



COST Action
CA18133

ERNEST

European Research
Network on Signal
Transduction

Additional Guidelines for Grant Awarding

Following the Annotated Rules for COST Actions (Horizon Europe)

Drafted by the Grant Awarding Coordinator and Committee

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1 – Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

Preamble. Before applying, all applicants must carefully and completely read **Annex 2** of the [Annotated Rules for COST actions](https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/) (https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/). Some citations from the Annotated rules are provided below, but do not represent the complete guidelines. Updates to the official Annotated Rules automatically take precedence over the sections quoted here.

1.1 Scope & Eligibility

From the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#);

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) support capacity building and transfer of knowledge through bilateral/multilateral collaborations;

- *Support specific / general topic that can help achieving the Action MoU objectives and deliverables (research coordination);*
- *Are very flexible and inclusive networking activities crucial to establish new collaborations or reinforce existing collaborations across disciplines and different sectors (e.g., academia and industry / SMEs) with possible impact on career development;*
- *Typical outcomes are spin-off publications and (funded) projects that contribute to the visibility and impact of the COST Actions, encouraging other researchers to join.*

*A Short Term Scientific Mission consists of a visit to a host organization located in a **different country than the country of affiliation** by a **Researcher or Innovator** for the specific work to be carried out and for a determined period of time.*

In ERNEST: STSMs are a major performance indicator for a COST Action and therefore highly encouraged.

1.2 Criteria for an STSM

From the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#):

Researcher or Innovator must respect that the STSM need to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period and always within the Action's lifetime.

In ERNEST: The Grant Period of ERNEST runs from the beginning of November until the end of October of the following year. For Year 3, the dates are November 01, 2021 to October 31, 2022. Please bear in mind that an STSM is finished not on the last day of your stay at the host institution,

but rather with the recording of the payment. Hence, the last day of your stay has to be planned such that submission of the report, its evaluation, and the processing of the payment are still possible *within* a Grant Period.

1.3 Financial support

From the [Annotated rules for COST actions](#):

STSM Grants are providing a contribution for travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, implementation of the project, delivery of the report to the COST Action MC and overall effort. STSM Grants do not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking a given mission. Up to a maximum of EUR 4 000,00 in total can be afforded per grant.

Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the completion of the activity and approval of all required report/documentation. STSM grantees can request up to 50% pre-payment of the approved grant. This amount is subject to availability of the funds and approval by the Grant Holder Institution.

In ERNEST: The amount of financial support is decided by the Grant Awarding Committee based on the proposal of the evaluators, in turn based on the request of the applicant and should reflect the duration and location of the STSM (see below 5).

1.4 Application procedure

From the [Annotated rules for COST actions](#):

- *Applications shall be submitted online in e-COST using dedicated forms available (<https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants/add?type=STSM>). In this regard applicants are informed that their application can be accessed by the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committees in the Action for evaluation purposes.*
- *Applicants must upload their CV to their e-COST profile. This information will be visible to the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committees in the Action for evaluation purposes.*

The content shall include:

To be filled in e-COST:

- *Title*
- *Start and end date (within the active Grant Period);*
- *Budget requested by the applicant;*
- *Information about the host institution and contact person.*

To be uploaded to e-COST:

- *Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Goals, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, expected outcomes and description of the contribution to the*

Action MoU objectives;

- *Confirmation of the host on the agreement from the host institution in receiving the applicant;*
- *Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc...)*

Helpful user guide: <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/12/Grant-Awarding-userguide.pdf>

In ERNEST: Applications will be processed all year round, i.e. there is no application deadline (except the condition that the entire STSM has to take place within one Grant Period, cf. 2).

The application needs to be submitted **at least four weeks before the expected starting date** through e-COST (<https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants/add?type=STSM>). Applicants are however encouraged to apply as early as possible, since STSMs are evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis. The necessary supporting documents need to be in .pdf format and are:

- Scientific CV, 1-3 pages
- Work plan, 2-6 pages depending on the length of the STSM. The work plan is in free format but expected to include: Aims and Objectives, Scientific background, Implementation (site of research, specific tasks and work plan, timetable), relevant national and international collaborations.
- Motivation letter, 1-2 pages. The letter should clearly mention: purpose of the STSM, its expected outcome (publication, patents, scientific impact), its duration (e.g. expected start and end dates), the amount applied for, its “added value” in terms of collaborations, as well as any other relevant information.
- Budget, 1 page. The budget should clearly indicate the expected costs (e.g. transport, accommodation, living costs) and the amount of support already received from other sources.
- Publication list
- Other relevant documents may be attached.
- While the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, the host confirmation letter needs to contain a paragraph on how the situation is monitored and what measures are taken to ensure that the STSM grantee is not stranded in the host country and/or at increased risk of infection.

