

## SECTION 7. SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS (STSM)

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) are institutional visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, fostering collaboration between individuals.

### 7.1. 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 in a Home Institution	To perform an STSM in a Host Institution
Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member	In another Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
	In a Participating COST Partner Member
	In an Approved IPC Institution
	In an Approved NNC Institution
	In EU Commission, Bodies, Offices and Agencies
	In an Approved European RTD Organisation
Located in an Approved NNC institution	In an Approved International Organisation
	In a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
Located in an Approved European RTD Organisation	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>

### 7.2. 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.

### 7.3. CRITERIA FOR STSM

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.

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.

## **7.4. 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 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 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.

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

### **7.4.1. 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 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.