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GUIDELINE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHORT-TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS (STSM) (EXCHANGE VISITS) IN THE COST FRAMEWORK

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A. General

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

These Missions (Exchange Visits) are aimed at strengthening the existing networks by allowing scientists to go to an institution or laboratory **in another COST member state** to foster collaboration, to learn a new technique or to take measurements using instruments and/or methods not available in their own institution/laboratory. They are particularly intended for young scientists.

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

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

The STSM should not normally be carried out in the COST member state where the Applicant is normally resident.

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

The authority to select the candidates is delegated to the Management Committee (MC) of the Action.

Short-term Scientific Missions between different Actions of the same field maybe considered by the Management Committees involved in exceptional and fully justified cases.

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

Applications may be submitted according to the schedules stipulated by the MC of the relevant Action, bearing in mind that delays must be taken into account for the assessment and administrative procedures. The application together with the MC approval should arrive at the COST Office **at least 4 weeks** before the mission starts.

B. Finance

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

The financial contribution for a STSM will be a fixed grant based on the Applicant's budget request and the evaluation of the application by the STSM assessment committee. An amount of 60 to 90 € for the daily allowance in particular for longer stays and 300€ for the travel is recommended. The total of a STSM shall normally not exceed € 2500. **Any exception needs special justification.**

In any case the costs associated with the STSM must not exceed the limits set in the "rules for reimbursement by COST of expenses for experts eligible for reimbursement".

Payments will be made after completion of the STSM and submission of the scientific report duly refereed by the **host institution** (see below).

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

C. Duration

Short-Term Scientific Missions, minimum one week (5 working days), maximum 3 months, shall be made within the time frame of the operation identified in the proposal and within the period of the respective COST Action.

D. The Applicant

Eligibility: see above under item "General".

E. Registration

The Applicant must use the **on-line registration tool** as described in Annex A

F. Host institution

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

G. The Assessment

1. The Management Committee (MC) of the Action will make the scientific and budgetary assessment and decision of the application.
2. The MC may formally delegate these tasks to a sub-group of its members (assessment panel), which may vary from time to time and from scheme to scheme, to assess proposals and to agree to those which may be funded.
3. It is recommended that this assessment panel consists of more than two people in order to avoid a conflict of interest, in addition to one person who is authorised to take the decision (normally the Chair). External advice may be sought.
4. The MC should agree the criteria for assessing applications in line with the Actions objectives. Wherever possible, these criteria should be made known in advance to potential applicants.
5. The MC Chair or the Action's STSM coordinator is responsible for circulating the application for decision to the assessment panel.
6. It is expected that every care will be taken to avoid any bias on the grounds of gender, age or nationality.
7. The decisions and assessments regarding all STSM applications should be reported to the next MC meeting **and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.**
8. MC members and other assessors should not involve themselves in the assessment of proposals in which they have a personal or financial interest. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. uniqueness of expertise), such a bar may be waived with the agreement of the other members involved, if the interest is declared and considered not to compromise the potential decision.
9. The MC chair or the Action's STSM coordinator has to inform the COST-Office Science Officer or Administrating Institute (in case of an annual grant holder such as in the TIST domain) about the decision. After checking the application for the compatibility with the existing rules and procedures the Science Officer will inform the Applicant about the outcome of the assessment and will arrange the necessary formalities for the issue of the grant in case of a positive result and availability of funding.

H. STSM Scientific report

The grantee is required to submit to the MC chair or the Action's STSM coordinator a short scientific report on the visit **within 4 weeks after his stay**. It should contain the following information:

- Purpose of the visit
- Description of the work carried out during the visit
- Description of the main results obtained
- Future collaboration with host institution (*if applicable*)
- Projected publications/articles resulting or to result from the STSM
- Confirmation by the host institute of the successful execution of the mission
- Other comments (*if any*)

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

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

- Approved STSM Scientific report
- Completed Payment request form.

I. DEVIATION

Any deviation from this procedure requires the approval of the COST Office

ANNEX A: ON-LINE REGISTRATION AND OPERATION OF STSMs

Step 1 – On-line registration by the applicant

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

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

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

Step 2 – Formal STSM application and annexes

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

- the future Host of the STSM,
- the Chair of the Management Committee of the Action (can be found on the COST web-site) or the Action's STSM coordinator if available and
- the Science Officer of the Action (can be found on the COST web-site) or administrative Institution of the Action.

Step 3 – Assessment by the Management Committee

The MC chair will arrange the assessment of the STSM.

Step 4 – Approval by the Management Committee

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

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

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

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

- 1 the **attached** request for an STSM for has been approved and*
- 2 a **grant of xxx €** has been recommended and*
- 3 the **host institute** accepted the proposal.*

Step 5 – Cost Office Acceptance Letter (Grant Letter)

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

- A the approval of the STSM and
- B the level of the financial grant given.

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

The Applicant will receive a **payment request form** at the same time which has to be sent to the COST Office or the Administrative Institute at latest 1 month after the completion of the mission.

Step 6 – STSM Scientific Report

After completion of the STSM the grantee has to issue the scientific report which has to be submitted to the Host and the MC chair.

Step 7 – Notice of completion by the Management Committee

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

The information shall be in the form of an e-mail stating

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

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

Step 8 – Payment by the Cost Office

After the receipt of the information of step 7 and receipt of the payment request from the grantee (see step 5) the COST Office or the Administrative Institute will arrange the payment.

ANNEX C: COST STSM STANDARD E-MAILS

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

Information to the Cost Office after STSM APPROVAL

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

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

- 1 the **attached** request for an STSM for has been approved and*
- 2 a **grant of xxx €** has been recommended and*
- 3 the **host institute** accepted the proposal.*

Information to the Cost Office after STSM COMPLETION

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

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

ANNEX D: COST Office Coordinates

European Cooperation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research

COST Office
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B-1050 Brussels, Belgium
Tel + 32-2-533 38 00
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<http://cost.cordis.lu>

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