# Subject │ Minutes of the First Management Committee Meeting of COST Action CA16224 “European Raptor Biomonitoring Facility”

Brussels, Belgium  
17/10/2017

1. **Welcome to participants**

The participants were welcomed by Dr Lucia Forzi, Science Officer, and by Ms Svetlana Voinova,Administrative Officer of the Action. Lucia Forzi chaired the first part of the meeting, including the election of the Action Chair, Vice-Chair, and selection of Grant Holder Institution under agenda items 8 and 9.

1. **Verification of the presence of two-thirds of the participating COST Countries**

CSO Approval: 23/06/2017

Start of the Action: 17/10/2017

End of Action: 16/10/2021

Total number of COST Full and Cooperating Members having accepted the MoU: 25(**Annex 2**)

Total number of COST Full Members intending to accept the MoU: 0

The quorum (2/3 of COST Countries participating in the Action) was reached: 18 of the 25 Parties were represented at the meeting (COST doc. 134/14 REV 2 “COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment” Annex I, Article 9).

1. **Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda (**Annex 1**) for the 1st Management Committee (MC) meeting was adopted.

1. **Tour de table/ introduction of the MC members**

The list of officially nominated delegates and the participants of the meeting with their contact information is presented in **Annex 3**.

1. **General information on COST mechanism and the funding and reporting of coordination activities**

Dr Lucia Forzi presented the COST Overview, Policies and COST Actions: Participation, Management, Monitoring (**Annex 4**). Relevant information can be found on the COST website at: <http://www.cost.eu>.

Ms Ingeborg Nolte, Head of Communications of the COST Association, presented the importance of communicating about the Action and the role of the Science Communication Manager (**Annex 5**).

Ms Svetlana Voinova continued with an introduction to the COST Grant System and provided details on COST Actions administrative rules and guidelines (**Annex 4**). Relevant information is on the COST website at <http://www.cost.eu/participate>, including the following reference documents:

* Rules of Procedure for COST Action Management Committees (COST 134/14 REV 2, Annex I) (**Annex 6**).
* COST Action Management
* COST Vademecum
* Guidelines for Action Management, Monitoring and Assessment
* Guidelines for Dissemination of COST Action results and outcomes
* Grant Agreement Template

1. **Agreement on the internal rules of procedure for the MC of the COST Action**

The Rules of Procedure for the Management Committee (**Annex 6**) were sent to the MC prior to the meeting. These were noted and endorsed by the MC.

1. **Setting the frame for the Action**

The recommendations by the Scientific Committee were presented to the MC (**Annex 4**).

The budget allocated to the Action for the 1st Grant Period (GP1) (01/11/2017 – 30/04/2018) was communicated during the meeting (**Annex 4**). A budget of 76 000 EUR has been allocated for GP1. This budget level should be allocated for 26 countries and this was done in order to consider additional countries joining the Action during the 1st Grant Period.

1. **Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair**

The Science Officer invited candidates for Chair and Vice-Chair to present their candidacy. There was one candidate for each post. Following their presentations:

* Mr Guy Duke (United Kingdom)was elected as the Chair.
* Dr Al Vrezec (Slovenia) was elected as the Vice-Chair.

1. **Selection of the Grant Holder Institution (GH Scientific Representative appointment) and FSAC rate**

Mr Duke reminded MC Members that they were invited by email to offer their institutions for the GH role. He noted that three had initially made an offer, but that one had withdrawn. Two candidates were therefore offering themselves as candidate Grant Holder Scientific Representative and their institutions as candidate Grant Holder Institution:

* Dr Al Vrezec, National Institute of Biology (Slovenia)
* Prof. Antonio Juan García-Fernández, University of Murcia (Spain)

Each candidate presented their candidacy.

The University of Murcia (Spain) was selected as the Grant Holder Institution and Prof. García-Fernández (Spain) as the Scientific Representative of the Grant Holder Institution.

The Management Committee decided on a 15% rate for FSAC for the 1st Grant Period.

Ms Svetlana Voinova noted that COST Association offered training for GH staff. Prof. García-Fernández is to arrange attendance of his staff on this training course.

1. **Presentation and discussion of the Action**

The Chair presented the Action (**Annex 7**), covering: origins of ERBFacility; the challenge addressed; the concept and the three ‘arenas’ (analysis, collections, field) involved; goals and objectives; management structure; extent of the network and links to relevant European initiatives; deliverables and expected impacts; and dissemination and exploitation considerations.

