



European Cooperation
in the field of Scientific
and Technical Research
- COST -

Brussels, 17 May 2006

Secretariat

COST 248/06

DRAFT SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Subject : 164th meeting of the COST Senior Officials Committee held in Brussels on
29/30 March 2006

The CSO President welcomed the participants¹ to the meeting, in particular the new delegates attending for the first time: Mr Herman van der Plas (NL), Mr Luis Delgado (ES) and Mr Brian Ditcham (UK).

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in CM 805/1/06 REV 1 of 16 March 2006.

2. APPROVAL OF SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF THE 163TH MEETING

The Committee approved the Summary of Conclusions of the previous meeting as set out in doc. COST 330/05.

¹ List of participants in Annex 1.

3. PRESENTATIONS OF THE COST DOMAIN REVIEWS

It was recalled that the CSO at its 161st meeting in March 2005 had agreed to carry out domain reviews in the field of Agriculture, Biotechnology, Food Sciences, Forestry and Forest Products, Environment and Meteorology; and Transport and Urban Civil Engineering. The review reports by independent Review Panels as well as comments from the respective TC Chairs had been made available to delegations.

The findings of the review panels were presented to the Committee by Panel members, Dr Nilsson and Dr O'Mahony, who also responded to some questions raised by delegations².

The President concluded by inviting the COST Office to compile the recommendations of all finalised review reports on COST domains, in order to utilise relevant findings in future activities and procedures.

4. EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS AND COST

Mr Sean O'Reagain, Commission, gave a presentation³ on the European Technology Platforms encouraging a proactive approach from COST to identify common areas and to explore directly with individual Technology Platforms possibilities for cooperation.

5. SYNERGY WITH OTHER EUROPEAN INITIATIVES

The President recognised the ongoing cooperation with the Commission services, such as the continuous consultation process on new Action proposals and e.g. the initiative for the NanoScience conference in October 2006. Ways to increase synergy with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) are under examination and COST had been invited to be present at a JRC event in Bulgaria late April. It was observed that a second meeting of the Commission/COST Strategic Group, as proposed by the Commission in its document "Towards a new partnership between COST and the Commission, would be appropriate (first meeting held on 4 May 2005).

² The Panel reports and presentations are available on the website: <http://www.cost.esf.org/index.php>.

³ A copy of the presentation was made available to delegations.

- EUREKA

The Committee was informed that

- COST had been represented at a recent EUREKA workshop in Ukraine by the CSO President and the COST Secretariat, where i.a. the possibility of Ukraine applying for membership had been examined,
- COST Action 529 "Efficient lighting for the 21st Century" will be presented as a concrete example of possible cooperation between COST and EUREKA at the next EUREKA Ministerial Conference on 9 June 2006 in Prague.

The Committee invited the COST Secretariat to prepare a policy paper on cooperation with EUREKA, describing concrete cases and presenting possibilities for more intensified cooperation.

- ESF

The President noted that the "ESF Strategic Plan 2006-2010" and "An analysis of the impact of ESF instruments", both available on the ESF website, included some references to COST which had raised concerns in some delegations. A letter from the ESF CEO dated 21 March 2006 clarifying the situation had been made available to delegations.

The Committee was informed that

- the CSO President had been invited to attend the next meeting of the ESF Governing Council on 28/29 September;
- a joint meeting of the COST DC Chairs and the Chairs of the ESF Standing Committees was planned to take place in the autumn of 2006;
- the COST Office had been asked to prepare a draft document on the cooperation with the ESF, outlining a structured way to obtain synergies and complementarities.

6. SITUATION OF NEW DOMAIN STRUCTURE

- Domain descriptors

The draft domain descriptors were circulated to delegations as a room paper. Delegations were invited to submit any possible comments on the draft descriptors to the COST Office.

It was recalled that, following the first meetings of the new Domain Committees, final descriptors would be presented to the CSO in June for approval.

