**EXTRACTED FROM COST Vademecum February 2020**

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) are **exchange visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, strengthening existing networks, fostering collaboration between COST Action Participants**. A STSM **should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action**, whilst at the same time allowing those partaking in the missions **to learn new techniques, gain access to specific data, instruments and/ or methods not available in their own institutions/ organisations**.

STSM applicants must be engaged in an official research programme as a **PhD student or postdoctoral fellow or may be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution or legal entity,** which has within its remit a clear association with performing research. The institutions/ organisations where applicants pursue their main strand of research are considered as **Home Institutions**. The **Host Institution** is the institution/ organisation that will host the STSM grantee.

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) are institutional visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, fostering collaboration between individuals. The Guidelines for Action Management, Monitoring and Assessment should be followed to ensure the proper implementation of this networking instrument (see [www.cost.eu/guidelines\_Action\_management\_monitoring\_assessment](http://www.cost.eu/guidelines_Action_management_monitoring_assessment))

**STSM – ELIGIBILITY RULES**

STSM applicants must be engaged in an official research programme as a PhD Student or postdoctoral fellow or can be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution, organisation or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing research. The institutions / organisation or legal entity where applicants pursue their main strand of research are considered as Home Institutions. The Host Institution is the institution / organisation that will host the successful applicant.

The following table shows the scenarios available to eligible STSM applicants:



Eligible STSM applicants must submit their STSM applications online at the following web address:

<https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm>

**EVALUATION**

 The evaluation of each received STSM application is performed by the Action MC. The Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) or the appointed STSM Coordinator / Committee can assume this responsibility if the Action MC gives them the mandate to perform this task on their behalf. The evaluation criteria defined by the Action MC should be communicated to all potential applicants.

The selection of successful STSM applicants must be done so in consideration of the scientific scope of the proposed mission and how the mission can support the Action in achieving its scientific objectives. There should be special considerations made by the Action MC with respect to supporting COST policies on promoting gender balance, enabling Early Career Investigators (ECI), broadening geographical inclusiveness.

The selection of STSM applicants **must be based on the scientific scope of the application and how it can support the COST Action in achieving its scientific objectives**, and take into account the COST Policy and Rules with special attention on Inclusiveness and Excellence. **The criteria must be available on the COST Action website and be communicated in advance to all potential applicants**.

**CRITERIA FOR STSM**

STSM must respect the following criteria:

They must have a **minimum duration of 5 calendar days** that includes travel. 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 to be considered as being an STSM grantee’s employer. **STSM grantees must make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security and pension matters**.

**MORE CRITERIA:**
**The selection of STSM grantees made by the STSM Coordinator/ Committee, including Home and Host Institutions as well as allocated grants, must be communicated to the entire Action MC in a subsequent Action MC meeting and included in the minutes of the Action MC meeting**.

STSMs must respect the following criteria:

* They must have a **minimum duration of 5 days**;
* They must have a **maximum duration of 90 days**;
* STSMs 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 Grand Holder of the COST Action may not be considered as being an STSM grantee’s employer. Grantees must make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security and pension matters.

**STSM – FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

An STSM Grant is a fixed financial contribution, which takes into consideration the budget request of the applicant and the outcome of the evaluation of the STSM application. STSM Grants do not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking a given mission. A STSM Grant is a contribution to the overall travel, accommodation and meal expenses of the Grantee.

The calculation of the financial contribution for each STSM must respect the following criteria:

* Up to a maximum of EUR 3 500 in total can be afforded to each successful applicant.
* Up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day can be afforded for accommodation and meal expenses.
* Up to a maximum of EUR 300 can be afforded for travel costs.

The Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) and / or the appointed STSM Coordinator / Committee should consider and can approve differentiated country rates to cover accommodation and meal expenses based on the perceived cost of living in the host country.

Specific provisions have been introduced to enable researchers from ITC participating in the COST Action to request a pre-payment of 50% of their STSM Grant when they complete the first day of their STSM. In such case, the representative of the Host Institution must confirm by e-mail to the Grant Holder that the STSM applicant has officially started the mission on day 1. Only then the Grant Holder can arrange the payment of 50% of the STSM grant. The remaining 50% of the Grant is payable once the administrative requirements have been satisfied after the STSM.

**APPROVING STSM FOR PAYMENT**

The STSM Grantee has **30 calendar days from the end date of the mission to submit a scientific report** to the Action Chair (or to the Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) / the appointed STSM Coordinator / Committee and to a senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution. Payment of the Grant is subject to a STSM scientific report being approved on behalf of the Action’s MC by the delegated person(s) responsible and by a senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution. Written approval of the STSM scientific report by the aforementioned persons must be uploaded in e- COST for archiving purposes.

**Before the STSM:**

Eligible STSM applicants must:

* Obtain written agreement from the Host institution that the STSM applicant may perform the activities detailed in the STSM work plan on the agreed dates;
* Complete an online STSM application, http://www.cost.eu/stsm

**After the STSM:**

**The STSM grantee is required to submit a short scientific report** to the Host institution (for information purposes only) and to the Action Chair (or Vice Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) / STSM Coordinator or Committee for formal approval within **30 days after the end date of the STSM**. Written approval of the scientific report by the aforementioned persons must be uploaded in e-COST for archiving purposes.

**MORE INFO:**[www.cost.eu/guidelines\_Action\_management\_monitoring\_assessment](http://www.cost.eu/guidelines_Action_management_monitoring_assessment)