

COST Action CA18202

NECTAR – Network for Equilibria and Chemical Thermodynamics Advanced Research

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

4th Call for STSM Applications

Second Grant Period, 1 May 2020 – 31 October 2021

COST Action NECTAR opens a call for applications to STSM to be developed under the scope of the referred Action, in the terms described in this document.

The main procedures/regulations concerning STSM are governed by the COST Vademecum (<https://www.cost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Vademecum-V8-1-May-20202.pdf>), in particular those described in Section 8. Please read this section prior to preparing your STSM application. Applicants can also refer to the STSM User guide (<https://www.cost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/STSM-userguide.pdf>).

Scope of NECTAR COST Action

The thermodynamic study of chemical equilibria represents the core of many important branches of chemistry, from coordination and supramolecular chemistry, to chemical speciation, to molecular modelling and drug design. The importance of chemical equilibria, and chemical thermodynamics in general, results from the simple assertion that many properties of elements and compounds depend mainly on their interactions in a given system: the biological activity of an element or molecule, or their environmental impact can be explained by a detailed study of these interactions, whose nature and strength can be evaluated by chemical equilibrium and other thermodynamic studies.

NECTAR combines the expertise of the large community of specialists working in the field of thermodynamic studies of chemical equilibria. The scopes of this Action are to create a network based on the stimulating collaboration between them, to promote knowledge exchange, and to achieve high technological progress. All this will be accomplished through a fruitful collaboration between young researchers and experienced scientists, taking into consideration gender balance and maximal geographical distribution. Innovative and integrated theoretical and experimental approaches will be established and optimized. Overall, the outstanding quality of obtained results will serve as benchmark for next decades, allowing their application in the above-mentioned fields and substantially impacting on life quality of next generations.

For further details and specific objectives, please read the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of NECTAR COST Action: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA18202/>.

Purpose of a STSM

STSM are exchange visits to support individual mobility, strengthen existing networks and foster collaboration between COST Action Participants. A STSM should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action, whilst simultaneously allowing those partaking in the missions to learn new techniques, gain access to specific data, instruments and/or methods not available in their own institutions.

Eligibility criteria

The institution/organization or legal entity where applicants pursue their main strand of research are considered here as Home Institutions. The Host Institution is the institution/organization that will host the approved applicant. Early Career Investigators (ECI) are defined as researchers with PhD + up to 8 years of research experience. The following eligibility criteria apply for the definition of the possible applicants and the host institutions.

- a) STSM applicants must be engaged in an official research programme as a PhD Student or postdoctoral fellow or can be employed by (or affiliated to) an institution, organization or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with research, and belongs to a NECTAR Action Member Country, or is an approved Near Neighbour Country (NNC) Institution* or an approved European RTD Organization;
- b) The possible STSM Host Institution must be selected according to the scenarios summarized in the following table.

* In NECTAR, NNC is currently Ukraine.

Applicant's Home Institution	STSM Host Institution
Located in a Participating COST Full Member/COST Cooperating Member	Located in another Participating COST Full Member/ COST Cooperating Member
	Located in a Participating COST Partner Member
	An Approved International Partner Country Institution
	An Approved NNC Institution
	The EU Commission or a EU Body, Office or Agency
	An Approved European RTD Organization
Located in an Approved NNC Institution	An Approved International Organization
	Located in a Participating COST Full Member/ COST Cooperating Member
Located in an Approved European RTD Organization	Located in a Participating COST Full Member/ COST Cooperating Member

Other important criteria for the STSM mobility are:

1. The STSM need to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period and always within the Action's lifetime;
2. The STSM must have a minimum duration of 5 calendar days that includes travel. For the STSMs approved in this Call, STSM must have a limit of 30 calendar days including travel and must be concluded before September 30th, 2021;
3. The COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action cannot be considered as being an STSM grantee's employer, *i.e.* the STSM Grant cannot be considered as a salary;
4. STSM grantees should make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security and pension matters.

