

**COST Action CA18202**

**NECTAR – Network for Equilibria and Chemical Thermodynamics Advanced Research**

## Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

### Call for STSM Applications

**Fifth Grant Period, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 – April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024**

COST Action NECTAR opens a call for applications to Short-Term Scientific Missions (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 [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#) (level A) and the [Rules for COST Actions](#) (level B), from which the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#) (level C) result. The [Annotated Rules](#) aim at providing a practical handbook to COST Actions participants in support of the [Rules for COST Actions](#) implementing the [Rules and Principles for COST activities](#). Please read these documents prior to preparing your STSM application. For a better understanding of the Grant Awarding process, please consult the [Grant Awarding – User Guide](#) document.

#### 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-nectar.eu/docs/general\\_docs/memorandum\\_of\\_understanding.pdf](https://www.cost-nectar.eu/docs/general_docs/memorandum_of_understanding.pdf).

## Purpose of a STSM

Short-Term Scientific Mission are visits of a **researcher** or **innovator** to a **host organization** located in a different country than the country of affiliation (for Affiliation, see Article 4.1.1.1.1 on [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#) document) for specific work to be carried out and for a determined period of time. STSM are valuable i) for the STSM Grantee, that has the chance to receive funding for implementing a project with an international team, obtaining new knowledge or access to equipment or techniques not available in the home institution; ii) for the STSM Host that can receive an international partner in their institution and extend or create a long lasting collaboration. STSM support specific / general topics that can help achieving the Action MoU objectives and deliverables (research coordination). A STSM should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action, helping to achieve the [Action MoU](#) objectives and deliverables.

## Eligibility criteria

The Grant applicant(s) are Action participants with a primary affiliation (see Article 4.1.1.1.1 on [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#)) to a legal entity located in a COST Full or Cooperating Member country, a COST Near Neighbour Country or a European RTD Organisation.

Other important criteria for the STSM mobility, under the scopes of NECTAR COST Action 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 March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024;
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:

- **November 5<sup>th</sup> 2023**: deadline for submission of STSM applications
- **November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023**: notification of selected STSM
- **March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024**: deadline for the conclusion of STSM activities

Within **30 days from the end date of the STSM** (or 15 days before the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first),

- a scientific report drafted by the applicant
- an approval letter of the scientific report from the Host institution

**must be uploaded on the e-COST portal.**

Also within **30 days from the end date of the STSM**, (or 15 days before the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first),

- dissemination materials should be prepared and sent to the Science Communication Team (see details below).

## Funding

The total budget for STSM within this Call is EUR 15000 and the minimum number of STSM grants that will be funded is ten (10). **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 subject 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.

Grants are paid by the Grant Holder Institution after the completion of the activity and approval of all required report/documentation. However, STSMs grantees may request up to **50% pre-payment of the approved grant**. This amount is subject to availability of funds and approval by the Grant Holder Institution. The request of pre-payment shall be submitted to the Grant Holder Manager (Dr Giuseppa Scarfi, [gscarfi@unime.it](mailto:gscarfi@unime.it)) and the Grant Awarding Coordinator (Prof. Matteo Tegoni, [matteo.tegoni@unipr.it](mailto:matteo.tegoni@unipr.it)).

## Application Procedure

The application procedure is legally bound to the [Rules for COST Actions](#). Eligible STSM applicants must submit their STSM applications online by logging into e-COST (<https://e-services.cost.eu>) and go to <https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants> and click on “Apply for a grant”. Then click on “Continue” on “Short-Term Scientific Mission grant”, to encode a new application. Then you just need to fill the online form with the following information:

- i. Applicant name (automatically filled)
- ii. Primary affiliation (automatically filled)
- iii. Type (automatically filled)
- iv. COST Action: CA18202
- v. Grant period (automatically filled after choosing the COST Action)
- vi. Title of the planned STSM
- vii. Amount requested
- viii. Bank account
- ix. Start date requested
- x. End date requested
- xi. Host institution name
- xii. Host institution city
- xiii. Host institution country
- xiv. Host contact person name
- xv. Host contact person email

After “Save Draft” and you reach the “Supporting documents” page. Here you need to mention the title of the file you will submit, the type and upload the file.

