



VIRTUAL NETWORKING STRATEGY

**International Interdisciplinary Network on
Smart Healthy Age-Friendly Environments | NET4Age-Friendly
COST Action 19136 (2020-2024)**

This article/publication is based upon work from COST Action CA19136 - International Interdisciplinary Network on Smart Healthy Age-friendly Environments, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.

www.cost.eu

SUMMARY

The Virtual Networking activities aim to ensure recognised, demonstrated and implemented collaboration between the Action members, including formal and informal knowledge actors from science/academia, policy, industry and civic society, through a structured process, towards the design of transdisciplinary activities to implement NET4 shared vision, and build up ways to implement their dissemination on a large scale, through targeted information and provision of contents to diverse audiences.

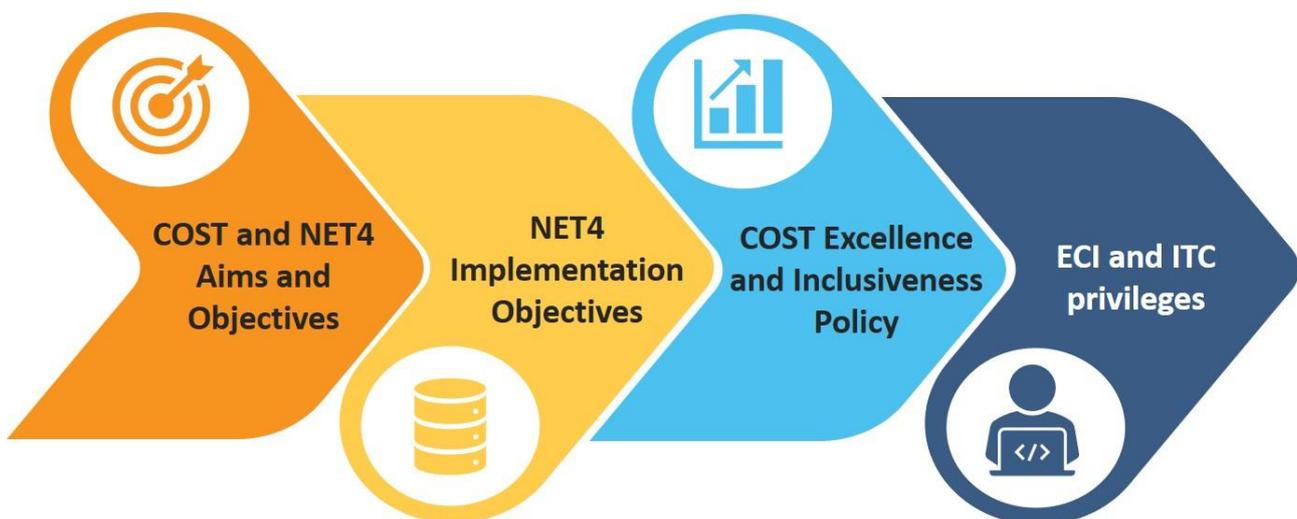
The VN activities also aim to provide enhanced access and inclusion of ITC, NNC and IPC members and EIC researchers into the main activities of the Action, ensuring that the use of the knowledge and results of NET4 have pragmatic and transferable outcomes, reach key stakeholders and achieve the main goal of influencing future policies and practices by bringing together regional and national ecosystems from 46 countries to learn and implement SHAFE.

The Action will support knowledge sharing through processes that will allow the identification of the social return of research, further attracting diverse groups of stakeholders along the quadruple helix of innovation. As an added value, such approach will also contribute to improve research sustainability.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The Action's Virtual Networking Strategy is based on the following key principles:

- Alignment of the proposal with the COST and Action aims and objectives
- Alignment with the objectives listed in the section "Implementation of Activities" below in this document.
- Adequate implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy, especially towards the support of researchers in ITCs and NNCs, as well as the approved strategy on virtual networking for the NET4Age-Friendly Action.
- Privilege of ECI and applicants from ITC.



THE STRATEGY

The Virtual Networking Strategy will aim to support the NET4 members to valorise and exchange their knowledge, addressing the challenges arising in the efforts to set-up local and regional ecosystems that promote smart healthy age-friendly environments, namely through:

- promoting and raising awareness about the contents developed by members, providing information on the relevance and effectiveness of the results;
- supporting the transfer of the results to targeted audiences, for example decision-makers, professionals, citizens;
- engaging professionals, communities and organisations;
- ensuring connection with existing networks and communities that may be relevant to the Action.

Within these main goals, the VNS will define how the online events of the Action will be planned, coordinated and reported and how they fit and contribute to the overall Action Strategy.

The main actions to be developed are the following:

- To prepare a virtual networking strategy for the Action;
- To support the MC in the discussions and planning of virtual events;
- To assist in the selection of hosts for the virtual networking events;
- To oversee the selection of the most appropriate virtual tools for each specific virtual activity, considering the needs of the Action, demonstrate the principle of the best value for money, adhere to GDPR.
- To support the call coordination of the Virtual Mobility Grants.

To this latest aim, the VN Plan will depart from the Strategy and define the approach for coordinating the six available Virtual Mobility Grants by:

- Defining the calls for VMG
- Open the VMG calls, support and advise candidates, disseminate
- Manage the evaluation process for awarding the VMG

At the end of the Grant period, the VN activities will be assessed and reported on to the MC and the COST Programme, in an integrated document containing the Strategy, the Plan and the Implementation outcomes.

THE IMPLEMENTATION

Each VM applicant can define their scope within the 5 Working Group (WG) themes, as long as they directly contribute to the work being actually developed within the WG during this Grant period. This should be made explicit in the application and coordination with WG Leaders and members is valued.

Each applicant shall develop one video recording summarising the outcomes, discussion and lessons learned in the VM, in any format (e.g. presentation, lecture, panel discussion, learning tool, etc.) as long as it is possible to upload this in NET4 website – webinar repository (<https://www.net4age.eu/net4-webinars>), to be used as a learning material and allowing for future networking, knowledge exchange and upscale.

All of the videos shall be ready and available at the MC meeting in 6-7 October, where a summary presentation of the 6 VM outcomes will be included in the agenda, with room for discussion between the Action members and grantees.

The requirements on activities expected to be performed by the successful applicant are listed in section 10.2.3 of the Vademecum, as potential examples:

- To support the harmonisation and standardisation of methods and procedures within the Action networking activities, e.g.:
 - setting up a survey amongst all Action members to collect different results and outcomes from experiments done in their respective labs and research groups.
 - coordinating the discussions to create common protocols to be used by the network afterwards.
 - preparing questionnaires and response scales to be used by the Action members as part of virtual networking activities.
- To support the implementation of research related activities that do not necessarily require in-person presence, e.g.
 - Desk search on relevant items.
 - Data analysis of the Action for a specific report or activity.
- Virtual mentoring scheme, with special focus on activities and exchanges that can generate capacity building and new skills, particularly for ECIs researchers (e.g. managerial skills, methodological skills, communication skills, etc).
- Content preparation and coordination of science communication activities, e.g.
 - Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC).
 - Online workshops like 'webinar series' or 'tv series'-like format.
 - Online COST Action workshops in external international conferences or events, when the applicant can demonstrate a role in the organising committee, that could help in the promotion of the Action activities.

June 2021