



# Guidelines for COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment



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## 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

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

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

Namely:

1. Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities (COST 132/14 REV)
2. COST Action Proposal Submission Evaluation and Approval (COST 133/14 REV)
3. COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment (COST 134/14 REV2)
4. Rules for Participation of Non-COST countries and Specific Organisations (COST 135/14 REV)

These documents are the binding legal reference and take precedence over any guidelines. They are available on the [Participate page](#) of the COST web. In case of any contradiction between the COST Implementation Rules and the present guidelines, COST Implementation Rules shall prevail.

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO COST

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a pan-European intergovernmental framework dedicated to European-based scientific and technological networking activities aiming at allowing their participants to jointly develop their ideas and new initiatives across all scientific disciplines through trans-European coordination of nationally or otherwise funded research activities. COST with 36 Member Countries and one Co-operating<sup>1</sup> State has, since its creation in 1971, contributed to closing the gap between science, policy makers and society throughout Europe and beyond.

COST mission is notably to enable breakthrough scientific developments leading to new concepts, services and products and thereby contribute to strengthen Europe’s research and innovation capacities. COST contributes to the objective of strengthening the scientific and technological bases of the European Research Area (ERA) by encouraging participants to share, create and apply knowledge.

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

COST draws the funds for its activities from the EU Framework Programme Horizon 2020. The COST Association has signed a Framework Partnership Agreement with the European Commission, defining the Strategic Action Plan, setting the objectives, policies and legal frame for the period 2014-2020<sup>2</sup>. Specific Grant Agreements describing the implementation of the COST Action Plan are signed yearly.

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

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

The COST main instrument is the COST Actions. COST Actions are selected through a bottom-up, science and technology driven approach. COST Actions provide the operational basis for structuring

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<sup>1</sup> The full list of COST Members is available at [http://www.cost.eu/about\\_cost/cost\\_countries](http://www.cost.eu/about_cost/cost_countries).

<sup>2</sup> Framework Partnership Agreement n° 633054 – COST H2020

pan-European networks facilitating Action Participants from COST Members and beyond to jointly develop ideas and new initiatives in science and technology.

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

### 3. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The COST Implementation Rules set the definitions of the terms used in these guidelines.

Action Chair and Vice Chair	The persons elected during an Action MC meeting or by written procedure from amongst the Action MC members. The Action Chair is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Action. The Vice Chair assists in these activities where requested to do so by the Action Chair and can substitute for the Action Chair when required or mandated to do so.
Action Management Committee (Action MC)	The group of representatives of the COST Members having accepted the MoU. They are in charge of the coordination, implementation, and management of an Action's activities as well as supervising the appropriate allocation and use of the COST funding with a view to achieving the Action's scientific and technological objectives. They are nominated by the CNC.
Action Participant	Any person being an Action MC member, an Action MC substitute, an Action MC Observer, a Working Group member or an Ad hoc Participant.
Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)	The agreement accepted by a minimum of seven different COST Full Members and/or Cooperating Member describing the Action objectives. This document has to be accepted by any additional COST Member joining the Action.
Action Rapporteur	An independent External Expert with pertinent expertise in the COST Action's fields of science and technology appointed by the COST Association to carry out monitoring or assessment of the designated Action.
Ad hoc Participants	The individuals selected, as necessary, by the Action MC to contribute to the COST Action activities towards the achievement of the COST Action objectives. Ad hoc Participants can be STSM grantees, trainees and trainers in Training Schools, and invited speakers at COST Action Workshops and Conferences.
Approved Institution	Institution located in a Non-COST Country (either Near-Neighbour Country or International Partner Country) which participation to a COST Action has been approved by the Action Management Committee (Action MC), the Head of Science Operations of the COST Administration and the Executive Board of the COST Administration.

Collection Date	The date when the proposals for new COST Actions submitted during a certain period are gathered and sent for evaluation.
COST Action Grant Agreement (AGA)	The agreement signed between the COST Association and the Grant Holder that governs the administrative and financial implementation of the COST Action.
COST Action or Action	The COST pan-European networking instrument allowing their participants to develop jointly their ideas and new initiatives in a field or topic of common interest.
COST Cooperating Member	Israel.
COST Full Members	The following European States : Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom.
COST Inclusiveness Target Countries	COST Members listed hereinafter that fulfil the Horizon 2020 widening eligibility conditions being either an EU Member State or an Associated Country to the EU Framework Programme – Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Republic of Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
COST Members	The COST Full Members, the COST Cooperating Member(s) and COST Partner Member(s).
COST National Coordinators (CNC)	The individuals appointed by COST Full or Cooperating Members in charge of confirming the participation of their COST Member to a COST Action by means of the acceptance of the Action's Memorandum of Understanding 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.
COST Near Neighbour Countries	Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Russia, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.
COST Partner Member	Any State fulfilling the conditions stated under article 8 of the Statutes of the COST Association admitted to the COST Association as a COST Partner Member.
Deliverables	Distinct, expected and tangible outputs of the COST Action, meaningful in terms of the COST Action's overall objectives. COST Action deliverables are used to measure the COST Action progress and success.



Dissemination	The public disclosure of COST Action's results and/or outcomes by any appropriate means (other than resulting from protecting or exploiting the results), including by scientific publications in any media.
Early Career Investigator (ECI)	A researcher in the time span of up to 8 years after the date of obtaining the PhD/doctorate (full-time equivalent).
EU bodies, offices and agencies	Anybody so defined in accordance with the Treaties on 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.  A list of the EU bodies, offices or agencies may be found at <a href="http://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies_en">http://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies_en</a>
European RTD Organisations	The European intergovernmental scientific research organisations responsible for infrastructures and laboratories whose members are States. The list of these organisations is available at <a href="http://www.euroforum.org/about/organisations/index.html">http://www.euroforum.org/about/organisations/index.html</a>
Grant Holder	The legal entity responsible for the administrative and financial implementation of the COST Action.
International Organisation	Any organisation with a European or international membership, scope or presence, with its own legal personality promoting in particular scientific and technological cooperation, which should have an added value in the fulfilment of COST Mission.  A non-exhaustive list of the International Organisations may be found in the "Rules for Participation in and implementation of COST Activities".
International Partner Countries	All those States that are neither COST Members nor COST Near Neighbour Countries.
Invited Speakers	Specialists who are not COST Action Participants but can partake in one COST Action meeting and one Training School throughout the lifetime of the COST Action. Repeated participation of Invited Speakers is not permissible.
Main Proposer	The representative of a network of proposers who submit a proposal for a COST Action in response to the Open Call.
Management Committee members and substitutes	Individuals appointed by the CNC of their Participating COST Full or Cooperating Members as their representatives in the Action MC.
Management Committee Observers (Action MC Observers)	Representatives from COST Partner Members, Near Neighbour Countries Approved Institutions, International Partner Countries Approved Institutions or Specific Organisations present at the Action MC.
Non-COST Countries	States that are not COST Members.

