



# BETTER

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

Fourth Call for

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

May 2025 – September 2025

**The deadline for applications is 26<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

### 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, 2025. 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 must be 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@gmail.com](mailto:zahra.ardakani@gmail.com)) (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@gmail.com](mailto:zahra.ardakani@gmail.com))

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

### **WG1**

**Topic 1:** Definitions and biosecurity legislation for small-scale farms (poultry, cattle, pigs)

**Aim:** Analysis of the achieved results from the questionnaire for small-scale farms and preparation of the paper for publication.

**Host Institution:** Ghent University, Belgium

**Supervisors:** Ilias Chantziaras

**Timeframe:** One week to ten days, during the month of June 2025.

**Short description:** The results to be analyzed within the STSM directly align with the task set for WG1 i.e. identify biosecurity measures that could be realistically implemented in extensive animal production systems and settings with low resources in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. The main objective of the questionnaire that has been conducted by WG1 in COST Action BETTER was to establish how small-scale farms are defined in the different countries by law or by general use. In addition, the goal was to map the presence of biosecurity legislation for small scale farms in the different countries.

**The expected results:** The selected candidate should perform an analysis of the questionnaire results, giving the wide overview of small scale sector for all included species (poultry, cattle pigs). Besides that, it is necessary to prepare a draft of paper for publication, alongside the writing team. The final expected result of STSM is the acceleration of the writing activities of the manuscript towards a swift publication within the coming months and before the end of the COST action.

## WG2

**Topic 2:** A review on communication methods preferred by farmers

**Aim:** To perform full text screening of papers selected in the scope of a review on communication methods preferred by farmers (Task 2.3); and summarise the results.

**Host Institution:** Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Bellaterra, Spain

**Supervisors:** Dr Giovanna Ciaravino

**Timeframe:** One to two weeks, from June to September 2025

**Short description:** To address task 2.3, WG2 have performed a structured search of literature focusing on the best ways to communicate with farmers. This STSM will focus on the full text screening of the papers retrieved. The main results are expected to be summarized and drafted into a manuscript collating this and other WG2 activities.

**The expected results:** A dataset with selected papers after full text screening; and a manuscript draft for submission in a scientific journal for peer-review.



## **WG4**

**Topic 3:** Draft a policy brief and an associated perspective paper on training and dissemination of biosecurity to ensure sustainability of the BETTER COST Action.

**Aim of the STSM:** The aim is to draft a policy brief and an associated perspective paper on training and dissemination of biosecurity to ensure the sustainability of the BETTER COST Action.

**Host institution:** University of Liège (ULiège)

**Supervisor:** Claude Saegerman

**Timeframe:** The two last weeks of June 2025 or the two first week of September 2025

**Short description:** The candidate summarized all the information generated inside the WP4 activities. Based on this, the candidate identifies proposals in order to contribute to the sustainability of BETTER COST Action, especially in terms of training and dissemination on biosecurity. These proposals (innovative ideas) will be classified according to its importance, by type of actors and by term (short, middle or long). The candidate shares the draft of the policy brief into the members of the WP4 and with the team-leaders of the other WPs in order to refine the policy brief. The candidate translates the policy brief in a draft of perspective paper.

**The expected results:** A policy brief prepared to be sent to the members of the consortium and a perspective paper drafted.