# Guidelines for COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment

**November 2020**

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### EUROPEAN COOPERATION
### IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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**Document Change History**

| Version | Release date | Summary of changes |
|---------|--------------|--------------------|
| 2017.01 | 11 January 2017 | First release of the document |
| 2017.02 | 01 July 2017 | 1. New networking tool added: Conference Grants.<br>2. Monitoring and Final Assessment includes more detailed information on First Progress Review at 12 Months and Second Progress Review at 24 months.<br>3. STSM process was updated to correspond to the new online e-COST tool.<br>4. Minor text adjustments throughout the document for language optimisation. |
| 2018.05 | 04 May 2018<br><br><br><br>19 February 2019 | 5. Amendment to include Albania as a COST Full Member and ITC.<br>6. Amendment to include Kosovo[1] as a Near Neighbour Country.<br>7. Amendment to include the Republic of Moldova as a COST Full Member and ITC.<br>8. Amendment to change of the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the Republic of North Macedonia |
| 2019.06 | 20 June 2019 | 9. Table of contents is clickable<br>10. Extended requirements for Action extensions (Section 4.1.2)<br>11. Key leadership positions are defined in Section 4.3.2<br>12. Update to include simplification of the COST International cooperation and specific organisation participation rules approved by the CSO (COST 135/14 REV 2) at its 206th meeting of 10-11 April 2019 |
| 2019.09 | 04 September 2019 | 13. Amendment to include COST Innovators Grant (CIG) (section 4.5) |
| 2020.11 | 30 November 2020 | 14. New electronic vote: e-Vote tool (section 3.3.1)<br>15. New section on COST Partner Member Participation (section 3.2.2)<br>16. FAD phasing out<br>17. New section on Guidance on GDPR implementation at Action level (section 7)<br>18. Text adjustments throughout the document for language optimisation and limitation of repetitions of the COST Vademecum |

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[1] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

# TABLE OF CONTENT

# 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The present "Guidelines for COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment" provides a practical step-by-step guide for the COST Actions management and networking activities.

The rules and general principles governing all COST activities are established in a series of documents approved by the CSO under the collective heading of "COST Implementation Rules".

Namely:

- Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities (COST 132/14 REV6)
- COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation and Approval (COST 133/14 REV5)
- COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment (COST 134/14 REV4)
- COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation rules (COST 135/14 REV2)

These rules set the definitions of the terms used in these Guidelines.
The administrative and financial provisions applicable to COST Actions are detailed in the COST Vademecum.

These documents are the binding legal reference and take precedence over any guidelines. They are available on the Documents and Guidelines page of the COST web. In case of any contradiction between the COST Implementation Rules and the present guidelines, COST Implementation Rules shall prevail.

# 2. INTRODUCTION TO COST

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a pan-European intergovernmental framework dedicated to European-based scientific and technological networking activities aiming at allowing their participants to jointly develop their ideas and new initiatives across all scientific disciplines through trans-European coordination of nationally or otherwise funded research activities. COST has presently 38 Full Members, one Cooperating Member and one Partner Member; the list is available on the COST Members webpage https://www.cost.eu/who-we-are/members/. Since its creation in 1971, COST has contributed to closing the gap between science, policy makers and society throughout Europe and beyond.

COST mission is to provide networking opportunities for researchers and innovators in order to strengthen Europe's capacity to address scientific, technological and societal challenges. COST contributes to the objective of the European Research Area (ERA) by encouraging participants to share, create and apply knowledge.

The COST Association is the legal entity in charge of the management and implementation of COST Strategy, policies and activities towards the achievement of the COST mission. The overview of the COST structure and its intergovernmental dimension may be found on the COST Organisation webpage: http://www.cost.eu/about_cost/organisation.

COST draws the funds for its activities from the EU Framework Programme Horizon 2020. The COST Association has signed a Framework Partnership Agreement with the European Commission, defining the Strategic Action Plan, setting the objectives, policies, and legal frame for the period 2014-2020[2]. Specific Grant Agreements describing the implementation of the COST Action Plan are signed yearly. COST has put in place a policy and a set of rules aiming at fulfilling its mission and specific objectives:

- COST Excellence and Inclusiveness,
- Participation of Non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations.

The COST main instrument is the COST Actions. COST Actions are selected through a bottom-up, science and technology driven approach. COST Actions provide the operational basis for structuring pan-European networks facilitating Action Participants from COST Members and beyond to jointly develop ideas and new initiatives in science and technology.

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[2] Framework Partnership Agreement n° 633054 – COST H2020

COST Actions are governed by legal, ethical, contractual, and administrative rules and principles in compliance with best scientific stewardship and the set of COST Rules. COST expects ethical behaviour from all actors involved in COST activities. COST strives to implement transparent and efficient management procedures.

All COST Action participants need to observe the COST Code of Conduct that invites COST Action participants to devote their best efforts to nurturing a climate of respect, mutual trust and cooperation.

# 3. COST ACTIONS

## 3.1. COST ACTIONS OVERVIEW

COST Actions are Science and Technology networks open to researchers and innovators from universities, research centres, companies, in particular SMEs, as well as other stakeholders and relevant legal entities. COST Actions are set up to achieve identified objectives described in the Action Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) within their four-year duration, centred on the sharing, creation, dissemination and application of knowledge. COST funds networking activities, it does not fund research itself.

COST Actions are:
- Pan-European, and globally connected: the COST inter-governmental framework spans 38 Full Members; 1 Cooperating Member and 1 Partner Member; Partner Members may join on the basis of the acceptance of the MoU; Non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations may join Actions on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit.
- Bottom-up: in terms of S&T fields and topics, COST welcomes any novel, original and innovative idea, i.e. there are no pre-defined topics / targets.
- Open: in terms of participation (all stakeholders and all partners), COST Actions can grow in size during their lifetime.
- Unique: as a platform to coordinate national research funding and resources within a lightweight framework.
- Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinary: bridging different research communities, disciplines, fields and methodologies.
- Outcome and Impact-Oriented: COST Actions are monitored against their expected output and impact.

COST Actions are "bottom-up" in two ways: their topics are chosen by proposers and the scientific management decisions are entrusted to the Action Management Committees. They are open throughout their lifetime to new members and are adaptable in terms of internal organisation and strategy. They shall promote actively the participation of the next generation of relevant stakeholders. Thus, COST Actions are especially well-suited to pursue new ideas through collaborative efforts and/or to build communities around emerging Science and Technology (S&T) topics and societal questions.

COST Actions' activities are organised and delivered by an Action Management Committee through a range of Networking Tools namely: meetings (including Action Management Committee (Action MC) meetings, Working Group (WG) meetings, Workshops and Conferences (W/C), Dissemination meetings); Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM); Training Schools, ITC Conference Grants and Dissemination. The networking activities purpose is to support the COST Action in addressing the main aim, answering the research questions and achieving the overall objectives of the COST Action, as these have been described in the COST Action MoU.

### 3.1.1. THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING OF A COST ACTION

The MoU is a multilateral agreement between the COST Members that participate in the COST Action. The MoU consists of two parts: the MoU proper and the Technical Annex.
The MoU comprises:
- The reference number and title of the Action
- The main aim of the Action
- The required minimum number of COST Members participating in the Action
- The COST Action structure, objectives and strategy
- The duration of the Action, calculated as from the date of the first meeting of the Action Management Committee

The Technical Annex contains a description of the networking project, namely the COST Action Structure and Strategy.

