



**European Co-operation  
in the field of  
Scientific and Technical Research  
- COST**



Palma de Mallorca, 15 June 2010  
COST 4176/10  
PRESSE 184

## **COST MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE<sup>1</sup> Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 15 June 2010**

The Representatives of the Governments of the COST Member States<sup>2</sup> and of the European Commission met at the COST Ministerial Conference in Palma de Mallorca on 15 June 2010 at the invitation of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

The Conference took stock of the developments in COST operations since the last Ministerial Conference in 2003 and discussed the future role of COST to contribute to achieving the objectives of the European Research Area (ERA) and priorities of the EU 2020 strategy.

The Conference's views are concluded in a Declaration on COST, the text of which is set out in the Annex.

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<sup>1</sup> COST, established in 1971, is an intergovernmental framework for cooperation and networking of European research activities. COST does not fund research itself, but supports networking activities such as meetings, conferences, short term scientific exchanges and outreach activities. COST receives financial support for its coordinating activities from the EU RTD Framework Programme (FP).

<sup>2</sup> Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom; Israel (cooperating state).

# **P R E S S**

**Conference of European Ministers responsible for European Cooperation  
in Science and Technology<sup>1</sup> (COST)**

**DECLARATION ON COST**

The Representatives of the Governments of the COST Member States and of the European Commission,

meeting at the COST Ministerial Conference in Palma de Mallorca on 15 June 2010,

**Whereas** COST is an intergovernmental framework for the co-ordination of research at a European level, set up by the exchange of letters initiated by the President of the Council of the European Communities on 4 November 1969 and 24 July 1970, and the Ministerial Resolution of 22 - 23 November 1971 and subsequently developed by further COST Ministerial Conferences; COST is characterised by the following main principles:

- "bottom-up" initiative from the European scientific and technical community,
- "à la carte" or "variable geometry" concept for organisation of networks,
- "co-ordination of research capacity" using the network of national co-ordinators and committees consisting of high level national representatives of the scientific community ("Domain committees"),
- "openness to participation beyond Europe", and
- "flexible structure" (easy implementation and light management of the research networking initiatives);

**Whereas** COST has proved to be a flexible, fast, integrative, effective and efficient tool to network and coordinate nationally funded research activities at project level, bringing motivated scientists together under light strategic guidance and letting them work out their ideas, thus contributing to overcome the fragmentation of research in the European Research Area (ERA) and also contributing broadly to Europe's competitiveness and socio-economic development;

**Whereas** the Representatives of the Governments of the COST Member States and the European Commission at the COST Ministerial Conference in Dubrovnik on 27 May 2003<sup>2</sup> confirmed their commitment to COST as an effective asset for European research because of its demonstrated contribution to scientific capacity building, through networking, cooperation and coordination;

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly also referred to as "European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research".

<sup>2</sup> Doc. COST 252/03.

**Whereas** COST has carried out a major modernisation of its *modus operandi*, in accordance with recommendations of a series of reviews, including notably its scientific management, by: introducing a new Domain structure; by increasing interdisciplinarity; by updating its Guidelines for assessment, monitoring and evaluation of COST Actions; introducing an open call; establishing a rigorous system of peer review and quality control; further facilitating the participation of early-stage researchers; and reinforcing its European and international dimension;

**Whereas** the European scientific community has continued to show high interest to COST as demonstrated by an overwhelming response to the COST Open Call; the number of requests for participation to COST Actions by institutions from non-COST countries has also constantly increased;

**Whereas** COST should continue to improve its performance whilst maintaining its best traditions;

1. **WELCOME** the report by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)<sup>1</sup> and **ARE SATISFIED** with the progress made since the previous COST Ministerial Conference in Dubrovnik in 2003;
2. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the success of COST as flexible, fast and efficient tool to network and coordinate research activities under light strategic guidance, **ARE CONVINCED** of the continued added value of COST activities in future;
3. **RECONFIRM** their commitment to COST and **UNDERTAKE** to enable and encourage national COST authorities to continue to commit themselves in terms of managerial and scientific personnel resources to fully exploit COST's potential;
4. **WELCOME** the membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina in COST as agreed by the CSO at its meeting of 26 - 27 May 2009;
5. **APPRECIATE** the cooperation between COST and the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the professional and successful way in which the ESF has acted as the implementing agent for COST, and **TRUST** that ESF and COST will continue to deepen useful scientific cooperation for the benefit of the European scientific community as a whole;
6. **WELCOME** the vision of COST regarding its role in the ERA 2020, as set out in the Annex to this Declaration, and **INVITE** CSO to keep it under review, and update it as appropriate;
7. **FIND** that COST must continue and should be encouraged to develop as a European initiative and a mechanism of prime importance for the implementation and strengthening of the ERA;

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<sup>1</sup> Doc. COST 4158/10.

