Memo | Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR)

Dear COST Action Members,

In order to further facilitate the process of reimbursing participants attending a COST Action meeting, the COST Office has introduced a Strong Authentication feature in e-COST, enabling Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR) forms to be submitted fully online.

Strong Authentication will enable Action participants and other relevant stakeholders to identify themselves as unique individuals to the e-COST system in a fully secure way, and thus submit not only supporting documents, but also the OTRR form completely online.

The new feature is based on the release of ‘One Time Passwords’ similar to those used by some e-banking systems, and will significantly improve the efficiency of reimbursement processes and reduce processing times - not to mention its environmentally-friendly aspect, as it will also minimise the need for printouts and paper in general.

The technical provider of the Strong Authentication solution is French company InWebo (www.in-webo.com/en). The company was selected by the COST Office and the ESF through a solid and well-documented tender process, and is a key provider of secure authentication solutions. The solution chosen is fully certified by the French National Agency for the Security of Information Systems (ANSSI - see www.ssi.gouv.fr/fr/produits-et-prestataires/produits-certifies-cspn/certificat_cspn_2012_03.html).

The Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR) allows each participant to directly encode into e-COST the expenses incurred in relation to the attendance of COST Action meetings, as well as to submit the supporting documents linked to the request, by scanning them and attaching them to the Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR).

In order to simplify the process, the maximum eligible number of nights and the maximum number of meals is calculated automatically on the basis of the travel information encoded by the participants, and the flat rate indicated by the Grant Holder when creating the meeting. Meals provided by the Local Organiser are automatically deducted from the reimbursement to individual participants. It is the responsibility of the participant to deduct any additional meal(s) being offered.

The OTRR is to be submitted only after the meeting took place. After the participant has encoded the relevant expenses and uploaded the supporting documents, the participant will be able to authenticate him/herself by providing the InWebo password, and submit the claim.

In case of any difficulties with the form, a step by step guide, including print screens of e-COST is included. This guide will be available in email invitation you will receive from e-cost.

For any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact either the e-COST Helpdesk (helpdesk@cost.eu) or the Administrative Officer in charge of the Action.

With kind regards

COST Office
Memo | Guide for Submission of a COST Online Travel Reimbursement Request for COST Actions Participants

In this document, COST Action Participants will find a step-by-step guide (including print screens) detailing how to fill in and authenticate themselves when submitting the Online Travel Reimbursement Request (OTRR), released on 19 September 2012 and updated on 17 February 2014.

This guide is only applicable for those Actions whose Gran Holder opted into the Strong Authentication feature and concerns only those claims provided by participants eligible and entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses while attending COST Action related activities.

The scenario used as an example in this guide concerns a COST Action Working group Meeting, taking place on 15 December 2013, in Brussels, with 0 meals provided by the Local Organiser.
Participants eligible and entitled to reimbursement

The invited participants who are deemed eligible for reimbursement will receive the following automatic e-COST invitation:

OFFICIAL INVITATION

Dear Dr John Smith,

You are invited to attend the following COST Meeting as a Meeting Participant:

COST Action: BM1207
Meeting Title: Release of the OTRR-Strong Authentication feature
Location: Cost, Brussels, Belgium
Meeting Type: Working Group Meeting
Meeting Dates: from 15-12-2013 to 15-12-2013

If you wish to attend, you will need to register for this event. If you already have an e-COST user profile, you will only need to login and accept this invitation by following the link below:

http://ea-e-cost-dev.bruxelles.esf.org/Invitation/1bbea1f1f72e3f79e617f3a4a748cc460/

If you are new to e-COST, you can register a new e-COST profile on the following link:
https://e-services.cost.eu

The following link provides instructions on how to fill in the Travel Reimbursement Request:

By clicking on the link provided in the invitation, the participant will be re-directed to this page:

Invitation to COST Office Event

If you are the intended invitee to the following COST event and you wish to participate, please log in below to proceed.

Meeting Details
Meeting ID: Ecost-Meeting-BM1207-151213-038157
Title: Release of the OTRR-Strong Authentication feature
Start Date: 2013/12/13
End Date: 2013/12/15
Location: COST, Brussels, Belgium

Your Details
Name: John Smith
Email: j.s@cost.eu
Organisation: University ***

Username: JSmith Password: ********

After login, the participant has to follow 5 steps, taking into consideration that ideally, step 1 should be done before the meeting, that steps 2 to 3 can be done either before or after the meeting and that step 4 and 5 can only be done after the meeting took place.

