



**European Cooperation
in the field of Scientific
and Technical Research
- COST -**

Brussels, 3 February 2010

Secretariat

**COST 4101/1/10
REV 1**

DRAFT SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Subject : 176th meeting of the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) held in Brussels
on 1 - 2 December 2009

The CSO President opened the meeting by introducing those attending for the first time¹:

- Mr Ammar MIRASCIJA (BA)
- Mr Josef JANDA (CZ)
- Mr Kiril GRAMATIKOV (MK)
- Ms Regula MEIER (CH)

¹ See complete list of participants in Annex I.

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in CM 4808/09 dated 12 November 2009 with some changes to the order of items (Annex II). In this context the Austrian delegate recalled the requirements of Article 7² of the CSO Working methods regarding the transmission of documents to delegations.

2. APPROVAL OF SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF THE 175th MEETING

The Committee approved the Summary of Conclusions of the previous meeting as set out in doc. COST 289/09.

3. RESULTS OF THE SWOT ANALYSIS ON COST-ESF IN THE ERA

Dr Erik Arnold from Technopolis gave a presentation on the SWOT³ ("strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats") analysis "Options for Implementing COST" issued in September 2009⁴. The analysis had introduced four possible scenarios for COST for the future ("base case", "re-division of labour", "separation" and "joint administration"), all four scenarios assuming that COST sets up an AISBL. Dr Arnold clarified that establishing a legal personality for COST was not a conclusion of the SWOT analysis, but a background assumption; he also added that in general the legal status of any funding mechanism is as such of no interest to the beneficiaries receiving support. As to the correctness of the financial information in the analysis (that had been questioned by the ESF) Dr Arnold noted that all figures were presented to the extent it had been possible to extract them from various publications and should not be considered an in depth economic analysis of the possible COST-ESF separation.

² "Agenda items for which the essential documents have been submitted to the delegations later than two weeks before the meeting can only be decided upon in the meeting if no delegation objects." (doc. COST 242/08, p.4)

³ The presentation and the SWOT analysis are available on the CSO website.

⁴ The CSO at its meeting on 26-27 May 2009 agreed to have an independent SWOT analysis carried out on the COST-ESF relationship in the ERA (doc. COST 253/09).

In response to a question from the CSO President and referring to his own experience in setting up an AISBL (the ERAWATCH network), Dr Arnold noted that establishing such an entity is not a lengthy neither costly process. He noted also that in this specific case the Commission had concluded a contract with ERAWATCH as soon as it had been established as an AISBL.

The President opened the floor for discussion, during which some delegations raised questions regarding the scope and the methodology of carrying out the analysis. While the historical review included in the analysis was considered complete, some delegations felt that the four scenarios for the future could have been developed in more detail and that more consideration could have been given to developing the roles and complementarities of COST and ESF in the European Research Area (ERA) without COST necessarily having a legal personality.

The President thanked Dr Arnold for his presentation and concluded that the analysis will be an important element in the ongoing reflections on the COST legal status and governance and the COST-ESF cooperation.

4. INFORMATION FROM THE CSO PRESIDENCY

The President informed the Committee of his participation at the following events:

- COST Day in Spain on 27 November 2009,
- COST Days in Morocco on 29 September - 2 October 2009,
- EU Research Information event "Towards integration into the ERA" in Serbia on 29 June 2009, and
- EUREKA Conference on 6-7 July 2009.

The CSO Vice-President had attended:

- COST Day in Switzerland on 21 October 2009,
- Conference at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (EL) on 15 October 2009, and
- COST Regional Information Days in Serbia on 2 September 2009.

Furthermore, Mr Stefan Cairén (SE), on behalf of the CSO President, had attended the COST Information event in South Africa on 8 September 2009 (co-organised by the Swedish EU Presidency).

The President recalled that detailed information is available on the website:

<http://www.cost.esf.org>. He encouraged delegations to regularly consult the news on the website.

5. INFORMATION FROM

- Delegations

= The Swiss delegate informed the Committee that Prof. Nicholas ROULET, a longstanding CSO member and one of its previous Chairs (1990-1994), had passed away on 22 November 2009.

