

Overview for COST NEWS for the year 2007

This document gives an overview of the news releases published on the COST website in the year 2008.

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04/12/2007 - COST Strategic Workshop - European Roadmap towards the Needs of Gifted Children and Adolescents

The COST Strategic Workshop “Meeting the Needs of Gifted Children and Adolescents – Towards a European Roadmap” took place in Brussels on 26 and 27 November 2007. With the active support of the European Parliament and the European Commission, COST brought together - for the first time ever - leading European researchers in the field of high ability and giftedness, industry representatives and European practitioners.

The workshop mapped the varied activities on Gifted and Talented Education (GTE) in the Member States and addressed the absence of a European strategy on the subject. Education and support of gifted youth is key to achieve the Lisbon strategy and research networks play a crucial role towards its achievement.

“A competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society thrives on the talents of its people,” said Peter Dröll, Head of Private Office of European Commissioner for Science and Research Janez Potočnik, “the global challenges are daunting and therefore no European intellectual potential should be left unexplored. Listening to the specific needs of gifted children and promoting them can be an important step towards this aim.”

Hiltrud Breyer, Member of European Parliament, an advocate of the topic and keen to place it on the European Agenda, stressed the necessity to act immediately through a European roadmap on the development of GTE. It was agreed that the roadmap should serve as a flexible framework: pursuing a common vision while allowing the Member States who are in charge of education to set their own priorities. Nurturing excellence has to become an overarching goal at the European level while the Member States have to develop educational systems that promote every individual’s special abilities.

During the workshop’s final panel, the participants adopted a resolution addressed to the European Commission. The resolution lists objectives such as the development of effective learning and teaching strategies and the enhancement of international cooperation. It recommends the creation of a working group to help reach these objectives. The working group’s main tasks would include the creation of a coordinated European Gifted and Talented (G&T) network; communication management between all partners involved in G&T education and the development and improvement of teacher education and teacher training.

The final conference documentation, including the resolution, will be made available [on this page](#) shortly and the requested follow-up activities prepared.

Meanwhile, for more information, please contact Dr Julia Stamm, Science Officer (jstamm@cost.esf.org).

01/12/07 - COST-ESF Synergy

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), was invited and attended the first Science Policy Conference organized by the European Science Foundation (ESF) in Strasbourg on 28 and 29 November 2007 focused on the European Research Area and, in particular, on its global dimension with the title “Is the ERA a first step to GLOREA (Global Research Area)?”.

During the Conference an interesting debate with contributions from scientists, science policy makers and research leaders from Asia and North America, in addition to contributions with a European perspective took place. Special attention was given to the views of the private sector on how they see the interaction between the public and private sector in the ERA.

The audience was composed of Heads and representatives of ESF’s 75 Member Organisations in 30 countries, members of ESF scientific committees, representatives of ESF’s international partner organisations and members of the press. The conference was facilitated by Quentin Cooper who hosts BBC Radio 4’s weekly *The Material World*, the UK’s most listened science programme.

On 29 November Professor Fedi presented his invited contribution on “COST-ESF synergy: an opportunity for the European scientific community”. He described the evolution of the cooperation established between COST and ESF which eventually led to the renewed appointment of the ESF as implementing agent for COST during the Seventh Framework Programme.(FP7). “ The increase of 80% of the funds obtained by COST in FP7 with respect to FP6” noted Professor Fedi “ is certainly a recognition both of the role of COST in the ERA and of the very effective synergy established between COST and ESF. It is also a very good opportunity both for the European scientific community and for the cooperation of ERA with the rest of the world”.

Professor Fedi then chaired a session where two examples of the COST-ESF cooperation were illustrated: “The ESF-COST Forward Look on European Food Systems in a changing world” presented by Dr John Ingram and “Trends and potentialities of landscapes studies: an ESF-COST network of networks” presented by Professor Tom Bloemers. “These are only two examples” concluded Professor Fedi “of the fact that the seeds of mutual trust established between COST and ESF five years ago are flourishing for the benefit of ERA and GLOREA”.

23/11/07 – COST in Tunisia

At the invitation of Professor Lazhar Bououny, Minister of Research and Technology of the Republic of Tunisia, Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, participated in the “Assises National de la Recherche” held in Tunis at El Kram International Fair on 19 and 20 November 2007.

These National Scientific Research and Technological Innovation Consultations Days, held under the High Patronage of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, have been organized in three sessions: Research Policy (objectives, priorities and strategy), the National Research System (realisations, prospects and challenges) and Research Environment and Partnership (dynamics of innovation, international partners).

In his key note address Professor Fedi described COST and underlined the contribution of COST to the opening of the European Research Area to the rest of world. “ Some 130 Institutions not belonging to the 35 COST countries participated in more that 100 COST Actions last year” said Professor Fedi “ For the north African Mediterranean countries - the European neighbouring countries - COST has decided to have a particular attention. Up to two researchers from each of these countries can be sponsored to participate in a COST Action. Tunisia already participate in two COST Actions and my presence here to day is to encourage the scientific community of Tunisia to increase its participation in COST” concluded Professor Fedi.

Alongside the Assises Professor Fedi met a number of leading figures of the Tunisian research community. On 22 November he was received by Ms Khedia Hamouda Ghariani, Secretary of State for Information Technologies and recently nominated General Director of the new Arab IT Organization. During the meeting the important contributions of COST in the field of Information & Communication Technologies were underlined and ways to increase the cooperation of COST with the IT Arab Organization explored.

21/11/07 - COST Statement on the Monfret Report

This Statement was approved unanimously by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) during its meeting on 15 and 16 November 2007. It refers to the Report “Final Review of COST in the Sixth Framework Programme” of the Panel set up by the European Commission for the final review of the contract between the European Commission (EC) and the European Science Foundation (ESF) for COST in the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6).

The Review was carried out by a Panel of six independent experts that was asked “to provide an appreciation on the provision of the administrative, scientific and technical secretariat for COST through the COST Office, on the overall outcome and impact of COST and COST Actions, on the success of the reforms of COST and on how the recommendations of the mid-term Review panel (2005) have been followed up”. For easy reference, the Report of the Panel is referred to as the “Monfret Report”, after the name of the Chair of the Panel.

The COST Committee of Senior Officials , examined the Monfret Report. The CSO was pleased to note that the Report underlined the high customer satisfaction of the current users of COST, which presently functions very well at the operational level, and took note of the practical and constructive recommendations to further improve COST operations.

However, the CSO noted that the Monfret Report appeared not to take into account the role of the COST CSO in introducing the recent reforms in COST which were fully recognized both by the European Commission and by the EU Council. In this respect, the Annex to this document contains a description of the reforms already recently undertaken by COST.

COST STATEMENT

The COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), issues a Statement in response to the Monfret Report, and in particular, concerning the recommendations contained therein about legal status, governance, strategy and science management in COST. The CSO:

1. confirms the commitment of COST to continue to be a flexible, fast, effective and efficient tool to network and coordinate nationally funded research activities at project level, bringing good scientists together under light strategic guidance and letting them work out their ideas, thus contributing to overcome the fragmentation of research in the ERA, and will keep the role of COST under review in the light of the developments in ERA;
2. confirms its decision to appoint the European Science Foundation (ESF) as the legal entity for the provision and management of the scientific, technical and administrative

- secretariat for COST under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7);
3. considers the present governance of COST in the three levels of Committee of Senior Officials (supported by its JAF Group), Domain Committees and Management Committees of Actions with the scientific, administrative and technical secretariat provided by the ESF to be the most appropriate at present;
 4. recalls that the nomination of the representatives in the COST Committees, in particular in the CSO, is the sole and unique prerogative of each COST State;
 5. recalls that, in line with the 2003 Ministerial Declaration that "CSO remains the decision-making body of COST", the CSO has both a governance and strategic role;
 6. recalls the thematic reorganization in 9 COST Domain Committees decided in 2006 and will consider in due course, after an evaluation of the current structure, future restructuring if deemed necessary;
 7. will build upon the above statements and upon a re-examination of the legal status and of the governance of COST in the draft Declaration to be considered by the COST Ministerial Conference planned for the second half of 2009; and to this end, has appointed a rapporteur to examine these matters;
 8. invites the European Commission to forward this Statement to the members of the Panel which will be formed by the European Commission for the mid-term review of the EC-ESF contract for COST in FP7.

ANNEX

1. LEGAL STATUS OF COST

The basis for the COST co-operation was constituted by two letters sent by the President of the Council of the European Communities (on 4 November 1969 and 24 July 1970 respectively) to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States invited to take part in this initiative, and the written replies from each of those States. This exchange of letters was supplemented by a general resolution adopted by the European Ministers for Research attending the Ministerial Conference in Brussels on 22 and 23 November 1971. Subsequent COST Ministerial Conferences extended membership of COST to new countries.

COST was therefore established by the Conference of 19 European Research Ministers in 1971 as an inter-governmental framework for the co-ordination at European level of nationally funded research. Although the framework for cooperation within COST is clearly defined, it was not formally set up as an international organization with a legal personality. This legal personality would allow COST, for instance, to sign a contract with the European Commission.

The lack of legal personality of COST was put in particular evidence when in 2002 the European Commission declared its intention to cease to provide the scientific secretariat and the financial administration of COST. COST did not have a legal personality and therefore could not receive funds directly from the Framework Programme and could not administer these funds: a task carried out until that moment by the European Commission.

The first solution examined by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) - as suggested by the Busch Report - was to devolve the administration of COST to the Secretariat General of the EU Council. This solution, however, was not conceivable for institutional reasons, since the Council as co-legislator could not execute part of the Framework Programme.

A second solution was identified in the possibility of creating a non-profit International Association under the Belgian law. In June 2002 a well structured proposal was presented to the COST CSO but the proposal was not approved.

Subsequently, the CSO started discussions with the European Science Foundation (ESF) - a non-profit Association under the French (Alsace) law – and this led to the establishment of a COST-ESF Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in September 2002 according to which ESF was “prepared, as from 1 January 2003, to act as the legal entity to provide and manage the administrative, technical and scientific secretariat for COST, its Technical Committees and its Actions, dependent on the appropriate funding for the COST activities and the COST Office being made available from the EU RTD Framework Programme”. As the implementing agent for COST, ESF can receive funds from the European Commission and can administer these funds following the decisions of the CSO which remains the COST “decision-making body”.

Both the ESF and the COST CSO approved the COST-ESF MoU in late 2002 and this decision was communicated to the European Commission by the Danish Presidency of the European Union.

The COST-ESF cooperation was in line with the conclusions on progress made in the development of the ERA of the Council of the European Union of 26 November 2002 which welcomed “efforts currently being undertaken in the context of ERA to achieve closer linkage with other European co-operation initiatives such as COST and ESF, with a view of creating synergies while respecting their complementary roles”.

The COST-ESF cooperation was also endorsed by the COST Ministerial Conference held in Dubrovnik in May 2003 which "EMPHASISED that COST must maintain an efficient organisation supported by a capable, cost-effective scientific secretariat to assist in the execution of the work and ENDORSED to that effect the contents of the Memorandum of Understanding between COST and the ESF".

A contract between the European Commission (EC) and the ESF to enable the ESF to carry out the activities envisaged in the COST-ESF MoU during the 6th RTD Framework Programme was established in July 2003 for the entire period of the Sixth Framework Programme.

The COST CSO in its 161st meeting in March 2005 assessed, as envisaged in the COST-ESF MoU, the operations of the MoU "with a view to transmitting its opinions, and possible recommendations for the future to the Council, Parliament and Commission, in particular to provide the latter with suggestions likely to be relevant for future Framework Programme proposals". In the assessment of the COST-ESF MoU the COST CSO noted that:

- “- the provisions of the COST-ESF MoU have been executed;
- the COST Office established by the ESF in Brussels is fully operational and COST has not only regained its traditional strengths but offers to the scientific community more and more new opportunities;
- the ESF provides the scientific, technical and administrative support for COST and the quality of the support is subject to the continuous evaluation during each consecutive CSO meeting and is steadily and gradually improving;

- the ties between COST and the ESF are strengthening. This partnership is already proving its effectiveness for the parties concerned and in the service provided to the research community”.

The High-Level Panel established in 2005 by the European Commission for the mid-term review of the EC-ESF contract for COST in FP6 recognised the benefits of the COST-ESF collaboration.

Following one of the objectives established for the period 2004-2007 “to inquire in the CSO about the willingness of the delegations to review the legal status of COST examining various alternatives for the longer term” the COST CSO President examined the matter both with the EU Council and with the European Commission. The results were presented during the 163rd meeting of the COST CSO in November 2005 which decided that “considering the well functioning cooperation with the ESF as the implementing agent for COST there was no urgent need to seek a legal personality for COST”.

In October 2006 COST and ESF approved an Addendum to the COST-ESF MoU with the objective of strengthening COST and ESF as two actors fostering the ERA and of further developing the synergy between them, while maintaining a clear distinction between their individual characteristics and their complementary roles. The European Science Foundation was invited to continue to act as the legal entity for COST and to provide the scientific, technical and administrative secretariat to COST Domain Committees and to COST Actions during the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). This decision was communicated to the European Commission through the General Secretariat of the EU Council.

In January 2007 negotiations between the European Commission and the ESF for the EC-ESF contract for COST in FP7 were started. Both COST and ESF were of the opinion that every effort should be made so that the EC-ESF contract for COST in FP7 be signed as soon as possible to allow a speedy implementation of the EU Council Decision on the Specific Programme "Cooperation" according to which “at least EUR 210 million and up to EUR 250 million should be attributed to COST, subject to the mid-term evaluation”. The negotiations had a positive conclusion and the contract was signed early August 2007.

From the above description, it appears very clearly that the CSO was perfectly aware of the implications of the lack of legal status of COST and of the fact that two bodies (EC and ESF) agree on a contract concerning a third body (COST) which does not have a legal personality and consequently is not a party in the contract and that, at the same time, whatever EC requests from the ESF needs the approval of this third body (COST) is indeed not the best solution from a strictly legal point of view. But at the same time in view of the FP7 the CSO decided not to abandon a solution which was working satisfactorily ensuring clear roles and decision making powers and to adopt a pragmatic attitude for the benefit of the European scientific community which is the only and real *raison d'être* of COST and which confirmed its strong interest in COST with its overwhelming response to the recent COST Open Call for proposals for new Actions.

