

COST Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval Process

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- 1. Presentation**
2. Evaluation of COST Actions
3. Chairing and action: experience

What are COST actions?

- Pan-European science and technology networks of researchers, engineers and scholars.
- To allow them:
 - To grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers,
 - To gives them impetus to their research and career,
 - To trigger innovative products and services.

Main Characteristics

- Openness
 - All fields of S&T, including interdisciplinary, new, emergent fields
 - Any novel or original idea
 - The chance to join ongoing COST Actions
- Inclusiveness
 - Actively engaging the whole research community across countries, generations and gender

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2017 COST Open Call

- The COST call is open all year round.
- Collection dates are organised every year,
 - when proposal enter the evaluation process.
- The next collection date is:

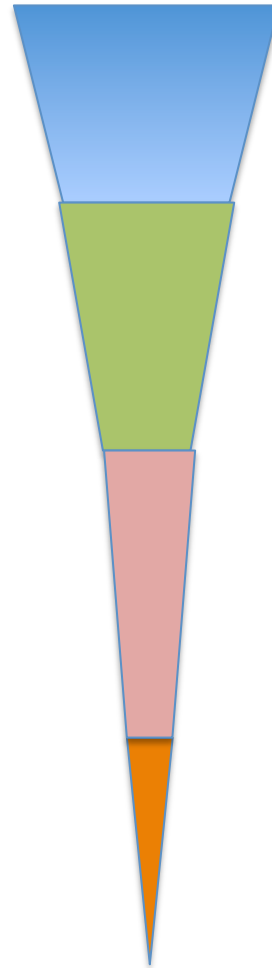


From Idea to Action

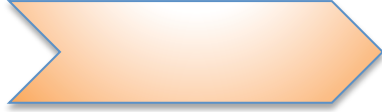


Evaluation Steps

1. External experts:
 - 3 remote + consensus report
2. Review panel:
 - See all proposals over threshold, provides a prioritized list
3. Scientific Committee
 - Intergovernmental committee of independent, high-level experts
 - Selects the proposals best reflecting the COST mission and policies.
4. Committee of Senior Officials
 - Governing board of COST
 - Approves the Actions to receive funding.



Experts' Evaluation Phases

1. Eligibility criteria (Y/N). NO if something holds:
 - Tech Annex > 15 pages
 - Not all written in English language
 - Not for peaceful purposes
 - Not anonymous (id of members, direct citation, self references, can extract id from the TA info)
2. Evaluation criteria (ranking)
 - S&T Excellence
 - Impact
 - Implementation

13 Specific questions!

Evaluation Criteria

S&T EXCELLENCE	IMPACT	IMPLEMENTATION
Soundness of the challenge.	Scientific, technological and/or socio-economic impact.	Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan.
Progress beyond the state-of-the-art and innovation potential.	Measures to maximise impact.	Appropriateness of management structures and procedures.
Added value of networking.	Level of potential innovation/breakthroughs	Network as a whole
Maximum = 25 points	Maximum = 20 points	Maximum = 20 points
TOTAL MARKS AWARDED = 65 points	OVERALL THRESHOLD = 45 point	Below Threshold -> OUT

S&T Excellence (25)

Soundness of the Challenge

Q1 - Is the challenge relevant and timely?

Q2 - Are the objectives presented clear and pertinent to tackle the challenge?

Progress beyond the state-of-the-art and innovation potential.

Q3 - Does the proposal advance the state-of-the-art and introduce an innovative approach to the challenge?

Added value of networking

Q4 - Is networking the best approach to tackle the challenge?

Q5 - What is the added value of the proposed Network in relation to former and existing efforts at European and/or international level?

Impact (20)

Scientific, technological and/or socio-economic impacts.

Q6 - Does the proposal clearly identify relevant, and realistic short-term/long-term impacts?

Measures to maximise impact.

Q7 - Does the proposal identify the most relevant stakeholders and present a clear plan to involve them as Action's participants?

Q8 - Is there a clear and attainable plan for dissemination and/or exploitation of results?

Level of risk and level of potential innovation/breakthroughs.

Q9 - How well does the proposal succeed in putting forward potential innovation/ breakthroughs with a convincing risk/return trade-off?

