

COST Action 24111 - European Network for Valorizing Food Processing Waste into Sustainable Fibers (ENFiber)

Guidelines for Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) Grants



General Notes: Please ensure that you carefully read all the guidance provided in this document before submitting your application. You do not need to wait until the closing date of the STSM call to apply. Your STSM may start and end at any time during the mission period. Applicants are advised to allow a minimum of one month between submitting the application and the proposed start date of the STSM; however, this timeframe may vary depending on the rules and administrative processing times of the hosting institution. All submitted STSM applications will be reviewed by the ENFiber committee according to the criteria outlined later in this document. STSM proposals achieving the threshold score will be funded subject to the availability of funds.

About this Action

The **COST Action ENFiber** (European Network for Valorizing Food Processing Waste into Sustainable Fibers) is a pan-European network dedicated to transforming food processing waste into high-value sustainable fibers using innovative and sustainable methods. This initiative meets the environmental and societal demand for waste reduction and circular bio-economy solutions. With food by-products often discarded or underutilised, ENFiber unlocks their potential by promoting scalable green extraction technologies and implementing advanced characterization techniques. The main challenge is to scale fiber production from food processing waste, making it both commercially viable and environmentally sustainable. To achieve this, ENFiber will identify fiber-rich waste streams, explore non-destructive analytical methods, develop extraction methodologies to maximize yields, assess the environmental impact of the processes, and pursue product development opportunities. Collaboration between researchers, industry, and policymakers will ensure alignment with regulatory frameworks and market demands. ENFiber is organized into Working Groups (WGs) focused on extraction, characterization, product development, sustainability, and dissemination. More information can be found in the [Action's Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#).

What is an STSM?

A core part of ENFiber's capacity-building strategy is the **Short-Term Scientific Mission** (STSM) program. STSMs are exchange visits in which a researcher travels to an institution in another country for a short period to conduct a specific research project, learn new techniques, or access data and infrastructure not available at their home institutions. These missions strengthen collaboration across the ENFiber network, promote interdisciplinary research on sustainable fiber extraction, and provide invaluable training opportunities, especially for early career researchers, in line with ENFiber's objectives and the EU's circular economy goals. It allows researchers to gain skills or knowledge, build or reinforce collaborations, and jointly advance the action's deliverables. Within ENFiber, STSM topics are expected to align with the Action's focus (e.g., novel fiber extraction methods, fiber characterization techniques, sustainability assessments, product development from waste fibers, etc.), thereby directly contributing to ENFiber's WG activities and MoU objectives. By facilitating knowledge exchange in areas such as food waste recycling and fiber technology, STSMs help ENFiber achieve its mission of scalable green solutions for fiber production.

Why pursue an STSM in ENFiber?

STSMs offer mutual benefits: the visiting researcher (STSM Grantee) receives funding to perform research in a new environment, accessing expertise or equipment unavailable at home, while the host institution gains an active collaborator and strengthens ties within the network. For ENFiber, STSMs are instrumental in building an interdisciplinary community, connecting early career scientists, engineers, and industry partners across countries to accelerate innovations in the conversion of food waste to fibers. These short missions play a key role in advancing scientific innovation and capacity building, and STSM results (e.g., data, protocols,

publications, or prototype fibers) will feed into ENFiber's deliverables and potentially lead to long-term collaborations.

Consistency with COST Rules

This guide follows the official COST rules for STSMs, as outlined in the [COST Annotated Rules](#). All applicants should familiarize themselves with the [COST guidelines](#) to ensure compliance with eligibility, financial, and reporting requirements. The information below is structured to ENFiber's context and priorities, providing clear instructions and selection criteria for prospective STSM applicants.

Who Can Apply?

Eligible applicants

In accordance with COST rules, applicants for ENFiber STSMs must meet the following criteria:

- Be a researcher of any age affiliated with an institution located in a [COST Member Country](#) or a [Near Neighbour Country](#) (NNC).
- Be formally associated with COST Action CA24111 (ENFiber) through membership in at least one Working Group (WG), or eligible to join the Action and its Working Groups.
- Be affiliated with a research-performing organisation, such as a university, research institute, company, or NGO with R&D activities.
- Propose an STSM to be carried out at a host institution located in a country [different](#) from the applicant's home institution.

