

Brussels, 27 July 2021

COST 094/21

# 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 Annotated Rules for COST Actions shall enter into force on 1 November 2021. However, they shall apply to COST Actions approved on 25 May 2021 as of the date of approval of the present rules.

The present 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.

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<b>HISTORY OF CHANGES</b>		
Version	Publication date	Changes
1.0	1.11.2021	<p>Initial version following adoption of <a href="#">Rules and Principles for COST activities</a> (level A) and to the <a href="#">Rules for COST Actions</a> (level B).</p> <p>Please note this version is subject to refining once contract between COST Association and European Commission will be concluded.</p>

## **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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## PREAMBLE – GENERAL RULES AND PRINCIPLES

### RULES FOR COST ACTIONS (LEVEL B)

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,
- COST shall adopt a set of stable, minimal, and user-friendly rules to ensure efficient, effective and impactful implementation of COST Actions,

Adopts the present [Rules for COST Actions](#) in accordance with the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#), which shall apply to COST Members, COST Governance, COST Administration and to participants to COST Actions.

These Annotated Rules for COST Actions translate into a practical handbook for COST Actions participants:

- The [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#)<sup>1</sup> (referred to as **level A** in the hierarchy of applicable rules); and
- The [Rules for COST Actions](#)<sup>2</sup> (referred to as **level B**) adopted by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO).

The **present Annotated Rules for COST Actions** are referred to as **level C** rules and are adopted by the Executive Board.

The present [Rules for COST Actions](#) **shall be subordinated to and shall not contravene the “Rules and Principles for COST activities” (level A)**. In case of any contradiction, the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) shall prevail.

[Rules for COST Actions](#) (level B) are **subordinated to the Rules and Principles for COST activities** (level A).

The [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) (level A) lay down the **following which are applicable to COST Actions**:

- The COST Principles (see hereunder I. Level A - COST Principles);
- The Rules applicable to Conflict of Interests (see hereunder II. Level A - Rules applicable to Conflict of Interests);
- The Breach of COST Rules and Principles (see hereunder III. Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles).

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cost.eu/Rules\\_And\\_Principles\\_for\\_COST\\_A](https://www.cost.eu/Rules_And_Principles_for_COST_A)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cost.eu/Rules\\_for\\_COST\\_Actions\\_B](https://www.cost.eu/Rules_for_COST_Actions_B)

## I. LEVEL A - COST PRINCIPLES

**COST Principles** are established and detailed in the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) (level A), **Article 3**:

COST activities shall be **governed by principles**, hereinafter referred to as **COST Principles**, that shall be **the cornerstone** of the rules applicable to COST activities as further defined in levels B and C rules and shall guide their set-up, implementation, and interpretation.

COST Principles shall be **applicable throughout the whole spectrum** of COST activities and to **all their actors**, including the COST Members, the COST Governance, the COST Scientific Committee, the COST Administration as well as to the participants to COST activities.

COST Principles shall be further depicted in applicable level B and complemented in level C rules which shall be abided by.

COST principles shall be as follows:

COST Principles are detailed and clarified hereunder.

COST Action participants and particularly the COST Action Management Committee (Action MC) Members shall keep those principles in mind when implementing the activities of their COST Action as they shall guide its decisions.

The COST Principles are key to the implementation of COST Actions and should be the guiding light of this implementation. Therefore, in case of doubt about a rule, the COST Principles shall serve as the reference for its understanding and interpretation.

### I.1. EXCELLENCE AND INCLUSIVENESS

#### 3.1. Excellence & Inclusiveness

Excellence and Inclusiveness principle aims at fostering excellence and inclusiveness in science Europe-wide, offering low-barrier access to research networks, and creating interdisciplinary research cooperation opportunities for researchers and innovators. This principle is based on openness and inclusiveness, bottom-up approach and striving for excellence as depicted hereunder and shall be implemented through the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy.

**COST Excellence and Inclusiveness is the leading COST Principle** that guide all COST activities in particular the Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval (SESA) process leading to COST Actions and implementation of COST Actions.

It is based on **three aspects** that are hereunder further defined and detailed.

### I.1.1. OPENNESS AND INCLUSIVENESS

#### 3.1.1. Openness and Inclusiveness

COST activities shall be **open and inclusive**.

COST is about people: the researchers and innovators. The success of COST activities depends on the ability to bring together all the relevant actors. Participation to COST activities **should therefore be open to all**.

Participation in COST activities shall be an entry point to other European collaborative research networks, that allows to save costs and time to connect with the right partners.

COST shall encourage participation from all actors, such as academics, non-academics, SMEs, international organisations and public authorities and civil society organisations. Participation in COST may also lead to follow-up in terms of proposals submitted for collaborative research in Horizon Europe. This underpins the role of COST as a pre-portal for follow-up European funding for research and innovation.

COST and participants to COST activities shall **value everyone and treat them equally and fairly, regardless of their gender, age, religious beliefs, ethnicity, political convictions, disabilities, or any other aspects**.

COST and participants to COST activities shall value **diversity** as an asset to its pan-European, multi-cultural and interdisciplinary character.

COST shall commit to promote **Open Science including through Open Access** of the outputs of COST activities, notably through the dissemination of their results and outcomes.

COST and participants to COST activities **shall ensure inclusiveness** in COST activities through **COST Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) representation, geographical diversity, gender balance and empowerment of young researchers**.

Openness and Inclusiveness as the **pinpoint of Excellence and Inclusiveness** COST Principle are reflected **throughout the whole rules for COST Actions** and should be carefully taken into account when implementing a COST Action.

The Actions shall **report** on their abidance with the Openness and Inclusiveness COST Principle (see hereunder I.1.3 - COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy). Further, abidance with this COST Principle may have an impact on COST Action budget as per Article 7.2 - COST Grant budget.

Openness and Inclusiveness COST Principle translates in different **opportunities and obligations** for COST Action participants that are reflected throughout the **Rules for COST Actions**, particularly in the following elements:

- Respect for ethical principles, notably the respect for the **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity**<sup>3</sup> and fundamental rights as by the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**<sup>4</sup> (see hereunder I.3 – Ethical principles);
- Openness of participation to all Researchers and Innovators (see notably Article 1.3 - Membership of COST Actions and Article 4 - Participation of individuals in COST Actions );
- Equal access to Leadership positions, notably with regard to COST Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) representation, geographical diversity, gender balance and empowerment of Young Researchers and Innovators. (see Article 3.9 - Access to leadership positions, particularly Article 3.9.2 - Openness and inclusiveness in mandatory leadership positions);

<sup>3</sup> **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity**, <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>

<sup>4</sup> **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012P%2FTXT>

- Commitment to Open Science including through Open Access of the outputs of COST activities (see for details Article 5 - Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation of the COST Action results );
- Financial support to COST Actions (see Article 6.4 - Eligibility to receive financial support).

### I.1.2. BOTTOM-UP APPROACH AND STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

#### 3.1.2. Bottom-up approach and striving for excellence

COST activities shall be **effective and impactful**, which requires COST to **strive for excellence**, focusing on progressing the state-of-the-art and development of breakthroughs. On a matter of principle, **topics of the COST activities shall be defined following a bottom-up approach**. The CSO may decide to follow a top-down approach where appropriate.

Excellence is an essential objective for science and technology as well as for individuals and organisations: it is the desire to achieve the highest quality in all endeavours, find the best solutions to new challenges, and contribute to tangible and intangible results and outcomes to guarantee progress and welfare.

COST shall in this regard:

- Foster professionalism and cooperative attitude in all aspects of the governance, management, and implementation of COST activities,
- Listen actively, respond, encourage teamwork, and make decisions based on facts and data, in an environment that encourages promotion, achievement and continuous learning in order to improve its own performance,
- Proactively identify, assess, and manage risks in view of greater potential and impact,
- Welcome any assessment or constructive criticism to cultivate an honest and responsible organisation and ask all participants in COST activities to help to fulfil the COST mission and objectives by completing their tasks in a professional, objective, and impartial manner,
- Ensure equal access to all scientific disciplines and promote interdisciplinarity, supporting and implementing the highest-level activities,
- Nurture talent and creativity, create opportunities for everyone to fulfil their full potential, and foster the potential of participants to COST activities,
- Ensure that participants to COST activities are evaluated and selected based on objective assessment of their qualifications and performance,
- Provide participants to COST activities with appropriate and impartial supervision, guidance, and support, in order to enhance high-quality results and outcomes from COST activities,
- Make relevant results and outcomes from COST activities easily available to potential end users in COST Members and beyond (the scientific community, business enterprises, policy makers, citizens, public and other stakeholders).

In the context of a COST Action, bottom-up means that Action MCs should provide opportunities for participants to propose ideas on how to achieve the objectives.

Excellence (likelihood to achieve breakthroughs and outstanding results) should be taken into consideration by the Action MC in their decision making.

### I.1.3. COST EXCELLENCE AND INCLUSIVENESS POLICY

#### 3.1.3. COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy

The COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy is developed around **three main elements**:

- **Geographical diversity,**
- **Career stage: involving young researchers and innovators,**
- **Gender balance.**

The COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy shall contribute to the objectives of the 'Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area' Work Programme under Horizon Europe.

COST Actions shall adhere to the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy, in all aspects of their implementation and throughout their lifecycle. Notably, the Actions shall take into account the three main tenets of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy:

- Geographical diversity: including Researchers and Innovators and stakeholders from the full European Research Area (ERA);
- Career stage: including Researchers and Innovators from all career stages;
- Gender balance: including Researchers and Innovators from the underrepresented genders and striving towards gender balance.

In implementing the Excellence & Inclusiveness Policy, COST has the following **indicatory targets** for the Actions:

- To include Researchers and Innovators from the greatest possible variety and range of COST Members in the Actions, *at the very minimum* including Researchers and Innovators from 12 distinct Inclusiveness Target Countries (see [Country and Organisations Table](#)<sup>5</sup> for categorisation of countries);
- To spend 50 per cent of the budget dedicated to networking activities to the benefit of Researchers and Innovators affiliated with a legal entity in Inclusiveness Target Countries or Near Neighbour Countries (see [Country and Organisations Table](#) for categorisation of countries);
- To dedicate at least 3 Mandatory Leadership positions to researchers based in Inclusiveness Target Countries;
- To have 40 per cent of participations to networking activities by Young Researchers;
- To dedicate 20 per cent of Mandatory Leadership positions to Young Researchers (see Article 3.9.1 for Mandatory leadership positions);
- To dedicate 50 per cent of Mandatory Leadership positions to female researchers.

COST Actions shall **make their best efforts to contribute to those overall indicatory targets**. **Best efforts of the Actions against those targets are the baseline for evaluation of compliance of the COST Actions with the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy.**

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<sup>5</sup> [www.cost.eu/Country\\_Organisations\\_Table](http://www.cost.eu/Country_Organisations_Table)

## I.2. EMPOWERMENT OF RESEARCHERS AND INNOVATORS

### 3.2 Empowerment of researchers and innovators

COST aims at empowering the participants to COST activities by providing them, within the limits of the legal and financial framework applicable, with the **powers to make the best decisions for their network**. Empowerment shall notably be implemented through the application of the Principle of Openness and Inclusiveness in leadership positions in COST Actions and possibly other activities where required.

Empowerment of Researchers and Innovators is reflected in the [Rules for COST Actions](#) through the empowerment of the COST Action Management Committee (Action MC) and COST Action participants (see Articles 3.5 - Management Committee Rights and Powers and 3.9 - Access to leadership positions).

## I.3. ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

### 3.3 Ethical principles

COST and participants to COST activities **shall adhere** to the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) and adhere to, apply, and enforce the highest principles of research integrity of reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability as depicted in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

COST and participants to COST activities **shall respect fundamental rights** as by the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#).

COST and participants to COST activities **shall act fairly and without prejudice**, uphold high standards of conduct and commit to thoroughness, transparency, efficiency, and regularity in the fulfilment of their tasks and responsibilities and avoid any discrimination.

COST activities shall be **for peaceful purposes only**. Any activities related to the development of armament or defence-oriented research shall be prohibited.

Breach of the ethical principles of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity in any COST activity shall be reported to the Scientific Committee.

All COST Action participants **shall adhere to and observe** [the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)<sup>6</sup> in the conduct and participation to a COST Action. To raise knowledge and understanding of their obligations in this regard, **COST Actions participants shall, when registering in e-COST, accept the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.**

**Breach of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity** shall be reported to the Scientific Committee for decision on the existence of the breach. If confirmed, the breach of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity shall amount to a breach of COST Rules and Principles as per III. Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

COST and COST Action participants acting on their own or as a group are required to act and behave fairly and without prejudice towards each other. Inappropriate acts or behaviours may be sanctioned as per III. Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles, particularly III.2 - Sanctions.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>

## I.4. RESPECT FOR CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

### 3.4 Respect for confidentiality and privacy

COST and participants to COST activities shall safeguard confidential information.

COST and participants to COST activities shall ensure respect for the privacy of participants to COST activities and more generally of all individuals providing personal data to COST.

Collection and processing of personal data shall be limited to the minimum required for implementation of COST mission and strategic priorities as further defined in the appropriate [privacy policy](#).

COST shall support the COST activities, where applicable, in ensuring compliance with the applicable legislation on data protection. COST provides other advice, notably with regard to intellectual property rights (IPR), where appropriate.

There shall be no confidential information in the frame of a COST Action. COST Actions are open networks of individuals and any disclosure to participants to a COST Action cannot be hindered by intellectual property rights (see Article 5 - Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation of the COST Action results on possible strategies on how to deal with Intellectual Property Rights within COST Actions). The Action MC may however decide that the information provided by one of its members, some of its discussions and some documents will be confidential. Documents shall not be confidential unless this is clearly stated in the document. The confidential information provided by the Action participants shall not be disclosed without their consent. Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation of the COST Action results

The Action MC shall then take necessary steps to develop and approve among participants a non-disclosure agreement.

The COST Association shall be bound by confidentiality when accessing the confidential documents and information.

Where participants to COST Actions make use of e-COST, their **privacy** is ensured by COST. Participants to COST Actions can find all details on processing activities made with their personal data through e-COST in the [privacy notice for COST Actions](#)<sup>7</sup>.

Where personal data processings occur in the framework of a COST Action **outside of e-COST**, the COST Action itself (through the Action MC) **shall define the personal data processings** required to the benefit of their Action and **inform the data subjects concerned** via a privacy notice to be inserted on their website.

The personal data processings occurring outside of e-COST should be limited as the COST Actions will be able to make use of e-COST for handling data of the WG participants (see Article 4 - Participation of individuals in COST Actions

Further information on what is data protection all about, how to design appropriate personal data processings and adopt a privacy notice can be found in this regard in the [FAQ for COST Actions on Data Protection](#)<sup>8</sup>. Templates are also available through the same link.

Requests for support or information can be addressed to [privacy@cost.eu](mailto:privacy@cost.eu).

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<sup>7</sup> <https://e-services.cost.eu/privacy-notice>

<sup>8</sup> [www.cost.eu/FAQ\\_GDPR-COSTActions](http://www.cost.eu/FAQ_GDPR-COSTActions)

## I.5. GOOD GOVERNANCE, FINANCIAL SOUNDNESS, AND EFFICIENCY

### 3.5 Good governance, financial soundness, and efficiency

COST shall ensure **good governance** which includes amongst others operating along the principles of transparency, efficiency and effectiveness as well as assuring sound, lean and cost-effective management and financial soundness of all its activities.

Participants to COST activities, where they are empowered to make decisions for the management of their network, shall ensure **good governance of their network and financial soundness** of the COST funded activities they organise for the benefit of their network and **be accountable** of their decisions.

Good governance and financial soundness shall reinforce efficiency of COST activities, ensuring the **maximum of its resources go to funding research networks.**

COST Action participants and particularly the COST Action Management Committee (Action MC) Members shall keep the principles of good governance, financial soundness and efficiency in mind when making decisions affecting their COST Action. This shall particularly play a role where the Action MC makes decisions for implementation by the Management Committee of financial support to COST Actions (see Article 6.2).

COST Actions Action MC are reminded that COST Grants are public money that shall be used with care and **allocated to activities that best serve the aims and objectives of the COST Action.**

COST Actions Action MC shall be **accountable** for the decisions they made, particularly with regard to the application of the COST Principles. Reporting is required in this regard (see notably I.1.3 – COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy and also Article 7.5 - Reporting on the use of the COST Grant and Article 8 - COST Action monitoring and final assessment

**Non-abidance** by COST Rules and Principles may **lead to measures** as per III. Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles, **impact in budget** of the Action as per Article 7.2 - COST Grant budget and in worst cases, **termination of a COST Action** as per Article 2 - COST Action start date and duration

## I.6. ABIDANCE BY THE APPLICABLE LEGAL AND FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.6 Abidance by the applicable legal and financial framework

COST and participants to COST activities shall **abide by the legal and financial framework applicable** as described in the present [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) and further depicted in applicable level B and complemented in level C rules. The present Rules and Principles are without prejudice to the abidance by COST and participants to COST activities to otherwise applicable law and regulations.

COST shall abide by the legal and contractual framework applicable for its functioning and financing.

As a publicly funded organisation, COST shall ensure validity, integrity, transparency, understandability, accuracy and completeness of financial reports and accounting records reflecting supporting information as required per level B rules and complemented in level C rules.

**COST Actions participants and all actors involved in a COST Action are required to abide by the COST Principles and COST rules, including the rules described in the present Annotated Rules.**

Non-abidance by those may lead to measures as per III. Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

## II. LEVEL A - RULES APPLICABLE TO CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Rules applicable to Conflict of Interests are stated in the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) (level A), Article 5:

### II.1. NOTION

COST shall avoid and manage potential Conflicts of Interests throughout all COST activities.

#### 5.1 Notion

There **shall be a Conflict of Interests** where any person involved in the conduct of a COST activity or susceptible to influence it **has, directly or indirectly, a financial, economic, or other personal interest, which might compromise or be perceived to compromise their impartiality and independence in the context of the concerned COST activity.**

In the frame of the [Rules for COST Actions](#), a Conflict of Interests could occur at different stages:

- Participation of a former Evaluator, of the Action Rapporteur in the Action;
- Grant awarding for a networking activity.

Where a Conflict of Interests as described above is detected in the frame of a COST Action, particularly with regard to an activity organised by the COST Action, the Action MC, shall **apply the procedure as described under II.3** - Handling a Conflict of Interests hereunder.

In case of doubt on whether a situation amounts to being a Conflict of Interests, one should not hesitate to consult their Scientific Officer or Administrative Officer for guidance.

#### **Nota bene:**

For a **Reviewing Procedure**, i.e., for the **COST Action monitoring and final assessment** as per Article 8, the cases where a Conflict of Interests may arise are described as follows:

Conflicts of Interests may arise with regard to all persons involved or identified to be involved in any evaluation, selection, monitoring or assessment procedure of a COST activity, hereinafter referred to as any Reviewing Procedure, and at all stages in the procedure, where:

- They are involved in the same procedure as a proposer or participant to the COST activity,
- They have a professional or personal relationship with any of the proposers or participants to the concerned COST activity such as but not limited to:
  - Currently work or will work in the same research unit as any of the proposers or participants to the concerned COST activity,
  - Have a close family or personal relationship with any of the proposers or participants to the concerned COST activity (relative, spouse, partner, close friend),
  - Are currently, have recently been or are set to become dependent professionally on any of the proposers or participants to the concerned COST activity or in professional competition with that person,
  - Have a close cooperation with any of the proposers or participants to the concerned COST activity among others through joint publication.
- They stand to benefit directly or indirectly from the concerned COST activity,
- They are for any reason unable to provide an impartial review of the concerned COST activity,
- Their professional judgment could be biased for other reasons.

This list is not exhaustive, and cases that are hereinabove described shall be interpreted in good faith to determine whether an individual meets the criteria to be designated Action Rapporteur in a COST Action. Any real or perceived issue with the designated individual shall be reported to the COST Administration via the Scientific Officer or Administrative Officer.

**Some functions at COST** or in an evaluation, selection or approval procedure of a COST activity proposal or in the monitoring and final assessment of a COST activity **shall be incompatible with a participation in all or one specific COST activity**. Those incompatibilities shall be further described in applicable level B rules.

To avoid a certain number of Conflict of Interests to occur, **some functions at COST or in a Reviewing Procedure** were designed as **being incompatible with a participation in a COST Action**. The details of those incompatibilities can be found **in Article 4.2 - Incompatibilities**.

**Example:** A person who was involved in the evaluation of the proposal leading to the COST Action would wish to or be invited to participate in a COST Action. This person shall refuse their participation.

## II.2. DECLARATION OF ABSENCE OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

### 5.2 Declaration of absence of Conflict of Interests and confidentiality

Any person identified to be involved **in any Reviewing Procedure shall sign** prior to exercising their duties a declaration of absence of Conflict of Interests and confidentiality stating that they:

- Are not aware of any Conflict of Interests regarding the proposal to be evaluated or selected or the activity to be monitored and assessed,
- Shall inform immediately the COST Administration of any Conflict of Interests discovered during the procedure,
- Shall maintain the confidentiality of the procedure.

Absence of signature of the declaration implies that the person cannot be involved in any Reviewing Procedure.

This provision is applicable with regard to a **Reviewing Procedure**, i.e., for the **COST Action monitoring and final assessment** as per Article 8.

## II.3. HANDLING A CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

### II.3.1. DUTY TO DISCLOSE

#### 5.3.1 Duty to disclose

**Any person** involved in any Reviewing Procedure of a COST activity or **in the conduct of a COST activity shall, in case they encounter a Conflict of Interests, declare it**.

If the concerned person fails to comply with their duty to disclose, **any other person being aware** of the Conflict of Interests **shall disclose it**.

In the frame of a COST Action, the **duty to disclose shall be exercised towards the Action MC** and the **Action MC shall address the case** as hereunder described. The COST Administration shall be kept informed of the issue and of the solution.