Open Call for proposals	The official announcement/publication with the description of the objectives and criteria required for COST Action proposals to be evaluated and selected. The Open Call allows submitting proposals on a continuous basis; the publication indicates the Collection Dates.
Outputs	Can be, among other, codified knowledge, tacit knowledge, technology, and societal app can be, among other, codified knowledge, tacit knowledge, technology, and societal applications.
Scientific Committee (SC)	The committee composed of independent, internationally renowned, high-level experts, one per COST Full or Cooperating Member, appointed by the CSO.
Specific Organisations	The European Commission, EU bodies, offices and agencies, the European RTD Organisations and International Organisations.
The Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)	The main decision-making body responsible for COST. It forms the Governance of the COST Association. It formally approves new COST Actions following the conclusion of each Open Call procedure. Each COST Full Member may appoint up to two Delegates to the CSO.
The Executive Board (EB)	The body that prepares for the CSO meetings and can make decisions on behalf of the CSO. The EB consists of the President and the Vice President of the CSO and at least four other CSO Delegates.
Working Group	A group of Action Participants whose activity, composition and leadership shall be defined by the Action MC in order to achieve the Action objectives.

## 4. COST ACTIONS

### 4.1. COST ACTIONS OVERVIEW

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

COST Actions are:

- Pan-European, and globally connected: the COST inter-governmental framework spans 36 Full Members and one Cooperating Member; Partner Members may join on the basis of the acceptance of the MoU; Non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations may join Actions on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit;
- Bottom-up: in terms of S&T fields and topics, COST welcomes any novel, original and innovative idea, i.e. there are no pre-defined topics / targets;
- Open: in terms of participation (all stakeholders and all partners), COST Actions can grow in size during their lifetime;
- Unique: as a platform to coordinate national research funding and resources within a lightweight framework;

- Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinary: bridging different research communities, disciplines, fields and methodologies;
- Outcome and Impact-Oriented: COST Actions are monitored against their expected output and impact.

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

COST Actions’ activities are organised and delivered by an Action Management Committee through a range of Networking Tools namely: meetings (including Action Management Committee (Action MC) meetings, Working Group (WG) meetings, Workshops and Conferences (W/C)); Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM); Training Schools and Dissemination. The networking activities aim at supporting the COST Action to address the main aim, answer to the research questions and achieve the overall objectives of the COST Action, as these have been described in the COST Action MoU.

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

The MoU is a multilateral agreement between the COST Members that participate in the COST Action. The MoU consists of two parts: the MoU proper and the Technical Annex.

The MoU comprises:

- The reference number and title of the Action;
- The main aim of the Action;
- The required minimum number of COST Members participating in the Action;
- The COST Action structure, objectives and strategy;
- The duration of the Action, calculated as from the date of the first meeting of the Action Management Committee.

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

The MoU must be accepted by at least seven COST Members before the COST Action may start and organise the first Action MC meeting. The procedure on how a COST Member joins a COST Action is described in section 1.2.

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

A COST Action starts officially on the date of the first Action MC meeting which may be organised only after at least seven (7) COST Members have accepted the MoU.

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

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

- Terminated by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) before its originally intended end date if any circumstances make the benefit of continuing the COST Action questionable;

- Extended by the Executive Board (EB)<sup>3</sup> or the COST Association Director<sup>4</sup> for a maximum of six months beyond its originally intended end date. Such extension is only possible if during the course of the COST Action the Action MC finds that it is, for technical reasons, impossible to finalise the work within the normal duration to a satisfactory conclusion, or if the monitoring process of the COST Action reveals that the extension would contribute to the achievement of the proposed objectives and is likely to maximise the impact of the COST Action. Any such extension shall be exceptional must be justified from scientific and technological perspectives;

The extension requests have to be submitted at the latest six (6) months before the end date of the COST Action. When the Action MC of a COST Action requests an extension and a budget increase, then both requests must be made simultaneously.

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

The first Action Management Committee meeting is arranged by the COST Association in Brussels. Attendance at the first Action MC meeting is limited to officially appointed Action MC members from COST Full and Cooperating Members having accepted the MoU. Representatives of COST Full and Cooperating Members having declared intention to accept the MoU but did not accept it yet may not vote. If an Action MC member is not able to attend the first Action MC meeting one of the Action MC substitutes may attend instead. The information must be communicated to the COST Association (Science and Administrative Officers) and the Main Proposer of the Action. Representatives of the European Commission, EU bodies, offices or agencies and EU RTD Organisations that featured in the proposal may attend the first Action MC meeting. No other person may attend the first Action MC meeting.

## 4.2. COST ACTION PARTICIPATION

### 4.2.1. COST FULL OR COOPERATING MEMBER PARTICIPATION

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

The procedure for researchers, engineers and scholars or other stakeholders from a COST Member to become a COST Action Participant is as follows:

#### 1. **As Action MC member:**

- The COST National Coordinator will nominate representatives affiliated to an institution of the COST Full or Cooperating Member to the Action MC. The selection of the representatives is based on national rules and procedures. Note: if a COST Full or Cooperating Member wants to join an Action more than twelve months after its approval by the CSO, the participation will be subject to an agreement by the COST Action Management Committee (Action MC);
- **As WG member:** Researchers, scholars, engineers or other stakeholders interested in joining a COST Action should first check whether the COST Member which their institutions are affiliated to, is officially participating to the COST Action. The information can be retrieved from the COST Action website.

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<sup>3</sup> When there is budget implications.

<sup>4</sup> When there is no budget implications.

- If their COST Full or Cooperating Member is participating to the COST Action, then the interested potential participant should contact either the Action Chair or the WG Leader of the WG, which the potential participant is interested in joining in, and express their interest in joining the COST Action as a WG member. The Working Group composition or membership is managed and decided by the Action MC. It is recommended that WG members' names and expertise (and their respective WGs) are listed and frequently updated on the specific website of the COST Action;
- If their COST Full or Cooperating Member is not participating to the COST Action, then the interested potential participant should contact the COST National Coordinator as the participation requires first a MoU acceptance and a participation to the Action Management Committee (see above).

COST Members appearing under “Intentions to participate” in the relevant COST Action website are those who have yet to accept the MoU of the COST Action but may have already nominated Action MC members (and substitutes). Action MC members from those COST Members do not have voting rights within the Action MC and may not be elected to leadership / coordination roles within the COST Action until the COST Member with ‘Intentions to participate’ finalises the process for becoming officially a participating COST Member to the network.