Period of STSM and application deadlines

Relevant dates are as follows:

- **March 15th 2021:** deadline for submission of STSM applications
- **Before March 30th, 2021:** notification of selected STSM
- **September 30th, 2021:** deadline for the conclusion of STSM activities.

A scientific report drafted by the applicant after the end of the STSM and an approval letter of the scientific report from the Host institution must be uploaded on the e-COST portal within 30 days from the end date of the STSM.

Funding

The total budget for STSM for this call is EUR 12550 and the minimum number of STSM grants that will be funded is eight (8). **The maximum budget granted to each approved STSM is EUR 1500 for a maximum of 30 calendar days including travel.** The amount granted to each individual STSM will be determined during the evaluation process by STSM Coordinator and may be subjected to negotiation with the applicant(s) before approval.

An STSM Grant is a fixed financial contribution which takes into consideration the budget request of the applicant and the outcome of the evaluation of the STSM application. **Please note that STSM Grants do not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking a given mission**, being only a contribution to the overall travel, accommodation and meal expenses of the Grantee. Applicants are encouraged to evaluate their budget request based on a high benefit/cost ratio and justify it based on the perceived cost of living in the host country/city. Following the provisions of Section 8.4 of COST Vademecum, which defines criteria for the financial contribution for each STSM, **up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day including travel days can be afforded.**

Note that specific provisions have been introduced to enable researchers from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) participating in the COST Action to request a pre-payment of 50% of their STSM Grant when they complete the first day of their STSM. In such case, the representative of the Host Institution must confirm by e-mail to the Grant Holder that the STSM applicant has officially started the mission on day 1. Only then the Grant Holder can arrange the payment of 50% of the STSM grant. The remaining 50% of the Grant is payable once the administrative requirements have been satisfied after the STSM. For further information please refer to the COST Vademecum <https://www.cost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Vademecum-V8-1-May-20202.pdf>).

Application Procedure

The application procedure is legally bound to the Vademecum of COST (<https://www.cost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Vademecum-V8-1-May-20202.pdf>). Eligible STSM applicants must submit their STSM applications online at the following web address: <https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm>.

The following information is needed for the on-line application form:

- i. Action number (CA18202);
- ii. Title of the planned STSM;
- iii. Start and end dates of the STSM;
- iv. Motivation and Workplan;

- v. Applicant's bank details;
- vi. Host institution details;
- vii. Requested budget.

The field "Motivation and Workplan summary" should contain the following information (max 2000 words)

1. Aim & Motivation - Please explain the scientific and/or other motivation for the STSM and what scientific and/or other outcomes you aim to accomplish with the STSM. Please include in this section a brief description of the scientific context into which the activities are to be performed (e.g. state of the art of that specific field of study etc.);
2. Proposed contribution to the scientific objectives of the Action. Please include how the planned activities will contribute to the plan of one or more WG(s) of the Action;
3. Techniques - Please detail what techniques or equipment you may learn to use, if applicable. Please underline the aspects of complementarity between expertise and instrumentation of the home and hosting institution/research groups;
4. Planning - Please detail the steps you will take to achieve your proposed aim.

Applicants are requested to present a Workplan summary reasonably feasible and coherent with the time slot reported in the application.

A CV should be submitted, drafted preferably in Europass format (max. 3 pages). A list of academic publications can be added in separate pages.

Prior to this submission, it is responsibility of the applicant to obtain a written agreement from the Host institution stating that the applicant may perform the activities detailed in the STSM work plan on the agreed dates. The letter must be dated back not more than 3 months, and must be signed by a permanent staff representative of the Host institution (e.g. head of the research group, PI, director of the department, head of the institute/division etc.).

Applicants that are not appointed to either permanent or tenure-track positions (i.e. Ph.D. students or Post-docs) are required to obtain a letter of support from their home institution for their application to STSM within this Action. A brief description of the motivation for support should be provided. The letter must be dated back not more than 3 months, and must be signed by a permanent staff representative of the home institution (e.g. Ph.D. supervisor, head of the research group, PI, director of the department, head of the institute/division etc.).

