COST Action CA22122 - Rethinking the Blue Economy: Socio-Ecological Impacts and Opportunities (RethinkBlue)

SECOND YEAR EXTRAORDINARY OPEN CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT AWARDS

<mark>Please read carefully because some changes have occurred and a new type of grant has been added with respect to previous calls.</mark>

Types of Grant Awards in Year 2 extraordinary open call

We invite applications for the following types of grant awards:
- Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM)
- ITC conferences (ITC)
- Dissemination conferences (DC)
- Young Research and Innovator Conferences (YRC)

Please read the information provided below carefully and check the evaluation criteria to see if the call is relevant for you. Before submitting your application, please ensure that your application is complete and includes all required documents.

Time Period of Activities and Next Application Deadline

The next deadline is 15 June 2025, for STSMs, DC, YRC and ITC conferences that take place between 1 July and 15 October 2025.

Ongoing Review for Applications Submitted After 15 June

After the applications submitted by 15 June have been reviewed, any remaining funding will be distributed on an ongoing basis (i.e. without a fixed deadline) to applications that meet the evaluation criteria.
All activities must be completed **by 31 October 2025**.
To allow time for processing, applications must be submitted at least 3 weeks before the start of the activity for which funding is sought.
Reports must be submitted as soon as possible after the end of the activity, in line with COST rules and the instructions of the Grant Award Coordinators.

Contact for questions

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COST Action CA22122 - Rethinking the Blue Economy: Socio-Ecological Impacts and Opportunities (RethinkBlue)

Grant Awarding Strategy

This document outlines the grant awarding strategy of the COST Action CA22122 - "Rethinking the Blue Economy: Socio-Ecological Impacts and Opportunities" (RethinkBlue).
The Grant Awarding Strategy can be amended by decision of the Management Committee if/as needed.
The Action has a Grant Awarding Coordinator and a Grant Awarding Co-Coordinator. In this document, they will be referred to as Grant Awarding Coordinators.

1. Types of grants

This section describes the types of grants available in COST Actions, namely grants for Short-term Scientific Mission (STSM), Virtual Mobility (VM), participation in an ITC Conference, a Dissemination Conference or a Young Researcher and Innovator Conference. The Action does not accept post-hoc applications for activities that have already taken place.
Applicants should refer to the details of a particular call for applications to see which grants can be applied for in any particular call. Please note that the Action does not plan to offer Virtual Mobility grants.

1.1 Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM)
According to the COST Level C Annotated Rules, "Short-Term Scientific Mission consists in a visit to a host organization located in a different country than the country of affiliation (for Affiliation, see Article 4.1.1.1.1) by a researcher or innovator for specific work to be carried out and for a determined period of time." (section A2-1.1.1.)

1.2. Virtual Mobility (VM)
According to the COST Level C Annotated Rules, "Virtual Mobility consists of a collaboration in a virtual setting among researchers or innovators within the COST Action, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, etc." (section A2-1.1.2.)

1.3. ITC Conference
According to the COST Level C Annotated Rules, an "ITC Conference grant funds an oral presentation of their own work within the scope of the Action by an Action Participant affiliated to a legal entity located in an Inclusiveness Target Country / Near Neighbour Country in a high-level conference fully organized by a third party, i.e. not organized nor co-organized by the COST Action". (section A2-1.2.1.)

1.4. Dissemination Conference
According to the COST Level C Annotated Rules, a "Dissemination Conference grant funds an oral presentation by an Action Participant of the work of the Action in a high-

level conference fully organized by a third party, i.e. not organized nor co-organized by the COST Action." (section A2-1.2.2.)

1.5. Young Researcher and Innovator Conference
According to the COST Level C Annotated Rules, an "YRI Conference grant funds a presentation (poster/oral presentation) of their own work by a Young Researcher and Innovator (YRI) in a high-level conference fully organized by a third party, i.e. not organized nor co-organized by the COST Action." (section A2-1.2.3)

2. Outline of the Grant Awarding Process

Action participants can apply for grant awards within the criteria and deadlines set by the Action's Management Committee. Action participants here refers to individuals who are members in one or more of the RethinkBlue Action's WGs.

Application periods and call for applications. The Grant Awarding Coordinators announce the call for applications, together with information on the types of grants available, the time period of events (e.g., conference, STSM) for which a grant award is sought, and the deadlines for applications.
- Note: If the Management Committee decides to specify additional and/or different evaluation criteria for particular calls, these will be announced by the Grant Awarding Coordinators as well (otherwise applicants are requested to refer to the criteria listed in the Action's general Grant Awarding Strategy, see section 4 and 5).

