

Overview of COST News 2008

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

<i>11 December 2008 General</i>	
About COST 2008 Now Available	2
<i>02 December 2008 Fedi</i>	
European Nuclear Medicine and European Surgery show interest in COST	2
<i>04 November 2008 General</i>	
COST Grant Agreement – Revised Version	2
<i>14 October 2008 General, TUD</i>	
COST Postpones Algeria Workshop Due to Floods	3
<i>02 October 2008 General</i>	
COST Office Newsletter No 10 – October 2008	3
<i>26 September 2008 General</i>	
Stakeholders and Researchers Gather to Discuss the Future of Humanities Research in Europe	3
<i>25 July 2008 Fedi</i>	
COST participates in ESOF 2008	4
<i>09 July 2008 General</i>	
COST Office Newsletter No 9 - July 2008.....	5
<i>06 June 2008 Fedi</i>	
Global interest in COST	5
<i>30 May 2008 General</i>	
Early Stage Researchers' Interest in COST.....	7
<i>08 May 2008 General</i>	
Second COST Visit to Albania	8
<i>09 April 2008 General</i>	
COST Office Newsletter No 8 April 2008	9
<i>08 April 2008</i>	
COST Considerations on the Results of the Consultation on the European Commission ERA Green Paper	9
<i>21 March 2008 General</i>	
ESF Launches its First Call for Candidates for the Enhancement of the ESF/COST Information System	10
<i>15 March 2008 Fedi</i>	
Assessment, Monitoring, Final Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions	11
<i>14 March 2008</i>	
Broaden the Scope of your Research	12
<i>08 March 2008 Fedi</i>	
COST Day in Skopje	13
<i>31 January 2008 Fedi</i>	
COST CSO President meets ESF CEO.....	13
<i>10 January 2008 Fedi</i>	
COST and INDIA.....	14

**11 December 2008 | General
About COST 2008 Now Available**

This easy-to-use guide covers the whole of the COST system for research cooperation in Europe.

It includes information about COST governance, contact points and financial instruments plus, most importantly, the COST Actions.

**02 December 2008 | Fedi
European Nuclear Medicine and European Surgery show interest in
COST**

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, represented COST on two prestigious occasions.

Professor Fedi was invited to speak at the Annual Scientific Congress of the European Association of Nuclear Medicine (EANM) held in Munich, Germany, from 11 to 15 October 2008.

Professor Fedi also participated as a speaker in the 12th Annual Conference of the European Society of Surgery on “European Integration for Surgical Know-How” held in Naples, Italy, from 27 to 29 November 2008.

At both conferences Professor Fedi presented “The Experience of COST” describing the main characteristics, results and opportunities of this European network for cooperation in scientific research. “I am certainly delighted” commented Professor Fedi “to see such a strong interest of European Nuclear Medicine and of European Surgery in COST”.

**04 November 2008 | General
COST Grant Agreement – Revised Version**

The revised version of the COST Grant Agreement is now available on the Guidelines page.

The COST Grant agreement is available in the [COST Guidelines page](#). Please note that the model contract for the grant agreement is now available in Section 6.13 Annex 1 of the vademecum.

Following the decision of the CSO taken at its 165th meeting all COST Actions will be operated under the COST Grant System. The transitions of the Actions will follow a transition plan to be implemented before the end 2008.

The aim of the COST Grant System is to provide a flexible way of financing COST Action activities in accordance with the rules for the “Financial Instruments” as laid out in the COST Vademecum.

The COST Grant Agreement is to be signed between the COST Office and the grant holder responsible for the execution of the work plan of the COST Action as agreed by the Action Management Committee and for providing the secretarial support for the COST Action.

The revised version aims to clarify the terms and conditions of the COST Grant Agreement, such as the financing, the payment modalities, the scope and modalities of controls and audits, the confidentiality obligations, the procedure in case of recoveries and penalties, the data protection rules, etc.

The revised COST Grant Agreement takes into account the new requirements of the FP7 grant agreement signed between the European Commission and the ESF as well as the general financial regulations of the European Union.