After the conclusion of the procedure of application online, each applicant is required to send a copy of the following documents (merged in one single PDF file) to the Action STSM Coordinator (Prof. Matteo Tegoni, matteo.tegoni@unipr.it) and to the Action Vice-Chair (Dr. Sofia Gama, sofia.gama@uwb.edu.pl) at latest on March 15th, 2021 (deadline for application). The email must have "STSM 4 CA18202 Application" as the subject line.

- STSM application form as generated online on e-COST;
- CV including a list of academic publications;
- Letter of invitation from the Host institution confirming that they can undertake the STSM on the given dates;
- Letter of support from the home institution for their application to STSM within this Action, if applicable.

These documents can be downloaded from the e-COST website at the end of the application procedure, if required.

Selection committee

The selection of applicants is based on the scientific scope of the STSM application which must be coherent with the overall objectives of the Action. The STSM Committee will select the successful applications.

The STSM Committee is composed of the STSM Coordinator (Prof. Matteo Tegoni, matteo.tegoni@unipr.it), Prof. Erika Ferrari (erika.ferrari@unimore.it), and Prof. Stefan Stürup (stefan.sturup@sund.ku.dk).

In case of conflict of interest (i.e. applicant belonging to a commissioner's research group), the member that is constrained in his duties will be substituted by the Action Chair or the Vice-Chair.

Applications assessment and communication of results

The STSM Committee will perform the scientific assessment of the applications considering the NECTAR Action scope and objectives, as well as the potential for enhancement of the research interaction between the involved parts, measured by the impact of the exchange expected by the applicants and involved institutions.

General criteria for evaluation of STSM proposals are:

- Priority to STSM applications of PhD students or ECI;
- Priority to applicants from ITCs;
- Gender balance;
- Complementarity of resources between home and host institutions/research groups (resources are intended as: technical expertise, infrastructure, or instrumentation; point 3 of the Motivation and Workplan summary* – see section "Application Procedure.");
- Clarity of activity planning (point 4 of the Motivation and Workplan summary);
- Contribution to the scientific objectives of the Action and to the planned activities of one or more WG(s) (point 2 of the Motivation and Workplan summary);
- Scientific and/or other motivation for the STSM and what scientific and/or other outcomes are aimed to accomplish with the STSM (point 1 of the Motivation and Workplan summary);
- Curriculum Vitae (CV).

* "Motivation and Workplan summary" refers to the related field in the online STSM application form

The STSM Coordinator (or the Action Chair/Vice-Chair, in case of conflict of interest) will inform the Grant Holder of the approved STSMs. The Grant Holder will inform each approved applicant by sending a Grant Letter generated from e-COST. The applicant must return this letter of acceptance with his/her signature.

STSM reporting and Payment

Within 30 days from the end date of the STSM the successful applicant must submit electronically on e-COST:

- The scientific report drafted by the applicant (max 4 pages). A template for the report can be found in e-COST (www.cost.eu/STSM_report_template).
- Host approval of scientific report: an official letter / email from a senior Researcher affiliated to the Host institution formally stating the acceptance of the scientific report.

At least three (3) scientific pictures and/or one (1) video showing experiments or group picture with host, must be sent, together with a consent to release statement, directly to the Science Communications Manager Prof. Elżbieta Gumienna-Kontecka (elzbieta.gumienna-kontecka@chem.uni.wroc.pl), and the STSM coordinator Prof. Matteo Tegoni (matteo.tegoni@unipr.it).

A copy of the scientific report in PDF format must be sent, by email, to the Action STSM Coordinator (Prof. Matteo Tegoni, matteo.tegoni@unipr.it) and the Action Vice-Chair (Dr. Sofia Gama, sofia.gama@uwb.edu.pl). The STSM Coordinator will be responsible for approving the scientific report and informing the Action Chair and the Grant Holder that the STSM has been successfully accomplished.

Failure to submit the scientific report and Host acceptance within 30 days from the end date of the STSM will effectively cancel the Grant.

(Please note that the COST Association can request additional information to substantiate the information contained within the documents submitted by STSM applicants).

STSM contacts

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