



Accelerating Innovation and Development of European Microbial Foods

1st Open Call for

Inclusiveness Target Country Conference Grants (ITCCGs)

Important Dates

This is the first call for applications for Inclusiveness Target Country Conference Grants (ITCCGs) in the framework of the COST Action **CA24132** (**Grant Period 1: 1st November 2025 – 31st October 2026**).

- **Call open from:** 1 April 2026 and will remain open until the available funding is exhausted.
- **Evaluation results:** Applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis and assessed against the established selection criteria. Applicants will be notified of the outcome within two weeks of submitting a complete application.
- Conferences must finish before 1st October 2026.

COST

The **European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST)** is a funding organisation that supports the creation of research networks, called COST Actions. These networks provide an open space for collaboration among scientists across Europe (and beyond), thereby fostering research advancement and innovation.

About CA24132

COST Action CA24132 - Accelerating Innovation and Development of European Microbial Foods (Mic2Food) main aim and objective of the Action is to facilitate the development of new microbial foods for the European market, by ensuring that discoveries are accelerated in a coordinated manner and translated into tangible products and by positively influencing the perception of the public and policymakers on microbial foods to allow this emerging industry to thrive in Europe. For further information see: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA24132/>

COST Inclusiveness Target Countries

Countries or Outermost Regions of the COST Full Members defined under 'widening participation and spreading excellence' strand of the Widening Participation and Strengthening ERA' part of Horizon Europe and associated countries as defined by the EC based on an indicator and published in the Horizon Europe Work Programme¹.

¹ **REGULATION (EU) 2021/695** OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013, article 2(17) : 'widening countries' or 'low R&I performing countries' means countries where legal entities need to be established in order to be eligible as coordinators

What is Inclusiveness Target Country Conference Grant?

A **Inclusiveness Target Country Conference Grant (ITCCG)** funds an **oral presentation** of their own work within the scope of the Mic2Food Action by an CA24132 participant affiliated to a legal entity located in an [Inclusiveness Target Country/ Near Neighbour Country](#) in a **high-level conference** fully organized by a third party, i.e. **not organized nor co-organized by the Mic2Food COST Action**.

ITC Conference Grants aim to:

- Serves COST [Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy](#);
- Supports Action Participant affiliated to a legal entity located in an Inclusiveness Target Countries/ Near Neighbour Countries to establish a strong network and increase their visibility in the research community through sharing their work and to gain knowledge;
- Can contribute to increasing visibility of the Mic2Food COST Action.

ITC Conference grantees will receive support for attending and presenting their own work within the scope of the Action (**oral presentation**) in a conference and can establish new contacts for future collaborations.

The **ITC Conference Grant in Mic2Food** intends to contribute to the scientific objectives of the [Cost Action CA24132](#).

Who can apply?

These opportunities are open to **all members of Mic2Food Cost Action CA24132** (students, professors and/or researchers) of any age. ITC conference grant applicants should be COST Members and affiliated to a legal entity located in an [Inclusiveness Target Country](#)².

Eligibility for the ITC Conference Grant can be checked: <https://www.cost.eu/am-i-eligible/>; and the reimbursement scheme is described in the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#).

- The applicant must be member of the Action at the time of application.
- The applicant must have a confirmation of an accepted **oral presentation** at a conference held in a different country than the country of affiliation.
- The main subject of the submitted abstract must be on the topic of the Action and the abstract must acknowledge COST.
- Applicants are required to deliver either an oral presentation at the selected conference and must be listed in the official program of the event/conference. The subject matter of the approved presentation must align with the topics covered by COST Action Mic2Food and acknowledge COST.

under the 'widening participation and spreading excellence' component of the 'Widening Participation and Strengthening ERA' part of the Programme; from the Member States, those countries are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, for the whole duration of the Programme; for associated countries, it means the list of eligible countries as defined based on an indicator and published in the work programme. Legal entities from outermost regions as defined in Article 349 TFUE shall be also fully eligible as coordinators under this component.

² **ITCs:** Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Republic of North Macedonia, Republic of Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine. **NNCs:** Algeria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia.

Financial Support

ITC Conference Grant is a fixed financial contribution, providing a contribution for travelling, accommodation and subsistence expenses, registration fee and overall effort. Applicants to ITCCG **should not apply for different types of conference grants during this period.**

The funding scheme awards up to a maximum of €2,500 per grant for face-to-face conferences and EUR 500.00 for online conferences. For the first grant period Mic2Food Action we will fund **up to a maximum of €1,000 per grant for face-to-face conferences.**

The decision on the amount of the grant is based on the applicant's proposal and will reflect the duration and location of the conference and the actual conference fee.

