Call for Applications

Short-term Scientific Missions 2019-20

Working Groups 1 & 2 (Analysis Arena)

10 June 2019

Deadline for applications
23:59 CEST, Sunday 30 June 2019

The European Raptor Biomonitoring Facility (ERBFacility) COST Action CA16224, Working Groups 1 & 2 (Analysis Arena) hereby announces this Call for Applications for **short-term scientific missions (STSMs).** This call relates to **up to seven (7) STSMs** available for **Grant Period 3** (1 May 2019 to 30 April 2020).

1. Context

ERBFacility is a pan-European network that seeks to reduce costs imposed by contaminants on human and wildlife health, by using raptors (birds of prey and owls) as sentinels on environmental contamination. ERBFacility seeks to improve effectiveness evaluation, risk assessment and early warning in relation to regulation of priority substances, plant protection products, biocides, veterinary products and heavy metals, with a focus on persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT) compounds. ERBFacility involves linked research coordination and capacity building in three arenas: (1) analysis (academics, laboratories, regulatory agencies); (2) collections (natural history museums, environmental specimen banks and other collections providing samples for analysis); (3) field (gathering samples and relevant contextual data). For more information see the Action description and MoU available on the COST website and see the ERBFacility website.

2. Purpose of this call

The purpose of this call is to contribute to the following Objectives:

ERBFacility Objective R1: to assess existing capacity and knowledge to detect pan-European spatial and temporal trends in the exposure of raptors to contaminants.

ERBFacility Objective C1: to build capacity in the 'analysis arena' through networking and collaboration among ecotoxicologists, collaborating laboratories and regulators.

3. Scientific priorities, number of STSMs, preferred timing

Applications under this Call should relate to one of the **four scientific priorities** of the ERBFacility **Working Groups 1&2 (Analysis Arena)** for Grant Period 3, as outlined below.

Up to 7 STSMs in total will be awarded, divided among the four scientific priorities as indicated below.

TITLE: Assessment of existing capacity and knowledge to detect pan-European spatial and temporal trends in the exposure of raptors to contaminants.

Reference WGs1&2/GP3/STSM1-3

Up to 3 STSMs will be made available in relation to this scientific priority.

The STSMs conducting such assessments are likely to involve literature review and meta-analysis elements and seek to identify any weaknesses or strengths of past and current monitoring to detect pan-European spatio-temporal trends.

It is expected that the missions will focus on different contaminants and applicants may wish to choose from a variety of compounds. Applications that consider toxic metals, such as lead or mercury, legacy POPs such as polychlorinated biphenyls, DDT [and metabolites] or brominated flame retardants, and anticoagulant rodenticides are particularly encouraged.

The timings of these STSMs should be agreed with the hosts. Each STSM will ideally be expected to be **at least 90 days** in length although applications for longer or shorter duration will be considered.

TITLE: Identification of candidate raptor species and sample matrices suitable for pan-European monitoring.

Reference WGs1&2/GP3/STSM4

Up to 1 STSM will be made available in relation to this scientific priority.

This STSM is intended to consider how species taxonomy, ecological traits and physiology interact such that read-across between and across species or species guilds can be conducted (because the geographical ranges of individual raptor species may not be pan-European). It also requires consideration of the practicalities of what types of sample can be collected. The STSM will be able to build on material from an ERBFacility workshop held earlier this year in Greece.

This STSM will ideally run **from around July to around September 2019**. The STSM is expected to last **at least 90 days**, although applications for longer or shorter duration will be considered.

TITLE: Developing Proof of Concept

Reference WGs1&2/GP3/STSM5-6

Up to 2 STSMs will be made available in relation to this scientific priority.

These STSMs will be associated with developing a proof of concept that demonstrates the ability of the ERBFacility to source raptor samples from across Europe (new material and archived material from specimen banks and museums) and analyse them for priority contaminants. This is a test of the ultimate aim of the ERBFacility (*development of a distributed 'facility' that enables pan-European raptor*

biomonitoring).

The intention is for the two STSMs to work in close conjunction with the Steering Group of the ERBFacility Proof of Concept study, engaging in logistical coordination of sample collection, data gathering and analyses.

At least one of the 2 STSMs is expected to start by end July. The STSMs are each expected to last **at least 90 days**, although applications for longer or shorter duration will be considered.

TITLE: Developing a Network of Analytical Labs and Government Institutions

Reference WG3/GP3/STSM7

Up to 1 STSM will be made available in relation to this scientific priority.

The focus of the mission would be to develop a collaborative network among the laboratories and government institutions carrying out the investigations of cause of death in wildlife by toxic compounds. This is likely to involve understanding how approaches to investigations (necropsy, forensic methodologies and analytical methods) vary between countries, relate these country-specific legal regulations on wildlife poisoning, differences to and to identify gaps in the knowledge. An anticipated output is the strengthening of links between laboratories that will enhance ability to investigate poisoning incidents.

This STSM is expected to take place **between August and November 2019**. The STSM is expected to last **at least 90 days**, although applications for longer or shorter duration will be considered.

