



COST Action 20135 - Improving biomedical research by automated behaviour monitoring in the animal home-cage (TEATIME)

Open Call for Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs)

For STSM undertaken between 01 January 2024 – 01 October 2024

Important Dates

Call closes: 30 June 2024

Notification of Results: 2 weeks after submission of complete application

Mission Period: 01 January 2024 – 01 October 2024

Note this is an open call. You can apply any time up to 30 June 2024 for your STSM to start and end any time during the mission period (01 January 2024 to 01 October 2024). Allow one month between submitting your application and the start date of your STSM.

About this Action

COST-TEATIME aims to improve biomedical research by bringing together European organizations developing automated home-cage monitoring technologies. They allow 24/7 data collection of experimental animals in their home-cage, but assessing physiology as well as the full behavioural repertoire still presents many challenges. This Action combines experts in mouse behaviour, laboratory animal science and data science, to critically and transparently assess the potential of these emerging technologies. More information can be found in the Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) available in the following web page: www.cost.eu/actions/CA20135.

General information

Do you want to visit a laboratory in another country to work with home-cage monitoring?

Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) are research visits aimed at supporting individual mobility, strengthening existing networks and fostering collaboration between COST Action Participants. They should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of this COST Action, whilst at the same time allowing those taking part in the missions to learn new techniques or methods, gain access to specific facilities, instruments or data that are not available in their own institution/organisation.

The TEATIME Action (www.cost-teatime.org) is offering up to 4 grants of up to €4,000 each for STSMs to be completed by 01 October 2024. The STSMs can range from 5 calendar dates to 3 months and are aimed to providing learning opportunities, preferably but not solely, to Young Researchers* through research exchange outside their home country. The grant will be paid on successful completion of the STSM, but an advance payment of up to 50% can be paid to researchers from an Inclusiveness Target Country (ITC).

Each STSM should focus on the science, development and informatics of home-cage monitoring and cover areas such as knowledge exchange, developing common methodologies, development of tools to analyse data, data annotation, integration, harmonisation and analysis. Some TEATIME Action member organisations are offering specific STSMs (detailed on our website), or you can contact any TEATIME member to design your own STSM.

*The researcher must be affiliated to a legal entity in a [COST Full/Cooperating Member, NNC](#) or European RTD. We particularly encourage Young Researchers (under 40 years old) to apply.



Eligibility Rules

In order to apply for an STSM, the following criteria must be fulfilled:

- The Applicant must
 - set up an e-COST profile
 - be based within a research institution in a legal entity in a COST Full/Cooperating Member, Near Neighbour Country (NNC) or European RTD
 - 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 STSM must be in a different country to the applicant's institution.
- The application needs to be submitted before the deadline of an STSM call.
- Due to the uncertainty of travel during the COVID pandemic "virtual" STSMs will also be considered.
- The STSM must have a minimum duration of 5 calendar days. STSMs of longer duration are encouraged.
- STSM need to be carried out in their entirety before 01 October.

Financial Rules

- The maximum grant is €4,000.
- The STSM will refund costs for travel, accommodation, subsistence, laboratory and other costs in order to complete the mission.
- Applicants can request a pre-payment of up to 50% of the total grant in advance**.
- This is payable under 2 conditions: that the GH has sufficient funds to cover 50% of the grant in advance and that the host confirms to the GH that the mission has started
- The remainder will be refunded after the mission and on approval of a report on the mission from the applicant.
- The Action cannot fund salaries.
- Note: the Action Management Committee (MC) can decide to approve the grant with a lower amount than requested

***Financial support for applicants from ITC countries:*

- Specific provisions have been made to encourage the application submission by researchers from ITC countries.
- STSM applicants with an affiliation in an institution in an ITC country can request a prepayment of 50% of grant.
- In some situations this can also apply to applicants from countries other than ITC.

Evaluation and awarding of STSM

- The evaluation of STSM applications and selection of STSM Grantees is performed by the Action's Grant Awarding Coordinator and TEATIME's Grant Evaluation Committee, on behalf of the Management Committee (MC) of the TEATIME COST Action.
- The selection of applicants is based on the scientific scope of the STSM application, which must clearly fit in the Action's scientific objectives.
- The selection also takes into account the COST policies on promoting gender balance, enabling Young Researchers (under 40 years old) and broadening geographical inclusiveness. As well as the suitability of the proposed budget.
- The applicants will be notified of the application results within 20 working days of receipt of the application.
- In some cases the Committee may ask for more information or ask the candidate to re-submit with further information or a revised budget.