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

Researchers, engineers, scholars or other stakeholders affiliated to universities, research centres, companies or other relevant legal entities located in Near Neighbour Countries (NNC) are encouraged and supported to participate in a COST Action on the basis of an ascertained mutual benefit.

Researchers, engineers, scholars or other stakeholders affiliated to institutions located in IPC may participate in a COST Action on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit.

When an individual located in a Non-COST Country is included in a COST Action proposal, the Non-COST Country institution to which they are affiliated shall be regarded as an Approved Institution upon the Actions' approval by the CSO. However, their participation in the COST Action shall still subject to the consent of the Action MC once established.

A researcher, engineer or scholar or other stakeholder from a Non-COST Country may also join a running COST Action as Action MC Observer as detailed below.

The procedure for individuals from a Non-COST Country to join a COST Action (as an Action MC Observer) is as follows:

1. The applicant contacts the Action Chair expressing their interest in joining the COST Action.
2. The applicant submits an official motivation letter (as a scanned pdf) to the Action Chair detailing the anticipated mutual benefit resulting from their participation in the COST Action. It should be written on the official letterhead paper of the applicant's institution and hand-signed by a representative of the institution (e.g. Head of Department, Institute Director).
3. The Action Chair launches the application request in e-COST. They will fill in the benefits for COST and the COST Action and upload the motivation letter sent by the applicant.
4. The applicant receives an automated email with a request to provide additional information and to finalise the application (benefits for the country, description of the applicant's activities in the COST Action, contact details).
5. On receipt of the completed application, the Science Officer will review and validate the application.
6. The Action Chair is informed that the application has been accepted and, in e-COST, either schedules an automatic Action MC vote or records the outcome of the vote if held at an Action MC meeting.

7. On receipt of the Action MC approval, the application will be examined and submitted for approval by the COST Association (Head of Science Operations and Executive Board).
8. Upon approval by the COST Association, the applicant receives a notification email and becomes an Action MC Observer after confirming their participation in e-COST.

Note: In the final year of a COST Action, applications from researchers or other stakeholders from non-COST Countries to formally join a COST Action are not considered. Moreover, Action MC Observers have no voting rights within the Action MC and may not be elected as Action Chair / Vice Chair / WG Leaders.

#### 4.2.3. SPECIFIC ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATION

In order to facilitate the dialogue and transfer of knowledge COST fosters the participation of science actors, policy makers and other relevant organisations and institutions in the COST Actions. The participation of the Specific Organisations does not require the acceptance of the Action's MoU.<sup>5</sup>

1. EC and EU offices, bodies or agencies listed as proposal participant (secondary proposer) become Action MC Observers when the COST Action is approved by the CSO. Participants from the EC and EU offices, bodies or agencies may also join a running COST Action as Action MC Observer. Within a period of 12 months after the Action's approval by the CSO the EC or an EU body, office or agency may join an Action without Action MC consent. After this 12 month period the participation requires Action MC approval. The procedure is the same as the one outlined in section 4.2.2. Action Participants from the EC and EU offices, bodies or agencies may participate in the Action MC as Action MC Observer (no voting rights). They may not be elected as a COST Action Chair or Vice Chair or WG Leader.
2. European RTD Organisations listed as proposal participants in the initial proposal proposer) become Action MC Observers when the COST Action is approved by the CSO. Participants from European RTD Organisations may also join a running COST Action as Action MC Observer. Within a period of 12 months after the Action's approval by the CSO European RTD Organisations may join an Action without Action MC consent. After this 12 month period the participation requires Action MC approval. The procedure is the same as the one outlined in section 4.2.2. Action Participants from European RTD Organisations may participate in the Action MC as Action MC Observer (no voting rights). They may not be elected as a COST Action Chair or Vice Chair or WG Leader except when a COST Full or Cooperating Member first nominates them as Action MC member; They may in that case be elected as a COST Action Chair or Vice Chair and will act as Action Chair, Vice-Chair or WG Leader as Action MC member from a COST Member.
3. International Organisations listed as proposal participants in the initial proposal become Action MC Observers when the COST Action is approved by the CSO. However, their participation in the COST Action shall still subject to the consent of the Action MC once established. When an International Organisation does not take part in a COST Action proposal it may also join a running COST Action on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit. It is subject to Action MC approval as well as COST Association approval (Head of Science Operations and the Executive Board). The procedure is the same as the one outlined in section 4.2.2. Action Participants from International Organisations may participate in the Action MC as Action MC Observer (no voting rights) and they cannot be elected as Action Chair / Vice Chair / WG Leaders. For more details on Specific Organisation please see the Rules for Participation of Non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations at [http://www.cost.eu/int\\_coop\\_rules](http://www.cost.eu/int_coop_rules).

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<sup>5</sup> Researchers or other stakeholders from Specific Organisations shall sign a letter of confidentiality containing, inter alia, provisions about the non-disclosure of confidential information and IPR related matters.



## 4.3. COST ACTION ACTORS

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

The Action MC is comprised of up to two Action MC members per participating COST Full or Cooperating Member. Action MC members are nominated by their respective COST National Coordinator (CNC) according to national procedures. If a MC member cannot attend a MC meeting they can be replaced by a MC substitute; the Action Chair and Action Grant Holder should be informed accordingly. The CNC may also approve the ad hoc replacement of Action MC member(s) at Action MC meetings. Action MC members should request agreement from Action Chair in case the Action MC substitute will be replacing them at a relevant Action MC meeting. They should also inform the Action Grant Holder accordingly.

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

The Action MC has the responsibility to:

- Define and manage the COST Action Strategy including planning of the networking activities necessary to achieve the COST Action objectives as outlined in the COST Action MoU;
- Define and manage the COST Action Structure, i.e. election of the Action Chair, Vice-Chair and selection of the Grant Holder, Working Group composition / membership, leadership and structure, and any other roles necessary to achieve the COST Action Objectives;
- Define the Work and Budget Plan for each Grant Period and ensure its implementation according to COST rules;
- Implement COST Policy and Rules;
- Decide whether to approve the participation of COST Full or Cooperating Members, after 12 months from the CSO approval of the COST Action;
- Decide whether to approve the participation of institutions in Non-COST Country and Specific Organisations, when requested (see section 4.2);
- Establish specific provisions linked to the management, share, creation or exploitation of knowledge, including Open Access policy and Intellectual Property Rights that may rise from the COST Action's activities. Such provisions must comply with national, European or international legislation and the need for protecting the participants' legitimate interests;
- Perform the reporting duties (Progress Reports and Final Achievement Report) allowing for the monitoring and final assessment of the COST Action and financial reporting;
- Decide, among potentially eligible participants, the ones entitled to reimbursement.

