



COST Action CA21146: Fundamentals and applications of purple bacteria biotechnology for resource recovery from waste (PURPLEGAIN)

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)¹

- *This is a call for applications for Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) in the framework of the COST Action CA21146 (PURPLEGAIN).*
- *Deadline for applications: 30th April 2024.*
- *STSMs must be completed before September the 30th 2024.*
- *The report must be sent to the STSM coordinator and the main host researcher within 15 days after the completion of the STSM and in any case no later than October the 15th 2024.*
- *IMPORTANT INFORMATION: the minimum duration for the Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) is established at one month, equivalent to 30 days¹*

COST

COST is an intergovernmental framework for European **C**ooperation 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 CA21146

COST Action CA21146 is a four-year networking action that aims at creating a European network to share information, facilitating technology and knowledge transfer between the academic and industrial sectors, related to Purple Photosynthetic Bacteria (PPB) applications for resource recovery from organic waste sources. Resource recovery includes wastewater or organic waste, open or closed environments, in single or chain processes. The network associates fundamental-focused and applied research groups, improving lab-scale technology optimization through mechanistic modeling. It benefits the technology transfer from applied-research groups to industry, considerably improving process design. PURPLEGAIN also aims to create a database for techno-economic, social and environmental impacts studies, which facilitates the marketability of both the PPB-based technologies and the products to extract. Some focused products are polyhydroxyalkanoates, single-cell proteins, biomass for energy, biomass as fertilizer, biohydrogen, carotenoids, terpenoids, organic acids, coenzyme Q10, and 5-aminolevulinic acid.

¹ This document summarizes the most important information. Care has been taken to do this as accurate as possible. Refer also to the [COST Vademecum](#) for up to date information.

STSM

Financial support may be provided to eligible applicants to carry out a **Short Term Scientific Mission** 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)² and PhD students will be given priority.

STSMs must have a minimum duration of one week (five working days). STSM need to be carried out in their entirety within a single Grant Period and always within the Action's lifetime

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 (Raul Muñoz, mutora@iq.uva.es) 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 STSM – 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 active involvement as well. In order to make the most out of the mission, the grantees 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 are encouraged to plan an extended stay. As a rule of thumb: the longer the STSM, the better. It is difficult to get a meaningful project done within just a few weeks, and the host has to invest time for instruction.

It is acceptable to attend a congress during the STSM. However, this must be declared in the application and requires the written approval of the host.

Applicants

STSM applicants shall be engaged in an official research programme as a PhD Student or postdoctoral fellow or can be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution, organisation or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing research. The institutions / organisation or legal entity where applicants pursue their main strand of research are considered as Home Institutions. The Host Institution is the institution / organisation that will host the successful applicant.

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

² ECI: A researcher within a time span of up to 8 years from the date they obtained their PhD/doctorate (full-time equivalent).

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

IPC- International Partner Country

The full list of Near Neighbour Countries (NNC) is as follows: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Russia, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine.

Note that both countries, home and host, must have joined the COST Action PURPLEGAIN. 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

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. STSM Grants do not necessarily cover all expenses related to undertaking a given mission. A STSM Grant is a contribution to the overall travel, accommodation and meal expenses of the Grantee.

The calculation of the financial contribution for each STSM shall respect the following criteria:

- Up to a maximum of EUR 3 500 in total can be afforded to each successful applicant.
- Up to a maximum of EUR 160 per day can be afforded for accommodation and meal expenses.

The Action Chair and the STSM Coordinator can approve differentiated country rates to cover accommodation and meal expenses based on the perceived cost of living in the host country.

Specific provisions have been introduced to enable researchers from 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 shall 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.

The COST Association and the Grant Holder of the Action cannot be considered as being an STSM grantee's employer (unless it is in alignment with the Action deliverables in the latter case). STSM grantees shall 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 PurpleGain's objectives. The initiative for an STSM can come from either the host or the visiting scientist. A list of potential host institutions and research topics can be found in the following link: <https://purplegain.eu/stsm/>
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 encodes a grant application by logging into e-COST and clicking on the Grant Applications tab. Any already existing applications are available for consultation in the Grant Applications Monitoring. To encode a new application, the applicant clicks on 'Apply for grant'. The application page contains:
 - a. Applicant details
 - b. STSM details (work plan)
 - c. Bank details (indicate if you are applying for a pre-payment of 50% of the Grant – only for applicants from Inclusiveness Target Countries)
 - d. Host details (must be located in a different country than the country of the applicant)
 - e. Financial support
 - f. Supporting documents: i) STSM grant Application (based on e-COST template: https://www.cost.eu/STSM_GrantApplication), ii) Confirmation of the host on the agreement from the host institution in receiving the applicant, iii) Other documents required by the Action:
 - Full work plan (two pages maximum).
1_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 and the Grantee's career (1 page maximum). Also indicate the working group of the COST Action to which this STSM belongs.
2_Lastname_Firstname_Letter_of_motivation.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?
3_Lastname_Firstname_Budget.pdf
 - Short Bio of the applicant (1 page maximum).
4_Lastname_Firstname_CV_applicant.pdf
 - Short Bio of the host group (1 page maximum)
5_Lastname_Firstname_CV_host_group.pdf

After adding the supporting document(s), the applicant can submit the grant application. The application status will change from draft to submitted. Prior to approval of the application, if need be, the applicant will be able to revise the application.

