



**European Cooperation
in Science and Technology
- COST -**

Brussels, 29 May 2013

Secretariat

COST 4113/13

NOTE

To : COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)

Subject : COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval

Delegations will find attached the rules regarding the “COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval” approved by the CSO on 15-16 May 2013.

COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval

The COST Committee of Senior Officials (hereafter referred to as “CSO”) having regard to COST 4112/13 “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities” in accordance with its role as main decision-making body of COST,

Whereas:

- (1) COST 4111/11, “Guidelines for Assessment of applications for COST Actions” refers to the existing rules and process for the evaluation of COST Action Proposals.
- (2) COST 4170/10, “Rules of Procedure for a COST Domain Committee” describes the general framework for the tasks of the COST Domain Committees (hereafter referred to as the “DC(s)”).
- (3) COST 4157/11 “COST Strategy” has provided a mandate for the streamlining and clarification of the COST procedures and documents so as to achieve the goals set by the CSO therein.

has adopted the present rules for “COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval” on the 15-16 May 2013 This Decision will enter into force on 1 June 2013.

Subject Matter and Scope

COST strives to implement transparent, efficient and simple evaluation and selection process.

This decision lays down the rules for the submission, evaluation, selection and approval of COST Action proposals. The implementation of these rules is further detailed on the COST Website and in the guidelines.¹

Definitions

For the purpose of this Decision, the following definitions shall apply as follows:

1. **COST Member Country**: means any country that was a founding member of the COST Intergovernmental Framework or joined COST as a full member following the approval of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO).

¹ Available on the COST Website (www.cost.eu/opencall)

2. COST Cooperating State: means a country that has been approved by the CSO to participate without voting rights in the CSO.
3. COST National Coordinator (CNC): means the individual appointed by the COST Member Countries and Cooperating State in charge of accepting the Action Memorandum of Understanding, of the nomination process for the Domain Committee and Management Committee members as well as providing information and support to national research communities.
4. Domain Committee (DC): means the committee composed of scientific and technological experts responsible for a particular research domain appointed by the COST Member Country and Cooperating State.
5. Open Call for proposals: means the official announcement/publication with the description of the objectives and criteria required for COST Action proposals to be evaluated and selected. The Open Call allows submitting proposals on a continuous basis; the publication indicates the Collection Dates.
6. Collection Date: means the date when the proposals for new COST Actions submitted during a certain period are gathered and sent for evaluation.
7. Proposer: means the coordinator of the group of researchers who submit a proposal for a COST Action in response to the Open Call.
8. COST Action: means the COST pan-European networking instrument allowing researchers from COST Member Countries and Cooperating State to develop jointly their ideas and new initiatives in a given field or topic of common interest.
9. Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU): means the agreement accepted by a minimum of five different COST Member Countries and/or Cooperating State describing the Action objectives and the added value of networking. This document has to be endorsed by any additional COST Member Country or Cooperating State joining the Action.
10. Action Participant: means any researcher who participates actively in a COST Action; this can include researchers from Near Neighbour and International Partner Countries.
11. Management Committee (MC): means the group of researchers, nominated by the CNC, in charge of the coordination, implementation, and management of an Action's activities as well as supervising the appropriate allocation and use of the COST funding in view of achieving the Action's scientific and technological objectives.
12. Researcher: means anyone engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems, and in the management of the projects concerned. For the purpose of participating in COST Actions, any individual, independently of his/her affiliation or professional quality shall be considered as researcher.

1. Basic principles

The rules reflect the principles of trans-nationality, fairness, transparency, openness, and inclusiveness.

COST strives to avoid any conflict of interest² in the evaluation of proposals.

All those involved in the evaluation of proposals must commit to confidentiality.

2. COST Open Call

The Open Call allows submitting proposals on a continuous basis; the call publication indicates the Collection Dates; two cycles of evaluation are organised annually.

Collection Dates are communicated in the Official Journal of the European Union. An announcement is also available on the COST website, together with the complete Open Call schedule.

The objective of the COST Open Call is to enhance the scientific excellence and transparency of COST through an accessible bottom-up opportunity with rigorous peer review. Proposals will be evaluated on a competitive basis per domain, taking into account the available funds for the particular Collection Date.

The Proposal is prepared by a Proposer acting on behalf of a network of researchers who see an opportunity for advancing scientific, technological or social knowledge through the international coordination support offered by COST.

