



# BETTER

COST Action CA20103: **B**iosecurity **E**nhanced **T**hrough **T**raining  
**E**valuation and **R**aising Awareness

Second Call for

## Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM) and Virtual Mobility Grants (VM)

May 2024 – October 2024

**The deadline for applications is 26<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

### What are STSMs and VMs?

**STSM** consists of a visit to a host organization located in a different country than the country of affiliation by a researcher or innovator to complete a specific work or task in a determined time. **VM** consists of a collaboration in a virtual setting among researchers or innovators (they work from home country), to achieve determined tasks, exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, etc. **Both** aim to strength the existing networks and foster collaborations among institutions.

**The overall aim of BETTER is to reduce the risk of infectious disease introduction and spread by improving the implementation of biosecurity measures in animal production systems**

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## ANNEX 1: STSM / VM OFFERS OF THE COST ACTION BETTER WORKING GROUPS (WGs)

### Call for STSM/VM

The COST Action CA20103 ‘Biosecurity Enhanced Through Training Evaluation and Raising Awareness’ (BETTER) encourages and supports visits of researchers in a form of Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM)<sup>1</sup> that take place abroad (in another COST country) or as a Virtual Mobility (VM) performed in virtual setting.

The STSMs and VMs in BETTER intend to contribute to the scientific objectives and deliverables of the COST action, while providing participants with the opportunity to establish long-term collaborations with an international team and gain new knowledge or access to equipment or techniques not available in the home institution/organisation.

In this call COST action BETTER offers STSMs or VMs grants for the topics listed in the ANNEX 1. STSM and VM grants will be awarded for STSMs / VMs conducted until October 31. 2023. Applicants are invited to apply to one of the proposed topics related to specific [Working Group \(WG\) objectives](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Grants User Guide (full text available [here](#)).  
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### **WG1: Mapping biosecurity measures applied on farms and transport across Europe**

For more information on the work in WG1, please contact Jasna Prodonav-Radulovic ([jasna@niv.ns.ac.rs](mailto:jasna@niv.ns.ac.rs))

### **WG2: Scaling-up the knowledge and experience of stakeholders and of the general public**

For more information on the work in WG2, please contact Maria Rodrigues da Costa ([costa.mariarodrigues@gmail.com](mailto:costa.mariarodrigues@gmail.com))

### **WG3: Methods for evaluation of biosecurity and benefits of its implementation**

For more information on the work in WG3, please contact Lena-Mari Tamminen ([lena.mari.tamminen@slu.se](mailto:lena.mari.tamminen@slu.se))

### **WG4: Training and dissemination**

For more information on the work in WG4, please contact Claude Saegerman ([claudio.saegerman@ulq.ac.be](mailto:claudio.saegerman@ulq.ac.be))

### **Who is eligible?**

The STSM/VM applicant can be any person affiliated with a legal entity located in a COST Full or Cooperating Member or a Near Neighbor Country and with an [e-COST](#) profile.

For more information see section 6.4 “Eligibility to receive financial support” in the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#).

### **How to apply for an STSM/VM?**

Applications are submitted online in e-COST where all necessary forms are available. Applications will be handled by the grant awarding coordinators of the COST action BETTER.

## THE APPLICATION FOR STSM/VM:

<https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants>

1. All applicants must carefully read the funding rules detailed in the Annex 2 of the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#).
2. For guidance on the e-COST tool, applicants can consult the [Grants User Guide](#) (see [Documents & Guidelines](#)).
3. All applicants must have an e-COST profile with bank account information and an updated CV.
4. All applicants must obtain a letter of invitation from the host institution confirming that they can undertake the STSM on the given dates prior to submitting an application.
5. STSM/VM applications must be made through the above link by logging into e-COST and clicking on the Grant Applications tab. All applications must be made in the e-COST-system using dedicated forms.

### To be filled in e-COST:

- Title
- Start and end date (within the active Grant Period)
- Budget requested by the applicant
- Information about the host institution and contact person (only for STSM)

### To be uploaded in e-COST

- Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Goals, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, plan for participation, expected outcomes and description of the contribution to the BETTER Action MoU objectives (available in the Action documents [here](#));
- Confirmation of the host on the agreement from the host institution in receiving the applicant (only for STSM);

- A STSM Grant application Template is available at:

[https://www.cost.eu/STSM\\_GrantApplication](https://www.cost.eu/STSM_GrantApplication)

- A VM Grant application Template is available at:

[https://www.cost.eu/VM\\_GrantApplication](https://www.cost.eu/VM_GrantApplication)

### Priority criteria for selection

Applications will be assessed by the Grant Awarding Coordinators, the Cost action chair, WG leaders and the host institution supervisors and the criteria for selection of candidates will be:

- 1) COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy:
  - a. Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) members (see list [here](#)) (+ 1 point)
  - b. Young Researchers (<40 years) (+2 points)
- 2) 1<sup>st</sup> time participant in BETTER COST STSM/VM (+1 point)
- 3) Excellence of the application (up to 4 points)
- 4) Active contribution of the applicant in the COST working groups (up to 2 points)

The requested budget must be compatible with the time frame proposed by the applicant to conduct the STSM/VM.

