Brussels, 1st October 2026

COST 094/21

Version 4.0

ANNOTATED RULES FOR COST ACTIONS

(Level C – COST Actions)

The Executive Board (EB) of the COST Association:

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

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

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

The present version of the Annotated Rules for COST Actions (COST 094/21; V4.0) shall enter into force on 1st November 2026.

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HISTORY OF CHANGES		
Version	Publication date	Changes
1.0	n/a	Initial version following adoption of Rules and Principles for COST activities (level A) and to the Rules for COST Actions (level B). Advance Copy - Restricted distribution to Action participants.
1.1	01.11.2021	Public distribution in the COST website. Rewording and text clarifications in the Annexes following further information on COST contractual conditions with the EC.
1.2	15.02.2022	Text clarification and link to the user guide on derogation procedure added to *A1-3.1 Travel Reimbursement Rules* and *A1-3.2 Local Organiser Support (LOS)*.
1.3	01.11.2022	Text clarifications and improvements. No significant changes impacting the implementation of the COST Actions.
1.4	01.11.2023	Text clarifications and improvements. No significant changes impacting the implementation of the COST Actions.
2.0	01.11.2024	- Text clarification and improvements - Clarification of procedure for Action extension requests - New criteria added to the access to leadership positions - Introduction of a new networking tool, the YRI Conference grant, and modification of the ITC Conference grant - Modification of the Travel Reimbursement Rules (daily allowance, long distance travel, car travel expenses and required documentation) - Introduction of force majeure impacting Local Organiser Support
3.0	01.11.2025	- Text clarifications and improvements - Clarification of the breaches and sanction procedures - Modification of the scope of the first COST Action monitoring - Modification of the daily allowance calculation and clarification of the criteria
4.0	01.11.2026	- Text clarifications and improvements - Update of chapter III.2. Sanctions - Introduction of a Working Group participation limitation - Clarification of the deadline for the Grant Holder to process reimbursement claims - Clarification of the travel reimbursement rules - Clarification of the eligible expenses for dissemination and communication products New relevant text is marked: blue. Text revised in previous versions is marked: in normal text.

Notice of use

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

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

Our approach

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

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

The annotations to the article are immediately underneath.

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

Requirements are in bold and red.

Examples, guidelines and recommendations are in bold and green.

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

Updates

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

New elements will be marked with NEW

Other information

Terms with a specific meaning are marked with a capital letter and are defined in the **Glossary**.
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.
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**[1] (referred to as **level A** in the hierarchy of applicable rules), and
- The **Rules for COST Actions**[2] (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 *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).*

[1] https://www.cost.eu/Rules_And_Principles_for_COST_A
[2] 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** is a COST Principle which is 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 COST Principle of Openness and Inclusiveness (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*.

The COST Principle of Openness and Inclusiveness 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[3] and fundamental rights as by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union[4] (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

[3] https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/
[4] EUR-Lex - 12012P/TXT - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

Young Researchers and Innovators. (see Article *3.9 - Access to leadership positions*, particularly Article *3.9.2 - Openness and Inclusiveness in leadership positions*);

- 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.

In light of the obligation to complete their tasks in a professional, objective, and impartial manner, participants in COST activities must always adopt respectful and professional behaviour and language when interacting with other participants.

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[5] for categorisation of countries);
- To spend 50% 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 and innovators based in Inclusiveness Target Countries;
- To have 40% of participations to networking activities by Young Researchers and Innovators;
- To dedicate 20% of Mandatory Leadership positions to Young Researchers and Innovators (see Article *3.9.1* for *Mandatory leadership positions*);
- To dedicate 50% of Mandatory Leadership positions to female researchers and innovators

COST Actions shall **make their best efforts to contribute to those overall indicatory targets**. **The 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***.

[5] 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[6] 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.

[6] https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/

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*.

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.

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.

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** [7].

Where personal data processing occurs in the framework of a COST Action **outside of e-COST**, the COST Action itself (through the Action MC) **shall define the personal data processing** 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 processing 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 processing and adopt a privacy notice can be found in this regard in the FAQ for COST Actions on Data Protection[8]. Templates are also available through the same link.

[7] https://e-services.cost.eu/privacy-notice

[8] www.cost.eu/FAQ_GDPR-COSTActions

Requests for support or information can be addressed to privacy@cost.eu.

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 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 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 - Good governance, financial soundness, and efficiency* 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 and Scientific Administration and 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,
- Breach of Rules applicable to COST Participants,
- Financial fraud,
- Breach of reporting obligations,
- For the Management Committees of COST Actions, breach of Management Committee duties.

Possible sanction measures may encompass:

a. Revocation of an Action participant's participation and reimbursement in a specific COST activity,
b. Exclusion from participation in one specific COST activity for a specific duration,
c. Termination of Working Group membership in one or several COST Actions,
d. Exclusion from participation in all or some COST activities for a specific duration,
e. 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,
f. Revocation from a leadership position in a COST activity, where applicable after consultation with the relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC),
g. Reduction of budget of a COST activity,
h. Termination of a COST Action.

Sanctions can be imposed by:

- The Management Committee or Core group of a COST Action for sanctions a to c,
- The COST Administration for sanctions a to g,
- The CSO for sanction h.

When facing a breach of lesser severity and/or committed by a first-time offender, the decision-making body may choose, under its sole discretion, to send a warning to the offender instead of imposing a sanction. This warning will be kept in the COST Association's record and will be taken into account in case the offender commits another breach.

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 aggrieved 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 aggrieved person or entity (be it the Action, the COST Association, or any other concerned entity).
- **Fraud** means **an intentional act of deceit with the intention to illegally or unethically gain an advantage** (financial or otherwise). Fraud or attempt of fraud encompasses a wide range of misconduct including theft, corruption, embezzlement, bribery, forgery, misrepresentation,

collusion, money laundering and concealment of material facts of COST programme resources or assets.

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**.

SANCTIONS RELATED TO PARTICIPATION

III.2.2. 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.

Examples:

1. The Action MC is found in breach of the Principle of good governance, financial soundness, and efficiency by making decisions that are contrary to eligibility rules under the present Annotated Rules for COST Action etc..
2. An Action MC is found in breach of the COST Principle of Openness and Inclusiveness because it rejects WG applications on grounds that appear to be contrary to the COST Principles.
3. An Action MC is found in breach of the COST Principle of Openness and Inclusiveness because it nominates at leadership positions only individuals from a limited number of countries or without consideration for their obligation to nominate one ITC Researcher or Innovator at a Mandatory Leadership position.

Procedure:

Where the COST Administration detects such breach(es) by an Action MC, 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 provide an opinion on whether the facts are sufficiently grounded for the case to be further assessed. Should it be the case, the **opinion 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 15 calendar days of receiving notification.

The COST Director shall, after the conclusion of the delay of 15 days and based on the file presented to him/her, the opinion of the Scientific Committee and the observations of the Action MC if any, decide on the reduction of the COST Action's budget, **recommend the termination of the COST Action to the Committee of Senior Officials,** or close the case. This decision shall **be formally notified to the Action MC**.

In cases where the COST Director recommends the termination of the COST Action, the **Committee of Senior Officials shall then decide,** based on the opinion 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.2.3. BREACH BY A HOLDER OF A MANDATORY LEADERSHIP POSITION

In case of **wilful, gross, or recurrent breach** by **the holder of a mandatory leadership position of:**

- COST Principle(s), notably COST Ethical Principle(s);
- COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy;
- Rule(s) applicable to COST Participants as per the present Annotated Rules;

For the Action Chair, the **COST Director** is entitled to revoke the concerned individual of their position.

For all other leadership positions, the **Head of Science Department** 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 COST Administration against a WG participant for the same facts**.

Example:

> The holder of a leadership position is found in breach COST Principle of Openness and Inclusiveness because he/she systematically rejects applications from certain individuals for some networking activities based on grounds that appear to be contrary to the COST Principle of Openness and Inclusiveness 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 and Innovators etc.).

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 instruct the case and constitute** a file including:

- 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**.

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

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 15 calendar days of receiving notification.

The COST Administration shall after the conclusion of the delay of 15 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 COST Director, when the case**

concerns an Action Chair, or the Head of Science Department, when the case concerns another leadership position, or close the case.

The **COST Director or the Head of Science Department shall then decide** based on the file presented to the COST Administration, the opinion of the Scientific Committee where applicable, and observations of the concerned individual and/or of the 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** after prior information to the relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC).

III.2.4. BREACH BY AN 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 present Annotated Rules;

by **an Action MC Member or Observer**, the **COST Director 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 COST Administration against a WG participant for the same facts**.

Examples:

1. An Action MC Member or Observer is found in breach of one of the Ethical Principle as per the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity;
2. Unjustified exclusion of certain active members of the MC or Working Groups

Procedure:

Where the COST Administration detects or is reported such breach(es) by **an Action MC Member or Observer** within a COST Action, it **shall inform the COST Director** with a file including:

- 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 COST Director shall decide whether the facts are sufficiently grounded for the case to be further assessed. Should it be the case, the **decision of the COST Director shall be formally notified to the concerned individual and to the relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC). The notification shall include the complete file that was provided to the COST Director**. The Scientific Committee shall receive a copy of the complete file for opinion when related to ethical matters.

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 15 calendar days of receiving notification.

The COST Director shall, after the conclusion of the delay of 15 days, and based on the file presented to him/her, the opinion of the Scientific Committee where applicable, and the observations of the concerned individual and/or of the relevant CNC if any, decide to **revoke** the Action MC Member or Observer from their position or **close the case**.

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

III.2.5. 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 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 from that 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 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.**

Example:

> A WG participant is found in breach of one of the Ethical Principle as per the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

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 15 calendar days of receiving notification.

The Action MC shall, after the conclusion of the delay of 15 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 COST Director for appeal** through the COST Administration. The COST Administration may not refuse to instruct the case.

The COST Director 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 COST Director **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 COST Director shall decide to:

- Confirm or remove the exclusion measure;
- Close the case.

This decision is final. It shall be **notified to the concerned individual**.

III.2.6. BREACH BY AN ACTION PARTICIPANT (NOT NECESSARILY WG MEMBER)

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 present Annotated Rules;

And in case of **wilful, gross or recurrent fraud** by an **Action Participant,**

The **Management Committee of a COST Action and/or the COST Administration is entitled to revoke** the concerned individual's participation and reimbursement in a specific COST activity.

