

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

Brussels, 24 May 2012

Secretariat

COST 4114/12

DRAFT SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Subject: JAF Group meeting¹ held in Luxembourg on 25 - 26 April 2012

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Group adopted the agenda as set out in CM 2432/12 of 2 April 2012².

2. Approval of Summary of Conclusions of the previous meeting

The Group approved the Summary of Conclusions of the JAF meeting of 16 February 2012 set out in document COST 4105/12.

¹ 28th meeting of JAF in its composition as set out in its Working Methods (COST 283/04).
List of participants in Annex I.

² The agenda points are listed in Annex II.

3. COST Grant Agreement: budgetary information

The President recalled the letter of the Director-General of DG R&I of 27 February 2012 confirming the release of the remaining EUR 10 million to COST, bringing the total EU funding for COST under FP7 to EUR 250 million. The letter had contained a plea to COST to specially contribute to an inclusive research and innovation policy by networking and supporting young promising teams notably from lesser performing European countries in the field of R&I and to pay particular attention to the enlargement countries and the European neighbourhood policy countries. These policy considerations would need to be addressed within the remaining period of FP7. The Director-General had reiterated this message during a meeting with the CSO President and COST Office Director on 24 April 2012 and requested COST to provide a dedicated paper on this issue. The Group had an exchange of views and observed that such a commitment had been reflected in recent COST documents, in particular the COST Position paper (COST 4106/12). However, it was agreed that the issue could be further elaborated and the Group agreed to include this in the agenda of the June CSO meeting, with the aim to develop an "Action Plan" on specific measures for CSO adoption.

The COST Office Director gave an overview on budgetary issues, noting that the additional funding from FP7 will allow various measures to strengthen the support in particular to Science operations, e.g. increased budget allocation per Action, increased number of Actions, adjusted flat rates for reimbursements, encourage STSMs to Neighbouring countries and Strategic activities. In order to implement all these further measures, a proportional number of additional staff will need to be engaged at the COST Office. All these elements need to be included in the next amendment to the Grant Agreement (as from 2 June 2012), for which the ESF proposal should shortly be submitted to the Commission. The JAF gave its full support to the above measures.

Finally, it was noted that the Annual report for 2011 had been submitted and was currently under examination by the relevant Commission services.

4. Proposals for new COST Actions

The Group examined the list of 35 proposals for new COST Actions that had been recommended for funding after the selection process (OC 2011-2). In the light of the new budgetary situation (item 3 above) the Group agreed to propose to include 5 additional top-ranked proposals to be presented for CSO approval³. As regards OC-2012-1 the Group agreed to propose that up to 50 Actions would be presented for CSO approval in November 2012. Furthermore, the figures in the next Collection date announcement (OC-2012-2) in the Official Journal of the EU would be amended accordingly.

The Group discussed the presentation of new proposals at future CSO meetings. There was a general agreement that the presentation should include information of possible trends or patterns (early weak signals) that could be observed from the Calls. It was proposed that, as the Domain Committees would be in an appropriate position to provide insight on such trends and to position their domain in a wider context (links with other existing instruments and initiatives, such as Joint Programming Initiatives), this could be a topic for the next joint meeting between the CSO and the DC Chairs in November.

Finally, the COST Office gave a presentation on the outcome of the 12th Collection date of 30 March 2012 (OC-2012-1). The Group briefly discussed the variations between domains regarding gender and the level of early stage researchers within the proponents⁴.

5. COST-ESF: separation roadmap in progress

The COST Office Director gave a progress report on the roadmap for separation between COST and ESF, as approved by the COST-ESF High Level Group. ESF will assume the responsibility of implementing the COST Grant Agreement until the end of FP7, but work is ongoing to ensure a smooth transition to any new arrangement in an orderly manner as of 1 January 2014.

³ The final list including the 5 additional proposals was agreed through written procedure.

⁴ The statistics have been made available on the CSO website.