The Proposer must be affiliated to a legal entity based in a COST Member Country or Cooperating State. The network must be composed by researchers affiliated to legal entities from at least five different COST Member Countries/Cooperating State.

The Open Call follows a two-stage submission process:

1. **Preliminary Proposal**: the eligible proposals are gathered at the Collection Date and subsequently evaluated by the relevant Domain Committee (DC).
2. **Full Proposal**: Proposers of selected Preliminary Proposals will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. Full Proposals will be peer reviewed by an External Expert Panel (EEP). Proposers of selected Full Proposals will be invited to a Hearing by the relevant Domain Committee.

² COST 4160/10 “COST Code of Conduct”

Preliminary Proposals may be submitted at any time using a dedicated secured online tool. They will be considered for the upcoming collection. Login and proposal data are only valid during one collection and are not transferable to the following collection.

The proposals must be written in English, as no translation is provided and peer reviewers come from different countries.

3. *The Preliminary Proposal*

3.1. *Submission*

The Preliminary Proposal should provide an overview of the potential Full Proposal including background information on the benefits, objectives, deliverables, scientific programme, and organisational structure of the proposed new Action.

Preliminary Proposals may be submitted at any time during the year via a secured on-line tool designated for this purpose; after registering a proposal, the Proposer will be able to access, edit and submit the proposal until the Collection Date. Only the last submitted version of a proposal is considered for evaluation.

3.2. *Evaluation*

A pre-check is performed by the COST Office in order to eliminate Preliminary Proposals that do not meet the eligibility criteria as defined in the guidelines for assessment of applications for COST Actions³.

Following the pre-check, the eligible Preliminary Proposals are allocated to the relevant COST Domain Committees. The allocation is based on the Proposer's stated preference at submission and COST Office allocation procedures.

The Preliminary Proposals are evaluated online by the respective Domain Committee. Each preliminary proposal will be evaluated by at least three experts.

The Proposer of the Preliminary Proposal can obtain feedback on the outcome of the evaluation on his/her proposal webpage⁴.

The COST Office invites the submission of Full Proposals from selected Preliminary Proposals, approximately three times the number of possible Actions for funding.

³ Available on the COST Website (www.cost.eu/opencall)

⁴ Available on the COST Website (www.cost.eu/opencall)

4. The Full Proposal

4.1. Submission

Proposers of successful Preliminary Proposals can submit a Full Proposal within a period of approximately two months via his/her proposal webpage.

Modifications to the submitted Full Proposals are allowed until the closing date. Only the last submitted version of a proposal is considered for evaluation.

4.2. Evaluation

The evaluation of the Full Proposals is performed in two steps:

4.2.1. External Expert Panel evaluation (EEP)

The EEP is organised by the COST Office, in cooperation with the Domain Committee Chair (or Vice-Chair). It is composed of external experts aiming to cover adequately the required expertise and to ensure gender balance within the panels.

Within each Domain, the EEP will evaluate remotely the Full Proposals via a secured on-line tool. Following the individual remote evaluation, the EEP convenes in a consensus meeting. At this meeting, the EEP will agree upon a consensus score and comments for each proposal. The EEP decides on the proposals to be invited to the subsequent evaluation step, the Domain Committee Hearing (here after referred to as “DC Hearing”).

Feedback on the outcome of the EEP is made available to the Proposer on his/her proposal webpage.

The European Commission liaison persons have access to all proposals and can submit comments on the Full Proposals. These comments are made available both to the EEP and the DC for consideration.

4.2.2. DC Hearing

The Proposers retained by the EEP are invited to present orally their proposal to the Domain Committee in a “DC Hearing”.

The DC Hearing will allow ranking the proposals, commenting on the oral presentation, and highlighting any changes in the ranking proposed by the EEP.

Feedback on the outcome of the DC Hearing is made available to the Proposer via his/her proposal webpage.

5. Approval

The COST Office prepares a final list of Action proposals based on the ranking and recommendations of the Domain Committees.

The final decision for approval and funding of the Full Proposals for new Actions is taken by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) on the basis of the final ranking of proposals further to the EEP and DC Hearing.

The text of a successful full proposal approved by the CSO will form the basis of the Action’s Memorandum of Understanding.

Final Provisions

The present rules for the submission, evaluation, selection and approval of COST Action proposals shall be binding in their entirety.

Any change or derogations to the current rules are subject to the approval of the CSO.