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

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

**1. Simple majority vote at an Action MC meeting** - decisions at Action MC meetings by simple majority vote may only be made if at least two-thirds of the participating COST Members are represented. Each Participating COST Full or Cooperating Member has one vote hence the two Action MC members from one COST Member must agree. In case of no agreement between the two participating COST Full or Cooperating Member representatives, the respective participating COST Full or Cooperating Member vote is void.

Decisions made by majority vote at Action MC meetings must be recorded in the minutes of the given meeting. The minutes recording the decisions must be filed with the relevant documents that. Minutes of Action MC meetings must be communicated to the Action MC, the COST Association and uploaded onto the e-COST platform.

Or

2. Simple majority vote held electronically via email (also known as “written procedure”) – Electronic vote is valid if all of the following conditions are met:

- Voting is initiated and managed by the Action Chair or, whenever the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder or acts as a local organiser, voting is initiated by the Vice-Chair with regards to commitments;
- All Action MC members are among the recipients of the message initiating the vote (and Action MC Observers receive the message but have no voting right);
- The vote is open for seven days;
- The COST Association is informed of the outcome of the vote;
- The outcome of the vote is included in the minutes of the next Action MC meeting after the electronic vote is held.

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

Electronic vote (via e-mail) may not be used for the approval of non-COST Countries and Specific Organisation participation or for the approval of the annual Work and Budget Plan.

#### 4.3.2. COST ACTIONS KEY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS (ACTION CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, WORKING GROUPS LEADERS, GRANT HOLDERS AND OTHER KEY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS)

At the first Action MC meeting, the Action MC elects the Action Chair by means of a simple majority vote. The Action MC also elects the Action Vice-Chair. The COST Action Chair and Vice Chair must represent different participating COST Full or Cooperating Members and should not have any additional WG leadership role.

At the same meeting, the Action MC also elects the other key positions required for achievement of the Actions’ objectives and the implementation of the networking tools (e.g. WG Leaders and Vice-Leaders, STSM coordinator, etc.).

One of the key leadership positions in the Action management (e.g. Action Chair, Action Vice-Chair, one of the WG leaders, Grant Holder) shall be reserved to a representative of a COST Inclusiveness Target Country<sup>6</sup>.

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

- Coordinate COST Action activities in line with the scientific objectives defined in the COST Action MoU and the Work and Budget Plan;
- Convene and chair Action MC meetings, including preparing the meeting agenda and validating the meeting minutes;
- Manage requests and the approval procedure of institutions in non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations who want to formally join the COST Action;
- Manage the application procedure of COST Full or Cooperating Members that want to join the COST Action one year after the date the CSO approved the COST Action has elapsed;

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<sup>6</sup> The present paragraph shall apply for COST Actions deriving from open calls starting at the open call 2017-1.



- Prepare a Work and Budget Plan to be approved by the Action Science Officer and the Action MC and in line with the allocated budget;
- Seek the approval of the Action MC and the Action Science Officer for significant changes to the approved Work and Budget Plan such as the cancellation of activities and/ or the inclusion of additional activities or changes that are not consistent with the COST Policy and Rules;
- Where formal amendments to the approved Work and Budget Plan are necessary (due to revision of Grant Period duration and/ or allocated Budget), the Action Chair must prepare a revised Work and Budget Plan to be approved by the Action MC in line with the changes which have been negotiated with the Action Science Officer and approved by the COST Association;
- Manage Action MC approvals/ decisions concerning expenditures (for meetings, Short Term Scientific Missions, Training Schools, Dissemination activities), according to COST rules, and communicate the outcome of Action MC approvals/ decisions to the Grant Manager and to the Action Science Officer;
- Communicate to the Grant Manager, on behalf of the Action MC, a list of all eligible Action Participants who are entitled to be reimbursed for their attendance at approved meetings and Training Schools - this task must be assumed by the Action Vice Chair when the COST Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution;
- Authorise payments (this task must be assumed by the Action Vice Chair when the COST Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution);
- Review, approve, sign and date financial reports - this task must be assumed by the Action Vice Chair when the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution (COST Vademecum);
- Inform the Action Science Officer about key developments in the COST Action;
- Prepare and submit to COST Association the requested Monitoring Progress Reports and Final Achievement Report of the COST Action.

#### 4.3.3. ACTION MC OBSERVERS

There are two sub-categories of Action MC Observers:

- Researchers affiliated to approved institutions in non-COST Countries;
- Researchers affiliated to approved Specific Organisations;
- Researchers from COST Partner Members.

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

#### 4.3.4. WORKING GROUP (WG) MEMBERS

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

The Action MC should appoint from amongst its members (and in very exceptional circumstances, their Action MC substitutes), a WG Leader (and Vice Leader) for each Working Group. In appointing WG Leaders (and Vice Leaders), the Action MC must take into account COST Policy and Rules (see Section 5) with respect to promoting gender balance, enabling Early Career Investigators (ECI) and broadening geographical inclusiveness. It is recommended that no more than two Working Group Leaders (and Vice

Leaders) are from the same COST Full or Cooperating Member or no more than one when they are from the same COST Full or Cooperating Member of the Chair or Vice-Chair.

Further, in appointing WG Leaders (and Vice Leaders), the Action MC must take into account the fact that one of the key leadership positions in the Action management (e.g. Action Chair, Vice-Chair, Working Group Leader, Grant Holder, STSM Coordinator) shall be reserved to a representative of a COST Inclusiveness Target Country<sup>7</sup>.

The WG Leader is responsible for:

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

#### 4.3.5. SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS COORDINATOR / COMMITTEE

The Action MC should appoint amongst its members a Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) Coordinator and a STSM Committee. The STSM Committee is responsible for defining transparent criteria of evaluation of STSM applications in line with COST rules (and in collaboration with the Action MC), the evaluation of STSM applications, the selection of the successful candidates and the approval of the scientific report submitted by the STSM grantee. The evaluation criteria must consider COST Policy and Rules with respect to promoting gender balance, enabling Early Career Investigators (ECI) and broadening geographical inclusiveness (see Section 5). The selection of STSM grantees made by the STSM Committee must be communicated to the Action MC in a subsequent Action MC meeting. The STSM grantees, the grants and the home and host institutions should be recorded in the minutes of that Action MC meeting.

