- Back in 1971…

Ministerial Conference 1971

Want to find out more?
https://50years.cost.eu/

- … COST was founded

50
years of science without borders
1971 - 2021

cost
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. Virtual Networking Tools (VNT)
2. Some changes in Horizon Europe

CA18105 RIBMINS - 2 September 2021

COST update

Dr Dominique Vandekerchove – Science Officer

cost
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. VNT Pilot Project

- The Virtual Networking Tools (VNT) have been designed for the promotion of virtual networking in the COST Actions and CIGs, to support Action continuity and alleviate Action challenges during COVID-19 pandemic.

- Aims:

    - *to build capacity and spread the uptake of virtual collaboration across different research communities*

    - *to 'pilot the future', making room for COST to further adapt in the context of Horizon Europe*

COST
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

VNT Pilot Project – EC approval

- EC approval: 23 March 2021

APPENDIX 3 – PROPOSAL FOR A PILOT FOR VIRTUAL NETWORKING TOOLS

Background

The current COVID-19 pandemic has imposed travel restrictions which continue to negatively impact COST's research community. Actions have continued some of their activities online. However, there is a pressing ask from the research community and an unmet urgent need to support virtual networking by providing new tools. A recent survey confirms that the vast majority of the COST Actions are in favour of permanently including virtual networking in the COST framework. In the absence of fit for purpose networking tools offered by COST, these grants are crucial to Actions regaining momentum and delivering a range of networking activities. The tools proposed do not require additional budget from the European Commission. In line with the principle of flexibility, the Actions can reallocate amounts within their current budget plans.

These tools will not replace physical mobility which remains key to the COST mission. The eligibility rules, criteria for evaluation and selection of applicants, and payment criteria applicable to these pilot grant schemes will be included in the Vademecum.

4

VNT Pilot Project – Grants description

- Grant for Virtual Networking Support (VNS Grant)

  … to stimulate virtual collaboration among all the members of a given Action by designating a VNS Manager.

- Grant(s) for Virtual Mobility (VM Grant)

  …to strengthen the existing networks by allowing individual participants to foster collaboration, exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, etc. performing activities that do not necessarily require in-person presence.

VNT Pilot Project – Grants description

VNS Grant	VM Grant (s)
Financial support: 1 VNS Grant (maximum EUR 4.000) per Action per Grant Period	Financial support: Maximum of 6 VM Grants (maximum EUR 1.500 each, maximum EUR 9.000) per Action per Grant Period
Grant Duration: = GP duration (until 31/10/2021)	Grant Duration: Depends on the activity (no minimum, but not beyond 31/10/2021)

Who can apply?

All individuals from participating COST countries and MC observers from NNCs.

VNT Pilot Project – Grants description

VNS Grant	VM Grant (s)

Which activities are covered?:

- <u>Prepare and distribute a detailed strategy</u> on virtual networking for the Action

- <u>Support the MC</u> in the discussions and planning of virtual events

- Assist in the <u>selection of hosts</u> for the virtual networking events

- Assist the selected hosts in <u>preparation and coordination of online events</u> (including <u>analysis of technical needs</u>),

- <u>Selecting the most appropriate virtual tools</u> for each specific virtual activity (webinar, virtual conference, online library …) considering the needs of the Action, demonstrate the principle of best value for money, adhere to GDPR,..

- <u>Support the call coordination of the Virtual Mobility Grants</u>.

Which activities are covered?:

- Support the <u>harmonisation and standardisation</u> of methods and procedures within the Action networking activities (surveys, discussion coordination, questionnaires, …)

- To support the implementation of <u>research related activities</u> that do <u>not necessarily require in-person presence</u> (computational/modelling activities, data analysis, …)

- <u>Virtual mentoring scheme</u>, with special focus on activities and exchanges that can generate capacity and build new skills, particularly for ECIs researchers

- Content <u>preparation and coordination of science communication activities</u> (MOOC, workshops/webinar series, workshops in external events, …)

- ….

VNT Pilot Project – Grants description

VNS Grant	VM Grant (s)
Process:	Process:
• Action MC decides whether and when to launch call + criteria for selection	• Action MC decides whether and when to launch call + criteria for selection
• Applicant submits application based on template available on e-COST	• Applicant submits application based on template available on e-COST
• **Action Chair** coordinates MC decision process on e-COST (CoI management)	• **VNS Manager** coordinates evaluation process on e-COST on behalf of MC
• Grant Holder issues grant letter upon decision, and payment upon report (similarly to STSM/ITC Conf. Grants processes)	• Grant Holder issues grant letter upon decision, and payment upon report (similarly to STSM/ITC Conf. Grants processes)

VNT Pilot Project

- Information available:
  - ✓ Updated Vademecum
  - ✓ FAQ document
  - ✓ User Guidelines
  - ✓ COST website and e-COST

