COST Action ES1408: European Network for Algal Bioproducts (EUALGAE)

Call: Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

Second call for applications for STSMs for the current grant period (15/16). Deadline for applications: 31st December 2015. Note that STSMs must be completed within the grant period, i.e. before May 31st 2016.

COST

COST is an intergovernmental framework for European **Co**operation in **S**cience and **T**echnology established to initiate networking and coordination of nationally funded research activities on a European level. It facilitates bringing good scientists together under light strategic guidance based on networks, called COST Actions, centred around research projects in fields that are of interest to COST countries and cooperating countries.

COST Action ES1408

COST Action ES1408 is a four year networking action that unites a heterogeneous group of scientists and researchers from across the EU and around the globe with a common goal: development of an economically feasible model for the commercialization of algae-based bioproducts. It is the aim of the action to stimulate not only interaction among research groups across Europe but also to foster cooperation between academia and industry. This scientific platform will generate a synergistic approach for utilization of microalgae biomass for sustainable fuels and fine chemical products. Here you can download the action's memorandum of understanding.

STSM

Financial support may be provided to eligible applicants to carry out a **S**hort **T**erm **S**cientific **M**ission that will specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of this COST Action. STSMs facilitate Action participants (PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, anybody employed by/affiliated to an institution or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing research) going to an institution or laboratory in another country to foster collaboration, to learn a new technique or to take measurements using instruments and/or methods not available in their own institution/laboratory. Early Career Investigators (ECI)[1] will be given priority.

STSMs must have a minimum duration of one week (five working days) and have a maximum duration of three months. An ECI can request a period of up to six months. STSMs must be completed within a single grant period (i.e. STSMs in the first grant period must end before May 31 2016) and within the Action's lifetime (March 23 2019).

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[1] ECI: A researcher within a time span of up to 8 years from the date they obtained their PhD/doctorate (full-time equivalent).

NOTE: It is possible to change the dates of a successful STSM application if both applicant and host agree. To do so the applicant must contact the STSM coordinator (Dominik Refardt, dominik.refardt@zhaw.ch) and inform him about the suggested changes. However, the STSM duration should not be reduced as this is an integral part of the STSM. STSMs that do fall short of the originally specified duration will not be reimbursed the full amount originally allocated.

Conducting a successful STMS – hints for the organizers

The mission should benefit both parties. Therefore it is a good idea to formulate it as a mini research project.

The mission should be scheduled such that the supervisor at the host institution is available. Supervisors: keep in mind that a successful mission requires your involvement as well.

In order to make the most out of the mission, the visitor should arrive well prepared. It is therefore a good idea to assign some kind of homework that needs to be done prior to the visit.

Applicants

STSM applicants should be graduate students (must be engaged in an official research programme as a PhD student) or postdoctoral fellows (including Early Career Investigators), and must either be employed by or affiliated to an institution or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing research.

The following table shows the scenarios available to eligible STSM applicants:

Home institution	Host institution
From a participating COST country	– To another participating COST country – To an approved NNC institution – To an approved IPC institution – To an approved specific organisation (EC and EU agencies, european RTD organisations, international organisations)
From an approved NNC institution	To a participating COST country
From an approved european RTD organisation	To a participating COST country

Note that a participating COST country should have accepted the memorandum of understanding of this Action (see here) and that the home institution and the host institution must be located in two different countries. The nationality of the applicant is not a bar to eligibility.

Financial Support

A STSM grant is a fixed contribution based on the budget requested by the applicant and the evaluation of the application by the selection committee. This grant will not necessarily cover all expenses; it is intended only as a contribution to the travel and subsistence costs of the participant.

The calculation of this contribution for a STSM is based on the following rules:

- The reimbursement rate per day is EUR 160 maximum.
- Up to EUR 500 may be attributed for travel expenses.
- A maximum of EUR 2,500 in total can be afforded to the grantee.
- A maximum of EUR 3,500 in total can be afforded to ECIs.

The selection committee can approve differentiated country rates to cover accommodation and meal expenses based on the perceived cost of living in the host country.

Please note the grant will only be paid to the grantee after the STSM has been completed and the STSM report, which is submitted by the grantee, has been approved by chair and the STSM coordinator. It is encouraged that the host advances the financial resources to the applicant and receives reimbursement directly from the COST Action.

The total budget for STSMs for the grant period 2015/16 is EUR 7,500.00.

For the period of the STSM, the grant holder of the Action, the management committee or the COST association cannot be considered as being an STSM grantee's employer. Grantees must make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security and pension matters.

Application procedure for an STSM

1. It is essential that the STSM relates to the Action's objectives. The initiative for an STSM can come from either the host or the visiting scientist. The Action's website or newsletter can be used to announce proposals for STSMs and to find candidates or hosts.

2. The applicant must obtain the written agreement of the host scientist before submitting the application. It is important that the host and the applicant mutually agree on the content of the planned STSM.

3. The applicant then completes the online application form. Note that the online system only has room for abbreviated CVs and work plans. The online registration tool will create a formal STSM application file, which the applicant can download.

