



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

Brussels, 20 November 2013

Secretariat

COST 4115/13

NOTE

To: COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)

Subject: COST International Cooperation Rules

Delegations will find attached the revised “COST International Cooperation Rules” as approved by the CSO on 13 - 14 November 2013¹. The revision of the document was required mainly due to the termination of the Reciprocal Agreement with Australia.

¹ The initial document COST 4115/13 was approved by the CSO on 15 - 16 May 2013.

COST International Cooperation Rules

The COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) having regard to

COST 4112/13 “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities”

in accordance with its role as main decision-making body of COST,

Whereas:

‘Progress report from the COST WG on Strategy of International Cooperation’ COST 4103/13 which put forward recommendations on international cooperation;

‘Rules and Procedures for implementing COST Actions’ COST 4154/11 details the rules and procedures for implementation of COST Actions;

‘COST Strategy for cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries’ COST 290/09 reviews the policy of international cooperation of 2005 and 2007;

‘COST Strategy for Cooperation with non-COST countries’ COST 222/07 extends the arrangements for Near Neighbour and Balkan countries and recalls previous orientation for Non-COST countries;

‘Strengthening R&D Cooperation with neighbouring countries’ COST 329/05 settles the functioning of the Near Neighbour policy.

has adopted the present “COST International Cooperation Rules” on the 15-16 May 2013. This Decision will enter into force on 1 June 2013.

Subject Matter and Scope

The CSO has approved a series of strategies in an effort to support the involvement of researchers from Near Neighbour and International Partner countries in COST Actions on the basis of mutual benefit.

Beyond COST countries COST allows, once mutual benefit has been ascertained, easy connection of research communities both with COST Near Neighbour Countries and worldwide. COST thus contributes through reliable networks to building trust with partner countries.

This Decision lays down the general rules for COST International Cooperation with the aim to facilitate the implementation of the COST Strategy for cooperation with institutions from Near Neighbour and International Partner countries.

Definitions

For the purpose of this Decision, the following definitions shall apply:

- 1) COST Member Country: means any country that was a founding member of the COST Intergovernmental Framework or joined COST as a full member following the approval of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO).
- 2) COST Cooperating State: means a country that has been approved by the CSO to participate without voting rights in the CSO.
- 3) COST Near Neighbour Countries: mean countries approved by the CSO to benefit from dedicated support for the integration of their scientists in COST activities.
- 4) International Partner Countries: mean all those countries that are neither COST Member Countries, nor Cooperating State nor Near Neighbour Countries.
- 5) EU Agencies: mean any body governed by European public law, with its own legal personality, established in the EU to accomplish specific tasks of a legal, technical and/or scientific nature in a given policy field and to support the EU Member States but distinct from the EU institutions.
- 6) European RTD Organisation: means any intergovernmental scientific research organisation that is responsible for infrastructures and laboratories whose members are countries, and the majority of which are COST Member Countries or Cooperating State.
- 7) International Organisation: means an organisation, other than the European Communities, which has legal personality under international public law, as well as any specialised agency set up by such an international organisation.

- 8) COST Action: means the COST pan-European networking instrument allowing researchers from COST Member Countries and Cooperating State to develop jointly their ideas and new initiatives in a given field or topic of common interest.
- 9) Action Participant: means any researcher who participates actively in a COST Action; this can include researchers from Near Neighbour and International Partner Countries.
- 10) Domain Committee (DC): means the committee composed of scientific and technological experts responsible for a particular research domain appointed by the COST Member Country and Cooperating State.
- 11) Management Committee (MC): means the group of researchers, nominated by the CNC, in charge of the coordination, implementation, and management of an Action's activities as well as supervising the appropriate allocation and use of the COST funding with a view to achieving the Action's scientific and technological objectives.
- 12) MC Observer: means a researcher observing a COST Action's coordination and decision-making process and activities on behalf of his/her institution of affiliation.
- 13) Working Group (WG) Member: means any researcher nominated by the Management Committee to contribute to the achievement of Action objectives.
- 14) Approved Institutions: means institutions located in Near-Neighbour or International Partner Countries which participation to a COST Action has been approved by the Action MC, the relevant Domain Committee and JAF.
- 15) Researcher: means anyone engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems, and in the management of the projects concerned. For the purpose of participating in COST Actions, any individual, independently of his/her affiliation or professional quality shall be considered as researcher.

General Principles for the International Cooperation Rules

COST has always encouraged international cooperation through the participation from Near Neighbour Countries (NNC) and International Partner Countries (IPC) in COST Actions following the bottom-up principle and provided there is mutual benefit.

It has also allowed for the participation of a series of international institutions in COST Actions to foster the dialogue with key actors in the global science and technology scene.

The present rules set the conditions of participation of researchers in COST Actions from NNC, IPC, including Reciprocal Agreement (RA) countries and from Specific Organisations (European Commission, EU Agencies, European RTD Organisations and International Organisations).

1. Conditions for Participation in COST Actions of Countries non-members of COST

Near Neighbour Countries (NNC)²

The rules governing the participation of researchers from NNC in COST Actions are as follows:

- A researcher from NNC can be a COST Action participant in the initial proposal, thus their participation is approved *de facto* when the Action is approved by the CSO, however subject to the consent of the MC once established;
- In cases where a researcher from NNC is not in the initial proposal, it is possible to become a participant of the Action. This participation requires approval by the MC, DC and JAF on a case by case basis following an accelerated written procedure; the JAF may, however, invoke political and other criteria in the approval of a NNC to join a COST Action
- In the final year of a COST Action, no requests from researchers from NNC to join an Action shall be possible;
- The MC may agree to invite as a one-off measure external scientific or technology specialists from NNC to a specific COST Action activity from institutions not approved as a NNC³;

Once approved as COST Action participants, the eligibility for reimbursement of participants from NNC is as follow:

- Researchers from NNC may be invited by the MC to participate in MC meetings as MC Observers (no voting right); up to two researchers per NNC, one per institution, are eligible for reimbursement in the MC of a COST Action; if affiliated to the same institution, only one is eligible for reimbursement;
- Researchers affiliated to approved institutions from NNC can participate in any activities organised in the COST Action;

In order to foster the cooperation between COST Actions and researchers from NNC:

- Training schools may be allowed in NNC on a case by case basis if relevant to the topic of the Action and proved that there is an added value to the COST Action;
- A top-up to the Action budget will be put in place to increase NNC participation.