Priority to Early Career Investigators (ECIs)

While applications are open to researchers at all career stages, priority will be given to Early Career Investigators (ECIs). An applicant is considered an Early Career Investigator (ECI) if no more than eight (8) years have elapsed since the official award date of their PhD, in accordance with COST rules.

How to Apply

Application Procedure:

1. If you do not yet have an [e-COST](#) account, create one and ensure that your bank details are completed for a potential grant transfer.
2. Download the [Short-Term Scientific Mission Grant Application Form](#) and [Detailed Budget Breakdown Form](#) from the ENFiber website and fully complete all the sections. The budget form must include:
 - The **STSM duration**, expressed in **calendar days**, with a **minimum duration of 5 days**, including travel days.
 - A **detailed Budget Breakdown**, clearly justifying:
 - Travel costs
 - Accommodation expenses
 - Per diem (subsistence) allowance

3. Prepare a CV in the **Europass format**, with a maximum length of **three** pages. A list of academic publications may be provided on separate pages if applicable. Applicants must also upload their updated CV in their e-COST profile.
4. You must obtain an **invitation letter** on letterhead from the **host institution** (e.g. head of the research group, PI, director of the department, head of the institute/division etc.), confirming that you will perform the activities detailed in the STSM work plan on the agreed dates.
5. Log onto e-COST and click on the [Grant Applications tab](#) to start a new application. You should select the grant from the page '[Apply for new grant](#)'. You will need to fill all requested sections and to upload all required documents before submitting the application including your ENFiber Application Form, Invitation Letter, Budget Form and CV which must be uploaded under the "**Other**" document category on the application platform.
6. Once all documents are uploaded and questions are complete, submit the STSM application form via the e-COST platform.
7. Incomplete applications will be rejected by the Grant Awarding Coordinator before being reviewed by the Core Group.

Funding Conditions

- Each successful applicant is eligible for up to a maximum of EUR 4,000 in total funding, depending on the duration of the STSM and the location of the host institution.
- Applicants **must** use the [COST Daily Allowance Rates](#) when preparing their budget.
- For travel days, it is recommended to request 50% (½) of the applicable daily allowance.
- The grant may cover travel, accommodation, subsistence, and project-related costs.
- Reimbursement is based on [COST Travel Reimbursement Rules \(TRR\)](#).

Please note that STSM grants do not cover experimental or research costs incurred at the host institution (e.g. consumables, reagents, equipment usage fees). The grant is intended solely to support the mobility of the applicant (travel, accommodation, and subsistence). **STSM grants are contributions to the overall cost of the mission and will not necessarily cover all expenses.**

Additional Funding and Payments

- STSMs may be combined with other funding sources, **provided that costs requested are not covered elsewhere**.
- Any additional funding must be clearly declared, and double funding for the same cost items is strictly prohibited.
- Payment is issued **after completion of the STSM** and approval of the final report, in accordance with COST rules. Please ensure that you are able to personally fund the STSM before making your application.

Administrative and Legal Responsibilities

- Grantees are responsible for their own personal insurance, health coverage, social security, and taxation matters.

- All approvals, reporting, and payment procedures are handled through the e-COST platform and are governed by COST rules and procedures.

Evaluation Procedure and Timeline

Applications will be evaluated by the ENFiber Core Group following the selection criteria **outlined below**. The review period will last **maximum** three weeks from the call deadline.

Assessment of STSM Applications

Following the STSM call closing date, the ENFiber STSM Evaluation Committee will conduct scientific, strategic, and budgetary evaluations of all eligible applications. Each proposal will be assessed using the criteria below.

1. Scientific Quality and Technical Soundness (0-30 points)

- Clarity and coherence of the scientific objectives
- Relevance of the proposed activities to the applicant's research profile
- Soundness and feasibility of the proposed methodology
- Expected contribution to the applicant's skills development

2. Relevance to ENFiber Objectives and Working Groups (0-25 points)

- Alignment with ENFiber's scientific objectives and scope
- Clear contribution to one or more ENFiber Working Groups
- Potential to generate knowledge, methods, or data relevant to ENFiber activities

3. Added Value of the Host Institution and STSM Design (0-20 points)

- Complementarity between the home and host institutions
- Justification of the host institution's expertise and infrastructure
- Clear rationale explaining why the STSM cannot be carried out at the home institution

