

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) in Bio4Pak Project

Preamble

(1) STSMs are designed to foster closer collaboration between partner institutions, enhance interdisciplinary understanding of ongoing research, and stimulate the co-creation of innovative ideas related to research, communication, and collaborative practices within the Bio4Pak network. Each STSM must demonstrate a clear and direct contribution to the scientific and strategic objectives of the Bio4Pak project. In parallel, STSMs are intended to enable participants to:

- acquire new scientific, technical, or methodological competences;
- gain access to specific data, equipment, infrastructure, techniques, or expertise not available at their home institution;
- consult, validate, and discuss research results with host institution experts;
- exchange knowledge, experience, and best practices within the Bio4Pak consortium;
- strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration and long-term scientific cooperation between project partners;

(2) Benefits of Short-Term Scientific Missions

The STSM scheme is structured to deliver measurable benefits at multiple levels: individual researchers, host institutions, and the Bio4Pak project. STSMs support:

a. Benefits for the STSM Grantee

STSMs provide Grantees with the opportunity to carry out targeted research activities, acquire advanced knowledge and skills, and access equipment, techniques, or expertise unavailable at their home institution. Attention is given to supporting early-career researchers and individuals from underrepresented groups, in line with Horizon Europe principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

b. Benefits for the Host Institution

Host institutions benefit from the temporary integration of external researchers, the exchange of complementary expertise, and the strengthening or initiation of long-term scientific collaborations within the Bio4Pak consortium. STSMs also contribute to increasing institutional visibility and reinforcing the host's role within the project network.

c. Benefits for the Bio4Pak Project

STSMs directly support the achievement of Bio4Pak scientific and innovation objectives by promoting talent development, knowledge transfer, and network integration. They function as goal-oriented capacity-building instruments that enhance interdisciplinary collaboration, co-creation, and innovation across project partners.

d. Benefits for the Portfolio of the Challenge

Where scientifically and strategically justified, the STSM scheme will also enable two-way exchanges between the Bio4Pak coordinator and research groups implementing complementary activities across the EIC Pathfinder Challenge Portfolio. Such portfolio-linked missions operationalise the “portfolio approach” by accelerating cross-project alignment of methodologies, data generation, and material/performance characterisation protocols, while facilitating rapid access to specialised facilities and know-how. They support the co-development of portfolio-level outcomes (e.g., interoperable test beds, harmonised sustainability and safety assessment frameworks, as well as coordinated dissemination and exploitation), thereby reducing duplication and increasing the comparability and reusability of results. Portfolio-linked STSMs will be governed by the same eligibility criteria, evaluation process, prioritisation rules, reporting obligations, and financial principles as STSMs implemented within the Bio4Pak consortium, ensuring full transparency, equal opportunities, and consistent quality standards across all exchanges. Ultimately, these STSMs strengthen portfolio coherence and impact, helping nature-inspired packaging and agricultural film solutions progress more efficiently toward validation, uptake, and broader adoption.

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Definitions

Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) – temporary institutional research visits designed to support individual researcher mobility and to strengthen scientific collaboration among institutions participating in the Bio4Pak project or Portfolio projects financed within EIC PATHFINDER CHALLENGE Work Programme (HORIZON-EIC-2024-PATHFINDERCHALLENGES-03), Challenge: Nature inspired alternatives for food packaging and films for agriculture.

Grantee – researchers (including early-career and senior researchers), PhD candidates, Master’s students, administrative or technical staff affiliated with institutions that are members of the Bio4Pak consortium or Portfolio Challenge partners or institutions of the Bio4Pak Advisory Board.

Host Institution – a partner institution of the BIO4PAK project, an institution affiliated with a member of the BIO4PAK Advisory Board, a partner institution from Portfolio projects financed under the EIC Pathfinder Challenge Programme (HORIZON-EIC-2024-PATHFINDER CHALLENGES-03: “Nature-inspired alternatives for food packaging and films for agriculture”),

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or

another external institution, provided that the planned STSM demonstrates a clear scientific, technological, dissemination-related or portfolio-level relevance to the objectives and expected impact of the BIO4PAK project.

STSM Coordinator – University of Lodz.

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General principles

1. The implementation of STSMs adheres to the principles of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, transparency, and fairness, ensuring balanced participation across gender, career stage, and institutional background. Eligibility is independent of gender, nationality, age, disability status, or career stage, in line with Horizon Europe principles of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and inclusiveness.
2. **Time duration:**
 - each STSM lasts minimum of 5 working days, without formally defined maximum duration, provided that the mission remains feasible within the allocated budget and project timelines.
 - Each STSM should be planned entirely within a single grant reporting period and take place within the overall lifetime of the Bio4Pak project

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Application

1. Home institutions select candidates for STSM according to their own internal procedures.
2. The selection of successful STSM applicants is based on information included in the STSM Application Form (Annex 1). As part of the STSM application procedure, Home institutions and STSM Coordinator shall be guided by the following criteria:
 - the objective of the STSM falls within the scientific scope of the Bio4Pak project;
 - the STSM takes place at a Bio4Pak partner institution, an Bio4Pak Advisory Board member institution, or a partner institution financed under the EIC Pathfinder Challenge Programme (HORIZON-EIC-2024-PATHFINDER CHALLENGES-03: “Nature-inspired alternatives for food packaging and films for agriculture”) or another external institution, provided that the planned STSM demonstrates a clear scientific, technological, dissemination-related or portfolio-level relevance to the objectives and expected impact of the BIO4PAK project.

