

## Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) rules

### 1. Definition and aims

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) are exchange visits aimed at supporting **individual mobility**, strengthening existing networks and fostering collaboration between COST Action Participants. STSMs should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action, whilst at the same time allowing the Grantees to learn new techniques, gain access to specific data, instruments and/or methods not available in their own institutions/organisations.

STSMs must respect the following criteria:

- The Applicant and the Host institution are in different countries;
- The minimum duration is 5 days;
- The maximum duration is 90 days;
- Are carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period within the AIM-COST Action's lifetime.

In addition to the standard 5-90 days missions, longer STSMs can be attributed specifically to ECIs<sup>1</sup>. In these cases, additional funding may be attributed if the following conditions are met:

- The Applicant and the Host institution are in different countries;
- The minimum duration is 91 days;
- The maximum duration is 180 days;
- Are carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period within the AIM-COST Action's lifetime.

### 2. Who is eligible

STSM applicants must be engaged in a research programme as a postgraduate student or postdoctoral fellow, or be officially affiliated to a public or private institution (Home institution). Participation of ECIs in STSM is particularly encouraged.

The following table describes all eligible scenarios:

Home institution <sup>2</sup>	Host institution <sup>3</sup>
From a Participating COST Country.	To another Participating COST Country
	To an approved Near Neighbour Country (NNC) institution
	To an approved International Partner Country (IPC) institution
	To an approved Specific Organisation (EC and EU Agencies, European RTD Organisations, International Organisations)
From an approved NNC institution	To a Participating COST Country
From an approved European RTD Organisation.	To a Participating COST Country

<sup>1</sup> Early Career Investigator: According to COST, within 8 years after completing a PhD/Doctorate degree.

<sup>2</sup> The institutions/organisations where applicants pursue their main strand of research

<sup>3</sup> The institution/ organisation that will host the STSM Grantee

Please visit [http://www.cost.eu/COST\\_Actions/ca/CA17108](http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/ca/CA17108) for the most up-to-date information about which countries and organisations are taking part in AIM-COST.

Applicants may receive only one STSM per Grant Period, and may not receive more than one STSM for the same Host institution for the duration of the AIM-COST.

### **3. How to apply**

Eligible applicants should follow these steps:

- Before submitting an application, obtain the agreement of the host institution on the work plan and proposed dates by means of an invitation letter signed by a senior researcher affiliated with the Host institution;
- Fill-in the online application form (available at: <https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm>) to register your request for an STSM;
- Fill-in the verification sheet (available at the STSM section of our [website](#))
- Provide the following supporting documents:
  - o *Curriculum vitae* (3 pages maximum);
  - o Motivation letter;
  - o Work plan: stating the topic and working group where the activity is included, objectives, expected outcomes and highlighting the contribution to the scientific objectives of AIM-COST (3 pages maximum);
  - o Letter of invitation from the host institution;
  - o Letter of support from the home institution.
  
- Send the complete files as e-mail attachment together with the necessary supporting documents to the STSM coordinator, using the email: [aimcost.stsm@gmail.com](mailto:aimcost.stsm@gmail.com);

The applicant will get a feedback email confirming the reception of the application.

During Grant Period-1, due to the short time available since the approval of the present rules, a single call will be open, starting at the day this document is published at the Action website and ending in March 31, 2019. Applications will be evaluated within two weeks from receipt. The STSM must end before May 1, 2019.

Starting from Grant Period-2, there will be two calls for STSM proposals: April and September. Proposals will be evaluated within three weeks after the submission deadline.

### **4. Financial support**

The STSM Committee will decide on the financial contribution for each STSM, taking into consideration the budget request of the applicant, the outcome of the evaluation of the STSM application, the duration of the mobility, the location of the Host institution (local prices of accommodation, distance from Home institution) and the total number of STSM approved.

