

# SHORT-TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS

## Definition of STSMs

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) are aimed at supporting individual mobility and at strengthening the existing networks and fostering collaborations by allowing scientists to visit an institution in another participating COST Country or an approved NNC institution or an approved IPC institution. A STSM should specifically contribute to the objectives of the COST Targeted Network.

## Aims of STSMs

The aim of STSMs is to contribute to the policy and objectives of BESTPRAC, namely

- to allow networking and exchanging financial, legal, and administrative experience
- to share and develop best practices encouraging knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer, and increased efficiency in project management
- establish a network for the administrative, finance and legal services in universities, research organizations and related entities

## Applicants

The Applicant should be employed at an institution of a COST participating country having accepted the MoU of BESTPRAC, with a record of active participation in BESTPRAC. See list of countries having accepted the MoU of BESTPRAC here: [http://www.cost.eu/about\\_cost/strategy/tn/Actions/TN1302?parties](http://www.cost.eu/about_cost/strategy/tn/Actions/TN1302?parties)

Applicants who are early stage administrators, representing the target group of BESTPRAC and coming from so-called inclusiveness countries are particularly encouraged to submit a STSM application. All other participants of BESTPRAC interested in a STSM are, of course, also very welcome to submit a STSM application.

Definition early stage administrator: max. 8 years after the last education attainment or years in the profession as research administrator.

Target group of BESTPRAC: staff in universities and research institutions carrying out administrative tasks in support of European projects during the post-award phase, often with low salaries, without any possibility to travel and to network and share experiences about carrying out administrative tasks in European research projects.

Inclusiveness countries: EU 13 (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

## “standard STSM” and “Group STSM” applications

The standard STSM refers to the application of an individual person going to a host institution.

BESTPRAC decided also to go for so-called “Group STSM” at a first stage. Up to 5 people (fitting the target group definition) from different institutions may be selected go to one host institution. Each applicant to a “Group STSM” must submit an individual STSM application indicating and reflecting that it is part of a Group STSM.

In addition, it is also possible to apply for a Group STSM with multiple hosts in one country.

Applicants should bear in mind that the travel costs should not be more than EUR 500 in total.

## Duration

According to the COST rules, the duration of STSM is minimum one week (5 working days) and maximum 3 months. It was agreed with the COST office that for BESTPRAC, shorter STSM (at least three days) can also be approved. Awardees may also request an extension from the Management Committee; in such a case the STSM may take up to 6 months in total.

## Budget for Grant Period 5 (1 May, 2016 – April 30, 2017)

A total amount of EUR 15,000 has been allocated for STSMs in grant period 5 which should cover at least 15 STSMs.

## Home and host institution

The home and the host institutions can be public or private from a COST participating country having accepted the MoU of BESTPRAC. See list of countries having accepted the MoU of BESTPRAC here:

[http://www.cost.eu/about\\_cost/strategy/tn/Actions/TN1302?parties](http://www.cost.eu/about_cost/strategy/tn/Actions/TN1302?parties)

A STSM may only be approved:

- from a home institution in a COST participating country to a host institution in another COST participating country or to a formally approved host institution in a non-COST country.
- From a formally approved home institution in a Near Neighbour country to a host institution in a COST participating country.

In exceptional cases, the COST Office reserves the right to analyse the possibility of reimbursement of any person designated by itself or by the Management Committee of an Action or by a Domain Committee to further the interests and aims of COST.

Short-Term Scientific Missions between different Targeted Networks / Actions may be considered by the Management Committees of both Targeted Networks / Actions.

The Applicant is responsible for obtaining the agreement of the host institution before submitting his/her application (see Annex I). However, this is not required at the application stage for a "group STSM". In this case, the host institution(s) approval letter is obtained if the applicant is successful following the normal review process.

## Deadlines and terms

Based on a decision adopted by the MC -meeting, there will be three fixed collection dates (deadlines) in grant period 5 for the STSMs applications: June 1, 2016; October 1, 2016 and February 1, 2017.

STSMs shall not start sooner than six weeks after the collection date and finishing no later than the end of the third Grant Period.

