



POSITION PAPER

The establishment of an independent user
forum for the European HPC ecosystem

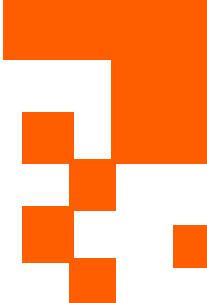


Introduction

As an Association of Users and HPC Centres in Europe, and, given our track record in coordinating HPC-related services over the past 15 years, we, the Partnership for Advanced Computing in Europe (PRACE), are well placed to perform an analysis of and provide recommendations on the most effective ways to encourage, collect, and react accordingly to, feedback from users in the European HPC ecosystem.

Creating effective mechanisms for user discussion and feedback is pivotal for enhancing engagement within the ecosystem and ensuring that public infrastructures are run efficiently and are adapted to the needs and capacity of the users. With the founding of the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking, and the changes this has brought to the European HPC ecosystem, it has become even more vital and urgent to establish a broad and inclusive user forum to collect feedback from users – across different disciplines, industries and communities – and encourage sharing of best practice and new ideas in computational science.

At PRACE, we have first-hand experience in enabling user feedback, training, and diverse user and infrastructure support, having established and run our own user forum while we provided HPC resources for science and research in Europe.



Purpose

In this position paper, we are proposing **why** and **how** a **newly established user forum relating to the EuroHPC JU infrastructure, as part of Europe's world class supercomputing ecosystem, should remain independent from its infrastructure funding body or bodies, mainly EuroHPC JU**, and **why** such a representative body should define its own governance rules and member selection criteria. This position paper also takes into consideration the European Parliament's own recommendations.



On pages 4-5, we list our recommendations on how to effectively collect and valorise user feedback, and how to, ultimately, **empower independent bodies to be the main collectors of feedback. Such actions will provide greater benefits to both the users and the EuroHPC JU itself.**

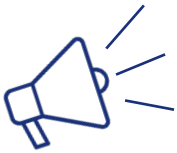
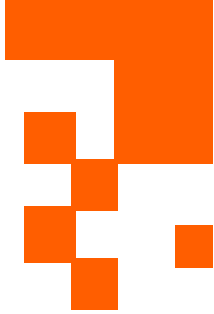
Independence is key

PRACE welcomes the idea that the EuroHPC JU – as the leading HPC organisation in the European Union that implements and funds the infrastructure providing users access to HPC and related technologies – would collect input and seek feedback from the communities who use the resources it makes available.

We must, however, stress that, for the collection and use of user feedback to be genuine, it is crucial that a user forum remains independent from the JU and defines its own governance rules and member selection criteria to enable free exchange and constructive discussion of ideas, considerations and experiences.

Drawing from our own experience, we believe it is almost impossible for an organisation to run its own, internal user forum to collect frank feedback from users while also remaining entirely neutral.

The EuroHPC JU has proven its effectiveness in delivering on its mandate, but to fully leverage the knowledge and experiences of HPC users in Europe so that it can continually improve its own offerings, it is imperative that the JU embraces an approach to user feedback that allows for anonymity **and** is shaped to a certain extent by the users themselves.

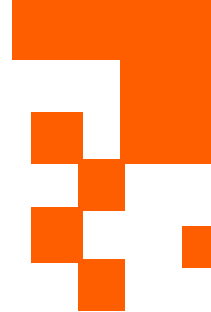


PRACE recommendations for effective user feedback

Based on our experiences, we recommend a strict separation of concerns. Users and user organisations should be able to formulate feedback independently, after which the EuroHPC JU can act upon this feedback and implement actions or not, as the case may be.

PRACE, therefore, supports the empowerment of selected independent bodies to act as user feedback nodes within the European HPC ecosystem, ensuring the collection of genuine feedback and the effective leverage of that feedback for the benefit of all HPC communities.

Empowering multiple organisations to gather feedback will also ensure that the voices of the many sub-communities that exist within the European HPC ecosystem are all heard. Centralisation of feedback collection comes with the risk that the needs of larger communities will drown out the voices of smaller, but equally important, ones.



PRACE's key recommendations based on the context outlined are:

1. Independence and governance

Any organisations collecting user feedback should define their own governance rules and member selection criteria, independent from the EuroHPC JU.

Those governance structures should ensure openness, inclusivity, and transparency.

2. Support and recognition

The JU Governing Board should recognise organisations as representative of identified user communities based on specific criteria (e.g. openness to users to join, proper governance structure).

Funding mechanisms should be defined to support the activities of these organisations within the framework of user forum actions.

3. Feedback collection and analysis

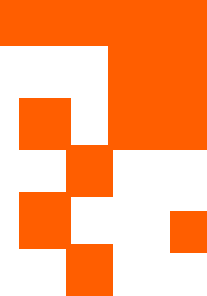
The EuroHPC JU should implement a structured process to record and analyse feedback from users and organisations.

Clear criteria should be defined to evaluate the expected feedback, ensuring transparency and accountability in the feedback process.

An action plan should be prepared based on the feedback, with regular reporting and review by the relevant bodies of the JU.

4. Separation of concerns

There should be a strict separation of roles: user organisations should formulate feedback, while the EuroHPC JU should account for this feedback and implement actions based on it and in compliance with its mandate and capabilities.



Role of PRACE

For the past 15 years, PRACE has used a bottom-up approach to serve its members' needs, and has experienced first-hand the inherent issues in running a user forum centrally.

