

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and further instruction to Action Chairs / Vice Chairs, STSM Coordinators / Committee Members and Grant Managers on how to correctly administrate STSMs.

The guidance provided in this document does not replace or affect any of the administrative requirements and contractual obligations contained in the COST H2020 Vademecum and the respective COST Action Grant Agreement.

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Feedback:

COST is interested in receiving feedback from users of this document. Comments can be directed to Science.Administration@cost.eu.

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

What is the purpose of an STSM?

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) are aimed at strengthening existing networks and fostering collaborations by facilitating Researchers participating in a given COST Action to visit an institution / organisation in another Participating COST Country / an approved NNC institution or an approved IPC institution. 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.

Who is eligible to partake in STSM?

A STSM applicant must be engaged in a research programme as a PhD Student or postdoctoral fellow or be employed by, or affiliated to, an Institution or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing scientific research.

Always satisfying the above requirement, whether a Researcher is eligible to receive a STSM Grant depends on the status of the country where they hold their primary affiliation. Once this has been established, eligibility can be determined by adhering to the stipulations in the following 3 categories:

1. Researchers holding their primary affiliation at an institution located in a Participating COST Country (a Country that has accepted the Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) are eligible to perform a STSM in another Participating COST Country. A list of Participating COST Countries can be found on the respective COST Action Webpage at www.cost.eu.

2. For Researchers holding their primary affiliation in a Near Neighbour Country (NNC), the consideration for being eligible to receive a STSM Grant is linked to whether their institution has been formally approved onto the Action or not – The eligibility status of Researchers located in NNC is restricted to those affiliated to approved NNC institutions. The complete list of NNC can be found at http://www.cost.eu/about_cost/cost_countries/international_cooperation/nnc. A list of approved NNC Institutions can be found on the respective COST Action Webpage at www.cost.eu.

3. For Researchers holding their primary affiliation at a European RTD Organisation, the consideration for being eligible to receive a STSM Grant is linked to whether their institution has been formally approved onto the Action or not. The eligibility status of Researchers located in European RTD Organisations is restricted to those affiliated to approved European RTD Organisations. A list of European RTD organisations is detailed in Annex II of the COST H2020 Vademecum (see <http://www.cost.eu/participate/guidelines>). A list of approved European RTD Organisations can be found on the respective COST Action Webpage at www.cost.eu.

STSM - from where to where?

The Home Institution / Organisation is the institution / organisation where the STSM applicant holds their primary affiliation as registered on their e-COST profile / STSM application / C.V. and where they are currently performing their main strand of research. The table below (see category A) details the possible STSM scenarios available to the respective applicant. The Host Institution / Organisation (category B) concerns the Institution / Organisation that will host the successful applicant.

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

A) Researcher in a Home Institution	B) To Perform a STSM in a Host Institution
From an institution in a <u>Participating</u> COST Country	In another <u>Participating COST Country</u>
	In an <u>approved NNC institution</u>
	In an <u>approved IPC institution</u>
From an <u>approved NNC institution</u>	In an <u>approved Specific organisation</u>
In an <u>approved</u> European RTD Organisation	In a <u>Participating</u> COST Country

Example of a Call for STSM Applications

[COST Action Number] Call Number [1 / 2 / 3 / 4] for Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) Applications

[1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th] Call for STSM Applications for Missions Occurring between [the Start Date of the STSM and the End Date of the STSM]

All STSM activities must occur in their entirety within the dates specified above

Purpose of a Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

STSMs facilitates Researchers from COST Countries participating in COST Action **[Action Number]** to go to an institution, organisation or research centre in another participating COST Country to foster collaboration and to perform empirical research. Participation of “Early-Stage Researchers” (ESR) in STSM is particularly encouraged. An applicant can be considered as being an “Early-Stage Researcher” when the time that has elapsed between the award date of the applicants PhD and the date of the applicants first involvement in the COST Action **[Action Number]** does not exceed 8 years. PhD students are also eligible to partake in STSMs.

Specific information concerning STSM

STSM can have a duration of between 5 days and 90 days (and up to 180 days if the applicant is an ESR – see definition of ESR above).

The financial support on offer is a contribution to the overall expenses incurred during the STSM and may not necessarily cover all of the associated outgoings.

The following funding conditions apply and must be respected:

1. up to a maximum of EUR 2 500 in total can be afforded to each successful STSM applicant;
2. up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day can be afforded for accommodation and meal expenses;
3. for ESRs, a maximum amount of EUR 3500 can be afforded to the Grantee for STSMs with a duration of between 91 and 180 days – For ESRs partaking STSMs with a duration of between 5 and 90 days, the limit of EUR 2 500 must be respected;
4. STSM activities must occur in their entirety within the dates specified in this call.

