

WHO CARES IN EUROPE?

Virtual Networking Support Grant

1st call for applicants
First Grant Period 2021

Description

In time of Covid, virtual networking is our Action's only reliable option if we are to pursue our objectives effectively. With the first lockdown, our Action's activities had to be cancelled, and for six months, we languished in uncertainty. We then replaced all in person meetings with 100% virtual meetings, and the results have been excellent. We must therefore build our virtual networking tools to accommodate the continuing expansion of our Action. This includes adapting our website to make it even more interactive than it is already.

The COST Association has recently launched two new types of grants in COST Actions to respond to the rising need of digital tools in the context of the COVID pandemic and to ensure the continuity of the COST Actions' work activities. It concerns a pilot scheme that will run until 31 October 2021.

The two new types of grants are:

- Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Grant: aims at promoting a virtual alternative to in-person collaboration. This grant intends to stimulate virtual collaboration by designating a Virtual Networking Support Manager.
- Virtual Mobility (VM) Grant: aims at strengthening the existing networks by allowing researchers and innovators to carry out collaboration in a virtual setting, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, disseminate Action results, etc.

The current call relates to the first type, the VNS Grant.

Eligibility rules

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Applicant(s) are Action participants with a primary affiliation to an institution located in a COST Full or Cooperating Member country or MC Observers from a COST Near Neighbour Country.
- The applicant(s) shall be prepared to develop a virtual networking strategy, coordinate the call for expression of interest for the Virtual Mobility Grants and draft at the end of the grant period a report to be approved by the MC.

Evaluation and selection of Applicants

The evaluation of each submitted VNS grant application is performed by the Core Group as mandated by the MC.

The selection of successful grantee shall be based on contributions to the overall objectives of the Action and the implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy.

The application shall be submitted in e-COST and include the following information:

1. A description of how the COST Action can benefit from developing virtual networking activities and adapting or creating new tools:



- make our website even more interactive than it is already,
 - adding a blog,
 - expanding its capacity for online publication
 - creating and managing a “Who Cares in Europe?” twitter account
2. Progress towards the MoU objectives and deliverables
- COST Excellence and inclusiveness Policy, specially towards the support of researchers in COST Inclusiveness Target Countries.
 - Stakeholder engagement and promoting the participation of researchers from NNC and IPC (COST Global Networking), including the redaction of a regular newsletter distributed via the website
 - ECI will be given preference for this position. A maximum number of our deliverables will be made available on the website as well.
3. A proposal for the strategy outline on virtual networking, including an approach for coordinating Virtual Mobility Grants (where relevant) by:
- Opening calls and managing the evaluation process for awarding the Virtual Mobility Grants. *Our first priority must be the development and implementation of the virtual networking tools outlined above. Once these are in place and operating well can we develop our strategy for coordinating Virtual Mobility Grants NOT YET, maybe in the future*
 - Supporting and advising beneficiaries of the Virtual Mobility Grant. *When the time comes, this will be among the responsibilities of our Virtual networking person.*

Additionally, the proposal shall include a plan on coordinating and reporting any planned COST Action events that will be held online (e.g. Annual Meeting or Conference) and how they fit the overall Action strategy.

Implementation of activities

The successful applicant shall take the Virtual Networking Support (VNS) Manager role in the COST Action. The activities expected to be performed by the successful applicant, but not limited to, are:

- Prepare and distribute among the MC members of the Action and the COST Science Officer a detailed strategy on virtual networking for the entire Action (following consultation with Action participants, subject to MC approval).
- Support the MC in the discussions and planning of virtual events and collaboration activities.
- Assist in the selection of hosts for the virtual networking events and collaboration activities.
- Assist the selected hosts in preparation and coordination of online events and collaboration activities (including the analysis of technical needs).
- Oversee the selection of the most appropriate virtual tools for each specific virtual activity (webinar, virtual 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, forums, etc.), demonstrate the principle of best value for money, adhere to GDPR requirements.
- Support the call, evaluation process, and coordination of the Virtual Mobility Grants (upon decision of the MC).

The grantee has 15 calendar days from the end of the Grant Period to submit a report to the Core Group and to the Science Officer of the Action including:

- The Action’s strategy on virtual networking approved by the MC.

- The list and brief description of virtual events and collaboration activities organised during the Grant Period.
- The contribution to the COST Action MoU objectives for each of the virtual events and collaboration activities
- The contribution to the COST Excellence and inclusiveness Policy, specially towards the support of researchers in COST Inclusiveness Target Countries.
- Stakeholder engagement and promoting participation of researchers from Near Neighbour Countries and International Partner Countries.
- Description of identified successful practices and lessons learned. The report shall consider only virtual activities carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period.

Financial support and payment

A financial contribution of EUR 2 000 will be awarded.. The Grant Holder shall pay the approved grant to the grantee after the MC has approved the grantee's report and no later than 15 days after the end of Grant Period. The COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action cannot be considered as being the grantee's employer who shall make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security, and pension matters. The grantee must also ensure they have the required technical material/equipment and infrastructure to carry out the activities proposed in their application to the grant.

Duration

The Virtual Networking Support Manager will start form its official appointment by the Core Group until October 31, 2021.

Deadline

The deadline for the applicants to send their application forms is October 15, 2021.

Additional Information

More information about the application process can be found in this link:
<https://www.cost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/VNT-userguide.pdf>

For more information on specific terms and conditions set in this call, please follow the COST Association guidelines described more in detailed in Vademecum v10.1 :

<https://www.cost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Vademecum-V9-28-April-20212-1.pdf>

In case of contradiction between the current call and the official documents generated by the COST Association, the latter shall prevail.