

# COST Vademecum

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**COST Association AISBL**

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Version Control	Release Date	Summary of changes
Version 6	01 May 19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clarification on MC decision going against COST rules (Section 2)</li> <li>2. Change of eligibility of Grant Holder Managers (Section 3)</li> <li>3. Adding Lobbying firms to the list of non-eligible costs (Section 3)</li> <li>4. Minor improvements (Section 4)</li> <li>5. Extra information concerning V.A.T reimbursed to individuals (Section 3.4)</li> <li>6. Specification on travel costs of infant in case of breastfeeding added (Section 5)</li> <li>7. Travel insurance removed from non-eligible costs (Section 5)</li> <li>8. LOS - Update of the list of eligible expenses (Section 7)</li> <li>9. Simplification on STSM rules (Section 8)</li> <li>10. Simplification of the ITC Conference Grant (Section 9)</li> </ol>
Version 7	20 June 19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change of eligibility of NNC participation</li> <li>2. Update of the list of eligible and non-eligible costs under Dissemination (Section 10)</li> <li>3. Minor corrections to reconcile CSO document 134/14</li> </ol>
Version 8	1 May 20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change of reimbursement rules for meetings and Training Schools</li> <li>2. Inclusion of an eligibility table (Annex I)</li> <li>3. LOS for virtual meetings</li> <li>4. FAD phasing out</li> </ol>
Version 9	28 Apr 21	Introduction to the Virtual Networking tools

## SCOPE OF THIS DOCUMENT

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology – see [www.cost.eu](http://www.cost.eu)), the longest running European framework, is a unique platform where European researchers can jointly develop their ideas and initiatives across all scientific disciplines through the trans-European networking of nationally funded research. It is funded by the European Union (EU) Horizon 2020 Programme whereby the European Commission (EC) has entered into a Framework Partnership Agreement with the COST Association which itself operates under direct instruction from the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) - see “explanation of terms used in this document”.

COST activities are largely arranged as COST Actions. The rules and principles governing all COST activities are established in a series of documents approved by the CSO. These documents can be found on the COST website at <https://www.cost.eu/cost-actions/how-to-participate/>The administrative provisions detailed in this document: COST Vademecum direct the implementation of COST Actions and are aligned to the aforementioned rules and principles.

## EXPLANATION OF THE TERMS USED THROUGHOUT THIS DOCUMENT

<b>Action Management Committee (Action MC) members and substitutes</b>	National representatives of each COST Full or Cooperating Member nominated by COST National Coordinators (CNC) to take charge of the coordination, implementation and management of an Action's activities as well as supervising the appropriate allocation and use of the COST funds with a view to achieving the Action's research coordination objectives and capacity building objectives.
<b>Action Chair and Action Vice-Chair</b>	Elected during an Action MC meeting by the Action MC from amongst the Action's MC members. The Action Chair is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Action. The Action Vice-Chair assists in these activities when requested to do so by the Action Chair and can substitute for the Action Chair when required or mandated to do so.
<b>Action MC Observers</b>	An individual observing at the Action MC a COST Action's coordination and decision-making processes and monitors its activities - namely individuals from COST Partner Members, Near Neighbour Countries or International Partner Countries or Specific Organisations.
<b>Action Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)</b>	The agreement accepted by a minimum of seven different COST Full Members and / or COST Cooperating Member which describes the Action's objectives. This agreement has to be accepted by any COST Full Member and / or COST Cooperating Member who is to join the Action. The MoU contains, in the form of a technical annex, core elements of the proposal submitted in the frame of the Open Call.
<b>Action Participant</b>	Any person being an Action MC member, an Action MC substitute, an Action MC Observer, a Working Group member or an ad-hoc participant.
<b>Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)</b>	The main decision-making body of COST, responsible for the strategic development of the COST framework. Each COST Full Member can appoint up to two Delegates to the CSO.
<b>COST Action Grant Agreement</b>	The agreement between the COST Association and the Grant Holder that governs the administrative and financial implementation of the COST Action.

<b>COST Cooperating Member</b>	<p>Is any Non-European State as depicted under Article 7 of the Statutes of the COST Association that has been admitted to the COST Association as a COST Cooperating Member.</p> <p>The COST Cooperating Member is Israel.</p>
<b>COST Full Member</b>	<p>Is any European State as depicted under Article 6 of the Statutes<sup>1</sup> of the COST Association that has been admitted to the COST Association as a COST Full Member.</p> <p>The 38 COST Full Members are: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, The Netherlands, the North Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, The Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom.</p> <p>The above COST Full Members govern the COST framework via their Delegates in the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) - the General Assembly of the COST Association.</p>
<b>COST Members</b>	The COST Full Members, the COST Cooperating Member(s) and COST Partner Member(s).
<b>COST National Coordinators (CNC)</b>	The individuals appointed by COST Members in charge of confirming the acceptance of the Action's Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of their COST Member and nominating the Action Management Committee members of their COST Member as well as the experts from their COST Member to be part of the pool of Experts for the Review Panels.
<b>COST Near Neighbour Countries (NNC)</b>	<p>States that can benefit from dedicated support that enables participation in COST Action activities.</p> <p>The full list of NNC is as follows: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kosovo<sup>2</sup>, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Russia, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine.</p>
<b>COST Partner Member</b>	Is any State as depicted under Article 8 of the Statutes of the COST Association which has been admitted to the COST Association as a COST Partner Member. South Africa is currently a COST Partner Member.
<b>Early Career Investigator (ECI)</b>	An individual who is within a time span of up to 8 years from the date they obtained their PhD/doctorate (full-time equivalent).
<b>EU Institutions, Bodies, Offices and Agencies</b>	<p>Any body defined in accordance with the Treaties on the European Union and on the Functioning of the European Union established in the EU to accomplish specific tasks of a legal, technical and/or scientific nature in a given policy field and to support the EU member States.</p> <p>A list of the EU Bodies, Offices and Agencies may be found at</p>

<sup>1</sup> See the COST Statutes at [http://www.cost.eu/about\\_cost/organisation](http://www.cost.eu/about_cost/organisation)

<sup>2</sup> This designation is without prejudice to position on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

	<a href="http://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies_en">http://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies_en</a>
<b>European RTD Organisations</b>	The intergovernmental scientific research organisations whose members are States, the majority of which are COST members.
<b>Grant Holder</b>	The legal entity responsible for the administrative and financial implementation of the COST Action.
<b>Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC)</b>	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, the North Republic of Macedonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey
<b>International Organisation</b>	Any Intergovernmental Organisation governed by international law. Organisations qualifying under the present Decision as European RTD organisations or EU bodies, officer, or agencies shall not be considered International Organisation in the COST framework.
<b>International Partner Countries (IPC)</b>	States that are neither COST Members nor COST Near Neighbour Countries.
<b>Invited Speakers</b>	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.
<b>Participating COST Full, Cooperating or Partner Member</b>	COST Full, Cooperating or Partner Member that has accepted the Action's MoU.



## SECTION 1. COST ACTIONS

### 1.1. COST ACTION OVERVIEW

A COST Action is a science and technology network funded over a four-year duration which requires the participation of at least seven different COST Full Members or Cooperating Members. An Action is organised through a range of networking tools which are performed for the purpose of supporting and ultimately achieving research coordination and capacity building objectives as set out in each Action's Memorandum of Understanding.

#### 1.1.1. FIRST ACTION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (ACTION MC) MEETING

The date of the first MC meeting of an Action marks the official start date of the Action. The first Action MC meeting is always organised, administered and funded centrally by the COST Association administration. Activities managed centrally by the COST Association are funded under what is known as the COST Centralised Management Funding Scheme. The first Action MC meeting shall take place within 9 months following the approval of the Action by the CSO.

#### 1.1.2. COST GRANT SYSTEM (CGS)

During the first Management Committee meeting, the Action MC shall elect an established legal entity, of which one Action MC Member shall hold an affiliation, to manage the COST Action under the tenets of the COST Grant System (CGS). The CGS requires that the elected legal entity, which becomes known as the Grant Holder, will administer the Action Grant by overseeing the financial and administrative management and the various coordination tasks required to successfully support the implementation of approved Action activities.

COST Action activities shall be implemented in strict adherence to the terms and conditions contained within the designated COST Action Grant Agreement, signed between the COST Association and the Action Grant Holder. In order to ensure the objectivity and independence of any decision taken by Action stakeholders with respect to how an Action is managed, any potential conflict of interest shall be avoided and / or declared to the COST Association in advance of any stakeholder engaging in activities that may represent or give rise to any such conflict of interest.

The COST Grant can only be used to support approved activities necessary for and dedicated to achieving the Action's objectives and / or supporting policies implemented by the CSO.

Exceptionally, it is possible that well-defined Action activities can be administered centrally by the COST Association under the COST Centralised Management Funding Scheme. The COST Centralised Management Funding Scheme can only be considered on an ad-hoc basis and for a limited period only. Action activities operating under the aforementioned scheme always require prior approval from the COST Association.

### 1.2. COST ACTION PARTICIPATION

#### 1.2.1. COST FULL MEMBER AND COOPERATING MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Individuals whose primary affiliation is with an institution located in a COST Full and / or a COST Cooperating Member can participate in a COST Action as an Action Participant once their respective country has accepted the MoU of the respective Action. Up to 12 months after the date the Action was approved by the CSO, COST Members can join the Action without the approval of the Action MC. When a period of 12 months has elapsed from the date the CSO approved the Action, the participation of additional COST Members becomes subject to formal approval by the Action MC.

Subject to Action MC approval, Action Participants can attend approved meetings / Training Schools, benefit from ITC Conference Grants and partake in Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM). They can

be reimbursed for their participation in compliance with the eligibility rules detailed in Section 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 of this document.

#### 1.2.2. COST PARTNER MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Individuals affiliated to universities, research centres, companies or other relevant legal entities located in COST Partner Members may participate in a COST Action as Action MC Observers (having no voting rights in the MC) if their COST Partner Member has formally accepted the Action's Memorandum of Understanding. MC Observers from COST Partner Members cannot be elected as an Action Chair / Vice-Chair / Working Group Leader. Individuals from COST Partner Members source their funding for their participation in COST Activities from national budget and are not eligible to receive funding from the budget afforded to the Action.

#### 1.2.3. NON-COST COUNTRIES PARTICIPATION

Individuals affiliated to universities, research centres, companies or other relevant legal entities located in Non-COST Countries (NNC or IPC) may participate in a COST Action on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit. Individuals affiliated to institutions in Non-COST Countries, who have been formally approved onto the Action may be invited by the Action MC as Action MC Observers (having no voting rights within the Action MC). For complete information on participation and eligibility of reimbursement please consult the document "COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation rules" available at [www.cost.eu/int\\_coop\\_rules](http://www.cost.eu/int_coop_rules).

#### 1.2.4. EU COMMISSION, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES PARTICIPATION

EU Commission, Bodies, Offices and Agencies may nominate representatives to participate as Action MC Observers (with no voting rights within the Action MC) and as WG member. Action MC Observers from EU Commission, Bodies, Offices and Agencies may access leadership positions in COST Actions but cannot be reimbursed using COST funds unless there are special provisions enacted by the CSO. For complete information on participation and eligibility of reimbursement please consult the document "COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation rules" available at [www.cost.eu/int\\_coop\\_rules](http://www.cost.eu/int_coop_rules).

#### 1.2.5. EUROPEAN RTD ORGANISATION PARTICIPATION

European RTD Organisations whose participation has been admitted onto a COST Action can nominate representatives to participate as Action MC Observers (having no voting rights within the Action MC) and as WG member.

For complete information on participation and eligibility of reimbursement please consult the document "COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation rules" available at [www.cost.eu/int\\_coop\\_rules](http://www.cost.eu/int_coop_rules).

#### 1.2.6. INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION PARTICIPATION

An International Organisation (IO) may participate in a COST Action on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit. Individuals affiliated to IOs that have been formally approved onto the Action may participate in the Action MC as an Action MC Observer (having no voting rights in the Action MC). For complete information on participation and eligibility of reimbursement please consult the document "COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation rules" available at [www.cost.eu/int\\_coop\\_rules](http://www.cost.eu/int_coop_rules).

## SECTION 2. COST ACTION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

### 2.1. ROLE OF THE ACTION MC WITHIN THE ACTION

The purpose of an Action MC meeting is to coordinate and organise the Action's scientific and networking activities in line with the objectives specified in both the Action's MoU and the approved Work and Budget Plans.