2. COST GOVERNANCE, STRATEGY AND SCIENCE MANAGEMENT

Governance, Strategy and Science Management in COST have been the subject of important reforms in the past three years. All the COST reforms were introduced at the initiative of the COST CSO and were strongly pursued by this Committee. The proactive role of the COST Office was particularly important for the implementation of the COST Open Call for proposal for new Actions. These reforms received a series of qualified acknowledgements.

2.1 COST Governance

The CSO role in COST governance received particular attention and was strengthened. Voting procedures based on a qualified majority - a milestone in the history of COST - were introduced in the CSO during its 164th meeting in March 2006.

During the same meeting the CSO decided that it “will continue to govern COST and stay abreast of developments taking place in each scientific community, this being reflected, in particular, in the nature, content and number of Actions being submitted to COST and that the CSO will continue to be informed of the content of the new Actions proposed, proceed to their approval and be informed of the results of the Actions completed”. This is in line with the fact that the Member States have to sign the MoU of the Actions in which they want to participate and that the CSO members, on one side, represent their Governments and, on the other side, are the link with the scientific community of their country.

The role of the CSO Executive Group - the so called JAF Group -, composed of the President and Vice-President of the CSO together with five other CSO members (two of them replaced every year) and representatives of the COST Secretariat - provided by the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU - of the European Commission and of the COST Office, was also reinforced. The main tasks of the JAF Group were established as follows: examination of the outcome of the assessment of new Action proposals by the Domain Committees and recommendation of the final list of new Actions to be approved by the CSO; generation, evaluation and revisions of documents for the CSO; monitoring the COST budget management and other COST Office activities; approval of prolongations of Actions and of applications of participation in COST Actions from Institutions from non-COST countries.

The CSO also decided to introduce the devolution of the management of the Actions from the COST Office to the Actions themselves and adopted measures to reduce the time between the presentation of a preliminary proposal and the launch of the approved Action to less than eight months.

Due to the reforms introduced by the CSO, COST has developed therefore into an intergovernmental network which is at present scientifically completely self-sufficient. The roles and decision making powers are every well defined at three levels: the Committee of Senior Officials, the Domain Committees and the Management Committees of the Actions. As clearly stated in the Declaration of the COST Ministerial Conference held in Dubrovnik in 2003 there was a need for COST to find “a capable, cost-effective scientific secretariat to assist COST in the execution of the work” and the ESF was identified as the most suitable candidate for this task. The nominations of the

representatives of the 35 COST States in the CSO, in the Domain Committees and in the Management Committees of COST Actions are the sole and unique responsibility of each COST State, The COST decision process does certainly not appear more complicated if compared with other intergovernmental research networks in the European Research Area.

2.2 COST CSO Strategic role

The strategic role of the CSO was reinforced. A major activity of the CSO has been dedicated to the discussion and approval of COST's strategic and political goals such as the contribution of COST to realizing the ERA and the Lisbon objectives, COST's communication strategy, COST's endeavours to reinforce the participation of early stage researchers and to improve the gender balance, the further development of COST as an instrument of integration across Europe and as an asset for the implementation of the European RTD policy towards the rest of the world and other topics of a strategic nature.

The following documents were discussed and approved by the CSO:

1) "Position of COST in the Future EU Policy for Research Support: Statement from COST"

COST 348/04 (+COR1) *(approved at the 160th CSO meeting on 1-2 December 2004)*

2) "To position COST in the European Research Area (ERA)"

COST 313/04 *(approved at the 160th CSO meeting on 1-2 December 2004)*

3) "Strengthening R&D cooperation with Neighbouring Countries"

COST 329/05 *(approved at the 163th CSO meeting on 24 November 2005)*

4) "COST Statement on the Financial Support for COST from the 7th RTD Framework Programme"

COST 256/06 *(approved at the 165th CSO meeting on 27/28 June 2006)*

5) "COST Strategy for Cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries: CSO Conclusions"

COST 229/07 *(approved at the 168th CSO meeting on 20-21 June 2007)*

6) "COST Strategy for Cooperation with non-COST countries: Report"

COST 220/07 *(endorsed by the CSO at the 167th meeting on 21 - 22 March 2007)*

7) "COST Strategy towards increased support for early stage researchers"

COST 212/07 *(approved at the 167th CSO meeting on 21 - 22 March 2007)*

8) "Pilot Scheme with Australia and New Zealand"

COST 211/07 *(approved at the 167th CSO meeting on 21-22 March 2007)*

9) **"Contribution of COST to the consultation on the EC Green Paper on "The ERA: New Perspectives : The role of COST in the European Research Area"**
COST 227/07 (approved at the 168th CSO meeting on 20-21 June 2007)

2.3 Science Management in COST. Important reforms were introduced by the CSO in the past three years concerning the structure of the COST scientific Domains, the introduction of a continuous Open Call for proposals for new Actions and the reinforcement of the scientific quality control of COST Actions.

Restructuring of the COST scientific Domains. The profound restructuring of the COST scientific domains - the first one introduced by the CSO after 35 years - has proved to be a major milestone for COST. It has launched COST into the future, facilitating the development of new ideas in the most promising fields of science. The restructuring was not obtained by simply reducing the number of COST domains, as requested by the COST Ministerial Conference held in Dubrovnik in 2003. It was achieved by starting again from a "tabula rasa" and by establishing a completely new structure based on 9 new scientific domains laying down the very basis for COST's scientific strategy. With this decision the CSO proved to be a real strategic body for COST by establishing and implementing a sound scientific strategy for the future. Now, COST is a modern network for European cooperation in science and technology at the service of European researchers. The new COST Domain Committees count among their members some of the most outstanding European scientists and they started their activities in June 2006. Good science management suggests therefore maintaining the present scientific Domains for a number of years, possibly until the end of FP7, both to acquire experience and to avoid disorientation in the scientific community. If a future evaluation of this structure would provide compelling evidence for further restructuring, the CSO will reconsider the present situation.

The notion of interdisciplinarity has been a key issue in this restructuring. Not only the domains themselves are inter-disciplinary; this interdisciplinarity is also ensured through the "Strategic Workshops", organized by COST on subjects of intrinsic interdisciplinary nature. In the past three years, COST organised and held strategic workshops on "Environment and Health", "European Cultural Heritage", "Food and Health" and the "European Forum on Nanosciences".

Open Calls for Proposals for new COST Actions. A major reform introduced by the CSO is the introduction of a continuous COST Open Call for Proposals for new Actions, together with a strengthened and consistent use of external peer reviews. This continuous Open Call for proposals is based on a two-stage process, reconciling the advantages of the COST tradition and the need for a highly transparent process of presenting proposals for new Actions, at the same time raising visibility within the research community. The call is continuous, i.e. the scientific community can present a proposal for a new Action at any time and on any subject, following the successful

tradition of COST. The call is open, i.e. the selection process follows the `bottom-up` tradition of COST. Preliminary proposals of maximum three pages length are submitted to an initial pre-selection. Only those deemed to be of sufficient interest, potential intrinsic quality, and European added value - in accordance with the criteria established by the CSO - are invited to submit a full proposal. This reduces the disadvantages Calls generally have to face, such as the problem of oversubscription (i.e. a large number of new full proposals, frequently not of sufficient quality), a huge workload in processing proposals and the disillusion which may arise within the research community due to the rejection of a large number of full proposals.

Quality control of COST Actions. Monitoring the Actions in progress and final evaluation of completed Actions (including external peer reviews) has always been a tradition in COST and a very good example of `Quality Control` in the European Research Area. Quality control is essential in all research endeavours, both for direct research funding and for networking of researchers. In all these cases, peer review is normally applied to determine the quality of the research being undertaken. Since the year 2000 the CSO has established Guidelines for the assessment, monitoring and evaluation process. These guidelines have been reviewed by the CSO and are followed by all Domain Committees which are obliged to involve external reviewers - both in the assessment of new proposals and in the evaluation of completed Actions. In order to obtain the services of top quality reviewers, remuneration for experts has been introduced. The latest version of these Guidelines is "**Guidelines for Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions**" COST 203/07 (*approved by the CSO by written procedure on 22 February 2007*).

Utilization of results from COST Actions. The COST CSO gave particular attention to the utilization of results from COST Actions. The CSO made it mandatory to prepare at the end of every Action a Final Evaluation Report on the basis of the progress Report of the Action and on the evaluation of a Panel of external peer reviewers. The basic objective of the final evaluation is to identify and describe how well the Action has reached its stated objectives, including the initiation of any follow-up activities and its impact in the area covered by the Action. The CSO also asked the COST Office to routinely publish reports highlighting outcomes and impacts of all completed Actions, and other "ad hoc" documents drawing the public attention towards noteworthy achievements of COST Actions as part of the COST general publicity and dissemination

policy. The close cooperation pursued by the CSO with EUREKA facilitates the direct application of research results obtained in COST Actions. One recent example in this direction is the joint conference of the EUREKA umbrella Innofisk and the two relevant COST Actions on sustainable fish production held in Greece in 2007.

2.4 Acknowledgements received by COST

The reform process pursued by the CSO in COST was fully recognized by the High Level Panel established by the European Commission for the Mid-Term Review of the EC-ESF contract for COST in FP6. The Panel recognized the important role of COST for achieving the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives and recommended to the European Commission to release the entire sum of 80M€ from FP6, the upper limit of support for COST within FP6, and, particularly important, to continue to support COST in the future with increased support within FP7.

The European Commission, in its proposal for FP7, stated its intention to enhance the synergy between FP7 and COST and to include financial support for COST and its activities. Furthermore, active cooperation with the Commission has been introduced, supervised by a High Level Group between COST and the European Commission, and co-chaired by the Director General of DG Research and the COST CSO President. This is a sign of renewed confidence in COST and has enabled the development of a strong partnership between COST and the European Commission, reinforcing coordination between the EC and COST, thus assuring complementarities and synergies between the two frameworks. The CSO agrees that this partnership should be further improved for the benefit of the ERA.

At the political level, COST has been acknowledged on a number of occasions. The Competitiveness Council of Ministers of the European Union has stressed “the importance of reinforcing the ties between the Framework Programmes and European intergovernmental organizations such as COST” and underlined “that European technology initiatives should achieve synergies with existing schemes such as COST taking into account its important contribution to R&D”. Such political recognition of COST was especially important in securing future support.

The COST CSO has also built links with the European Parliament. COST has been explicitly mentioned in the Report of the Rapporteur to the European Parliament on FP7. A successful COST exhibition in the European Parliament sponsored by MEP Ms Pia Elda Locatelli was held from 18 to 21 April 2006, with the participation of Commissioner Dr Janez Potocnik, of the Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) of the European Parliament, Mr Giles Chichester, and of Professor Jerzy Buzek, the Rapporteur to the European Parliament on FP7.

The European scientific community continues to acknowledge COST as a “fast, efficient, effective flexible framework to bring European researchers together, under light strategic guidance, to let them work out their ideas”. As stated before, the interest of the European scientific community in COST has been recently confirmed by the overwhelming response to the COST Open Call for Proposals for new Actions launched in May 2006 and in March 2007.

In December 2006, the Council of the European Union adopted a Decision concerning the Specific Programme "Cooperation" implementing the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community, according to which at least EUR 210 million and up to EUR 250 million should be attributed to COST, subject to the mid-term evaluation. This financial support will be provided through a grant which will be paid on the basis of a grant agreement between the Commission and a legal entity designated by COST as its implementing agent and communicated to the Commission by the General Secretariat of the EU Council and identified in the Work Programme.

The increase of between 50% and possibly more than 78% of the financial support to COST with respect to the Sixth Framework Programme is a reward of paramount importance for the entire COST community:

- * for the members of the COST CSO whose dedication and sense of ownership made it possible to introduce a number of reforms which are real milestones in the history of COST;
- * for the Chairs and members of the newly appointed scientific COST Domain Committees, nominated among the most outstanding European scientists;
- * for the participants in the COST Actions, the real “raison d’être” of COST;

* for the COST Office established by the European Science Foundation in Brussels acting as COST implementing agent;

* for the COST Secretariat provided, since the very beginning of COST, by the General Secretariat of the EU Council, thus providing the essential interface to the EU Council of Ministers responsible for research, innovation and competitiveness.

20/11/07 – COST appoints Professor Kneucker as Rapporteur

During its 163rd meeting in November 2005 the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) decided that "considering the well functioning cooperation with the European Science Foundation (ESF) as the implementing agent for COST there was no urgent need to seek a legal personality for COST". On the basis of this decision in October 2006 COST designated the European Science Foundation as its implementing agent for the Seventh Framework Programme.

During its meeting on 15 and 16 November 2007 the CSO, while confirming the ESF as the legal entity for COST during the Seventh Framework Programme, decided to re-examine the legal status and the governance of COST also in view of the COST Ministerial Conference planned in the second half of 2009.

For this purpose Professor Raoul Kneucker, Chair of the High Level Panel for the Mid Term Review of the EC-ESF contract for COST during FP6, was appointed as the Rapporteur, with the task to present to the CSO by 30 April 2008 at the latest a preliminary report on possible solutions for the legal status and governance of COST. The Rapporteur will be supported in this task by the Council COST Secretariat and the Commission services, in particular to ensure the advice of the legal services of these institutions.

"With this decision" commented Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST CSO "and with the decision to have a COST Ministerial Conference in the second half of 2009, the CSO reacted in an extremely rapid way to the recommendations contained in the Report of the Panel established by the European Commission for the Final Review of the EC-ESF Contract for COST in FP6".

19/11/07 – COST gets rid of the “red ribbons”

“It is another milestone in the history of COST “said Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), commenting the latest decision of the Committee regarding the procedures for the approval of the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) of COST Actions.

“In 1971 the approval of the participation in the first 7 COST Actions launched that year had to be ratified by the Parliaments of the countries wishing to participate in the Actions” continued Professor Fedi ” and this certainly added to the time needed to launch new Actions. In 1978 the introduction of the Memorandum of Understanding made the procedure much simpler and avoided the need for Parliamentary ratification. The MoU for each Action was a formal document with the famous “red ribbons” to be signed by the representatives of the countries interested in participating in the Actions. With the growing number of the Actions, more than 200 running every year, this certainly became a rather cumbersome procedure which was regarded by the European scientific community as an unnecessary heritage of the past and in contrast with the flexibility and light management peculiar to COST”.