The MoU must be accepted by at least seven (7) COST Full or Cooperating Members before the COST Action may start and organise the first Action MC meeting. The procedure on how a COST Member joins a COST Action is described in section 3.2..

### 3.1.2.OFFICIAL START DATE AND DURATION OF A COST ACTION

A COST Action starts officially on the date of the first Action MC meeting. The first Action MC meeting is always organised, administered, and funded centrally by the COST Association.

COST Actions that fail to start within nine (9) months from the date of approval of the Action by the CSO will be referred back to the CSO for decision.

A COST Action has normally a duration of four (4) years. In exceptional and well-justified circumstances, this period may be modified and a COST Action may be:

- Terminated by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) before its originally intended end date, if any circumstances make the benefit of continuing the COST Action questionable.
- Extended by the Executive Board (EB)[3] or the COST Association Director[4] for a maximum of six months beyond its originally intended end date. Such extension is only possible if during the course of the COST Action the Action MC finds that it is impossible to finalise the work within the normal duration to a satisfactory conclusion, or if the monitoring process of the COST Action reveals that the extension would contribute to the achievement of the proposed objectives and is likely to maximise the impact of the COST Action. Any such extension shall be exceptional and must be justified from scientific and technological perspectives.

   The extension requests have to be submitted at the latest six (6) months before the end date of the COST Action. When the Action MC of a COST Action requests an extension and a budget increase, then both requests must be made simultaneously. The extension request requires the approval of the MC; the Action Chair sends the request with signature on the institution's letterhead (scan attached to mail to the SO). The request must specifically address the expected outcomes and impacts of the extension. The outcomes and impacts of the extension need to be addressed in the Final Assessment Report.

## 3.2. COST ACTION PARTICIPATION

### 3.2.1.COST FULL OR COOPERATING MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Researchers and innovators or other stakeholders affiliated to universities, research centres, companies or other relevant legal entities located in a COST Full or Cooperating Member may participate in a COST Action once their respective country has accepted the MoU of the COST Action in question.

The procedure for researchers and innovators or other stakeholders from a COST Full or Cooperating Member to become a COST Action Participant is as follows:

- **As Action MC member**: The COST National Coordinator will nominate representatives affiliated to an institution of the COST Full or Cooperating Member to the Action MC. The selection of the representatives is based on national rules and procedures.  Note: if a COST Full or Cooperating Member wants to join an Action more than twelve months after its approval by the CSO, the participation will be subject to an approval by the COST Action Management Committee.

- **As WG member:** Researchers and innovators interested in joining a COST Action should first check whether the COST Full or Cooperating Member, in which their institutions are located , is officially participating in the COST Action. The information can be retrieved from the COST Action page in the COST website. Two different possibilities may exist for becoming a WG member:

   a) If their COST Full or Cooperating Member is participating in the COST Action, then the interested potential participant should contact either the Action Chair or the WG Leader of the

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[3] When there are budget implications.
[4] When there are no budget implications.

WG, which the potential participant is interested in joining in, and express their interest in joining the COST Action as a WG member. The Working Group composition or membership is managed and decided by the Action MC.

b) If their COST Full or Cooperating Member is not participating to the COST Action, then the interested potential participant should contact the COST National Coordinator as the participation requires first a MoU acceptance and a participation in the Action Management Committee (see above).

Note: Action MC members nominated from those COST Full or Cooperating Members that have not yet approved the MoU do not have voting rights within the Action MC and may not be elected to any leadership or coordination roles within the COST Action until the process for becoming officially a participating COST Full or Cooperating Member has been finalised.

### 3.2.2. COST PARTNER MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Researchers and innovators or other stakeholders with relevant expertise affiliated to universities, research centres, companies or other relevant legal entities located in a COST Partner Member [5]:
- may participate in any activities organized by the COST Action
- may not access key leadership positions in COST Actions

Action Participants should get into contact with their national contact point.

Details on eligibility (financial) conditions for participation are defined in the COST Vademecum and summarized in the  Eligibility table in Annex of the COST Vademecum.

### 3.2.3. NON-COST COUNTRIES (NNC AND IPC) PARTICIPATION

Participation of Non-COST Countries in COST Actions is regulated by CSO Decision 135/14 REV 2 - COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation rules.

Individuals affiliated to universities, research centres, companies or other relevant legal entities located in Non-COST countries (NNCs or IPCs) may participate in a COST Action on the basis of an ascertained mutual benefit. They may become MC Observers in the Action and be invited to MC meetings, having no voting rights.

When individuals located in Non-COST countries (NNCs or IPCs) are part of the network of proposers, their participation as Action MC Observers shall be considered as approved upon the Action approval by the CSO.

When individuals located in Non-COST countries (NNCs or IPCs) are not part of the network of proposers, their participation in a COST Action as Action MC Observers requires the approval of the Action MC on the one hand and of the Head of Science Operations of the COST Administration on the other hand following the procedure as described below:
- The applicant contacts the Action Chair expressing their interest in joining the COST Action.
- The Action Chair launches the application request in e-COST and fills in the benefits for COST and the COST Action.
- The applicant receives an automated email with a request to provide additional information and to finalise the application (benefits for the country, description of the applicant's activities in the COST Action, contact details).
- On receipt of the completed application, the Science Officer will review and validate the application.
- The Action Chair is informed that the application has been accepted and, in e-COST, either schedules an automatic Action MC vote or records the outcome of the vote if held at an Action MC meeting.
- On receipt of the Action MC approval, the application will be examined and submitted for approval by the COST Association Head of Science Operations.

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[5] South Africa is a COST Partner Member.

- Upon approval by the COST Association, the applicant receives a notification email and becomes an Action MC Observer after confirming their participation in e-COST.

Note:
- In the final year of a COST Action, applications from researchers or other stakeholders affiliated to institutions in Non-COST Countries to formally join a COST Action are not considered.
- Action MC Observers from Non-COST countries (IPC and NNC) have no voting rights within the Action MC and may not be appointed by the MC to any Key leadership position.

The table hereunder summarises the Participation of researchers from NNCs and IPCs in COST Actions:

| | Researchers from Near Neighbour Country | Researchers from International Partner Country |
|---|---|---|
| Right to participate to a COST Action | ✅ Based on ascertained mutal benefit | ✅ Based on ascertained mutual benefit |
| Eligibility to funding | ✅ | ❌ |
| Need for Action MC approval for taking part in a COST Action if part of the proposal | ❌ | ❌ |
| Need for Action MC approval for taking part in a COST Action if not part of the proposal | ✅ | ✅ |
| Need for HoSO[6] approval for taking part in a COST Action if not part of the proposal | ✅ | ✅ |
| Position in the MC | MC observer | MC observer |
| Participant in COST Action activities | ✅ | ✅ |
| Access to any key leadership positions | ❌ | ❌ |

Details on eligibility (financial) conditions for participation are defined in the COST Vademecum and summarized in the  Eligibility table in Annex of the COST Vademecum.

### 3.2.4. SPECIFIC ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATION

Participation of Specific Organisations in COST Actions is regulated by CSO Decision 135/14 REV 2 - - COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation rules.