Implementation (20)

Overall Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan

Q10 - Is the work plan (WGs, tasks, activities, timeframe and deliverables) coherent, realistic and appropriate to ensure the achievement of the objectives?

Q11 - Does the proposal identify the main risks related to the work plan and has a plan for contingencies?

Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures

Q12 - Are the management structure and procedures appropriate

Network as a whole

Q13 - Does the proposed Network envisage the critical mass, expertise and geographical distribution for addressing the challenge and the objectives? If not, does the proposal identify the gaps in the Network and present a clear plan for overcoming the gaps? Are mutual benefits clearly ascertained in case of involvement of NNC and IPC institutions?

Criteria For Scoring Each Question

MARK	ABBREVIATION DISPLAYED IN e-COST	LABEL	DESCRIPTION
5	E	Excellent	The proposal fully addresses all relevant aspects of the question. Any shortcomings are minor.
4	VG	Very Good	The proposal addresses the question very well, although certain improvements are still possible.
3	G	Good	The proposal addresses the question well, although improvements would be necessary.
2	F	Fair	While the proposal broadly addresses the question, there are significant weaknesses.
1	P	Poor	The question is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
0	Fail	Fail	The proposal fails to address the question under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.

General Tips and Tricks

1. Differentiate your proposal from existing Actions, networks and (EU/regional) projects
 - Be original, but realistic
2. Read the preliminary proposal evaluation criteria and maximise score for each
 - In the design of the proposed Action, and
 - reflect the evaluation language in your proposal AND justify,
eg “The topic of this proposal is very important and timely because . . .” “The proposed approach is highly innovative in that it . . .”
3. Follow the template AND clearly address each criterion (difficult!)
 - Be concise, but address ALL topics in the template!

General Tips and Tricks

4. See MoU of successful proposals available in COST portal
 - Also, ask Chairs of recent successful COST Actions for a copy of their preliminary proposal
5. Get people (eg colleague/ DC Expert/ DC Member) to “assess” your proposal before you submit it,
 - Revise the proposal according to their feedback
6. Presentation is very important:
 - Get (near) native speaker to proof read the proposal
 - Get someone outside the network/field to read the proposal – is it clear without “inside knowledge”

Tips and Tricks: Excellence

1. Choose a very important and/or timely topic and propose the correct approaches
2. Excellent and up to date awareness of relevant scientific/technical fields
 - If resubmitting proposal UPDATE the SOTA with any new Actions/ projects since previous submission, even if previous SOTA was excellent
3. Make proposal highly innovative: a significant new problem and/or a significant new approach
 - But address also risks
4. Ensure (and prove) that networking in this field ranks amongst the best mechanisms to progress the state-of-the-art
 - And the proposal uses such a mechanism in a sound manner.

Tips and Tricks: Impact

1. Ensure that important impacts are very likely in several respects
 - Describe these impacts also in terms of scientific/ technical/ economic/ societal/ environmental,
2. Clearly describe plans for wide-ranging and ambitious outputs
 - Dissemination and exploitation not only for science, also stakeholders, industry, ..
3. Involve as many groups of relevant stakeholders as possible in the preparation of the proposal
 - And ensure that they are listed as having participated in the proposal
 - Or, at least ensure that plans for implication of stakeholders are clear, wide-ranging and feasible

Tips and Tricks: Implementation

4. Network must be spread (many countries), but coherent
 - Don't add just new people
 - But try to cover those countries you are interested in.
 - Anybody may come during the first year, avoid surprises !!
5. Don't forget to have inclusive countries!!
 - Specific criteria in questions
 - Rule: plan 50% of activities in inclusive countries
6. Add NNC countries and IP
 - If possible, not mandatory

Tips and Tricks: Implementation

7. Include industry and stakeholders
 - If you have the contacts
 - Usually well evaluated (impact, dissemination, ...)

8. Be careful to have a good balance of ESR and Gender compared to the whole network.
 - Plan activities to give priority to ESR.
 - Gender: If not possible (e.g. Computer engineering usually) justify it.

