COST Action CA24164

Sensing Europe's Court Spaces at the Crossroads of Past, Present and Future (SENSES)

Call for applications for Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

No specific deadline for applications

1. About SENSES

SENSES brings together researchers and professionals to combine knowledge and find novel ways of presenting the European court residence, seen as the locus of multiple sensorial experiences. At the crossroads of court studies, sensory history and digital humanities, SENSES focuses on the "court residence" of late mediaeval and early modern Europe. This means the material and spatial environment of the courts in Europe from 1300 to 1800 within their social context, at all spatial scales from the single building (or part) to the landscape created around it and the supra-territorial residence network it belongs to. We will explore the full gamut of sensory experiences linked with the court residence and its life throughout history until today: from essential human activities, such as preparing food and crafting things, to the grandest and most complex, such as perceiving performances of music and dance in dedicated spaces and dining rituals.

Our goal is to build a better understanding of this complex cultural phenomenon and thus to support its survival as European heritage. To achieve this, SENSES will be multi-disciplinary and trans-sectoral, building bridges between academic disciplines on the one hand, and between academia and the cultural heritage sector on the other. We want to offer a sound research-based platform for developing novel, sensory-based interactions between the public (consumer), and the heritage (art, architecture, music) of the past. By exploring new ways of making and keeping this artistic heritage relevant for audiences of the future, we will contribute actively to European identity-building.

SENSES brings together researchers, heritage professionals, and digital specialists to advance a shared understanding of the multisensory dimensions of Europe's court residences. Its objectives fall into three interconnected areas:

1. Aims to deepen knowledge of court residences as multisensory environments by studying how sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, and movement shaped palace life between 1300 and 1800. The Action supports innovative research that investigates sensory experience in relation to architecture, material culture, ritual, and daily practice. It also promotes the use and critical evaluation of digital tools — from 3D and acoustic modelling to VR/AR — to explore past environments and reconstruct sensory phenomena that are otherwise difficult to access.

2. The Action strengthens collaboration across disciplines and sectors by creating a shared platform for historians, art and architectural historians, musicologists, archaeologists, heritage curators, and digital experts. Through conferences, workshops, and joint activities, SENSES

encourages dialogue on methods, sources, and best practices for studying and communicating sensory heritage. This includes developing a common language and clearer "academic specifications" for digital reconstructions, ensuring that new digital outputs are both historically grounded and publicly meaningful.

3. Works to reduce disparities in knowledge, access, and technical resources across Europe. It provides training opportunities for early-career researchers, supports the exchange of expertise between academia and the heritage sector, and fosters inclusive participation throughout the network. By encouraging collaborative projects and linking research with museum practice, the Action aims to strengthen the long-term preservation, interpretation, and public relevance of palace heritage. Ultimately, SENSES seeks to raise awareness of the rich sensory dimensions of court residences and to contribute to a stronger shared European cultural identity.

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

WG1 SACRED
Explores the multiple sensorial experiences involved in the religious acts taking place in medieval and early modern European court residences 1300-1800.

WG2 DINING
Addresses the multiple sensorial experiences involved in the dining ceremonies of the medieval and early modern European court residences 1300-1800.

WG3 FABRIC
Addresses all the sensory experiences linked with a particularly rich and varied range of objects in the medieval and early modern European court residences 1300-1800: textile fabrics.

WG4 BODY looks at the multiple bodily experiences which are part of daily life at the medieval and early modern European court residences 1300-1800.

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 SENSES objectives and Working Groups as described in this document.

This call is open-ended. There is no set deadline. Each application will be processed on a first-come first-served basis. It is especially aimed at STSMs that will be implemented from March to 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.

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 Action Chair/Grant Holder based on the advice of the Grant Awarding Coordinator. The request of the applicant should reflect the duration and location of the STSM.

STSM guidelines-CA24164

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.

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 31 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/stsm.

Applications comprise:

1. An online Grant Application (found at https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm) 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 31 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 (Application template) 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.

Any documents that cannot be uploaded via the e-COST interface should be sent directly to the Grant Awarding Coordinator who is Bernardo J. García García (bjgarcia@ucm.es) and the Chair of

COST Action who is Konrad Ottenheym (k.a.ottenheym@uu.nl).

8. Evaluation of applications

Applications will be evaluated for their quality and for their relevance to the objectives of SENSES 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 Working Group.

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

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 Working Group.

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 (≥ 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. The results will be published in the COST Action website.

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Summary of the evaluation criteria

Category	Notes	Scoring
Requisites		
Support letter - home Institute	Required for students only	Y/N
Support letter - host Institute		Y/N
Evaluation		
Motivation letter	Convincing	Y/N
Work plan		
Clarity and relevance	Score	1-6
Feasibility	Score	1-6
Planning	Score	1-6
Expected outputs	Score	1-6
Suitability of the candidate from the curriculum vitae and list of publications		
Grant request		
Travel	Acceptable	Y/N
Accommodation	Acceptable	Y/N
Subsistence	Acceptable	Y/N
Miscellaneous	Acceptable	Y/N

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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 SENSES 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.

Documents that cannot be uploaded via the e-COST interface should directly be sent to Grant Awarding Coordinator (Bernardo J. García García bjgarcia@ucm.es) and the Chair of COST action (Konrad Ottenheym k.a.ottenheym@uu.nl).

10. 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 within the actual Grant Period, i.e. before 31 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.

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Notes:

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

Acknowledgement text:

"This publication is based on work supported by the COST Action CA24164: Sensing Europe's Court Spaces at the Crossroads of Past, Present and Future (SENSES)."

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