## II.3.2. DETERMINING WHETHER A CONFLICT OF INTERESTS EXISTS

### 5.3.2 Determining Whether a Conflict of Interests Exists

**When declared** or, where the COST Administration **get informed** that any person involved in any Reviewing Procedure could be in Conflict of Interests, the case shall be instructed in writing.

Where the Conflict of Interests is doubtful, the **concerned person shall be given the opportunity to disclose** the financial, economic, or other personal interest and if required, the supporting material facts:

- Where acting in the frame of a body, Committee, or ad hoc working group of the COST Association, after discussion with the concerned person preliminary to any discussion or decision-making in the appropriate forum, the **concerned person shall leave the room while the potential of a Conflict of Interests is discussed and determined**. The remaining members of the relevant body, Committee or ad hoc working group of the COST Association **shall decide if a Conflict of Interests exists**.
- Where the concerned person is an individual expert, the COST Administration shall decide if a Conflict of Interests exists on the basis of the disclosed interest and relevant material facts if any. The COST Administration may consult the Scientific Committee if required.

After being reported a potential Conflict of Interests, the **Action MC shall:**

- Instruct the case;
- Give the possibility to the concerned individual to disclose the financial, economic, or other personal interest and if required, the supporting material facts, should the case be doubtful;
- Decide whether the Conflict of Interests exists. The decision of the Action MC is final.

### II.3.3. COURSE OF ACTION WHERE CONFLICT OF INTERESTS IS CONFIRMED

#### 5.3.3 Course of action where conflict of Interests is confirmed

If the Conflict of Interests is confirmed **before or during** any Reviewing Procedure or **during the course of the concerned COST activity**:

- The individual expert in Conflict of Interests shall stop their participation in any Reviewing Procedure of the concerned COST activity or otherwise in the conduct of the COST activity and be replaced,
- The member of a relevant body, Committee or ad hoc working group of the COST Association in Conflict of Interests shall leave the room while the Reviewing Procedure for that specific activity is ongoing,
- Any comments, marks, assessment, recommendation or otherwise equivalent already provided by the individual in Conflict of Interests shall be discarded,
- Where applicable, the Conflict of Interests shall be mentioned in the minutes of the meeting of the relevant body, Committee, or ad hoc working group of the COST Association.

If the Conflict of Interests is confirmed **after** the Reviewing Procedure of the concerned COST activity took place or otherwise after the conduct of the COST activity, the COST Administration shall after discussion with the concerned person:

- Assess the potential impact and consequences of the Conflict of Interests,
- If, in the opinion of the COST Administration, the Conflict of Interests would make the Reviewing Procedure of the COST activity partial or inadmissible or affect the value or quality of the COST activity, report to the EB which may take appropriate measures to mitigate the issue,
- Where the issue cannot be mitigated at the level of the EB, the case shall be reported to the CSO.

The COST Administration shall take the lead in any resolution process of a case of Conflict of Interests at any time in any Reviewing Procedure or otherwise in the conduct of a COST activity.

#### **Rule:**

Where the **Conflict of Interests is confirmed, before or during** the concerned COST Action decision or activity, the Action MC shall require from the concerned individual **not to take part to** any decision of the Action MC or to any networking activity where the person is in Conflict of Interests.

Participation to a decision of an individual in Conflict of Interests where this Conflict of Interests was previously confirmed shall invalidate the decision of the concerned Action MC.

Where the **Conflict of Interests is confirmed, after** the concerned COST Action decision or activity, the Action MC shall **after discussion** with the concerned person:

- Assess the potential impact and consequences of the Conflict of Interests;
- If, in the opinion of the Action MC, the Conflict of Interests would make the decision or activity partial or inadmissible or affect the value or quality of the COST activity, it shall take appropriate measures to mitigate the issue or justify the absence of measures.

### III. LEVEL A - BREACH OF COST RULES AND PRINCIPLES

Rules applicable to Breach of COST Rules and Principles are stated in the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) (level A), Article 6:

Breach of any of the provisions of the present [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) as further described in applicable level B rules, complemented in level C rules **may lead to rejection of costs, reduction, suspension or termination of a grant, recovery, or sanctions** that shall be defined and applied **depending on the violated rule or principle, the kind and importance of the breach and its impact** to be assessed by the entity competent to impose and enforce a potential sanction as hereunder referred to after an adversary proceeding.

The rejection of costs, reduction, suspension or termination of a grant, recovery, or sanctions as well as the **procedure** to be followed for applying those shall, where required, be further detailed if required in the Annotated Rules to be adopted by the EB of the COST Association (the level C Rules) or in any contract or other binding agreement with any legal entity involved in a COST activity.

Those rules regarding breaches of Rules and Principles applicable to COST Actions complement the COST Principle of Abidance by the applicable legal and financial framework as per I.6 above and Accountability as per I.5 above.

A breach of COST Rules and Principles can lead to the application of different measures.

The following paragraphs describe the breaches leading to measures, the possible measures to be applied in case of breach, the procedure to be followed and the entities competent to impose and enforce a potential measure if required.

#### III.1. REJECTION OF COSTS, REDUCTION, SUSPENSION, TERMINATION OF A GRANT

Rejection of costs, reduction, suspension, termination of a grant or recovery of undue amounts can occur in the frame of the **COST Grant implementation** by the Grant Holder as per Article 7 - COST Action funding and administration They shall occur in the following circumstances and following the hereunder described procedures:

##### III.1.1. REJECTION OF COSTS

The COST Association shall – at the time of the Intermediate Financial Report (see Article 7.5), the Final Financial Report (see Article 7.5) or afterwards – **reject any costs which are non-eligible** in accordance with the present Annotated Rules for COST Actions, in particular following checks, reviews, audits or investigations.

Non-eligible costs shall be rejected in full, except for the Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination (FSAC) expenses (see ANNEX 5 Financial, Scientific and Administrative Coordination (FSAC)) which shall be rejected proportionally to the task or part of the related activity not implemented.

**The Grant Holder shall be duly notified of such rejection.**

If the COST Association rejects costs, it will deduct them from the eligible costs declared and then calculate the amount due (and, if needed, proceed to recovery as per Article 7.6).

### III.1.2. REDUCTION, SUSPENSION OR TERMINATION OF A GRANT

**Mismanagement** of the allocated funds, **non-fulfilment of the Grant Holder's contractual obligations** and the **non-performance of the tasks and responsibilities expected of the Grant Holder** as per Article 7.4 or in accordance with the Action Grant Agreement concluded following the Article 7.3 may lead to one or all of the following measures:

- The suspension of all pending and / or future payments and the recovery of the amounts already paid;
- The suspension or cancellation of the Action Grant Agreement;
- The selection of a replacement Grant Holder; or
- The reduction or complete cancellation of the contribution to the Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination (FSAC) costs mentioned in ANNEX 5.

#### **Procedure**

Where the COST Association detects a breach as listed above, it shall **formally notify** the concerned Grant Holder of its intention to adopt such a measure.

The **notification shall include:**

- The facts and behaviours that are alleged forming the mismanagement of funds;
- The Rules alleged to be breached; and
- The proposed measure to be applied.

The **absence of those elements in the notification shall make the notification void and terminate the proceeding.**

The notification shall **be accompanied with an invitation to submit observations** within 30 calendar days of receiving notification.

The COST Association shall after the conclusion of the delay of 30 days, based on the elements of the case and observations of the Grant Holder if any, **decide to pursue with the application of the measure or close the case.** This decision shall **be formally notified to the Grant Holder.**

#### **Measures and effect**

The suspension of payments or of the Action Grant Agreement shall take effect the day the confirmation notification is sent by the COST Association. If the conditions for resuming payments are met, the suspension shall be lifted. The COST Association shall notify the Grant Holder accordingly.

The cancellation of the Action Grant Agreement shall take effect the day the confirmation notification is sent by the COST Association. Cancellation of the Action Grant Agreement shall lead to the selection of a replacement Grant Holder (see Article 7.4 - Grant Holder).

The selection of a replacement Grant Holder shall be preceded by a measure of suspension or cancellation of the Action Grant Agreement and be reported to the Action MC in view of the selection of a new Grant Holder.

The reduction or complete cancellation of the Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination (FSAC) shall take effect the day the confirmation notification is sent by the COST Association.

### III.2. SANCTIONS

In the hereunder defined cases, breaches may lead to sanctions:

**Breaches leading to possible sanctions** are as follows:

- Breach of COST Principles,
- Breach of COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy,
- Breach of Rules applicable to Conflict of Interests,
- For the Management Committees of COST Actions, breach of Management Committee duties,
- Financial fraud,
- Breach of reporting obligations.

**Possible sanctions may encompass:**

- Exclusion from participation in one specific COST activity or in all or some COST activities for a specific duration,
- Exclusion from participation in one specific evaluation, selection, monitoring or assessment procedure of a COST activity or from an expert database of COST for a specific duration,
- Revocation from a leadership position in a COST activity, where applicable after consultation with the relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC),
- Reduction of budget of a COST activity,
- Termination of a COST Action.

The Management Committee of a COST Action shall be entitled to exclude a Working Group member of a given COST Action in case of any of the above-mentioned breaches to [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) and the [Rules for COST Actions](#) as further complemented by level C Rules.

The CSO shall be entitled to:

- Terminate a COST Action in case of breach of COST Principles by a COST Action Management Committee on the basis of a recommendation of the Scientific Committee,
- Revoke the holder of a mandatory leadership position in case of any of the above-mentioned breaches to [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) and the [Rules for COST Actions](#) based on prior information to the appropriate CNC and recommendation of the Scientific Committee.

The EB shall be entitled to:

- Exclude an individual from any participation in any COST activity for a fixed duration to be defined by the EB in case of financial fraud,
- In case of any of the above-mentioned breaches to [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) and the [Rules for COST Actions](#):
  - Revoke a Management Committee Member after prior consultation with the relevant CNC,
  - Exclude a Working Group member of a specific COST Action.

The COST Administration shall be entitled to revoke an independent External Expert or COST Action Rapporteur for breach of confidentiality or for failure to declare a Conflict of Interests from the COST experts' database.

### III.2.1. NOTIONS

For the application of the present paragraph, the following terms shall be defined:

- A **wilful breach** means a breach **motivated by premeditated or intentional purpose**.
- A **gross breach** means a breach that **leads to severe impact** for the injured person or entity (be it the Action, the COST Association, or any other concerned entity).
- A **recurrent breach** means a breach that due **to its repetitive character leads to a severe impact** for the injured person or entity (be it the Action, the COST Association, or any other concerned entity).

A breach of the COST Rules and Principles can be detected at the **level of an individual, a legal entity or a group of individuals acting together as a decision-making body**.

#### **Examples:**

- A WG participant is found in breach of one of the Ethical Principle as per the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#);
- The holder of a leadership position is found in breach of the Openness and Inclusiveness Principle because he/she systematically rejects applications from certain individuals for some networking activities based on grounds that appear to be contrary to the Openness and Inclusiveness Principle or COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy (e.g. rejection of individuals affiliated in countries that differ from the affiliation of the group of proposers, gender based decisions or rejection of applications of Young Researchers etc.);
- An Action MC is found in breach regarding the Openness and Inclusiveness Principle because it rejects WG applications on grounds that appear to be contrary to the COST Principles (e.g. see examples above) or designating at leadership positions only individuals from a limited number of countries or on a gender based approach or without consideration for their obligation to nominate one ITC Researcher or Innovator at a Mandatory Leadership position;
- An Action MC is found in breach of the Principle of good governance, financial soundness, and efficiency (e.g. by making decisions that are contrary to eligibility rules under the present Annotated Rules for COST Actions etc.).

### III.2.2. BREACH BY A WG PARTICIPANT

In case of **wilful, gross, or recurrent breach of**

- COST Principle(s), notably COST Ethical Principle(s),
- Rule(s) applicable to COST Action participants as per the Annexes of the present Annotated Rules,

by a **WG Participant to a COST Action**, the **Management Committee of a COST Action is entitled to exclude** the concerned Working Group member of the given COST Action.

The **exclusion can be definitive or limited** to the participation to one or several specific activities taking place in the frame of the COST Action.

Breaches that **do not amount to being a wilful, gross, or recurrent breach shall not lead to sanctions**. However, the issue shall be taken seriously, and the concerned parties shall aim at resolving the issue amicably.

Before taking any sanction, the Action MC shall **seek to resolve the issue through amicable means with the concerned WG Participant**.

#### **Procedure:**

Should amicable solution not be reachable, the Action MC shall **formally notify** the concerned individual of its intention to adopt such a measure.

The **notification shall include:**

- The facts and behaviours that are alleged forming a breach;
- The COST Principle(s) or Rule(s) alleged to be breached;
- The **elements that ground the qualification** of the alleged breach as a **wilful, gross, or recurrent breach**; and
- The proposed sanction to be applied.

The **absence of such elements in the notification shall make the notification void and terminate the proceeding.**

The notification shall **be accompanied with an invitation to submit observations** within 30 calendar days of receiving notification.

The Action MC shall after the conclusion of the delay of 30 days and based on the elements of the case and observations of the WG participant if any, **decide to pursue with the application of the exclusion measure or close the case.** This decision shall **be formally notified to the WG Participant.**

For **alleged breach of COST Ethical Principles**, the **Scientific Committee shall be consulted** (through the COST Administration) to determine whether the concerned behaviour amounts to a breach to a COST Ethical Principle.

The concerned WG Participant may **bring the case to the knowledge of the Executive Board** of the COST Association **for appeal** through the COST Administration. The COST Administration may not refuse to instruct the case.

The Executive Board could also **be referred the case directly by the COST Administration**, should the COST Administration detect the breach and the Action MC is not willing or not able to make a decision in this regard.

The Executive Board **shall receive a complete file** including:

- The facts and behaviours that are alleged forming a breach;
- The COST Principle(s) or Rule(s) alleged to be breached;
- The assessment of the COST Action MC (or COST Administration in case the EB is seized directly by the COST Administration) regarding the elements that, according to the Action MC (or COST Administration), grounded the qualification of the alleged breach as a wilful, gross, or recurrent breach;
- The observations of the WG participant if any;
- An assessment from the COST Administration where the Executive Board was seized through an appeal of the concerned WG participant.

On that basis, the Executive Board shall decide to:

- **Close the case;**
- **Confirm the exclusion measure.**

This decision shall be **notified to the concerned individual.**

### III.2.3. BREACH BY AN ACTION MC

In case of **wilful, gross, or recurrent breach of** COST Principle(s), including the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy, Management Committee duties deriving from COST Principles, including reporting obligations, by a **COST Action MC**:

- The budget of the COST Action can be reduced in accordance with Article 7.2 - COST Grant budget;
- The Committee of Senior Officials of the COST Association is entitled to terminate a COST Action.

#### **Procedure in front of the Committee of Senior Officials:**

Where the COST Administration detects such breach(es) by an Action MC and considers the case should be brought to the Committee of Senior Officials, it **shall inform the Scientific Committee** with a file prepared by the COST Administration which shall include:

- The facts and behaviours that are alleged forming a breach;
- The COST Principle(s) or Rule(s) alleged to be breached;
- The **elements that, for the COST Administration, ground the qualification** of the alleged breach as a **wilful, gross, or recurrent breach**.

On the basis of this file, the Scientific Committee shall decide whether the facts are sufficiently grounded for the case to be further assessed. Should it be the case, the **decision of the Scientific Committee shall be formally notified to the Action MC. The notification shall include the complete file that was provided to the Scientific Committee.**

**The absence of those elements in the notification shall make the notification void and terminate the proceeding.**

The notification shall **be accompanied with an invitation to submit observations** within 30 calendar days of receiving notification.

The Scientific Committee shall after the conclusion of the delay of 30 days and based on the file presented to it and observations of the Action MC if any **recommend a course of action to the Committee of Senior Officials** that may include recommendations of different kinds to the discretion of the Scientific Committee or close the case.

The **Committee of Senior Officials shall then decide** based on the recommendation of the Scientific Committee together with the file presented to the Scientific Committee and observations of the Action MC if any **to terminate the COST Action**, decide to **recommend some specific course of action or close the case**. This decision shall **be formally notified to the Action MC**.

### III.2.4. BREACH BY A HOLDER OF A MANDATORY LEADERSHIP POSITION

In case of **wilful, gross, or recurrent breach of:**

- COST Principle(s), notably COST Ethical Principle(s);
- COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy;
- Management Committee duties;
- Reporting obligations;
- Rule(s) applicable to COST Participants as per the Annexes of the present Annotated Rules,

by **the holder of a mandatory leadership position**, the **Committee of Senior Officials of the COST Association is entitled to revoke the concerned individual of their mandatory leadership position.**

Such a revocation is **not exclusive of sanctions that could be made by the Action MC or the Executive Board of the COST Association against a WG participant for the same facts.**

#### **Procedure:**

Where the COST Administration detects or is reported such breach(es) by the holder of a Mandatory Leadership position within a COST Action, it **shall inform the Scientific Committee** with a file prepared which shall include:

- The facts and behaviours that are alleged forming a breach;
- The COST Principle(s) or Rule(s) alleged to be breached;
- The **elements that, for the COST Administration, ground the qualification** of the alleged breach as a **wilful, gross, or recurrent breach.**

On that basis, the Scientific Committee shall decide whether the facts are sufficiently grounded for the case to be further assessed. Should it be the case, the **decision of the Scientific Committee shall be formally notified to the concerned individual and to the relevant CNC. The notification shall include complete file that was provided to the Scientific Committee.**

**The absence of those elements in the notification shall make the notification void and terminate the proceeding.**

The notification shall **be accompanied with an invitation to submit observations** within 30 calendar days of receiving notification.

The Scientific Committee shall after the conclusion of the delay of 30 days and based on the file presented to it and observations of the concerned individual and possibly relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC) if any **recommend a course of action to the Committee of Senior Officials** or close the case.

The **Committee of Senior Officials shall then decide** based on the recommendation of the Scientific Committee together with the file presented to the Scientific Committee and observations of the concerned individual or relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC) if any **to revoke the holder of the mandatory leadership position or close the case.** This decision shall **be formally notified to the concerned individual** based on prior information to the relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC).

### III.2.5. BREACH BY A ACTION MC MEMBER OR OBSERVER

In case of **wilful, gross, or recurrent breach of:**

- COST Principle(s), notably COST Ethical Principle(s);
- COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy;
- Management Committee duties;
- Reporting obligations;
- Rule(s) applicable to COST Participants as per the Annexes of the present Annotated Rules;

by **a Action MC Member or Observer**, the **Executive Board of the COST Association is entitled to revoke** the concerned individual from their position as Action MC Member or Observer.

Such a revocation is **not exclusive of sanctions that could be made by the Action MC or the Executive Board of the COST Association against a WG participant for the same facts.**

#### **Procedure:**

Where the COST Administration detects or is reported such breach(es) by **a Action MC Member or Observer** within a COST Action, it **shall inform the Executive Board** with a file prepared which shall include:

- The facts and behaviours that are alleged forming a breach;
- The COST Principle(s) or Rule(s) alleged to be breached;
- The **elements that, for the COST Administration, ground the qualification** of the alleged breach as a **wilful, gross, or recurrent breach**.

On that basis, the Executive Board shall decide whether the facts are sufficiently grounded for the case to be further assessed. Should it be the case, the **decision of the Executive Board shall be formally notified to the concerned individual and to the relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC). The notification shall include complete file that was provided to the Executive Board.**

**The absence of those elements in the notification shall make the notification void and terminate the proceeding.**

The notification shall **be accompanied with an invitation to submit observations** within 30 calendar days of receiving notification.

The Executive Board shall after the conclusion of the delay of 30 days and based on the file presented to it and observations of the concerned individual and possibly relevant CNC if any decide to **revoke** the Action MC Member or Observer from their position as Action MC Member or Observer or **close the case**.

This decision shall **be formally notified to the concerned individual** based on prior information to the relevant CNC.

### III.2.6. BREACH OF RULES APPLICABLE TO CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Any breach of the Rules applicable to Conflict of Interests shall be dealt with as per II. Level A - Rules applicable to Conflict of Interests:

- Absence of signature of the declaration of absence of Conflict of Interests implies that the person cannot be involved in any Reviewing Procedure;
- **Absence of declaration of a Conflict of Interests or, in case of a third-party having knowledge of the Conflict of Interests absence of disclosure of a Conflict of Interests shall always be considered a gross breach of the Rules applicable to COST Actions.**

Where occurring in the frame of a Reviewing Procedure, paragraph III.2.8 - Breach in a Reviewing Procedure hereunder shall apply.

Where occurring in the frame of a COST Action:

- Paragraph III.2.2 shall apply where the breach is imputable to a WG participant;
- Paragraph III.2.4 shall apply where the breach is imputable to the holder of a mandatory leadership position;
- Paragraph III.2.5 shall apply where the breach is imputable to a Action MC Member or Observer.

### III.2.7. FINANCIAL FRAUD

**Financial fraud shall always be considered a gross breach of the Rules applicable to COST Actions.**

Mismanagement of funds by an individual shall lead to:

- **Rejection** by the Grant Holder or the COST Association as required of claims that include non-eligible expenses;
- **Recovery of undue amounts** by the Grant Holder or the COST Association as required.

Further, mismanagement of funds by an individual may lead to the **exclusion of the concerned individual from any participation in any COST activity for a fixed duration to be defined by the Executive Board of the COST Association.**

#### **Procedure:**

Any suspected or detected case of financial fraud **shall be reported to the COST Administration.** The COST Association may also at its discretion open investigations where financial fraud is suspected.

During investigation procedure, the **COST Association shall** proceed to:

- Extension of investigations within any claims submitted throughout all COST Actions;
- Suspension of reimbursement of any pending claims throughout all COST Actions where the individual is involved until closure of the procedure.

In case of detected financial fraud by an individual, the COST Association shall formally **notify the concerned individual.**

The **notification shall include:**

- The findings;
- The recovery measure if any; and
- The potential exclusion measure.

The **absence of such elements in the notification shall make the notification void and terminate the proceeding.**

The notification shall **be accompanied with an invitation to submit observations** within 30 calendar days of receiving notification.