4. Impact, Knowledge Transfer, and Network Strengthening (0-15 points)

- Potential for long-term collaboration within ENFiber
- Plans for knowledge exchange, dissemination, or follow-up activities (e.g. preparation of a joint publication or short communication, targeted journal or conference contributions, presentations within ENFiber, or other concrete dissemination outputs).
- Contribution to strengthening ENFiber's interdisciplinary and international network

5. Strategic and Inclusiveness Criteria (0-10 points)

Priority will be given to applications that:

- Are submitted by **PhD students or Postdoctoral Researchers**
- Originate from **Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs)**
- Involve **early-career researchers** or first-time STSM applicants
- Support balanced participation across Working Groups and countries

Selection Procedure, Ranking and Notification of Results

The scientific and budgetary evaluation of all eligible STSM applications will be conducted by the **ENFiber Core Group**, coordinated by the Grant Awarding Coordinator (GAC).

Following the evaluation, the Core Group will score each eligible application. Based on these scores, the Grant Awarding Coordinator (GAC) will prepare the final ranked list of applications, in line with the budget allocated to the specific STSM call. Applications will be ranked according to their total score. In the case of equally ranked proposals, priority will be given in the following order:

1. Early Career Investigators (ECIs)
2. PhD students
3. Applicants from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs)

The final ranked list will be proposed to the Action Vice Chair and the Action Chair for confirmation, in accordance with COST rules and procedures.

Following completion of the selection process, the final ranked list of applications, including scores, will be published through ENFiber communication channels, including the Action website and social media platforms. The lists of accepted applicants and waiting-list candidates will be publicly announced.

Successful applicants will be formally notified through the e-COST platform once their application has been approved. A Grant Letter will be issued to approved candidates, outlining:

- The rights and obligations of the grantee
- The responsibilities of the Action Grant Holder

Applicants placed on the waiting list will not receive an automatic notification via the e-COST system at the time of the initial decision. Waiting-list candidates may be contacted at a later stage, should additional budget become available or if higher-ranked applicants withdraw, in accordance with the approved ranked list.

STSM Execution

- Grantees must carry out the STSM as described in the approved application, within the approved duration.
- Any deviations from the work plan or STSM dates must be reported and approved in advance where possible.
- Failure to comply with the approved plan may result in the reduction or cancellation of financial support.
- In cases of force majeure or host institution closure before or during the STSM, applicants should follow the relevant COST guidance and promptly consult the STSM Coordinator.

After the STSM

- Once the activity has ended, the grantee must submit a [report on the outcomes of the Short-Term Scientific Mission](#) using the template that can be downloaded from the ENFiber website, and relevant documentation in e-COST within 30 days after the end date of the activity. **Failure to submit the report by the deadline will result in the cancellation of the grant and no payment will be made.**
- **Confirmation from the Host institution:** A letter or an email from the senior researcher of the Host institution confirming that the applicant has successfully completed the mission.

- Payment of the grant is subject to the approval of the report by the STSM Coordinator, Vice Chair and Chair of the Action. Once approved, the Grant Holder proceeds with payment.

For any questions on STSM, please direct any enquiries to: agoncalves@morecolab.pt

Acknowledgement

COST Action CA24111 ENFiber and its Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) are supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology). COST is a funding organisation for research and innovation networks, supporting transnational cooperation by connecting research initiatives across Europe and beyond. Through COST Actions, researchers are enabled to develop new ideas, build lasting collaborations, and advance scientific knowledge and careers through structured networking and knowledge exchange. Further information on COST is available at www.cost.eu.

In the case of scientific publications or other dissemination outputs arising from STSM activities, applicants are required to acknowledge and cite COST Action CA24111 ENFiber, in accordance with COST communication and dissemination rules.

Examples of Acknowledgement Statements

1. Standard acknowledgement

This work was carried out within the framework of the COST Action CA24111 ENFiber, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

2. STSM-specific acknowledgement

Part of this work was performed during a Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) funded by the COST Action CA24111 ENFiber, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

3. Detailed acknowledgement

This work benefited from a Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) funded by the COST Action CA24111 ENFiber, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), which facilitates research networking and knowledge exchange across Europe and beyond.

4. Minimal acknowledgement (posters, figures, slides)

Supported by COST Action CA24111 ENFiber (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

5. Thesis or report acknowledgement

The research presented in this thesis/report benefited from a Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) funded by the COST Action CA24111 ENFiber, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).