



## COMPLAINTS

INTERACT staff have worked hard to gain funding from the EU that will support access for hundreds of researchers to northern and Arctic research stations. They also work hard, together with external expert reviewers, to evaluate numerous applications for access while station managers offering Transnational Access are committed to providing a service and procedure to facilitate successful TA visits with minimal administration. Although the ethos of INTERACT is to facilitate research in the north, occasionally complaints about procedures and decisions may arise. INTERACT therefore has a specific policy related to complaints concerning Transnational Access funding policy, awards and procedures.

## BACKGROUND

The selection of user groups for Transnational Access, including both physical and remote access, is a two-step process. First, the applications undergo scientific evaluation by the TA Board that consists of eight experts external to INTERACT and eight representatives of stations in particular geographical regions. Each application is evaluated for several criteria: Scientific quality of the planned research, scientific merits of the user group leader, relevance of the planned research for INTERACT goals, and value for money. TA Board discusses all applications and recommends user groups that they decide merit access to the research stations. The TA decisions are then finalized by the research stations, based on the TA Board's recommendations, feasibility of the projects at the station, station strategy etc. The recommendations to the stations, and access decisions to the applicants are communicated by the INTERACT Transnational Access Office, which does not take part in the evaluation and selection processes. The applicants are provided with the access decision and a conclusive Evaluation Statement via the INTERACCESS system.

The [INTERACT Transnational Access Office](#) is the first point of contact for complaints and grievances, not the members of the TA Board or the main INTERACT Coordinating Office.

## PROCEDURE

Inquiries relating to the administrative handling, funding policy, access decisions or granted access, and evaluation and selection procedure of TA proposals, should be directed to the [INTERACT Transnational Access Office](#). Any enquiries will be investigated informally initially, with feedback on the actions decided given to the person raising the issue within ten working days. Cases will be escalated to the appropriate INTERACT officer if, and when, necessary.

Complaints should not be sent to the main INTERACT Coordinating Office, TA Board Members or station managers, as it is not within their remit to respond, and this will only serve to delay the response while the complaint is forwarded to the appropriate INTERACT officer or contact person.

The following are not considered as grounds for complaint:

- rejection of TA proposals according to the published selection procedure;
- the composition of the TA Board;

Applicants who have previously received INTERACT TA should not take it for granted that subsequent applications will be approved, as they are considered as new TA applications and thus undergo the same selection procedure as all applications. In other words, projects lasting for more than one year should be organized in such a manner that it is possible to achieve the desired results even if INTERACT Transnational Access is only granted once. INTERACT is not a research council and does not provide full funding for research projects, only access to conduct studies at research stations.

Formal complaints should be directed in writing, by post or electronically, to the INTERACT Transnational Access Office which will aim to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and/or seek clarification within ten working days. If the TA Office cannot deal with your complaint, they will pass it on to the appropriate contact and give you their name and contact details.

The appropriate INTERACT officer will investigate the complaint, and will try to resolve the problem to the complainant's satisfaction. If the response from the relevant INTERACT officer is not felt to be satisfactory, complainants should be written to the [INTERACT Coordinator](#).

Multiple complaints about the same issue, after receiving a response from the appropriate INTERACT officer, will not be considered.