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3.1. Objectives

The aim of a Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) shall be to contribute to the scientific objectives of a COST Action.

These Missions (Exchange Visits) are aimed at strengthening the existing networks by allowing scientists to go to an institution or laboratory **in another COST Country** to foster collaboration, to learn a new technique or to take measurements using instruments and/or methods not available in their own institution/laboratory. They are particularly intended for young scientists.

An Action should normally set up at least 4 STSMs per year.

3.2. The Applicant

The selection of the applicant is the responsibility of the Management Committee (MC) of the Action.

The **Applicant** should normally be engaged in a programme of research as a postgraduate student or postdoctoral fellow or be employed in an institution of a COST Country having accepted the MoU of the Action. This institution shall be actively participating in the COST Action.

For the period of the STSM neither the MC of the Action nor the COST Office may be considered as the employer and grantees must make their own arrangements for all health, social, personal security and pension matters.

3.3. Home and Host Institution

The home and the host institution can be public or private.

A STSM may only be approved:

- from a home institution in a COST participating country to a host institution in another COST participating country or to a formally approved host institution in a non-COST country

- from a formally approved home institution in a Near Neighbour country to a host institution in a COST participating country.

In exceptional cases, the COST Office reserves the right to analyse the possibility of reimbursement of any person designated by itself or by the Management Committee of an Action or by a Domain Committee to further the interests and aims of COST.

Short-Term Scientific Missions between different Actions may be considered by the Management Committees of both Actions.

The Applicant is responsible for obtaining the agreement of the host institution, before submitting his/her application.

3.4. Duration

Short-Term Scientific Missions, **minimum one week (5 working days), maximum 3 months**, shall be made within the time frame of the operation identified in the proposal and within the period of the respective Action.

For Early Stage Researchers (less than PhD + 8 years) the COST Office may approve an extension to a duration beyond 3 months, but normally not more than 6 months in total.

3.5. Financial Support

The financial support is a contribution to the costs of a STSM and may not necessarily cover all the costs in each case. The grant should normally cover only travel and subsistence.

The financial contribution for a STSM will be a fixed grant based on the Applicant's budget request and the evaluation of the application by the STSM assessment committee. An amount of EUR 60 to 90 for the daily allowance in particular for longer stays and EUR 300 for the travel is recommended but not obligatory. The total of a STSM shall normally not exceed EUR 2 500 up to 3 months (or EUR 3 500 for Early Stage Researchers – above 3 months). **Any exception needs special justification and prior approval from the COST Office.**

In any case the costs associated with the STSM must not exceed the limits set in the rules for reimbursement by COST of expenses for experts eligible for reimbursement (see 1. - Travel and Subsistence).

An advance payment may be made in exceptional circumstances, which will require additional special justification.

3.6. Registration and Deadlines

The Applicant must use the **on-line registration tool**. (see 3.10 - How to submit an application).

Applications may be submitted according to the schedules stipulated by the MC of the relevant Action, bearing in mind that delays must be taken into account for the assessment and administrative procedures.

The application together with the MC approval should be sent to the COST Office **at least 4 weeks** before the STSM starts.

3.7. Assessment

a) The MC of the Action will make the scientific and budgetary assessment and take the final decision.

The MC may formally delegate these tasks to :

- the STSM coordinator or,
- a sub-group of its members (assessment panel), which may vary from time to time and from scheme to scheme, to assess proposals and to agree on those which may be funded.

It is recommended that this assessment panel consists of more than two people in order to avoid a conflict of interest, in addition to one person who is authorised to take the decision (normally the Chair). External advice may be sought.

MC members and other assessors should not involve themselves in the assessment of proposals in which they have a personal or financial interest. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. uniqueness of expertise), such a bar may be waived with the agreement of the other members involved, if the interest is declared and considered not to compromise the potential decision.

b) The MC should agree the criteria for assessing applications in line with the Action objectives. Wherever possible, these criteria should be made known in advance to potential applicants. It is expected that every care will be taken to avoid any bias on the grounds of gender, age or nationality.