Evaluation process and result announcement

When the Grant application is submitted, the Grant Awarding Coordinator is notified. The applicant, Action Chair and Vice Chair also receive a copy of the notification. The Grant

Awarding Coordinator will be able to review and approve/reject the Grant application on behalf of the Management Committee (MC)

The STSM coordinator will then propose a ranked list of applications to the management committee: chair and vice-chair, WG leaders, Grant Awarding coordinator, Science Communication Coordinator, Training Schools Coordinator, and Stakeholder Coordinator. In case of rejection, a justification needs to be encoded. The justification will be included in the e-notification to the applicant.

Evaluation will be based on the complementarity of the applicant and host group, the quality and scientific excellence of the research proposal, the relevance of the work plan for the achievement of PURLEGAIN objectives, the impact on the career of the grantee, the potential to support new collaborations. There should be special considerations with respect to supporting COST policies on promoting gender balance, enabling Early Career Investigators (ECI) and applicants from ITC countries (Inclusiveness-Target-Countries), while broadening geographical inclusiveness.

The selection committee, composed of the Action Chair, the Grant Awarding coordinator and a representative of each WG, 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 an e-mail from the grant holder (Grant Letter Notification), 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 Grant Letter outlines the rights and duties of the grantee and of the Grant Holder.

If the amount of funding by all applications within a call does not exceed the available budget, the applications are handled by the Grant Awarding coordinator only. The Grant Awarding coordinator then presents the list to the selection committee which must accept the funding of every application.

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 selection committee 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 selection committee. The Grant Awarding 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 Grant Awarding coordinator prior to the evaluation process.

Criterion	max. points
a) Before any further criteria are considered	
Application is complete and fulfils all formal requirements	pass/no pass
The application will be ranked last if the applicant was granted in previous STSM call	pass/no pass
b) Evaluation of the proposal	
Applicant or host group from ITC country	0 or 10

Applicant is ECI (or promotes gender balance)	0 or 10
Impact on the career of the application	15
Complementary between the applicant and the host group	10
Multidisciplinarity or interdisciplinarity of the proposal	10
CV of the applicant	10
CV of the host group, aligned with the objectives of PurpleGain action*	10
Scientific Quality and Relevance to the objectives of PurpleGain Action	20
Creation of a new collaborations within PurpleGain partners**	0 or 5

*-Scientific productivity, training capacity and available infrastructure referred to the last 5 years

** -The home and host institution have not collaborated previously

5. The evaluators report their evaluations to the Grant Awarding coordinator.
6. The Grant Awarding coordinator ranks all evaluations and then reports the final result to the selection committee to be discussed and accepted. The STSM coordinator will approve the applications selected in the e-cost platform.
7. The applicants are informed about the decision reached.

After the STSM

1 day and 10 days after the end of the grant, the grantee receives a reminder to upload the report. The deadline to submit the report is 30 days from the end of the activity, within 15 days from the end date of the Grant Period or within a shorter timeframe as per Grant Holder/ Grant Awarding Coordinator's request to meet reporting deadlines. The grantee receives an e-notification to submit the report and other supporting documents on e-COST, the GH manager and the Grant Awarding Coordinator will be in copy of the notification. The grantee must complete the report template, upload, and submit it in e-COST along with a host approval letter of the report (free style). A scientific report template is available on-line here: https://www.cost.eu/STSM_Report

The Grant Awarding Coordinator is notified when the grantee submitted the report and must verify the validity and content of the report by clicking the link in the notification. After review of the report by the procedures agreed by the MC, the Grant Awarding Coordinator needs to encode its approval or rejection on behalf of the MC. Upon the recording of the payment, an e-notification is sent to the grantee, with a copy to the Grant Holder manager.

Acknowledgement of CA21146 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 Fundamentals and applications of purple bacteria biotechnology for resource recovery from waste (PURPLEGAIN)- CA21146*

If the work is presented in a conference or event, the COST logo must be displayed and the Action CA21146 must be acknowledged.

More information

- Websites: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA21146/>
- Online application form: <https://e-services.cost.eu/user/login>

- COST Vademecum: <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/04/Vademecum-28-April-2021.pdf>
- Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) – User Guide: <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/12/Grant-Awarding-userguide.pdf>

For further information you may contact the STSM coordinator Raúl Muñoz Torre (raul.munoz.torre@uva.es).

April 2nd 2024

Raúl Muñoz Torre (Grant Awarding coordinator of COST Action CA21146)