

The call for Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM), Virtual Mobility (VM) and Conference grants of COST Action DSS4ES is open for activities ending before 1st October 2026

(Applications submitted in 2026 will be evaluated continuously by the Grant Awarding Coordinator and the Core Group, there are no specific deadlines for the year 3.)

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) allow scientists to learn about innovative concepts and methodologies of particular interest from an institution or laboratory in another COST country. Virtual Mobility (VM) grants consist of a collaboration in an online setting among researchers or innovators within the COST Action, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques, support the harmonisation and standardisation of methods and procedures within the Action networking activities in the working groups.

The Applicant should normally be a post graduate student or a postdoctoral fellow and employed in an institution of a COST Country having accepted the [MoU](#).

DSS4ES is a four-year COST Action running between 2023 and 2027. The primary objective of DSS4ES is to facilitate the development of new methodological approaches to decision support systems, including important relations between forest and landscape. The emphasis is on screening, evaluating and proposing existing and future tools to support holistic planning approaches that increase sustainable forest management, consider various ecosystem services, and address associated risks and uncertainties. (For further details, see the Memorandum of Understanding – [MoU](#) at Action home page <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA22141/> or via the Action website www.dss4es.com.)

The activities in **DSS4ES** are structured in five Working Groups (WGs):

WG1: DATA AND KNOWLEDGE

WG3: USER PERSPECTIVE

WG2: MODELS and METHODS

WG4: DSS INTEGRATION

WG5: GOVERNANCE (IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING)

Applications can only be submitted by using the on-line registration tool on e-COST (go to <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA22141/> and choose e-COST; select Action DSS4ES). The applicant should submit the application with the content described in [Appendix A](#). The Core Group of DSS4ES will evaluate the applications on behalf of the Management Committee on the basis of criteria found in [Appendix B](#). Suggestions for topics of prime interest are described in [Appendix C](#).

FUNDING SCHEME for STSMs and conferences [€]

STSM	
Minimum duration	5 working days
Maximum daily allowance rate	160
Maximum long-distance travel expenses*	1,500
Total maximum amount for mission	4,000
Virtual Mobility	
Minimum duration	no specific requirement
Maximum grant	1,500
Conference	
Maximum grant (for F2F conferences)	1,000

* *The receipts for long-distance travel expenses are not required.*

Appendix A

Application:

Shall be submitted online in e-COST using dedicated forms available (see below). In this regard, applicants are informed that their application can be accessed by the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committees in the Action for evaluation purposes. Applicants must upload their CV in their e-COST profile. This information will be visible to the holders of leadership positions and any evaluation committees in the Action for evaluation purposes. In case of rejection, the applicant will be informed about the justification in the e-notification.

Networking Activity	Information to be provided in the application	Information to be provided when reporting and claiming the grant
STSM	<p><u>To be filled in e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title • Start and end date (within the active Grant Period, i.e. no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) • Budget requested by the applicant • Information about the host institution and contact person. Location of host institution must be in a different country than the country of affiliation of the applicant <p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application form (template available in e-COST) describing: Goals, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, expected outcomes and description of the contribution to the Action MoU objectives • Confirmation of the host on the agreement from the host institution in receiving the applicant (template available in e-COST) • Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc...) 	<p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to the Action MC on the work developed, main achievements of the STSM and planned future follow up activities
Virtual Mobility	<p><u>To be filled in e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title • Start and end date (within the active Grant Period, i.e. no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) • Budget requested by the applicant <p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Main Objective, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, plan for participation, expected outcomes and description of the contribution to the Action MoU objectives • Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc...) 	<p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