Calculation of the financial contribution for STSM will respect the following criteria:

- A fixed daily rate for accommodation and meal expenses, calculated according to the country [daily rates](#) approved by the MC, up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day;
- A maximum of EUR 2,500 can be approved to for each successful applicant.

For ECIs applying for STSM with a duration between 91 and 180 calendar days, the calculation for an increased financial contribution must respect the following criteria:

- A fixed daily rate for accommodation and meal expenses, calculated according to the country [daily rates](#) approved by the MC, up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day;
- A maximum of EUR 3,500 can be approved for each successful applicant.

## 5. Evaluation process

The evaluation, grading and ranking of the STSM applications will be the task of the STSM Committee. The MC has agreed that the STSM Committee will be composed by:

- The STSM Coordinator: João Pinto ([jpinto@ihmt.unl.pt](mailto:jpinto@ihmt.unl.pt));
- The STSM Deputy Coordinator: Marie Picard ([marie.picard@ird.fr](mailto:marie.picard@ird.fr));
- The Action Chair: Alessandra della Torre ([alessandra.dellatorre@uniroma1.it](mailto:alessandra.dellatorre@uniroma1.it));
- The Action Deputy Chair: Dusan Petric ([dusanp@polj.uns.ac.rs](mailto:dusanp@polj.uns.ac.rs));
- Working Group 1 leader: Francis Schaffner ([fschaffner.consult@gmail.com](mailto:fschaffner.consult@gmail.com));
- Working Group 2 leader: Antonios Michaelakis ([a.michaelakis@bpi.gr](mailto:a.michaelakis@bpi.gr));
- Working Group 3 leader: William Wint ([william.wint@zoo.ox.ac.uk](mailto:william.wint@zoo.ox.ac.uk)).

The applications are sent to the STSM coordinator by [email](#). The Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator will analyse the applications and reject those that are incomplete or that do not meet the eligibility criteria.

Eligible applications will be sent to the respective WG leaders that will grade the work plan and the motivation letter, according to the following scale:

- 1 – Very poor: proposal illogical and not understandable.
- 2 – Poor: proposal with limited understanding, planning and no clear objectives.
- 3 – Fair: proposal with some understanding, planning and objectives.
- 4 – Good: good proposal but needs input to develop feasible outputs.
- 5 – Excellent: proposal well designed in terms of planning, feasibility and projected outputs.

In addition, WG leaders will give up to 4 points to each application according to its appropriateness within the objectives of the WG.

WG leaders will return their results to the STSM Coordinator. The STSM Coordinator will add one point to applications submitted by ECIs, rank all the proposals and, together with the STSM Deputy Coordinator and the Action Chair or Deputy Chair will suggest the specific grant amount and duration. A minimum grade of six points (out of 10) is required for grant attribution. The total number of STSM attributed per grant period will depend on the budget available for the call. In the case of even scoring, the STSM Committee will take in to account geographic and/or gender balance.

In Grant Period-1, applications receiving a score equal or higher than 6 will be immediately approved on a first-come, first-served basis. If more applications than those that could be supported by GP1 available funds will be received, these will be added to the list of the first evaluation session of GP2.

In subsequent Grant Periods, the ranked table will be sent by email to the members of the STSM Committee for their final approval. After approval, the results table will be published on the website of the Action.

## **6. Reporting and payment**

The STSM Grantee has 30 calendar days from the end date of the mission to submit a scientific report to the STSM Coordinator. Payment of the grant is subject to approval of the STSM scientific report by the STSM Coordinator and by the senior researcher affiliated to the Host institution.

The Scientific report must address the following topics:

- Purpose of the STSM;
- Description of the work carried out during the STSM;
- Description of the main results achieved;
- Future collaboration with the Host institution (if applicable);
- Foreseen publications/articles resulting from the STSM (if applicable);
- Confirmation by the Host institution of the successful execution of the STSM.

## **7. Others**

For a detailed description of the regulations and procedures, applicants should consult the COST *Vademecum*.