3.8. Approval

The MC Chair or the STSM coordinator is responsible for circulating the application for decision to the assessment panel.

The MC Chair or the STSM coordinator has to inform the COST Office about the decision. After checking the application for the compatibility with the existing rules and procedures the COST Office will inform the Applicant about the outcome of the assessment and will arrange the necessary formalities for the issue of the grant in case of a positive result and availability of funding.

The decisions and assessments regarding all STSM applications shall be reported to the next MC meeting **and recorded in the minutes of the meeting**.

3.9. Deviation

Any deviations and exceptions from this procedure may be considered, provided that they contribute to the scientific objectives of the Action. They require prior approval from the COST Office.

3.10. How to Submit an STSM Application

3.10.1. On-line registration by the applicant

The Applicant must use the **on-line registration** tool to register their request for an STSM (see <https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm>). The following information has to be encoded with the registration:

1. the Action number;
2. the title of the planned STSM;
3. the start and end date;
4. the applicant's details, including key academic details and workplan;
5. the applicant's bank details;
6. the host institution's ;
7. financial data (amount for travel and subsistence).

3.10.2. Formal STSM application and annexes

After encoding the information via the on-line registration tool will issue a formal STSM application (see 3.12) which has to be downloaded and sent by the applicant electronically (by e-mail as attachment) together with any necessary document which the Applicant may regard as helpful in supporting the application at the evaluation process (such as CV, full workplan, list of publications, motivation letter, letter of support from the home institute etc.) to:

- the future Host institution of the STSM;
- the MC Chair or the STSM coordinator.

3.10.3. Assessment of the STSM

The MC Chair or the STSM coordinator will arrange the assessment of the STSM.

3.10.4. Approval from the Management Committee

The MC Chair or the STSM coordinator informs the Grant Holder that the proposed STSM has been approved in the form of an e-mail stating:

"Subject: STSM Reference number, COST Action number, grantees name

On behalf of the Management Committee of the above COST Action I would like to inform you after evaluation that:

- a) the attached request for an STSM has been approved and;
- b) a grant of EUR x has been recommended and;
- c) the host institute accepted the proposal."

3.10.5. The Grant letter (see 3.13 - sample)

The COST Office will send to the Applicant a **Grant letter** in which he/she is informed about:

- a) the approval of the STSM and;
- b) the level of the financial grant given.

The Applicant has to return this **Grant letter**, after accepting the grant with his/her signature.

The Applicant will receive a **Payment Request Form** (see 3.14) at the same time.

3.11. After the STSM

3.11.1. STSM Scientific Report

After completion of the STSM the grantee is required to submit to the host institution and MC Chair (or the STSM coordinator) a short scientific report on the visit **within 4 weeks after his/her stay**.

It should contain the following information:

- Purpose of the STSM;
- Description of the work carried out during the STSM;
- Description of the main results obtained;
- Future collaboration with host institution (if applicable);
- Foreseen publications/articles resulting or to result from the STSM (if applicable);
- Confirmation by the host institution of the successful execution of the STSM;
- Other comments (if any).

3.11.2. Notice of completion

The MC Chair or the STSM coordinator is responsible for approving the final report and sending the notice of completion of the STSM to the COST Office.

The MC Chair of the STSM coordinator will send a short notice to the COST Office with the confirmation that the STSM has been successfully accomplished and that the grant can be paid.

The information is usually in the form of an e-mail stating:

"Subject: STSM Reference number, COST Action number, grantee's name

On behalf of the Management Committee of the above COST Action I would like to inform you that:

- 1) The above STSM has been completed from <Start date> to <End date>
- 2) The scientific report has been approved by the MC and Host.
- 3) The amount of EUR X can be paid"

3.11.3. Payment

The COST Office will execute the payment of the fixed grant directly to the grantee or the host institution as requested in the application after receipt of the following documents:

- Notice of completion by the Management Committee;
- Completed Payment request form;
- Summary of scientific report (maximum 1 page).