

STSM

ML₄Microbiome

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What is a STSM?

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) are **exchange visits** aimed at

- supporting individual mobility,
- strengthening existing networks and
- fostering collaboration between researchers.

A STSM should specifically **contribute to the scientific objectives of the COST Action**, whilst at the same time 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 / organisations.

Eligibility Rules: Who can apply?

STSM applicants must be engaged in an official research programme as a

- PhD Student or
- postdoctoral fellow or
- employed by, or affiliated to, an Institution or legal entity that has within its remit a clear association with performing research.

STSMs are particularly **(but not exclusively)** intended for

- **Early Career Investigators** (ECIs), i.e. a researcher whose career span less than 8 years between the date of the PhD/doctorate (or similar experience) and the date of involvement in ML₄Microbiome. Periods of career leave have to be added to this time span.

Eligibility Rules

- **adherence to the ML₄Microbiome scientific objectives**
- STSMs must contribute to the scientific objectives of one or more ML₄Microbiome Working Groups (WG), i.e.
 - WG₁ State-of-the-art evaluation and update,
 - WG₂ Establishing benchmark datasets and ML DREAM Challenge,
 - WG₃ Optimisation and standardisation.
- WG₄ aims excluded, participants welcomed.

Eligibility Rules: Home vs Host institution

- **NCC Near Neighbour Countries:** Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Russia, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine
- **IPC International Partner Countries:** Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sudan, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Uruguay
- **European RTD Organisation** One of 8 European intergovernmental scientific research organizations (e.g. EMBL - European Molecular Biology Laboratory, full list in Vademecum)

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
	Action MC Observer from IPC
	Action MC Observer from NNC
	The EU Commission or an EU Body, Office or Agency
	An Approved European RTD Organisation
	An Approved International Organisation
Action MC Observer from NNC	Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member
Located in an Approved European RTD Organisation	Located in a Participating COST Full Member / COST Cooperating Member

STSM financial contribution

An STSM grant is a **fixed financial contribution** that takes into consideration

- the budget request of the applicant and
- the outcome of the evaluation of the STSM application.

STSM Grants do not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking a given mission (**travel, accommodation and meal expenses should be covered**).

- The COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action are not to be considered as being an STSM Grantee's employer.
- STSM Grantees must make their own arrangements for all provisions related to visas, personal security, health, taxation, social security and pension matters.
- The STSM Committee can approve differentiated country rates to cover accommodation and meal expenses based on the perceived cost of living in the host country.

STSM financial contribution

STSMs and financial contribution follow the following criteria:

- They must have a minimum duration of **5 days**.
- STSM need to be carried out in their entirety **within a single Grant Period** and **always within the Action's lifetime**
- Max contribution per day: 160 € (accommodation, meal)
- Max total contribution: 3500 €

STSM financial contribution

- ITC (Inclusiveness target countries) candidates can request a pre-payment of 50% of their STSM Grant when they complete the first day of their STSM.
- 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.
- 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.

APPLICATION PROCESS

STEPS

- Eligible STSM applicants can submit their STSM applications online at: www.cost.eu/STSM
- The Action's STSM Committee performs the evaluation of each received STSM application.

The **selection of successful STSM applicants must consider**

- the scientific scope of the proposed mission and
- how the mission can support the Action in achieving its scientific objectives.
- promoting gender balance, enabling Early Career Investigators (ECI) and broadening geographical inclusiveness.

PLEASE NOTE:

- STSMs MUST BE APPROVED BY THE STSM COMMITTEE BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAVEL
- ONCE THE STSM HAS BEEN COMPLETED, THE GRANTEE MUST SUBMIT A SCIENTIFIC REPORT TO THE STSM COMMITTEE AND TO THE HOST INSTITUTION
- **Payment** of the Grant will be carried out **AFTER** the mission will have been completed **AND IS SUBJECT TO** the **scientific report** being approved by the STSM Committee and a senior researcher affiliated to the Host institution.

HOW TO APPLY? (1)

- A. Register to <https://e-services.cost.eu>
- B. Go to <https://e-services.cost.eu/STSM> and provide:
 - Support letter from a senior researcher affiliated to the Home Institution
 - Letter of invitation from a senior researcher affiliated to the Host institution
 - STSM application form
 - Motivation letter including a work plan detailing the proposed activities (motivation letter template attached)
 - Applicant's full C.V. (including a list of academic publications – if applicable)
- NOTE: it is very important to specify in the workplan and in the motivation letter **why and how your mission will contribute to the ML₄Microbiome objectives, and, in details, which WGs will benefit from your mission**

HOW TO APPLY? (2)

- C** Send an email to STSM committee (turukalo@uns.ac.rs) providing (same as above):
- Support letter from a senior researcher affiliated to the Home Institution
 - Letter of invitation from a senior researcher affiliated to the Host institution
 - STSM application form
 - Motivation letter including a work plan detailing the proposed activities
 - Applicant's full C.V. (including a list of academic publications – if applicable)
- D** Applicants need to receive before STSM initiation:
- MC pre-approval (email from delegated ML4 Microbiome person). Please allow at least two weeks from the application submission to the pre-approval
 - The formal Grant Notification letter

HOW TO APPLY? (3)

E The following information is needed **after** the STSM has been completed:

