European Cooperation in Science and Technology - COST -

Secretariat

Brussels, 14 March 2011

COST 4110/11

DRAFT SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Subject : 181st meeting of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) held in Brussels on 16 - 17 February 2011

The CSO President opened the meeting and welcomed the participants[1], recalling that part of the meeting (items 6 and 7) would be dedicated to a joint session with the Chairs of the COST Domain Committees.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in CM 1341/11[2] dated 25 January 2011.

2. Approval of Summary of Conclusions of the previous meetings

The Committee approved the Summary of Conclusions of the previous meeting held on 1 - 2 December 2010 as set out in doc. COST 4101/11.

[1] List of participants in Annex I.
[2] Agenda items in Annex II.

As regards the minutes the SE delegate referred to the intention to hold only 2 CSO meetings per year in the future, as announced by the President at the previous meeting. He stressed that consequences of such a decision should be carefully considered, e.g. the need to delegate more tasks to JAF. He recalled that JAF in the past was open to all delegations and wondered, if the Group in its current format would be sufficiently representative to take more decisions on behalf of the CSO. The intervention was supported by DK and PL delegates.

3. Information from

- CSO President

= The President introduced the new COST Office Director, Dr Monica DIETL BERNHARDT, who will take up her function on 1 April 2011.

= The President informed the Committee that on 9 February 2011 the Commission had presented a Green Paper on "From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding"[3]. The paper had launched a wide public consultation that would close on 20 May 2011.

The Committee agreed to the President's proposal to set up an ad hoc Working Group to prepare a "COST Statement". The Group would be composed of CSO President, CSO members[4] to be appointed by the CSO President and supported by the COST Office and the COST Secretariat. The WG would work through electronic means and all CSO delegations would be invited to contribute to the work. The aim would be to approve the COST Statement through written procedure already before the next CSO meeting on 17 - 18 May 2011.

[3] Website: http://ec.europa.eu/research/csfri/index_en.cfm

[4] *After meeting note*: The President asked by e-mail for volunteers from the CSO to participate in this WG. Mr Raimo Pulkkinen (FI) and Marion Wolpers (DE) have been appointed as members of the WG.

- Delegations

  None.

- COST Office

  None.

- COST Secretariat

  = The Committee was informed of the changes in the Council Secretariat (DGC II 2B). As from January 2011 Ms Ulla MESIÄ has been designated to replace the former Head of COST Secretariat, Dr Kimmo PEIPPO. The President, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Dr Peippo for his valuable contribution to COST and wished him best of success in his future functions at the Council Secretariat.

  = The Secretariat recalled that decisions taken by the JAF Group at its meeting on 19 - 20 January 2011 on requests for participation of institutions from non-COST countries had been made available to CSO in doc. COST 4104/11.

- Commission

  The Committee was informed of the reorganisation within the Commission. In DG Research & Innovation, as from 1 January 2011, COST matters have been assigned to Unit B4 (Joint Programming). However, Mr Markku WARRAS (Unit C5) will continue to represent the Commission services at the CSO and JAF.

4. COST-ESF Relationship

The President informed the Committee that the COST-ESF High Level Group had met in Brussels on 7 February 2011. The meeting had focused on the next amendment to the COST Grant Agreement, the appointment of the new COST Office Director and the draft outline of a roadmap towards a smooth transition towards an "autonomous" COST Office after FP7.

The Committee agreed to the proposal by the COST-ESF High Level Group to set up a Working Group with the following mandate:

- to examine in detail and prepare for the financial management of COST towards end of the FP7 agreement,
- to produce a roadmap towards an autonomous COST Office after the end of the FP7 and a smooth transition to any new arrangement in an orderly manner as of 1 January 2014.

The WG would comprise the COST Office and ESF representatives as required, as well as the CSO President or a member of the CSO[5] appointed by the CSO President. The Commission would be invited to attend as an observer. The EL delegate underlined the need to separate between issues to be discussed with the ESF, and those where decisions are to be taken by the CSO (such as the implementing agent for COST in the next FP).

The Commission representative noted that the ESF had proposed a meeting to the Commission services to discuss the financial management as soon as possible, but that in the Commission's view such a meeting would be more relevant and timely once the decision on the possible additional funding for COST from the FP7 would be made. During the exchange of views several delegations highlighted the urgency of such discussions as soon as possible for the appropriate planning of COST activities.

