COST Action 23156 - European Network for Sigma-1 Receptor as a Therapeutic Opportunity (SIGMA-1EUROPE)

Open Call for ITC Conference Grants (ITCCGs)

for ITCCG undertaken between 20 March 2025 – 30 September 2025

Important Dates

Call closes: 30 September 2025

Notification of Results: 2 weeks after submission of complete application

Mission Period: 20 March 2025 – 30 September 2025

Please note: This is an open call. You can apply any time up to 15 September 2025 for your ITCCG to start and end within the call period (20 March 2025 to 30 September 2025). Please ensure there is at least one month between submitting your application and the start date of the conference.

About this Action

COST Action CA23156 - European Network for Sigma-1 Receptor as a Therapeutic Opportunity (SIGMA-1EUROPE) focuses on the Sigma-1 Receptor, a ligand-regulated endoplasmic reticulum chaperone protein and a promising target for innovative compounds used in the treatment of neurodegenerative and inflammatory diseases, cancers, and pain conditions.

The SIGMA-1 EUROPE network brings together experts and disciplines across Europe to advance the exploration and identification of the role of the Sigma-1 Receptor in physiology and pathologies, to design innovative Sigma-1 Receptor ligands for cellular biology and medicine, and ultimately to train young researchers and innovators to revise our views of the diseases, to think out-of-the-box and explore novel and innovative therapeutic opportunities.

For further information see:

www.cost.eu/actions/CA23156

General information

Are you a Researcher or Innovator from an ITC Country? Would you like to attend an international conference to present your work?

SIGMA-1 EUROPE is offering ITC Conference Grants (of up to €2,000 each) to researchers and innovators to attend a high-level conference and present their work as an oral presentation. To be eligible you must be affiliated to a legal entity in a COST Inclusiveness Target Country (ITC) or Near

Neighbour Country (NNC). The work presented must be relevant to the scope of the Action. The grant can provide a contribution to travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses, registration fees and overall effort.

Note the ITC Conference Grants are now available to researchers/innovators of any age and are no longer restricted to Young Researchers under 40 years old. They now provide support for people accepted to give an oral presentation but not a poster.

Eligibility Rules

To apply for an ITCCG, the following criteria must be fulfilled:

- The Applicant must:
  - o Create an e-COST profile.
  - o Be affiliated with a research institution in a legal entity in a COST Full/Cooperating Member, Near Neighbour Country (NNC), or European RTD.
  - o Be engaged in an official research program as a PhD Student, postdoctoral fellow, or employee of an institution associated with research.
- The application needs to be submitted before 15 September 2025.

Financial Rules

• The maximum grant is €2,000 for a face-to-face meeting and €500 for virtual meetings.
• The ITC Conference grant can be used to fund/refund costs for travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, registration fee and overall effort.
• Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the end of Conference and approval of all required report/documentation.
• Note: the Action Management Committee (MC) can decide to approve the grant with a lower amount than requested

Evaluation and awarding of ITCCG

• The evaluation of ITC Conference Grant applications and selection of ITC Grantees is performed by the Action's Grant Awarding Coordinator and SIGMA-1 EUROPE's Grant Evaluation Committee, on behalf of the Management Committee (MC) of the SIGMA-1 EUROPE COST Action.
• The selection of applicants is based on the scientific relevance of the ITC Conference Grant 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.
• A minimum score of 75 is required for funding. With a minimum threshold of 15 required for "Relevance to the aims and objective of SIGMA-1 EUROPE"

• 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 SIGMA-1EUROPE aims and objectives: conference topic(s), audience and the proposed oral presentation	20*
Scientific quality of the presentation: original research, clear presentation	20
Motivation: good motivation for attending and potential for impact on the applicant's career	20
Suitability of the budget requested: a plausible and well-planned budget that is sufficient to cover expenses while demonstrating value for money	20
Relevance to COST policies: promoting gender balance, enabling Young Researchers and broadening geographical inclusiveness	20

A minimum score of 15 points in this criterion 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 SIGMA-1EUROPE, as the Action will only support ITCCG that are clearly relevant to SIGMA-1EUROPE.

ITCCG Application Procedure

For information and a guide on how to apply online 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 the Action "CA231565 European Network for Sigma-1 Receptor as a Therapeutic Opportunity" by typing 'CA23156' 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 oral presentation (limit 128 characters, including spaces)
- Start and end date (within the active Grant Period)
- Budget requested by the applicant
- Information about the Conference

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:

• Application form (template available on e-COST) describing: Relevance of the conference topic to the Action and motivation including the potential for impact on the applicant's career
• Copy of the abstract of the accepted oral presentation
• Acceptance letter from the conference organisers
• For PhD students only - letter of recommendation from your supervisor at your institution
• Budget plan (up to €2,000 in-person, €500 virtual) – Please upload an Excel table, which summarises the budget requested. Typical categories would be:
    o Registration for the meeting
    o Travel (to and from and during the Conference)
    o Accommodation
    o Subsistence
    o Any other costs relevant to your application
Note: Please make the ITC Conference Grant request before the deadline of an ITC Conference Grant

call.

After attending the Conference

Within 30 days from the end date of the Conference, the grantee must submit via e-COST:

• Report on the outcome of the presentation in terms of grantee's visibility, including the establishment of new contacts for future collaborations
• The certificate of attendance
• The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the oral presentation of the grantee
• Copy of the given oral presentation
Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the completion of the activity and approval of all required report/documentation.

Failure to submit the scientific report within 30 days from the end date of the conference will cancel the Grant.

Contacting SIGMA-1 EUROPE

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

Please send any questions to: michal.cagalinec@savba.sk

Acknowledgement