- Nominations to the new Domain Committees

A table illustrating the situation of nominations to the new Domain Committees (DC) was made available to delegations. Delegations were recalled that the deadline for nominating representatives was set on 31 March 2006.

It was noted that, further to the nominated representatives, the CNCs were invited to submit any contact information of scientists possibly interested in COST activities to the COST Office, with a view to the creation of a wider database.

7. FINANCIAL ISSUES: Summary of expenses 2003-2007 and Transition from FP6 to FP7

The President recalled that information presented to the last JAF meeting was available in the Summary of Conclusions, doc. COST 216/06, including an Annex on general comments on the budgetary situation.

A budget plan 2003-2007 and a table on COST expenditure distribution 2005 by spending line were made available to delegations by the COST Office as a room paper.

8. ACTION-RELATED ITEMS

(a) Proposals of new Actions

The Committee approved, in principle, the following new Actions:

Materials

- 541 Semi Solid Processing of Steels Thixosteel (BE proposal)
- 542 High Performance Energy Storages for Mobile and Stationary applications
(DE proposal)

Meteorology

- 734 Impacts of CLImate change and Variability on European AGRiculture (IT proposal)

AgriBio

- 866 Green Care in Agriculture (NO proposal)
- 868 Biotechnical functionalisation of renewable polymeric materials (AT proposal)
- 869 Mitigation options for reducing nutrient emission to surface water and groundwater
(NL,UK,DK,FI proposal)

Medicine and Health

- B30 Neural regeneration and plasticity (NEREPLAS) (ES proposal)
- B35 Lipid peroxidation associated disorders (LPO) (HR proposal)

UCE

- C24 Analysis and Design of Innovative Systems for Low-EXergy in the Built Environment:
COSTeXergy (NL proposal)
- C25 Sustainability of Constructions – Integrated Approach to Life-time Structural
Engineering (PT,FI proposal)
- C26 Urban Habitat Constructions under Catastrophic Events (IT proposal)

Chemistry

- D37 Grid Computing in Chemistry : “GRIDCHEM” (CH proposal)
- D38 Metal-Based Systems for Molecular Imaging Applications (IT proposal)
- D39 Metallo-Drug Design and Action (UK proposal)

(b) Requests for participation in COST Actions of institutions from non-COST countries

Upon recommendation of the JAF Group, the Committee agreed to the following requests for participation of institutions from non-COST countries:

- 354 : Performance Indicators for Road Pavements
 - U.S. Department for Transportation FHWA, USA

- 537 : Core Laboratories for the improvement of medical devices in clinical practice from the analysis of implanted prostheses
 - University of Washington Engineered Biomaterials, Seattle, Washington USA

- 859 : Phytotechnologies to promote sustainable land use management and improve food chain safety
 - Institute of Physicochem and Biological Problems in Soil Science, RAS, Pushchino, Moscow region, Russia

- B22 : Drug Development for Parasitic Diseases
 - Seattle Biomedical Institute, Seattle, USA
 - University of Cape Town, South Africa

- B25 : Physiologically based pharmaco-/toxico-kinetics and dynamics
 - ECVAM (JRC, Ispra)

- B27 : Electric Neuronal Oscillations and Cognition
 - New York University School of Medicine USA

D25 : Applied Biocatalysis: Stereoselective and Environmentally-friendly Reactions
Catalysed by Enzymes
- Biosciences Unit of CSIR, South Africa

The question of general policy on participation of non-COST countries was raised, and the extent to which general political considerations should be taken into account when establishing scientific contacts at technical level.

It was noted that the Secretariat would continue to provide information to the Committee on the cooperation at the EU level with countries in question, that may serve as a basis for Committee's opinion on requests from non-COST countries.

