

Brussels, 29 October 2021

COST 098/21

RULES FOR COST INNOVATORS GRANTS

(Level B – COST Innovators Grant (CIG))

The COST Committee of Senior Officials (“CSO”) having regard to:

The CSO Decision “Rules and Principles for COST activities”,

In accordance with its role as General Assembly of the COST Association,

Whereas

- The Rules and Principles for COST activities lay down the principles and general rules for COST activities;
- The COST Innovators Grant aims at enhancing the pace and success of breakthrough innovations (see the definition of *Innovation* in the [Glossary](#)), building bridges between the scientific research performed in COST Actions and the applications in the market and in society;
- COST shall adopt a set of stable, minimal, and user-friendly rules to ensure efficient, effective, and impactful implementation of CIGs.

Adopts the present Rules for CIGs in accordance with the Rules and Principles for COST activities, which shall apply to COST Members, COST Governance, COST Administration and to participants to the CIGs.

The present Rules for CIGs shall be subordinated to and shall not contravene the “Rules and Principles for COST activities”. In case of any contradiction, the Rules and Principles for COST activities shall prevail.

The present Rules for CIGs shall lay down the general rules applicable to CIGs deriving from the Rules and Principles for COST activities and govern:

- The CIG approval and objectives,
- The CIG starting date and duration,
- The CIG management,
- The Participation of individuals in CIGs,
- The Business Plan,
- The Financial support to CIGs: networking activities and other expenses,
- The CIGs funding and administration,
- The CIGs final assessment.

Throughout the present Rules for COST Innovators Grants, the term “shall” implies an obligation to comply with the set requirement whilst the term “may” implies an authorisation to act. Other terms used in the present rules are defined in the list of Definitions and abbreviations contained in the Annex II to the Rules and Principles for COST activities (see [Glossary](#)).

Non-compliance with the present rules may lead to the measures for Breach of COST Rules and Principles as per Rules and Principles for COST activities, Article 6.

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1. CIGS APPROVAL AND OBJECTIVES

1.1. Approval of CIGs

CIGs are approved by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) as described in the CIG Submission Guidelines (http://www.cost.eu/innovators_grant).

1.2. Objectives of CIGs

The CIG Terms of Reference, constituting the addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of the Action, shall describe the aims and objectives of the CIGs as approved by the CSO.

2. CIG START DATE AND DURATION

A CIG shall start at the beginning of the Grant Period following the CSO approval and shall have a duration of 12 months.

No extension shall be granted, unless the COST Executive Board decides to offer an extension to CIGs affected by a case of *force majeure* (see the definition of *force majeure* in the [Glossary](#)), which resulted in a delay in the implementation of the CIG's aims and objectives. The EB of the COST Association shall in such case determine the duration of the extension based on the Rules of Procedures defined by the EB. Those Rules of Procedures shall be published.

The CSO may terminate a CIG in case of:

- Circumstances that from a Science and Technology or network activities point of view make the benefit of continuing the CIG questionable. Those circumstances shall be duly justified following the breach of COST Action rules and principles by the CIG Team as per [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#), Article 6.

3. CIG MANAGEMENT

CIGs shall be managed by the CIG Team composed of Researchers and Innovators affiliated in COST Full or Cooperating Members. The CIG Team composition is detailed in the CIG application and approved by the CSO upon approval of the CIG applications to be funded.

3.2 The CIG Team

3.1.1. Composition

The CIG Team is composed at the time of submission by the applicants and its members must stem from the COST Full or Cooperating Members.

The CIG Team is specified in the CIG application and approved by the Management Committee of the Action and its composition shall not change after the CIG application has been submitted.

The CIG Team is led by the CIG Chair and the CIG Vice-Chair as specified in the CIG application.

Should CIG Team Members leave the CIG during its lifetime, they may either be replaced by another expert from a COST Full or Cooperating Members capable of fulfilling their role (e.g., same expertise), or the CIG Team takes over their role, and a clear justification and rationale for the choice shall be provided.

3.1.2. Role, rights and powers, and decision making

The CIG Team is the decision-making body and shall formally establish their decision-making procedure. The CIG Team shall have the required decision powers for governing the CIG to implement the activities and manage the budget in view of achieving the CIG objectives.

