

**COST Action CA24157**

# **Coordinated and Standardized Monitoring of Permafrost Response to Climate Change (PermaCOST)**

**Call for applications for short-term scientific missions (STSM)  
for implementation until 15 October 2026**

**Call 1**

**No specific deadline for applications**

## 1. About PermaCOST

Permafrost has been dramatically warming and degrading in most mountain and polar regions, with far reaching and long-term implications for natural and anthropogenic environments. In this context of rapid changes and large socio-economic impacts, the increased scrutiny from the society and the growing demand for sound data from stakeholders make permafrost monitoring a timely and highly relevant field of research.

Documenting, analysing, and assessing the response of permafrost to climate change requires fundamental cross-disciplinary and cross-geographic knowledge that can only be achieved through coordinated and standardized monitoring activities.

For years, European research groups have been at the forefront of operational and innovative permafrost monitoring activities, but they have not been able to further coordinate their activities or to establish widely accepted standards for data acquisition and processing.

The PermaCOST Action aims to bring together European permafrost researchers, stakeholders, and practitioners with expertise in different measurement techniques and permafrost conditions to work towards a coordinated and standardized monitoring of permafrost response to climate change.

The objectives of PermaCOST are to:

1. identify key novel permafrost monitoring methods;
2. homogenise permafrost data acquisition guidelines;
3. homogenise permafrost data processing routines;
4. assess the state and evolution of permafrost in Europe; and
5. promote the development of operational permafrost monitoring networks at national, regional, and European scales.

Five working groups (WG) focus on work as follows:

### **WG1. Identification of key parameters and associated methods for permafrost monitoring**

WG1 aims to evaluate key parameters and associated methods complementary to established monitored permafrost parameters (ground temperature and active layer thickness). WP1 will evaluate the suitability of additional key parameters for permafrost monitoring, and their added value for comprehensive assessment of permafrost state and evolution.

### **WG2. Permafrost data acquisition standards**

WG2 aims to compile and homogenise existing data acquisition guidelines for permafrost specific application of the key complementary monitoring parameters and methods (defined in WG1).

### **WG3. Permafrost data processing standards**

WG3 aims to compile, evaluate and homogenise data processing standards for data sets of the key parameters and associated methods (defined in WG1).

### **WG4. Permafrost state assessment**

WG4 aims to compile the first European-wide comprehensive (i.e. including key complementary parameters and methods defined in WG1) assessment of permafrost state and evolution.

### **WG5. Permafrost monitoring network promotion**

WG5 aims to promote and support the development of operational permafrost monitoring networks at the national, regional and European levels.

The full description of the action including the Memorandum of Understanding can be found at <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA24157/>.

## 2. What is a short-term scientific mission (STSM)

A short-term scientific mission (STSM) is a visit to a host organization located in a different country by a researcher or innovator to conduct a specific piece of work for a determined period of time. A STSM grantee receives funding for this work within an international team and gains new knowledge or access to equipment or techniques not available in the home institution. STSMs serve several key purposes in

EU COST Actions. COST networks encourage international collaboration among researchers and innovators in various scientific fields. The STSMs are an integral part of every COST Action. They:

- Facilitate the international mobility of researchers, especially early-career scientists, to foster new collaborations and sharing knowledge across borders.
- Enhance research skills by transferring new techniques and using equipment in different environments.
- Build and strengthen networks that lead to long-term collaborations, joint publications, and other research activities.
- Boost research projects by providing essential skills, data, and collaborations that support the Action.
- Foster development of early career researchers, including through the establishment of a research profile and gaining international experience.
- By encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing, STSMs contribute to the overall scientific excellence of the research community involved in COST Actions.
- Support COST policies on promoting gender balance, enabling young researchers, and broadening geographical inclusiveness. Grantees should be selected in an open and transparent way.
- Advance COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy and Principles of Openness.

### 3. This open call:

Applications are invited from scientists and innovators for STSMs that support the PermaCOST objectives and Working Groups as described in this document.

This call is open-ended. There is no set deadline. Each application will be evaluated based on its quality, relevance to the Action objectives, and budget availability. Applications will be considered in the order of submission, particularly in cases where multiple applications of similar quality are received and budget limitations apply. It is especially aimed at STSMs that will be implemented before 15 October 2026.