Documents that cannot be uploaded via the e-COST interface should directly be sent to the Grant Awarding Committee via email at ernest.gac@lists.uni-marburg.de

1.5 Evaluation of applications

From the [Annotated rules for COST actions](#):

The evaluation of each received STSM application is performed by the Action MC. The Grant awarding Committee can assume this responsibility if the Action MC gives them the mandate to perform this task on their behalf. The selection of successful STSM applicants must be done so in consideration of the scientific scope of the proposed mission and how the mission can support the Action in achieving its scientific objectives. There should be special considerations made by the Action MC with respect to supporting COST policies on promoting gender balance, enabling Young Researchers, broadening geographical inclusiveness.

The Management Committee defines content and timing of the Open Calls, sets the evaluation criteria, and the mandatory and, if required by the Action MC, additional information/documentation that shall be provided by applicants in their application.

The Management Committee selects applicants and takes decisions on the budgets of the awarded grants. Grantees should be selected in an open and transparent way. COST Excellence and Inclusiveness: Policy and Principles of Openness and Inclusiveness should be considered when deciding on Grants.

In ERNEST: The MC mandates the Grant Awarding Coordinator and Committee to evaluate STSM applications on their behalf. In case of conflicts of interest, the committee member(s) involved will be replaced by the Equality and Inclusiveness Officer. The committee will also confer with the Equality and Inclusiveness Officer regarding the fair distribution of the STSMs across research groups, countries, and genders. For this reason, it is unlikely that more than one proposal by a single applicant will be accepted during one Grant Period.

Proposals will be evaluated for their quality and for their relevance to ERNEST objectives.

The amount granted will be based on the budget requested by the applicant, as well as the funds available for STSMs in the overall ERNEST budget. Since longer STSMs are more likely to be associated with higher costs, the duration of the STSM will also be considered when deciding the granted support. The Grant Awarding committee will provide (brief) feedback about the evaluation to the applicants.

1.6 Submission of the STSM report and payment

From the [Annotated rules for COST actions](#):

- *Once the activity has ended, the grantee submits the required reports and relevant documentation in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the activity or 15 days after the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first.*
- *Claims the payment of the grant via e-COST;*
- *The required report/documentation for claiming an STSM Grant is a Report to the Action MC on the **work developed**, main achievements of the STSM and planned future follow-up activities.*

- *Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the completion of the activity and approval of all required report/documentation. However, STSMs grantees may request up to 50% pre-payment of the approved grant. This amount is subject to availability of funds and approval by the Grant Holder Institution.*

In ERNEST: Besides detailing the scientific findings in this report, it is equally important to present the importance of the visit in terms of personal development, networking and capacity building (e.g. collaborations). **Failure to send the report within 30 days will automatically cancel the grant.** Payment of the grant should be expected 2-4 weeks after submitting the report. The report should contain:

- Purpose of the STSM;
- Description of the work carried out during the STSM;
- Description of the main results obtained;
- 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;
- Other comments (if any).

The scientific report must be sent to the Grant Awarding Committee at ernest.gac@lists.uni-marburg.de, which coordinates Action Management Committee approval of the report and confirms approval/rejection of the report.

1.7 Frequently asked questions

1. *Can I postpone my STSM?*

No. STSMs can only happen during the period that has been applied for. If the originally intended period is not feasible, then the current application needs to be canceled and a new STSM applied for.

2. *I don't know when I would like to go. Can I just apply for three weeks during a period of one month (or similar)?*

No. STSMs have to have fixed start and end dates. Moreover, all supporting documents (cf. 4) need to explicitly mention these dates.

3. *Where do I upload my tickets after I have returned from the STSM?*

Do I have to prove that my mode of transportation was the most economical? You do not have to provide any receipts for travel or accommodation. STSM grants are paid as lump sums, so no documentation is needed.