Taking due account of the CIG Team Duties as per Article 3.1.3. hereunder, the CIG Team rights and powers shall include, but not be limited to:

- Within the applicable legal and financial framework, make any necessary decisions to meet the aims and objectives of the CIG;
- Be informed of the progress in the CIG and act accordingly;
- Select or replace the Grant Holder in compliance with the rules for Grant Holder as per Article 7.4;
- Decide on any confidentiality clause and Intellectual Property Rights Agreement as deemed required;
- Negotiate and approve the Work and Budget Plan and where required, reallocate budget within the frame of the approved Work and Budget Plan, in compliance with the rules for CIG funding and administration as per Article 7, with regard to financial support to CIG, implement the financial support to CIG in compliance with the rules for Financial management by the CIG Team as per Article 6.2;
- Deliver the Business Plan.

3.1.3. Duties

The CIG Team shall:

- Use English as working language in all documents and correspondence with the COST Association;
- Abide by the COST [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#);
- Avoid Conflicts of Interests and report them to the COST Administration if any (see [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#), Article 5);
- Inform the COST Administration of the CIG's progress upon request;
- Attend the final event organised by COST;
- In case of conflict with the Grant Holder on implementation of decisions of the CIG Team regarding financial support to CIG, report to the COST Administration for conflict resolution in compliance with the rules for Grant Holder as per Article 7.4;
- Adopt required reports in the frame of CIG budget and administration in compliance with the rules for Reporting on the use of the COST Grant as per Article 7.5;
- Establish the Final Achievement report, which includes the Business Plan, and actively participate in the process of CIG final assessment in compliance with the rules for CIG final assessment as per Article 8.

3.2 Access to leadership positions

Leadership positions are positions in a CIG held by individuals to guide and coordinate the tasks required for the implementation of the CIG.

Some positions in the CIG management are to be considered as mandatory leadership positions. The mandatory leadership positions are needed to assure the minimal needs of a CIG. They are the following: Chair, Vice Chair and Grant Holder Scientific Representative (GH SR).

CIGs are furthermore free to establish any other leadership positions according to their own needs. Access to leadership positions shall be as shown in *Table 1*.

Table 1: This table shows the access to leadership positions within the CIG.

Affiliation to	Mandatory positions	Other leadership positions	
	Chair/Vice Chair, GH SR	Grant Awarding Coordinator	Other e.g., International advisor
Legal entity in a COST Full or Cooperating Member	✓	✓	✓
Legal entity in a COST Partner Member	✗	✗	✓
The EC, EU bodies, offices, and agencies (EC/EU)	✓	✓	✓
A European RTD Organisation	✓	✓	✓
An International Organisation	✗	✗	✓
Legal entity in an NNC	✗	✗	✓
Legal entity in an IPC/Third State	✗	✗	✓

Further to the conditions shown in *Table 1*, the **Chair and Vice Chair positions** shall be established in the CIG application.

Similarly, the **Grant Holder Scientific Representative (GH SR)** position shall be reserved to an individual who is a CIG Team Member in compliance with the rules for Grant Holder as per Article 7.4.

Should the **CIG Chair or Vice Chair**, change their affiliation to an International Organisation, a COST Partner Member, NNC or IPC, the CIG Team shall be informed. When allowed under the conditions specified in the table above, the CIG Team may decide to keep the individual in the position if it is deemed beneficial to the CIG.

When a **Grant Holder Scientific Representative** changes their affiliation, the Grant Holder Scientific Representative shall be replaced by a CIG Team Member having an affiliation with the Grant Holder in place, or the Grant Holder shall be replaced.

4. PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS IN CIGS

4.1 Participation modalities, rights, and duties

Participation to the CIG activities is open to all researchers and innovators as from the start date of the CIG and subject to the approval of the CIG Team as per Article 6.2. Participation to CIG activities shall be open to any individual affiliated in a legal entity wherever in the world, except in cases listed under Article 0.

Participation in a CIG does not entitle the concerned individual to be reimbursed of their expenses for participating in CIG activities. The reimbursement shall be subject to the decision of the CIG Team regarding the Financial management by the CIG Team as per Article 6.2 and the rules for Eligibility to receive financial support as per Article 6.4.

Individuals participating in a CIG shall be bound by the present rules, the COST Rules and Principles for COST activities and any applicable rule for funding as per Article 6.