The **COST Administration is also entitled to exclude** the concerned individual from participation in all or some COST activities for a specific duration,

Examples:

1. A participant using the different networks to promote their business by offering services to the Actions (e.g. building websites, design services, etc).
2. A participant submits two claims to different events in different countries. The departure and arrival times to these events overlap significantly.
3. A participant arrives to an event, signs off on the attendance list and leaves the event immediately, still submitting a claim for reimbursement of expenses.
4. A participant is suspected of forgery of administrative requirements (i.e. signature of the attendance list, manipulation of supporting documents with the aim to increase eligible reimbursement).

Procedure:

Where the Action MC or COST Administration detects or is reported such breach(es) by **an Action participant**,

- **When the sanction is to be imposed by the Action MC:**

The Action MC shall **formally notify** the individual concerned 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 15 calendar days of receiving notification.

The Action MC shall after the conclusion of the delay of 15 days and based on the elements of the case and observations of the Action 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 Action Participant**.

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

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

- **When the sanction is to be imposed by the COST Administration:**

It **shall inform the Head of Science Department** with a file including the same elements as the previous section.

On that basis, the Head of Science Department shall decide whether the facts are sufficiently grounded for the case to be further assessed. Should it be the case, the decision of the Head of Science Department shall be formally notified to the concerned individual and to the relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC). The notification shall include the complete file that was provided to the Head of Science Department. The Scientific Committee shall receive a copy of the complete file for opinion when related to ethical matters.

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 15 calendar days of receiving notification.

The Head of Science Department shall, after the conclusion of the delay of 15 days and based on the file presented to him/her, the opinion of the Scientific Committee where applicable, and the observations of the concerned individual and possibly relevant CNC if any decide to revoke the Action Participant or close the case.

This decision shall be formally notified to the concerned individual after prior information to the relevant CNC.

III.2.7. 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.2.10 - Breach in a Reviewing Procedure* hereunder shall apply.
Where occurring in the frame of a COST Action:

- Paragraph *III.2.3* shall apply where the breach is imputable to the holder of a mandatory leadership position;
- Paragraph *III.2.4* shall apply where the breach is imputable to an Action MC Member or Observer**.**
- Paragraph III.2.5 shall apply where the breach is imputable to a WG participant.

RELATED TO IMPLEMENTATION

III.2.8. 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 and/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**.

Examples (non-exhaustive list):

1. A participant submits two claims to different events in different countries. The departure and arrival times to these events overlap significantly. Moreover, the participant only requests car travel as long distance on both claims.
2. A participant arrives to an event, signs off on the attendance list and leaves the event immediately, still submitting a claim for reimbursement of expenses for the full duration of the event.
3. A participant submits tampered documentation, claiming expenses not actually incurred.
4. A participant submits an STSM claim for a maximum reimbursement limit, yet the intended activity is in the frame of a Dissemination Conference Grant, where the maximum reimbursable limit is lower.
5. The Grant holder manager submits tampered invoices.

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 15 calendar days of receiving notification.

The COST Association shall, after the conclusion of the delay of 15 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.2.9. BREACH OF REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

Breach in reporting obligations covered in the Action Grant Agreement, together with all matters arising out of it, will in all respects be governed by Belgian Law. If a dispute concerning the interpretation, application or validity of the Action Grant Agreement cannot be settled amicably, the Brussels courts will have jurisdiction to hear any dispute.

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 rejection 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.

Examples:

1. Late or no submission of the Final Financial Report
2. Lack of appropriate acknowledgements in reported activities
3. Refusal to return unspent funds
4. Refusal to provide documentation and information during the continuous monitoring, as well as during ex-post reviews.

Procedure:

Where the COST Administration 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 these 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 10 calendar days of receiving notification.

The COST Administration 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**.

III.2.10. 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 proceeding 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 15 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**.

RELATED TO IDENTITY

III.2.11. IDENTITY FRAUD

Identity fraud shall always be considered a gross breach of the Rules applicable to COST Actions. Identity fraud can be detected on affiliation information or impersonation (attendance list signature).

Procedure:

- Submission of identification information:

When concerns are raised about an individual, the COST Administration may request identification documentation such as government IDs and affiliation proof.

- Document authentication:

The submitted documentation will be reviewed for authenticity via

- Automated tool
- Database cross-referencing to verify the document's legitimacy.

- Approval or Rejection:

If all verification steps are successful, the identity is approved, and the case is closed.

If inconsistencies or suspicions arise, additional verification steps may be required. The COST Association reserves the right to perform any additional background checks necessary to allow it to make a decision on the case.

The **COST Director** shall then be informed with a file including:

- The facts and behaviours that are alleged constituting identity fraud;
- The **elements that ground the qualification** of identity fraud; and
- The proposed sanction to be applied.

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

The notification shall be accompanied with an invitation to submit observations within 15 calendar days of receiving notification.

The COST Director shall, after the conclusion of the delay of 15 days and based on the file presented to him/her and the observations of the concerned individual if any, decide to impose a sanction to the individual or close the case.

When discrepancies are found (e.g., fake documents), the individual concerned may

- see his/her participation and reimbursement in a specific COST activity revoked,
- be excluded from participating in all or some COST activities for a specific duration,
- see his/her Working Group membership in one or several COST Actions terminated, and/or
- be revoked from a leadership position in a COST activity, where applicable after consultation with the relevant COST National Coordinator (CNC),

The Executive Board shall be informed with a file which shall include the findings, the observations of the concerned individual if any, and the sanction(s) adopted.

This decision is final and shall be formally notified to the concerned individual.

In the most severe cases, the COST Association reserves the right to pursue further legal consequences.

LEVEL B – RULES FOR COST ACTIONS

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 Principles as per Rules and Principles for COST activities, Article 6.

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[9] 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**[10].

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.

[9] https://www.cost.eu/Country_Organisations_Table
[10] https://www.cost.eu/Glossary

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 webpage 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. - Nomination to the Management Committee*).

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), a EU body, office or agency or a European RTD Organisation.

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 - Funding of a COST Action – The COST Grant*).

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 6 months before the end date of the Action,
  - 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:

The request shall be introduced during the last year of the Action and not later than 6 months before the end date of the Action. 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 Action end date without additional **Grant Period** (see Article *7.2 - COST Grant budget*).

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)[11] 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. The MC member shall be any individual affiliated to a legal entity.

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.

[11] http://www.cost.eu/cnc

Nomination process shall be as follows:

	Representation	Responsible for nomination	Nomination	
			Before Action MC1	After Action MC1
COST F/C Member	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.
COST Partner Member	Action MC Observer (up to 2)	CNC		
Specific Organisations	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.

In the case of Specific Organisations, the Responsible for nomination shall contact the Science Officer responsible of the Action to encode in e-COST the nomination of an Action MC Observer.

The Action MC validation procedure for new Action MC Members and Action MC Observers nominations is further detailed in Article *3.5.2.1 - Validation of new Action MC Members and Observers*.

For details on countries and Specific Organisations Membership of COST Actions, see Article *1.3 Membership of COST Actions*.

The MC membership can be terminated by the CNC of the country due to changes, self-withdrawal or other reasons.

Examples:

For other reasons, CNC can consider a presumed inactive participation of a MC member if at least one of the following criteria is fulfilled:

- not having applied as a WG member within the first year after nomination;
- having at least two unjustified consecutive absences at a MC meeting without substitution;
- having at least three consecutive absences at a MC meeting with substitution over a period of two years;
- having at least three unjustified consecutive absences at WG meetings provided an invitation was received.

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* 4.1.1.1.1 - *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 through the "proxy".

3.3. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Action MC shall meet **at least once a year** face to face, online 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 Grant Period.

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 *I.5 – Good governance, financial soundness, and efficiency*), 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 organised face-to-face.

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

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, the Action MC may decide to limit the reimbursement of expenses for attending Action MC meetings to one Action MC Member per COST Full or Cooperating Member. Should it be decided by the Action MC, this modality shall be implemented in the same way for all COST Full or Cooperating Members (no exceptions), and follow the requirements set as per Article *6.2*:

- The Action MC Members from each COST Full or Cooperating Member shall decide among themselves whom of them shall be the one benefiting from reimbursement;
- The second Action MC Member shall be able to attend the MC meeting without reimbursement or via online means if the meeting is hybrid.

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:

Minutes of Action MC meeting shall be taken and be subject to Action MC approval. Minutes shall be approved at the latest 4 weeks after the Action MC meeting and in any case before the end of the Grant Period. Upon Action MC approval, the minutes shall be 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 MC meetings.

Discussions and minutes of Action MC meeting can be made public. The Action MC may however decide that some of its discussions or part of the minutes shall be considered confidential (for further details see *I.4 - Respect for confidentiality and privacy*).

Recommendation:

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

The minutes should be uploaded into e-COST together with the relevant documents immediately after their approval by the Action MC and before the end of the GP.

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.[12]

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.

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

[12] COST mission and strategic priorities can be found at https://www.cost.eu/about/cost-mission/

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

3.5.2.1. 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- Nomination to the Management Committee*, 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 and the concerned nominee will be informed of the outcome of the decision.

3.5.2.2. 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 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, in accordance with 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*).

The WG membership / leadership shall be terminated through e-COST in case of self-withdrawal.

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 Access to leadership positions*). Upon request, WG applicants willing to candidate for Mandatory Leadership positions should be invited to the meeting.

3.5.2.3. 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.

3.5.2.4. 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 Article *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 - Work and Budget plan*.

- 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 - Work and Budget plan* and *7.3 - COST Action Grant Agreement*);
- Excluding a WG member where applicable as per *III.2.5 – 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 and, if needed, guidance on decision-making procedure within the Core Group.

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 and communication products (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 presented to 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 online) 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 no 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 online) 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, online 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 shall be made as follows:

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

  A decision is adopted with at least 51% of the casted votes of the COST Full or Cooperating Members represented in the meeting in favour of the proposal, after deduction of the abstentions, negative and void votes.

  The Action Chair shall not vote.

Or

- e-Vote (MC-Voting):
  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.

  A decision is adopted with at least 51% of the casted votes of the COST Full or Cooperating Members 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
  - approval of a CIG application (CIGA-voting).

  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 webpage on the COST 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)**.

The elected Action Chair will represent the Action and no longer their COST Full or Cooperating Member. For the representation of the country in the Action, another Action MC Member may be nominated by the CNC.

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 the election of a new holder of the position takes place without any undue delay, subject to conditions as mentioned under Article *3.9.33. - Access to leadership positions*.

3.9.1.1. ROLES OF THE MANDATORY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

3.9.1.1.1. 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 draft meeting minutes to be approved by the Action MC; see for details *Article 3.3 – Management Committee Meetings*;
- 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.

3.9.1.1.2. 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.

