



**European Cooperation  
in the field of Scientific  
and Technical Research  
- COST -**

**Brussels, 31 March 2006**

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**Secretariat**

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**COST 235/06**

**NOTE**

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To : COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)

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Subject : Open Call and Selection Criteria for new COST Actions

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Delegations will find attached the document on the "Open Call and Selection Criteria for new COST Actions" as approved by the CSO at its 164th meeting on 29/30 March 2006.

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## Open Call and Selection Criteria for new COST Actions

### (a) Open Call

The Open Call for the traditional COST Actions will be launched on 1 April 2006. It is a continuous and thematically Open Call for proposals with predefined collection dates. This call will be published on the COST web site, in the Official Journal of the European Union, on CORDIS, on the ESF website, in selected scientific journals, and other appropriate media, following the outline of contents in Annex I.

The first collection date will be 31 May 2006. Proposals submitted after 24:00 on 31 May 2006 will be retained for the next collection date.

### (b) Selection Procedure

- **Preliminary Proposals** (based on a web template requiring a maximum of 1500 words) are to be submitted on-line to a dedicated data-base, operated by the COST Office. The proponent can indicate a preferred Domain.
- The COST Office will perform a pre-check and reject any proposals which do not meet the criteria for COST support, e.g. proposals requesting research funding (see Annex II.1).
- The COST Office will then allocate the remaining preliminary proposals to the respective Domains based on proponent's preference and its own judgment. Preliminary proposals that are not allocated to a COST Domain will be considered as "Interdisciplinary Exploratoria" (IE) and referred to an "IE Group", nominated by the relevant DCs. A chair will be nominated by the CSO President. The "IE mentor" will normally be a member of the CSO and, with the support of the COST Office, will form a small group of appropriate experts to guide the IE proposals through the selection process.

- The DCs will rank their respective anonymised Preliminary Proposals on the basis of the procedure and criteria listed at Annex II.2. Every DC member will be invited to assess the proposals by attributing 1 to 4 points to each criterion for each proposal in an automated process. The points attributed will be added and a ranking established. Access to the ranking database will be password protected. The same procedure will be applied in the case of IEs.
- The COST Office will then invite 75 of the top ranked Preliminary Proposals (normalised) per collection date (normally two per year) to submit **Full Proposals**.
- As outlined in "Guidelines for Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation of COST Actions" the COST Office, in close cooperation with the DCs, will convene external experts (taking into consideration the pool of “DC experts”) to establish one comparative reviewing panel per Domain for each collection date (the External Expert Panels [EEP]). The EEPs will assess the Full Proposals on the basis of the selection criteria at Annex III. In the case of IE Full Proposals a similar process will be carried out by the IE Group.
- A “Rapporteur” from each DC will coordinate the EEP for that Domain and participate in the relevant EEP meetings. The COST Office will be represented by the respective Science Officer who will brief each the EEP prior to the meeting. The Rapporteurs will present the EEPs’ proposals to the DCs. Proposals rated above the threshold value will be invited to present the proposal to the relevant DC or IE group. Each DC will rank its proposals and document the reasons for the ranking.
- A moderated meeting of DC chairs will be held afterwards to compile a ranking list of all Full Proposals on the basis of a proposal by the COST Office.
- On the basis of this overall ranking list, the JAF group will propose a shortlist for the CSO to approve within the given financial envelope.
- Each selected IE will be assigned to one DC for monitoring and evaluation upon completion.

(c) Timetable for COST Actions to be launched early 2007

A tight timetable must be strictly respected in order to enable a CSO decision in November 2006 and to ensure the start of new Actions in 2007 funded by the ESF/COST contract for FP7:

- collection date for preliminary proposals: 31 May 2006
- allocation of preliminary proposals to the DCs: early June 2006
- invitation for full proposals: end-June 2006
- deadline for full proposals: 15 September 2006

In order to meet the November CSO meeting the following preliminary time table is planned:

- Assessment of full proposals by EEP: beginning October 2006
- Ranking of full proposal by DC mid October
- JAF shortlist to CSO: end October 2006
- CSO approval: 166th meeting in November 2006

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## Open Call outline

The following Open Call is to be published in appropriate media. (Final layout to be prepared):

### **COST Open Call for Proposals to Support European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research**

COST brings together research teams in different countries working on specific topics. It finances networking of nationally funded activities in supporting meetings, conferences, short term scientific exchanges and outreach activities. COST therefore does NOT fund research itself. Currently more than 200 scientific networks (Actions) are supported. Every year approximately 45 new Actions are approved and started.

