

Identification of the Unit

The secondment will be based in the Humanities Unit of the ESF.

Type of position proposed

Junior science officer

Description of the project: tasks, deliverables, milestones

Tasks

1. Within ESF Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010, Exploratory Workshops are intended to identify hot topics in any field of science, combining innovative approaches and excellent research. They can serve as the stepping stone for further development into Research Networking Programmes, EUROCORES, Forward Looks, Framework Programme proposals and the like.

The project proposed is aimed at increasing the quality of selection of the Exploratory Workshops in order to assure that the proposals with the highest potential of innovativeness are selected, in view of optimizing this 'stepping stone' idea.

This optimization process includes the selection of reviewers (from the ESF pool, the ESF database and via the internet) and a quality check of the reviews received, as a preparatory step towards the development of an ESF review college. As a consequence, a major overhaul of the quality of the Humanities section of the database is foreseen. The process will result in a process description, taking the existing internal guidelines for Exploratory Workshops as a starting point. This process description will include the work of the Standing Committee and the unit and will develop formats for issues such as the feedback by the rapporteur on the workshop, in view of possible follow-up actions. The description is thus oriented towards the harmonisation of internal ESF procedures. With regard to the development of the ESF review college this project will provide the preparatory steps, to be broadened to the other ESF science units subsequently, in collaboration with the CEO unit.

In order to achieve this, the candidate will be responsible for the selection process for Exploratory Workshops in 2008 in the Humanities.

As a parallel process to this project, a 'mining' exercise will be set up among the Exploratory Workshops taking place in 2008 in which SCH is involved. Results of this exercise will be an inventory of issues addressed in the Exploratory Workshop with high potential for concrete follow-up activities, which will be taken as the benchmark. A similar mining exercise will be held for comparison after implementation of the project currently requested.

Deliverables:

- a. A qualitatively high peer review process for the 2008 Exploratory Workshops
- b. Description of process from deadline of submission, decision by Standing Committee to feedback from the rapporteur and follow-up possibilities after the workshop

- c. Review of Humanities section in ESF Database and update accordingly, including the coverage of disciplines as well as the quality check of the reviewers and of reviews

Milestones:

In line with selection process for Exploratory Workshops between May and October

2. As a second part of the project proposed, the change towards a grant system for Research Networking Programmes will be explored. COST is in the process of implementing such a system for the recently started Actions.

By closely monitoring the running RNPs, their activities, organisation, budgets, reports and procedures, the implementation of a grant system for the RNPs will be prepared. As for the task described under 1, this process will constitute the preparatory steps, to be used for other science units in ESF as well, in collaboration with the CEO unit and, where needed, with the COST office.

Deliverables:

- a. Process description for the management of RNPs
- b. Task distribution for management of RNPs for ESF staff and RNP coordinator / chair
- c. Description of a possible implementation strategy for a grant system for RNPs
- d. First setup of guidelines for RNPs according to grant system

Milestones:

In line with the development and progress of Working Group 7 on managing RNPs in order to gain capacity to do other things.

Qualifications of a successful candidate

- ⇒ PhD, or equivalent research experience, preferably with a further 3-5 years research experience in the Humanities
- ⇒ Experience with grant review processes and experience of science management, ideally gained by working in an ESF Member Organisation
- ⇒ High standard of spoken and written English
- ⇒ Strong inter-personal and excellent communication skills within a multi-national context, including discretion, diplomacy and tolerance
- ⇒ Ability to draft concise and clear documents
- ⇒ Good working knowledge of MS Office systems and of electronic databases and web sites
- ⇒ Action-orientated, responsible and autonomous, creative and willing to take initiatives, and continuous improvement minded
- ⇒ Transparency in working and a team-orientated work ethic
- ⇒ Commitment to deliver on allocated tasks and respond in a timely manner to deadlines

Period and length of the secondment

The secondment position is offered for a period of 6 months, starting preferably 1 May 2008.

This period is chosen to cover the full cycle of peer review for the Exploratory Workshops 2007, starting at the reception of the proposals in early May 2008 and ending with the selection made by the Standing Committee in October 2008.

This period also covers the time in which a number of different events take place in the running programmes (mid term and final evaluation, final conference, workshops, editorial meetings). Exploration of how a change towards a grant system for the newly selected RNPs as of 2009 can be implemented will be based on following these activities.

Supervision and support foreseen

The candidate will work at the Humanities Unit at ESF Headquarters in Strasbourg, France, under the supervision of the Head of Unit. In addition, there will be collaboration with the science officer in the CEO unit working on the ESF-wide project on quality assurance in peer review. Within the Humanities Unit, the candidate will work closely with the staff dealing with the management of the Research Networking Programmes and with Exploratory Workshops and the database.

The candidate will participate in unit meetings and attend the Core Group & MO representatives meeting in June as well as the SCH Plenary meeting in October, both in Strasbourg. In addition to this, the candidate may attend various activities taking place within the RNPs during the period of the secondment.

Mutual benefits for ESF and Member Organisation

The project closely links to the recently launched ESF Member Organisation Forum on Peer Review (www.esf.org/activities/mo-fora/peer-review.html).

The ESF MO Forum on Peer Review started with the international conference 'Peer review – its present and future state' in October 2006. For ESF Member Organisations peer review and grant awarding procedures are key to the quality of their performance and to their image in the scientific community. However, with changes to ways research is organised and funded, new challenges and requirements for peer review arise. The ESF MO Forum serves as an opportunity to exchange experiences and develop best practices across Europe.

In order for this project to be successful, the experience in running peer review and quality assurance in one of the ESF Member Organisation is needed. In return, the Member Organisation is offered the possibility to see how peer review is done at ESF, and how the constant improvement process is managed. This will add to having the ESF peer review system accepted as the European standard.

With regard to the management of the RNPs, it shows the opportunity to the MO to see how these activities are managed by ESF on behalf of the Member Organisations, who provide the funding.

Deadline for applications: 16 April 2008

Date of interviews: 24 April 2008

ESF short-term Secondment Scheme Rules

- The period of secondment normally is 3-6 months, based in Strasbourg France;
- The Home Organisation continues to pay salaries and benefits while on secondment.
- ESF pays all additional cost linked to the secondment i.e.
 - Relocation costs/ associated travelling costs
 - Furnished lodging in Strasbourg
 - Home trips every 4 weeks
 - A daily allowance based on days of presence at ESF in Strasbourg,
 - The cost of any mission carried out at the request of the ESF at the rates applicable to its own rules and regulations

Member Organisations and ESF will work together to ensure continuity of health coverage and other insurances while on secondment.