3.9.1.1.3. 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, as well as the MoU objectives;
- 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.

3.9.1.1.4. 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 at a conference organised by third parties The networking activities organised through the Grant Awarding Process are described in *ANNEX 2 - Networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process*.

3.9.1.1.5. 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 Science Communication Plan adopted by the COST Action, 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 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 Mandatory Leadership positions is mentioned under Article 3.9.1. 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 (except being Grant Holder Scientific Representative).

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.

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.

Among leadership positions (mandatory and other (if any)), at least one shall be reserved to a Young Researcher and Innovator; for this rule, the qualification as Young Researcher and Innovator shall be observed at the time of the election by the Action MC.

3.9.3. 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**.

For details on the Grant Holder, see Article *7.4*.

For details on countries and Specific Organisations Membership of COST Actions, see Article *1.3 – Membership of COST Actions.*

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 PARTICIPATON

4.1.1.1. 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. An individual may only participate as a member of Working Groups in a limited number of concurrent COST Actions, as further specified in the Annotated Rules for COST Actions.

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**.

An individual may only participate in 8 concurrent COST Actions as a WG member.

4.1.1.1.1. 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, research master (where the candidate focuses on a particular topic in-depth and independently, to complete a significant research project), PhD or Post-Doctoral programme;
- Voluntary service in an 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 the COST Action webpage on the 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).

Upon request by the COST Association, the individual shall provide the requested information proving the nature of his/her affiliation to a legal entity.

4.1.1.1.2. VISIBILITY ON COST WEBSITE

In order to give visibility to WG members, their participation will be displayed on the COST Action webpage on the COST website. The WG members may withdraw at any time their consent for their name displayed on the COST Action webpage on the COST website (for more details on privacy, see https://e-services.cost.eu/privacy-notice).

4.1.1.2. 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 COST Action webpage 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 - Management Committee Duties.*

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 *4.1.1.1.1*.

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 Implementation by the Management Committee of financial support to COST Actions as per Article 6.2 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 (non-exhaustive list):

- 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 research and innovation community in Europe and beyond, and society at large.

Guidelines for COST Actions websites:

COST funded websites of COST Actions are intended to facilitate scientific collaboration and dissemination of knowledge. These platforms must maintain a professional and neutral stance. For instance, COST funded websites should not be used for political speeches, propaganda or crowd funding activities (this list is not exhaustive). Any content deemed inappropriate, including material that could be interpreted as promoting political agendas or soliciting funds, will be subject to review and possible request for removal by COST. This ensures that the focus remains on promoting open and unbiased scientific exchange.

Rule:

COST Actions Action MC shall:

- Appoint a Science Communication Coordinator (see Article *3.9.1.1.5*);
- 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 -dissemination and communication product (including, but not limited to scientific publications, books, white papers, policy briefs, flyers, presentations, videos, podcast, webinars) financed with this budget publicly accessible according to principles of Open Access;
- Acknowledge COST as a funding source in any reproducible product financed with this budget, as well as during any activity financed with this budget. The acknowledgement shall follow the rules as described in *A3-3.2 Acknowledging COST and EU Funding.*

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 *3.9.1.1.5*), 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.

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 this 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 Action, a mapping of Action results (potentially) relevant outside the strict scientific sphere and methods and formats to promote synergies between the Action 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 Open Access** to 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.

The Action Management Committee should discuss how the principles of Open Science apply to the Action, the Action aims and objectives, and the foreseen Action activities. As a part of the Open Science approach, the Action should also consider how the principles of Open Access apply to the Action and any spin-offs produced by the Action.

Actions shall apply the COST 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, whenever 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.

The Action MC is empowered to set its own norms in interpreting these principles. 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.

For any reproducible product (including, but not limited to, scientific publications, books, white papers, policy briefs, flyers, presentations, videos, podcasts and webinars) for which the COST Grant is used, Open Access is mandatory.

Recommendations:

Notwithstanding the obligation of Open Access for reproducible products funded by COST, for any other reproducible products 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[13] dedicated to support in IPR). Useful reading materials are available on:

[13] https://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/home

- The IP Resources library of the IP Helpdesk of the European Commission[14];The European Union Intellectual Property Office[15];The Resources portal of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)[16].

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.

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.

[14] https://intellectual-property-helpdesk.ec.europa.eu/regional-helpdesks/european-ip-helpdesk_en
[15] https://euipo.europa.eu/ohimportal/en
[16] https://www.wipo.int/reference/en/

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 online 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 to 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;
- The Working modalities for the implementation of the funded activities including the description of the tasks of the different actors;
- 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 Executive Board 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 MC meetings, decide whether reimbursement shall apply to all eligible 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 MC Members from each Full or Cooperating Member shall decide among themselves whom of them shall be the one benefiting from reimbursement,
    - the other MC Members shall be able to be present or represented via online 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.

For details and further rules related to Action MC Meetings, see Article *3.3- Management Committee meetings*.

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
Online Environment		✓	✓
COST Members	Full or Cooperating Members	✓	✓
	Partner Member	✗	✓
NNC		✓	✓
IPC/Third State		✗	✓
Specific Organisations		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.

For details on countries and Specific Organisations Membership of COST Actions, see Article *1.3 - Membership of COST Actions*.

For details on the COST Action networking activities, see *Annexes: Funding Schemes for activities of COST Actions*.

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* & YRI** 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 individuals affiliated to a legal entity located in COST Inclusiveness Target Countries and NNC.

** YRI Conference Grants are limited to Young Researchers and Innovators.

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 to a legal entity is determined as per Article *4.1.1.1.1*.

Moreover, the individuals being incompatible as per *Article 4.2 - Incompatibilities*, shall not be invited nor receive financial support from a COST Action, unless otherwise permitted in *Article 4.2 -* Incompatibilities.

For details on countries and Specific Organisations Membership of COST Actions, see Article *1.3 - Membership of COST Actions*

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 COST Grant budget as per 7.2.

The Action MC1 meeting of a COST Action shall be organised by COST and funded directly by COST.

Action MC1 meeting of a COST Action is fully organised and funded centrally by the COST Association who shall invite 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 the 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 administers 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 in the framework of the MoU.

COST Grant may not be used for neither drafting, writing nor 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 Grant Period, 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

7.2.2.1. 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.

A specific Work and Budget Plan shall be approved for each Grant Period. It shall include MoU objectives, Action deliverables, Grant Agreement Period Goals (GAPGs) and describe the networking activities and other expenses specifically supporting the Action that can be performed or implemented throughout the Grant Period.

Further, a percentage of 15% of the actual eligible expenses, referred to as FSAC (Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination) – see *ANNEX 5*, is also defined in the approved Work and Budget Plan. The Grant Holder Institution can request a lower percentage of FSAC but cannot request a percentage of FSAC higher than 15% of the actual eligible expenses.

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

7.2.2.2. 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, with the COST Administration.

The MoU objectives and Action deliverables are extracted from the MoU.

The Grant Agreement Period Goals (GAPGs) are specific scientific goals, milestones, which are envisaged to be achieved within the Grant Period. The GAPGs may be used by the COST Action MC to assess the progress of the COST Action, and if necessary, adjust them, to ensure achievement of the MoU objectives. The GAPGs are not the same as the MoU objectives, nor a COST networking activity, nor a deliverable or an output. Each GAPG should relate to at least one MoU objective. It is strongly recommended to have at least 2 GAPGs per WG.

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.

7.2.2.3. 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*.

7.2.2.4. 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 Grant Period 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[17] 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[18];
- For Grant Holder vested in another non-EU country or being a EU RTD at https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate_Annex_non-GDPR[19].

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.

Although it should remain exceptional, an Action Grant Agreement may be amended at any time 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 the European Commission and the COST Association 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 motives.

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

Prior to committing to any expense or activity, the Grant Holder shall consult the COST Association whenever there is doubt about its eligibility to be supported or funded under the COST Grant.

[17] http://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate_Core

[18] https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate_Annex_GDPR

[19] https://www.cost.eu/AGATemplate_Annex_non-GDPR

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 institution following the terms of the present Article and of the COST Action Grant Agreement as per Article *7.3*.

The **Grant Holder institution shall be a legal entity** governed by national or international law. It cannot be an individual. The 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 institution shall be vested in one of COST Full or Cooperating Member **having nominated an Action MC Member in the COST Action** (see Article *3.9 - Access to leadership positions* and in particular Article *3.9.1.1.2*) or the EC, a 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).

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 the Grant Holder institution subject to approval by 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 institution candidate.

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 its replacement, unilaterally impose a change of Grant Holder.

The change of Grant Holder shall require a vote at the Action MC and approval by 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 reimbursement claims to Action participants within 30 calendar days of receiving a complete reimbursement claim and never later than 45 calendar days after the end date of the activity, and respecting Financial reporting deadlines. In cases of advance payments, 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 *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 no 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 no 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). The report shall be submitted by the Action Chair 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 first monitoring is performed by the Scientific Committee based on PR1 analysis of these two points, addressing Actions which are underperforming in dimension(s) as per I.1.3 - COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy. Only the underperforming Actions will receive recommendations according to outcome.

The second monitoring requirement is the second Progress Report (PR2). **The PR2 shall be approved by the Action MC and be submitted by the Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC** 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. The PR2 may be published on the COST Action webpage on the COST website in compliance with *I.4 - Respect for confidentiality and privacy*.

An external expert (Action Rapporteur) shall be appointed by the COST Administration to perform the assessment of the Action's mid-term progress towards the achievement of MoU objectives.

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 Achievement Report.

The Final Achievement Report (FAR) shall be approved by the Action MC and be submitted by the Action Chair on behalf of the Action MC one month after the end date of the Action. The FAR shall include information on the activities of the Action during the Action's lifetime. The FAR may be published on the COST Action webpage on the COST website in compliance with *I.4 - Respect for confidentiality and privacy*.

An external expert (Action Rapporteur) shall be appointed by the COST Administration 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

COST Action events encompass Meetings and Training Schools.

A1-1 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;
    - **Online 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.

A COST Action organises or co-organises events to the benefit of the Action. A COST Action does not sponsor events.

A1-1.1 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*); For details about the rules for the MC meeting organization, see *Article 3.3- Management Committee meetings.*
    - **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.

A1-1.2 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.