(c) Requests for extension or prolongation of COST Actions

The Committee took note of the decision of the JAF Group, at its meeting of 12/13 October 2005, to approve requests for extension of the following COST Actions:

- COST 284 Innovative Antennas for Emerging Terrestrial and Space-based Applications (7,5 months)
- COST 921 Food matrices: structural organisation and impact on flavour release and Perception (7 months)
- COST D24 Sustainable Chemical Processes: Stereoselective Transition Metal-Catalysed Reactions (6 months)
- COST D25 Applied Biocatalysis: Stereoselective and Environmentally-friendly Reactions Catalysed by Enzymes (6 months)
- COST D26 Integrative Computational Chemistry (6 months).

The Committee approved the second request for extension of the COST Action D20 : Metal Compounds in the Treatment of Cancer and Viral Diseases (6 months, no additional budget required).

(d) Devolution of financial administration to Actions

The President recalled that the Assessment Panel report of COST in 2002 had recommended that COST should allow Actions to manage their own affairs, including providing their own scientific secretarial support. This recommendation had been reconfirmed by the Review panel following the Mid Term Review of the Commission-ESF contract for the support of COST.

The COST Office noted that Actions have the option to choose between the annual grant approach and the centralised financial administration. The feedback from Actions who have applied the grant system has been positive and the CSO should consider whether the grant system could be made applicable to all Actions instead of running two parallel systems. In order to assist Actions in managing the financial administration an "on-line tool" could be developed and the training on its use provided by the COST Office.

During an exchange of views some delegations wondered whether any decision by the CSO was required on such an operational issue. Several delegations hesitated whether the grant system should be made obligatory, emphasising the importance to maintain flexibility to respond to any new developments during the duration of an Action.

With a view to further examination or approval at the next CSO meeting, the COST Office was invited to submit a written proposal on the subject.

9. APPOINTMENT OF A NEW JAF MEMBER (COST 214/06)

The Committee took note of the resignation of Prof. Esteban MANRIQUE REOL (ES) from the COST CSO and as member of JAF as from 1 February 2006, due to his return as researcher professor to the Spanish Research Council.

The Committee agreed to appoint Prof. Luis DELGADO MARTINEZ (ES) as a new JAF member for the remaining period of the mandate, i.e. until June 2008.

10. COST FUND (COST 201/1/06 REV 1)

(a) Auditors' report on the Statement of revenue and expenditure 2005

The Committee endorsed the recommendation by the auditors of the COST Fund to give discharge to the Secretariat in respect of the implementation of the budget of the financial year closing 31 December 2005, based on the Statement as set out in doc. COST 201/1/06 REV 1 and the audit carried out on 28 March 2006.

The Committee took note of the draft estimates of expenditure and revenue for the financial year 2006.

(b) Designation of auditors for the COST Fund for 2006

The Committee re-nominated the Czech delegate, Mr Cihlar, and the German delegate, Ms Badeberg, as auditors for the financial year 2006.

11. OPEN CALL AND SELECTION CRITERIA FOR NEW ACTIONS

The Committee examined the proposal on Open Call and Selection criteria for new Actions as set out in doc. COST 203/1/06 REV 1. In order to accommodate observations from delegations, the President established an *ad hoc* drafting Group, open to all interested delegations to participate, to further elaborate the proposal.

A revised proposal presented by the drafting Group was approved by the Committee⁴ and the first Open call will be launched on 1 April 2006.

⁴ Final version as set out in doc. COST 235/06

12. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW COST DOMAIN STRUCTURE

(a) Termination of the old TC mandates

The Committee agreed to terminate the current mandates of the COST Technical Committees, as set out in doc. COST 215/06, as from 31 May 2006.

(b) Draft Terms of Reference of Domain Committees

The Committee approved the Terms of Reference for a mandate of COST Domain Committees as set out in COST 272/2/05 REV 2.⁵

(c) Draft Rules of Procedure of Domain Committees

The Committee approved the model of Rules of Procedure of COST Domain Committees as set out in COST 273/2/05 REV 2⁶.

13. PROPOSAL FOR A SURVEY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The COST Office was invited to present a written proposal on the survey on customer satisfaction to the next CSO meeting for approval.

⁵ Separate mandate for each Domain Committee as set out in documents COST 237/06 - 245/06.

