

Brussels, 26 April 2018

COST 134/14 REV 3

CSO DECISION

Subject: **Amendment of document COST 134/14: COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment**

The “COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment” lays down the rules on management, monitoring and final assessment of COST Actions. The Committee of Senior Officials at the 203rd CSO meeting of 25-26 April 2018 approved the present revision. This revision regards:

- termination cases (breach of eligibility criteria and other breaches of fundamental COST Rules);
- the role of the Scientific Committee in monitoring and final assessment;
- clarification of e-voting rules in Annex - Rules of Procedure for COST Action management Committees.

These rules shall enter into force on the date of the present decision.



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COST ACTION MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

The COST Committee of Senior Officials (“CSO”) in respect of

the Statutes of the COST Association as revised on 14 Sept 2016;

the Internal Rules of the COST Association;

the CSO Decision COST 132/14 REV 3, “Rules for the Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities”,

in accordance with its role as General Assembly of the COST Association,

Whereas:

- (1) COST Members have established an International not-for-profit Association, the COST Association, integrating the governance, management and implementation functions of COST.
- (2) COST contributes to the objective of strengthening the scientific and technological bases of the European Research Area by promoting the European-based scientific and technological networking encouraging all stakeholders to share, create and apply knowledge, thereby encouraging Europe to become more competitive.
- (3) COST shall be open to all fields in Science and Technology and wishes to foster multi- and interdisciplinary, aiming notably to enable breakthrough scientific developments leading to new concepts, services and products.
- (4) COST is supported by the European Union (EU) Framework Programme promoting research and innovation activities and fostering better exploitation of the industrial potential of policies of innovation, research and technological development in the European Research Area.
- (5) COST shall be implemented in accordance and compliance, where applicable, with the EU Financial Regulation (Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council) and its Rules of Application (Commission Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1268/2012) or any subsequent regulation.
- (6) The set of “COST Implementation Rules” should provide a coherent, comprehensive and transparent frame to ensure efficient and harmonised implementation of activities, as well as ease access for all potential stakeholders, by promoting and facilitating participation from a wide range of researchers, engineers or scholars from universities, research centres, and companies, as well as other relevant stakeholders (in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and legal entities.
- (7) For the benefit of the COST Action Participants the COST Implementation Rules should be robust, stable and consistent and should focus on best interest of research communities and foster mutual trust in their networking activities.
- (8) COST should provide funding for activities of relevance for fulfilling COST mission and achieving COST objectives, more particularly for COST Actions, the COST networking instrument.
- (9) COST should further encourage participation of young talents and next generation leaders in science and technology promote working opportunities for Early Career Investigators and gender balance.
- (10) COST should support integration of scientific research communities and increase the contribution of the participants from identified Inclusiveness Target Countries in COST activities.

- (11) COST should fund networking activities in the field of science and technology destined only for peaceful purposes; any funding of activities related to sensitive technology development, armament or defence oriented research should be avoided. COST should support activities carried out in compliance with fundamental ethical principles.
- (12) COST should foresee appropriate scientific and technological monitoring and follow-up in view of assessing the results, outcomes and impacts of COST Actions and other activities.
- (13) COST should establish the frame for a proper impact analysis and comprehensive statistics of participation in COST Actions and other activities as well as results and outcomes.
- (14) COST should encourage the use, dissemination and exploitation of research results while, where appropriate, giving particular attention to confidential data and protection of intellectual property generated through COST activities, in particular through COST Actions. COST activities should not contribute to distortions in access to markets or development of monopolies.
- (15) COST should promote Open Access and encourage availability of results published thanks to COST funding and thereby contributing to boost worldwide visibility of European science and technology.
- (16) COST should protect EU financial interests and ensure sound financial management. COST is aware that the EU auditing procedures apply.

The CSO has adopted the present rules for “COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment” in accordance with the “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST activities”. They aim at further developing on the principles and rules contained in the “Rules for the Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities”.

The present rules shall be subordinated to and may not contravene the “Rules for the Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities”. In case of any contradiction between those CSO Decisions, the “COST Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities” shall prevail.

SUBJECT MATTER AND SCOPE

COST shall strive to implement transparent, cost-efficient, timely and simple management, monitoring and assessment procedures.