The COST Association shall, after the conclusion of the delay of 30 days and based on the elements of the case and observations of the concerned individual if any, **decide to:**

- **Close the case** – this decision shall be notified to the concerned individual, or
- **Pursue with recovery measures** – this decision shall be notified to the concerned individual. The COST Association may deduct the amounts to be recovered from any sum due to the participant. The Court of Brussels will be competent in case judiciary proceedings are required, and / or;
- **Bring the case to the Executive Board of the COST Association** – The Executive Board shall be informed with a file which shall include the findings and the measures already put in place as well as if any the observations of the concerned individual. On that basis, the Executive Board shall decide to **exclude the concerned individual** from any participation in any COST activity for a fixed duration to be determined in the Executive Board decision or **close the case**.

### III.2.8. BREACH IN A REVIEWING PROCEDURE

**Breach of confidentiality or failure to declare a Conflict of Interests in a Reviewing Procedure shall always be considered as a gross breach of COST Principles that shall lead to the exclusion of the Action Rapporteur from the COST experts' database by the COST Administration.**

#### Procedure:

Before to proceed with the exclusion from the COST experts' database, the COST Administration shall **formally notify** the concerned individual of its intention to adopt such a measure.

The **notification shall include:**

- The facts and behaviours that are alleged forming a breach;
- The proposed exclusion measure.

The **absence of such elements in the notification shall make the notification void and terminate the proceeding.**

The notification shall **be accompanied with an invitation to submit observations** within 30 calendar days of receiving notification.

The COST Administration shall after the conclusion of the delay of 30 days and based on the elements of the case and observations of the Action Rapporteur if any, **decide to pursue with the application of the exclusion measure or close the case**. This decision shall **be formally notified to the Action Rapporteur**.

(Level B - end of Preamble)

The present [Rules for COST Actions](#) shall lay down the general rules applicable to COST Actions deriving from the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) and govern:

- The **COST Action set-up**,
- The **COST Action start date and duration**,
- The **COST Action management**,
- The **Participation of individuals in COST Actions**,
- The **Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation of COST Actions results**,
- The **Financial support to COST Actions: networking activities and other expenses**,
- The **COST Action funding and administration**,
- The **COST Action monitoring and final assessment**.

Throughout the present [Rules for COST Actions](#), 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](#).

Non-compliance with the present rules may lead to the measures for Breach of COST Rules and

The [Rules for COST Actions](#) are structured around the above-mentioned topics which are taken over hereunder.

The rules for non-compliance have been clarified above.

## 1. COST ACTION SET UP

### 1.1. Approval of COST Actions

COST Actions are approved by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) as per Rules for Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval (SESA) of COST Actions.

### 1.2. Aims and objectives of COST Actions

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) shall describe the aims and objectives of the Action as approved by the CSO.

The MoU shall be completed with a Technical Annex describing the networking project.

The MoU shall be published on COST Association website.

The MoU is a multilateral agreement between all COST Members undertaking joint activities of mutual interest and participating in the Action.

The **MoU consists of two parts**: the MoU proper and the Technical Annex.

The MoU proper comprises: the reference number, the title of the Action and the main aim of the Action.

The Technical Annex details the aims and objectives of the COST Action in view of its implementation. It is prepared between the Main Proposer and the COST Administration based on the Action proposal.

The MoU proper may **be amended** by the Committee of Senior Officials based on Scientific & Technological justification. The request shall be brought by the Action MC to the CSO through the COST Administration.

The Technical Annex may be amended by the Action MC to follow the need of implementation or any relevant Scientific & Technological development occurring during the lifetime of the Action.

**Such changes shall obtain prior agreement of the COST Administration.**

### 1.3. Membership of COST Actions

All COST Members are part of the COST Action through CSO approval.

After CSO approval, Specific Organisations may join a COST Action as follows:

- The European Commission (EC), EU bodies, offices, and agencies and European RTD Organisations: upon request of the Specific Organisation via the Responsible for nomination (see Article 3.1 – Nomination to the Management Committee),
- International Organisations: upon request of the International Organisation via the Responsible for nomination (see Article 3.1 – Nomination to the Management Committee) and based on mutual benefit checked by the COST Administration.

COST Members are member States of COST. There are three categories of membership for States in COST:

- COST Full Members;
- COST Cooperating Members;
- COST Partner Members.

COST Members and their category of membership can be found in the [Country and Organisations Table](#)<sup>9</sup> or at <https://www.cost.eu/who-we-are/members/>

Specific Organisations belong to three categories:

- The European Commission (EC), EU bodies, offices, and agencies;
- European RTD Organisations;
- International Organisations.

Definitions of those terms can be found in the [Glossary](#)<sup>10</sup>.

The European Commission (EC), EU bodies, offices, and agencies and the European RTD Organisations are a closed list of Organisations that can be found in the [Country and Organisations Table](#).

Other organisations filling the criteria as per the Glossary may request recognition by the COST Administration. The list will then be updated.

COST has also established a list of commonly recognised International Organisations that can be found in the [Country and Organisations Table](#).

As of date of approval of a COST Action by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), all COST Members are part of the Action.

**Specific Organisations interested to join a COST Action shall contact the Science Officer responsible of the Action** (mentioned on the COST Action page on the COST website) who will guide them throughout the process of membership (and nomination of an Action MC Observer as per Article 3.1.).

International Organisations willing to join a COST Action **shall demonstrate in their application the benefit for both the COST Action and their International Organisation** in being a member of the said COST Action. The COST Administration (Head of Science Operations) shall approve or reject the mutual benefit. If no mutual benefit exists, the International Organisation application shall be rejected.

The **mutual benefit is presumed** for applications of the European Commission (EC), an EU body, office or agency or a European RTD Organisation.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.cost.eu/Country\\_Organisations\\_Table](https://www.cost.eu/Country_Organisations_Table)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/07/Annex-II-level-A-Glossary.pdf>

## 2. COST ACTION START DATE AND DURATION

### 2.1. Start and duration

A COST Action shall start at the date of the first Management Committee meeting (Action MC1) that shall take place not earlier than 4 months and not later than 9 months after CSO approval.

A COST Action shall have a duration of 4 years.

A COST Action starts officially on the date of the first Action MC meeting. The first Action MC meeting (Action MC1) is always organised, administered, and funded centrally by the COST Association (see Article 7.1).

### 2.2. Extensions

#### 2.2.1. EXTENSION REQUESTS BASED ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND / OR NETWORKING ELEMENTS

A COST Action may see its duration extended in following circumstances:

- The Management Committee (Action MC) submits to the COST Administration an extension request based on a Science and Technology or networking or both justification:
  - The extension request shall describe the specific reasons from a Science and Technology / networking perspective and show that the Action was not in the position to influence or foresee the delay in implementation of the Action aims and objectives,
  - The request shall be introduced during the last year of the Action and not later than the deadline set and communicated each year by the COST Administration,
  - If granted, the extension shall be:
    - granted for a duration of 6 months (not variable),
    - without additional budget.

Where a COST Action encountered circumstances from a Science and Technology or networking perspective during its lifetime that **the Action was not in the position to influence**, which resulted in delay in implementing the Action aims and objectives, the Action MC may request an extension.

#### **Procedure:**

Each year, the COST Administration shall provide to COST Actions entering in their last year of activities (Grant Period 4) a deadline for submitting their extension requests.

The extension request requires the approval of the Action MC. This decision cannot be delegated.

The extension request shall be justified by reasons based on Science and Technology and/or networking issue.

The extension request shall demonstrate that the Action was not in the position to influence or foresee the delay in implementation of the Action aims and objectives following the encountered issues.

The Action Chair shall submit the extension request on behalf of the Action MC.

The COST Administration shall decide based on the provided elements in the request for extension and provide a written justification to the Action MC for its decision.

If granted, the extension shall be for 6 months with no additional budget. This will be implemented through **an extension of the Grant Period in time only** (see Article 7.2 - COST Grant budget) for the last year of activities.

### 2.2.2. EXTENSION IN CASE OF FORCE MAJEURE

- The Executive Board (EB) of the COST Association offers an extension to COST Actions affected by a case of force majeure which resulted in a delay in the implementation of the Action's aims and objectives.

The EB of the COST Association shall in such case determine the duration of the extension and possible budget support based on Rules of Procedures defined by the EB on proposal from the COST Administration. Those Rules of Procedures shall be published.

In case of **Force Majeure** encountered by one or several COST Actions which **resulted in a delay in the implementation of the Action's aims and objectives**, the Executive Board of the COST Association may decide **to offer** an extension to impacted COST Actions.

Shall such a case of force majeure occur, the Executive Board of the COST Association shall adopt specific Rules of Procedure that shall define:

- The criteria for determining which COST Actions are eligible for an extension based on force majeure. The Executive Board of the COST Association may, on a justification based on the circumstances of the case of force majeure, decide that all running Actions have been impacted and are therefore eligible to an extension in case of force majeure.

Among those criteria, may be considered:

- The impact of the case of force majeure on achieving their aims and objectives based on a Science and Technology and/or networking perspective. Should a case of force majeure be impactful for all COST Actions, the Executive Board of the COST Association may decide that such a demonstration of impact is not required;
- The start and end date of the impacted Actions;
- Any other criteria relevant depending on the circumstances of the said case of force majeure.
- The duration(s) of extensions to be provided. The Rules of Procedure may provide for a unique duration for all impacted COST Actions or a range of durations depending on the impact of the case of force majeure on the concerned COST Actions. Should the Executive Board of the COST Association choose for a range approach, the Rules of Procedure shall contain criteria of evaluation of the impact;
- The additional budget available, if any, for the concerned COST Actions. The Rules of Procedure may provide for a unique budget for all impacted COST Actions or a case-by-case approach depending on the impact of the case of force majeure on the concerned COST Actions. Should the Executive Board of the COST Association choose for a case-by-case approach, the Rules of Procedure shall contain criteria of evaluation of the impact leading to determine the additional budget for each concerned COST Action.

### 2.3. Termination of a COST Action

The CSO may terminate a COST Action in case of:

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

## 3. COST ACTION MANAGEMENT

COST Actions shall be managed by a Management Committee (Action MC) composed of Action MC Members and Action MC Observers, reflecting the intergovernmental character of COST.

### 3.1. Nomination to the Management Committee

COST Members and Specific Organisations who joined the COST Action may – but are not forced to – nominate or replace their representative(s) to the Action MC at any time, from the publication of the MoU until the Action end date.

The COST National Coordinators (CNCs)<sup>11</sup> are the national contact points in the COST Members. They are responsible for the nomination in the Action MC, the selection of the representatives for COST Members is based on national rules and procedures.

In the case of Specific Organisations, the Responsible for Nomination is the person who has the authority within the Specific Organisation to nominate a MC Observer in the Action MC. It belongs to the Responsible for Nomination to ensure they are vested to act on behalf of their Specific Organisation.

After Action MC1, it is recommended for the Responsible for nomination of the relevant COST Member or Specific Organisation to consult the Action Chair before any nomination in order to determine the best candidate for the Action MC Member or Observer position(s).

The contact details of the Action Chair can be found on the COST Action webpage on the COST website.

The purpose of the consultation is to ensure that the profile of the proposed Action MC Member or Observer matches the aims and objectives of the COST Action and, where possible, brings diversity and interdisciplinarity in the Action MC.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cost.eu/cnc>

Nomination process shall be as follows:

	Representation	Responsible for nomination	Nomination	
			Before Action MC1	After Action MC1
<b>COST F/C Member</b>	Action MC Member (up to 2)	CNC	Direct nomination by the responsible for nomination	The nomination needs tacit validation by the Action MC.  The Action MC may refuse the nomination within 4 weeks of nomination based on a written Science and Technology/networks justification.
<b>COST Partner Member</b>	Action MC Observer (up to 2)	CNC		
<b>Specific Organisations</b>	Action MC Observer (max 1)	Future Action MC Observer (on behalf of the Organisation)		

**The nomination shall occur through the nomination dedicated online tool in e-COST.**

The Action MC validation procedure for new Action MC Members and Action MC Observers nominations is further detailed in Article 3.5.2.a - Validation of new Action MC Members and Observers.

### 3.2. Substitution of Management Committee Members and Observers

Action MC Members and Observers may – but are not forced to – nominate their substitute for a specific event or a specific period.

The substitute shall be appointed **among the Working Group (WG) members affiliated in the same COST Member or Specific Organisation**. The nomination shall take place through a proxy.

A proxy may not be provided for an unlimited duration and shall be **limited to a maximum of 6 months**.

The proxy shall be brought to the attention of the Responsible for nomination of the relevant COST Member or Specific Organisation and of the Action Chair.

**The online tool in e-COST dedicated to appointment of a substitute shall be used by the Action MC Member or Observer to appoint their Action MC substitute among the Working Group (WG) members affiliated in the same COST Member or Specific Organisation.**

For the notion of affiliation, see Article 4)1.1.a.1) - Affiliation.

When appointed, the substitute takes over all powers and duties of the Action MC Member or Action MC Observer they replace for the duration of the appointment as taken over in the proxy.

### 3.3. Management Committee meetings

The Action MC shall meet **at least once a year** face to face, by virtual means or in hybrid mode.

Action MC Members and Observers shall **be invited to the Action MC meetings by default**.

The **Action MC may invite to its meetings any other individual** relevant for the progress of the Action in an advisory position.

#### 3.3.1. FREQUENCY AND PLACE OF THE ACTION MC MEETINGS

The Action MC shall be convened by the Action Chair as often as required for the performance of its tasks but not less than one Action MC meeting per year.

The Action MC may also be convened at the request of Action MC Members representing at least three COST Full or Cooperating Members represented in the Action MC or on request of the COST Association.

Meetings shall be held where the Action MC considers it advisable to meet or by means of a virtual communication tool to which all Action MC Members can have access, and in compliance with the rules for the location of COST Action meeting in Article 6.3 - Location of COST Action networking activities.

#### **Recommendations:**

In order to ensure that most of the Action budget go to networking activities (see Article 1.5), Action MC meetings should be held in conjunction with another approved COST Action activity and preferably with a COST Action Workshop or COST Action Conference to consolidate travel expenses if organized face-to-face.

The recommended duration of Action MC meetings is half a day; Action MC meetings should not last more than a day unless there is a clear justification.

#### 3.3.2. PARTICIPATION IN ACTION MC MEETINGS

**COST Association representatives and all Action MC Members and Action MC Observers shall be invited by default to attend Action MC meetings.**

However, where the Action MC decides to limit reimbursement of expenses for attending to Action MC meetings to one Action MC Member per COST Full or Cooperating Member as per Article 6.2:

- The Action MC Members from each Full or Cooperating Member shall decide among themselves whom of them shall be the one benefiting from reimbursement;
- The other Action MC Member shall be able to be present in the meeting or via virtual means.

The Action MC may decide to invite **any relevant individual** to its meetings, be them e.g. WG members, holders of Mandatory Leadership Positions or other Leadership positions, relevant experts.

#### 3.3.3. AGENDA AND MEETING MINUTES

#### **Rule:**

A standard Action MC agenda, available in e-COST platform, shall be used for each Action MC meeting; if needed, additional points for discussion may be added.

Minutes of Action MC meeting shall be taken and, following approval by the Action MC, uploaded into e-COST together with the relevant documents.

Minutes shall include decisions made during the meeting but also any decision made by e-vote (see Article 3.8 - Management Committee decision making) between two meetings.

Discussions and minutes of Action MC meeting shall by default be public. The Action MC may however decide that its discussions or certain minutes of meetings shall be considered confidential (see I.4 - Respect for confidentiality and privacy for implementation of the confidentiality).

#### Recommendation:

The minutes should be made available at the latest 4 weeks after the Action MC meeting.

### 3.4. Management Committee Role

The role of the Action MC shall be to:

- Take necessary actions to meet the aims and objectives of the COST Action by assuring all relevant aspects of the management of the network, stakeholder engagement and dissemination of results,
- Contribute to the COST mission and strategic priorities.

The Action MC is the **decision-making body of the Action**. The Action MC shall oversee the strategy of the Action, coordinate the open network and its activities in line with the MoU and the approved Work and Budget Plan(s) and contribute to COST mission and strategic priorities.<sup>12</sup>

The Action MC Members or Observers shall:

- Actively participate to the work of at least one WG,
- Serve and represent their COST Member or Specific Organisation's community in order to:
  - coordinate the input to the Action at national level or inside a Specific Organisation,
  - disseminate opportunities arising within the Action at national level or inside a Specific Organisation; and
  - report to the Responsible for nomination as required.

### 3.5. Management Committee Rights and Powers

The Action MC shall have **all required decision powers for governing the COST Action** in order to implement activities and manage the budget in view of achieving the MoU objectives.

The Action MC may implement the organisational structure for the Action to the best needs of the Action, this includes setting-up advisory committees serving purposes as defined by the Action MC.

Decisions shall be **made in compliance with the Rules and Principles for COST activities and the present rules complemented by level C Rules**.

For details in case of breaches of the COST Rules and Principles included the ones of the present Annotated Rules for COST Actions, refer to III - Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

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<sup>12</sup> COST mission can be found at <https://www.cost.eu/who-we-are/mission-vision-and-values/> and strategic priorities at <https://www.cost.eu/about/cost-strategy/>

### 3.5.1. GENERAL

Taking due account of the Action MC Duties as per Article 3.7. hereunder, the **Action MC 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 COST Action,**
- **Be informed of the progress in the Action and act accordingly.**

The power to make any necessary decisions to meet the aims and objectives of the COST Action covers all fields of activities from the COST Action, going from the structure of the COST Action in Working Groups, including their membership, to the decisions regarding the activities that best serve those aims and objectives, including financial decisions. The Action MC Members shall keep in mind that they are held accountable for their decisions in line with the COST Principle on Good governance, financial soundness, and efficiency as per I.5.

The right of the Action MC to be informed of the progress of the Action implies an obligation to the established Working Groups and the Core Group if any (see Article 3.6 - Delegation of powers) to report regularly to the Action MC on their activities, achievements and issues.

### 3.5.2. ACTION MANAGEMENT

#### 3.5.2.a. Validation of new Action MC Members and Observers

- With regard to Action management:
  - Tacitly validate new Action MC Members and Observers or refuse them within 4 weeks of nomination; explicit refusal shall require a written Science and Technology / networking justification in compliance with the rules for Nomination to the Management Committee as per Article 3.1.

Before the start of the Action, nominated persons will automatically become Action MC Members or Observers.

In compliance with the process for Nomination to the Management Committee as per Article 3.1, after the Action MC1 meeting, new Action MC Members and Observers shall be validated by the Action MC.

Validation will normally occur tacitly, i.e. without any action of the Action MC. However, the nominee can be explicitly approved or refused by an Action MC decision. The refusal shall be based on a written Science and Technology and/or networking justification taken within 4 weeks of the nomination. Where no explicit decision of refusal was made within 4 weeks of nomination, the nomination is validated. The nominee is then requested to accept the role. The nominee becomes Action MC Member or Observer upon acceptance of the role.

When a new Action MC Member or Observer **is nominated** by a COST National Coordinator (CNC) or Responsible for Nomination **after the Action MC1 meeting**, the Action MC will be notified. Should the Action MC decide to refuse the nomination within 4 weeks of nomination, the Action MC shall provide a written Science and Technology / networking justification.

The Responsible for Nomination (CNC of the relevant COST Member or Responsible for Nomination for the Specific Organisations) and the concerned nominee will be informed of the outcome of the decision.

### 3.5.2.b. WG membership

- Manage the WGs membership which shall include but not be limited to:
  - Defining criteria for WG composition and procedure for WG membership approval in line with the COST Principles as per [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#), Article 3,
  - Approving, refusing or, where this power is delegated, supervising the decisions on the WG membership applications against set criteria: **WG applications shall be reviewed on a regular basis, the maximum delay between two reviews shall be 3 months** as per Article 3.7 - Management Committee Duties,
  - Terminating WG membership against set criteria,
  - Excluding a WG member where applicable as per the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#), Article 6 - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

The objectives of Working Groups (WG) are to perform the tasks required for a COST Action to fulfil its scientific objectives in line with those objectives defined in the MoU.

The Action MC shall establish the Working Groups and define their scope of activities. The Action MC shall also adopt the criteria for WG composition and membership. Where defining those criteria, the Action MC shall pay due attention to COST Principles.

The Action MC Members and Observers will have access through e-COST to the WG applications submitted.

The approval of WG applications may be delegated to the Core Group, if any (see Article 3.6 - Delegation of powers).

#### **Recommendation:**

At the Action MC1 meeting, the WG member applications already submitted should be reviewed by the Action MC in order for the Action MC to take the WG members in account for election to Mandatory Leadership positions (see Article 3.9). Upon request, WG applicants willing to candidate for Mandatory Leadership positions should be invited to the meeting.

### 3.5.2.c. Leadership positions

- Elect or replace individuals for **leadership positions** in compliance with the rules on Access to leadership positions as per Article 3.9.,
- Select or replace the Grant Holder in compliance with the rules for Grant Holder as per Article 7.4,
- Where required, delegate part of their powers and manage the delegation of powers in compliance with the rules for Delegation of powers as per Article 3.6.,
- Supervise the work of the holders of mandatory and non-mandatory leadership positions and of the GH.

#### 3.5.2.d. Other rights and powers

- Decide on any confidentiality clause and Intellectual Property Rights Agreement as deemed required,
- Take decision in case of Breach of COST Rules and Principles as per [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#), Article 6.

Where applicable, the Action MC shall agree on how to handle intellectual property rights of the Action results obtained or expected, be it by written agreement among the Action MC Members or otherwise. For guidance regarding intellectual property rights within a COST Action, see 5 - Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation of the COST Action results

#### 3.5.3. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

The Action MC has also all financial powers as required for the management of the COST Action, among which in particular.

- 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 COST Action funding and administration as per Article 7.

The Work and Budget Plan shall be approved by the Action MC and the COST Administration before any COST Action activity can be implemented. For details on the adoption of the Work and Budget Plan, see Article 7.2.2.

