

SECTION 8. SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS (STSM)

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).

8.1. 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:

Applicant's Home Institution	STSM Host Institution
Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member	Located in another Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
	Located in a Participating COST Partner Member
	An Approved IPC Institution
	An Approved NNC Institution
	The EU Commission or an EU Body, Office or Agency
	An Approved European RTD Organisation
	An Approved International Organisation
Located in an Approved NNC Institution	Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
Located in an Approved European RTD Organisation	Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member

Eligible STSM applicants must submit their STSM applications online at the following web address: <https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm>

8.2. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

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.

8.3. 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.

8.4. 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.

8.4.1. 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.