“The COST CSO in its latest meeting on 15 and 16 November 2007 agreed on streamlining the procedures for approval of new COST Actions and decided that the COST countries interested in participating in a COST Action confirm their participation in writing to the COST Secretariat without the need to additionally sign the relevant MoU. After 36 years” concluded Professor Fedi “COST finally got rid of the red ribbons”.

02/11/07 – COST participates in the Australian-European ICT Days in Piemonte

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), was invited and participated in the Australian-European ICT Days organized in Turin from 29 to 31 October 2007 by the Polytechnic of Turin, the Piemonte Region, the Italian Embassy in Canberra and the Torino Wireless Foundation.

This three-day long event provided a useful opportunity to cover a number of topical issues in information and communication technology (ICT) research and development cooperation between Australia and Europe. It also provided an opportunity for the Queensland Government and the Piemonte Region to further develop their collaborative relationship, in so doing providing a case study of the role of “bottom up” regionally based cooperative agreements in facilitating Australian-European R&D cooperation.

In the first day attention was focused on the role of bilateral R&D cooperation at the regional level as illustrated by the Piemonte Region – State of Queensland agreement. This involved an open technical session on cooperation over applications of Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS)

The second day focused on the role of bilateral R&D cooperation at the national level by considering the nature, extent and future prospects for Australian-Italian R&D cooperation. This was treated as an example of the contribution of bilateral national cooperation to the wider evolving Australian-European relationship.

The third day focused on the important cross cutting thematic area of “managing complexity” with particular reference to the extent to which Australian-European cooperation on ICT R&D can assist in addressing this major challenge. Modern internationally inter-dependent nations and economic blocks must now manage highly complex problems in the natural, social, environmental, economic and technological domains.

In his key note speech Professor Fedi illustrated the role of COST to contribute to the opening of the ERA to the cooperation on a world basis. “COST has always been open to the cooperation with non-COST countries” said Professor Fedi “More than 130 Institutions from non COST countries participated in more than 100 COST Actions last year. In general, however, researchers from non-COST countries do not receive support from COST for their participation and this might represent an obstacle. There are two notable exceptions. The first is the strategy adopted in COST to support researchers from Balkan and north- African Mediterranean countries. The second is the pilot scheme adopted with Australia and New Zealand. Thanks to this agreement established early 2007 the participation of Australian researchers increased notably from 8 to 20 COST Actions. In the second semestre 2007”.

26/10/07 – Bulgarian COST National Conference 2007

A COST National Conference was held in Bansko City (Bulgaria) on 23-25 October 2007 organized by Mrs Albena Vutsova, Bulgarian COST National Coordinator and Director of the Scientific Research Directorate of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science.

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), attended the event and illustrated the “Past, Present and Future of COST” concluding that “the brilliant future of COST should continue to be an important opportunity for the Bulgarian scientific community”.

Ms Vutsova presented the “Bulgarian experience in COST programme and the Bulgarian experience of the implementation of the grant schemes” and Dr. Martin Grabert, Director of the COST Office, illustrated the “Impact assessment and monitoring of COST Actions” and “The COST Grant System”.

Bulgarian best practices in the areas of Food and agriculture; Biomedicine and molecular biosciences; Earth system science and environmental management; Forests, their Products and Services were illustrated by Bulgarian Researchers. “Bulgaria in the Food and Agriculture domain” by Dr. Elena Marinova, Bulgarian Domain member and Scientific secretary of the AgroBioInstitute, National centre for Agrarian Sciences; “Bulgaria in the Earth System Sciences and Environmental Management domain” by Prof. Stayko Kolev, Domain member and Scientific secretary of the National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; “Bulgaria in the Forests, their Products and Services domain” by Prof. Petar Stoyanov, Domain member, Department of Dendrology, University of Forestry; and “Bulgaria in the Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences domain” by Prof. Ivan Minkov, Domain expert, Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”.

“COST Actions, procedures and guidelines” were illustrated by Mr. Günter Siegel, Senior Science Officer, COST Office; “European Neighbouring Research Policy overview - opening 7FP, COST and JRC programmes towards BSEC and WBCs regions” and “Young Scientists Promotional schemes and possible complementarity with national instruments” by Mrs. Karina Angelieva; “Short presentations of national activities” by the COST National Coordinators from Greece, FYR of Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey; and “Project Fund of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)” by Mrs. Genoveva Jecheva.

A lively series of questions and answers by the more than sixty participants followed every session of the Conference. At the end of the sessions the participants expressed their sincere appreciation to Mrs Albena Vutsova and to her assistants Mrs. Karina Angelieva and Mrs. Milena Glavcheva for the excellent organization of the Conference.

22/10/07 – COST participates in the Conference on “Cultural Diversity and Religious Pluralism”.

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), was invited and attended the Conference on “Cultural Diversity and Religious Pluralism: the possible Dialogue in Europe” held on 19-20 October 2007 at the Link Campus University of Malta in Rome.

The Conference was organized by EURISPES and by the RIPE Group (“Religion Innovation and Pluralism in 21 Century Europe”) founded on May 20th 2006 in Aarhus University, Denmark, at the end of the Conference “Religion and Society”. The contributions of the Conference have been published in the volume “*Religion and Society: Crossdisciplinary European Perspectives*” (Ed. Forlaget Univers Aarhus, 2006). One of the Group’s activity is an annual conference with the aim to present and compare the results of the main researches and studies carried out during the year.

“It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here today in my capacity as President of COST” said Professor Fedi in his address “ and to give you my welcome address both on behalf of COST and of ESF. As you may know, a fruitful cooperation has been established between COST and ESF. ESF acts as the implementing agent for COST and provides the scientific, technical and administrative secretariat to COST Scientific Domain Committees and to COST Actions.

An ESF Exploratory Workshop on “Religion and Society: Crossdisciplinary European Perspectives” took place in May 2006 and an ESF Forward Look on “Religion and Other Belief System : what do people believe in and what does it make them do?’ will take place shortly. I gather that some of you will be involved in this ESF Forward Look.

For the Seventh Framework Programme which, as you know, will last until 2013 COST received an increase of funds of about 80% with respect to the Sixth Framework Programme. The future for COST and ESF appears therefore brilliant and I do hope that your initiatives could find the necessary support either in ESF or in COST”.

11/10/07 – COST is present in the debate on the future of Science and Technology in Europe

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), was invited and participated in the Conference "The Future of Science and Technology in Europe" held from Monday 8th to Wednesday 10th October 2007 at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.

The Conference, hosted and organised by the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union, with the support of the European Commission, aimed to provide a forum for debate on future research policy developments in the EU. The programme focused on the Portuguese Presidency priorities and took into account the ongoing public discussion on the EC Green Paper, "The European Research Area: New Perspectives".

The Portuguese Presidency wished to highlight the role of Science and Technology in the Lisbon Strategy for the EU and to contribute to a renewed priority for S&T in the European agenda. Seven years after the launch of the Lisbon Strategy, it was felt important that the interested stakeholders take stock of where Europe stands with regard to science and technology goals and that they discuss collectively in a broad and frank manner where to go and how they envisage the future of science and technology in Europe.

The Conference, attendance at which was by invitation only, brought together more than 400 participants, representing the majority of stakeholders and institutional actors and provided a unique opportunity for interested stakeholders to express their views and to actively contribute to the debate on the future of science and technology in Europe.

On the 8th October Professor Fedi participated in the Joint Informal High Level meeting of Directors-General responsible for Energy and Research "Building Jointly a European Strategic Energy Technology Plan" held at the Pavilhao Atlantico. The meeting was organized by the Portuguese Presidency as a contribution to the future presentation of the European Strategic Energy Technology Plan.

02/10/07 – A new success of COST: the overwhelming response of the European scientific community.

“The some 500 preliminary proposals presented to the third collection date 30 September 2007 of the COST Open Call from which some 25 new COST Actions will have to be selected is a new overwhelming response of the European scientific community” said Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). “ Even if it was the first form of cooperation in Science and Technology launched in Europe some 40 years ago, COST demonstrates all its vitality. This result clearly shows that the European scientific community continues to look at COST as a flexible, fast, effective and efficient tool to network and coordinate nationally funded research activities at project level, bringing good scientists together under light strategic guidance and letting them work out their ideas, thus contributing to reduce fragmentation in research investments in Europe and to open the European Research Area to the cooperation on a world basis.”

The introduction of a continuous COST Open Call for proposals for new Actions, together with a strengthened and consistent use of external peer reviews, is a major reform introduced by the CSO,. It is based on a two-stage process, reconciling the advantages of the COST tradition and the need for a highly transparent process of presenting proposals for new Actions, at the same time raising visibility within the research community. The call is continuous, i.e. the scientific community can present a proposal for a new Action at any time and on any subject, following the successful tradition of COST. The call is open, i.e. the selection process follows the `bottom-up` tradition of COST. Preliminary proposals of maximum three pages length are submitted to an initial pre-selection. Only those deemed to be of sufficient interest, potential intrinsic quality, and European added value - in accordance with the criteria established by the CSO - are invited to submit a full proposal. This reduces the disadvantages Calls generally have to face, such as the problem of oversubscription (i.e. a large number of new full proposals, frequently not of sufficient quality), a huge workload in processing proposals and the disillusion which may arise within the research community due to the rejection of a large number of full proposals.

01/10/07 – The COST President attends the ESF Governing Council in Helsinki

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), was invited and attended the meeting of the Governing Council of the European Science Foundation (ESF) held in Helsinki on 28 September 2007.

“COST looks with great confidence and optimism at the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7)” said Professor Fedi intervening on the item concerning the relationship between COST and ESF “ and this for a series of reasons.

During the Sixth Framework Programme the COST CSO introduced a number of significant reforms. The role of the CSO was certainly of paramount importance and instrumental. As a result, COST can now contribute cost-effectively to research coordination within the European Research Area.

The Community’s funding to COST under FP7 is specified in the Cooperation Specific Programme, whereby the Community's grant will be at least 210 million Euro and up to 250 million Euro subject to a mid-term evaluation. The increase of between 50% and possibly more than 78% of the financial support to COST with respect to the Sixth Framework Programme is a reward of paramount importance for the entire COST community. I wish to share this satisfaction with the ESF which in October 2006 COST confirmed as its legal entity for FP7. As a result of this designation, the new contract between the European Commission and the European Science Foundation for COST was signed early August 2007 and this ensured a smooth transition from FP6 to FP7.

COST is presently organized in three levels : the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) – the high decision-making body of COST, the nine Scientific Domain Committees and the about two hundred Management Committees – one for each COST Action. The secretariat to the Committee of Senior Officials is provided by the General Secretariat of the European Council thus underlining the inter-governmental nature of COST. The scientific and administrative secretariat to the Scientific Committees and to the Actions is provided by the ESF through the COST Office located in Brussels. This organization ensures clear roles and decision powers and appears to be the most appropriate at present for the duration of FP7.

The cooperation established between COST and ESF is extremely productive for the entire European scientific community and I take this occasion to convey on behalf of the entire COST community my heartiest congratulations to the newly appointed ESF Chief Executive Officer Professor Marja Makarow, together with the hope to continue with her the fruitful cooperation established with her predecessors.

The Report of the Panel established by the European Commission for the Final Review of the EC-ESF Contract for COST in FP6 (referred to as Monfret Report after the name of the Chair of the Panel) raised the issues of the legal status and of the governance of COST. These issues are currently the subject of careful consideration by the CSO also in view of the COST Ministerial Conference planned for the second half of 2009. I only

stress that, from my point of view. whatever the solution , the intergovernmental character of COST should be preserved.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that during FP7 COST will continue to contribute in a significant manner to reduce fragmentation in research investments in Europe and to open the European Research Area to the cooperation on a world basis.”

At the end of the meeting the ESF Governing Council expressed its satisfaction for the present status of the relationship between COST and ESF and decided to postpone the examination of the recommendations of the Monfret Report to the year 2010 in occasion of the mid-term review of the EC-ESF contract for COST in FP7.

21/09/07- COST participates in the EC Workshop "Strengthening the coordination of Community and Member States policies and programmes for international S&T cooperation: impediments and opportunities".

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Official, was invited and participated in the Workshop on "Strengthening the coordination of Community and Member States policies and programmes for international S&T cooperation: impediments and opportunities" organized by the European Commission in Brussels on 19 and 20 September 2007. In his presentation Professor Fedi stressed the contribution of COST both to reduce the fragmentation of national research efforts in the ERA and to increase the cooperation of Europe on a world basis. The text of the Professor Fedi's presentation follows.

**THE COST EXPERIENCE:
REDUCE FRAGMENTATION IN EUROPE AND OPEN THE ERA TO THE WORLD**

Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials

*COST - European **CO**-operation in the field of **S**cientific and **T**echnical Research - was the first and is one of the widest networks to coordinate nationally funded research activities at project level. Established by a Ministerial Conference of 19 European States in November 1971, COST is at present serving the scientific communities of its 35 member Countries¹ and many others around the globe with which it cooperates. With about 200 on-going "Actions" it currently networks approximately EUR 2 billion worth of national research funding through its support, which is of the order of 1% of this sum, and reaches out to over 30 000 researchers across Europe. COST is open for participation from institutes from non-COST countries on the basis of mutual benefit and currently approximately 130 institutions from 21 non-COST countries participate in some 100 COST Actions.*

1. The COST approach to international s&t cooperation

The mission of COST is to be a flexible, fast, effective and efficient tool to network and coordinate nationally funded research activities at project level, bringing good 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. At the same time, COST is open to participation of institutes from anywhere in the world on the basis of mutual benefit.

¹ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, F.Y.R of Macedonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Serbia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom. Israel is a cooperating state in COST.

COST builds upon the inherently bottom-up nature of research activities as one of its most important characteristics. The initiative for launching a COST Action comes from the European researchers themselves. COST provides the support for the networking and coordination of research activities. The sole purpose of COST central funding - on average of the order of 1% of the national funds involved in an Action - therefore is to establish the research “network” and to provide the organisational and operational basis for cooperation with minimum administrative burden.

COST responds to the need for the coordination of researchers, including academia, public authorities and industry, across Europe and provides the added-value that can be achieved by integration and synthesis of otherwise independent research, without endeavouring to coordinate national programmes or policies. The linking of the researchers themselves is an essential “bottom up” element which COST sustains.

