

Brussels, 27 July 2021

COST 094/21

Version 1.4

ANNOTATED RULES FOR COST ACTIONS

(Level C – COST Actions)

The Executive Board (EB) of the COST Association:

Having regard to the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) (level A) and to the [Rules for COST Actions](#) (level B) enabling the EB to adopt Annotated Rules, hereinafter referred to as level C rules,

Adopts the present Annotated Rules for COST Actions (level C).

The present Annotated Rules aim at providing a practical handbook to COST Actions participants in support of the [Rules for COST Actions](#) implementing the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#).

The present version of the Annotated Rules for COST Actions (COST 094/21; V1.4) shall enter into force on 1st November 2023.

The Annotated Rules shall cancel and replace:

- The Guidelines for COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment;
- The Guidelines for the communication, dissemination and exploitation of COST Action results and outcomes;
- The COST Vademecum;
- The Derogation Procedure.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
Version	Publication date	Changes
1.0	na	Initial version following adoption of Rules and Principles for COST activities (level A) and to the Rules for COST Actions (level B). Advance Copy - Restricted distribution to Action participants.
1.1	01.11.2021	Public distribution in the COST website. Rewording and text clarifications in the Annexes following further information on COST contractual conditions with the EC.
1.2	15.02.2022	Text clarification and link to the user guide on derogation procedure added to <i>A1-3.1 Travel Reimbursement Rules</i> and <i>A1-3.2 Local Organiser Support (LOS)</i> .
1.3	01.11.2022	Text clarifications and improvements. No significant changes impacting the implementation of the COST Actions.
1.4	01.11.2023	Text clarifications and improvements. No significant changes impacting the implementation of the COST Actions. New relevant text is marked: blue. Text revised in previous version is marked: in normal text.

Notice of use

The purpose of this document is to be the **unique entry door** to [Rules for COST Actions](#) for users and help users understand and interpret those rules, by avoiding technical vocabulary, legal references and jargon, and seeking to help readers find answers to any practical questions they may have about the [Rules for COST Actions](#).

This document's structure **takes over and mirrors that of the Rules for COST Actions**. It explains each Article and includes examples where appropriate.

Our approach

The text of the Article appears in a grey text box - to differentiate it from the annotations.

The **concepts** that are annotated are in bold and underlined.

The annotations to the article are immediately underneath.

Long articles are split into different parts, so the annotations can be placed below the relevant parts.

Requirements are in bold and red.

Examples, guidelines and recommendations are in bold and green.

Specific cases and **derogations** are in bold and orange.

Updates

The Annotated Rules will be periodically updated with new examples and explanations, based on practical experience and on-going developments.

New elements will be marked with **NEW**

Other information

1. Terms with a specific meaning are marked with a capital letter and are defined in the [Glossary](#).
2. Throughout the present Annotated Rules, the term "shall" implies an obligation to comply with the set requirement whilst the term "may" implies an authorisation to act. The term "should" implies a recommendation.
3. All cross-references are introduced in the form of hyperlinks and clickable.

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ANNEX 2. NETWORKING ACTIVITIES ORGANISED THROUGH A GRANT AWARDING PROCESS

Networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process encompass mobility of researchers and innovators and presentation at conferences organised by third parties.

A2-1 SCOPE AND BENEFITS

The grant awarding by COST Actions and its implementation:

- Contributes to the visibility of COST as an open, flexible, and inclusive funding programme;
- Offers a valuable experience for Young Researchers and Innovators as well as for the already established researchers in supporting their career development;
- Can strengthen the existing networks by allowing researchers and innovators to foster collaboration both in a face-to-face and virtual setting, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, disseminate the Action results, etc.

Grant awarding **benefits to**

- **COST Action:**
 - Funding is awarded to individuals based on collected applications and transparent evaluation criteria set up by the Action MC in order to support the Actions in achieving their research coordination and capacity building objectives.
- **Grant Awarding Coordinator** serves the community by coordinating the Calls and awarding of Grants by the COST Action, by doing this:
 - Gains visibility and proven experience in grant administration and research administration in general.
- **Grant Evaluation Committee(s)** can be set up by the Action MC for evaluating the applications received for proposal to the Action MC:
 - Members increase their reputation in the community and can have an impact in the results produced by the Action.