⁶ Final version issued after the meeting as doc. COST 236/06.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee's next meetings will take place on

- 27/28 June 2006 Tallinn (EE)
- 20/21 November 2006 Brussels (BE)

The Estonian delegation informed the Committee of the tentative programme of the CSO meeting. Registration form with detailed information would be shortly made available on-line.

The Committee accepted the invitation from Swedish delegation to host a CSO meeting in June 2007 in Malmö.

15. A VIEW OF THE COST CSO ON THE LEVEL OF THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR COST IN THE FP7

The COST Office presented a document as set out in doc. COST 218/06 regarding the indicative budget requirements and financial support for COST coordination activities from the FP7. The preliminary calculation to support a total number of 260 Actions was based on a total budget of 280 million euro during the period 2007-2013.

Following an exchange of views the COST Office was invited to take account of observations by delegations in a revised document which could serve as a basis for further deliberations on the level of financial support to COST under FP7⁷. The Committee concluded to insert this item on the agenda of its next meeting.

⁷ Doc. COST 218/1/06 REV 1 of 11 April 2006.

16. COST GOVERNANCE (COST 205/1/06 REV 1)

The Committee examined the document on COST Governance as set out in COST 205/1/06 REV 1 and arrived at the following conclusions on various items:

- CSO meetings

The Committee agreed that, as from November 2006 the CSO meetings would be divided in two parts: Governance and Strategy.

The **Governance** part, normally dealt with during the first day, will be divided in: Information, Approval and Discussion. The CSO will continue to govern COST and to stay abreast of developments taking place in each scientific community, reflected in particular in the nature, content and number of Actions being submitted to COST. The CSO will be informed of the content of the new Actions proposed, proceed to their approval and be informed of the results of the Actions completed.

The **Strategy** part, normally dealt with during the second day will be divided in: Discussion and Approval. It allows the CSO to be a truly strategic body, setting overall strategic and political goals, and determining COST's role in the ERA and the Framework Programme.

- JAF Group

The Committee agreed that, in addition to the tasks already assigned to the JAF by the CSO⁸, the following tasks are also assigned to the JAF:

- the decision on the provisional agendas for CSO meetings,
- the generation, evaluation and revision of documents relating to items on the provisional CSO agendas,
- the decision on prolongations of Actions and scrutiny of requests for participation of institutions from non-COST countries,
- monitoring the budget management and the COST Office activities (e.g. speeding up and simplifying administrative procedures; devolution to Actions through the grant system).

- Secretariat

The President noted the general consensus within the Committee that the Secretariat of the CSO and its subcommittees would continue to be assumed by the Council Secretariat, as had been reconfirmed in the conclusions of the COST Ministerial Conference in 2003.

- Ministerial Conferences

The Secretariat recalled that any COST Member State could present an invitation to host a future Ministerial Conference and informed the Committee that the proposal to convene a COST Ministerial Conference in the context of the informal Competitiveness Council meeting during Slovenia's EU Presidency in March 2008 was under examination.

The President concluded that this item would be referred to the next CSO meeting for examination.

⁸ Doc. COST 299/04, p. 7.

- Overall Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The President stated that a proposal by the UK delegation to replace the signing of each individual Action by a global MoU had been examined by the JAF Group. In order to clarify the outline of such a global MoU the UK delegation had prepared a non-paper that had been circulated to delegations prior to the meeting.

During the exchange of views some delegations, while being favourable towards examining the possibilities for simplification, anticipated constitutional problems in regard to the proposed global MoU. Several delegations stated their preference to maintain the current system of individual Memoranda, while some delegations supported the proposal of a global MoU. It was recalled that the signing procedure had already been simplified to a great extent during the last years (only the first five signatories were invited to sign the Memorandum in person) and statistical data had proved that the signature process could, in most cases, be carried out in less than two months after the approval of an Action by the CSO.

