

# Guidelines for Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) Grants

## Mission

Short-Term Scientific Missions are visits of a researcher or innovator to a host organization located in a different country than the country of affiliation for specific work to be carried out and for a determined period of time. STSMs are valuable:

- A. for the STSM Grantee, who has the chance to receive funding for implementing a project with an international team, obtaining new knowledge or access to equipment or techniques not available in the home institution;
- B. for the STSM Host who can receive an international partner in their institution and extend or create a long-lasting collaboration. STSMs support specific / general topic(s) that can help achieve the Action MoU objectives and deliverables (research coordination). A STSM should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action, helping to achieve the Action MoU objectives and deliverables;
- C. for the Action to increase the interdisciplinarity of the action members.

## Eligibility

- The applicant and host 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);
- The Grant applicant is a researcher or innovator who visits a host organization located in a different country than the country of affiliation for specific work to be carried out and for a determined period of time;
- The Host Institution should be in another participating COST Full Member/ COST Cooperating Member country, Participating COST Partner Member country, Approved International Partner Country (IPC) or be an NNC Institution;
- Both the Grant applicant and the Host Institution shall be actively involved in the DESIGNAE COST Action, i.e. listed as Working Group (WG) members on the website;
- The STSM must have a minimum duration of 3 calendar days (excluding travel);
- STSMs should comply with the scope of the Action, with emphasis of the interdisciplinary nature of the Action. STSMs with an interdisciplinary focus, e.g. applicant and host are from different fields, will be preferred;
- Proposers of a specific grant “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 start date of the scientific mission.

Applicants should ensure that their submission is made at least 14 days preceding the start date of the planned scientific mission.

- Preparation of the required documents for the Grant application including additional supporting documentation:
  - STSM 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 a PDF document once completed.
  - Invitation letter from the STSM Host Institution: a signed invitation letter from the STSM Host institution stating that the applicant may perform the activities detailed in the STSM working plan on the agreed dates. The letter must be dated back not more than 3 months, and must be signed by a permanent staff representative of the Host institution (e.g. head of the research group, PI, director of the department, head of the institute/division etc.).
  - Letter of support from the applicant's institution (if applicable<sup>1</sup>): a signed letter from the applicant's employer institution stating that the applicant is authorized to perform the activities detailed in the STSM working plan on the agreed dates.
  - 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.

## 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 and Host are members of the action and listed as WG members. If applicable: The Applicant is not the proposers of the "challenge" of the specific call;
- The STSM is taking place in a different country than the applicant's affiliation country;
- The STSM is taking place within the current Grant Period.

After passing the pre-screening stage (otherwise, the grant will be rejected), the GAC will send the application to 1-2 reviewer(s) representing the WG of strongest alignment as indicated by the applicant in the application form. 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 of the proposal:** Does the application contribute to the objectives of the Action and (if applicable) to the goals specified in the call? (1-5 points)
- **Interdisciplinarity:** Does the mission reflect the interdisciplinary approach of the action, by e.g. leading to the exchange of knowledge in an interdisciplinary setting or is the topic of the activity interdisciplinary in nature? (1-5 points)

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<sup>1</sup> For self-employed applicants or equivalent, please submit a self-statement explaining this point instead of the support letter. This article/publication is based upon work from COST Action DESIGNAE, CA24126, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology). COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.

- **Planning:** Is the quality and feasibility of the work plan reasonable and satisfying and (if applicable) falls within the envisioned plan of the call? (1-5 points)
- **Additional Diversity and Inclusiveness points for Young Researchers/Innovator** (+1 point) and/or those 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 & host institution;
- Interdisciplinarity of the Mission;
- Young Researcher/Innovator, ITC, gender balance.

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

**Change of approved STSM dates:** If the approved dates for performing the STSM need to be modified, the applicant must inform the Grant Holder and the Grant Awarding Coordinator before the original start date and provide a clear explanation for the change. Modifications will not be accepted after the original start date.

### **STSM Grants Financial Support**

An STSM Grant aims to provide a contribution for covering the costs for economy travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses for the selected candidates. STSM grantees must make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security, travel insurance and pension matters.

The STSM must have a minimum duration of 3 calendar days dedicated to hands-on work. The days allocated for travel to and from the host organization are not considered as part of the STSM. While there is no upper limit on duration, we recommend a maximum duration of 90 days. The STSM must be completed by the annual deadline specified in the call.

