

SECTION 4. MEETINGS – FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Action MC must determine from amongst eligible participants those who are entitled to be reimbursed. The Action Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder institution) can assume this responsibility if the Action MC formally gives them the mandate to act on their behalf. Eligible Participants that are entitled to be reimbursed can receive financial support for their travel, accommodation and meal expenses in line with the eligible expenses detailed in Section 4.1.

The organisational expenses linked to hosting an approved meeting can be claimed under the 'Local Organiser Support' mechanism (see Section 6: Local Organiser Support).

Meeting participants eligible to be reimbursed should:

1. Choose the most economical means of transportation.
2. Make their transportation arrangements as early as possible upon receipt of their official invitation to the approved activity.

In order for eligible participants to be reimbursed they must:

1. Register for an e-COST profile at <https://e-services.cost.eu> - each participant must also add their bank details to their e-COST profile.
2. Sign the attendance list on each day that they attend the meeting. Please note that this requirement is not applicable to the Dissemination meetings category - see Section 3.3.
3. Declare via e-COST when submitting their Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR) that they will not receive a reimbursement or an allowance from a third party to support their attendance at the approved COST activity for where they are submitting a claim - double funding is not permitted. The COST Association reserves the right to contact any beneficiary of COST funds and / or their institution or any other relevant third party when double funding is suspected.
4. Submit to their Grant Holder, a completed OTRR within 30 calendar days after the end date of the approved activity.
5. Upload legible copies of all invoices / receipts and relevant supporting documents onto e-COST.

All payments made to eligible participants are in Euro at an exchange rate automatically calculated by e-COST which uses the conversion rate applicable at the end date of the meeting in question. Bank charges / fees incurred by a Grant Holder in relation to returned or rejected payments due to incorrect bank account details being provided by a beneficiary of COST funds can be subtracted from the payable amounts. When receiving a payment sourced from COST, bank charges / fees charged by banks are not eligible to be claimed by the beneficiary and must be borne by each respective individual beneficiary.

When using Strong Authentication:

- Each Grant Holder must archive legible copies (electronic copies will also suffice) of all OTRRs and of all of the supporting documentation (including Action MC approvals) related to meetings up to the end date of the audit timeframe as indicated on the respective Action Grant Agreement signed between the COST Association and the Grant Holder.
- Each claimant must archive the original invoices / receipts until the end date of the audit timeframe as indicated on the respective Grant Agreement signed between the COST Association and the Grant Holder.

When not using Strong Authentication:

- Grant Holders must archive original (signed by hand) OTRR forms along with legible copies of all supporting documentation (electronic copies will also suffice) including Action MC approvals related to meetings up to the end date of the audit timeframe that is indicated on the respective Action Grant Agreement signed between the COST Association and the Grant Holder.

4.1. ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

4.1.1. ACCOMMODATION EXPENSES (WHICH ALSO COVERS BREAKFAST EXPENSES)

When claiming for accommodation expenses the following conditions apply:

1. The reimbursement of incurred accommodation expenses is paid as a flat rate for a set amount of up to a maximum of EUR 120 per person per night. This set amount includes a provision to cover breakfast expenses. No invoices issued from accommodation providers are required. The Action MC may decide to apply a reduced ceiling on the applied flat rate for accommodation expenses. In such cases, all participants must be notified of the revised flat rates before or when receiving their formal invitations via e-COST. The same accommodation flat rate amount must be afforded to all eligible participants attending a given event.
2. The maximum number of nights that can be claimed for by an eligible participant is calculated against the actual number of days the participant attends the approved activity (as confirmed against their signature on the official attendance list for each day of the event that they attend), plus 1 night, permitting, if applicable, the participant to arrive at the vicinity of the event on the day before the activity commences.
3. Accommodation expenses must be paid for by each individual participant.
4. When an eligible participant shares their hotel room with another eligible participant, then only one participant can submit a claim for their accommodation expenses.
5. An eligible participant residing in the same city as where the approved activity is being held should not claim for accommodation expenses.
6. Requests for extra night's accommodation must be approved by the COST Association prior to any related expense being paid to a participant.

4.1.2. MEAL EXPENSES

When claiming for meal expenses the following conditions apply:

1. Meal expenses are reimbursed against flat rates only (at a maximum of EUR 20 per meal). No invoices or receipts from the meal providers are required. The Action MC may decide to apply a reduced ceiling on the applied flat rate for meal expenses. In such cases, all participants must be notified of the revised flat rates before or when receiving their formal invitations via e-COST. The same meal flat rate amount must be afforded to all participants.
2. A maximum of up to two meals per day are eligible (two meals strictly concern lunch and dinner provisions - breakfast expenses are not an eligible expense – see Section 4.1.1.).
3. Meals provided from other sources including the Local Organiser must be deducted from the number of eligible meals that can be afforded to a participant.
4. Requests for extra meals must be approved by the COST Association prior to any related expense being paid to a participant.

