

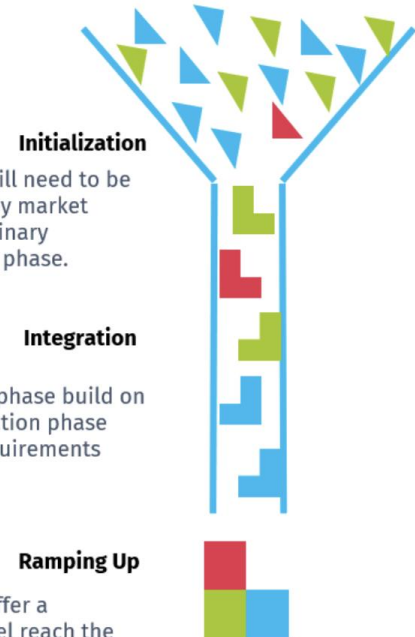
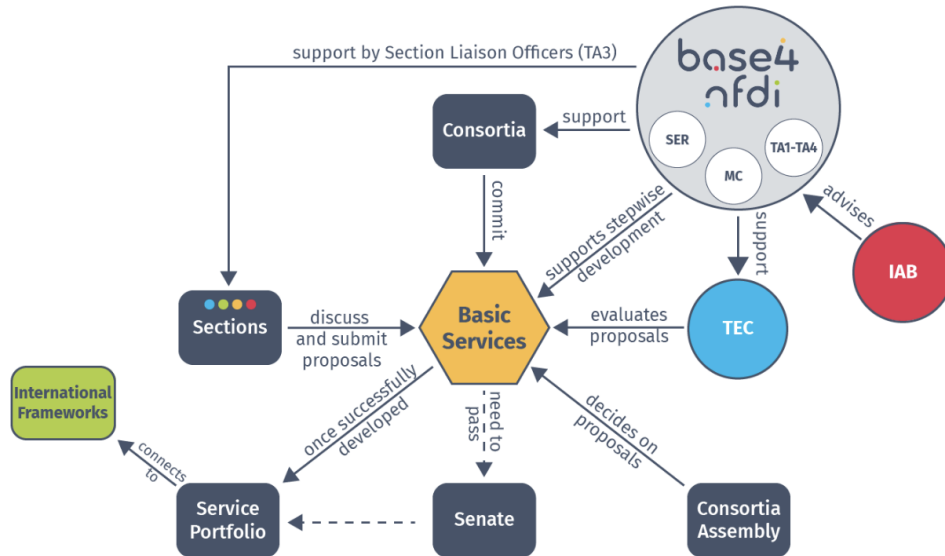
NFDI as a Learning System. Results and Lessons Learned from the Evaluation of Base4NFDI

Dr. Jan Biela, Dominik Obeth, Franziska Fritzsche
CoRDI, 26 August, 2025



A large variety of stakeholders is involved

Funding is awarded through a multi-stage process



The evaluation addressed three aspects of Base4NFDI:

1 Internal project structure and organisation

- Assessing the **effectiveness** of project structures and resource utilisation.
- Evaluating **role profiles** and **responsibilities**
- Reviewing **communication** and **coordination** with stakeholders

2 Process for developing basic services

- Analysing **collaboration** and **efficiency** in workflows
- Assessing **evaluation & decision-making** processes
- Examining the role of **strategic governance** bodies

3 Relevance to the NFDI community

- Assessing the **usability of basic services** for **consortia**.
- Evaluating **collaboration** between **developer teams, B4N and the NFDI consortia** as well as the **commitment** of the consortia **to basic services**.

Applied methods



Period of examination: January – June 2025

The evaluation was funded by DFG as part of NFDI. Grant Number 521463400.



Base4NFDI's collaboration and structures work well overall, despite being set up in a complex environment with pre-existing structures

Challenges for setup

- ❏ Integration into pre-existing environment
- ❏ Adaptable project structure with intentionally broad roles
- ❏ Many institutions involved, new roles (Service Stewards, Section Liaison Officers)
- ❏ Tight timeline

Main results

- ❏ Base4NFDI fulfils roles and tasks; **internal teamwork is efficient**, but **more efforts needed for coordination** with/among co-spokespersons.
- ❏ **Job profiles are demanding**, making vacancies hard to fill.
- ❏ External stakeholders value collaboration, but communication should be streamlined to a **single contact point**.