4. Send the application file as an e-mail attachment to the Action chair, Cristina Gonzalez (cristina.gonzalez@imdea.org), the Action vice chair, Luisa Gouveia (luisa.gouveia@lneg.pt) and the STSM coordinator, Dominik Refardt (dominik.refardt@zhaw.ch). Add the following supporting documents *and name them accordingly* (check again before sending them):
   - Brief CV with publications (three pages maximum). *Lastname_Firstname_CV.pdf*
   - Full work plan (five pages maximum). *Lastname_Firstname_workplan.pdf*
   - A letter of motivation by the applicant with a detailed explanation about how the STSM will contribute to the Action's aims (important). *Lastname_Firstname_Letter_of_motivation.pdf*
   - Letter of agreement by a senior researcher affiliated to the host institution to accept and supervise the applicant. *Lastname_Firstname_Letter_of_agreement.pdf*

- A support letter (pdf scan is sufficient) from the home institution. *Lastname_Firstname_Letter_of_support.pdf*
- PhD student applications must also provide a short statement of support for the proposed visit from their supervisor. *Lastname_Firstname_Letter_from_supervisor.pdf*
- Requested budget and its justification on half a page (total expected cost for travel, accommodation and daily allowance, additional financial support). Also indicate: Should the grant be transferred to the applicant or the home institution? *Lastname_Firstname_Budget.pdf*

Evaluation process and result announcement

The applications will be pre-processed by the STSM coordinator who will then propose a ranked list of applications to the selection committee (core group): chair and vice-chair, WG leaders, STSM coordinator, and ECIs representative.

Evaluation will be based on the scientific excellence of the applicant, the research proposal, and the relevance of the work plan for the achievement of EUALGAE objectives. There should be special considerations with respect to supporting COST policies on promoting gender balance, enabling Early Career Investigators (ECI) and broadening geographical inclusiveness.

The selection committee will evaluate the STSMs proposals within a month after the STSMs call deadline and will inform the grant holder of the successful evaluated proposals. The successful applicants will then receive a grant letter from the grant holder, stating the official approval of the STSM application, the granted budget and a payment request form which has to be completed after the completion of the STSM for the grant to be transferred. The applicant has to notify acceptance of the grant by returning the letter, with his/her signature, a week after receiving the grant letter.

If the amount of funding by all applications within a call does not exceed the available budget, the applications are handled by the STMS coordinator only. He then presents the list to the core group which must accept the funding of every application. If necessary, the STSM coordinator can ask members of the core group for advice.

If there are more applications than funding is available, the following procedure takes place.

1. A list of all applications (containing an informative summary as well as the names of the home and host institutions) is distributed to all members of the core group in form of a table in which every evaluator can mark which applications he or she can evaluate according to their field of expertise.
2. To guarantee a fair and objective evaluation, an evaluator should have no affiliation with neither the home nor the host institution of the STSM proposal in question.
3. All applications are evaluated by two members of the core group each. The STSM coordinator distributes the proposals to the individual evaluators.
4. The criteria given in the table below shall be applied for evaluation. The first criterion (a) is assessed by the STSM coordinator prior to the evaluation process.

Criterion	max. points
a) Before any further criteria are considered	
Application is complete and fulfills all formal requirements	pass/no pass
b) Evaluation of the proposal	
Research plan is relevant for the action's aims	3
Research plan is of high quality	3
The proposal presents a novel/innovative/original idea	3
Applicant has an outstanding CV (considering his/her position)	1
Topic of the proposal relates to the applicants field of research	1
c) Criteria that can be used if a decision is not reached	
Applicant is from a less research intensive country	
Applicant is a PhD student or an ECI	
Gender of the applicant balances the gender ratio of all applicants of the current call	

If three points can be awarded, numbers mean the following:
0: no
1: somewhat
2: yes
3: very much
If one point can be awarded, numbers mean the following:
0: no
1: yes

5. The evaluators report their evaluations to the STSM coordinator.
6. The STSM coordinator ranks all evaluations and applies further criteria (c) if necessary. He then reports the final result to the core group to be accepted.
7. The applicants are informed about the decision reached.

After the STSM
The grantee is required to submit a one page scientific report to the host scientist, the Action chair and the STSM coordinator for approval within 30 days after the end date of the STSM. The report should contain:

- Cover page with applicant's name, affiliation address, e-mail, name of the host scientist and institute.
- Purpose of the STSM
- Description of the work carried out during the STSM
- Description of the main results obtained
- Future collaboration with the host institution (if applicable)
- Foreseen publications/articles resulting from the STSM (if applicable)
- A letter of confirmation by the host scientist of the successful execution of the STSM
- Other comments (if any).

An an official letter or email confirmation from a senior researcher affiliated to the host institution is required before the scientific report can be accepted.

The Action chair and STSM coordinator are responsible for approving the scientific report. Before the STSM grant is formally approved and can be paid, the grant manager must receive an email from the STSM coordinator stating that the STSM has been successfully completed and that the scientific report has been accepted. The failure to submit the scientific report within 30 days will effectively cancel the grant. Once approved, payment of the STSM grant will be made by bank-to-bank transfer to either the host institution or the applicant, as requested in the application.

NOTE: For STSM ending close to the end of the grant period, the completion report must be returned in time so that the reimbursement procedure can be completed within the budget period.

Acknowledgement of ES1408 in publications

If work resulting from an STSM visit is published in a journal, please add the following acknowledgement: *Part of this work was supported by the COST Action ES1408 European network for algal-bioproducts (EUALGAE).*

If the work is presented in a conference or event, the COST logo must be displayed and the Action ES1408 must be acknowledged.

More information

- Website: http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/essem/Actions/ES1408

- Online application form: https://e-services.cost.eu/w3/index.php?id=91

- COST Vademecum: google for „COST VADEMECUM"

For further informations you may contact the STSM coordinator Dominik Refardt (dominik.refardt@zhaw.ch).

December 10th 2015

Dominik Refardt (STSM coordinator of COST Action ES1408)