



# Call for Applications

## Short-term Scientific Missions 2020-21

### Working Groups 1 & 2 (Analysis Arena)

**19 April 2021**

**Deadline for applications**  
**Friday 21 May 2021**

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 four (4) STSMs** available for **Grant Period 4** (1 May 2020 to 16 October 2021).

#### 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 the **scientific priorities** of the ERBFacility **Working Groups 1&2 (Analysis Arena)** for Grant Period 4, as outlined here:

**TITLE: Assessment of standardisation and harmonization of quality control of analytical datasets and their required metadata to achieve pan-European monitoring**

**Reference WGs1&2/GP4/STSM1&2**

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

STSMs conducting such assessment are likely to involve literature review and meta-analysis elements and seek to identify any weaknesses or strengths of analytical methods applied for biomonitoring of chemicals in wildlife, particularly in raptors.

It is expected that the missions will focus on different contaminants. Applicants may wish to focus on compounds selected for the ERBFacility Proof of Concept. Applications that consider toxic metals, such as lead or mercury, and anticoagulant rodenticides are particularly encouraged. Other chemicals, like POPs, flame retardant, etc might also be considered.

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

**TITLE: Methods for forensic analysis of Phosphine, cyanide and glycos**

**Reference WGs1&2/GP4/STSM3**

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

Wildlife forensic toxicology includes many types of chemicals that must be studied with a wide range of analytical techniques. A study of the analytical capacities in the wildlife toxicology laboratories in Europe has revealed some gaps in the coverage of some types of chemicals that are not included in routine analysis of pesticides and toxic elements. Phosphides, cyanide and ethylene glycol and other glycols are substances that can remain underreported in monitoring of mortality by poisoning in raptors because of the difficulty of including these substances in routine analysis.

This STSM will be focused on (1) review of the analytical techniques for these groups of chemicals, (2) defining those techniques more convenient for the current analytical capacities in European laboratories, and (3) set up these methods in a wildlife toxicology laboratory for their dissemination to other labs.

The timing of this STSM should be agreed with the host. The STSM is expected to last **at least 90 days**, although applications for longer or shorter duration will be considered.

**TITLE: Scoping the analytical capacity available within ERBFacility to carry out the Proof of Concept**

**Reference WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4**

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

The Proof of Concept (PoC) of the European Raptor Biomonitoring Facility has currently identified more than 3000 raptor liver samples that are available for the analysis of anticoagulant rodenticides, lead and mercury. The intention is for this STSM 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. The specific goals of this STSM include: (1) giving support to the organization of the work of different toxicology laboratories, (2) analysing samples in one of these laboratories and (3) coordination of the PoC databases.

The timing of this STSM should be agreed with the host. The STSM is expected to last **at least 90 days**, although applications for longer or shorter duration will be considered.

#### **TITLE: Review of analytical methods for contaminant monitoring**

##### **Reference WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5**

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

The objective of this STSM is to review analytic methods used for research and monitoring pollutants in avian species. As a result, there will be a dataset of matrix, method, and references. The dataset will include core parameters like sample size, levels of detection (LOD) and quantification (LOQ). This database will be useful tool for laboratories, selecting most suitable method for application, based on lab equipment and other characteristics.

The timing of this STSM should be agreed with the host. 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 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 ERB Facility Management Committee. However, please note that the following have already indicated that they may be able to host a mission:

| <b>Potential host institute</b>  | <b>Country</b> | <b>Contact name</b>              | <b>Contact email</b>   | <b>STSM reference</b>  |
|--|----------------|----------------------------------|--|--|
| University of Murcia   | Spain          | Prof Antonio J. Garcia-Fernandez | <a href="mailto:ajgf@um.es">ajgf@um.es</a>                     | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM1<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM2<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM3<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5 |
| Institute for Game and Wildlife Research/University of Castilla - La Mancha (UCLM) | Spain          | Prof Rafael Mateo                | <a href="mailto:Rafael.Mateo@uclm.es">Rafael.Mateo@uclm.es</a> | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM1<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM2<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM3<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5 |
| Centre for Ecology & Hydrology   | UK             | Mr Lee Walker                    | <a href="mailto:leew@ceh.ac.uk">leew@ceh.ac.uk</a>             | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM1<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM2<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5                     |

|   |                 |                        |  |  |
|---|-----------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research | Germany         | Dr Oliver Krone        | <a href="mailto:KRONE@izw-berlin.de">KRONE@izw-berlin.de</a>                     | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM1<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM2<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5 |
| VetAgro Sup Campus Vétérinaire de Lyon          | France          | Prof. Philippe Beryn   | <a href="mailto:philippe.berny@vetagro-sup.fr">philippe.berny@vetagro-sup.fr</a> | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM1<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM2<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM3<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4 |
| Estonian University of life sciences            | Estonia         | Dr. Madis Levits       | <a href="mailto:mleivits@gmail.com">mleivits@gmail.com</a>                       | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5   |
| Norwegian University of Science and Technology  | Norway          | Dr. Veerle Jaspers     | <a href="mailto:veerle.jaspers@ntnu.no">veerle.jaspers@ntnu.no</a>               | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5   |
| Norwegian Institute for Air Research            | Norway          | Dr. Dorte Hertzke      | <a href="mailto:dorte.herzke@nilu.no">dorte.herzke@nilu.no</a>                   | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM1<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM2<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5 |
| Wageningen University                           | The Netherlands | Dr. Nico van der Brink | <a href="mailto:nico.vandenbrink@wur.nl">nico.vandenbrink@wur.nl</a>             | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM1<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM2<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5 |
| University of the Highlands and Islands         | UK              | Dr. Mark Taggart       | <a href="mailto:mark.taggart@uhi.ac.uk">mark.taggart@uhi.ac.uk</a>               | WGs1&2/GP4/STSM4<br>WGs1&2/GP4/STSM5   |

## 6. Eligibility

STSMs are exchange visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, strengthening existing networks, 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                                       |
| Located in an Approved NNC Institution                                | An Approved International Organisation                                      |
|   | 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 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 (GP4) ends on 16 October 2021.

**Face-to-face modality is encouraged for all STSMs proposed. However, depending on the COVID-19 situation in the host and candidate countries, virtual or mixed modalities are also possible. Candidates should indicate their preference on modality for the respective STSM in the application form.**

## 7. Application procedure

Applications must be submitted through [www.cost.eu/stsm](http://www.cost.eu/stsm)

In order to access the submission page, you must first be registered in eCOST (accessible at [www.cost.eu](http://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 to the Action Chair, to the STSM Coordinator and to a senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution. 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 a senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution (see **Letter of Acceptance Template**, attached).

## 10. Deadlines for applications

The extended deadline for applications for this mission is **21 May 2021**.

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 this mission, please contact:

- WG1 Lead, Mr Lee Walker, [leew@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:leew@ceh.ac.uk)
- WG2 Lead, Prof Antonio J. Garcia-Fernandez, [ajgf@um.es](mailto: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](mailto:krone@izw-berlin.de)