In accordance with the roadmap, meetings have been held between COST Office Director and ESF Director of Administration and Finance and Director of Human Resources for thorough preparation of the separation and progressive transfer of responsibilities from ESF to the COST Office (e.g. the budget planning until the end of FP7 and work contracts). Furthermore, an internal roadmap has been presented to all COST Office staff and numerous work packages are ongoing to improve quality and efficiency, e.g. the update of the Vademecum and internal guidelines. The Group welcomed the ongoing work to ensure smooth transition between FP7 and Horizon 2020.

6. COST implementing structure in the next Framework Programme "Horizon 2020"

The President recalled that a draft note including various possibilities for the COST implementing structure had been presented to the CSO meeting in March. The Group stressed the importance to define the main criteria for the future implementing structure and the need for legal expertise for the examination of the various options in order to provide the CSO a solid basis for decision-making. As regards the financial viability of an implementing agent, such as COST Office Association (COA) and the need for guarantees in this respect, it was suggested that the possible role of the European Investment Bank (EIB) should be explored.

In order to prepare for the CSO meeting in June it was agreed that the President would contact legal companies (based on suggestions from JAF members on possible candidates), with the aim to identify a legal expert, who could already be invited to attend the June meeting. The President would also take informal contact with the EIB, as suggested. The Group observed that contacts for joint efforts with EUREKA would need to be maintained to clarify issues common to both frameworks. It was concluded that CSO would discuss the question in June 2012 and agree on the next steps to be taken, with a view to decisions on the implementing structure at the November meeting.

7. CSO timetable for a roadmap until June 2014

The Group examined the draft roadmap for the CSO until June 2014 that had been circulated to delegations prior to the meeting (see also items 5 and 6 above).

8. COST Strategy for International cooperation

The Chair of the COST WG on International cooperation, Ms Ward, presented a progress report following the WG meeting of 7 March 2012. The Group discussed the report, which was considered an excellent basis for the discussion at the June CSO meeting. The Group agreed to the proposed topics for the breakout sessions at the CSO, i.e. "Full membership" and "Reciprocal agreements". An update of the progress report, taking account of suggestions by the participants, will be circulated to delegations.

The Group was informed that the Reciprocal agreement with Argentina would end on 31 May 2012. As the dedicated budget has not been exhausted, the Group was of the opinion that the implementation of the agreement should be prolonged until the end of FP7 with the available remaining funds (in line with other reciprocal agreements) and agreed to submit such a proposal to the June CSO meeting.

9. Proposal for COST CSO Document for COST implementation rules

It was recalled that the CSO in March had been informed of an ongoing analysis of COST documents, to identify potential duplications and contradictions between documents and to update and merge relevant documents accordingly. Based on this analysis a proposal for *Rules for participation in and implementation of COST activities* ("Rules") was presented. The proposed document focuses on the strategic guidelines that need to be approved by the CSO, while all details on the implementation will be set out in the COST Office Vademecum.

It was stressed that the Vademecum would remain a responsibility of the COST Office/ESF and the CSO would merely take note of major changes, if and where necessary to provide the appropriate basis for the implementation of the COST Grant Agreement. The Group concluded that the proposal for the "Rules" would be presented for discussion to the June CSO meeting.

10. Proposal for two new JAF members

The President recalled that the mandates of two JAF members, Mr Carlo DUPREL (LU) and Ms Maija BUNDULE (LV), would end in June 2012. She thanked both departing members for their valuable contribution to the work of JAF during the past three years. The Group was informed that Mr Jean-Paul COURBEBAISSE (FR) and Mr Stefan CAIREN (SE), who had confirmed their availability to join JAF, would be proposed as new JAF members as from June 2012.

11. Progress/status reports by the COST Office:

(a) COST Grant System

The COST Office Head of Science Operations (HoSO) recalled the background for the assessment of the COST funding schemes (COST Grant System and pay-as-you-go) by independent external experts. The main points of the assessment were to address the strengths and weaknesses of the Grant System from the Grant Holder's and COST Office's perspective; the cost-efficiency of both systems; and recommendations for further improvements or other possible developments of the funding schemes. Four independent experts had been appointed and their individual reports had been summarised in a consensus report. The HoSO presented the outcome and noted that the COST Office could broadly agree with the findings and the experts' recommendations. However, further internal discussion would be needed, before final conclusions would be drawn. In general the JAF appeared to agree that no major changes should be adopted during FP7. It was concluded that the CSO would be informed of the outcome of the evaluation in June and that the COST Office would prepare a proposal and a timetable for future developments in due course.

