



Brussels, 9 December 2014

COST 135/14

DECISION

Subject: **B.3. “COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation”**

The document for “COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation” establishes the main principles and rules for the participation in COST Actions of researchers from Near Neighbour and International Partner Countries as well as from Specific Organisations. These rules will replace the document COST 4115/13 and will enter into force as from 1 January 2015.

The Committee of Senior Officials approved the attached document by written procedure on 9 December 2014.



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COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation

The COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) having regard to COST 132/14 “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities” in accordance with its role as main decision-making body of COST,

Whereas:

- (1) The “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities” presents the general principles applicable to the participation in and implementation of COST activities, in particular COST Actions, including the openness to countries other than the COST Member Countries and Cooperating State and the participation of Specific Organisations.
- (2) COST should define a position, on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit, on the participation of researchers, engineers and scholars from specific organisations.
- (3) COST should develop a policy for international cooperation, defining, on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit, the participation of researchers, engineers and scholars from COST Near Neighbour Countries and from International Partner Countries in COST activities.
- (4) The ‘Progress report from the COST WG on Strategy of International Cooperation’ COST 4103/13 puts forward recommendations on international cooperation.
- (5) ‘COST Strategy for cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries’ COST 290/09 reviews the policy of international cooperation of 2007 and 2005.
- (6) ‘COST Strategy for Cooperation with non-COST countries’ COST 222/07 foresees the arrangements for Near Neighbour and Balkan countries and recalls previous orientation for Non-COST countries.

Has adopted the present “COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation” on 9 December 2014. This decision will enter into force on 01 January 2015.

Subject Matter and Scope

This decision lays down the rules for “COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation” with the aim to facilitate the implementation of the COST strategies for international cooperation and collaboration with partner organisations. These rules derive and align to the general principles and rules of “COST Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities”¹ and are complementary to the COST Rules on “COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection, and Approval”² and “COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment”³.

Beyond COST Member Countries and Cooperating State, COST allows, once mutual benefit has been ascertained, the involvement of researchers, engineers and scholars from Near Neighbour Countries, and the participation of International Partner Countries and Specific Organisations, such as EU Agencies, European RTD and International Organisations, in COST Actions and other activities.

Definitions

For the purpose of this Decision, the following definitions shall apply:

1. COST Member Country: means any country that joined the COST Association as a full member following the approval of the COST Association Statutes
2. COST Cooperating State: means any State that was admitted to the COST Association as Cooperating Member.
3. COST Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC): means COST Member Countries that fulfil the Horizon 2020 widening eligibility conditions being either an EU Member State or an Associated Country to the EU Framework Programme.
4. COST Near Neighbour Countries (NNC): means countries approved by the Committee of Senior Officials to benefit from dedicated support for the integration of their scientists in COST activities.
5. International Partner Countries (IPC): mean all those countries that are neither COST Member Countries, nor Cooperating State nor Near Neighbour Countries.
6. EU Agencies: mean any organisation governed by European public law, with its own legal personality, established in the EU to accomplish specific tasks of a legal, technical and/or scientific nature in a given policy field and to support the EU Member States but distinct from the EU institutions.
7. European RTD Organisation: means any intergovernmental scientific research organisation that is responsible for infrastructures and laboratories whose members are countries, and the majority of which are COST Member Countries or Cooperating State.
8. International Organisation: means any organisation with an European or international membership, scope or presence, with its own legal personality, governed by international

¹ COST 132/14

² COST 133/14

³ COST 134/14

public law or recognised as of general interest, in particular promoting scientific and technological cooperation, which should have an added value in the fulfilment of COST Mission.

9. COST National Coordinator (CNC): means the individuals appointed by the COST Member Countries and Cooperating State in charge of confirming the acceptance of the Action Memorandum of Understanding and responsible for nominating the Management Committee members of their country and the evaluators for the Review Panels pool of Experts.
10. COST Action: means the COST pan-European networking instrument allowing researchers from COST Member Countries and Cooperating State to develop jointly their ideas and new initiatives in a field or topic of common interest.
11. Action's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU): means the agreement accepted by a minimum of five different COST Member Countries and/or Cooperating State describing the Action objectives. This document has to be accepted by any additional COST Member Country or Cooperating State joining the Action.
12. Action Participant: means any researcher, engineer or scholar who participates actively in a COST Action.
13. Early Career Investigator (ECI): means a researcher in the time span of up to 8 years after the date of obtaining the PhD/doctorate (full-time equivalent).
14. Scientific Committee (SC): means the committee composed of independent, internationally renowned, high-level experts, one per COST Member Country and Cooperating State, appointed by the CSO.
15. Management Committee (MC): means the group of researchers, engineers or scholars representing COST Member Countries and Cooperating State that have accepted the MoU, in charge of the coordination, implementation, and management of an Action's activities as well as supervising the appropriate allocation and use of the COST funding with a view to achieving the Action's scientific and technological objectives. They are nominated by the CNC.
16. MC Observer: means a researcher, engineer or scholar observing a COST Action's coordination and decision-making process and activities on behalf of his/her institution of affiliation.
17. Approved Institutions: means institutions located in Near-Neighbour or International Partner Countries which participation to a COST Action has been approved by the Action MC, the Scientific Committee and Executive Board.