You should submit:

- **Grant Application Template** (that you can find in [https://www.cost.eu/STSM\\_GrantApplication](https://www.cost.eu/STSM_GrantApplication)) that you should previously prepare with the following information:
  - Action number: CA18202

- Applicant name
  - **Details of the STSM:** Title and Start and End dates
  - **Goals of the STSM:** Purpose and summary of the STSM (max 200 words)
  - **Working Plan:** Description of the work to be carried out by the applicant (max 500 words)
  - **Expected outputs and contribution to the Action MoU objectives and deliverables:** main expected results and their contribution to the progress towards the Action objectives (either research coordination and/or capacity building objectives) and deliverables (max 500 words).
- **Invitation letter from the Host:** 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 working 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.).
  - **Candidate CV:** a CV should be submitted, drafted preferably in Europass format (max. 3 pages). (A list of academic publications can be added in separate pages.)

In the Application form field please briefly address the following points:

1. 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;
2. 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;
3. Please detail the steps you will take to achieve your proposed goals.

**Applicants are requested to present a Working plan reasonably feasible and coherent with the time slot requested in the application.**

After uploading all the requested documents, the applicant should click on “Submit”, a new window will appear and clicking on “Options”, please “download PDF”. After confirm submission by clicking on “✓Submit”, each applicant is required to send a **copy of the downloaded application form and all the other uploaded documents (merged in one single PDF file)** to the **Grant Awarding Coordinator** (Prof. Matteo Tegoni, [matteo.tegoni@unipr.it](mailto:matteo.tegoni@unipr.it)) and to the **Action Vice-Chair** (Dr. Sofia Gama, [sofia.gama@uwb.edu.pl](mailto:sofia.gama@uwb.edu.pl)). The email must have “STSM 10 CA18202 Application” as the subject line.

## 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](mailto:matteo.tegoni@unipr.it)), Prof. Erika Ferrari ([erika.ferrari@unimore.it](mailto:erika.ferrari@unimore.it)), and Prof. Stefan Stürup ([stefan.sturup@sund.ku.dk](mailto: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 Young Researcher;
- Priority to applicants from ITCs;
- Gender balance;
- Clarity of activity planning (Working plan) and complementarity of resources between home and host institutions/research groups (resources are intended as: technical expertise, infrastructure, or instrumentation);
- Main expected results and their contribution to the progress towards the Action objectives and deliverables;
- Curriculum Vitae (CV).

The Grant Awarding 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

### STSM reporting and payment

Within 30 days from the end date of the STSM the successful applicant must submit the **scientific reports (A)** and the **dissemination materials (B)**.

#### A) scientific reports on e-COST and its approval:

- The scientific report drafted by the applicant (max 4 pages). A template for the report can be found in e-COST ([https://www.cost.eu/STSM\\_Report](https://www.cost.eu/STSM_Report)).
- 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.

These **two documents** must be uploaded on e-COST to proceed with the request for payment.

When preparing the scientific report please consider the following:

- The scientific report for COST is a public document. Please take this into account in terms of Intellectual Property Rights.
- The scientific report does not need to contain specific and detailed results of the research. Rather, it should focus on the aspects that are the aim of STSM (see Purpose of a STSM, page 2 of this Call), in particular how the collaborative research during STSM has strengthened the scientific relationship between Home and Hosting institutions within the framework of Cooperation and Science in the European Union.

A copy of the scientific report in PDF format must be sent, by email, to the Grant Awarding Coordinator (Prof. Matteo Tegoni, [matteo.tegoni@unipr.it](mailto:matteo.tegoni@unipr.it)) and the Action Vice-Chair (Dr. Sofia Gama, [sofia.gama@uwb.edu.pl](mailto: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.

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

#### B) dissemination materials to Science Communication Team:

- A poster/video/success story describing the subject of your collaborative STSM activities.
- A strong, short advertising sentence summarizing your STSM experience that will be used for promotion of the above material.

Please remember to present Home and Host institutions and your passion for science! Use pictures showing you at work but also after-work. Do not sound too abstract, avoid scientific jargon, use short sentences. The material is to advertise NECTAR COST research, promote you, and will be shown in social media for public audience.

The materials have to be sent directly to the **Science Communication Manager** Prof. Elżbieta Gumienna-Kontecka ([elzbieta.gumienna-kontecka@chem.uni.wroc.pl](mailto:elzbieta.gumienna-kontecka@chem.uni.wroc.pl)) and to **WG-5 Leader** Dr. Álvaro Martínez ([alvaro.martinez@uv.es](mailto:alvaro.martinez@uv.es)).

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

### **STSM contacts**

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