



Call for Applications

Short-term Scientific Missions 2019-20

Working Group 4 (**Field Arena**)

11 October 2019

Deadline for applications
23:59 CEST, Friday 1 November 2019

The European Raptor Biomonitoring Facility (ERBFacility) COST Action CA16224, Working Group 4 (Field Arena), hereby announces this Call for Applications for **short-term scientific missions (STSMs)**. This call relates to **up to four 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 of 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 ERBFacility objectives:

Objective R3: To develop a framework, standards and protocols for a European Raptor Sampling Programme (ERSamP). This will provide for collection of the right raptor samples from the right locations at the right times. Standards and protocols will ensure harmonised sampling methods and harmonised recording of relevant field data.

Objective C3: Build capacity in the 'field arena' through networking and collaboration among ornithologists, raptor collections and ecotoxicologists, including by: (a) stimulating and harmonising collection of raptor samples and field data relevant to

interpretation of contaminant data; (b) testing the framework, standards and protocols to deliver proof of concept.

3. Scientific priorities, number of STSMs, preferred timing

Applications under this call should relate to one of the **scientific priorities** of the ERBFacility **Working Group 4 (Field Arena)** for Grant Period 3, as outlined here.

Up to one STSM will be made available in relation to each of these four priorities (total maximum 4 STSMs).

TITLE: Capacity building for sampling and data collection across Europe

Reference WG4/GP3/STSM1

This mission will review existing and potential opportunities across Europe to build capacities of field participants to collect raptor samples (for toxicological analyses) and to collect more raptor monitoring information (to provide context for interpretation of contaminant findings). The mission should identify where in Europe there are significant gaps in skills, identify pools of expertise, and develop ways to fill these gaps. A Working Group 4 workshop planned for mid September 2019 in Slovenia will provide an opportunity to bring together appropriate people from across Europe to discuss these needs. The mission holder could be involved in planning, running and reporting outcomes from this workshop.

This STSM will ideally start **as soon as possible** and end no later than **31 March 2020**. The length of this mission is expected to be **60-90 days** (though a longer mission by an ECI will be considered).

TITLE: Best practice guidance framework for the European Raptor Sampling Programme and specific guidance for vultures

Reference WG4/GP3/STSM2

Working Group 4 has carried out preliminary work to develop a structure of best practice guidance information for collecting samples from raptors and for collecting associated population information. This comprises two parts: (i) general guidance that is applicable across most or all raptor species; and (ii) guidance that is raptor species or group specific. Both parts draw on existing high quality guidance already in existence, adding extra guidance identified as required by the network of people involved in ERBFacility. Specific guidance has been developed for Peregrine and other falcons, and is being developed for vultures. There is a need to bring all of this guidance together into a user-friendly framework, and to complete the guidance for vultures, including work to develop the best ways of sharing the guidance and facilitating its adoption across Europe.

This STSM will ideally start **as soon as possible** and end no later than **31 March 2020**. The length of this mission is expected to be **60-90 days** (though a longer mission by an ECI will be considered).

TITLE: Best practice sampling and contextual data guidance for Proof of Concept species

Reference WG4/GP3/STSM3

ERBfacility is in the process of initiating a Proof of Concept study, which will attempt to demonstrate how our joined up approach involving ecotoxicologists (analysts), storage facilities (museum and specimen banks) and field researchers (to collect

samples and supporting population data) can deliver enhanced monitoring of contaminants across Europe using raptors. We have existing best practice general guidance drafted, and also draft guidance for two raptor groups (see WG4/GP3/STSM2 above). We would now like to draft similar guidance for the species/groups that will be the focus of the Proof of Concept study (in order of priority: Tawny Owl, Common Buzzard, Kestrels, other owls).

This STSM will ideally start **as soon as possible** and end no later than **31 March 2020**. The length of this mission is expected to around **30 days** (if addressing only one species) or around **90 days** (if covering 3+ priority species) (though a longer mission by an ECI will be considered).

TITLE: Review of contextual data from across Europe for Proof of Concept focal species

Reference WG4/GP3/STSM4

ERBfacility is in the process of initiating a Proof of Concept study, which will attempt to demonstrate how our joined up approach involving ecotoxicologists (analysts), storage facilities (museum and specimen banks) and field researchers (to collect samples and supporting population data) can deliver enhanced monitoring of contaminants across Europe using raptors. We expect that the focal species for this study will include Tawny Owl and Common Buzzard. The aim will be to build a picture of spatial variation in exposure to one or more contaminants (metals and or anticoagulant rodenticides) across Europe. To support this with background interpretative information, this STSM will review the monitoring information that is available for these species across Europe, to build a picture of spatial variation in population trends, demography, diet and related life history variables and suggested causes of recent change.

This STSM will ideally start **as soon as possible** and end no later than **31 March 2020**. The length of this mission is expected to be at least **45 days** (if addressing one species) or **90 days** (if addressing both species) (though a longer mission by an ECI 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
British Trust for Ornithology (Scotland)	Scotland (UK)	Dr Chris Wernham & Dr Ben Darvill	chris.wernham@bto.org	WG4/GP3/STSM1

Vulture Conservation Foundation	Spain	Jovan Andevski	j.andevski@4vultures.org	WG4/GP3/STSM2
National Institute of Biology, Ljubljana	Slovenia	Dr Al Vrezec	al.vrezec@nib.si	WG4/GP3/STSM1 WG4/GP3/STSM4

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 another Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
	Located in a Participating COST Partner Member
Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member	An Approved IPC Institution
	An Approved NNC Institution
	The EU Commission or a EU Body, Office or Agency
	An Approved European R I D 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 2500 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 3500 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, Friday 1 November 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 WG4 and the focus of these missions, please contact:

- WG4 Lead, Dr Chris Wernham, chris.wernham@bto.org

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