The combination of excellence and networking as prerequisites for the COST Actions has always been an important characteristic of COST. The scientific excellence is assured by a rigorous control process of the scientific quality of the Actions from the Assessment of Proposals of New Actions through the Monitoring of Actions in Progress to Final Evaluation of completed Actions. Networking is also a prerequisite to proposing a new Action: at least 5 countries have to participate. However, additional participants - including institutes from non-COST countries - may join the Action in a flexible manner and normally the level of participation is much higher, on average 15-20 countries, on the management of which COST has a long and successful tradition. With the excellence of the Action having been established through the selection process, the large partnerships result in effective and extensive knowledge sharing.

The Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), the governing body of COST, is set up by representatives of all COST Member Countries. These representatives contribute to the coordination of the research activities by promoting and – on an a la carte basis - adhering to individual COST Actions. By stimulating their scientific communities to propose new Actions they take a major responsibility in actively coordinating research activities on this intergovernmental level.

The COST strategy is based on nine broad scientific domains under which new Actions are selected based on a number of strategic evaluation criteria including scientific excellence and the added value expected from the coordination of national research efforts. Proposals should also identify and take into account R&D efforts supported by other national and international funding schemes. COST has taken a conscious choice not to attempt to give further top-down guidance in terms of thematic or geographical priority areas, over and above the broad "strategic principles". Accordingly, it is left for the international scientific community and the selection process to identify the Actions which best fit the principles established.

Although COST was conceived to improve networking and coordination amongst its members, one of the key features of COST is openness towards the rest of the world on the basis of mutual benefit, which is only natural in a globalised world. International

participants from non-COST countries can join Actions on a case by case basis once the mutual benefit has been ascertained, without the need for any formal arrangements at government or agency level. Potential participants from non-COST countries can also team up with those from COST countries already in the preparation of proposals for new Actions.

With such easy accessibility and light and fast procedures, COST has been a “bridge” or an entry point in particular for the scientific communities of the European neighbouring countries. Experience shows that for the efficient inclusion of participants from non-COST countries, specific incentives are a prerequisite. Normally, participants may lack the necessary travel budget to ensure the cooperation deemed useful from both sides. Therefore the cooperation based on equal footing in terms of dedicated financial support for all participants in COST Actions is assumed to produce better results also in the interest of Europe. Currently approximately 130 institutions from 21 non-COST countries participate in some 100 COST Actions, i.e. in about half of the Actions. Since the bottom-up principle of COST applies to the non-COST countries participations, no explicit strategy seems to be required at present. The strict quality control mechanism combined with the criterion of mutual benefit and the fact that the non-COST country institutions need to find their own funding for their participation in COST Actions guarantee the effectiveness of the bottom up-principle.

2. Lessons learned

During its 36 years of existence COST has acquired a considerable body of experience in international S&T cooperation, some of which can be summarised as follows:

- A mix of approaches should be maintained for international S&T cooperation at all levels, giving a choice for scientists that best fits their needs. Coordination is not to be limited to coordination of formal, national research programmes and policies but has to continue to include the networking of researchers.
- Coordination of programmes and policies and top-down identification of research activities is a difficult and time consuming task. However, significant added value can be obtained by providing a "light" framework to support and facilitate the "natural" bottom-up cooperation between scientists at project level with minimum strategic guidance.
- It is possible to combine scientific relevance and large international cooperation networks for the benefit of wide international knowledge sharing and integration of scientific communities.
- Individual institutes should have an easy access, with minimum bureaucracy, to cooperation networks without the need for formal arrangements at government or Agency level.

- Relatively small financial support - such as reimbursement of travel expenses - can have a significant impact to improving possibilities for cooperation.
- "Mutual benefit", to be ascertained at project level, is an excellent basis for cooperation without the need to establish prior strategic principles or agenda for cooperation.
- Large international cooperation networks can act as precursors to further deeper cooperation activities.

3. Conclusions

This paper is a "practitioner's" input based on a long experience from a "light" approach to facilitate international S&T cooperation at project level which has proved to work, perhaps due to the fact that it has not aimed at the coordination of programmes or policies but simply being a network of researchers who voluntarily choose to cooperate. This is not to argue that all attempts to coordinate policies are futile. It goes without saying that in a globalised world facing serious problems, coordination of policies is necessary to make best use of scarce resources. However, top-down coordination of S&T policies is an ambitious goal, and it is not always straight-forward to implement vis-à-vis the scientific communities - or countries - traditionally more used to competition and voluntary cooperation in the field of science. Therefore, it is important to maintain a mix of approaches, including those which respect and facilitate bottom-up research cooperation, perhaps with some strategic guidance. This could also pave the way for subsequent "higher level" coordination of policies.

06/09/07- ANOTHER COST SUCCESS STORY: PHENOLOGICAL RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN EUROPE

“Establishing a European Phenological Data Platform for Climatological Applications” is the title of COST Action 725 running from 2004 to 2009 with 27 participating countries which deals with “Phenology” i.e. the study of the timing of recurring biological events in the animal and plant world and the causes of their timing with regard to biotic and abiotic forces. The main objective of the Action is the establishment of a comprehensive European reference data set of phenological observations that could be used for climatological purposes, particularly climate monitoring and the detection of changes.

At the workshop of Action COST 725 in fall 2005 Annette Menzel from the Technical University Munich (Germany) proposed the idea of a European phenological “meta” analysis. The response to her request for contributions of the COST 725 participating countries was enormous. During a Short Scientific Mission funded by COST, Menzel and Tim H. Sparks, from the CEH Monks Wood, UK, analyzed the national reports received. Shortly after that, in 2006 the COST 725 study “European phenological response to climate change matches the warming pattern” was published and found immediately a European wide echo.

The COST 725 study is one of the major contributions for the assessment of observed changes and responses in natural and managed systems, using 125 000 observational series of 542 plant and 19 animal species in 21 European countries for the period 1971-2000.

The aggregation of the time series revealed a strong signal across Europe of changing spring and summer phenology.

Spring and summer exhibited a clear advance by 2.5 days/decade in Europe. Mean autumn trends were close to zero, but suggested more of a delay when the average trend per country was examined (1.3 days/decade). The patterns of observed changes in spring (leafing, flowering and animal phases) were spatially consistent and matched measured national warming across 19 European countries; thus the phenological evidence quantitatively mirrors regional climate warming. The findings strongly support previous studies in Europe, confirming them as free from bias towards reporting global climate change impacts.

This study found a prominent place in the 4th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC to which four members of COST Action 725 gave an important contribution on the basis of their expertise in assessing climate change responses in wild plants, agricultural systems and animals.

05/09/2007 - Conference on Computational Physics (CCP2007) – COST/ESF involvement

COST and ESF (European Science Foundation) sponsor the Conference on Computational Physics (CCP2007). The annual event is organised in Europe every three years and this year's edition – organised in Brussels from 5 to 8 September 2007 – focuses on computational developments in physics ranging from electronic structure computations to simulations in astrophysics.

Of the more than thirty Actions active in COST's Materials, Physics and NanoSciences (MPNS), three are particularly involved in the event and will showcase their work to the more than 400 participants expected to participate.

COST Action P10 "Physics of Risk" relates to understanding the phenomenology of risk through the study of dynamic features and interactions that influence the onset of extreme events within society. This COST Action will feature recent work carried out by physicists concerned with the nature of societal income distributions based on elementary agent models at the conference. This work sheds light on the underlying competitive processes that cause such distributions to remain more or less constant over time and across different societies and poses challenges to those who advocate extreme egalitarian redistributions.

COST Action P13 "Forging the missing link: From Molecular Simulations to Nanoscale Experiments" contributes with two central conference sessions covering topics such as applications of computational methods, soft matter systems and solids and clusters. These topics are the core of the Action since its main objective is to initiate a concerted European effort to develop novel computational tools to model matter at the nanoscale: the regime where advanced computation and modern experimental techniques meet.

Finally, COST Action P19 "Multiscale Modeling of Materials" will organise a session in which the recent advances related to the theoretical and practical aspects of the Lattice Boltzmann Method (LBM) are addressed through a presentation of the recent developments in research performed by the Institute of Energy Technology - ETH Zurich; CUI – Scientific & Parallel Computing group - University of Geneva and the University of Lyon - INSA Lyon – CREATIS.

For more information on CCP2007, please visit ccp2007.ulb.ac.be/index.php.

For more information on COST and COST Actions, please visit www.cost.esf.org.

For more information on COST Physics activities contact P. Swiatek pswiatek@cost.esf.org

03/09/07 – A NEW COST SUCCESS STORY: GREEN CHEMISTRY AND COOPERATION WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES.

Green chemistry – the creation of sustainable processes to prevent the creation of hazardous waste – is one of the answers to the worldwide demand for environmentally friendly chemical processes and cost-effective approaches to pollution prevention. This new and important scientific frontier is addressed by a number of COST Actions.

One Action, COST Action D29 “Sustainable/Green Chemistry and Chemical Technology”, expanded COST’s geographic scope by involving green chemists from Ethiopia. This unique contribution to global science was featured in *Science Magazine*, Volume 316, in June 2007. Management Committee members Dr Asfaw Nigist from the Chemistry Department of Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia and Professor Martyn Poliakoff from the Department of Chemistry at the University of Nottingham co-authored the article entitled “Empowering Green Chemists in Ethiopia”.

The concept of Green Chemistry was new to Ethiopia when Dr Nigist joined the COST Action in 2004 and awareness has been rising steadily ever since. The enthusiasm of a few young chemists, combined with the fact that Africa has resources such as intense sunlight and unique species readily available make Africa an excellent breeding ground for the development of sustainable chemical technologies appropriate to the needs of the community.

An aspect that is well-recognised by the Federation of African Societies of Chemistry (FASC) that therefore chose Green Chemistry as the theme for its First Annual Congress to be held in Addis Ababa in September 2007.

The authors conclude that the collaboration between Ethiopian and European scientists was not only intellectually rewarding for all chemists involved, it also helped raise the profile of Ethiopian chemistry and enriched the international scientific community.

For more information on COST Action D29, please visit: http://www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=189&action_number=D29

For more information on this topic, please contact Dr Nigist (nigista@chem.aau.edu.net) or Professor Poliakoff (martyn.poliakoff@nottingham.ac.uk) directly.

Other COST Actions addressing Green Chemistry can be found in the COST Action Database <http://www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=26> by typing D6, D10 or D30 in the search field available.

03/08/07- COST meets EANM

On 2 August 2007 in Naples Professor Francesco Fedi, President of COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) met Professor A. Cuocolo, Professor W. Knapp and Ms. A. Bauer, respectively President, President Elect and Executive Director of EANM (European Association of Nuclear Medicine).

Professor Cuocolo congratulated Professor Fedi for his recent re-election as President of COST and introduced EANM by showing a short presentation. Until now, the EANM has been directly involved with COST only once. A group around the Radionuclide Therapy Committee (M. De Jong, H. Maecke et al) have been successful with a BM0607 submission on "Targeted Radionuclide Therapy".

Professor Fedi introduced COST by showing a presentation on the past, present and future of COST.

During the meeting it was clarified that EANM could not propose a COST Action as an association, but could encourage its members to do so. Nuclear Medicine relevant research can fit into various COST scientific domains, which are:

- Biomedicine and Molecular Bioscience
- Food and Agriculture
- Forests their Products and Services
- Materials, Physical and Nanosciences
- Chemistry and Molecular Sciences & Technologies
- Earth Systems Science & Environmental Management
- Information & Communication Technologies
- Transport & Urban Development
- Individuals, Society, Culture & Health

It was decided that EANM will include information on COST in EANM publications and will consider the possibility of inviting Professor Fedi to illustrate COST during the EANM Congress envisaged in Munich in 2008.

01/08/07 – THE EUROPEAN SCIENCE FOUNDATION AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION SIGN THE CONTRACT FOR COST IN FP7

On 31 July 2007 the European Commission (EC) and the European Science Foundation (ESF) signed the contract for ESF to continue to provide and manage the administrative, technical and scientific secretariat of COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). The Seventh Framework Programme foresees a 210 M€ in support for COST with the possibility of a top up of another 40 M€ depending on a positive mid-term evaluation in 2010.

The decision strengthens the working relationship between COST and ESF, two principal networking organisations in Europe which have been interacting at various levels for more than three decades. It builds on the previous EC-ESF contract for COST under FP6, signed in 2003, and guarantees the continuation of COST activities through FP7. The initial provision of EUR 210 million – compared to EUR 80 million in the previous contract – gives COST the opportunity to expand activities and to enhance the support of the COST Domain Committees (the nine scientific and technical committees) as well as of the COST Actions (the networks of researchers).

The contract sets out a series of work packages which reflect the increase in funding through new and expanded activities and the number of running Actions, the development of new ideas for interdisciplinary science initiatives, a better exploitation of the European “Near Neighbours” policy and a stronger focus on outreach and communications.

“The negotiation of this contract and the transition between FP6 and FP7 were two challenging processes. The ESF team’s commitment to COST, with its experience of managing such a complex operation, a constructive and efficient cooperation with the European Commission and with the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) have been essential in allowing the successful completion of this important agreement” commented Dr. David Weber, ESF’s Director of Administration and Finance.

“This agreement leads to a three-win situation – win for the ESF, win for COST and most importantly a win for the European research community thanks to the synergy that the two organisations created by working together. All of us are very happy and proud of the outcome” stated Dr. John Marks, ESF Chief Executive Officer.

“The contract and the increase in funding is indeed a strong vote of confidence towards the ESF-COST cooperation,” continues Dr Martin Grabert, Director of the COST Office. “With this contract, we can truly capitalise on previous successes. We will not rest on our laurels, however, and continue to focus on cross-disciplinary initiatives and strengthening the synergy between the various research actors in Europe”.

“I very much welcome the positive conclusion of the negotiations for the signature of the EC-ESF contract for COST” commented the President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, Professor Francesco Fedi “COST has always been a unique instrument

with a strong role to play towards the development of the ERA. Typical COST features such as its flexibility and bottom-up approach make it a perfect platform for innovative ideas on the frontiers of science. Aspects which are well-recognised by the science community if the resounding response to our open call for proposals and the numerous requests for cooperation from non-COST countries are any indication. I look forward to the strengthening of the ties between COST, the European Commission and the European Science Foundation for the benefit of the entire European Research Area” concluded Professor Fedi.

06/07/07 - JOINT PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF COST AND ESF ON THE PANEL REPORT ON THE FINAL REVIEW OF THE EC-ESF CONTRACT FOR COST IN FP6

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), and Dr. John Marks, Chief Executive Officer of the European Science Foundation (ESF), released the following joint preliminary Statement.