For a complete overview of the role and responsibilities of the Action MC as well the procedure to acquire MC approval, please consult the CSO Decision on "COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment", section 4 and annex I the 'Rules of procedure for COST Action Management Committees'. The document is available at [www.cost.eu/action\\_management](http://www.cost.eu/action_management).

### 2.2. FIRST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

The date of the first Action MC meeting of an Action marks the official start date of a COST Action. The first Action MC meeting is organised, administered and funded centrally by the COST Association. For a complete overview of the activities due to occur during first MC meeting, please consult the CSO Decision on "COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment", section 2. The document is available at [www.cost.eu/action\\_management](http://www.cost.eu/action_management).

The COST Association reserves the right to cancel an official invitation to an MC Member to the first Management Committee meeting if the he/she does not Accept or Decline the invitation within ten (10) working days after the invitation has been sent out. The invitation will be sent out to the official MC Substitute in this case.

### 2.3. THE ROLE OF THE ACTION CHAIR

For a complete overview of the role and responsibilities of the elected Action Chair, please consult the Guidelines for COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment, section 4.3.2. The document is available at [www.cost.eu/action\\_management](http://www.cost.eu/action_management).

Among those responsibilities, the elected Action Chair has under its remit in the framework of these financial rules the following:

1. Manage Action MC approvals / decisions concerning expenditure (for meetings, Training Schools, Local Organiser Support, Short Term Scientific Missions, Dissemination and Publications) and communicate the outcome of Action MC approvals / decisions to the Grant Manager (see Section 2.2) and to the COST Association.
2. Define and communicate to the Grant Manager, on behalf of the Action's 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 shall be assumed by the Action Vice-Chair when the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution.
3. Authorise payments - this task shall be assumed by the Action Vice-Chair when the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution.
4. Review, sign and date financial reports - this task shall be assumed by the Action Vice-Chair when the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution.

## SECTION 3. COST GRANT SYSTEM (CGS)

Once the first Management Committee meeting has been concluded, the COST Action is from that point on funded and implemented under the tenets of the COST Grant System (CGS).

### 3.1. COST ACTION GRANT HOLDER

Under the tenets of the COST Grant System (CGS) the COST Action is implemented by a COST Action Grant Holder.

#### 3.1.1. SELECTION OF THE GRANT HOLDER

The CGS requires that an established legal entity, which one of the Action MC members shall be affiliated to, is selected by the Action MC to oversee the financial management and the various coordination tasks required to successfully support the implementation of approved COST activities. The decision to select the chosen Grant Holder shall be recorded in the minutes of the respective Action MC meeting or shall be secured by written procedure (which is also known as an e-vote). The result of such e-vote shall be also recorded in the minutes of the following Action MC meeting. This selected legal entity becomes known as the Grant Holder. The Grant Holder itself shall be a legal entity bound by national, international, public or private law. It cannot be an individual.

When selecting the Grant Holder, the Action MC shall take into consideration the following:

- The administrative capacity of the Grant Holder to successfully implement the Grant (i.e. the ability of the Grant Holder to process reimbursements whilst complying with national / local fiscal rules).
- The financial stability and medium-term viability of the chosen Grant Holder Institution.
- Any potential conflict of interest that could arise as a result of a proposed institution becoming a Grant Holder.

The COST Association will assess the appropriateness and viability of each proposed Grant Holder Institution and may request official statutes and / or a statement of accounts of the given institution prior to the transference of the Grant. Any subsequent evaluation of the Grant Holder's performance by the COST Association may determine that the replacement of a specific Grant Holder is necessary. A change of Grant Holder requires formal approval by both the COST Association and the Action MC. The COST Association reserves the right to unilaterally impose a change of Grant Holder or reject a nominated Grant Holder should it be deemed necessary to do so in order to ensure the smooth running of a specific Action.

The Grant Holder is comprised of four key positions. Depending on the internal organisation of the Grant Holder, the same person can hold more than one position at a time. The four positions are as follows:

1. **Scientific Representative:** is the Action MC member affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution. The Scientific Representative should attend Action MC meetings and shall be readily available to support the Action MC in monitoring the overall progress of the Action.

If the Scientific Representative position becomes vacant during an on-going Grant Period and no other Action MC member or Action MC substitute affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution is available to assume the position, one of the following two options are possible:

- The COST National Coordinator can nominate another individual who is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution to become an Action MC member. In this case, the newly nominated individual will become the Scientific Representative.

OR

- The Grant Holder Institution can appoint, as a temporary replacement, a member of staff to act as Scientific Representative until the end of the on-going Grant Period. When an individual affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution is not nominated as a replacement Action MC member at

the end of the on-going Grant Period, a new Grant Holder has to be elected for the subsequent Grant Period by the Action MC in line with the considerations detailed above.

2. Legal Representative: is the person from the Grant Holder Institution who bears the legal authority to sign the COST Action Grant Agreement (e.g. the Rector of a University).
3. Financial Representative: is the person from the Grant Holder Institution who has the legal authority to financially commit the institution in question and to validate the expenses listed in financial reports.
4. Grant Manager: is the person from the Grant Holder Institution who is responsible for overseeing the administrative management of the COST Action and is the primary user, on behalf of the Grant Holder, of the e-COST Action management tool.

### 3.1.2. GRANT HOLDER TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Prior to the commencement of the Action's activities, the elected Grant Holder Institution will enter into a legally binding contractual agreement called Action Grant Agreement with the COST Association. The Grant Holder will perform and oversee the administrative tasks related to managing and coordinating approved COST Action activities. The Grant Holder shall perform these tasks in accordance with best practice financial and administrative standards, the terms and conditions specified in the relevant signed Action Grant Agreement and the rules detailed in the COST Vademecum. If the Grant Holder cannot for any reason fulfil the aforementioned administrative tasks, the COST Association shall be informed immediately. Otherwise, the COST Association can consider any significant delays or notable performance failures as non-fulfilment of contractual obligations.

#### 1. Scientific Coordination responsibilities of the Grant Holder

The Grant Holder shall support the Action MC with the production of the required scientific reports for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the Action (see Section 1.3).

#### 2. Administrative responsibilities of the Grant Holder (Non-exhaustive list)

- Preparation of documentation for meetings under the guidance of the Action Chair / Vice-Chair (e.g. overseeing Action MC approvals, distributing agendas, issuing invitations, drafting minutes and ensuring that all eligible participants sign the relevant attendance lists etc.)
- Coordinating Action meetings. In case where the Grant Holder Manager shall travel to the meeting place in an administrative role (e.g. ensuring the attendance list is signed, assisting the MC Chair with the Minutes, providing support to the Local Organiser, etc) then the travel costs of the Grant Holder Manager can be funded with the Action's budget.
- Collecting and archiving supporting documents related to processing reimbursement claims and the associated payments; if necessary and when in compliance with local regulations, Grant Holder Institutions can request participants for original supporting documents.
- Archiving all necessary Action MC decisions relating to the Action.
- Shall support the Action with the production of its publications and in monitoring the development and maintenance of the Action website.

#### 3. Financial responsibilities of the Grant Holder (non-exhaustive list):

- Ensure that all payments linked to approved COST Action activities are paid in line with Action MC approvals and eligibility criteria stipulated in the present Vademecum. With respect to reimbursing Action Participants, the Grant Holder should process reimbursements within 30 calendar days after receiving the claimant's complete claim and never later than 45 calendar days after the end date of the event in question. In cases where advance payments (other than the ones foreseen for Action Participants from ITC, see Section 8.4) are requested by Action Participants and / or grantees, the Grant Holder assumes the financial risk associated with doing so. All payments related to COST activities shall be finalised and recorded in e-COST only after all the administrative requirements have been satisfied and the payment in question has been wired to the beneficiary or is about to be done.
- Ensure the preparation and delivery of financial reports within the set deadlines.

### 3.1.3. FINANCIAL REPORTING

**For each Grant Period, the following financial reports shall be submitted by the Grant Holder:**

- Intermediate Financial Report (IFR): the IFR is to be submitted if cash is required when requesting the second payment, at any given time according to the budgetary needs of the Action and not later than month 10 of the Grant Period. The IFR shall be signed electronically on e-COST by the financial or legal representative of the Grant Holder.
- Final Financial Report (FFR): the validated and signed FFR is to be submitted within 45 calendar days following the terms of the Action Grant Agreement from the end of each Grant Period. The expenses reported in the FFR shall contain only finalised and paid claims. The FFR shall be electronically signed on e-COST by the Financial / Legal Representative of the Grant Holder, and by the Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution). In cases where the late submission of the FFR is evident (submission beyond 45 calendar days after the end date of the Grant Period) the COST Association reserves the right to reject any non-finalised and / or unpaid claims from the given report. No changes to the report will be authorised after the validation and subsequent finalisation of the FFR.

The COST Association cannot be held responsible for any erroneously encoded expenses or any type of discrepancy detailed on a submitted financial report. Should the COST Association identify non-eligible or questionable expenses contained within a submitted report, the respective Grant Holder will be duly notified. Such expenses will be removed from e-COST and an updated revised version of the report shall be re-submitted to the COST Association for review. When financial reports submitted by the Grant Holder reveal discrepancies that are only identified after the Grant Period has been closed and / or in the event of an audit, the COST Association reserves the right to request the repayment of erroneously claimed funds in accordance with Section 3.2 of the present Vademecum.

### 3.1.4. FINANCIAL SCIENTIFIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION (FSAC)

The Financial, Scientific, Administration and Coordination (FSAC) budget line is a fixed percentage contribution afforded to the Grant Holder to support the execution of the administrative tasks relating to managing and coordinating scientific activities during a given Grant Period. The FSAC percentage, which can represent up to a maximum of 15% of the actual scientific expenditure, is defined in the approved Work and Budget Plan. At the end of each Grant Period, the applicable FSAC amount that can be afforded to the Grant Holder is calculated by applying the Action MC approved FSAC percentage against the actual eligible scientific expenditure incurred during the respective Grant Period.

## 3.2. COST ACTION GRANT AGREEMENT AND WORK AND BUDGET PLAN

### 3.2.1. COST ACTION GRANT AGREEMENT

For each Grant Period, Actions are allocated a fixed budget. This budget represents the maximum financial contribution that will be provided by the COST Association for the respective Grant Period. With this contribution, each Action MC is required to plan, define, agree and approve, in the guise of a Work and Budget Plan, the Action's scientific activities for the given Grant Period. Action funds cannot be directly used for submitting research proposals for the purpose of acquiring funding for national, European or internationally sourced research grants. The approved Work and Budget Plan detailing activities of the Action forms an Annex to the Action Grant Agreement. The COST Association and the Grant Holder Institution shall sign an Action Grant Agreement. Each Grant Period typically lasts 12 months.

A Work and Budget Plan (Annex A to the Grant Agreement) contains the following budget lines:

1. Meetings.

2. Training Schools.
3. Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM).
4. Conference Grants for Early Career Investigators from ITC, hereinafter referred to as Conference Grants.
5. COST Action Dissemination.
6. Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities (OERSA).

Budget lines 1-6 come under the collective heading: 'science expenditure'. The Action MC can rearrange the budget allocation for approved activities listed under 'science expenditure'.

7. Financial Scientific and Administrative Coordination tasks ((FSAC) - see Section 3.1.4.).

As each Grant Period evolves, the Action Science Officer shall be promptly informed by the Action Chair when an approved activity has been cancelled. In addition, approval by the Action's Science Officer is required to authorise the inclusion of additional activities that were not originally foreseen in the initial approved Work and Budget Plan. The additional activity, once approved, becomes an integral part of concerned Grant Period.

### 3.2.2. COST ACTION GRANT AGREEMENT AMENDMENT

An amendment to the Action Grant Agreement is mandatory when:

1. There is a change in the legal status of the Grant Holder.
2. A change to the end date of a Grant Period becomes necessary.
3. A change to the Action's budget for a Grant Period is necessary (following the approval of a revised Work and Budget Plan that has been agreed by both the Action Science Officer and the Action MC).

When an Amendment to a Grant Agreement is necessary, a possible increase in the FSAC (see Section 3.1.4) can be considered only if a valid justification is provided. The revised FSAC amount cannot exceed 15% of the total amount allocated for scientific activities. The COST Association shall consider it on a case-by-case basis and will determine whether such an increase is justified and / or necessary.

An amendment to the Action Grant Agreement shall be signed by both the COST Association and the Grant Holder before the end date of the Grant Period.