## Application registration

Applications can only be submitted by using the on-line registration tool ([www.cost.eu/stsm](http://www.cost.eu/stsm)) and forwarding the necessary documents to STSM Coordinator.

The following information has to be encoded with the registration:

1. the Action number;
2. the title of the planned STSM;
3. the start and end date;
4. the applicant's details, including key academic, institutional-administrative or policy-making; details and workplan; and home institution details;
5. the applicant's bank details;
6. the host institution's details;
7. financial data (amount for travel and subsistence requested).

After encoding the information via the on-line registration tool, a formal STSM application is generated which has to be downloaded and sent by the Applicant electronically (by e-mail as attachment) together with the proposal to:

- the future Host institution of the STSM;
- the STSM coordinator.

## Each proposal should include the following sections:

- Summary (this will be also used in the COST reporting form)
- Background to the STSM
- Specific Aims of the STSM
- Preliminary Results (if they exist)
- Workplan
- Relevance of the collaboration (why this project should require a visit to the host institution)
- References to relevant Literature (if applicable; should not exceed one page)
- Letters of support from the home (for all applications) and host institutions (for standard applications only)
- CV (should not exceed one page)

Applicants are encouraged to be brief. Overall, the proposal should not exceed 4 pages (excluding references and letters of support).

The working language of BESTPRAC is English; all official documentation submitted (application, scientific report) have be executed in English.

## Financial Support

The financial support is a contribution to the costs of a STSM and may not necessarily cover all the costs in each case. The grant should normally cover only travel and subsistence. The financial contribution for a STSM will be a fixed grant based on the Applicant's budget request and the evaluation of the application by the STSM assessment committee. An amount of EUR 90 to 120 for the daily allowance in particular for longer stays and EUR 300 for the travel is recommended but not obligatory. The total of a STSM shall not exceed EUR 2,500 up to 3 months (or EUR 3 500 for early stage researchers, early career institutional administrators or policy makers if the STSM exceeds 3 months). Grantees must make their own arrangements for all health, social, personal security and pension matters.

## Assessment

The STSM Coordinator distributes the applications to the relevant STSM Evaluation Panel (Core Group).

### Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria are available in advance to potential applicants. Every care will be taken to avoid any bias and ensure both a geographical and gender balance. In the evaluation process, the STSM Evaluation Panel will evaluate each proposal focusing primarily on the relevance of the submitted STSM to the goals of the particular WG and the overall objectives of BESTPRAC, the clarity and rigour of the submission and the expected impact of the STSM. The STSM Evaluation Panel will not approve any application that is not properly and carefully written.

The Evaluation Panel shall draft an Assessment Report (see Annex II).

### Assessment outcome

The STSM Coordinator informs the Grant Holder if the proposed STSM has been approved in the form of an e-mail stating:

"Subject: STSM Reference number, COST Targeted Network number, grantees name

On behalf of the Management Committee of the above COST Action I would like to inform you after evaluation that:

- a. the attached request for an STSM has been approved and;
- b. a grant of EUR x has been recommended and;

- c. the host institution accepted the proposal."

In the event of a submission failure, the e-mail shall be modified accordingly.

After checking the application for the compatibility with the existing rules and procedures, the Grant Holder will inform the Applicant about the outcome of the assessment and will arrange the necessary formalities for the issue of the grant in case of a positive result and availability of funding. The Grant Holder informs the Applicant about the assessment outcome through the Grant letter in which the Applicant is informed about:

- a. the approval of the STSM and;
- b. the level of the financial grant given.

The Applicant has to return this Grant letter, after accepting the grant with his/her signature, without any delay. The Applicant will receive a Payment Request Form at the same time.

