**Evaluation process**

**STEP 1 – PROPOSAL EVALUATION BY INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EXPERTS** (double blind)

1.1 SUBMISSION OF INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION REPORTS

Three IEEs evaluate remotely in the e-COST platform: Individual Evaluation Report (IER)

1.2 SUBMISSION OF CONSENSUS EVALUATION REPORTS

IEEs prepare a Consensus Evaluation Report (CER) for the proposal assigned to them.

**Review panel member (RP):** preliminary revision and quality check of the CER – involved in discussions leading to consensus
Evaluation process

• **STEP 2 – REVISION AND QUALITY CHECK BY AD HOC REVIEW PANELS**

• Appointed by the COST Association from a pool of researchers nominated by the CNCs (COST National Coordinators)

• RP Members:
  - **Review and validate** the remote Consensus Evaluation Reports (CERs) and marks.
  - **Resolve differences in opinions** among the IEEs.
  - **Rank the proposals** above the overall threshold, according to their validated consensus marks, and prepare a shortlist of proposals.
  - Strive for **consistency of marking** across the proposals within the Review Panel.
  - Identify those proposals, among those above the overall threshold, which address **emerging issues or potentially important future developments**.
  - Prepare the **report** for the COST Scientific Committee.

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ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Include a Network of Proposers from at least 7 different COST Full or Cooperating Members.
- Be anonymous (self-citations or other references that allow identification of participants)!
- Address S&T challenges destined only for peaceful purposes
- Respect word and page limits: Technical Annex must not exceed fifteen (15) pages.
- Be written in English.
# Evaluation criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S&amp;T EXCELLENCE</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
<th>IMPLEMENTATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Soundness of the challenge.</td>
<td>▪ Scientific, technological and/or socio-economic impact.</td>
<td>▪ Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Progress beyond the state-of-the-art and innovation potential.</td>
<td>▪ Measures to maximise impact.</td>
<td>▪ Appropriateness of management structures and procedures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Added value of networking.</td>
<td>▪ Level of risk and level of potential innovation/breakthroughs</td>
<td>▪ Network as a whole</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total marks for the section = 25 points</th>
<th>Total marks for the section = 20 points</th>
<th>Total marks for the section = 20 points</th>
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TOTAL MARKS AWARDED = 65 points  
OVERALL THRESHOLD = 45 points  
Proposals failing to achieve the overall threshold will not be funded
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARK</th>
<th>ABBREVIATION DISPLAYED IN e-COST</th>
<th>LABEL</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>The proposal fully addresses all relevant aspects of the question. Any shortcomings are minor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>VG</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>The proposal addresses the question very well, although certain improvements are still possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>The proposal addresses the question well, although improvements would be necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>While the proposal broadly addresses the question, there are significant weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>The question is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>The proposal fails to address the question under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.</td>
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</table>
Q1 - Is the challenge relevant and timely?

- The **research question** addressed by the proposed COST Action.
- Whether answering the research question will solve a **relevant S&T and / or socio-economic** problem.
- Whether this is the right moment for addressing the research question by **means of networking**.
- Scores: 4.2 ± 0.7 (3-5)
Q2 - Are the objectives presented clear and pertinent to tackle the challenge?

- Research and Capacity building objectives
- The stated objectives contribute to answer the research question (challenge) of the Action.
- The objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely).
- The objectives are clearly defined and are not confused with COST Action networking activities (i.e. meetings, Training Schools, Short-Term Scientific Missions, Conference Grants and Dissemination), milestones and deliverables (please see Q10 for definitions).
- Scores: 4.2 ± 0.7 (3-5)
Q3 - Does the proposal advance the state-of-the-art and introduce an innovative approach to the challenge?

• If the proposal shows a good understanding of the state-of-the-art.
• How and if the proposal will advance the state of the art.
• The innovation the proposal brings about, by tackling the challenge.
• Scores: 4.0 ± 0.7 (3-5)
Q4 - Is networking the best approach to tackle the challenge?