4.1.3. LONG DISTANCE (CROSS-BORDER) TRAVEL EXPENSES

Long distance travel is when an eligible participant travels across national borders from the country where they are residing (as registered on their e-COST profile) directly to where the approved COST meeting is being held and back to the country where they are residing. Each eligible participant is entitled to claim for travel expenses in line with the conditions detailed in this section irrespective of the dates of travel.

The following conditions apply to the different modes of permissible long distance travel options as listed below:

1. Air travel expenses
 - Air travel is always classified as being long distance travel;
 - The supporting documents provided by the eligible participant must clearly detail the name of the service provider, the mode of transport taken, the full price of the ticket, the name of the passenger, the travel dates, departure and arrival times and the booking class (an invoice only showing the amount will not suffice);

- Only economy class tickets are eligible to be reimbursed;
- Air fares cannot exceed EUR 1 200. Air fares that exceed EUR 1201 require explicit approval from the COST Association prior to the event taking place and before the ticket is purchased by the eligible participant;
- Seat reservations and luggage transportation expenses are eligible to be reimbursed;
- Administrative fees charged by travel agencies are eligible to be reimbursed.

2. Long distance Train or Bus travel expenses

An eligible participant travelling by train or bus crossing national borders from the country where they are residing (as registered on their e-COST profile) to the country where the approved COST meeting is being held and back again must comply with the following considerations:

- The supporting documents provided by eligible participants must clearly detail the name of the service provider, the mode of the transport taken, the full price of the ticket and the date of travel;
- First, second and business class tickets are eligible to be reimbursed;
- Supplements for fast trains and sleeper trains are eligible to be reimbursed.

3. Long distance Car travel expenses

An eligible participant travelling by car crossing national borders from the country where they are residing (as registered on their e-COST profile) to the country where the approved COST meeting is being held and back again must respect the following criteria:

- Car travel is limited to a maximum distance of 2 000 km for the entire journey;
- Car travel can be reimbursed at EUR 0.20 per km, when one eligible participant is travelling;
- Car travel can be reimbursed at EUR 0.30 per km, when additional participants who are also eligible to be reimbursed are travelling in the same vehicle. Only the driver can be reimbursed. The names of the other eligible passengers must be mentioned on the remarks section of the OTRR submitted by the driver;
- Submission of a proof of distance travelled by means of a print out from a reputable online route planner (e.g. Google maps) showing the route taken and the kilometres travelled;
- Parking expenses are eligible to be reimbursed based on the submission of receipts / invoices and can only cover the time period relevant to the approved activity (parking expenses can be claimed under Local transport expenses – Parking expenses, see Section 4.1.4.);
- Additional accommodation expenses, fuel expenses, tolls charges and car rental expenses are not eligible to be reimbursed.

4. Long distance Ferry travel expenses

An eligible participant travelling by ferry from the country where they are residing (as registered on their e-COST profile) to the country where the approved COST meeting is being held and back again can be reimbursed. Supporting documents provided by eligible participants must clearly detail the name of the service provider, the mode of the transport, the full price of the ticket and the date of travel.

5. Travel derogations

Travelling to and from countries other than that where the approved meeting is being held and the country where the eligible individuals is residing (as registered on their e-COST profile) is a rule derogation and must be explained and detailed by the participant on the relevant claims section on e-COST. When this type of rule derogation is evident, the participant in question must submit an OTRR containing a written justification which must be accompanied with the following:

- The full travel itinerary and the invoice / receipt for the actual ticket that was purchased along with all of their other supporting documents;
- Comparative quotes sourced from a print-out from a reputable online travel search engine (Skyscanner, Expedia, Opodo etc.) listing the most economical means of travel close to the dates of the meeting for the expectant journey (the expectant journey being as if the participant travelled from the country where they are residing (as registered on their e-COST profile) to the country

where the approved activity is being held and back again). The quotes shall be generated at least one month before the start date of the meeting. The quotes must show travel prices of the same mode of transport that was actually travelled. Participant can never be reimbursed for more than the cheapest means of travel substantiated on the submitted comparative quotes and never more than the amount that was actually paid for the travel ticket in question. The lower of the two amounts determines the maximum sum that can be reimbursed to the claimant.

4.1.4. LOCAL TRANSPORT EXPENSES

Local transport is when an eligible participant uses travel options that start and finish within one country's national borders - specifically not travelling across national borders.