A2-1.1 MOBILITY OF RESEARCHERS AND INNOVATORS

Short-Term Scientific Missions and Virtual Mobility:

- 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;
- Outcomes (e.g. spin-off publications and (funded) projects) contribute to the visibility and impact of the COST Actions, encouraging other researchers to join.

A2-1.1.1 SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS (STSM)

Short-Term Scientific Mission consists in a visit to a host organization located in a different country than the country of affiliation (for Affiliation, see Article 4.1.1.1.1) by a researcher or innovator for specific work to be carried out and for a determined period of time.

Short-Term Scientific Missions **benefit to:**

- **STSM Grantee:** receives funding for implementing a project with an international team and gains new knowledge or access to equipment or techniques not available in the home institution;
- **STSM Host:** receives an international partner in their institution and can develop long lasting collaboration.

A2-1.1.2 VIRTUAL MOBILITY (VM)

Virtual Mobility consists of a collaboration in a virtual setting among researchers or innovators within the COST Action, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, etc.

Virtual Mobility **benefit to:**

- **COST Action:** uses a flexible tool to implement virtual activities inside the network, achieve the MoU objectives and significantly increase their impact and reach. Contributes to European leadership in knowledge creation and increasing its innovation potential;
- **VM grantee:** develop(s) capacity in virtual collaboration and networking in a pan-European framework.

Examples of activities that can be performed by the VM grantee are:

- Virtual mentoring scheme, with special focus on activities and exchanges that can generate capacity building and new skills, particularly for Young Researchers and Innovators (e.g. managerial skills, methodological skills, communication skills, etc);
- To support the harmonisation and standardisation of methods and procedures within the Action networking activities, e.g.
 - setting up a survey amongst all Action members to collect different results and outcomes from experiments done in their respective labs and research groups;
 - coordinating the discussions to create common protocols to be used by the network afterwards;
 - preparing questionnaires and response scales to be used by the Action members as part of virtual networking activities.
- To support the implementation of research coordination related activities that do not necessarily require in-person presence, e.g.
 - computational or modelling activities;
 - data analysis of the Action for a specific report or activity.

A2-1.2 PRESENTATIONS AT CONFERENCES ORGANISED BY THIRD PARTIES

A2-1.2.1 ITC CONFERENCE

ITC Conference consists in a presentation of the own work given by a Young Researcher and Innovator affiliated in an Inclusiveness Target Country / Near Neighbour Country for their participation in high-level conferences fully organized by a third party, i.e. not organized nor co-organized by the COST Action.

ITC Conference:

- Serve COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy;
- Support Young Researchers and Innovators affiliated in a legal entity in an Inclusiveness Target Countries/ Near Neighbour Countries to establish a strong network and increase their visibility in the research community through sharing their work and to gain knowledge;
- Can contribute to increasing visibility of the Action.

ITC Conference **benefit to:**

- **ITC Conference Grantee:** receives support for attending and presenting their work (poster/oral presentation) at a conference and can establish new contacts for future collaborations.

A2-1.2.2 DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE

Dissemination Conference consists in an oral presentation by an Action Participant of the work of the Action in high-level conferences fully organized by a third party, i.e. not organized nor co-organized by the COST Action.

Dissemination Conference:

- Significantly increase visibility of the Action in the research community, can contribute to increasing visibility of the presenter;
- Attract additional participants and stakeholders and disseminate Action results to relevant end-users at high profile conferences in the field on a topic relevant to the Action.

Dissemination Conference **benefit to:**

- **Dissemination Conference Grantee:** receives support for attending and delivering an oral presentation of the Action, their activities, and results at a conference and for developing new contacts and potential future collaborations;
- **COST Action:** receives increased visibility and awareness, new contacts with potential stakeholders.

A2-2 WORKING MODALITIES

A2-2.1 INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED FOR THE WORK AND BUDGET PLAN

As per Article 7.2 - *COST Grant budget*, the Action needs to provide the following information for Mobility of researchers and innovators grants (STSMs and VMs) and Presentation at conferences organized by third parties grants (ITC and Dissemination conference) to be awarded by the Action when negotiating the Work and Budget Plan or requesting budget reallocation after its approval and during the Grant Period:

- ‘Description’:
 - How the awarded grants will address one (or several) associated Grant Agreement Period Goals(s) related to the achievement of one (or several) MoU objective(s) and contributing to the Science Communication Plan²⁴ adopted by the Action;
 - How the COST Principles will be addressed;
 - If available, the weblink(s) to the event and the programme (in case of ITC Conference and Dissemination Grants);
 - Type and number of calls for applications (if applicable).
- ‘Budget’ (estimation) allocated for the Grants.