#### 4.3.6. CORE GROUP MEMBERS

The Action MC can constitute a Core Group; a Core Group typically consists of the COST Action Chair, Vice Chair, Working Group Leaders (and Vice Leaders), STSM Coordinator and other key leadership positions within the COST Action deemed necessary by the Action MC. The composition of the Core Group and its mandate to steer and monitor the COST Action on behalf of the Action MC must itself be formally approved by the Action MC. The Core Group should assist the Action Chair in determining, on behalf of the Action MC, from amongst eligible participants those who are entitled to be reimbursed. Whenever issues arise, which can directly impact the Work and Budget Plan and are not in the mandate of the Core Group, or for any other key decision regarding the COST Action's management, the Core Group must first consult with the Action MC and by no means must decide exclusively.

#### 4.3.7. OTHER COORDINATOR(S) / COMMITTEE(S)

An Action MC may also appoint other Coordinator(s) or Committee(s), e.g. Editorial Committee, Dissemination Board, to coordinate and manage specific tasks delegated to them by the Action MC in

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<sup>7</sup> The present paragraph shall apply for COST Actions deriving from open calls starting at the open call 2017-1.

line with the COST rules. All appointments, and their respective mandate(s) must be formally approved by the Action MC by being recorded in the minutes of an Action MC meeting or by 'written procedure'. The Action MC must be informed of any conclusions / decisions reached / taken by the 'Other' Coordinators or Committees prior to any decision taking effect, and these should be recorded in the minutes of the respective meeting.

#### 4.3.8. AD HOC PARTICIPANTS

Ad hoc participants are selected, as necessary, by the Action MC to contribute to the COST Action activities towards the achievement of the COST Action Objectives. Ad hoc participants can be STSM grantees, trainees and trainers in Training Schools, and invited speakers at COST Action Workshops and Conferences.

#### 4.3.9. INVITED SPEAKERS / EXPERTS

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

### 4.4. COST ACTION MONITORING AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

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

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

#### 4.4.1. COST ACTION MONITORING

The main objective of the external monitoring is to provide a regular assessment on the progress of the COST Action with relation to the implementation of networking activities, the development of S&T activities towards the achievement of MoU objectives and the implementation of COST Policy and Rules (see Section 5).

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

The Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC submits a Progress Report at months 12 and 24 of its implementation that constitutes the basis for the external monitoring of the COST Action. Progress

Reports contain information on the Action's progress with achieving its MoU objectives and other outputs and with implementing COST Policy and Rules.

The Action Rapporteur prepares remotely, after receiving the Progress Report by the Action Chair a Progress Review. Where necessary the Action Rapporteur provides recommendations to the Action MC concerning issues to be addressed/ measures to be implemented by the COST Action in view of ensuring the achievement of the objectives stated in the MoU and the implementation of COST Policy and Rules.

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

#### 4.4.2. COST ACTION FINAL ASSESSMENT

The main objective of the external Final Assessment of the COST Action is to identify:

- How well the Action has reached its defined goals and objectives; and
- Expected immediate, mid-term and envisaged long-term impacts of the Action after its completion, including the initiation of any follow-up activities and its impact on R&D activities in the area covered by the Action;
- To collect data necessary to demonstrate COST performance and impact.

The Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC submits a Final Achievement Report within two months after the end date of the COST Action. The report contains information on the Action's achievement of its MoU objectives, its delivery of MoU deliverables, other achievements not foreseen in the MoU, the implementation of COST Policy and Rules and the impact of the Action.

The Action Rapporteur then prepares a Final Assessment Report highlighting the COST Action achievements and impact, identifying any potential success story(ies) and emerging topic(s) or potentially important future developments.

The Scientific Committee examines and validates a summary of Progress Reports and Final Assessment Reports covering the monitored or ended COST Actions within the period between two Scientific Committee Plenary meetings. The Scientific Committee is also responsible for the analysis of the outcomes and impact of the ended Actions.

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

## 5. COST POLICY AND RULES

### 5.1. OVERVIEW

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

- COST Excellence and Inclusiveness;
- Participation of non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations.



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

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

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

- Encouraging and enabling researchers from less research-intensive countries across Europe to set up or join COST Actions. These countries are denominated Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC<sup>8</sup>) and fulfil the Horizon 2020 widening eligibility condition, being either an EU Member State or Associated Country to the EU Framework Programme;
- Counterbalancing research communities' unequal access to knowledge, infrastructures, funding and resources;
- Providing a strong means to increase the visibility and integration of researchers to the leading knowledge hubs of Europe, as well as to acquire their necessary leadership skills, regardless of their location, age or gender;
- Smoothly contributing to trigger structural changes in the national research systems of COST Members;
- Identifying excellence across Europe to contribute to Horizon 2020 widening objectives.

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

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

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<sup>8</sup> See the list in Definitions.

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

## 5.2. COST POLICY AND RULES IMPLEMENTATION BY COST ACTIONS

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

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

- Inclusiveness and Excellence (gender balance, ECI, geographical coverage):
  - Leadership roles fairly distributed to the under-represented gender and ECIs, with a balanced geographical coverage;
  - Promotion of ECI through STSMs, organisation of Training Schools, dedicated sessions in Conferences / Workshops, formation of Think Tanks or ECI Forums;
  - Organisation of Workshops/ Conferences in ITC, encouragement of researchers from ITC to apply for STSMs or participate in Training Schools or COST Action meetings.
- International Cooperation (if applicable):
  - Encouragement of COST Action Participants from Approved Institutions from non-COST Countries to apply for STSMs, or host STSM applicants, or attend Training Schools;
  - Encouragement of COST Action Participants from COST Members having accepted the MoU of the COST Action to apply for STSMs to an approved institution of a non-COST Country (International Partner Country (IPC) or Near Neighbour Country (NNC));
  - Invitations to COST Action Participants from Approved Institutions of Non-COST Countries to be Trainers in Training Schools.
- Industry Cooperation (if applicable):
  - Sessions dedicated to industry;
  - Roundtable discussions with industrial partners;
  - STSMs with industry acting as home or host institution.

## 6. COST NETWORKING TOOLS

### 6.1. OVERVIEW

COST offers a range of Networking Tools, namely:

- Meetings (including Management Committee meetings, Working Group meetings, Workshops and Conferences, Dissemination meetings);
- Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM);
- Training Schools;
- Dissemination.

