



# **COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval (SESA) Guidelines**



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## ***Background***

In 2012, a revision exercise of the main COST documents led to the drafting and approval by the CSO, of the revised COST Implementation Rules (COST doc. 4112/13) followed by the revised rules for “COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval” (COST doc. 4113/13), the rules regarding the “COST Action Management” (COST doc. 4114/13) and the “COST International Cooperation Rules” (COST doc. 4115/13).

A step further, is the introduction of a more detailed set of guidelines, such as the current ones, addressing specific issues each time and linked to the revised COST rules, in order to assist in submitting proposals under the revised rules.

## ***Subject Matter and Scope***

The current guidelines provide all the information necessary for COST Action proposers regarding the submission, evaluation, selection and approval of such proposals.

These instructions and explanations depend on COST doc. 4113/13 “COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval”, which sets the general framework as well as to the information available on the Open Call webpage<sup>1</sup>.

The current Guidelines enter into force as of 18/09/2013.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cost.eu/opencall](http://www.cost.eu/opencall)





## *Introduction*

The submission of proposals for new COST Actions is a two-stage process. It is split between a “Preliminary Proposal” and a “Full Proposal”.

More precisely the eligible “Preliminary Proposals” are gathered at the Collection Dates and subsequently evaluated by the relevant Domain Committee (DC). For specific Collection Dates, please refer to the Open Call schedule on the Open Call webpage<sup>2</sup>.

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 DC.

Overall, a successful proposal for a new COST Action should entail the following features/elements:

- create new networks rather than simply seek funding for existing networks;
- reach out for high scientific/technological quality in an innovative way;
- contribute substantially to the coordination and defragmentation of research efforts across Europe and to the strengthening of Europe's scientific networking capacity (in the context of the European Research Area), namely with the participation of relevant stakeholders;
- contribute strongly and visibly to European society, economic growth and welfare by producing results of potential interest to important sectors such as public authorities, policy institutions, standards bodies and/or private companies and industry;
- be based upon:
  - careful consideration of the level of interest and relevant research resources in the countries likely to participate in the Action;
  - assessment of the added value expected from the coordination of national research efforts by the Action;
- be flexible enough to permit at the implementation stage the inclusion of disciplinary perspectives and activities not foreseen during the preparation of the proposal;
- identify and take into account R&D efforts supported by other national and international funding schemes;
- encourage capacity building and the mobility of early-career European researchers.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.cost.eu/opencall](http://www.cost.eu/opencall)





## *Preliminary Proposals for new COST Actions*

### **In short**

The Preliminary Proposal should provide an overview of the potential Full Proposal (within 4 to 5 pages maximum), including background information on the benefits, objectives, deliverables, scientific programme and organisational structure of the proposed new Action.

### **Submission steps**

1. Create an account by registering via the applicant's login page (see <http://www.cost.eu/opencall>)
  - You will be asked to enter your details (Name, Institution, Address and Email);
  - An automatic email is sent to you containing your personal login information.

#### **Note:**

- The account is only active during the running collection and gives access to your personal proposal webpage where you can edit your Preliminary/Full Proposal until the respective deadline, retrieve any feedback from the evaluations and follow the status of your proposal.
  - Attention: Proposals will not be transferred to any subsequent collection. If you want to resubmit a proposal, you will need to create a new account linked to that collection.
2. Access the preliminary proposal online form by logging in with your credentials on the applicants login page (see <http://www.cost.eu/opencall>).
  3. Fill in the mandatory information on gender, Early Stage Researcher and re-submission.
  4. Fill in the online form - Preliminary Proposal template (see 2.3). The template of the preliminary proposal can be found in Annex III.

## **Evaluation of Preliminary Proposals**

### *Eligibility check and criteria*

During the three first weeks following the collection date, the COST Office performs an eligibility check of all proposals against the “Eligibility criteria” (see Annex III). Proposers may be suggested to choose a more appropriate Domain.

The results are published on the proposer's personal page (for date see schedule on the Open Call webpage).

Proposers whose proposal has been rejected based on eligibility criteria will also be informed by e-mail.



## *Evaluation by the Domain Committee (DC)*

The preliminary proposal evaluation process is chaired by the Domain Committee Chair assisted by the COST Office.

