COST Action CA24103

EUropean COllaborative Network on electroCatalysis for Efficient Renewable Technologies (EU-CONCERT)

Call for applications for short-term scientific missions (STSMs)

for implementation from January to May 2027

Call 1

Deadline 15/12/2026

1. About EU-CONCERT

EU-CONCERT (European Collaborative Network on electroCatalysis for Efficient Renewable Technologies) is a COST Action dedicated to advancing the fundamental understanding and modeling of electrocatalytic processes at electrified solid–liquid interfaces. Electrocatalysis underpins key technologies for the green energy transition, including water splitting, hydrogen production, and the electrochemical conversion of small molecules such as CO_2 and N_2. However, predictive descriptions of these processes remain limited due to the complexity of interfacial phenomena and the lack of systematic validation of theoretical models against well-controlled experimental data.
EU-CONCERT addresses this challenge by encouraging close collaboration between theoretical, computational, and experimental communities, with a strong focus on benchmarking, reproducibility, and data sharing. The Action aims to improve the accuracy and reliability of electrochemical modeling approaches while strengthening links between simulations and experiments through coordinated research and targeted mobility activities.
A central strategic objective of EU-CONCERT is to foster balanced participation and effective collaboration between the theoretical/computational and experimental communities, ensuring that advances in modelling and experimental characterisation inform and validate each other. At the same time, the Action seeks to promote geographical inclusiveness by widening access to research opportunities and strengthening the participation of researchers from Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs). These complementary priorities guide the allocation of mobility grants, while maintaining scientific excellence as a fundamental selection criterion.

The objectives of EU-CONCERT are:

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1. Develop and assess advanced theoretical and computational methods for modeling electrified solid–liquid interfaces, including solvent, electrolyte, and potential-dependent effects.
2. Generate high-quality, reproducible experimental data on well-defined model systems suitable for rigorous comparison with simulations.
3. Establish shared benchmarking protocols and promote open data sharing to enhance reproducibility and comparability across studies.
4. Facilitate knowledge transfer and interdisciplinary collaboration between theory and experiment.
5. Train and support early-career researchers and strengthen capacity building across the European electrocatalysis community.

To achieve these objectives, EU-CONCERT is organized into the following Working Groups (WGs):

- **WG1 – Advanced Theoretical and Computational Approaches in Electrocatalysis**
  Focuses on the development and improvement of computational methods for electrochemical interfaces, including potential-dependent phenomena and reaction kinetics.
- **WG2 – Collection of Experimental Data on Model Systems and Comparison with Simulations**
  Coordinates the design and execution of experimental studies on well-defined systems and ensures direct comparison with theoretical predictions.
- **WG3 – Benchmarking and Data Sharing**
  Develops standardized protocols for benchmarking and promotes FAIR data sharing practices within and beyond the Action.
- **WG4 – Communication, Dissemination, and Capacity Building**
  Oversees training activities, Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs), dissemination of results, and engagement with the broader scientific community.

2. What is a short-term scientific mission (STSM)

A Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) is a research visit carried out by a researcher or innovator at a host institution located in a different country, for a defined and limited period. The mission enables the applicant to perform a focused piece of work within an international environment, gaining access to expertise, methods, data, or research infrastructure that are not available at the home institution.
STSMs are a core instrument of COST Actions and serve multiple purposes. They promote international mobility and foster collaboration across countries and disciplines, with particular emphasis on supporting early-career researchers. STSMs facilitate the transfer of knowledge and research skills, including the use of specialized techniques and equipment, and contribute to the establishment of durable scientific networks that may lead to joint publications and long-term collaborations. By enabling targeted research activities, STSMs strengthen ongoing projects within the Action and directly support the achievement of its scientific objectives. In line with COST policies, STSMs also contribute to excellence and inclusiveness by encouraging gender balance, widening geographical participation, and ensuring transparent and open selection procedures.

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Within EU-CONCERT, STSMs are particularly encouraged to facilitate knowledge exchange between theoretical/computational and experimental research, promote new collaborations across institutions and countries, and broaden participation in the Action's scientific activities, especially among researchers from ITCs.

3. Call information

Applications are invited from researchers and innovators for STSMs contributing to the scientific objectives of EU-CONCERT and its Working Groups.
The total budget available for this call is €20,000. To support the strategic objectives of EU-CONCERT, the budget will be allocated according to two complementary principles:

- **Scientific balance:** an indicative 50/50 allocation between projects with a primarily theoretical or computational focus (WG1) and projects with a primarily experimental focus (WG2).
- **Geographical inclusiveness:** an indicative 50/50 allocation between applicants affiliated with institutions in Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs) and those in non-ITC countries.

These allocations are intended to promote balanced participation across scientific disciplines and geographical regions, while maintaining scientific quality as a prerequisite for funding.
Projects involving multiple Working Groups, including WG3 and WG4, are encouraged and will be classified under WG1 or WG2 according to their primary scientific focus for allocation purposes.
The two 50/50 allocations will be considered simultaneously and do not establish four fixed sub-quotas. If one or more categories cannot exhaust their indicative allocation due to an insufficient number of eligible applications meeting the required quality threshold, or because of the amounts requested, the remaining funds may be redistributed to other eligible applications according to the evaluation procedure described in Section 8.
The deadline for applications is 15 December 2026. All applications will be evaluated collectively after the closure of the call. Funded STSMs must take place between **1 January and 31 May 2027**, following the issuance and acceptance of the official Grant Letter.

