

European Cooperation in Science & Technology (COST)

What is the COST programme and why participate?

COST is a framework for European Cooperation in Science and Technology run by the COST Association, with over 40 countries including the UK as a full member. It is funded by the COST Members and by the 'Widening participation and spreading excellence' budget in Horizon Europe.

COST supports researchers and innovators to build long term relationships in any research field, fostering collaboration between nations, strengthening Europe's overall ability to address key societal and economic challenges. In 2026 up to 80 COST Actions are proposed in total .

- COST Actions are bottom-up global networks of researchers in any disciplines, pursuing specific research agendas they propose.
- COST is open to any legal entities e.g. businesses.
- Early Career Researchers and others benefit from professional development opportunities under COST.
- COST does not fund research, but a broad range of networking and collaboration activities to pool and share research approaches and results.

A short video on the COST Association website explains [why people should consider participating](#).

Participating in a COST Action brings many benefits including researcher career development:

- Expands researchers' networks creating connections that foster excellent research.
- Fosters interdisciplinary research.
- Kickstarts researcher careers and supports their growth.
- Empowers young researchers with leadership opportunities early in their careers.
- Facilitates long term professional relationships for results across disciplines and countries.
- Supports researchers' professional profile development including communication of impact.
- Supports those researchers who may also wish to engage in Horizon Europe programmes.

What does a COST Action involve?

Overall, a successful proposal for a new COST Action should entail the following features:

- Create new networks rather than simply seek funding for existing ones.
- Contribute to the coordination of European Research Area efforts across Europe.
- Contribute strongly and visibly to European society, economic growth and welfare by producing results of interest to policy makers, standards bodies and/or private companies and industry.
- Be based upon:
 - the level of interest and relevant research resources in the countries participating
 - the added value expected from the coordination of national research by the Action
- Be expandable to new participants.
- Identify and consider R&D supported by other national and international funding schemes.
- Encourage capacity-building, by connecting high-quality scientific communities in Europe and worldwide, and encourage the mobility of early-career European researchers.

What activities does a COST Action support with funding?

Up to €150,000 is available annually on average, over four years, with the first year fixed at €125,000. Funding is relative to the size of the consortium and the level of engagement by partners.

COST actions typically fund:

- Meetings, conferences, workshops and conference grants.
- Training schools

- Short-term scientific missions
- Dissemination activities
- Virtual mobility grants

Options for participation

The UK is a **Full Member** of COST. Researchers based in the UK can:

- request to **join existing COST Actions**.
- be a main or secondary proposer in the **COST Open Call for new Actions**.
- hold leadership positions in ongoing Actions including e.g. Grant Holder, Action Chair.
- put themselves forward as **expert evaluators** for COST Actions.

Try this **COST tool** to navigate engagement options. (The tool does not evaluate proposal success.)

How to join an existing action

- Go to the COST website > COST actions > **browse actions**.
- Read the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) in any running actions you might be interested in joining and identify your potential contribution.
- Click into the action you are interested in - there will be an option to contact the action.
- Once you have joined an action, grant opportunities will be issued by the action leaders.

Open call & eligibility

The annual **COST Open Call** for proposals for new COST Actions opens on **31 July 2026** and closes on **28 October 2026 (12 noon CET)**. Each proposal **must**:

- be coordinated by a **Main Proposer** from a COST Full Member Country or Cooperating State, EU body/agency/RTD,
- include **Proposers** from **at least seven** COST Member Countries or Cooperating States,
- with **at least 50%** from **COST Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs)** and **at least 40%** of whom should be **Young Researchers and Innovators**.
- retain **anonymity** of **all Proposers**.

Secondary Proposers may be drawn from a range of possible legal entities e.g.

- COST Full/Cooperating Members
- COST Partner Members,
- A legal entity in a Near Neighbour Country
- A Third State specific organisation/EU body/office/agency/RTD,
- An International Organisation

Participants can include researchers, industry, the public sector and NGOs.

COST policies proposed actions should contribute to - excellence, inclusiveness (towards less research active COST countries), gender balance, early-career investigators, international cooperation and participation of SMEs/industry.

Please refer to the following **key Open Call documents**:

- **COST Open Call**
- **Tips for a winning proposal**
- and **key documents**

Restrictions

In each Open Call, an individual may participate as a Main or Secondary Proposer in **one proposal only**.

COST proposal submission

- To propose a COST Action **first register and create your profile on e-COST**.
- Go to the open call tab on your profile > proposals > create new proposal.
- The Main Proposer drafts the proposal which is strengthened by Secondary Proposers.
- The submission process for COST is single stage.
- The Technical Annex is submitted within e-COST.
- The e-COST system will not allow submission of proposals exceeding page/text limits.

COST evaluation procedure

The COST Association coordinates an independent evaluation procedure. Proposals are selected on a competitive basis considering the available budget for a particular Open Call.

It usually takes around 7 months from submission (October) to awarding (May). Evaluation is by Independent External Experts, then revision and quality check by Review Panels, then proposal selection by the COST Scientific Committee. COST uses double blind Peer Review.

The Evaluation Report and results of assessment are made available to each proposer via e-COST after approval by the Committee of Senior Officials.

Evaluation criteria

Excellence in S&T and Networking:

- Soundness of the challenge.
- Research coordination and capacity-building objectives.
- Progress beyond the state-of the art.
- Added value of networking in Science & Technology excellence.
- Critical mass of the network.

Impact:

- Impact on science, society, policy, or any other relevant area, short-, medium- or long-term.
- Involvement of stakeholders, their role and added value.
- Plans for communication, dissemination and valorisation of results and target audience.

Implementation:

- Coherence of the Action's structure and effectiveness of the work plan.

How is a COST action structured?

Once a COST Action is funded, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is signed that provides the Action's annual Work and Budget Plan including objectives, tasks, activities, and milestones. An Annual Grant Agreement is signed between the Grant Holder and the COST Association. (Please note that terms and conditions are different to those in Horizon Europe grants.)

For each country with participants in the action, two Management Committee Members are nominated by the Action through that country's COST National Coordinator (CNCs).

The first Management Committee meeting is all-important to attend in person as this is where key roles in the action are decided e.g. an Action Chair, Vice Chair and Grant Holder will be appointed.

The Grant Holder Manager holds the budget for the action and issues calls for proposals for the action members to run or participate in e.g. Short-Term Scientific Missions - exchange visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, strengthening existing networks and fostering collaboration between COST Action participants. Researchers typically visit another country involved in the action.

More information

Useful websites and resources

- [COST website](#)
- [COST “am I eligible” tool](#)
- [How to join existing COST Actions](#)
- [Browse actions](#)
- [Eligible countries](#)
- [COST Association’s UK country website](#)
- [COST Innovators Grant guidelines and past projects](#)
- [COST Strategic Plan \(2017-2027\)](#)
- [ORE - the EC’s Open Access publishing platform](#)
- [Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area Work Programme 2026-2027](#)

COST Open Call 2026

- [COST Open Call for new Actions](#)
- [Key documents](#)
- [Tips for a winning proposal](#)

Other resources

- [UKRO Portal](#)
- [Social media - COST’s YouTube channel \(@costoffice\)](#)
- [LinkedIn: COST Association](#)
- [COST Newsletter](#)