4.2 Incompatibilities

Some functions at COST or in an evaluation, selection, or approval procedure of a CIG application or in the final assessment of a CIG shall be incompatible with a participation in a CIG. Those incompatibilities shall be as follows:

- Active CSO Delegates, COST National Coordinators and Scientific Committee Members and personnel of the COST Administration may not be CIG Team Members, be reimbursed for their attendance to a CIG activity nor be Rapporteur in any CIG;
- A former CSO Delegate or Scientific Committee Member may not be CIG Team Member, be reimbursed for their attendance to a CIG activity, nor be Rapporteur in any CIG selected or approved during their mandate;
- CIG Committee Members having been involved in the evaluation of an application may not be CIG Team Members in the CIG deriving from that application, they however may be invited for an ad-hoc contribution or be Rapporteur for that CIG;
- Rapporteurs may not be CIG Team Members, CIG participants neither be invited for a contribution in the CIG they are reviewing.

5. THE CIG BUSINESS PLAN

The Business Plan is a mandatory deliverable of a CIG. For the purposes of the CIG the definition of Business Plan given in the [Glossary](#) applies.

The CIG Chair shall submit a Final Achievement Report (see Article 8) on behalf of the CIG Team, using the template provided by COST and shall contain the Business Plan.

The Business Plan will be treated as CONFIDENTIAL information by the COST Association and by any person involved in the CIG evaluation, selection, approval process, and final assessment.

6. FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE CIGS: NETWORKING ACTIVITIES AND OTHER EXPENSES

The approved CIGs shall be granted a budget to carry out the CIG activities. The Annexes to the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#) (level C) shall apply to the CIGs with regard to the activities, eligibility and reimbursement rules.

6.1 Scope of the financial support to CIGs

Funding provided by COST supports networking activities, namely:

- Meetings (CIG Team or other meetings);
- Training Schools;
- Mobility of researchers and innovators;
- Presentation at conferences organised by third parties for:
 - Capacity building (limited to young researchers and innovators from ITC or NNC);
 - Dissemination of CIGs' work and results.

Other expenses specifically supporting the CIG shall include:

- Dissemination and communication products;
- Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination (FSAC);
- Expenses incurred for the benefit of the network.

6.2 Financial management by the CIG Team

The CIG Team shall implement the networking activities and make decisions regarding the other expenses specifically supporting the CIG in compliance with COST Principles and within the frame of the present rules as complemented by the Annexes to the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#).

This shall imply the following:

- Decide whether the invitation to a meeting or training school shall imply reimbursement of the expenses carried out to participate in the concerned CIG networking activity;
- Decide whether to cap to a certain amount the reimbursement of expenses for participating in a CIG networking activity duly taking into account the COST Principles as per Rules and Principles for COST activities, Article 3;

Award where applicable the grants for networking activities. Awarding the grants shall include but not be limited to opening calls for grant awarding, deciding on the criteria for evaluating applications to grants and evaluating grant applications.

6.4 Location of CIG networking activities

CIG networking activities may take place in the locations shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Locations where CIG networking activities can take place.

Location		Meetings	Training Schools and other networking activities
Virtual Environment		✓	✓
COST Members	Full or Cooperating Member	✓	✓
	Partner Member	✗	✓
NNC		✓	✓
IPC/Third State		✗	✓
Specific Organisations		Rule applicable to territory where it is vested	

6.4 Eligibility to receive financial support

Individuals invited as per Article 6.2 and, where applicable, legal entities, participating in a CIG networking activity shall be eligible to receive financial support to cover part or all of their expenses carried out to participate in or to organise a CIG networking activity as defined in Table 3 .

Table 3: This table defines the eligibility conditions to receive financial support to cover part or all of their expenses carried out to participate in or to organise a CIG networking activity (* ITC Conference Grants are limited to Young Researchers and Innovators from COST Inclusiveness Target Countries and NNC; ** F/C Member = Full or Cooperating Member; *** CPM = COST Partner Member).

Affiliation to		Meetings		Training Schools			Other networking activities	
		Invited individual	Local Organiser	Trainer	Trainee	Local Organiser	ITC Conf Grant*	All others
COST Members	Legal entity in COST F/C** Member	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Legal entity in CPM***	At COST Partner Member's costs						
Specific Organisations	EC/EU	At EC, EU body, office or agency costs						
	Eur. RTD Org.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
	IO	Once in the lifetime of the CIG	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
NNC	Legal entity in an NNC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IPC/Third State	Legal entity in an IPC	Once in the lifetime of the CIG	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗

7. CIG FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION

7.1. Funding of a CIG – The COST Grant

CIGs shall be funded and administered through the COST decentralised management scheme, the COST Grant System (CGS), which is provided by the COST Association.