A1-2 WORKING MODALITIES

A1-2.1 INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED FOR THE WORK AND BUDGET PLAN

As per *A*rticle*7.2 - COST Grant budget*, 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 event addresses one (or several) associated Grant Agreement Period Goals(s) related to the achievement of one (or several) MoU objective(s) and contributing to the Science Communication Plan[20]adopted by the Action;
  - A rough schedule (e.g. 2 hrs Action MC meeting, 2 days parallel sessions of WG meetings, 2 hrs plenary session of all WGs);
  - If the Action MC decides to reduce the daily allowance, this should be indicated;
  - Possible keynote speakers and trainers and their relevant expertise could be also described.
  - For co-located COST Action events with an event not organised by the COST Action (see *A1-2.3.1 Planning of the Event* for more information on the conditions for co-located events):
    - How and why the COST Action would benefit from this co-location and when exactly the COST Action event is scheduled in relation to the 'external' event;
    - A website related to the 'external' event should be provided, if available.
  - For co-organised COST Action events with an external organisation or with another COST Action (see *A1-2.3.1 Planning of the Event* for more information on the conditions for co-organized events):
    - 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 co-organized event;
    - A website related to the co-organized event should be provided if available.

- '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).

[20] Until the Science Communication Plan is adopted by the Action, see Article 5.3- Communication, dissemination and valorisation strategy, the section of the MoU related to the dissemination and communication of results is applying.

- 'Meeting/Training School details' e.g. title, attendance type (face-to-face, online or hybrid), 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; co-located COST Action meetings should be encoded as 1 single event unless there is a clear justification.
- 'Budget' (estimation) calculated automatically in e-COST based on foreseen number of participants, daily allowance, average long distance travel cost, estimated LOS amount according to event duration (see *A1-3.2.2 - LOS grant amount calculation*) and other details.

A1-2.2 ACCESS CONDITIONS

See *Article 6.4* for *Eligibility to receive financial support* and *Article 6.3* for the possible *Location of COST Action networking activities*.

A1-2.3 PROCESS DESCRIPTION

A1-2.3.1 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 *7.2.2.2*). 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 *7.2.2.3* 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 Manager:**
    - During the Grant Period**:** once the event is 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:

Timing of COST Action events

For budget optimisation, it is highly recommended to avoid time gaps between the different event type when these are organized within the same time frame and located in the same venue/city (e.g. no time gap between different COST Action meeting type, or e.g. no time gap between a COST Action meeting and a COST Action Training School).

In addition, unless there is a clear scientific justification, COST Actions are encouraged to organize large COST Action events sufficiently early in the Grant Period such to allow sufficient time for eventual underspent of that activity to be reallocated to another activity whenever feasible, see *Article 7.2.2.3*.

Location of COST Action events

COST 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. This is applicable, for example, when the MC decides to host multiple meetings and / or a Training School over the same time period at the same or across multiple venues.

For details on the LOS of COST Action events see section *A1-3.2.* of the present Annex.

Co-location of COST Action events:

with an event also organized by the COST Action

Action events may occur as co-located events that are all fully organized by the COST Action (e.g. COST Action multiple meetings, e.g. Action meeting co-located with COST Action Training School), over the same time period avoiding time gaps. Co-location of COST Action events is recommended in order to foster collaboration and encourage knowledge exchange, so as to consolidate travel expenses for the COST Action.

The specific conditions for LOS for co-located activities are described under section *A1-3.2.1.4.* of the present Annex.

with an event *not* organized by the COST Action

- Action events may occur as **co-located events *adjacent* to an 'external' event**:

Location of COST Action event adjacent to an 'external' event, typically prior or after, 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 events with 'external' events is not recommended, unless a valid explanation provided by the Action MC is accepted by the COST Action Science Officer;

- Action events may occur as **co-located events *within* an 'external' event - COST session:**

Location of an event (COST session) within 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 events within '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 **(COST session) organised within an 'external' event shall have the COST Action number and title in the programme**;

Co-organisation of Action events

with another COST Action

Action events may occur as **co-organized activities *with* another COST Action.** Co-organisation of an event with another COST Action is recommended in order to foster collaboration and encourage knowledge exchange.

The specific conditions for LOS when co-organizing activities with another COST Action are described under section *A1-3.2.1.4* of the present Annex.

with an 'external' organization

Action events may occur as **co-organized activities *with* an 'external' organization:** 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 *A1-3.2.1.5*. of the present Annex). **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. General principle and rules* and *A3-3.2 Acknowledging COST and EU Funding.*

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 advised 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 advised 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.

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.

A1-2.3.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVENT

For the appropriate implementation of the event, the following tasks need to be completed in accordance with the respective responsibility taken by each "actor" as defined below.

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 Manager to provide all details on budget and organisational aspects;
  - Coordinates with the Grant Holder Manager to ensure that all participants accounted for the LOS grant are invited to the event via the e-COST platform.
  - 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 online and hybrid events with names and countries of affiliation of the participants); Ensures that the participants use the correct name and country of affiliation.
  - The Local Organiser may **never** charge registration fees or any other type of fees aiming to cover expenses funded through the Local Organiser Support Grant (see *A1-3.2.1- Type of expenses to be covered by the LOS per type of event)* to participants invited by the Action to that Action event.
    However, expenses not funded through the Local Organiser Support Grant (see *A1-3.2.1- Type of expenses to be covered by the LOS per type of event*) incurred by the Local organiser on behalf of the participants may be charged in advance to the participants to the event.

    Example: meal costs. The Local organiser has the option to either request to the Action participants to pre-pay the expenses related to lunches and/or social dinner or request the Action participants to pay it onsite.

- **Grant Holder Manager:**
  - 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 A1-3.2 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 travel reimbursement rules);
  - In case the Grant Holder Manager attends a meeting, supports the Local Organiser in collecting the signed attendance list (and/or attendance logs for online and hybrid events).

- Follows the acceptance of invitations by the participants; in case the MC has established a deadline for response, cancels non-answered invitations.

- **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.
    Note: 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 institution 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 event.

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 A1-3.1.2 of the present Annex).

- **Local Organiser:**
  - Provides the signed 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 (original or a digital/digitalised version if authorised by the rules applicable in the Grant Holder institution and by the applicable national law);
  - Completes in e-COST the bank details of their institution, uploads the signed attendance list/online attendance logs of the event, encodes the final number of unique participants, submits the LOS request claim within 15 days from the end of the event, etc);
  - Provide to the Grant Holder Manager upon request any supporting documents relevant to the LOS as detailed per *A1-3.2.4* ;
  - Liaises with the Action Chair/ Vice-Chair / relevant Action Leaders for reporting to the Action MC on the main discussions and outcomes.
- **Grant Holder Manager:**
  - Collects from the Local Organiser the original (or a digital/digitalised version if authorised by the rules applicable in the Grant Holder institution and by the applicable national law) of the signed attendance list (and/or online attendance logs);
  - Reviews the signed attendance list (and/or online attendance logs) received from Local Organiser;
  - For Action MC and Core Group meetings: Collects minutes from the Action Chair and uploads them timely into e-COST together with the relevant documents. For details about the rules for the MC meeting organization, see *Article 3.3-Management Committee meetings*;
  - Processes travel reimbursement requests of eligible meeting/training school participants and reimbursement of the Local Organiser Support expenses within 30 calendar days of receiving a complete reimbursement claim and never later than 45 calendar days after the end date of the meeting;
  - Processes invoices (if any) from:
    - Training materials, consumables and shipping costs for Training School samples or equipment (please see *Annex 4).*

- *Expenses incurred for the benefit of* the network.

Recommendation: Actions are encouraged to have the official attendance list signed at the end of each event day rather than at the start, to better reflect actual attendance. Where there is documented evidence that a participant did not attend or partially attend a day for which a signature was provided, the Grant Holder shall reduce the reimbursement accordingly (e.g. reducing the daily allowance for that day) or cancel the total claim. The documented evidence refers to the meeting minutes stating that that such participant did not attend or partially attend the event or any other written incident log signed by the session chair or local organised documenting such situation.

A1-3 FUNDING SCHEME

Financial support can be requested for:

- Travel reimbursement of meeting participants attending face-to-face events following Travel reimbursement rules (see A1-3.1 of the present Annex hereunder);
- Local Organiser Support: covering expenses carried out to organise an approved COST Action event (see A1-3.2 of the present Annex hereunder).

A1-3.1 TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT RULES

A1-3.1.1 PRINCIPLES

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

- Follow the eligibility conditions outlined in this document.
- Make their transportation arrangements as early as possible upon receipt of the e-COST official invitation to the approved activity;
- Not receive double funding, as it is not permitted. Therefore, the participants shall declare via e-COST when submitting their Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR) whether they receive or not 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. In case a participant is partially funded by another source of funding, this amount must be deducted by the participant in his/her 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.

In addition, participants may claim a lower amount of reimbursement than the entitled amount as per the rules described below in *A1-3.1.3- Eligible expenses.*

COST Actions participants are reminded that the COST Grant is public money that shall be used with care and only in relation with the COST Action activities.

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

A1-3.1.2 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 as per Article 6.4;
- Have received an e-COST invitation to the event and have accepted it within 2 weeks from receiving it;
- Sign the attendance list on each day they attend the Action event;
- 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 date of the Action event;
- Upload legible copies of all invoices / receipts and relevant supporting documents onto e-COST.

A1-3.1.3 ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Participants to an Action event, who meet the administrative requirements may receive financial support as follows:

A1-3.1.3.1 *ACCOMMODATION, MEALS, AND SHORT DISTANCE TRAVEL EXPENSES – DAILY ALLOWANCE*

The reimbursement of incurred expenses for accommodation, meals, short distance travel (defined as less or equal to 100 km one way) and other incidental costs is paid as one lump-sum amount known as daily allowance. Incidental costs are defined in Section A1.-3.1.4.

No invoices for accommodation, meals, short distance travel or other incidental costs are therefore required (see below daily allowance calculation) except in specific cases.

The daily allowance rate (to be found at 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 all Trainers and one rate for all Trainees;
- The Grant Holder shall notify the revised daily allowance rate before sending the formal invitations to the participants via e-COST;
- The MC decision to lower the daily allowance shall be uploaded in e-COST as a supporting document.

Daily allowance calculation

The daily allowance is calculated based on the **actual number of days of attendance** to the approved activity as confirmed by the participant's signature on the official attendance list for each day of the event they attend. Where there is documented evidence that a participant signed without attending (e.g. left the event after signing), the daily allowance shall not be granted for that day, and the case may be treated as mismanagement of funds (see III.2.6.])

The participant may arrive before the activity commences and/or leave after the activity finishes. The daily allowance is then calculated accordingly:

Daily allowance	Calculation
100%	For the outbound travel day to the event
100%	Each day of attended event (without long distance travel incurred)
40%	For the inbound (return) travel day
50%	When the entire trip (inbound and outbound) happens in a single day, with no overnight stay.