The applicant will be formally notified of the outcome of their STSM/VM application by Jože Starič ([Joze.Staric@vf.uni-lj.si](mailto:Joze.Staric@vf.uni-lj.si)) or Zahra Ardakani ([zahra.ardakani@unibo.it](mailto:zahra.ardakani@unibo.it)) (Grant Awarding Coordinators) no more than 3 weeks after the application's deadline.

The applicant will receive an official confirmation of the STSM/VM with a link to the official grant letter.

### Financial support

- Scope: Providing a contribution for travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses for the STSM.
  - A COST Action pre-specified list available [here](#) can be used as a guide to assist applicants in estimating their total requested budget for the activities.
- Up to € 4,000 in total can be afforded to each successful STSM applicant.
- Up to € 1,500 in total can be afforded to each successful VM applicant.

Obs.: STSMs grantees may request up to 50% pre-payment of the approved grant. The remaining 50% of the Grant is paid after the completion of the activity and approval of all required report/documentation.

## After the STSM/VM

### Reporting and claim for payment of the grant:

- Payment of the grant have to be claimed via e-COST.
- Payment will be completed when a short scientific report is submitted in e-COST.
- The required report for claiming the grant of a STSM/VM should describe the work carried out, main achievements of the STSM/VM and planned follow up activities.
- The grantee has to submit the required report and relevant documentation in e-COST within **30 days** after the end date of the activity **or up to 15 days after the end of the Grand Period**, whichever comes first.
- Reports need to be approved by the BETTER CORE GROUP.
- Failure to submit the scientific report within the requested period will effectively cancel the Grant.
- The report will be uploaded to the BETTER webpage portal upon approval by the CORE GROUP.
- A scientific report template is available on the [Documents & Guidelines](#) page or through the following links:
  - Template for STSM Report: [https://www.cost.eu/STSM\\_Report](https://www.cost.eu/STSM_Report)
  - Template for VM Report: [https://www.cost.eu/VM\\_Report](https://www.cost.eu/VM_Report)

### **COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy**

The COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy is developed around three main elements:

- Geographical diversity,
- Career stage: involving Young Researchers and Innovators,
- Gender balance.

The COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy shall contribute to the objectives of the 'Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area' Work Programme under Horizon Europe.

For more general information on STSMs/VMs please contact the Grant Awarding Coordinators.

**Grant Awarding Coordinators:** Jože Starič ([Joze.Staric@vf.uni-lj.si](mailto:Joze.Staric@vf.uni-lj.si)) or Zahra Ardakani ([zahra.ardakani@unibo.it](mailto:zahra.ardakani@unibo.it))

## **ANNEX 1: STSM / VM OFFERS OF THE COST ACTION BETTER WORKING GROUPS (WGs)**

### **WG1**

**Topic 1:** Biosecurity analysis of biosecurity legislation/compliance in cattle production systems in Europe

**Aim:** The aim of this STSM is to complete the analysis and draft a paper within the data obtained by the cattle subgroup, originated from Task 1.1.

**Host Institution:** GD Animal Health (Netherlands)

**Supervisors:** Inge Santman-Berends

**Timeframe:** Two weeks in XX 2024

**Short description:** In the frame of Task 1.1 “Review of biosecurity measures applied on cattle, pig and poultry farms and on animal transport across Europe” a data collection tool based on excel has been created to capture biosecurity practices applied in cattle production systems across Europe. The created database related to biosecurity measures (mandatory by law and by other than law) and their implementation rate was already analyzed in a previous STSM. This STSM will complete the analysis and draft a paper with main results.

**The expected results:** We expect the outcome of this STSM to be a draft of a paper describing the main results.

## WG2

### **Topic 2: General public and biosecurity**

**Aim:** To further analyse results and to produce a manuscript based on last year's survey results (Task 2.1), focusing on the general public's perceptions of biosecurity, their understanding of disease spread, and their role in it.

**Host Institution:** Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) – Inverness campus, Scotland, UK

**Supervisors:** Dr Maria Costa, Dr Kate Lamont

**Timeframe:** Two weeks, from May to September 2024

**Short description:** Task 2.1, "Participative actions through Innovation Labs with the general public," aims to explore the general public's views on biosecurity within livestock production systems, their attitudes towards biosecurity, and their understanding of disease spread, along with their perspectives on their role in disease prevention.