### 4. Eligibility

STSM travel grants are available to applicants employed by, or affiliated to, an institution, organization, or legal entity in a **COST full/cooperating member country** or a legal entity in a **near neighbour country (NNC)**.

The eligible countries are listed in [COST Documents & Guidelines](#), particularly, in the [Country and Organisations Table](#).

Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage with the PermaCOST Action, for example by joining one of its Working Groups.

### 5. Financial support

Before applying, candidates should read [Annex 2 of the Annotated Rules for COST actions](#).

STSM grants provide a contribution for travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, and for miscellaneous expenses (such as conference fees) arising from the implementation of the project and the delivery of the report to the COST Action Management Committee. There is no limit to the maximum duration up to October 2026. Up to a maximum of EUR 4,000 in total can be awarded per grant. Participants are reminded that cancellation insurance fees are an eligible expense and are advised to contract one. Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the completion of the activity and after approval of all required report/documentation.

The final amount of financial support is decided by the Management Committee (or Core Group if delegated) based on the advice of the Grant Awarding Coordinator. The request of the applicant should reflect the duration and location of the STSM.

## 6. The grant awarding process

Each STSM must be carried out entirely within one Grant Period. Each Grant Period runs from the 1 November until the 31 October of the following year. For this call, missions must be complete by **15 October 2026**.

The grant awarding process for STSMs starts with a call under a strict (annual) budget. Each application is reviewed by two (or three in case the outcome is not consistent) project members who are guided by the Grant Awarding Coordinator. The Grant Awarding Coordinator advises the Action Chair who acts on the advice if the budget allows. An STSM ends when the payment is recorded. Missions must be completed by **15 October**. STSM applicants should not book anything (e.g., transportation or accommodation) before receiving a confirmation through a Grant Letter.

## 7. Application procedure

Applicants must have an e-COST profile and applications must be submitted online in e-COST via <https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants>. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to engage with the PermaCOST Action, for example by joining one of its Working Groups.

Applications comprise:

1. An online Grant Application (found at <https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants> ) which includes:
  - A project title for the mission that communicates the content and purpose of the work.
  - Start and end date of the STSM (within the active grant period up to 15 October 2026, i.e., no overlap across two consecutive grant periods).
  - Grant requested.
  - Basic information about the host institution and contact person.
2. A completed Application Form (available from the application system) describing goals, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, expected results (outcomes) and description of the contribution to the [Action MoU](#) objectives.
3. Confirmation from the host institution of its availability to receive the applicant.
4. A justification document setting out:
  - The statement describing applicant's motivation (1-2 pages).
  - The financial plan (about 1 page) clearly indicating the expected costs (e.g., transport, accommodation, living costs) following COST rules and the amount of support already received from other sources.
5. Applicant's curriculum vitae.
6. In the case of students, a support letter from the home institution.

All required documents must be uploaded via the e-COST interface. In exceptional cases, if technical issues prevent uploading, applicants may contact the Grant Awarding Coordinator (Ylva Sjöberg, [ylva.sjoberg@umu.se](mailto:ylva.sjoberg@umu.se)) for guidance.

## 8. Evaluation of applications

Applications will be evaluated for their quality and for their relevance to the objectives of PermaCOST and its Working Groups. To avoid time-wasting, each application will be first screened by the Grant Awarding Coordinator to check that it is complete and that it is relevant to the Action. Incomplete applications are rejected with the possibility to resubmit. Irrelevant applications are also rejected and cannot be resubmitted.

Following passing of the screen, STSM applications are evaluated by independent experts guided by the Grant Awarding Coordinator on behalf of the Management Committee (MC). External advice may be sought. The Grant Awarding Coordinator manages the process so that evaluators have no personal or financial interest in the application. An evaluation score is given considering the proposal clarity,

relevance for the Action, feasibility, planning, and expected outputs. Scores are from 1 to 6. The final evaluation outcome is announced within one month of submission.