The Chair outlined how ERBFacility complies with COST policies:

* Good geographical coverage (25 of 37 COST countries so far party to the Action), 11 of 25 Parties (44%) are COST Inclusiveness Target Countries (ICTs).
* Gender balance is currently poor (only 9 of 35 MC members are female): this is thought to reflect a similar gender bias in the wider raptor biomonitoring community. On a more positive note, 2 of the 4 candidate Working Group Leaders are female.
* 5 participants at the meeting, and the candidate STSM Coordinator, are Early Career Investigators (ECIs).

MC discussed ERBFacility adherence to COST policies as well as the SC Recommendations (**Annex 4**). MC agreed that particular attention should be given to: (1) engage other participants identified in the MoU (e.g. ECHA, EFSA, EEA, DG ENV, relevant NGOs, industry, US institutions); (2) bring missing COST countries in as Parties to the Action, with particular emphasis on missing ICT countries; (3) encourage women to participate in ERBFacility management structures and activities; (4) involving ECIs in activities such as Working Groups, STSMs, and Training Schools. These issues will be addressed by the Core Group.

The Chair outlined Action milestones and deliverables for GP1 and for the subsequent 6 months, as specified in the Action MoU. Detailed work plans are to be produced for each of the four Working Groups by month 6. The Action is also required to convene the first General Meeting and set up an Action website within GP1.

**Deliverables and timeline**

MC reviewed the deliverables and their timeline as specified in eCOST. MC agreed on the following amendments:

* Deliverables 1, 2, 6, 7: Amend ‘peer-reviewed paper’ to ‘final manuscript for publication’ (these manuscripts will typically be intended for peer review publication but acceptance of papers by journals cannot be guaranteed and manuscripts could be published as reports if need be).
* Deliverable 4: Amend to ‘Guidance on recruitment of volunteers and training of volunteers / volunteer trainers.’
* Deliverables 5: Amend to ’Technical specs detailing the ERBioMs framework and a final manuscript on read-across techniques.’
* Deliverables 9: Amend to ‘Pilot reports, proof of concept and guidance for harmonisation of raptor monitoring data and its integration for regulatory purposes in the areas of risk assessment and risk mitigation”.

Subject to these amendments, MC agreed the deliverables and their due dates. These amendments were noted and will be provided to the Science Officer.

MC requested that the WG responsible for each deliverable is made clear in each Deliverable.

MC discussed WG membership and size. MC members can elect to join one or more WGs of interest. Each MC member is expected to join at least one WG. WG Leaders can also co-opt experts from the participating countries who are not MC Members, while taking in to account financial constraints and COST rules. MC discussed how big WGs might be, taking in to account effective group size and financial constraints, the need for them to be flexible and the potential for sub-groups (task forces) for specific tasks. One option to limit costs may be to limit WG size (e.g. max 10-12 members) and bring in additional expertise for task forces. Another option is to have core and corresponding members of WGs (to limit travel costs). The Chair stressed that recruitment to Working Groups should be open and transparent. MC agreed to delegate to WG Leaders the ability to manage WG membership and operation, while ensuring this is in line with COST rules. The Science Officer reminded that since Actions are open networks Working Groups should be open and recommended to the MC to put in place selection criteria in order to ensure complementary expertise within the Working Groups.

The Chair will circulate to MC Members and Substitutes, by 27/10/17, a simple proforma to provide a brief biography and photo, and to indicate interest to join a specific WG or WGs. MC members should return completed proformae by 6/11/17. Completed proformae will be shared with WG Leaders by 8/11/17. Biographies and photos will be posted in due course to the ERBFacility website.

The Core Group will discuss and plan finalisation of WG membership at its first meeting (date tbc).

1. **Establishment of Action Management Structure**

**Election of WG Leaders**

The Chair reminded MC members that they had been invited by email to consider their candidacy for WG Leader roles. He again invited MC members to offer their candidacy. There was one candidate for each role:

WG1: Prof. Richard F Shore (UK)

WG2: Prof. Antonio García-Fernández (Spain)

WG3: Dr Paola Movalli (The Netherlands)

WG4: Dr Chris Wernham (UK)

The Chair invited each to present their candidacy. As Dr Wernham (MC Substitute) was not present, the Vice-Chair presented her candidacy. The Chair noted that WG Leaders must be MC Members. He said that, while Dr Wernham was currently a MC Substitute, his election as Chair left a MC Member vacancy for the UK that Dr Wernham was expected to take up.