14 October 2008 / General, TUD **COST Postpones Algeria Workshop Due to Floods**

Due to the heavy floods, COST has had to postpone its transport strategic workshop taking place from 27 to 29 October 2008.

The workshop will be held from **16 to 18 February 2009** instead and take place in Ghardaïa, Algeria.

More information is available on the [event page](#) from the local organisers.

02 October 2008 / General **COST Office Newsletter No 10 – October 2008**

The 10th issue of the COST Office e-newsletter is now available.

Find out about ESOF 2008 success; about the long-lasting results of Short-term Scientific Missions, and many more. Read about Axel Ewald Kranzmann - DC Chair for COST Domain Material, Physical and Nanosciences (MPNS).

26 September 2008 / General **Stakeholders and Researchers Gather to Discuss the Future of Humanities Research in Europe**

Humanities scholars from across Europe will come together at the 4th HERA Conference “European diversities – European identities” in Strasbourg, on 8 and 9 October 2008. They will showcase some of the best collaborative work dealing with identity from different national, ethnic, religious or linguistic angles.

The conference will introduce two new large-scale research programmes on “Cultural Dynamics” and “Creativity and Innovation”. These will be launched early 2009 by the HERA consortium of 13 national funding organisations. The two programmes will address key issues on the past and future of European identities.

The aim of the conference is to demonstrate the best cutting-edge humanities research in Europe and encourage fruitful exchange between researchers and policy-makers as for the best ways of supporting new research. For the first time, major public research funders for Humanities in Europe, including The EC Framework Programme, the European Science Foundation (ESF), COST and HERA, will collaborate to explore these new links.

At a plenary session, early-career researchers will speak about contributing to the new Research Infrastructures, Humanities research and will present their work poster session.

The issues of regional diversities of Europe will be debated in a session on the constituent parts of European identity. Professor Gisli Pálsson, University of Iceland, EUROCORES research programme BOREAS will focus on the circumpolar North and Dr. Thierry Fabre, Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, FP6 Project "Ramses2" will look at the Mediterranean between Europe and the Muslim World and South Eastern Europe (Central European University). In another session, archaeologist Dr. Marie-Louise Stig Sorensen from University of Cambridge (FP7 Project "CRIC") will discuss how identities and cultural heritage are re-constructed after violent conflicts (e.g. Spanish Civil War and the Bosnian War).

Going back in time, the roots of European identities can be linked to the history of migration and co-existence of different cultures. This topic will be further discussed by Professor Walter Pohl, Austrian Academy of Sciences, winner of the prestigious Wittgenstein Prize. His presentation will deal with the formation of ethnic identities in Early Middle Ages: how were new communities formed, how did old communities survive, how were foreign peoples integrated?

Since many of the "priority themes" in our modern-day Europe – be it security or environment – lead to complex research questions that demand an interdisciplinary approach the conference will devote three sessions "On global changes and challenges", where scholars will touch on the "human element" of exploring outer space and the role of ethical values in security studies.

In the session "Environments: Humanities research explores new faces of the environment", Professor J.H.F. Bloemers, Emeritus Professor of Archaeological heritage management at the University of Amsterdam and the Chair of the ESF-COST "Landscape Studies", will talk about the emerging interest in cognition-based approaches to the study of landscapes bringing together the arts (including architecture and urban planning), cultural, social, behavioural and cognitive sciences.

The last two sessions will be devoted to the globalisation of humanities research, where participants will contemplate the future of the humanities research in Europe and in the world.

The upcoming Strasbourg conference will feature seven successive sessions and over thirty speakers – researchers supported by different public research funders for the Humanities in Europe. Other speakers will also include Jean-Michel Baer, Director, Science, economy and society Directorate – DG Research, Prof. Philip Esler, Chief Executive of the Art and Humanities Research Council and the Chair of the HERA Network Board, and Professor Alain Peyraube, CNRS, member of the ERC Scientific Council as well as representatives from COST and ESF.