- With regard to financial support to COST Actions, implement the financial support to COST Actions in compliance with the rules for Implementation by the Management Committee of financial support to COST Actions as per Article 6.2.

### 3.6. Delegation of powers

The Action MC may delegate part of their powers to a Core Group to be designated by the Action MC.

The Action MC may withdraw the delegation of powers at any time.

The Action MC shall designate by majority vote the members of the Core Group among Action MC Members and Observers and holders of leadership positions. The Openness and Inclusiveness COST Principle shall be respected when designating the members of the Core Group. The Core Group shall as a minimum be composed of the Chair, Vice-Chair and the WG leaders.

The Core Group may carry on day-to-day management and urgency cases. The Action MC powers shall not be fully delegated.

The delegation of powers shall imply an obligation for the Core Group to swiftly report to the Action MC. The delay between two reports shall not exceed 3 months (see Article 3.7 - Management Committee Duties).

Decisions made in the framework of the delegation of powers are subject to Action MC control. The Action MC may invalidate those decisions in case they have overpassed the scope of the delegation of powers. Invalidated decisions shall be subject, where required, to a new decision of the Action MC.

The Action MC may delegate part of their powers to a Core Group.

The Core Group shall **only** be competent to take decisions **as delegated to it by the Action MC**.

The Delegation of powers shall therefore be in writing and clearly list the powers that are delegated to it.

**Some powers shall never be delegated. Those are as follows:**

- Validation of Action MC Members and Observers;
- Establishing the Working Groups, defining their scope of activities and adopting the criteria for WG composition and membership;
- Electing, selecting or replacing holders of Mandatory Leadership positions;
- Supervising the work of the holders of Mandatory Leadership positions and of the Grant Holder,
- Approving Work and Budget Plans (for the preparation of Action Grant Agreement and its amendments see Article 7.2.2 and 7.3);
- Excluding a WG member where applicable as per III.2.2 - Breach by a WG participant;
- Decide on any confidentiality clause and Intellectual Property Rights Agreement as deemed required;
- Submission of a request for extension.

All other powers may be delegated.

#### **Recommendation:**

The Action should seek advice from the Science Officer for establishing the Delegation of powers.

#### **Examples:**

By experience, the following powers are commonly delegated to the Core Group:

- Change of place and date of activities;
- Invitation to participants for networking activities;
- Selection of providers for dissemination items (e.g. website, publications, etc.);
- Approval or refusal of WG applications as well as termination of WG membership against criteria set by the Action MC;
- Selection of invited participants who will be reimbursed.

The Core Group **may not subdelegate its tasks**. Should there be a need for a specific power of the Action MC to be delegated to a single person, this shall be subject to a decision of the Action MC which shall be made before the delegated task be executed.

The Core Group shall report to the Action MC their decisions. Reporting can be made in writing. **Reporting shall occur with maximum 3 months delay between two reports.**

At the next Action MC meeting, the reports shall be validated by the Action MC.

### 3.7. Management Committee Duties

The Action MC 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 Action's progress upon request,
- Adopt a **Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation strategy** and implement it in compliance with the rules for as per Article 5.
- In case of **conflict with the Grant Holder** on implementation of decisions of the Action MC regarding financial support to COST Actions, **report** to the COST Administration for conflict resolution in compliance with the rules for Grant Holder as per Article 7.4
- **Approve or refuse swiftly Working Group(s) membership applications.** The maximum delay between application and decision shall not exceed 3 months,
- Adopt **required reports** in the frame of COST Action budget and administration in compliance with the rules for Reporting on the use of the COST Grant as per Article 7.5,
- Establish **progress reports** and actively participate in the process of COST Action monitoring and final assessment in compliance with the rules for COST Action monitoring and final assessment as per Article 8,
- In fulfilling their powers, take into consideration the findings, advice, and recommendations of the Action Rapporteur in the frame of the COST Action monitoring in compliance with the rules for COST Action monitoring and final assessment as per Article 8.

### 3.8. Management Committee decision making

Each COST Full and Cooperating Member represented in the Action MC has one vote in the Action MC.

COST Partner Members and Specific Organisations represented in the Action MC may not vote (advisory role).

Decisions shall be taken by simple majority:

- At Action MC meetings if a quorum of 2/3 of COST Full and Cooperating Members is present (including virtually) or represented; or
- By written silent procedure through the e-vote tool provided by the COST Administration.

Each COST Full and Cooperating Member represented in the Action MC has one vote in the Action MC. Action MC Observers and other attendees may contribute to the discussions but have not voting rights.

### 3.8.1. QUORUM

A COST Full and Cooperating Member is represented in the Action MC when the corresponding COST National Coordinator (CNC) has nominated an Action MC Member for that COST Action.

The quorum is reached when 2/3 of the COST Full or Cooperating Members having nominated an Action MC Member in the said COST Action are represented by at least one Action MC Member (or their appointed substitute) present (including virtually) in the meeting.

#### **Example:**

The COST Action has 35 nominated Action MC Members from 27 COST Full or Cooperating Members. The quorum is reached when the number of COST Full or Cooperating Members represented in the Action MC meeting by an Action MC Member (in person, virtually or represented by their appointed substitute) reach 18.

Where the 2/3 is not a round number, the 2/3 shall be rounded to the number above (e.g. 11,33 means 12).

**No quorum is required for the e-Vote**, unless stated otherwise in the request for e-Vote.

### 3.8.2. VOTE OF THE ACTION MC MEMBERS OF THE SAME COST FULL OR COOPERATING MEMBERS

Each COST Full or Cooperating Member represented in the Action MC has one vote, hence where a COST Full or Cooperating Member has two nominated Action MC Members, they shall seek for consensus among themselves, however the consensus shall not be imposed.

In case of diverging votes by the two Action MC Members of one COST Full or Cooperating Member, the COST Full or Cooperating Member vote is void.

### 3.8.3. MODALITIES

Decisions of the Action MC shall be made by simple majority votes.

Decisions may be made as follows:

- Vote at an Action MC meeting:  
Decisions at Action MC meetings may only be made if the quorum is reached.  
In case the quorum is not reached, the decisions may not be made at the Action MC but may be proposed to be taken via e-Vote procedure (see below);

Simple majority is reached when at least 51% of the casted votes of the COST Full or Cooperating Members represented in the meeting are in favour of the proposal, after deduction of the abstentions, negative and void votes.

Or

- e-Vote:  
A dedicated online tool for Action MC decision making is available in the e-COST platform and shall be used to seek for written Action MC decision.

Simple majority is reached when at least 51% of the casted votes of the COST Full or Cooperating Members are in favour of the proposal. Absence of reaction (abstention) to a request of e-Vote shall count as tacit approval (i.e., positive vote).

Voting shall be initiated and managed by the Action Chair or Action Vice Chair. The vote shall be open for a minimum of seven calendar days.

The e-Vote tool shall not be used for the following case for which specific e-COST voting solutions exist, which launch the electronic Action MC decision procedure automatically: approval of the Work and Budget Plan.

The outcome of the vote is automatically displayed in the Action MC decisions' page in e-COST and shall be included in the minutes of the next Action MC meeting.

### 3.9. Access to leadership positions

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

The leadership positions are entered on the e-COST leadership positions page and displayed in the COST Action website.

#### 3.9.1. MANDATORY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Some positions in the COST Action management are considered as mandatory leadership positions. The mandatory leadership positions are needed to assure the minimal needs of a COST Action, i.e.:

- Positions related to the Action MC and funding of the Action: Chair, Vice Chair and Grant Holder Scientific Representative (GH SR) – those positions shall be filled in by election of the Action MC as per article 3.5 at the first Management Committee (Action MC1) meeting,
- Positions related to the coordination of the WGs defined by the Action: Working Group Leaders,
- Position related to Grant awarding: Grant Awarding Coordinator,
- Position related to dissemination and communication: Science Communication Coordinator.

The **Chair, Vice Chair and Grant Holder Scientific Representative shall be elected by the Action MC at the Action MC1 meeting (first Action MC meeting).**

#### Recommendations:

The other Mandatory Leadership positions as well as any other leadership positions deemed necessary by the Action should also be elected at the Action MC1 meeting.

In case a Mandatory Leadership position or any other leadership position deemed necessary by the Action becomes vacant, it is recommended that election of a new holder of the position takes place without any undue delay, subject to conditions as mentioned under Article 3.9.4. - Access to leadership positions.

#### 3.9.1.a. Roles of the mandatory leadership positions

##### 3)9.1.a.1) Action Chair and Vice-Chair

The Action Chair has the following tasks and responsibilities:

- Coordinate COST Action activities in line with the scientific aims and objectives defined in the COST Action MoU and the Work and Budget Plan;
- Chair the Action MC and convene Action MC meetings, including preparing the meeting agenda and validating the meeting minutes;
- Prepare for all decisions to be made by the Action MC as per Article 3.5 - Management Committee Rights and Powers, notably:

- Prepare a Work and Budget Plan in line with the allocated budget (see Article 7.2.2 for details on the Work and Budget plan);
- Negotiate the Work and Budget Plan on behalf of the Action MC with the COST Administration (through the Science Officer); Where required (e.g. due to revision of Grant Period duration or allocated Budget), prepare and negotiate a revised Work and Budget Plan to be approved by the Action MC after approval by the COST Administration (through the Science Officer);
- Seek, on behalf of the Action MC, after approval of the Action MC, approval of the COST Administration through the Science Officer for significant changes to the approved Work and Budget Plan as per Article 7.2.2.
- Manage Action MC votes as per Article 3.8, and communicate the outcome of Action MC decisions to the Grant Holder Manager and the Action Science Officer;
- Act as required as per Article 6.2 and 7.5 with regard to financial responsibilities of the Action MC;
- Inform the Action Science Officer about key developments in the COST Action;
- Prepare with the Action MC and submit on behalf of the Action MC to COST Association the requested Monitoring Progress Reports and Final Achievement Report of the COST Action.

The role of the Vice Chair is to assist the Chair and replace the Chair when required or mandated to.

#### **3)9.1.a.2) Grant Holder Scientific Representative**

The Grant Holder Scientific Representative is the liaison between the Grant Holder and the Action MC. See Article 7.4.3 for details.

#### **3)9.1.a.3) WG leader(s)**

The WG leader is responsible for:

- Coordinating and managing activities and tasks associated with achieving the COST Action scientific and networking objectives specific to the Working Group they lead, taking into account the COST Principles and Rules;
- Providing input for the preparation of the Progress Reports and Final Achievement Report as per Article 8 and presenting the progress of the Working Group to the Action MC, and the COST Association, if deemed necessary;
- Ensuring the appropriate dissemination of results and outputs generated by the Working Group in order to maximise the impact of the COST Action.

#### **3)9.1.a.4) Grant Awarding Coordinator**

The Grant Awarding Coordinator is coordinating the awarding by the Action of Grants to support the mobility of Researchers and Innovators and the presentation of Action results at a conference organised by a third party. The networking activities organised through the Grant Awarding Process are described in ANNEX 2 - Networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process.

#### **3)9.1.a.5) Science Communication Coordinator**

The Science Communication Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the implementation of a communication and dissemination strategy to enable the Action achieving its objectives and to increase the visibility of the network, playing a crucial role in bridging the gap between the Action scientific achievements and the public.

The Science Communication Coordinator is charged with the following main tasks:

- To be the main contact point for both Action participants and external parties for questions on Action communication, dissemination, and valorisation;
- To coordinate efforts of communication, dissemination and valorisation of Action activities and results;
- To implement the Action communication plan and coordinate efforts of revision or amendment of the plan where necessary or relevant;
- To be the main contact point of the COST Administration for communication related matters.

### 3.9.2. OPENNESS AND INCLUSIVENESS IN MANDATORY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Mandatory leadership positions allocation **shall reflect the diversity of the Action in terms of geographical diversity and Openness and Inclusiveness.**

**Among mandatory leadership positions, at least one shall be reserved to an ITC affiliated individual.**

COST Actions shall make their best efforts to contribute to the overall indicatory targets provided in I.1.3. - COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy with regard to election to Mandatory Leadership positions.

The list of COST Inclusiveness Target Countries can be found in the [Country and Organisations Table](#).

**The Chair and Vice Chair shall not have the same affiliation neither to their legal entity nor to their COST Full or Cooperating Member.**

#### **Recommendations:**

The Chair and Vice Chair should not have any additional other Mandatory Leadership position.

It is also recommended that no more than two holders of Mandatory Leadership positions are from the same COST Member or Specific Organisation, and not more than one when they share the COST Member or Specific Organisation affiliation with the Chair or Action Vice-Chair.

### 3.9.3. OTHER LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

COST Actions are furthermore **free to establish any other leadership positions according to their own needs** and include them in the evaluation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy.

COST Actions may establish any other leadership positions serving the needs of the Action.

Leadership positions freely established by COST Actions should address the COST Principle of Excellence and Inclusiveness and shall be taken in consideration during the evaluation of the implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy by the Action.

### 3.9.4. ACCESS TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Access to leadership positions shall be as follows:

Affiliation to	Mandatory positions		Other leadership positions (e.g. WG co-leaders, international advisor, ....)
	Chair/Vice Chair GH SR Grant Awarding Coordinator	WG Leader Science Communication Coordinator	
Legal entity in a COST F/C 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	✗	✗	✓

The table above shall be read in conjunction with the following conditions:

Further to the conditions of the table above,

- The **Chair and Vice Chair positions** shall be reserved to individuals who are Action MC Members or Observers **at the time of their election**,

The **Grant Holder Scientific Representative (GH SR)** position shall be reserved to an individual who is an Action MC Member or Observer in compliance with the rules for Grant Holder as per Article 7.4.

When a **Chair, Vice Chair, WG Leader, Grant Awarding Coordinator or Science Communication Coordinator** **changes their country affiliation**, the Action MC shall be informed. When allowed under the conditions specified in the table above, the Action MC **may decide to keep the individual in the position if it is deemed beneficial to the Action**.

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

See Article 7.4 for the details in this regard.

## 4. PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS IN COST ACTIONS

COST Actions shall be open and inclusive: Participation shall be open to all as from the date of approval of the COST Actions.

### 4.1. Participation modalities, rights, and duties

#### 4.1.1. WG PARTICIPATION – LONG-TERM PARTICIPATION

##### 4.1.1.a. Modalities

Participation to a COST Action may take the form of a long-term participation, in which case, the concerned individual participates as WG member to the COST Action.

Participation as WG member shall be **open to any individual affiliated in a legal entity** wherever in the world, except in cases of Incompatibilities as per Article 4.2.

Participation as WG member shall imply a **duty** to contribute to the realisation of the objectives of the WG and shall give rights of access to activities and information shared in the Action.

Participation as WG member shall be reflected on the **COST website for visibility purposes**.

##### 4)1.1.a.1) Affiliation

In order to become a WG member, **any individual shall be affiliated to a legal entity** which may be based wherever in the world.

An **affiliation** is any form of recognised relationship between the individual and a legal entity.

**Examples** of affiliation may be (non-exhaustive list):

- A work contract;
- Enrolment in a research performing study programme (for example PhD or Post-Doctoral programme);
- Voluntary service in a NGO;
- Emeritus professorship.

In case of doubt where the Action cannot help, the applicant should contact the Science or Administrative Officer in charge of the COST Action (as displayed on COST Action page on COST website) for further guidance.

A **legal entity can be (non-exhaustive list)** a public entity (national, regional, local public authority or any other kind of public entity), a university, a research centre, company, association, Specific Organisation (see Article 1.3) or any other form of legal entity recognised under a national or international framework.

The **seat of the legal entity shall be used to determine the country of affiliation of the WG participant**.

**Where a legal entity has several seats in the world or affiliated individuals work from different places in the world, the country of workplace shall be considered as the country of affiliation.**

The attention of applicants is called upon this aspect when filling-in their e-COST profile, the legal entity of affiliation **shall be provided with an accurate address** (this is essential notably for numerous processes via e-COST). No personal address shall be provided for the affiliation.

**Participants shall also pay attention to always keep their e-COST profile up to date.**

Where individuals have several affiliations, **they are responsible to mention in their e-COST profile their primary affiliation** (meaning the legal entity that they consider as their main affiliation).

#### 4)1.1.a.2) Visibility on COST website

In order to give visibility to WG members, their participation will be displayed on the Action page on the COST website (for more details on privacy, see <https://e-services.cost.eu/privacy-notice>).

#### 4.1.1.b. Application and approval

Application to participate as WG member shall:

- be open as of the date of the COST Action MoU publication on the COST website and remain possible for the whole duration of the Action,
- be subject to Action MC approval as per article 3.5.

The Responsible for Nomination of COST Members or Observers shall have access to the applications for COST Actions. The Responsible for nomination shall be entitled but not forced to choose among applicants affiliated in legal entities of their country to nominate their Action MC Members.

**Applications to become a Working Group member shall be submitted via the Action page on the COST website, the dedicated tool being accessible as from the date of publication of the MoU.**

An individual applying to membership in a WG can also indicate the interest to become an Action MC Member or Observer. This information can be used by the COST National Coordinator (CNC) or Responsible for Nomination.

The Action MC shall review the WG membership applications on a regular basis. The maximum delay between application and decision shall not exceed 3 months as per Article 3.7.

Action MC Members need to apply to one or more WGs of the Action. Their WG application may not be rejected.

#### 4.1.2. AD-HOC CONTRIBUTION – SHORT-TERM PARTICIPATION

Participation to a COST Action may also take the form of an ad-hoc participation, subject to invitation by the Action MC during the lifetime of the Action. Incompatibilities as per Article 4.2 shall also apply to ad-hoc participation.

**Ad-hoc participants shall have an affiliation as per Article 4)1.1.a.1).**

#### 4.1.3. RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF A COST ACTION PARTICIPANT

Participation in a COST Action as WG member, including as Action MC Member, or via an ad-hoc contribution **does not entitle the concerned individual to be reimbursed of their expenses for participating in COST Action activities**. The reimbursement shall be subject to the decision of the Action MC regarding the **Error! Reference source not found**. as per Article **Error! Reference source not found**. and the rules for Eligibility to receive financial support as per Article 6.4.

For rules on eligibility for reimbursement of expenses when participating in COST Action activities, see Articles 6.2, 6.4 and dedicated Annex for the relevant networking activity.

Individuals participating in a COST Action **shall be bound by the present rules as complemented by level C Rules and the COST Rules and Principles.**

**COST Actions participants and all actors involved in a COST Action are required to abide by the COST Principles and COST Rules, including the rules described in the present Annotated Rules.** Non-abidance by those may lead to measures as per III. Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

## 4.2. Incompatibilities

Some functions at COST or in an evaluation, selection or approval procedure of a COST Action proposal or in the monitoring and final assessment of a COST Action shall be incompatible with a participation in a COST Action. 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 Action MC Members, WG members, be invited for an ad-hoc participation nor be Action Rapporteur in any Action,
- A former CSO Delegate or Scientific Committee Member may not be Action MC Member, WG member, be invited for an ad-hoc contribution nor be Action Rapporteur in any Action selected or approved during their mandate,
- External Experts and Review Panel Members having been involved in the evaluation of a proposal may not be Action MC Member nor WG member in the Action deriving from that proposal, they however may be invited for an ad-hoc contribution or be Action Rapporteur for that Action,
- Action Rapporteurs may not be Action MC Member, WG member neither be invited for an ad-hoc contribution in the Action they are reviewing.

**The concerned individuals shall ensure they comply with their obligations in this regard.**

## 5. COMMUNICATION, DISSEMINATION AND VALORISATION OF THE COST ACTION RESULTS

The Action MC shall adopt an appropriate Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation strategy and implement it throughout the duration of a COST Action.

Strategic communication of COST Actions aims at informing all relevant stakeholders about the Action and results.

Dissemination of the COST Action results shall follow Open Science including Open Access as further defined in level C Rules.

COST Actions aim at the valorisation of their results by facilitating their uptake by the European research and innovation community and the society at large.

The Action MC shall be supported by the Science Communication Coordinator in those tasks.

The level C Rules shall describe the obligations of the COST Actions with regard to visibility of COST and acknowledgement of the support of EU funding in their communication and dissemination.

### 5.1. General principle and rules

As a **general principle**, COST Actions shall make their best effort **to inform** all relevant stakeholders about the Action and Action results, to **follow principles of Open Science and Open Access in dissemination**, and to aim at the **valorisation of their results** by facilitating their uptake by the European research and innovation community and the society at large.

#### Rule:

COST Actions Action MC shall:

- Appoint a Science Communication Coordinator (see Article 3)9.1.a.5));
- Adopt a written Science Communication Plan including an appropriate Communication; Dissemination and Valorisation strategy as well as a plan for the implementation of this strategy.

Additionally, when COST Actions use the Action budget for communication, dissemination, or valorisation of Action results, **COST Actions shall:**

- Make any reproducible item (including, but not limited to, articles, papers, books, manifestos, pamphlets, flyers, presentations, videos and webinars) financed with this budget publicly accessible according to principles of Open Access;
- Acknowledge COST as a funding source in any reproducible item financed with this budget, as well as during any activity financed with this budget. The acknowledgement shall follow the [COST guidelines on visual identity](#)<sup>13</sup>.

### 5.2. Stewardship to Science Communication

The COST Administration provides a range of tools and trainings to allow COST Actions to improve and maximise the impact of its strategy on communication, dissemination, and valorisation.

The Science Communication Coordinator (see Article 3)9.1.a.5)), in close consultation with the Core Group and the Action MC, should explore how these tools and trainings can be used to the advantage of the COST Action.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cost.eu/about/visual-identity/>

### 5.3. Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation strategy

Each Action MC shall adopt a Science Communication Plan including a communication, dissemination, and valorisation strategy, as well as a plan to implement this strategy.

#### Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Science Communication Plan is approved by the Management Committee not later than 6 months after the start date of the Action. It is recommended that the Science Communication Plan, including progress on implementation, is discussed on a yearly basis by the Action MC and reviewed or amended where necessary.