The Chair informed MC, in advance of a vote for WG3 Leader, of a potential conflict of interest in that he is married to Dr Movalli. Should Dr Movalli be elected, both would be Core Group members. MC should keep this in mind when delegating powers to the Core Group. MC took note of this potential conflict of interest. The Chair left the room for the election of the WG3 Leader and the Vice-Chair took the vote for this role.

The MC duly elected Prof Shore as WG1 Leaders, Prof García-Fernández as WG2 Leader, Dr Movalli as WG3 Leader and Dr Wernham as WG4 Leader.

Dr Lucia Forzi noted that the election of Guy Duke (Chair), Richard Shore (WG1 Leader) and Chris Wernham (WG4 Leader), each affiliated to UK institutions, introduced a geographical imbalance to the Leadership roles. While there is no COST rule in this respect, COST *recommends* that any one country should hold no more than two leadership roles. Dr Forzi recalled the letter sent by the COST Association Director to all Action Main Proposers, inviting them to assign two leadership positions to ITC researchers. Richard Shore offered to discuss with a possible WG1 Deputy whether their roles (Leader and Deputy) might be reversed so that this imbalance might be resolved.

**Election of STSM Coordinator, Science Communication Manager**

The Chair reminded MC members that they had been invited by email to consider their candidacy for these two roles. He again invited MC members to offer their candidacy. There was one candidate forthcoming for each role:

* STSM Coordinator: Dr Igor Eulaers (Denmark)
* Science Communication Manager: Dr Blagica Sekovska (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The Chair noted that Dr Eulaers and Dr Gomez had attended a COST Leadership Workshop in September, as Early Career Investigators (ECIs) interested in COST Leadership roles. However, the candidacy of Dr Pilar Gomez-Ramirez (Spain, MC Substitute) for the STSM Coordinator role was withdrawn, as there is a requirement for the STSM Coordinator to be a MC Member.

MC duly elected Dr Eulaers as STSM Coordinator and Dr Sekovska as Science Communication Manager. The Chair expressed the hope that Dr Gomez-Ramirez might wish to support Dr Eulaers in STSM coordination.

MC discussed the process for evaluation of STSM applications. The Chair suggested that, for each STSM position, the relevant WG Leader, a second MC member from the same WG (appointed by the WG) and the STSM Coordinator should form an evaluation committee. MC agreed to this proposal. The Science Officer reminded MC of the need to identify selection criteria.

**Core Group**

The MC confirmed that the Core Group consists of the Chair, Vice-Chair, the four WG Leaders, STSM Coordinator, Science Communication Manager and GH Scientific Representative (in this case, the latter is also WG2 Leader).

1. **Action implementation planning**

The Chair presented draft goals for the 1st Grant Period (1/11/17-30/4/18). MC discussed and agreed four goals, one for each WG, as follows: ‘*Scope and plan WG work, document initial WG activities*.’

MC discussed and agreed the deployment of COST tools and Action budget for GP1 (total grant available = c. €76,000) to meet these goals. They will be met through Core Group meetings, a multi-purpose first General Meeting (WG meetings, MC2, Core Group), STSMs and dissemination and communication activities.

A key tool and main cost item will be a 4-day first General Meeting, involving around 50 participants. This will involve two days plenary (all WGs together) and WG meetings to scope and plan WG work (outline for the whole Action period, detail through to end of GP2, i.e. 30/04/2019), the possibility of organising a field visit focussing on raptor biomonitoring will be investigated and final day for MC2 meeting (AM) and Core Group meeting (PM). Only MC members will remain for Day 4 AM and only Core Group for Day 4 PM. Estimated total meeting cost €50,000.

The Chair reminded MC members that they had been invited by email to offer to host the first General Meeting. He again asked MC for offers. Rafael Mateo (University of Castilla La-Mancha) kindly offered to host the meeting at UCLM, Ciudad Real, Spain. The MC gratefully accepted this kind offer. MC agreed on a provisional date for the meeting of the last week of February 2018 (week of 26/2 to 1/3/18) (to be confirmed). MC Members are kindly requested to block this week in their diary to ensure MC2 is quorate.

