# STSM – Application Guidelines

The guidance provided in this document does not replace or affect any of the administrative requirements and contractual obligations contained in the COST Vademecum and the EUROCAROTEN COST Action Grant Agreement.

**Background**
Short-term scientific missions (STSM) are exchange visits, which allow scientists (including PhD students) from one COST country to visit an institution or laboratory in another COST country (or Near Neighbour or Reciprocal Country). They are aimed at fostering collaborations and sharing new techniques and infrastructure that may not be available in other participants' institutions or laboratories.

**Eligibility**
STSM facilitates Researchers from COST Countries participating in COST Action CA15136 '**EUROCAROTEN: European network to advance carotenoid research and applications in agro-food and health**' to go to an institution, organization or research center in another participating COST CA15136 country to foster collaborations and to perform empirical research. STSMs 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/organizations.

Applicants from COST Inclusiveness Target Countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Serbia and Turkey) are especially welcome. Nevertheless, applications from all countries will be equally considered and the quality is always the decisive parameter.

Inclusiveness target countries in EUROCAROTEN:
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Serbia and Turkey.
In order to be eligible for a STSM grant the applicant must be:

- engaged in a research programme as a PhD Student or postdoctoral fellow or be employed by, or affiliated to, an Institution or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing scientific research;

Applicants holding a primary affiliation at an institution located in a participating COST CA15136 country are eligible to perform a STSM in another Participating COST Country, in an approved Near Neighbor Country institution, in an approved IPC institution and/or in an approved Specific organization.

Those applicants who hold an affiliation in a Near Neighbor Country (NNC) or at a European RTD Organization, are only eligible for funding if their institution has been formally approved onto MI-NET. Furthermore, they are only allowed to perform a STSM in a participating COST country.

**Duration/Support Available**
STSMs need to take place according to the following rules:
- be a minimum duration of 5 days;
- be a maximum duration of 90 days;
- be carried out in their entirety within a single grant period and within the Action's lifetime.
However, exceptions can be made for ECIs wishing to stay for 91-180 days.
For more details regarding the regulations related to STSM, please refer to the COST Vademecum (http://www.cost.eu/participate).

EUROCAROTEN financial contribution to STSMs **is intended to cover part of the travel and subsistence costs of the participant during the mission, not all the expenses.**
Specific EUROCAROTEN rules concerning financial support for STSMs
- Financial support is limited to contribute to cover part of the travel, accommodation and meal expenses and is paid in the form of a grant.
-Up to a maximum of 500€ may be attributed for the travel expenses; expected travel expenses must be specified in the budget and be reasonable.
-A maximum 2,500€ in total can be afforded to the grantee for the full STSM including travel expenses for 90 days STSMs.
For one week the maximum amount can be set up to 1000€
Considering a maximum average cost of 150 € / day, we would apply the following percentages for longer stays:
0.35x / day up to one month: maximum would be: 1650€
0.20x / day up to 2 months: 1950€ maximum
0.18x / day up to 3 months: 2500€ maximum
-In case of extended stays for ECIs a maximum of 3,500€ can be afforded to the grantee for the full STSM.

Due to the increasing number of applications, **the amount of funding awarded may be lower that the funding requested**. This decision is not appealable. Grantees can at any point redraw their application.


**Application Process**
All applications must be made by the visiting researcher as per the steps described below:

1. All applicants must register for an e-COST profile at https://e-services.cost.eu/  adding their bank account details to their profile.
2. All applicants must obtain a letter of invitation from the Host institution confirming that they can undertake the STSM on the given dates prior to submitting an application.
3. All applicants must complete, submit and download their STSM application online at https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm.
4. All applicants must send their submitted STSM application form and the following documents to Dr. Lourdes Gómez Gómez, marialourdes.gomez@uclm.es (STMS Coordinator) for evaluation.
    1. The submitted STSM application form (downloadable when the online application is submitted)
    2. Letter of invitation from the host institution
    3. A letter of support from the Home Institution
    4. A Full C.V. (including a list of academic publications)

5. A motivation letter including an overview of the work plan, proposed activities and expected outcomes
5. The application will then be assessed by the STSM Coordinator and the STSM committee against the perceived contribution that the proposed visit will make against the scientific objectives outlined in the Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
6. The applicant will be formally notified of the outcome of their STSM application within 1-2 weeks from submission, so please plan the start and duration for your STSM accordingly.
7. STSM applicants should not book anything (for example transportation or accommodation) before receiving the formal confirmation of the MC or STSM committee.
8. Within **30 days** from the end date of the STSM, the successful applicant must submit a scientific report (please refer to the COST Vademecum) to the Host institution and to EUROCAROTEN (marialourdes.gomez@uclm.es). The applicant is also responsible for acquiring an official acceptance letter / Email confirmation of acceptance from a senior Researcher affiliated to the Host institution formally accepting the scientific report. This formal acceptance of the scientific report has to be sent to the Grant Holder and the STSM Coordinator for archiving purposes. **Failure to submit the scientific report within 30 days will effectively cancel the grant**. The STSM Coordinator is responsible for approving the scientific report and informing the Grant Holder that the STSM has been successfully accomplished. After receipt of the approval by email, the Grant Holder will execute the payment of the grant.

Please note that the reimbursement of STSM grantees will be done after the mission is over and the final report is submitted by the STSM participant. Exceptions to this rule cannot be granted.

All future publications resulting from the STSM should contain an acknowledgment to the action: "This work has been developed in the framework of and supported by COST Action CA15136 EUROCAROTEN".

**Evaluation process**
The evaluation committee: Dr. Lourdes Gómez Gómez and Vladimir Kren are the STSM coordinator and vice-coordinator, respectively. The STSM committee is composed by:

• Lourdes Gómez Gómez, STSM Coordinator, marialurdes.gomez@uclm.es
• Vladimir Kren, STSM Vice-Coordinator kren@biomed.cas.cz
• Kristina, Kljak, ECI Spokesperson kkljak@agr.hr
• Jasmine Petreska, Gender Balance Coordinator (GBC), jasmina.petreska@pmf.ukim.mk
• Milan Čertík, International Coordinator (ITCICC), milan.certik@stuba.sk
• Paul Fraser, WG1 Leader, P.Fraser@rhul.ac.uk
• Nora O'Brien, WG2 Leader, nob@ucc.ie
• Torsten Bohn, WG3 Leader, Torsten.Bohn@lih.lu
• Anneli Ritala, WG4 Leader, anneli.ritala@vtt.fi


The STSM Manager and STSM Vice Manager, having consulted the STSM Committee (composed at least of the ECI Spokesperson, Gender Balance Coordinator, ITC and International Cooperation Coordinator and Working Group Leaders), will set the evaluation criteria, will review the applications and will propose the candidates and the amounts to be granted for final approval for the Chair and Vice

Chair. The STSM Committee members should reply in 7 days, if a member does not answer it will be understood that such member agrees with the proposal of the STSM Manager and STSM Vice Manager

The proposals that are considered eligible are ranked and approved based upon budget availability. A decisive parameter is always quality of the project, CV of the applicant and expected cost-benefit ratio. The ranking criteria are:

- Scientific quality of the application (originality and feasibility of the approach)
- Realistic planning of the application (feasibility within timeframe proposed and justification of the finance requested)
- Qualifications of the applicant (research being undertaken, research already undertaken, publications and participation in international research cooperation)
- Benefit of the STSM (added-value for the applicant, host, and home institutions)
- First-time proposals are preferred over repeat proposals.
- Proposals by members and/or to hosts without any previous STSM funding are preferred.
- Priority in STSM funding will be given to Early Career Investigators (ECI: young researchers within a time span of up to 8 years from the date they obtained their PhD/doctorate) and PhD students.
- The amount granted to applicants with more than 8 years of PhD experience may be comparatively lower as compared to ECIs or PhD student applicants.

If one or more of the STSM proposals under evaluation has the same institution (host or home) as a committee member, this member does not participate in the evaluation procedure. In the case, this situation happens with a WG leader or any other leader involved in the STSM committee, it is up to the respective co-leader to take his place.

**Assessment STMS-COST Action CA15136**
Each STMS proposal will be assessed according to the criteria listed below.
Indicative values: 1 (poor); 2 (fair); 3 (good); 4 (very good); 5 (excellent).

1. Applicant CV (up to 5 points)
Estimate the ability of applicant to realize the proposed STMS.
2. Applicants publications (up to 5 points)
Publications related to the working plan proposal.
3. Working plan proposal (up to 15 points)
-Clear justification of activities that should be realized during the STMS.
-How are the activities in connection to COST action CA15136 and priorities defined in MoU.
-Dissemination of outcomes from STMS.
4. COST Action benefits (up to 5 points)
Clear definition of the CST action CA15136 benefits from the proposed STSM.
5. Training benefits for the applicant (up to 5 points)
Expected benefits for the applicant from the proposed STSM.
6. Geographical inclusiveness (up to 10 points)
-If the applicant's Home and/or Host institution is a COST Inclusiveness country.
Home institution is a COST Inclusiveness country (5 points).
Host institution is a COST Inclusiveness country (5 points).

Minimum score to be considered for a STMS is 21.

**Evaluation Form STMS-COST Action CA15136**

- Applicants name:
- Reference code:

Tick the most appropriate option according to the following scale:
1 (poor); 2 (fair); 3 (good); 4 (very good); 5 (excellent)

| **Applicant CV (up to 10 points)** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Estimate the ability of applicant to realize the proposed STMS | | | | | |
| Publications related to the working plan proposal | | | | | |
| **Working plan proposal (up to 10 points)** | | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Clear justification of activities which should be realized during the STMS | | | | | |
| How are the activities in connection to COST action CA15136 and priorities defined in MoU | | | | | |
| Dissemination of outcomes from STSM | | | | | |
| **COST Action benefits (up to 15 points)** | | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Clear definition of the CST action CA15136 benefits from the proposed STSM | | | | | |
| **Training benefits for the applicant (up to 5 points)** | | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Expected benefits for the applicant from the proposed STSM. | | | | | |
| **Geographical inclusiveness (up to 5 points)** | | | | | |
| | | | | | 5 |
| Home institution is a COST Inclusiveness country (5 points) | | | | | |
| Host institution is a COST Inclusiveness country (5 points) | | | | | |
| TOTAL SCORE (maximum 45 points) | | | | | |

Date:

# STSM Application and Management

## APPLICANT

- Read section 7 of the Cost Vademecum
- Register for an e-COST profile
- Obtain letter of invitation from Host Institution

STSM application form completed online

Application form downloaded and e-mailed to marialourdes.gomez@uclm.es together with all teh relevant documents

- Letter of invitation
- submitted STSM application form
- Motivation letter
- Letter of support from Home institution
- Full CV (incl publications)

**Within 30 days, from the end date of the STSM**
Submits report of the visit and obtains formal confirmation by e-mail from the Host institution acepting the scientific report

## GRANT HOLDER

Completed paperwork sent to STMS coordinator

Administrative checks are carried out for eligibility, application form and all other documents

Uploads award e-mail to eCOST

Processes payment and updates website

## STSM COMMITEE

Evaluated and approved successful applications

Informs grant manager and applicant of application being successful

Informs grant holder of the end of STSM and of approved report

Approves report