



AGREEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE USE OF ROBOTICS

OCTOBER 2022



General terms and conditions – use of VLIZ marine robotic platforms for scientific purposes

Preamble

- VLIZ was given the mandate by the Flemish Government to manage and deploy (large-scale) marine research infrastructure such as marine robotic platforms. The VLIZ Marine Robotics Centre (MRC) acts as a marine technology broker for the research and innovation community (cf. Covenant between the Flemish Government and VLIZ 2022-2026).
- The present “General terms and conditions on the use of VLIZ marine robotic platforms for scientific purposes” falls within the larger framework of the VLIZ-Science Support Charter (approved by scientific committee of VLIZ in March 2022).

Ideation and project preparation

- The deployment of marine robotic platforms is not a trivial endeavor. It requires personnel with specific skills and expertise, careful planning, large investments, specialized data processing and often also dedicated technological developments to accommodate specific measurements at sea. Hence, it is strongly advised to involve the VLIZ MRC expertise as early as the planning or initiation phase of a project proposal or research idea in order to align mutual expectations and to maximize the chance of success.
- As the deployment of marine robotic platforms cannot be regarded as a mere service (see also the VLIZ Science Support Charter), an equal and respectful partnership with all involved scientists is pursued.

Operations, data and results

- Missions will be planned by the VLIZ robotics team in close interaction with the scientist to maximize the scientific output, while at the same time guaranteeing the safety of the marine robotic equipment and crew. The VLIZ robotics team - together with the ship’s captain - reserve the right to cancel a planned operation if the mission is not deemed safe for personnel or equipment.
- Unless agreed upon otherwise, the data generated by the marine robotic platforms will be owned by VLIZ (i.e. raw data produced by the robotic platforms as well as data which is processed by the VLIZ robotics team). The ownership of the data in no way impairs the IP of the applicant with regard to the proposed research question and the general set up and location of the study.
- The first right of use of the data will be granted to the involved scientists as far as it falls within the scope of the project/collaboration for which the robotic platforms were requested. The aforementioned exclusivity expires after 2 years but can be extended to 4 years (standard PhD-term). Exceptions on this rule can be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

- Without prejudice to the abovementioned point, VLIZ pursues an open science/open data policy. This philosophy will also be applied as much as possible to the data generated by the marine robotic platforms.
- Unless agreed upon otherwise, VLIZ will assume management of the data generated by the robotic platforms. This data management role will facilitate the alignment with standard data policies from funding agencies (see also the point above on open data).
- The degree of post-processing of data acquired with the marine robotic platforms will be discussed with the involved scientist(s) (during the project preparation).

Publications

- The efforts of the VLIZ marine robotics team is expected to be acknowledged in the output of the deployment (incl. grey literature). Typically, this will result in co-authorship of scientific papers that use data acquired with the robotic systems (hereby respecting the prevailing rules on authorship in scholarly or scientific publications).

Communication

- VLIZ can use the data generated by the marine robotic platforms (e.g. visual footage, sonar images, etc.) for communication and citizen science purposes, as long as they do not reasonably interfere with the scientific objectives of the project/collaboration for which the robotic platforms were applied. VLIZ will correctly mention all involved partners in this communication and will streamline communication actions with the leading scientist(s).
- The involved scientists will correctly mention the efforts of VLIZ in any communication that includes data, visuals and results based on the data from the marine robotic platforms. Such communication actions will also be streamlined beforehand with the VLIZ-communication division.

Expenses and remuneration

- The distribution of the costs for a certain deployment will be discussed with VLIZ, well in advance of the scientific survey and preferably already during the initiation phase of a project proposal, research idea or request for ship time.
- Considering the supporting role VLIZ assumes towards the Flemish marine research groups, the following rules of thumb can be given (without prejudice to the point above):
 - VLIZ bears the costs for the insurance, maintenance, upgrades, licenses, etc. of the marine robotic platforms.
 - In general, it can be stated that for a standard deployment (incl. MOB and DEMOB), VLIZ assumes the personnel costs. Yet, if the required personnel effort goes beyond a standard deployment and jeopardizes the operational functioning of the VLIZ MRC, additional personnel budget should be foreseen by the user (for example by including VLIZ as a partner or subcontractor in a project).
 - In general, survey-related costs (consumables, ship-time, travel, shipping, specific insurance, etc.) should be accounted for by the scientist.

- If substantial tailor-made developments are required regarding the marine robotic platforms or associated (e-)infrastructure, it is strongly advised to discuss this with VLIZ well in advance. The possibility of implementing these developments depends, among others, on the fit with the development roadmaps of VLIZ MRC, the availability of platforms and staff for the period required and the overall technical feasibility of the developments. In such circumstances, it is strongly recommended to include VLIZ as a partner in the concerned project.

Final note

VLIZ has the right to refuse any kind of collaboration if the general spirit of these terms and conditions are not respected or if the safety of the crew and/or the marine robotic platforms cannot be guaranteed.