4. Eligibility

STSM grants are available to applicants employed by, or affiliated to, an institution, organisation, or legal entity in a **COST Full/Cooperating Member country**, a **Near Neighbour Country (NNC)**, or a **European RTD Organisation**.

The eligible countries are listed in COST Documents & Guidelines, particularly, in the Country and Organisations Table.

Applicants must comply with the COST eligibility rules in force at the time of application. Overlapping or double funding is not permitted, including simultaneous funding from different COST Conference Grant schemes for the same activity.

5. Financial support

Before applying, candidates should read **Annex 2** of the Annotated Rules for COST actions.

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STSM grants provide a contribution for travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses, and for miscellaneous expenses arising from the implementation of the project and the delivery of the report to the COST Action Management Committee. There is no limit to the maximum duration up to 31 May 2027.
The requested budget for each STSM will be assessed during the evaluation process and may be adjusted if necessary; however, **the financial contribution shall not exceed EUR 2,500 per grant. With a total call budget of EUR 20,000, eight STSMs can be funded if all grants are awarded at the maximum amount.**

Participants are reminded that cancellation insurance fees are an eligible expense and participants are advised to take out cancellation insurance.
Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the completion of the activity and after approval of all required report/documentation.
The final amount of financial support is determined by the Action Chair/Grant Holder, based on the advice of the Grant Awarding Coordinator, in accordance with the outcome of the review process (see Section 8 below). The request of the applicant should reflect the duration and location of the STSM.

6. The grant awarding process

Each STSM must be carried out entirely within the **1 January and the 31 May 2027**.

The grant awarding process for STSMs starts with a call under a strict budget. Each application is reviewed by a pool of reviewers named by the Grant Awarding Coordinator among the Action members and validated by the Core Group on behalf of the Management Committee.
The Grant Awarding Coordinator advises the Action Chair who acts on the advice if the budget allows. An STSM ends when the payment is recorded. Missions must be complete by 31 May 2027.

STSM applicants should not book anything (e.g., transportation or accommodation) before receiving confirmation through a Grant Letter of the Grant assignment.

7. Application procedure

Applicants must have an e-COST profile and applications must be submitted online in e-COST via https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm.

Applications comprise:

1. An online Grant Application (found at https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm) which includes:
    a. A project title for the mission that communicates the content and purpose of the work.
    b. Start and end date of the STSM.
    c. Budget requested.
    d. Basic information about the host institution and contact person.

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2. A completed Application Form (Application template) describing goals, description of the work to be carried out by the applicant, expected results (outcomes) and description of the contribution to the Action MoU objectives.

3. Confirmation from the host institution of its availability to receive the applicant (Host acceptance template).

4. A justification document setting out:
   a. how the proposed STSM will contribute to the scientific and professional growth of the applicant (max. 250 words)
   b. the financial plan (about 1 page) clearly indicating the expected costs (e.g., transport, accommodation, living costs) following COST rules and the amount of support already received from other sources.

5. Applicant's curriculum vitae.

6. In the case of students, a support letter from the home institution.

Any documents that cannot be uploaded via the e-COST interface should be sent directly to the Grant Awarding Coordinator (Michele Re Fiorentin michele.refiorentin@polito.it) and the Action Chair (Giancarlo Cicero giancarlo.cicero@polito.it).

8. Evaluation of applications

Applications will be evaluated based on their scientific quality, feasibility, expected outcomes, and relevance to the objectives of EU-CONCERT and its Working Groups.
Each application will first be screened by the Grant Awarding Coordinator to verify its completeness, eligibility, and relevance to the Action. Incomplete applications will be rejected, with the possibility of resubmission before the application deadline. Applications that fall outside the scientific scope of the Action will be rejected and cannot be resubmitted.
Eligible applications will be evaluated independently by at least two reviewers appointed by the Grant Awarding Coordinator from among the Action members, acting on behalf of the Management Committee. External expert advice may be sought where appropriate. The Grant Awarding Coordinator will ensure that reviewers have no conflicts of interest with the applicants or their proposed activities.
Each application will be assessed against four numerical criteria, as detailed in Table 1:

- **Clarity and relevance:** clarity of the scientific objectives, scientific quality of the proposal, and contribution to the objectives of EU-CONCERT and its Working Groups.
- **Feasibility:** appropriateness of the proposed methods, available expertise, and resources at the host institution.
- **Scientific planning:** organisation of the proposed activities, timeline, and consistency of the work plan with the objectives and duration of the STSM.
- **Expected outputs:** expected scientific results, concrete deliverables, opportunities for future collaborations, and added value for the Action.