During approximately four weeks, the evaluators, i.e. DC members or experts (who may be drawn from the pool of "nominated DC experts" or from other sources), will evaluate the proposals within their Domain. Each proposal will be evaluated by three evaluators at least. The DC Chairs do not evaluate proposals in their Domain.

The evaluators mark their allocated Preliminary Proposals on the basis of the "Evaluation criteria" (see Annex IV) by assigning marks between 1 and 6 to each of the six criterion and by adding an appropriate and constructive comment.

The final marking (average of all the evaluator's marks), the average mark for each criterion and the individual comments are made available to the proposer on the proposer's personal page (for date see schedule on the Open Call webpage).

The COST Office normally invites, in total, around three times as many top ranked Preliminary Proposals to submit Full Proposals as the total number of new Actions that can be supported by the available funds.

## *Full Proposals for new COST Actions*

### **Basic principles**

Proposers of successful Preliminary Proposals are invited to submit a Full Proposal within a period of approximately two months via his/her proposal webpage with the login provided for the Preliminary Proposal submission.

The Full Proposal should provide on approximately 15 to 20 pages extensive information on the background, objectives, benefits, scientific programme, organisation, deliverables, milestones and dissemination plan of the proposed new Action. The text of a successful Full Proposal will constitute the formal Technical Annex of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of the COST Action, and must therefore conform in all material respects, including formatting, to the template provided by the COST Office (see below and examples of MoU on the Action's web page).

### **Submission steps**

- a) Log in to your proposal webpage and access the Full Proposal form;
- b) Fill in the online form - Full Proposal template (see Annex VII).



## Editorial instructions for Full Proposals

- Follow the on-line template and make sure all the relevant parts are filled in following the given heading structure. Please note that any modifications to the Full Proposals are allowed until the closing date. The last saved version of the proposal is considered for evaluation. No confirmation email is sent (the status is updated on the proposers webpage).
- Keep the format simple: use only a single font type and size (the default), left alignment, simple bulleted and numbered lists, default line/paragraph spacing, no footnotes/endnotes/headers/footers.
- Prefer to work directly in the on-line tool (conversion from MS Word for example can lead to unexpected results, or text losses, if for example headings or automatic lists have been used – in such case remove all automatic formatting before pasting to the on-line tool).
- The text limits are recommendations and can be slightly exceeded.
- The Proposal must be written in English. The Applicant is strongly advised to have the text checked for correctness and clarity. COST does not provide translation or correction services.
- No mentioning of individual scientists, institutes or organisations in the text of the proposal.
- Check table layouts (ex: timetable).
- Use of capital letters for COST-specific and Action-related expressions; non-exhaustive list: Action Proposal, Management Committee, Working Group, STSM (Short-Term Scientific Mission), etc.
- Explain all acronyms (including those commonly used in the Framework Programme context).
- Use of "Europe" or "COST countries" when referring to the overall geographical scope of COST. "European Union" or "EU Member States" should only be used to refer to the EU as a player ("EU legislation", "EU programmes", "EU policies" etc.) or when only EU Member State(s) need to be explicitly mentioned, excluding COST countries not members of EU.
- Avoid pronouns such as "I", "we"; rather use "the Action Proposal".
- Avoid any references to information contained in Part II - additional information (such as "see attached list of experts").

## Evaluation of Full Proposals

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

### *Evaluation by the External Expert Panel (EEP)*

Within each Domain, during a period of approximately one month, the external experts will evaluate remotely the Full Proposals against the evaluation criteria below.

At the end of this period, the EEP convenes in a consensus meeting. At this meeting, they agree



for each Full Proposal on consensus marks and comments, and recommend any number of proposals to be invited to the DC Hearing among those that have reached the threshold mark (55). Proposals marked below the threshold or not recommended to the DC Hearing are excluded from further evaluation.

The consensus marks and comments, and the decision to be invited to the DC hearing or not, are made available to the proposer via his/her webpage.

The Domain Committee Chair (or Vice-Chair) presents the EEP's outcome to the Domain Committee.

### *Evaluation by the Domain Committee*

The Proposers retained by the EEP are invited to present orally their proposal to the Domain Committee (or its delegated Executive Group) in a “DC Hearing”, also addressing the comments from the External Expert Panel.

The Domain Committee (or Executive Group) will rank and comment each proposal. The DC comment will be made available to the Proposer via his/her proposal webpage.

