



**European Cooperation
in Science and Technology
- COST -**

Brussels, 29 May 2013

Secretariat

COST 4111/13

NOTE

From:	JAF Group
To :	COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)
Subject :	Plan for the Strategic Activities 2012-2014

Delegations will find attached the document: "Plan for the Strategic Activities 2012-2014" approved by the CSO at its meeting on 15-16 May 2013¹.

¹ This document replaces the previous version set out in COST 4107/12.

Plan for the Strategic Activities 2012-2014

General Considerations

In the context of EU2020, the Innovation Union goals and the Horizon 2020 proposal, and in line with the “COST Strategy” (COST 4157/11) for “Shaping COST for the Future” this document aims to establish a transparent and balanced use of the so-called “strategic budget”. It takes into account and replaces the “COST Workshops, COST/ESF High Level Research Conferences and COST Strategic Scientific Initiatives” (COST 4171/10) and provides a plan to decide on strategic activities, including conferences, meetings and events.

Two categories of strategic activities must be envisaged, each with adapted levels of decision-making: Science & Technology-driven and Policy-driven Strategic activities.

1. Science & Technology-driven Strategic Activities

Science & Technology-driven Strategic Activities serve the dissemination of COST activities and outcomes, prepare the ground for future Science & Technology (S&T) developments and/or influence science policy.

Scientific communities and science policy stakeholders are the main target audiences of the Science & Technology-driven Strategic Activities.

These activities will be initiated by the Domain Committees.

Three categories of proposals can be presented: Transdisciplinary Science & Technology Strategic Events; Domain specific Science & Technology Strategic Events; and Action Showcases.

Transdisciplinary Science & Technology Strategic Events

The objective of these events is to focus on scientific and/or technological development of transdisciplinarity

- fostering the creation of new emergent scientific communities
- stimulating the strategic development of future oriented scientific topics/areas addressing COST strategic priorities.

Domain specific Science & Technology Strategic Events

The objective of these events is to focus on scientific and/or technological novelties

- highlighting under-developed scientific areas
- stimulating strategic development in specific regions in Europe
- generating impact for emerging fields ('weak signals').

Action Showcases

The objective of the Action Showcases is to focus on disseminating Action output with relevant impact on society and stakeholder communities.

2. Policy-driven Strategic Activities

Policy-driven strategic activities aim to give COST the necessary visibility and to reinforce its credibility in the mind of political decision-makers, bridging S&T and policy. Their aim is to maintain and foster the quality image and impact of COST.

Policy-makers are the main target audience of the Policy-driven Strategic Activities.

These activities will be initiated by the COST CSO President or CSO Member and/or the COST Office Director.

Four categories of proposals can be presented: High Level Policy Events, Co-organisation of high visibility, high impact Events and Policy, Society or Science-policy Targeted Days and Targeted Policy-driven Networks.

High-Level Policy Events

The objective of these events is to focus on relevance of COST for the ERA

- highlighting COST's importance as pan-European Science & Technology framework
- substantiating that small ideas can have high impact

Co-organisation of high visibility, high impact Events

The objective of these events is to focus on political and societal outreach

- strengthening the role of COST in a given societal or policy domain
- stimulating the strategic development of future oriented societal challenges

through co-organisation of or participation to high-level political and Science & Technology events

Policy or Society-oriented Targeted Days

The objective of these Days is to focus target topics of political, societal or science-policy interest

- strengthening the role of COST in a given societal or policy domain
- stimulating the strategic development of future oriented societal challenges

Targeted Policy-driven Networks

The objective is to use the COST networking instrument², for targeting specific policy priorities in order to:

- strengthen the role of COST in a given policy domain
- stimulate the strategic development of future oriented societal challenges
- contribute to EU2020 political goals

Reserve Budget for ad hoc initiatives

COST may not anticipate all opportunities, therefore a small budget reserve will allow for ad hoc initiatives or specific agreements as appropriate. Such proposal may come from JAF or CSO and/or COST Office Director; this last must be consulted for advice and approval, for budgetary and organisational reasons.