[5] *After meeting note:* Ms Lieve Van Daele (BE) and Dr Carlo Duprel (LU) have been appointed as CSO representatives to the WG (attendance depending on the subject).

5. Financial information: summary of expenses and budget planning for 2011

The COST Office gave a presentation regarding the COST budget overview 2007 - 2014[6]. It was noted that up to 30 new Actions from the next Collection date (25 March 2011) could be funded within the budget. However, since the decision regarding possible additional funding (up to 40 M€) for COST from FP7 is not yet known, several scenarios for the coming years still need to be considered in parallel. The COST Office responded to several questions raised by delegations regarding the transition from FP7 to the next Framework Programme, noting that new Actions continue to present a 4-year plan for their activities.

The Committee was informed that if there would be an increase to the COST funding and this decision would be communicated to COST/ESF shortly, this could be taken into account in the next annual amendment to the Grant Agreement (to enter into force on 2 June 2011), else a further amendment could be foreseen later in 2011.

6. Shaping COST for the future: COST Vision 2020

The President welcomed the DC Chairs to the meeting (see participants list in Annex I).
The President presented a draft statement on COST mission that had been prepared by a drafting group composed by CSO President, Dr Klaper (CH), Dr Duprel (LU) and Dr Haury (COST Office). During the discussion it was clarified that the statement could be considered as a first step towards a wider COST strategic plan "Shaping COST for the future". While the statement should build on "The Role of COST in the ERA 2020"[7] it was noted that new developments, such as the Innovation Union Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative should be taken into account in this context.

The President concluded that the draft statement, with some amendments, would be sent to delegations for their comments, with a view to the next CSO meeting.

[6] The presentation is available on the CSO website.
[7] Doc. COST 252/09.

7. Joint session with the DC Chairs

The Committee was divided into three Groups with 3 DC Chairs in each. Each Group was chaired by a CSO member and supported by representatives from the COST Office. The key questions and principles to guide the discussion had been set out in a note from the President that had been sent to all participants on 1 February 2011.

- Follow-up and Conclusions

The Chairs of the three break-out sessions, Dr DUPREL (LU), Dr KLAPER (CH), Dr PRISTOVŠEK (SI), presented the outcome of the discussions in each group[8], followed by interventions by the DC Chairs and delegations. Participants observed that discussions in small groups had been an excellent way to work and estimated that the discussions had been constructive and highly useful. The President thanked the Chairs and the delegates for their active participation and noted that a long list of items had been identified for a follow-up (see also item 10).

8. COST Fund

(a) Statement of revenue and expenditure as at the end of the financial year 2010

The Secretariat presented the Statement of revenue and expenditure for 2010 as set out in doc. COST 4102/11. The audit of the COST Fund had been carried out on 18 January 2011 by the two auditors appointed by the CSO: Eva KLAPER (CH) and Lieve VAN DAELE (BE).

The Committee took note of the oral report of the auditors and endorsed their recommendation to give discharge to the Secretariat for the financial year 2010.

[8] The reports have been made available to participants after the meeting.

(b) Estimates of expenditure and revenue for the financial year 2011

The Committee approved the draft estimates of expenditure and revenue for the financial year 2011 as set out in doc. COST 4102/11, p.3.

(c) Designation of auditors for the COST Fund for 2011

The Committee noted that the current auditors, Eva KLAPER (CH) and Lieve VAN DAELE (BE), had announced to be available to continue as auditors of the COST Fund in 2011. The Committee thanked both delegates, and confirmed their appointment to this task for the financial year 2011.

9. Proposal for further streamlining of procedures regarding the Memoranda for COST Actions

The Committee approved the proposal for further streamlining of procedures regarding the Memoranda for COST Actions as set out in doc. COST 4105/11. It was agreed that the new procedure would be effective as from the availability of the on-line tool, prior to which delegations would receive practical information from the COST Office regarding the tool. Furthermore, the Committee agreed that relevant parts of doc. COST 4159/10 "Rules and Procedures for implementing COST Actions" will be updated accordingly.

10. Proposal for adjustments to the COST Guidelines (doc. COST 4115/10)

The Committee approved in principle the proposal for adjustments to the "Guidelines for Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions" (doc. 4115/10) as set out in the note dated 2 February 2011. The Committee asked the COST Office to consult the DC Chairs on these changes with a short deadline for comments where after the Secretariat would issue revised versions of the documents[9] to be approved through written procedure. The new slightly amended Guidelines would apply as from the Collection date of 25 March 2011.