The Science Communication Plan should indicatively contain the following elements:

- Strategy on communication of the Action results;  
This includes an exploration of potential audiences for the Action results (media, policy makers, stakeholders, industrial partners, NGOs etc), how and when to contact these, the potential communication formats used and the goal of strategy;
- Strategy on dissemination of the Action results;  
This includes an overview of the scientific partners to reach out to, including where relevant peers from scientific disciplines or fields which are (initially) not included in the Action. It could identify relevant conferences, journals or other scientific forums to disseminate the Action results;
- Strategy on valorisation of the Action results;  
This includes potential end users to reach out to during and after the lifetime of the Actions, a mapping of Action results (potentially) relevant outside the strict scientific sphere and methods and formats to promote synergies between the Actions and partners for valorisation;
- Implementation of the strategy;  
This includes a tentative timeline for activities and deliverables concerning communication, dissemination and valorisation, as well as the Action Working Groups and other Action partners involved in the implementation.

The Science Communication Plan shall reflect the MoU in particular connecting to the aims and objectives of the Action. The Science Communication Plan should, additionally, include a reflecting on the Action approach to Open Science and Open Access, as described in Article 5.4 hereunder.

### 5.4. Open Science and Open Access

As an implementation of the COST Principle of Openness And Inclusiveness as per I.1.1, COST shall commit to promote **Open Science including through Open Access** of the outputs of COST activities, notably through the dissemination of their results and outcomes.

This COST Principle shall be implemented within COST Actions for COST Actions activities and results.

Any deviation from the principles of Open Science in any form by the Action shall be explicitly motivated by the Action and approved by the Management Committee.

As a part of the Open Science approach, the Action shall consider how principles of Open Access apply to the Action and any spin-offs produced by the Action.

The Action Management Committee should discuss how principles of Open Science apply to the Action, the Action aims and objectives and the foreseen Action activities. The Action MC is empowered to set its own norms in interpreting these principles.

Actions shall apply the Principle of Openness to Action activities, indicatively and non-exhaustively including:

- Adherence to principles of FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable ) data sharing;
- Allowing Action activities to be openly accessible to interested individuals, to the extent practically realisable;

- Making any proceedings, material or other object of interest to which the Action or Action activities contributed accessible to any interested third party;
- Maintaining openness concerning strategic and operational choices by the Action, including openness on Action partners and potential Action spin-offs or follow-ups.

**For any reproducible item (including, but not limited to, articles, papers, books, manifestos, pamphlets, flyers, presentations, videos and webinars) for which COST Grant is used, Open Access is mandatory.**

#### **Recommendations:**

**For any other reproducible item to which Action activities have contributed materially (for example, a publication resulting from an STSM or a workshop), Open Access is strongly recommended.**

It is strongly recommended that the Action produces at least once during its lifetime an **Open Access publication which summarises the main proceedings of the Action**. Dependent on budget availability, it is recommended that the Action reserves budget for such a publication during one of its grant periods.

## **5.5. Intellectual property rights**

### **5.5.1. PREVIOUSLY EXISTING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS**

Following the COST Principle of Openness and based on Open Science, COST Actions are open networks of individuals where disclosure of research data among participants should not be hindered, notably by intellectual property rights attached to Background information brought by participants for the purpose of the COST Action.

If any, intellectual property rights attached to Background information shall remain the exclusive property of the participant who introduced the information for use by the COST Action. However, each participant should grant each of the other participants involved in a COST Action a non-exclusive royalty-free right and license to use and access its Background information for the duration of the COST Action and for the sole purpose of conducting the COST Action.

A participant shall not use or make use of another participant's result or Background information without obtaining prior written approval unless these have already been published (and then with proper reference). A breach in this regard may lead to measures as per III. Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

### **5.5.2. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS ON ACTION RESULTS**

COST Actions can on the other side generate Action Results which might be in need to be protected by equitable and fair provisions for the management of their use, ownership, and/or their protection under intellectual property rights.

Whilst those provisions may not hinder the communication and dissemination of the COST Action Results, each Action MC shall take the necessary steps, be it by written agreement among the participants or otherwise, to protect these rights, if any.

COST Actions can seek support in dealing with intellectual property rights from the COST Administration or national institutions of affiliations, IPR specialist national or EU agencies (see for example the [European IPR Helpdesk](https://www.iprhelppdesk.eu/home)<sup>14</sup> dedicated to support in IPR). Useful reading materials are available on:

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.iprhelppdesk.eu/home>

- The IP Resources library of the [IP Helpdesk of the European Commission](#)<sup>15</sup>;The [European Union Intellectual Property Office](#)<sup>16</sup>;The [Resources portal of the World Intellectual Property Organization \(WIPO\)](#)<sup>17</sup>.

### 5.5.3. USE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OF THIRD PARTIES BY THE ACTION

COST Actions shall take specific care when using for the benefit of the Action intellectual property of third parties (such as pictures, raw data etc.).

Whilst the use of intellectual property is in most cases free for science purposes, this shall not always be the case where data / information is used for dissemination purposes (e.g. on the website of the Action). COST Actions, in particular Science Communication Coordinators and Grant Holders, shall therefore be attentive to those aspects.

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<sup>15</sup> [https://intellectual-property-helpdesk.ec.europa.eu/regional-helpdesks/european-ip-helpdesk\\_en](https://intellectual-property-helpdesk.ec.europa.eu/regional-helpdesks/european-ip-helpdesk_en)

<sup>16</sup> <https://euipo.europa.eu/ohimportal/en>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.wipo.int/reference/en/>

## 6. FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COST ACTIONS: NETWORKING ACTIVITIES AND OTHER EXPENSES

COST shall fund networking activities and other expenses supporting the Action.

The financial support to COST Actions shall address the aims and objectives of the COST Action.

COST Actions may also conduct activities that are not funded by COST.

### 6.1. Scope of the financial support to COST Actions

Funding provided by COST supports **networking activities**, namely:

- Meetings (Action MC, WG 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 COST Actions' work and results.

**Other expenses specifically supporting the Action** shall include:

- Dissemination and communication products,
- Expenses incurred for the benefit of the network.

The level C Rules shall describe the scope of the funding schemes as well as their working and financial modalities.

**Meetings and Training Schools** are implemented via the organisation of events.

**Mobility of Researchers and Innovators** and **Presentation at conferences organised by third parties** are implemented via a grant awarding process.

**Dissemination and Communication Products** are acquired in support of the Science Communication Plan adopted by the Action.

**Expenses incurred for the benefit of the Action** may comprise:

- **Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities**, for the acquisition of services and products needed for the optimal implementation of the networking activities and the achievement of the MoU objectives.
- **Virtual Networking Support**, for promoting virtual collaboration as a complement to traditional ways of collaboration within the research and innovation communities.

In addition, **Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination** (FSAC) is a contribution to the Grant Holder in support the execution of the financial, scientific, and administrative coordination tasks relating to managing and coordinating Action activities during a given Grant Period.

The Annexes to the present Rules aim at describing:

- The Benefits and Scope of the funded activities and its implementation;
- The Working modalities of the funded activities including with regard to the implementation of their funding scheme;
- The funding schemes.

**ANNEX 1** describes the networking activities implemented via organisation of events, such as Meetings and Training Schools.

**ANNEX 2** describes the networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process, i.e. Mobility of Researchers and Innovators and Presentation at conferences organised by third parties.

**ANNEX 3** describes the acquisition of Dissemination and Communication Products.

**ANNEX 4** describes the Expenses incurred for the benefit of the network.

**ANNEX 5** describes the Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination (FSAC).

The EB of the COST Association may adopt new funding schemes for supporting COST Actions whilst abiding by the present rules and COST Principles and by the legal and contractual framework applicable to COST and report accordingly to the CSO.

Should the Executive Board of the COST Association adopt new funding schemes, the present Annotated Rules for COST Actions will be updated.

The Action networking activities shall be planned by the Action MC in compliance with the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#).

**Action MC when planning networking activities are required to abide by the COST Principles and COST rules, including the rules described in the present Annotated Rules.** Non-abidance by those may lead to measures as per III. Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

## 6.2. Implementation by the Management Committee of financial support to COST Actions

The Action MC shall implement the **networking activities** and make decisions regarding the **other expenses specifically supporting the Action** in compliance with COST Principles and within the frame of the present rules as complemented by level C rules.

This shall imply to:

- Invite relevant individuals to participate to the networking activity,
- Decide whether the invitation to a meeting or training school shall imply reimbursement of the expenses carried out to participate in the concerned COST Action networking activity,
- For Action MC meetings, decide whether reimbursement shall apply to all eligible Action MC Members or Observers or to one per COST Full or Cooperating Member or European RTD Organisation. In such case, the following shall apply:
  - the Action MC Members from each Full or Cooperating Member shall decide among themselves whom of them shall be the one benefiting from reimbursement,
  - the other Action MC Members shall be able to be present or represented via virtual means.

- Decide whether to cap to a certain amount the reimbursement of expenses for participating in a COST Action 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. The Action MC shall be supported by the Grant Awarding Coordinator in those tasks.

### 6.3. Location of COST Action networking activities

COST Action networking activities may take place in following locations:

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

Within the frame of the approved Work and Budget Plan, the selection of the location of the COST Action networking activities shall be made by the Action MC (or the Core Group if within its Delegation of Powers) taking in consideration the availability of specific resources (for example a specific equipment needed for a Training School), the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy and the Principle of sound financial management.

## 6.4. Eligibility to receive financial support

**Individuals invited** as per Article 6.2 **and, where applicable, legal entities**, participating in a COST Action 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 COST Action networking activity **as defined in the table hereunder**:

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 (dedicated budget line)						
Specific Organisations	EC/EU	At EC, EU body, office or agency cost (minimisation of cascade funding)						
	Eur. RTD Org.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
	IO	Once in the lifetime of the Action	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
NNC	Legal entity in a NNC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IPC / Third States	Legal entity in an IPC	Once in the lifetime of the Action	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗

\* ITC Conference Grants are limited to Young researchers and innovators from COST Inclusiveness Target Countries and NNC.

The level C Rules shall detail, if any, the expenses carried out to participate in or, where applicable, to organise a COST Action funded activity eligible for such reimbursement.

The affiliation of an individual or a legal entity is determined as per Article 4)1.1.a.1).

The Annexes to the present Rules further describe the rules applicable to the financial support to COST Actions.

## 7. COST ACTION FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION

### 7.1. Funding of a COST Action – The COST Grant

COST Actions shall be **funded and administered through the COST decentralised management scheme**, the COST Grant System (CGS).

COST Actions are funded through the **COST Grant** provided by the COST Association.

The COST Grant shall **only** be used to support **COST Action networking activities and other expenses specifically supporting the Action** as per Article 6 during a specific Grant Period within the frame of the COST Grant budget defined in compliance with the rules for

Action MC1 meeting of a COST Action is fully organised and funded centrally by the COST Association who shall invited the nominated Action MC Members and Action MC Observers. The Main Proposer may suggest that other persons could be invited as attendees. The COST

Action MC1 meeting of a COST Action is fully organised and funded centrally by the COST Association who shall invited the nominated Action MC Members and Action MC Observers. The Main Proposer may suggest that other persons could be invited as attendees. The COST Association has the final say on the invitations to third parties.

After Action MC1 meeting and for the whole duration of the COST Action, the COST Action is funded, administered, and implemented under the tenets of the COST Grant System (CGS).

The COST Grant System (CGS) requires that a Grant Holder administer the COST Grant (see Article 7.4).

The COST Grant shall **only** be used to support **networking activities and other expenses specifically supporting the Action** (see Article 6.1) necessary for and dedicated to achieving the Action's aims and objectives as approved by the Action MC.

COST Grant may not be used for submitting proposals for the purpose of acquiring funding for national, European or internationally sourced research grants.

### 7.2. COST Grant budget

The COST Administration shall, **subject to available funds**, in compliance with COST Principles and in strict abidance with the legal and contractual framework applicable to COST, attribute to each COST Action a **budget per Grant Period**, hereinafter referred to as **COST Grant budget**. The COST Grant budget shall be **the maximum financial contribution of COST towards the COST Action during a Grant Period**.

#### 7.2.1. DETERMINATION OF THE COST GRANT BUDGET

The COST Grant budget shall **vary depending on**:

- Budget available to the COST Association,
- Number of Actions to be funded,
- Size of the network,
- Past performance of the Action in terms of budget completion and abidance of the COST Action with the COST Principles and particularly the principle of Excellence and Inclusiveness as per [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#), Article 3,

**Depending on the budget available to the COST Association**, the COST Grant budget is determined on the basis of the following elements:

- Number of Actions to be funded. Because COST has a closed budget envelope, the number of Actions to be funded has an impact on the average amounts mentioned hereunder;
- In their first year, COST Grant budget is identical for all new Actions;
- As of the second Grant Period, the following elements, are taken into account to determine the COST Grant budget of each Action:
  - An indicative average amount is defined per COST Full or Cooperating Member of affiliation of the WG members of the Action;  
Subject to budget available for COST, increase in the size of the network during a Grant Period will be reflected in the Grant budget of the following Grant Period;
  - An indicative average amount is defined per NNC represented in the Working Groups of the Action.  
Subject to budget available for COST, increase in the number of NNCs represented in the network will be reflected in the Grant budget of the following Grant Period.

The addition of these elements will provide an indicative COST Grant budget for the Action for a Grant Period.

The definitive COST Grant budget will then be determined by the COST Administration on the basis of the past performance of the Action in terms of:

- Budget completion; and
- Abidance of the COST Action with the COST Principles and particularly the Principle of Excellence and Inclusiveness.

This can result in an increase or a decrease of the COST Grant budget per Action.

A COST Grant budget will be provided for the duration of the Grant Period, which shall normally be of 12 months. In case of a shorter or longer Grant Period (excluding extensions based on Science and Technology and / or networking elements – see Article 2.2.1), the COST Grant budget will be calculated by applying a pro-rata to the calculation as mentioned above, depending on budget available.

## 7.2.2. WORK AND BUDGET PLAN

### 7.2.2.a. Content of the Work and Budget Plan

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

The networking activities and other expenses specifically supporting the Action that can be performed or implemented throughout a Grant Period are described in a Work and Budget Plan.

Further, a percentage of up to a maximum of 15% of the actual eligible expenses, referred to as FSAC (Financial, Scientific, Administration and Coordination) – see ANNEX 5, is also defined in the approved Work and Budget Plan.

The approved Work and Budget Plan forms the Annex A of the COST Action Grant Agreement, further described in Article 7.3.

#### 7.2.2.b. Negotiation and approval of the Work and Budget Plan

As per Article 3.5, the Work and Budget Plan shall be negotiated by the Action MC with the COST Administration. **Once agreed upon by the COST Administration, the Action MC shall approve the Work and Budget Plan.**

The Work and Budget Plan shall be negotiated by the Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC.

The information required for negotiation of the Work and Budget Plan is included in the relevant Annexes as per proposed networking activity.

**The approval of the Work and Budget Plan by both the COST Administration through the Action Science Officer and the Action MC and signature of the COST Action Grant Agreement as per Article 7.3 are required before any Action activities can commence.**

#### 7.2.2.c. Reallocation of budget

During a Grant Period, the Action MC **may reallocate budget within the frame of the approved Work and Budget Plan, subject**, where applicable as described in level C Rules, **to pre-approval of the COST Administration.**

The Action MC may reallocate funds between networking activities and other expenses specifically supporting the Action as per the needs of the Action and with the aim of maximising the networking activities.

**Budget line dedicated to FSAC may not be reallocated.**

The Action's Science Officer shall be promptly informed by the Action Chair when an approved activity is cancelled.

**COST Administration's prior approval (via the Science Officer) is required for the inclusion of activities that were not originally foreseen in the approved Work and Budget Plan.**

Reallocation of budget within the frame of the approved Work and Budget Plan does not amount to a change to the COST Action Grant Agreement. For amendments to the COST Action Grant Agreement, see Article 7.3.

#### 7.2.2.d. Budget underspending

At the end of each Grant Period, unspent budget shall be either returned to or retained by the COST Association.

There shall be no carry-over of underspent budget from one year to another.

### 7.3. COST Action Grant Agreement

The COST Grant **shall be formalised by an Action Grant Agreement** concluded between the COST Association represented by its Director and the Grant Holder.

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

The Action Grant Agreement **shall detail** the present Action Rules regarding:

- The COST Grant maximum budget,
- The grant period duration, start and end date,
- The rights and obligations, tasks and responsibilities of the parties in terms of financial management and administration of a COST Action, 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 Action Grant Agreement obligations,
- Any other provisions as required following the legal and contractual framework applicable to COST.

The Action Grant Agreement may be amended at any time.

Grant Holders (GH) and any interested individual can find the [COST Action Grant Agreement template](#)<sup>18</sup> as well as their Annex B regarding Data Protection:

- For Grant Holder vested in a EU Member State or EEA country or in a non-EU country with an adequacy decision or being the European Commission (EC), a EU body, office or agency at [https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate\\_Annex\\_GDPR](https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate_Annex_GDPR)<sup>19</sup>;
- For Grant Holder vested in another non-EU country or being an EU RTD at [https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate\\_Annex\\_non-GDPR](https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate_Annex_non-GDPR)<sup>20</sup>.

The Action Grant Agreement is the legally binding contractual agreement concluded between the COST Association and the Grant Holder (see Article 7.4) formalising the COST Grant. It shall be signed prior to the commencement of the Action's activities via e-COST.

An Action Grant Agreement shall be concluded per Grant Period which normally lasts for 12 months.

An Action Grant Agreement may be amended at any time (though it should remain exceptional) between its start and end date in the following cases:

- Extension of the Grant Period (e.g. for alignment with the Specific Grant Agreement between EC and COST or due to extension of the lifetime of the Action);
- Reduction of the Grant Period (e.g. in case of change of Grant Holder Institution);
- Increase or decrease of budget;
- Due to a combination of time and budget.

Mismanagement of the allocated funds, non-fulfilment of the Grant Holder's contractual obligations and the non-performance of the tasks and responsibilities expected of the Grant Holder may lead to rejection

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate\\_Core](http://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate_Core)

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate\\_Annex\\_GDPR](https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate_Annex_GDPR)

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate\\_Annex\\_non-GDPR](https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate_Annex_non-GDPR)

of costs, reduction, suspension or termination of a grant, recovery, or sanctions as described in III - Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

#### Recommendation:

The Grant Holder shall consult the COST Association when there is doubt about the eligibility of any expense or activity being supported or funded under the COST Grant.

## 7.4. Grant Holder

### 7.4.1. REQUIREMENTS

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 which have joined the COST Action.**

The COST Grant shall be administered by a Grant Holder following the terms of the present Article and of the COST Action Grant Agreement as per Article 7.3.

The **Grant Holder shall be a legal entity** governed by national or international law. It cannot be an individual. COST Grant can only be paid into the Grant Holder's institutional bank account. Grant payments cannot be paid into an individual's private bank account.

The Grant Holder shall be vested in one of **COST Full or Cooperating Member having nominated a Action MC Member in the COST Action** (see Article 3.9 - Access to leadership positions and in particular Article 3)9.1.a.2)) or **the EC, an EU body, office or agency (EC/EU) or a European RTD Organisation which have joined the COST Action.**

### 7.4.2. SELECTION AND VALIDATION OF THE GRANT HOLDER

The Grant Holder shall be selected by the Action MC at Action MC1 meeting and is subject to approval of the COST Administration.

The Grant Holder shall be **selected at Action MC1 meeting** by the Management Committee as per Article 3.8 Management Committee decision making.

In case the decision cannot be made during the Action MC1 meeting, the Action MC shall proceed swiftly via an e-vote (see Article 3.8 for details).

As for any Action MC decision, the decision shall be recorded in the Action MC meeting minutes (see Article 3.3.3 - Agenda and meeting minutes).

When selecting the Grant Holder, the Action MC **shall take into consideration the following:**

- The administrative capacity of the selected Grant Holder to successfully implement the Grant (i.e., the ability of the Grant Holder to process reimbursements according to the present rules and Action Grant Agreement whilst complying with national / local laws and regulations, amongst which fiscal law);
- The financial stability and medium-term viability of the selected Grant Holder;
- Any potential conflict of interest that could arise as a result of the selection.

**The selected legal entity becomes Grant Holder subject to approval of the COST Association.**

The COST Association assesses the administrative capacity and financial viability of the selected Grant Holder before approval. To do so, the COST Administration may request official statutes and / or a statement of accounts of the Grant Holder.

The COST Association reserves the right to reject a selected Grant Holder based on one of the above-mentioned grounds or, during the course of a COST Action, should the performance of the Grant Holder appear low and require the replacement of the Grant Holder, unilaterally impose a change of Grant Holder.

The change of Grant Holder shall require a vote at the Action MC and approval of the COST Association as mentioned above.

### 7.4.3. GRANT HOLDER POSITIONS

The **Action MC Member or Observer affiliated with that legal entity** shall become the **GH Scientific Representative**.

In compliance with the rules on Access to leadership positions as per Article 3.9, **when a Grant Holder Scientific Representative changes their affiliation**, the Grant Holder Scientific Representative **shall be replaced with a Action MC Member or Observer having an affiliation with the Grant Holder in place or the Grant Holder shall be replaced**.

The Grant Holder is comprised of four key positions. Depending on the internal organisation of the Grant Holder, the same person can hold more than one position at a time.

The four positions are as follows:

- **Scientific Representative:** the Action MC Member or Observer affiliated to the Grant Holder. The Scientific Representative should attend Action MC meetings and shall be readily available to support the Action MC in monitoring the overall progress of the Action.  
**If the Grant Holder Scientific Representative position becomes vacant**, it shall be processed as follows:
  - Another Action MC Member or Observer is affiliated to the Grant Holder in the Action MC, that person shall become Grant Holder Scientific Representative upon Action MC approval, or
  - **In the absence of Action MC Member or Observer affiliated with the Grant Holder**, the COST National Coordinator or Responsible for Nomination **nominates another individual who is affiliated to the Grant Holder** to become an Action MC Member or Observer. In this case, the **newly nominated individual will become the Grant Holder Scientific Representative upon Action MC approval**, or
  - **In the absence of Action MC Member or Observer affiliated with the Grant Holder nominated in** replacement of the leaving Grant Holder Scientific Representative, a **new Grant Holder shall be selected** by the Action MC as per Article 7.4.2 above as of the following Grant Period.
- **Legal Representative:** the individual affiliated with the Grant Holder who bears the legal authority to sign the COST Action Grant Agreement (e.g. the Rector of a University);
- **Financial Representative:** the individual affiliated with the Grant Holder who has the legal authority to financially commit the institution in question and to validate the expenses listed in financial reports;
- **Grant Holder Manager:** the individual affiliated with the Grant Holder who is responsible for overseeing the administrative management of the COST Action and is the primary user of the e-COST Action management tool.

