

## Guidelines for Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants

### Mission

VM Grants aim to support the collaboration of researchers and innovators (R&I) associated with DESIGNAE in a virtual setting, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, etc. Examples of activities that can be performed by the VM grantee are:

- Mentoring, with special focus on capacity building and new skills particularly for Young R&I (e.g. managerial, methodical, communication skills);
- Harmonisation and standardisation of methods and procedures by
  - Setting up a survey amongst DESIGNAE members;
  - Coordination of discussion to create common protocols;
  - Preparing questionnaires/response scales to be used by DESIGNAE members;
- Supporting the implementation of research coordination related activities:
  - Computational/modelling activities;
  - Data analysis of the action for a specific report/activity.

The grantees receive financial support for the overall effort of performing the tasks specified in the grant application document.

### Eligibility

- The applicant must be a member of the Action at the time of application with a primary affiliation to a legal entity located in a COST Full or Cooperating Member country, a COST Near Neighbour Country or a European RTD Organization;
- If applying for a specific VM “Challenge” featured on the DESIGNAE website, the applicant must have the required skills for the VM task, as specified in the description of the VM “Challenge”;
- Proposers of a specific VM “Challenge” featured on the DESIGNAE website cannot act as “applicant” to their own proposal.

### Submission of applications

The evaluation of grant applications and the issuance of a formal decision regarding approval must be completed prior to the applicant’s work on the task.

- Preparation of the required documents for the Grant application including additional supporting documentation:
  - VM Grant Application Form using DESIGNAE template (based on e-COST template): the document can be downloaded from DESIGNAE website ([www.designae.eu](http://www.designae.eu)). Save as PDF document once completed.
  - For applicants proposing a task not related to a specific VM “Challenge” (own proposal) a support letter signed by one of the WG leaders of the WG of strongest alignment specifying a budget recommendation for the intended tasks is needed.

- Candidate's CV: Applicants must upload their CV in their e-COST profile (max. 3 pages). This information will be visible to the holders of leadership positions and any reviewers appointed by the Action for evaluation purposes.
- Submission of the application in e-COST (<https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants>): The applicant encodes a grant application by logging into e-COST and clicking on the Grant Applications tab. The applicant can select the grant from the page 'Apply for new grant'. Applicants need to fill all requested sections and upload all required documents before submitting the application.
  - If applying for a specific VM Challenge featured on DESIGNAE website, the "Title" should correspond to the VM "Challenge". Otherwise, please specify your own proposal title.

## Evaluation Procedure

As approved by the Management Committee (MC), the evaluation will be performed by selected reviewers representing the individual WGs. The application undergoes initial screening concerning the following points by the Grant Awarding Coordinator (GAC) - substituted by the Action Chair (AC):

### **Pre-screening criteria:**

- The applicant is a member of DESIGNAE and listed as WG members.
- If applicable: The applicant is not the proposer of the VM "Challenge".
- The application activity is finished by the deadline stated in the call.

After passing the pre-screening stage (otherwise, the grant will be rejected), the GAC will send the application to 1-2 reviewers representing the WG of strongest alignment as indicated by the applicant in the application form or (if applicable) preselected in case of a specific call challenge. Reviewer selection will ensure no conflict of interest and will take into account balance in gender/country/age of the reviewers. The reviewers are asked to fill a review-template based on the following evaluation criteria:

### **Evaluation Criteria Score** (from 0 to 17 points):

- **Relevance:** Does the application contribute to the objectives of the Action and (if applicable) to the goals specified in the call? (0-5 points)
- **Expertise:** Is the applicant expertise and contribution clear and relevant and (if applicable) in line with the criteria specified in the call? (0-5 points)
- **Planning:** Is the quality and feasibility of the work plan reasonable and satisfying and (if applicable) fall within the envisioned time plan of the call? (0-5 points)
- **Additional Diversity and Inclusiveness points for Young Researchers/Innovator** (+1 point) and/or based in an **ITC** (+1 point).

Participants will be selected based on their evaluation score, when obtaining a minimum of 12 points in the evaluation process (otherwise the application will be automatically rejected) and provided budget availability.

In case of the necessity of decision making between candidates with similar scores, applications will be prioritized (by the Network Balance Coordinator) as follows:

- Number of previous grants granted to the applicant;
- Young Researcher/Innovator, ITC, gender balance.

**The Grant Holder will inform each approved applicant by sending a Grant Letter generated from e-COST.**

### **VM Grants Financial Support**

An VM Grant will cover (but not necessarily cover all) costs for the personal effort of conducting the tasks specified in the grant application document:

- The max. amount of €1.500 is considered appropriate for the compensation for the personal effort of about 30 solid days work which can be spread out over the grant period. Applications of tasks/activities requiring less effective working days should reduce the budget accordingly.

**The financial support might be reduced by the GAC or Grant Holder Manager (GHM) through budget limitations or upon suggestion by the reviewers. It should be noted that the request made by the applicant should reflect the work and expenditures necessary to perform the task in the grant application.**

It should also be noted, that the COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action cannot be considered as being an STSM grantee's employer, i.e. the STSM Grant cannot be considered as a salary.

Further details can be consulted at the COST Annotated Rules.

### **Approving VM Grants for Payment**

The pre-approved grantee must submit the following documents at the latest 30 days after the end date of the planned activity or 15 days after the end date of the Grant Period, whichever comes first:

- A Grant Report, using DESIGNAE VM Grant Report template, which can be found on DESIGNAE website ([www.designae.eu](http://www.designae.eu)). When preparing it, the following should be considered:
  - The report for COST is a public document; please take into account applicable Intellectual Property Rights.
  - The report should describe the outcome of the activity and how it can be used for/support DESIGNAE in future.
  - The report should include a short summary for dissemination purposes: A very short statement (maximum 280 characters, including spaces) for the DESIGNAE Social Media accounts.
  - Save the document as PDF before submitting.
- Approval letter of the conducted work and quality of outcome signed by the WG leader or (if applicable) by the proposer of the specific VM "Challenge".

The GAC is responsible for approving the scientific report (in case of doubt after consulting with the reviewers or WG leaders) and informing the GHM that the mission has been successfully completed. Reasons for rejection of the report can be: incomplete information, disagreements with the initial application (with respect to dates and topic).

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Grants are paid by the Grant Holder Institution after the completion of the activity and approval of all required reports/documentation.

**Failure to submit the requested documents within the established period from the end date of the VM Grant will effectively cancel the Grant.**

### **Acknowledgments**

Any publications and dissemination materials resulting from the VMG (e.g. article, submission to a conference) must acknowledge the DESIGNAE COST Action:

- COST Action logo and DESIGNAE logo (in presentations);
- Acknowledgment phrase in articles: “This publication is based upon work from COST Action DESIGNAE CA24126, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).”

This acknowledgment is mandatory and should be clearly visible within the content to ensure proper recognition of the COST Action’s support.