<p>ITC Conference</p>	<p><u>To be filled in e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title of the presentation Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period, i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) and country Budget requested Attendance Type (face to face or online) <p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Relevance of the conference topic to the Action and Motivation describing the potential for impact on the applicant's career. Copy of the abstract of the accepted oral presentation Acceptance (or invitation) letter from the conference organisers Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc...) 	<p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the Action MC on the outcome of the presentation of the accepted contribution, in terms of grantee's visibility, including the establishment of new contacts for future collaborations The certificate of attendance The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the oral presentation of the grantee
<p>Dissemination Conference</p>	<p><u>To be filled in e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title of the presentation Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period, i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) and venue Budget requested Attendance Type (face to face or online) <p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Alignment with the Science Communication Plan25 adopted by the COST Action and Expected impact to the COST Action. Copy of the abstract of the accepted oral presentation focused on promoting the scientific achievements and activities being performed by the COST Action Acceptance (or invitation) letter from the conference organisers Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc...) 	<p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the Action MC on the outcome of the presentation, including the establishment of new contacts for future collaborations The certificate of attendance The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the oral presentation of the grantee
<p>YRI Conference</p>	<p><u>To be filled in e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title of the presentation Conference title, date (within the active Grant Period, i.e.no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods) and country Budget requested Attendance Type (face to face or online) <p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Relevance of the conference topic to the Action and Motivation describing the potential for impact on the applicant's career Copy of the abstract of the accepted poster or oral presentation Acceptance (or invitation) letter from the conference organisers Other documents required by the Action (e.g. recommendation letter, etc...) 	<p><u>To be uploaded to e-COST:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the Action MC on the outcome of the presentation of the accepted contribution, in terms of grantee's visibility, including the establishment of new contacts for future collaborations The certificate of attendance The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the presentation (oral or poster) of the grantee

Appendix B

Grant Awarding Criteria for STSMs and VMs

1. Relevance to DSS4ES	
Relevance	How well the application addresses the objectives of DSS4ES
Applicant	Different countries, including ITCs ^(a) , should be represented
Host institution	Different countries, including ITCs, should be represented
Working Groups (WG)	How well the application contributes to the work of one or several WGs
2. Quality of work plan	
Clear workplan	The clarity in which purpose, time plan and activities are described
Host institution	How well the host institution supports the applicant in achieving the objectives of the mission
Outcomes	The proposed output in terms of scientific articles, conference contributions or other tangible results ^(b)
Further potential	To what extent the STSM allows scientific activities to occur beyond the period of the STSM
3. Applicant's CV	
Applicant	Priority for early-stage researchers with relevant topics of the thesis
4. Budget plan	
Duration/budget ratio	Optimality of budget request for requested period and planned activities

^(a) COST Inclusiveness Target Countries

^(b) Tangible results can take many forms, in addition to the compulsory report to e-COST, like presentation at a WG meeting, a short paragraph on the DSS4ES website, scientific article etc.

Appendix C

Working Group related STSM and VM topics

The following indicates STSMs/ or VM projects of high relevance at the current stage of the Action. Applications covering these topics will therefore be prioritized in the selection of STSMs/ or VM. This does not preclude applications with other topics, or related topics, if they fall within the tasks of one of the WGs mentioned below.

The priority given to projects in the list is motivated by their contribution to the deliverables pertaining to different WGs. It is therefore recommended that applicants also consult the [MoU](#). It is also recommended that applicants be in contact with the respective WP leader to develop applications in line with WG objectives. They may also provide information on suitable host institutions. You can find their addresses at the [DSS4ES homepage](#) and below.

WG1
WG1 leader: Janina Kleemann, janina.kleemann@geo.uni-halle.de
1. Collecting more spatial information/data about ecosystem services for the country reports on different levels for the European countries + on EU-level with its possible use in decision support systems (DSS) in the project context (DSS4ES); for this task, several countries need to be covered by the work of the STSM applicant
2. Screening data from all submitted country reports in WG 1 that could be used (and how) in which DSS and in which context
3. Screening of ecosystem services and related indicators that can be assessed and used as part of the DSS (literature basis: Grima et al. 2023), developing selection criteria of “relevance” and “importance” of ecosystem services and their related indicators, among others, in the context of DSS4ES
4. Analysis (statistical/descriptive) of types, conditions, data, ecosystem services modelled, context, among others, of dynamic vegetation models in different countries that could be used for decision support in forest and related ecosystems. This task belongs to a systematic literature review of dynamic vegetation models in selected European countries.
5. Collecting information/data specifically of Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data for landscape management in the context of DSS4ES. IoT enables to communicate and exchange data in real time, e.g. Live cameras (such as EarthCam), streaming webcams of species and landscape monitoring that could be used for DSS; screening of other innovative approaches for data extraction from forest and -related ecosystems with a distinction between early stage research prototypes and fully commercialized solutions and across different European countries; this task could be done as a systematic literature review
6. Detailed screening of the EU-policy agenda in the context of DSS4ES for ecosystem services selection and for preparing a research agenda (can be in cooperation with WG 5) for digital technologies for landscape management, e.g., the selection of forest landscape management strategies at different spatial levels that contribute to solve the dilemmas of forest-related EU-policies (keeping in mind the ecosystem services trade-offs) and considering the future directions of the EU-policy

