NetwOArk STSM grant call Grant Period 2 (2023-2024)

Preamble.
Before applying, all applicants must carefully and completely read Annex II of the COST [Annotated Rules]() (), Short Term Scientific Missions. Updates to the official Rules automatically take precedence over the sections quoted here.

1 Scope & Eligibility

From the COST Rules:
Short-Term Scientific Missions support capacity building and transfer of knowledge through bilateral/multilateral collaborations. They also help achieving the Action MoU objectives and deliverables (research coordination). Missions are very flexible and inclusive networking activities crucial to establish new collaborations or reinforce existing collaborations across disciplines and different sectors (e.g., academia and industry / SMEs) with possible impact on career development.
In NetwOArk: STSMs are a major performance indicator for a COST Action and therefore highly encouraged. Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) are research visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, strengthening existing networks and fostering collaboration between COST Action Participants. They should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of this COST Action, whilst at the same time allowing those taking part in the missions to learn new techniques or methods, gain access to specific facilities, instruments or data that are not available in their own institution/organisation.

2 Criteria for an STSM

From the Rules:
STSM must respect the following criteria:
- consist of a visit to a host organization located in a different country than the country of the applying researcher or innovator;
- are designed for specific work to be carried out and for a determined period of time. STSM need to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period.

In NetwOArk:
An STSM can have a duration of 5 calendar days up to 90 calendar days, that includes travel. In view of the reporting requirements (COST Annotated Rules page 98) STSMs must take place in the period March 2024 – Sep 2024, with an end date before Oct 1, 2024. The researcher must be affiliated to a legal entity in a COST Full/Cooperating Member, NNC or European RTD. We particularly encourage Young Researchers (under 40 years old) and/or from ITC to apply.

3 Financial support

From the Rules:
A 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 3000 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.

In NetwOArk: The amount of the grant is decided by an evaluation committee (composition see below 5.) Payment of the grant takes place after the STSM is finished (except for researchers from an Inclusiveness Target country (ITC), who can request a pre-payment of 50 %) and is conditional on the submission of a short scientific report (cf. 6).

4 Application procedure
From the Rules:
Eligible STSM applicants must submit their STSM applications online. See Annex for details.

In NetwOArk: Applications can be submitted at two deadlines in the Grant Period: February 1, 2024 and May 1, 2024.

The application needs to be submitted at least six weeks before the expected starting date. Applicants are however encouraged to apply as early as possible, since there is a limited number of STSM grants available.

The necessary supporting documents should be in .pdf format and are listed in the Annex.

5 Evaluation of applications
From the Rules:
The evaluation of each received STSM application is performed by the Evaluation Committee, mandated to perform this task on behalf of the NetwOArk MC.

In NetwOArk: Proposals will be evaluated for their quality and for their relevance to NetwOArk objectives. See Annex for details.

Proposals will be evaluated by a committee composed of the Grant Awarding Coordinator, a representative from each NetwOArk Working Group and the scientific coordination representative, dr. Chris Ladel. In case of conflicts of interest, the evaluation committee member(s) involved will be replaced by the Grant Holder Scientific Representative. The fair distribution of the STSMs across research groups, countries and genders is part of the selection.

Only one proposal by a single applicant or legal entity (as host or applicant affiliation) will be accepted during one Grant Period. The amount granted will be based on the budget requested by the applicant, as well as the funds available for STSMs in the NetwOArk budget for the Grant Period. Note: the Evaluation Committee can decide to approve the grant with a lower amount than requested. Since longer STSMs are more likely to be associated with higher costs, the duration of the STSM will also be considered when deciding the granted support.

The applicants will be notified of the application results within 21 working days of the application deadline. The evaluation committee will provide brief feedback about the evaluation to the applicants.

6 Submission of the STSM report
From the Rules:
The STSM Grantee has 30 calendar days from the end date of the mission to submit a scientific report via e-COST, which is mandatory to receive reimbursement. Payment of the Grant is subject to a STSM scientific report being approved on behalf of the Action's MC by the Grant Awarding Coordinator and one representative from the Evaluation Committee. Written approval of the STSM scientific report by the aforementioned persons must be uploaded in e-COST for archiving purposes by the Grant Holder Manager.