Only one outbound and one inbound travel day are covered by the daily allowance.

This rule applies regardless of the mode of transport.

Other provisions for the calculation of the daily allowance

- Extended stay: If a participant travels earlier than one day before and/or departs later than one day after the activity, no daily allowance is provided for those extra days.
- No claim for long-distance travel but request for daily allowance: If a participant does not request any reimbursement for long-distance travel before and/or after the event, to accurately calculate the daily allowance for the travel dates, alternative proof or supporting documents indicating the dates of departure and arrival must be provided. Acceptable supporting documents are a relevant transport ticket, travel booking itinerary, or accommodation invoice.
- When the participant travels by car on the day before and/or after the event, the daily allowance for those days is calculated on the basis of either an accommodation invoice (showing the participant's name and the check-in and check-out dates), or a parking receipt clearly showing the arrival and/or departure date(s). Where car mileage is also claimed, this same parking receipt serves as proof for both the mileage and the daily-allowance dates; it does not need to be uploaded twice. For the calculation of the car kilometres proven by parking proof, please refer to section A.1-3.1.3.2 – Long-distance travel.
- Co-located or consecutive events: If a participant attend co-located or consecutive events and submits separate travel reimbursement requests, the total daily allowance may never exceed 100% per day. Any overlap or excess to authorised daily allowances must be adjusted accordingly.

Participants invited to a COST Action event can estimate in e-COST the amount of daily allowance they could receive by accepting the invitation and by initiating the reimbursement claim.

When the participant is invited to attend a COST event while concurrently benefiting from a COST STSM Grant, the eligible participant is entitled to claim:

- the long-distance travel from the place of the STSM to the place of meeting/Training School and back
- 50% of the Daily Allowance for the attended event days and for the travel days to and from the event, using the Reimbursement Form related to the meeting.

Same reimbursement provisions apply. The applicant shall include in his/her meeting/Training School claim a statement from the Host Institution or Action Chair of the Action confirming the STSM mission and including the Action Number and the dates of the STSM (from/until).

Recommendations:

In order for the 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 full daily allowance of only one of them and the other participant to claim 50% of the daily allowance;
- When an eligible participant's primary affiliation is in the city of the event, the participant is invited to claim only 50% of the daily allowance. This option can be selected when completing the Online Travel Reimbursement claim in e-COST.
- Participants are advised to book a refundable accommodation.

A1-3.1.3.2 *LONG-DISTANCE TRAVEL EXPENSES*

Long-distance travel is any travel equal to or above 101 km one way between a main transportation hub at the point of departure and the main transportation hub at the event venue and return to a main transportation hub at the point of arrival.

Eligible long-distance travel modalities include:

- Train,
- Ferry,
- Bus,
- Plane,
- Car (see special provisions for transport by car below.)

Short distance travel (transport to and from a main transportation hub like an airport, harbour, main train or bus station for distance of less or equal to 100 km one way) is covered by the daily allowance.

Participants may begin their outbound travel from a point of departure that differs from the point of arrival of their return travel, provided each leg is directly related to attending the COST event. The standard layover/stopover rules apply.

LAYOVER vs STOPOVER

Eligible participants receive daily allowance and financial support for travel **directly related to the COST activity** they were invited for. Extra travel costs linked to any non-standard travel options (such as adding extra days to one's trip or deviations from the normal itinerary, whether for personal or for professional reasons), shall not be reimbursed. For the purpose of implementation of these principles, the following definitions shall apply:

Layover

- A **layover** refers to the waiting time between two connecting flights at the airport or different modes of transport (e.g. Train + flight, flight+ bus, etc).
- A layover should not exceed a duration of 24 hours and shall be evidenced with supporting documents detailing the travel hours.
- Purpose: layovers are typically necessary for passengers to change planes/mode of transport, on the way to their final destination or back, when there are no direct flights available or when it is cheaper to have a connecting flight. Any travel longer than 24 hours is considered a stopover.

Stopover

- A **stopover** occurs when a traveller intentionally pauses their journey in a connecting city or country for more than 24 hours before continuing to their final destination.
- Consequence of stopover: the leg of the journey which is not directly related to the COST activity is not eligible for reimbursement. If the cost of each portion of the journey cannot be identified, 30% of the total amount of the ticket shall be deducted.
- Purpose: stopovers are mostly a traveller's choice to deliberately pause the journey at a connecting point and spend at least 24 hours in the connecting city before continuing on to their final destination.

Reimbursement limits and conditions

Long-distance travel expenses are reimbursed at face value (including VAT), up to a maximum of EUR 1 500. Eligible costs within this amount include:

- the transport ticket/fare;
- travel cancellation insurance;
- carbon offset fees;
- seat-related charges within the booked travel class (i.e. seat reservation or selection, extra legroom, exit row), including reservations that are compulsory for the service used (e.g. high-speed or international trains);
- priority services (e.g. fast lane, priority boarding, SMS boarding);

- luggage expenses;
- sustainable fuel surcharges.

Administrative or booking fees charged by a travel agency or booking platform (including online platforms) are also eligible, provided they form part of the long-distance travel purchase and are itemised on the invoice or booking confirmation.

Only the eligible costs listed above are reimbursed, and only up to EUR 1 500 maximum. Upgrades to a higher travel or cabin class and any cost not listed above, are not eligible even if the total amount spent on travel is below EUR 1 500. (see A1-3.1.4 – Non eligible travel expenses).

Recommendation:
Participants are advised to contract a travel cancellation insurance for all their long distance travel.

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 into account 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.

Required supporting documents for long-distance travel

In addition to the administrative requirements set out in the present section, participants must upload supporting documents in e-COST containing all required information in a readable and verifiable form.

Required information
The documentation must include the following, as applicable to the claim:

- Name of the service provider
- Amount paid
- Travel itinerary, including departure and arrival dates and cities/airports
- For air travel, the passenger's name(s) and the e-ticket number and/or booking reference that can be linked to the claimed flight amount
- For any extra charge claimed: the type and amount of each extra charge (e.g. seat reservation, extra leg room, exit row seat, fast lane, priority boarding, SMS priority boarding fees, luggage-related expenses, sustainable fuel surcharge)
- For a layover, travel documents attesting the travel hours (see Section LAYOVER vs STOPOVER)

Definition of Complete Documentation
A complete copy of the travel booking or ticket must be provided. A "complete copy" means a document or set of documents containing all required information applicable to the claim:

- When a single document (e.g. invoice, receipt, e-ticket or booking confirmation) contains all the required information above, no additional booking document, ticket or boarding pass is needed.
- When the required information is spread across multiple documents (e.g. invoice + e-ticket or booking confirmation), these must be consistent and clearly linked by either:
  - Passenger name(s) together with travel dates and cities/airports; or
  - Passenger name(s) together with either the ticket number and/or the booking reference

Special Cases

- Package purchases (e.g. flight + hotel): A detailed cost breakdown must be provided, showing transport and accommodation separately. Only the transport component is reimbursable as long-distance travel. If the cost breakdown is not available, the expense will not be reimbursed.
- In the case of two consecutive Action events (e.g. a Meeting followed by a Training School), long travel distance expenses may be claimed only once under only one of the events, at the participant's discretion. Travel documents must be uploaded in e-COST for both events for the purpose of calculating the daily allowance.

Document Quality and Validity

- Documents must be legible and unaltered.
- A document will not be accepted if it does not display all required information. This includes partial documents, bank statements, and standalone payment confirmations lacking the required details..

Non-Compliance

Failure to provide documentation compliant with the above requirements will result in rejection of the claim.

Specific conditions for Train / Bus / Ferry

- The standard long-distance transport and documentation requirements apply.
- A participant may claim only the cost of their own travel (one passenger).
- Where a single ticket or booking covers more than one passenger, the number of passengers must be identifiable so the participant's individual share can be determined — from the ticket or the booking confirmation. Where only a total amount is shown, it is divided by the number of passengers.
- No indication of the number of passengers is required for a ticket covering a single passenger.

Consecutive travel segments

Where a single long-distance journey is composed of **several consecutive travel tickets** (i.e. connecting legs or layovers of the same trip, within the 24-hour layover limit), all tickets must be uploaded together in a single e-COST entry, indicating only the point of origin and the final destination.
When the tickets involve different currencies, the corresponding currency conversion must also be uploaded in e-COST. In addition, the participant must upload in e-COST an explanatory note.

Specific conditions for Car travel expenses:

Car travel is eligible as long-distance travel where the one-way distance is 101 km or more. Below this threshold, car travel is covered by the daily allowance and is not separately reimbursed.
Reimbursement rate and cap:

- Car travel is reimbursed at EUR 0.35 per km.
- The total car distance is capped at 1 000 km for the round trip (point of departure → event venue → point of arrival).

Distance is calculated using the automatic distance calculator in e-COST.

Car travel reimbursement provisions

For audit and compliance purposes, the following items are required:

- Proof of travel: parking is a means of proof, not a reimbursable expense

A parking ticket/receipt clearly showing the date(s) of parking is the required proof that the car journey took place (not fuel or toll receipts). It evidences the travel only; the parking cost itself — like fuel and tolls — is not reimbursable (see A1-3.1.4 – Non eligible travel expenses). The following apply:

  - Parking paid by SMS: a screenshot of the confirmation message must be uploaded in e-COST.

- Free parking: where no receipt exists because parking was free, an invoice or written declaration from the parking provider confirming the participant's parking and the specific dates of use may be submitted instead.
- The parking document (receipt or declaration) does not need cover the entire duration of the event.
- Where several valid parking receipts exist for a single travel period, one is sufficient.

- Shared vehicle
  - Where several eligible participants travel together in the same vehicle, only one designated participant may claim the kilometres. The others may not claim separately for the same journey.
- Insurance and damage
  - Participants travelling by private vehicle should ensure adequate insurance cover for damage to the vehicle, occupants, and third parties. These costs are not eligible for reimbursement (see A1-3.1.4).

A1-3.1.3.3 *OTHER TRAVEL EXPENSES: TRAVEL VISA EXPENSES*

Participants may claim a contribution towards the mandatory official fees required to enter or exit a country for the purpose of attending an approved COST event. Eligible expenses are:

- Travel visa processing fees;
- Exit fees (e.g. Türkiye);
- Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) fees (e.g. United Kingdom).

To be eligible, the visa fee must be:

- an official charge levied by a government authority (embassy, consulate, official government portal, or border/airport authority); and
- directly required for the participant to attend the approved COST event. Where the official receipt cannot show the participant's name, it must be accompanied by evidence linking the payment to the participant.