Evaluation criteria for STSM applications

The TEATIME STSM evaluation criteria (listed below) are based on the relevance of the mission to the aims and objectives of TEATIME, the scientific scope and quality of the project, the scientific background and quality of the applicant and the suitability of the host research environment. They also consider COST Policy and Rules on promoting gender balance, enabling Young Researchers and broadening geographical inclusiveness.

- A minimum score of 75 is required for funding. With a minimum threshold of 15 required for “Relevance to the aims and objective of TEATIME”
- Applicants will be notified of the application results within 20 working days of receipt of the application.
- Applicants may be asked to provide additional information.
- Applicants may resubmit once in the same call if not successful.
- Applicants may apply for and be awarded more than one grant of any type during the call period, but in the case of restricted funds or applications of equal merit, the grant may be awarded in preference to an applicant that has not held a grant before.

Evaluation criteria	Max points
Relevance to TEATIME aims and objectives: demonstrates an understanding of the aims of TEATIME; shows relevance to TEATIME Objectives and the scientific objectives and tasks within at least one of the Working Groups	20*
Scientific quality of the project: feasibility, originality, achievability and potential impact	20
Scientific quality of the applicant: skills and experience of the applicant, academic CV, and for PhD students, supervisor’s opinion	15
Suitability of the research environment at the host institution: methodology available, complementarity between host and applicant background	15
Suitability of the budget requested: a plausible and well-planned budget that is sufficient to cover expenses while demonstrating value for money	15
Relevance to COST policies: promoting gender balance, enabling Young Researchers and broadening geographical inclusiveness	15

*A minimum score of 15 points is required to be eligible for funding

Equal weighting is given to the scientific quality of the project and its relevance to the aims and objectives to TEATIME, as the Action will only support STSM that are clearly relevant to TEATIME and the development and use of home-cage monitoring including associated data storage, visualisation, analysis and annotation. Pay specific attention to the definition of home-cages on the TEATIME website (www.COST-TEATIME.org) to make sure the system you wish to work with on the STSM is relevant.

STSM Application Procedure

For information and a guide on how to apply on-line see the “Grant Awarding user guide” in [COST Documents & Guidelines](#) in the section “Documents for running a COST Action”.

To start the application, you must have an e-COST profile or create one. Do this by logging into the e-COST platform (<https://e-services.cost.eu/>). You will also need to add your bank details and a CV to your profile before you can start the application.



The application must be completed via e-COST

Instructions and screen shots on how to do this are given in the “Grant Awarding user guide” in [COST Documents & Guidelines](#) in the section “Documents for running a COST Action”.

In summary: go to the COST website and select COST Actions and then “Grant applications” from the menu on the left. This will take you to <https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants/add>

Select our Action “CA20135 Improving biomedical research by automated behaviour monitoring in the animal home-cage” by typing CA20135 in the search box under COST Action.

Then click on the blue box to “Apply for a Grant”, select Short-term Scientific Mission grant by clicking “continue” and complete the information which includes:

- A title for your STSM (limit 128 character limit, including spaces)
- Start and end date (within the active Grant Period; i.e. ends before 01 October)
- Budget requested by the applicant
- Information about the host institution and contact person

DO NOT SUBMIT at this stage, just save the draft.

You will then return to the application page where you can select “upload documents” from the “options” drop-down box. This will take you to a page where you can download the COST template for the application form.

You will then need to complete this and upload the following documents:

- **Letter of support from the host** confirming the host institution organisation can host the STSM applicant to perform the activities detailed in the STSM work plan on the agreed dates
- **CV** (including a list of academic publications – if applicable)
- **For PhD students**, letter with supervisor’s opinion on the relevance of the STSM to the student’s studies and suitability of the applicant
- **Application form** (template available on e-COST) describing:
 - **Details** - STSM Title, start and end dates
 - **Goals** - 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 outcomes 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).
- **Budget plan** (up to €4,000) – Please upload an Excel table, which summarises the budget requested. Typical categories would be:
 - Travel (to and from and during the STSM)
 - Accommodation
 - Subsistence
 - Consumables
 - Other lab costs
 - Any other costs relevant to your STSM

Note: Please make the STSM request before the deadline of an STSM call.

After completing the STSM

- Within 30 days from the end date of the STSM, the successful applicant must submit a scientific report, using the template provided on e-COST, to include work developed, main achievements and planned future follow-up activities.
- The applicant is also responsible for acquiring and uploading an official letter from the host institution



- formally accepting the scientific report.
- Failure to submit the scientific report within 30 days from the end date of the STSM will cancel the Grant.

We look forward to receiving your application and are here to help with any questions you have.

Please send any questions to: iheinla@ut.ee

Copied to: COST-TEATIME@har.mrc.ac.uk

Acknowledgement

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COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.

www.cost.eu