[9] Following the exchange of views with the DC Chairs (item 7), some amendments to the "Guidelines for the organisation of the Annual Progress Conference (APC)" (doc. COST 4116/10) will also be presented for CSO approval.

In this context the PL delegate referred to the document "A Guide for drafting the Technical Annex describing a COST Action" by Dr Mustelin (a former CSO member from Finland) and suggested that an update of such a document could still be useful for the proponents.

11. CSO decision on COST BM0906

The COST Office gave a presentation on the background of the reasons that had led to the current situation, where the Management Committee of COST BM0906 had voted in favour of terminating the Action. In accordance with the "Rules and Procedures for implementing COST Actions" (doc. COST 4159/10), and following the MC vote, the Committee decided that this Action would be terminated. It was proposed that the MC members could be contacted by the CNC, if they wish, to further explain the circumstances.

12. COST International cooperation

Ms Ward (IE), the Chair of the WG on International Cooperation gave a situation report[10] to the Committee asking for further guidance for the continuation of the work. The Committee had a brief exchange of views on questions related to full membership in COST and other possible forms of cooperation. The budgetary implications of non-COST participation and the need to discuss the overall strategy on international cooperation was raised.

The President concluded that COST International cooperation would be discussed at the next CSO meeting. It was recalled that JAF had invited the COST Office to present evaluation of the reciprocal agreements and other specific schemes (such as Near Neighbours) to the CSO. In order to prepare for the discussion, this evaluation, a background document and a set of questions would be prepared and sent to delegations in advance. The inclusion of this point in the agenda of the May or December CSO meeting will depend on the availability of such documentation.

[10] The presentation is available on the CSO website.

In this context the Committee was informed that a seminar on International Cooperation has been scheduled for 7 April 2011 at the COST Office, with Ms Sieglinde GRUBER from the International Cooperation Directorate of the Commission services in DG Research & Innovation as keynote speaker.

13. (a) Future CSO and JAF meetings

The Committee took note of the dates for the next CSO and JAF meetings as set out in doc. COST 4214/10. The Turkish delegate informed the Committee of the arrangements for the CSO meeting that is scheduled for 17 - 18 May 2011 in Istanbul. It was agreed that the Secretariat would circulate a tentative agenda as soon as possible, to allow delegations to start making their travel arrangements.

The Irish delegate informed the Committee of their willingness to host a CSO meeting in Dublin on 29 - 30 May 2012 (formal invitation letter will follow).

(b) COST Visibility 2011: events calendar

The COST Office presented an overview of activities related to the "Year of Visibility 2011"[11]. The Committee was informed that MEP Pilar del Castillo (ES) has agreed to host a COST exhibition at the European Parliament on 17 - 21 October 2011. The opening session will take place on 18 October, with keynote speakers still to be confirmed.

[11] See also doc. COST 4213/10 approved by the CSO on 1-2 December 2010.

(c) COST Seminars, COST Office activities and future events

The COST Office presented an updated note[12] on COST Seminars, COST Office activities and future events. The Committee's attention was drawn, in particular, to:

- COST Office Seminar on Research Integrity held on 18 January 2011[13], and
- the 1st European Gender Summit, to be co-organised by the ESF, COST and the FP7 Science in Society funded genSET project on 8 – 9 November 2011.

14. Any other business

- The CH delegate suggested that the COST Office could prepare a questionnaire to be sent to COST grant holders to assess their satisfaction with the Grant system. The President concluded by inviting the COST Office to prepare a set of questions to be first circulated to CNCs for their comments and subsequently sent to grant holders.

- The President had launched a consultation among the COST National Coordinators (CNC) within the working frame "Shaping COST for the future", asking CNCs for their contribution describing: a) his/her role/tasks as CNC; b) current procedures for nominations to the MC; and any comments/suggestions for improvement. A specific meeting between the CNCs and the COST Office, chaired by the COST Vice-President Dr PRISTOVŠEK, would take place during the month of March and its results would be reported to the next CSO meeting in May.