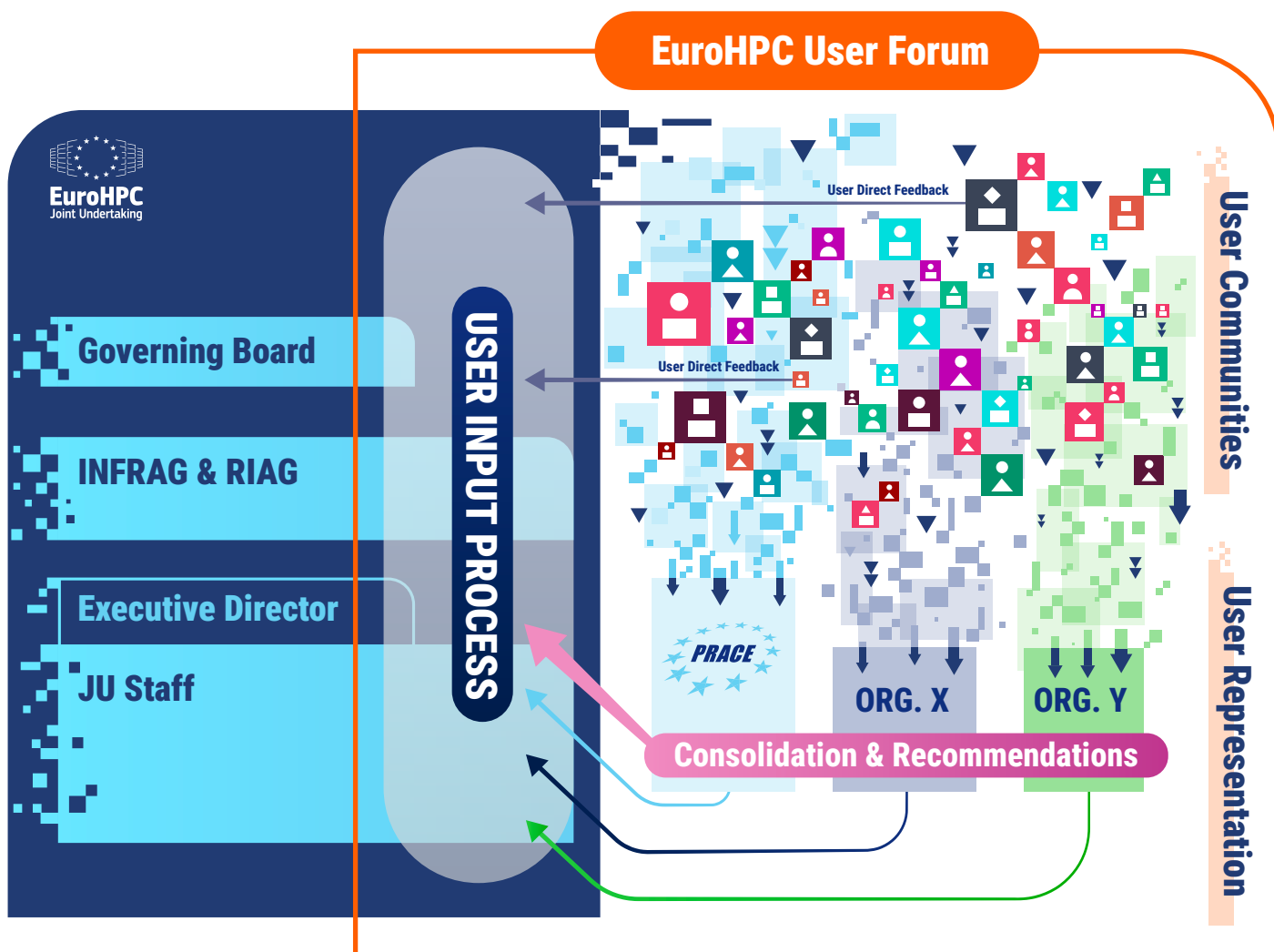
As an established Association of Users and HPC centres in Europe, we are therefore perfectly placed to offer our services in this arena, and we will be recognised throughout our ecosystem as a representative organisation of user communities. We have extensive experience in ensuring persistence and continuity, and providing users with the option to give feedback through a third party will be imperative to guarantee that their feedback is open and frank. Only then will it have the greatest positive impact for both the users, the HPC community and its funding bodies.



PRACE welcomes other organisations in the ecosystem who want to support the representation of the voice of HPC users in Europe and take part in the gathering of their feedback.



Additionally, we recommend that the EuroHPC JU creates opportunities for individual users to provide direct feedback.



How the EuroHPC User Forum proposed by PRACE would work

Conclusion

The establishment of effective mechanisms for user feedback will be crucial for the ongoing success of the EuroHPC JU, and will allow it to evolve in an agile way to match the changing needs of its users. By ensuring independence, proper governance, and effective, neutral feedback mechanisms, the voices of users will contribute to the efficient and effective improvement of the EuroHPC JU actions for the benefit of all stakeholders. PRACE, with its proven track record, stands ready to contribute to this initiative.



About PRACE

The Partnership for Advanced Computing in Europe (PRACE)

is an international non-profit association with its seat in Brussels. Our mission is to represent the interests and identify the needs of users of HPC and related technologies – artificial intelligence, quantum computing, cloud computing, data science etc – in Europe, and to pursue actions to enable high-impact research and innovation across all disciplines and industrial applications, thereby enhancing European scientific, technological and economic competitiveness for the benefit of society.

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