#### 7.4.4. TASKS

When administering the COST Grant, the Grant Holder shall **act under supervision of the Action MC.**

However, the Grant Holder shall oppose to any Action MC 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.

The Grant Holder shall, under supervision of the Action MC, be in charge of overseeing the financial and administrative management and of the various coordination tasks required to successfully support the implementation of approved COST Action activities.

Financial, Scientific and Administrative Coordination includes the following tasks:

- **Scientific coordination**

The Grant Holder shall support the Action MC with the production of the required reports as per Article 8 for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the Action.

- **Administrative management** (non-exhaustive list):

- Preparation of documentation for meetings under the guidance of the Action Chair / Vice-Chair (e.g. overseeing Action MC approvals, distributing agendas, issuing invitations, drafting minutes and ensuring that all eligible participants sign the relevant attendance lists etc.);
- Coordinating Action meetings;
- Collecting and archiving supporting documents related to processing reimbursement claims and the associated payments; if necessary and when in compliance with local regulations, Grant Holder Institutions can request participants for original supporting documents;
- Archiving all necessary Action MC decisions relating to the Action;
- Support the Action and the Science Communication Coordinator with the administrative production of its publications and in monitoring the development and maintenance of the Action website.

- **Financial management** (non-exhaustive list):

- Ensure that all payments linked to approved COST Action activities are paid in line with Action MC approvals and eligibility criteria as per the Annexes to the present Annotated Rules;
- Process reimbursements claims to Action participants within 30 calendar days after receiving the claimant's complete claim and never later than 45 calendar days after the end date of the event in question;  
In cases where advance payments (other than the ones foreseen for Action participants from ITC) are requested by Action Participants and / or grantees, the Grant Holder assumes the financial risk associated with doing so. All payments related to COST activities shall be finalised and recorded in e-COST only after all the administrative requirements have been satisfied and the payment in question has been wired to the beneficiary or is about to be done;
- Ensure the preparation and delivery of complete financial reports within the set deadlines as per Article 7.5.

The Grant Holder shall perform these tasks in accordance with best practice financial and administrative standards, the present rules and the terms and conditions specified in the COST Action Grant Agreement.

If the Grant Holder cannot for any reason fulfil the aforementioned tasks, the COST Association shall be informed immediately. The same shall apply where Grant Holder is faced with decisions of the Action MC susceptible to breach the present rules.

Any significant delays or notable performance failures may be considered as non-fulfilment of contractual obligations and lead to rejection of costs, reduction, suspension or termination of a grant, recovery, or sanctions as per Article III - Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

#### **Recommendation:**

The Grant Holder should consult the COST Association when there is doubt about the eligibility of any expense or activity being supported or funded under the COST Grant.

## **7.5. Reporting on the use of the COST Grant**

The Action Grant Agreement shall **detail the reporting obligations** of the COST Actions towards the COST Association with regard to the use of the COST Grant. The reporting shall occur **in the timeframes mentioned in the Action Grant Agreement**.

The **Action MC shall support the Grant Holder** in the fulfilment of those obligations and adopt the established reports before their submission to the COST Association.

### **7.5.1. FINANCIAL REPORTING MODALITIES**

Financial reporting shall occur during each Grant Period as per the modalities of the COST Action Grant Agreement.

Payment requests are linked to the financial reporting requirements. It is therefore essential that the Grant Holder and the Action MC take all the necessary measures to meet their reporting requirements in line with the time frames specified in the Action Grant Agreement.

Financial reporting is made through the submission of the followings:

- **Intermediate Financial Report (IFR)** to be submitted **only if cash is required** when requesting the second instalment of the COST Grant, at any given time according to the budgetary needs of the Action and not later than 2 months before the end date of the Grant Period. The IFR shall be signed electronically on e-COST by the Financial representative of the Grant Holder;
- **Final Financial Report (FFR)**: to be submitted to the COST Association at the end of the Grant Period and not later than within 30 calendar days after the end date of the Grant Period. The FFR shall trigger, after validation by the COST Association, the payment of the last instalment of the COST Grant. The expenses reported in the FFR shall contain only finalised and paid claims.

Late submission of the FFR may lead to rejection of any non-finalised and / or unpaid claims from the given report as per III.1.1 - Rejection of costs.

The FFR shall be electronically signed on e-COST by the Financial representative of the Grant Holder, and by the Action Chair (Vice-Chair in case the Action Chair is affiliated with the Grant Holder).

The FFR shall be validated and signed by the COST Association and the Grant Holder within 45 days from the end date of the Action Grant Agreement. No changes to the report shall be done after the validation and signature of the FFR.

The COST Association cannot be held responsible for any erroneously encoded expenses, or any type of discrepancy detailed on a submitted financial report.

Should the COST Association identify non-eligible or questionable expenses contained within a submitted report, the respective Grant Holder will be duly notified as per III.1.1 - Rejection of costs.

Such expenses will be removed from e-COST and an updated and revised version of the report shall be re-submitted to the COST Association for review.

When financial reports submitted by the Grant Holder reveal discrepancies that are only identified after the Grant Period has been closed and / or in the event of an audit, the COST Association reserves the right to request the repayment of erroneously claimed funds through recovery as per Article 7.6 hereunder.

## **7.6. Recovery of undue amounts**

The COST Association reserves the right to reclaim undue amounts from the Grant Holder in the following cases:

- Undue amounts are identified through reporting or at the time of an audit;
- A procedure of non-fulfilment of the Grant Holder's contractual obligations and / or the non-performance of their tasks is concluded which leads to rejection of costs to be recovered (see III - Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles).

Undue amounts shall be recovered, at the choice of the COST Association, either through:

- A deduction applied to the next instalment of the COST Grant within the same Grant Period or at first instalment of the next Grant Period;
- A request for repayment of undue amounts. The COST Association will request the repayment of undue amounts when applicable via a recovery note sent to the Grant Holder Financial Representative.

This procedure shall be applied when:

- There is an under-spend at the end of the last Grant Period of the Action;
- There is an under-spend at the end of a Grant Period and a change of Grant Holder is required.

## 8. COST ACTION MONITORING AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

COST Actions shall be monitored during their implementation and be assessed at their completion with the aim to contribute to the best dissemination and exploitation of COST Action results and outcomes and to maximise the potential impact of COST Actions.

Each COST Action shall benefit from an independent external monitoring and final assessment, carried by an Action Rapporteur.

Action Rapporteurs shall provide to the Action MC, the COST Association and the Scientific Committee their progress and final assessment Reviews.

The Scientific Committee shall, on the basis of the progress and final assessment reports and reviews as well as any other relevant information that it may request and shall receive, be informed about:

- the overall monitoring and final assessment of COST Actions,
- global analysis of the outcomes and impact of ended Actions,

On that basis, the Scientific Committee shall provide to the CSO scientific and technological advice.

The Scientific Committee shall also assess how the Actions have addressed the recommendations formulated by the Scientific Committee at the selection phase of the COST Open Call (Progress Report 1).

The monitoring and final assessment of COST Actions shall allow the Scientific Committee to foster the strategic orientation of COST activities and give advice and recommendation on Science and Technology strategies to the CSO.

## 8.1. COST Action monitoring

The monitoring of a COST Action shall consist in the regular follow-up and review of a running COST Action.

The objectives of the external monitoring shall be to:

- Provide an assessment on the progress of the COST Action with relation to the implementation of networking activities, the development of Science and Technology activities towards the Action's objectives and the putting into practice of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy,
- Give advice to the Action MC where necessary, identifying and suggesting corrective measures or best practices,
- Contribute to the best dissemination and exploitation of COST Action results and outcomes and to maximise the potential impact of COST Actions.

Action monitoring shall take place at month 12 and 24 of the Action implementation based on reports of the Action MC.

The Action Rapporteur shall establish a Progress Review with recommendations to the Action MC concerning Action implementation.

In fulfilling its responsibilities, the Action MC shall take into consideration the findings, advice and recommendations of the Action Rapporteur.

**The first monitoring requirement is the first Progress Report (PR1), which the Action MC Chair submits on behalf of the Action MC** within two weeks after month 12 from the Action start date.

The PR1 shall address the following two points:

- Scientific Committee (SC) Recommendation implementation (as entailed in the evaluation report from the proposal's selection stage);
- COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy implementation as per I.1.3 - COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy.

The PR1 assessment is performed by the Scientific Committee with one of the following outcomes:

- "Implementation sufficient";
- "Implementation insufficient but plans adequate - repeat policy implementation monitoring in 1 year";
- "Implementation insufficient and plans inadequate - Action to meet with SC".

**The Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC submits the second Progress Report (PR2)** within one month after month 24 from the Action start. The PR2 shall include information on the activities of the Action in the first two years of the Action's lifetime.

An external expert (Action Rapporteur) shall be appointed to perform the assessment of the Action's mid-term progress.

## 8.2. COST Action final assessment

The COST Action final assessment shall consist in determining the degree of realisation of the COST Action towards its stated objectives and its potential impact after completion, including any follow-up initiatives or R&D activities in the area covered by the COST Action.

The objectives of the final assessment shall be to:

- Identify how well the Action has reached its defined objectives and goals,
- Identify expected immediate, mid-term and envisaged long-term impacts of the Action after its completion, including the initiation of any follow-up activities and its impact on R&D activities in the area covered by the Action,
- Collect data necessary to demonstrate COST's performance and impact.

Final assessment shall be carried out at the end of each COST Action, normally at month 48. The final assessment of COST Actions having benefited from an extension shall include a dedicated section assessing the extension period.

The Action Rapporteur shall prepare a Final Assessment Report highlighting the Action's achievements and impact, identifying potential success stories and indicating any emerging or potentially important future developments.

If applicable, the outcomes and impacts of a granted extension shall be addressed in the Final Assessment Report.

**The Final Achievement Report shall be submitted by the Chair on behalf of the Action MC** one month after the end date of the Action. Based on the Final Achievement Report, the Action Rapporteur performs a detailed assessment of the Action in the Final Assessment Report.

An external expert (Action Rapporteur) shall be appointed to perform the final assessment of the Action. This person may be or not the same one who performed the assessment of the Action's mid-term progress.

**ANNEXES**  
—  
**FUNDING SCHEMES FOR ACTIVITIES OF  
COST ACTIONS**

# ANNEX 1. NETWORKING ACTIVITIES ORGANISED THROUGH ACTION EVENTS

Action events encompass Meetings and Training Schools.

## 1. SCOPE AND BENEFITS

COST Action events have the following aims and objectives:

- **Contribute to Research Coordination:** Meetings and Training Schools enable the achievement of Action MoU objectives and deliverables;
  - Meetings are a crucial means for research coordination, the provision of tangible outputs, for the generation of new ideas and the stimulation of discussions that generate new views;
  - Training Schools are used for reaching specific results (e.g., data collection or analysis, training on methodologies developed by the Action etc.) in support of the objectives of the COST Action;
- **Contribute to Capacity Building:** The contacts made and the knowledge exchanged at Meetings and Training Schools can support career development of participants. This contributes to the building of the European Research Area and provides opportunities to all talented Researchers and Innovators independently from where they are located in Europe or beyond;
- **Create and maintain the network:** Meetings and Training Schools support the creation of new collaborations among participants that strongly benefit the Action. These are also important starting points for other networking activities (in particular Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs)) and follow-up activities (e.g., other funding opportunities, new collaboration proposals).
- **Provide a framework for Action participants to network during:**
  - **Face-to-Face Events:** Are crucial for building trust and sense of connection to other Action participants, to ensure high level of engagement and implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy. Informal networking along meetings (e.g., coffee breaks, lunches/dinners, social activities) are an essential component for creating long lasting professional relationship. Face-to-face events are necessary when access to specific facilities, databases, and equipment are needed;
  - **Virtual and Hybrid Events:** Digital communication and collaboration tools allow for an increased number of options to collaborate (complementary to face-to-face), especially for established Actions. This can allow for time savings and cost-effective participation in activities, especially when people cannot travel or if there are budget constraints. Furthermore, they increase the flexibility for organising meetings e.g., ad-hoc meeting, also on a short notice. The ability to involve an increased number of people, the ease of scheduling and attending events contributes to increasing and widening the participation in Actions: thus, supporting the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy, the COST Global Networking (involvement of individuals affiliated in International Partner Countries / Near Neighbour Countries), and the engagement of actors from outside academia or from a different scientific field.
- **Increase the visibility** of the COST programme.

Action events benefit to:

- **COST Action:**
  - Serving for the achievement of the MoU objectives;
  - Building capacity on a specific topic needed for the Action;
  - Creating opportunity to generate new ideas and collaborations;

- Maximizing impact and increase the visibility of the COST Action.
- **Local Organiser:**
  - Increasing own and institution's visibility.

**COST Actions organise or co-organise events to the benefit of the Action. COST Action do not sponsor events.**

## 1.1. Meetings

COST supports different types of meetings, that serve different goals:

- Network management and strategy setting:
  - **Action MC Meetings:** to allow the Action to set the strategy and coordinate the open network and its activities in line with the MoU and the approved Work and Budget Plan(s) (see Article 3.4 - Management Committee Role);
  - **Core Group Meetings:** to organise and prepare Action MC decisions (see Article 3.6. Delegation of powers for the role of the Core Group).
- Achieving Objectives/Delivering impact:
  - **Working Group Meetings:** to coordinate the work, production, and exchange of knowledge. Prepare deliverables and reports to Action MC;
  - **Workshops, Conferences and Other Meetings:** to showcase the Action's main achievements/developments and outcomes and extend the networking to other researchers and/or stakeholders.

Meetings **benefit to:**

- **Meeting participants** (Action participants and ad hoc contributors): opportunity to create new and/or interdisciplinary collaborations and to reinforce existing ones, contribute to the progress of their own work and of the Action beyond state of the art in the field.

## 1.2. Training Schools

Training Schools serve to help the Action achieve their MoU Objectives and deliver impact with regard to:

- **Capacity Building:** Allowing COST Actions to provide training for Researchers and Innovators in highly specialised topics which are essential for the Action. They are the tool for transferring know-how among all types of actors and building interdisciplinary expertise;
- **Research Coordination:** Training Schools can also be used for reaching specific results (e.g., data collection or analysis, training on methodologies developed by the Action) in support of the objectives of the COST Action.

Training Schools **benefit to:**

- **Trainers:**
  - Networking with colleagues and next generation of researchers working in the same area;
  - Setting the "standard" and/or shape new and emerging areas of knowledge;
  - Developing and improving their own teaching materials.
- **Trainees:**
  - Meeting and networking with peers and leaders of the area and, build the next generation of researchers;
  - Getting critical knowledge and skills to deepen their own research;
  - Creating potential for career opportunities.

## 2. WORKING MODALITIES

### 2.1. Information to be provided for the Work and Budget Plan

As per article 7.2., the Action needs to provide the following information for meetings and training schools when negotiating the Work and Budget Plan or requesting budget reallocation after its approval and during the Grant Period:

- 'Description':
  - How the networking activity serves the MoU objectives;
  - The format (face-to-face, hybrid or virtual) and rough schedule (e.g. 2 hrs Action MC meeting, 2 days parallel sessions of WG meetings, 2 hrs plenary session of all WGs);
  - The plans and objectives of the stand-alone activity, e.g. of the Training School or of each of the sub-activities in case of an Action co-located meeting, e.g. Action MC meeting and WG meeting;
  - How the stand-alone activity, e.g. Training School, or each of the sub-activities in case of Action co-located activities serve towards the achievement of the MoU objectives;
  - If decided by the Action MC, deviation from the Travel reimbursement rules, e.g. reduction of the daily allowance, should be indicated;
  - For co-located COST Action activities with an event not organised by the COST Action:
    - How and why the COST Action would benefit from this co-location and how the COST Action activity relates to the other event in terms of scheduling, e.g. COST session or adjacent event prior to or after the event not organised by the COST Action (see below for more information on co-location of events);
    - A website related to the external event should be provided, if available.
  - For co-organised COST Action activities with an 'external' organisation:
    - How and why the COST Action will benefit from the co-organisation and how the COST Action is involved in the set-up of this joint activity (e.g. share of COST Action Participants in steering or scientific committee) - see below for more information on co-organisation of events;
    - A website related to the other organisation should be provided if available.
  - Possible keynote speakers and trainers and their relevant expertise could be also described.
- 'Outputs': Outputs can be, amongst others, codified knowledge, tacit knowledge, technology, and societal applications:
  - Codified knowledge: Knowledge expressed through language (including mathematics, music, etc.) and thus capable of being stored on a physical support (i.e. transferable knowledge) – e.g. publications; patents, websites;
  - Tacit knowledge: Non formalised knowledge, resulting from the participation in the COST Action networking activities and the social interaction among its members that can also be re-invested in other contexts;
  - Technology: Knowledge embedded in artefacts either ready to use or not, such as machinery or software, new materials or modified organisms – e.g. a prototype, a database;
  - Societal applications: Use of any kind of knowledge (codified, tacit, technology) to perform specific tasks. Societal applications require the active participation of stakeholders (such as business enterprises, practitioners, regulators, users) within the lifetime of an Action. If stakeholders are not involved, then societal applications may only be considered as possible future impacts resulting from the envisaged outputs, rather than direct Action outputs (e.g. use of a methodology developed by the Action by a community of practitioners not participating in the Action).
- 'Meeting/Training School details' e.g. title, event location: city and country (tentative), type of the stand-alone activity, e.g. Training School, or each of the sub-activities in case of Action co-located activities;
- 'Budget' (estimation) calculated automatically in e-COST based on foreseen number of participants and daily allowance, adding an estimated LOS amount according to event duration (see 3.2.2 - LOS grant amount calculation) and other details.

## 2.2. Access conditions

See Article 6.4 for Eligibility to receive financial support.

## 2.3. Process description

### 2.3.1. Planning of the Event

- **Action MC or Core Group** (if delegated, see Article 3.6): decides on:
  - The type of event, the topic, the scope, and expected outcomes;
  - Location and date;
  - Overall budget to allocate;
  - The Local Organiser;
  - The selection and criteria for reimbursing meeting participants, trainers and trainees considering the COST Principles, notably the Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy.
- **Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC:**
  - Before the start of the Grant Period, at Work and Budget Plan negotiation stage: drafts and submits the Work and Budget Plan with planned events to be approved by Science Officer and the Action MC (see Article 7.2.2.b). The content of the proposed event in the Work and Budget Plan should provide the information necessary for the negotiation as indicated above);
  - During the Grant Period: initiates approvals, by SO / Action MC, for changes in the approved Work and Budget Plan – see Article 7.2.2.c for circumstances where approval to changes to the Work and Budget Plan is required (e.g., new event or change in the budget or other details of an approved event).
- **Grant Holder**
  - During the Grant Period: once approved, encodes in e-COST the request for changes in the approved Work and Budget Plan.

**In planning for the organisation of Action events, the Action MC needs to consider the following:**

#### **Location and timing of events**

COST Action **organizes events** according to Work and Budget Plan for the Grant Period. Action events should be held in different locations as defined in the table under Article 6.3 - Location of COST Action networking activities **taking due account of geographic spread as per COST Principle of Openness**.

The decisions on locations on Action events shall also consider the principle of sound financial management.

In addition, for budget optimisation, it is highly recommended to avoid time gaps between different types of meetings and/or Training School when these are located in the same venue/city and within the same timeframe.

### **Co-location and Co-organisation of Action events**

Action events may also occur either as **co-located activities or COST session, or as co-organised activities**:

- **Co-location of COST Action activities or COST session** in an event not organised by a COST Action. Organisation of COST Action activities within or adjacent to an 'external' event is acceptable if there is a clear added benefit to the COST Action in relation to the scientific and networking objectives outlined in the COST Action MoU. Repeated co-location of COST Action activities with 'external' events is not recommended, unless a valid explanation provided by the Action MC is accepted by the COST Action Science Officer. A COST Action scientific session in an 'externally' organised event shall have the COST Action number and title in the programme;
- **Co-organisation of an event.** Co-organisation of an event with an 'external' organisation is acceptable if there is a clear benefit to the COST Action in relation to the scientific and networking objectives outlined in the COST Action MoU. The **COST Action shall be fully integrated into the scientific programme and shall have direct involvement in the general organisation of the event.** This implies a good representation in the organising committee of COST Action participants and as speakers or session chairs at the event, i.e. at least 40%. In addition, a good representation of COST Action participants as audience and a fair share of local organiser costs and expenses related to invited speakers are also recommended (see paragraph 3.2.1.E. of the present Annex). It is advisable to co-organise an event combined with Action MC and WG meetings so as to consolidate travel expenses for the COST Action.  
**Moreover, the following conditions shall be respected:**
  - COST shall be visible as a co-organiser on the event's specific website, publication and dissemination materials;
  - Promotional material disseminated at events shall follow the instructions and standards defined in Article 5.1. ([COST guidelines on visual identity<sup>21</sup>](#)).

### **In planning the organisation of an Action Workshop or Conference, the Action MC needs to consider:**

This type of activity is organised by the COST Action and is open to the broader scientific community. The scientific and organising committee of the event, or the COST Action Core Group, is expected to announce a 'Call for Abstracts' including the meeting's topics and also guidelines to researchers on how to submit an abstract or paper. It is expected that the WG Leaders (and Vice-Leaders) will actively participate and contribute to the content of the scientific programme, e.g. selection of session chairs and speakers amongst the Action participants. The selection of COST Action participants and speakers should consider the COST Principles and Excellence and Inclusiveness policy. Moreover, **the following conditions shall be respected:**

- COST shall be visible as the organiser on the event's specific website, COST Action website and publication and dissemination materials;
- Promotional material disseminated at conferences shall follow the instructions and standards defined in Article 5.1.