This decision shall lay down the rules for the management, monitoring and final assessment of COST Actions and strive to achieve the best quality performance and outcomes. These rules derive from the basic principles laid down in the “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities”.

These rules shall be further detailed and explained in the COST Vademecum and in the related Guidelines.

DEFINITIONS

Definitions of the “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities” shall apply to this Decision.

Further, for the purpose of the present rules, the following definition shall apply:

Action Rapporteur: means an independent external expert with pertinent expertise in the Action’s fields of science and technology and knowledge of COST appointed by the COST Association from the COST Experts database in order to ensure monitoring and assessment of the designated COST Action as described under paragraph 4.4 of the present rules and procedure.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

The objective of the rules and procedure described herein shall be to enhance the management quality and implement transparent monitoring and final assessment of COST Actions. They shall aim at addressing the COST mission and policies. Particular attention shall be paid to enhancing the support of Early Career Investigators and promoting gender balance.

Action proposals shall be submitted for evaluation and selection following the COST Open Call. The selection of proposals for COST Actions shall be outlined in the rules for “COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval” and accompanying guidelines.

After approval by the CSO, the Action’s Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) shall be prepared for each new COST Action and shall be opened for participation as described in the present document.

1. BASIC PRINCIPLES

COST Actions shall be overall governed by legal, ethical, contractual, financial and administrative principles, rules and procedures, as well as by the nature and source of COST funding in the form of EU public funds.

More specifically, the implementation of COST Actions shall be oriented towards the fulfilment of the objectives described in the MoU and the basic principles described therein, comply with the COST Action Grant Agreement and be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the present rules.

2. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

2.1. STRUCTURE OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

To launch a new COST Action a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) must be prepared. The MoU consists of two parts: the MoU and the Technical Annex.

The MoU comprises:

- The reference number and title of the Action;
- The main aim of the Action;
- The required minimum number of COST Members participating in the Action;
- The duration of the Action, calculated as from the date of the first meeting of the Action Management Committee.

The Technical Annex contains a description of the COST Action structure, objectives, strategy and networking project, namely the COST Action Structure and Strategy.

2.2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AND START OF ACTION

Within a period of twelve (12) months after the approval of the Action, any COST Member may join the Action. After this period, additional COST Members may join the Action subject to the agreement of the Action MC.

The Action shall start on the date of the first Action MC meeting which may take place only after at least seven (7) COST Full or Cooperating Members have accepted the MoU. COST Actions normally have a duration of four (4) years calculated from the date of the first MC meeting.

At the first Action MC meeting, the MC shall elect the Action Chair and select the Grant Holder. These steps are mandatory in order to proceed with the signature of the Action Grant Agreement (AGA)¹. The MC shall also elect the Action Vice-Chair. Other key leadership positions required for achievement of the Actions' objectives and the implementation of the networking tools shall be elected at the first possible opportunity.

One of the key leadership positions in the Action management (e.g. Action Chair, Vice-Chair, Working Group Leader, Grant Holder Scientific Representative, STSM Coordinator, Science Communication Manager) shall be reserved for representatives of a COST Inclusiveness Target Country.

Actions that fail to start within nine (9) months from the date of approval of the Action proposal by the CSO due to lack of the minimum number of participating COST Members, or because the first meeting of the Action MC has not been held within nine months of the date of approval, shall be reported to the CSO for decision.

3. CHANGES TO A COST ACTION

Possible changes to the MoU:

- Any proposed change to a COST Action main aim and objectives shall be based on Scientific & Technological (S&T) justification and be brought to the attention of the CSO for decision;
- A COST Member participating in the Action which intends, for any reason whatsoever, to terminate its participation, shall notify the COST Association of its intention immediately;
- If the number of COST Members participating in the COST Action falls below the minimum number of seven, the Action shall be terminated;
- If within twelve months from the start of the Action, there is not at least one key leadership position as described in point 2.2 held by an Action Participant from a COST Inclusiveness Target Country, the case shall be reported to CSO for decision;
- The duration of a COST Action may be shortened or exceptionally extended by the CSO, if well justified, in the following cases:
 - The COST Action may be terminated before its originally intended end date if any circumstances make the benefit of continuing the COST Action questionable; termination of COST Actions shall be exceptional and shall be duly justified from an S&T or network activities point of view. Amongst others, breach of one or several fundamental ethical principles as described in the COST Code of Conduct² or in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity³ at any given time during the running of the COST Action may lead to termination of the COST Action; in that specific case, the CSO shall take its decision based on a recommendation of the Scientific Committee.
 - The COST Action may be extended for a maximum of six months beyond its originally intended end date. Such extension shall only be possible if during the course of the Action the Action MC notes that it shall be, for technical reasons, impossible to bring the work under the Action within the normal duration to a satisfactory conclusion, or if the monitoring process of the COST Action reveals that the extension would contribute to the achievement of the proposed objectives and is likely to maximise the impact of the COST Action; Extensions of COST Actions shall be exceptional and shall be duly justified from an S&T or network activities point of view. The extension has to be requested at the latest

¹ Details may be found under COST Vademecum.

² COST 081/15 dated 18 Nov 2015 or any successor document, COST Code of Conduct, www.cost.eu/download/Code_of_Conduct;

³ European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, Berlin, ALLEA – All European Academies, published on http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/h2020-ethics_code-of-conduct_en.pdf

six (6) months before the end date of the COST Action. The final assessment of COST Actions having benefited from an extension shall include a dedicated section assessing the extension period.

The Technical Annex may be revised by the Action MC to follow the needs of implementation or any relevant scientific/technological development occurring during the lifetime of the Action. Such changes shall obtain prior agreement of the COST Association administration.

4. COST ACTION MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

COST Actions shall be open to any participant relevant to the Action who shall be committed to achieving the objectives laid out in the MoU.

The Action activities shall be planned by the Action MC in compliance with the objectives, strategy, structure, and work plan presented in the MoU. They shall be reflected in the Work and Budget Plan (WB&P) annexed to the AGA.

COST Action grants shall be devoted to the MoU implementation and respect the AGA conditions. The COST networking tools shall help in achieving the Action objectives; all research and other activities needed to achieve those objectives shall be deemed to be funded by national or other source of funds.

The management of a COST Action comprises the various aspects necessary for the organisation, implementation and completion of its activities towards achievement of its objectives. They shall be summarised as follows:

- Action Participation: this includes the rules, procedures and responsibilities linked to the involvement, role and tasks of Action Participants in COST Actions;
- Action Objectives: The Action objectives as detailed in the MoU and Technical Annex;
- Action Strategy and Structure: this comprises the organisation of the Action in:
 - The Action Scientific & Technological (S&T) research networking activities necessary to achieve the objectives;
 - The internal organisation of the Action into Working Groups and other managing structures needed for the successful implementation of the Action;
 - The work plan including efficient use of the networking tools – meetings (Action MC meetings, Working Group meetings, workshops, conferences), Short Term Scientific Missions, Training Schools and Dissemination activities to share ideas and knowledge and create added value;
 - The timeline for the implementation of the Action activities and the achievement of objectives within the Action lifetime.
- Action Budget and Administration: this comprises the administrative and financial coordination and management linked to the Action;
- Action Monitoring and Final Assessment: this comprises the follow-up and assessment of the level of achievement of an Action's objectives whether on-going or concluded.

4.1. COST ACTION PARTICIPATION

Action Participants shall engage to contribute to the achievement of the objectives set in the Action MoU and Technical Annex and conditions described in the AGA and have thereby accepted to respect the set of COST Implementation Rules and the COST Vademecum.

All Action Participants need to have a registered profile in the COST electronic database, e-COST. The following restrictions apply to Action Participants:

- CSO members may not be Action Participants;

- COST National Coordinators and Scientific Committee Members may not become Action Participants during their CNC/ SC mandate;
- External Experts having evaluated a proposal may not participate in the Action deriving from that proposal;
- Ad-hoc Review Panel Members may not participate in any Action approved following the evaluation process in which they were involved in that position;
- Action Rapporteurs may not be Participants of the Action they are reviewing.

4.2. COST ACTION OBJECTIVES, STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE

The COST Action objectives shall be clearly stated in the MoU and Technical Annex. COST Actions shall aim at their achievement. They shall thereby contribute to the fulfilment of the COST Association aim and goals.