² With COST networking instrument is meant "COST Action" to be understood that in the implementation of the Targeted Networks the COST rules will apply (i.e. networking tools, reimbursement rules, etc)

Annex 1: Selection and approval procedure for Strategic Activities

General criteria and recommendations

General criteria: Rationale, state of play, scientific pertinence

Recommendations: Widening to all regions, Young Career Investigators/Early Stage Researchers (YCI/ESR) and consolidation of independent researchers, as well as gender balance should be encouraged. HoSO³/SOs⁴ may propose COST representatives to engage in the Organising Committee of an event in order to shape the content and ensure adequate COST visibility (and as appropriate following Advisory Board recommendations).

Note: COST Office reserves the right to select the final dates and location for the conference.

Selection and approval procedure for Transdisciplinary Science & Technology Strategic Events and Domain specific Science & Technology Strategic Events

DC Chairs submit a proposal (using the Application Template for COST Strategic Events) to HoSO →

HoSO consults **SOs and HCC**⁵ (internal consultation) and in parallel **Advisory Board** (where COST Office deems appropriate) (external consultation) [max 15 working days] →

HoSO summarises the results of the internal and external consultations and sends the summary together with the proposal to the COST Office Director and CSO President. HoSO can recommend to send a proposal to an external Advisory Board⁶ [max 10 working days] →

COST Office Director and **CSO Presidency** approve the event by e-mail [max 3 working days].

In case the event is not immediately approved, but needs further clarifications, CSO Presidency lists open questions to COST Office Director; the HoSO informs proposers and indicates a date for resubmission to the HoSO.

Simplified Selection and approval procedure for Action Showcases

Proposals are not sent to the CSO Presidency, nor to external experts, but evaluated and approved by the COST Office Director.

DC Chairs submit a proposal (using the Application Template for COST Strategic Events) to HoSO →

HoSO consults **SOs and C&C** [max 15 working days] →

HoSO summarises the results of the internal consultation and sends the summary together with the proposal to the COST Office Director [max 10 working days] →

COST Office Director approves the event by e-mail [max 3 working days].

In case the event is not immediately approved, COST Office Director lists open questions to applicants directly, HoSO in copy + indicates a date for resubmission to the HoSO.

³ Head of Science Operations (HoSO)

⁴ Science Officers (SOs)

⁵ Head of Conferences & Communications (HCC)

⁶ Advisory Board – a stable interdisciplinary board of 3 appointed external experts and when appropriate EC officers, whose opinions aim to improve/ enrich the proposals.

Selection and approval procedure for Policy-driven Strategic Activities

CSO Presidency or CSO Member and/or the COST Office Director submit a proposal to JAF or CSO, on specific strategic activities to highlight policy relevance against COST priorities important for the scientific and technological developments in COST Countries or for other stakeholders.

COST Office Director consults HoSO and/or Head of Communications & Conferences and validates the event and dates by email.

The JAF and the CSO are informed.

Specific procedure for Targeted Networks

After JAF identifies the topic, JAF assesses the short description of the Targeted Network proposal (aim, objectives and workplan). Upon JAF approval of the outline, the draft MoU⁷ of the Targeted Networks are prepared and submitted to independent policy experts for recommendations aiming to improve/enrich the draft MoU.

CSO approves the MoU of the Targeted Networks.

⁷ Memorandum of Understanding

Annex 2: Practicalities for the implementation of Strategic Activities 2012-2014

The Plan for Strategic Activities 2012-2014 will be supported by a strategic budget line of around 1.5 million EUR per annum.

1. Science & Technology-driven Strategic Activities

Transdisciplinary Science & Technology Strategic Events

- **Initiated by:** at least three Domain Committees or at least three Actions from three different Domains, joint proposal.
- **Deliverables:** a final report (for internal use and to be presented to the CSO) and/or proceedings (disseminated widely)
- **Outcome:** a final report and/or proceedings, roadmap, policy paper, policy impact etc.
- **Number of events:** ~ 3 per year
- **Indicative Budget:** 80-100 kEUR/event. Limit total reimbursement of travel expenses to 600 EUR for European participants and 1200 EUR for overseas participants.
- **Organising Committee:** 3 representatives nominated (1 per each Domain) + one Science Officer to overlook the scientific quality + Conference Officer to advise on practical aspects and manage the event, total number including chairs should not exceed 5 persons. A CNC to act as observer.
- **Lead time⁸:** 12-18 months
- **Similar to:** former *Exploratory Workshops, Strategic Workshops, COST-ESF events, Interdisciplinary Science Initiatives*

Indication:

- **Duration:** typically 3 days (4 nights)
- **Participants:** 60 to 75 reimbursed participants in total, including from 50 to 65 invitees and 10 to 25 slots open for application.
- **Format:** plenary → breakout → plenary
- **Location:** preferentially within 1 hour from a national airport, not in city centres

Domain specific Science & Technology Strategic Events

- **Initiated by:** individual Domain Committees.
- **Deliverables:** a final report (for internal use and to be presented to the CSO) and/or proceedings (disseminated widely)
- **Outcome:** a final report and/or proceedings, roadmap, policy paper and expected impact on policy
- **Number of events:** 4 per year
- **Indicative Budget:** 35-50 kEUR/event. Limit total participant reimbursement to 600 EUR for European participants and 1200 EUR for overseas participants.

⁸ Meaning from the initiation to the completion of the event

- **Organising Committee:** Maximum 5 persons including Science Officer plus Conference Officer. A CNC member to act as observer.
- **Lead time:** 6-12 months
- **Similar to:** former *Exploratory Workshops*

Indication:

- **Duration:** 2 days (3 nights)
- **Participants, format and possible outcome (in addition to the mandatory deliverables):**
2 options:
 - 40 participants in total; 20 COST ‘insiders’ (Action members, DC members) and 20 external experts, upon invitation only, all reimbursed. Active contribution from all participants, working in 3-4 breakout groups. Outcome: Policy paper.
 - 80 participants in total; 20 invited & reimbursed speakers and open for application of up to 60 non-reimbursed participants, to be selected by the Organising Committee. Outcome: Position paper/ Recommendation/ State-of-the-art report to DC
- **Location:** central (capitals of COST Countries)

Action Showcases

- **Initiated by:** Each Domain Committee may select up to three successful Actions to be highlighted as COST Success Stories to policy-makers and relevant stakeholders in the scientific community.
- **Number of events:** 9 per year
- **Indicative Budget:** 3-5 kEUR/event. Budget would cover travel reimbursement of participants and hosting 1 coffee break or networking drinks. Limit total participant reimbursement to 600 EUR for European participants and 1200 EUR for overseas participants.
- **Organising Committee:** 1 designated DC member, Science Officer plus Conference Officer (*if needed*). A CNC member to act as observer.
- **Lead time:** 4-6 months (*to fit into the planning of the main event*)
- **Similar to:** former *Exploratory Workshops (in the past: e.g. VIV or EFFOST conference)*

Indication:

- **Duration:** ½ day
- **Participants:** up to 3 Action members, 1 DC as COST ambassador and 1 facilitator
- **Format:** satellite event at the most important international event in the field, Actions grouped thematically and represented either in a block of presentations or in a panel discussion
- **Outcome:** a final report and/or proceedings, roadmap, policy paper and expected impact on policy
- **Location:** if as satellite; depends on the location of the main event

2. Policy-driven Strategic Activities

High-Level Policy Events

- **Initiated by:** COST CSO Presidency or proposed by CSO Members
- **Audience:** addressing high-level political and Science & Technology representatives (EP, Council, EC, etc.)
- **Number of events:** one per year
- **Indicative Budget:** ~ 100 kEUR
- **Lead time:** 18-24 months
- **Similar to:** *EP exhibition*

Co-organisation of high visibility, high impact Events

- **Initiated by:** CSO Presidency or CSO Member/ COST Office Director to establish political links with the organiser.
- **Number of events:** 1-2 per year
- **Indicative Budget:** ~ 50 kEUR in total
- **Lead time:** 18-24 months
- **Similar to:** *Gender Summit, ESOF, COST/ESF High Level Research Conferences*

Policy or Society-oriented Targeted Days

- **Initiated by:** CSO Presidency or CSO Member/ COST Office Director and linked to the priorities of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union
- **Number of events:** 2 per year
- **Indicative Budget:** ~ 100 kEUR in total
- **Lead time:** 18-24 months
- **Similar to:** *some Strategic Workshops (e.g. SKA)*

Targeted Policy-driven Networks

- **Initiated by:** CSO Presidency or CSO Member/ COST Office Director
- **Number of Actions:** 4 per year
- **Indicative Budget:** ~ 510 kEUR in total
- **Follow-up:** Monitored by one or two experts appointed by the CSO
- **Examples:** *JPI, ERC/young investigators, Gender*

Reserve Budget for ad hoc initiatives

200 kEUR/year are reserved for ad hoc initiatives or specific agreements as appropriate.