The COST Office prepares the final list to be approved by the CSO based on the following elements:

- The Domain's share, which is generated by a filtering distribution that takes into account the submission distribution per Domain. TDP is treated as a separate Domain;
- The number of Action Credits per Domain, which is generated from the past Collection Dates, from the accumulated differences between the number of proposals actually approved and the Domain's share for those Collection Dates;
- The available funding.

The technical details of the methodology must be consensual between the DC Chairs and the COST Office and any possible conflicts are to be resolved by JAF/CSO.

On the basis of the above procedure the JAF group will propose a definitive list for the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) who takes the final decision for approval and funding of the Full Proposals for new Actions.

The COST Office will inform all the Applicants of the Full Proposals of the result of the selection process.



## *List of Annexes*

Annex I – Graphic representation of a COST Action evaluation process

Annex II – Definitions

Annex III - Eligibility criteria for Preliminary Proposals

Annex IV – Evaluation criteria for Preliminary Proposals

Annex V - Preliminary Proposal template

Annex VI - Evaluation criteria for Full Proposals

Annex VII - Full Proposal template

## **Annex I – Graphic representation of a COST Action evaluation process**





## Annex II – Definitions

For the purpose of the current guidelines, the following “Definitions” shall apply:

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).
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 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.





### **Annex III - Eligibility criteria for Preliminary Proposals**

- The text of the proposal follows the structure of the online template;
- The proposal fulfils the basic characteristics of a COST Action ;
- No research funding requested;
- Peaceful purposes;
- No duplication of existing research within COST, no overlap with an existing Action (but the continuation of an existing Action is eligible);
- No duplication with another proposal within the same collection;
- No focus on a single network activity, such as a the set of up of a conference;
- Resubmissions should contain modifications, in particular with regards to evaluator remarks;
- The text of the proposal must be anonymous (no disclosure of participants name or institution);
- Are 5 or more COST Member States involved in the Proposal?





## **Annex IV – Evaluation criteria for Preliminary Proposals**

### **1. Right for COST?**

Is COST the best mechanism for achieving the Action's objectives?

High marks are given to proposals for which COST is the best adapted mechanism.

### **2. Public utility/science**

Does the proposed Action address real current problems/ scientific issues?

High marks are given to highly exciting and interesting proposals on a very important and/or timely topic.

### **3. Innovation**

Is the proposed Action innovative?

High marks are given to highly innovative proposals.

### **4. Impact**

Would the proposed network make a significant difference in terms of knowledge, capacity building, social impacts, etc.?

High marks are given to proposals with high potential impact.

### **5. Networking**

Are networking aspects well motivated and developed in the proposal?

High marks for proposals that both motivate the need for networking in the field and show how the proposed networking will add value to the current state-of-the-art.

### **6. Presentation**

Is the proposed Action presented in a clear, rational and understandable way?

High marks for proposals that are presented in a clear, rational and understandable way.





## Annex V - Preliminary Proposal template

### Remarks

- Timeout: to avoid losing data, do not forget to save regularly via the many “save changes” buttons;
- You can access and edit your proposal any time before the collection deadline;
- Do not forget to press the submission button to submit your proposal (you will receive a confirmation mail). Please note that even after pressing the submit button you can still edit your proposal; the last submitted version (before the collection deadline) will be taken into account;
- Unsubmitted data will not be saved, nor transferred to the following collection;
- Anonymity: the proposers’ names are removed before the preliminary proposals are made available to evaluators. The text of the proposal should not reveal the participants of the proposal, whether by name, by institution name, or even by country (with the exception of International Participants, whose country - and only country name - can be cited in the text. Be careful not to disclose any participant if you add any references or short bibliography. A breach in the anonymity rule can lead to the ineligibility of the proposal (see eligibility criteria) or the editing of the proposal by the COST office so as to anonymize the proposal.

### a) Proposal Title

- No character limit but it is strongly advised to avoid too long titles;
- Do not capitalize all the characters;
- Add a capitalized acronym at the end of the title and between brackets.

### b) Proposal Abstract

Maximum 1000 characters, including blanks.

### c) Keywords

Maximum 400 characters, including blanks. They should be separated by a comma.