8. **EMPHASISE** that COST must:

- maintain an efficient organisation for the execution of its work in serving the European scientific community and society at large,
- strengthen its role as an active player in the ERA both in its European and global dimension and
- respond in a flexible manner to any future developments;

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**To this effect the Representatives of the Governments of the COST Member States express their commitment to the development of COST and:**

9. **INSTRUCT** CSO to continue to work efficiently and effectively as the main decision making body of COST;
10. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the work by the CSO in examining the options for the future legal status and governance of COST; **ENCOURAGE** the CSO to pursue this preparatory work, in particular by studying the conclusions of the FP7 mid-term evaluation of COST, so that it could, at the latest well before the end of FP7, come forward with appropriate conclusions and/or proposals in this respect which would ensure maintaining COST as a viable framework in compliance with the principles set out above; **INVITE** CSO to take any decisions in this regard, which fall within its remit, in a timely manner, and/or put forward any further proposals for the Governments of the COST Member States to consider;
11. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the establishment on 8 June 2010 of the "*COST Office International Scientific Non Profit Making Association*", by interested Member States, under Belgian law (hereinafter "the COST Office Association");
12. **STRESS** the importance of the European Union maintaining a strong and active involvement in all aspects of COST also in the future **RECOGNISING** the advantages that COST has through cooperation with the European Union and its RTD programmes;
13. **STRESS** the importance of ensuring a seamless continuation of COST operations; **CALL ON** the Commission to facilitate this process; and **ENCOURAGE** the CSO to actively liaise with the ESF;
14. **INVITE** the CSO to report to the next COST Ministerial Conference on the achievements realised;
15. **FIND** that the level of EU funding should allow COST to meet present tasks and future expectations and, in the light of the reforms undertaken and in line with the Decision of the Council of the EU of 19 December 2006 on the FP7 Specific Programme 'Cooperation'<sup>1</sup>, **ACKNOWLEDGE** with satisfaction the positive FP7 mid-term evaluation of COST, which should be a good basis for allocating to COST a total budget of EUR 250 million for the duration of FP7 representing the upper limit of the *fourchette* indicated in that Decision;  
  
and, finally;
16. **LOOK FORWARD** to the future developments of the ERA and to the role that COST can play in that context.

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<sup>1</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, L 54, 22.2.2007, p. 30.

**THE ROLE OF COST IN THE ERA 2020<sup>1</sup>**

In Europe's balanced multitude of different systems for the support of research, education and innovation, COST continues to play a very distinct role and to complement other actors in the ERA, providing openness and equality of access to activities in a unique way. There continues to be a strong demand for coordination of bottom-up research activities, and the basic principles of COST – flexibility and openness – are widely recognised. Therefore the level of COST's activities has been maintained and those activities broadened. COST's Vision of its place in the European Research Area in 2020 is:

- COST continues to be a flexible, fast, effective and efficient tool to network and coordinate nationally funded research activities at project level, bringing motivated scientists together under light strategic guidance and letting them work out their ideas, thus contributing to overcome the fragmentation of research in the ERA. A significant share of the European scientific community is involved, directly or indirectly, in COST activities.
- COST responds to future needs; it acts as an *exploratorium* for ideas and addresses emerging and unforeseen developments. It addresses ambitious goals and more complex questions and has enhanced its precursor role. COST Actions are objective-driven and often multidisciplinary. Their objectives are clearly defined and information arising from COST Actions provides well-structured evidence-based input for policy making and they contribute to Europe's competitiveness and socio-economic development. Whilst maintaining its bottom-up character, COST is open to support longer-term planning processes in the development of new COST Actions.
- COST acts as a catalyst for long-term networking and in particular supports early career scientists and newly established research groups, strengthening their future participation in European and other international research initiatives.
- COST provides a framework for pre-normative cooperation leading to international norms and standards.
- COST is an inclusive and flexible international framework for the benefit of the European scientific community. COST has a worldwide geographical coverage which will be further extended in a pragmatic way by continuing to involve non-member countries in its Actions and through a more structured series of collaborative arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from doc. COST 252/09.