The networking activities aim to support the COST Action to address the Challenge (Main aim), answer to the research questions and achieve the overall objectives of the COST Action, as these have been



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

## 6.2. STAKEHOLDERS

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

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

## 6.3. MEETINGS

COST supports different meeting types as part of its meetings Networking Tool, including Management Committee meetings, Working Group meetings, Workshops and Conferences, Dissemination meetings. Before going into the details of each meeting type, the following conditions must be respected when organising a meeting:

- COST Action meetings must be held for the sole purpose of supporting the COST Action's scientific and networking activities in line with the objectives specified in both the COST Action's MoU and the approved Work and Budget Plans;
- The Action MC / Core Group (if this is mandated by the Action MC) must determine from amongst eligible participants those who are entitled to be reimbursed (targeting a balanced allocation of reimbursement places across the COST countries having accepted the MoU of the Action);
- All categories of meetings (except Dissemination meetings) must be held in a Participating COST Full or Cooperating Member, preferably at an institution where an Action MC member holds an affiliation, taking into consideration the COST Policy and Rules, in particular the Inclusiveness and Excellence dimension (Section 5.2);
- No time gaps must exist between different type of meetings and/or Training School when these are located in the same country and within the same timeframe.

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

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

1. **Co-location of COST Action activities / COST session in an event not organised by a COST Action.** Organisation of COST Action activities within or adjacent to an 'external' event is acceptable if there is a clear added benefit to the COST Action in relation to the scientific and networking objectives outlined in the COST Action MoU. Repeated *co-location* of COST Action activities with 'external' events is not recommended, unless a valid explanation provided by the Action MC is accepted by the COST Action Science Officer. A COST Action scientific session in an 'externally' organised event must have the COST Action number and title in the

programme. It is recommended 1 Invited Speaker per 5 COST Action Participants should be included in the session. Multiple COST Action sessions in the same event should be avoided and if possible be replaced by having the event co-organised with the COST Action.

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

Moreover, the following conditions must be respected:

- COST must be visible as a co-organiser on the event's specific website and publication / dissemination materials;
- Promotional material disseminated at events must follow the instructions and standards defined in Guidelines for the Dissemination of COST Action Results and Outcomes, [http://www.cost.eu/Action\\_dissemination\\_guidelines](http://www.cost.eu/Action_dissemination_guidelines).

### 6.3.2. ACTION MC MEETINGS

The purpose of an Action MC meeting is to coordinate and organise the COST Action's scientific and networking activities in line with the objectives specified in both the COST Action MoU and the approved Work and Budget Plan. Action MC meetings should be held in conjunction with another approved COST Action activity (e.g. WG meetings, Workshops/ Conferences) and preferably with a COST Action Workshop/ Conference to consolidate travel expenses. COST Association representatives and all Action MC members from Participating COST Full and Cooperating Members are automatically invited to attend Action MC meetings. There must be at least one but no more than two Action MC meetings per 12 month Grant Period. The recommended duration of MC meetings is half a day; MC meetings should not last more than a day, unless there is a clear justification.

A standard MC agenda, available in e-COST, must be used for each meeting; if needed, additional points for discussion may be added.

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

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

Working Group meetings focus their work on achieving the scientific and/ or technological objectives of the COST Action as set out in the COST Action MoU.

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



All meetings are expected to have a specific agenda and minutes. The minutes of the meetings should be uploaded on the COST Action's intranet website and sent to the Science Officer.

#### 6.3.4. CORE GROUP MEETINGS

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

#### 6.3.5. COST ACTION WORKSHOP / CONFERENCE

This type of activity must be organised by the COST Action and is open to the broader scientific community. The Scientific/ Organising Committee of the event, or the COST Action Core Group, is expected to announce a 'Call for Abstracts' including the meeting's topics and also guidelines to researchers on how to submit an abstract/ paper. It is expected that the WG Leaders (and Vice-Leaders) will contribute to the content of the scientific programme and have an active participation, e.g. selection of Invited Speakers, and session chairs/ speakers amongst the COST Action Participants. The selection of COST Action Participants and Invited Speakers must take into account the COST Policy and Rules (Section 5).

Moreover, the following conditions must be respected:

- COST must be visible as the organiser on the event's specific website, COST Action website and publication / dissemination materials;
- Promotional material disseminated at conferences must follow the instructions and standards defined in Guidelines for the Dissemination of COST Action Results and Outcomes, [http://www.cost.eu/Action\\_dissemination\\_guidelines](http://www.cost.eu/Action_dissemination_guidelines).

It is highly recommended that work presented during the Workshop/ Conferences is published either as a special issue, or conference proceedings or as a book of abstracts or a white paper or in any other relevant to the Workshop/ Conference format of publication. This enhances dissemination of the COST Action to a wider audience and opens up the potential for new networking activities.

The COST Action should strive to engage with industry, policy makers, standards organisations, national authorities, and any other stakeholders (Section 3.2), if relevant to the topic, objectives and deliverables of the COST Action, by inviting them to the COST Action Workshop / Conference.

#### 6.3.6. DISSEMINATION MEETINGS

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

- The participation of eligible Action Participants at Dissemination meetings must be pre-approved by both the Action MC and by the COST Action's Science Officer. European conferences are preferred. However, conferences held elsewhere may also be considered;
- For each Grant Period, a maximum of two Action MC members (or their substitutes), limited to one per meeting, are eligible to be reimbursed for their attendance at approved Dissemination

meetings. Repeated attendance at Dissemination meetings by the same Action MC members (or substitutes) across Grant Periods is not allowed;

- All eligible COST Action Participants must make an oral presentation at the conference in question and must be listed as a speaker in the official event or conference programme. The main subject of the oral presentation/ speech at the approved event or conference must result in promoting the scientific activities of the COST Action. The programme and presentation should be sent to the Action Science Officer.

### 6.3.7. FINAL WORKSHOP / CONFERENCE COMBINED WITH THE FINAL ACTION MC MEETING

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

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

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

During the Final Action MC meeting, the Action MC should discuss the content of the Final Achievement Report and the progress of the Final Action Dissemination (FAD), if applicable.

## 6.4. TRAINING SCHOOLS

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

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

- The Action MC/ Core Group must define the trainers and select the trainees based on clear criteria taking into account the COST Policy and Rules, in particular the Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy (Section 5);
- A Training School must have the COST Action scientific and networking objectives as its main focus. The COST Action also has to be one of the primary organisers of the Training School. For co-organised Training Schools the same conditions should be fulfilled as the ones for co-organised meetings (Section 6.3.1, point 2);
- The COST Action must be clearly promoted on all dissemination channels, namely the official website of the COST Action and event, brochures and all training material;
- The programme of the Training School must incorporate theoretical and practical components (i.e. a participant discussion session alone is not sufficient);
- Training Schools are recommended to last a minimum of 3 days;

- A ratio of at least 3 Trainees to 1 Trainer is recommended;
- Training School must be held in a participating COST Full or Cooperating Member or in an approved NNC institution (in this case, pre-approval from the COST Association is mandatory).

