



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

**Brussels, 10 October 2002**

**Secretariat**  
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**COST 262/02**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**Subject :           Memorandum between COST and the ESF**

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Delegations will find attached the final version of the Memorandum between COST and the ESF as accepted by both the ESF and COST.

The text, which has been reviewed by the Council's Legal Service, sets out in Annex II a statement from the ESF, which expresses its wish to complete the document with a more detailed description of its mission.

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## CONSIDERATIONS

- (1) Whereas COST was founded by an exchange of letters in 1970 between 19 European States, which led also to the setting up of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO);
- (2) Whereas the Representatives of these 19 States and the European Communities confirmed the creation of the framework of international cooperation COST in a general Resolution adopted by the Conference of European Research Ministers in Brussels on 22 and 23 November 1971;
- (3) Whereas COST now incorporates 35 countries;
- (4) Whereas COST must continue to fulfil its intergovernmental role to ensure a cost-efficient contribution to research coordination within the European Research Area <sup>1</sup>;
- (5) Whereas reinforced coordination among the activities of the ESF, COST and FP will be actively sought in order to exploit the synergies to strengthen the European Research Area <sup>1</sup>;
- (6) Whereas the COST Secretariat is provided by the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union with technical and scientific support from the Commission;
- (7) Whereas the Council, in its decision adopting a specific programme for research "Strengthening and Integrating the European Research Area", indicates that a substantial grant to COST from the Sixth Framework Programme could be justified <sup>2</sup>;
- (8) Whereas the Council notes that the Commission does not intend to provide the administrative, technical and scientific secretariat to COST and its Technical Committees and its Actions initiated during the Sixth Framework Programme and therefore another solution for this task has to be found;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L232 of 29.8.2002, page 25

<sup>2</sup> Council decision of 30 September 2002, not yet published in OJ.

- (9) Whereas the COST Assessment Panel, in its report <sup>1</sup>, recommends i.a. that management needs to be strengthened and processes of administration be simplified, emphasising the need for substantial out-sourcing of technical support;
- (10) Whereas COST is an intergovernmental framework for the co-ordination of nationally funded research at a European level, characterised by the following principles:
- "bottom-up" initiative from the European scientific and technical community,
  - "à la carte" or "variable geometry" concept for organisation of networks,
  - "co-ordination of research capacity" using the network of 35 national co-ordinators and 12 technical committees,
  - "openness to non-European participation";
- (11) Whereas the European Science Foundation (ESF), founded in 1974, is a non-profit association of 70 national funding agencies devoted to scientific research in 27 European countries <sup>2</sup>;
- (12) Whereas the ESF fulfils the criteria to be a legal entity eligible for financial support from the European Community;
- (13) Whereas the ESF expressed its preparedness to provide and manage the administrative, technical and scientific secretariat for COST, its Technical Committees and its Actions;

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<sup>1</sup> An Assessment of COST, a report with recommendations (55 pages)

<sup>2</sup> Statement from the European Science Foundation (Annex 2)

THEREFORE:

The COST Senior Officials and the ESF, with a view of contributing to the strengthening of the European Research Area arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The ESF is prepared, as from 1 January 2003, to act as the legal entity to provide and manage the administrative, technical and scientific secretariat for COST, its Technical Committees and its Actions, dependent of the appropriate funding for the COST activities and the COST Office being made available from the EU RTD framework programme.
2. Therefore the ESF will establish a COST Office. The main functions and responsibilities of that Office are set out in Annex 1.
3. Under the new arrangement, COST will retain its above characteristics of an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism governed by the CSO as its decision-making body.
4. The secretariat of the CSO and its sub-committees will continue to be assumed by the Secretariat General of the Council of the European Union.
5. The arrangement will not constitute an obstacle to the membership of COST not coinciding with the ESF nor to COST's openness towards COST Action participation from third partners.
6. A Transition Working Party, consisting of representatives of ESF and COST, will be created, to advise on the integration of the operation and on appropriate modalities. The Transition Working Party will submit its proposals to both COST and ESF for approval.
7. The present MoU will have effect until the end of the Community's Sixth Framework Programme. The COST and the ESF decided to assess the operation of the MoU at the latest by 1 July 2005 with a view to transmitting their opinions, and possible recommendations for the future; to the Council, Parliament and Commission, in particular to provide the latter with suggestions likely to be relevant for future Framework Programme proposals.

**Draft configuration of a COST Office of the ESF**

1. The COST Office will be responsible for the general administration of the activities of the Technical Committees and of the Actions activities of COST and for preparing and implementing the decisions of the CSO as decided between the CSO and the ESF.
2. The COST Office will participate actively in the development of COST and formulate recommendations or deliver opinions on relevant matters.
3. The COST Office will be led by a Head of the COST Office responsible to the Secretary General of the ESF and reporting to the CSO. The ESF Secretary General will be responsible for the appointment of the Head of the COST Office. The appointment will be made in consultation with the Presidency of the CSO. The Head of the COST Office will be responsible for providing the support for COST, as decided between the CSO and the ESF. The staff of the COST Office will be appointed by the Secretary General of the ESF including the appointment of seconded personnel.
4. The Head of the COST Office will be responsible for the execution of its activities as decided between the CSO and the ESF. She/he will also ensure that any of these activities will be in conformity with the objectives and the interests of COST.
5. The responsibilities of the COST Office, in addition to those specified above, will consist of the following:
  - (i) to draw-up a yearly activity plan, as well as the budget proposal for each financial year including revisions and the sources of revenue and a budget for the COST Office;
  - (ii) to draw-up the annual activity report and the financial statement for each completed financial year;

- (iii) to ensure the liaison with all committees of COST and the COST Council Secretariat;
- (iv) to give secretarial support to the Technical Committees of COST and to ensure secretarial support to COST Actions;
- (v) to propose procedures and any amendments thereto for approval by the CSO, as consented between the CSO and the ESF;
- (vi) to provide COST with background documentation and scientific secretariat support, as specified in COST guidelines and procedures;
- (vii) to actively promote and publicise COST;
- (viii) to give support for the preparation of proposals for COST Actions;
- (ix) to provide financial support to the activities of the Technical Committees and of the Actions of COST;
- (x) to promote the synergy between COST and the Framework Programme in the European Research Area;
- (xi) to disseminate the results of the COST Actions and encourage their valorisation;
- (xii) to maintain relevant databases and websites
- (xiii) any other activities necessary to achieve the objectives of COST and decided upon between the CSO and the ESF.

### **Statement from the European Science Foundation**

The European Science Foundation (ESF), founded in 1974, is a non-profit association of 70 national funding agencies and academies devoted to scientific research in 27 European countries, is characterised by the following principles:

- Promotion of the integration of the European research community through 'bottom-up' networking instruments;
- Commitment to ensuring scientific excellence through peer review procedures while promoting good and ethically sound research practice;
- Operation of open and transparent variable geometry (à la carte) based on the two above principles;
- Stimulation of innovative research at a European level and the reinforcement of European scientific capacity and capability;
- Strengthening of scientific self-administration in Europe.

As befits a science-based organisation, it is important to recognise that all scientific decisions in which ESF is involved are taken on the basis of high quality scientific advice and assessment. While administrative advice is sought as appropriate, the process of scientific decision taking is not subject to political interference.

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