CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM)

Call number: STSM – Year 2 N. 3

SUPPORT TO VISTA CROSS-WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

VALUES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRANTS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Values in Turbulent Times:
Navigating Social Changes and Challenges (VISTA)
Action number: CA24150

AT A GLANCE

- Number of grants: 1
- Application deadline: 6th December 2026, 23:59 CET
- Maximum grant: EUR 4,000
- Planned period: It must start after 15 January 2027 and end no later than 15 July 2027
- Apply via: e-COST portal (Activity Grants)

1) Background

CA24150 – *Values in Turbulent Times: Navigating Social Changes and Challenges* (VISTA) invites applications for one Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) to examine the relationship between individual values and attitudes towards migrants in times of crisis. VISTA aims to advance research on how societal crises and social transformations relate to changes and continuities in the values and beliefs held by individuals across Europe.

Using existing survey data (e.g., European Social Survey), this STSM will investigate attitudes towards migrants and their relationship with individual value priorities, such as universalism and security. Through a focused analysis of selected countries and survey rounds surrounding a clearly defined crisis, the STSM will explore changes and continuities in these attitudes and examine whether their associations with values differ across periods. Changes in attitudes will be distinguished analytically from changes in values, allowing the study to assess how value priorities relate to judgments about migration in changing social contexts.

The STSM will contribute primarily to VISTA's work on contextual and individual factors associated with value change (WG4).

2) STSM aim and expected contribution

The successful applicant will undertake a focused secondary analysis of existing survey data under the joint scientific supervision of the host supervisor at the Department of Sociology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy, and the co-supervisor. The work will be scoped to a one-month mission and organised around the following activities:

A. Research focus and analytical preparation

- Refine a research question addressing the relationship between individual values and attitudes towards migrants in a clearly defined crisis context.
- Draw on a targeted reading of relevant literature to guide the selection of countries, survey rounds and a limited set of value orientations and attitudinal indicators.

B. Focused analysis of existing survey data

- Prepare the selected data and measures, checking their availability and comparability across countries and survey rounds.
- Conduct descriptive analyses and a limited set of statistical models to examine changes and continuities in attitudes towards migrants and whether their associations with individual values differ across periods, accounting for relevant sociodemographic characteristics and the survey design.
- Document analytical decisions and interpret the findings in light of the limitations of the data, distinguishing observed differences and associations from claims about causal effects or individual value change

C. Synthesis and contribution to VISTA

- Prepare one research report presenting the research question, data, methods, main findings and limitations, accompanied by a reproducible analysis script.
- Discuss the findings with the host supervisor, co-supervisor and relevant VISTA researchers, identifying their contribution to WG4's work on values in changing contexts, alongside a small number of questions for future research.

3) Expected outputs (deliverables)

By the end of the STSM, the grantee is expected to submit:

(D1) Empirical Research Report: A report presenting the research question, theoretical rationale, selected countries and survey rounds, measures of values and attitudes towards migrants, analytical approach, and main findings. The report will examine changes and continuities in attitudes and their associations with individual values across the selected periods, discussing the limitations of the analysis and its contribution to VISTA.

(D2) Reproducible Analysis Materials: An annotated script covering data preparation, variable construction and statistical analyses, accompanied by brief documentation of variable selection, coding decisions and treatment of survey weights. The documentation may be included as an annex to the research report.

4) Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Meet the STSM eligibility rules of the COST Action.
- Be affiliated in a country different from Italy.
- Be available to complete the mission within the stated timeframe.
- Demonstrate experience in the secondary analysis of survey data using statistical software such as R, Stata, SPSS or equivalent, including data preparation, variable construction and statistical analysis.
- Be able to document analytical procedures and communicate findings clearly in English.

5) Preferred applicant profile

Applications are welcome from researchers at any career stage who can demonstrate:

- Expertise or a strong research interest in attitudes towards migrants, sociology of migration, values research or the social consequences of crises.
- Experience in the secondary analysis of survey data using statistical software such as R, Stata, SPSS or equivalent. Familiarity with the European Social Survey or comparable cross-national datasets is an asset.
- Ability to prepare survey data, construct appropriate measures, account for survey weights and interpret statistical findings critically.
- Strong skills in documenting analytical procedures and drafting clear, concise empirical research reports in English.
- Capacity to work independently while collaborating with the host supervisor, co-supervisor and an international, interdisciplinary COST Action network.