To address task 2.1, WG2 initiated an online survey targeting consumers. Initially conducted in English, the survey expanded to 22 additional languages. Results of this survey have been analysed, summarized, and a descriptive manuscript is being prepared. As there are further analyses to be conducted on the data, there is an opportunity to refine the draft of the current manuscript, to prepare it for submission, and potentially to produce a second more detailed manuscript on the topic.

**The expected results:** A refined manuscript draft for submission in a scientific journal for peer-review; a report of further analyses on the data; a first draft of a second manuscript for submission.



### **Topic 3: Review on social, economic and psychological factors affecting decision making of biosecurity**

**Aim of the STSM:** To draft a manuscript based on the results of the data extraction from papers retained within Task 2.2 (Review of social, economic and psychological factors affecting the decision-making of biosecurity measures by cattle, pig and poultry farmers, veterinarians and traders).

**Host Institution:** Lusófona University, Lisbon, Portugal

**Supervisors:** Dr Rui Gaspar

**Timeframe:** May to July 2023, excluding August.

**Short description:** Task 2.2 “Review of social, economic and psychological factors affecting the decision-making of biosecurity measures by cattle, pig and poultry farmers, veterinarians and traders” seeks to identify factors – barriers and motivators – that influence the decision-making for the implementation of biosecurity measures.

A systematic search was employed to identify relevant literature. After the screening process, the Capability, Opportunity, Motivation and Behaviour (COM-B) model was used to extract data and results were analysed using a methodological approach grounded on the Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF).

The aim of this STSM is draft a manuscript based on the results of the review process undertaken so far.

**The expected results:** a manuscript draft for submission in a scientific journal for peer-review.

### **WG3**

#### **Topic 4: Analysis of literature review on methods for assessing biosecurity and its benefits**

**Host institution:** Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, North Macedonia

**Supervisor(s):** Miroslav Kjosevski

**Timeframe:** 2 weeks between June to September 2024

(anticipated period, when STSM/VM can take place and approximate time needed to complete the STSM/VM)

**Aim of the STSM/VM:** Analyse results from the collaborative review process and drafting a manuscript of the scoping review.

#### **Short description:**

The candidate will work with a dataset consisting of labelled abstracts from a collaborative literature review. During the STSM these labels will be used to summarise the state of existing biosecurity literature. In addition, the candidate will start drafting the results part of the manuscript of the scoping review. Previous experience of working with biosecurity assessment and/or literature review is desirable. Candidates with previous engagement from working in the literature review subgroup of WG3 will be prioritised.

**The expected results:** A preliminary descriptive analysis summarising the main findings of the scoping literature review and a draft of the results section of a publication.

## **Topic 5: Define criteria for evaluation of biosecurity improvement programs**

**Timeframe:** 2 weeks before end of September 2024

**Host institution:** Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

**Supervisor in the host institution:** Lena-Mari Tamminen

**Aim:** Draft a framework for the assessment of the efficacy of a biosecurity improvement program and test it on a subset of identified programs.

**Short description:** As a first step the candidate will define the relevant criteria for assessing the efficacy of biosecurity improvement programs based on a pre-prepared definitions of “efficacy” and of “biosecurity improvement program” developed in WG3. The criteria will be functional to develop a qualitative assessment framework (draft 01, developed in Excel) to be used to collect the required information necessary to assess any improvement program. These 2 tasks will be the focus of the STSM. The candidate will then test the criteria on a subset of improvement programs to validate the framework, leading to the development of the final framework. This part can be done after the STSM in the host institution.

Candidates with previous engagement from working on the developing the criteria in WG3 will be prioritised.

**The expected results:** A framework for evaluating biosecurity improvement programs and an evaluation of how they work when applied on real programs.

## **WG4**

**Topic 6:** Putting together a publication: What is a "good" biosecurity training or website for a farmer or a veterinarian.

**Aim of the STSM:** Drafting a manuscript based on T4.3 online survey, WG4 STSMs, VM and Padova World Cafe activity results.

**Host Institution:** LUKE (Finland)

**Supervisors:** Jarkko Niemi

**Timeframe:** 2-3 weeks in June

**Short description:** Applicant is expected to produce manuscript draft based on previous WG4 activities. Such as:

Task 4.3 online survey which collected information about existing training and research projects on biosecurity. Which results were analysed in previous Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM): "Mapping on Biosecurity Projects and Trainings" and a Virtual Mobility (VM): "Mapping on Existing Biosecurity Websites projects". In addition, results from World Cafe activity in Padova meeting on 6th February 2024, with the title "Biosecurity education programmes and websites for farmers and private veterinarians. Preliminary summaries of the all the activities have already been created.

**The expected results:** Applicant is expected to combine all previously mentioned information sources into a single publication manuscript draft. In the end of the STSM the draft should be sent to all the co-authors for commenting.