific questions, and on generating high quality data aggregations and products.
- Thematic marine extension to the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)
- Serving the needs of the EU Blue Economy, Marine Environment, and Marine Knowledge agendas

The official Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between both projects is still in draft status, but the cooperation has informally already started.

Areas of collaboration and results achieved

Technical aspect

On the infrastructure side, Blue-Cloud's CNR has offered D4Science resources and support for the hosting and integration of the FAIR-EASE VRE and Earth Analytical Labs. The first two Labs have now (June 2024) been deployed, and this will be expanded in next months with the other labs.

Furthermore, on an interdisciplinary aspect, Data Discovery and Access Service: BC2026 has its DDAS by which it provides access to data from several blue data infrastructures, making use of harmonised metadata, as well as data access API's per BDI. FAIR-EASE adds on the interdisciplinary aspect (more than marine), and a method to integrate also subsetting services into the IDDAS. FAIR-EASE also develops a new method, via RDF, to expose the data content in a data system behind the API in a machine accessible way. It will be demonstrated how this new IDDAS could work, and when successful might become a useful iteration for the BC2026 DDAS.

Communication and dissemination

Several common webinars have been organised and shared in both project's networks.

Policies, standards, guidelines

Both FAIR-EASE and BC2026 focus on semantic improvements in metadata and data. the semantic analyser developed by BODC as part of FAIR-EASE has an immediate use case for BC2026 as well. Cooperation is already ongoing on this.

2.3.4. AquaInfra

Project presentation

The AquaINFRA project¹⁰ aims to create a virtual environment for marine and freshwater restoration. It will provide FAIR multidisciplinary data and services to support scientists and stakeholders. The environment allows stakeholders to store, share, access, analyse, and process research data across disciplines and national borders, leveraging the EOSC. AquaINFRA focuses on enabling collaboration between marine and freshwater researchers, with specific goals of cross-domain search mechanisms and spatiotemporal analysis through Virtual Research Environments. The project contributes to restoring healthy oceans, seas, coastal, and inland waters.

Starting date of the collaboration : 03/2024

Areas of Collaboration and Synthesis of Results achieved

Both projects aim to implement and promote the FAIR data principles. Both projects create case studies and demonstration projects that highlight successful collaborations and provide models for other researchers to follow. FAIR EASE focuses on broad scientific data, while AquaInfra specifically targets environmental water-related data.

The collaboration includes the integration of tools and services developed by both projects. For instance, AquaInfra might leverage data management and sharing tools from FAIR EASE, while FAIR EASE can benefit from AquaInfra's specialized environmental data tools and services.

The projects work together to develop and improve the components of a shared Galaxy platform that support data management and analysis. The collaboration between the FAIR EASE and AquaInfra projects strengthens the capabilities of both initiatives by combining expertise in data management, environmental research, and technical infrastructure.

2.4. FAIR-EASE collaboration with other initiatives

2.4.1. Gaïa Data

Project presentation

Gaia Data¹¹ is a French Equipex+ PIA3 project which aims to build a distributed e-infrastructure by relying on two Research Infrastructures (RI) : [Data Terra](https://data-terra.eu/) and [Climeri](https://climeri.eu/). This e-infrastructure may provide discovery, access, analysis and visualisation services on Earth science data. This e-infrastructure could become an EOSC thematic node.

Gaia data e-infrastructure is designed for the long term (i.e. sustainable) and optimised for Earth science data.

Starting date of the collaboration: November 2023

¹⁰ <https://aquainfra.eu/>

¹¹ <https://www.gaia-data.org/>

Areas of Collaboration and Synthesis of Results achieved

Technical activities

A joint technical working group has been created to improve potential technical synergies between the projects (national and European). In this group FAIR-EASE and GAIA DATA tackles the following common challenges :

- Create a meta Catalogue (harvesting existing Data Collection catalogues) using a DCAT profiles and provide features to harmonise and enrich the metadata
- Create a discovery portal
- Simplify data access
- Design and use an Earth Analytic Lab (JupyterLab, Galaxy, ...)
- Use core services (e.g. SSO, Vault, Repositories, ...)

One of the aims is to avoid duplication and duplication of effort, while maintaining the ultimate goal of a sustainable e-infrastructure.

Policies, standards, guidelines

The collaboration also worked on the alignment with existing standards, notably the DCAT profile, as well as OGC specifications, including OGC API, STAC, and OpenEO.

2.4.2. D4Science

Presentation of the initiative

D4Science¹² is a digital infrastructure designed to offer diverse communities of practices a comprehensive suite of services through tailored and co-created virtual research environments promoting collaboration and innovation. It is operated as a not-for-profit service. Its development was supported by several EU-funded projects.

The virtual research environments support the entire research lifecycle—from data management and analysis to publication and collaboration. By integrating services, tools, and resources, D4Science advances open science practices. Its effectiveness is exemplified through numerous success stories and impactful use cases.

Areas of Collaboration and Synthesis of Results achieved

The cooperation with CNR's D4Science has started as part of the BC2026 cooperation. D4Science offers computing and storage resources, as well as the software for running virtual research environments, which will be used to set up the FAIR-EASE Earth Analytical Labs. More information has already been provided in section 3.3.3.