Submission process

Evaluation and decision-making

Development process

Sections /
working
groups

TEC

Consortia

Consortia
Assembly

Developer
teams

Main results

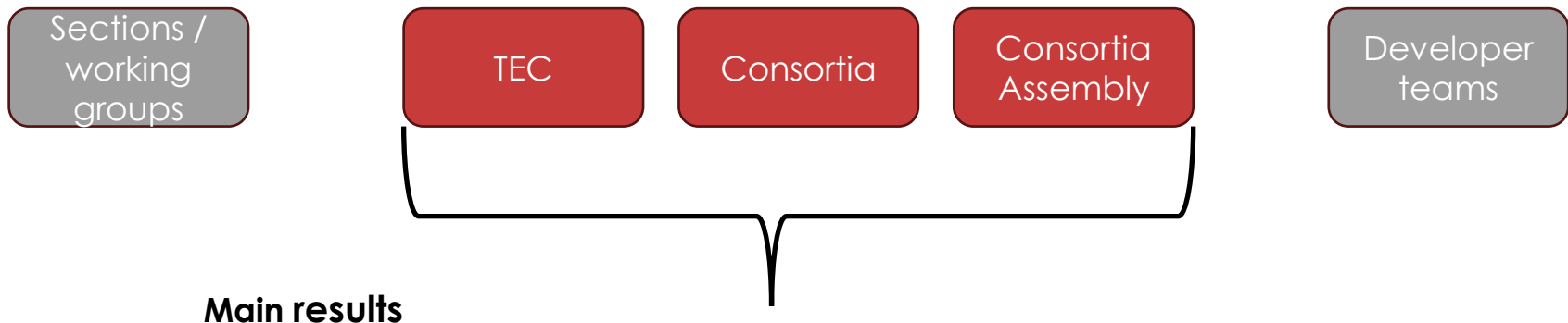
- **Bottom-up approach seen very positive** by all stakeholders and improves acceptance of Base4NFDI.
- **Risk that strategically relevant services may be overlooked** (e.g. for EOSC integration)
- Some members of **third-round consortia wish to be integrated more** in the sections



Submission process

Evaluation and decision-making

Development process



Main results



TEC:

- ↗ **Critical role** to avoid first come – first served principle.
- ↗ **Transparent communication of reasons for rejections** necessary for contested decisions.
- ↗ **Pitch-format** could improve acceptance



Consortia:

- ↗ Discussions about submission mostly take place in **small circles** (e.g. expert committees) rather than plenary, but is considered adequate.
- ↗ **Decisions** mostly taken in steering committees.
- ↗ **Limited ability to commit** to basic services.



Consortia Assembly:

- ↗ **Quorums** for submission rounds are overall **adequate**.
- ↗ Larger minority in favour of **higher quorums for initialisation phase** and lower quorums for ramp-up



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Main results

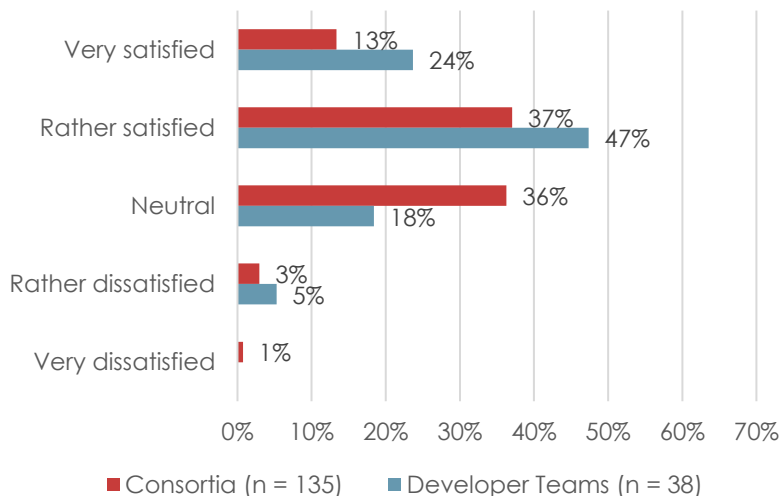
- **Lowering administrative burdens and formal requirements** will help ease challenges faced by developer teams
- **Support** by Base4NFDI for outreach and training activities **is considered helpful**





Stakeholders are overall satisfied with Base4NFDI

How satisfied are you overall with the Base4NFDI project?



- Multi-stage process reduces planning **security** for developer teams and consortia.
- Sustainability of basic services as a chicken-egg problem:** Partly vague commitment of consortia vs. uncertainty about the development process.
- Prioritising basic services will likely become an issue soon** since funds are too limited. Not all basic services might reach ramp-up phase.



Most services are considered useful for the whole NFDI community. Respondents tend to attribute services rather to the whole NFDI than their own consortia/institution.

Which of the following basic services are, from your point of view, in general useful for the following user groups?

	IAM4NFDI	PID4NFDI	TS4NFDI	Jupyter4NFDI	DMP4NFDI	KGI4NFDI	nfdi.software	RDMTraining4 NFDI	Average
For individual users	35%	23%	23%	49%	35%	17%	29%	37%	31%
For my institution	40%	35%	31%	31%	33%	19%	24%	31%	31%
For my consortium	56%	46%	47%	36%	35%	29%	25%	39%	39%
For the NFDI community as a whole	73%	61%	52%	39%	44%	36%	33%	50%	48%
For complementing EOSC services	19%	14%	13%	9%	7%	10%	5%	4%	10%
I don't know this service	12%	10%	19%	11%	17%	25%	26%	17%	17%



Perceived relevance for target groups varies substantially across services.

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EOSC alignment is ranked lowest

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Summary & Recommendations

1 Internal project structure and organisation

Main findings

- Structures and roles are effective despite challenging project structure and environment

Selected Recommendations

- Establish dedicated task leads to clarify team member roles

2 Process for developing basic services

Main findings

- Both bottom-up approach and strategic elements necessary
- High variety of services requires broad evaluation criteria

Selected Recommendations

- Revisit balance between bottom-up approach and strategic elements
- Continue establishing “maturity” as evaluation criteria (instead of TRL)

3 Relevance to the NFDI community

Main findings

- Commitment of consortia as chicken-egg problem
- Long-term operation of services yet unclear

Selected Recommendations

- Establish clear paths for long-term funding
- Rethink structure of the development process to improve planning security
- Further strengthen link between sections and consortia

Get in touch!

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