Step 1/5 - Invitation

In step 1, the participant is asked to accept or decline the invitation.
Step 2/5 - Reimbursement

In step 2, the participant can start to fill in the claim immediately. When selecting “YES”, the claim is displayed below and can be updated. The system will record any modification made by the participant from the step 2 to 5.

The participant can only finalise the request and submit it to the Grant Holder after the meeting, therefore it is advisable that the participant completes the request only after the meeting. When selecting “NO”, the participant will have the possibility to re-access the page at a later time by following the link provided in the invitation.

The claim must be submitted within 30 calendar days after the end date of the meeting. After 30 days, the expenses will no longer be eligible.

Once the participant agrees to claim the reimbursement of expenses, the information related to the Strong Authentication is displayed and the participant is prompted to create a Strong Authentication profile.
The **Strong Authentication profile** consists of several elements:
- The name of the **browser** on which the participant creates the profile will be prominently displayed on the top of the page;
- The **profile username** associated with the browser will be also displayed once the participant chose the user name;
- The **PIN code** will be used only after the participant authenticated him/herself. The PIN code cannot be used to access e-cost!
- The **antiphishing sentence** can be any sentence chosen by the participant and will be displayed each time the participant used his/her PIN code to authenticate him/herself before submitting the OTRR.

Once the Strong authentication profile is created, a confirmation message is displayed. The participant acknowledges this message by pressing the button 'Ok'. The participant can now continue with the completion of the OTRR.
Activate COST Strong Authentication service

Site: qa-dev
Browser: Firefox on Windows

This site is protected by InWebo. Please activate it in this browser.

User profile and browser
User profile *:
jsmith

E.g., your e-COST username

Your user profile associated to this browser:
jsmith - Firefox on Windows

Your user profile is automatically inserted

Authentication data
PIN code *:
**************

7 to 16 characters, with at least one digit and one letter

Confirm PIN code *:
**************

Antiphishing sentence * (e.g., "I love reading")
Go FC Barcelona!

This secret sentence that you choose yourself will be displayed each time you will have to strongly authenticate yourself, asserting you are on the correct website.

Activate COST Strong Authentication

Helium by InWebo © 2013

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Activate COST Strong Authentication service

Activation of COST Strong Authentication service successful

COST Strong Authentication authentication service has been successfully activated for qa-dev. An authentication device, InWebo Helium, is configured in this browser.

OK

Helium by InWebo © 2013
Step 3/5 – Travel Information and Expenses

Step 3 concerns the actual encoding of expenses.

For the purpose of this guide, the scenario described is as follows: the participant attends a Working Group meeting in Brussels on 15 December 2013. The participant is affiliated to a Spanish institution. To attend the meeting, the participant is leaving from Barcelona to Brussels and then flying back to Spain.

The participant has the possibility to update each category of expenses.

- **Travel Dates and Meeting Attendance**

Travel start date and travel end date are automatically populated with the meeting dates and are editable. The drop down menu allows the participant to select the departure time (from home/starting location) and the arrival time (back home/arrival location) as well.

The participant needs to complete the attendance to the meeting by selecting the date(s) for which the attendance list has been signed. Travel information and attendance to the meeting are necessary to calculate automatically the maximum number of nights and the maximum number of meals eligible to be reimbursed to the participant.
- **Accommodation and Meals Expenses**

The applicable rate is the same here as the one specified by the Grant Holder while creating the meeting. Using the available drop down menu, the participant selects the number of nights and meals to be reimbursed.

![Accommodation Expenses](image)

- **Accommodation Expenses**
  - Number of nights: 1
  - Applicable Rate per Night: EUR 120.00
  - Reimbursable amount: EUR 120.00

![Meals Expenses](image)

- **Meals Expenses**
  - Number of meals: 4
  - Applicable Rate per Meal: EUR 20.00
  - Reimbursable amount: EUR 80.00

Meals provided by the Local Organiser are automatically deducted from the reimbursement to individual participants. It is the responsibility of the participant to deduct any additional meal(s) being offered.
Travel Expenses

In this section, the participant may encode any long distance travel expenses necessary to attend the meeting by clicking the “Add” button.

