



## Second call for applications

# Short-term Scientific Missions

**18 FEBRUARY 2019**

**Extended deadline for applications**  
**Friday 15 March 2019**

The European Raptor Biomonitoring Facility (ERBFacility) COST Action CA16224 hereby announces a second call for applications for **short-term scientific missions (STSMs)**. This call relates to up to one STSM available for Grant Period 2 (ending 30 April 2019).

### 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](#) (coming soon).

### 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**. Existing raptor specimen collections in NHMs and ESBs have only in a very few cases been made with contaminant monitoring in mind; those collections which are designed to meet contaminant monitoring needs are national in scale (e.g. UK Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme [Walker et al. 2008]). There is therefore a need to develop an ERSpeB framework to link and expand existing collections and, where appropriate, propose new regional collections, to meet ERBioMS needs.

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

Applications under this call should relate to the **scientific priority** of the ERBFacility **Working Group 3 (Collections Arena) to develop a framework for a distributed European Raptor Specimen Bank (ERSpeB) for contaminant monitoring**.

The development of a distributed European Raptor Specimen Bank and the use of samples held by the ERSpeB for contaminant analysis implies the ability to ship samples between collections and from collections to laboratories, including across international borders within Europe.

**Applications should focus on regulatory constraints to shipping of samples between collections from one country to another in Europe (both within and outside the EU).**

This should take in to account constraints relating to: (a) the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES); (b) the Nagoya Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity; (c) transport of (hazardous) biological materials. The mission should seek to identify differences between countries in the interpretation of regulatory requirements for the shipping of samples, identify good practice that facilitates the shipping of samples, and identify measures that may be taken to further facilitate shipping, such as specialised training and provision of guidance.

This STSM will ideally start by mid-March 2019 and must end no later than 30 April 2019. The length of this mission is expected to be between 30-45 days.

**Suitable candidates for this STSM are likely to have previous experience, in a research collection context, in relation to the shipping of samples between countries in Europe, and good understanding of the related regulatory frameworks and current practice in implementation of these frameworks.**

#### 4. Expected output from the STSM

Each mission 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 strongly encouraged to produce a critical paper for submission to a suitable peer-reviewed journal and applications committing to such publication will be preferred.

#### 5. Mission host

Applicants must arrange an appropriate host institution for their mission (which must be in a different country from the one in which they are currently working). Applicants are free to identify and contact a suitable host and may wish to look for such hosts 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:

- Natural History Museum of Denmark, University of Copenhagen, Denmark – Prof Peter Hosner, email: [peter.hosner@snm.ku.dk](mailto:peter.hosner@snm.ku.dk)
- Instituto de Investigación en Recursos Cinegéticos, University of Castilla-La Mancha-CSIC, Ciudad Real, Spain – Dr Rafael Mateo, email: [Rafael.mateo@uclm.es](mailto:Rafael.mateo@uclm.es)
- Laboratory of Toxicology, University of Murcia, Murcia, Spain - Prof Antonio Garcia-Fernandez, email" [ajgf@um.es](mailto:ajgf@um.es)

Other suitable hosts for all STSMs may be found among members of the [ERB Facility Management Committee](#) or at other natural history museums, environmental specimen banks or research collections in Europe.

#### 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 student 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 studying for or holding a First or Masters Degree and not yet registered for a PhD are also considered eligible. The institutions/organisations where applicants pursue their main strand of research are considered as Home Institutions. 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 at present. 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 (GP2) ends on 30 April 2019.

## 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:

- **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 (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.

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

- **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)
- **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)
- **Short CV of applicant** outlining qualifications and research track record.
- **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 Action Chair or Vice Chair, the STSM Coordinator, the respective Working Group Leader. 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 output (including any planned publication) in relation to the scientific priorities of the relevant Working Group (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.

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 Friday 15 March 2019.

Applicants will normally be notified of the outcome of their application within 1 week 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)