6) Host institution and duration

- Host institution: Department of Sociology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy.
- Host supervisor: Prof. Veronica Riniolo (Action Chair), Department of Sociology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
- Co-Supervisor: Prof. Bogdan Voicu, Action Vice Chair
- STSM duration: 1 month
- Planned period: The one-month stay will be scheduled in agreement with the host supervisor. It must start after 15 January 2027 and end no later than 15 July 2027.

7) Funding

The STSM grant is intended to provide a contribution for travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, implementation of the project, delivery of the report to the COST Action MC on the work developed, main achievements of the STSM, planned future follow-up activities and overall effort, in line with COST Action rules.

Applicants should include a concise budget estimate and explain value for money.

The grantee submits the required reports and relevant documentation in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the activity and not later than 15th September, unless otherwise specified by COST rules for the relevant Grant Period.

8) Application package (a single PDF document)

Applicants must submit a single PDF containing:

1. ***Motivation letter (max 1 page)***
   - How the proposed mission aligns with the aims of this call and the COST Action objectives
   - Relevant research experience on individual values and/or attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, and methodological experience in quantitative research and the secondary analysis of survey data
2. ***CV (max 4 pages)***
   - Including selected publications, projects, or research experience relevant to individual values, attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, value change in times of crisis, or the quantitative analysis of survey data
3. ***Proposed work plan (max 2 pages)***
   - Tasks, timeline, and intended outputs, aligned with deliverables above

4. ***Host collaboration statement (max ½ page)***
    - A short plan for coordination with the host supervisor and the VISTA network, including meetings, check-ins, and documentation workflow
5. ***Budget estimate (max ½ page)***
    - Travel, accommodation, subsistence, and other eligible costs, with a brief justification

9) Selection criteria

Applications will be evaluated by the Grant Awarding Committee in collaboration with the host supervisor, using the following criteria:

1. **Relevance to Action objectives and WG deliverables - 30%**

    Alignment with VISTA's objectives concerning values in times of crisis, with a clear focus on the relationship between individual values and attitudes towards migrants.

2. **Scientific profile and methodological competence - 30%**

    Quality and relevance of the applicant's research experience in relation to the STSM topic, and demonstrated competence in quantitative methods and the secondary analysis of survey data using statistical software. Assessment will be based on the CV, selected publications or projects, and the motivation letter, taking into account experience with cross-national surveys.

3. **Feasibility and quality of work plan - 15%**

    Realistic scope, clear tasks and timeline, credible deliverables, and appropriate documentation strategy.

4. **Host suitability and collaboration added value - 10%**

    Complementarity between the applicant's expertise and the host's research interests, with a clear plan for scientific exchange, feedback and effective collaboration during the mission.

5. **Impact, dissemination, and value for money - 15%**

    Potential contribution to VISTA outputs, article development, training/dissemination materials, stakeholder-oriented reflection, and justified budget.

10) Submission procedure and deadline

- Submission: https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants
- Select: Apply for new Grant -> "STSM – Year 2 N. 3- Values and Attitudes towards Migrants in Times of Crisis"
- Deadline: 6th December 2026, 23:59 CET
- Notification of results: 21st December 2026

11) Contacts for questions:

Host Supervisor/Action Chair: Prof. Veronica Riniolo, veronica.riniolo@unicatt.it

Co-Supervisor/Action Vice Chair: Prof. Bogdan Voicu, bogdan.voicu@ulbsibiu.ro

Grant Awarding Coordinator: Prof. Pieter Francois, pieter.francois@anthro.ox.ac.uk

Grant Holder Manager: Dr. Alessandra Amato, grantholder.vista@unicatt.it

COST REFERENCE LINKS

- e-COST: https://e-services.cost.eu/

- COST funding documents and guidelines: https://www.cost.eu/funding/documents-guidelines/

- COST Grant Awarding User Guide: https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2025/01/COST-Grant-Awarding-user-guide.pdf