In NetwOArk: Besides detailing the scientific findings in this report, it is equally important to present the importance of the visit in terms of personal development, networking and capacity building (e.g. collaborations). Failure to send the report within 30 days will automatically cancel the grant. Payment of the grant should be expected
2-4 weeks after submitting the report.
See the Annex for details about the Report content.

7 Frequently asked questions
1. Can I postpone my STSM?
No. STSMs can only happen during the period that has been applied for. If the originally intended period is not feasible, then the current application needs to be cancelled and a new STSM applied for.
2. I don't know when I would like to go. Can I just apply for three weeks during a period of one month (or similar)?
No. STSMs must have fixed start and end dates. Moreover, all supporting documents (cf. 4) need to explicitly mention these dates.
3. Where do I upload my receipts after I have returned from the STSM?
Do I have to prove that my mode of transportation was the most economical?
You do not have to provide any receipts for travel or accommodation. STSM grants are paid as lump sums, so no documentation is needed.

ANNEX
 # Applying for a STSM grant via e-COST
For detailed instructions and help see the Grant Awarding user guide.

In summary: go to the COST website using this link: https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants/add
Then click on the blue box "Short-term Scientific Mission grant"
Select our Action "CA21110"
and complete the information which includes:
• A title for your STSM (limit 128 character limit, including spaces)
• Start and end date (within the active Grant Period; i.e. ends before 31 October)
• Budget requested by the applicant
• Information about the host institution and contact person

Save the draft.

You will then return to the application page where you can select "upload documents" from the "options" drop-down box. This will take you to a page where you can download the COST template for the application form.
You will need to complete this.
Then proceed to upload the following documents:
• **Application form** (mandatory e-COST template)
• **Letter of support from the host** confirming the host institution organisation can host the STSM applicant to perform the activities detailed in the STSM work plan on the agreed dates
• **CV** (including a list of academic publications – if applicable)
• **Budget plan** (up to €3,000) – Please upload a table, which summarises the budget requested. Typical categories would be:
o Travel (to and from and during the STSM)
o Accommodation
o Subsistence
o Any other costs relevant to your STSM

Note: Please make the STSM request before the deadline of an STSM call.

 # Evaluation criteria for Awarding STSM
STSM funding will be awarded according to the COST key principles of:
Excellence – Inclusivity- Balance (gender and nation)
Criteria for evaluation will be as follows:
- The relevance and application of the research to the field of the Action – a detailed work plan will help determine if the scientific aims of the work will be relevant and applicable to the Action's aims (1-5 points).
- The quality and clarity of the proposed research – The STSM application should be of high quality, arguing clearly and cogently the importance and timeliness of the research (1-5 points).

- The choice of Host institution – the applicant must give specific scientific reasons for visiting their chosen Host institution. We will also be tracking the geographical distribution of the Host institutions to ensure there is an evenly spread network for knowledge transfer. The involvement of ITC countries will be a plus (1-5 points).
- The profile of the researcher – We will take into account the researcher's potential of successfully completing the STSM on the basis of their previous work and achievements commensurate to their career stage. In line with COST policy, we will preferentially award STSMs to Young Researchers. This should not discourage more experienced researchers from applying (1-5 points).
- The publication/output potential of the research carried out – Based on the STSM work plan and detailed publication/output plan (1-5 points).
- Suitability of the requested budget (1-5 points)

Equal weighting will be given to the criteria. In some cases the Committee may ask for more information or ask the candidate to re-submit with further information or a revised budget.

STSM Report
The STSM Grantee has 30 calendar days from the end date of the mission to submit a scientific report via e-COST.
The Report is a mandatory COST template, to be submitted via e-COST. In its description the report should contain:
- Purpose of the STSM;
- Description of the work carried out during the STSM;
- Description of the main results obtained;
- 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;
- Other comments (if any).