It is envisioned to have at least one call for applications per year. Depending on the availability of funding, there may be additional calls for applications.
The timetable for the calls in each grant year (1.11. to 31.10.) will be proposed by the Grant Awarding Coordinators for approval by the MC.

Application. Applicants submit their applications via e-COST.

Review. After the deadline, the submitted applications will be subject to an initial screening, to check that
- the application concerns a type of grant award that is included in the call
- the application is complete, and all required documents are submitted
- the application is submitted prior to the deadline
- the applicant is a member of at least one of the WGs of the RethinkBlue Action
- the time period of the conference or STSM falls within the time period specified in the call for applications

Applications that fail to meet these screening criteria will be rejected.

Applications that pass the initial screening will be reviewed by the RethinkBlue Action's Grant Evaluation Committee (GEC) against the criteria set by the Action's Management Committee (see section 4 and 5 below).

Based on the Grant Evaluation Committee's (GEC) evaluation, the Grant Awarding Coordinators prepare a list of suggested candidates. The list includes the candidates's names, type of grant and grant amount sought. The list is submitted to the Action's Management Committee (MC) for approval.

After the MC has approved the grant awards, applicants are notified of the decision through e-COST.

After the activity (i.e. conference, STSM) for which the grant is sought. Once the activity has ended, the grantee submits the required reports and relevant documentation in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the activity or 15 days after the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first. The timeframe may be shorter as per the Grant Holder / Grant Awarding Coordinator's request to meet reporting deadlines.
The Grant Awarding Coordinator reviews the report to verify the validity and content of the reports, and coordinates the MC's rejection or approval of the reports. After the MC's decision, the Grant Awarding Coordinator records the approval or rejection of the report on behalf of the MC in e-COST. Only Action participants (i.e. individuals who are members in at least one of the RethinkBlue Action's WGs) can receive grant award payments.
Once the report is approved by the MC and all supporting documents are submitted, the Grant Holder Manager processes and records the payment of the grant.

Payment of the grant. Grants are paid by the Grant Holder Institution <u>after</u> the completion of the activity and the approval of all required report/documentation. STSMs grantees may request up to 50% prepayment of the approved grant. This amount is subject to availability of funds and approval by the Grant Holder Institution. The request of prepayment shall be submitted to the Grant Holder Manager. (See COST Level C Annotated Rules, section A2-2.3).

3. The Grant Evaluation Committee (GEC)

Tasks. The RethinkBlue Action's Grant Evaluation Committee (GEC) reviews grant applications received by the Action, in line with the criteria set by the Action's Management Committee.
Members of the GEC. The GEC consists of the Grant Awarding Coordinators as well as additional members. All members of the GEC must be members in at least one of the RethinkBlue Action's WGs.
Selecting GEC members. Except for the Grant Awarding Coordinators (who are members of the GEC throughout the Action), other members are appointed for one year at the time, starting on 1 November. These members are selected based on their expression of interest, suggestions from WG (co-)leaders or MC members, and/or from among past grant recipients. Anyone wishing to be part of the GEC can email the Grant Awarding Coordinators to notify them of their interest by 15 September of each year.
In selecting GEC members, the Grant Awarding Coordinators will take into account scientific excellence, area of expertise, as well as COST inclusiveness principles. Based on this, the Grant Awarding Coordinators will suggest a list of GEC members, to be approved by the MC.

4. Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM)

A Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) consists in a visit by a researcher or innovator to a host organization for specific work to be carried out and for a determined period of

time. The host organization must be located in a different country than the country of affiliation of the researcher or innovator.

Scope. The grant provides a contribution towards traveling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, implementation of the project, delivery of the report to the COST Action MC and overall effort. The amount of the grant is determined by the Action's MC. The maximum amount is 4,000€ per grant (see COST C Level Annotated Rules, section A2-3).

How to apply. The applicant completes the grant application form in e-COST (on the "Grant applications" tab or https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants/add) and uploads any additional documents that are required.

For STSM grants, the following documents are required:
1. The COST STSM application form, available at https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants. In the section "Expected outputs and contribution to the Action MoU objectives and deliverables" in this application form,, applicants must specify how the proposed STSM links to the topic of at least one of the Action's WGs and to the scientific goals of the Action.
2. A letter of motivation
3. The applicant's CV
4. A letter of invitation to the applicant from the host (i.e. a researcher affiliated at the host institution)
5. For PhD students and post docs: A letter of support from their supervisor or head of department
6. Approximate budget and brief justification
7. Recommended: A letter of support from the applicant's WG leader/co-leader or a Core Group member that documents the relationship of the STSM with a collaborative work between RethinkBlue Action participants, related with deliverables of the RethinkBlue Action (e.g., publications, policy briefs).