The President concluded that

- the Committee had not reached consensus on the proposal for a global MoU and that the current system of signing individual Memoranda would be maintained, and that
- delegations, who would prefer a simplified procedure, could examine further possibilities for simplification at national level, and cooperate with the UK delegation with a view to a proposal on streamlining the process.

17. COST STRATEGY

The Committee was informed that a proposal on a new COST instrument : Young Investigators Network "YIN" would be presented at a forthcoming CSO meeting for examination⁹.

The President encouraged the National coordinators to endeavour involving young researchers when nominating national representatives to the Management Committees of Actions.

The President noted that in order to address strategic questions (such as COST's role in ERA, initiatives for the involvement of new groups in COST, cooperation with third countries etc.) in a structured manner, COST should reflect on its future strategy, and that this item would be included in the agenda of the next JAF meeting in May.

18. INTERPRETATION OF THE CSO AND JAF WORKING METHODS¹⁰

The Committee endorsed the interpretation that in accordance with the JAF working methods, the JAF decisions/recommendations are taken by consensus by the **members of JAF** (i.e. the CSO President, the CSO Vice-President and the five appointed members), whereas no single member can alone block a decision.

Documents from various sources (e.g. delegations, President, Secretariat, COST Office, Commission) may receive a COST reference number that allows documents to be circulated through Council channels and be registered and made available on the Council website. A paper issued as a COST document should clearly state the origin, destination and status of the document.

The Secretariat was invited to examine the possibility to distinguish between documents under examination, and those approved by the CSO.

⁹ Summary of Conclusions, doc. COST 216/06, p.9.

¹⁰ Working methods as set out in documents COST 326/05 (CSO) and COST 283/04 (JAF).

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Several delegations supported the re-introduction of an item 'Information from the President/delegations' on the COST agenda. Under this point the CSO President could inform delegations of his scheduled activities and delegations could provide possible input to support these activities as well as report on events regarding COST at national level.

In this context the President informed the Committee of his forthcoming programme:

- 5-6 April, Florence, conference on Cultural Heritage
- 18-21 April, Brussels, COST Exhibition at the European Parliament
- 27-28 April, Sofia (BG), JRC event with COST presentation
- 3 May, Edinburgh (UK), Scottish COST Day

- The Austrian representative informed the Committee

= of the EU-LAC Senior Officials meeting on S&T Cooperation in Salzburg on 1-3 February 2006, in preparation of the 4th EU-LAC Summit to be held in Vienna in May 2006¹¹,

= that Argentina, Brazil and Columbia have intentions to establish a liaison office on S&T in Brussels. It could be considered to invite a representative from these missions in Brussels to attend one of the forthcoming CSO meetings.

¹¹ A report was made available to delegations as room paper.

List of participants¹

<u>PRESIDENT</u>	:	Mr Francesco FEDI
<u>AUSTRIA</u>	:	Mr Florian LORENZ Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs
		Ms Helga MIELING Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology
<u>BELGIUM</u>	:	Mr Hendrik MONARD Federal Science Policy
<u>BULGARIA</u>	:	Ms Albena VUTSOVA Ministry of Education and Science
<u>CROATIA</u>	:	Mr Bozidar BIONDIC University of Zagreb
		Mr Damir JELICIC Ministry of Science, Education and Sports
<u>CZECH REPUBLIC</u>	:	Mr Milos CHVOJKA Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
		Mr Jaroslav CIHLAR Technical University of Brno
		Mr Bedrich PEKAREK Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
<u>DENMARK</u>	:	Mr Gorm BRAMSNAES Danish Research Agency
<u>ESTONIA</u>	:	Ms Ülle MUST Archimedes Foundation
<u>FINLAND</u>	:	Ms Eili ERVELÄ-MYRÈEN Academy of Finland

¹ Regrets received from the delegations of Cyprus, FYR of Macedonia and Portugal.

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Mr Herman van der PLAS
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NORWAY : Mr Bjorn BJORNSEN
The Research Council of Norway

ROMANIA : Ms Ecaterina GICA
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Mr Mircea SBARNA
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