It is highly recommended that work presented during the Workshop or Conference is published either as a special issue, or conference proceedings or as a book of abstracts or a white paper or in any other format of publication relevant to the event. This enhances dissemination of the COST Action to a wider audience and opens up the potential for new networking activities.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.cost.eu/about/visual-identity/>

The COST Action should strive to engage with industry, policy makers, standards organisations, national authorities, and any other stakeholders, if relevant to the topic, objectives and deliverables of the COST Action, by inviting them to the COST Action Workshop / Conference.

**Each COST Action should organise a Final Workshop or Conference to highlight and showcase the achievements of the COST Action.** It should be combined with the Final Action MC meeting and occur before the end of the last Grant Period.

During the Final Workshop or Conference, the COST Action is encouraged to have a general COST Action presentation delivered by the COST Action Chair or Working Group presentations delivered by Working Group Leaders or Vice Leaders demonstrating:

- The achievements of the specific Working Group in relation to the scientific objectives detailed in the MoU which will be highlighted in the Final Achievement Report;
- Relevant scientific deliverables and outputs, including dissemination activities, that resulted from each Working Group;
- Expected impact, short-, medium- and long-term;
- Major challenges that were encountered in the COST Action and the solutions that were used to overcome these challenges.

**When organising Training Schools, the following conditions shall be respected:**

- The Training School shall have the COST Action scientific and networking objectives as its main focus. The COST Action also has to be one of the primary organisers of the Training School. For co-organised Training Schools, the same conditions should be fulfilled as the ones for co-organised events (see [Co-location and Co-organisation of Action events above](#));
- The programme of the Training School shall incorporate theoretical and practical components.

**When organising Training Schools, the Action MC needs to consider the following aspects:**

- The COST Action should be clearly promoted on all dissemination channels, namely the official website of the COST Action and event, brochures and all training material;
- The Training School is recommended to last a minimum of 3 days;
- A ratio of at least 3 Trainees to 1 Trainer is recommended.

### 2.3.2. Implementation of the Event

Before and during the event:

- **Action Chair / Vice Chair / relevant Action Leaders** in view of the scope and expected outcomes of the event:
  - Support the Local Organiser on the finetuning of the content and agenda/programme;
  - Prepare a proposed list of meeting participants / trainers / trainees to invite and to reimburse following the criteria set by the Action MC.
- **Action MC or Core Group (if delegated)** approves:
  - The list of meeting participants / trainers / trainees to invite and reimburse;
- **Science Communication Coordinator:** organizes publication of event on Action website and dissemination via other channels;
- **Local Organiser:**
  - Selects the venue and manages all organisational and logistical aspects;
  - Liaises with the Grant Holder to provide all details on budget and organisational aspects;
  - Liaises with the Action Chair / Vice Chair /relevant Action Leaders for setting up the content and programme;
  - For Training School: Guarantees the access and if needed, the security clearance to necessary specific materials, equipment and location; and liaises with the trainers to assure all their needs are met for a successful training;
  - During the event collects the signed attendance list (and/or attendance logs for virtual and hybrid events with names and countries of affiliation of the participants);

- The Local Organiser may **never** charge registration fees to an Action event from the participants to an Action event.  
However, eligible expenses encountered by the Local organiser on behalf of the Action participants may be charged in advance to the participants to the event.

**Example:** meal costs.

- **Grant Holder:**
  - Initiates the Local Organiser Support (LOS) process in e-COST, by encoding the Local Organiser Support details, verifying the budget available, and sending the grant letter to the Local Organiser (see paragraph 3.2 of the present Annex below);
  - Supports and liaises with the Local Organiser;
  - Issues timely e-COST invitations to participants (ideally 30 days before the event start date);
  - Provides timely information (agenda, details on venue, general instructions) and support to the participants (e.g., information on reimbursement rules);
  - In case the Grant Holder attends a meeting, supports the Local Organiser in collecting the signed attendance list (and/or attendance logs for virtual and hybrid events).
- **Meeting participants, Trainers and Trainees:**
  - Are invited via the e-COST platform with or without reimbursement;  
They should accept or decline the e-COST invitation within 2 weeks from receiving the invitations.  
**Recommendation: to ensure sound financial planning of the event, after this period the Action MC may withdraw the invitation and the participant will lose the right to claim TRR.**
  - Shall secure the necessary travel documents / visas needed to facilitate their participation in approved COST activities;  
  
The COST Association and the Action Grant Holder cannot be held responsible in cases where individuals do not secure the necessary travel documents / visas needed to facilitate their participation in approved COST activities.
  - During the event, the participants shall:
    - For face-to-face participation: Sign the attendance list each attended day of the meeting/training school.

After the event:

- **Meeting Participants, Trainers and Trainees:**  
  
If invited with the status: "eligible for reimbursement", need to submit the claim in e-COST, (see paragraph 3.1.2 of the present Annex).
- **Local Organiser:**
  - Provides the attendance list (and/or attendance logs) to the Grant Holder as soon as possible and within the 15 days after the end of the meeting;
  - Liaises with the Action Chair/ Vice-Chair / relevant Action Leaders for reporting to the Action MC on the main discussions and outcomes.
- **Grant Holder:**
  - Collects attendance list (and/or attendance logs) from Local Organiser;
  - For Action MC and Core Group meetings: Collects minutes from the Action Chair and uploads on e-COST;
  - Processes travel reimbursement of eligible meeting/training school participants and reimbursement of LO of Local Organiser Support expenses within 30 days from the end of the meeting;
  - Processes invoices (if any) from:
    - Training materials, consumables and shipping expenses for Training School samples or equipment (please see Annex 4).

### 3. FUNDING SCHEME

Financial support can be requested for:

- Travel reimbursement of meeting participants for face-to-face events following Travel reimbursement rules (see 3.1 of the present Annex hereunder);
- Local Organiser Support: catering and meeting organisation (see 3.2 of the present Annex hereunder).

#### 3.1. Travel reimbursement rules

##### 3.1.1. Principles

Following the principle of Good governance, financial soundness, and efficiency as per I.5, participants to an Action event shall:

- Choose the most economical means of transportation;
- Make their transportation arrangements as early as possible upon receipt of the e-COST official invitation to the approved activity;
- Avoid double funding. Therefore, the participants shall declare via e-COST when submitting their Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR) that they will not receive a reimbursement or any allowance from a third party to support their attendance at the approved COST activity for which they are submitting a claim.

The COST Association reserves the right to contact any beneficiary of COST funds and / or their institution or any other relevant third party when double funding is suspected. Further, non-abidance by this rule may lead to rejection of costs or sanctions as per III - Level A - Breach of COST Rules and Principles.

##### 3.1.2. Administrative requirements

In order to see their claim being reimbursed participants to an Action event shall:

- Have an e-COST profile at <https://e-services.cost.eu/> including bank details;
- Be eligible to receive financial support per Article 6.4;
- Have received an e-COST invitation to the meeting / training school and have accepted it within 2 weeks from receiving it;
- Sign the attendance list on each day that they attend the meeting and/or Training School;
- Submit via e-COST a completed Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR) as soon as possible and not later than 15 calendar days after the end of the meeting;
- Upload legible copies of all invoices / receipts and relevant supporting documents onto e-COST.

### 3.1.3. Eligible expenses

Participants to an Action event meeting the administrative requirements may receive financial support as follows:

#### 3.1.3.A. **Accommodation, meals, and short distance travel expenses – Daily Allowance**

The reimbursement of incurred expenses for accommodation, meals, and short distance travel is paid as one lump-sum amount known as daily allowance.

No invoices for accommodation, meals, and short distance travel are therefore required.

Daily allowance rate (to be found at [www.cost.eu/daily\\_allowance](http://www.cost.eu/daily_allowance)) is based on the country where the event takes place.

The Action MC may decide to reduce the daily allowance rate. In such case:

- The same daily allowance rate shall be afforded to all eligible participants attending a given event;
- For Training Schools only, the Action MC may choose to apply two different daily allowance rates, one rate for Trainers and one rate for Trainees;
- All participants shall be notified of the revised daily allowance rate before or upon receiving their formal invitations via e-COST.

The actual daily allowance is calculated against:

- The actual number of days of attendance to the approved activity (as confirmed against their signature on the official attendance list for each day of the event that they attend);  
The participant may arrive on the day before the activity commences and/or leave one day after the activities finish. The DA is then calculated accordingly;
- The participant's travel start- and end dates and hours;  
In the cases when the travel dates and hours cannot be determined, the participant shall provide travel supporting documents attesting their travel dates so that the daily allowance can be correctly calculated.

**The table hereunder describes how those criteria are taken into account in the calculation of the daily allowance:**

Travel start date:	
- travel starts before 11:59	Full allowance reimbursed
- travel starts between 12:00 and 18:59	90% of Daily Allowance reimbursed
- travel starts after 19:00	80% of Daily Allowance reimbursed

Travel end date:	
- travel ends between 12:00 and 18:59	10% of Daily Allowance reimbursed
- travel ends after 19:00	20% of Daily Allowance reimbursed

Event days	
Attended event days (based on signed attendance list)	Full allowance reimbursed per day

### Recommendations:

In order for Action to make best use of the COST Grant:

- When two eligible participants share the same accommodation, whilst both participants are allowed to claim the Daily Allowance, they are invited to consider claiming the Daily Allowance of only one of them;
- When an eligible participant's primary affiliation is in the city of the event, the participant is invited to claim only the part of the daily allowance intended to cover the local transport expenses. This option is enabled when completing the Online Travel Reimbursement claim in e-COST.

#### 3.1.3.B. *Long-distance travel expenses*

**Long-distance travel is any travel above 100 km one way from the legal entity of affiliation of the participant (see Article 4)1.1.a.1) - Affiliation for determination of the affiliation) to the meeting venue or from the meeting venue to the legal entity of affiliation.**

Long-distance travel may be by train, ferry, bus, plane, or car.

The incurred long-distance travel expenses **are reimbursed on face-value, up to a maximum of EUR 1500, cancellation insurance included, for the roundtrip.**

The Action MC may decide to reduce the maximum amount. In such case:

- The same maximum amount shall **be applicable to all eligible participants** attending a given event;
- When making such a decision, the Action MC shall take due account to the situation of the attendees **so as to not discriminate the attendees having to travel from more remote areas;**

**Example:** If a participant shows, within a reasonable time before travel date that there is no reasonable transport below the cap established by the Action MC, this cap shall be waved for the individual participant. The limit of 1500 EUR nevertheless still applies.

- All participants shall be notified of the revised maximum rate before or upon receiving their formal invitations via e-COST.

On top of the Administrative requirements as per 3.1.2 above, the participants shall, in order to see their long-distance travel expenses being reimbursed, **attach supporting documents** which shall clearly **detail:**

- The name of the service provider;
- The mode of transport taken;
- The full price paid for the ticket;
- The name of the passenger if applicable;
- The travel dates, departure and arrival times (an invoice only showing the amount will not suffice).

Failure to provide the required supporting documents with the information mentioned above may lead to the rejection of the claim.

### Recommendation:

Participants are advised to contract a travel cancellation insurance for all their long-distance travel. Cancellation insurance is an eligible expense included in the long-distance travel expenses.

### **Specific conditions for Car travel expenses:**

- Car travel is limited to a maximum distance of 2 000 km for the entire journey;
- Car travel shall be reimbursed at EUR 0.35 per km;
- If multiple participants travel together, only one person may claim the reimbursement of the number of km. Other eligible participants travelling in the same car are not eligible for the reimbursement of the car km.

#### **3.1.3.C. Other travel expenses: Visa expenses**

Participants may claim visa expenses required to travel to the meeting venue as follows:

- May only be claimed the **costs related to visa processing fees relevant to attending approved COST event(s)**;
- **Attach supporting documents** which shall include:
  - Receipt / stamp from the embassy / consulate issuing the visa;
  - Amount paid for the visa and possible administrative costs.

#### **3.1.4. Non eligible travel expenses**

The following expenses may **never** be claimed as travel expenses:

- Any expenses claimed on top of the daily allowance or long-distance travel such as: taxi or parking expenses, fuel costs, carbon tax, toll charges, car rental expenses linked to car travel, additional accommodation or meals;
- Conference / registration fees;
- Lecture fees and honoraria;
- SMS costs, photograph cost or photocopies, postage expenses or service fees associated with obtaining visas;
- Life and medical insurance – expenses related to addressing / treating health issues;
- Luggage insurance;
- Fees, charges, and/or penalties linked to a participant changing or having to rebook travel tickets;
- Wi-Fi, telephone, internet, laundry and mini-bar consumption expenses;
- Printing and postage expenses;
- Regional and / or national taxation fees; stamp duty expenses;
- Bank charges / fees on reimbursement made by the Grant Holder (or COST Association for centralised events).

### **Example of a traveling route and claimable expense:**

**Ex 1:** A participant affiliated to a Lithuanian university travels to a meeting held in Fuerteventura, Spain. The travel route selected is a flight from Vilnius to Tenerife North and using a car to reach Fuerteventura. The participant will submit a claim as follows:

- Long distance travel: Plane from Vilnius to Tenerife – reimbursement on face-value under the cap (see 3.1.3.B for details);
- Public transport from place of affiliation to the airport and return (less than 100 km one way) together with meals and accommodation: included in the daily allowance (see 3.1.3.A for details);
- Car used from Tenerife airport to Fuerteventura: included in daily allowance;
- Public transport from Fuerteventura to Tenerife airport: included in daily allowance.

**Ex 2:** A participant is affiliated in University in Rennes and the meeting venue is in Nice. The participant is reimbursed for:

- Long distance travel: from Rennes to Paris (see 3.1.3.B for details);
- Long distance travel: from Paris to Nice (see 3.1.3.B for details);
- Short distance between airport / train station in Rennes and in Nice and meeting venue together with meals and accommodation are included in Daily Allowance.

**Ex 3:** A participant is affiliated in a SME in Prague. She has a COST Action meeting starting in Rome on a Thursday and Friday. She leaves Prague on the previous Friday for spending the weekend in Rome and has a meeting in Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO - UN Organisation) on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday:

- Case 1: The FAO reimburses her travel expenses both ways: the participant may not claim her long distance travel expenses from COST (as this would be double funding). The participant may claim Daily Allowance as of the Wednesday evening;
- Case 2: The FAO reimburses her travel expenses one way inward: the participant may only claim her long distance travel expenses on face-value for her way back and claim Daily Allowance as of the Wednesday evening;
- Case 3: The FAO does not reimburse her travel expenses: the participant may claim her long distance travel expenses on face-value both ways and claim Daily Allowance as of the Wednesday evening.

### 3.1.5. Specific conditions for Action participant in need of Assistance in case of disability

The eligible participant suffering of a temporary or permanent disability may request from the COST Association (request to be introduced via the Grant Holder of the concerned COST Action) a specific demand in order to obtain that incurred travel expenses of a personal assistant whose presence is required by the side of the Action participant due to his/her disability are reimbursed. The request can be made once for the duration of the whole COST Action.

The **request shall include:**

- From the Action participant:
  - A medical certificate certifying the need for assistance of the Action Participant. The medical certificate shall be issued by a medical practitioner or national, local or regional authority competent to issue such a certificate and shall include:
    - Date of issuance;
    - Dates of applicability;
    - Possibly other mentions as required in the present document.
  - The Action Participant shall indicate in the OTRR the name of the accompanying person in the justification box.
- From the accompanying person:
  - The copy of the medical certificate of the Action Participant he/she is assisting as mentioned above;
  - All supporting documents required as per paragraph 3.1.3.B - Long-distance travel expenses above;
  - Accommodation invoice including the type of room and the name of the personal assistant;
 

In case the eligible participant is sharing the hotel room and in order to avoid double funding (via the Daily Allowance), then a written statement from the hotel confirming the supplement of the hotel rate if any shall be provided or a comparative quote showing the difference rate between a single room and double room. The accompanying person shall be reimbursed only the difference between the two amounts;
  - A document demonstrating that the claimant has actually incurred the expense.

Once the request approved, the accompanying person shall be entitled to be reimbursed for eligible expenses against face-value, with a ceiling for accommodation and local transport expenses incurred in the meeting country set at the Daily Allowance amount per day agreed by the Action MC for the given activity.

### 3.1.6. Force majeure impacting travel

A participant to a COST Action event can encounter a case of force majeure that force them to cancel or shorten their participation to a COST Action event.

Cases that amount to a force majeure can be as follows:

- Decease of the participant;
- Decease of a Close relative being defined as a first degree relative or any person that is dependent on the Action event participant;
- Medical circumstances encountered by the Action participant that make travel impossible /not recommended;
- Medical circumstances encountered by a Close relative which require the presence of the Action participant;
- Any other case of Force Majeure defined as an event or circumstance beyond the participant's reasonable control and occurring without its fault or negligence. The following examples can be provided: strike, terrorist incident, natural disaster, prohibition from an official national authority to travel to the meeting country.

In such cases, the participant either is prevented to participate in the Action event (force majeure case happens before departure) or forces the participant to shorten its participation to the Action event.

In both cases, the participant (or its relatives in case of decease of the participant) may request from the COST Association (request to be introduced via the Grant Holder of the concerned COST Action) a specific demand in order to obtain that incurred travel expenses due to the case of force majeure are reimbursed, **when not otherwise covered (e.g. by a travel insurance or other scheme such as passengers protection rights).**

Participants are reminded that cancellation insurance fee is an eligible expense included in the long-distance travel expenses and are advised to contract one.

**Participants are strongly recommended to seek reimbursement from cancellation insurance / accommodation service provider / any other means available to them where applicable.**

The request shall include:

- All supporting documents required as per paragraph 3.1.3.B - Long-distance travel expenses above;
- Travel-expenses / Accommodation invoice;
- Document(s) demonstrating that the claimant has actually incurred the expense;
- Evidence of the non-refundable character of the amounts, i.e. a document demonstrating the otherwise non-refundable character of incurred expenses. To be valid, such an evidence shall take the form of:
  - When an Action participant purchased a travel insurance, a confirmation in writing of the non-refundable character of the amounts of the travel expenses;
  - In absence of purchase of a travel insurance, the cancellation policy of the transport / accommodation service provider confirming the non-refundable character of the amounts of the travel / accommodation expenses;
  - In exceptional circumstances, where it appears that service providers change unilaterally their cancellation policy in a very short timeframe, a confirmation in writing of the service provider might be required.

It shall include the specific non-refundable amounts of eligible expenses.

- Any supporting document evidencing the Force Majeure. This may take the form of (non-exhaustive list):
    - Certificate of death issued by a medical practitioner / national, regional or local authority competent to issue such a certificate of the participant or Close relative (+ in that case, evidence of the relationship as mentioned above);
    - Medical certificate certifying that:
      - The participant cannot attend / needs to shorten their participation to the meeting due to medical circumstances; or
      - Certifying that the presence of the participant near a (ill or injured) Close relative is required (+ in that case, evidence of the relationship as mentioned above).
- The medical certificate shall be issued by a medical practitioner or national, local or regional authority competent to issue such a certificate and shall include:
- Date of issuance;
  - Dates of applicability;
  - Possibly other mentions as required in the present document.
- Document certifying a national border closure, the closure of a Host Institution.

### **3.1.7. Payments modalities**

All payments made to eligible participants are in Euro at an exchange rate automatically calculated by e-COST which uses the conversion rate applicable at the end date of the Action event in question.

Bank charges / fees incurred by a Grant Holder in relation to returned or rejected payments due to incorrect bank account details being provided by a beneficiary of COST funds can be subtracted from the payable amounts.

## 3.2. Local Organiser support (LOS)

A legal entity acting as a Local Organiser for an Action event shall be eligible to receive financial support to cover expenses carried out to organise a COST Action networking activity. This financial support takes the form of a grant referred to as Local Organiser Support. The Local Organiser Support is a financial contribution to the overall expenses related to organising approved meetings, conferences, workshops and / or Training Schools.

### 3.2.1. Type of expenses to be covered by the LOS per type of event

The Local Organiser Support grant may be used to cover the following eligible categories of expenses per type of event:

#### 3.2.1.A. **Face to face events:**

- Rental for rooms, audio-visual (A/V) materials, and poster stands;
- Photocopying and the printing of programmes, handouts, event materials, book of abstracts, book of proceedings, flyers etc.;
- Refreshments (light edible items and beverages not intended to substitute for meals);
- Collective bus transfer to the event venue;  
This refers to the transfer of all participants from a designated point to the event venue in the cases when the event venue is in a remote location without adequate public transport;  
This does not include airport transfer to hotels, bus transfer to the conference dinner or the bus reservation with a touristic purpose, which are not eligible in any case;
- Field trip expenses if scientifically justified and relevant to the objectives of the approved meeting / Training School;
- Administrative support of up to a maximum of 15% of the eligible Local Organiser Support amount can be claimed by the Local Organiser to support the administrative and secretarial expenses linked to hosting and organising the approved scientific activity of any size). In cases when the Grant Holder Manager is the Local Organiser, tasks carried out as Local Organiser are not included the general Grant Holder Manager tasks (e-COST management, treating the reimbursement claims, etc). The local organiser shall submit a time sheet indicating the name of the personnel, number of hours worked, and hourly rate. The document shall be signed by a legal authority from the institution.

#### 3.2.1.B. **Virtual events:**

- Technical hosting and / or support;  
This refers to technician hourly rate if required on specific openings days before and during the event to assist with technical support, attendee management and monitoring, registration, platform configuration and setup, communication with attendees and / or document sharing, pre-recording and editing presentations for events and conferences;
- Customer support during event;  
This refers to staff hourly rate for the support for attendees, live-stream tech support via email and/or chat, attendance tracking and quorum, Q&A set up and managing, moving slides during meeting, voting, polling, waiting room, chat monitoring, report writing if applicable;
- Pre-event recordings, studio rental, production costs;
- Post-event process management refer to post-production editing cost, for example for videos and other materials, feedback surveys, and analysis;
- Administrative support covers the same items as for a face-to-face event.