The Specific Organizations are:

- EU bodies, offices, and agencies
- European RTD Organizations[7]
- International Organizations

In order to facilitate the dialogue and transfer of knowledge COST fosters the participation of science actors, policy makers and other relevant organisations and institutions in the COST Actions. The participation of the Specific Organisations does not require the acceptance of the Action MoU Researchers or other stakeholders from Specific Organisations shall agree on the objectives of the COST Action they are participating in and faithfully accomplish their tasks in that regard. They also shall

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[6] Head of Science Operations (HoSO) of the COST Association
[7] The COST Association shall assess the qualification as European RTD Organisation on a case by case basis. The COST Administration is free to require any documentation that might be considered useful in this regard.

sign a letter of confidentiality containing, inter alia, provisions about the non-disclosure of confidential information and IPR related matters.

The table hereunder summarises the Participation of Specific Organisations in COST Actions:

| | EU bodies, offices and agencies | European RTD Organisations | International Organisations |
|---|---|---|---|
| Right to participate to a COST Action | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ Based on ascertained mutual benefit |
| Eligibility to funding | ✘ | ✔ | ✘ |
| Need for Action MC approval for taking part in a COST Action if part of the proposal | ✘ | ✘ | ✘ |
| Need for Action MC approval for taking part in a COST Action if not part of the proposal | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| Need for HoSO[8] approval for taking part inf a COST Action if not part of the proposal | ✘ | ✘ | ✔ |
| Position in the MC | MC observer | MC observer | MC observer |
| WG Participant | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| Access to any key leadership positions | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ |

Details on eligibility (financial) conditions for participation are defined in the COST Vademecum and summarized in the  Eligibility table in Annex of the COST Vademecum.

### 3.3. COST ACTION ACTORS

#### 3.3.1. ACTION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (ACTION MC) MEMBERS AND ACTION MC SUBSTITUTES

The Action MC is comprised of up to two Action MC members per COST Full or Cooperating Member participating in the Action. Each MC member from COST Full or Cooperating Members is nominated by their respective COST National Coordinator (CNC) according to national procedures. If a MC member cannot attend a MC meeting, the person can be replaced by a MC substitute; the Action Chair and Action Grant Holder should be informed accordingly.

The Action MC is in charge of the management and implementation of the COST Action with a view to achieving the COST Action scientific and technological objectives as specified in the COST ActionMoU.

The Action MC has the responsibility to:

- Define and manage the COST Action Strategy including planning of the networking activities necessary to achieve the COST Action Objectives as outlined in the COST Action MoU.
- Define and manage the COST Action Structure, i.e. election of the Action Chair, Vice-Chair and selection of the Grant Holder, Working Group composition, membership, leadership and structure, and any other roles necessary to achieve the COST Action Objectives.

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[8] Head of Science Operations (HoSO) of the COST Association

- Define the Work and Budget Plan for each Grant Period and ensure its implementation according to COST rules.
- Implement COST Policy and Rules.
- Decide whether to approve the participation of COST Full or Cooperating Members, after 12 months from the CSO approval of the COST Action.
- Decide whether to approve the participation of Specific Organisations and individuals from COST Partner Members and Non-COST Countries, when requested (see section 3.2).
- Establish specific provisions linked to the management, share, creation, or exploitation of knowledge, including Open Access policy and Intellectual Property Rights that may arise from the COST Action activities. Such provisions must comply with national, European and international legislation and the need for protecting the participants' legitimate interests.
- Perform the reporting duties (Progress Reports and Final Achievement Report) allowing for the monitoring and final assessment of the COST Action and financial reporting.
- Decide, among potentially eligible participants, the ones entitled to reimbursement.

Budgetary and strategic decisions linked to the management of a COST Action must adhere to the opinions and requests of the majority of the Action MC in line with the rules and principles detailed in this document and in the rules for COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment (Annex I "Rules of Procedure for COST Action Management Committees"). Acquiring agreement within the Action MC with respect to the management and implementation of COST Action activities qualifies as Action MC approval.

There are the following alternative procedures that the Action MC must follow to acquire Action MC approval:

- **Simple majority vote at an Action MC meeting**: decisions at Action MC meetings by simple majority vote may only be made if at least two-thirds of the participating COST Full or Cooperating Members are represented. Each Participating COST Full or Cooperating Member has one vote hence the two Action MC members from one COST Member must agree. In case of no agreement between the two participating COST Full or Cooperating Member representatives, the respective participating COST Full or Cooperating Member vote is invalid. Decisions made by majority vote at Action MC meetings must be recorded in the minutes of the given meeting. The minutes recording the decisions must be filed with the relevant documents.  and must be communicated to the Action MC and the COST Association and uploaded onto the e-COST platform.

     **Or:**

- **Simple majority vote held electronically** via email (also known as "written procedure"): Electronic vote is valid if all the following conditions are met:
  a) Voting is initiated and managed by the Action Chair or, whenever the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder or acts as a local organiser, voting is initiated by the Vice-Chair with regards to commitments.
  b) All Action MC members are among the recipients of the message initiating the vote (and Action MC Observers receive the message but have no voting right).
  c) MC Substitutes may only vote where specifically requested to do so by a MC member that is unable to participate in the vote.
  d) Where the two MC members of a COST Full or Cooperating Member express dissenting positions the vote of that COST Full or Cooperating Member shall be recorded as invalid.
  e) The vote is open for seven days.
  f) The COST Association is informed of the outcome of the vote.
  g) The outcome of the vote is included in the minutes of the next Action MC meeting after the electronic vote is held.

In case of electronic vote, absence of reply shall be interpreted as consent except as otherwise decided by the Action MC.

     **Or:**

- **Simple majority vote held electronically** via e-Vote tool:
     A dedicated online tool is available in the e-cost platform. It is highly recommended to use this tool to seek electronically MC approval. The outcome of the vote is automatically displayed in the MC decisions page in e-cost and should be included in the minutes of the next Action MC

meeting after the electronic vote is held. A "e-Vote tool" user guide is available under the following link: http://www.cost.eu/e-vote-guide.

Electronic vote (via e-mail or via e-Vote) may not be used for the following cases for which specific procedures and dedicated online tools are available:
- approval of the participation of Specific Organisations or applicants from NNCs or IPCs
- approval of the annual Work and Budget Plan.

### 3.3.2.COST ACTION LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Action key leadership positions are defined in the Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities. One of the key leadership positions shall be reserved to a representative of a COST Inclusiveness Target Country.

At the first Action MC meeting, the Action MC must elect the Action Chair by means of a simple majority vote. The Action MC also elects the Action Vice-Chair. The COST Action Chair and Vice Chair must represent different participating COST Full or Cooperating Members or be affiliated to the European Commission, a EU body, office or agency or a European RTD Organisation participating in the COST Action, and preferably should not have any additional key leadership position.

At the same meeting, the Action MC should also elect other key leadership positions as Working Group Leaders, Grant Holder Scientific Representative, STSM Coordinator, Science Communication Manager. These Key leadership positions are entered on the e-COST Leadership Positions page.