The coordination, implementation and management of a COST Action, as well as the supervision of the appropriate allocation and use of the grant, shall be entrusted to the Action MC.

Each Action MC member represents the COST Member for which they were nominated by the COST National Coordinator, regardless of their nationality. The COST National Coordinators should, when nominating Action MC members, take into account the Scientific Committee recommendations for the proposal as well as the COST Policy and the competences required to achieve the objectives of the Action.

The Action MC shall be composed of up to two representatives from each COST Member participating in the Action. Each COST Full or Cooperating Member shall have one vote at the Action MC.

The Action MC may include up to two representatives from each non-COST Country as MC Observers; these representatives shall come from different institutions. Specific Organisations may appoint representatives to participate in the Action. MC Observers have no voting rights⁴.

The COST Action MC shall:

- Define and manage the Action Strategy and Structure, including election of the Action Chair, Vice-Chair and Grant Holder, Working Group composition or membership, leadership and structure, and other activities necessary to achieve the Action objectives;
- Establish specific provisions linked to the management, share, creation, dissemination or exploitation of knowledge, including Open Access policy and management of Intellectual Property that may rise from an Action. These provisions shall comply with national, European or international legislation and the need for protecting the Action Participants' legitimate interests;
- Perform the reporting duties allowing for monitoring the Progress for and assessment of the Action and financial reporting (see below);
- Decide, among potentially eligible Action Participants, the ones entitled to reimbursement.

The 'Rules of Procedure for Action Management Committee' in Annex I contain the provisions for the internal decision-making process and the management of the activities of the Action MC.

⁴ See "COST Rules for Participation of Non-COST countries and Specific Organisations"

4.3. COST ACTION BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION

COST Actions shall be administered through the COST decentralised management scheme, the COST Grant System (CGS)⁵.

Under the COST Grant System the Action financial management and administration shall be entrusted to and implemented by the Grant Holder, in compliance with Action MC decisions.

The Grant Holder shall be the legal entity signing the AGA on behalf of the Action and ensuring the legal and financial administration of the COST Action as defined in the MoU and the AGA. As such, it fulfils the conditions described in the AGA and shall respect the set of COST Implementation Rules and the COST Vademecum, where further information on the nature of an AGA and the role and responsibilities of the Grant Holder may be found⁶.

The first Action MC meeting of a COST Action shall be organised by COST. The costs thereof shall fall outside of the COST Grant System.

4.4. COST ACTION MONITORING AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

All COST Actions shall be monitored during their implementation and be assessed at their completion. Such exercise, performed via a documented analysis of the results and outcomes of COST Action S&T and networking activities, shall aim at contributing to the best dissemination and exploitation of COST Action results and outcomes and to maximise the potential impact of COST Actions.

Each COST Action shall benefit from an independent external monitoring and final assessment, carried by an Action Rapporteur. In exceptional cases, where additional expertise might be needed, a second Rapporteur may be appointed.

Action Rapporteurs shall be identified based on the fields and sub-fields of science and technology following the OECD classification which are of pertinence for each COST Action.

Action Rapporteurs shall advise the Action MC on the strategic orientation of activities and structure to best serve the Action objectives, they shall perform the reporting duties for the monitoring and assessment of an Action, without prejudice of the management and monitoring responsibilities of the COST Association, to whom they shall report on the activities and advancements of the Action.

4.4.1. OBLIGATION OF CONFIDENTIALITY

All individuals involved in the monitoring and final assessment of COST Actions shall commit to confidentiality. The experts involved in the monitoring and final assessment procedures shall:

- Treat confidentially any information and documents, in any form (i.e. paper or electronic), disclosed in writing or orally in relation to the performance of the monitoring and final assessment;
- Not disclose, directly or indirectly, confidential information or documents relating to Actions, without prior written approval of the COST Association;
- Not disclose any detail of the monitoring and final assessment procedures and their outcomes for any purpose other than fulfilling their tasks as Action Rapporteur.

4.4.2. COST ACTION MONITORING

The monitoring of COST Actions shall be the regular follow-up and review of running COST Actions.

⁵ Details may be found under COST Vademecum.

⁶ See COST Vademecum

The main objective of the external monitoring shall be to provide an assessment on the progress of the COST Action with relation to the implementation of networking activities, the development of S&T activities towards the Action's objectives and the putting into practice of the COST Policy.