(b) Implementation of COST Strategy: Frame for the Impact Analysis

The COST Office HoSO presented a progress report regarding the COST Impact Analysis. The Group complimented the COST Office for the quality of the work, highlighting the importance of establishing a well-defined model, suitable metrics and performance indicators. The Commission representative recalled that the final evaluation of COST in FP7 would be carried out in early spring 2014 and results of the impact analysis would be highly valuable input for this exercise. The need to involve external experts to carry out an analysis was raised and synergies with others was stressed (Eurostat, Commission experts etc.). The COST Office was encouraged to rapidly propose a plan for the implementation (first priority on a selected set of indicators). The Group concluded that a progress report would be presented to the CSO in June.

(c) TDP Pilot Evaluation scheme

The COST Office HoSO reported on the progress on the pilot evaluation procedure of Trans-disciplinary proposals (TDP) as agreed by CSO at its meeting in March 2012. The Group agreed that a progress report would be given to the next CSO meeting in June.

(d) COST Strategic Activities

The COST Office Director presented the COST Strategic activities currently in the pipeline. The Group discussed the possibility of targeted activities for female scientists as well as scientists from neighbouring countries, with special focus on young researchers (see also item 3). Other targeted activities could deal with tackling societal challenges, the impact of research, development and innovation, and best practices in S&T management. It was recalled that, in accordance with the CSO decision (COST 4107/12), the strategic activities are approved by the JAF through written procedure.

12. Draft agenda for the 185th CSO meeting (6-7 June 2012)

The Group examined the draft agenda for the 185th CSO meeting that will be held in Dublin, Ireland on 6 - 7 June 2012⁵.

13. Future meetings

The Group took note of the list of future JAF and CSO meeting dates in 2012-2014:

CSO

2012: 6-7 June (Dublin, IE) and 20-21 November

2013: 15-16 May and 13-14 November

2014: 14-15 May

JAF

2012: 17-18 October

2013: 16-17 April and 16- 17 October

2014: 16-17 April

14. Any other business

- The Group took note of the draft plan for the communication activities 2012-2014 that had been circulated to delegations prior to the meeting and agreed that the plan would be presented to the next CSO meeting in June for approval.

⁵ The final version is set out in doc. CM 2339/1/12 REV 1.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CSO President:	Angeles RODRIGUEZ PEÑA	Spain
CSO Vice President:	Primož PRISTOVŠEK	Slovenia
JAF Members:	Lieve VAN DAELE Rita WARD Maija BUNDULE Carlo DUPREL Arif ADLI	Belgium Ireland Latvia Luxembourg Turkey
Other participants:	Monica DIETL Matthias HAURY Ursula CASTRO Markku WARRAS Ulla MESIÄ	COST Office " " Commission Council Secretariat
At the invitation by the CSO President:	Gorm BRAMSNAES Jean-Paul COURBEBAISSE Stefan CAIREN	Denmark (EU Presidency) France Sweden

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Adoption of the agenda
 2. Approval of Summary of Conclusions of the previous meeting
 3. COST Grant Agreement: budgetary information
 4. Proposals for new COST Actions
 5. COST-ESF: separation roadmap in progress
 6. COST implementing structure in the next Framework Programme "Horizon 2020"
 7. CSO timetable for a roadmap until June 2014
 8. COST Strategy for International cooperation
 9. Proposal for COST CSO Document for COST implementation rules
 10. Proposal for two new JAF members
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 - (a) COST Grant System
 - (b) Implementation of COST Strategy: Frame for the Impact Analysis
 - (c) TDP Pilot Evaluation scheme
 - (d) COST Strategic Activities
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 14. Any other business
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