Financial support is limited to cover travel, accommodation and meal expenses and is paid in the form of a Grant.

For this call, the Management Committee of COST Action **[Number + Full Name of Action]** has allocated a total budget of **[EUR Amount in Euro]** for up to **[Number of STSM]** STSMs. The amounts granted for each individual STSM will be determined during the evaluation process by the formally appointed person (s). The selection of applicants is based on the scientific scope of the STSM application which must clearly compliment the overall objectives of the Action.

How to apply for an STSM:

Interested Researchers can apply by following the directions provided below and submitting their application and supporting documents to **[Name and Email Address of STSM Coordinator / Committee Member]** by the deadline of the **[Application Deadline Date]**.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS IS AS FOLLOWS:

1. All applicants must carefully read the funding rules detailed in Section 7 of the COST H2020 *Vademecum*. This document is available at: <http://www.cost.eu/participate/guidelines>.
2. All applicants must register for an e-COST profile at <https://e-services.cost.eu/> - adding their bank account details to their profile.
3. All applicants must obtain a letter of invitation from the Host institution confirming that they can undertake the STSM on the given dates prior to submitting an application.
4. All applicants must complete, submit and download their STSM application online at: <https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm>.
5. **All applicants must send their submitted STSM application form and the relevant supporting documents to [Name and Email Address of STSM Coordinator / Committee Member] for evaluation before the application submission deadline expires.**
The list of supporting documents to be submitted for the evaluation are:
 - Letter of invitation to the applicant from a senior Researcher affiliated to the Host institution
 - The submitted STSM application form (downloadable when the online application is submitted - see point 4 above)
 - A motivation letter including an overview of the proposed activities that will be performed which must contain a plan of work for the visit highlighting the proposed contribution to the scientific objectives of the respective COST Action;
 - A letter of support from the Home Institution;
 - A Full C.V. (including a list of academic publications – if applicable).
6. The application will then be assessed by the formally delegated person (s) **[Name of STSM Coordinator / Committee Member]** against the perceived contribution that the proposed visit will make against the scientific objectives outlined in the Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
7. The applicant will be formally notified of the outcome of their STSM application by **[Name of STSM Coordinator / Committee Member]** on the **[Outcome Notification Deadline Date]**.
8. Within 30 days from the end date of the STSM, the successful applicant must submit a scientific report to the Host institution and to the **[Name of STSM Coordinator / Committee Member]**. The applicant is also responsible for acquiring an official acceptance letter / Email confirmation of acceptance from a senior Researcher affiliated to the Host institution formally accepting the scientific report. This formal acceptance of the scientific report has to be sent to the Grant Holder and the **[Name of STSM Coordinator / Committee Member]** for archiving purposes.

Failure to submit the scientific report within 30 days from the end date of the STSM will effectively cancel the Grant.

(Please note that COST can request additional information to substantiate the information contained within the documents submitted by STSM applicants).

Deadline for applications to be submitted: [DAY / MONTH / YEAR]

Notification of application outcome: [DAY / MONTH / YEAR]

Period of STSM: between [DAY / MONTH / YEAR] and [DAY / MONTH / YEAR]

Example Email template for disseminating call for STSM Applications

This Email template can be sent to: Researchers in Participating COST Countries / approved institutions located in NNC / approved European RTD Organisations, to promote / disseminate a call for STSM Applications – please amend the text where deemed necessary.

Dear Researchers,

COST Action [Action Number and Action Name] invites Researchers from Participating COST Countries to submit applications for the **[1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th]** call for Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM) Applications for missions occurring between **[the Start Date of the Activity and the End Date of the Activity]**.

Purpose of a STSM

STSM are aimed at strengthening existing networks and fostering collaborations by allowing Researchers participating in a given COST Action to visit an institution / Organisation in another Participating COST Country / an approved NNC institution or an approved IPC institution. 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.

Please see the full call for STSM Applications in the document attached to this Email.

Deadline for applications to be submitted: **[DAY / MONTH / YEAR]**

Notification of application outcome: **[DAY / MONTH / YEAR]**

Period of STSM: between **[DAY / MONTH / YEAR]** and **[DAY / MONTH / YEAR]**

All STSM activities must occur in their entirety within the period specified above.

Contact person:

[Name of STSM Coordinator / Committee Member.

[Institution of contact person]

[Address of contact person]

[Telephone number of contact person]

[Email address of contact person]

[Action website]

For COST STSM funding rules - see Section 7 of the COST H2020 Vademecum See: <http://www.cost.eu/participate/guidelines>

How to obtain MC Approvals for STSM

The assessment criteria for awarding STSM Grants must be defined and agreed upon by the MC. In most instances, the MC formally delegates the task of evaluating applications and awarding STSM Grants to the MC Chair / Vice Chair / STSM Coordinator / Committee.