2 – Virtual Networking Support Grant

Virtual Mobility Grants

Preamble. Before applying, all applicants must carefully and completely read **Annex 2** of the [Annotated rules for COST actions](https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/) (https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/).

2.1 Scope & Eligibility

Virtual Networking Tools aim to introduce two new types of Grants to build capacity and spread the uptake of virtual collaboration across different research communities:

1. Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Grants, to promote virtual collaboration as a complement to traditional ways of collaboration within the research and innovation communities.

2. Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants, to strengthen the existing networks by allowing scientists to foster collaboration in a virtual setting, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, disseminate the Action results, etc.

In ERNEST, VNS Grants are highly encouraged:

VNS Grants might support the organization (planning, coordination, selection of appropriate tools) of ERNEST virtual events and to support the call, evaluation process, and coordination of the VM Grants (upon decision of the MC).

VM Grants might support

- Research-related activities (computational, modeling)
- ERNEST activities, such as preparing, distributing and analyzing surveys/questionnaires amongst all Action members, or coordinating the discussions to create common protocols, afterwards, or data analysis of the Action for a specific report or activity.
- Virtual mentoring activities
- Preparation and coordination of science communication activities

2.2 Criteria

Applicant(s) are Action participants with a primary affiliation to an institution located in a COST Full or Cooperating Member country or MC Observers from a COST Near Neighbour Country.

1. Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Grants: The applicant(s) shall be prepared to develop a virtual networking strategy, and coordinate the call for expression of interest for the Virtual Mobility Grants.

2. Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants: The applicant(s) shall inform the MC about the aim of the VM Grant and how its outcomes will generate benefits to the Action

2.3 Financial support

1. Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Grants: A financial contribution of up to EUR 4 000 can be awarded per Grant Period.

2. Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants: A maximum of 6 Virtual Mobility Grants per Action per Grant Period can be awarded. Each VM Grant cannot exceed EUR 1 500. The grant does not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking the virtual mobility activity. The grantee must also ensure they have the required technical material/equipment and infrastructure to carry out the activities proposed in their application to the grant.

2.4 Application procedure

1. Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Grants:

The application shall include the following information:

- A description of how the COST Action can benefit from developing virtual networking activities
- A proposal for the strategy on virtual networking, including an approach for coordinating VM Grants (where relevant)

VNS template: www.cost.eu/virtual_networking_support_grant_application

2. Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants:

The application shall include the following information:

- Main objective of the Virtual Mobility Grant.
- Working Plan: Description of the collaborative initiative to be implemented.
- List of participants of the collaborative initiative (short description of their expertise and contribution).
- Main expected outputs
- Contribution to the COST Action Strategy

VM template: www.cost.eu/virtual_mobility_grant_application

Helpful user guide: <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/12/Grant-Awarding-userguide.pdf>

In ERNEST: Applications will be processed all year round, i.e. there is no application deadline (except the condition that the VSN has to take place within one Grant Period). The VM application needs to be submitted **at least four weeks before the expected starting date**. Applicants are however encouraged to apply as early as possible, since applications are evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Documents that cannot be uploaded via the e-COST interface should directly be sent to the Grant Awarding Committee via email at ernest.gac@lists.uni-marburg.de

2.5 Evaluation of applications

1. Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Grants: The Action Chair can approve/reject the application on behalf of the MC. Once approved, the VNS grantee will be appointed as VNS manager.

2. Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants: The VM application is reviewed and approved/rejected by the VNS manager on behalf of the MC. The Action Chair acts as default VNS manager.

In ERNEST: The MC mandates the Grant Awarding Coordinator and Committee to evaluate VNS and VM grants on their behalf. The selection of grantees will be based on contributions to the overall objectives of the Action and the implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy. The evaluation committee will also confer with the Equality and Inclusiveness Officer regarding the fair distribution of the VNS Grants across research groups, countries, and genders.

2.6 Submission of the report

*1. Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Grants: The deadline to submit the report is **15 calendar days from the end of the grant period**.*

VNS report template: www.cost.eu/virtual_networking_support_grant_report

2. Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants: The report shall include: description of the outcomes and achieved outputs, description of the benefits to the COST Action Strategy, description of the virtual collaboration (including constructive reflection on activities undertaken, identified successful practices and lessons learned).