= Mr Stefan Cairén (SE) recalled that the CSO had appointed him to represent the Committee at the WG on COST Impact Study and that he had attended four meetings of the WG. However, his travel expenses of these meetings had not yet been reimbursed to the Swedish Ministry by the ESF despite several reminders. Mr Cairén informed the Committee that in this unclear situation he would unfortunately not be able to participate at the next meeting on 4 December 2009. It was noted that the question of reimbursements had been raised at the level of ESF Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The President asked to be kept informed of any developments on this issue.

- The COST Office informed the Committee:

= that the publications "About COST 2010" and "Annual Report 2009" are now under preparation. Delegations were asked to indicate the number of copies they wish to receive;

= that the mandates of the current Domain Committees (DC) will expire on 31 May 2010. A COST Office note on suggestions for the nominations to the DCs was distributed to delegations⁵; and

= of the COST Scientific Strategic Initiatives and the COST Seminars, COST Office activities and future events⁶.

6. COST GRANT AGREEMENT IN FP7: STATUS REPORT

The COST Office informed the Committee of the status of the COST Grant Agreement in FP7 ("COST II"). The current amendment to the COST II contract is effective until June 2010. The proposal from the ESF to the Commission regarding the next amendment should be submitted as soon as possible in 2010, at the latest by 1 March 2010, to have the negotiations concluded and amendment signed before 1 June 2010. The COST Office informed the Committee on the budget implications of the gradual increase in the number of Actions as envisaged in the grant agreement⁷.

In its conclusions the Committee expressed its concern about the financial management under the current COST II contract. The Committee agreed to request the ESF to observe full transparency and contractual obligations (i.e. commitment of the full budget) whilst it was also recalled that only the European Commission and the ESF are formally parties to the COST contract. The Committee recalled the understanding that the contingencies built under FP6 could be used to bridge shortfalls in the Actions budgets, since the full amount would be paid to the ESF following the acceptance of the final report for the actual amendment period. Finally, the Committee noted that the introduction of a separable accounting system for the COST II contract budget would be desirable already under the actual contract to ensure the full visibility and transparency of the items charged to COST.

⁵ Final version is set out in doc. COST 296/09.

⁶ Notes from the COST Office dated 16 November 2009 are available on the CSO website.

⁷ Separate note by the COST Office sent to delegations on 20 November 2009 is available on the CSO website.

7. ACTION-RELATED ITEMS

a) Results of the 7th Collection date (25 September 2009)

The COST Office gave a presentation on the results of the 7th Collection date of 25 September 2009, at which 469 eligible proposals had been presented. The evaluation of the full proposals will take place in February-March 2010, following which the list of recommended proposals will be submitted to JAF by the end of March 2010. The final list will be presented to the CSO for approval at its meeting in May 2010.⁸

b) Requests for participation of institutions from non-COST countries

The Committee took note of the decision by the JAF Group, at its meeting on 4 November 2009, to approve 97 requests for participation of institutions from non-COST countries as set out in doc. COST 287/09.⁹

c) Requests for extension of prolongation of COST Actions

The Committee took note of the decision by the JAF Group, at its meeting on 4 November 2009, to approve the following requests for extension of COST Actions with no budget implications:

- D35: From Molecules to Molecular Devices: Control of Electronic, Photonic, Magnetic and Spintronic Behavior (6 months)
- 862: Bacterial Toxins for Insect Control (6 months)
- 868: Biotechnical Functionalisation of Renewable Polymeric Materials (6 months)
- 863: Euroberry Research: from Genomics to Sustainable Production, Quality & Health (5 months)

⁸ The next collection date as agreed is 26 March 2010 (doc. COST 209/08).