More information: www.heranet.info

Media contact: Ms. Julia Boman: jboman@esf.org

25 July 2008 | Fedi **COST participates in ESOF 2008**

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), participated in the Euro Science Open Forum (ESOF) held in Barcelona from 18 to 22 July 2008. He was accompanied by Professor John Bartzis, Vice President of the COST CSO, by Dr Martin Grabert, Director of the COST Office, and by Ms Inge De Prins, COST PR and Communications

Manager. The COST Science Officers took care of the interactive COST Exhibition stand, located next to EUREKA and the European Science Foundation, and gave an overview of COST activities to the numerous visitors.

More than 4000 researchers and 400 journalists had registered for this prestigious event. The mission of ESOF2008 was to provide both European and international science communities with an open platform for debate and communication and in doing so influence the future of science in Europe.

COST organised a Scientific Session "Science in the centre between past and future: the challenge of preserving cultural heritage" which considered the fact that heritage tourism contributes more to European GNP and provides employment for more people than the whole automotive sector and that, therefore, conserving artefacts is both culturally essential and an economic imperative.

The Session addressed such questions as: Has this process been seriously impeded by EU funding structures? How can scientists, conservators and curators work together effectively? and How can we train the experts of the future to embrace the multidisciplinary approach required?.

In parallel, COST organised three Early Stage Researchers' Workshops. About 50 COST Early Stage Researchers were given the opportunity to visit ESOF2008 and participate in the public activities including the career programme. The three interdisciplinary workshops were entitled "FAT: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly", "Digital Television: Users, Markets and Policies" and "Decision Analysis for a Better and Safer World"

09 July 2008 | General **COST Office Newsletter No 9 - July 2008**

The 9th issue of the COST Office e-newsletter is now available.

Amongst other news, find out about the reciprocal agreements with Australia and New Zealand, delving deeper into COST's international appeal.

The 9th and other past issues are available on the [newsletter page](#).

06 June 2008 | Fedi **Global interest in COST**

"COST does indeed contribute to increasing cooperation in research on a world basis" commented Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, noting the ever-growing requests received by institutions from non-COST countries to take part in COST Actions.

"One of the key features of COST is its openness towards the rest of the world on the basis of mutual benefit. Institutions from non-COST countries can join an Action 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.

Ms Mary Minch, Director of Directorate D, International Cooperation, at the European Commission's DG Research, stated during a COST Office seminar last week that "COST is a good tool to complement the

European Commission's activities in international cooperation. It helps to lay the foundations for further collaboration within the Framework Programme".

With such light, fast and easily accessible procedures, COST is an important opportunity for cooperation between the scientific communities across the 35 COST countries but also a "bridge" for the scientific communities both in European neighbouring countries and on a worldly basis. More than 190 institutions from non-COST countries are currently participating in COST Actions.

In general, researchers from Institutions in non-COST countries do not receive economic support from COST. However, COST established a particular strategy to encourage Mediterranean, North-African, Balkan and Eastern countries to participate in COST Actions. For each COST Action up to two researchers from each country may be reimbursed for attending the Action meetings. They are eligible for support when participating in other activities decided at the level of individual Actions (short-term scientific missions, training schools and conferences).

In July 2007, two pilot schemes entered into force to support the travel and subsistence costs of Australian and New Zealand researchers participating in COST Actions. These reciprocal agreements were developed in collaboration with the Australian Academy of Science and the Royal Society of New Zealand respectively, and draw on dedicated funds from their respective governments. Within ten months participation from these two countries has more than tripled. "This is proof of the 'easy access' of COST to third countries, and these reciprocal agreements could be a model which could be extended even further," commented Dr. Martin Grabert, Director of the COST Office. Now, South Africa, India and Argentina are looking at the possibility of similar arrangements.

COST recently approved 26 new requests from non-COST country institutions to join COST Actions. These requests stem from 13 countries ranging from Azerbaijan to Russia. For the first time researchers from the Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem, Palestine, will join COST Action D43 Colloid and interface chemistry for nanotechnology; This could be an indicator that collaboration in science and research supports peace processes by generating trustful working environments," he concluded.