The Final Panel Report “Final Review of COST in the Sixth Framework Programme” is now available. This Report was foreseen in the FP6 contract on COST between the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the European Commission which started in July 2003.

The Review was carried out by a panel of six independent experts that was asked to assess among others the overall outcome and scientific impact of COST and COST Actions as well as the success of the reforms of COST. It also suggested aspects to be considered in the future.

The Report appreciated the very high customer satisfaction of the current users of COST and concluded that the transition from the COST Action management by the European Commission to the COST Office run by the European Science Foundation was fully successful. It acknowledges a number of improvements accomplished such as the increased transparency through the introduction of the Open Call and the simplification of application and reimbursement procedures in general. The collaboration between, and new synergies developed by, COST and ESF is considered to be developing well and has already borne fruits.

The Report contains a series of policy-oriented as well as practical recommendations in view of COST’s unique position at the start of the FP7, its contribution to development of the European Research Area (ERA) and the opportunities it has to liaise with European policy initiatives which support trans-national cooperation. Recommendations include changes in governance to improve clarity of decision making and targets to be addressed in the FP7 mid term evaluation which is scheduled for 2010.

ESF as well as COST consider the Panel’s findings a valuable input into the ongoing discussions on how e.g. the Green Paper on the future orientation of the ERA or the priorities set by the Portuguese EU Presidency contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

Both COST and ESF recall the agreements reached in the Addendum to the COST-ESF MoU. This Addendum was approved in October 2006 with the objective of strengthening COST and ESF as two actors fostering the ERA and of further developing the synergy between them, while maintaining a clear distinction between their individual characteristics and their complementary roles. The European Science Foundation was invited to act as the legal entity for COST and to provide the scientific, technical and administrative secretariat to COST Domain Committees and to COST Actions during the next Seventh Framework Programme. Both COST and ESF are of the opinion that

every effort should be made so that the EC-ESF contract for COST for FP7 be signed as soon as possible to allow a speedy implementation of the EU Council Decision on the Specific Programme "Cooperation". .

The relevant operational recommendations will be implemented in the FP7 contract. The recommendations on strategy and governance addressed to COST and ESF will be subject of further discussion in the COST and ESF Governing Bodies, respectively.

03/07/07 - COST CONTRIBUTES TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE EC GREEN PAPER ON "THE ERA: NEW PERSPECTIVES": THE ROLE OF COST IN THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA.

The COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) at its meeting at the end of June 2007 approved the Contribution of COST to the consultation on the Commission Green Paper on "The ERA: New Perspectives", entitled "**The role of COST in the European Research Area**".

"This document demonstrates that COST is a unique instrument" said Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials "with a definite role to play in the ERA to contribute to the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives especially due to the particular characteristics of COST which have been decisive for its continued success throughout the last 37 years: its intergovernmental nature, its bottom-up approach, its flexibility, its position as an open network among researchers and as an exploratorium of new ideas in the most advanced frontiers of science; its complementary role with respect to the EC Framework Programmes; its role towards the new Member States of the European Union, the European neighbouring countries and, in general, towards the rest of the world".

"If COST did not exist it would be necessary to invent it" continued Professor Fedi "was the result of a recent survey which was indeed confirmed by the overwhelming response of the European scientific community to the recent COST Calls for proposals for new COST Actions".

CONTRIBUTION OF COST TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE EC GREEN PAPER ON THE ERA: NEW PERSPECTIVES: THE ROLE OF COST IN THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

***COST** - European **CO**-operation in the field of **S**cientific and **T**echnical Research - was the first and is one of the widest networks to coordinate nationally funded research activities. Established by a Ministerial Conference of 19 European States in November 1971, COST is at present serving the scientific communities of its 35 member Countries and many others around the globe with which it cooperates. With about 200 on-going Actions, it currently networks approximately EUR 2 billion worth of national research funding through its support, which is of the order of 1% of this sum, and reaches out to over 30 000 researchers across Europe.*

COST considers **ERA** to consist of a set of interacting players from individual researchers and research teams to national and European level actors and it should reflect the existing variety of approaches fostering constant exchange and competition. European-wide structures and schemes should constitute a balanced mix of approaches respecting and facilitating bottom-up research activities, combined with strategic guidance and coordination where this serves European policy objectives. The players in ERA should constantly improve their performance whilst preserving their best

traditions. In such context, COST is above all an ERA instrument creating, among others, synergies of European and global dimension on high level national research and innovation activities. COST - having implemented a series of major reforms in the last three years, some of them real milestones in its history - has the following vision of its role and added value in the further development of ERA, responding those “axes” identified in the Green Paper which are most pertinent to COST:

A. “WELL-COORDINATED RESEARCH PROGRAMMES AND PRIORITIES”

- **COST is a flexible, fast, effective and efficient tool to network and coordinate nationally funded research activities at project level, bringing good scientists together under light strategic guidance and letting them work out their ideas, thus contributing to overcome the fragmentation of research in the ERA.**

COST builds upon the inherently bottom-up nature of research activities as one of its most important characteristics. The initiative for launching a COST Action comes from the European researchers themselves. COST provides the support for the networking and coordination of research activities. The sole purpose of COST central funding - on average of the order of 1% of the national funds involved in an Action - therefore is to establish the research “network” and to provide the organisational and operational basis for cooperation. This approach also implies a minimum administrative burden for the participants and a fast adoption of Actions. Through this cooperation, duplications and gaps are avoided and the consequent synergy and work sharing allows a much more efficient use of the national resources. For the individual scientist, and for the national funder, cooperation within COST makes it possible to reach much broader and common research goals in parallel with and in addition to the scientist's own goals.

COST responds to the need for the coordination of researchers, including academia, public authorities and industry, across Europe and provides the added-value that can be achieved by integration and synthesis of otherwise independent research, without endeavouring to coordinate national programmes. The linking of the researchers themselves is an essential “bottom up” element which COST sustains. In this regard, COST aims to continue and reinforce its role as one of the leaders in European research networking.

As the Framework Programme represents only some 5% of total European research investments, any mechanisms for maximising the impact of the investments at the national level and for creating the required scientific critical masses are essential, especially for overcoming fragmentation. COST, EUREKA, and the European Science Foundation (in particular with its EUROCORES scheme) are examples of actors for the development of ERA outside the Framework Programme. COST considers that there is scope for some rationalization within Europe's research support mechanisms while avoiding a monolithic approach, as researchers need to have the opportunity to seek support from a variety of sources. For its part, COST has already established a

partnership with the Commission to reinforce coordination between the Framework Programme and to seek complementarities and synergies between the two frameworks. COST will also endeavour to reinforce links with EUREKA with a view to identifying possibilities for more applications-oriented follow-up to COST Actions, for instance building upon the experience of COST/EUREKA "twinning events".

The relationship between COST and ESF deserves a particular mention in this respect. In 2002 a Memorandum of Understanding was agreed and ESF became the implementing agent for COST, which administered the funds provided from the Sixth Framework Programme for COST through an ad hoc contract with the European Commission and supported the scientific, technical and administrative secretariat of COST Technical Committees and Actions through a COST Office located in Brussels which became fully operational in early 2004. In October 2006, COST confirmed the European Science Foundation as the legal entity to act as the implementing agent for COST and to provide the scientific, technical and administrative secretariat to COST Domain Committees and to COST Actions during the Seventh Framework Programme. Further measures were also agreed between COST and ESF, in an Addendum to the current COST-ESF Memorandum of Understanding, with the objectives of strengthening COST and ESF as separate instruments within the ERA and of further developing the synergy between them, while maintaining a clear distinction between their individual characteristics and their complementary roles.

In addition to the very effective synergy already established between COST and ESF, an opportunity for a clearer “division of labour” with the functions and responsibilities of both structures being considered as complementary could be envisaged in the future from the COST viewpoint. In fact, both bring together national research investment through an inter-governmental structure (COST) and an inter-agency/research council structure (ESF). Both are, of course, coordinating national research investments. A scenario could then be envisaged where the bulk of “networking” is taking place under COST allowing ESF to coordinate new major programmes and develop the EUROCORES.

- **In COST, new ideas are developed in the most promising fields of science leading to further activities also using other instruments; COST is also a high-level scientific network able to tackle problems of societal importance for Europe.**

COST is not confined to the particular thematic objectives of the Framework Programmes (FPs) and COST’s value to ERA lies to a large extent in its possibility of acting both within and outside the confines of the FPs. On the other hand, COST is funded through the FP and its specific position and role thereby has been recently recognized. Precursor of advanced multidisciplinary research, COST should continue anticipating and complementing the activities of the Framework Programmes, which has already fostered e.g. the establishment of “Networks of Excellence” in many key scientific domains. In the field of Telecommunications and Information Science alone, six Networks of Excellence in the Sixth Framework Programme derived directly from COST Actions.

Through providing networking for researchers for activities supported by national funds, COST has anticipated many European RTD collaborative mechanisms.

This role of COST should be developed and strengthened in the perspective of the ERA and FP7. Coordination is not to be limited to coordination of formal, national research programmes but has to include the networking of researchers. Thus, ERA-NET and "Article 169" Initiatives on one hand and COST on the other hand are complementary as COST coordinates at researcher level while ERA-NET and Article 169 act at programme level. Consequently, contacts between COST Domain Committees and ERA-NETS should be encouraged in appropriate fields in order to establish a mutual information flow.

COST appears to be an ideal environment to tackle problems of societal importance especially in the case of delicate issues arising from new technologies. COST can contribute to reassuring the public that the examination of these issues is not restricted to individual countries and that it is carried out in a high-standard, independent environment. The establishment of the exposure limits to base stations for mobile communications by a COST Action is one example in this direction. COST has relations with a series of International and European bodies such as the World Meteorological Organisation, (WMO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the European Standardisation Telecommunications Institute (ETSI).

B. "EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE SHARING"

- **COST is a framework capable of combining both scientific excellence and extensive networking among European researchers.**

The combination of excellence and networking as prerequisites for the COST Actions has always been an important characteristic of COST:

The excellence is assured by a rigorous control process of the scientific quality of the Actions which is composed of the Assessment of Proposals of New Actions, the Monitoring of Actions in Progress and Final Evaluation of completed Actions.

Networking is a prerequisite to proposing a new Action: at least 5 countries have to participate. However, additional participants may join the Action in a flexible manner and normally the level of participation is much higher, on average 15-20 countries, on the management of which COST has a long and successful tradition. With the excellence of the Action having been established through the selection process, the large partnerships result in effective and extensive knowledge sharing at European level. COST considers that it is essential for the development of ERA to preserve this type of a networking scheme over and above other mechanisms, such as those of the FP, which focus on a more extensive research funding of projects with a limited number of participants.

The contribution of COST to European competitiveness in the global market is demonstrated by the many contributions to normative and standardisation bodies where COST results, COST models and COST methods are commonly referred to

and recommended. It is also testified by the many Small Enterprises originated from COST activities at the frontiers of modern technology and by the many examples of transfer of results to the European industry. The COST contribution to the standardisation of the GSM system - a European success - the recommendation of COST models for the design of radiocommunication systems at GHz frequencies worldwide – which eventually led to the possibility of receiving TV channels directly from satellites with small parabolas - or the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF) in Reading, UK, grown out of an early COST Action in the meteorology domain, are some of many examples.

C. "AN ADEQUATE FLOW OF COMPETENT RESEARCHERS"

- **COST contributes to the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives through promoting researchers' training and mobility as an integral part of COST Actions.**

Coordination of national activities in COST Actions not only brings together the researchers and their research groups, but it also levers mobility through exchanges, especially for the younger generation of researchers through recently adopted measures to be integrated in the Actions, and links the various national research support mechanisms.

COST has always been at the forefront of the efforts to make Europe attractive to the best researchers by: (a) creating a high-level stimulating scientific environment and (b) encouraging the mobility of researchers across Europe through "Short-Term Scientific Missions", primarily for young researchers, "training schools" and "high-level research conferences", used by senior and junior researchers for forefront research discussions. COST Actions also provide important possibilities for gaining experience in management of research projects. COST encourages the participating institutions to observe the European Charter for Researchers.

In the past 36 years a considerable number of doctorates have been obtained in Europe by students in connection with COST Actions who have benefited from the international COST framework in their work. The innovative nature and the scientific importance of COST results is also demonstrated by the very high number of papers published in excellent scientific and technical journals or presented in the most important international Conferences, and by the interest by the scientific communities outside the COST members: in Europe - notably in Russia - as well as outside Europe, in particular in the USA, in Canada and Asia.

D. "A WIDE OPENING OF THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA TO THE WORLD"

- **COST is an active partner for the European Neighbourhood policy towards the scientific communities of neighbouring countries and is an asset for the EU RTD policy with the rest of the world.**

The role of supporting the EU RTD external dimension has been recognised and endorsed by the COST Ministerial Conference of Dubrovnik in 2003, by the Assessment Panel appointed by the COST Committee of Senior Officials in 2002, by the Ministerial Conference for the adoption of the EU–Balkan countries Action Plan in Science and Technology in 2003, by the Conference on Participation of Western Balkan Countries in EU-RTD-Framework Programmes in 2005 and by the High Level Panel, established in 2005 by the European Commission, for the Mid-Term Review of the contract between the Commission and the European Science Foundation for the support of COST.

With easy accessibility and light and fast procedures, COST has always been a “bridge” or an entry point for the scientific communities of the European neighbouring countries. Many of the scientific communities of the countries which are now full members of the EU have had their first approach to Europe through COST. This seems particularly relevant for the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives since many of the required new researchers are expected to come from these countries. Experience shows that for the efficient inclusion of participants from non-COST countries in COST Actions, specific incentives are a prerequisite. Normally, participants lack the necessary travel budget to ensure the cooperation deemed useful from both sides. Therefore the cooperation based on equal footing in terms of dedicated financial support for all participants in COST Actions is assumed to produce better results in the interest of Europe. Accordingly, COST is in the process of improving in particular the non-COST "Neighbourhood" countries' conditions to participate in COST Actions.

COST has demonstrated its ability to be an asset for the implementation of RTD policy also towards the rest of the world. It does this with considerable success thanks to COST flexibility and the ease of access of participation for third country institutions in COST Actions on the basis of mutual benefit. Currently approximately 130 institutions from 21 non-COST countries participate in some 100 COST Actions.

