



COMULIS STRATEGY PAPER – VIRTUAL NETWORKING –

COMULIS' virtual networking mission is to advance life sciences in Europe by implementing and disseminating the manifold benefits of correlated multimodal imaging. We envision a future where we bring together diverse scientists with their specific expertise to harness the power of multimodality imaging and train a new generation of young scientists for whom multimodality imaging research is the new normal. Getting such diverse interests to work together and teaching scientists for whom the multimodality imaging approach is an integral component of their research tool-chest will only be possible if we produce the necessary networking tools and learning resources to facilitate the transition. We think that virtual networking tools represent an indispensable toolset to achieve these goals.

Our virtual networking approaches will be guided by our values of geographical integration (with a focus on ITC countries), balanced inclusion of all genders, and promotion of early career scientists. Virtual networking will allow COMULIS to bring together such diverse disciplines and scientists by also opening the call for virtual mobility grants. We specifically encourage young researchers to apply for VM Grants and take the lead in ambitious projects of COMULIS, and focus on increasing brain circulation between peripheral regions to research intensive territories. The evaluation process for VM Grants will be additionally based on equal opportunities and gender-friendly implementations. All proposals will undergo a peer-review process by members of the COST Action, coordinated by the COMULIS Core Group. We have set up a clear scoring system that – apart from scientific excellence – also takes into consideration gender, career stage and geography. The VM Grant project description and agenda will be further evaluated according to whether it is strongly linked to the COMULIS working groups and COMULIS objectives and whether it ties in strongly with aspects of multimodality. Evaluation criteria also include whether they have the potential for dissemination and technology transfer back at the home country, whether the goals of the projects are realistic compared to its targeted duration, and whether involved parties have the expertise to accomplish the VM Grant goals.

The VM Grants will be disseminated through our vivid social media presence, our homepage and our dedicated mailing lists that reaches out to about 400 scientists. Once the Core Group has decided on funding, the Virtual Networking Support Manager will advise the beneficiary on choosing the optimal networking tool and support her/him with the implementation. The beneficiary will need to file a final report to receive the granted amount, which will be shared across the COMULIS network. Importantly, the Virtual Networking Support Manager will attend dedicated courses offered within COST or educational platforms to better understand available tools and platforms and their advantages and limits for virtual networking.

In summary, virtual networking will be a crucial toolset for COMULIS and the right answer to the ongoing pandemic to help advance and disseminate multimodality imaging across scales in life sciences despite the current challenges and travel restrictions.

