ESCMID Observership programme
Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

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Application process

Q: How do I submit an application for an ESCMID Observership?

ESCMID members submit their requests for an ESCMID Observership visit by sending an online application form directly to the ESCMID Collaborative Centre (ECC):

1. Search for ECCs (www.escmid.org/ECCsearch)
2. Select the Collaborative Centre (ECC) you want to visit.
3. Use your ESCMID membership details to login.
4. Click on the link ‘Apply now for Observership visit’, and submit your request for an Observership using the online application form.
5. The ECC reviews the request for an Observership visit.
6. If necessary, the ECC will clarify details with the applicant.
7. The ECC accepts or rejects the request for an Observership.
8. Once approved by the ECC, ESCMID will review the application.
9. ESCMID Office informs the applicant of the result.

Q: Can I submit more than one request for an Observership visit at the same time?

No, ESCMID members may only submit one Observership request to an ECC at a time. The review process must be completed by the ECC before a new request may be submitted.

Q: Are there any application restrictions?

For the general ESCMID Observership programme, applications may be submitted throughout the year.
Exception: Until further notice, only one ESCMID ECDC Observership and one ESCMID WHO Observership will take place per year. For deadlines, please check the respective websites: www.escmid.org/WHO_Observer or www.escmid.org/ECDC_Observer.

Q: How far in advance can I submit my application before the intended Observership visit?

The request for an Observership must be submitted at least 2 months before the intended visit starts. Please be aware that the review process by the ECC host and by ESCMID can take up to 2 months. We recommend that you submit your request even earlier so that you have enough time to make your travel arrangements.

Q: How long does the evaluation process take?

We usually need 2 months for the evaluation process. Depending on circumstances and the availability of a reviewer, it might take less time. However, we cannot guarantee to complete the evaluation in less than 2 months.
Q: I have submitted a request to an ECC, but have not received any answer. What can I do?

We usually give the ECCs 3 weeks to answer a request. If you have not heard anything after 3 weeks, please contact the ECC again, and refer to the ID of your request. You can find the ECC host’s contact details and the ID of your request in the email notification which you received after the online submission of your request. If you still do not get a reply, please send an email to the ESCMID Executive Office at observership[at]escmid.org.

Q: If my application for an Observership is unsuccessful for any given year, can I still submit another Observership application during that same year?

Yes, if your application for an Observership is unsuccessful, you may still apply for another Observership visit provided that you have not received approval for any other Observership visit within 12 months (before or after of a completed Observership). Reference date is the last day of the Observership visit.

Q: Is there a maximum or minimum duration?

Yes, the duration of Observerships is from 1 day to 1 month. The purpose of the programme is to encourage our members to visit ESCMID Collaborative Centres to gain insights into good clinical and/or laboratory practice at a foreign institute. For this purpose we think even a short period of time is sufficient. However, you are free to arrange to stay for a longer period with your host ESCMID Collaborative Centre, but please be aware that ESCMID Observership funding will not cover all expenses, and you might want to look for additional sources. Please also be aware of the special conditions for the WHO Observerships and ECDC Observerships.

Q: Is it possible to have more than one Observership visit within 12 months?

ESCMID does not allow an exception from the ESCMID guidelines to have more than one ESCMID Observership within 12 months, irrespective of whether the applicant asks for funding or not. However, there is always the option to visit the ECC host outside the ESCMID Observership programme provided that the ECC host agrees.

Q: Can I apply for an Observership at a Centre that is not an ESCMID Collaborative Centre?

This is not possible, but you could encourage the institute to sign up as an ESCMID Collaborative Centre, and then apply to visit it afterwards. We realize this may be difficult, but ESCMID would like to include more European and non-European institutes in this network.

Q: Can I visit an ECC which is based in the country where I work?

No. For the general ESCMID Observership programme, only visits to a different country will be sponsored. There is an exception for the WHO and ECDC Observerships which can be visited by members who work in Denmark and Sweden respectively.
Q: Can I visit an ECC outside Europe?

Intercontinental Observership visits are eligible if the observer is in Europe or if the observer visits a centre in Europe (e.g. ESCMID member from Europe can visit an ECC in Africa or ESCMID member from Australia can visit an ECC in Europe). The same funding rules apply to all intercontinental observership visits regardless of origin and destination. Outside Europe, an observer must visit an ECC in Europe (e.g. an ESCMID member from South Africa may not visit an ECC in Tunisia or South America). ESCMID Observership visits within Europe are possible (e.g. ESCMID member from the UK can visit an ECC in Croatia).

Q: Can I change the date of the Observership visit after approval?

In exceptional circumstances, it is possible to change the date of your Observership retrospectively provided that the ECC host agrees. The ESCMID Office (observership[at]escmid.org) needs to be informed as soon as possible, and proof of ECC host agreement must be provided. Important - there is one restriction: in cases when the new date of the visit is in another year, we would need to check whether the new date is possible for cost allocation reasons.

**Reporting & evaluation of Observership visits**

Q: Do I need to write a report?