- **Scientific Report (max five-pages)** detailing the activities undertaken: **it is necessary to give full information about why and how your mission has contributed to the ML₄Microbiome objectives, and, in particular, which WGs has benefited from your mission, and how**
- **An official letter from a senior researcher affiliated to the Host institution formally accepting the scientific report**

F Following the completion of tasks at point E above and the approval of the scientific report by the STSM Committee, applicants will receive:

- **MC post-approval (email from delegated ML₄Microbiome person) – before STSM payment**
- **STSM payment**

Applicants of successful STSMs are kindly requested, in case of publication of the results partly coming from the mission work, to **acknowledge ML₄Microbiome in the following way: “supported by a STSM Grant from EU COST Action 18131 - Statistical and machine learning techniques in human microbiome studies (ML₄Microbiome).”**

SELECTION and EVALUATION criteria

- Relevance of STSM with action objectives
- Relevance of host institute's expertise with STSM objectives
- Results of direct interest for/exploitable by the Action
- Applicant is ECI or PhD candidate
- No previous STSM by same applicant
- No other STSMs from same home institution / country
- Gender balance
- Geographical dispersion

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- Each applicant has to submit a STSM report elaborating on the accomplishments during STSM and the STSM plan fulfilment.
- **A scientific written report for the COST** and distribution between the MC has to be delivered **not later than 30 days after the conclusion of the STSM.**

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- We would encourage applicants and host to produce
 - joint publications based on STSMs,
 - to sustain collaboration,
 - submit joint project proposals, or
 - pursue similar research and networking goals.
- **The applicants will be invited to the (bi)annual action WG Meetings to present their findings to the Action members.**

USEFUL LINKS

- the COST website at www.cost.eu
- the COST Vademecum at <https://www.cost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Vademecum-May-2019.pdf>
- the ML₄Microbiome project description at <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA18131/#tabs|Name:overview>
- the ML₄Microbiome Memorandum of Understanding at https://e-services.cost.eu/files/domain_files/CA/Action_CA18131/mou/CA18131-e.pdf
- contact turukalo@uns.ac.rs
- contact your local Management Committee member: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA18131/#tabs|Name:management-committee>

II Grant period approved STSMs

CANDIDATE NAME	CANDIDATE INSTITUTION	HOME COUNTRY	HOST NAME	HOST INSTITUTION	HOST COUNTRY	TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	DURATION
Thomas Klammsteiner	University of Innsbruck	Austria	Blaz Stres	Biotechnical Faculty	Slovenija	The gut microbiome of black soldier fly larvae – a meta-analysis of available marker gene datasets	1.02.2021	31.3.2021	2months
Miodrag Cekikj	Ss. Cyril and Methodius University (Skopje)	North Macedonia	Ugur Sezerman	Department of Biostatistics and Medical Informatics, Istanbul	Turkey	STATISTICAL AND MACHINE LEARNING TECHNIQUES IN HUMAN MICROBIOME STUDIES	1.2.2021	7.3.2021	35 days
Malik Yousef	Zefat Academic College (Zefat, Israel)	Israel	Burcu Bakir-Gungor	Department of Computer Engineering ,Abdullah Gul University	Turkey	MicroBiomeNet: Machine Learning Analysis of Metagenomics	12.7.2021	25.7.2021	14 days

ITC GRANTS

ITC countries & grants

- INCLUSIVENESS TARGET COUNTRIES

- Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, the North Republic of Macedonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey

ITC Conference Grants are aimed at

- **ECI and PhD students** from

Participating ITC to attend international science and technology related conferences, event or activity on the topic of the Action **that are not organised by the COST Action.**

ELIGIBILITY

- ECI or PhD student
- **The applicant must make an oral/poster presentation at the conference**
- **must be listed in the official event/conference programme.**
- The main subject of the work must be on the topic of the Action and
- **must acknowledge COST**
- The participation of each applicant shall be pre-approved by the Action MC.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

- Evaluation performed by STSM Committee (ITC Conference Grant Manager)
- The person responsible for performing the related tasks into e-COST is referred to as ITC Conference Grant Manager. The evaluation criteria defined by the Action's MC should be communicated to all potential applicants.
- consideration of **the scientific scope** of the proposed participation and **how it will support the Action** in achieving its scientific objectives.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- a **fixed financial contribution** which takes into consideration the budget request of the applicant and the outcome of the evaluation of the application by the delegated person(s).
- Conference Grants do not necessarily cover all the expenses related to participating in a given conference. A Conference Grant is a contribution to the **overall travel, accommodation and meal expenses** of the selected Grantee.
- maximum of EUR 2 500 in total
- maximum of EUR 160 per day - accommodation and meal expenses.
- maximum of EUR 500 can be claimed for the conference fees and **virtual conference fees can be considered eligible** provided all other eligibility conditions are fulfilled

Documentary evidence of the conference fee amount must be provided by the applicant and in kind, must be archived by the Grant Holder along with the relevant administrative documents.

PAYMENT

- **The Grantee has 30 calendar days from the end date of the Conference to submit**
 - either a certificate of attendance or
 - a report to the ITC Conference Grant Manager of the Action
- Payment of the Grant is subject to the submitted certificate of attendance or the submitted report being approved by the ITC Conference Grant Manager.
- Written approval of the submitted report must be sent to the Grant Holder for archiving purposes