STSMs: Guidelines for Applicants

Researchers interested in applying for an STSM should first read the information below to establish whether they are eligible to apply for an STSM and how to calculate the requested grant. **Applicants are also requested to consult the COST Vademecum Chapter 7** (http://www.cost.eu/Vademecum) **for the updated information about STSMs.**

The selection of applicants is based on the scientific scope of the STSM application which must clearly complement the overall objectives of the Action.

Successful applicants must submit a scientific report to the Host Institution and to the STSM Coordinator within 30 days from the end date of the STSM, and they will be responsible for acquiring from a senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution written confirmation of formal acceptance of the scientific report. The scientific report will also require the approval of the Action Chair or STSM Coordinator in order to process the payment of the Grant. Successful applicants will be asked to submit a brief of the STSM outputs for the Action's website describing in summary the scientific report which will also be made available online, and be prepared to participate in the Action's events with a poster about their STSM when applicable or when requested by the Chair or STSM coordinator.

Who is eligible to take part in STSM?

Participation of 'Early-Career Investigators' (ECI)[1] in STSM is particularly encouraged. An applicant can be considered as being an ECI when the time that has elapsed between the award date of the applicant's PhD and the date of the applicant's first involvement in the COST Action CA16222 does not exceed 8 years. PhD students are also eligible to partake in STSMs. Other applicants must be employed by or affiliated to an institution or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing scientific research.

STSMs are not available to BSc/MSc students with no additional affiliation to an organisation/research centre.

The STSM Grant

STSM can have a duration of between 5 days and 90 days (and up to 180 days if the applicant is an ECI).

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 costs. Financial support is limited to cover travel, accommodation and meal expenses and is paid in the form of a Grant. The cost of research materials is not eligible for consideration as part of the grant.

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[1]Sometimes referred to Early Career Researcher on e-COST

Please note that the awarded grant will be paid only after the STSM has been completed – therefore the applicant must have approval and prior financial support.

The following funding conditions apply and must be respected:

- up to a max of EUR2,500 in total can be afforded to each successful STSM applicant;
- up to a max of EUR160 per day can be afforded for accommodation & meal expenses;
- for ECIs, a max amount of EUR3,500 can be afforded to the Grantee for STSMs with a duration of between 91 & 180 days – For ECIs partaking in STSMs with a duration of between 5 & 90 days, the limit is EUR2,500;
- STSMs must occur in their entirety within the dates specified in the Grant Period published in the respective Action call;
- The MC can approve lower country rates for subsistence per day, based on the cost of living in a given country.

STSM awards may be combined with other funding sources, but these must be acknowledged in the application.

Please note that failure to submit the scientific report within 30 days from the end date of the STSM will effectively cancel the Grant.

COST can request additional information to substantiate the information contained within the documents submitted by STSM applicants.

Criteria for Assessment of Applications

Each proposal will be assessed independently by the STSM committee of the Action and an evaluation score will be given considering (i) the clarity of the proposal; (ii) the degree to which the proposed STSM complements or contributes to the Action strategic priorities as defined in the MoU; (iii) planned work plan feasibility and outputs; and (iv) the ability of the Applicant to successfully complete the proposed STSM and disseminate relevant outputs. The proposal should show clear evidence of how the proposed STSM will benefit both the COST Action CA16222 and the Applicant. The proposal will be assigned to one of the following categories:

1 - **Very poor:** proposal illogical and not understandable. Not clearly linked to any WG. (0-10 marks)

2 – **Poor:** proposal with limited understanding, planning and no clear objectives. Weakly linked to at least one WG. (11-35 marks)

3 – **Fair:** proposal with some understanding, planning and objectives. Moderate links to at least one WG. (36-60 marks)

4 – **Good:** good proposal but needs input to develop feasible STSM. Well linked to at least one WG. (61-80 marks)

5 – **Excellent:** proposal well designed in terms of planning, feasibility and projected outputs. Strongly linked to at least one WG. (81-100 marks)

Extra marks will be given for links with a WG of the Action and the output value to the COST Action via the development of research, research proposals and scientific networks. A proposal can reach a maximum score of 100. The proposals will be ranked and those with the highest scores will be financed, subject to the duration of the STSM applications and the available budget. The results will be published in the COST Action website.

In case of rejection, the STSM Committee will inform the Applicant. Resubmissions in future calls are possible. Once approved by the STSM Committee, the Grant Holder will notify the Applicant. To accept the grant, the Applicant has to return the Grant letter with his/her signature.