¹² <https://www.d4science.org/about-us>

2.4.3. Galaxy project community

Project presentation

The Galaxy project¹³ is an open, web-based platform for data-intensive research, which aims to make complex computational analyses accessible to researchers without programming skills. Both FAIR EASE and the Galaxy project are committed to making scientific data and computational tools more accessible, interoperable, and reusable, aligning with the FAIR principles.

Areas of collaboration and results achieved

FAIR EASE and the Galaxy project community often collaborate on workshops, training sessions, and webinars to educate researchers on data management, FAIR principles, and the use of Galaxy for data analysis.

FAIR EASE contributes to the documentation and support resources within the Galaxy community, providing guidelines and best practices for managing and sharing data according to FAIR principles. This involvement helps enhance the capabilities of Galaxy in handling and processing FAIR-compliant data.

FAIR EASE helps in developing and enhancing infrastructure that supports data interoperability and reuse within the Galaxy ecosystem. This includes contributions to software development, data standards, and interoperability frameworks. FAIR EASE involves pilot projects in the Galaxy community to demonstrate the practical benefits of integrating FAIR data principles with Galaxy analytical tools. These projects serve as demonstrators for the wider scientific community. FAIR EASE integrates tools and workflows developed as part of the Galaxy project. This integration ensures that data managed as part of FAIR EASE can be processed using Galaxy's robust analytical capabilities.

FAIR EASE's participation in the Galaxy project community contributes to the development of infrastructures and policies that facilitate open and reproducible science. It illustrates the wider objectives of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) in promoting open science and innovation across Europe.

2.5. KPIs assessment

During the proposal stage, the project established a certain number of KPIs regarding the involvement of FAIR-EASE within the ecosystem. This section aims to assess these KPIs with one year remaining till the project ends.

The two key KPIs are displayed in the table below :

¹³ <https://galaxyproject.org/>

Name of the KPIs	Number of measurement
Participation in ecosystem events	5 via both and/or presentation and/or posters
Number of consultations with stakeholders (ie researchers, users, infrastructures, service providers, EU initiatives...)	5 by project end

During the first half of the project, FAIR-EASE has been actively involved in many EOSC and other Open Science ecosystem related events. The project has participated by presenting a poster, organising or giving presentations to five events, reaching the KPIs set at the beginning of the project.

Name of the event	Date	Location	Participation
EOSC Symposium 2022	14/11/2022 - 17/11/2022	Prague (Czech Republic)	Presentation of a poster
EOSC Symposium 2023	20/09/2023 - 22/09/2023	Madrid (Spain)	Organizer (C. Pierkot, A. Rizzo) and speaker (A. Kokkinaki) of the session “Semantic Interoperability”
OS FAIR 2023	25/09/2023 - 26/09/2023	Madrid (Spain)	Presentation by Peter THIJSE on FAIR Data Discovery & Access
European Galaxy Days	04/10/2023 - 06/10/2023	Freiburg (Germany)	Presentation by Jerome DETOC & Marie JOSSE
EOSC Focus Winterschool	30/01/2024 - 01/02/2024	Thessaloniki (Greece)	Participation to technical workshops and discussion

Furthermore, regarding the KPI on stakeholder consultations (target: **5 by project end**), FAIR-EASE is also well on track. By the mid-term of the project, **three interviews** have already been conducted with key stakeholders, including project pilots and representatives from **D4Science**.

3. Liaison and contribution to EOSC and other EU initiatives planned activities

FAIR-EASE plans to further strengthen its engagement with European initiatives, building upon the contacts and collaborations already established within the first half of the project. In particular, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with D4Science is currently in the process of being signed, formalising cooperation and setting the ground for enhanced interoperability and joint exploitation of services.

In addition, FAIR-EASE will pursue more targeted actions on sustainability, ensuring that results and services can endure beyond the project lifetime. A central element of this strategy will be the identification and consolidation of Key Exploitable Results (KERs), enabling the project to define pathways for long-term adoption, integration into the EOSC ecosystem.

4. Conclusion

Throughout its first implementation phases, FAIR-EASE has successfully positioned itself within the EOSC ecosystem, establishing strong collaborations with key projects, initiatives, and infrastructures. The project has actively contributed to EOSC Association activities (engagement in the EOSC Focus Opportunity Areas) and initiated synergies with EU-funded projects such as FAIR-IMPACT, EuroScience Gateway, Blue-Cloud 2026, and Aqualnfa. Moreover, the project also started to collaborate with initiatives including Gaia Data, D4Science, and the Galaxy community. These liaisons have ensured that FAIR-EASE results are not only visible but also can be sustainable in the future and be useful to the communities especially within the European Open Science landscape.

The mid-term KPI assessment shows that the project is on track, having already reached its target for ecosystem event participation and well advanced towards its consultation objectives with stakeholders.

Looking ahead, the project will consolidate and extend these efforts, particularly through the formalisation of collaborations such as the forthcoming MoU with D4Science and the identification of Key Exploitable Results (KERs) to ensure the sustainability of the services provided by the project.