The following conditions apply to the different modes of permissible local transport options:

1. Public transport expenses

Public transport expenses cover bus, shuttle, train, metro and tram travel within one country. The reimbursement rules for public transport are as follows:

- If the amount claimed for the entire journey is equal to or less than EUR 25, then no supporting documents are required. In any case, the details of the relevant journey(s) must be detailed on the OTRR (for both the outbound and inbound journeys);
- If the amount claimed for the entire journey is more than EUR 25, then supporting documents justifying the total amount claimed must be provided by the participant. All submitted invoices / receipts must clearly detail the name of the service provider, the full price of the ticket and the date of travel. All segments of the journey must be detailed on the claimants OTRR.

2. Taxi expenses

An eligible participant is permitted to claim taxi expenses in the following instances:

- When public transport is not available;
- If taxis are taken before 7 am to facilitate an early departure and / or if a taxi is taken after 10 pm due to a late arrival.

Taxi expenses up to a maximum of EUR 80 for the entire journey can be claimed by eligible participants if either of the above criteria have been respected. A justification must be encoded in the dedicated space on the OTRR. Taxi expenses can only be paid against the amounts detailed on taxi receipts. Taxi receipts must clearly detail the name of the service provider, the full price of the journey and the date of travel. Tips are not eligible for reimbursement.

3. Local Car travel expenses

An eligible participant travelling by car within one country - specifically not travelling across national borders can be reimbursed in line with the criteria detailed in Section 4.1.3. - Car travel.

4. Parking expenses

Parking expenses are eligible to be reimbursed against the submission of receipts / invoices. An eligible participant can only claim for parking expenses incurred for the timeframe that coincides with the approved activity.

5. Local Ferry expenses

An eligible participant travelling by ferry for travel starting and finishing within one country's territorial waters can claim for local ferry expenses. The submitted invoice / receipt must clearly detail the name of the service provider, the full price of the ticket and the date of travel.

For all permissible modes of transport, as detailed in Section 4.1.3. and Section 4.1.4. (excluding tickets related to air travel whereby the name of the passenger is always required), it is understood that in certain instances, expenses such as taxi receipts and certain train / bus / metro / tram / ferry tickets will not contain the name of the passenger (s) and / or the full travel itinerary. In such cases, the supporting documents provided by the eligible participant must clearly detail the name of the service provider, the mode of transport taken, the full price of the ticket and the date of travel.

4.1.5. OTHER TRAVEL EXPENSES

1. Visa expenses

Visa fees relevant to attending approved COST meetings are eligible to be reimbursed. All eligible claimants must validate the incurred amount by producing supporting documents such as a receipt / stamp from the embassy / consulate issuing the visa which clearly shows the amount paid and the conditions of the acquired visa. The COST Association and the Action Grant Holder cannot be held responsible in cases where individuals do not secure the necessary travel documents / visas needed to facilitate their participation in approved COST activities. In such instances, the individual in question will not be entitled to be reimbursed for any incurred expenses.

2. Expenses that give rise to rule derogations caused by medical illness and / or Force Majeure

If an eligible participant (or a first degree relative of an eligible participant) suffers from a medical illness or if an eligible participant encounters a case of Force Majeure (e.g. a strike, terrorist incident or natural disaster) and, as a result, there is an expressed need to cancel / change travel ticket (s) and / or hotel reservation (s), then non-refundable amounts or additional expenses can be considered as being eligible for reimbursement. The non-refundable amounts or additional expenses linked to the above must always be calculated against the face value of the incurred travel, accommodation and meal expenses (face value being the amounts evidenced on submitted receipts / invoices). The maximum thresholds governing eligible travel expenses (see Section 4.1.3., 4.1.4. and 4.1.5.) must be respected. Extra accommodation and meal expenses being claimed due to medical illness / Force Majeure can never exceed the Action MC agreed set flat rate amounts for the given activity.

Each eligible participant claiming expenses linked to medical illness / Force Majeure must submit a completed, signed and dated OTRR, all of the relevant invoices and receipts and if applicable, a statement from the respective service provider (s) (airline company, hotel etc.) detailing the non-refundable amounts. Claimants must also always submit to their Grant Holder, written documentary evidence justifying their claim – i.e. submitting a medical certificate in cases related to medical illness or a statement from the airline company / service provider in cases linked to Force Majeure substantiating the nature of the Force Majeure. The Grant Holder must in turn submit all supporting documentation provided by the participant to the COST Association for formal approval prior to the respective claim being paid to the participant.

The COST Association considers each derogation request linked to medical illness and Force Majeure on a case-by-case basis and reserves the right to reject any such request.