All required documents must be submitted before the deadline. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Evaluation Criteria for STSM grants. The proposed STSM must contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action CA22122 - Rethinking the Blue Economy: Socio-Ecological Impacts and Opportunities (RethinkBlue), and fit within the scope of one or more of the RethinkBlue Action's Working Groups. When submitting the application, the applicant must be a member of at least one of the Action's Working Groups.

STSM proposals will be evaluated in two steps, according to the following criteria:

Step 1: Initial screening
Evaluation criteria:
- the application is complete, and all required documents are submitted
- the application is submitted prior to the deadline
- the applicant is a member of at least one of the WGs of the RethinkBlue Action
- the time period of the STSM falls within the time period specified in the call for applications

Applications that fail to meet these criteria will be rejected. Applications that meet these criteria will be reviewed.

Evaluation criteria:
- Relationship of the STSM with collaborative work between RethinkBlue Action participants, especially work on deliverables of the RethinkBlue Action (e.g., publications, policy briefs).
- Scientific quality of the project for which the STSM grant is sought
- Feasibility of the STSM / the work that is planned during the STSM
- Importance/necessity of the STSM for achieving the goals of the scientific project
- Connection of the STSM and of the project's scientific output to the aim of the RethinkBlue COST Action
- Connection of the STSM and of the project's scientific output with the theme of a specific working group of the Action

When several proposals meet the evaluation criteria outlined above, priority will be given to
- applicants who actively participate in the RethinkBlue Action
- proposals by young researchers and innovators, women, researchers and innovators from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) and researchers and innovators with disabilities
- proposals from applicants who have not previously received an individual grant (STSM, VM, or conference grants) from the RethinkBlue Action
- ensuring a balance of grants awarded to members of different working groups

The Management Committee reserves the right to specify additional and/or different criteria for particular calls.

After the STSM. The grantee submits the required reports and relevant documentation in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the STSM or 15 days after the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first. The timeframe may be shorter as per the Grant Holder / Grant Awarding Coordinator's request to meet reporting deadlines.
The report is submitted on e-COST. The grantee completes the report template on e-COST, and uploads any additional documents that are required. For STSM grants, the following additional documents are required:
- The completed report template available on the e-COST platform.
- An official confirmation by a representative of the host institution (e.g. the researcher who hosted the grantee, or the head of department) of the successful execution of the STSM. The confirmation must state the dates of the grantee's stay at the host institution.

If results from the STSM are published (e.g. in a scientific journal) or presented at any national or international conference (oral or poster), it is mandatory to acknowledge the support of the COST Action CA22122 according to the COST guidelines on visual identity. Posters should also include the COST and EU logos as specified in the guidelines on visual identity.

Following the STSM, Science Communicator coordinators will ask the grantee(s) for an abstract and visual material from the STSM period to be published on the RethinkBlue

webpage. The grantee(s) are committed to collaborate in dissemination while receiving support from the RethinkBlue action.

5. Grants for presentations at ITC conferences, dissemination conferences and Young Researcher and Innovator conferences

ITC Conference grants provide financial support for Action Participants affiliated with an institution in an Inclusiveness Target Country or Near Neighbour Country to present their own research at high-level conferences that are organized by third parties (i.e. conferences that are not organized or co-organized by the RethinkBlue COST Action). The presentation takes the form of an oral presentation.

Dissemination Conference grants provide support for an oral presentation by an Action Participant of the work of the Action in a high-level conference that is organized by a third party (i.e. conferences that are not organized or co-organized by the RethinkBlue COST Action). It is understood that Dissemination Conference grants are intended for the presentation of research results obtained from the joint work of a team of Action members collaborating on a deliverable for our Action.

Young Researcher and Innovator Conference grants provide financial support for a presentation (poster/oral presentation) of their own work by a Young Researcher and Innovator (YRI) in a high-level conference fully organized by a third party, i.e. not organized nor co-organized by the COST Action.