Developing stronger links amongst European scientists is crucial to building the European Research Area (ERA). COST's main objective is to stimulate new, innovative, interdisciplinary and broad scientific networks in Europe. COST activities are carried out by research teams to strengthen the foundations for building scientific excellence in Europe.

COST invites proposals for Actions contributing to the scientific, economic, cultural or societal development of Europe. Proposals playing a precursor role for other European programmes and/or involving young groups' ideas are especially welcome.

COST is organised in nine scientific and technical Domains (Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences; Chemistry and Molecular Sciences and Technologies; Earth System Science and Environmental Management; Food and Agriculture, Forests, their Products and Services; Individuals, Society, Culture and Health; Information and Communication Technologies; Materials, Physical and Nanosciences; Transport and Urban Development).

Proponents are invited to indicate their preference for one Domain. Proposals not fitting this broad disciplinary structure are also welcome and will be assessed separately.

Proposals should include researchers from a minimum of five COST member states and should network nationally funded research activities. Their work plan should include no more than four targeted Working Groups and include activities such as meetings, short term scientific missions, work shops, conferences and outreach activities. On average financial support of some € 90.000 p.a. as grant for up to 4 years can be expected.

A two stage process will be followed to assess proposals. *Preliminary Proposals* (maximum 1500 words/3 pages), submitted using the on-line template at [www.cost.esf.org/opencall](http://www.cost.esf.org/opencall) should provide a brief overview of the proposal and its impact. Proposals will be screened for eligibility. Proposals not conforming to the eligibility criteria of COST (e.g. requesting research funding) will be excluded. A pre-selection will rank the remaining Preliminary Proposals of which some 75 per collection date will be invited to submit a *Full Proposal*. These will be peer reviewed according to the assessment criteria which can be found at [www.cost.esf.org/opencall](http://www.cost.esf.org/opencall). The decision will normally be taken within six months of the collection date below and the Actions should expect to start about six weeks thereafter.

The first collection date for Preliminary Proposals is 31 May 2006. Full Proposals will be invited by 30 June 2006 for submission by 15 September 2006. The next collection dates is expected to be 30 March 2007

Proponents may wish to contact their national COST Coordinator (CNC) for information and guidance. **Proposals must be submitted on-line to the COST Office web site.** For details including the criteria, a list of COST Member States and contact details for the COST National Coordinators see [www.cost.esf.org/cnc](http://www.cost.esf.org/cnc).

COST receives financial support for its coordinating activities from the EU RTD Framework Programme. The COST Office, established by the European Science Foundation (ESF), acting as the implementing agent for COST during the 6th FP on RTD, provides the scientific secretariat for COST activities.

All grants to be offered in response to this call are subject to COST being awarded funds from the seventh RTD Framework Programme.

**1. Eligibility Criteria (all have to be met) to be checked by the COST Office**

- The Preliminary Proposal follows the template on the web
- The number of COST MS involved in the proposal (institutes interested  $\geq 5$ )
- No research funding is requested
- There is no obvious duplication of work with other funding schemes

**2. Assessment Criteria for Preliminary Proposals**

Selecting new COST proposals following the COST Open Call requires general criteria, which are not directly Domain related but inter-disciplinary. Only proposals providing solid scientific content of high quality will be admitted to the final selection process. The list of selection criteria covers aspects laid down in the respective COST documents.

The automated ranking of Preliminary Proposals requires the attribution of grades. The DC members are invited to consider six criteria for ranking the Preliminary Proposal. A minimum of eight DC members or experts have to rank each proposal to validate the assessment; a process of normalisation will be applied to take into account that different assessing traditions exist over the Domains and different numbers of assessors will have commented on different proposals. If this requirement can not be fulfilled in specific cases the COST Office will initiate an appropriate procedure involving the liaison members of the DCs to secure the ranking of all eligible Preliminary Proposals.