**Scores:**

**1 (very poor):** proposal is not logical and not understandable. Not clearly linked to any working group.

**2 (poor):** proposal with limited understanding, planning and no clear objectives. Weakly linked to any working group.

**3 (fair):** proposal with some understanding, planning and objectives. Moderate links to at least one WG.

**4 (good):** good proposal but would benefit from refinement. Well-linked to at least one WG.

**5 (very good):** clear and effective plan that is well-linked to at least one working group.

**6 (excellent):** the proposed work plan is well-designed and planned, is feasible with good projected outputs. Strongly linked to at least one WG.

A score is given (from 1 to 6 as above) for proposal clarity, feasibility, planning and expected outputs. Each reviewer scores each proposal independently. The STSM Grant Awarding Coordinator collates the outcomes of the independent evaluations and communicates the final scoring (range 4-24 points) after confirming the fulfilment of requisites to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Action. Proposals with high scores ( $\geq 20$  points) will be financed, but only when all other evaluation criteria are acceptable, and the available budget suffices. The outcome will be communicated to the applicant by email.

<b>Assessment of STSM proposal</b>		
<b>Name of applicant:</b>		
<b>Title of application:</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Scoring</b>
<b>Requisites</b>		
Support letter – home institute	Required for students only	Y/N
Support letter – host institute		Y/N
Motivation letter	Convincing	Y/N
<b>Work plan</b>		
Clarity and relevance	Score	1-6
<i>Please, provide a brief comment:</i>		
Feasibility	Score	1-6
<i>Please, provide a brief comment:</i>		
Planning	Score	1-6
<i>Please, provide a brief comment:</i>		
Expected outputs	Score	1-6
<i>Please, provide a brief comment:</i>		
<b>Other aspects</b>		
Curriculum Vitae		
<i>Please provide a comment on CV, if relevant:</i>		
Grant request		
Travel	Acceptable	Y/N
Accommodation	Acceptable	Y/N
Subsistence	Acceptable	Y/N
Miscellaneous	Acceptable	Y/N
<b>Please provide a comment on your overall assessment of the application:</b>		

## 9. Submission of the STSM report and payment

Once the activity has ended, the applicant claims the payment of the grant via e-COST. For this, the grantee submits the short STSM report using the STSM report template, and relevant documentation within 15 working days of the completion of the mission.

The report includes a short description of the work, and main achievements of the STSM and planned future follow-up activities.

Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the completion of the activity and approval of all required report/documentation. In addition to providing the STSM report, the applicant must upload a Scientific Report for use in communications that includes:

- The background and a full description of the work and the main scientific findings.
- The effect of the visit on personal development, networking, and capacity building (e.g., collaborations).
- Foreseen publications/articles resulting from the STSM (if applicable).
- The summary of the report will be published on the PermaCOST website.
- In addition to the Mission Report, a document confirming the host institution of the execution of the STSM and
- Proof of evidence of the stay (a picture of the grantee working at the host institution facilities and a picture with the collaborators) that might be published in social media and website.

All required documents must be uploaded via the e-COST interface. In exceptional cases, if technical issues prevent uploading, applicants may contact the Grant Awarding Coordinator (Ylva Sjöberg, [ylva.sjoberg@umu.se](mailto:ylva.sjoberg@umu.se)) for guidance.

### Frequently asked questions.

- 1. Can I postpone my STSM?** If the originally intended period is not feasible, STSM could be postponed after consultation with the Grant Awarding Coordinator and Action Chair. Grantees should keep in mind that the approved STSM must be completed before 15 October 2026.
- 2. I am uncertain about the exact dates for my trip. Can I apply for a flexible three-week period within a one-month timeframe, for example?** Yes, it is possible. However, STSMs require specific start and end dates, therefore, supporting documents have to state the period in which the applicant is considering doing the STSM.
- 3. Where do I upload receipts for accommodation or meals after I have returned from the STSM?** You do not have to provide any receipts for accommodation or meals. The financial support is paid in the form of a grant. However, travel expenses and accommodation invoices must be presented in the case of cancellation by force majeure.

#### Notes:

Each publication produced with support of a STSM must acknowledge the support of the COST Action and whenever possible use the COST and PermaCOST logos (on slides and posters).

#### Acknowledgement text:

“This publication is based on work supported by the COST Action CA24157: Coordinated and Standardized Monitoring of Permafrost Response to Climate Change (PermaCOST).”