Preparation of the budget calculation within the table provided in the DESIGNAE STSM Grant Application Form - the days allocated for travel to and from the host organization are not considered in this calculation (see also specific examples at the end of the document):

- Subsistence and accommodation: the maximum contributions are the following:
  - First 5 days (X) – 135 EUR per day
  - Days 6-15 (Y) – 55 EUR per day
  - From day 16 (Z) – 33 EUR per day
- Travel: A maximum of 400 EUR is recommended, but exceptions can be considered, depending on the location of the proposer and the host institution.
- The requested financial contribution for each STSM will be calculated according to the following formula up to a maximum of EUR 4000 in total:

$$\text{Final amount} = (X \times 135) + (Y \times 55) + (Z \times 33) + \text{Travel} \leq 4000 \text{ €}$$

**The financial support might be reduced by the GAC or Grant Holder Manager (GHM) due to budget limitations or upon suggestion by the reviewers.**

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 STSM Grants for Payment**

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

- A Grant Report, using DESIGNAE STSM Grant Report template, which can be found on DESIGNAE website ([www.designae.eu](http://www.designae.eu)). The report is drafted by the applicant (max. 4 pages). 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 does not need to contain specific and detailed results of the research. Rather, it should focus on the aspects that are the aim of the STSM (see purpose of a STSM), in particular how the collaborative research during the STSM has strengthened the scientific relationship between Home and Hosting institutions within the framework of COST and if applicable added to the interdisciplinarity of the Action.
  - It should include a short summary for dissemination purposes: A very short statement (maximum 280 characters, including spaces) for the DESIGNAE Social media accounts, including a photo or short video taken during the STSM (uploaded separately in e-COST). Alternatively, a proof of the grantee own post tagging official DESIGNAE Social Media accounts will also be sufficient;
  - Save the document as PDF before submitting.
- Confirmation from the Host institution: A letter or an email from the Host Supervisor confirming that the applicant has successfully completed the mission.
- Photo or short video taken during the STSM (if not posted and tagged on social media).

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

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 location, dates and topic).

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

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**Participants from ITCs can request a pre-payment of 50% of their STSM Grant when they complete the first day of their STSM.** For that purpose, the Host must confirm by e-mail to the Grant Holder (GH) that the first day of the mission has officially started, after which the GH can arrange the payment of 50% of the STSM grant; the remaining 50% is payable after approval of the STSM report etc. (see above) after completion of the STSM.

**STSM cancellation:** If for any reason the applicant cannot or has not been able to complete the STSM, the applicant must inform the Grant Holder and GAC providing an explanation in order to delete the grant request.

## Acknowledgments

Any publication and dissemination material resulting from the STSM (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.

## Examples for budget calculations:

**Example 1:** A Grant Applicant plans to perform an STSM of 5 days at a university in a different country, from 4<sup>th</sup> of May to 8<sup>th</sup> of May.

Budget Details and description of the budget.

- Travel: 300 €
- Subsistence and accommodation: 675 €
- Total: 870 €
- Requested: 870 €

The flight from Palma (Spain) to Porto (Portugal) has an approximate cost of 300 EUR, departure date: 3<sup>rd</sup> of May – return date: 9<sup>th</sup> of May. The funded stay lasts 5 days, considering 5 days to execute the proposed tasks and 2 unfunded travel days. Costs for subsistence and accommodation have been calculated using the provided formula:  $(5 \times 135) = 675$  EUR.

**Example 2:** A Grant Applicant plans to perform a research stay at a university in a different country of 3 months, from 1<sup>st</sup> of May to 31<sup>st</sup> of July.

Budget Details and description of the budget.

- Travel: 300 €
- Subsistence and accommodation: 3766 €
- Total: 4066 €
- Requested: 4000 € (maximum allowed)

The flight from Palma (Spain) to Porto (Portugal) has an approximate cost of 300 EUR, departure date: 30<sup>th</sup> of April – return date: 1<sup>st</sup> of August. The funded stay lasts for 92, considering 92 days to execute the proposed tasks and 2 unfunded travel days. Costs for subsistence and accommodation have been calculated using the provided formula:  $(5 \times 135) + (10 \times 55) + (77 \times 33) = 675 + 550 + 2541 = 3766$  EUR.

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