Preliminary Proposal ID		Domain
I.1	Does the proposed network address real current problems/scientific issues?	yes                  no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
I.2	Would the proposed network make a significant difference?	yes                  no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
I.3	What is the level of innovation and/or originality in the proposed Action?	high                  low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
I.4	Networking aside, how great are the potential benefits of the proposed Action?	high                  low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
I.5	Is COST the best mechanism for achieving the Actions' objectives?	yes                  no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
I.6	Is the proposed Action presented in a clear and understandable way?	yes                  no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1

Proposals not reaching the threshold of 17 points will not be invited to submit a full proposal.

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**Assessment Criteria for Full Proposals**

Full Proposals for new COST Actions will be rated by the EEP. It has to be kept in mind that the relatively little investment to be made for a COST Action has to be balanced with a thorough judgement applying the criteria. The following 3 sets of criteria are to be used by the members of the EEP. Comments can be added by the experts in the final recommendation.

The rating postulates that 4 is the highest grade to be attributed and 1 is the lowest.

<b>Full Proposal ID</b>	<b>Domain</b>	
<b>I</b>	<b>IMPACT OF PROPOSAL</b>	
I.1	Is COST the best mechanism for achieving the Actions' objectives? Comments:	yes      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
I.2	Does the proposed network address real current problems/scientific issues? Comments:	yes      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
I.3	Does the proposed network make a significant difference? Comments:	yes      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
I.4	Networking aside, how great are the potential benefits of the proposed Action? Comments:	yes      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
I.5	Is the dissemination plan adequate in relation to the objectives of the Action? Comments:	yes      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
<b>II</b>	<b>QUALITY OF PROPOSAL</b>	
II.1	What is the level of innovation in the proposed Action? Comments:	high      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
II.2	What is the level of originality of the proposed Action? Comments:	high      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
II.3	What is the level of scientific quality of the proposed Action? Comments:	high      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
II.4	How relevant is the proposed Action to European economic or societal needs? Comments:	high      low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1

II.5	To what extent does the proposed Action contribute to the development of the scientific or technological field? Comments:	high      low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
II.6	To what extent does the proposed network aim at involving young researchers? Comments:	high      low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
II.7	To what extent does the proposed network aim at being gender balanced? Comments:	high      low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
II.8	Does the number of countries the proponents come from reflect a wide European dimension? Comments:	yes      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
II.9	Are the proponents aware of the state-of-the-art of the scientific/technical field covered by the proposal? Comments:	yes      no <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
<b>III</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT OF PROPOSAL</b>	
III.1	To what extent is the plan of activities and the management organisation appropriate? Comments:	very      not <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
III.2	To what extent are the time schedule and the targets appropriate? Comments:	very      not <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
III.3	To what extent has provision been made for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of objectives? Comments:	good      little <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
III.4	To what extent has provision been made for assessing potential application, and fostering exploitation, of results? Comments:	good      little <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
A presentation of the proposal to the respective DC will establish the basis for the ranking		
<b>IV</b>	<b>PRESENTATION</b>	
	Convincingness of the presentation of the proposal	high      low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 4   3   2   1
<b>V</b>	<b>OVERALL RECOMMENDATION</b> Comments:	

A weighting factor is applied to the respective criteria automatically during the IT processing of the EEPs discussions. The results in the four sets have to pass all thresholds to be retained for funding:

Criterion		Weighting factor	Group threshold (after applying the weighting factor)
I.1	best mechanism	1	14 (out of 20)
I.2	address problems	1	
I.3	makes difference	1	
I.4	benefits	1	
I.5	dissemination	1	
II.1	innovation	1	33 (out of 48)
II.2	originality	1	
II.3	scientific quality	2	
II.4	economic/societal needs	1	
II.5	development of field	1	
II.6	young researchers	2	
II.7	gender balance	1	
II.8	wide European dimension	1	
II.9	state of the art	2	
III.1	activities plan/management	1	10 (out of 16)
III.2	time schedule	1	
III.3	monitoring	1	
III.4	potential application	1	

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