

## **COST Action CA22146**

### **Harnessing the potential of underutilized crops to promote sustainable food production (DIVERSICROP)**

#### **Continuous call for applications for virtual mobility grants**

#### **1. About DIVERSICROP**

With population growing rapidly and within the context of agro-climatic changes, there is an increased demand for sustainably produced nutritious food. In Europe, many foods that contribute to health are not widely-grown and consumed despite their suitability to European climates and environments and their viability for sustainable production with lower inputs. Underutilised crops that are stress resilient, such as rye and legumes, have the potential to supply key nutrients and improve diets. Such crops have a long history of cultivation across the continent and are part of the historic food identity of different European countries but are underutilised due to several complex reasons. DIVERSICROP addresses these challenges using an innovative, cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary approach by analysing the deep history of underutilised crops in Europe, understanding the genetic diversity and adaptation to climate change of crop germplasm, analysing current regional trends in the consumption of food products and by involving national and EU policymakers and key stakeholders to revive diverse crop production and maximise the impact of Europe's agricultural sustainability. DIVERSICROP aims to harmonise fragmented data and develop strategies for the sustainable cultivation of target crops, striking a balance between agricultural sustainability and human nutritional value. DIVERSICROP brings together a skilled and interdisciplinary network to identify climate-resilient crop lines, and potential nutritional and health benefits of their consumption to rethink our food systems. DIVERSICROP will strengthen the Farm to Fork and the Biodiversity strategies under the European Green Deal to contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The objectives of DIVERSICROP are to:

1. reveal the environmental, economic and sociocultural circumstances that led to modern underutilisation of the three target crops;
2. determine the traits and characteristics of these crops that make them viable for sustainable production in a modern context;
3. assess their nutritional value, their potential use in food products and their overall market potential in the future; and
4. to provide a pathway for re-engagement with these crops by facilitating interdisciplinary exchange.

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

**WG1. Ancient History.**

The ancient history WG maps the regional deep history for production and consumption of the three selected crops (7000 BC to early modern period) based upon evidence from archaeology, history and ethnobotany.

**WG2. Crop Science.**

The crop science WG identifies current regional environmental constraints that limit production of the three target crops, examining environmental adaptation of underutilised germplasm.

**WG3. Nutrition.**

The nutrition WG examines the current regional trends in food consumption for key products containing the three target crops.

**WG4. Policy.**

The policy WG reviews past policies and incentives, and facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue, with a view to supporting policy development.

**WG5. Dissemination, training and events.**

The dissemination WG disseminates project results to consolidate Europe as the nexus of promotion for underutilised crops cultivation.

## **2. What is a virtual mobility grant**

The COST Action virtual mobility (VM) grants are designed to support remote collaboration and knowledge exchange among researchers and innovators involved in COST Actions, especially in cases where physical mobility is not feasible or necessary. Virtual Mobility consists of a collaboration in a virtual setting among researchers or innovators within the COST Action, to exchange knowledge, learn new techniques. They support work that contributes to the objectives of a specific COST Action. This work can include organizing online workshops, virtual meetings, webinars, or any other activities that promote knowledge sharing, training, and the advancement of the Action's goals.

VM grants are very flexible and inclusive networking activities crucial to establish new collaborations or reinforce existing collaborations across disciplines and different sectors (e.g., academia and industry / SMEs) with possible impact on career development. VM Grants can fund various types of remote activities, such as:

1. Organizing and hosting online training schools or workshops.
2. Developing and coordinating online content, such as tutorials or course materials.
3. Facilitating virtual networking and collaboration between COST Action members.
4. Producing reports or publications that summarize the outcomes of the virtual collaboration.

5. Data analysis, modelling, and preparation of articles.
6. Action webinars
7. Virtual mentoring activities, especially those that support capacity building, particularly for young researchers and investigators.
8. The implementation of research coordination related activities that do not necessarily require in-person presence.

These grants are particularly valuable for maintaining momentum in COST Actions. They help ensure that the collaborative work can continue effectively, leveraging digital tools to overcome geographical barriers.

Outcomes (e.g. spin-off publications and (funded) projects) contribute to the visibility and impact of the COST Actions, encouraging other researchers to join.

The amount of funding provided through VM Grants is typically modest, reflecting the lower costs associated with virtual activities compared to physical mobility grants. The grant covers expenses related to the execution of the virtual activity, such as software licenses, honoraria for speakers, or other related costs. The maximum grant is 1,500 Euros.

Since the financial support comes as a grant, no invoices or other justification of the expenses will be requested.

The VM Grants cannot be used to attend virtual conferences or to purchase software license or set up a database.

### 3. Application procedure

Applicants must have an [e-COST profile](#) and applications must be submitted online in e-COST. The applicant encodes a virtual mobility grant application by logging into e-COST and selecting the 'virtual mobility' type option.

Interested Action participants must also submit an application outlining the planned virtual activity, its relevance to the COST Action, and the expected outcomes. The application form can be downloaded [here](#). The proposal set out in the application will be reviewed by a designated group of Action members guided by the Grant Coordinator. The group advises the Management Committee on the proposal's suitability for funding. Documents that cannot be uploaded via the e-COST interface should be sent directly to the Grant Awarding Coordinator (Donal Murphy-Bokern [donal@murphy-bokern.com](mailto:donal@murphy-bokern.com)) and the Chair of COST action (Sonia Negrao [sonia.negrao@ucd.ie](mailto:sonia.negrao@ucd.ie)).

## 4. The grant awarding process

The supported activity 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.

Applications will be evaluated for their quality and for their relevance to the objectives of DIVERSICROP 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 the passing of the screen, each application is reviewed by two (or three in case the outcome is not consistent) relevant Action members who are guided by the Grant Awarding Coordinator. This assessment considers the relevance of the proposed activity to the Action. The Grant Awarding Coordinator advises the Action Chair who acts on the advice if the budget allows. Successful applicants receive a grant letter.

## 5. Submission of the reports and payment

After the completion of the virtual activity, grantees are required to submit a grant report and a public scientific report to the Management Committee within 30 days of the completion of the work or 15 days after the end of the grant period (i.e. 15 November 2025) whichever date comes first. [The template for the VM Grant report can be downloaded here.](#) The grant report provides:

- A detailed account of the activities carried out.
- An assessment of how the activity met its objectives and contributed to the COST Action's goals.
- A financial report detailing how the grant funds were used.

The template for the scientific report will be provided by the Grant Awarding Coordinator. Failure to submit the grant report within 30 days will effectively cancel the grant. The Action Chair or Grant Awarding Coordinator is responsible for approving the grant report and informing the Grant Holder that the VM Grant has been successfully accomplished. After receipt of the approval by email, the Grant Holder will execute the payment of the grant.

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### Notes:

Each publication produced with support of a dissemination conference support grant should acknowledge the support of the COST Action and whenever possible use the COST and DIVERSICROP logos (on slides and posters).

### Acknowledgement text:

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