



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

Brussels, 19 May 2011

Secretariat

COST 4151/11

NOTE

Subject : Consultation by the European Commission on the Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for future EU Research and Innovation Funding
- COST response

The attached contribution to the consultation on the Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for future EU Research and Innovation Funding was approved at the 182nd meeting of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) on 18 May 2011.

CSO's response to the EC Consultation: Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for future EU Research and Innovation Funding

(http://ec.europa.eu/research/csfri/index_en.cfm , Doc COM (2011) 48, 9.2.2011)

Through the **Green paper** the European Commission (EC) is for the first time calling on stakeholders to react by giving critical input and tangible proposals on challenging interrogations the European Union (EU) has to take up in the next decade. In the **context** of the Europe 2020 strategy, where the main goal is to “become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy”, the DG Research and Innovation has set out in the Innovation Union paper a strategic frame for engaging all European actors in contributing to a strong Europe in the globally high competitive context. Each Member State and each EU institution has to commit to this process.

The Commission's **perspective** is to create, through a Common Strategic Framework for European Research and Innovation, a shared and simplified legal and financial framework, which allows new challenges to be taken up through concrete adapted programmes and tools, where European added value is proven and leverage effects are drastically increased.

COST can, does, and actively wishes to contribute to these stimulating ambitions.

COST has been now for 40 years a vital player in the development of the European Research landscape and has established a relationship of trust with researchers and policy makers, by building trans-national networks of researchers and thus effectively tackling a major challenge recognized by the Green Paper (i.e. costly duplication and fragmentation inherent to the public research and innovation funding in Europe that is primarily organised and predominantly funded at national level). COST can therefore competently provide views on some key questions raised in the Green Paper, and contribute to the debate with specific advice and by proposing actions that support its strategic goals.

CSO view of, and advice on, the proposed Common Strategic Framework

As a priority, the European Union expects its **researchers to be at the forefront of international research and innovation** in order to make Europe “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world”. If Europe truly considers this to be urgent, the research and innovation environment in the EU must be adapted correspondingly. This implies appropriate infrastructures and equipment as well as proper and harmonized rules, **a common strategic framework but also a change in mentalities at all levels** including the society as a whole.

Question 1: To make EU research, technology and innovation funding **more attractive and easy to access** for participants, the Common Strategic Framework should as a priority **dissociate rules from content** and **offer a stable and adequate, financial and fiscal framework with clear definitions and self-explanatory but adaptable rules**. The procedures must be based on the principle of mutual trust and the acceptance of nationally tried, tested and recognised procedures. This would also greatly facilitate access of less experienced institutions and researchers, including small universities and SMEs, to programmes and instruments.

Question 2: EU funding would best be able to cover the full innovation cycle from research to market uptake if **each actor knows the part it has to play and to which objectives it has to contribute**; a clear definition of goals and identification of concerned actors is necessary. Gathering them under one Common Strategic Framework will help to ease swapping throughout the innovation cycle by encouraging pioneering science up to technology and development activities throughout Europe. Therefore, a more open definition and use of instruments should be made possible.

Question 3: The characteristics of EU funding which maximise the benefit of acting at the EU level are mainly based on **trans-national cooperation**, diverse mentalities and a variety of working methodologies. Therefore, the two most important features that should be taken into account in the planning of the next Framework Programme are **guaranteeing European added value and achieving impact on the European economy and society**. The most appropriate legal and fiscal environments in EU member states and at EU level will leverage private investments by motivating small and large private companies to contribute to research and innovation investments, and thereby also contribute to growth in Europe.

Question 4: It is healthy to **preserve diversity, independence of budgets and resources and respect the principle of subsidiarity**, where research projects should be still financed by the respective Member states, while constantly checking for European added value and impact of EU funding in any European initiative. Joint efforts and better synergies between national and European science and technology programmes are clearly needed to make Europe stronger. In this context, EU funding should have a catalyser or seed for further leverage. Research and Innovation activities need stability; so it is important that before decisions are taken the opinion of the relevant communities is carefully considered. Once the major priorities and objectives are defined, positive competition must be promoted giving freedom to the proposals through a bottom-up process.

Question 5: The size and the balance of projects should not be policy driven, but depend on the content and set targets. **Projects must as a priority serve research, technological and innovation needs** and may evolve during the lifetime of a research programme/project depending on the advancement of knowledge. Europe needs a simple set of appropriate instruments responding to different stages of the project cycle and of researchers' careers, open to transnational and inter-sectoral knowledge sharing and mobility.

Question 6: Legal and financial rules have to be dissociated from programmes and instruments. The **balance** between a **unique set of rules** allowing for radical simplification and the necessity to keep a certain degree of **adaptability in the use** of these rules to achieve research, technology and innovation objectives is necessary. Throughout, **clear and definitive common definitions of all terms** used will greatly facilitate comprehension.

Question 8: **Excellence must remain the most important driving force for research funding** in the next framework programme and related European funding programmes. There is a need to unlock and integrate the best research, technology and innovation capacities of the less performing countries in order to develop the full capacity of Europe.

Question 9: It is important to **maintain the balance between curiosity-driven (science based or “bottom-up”) and agenda-driven (policy based or “top-down”) research and technology activities. Societal challenges must be turned into sustainable solutions** in areas such as global warming, tightening supplies of energy, water and food, ageing societies, public health and security and urbanization. Approaching these challenges **requires joint efforts and investments by both public and private sectors together with policy measures**; the different instruments will have to contribute at different levels.