4. Expected output from each STSM

Each STSM is required to produce a **mission report** (see **Reporting Template**, attached) of 2-3 pages, to be submitted to the MC Chair and to the Host Institution, within 30 days of completion of the mission.

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to produce a **detailed technical report** and/or a **critical paper** for submission to a suitable peer-reviewed journal. Applications committing to such a technical report and/or peer-reviewed publication will be preferred.

5. Mission hosts

Applicants must arrange an appropriate host institution for their mission. Applicants are free to identify and contact a suitable host. Applicants may in particular wish to find a host among members of the ERBFacility Management Committee. However, please note that the following have already indicated that they may be able to host a mission:

Potential host institute	Country	Contact name	Contact email	STSM reference
University of Murcia	Spain	Prof Antonio Garcia-Fernandez	ajgf@um.es	WGs1&2/GP3/STSM1-3 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM5-6 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM7
Institute for Game and Wildlife Research/University of Castilla - La Mancha (UCLM)	Spain	Prof Rafa Mateo	Rafael.Mateo@uclm.es	WGs1&2/GP3/STSM1-3 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM5-6 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM7
Aarhus University	Denmark	Dr. Igor Eulaers	ie@bios.au.dk	WGs1&2/GP3/STSM1-3 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM4

Centre for Ecology & Hydrology	UK	Prof Richard Shore	rfs@ceh.ac.uk	WGs1&2/GP3/STSM1-3 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM4 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM5-6
Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research	Germany	Dr Oliver Krone	KRONE@izw-berlin.de	WGs1&2/GP3/STSM1-3 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM4 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM5-6
VetAgro Sup Campus Vétérinaire de Lyon	France	Prof. Philippe Berny	philippe.berny@vetagro-sup.fr	WGs1&2/GP3/STSM1-3 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM5-6 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM7
Estonian University of life sciences	Estonia	Dr. Madis Levits	mleivits@gmail.com	WGs1&2/GP3/STSM5-6 WGs1&2/GP3/STSM7

6. Eligibility

STSMs are exchange visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, strengthening existing networks and fostering collaboration between COST Action Participants. A STSM should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action, whilst at the same time allowing those partaking in the missions to learn new techniques, gain access to specific data, instruments and/or methods not available in their own institutions/organisations.

STSM applicants must be engaged in an official research programme as a PhD student or postdoctoral fellow, or may be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution or legal entity, which has within its remit a clear association with performing research. **Students holding a First or Masters Degree and not yet registered for a PhD are also eligible**. The institution/ organisation where an applicant pursues his/her main strand of research is considered the Home Institution. The Host Institution is the institution/organisation that will host the STSM grantee.

The following table shows the scenarios available to eligible STSM applicants:

Applicant's Home Institution	STSM Host Institution
Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member	Located in another Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
	Located in a Participating COST Partner Member
	An Approved IPC Institution
	An Approved NNC Institution
	The EU Commission or a EU Body, Office or Agency
	An Approved European RTD Organisation
	An Approved International Organisation
Located in an Approved NNC Institution	Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
Located in an Approved European RTD Organisation	Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member

The Participating COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members are the country Parties to ERBFacility, listed here. Please note that at present, there are no Approved IPC, NNC European RTD or International Organisations for ERBFacility. The only relevant scenarios are thus those highlighted in yellow in the table above. In other words**, the applicant's Home Institution must be located in one of the countries that are Party to ERBFacility, and the STSM Host Institution must be located in one of the other countries which are Party to ERBFacility** (or the European Commission, an EU Body, Office or Agency).

STSMs must have a minimum duration of 5 days and a maximum duration of 90 days. However, STSMs involving Early Career Investigators (those studying for a PhD or with up to 8 years of experience following award of PhD) may have a maximum duration of 180 days. STSMs need to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period and always within the Action's lifetime. The current ERBFacility Grant Period (GP3) ends on 30 April 2020.

7. Application procedure

Applications must be submitted through www.cost.eu/stsm

In order to access the submission page, you must first be registered in eCOST (accessible at www.cost.eu).

When you go to the STSM submission page, you will need to enter a '**Motivation and Workplan Summary**' of **up to 2000 words**. We advise you to prepare this summary offline in Word, and then cut and paste your summary to the online form. The Motivation and Workplan Summary should address the following points:

- **Title and reference for the mission** (as given in Section 3, above)
- **Aim and motivation** – please explain the scientific and/or other motivation for the STSM and what scientific and/or other outcomes you aim to accomplish with the STSM.
- **Proposed contribution to the scientific objectives of the Action** – please focus here on how your STSM will contribute to the Working Group scientific priorities for the selected mission (see Section 3 above)
- **Techniques** – please detail what techniques and/or equipment you may learn to use, if applicable.
- **Planning** – please detail the steps you will take to achieve your proposed aim.
- **Expected outputs** – please specify in terms of: (a) the formal mission report, (b) a detailed technical report, (c) one or more peer-reviewed papers (and indicative target journal).