A2-2.2 ACCESS CONDITIONS

See *Article 6.4* for *Eligibility* to receive financial support and *Article 6.3* for the possible *Location of COST Action networking activities* (see in table, column “other networking activities”).

A2-2.3 PROCESS DESCRIPTION – VIEW OF THE GRANTEE

Open Call(s) for Applications shall be published on Action website, disseminated via other channels and shall contain information on funding opportunities within the COST Action, on the application and evaluation procedure.

Application:

- Shall be submitted by an individual and for an activity complying with the conditions described in *A1-2.2 Access conditions*
- Shall be submitted online in e-COST using dedicated forms available. 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 in 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 of the application depends on the activity and shall include:

Networking Activity	Information to be provided in the application
STSM	<i>To be filled in e-COST:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title

²⁴ Until the Science Communication Plan is adopted by the Action, see Article 5.3- *Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation strategy*, the section of the MoU related to the dissemination and communication of results is applying.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start and end date (within the active Grant Period, i.e. no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) • Budget requested by the applicant; • Information about the host institution and contact person. Location of host institution must be in a different country than the country of affiliation of the applicant; <p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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...)
Virtual Mobility	<p><u>To be filled in e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title • Start and end date (within the active Grant Period, i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) • Budget requested by the applicant <p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Main Objective, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, plan for participation, expected outcomes and description of the contribution to the Action MoU objectives; • Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc...)
ITC Conference	<p><u>To be filled in e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of the presentation • Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period , i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) and country; • Budget requested; • Attendance Type (face to face or virtual) <p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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...)
Dissemination Conference	<p><u>To be filled in e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of the presentation • Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period, i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) and venue; • Budget requested; • Attendance Type (face to face or virtual) <p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Alignment with the Science Communication Plan²⁵ adopted by the COST Action and Expected impact to the COST Action. • Copy of the abstract of the accepted oral presentation focused on promoting the scientific achievements and activities being performed by the COST Action; • Acceptance (or invitation) letter from the conference organisers;

²⁵ Until the Science Communication Plan is adopted by the Action, see Article 5.3- *Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation strategy* , the section of the MoU related to the dissemination and communication of results is applying.

	• Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc...)
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- Upon approval of the application, the Grantee receives a Grant Letter from the Grant Holder stating the approved amount and the conditions for receiving the grant.

Implementation of the Activity:

- **STSMs:** Grantee performs the tasks in line with the approved application;
- **Virtual Mobility:** performs the tasks in line with the approved application;
- **ITC Conference:** Grantee delivers the approved (oral or poster) presentation, following any specific request of acknowledgement set by the Action MC;
- **Dissemination Conference:** Grantee delivers the approved oral presentation, actively networks with other participants and promotes the COST Action to the potential stakeholders;

Reporting and claim for payment of the grant:

- 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;
- Claim the payment by submitting the report via e-COST;
- The required report/documentation for claiming a **STSM Grant** is:
 - Report to the Action MC on the work developed, main achievements of the STSM and planned future follow up activities.
- The required report/documentation for claiming a Virtual Mobility Grant is:
 - Report to the Action MC on the work developed, main outcomes and achieved outputs of the Virtual Mobility, and description of the future follow up collaboration.
- The required report/documentation for claiming an **ITC Conference Grant** is:
 - Report to the Action MC on the outcome of the presentation of the accepted contribution, in terms of grantee's visibility, including the establishment of new contacts for future collaborations
 - The certificate of attendance,
 - The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the presentation (oral or poster) of the grantee
 - Copy of the given presentation (oral or poster);
- The required report/documentation for claiming a **Dissemination Conference Grant** are:
 - Report to the Action MC on the outcome of the presentation, contacts made and potential for future collaborations;
 - The certificate of attendance,
 - The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the oral presentation of the grantee
 - Copy of the given presentation.

