

COST – The leading networking tool in the ERA

About COST

European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) is an intergovernmental funding organisation for research and innovation networks with a membership of 43 countries. Its mission is to provide networking opportunities for researchers and innovators in order to strengthen Europe's capacity to address scientific, technological, and societal challenges. COST has been implementing its mission since 1971 by funding bottom-up, excellence-driven, open, and inclusive networks for peaceful purposes in all areas of science and technology.

COST has a consolidated structure, widely recognised by scientific communities in Europe and beyond, where people and ideas can grow, contributing decisively to the internationalisation process and career development of the research and innovation communities and to significant scientific and technological breakthroughs. To continue to act as the leading networking instrument in the European Research Area (ERA), and a cornerstone of the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, COST has defined three strategic priorities:

- Promoting and spreading excellence
- Fostering interdisciplinary research for breakthrough science
- Empowering and retaining young researchers and innovators

Over the past 50 years, COST has been able to adapt to an ever changing present and uncertain future. It included Ukraine as a full member in 2022, and it was swift to adapt to a new meeting reality during the COVID-19 pandemic with the introduction of Virtual Networking Tools. These tools provide support for new forms of collaboration in virtual and hybrid settings and are a complement to traditional ways of collaboration within COST Actions.

Why do ERA and FP10 need COST?

COST plays a key role in making ERA work - Cross-border and intersectoral collaboration and mobility are key in today's research and innovation practice. Yearly COST serves a community of more than 50,000 active researchers, with different types of scientific backgrounds and diversified career pathways, in building networks that highly contribute to the free flow of knowledge and researchers and innovators in Europe and beyond. COST offers simple and low-barrier processes for universal access to networks of excellence, making COST a crucial player in the continuous development of the ERA, as also mentioned in the [EU Council Conclusions on the ERA in 2020](#).

COST delivers Inclusive Excellence - COST Actions are selected solely based on excellence criteria. After the selection phase, any researcher in Europe can join and benefit from COST funding, even without having joined the proposers' group. This ensures equal opportunities and representation for all members of the research and innovation community, regardless of their background, ethnicity, gender, or other personal characteristics. By promoting inclusive excellence, our European research networks aim to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive scientific community, where all members can fully develop their skills and expertise to drive impactful research and innovation.

COST provides small grants with big leverage - Each COST network has a global budget of around EUR 600,000 to implement networking and capacity-building activities over four years. A network

typically mobilises more than 200 peer researchers. Research activities are complemented by collaborative efforts developed within the network, and funded by other sources (national, regional, EU, or international level), making COST a frontrunner in defragmenting knowledge and aligning investments in research and innovation. Participation in COST leads to significant results and follow-up in terms of the number of proposals submitted for collaborative research in Horizon 2020, with an impressive success rate of 39%. During Horizon 2020, this accounted for more than EUR 390 million in approved follow-up projects spinning off from COST Actions on a yearly basis. Taking into account the COST Programme's total budget (EUR 300 million), one euro invested in COST generates almost 10 euros in return, which underpins the role of COST as a pre-portal and incubator for follow-up European funding.

COST is a unique opportunity for the next generation of EU researchers - It is crucial to take advantage of the pool of talent that exists in the younger generation and offer them diverse career perspectives so they can develop and exploit their full potential. COST enables young researchers to quickly build a network of peers and obtain practical experience with pan-European collaborative research, while providing training opportunities to build leadership capabilities. Currently, more than 40% of researchers involved in COST Actions are young researchers and almost 20% of the leadership positions are filled by young researchers.

What do we need to serve FP10 in the best possible way?

Given the high number of proposals submitted annually to the COST Open Call, of which many excellent proposals cannot be funded, the steep growth in the number of network participants, the very high customer satisfaction rate, and recent substantial inflation, COST calls for multi-annual funding with a substantially increased budget in FP10. This is also in line with the [2021 COST Ministerial Declaration](#). An increased budget would allow COST to reach its full potential in serving as the leading networking tool in the ERA and supporting the EU's next generation of researchers.