### d) Indicative COST Domain

Select from the list of Domains the one which fits best to your proposal (see also [http://www.cost.eu/domains\\_actions](http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions)). Please note that during the eligibility check performed by the COST Office after the collection date, you may be suggested to choose a more appropriate Domain.

### d) Text of proposal

Maximum 10000 characters, including blanks (a counter shows the number of characters left, exceeding text will be lost).

Please do not overwrite the titles and respect their order in the text.

#### d.1) Background, Problems

This part should be an introduction to describe, in general terms, why it is desirable to launch the COST Action in question. It should summarise the previous research and the current state of knowledge in the field of the proposal. It could include an analysis of relevant research in the EU



Framework Programmes and other European fora. It may be useful also to compare the European research with that in, for example, the USA, Canada, Japan or other parts of the World.

In addition it should explain the reasons for the proposed cooperation with a distinction between the objectives, the expected results and the means to achieve them. As far as possible, this should be done with emphasis on immediate or future applications envisaged, so that even a reader who is not a specialist in the field obtains a clear picture of the expected benefits of the Action.

You may briefly describe also possible complementarity with and value-added to ongoing or planned research in the EU Framework Programme and other European organisations as one of the goals of COST is to avoid duplication of efforts in Europe.

Indicate the background of the proposal, the specific problems the network wants to solve and the goal the network would like to achieve. This part should demonstrate that the proposal addresses real current scientific and or technical issues with a high relevance for European society.

#### d.2) Benefits

This part should explain the expected benefits of the proposal itself without the networking aspects. These benefits could be societal, scientific and/or in the field of technology. There may be also other benefits for other areas which should be elaborated here.

#### d.3) Objectives, Deliverables and Expected Scientific Impact

This part should clearly indicate what one expects to achieve through the Action, in particular what will be the expected impact of this Action. It is very important to explicitly state all the objectives, whenever possible in quantitative terms making it easier to evaluate, how well the Action may achieve its goals. As far as possible, the likely end-users of expected results should be clearly indicated. In formulating objectives one has to distinguish between the aims (something toward which effort is directed) and the means to achieve them (methods or ways for accomplishing something). Carefully avoid all specifications of means - e.g. scientific problems to be solved as well as research tasks - as they belong to part d) Scientific programme.

A clear list of deliverables accompanied by a list of milestones should be provided.

#### d.4) Scientific Programme and Innovation

Here the most important research tasks to be carried out should be described (the structure of the work plan), with necessary explanation of how they will lead to achieving the objectives. In particular the innovative elements of the proposals and its originality should be presented.

You should remember that scientists that have not participated in the preparation are also entitled to join the network at a later stage if their countries sign the MoU. For that reason, the proposal must provide an open and flexible framework making it possible for any interested country to join the Action.

It will greatly enhance the clarity of the proposal if this Section is wholly focused on outlining the scientific content of the Action, while all organisational matters such as setting up Working Groups are dealt with in the following Section “Organisation”.

#### d.5) Organisation

The main purpose of this part is to give a clear picture of the arrangement of the Action. When you have clarified the reasons for the proposed co-operation, you should explain why COST seems to offer the best framework for it, for example as compared with the EU Framework Programme and other European organisations. This can be explained by describing the advantages or benefits, which should be gained from carrying out your project within the COST framework.

This part should clearly reflect the fact that a COST Action is implemented through a concerted action. This means that the research is carried out in the participating countries and financed by other sources than COST. COST provides via the COST Action the means for the co-ordination of the research.

#### d.6) Participants interested in network (name, institution and country)

List here the participants of your network including yourself.

In order to guarantee the anonymity of the proposers and avoid any conflict of interest, only the country list will be shown to the assessors.

The list must contain at least 5 participants from 5 different COST member countries and include yourself.

It is not necessary to list all participants, especially from a same institution or country (you will have this opportunity in the Full Proposal), prefer to highlight the geographical variety.

If your proposal involves more than 10 different participants, it is recommended to just include 10 of them; the full list will be requested if you are invited to submit a full proposal.





## Annex VI - Evaluation criteria for Full Proposals

### Section A. Science and Networking (marks from 1 to 4 - weight 2)

#### A.1 Does the proposed Action address real current problems/scientific issues?

4. The topic is very important and /or timely and proposal presents the correct approaches.
3. The topic is very important and /or timely, but proposal fails to present the correct approaches.
2. The topic is not important nor timely, although proposal presents the correct approaches.
1. Serious lack of substance and/or relevance.