² COST Near Neighbour Countries: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Russia, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

³ Further information on the limitation can be found in the COST Vademecum.

International Partner Countries (IPC)

The rules governing the participation of researchers from IPC in COST Actions are as follows:

- A researcher from IPC can be a COST Action participant in the initial proposal, thus their participation is approved *de facto* when the Action is approved by the CSO, however, subject to the consent of the MC once established;
- In case where a researcher from IPC is not in the initial proposal, it is possible to become a participant of the Action. This participation requires approval by the MC, DC and JAF on a case by case basis; the JAF may, however, invoke political and other criteria in the approval of a IPC to join a COST Action;
- In the final year of a COST Action, no requests to join an Action shall be possible;
- Researchers affiliated to approved institutions from IPC may be invited by the MC to participate in MC meetings as MC Observers (no voting right); up to two researchers per IPC, one per institution in the MC of a COST Action; if affiliated with the same institution, only one participant is allowed;
- Researchers from IPC can also participate in any activities organised in the COST Action;
- The MC may agree to invite external scientific or technology specialists from IPC to a specific COST Action activity from institutions not approved as a IPC⁴;
- COST Action participants affiliated to an approved institution from IPC are not eligible for reimbursement, unless there are special provisions decided by the CSO;
- Researchers invited as trainers to a COST Action Training School are eligible for reimbursement.

Reciprocal Agreements (RA)

COST aims to reinforce cooperation with interested/targeted partner countries on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit so as to strengthen knowledge share and creation with the science and technology communities beyond the COST Member Countries and Cooperating State. To this end, and on the request of the CSO, the COST Office has signed three Reciprocal Agreements with, New Zealand⁵, South Africa⁶ and Argentina,⁷ that will run until the end of FP7 (June 2014).

⁴ Further information on the limitation can be found in the COST Vademecum.

⁵ New Zealand RA was signed by the Royal Society of New Zealand on 1st July 2009 (after 2 year pilot phase).

⁶ South Africa RA was signed by the European South African Science and Technology Advancement Programme (ESASTAP) on 1st July 2009.

⁷ Argentina pilot RA was signed by the National Direction of International relations of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovative Production (MINCyT) on 1st June 2010 and extended until the end of FP7.

The RA aim to favour the participation of researchers from these countries in COST Actions; the partner countries have a COST dedicated budget to allow their nationally funded researchers participate in COST Action activities; COST engages by funding researchers from COST Member countries participating in the Action to participate in short-term scientific missions (STSMs) to approved institutions in these RA countries.

Reciprocal Agreement countries fall under the category of IPC and the same rules to join a COST Action apply.

- Only participants in COST Actions involving official participation from RA countries are eligible to draw on these funds;
- STSMs can operate under a RA;
- The agreements cover travel and subsistence expenses to and within the host country;
- Specific details per agreement apply. Each of the implementing agents may have specific eligibility criteria and priorities – it is important that applicants check with their implementing agent to understand these eligibility criteria and priorities.

2. Conditions for Participation of Specific Organisations⁸

So as to facilitate the dialogue and transfer of knowledge COST has always fostered the participation of policy makers and other relevant organisations and institutions in the COST Actions.

European Commission and EU Agencies⁹

The general rules governing the participation of European Commission (EC) and EU Agencies are as follows:

- The EC and EU Agencies can propose new Actions if associated with the minimum number (five) of COST Member Countries;
- The EC and EU Agencies can be a COST Action participant in the initial proposal, thus their participation is approved *de facto*; after 12 months of the start of the Action, MC approval is required for participation;

⁸ COST 4112/13 “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities”

⁹ http://europa.eu/about-eu/agencies/index_en.htm

- They can participate in the MC as MC Observer (no voting rights) and as a WG Member, upon MC decision;
- EC and EU Agencies Action participants are not eligible for reimbursement, unless there are special provisions decided by the CSO.

European RTD Organisations¹⁰

- European RTD Organisations can propose new Actions if associated with the minimum number (five) of COST Member Countries;
- European RTD Organisations can participate in a COST Action;
- They can be a COST Action participant in the initial proposal, thus their participation is approved *de facto*; after 12 months of the start of the Action, MC approval is required for participation;
- They can participate in the MC as MC Observers (no voting rights) and as a WG Member, upon MC decision;
- Action Participants from European RTD Organisations are eligible for reimbursement, unless there are special provisions decided by the CSO.

International Organisations

- International Organisations can participate in a COST Action;
- Unless International Organisations are part of the initial proposal (their participation is approved *de facto*, subject to the consent of the MC once established), their approval process requires JAF approval on a case by case basis;
- International Organisations can participate as MC Observers (no voting rights) and as WG Members, upon MC decision;
- Action Participants from International Organisations are not eligible for reimbursement, unless there are special provisions decided by the CSO.

Final Provisions

The present COST International Cooperation Rules are part of the COST set of rules, including the COST Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities and other related documents. The provisions contained herein and therein are directly applicable to all COST Actions and participants.

Any change or derogations to the current Rules are subject to the approval of the CSO.

¹⁰ <http://www.eiroforum.org/about/organisations/index.html>