⁹ JAF had also provisionally approved two further participations of non-COST institutions subject to further clarification. This has now been confirmed as regards the participation of the National Center for Research (Sudan) to Action CM0801

- E45: European forest externalities (EUROFOREX) (5 months)¹⁰
E55: Modelling of the performance of timber structures (6 months)

d) Status of final evaluation reports and progress reports of COST Actions

The COST Office informed the Committee of the status of final evaluation reports and progress reports of COST Actions that have ended between January 2007 and October 2009. It was noted that despite numerous efforts by the COST Office no reports had been received from Action E32 that had ended already in 28 October 2007. Therefore the Committee agreed to the JAF suggestion that any future Action proposals from those responsible for E32 should be excluded.

The Committee congratulated the COST Office and the DCs for their efforts that have resulted to a very satisfactory situation regarding the reports and their timely presentation.

e) COST Grant system: Status report

The COST Office informed the Committee of the successful migration of 30 Actions to the new Grant System. Another 30 Actions were ready to conclude a grant agreement. However, due to budgetary reasons, the COST Office anticipated difficulties in the migration according to the originally established schedule.

The Committee expressed its concern regarding the swift migration of Actions and agreed to communicate its view to the ESF in a letter from the CSO President¹¹ (see also item 6 above).

¹⁰ JAF decision was made "subject to the approval by the Domain Committee", which approval now has been confirmed.

¹¹ The letter of 4 December 2009 from the CSO President to the ESF President and ESF CEO has been circulated to delegations.

8. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE COST OFFICE

The COST Office gave a presentation on the structure and functioning of the COST Office¹². The Committee was informed of the recent changes regarding the reporting between the COST Office and the ESF in Strasbourg. Following an exchange of views the Committee unanimously agreed to:

- express its full support and trust to the Director of the COST Office;
- insist on avoiding any double reporting lines, in agreement with the COST-ESF MoU¹³, in order to have clear responsibilities in achieving the contractual objectives;
- ask the ESF to immediately re-establish the delegation of the COST Office Director until the end of the present assignment until 31 August 2010 under the terms of this agreement, ensuring that all COST Office staff report to him with immediate effect;
- request the ESF to extend the delegation of the current Director until the end of FP7 Grant agreement between the European Commission and ESF;
- request that the recruitment procedure to maintain the positions of the Head of Science Operations, the financial controller and the legal adviser should be launched without any delay. In order to facilitate these and future recruitments a sufficient authority on recruitments within the given budget and staffing plan as defined in the COST II contract should be delegated to the COST Office; and to
- ask the ESF to give as soon as possible reassurance to the CSO President that, on the above basis, the management and operation of the COST Office, in full compliance with the COST-ESF MoU, has been restored.

The President stated that these conclusions by the Committee would be communicated to the ESF CEO in a letter¹⁴.

¹² The presentation is available on the CSO website.

¹³ Doc. COST 262/02.

¹⁴ The letter of 3 December 2009 from the CSO President to the ESF CEO and to the DFG Secretary General has been circulated to delegations.

9. PROGRESS REPORTS ON

- COST Impact Study for the Mid-Term Evaluation in 2010 and Customer Satisfaction Survey

The COST Office informed the Committee on the progress on the above two studies that were both progressing smoothly. Final reports were expected by the end of the year and would be presented to the next CSO meeting in March 2010. These reports would also be important input to the Panel of independent experts who would carry out the COST mid-term evaluation in spring 2010.

10. APPROVAL OF NEW COST ACTIONS

The COST Office gave a presentation on the 30 new COST Actions that were presented to the CSO for approval. A booklet illustrating each Action was distributed to delegations. It was recalled that the ranking list presented to the CSO respected the results of the DC Chairs' consensus meetings that had been chaired by the CSO Vice-President. In this context it was noted that some further information would be helpful for the COST National coordinators following the consensus meetings in order to respond to questions by proponents whose proposals had not been included in the final shortlist.

The Committee approved all the 30 new Actions as set out in doc. COST 256/09.

11. COST-ESF RELATIONSHIP

The President recalled that a meeting of the enlarged COST-ESF High Level Group had taken place on 9 November 2009. A report of the COST delegation (doc. COST 293/09) and the minutes of the meeting (dated 19 November 2009) had been circulated to delegations. He also informed the Committee of his attendance at the ESF Assembly that had been held on 20 November in Strasbourg¹⁵.

