



Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) Guidelines

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Mission

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) are institutional visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, fostering collaboration between individuals and strengthening existing networks by contributing to the scientific objectives of the COST Action.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be part of a PhD programme, or postdoctoral fellow or can be employed by an institution or organisation performing research.
- The Home institution of the applicant should be located in a Participating COST Full Member/ COST Cooperating Member, or in an Approved NNC Institution.
- The Host Institution should be located in another participating COST Full Member/ COST Cooperating Member, Participating COST Partner Member, Approved IPC or NNC Institution.

Evaluation Committee

The MC has approved that the evaluation process will be carried out by a committee for transparency and inclusion reasons.

As approved by the MC (07.02.2020), the committee will be composed by the STSM Coordinator, the Chair, the Vice Chair, the ITC Grants Coordinator, and the Science Communication Manager.

Evaluation Criteria for excellence

1. Relevance of the proposal: the degree to which the work plan is detailed in its scientific goals of the work and how these goals are applicable to the Action's tasks (1-10 points).
 2. Feasibility of the mission: the degree to which the time spend in the Host Institution will be effective to reach the scientific goals planned for the mission (1-10 points).
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Evaluation Process

- The evaluation criteria defined by the Action's MC are promptly communicated to all potential applicants on the website of the Action.
- Deadlines for applications and for evaluation are clearly set and communicated via the website of the Action.
- For each call:
 - The STSM Coordinator will evaluate if the applications meet the criteria for eligibility, and if documents required are part of the application. The STSM Coordinator will send the eligible applications by email to the rest of the committee giving reasons for non-eligible applications (if applicable).
 - The committee will grade each applicant's proposal based on a ranking point from 1-10.
 - The STSM Coordinator will formulate a list of applicants ranked from the highest to the lowest points.
 - Starting from the ranking, COST policies on excellence and inclusiveness and available budget will be considered by the committee for a final decision. Not previous grant from Action participants will be considered.
- Upon completion of evaluation, inter-rate reliability is calculated (if insufficient - proceed with election procedure but re-work criteria on the next MC meeting).

List of documents for the application

For the application to be eligible, applicants need to submit the following supporting documents:

1. A complete proposal which includes (maximum 4 pages):
 - A. Motivation letter:
 1. Introduction (problem statement, rationale and research questions);
 2. Aims/goals of the research mission and justification for the choice of host institution (summary of the activities related to this goals/ the relevance of methods that might be applied in the Host institutions, if applicable).
 - B. Working plan (how the activities are planned during the time spend at the Host institution, applicants may include a working plan chart, and expected results).

- C. Outputs of the mission and benefits to the COST Action 18123 and applicant (how results will be disseminated, possible plans for academic articles, policy brief, how the action and the applicant benefits from the outputs, etcetera).
2. An updated Europass CV (dates of degrees obtained, current position, past experience and a list of academic publications, if applicable).
 3. Invitation letter from a senior researcher of the Host Institution.
 4. Letter of support by a professor affiliated with the home institution.

Duration of the STSM

- STSM must have a minimum duration of 5 calendar days and a maximum duration of 90 calendar days.
- STSM need to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period and always within the Action's lifetime.
- The COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action cannot be considered as being an STSM grantee's employer.

STSM Financial Support

- A STSM Grant will financially contribute (but not necessary cover all) costs for travel, accommodation and meal expenses.
- STSM grantees must make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security and pension matters.
- The calculation of the financial contribution for each STSM will be up to a maximum of EUR 2500 in total or up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day that can be afforded for accommodation and meal expenses and up to a maximum of EUR 300 for travel costs.
- Differentiated country rates to cover accommodation and meal expenses based on the perceived cost of living in the host country will apply.
- Participants from ITCs can request a pre-payment of 50% of their STSM Grant when they complete the first day of their STSM. For that purpose the representative of the Host Institution must confirm by e-mail to the Grant Holder that the first day of the mission has officially started, and then the Grant Holder can arrange the payment of

50% of the STSM grant; the remaining 50% of the Grant is payable once administrative requirements have been satisfied after the STSM.

Approving STSM for Payment

The grantee within 30 calendar days from the end date of the mission will submit via e-cost the following documents:

1. A short scientific report, including the following sections: (a) Aims/goals of the STSM; (b) Summary of the work activities and method(s); (c) The main results (what was expected and what turned out, the relevance of the results taken); (d) Future possible opportunities to collaborate with the host institution and future possible plans; and (e) Possible outputs (articles, policy briefs, summary reports, review papers, etcetera).
2. A letter or an email from the senior researcher of the Host institution confirming that the applicant has successfully completed the mission.
3. A short summary (maximum 500 words) for the website page including: affiliation, field of research interest, a short summary of the research completed in STSM, benefits of the STSM for building skills to the participant, outputs, and possibly including a photo with collaborators, a short video and a short quote describing the experience.

The STSM Coordinator and the Vice Chair are responsible for approving the scientific report and informing the Grant Holder that the mission has been successfully completed.

Further details can be consulted at the COST Vademecum.