#### A.2 Does the proposed Action show awareness of the state-of-the-art of the relevant scientific/technical/socio-economic fields?

4. Excellent and up to date awareness of relevant scientific/technical fields
3. Good awareness of relevant fields.
2. Defective awareness of relevant fields.
1. Serious lack of awareness of relevant fields.

#### A.3 Is the proposed Action innovative?

4. Highly innovative: identifies a significant new problem and/or a significant new approach.
3. Innovative in some notable aspects.
2. Not very innovative: the topic is already well-studied and/or the proposal largely follows a well-trodden approach.
1. Not at all innovative.

#### A.4 Does the proposed Action answer a need for the networking of experts in the field?

4. Networking in this field ranks amongst the best mechanisms to progress the state-of-the-art and the proposal uses such a mechanism in a sound manner.
3. Networking in this field ranks amongst the best mechanisms to progress the state-of-the-art, but the proposal fails to use such a mechanism in a sound manner.
2. Networking in this field is not amongst the best mechanisms to progress the state-of-the-art, although the proposal uses such a mechanism in a sound manner.
1. Networking in this field is not amongst the best mechanisms to progress the state-of-the-art and the proposal fails to use such a mechanism in a sound manner.

### Section A

- Comments:

- Total Mark (Max 16 X 2 = 32)

### Section B. Impact (marks from 1 to 4 - weight 2)

B.1 A COST Action may have impacts in various valuable directions. This Action mainly aims at (choose between a, b, or c.): a. meeting European economic or societal needs / b. developing the scientific or technological field / c. both a and b.

4. Important impacts very likely in several respects.
3. Some notable impacts likely.
2. May be some minor impacts.



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1. Unlikely to make useful impacts.

B.2 Are there clear plans for stimulating the production of high quality outputs?

4. Plans for outputs are clear, wide-ranging and ambitious.

3. Plans for outputs are reasonable.

2. Plans for outputs are unambitious or defective.

1. Plans for outputs are minimal or absent.

B.3 Is attention given to the involvement of stakeholders in order to increase the potential application of results (including, where appropriate, fostering their commercial exploitation)?

4. Stakeholders are already part of experts who took part in the preparation of the proposal.

3. Plans for implication of stakeholders are clear, wide-ranging and feasible.

2. Plans for implication of stakeholders are reasonable.

1. Plans for implication of stakeholders are unambitious or defective.

## Section B

- Comments:

- Total Mark (Max 12 X 2 = 24)

## Section C. Structure and organisation (marks from 1 to 4 - weight 1)

C.1 Is the proposal presented in a clear, convincing, and appropriate way?

4. Very clearly written with compelling argument; fully appropriate format.

3. Well written; argument is easy to follow; appropriate format but may need minor changes;

2. Poorly written, but argument can be followed with effort; and/or defective format.

1. Poorly written; argument is unclear; and/or inappropriate format.

C.2. Are the workplan and organisation appropriate?

4. Workplan and organisation make full, productive and cost-effective use of COST opportunities.

3. Workplan and organisation are reasonable, any defects are minor.

2. Workplan and/or organisation show significant defects.

1. Workplan and/or organisation are lacking or inappropriate or unclear.

C.3 Are the time schedule and the setting of milestones appropriate?

4. Schedule and milestones are well-defined and practical.

3. Schedule and milestones are reasonable.

2. Schedule and/or milestones show some defects.

1. Schedule and/or milestones are lacking or inappropriate or unclear.

C.4. Are appropriate plans made for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of objectives?

4. Monitoring and evaluation plans are well-defined and practical.

3. Monitoring and evaluation plans are reasonable.

2. Monitoring and evaluation plans show some defects.

1. Monitoring and evaluation plans are lacking or inappropriate or unclear.





## Section C

- Comments:
- Total Mark (Max 16)

## Section D. Contribution to wider COST goals (marks from 0 to 1 - weight 1)

### D.1 How well does the proposed Action aim to involve early stage researchers?

1. An innovative plan is presented in addition to the standard template in Section E.4 of Full Proposal
0. Otherwise.

### D.2 How well does the proposed Action aim at gender balance?

1. An innovative plan is presented in addition to the standard template in Section E.4 of Full Proposal
0. Otherwise.

### D.3 Does the proposed Action have the potential to contribute to the solution of global challenges in a global dimension?