## 6.5. SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM)

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

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

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

Home Institution	Host Institution
From a Participating COST Full or Cooperating Member.	To another Participating COST Member
	To an approved institution from a Non-COST Country
	To an approved Specific Organisation
From an approved institution of a NNC.	To a Participating COST Full or Cooperating Member
From an approved European RTD Organisation	To a Participating COST Full or Cooperating Member

The selection of STSM grantees made by the STSM Coordinator/ Committee, including Home and Host Institutions as well as allocated grants, must be communicated to the entire Action MC in a subsequent Action MC meeting and included in the minutes of the Action MC meeting.

STSMs must respect the following criteria:

- They must have a minimum duration of 5 days;
- They must have a maximum duration of 90 days;
- STSMs need to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period and always within the
- Action's lifetime.

Specific additional provisions have been adopted by the CSO to encourage the participation of ECI in STSMs. To qualify for these specific provisions, the following conditions apply:

- The mission must have a minimum duration of 91 days;
- The mission must have a maximum duration of 180 days;
- STSMs performed by ECIs needs to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period and always within the COST Action's lifetime.

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

### 6.5.1. STSM PROCESS

#### 1. Before the STSM:

Eligible STSM applicants must:

- Obtain written agreement from the Host institution that the STSM applicant may perform the activities detailed in the STSM work plan on the agreed dates;
- Complete an online STSM application, <http://www.cost.eu/stsm>.

The applicant must then send the following documentation as an e-mail attachment to the STSM Host institution, the Action Chair (or Vice Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution), the STSM Coordinator / Committee and to the Grant Holder:

- Written agreement from the Host institution that the STSM applicant may perform the activities detailed in the STSM work plan on the agreed dates;
- A STSM application;
- A CV (including a list of academic publications – if applicable);
- A motivation letter including a work plan of the activities to be performed during the visit highlighting the proposed contribution to the scientific objectives of the respective COST Action;
- A letter of support from the Home institution.

#### Evaluation of the application and selection of the Grantee:

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

Pre-approval (before the STSM) is a written acknowledgement in the form of an email by the Action Chair (or Vice Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) or the STSM Coordinator / Committee to the Grant Manager confirming that the respective STSM application was successful and that the chosen applicant may commence their STSM within the agreed conditions.

#### Pre-approval email template

Subject: *Pre-approval* [**STSM Reference number, COST Action number, Applicant's name**]

*Dear Grant Manager,*

*On behalf of the Action MC, I formally approve the STSM application of **[Name of Applicant]** to be performed between **[the Start Date of the Activity and the End Date of the Activity]** at the **[Name of Host Institute]**.*

**[Name of Action Chair / STSM Coordinator / Committee Member]**  
**[Role in COST Action: Action Chair / Vice Chair / STSM Coordinator etc.] [Institution of**

**sender]**

**[Address of sender] [Telephone number of sender] [Email address of sender]**

Only when the Grant Manager receives the above pre-approval email from the Action Chair / STSM Coordinator / Committee may the Grant Notification Letter be sent to the successful STSM applicant via e-COST. The applicant needs to download their Grant Notification Letter prior to undergoing their STSM. The above pre-approval email represents formal authorisation that the STSM applicant may commence their STSM in line with the conditions specified within the given email.

## **2. After the STSM:**

The STSM grantee is required to submit a short scientific report to the Host institution (for information purposes only) and to the Action Chair (or Vice Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution) / STSM Coordinator or Committee for formal approval within 30 days after the end date of the STSM. Failure of the Grantee to submit the scientific report within 30 days after the end date of the STSM will effectively cancel the grant.

The scientific report must contain the following:

- Purpose of the STSM;
- Description of the work carried out during the STSM;
- Description of the main results achieved;
- Future collaboration with the Host institution (if applicable);
- Foreseen publications / articles resulting from the STSM (if applicable);
- Confirmation by the Host institution of the successful execution of the STSM.

Post approval (after the STSM) is written acknowledgement in the form of an email by the STSM Coordinator / Committee to the Grant Manager confirming that the STSM was completed successfully, the scientific report was accepted and that the Grant can be paid to the applicant.

### **Post-approval email template**

Subject: *Post-approval* **[STSM Reference number, COST Action number, Grantee's name, Grant amount]**

*Dear Grant Manager,*

*On behalf of the Action MC, I formally approve the scientific report submitted by **[Name of Applicant]** detailing the research activities performed during the STSM held between the **[Start Date of the Activity and the End Date of the Activity]** at the **[Name of Host Institute]**. I also confirm that the administrative requirements have been satisfied and that the grant amount of **[Amount in Euro]** may be paid to the Grantee.*

**[Name of Action Chair / STSM Coordinator / Committee Member]**

**[Role in COST Action: Action Chair / Vice Chair / STSM Coordinator etc.] [Institution of sender]**

**[Address of sender] [Telephone number of sender] [Email address of sender]**

The Grant Manager may only instruct their respective financial officer to process the payment of the STSM grant once both of the above mentioned approvals are in place. All administrative requirements must be checked for accuracy and consistency and filed accordingly before the payment can be made.

## 7. DISSEMINATION

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

COST Actions can get financial support for a series of dissemination material including among others website, material for display and distribution, publications. Details including tips and tricks for dissemination as well as the requirements regarding COST visual identity that must be met for securing funding can be found at Guidelines for the Dissemination of COST Action Results and Outcomes, [http://www.cost.eu/Action\\_dissemination\\_guidelines](http://www.cost.eu/Action_dissemination_guidelines). For financial details please see the COST Vademecum, <http://www.cost.eu/Vademecum>, Section 8.1.

Moreover, COST Actions may apply for a Final Action Dissemination (FAD) grant, to produce material disseminating the Action's results obtained during the lifetime of the Action. For financial details please see Section 8.2 of the COST Vademecum, <http://www.cost.eu/Vademecum>. There is a template, [http://www.cost.eu/FAD\\_application\\_template](http://www.cost.eu/FAD_application_template) that needs to be completed and sent to the COST Action Science Officer responsible for the COST Action, at the latest 6 months before the official end date of the COST Action.

## 8. COST GRANT SYSTEM

### 8.1. OVERVIEW

The first Action MC meeting is organised by the COST Association and takes place in Brussels, usually held at the COST Association premises. It is administered and funded centrally by the COST Association.

Once the first Action MC meeting has taken place, the COST Action is funded and implemented under the COST Grant System (CGS). Under the COST Grant System (CGS), the Financial, Scientific, Administrative and Coordination (FSAC) tasks related to the management of the COST Action are performed by a Grant Holder. The Grant Holder is a legal entity, to which one of the Action MC members must be affiliated and is selected by the COST Action MC during the first Action MC meeting.