The COST Action monitoring exercise aims at giving advice to the Action MC where necessary, identifying and suggesting eventual corrective measures and/or best practices.

The Action MC shall produce progress reports at months 12 and 24 of the Action implementation, using the templates provided by COST, which shall constitute the basis for the monitoring of the COST Action.

The Action Rapporteur shall prepare at month 24 a Progress Review with recommendations to the Action MC concerning Action implementation in view of ensuring the achievement of the objectives stated in the MoU. In fulfilling its responsibilities, the Action MC shall take into consideration the findings, advice and recommendations of the Action Rapporteur.

4.4.3. COST ACTION FINAL ASSESSMENT

The COST Action final assessment exercise shall aim at assessing the Action achievements against the objectives and potential impact.

The final assessment of COST Actions shall be to determine how well the COST Action has reached its stated objectives and might have eventually created an impact after completion, including any follow-up initiatives or R&D activities in the area covered by the COST Action.

The main objective of the final assessment shall be:

- i) to identify how well the Action has reached its defined objectives and goals;
- ii) to identify expected immediate, mid-term and envisaged long-term impacts of the Action after its completion, including the initiation of any follow-up activities and its impact on R&D activities in the area covered by the Action.
- iii) to collect data necessary to demonstrate COST performance and impact.

The final assessment shall be carried out at the end of each COST Action, normally at month 48. The Action Rapporteur shall prepare a Final Assessment Report highlighting the Action achievements and impact, identification of potential success story(ies) and indicating any emerging or potentially important future developments. The information shall be provided to the Scientific Committee in order to allow the development of their role on impact assessment of the ended COST Actions.

4.4.4. ROLE OF THE COST SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE IN THE ACTION MONITORING AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

The Scientific Committee has a strategic role in the Monitoring and Final Assessment of COST Actions and is responsible for the analysis of the outcomes and impact of the ended Actions.

The SC may request and shall receive any relevant information so as to carry out its role in relation to the monitoring of running COST Actions.

This Monitoring and Final Assessment of COST Actions shall allow the Scientific Committee to foster the strategic orientation of COST activities and give advice and recommendation on S&T strategies to the CSO.

5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

COST expects ethical behaviour from all actors in COST Activities in accordance with the principles established in the “COST Code of Conduct”. COST shall strive to avoid any Conflict of Interest in its activities.

The present rules shall define and describe the handling of Conflict of Interest situation in the monitoring and final assessment of COST Action, in accordance with the principles established in the “COST Code of Conduct”. They shall apply to any person involved in the procedure, i.e. Action Participant, Action Rapporteur, Scientific Committee Member.

5.1. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DEFINITION AND CASES

A Conflict of Interest with regard to the monitoring and final assessment of COST Actions shall be the risk that professional judgement or actions regarding a person’s duties and responsibilities shall be unduly influenced by that person’s professional or private interests.

A Conflict of Interest can be real, potential or perceived.

5.1.1. REAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST CASES

The Action Rapporteur involved in the monitoring and final assessment procedures:

- Was one of the proposers for the Action;
- Is or was an Action Participant.

5.1.2. POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST CASES

The Action Rapporteur involved in the monitoring and final assessment procedures:

- Was aware of the preparation of the proposal for the Action;
- Has a professional or personal relationship with any of the Action participants;
- Stands to benefit directly or indirectly from the Action;

5.1.3. PERCEIVED CONFLICT OF INTEREST CASE

The Action Rapporteur involved in the monitoring and final assessment procedures:

- Feels for any reason unable to provide an impartial review (progress monitoring and final assessment) of the Action.

5.2. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Action Rapporteurs as well as Scientific Committee Members shall sign a declaration stating/accepting that they:

- are not aware of any conflict of interest with the Action or Actions to be monitored and assessed;
- shall inform immediately the COST Association of any conflict of interest discovered during the monitoring and final assessment procedure;
- shall maintain the confidentiality of the procedure.

TABLE 1: INCOMPATIBILITIES

This table presents cases where a position shall be incompatible with monitoring and final assessment procedures.

