



COST

**European Cooperation in Science
and Technology**

**Introduction to the
COST Framework Programme**



Outline

1. How to prepare a successful proposal?

- New Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval (SESA) procedure
- Proposal Preparation – Practical Aspects

The new COST Open Call – why new?

- ❑ Establishment of the COST Association (September 2013)
 - ❑ significant step towards COST mission, policies and objectives
- ❑ New set of rules and procedures for COST
 - ❑ to best serve the **European research communities** and respect the **bottom-up approach**
- ❑ COST CSO decided upon the revision of
 - ❑ **scientific organisation**
 - ❑ **evaluation and selection procedure**
 - ❑ ensuring transparent mechanisms and openness for all science and technology fields

New scientific classification

Three level classification

- ❑ 6 Main Fields of Science:
 - Natural Sciences,
 - Engineering and Technology,
 - Medical and Health Sciences,
 - Agricultural Sciences,
 - Social Sciences,
 - Humanities
- ❑ 41 Sub-fields of Science...
 - ❑ 719 areas of expertise (research areas)

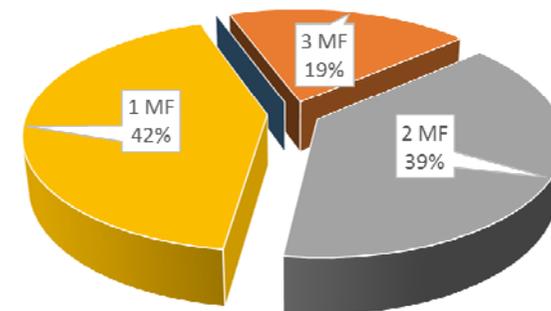
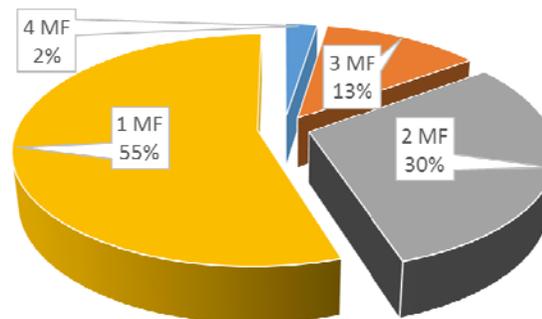


New scientific classification

- ❑ Widely implemented at COST (expert, proposal, Action level)
 - ❑ Proposers can specify up to 5 areas of expertise
 - ❑ Evaluators will be selected on the basis on the areas of expertise they entered in their profile
- ❑ Flexible approach: no permanent bodies (ad-hoc Review Panels per collection as clustering changes for each collection - depending on the proposals)

New scientific classification: Supporting multi-disciplinarity

Main Fields of research (MF)	oc-2015-1		oc-2015-2	
	<i>Proposals</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Proposals</i>	<i>Actions</i>
4 MF	3%	3%	1%	0%
3 MF	10%	13%	11%	19%
2 MF	33%	30%	34%	39%
1 MF	54%	55%	53%	42%
Total number	345	40	240	26





Collection Dates

- ❑ COST New Open Call for proposals – published on 15 December 2014
- ❑ As of mid-February 2015 researchers, engineers or scholars were able to submit proposals anytime throughout the year via the **new e-COST online submission tool**
- ❑ The first Collection Date was on 24 March 2015
- ❑ **The next Collection Date will be 7 December 2016 – 12:00 noon (CET)**
- ❑ Some 25 to 40 new Actions are approved in each collection, subject to budget availability

The new COST Open Call – for whom?