The role of the Action Chair has under its remit the following tasks and responsibilities:

- Coordinate COST Action activities in line with the scientific objectives defined in the COST Action MoU and the Work and Budget Plan.
- Convene and chair Action MC meetings, including preparing the meeting agenda and validating the meeting minutes.
- Manage requests and the approval procedure for Specific Organisations and applicants from NNCs or IPCs who want to formally join the COST Action.
- Manage the application procedure of COST Full, Cooperating Members that want to join the COST Action as of one year after the date the CSO approved the COST Action has elapsed.
- Prepare a Work and Budget Plan to be approved by the Action Science Officer and the Action MC and in line with the allocated budget.
- Seek the approval of the Action MC and the Action Science Officer for significant changes to the approved Work and Budget Plan such as e.g. the cancellation of activities and/ or the inclusion of additional activities
- Where formal amendments to the approved Work and Budget Plan are necessary (due to revision of Grant Period duration and/ or allocated Budget), the Action Chair must prepare a revised Work and Budget Plan to be approved by the Action MC in line with the changes which have been negotiated with the Action Science Officer and approved by the COST Association.
- Manage Action MC votes concerning expenditures (for meetings, Short Term Scientific Missions, Training Schools, Dissemination activities), according to COST rules, and communicate the outcome of Action MC decisions to the Grant Manager and to the Action Science Officer.
- Define and communicate to the Grant Manager, on behalf of the Action MC, a list of all eligible Action Participants who are entitled to be reimbursed for their attendance at approved meetings and Training Schools - this task must be assumed by the Action Vice Chair when the COST Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution; (COST Vademecum).
- Authorise payments - this task must be assumed by the Action Vice Chair when the COST Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution; (COST Vademecum).
- Review, sign and date financial reports - this task must be assumed by the Action Vice Chair when the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution (COST Vademecum).
- Inform the Action Science Officer about key developments in the COST Action.
- Prepare with the MC and submit on behalf of the MC to COST Association the requested Monitoring Progress Reports and Final Achievement Report of the COST Action.

The Action MC may elect other leadership position as the ITC Conference Grants coordinator and any other leadership positions within the COST Action deemed necessary by the Action MC, as e.g. WG

Vice Leaders[9]. The ITC Conference Grant Coordinator can be entered on the e-COST Leadership Positions page.

### 3.3.3. ACTION MC OBSERVERS

Researchers and innovators affiliated to universities, research centres, companies or other relevant legal entities located in the different sub-categories described below can become MC Observers. The sub-categories of Action MC Observers are:

- Individuals based in Non-COST Countries (NNCs and IPCs)
- Individuals affiliated to approved Specific Organisations
  - Individuals affiliated to EU bodies, offices and agencies
  - Individuals affiliated to European RTD Organisations
  - Individuals affiliated to approved International Organisations
- Individuals based in COST Partner Members

Action MC Observers may attend Action MC meetings and approved activities but do not have voting rights within the Action MC.

### 3.3.4. WORKING GROUP (WG) MEMBERS

The objectives of Working Groups (WG) are to perform the tasks required for a COST Action to fulfil its scientific objectives in line with those objectives defined in the COST Action MoU. The Action MC appoints WG members for each of the Working Groups. It is expected that every Action MC Member actively participates in at least one WG. WG members are selected from amongst Action MC members, Action MC substitutes and other COST Action Participants from participating COST Full or Cooperating Members, as well as Action MC Observers from Partner Members, and Specific Organisations and NNC and IPC.

The Action MC should appoint from amongst its members (and in very exceptional circumstances, their Action MC substitutes) including MC Observers affiliated to EU bodies, offices and agencies or European RTD Organisations, a WG Leader (and possibly a Vice Leader) for each Working Group. In appointing WG Leaders (and Vice Leaders), the Action MC must take into account COST Policy and Rules (see section 4) with respect to promoting gender balance, enabling Early Career Investigators (ECI) and broadening geographical inclusiveness. It is recommended that no more than two Working Group Leaders (and Vice Leaders) are from the same COST Full or Cooperating Member or no more than one when they are from the same COST Full or Cooperating Member of the Action Chair or Action Vice-Chair.

Further, in appointing WG Leaders the Action MC must take into account the fact that one of the Key leadership positions in the Action management shall be reserved to a representative of a COST Inclusiveness Target Country.

The WG Leader is responsible for:
- Coordinating and managing activities and tasks associated with achieving the COST Action scientific and networking objectives specific to the Working Group in question, taking into account the COST Policy and Rules.
- Providing input for the preparation of the Progress Reports and Final Achievement Report and presenting the progress of the Working Group to the Action MC, and the COST Association, if deemed necessary.
- Ensuring the appropriate dissemination of results and outputs generated by the Working Group in order to maximise the impact of the COST Action.

### 3.3.5. SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS COORDINATOR AND COMMITTEE

The Action MC should appoint amongst its members a Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) Coordinator and a STSMs Committee. The STSM Committee is responsible for defining transparent criteria for the evaluation of STSM applications in line with COST rules and in collaboration with the Action MC. The evaluation criteria defined should be communicated to all potential applicants. The STSMs Committee is also responsible for the evaluation of STSM applications, the selection of the successful candidates and the approval of the scientific report submitted by the STSM grantee after the

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[9] WG Vice leaders can also be called co-leaders or deputy leaders.

mission. The evaluation criteria must consider COST Policy and Rules with respect to promoting gender balance, enabling Early Career Investigators (ECI) and broadening geographical inclusiveness (see section 4). The selection of STSM grantees made by the STSM Committee must be communicated to the Action MC in a subsequent Action MC meeting. The details as the STSM titles, the grantees names, the allocated grant amounts, the respective home and host institutions should be recorded in the minutes of that Action MC meeting.

### 3.3.6. CORE GROUP MEMBERS

The Action MC can constitute a Core Group; a Core Group typically consists of Key leadership position holders and any other leadership positions within the COST Action deemed necessary by the Action MC. The Action MC has to approve the composition of the Core Group. The Core Group can take decisions on matters for which it has been formally mandated by the MC. The Core Group should assist the Action Chair in determining, on behalf of the Action MC, from amongst eligible participants those who are entitled to be reimbursed. Whenever issues arise, which can directly impact the Work and Budget Plan and are not in the mandate of the Core Group, or for any other key decision regarding the COST Action management, the Core Group must first consult with the Action MC and by no means can decide exclusively.

### 3.3.7. OTHER COORDINATOR(S) AND COMMITTEE(S)

The Action MC should appoint amongst its members an ITC Conference Grants Coordinator and can appoint and mandate an ITC Committee for the evaluation of the ITC Conference Grants applications. The Action MC may also appoint other Coordinator(s) or Committee(s), e.g. Editorial Committee, Dissemination Board, to coordinate and manage specific tasks delegated to them by the Action MC in line with the COST rules. All appointments, and their respective mandate(s) must be formally approved by the Action MC by being recorded in the minutes of an Action MC meeting or by 'written procedure'. The Action MC must be informed of any conclusions reached and decisions taken by the 'Other' Coordinators or Committees in a subsequent Action MC meeting, and these should be recorded in the minutes of the respective meeting.

### 3.3.8. AD HOC PARTICIPANTS

Ad hoc participants are individuals selected, as necessary, by the Action MC to contribute to the COST Action activities towards the achievement of the COST Action Objectives. Ad hoc participants can be for example STSM grantees, trainees, and trainers in Training Schools, but as well Workshop/Conference participants or ITC Conference grantees.

### 3.3.9. INVITED SPEAKERS

Invited Speakers are specialists who are not COST Action Participants but can partake in one COST Action meeting and/or one Training School throughout the lifetime of the COST Action. Repeated participation of Invited Speakers cannot be funded under the COST Grant. Invited Speakers must appear as a Speaker, Session Chair, Moderator or Trainer on the agenda of the relevant meeting or Training School.

## 3.4. COST ACTION MONITORING AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

COST implements transparent and efficient monitoring and final assessment procedures. A documented analysis of the progress, results and outcomes of a COST Action S&T and networking activities aims at contributing to the best dissemination and exploitation of COST Action results and outcomes and to maximise the potential impact of the COST Action. COST Actions are monitored at months 12 (First Progress Review (PR1)) and 24 (Second Progress Review (PR2)) and a final assessment is carried out at the end of the Action.