When formally nominated to do so, the STSM Coordinator/Committee Member can make budgetary decisions related to STSM on behalf of the MC. These budgetary decision can be formalised and evidenced by acquiring two distinct approvals:

1. STSM MC Pre-approval before the mission by 'written procedure (also known as e-vote)
2. STSM MC Post-approval after the mission by 'written procedure' (also known as e-vote)

Before the STSM

Pre-approval (before the mission) is written acknowledgement in the form of an Email by the formally nominated person to the Grant Manager confirming that the respective STSM application was successful and that the chosen applicant can commence their STSM within the agreed conditions.

1. The formally nominated person must nominate the selected STSM participant and communicate the following text to the Grant Manager by Email affording pre-approval to the applicant.

Pre-approval Email Template

Dear Grant Manager,

Subject: Pre-approval **[STSM Reference number, COST Action number, Applicants name, Grant amount]**.

On behalf of the MC, I formally approve the STSM application of **[Name of Applicant]** to be performed between **[the Start Date of the Activity and the End Date of the Activity]** at the **[Name of Institute]**. The applicant can receive a fixed Grant of **[Amount in Euro]** subject to the administrative requirements being satisfied within 30 day after the end date of the STSM.

[Name of STSM Coordinator / Committee Member].

[Institution of contact person]

[Address of contact person]

[Telephone Number of contact person]

[Email address of contact person]

End of Pre-approval Email Template

Only when the Grant Manager receives the above pre-approval Email can the Grant Notification Letter be sent to the successful STSM applicant via e-COST. The applicant needs to download his / her Grant Notification Letter prior to undergoing their STSM. The above pre-approval Email represents formal authorisation that the STSM Applicant can commence his / her STSM in line with the conditions specified within the given Email.

This Pre-approval Email must be filed with the administrative documents required for STSM.

After the STSM

Post approval (after the mission) is written acknowledgement in the form of an Email by the formally nominated person to the Grant Manager confirming that the STSM was completed successfully; the scientific report was accepted, the administrative requirements have been satisfied and that the Grant can be paid to the applicant.

[Insert Official Logo of the Action]

[Insert COST Logo]

Post-approval Email Template

Subject: **Post-approval [STSM Reference number, COST Action number, Grantees name, Grant amount].**

On behalf of the MC, I formally approve the scientific report submitted by **[Name of Applicant]** detailing the research activities performed during the STSM held between the **[Start Date of the Activity and the End Date of the Activity]** at the **[Name of Institute]**. I confirm that the administrative requirements have been satisfied and that the Grant can be paid.

[Name of STSM coordinator / Committee Member].

[Institution of contact person]

[Address of contact person]

[Telephone Number of contact person]

[Email address of contact person]

End of Post-approval Email Template

The Grant Manager can only instruct their respective financial officer to process the payment of the STSM Grant once both of the above mentioned approvals are in place. All administrative requirements must also be checked for consistency and filed before the payment can be made.

Administrative requirements for STSM

The following list of administrative requirements must be checked for accuracy and filed in a secure place prior to the respective payment being executed:

1. Letter of invitation to the applicant from a senior Researcher affiliated to the Host institution
2. STSM application form
3. A motivation letter from the applicant including a work plan detailing the proposed activities
4. A support letter / Email from the Home Institution
5. A full C.V. of the applicant (including a list of academic publications – if applicable)
6. MC Pre-approval (Email from delegated person see: How to obtain MC Approvals for STSM) confirming that the respective STSM application was successful and that the chosen applicant can commence their STSM within the agreed conditions
7. A scientific report
8. An official letter / Email from a senior Researcher affiliated to the Host institution formally accepting the scientific report
9. MC Post-approval (Email from delegated person – see: How to obtain MC Approvals for STSM) confirming that the STSM was completed successfully; the scientific report was accepted, the administrative requirements have been satisfied and that the Grant can be paid to the applicant
10. Payment remittance showing the Beneficiary name, the Grant amount and the bank account (bank name, name of account holder, IBAN and Swift/BIC) to where the STSM Grant was paid

Access to archived documents, controls and audits

The COST Association reserves the right to request additional information for the purpose of substantiating the data contained within any of the administrative documents submitted by STSM applicants / Grantees. If the Grant Holder Institution is unable to provide any of the above administrative documents for review when requested to do so by the COST Association, the STSM Grant may be declared ineligible and the respective funds may be subject to a recovery procedure. For Audit purposes, all relevant financial information and supporting documents related to administering a STSM must be archived and be readily available for review by the COST Association up to end of the audit timeframe specified in the Action Grant Agreement signed between the COST Association and the Grant Holder Institution administering the COST Action in question.

[Insert Official Logo of the Action]

[Insert COST Logo]