In order to achieve these objectives and to respond to the requests by the Actions, the access to short-term scientific missions could be extended on a cost-sharing basis. In a two-year pilot phase COST Actions in which institutions from Australia and New Zealand participate are eligible for additional support for short term scientific missions in the mutual interest. Both the partner countries are committing earmarked funds to secure reciprocity.

ANNEX

Responses to selected questions put forward in the Green Paper:*

Elements of the European Research Area vision

2. What should be the roles of EU, national and regional policies to establish such a European Research Area and take best advantage of the European dimension in the context of globalisation and national and regional specialisation?

COST considers ERA to consist of a set of interacting players from individual researchers and research teams to national and European level actors and it should reflect the existing variety of approaches fostering constant exchange and competition. European-wide structures and schemes should constitute a balanced mix of approaches respecting and facilitating bottom-up research activities, combined with strategic guidance and coordination where this serves European policy objectives. The players in ERA should constantly improve their performance whilst preserving their best traditions. In such context, COST is above all an ERA instrument creating, among others, synergies of European and global dimension on high level national research and innovation activities.

Realising a single labour market for researchers

5. How could the principles established in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their Recruitment be effectively implemented, in order to develop fully the European dimension of research careers, including the trans-national opening of vacancies and funding opportunities for researchers?

For its part, COST is encouraging all COST Actions to apply the Code of Conduct for their Recruitment and implement the European Charter for Researchers.

8. How could we increase the numbers and quality of researchers in Europe by attracting young research talents, ensuring real equal opportunities for men and women and exploiting the experience and expertise of end-of-career researchers, for example in advisory and training roles?
10. How could the specific education and training needs of researchers be addressed at all stages of their careers, starting with post-graduate and doctoral curricula, building on the Bologna process for higher education?

* This section reproduces relevant elements from the full COST contribution given in the first part of this document.

COST has experience in promoting researchers training and mobility as an integral part of COST Actions. Coordination of national activities in COST Actions not only brings together the researchers and their research groups, but it also levers mobility through exchanges, especially for the younger generation of researchers through recently adopted measures to be integrated in the Actions, and links the various national research support mechanisms. COST has always been at the forefront of the efforts to make Europe attractive to the best researchers by: (a) creating a high-level stimulating scientific environment and (b) encouraging the mobility of researchers across Europe through "Short-Term Scientific Missions", primarily for young researchers, "training schools" and "high-level research conferences", used by senior and junior researchers for forefront research discussions. COST Actions also provide important possibilities for gaining experience in management of research projects.

Sharing knowledge

21. Is there a need for EU-level policies and practices to improve and ensure open access to and dissemination of raw data and peer-reviewed publications from publicly funded research results?
22. What should constitute a European Framework for knowledge sharing between research institutions and industry based on identified good practice and models?

In this respect, COST's approach is to be a framework combining both scientific excellence and extensive networking among European researchers: the excellence is assured by a rigorous control process of the scientific quality of the Actions. Networking is a prerequisite to propose a new Action: at least 5 countries have to participate. However, additional participants may join the Action in a flexible manner and normally the level of participation is much higher, on average 15-20 countries, on the management of which COST has a long and successful tradition. With the excellence of the Action having been established through the selection process, the large partnerships result in effective and extensive knowledge sharing at European level. COST considers that it is essential for the development of ERA to preserve this type of a networking scheme over and above other mechanisms, such as those of the FP, which focus on a more extensive research funding of projects with a limited number of participants.

Optimising research programmes and priorities

27. What participative processes need to be put in place to enable public authorities to jointly identify and decide upon major societal issues requiring a pooling of resources and capacities?

Flexible, fast, effective and efficient tools are needed to network and coordinate nationally funded research activities at project level, bringing scientists together under light strategic guidance and letting them work out

their ideas, thus contributing to overcome the fragmentation of research in the ERA.

COST's approach is to build upon the inherently bottom-up nature of research activities as one of its most important characteristics. The initiative of launching a COST Action comes from the European researchers themselves. COST provides the support for the networking and coordination of research activities. The sole purpose of COST central funding - on the average of the order of 1% of the national funds involved in an Action - therefore is to establish the research "network" and to provide the organisational and operational basis for cooperation. This approach also implies a minimum administrative burden for the participants and a fast adoption of Actions.

Opening to the world: international cooperation in S&T

33. How can neighbouring countries be best integrated into the European Research Area as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy?

Easy accessibility and light and fast procedures are essential. In this respect COST has been a "bridge" or an entry point for the scientific communities of the European neighbouring countries. Experience shows that for the efficient inclusion of participants from non-COST countries, specific incentives are a prerequisite. Normally, participants lack the necessary travel budget to ensure the cooperation deemed useful from both sides. Therefore the cooperation based on equal footing in terms of dedicated financial support for all participants in COST Actions is assumed to produce better results in the interest of Europe.

34. How can the EU's bilateral S&T agreements be made more effective? Are there alternative or complementary instruments that can be used, such as joint calls for projects, involving where possible the Member States?

As an example in the COST framework, in order to respond to the requests by the Actions, the access to short-term scientific missions could be extended on a cost-sharing basis. In a two-year pilot phase COST Actions in which institutions from Australia and New Zealand participate are eligible for additional support for short term scientific missions in the mutual interest. Both the partner countries are committing earmarked funds to secure reciprocity.

15/06/07 - COST IN ITALY

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, was invited to open the Workshop on Nanotechnologies held on the 6th of June 2007 at the University of L'Aquila. Sponsored by internal funds of the University, the Workshop was a unique opportunity for scholars from a variety of disciplines and professional experiences to discuss work in progress in the various fields of Nanotechnologies.

Subsequently, on 14 June, Professor Fedi was invited to a COST INFORMATION DAY at the University of Palermo where he illustrated the past, present and future of COST.

“The role of Italy in COST has always been particularly important” noted Professor Fedi. The Italian Minister of Research, Mr. Camillo Ripamonti chaired the first COST Ministerial Conference in 1971 and concluded the activities of the Conference with the following somewhat prophetic words: COST constitutes an experimental laboratory for European cooperation which will provide valuable information for the future. Since the very beginning Italy was a strong supporter of COST and proposed and chaired one of the first 7 Actions launched in 1971 on radiopropagation at frequencies higher than 10.000 MHz. Italy is among the four COST countries which participated in the highest number of COST Actions. As a response to the first COST Open Call in March 2006 Italy, together with Germany, presented more than 100 preliminary proposals and was the country which presented the highest number of proposals as a response to the second Call in May 2007. The nine Italian representatives in the COST Domain Committees have been chosen among the most authoritative members of the Italian scientific community; four out of nine are women and one of them has been elected Chair of her Domain Committee. In 2004, for the first time after 35 years, an Italian has been elected President of COST and in 2007 the Italian President has been re-elected for another three- year period. From all this” concluded Professor Fedi “it has to be hoped that the future brilliant future of COST will continue to be an important opportunity for the Italian scientific community.”

04/06/07 – COST IN CROATIA

A COST Strategic Workshop on “Smart Health Care” was held at the University of Dubrovnik on 31 May- 1 June 2007 organized by the COST Domain Committees of [Information and Communication Technologies](#); [Individuals, Societies, Cultures and Health](#); and [Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences](#).

This Strategic Workshop followed a trans-disciplinary approach to the highly important and up-to-date topic of Smart Health Care and aimed at bringing together high-level researchers and decision-makers to discuss this forefront topic and to raise awareness within the scientific community.

During the opening Session, chaired by Professor Dina Simunic, Vice Chair of the COST Domain Committee of Information and Communication Technologies, Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, in his welcome address, congratulated the organizers for the choice of the subject and for the interdisciplinary approach given to the Workshop. He also reminded to the audience that Dubrovnik has a particular importance for COST since the latest COST Ministerial Conference was held in Dubrovnik in 2003 and represented the first signal of the COST “renaissance” after the difficult period of the previous years.

28/05/07 – COST IN RUSSIA

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), was invited and participated in the transdisciplinary Conference organised in Moscow on 23-25 May 2007 by COST Action 298 “The user and the future of information and communication technologies”.

The main objective of the Conference entitled “The good, the bad and the unsuspected” was to create new knowledge about users’ creativity and facilitate their empowerment in a broadband information society. This knowledge is crucial in order to strengthen the European Research Area. and requires an examination of the factors that can both constrain and enhance users’ abilities to shape and use ICTs.

The ‘broadband society’ refers to a possible, but not inevitable, substantial transformation of our experience allowing information and communication technologies to be used everywhere, all the time and by everybody. Given the widespread aspirations of Governments and companies to achieve this goal, the extent to which any such transformation has occurred needs to be evaluated in a balanced manner.

Technology and product developers, designers, social scientists, policy makers and community representatives were invited, to join the attempt to develop this discussion on a common, shared and transdisciplinary ground.. The Conference was organised around four main themes: Users as innovators, Humans as eActors, The multiple cultures of the Information Society, Future directions.

Four COST Actions converged in this conference under the guidance of COST 298. Joint sessions were organized with COST 219ter “Accessibility for all to services and terminals for next generation networks”, COST 292 “Semantic multimodal analysis of digital media” and COST A30 “East of West: Setting a new Central and Eastern European media research agenda”, belonging to two different COST domains: “ICT - Information and Communication Technologies” and “ISCH - Individuals, Societies, Cultures and Health”.

In his welcome address, after the introduction of the Chair of the Conference Dr Bartolomeo Sapio, Professor Fedi, illustrated the main characteristics of the COST network and congratulated the organizers both for the choice of the theme of the Conference and for the selection of the venue since, as he noted, “Russia, with its participation in 38 COST Actions, is by far the most active non-COST country and 180 abstracts, more than 110 participants from 25 countries and 5 continents, 28 parallel sessions, 3 plenaries, 2 roundtables, 4 COST Actions involved are a sign of the overwhelming success of the conference”.

08/05/07 - COST INFORMATION DAY IN ARMENIA

A COST Information Day was organised in Yerevan on 8 May 2007 by the Armenian Ministry of Trade and Economic Development and it was attended by some 70 representatives of the Armenian scientific community. This COST Information Day was follow-up to the meeting between Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, and the Armenian Ambassador Dr. Viguen Tchitetchian in Brussels on 1 March 2007.

In the Information Day COST was represented by Dr. Michel Gorlicki, member of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), accompanied by Dr. Kimmo Peippo, Head of COST Secretariat as well as Mr. Günter Siegel and Dr. Piotr Swiatek, Science Officers from the COST Office.

Following the welcome address by Deputy Minister T. Davtyan, Dr. Gorlicki gave a presentation "COST: Past, Present and Future". He also passed the message to the audience from Prof. Fedi, who was unable to attend the meeting, encouraging the Armenian scientific community to participate actively in the COST research activities. Dr Peippo presented "COST Strategy toward European neighbouring countries and non-COST countries". Mr. Siegel gave a presentation on "Participation in COST Actions: procedures and guidelines" and presented activities in the Domains of Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences; and Food and Agriculture; and Forests, their Products and Services. Dr Swiatek gave a presentation on "Experience with non-COST countries participation" and presented COST Domains Chemistry, Molecular Sciences and Technology; Materials, Physics and Nanosciences; Earth System and Environmental Management; Information and Communication Technologies; and Individuals, Societies, Cultures and Health. Dr. Ashot Chilingaryan (Cosmic Ray Division - Yerevan Physics Institute) gave a presentation on "Armenian COST Experience". The Yerevan Physics Institute is currently participating as a non-COST institute in Action 724: "Developing the Scientific Basis for Monitoring, Modelling and Predicting Space Weather".

The COST delegation also met Dr. Ishkhan Karapetyan, Executive Director of the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center of Armenia.

04/05/07 - CERN HOSTS COST - ENLIGHT STRATEGIC WORKSHOP ON HADRON THERAPY

The COST Strategic Workshop on “Cancer treatment and hadrons: Powerful tools for an advanced, effective treatment on cancer” took place in Geneva on 3 and 4 May 2007 at the “Globe of Science and Innovation” of CERN (Coopération Européenne pour la Recherche Nucléaire- European Cooperation for Nuclear Research).

The Workshop was the result of the collaboration between the COST Domain of Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences (BMBS) and the European Network for Research in Light-Ion Hadron Therapy (ENLIGHT), a network established back in 2002 to promote the use of hadron particles for cancer therapy. A hadron, in [particle physics](#), is a [subatomic particle](#) which experiences the [nuclear force](#). These are not fundamental particles but are composed of [fermions](#), called [quarks](#) and antiquarks, and of [bosons](#), called [gluons](#).

In his welcome speech, the Director General of CERN, Mr Robert Aymar, commented on the importance of continuing particle research and establishing hadron therapy as a cancer treatment modality and pointed at the role of the CERN as an international organisation in supporting such initiatives. He added that there is an increased need for networking activities in order to develop a pan-European platform dedicated to the advancement of all aspects of hadron therapy and thanked COST for strongly supporting this event.

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of COST, in his address to the participants, underlined the fact that COST was the first “networking” instrument on a European level to bring scientists together. Professor Fedi mentioned that this workshop materialized under the strategic scope of COST, through which COST provides an outreach to the scientific community, promotes interdisciplinarity, raises awareness on forefront scientific topics and creates the basis for future partnerships between COST Action scientists and world experts, towards achieving a strong ERA. In the case of ENLIGHT, a pre-established network, he mentioned that COST is proud to have collaborated with this community on the important topic of hadron therapy where Europe can become a leading world expert.

The success of the workshop was confirmed by the participation of more than 120 scientists of the ENLIGHT network, members of the COST BMBS Domain Committee and COST Actions, as well as both Science Officers from the European Commission and the European Patent Office (EPO) and representatives of companies developing gantries for hadron therapy.

The workshop was concluded by short overview talks by Professor Ugo Amaldi, one of the key figures in the field of hadron therapy, and by Dr. Maximillian Metzger, Secretary General of CERN.

16/04/07 - REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COST COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS ON THE TRIENNIUM 2004-2006

After the serious difficulties encountered in 2002 and 2003, COST experienced a period of “renaissance” in the subsequent three years. Now, there is renewed confidence and enthusiasm in the COST research community, further strengthened by the secured support from the EU RTD Framework Programme.

2006 was the third year of this “renaissance” which started at the beginning of 2004 with the establishment of the fully operative COST Office in Brussels on the basis of a contract between the European Science Foundation - acting as implementing agent for COST - and the European Commission.

The intense period of reforms within COST that followed has further contributed to the COST “renaissance”.