Other cost items for GP1 are:

* STSMs (c. 4 missions) - €10,000
* Website creation and maintenance - €4500
* Production of a brochure - €500
* FSAC (Grant Holder administrative costs) *15% of expenditure*

MC agreed that WG Leaders (in consultation with their respective WGs) would put forward scientific priorities for STSM proposals, each for 4-6-week missions, by end November, for Core Group approval by mid-December, publication of STSM openings by end December, selection by early February and missions in March-April.

MC requested the Core Group to meet [Skype] within the next 4-6 weeks to review and progress actions in these minutes and look ahead to work planning for GP2. The Chair will issue a Doodle poll by 27/10/17 to find a suitable meeting date and time.

MC delegated authority to the Core Group to take budgetary decisions up to maximum €5000 without need to seek MC approval.

MC discussed the need to move quickly on dissemination and communication activities. This will be addressed by the Core Group at its first meeting, and will cover the drafting of a dissemination and communication plan, creation and maintenance of an Action website, drafting and publication of an Action brochure, and other initial activities. The Chair noted that a first ERBFacility poster had already been submitted to the European Bird Curators meeting being held in Paris 17-19 October 2017 and a relevant paper published as a [Trend Editorial](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11356-017-0096-x) in *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*.

1. **Any Other Business (AOB)**

There was no other business.

1. ***Closing***

The Chair thanked Dr Lucia Forzi, Ms Ingeborg Nolte and Ms Svetlana Voinova for the excellent input from their side and thanked MC members for their contributions. He thanked in particular the Vice-Chair, WG Leaders, STSM Coordinator and Science Communications Manager for their commitment and looked forward to working closely with them for the success of the Action. He looked forward to meeting all again in Ciudad Real in February 2018. The meeting closed on schedule at 17:00.

**SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **no** | **ACTION** | **WHO** | **Deadline** |
| 1 | **GH training**: select training date, attend GH training (Item 9) | Prof Garcia-Fernandez | 30/11/17 |
| 2 | **SC recommendations**: plan appropriate actions (Item 10) | Core Group | 30/11/17 |
| 3 | **ERBFacility deliverables**: provide revised deliverables to the Science Officer (item 10) | Chair | 31/10/17 |
| 4 | **Establish WGs**: (a) Chair to issue proforma to MC Members and Substitutes for profile/photo and to specify their WG interests; (b) Members and Substitutes to complete and return to Chair; (c) Chair to circulate summary of WG interests to WG Leaders; (d) Core Group to specify selection criteria for WG membership; (e) WG Leaders to propose WG membership, including possible co-option of other experts; (f) finalise initial WG membership (item 10) | Chair; MC Members and Substitutes; WG Leaders | 30/11/17 |
| 5 | **WG1 Leader role**: explore possible switch (Item 11) | Prof Shore | 30/11/17 |
| 6 | **GP1 Workplan and budget**: finalise in eCOST in line with MC decisions (Item 12) | Chair | 31/10/17 |
| 7 | **First General Meeting**: fix dates for GM at UCLM in late February; plan and convene GM (Item 12) | Chair in consultation with Dr Mateo | 31/10/17 |
| 8 | **STSMs**: (a) Develop scientific priorities for first STSMs; (b) consult with WGs on STSMs; (c) finalise and publish call for STSMs; (d) evaluate applications and award STSMs; (e) implement STSMs (Item 12) | WG Leaders in consultation with WGs and STSM Coordinator | 30/04/18 |
| 9 | **Dissemination and Communication Plan**: (a) first draft plan for project period and GP1; (b) discuss in Core Group; (c) refine and circulate plan to MC (Item 12) | Science Communications Manager in consultation with Core Group | 31/12/17 |
| 11 | **Core Group meeting** (skype): (a) issue Doodle poll to fix date; (b) convene meeting; (c) issue minutes and action points (Item 12) | Chair | 18/12/17 |
| 12 | **MC1 Minutes**: draft and circulate, including MC presentations in Annex | Chair | 03/12/17 |

**List of Annexes**

**Annex 1 -** Agenda

**Annex 2 -** Action Fact Sheet

**Annex 3 -** Attendance list

**Annex 4 -** Science Officer presentation and Administrative Officer presentation

**Annex 5** – Head ofCommunications presentation

**Annex 6 -** The Rules of Procedure for COST Action Management Committees (COST 134/14 REV 2, Annex I)

**Annex 7 -** MC Chair presentation