26 May 2008 / Fedi **COST Days in Israel**

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, participated in the intense week of the COST DAYS in Israel organised from 19 to 23 May 2008 by Dr Husam Massalha, COST National Coordinator for Israel, and by Ms Ilana Lowi, Director, Division for International Relations, Ministry of Science, Culture and Sport of Israel. The COST Days were held at the Tel-Aviv University, at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, at the Technion Institute of Technology, Haifa and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Professor Fedi presented the 'Past, Present and Future of COST' and commented "I am really impressed by the high level of Science and Technology in Israel. I also hope that the remarkable participation of Israel in some 80 COST Actions could be even increased in the future". Professor Fedi was accompanied by Dr Martin Grabert, Director of the COST Office, who presented 'The Life Cycle of COST Actions'. Dr Kimmo Peippo, Head of COST Secretariat provided by the EU Council, who presented 'The COST

Strategy towards European neighbouring countries and non-COST countries'. Dr Wolfgang Obert, Deputy Director of the COST Office, presented 'The COST Grant System'.

At the Tel-Aviv University, the COST Delegation was welcomed by Professor Hagit Messer -Yaron, Vice President for Research at the Tel Aviv University. Examples of participation in COST Actions of the scientific community of Israel were presented by Professor Dov Prusky (Agricultural Research Organisation, Bet-Dagan) and Professor Yoram Epstein (Tel-Aviv University).

At the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev the COST Delegation was welcomed by Professor Jimmy Weinblatt, Rector, Professor Moti Herskowitz, Vice President and Dean for Research and Development and Prof. Abraham Parola, Dean, Faculty of Life Sciences. Examples of participation of Israel in COST Actions were given by Professor Pedro Berliner, Dr Gonen Ashkenasy and Dr Gabriel Lemcoff.

At the Technion Institute of Technology the COST Delegation was welcomed by Professor Peretz Lavie, Vice President for Resource Development and External Relations and by Mr Alex Gordon, Head of the Technion Liaison Office. An example of participation of Israel in COST Actions was given by Professor Alfred- Shalom Hakkert.

At the Hebrew University of Jerusalem the COST Delegation was welcomed by Professor Herve Bercovier, Vice President for Research and Development, by Mr Robert Krengel, Delegation of the European Commission to Israel, and by Mr Marcel Shaton, Director of the Israel Directorate for the EU Framework Programmes. Examples of participation of Israel were given by Professor Orly Goldwasser (Hebrew University), Prof. Dan Gibson (Hebrew University), Dr. Amnon Lahad (Hebrew University) and Prof. Mordechai Shechter (Haifa University).

30 May 2008 / General **Early Stage Researchers' Interest in COST**

The COST Office participated to the GRAD skills "Research Futures 2008" Conference which took place 30 May 2008 at St. Andrews University, Scotland.

This one-day event attracted more than 250 early stage researchers (PhD students and post-doctoral fellows) with various speakers including leading policy advisors, industrial employers, research funders, knowledge transfer experts and senior academics.

The UKRC was represented by a keynote speaker Prof Ian Diamond, Chief Executive, ESRC. Dr Martin Grabert, Director of the COST Office, was invited to present the second keynote speech, highlighting the opportunities for early stage researchers at COST. The audience was very receptive and in the ensuing discussions several ideas for COST Action proposals were identified.

"It is a great experience to see so many bright and talented people developing their career plans in science," commented Dr. Grabert after the meeting. "Developments at a European level, such as the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, are important assets to support young researchers in Europe and ensure the most flexible and all-inclusive approach to pan-European mobility. For this reason, COST encourages all Actions to promote and apply the charter and the code."

08 May 2008 / General **Second COST Visit to Albania**

Following Albania's association to the EU 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technology Development, the European Commission, COST and the Albanian Ministry for Science and Education organised a Research Information Event in Tirana on 6 May 2008.

The intention of this event was to encourage dialogue with the local scientific community, identify potentially interested partners and pave the way for further collaboration within the Framework Programme and COST.