Tips and Tricks: Getting Help

- COST Organization
 - NCP in Spain
 - CSO representatives for your country
 - Mail: opencall@cost.eu
- Research Office in your institutions
 - Previous experience
 - Procedures
 - Proofread and pre-evaluation
- Chairs of running Actions
 - From Spain
 - Relevant to your area

Success and failure...

- Tough one-shot process and competition has become very high
 - ~ 5% success rate.
- Budget negotiated per year
 - Depends on the number of countries, but, has been decreasing ...
 - Average budget for the 1st Grant Period of the Actions starting in 2016:
EUR 111,000
- Don't be disappointed if you fail
 - You can retry as many times as you want! No limitation 😊
 - Problem with retries: aging of the idea

Become an External Expert

- COST demands independent experts from all scientific areas
 - To help in the evaluation process
- Why becoming a COST Expert?
 - Contribute to the evaluation of COST Open Call proposals;
 - Participate in the assessment of Action results and outcomes;
 - Be invited to take part in the assessment of COST strategic activities.
- How to participate?
 - http://www.cost.eu/participate/external_experts
- **Best way to know the process!!!**

Conflicts of Interest

- Independent External Experts having evaluated a proposal
 - May not participate in the Action if accepted
- Review Panel Members
 - May not participate in any Action approved following the panel evaluation that they were involved
- CNCs, Scientific Committee Members and CSO members
 - May not be Action Participants

www.cost.eu/

- Open Call: www.cost.eu/opencall
- Participation: <http://www.cost.eu/participate/>
- Domain pages: [http://www.cost.eu/COST Actions](http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions)
- FAQ: www.cost.eu/service/faq
- Library: www.cost.eu/media
- Events: www.cost.eu/events
- SESA:
[http://www.cost.eu/download/
action_proposal_submission_evaluation_selection_appro
val_133_14](http://www.cost.eu/download/action_proposal_submission_evaluation_selection_approval_133_14)

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An Example: ICT 1305 NESUS

	Kick-off	17/04/2015	07/04/2016	10/04/2017	Variarían abs.
Countries	29	33	34	34	0
Inclusiveness countries	15	18	18	19	0
Members	74	214	262	304	48

- Non COST countries: NNC 5 IP 6
- Grant Budget for next period approved by COST (16-01-2017):
- 142. 499,95 EUR

My Experience as Chair of NESUS

- Good things:
 - Good tool for new ideas (specially for young people)
 - Contacts, ...Research, EU, institutions, ...
 - Generation of research results: publications & projects
 - Personal and group visibility
- And not so good:
 - Heavy management: not all institutions accept procedures
 - Budget low and renegotiated per year
 - Activities accepted are very rigid: vademecum

My Experience as Chair of NESUS

- Impact on my professional carrier:
 - Strong visibility
 - Proposal of H2020 EU projects.
 - Guest editing of journals, papers in cooperation, ...
- But.. not very strong on my direct research activity
 - Becuase COST does not pay research activities.
 - You need other funding sources (H2020, ...)

My Experience as Chair of NESUS

- Management to participate:
 - Raising a proposal is not difficult if a network exists.
 - Everything is made through the COST portal
- Action management:
 - That's another question: very bureaucratic.
 - Now it is easier as eCOST is available
 - But, you have to satisfy eCOST procedures and grant holder procedures
 - Be careful: COST is flat rate and no VAT
 - Not all institutions accept that
 - Get written compromise!

My Experience as Chair of NESUS

- Annual effort:
 - Difficult to estimate, but is high
 - At least 6 short trips for meetings per year
 - Virtual meetings and calls with Officer
 - Work with WG leaders and STSM chair...
 - Promoting research
 - Assessment and financial reporting ...
- Estimation: at least 2,5 months per year
 - But the action is large ...

My Experience as Chair of NESUS

- Critical:
 - Chair & Grant Holder may be different institutions
 - In different countries
 - If you are chair, claim also GH,
 - GH get 15% of budget for management -> hire someone
 - Everything is much easier that way
- Help from COST Office:
 - Initial course, but you have to learn with time
 - Everything is written in Vademecum
 - COST Office helps with procedures and doubts
 - Ryhtm may be slower that you would like

Thank you!

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