

COST MINISTERIAL DECLARATION 2021*



Signalling the 50-year landmark of European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) as an intergovernmental organisation since 1971

Europe reinforces its support to COST in the promotion of bottom-up, open, inclusive and global networks, towards a renewed and stronger European Research Area

The Representatives of the Governments of the COST Members,

Recalling the **Ministerial Resolution of 22-23 November 1971**, whereby the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) was established as the first European intergovernmental framework for collaborative research, and the **establishment of the COST Association in 2013**, from then onwards referred to as COST, as an international not-for-profit organisation under Belgian Law (AISBL);

Highlighting the **50-year landmark of COST as an intergovernmental initiative** directly impacting the lives of more than 50.000 researchers, innovators and research managers every year, promoting Europe as a strong, open and inclusive ecosystem of research and innovation;

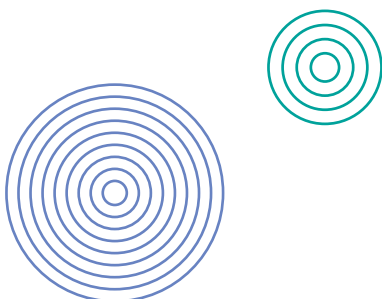
Acknowledging the global reach of COST and welcoming the latest **COST Members: the Republic of Albania**, as agreed by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) at its 203rd meeting in Reykjavík, Iceland, on 25-26 April 2018, **the Republic of Moldova**, as agreed by the CSO at its 204th meeting in Vienna, Austria, on 7-8 November 2018, and the **Republic of South Africa as a COST Partner Member**, as agreed by the CSO at its 206th meeting in Bucharest, Romania, on 10-11 April 2019;

Recognising the **alignment and the unique contribution of COST** to the **strategic agenda for the EU 2019-2024** and its political guidelines (including the Recovery and Resilience Facility as part of the **Next Generation EU** and more noticeably at the level of research and innovation;

Recognising the **contribution to the new European Research Area (ERA)** Communication, the ERAC Opinion on the ERA, the Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research, and the Widening Strategy for the new European Research and Innovation Programme, Horizon Europe (2021-2027);

Acknowledging the importance of **the European Commission to continue its financial and political support as an active and engaged partner for COST**, allowing COST to meet its strategic goals and targets, and to deliver ERA objectives by acting as a pre-portal to several key initiatives (e.g., MSCA and ERC grantees as well as large collaborative projects), thus contributing to the increase on participation levels and success rates in the EU research and innovation investment programme; and contributing to the science-informed policy advice at European level.

*The Ministerial Declaration was adopted on 4 May 2021 by an overwhelming majority of high-level representatives from the COST Members. Poland, while supporting the Ministerial Declaration, had a reservation concerning the suggested increase in the COST budget should it affect other widening programmes.



Building on the **COST Ministerial Declaration of 2016**, the COST Members stand committed to recognise COST as:

- > *the **leading networking instrument in the ERA**, where true **pan-European collaborations are expanded globally**, based on the diversity of collaborations of researchers across its 38 COST Members and Cooperating Member, enabling knowledge to be turned into innovation with societal impact;*
- > *an innovative intergovernmental initiative, by promoting, a set of **new complementary networking activities since 2017**, namely COST Connect, COST Academy, COST Cross-Cutting Activities, and the pilot of the COST Innovators' Grant (2019), reflecting not only the dynamism and ambition of the COST Association, but also acknowledging the vision of the COST Association to offer stewardship to the COST Actions, creating a myriad of new opportunities to make people and institutions grow through networking and knowledge sharing, and enhancing its impact on society at large;*
- > *strategic in consistently promoting the **career development and empowerment of the young generations** of researchers and innovators, hence contributing decisively to talent attraction and retention in Europe, and to balanced brain circulation;*
- > *an example of effective **articulation and synergy between national and European resources**, namely by funding networking activities which leverage nationally funded research and innovation, and by complementing a centralised structure of human resources with an extended network of COST National Coordinators;*
- > *a **pre-portal, low-entry barrier, and successful pathway towards other funding schemes in the ERA**, embracing openness and inclusiveness as its core values, fostering individual and institutional growth, thus widening the access to excellence and ensuring no one is left behind, making sure present inequalities in R&I performance and working conditions are overcome;*
- > *a unique platform that **builds global collaborative joint efforts in Europe and beyond**, recognising the importance of the COST Near Neighbour Countries and its impact on the respective research and innovation communities, as well as the critical role the COST Partner Member status plays in the globalisation of collaborative patterns, and in the EU strategy for international cooperation in science, technology and innovation.*



Looking forward, the COST Members agree to:

- > *express their ongoing support to COST and its unique role in the European research and innovation system and congratulate COST for its 50 successful years of research by supporting collaboration between researchers and innovators in Europe and worldwide and in creating breakthrough knowledge and innovation;*
- > *call on COST to continue the effort to build collaborative platforms in the ERA and globally, recognise the importance of the COST Near Neighbour Countries participation and its impact on the respective research and innovation communities, as well as the critical role of the COST Partner Member status plays in the globalisation of COST and in the EU strategy for international cooperation in science, technology and innovation;*
- > *call for the European Commission to increase the COST budget by at least 50% compared to Horizon 2020, applicable for the whole duration of Horizon Europe; this increase comes from the already agreed total widening budget and will allow for an increase in the number of excellent proposals funded, stimulate breakthrough knowledge, and enlarge the number of direct beneficiaries, while maintaining the ambition to dedicate 50% of its funds to the R&I communities of the COST Inclusiveness Target Countries;*
- > *encourage COST Members to consider the implementation of nationally funded mechanisms supporting R&I activities and complementary to COST, particularly in the case of young researchers and innovators in leading positions;*
- > *encourage COST to continue to promote research mobility by implementing mechanisms to increase the number of young researchers and innovators in leadership positions, to set more ambitious targets for the participation levels of the less connected R&I communities, and to stimulate career development activities, while advocating for gender equality;*
- > *call upon COST to further act as a cornerstone of the ERA, enhancing its role as an inclusive*

and open collaborative platform for all researchers, innovators and non-specialists at all career stages, establishing synergies between scientific, technological and innovation communities, with a particular emphasis on the area of science-employment-resilience;

- > *urge COST to implement an observatory for institutional and individual collaborative patterns based on COST participants– including the mobility of human capital and capacity building – complementing the R&I Observatory (Policy Support Facility); and in synergy with the ERA Talent Platform, providing further information of the national research and innovation systems, and informing EU and national policy-makers;*
- > *encourage COST to further develop its strategic priorities and to assume a leadership position in terms of modernising networking and collaborative activities in a COVID and post-COVID era, lowering the entrance barriers for the isolated niches of excellence, and contributing to a greener and more digital Europe, promoting the increase of the number of beneficiaries from mobility schemes, stimulating career development tools, and to continue fostering novel interdisciplinary research and innovation;*
- > *encourage the establishment of stronger synergies between COST activities and other Horizon Europe programmes or funding schemes, building on the successful stories of the past 50 years;*
- > *call upon COST to strengthen its role as a talent scouting platform covering a wide range of profiles in the research and innovation spectrum, but also as a space where new ideas emerge and grow, thus providing evidence-based information to understand research and innovation trends, anticipate and complement the activities of the coming EU Framework Programmes, and the coming societal challenges;*
- > *invite the CSO to report to the next COST Ministerial Conference on the achievements realised.*

