

3 - Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM)

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Date	Change history
25 03 2008	Amendment on Early Stage Researchers

3.1 - Objectives

The aim of a Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) shall be to contribute to the scientific objectives of a COST Action.

These Missions (Exchange Visits) are aimed at strengthening the existing networks by allowing scientists to go to an institution or laboratory **in another COST member state** 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.

An Action should normally set up at least 4 STSMs per year.

STSMs may also be used to reimburse students attending a training school (see 4 – Training Schools).

3.2 - The Applicant

The selection of the applicant is the responsibility of the Management Committee (MC) of the Action.

The **Applicant** should normally be engaged in a programme of research as a post graduate student or postdoctoral fellow or be employed in an institution of a COST Member State having signed the MoU of the Action concerned. This institution should be actively participating in the COST Action.

For the period of the STSM neither the MC of the COST Action nor the COST Office may be considered as the employer and grantees must make their own arrangements for all health, social, personal security and pension matters.

3.3 - Home and Host institution

The home and the host institution can be public or private, and should be in a COST Member State having signed the MoU and participating in the COST Action.

In exceptional cases a STSM may be approved from a home institution in a COST signatory country to a host Institution in a non-COST country but not the other way round.

Short-Term Scientific Missions between different Actions may be considered by the Management Committees of both Actions.

The Applicant is responsible for obtaining the agreement of the host institution, before submitting his application.

3.4 - Duration

Short-Term Scientific Missions, minimum one week (5 working days), maximum 3 months, shall be made within the time frame of the operation identified in the proposal and within the period of the respective COST Action. The COST Office, in exceptional cases, may expand STSMs of Early Stage Researchers (less than PhD + 10 years) to a duration beyond 3 months, but normally not more than 6 months in total. In these cases, financial support can be increased to normally maximum EUR 3 500.

3.5 - Finance

The financial support is a contribution to the costs of a STSM and may not necessarily cover all the costs in each case. The grant should normally cover only travel and subsistence.

The financial contribution for a STSM will be a fixed grant based on the Applicant's budget request and the evaluation of the application by the STSM assessment committee. An amount of EUR 60 to 90 for the daily allowance in particular for longer stays and EUR 300 for the travel is recommended. The total of a STSM shall normally not exceed EUR 2 500 (EUR 3 500 for Early Stage Researchers – see 3.4). **Any exception needs special justification.**

In any case the costs associated with the STSM must not exceed the limits set in the “rules for reimbursement by COST of expenses for experts eligible for reimbursement” (see 1. - Travel and subsistence).

An advance payment may be made in exceptional circumstances, which will require additional special justification.

3.6 - Registration and deadlines

The Applicant must use the **on-line registration tool** as described in *Annex A - On-line registration and operation of STSMs*. Applications may be submitted according to the schedules stipulated by the MC of the relevant Action, bearing in mind that delays must be taken into account for the assessment and administrative procedures.

The application together with the MC approval should arrive at the COST Office **at least 4 weeks** before the mission starts.

3.7 - The Assessment

a) The Management Committee (MC) of the Action will make the scientific and budgetary assessment and decision of the application.

The MC may formally delegate these tasks to :

- STSM coordinators or,
- a sub-group of its members (assessment panel), which may vary from time to time and from scheme to scheme, to assess proposals and to agree on those which may be funded.

It is recommended that this assessment panel consists of more than two people in order to avoid a conflict of interest, in addition to one person who is authorised to take the decision (normally the Chair). External advice may be sought.

MC members and other assessors should not involve themselves in the assessment of proposals in which they have a personal or financial interest. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. uniqueness of expertise), such a bar may be waived with the agreement of the other members involved, if the interest is declared and considered not to compromise the potential decision.

b) The MC should agree the criteria for assessing applications in line with the Actions objectives. Wherever possible, these criteria should be made known in advance to potential applicants. It is expected that every care will be taken to avoid any bias on the grounds of gender, age or nationality.

3.8 - Approval

The MC Chair or the Action's STSM coordinator is responsible for circulating the application for decision to the assessment panel.

