



Genetic Nature  
Observation & Action

## Virtual Mobility Grant WG4 “Establishing a mentorship programme for GENOA Young Researchers and Innovators - YRIs”

CA23121 GENOA

### *Call for Virtual Mobility Grant (VGM)*

Work on VGM taking place between **25th June - 15th September 2026**

**CALL DEADLINE:** June 7th, 23:59 CEST

**ANNOUNCEMENT DATE:** ten working days upon receipt of the applications

### BACKGROUND

Supporting the development of **Young Researchers and Innovators (YRIs)** is a key priority of GENOA, across working groups but particularly in WG4. To foster career development and personal growth in academic and applied contexts, GENOA intends to establish a **mentorship programme** connecting early-career researchers with experienced scientists across disciplines and countries. This **Virtual Mobility Grant (VMG)** call will support activities necessary to design and implement the mentorship framework, including mapping mentorship needs, developing guidelines and matching procedures, and facilitating initial interactions between mentors and mentees within the GENOA YRI network. The initiative aims to strengthen professional development opportunities for YRIs and promote long-term collaboration within the Action.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE VM GRANT FOR YRIs

The VMG will focus on designing and establishing a mentorship programme for GENOA Young Researchers and Innovators **including, but not limited to**, the following activities:

- one-to-one mentorship;
- workshops on career development;
- opportunities to boost networking and collaboration.

The programme must be designed to be self-sustaining beyond the VMG and for the duration of GENOA.



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## Eligibility

Individuals affiliated to a legal entity in a COST Full/Cooperating Member, in a European RTD, or in a Near Neighbour Country (NNC) institution can apply for a VMG.

## Non-eligible activities

All activities that are covered by other networking tools, licenses of programmes or online tools, conference fees, translations, purchase of any software and technical equipment.

## ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

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 successful applicant(s) shall:
  - inform the MC and the Core Group about the aim of the VM Grant and how its outcomes will generate benefits to the Action,
  - actively contribute to the activities and overall objectives of the Action,
  - submit a report at the end, to be approved by the Grant Awarding Coordinator on behalf of the MC.

## FUNDING

The maximum amount for a VM grant is **€1,500**. However, please note that the requested amount can be decreased or increased as Core Group will define the exact amount for each grant reflecting the scope and complexity of the task and activities.

**No in advance payments are foreseen.** Approved VM Grant will be paid to the grantee after the Core Group has approved the grantee's report and no later than 15 days from the end of Grant Period.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURE

VM Grant applications must be submitted using the e-COST system. The applicants should use VM templates provided by e-COST in the Grant Awarding User Guide (page 4). VM Grant applications submitted in any other way (email, post etc.) will not be evaluated. Details of application procedure are described in the Grant Awarding User Guide.

1. Applicants are encouraged to contact the YRI network coordinators Roberta Gargiulo, Emina Šunje and Filipa Borges, prior to submitting their application to ensure that the proposed outcome of their VMG agrees with the objectives of the call.

2. All applicants must complete, submit and download their VMG applications online within their e-COST profile at: <https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants/add?type=VM>.
3. All applicants must send their submitted VMG application form and the relevant supporting documents through the e-COST platform <https://e-services.cost.eu/user/login> for evaluation by the Grant Awarding Coordinator. The VMG applicant must submit (see also Annotated Rules, pp. 100):
  - VM Grant application template (template is provided in the e-COST and in the Grant Awarding User Guide (page 4). The final document will be generated by e-COST system after filling in all requested information).
  - If needed, VM Grant Applicant can submit other supporting documents. Number of supporting documents is not limited, while the size of each file is limited to 2 MB. VM Grant applicant is allowed to submit various formats of the files, but applicant must ensure that the grant Awarding Coordinator will be able to download and check the document.
4. The evaluation procedure will follow the decision of the Core Group (following the mandate given by MCs) and the Grant Awarding Coordinator will process each received VM Grant application against the perceived contribution that the virtual mobility will make against the deliverables outlined in the Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of GENOA (but see also Annex to this document).
5. The applicant will be formally notified of the outcome of their VM application by the Grant Awarding Coordinator **no later than June 20, 2026**.

## Report

Within 30 days from the end date of the VMG, the successful applicant must submit a scientific report to the Host institution and to the Grant Awarding Coordinator (**through the e-COST platform**).

### The Report will include:

- A detailed description of the mentorship programme and how it will be implemented
  - a summary of the planned mentorship activities (including minimum mentoring interactions, possible ways to document mentee needs, etc.);
  - the mentor-mentee matching, including the workflow and expectations for both mentors and mentee (i.e. individual responsibilities);
  - a plan and proposed agenda for a potential workshop on career development
- Description of the outcomes and achieved outputs (including any specific [MoU](#) deliverables, or publications resulting from the Virtual Mobility).
- Description of the benefits to the COST Action Strategy (what and how).
- Description of the VMG collaboration (including constructive reflection on activities undertaken, identified successful practices and lessons learned, including a summary of the pilot mentorship activities previously carried out within GENOA). The template of the report is provided in the e-COST and in [the grant Awarding User Guide](#).

- The sections recommended for inclusion in the report are: Methodology (mapping mentorship needs), Proposed Programme, Mentorship format, Minimum interactions, operational plan for implementation and sustainability beyond the lifetime of the VMG, expected impact.

\* Due to administrative tasks related to the approval of the report, it is strongly recommended that reports of the VM grants are completed as soon as possible after the completion of the grant.

*(Please note that the COST Association can request additional information to substantiate the information contained within the documents submitted by VMG applicants)*

### Application content

Each VM Grant Application must include the following information that is also provided in the application template:

- Main objective of the VM Grant in direct relation with Action deliverables.
- Working Plan: Description of the collaborative initiative to be implemented.
- Plan for Participation: List of participants in the collaborative initiative (short description of their expertise and contribution).
- Main expected outputs: Results and contribution to the progress towards the MoU deliverables (either research coordination and/or capacity building objectives can be tackled) and delivery of the MoU objectives.
- Contribution to the COST Action Strategy: How will the Virtual Mobility contribute to the e-COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy and plans for stakeholder engagement and promoting participation of researchers from Near neighbouring countries and International partner countries and to the approved virtual networking strategy, if available.
- A tentative structure of the operational plan to support GENOA during and beyond the lifetime of the virtual mobility grant.

### EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each VMG proposal will be evaluated according to the following five criteria:

- Connection to the objectives of GENOA (as per the topical call) (40%)
- Scientific quality and feasibility of the proposed activities (25%)
- Output (self-sustaining mentorship programme) (20%)

- Involvement of inclusiveness target countries (ITCs) (5%)
- Gender balance (5%)
- Expected impact on Young Researchers and Innovators (5%)

### Notification about the call's results

Successful VM Grant Applicants will be informed by an email automatically generated by the e-COST platform. **The results of the evaluation are expected to be known in ten working days upon receipt of the applications.**

If you have any questions related to the VM Grant and the application procedure, please contact GENOA Grant Awarding Coordinator Joachim Mergeay (email: [joachim.mergeay@inbo.be](mailto:joachim.mergeay@inbo.be)) or YRI coordinators Roberta Gargiulo ([r.gargiulo@kew.org](mailto:r.gargiulo@kew.org)), Emina Šunje ([sunje.emina@gmail.com](mailto:sunje.emina@gmail.com)), Filipa Borges ([filipa.fsb@gmail.com](mailto:filipa.fsb@gmail.com)).

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