A COST Action must be implemented in line with the terms and conditions specified in periodic legally binding contracts (COST Action Grant Agreements) and sound legal, ethical and administrative principles. For each Grant Period, a Work and Budget Plan formally details the scientific activities that are to be performed by the COST Action. Each Work and Budget Plan must be approved by the Action Science Officer and the Action MC before activities may commence. The scientific activities approved in each Work and Budget Plan form part of the contractual agreement (the Annex A) that must be signed in covenant between the COST Association and the Grant Holder Institution.

The COST Action grant may only be used to support approved activities necessary for and dedicated to achieving the COST Action's objectives and supporting COST Policy and Rules. For more information please see the COST Vademecum, <http://www.cost.eu/Vademecum>.

### 8.2. GRANT HOLDER REPRESENTATIVES

The Grant Holder is represented by four key positions. Depending on the internal organisation of the Grant Holder, the same person may 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 must be readily available to support the Action MC in monitoring the progress of the Action.
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 working or affiliated to the Grant Holder institution who is responsible for overseeing the administrative management of the COST Action and is the primary user of the e-COST Action management tool.

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

For each Grant Period, the Action MC is required to plan, define and approve, in the form of a Work and Budget Plan (WBP), the Action's scientific activities and the indicative budget allocated to the various Networking Tools. The WBP must be drafted using the e-COST Action Management Tool (e-CAMT), using the available User Guide on the COST Participation webpage, <http://www.cost.eu/participate>. A Work and Budget Plan consists of the following parts:

1. COST Action Profile
2. MoU objectives and Grant Agreement Period Goals and Activities
3. Work and Budget Plan for the Grant Agreement Period

#### Part 1: COST Action Profile

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

#### Part 2: MoU objectives and Grant Agreement Period Goals and Activities

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

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

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

### Part 3: Work and Budget Plan for the Grant Agreement Period

The Action MC of the COST Action should plan and decide how they will allocate the COST Action's budget using the COST Networking Tools. A COST Grant is comprised of the following budget lines:

1. Meetings;
2. Training Schools;
3. Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs);
4. Disseminations;
5. Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities (OERSA);

Budget lines 1-5 come under the collective heading: 'Total Science Expenditure'. Changes to the budget or other details of an approved activity require the approval of the Action MC and the Action Science Officer.

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

Budget line 6 is a fixed percentage contribution afforded to support Grant Holder's administering and coordinating approved scientific activities. The FSAC percentage cannot exceed 15% of the actual science expenditure.

Each WBP needs to be formally approved by the Action Science Officer.

While completing the WBP the COST Policy and Rules (Section 5) must be taken into account; the COST Action will be monitored based on the COST Policy and Rules throughout its lifetime.

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

- 'Description':
  - The rough **schedule**, e.g. 2 hrs Action MC meeting, 2 days parallel sessions of WG meetings, 2 hrs plenary session of all WGs;
  - The **plans and objectives** of the stand-alone activity, e.g. Training School / of each of the sub-activities in case of a joint meeting, e.g. Action MC meeting and WG meeting;
  - How the stand-alone activity, e.g. Training School / of each of the sub- activities serves towards the achievement of the set of GAPGs;
  - Possible invited speakers and trainers and their relevant expertise
  - Any special rules set up with regards to reimbursement, if a deviation from the general COST rules and/ or from rules agreed within the COST Action MC, e.g. reduction of the flat rate of accommodation reimbursement;
  - For **co-located** COST Action activities with an event not organised by the COST Action; how and why the COST Action benefits from this co-location and how the COST Action activity relates to the other event in terms of scheduling, e.g. session, adjacent event prior or after the event not organised by the COST Action. A website related to the external event should be provided if possible (for more detailed information see Section 3.6.7);
  - For **co-organised** COST Action activities with an 'external' organisation; how and why the COST Action benefits from the co-organisation and how the COST Action is involved in the set-up of this joint activity (e.g. share of COST Action Participants in steering and/ or scientific committee). A website related to the other organisation should be provided (for more detailed information see Section 3.6.7).
- 'Outputs': Outputs can be, among other, codified knowledge, tacit knowledge, technology, and societal applications:
  - **Codified knowledge:** Knowledge expressed through language (including mathematics, music etc.) and thus capable of being stored on a physical support (i.e. transferrable knowledge) – e.g. *publications; patents, websites;*



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

For STSMs the following should be provided under:

- 'Description':
  - The scientific priorities of the WG(s) and which GAPGs those relate to;
  - How the COST Policy and Rules will be addressed.
- 'Outputs':
  - **Tangible output(s)** e.g. STSM reports, collaborative projects, joint publications, presentation in a COST Action Meeting, etc.;
  - **Less tangible output(s)**, e.g. knowledge exchange, transfer of skills and techniques, networking.

For Dissemination the following should be provided under:

- 'Description':
  - The topic and type of publication, e.g. proceedings, review article, special issue, etc.;
  - The number of Participating COST Members involved in the publication (in order to be eligible for funding the publication must be authored by different participants from at least three different Participating COST Members);
  - The publisher/ provider, Open Access or traditional publishing;
  - The distribution strategy;
  - The target audience;
  - The WG(s) that relates to.
- 'Outputs':
  - **Less tangible output(s)**, e.g. knowledge exchange, transfer of skills and techniques, policy development.

## 8.4. GRANT HOLDER TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 8.4.1. SCIENTIFIC COORDINATION TASKS OF THE GRANT HOLDER

The Grant Holder must support the Action MC in the production of the required Progress Reports and Final Achievement Report for the proper monitoring and assessment of the COST Action (see Section 1.4).

### 8.4.2. ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS OF THE GRANT HOLDER (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

- Preparation of documentation for meetings under the guidance of the Action Chair / Vice Chair (e.g. Action MC approvals, agendas, invitations, minutes, attendance lists etc.);
- Coordinating COST Action meetings; please note that if the Grant Manager's participation in the approved activity is purely administrative (meaning that they are not an Action MC member, Action MC substitute, WG member, STSM grantee or trainer / trainee) then the associated expenses can be sourced from the FSAC and not from the scientific expenditure budget lines;
- Collecting and archiving supporting documents related to processing reimbursement claims and the associated payments;
- Archiving, and uploading in e-COST, all necessary Action MC decisions relating to the COST Action.

### 8.4.3. PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION TASKS OF THE GRANT HOLDER

The Grant Holder must support the Dissemination activities of the COST Action (e.g. publications, website) to be aligned with the rules outlined in the COST Vademecum <http://www.cost.eu/Vademecum>.