The decisions and assessments regarding all STSM applications shall be reported to the next MC meeting and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

## After the STSM

### STSM Report

After completion of the STSM the Grantee is required to submit to the host institution and the STSM Coordinator a short report on the visit within 4 weeks after his/her stay. The report should contain the following information:

- Summary (to be also used for reporting to the COST Office);
- Purpose of the STSM;
- Detailed description of the work carried out during the STSM;
- Contribution to the goals of the COST Targeted Network;
- Description of the main results obtained
  - elaborate in detail on the results obtained
  - describe what you have learned during your visit
  - please take into consideration that the readers of the report shall also be able to learn from it;
- It is mandatory to describe which of the best practices / tools / systems from the host institution will be (tried to be) implemented by you within your institute. Please also describe the reason / benefit of its implementation. In this regard identify the 1) tools/systems/practices that are beneficial, and more importantly, describe their content (please obtain permission from your host to reproduce, if necessary)
- Future collaboration with host institution (if applicable);
- Foreseen publications/articles/dissemination tool or document resulting or to result from the STSM (if applicable);
- Confirmation by the host institution of the successful execution of the STSM (see Annex III);
- Other comments (if any).

The report shall be executed in English and delivered in the PDF format.

In addition to the requested report, each Grantee is asked to contribute to the BESTPRAC manual "Best practices and learning points in research administration" containing both good practices and weaknesses in project planning and implementation. The Grantee will be provided with the latest version at the time of the approval of the STSM.

Once the STSM is paid, the details (recipient, host, countries, amount, and length of time) appear in the financial reports that the Grant Holder can generate from eCOST. Each STSM report will be uploaded onto the Targeted Network website.

### Notice of completion

The STSM Coordinator together with the STSM Evaluation Panel is responsible for approving the final report and sending the notice of completion of the STSM to the Grant Holder with the confirmation that the STSM has been successfully accomplished and that the grant can be paid. The information is usually in the form of an e-mail which should include the scientific report and state:

"Subject: STSM Reference number, COST Targeted Network number, grantee's name

On behalf of the Management Committee of the above COST Action I would like to inform you that:

1. The above STSM has been completed from <Start date> to <End date>
2. The scientific report has been approved by the MC and Host.
3. The amount of EUR X can be paid"

### Payment

After reception of the approval mail and the Report, the Grant Holder shall execute the payment of the fixed grant directly to the grantee or the host institution as requested in the application within a period of 30 days:

- Completed Payment request form;
- Summary of scientific report (maximum 1 page).

### Deviation from procedure

Any deviations and exceptions from this procedure may be considered, provided that they contribute to the objectives of the Action. They require prior approval from the COST Office.

## Annex I

A suggested template for the expression of interest. You may also use your own.  
However: You MUST write the expression of interest using the letterhead of your Institution!

### Expression of intention to host a Short-Term Scientific Mission

To the Grant Holder of the COST Targeted Network TN1302 – BESTPRAC

Place, date: \_\_\_\_\_

STSM Applicant (first name and last name): \_\_\_\_\_

Home Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Host Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

hereby inform that we welcome the visit that Mr/Ms \_\_\_\_\_  
plans to perform in our institution at \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_  
(month) \_\_\_\_\_ (year), within the framework of the BESTPRAC Short-Term  
Scientific Mission (STSM) programme.

The STSM will be based on the work plan described by Mr/Ms  
\_\_\_\_\_ in the STSM Application. The STSM will have a mutual  
benefit for the applicant and our group, in consideration of both the specific activities  
to be performed and the expected strengthening of cooperation between the Home  
and Host institutions.

Yours sincerely,

First name and last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Annex II

Does the application meet the aims of the COST Targeted Network?

- Yes
- No

Overall assessment of the Short-Term Scientific Mission application

- The application is recommended for funding.
- The application is not recommended for funding because it does not fulfil the aims of the COST Targeted Network.
- The application is not recommended for funding because of budgetary reasons (budget is too high).

Statement of the Evaluation Panel:

Note (where applicable): The Assessment Panel recommends resubmission of the application provided that the following changes are made:

Date, place

Evaluation panel members

### **Annex III**

A suggested template for the confirmation by the host institution of the successful execution of the STSM. You may also use your own.

*However: You MUST write the confirmation using the letterhead of the Host Institution!*

### **Confirmation of the host institution on the successful completion of the Short-Term Scientific Mission**

To the Grant Holder of the COST Targeted Network TN1302 – BESTPRAC

Place, date: \_\_\_\_\_

The host institution \_\_\_\_\_

hereby confirms the successful completion of the STSM stay of [name of applicant]

\_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

Yours sincerely,

First name and last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_