The event brought together over 150 Albanian participants including senior representatives from the academic and business community as well as public authorities. The event was opened by the European Commissioner for Science and Research, Janez Potočnik, the Albanian Minister of Education and Science, Genc Pollo, and the Albanian Minister of Integration, Majlinda Bregu.

COST was represented by Professor John G. Bartzis, Vice President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials accompanied by Mr Günter Siegel, Science Officer from the COST Office. Professor Bartzis had the opportunity to present what COST is and how the Albanian researchers can rapidly join the European Research mainstream on the principle of mutual benefit.

More specifically it was stressed that COST is one of the longest-running European instruments supporting networking among scientists and researchers across Europe. It was also underlined the great potential offered by COST as a bottom-up tool for networking with other European scientists.

Professor Bartzis emphasised that at present the Albanian researchers have not yet profited from the 200 COST Actions and invited interested scientists to consider the opportunities offered by COST, having in mind that COST Actions could be considered also an incubator for R&D proposals to FP7. It was clear from the discussion that COST seems to be a particularly attractive instrument to facilitate in this country and in Western Balkans in general, to establish scientific networks and to facilitate the participation in the Framework Programmes.

The participation of COST in May 2008 followed the COST DAYS in Albania in which Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, participated from 15 to 19 June 2004, for a series of meetings with the highest representatives of the political and scientific community in Albania to stimulate international cooperation in science and technology in the framework of COST.

This visit was in line with the COST Ministerial Conference held in Dubrovnik in 2003 which had recommended that COST should continue to lend support, in the scientific and technological field, to the Community's foreign dimension, especially in Mediterranean third countries including the Western Balkans and in the Russian Federation and other Newly Independent States. In Tirana

Professor Fedi delivered a speech on "COST: Past, Present, Future" at a conference held in the Ministry of Education and Science with the Directors of the Scientific Research Institutions and the Universities. In Gjirokastra he presented COST activities in a conference held in the University of Gjirokastra and met the Rector Prof. Kristaq Kikina. In Vlora he had meetings with the Rector of the Technological University of

Vlora, Prof. Bilal Shkurtaj and with the Director of the Agricultural Research Institute of Vlora Prof. Bardhosh Ferraj.

09 April 2008 | General **COST Office Newsletter No 8 April 2008**

Download the eighth edition of the COST Office e-newsletter and find out about the latest COST news and stories.

In this issue a Portrait of Hans Stødkilde-Jørgensen - DC Chair for COST Domain Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences.

The 8th and other past issues are available on the [newsletter page](#).

08 April 2008 **COST Considerations on the Results of the Consultation on the European Commission ERA Green Paper**

The results of the public consultation on the European Commission's Green Paper on the European Research Area (ERA) "The ERA: New Perspectives", to which COST contributed, are now available on the European Commission's website.

"COST notes with pleasure that the Commission took into account its contribution: "[The role of COST in the European Research Area](#)" said Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials. "In that context, COST had emphasised in particular 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".

Amongst the quotes selected from the various contributions one sentence from the COST paper is reported on p. 26:

"...Free-format contributions provide further insight. One of the most significant remarks about the roles of EU, national and regional policies in establishing the ERA is that "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..."

Moreover, the Commission's document makes two explicit references to COST:

1) Regarding the contribution from the European Parliament (p. 22) "The EP also calls for further development of initiatives such as COST and EUREKA and asks for the greater involvement of public bodies in establishing long-term priorities for public R&D funding, with specific reference to European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology Initiatives."

2) Concerning transnational cooperation (p. 74) "Other positive examples suggested in several free-format contributions include JTIs, Eureka and COST. They are all considered as worthy of analysing and

further developing to adapt more to the ERA perspective, notwithstanding the need for regular and detailed evaluation."

In general, there seems to be demand for COST-type activities, which is reflected in a number of statements arising from the consultation:

"Most of the stakeholders recognise the need for better coordination of Member States' research programmes. They suggest a differentiated approach to coordination for different types of research, based also on principles such as subsidiarity, variable geometry and European added value. Procedures should be flexible and transparent."