### 3.2.3. PAYMENT MODALITIES

Payment requests are linked to the financial reporting requirements specified within the respective Action Grant Agreement. It is essential that each Grant Holder and the Action MC take all the necessary measures to meet their reporting requirements in line with the time frames specified in the Action Grant Agreement.

For the Action's first Grant Period, after the signature of the Grant Agreement by both parties, and within 30 days following the release of a payment notification, the first instalment of 50% of the allocated Grant amount is transferred to the Grant Holder. The release of the payment notification depends on the timing and estimated Action expenditure level of the planned activities. The payment of first instalments for all subsequent Grant Periods also requires that FFR (see Section 3.1.3) detailing eligible expenses for the preceding Grant Period are validated by the COST Association before the associated transfer of funds can be made. Any funds left unspent from the previous Grant Period will be automatically deducted from the amount paid to the Grant Holder for the first instalment of the subsequent Grant Period.

For all Grant periods, the second instalment of up to 35% of the allocated Grant amount can be paid after the signature of a validated IFR and following the conditions stated in the payment notification.

For all Grant periods, the third instalment of up to 15% of the allocated Grant amount can be paid after the signature of a validated FFR and following the conditions stated in the payment notification. The payment of all instalments is subject to the availability of funds under the applicable Specific Grant Agreement signed between the COST Association and the European Commission.

Grant payments are processed by instalments in EUR and can only be paid into the institutional bank account of the Grant Holder. Grant payments cannot be paid into an individual's private bank account. Bank and / or currency related charges / fees imposed by the bank of the Grant Holder Institution when receiving Grant payments from the COST Association are not eligible to be claimed under the COST Grant System. These expenses shall be borne by each respective Grant Holder Institution.

#### 3.2.4. RETURNING UNSPENT FUNDS

The COST Association reserves the right to reclaim or retain funds from the Grant Holder when:

1. There is an under-spend at the end of the last Grant Period of the Action.
2. There is an under-spend at the end of a Grant Period and a change of Grant Holder is required.
3. The non-fulfilment of the Grant Holder's contractual obligations and / or the non-performance of their tasks and responsibilities are discernible (see Section 3.1.2).

In any of the aforementioned scenarios, the Grant Holder has to provide the COST Association with a finalised FFR in order to bring the respective Grant Period to a close. When the FFR has been validated by the COST Association and an under-spend is evident, the COST Association will request the repayment of the unspent funds.

#### 3.2.5. REJECTION OF EXPENSES

The COST Association shall – at the time of the IFR, the FFR or afterwards – reject any expenses which are non-eligible in accordance with the present Vademecum, in particular following checks, reviews, audits or investigations. Non-eligible costs shall be rejected in full, except for the lump sum expenses which shall be rejected proportionally to the task or part of the related activity not implemented. The Grant Holder shall be duly notified of such rejection.

If the COST Association rejects expenses at the time of the IFR or FFR, it will deduct them from the eligible costs declared in the IFR or FFR and reduce the second or third instalment accordingly.

#### 3.2.6. NON-FULFILMENT OF CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS OR MISMANAGEMENT OF FUNDS

Mismanagement of the allocated funds, non-fulfilment of the Grant Holder's contractual obligations and the non-performance of the tasks and responsibilities expected of the Grant Holder may lead to one or all of the following scenarios:

1. The suspension of all pending and / or future payments and the recovery of the amounts already paid.
2. The suspension or cancellation of the Action Grant Agreement.
3. The selection of a replacement Grant Holder.
4. The reduction or complete cancellation of the contribution to the Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination (FSAC) costs mentioned in Section 3.1.4.

Before taking any of the above-mentioned measures, the COST Association will formally notify the Grant Holder:

1. of its intention to adopt one of the above-mentioned measures.
2. to submit observations within 30 calendar days of receiving notification.



If the COST Association does not receive observations or decides to pursue the above steps despite the observations it has received, it will formally notify confirmation of the measure. Otherwise, it will formally notify that the procedure is not continued.

The suspension of payments or of the Action Grant Agreement will take effect the day the confirmation notification is sent by the COST Association. If the conditions for resuming payments are met, the suspension will be lifted. The COST Association will notify the Grant Holder accordingly.

The cancellation of the Action Grant Agreement will take effect the day the confirmation notification is sent by the COST Association. Cancellation of the Action Grant Agreement will lead to the selection of a replacement Grant Holder.

The selection of a replacement Grant Holder will be preceded by a measure of suspension or cancellation of the Action Grant Agreement and be reported to the Action MC in view of the selection of a new Grant Holder.

The reduction or complete cancellation of the Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination (FSAC) will take effect the day the confirmation notification is sent by the COST Association.

### 3.2.7. E-COST, STRONG AUTHENTICATION, AND ARCHIVING

It is compulsory that all Grant Holders use the online Action management tool: e-COST – see <https://e-services.cost.eu>.

e-COST is a technical platform that enables participants to submit their reimbursement claims electronically and as such enables Grant Holders to monitor the participation status of invitees / attendees for any given activity. e-COST also provides a 'real time' budgetary overview of any activity that has been encoded and actioned on the platform.

The Strong Authentication feature is activated by default on e-COST, unless otherwise requested by the Grant Holder. The Strong Authentication simplifies the reimbursement procedure in e-COST. It applies to all types of meetings and requires users to register 'one-time passwords' similar to the additional security layers found on many online banking facilities. Participants are prompted to complete the Strong Authentication online registration procedure when they access their first invitation email for a meeting. On finalising the registration procedure, each eligible participant will then be able to complete and submit their 'Online Travel Reimbursement Request' (OTRR) forms and the relevant supporting documentation entirely online. This removes the requirement of eligible participant to physically print out and sign their OTRR forms by hand and for them to send their OTRR forms (and supporting documentation) to their Grant Holder by post.

The original invoices / receipts / supporting documents shall be kept by each eligible Action Participant for four (4) years after the end of the Grant Period in which the meeting takes place. If necessary and when in compliance with local regulations, Grant Holder Institutions can request Action Participants for original supporting documents, in which case, the obligation to keep original documents is transferred to the Grant Holder.

All Grant Holders managing Actions that opt for the Strong Authentication feature shall archive legible copies (electronic copies will suffice) of all OTRRs and of all of the supporting documentation (including Action MC approvals) related to all activities up to the end date of the respective audit timeframe that is indicated on the Action Grant Agreement signed between the COST Association and the Grant Holder. Grant Holders choosing not to opt for the Strong Authentication feature shall archive original (signed by hand) OTRR forms submitted by all participants along with legible copies (electronic copies will suffice) of all supporting documentation (including Action MC approvals) related to meetings up to the end date of the audit timeframe that is indicated on the Action Grant Agreement signed between the COST Association and the Grant Holder.

### **3.3. GENERAL NON-ELIGIBLE EXPENSES UNDER THE COST GRANT SYSTEM (CGS)**

1. V.A.T. borne by Grant Holders or Local organisers is not to be considered as being a charge or a fee under the CGS irrespective of whether the Grant Holder institution is subject to pay V.A.T. or not. Such V.A.T. cannot be claimed nor can it be reimbursed by COST funds. However, V.A.T. included in receipts provided by Action Participants as part of the travel reimbursement request, is eligible. Provisions for possible future losses or charges and / or for doubtful debt.
2. Expenses related to interest or duties.
3. Unnecessary or ill-considered expenses.
4. Expenses already paid for and / or those already reimbursed from other sources.
5. Exchange rate losses.
6. Expenses linked to activities that do not have a clear and recognisable association with supporting approved COST Action activities.
7. Bank and / or currency related charges / fees imposed by the bank of the Grant Holder Institution when receiving Grant payments from the COST Association.
8. Bank and / or currency related charges / fees charged by the bank of individual claimants / beneficiaries who have received a payment from the Grant Holder Institution / COST Association.
9. Recruitment of lobbying firms with regards to Dissemination activities or networking tools. Lobbying firms are considered as public affairs consultancies providing their clients with insights into the political environment, and advice relating to governmental policy. They are most often employed by the private sector and represent their clients' interests towards policymakers and media. They may undertake media relations and communication agency work.

Grant Holder's shall consult the COST Association when there is doubt about the eligibility of any expense or activity being supported or funded under the COST Grant System.

## SECTION 4. MEETING TYPES AND ELIGIBILITY

COST supports different categories of meetings as part of its “Meetings” networking tool. The following considerations shall be respected in all cases:

1. All activities shall be approved by the Action MC and by the Action Science Officer. The Action Chair shall acquire approval of the Action MC and the Action Science Officer for changes to the approved Work and Budget Plan such as the cancellation of activities and / or the inclusion of additional activities not originally included in the approved Work and Budget Plan.
2. COST meetings, workshops, and conferences shall be held for the sole purpose of supporting the Action’s scientific and networking activities in line with the objectives specified in both the Action’s MoU and the approved Work and Budget Plans. In its role as organiser or co-organiser, the COST Action shall be fully integrated into the scientific programme of the respective event / activity and shall have direct involvement in the general organisation of the event. COST shall be visible as an organiser or co-organiser on the event’s specific website and its promotional materials. In case of co-organised meeting, workshop, conferences etc. COST Action participants shall be waived of any registration fees to attend the event in question.
3. For co-located meetings (co-located being multiple COST meetings that are held over the same time period in the same venue / city), a limit of four Invited Speakers applies to the combined series of meetings. Only one ‘Local Organiser Support’ claim can be afforded to support the entire series of co-located meetings with the COST contribution never exceeding EUR 10 000.
4. The Action MC shall determine from amongst eligible participants those who are entitled to be reimbursed. The Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) can assume this responsibility if the Action MC formally gives them the mandate to act on their behalf. The eligibility table for all types of participation in a COST activity is available in Annex I of the Vademecum.
5. All categories of meetings (except Dissemination meetings – see Section 4.3) shall be held in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member.
6. All beneficiaries in receipt of a reimbursement for eligible travel, accommodation and meals expenses which are sourced from COST funds shall sign the attendance list on each day that they attend the COST event. Please note that this requirement is not applicable to the Dissemination meetings category - see Section 4.3.
7. Taxes that might be due by Action Participants or other beneficiaries with respect to flat rate allowances and / or fixed Grants are not to be deducted from payable amounts. It is the responsibility of each beneficiary to ensure that they comply with their national tax rules and obligations regarding all amounts received from COST.

### 4.1. ACTION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (MC) MEETINGS

#### 4.1.1. PARTICIPANTS ELIGIBLE TO BE REIMBURSED FOR THEIR ATTENDANCE AT ACTION MC MEETINGS

1. Up to two Action MC members (or their substitutes) from each Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member are eligible to be reimbursed for their attendance at Action MC meetings. Each Action MC member can only be replaced by an officially nominated substitute.
2. The reimbursement of Action MC Observers from Near Neighbour Country (NNC) is limited to up to a maximum of two representatives from each NNC. When more than two MC Observers from the same NNC are invited to attend an MC meeting, the MC decides on who should be reimbursed.
3. The reimbursement of Action MC Observers from Approved European RTD Organisations is limited to one representative from each approved Organisation.
4. Expenses for the participation of Working Group leaders affiliated in Participating COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members who exceptionally are not Action MC members nor Action MC substitutes may be reimbursed.

#### 4.1.2. PARTICIPANTS NOT ELIGIBLE TO BE REIMBURSED FOR THEIR ATTENDANCE AT ACTION MC MEETINGS

1. Action MC Observers from COST Partner Members, IPC, Approved International Organisations (IO) and EU Commission, Bodies, Offices and Agencies.
2. Any other participant not specifically mentioned as being eligible.

### 4.2. ALL OTHER CATEGORIES OF MEETINGS (EXCLUDING DISSEMINATION MEETINGS)

All other types of approved meetings, excluding Dissemination meetings, focus their work on achieving the research coordination and capacity-building objectives of the Action in line with those objectives set out in the Action's MoU.

#### 4.2.1. PARTICIPANTS ELIGIBLE TO BE REIMBURSED FOR OTHER TYPES OF MEETINGS

1. Action Participants from Participating COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members.
2. Action MC Observers from NNCs.
3. Action Participants from Approved European RTD Organisations.
4. Up to four Invited Speakers whose primary affiliation is with an institution located in a non-Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member (which also includes COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members listed as being under intention and / or individuals who have not yet obtained Action MC approval to participate in a given Action), individuals in non-approved NNC Institutions and individuals located in non-approved IPC Institutions.

