



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

Brussels, 1 July 2010

Secretariat

COST 4178/10

NOTE

Subject: COST Ministerial Conference, Palma de Mallorca 15 June 2010
- Summary of discussions

Further to the adoption of the Declaration on COST¹, the Conference had an exchange of views on the basis of Notes for discussion provided by the Chair (Annex). Points raised by delegations included the following:

- The value of the **characteristics** of COST was very largely reaffirmed: openness, inclusiveness, flexibility, bottom-up and non-thematic nature and involvement of early-stage researchers. In particular, the role of COST in capacity building and as a "stepping stone" to European research cooperation was stressed. A number of delegations indicated that COST has been explicitly included as an element in their national R&D strategies.

¹ Doc. 4175/10.

- The **continued distinct role of COST** was emphasised in supporting, for its part, the necessary further internationalisation of national research activities (also beyond Europe), which is an increasingly important element of the **European Research Area** (ERA). Networking activities remain essential, and even if the magnitude of COST as such may be limited it continues to provide significant leveraging and catalysing effect. In case other R&D initiatives at European level were to grow in size, this could even provide further scope for COST-type mechanisms. It was also emphasised that the partnership between COST and the European Union should be maintained, in which context the EU Council ("Competitiveness") could also include COST in one of its forthcoming discussions.
- In order to maintain COST as a viable mechanism, the **quality** of its activities should be maintained. Also, the transfer of results from COST Actions and outreach activities could be reinforced.
- Given the fact that COST Actions often involve partners from higher education institutions, research organisations as well as industry, COST could also play a role in the implementation of the "**knowledge triangle**" concept.
- Further improvements in the **governance** of COST were called for, notably in terms of efficiency and flexibility, also taking into account the possible developments in the ERA landscape. Also, the visibility of COST and the due linking of COST to other European mechanisms should be ensured. As to the question of organising cost activities in the future, some delegations expressly welcomed the prospect of an independent legal entity (COST Office Association) to this effect, whilst some others stressed the need to ensure that a possible independent COST would remain viable.
- Finally, delegations acknowledged the role of the leaving **CSO President** Francesco FEDI during his Presidency (2004-2010).

European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST)

Notes for Discussion

“The Role of European Cooperation in Science and Technology at the light of the EU2020 priorities”

- o At the political level, COST has been acknowledged on a number of occasions. The EU Council has reaffirmed the European Research Area (ERA) as a core element of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs and stressed the necessity to ensure that the ERA is fully operational and fully contributes to the “knowledge triangle” of research, innovation and education driving the international competitiveness and sustainable development of Europe and underpinning its ambitions to further develop its position as a leading knowledge economy and society. In the context of ERA assessment and co-ordination, the EU Competitiveness Council also recalled that one of the traditional networking activities, COST, continues to be essential to the creation of a true spirit of cooperation. This spirit will be required if synergies between existing and possibly new instruments is to achieve better impact from research investments and to substantially reduce the already heavy burden of administration and bureaucracy associated with managing transnational research projects.

- o Today, we have a new Treaty for the European Union that puts forward for the first time the creation of the **European research area** as the means to arrive at the main objective of the Union, namely to strengthen its scientific and technological bases.

- o The Treaty on the functioning of the European Union also refers to the competences of the Union and the Member States, concerning the objectives of the Union research policy and clearly states **the competence sharing** between the Union and the Member States in the field of research, in particular as regards new emphasis to the development of the European Research Area.

- o 2010 has also witnessed the launching of a **New European Strategy for a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth (EU 2020)**. A strategy in which research and innovation are once more highlighted as essential drivers of our future growth. In particular, the “Innovation Union” flagship initiative of this new strategy aims at the completion of the European Research Area, and calls on Member States to enhance cross-border cooperation in areas with EU added value. The initiative also underlines the necessity of strengthening and further developing the role of the different EU instruments to support innovation.

- o Within this new framework:

Questions:

I. How to improve (can be reinforced) the national research and technology policy frameworks using the COST mechanism?

II. What role can COST play in the future for the achievement of the ERA objectives, considering the Europe’s multitude of systems for the support of research, education and innovation?
