

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

Open Call for Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs)

for STSM undertaken between 20 March 2025 – 30 September 2025

Important Dates

Call closes: 15 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 08 August 2025 for your STSM to start and end within the mission 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 your STSM.

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

Would you like to visit a laboratory in another country to work within the frames of this Action?

Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) are research visits designed to support individual mobility, strengthen existing networks, and foster collaboration between COST Action Participants. All participants (senior scientist, junior scientists and students) are encouraged to apply. Although missions are primarily expected to promote collaboration among Action partners, exchange could involve visiting

laboratories that are not yet Action members. The missions should specifically contribute to the scientific objectives of this COST Action, by giving access to new techniques or methods, specific facilities, instruments or data that are highly beneficial to the awardee's project in his own institution/organisation.

The SIGMA-1EUROPE Action (www.cost.eu/actions/CA23156) is therefore offering grants for staff exchanges (up to €4,000) for STSMs to be completed by 30 September 2025. The STSMs can range from 5 calendar days 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 scientific research related, directly or indirectly, to the sigma-1 receptor field, including knowledge exchange, methodological development, data analysis, and innovation. Some SIGMA-1EUROPE member organisations are offering specific STSMs (details available on the consortium website), or you can contact any SIGMA-1EUROPE 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) to apply.

Eligibility Rules

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

- The Applicant must:
 - Create an e-COST profile.
 - Be affiliated with 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 program as a PhD Student, postdoctoral fellow, or employee of an institution associated with research.
- The STSM must take place in a different country than the applicant's home institution.
- The application needs to be submitted before 15 September 2025.
- Virtual STSMs will also be considered.
- The STSM must last a minimum of 5 calendar days. STSMs of longer duration are encouraged.
- STSM must be completed by 30 September 2025.

Financial Rules

- The grant will be calculated according to COST rules depending on the travel cost and duration, and up to a maximum of €4,000.
- Grants cover travel, accommodation, subsistence, laboratory and other costs.
- Specific provisions have been made to encourage the application submission by researchers from ITC countries**.

- The Action does not fund salaries.
- **Note:** The Action Management Committee (MC) may approve grants for amounts lower than requested.

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

- STSM applicants with an affiliation in an institution in an ITC country can request a prepayment of up to 50% of the total grant in advance.
- This is payable under 2 conditions: that the Grant Holder (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.

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 SIGMA-1EUROPE's Grant Evaluation Committee, on behalf of the Management Committee (MC) of the SIGMA-1EUROPE 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) and broadening geographical inclusiveness. As well as the suitability of the proposed budget.
- Applicants will be notified of results within 20 working days of receipt of the application. Applicants will be notified of results within 20 working days of submission. If needed, the Committee may request additional information or ask for a revised application.
- 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 SIGMA-1EUROPE STSM evaluation criteria (listed below) are based on the relevance of the mission to the aims and objectives of SIGMA-1EUROPE, 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 the criterion "Relevance to the aims and objective of SIGMA-1EUROPE".
- 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: demonstrates an understanding of the aims of SIGMA-1EUROPE; shows relevance to SIGMA-1EUROPE Objectives and the scientific objectives and tasks within at least one of the Working Group	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 in this criterion are 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 STSM that are clearly relevant to SIGMA-1EUROPE.

STSM 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 STSM (limit 128 characters, including spaces)
- Start and end date (within the active Grant Period)
- 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 of completing your STSM, submit a scientific report (template available on e-COST) outlining your work performed, achievements and future plans.
- 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 report within 30 days will result in the grant being canceled.

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

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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.

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