Invited Speakers are specialists who are not Action Participants but can partake in one COST Action meeting throughout the lifetime of the Action. Repeated participation of the same Invited Speakers for meetings cannot be funded under the COST Grant. Invited Speakers shall be invited, and listed, as speakers on the programme / agenda of the relevant Action meeting.

#### 4.2.2. PARTICIPANTS NOT ELIGIBLE TO BE REIMBURSED FOR OTHER TYPES OF MEETINGS

1. Action MC Observers from COST Partner Members, IPC, approved IO and EU Commission, Bodies, Offices and agencies.
2. Any other participant not specifically mentioned as being eligible.

### 4.3. DISSEMINATION MEETINGS

Dissemination meetings are high profile events or conferences not organised by the COST Action. Action MC members or their substitutes shall attend these meetings for the purpose of disseminating the Action's achievements. The following conditions apply to this meeting type:

1. The participation of eligible participants at Dissemination meetings shall be pre-approved by both the Action MC and by the Action's Science Officer. Attendance at European conferences is preferred. However, conferences held elsewhere can also be considered.
2. For each Grant Period, a maximum of two Action MC members or their substitutes are eligible to be reimbursed for their attendance at approved Dissemination meetings. Repeated attendance at Dissemination meetings by the same Action MC members or Action MC substitutes across Grant Periods should be avoided.

3. All eligible Action Participants shall make an oral presentation at the conference in question and shall be listed as a speaker in the official event/conference programme. The main subject of the oral presentation / speech at the approved event or conference shall result in promoting the scientific activities being performed by the COST Action.
4. Eligible participants may receive financial support for their travel, accommodation and meal expenses in line with the eligibility rules detailed in Section 4.
5. In addition to the provisions specified in Point 4 (see above), a contribution of up to a maximum of EUR 500 can be claimed for conference fees incurred by eligible participants. When meal and accommodation expenses are supported by the hosting institution as part of the provisions offered in their conference package, the accommodation and meal allowances afforded to each eligible participant shall be deducted from each claim accordingly. The reimbursement of a conference fee requires a claimant to submit supporting documentation evidencing that the amount in question was incurred. Virtual conference fees can be considered eligible provided all other eligibility conditions are fulfilled.

#### 4.3.1. PARTICIPANTS ELIGIBLE TO BE REIMBURSED

Action MC members or Action MC substitutes from Participating COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members.

#### 4.3.2. PARTICIPANTS NOT ELIGIBLE TO BE REIMBURSED

1. Individuals located in institutions in non-Participating COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members (which includes those individuals located in COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members listed as being under intention or which have not yet obtained Action MC approval to participate in the Action).
2. Action MC Observers from COST Partner Members, NNC, IPC, Approved IO, EU Commission, Bodies, Offices and Agencies and Approved European RTD Organisations.
3. Any other participant not specifically mentioned as being eligible.

## SECTION 5. MEETINGS – FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Action MC determines who amongst eligible participants will be entitled to financial support for their travel and subsistence expenses as detailed in this Section

The Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) shall assume this responsibility when formally mandated by the Action MC.

The eligibility table for all types of participation in a COST activity is available in Annex I of the Vademecum.

The organisational expenses linked to hosting an approved meeting shall be claimed under the ‘Local Organiser Support’ mechanism (see Section 7: Local Organiser Support).

### **Meeting participants eligible to financial support shall:**

- Choose the most economical means of transportation.
- Make their transportation arrangements as early as possible upon receipt of the e-COST official invitation to the approved activity.

### **For eligible participants to receive financial support, they shall:**

1. Create an e-COST profile at <https://e-services.cost.eu/> including bank details.
2. Accept the meeting invitation.
3. Sign the attendance list on each day that they attend the meeting. Please note that this requirement is not applicable to the Dissemination meetings category - see Section 4.3.
4. Declare via e-COST when submitting their Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR) that they will not receive a reimbursement or an allowance from a third party to support their attendance at the approved COST activity for which they are submitting a claim - double funding is not permitted. The COST Association reserves the right to contact any beneficiary of COST funds and / or their institution or any other relevant third party when double funding is suspected.
5. Submit via e-COST a completed OTRR within 30 calendar days after the end date of the approved activity.
6. Upload legible copies of all invoices / receipts and relevant supporting documents onto e-COST
7. Archive the original invoices / receipts for four (4) years after the end of the Grant Period in which the meeting takes place.

All payments made to eligible participants are in Euro at an exchange rate automatically calculated by e-COST which uses the conversion rate applicable at the end date of the meeting in question. Bank charges / fees incurred by a Grant Holder in relation to returned or rejected payments due to incorrect bank account details being provided by a beneficiary of COST funds can be subtracted from the payable amounts. When receiving a payment sourced from COST, bank charges / fees charged by banks are not eligible to be claimed by the beneficiary and shall be borne by each respective individual beneficiary.

### **5.1. ELIGIBLE EXPENSES**

#### **5.1.1. DAILY ALLOWANCE**

The reimbursement of incurred accommodation, meals, and local travel expenses in the country where the meeting takes place is paid as one item known as daily allowance. The daily allowance considers the participant’s travel start and end dates and hours. The daily allowance rate is determined based on the country where the event takes place. The daily allowance rates can be found on the COST website at [www.cost.eu/daily\\_allowance](http://www.cost.eu/daily_allowance).

No invoices for accommodation, meals, and local transport in the country where the meeting takes place are required. In the cases when the travel dates to and from the event cannot be determined, the participant shall provide any documentation attesting their travel dates so that the daily allowance can be correctly reimbursed.

The Action MC may decide to reduce the daily allowance rate. In such cases, all participants shall be notified of the revised daily allowance rate before or upon receiving their formal invitations via e-COST. The same daily allowance rate shall be afforded to all eligible participants attending a given event.

1. The maximum daily allowance rate that can be claimed for by an eligible participant is calculated against the actual number of days the participant attends the approved activity (as confirmed against their signature on the official attendance list for each day of the event that they attend), plus 1, permitting, if applicable, the participant to arrive on the day before the activity commences or leave one day after the activities finish.
2. Accommodation expenses shall be paid for by each individual participant and not by a Local Organiser.
3. When an eligible participant shares the accommodation with another eligible participant, both eligible participants may claim reimbursement according to the daily allowance rules. The recommendation is that if the daily allowance of one of the two participants covers the accommodation, meals, and local travel of both, then one participant may claim the daily allowance and the long distance travel expenses while the second participant claims only his/her own long distance travel expenses.
4. An eligible participant has also the option to decline the reimbursement of the daily allowance.
5. The daily allowance contains provisions for a maximum of up to two meals per day (meals strictly concern lunch and dinner).
6. For each meal provided by other sources or by the Local Organiser, the daily allowance is reduced with 10% of the daily allowance rate.
7. Local transport expenses related to travels in the country where the meeting takes place are included in the daily allowance rate and refer to the use of metro / tram, car, local train, bus or ferry to reach the hotel and / or meeting venue from the airport / train station and back, to and from the meeting venue and hotel and to the joint dinner (if applicable). No invoices or tickets are required.

#### 5.1.2. LOCAL TRANSPORT EXPENSES TO REACH THE MAIN MODE OF LONG-DISTANCE TRANSPORT

Local transport expenses incurred in the country where the eligible participant's primary affiliation is located (as registered on their e-COST profile) are eligible for reimbursement based on tickets / receipts / invoices.

The following conditions apply to the different modes of permissible local transport options:

##### 1. Local transport expenses

Local transport expenses refer to travels in the country of primary affiliation with the purpose to reach the main mode of long-distance travel and include the use of metro, local train, bus or ferry. All tickets / receipts are required and shall clearly detail the name of the service provider, the full price of the ticket, and the date of travel. If the price is missing, a price quotation obtained from the service provider website shall be uploaded along with the claim on e-COST.

##### 2. Local Car travel expenses

An eligible participant travelling by car within one country to reach the main mode of long-distance travel, specifically not travelling across national borders, can be reimbursed according to the following criteria:

- Car travel can be reimbursed at EUR 0.35 per km.

- If multiple participants travel together, only one person may claim the reimbursement of the number of km. Other eligible participants travelling in the same car are not eligible for the reimbursement of the car km.
- For those participants whose primary affiliation is in the country where the meeting takes place, if they travel less than 100 km (one way) in the country where the meeting takes place, the expense is reimbursed through the daily allowance rate and cannot be claimed separately.

### 5.1.3. LONG-DISTANCE (CROSS-BORDER) TRAVEL EXPENSES

Long-distance travel is when an eligible participant travels across national borders from the country of their primary affiliation (as registered on their e-COST profile) directly to where the approved COST meeting is being held and back (round trip). Each eligible participant is entitled to claim for travel expenses in line with the conditions detailed in this section irrespective of the dates of travel, provided the meeting dates are included.

The following conditions apply to the different modes of permissible long-distance travel options as listed below:

#### 5.1.3.1 Long-distance or International Train, Bus, or Ferry travel expenses

An eligible participant travelling by train or bus crossing national borders from the country where their primary affiliation is located (as registered on their e-COST profile) to the country where the approved COST meeting is being held and back again shall comply with the following considerations:

- The supporting documents provided by eligible participants shall clearly detail the name of the service provider, the mode of transport taken, the full price paid for the ticket, and the date of travel.
- First, second, and business class tickets are eligible to be reimbursed.
- Supplements for fast trains and sleeper trains are eligible to be reimbursed.

Special provisions are in place for the reimbursement of eligible participant who live in the same country as where the meeting takes place with respect to the reimbursement of long-distance travel.

- When the departure point of the participant is less than 100 km from the meeting place (one way, in the same country), then the travel expense is considered local transport and reimbursed through the Daily Allowance.
- When the departure point of the participant is more than 100 km from the meeting place (one way, in the same country), then the travel expense can be reimbursed based on tickets/invoices. The participant shall provide a proof of the distance travelled by means of a printout from a reputable online route planner (e.g. Google maps) showing the route taken and the kilometres travelled.

#### 5.1.3.2. International or domestic air travel expenses

Air travel is always classified as being long distance travel, including domestic flights.

- The supporting documents provided by the eligible participant shall clearly detail the name of the service provider, the mode of transport taken, the full price paid for the ticket, the name of the passenger, the travel dates, departure and arrival times and the booking class (an invoice only showing the amount will not suffice).
- Only economy class tickets are eligible to be reimbursed.
- Air fares cannot exceed EUR 1 200. Air fares that exceed EUR 1200 require explicit approval from the COST Association prior to the event taking place and before the ticket is purchased by the eligible participant. If these conditions are not met, the reimbursement above EUR 1 200 may be declined.
- Stop-overs (other than for connecting flights) shall be avoided. Expenses incurred during a voluntary stop-over are not eligible for reimbursement. The eligible expenses shall be processed as outlined in the section travel derogation.



- Seat reservations, extra leg room, exit row seats, fast lane, priority boarding, and luggage transportation expenses are eligible to be reimbursed.
- Administrative fees charged by travel agencies are eligible to be reimbursed.
- Cancellation insurance fees are eligible to be reimbursed.
- In cases where the eligible participant is breastfeeding her infant (0-12 months), the long-distance travel of the infant may be reimbursed. Only the airfare of the infant can be reimbursed in this case (i.e. tickets of accompanying family members or babysitters are not eligible).

#### **5.1.3.3. Long distance Car travel expenses**

An eligible participant travelling by car crossing national borders from the country where their primary affiliation is located (as registered on their e-COST profile) to the country where the approved COST meeting is being held and back (round trip) shall respect the following criteria:

- Car travel is limited to a maximum distance of 2 000 km for the entire journey.
- Car travel can be reimbursed at EUR 0.35 per km.
- The participant shall provide a proof of the distance travelled by means of a printout from a reputable online route planner (e.g. Google maps) showing the route taken and the kilometres travelled.
- If multiple participants travel together, only one person may claim the reimbursement of the number of km. Other eligible participants travelling in the same car are not eligible for the reimbursement of the car km.
- Parking expenses, any additional accommodation expenses, fuel expenses, tolls charges and car rental expenses are not eligible to be reimbursed.

#### **5.1.3.4. Other travel expenses: Visa expenses**

Visa processing fees relevant to attending approved COST meetings are eligible to be reimbursed. All eligible claimants shall provide relevant supporting documents such as a receipt / stamp from the embassy / consulate issuing the visa which clearly shows the amount paid and the conditions of the acquired visa. The COST Association and the Action Grant Holder cannot be held responsible in cases where individuals do not secure the necessary travel documents / visas needed to facilitate their participation in approved COST activities. In case of non-attendance at the event, the participant will not be entitled to be reimbursed for the visa-related expenses.