- ❑ Open to **all S&T fields**
- ❑ Those aiming at contributing to the **scientific, technological, economic, cultural or societal knowledge advancement and development of Europe**
- ❑ Closing the gap between **science, policy makers and society** throughout Europe and beyond
- ❑ Reflecting the main characteristics of COST Actions
 - ❑ providing for **knowledge share**
 - ❑ **knowledge creation and application**
 - ❑ being **open and output oriented** while aiming at strengthening the S&T basis of the proposed topic(s)
- ❑ Responding to **COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy**



3. How to prepare a successful proposal?



COST Open Call

- Official publication (incl.the collection date)
- Online submission tool (e-COST)
- COST 133/14 B.1. “COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval”
- COST Open Call: Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval (SESA) guidelines
- COST Action Technical Annex Template

The screenshot shows the e-COST portal interface. At the top right, there is a navigation bar with the text 'e-COST'. Below this, there is a main content area with the following sections:

- e-COST**
e-COST is a portal for COST Action participants' registration and financial reporting
▶ Link to e-COST portal
- Key Documents**
 - ▶ [Open Call for Proposals \(PDF, 162 kB\)](#)
 - ▶ [Technical Annex \(DOCX, 113 kB\)](#)
 - ▶ [SESA explained \(PDF, 3 MB\)](#)
 - ▶ [SESA Guidelines \(PDF, 1 MB\)](#)
- COST Implementation Rules**
 - ▶ [A. Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities \(132/14\) \(PDF, 335 kB\)](#)
 - ▶ [B.1. COST Action Proposal Submission Evaluation and Approval \(133/14\) \(PDF, 267 kB\)](#)
 - ▶ [B.2. COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment \(134/14\) \(PDF, 341 kB\)](#)
 - ▶ [B.3. COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation \(135/14\) \(PDF, 214 kB\)](#)

Orange arrows from the text on the left point to the 'e-COST' navigation bar, the 'Key Documents' section, the 'B.1. COST Action Proposal Submission Evaluation and Approval' document, and the 'COST Action Technical Annex Template' text.

Stay tuned for COST updates:

<http://www.cost.eu/opencall>

COST OPEN CALL

One-stage submission process (on line tool)

New **S**ubmission, **E**valuation, **S**election and **A**pproval (SESA) procedure follows the subsequent phases:

- **SUBMISSION:** by a **Main Proposer** on behalf of a network of proposers
- **EVALUATION :**
 - ❑ External Remote Evaluation by **Individual External Experts**
 - ❑ Revision and Quality Check by *Ad hoc* **Review Panels**
- **SELECTION: COST Scientific Committee (SC)**
- **APPROVAL: COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)**



Step 1: External Remote Evaluation

- ❑ **3 Independent External Experts**
 - ❑ COST Expert data base
 - ❑ Fields and sub-fields of Science and Technology and, if needed, Key Words
 - ❑ Validated by Scientific Committee

- ❑ **Remote peer-review evaluation**

- ❑ **Remote consensus** shall be sought between the independent External Experts

- ❑ **The consensus shall not be imposed**; independent External Experts may maintain their views on the proposal

- ❑ Eventual differences in opinion of the experts resulting in a non-consensual decision will be **handled and arbitrated by the Review Panel**

Step 1: External Remote Evaluation

- Proposals are evaluated **only** on the basis of the **evaluation criteria**

S&T EXCELLENCE	IMPACT	IMPLEMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soundness of the challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientific, technological and/or socio-economic impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress beyond the state-of-the-art and innovation potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures to maximise impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriateness of management structures and procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added value of networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of risk and level of potential innovation/breakthroughs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network as a whole
Total Mark for the section: 25 points	Total Mark for the section: 20 points	Total Marks for the section: 20 points
TOTAL MARK AWARDED: 65 points		
OVERALL THRESHOLD: 45 points		



Step 2: Revision and Quality check

- ❑ **By *ad hoc* Review Panels**
 - ❑ Review Panels - active researchers, engineers or scholars
 - ❑ Appointed by COST National Coordinators
 - Up to 3 per OECD field of S&T
 - ❑ *Ad hoc* Review Panels set by the COST Association
 - Depending on number and S&T topics of proposals submitted by the Collection Date
 - ❑ Validated by the COST Scientific Committee
- ❑ **Reviewing and validating** all the Consensus Reports and marks
- ❑ **Resolving the differences** in opinions among the Independent External Experts
- ❑ After validation of consensus reports and marks, **rank the proposals above the threshold**
- ❑ For the proposals above the threshold, identify those that indicate **emerging issues or potentially important future developments**