¹⁵ The speaking notes of the President are attached in Annex III.

Regarding the statements by the representative of the German DFG at the Assembly, the German delegation confirmed that these were personal statements and according to a study by the Ministry were not shared by the German scientific community.

The ESF CEO had sent a letter with attachments concerning the consequences of a separation of COST from ESF before the end of FP7 directly to the members of the CSO. Following the instructions by the ESF CEO to the COST Office, a copy of this letter and the attachments were distributed to delegations.

The Commission representative recalled the position of the Commission as expressed in the previous CSO meeting on 3 November 2009¹⁶, in particular that the ESF should continue as the implementing agent for COST for the whole duration of the FP7. He stressed that it was up to the COST Member States themselves to decide upon the implementing agent of the intergovernmental COST initiative, and that the decision on any possible changes should be evidence-based, through further work of the COST-ESF High Level Group, discussions on the SWOT analysis and following the outcome of the COST FP7 mid-term evaluation in spring 2010.

At the end of an exchange of views the Committee:

- decided that whatever the decision on the COST Office Association could be, a new COST implementing agent will not be appointed before the implications of the transfer from ESF to such new implementing agent are examined by COST, ESF and the European Commission and in any case certainly not before June 2010;
- agreed to the establishment of a COST-ESF Working Group "Implications" with the task to study by the end of March 2010 the implications of the possible transition from the ESF to a new implementing agent, should COST choose this option in the future;

¹⁶ Doc. COST 289/09, p. 3

- agreed on the following composition of the WG "Implications": from the COST side: 3 representatives of the COST CSO (Dr Michel Gorlicki - Co-Chair of the WG, Dr Carlo Duprel and another CSO representative¹⁷); from the ESF side: 3 representatives (one of them Co-Chair); Dr Martin Grabert (COST Office); Dr Kimmo Peippo (COST Secretariat, observer); one representative of the European Commission (observer);
- recalled and confirmed the proposal repeatedly offered by COST to increase the COST-ESF synergy by increasing the specificities of their instruments - COST for networks and ESF for programmes - with a view to introducing important simplifications for the European scientific community, i.e. to gradually put under COST all networking activities of ESF (where only the support for the networking is provided) leaving under ESF the Research Programmes (where the support for the manpower and instrumentation is also provided) ;
- agreed to the establishment of a COST-ESF Working Group ""Networks" with the task to study by the end of March 2010 the possibilities for increasing the COST - ESF synergies in the networking and in the Forward looks activities;
- agreed on the following composition of the WG "Networks": from the COST side (Prof. John Bartzis - Co-Chair of the WG, Dr. Sylvain Joffre, Dr. Dieter Schinzer): from the ESF side (three representatives, one of them Co-Chair of the WG) and Dr Martin Grabert (COST Office).

The President concluded by stating that these decisions would be communicated to the ESF President and ESF CEO in a letter.

¹⁷ After the meeting the participation of Mr Raimo PULKKINEN (FI) as the 3rd CSO member and of Ms Maria VALLEJO (ES) as an expert has been confirmed.

12. LEGAL STATUS OF COST

It was recalled that at its previous meeting on 3 November 2009 the Committee had voted on the possible establishment of a COST Office Association (COA). 24 delegations had voted in favour and therefore a qualified majority (27) of the votes had not been reached. Since the last meeting two delegations (FI, IS) had expressed their position and were now in favour of the COA. Furthermore, the Belgian delegation that at the previous meeting had not been in favour of the establishment of a COA had changed their position to an "abstention". The President concluded that consequently 26 delegations were currently in favour of the establishment of a COA. He underlined that the possible establishment of a COA needed to be separated from the decision of designating an implementing agent for COST. Such a decision would only be taken after the implications of the transfer from the ESF to such a new implementing agent would be examined by COST, ESF and the European Commission and in any case certainly not before June 2010.