Question 10: COST believes that **an essential space has to be reserved for bottom-up activities, which often allow the early identification of upcoming new research fields or innovative technologies vital for the Innovation Union goals.** The intergovernmental schemes like COST and EUREKA should be utilized more widely to foster new ideas from bottom-up and validated top-down to enhance the level of scientific knowledge, societal welfare and business activities through a policy-driven approach.

Question 26: **International cooperation with non-EU countries should be promoted where fields of mutual benefit are identified**, in particular in priority areas of strategic interest where the whole of humanity is concerned. For ease of achieving trustful partnerships, EU instruments have to be simple, be easily understood, and IPR and access questions have to be clear and balanced (reciprocity).

COST's commitment

*COST's mission is to **enable original and break-through scientific and technological developments** leading to new concepts and products and thereby contributing to strengthen Europe's research and innovation capacities.*

*COST's strategy includes specific actions for enhancing **training prospects for innovative minds**, fostering **output orientation of its networking actions** and **building interaction with other fora such as EUREKA**.*

*Through efficient implementation of **networking activities** COST can guarantee a significant **leverage effect of regional and national capacities** as has been shown by several national studies performed last year (Germany, Switzerland and United Kingdom).*

*COST can contribute to Joint Programming Initiatives through its Actions that can serve as **preliminary pilot tool for these initiatives**, but can also offer a forum for easy involvement of the various stakeholders.*

*Member States' RTD budgets are not "free money", as a relevant part of them is already committed to basic funding of Universities and Research Institutions. With COST Europe has an instrument that can mobilize this funding for a **better integration of regional, national and EU activities**. COST networks can fill this gap by connecting individual researchers' teams and lead to institutional networking.*

*COST provides an easy framework for researchers and SMEs to work together efficiently, **developing trust and building the ground for further cooperation**. COST seeks best performance while at the same time maintaining its user-friendly qualities.*

*COST is today the **only bottom-up networking instrument** in ERA. Already in the past, topics that came up through COST Actions were in a next step included in the work programmes of the FP. COST could play a more strategic role here in the future.*

*COST through efficient implementation of networking activities **identifies high quality research teams and individuals** ("pockets of excellence") which are yet not well integrated and visible in the research and innovation scene and secures their inclusion.*

Finally, COST intergovernmental structure shows good practice of bringing together national research funds for research projects which consist of excellent research and which are aimed at innovation. It can serve as an example for national and international programmatic cooperation. COST is an example of coordination over and exchange between nationally funded research, which has been proven highly useful, efficient and effective for increasing capacity building, the impact of research on policy for societal challenges and defragmentation of funding efforts.

COST - 40 years of stability for COoperation in Science and Technology offered to the research and technology communities

- **COST has a real pan-European dimension.**

COST has now **35 Member countries** engaged in its governance and Israel as a co-operating country. It includes the 27 EU Member States, 3 EFTA Member States (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland), candidate countries (Croatia, Iceland, F.Y.R. of Macedonia and Turkey), and potential candidates (Bosnia Herzegovina and Serbia). On the basis of mutual benefit **non-COST partners** may also join individual Actions.

Neighbour countries (Balkan countries as Albania and Montenegro; Mediterranean countries as Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia; and Eastern European countries as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine) have privileged access to COST Actions. COST has also signed four **Reciprocal agreements** with Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Argentina. Thus up to FP7 the geographical coverage of COST was somewhat wider than the participation in the Framework Programmes.

COST offers a framework for **intergovernmental action**, but does not have a legal personality. COST was established for the **coordination at European level of nationally funded research** and became quickly one of the principal frameworks for research cooperation covering basic and pre-competitive research.

- **COST – A Mission focused on efficient Leverage and Inclusiveness of Scientific Excellence to create opportunities for Innovation**

COST has been regularly evaluated and assessed, in the recent years through three successive reviews (Kneucker, Monfret and Horvat reports), which reports have unanimously acknowledged the importance of COST in the integration process of research communities towards the European Research Area.

- **COST – Achievements in line with Innovation Union Goals**

Since the beginning of FP7, COST has managed **more than 400 Actions** and brought together more than 130.000 individuals through meetings organized under the scope of COST Actions. COST has managed more than 5300 short-term missions and 260 training schools with almost 5300 participants.

Concerning **gender balance**, the number of registered participation in the COST database out of 18.500 registered researchers there are 35% female and 65% male.

A rough analysis on Web of Science (Thompson) **publications** shows that only since 2009, 1033 publications (2705 citations) are found which mention COST as having contributed to the scientific outcomes of the research results published.

Participation of COST member countries to COST Actions demonstrates that COST **inclusiveness supports integration of research communities of highest quality all over Europe** and beyond. It is important to note that small or medium sized countries such as Cyprus, Malta, Iceland, Estonia, Slovenia, Latvia, Ireland, Croatia, Lithuania, and Bulgaria, are successfully participating in COST Actions.

Increasing numbers of COST Actions involve **Industry and SMEs** having a clear economic impact through products, standardisation and other outcomes, which contribute to knowledge transfer and can have an impact on jobs. COST helps in avoiding brain drain.

Finally, COST Actions traditionally address major **societal challenges**, dealing with topics contributing to avoiding fragmentation or ineffectiveness, in domains such as Agriculture, Food Security, Climate Change, Healthy Diet, Cultural Heritage, Urban Europe, Global Challenges, Local Solutions among others.

*In conclusion, COST can guarantee its contribution to two key Innovation Union goals: a **leverage effect and inclusiveness of excellence** all over Europe.*