Step 3 - Selection by the Scientific Committee

- ❑ **Scientific Committee**
 - ❑ 37 high-level experts representing the 36 COST Member Country and 1 Cooperating state
 - ❑ Appointed by and reports to CSO
- ❑ Shall select among the ranked list of proposals received from the Review Panels by discriminating among proposals with the same marks, taking into account the **COST mission and policies**
- ❑ **Balanced COST Action portfolio**, by ensuring the coverage of all S&T fields
- ❑ Shall submit the final ranked list of selected proposals to the CSO for approval.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

- PRACTICAL ASPECTS -

Eligibility Criteria

- ❑ Represent a network of proposers from at **least 5** COST Member Countries or Cooperating State with researchers, engineers or scholars having a **registered e-COST profile**
- ❑ **Be coordinated by a Main Proposer in a COST Member Country or Cooperating State**
- ❑ Be **anonymous**, hence not contain any reference to the names and/or institutions of the participants in the network of proposers
- ❑ Address science and technology challenges destined only for **peaceful purposes**
- ❑ **Respect word or page limits** as described in the SESA Guidelines (in preparation)
- ❑ Be written in **English**, the working language of the COST Association
- ❑ **Not be identical with another submitted proposal in the same collection**



Proposal Sections

SECTION		
GENERAL FEATURES	Online tool Mandatory	Key Expertise needed for Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OECD Fields / Subfields of Science and Technology plus Research Areas
TECHNICAL ANNEX	PDF Mandatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MAX 15 Pages ▪ Anonymity ▪ Figures and Pictures - Copyright
REFERENCES	Online tool Optional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 500 words ▪ Anonymity
COST MISSION & POLICIES	Online tool Mandatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 500 words ▪ Excellence and Inclusiveness ▪ International Cooperation ▪ Industrial Dimension
NETWORK of PROPOSERS	Online tool Mandatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum 5 researchers from 5 COST Member Countries and/or Cooperating State ▪ Statistical Information that will be used for evaluation

Technical Annex

SECTIONS	SUB-SECTIONS
S&T EXCELLENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Challenge▪ Objectives▪ Progress beyond the State-of-the-art and Innovation Potential▪ Added value of networking
IMPACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Expected Impact▪ Measures to Maximise Impact▪ Potential for Innovation versus Risk Level
IMPLEMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Description of the Work Plan▪ Management Structures & Procedures▪ Network as a whole



1 S&T Excellence

1.1 Challenge

- 1.1.1 Description of the Challenge (Main Aim)
- 1.1.2 Relevance and timeliness

Describe the research question(s) your proposal aims to address. You should make a case for the relevance and timeliness of the proposed challenge(s)

KEY CONCEPT: Challenges of COST Actions

*Challenges are the **research questions** addressed by a COST Action, targeting S&T and / or socio-economic problems*



1 S&T Excellence

1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 Research Coordination Objectives
- 1.2.2 Capacity-building Objectives

*Provide a clear and specific description of the **project objectives** against the background of the state-of-the-art, **showing their pertinence to tackle the proposed challenge**. Make sure the proposed objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely)*

KEY CONCEPTS: Objectives in COST Actions *are the results that an Action needs to achieve in order to respond to its challenge*

Research Coordination Objectives: distribution of tasks, sharing of knowledge and know-how, and the creation of synergies among Action participants to achieve specific outputs.

Capacity-building Objectives: building critical mass to drive scientific progress, thereby strengthening the European Research Area. They can be achieved by the delivery of specific outputs and/or through network features or types and levels of participation.