- MC discussion on the needs

- Define selection criteria and launch calls for proposals

- Prepare the virtual networking strategy

- Payment of the grants after reporting by grantees

VNT Pilot Project – Implementation

- Launch of the project: **28 April 2021**

- VNT Pilot intermediate assessment: 22 July 2021

- End of Grant Period (including VNT Pilot): 31 Oct 2021

- VNT Pilot final assessment, included in the Periodic Report of SGA 3.2 to the EC: 21/12/2021

Q&A on VNT

2. Some changes : simplification
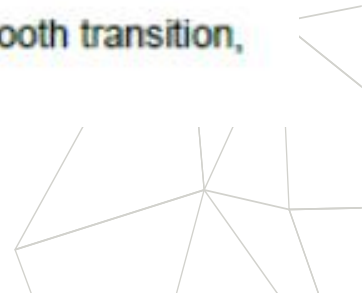
Brussels, 27 July 2021
COST-DIR-042-21

Subject: Approval of the Annotated Rules for COST Actions

Dear Action Chairs and Grant Holder Managers,

As we have already communicated, a new set of rules will apply to COST Actions from the beginning of Horizon Europe. These rules arise from a rigorous exercise of simplification which focused on improving the experience of Action Chairs, Grant Holders and participants. The rules are now gathered in one single document, the Annotated Rules for COST Actions, which also provides guidance on how to understand and interpret them.

I am pleased to inform you that the Executive Board of the COST Association approved today, 27 July 2021 the Annotated Rules for COST Actions[i]. They will enter into force as of the 1st November, 2021[ii].

Today, I would like to provide you with the approved document in order to ensure a smooth transition, allowing you to become familiar with the new rules at your earliest convenience.

COST
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

As of Nov. 1ˢᵗ :
Vademecum replaced by Annotated Rules

Brussels, 27 July 2021

COST 094/21

ANNOTATED RULES FOR COST ACTIONS

(Level C – COST Actions)

The Executive Board (EB) of the COST Association

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

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

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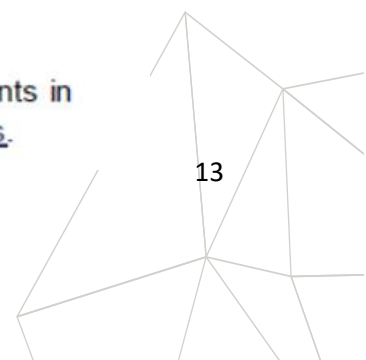
Simplification

- Strongly desired by all stakeholders

  - *COST Actions -* Grant Management Study and Customer Satisfaction Survey.

  - *COST Association -* become more efficient and provide better service to the Actions

- **Shift of focus:** from managerial tasks to science networking

- Entry into force: **1st November 2021**
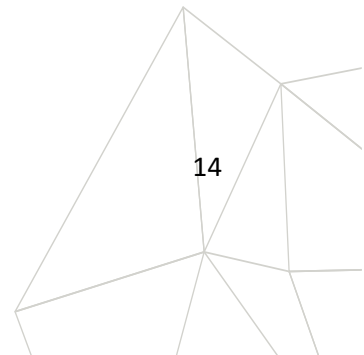
Main Changes: (1) People and Countries

- Membership in Actions
  - ➢ all COST member countries part of an Action

- Participation of Individuals to COST Actions
  - ➢ Strengthening of WG membership
    - open to any individual affiliated in a legal entity in the world
      - subject to MC approval
    - reimbursement subject to MC decision under the COST eligibility framework
    - visibility and application possibility on COST Action web page

EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Main Changes: (2) Leadership Positions

- Only Chair, Vice Chair and GH SR need to be MC members*
- WG leaders and Science Communication Coordinator anybody from COST Member states **
- New - Grant Awarding Coordinator
  - ➢ STSM, ITC Conference Grant, Dissemination Grant

- Possibility to create other leadership positions
  - ➢ also open for any researchers in the world
  - ➢ visibility of all leadership positions on COST Action web page

*) or MC Observer from EC, EU bodies, offices, agencies, European RTD organisations
**) or from EC, EU bodies, offices, agencies, European RTD organisations, International Organisations

COST
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Main Changes: (3) Management Committee

- No permanent MC substitutes anymore
- MC Observers
  - ➢ only from Specific Organisations or COST Partner member state (South-Africa)

- Virtual/hybrid MC meetings possible
- Formalisation of Core Group and delegation of power

COST
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Main Changes (4): Eligibility

- Reimbursement of individuals
  - ➢ MC Meeting
    - Open to any relevant participant (even if not MC member)
    - MC can decide to reimburse only 1 MC member per country
  - ➢ Invited Speakers
    - No more limit of 4 per event

- Choice of location for activities
  - ➢ Meetings
    - In any of the 39 COST Full or Cooperating Member states
    - Near Neighbour Countries (NNC)
  - ➢ Training Schools and other networking activities
    - Anywhere
  - ➢ Virtual Environment

COST
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY