

OPERA COST Action

“EurOPean NEtwork foR Innovative and Advanced Epitaxy”

CA20116

Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) – OPERA COST Action

STSM Objectives:

A short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) consists in a visit to a host organization by a Researcher or Innovator to carry out a specific scientific task for a well-defined period of time. The host organization and the Researcher/Innovator affiliation countries must be different. The STSM programme aims to actively contribute to reach the scientific objectives of the OPERA COST Action.

STSM will support visits and exchanges with the objective to:

- Strengthening the network;
- Improving the access to the scientists to infrastructures, experimental techniques and/or methodologies not available in their own institution/laboratory;
- Fostering collaborations and creating synergies between different countries. STSM will lead to enhanced knowledge creation and transfer.

STSM will benefit to:

- STSM Grantee: receives funding for implementing a project with an international team and gains new knowledge or access to equipment or techniques not available in the home institution;
- STSM Host: receives an international partner in their institution to create or develop a long-lasting collaboration.

Who is eligible to take part in an STSM?

A STSM applicant must be affiliated to a research institution/laboratory, company, or legal entity, having a research activity directly in relation with epitaxy, characterization of epitaxial materials, or modelling/simulation to understand the growth processes and the epitaxial structures.

STSM Participation of Young Researchers and Innovators – defined as scientists under the age of 40 – and PhD students is strongly encouraged. However, STSM program is also open for senior scientists.

In the attribution of STSMs proposals, the participation of scientists from ITC will be promoted as well as that of women scientists to reach as much as possible an equal proportion between men and women grantees. Due to the large number of participating countries and the limited budget, a given scientist cannot enjoy more than one STSM funded by the OPERA COST Action.

Under the Home and Host Institutions conditions, the eligibility conditions of STSM applications depends on:

- The country of the Researcher’s primary affiliation (as registered on their e-COST profile/STSM application/C.V.).
- Where the researcher is currently performing his/her main strand of research (Home Institution).
- The country of the Host Institution.

The eligibility conditions of STSM applications in term of Home and Host Institutions are as follow:

Home Institution	Host Institution
Located in an institution in a COST Country or Cooperating State participating to the OPERA COST Action	In another COST Country or Cooperating State participating to the OPERA COST Action
	In an approved Near Neighbour Country (NNC) institution
	In an approved International Partner Countries (IPC) institution
Located in an approved NNC institution	In an approved Specific organization
	In a COST Country or Cooperating State participating to the OPERA COST Action

Located in an approved European RTD Organisation	In a COST Country or Cooperating State participating to the OPERA COST Action
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Organizational and financial aspects

Funding conditions of the STSM.

Eligible STSM can have duration of minimum 5 working days and maximum 60 calendar days. The financial support will be allocated in the form of a fixed grant. The grant provides a contribution for travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, implementation of the project, delivery of the report to the OPERA COST Action Management Committee and overall effort. **The financial support on offer is a contribution to the overall expenses incurred during the STSM and may not necessarily cover all the associated outgoings.**

The following funding conditions apply and must be respected:

1. The maximum total amount requested to the Action for each grant should not exceed EUR 2500: Maximum EUR 2000 for accommodation, meals and global expenses, and Maximum EUR 500 for travelling.
2. For accommodation and meal expenses, we kindly recommend each applicant to request a maximum amount of EUR 100 per day for mission of up to 8 days, and EUR 80 per day for missions longer than 8 days. The STSM program will only cover the daily expenses for the actual mission dates and the day immediately before (after) the mission in case of traveling those dates. Unjustified weekend days will not be funded. The recommended daily allowance could be further reduced for senior scientist by the OPERA Action Core-Group to maximize the number of STSM grants.
3. STSM activities within this call must be completed within the defined timing (see below).
4. STSM grantees are allowed to receive complementary funding from the home and host institutions.

The amounts granted for each individual STSM will be determined during the evaluation process by the OPERA Action Core-Group. The selection of applicants is based on the scientific scope of the STSM application, which must be clearly in line with the overall objectives of the Action. The Action Core group, under suggestion of the STSM committee, might redefine for each approved grantee the duration of the STSM and the amount to be allocated, also on the base of the cost of living in each respective country and of the duration of the stay. It is assumed that for stays of several weeks, cheap and possibly self-catering accommodations can be found with the help of the Host Institution.

The OPERA Cost action can provide in advance up to 50% of the grant awarded for the entire STSM. This advance can be processed before or during the STSM. In case the applicant is interested, it must be indicated in the extended STSM application form (see below).

Application dates and STSM activity periods for the first grant period (until 31 October 2022).

- **First call:** Applications from March 14 to April 14. Response due to May 3. Period of STSM until June 31.
- **Second call:** Applications from May 10 to May 31. Response due to June 14. Period of STSM until August 31.
- **Third call:** Applications from June 20 to July 8. Response due to July 22. Period of STSM until October 15. **The STSM report must be sent before October 20.**

Engagements of the STSM Grantee.

