COST Action CA 15217 - Procedure for Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs)

(See also Section 7 of the COST Vademecum for further details.)

The application deadline is Monday, July 31, 2017.

1. Objectives and scope

STSM (Exchange Visits) are aimed at strengthening the COST network by allowing scientists to go to an institution or laboratory in another country (please refer to the Vademecum for definitions of eligible countries) to foster collaboration, to learn a new technique or to take measurements using instruments and/or methods not available in their own institution/laboratory. They are particularly intended for young scientists. STSM need to align with one or more of the six working groups of the Action.

Approximately 5 STSM are envisaged for the current budget year (June 2017-May 2018)

2. Applicant Eligibility

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.

3. Duration

STSM must respect the following criteria:

• They must have a minimum duration of 5 calendar days.
• They must have 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.

Specific additional provisions have also been made possible to encourage the participation of Early Career Investigators (ECI) in STSM. To qualify for these specific provisions, the following conditions apply:

• The mission must have a minimum duration of 91 calendar days.
• The mission must have a maximum duration of 180 calendar days.

STSM performed by ECI need to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period and always within the Action’s lifetime.
4. Financial matters

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 2,500 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

Specific provisions have been introduced to enable researchers from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) participating in the respective COST Action to receive 50% of their STSM Grant when they complete the first day of their STSM. The remaining 50% of the Grant is payable once the administrative requirements have been satisfied.

For ECIs, the calculation for an increased financial contribution must respect the following criteria:

- Up to a maximum of EUR 3,500 in total can be afforded to ECIs for missions with a duration of between 91 and 180 calendar days
- Up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day can be afforded for accommodation and meal expenses

5. Application documents

- The applicant must use the electronic application form available on https://e-services.cost.eu/user/login/STSM. After encoding the information and pressing the "submit" button the online registration tool will issue a formal STSM application which has to be downloaded and sent by the applicant electronically (by e-mail as attachment) to the Action STSM Coordinators (Philipp.pattberg@vu.nl; Patrizia.Ziveri@uab.cat).

The other supporting documents that must be enclosed and sent to the Action STSM coordinator are:

- Proposal description (about 1000 words, containing the research problem, goal and objectives of the STSM and expected results) with a clear indication of the working group(s) that the proposal will contribute to;
- The invitation letter from the Host institution
- Letter of support by the Home organization
- CV
- List of publications
- Detail budget breakdown
- Motivation letter (about 500 words)
6. Assessment

All applications received will be reviewed by the two STSM-Coordinators and a proposition made to the Core Group on whom to select. The Core Group then formulates a draft decision, which is then placed by the Chair of the Action in front of the MC for an eVote.

Assessments will be based upon the following evaluation criteria in order to rank the applications:

- Eligibility per COST criteria
- Quality of research/project outline (including clear goals and deliverables such as publications)
- Fit with working group
- Host endorsement letter/Fit with host institution
- Financial viability
- Gender balance and inclusion of ICT countries

The final approval of the applications will be made by the MC.

7. Scientific report after STSM

After completion of the STSM the grantee is required to submit to the Host and the Action STSM coordinator a short scientific report on the visit within 4 weeks after his/her stay. It should contain the following information:

- Purpose of the visit;
- Description of the work carried out during the visit
- Description of the main results obtained
- Future collaboration with host institution (if applicable)
- Projected publications/articles resulting or to result from the STSM (if applicable)
- Confirmation by the host institute of the successful execution of the mission
- Other comments (if any)

8. Notice of completion by the Management Committee

The STSM Grantee has 30 calendar days from the end date of the mission to submit a scientific report (see section 7 above) 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 scientific report being approved on behalf of the Action by the delegated person(s) responsible and by a senior researcher affiliated to the host institution. Written approval of the scientific report by the aforementioned persons must be uploaded in e-COST for archiving purposes.