"Respondents prefer flexible and adaptable, bottom-up cooperation schemes, networking, voluntary legal frameworks, the exchange of best practices and the establishment of guidelines."

"There is a general agreement on the need for a bottom-up process for the creation of centres of excellence (or other networks). Opinions converge on the fact that these centres must be needs-driven, not policy-driven, to remain sustainable. A large number of stakeholders insist on avoiding the institutionalisation of these structures, which should respond to specific needs and should come to an end, once those needs are satisfied. Networks should be fostered and encouraged as a response to specific research requirements and may or may not continue beyond the completion of a programme."

"Additionally, several principles are mentioned as important to be respected, such as the principle of subsidiarity, variable geometry, the documentation of real European added value, as well as the right balance between collaboration and competition and between bottom-up research initiatives and top-down strategic guidance."

"To reduce complexity, around 80% of the respondents prefer "a two-stage evaluation approach".

21 March 2008 / General **ESF Launches its First Call for Candidates for the Enhancement of the ESF/COST Information System**

The Call for Candidates, launched on 14 March 2008 and published on TED (Tenders Electronic Daily - Supplement to the Official Journal of the European Union), concerns the provision for: - an Information System Integration Infrastructure, and - a Human Resources Management System, both including software licenses and all associated services.

Candidates are invited to apply for one or both provisions by 25 April 2008 at 12.00 CET.

These 2 provisions are the first part of a global Information System (IS) project which aims to offer both ESF and COST an adapted IS lined up with the Foundation's strategic orientations and processes.

This new information system will have to provide trustworthy shared information to the different users and offer high office automation and data security / confidentiality functions.

Processes to be covered in the global solution are the following :

- Finance management

- Science management, including grant management
- Managing external contracts
- Human Resources management
- Procurement management
- Communication management

More information is available on the [ESF/COST Information System web page](#) or on [TED](#) website. Alternatively, you can contact the [IS Project Manager](#).

15 March 2008 | Fedi **Assessment, Monitoring, Final Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions**

“I am particularly proud” said Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) “that - at its latest 170th meeting - the COST CSO approved the latest revision of the COST Guidelines for Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions.

These Guidelines are the result of a careful common effort of the entire COST community to fix a very rigorous procedure for:

- the establishment of rules for avoiding conflicts of interest, for introducing a COST code of conduct and for adding further to the objectivity and transparency of the whole assessment, monitoring and evaluation process;
- the Assessment of proposals for new Actions, including the criteria followed in the assessment through peer-reviews by the assessors and the templates to be used by the proposers for the preparation of Preliminary Proposals and Full Proposals;
- the Monitoring of Actions in progress, including the template for the preparation of the Progress Reports;
- the Final Evaluation through peer-reviews of completed Actions, including the template for the preparation of the Final Evaluation Report;
- the Dissemination and Exploitation of the results obtained in COST Actions.”

“The Guidelines were introduced to COST back in the year 2000 as the result of the activities of a Working Group established in 1999 by the CSO and formed by the Chairs of the then 12 COST Technical Committees. Since then, a number of revisions were introduced by the CSO. The latest revision was carried out by an “ad hoc” Working Group formed both by CSO members and Chairs of the COST Domain Committees. This revision was endorsed by the COST JAF Group in February 2008 and approved by the CSO in March 2008. With the approval of these Guidelines” concluded Professor Fedi “COST certainly establishes a milestone in its history and fully qualifies itself as an effective instrument for bottom-up networking research activities in the European Research Area”.

The latest Guidelines are now available on the [COST Guidelines page](#).

14 March 2008

Broaden the Scope of your Research

Do you work in a research area which is interdisciplinary, yet does not find an outlet for development? Is your research agenda constrained by grant and funding opportunities that are too narrowly defined for your scientific networking purposes? Is an international network a potential solution? Thanks to a recent decision by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), your research may find a home in one of our Trans-Domain Proposals (TDPs). TDPs offer scientists fertile ground for future networks across many scientific disciplines, by allowing unusually broad, interdisciplinary proposals to strike across the nine scientific domains currently offered.