1. Proposal will certainly attract interest from a wide range of non-COST Countries if approved
0. Otherwise.

## Section D

- Comments:
- Total Mark (Max 3)

## Total Mark for the Full Proposal (Threshold: 55 points out of 75)

### E. Overall recommendation of the EEP

- Comments:
- Strength of proposal:
- Weakness of proposal:
- Invitation (or not) to the DC hearing





## Annex VII - Full Proposal template

### Part I - Draft Technical Annex

#### I.A. Abstract (maximum 200 words)

Be clear and precise as this section will form the basis for COST information – web site and booklets – and reporting. The Abstract should include the broader scientific context of the Action as well as the expected deliverables and benefits. It should also indicate the European added value of the Action and the reasons for undertaking it in the COST framework.

Keywords: maximum 5 keywords or very short phrases.

#### I.B. Background (maximum 2-3 pages)

##### I.B.1 General background

- Define the research topic in such a way that it is clear that the network will address real current problems or scientific issues.
- Inform about the wider relevance of the Action (why is it desirable to launch it as COST Action).
- Explain why COST, which funds only networking and capacity-building activities and not research, is the best mechanism for support. State reasons why COST seems to offer the appropriate framework for the Action, compared to other research frameworks such as the EU Framework Programme and other European organisations.
- Describe the advantages or benefits which should arise from carrying out your project within the COST framework.

##### I.B.2 Current state of knowledge

- Summarise the previous research in the field of the proposal.
- Describe the current state of the art, including relevant research within the EU Framework Programmes and other EU fora, comparison of EU research with that in other parts of the world.
- Explain how the Action will be innovative in addressing either a new problem or a new approach to an existing problem.

##### I.B.3 Reasons for the Action

- Reasons for launching the Action, indicating the need for an experts network in the area and the added value of the Action networking. Emphasise immediate and future benefits and envisaged applications (understandable for non-specialists readers).
- Indicate whether the Action is mainly aimed at European economic/societal needs, or at scientific/technological advance, or both.
- Clearly distinguish between objectives, expected results and the means that are needed to achieve them. The impact of COST comes from concrete outcomes, not just activity; so indicate how the Action will aim for maximally productive outcomes.





#### I.B.4 Complementarity with other research programmes (if appropriate)

Mention Relevant links to and complementarity with any current and/or planned European research projects, such as the EU Framework Programme and other European organisations (bear in mind that avoiding duplication is one of the goals of COST).

#### I.C. Objectives and Benefits (maximum 2 pages)

##### I.C.1 Aim

Standard text as first item of this section (as this sentence will be quoted word for word in point 2 of the Memorandum proper, it should be extremely concise – max 3 to 4 lines):

“The main objective of the Action is ...”

The impact of COST comes from concrete outcomes, not just activity. Therefore indicate clearly what should be achieved through the Action. Given that all COST Actions are networks of scientists, the objectives should therefore clearly state the purpose of such networking, indicating - where possible - clear expected deliverables, not only research activities to be undertaken. However, if the proposed Action is of specially novel or "high risk" nature so that concrete deliverables are difficult to envisage, this should be explained clearly in the proposal.

##### I.C.2 Objectives

List and explain secondary objectives (whenever possible in quantitative terms, which will make it easier to evaluate how well the Action may achieve its goals).

##### I.C.3 How networking within the Action will yield the objectives?

Distinguish between objectives (aims of the Action) and means needed (manpower, equipment, etc.) to achieve these objectives (avoid any reference to method and means – e.g. scientific problems to be solved as well as research tasks – as they belong to section D (Scientific programme) detailed below).

##### I.C.4 Potential impact of the Action

Describe expected benefits that will stem from the Action (with reference to section B).

##### I.C.5 Target groups/end users

Reflect on the likely stakeholders and end users that will exploit the expected results. Indicate whether they were involved in the preparation of the proposal.

#### I.D. Scientific Programme (maximum 3-4 pages)

##### I.D.1 Scientific focus

- Describe the most important research tasks to be coordinated by the Action.
- Provide a structured, but not too detailed work plan flexible enough to permit the inclusion, at the implementation stage, of disciplinary perspectives and activities not foreseen during the preparation of the proposal. Keep the framework of the Action open and flexible.