The complete and profound restructuring of the COST scientific domains - the first one after 35 years - has proved to be a major milestone for COST and a real “Copernican revolution”. It has launched COST into the future, being a true “exploratorium” of new ideas in the most promising fields of science. The restructuring was not obtained by simply reducing the number of COST domains, as requested by the COST Ministerial Conference held in Dubrovnik in 2003. It was achieved by starting again from a “tabula rasa” and by establishing a completely new structure now based on 9 new scientific domains. With this decision the CSO proved to be a real strategic body for COST by establishing and implementing a sound scientific strategy for the future. Now, COST is a modern network for European cooperation in science and technology at the service of European researchers. COST has been re-positioned so that it can act as a real precursor for the Framework Programmes. Moreover COST can provide an essential collaboration system to underpin the European Research Council, support the younger generation of researchers. Most importantly, COST proved to be a key element of the European Research Area and to be able to contribute significantly to achieving the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives.

The notion of interdisciplinarity has been a key issue of the reformed scientific domains. Not only the domains themselves are inter-disciplinary; this interdisciplinarity is also ensured through the “Strategic Workshops”, organized by COST on subjects of intrinsic interdisciplinary nature. In the past three years, COST organised and held strategic workshops on “Environment and Health”, “European Cultural Heritage”, “Food and Health” and “Nanosciences”.

Another major reform introduced in COST concerned the introduction of a continuous Open Call for Proposals, together with a strengthened and consistent use of external peer reviews. This continuous Open Call for proposals is based on a two-stage process, reconciling the advantages of the COST tradition and the need for a highly transparent process of presenting proposals for new Actions . The call is continuous, i.e. the scientific community can present a proposal for a new Action at any time and on any subject, following the successful tradition of COST. The call is open, i.e. the selection process follows the `bottom-up` tradition of COST. The process is based on a call for proposals: the benefits of Calls for Proposals, generally seen as raising visibility within the research community and creating openness, have been introduced. The call is based on a two-stage process (preliminary proposal and full proposal). Preliminary proposals of maximum three pages length are sought to act as an initial filter of proposals to be followed .Only those deemed of sufficient interest, potential intrinsic quality, and European added value are invited to submit a full proposal. This should reduce the disadvantages Calls generally have to face, such as the problem of oversubscription (i.e. a large number of new full proposals, frequently not of sufficient quality), a huge workload in processing proposals within the COST Office and in the review system and the disillusion which may arise within the research community due to the rejection of a large number of full proposals.

Monitoring the Actions in progress and the final evaluation of completed Actions (including external peer reviews) have always been a tradition in COST and a very good example of `Quality Control` in the European Research Area. Quality control is essential in all research endeavours, both for direct research funding and for networking of

researchers. In all these cases, peer review is normally applied to determine the quality of the research being undertaken. COST has established guidelines for the assessment, monitoring and evaluation process. These guidelines have been reviewed and have to be followed by all the Domain Committees which are obliged to involve external reviewers - both in the assessment of new proposals and in the evaluation of completed Actions. In order to obtain the services of top quality reviewers, remuneration for experts has been introduced.

COST Governance has been the third important reform introduced in COST. The strategic role of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), bringing together representatives of the governments of the 35 COST countries, was reinforced. A major activity of the CSO will be dedicated to discussion and approval of COST strategic and political goals such as the COST mission in the ERA, COST's contribution to the Lisbon objectives, COST communication strategy, COST penetration in quantity and quality, COST as an instrument of integration across Europe, COST as an asset for the implementation of the European RTD policy towards the rest of the world and similar topics of a strategic nature. The CSO role in COST governance was also addressed and strengthened. It was decided that the CSO will continue to stay abreast of developments taking place in the scientific community, this being reflected, in particular, in the assessment, monitoring and final evaluation of COST Actions. These decisions, together with the introduction of voting procedures based on a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority - another milestone in the history of COST - has allowed the CSO to develop its role as a truly strategic body.

The role of the CSO Executive Group - the so called JAF Group -, formed by the President and Vice-President of the CSO together with five other CSO members (two of them rotating every year), was also reinforced. The main tasks of the JAF Group were established as follows: recommendation of new Actions; generation, evaluation and revisions of documents for the CSO; monitoring the management of the COST budget and the COST Office activities; approval of prolongations of Actions, and scrutiny of

applications of participation in COST Actions from Institutions from non-COST countries.

The delegation of the management of the Action from the COST Office to the Actions themselves will be introduced starting from 2007. This delegation is a further milestone in the process of reforming COST governance. Streamlining the approval of Actions will be the final challenge to complete the modernisation of COST governance.

In October 2006, COST confirmed the European Science Foundation (ESF) as the legal entity to act as the implementing agent for COST and to provide the scientific, technical and administrative secretariat to COST Domain Committees and to COST Actions during the next Seventh Framework Programme. To this end and with the objective of strengthening COST and ESF as separate instruments within the ERA and of further developing the synergy between them, while maintaining a clear distinction between their individual characteristics and their complementary roles, an Addendum to the current COST-ESF Memorandum of Understanding established in 2002 was agreed by the COST Committee of Senior Officials and by the ESF Governing Council.

The reform process underway in COST was fully recognized by the High Level Panel established by the European Commission for the Mid-Term Review of the EC-ESF contract for COST. The Panel recognized the important role of COST for achieving the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives and recommended to the European Commission to release the entire sum of 80M€ from FP6, the upper limit of support for COST within the sixth Framework Programme (FP6), and particularly important, to continue to support COST in the future with increased support within FP7.

The European Commission, in its latest proposal for FP7, stated its intention to enhance the synergy between FP7 and COST and to include financial support for COST and its activities. Furthermore, an active cooperation with the Commission has been introduced, supervised by a High level Group between COST and the European Commission, and co-chaired by the Director General of DG Research and the COST

CSO President. This is a sign of renewed confidence in COST and has enabled the development of a strong partnership between COST and the European Commission.

At the political level, COST has been acknowledged on a number of occasions. Several times, the Competitiveness Council of Ministers of the European Union stressed “the importance of reinforcing the ties between the Framework Programmes and European intergovernmental organizations such as COST” and underlined “that European technology initiatives should achieve synergies with existing schemes such as COST taking into account its important contribution to R&D”. Such political recognition of COST is especially important in securing future support.

COST has also built links with the European Parliament. COST has been explicitly mentioned in the Report of the Rapporteur to the European Parliament on the Seventh Framework Programme. After the COST DAY held in Brussels in November 2004 - the first initiative of this kind - a very successful COST exhibition in the European Parliament has been held from 18 to 21 April 2006, with the participation of Commissioner Dr Janez Potocnik, of the Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) of the European Parliament, Mr Giles Chichester, and of Professor Buzek, the Rapporteur to the European Parliament for the Seventh Framework Programme.

During the past triennium COST strove for ensuring the wide dissemination of the results of its Actions to “user” communities, including policy makers at all levels. Where appropriate, COST encouraged the use of results to foster European commercial and industrial competitiveness. The development and intensification of links with EUREKA is a cornerstone of this approach, and there has been an ongoing consultation between COST and EUREKA. COST participated in the EUREKA Ministerial Conference held in Prague in June 2006 at the invitation of the Czech EUREKA Presidency. This participation was the result of mutual presentations by the COST and EUREKA Presidencies at the level of EUREKA's High Level Group and COST's Senior Officials

Committee and regular exchanges of information at the level of specific domains and the respective secretariats.

The visibility of COST in the various COST countries was raised by the numerous COST Information Days organized in Italy (Milan, Rome, and Bologna), in Finland (Helsinki), in Estonia (Tallin), in Turkey (Ankara and Izmit), in Scotland (Edinburgh), in the Netherlands (Utrecht), in Romania (Bucharest, Iasi and Timisoara), in Ireland (Dublin), in France (Nice) and in Bulgaria (Sofia).

COST has demonstrated its ability to be an asset for the implementation of the European RTD policy towards the rest of the world. It does this with considerable success thanks to COST flexibility and the ease of access of participation for third country institutions in COST Actions. Consequently COST did not restrict itself to only serving the European research community, and it did not confine itself geographically. Following its traditions, it continued to be an open networking system, encouraging the participation - on the basis of mutual interest and benefit - of researchers and colleagues from all over the world. COST Information Days were organized in Albania (Tirana and Gjirokastra), in the Republic of Moldova (Chisinau), in China (Beijing and Shanghai), in Ukraine (Kyiv), in Argentina (Buenos Aires), and in Australia and New Zealand.

The European scientific community continues to acknowledge COST as a “fast, efficient, effective flexible framework to bring European researchers together, under light strategic guidance, to let them work out their ideas”. This perception was confirmed by a survey which revealed that “if COST did not exist it would be necessary to invent it”. The interest of the European scientific community in COST has been recently confirmed by the overwhelming response to the COST Open Call for Proposals launched in May 2006 where more than 800 preliminary proposals were received for the selection of only some 40 new COST Actions.

The reforms introduced in COST in the last three years together with the role that COST has had within the European Research Area in the past 35 years have been fully recognised. This includes the development of European scientific endeavours in many key areas at the frontiers of our knowledge, the establishment of networks of thousands of leading Scientists, the increase of mobility of researchers across Europe, the improvement of cooperation in science and technology and the creation of a better understanding among European countries. In December 2006, the Council of the European Union adopted a Decision concerning the Specific Programme "Cooperation" implementing the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community, according to which at least EUR 210 million and up to EUR 250 million should be attributed to COST, subject to the mid-term evaluation. This financial support will be provided through a grant which will be paid on the basis of a grant agreement between the Commission and a legal entity designated by COST as its implementing agent and communicated to the Commission by the General Secretariat of the Council and identified in the Work Programme.

The increase of between 50% and possibly more than 78% of the financial support to COST with respect to the Sixth Framework Programme is a reward of paramount importance for the entire COST family. For the members of the COST Committee of Senior Officials whose dedication and sense of ownership made it possible to introduce a number of reforms which are real milestones in the history of COST. For the Chairs and members of the newly appointed scientific COST Domain Committees, nominated among the most outstanding European scientists. For the participants in the COST Actions, the real "raison d'être" of COST, and, in general, for the entire European scientific community whose more than 800 proposals presented as response to the first COST Call for the selection of some 40 new Actions confirmed all the vitality of the COST framework. For the COST Office established by the European Science Foundation in Brussels acting as COST implementing agent. For the COST Secretariat provided, since the very beginning of COST, by the General Secretariat of the EU Council. I wish to express the gratitude of the entire COST family to the members of the European Parliament who confirmed the interest in COST that has emerged in the COST exhibition in the Parliament held in April 2006, to the European Commission and

“dulcis in fundo” to the Council of the European Union and, in particular, to the members of its Research Working Party which gave this strong support to COST.

All these achievements give great confidence for the future of COST at the service of the European scientific community and for the benefit of the European citizens.

On 21 March 2007 the representatives of the 35 COST countries, during the meeting of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) convened in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, re-elected Professor Francesco Fedi as President of COST for the next triennium. The Italian Ministry of Universities and Research was encouraged to present his candidature by the many delegations of the COST CSO who had expressed the view that a continuity in the COST CSO Presidency was indeed necessary in this delicate moment for COST, had stated an open appreciation for the outstanding results obtained by the Italian Presidency and had announced their support when in the latest CSO meeting they had "indicated that they would be favourably disposed towards a re-election of the President-in-office, were he willing to continue".

Following this election the following main objectives for the period 2007-2010 have been identified:

1. To consolidate and monitor the considerable number of reforms introduced in COST in the past three years.
2. To consolidate the relationship and to strengthen the ties with the European Commission (EC) and with the European Science Foundation (ESF), with particular attention to the EC-ESF contract for COST.
3. To maintain and increase the role of COST as a unique instrument in the European Research Area and its complementarity with the EU Seventh Framework Programme.

4. To increase the visibility of COST in the scientific community, in the user community, among politicians and decision makers presenting COST potentialities and success stories.
5. To strengthen the synergy with other intergovernmental networks, in particular with EUREKA, and with standardization bodies.
6. To implement the COST strategy to increase the role of COST as an active partner in the European “neighbourhood” policy towards the scientific communities of the EU’s “near neighbours” and as an asset for the EU RDT policy in its relation to the rest of the world.
7. To implement the COST strategy for an increased involvement of researchers early in their careers in the frame of COST co-operation.

Professor Dr. Ing. Francesco Fedi
President COST Committee of Senior

Officials

21/03/07 – FRANCESCO FEDI CONFIRMED PRESIDENT OF COST FOR THE NEXT TRIENNIUM

On 21 March 2007 the representatives of the 35 COST countries, during the meeting of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) convened in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, re-elected Professor Francesco Fedi as President of COST for the next triennium. The Italian Ministry of Universities and Research was encouraged to present the candidature of Professor Fedi by the many delegations of the COST CSO who had expressed the view that a continuity in the COST CSO Presidency was indeed necessary in this delicate moment for COST, had stated an open appreciation for the outstanding results obtained by Professor Fedi during his Presidency and for his efforts to make COST a very effective instrument in the ERA and had announced their support when in the latest CSO meeting they had "indicated that they would be favourably disposed towards a re-election of the President-in-office, were he willing to continue".

Following his election as President of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of COST, Professor Francesco Fedi has released a statement on the following main objectives which he has proposed for his period of office 2007-2010:

8. To consolidate and monitor the considerable number of reforms introduced in COST in the past three years.
9. To consolidate the relationship and to strengthen the ties with the European Commission (EC) and with the European Science Foundation (ESF), with particular attention to the EC-ESF contract for COST.
10. To maintain and increase the role of COST as a unique instrument in the European Research Area and its complementarity with the EU Seventh Framework Programme.
11. To increase the visibility of COST in the scientific community, in the user community, among politicians and decision makers presenting COST potentialities and success stories.
12. To strengthen the synergy with other intergovernmental networks, in particular with EUREKA, and with standardization bodies.
13. To implement the COST strategy to increase the role of COST as an active partner in the European "neighbourhood" policy towards the scientific communities of the EU's "near neighbours" and as an asset for the EU RDT policy in its relation to the rest of the world.
14. To implement the COST strategy for an increased involvement of researchers early in their careers in the frame of COST co-operation.