The allocated grant amount is a contribution to the overall expenses of the ITCCGs and not an intent to finance the overall costs. Our Action supports travel costs, accommodation and the conference fee. If the conference registration fee includes meal and accommodation expenses in the conference package, these costs must be **deducted** from the grant. Applicants are required to provide **documentary evidence of the conference fee** along with other pertinent administrative documents.

Grantees must make their own arrangements for all provisions related to personal security, health, taxation, social security, travel insurance and pension matters. Further details can be consulted at the [COST Annotated Rules](#).

Application procedure

Apply via the e-COST (<https://e-services.cost.eu/user/login>) and first-time users must create an account. The applicant encodes a grant application by logging into **e-COST** and clicking on the **Grant Applications tab**. To encode a new application, the applicant clicks on '**Apply for grant**'.

Under "**Presentations at conferences organised by third parties - Inclusiveness Target Countries Conference**", choose "Apply".

Applications are submitted **online** through the e-COST platform using the dedicated forms available at: <https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants>

- Create or update your e-COST profile, ensuring that your CV and bank account information are uploaded.
- Carefully read the funding rules described in the [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#).
- For guidance on the e-COST tool, applicants can consult the [Grant Awarding User guide](#).

Inclusiveness Target Country (ITC) Conference Grant applications must be filled in e-COST providing

- a. Applicant details
- b. COST Action number ([CA24132](#))
- c. Title of the presentation
- d. Conference title, **date**, (within the active Grant Period, i.e., no overlap across two consecutive Grant Periods), and country.
- e. Budget requested and its justification.
- f. Attendance Type (face-to-face)
- g. Bank details for payment (Bank address country, IBAN Account Number, Bank Name and SWIFT/BIC Code)

After encoding the Grant application form by filling in all the above-mentioned sections, the applicant

also needs to upload the actual **application template completed**, which shall be previously downloaded from the following link: <https://www.cost.eu/ITCG-application-template>.

Upload the supporting documents

After adding the supporting document(s), the applicant can **submit** the grant application. The application status will change from draft to submitted. Prior to approval of the application, if need be, the applicant will be able to revise the application.

Supporting documents:

- h. ITC Conference Grant **Application Form** (based on e-COST template <https://www.cost.eu/ITCG-application-template>), describing the relevance of the conference topic to the objectives of Mic2Food Action, and highlighting the quality and excellence of the conference; and motivation of the applicant with a detailed explanation about how the attendance to this conference will contribute to the Grantee's career.
- i. Copy of the abstract/proceeding of the accepted **oral presentation**
- j. **Acceptance (or invitation) letter** from the conference organiser committee (confirming your speaking slot).

Other documents required by the Action:

- k. CV of the applicant, including a list of academic publications if applicable.
- l. Involvement in Mic2Food, provide a description of your involvement and contributions to Mic2Food thus far. Explain how your participation in and contribution to the selected conference would benefit the CA24132 by defining the relevant Working Group(s) and the specific deliverable(s) addressed in the contributions.
- m. Conference Agenda if available at the time of application and URL.
- n. Copy of the information sheet of the conference where the registration fees are listed.
- o. Scanned copy of passport/ID card.
- p. For PhD students only - letter of recommendation from your supervisor at your institution.

Two weeks after the complete application submission, the Grant Awarding Coordinator reports the final result to the grant evaluation committee, to the leadership and Grant Holder Manager of CA24132, also is notified the applicant. The Grant Holder will then send to the applicant a "**Grant Letter**" confirming the proposal's approval and the awarded grant amount.

Evaluation process and result announcement

The Grant Awarding Coordinator and Mic2Food Grant Evaluation Committee will be able to review the ITCCG application, on behalf of and the Management Committee (MC). In case of ultimate rejection, a justification will be included in the e-notification to the applicant.

Evaluation will be based on the **quality and scientific excellence** of the conference, the relevance of the conference which must clearly fit in the Mic2Food Action's scientific objectives, the impact on the career of the grantee, and applicant motivation.

To guarantee a fair and objective evaluation, an evaluator should have no affiliation with the home institution of the ITCCG proposal, and a positive decision requires approval by more than 50% of the grant evaluation committee members.

Successful applicants will receive an e-mail (**Grant Letter**), from the Grant Holder stating the official approval of the ITC Conference Grant application, the granted budget and a payment request form which must be **completed after the completion of the Conference** for the grant to be transferred.

The criteria given in the table below shall be applied for evaluation and participants will be selected on the basis of an **evaluation-criteria score** (see below). Preference will be given to papers submitted to conferences with competitive **peer review**. Moreover, **geographical diversity** and **gender balance** will be taken in due consideration, according to the [COST excellence and inclusiveness policy](#).