Two delegations suggested re-examining other possibilities for COST legal entity than AISBL, e.g. the "Joint Undertaking" model.¹⁸

13. PREPARATION OF THE COST MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE 2010

The Spanish delegation noted that in the light of the ongoing considerations regarding the possible legal status for COST and pending the results of the mid-term evaluation of COST Grant agreement in FP7, it seems premature to organise a COST Ministerial Conference (MC) already in January 2010. Therefore the Committee took note of the new scheduled dates for the COST MC on 14 - 15 June 2010 in Spain.

¹⁸ The Austrian delegation has asked to include its statement that no ex-ante evaluation was carried out and possible financial consequences were not examined regarding the possible establishment of COA.

14. COST FUND

- Revised estimates of expenditure and revenue for the financial year 2009

The Committee took note of the revised estimates of expenditure and revenue of the COST Fund for 2009 as set out in doc. COST 288/09. The revision, whilst within the original envelope, takes account of the costs for the SWOT analysis, for which purpose the CSO at its meeting in May authorised the use of the COST Fund.

15. COST STRATEGY FOR COOPERATION WITH INSTITUTIONS FROM NON-COST COUNTRIES

The Committee took note of the document COST 290/09 on the COST strategy for cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries and the suggestions for lines of action. The Committee agreed to establish a working group on "Strategy on international cooperation" with the following composition: Ms Rita WARD (IE), Mr Omer CEBECI (TR), Mr Gorm BRAMSNAES (DK) and Ms Helga MIELING (AT), supported by the COST Secretariat and the COST Office. The Committee agreed to ask the members of the working group to nominate a coordinator of the group amongst them.

16. TIMETABLE AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ELECTION OF CSO PRESIDENT IN 2010

The President recalled that his current mandate as the CSO President had started on 21 June 2007 and would therefore expire on 21 June 2010. The Committee agreed that the election of the President would be held at the 178th CSO meeting on 26 - 27 May 2010. Furthermore the Committee agreed to apply the same procedure as at the previous election and as set out in doc. COST 208/07. Delegations were requested to present candidatures, accompanied by a supporting letter from the national authorities, by **29 March 2010** at the latest to the COST Secretariat.

17. COST STRATEGY TOWARDS INCREASED SUPPORT FOR EARLY STAGE RESEARCHERS

- Proposal on COST Family friendly policy

The Committee approved the revised strategy towards increased support for early stage researchers as set out in doc. COST 291/09 and including a new chapter on COST family-friendly policy. The Committee invited the COST Office to report back to the Committee in one year's time with statistical information on the developments regarding the support measures.

18. COST WEB AND IT SYSTEM

Dr GORLICKI gave a report to the Committee on the outcome of the COST-ESF Information meeting held in Strasbourg on 16 July 2009 that was organised by the ESF Management Team in order to clarify the implications of the new IT corporate system called "COSMOS" in terms of financial aspects, IT procedures and as to the relationship between the administrations of COST and the ESF. A copy of his report was made available to delegations¹⁹.

The Committee recalled its decision at the 173rd CSO meeting in March 2009 to run the COST web site with the address *www.cost.eu* as soon as possible. All IT solutions that are required to accomplish the COST mission should be under the control of the COST Office, in line with the spirit of the COST-ESF MoU. The Committee also articulated a reservation concerning the contribution of 40 % to the COSMOS budget with respect to the need of this tool for the purposes of the COST mission and the perspective for such a system in the long run for the ESF.

¹⁹ The report is also available on the CSO website.

19. WORKING GROUP GUIDELINES: STATUS REPORT

The CSO Vice-President informed the Committee of the work of the Working Group Guidelines (WGG) that has the mandate to propose a revision of the COST Guidelines (doc. COST 205/08) to be approved by the CSO at its meeting in March 2010. The WGG had met on 5 October and further written comments from WG members had been requested by the end of November 2009. A new draft of the Guidelines will be prepared by the COST Office by end of January with a view to the JAF meeting in February 2010. A revised proposal will be presented to the CSO for approval at its meeting in March 2010.

In this context the COST Office informed the Committee of the envisaged future Collection dates within the framework of the present COST Guidelines (Annex IV).

20. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON COST

The President recalled his letter of 14 September 2009 to the CSO members, in which he had informed delegations of the two questions from members of the European Parliament on COST, as well as replies given by Commissioner Potočnik²⁰.

21. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee examined the list of future meetings as set out in doc. COST 205/4/09 REV 4. It was recalled that the JAF Group will examine the proposals for meeting venues at its next meeting. The dates of the Ministerial Conference were modified as announced by the Spanish delegation (see item 13)²¹.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

-

²⁰ The questions and answers are available on the CSO website.

²¹ The dates as agreed at the meeting are set out in COST 205/5/09 REV 5.

List of participants

<u>PRESIDENT</u>	:	Mr Francesco FEDI
<u>VICE-PRESIDENT</u>	:	Mr John BARTZIS
<u>AUSTRIA (AT)</u>	:	Ms Helga MIELING
<u>BELGIUM (BE)</u>	:	Ms Lieve VAN DAELE
<u>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BA)</u>	:	Mr Ammar MIRASCIJA
<u>BULGARIA (BG)</u>	:	Ms Albena VUTSOVA
<u>CROATIA (HR)</u>	:	Mr Damir JELICIC
<u>CYPRUS (CY)</u>	:	Ms Constantina MAKRI
<u>CZECH REPUBLIC (CZ)</u>	:	Mr Milos CHVOJKA Mr Josef JANDA Mr Bedrich PEKAREK
<u>DENMARK (DK)</u>	:	Mr Gorm BRAMSNAES
<u>ESTONIA (EE)</u>	:	Ms Ulle MUST
<u>FINLAND (FI)</u>	:	Mr Raimo PULKKINEN
<u>fYR of MACEDONIA (MK)</u>	:	Mr Kiril GRAMATIKOV
<u>FRANCE (FR)</u>	:	Ms Michèle BARON Mr Michel GORLICKI
<u>GERMANY (DE)</u>	:	Mr René HAAK Ms Marion WOLPERS
<u>GREECE (EL)</u>	:	-
<u>HUNGARY (HU)</u>	:	Ms Orsolya TOTH

ICELAND (IS) : Ms Hjördis HENDRIKSDOTTIR

IRELAND (IE) : Ms Rita WARD

ISRAEL (IL) : -

ITALY (IT) : Ms Maria UCCELLATORE

LATVIA (LV) : Ms Maija BUNDULE

LITHUANIA (LT) : Ms Birute BUKAUSKAITE

LUXEMBOURG (LU) : Mr Carlo DUPREL
Ms Josiane ENTRINGER

MALTA (MT) : -

NETHERLANDS (NL) : Ms Yvonne SCHAAP

NORWAY (NO) : Ms Trude DYPVIK

POLAND (PL) : Mr Marek ZDANOWSKI

PORTUGAL (PO) : Ms Fernanda SOUTO-SEPULVEDA

ROMANIA (RO) : Ms Silvia GERGELY

SERBIA (RS) : Ms Biljana STOJANOVIC

SLOVAKIA (SK) : -

SLOVENIA (SI) : Mr Primoz PRISTOVSEK

SPAIN (ES) : Ms Ángeles RODRIGUEZ PEÑA

SWEDEN (SE) : Ms Birgitta BOMAN
Mr Stefan CAIREN

SWITZERLAND (CH) : Ms Eva KLAPER
Ms Regula MEIER

TURKEY (TR) : Mr Omer CEBECI

UNITED KINGDOM (UK) : Mr Chris REILLY
Mr Steve RINGER

COMMISSION, DG Research : Mr Markku WARRAS
Ms Marie-Cécile ROUILLON

COST OFFICE : Mr Martin GRABERT
Mr Afonso FERREIRA
Ms Magali POINOT
Ms Inge DE PRINS