The monitoring and final assessment of COST Actions is supervised by the Scientific Committee (SC). The Scientific Committee is the committee composed of independent, internationally renowned, high-level experts, one per COST Full or Cooperating Member, appointed by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO); they are in charge of the following tasks:

- Analysis, during the first Progress Review, of the Actions' implementation of the Scientific Committee recommendations (from the proposal stage) and the COST Policy for Excellence and Inclusiveness.
- Oversight and analysis of the second Progress Review of COST Actions.
- Analysis of the outcomes and impact of the ended Actions.

For the second Progress Review and the Final Assessment of each COST Action an independent External Expert with pertinent expertise in the COST Action fields of science and technology is appointed by the COST Association as the COST Action Rapporteur. The COST Action Rapporteur will advise the Action MC on the strategic orientation of activities and structure to best serve the COST Action objectives, and report to the COST Association on the activities and advancements of the COST Action. The COST Action Rapporteur appointed may be different for second Progress Review and Final Assessment.

### 3.4.1.COST ACTION MONITORING

The main objective of the external monitoring is to provide a regular assessment on the progress of the COST Action with relation to the implementation of networking activities, the development of S&T activities towards the achievement of MoU objectives and the implementation of Scientific Committee recommendations and COST Policy and Rules (see section 4).

The COST Action monitoring aims at giving advice to the Action MC where necessary, identifying and suggesting eventual corrective measures and/ or best practices.

1. **First Progress Review after 12 Months of activities**

The Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC submits online a Progress Report (PR1) after 12 months. The purpose of the PR1 is to monitor the Action implementation of the:

- Scientific Committee (SC) Recommendation (from the proposal stage)
- COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy (Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC), Early Career Investigators (ECIs) and gender balance)

The PR1 does not address any other issue, e.g. progress with achieving the MoU objectives.

The Action Chair must submit the report within 2 weeks of receipt of the email containing the link to the PR1 reporting interface in e-COST.

The Action Chair comments on the Action implementation of the SC Recommendation and each of the dimensions of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy based on data provided by e-COST. Moreover, the Action Chair describes the Action plans to ensure a continuous implementation of the SC Recommendation and COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy. It is recommended that the Action Chair provides any additional information pertinent to the purpose of the Progress Report at month 12. For instance, if participants from ITC countries have a scientific leadership role e.g. Action WG Vice Leader, STSM coordinator, Task Force Leader, or that COST Inclusiveness and Excellence Policy is a criterion for STSMs selection, or that there is dedicated ECIs session in the conferences organised by the COST Action, this kind of information should be provided in the report.

The Action input will be reviewed by the SC and a classification accompanied by a comment, where necessary, will be provided. The three possible classifications are:

- implementation sufficient
- implementation insufficient but plans adequate - repeat policy implementation monitoring in 1 year
- implementation insufficient and plans inadequate - Action to meet with SC

2. **Second Progress Review after 24 Months of activities**

The Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC submits online a Progress Report (PR2) within one month after 24 months have passed. PR2 includes information on the activities of the Action up to month 24 of the Action's lifetime. The Action Rapporteur submits a Progress Review remotely, after receiving the Action Progress Report.
The main objective of the external monitoring is to provide an assessment of the progress of the COST Action with relation to the:

- implementation of networking activities
- development of S&T activities towards the Action MoU objectives

- achievement of MoU deliverables
- achievement of additional outputs / achievements, including projects resulting from Action activities and co-authored Action publications by at least two Action participants from two countries participating in the Action, that are on the topic of the Action and for which the networking was necessary
- impacts of the Action (the short- to long-term scientific, technological and / or socioeconomic changes produced by the Action, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended)
- dissemination and exploitation of Action results

In addition, information is collected on Action success(es), and where necessary, corrective measures and recommendations are suggested by the Action Rapporteur.

Monitoring of the implementation of COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy (section 4) may be repeated if requested as an outcome of the assessment of Progress Report 1 at 12 months.

In case the COST Action fails to comply with their reporting obligation or does not take the necessary measures to address issues identified by the Rapporteur, the COST Association may delay the signing of the Action Grant Agreement for the following Grant Period, and / or notify the CNC of the Action Chair.

### 3.4.2. COST ACTION FINAL ASSESSMENT

The Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC submits online a Final Achievement Report within one month after the end date of the COST Action. The Action Rapporteur then prepares and submits remotely a Final Assessment Report. The Action Rapporteur appointed for preparing the Final Assessment may be different from the Rapporteur appointed for PR2.

The main objective of the Final Assessment of the COST Action is to identify how well the Action has:

- implemented networking activities
- developed S&T activities towards the Action MoU objectives
- achieved its MoU deliverables
- achieved additional outputs / achievements, including projects resulting from Action activities and co-authored Action publications by at least two Action participants from two countries participating in the Action, that are on the topic of the Action and for which the networking was necessary
- achieved dissemination and exploitation of Action results

In addition, the Final Assessment of the Action:
- includes information on potential success stories and emerging topics or potentially important future developments
- identifies impacts (the short- to long-term scientific, technological and / or socioeconomic changes produced by the Action, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended)
- collects data necessary to demonstrate COST performance and impact

In case the COST Action fails to comply with their reporting obligation, the COST Association may notify the CNC of the Action Chair.

## 3.5. COST INNOVATORS GRANT (CIG)

The procedure and rules for the application, implementation, reporting and dissemination of the COST Innovators Grant phase of an Action are described in the COST Innovators Grant Guidelines and the COST Vademecum.

# 4. COST POLICY AND RULES

## 4.1. OVERVIEW

COST has put in place a policy and a set of rules aiming at fulfilling its Mission and specific objectives. These are:

- COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy
- Participation of COST Partner Members, Non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations

The policy on **COST Excellence and Inclusiveness** is built upon two pillars:

- Strengthening the excellence through the creation of cross-border networking of researchers.
- Promoting geographical, age and gender balance throughout its activities and operations.

This policy aims to provide collaboration opportunities to all researchers and innovators and other stakeholders and to overcome the bottlenecks that prevent the use of all talented and creative human resources available for European science. It has the following objectives:

- Encouraging and enabling researchers from less research-intensive countries across Europe to set up or join COST Actions. These countries are denominated Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC[10]) and fulfil the Horizon 2020 widening eligibility condition, being either an EU Member State or Associated Country to the EU Framework Programme.
- Counterbalancing research communities' unequal access to knowledge, infrastructures, funding and resources.
- Providing a strong means to increase the visibility and integration of researchers to the leading knowledge hubs of Europe, as well as to acquire their necessary leadership skills, regardless of their location, age or gender.
- Smoothly contributing to trigger structural changes in the national research systems of COST Members.
- Identifying excellence across Europe to contribute to Horizon 2020 widening objectives.

The COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation rules aim at fostering cooperation between researchers from COST Members and Non-COST Countries (either Near Neighbour Countries (NNCs) or International Partner Countries (IPCs)) on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit, complementary expertise and scientific added value.

The participation of NNCs is particularly encouraged, according to the provisions related to eligibility for both participation and reimbursement set in the "COST Rules for Participation of Non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations" and in the COST Vademecum.

Further, COST aims at enabling fruitful collaboration between researchers and industry by providing a natural platform for them to meet and build mutual trust. It also aims at increasing impact of research in the industrial sector, by promoting the use and development of technologies, as well as the exploitation of COST Action results and outcomes through dedicated dissemination and exploitation activities targeting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large companies in Europe (SME & Industry Cooperation).