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If any of the above criteria is evaluated as NO, the application must be rejected without further evaluation. Specific Evaluation Criteria (0–5 points each). Eligible applications are evaluated according to the following criteria:

- relevance of the proposal, including the planned STSM activities and alignment with the scientific objectives of Bio4Pak (1–5 points);
- benefits for the host and home institutions resulting from the STSM (1–5 points);
- expected impact of the STSM on the professional development of the Grantee (1–5 points);
- expected outcomes and follow-up plans for further collaboration (1–5 points).

3. Prioritisation Rules. Applications will be prioritised according to the following criteria: Young Researchers (age under 35 years), applicants who have not previously received STSM funding.

4. Notification of the STSM Coordinator. Candidates who have been selected by the Home institutions in accordance with paragraph 1 are required to send a scanned copy of the STSM Application Form (Annex 1) signed by the candidate and the STSM supervisor and a curriculum vitae (CV) to the STSM Coordinator at bio4pak@biol.uni.lodz.pl.

5. Evaluation Process. The STSM Coordinator verifies the completeness and formal correctness of the STSM application and informs the applicant about the results within 14 working days. In cases of doubt as to whether the criteria described in paragraph 1 have been met, the applications are forwarded by the STSM Coordinator to the GA, which will decide on the acceptance of the STSM.

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Financing & responsibilities

1. As a rule, the Home institution is responsible for covering the costs related to the implementation of an STSM. An exception to this rule applies to STSMs with a destination at the University of Lodz (UL), as specified below.
2. **STSMs Hosted by the UL.** STSMs may be financed by the UL up to a maximum amount of EUR 1,500 per single STSM, irrespective of the duration of the mission subject to availability of resources. The final reimbursable amount is calculated in accordance with the internal accounting and financial regulations of the UL, which are binding for all Grantees Hosted by the UL or visiting external institutions.

STSMs of Bio4Pak partners and Portfolio Partners. STSMs of Grantees of Bio4Pak partners carried out at Bio4Pak partner institutions (other than UL) or at Portfolio projects financed under the EIC Pathfinder Challenge Work Programme (HORIZON-EIC-

2024-PATHFINDERCHALLENGES-03: “Nature-inspired alternatives for food packaging and films for agriculture”) have to be covered by the Home institution. All financing arrangements must comply with applicable national and institutional regulations.

3. **Eligibility and costs.** The STSM grant constitutes a financial contribution towards eligible costs incurred during the mission and does not constitute a salary, stipend, or employment-related remuneration. The grant does not necessarily cover all expenses related to the STSM. It may contribute to the following cost categories: travel costs, accommodation, subsistence.

Grantees are expected to plan their missions realistically and may be required to co-finance expenses from other sources.

All financing arrangements must comply with applicable national, institutional, and project-level regulations, including internal financial and accounting rules of the financing institution.

STSM Grantees are fully responsible for making their own arrangements and for complying with all applicable regulations related to personal safety and security, health and travel insurance, taxation, social security and pension obligations. The Bio4Pak project, the coordinating institution, and the host institution shall not be held liable for any personal, legal, or financial matters arising from the STSM.

Grantees are required to apply best value for money principles when arranging travel and accommodation. This includes selecting cost-effective and reasonable options that are proportionate to the duration and objectives of the STSM, in line with Horizon Europe financial accountability standards.

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Grantee’s obligation

An integral component of each STSM is its contribution to project dissemination and visibility. Grantees are expected to actively support Bio4Pak communication activities, including but not limited to: social media engagement, short videos, interviews, or other dissemination materials shared through official Bio4Pak communication channels. All STSM dissemination activities shall be properly affiliated with the logotypes and financial disclaimer.

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Reporting and Approval of the STSM Grant

1. The STSM Grantee shall submit the signed STSM Reporting Form (Annex 2) within 14 working days from the end date of the mission by email to the STSM Coordinator at bio4pak@biol.uni.lodz.pl, with the **direct STSM supervisor at the Host Institution** copied.

The STSM Reporting Form shall include:

- a concise description of the work carried out during the STSM, including main activities, achievements, and outcomes in relation to the approved objectives;
 - evidence of dissemination activities related to the STSM (e.g. a link to a video, post, or interview disseminated via Bio4Pak communication channels).
2. **Payment Conditions.** Payment of the STSM grant is conditional upon the submission and approval of the scientific report (i.e. STSM Report), which must be positively evaluated by the STSM Coordinator. Failure to submit the report or to obtain approval may result in partial or full rejection of the grant payment.
 3. All reports and related documentation shall be retained for audit and control purposes in line with Horizon Europe financial and record-keeping requirements.

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Final Provisions

These Regulations enter into force on the date of their approval and apply to all Short-Term Scientific Missions implemented within the Bio4Pak project.

They shall be interpreted and implemented in compliance with Horizon Europe rules, the Grant Agreement, and applicable to national and institutional financial regulations.

All relevant STSM documentation, including application forms and reporting templates, is available at: www.bio4pak.eu.

Annexes:

Annex 1 – STSM Application Form

Annex 2 – STSM Reporting Form