- Whether the challenge could not be met in the same way without a COST Action
- How networking helps meet the challenge, for example, by:
  - Leveraging resources not funded by COST.
  - Increasing the impact of research outputs.
  - Mitigating research fragmentation
- Scores: 4.8 ± 0.4 (4-5)
Q5 - What is the added value of the proposed network in relation to former and existing efforts at European and/or international level?

- Whether the added value of the proposed network has been explained
- Whether former and existing efforts at the European and/or international level have been identified.
- Scores: 4.1 ± 0.6 (3-5)
Q6 - Does the proposal clearly identify relevant, and realistic short-term/long-term impacts?

• Whether the impacts identified by the proposal are relevant to S&T and/or the society at large.

• Whether the impacts listed can be realistically achieved if the Action proposal is successful.

• Scores: 3.8 ± 0.7 (3-5)
Q7 - Does the proposal identify the most relevant stakeholders and present a clear plan to involve them as Action’s participants?

- Whether the **relevant stakeholders** are identified.
- Whether the **plan to involve them** is clear, attainable and realistic.
- Scores: $3.6 \pm 0.7 \ (3-5)$
Q8 - Is there a clear and attainable plan for dissemination and/or exploitation of results?

- Whether the dissemination plan is targeted, clear and attainable.
- Whether the plan for exploitation of results is relevant, clear and attainable (exploitation of results may not be relevant to some topics of proposals).
- Scores: 3.9 ± 0.9 (2-5)
Q9 - How well does the proposal succeed in putting forward potential innovation/breakthroughs with a convincing risk/return trade-off?

- Whether the proposal succeeds in putting forward potential innovation/breakthroughs with a convincing risk/return trade-off.
- *Scores: 3.8 ± 0.8 (3-5)*
Q10 - Is the work plan (Working Groups, tasks, activities, timeframe and deliverables) coherent, realistic and appropriate to ensure the achievement of the objectives?

- Whether the planned deliverables are in line with the definitions (Action deliverables must not be confused with COST Action networking activities).
- Whether the planned deliverables are the most appropriate results to achieve the objectives.
- The tasks and activities planned are adequate for assuring achievement of the results and deliverables.
- The planned timeframe for the implementation is achievable and there are suitable milestones to map and measure progress.
- Scores: $3.8 \pm 0.7$ (3-5)

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Q11 - Does the proposal identify the main risks related to the work plan and have a plan for contingencies?

• Whether the **main risks** related to the Work Plan are identified and the **contingencies** are presented in a credible way.

• **Scores: 3.7 ± 1.0 (2-5)**
Q12 - Are the management structure and procedures appropriate?

- Whether the **management structure** follows the COST rules.
- Whether the **management procedures** are appropriate for the implementation of the proposed COST Action
- **Scores:** $4.8 \pm 0.4$ (4-5)
Q13 - **Critical mass, expertise and geographical distribution** for addressing the challenge and the objectives? If not, does the proposal identify the gaps in the network and present a clear plan for overcoming the gaps? Are mutual benefits clearly ascertained in case of involvement of NNC* and IPC* institutions?

- **NOT** whether **COST Policies** (Early Career Investigators, Gender Balance, Inclusiveness Target Countries participation) are addressed by the proposal, this is done by the Scientific Committee in the Selection phase.

- **Critical mass, expertise and geographical distribution** of the network are sufficient to tackle the challenge and implement the work plan and in case there are gaps, whether these are identified by the proposers and there is a plan to overcome them.

- In case Near Neighbor Countries (NNCs) and International Partner Countries (IPCs), institutions and International Organisations are intended to be involved in the proposed Action, the **mutual benefits** deriving from their participation are clearly explained.

- **Scores:** $3.9 \pm 0.9$ (2-5)
Summary

• 3 IEEs largely define the score based on specific criteria
• These criteria will be reduced in coming round(s)
• Differences between projects are generally reflected across the range
• The IMPACT and IMPLEMENTATION criteria typically lead to larger differences:
  - Q7: Identification and involvement of Stakeholders
  - Q8: Dissemination and exploitation plan
  - Q11: Risks and Contingency plan
  - Q13: Composition of the consortium