COST Action CA21158

SMILES

Enhancing Small-Medium IsLands resilience by securing the sustainability of Ecosystem Services

SPECIAL FAST-TRACK CALL FOR

Virtual Mobility (VM)

To take place until 15 October 2025

1. Purpose of Virtual Mobility (VM) under SMILES

The main objective of SMILES[1] is to provide a platform for coordinated interdisciplinary research on several aspects of mapping and assessment of ecosystem services (ES) in small and medium European Islands in order to synthesize and strengthen the knowledge base for conservation of island realms and contribute to their sustainable development. Achieving this goal includes fostering collaboration across disciplines and geographic regions, with a focus on PhD students, Young Researchers and Innovators and researchers from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs).

There are **six working groups**[2] focusing on different aspect of the topic:
1. Small-medium island ecosystems: natural capital assessment
2. Ecosystem Services of Small-medium islands
3. Effects of Land use and climate changes (LU/CC) on ES
4. Nature-based solutions (NbS) for safeguarding ES of small-medium islands
5. Policy and Governance of Small-Medium Islands for ES provision
6. Dissemination, Participatory and user-centered design processes

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[1] To learn more about aims and the key questions of COST Action SMILES, please look at the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) here: https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA21158/.
[2] Detail of the working groups can be found here: https://sites.google.com/view/cost-smiles/working-groups .

Virtual Mobility:
- Support capacity building and transfer of knowledge through bilateral/multilateral collaborations;
- Support specific / general topic that can help achieving the Action MoU objectives and deliverables (research coordination);
- Are very flexible and inclusive networking activities crucial to establish new collaborations or reinforce existing collaborations across disciplines and different sectors (e.g., academia and industry / SMEs) with possible impact on career development;
- Typical outcomes are spin-off publications and (funded) projects that contribute to the visibility and impact of the COST Actions, encouraging other researchers to join.

2. Specific information concerning VM

Virtual Mobility consists of a collaboration in an online setting among researchers or innovators within the COST Action, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, etc. Examples of activities that can be performed by the VM grantee are:
- Virtual mentoring scheme, with special focus on activities and exchanges that can generate capacity building and new skills, particularly for Young Researchers and Innovators (e.g. managerial skills, methodological skills, communication skills, etc);
- To support the harmonization and standardization of methods and procedures within the Action networking activities, e.g.
  - setting up a survey amongst all Action members to collect different results and outcomes from experiments done in their respective labs and research groups;
  - coordinating the discussions to create common protocols to be used by the network afterwards;
  - preparing questionnaires and response scales to be used by the Action members as part of online networking activities.
- To support the implementation of research coordination related activities that do not necessarily require in-person presence, e.g.
  - computational or modelling activities;
  - data analysis of the Action for a specific report or activity.

VM must respect the following criteria:
- Up to a maximum of EUR 500 per day (for a maximum of 3 days) can be awarded to each successful VM applicant;
- The Applicant and the Host institution are in different countries;
- The VM must be carried out entirely by **15 October 2025**;

3. Deadline for Applications
Applications for a VM grant can take place until **15 October 2025**.

4. Who can apply
VM applicants must be engaged in a research program as a postgraduate student or postdoctoral fellow or be officially affiliated to a public or private institution (Home institution). Participation of Young Researchers / Innovators (<40 year old) in STSM and VM is encouraged.

5. How to apply

The list of supporting documents to be submitted includes:

- **Letter of invitation** from the Host Institution confirming that they can undertake the STSM or VM on the given dates should their application be approved.
- **Letter of support** from the Home Institution.
- The **submitted VM application form**.
- An overview of the **proposed activities** to be carried out, a **workplan**, **justification** for the choice of the Host Institution, **benefits** to the SMILES Action, benefits to the Applicant (maximum 4 standard pages).
- A **full C.V.** (including a list of academic publications – if applicable).

Applicants are informed that their application can be accessed by the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation Committees in AIM-COST Action for evaluation purposes.

7. What is required after completing the VM

- Report to the Action MC on the work developed, main outcomes and achieved outputs of the Virtual Mobility, and description of the future follow up collaboration.
- Confirmation by the host of the successful execution of the mission (Provide a brief affirmation by the Host researcher -with their signature- that the VM was carried out successfully. It can be included in the report or as a separate accompanying document).
- It must be uploaded to the platform by **19 October 2025**.

Publications resulting from VM activities should acknowledge COST Action CA21158 (SMILES) support. A short text and photo describing the activity for the Action's website and social media should be also provided after the completion of the VM.