## 4.2. IMPLEMENTATION OF COST POLICY AND RULES BY COST ACTIONS

The COST Actions are expected to have a strategy on how to promote COST Policy and Rules through their activities and functioning in general. This must be revised and updated at every Action MC meeting. COST Actions will be assessed on the COST Policy and Rules implementation efforts and achievement level.

Some examples of how to promote COST Policy and Rules at the COST Action level are the following:

- Inclusiveness and Excellence (ITC and ECI involvement, gender balance):
  - Leadership roles fairly distributed to the ITC Action Participants, under-represented gender and ECIs.
  - Promotion of ECI through STSMs, organisation of Training Schools, dedicated sessions in Conferences / Workshops, creation of Think Tanks or ECI Fora.
  - Organisation of Workshops/ Conferences in ITC, encouragement of researchers from ITC to apply for STSMs or participate in Training Schools or COST Action meetings.
  - Organisation of dedicated sessions in Workshops/Conferences to raise awareness about the importance of improving gender balance in the respective field.
- International Cooperation (if applicable):
  - Encouragement of COST Action Participants from Approved non-COST Countries (International Partner Country (IPC) or Near Neighbour Country (NNC)); to apply for STSMs, or host STSM applicants, or attend Training Schools.

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[10] See COST 132-14 Annex I or web page for the list of ITCs

- Encouragement of COST Action Participants from COST Full or Cooperating Members having accepted the MoU of the COST Action to apply for STSMs to an approved institution of a non-COST Country (International Partner Country (IPC) or Near Neighbour Country (NNC)).
  - Invitations to COST MC Observers from Non-COST Countries to be Trainers in Training Schools.
- Industry Cooperation (if applicable):
  - Sessions dedicated to industry
  - Roundtable discussions with industrial partners
  - STSMs with industry acting as home or host institution

# 5. COST NETWORKING TOOLS

## 5.1. OVERVIEW

COST offers a range of Networking Tools, namely:

- Meetings (including Management Committee meetings, Working Group meetings, Workshops and Conferences, Dissemination meetings)
- Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs)
- Training Schools
- ITC Conference Grants
- Dissemination

Networking activities aim to support the COST Action to address the Challenge (Main aim), answer the research questions and achieve the overall objectives of the COST Action, as these have been described in the COST Action MoU.

For details on the financial rules for the networking tools please see the COST Vademecum.

## 5.2. STAKEHOLDERS

In the majority of the COST Actions, a number of stakeholders may play an important role in either the fulfilment of the MoU objectives or deliverables or dissemination.

A stakeholder is anyone who has a vested interest in the COST Action or will be affected by its outcomes. The COST Action should therefore strive to engage with industry, policy makers, standards organisations, national authorities, and any other stakeholders, relevant to the topic, objectives, and deliverables of the COST Action. Stakeholders' involvement can be relevant to problem definition and/ or knowledge generation and/ or dissemination. Stakeholders mapping, analysis, prioritisation, and engagement strategy must be initiated at the onset of the COST Action. Stakeholders' roles may change throughout the COST Action.

COST Actions are advised to have either dedicated meetings with stakeholders, e.g. roundtable discussions, WG meetings or integrate the relevant stakeholders in a COST Action Workshop/ Conference as keynote speakers or in dedicated sessions during a COST Action activity.

## 5.3. MEETINGS

COST supports different meeting types as part of its meetings Networking Tool, including Management Committee meetings, Working Group meetings, Workshops and Conferences, Dissemination meetings.

Eligibility (financial) conditions to be respected when organising a meeting are defined in the COST Vademecum. In addition, for budget optimisation, it is highly recommended to avoid time gaps between different types of meetings and/ or Training School when these are located in the venue/city and within the same timeframe.

### 5.3.1. CO-LOCATED AND CO-ORGANISED MEETINGS

COST Action activities may also occur either as *co-located* activities or COST session, or as *co-organised* activities. For these activities, the following conditions must be respected as well:

- **Co-location of COST Action activities or COST session in an event not organised by a COST Action**. Organisation of COST Action activities within or adjacent to an 'external' event is acceptable if there is a clear added benefit to the COST Action in relation to the scientific and networking objectives outlined in the COST Action MoU. Repeated *co-location* of COST Action activities with 'external' events is not recommended, unless a valid explanation provided by the Action MC is accepted by the COST Action Science Officer. A COST Action scientific session in an 'externally' organised event must have the COST Action number and title in the programme. It is recommended 1 Invited Speaker per 5 COST Action Participants should be included in the session. Multiple COST Action sessions in the same event should be avoided and if possible be replaced by having the event co-organised with the COST Action.

- **Co-organisation of an event**. Co-organisation of an event with an 'external' organisation is acceptable if there is a clear benefit to the COST Action in relation to the scientific and networking objectives outlined in the COST Action MoU. The COST Action must be fully integrated into the scientific programme and must have direct involvement in the general organisation of the event. This implies a good representation in the organising committee of COST Action Participants, from different COST Full or Cooperating Members having accepted the MoU of the Action, and as speakers or session chairs at the event, i.e. at least 40%. In addition, a good representation of COST Action Participants as audience and a fair share of local organiser costs and expenses related to Invited Speakers are also recommended. It is advisable to co-organise an event combined with Action MC and WG meetings so as to consolidate travel expenses for the COST Action.

Moreover, the following conditions must be respected:

a) COST must be visible as a co-organiser on the event's specific website, publication and dissemination materials.
b) Promotional material disseminated at events must follow the instructions and standards defined in Guidelines for the Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation of COST Action Results and Outcomes.

### 5.3.2. ACTION MC MEETINGS

The purpose of an Action MC meeting is to coordinate and organise the COST Action scientific and networking activities in line with the objectives specified in both the COST Action MoU and the approved Work and Budget Plan. Action MC meetings should be held in conjunction with another approved COST Action activity and preferably with a COST Action Workshop or Conference to consolidate travel expenses. COST Association representatives and all Action MC members from Participating COST Full and Cooperating Members are automatically invited to attend Action MC meetings. MC Observers may be invited to MC meetings, they can contribute to the discussions but have not voting rights. Their participation is funded according to the provisions outlined in the COST Vademecum.
There must be at least one Action MC meeting per 12-month Grant Period. The recommended duration of MC meetings is half a day; MC meetings should not last more than a day, unless there is a clear justification.
A standard MC agenda, available in e-COST, must be used for each MC meeting; if needed, additional points for discussion may be added.

The MC meeting minutes must be circulated within the MC, uploaded in e-COST and sent to the COST Action Science and Administrative Officers.

### 5.3.3. WG MEETINGS AND OTHER COST ACTION MEETINGS

Working Group meetings focus their work on achieving the research coordination and capacity building objectives of the COST Action as set out in the COST Action MoU.

The Action MC may also approve the organisation of other horizontal meetings mainly between COST Action Participants in order to facilitate the achievement of expected deliverables, e.g. an editorial group meeting to finalise the editing of a handbook, or an outreach group meeting for deciding the strategy on how to address a dissemination objective and its implementation.

All meetings are expected to have a specific agenda and minutes or reports. The related documents should be uploaded on the COST Action intranet website.

### 5.3.4. CORE GROUP MEETINGS

Core Group meetings should not last more than 2 days. Meetings should have an agenda and minutes, with the latter to be circulated among the Action MC members and uploaded on the COST Action intranet website and sent to the Science Officer. It is recommended for budget efficiency either the Leader or the Vice Leader of each WG attends a Core Group meeting.