#### **5.1.3.5. Travel derogations**

Travelling to and from countries other than where the approved meeting is being held and the country where the eligible participant's primary affiliation is located (as registered on their e-COST profile) is a rule derogation. In such cases, the participant shall submit an online travel reimbursement request with a justification which shall be accompanied with the following:

- The full travel itinerary and the invoice / receipt for the actual ticket that was purchased.
- Comparative quotes sourced from an online travel search engines such as Skyscanner, Expedia, Opodo etc. showing the most economical means of travel close to the dates of the meeting as if the participant travelled from the country where their primary affiliation is located (as registered on their e-COST profile) to the country where the meeting is being held and return. The quotes shall be generated at least one month before the start date of the meeting.
- Whichever is the more economical option between the actual ticket bought and the comparative quote, within reason, will be reimbursed to the participant.

Returning to or coming from a different city which is in the country of affiliation is not considered a travel derogation. The participant shall explain in his/her claim in e-COST why he/she is not returning to the same place as the place of departure.

## **Expenses that give rise to rule derogations caused by medical illness and / or Force Majeure**

If an eligible participant (or a first degree relative of an eligible participant) suffers from a medical illness or if an eligible participant encounters a case of Force Majeure (e.g. a strike, terrorist incident or natural disaster) and, as a result, there is an expressed need to cancel / change travel ticket (s) and / or hotel reservation (s), then the proven non-refundable amounts or additional expenses can be considered as being eligible for reimbursement. The non-refundable amounts or additional expenses linked to the above shall always be calculated against the face value of the incurred travel, accommodation and meal expenses (face value being the amounts evidenced on submitted receipts / invoices). The maximum thresholds governing all eligible travel expenses as described in Section 5 shall be respected. Extra accommodation and meal expenses being claimed due to medical illness / Force Majeure can never exceed the Action MC agreed set flat rate amounts for the given activity.

Each eligible participant claiming expenses linked to medical illness / Force Majeure shall submit a completed, signed and dated OTRR, all the relevant invoices and receipts and if applicable, a statement from the respective service provider(s) (airline company, hotel etc.) detailing the non-refundable amounts. Claimants shall also always submit to their Grant Holder, written documentary evidence justifying their claim – i.e. submitting a medical certificate in cases related to medical illness or a statement from the airline company / service provider in cases linked to Force Majeure substantiating the nature of the Force Majeure. The Grant Holder shall in turn submit all supporting documentation provided by the participant to the COST Association for approval prior to the respective claim being paid to the participant.

The COST Association reviews each derogation request linked to medical illness and Force Majeure on a case-by-case basis and reserves the right to reject any such request.

## **5.2. MEETINGS: NON-ELIGIBLE EXPENSES**

1. Taxi expenses.
2. Parking expenses.
3. Conference / registration fees (apart from Dissemination meetings – see Section 4.3.).
4. Lecture fees and honoraria.
5. Accommodation, transportation, SMS costs, photograph or photocopies, postage expenses or service fees associated with obtaining visas.
6. Life and medical insurance – expenses related to addressing / treating health issues.
7. Luggage insurance.
8. Fees, charges and/or penalties linked to a participant changing or having to rebook travel tickets.
9. Additional accommodation or meal expenses, fuel expenses, carbon tax, toll charges and car rental expenses linked to car travel.
10. Wi-Fi, telephone, internet, laundry and mini-bar consumption expenses.
11. Printing and postage expenses.
12. Regional and / or national taxation fees; stamp duty expenses.

## SECTION 6. 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.

The Guidelines for Action Management, Monitoring and Assessment should be followed to ensure the proper implementation of this networking instrument. This document can be consulted at : [www.cost.eu/guidelines\\_Action\\_management\\_monitoring\\_assessment](http://www.cost.eu/guidelines_Action_management_monitoring_assessment)).

### 6.1. GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW WHEN ORGANISING A TRAINING SCHOOL

1. A Training School shall have COST Action objectives as its focus.
2. Training School shall be held in a participating COST Full or Cooperating Member or in an institution with which an NNC Action Participant is affiliated (in this case, pre-approval from the Action Science Officer is mandatory).
3. The COST Action also shall be one of the primary organisers of the Training School and shall be clearly promoted on all dissemination channels, namely the official website of the Action / event, brochures and all relevant training material.
4. There should be a reasonable country balance concerning trainee participation.
5. Training Schools are recommended to last a minimum of 3 days.
6. A ratio of at least 3 Trainees to 1 Trainer is recommended.

### 6.2. TRAINING SCHOOLS – ELIGIBILITY RULES

COST supports the participation of two categories of participants: trainers and trainees.

1. The Action MC shall define from amongst eligible participants those Trainers and Trainees who are to be reimbursed. The Action MC can delegate the pre-mentioned tasks to the Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution).
2. Both Trainers and Trainees can be reimbursed for their long-distance travel expenses in line with the eligibility rules specified in Section 5. Meetings – Financial Support. In addition, the reimbursement of the daily allowance rate for the country where the Training School takes place covers the incurred accommodation, meals, and local travel expenses.
3. In no occurrence can Trainers receive any form of Lecture Fees and/or any form of honoraria for participating in a COST Action Training School.
4. The Management Committee may choose to apply two different daily allowance rates, one rate for Trainers and one rate for Trainees.
5. The Action MC may decide to reduce the daily allowance rate. In such cases, all participants concerned shall be notified of the revised daily allowance rate before or upon receiving their formal invitations via e-COST. The same daily allowance rate shall be afforded to all eligible Trainers or all eligible Trainees attending a given Training School.
6. All attendees (both trainers and trainees) at approved Training Schools shall sign the attendance list on each day that they attend the event.
7. All attendees shall create an e-COST profile at <https://e-services.cost.eu> including bank details prior to accepting their e-COST invitation.
8. All attendees shall submit via e-COST a completed online travel reimbursement request within 30 calendar days after the end date of the approved activity.
9. All attendees shall upload legible copies of all invoices / receipts and relevant supporting documents onto e-COST and archive the original invoices / receipts for four (4) years after the end of the Grant Period in which the meeting takes place.

10. The organisational expenses linked to hosting a Training School can be claimed under the 'Local Organiser Support' mechanism (see Section 7).

**Trainers eligible to be reimbursed:**

1. Trainers from Participating COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members.
2. Trainers from Participating COST Partner Members.
3. Action MC Observers from NNC.
4. Action MC Observers from IPC.
5. Trainers from Approved International Organisations (IO).
6. Trainers from Approved European RTD Organisations.
7. Up to four Invited Speakers whose primary affiliation is with an institution located in a non Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member (which also includes COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members listed as being under intention and / or individuals who have not yet obtained Action MC approval to participate in a given Action), individuals in non-approved NNC Institutions and individuals located in non-approved IPC Institutions.

Invited Speakers are specialists who are not Action Participants but can participate and be reimbursed for their attendance in one COST Action meeting and/ or Training School throughout the lifetime of the Action following the same reimbursement rules as for any other eligible participant. Invited Speakers shall be listed as a speaker on the programme / agenda of the relevant Training School.

**Trainers not eligible to be reimbursed:**

1. Trainers from EU Commission, Bodies, Offices and Agencies.
2. Other Trainers not specifically mentioned as being eligible.

**Trainees eligible to be reimbursed:**

Trainees shall be engaged in an official research programme as a PhD Student or postdoctoral fellow or can be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution, organisation or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing research. Trainees eligible for reimbursement:

1. Trainees from COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Member.
2. Action MC Observer from NNC.
3. Trainees from Approved European RTD Organisations.

**Trainees not eligible to be reimbursed:**

1. Trainees from COST Partner Members.
2. Action MC Observers from IPC.
3. Trainees from Approved IO, EU Commission, Bodies, Offices and Agencies.
4. Other Trainees not specifically mentioned as being eligible.

## SECTION 7. LOCAL ORGANISER SUPPORT (LOS)

### 7.1. LOS RULES

The LOS is a contribution to the overall expenses related to organising approved meetings (excluding Dissemination meetings), Conferences, Workshops and / or Training Schools. The Local Organiser can, in agreement with the Action Chair (and / or Action Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution), choose between two reimbursement modalities which determine the basis for calculating the LOS amount that can be claimed. LOS can only be paid into an institutional bank account and never into a personal bank account.

#### 7.1.1. LOS FINANCIAL SUPPORT / REIMBURSEMENT MODALITIES

There are two LOS reimbursement modalities:

##### 1. Reimbursement Modality 1

The first reimbursement modality enables the Local Organiser to claim a lump sum of up to EUR 20 per participant for each day the participant attends the approved activity.

For this reimbursement modality, the following conditions are applicable when submitting a Local Organiser Support claim:

- A maximum of EUR 5 000 can be claimed.
- Each participant, eligible or not for personal expense reimbursement, shall sign the attendance list for each day they attend the event.
- The final grant amount is calculated based on the total number of participants who signed the attendance list for each day of the event.
- The Grant Holder shall upload onto the e-COST platform, the signed attendance list for each day of the approved activity. Invoices do not need to be submitted by the Local Organiser for this reimbursement modality.

The Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) can choose to approve an amount lower than what the lump sum amount of EUR 20 per participant for each day the participant attended the approved activity permits.

##### 2. Reimbursement Modality 2

This reimbursement modality enables the Local Organiser to claim eligible expenses which are justified against amounts detailed on invoices. The Local Organiser shall submit a breakdown of eligible expenses. V.A.T. listed on invoices cannot be claimed by the Local Organiser and shall be covered from other sources. The claimed expenses shall strictly adhere to the category of eligible expenses listed in Section 7.2.

For this reimbursement modality, the following conditions are applicable when submitting a Local Organiser Support claim:

- A maximum of EUR 10 000 can be claimed.
- The Local Organiser shall enter in e-COST a final breakdown of eligible expenses and shall upload all the invoices concerning the requested eligible expenses.
- V.A.T. cannot be claimed by the Local Organiser.
- The Local Organiser shall upload, onto the e-COST platform, the signed attendance lists for each day of the approved activity.

### 7.1.2. LOS FOR CO-LOCATED ACTION ACTIVITIES

An Action may decide to host multiple meetings and / or a Training School over the same time period in the same venue. In such cases, the series of meetings and the Training School are considered to be two separate activities. Therefore, one LOS contribution can be afforded to support the entire series of co-located meetings and a second separate LOS contribution can be afforded to support the Training School.

### 7.1.3. LOS WHEN CO-ORGANISING ACTIVITIES WITH ANOTHER COST ACTION

A COST Action may decide to co-organise an event with another COST Action. In such cases:

- LOS claims can be submitted by only one of the COST Actions;
- A single LOS claim can be afforded to support the entire series of co-organised, co-located COST meetings with the COST contribution never exceeding EUR 10 000;
- A single LOS claim can be afforded to support a co-organised COST Training School with the COST contribution never exceeding EUR 10 000.

### 7.1.4. LOS WHEN CO-ORGANISING COST ACTION ACTIVITIES WITH AN EXTERNAL CONFERENCE

A COST Action or several COST Actions working together in a synergetic manner may wish to co-organise a COST activity with an external event. In such cases:

- There shall be a dedicated COST session visible within the external event's program.
- COST shall be visible as a co-organiser on the event's specific website and publication / dissemination materials.
- A single LOS claim can be afforded to support the entire series of co-located COST meetings with the COST contribution never exceeding EUR 10 000.
- A single LOS claim can be afforded to support a co-organised Training School with the COST contribution never exceeding EUR 10 000.

The COST Association may request that the Grant Holder and / or the Local Organiser provides a breakdown of income and expenditure associated with an entire event to assure that COST activities have not generated a profit.

### 7.1.5. LOS FOR VIRTUAL AND HYBRID MEETINGS

An Action may decide to host virtual and / or hybrid meetings using online networking tools. In such cases, a LOS contribution can be afforded to support expenses strictly related to the technical set-up. The reimbursement modality 2 applies in all cases of a LOS for virtual meetings. The purchase of the license fee is not an eligible expense and shall be covered from other sources. The organisation of the event with all remains the task of the GH.

While there is no signed attendance list for virtual events, attendance logs from the virtual tools used shall be uploaded into e-COST. In the case of hybrid events (part presential, part virtual) the already existing LOS rules apply (the signed attendance list for those who attend in person and the attendance logs for those who attend virtually).