VM report template: www.cost.eu/virtual_mobility_grant_report

The report must be sent to the Grant Awarding Committee at ernest.gac@lists.uni-marburg.de. The deadline to submit the report is 30 calendar days from the end date of the activity for the VM grant.

3 – ITC Conference Grants

Preamble. Before applying, all applicants must carefully read **Annex 2** of the [Annotated rules for COST actions](https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/) (<https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/>).

3.1 Scope & Eligibility

ITC Conference Grants aim to provide financial support to young researchers and innovators from COST Inclusiveness Target Countries and Near Neighbour Countries (NNC) for attending and presenting their work (poster/oral presentation) at a conference. It covers expenses related to conference attendance, including travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, conference registration fees or printing of scientific posters.

3.2 Criteria

Applicants are young researchers and innovators with a primary affiliation to an institution located in a COST Inclusiveness Target Country or Near Neighbour Country.

The eligible countries are listed in the COST [Country and Organisations Table](https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/) (<https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/>).

The conference needs to take place in its entirety within the active Grant Period and always within the Action's lifetime. The Grant Period of ERNEST runs from the beginning of November until the end of October of the following year. For Year 3, the dates are November 01, 2021 to October 31, 2022.

3.3 Financial support

A financial contribution of up to EUR 2 000,00 can be awarded per Grant Period for face-to-face conferences or EUR 500,00 for virtual conferences. The amount awarded should reflect the duration and location of the Conference and the actual conference fee. Grants are paid by the Grant Holder *after* the completion of the activity and approval of required reports and documentation.

3.4 Application procedure

From the [Annotated rules for COST actions](https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/):

- *Application shall be submitted online in e-COST using dedicated forms. Applicants are informed that their application can be accessed by the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committees in the Action for evaluation purposes.*

- *Applicants must upload their CV to their e-COST profile. This information will be visible to the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committees in the Action for evaluation purposes.*

To be filled in e-COST:

- Title of the accepted oral or poster presentation
- Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period) and country
- Budget requested
- Attendance Type (face-to-face or virtual)

To be uploaded to e-COST:

- Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Relevance of the conference topic to the Action and Motivation describing the potential for impact on the applicant's career
- Copy of the abstract of the accepted oral or poster presentation
- Acceptance letter from the conference organisers
- Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc..)

Helpful user guide: <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/12/Grant-Awarding-userguide.pdf>

In ERNEST: The conference start *and* end date shall fall within the active Grant Period. The ITC Conference Grant application needs to be submitted **at least four weeks before the starting date of the conference**. Applicants are however encouraged to apply as early as possible, since applications are evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Documents that cannot be uploaded via the e-COST interface should directly be sent to the Grant Awarding Committee via email at ernest.gac@lists.uni-marburg.de

3.5 Evaluation of applications

In ERNEST: The MC mandates the Grant Awarding Coordinator and Committee to evaluate the ITC conference grant applications on their behalf. In case of conflicts of interest, the evaluation committee member(s) involved will be replaced by the Equality and Inclusiveness Officer.

The selection of grantees will be based on contributions to the overall ERNEST objectives and the implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy. The evaluation committee will also confer with the Equality and Inclusiveness Officer regarding the fair distribution of the ITC Conference Grants across research groups, countries, and genders. It is unlikely that more than one application by a single applicant will be accepted during one Grant Period. The amount granted will

be based on the budget requested by the applicant, as well as the funds available in the overall ERNEST budget. The evaluation committee will provide a brief feedback on the evaluation of the application.

3.6 Submission of the report

From the [Annotated rules for COST actions](#):

- The grantee submits the required reports and relevant documentation in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the conference or 15 days after the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first.
- The required report/documentation for claiming a ITC Conference Grant is
 - Report to the Action MC on the activities during the conference.
 - The certificate of attendance,
 - The programme of the conference or book of abstracts/proceedings indicating the presentation of the grantee
 - copy of the given presentation (oral or poster)
- Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the completion of the activity and approval of required report/documentation.

In ERNEST: Besides detailing the activities during the conference in this report, it is equally important to present the importance of the conference attendance in terms of personal development, networking and capacity building (*e.g.* collaborations). **Failure to send the report within 30 days will automatically cancel the grant.** Payment of the grant should be expected 2–4 weeks after submitting the report.

The scientific report must be sent to the Grant Awarding Committee at ernest.gac@lists.uni-marburg.de, which coordinates Action Management Committee approval of the report and confirms approval/rejection of the report.

