



5th call for Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) and Virtual Mobilities (VMs)

This is the 5th call for applications for Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) and Virtual Mobilities (VMs) funded by COST Action CA23107 [Network for Evidence Synthesis in the Agri-Food Sector \(EU-NESA\)](#).

The main aim and objective of the Action is to create a hub and network of people and institutions, with the goal to enhance the use of evidence synthesis in the agri-food sector. This will enable research evidence to better inform decisions and a shift towards sustainable agri-food systems.

Note: For this call, STSMs and VMs will only be considered if they **directly contribute to the strategic priorities and objectives of the Action**, and/or **advance the tasks of one or more working groups**. See sections 04 and 06 for more information on priorities and evaluation.

Contents

- 01: STSMs and VMs
- 02: Guidelines for applicants
- 03: Application instructions
- 04: Evaluation of applications
- 05: Reporting and payments
- 06: STSM and VM open call
- 07: Useful links and documents
- 08: Questions/enquiries

01: STSMs and VMs

STSMs enable short research and study visits to a research institution or laboratory **in another country** to strengthen the network and foster collaboration, learn a new technique, or use equipment, data, and/or methods not available in the applicant's own institution, and contribute to the scientific objectives of the Action. STSM grants provide a contribution towards travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses, and implementation of the task.

VMs enable virtual collaboration among researchers or innovators **in different institutions**, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, and contribute to the scientific objectives of the Action. VM grants provide a contribution towards implementation of the task.

STSM and VM grants are available for researchers and innovators affiliated with a legal entity in a Full Member Country, Cooperating Member Country, Near Neighbour Country, or European RTD Organisation. Young researchers and innovators (<40 years old) and those from Inclusiveness Target Countries and Near Neighbour Countries are strongly encouraged to apply. Consult the [Country and Organisations Table](#) for eligibility.

02: Guidelines for applicants

STSM grants support international travel. Grants are a contribution towards the costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence, for which grantees will need to make their own arrangements. The duration of the visit should be at least 5 working days (plus 2 days for travel) and a maximum of 90 days. STSMs must be completed within a single Grant Period and within the Action's lifetime. **The maximum amount awarded for an STSM under this call is €3000.** The amount will reflect the duration and location of the STSM. For guidance on the cost of living in the host country consult the [COST Daily Allowance Rates](#). Applicants are also requested to consult the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#).

VM grants support virtual collaboration. The duration of the task should be at least 5 working days. VMs must be completed within a single Grant Period and within the Action's lifetime. **The maximum amount awarded for a VM under this call is €1000.** The amount will reflect the duration, scope and complexity of the task and activities to be covered.

EU-NESA is organized into 4 scientific Working Groups (WGs). VMs are considered a great opportunity for participants to focus their work on research topics that have been highlighted by WGs or to introduce new ideas addressing the Action's objectives. Details on the content and goals of WGs are available in the [Action's Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#).

The coordination of STSMs and VMs is carried out by a supervisor. The supervisor oversees all the activities in the work plan and verifies and pre-approves all documents (report, deliverables, etc.). STSM and VM opportunities with a pre-defined topic already have a supervisor assigned. Applicants for the open call will need to identify a suitable supervisor. In all cases applicants must contact the supervisor and procure a letter confirming their agreement to act in that capacity. For STSM applicants the letter must confirm the agreed dates of travel and the period of the visit.

Applications for STSMs and VMs are open to research Masters students, PhD students, post-docs, and researchers from academia, research organizations and researched-focused SMEs.

Awards will be limited to one STSM or one VM grant per applicant per call.

The STSM/VM must be completed by 24/10/2026. The starting date should be agreed with the supervisor before submitting the application. **Grants will be awarded on a rolling basis until the funds have been exhausted.**

03: Application instructions

Applications for grants are managed through the e-COST management tool. All applicants must have an [e-COST profile](#). The applicant must use the e-COST management tool to register the VM application request. In addition to the information entered at the website, the applicants should also upload the following documents in a single PDF file:

- Short CV including recent publications
- [STSM application form](#) or [VM application form](#)
- Confirmation letter from the STSM/VM supervisor

For additional information on the submission via the e-COST system, see the [Grant Awarding User Guide](#).