## 7.2. LOS ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

### 1. Rental of rooms and AV (audio-visual) materials.

For virtual meetings, the following expenses can be included under the 'Rental' category:

- 1.1. If engaging a conference organiser, technician hourly rate if required on specific openings days before and during the event to assist with technical support, attendee management and monitoring, configuration and setup, communication.
- 1.2. customer support for attendees, live-stream tech support via email and/or chat.
- 1.3. pre-recording of keynotes/teaching sessions for training schools.
- 1.4. post-event process management: video editing, recording management.
2. Rental of poster stands.
3. Photocopying and the printing of programmes, handouts, event materials, book of abstracts, book of proceedings, flyers etc.
4. For meetings with a minimum of 40 participants as evidenced by the signed attendance list , up to a maximum of 15% of the eligible LOS amount can be claimed by the Local Organiser to support the administrative and secretarial expenses linked to hosting and organising the approved scientific activity. The local organiser shall submit a time sheet indicating the name of the personnel and number of hours worked and hourly rate, and the document signed by a legal authority from the institution.
5. Field trip expenses if scientifically justified and relevant to the objectives of the approved meeting / Training School.
6. Coffee breaks and light refreshments.
7. Light lunches (light lunches are wraps / sandwiches / finger food etc.) – light lunches count as one meal when calculating an eligible participant’s meal provision. This means that any light lunch offered to an eligible participant (irrespective of where the funding for the lunch is sourced) is to be counted as one meal and shall be deducted from the daily meal allowance afforded to each participant.
8. One single networking dinner for the entire meeting duration which must be deducted from the daily meal allowance of each eligible participant. Up to maximum 45 Eur per person including beverages is eligible.
9. Collective bus transfer to the event venue. This refers to the transfer of all participants from a designated point to the event venue in the cases when the event venue is in a remote location without adequate public transport. This does not include airport transfer to hotels, bus transfer to the conference dinner or the bus reservation with a touristic purpose, which are not eligible in any case.
10. Consumables purchased for Training Schools (see Section 6) such as laboratory materials, the rental of scientific equipment and sample shipping costs. The quantity and nature of the purchased or rented consumables shall be coherent with the needs and requirements of the Action Participants who will attend the approved Training School.

### **7.3. LOS NON-ELIGIBLE EXPENSES**

1. V.A.T. and any other indirect taxes.
2. Networking dinners exceeding the one single networking dinner limit.
3. Group accommodation bookings.
4. Accommodation bookings for individual participants.
5. Translation or interpretation expenses.
6. Field trip expenses without relevant scientific justification.
7. Purchase of technical equipment or electronic devices such as mobile phones, computers, printers etc.
8. Notepads and pens, or any office supplies.
9. License fees for virtual meetings.
10. Any expense not listed in the list of eligible expenses detailed in Section 7.2.

## SECTION 8. SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS (STSM)

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) are institutional visits aiming to support individual mobility, fostering collaboration between individuals. The Guidelines for Action Management, Monitoring and Assessment should be followed to ensure the proper implementation of this networking instrument (see [www.cost.eu/guidelines Action management monitoring assessment](http://www.cost.eu/guidelines_Action_management_monitoring_assessment)).

### 8.1. STSM – ELIGIBILITY RULES

STSM applicants shall be engaged in an official research programme as a PhD Student or postdoctoral fellow or can be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution, organisation or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing research. The institutions / organisation or legal entity where applicants pursue their main strand of research are considered as Home Institutions. The Host Institution is the institution / organisation that will host the successful applicant.

The following table shows the scenarios available to eligible STSM applicants:

Applicant's Home Institution	STSM Host Institution
<b>Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member</b>	Located in another Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
	Located in a Participating COST Partner Member
	Action MC Observer from IPC
	Action MC Observer from NNC
	The EU Commission or an EU Body, Office or Agency
	An Approved European RTD Organisation
	An Approved International Organisation
<b>Action MC Observer from NNC</b>	Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
<b>Located in an Approved European RTD Organisation</b>	Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member

Eligible STSM applicants shall submit their STSM applications online at the following web address: <https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm>.

### 8.2. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

The evaluation of each received STSM application is performed by the Action MC. The Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) or the appointed STSM Coordinator / Committee can assume this responsibility if the Action MC gives them the mandate to perform this task on their behalf. The person responsible for performing the related tasks into e-COST is referred to as STSM coordinator. The evaluation criteria defined by the Action MC should be communicated to all potential applicants.

The selection of successful STSM applicants shall be done so in consideration of the scientific scope of the proposed mission and how the mission can support the Action in achieving its scientific objectives. There should be special considerations made by the Action MC with respect to supporting COST policies on promoting gender balance, enabling Early Career Investigators (ECI), broadening geographical inclusiveness.

### 8.3. CRITERIA FOR STSM

STSM shall respect the following criteria:

- They shall have a minimum duration of 5 calendar days that includes travel.
- STSM need to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period and always within the Action's lifetime.



The COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action cannot be considered as being an STSM grantee's employer. STSM grantees shall make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security and pension matters.

#### **8.4. STSM – FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

An STSM Grant is a fixed financial contribution which takes into consideration the budget request of the applicant and the outcome of the evaluation of the STSM application. STSM Grants do not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking a given mission. A STSM Grant is a contribution to the overall travel, accommodation and meal expenses of the Grantee.

The calculation of the financial contribution for each STSM shall respect the following criteria:

- Up to a maximum of EUR 3 500 in total can be afforded to each successful applicant.
- Up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day can be afforded for accommodation and meal expenses.

The Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) and / or the appointed STSM Coordinator / Committee should consider and can approve differentiated country rates to cover accommodation and meal expenses based on the perceived cost of living in the host country.

Specific provisions have been introduced to enable researchers from ITC participating in the COST Action to request a pre-payment of 50% of their STSM Grant when they complete the first day of their STSM. In such case, the representative of the Host Institution shall confirm by e-mail to the Grant Holder that the STSM applicant has officially started the mission on day 1. Only then the Grant Holder can arrange the payment of 50% of the STSM grant. The remaining 50% of the Grant is payable once the administrative requirements have been satisfied after the STSM.

##### **8.4.1. APPROVING STSM FOR PAYMENT**

The STSM Grantee has 30 calendar days from the end date of the mission to submit a scientific report to the Action Chair (or to the Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) / the appointed STSM Coordinator / Committee and to a senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution. Payment of the Grant is subject to a STSM scientific report being approved on behalf of the Action's MC by the delegated person(s) responsible and by a senior researcher affiliated to the Host Institution. Written approval of the STSM scientific report by the aforementioned persons shall be uploaded in e-COST for archiving purposes.

## **SECTION 9. ITC CONFERENCE GRANTS FOR EARLY CAREER INVESTIGATORS AND PHD STUDENTS**

ITC Conference Grants aim to support ECI and PhD students from Participating ITC to attend international science and technology related conferences, event or activity on the topic of the Action that are not organised by the COST Action.

### **9.1. ITC CONFERENCE GRANTS – ELIGIBILITY RULES**

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Conference Grants are exclusively reserved for PhD students, PhD candidates, and ECI's with a primary affiliation in an institution located in an ITC participating in the Action.
- The applicant shall make an oral/poster presentation at the conference in question and shall be listed in the official event/conference programme. The main subject of the oral presentation / poster presentation / speech at the approved conference shall be on the topic of the Action and shall acknowledge COST (see Section 10).
- The participation of each applicant shall be pre-approved by the Action MC.

### **9.2. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICANTS**

The evaluation of each received Conference Grant application is performed by the Action's MC. The Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) or an appointed Coordinator / Committee can assume this responsibility if the Action's MC gives them the mandate to perform this task on their behalf. The person responsible for performing the related tasks into e-COST is referred to as ITC Conference Grant Manager. The evaluation criteria defined by the Action's MC should be communicated to all potential applicants.

The selection of successful applicants shall be done so in consideration of the scientific scope of the proposed participation and how it will support the Action in achieving its scientific objectives.

### **9.3. ITC CONFERENCE GRANTS – FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

A Conference Grant is a fixed financial contribution which takes into consideration the budget request of the applicant and the outcome of the evaluation of the application by the delegated person(s). Conference Grants do not necessarily cover all the expenses related to participating in a given conference. A Conference Grant is a contribution to the overall travel, accommodation and meal expenses of the selected Grantee.

The calculation of the financial contribution for each Conference Grant shall respect the following criteria:

- Up to a maximum of EUR 2 500 in total can be afforded to each successful applicant.
- Up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day can be afforded for accommodation and meal expenses.
- Up to a maximum of EUR 500 can be claimed for the conference fees to be incurred by the selected Grantee. Virtual conference fees can be considered eligible provided all other eligibility conditions are fulfilled.

In addition, when meal and accommodation expenses are supported by the hosting institution as part of the provisions offered in their conference package, the amount for subsistence afforded to each eligible participant shall be deducted from the Grant. Documentary evidence of the conference fee amount shall be provided by the applicant and shall be archived by the Grant Holder along with the relevant administrative documents.

Multiple applications to several Actions by the same person to attend the same conference is strictly forbidden and may lead to the cancellation of the grant.

#### **9.3.1. APPROVING ITC CONFERENCE GRANTS FOR PAYMENT**

The Grantee has 30 calendar days from the end date of the Conference in question to submit either a certificate of attendance or a report to the ITC Conference Grant Manager of the Action and the Action's Grant Holder.

Payment of the Grant is subject to the submitted certificate of attendance or the submitted report being approved by the ITC Conference Grant Manager. Written approval of the submitted report shall be sent to the Grant Holder for archiving purposes.

Should the ITC Conference Grant Manager apply for a Conference Grant, the mandate for approval or rejection of the request via e-mail is transferred to the Chair or Vice-Chair, as well as the approval of the Conference Grant report. The written approvals shall be sent to the Grant Holder for archiving purposes.

## SECTION 10. VIRTUAL NETWORKING TOOLS

Virtual Networking Tools aim to introduce two new types of Grants to build capacity and spread the uptake of virtual collaboration across different research communities, in the form of a **pilot scheme running until 31 October 2021**. There are two types of Grants:

### 1. Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Grants

These grants aim at promoting virtual collaboration as a complement to traditional ways of collaboration within the research and innovation communities. This mechanism intends to stimulate virtual collaboration among the members of a given Action.

### 2. Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants

These grants aim at strengthening the existing networks by allowing scientists to foster collaboration in a virtual setting, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, disseminate the Action results, etc.

## 10.1 VIRTUAL NETWORKING SUPPORT (VNS) GRANT

### 10.1.1 ELIGIBILITY RULES

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Applicant(s) are Action participants with a primary affiliation to an institution located in a COST Full or Cooperating Member country or MC Observers from a COST Near Neighbour Country.
- The applicant(s) shall be prepared to develop a virtual networking strategy, coordinate the call for expression of interest for the Virtual Mobility Grants and draft at the end of the grant period a report to be approved by the MC.

### 10.1.2 EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

The evaluation of each submitted VNS grant application is performed by the Action's MC. The Action Chair or an appointed Coordinator / Committee can assume this responsibility if the Action's MC gives them the mandate to perform this task on their behalf. The evaluation criteria defined by the Action's MC shall be communicated to all potential applicants.

The selection of successful grantee shall be based on contributions to the overall objectives of the Action and the implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy.

The application shall be submitted in e-COST and include the following information:

1. A description of how the COST Action can benefit from developing virtual networking activities, with a focus on:
  - Progress towards the MoU objectives and deliverables.
  - COST Excellence and inclusiveness Policy, specially towards the support of researchers in COST Inclusiveness Target Countries.
  - Stakeholder engagement and promoting the participation of researchers from NNC and IPC ([COST Global Networking](#)).
2. A proposal for the strategy outline on virtual networking, including an approach for coordinating Virtual Mobility Grants (where relevant) by:
  - Opening calls and managing the evaluation process for awarding the Virtual Mobility Grants.
  - Supporting and advising beneficiaries of the Virtual Mobility Grant.

Additionally, the proposal shall include a plan on coordinating and reporting any planned COST Action events that will be held online (e.g. Annual Meeting or Conference) and how they fit the overall Action strategy.

### 10.1.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES

The successful applicant shall take the Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Manager role in the COST Action.