### 5.3.5. COST ACTION WORKSHOP / CONFERENCE

This type of activity must be organised by the COST Action and is open to the broader scientific community. The Scientific and Organising Committee of the event, or the COST Action Core Group, is expected to announce a 'Call for Abstracts' including the meeting's topics and also guidelines to researchers on how to submit an abstract or paper. It is expected that the WG Leaders (and Vice-Leaders) will contribute to the content of the scientific programme and have an active participation, e.g. selection amongst the COST Action Participants of Invited Speakers, session chairs and speakers. The selection of COST Action Participants and Invited Speakers must take into account the COST Policy and Rules (section 4).

Moreover, the following conditions must be respected:

a) COST must be visible as the organiser on the event's specific website, COST Action website and publication and dissemination materials.
b) Promotional material disseminated at conferences must follow the instructions and standards defined in Guidelines for the communication, dissemination and exploitation of COST Action results and outcomes.

It is highly recommended that work presented during the Workshop or Conference is published either as a special issue, or conference proceedings or as a book of abstracts or a white paper or in any other format of publication relevant to the event. This enhances dissemination of the COST Action to a wider audience and opens up the potential for new networking activities.
The COST Action should strive to engage with industry, policy makers, standards organisations, national authorities, and any other stakeholders (section 5.2), if relevant to the topic, objectives and deliverables of the COST Action, by inviting them to the COST Action Workshop / Conference.

### 5.3.6. DISSEMINATION MEETINGS

Dissemination meetings are high profile events or conferences not organised by the COST Action. Action MC members (or MC substitutes) may attend these meetings for the purpose of disseminating their COST Action activities, attracting the attention of additional stakeholders to the COST Action or gathering knowledge and information relevant to the COST Action for its subsequent dissemination to the COST Action Participants.

### 5.3.7. FINAL WORKSHOP / CONFERENCE

Each COST Action MC should organise a Final Workshop or Conference to highlight and showcase the achievements of the COST Action. It should be combined with the Final Action MC meeting and must occur before the end of the last Grant Period.

During the Final Workshop or Conference, the COST Action is encouraged to have a general COST Action presentation delivered by the COST Action Chair or Working Group presentations delivered by Working Group Leaders or Vice Leaders demonstrating:

- The achievements of the specific Working Group in relation to the scientific objectives detailed in the MoU.
- Relevant scientific deliverables and outputs, including dissemination activities, that resulted from each Working Group.
- Expected impact, short-, medium- and long-term.
- Major challenges that were encountered in the COST Action and the solutions that were used to overcome these challenges.

During the Final Action MC meeting, the Action MC should discuss the content of the Final Achievement Report.

## 5.4. TRAINING SCHOOLS

Training Schools aim to facilitate capacity building on a topic relevant to the theme of the respective COST Action through the delivery of intensive training on a new or emerging subject. They can also offer familiarisation with unique equipment or expertise and are typically, although not exclusively, considered to be for the benefit of ECI and PhD students. They are not intended to provide general training.

COST supports the participation of two categories of participants, trainers and trainees. The following conditions must be respected when organising a Training School:

- The Action MC ( Core Group if mandated by the Action MC) must define the trainers and select the trainees based on clear criteria taking into account the COST Policy and Rules, in particular the Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy (section 4).
- The Training School must have the COST Action scientific and networking objectives as its main focus. The COST Action also has to be one of the primary organisers of the Training School. For co-organised Training Schools, the same conditions should be fulfilled as the ones for co-organised meetings (section 5.3.1, point 2).
- The COST Action must be clearly promoted on all dissemination channels, namely the official website of the COST Action and event, brochures and all training material.
- The programme of the Training School must incorporate theoretical and practical components .
- The Training School is recommended to last a minimum of 3 days.
- A ratio of at least 3 Trainees to 1 Trainer is recommended.
- The Training School must be held in a participating COST Full or Cooperating Member country or in an institution with which an NNC Action Participant is affiliated (in this case, pre-approval from the Action Science Officer is mandatory).

Eligibility (financial) conditions to be respected are defined in the COST Vademecum.

## 5.5. SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM)

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) are exchange visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, strengthening existing networks, and fostering collaboration between COST Action Participants. A STSM should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action, whilst at the same time allowing those partaking in the missions to learn new techniques, gain access to specific data, instruments or methods not available in their own institutions or organisations. At least 4 STSMs are recommended per 12-months Grant Period.

Eligibility (financial) conditions to be respected are defined in the COST Vademecum.

Eligible STSM applicants must:
- Obtain written agreement from the Host institution that the STSM applicant may perform the activities detailed in the STSM work plan on the agreed dates.
- Complete and submit an online STSM application using the dedicated tool: https://e-services.cost.eu/STSM.

The evaluation of STSM applications and selection of grantees is performed by the Action MC. The Action MC may formally delegate the evaluation of STSM applications to the Action Chair (or the Vice Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution or an appointed STSM Coordinator or Committee. The evaluation criteria defined by the Action MC must be fair and transparent. The selection of STSM applicants must be based on the scientific scope of the application and how it can support the COST Action in achieving its scientific objectives and take into account the COST Policy and Rules with special attention on Inclusiveness and Excellence. The criteria must be available on the COST Action website and be communicated in advance to all potential applicants.

The list of STSM titles, grantees names, including Home and Host Institutions as well as allocated grants amount, must be communicated to the entire Action MC in a subsequent Action MC meeting and included in the minutes of the Action MC meeting.

Within 30 days after the end date of the STSM, the STSM grantee is required to submit for formal approval a short scientific report to the Action Chair (or Vice Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) or STSM Coordinator or Committee and to 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.

## 5.6. ITC CONFERENCE GRANTS

ITC Conference Grants are aimed at supporting ECIs and PhD students/candidates from Participating ITC to attend high profile international science and technology related events not specifically organised by the Action. Attendance at European conferences is preferred; conferences held elsewhere can be considered.

Eligibility (financial) conditions to be respected are defined in the COST Vademecum.

Eligible ITC Conference Grant applicants must complete and submit an online ITC Conference Grants application using the dedicated tool: https://e-services.cost.eu/conferencegrant.

The evaluation of applications and selection of grantees is performed by the Action MC. The Action MC may formally delegate the evaluation of applications to the Action Chair (or Vice Chair is the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder institution), or the elected ITC Conference Grant Coordinator or Committee. The evaluation criteria are defined by the Action MC and must be fair and transparent. The criteria must be available on the COST Action website and be communicated in advance to all potential applicants. The selection of the applicants must be based on the scientific scope of the application and how it can support the COST Action in achieving its objectives and the implementation of COST Policy.

Within 30 days after the end date of the conference in question, the grantee is required to submit for formal approval either a certificate of attendance or a conference report to the ITC Conference Grant coordinator and the Grant Holder. Written approval of the submitted attendance certificate or conference report by the aforementioned persons must be uploaded in e-COST for archiving purposes.

## 5.7. DISSEMINATION

The Action dissemination strategy is detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). All dissemination activities and material produced must be in line with the dissemination strategy and the objectives of the COST Action. Dissemination material must be described in the Work and Budget Plan approved by the Management Committee (Action MC) and COST Association.

COST Actions can get financial support for a series of dissemination material including among others website, material for display and distribution, publications, videos. For financial details, please see the COST Vademecum. The COST Association considers advertising costs as ineligible. This applies also in situations where an Action is requested to pay for content in a publication that is distributed for free (except for Open Access in publications produced by a renowned scientific publisher).