Only the official fees listed above are reimbursed. Third-party service or agency fees for visa or authorisation processing are not eligible (see A1-3.1.4 – Non eligible travel expenses).

Required supporting documents:

- Proof of payment issued by the relevant authority (e.g. embassy/consulate receipt or stamp, official online confirmation, or border/airport receipt), clearly showing:
  - the name of the participant;
  - the description of the fee; and
  - the amount paid.

A1-3.1.4 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 incidental costs (taxi or parking expenses, fuel costs, toll charges, car rental expenses linked to car travel, tips, etc.) or additional accommodation or meals;
- Travel or transport subscription and season passes (e.g. Interrail, Swiss Travel Pass, Deutschland-Ticket, and similar);
- Meals, whether claimed individually or included in the price of a travel ticket (meals are covered by the daily allowance)
- Conference / registration fees;
- Lecture and/or honoraria fees;
- Third-Party flight delay compensation services;
- Third party service fee for visa processing (including form filling assistance, appointment bookings; visa application reception; information collection; data processing; transfer to the Embassy; reception and sorting of

passports; express courier return; contact of applicants upon return of passports from the Embassy; handling telephone, online messages or email enquires of applicants by Call Centre; assistance Visa On Web, SMS costs, photograph cost or photocopies, postage expenses);
- Passport processing fees;
- Travel expenses related to visa processing;
- Stand-alone medical or life insurance;
- Luggage insurance;
- Fees, charges, and/or penalties linked to a participant changing or having to rebook travel tickets, and any bid, auction, offer or fee to upgrade to a higher travel or cabin class (e.g. economy to business). For the avoidance of doubt, this exclusion does not cover luggage fees or the eligible extra charges listed under A1-3.1.3.2 (e.g. seat reservation, extra legroom), which remain eligible up to the applicable cap.
- Optional 'price lock' or 'hold-the-fare' fees (e.g. paying to freeze a ticket price for a limited period)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 / exchange or commission fees on reimbursement made by the Grant Holder (or COST Association for centralised events).

A1-3.1.5 A1-3.1.3.2A1-3.1.3.1A1-3.1.3.2A1-3.1.3.2A1-3.1.3.2A1-3.1.3.2SPECIFIC CONDITIONS FOR ACTION PARTICIPANT IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE IN CASE OF DISABILITY

An eligible participant with a temporary or permanent disability may, where duly justified by their condition, request reimbursement of adapted transport arrangements necessary to enable their participation in a COST Action activity.

Adapted transport refers to specialised or accessible transport (for example a wheelchair-accessible vehicle, paratransit service or and accessible taxi) only where standard public or shared transport options are unavailable or unsuitable in view of the participant's documented mobility or accessibility needs.

By way of exception to A1-.3.1.4 (non-eligible travel expenses), the cost of specialised or adapted transport is reimbursed against actual costs in addition to the standard transport provisions (daily allowance and long distance transport), provided that:

- The need for adapted transport is clearly justified by the participant's condition and, supported by the medical documentation certifying the disability-related need underlying the request;
- Standard public or shared transport was unavailable for the journey concerned.
- The costs are reasonable and proportionate to the participant's needs; and
- The same journey or leg is not also claimed under the standard travel provisions (double funding).

An eligible participant with a disability (temporary or permanent), 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 may be made once for the duration of the whole COST Action or if the assistant changes.

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:
  - All supporting documents required as per paragraph A1-3.1.3.2 - 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 derogation request is approved, the accompanying person shall be entitled to be reimbursed for eligible expenses against face-value, with a ceiling for accommodation, meals and short-distance transport expenses incurred in the meeting country set at the daily allowance amount per day agreed by the Action MC for the given activity. The claim of the incurred costs of the personal assistant for disability is included in the participant's claim in e-COST.

A **user guide**[21] is available to the participants. In case of non-fulfilment of all administrative requirements, the derogation request will not be assessed and will be rejected by default.

A1-3.1.6 FORCE MAJEURE IMPACTING TRAVEL[22]

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)**.

Recommendation:

[21] http://www.cost.eu/derogation_procedure

[22] The scope of the force majeure impacting travel is specific and deviate from the definition of the Force majeure in the Glossary.

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 A1-3.1.3.2 - 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.

A **user guide**[23] for claiming expenses in case of force majeure is available to the participants. In case of non-fulfilment of all administrative requirements, the derogation request will not be assessed and will be rejected by default. Please note that only the scenarios listed in the user guide can be considered. Any other cases than the ones indicated in the user guide will not be assessed.

A1-3.1.7 PAYMENT 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.

[23] http://www.cost.eu/derogation_procedure

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.

A1-3.2 LOCAL ORGANISER SUPPORT (LOS)

Any legal entity acting as a Local Organiser, to which one of the Action Participants is affiliated to, shall be eligible to receive financial support as a contribution to cover expenses carried out to organise an approved COST Action event (see Article *6.4- Eligibility to receive financial support)*.

This financial support takes the form of a grant referred to as Local Organiser Support. The Local Organiser and Grant Holder institution shall follow their national and institutional financial and legal rules. However, the use and reporting of this grant cannot contradict the COST rules.

In cases when the Grant Holder Manager is the Local Organiser, tasks carried out as Local Organiser are not included in the general Grant Holder Manager tasks (e-COST management, treating the reimbursement claims, etc.).

The responsibilities of the Local Organiser are detailed on *A1-2.3.2 - Implementation of the Event*.

A1-3.2.1 TYPE OF EXPENSES TO BE COVERED BY THE LOS PER TYPE OF EVENT

The Local Organiser Support grant cannot be used to cover VAT expenses nor purchase of infrastructure as these are never covered by COST funding. However, it may be used to cover the following categories of expenses per type of event:

A1-3.2.1.1 *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 (snacks and beverages not intended to substitute lunch nor dinner);
- 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 relevant to the objectives of the approved meeting / Training School;
- Administrative support and secretarial expenses linked to hosting and organising the approved scientific activity
- Cancellation insurance.

A1-3.2.1.2 *ONLINE 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 an 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 and post-event process management refer to post-production editing cost, for example for videos and other materials, feedback surveys, and analysis, if the purpose of the recording is to be addressed to the attendees of the Action event.
- Administrative support covers the same items as for a face-to-face event;
- Cancellation insurance.

A1-3.2.1.3 *HYBRID EVENTS:*

- The same eligible expenses as for a face-to- face and online event;
- Technical hosting and / or support;
  This covers the same items as for online events and additionally, a range of technical support personnel onsite and / or online / or in more than 1 location if required;
- Cancellation insurance.

A1-3.2.1.4 *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 or across multiple venues. 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.
- For events organised across multiple locations: A single Local Organiser shall centralise all tasks related to the organisation of the event in multiple locations and be the recipient of the Local Organiser support grant; For each location, one event needs to be encoded in e-COST and the respective invitations sent to the relevant participants.

Note: It is the direct responsibility of the Local Organiser to ensure there is no double funding.

For more information regarding co-location of events, please refer to *A1-2.3.1 Planning of the Event*.

A1-3.2.1.5 *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.

Note: It is the direct responsibility of the Local Organiser to ensure there is no double funding.

For more information regarding co-organisation of events, please refer to *A1-2.3.1 Planning of the Event*.

A1-3.2.2 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 online);
- The number of unique participants who were invited on e-COST and signed the attendance list and/or appear on the online attendance log (all invited participants can be considered for calculating the LOS, independently of their eligibility status to receive reimbursement from the COST Action),

and

- The duration of the event.

On that basis, the maximum Local Organiser Support grant amounts are as follows:

- Local Organiser Support grant amount for face-to-face and hybrid events;

Total unique 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 online events;

Total unique participants for the entire duration of the event	LOS grant for a COST online 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 3000
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 for 3 days. The Local Organiser may request a grant of:

- A maximum of EUR 3 500 for a face-to-face or hybrid event;
- A maximum of EUR 900 for an online event;
- A smaller amount if chosen so.

During the event, the following participation is observed:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	TOTAL unique participants for 3 days
10 people signed attendance	5 additional people sign the attendance list /	8 additional people sign the attendance list/	23 people have signed

list /appear on the online attendance log	/appear on the online attendance log	appear on the online attendance log	/ were present online and can be counted for LOS calculation
Collected signatures on day 1: 10	Collected signatures on day 2: 13 (2 participants from day 1 did not show up)	Collected signatures on day 3: 17 (4 participants from day 1 or 2 did not show up)	30 signatures collected, but only 23 unique participants.

The total number of unique participants for the entire duration of the event is then in the range of 1 to maximum 25. The Local Organiser may then claim the grant requested and previously confirmed by the Grant Holder institution.

The grant awarded to the Local Organiser is a contribution to the organisation of the Action event and does not necessarily, correspond to the actual expenses incurred. The Local Organiser does not, necessarily, need to reimburse to the Grant Holder institution the difference between the actual expenses incurred and the grant amount received.

A1-3.2.3 PAYMENT 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 online event attendance logs have been uploaded in e-COST.

COST Association does not require any receipts or invoices from the Grant Holder institution to justify the amount granted to the Local Organiser except the attendance list/logs.

A1-3.2.4 ARCHIVING

The Local Organiser shall archive relevant LOS supporting documents (eg. invoices, receipts, timesheets, original signed attendance list / logs if not provided to the Grant Holder institution) for a period up to 9 years after the validation of the Final Financial Report by the COST Association and make them available upon request to the Grant Holder institution, COST Association, or any auditor.

The Grant Holder institution may request from the Local Organiser any supporting documents required in accordance with applicable laws or regulations.

A1-3.2.5 FORCE MAJEURE IMPACTING LOS

A Local Organiser of a COST Action event can encounter a case of force majeure driving them to cancel or shorten the COST Action event.

Force majeure in the context of an LOS can be defined as follows:

- An event or circumstance beyond the Local Organiser'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 Local Organiser either is prevented to continue planning and organising of the Action event (force majeure case happens before event start date) or forces the local organiser to shorten the Action event (force majeure case happens during the event).

In both cases, the local organiser must call upon the contracted cancellation insurance. In the absence of a cancellation insurance, any cost related to the organisation of the event will not be eligible for reimbursement from the COST Grant.

If the event can still be organised but only in an online format, an LOS grant for an online event can be requested, including the justification for the transformation of the type of event from face to face or hybrid to online.