STSMs: Eligible "Home and Host" Combinations

The **Home Institution** is the institution/organisation where the STSM applicant holds their primary affiliation as registered on their CV and e-COST profile, and where they are currently performing their main strand of research. The **Host Institution** is the institution/organisation that will host the successful applicant.

Please visit the Action's page on the COST website for the most up-to-date information about which countries and organisations are taking part in the Action. STSM participation is encouraged for participants from ITC.

Home Institution	Host Institution
From a Participating COST Country	To another Participating COST Country
	To an approved NNC institution
	To an approved IPC institution
	To an approved EC / EU Agency / an approved European RTD Organisation or an approved International Organisation
From an approved NNC institution	To a Participating COST Country
From an approved European RTD Organisation	To a Participating COST Country

Instructions for submitting the online Application

Applications for STSMs are managed through the e-COST management tool. The link to the STSM application is available at **http://www.cost.eu/STSM**. You will need an e-COST profile to login or you can create one using the site.

It is highly recommended to consult further important and updated information about STSMs (duration, financial support and reimbursement) in the COST Vademecum Chapter 7 (http://www.cost.eu/Vademecum**).**

The application for a STSM is composed of two steps:

Step 1. Online registration by the applicant
The Applicant must use the online e-COST tool to register the request for an STSM. The following information has to be encoded with the registration:
* the title of the planned STSM;
* the planned dates and length of stay;
* a short description of the academic details of the proposed STSM
* a short description of the proposed work plan (about 250 words);
* name, postal address and e-mail of the prospective host at the receiving institution;
* a budget request with a breakdown of the expenses of the STSM;

Step 2. Formal STSM application and annexes
After encoding the information and pressing the "submit" button the applicant is requested to submit electronically (as an e-mail attachment), the necessary documents to support the application at the evaluation process. The supporting documents include an STSM proposal (described below), CV, list of publications, motivation letter, letter of support from the home institute, letter of support from host institute. These should be sent to:
* the future Host of the STSM;
* the Chair and Co-Chair of the Management Committee of the Action (chair@wise-act.eu; cristina.pronello@utc.fr)
* the Action STSM Coordinator (stsm@wise-act.eu)

Instructions for Writing the STSM Proposal

The maximum length of the **STSM proposal is 5 pages**. In addition, there are page and word limits applied to the various sections as detailed below.

Please use font size 12pt with single line spacing. The page size is A4 and all margins should be at least 15 mm. Make sure that you use the correct format to prepare the proposal, you do not exceed the maximum number of pages and that your proposal is complete.

A complete proposal should include the following:
1) **Description of work** (max 3 pages)
    a. Background
    b. Aims and objectives
    c. Justification for the choice of the host institution
    d. Description of the work to be carried out by the applicant at the host institution
    e. Expected results
    f. Dissemination of results

2) **Detailed plan of activities** (max 1 page):
    a. This section should include a diagrammatic workplan (e.g. a Gantt chart) for the entire duration of the STSM.

3) **Benefit to COST Action CA16222** (max ½ page)

4) **Benefits to the Applicant** (max ½ page)

Formal Report after the STSM

Successful applicants will need to submit a scientific report to the Host Institution and to the STSM Chair and Coordinator within 30 days from the end date of the STSM, and they will be responsible for acquiring from a senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution confirmation of formal acceptance of the scientific report. The scientific report will also require the approval of the Action Chair or STSM coordinator in order to effect the payment of the Grant. Successful applicants will be asked to submit a brief of the STSM outputs for the Action's website describing in summary the scientific report which will also be made available online, and be prepared to participate in the Action's events with a poster about their STSM when applicable or when requested by the Chair or STSM coordinator.

The report should include 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 the Host institution (if applicable);
- Foreseen publications/articles resulting from the STSM (if applicable).

The report should be accompanied by:

- Confirmation by the Host institution of the successful execution of the STSM (official signed letter)
- Confirmation from a senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution that they formally accept your scientific report (e-mail confirmation).

For dissemination purposes, the successful applicants will be required to prepare:

- A brief for the Action's website to include the following:
  - Name:
  - Institution:
  - Research Interest: (one sentence)
  - Summary of research completed in STSM: (<400 words)
  - Synthesis and application [of research?]: (<100 words)
  - Wider benefit of the STSM to the participant: (<200 words)
  - Key Outputs
  - If possible, include a photograph of you alongside your collaborators and a short quote describing your experience.
- A Poster on the STSM when attending Action events or when called upon by the Action Chair or STSM Coordinator.

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