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| 7. In cooperation with WG 4 (DSS integration), develop concepts for interfaces for linking new data sources to DSS. |
| 8. Own topics related to data accuracy, data quality, and data gaps of DSS on different spatial levels across countries and across different sectors (e.g., forestry, agriculture and urban planning) |

WG2

WG2 leader: Ulrike Hiltner, ulrike.hiltner@usys.ethz.ch

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| <p>1. Comparative Analysis of Process-Based Models for Forest Ecosystem Service Decision Support in European Forest Landscapes</p> <p>This STSM aims to conduct a comprehensive review and comparison of existing process-based models utilized in decision support systems for assessing ecosystem services within European forest landscapes. The focus will be on models capable of projecting forest dynamics under various management scenarios, making them valuable tools for informing forest management planning that aims to balance timber production with ecosystem service provision.</p> <p>Keywords: Forest ecosystem services, Decision support systems, Process-based models, Forest dynamics, Forest management planning, European forests</p> |
| <p>2. Comparative Analysis of Empirical Models for Forest Ecosystem Service Decision Support in European Forest Landscapes</p> <p>This STSM will focus on conducting a detailed comparative analysis of various empirical models currently employed in decision support systems for assessing and valuing ecosystem services within European forest landscapes. The emphasis will be on evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, and applicability of different empirical modeling approaches for informing forest management decisions aimed at optimizing ecosystem service provision.</p> <p>Keywords: Forest ecosystem services, Decision support systems, Empirical models, Forest management, European forests</p> |
| <p>3. Comparative Analysis of Heuristic Models for Forest Ecosystem Service Decision Support in European Forest Landscapes</p> <p>This STSM will undertake a comparative analysis of heuristic models used in decision support systems for assessing and managing ecosystem services within European forest landscapes. The focus will be on evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency, and adaptability of various heuristic approaches in guiding forest management practices to enhance ecosystem service delivery while considering the complexities and trade-offs involved.</p> <p>Keywords: Forest ecosystem services, Decision support systems, Heuristic models, Forest management, European forests</p> |
| <p>4. Topic Review of Exact Methods for Decision Support in Forest Ecosystem Management</p> <p>This STSM will conduct a comprehensive review of existing work related to the application of exact methods, such as mathematical programming, in supporting decision-making processes within the context of forest ecosystem management. The focus will be on evaluating the effectiveness and limitations of these methods in addressing complex forest management challenges, particularly in relation to optimizing ecosystem service provision and balancing competing objectives.</p> |

Keywords: Forest ecosystem management, Decision support, Exact methods, Mathematical programming, Optimization

5. Topic Applicability of Models and Methods in European Living Labs and Case Studies

This STSM aims to assess the applicability and effectiveness of various models and methods used in decision support systems for forest ecosystem management within the context of real-world Living Labs and case studies across Europe. The focus will be on evaluating how these models and methods perform in diverse ecological, social, and economic contexts, and identifying key factors influencing their successful implementation and impact.

Keywords: Forest ecosystem management, Decision support systems, Models, Methods, Living Labs, Case studies, Europe

WG3

WG3 leader: Wojciech Kędziora, wojciech_kedziora@sggw.edu.pl

1. Cross-Country Stakeholder Mapping for Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

This STSM aims to analyze and compare stakeholder profiles and mapping methods across different regions to enhance sustainable forest landscape management. By leveraging international collaboration, the mission will explore variations in stakeholder roles, interests, and influence, providing valuable insights for more inclusive and effective participatory processes. The outcome will contribute to the development of comprehensive frameworks for stakeholder engagement tailored to diverse regional contexts.