ANNEX 2. NETWORKING ACTIVITIES ORGANISED THROUGH A GRANT AWARDING PROCESS

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

A2-1 SCOPE AND BENEFITS

The grant awarding by COST Actions and its implementation:

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

Grant awarding **benefits to**

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

A2-1.1 MOBILITY OF RESEARCHERS AND INNOVATORS

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

A2-1.1.1 SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSIONS (STSM)

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

Short-Term Scientific Missions grant **benefits to**:

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

A2-1.1.2 VIRTUAL MOBILITY (VM)

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

Virtual Mobility grant **benefits to:**

- **COST Action:** uses a flexible tool to implement online activities inside the network, achieve the MoU objectives and significantly increase their impact and reach. Contributes to European leadership in knowledge creation and increasing its innovation potential. However, this grant should not be used to compensate the tasks of leadership positions (e.g. the Grant Holder Manager, Grant Awarding Coordinator, etc.);
- **VM grantee:** develop(s) capacity in online collaboration and networking in a pan-European framework.

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

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

A2-1.2 PRESENTATIONS AT CONFERENCES ORGANISED BY THIRD PARTIES

A2-1.2.1 ITC CONFERENCE

ITC Conference grant funds an oral presentation of their own work within the scope of the Action by an Action Participant affiliated to a legal entity located in an Inclusiveness Target Country / Near Neighbour Country in a high-level conference fully organized by a third party, i.e. not organized nor co-organized by the COST Action.

ITC Conference grant:

- Serves COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy;
- Supports Action Participant affiliated to a legal entity located 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 grant **benefits to**:

- **ITC Conference Grantee:** receives support for attending and presenting their own work within the scope of the Action (oral presentation) in a conference and can establish new contacts for future collaborations.

A2-1.2.2 DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE

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

Dissemination Conference grant:

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

Dissemination Conference grant **benefits to**:

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

A2-1.2.3 YOUNG RESEARCHER AND INNOVATOR CONFERENCE

YRI Conference grant funds a presentation (poster/oral presentation) of their own work within the scope of the Action by a Young Researcher and Innovator (YRI) in a high-level conference fully organized by a third party, i.e. not organized nor co-organized by the COST Action.

YRI Conference grant:

- Serves COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy;
- Supports Young Researchers and Innovators 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.

YRI Conference grant **benefits to**:

- **YRI Conference Grantee:** receives support for attending and presenting their own work within the scope of the Action (poster/oral presentation) in a conference and can establish new contacts for future collaborations.

A2-2 WORKING MODALITIES

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

As per Article *7.2 - COST Grant budget*, the Action needs to provide the following information for Mobility of researchers and innovators grants (STSM and VM grants) and Presentation at conferences organized by third parties grants (ITC, YRI and Dissemination conference 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 awarded grants will address one (or several) associated Grant Agreement Period Goals(s) related to the achievement of one (or several) MoU objective(s) and contributing to the Science Communication Plan[24]adopted by the Action;
  - How the COST Principles will be addressed;
  - If available, the weblink(s) to the event and the programme (in case of ITC, YRI and Dissemination Conference Grants);
  - Type and number of calls for applications (if applicable).
- 'Budget' (estimation) allocated for the Grants.

A2-2.2 ACCESS CONDITIONS

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

A2-2.3 PROCESS DESCRIPTION – VIEW OF THE GRANTEE

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

Application:

- Shall be submitted by an individual and for an activity complying with the conditions described in *A1-2.2 Access conditions*
- Shall be submitted online in e-COST using dedicated forms available. In this regard, applicants are informed that their application can be accessed by the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committees in the Action for evaluation purposes.
- Applicants must upload their CV in their e-COST profile. This information will be visible to the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committees in the Action for evaluation purposes.
- Upon approval of the application, the Grantee receives a Grant Letter from the Grant Holder stating the approved amount and the conditions for receiving the grant.

Implementation of the Activity:

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

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

Reporting and claim for payment of the grant:

- Once the activity has ended, the grantee submits the required reports and relevant documentation in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the activity or 15 days after the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first;

Claim the payment by submitting the report via e-COST.

Receiving payment of the grant:

- Grants are paid by the Grant Holder Institution after the completion of the activity and approval of all required report/documentation.

  However, STSMs grantees may request up to 50% pre-payment of the approved grant. This amount is subject to availability of funds and approval by the Grant Holder Institution. The request of pre-payment shall be submitted to the Grant Holder Manager.

Information and documents to be provided by the grantee:

Networking Activity	Information to be provided in the application	Information to be provided when reporting and claiming the grant
STSM	*To be filled in e-COST:* • Title • Start and end date (within the active Grant Period, i.e. no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) • Budget requested by the applicant; • Information about the host institution and contact person. Location of host institution must be in a different country than the country of affiliation of the applicant; *To be uploaded to e-COST:* • Application form (template available in e-COST) describing: Goals, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, expected outcomes and description of the contribution to the Action MoU objectives; • Confirmation of the host on the agreement from the host institution in receiving the applicant (template available in e-COST); • Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc…)	*To be uploaded to e-COST:* ○ Report to the Action MC on the work developed, main achievements of the STSM and planned future follow up activities.
Virtual Mobility	*To be filled in e-COST:* • Title • Start and end date (within the active Grant Period, i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) • Budget requested by the applicant *To be uploaded to e-COST:* • Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Main Objective, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, plan for participation, expected outcomes and description of the contribution to the Action MoU objectives; • Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc…)	*To be uploaded to e-COST:* ○ Report to the Action MC on the work developed, main outcomes and achieved outputs of the Virtual Mobility, and description of the future follow up collaboration.

ITC Conference	*To be filled in e-COST:* • Title of the presentation • Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period, i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) and country; • Budget requested; • Attendance Type (face to face or online) *To be uploaded to e-COST:* • Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Relevance of the conference topic to the Action and Motivation describing the potential for impact on the applicant's career. • Acceptance (or invitation) letter from the conference organisers; • Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc…)	*To be uploaded to e-COST:* ○ Report to the Action MC on the outcome of the presentation of the accepted contribution, in terms of grantee's visibility, including the establishment of new contacts for future collaborations, ○ The certificate of attendance, ○ The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the oral presentation of the grantee,
Dissemination Conference	*To be filled in e-COST:* • Title of the presentation • Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period, i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) and venue; • Budget requested; • Attendance Type (face to face or online) *To be uploaded to e-COST:* • Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Alignment with the Science Communication Plan[25] adopted by the COST Action and Expected impact to the COST Action. • Acceptance (or invitation) letter from the conference organisers; • Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc…)	*To be uploaded to e-COST:* ○ Report to the Action MC on the outcome of the presentation, including the establishment of new contacts for future collaborations, ○ The certificate of attendance, ○ The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the oral presentation of the grantee,
YRI Conference	*To be filled in e-COST:* • Title of the presentation • Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period, i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) and country; • Budget requested; • Attendance Type (face to face or online) *To be uploaded to e-COST:* • Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Relevance of the conference topic to the Action and Motivation describing the potential for impact on the applicant's career. • Acceptance (or invitation) letter from the conference organisers; • Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc…)	*To be uploaded to e-COST:* ○ Report to the Action MC on the outcome of the presentation of the accepted contribution, in terms of grantee's visibility, including the establishment of new contacts for future collaborations, ○ The certificate of attendance, ○ The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the presentation (oral or poster) of the grantee,

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

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

Note on Conflict of Interests:

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

Grant Awarding

- Management Committee:
  - Defines content and timing of the Open Calls, sets the evaluation criteria, defines 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[26]: provides to the Action MC/Core Group (if delegated by the Action MC) a proposal of selected grants and amounts for their approval;
- Science Communication Coordinator: organises publication of Open Calls on Action website, their dissemination via other channels;
- Grant Holder Manager: verify the funds availability, check against the approved grant application and issue the grant letter.

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

Implementation

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

Reporting and Payment of the Grant

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

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

A2-3 FUNDING SCHEME

Financial support for networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process is a grant awarded to individuals, not intended to cover employment costs. Applicants shall not receive different overlapping grants (except for the Virtual Networking Support (VNS)) during the same grant period. The financial support is as follows:

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

			shall not receive different types of conference grants in the same period.

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

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

When the participant is invited to attend a COST event while concurrently benefiting from a COST STSM Grant, the eligible participant is entitled to claim:

- the long-distance travel from the place of the STSM to the place of meeting/Training School and back
- 50% of the Daily Allowance using the Reimbursement Form related to the meeting.

Same reimbursement provisions apply. The applicant shall include in his/her meeting/Training School claim a statement from the Host Institution or Action Chair of the Action confirming the STSM mission and including the Action Number and the dates of the STSM (from/until).

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

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.

A3-1 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.

A3-2 WORKING MODALITIES

A3-2.1 INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED FOR THE WORK AND BUDGET PLAN

As per Article *7.2. - COST Grant budget*, the Action needs to provide the following information for each dissemination and communication product to be funded by the Action when negotiating the Work and Budget Plan or requesting budget reallocation after its approval and during the Grant Period:

- The type of dissemination and communication product, to be selected among the eligible products as described in the present Annex (see *A3-3.1- Eligible expenses*);
- 'Title': short informative title of the selected product;

- 'Description':
  - How the selected product contributes to the Science Communication Plan[28] adopted by the Action;
  - The content and topic of the selected product and how it relates to the Action objectives;
  - The distribution strategy for the Dissemination and Communication Product, if applicable;
  - The targeted audience and involved Working Group(s), if applicable.
- 'Budget' (estimation, without VAT) for the selected product.

A3-2.2 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 *A3-3 – Funding schemes* of the present Annex:

- **Action MC:** approves products and budget, in accordance with the Science Communication Plan[29] adopted by the Action;
- **Action Chair:** Submits the request for the products to be funded (at Work and Budget Plan negotiation or during Grant Period). The content of the proposed product in the Work and Budget Plan should provide the information necessary for the negotiation as indicated above;
- **Grant Holder Manager:** upon approval by the COST Association, follows the product development status until delivery, collects and encodes on e-COST the product itself and all the required documents.

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* (and *5.4 – Open Science and Open Access*. In addition, to be eligible for funding, comply with the requirement foreseen *in A3-3.2 - Acknowledging COST and EU Funding.*

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.

The scientific 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.

A3-3 FUNDING SCHEMES

In order to see their claim for dissemination and communication products being reimbursed, dissemination and communication products shall meet the hereunder described general conditions:

- Being eligible as per *A3-3.1* of the present Annex hereunder;
- Acknowledge COST and EU funding as per A3-3.2 of the present Annex hereunder;

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

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

- 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; and
  - Article 5.4 - Open Science and Open Access;
  - For any reproducible product (including, but not limited to, scientific publications, books, white papers, policy briefs, brochures, flyers, presentations, videos, podcasts, webinars) to be made widely available.
- Be supported by invoices **dated within** the Grant Period:
- Be delivered **within** the Grant Period; a proof of delivery is required for each product.
- 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 institution for the selection of their provider;
- Be approved by the Action MC and COST Association.