Professor Francesco Fedi was born in Rome, Italy. He received the Dr. Ing. degree "summa cum laude" from the University of Rome in 1963 and the Master of Science degree in the USA in 1966 thanks to a Fulbright scholarship. Director of some of the most important research centres in Italy and Professor of radiocommunications at the Universities of Rome and Bologna.. Author of more than 100 scientific papers on radiopropagation and communication systems, he received the "Marconi" prize for his research activities in 1980 and the "Diplôme d'honneur" from the International Radio Consultative Committee "for his outstanding contributions to the progress of telecommunications" in 1989. Chairman of the Working Party on "Radiometeorology" and Vice-Chairman of the Study Group on "Radiowave propagation" of the International Telecommunication Union, during the 1997 "World Radiocommunication Assembly" he was awarded the "Diplôme de reconnaissance" "en témoignage de la contribution apportée aux travaux de l'Union Internationale des Telecommunications". Chairman of the Commission on "Wave Propagation and Remote Sensing" of the International Union of Radio Science from 1981 to 1984 and member of the Scientific Committee on Telecommunications. Active in COST since the very beginning, he was elected Chairman of two of the first COST Actions and has served as Chairman of the COST Technical Committee "Telecommunication Information Science and Technology" from 1998 to 2003. In 2004, with the unanimous support of the representatives of the 35 COST countries, he was elected President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, the highest decision-making body of COST, for the 2004-2007 triennium.

16/03/07 – COST PARTICIPATES IN THE FAREWELL SYMPOSIUM TO PROFESSOR ANDERSSON

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), was invited and participated in the Farewell Symposium to Professor Bertil Andersson “Promoting Excellence in Science: a tribute to Bertil Andersson’s contributions to the European Research Area” organized by the European Science Foundation (ESF) in Strasbourg on 16 March 2007. Professor Andersson, Chief executive Officer of ESF, will leave the ESF at the end of March to take up the appointment as Rector of the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore as of 1 April 2007.

After a welcome address of Professor Ian Halliday, President ESF, Professor Fedi presented “The reform of COST: steps towards excellence”. Other presentations were: *Pär Omling* Excellence in Science; *Martin Reddington* Promotion of excellence through HFSP; *Nick Steneck* Research Integrity as a guarantee for excellence; *Daniel Estève* The ERC: individual excellence at European level; *Peter Schuster* Systems perspectives as motor for excellent new frontier research; *Frank Gannon* EURYI as an instrument to promote young excellence; *Jim Barber* Bertil Andersson’s personal contributions to excellent science; *Bertil Andersson* Perspectives on excellence in science; *Fabienne Keller* Closure of the Symposium.

14/03/07 – COST INFORMATION DAY IN SERBIA

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), participated in the COST INFORMATION DAY in Beograd organized by the Serbian National Coordinator Professor Biljana Stojanovic on 14 March 2007. Professor Fedi was accompanied by Dr. Martin Grabert, Director of the COST Office and by Dr. Kimmo Peippo, Head of the COST Secretariat.

On 13 March Professor Fedi met Dr. Alexandar Popovic, Minister of Science and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia, and visited the Institute Mihailo Pupin, where Professor Sanja Vranes, Scientific Director, illustrated the activities of the Institute.

On 14 March, after the welcome address to an audience, composed of some 200 representatives of the Serbian scientific community, of Minister Popovic and of Professor Branko Kovačević, Rector of the University of Belgrade, Dr. Ivan Videnović, Assistant Minister for International S&T cooperation, illustrated the “International S&T Cooperation in Serbia” and Professor Fedi the “Past, Present and Future of COST”. After the break, Dr. Grabert presented “Open Call and Assessment of Proposals for New Actions and COST Strategy for Neighboring Countries and non-COST Countries”, Dr. Hans Stødkilde-Jørgensen, COST DC BMBS Chair, “Interdisciplinary adding to the COST profile” and Professor Stojanovic the “Serbian COST Experience”.

A session devoted to the presentation by Serbian Scientists of their experience in the participation in COST Actions and to questions and answers with the Serbian scientific community followed.

At the end of the COST INFORMATION DAY Professor Fedi congratulated the organizers for the success of the event and encouraged the Serbian scientific community to maintain and possibly increase the fruitful participation in COST activities.

01/03/07 - COST PRESIDENT MEETS ARMENIAN AMBASSADOR

On 1 March 2007 in Brussels Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior officials (CSO), accompanied by Ms Ulla Mesia of the COST Secretariat, met Dr Viguen Tchitetchian, Ammbassador of the Republic of Armenia and Mr Garegin Melkonyan, Trade Representative of the Republic of Armenia to EU Members States.

Main objective of the meeting was to illustrate the main opportunities of the COST framework for the scientific communities of European neighbouring countries and the ways to increase the participation in COST Actions of Armenian scientists.

A COST Information Day has been planned in May 2007 in Armenia to illustrate COST to the researchers and scientists of the Republic of Armenia.

27/02/07 - THE EC-COST HIGH LEVEL STRATEGIC GROUP MEETS FOR THE SECOND TIME

The new partnership between COST and the European Commission agreed in May 2004 established the set up of a high-level Commission/COST Strategic Group (HLG) which would regularly take stock of the development of the partnership, set out further strategic orientations for the joint work and report on achievements.

The second meeting of the HLG was held in Brussels on 27 February 2007 at the European Commission's SDME building.

Participants from the COST side were: Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST CSO Committee (Member of the Group); Mr. Stefan Cairén, Vice-President of the CSO Committee (Member of the Group); Dr. Jiri Burianek, Director, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU and Dr. Martin Grabert, Director, Director of the COST Office .

Participants from the European Commission side were: Mr. José Manuel Silva Rodríguez, Director General, DG Research (Member of the Group); Ms. Dorianne Givord-Strassel, Assistant to the Director General, DG Research; Mr. Alain Vanvossel, Head of Unit, DG Research, Unit B.2 (Member of the Group); Mr. Markku Warras, Scientific Officer, DG Research, Unit B.2; Mr. Jan-Arne Eilertsen, Scientific Officer, DG Research, Unit B.2.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. José Manuel Silva Rodríguez and by Professor Francesco Fedi. After a welcome address by Mr. Silva Rodríguez, Professor Fedi illustrated the main reforms introduced in COST : governance and reinforcement of the strategic role of the COST CSO, restructuring of the COST Scientific Domains, Open Call and guidelines for the assessment, monitoring and final evaluation of COST Actions, strengthening of the synergy between COST and the European Science Foundation.

The meeting continued examining the future of COST and its position in the ERA. Particular attention was given to the position of exploratorium of COST in the most advanced frontiers of science; to the role of COST towards the newly acquired countries in the European Union, the European neighbouring countries and, in general, towards the rest of the world; to the possible contribution of COST to the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives.

At the end of the meeting Mr Rodriguez congratulated Professor Fedi for the important achievements obtained by COST in the last three years and Professor Fedi thanked the European Commission for the constant support received during his Presidency.

17/02/07 - COST IN SEVILLA

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), met Mr Peter Kind, Director of the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS), and his collaborators in the IPTS premises in Sevilla on 12 February 2007. IPTS, one of the Institutes of the EC Joint Research Centre, provides customer-driven support to the EU policy-making process by researching science-based responses to policy challenges that have both a socio-economic as well as a scientific/technological dimension. The purpose of the meeting was to investigate about a potential involvement of IPTS in the Study of potential impact of COST and in the Survey of COST Customer Satisfaction.

On 13 and in the morning of 14 February Professor Fedi chaired the meeting of the executive Group of the COST CSO, the JAF Group, held in the premises of the “Consejo Superior De Investigaciones Cientificas” (CSIC). Professor Rafael Rodriguez Clemente, General Coordinator of CSIC in Andalusia, welcomed the participants. Main purpose of the meeting was the revision of the COST Guidelines for the Assessment of new proposals for COST Actions, the monitoring of Actions in progress, the final evaluation of completed Actions and the dissemination and exploitation of COST results.

On 14 February afternoon Professor Fedi chaired the joint meeting of JAF members with the Chairs of the COST Domain Committees convened to examine the problems connected with the quality control of COST Actions and the strenghtening of the synergy between COST and the European Science Foundation.

16/02/07 – STRENGTHENING THE COST AND ESF SYNERGY: “COST-ESF FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE” AND “COST-ESF SCIENCE DAYS”.

With the objective of strengthening the COST and ESF synergy, a meeting between the Chairs of the COST Domain Committees and the Chairs of the ESF Scientific Committees was held in Sevilla on 15 February 2007. The meeting was organized and chaired by Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), and by Professor Bertil Andersson, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the ESF. It was also attended by Professor Ian Halliday, ESF President, by Dr Martin Grabert, Director COST Office, by Dr John Marks, future CEO of ESF and by members of JAF, the executive Group of COST CSO.

The event was opened by a series of introductory presentations: “Reinforcing the COST –ESF Synergy: MoU and Agreements” (by F. Fedi); “ESF-COST synergy: COST Domain Committees and ESF Scientific Committees” (by B. Andersson); “The need for forward looks in Europe: the role of ESF and COST” (by I. Halliday); “COST: Basic facts” (by M. Grabert); “ESF: Basic facts” (by J. Marks).

The meeting continued as a team-building exercise and was conducted in that spirit. It was a meeting for generative input on topics and actions that both organisations could take on board in a synergistic manner.

The sessions were intended to set the scene for structured discussions on joint possible initiatives between the Committees along four major interdisciplinary lines: “Societies of tomorrow” (coordinated by G. Semin and C. Godwin); “Global environment and sustainability” (coordinated by S. Joffre); “Medical and Life Science Research in the Post Genome Era” (coordinated by H. Stødkilde-Jørgensen); “Science and technology : the basis for the innovations of tomorrow” (coordinated by G. Brussaard and M. Maréschal).

The discussion covered exciting new scientific challenges where the ESF and COST instruments could be used to enhance European research potential and where cooperation between the two organisations would be crucial with particular attention to the new initiatives: the “COST-ESF Scientific Days” as well as the “COST-ESF Frontiers of Science”.

It was agreed that “Frontiers of Science” should be more oriented toward the scientific community and explore future needs in research, societies and politics and should be organised in a flexible format, potentially based on ESF Forward Looks and COST Strategic Workshops. As an interdisciplinary science initiative these activities could provide some funding for a preparatory activity leading to a major conference and succeeded by a follow-up phase to implement and put into action their findings.

The “Science Days” are supposed to present results of research activities of both organizations to a general public. Certainly these events involving media, opinion

leaders, politicians and laymen require a long lead time and should cover topics of particular interest to the public. The format of these events should be optimal with respect to the topics, location, invitees, presenters, and involved actors from other parties.

In the concluding session, coordinated by F. Fedi and B. Andersson, the discussions were summarised to “take home messages”, next steps were decided, and possible topics for Frontiers of Science and Science Days were identified.

07/02/07 - COST AND CANADA

A high level delegation of 32 participants from Canada attended the EU Science & Technology workshop "*Canada – Europe: Partners in the world*" that was organised in Brussels in the premises of the Mission of Canada to the European Union on February 5-6, 2007. The aim of this workshop was to inform about the 7th Framework Programme and recent developments in the European Research Area (ERA)

The COST Office Director Martin Grabert presented COST and the possibilities of cooperation with Canadian researchers in COST Actions. The discussion showed a lively interest for intensifying networking activities within COST. The visit of the President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) two years ago and of the CEO of the European Science Foundation (ESF) last autumn increased awareness to an extent that the Canadian government is preparing for new approaches to foster the Canadian participation in COST.

Only recently the Canada-Europe Liaison office was inaugurated as part of the joint initiative called "ERA-Can". ERA-Can is a collaborative, international initiative, which is jointly funded by the European Commission and Canada and aims to increase the quality, quantity, profile and impact of S&T cooperation between Canada & the ERA. There is untapped potential for Canadian integration to the ERA, and for European involvement in Canadian S&T. The director of ERA-Can, Dr. Janet Panford, presented this new initiative and concluded that COST is a great opportunity for Canadian researchers to participate in European Research networks.

Currently the COST Office receives an increasing number of requests from non-COST countries on fostering the respective networking activities based on reciprocal agreements. The first pilot agreements with Australia and New Zealand were endorsed by the COST CSO. These agreements are presently under preparation and expected to become effective with the new fiscal year in the two countries. They will, trialling for an initial period of two years, establish a basis for the COST Office to provide support to scientists from Australia and New Zealand for the participation in COST Action activities and vice versa. It is expected that in the future COST will strongly support these bilateral agreements in the context of COST Actions. The President of the COST CSO, Professor Fedi, noted that "COST is an attractive instrument to foster scientific interactions with many non-European countries and we should make best use of these opportunities." And Dr. Grabert added "It would be very supportive for many COST Actions with Canadian participations if a reciprocal agreement with Canada through ERA-Can could be found".

05/01/07 - A SUCCESS FOR COST OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE: THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OBTAINED IN THE SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME.

The Official Journal of the European Union of 30 December 2006 volume L 400, reported that on 19 December 2006 the Council of the European Union adopted a Decision concerning the Specific Programme "Cooperation" implementing the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community. The Decision stated that of the total "Cooperation budget" of 32413 EUR million at least EUR 210 million and up to EUR 250 million should be attributed to COST, subject to the mid-term evaluation. This financial support will be provided through a grant which will be paid on the basis of a grant agreement between the Commission and a legal entity designated by COST as its implementing agent and communicated to the Commission by the General Secretariat of the Council and identified in the Work Programme..

" The increase of between 50% and possibly more than 78% of the financial support to COST with respect to the Sixth Framework Programme is a reward of paramount importance for the entire COST family." commented Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials. "For the members of the COST Committee of Senior Officials whose dedication and sense of ownership made it possible to introduce a number of reforms which are real milestones in the history of COST. For the Chairs and members of the newly appointed scientific COST Domain Committees, nominated among the most outstanding European scientists. For the participants in the COST Actions, the real " raison d'être" of COST and, in general, for the entire European scientific community which presenting more than 800 proposals as the response to the COST Call for the selection of some 40 new Actions confirmed all the vitality of the COST framework. For the COST Office established by the European Science Foundation in Brussels acting as COST implementing agent. For the COST Secretariat provided, since the very beginning of COST, by the General Secretariat of the EU Council" .

" I wish also to express the gratitude of the entire COST family" continued Professor Fedi" to the members of the European Parliament who confirmed the interest in COST emerged in the COST exhibition in the Parliament held in April 2006, to the European Commission and " dulcis in fundo" to the Council of the European Union and, in particular, to the members of its Research Working Party which gave this strong support to COST".