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[12] The note is available on the website.
[13] See website: http://www.cost.esf.org/events/integrity

ANNEX I

List of participants

PRESIDENT	:	Ms Ángeles RODRIGUEZ PEÑA
VICE-PRESIDENT	:	Mr Primož PRISTOVŠEK
AUSTRIA (AT)	:	*regrets*
BELGIUM (BE)	:	Ms Lieve VAN DAELE
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BA)	:	*regrets*
BULGARIA (BG)	:	*regrets*
CROATIA (HR)	:	Mr Damir JELICIC
CYPRUS (CY)	:	Ms Constantina MAKRI
CZECH REPUBLIC (CZ)	:	Mr Jaroslav CIHLAR Mr Josef JANDA
DENMARK (DK)	:	Ms Gorm BRAMSNAES
ESTONIA (EE)	:	Ms Ülle MUST
FINLAND (FI)	:	Ms Arja KALLIO Mr Raimo PULKKINEN
fYR of MACEDONIA (MK)	:	-
FRANCE (FR)	:	Ms Michèle BARON Mr Michel GORLICKI
GERMANY (DE)	:	Ms Marion WOLPERS
GREECE (EL)	:	Mr John BARTZIS
HUNGARY (HU)	:	Ms Orsolya TOTH

ICELAND (IS)	:	Ms Ásgerður KJARTANSDÓTTIR
IRELAND (IE)	:	Ms Rita WARD
ISRAEL (IL)	:	-
ITALY (IT)	:	Ms Giulia ROTUNDO Ms Maria UCCELLATORE
LATVIA (LV)	:	*regrets*
LITHUANIA (LT)	:	Mr Audrius ZVIKAS
LUXEMBOURG (LU)	:	Mr Carlo DUPREL
MALTA (MT)	:	*regrets*
NETHERLANDS (NL)	:	*regrets*
NORWAY (NO)	:	Ms Trude DYPVIK
POLAND (PL)	:	Mr Marek ZDANOWSKI
PORTUGAL (PO)	:	Ms Fernanda SOUTO-SEPULVEDA
ROMANIA (RO)	:	*regrets*
SERBIA (RS)	:	Ms Biljana STOJANOVIC
SLOVAKIA (SK)	:	*regrets*
SLOVENIA (SI)	:	Ms Dagmar SZILAGYI
SPAIN (ES)	:	Ms Maria MAZON
SWEDEN (SE)	:	Mr Stefan CAIREN
SWITZERLAND (CH)	:	Ms Eva KLAPER
TURKEY (TR)	:	Mr Omer CEBECI
UNITED KINGDOM (UK)	:	Mr Chris REILLY

COMMISSION, **DG Research & Innovation**	:	Mr Markku WARRAS
COST OFFICE	:	Mr Matthias HAURY Ms Inge DE PRINS Ms Ursula CASTRO
COUNCIL SECRETARIAT	:	Ms Ulla MESIÄ Ms Laurence VANHULLE

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Other participants:

Dr Monica Dietl Bernhardt, CNRS

DC Chairs (items 6 and 7)

BMBS	Roland POCHET
CMST	Dieter SCHINZER
ESSEM	Ipek ERZI
FA	Javier PUEYO
FPS	Sjur BAARDSEN
ISCH	Marc CABALL
ICT	Soulla LOUCA
	Dina SIMUNIC (Vice-Chair)
MPNS	Zsolt KAJCSOS (Vice-Chair)
TUD	Cristina PRONELLO
COST Office	Carine PETIT
COST Office	Julia STAMM
COST Office	Magdalena RADWANSKA

ANNEX II

Agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Approval of Summary of Conclusions of the previous meeting

Information items

3. Information from
   - CSO President
     = COST Position regarding future FP
   - Delegations
   - COST Office
   - COST Secretariat
   - Commission
4. COST-ESF Relationship
5. Financial information: summary of expenses and budget planning for 2011
6. Shaping COST for the future: COST Vision 2020
7. Joint session with the DC Chairs

Items for approval

7*bis*. Follow-up and Conclusions of item 7

8. COST Fund
   (a) Statement of revenue and expenditure for 2010
   (b) Draft estimates for 2011
   (c) Designation of auditors for the COST Fund for 2011

9. Proposal for further streamlining of procedures regarding the Memoranda for COST Actions

10. Proposal for adjustments to the COST Guidelines (doc. COST 4115/10)

11. CSO decision on COST BM0906

Items for discussion

12. COST International cooperation: Status report
13. (a) Future CSO and JAF meetings
    (b) COST Visibility 2011: events calendar
    (c) COST Seminars, COST Office activities and future events
14. Any other business