The participant needs to specify the means of transport using the drop down menu, the itinerary, and the amount to be reimbursed. Each leg of the travel has to be encoded separately. Therefore, once the first leg is completed, you have to click on the “Submit” Button at the bottom of the page.
As the example above requires a justification (in this case, the participant is not travelling from his home country, but from Germany) the system will ask for it. The derogation requires a MC approval or a COST Office approval and the participant must upload it as supporting document in the relevant section further below.

If the participant needs to modify, delete or add another leg of travel, then the participant has to click on one of the button highlighted in the print screen below:

Using the example provided, the Travel Expenses section is completed as follows

- Local transport expenses

Local transportation expenses include all costs related to the local transport needed to attend the meeting. Local transport refers to any inner city trip or short transport to go from home to the airport / train station, and to the city of the meeting, including public transport, taxis, car and ferries.
For the purpose of this guide, the participant uses the car to return from the airport back home. Car travel expenses are reimbursed based on the distance (in kilometres) travelled by the participant. The system automatically calculates the related total amount in EUR. The proof of distance must be uploaded in the supporting document section (further below).

Once completed, the participant needs to click on the “Submit” button at the bottom of the page.
- Other Expenses

A list of pre-defined other expenses is populated in the drop down menu. Depending on the type of other expenses encoded (travel visa cost, additional night, and additional meal), a text box will appear to allow the participant to justify the request. The justification encoded at this stage will also appear in the Financial Report of the Action as well as in the OTRR. An extra night and extra meal will be automatically based on the flat rate encoded by the Grant Holder while creating the meeting.

![Edit expenses](image)

- Upload Supporting Documents

After completing the request, and **before** final submission of the claim to the Grant Holder, the participant must upload all the supporting documents (airplane ticket, transport receipt etc.) as well as any email/justification linked to the expenses claimed, by clicking on the Browse button at the bottom of the page (supported files types are: pdf, xps, png, jpg, jpeg, gif).

![Supporting Documents](image)

**Step 4/5 – Bank Account**

Once all the expenses had been recorded and the supporting documents have been uploaded, the participant needs to select the bank account to which the payment should be transferred. If the participant has already encoded his/her bank account in e-COST it is available in the drop down menu. Otherwise, or if wanted, the participant has the possibility to add a new bank account at this stage.
After completion of the step 4, it is now possible to preview the completed TRR. This allows the participant to review the request before submitting it to the Grant Holder.

**Step 5/5 – Submission**

If everything is correctly encoded and uploaded, then the participant has to certify that the expenses claimed here are not being reimbursed by any other sources by ticking the box next to the declaration.

As soon as the box is ticked, the button “Submit Claim” will be available which will allow participants to authenticate him/herself by providing the profile username and the PIN code and then submit the Online Request to the Grant Holder. Once submitted, the participant cannot modify the request anymore.
Step 5/5

I declare that the above expenses are not being reimbursed from any other source.

The COST Office and the Grant Holder reserve the right to correct this document after signature by the participant to comply with COST Rules.

Click to submit your claim electronically. You will be redirected to enter your Strong Authentication credentials.

Message from webpage

After submitting your reimbursement request, you will not be able to make any change. Are you sure you want to proceed?

OK Cancel

Message from webpage

You will now be redirected to enter your strong authentication credentials. Upon successfully verifying your identity, your claim will be submitted electronically.

OK
Once the participant submitted the claim, (s)he has the possibility to download the claim only for his/her own personal file, without the need to send it by post to the Grant Holder.

A confirmation email is also sent to him/her as below:
The confirmation of the reception of the Strong authentication OTRR by the Grant Holder creates automatically the payment linked to the request. As soon as the Grant Holder confirms the processing of the payment to the participant in e-COST, an automatic e-mail is sent to the participant mentioning the amount paid (including any modifications introduced by the Grant Holder) as well as the payment details.

For any questions concerning problems with the new Online Travel Reimbursement Request, please contact the Grant Holder or submit a help request to ecost@cost.eu.