A3-3.1 ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The following expenses are eligible as dissemination and communication products: The table below shall be read in conjunction with the general conditions listed just above.

Dissemination or Communication Product	List of eligible expenses	Specific Conditions
Scientific publication in Open Access *Proof of delivery:* If Accepted (or in Press), but not published yet: pdf with the publisher's header providing the expected date of publication OR accepted final manuscript in pdf format and accepted publication full text from the publisher's website. If Published: final publication in pdf format	• Only publication fees in full open access venues for scientific publications are eligible for reimbursement (Gold Open Access). • Proof reading, editing, translation and layout expenses.	• Be the result of the work of the Action, And • Be authored by ○ Action participants from at least 3 different COST Members. Or ○ Action participants from at least 2 different COST Members and 1 NNC. Or ○ Action participants from at least 2 different COST Members if resulting from an STSM funded by the Action. And, • No Embargo period is allowed
Action Website *Proof of delivery:* *Weblink to the public website + login and password for private area (if existent) for use by the COST Staff.*	• Design, production, hosting and maintenance. • One single domain for the Action Website	• Up to EUR 12 000 until the end date of the Action. Maintenance of the Action website beyond the end date of the Action is not mandatory but recommended. However, additional costs beyond the end date of the last Action Grant Period are not covered from the COST Grant.
Action logo *Proof of delivery: A readable file with logo.*	• Design.	• Up to EUR 1000 until the end date of the Action.

Dissemination Materials *Proof of delivery: The final product in pdf format or link to the published file.*	• Design and production. • Proof reading, editing, translation, layout and printing expenses.	• Limited to leaflet, brochures, flyers, infographics, Action poster, roll-up, books (e-book/printed books), training materials, reports (e.g. policy briefs, white papers, technical reports)
Multimedia content *Proof of delivery: Multimedia file or link to the published file.*	• Design and production. • Proof reading, editing, translation and layout expenses.	• Videos, podcasts, webinars, animations, and multimedia presentations.
Information materials for external events *Proof of delivery: Final design of the products to be distributed.*	• Design and production	• Material to be distributed in the frame of an external event open to a high number of external stakeholders, limited to pens, notepads, USB sticks, bookmarks, lanyards, t-shirts, caps, and bags. All such materials must comply with the COST visual identity guidelines (see A3-3.2).
Booth at a conference or commercial exhibition organised by a third party not funded by COST. *Proof of delivery: Certificate of participation issued by the event organiser.*	• Registration fee as an exhibitor.	• Web link to the event website needs to be provided, • COST Action (title or number or acronym) should be visible in the event programme as an exhibitor.

A3-3.2 ACKNOWLEDGING COST AND EU FUNDING

In order to be eligible, any Communication and Dissemination Product funded by the COST Grant shall acknowledge COST and EU support as follows:

Elements for acknowledgement:

(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
COST logotype	The EUemblem and text "Funded by the European Union".	The acknowledment text needsto include the title of the Action (or Acronym) AND the COST Action number. See example below.	The boilerplate featuring a description of COST.	A reference to the COST website
cost EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	Funded by the European Union	This article/publication is based upon work from COST Action < insert name of Action or initials, CAxxxx >, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).	COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.	www.cost.eu

A user guide, EU and COST logo is available on the COST website: https://www.cost.eu/about/visual-identity/

Use of the different elements for acknowledgement in different Dissemination and Communication Products:

Dissemination or Communication Product		COST logotype (A)	EU emblem +text (B)	Acknowledgement (C)	Boilerplate (D)	COST website (E)
Scientific publication in Open Access	Articles in scientific journals	X	X	V	X	X
Action Website		V	V	X	V	V
Action logo		X	X	X	X	X
Dissemination Materials	Leaflets, brochures, flyers, infographics, books (e-books, printed books) training materials, reports (e.g. policy briefs, white papers, technical reports)	V	V	V	V	X
	Action posters, roll-ups	V	V	X	X	X
Multimedia* content	Videos, podcasts, webinars, animations, and multimedia presentations	V	V	V	V	V
Information materials for external events**	Pens, notepads, USB sticks, bookmarks...	V	X	X	X	X

* The COST logo does not need to be embedded throughout the entire multimedia content, but only at the beginning or end.

** This requirement may be waived in exceptional cases where the size of the information material is too small.

A3-3.3 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 *A3-3.1- Eligible expenses*;
- Advertising costs;
- Purchase of equipment (**example**: camera, microphones, laptops, ...), infrastructure or other assets used for the Action (databases, repositories, software, hardware…);
- Any expense not included in the list of eligible expenses detailed in *A3-3.1*. 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 and supporting online collaboration as a complement to traditional ways of collaboration within the research and innovation communities.

A4-1 OTHER EXPENSES RELATED TO SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES (OERSA)

A4-1.1 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 Holder / Local Organiser;
- **Indirect users:** Action participants; Ad hoc contributors.

A4-1.2 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 *A4-1.3 - 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 Manager:** upon approval by the COST Association, processes payment(s) for service provider(s), collects invoices and uploads them in e-COST.

A4-1.3 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;
- Be procured following the rules applicable to the Grant Holder institution;
- Be approved by the Action MC and COST Association.

A4-1.3.1 ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Expenses with the following products and services are eligible: The table below shall be read in conjunction with the general conditions listed just above.

List of eligible items	Specific Conditions
Bank charges	Only expenses supported by copy of bank statements of the Grant Holder related to transactions incurred within the Grant Period are eligible.
Consumables Renting of equipment and short-term use of software and database licences	For use in Training Schools organised by the Action. Only expenses supported by invoices.
Shipping costs.	Shipping of materials that need to be distributed within the network to reach the Action objectives, including: • Sample and equipment sharing for research coordination and training schools approved by COST and organised by the Action; • Dissemination and communication products produced by the Action for meetings and events, to network members and to stakeholders; Only expenses supported by invoices.
Virtual communication, virtual design, and collaboration tools (digital networking).	Maximum claim of EUR 500 per Grant Period. Only expenses supported by invoices.

A4-1.3.2 NON-ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- V.A.T. and any other indirect taxes;
- Bank and / or currency related charges / fees imposed by the bank of the Grant Holder Institution when opening/maintaining a bank account or when receiving Grant payments from the COST Association are not eligible to be claimed under the COST Grant System. These expenses shall be borne by each respective Grant Holder Institution.
- 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.

A4-2 VIRTUAL NETWORKING SUPPORT (VNS)

A4-2.1 SCOPE AND BENEFITS

The Virtual Networking Support (VNS) aims at assessing and supporting the new forms of collaboration in online and hybrid settings as a complement to traditional ways of collaboration within the research and innovation communities and among the members of a given Action.

Virtual Networking Support **benefits to:**

- **COST Action:** develops collaboration by having a dedicated person transferring knowledge, stimulating, and implementing online and hybrid activities inside the network, achieving the MoU objectives, and significantly increasing their impact and reach. Contributes to European leadership in knowledge creation and increasing its innovation potential.
- **VNS Grantee:** develops capacity in online and hybrid collaboration and networking in a pan-European framework, thus supporting the Action.

Some activities expected to be performed by the VNS grantee in support to the COST Action are, but not limited to:

- Prepare and distribute among the MC members of the Action and the COST Science Officer a detailed strategy on online and hybrid networking for the entire Action (following consultation with Action participants, subject to MC approval).
- Support the MC in the discussions and planning of online and hybrid events and collaboration activities.
- Assist in the selection of hosts for the online and hybrid networking events and collaboration activities.
- Assist the selected hosts in preparation and coordination of online or hybrid events and collaboration activities (including the analysis of technical needs).
- Oversee the selection of the most appropriate virtual tools for each specific online or hybrid activity (webinar, online conference, online library containing learning material for use by the Action members) considering the needs of the Action and the activities (need for sub-groups, fora, etc.), demonstrate the principle of best value for money, adhere to GDPR requirements.
- Support the Science Communication Coordinator in integrating the online and hybrid dimensions of the Action dissemination and communication strategy.
- Support the Grant Awarding Coordinator in the call, evaluation process, and coordination of the Virtual Mobility Grants [30].

A4-2.2 WORKING MODALITIES

A4-2.2.1 INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED FOR THE WORK AND BUDGET PLAN

The Action can provide information on whether the Action plans to make use of this grant, and the allocated budget (see *ANNEX 2 Networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process*).

[30] To gain access on e-COST to the submitted proposals and support the evaluation, the VNS grantee needs to be assigned an “other leadership role”.

A4-2.2.2 ACCESS CONDITIONS

See Article 6.4 for Eligibility to receive financial support.

A4-2.2.3 SPECIFICITY OF THE VNS GRANT AWARDING PROCESS

The MC may decide to organise an open call for applications or identify among the Action participants or other relevant individuals a suitable candidate.

The application shall be submitted online in e-COST using the dedicated form and templates available. Upon approval, the grantee performs the tasks in line with the approved application.

The report required for claiming the grant of a Virtual Networking Support shall be submitted upon the completion of the activity and at the latest 15 days after the end of the Grant Period and shall follow the template available on e-COST.

For any further information on the process for grant awarding, please see *ANNEX 2 Networking activities organised through a Grant Awarding Process*.

A4-2.3 FUNDING SCHEMES

Financial support for VNS is a grant awarded to an individual of up to EUR 4 000 per Grant Period, not intended to cover employment costs but providing a contribution for the overall effort, not necessarily covered by an employer or by the Grant Holder institution.

The decision on the amount to award is in the hands of the Action MC or Core Group on proposal of the evaluators and should reflect the duration, scope and complexity of the task and activities to be covered via the VNS grant.

The Action can award a maximum of one VNS Grant per Grant Period.

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

ANNEX 5. FINANCIAL AND SCIENTIFIC ADMINISTRATION AND COORDINATION (FSAC)

A5-1 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.

A5-2 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 selecting a Grant Holder, the Action MC agrees to allocate FSAC to this institution within the budget.

A5-3 FUNDING SCHEMES

The calculation of FSAC is made by applying a 15% rate (or a lower percentage requested by the Grant Holder institution as foreseen in Article *7.2.2.1*) 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:

	Budget (Work and Budget Plan)	**Actual Eligible Expense (Financial Report)**
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
SUB TOTAL	**EUR 130.434,78**	**EUR 128.050,00**
FSAC	**EUR 19.565,22**	**EUR 19.207,50**
TOTAL	**EUR 150.000,00**	**EUR 147.257,50**