The COST Grant shall only be used to support CIG networking activities and other expenses specifically supporting the CIG as per Article 6.1.

7.2. The COST Grant budget

The COST Administration shall grant to each CIG a budget for its whole duration, hereinafter referred to as COST Grant budget, subject to available funds, in compliance with COST Principles and in strict abidance with the legal and contractual framework applicable to COST.

The COST Grant budget shall be the maximum financial contribution of COST towards the CIG for its entire duration.

The COST Grant budget shall vary depending on:

- Budget available to the COST Association;
- Budget requested in the CIG application.

The COST Grant budget shall be defined in the COST CIG Grant Agreement (Article 7.3). Allocation of the COST Grant budget in CIG networking activities and other expenses specifically supporting the CIG shall be included in the Work and Budget Plan annexed to the CIG Grant Agreement. Allocation of budget in the Work and Budget Plan shall maximise budget for networking activities.

During the duration of the CIG, the CIG Team may reallocate budget within the frame of the approved Work and Budget Plan, subject, where applicable as described in the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#), to pre-approval of the COST Administration.

At the end of the CIG, unspent budget shall be returned to the COST Association.

7.3. CIG Grant Agreement

The COST Grant shall be formalised by a CIG Grant Agreement concluded between the COST Association represented by its Director and the CIG Grant Holder.

The CIG Grant Agreement sets the contractual framework under which the COST Grant shall be used and administered for the benefit of the accomplishment of CIG's aims and objectives. The CIG Grant Agreement shall be compliant with the present rules and COST Principles.

The CIG Grant Agreement shall detail the present CIG Rules regarding:

- The COST Grant maximum budget;
- The CIG duration, start and end date;
- The rights and obligations, tasks and responsibilities of the parties in terms of financial management and administration of a CIG, including financial reporting and their timelines, access to archived documents, controls and audits, rejection of expenses;
- The Work and Budget Plan;
- The payment modalities of the COST Grant and the return of unspent funds;
- The consequences of non-compliance with the CIG Grant Agreement obligations.

Any other provisions as required following the legal and contractual framework applicable to COST.

The CIG Grant Agreement may be amended at any time.

7.4. Grant Holder

The Grant Holder shall be a legal entity vested in a COST Full or Cooperating Member or the EC, EU bodies, offices, and agencies (EC/EU) or a European RTD Organisation (see Table 1). The Grant Holder shall be appointed among the Institutions to which CIG Team Members are affiliated. The Grant Holder shall be represented in the CIG Team by the Grant Holder Scientific Representative.

The Grant Holder shall be defined in the CIG application and is subject to approval of the COST Administration.

In compliance with the rules on Access to leadership positions as per Article 5.3.2, when a Grant Holder Scientific Representative changes their affiliation, the Grant Holder Scientific Representative shall be replaced. They may be replaced by a CIG Team Member having an affiliation with the Grant Holder in place otherwise the Grant Holder shall be replaced.

When administering the COST Grant, the Grant Holder shall act under supervision of the CIG Team. However, the Grant Holder shall oppose to any CIG Team decision that would be taken against the present rules and the Rules and Principles for COST activities and report to the COST Administration in case of issue for seeking resolution.

7.5. Reporting on the use of the COST Grant

The CIG Grant Agreement shall detail the reporting obligations of the CIG towards the COST Association with regard to the use of the COST Grant. The reporting shall occur in the timeframes mentioned in the CIG Grant Agreement. The CIG Team shall support the Grant Holder in the fulfilment of those obligations and adopt the established reports before their submission to the COST Association.

8. CIG FINAL ASSESSMENT

Each CIG shall submit a Final Achievement Report within forty-five calendar days. The assessment is carried out by an independent external expert (Rapporteur).

The Rapporteur shall prepare a Final Assessment Report evaluating the degree of realisation of the CIG towards its stated objectives and its potential impact after completion, including the soundness of the Business Plan and the exploitation of the CIG outputs. Rapporteurs shall provide their final assessment review within 30 (thirty) days from the receipt of the CIG's Final Achievement Report to the CIG Team and the COST Association.

The CIG Final Assessment shall consist in determining, including any follow-up initiatives in the area covered by the CIG.