Yes. After the Observership visit, and as a condition for reimbursement, you have to submit a brief report about the visit which will be published on the ESCMID website and in selected ESCMID publications as appropriate. We shall also ask you to complete a brief questionnaire to provide feedback on your Observership visit.

Q: Is there a word limit for the report

Yes, there is a word limit of 4500 characters for the report.

**Reimbursement of Observership visits**

Q: How is the grant reimbursed to the recipient?

Reimbursement takes place after the Observership visit. As a condition for reimbursement you have to submit a brief report upon completion of the visit. Reimbursement will be made after we receive hard copies as proof of incurred expenses (incl. boarding cards and original invoices/receipts). Please send to ESCMID Executive Office, P.O. Box 214, 4010 Basel, Switzerland.

Important: ESCMID will only reimburse expenses from pre-authorised visits.

Q: How long does it take to reimburse me?

It is very important to us to handle the reimbursement promptly. However, we are dependent on how fast we receive all the necessary original documents. When all original
documents are on hand, and there are no further questions to answer, Reimbursement will be arranged. Generally it takes a few days until Reimbursement is made (processing of international bank transfers varies a lot).

Q: Can I use the ESCMID funding for travel and accommodation?

There are new reimbursement rules for intercontinental Observerships effective from 11 March 2014. All Observership visits which are approved by the ESCMID Executive Office after 11 March 2014 are regulated by the new reimbursement rules.

Intra-European Observership visits
Include ESCMID members from Europe who visit an ECC in Europe (for definitions see below). ESCMID subsidises travel costs and subsistence for outside-of-country visits to a maximum of EUR 1’200 as follows:

- EUR 500 max. for travel expenses (air ticket, train ticket, car expenses at EUR 0.30 per km)
- EUR 70 per diem (up to a maximum of 10 days)

Please note that we can only reimburse the travel expenses actually incurred, up to a maximum of 500 EUR and after we receive proof of paid travel expenses. Please be aware of the special conditions for the WHO Observerships and ECDC Observerships.

Intercontinental Observership visits (outgoing/incoming)
Outgoing: include ESCMID members from Europe visiting an ECC outside Europe (for definitions see below). Incoming: include ESCMID members from outside Europe visits an ECC in Europe (for definitions see below). ESCMID subsidises travel costs and subsistence for outside-of-country visits to a maximum of EUR 1’700 as follows:

- EUR 1000 max. for travel expenses (air ticket, train ticket, car expenses at EUR 0.30 per km)
- EUR 70 per diem (up to a maximum of 10 days)

Please note that we can only reimburse the travel expenses actually incurred, up to a maximum of 1’000 EUR and after we receive proof of paid travel expenses. Please be aware of the special conditions for the WHO Observerships and ECDC Observerships.

Q: When should I submit the reimbursement documents?

All claims for expenses have to be handed in to the ESCMID Executive Office not later than 6 months after the visit has taken place in order to be reimbursed.
Q: Can I use the funding to cover my accommodation and food costs too?
We reimburse EUR 70 per diem (= flat rate for subsistence costs) (up to a maximum of 10 days) which includes a contribution to accommodation and food costs. For the subsistence costs we do not need any receipts of your daily expenses.

Q: Do you also reimburse taxi costs as travel costs?
We reimburse transfer (like bus) from airport or train station to the city as travel expenses but we do not reimburse taxi costs. Please note that we will reimburse those travel costs only after we receive proof of paid expenses.

Q: Does the ‘per diem’ reimbursement cover the arrival and departure day?
No, the Observership funding covers the time you spend at the Collaborative Centre, so only the Observership visit itself. If you need to arrive a day earlier and depart a day later you might be able to reclaim the additional per diem costs. However, the maximum of 10 days of ‘per diem’ may not be exceeded.

Q: Do you cover costs for VISAs?
Yes, but they count as travel costs and are added to your travel costs total for which there is a maximum.

Q: Is it a problem if my train ticket is in a different currency from Euro?
It is no problem when the train ticket is in a different currency from Euro. Please use www.oanda.com for the exchange rate on the date of the last day of your trip.

Q: How to deal with car expenses?
You can claim your expenses for driving with your own car as travel costs, but please be aware that we will only reimburse travel costs up to a maximum limit (please see above reimbursement rules).
Please enter the km you drove on the reimbursement form, and add a printout of the distance you drove (e.g. printout of a route planner). We reimburse EUR 0.30/km.

Q: How do you define Intra-European Observerships and Intercontinental Observerships?
Intra-European Observerships apply to those cases where ESCMID members from Europe visit an ECC in Europe (list of countries below).

Intercontinental Observerships apply to ESCMID members from Europe visiting an ECC outside Europe (‘outgoing’) or to ESCMID members from outside Europe visiting an ECC in Europe (‘incoming’) (list of countries see below).

ESCMID member from Europe: includes ESCMID members working in a European country.
ESCMID member outside Europe: includes ESCMID members working in a non-European country.
List of countries and respective geographic region:
https://www.escmid.org/fileadmin/src/media/PDFs/5Profession_Career/ECC_Observerships/Definition_countries.pdf