The activities expected to be performed by the successful applicant, but not limited to, are:

- Prepare and distribute among the MC members of the Action and the COST Science Officer a detailed strategy on virtual networking for the entire Action (following consultation with Action participants, subject to MC approval).
- Support the MC in the discussions and planning of virtual events and collaboration activities.
- Assist in the selection of hosts for the virtual networking events and collaboration activities.
- Assist the selected hosts in preparation and coordination of online events and collaboration activities (including the analysis of technical needs).
- Oversee the selection of the most appropriate virtual tools for each specific virtual activity (webinar, virtual conference, online library containing learning material for use by the Action members) considering the needs of the Action and the activities (need for sub-groups, forums, etc.), demonstrate the principle of best value for money, adhere to GDPR requirements.
- Support the call, evaluation process, and coordination of the Virtual Mobility Grants (upon decision of the MC).

The grantee has 15 calendar days from the end of the Grant Period to submit a report to the Action Chair / the appointed Coordinator / Committee and to the Science Officer of the Action including:

- The Action's strategy on virtual networking approved by the MC.
- The list and brief description of virtual events and collaboration activities organised during the Grant Period.
- The contribution to the COST Action MoU objectives for each of the virtual events and collaboration activities
- The contribution to the COST Excellence and inclusiveness Policy, specially towards the support of researchers in COST Inclusiveness Target Countries.
- Stakeholder engagement and promoting participation of researchers from Near Neighbour Countries and International Partner Countries.
- Description of identified successful practices and lessons learned.

The report shall consider only virtual activities carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period.

### 10.1.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND PAYMENT

A financial contribution of up to EUR 4 000 can be awarded per Grant Period. The MC shall define the exact amount of the grant. The grant does not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking the virtual networking coordination role.

The Grant Holder shall pay the approved grant to the grantee after the MC has approved the grantee's report and no later than 15 days after the end of Grant Period.

The COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action cannot be considered as being the grantee's employer who shall make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security, and pension matters. The grantee must also ensure they have the required technical material/equipment and infrastructure to carry out the activities proposed in their application to the grant.

## 10.2 VIRTUAL MOBILITY (VM) GRANTS

### 10.2.1 ELIGIBILITY RULES

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Applicant(s) are Action participants with a primary affiliation to an institution located in a COST Full or Cooperating Member country or MC Observers from a COST Near Neighbour Country.
- The applicant(s) shall inform the MC about the aim of the VM Grant and how its outcomes will generate benefits to the Action, actively contribute to the activities and overall objectives of the Action and submit a report at the end, to be approved by the VNS manager on behalf of the MC.

### 10.2.2 EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

The evaluation of each received VM grant application is performed by the Action's MC. The Action Chair or an appointed Coordinator / Committee can assume this responsibility if the Action's MC gives them the mandate to perform this task on their behalf. The person responsible for performing the related tasks is referred to as Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Manager as defined under Section 10.1. The evaluation criteria defined by the Action's MC shall be communicated to all potential applicants.

The selection of successful grantee shall be based on contributions to the overall objectives of the Action, the approved strategy on the virtual networking for the Action and the implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy.

The application shall be submitted in e-COST and include the following information:

- Main objective of the Virtual Mobility Grant.
- Working Plan: Description of the collaborative initiative to be implemented.
- Plan for Participation: List of participants in the collaborative initiative (short description of their expertise and contribution).
- Main expected outputs: results and contribution to the progress towards the MoU objectives (either research coordination and/or capacity building objectives can be tackled) and delivery of the MoU objectives.
- Contribution to the COST Action Strategy: How will the Virtual Mobility contribute to the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy and plans for stakeholder engagement and promoting participation of researchers from NNC and IPC (COST Global Networking) and to the approved virtual networking strategy, if available.

### 10.2.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES

The successful applicant(s) shall implement the workplan approved in their application within the time frame also there defined and always within one single Grant Period.

The activities expected to be performed by the successful applicant, but not limited to, are:

- To support the harmonisation and standardisation of methods and procedures within the Action networking activities, e.g.
  - setting up a survey amongst all Action members to collect different results and outcomes from experiments done in their respective labs and research groups.
  - coordinating the discussions to create common protocols to be used by the network afterwards.
  - preparing questionnaires and response scales to be used by the Action members as part of virtual networking activities.
- To support the implementation of research related activities that do not necessarily require in-person presence, e.g.
  - computational or modelling activities.
  - data analysis of the Action for a specific report or activity.

- Virtual mentoring scheme, with special focus on activities and exchanges that can generate capacity building and new skills, particularly for ECIs researchers (e.g. managerial skills, methodological skills, communication skills, etc).
- Content preparation and coordination of science communication activities, e.g.
  - Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC).
  - Online workshops like 'webinar series' or 'tv series'-like format.
  - Online COST Action workshops in external international conferences or events, when the applicant can demonstrate a role in the organising committee, that could help in the promotion of the Action activities.

The grantee has 30 calendar days from the completion of the Virtual Mobility Grant to submit a report to the Action Chair/ the VNS Manager and to the Science Officer of the Action including:

- Description of the outcomes and achieved outputs (including any specific MoU deliverables, or publications resulting from the Virtual Mobility).
- Description of the benefits to the COST Action Strategy (what and how).
- Description of the virtual collaboration (including constructive reflection on activities undertaken, identified successful practices and lessons learned).

The report shall consider only virtual activities carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period.

The MC must be informed at the end of the respective activity of the main results of each Virtual Mobility Grant. Also, the grantee will have the obligation to actively contribute to the activities of the Action WG relevant to those findings.

#### 10.2.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND PAYMENT

A maximum of 6 Virtual Mobility Grants per Action per Grant Period can be awarded. Each Virtual Mobility Grant cannot exceed EUR 1 500.

The MC shall define the exact amount of each grant reflecting the scope and complexity of the task and activities. The grant does not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking the virtual mobility activity.

The Grant Holder shall pay the approved grant to the grantee after the MC has approved the grantee's report and no later than 15 days from the end of Grant Period.

The COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action cannot be considered as being the grantee's employer who shall make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security, and pension matters. The grantee must also ensure they have the required technical material/equipment and infrastructure to carry out the activities proposed in their application to the grant.

### 10.3 NON-ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

1. Expenses already covered under other networking tools (e.g. LOS, STSM, ITC Conference Grants).
2. Expenses considered non-eligible under any other networking tool (e.g. LOS, Dissemination, etc)
3. Expenses related to licence fees for virtual communication tools beyond the permitted amount for the Action for a Grant Period.
4. Expenses related to the participation in a conference.
5. Translation or interpretation expenses.
6. Purchase of software and technical equipment or electronic devices such as mobile phones, computers, printers, etc.

## 11. COMMUNICATING COST ACTION RESULTS

Any COST Action communication tool (e.g. publications, PowerPoints, etc.) shall integrate a reference to the COST programme and acknowledge the support of EU funding, as indicated in the COST brand book (pages 73-76): <https://www.cost.eu/visual-identity/>. All outputs generated by a COST Action resulting from the Action's scientific and networking activities shall display the correct COST logo and its placement according to the visual identity guidelines as presented in the COST Brand Book (link to website page <https://www.cost.eu/visual-identity/>). In addition, there shall be the EU emblem with accompanying sentence.

### 11.1 INFORMATION MATERIAL

Whenever COST Actions organise / co-organise events, the COST corporate logo, the EU emblem with accompanying text, the COST Action logo (if applicable) and the name, acronym and reference number of the COST Action needs to be visible on all relevant materials which are on display or are being distributed at the event in question. Please refer to the visual identity guidelines in the COST brand book (pages 14-18 and 73-76).

The use of the COST corporate logo (on, for example posters, brochures, newsletters, infographics, etc.) are to be solely used for supporting approved COST Action activities and may not be used for individual representation and / or collective activities that do not pursue the networking objectives of the Action in question.

### 11.2 WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT, HOSTING AND MAINTENANCE

Action websites may vary in their scope and content. The allocation of COST funds to support website development, hosting and maintenance shall clearly support the Action's objectives as set out in the MoU. COST Actions need to launch their websites within their first 12 months of existence and shall be maintained for 2 years after the end date of the Action. Actions shall provide their Science Officer with a functional link within their first year of activity. It is important that these websites are in line with market standards in terms of user-friendliness, design and content. There shall be only one website per COST Action, and one single URL and domain registered (i.e. no multiple domain registrations). Throughout the lifetime of the Action, website expenses cannot exceed EUR 9 000. An Action can request funding for only one website across the lifetime of the Action.

In order to be eligible for funding, each Action website shall clearly display the following items:

1. The COST logo, the EU emblem and accompanying text: "Funded by the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme of the European Union". The COST logo is available at <https://www.cost.eu/visual-identity/>.
2. The EU emblem and its guidelines of use are available on the European Commission's website
3. A link to the Action's main web page on the COST website and a link to the Action's MoU as it appears on the COST website.
4. A link to the relevant COST website pages featuring the COST rules and guidelines: see <https://www.cost.eu/cost-actions/how-to-participate/>.
5. The names and contact information of the Action Chair, Vice-Chair, Science Officer of the Action and Administrative Officer of the Action. Also, it is highly recommended to provide information on other key positions in the Action.
6. A short description of COST and a link to the COST website.
7. The possibility and rules for joining the Action and taking part in its activities.

The COST Action websites and other communication tools should not have the visual presentation (graphic style) of the COST Association. Only the reference to EU funding and COST is obligatory.



Please do not post any official documents (e.g. CSO Decisions...), templates, guidelines directly on the Action website, as such documents are subject to change. Always link to the Participate section on the COST website: <https://www.cost.eu/cost-actions/how-to-participate>.

### 11.3 SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

Publications funded by COST shall be a direct result of work performed by Action Participants and shall be co-authored by Action Participants representing at least 3 different Participating COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members. Whenever possible, publications should be made available under Open Access licences.

Publications resulting from work performed by COST Action Participants fall under two distinct categories that are funded differently:

1. Publications produced during an Action's lifetime funded under the CGS - sourced from the COST Grant and paid for by the Action's Grant Holder.
2. Final Action Dissemination (FAD) – whereby up to an amount of EUR 10 000 in total (V.A.T. is not eligible) can be requested for a dissemination activity at the end of an Action. The FAD is funded centrally by the COST Association under the Centralised Management Funding Scheme in the form of a fixed grant. Applications for this networking tool close on 31 May 2020. The process governing the administration and funding of the FAD is set out in Section 10.7.

All publications generated from work performed by Action Participants shall include, display and respect the COST corporate identity adhering to the brand guidelines detailed in the COST brand book, available for download at: <https://www.cost.eu/visual-identity>.

### 11.4 ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Under the CGS, the following expenses can be funded once approved:

1. COST Action information material such as brochures, flyers, posters, and infographics for display or general circulation including postage expenses for the purpose of enabling the distribution of such materials.
2. Graphic design expenses of up to a maximum of EUR 1000 across the lifetime of the Action – e.g. creation of an Action logo.
3. The creation, development, hosting and maintenance of one Action website.
4. Multimedia content such as videos, animations and multimedia presentations.
5. Conference booths and roll ups can be considered eligible on a case-by-case basis and based on the approval of the Action's Science Officer under the condition that the COST Action is actively involved in the conference programme through a workshop or speaking opportunity or poster presentation.
6. Materials that are generally considered as marketing gifts such as pens, USB sticks, notepads, bags, umbrella, etc can only be eligible when a COST Action organizes a conference or participates in any external events that are open to a high number of external stakeholders, in order to promote and increase awareness about the Action. Prior approval from the COST Association through the Science officer shall be requested before making any financial commitment.
7. Proofreading, editing and layout expenses.
8. Publication expenses – which include Open Access licenses and / or expenses supporting the purchase, production and direct distribution of publications developed by Action Participants and produced by a renowned publisher. Expenses made in the framework of dissemination of a COST Action results and outcomes in the framework of Open Access will be assessed by COST along the lines of quality and impact. COST Actions should therefore be aware of those criteria and make a first assessment in this regard before getting to commit expenses in Open Access.

- Quality of the publication to be assessed along the lines of:

1. Fulfilment of criteria of Section 10.3 above: Publications funded by COST shall be a direct result of work performed by Action Participants and shall be co-authored by Action Participants representing at least 3 different Participating COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members; the article processing fees (APF) charged to COST may not exceed the APF published on the journal's Web site.
2. Peer-review process: All of a journal's content, apart from any editorial material that is clearly marked as such, shall be subjected to peer review. Peer review is defined as obtaining advice on individual manuscripts from reviewers, expert in the field who are not part of the journal's editorial staff. This process, as well as any policies related to the journal's peer review procedures, shall be clearly described on the journal's Web site.
- Impact of the publication to be assessed along the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR)<sup>3</sup> – that has established itself as a good alternative to the Impact Factor - of the considered academic journal. Any journal that is situated in the first three quartiles<sup>4</sup> Q1-Q3 is considered of sufficient impact, while journals in the last quartile Q4 or journals not contained in the SCOPUS database need an assessment by the responsible SO; the SJR and quartile (Q1, Q2, Q3 or Q4) for each journal contained in SCOPUS can be obtained from the [SCImago web page](http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php) (accessible at <http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php>).

