

VBSCan:

Rules for the STSM presentation and approval

- **Opening of the STSM call**

VBSCan is open for receiving STSM applications from July 1st.

- **Purpose**

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) are aimed at strengthening existing networks and fostering collaborations by facilitating researchers and scholars participating in VBSCan to visit an institution / organisation in another Participating COST Country / an approved NNC institution or an approved IPC institution. 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.

- **Who can apply**

STSM applicants must be engaged in an official research programme as PhD Students, postdocs, be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution participating in the program.

A necessary condition is that the Host and Home Institutes of the participant are located in two different countries.

- **Duration**

The minimal duration of STSMs is 5 days and maximum 90 days, which can be extended to 180 days for Early Career Investigators (ECI), that is, researchers with up to 8 years of experience after obtaining their PhD (students are not considered ECIs). Each STSM must be carried out entirely in a single Grant Period, that is from 1st of May till 30th of April.

- **Funding**

The STSM grant can contribute to the costs of travel, accommodation and meal expenses up to: 2 x 20E /day for meals, 120E/night. The following criteria must be respected: the total cost of the awarded STSM must not exceed Eur 2500 (Eur 3500 for ECIs), while the daily rate for accommodation and meal expenses must not exceed Eur 160.

- **How to apply**

Applications should be submitted electronically at <http://www.cost.eu/STSM>.

The online form requires:

- STSMs details (dates, Home and Host Institute of the Candidate),
- academic details of the candidate,
- a motivation letter,
- a short workplan summary,
- financial details (see Section Funding for the rules),
- a short letter of invitation from a senior researcher affiliated to the Host institution,
- a letter of support from a relevant Working Group leader
- a letter of support from the Home Institute.

Before applying, a candidate is advised to contact a researcher affiliated at a Host Institution and a working group leader relevant for the planned work. The researcher affiliated at a Host Institution should agree upon the program of the STSM. The working group leader should be asked to review the plan and suggest the format of the scientific report.

- **Final report**

After completing (your) the mission the applicant is required to submit a scientific report to the Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder Institution), the appointed STSM Coordinator, to the Host institution and the Working Group leader for approval. One person out of those, the report is submitted to, will be appointed the “responsible” for approval, checking the report in detail and following up with the other members for their approval. Only after accepting the report the reimbursement of costs will be granted.

The format of the scientific report should be defined by the respective working group leaders when the STSM application is submitted. It can take the form of a code documentation / twiki page / short write-up of the results, or other formats, whatever is deemed best (and endorsed by the core evaluation committee during the application procedure).

Additionally, for every STSM a short contribution to our VBSCan newsletter should be submitted afterwards: a picture or a plot and a short report (~300 words), describing the work and the outcome for the newsletter (in an editable format, such as .doc or .txt). A special attention to the short report should be paid, as the newsletter is disseminated to a broader public.

- **The assessment procedure**

Geographical and gender balance issues will be taken into consideration. Applications from ESR will be favoured (ESR = Early Stage Researchers, i.e. with PhDs + up to 8 years of research experience). Application from inclusiveness countries will be favoured (either staying there or coming from there).

The STSM Coordinator has the right to revise the grant amount (decrease or increase) before approving the mission.

- **Reviewing procedure**

The reviewing procedure will be adapted throughout the programme. At the start of the action, applications are accepted continuously and are reviewed within typically ~4 weeks.

During the first year the successful applicants will be asked to answer a quick survey giving feedback on the procedure so that the requirements can be adjusted based on that feedback.

- **Core evaluation team**

The team to review the applications and to grant them consists of: Working group leaders of WG4 and WG5 and up to 4 selected members from the Management Committee (recruited on a voluntary basis)

A simple majority vote is needed to accept a STSM. No explicit vote within a week from submitting the application grant or the final report means consent. Votes will be cast by email to the STSM coordinator (or a deputy coordinator).

Adaptations to the planned programme could be suggested by the core evaluation team, e.g. concerning the planned report, as a necessary condition for granting the STSM.

Appendices

Template letters required in the procedure:

- Invitation letter by the Host Institute Representative

Dear STSM committee members,

With this letter I would like to invite [Name Surname of the Applicant] for a scientific visit in the [Host Institution Name] during the [Dates]. The plan of the visit includes: [description of activities].

Kind regards,

...

- The letter approving the STSM by the Host Institute Representative

Dear STSM committee members,

With this letter I would like to state that the STSM visit of [Name Surname] in the [Institution Name] during the [Dates] was very successful. We [description of results].

Kind regards,

...

- The letter of support from a WG leader

Dear STSM committee members,

With this letter I would like to support the application of [Applicant Name Surname] to undertake the STSM visit in the [Institution Name] during the [Dates]. The planned activities match the objectives of the group and will result in [a form of a scientific report].

Kind regards,

...

- The letter a WG leader approving the final report

Dear STSM committee members,

With this letter I would like to approve the final report of [Applicant Name Surname] who undertook the STSM visit in the [Institution Name] during the [Dates]. As a result [a form of a scientific report] was completed.

Kind regards,

...