

Brussels, 28 June 2013

Memo | COST Simplifies the Rules for Participation in COST Activities

1. Introduction

In early 2012 the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) mandated the COST Office to review the COST documents setting the principles for the implementation and management of COST activities. This review is now complete. The aim of this memo is to briefly highlight what has changed in the revised documents and thus also in some of the rules applying to the implementation and management of COST Actions.

The key objective of reviewing the COST documents mentioned above was to respond to requests by the COST scientific community for simplification and clarification. In particular, the review exercise aimed at:

- Harmonising, streamlining and facilitating the understanding of the COST rules, principles and procedures by the COST scientific community, while introducing positive enhancements;
- Facilitating the implementation of such rules, principles and procedures in the management and execution of COST activities, and in particular of COST Actions.

The memo refers in particular to the following documents:

- **COST Implementation Rules:** These consist of a set of four documents approved by the COST CSO on May 15th-16th, 2013 (see below for more details). As you are aware, these documents entered into force on 1 June 2013 and provide the basic and general provisions for the implementation of the COST Activities, with a specific focus on COST Actions.
- The **COST Vademecum:** This has been revised in light of the revised COST Implementation Rules mentioned above. As before, the COST Vademecum details the financial and administrative processes and rules that apply to the implementation and administrative management of COST Actions and of other activities funded by COST.

The revised COST Implementation Rules and COST Vademecum can be found on the COST website by following the links below;

- [COST doc. 4112/13 "Rules for the Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities"](#)
- [COST doc. 4113/13 "COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval"](#)
- [COST doc. 4114/13 "COST Action Management"](#)
- [COST doc. 4115/13 "COST International Cooperation Rules"](#)
- [COST Vademecum \(Parts 1 and 2\)](#)

Please note that both the COST Implementation Rules and the revised COST Vademecum are a '*must-read*'. The revised COST Vademecum enters into force as of today, 28 June 2013, and the provisions of all these documents are legally binding. Any activities that have already been planned before 28 June 2013 or are ongoing on this date are subject to the previous set of rules, unless any relevant rules have been replaced by more favourable provisions in the revised Vademecum – in which case the latter apply.



2. Summary of main revisions

The following is a summary of the key innovations introduced in the revised COST Implementation Rules and in the revised COST Vademecum. Further additional information relating to the practical implementation of the revised rules is also available in e-COST.

2.1 General Revisions

- **Structure:** The structure of the COST Implementation Rules was revised in order to render these more coherent and user-friendly. In particular, the COST Vademecum now provides all the information relating to COST Actions in a single section (Part 1), and all information relating to COST activities other than a COST Action in a separate one (Part 2);
- **Definitions:** Most of the definitions used in the documents have been revised in order to render them more accurate, comprehensive and where possible, aligned with definitions commonly used in the European scientific community (for example lists of organisations such as EU Agencies, European RTD Organisations, etc.).

2.2 Content- Related Revisions

- **Networking Tools** - These are related to COST Actions and comprise the following: MC meetings, Working Group meetings, workshops, conferences, Short Term Scientific Missions, Training Schools and Dissemination activities. This category also includes a new meeting type: *Dissemination meetings*, designed to allow Action Participants to showcase an Action while attending other events; The section of the revised Vademecum referring to meetings has also been completely reorganised to simplify the understanding of the applicable rules per meeting type;
- **Reorganisation of the category of expenses for meeting participants** - The categories of expenses have been simplified, with no changes in terms of eligibility;
- **Local Organiser Support** - Improvement of the flat rate calculation, with a flat rate per day per participant of EUR 20 (instead of EUR 30 per participant for the entire meeting duration). The possibility to reimburse based on invoices remains. The reimbursement request process for the Grant Holder, the MC Chair and the Local Organiser has been simplified (electronic pre- and post-approval, and automatic submission of Grant Letters and of payment requests);
- **STSM** – This process has been simplified, as Grant Letters don't need to be signed by the applicants anymore;
- **Training School** - This process has also been simplified, as Grant Letters don't need to be signed by the trainees anymore. In addition to this, trainers from participating International Partner Countries (IPC) are now eligible for reimbursement. On a case by case basis, training schools can now take place in Near Neighbour Countries (NNC) if duly justified and relevant to the topic of a COST Action (upon COST Office approval).

2.2.1 Near Neighbour Countries (NNC)¹

- The countries previously defined as 'Non COST Countries' are now divided now into two distinct categories: NNC and IPC;
- NNC are the countries approved by the CSO to benefit from dedicated support for the integration of their scientists in COST activities;

¹ Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Russia, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.





- The application and approval process for researchers from NNC to become Action Participants is now shorter, thanks to the introduction of a fast-track written procedure² involving MC, DC and JAF;
- Researchers from an approved NNC can participate in the MC as MC Observers;
- A top-up to the COST Actions budget of up to 10% is put in place as an incentive to increase NNC participation;
- In the final year of a COST Action, no requests from researchers from NNC to join an Action shall be possible.

2.2.2 International Partner Countries (IPC)

- International Partner Countries are all the countries that are neither COST Member Countries, nor Cooperating States or Near Neighbour Countries;
- The application and approval process for researchers from IPC to become Action Participants remains the same;
- Researchers from an approved IPC can participate in the MC as MC Observers;
- In the final year of a COST Action, no requests from researchers from IPC to join an Action shall be possible.

2.2.3 Specific Organisations

- The term “Specific Organisations” includes the European Commission and EU Agencies, European RTD Organisations and International Organisations;
- The term “European Body” has been abandoned;
- **European Commission and EU Agencies**³ - The application and approval process for researchers from EC and EU Agencies to become Action Participants requires MC approval only. Once approved, researchers from these organisations can participate in the MC as MC Observers; they cannot be MC Chair or Vice-Chair of an Action; they are not eligible for reimbursement;
- **European RTD Organisations**⁴ - The application and approval process for researchers from European RTD Organisations to become Action Participants requires MC approval only. Once approved, researchers from these organisations can participate in the MC as MC Observers; they cannot be MC Chair or Vice-Chair of an Action; they are now eligible for reimbursement;
- **International Organisations:** The application and approval process for Participants from International Organisations to become Action Participants remains the same. Once approved, researchers from these organisations can participate in the MC as a MC Observer; they cannot be MC Chair or Vice-Chair of an Action; they are not eligible for reimbursement.

3. Further information

This memo aims to provide an introduction to the key innovations contained in the documents setting the rules for the implementation of COST Activities. For more information, we recommend a detailed reading of the revised COST Vademecum, the COST Implementation Rules and of our communication relating to e-COST. Any additional questions you may have after consulting these sources can be addressed to the relevant Science Officers and Administrative Officers of the COST Office.

² This will allow an approval process of around 20 days, instead of the previous 5 months (5 days of an automatic written procedure for MC, 5 days for DC and 5 days for JAF)

³ See http://europa.eu/agencies/regulatory_agencies_bodies/policy_agencies/index_en.htm.

⁴ See <http://www.euroforum.org/about/organisations/index.html>.