4 – Dissemination Conference Grants

Preamble. Before applying, all applicants must carefully read **Annex 2** of the [Annotated rules for COST actions](https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/) (<https://www.cost.eu/funding/how-to-get-funding/documents-guidelines/>).

4.1 Scope & Eligibility

A Dissemination Conference Grant supports presentations of the work of the Action at high-level conferences by an Action participant, allowing to increase visibility of the Action in the research community and attract additional participants and stakeholders. The Dissemination Conference Grantee receives financial support for attending and presenting the Action, their activities, and results (oral presentation) at a conference and/or for developing new contacts and potential future collaborations.

4.2 Criteria

The conference needs to take place in its entirety within the active Grant Period and always within the Action's lifetime. The Grant Period of ERNEST runs from the beginning of November until the end of October of the following year. For Year 3, the dates are November 01, 2021 to October 31, 2022.

4.3 Financial support

A financial contribution of up to EUR 2 000,00 can be awarded per Grant Period for face-to-face conferences or EUR 500,00 for virtual conferences. The amount awarded should reflect the duration and location of the Conference and the actual conference fee. Grants are paid by the Grant Holder *after* the completion of the activity and approval of required reports and documentation.

4.4 Application procedure

From the [Annotated rules for COST actions](#):

Applications shall be submitted online in e-COST using dedicated forms. Applicants are informed that their application can be accessed by the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committees in the Action for evaluation purposes.

Applicants must upload their CV to their e-COST profile. This information will be visible to the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committee in the Action for evaluation purposes.

To be filled in e-COST:

- *Title of the accepted oral or poster presentation*
- *Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period) and country*
- *Budget requested*
- *Attendance Type (face to face or virtual)*

To be uploaded to e-COST:

- *Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Relevance of the conference topic to the Action and Motivation describing the potential for impact on the applicant's career*
- *Copy of the abstract of the accepted oral or poster presentation*
- *Acceptance letter from the conference organisers*
- *Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc...)*

Helpful user guide: <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/12/Grant-Awarding-userguide.pdf>

In ERNEST: The conference start *and* end date should fall within the active Grant Period. The Dissemination Conference Grant application needs to be submitted **at least four weeks before the starting date of the conference**. Applicants are however encouraged to apply as early as possible, since applications are evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Documents that cannot be uploaded via the e-COST interface should directly be sent to the Grant Awarding Committee via email at ernest.gac@lists.uni-marburg.de

4.5 Evaluation of applications

In ERNEST: The MC mandates the Grant Awarding Coordinator and Committee to evaluate Dissemination Conference Grant applications on their behalf. In case of conflicts of interest, the evaluation committee member(s) involved will be replaced by the Equality and Inclusiveness Officer.

The selection of grantees will be based on contributions to the overall ERNEST objectives and the implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy. The evaluation committee will also confer with the Equality and Inclusiveness Officer regarding the fair distribution of the Dissemination Conference Grants across research groups, countries, and genders. It is unlikely that more than one application by a single applicant will be accepted during one Grant Period. The amount granted will be based on the budget requested by the applicant, as well as the funds

available for Dissemination grants in the overall ERNEST budget. The evaluation committee will provide a brief feedback on the evaluation of the application.

4.6 Submission of the report

From the [Annotated rules for COST actions](#):

- *The grantee submits the required reports and relevant documentation in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the conference or 15 days after the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first.*
- *The required report/documentation for claiming a Dissemination Conference Grant is*
 - *Report to the Action MC on the outcome of the presentation, contacts made and potential future collaborations*
 - *The certificate of attendance*
 - *The programme of the conference or book of abstracts/proceedings indicating the presentation of the grantee*
 - *Copy of the given presentation*
- *Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the completion of the activity and approval of required report/documentation.*

In ERNEST: Besides detailing the activities during the conference in this report, it is equally important to present the importance of the conference attendance in terms of personal development, networking and capacity building (*e.g.* collaborations). **Failure to send the report within 30 days will automatically cancel the grant.** Payment of the grant should be expected 2–4 weeks after submitting the report.

The scientific report must be sent to the Grant Awarding Committee at ernest.gac@lists.uni-marburg.de, which coordinates Action Management Committee approval of the report and confirms approval/rejection of the report.