Procedure	Action Chair, Vice-Chair, MC member, Action Participant	Scientific Committee Member
Monitoring	X	X
Final assessment	X	X

X = incompatible

COST National Coordinators and CSO members may not be involved in Action Monitoring and Final Assessment.

CONSEQUENCES

The first duty of any person involved in the monitoring and final assessment procedures shall be to declare a Conflict of Interest.

Failure to declare the Conflict of Interest shall have the following consequences:

- Notification to the Director of the COST Association;
- Removal of the Action Rapporteur from the COST Expert Database.

All cases of Conflict of Interest shall be recorded in writing.

1. If the Conflict of Interest is identified/confirmed during the monitoring and/or final assessment:
 - The Action Rapporteur shall stop the monitoring and/or final assessment of the Action and shall be replaced if in the opinion of the COST Association the Conflict of Interest identified/confirmed would preclude the Action Rapporteur from making an impartial monitoring or final assessment of the Action;
 - Any comments and marks already given by the Action Rapporteur shall be discarded.
2. If the Conflict of Interest is identified/confirmed after the monitoring and final assessment has taken place, the COST Association shall examine:
 - The potential impact and consequences of the Conflict of Interest and take appropriate measures.

The COST Association has the right to take the lead in any resolution process of a Conflict of Interest situation at any moment of monitoring and final assessment.

FINAL PROVISIONS

The present Rules shall be binding in their entirety and directly applicable to all COST Actions.

Any change or derogations to the present rules shall be subject to the approval of the CSO.

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR COST ACTION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

Article 1

The Action Management Committee (Action MC) for COST Action has been set up in accordance with the provisions of the “COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment”.

The members of the Action MC shall be nominated by the COST National Coordinator (CNC) of the respective COST Full or Cooperating Member participating in the Action. The Action MC consists of up to two representatives for each COST Full or Cooperating Member. Action MC members shall be considered as representatives of their COST Full or Cooperating Member. The CNCs should nominate up to three Action MC substitutes.

Representatives from COST Partner Members may participate in the Action MC as MC Observers, with no voting right.

Researchers, engineers or scholars or other stakeholders from non-COST Countries may be MC Observers; participation shall be limited to up to two representatives provided they come from two different institutions of the country in question.

Specific Organisations may be represented in the Action MC as MC Observers. Their participation shall follow the “Rules for Participation of Non-COST countries and Specific Organisations”. MC observers have no voting right and shall be approved by the Action MC.

Article 2

The main responsibilities of the Action MC shall be, as defined in Section 4.3. – *COST Action Strategy and Structure* of the “COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment”, to ensure the coordination, implementation and management of the Action as well as supervising the appropriate allocation and use of the funds. Minutes shall be taken at each Action MC meeting and uploaded into e-COST.

Article 3

Each COST Full and Cooperating Member participating in the Action has one vote in the Action MC. If a Action MC member is unable to attend a meeting, the vote may be delegated to an officially appointed substitute (see Article 4). MC Observers from COST Partner Members, non-COST Countries or Specific Organisations have the right to express their views but not to vote.

Votes may be held electronically via e-mail and shall be valid if all of the following conditions are met:

- 3.1 Voting shall be initiated and managed by the Action Chair (Whenever the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder or acts as a local organiser, initiating a vote with as object commitments, validation and approval shall be transferred to the Vice-Chair);
- 3.2 All Action MC members shall be among the recipients of the message initiating the vote (and MC Observers receive the message but have no voting right);
- 3.3 MC Substitutes may only vote where specifically requested to do so by a MC member that is unable to participate in the vote;
- 3.4 Where the two MC members of a COST Full or Cooperating Member express dissenting positions the vote of that COST Full or Cooperating Member shall be recorded as invalid;
- 3.5 The vote shall be open for seven days;
- 3.6 The COST Association shall be informed of the outcome of the vote;
- 3.7 The outcome of the vote shall be included in the minutes of the next Action MC meeting after the electronic vote is held.

In case of electronic vote, absence of reply shall be interpreted as consent except as otherwise decided by the Action MC. Electronic vote (via e-mail) may not be used for the approval of non-COST Countries

and Specific Organisation participation nor for the approval of the annual Work and Budget Plan, for which specific procedures and dedicated online tools shall be available.