- Explain the human and technical means to achieve the objectives described in section C.
- Remember that this section must be clear to non-specialists (even if the description may be more “technical”).

#### I.D.2 Scientific work plan – methods and means

- Do not mention explicitly the names of individual scientists, specific research institutions or other bodies (only exceptionally, if the Action cannot be implemented without the participation of a specific Institution, you should clearly mention this with the relevant explanation).

Always remember that scientists who have not participated in the preparation are also entitled to join if their countries accept the MoU.

- Focus on work plan and methods of the Action and not on its organisation.
- Mention for your Working Groups (see E.2 Working Groups), their objectives and what they will achieve.

#### I.E. Organisation (maximum 2 pages)

General remark: You need not reiterate organisational features common for all COST Actions, described in the "Rules and Procedures for Implementing COST Actions" (doc. COST 4112/13) and in COST doc. 4114/13 “COST Action Management”. As a rule, organisational matters should be mentioned only if you intend to apply them in some specific way. In order to avoid unnecessary repetitions or contradictions, please refer to Rules and Procedures when drafting this section.

##### I.E.1 Coordination and organisation

- Give a clear picture of the management and organisation of the Action.
- Reflect the fact that a COST Action is implemented through a concerted action, which means that the research is carried out in and financed by other sources than COST, while COST provides the means for the necessary co-ordination.
- Use organisational features common to all COST Actions, but also allow for limited Action-specific variations (e.g. you may want to introduce a Steering Group, an Editorial Board, STSM manager, etc.). Consult “Rules and Procedures for implementing COST Actions”.
- Mention milestones – major achievements that are crucial to the future direction of the Action.
- Explain how the coordination of national research will be implemented (including the creation of possible common research teams, conferences and workshops, short-term scientific missions or other exchanges between laboratories, training schools, websites, etc.).
- Be aware of the obligation to set up an Action specific website that will not duplicate general information already available from the COST website (e.g. signatory list, MC list, etc.) and to keep it updated: Include a plan to keep this website up to date, both to serve the needs of the participants and with the specific aim of ensuring the dissemination or exploitation of the results of the Action.
- As a rule, do not list names of interested research establishments and scientists. (This will be part of the Additional Information – Part II.)



### I.E.2 Working Groups

- Working Groups are a useful way of extending the Action beyond the membership of the Management Committee and of sharing workloads.
- An Action has normally 3-6 but not more than 6 Working Groups.
- If you plan Working Groups, explain their organisation (without repeating unnecessarily the “Scientific Programme” given under Section D).

### I.E.3 Liaison and interaction with other research programmes

- Address possible liaisons and interaction with other COST Actions and other European and international research programmes, such as the EU Framework Programme and other European organisations.
- Indicate how these interactions will be organised: by exchange of information, meetings, by joint seminars or any other means.

### I.E.4 Gender balance and involvement of early-stage researchers

The following paragraph is compulsory:

“This COST Action will respect an appropriate gender balance in all its activities and the Management Committee will place this as a standard item on all its MC agendas. The Action will also be committed to considerably involve early-stage researchers. This item will also be placed as a standard item on all MC agendas.”

- Please add any additional support the Action plans concerning gender balance and the involvement of early-stage researchers, in particular with respect to the organisation of training schools, STSMs etc.
- Explain how you intend to achieve a capacity building.

### I.F. Timetable Maximum one page

- Give a clear picture of the timescale of the Action.
- The duration of a COST Action is four years, unless there are specific cases to be approved by the CSO, on the basis of a justification provided in the proposal.
- Use relative time scales (Year 1, Year 2, etc.), not specific years.
- Please use a table.

### I.G. Economic Dimension

- The Economic Dimension gives a rough estimate of the total research activity leveraged by the Action based on a formula “Number of COST countries that have participated in the Action” X EUR 4 million. No data entry is needed here, the system will calculate the amount automatically based on the number of COST participants entered in part II – A.

### I.H. Dissemination Plan Maximum 2 pages

#### I.H.1 Who?

Identify the target audiences for the dissemination of the results of the Action (in particular findings and recommendations), e.g. other researchers working in the field; other research frameworks; research Institutes and Academia; Standards Bodies; industry (represented by







manufacturers and service providers); European level policy makers; Government policy makers, regional planners and policy makers; general public.