COUNCIL SECRETARIAT : Mr Kimmo PEIPPO
Ms Ulla MESIÄ

Agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda (CM 4808/09)
 2. Approval of Summary of Conclusions of the previous meeting
 3. Results of the SWOT analysis on COST-ESF in the ERA
 - Presentation by Technopolis
 4. Information from the CSO Presidency
 5. Information from
 - delegations
 - COST Office
 - = strategic scientific initiatives
 - = COST Seminars, COST Office activities and future events
 - COST Secretariat
 - Commission
 6. COST Grant Agreement in FP7: status report
 7. Action-related items
 - (a) Results of the 7th Collection date (25/09/2009): Schedule of the assessment process
 - (b) Requests for participation of institutions from non-COST countries
 - (c) Requests for extension or prolongation of COST Actions
 - (d) Status of final evaluation reports and progress reports of COST Actions
 - (e) COST Grant system: status report
 8. Structure and functioning of the COST Office
 9. Progress reports on
 - COST Impact Study for the Mid-term Evaluation in 2010
 - Customer Satisfaction Survey
 10. Approval of new COST Actions
 11. COST-ESF relationship (*dealt with before item 10*)
 12. Legal Status of COST (*dealt with as item 7bis*)
 13. Preparation of the COST Ministerial Conference 2010
 - Draft Declaration
 14. COST Fund: Revised estimates of expenditure and revenue for the financial year 2009
 15. COST Strategy for Cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries
 16. Timetable and procedures for the election of CSO President in 2010
 17. COST Strategy towards increased support for early stage researchers
 - Proposal on COST family friendly policy
 18. COST Web and IT system
 19. Working Group Guidelines: status report
 20. Questions from Members of the European Parliament on COST
 21. Future meetings
 22. Any other business
-

Report of the COST CSO President on the ESF General Assembly 20 November 2009

Professor Francesco Fedi, COST CSO President, was invited and attended the ESF General Assembly held on 20 November 2009 in Strasbourg.

Together with the ESF President Professor Ian Halliday he informed the participants of the latest developments of the COST-ESF relationship illustrated in the minutes of the enlarged COST-ESF HLG meeting held in Brussels on 9 November 2009 and in the Report to the CSO of the COST Delegation in the meeting (doc. COST 293/09). It was decided that ESF will distribute the minutes of the COST-ESF HLG meeting to all ESF Member Organisations as already done by the COST Secretariat for the COST CSO.

Answering to a question from the audience, the reasons which seemed to be the cause of the support of 70% of the COST Member States to establish a legal personality for COST were illustrated:

a) The “Monfret Report”, commissioned by the European Commission at the end of FP6 to a group on independent experts, which recommended that: either COST creates an independent legal entity or ESF takes over the full operation of COST including the strategy formulation and the linkages with Member States. This recommendation derived from the appraisal of the present relationship among ESF, EC and COST - “a juridical monster” certainly not satisfactory from a legal point of view - where two bodies (ESF and EC) establish a contract about a third body (COST) which not having a legal personality cannot enter in the contract and yet whatever EC asks to ESF to do has to be approved by COST.

b) The Kneucker Report, commissioned by the COST CSO to Professor Raoul Kneucker to respond to the recommendations of the Monfret Report, where the present situation is defined as an “institutio claudicans” (limping institution).

c) The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis on COST-ESF relationship, commissioned by the COST CSO to Technopolis, which concluded that it would be desirable that COST would establish its legal personality whatever the future relationship with the ESF could be, even in the case ESF continues with service providing to COST.

d) The disparity of opinions of ESF member Organisations. On one side the German DFG which was of the opinion that ESF should take over COST and was ready to cease its support to ESF in case this would not happen. On the other side the French CNRS and the Spanish CISC which openly stated that they wanted that the role of COST implementing agent of ESF and the relative contract with the EC should cease as soon as possible.

e) The statement of ESF that the role of being the implementing agent and to provide and manage the administrative, technical and scientific secretariat for COST Technical Committees and Actions, was not enough; that ESF should not continue to consider COST “as actual and potential source of revenue for ESF” but must act, in practice, to take full responsibility of the COST scientific activities.

f) The discussion presently under way between the EUROHORCS and ESF concerning the ESF becoming a sort of Scientific Advisor of the EUROHORCS thus casting doubts of the possibility for ESF to continue to be a service provider for bodies like COST.