Criterion	max. points
a) Before any further criteria are considered	
Application is complete and fulfils all formal requirements	pass/no pass
b) Evaluation of the grant application	
Relevance of the conference: The conference is well-recognized and its topics and audience align with the Action's Working Groups.	3
Scientific quality and excellence of the presentation: The presentation demonstrates novel, high-quality research clearly aligned with the Action's Working Groups.	3
Motivation: The applicant shows strong motivation to attend and clear potential for positive career impact.	3
Suitability of the budget requested: The proposed budget is realistic, well-justified, and represents good value for money.	3
Relevance to COST policies: The application supports COST priorities by promoting gender balance, inclusion of Young Researchers, and geographical diversity.	3

If three points can be awarded, numbers mean the following:

- 0: no
- 1: somewhat
- 2: yes
- 3: very much

If one point can be awarded, numbers mean the following:

- 0: no
- 1: yes

Applicants must score at least 11 points to qualify for the grant. If scores are equal, preference will be given to those who have not previously received an ITC Conference Grant.

Within two weeks after the complete application submission, the Grant Awarding Coordinator reports the final result to the grant evaluation committee, to the leadership and Grant Holder Manager of CA24132, also is notified the applicant. The Grant Holder will then send to the applicant a **"Grant Letter"** confirming the proposal's approval and the awarded grant amount.

After the Conference

The **grantee** will receive an e-notification to submit the **report** and other **supporting documents** on e-COST. The deadline to submit the scientific report is **30 days** from the end of the activity, within **15 days from the end date of the Grant Period** (October 31, 2026) or within a shorter timeframe as per Grant Holder / Grant Awarding Coordinator's request to meet reporting deadlines.

The **supporting documents** requested **after the conference** are:

- a. Scientific Report (use ITCCG Report template <https://www.cost.eu/ITCG-report-template>), describing the outcome of the presentation of the accepted contribution, in terms of grantee's visibility, including the establishment of new contacts for future collaborations;
- b. The certificate of conference attendance;
- c. The programme of the conference or book of abstracts / proceedings indicating the oral presentation of the grantee;
- d. Copy of the given oral presentation.

In addition to the report, grantees are required to upload proof of their travel or accommodation in the conference hosting city, documentation of the conference fee and package, a brief testimonial about the attended conference experience and a photograph taken during their presentation at the conference.

After review of the report by the procedures agreed, the Grant Awarding Coordinator needs to encode their approval or rejection on behalf of the Grant Evaluation Committee and MC. Upon the recording of the payment, an e-notification is sent to the grantee, with a copy to the Grant Holder manager.

Application approval and payment procedures are managed through the e-COST platform, with detailed explanations provided in the COST Annotated Rules. For comprehensive information on eligibility, evaluation and selection, financial support, and grant payment procedures, please refer to [Grant Awarding User Guide](#) and [Annotated Rules for COST Actions](#).

Failure to submit the requested documents within the established period from the end date of the ITC Conference Grant will effectively cancel the Grant.

Acknowledgement

The appropriate acknowledgement must be included in presentation and proceedings, which publication must be sent by e-mail to the Grant Awarding Coordinator as soon as it is published.

The work is presented at conference, the [COST corporate logo](#), the [EU emblem](#) with accompanying text (“Funded by the European Union”), the Mic2Food logo, and the name, acronym, and reference number of the COST Action must be visible on all relevant materials that are on display or distributed at the conference.

All presentations and proceedings of conferences supported by the CA24132 ITC Conference Grant must contain the following acknowledgement: The attendance to this conference was supported by the *COST Action CA24132 “Mic2Food – Accelerating Innovation and Development of European Microbial Foods,” supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology); www.cost.eu*.

The grantee acknowledges and consents that, upon completion of the conference, information about the conference and the grantee, including the presentation and visual documentation (photos, videos), may be published on the **Mic2Food website**, in the **online newsletter**, and through other **official communication channels of the Action**. Posters and presentations should use the **official Mic2Food templates**, including the Mic2Food logo. For templates, please contact Science Communication Coordinator **Prof. Bojana Bajic** (baj@uns.ac.rs)

Further information

- **CA24132 (Mic2Food):** <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA24132/>
- **Annotated Rules for COST Actions:** <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2025/11/COST-094-21-Annotated-Rules-for-COST-Actions-Level-C-V3.0-25-IX-2025.pdf>
- **ITC Conference Grant Awarding User guide** (<https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2025/01/COST-Grant-Awarding-user-guide.pdf>).
- For general information on ITC Conference Grants, please contact the **Grant Awarding Coordinator of CA24132: Prof. Assoc. Dr. Luziana Hoxha** (lhoxha@ubt.edu.al).