The MC chair or the Action's STSM coordinator has to inform the COST-Office Science Officer or the grant holder (in case of an annual grant) about the decision. After checking the application for the compatibility with the existing rules and procedures the Science Officer will inform the Applicant about the outcome of the assessment and will arrange the necessary formalities for the issue of the grant in case of a positive result and availability of funding.

The decisions and assessments regarding all STSM applications should be reported to the next MC meeting **and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.**

3.9 - Deviation

Any deviations and exceptions from this procedure which contributes to the scientific objectives of the Action requires the approval of the COST Office.

Annex A: On-line registration and operation of STSMs

1) Before the STSM:

Step 1 – On-line registration by the applicant

see <http://www.cost.esf.org/stsm>

The Applicant must use the **on-line registration tool** to register their request for an STSM. The following information has to be encoded with the registration:

- Applicant's title, name, work place, postal address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address;
- name, postal address, telephone, fax and email of the prospective host at the receiving institute;
- the planned dates and length of stay;
- the title of the planned STSM;
- a short description of the proposed work plan (about 250 words);
- a short curriculum vitae;
- a budget request with breakdown for the costs of the STSM;
- bank details.

Step 2 – Formal STSM application and annexes

After encoding the information and pressing the “submit” button the on-line registration tool will issue a formal **STSM application** which has to be downloaded and sent by the applicant electronically (by e-mail as attachment) together with any necessary document which the Applicant may regard as helpful in supporting the application at the evaluation process (such as CV, list of publications, motivation letter, letter of support from the home institute etc.) to:

- the future Host of the STSM;
- the Chair of the Management Committee of the Action (can be found on the COST web-site) or the Action's STSM coordinator if available.

Step 3 – Assessment by the Management Committee

The MC chair will arrange the assessment of the STSM.

Step 4 – Approval by the Management Committee

The MC Chair or the Action's STSM coordinator informs the COST Office (or the administrative Institute of the Action) that the proposed STSM has been approved

This information from the MC Chair can be in the form of an e-mail stating

Subject: STSM Reference number, COST Action number, grantees name

On behalf of the Management Committee of the above COST Action I would like to inform you after evaluation that:

- a) the **attached** request for an STSM for has been approved and;*
- b) a **grant of EUR x** has been recommended and;*
- c) the **host institute** accepted the proposal.*

Step 5 – Cost Office Acceptance Letter (Grant Letter)

The COST Office (or the administrative Institute) will send to the Applicant an **acceptance letter** in which the grantee is informed about:

- a) the approval of the STSM and;*
- b) the level of the financial grant given.*

The Applicant has to return this **acceptance letter**, after accepting the grant with his signature.

The Applicant will receive a **payment request form** at the same time.

II) After the STSM:

Step 6 – STSM Scientific Report

After completion of the STSM the grantee is required to submit to the Host and MC chair (or the Action's STSM coordinator) a short scientific report on the visit **within 4 weeks after his 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).

Step 7 – Notice of completion by the Management Committee (post-approval)

The MC Chair or the Action's STSM coordinator or the host (if agreed by the MC) is responsible for approving the final report and sending the approval to the COST Office or the Administrative Institute.

The MC Chair of the Action's STSM coordinator will send a short notice to the COST Office or Administrative Institute with the confirmation that the STSM has been successfully accomplished and that the grant can be paid.

The information is usually in the form of an e-mail stating

Subject: STSM Reference number, COST Action number, grantee's name

*On behalf of the Management Committee of the above COST Action I would like to inform you that the **above** STSM has been completed and the scientific report approved by the MC and Host.*


Step 8 – Payment by the Cost Office

The COST Office or the grant holder will execute the payment of the fixed grant directly to the grantee or the organising institute as requested in the application after receipt of the following documents:

- Notice of completion by the Management Committee (step 7);
- Completed Payment request form (step 5).
- Summary of scientific report (maximum 1 page)

Annex B: Sample Application Form

(document produced by COST Office IT tool)



COST STSM Application Form

To be sent by the applicant as attachment by e-mail together with all the documents he/she would like to submit to support the application (full CV, detailed work plan, motivation, etc.) to the

