



## STSM Grants WG5 “Communication and Collaboration”

CA23121 - Genetic Nature Observation and Action (GENOA)

### *The Fourth Call for Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) Grants*

Work on STSM taking place between **1<sup>st</sup> July - 15<sup>th</sup> September 2026**

**CALL DEADLINE:** June 14th, 23:59 CEST

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

### BACKGROUND

Working Group 5's primary goal is to foster multifaceted networking and effective communication within the biodiversity monitoring community. We achieve this by coordinating with major external organisations to promote collaboration across the three biodiversity pillars (genes, species, ecosystems). Internally, WG5 manages all communication and handles the Action's website, social media, news, and reports. WG5 specifically works to overcome language barriers by engaging local communicators, ensuring information is consistent and clear across all channels.

The **TWO Short-Term Scientific Missions** in this call aims to support progress in the work plan of WG5 through contribution to objectives O5.1 and O5.3.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE STSM GRANTS FOR WG5

These Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) aim to strengthen the role of conservation genetics within broader biodiversity conservation efforts while fostering cross-disciplinary engagement and innovative communication approaches.

A central goal of the STSMs is to identify and capture opportunities for sharing lessons learned on biodiversity monitoring, including both genetic and non-genetic methodologies, and to

translate these insights into formats that are engaging and widely accessible to diverse stakeholders (Objective O5.3).

To this end, successful applicants are expected to develop **artistic and creative outputs**, showcasing innovative ways to communicate and advocate for the importance of genetic diversity. These outputs may include visual materials, storytelling formats, multimedia products, or other creative expressions, and will serve as communication tools for broader dissemination within and beyond the GENOA COST Action.

### 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 STSM.

The table below illustrates the possible scenarios for eligible STSM applicants:

Applicant's Home institution	STSM Host Institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member</li> <li>· Located in a Near Neighbour Country</li> <li>· Located in a recognised European RTD Organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Located in another Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member / Partner Member</li> <li>· Located in an IPC / Third State</li> <li>· Located in a Near Neighbour Country</li> <li>· Specific Organisations: only if the rule applies to the territory where it is vested</li> </ul>

### 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 STSM 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 both STSM grants is **€ 2,500**. 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 STSM 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. In exceptional well-justified cases, 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.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURE

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

1. Applicants are encouraged to contact respective WG5 leaders Belma Kalamujić Stroil, Alexander Kopatz, and Peter Galbusera, prior to submitting their application to ensure that the proposed outcome of their STSM agrees with the objectives of this action.
2. All applicants must complete, submit and download their STSM applications online within their e-COST profile at: <https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm/apply/new>.
3. All applicants must send their submitted STSM application form and the relevant supporting documents through the e-COST platform <https://e-services.cost.eu/user/login> for evaluation by the STSM Committee. The list of supporting documents to be submitted for the evaluation are (see also [Annotated Rules](#), pp. 100):
  - Letter of invitation to the applicant from a senior researcher affiliated to the Host institution.
  - A letter of support from the Home Institution.
  - The submitted STSM application form (downloadable when the online application is submitted - see point 4 above). Applicants are kindly asked to clearly state which workgroup(s) will their STSM contribute to, in order to facilitate the evaluation process.

- A motivation letter including an overview of the proposed activities that will be performed which must contain a plan of work for the visit highlighting the proposed contribution to the scientific objectives of the respective COST Action.
  - A Full C.V. (including a list of academic publications – if applicable).
4. The application will then be assessed by the formally delegated **STSM Committee** against the perceived contribution that the proposed visit will make against the scientific objectives outlined in the Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of GENOA (but see also Annex to this document).
5. STSM Committee members: STSM Coordinator Joachim Mergeay, WG1: Miroslav Urosevic, WG2: Sven Winter, WG3: Maria Kachamakova, WG4: Roberta Gargiulo, WG5: Lada Lukic Bilela, Action Chair Ancuta Fedorca, Vice-Chair Isa-Rita Russo
6. The applicant will be formally notified of the outcome of their STSM application by the STSM Coordinator Joachim Mergeay **after 10 working days after the application arrives**.

## Report

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

- Description of the outcomes and achieved outputs (including any specific [MoU](#) deliverables, or publications resulting from the STSM Mobility).
- Description of the benefits to the COST Action Strategy (what and how).
- Description of the STSM collaboration (including constructive reflection on activities undertaken, identified successful practices and lessons learned). The template of the report is provided in the e-COST and in [the User Guide of STSM](#) (page 4).

\* Due to administrative tasks related to the approval of the report, it is strongly recommended that reports of the STSM 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 STSM applicants)*

## Application content

Each STSM Grant Application must include following information that are also provided in the application template:



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- Goals of the STSM (Purpose and summary of the STSM);
- Working Plan (Description of the work to be carried out by the applicant);
- 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 STSM 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.

### EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

- Connection to the objectives of GENOA (as per the topical call) (40%)
- Scientific quality (25%)
- Output (potential publications) (20%)
- Involvement of inclusiveness target countries (ITCs) (5%)
- Gender balance (5%)
- Young Researcher (5%)

### Notification about the call's results

Successful STSM 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 STSM Grant and the application procedure, please contact GENOA Grant Awarding Coordinator Joachim Mergeay (email: [joachim.mergeay@inbo.be](mailto:joachim.mergeay@inbo.be)) or WG5 leader Belma Kalamujić Stroil ([genoa.costaction@gmail.com](mailto:genoa.costaction@gmail.com)).**

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