The candidate / beneficiary of the STSM undertakes to respect, according to the imposed schedule, the steps described in the following table:

<p>Information to be provided in the application</p>	<p>To be filled in e-COST:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title • Start and end date (within the active Grant Period); • Budget requested by the applicant; • Information about the host institution and contact person. <p>5 mandatory documents to be uploaded to e-COST:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STSM application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Travel and budget plans, goals, summary of the work to be carried out by the applicant, expected outcomes and description of the contribution to the Action MoU objectives; • Confirmation letter of the host on the agreement from the host institution in receiving the applicant. This document should also state who the senior researcher in charge of the applicant at the host institution will be. Such a senior researcher will be appointed as tutor of the applicant for reporting purposes. In this letter it can be also indicated the mutual benefit of the STSM from the point of view of the host institution. (Template available on OPERA website). • A letter of support from the home Institution. In this letter it can also be indicated the mutual benefit of the STSM from the point of view of the home institution. • A full C.V. limited to 2 pages using the Europass template including: date of birth; current position: e.g. PhD student, Post Doc (specify date of PhD award), Assistant Professor, Employee, Research fellow..., the number of years since obtaining PhD Degree, where applicable, a list of academic publications. (Template available on OPERA website). • Extended STSM application form. This document is similar to the STSM application form described above but it contains further information necessary for the reviewing process. Besides providing here detailed budget and travel plans, the applicant is also asked to provide an extended scientific workplan (max 2 pages, including motivation) to properly describe the state of the art, the methods and the objectives. The workplan should highlight the expected added value (including training benefits and know-how transfer) for the host and home institutions and for the applicant. The STSM duration must be justified within the the work plan section. (Template available on OPERA website). <p>Non-mandatory documents to be uploaded to e-COST:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In case of special circumstances that could be taken into account to extend the age for considering the applicant as a Young Researcher/Innovator (e.g., maternity and paternity leave, clinical training, long-term illness or national service), the applicant must submit the corresponding certificates.
<p>During the STSM activity</p>	<p>The STSM beneficiary undertakes to perform the tasks in accordance with the approved request.</p>
<p>After the STSM activity</p>	<p>The STSM grantee submits the required documents in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the activity or 15 days after the end of the Grant Period, whichever date comes first.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The STSM grantee submits the required report to the Action MC on the work developed, main achievements of the STSM and planned future follow up activities; • The STSM grantee submits the relevant documentation in e-COST and claims the payment of the grant via e-COST. <p>The STSM grantee undertakes to participate to a Workshop meeting of the OPERA COST Action to share his/her experiences and research results.</p>

Useful links.

- COST Members: <https://www.cost.eu/about/members/>
- Near Neighbour Country (NNC) & International Partner Countries (IPC): <https://www.cost.eu/about/cost-strategy/cost-global-networking/>
- Grant Awarding - User guide: <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/12/Grant-Awarding-userguide.pdf>

- OPERA COST Action Website: <https://cost-opera.eu>
- OPERA Action Memorandum of Understanding: https://e-services.cost.eu/files/domain_files/CA/Action_CA20116/mou/CA20116-e.pdf
- STSM Grant - Application form: https://www.cost.eu/STSM_GrantApplication
- Report on the outcomes of a STSM: https://www.cost.eu/STSM_Report

Evaluation procedure

The core-group in charge of evaluating the STSM proposals is composed by:

Dr. Sergio Fernández-Garrido, STSM Leader; Dr. Zoran Jovanovic STSM Vice-Leader, Dr. Laurence Méchin, Grant Awarding Coordinator; Dr. Gavin Bell, WG1 Leader; Prof. Nini Pryds, WG2 Leader; Dr. Susana Cardoso, WG3 Leader; Dr. Paula Ferreira, Science Communication Coordinator; Dr. Lucian Pintilie, MC member for Romania; Dr. Yamina André, Grant Holder; Dr. Tamara Potlog, Vice-Chair; Dr. Noelle Gogneau, Chair.

Selection criteria will take into account:

- **Relevance to the OPERA COST Action scientific objectives, as outlined in the Action Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Fulfilling this criterion is mandatory.**
- CV and profile of the applicant including the fact of:
 - being or not being Young Researchers/Innovators – defined as scientists under the age of 40 at the time of the STSM call opening (properly documented circumstances such as for maternity and paternity leave, clinical training, long-term illness or national service can be considered to extend the age of Young Researchers/Innovators beyond 40);
 - being or not being a Woman Scientist;
 - Coming or not from an ITC.
- Scientific quality of the proposed project and expected scientific impact.
- Expected benefit for both the applicant and host institution, and interest of the exchange visits (e.g. complementary of techniques, exchanges of samples, discussions about common results, etc).
- Overall balance between countries and genders.