- * Host (who will send his agreement to host the applicant to the MC Chair)
- * MC Chair for evaluation and approval

COST Office
Science Officer: *Name of Science Officer*
Telephone nr, e-mail address
COST MC Chair: *Name, e-mail address*

COST STSM Reference Number: COST-STSM-999-111
Period: xx/xx/200x to xx/xx/200x
COST Action: 999

STSM Applicant: *Name, Organisation Name, City(Country)*
e-mail address
STSM Topic: *Name of the Topic*
Host: *Name, Organisation Name, City(Country), e-mail address*

Budget Request:

Travel	X €
Subsistence (hotel/meals)	X €
Total	X €

Short CV (date of birth, higher education degree, further qualifications, max 250 ch.):

Aridus e lasso veniebat anhelitus ore, metaque erat longe: tum denique de tribus unum fetibus arboreis proles Neptunia misit. Obstipuit virgo nitidique cupidine pomi declinat cursus aurumque volubile tollit praeterit Hippomenes: resonant spectacula plausu.

Work Plan Summary (keywords, max 250 ch.):




Illa moram celeri cessataque tempora cursu corrigit atque iterum iuvenem post terga relinquit: et rursus pomi iactu remorata secundi consequitur transitque virum. pars ultima cursus restabat; 'nunc' inquit ' ades, dea muneris auctor' inque latus campi, quo tardius illa rediret.

I request the approval of a COST Short Term Scientific Mission as described above

Applicant
Name of applicant *Date*

Annex C: Sample Letter to the Beneficiary

(document produced by COST Office IT tool)

	COST Office 149 avenue Louise 1050 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 533 3800 Fax: +32 (0)2 533 3890 E-mail: office@cost.esf.org http://www.cost.esf.org	
<i>Name</i> <i>Institution</i> <i>Address</i> <i>e-mail</i>	
REFERENCE: Short Term Scientific Mission, COST Action nr Beneficiary: <i>Name, Institution</i> Host: <i>Name, Institution</i> Period: from <i>start date</i> to <i>end date</i> Place: <i>City (country)</i> Reference code: <u>COST-STSM-531-02588</u>	
Dear Mr/Ms. <i>Name</i> ,	
With reference to your application for a Short Term Scientific Mission within the COST scientific programme on Action name , I am pleased to inform you that the Management Committee of the COST Action <i>number</i> has awarded you a fixed grant amounting to X,00 € , for the above STSM.	
You are requested to inform the COST Office whether you intend to accept this grant. To do so, please sign one copy of this letter and return it to the COST Office at the above address, and retain the second copy for yourself. Please note that you should start your mission at the foreseen time and inform the COST Office about any changes <u>in advance of the mission</u> .	
No later than 4 weeks after completion of your mission, you must send your <u>scientific report</u> together with the <u>host report</u> to the Chair or the member of the Management Committee responsible for the STSM. A copy of these two reports should also be sent directly to the COST Office together with the completed payment request form in order to be eligible for reimbursement.	
Please note that the guidelines for the Short Term Scientific Missions for COST can be found in http://www.cost.esf.org/guideline .	
Yours sincerely,	
SO Name Science Officer	
<i>I have read of the rules for the execution of the COST Short Term Scientific Missions and I accept this offer.</i>	
Scientist name:	
Signature: Date:	
 COST is supported by the EU RTD Framework Programme	 ESF provides the COST Office through an EC contract

Annex E: COST STSM Standard e-mails

Standard e-mails to the COST Office (or the Administrative Institute)

1) Information to the COST Office after STSM APPROVAL:

Subject: STSM Reference number, COST Action number, grantee's name

On behalf of the Management Committee of the above COST Action I would like to inform you after evaluation that:

- a) the **attached** request for an STSM for has been approved and*
- b) a **grant of EUR x** has been recommended and*
- c) the **host institute** accepted the proposal.*

2) Information to the COST Office after STSM COMPLETION by MC Chair or STSM coordinator:

Subject: STSM Reference number, COST Action number, grantee's name

On behalf of the Management Committee of the above COST Action I would like to inform you that the above STSM has been completed and the scientific report approved by the MC and Host.