2. Engaging Stakeholders Through Surveys for Participatory Forest Landscape Management

This STSM focuses on designing and conducting surveys and focus groups to gather insights into stakeholder preferences for participatory decision-making in forest landscape management. The mission involves preparatory work, stakeholder engagement, and the development of tools to capture diverse perspectives from local communities and other key actors. The results will help refine strategies for inclusive and collaborative decision-making processes in sustainable forest management.

3. Analyzing Participatory Processes in Forest Management

This STSM aims to review best practices and case studies of participatory forest management programs across different socio-economic and ecological contexts. The mission will involve visits to institutions that have successfully implemented such programs, enabling an in-depth analysis of methods and outcomes. The insights gained will contribute to understanding the effectiveness of participatory processes and their adaptation to diverse regional challenges in sustainable forest management.

WG4

WG4 leader: Ivo Vinogradovs, ivo.vinogradovs@lu.lv

1. Assessing and enhancing DSS frameworks for improved integration

Objective: to conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing DSS frameworks used in forest management, focusing on their capacity to integrate diverse stakeholder needs, multi-domain and ecosystem service data. The STSM aims to identify areas for improvement and propose enhancements that align with WG4's Year 2 objective of refining DSS frameworks for better usability and interoperability.

Goals (tasks):

- Review existing DSS frameworks (analyze the structure and functionality of current DSS used in forest management, with a focus on ecosystem services integration; identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps, especially in relation to integrating multi-domain data and accommodating stakeholder needs).
- Develop recommendations for framework improvement (based on the review, formulate practical recommendations for improving the DSS frameworks, emphasizing features that enhance user interaction and data integration; focus on technical enhancements that improve system interoperability, visualization capabilities, and stakeholder engagement features).
- Design a roadmap for a future STSM that will focus on implementing one or two key enhancements within the DSS framework.

Expected outcomes:

- Comprehensive DSS assessment report: a report detailing the current state of DSS frameworks, including identified strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.
- A presentation summarizing the results, shared with WG4 and relevant partners.

Justification: this STSM supports WG4's Year 2 goal of reviewing and refining DSS frameworks. The ideal candidate should have experience in environmental modeling or DSS development; familiarity with ecosystem services data and forest management practices; analytical skills and the ability to translate findings into actionable recommendations for system improvement.

2. Enhancing DSS Integration through Stakeholder Feedback Analysis

Objective: to advance the integration of DSS within WG4 by working directly with experts to analyze and incorporate stakeholder feedback collected by WG3. The aim is to ensure that the DSS is aligned with user needs, preferences, and decision-making priorities, focusing on practical and actionable (realistic) improvements.

Goals (tasks):

- Analyze and translate stakeholder feedback (collaborate with WG3 to review and interpret stakeholder feedback related to system needs, user interface preferences, and decision-making priorities; convert this feedback into actionable technical specifications for DSS improvement, emphasizing user interface and decision-support features).
- Refine DSS features based on stakeholder needs (focus on developing and improving DSS modules that address identified stakeholder requirements, such as interactive visualization tools or scenario modeling capabilities; ensure that these features align with the technical structure of the DSS and are ready for implementation and further testing).
- Design a roadmap for a follow-up STSM that will focus on usability testing and optimization of the DSS based on the stakeholder-driven enhancements.

Expected outcomes:

- Report detailing the integration of stakeholder feedback into the DSS framework and outlining the specific improvements made.
- Presentation of results to WG4 and relevant partners.

Justification: this STSM aligns with WG4's Year 2 objective by incorporating stakeholder-driven insights into the DSS framework, ensuring the system is both user-centric and technically sound.

The ideal candidate should have experience in stakeholder engagement or social sciences, particularly in analyzing user needs and translating them into technical requirements; familiarity with DSS development or environmental modeling; strong skills in technical documentation and communication.

WG5

WG5 leader: Sofia CORTICEIRO, sofiacorticeiro@ua.pt

1. Covers 1 STSMs and 3 VMs: The STSM will focus on identifying and compiling national policy documents from currently missing countries related to the protection and sustainable management of forest ecosystems. In parallel, three VMs will support a systematic review of European and national policies and their relationship with existing Decision Support Systems (DSS). This work will assess policy relevance, strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and implementation challenges, and will include an alignment screening to map policy requirements against DSS capabilities.