COST promotes Open Access and, in the conditions stated in the COST Vademecum, considers expenses for Open Access as eligible expenses.
Action Publications that would be funded by COST must be co-authored by Action participants representing at least 3 different Participating COST Full or Cooperating Members.

Details including tips and tricks for dissemination as well as the requirements regarding COST visual identity that must be met for securing funding can be found at Guidelines for the Communication, Dissemination and exploitation of COST Action Results and Outcomes

# 6. COST GRANT SYSTEM

## 6.1. COST ACTION WORK AND BUDGET PLAN (WBP)

For each Grant Period, the Action MC is required to plan, define and approve, in the form of a Work and Budget Plan (WBP), the Action scientific activities and the indicative budget allocated to the various

Networking Tools. The WBP must be drafted using the e-COST Action Management Tool and consists of the following parts:

- COST Action Profile
- MoU objectives and Grant Agreement Period Goals and Activities
- Work and Budget Plan for the Grant Agreement Period

### 6.1.1.COST ACTION PROFILE

The COST Action General Information, the Participation of COST Members (including their acceptance date), the number of entities from Non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations, as well as the WGs (Title, Leader name and number of members) are indicated.

### 6.1.2.MOU OBJECTIVES, ACTION DELIVERABLES, GRANT AGREEMENT PERIOD GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

The COST Action Objectives and Deliverables are extracted from the MoU. The Grant Agreement Period and the Goals for that Period must be indicated.

The Grant Agreement Period Goals (GAPGs) must be specific scientific goals, milestones, which are envisaged to be achieved within the Grant Period. The GAPGs can be used by the COST Action MC to assess the progress of the COST Action, and if necessary, adjust them, to ensure achievement of the MoU objectives. The GAPGs must not be the same as the MoU objectives, nor a COST Networking Tool (i.e. meeting, Training School, Short Term Scientific Mission, Disseminations) nor a deliverable or an output.

Each GAPG should relate to at least one MoU objective. It is strongly recommended to have at least 2 GAPGs per WG.

### 6.1.3.WORK AND BUDGET PLAN FOR THE GRANT AGREEMENT PERIOD

The Action MC should plan and decide how they will allocate the COST Action budget to the COST Networking Tools. A Work and Budget Plan (Annex A of the Grant Agreement) contains the following budget lines:

1. Meetings
2. Training Schools
3. Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs)
4. ITC Conference Grants
5. COST Action Dissemination
6. Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities (OERSA)

   Budget lines 1) – 6) come under the collective heading: 'Total Science Expenditure'. Changes to the budget or other details of an approved activity require the approval of the Action MC and the Action Science Officer.

7. Financial Scientific and Administrative Coordination tasks (FSAC).

   Budget line 7 (FSAC) is a fixed percentage contribution afforded to support the Grant Holder's administering and coordinating approved scientific activities. The FSAC percentage cannot exceed 15% of the actual science expenditure.

Each WBP needs to be formally approved by the Action Science Officer. While completing the WBP the COST Policy and Rules (section 4) must be taken into account; the COST Action will be monitored based on the COST Policy and Rules throughout its lifetime.

**For Meetings and Training Schools** the following, if applicable, should be provided under:

- **'Description'**:
  - **The rough schedule**, e.g. 2 hrs Action MC meeting, 2 days parallel sessions of WG meetings, 2 hrs plenary session of all WGs.
  - **The plans and objectives** of the stand-alone activity, e.g. Training School or of each of the sub-activities in case of a joint meeting, e.g. Action MC meeting and WG meeting.

- How the stand-alone activity, e.g. Training School or of each of the sub-activities serves towards the achievement of the set of GAPGs.
- Possible invited speakers and trainers and their relevant expertise.
- Any special rules set up with regards to reimbursement: if would be applied a deviation from the general COST rules and/ or from rules agreed within the COST Action MC, e.g. reduction of the daily allowance.
- **For co-located** COST Action activities with an event not organised by the COST Action: how and why the COST Action benefits from this co-location and how the COST Action activity relates to the other event in terms of scheduling, e.g. COST session or adjacent event prior to or after the event not organised by the COST Action. A website related to the external event should be provided if possible (for more detailed information see section 5.3.1, point 1).
- **For co-organised** COST Action activities with an 'external' organisation: how and why the COST Action benefits from the co-organisation and how the COST Action is involved in the set-up of this joint activity (e.g. share of COST Action Participants in steering or scientific committee). A website related to the other organisation should be provided (for more detailed information see section 5.3.1. point 2).

- **'Outputs'**: Outputs can be, among other, codified knowledge, tacit knowledge, technology, and societal applications:
    - **Codified knowledge**: Knowledge expressed through language (including mathematics, music etc.) and thus capable of being stored on a physical support (i.e. transferable knowledge) – e.g. publications; patents, websites.
    - **Tacit knowledge:** Non formalised knowledge, resulting from the participation in the COST Action networking activities and the social interaction among its members that can also be re-invested in other contexts.
    - **Technology**: Knowledge embedded in artefacts either ready to use or not, such as machinery or software, new materials or modified organisms – e.g. a prototype, a database.
    - **Societal applications:** Use of any kind of knowledge (codified, tacit, technology) to perform specific tasks. Societal applications require the active participation of stakeholders (such as business enterprises, practitioners, regulators, users) within the lifetime of an Action. If stakeholders are not involved, then societal applications may only be considered as possible future impacts resulting from the envisaged outputs, rather than direct Action outputs (e.g. use of a methodology developed by the Action by a community of practitioners not participating in the Action).

**For STSMs** the following should be provided under:
- **'Description':**
    - The scientific priorities of the addressed WG(s) and which GAPGs those relate to.
    - How the COST Policy and Rules will be addressed

- **'Outputs':**
    - **Tangible output(s),** e.g. STSM reports, collaborative projects, joint publications, presentation in a COST Action Meeting, etc.
    - **Less tangible output(s),** e.g. knowledge exchange, transfer of skills and techniques, networking.

**For ITC Conference Grants** the following should be provided under:
- **'Description':**
    - The scientific priorities of the WG(s) addressed and which GAPGs those relate to.

- **'Outputs':**
    - **Tangible output(s),** e.g. paper, poster, presentation in a COST Action Meeting, etc.
    - **Less tangible output(s),** e.g. knowledge exchange, networking.

**For Dissemination** the following should be provided under:
- **'Description'**
    - the topic and type of dissemination, e.g. publications (proceedings, review article, special issue), videos, etc;

- the number of Participating COST Full or Cooperating Members involved in the publication (in order to be eligible for funding the publication must be authored by different participants from at least three different Participating COST Full or Cooperating Members);
- the publisher/ provider, Open Access or traditional publishing;
- the distribution strategy;
- the target audience;
- the WG(s) involved.

- **'Outputs':**
  - **tangible output(s),** e.g. publications, website, videos, etc.
    **less tangible output(s),** e.g. knowledge exchange, transfer of skills and techniques, policy development.

# 7. GDPR IMPLEMENTATION AT ACTION LEVEL

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is applicable as of 25 May 2018. GDPR is the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data" dated 27 April 2016. GDPR applies everywhere in the EU (and European Economic Area) with the same legislation.

The COST Association and COST Actions must comply with this regulation

For more detailed guidance on GDPR implementation at Action level please consult Data Protection FAQ for COST Actions.