Scope. The grant provides a contribution towards traveling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, registration fee, printing of scientific poster and overall effort. The amount of the grant is determined by the Action's MC. The maximum amount is 2,000€ per grant for face-to-face conferences or 500€ per grant for virtual conferences (see COST C Level Annotated Rules, section A2-3).
The "**1 person rule**" will be applied: only 1 person of the team working on a deliverable can get a grant for a particular conference (e.g., it will not be possible for 2 persons to receive grants to present a paper together at the same conference)

How to apply. The applicant completes the grant application form in e-COST (on the "Grant applications" tab or https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants/add) and uploads any additional documents that are required.
For conference grants, the following documents are required:
1. The appropriate COST conference grant application form (for ITC conference or dissemination conference), available at https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants.
2. A letter of motivation. This should include information on the relevance of the conference for the scientific aims of the RethinkBlue Action and for one or more of the WGs. In addition, applicants for ITC Conference grants should describe the importance of the conference with regard to the potential impact on the future research and career. Applicants for Dissemination Conference grants should explain how the conference presentation aligns with the RethinkBlue Action's Science Communication Plan.
3. The applicant's CV

4. Copy of the abstract of the accepted presentation (YRI Conference: oral presentation or poster; Dissemination Conference and ITC Conference: oral presentation)
5. Acceptance letter from the conference organizers (e.g. email confirming that the presentation is accepted)
6. For PhD students and post docs: A letter of support from their supervisor or head of department
7. Approximate budget and brief justification.
8. Recommended: A letter of support from the applicant's WG leader/co-leader or a Core Group member that documents the relationship of the conference attendance with a collaborative work between RethinkBlue Action participants, related with deliverables of the RethinkBlue Action (e.g., publications, policy briefs).

All required documents must be submitted before the deadline. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Evaluation Criteria for conference grants. The proposed conference presentation must contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action CA22122 - Rethinking the Blue Economy: Socio-Ecological Impacts and Opportunities (RethinkBlue), and fit within the scope of one or more of the RethinkBlue Action's Working Groups. When submitting the application, the applicant must be a member of at least one of the Action's Working Groups.

Proposals will be evaluated in two steps, according to the following criteria:

Step 1: Initial screening
Evaluation criteria:
- the application is complete, and all required documents are submitted
- the application is submitted prior to the deadline
- the applicant is a member of at least one of the WGs of the RethinkBlue Action
- the time period of the conference falls within the time period specified in the call for applications

Applications that fail to meet these criteria will be rejected. Applications that meet these criteria will be reviewed.

Step 2: Review
Evaluation criteria:
- Relationship of the conference presentation with collaborative work between RethinkBlue Action participants, especially work on deliverables of the RethinkBlue Action (e.g., publications, policy briefs).
- Scientific quality of the project that will be presented
- Connection of the presentation to the aim of the RethinkBlue COST Action
- Connection of the presentation with the theme of a specific working group of the Action
- For ITC and YRI Conference grants: potential for impact on the applicant's career
- For Dissemination Conference grants: alignment with the RethinkBlue Action's Science Communication Strategy

When several proposals meet the evaluation criteria outlined above, priority will be given to
- applicants who actively participate in the RethinkBlue Action
- proposals by young researchers and innovators, women, researchers and innovators from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) and researchers and innovators with disabilities
- proposals from applicants who have not previously received an individual grant (STSM, VM, or conference grants) from the RethinkBlue Action
- ensuring a balance of grants awarded to members of different working groups

The Management Committee reserves the right to specify additional and/or different criteria for particular calls.

The conference presentation. It is mandatory to acknowledge the support of the RethinkBlue COST Action (CA22122) during the presentation, according to the COST guidelines on visual identity. Powerpoint presentations and posters should include the COST and EU logos as specified in the guidelines on visual identity.

After the conference. The grantee submits the required reports and relevant documentation in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the conference or 15 days after the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first. The timeframe may be shorter as per the Grant Holder / Grant Awarding Coordinator's request to meet reporting deadlines.

The report is submitted on e-COST. The grantee completes the report template on e-COST, and uploads any additional documents that are required. For conference grants, the following additional documents are required:
- Completed report template (available on e-COST).
- Certificate of attendance,
- The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the presentation of the grantee (YRI Conference: oral presentation or poster; Dissemination Conference and ITC: oral presentation)
- Copy of the given presentation (YRI Conference: oral presentation or poster; Dissemination Conference and ITC: oral presentation)

Following the conference, Science Communicator coordinators will ask the grantee(s) for an abstract and visual material from the conference to be published on the RethinkBlue webpage. The grantee(s) are committed to collaborate in dissemination while receiving support from the RethinkBlue Action.