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Every dark cloud has a silver lining

Last week, as most flights in Europe came to a halt due to the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland, members of COST Action ES0802 realised that this seemingly impossible situation could actually be an opportunity in disguise.



The Action focuses on unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in atmospheric research. They realised immediately that these pilotless aircrafts could be used in the future to collect data on the consistency of such ash clouds, a process which currently requires a brave pilot instead.

One of the Action Members, Dr Bruno Neiningner from the Zurich University of Applied Sciences in Switzerland, was exceptionally granted permission to fly through the ash cloud and gather much needed scientific information.

When he returned approximately 50 minutes later, he told anxiously awaiting journalists that "this was clearly not a normal deck of clouds. The visibility was much reduced and the air smelled like a steam locomotive."

Meanwhile, COST Action ES0802 colleagues of Dr Neiningner were already discussing protocols for how to improve emergency forecasting in case another emergency strikes or Eyjafjallajökull's restless neighbour Katla erupts. The Action is now using its COST network to come up with a clear European strategy to equip UAS with all possible in situ aerosol and cloud instruments in emergency cases.

If all goes well, COST would give Europe the possibility to respond faster while scientists could keep both feet safely on the ground.

Information

[COST Action ES0802](#)

[Dr Bruno Neiningner - Interview with Swiss TV \(in German\)](#)



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