

TOP-AGRI-Network - Call for STSM Applications 2022-2023

Short-term scientific missions (STSM) are exchange visits between researchers involved in a COST Action, allowing scientists to visit an institution or laboratory in another COST Member. Their aim is to foster collaboration in excellent research infrastructures and share new techniques/methods that may not be available in a participant's home institution or laboratory and to establish and boost networks.

The COST Action 'Towards zero pesticide agriculture: European network for sustainability' (TOP-AGRI-Network, CA21134, <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA21134/>) welcomes Action members' applications for STSMs in order to network and develop scientific collaborations between institutions involved in the Action and, especially, to increase young researchers' expertise and networking.

STSMs are an important part of TOP-AGRI-Network, funded by COST, European Cooperation in Science and Technology. The Action aims to establish a European network of scientists-experts and young researchers studying and applying techniques and protection methods aiming at preparing the future of an agriculture free of synthetic pesticides and of nature-derived pesticides that negatively impact environment and human health. TOP-AGRI-Network tackles this challenge by creating and organizing a wide research community with the aim to form a European leading network with high and transdisciplinary expertise around the common objective of a pesticide-free agriculture, with a particular focus on young scientists. To enable a redesign of the food system as a whole, TOP-AGRI-Network will promote a concerted mobilization of scientists, farmers and extension services, processing industries, public authorities and consumers by associating them closely with the activities that will be carried out in the COST Action.

Eligibility

STSMs should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action. In this first call, STSMs related to the WG1 will be privileged.

The STSM applicant must be engaged in an official research programme as a PhD student or postdoctoral fellow (less than 5 years after obtaining the PhD) or can be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution, organisation or legal entity which has within its remit a clear role in performing basic and applied research and transferring research results.

The following eligibility criteria apply:

1. STSMs must have a minimum duration of 2 weeks and a maximum duration of 4 weeks;
2. Applicants must work in institutions located in a COST Member (ITC or non-ITC), Partner Member, or approved Near-Neighbour Country;
3. The host institution must be located in a COST Member (ITC or non-ITC) and must be carried out entirely within a single grant period between early April and late September 2023.
4. The application needs to be submitted before the deadline of 15 February 2023;

5. The applicant must conduct research at the host institution which must be on the topic of the Action and preferably related to the WG1 (https://e-services.cost.eu/files/domain_files/CA/Action_CA21134/mou/CA21134-e.pdf); selected applicants should be targeting Action deliverables as much as possible, e.g. literature reviews or some specific tasks;
6. The grantee must submit a scientific report to the host institution and to the Action Chair and STSM coordinator within 30 days from the end date of the STSM. The scientific report will require the approval from a senior scientist of the host institution, and after, of the Action Chair or STSM coordinator in order to effect the payment of the grant. Successful applicants will be asked to submit a brief of the STSM outputs for the Action's website summarising the scientific report which will also be made available online.

The applicant should:

1. Obtain the agreement of the host institution, before submitting his/her application;
2. Use the online registration tool to register his/her request for an STSM through the applicant's e-COST profile;
3. After registration, download the formal STSM application and complete it with supporting documentation (CV, full work plan, list of publications, motivation letter, letter of support from the home institution, etc.);
4. Send the application by e-mail as attachment to the proposed host institution of the STSM and submit the application online.

The application should include:

1. STSM objective and work plan;
2. Letter of acceptance of the host institution referring that the applicant can perform the activities detailed in the working plan on the referred period;
3. Letter of support from the home institution;
4. Applicant's CV including a list of publications;
5. Motivation letter comprising aim and motivation, proposed contribution to the Action objectives, steps to achieve the objectives.

The final report should include:

1. Purpose of the STSM;
2. Description of the work carried out during the STSM;
3. Description of the main results obtained;
4. Future collaboration with the host institution (if applicable);
5. Foreseen publications/articles resulting from the STSM (if applicable).

Selection of the applicants

A scientific committee – STSM Committee – composed by the STSM Coordinator, the Action Chair, the Action Vice-Chair and the Work Group leaders will evaluate all the STSM proposals and define a ranking for the attribution of the grants. In case of conflict of interest, the member that is

constrained in his/her duties should designate a substitute. If needed, the scientific committee will ask external reviewers to provide advice.

The evaluation criteria defined by the STSM Committee are:

- Excellence of the proposal regarding its contribution to the Action and the achievement of its scientific objectives;
- Excellence of the proposal and scientific scope of the proposed exchange mission;
- Excellence of the applicant;
- Relevance with the applicant career and strategy;
- Relevance regarding the implementation of new networks.

The selection will take into account the COST policies on promoting gender balance, supporting young researchers, and broadening geographical inclusiveness.

The aim of this grant is to support the costs associated with the exchange visit. This grant will not necessarily cover all expenses and is intended only as a contribution to the travel and subsistence costs of the participant. As approved by the Action Management Committee the following fixed rule will be applied: 400€ (flat rate) for the travel and 100€ for each day of the STSM. The total amount granted will not exceed 3500€.