1 S&T Excellence

1.3 Progress beyond the state-of-the-art and Innovation Potential

- 1.3.1 Description of the state-of-the-art
- 1.3.2 Progress beyond the state-of-the-art
- 1.3.3 Innovation in tackling the challenge

Describe briefly the state-of-the art in the field related to the challenge, as well as the advance that the COST Action will bring about

*Highlight the **innovation potential** anticipated by the proposed COST Action in order to tackle the challenge. **Innovation is to be intended as the creation and / or development of new or improved concepts, products, processes, services, and / or technologies that are made available to markets, governments and society***



1 S&T Excellence

1.4 Added value of networking

- 1.4.1 In relation to the Challenge
- 1.4.2 In relation to existing efforts at European and/or international level

Describe the added value of networking in relation to the challenge by highlighting why networking is the best approach to tackle the challenge

Describe the added value of the proposed COST Action in relation to former and existing efforts (research projects, other networks, etc.) at the European and/or international level



2 Impact

2.1 Expected Impact

- 2.1.1 Short-term and long-term scientific, technological, and/or socio-economic impacts

Describe in a clear and realistic way the S&T and socio-economic impact envisaged by the proposed COST Action in the short- and long-term perspective

KEY CONCEPT: COST Action impact

Impact is the effect or influence on short-term to long-term scientific, technological, and/or socio-economic changes produced by a COST Action, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.



2 Impact

2.2 Measures to Maximise Impact

- 2.2.1 Plan for involving the most relevant stakeholders
- 2.2.2 Dissemination and/or Exploitation Plan

Identify the most relevant stakeholders and present a clear plan to involve them as Action's participants

Present a clear and attainable plan for dissemination and/or exploitation of results, including IPR, if relevant

2.3 Potential for Innovation versus Risk Level

- 2.3.1 Potential for scientific, technological and/or socioeconomic breakthroughs

Make a case on how well the proposal succeeds in putting forward potential innovation/breakthroughs with a convincing risk/return trade-off

3 Implementation

3.1 Description of the Work Plan

- 3.1.1 Description of Working Groups

Provide a detailed description of the different Working Groups. For each WG provide objectives, tasks, activities, milestones and list of major deliverables

- 3.1.2 GANTT Chart

Provide a graphical illustration of a schedule offering the project management overview of the different WGs, tasks, activities, and deliverables of your proposal

- 3.1.3 PERT - Program (Project) Evaluation and Review Technique (optional)

Provide a graphical representation of the different WGs showing their inter-relation. If needed, the same can be provide to show the inter-relation among the different tasks within each WG

- 3.1.4 Risk and Contingency Plans

Identify the main risks related to the Work Plan and present a credible contingency plan.

3 Implementation

3.2 Management Structures and Procedures

Describe the Action organisation in terms of management structure that would help the Action meet the proposed challenge. It is required that the proposed Action organisation and management structure respect COST rules

More detailed information at:

COST Implementation Rules - B.2 COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment (134/14)

<http://www.cost.eu/participate>

3 Implementation

3.3 Network as a whole

Describe how well the features of your Network of Proposers can achieve the objectives of the proposed COST Action. Make a case for the critical mass, expertise and geographical distribution needed for addressing the challenge and the objectives

If your Network misses any of these features, present a clear plan for overcoming the identified gaps. Note that COST Policies should not be addressed here

If you plan to include International Partner Countries (IPCs) or Near Neighbour Countries (NNCs) institutions in your proposal, give a brief description of the mutual benefits deriving from their participation

More detailed information concerning IPCs and NNCs at:

COST Implementation Rules - B.3 COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisation Participation (135/14)

<http://www.cost.eu/participate>

LAST RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ Strong competition: be ambitious
- ❑ Start: start early – a proposal needs time and evolution
- ❑ Become acquainted with the **COST Open Call: Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval (SESA) guidelines** (in preparation)
- ❑ Have a clear view over the Action structure and 4 year strategy (WG)
- ❑ Present a clear strategy on the integration of researchers from inclusiveness countries (ex: Grant Holder, STSM,...)
- ❑ If you have the chance, have a **native speaker check the English**
- ❑ BUT - Perfect English is not necessary, it is the **clarity + consistency** which counts and increases your chances
- ❑



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