It was also clarified that establishing a legal personality of COST - if so decided by COST - is envisaged into two steps:

- a) the establishment of a COST Office Association as an AISBL under the Belgian law
- b) the appointment of this Association as COST Implementing Agent.

It was underlined that this second step could not take place before the implications of this transfer are examined by COST, ESF and the European Commission and that in any case the scientific synergy COST-ESF should continue and increase.

At the end of the presentation, Dr Arnold Migus, Director General of the French CNRS and Vice-President of ESF, stated that CNRS is of the opinion that the contract EC-ESF for COST should cease as soon as possible well before the end of FP7.

Professor Mathias Kleiner, President of the German DFG and Vice-President of ESF, stated that in Germany they were very worried about the poor scientific quality of the COST Actions. There was no time to respond to this statement but the following considerations are in place.

- a) Are these views shared by the entire German scientific community?
- b) This statement would seem in contrast with the results of the COST - ESF activities on the COST Guidelines which read (from the minutes of the HLG meeting on 9 November) “The COST and ESF delegations jointly expressed their satisfaction on the discussion between representatives of both parties on the respective evaluation procedures. The meeting had been instructive in better understanding the processes currently in place, and had confirmed that both were of high quality standards. While the focus was on the COST Guidelines, where several constructive suggestions have been generated, the discussion had also identified elements that ESF would consider for its own peer review procedures. It was concluded that this exercise was a good example of constructive cooperation between the two parties”.
- c) This statement would seem in contrast with the results of a Workshop on evaluation procedures of scientific activities that COST organized at the end of May 2009 where also DFG was invited. The result of the Workshop was that COST does not need to learn anything from other organizations but perhaps the COST activities of monitoring and final evaluation could be taken as an example of best practices by other organizations.
- d) This statement is instead in line with what reported in the SWOT analysis following the interviews of ESF representatives” Many (but not all) of the stakeholders associated with ESF referred to claims that COST Actions and processes were of poor quality; some even argued that association with COST was a liability for ESF, and risked tainting its reputation. Little evidence was offered to support this perspective.”

It is regrettable and somewhat frustrating to note that despite efforts over many years, the mutual understanding between ESF and COST on the nature and value of their respective activities has still not improved as expected. It has to be hoped that in practice, this would not imply that achieving the synergies and complementarities within the present COST-ESF administrative arrangements does not appear very promising.

ANNEX IV

	2010-2	2011-1	2011-2	2012-1	2012-2	2013-1	2013-2
Collection Date	24/09/2010	25/03/2011	30/09/2011	30/03/2012	28/09/2012	29/03/2013	27/09/2013
Eligibility check & allocation to DC	07/10/2010	07/04/2011	13/10/2011	17/04/2012	11/10/2012	16/04/2013	10/10/2013
DC electronic ranking finished	05/11/2010	06/05/2011	10/11/2011	11/05/2012	09/11/2012	10/05/2013	08/11/2013
Invitation for Full Proposals	12/11/2010	13/05/2011	18/11/2011	18/05/2012	16/11/2012	17/05/2013	15/11/2013
Submission deadline FP	14/01/2011	29/07/2011	20/01/2012	27/07/2012	18/01/2013	26/07/2013	17/01/2014
Deadline EEP comments	11/02/2011	26/08/2011	17/02/2012	31/08/2012	15/02/2013	30/08/2013	14/02/2014
EEP meetings	14-25/02/2011	29/08-9/09/2011	20/02-2/03/2012	3-14/09/2012	18/02-1/03/2013	2-13/09/2013	17-28/02/2014
DC Hearings	21/2-4/03/2011	5-16/09/2011	27/2-9/03/2012	10-21/09/2012	25/02-8/03/2013	9-20/09/2013	24/2-7/03/2014
DCCCM	7/3-18/03/2011	19-30/09/2011	12-23/03/2012	24/09-5/10/2012	11-22/03/2013	23/09-4/10/2013	10-21/03/2014
Final list of new Actions proposals	24/03/2011	06/10/2011	29/03/2012	11/10/2012	28/03/2013	10/10/2013	27/03/2014