#### I.H.2 What?

- Describe the dissemination methods you intend to use.
- For each of your audiences you may choose several of the existing possibilities, e.g.
- Posting of general information on a public website;
- Posting of working documents on a password protected website;
- Set up of an electronic communication network (internet discussion forum, e-mail network, etc.);
- Publications: state of the art reports, interim reports, case study reports, proceedings, guidelines, manuals, final reports;
- Events: workshops, seminars and conferences organised by the MC, contributions to other national and international conferences and symposia;
- Articles in peer-reviewed scientific and technical Journals;
- Non-technical publications.

#### I.H.3 How?

- Describe how these dissemination methods will be used.
- Note that dissemination goes beyond publication of results.
- Take into consideration the progress of the Action as well the results of its evaluation in updating the dissemination plan during the course of the Action.

For additional information on dissemination activities, see the Guidelines for Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions.

### Part II Additional Information (maximum 10 pages)

This part is not included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The main purpose of the second part of the proposal is to facilitate the assessment of the proposal and the nomination of National Representatives to the Management Committee (MC). This part will not be part of the MoU. Note that only part A. List of Experts is mandatory as the information given here is important for the later nominations to the Management Committee.

#### II.A. List of Experts

For COST country participants, list the Participants to the proposal (PtP), potential Management Committee (MC) / Working Group (WG) members that expressed their interest (Participant detail information and scientific expertise).

For participations from Near Neighbour Countries (NNC) , International Partner Countries (IPC) or specific Organisations (European Commission, EU Agencies, European RTD Organisations and International Organisations), a description of the mutual benefit and of the targeted scientific activities, including the included Working Group(s) is requested.





## II.B. History of the Proposal

The purpose of this section is to give the historical background of the proposal: how the idea of the COST Action was born and how the subsequent definition of the objectives and the pre-proposal planning was carried out.

## II.C. Preliminary Work Programme

Especially if the proposal is very complex and based on participation of research teams from different fields of research interacting in a specific way, you may wish to explain how this has been envisaged, at a more concrete level than that indicated in the draft Technical Annex.

## II.D. Recent Publications

In order to make it easier to assess the scientific merits of the proposal, you may wish to compile a short list of recent scientific publications relating to the topic of the Action. If desired, you could group all the publications authored or co-authored by you as a kind of scientific self-portrait. This should be a maximum of 2 pages.

## II.E. Further Remarks

In this subheading you may add any information or remarks but also comment on the following assessment criteria.

- To what extent does the proposed network aim at involving early-stage researchers?
- To what extent does the proposed network aim at being gender balanced?
- Does the number of countries the Applicants come from reflect a wide European dimension?
- To what extent have provisions been made for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of objectives?
- To what extent have provisions been made for assessing potential application, and fostering exploitation, of results?





## FAQs

1. Can I make changes to my proposal? Yes, any modifications to the proposals, whether it is preliminary or full is allowed until the closing date. Preliminary proposal can be submitted many times before the deadline (the last submission is considered for evaluation). For the Full Proposal, the last saved version of the proposal is considered for evaluation (there is no submission button, nor confirmation mail).
2. I have submitted to a previous collection, can I resubmit? Yes, but you need to create a new account and re-enter all data. Do not forget to amend the proposal taking into account the evaluators comments.
3. Where can I see sample of successful proposals: the Action Memorandum of Understanding available in PDF version on the Action page contains the main information included in a Full
4. Can I add pictures? No, only text or tables at both the Preliminary as the Full Proposal stage.
5. Pasting to the online form from a word processor produces strange results. This happens if you use features like automatic headings, bulleted/numbered lists, indents, justified text, different font types and sizes. Please use a basic formatting following the editorial instructions above.
6. Are amendments to the title possible? Yes, at the Full Proposal stage send an email to [opencall@cost.eu](mailto:opencall@cost.eu) with the new title.
7. I have exceeded the text limits, are there any consequences? The chapter limits are recommendations, slight excesses are not penalized.
8. Is there a redress procedure? No
9. Can proposals be transferred from one collection to another? No, a proposal is linked to one collection and is cannot be transferred to any subsequent collection (however re-submissions of the same proposal are allowed).