Through the establishment of a Standing Assessment Body (SAB) which will review submitted TDPs, COST sets a major landmark in the ERA. The TDP-SAB will be composed of the Chairs of the nine COST Domain Committees, as well as two additional scientific experts per Domain, and will be led by a neutral coordinator directly appointed by the CSO President. The COST Office's own Science Officers may also serve as experts with the SAB.

28 March 2008 (17:00 CET) is the collection date for Preliminary Proposals—as with previous successful collection dates this is a continuous call which is thematically open. Proposals playing a precursor role for other European Programmes and/or initiated by early-stage researchers are particularly welcome!

This is the first collection date in 2008 of COST's Open Call for Proposals, and we hope to receive a high number of Preliminary Proposals that will in turn become full-fledged COST Actions. (COST Actions are networks centred on nationally funded research projects, which are of interest to at least five COST countries). Researchers are invited to locate their topic within one of the nine scientific domains or, alternatively, to submit interdisciplinary proposals not readily fitting into a single Domain. The latter category is now put in the centre of attention through the setup of the TDP-SAB.

With the introduction of the TDPs and the TDP-SAB review and assessment process, COST continues to set the standard for innovative and dynamic funding opportunities which add value throughout the scientific research and development cycle.

Proposal Assessment Details:

Proposals are assessed in two stages. Preliminary Proposals, consisting of a brief overview and an impact description, are checked for eligibility first and, when eligible, assessed against the published criteria. The selected Preliminary Proposals are then invited to submit a Full Proposal which is peer reviewed according to the published assessment criteria. The time between the collection date and the proposal for approval of the best Full Proposals by the COST CSO is approximately 6 months.

For more information on the COST Open Call, please visit the [Open Call page](#). For more information on the COST domains, click [here](#).

08 March 2008 / Fedi **COST Day in Skopje**

“I am extremely glad to be in Skopje again where, in March 2004, I was unanimously elected President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials for the first time” said Professor Francesco Fedi in his address to the large audience convened on 05 March 2008 in the Oval Conference Hall, Rectorate Building of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje for the Macedonian COST Day.

The COST Day was organised by Ms Katerina Sumanovska, Representative of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), and was opened by Mr Jovan Lazarev, Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Professor Gorgi Martinovski, Rector and Professor Velimir Stojkovski, Vice-Rector of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University.

Presentations by the COST Presidency and by the COST Office followed: “COST: Past, Present and Future” by Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials;

“COST Actions: Networks of successful European cooperation” by Dr Afonso Ferreira, Head of Science Operations of the COST Office; “COST Structure, Instruments and Tools” by Dr Günter Siegel, Senior Science Officer of the COST Office; “COST Strategy towards Neighbouring countries and non-COST Countries” and “How to Successfully Participate in COST” by Dr. Wolfgang Obert, Deputy Director of the COST Office.

The COST Day was concluded by “COST in Bulgaria” presented by Ms. Dijana Peeva and by “Examples of participation in COST Actions” presented by representatives of the scientific community of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Acad. Jordan Pop Jordanov – COST Action B27, Dr. Lidija Krtsevka – COST Actions C12-C26, Prof. Gordana Gaceva – COST Action P12, Prof. Biljana Minceva-Sukarova – COST Action D42, Dr. Vlatko Ilieski – COST Action 855 and Prof. Goce Vasilevski – COST Action 860.

After the COST Day, a visit to the Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Engineering Seismology took place. The FP6 project “Earthquake protection of Historical Buildings by reversible mixed technologies (PROHITECH)” was illustrated by Prof. Kiril Gramatikov and Prof. Elena Dumova-Jovanovska.

“I am really impressed with the remarkable participation of the scientific community of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in COST Actions” concluded Professor Fedi “and with the success of the project on Earthquake protection in FP6. Since it originated from a COST Action, it is a very good example of how COST can be an exploratorium for new ideas and of the complementarity of COST and the Framework Programmes”.

