



# Call for Applications

## Short-term Scientific Mission or Virtual Mission GP4

### Working Group **3** (Collections Arena)

5 September 2021

**Deadlines for applications**  
**23:59CET, Friday 17 September 2021**

The European Raptor Biomonitoring Facility (ERBFacility) COST Action CA16224, Working Group 3 (Collections Arena), hereby announces this Call for Applications for one **short-term scientific mission (STSM)** or **virtual mission (VM)** available for **Grant Period 4** (ending 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 ERBFacility **Objective R2: To develop a framework for a distributed European Raptor Specimen Bank (ERSpeB) for contaminant monitoring.**

#### 3. Scientific priorities, number of STSMs/VMs, preferred timing

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

Up to **one STSM/VM** will be made available.

**TITLE: Drafting a framework for the European Raptor Specimen Bank ERSpeB)**

**Reference WG3/GP4/STSM1**

A key step in development of a distributed European Raptor Specimen Bank (ERSpeB) is to bring together all work done under WG3, including linkages with WGs1&2 (Analysis Arena) and WG4 (Field Arena) in a framework document, which outlines the key elements of the ERSpeB. Work done includes: a review of raptor collections in Europe; a review of constraints to the shipping of raptor samples in Europe; scoping of a European Raptor Specimen Database; and the development of a protocol for collections on the gathering, processing and storing raptor specimens/samples for contaminant analysis.

**Applications for this STSM/VM should focus on synthesizing and bringing together, in a single document, the outcomes of the above-mentioned work, and identifying the key linkages with parallel frameworks being developed for the analysis and field arenas**

This STSM/VM will ideally start **as soon as possible** and end no later than **15 October 2021**. The length of this mission is expected to be between **21-28 days** but shorter missions will be considered.

The mission holder may additionally be invited to participate in a WG3 meeting to be convened at Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden (or virtually) in October 2021 (date to be confirmed). Travel and subsistence costs for this meeting will be reimbursed separately (on condition that there is no overlap with the mission dates).

#### 4. Expected output from the STSM / virtual mission

The STSM/VM is required to produce a **scientific 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 expected to produce a more **detailed draft framework document**. Guidance on the content of this document will be provided by the WG3 Lead. Applications committing to produce such a document 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](#) or at other natural history museums, environmental specimen banks or research collections. 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/VM reference
Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden	Netherlands	Dr Paola Movalli	Paola.movalli@naturalis.nl	WG3/GP4/STSM1

#### 6. Eligibility

STSMs are exchange visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, strengthening existing networks and fostering collaboration between COST Action Participants.

VMs are similar, but do not require international mobility. Instead, they are performed virtually, with remote guidance from the Host.

A STSM/VM 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/VM 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. **Persons holding a First or Masters Degree and not yet registered for a PhD are also eligible.**

The following table shows the scenarios available to eligible applicants.

- **Applicant's Home Institution** = the institution/organisation where an applicant pursues his/her main strand of research.
- **STSM Host Institution** = the institution/organisation that will host the STSM / virtual mission grantee.

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 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/VM 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 (ECI = 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.

**Any STSM/VM under this Call must be completed (i.e. the mission-holder must have returned home) by 16 October 2021 (i.e. by the end of the current Grant Period 4).**

## 7. Application procedure

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

In order to access the submission page, you must first be registered in eCOST (accessible at [www.e-services.cost.eu](http://www.e-services.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/VM (using the **Letter of Interest Template**, attached)
2. **Letter of support from your Home Institution** that the proposed STSM/VM 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

### STSM Grants

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 missions of 91-180 days, a maximum of €3500 in total can be afforded to the successful applicant.
- Up to a maximum of €300 can be afforded for travel costs.

The Action Chair and/or the Core Group 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.

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).

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.

Specific provisions have been introduced to enable researchers from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC)<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> ITC Countries that are Party to ERBFacility: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Hungary, the North Republic of Macedonia, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey

once the administrative requirements have been satisfied after the STSM.

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.

### VM Grants

VM Grants aim at strengthening the existing networks by allowing scientists to foster collaboration in a virtual setting, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, disseminate Action results, etc. The successful applicant(s) will be selected by the MC to perform activities that do not necessarily require in-person presence. These activities may include surveys, questionnaires or preparation of protocols, virtual mentoring of activities that can generate capacity, build new skills, etc. The maximum amount per VM Grant is €1500.

## 10. Deadline for applications

The deadlines for applications under this Call are:

- **WG3/GP4/STSM1: 23:59 CET, Friday 17 September 2021**

Applicants will normally be notified of the outcome of their application within 5 working days of the deadline.

## 11. Further information

For more information related to the scientific priority of WG3 and the focus of this mission, please contact:

- WG3 Lead, Dr Paola Movalli, [paola.movalli@naturalis.nl](mailto:paola.movalli@naturalis.nl)

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)