Each criterion will be scored from 1 to 6, according to the following definitions:
Scores:

- **1 (very poor):** The criterion is not adequately addressed, with major weaknesses or missing information.
- **2 (poor):** The criterion is only partially addressed, with significant weaknesses.
- **3 (fair):** The criterion is addressed at a basic level, but important limitations remain.

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- **4 (good):** The criterion is satisfactorily addressed, with only minor weaknesses.
- **5 (very good):** The criterion is thoroughly and convincingly addressed, with no significant weaknesses.
- **6 (excellent):** The criterion is addressed to an outstanding standard, with exceptional clarity, quality, and supporting justification.

Each reviewer will independently assign a score from 1 to 6 to each of the four criteria, resulting in a total score ranging from 4 to 24 points. The overall score of each application will be calculated as the arithmetic mean of the reviewers' total scores. The scientific and professional development justification and the suitability of the requested budget will also be assessed qualitatively, as indicated in Table 1.
To be considered for funding, applications must achieve an overall score of at least 16 out of 24 points and an average score of at least 3 out of 6 in each individual criterion. Meeting these thresholds does not guarantee funding.

For funding allocation purposes, each application will be assigned to one primary scientific category (WG1 or WG2) and one geographical category (ITC or non-ITC), based respectively on the main scientific focus of the proposed STSM and the country of the applicant's home institution. Projects involving multiple Working Groups will be classified according to their primary scientific focus. ITC status will be determined according to the official COST classification in force at the application deadline.
Separate ranked lists will be established for WG1 and WG2, and for ITC and non-ITC applicants. Each application will therefore appear in two lists, one for each classification.
Grants will be allocated to the highest-ranked eligible applications within the relevant categories, taking into account the budget allocations between WG1 and WG2, and between ITC and non-ITC applicants. Both allocations will be considered simultaneously, with the aim of achieving a balanced distribution of funding while maintaining scientific quality as a prerequisite.
If any WG or ITC/non-ITC category receives an insufficient number of eligible applications meeting the required quality threshold to exhaust its indicative allocation, the remaining funds may be redistributed to the highest-ranked eligible applications not yet funded.
Where the two allocation objectives cannot be fully satisfied simultaneously, the selection will seek the closest feasible balance, considering the evaluation scores, requested budgets, and overall objectives of the Action. Any deviations from the indicative allocations will be documented and justified.
In the event of equally ranked applications competing for the remaining available funds, **priority will be given to the application with the higher average score in clarity and relevance, followed by the average score in expected outputs.**

The Grant Awarding Coordinator will prepare the consolidated ranking and proposed grant allocations, including justification for any deviations from the indicative budget distribution. **The final selection and grant amounts will be submitted for approval to the Management Committee or its duly delegated Core Group.** The awarded financial contributions may be adjusted based on the justification of the requested expenses and the available budget, up to a maximum of **EUR 2,500 per grant**.
The evaluation outcome will be communicated to applicants through the COST e-services page within one month after the application deadline. A summary of the results will be published on the COST Action website.

Table 1. Summary of the evaluation criteria

Category	Scoring	Notes
Requisites		
Support letter – home institution	Y/N	Required for students only

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Support letter – host institution	Y/N	
Evaluation		
Scientific and professional development justification	Y/N	Convincing?
Work plan		
Clarity and relevance	1 - 6	Score?
Feasibility	1 - 6	Score?
Planning	1 - 6	Score?
Expected outputs	1 - 6	Score?
Grant request		
Travel	Y/N	Acceptable?
Accommodation	Y/N	Acceptable?
Subsistence	Y/N	Acceptable?
Miscellaneous	Y/N	Acceptable?

9. Submission of the STSM report and payment

Once the STSM has been completed, the applicant must submit a request for payment via the e-COST system**.** To this end, the grantee is required to upload the STSM report, using the official STSM report template, together with all required supporting documentation, within 15 working days of the end of the mission.

The STSM report includes a short description of the work, and main achievements of the visit and planned future follow-up activities.
In addition to providing the STSM report, the applicant must upload

- A **confirmation document from the host institution** certifying that the STSM was carried out as approved.
- An **additional scientific report** including:
  - The background and a detailed description of the work performed, together with the main scientific findings;
  - An assessment of the impact of the visit on the grantee's professional and scientific development, networking, and capacity building (e.g. establishment of collaborations);
  - Information on any foreseen publications or outputs resulting from the STSM, where applicable.

Any documents that cannot be uploaded via the e-COST interface should be sent directly to the Grant Awarding Coordinator (Michele Re Fiorentin michele.refiorentin@polito.it) and the Action Chair (Giancarlo Cicero giancarlo.cicero@polito.it).

Grants are paid by the Grant Holder after the completion of the activity and approval of all required report/documentation.

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10. Acknowledgement and Visibility

Any publication, presentation, or dissemination activity resulting from an STSM funded under this call must acknowledge the support of the COST Action and, whenever possible, display the COST and EU-CONCERT logos (e.g. on slides, posters, or other dissemination materials). The following acknowledgement text must be used:

“This publication is based on work supported by the COST Action CA24103: EUropean COllaborative Network on electroCatalysis for Efficient Renewable Technologies (EU-CONCERT).”

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