Eligible expenses are payable against the amounts detailed on invoices and reviewed against deliverables. The COST Association reserves the right to request additional information pertaining to procurement rules applicable for the purchase of a claimed item.

## 11.5 NON-ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

1. Value Added Tax (V.A.T.).
2. Use of COST Funds for sponsorship of events / conferences.
3. Fees or charges associated with disseminating or advertising media content and publications that go beyond what is detailed in Section 11.5.
4. Materials that are generally considered as marketing gifts such as pens, USB sticks, notepads, bags, umbrella, etc can only be eligible when a COST Action organizes a conference or participates in any external events that are open to a high number of external stakeholders, in order to promote and increase awareness about the Action. Prior approval from the COST Association through the Science officer shall be requested before making any financial commitment.
5. Translation costs.
6. Advertisement costs.
7. Any expense not listed in the list of eligible expenses detailed in Section 10.4.
8. Publications or training material purchased and paid with COST funds cannot be sold to Action participants or the general public.

## 11.6 FINAL ACTION DISSEMINATION (FAD)

Final Action Dissemination (FAD) refers to outputs produced after the end date of the Action in order to share and promote the COST Action's results among wider research community, policy makers, other stakeholders and/or the general public. The FAD is funded centrally by the COST Association under the Centralised Management Funding Scheme in the form of a fixed Grant.

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<sup>3</sup> SCImago Journal Rank (SJR indicator) is a measure of scientific influence of scholarly journals that accounts for both the number of citations received by a journal and the importance or prestige of the journals where such citations come from, see [D. Butler \(2008\). Nature. 451 \(6\): 6. doi:10.1038/451006a.](#)

<sup>4</sup> Quartile rankings are derived for each journal in each of its subject categories according to which quartile of the SJR distribution the journal occupies for that subject category. Q1 denotes the top 25% of the SJR distribution, Q2 for middle-high position (between top 50% and top 25%), Q3 middle-low position (top 75% to top 50%), and Q4 the lowest position (bottom 25% of the SJR distribution).

Actions which are in their final grant period may request a FAD grant. The application deadline has been exceptionally extended until 31 May 2020. This dissemination tool will be discontinued at the end of the H2020 Framework Programme.

## 11.7 FAD APPLICATION PROCESS

1. The MC Chair, on behalf of the Management Committee of the Action, shall send a request for a FAD Grant of up to EUR 10 000 to the Action Science Officer by 31 May 2020.
2. The FAD Grant request form can be found at: [http://www.cost.eu/FAD\\_application\\_template](http://www.cost.eu/FAD_application_template).
3. Similarly to publications funded under the CGS (see Section 10.3), the FAD (e.g. videos, animations, infographics, etc.) shall be a direct result of work performed by the Action and shall be co-authored by Action Participants representing at least 3 different Participating COST Full Members / COST Cooperating Members.
4. The details (including the breakdown of costs) contained within the request for the FAD Grant shall be approved by both the Action MC and the Action's Science Officer. Upon approval by the Action's Science Officer, the Action's Administrative Officer shall send a Grant notification award letter determining the agreed Grant amount to the Action Grant Holder. Approved FAD products or outputs shall be ordered and paid directly by each Action's Grant Holder. The COST Association will then provide a fixed Grant of up to an agreed amount to compensate the Action Grant Holder.
5. The FAD shall adhere to the COST logo and branding guidelines detailed in the COST brand book, available for download at: <https://www.cost.eu/visual-identity>. The Grant Holder shall ensure the respect of the guidelines (the use of the logo, the COST and EU funding acknowledgement) by sharing them with the scientific publisher (if applicable). In case of non-respect, the COST Association may refuse the payment of the FAD invoice.
6. In the case of print publications, the publisher or Grant Holder shall send three hard copies of the final product to the COST Association / Communication unit prior to submitting the invoice for payment and no later than 30 April 2021. In the case of digital material, the Grant Holder shall send the COST Association a link to the online publication no later than 30 April 2021.
7. The Action Grant Holder shall ensure that the FAD invoice(s) showing the amount(s) payable for the approved FAD is received by the COST Association no later than 30 April 2021. Failure to submit the FAD invoice(s) within the timeframe specified may result in the cancellation of the FAD Grant.
8. Since COST Action Participants shall never gain financial benefits from publications which are supported or fully paid by COST, the Grant Holder shall ensure that no Royalties are paid to the authors concerning the number of books which are purchased by the COST Association in the scheme of the FAD Grant.

## 11.8 OTHER EXPENSES RELATED TO SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES

'Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities' (OERSA) are currency related bank fees or charges incurred by the Grant Holder when processing the payment of eligible expenses to beneficiaries. These fees and charges shall be evidenced by proof of payment showing the nature of the expenses and the amounts that have been incurred.

Bank and / or currency related charges / fees charged by the bank of the Grant Holder Institution when receiving Grant payments from the COST Association are not eligible to be claimed under the COST Grant System. These expenses shall be borne by each respective Grant Holder Institution.

Bank and / or currency related charges / fees charged by the bank of individual claimants and / or beneficiaries who have received a payment sourced from the COST Grant are not eligible to be claimed by the beneficiary and shall be borne by each respective individual beneficiary.

In exceptional circumstances, an Action may need to undertake activities that are outside the remit of the eligible expenses detailed in this document. In such cases, expenses can be claimed and classified under the OERSA category but only after explicit approval is authorised by the COST Association and before any such expense has been incurred (eg. licence fees for virtual communication tools).

### 11.8.1 OTHER EXPENSES RELATED TO SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES: NON-ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

1. V.A.T. and any other indirect taxes.
2. Database expenses.
3. Any other expenses not approved by the COST Association prior the incurred expense.

## 12. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### 12.1 ACCESS TO ARCHIVED DOCUMENTS, CONTROLS AND AUDITS

The COST Association or an appointed audit performing organisation or agency, under direct or indirect instruction from the European Commission, are permitted to carry out random checks to examine accounting records and / or supporting documentation linked to administering and financing COST Activities. Grant Holders can therefore be asked to make readily available to the COST Association, or to the appointed audit-performing organisation or agency, legible copies of their accounting records and / or supporting documentation. Any request for documentation will be done so for the purpose of determining whether specific COST activities were implemented and administered in line with the rules and principles set out in the COST Vademecum and the terms and conditions detailed in the Action Grant Agreement. All supporting documentation including Action MC meeting minutes, Action MC approvals and accounting records shall be made readily available for inspection up to the end date of the audit timeframe specified in the COST Action Grant Agreement signed between COST and each respective Grant Holder.

All payments sourced from COST funds shall be done so for the sole purpose of supporting eligible expenses related to executing approved COST Action activities. All incurred expenses shall be reasonable, justified and shall comply with the principles of Sound Financial Management (SFM). All expenses incurred throughout the lifetime of an Action shall be identifiable and verifiable and shall be recorded correctly in the accounting records of the Grant Holder in accordance with standard cost accounting practices of the country where the Grant Holder is registered. All accounting entries shall be able to demonstrate a direct reconciliation between the eligible expenses claimed and the amounts paid to beneficiaries.

For Grant Holders opting to use the Strong Authentication feature, original invoices / receipts shall be kept by each claimant up until the end date of the audit timeframe as indicated on the Grant Agreement signed between the COST Association and the Grant Holder. All Grant Holders managing Actions that opt for the Strong Authentication feature shall archive legible copies of all OTRRs and supporting documentation. This requirement also applies to all supporting documentation relating to meetings, Training Schools, Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM), Local Organiser Support (LOS) expenses, ITC Conference Grants, Dissemination activities (including Publications expenses) and Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities (OERSA) up to the end date of the respective audit timeframe.

If a Grant Holder chooses not to opt for the Strong Authentication feature, they shall archive original (signed by hand) OTRR forms. The Grant Holder shall also archive legible copies (electronic copies will also suffice) of all supporting documentation (including Action MC approvals) related to meetings, Training Schools, Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM), Local Organiser Support (LOS) expenses, Dissemination activities (including Publications expenses) and Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities (OERSA) up until the end date of the audit timeframe as indicated on the Action Grant Agreement signed between the COST Association and the Grant Holder.

### 12.2 RULE DEROGATIONS

Any derogation from the rules and principles referred to in this document require explicit written agreement from the COST Association prior to any commitments or payments being approved, incurred or processed by any Grant Holder.

Derogations from the eligibility rules contained within this document will only be considered if the COST Association determines that there are fair and reasonable explanations for any such derogations. The COST Association reserves the right to approve or reject any request for a rule derogation. Such requests shall always be made to the COST Association before the expense is incurred.

### 12.3 ACKNOWLEDGING COST

All payments sourced from COST funds throughout the lifetime of the Action shall be done so for the sole purpose of supporting approved COST activities. Consequently, approved activities which are organised / co-organised by COST Actions shall formally recognise the COST framework. This recognition requires that the branding guidelines detailed in the Guidelines for the dissemination of COST Action results and outcomes (see [www.cost.eu/Action\\_dissemination\\_guidelines](http://www.cost.eu/Action_dissemination_guidelines)) are respected and are visible on all documents (agendas etc.) and all funded dissemination channels (official website of the Action, the event specific website, presentations, promotional material etc.). COST shall also be recognised on Action outputs (including peer-reviewed publications) that benefit either, directly or indirectly, from COST funding.

## **12.4 NON-COMPLIANCE**

Non-compliance with the above-mentioned requirements can determine that any related expense or payment sourced from COST funds are non-eligible. In specific cases when the Vademecum or any other COST rules, procedure or guidelines applicable to COST Actions are not being or cannot be respected, the COST Association shall be informed and shall authorise the omission prior to the expense being incurred.

## 13. ELIGIBILITY TABLE (ANNEX I)

Participant has an affiliation <sup>1</sup> in a...	And Participant is a...	Eligible to be reimbursed for their participation in a...						
		Meetings			Training School		STSM	ITC Conference Grant
		MC meeting	Other type of meeting	Dissemination Meeting	Trainer	Trainee	Grantee	Grantee
COST Full Member or Cooperating Member Country that joined the Action	MC member/ substitute	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>7</sup>
	WG member Ad-hoc participant	NO	Yes	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>7</sup>
COST Full Member or Cooperating Member Country that did NOT join the Action	Ad-hoc participant	NO	Once <sup>6</sup>	NO	Once <sup>6</sup>	Yes	NO	NO
Near Neighbour Country	MC Observer (joined the Action)	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	NO
	Ad-hoc participant (did not join the Action)	NO	Once <sup>6</sup>	NO	Once <sup>6</sup>	NO	NO	NO
COST Partner Member or International Partner Country	MC Observer (joined the Action)	NO <sup>3</sup>	NO <sup>3</sup>	NO <sup>3</sup>	Yes	NO <sup>3</sup>	NO <sup>3</sup>	NO <sup>3</sup>
	Ad-hoc participant (did not join the Action)	NO	Once <sup>6</sup>	NO	Once <sup>6</sup>	NO	NO	NO

*Table continues on next page*

EU RTD: that joined the Action	MC Observer	Yes <sup>4</sup>	Yes	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	NO
	WG member Ad-hoc Participant	NO	Yes	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	NO
EU RTD: that did NOT join the Action	Ad-hoc participant	NO	Once <sup>6</sup>	NO	Once <sup>6</sup>	NO	NO	NO
EU Body, office or agency: that joined the Action	MC Observer							
	WG member Ad-hoc Participant	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
EU Body, office or agency: that did NOT join the Action	Ad-hoc participant	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
International Organisation: that joined the Action	MC Observer							
	WG member Ad-hoc Participant	NO <sup>5</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>
International Organisation: that did NOT join the Action	Ad-hoc participant	NO <sup>5</sup>	Once <sup>6</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>	Once <sup>6</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>	NO <sup>5</sup>

1. Or enrolled in a PhD programme. 2. Max 2 per country. 3. COST Partner Member have at national level a dedicated budget to support participation to COST Action activities. 4. Max 1 per organisation. 5. Even if located in a COST country. 6. In the lifetime of the Action. 7. Only for ECI or participants enrolled in a PhD programme in a COST Inclusiveness Target Country.