Article 4

Action MC members may, with the agreement of the Action Chair, be replaced by a MC substitute nominated by the COST National Coordinator. In case the MC substitutes are also unavailable an alternative representative may only participate in the Action MC meeting with the express consent of the Action Chair and the COST National Coordinator. Attendance at the Action MC meeting should be limited to members (or their substitute), as well as the designated MC Observers.

Article 5

The Action MC may decide that some of its discussions or certain minutes of meetings and other documents be considered confidential; those documents shall be sent to the COST Association. Documents shall not be considered confidential unless this is clearly stated on the front page.

The information supplied by the Action MC members shall not be published without their consent.

Article 6

If in the course of the Action results are obtained or expected, which could give rise to intellectual property rights, the Action MC shall take the necessary steps, be it by written agreement among the Action MC members or otherwise, in order to protect these rights, with respect to the principles set out in "Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities" and corresponding guidelines.

Article 7

The Action MC appoints by a simple majority vote from among its members an Action Chair and a Vice-Chair for the duration of the Action.

Representatives from European RTD Organisations shall be eligible to be elected as Action Chair or Vice-Chair provided a COST Full or Cooperating Member first nominates them as Action MC member. MC Observers from COST Partner Members, non-COST Countries and Specific Organisations other than European RTD Organisations are not eligible to be elected Action Chair or Vice-Chair nor WG Leaders.

The election shall take place during the first Action MC meeting.

If the Action Chair is unable to attend a meeting, their place shall be taken by the Vice-Chair. Whenever the Action Chair is affiliated to the Grant Holder or acts as a local organiser, commitments, validation and approval shall be transferred to the Vice-Chair.

In the event of the premature resignation or termination of the appointment of the Action Chair or Vice-Chair, they shall be replaced for the remainder of the mandate, again by a simple majority vote to elect a new Action Chair and/or Vice-Chair.

The COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) may, in exceptional cases⁷, revoke the Action Chair and/or Vice-Chair. The CSO shall issue a written justification of the act to the Action MC. Such decision shall be without the possibility of appeal.

Article 8

⁷ Such cases would include, *inter alia*, non-compliance with the COST rules, including this document, the COST Code of Conduct, the COST Vademecum and/ or the Guidelines for COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment.

One of the key leadership positions in the Action management (e.g. Action Chair, Vice-Chair, Working Group Leader, Grant Holder Scientific Representative, STSM Coordinator, Science Communication Manager) shall be reserved for a representative of a COST Inclusiveness Target Country.

Article 9

Except for exceptional and justified reasons, meetings of the Action MC may be held only if at least two-thirds of the COST Full or Cooperating Members participating in the Action are represented.

Decisions of the Action MC shall be taken by simple majority vote of Action MC members present or represented at the meeting, with one vote per COST Full or Cooperating Member participating in the Action. In the event of a tie, the procedure may be repeated. The Action Chair does not have the right to vote.

The minutes of an Action MC meeting at which at least two-thirds of the COST Full or Cooperating Members participating in the Action are not represented shall be approved by an Action MC vote according to Article 3.

Article 10

The Action MC shall be convened by the Action Chair as often as required for the performance of its tasks and not less than once per year.

It may also be convened at the request of members representing at least three COST Full or Cooperating Members participating in the Action.

Article 11

Support for the Action MC shall be provided by the Grant Holder following the COST Grant System. Support to the Action MC may be provided by the COST Association on a subsidiary basis for meetings organised outside of the COST Grant System

Article 12

The COST Association shall receive copies of correspondence and minutes of meetings pertinent to the monitoring of the Action.

Official documents to be distributed by the Grant Holder (or by the COST Association in case of meeting organised under the centralised management) at meetings shall be provided at least one week before the meeting. Whenever possible, documents should be electronically distributed by the authors directly to the Action Participants and the Grant Holder as well as to the COST Association.

Article 13

Meetings shall be held where the Action MC considers it advisable to meet, in easy to reach locations such as universities or research organisations of any COST Full or Cooperating Member participating in the Action. The first Action MC meeting shall be organised by the COST Association and shall take place in Brussels.

Article 14

The working language of the Action MC shall be English. Documents emanating from the Action MC shall be written in English.

Article 15

These Rules of Procedure shall be respected and may not be amended by the Action MC.