04: Evaluation of applications

Each proposal will be assessed independently by the pertinent WG leader and co-leader, and by the EU-NESA Grant Awarding Committee. A score will be given based on the following evaluation criteria:

- (i) **the clarity of the proposal** – are the objectives and methodology described in simple, precise language?
5 excellent; 4 very good; 3 satisfactory; 2 deficient; 1 poor; 0 failed
- (ii) **the degree to which the STSM/VM complements or contributes to the Action's strategic priorities and objectives as defined in the MoU** – does it directly support the Action's core goals and complement existing activities?
5 excellent; 4 very good; 3 satisfactory; 2 deficient; 1 poor; 0 failed
- (iii) **the added value to the ongoing work in the WGs** – does the mobility introduce new expertise, methods, data, or perspectives that directly advance WG tasks?
5 excellent; 4 very good; 3 satisfactory; 2 deficient; 1 poor; 0 failed
- (iv) **work plan feasibility and outputs** – is the work plan practical and achievable and are the planned outputs relevant and timely?
5 excellent; 4 very good; 3 satisfactory; 2 deficient; 1 poor; 0 failed
- (v) **the ability of the applicant to successfully complete the proposed STSM/VM and disseminate relevant outputs** – does the applicant have relevant expertise and do they have a strategy for sharing outputs?
5 excellent; 4 very good; 3 satisfactory; 2 deficient; 1 poor; 0 failed
- (vi) **motivation for applying for an STSM/VM** – are the benefits to the applicant clearly articulated with evidence of how funding would enable unique opportunities not otherwise possible?
5 excellent; 4 very good; 3 satisfactory; 2 deficient; 1 poor; 0 failed
- (vii) **diversity and inclusiveness**
Would supporting this application contribute to the Action's ITC and NNC targets?
1 yes; 0 no
Would supporting this application contribute to the Action's YRI targets?
1 yes; 0 no
Is the applicant a WG member?

1 yes; 0 no

Has the applicant previously received funding from the Action?

1 no; 0 yes

A proposal can reach a maximum score of 34. The proposals will be ranked and those with the highest scores will be granted, bearing in mind the need to achieve a gender balance in accordance with the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy. If proposals have the same score, preference will be given to those from YRI and/or applicants from ITC or NNC countries, and to candidates who have not previously received funding from the EU-NESA COST Action.

05: Reporting and payments

STSMs grantees from ITC countries 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.

Once the STSM/VM has ended, the grantee must submit a short report on the outcomes. The [STSM report](#) or [VM report](#) needs to be submitted within **30 days after the end date of the STSM/VM or 15 days after the end of the Grant Period (31/10/2026), whichever date comes first**. The grantee claims the payment by submitting the report via e-COST. Failure to submit the required report on time may lead to the grant being cancelled.

Additionally, after the completion of the STSM/VM activities the grantee is encouraged to participate in dissemination activities related to the work developed during the period of the grant, such as testimonies, blogs, and/or reports about the activities undertaken.

06: STSM and VM open call

Applicants are invited to propose their own research topic which aligns with the goals of EU-NESA and is related to current WG activities. Prospective applicants should therefore contact the WG leader and co-leader to discuss the research topic and identify a suitable supervisor.

For this open call, **STSMs and VMs will only be considered if they directly contribute to the strategic priorities and objectives of the Action, and/or advance the tasks of one or more Working Groups**. This may include, for example, work supporting evidence synthesis guidance and resources, concept and knowledge-gap activities, evidence collection and synthesis, development of training materials or methods, policy and decision-maker guidance, or stakeholder engagement and communication. Applicants should clearly identify the relevant Action priority, Working Group task and/or deliverable to which their proposed activity will contribute. Activities must be feasible within the timescale applied for.

07: Useful links & documents

- [STSM application form](#)
- [STSM report template](#)
- [VM application form](#)
- [VM report template](#)

- [e-COST](#)
- [Daily allowance rates](#)
- [Grant Awarding User Guide](#)
- [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#)
- [Countries and Organisations Table](#)
- [EU-NESA COST page](#)
- [EU-NESA website](#)

08: Questions/enquiries

- Scope and aims of the Action: Action Chair – Nicola Randall (nrandall@harper-adams.ac.uk)
- STSM & VM calls and eligibility requirements: Grant Awarding Committee – Sarah Milliken (S.Milliken@greenwich.ac.uk), Nurinisa Esenbuğa (nesenbuga@gmail.com), Ricardo Assunção (rassuncao@egasmoniz.edu.pt)
- Reimbursement process: Grant Holder Manager – Abigail Cooke (acooke@live.harper.ac.uk)