31 January 2008 / Fedi **COST CSO President meets ESF CEO**

On 31 January 2008, Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) met with Professor Marja Makarow, the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the European Science Foundation in Strasbourg.

“We consider that our scientific communities” agreed Prof. Fedi and Prof. Makarow “are working with enthusiasm to improve the synergy between COST and ESF which could bring extremely important mutual benefits and we believe that these synergies should be pursued while respecting the complementary roles of COST and ESF without merging or taking over”.

During the meeting Prof. Fedi and Prof. Makarow established the Agenda of the next COST-ESF High Level Group meeting envisaged on 12 February 2008 in Brussels and discussed extensively new ideas to improve the synergy between COST and ESF and the contribution of these two bodies to the European Research Area.

10 January 2008 / Fedi **COST and INDIA**

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), took part in the series of meetings in India organised in December 2007 and January 2008 by the Indian Embassy in Italy under the “Distinguished Visitors Programme” of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) which partially sponsored the visits.

The visit of Professor Fedi was in line with the INDIA-EU Joint Statement resulting from the eight India-European Union Summit held in Delhi on 30 November 2007.

During the Summit the Republic of India was represented by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, External Affairs Minister, Shri Kamal Nath, Minister for Commerce and Industry, Shri M K Narayanan, National Security Adviser. The EU was represented by Mr José Sócrates, Prime Minister of Portugal, in his capacity as President of the European Council, by Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, Mr Peter Mandelson, European Commissioner for Trade, and Mr João Gomes Cravinho, Portuguese Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

In recognition of the critical role of science and technology for their respective knowledge-based economies, the participants in the Summit recommended the establishment of:

- joint nodes for networking innovation systems;
- efforts towards the creation of joint infrastructure for advanced research;
- funding systems for promotion of S&T collaboration;
- strengthened partnership initiatives with co-investment of resources in selected fields of mutual priority.

During his meetings Professor Fedi underlined that one of the key features of COST is its openness towards Institutions from non-COST countries and that COST contributes to increase the cooperation of the European Research Area with the rest of the world. Researchers from non-COST countries can join a COST Action on a case-by-case basis once the mutual benefit has been ascertained.

With such easy accessibility and light and fast procedures, COST has always been a “bridge” towards the scientific communities of the European neighbouring countries and throughout the world. Approximately 130 institutions from 21 non-COST countries participated in 2006 in some 100 COST Actions. Since researchers from Institutions from non-COST countries cannot receive economic support from COST and consequently increase their participation in COST Actions, specific incentives are a prerequisite as the

necessary travel budgets are often lacking. Indian participation in COST in 2006 was limited to the University of Hyderabad and to COST Action 859 “Phytotechnologies to promote sustainable land use management and improve food chain safety”. “The main purpose of my visit to India” said Professor Fedi “is to encourage the Indian scientific community to increase its participation in COST Actions and to explore ways to render this possible”.

In New Delhi, Professor Fedi met Mr Ashok Das, Deputy Director General of ICCR; Hon’ble V.K. Duggal, member of the Commission on Centre-State Relations; Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Head of the International Affairs Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR); Ms Shipra Chatterjee, Executive Director, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI); Mr. Antonio Armellini, Italian Ambassador in India, and Dr Nikita Sabherval, Head Business Development, Max Devki Devi Heart & Vascular Institute. During his visits Professor Fedi was accompanied by Mr Ashok Kumar Jajoria, Liason Officer ICCR New Delhi.

In Jaipur, Professor Fedi met Professor S.D. Gupta, Director, Institute of Health Management Research and Ms Savitri Kunadi, Chairperson, Executive Committee, Rajasthan Foundation. During his visits Professor Fedi was accompanied by Mr Singh Azad, Senior Programme Director, ICCR Jaipur.

In Mumbai, Professor Fedi met Professor Muntasir Barma, Director, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research; Professor Asok Misra, Director, Indian Institute of Technology (ITT) and Ms. Shernaaz Engineer, Zaanrehs Publications. During his visits Professor Fedi was accompanied by Mr. Sudarshan Shetty, Liason Officer, ICCR Mumbai.