



UCLouvain



Drafting, submitting and running a COST Action

Some insights from COST Action 'Constitution-making and deliberative democracy'

Belgium, 4 May 2021

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- 1) How long in advance do we need to start the preparation of the proposal?
- 2) Do we need a large partnership/network from the start of the preparation?
- 3) What are the main difficulties/obstacles encountered in the preparation of the proposal? How to overcome them?
- 4) Why would you recommend COST Actions as an R&I networking instrument?
- 5) What are the main advantages and scientific benefits of a COST Action?
- 6) Is the management of a COST Action time consuming? What are the main difficulties?

1) How long in advance do we need to start the preparation of the proposal?

- Quite some time to mature, but it can be rather quick to write
 - Check next deadline(s)
 - Check for the existence or not of your 'idea'
 - Check your 'core group'
- Quite some time to mature (in years/months)
 - A COST Action submission is not a research proposal
 - There are many examples of COST Actions
 - Re-submit
- Rather quick to write (in months/weeks)
 - One person takes the lead vs. division of labour
 - Look for a diversity of internal reviewers

2) Do we need a large partnership/network from the start of the preparation?

- No...
 - No, because the application is *anonymous* and this is something really important to keep in mind
 - No, because you need to find the right balance between efficiency and diversity
- ... but
 - The quality of the network will be assessed: so better to start building it sooner than later
 - The diversity of the partners will improve the content of the proposal
 - Especially the diversity of partners (i.e. not only researchers, and not only advanced researchers)



3) What are the main difficulties/obstacles encountered in the preparation of the proposal? How to overcome them?

- Chance of success is low
 - Keep up the – good – fighting spirit
 - Try again
 - Check whether it is the most appropriate funding tool for your ‘need’
 - Make sure you meet all – formal - requirements
- Very different from usual research applications
 - Read existing Memorandums of Understanding (MoU)
 - Your Technical Annex will become your MoU
- Network approach
 - What you try to get funded is *a network* and *not a project*
 - Use the diversity of people/profiles who will participate in this network



4) Why would you recommend COST Actions as an R&I networking instrument?

- Foster existing collaborations
 - A submission often starts from an existing 'core group'
 - A COST Action fosters the existing collaborations
- Open new collaborations
 - High visibility
 - Resources (money and tools)
- With people you don't already know
 - Anyone who wants to join your Action may join
 - The structure of the Action should be designed in this perspective
 - More people/countries join, more money the Action gets
 - More activities you can do



5) What are the main advantages and scientific benefits of a COST Action?

- **Networking tools**
 - COST Actions fund things that are usually not funded
 - Enabling people to meet and to develop ideas together
 - Bringing together people from a wide variety of background (e.g. country, age, profile)
- **Scientific benefits**
 - Wider geographical coverage
 - Wider disciplinary coverage
 - Wider profile coverage
 - Production, publication, dissemination
 - On these foundations: sustaining the Action through time (e.g. applications for usual research applications)



6) Is the management of a COST Action time consuming? What are the main difficulties?

- Yes...
 - Because bring together people who know one another with people who don't know one another
 - The diversity of the people is definitely an asset but heavy coordination is needed
 - Learning process takes time
- ... but
 - COST offers a very structured framework
 - Collective management of an Action via its 'core group'
 - Individual management of an Action via its Grant Holder Manager (15% of the budget → 25% FTE)
 - Chair and Grant Holder Manager



Good luck