Applicants must also upload the following supporting documents, which should be prepared in advance to submitting your application online:

1. **Letter of interest from the proposed Host Institution** confirming that she/he has agreed to host you for the proposed dates, and to participate in the STSM (using the **Letter of Interest Template**, attached)
2. **Letter of support from your Home Institution** that the proposed STSM does not interfere with any obligatory duties you may have at your home institution (using the **Letter of Support Template**, attached)
3. **Short CV of applicant** outlining qualifications and research track record.
4. **Short CV of the host** outlining qualifications, research track record, international collaborations and supervisory experience.

8. Evaluation

Applications will be evaluated by a panel of three persons, which includes the STSM Coordinator, the Working Group Leader and a Working Group member. One or more of these persons will be replaced (by other Working Group members) if there is any direct conflict of interest.

Applications will first be assessed for eligibility. Non-eligible applications will be excluded from the selection stage.

Eligible applications will then be assessed for selection based on:

- **Pertinence and quality** of the proposed research work and expected output in relation to the selected scientific priority (as specified in Section 3 above) (maximum 5 points, threshold 3 points)
- **Suitability of the applicant**: relevance and quality of research track record (in relation to career stage) (maximum 5 points, threshold 3 points)

- **Suitability of the host**: expertise and experience in the relevant research area, experience in international collaborations, supervisory experience (maximum 5 points, threshold 3 points)

Equal weight will be given to the above three criteria.

Evaluation will also give consideration to the suitability of the proposed timetable, and the cost effectiveness of the proposed budget.

Where applications score equally, consideration will be given to COST policies on excellence and inclusiveness, specifically:

- Geographical spread (notably, missions to and/or from Inclusiveness Target Countries)
- Involvement of Early Career Investigators
- Gender balance

In order to increase the proportion of women in successful scientific careers, we particularly encourage women to apply.

For each scientific priority specified at Section 3 above, a final ranked list of the applications will be drawn up and agreed by the panel and submitted to the Action Core Group with a recommendation for award of the mission(s) to the highest ranked application(s). Final approval of award of a grant will be made by the Action Core Group (excluding any members having a direct conflict of interest).

9. Financial support

An STSM grant is a fixed financial contribution, which takes into consideration the budget request of the applicant and the outcome of the evaluation of the STSM application. STSM Grants do not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking a given mission. A STSM Grant is a contribution to the overall travel, accommodation and meal expenses of the Grantee.

- For shorter missions, a maximum of EUR 160 per day can be afforded for accommodation and meal expenses.
- For longer missions up to 90 days, a maximum of €2500 in total can be afforded to the successful applicant.
- For ECI missions of 91-180 days, a maximum of €3500 in total can be afforded to the successful applicant.

Payment of the Grant is subject to the scientific report being approved by the Action Chair, the STSM Coordinator and a senior researcher affiliated to the Host institution. A template for the scientific report is made available in your eCOST profile following award of mission.

The COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action are not to be considered as being an STSM Grantee's employer. Grantees must make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security and pension matters.

An STSM Grant is a fixed financial contribution, which takes into consideration the budget request of the applicant and the outcome of the evaluation of the STSM application. STSM Grants do not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking a given mission. A STSM Grant is a contribution to the overall travel, accommodation and meal expenses of the Grantee.

The calculation of the financial contribution for each STSM must respect the following criteria:

- Up to a maximum of EUR 2 500 in total can be afforded to each successful applicant;
- Up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day can be afforded for accommodation and meal

expenses.

For ECIs, the calculation for an increased financial contribution must respect the following criteria:

- Up to a maximum of EUR 3 500 in total can be afforded to ECIs for missions with a duration of between 91 and 180 calendar days;
- Up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day can be afforded for accommodation and meal expenses.

The Action Chair and/or the STSM Coordinator will consider and may approve differentiated country rates to cover accommodation and meal expenses based on the perceived cost of living in the host country.

Specific provisions have been introduced to enable researchers from ITC participating in the COST Action to request a pre-payment of 50% of their STSM Grant when they complete the first day of their STSM. In such case, the representative of the Host Institution must confirm by e-mail to the Grant Holder that the STSM applicant has officially started the mission on day 1. Only then the Grant Holder can arrange the payment of 50% of the STSM grant. The remaining 50% of the Grant is payable once the administrative requirements have been satisfied after the STSM.

The STSM Grantee has 30 calendar days from the end date of the mission to submit a scientific report. The report must be submitted to the senior researcher hosting the mission at the Host Institution and to the STSM Coordinator, with copy to the relevant Working Group Lead and the Action Chair. Payment of the Grant is subject to a STSM scientific report being approved on behalf of the Action's MC by the delegated person(s) responsible and by the senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution (see **Letter of Acceptance Template**, attached).

10. Deadline for applications

The deadline for applications under this Call is **23:59 CEST, Sunday 30 June 2019.**

Applicants will normally be notified of the outcome of their application within 2 weeks of the deadline.

11. Further information

For more information related to the scientific priority of WGs1&2 and the focus of these missions, please contact:

- WG1 Lead, Prof Richard Shore, rfs@ceh.ac.uk
- WG2 Lead, Prof Antonio Garcia-Fernandez, ajgf@um.es

For more information regarding the **application process**, or any help needed with submitting your application online in eCOST, please contact the STSM Coordinator, Dr Oliver Krone, krone@izw-berlin.de