Receiving payment of the grant:

- Grants are paid by the Grant Holder Institution 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. The request of pre-payment shall be submitted to the Grant Holder Manager.

A2-2.4 PROCESS DESCRIPTION – VIEW OF THE MC, GRANT AWARDING COORDINATOR AND GRANT HOLDER

Note on Conflict of Interests:

[Conflict of interest needs to be avoided](#). See Preamble, II.3 – *Handling a Conflict of Interests* for reference on the procedure to handle such a case.

Grant Awarding

- 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;
 - Selects applicants and take decisions on the budgets of the awarded grants.
- Grant Awarding Coordinator: organises Open Calls for applications and their dissemination with the Science Communication Coordinator, coordinates the collection and evaluation of the applications, guides the applicants, and communicates with the Grant Holder;
- Grant Evaluation Committee, if appointed²⁶: provides to the Action MC/Core Group (if delegated by the Action MC) a proposal of selected grants and amounts for their approval;
- Science Communication Coordinator: organises publication of Open Calls on Action website, their dissemination via other channels;
- Grant Holder Manager: verify the funds availability, check against the approved grant application and issue the grant letter.

Grantees should be selected in an open and transparent way. COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy and COST Principles of Openness and Inclusiveness should be considered when deciding on Grants.

Implementation

- Grant Awarding Coordinator and/or Grant Holder Manager: instructs the individual grantees on how to report and what documents to upload on e-COST;
- Grant Holder institution: May choose to process up to 50% of the approved grant, if requested by the STSM grantee and supports the grantee in case of force majeure by informing the applicant about the necessary documents (invoices, tickets, etc) that may be exceptionally required for the reimbursement of the grant or actual expenses.

Reporting and Payment of the Grant

- Grant Awarding Coordinator: Reviews relevant reports submitted by individual grantees. Coordinates Action MC approval of the report and confirms approval /rejection of the report.
- Management Committee (or delegated authority): approves / rejects report;
- Grant Holder Manager: processes and records the payment of the Grant once the report is approved and all supporting documents are submitted.
 - In cases when the Grant Holder approved a pre-payment of up to 50% of the grant for an STSM, the amount is paid by the Grant Holder at any moment before or during the duration of the STSM. The Grant Holder needs to ensure adequate tracking of any amount pre-paid and record in e-COST the total final grant after the mission has been fulfilled. Grant Holder institution is responsible for any mistakes in double paying to the grantees.

²⁶ To gain access on e-COST to the submitted applications and support the evaluation, the Grant Evaluation Committee(s) Members need to be assigned in “other leadership roles” see Article 3.9- *Access to leadership positions*.

A2-3 FUNDING SCHEME

Financial support for networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process is a grant awarded to individuals, not intended to cover employment costs, as follows:

Name	Scope	Maximum Amount (EUR)	Decision of the Amount
STSM Grant	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.	Up to EUR 4 000,00 per grant	Decided by the Action MC or Core Group on proposal of the evaluators, based on the request of the applicant and should reflect the duration and location of the STSM.
Virtual Mobility Grant	Providing a contribution for the overall effort, not necessarily covered by an employer or by a Grant Holder institution.	Up to EUR 1 500,00 per grant	Decided by the Action MC or Core Group on proposal of the evaluators and should reflect the duration, scope and complexity of the task and activities to be covered via the VM grant.
ITC Conference Grant	Providing contribution for travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, registration fee, printing of scientific poster and overall effort.	Up to EUR 2 000,00 per grant for face-to-face conferences	Decided by the Action MC or Core Group on proposal of the evaluators and should reflect the duration and location of the Conference and the actual conference fee.
Dissemination Conference Grant		OR EUR 500.00 for virtual conferences	

Participant grants are non-commercial transactions, therefore, claims as such are not subject to V.A.T deduction. Taxes normally due or applicable with respect to the payment of the grant are not to be deducted from amounts payable to participants. It is the responsibility of each participant to ensure that all amounts that they receive from COST funding are compliant with their national tax rules and obligations.

Provisions related to *Force majeure impacting travel* in paragraph A1-3.1.6 of Annex 1 are applicable to financial support for networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process. A **user guide**²⁷ for claiming expenses in case of force majeure is available to the participants.

²⁷ http://www.cost.eu/derogation_procedure