### 3.2.1.C. **Hybrid events:**

- The same eligible expenses as for a face to face and virtual event;
- Technical hosting and / or support;  
This covers the same items as for virtual events and additionally, a range of technical support personnel onsite and / or online / or in more than 1 location if required.

### 3.2.1.D. **Specific conditions for LOS for co-located activities**

An Action MC (or Core Group when delegated) may decide to host multiple meetings and / or a Training School over the same time period at the same venue. In such cases:

- Co-located meetings are considered as 1 single event, therefore only 1 Local Organiser Support may be claimed;
- However, in case of co-located meeting(s) with a Training School, the series of meetings and the Training School are considered as two separate activities. Therefore, one LOS grant is eligible to support the entire series of co-located meetings and a second separate LOS grant is eligible to support the Training School.

### 3.2.1.E. **Specific conditions for LOS when co-organising activities with another COST Action**

An Action MC (or Core Group when delegated) may decide to co-organise an event with another COST Action. In such cases:

- Only one COST Action can claim a Local Organiser Support grant;  
The concerned Action MCs shall agree among themselves on which of the Action shall carry out the Local Organiser Support grant;
- A single Local Organiser Support grant is eligible to support the entire series of co-organised, co-located Actions' meetings;
- A single Local Organiser Support grant is eligible to support a co-organised COST Training School.

## 3.2.2. **LOS grant amount calculation**

The calculation of the Local Organiser Support is determined by:

- The format of the Action event (face-to-face, hybrid or virtual);
- The number of participants who signed the attendance list and/or appear on the virtual log,  
and
- The duration of the event.

On that basis, the maximum Local Organiser Support grant amount are as follows:

- Local Organiser Support grant amount for face-to-face and hybrid meetings;

Total participants for the entire duration of the event	LOS grant for a COST face to face / hybrid event lasting:		
	1 day	2 days	3 days or more
Min.1–max. 25 participants	EUR 1.000	EUR 2.000	EUR 3.500
26-50 participants	EUR 2.000	EUR 4.000	EUR 6.000
51-100 participants	EUR 4.000	EUR 6.000	EUR 8.500
101-200 participants	EUR 6.000	EUR 8.500	EUR 10.000

- Local Organiser Support Grant amount for virtual meetings;

Total participants for the entire duration of the event	LOS grant for a COST virtual event lasting:		
	1-day event	2-day event	3-day event or more
Min. 1–max. 25	EUR 350	EUR 700	EUR 900
26-50	EUR 900	EUR 1.500	EUR 3.000
51-100	EUR 2.500	EUR 3.500	EUR 4.500
101-200	EUR 3.500	EUR 5.500	EUR 7.000

The Local Organiser may choose to request an amount that is lower than the maximum claimable Local Organiser Support grant.

### Example

Local Organiser Support grant amount calculation:

A COST event is planned in e-COST for 25 people. The Local Organiser may claim:

- A maximum of EUR 3 500 for a face-to-face or hybrid event;
- A maximum of EUR 900 for a virtual event;
- A smaller amount if chosen so.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	TOTAL participants for 3 days	Max LOS grant /type of event
10 people signed attendance list /appear on the virtual log	5 people	8 people	23 people have signed / were present virtually	EUR 3.500 – face to face / hybrid
				EUR 900 – virtual

### 3.2.3. Payments modalities

The Local Organiser Support grant shall always be paid into an institutional bank account and never into a personal bank account.

The Local Organiser Support grant shall be paid after the event has taken place and the attendance list and / or virtual meeting attendance logs have been uploaded in e-COST.

### 3.2.4. Archiving

The Grant Holder shall archive the attendance list / logs.

The Grant Holder may request from the Local Organiser any supporting documents required in accordance with applicable law or regulation.

## 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.

### 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.

#### 1.1. Mobility of researchers and innovators

Researchers and innovators Mobility Grants (Short-Term Scientific Missions and Virtual Mobility Grants):

- 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.

##### 1.1.1. Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

Short-Term Scientific Mission consists in a visit of a host organization located in a different country than the country of affiliation (for Affiliation, see Article 4)1.1.a.1)) by a Researcher or Innovator for the 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.

### 1.1.2. Virtual Mobility (VM)

To be confirmed - following the evaluation by COST of results of the current pilot and the contract to be signed between COST and the EC.

## 1.2. Presentations at Conferences organised by third parties

### 1.2.1. ITC Conference Grants

ITC Conference Grants consist in financial support for Young Researchers and Innovators affiliated in an Inclusiveness Target Country / Near Neighbour Country for their participation in high-level conferences. ITC Conference Grants:

- 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 Grants **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.

### 1.2.2. Dissemination Grants

Dissemination Grants consist in financial support to Action participant for their participation in high-level conferences. Dissemination Grants:

- 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 Grants **benefit to:**

- **Dissemination Conference Grantee:** receives 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;
- **COST Action:** receives increased visibility and awareness, new contacts with potential stakeholders.

## 2. WORKING MODALITIES

### 2.1. Information to be provided for the Work and Budget Plan

As per article 7.2., the Action needs to provide the following information for grants 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':
  - The scientific priorities of the addressed Working Group(s) and which MoU objectives those relate to;

- 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.
- 'Outputs':
  - Tangible output(s), e.g., STSM reports, collaborative projects, joint publications, presentation in a COST Action Meeting or an external conference to a wider scientific community, potential stakeholders, contacts for new collaboration (in case of Dissemination Grants) etc.;
  - Less tangible output(s), e.g., knowledge exchange, transfer of skills and techniques, increased visibility and awareness of COST Action (in case of Dissemination Grants), networking.
- 'Budget' (estimation) calculated automatically in e-COST based on foreseen number of Grants and estimated average amount.

## 2.2. Access conditions

See Article 6.4 for Eligibility to receive financial support.

## 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 online in e-COST using dedicated tool;
- The content of the application depends on the activity and shall include:

Networking Activity	Application form (filled in e-COST)	Other Information (uploaded in e-COST)
STSM	Indicating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Start and end date;</li> <li>● Goals, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, expected outcomes, description of the contribution to the Action MoU objectives;</li> <li>● Budget requested by the applicant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Confirmation of the host on the agreement from the host institution in receiving the applicant;</li> <li>● Applicant's CV;</li> <li>● Recommendation letters.</li> </ul>
ITC Conference Grant	Indicating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conference title, date and venue;</li> <li>● Budget requested;</li> <li>● Motivation describing the potential for impact on the applicant's career.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Copy of the abstract of the accepted oral or poster presentation;</li> <li>● Acceptance letter from the conference organisers;</li> <li>● Any other documents requested by the Action MC and described in the Call (e.g., applicant's CV, recommendation letters).</li> </ul>

Dissemination Grant	<p>Indicating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conference title, date and venue.</li> <li>• Budget requested;</li> <li>• Description of the targeted audience and potential impact to the COST Action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of the abstract of the accepted oral presentation focused on promoting the scientific achievements and activities being performed by the COST Action;</li> <li>• Acceptance (or invitation) letter from the conference organisers;</li> <li>• Any other documents requested by the Action MC and described in the Call (e.g., applicant's CV, recommendation letters).</li> </ul>
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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;
- **ITC Conference Grants:** Grantee delivers the approved (oral or poster) presentation, following any specific request of acknowledgement set by the Action MC;
- **Dissemination Grants:** 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 Grant;
- Claims the payment of the grant via e-COST;
- The required report/documentation for claiming the grant of a **STSM** is:
  - Report to the Action MC on the main achievements of the STSM and planned future follow up activities.
- The required report/documentation for claiming an **ITC Conference Grant** is:
  - The certificate of attendance, the programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the presentation (oral or poster) of the grantee and copy of the given presentation (oral or poster);
- The required report/documentation for claiming a **Dissemination Grant** are:
  - Report to the Action MC on the contacts made and potential for future collaborations; the presentation given should be annexed.
  - The certificate of attendance, the programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the oral presentation of the grantee.

#### **Receiving payment of the grant:**

- 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.

## **2.4. Process description – view of the COST Action MC, Grant Awarding Coordinator and Grant Holder**

#### **Note on Conflict of Interests:**

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 appointed: 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: 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 Principles of Openness and Inclusiveness should be considered when deciding on Grants.

### **Implementation**

- Grant Awarding Coordinator and/or Grant Holder: instructs the individual grantees on how to report and what documents to upload on e-COST;
- Grant Holder: Processes the first instalment (if requested by STSM grantees from ITCs and NNCs) and supports the grantee in case of force majeure.

### **Reporting**

- STSM Host: Provides a written approval of the STSM report;
- Grant Awarding Coordinator: Collects relevant reports submitted by individual grantees. Coordinates Action MC approval of the report and confirm approval /rejection of the report.
- Management Committee: approves / rejects report;
- Grant Holder: pays the Grant once the report is approved and all supporting documents are submitted.

### 3. FUNDING SCHEME

Financial support for networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process is as follows:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Maximum Amount (EUR)</b>	<b>Decision of the Amount</b>
<b>STSM Grant</b>	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.
<b>ITC Conference Grant</b>	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.
<b>Dissemination Conference Grant</b>		OR  EUR 500.00 for virtual conferences	

Provisions related to Force majeure impacting travel in paragraph ANNEX 1.3.1.6 of Annex 1 are applicable to financial support for networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process.

## ANNEX 3. DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS

Dissemination and communication products support the COST Actions. They are funded because of the added value they bring to the activities and collaboration within the COST Action.

### 1. SCOPE AND BENEFITS

Dissemination and Communication Products:

- Increase the visibility, awareness, and impact of COST Actions:
  - Promote the work and activities performed within the COST Actions by group(s) of individual researchers / COST Action;
  - Support capacity building and benefits the participant's career.
- Make widely available the results of COST Actions to all type of potential end users in COST Members and beyond (the scientific community, business enterprises, policy makers, citizens, general public, other stakeholders);
- Increase the visibility, awareness, and impact of COST programme towards the decision makers and research communities.

Dissemination and Communication Products **benefit to**:

- **Direct Users:**
  - **Action participants and COST Actions:**
    - Receive funding for promoting their work and activities, for sharing widely the knowledge, results, and achievements, and increasing the network of contacts for collaboration.
- **Indirect Users:**
  - **Researchers outside the network and Stakeholders** (practitioners, citizens, businesses, policy makers, authorities, NGOs, and others):
    - Get access to the most up to date knowledge that they can use for their own initiatives;
    - Can be engaged and actively become part of the Action.
  - **General Public:**
    - is informed about scientific progress/developed products of their interest. Potential to showcase the value of investing in EU cooperation in research.

### 2. WORKING MODALITIES

#### 2.1. Information to be provided for the Work and Budget Plan

As per article 7.2., the Action needs to provide the following information for grants 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 item serves the MoU objectives;
  - The topic and type of dissemination, e.g. publications (proceedings, review article, special issue), videos, etc.;
  - The number of COST Full or Cooperating Members involved in the publication;
  - The publisher or provider of Open Access publication, the number of COST Full / Cooperating and Partner Members (or Near Neighbour Country) involved in the publication;
  - The distribution strategy for multimedia products;
  - The targeted audience and involved Working Group(s) could be also described.

- ‘Outputs’:
  - Tangible output(s), e.g. publications, website, videos, etc.;
  - Less tangible output(s), e.g. knowledge exchange, transfer of skills and techniques, policy development, raising awareness on the topic.
- ‘Budget’ (estimation) for each dissemination item, e.g. publication(s), website, video(s) etc.

## 2.2. Process description

Dissemination and Communication products are implemented via third party services. Financial support can be requested for the products delivered by the Action and listed in the table in paragraph 3 - Funding schemes of the present Annex:

- **Action MC:** approves items and budget, in accordance with the Action Dissemination, Communication and Valorisation strategy;
- **Action Chair:** Submits the request for the items to be funded (at Work and Budget Plan negotiation or during Grant Period), providing information about the content, targeted audiences, and channels for distribution. The content of the proposed item in the Work and Budget Plan should provide the information necessary for the negotiation as indicated below;
- **Grant Holder:** upon approval by the COST Association, follows the production of the item and collects all required documents. For claiming the expense: an invoice and a proof of delivery (item in electronic format, pdf, link, DOI, etc.) need to be provided to the COST Association.

Dissemination and Communication products shall comply with requirements set in 5 - Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation of the COST Action results, notably Article 5.1 - General principle and rules (see in particular, [COST guidelines on visual identity for acknowledging COST funding](#)) and 5.4 - Open Science and Open Access.

### Recommendation

In selecting the publisher for a scientific publication to be published in Open Access, the Action MC shall select a renowned publisher and the publication shall be of high impact. Impact of the publication to be assessed along the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR)<sup>3</sup> – that has established itself as a good alternative to the Impact Factor – of the considered academic journal. Any journal that is situated in the first three quartiles Q1-Q3 is considered of sufficient impact, while journals in the last quartile Q4 or journals not contained in the SCOPUS database need an assessment by the responsible Science Officer; the SJR and quartile (Q1, Q2, Q3 or Q4) for each journal contained in SCOPUS can be obtained from the SCImago web page (accessible at <https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php>).

The publication shall be subjected to peer review. Peer review is defined as obtaining advice on individual manuscripts from reviewers, expert in the field who are not part of the journal’s editorial staff. This process, as well as any policies related to the journal’s peer review procedures, shall be clearly described on the journal’s Web site.

## 3. FUNDING SCHEMES

In order to see their claim for dissemination and communication products being reimbursed, Dissemination and communication products shall meet the hereunder described conditions:

- Being eligible as per paragraph 3.1 of the present Annex hereunder;
- Abide by the requirements set in Article 5 - Communication, Dissemination and Valorisation of the COST Action results, notably;
  - Article 5.1 - General principle and rules (see in particular, acknowledging COST and EU support – see [COST guidelines on visual identity](#)); and
  - 5.4 - Open Science and Open Access;
  - For any reproducible item (including, but not limited to, articles, papers, books, manifestos, pamphlets, flyers, presentations, videos and webinars) to be made widely available.

- Be supported by invoices dated within the Grant Period;
- Be delivered within the Grant Period;
- Respect the non-for-profit principle: dissemination and communication products issued and/or purchased and paid with COST funds cannot be sold to Action participants or the general public;
- Be procured following the rules applicable to the Grant Holder;
- Be approved by the Action MC and COST Association.

### 3.1. Eligible expenses

The following expenses are eligible as Dissemination and Communication Products:

**THIS LIST MAY BE UPDATED ONCE THE CONTRACTUAL CONDITIONS OF COST ARE KNOWN.**

List of eligible items	Specific Conditions	Product to be delivered
Open Access fee for scientific publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be the result of the work of the Action.</li> <li>• Be authored by Action participants from at least 3 different COST F/C and Partner Member (or 2 COST F/C and Partner Member and 1 NNC) or authored by Action participants from 2 COST F/C and Partner Member if resulting from an STSM funded by the Action.</li> </ul>	Accepted publication in pdf format (or link or DOI).
Registration fee as an exhibitor in events organized by a third party not funded by COST.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weblink to the event website, COST/COST Action should be visible in the event programme as an exhibitor.</li> </ul>	Certificate of participation issued by the event organiser.
Design of the Action logo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to EUR 1.000 during the lifetime of the Action.</li> </ul>	A readable file with logo.
Design and production of dissemination materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited to leaflet, brochures, flyers, infographics, Action poster, roll-up, training materials.</li> </ul>	The final product in pdf format or link to the published file.
Design and production of multimedia content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Videos, animations, and multimedia presentations.</li> </ul>	Multimedia file or link to the published file.
Design and production of information materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional material to be distributed in the frame of an external event that is open to a high number of external stakeholders.</li> </ul>	Final design of the products to be distributed.
Design, production, hosting and maintenance of the Website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to EUR 9.000 during the lifetime of the Action.</li> </ul>	Weblink to the public website + login and password for private area (if existent) for use by the COST Staff.
Proof reading, editing, translation and layout expenses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In combination of other eligible item.</li> <li>• Only related to products delivered by the Action under the other categories of expenses.</li> </ul>	The product it relates to.

### **3.2. Non eligible expenses**

- Value Added Tax (V.A.T.);
- Fees or charges associated with disseminating or advertising media content and publications that go beyond what is detailed in this section;
- Advertisement costs;
- Any expense not listed in the list of eligible expenses detailed in paragraph 3.1. above.

## ANNEX 4. EXPENSES INCURRED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NETWORK

Expenses incurred for the benefit of the network are not directly supporting networking activities but are funded because they bring added value to the activities of the network. These expenses comprise:

- **Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities**, for the acquisition of services and products needed for the optimal implementation of the networking activities and the achievement of the MoU objectives;
- **Virtual Networking Support**, for promoting virtual collaboration as a complement to traditional ways of collaboration within the research and innovation communities.  
**To be Confirmed - following the evaluation by COST of results of the current pilot and the contract to be signed between COST and the EC.**

### 1. OTHER EXPENSES RELATED TO SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES (OERSA)

#### 1.1. Scope and Benefits

This budget line allows to fund essential and supporting expenses for the successful implementation of activities related to all networking activities.

To the benefit of:

- **Direct users:** Action MC; Action Chair; Grant Holders / Local Organisers.
- **Indirect users:** Action participants; Ad hoc contributors.

#### 1.2. Working modalities

OERSA is implemented via third party services. Financial support can be requested for the products delivered by the Action and listed in the table in the paragraph 1.3 - Funding schemes of the present Annex:

- **Action MC:** approves items and budget;
- **Action Chair:** Submits the request for the items to be funded (at WBP or during grant period);
- **Grant Holder:** upon approval by the COST Association, processes payment(s) for service provider(s), collects invoices and uploads them in e-COST.

#### 1.3. Funding schemes

Products and services acquired for the benefit of the Action can be claimed for as much as they are eligible, meaning respecting the following general conditions:

- Being listed in the table hereunder;
- Be supported by invoices dated within the Grant Period;
- Be delivered within the Grant Period;
- Been procured following the rules applicable to the Grant Holder;
- Approved by the Action MC and COST Association.

### 1.3.1. Eligible expenses

Expenses with the following products and services are eligible:

**THIS LIST MAY BE UPDATED ONCE THE CONTRACTUAL CONDITIONS OF COST ARE KNOWN.**

List of eligible items	Specific Conditions
Bank charges.	Only expenses supported by copy of bank statements of the Grant Holder are eligible.
Consumables for use in Training Schools.	Only expenses supported by invoices.
Renting of equipment and short-term use of software and database licences for Training Schools.	Only expenses supported by invoices.
Shipping costs.	Shipping of materials that need to be distributed within the network to reach the Action objectives, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample and equipment sharing for research coordination and training schools approved by COST and organised by the Action;</li> <li>• Dissemination and Communication products produced by the Action for meetings and events, to network members and to stakeholders;</li> </ul> Only expenses supported by invoices.
Virtual communication and collaboration tools (digital networking).	Maximum claim of EUR 500 per Grant Period. Only expenses supported by invoices.

### 1.3.2. Non-eligible expenses

- V.A.T. and any other indirect taxes;
- Bank and / or currency related charges / fees charged by the bank of individual claimants and / or beneficiaries who have received a payment sourced from the COST Grant are not eligible to be claimed by the beneficiary and shall be borne by each respective individual beneficiary;
- Any other expenses not approved by the COST Association prior the incurred expense.

## 2. VIRTUAL NETWORKING SUPPORT (VNS)

### 2.1. Scope and Benefits

To be confirmed - following the evaluation by COST of results of the current pilot and the contract to be signed between COST and the EC.

### 2.2. Working modalities

To be confirmed - following the evaluation by COST of results of the current pilot and the contract to be signed between COST and the EC.

### 2.3. Funding schemes

To be confirmed - following the evaluation by COST of results of the current pilot and the contract to be signed between COST and the EC.

# ANNEX 5. FINANCIAL, SCIENTIFIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION (FSAC)

## 1. SCOPE AND BENEFITS

This budget line is a contribution to the expenses incurred by the Grant Holder in the implementation of the Action Grant Agreement. The FSAC is granted to the Grant Holder to support the execution of the financial, scientific, and administrative coordination tasks relating to managing and coordinating Action activities during a given Grant Period.

## 2. WORKING MODALITIES

FSAC is payable to the Grant Holder and agreed in the Action Grant Agreement signed between the Grant Holder and the COST Association. By approving a Grant Holder, the Action MC agrees to allocate FSAC within the budget.

## 3. FUNDING SCHEMES

The calculation of FSAC is made by applying a 15% rate to the sub-total of the expenses as per Annexes 1 to 4.

At the time of the Work and Budget Plan negotiation, FSAC is estimated by applying a 15% rate to the sub-total of the budgeted expenses.

At the time of the Final Financial Report, FSAC is claimed by the Grant Holder. The claimable amount is calculated by applying a 15% rate to the sub-total of actual and eligible expenses reported and approved by the COST Administration.

### Example:

	<b>Budget (Work and Budget Plan)</b>	<b>Actual Expense (Financial Report)</b>
Meetings	EUR 55.000,00	EUR 54.500,00
Training Schools	EUR 20.000,00	EUR 19.500,00
STSM	EUR 30.000,00	EUR 28.750,00
VM	EUR 4.000,00	EUR 4.000,00
Presentation for capacity building	EUR 3.000,00	EUR 2.500,00
Presentation for dissemination	EUR 1.500,00	EUR 1.000,00
Dissemination and Communication Products	EUR 10.000,00	EUR 12.000,00
OERSA	EUR 2.934,78	EUR 1.800,00
VNS	EUR 4.000,00	EUR 4.000,00
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>EUR 130.434,78</b>	<b>EUR 128.050,00</b>
<b>FSAC</b>	<b>EUR 19.565,22</b>	<b>EUR 19.207,50</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>EUR 150.000,00</b>	<b>EUR 147.257,50</b>