

GSO Draft Terms of Reference

1. The GSO Vision and mission

Vision: A world with GRIs that offer robust and coordinated scientific services to promote an effective international response to societal and scientific grand challenges.

Mission: GSO exchanges experiences, and identifies and promotes guidelines, opportunities, and practices for the advancement of the landscape of GRI within its members.

2. Background

History of the GSO

- The Group of Senior Officials (GSO) was established in 2008 by G8 Science Ministries in recognition of the potential for increased international cooperation on Global Research Infrastructures (GRIs)
- The aim of the group is generally to promote international cooperation in large-scale research facilities through the exchange of relevant information.
- The G7 issued mandates containing tasks in 2008, 2013 and 2015. Based on the mandates, the group focussed on various issues of international cooperation, including the sharing of information on plans to construct new large-scale research facilities, a framework for GRI, promoting access to GRI, and sharing scientific data and information. In 2015 and 2017, the group reported to the G7.
- In 2017 and 2019, no further specific mandates were issued. The group decided to establish a work plan based on the latest mandate and continue an informal exchange.
- The group is currently mandated by the G7¹.

What the GSO has achieved

- A permanent discussion forum for exchange of best practices and possible GRI developments
- A Framework of criteria of what constitutes a GRI (under continuous refinement)
- Case studies of aspiring GRIs tested against the Framework
- A list of research infrastructures offering international access
- A Declaration of Intent on global excellence-based access to RIs.

¹ [G7 united in science and research - BMBF](#)

3. GSO activities

1. Updating the GSO Framework and identifying good practices for the implementation of GRIs.

- The GSO framework is updated by testing its criteria on GRI case studies. The GSO will publish the case studies on its website and carry out soft monitoring of how the criteria can be applied in different environments and through a RI lifecycle. This information will help in refining and updating the criteria.

2. Sharing information on plans for up-grading, new construction and/or further integration of RIs of potential global relevance²

- Encouraging the exchange and discussion on national roadmaps and/or strategic plans and RI catalogues, and monitoring identified common gaps on capability;
- Making sure that relevant GRIs are identified in the national roadmap and strategic documents of their country;
- Horizon scanning of GRI collaboration opportunities;
- Operating as an exchange platform for policies and practices.

3. Outreach

- Engaging across governments on the evolution and potential of the GRI landscape, and providing participant governments with recommendations on areas of high value / of timely and strategic cooperation on GRIs;
- Ensuring the scientific community is informed about the Framework, and the other work of the GSO, and making this information available on the GSO dedicated website;
- Engaging with other relevant audiences (research funders, other international fora).

4. Complementarity to other work

The GSO will have sight of and engage, where necessary or advantageous, with G7, G20, EU Institutions, UN, OECD, or other international policy / scientific fora (e.g., Carnegie and Belmont) and relevant regional initiatives including ESFRI and EOSC.

The scope of the GSO is to increase coherent global cooperation. Its aim and its composition (governmental representatives from entities responsible for major GRI investments) distinguish it from bodies such as the GSF (carrying out analytical work on science policy, to which the GSO contributes) and ICRI (a bi-annual conference aimed at fostering international dialogue and collaboration on research infrastructures).

² For a description of RI categories, please see page 34 of the 2015 GSO report ([gso progress report 2015 final.pdf \(gsogri.org\)](https://www.gsoagri.org/gso-progress-report-2015-final.pdf))

5. Organisation and modus operandi

1. The GSO is presently composed by representatives from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Commission, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia (excluded from G7 chaired meetings as of November 2022), South Africa, UK and USA. Participating countries are represented at the GSO by officials, experts of international research infrastructures, and representatives of national research organizations mandated by governments.
2. The European Commission provides the GSO Secretariat, according to an agreement of GSO members. The Secretariat announces meetings, takes minutes, and circulates relevant documents and decisions adopted by the Group. The Secretariat also curates the website.
3. The GSO has a rotating chairmanship that lasts for one year. The GSO Chair will be the country holding the G7 Presidency.
4. The GSO will meet in person once a year. The host country will rotate among all GSO members. The host country will organise and lead the in-person meeting and the site visits. To the maximum extent possible, GSO meetings should be combined / held alongside other fora such as OECD GSF meetings and ICRI.
5. Interim online meetings can be convened by the GSO Chair. Online meetings will be organised by the Secretariat and led by the GSO Chair.
6. The GSO operates by consensus. When required, decisions will be adopted by a majority that includes a G7 majority.
7. The GSO is open to new members who are actively engaged in GRI activities and investments, and who commit to promoting the GSO Framework Criteria. The GSO may identify potential members and invite them to join. Interested countries may also express their interest in writing to the GSO Secretariat and members will decide according to the procedures in art. 6 within 8 weeks.
8. Participants representing bodies other than national governments, such as relevant intergovernmental organizations, can join the GSO as Observers by contacting the Secretariat. The GSO can invite non-member countries as guests to the open sessions of GSO meetings.
9. GSO members will engage in GSO activities and participate in GSO meetings. Any GSO member can leave the group by notifying the Secretariat in writing, after which the resignation will come into effect five weeks later. The GSO can also decide on a termination or suspension of a member not complying with these Terms of Reference, according to the principle established in art. 6.
10. The GSO may decide to use the assistance of ad hoc experts.