General Provisions

The CSO has developed strategies for international cooperation and collaboration with partner organisations with the objective to allow for connection of European research communities involved in COST both worldwide and with key stakeholders. COST thus contributes through reliable networks to building trust among all actors involved in COST activities and helps to create the foundation for future cooperation in favour of a strong and open Europe.

1. Basic principles

COST shall allow for the participation of researchers, engineers and scholars from European and non-European countries, other than Members or Cooperating State of COST, in COST Actions and other activities with the aim to foster the dialogue and cooperation with key actors in the European and global science and technology scene on the base of ascertained mutual benefit.

Following the bottom-up principle and provided that mutual benefit can be determined⁴, particular attention shall be given to the involvement of researchers, engineers and scholars from Near Neighbour Countries (NNC) and the participation of International Partner Countries (IPC) in COST Actions and other activities. The participation of Specific Organisations that are the European Commission, EU Agencies, European RTD Organisations and International Organisations shall follow the same basic principles as appropriate.

2. Conditions for International Cooperation in COST Actions

Near Neighbour Countries (NNC)⁵

The rules governing the participation of researchers, engineers and scholars from NNC in COST Actions are as follows:

- When a researcher from NNC takes part in a COST Action proposal his/her participation is approved de facto when the Action is approved by the CSO, however subject to the consent of the Management Committee once established;
- When a researcher from NNC is not in the initial COST Action proposal, his/her participation requires the approval of the Management Committee, Scientific Committee and Executive Board on a case by case basis following an accelerated written procedure; the Executive Board may, however, invoke political or other criteria in the approval to join a COST Action;
- In the final year of a COST Action, no requests to join an Action shall be possible;
- The Management Committee may agree to invite as a one-off measure external scientific or technology specialists from NNC to a specific COST Action activity from institutions not approved as a NNC⁶.

Once approved as COST Action participants, the eligibility for reimbursement of participants from NNC is as follow:

- Researchers from NNC may be invited by the Management Committee to participate in MC meetings as MC Observers (no voting right). Up to two researchers per NNC, one per institution, are eligible for reimbursement;
- Researchers affiliated to institutions from NNC already approved can participate in any activities organised in the COST Action.

⁴ The potential partner from NNC and IPC must write a letter to the Main Proposer or Action Chair demonstrating the mutual benefit.

⁵ COST Near Neighbour Countries: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Russia, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

⁶ Further information on the limitation can be found in the COST Vademecum.

In order to foster the cooperation between COST Actions and researchers, engineers and scholars from NNC:

- Training schools may be allowed in NNC on a case by case basis if relevant to the topic of the Action and proved that there is an added value to the COST Action;
- A top-up to the Action budget is available to increase the NNC participation.

The participation of NNC does not require the acceptance of the Action's MoU⁷.

International Partner Countries (IPC)

The rules governing the participation of researchers, engineers and scholars from IPC in COST Actions are as follows:

- When a researcher from IPC takes part in a COST Action proposal, his/her participation is approved de facto when the Action is approved by the CSO, however, subject to the consent of the MC once established;
- When a researcher from IPC is not in the initial Action proposal, his/her participation requires the approval of the MC, SC and EB on a case by case basis; the EB may, however, invoke political or other criteria in the approval to join a COST Action;
- In the final year of a COST Action, no requests to join an Action shall be possible;
- Researchers affiliated to institutions officially approved from IPC may be invited by the MC to participate in MC meetings as MC Observers (no voting right). Up to two researchers per IPC, one per institution can participate in MC meetings;
- Researchers from IPC can also participate in any activities organised in the COST Action; in the Working Groups they can only participate as WG members (not as WG leaders);
- The MC may agree to invite external scientific or technology specialists from IPC to a specific COST Action activity from institutions not approved as a IPC;
- COST Action participants affiliated to an approved institution from IPC are not eligible for reimbursement, unless there are special provisions decided by the CSO;
- Researchers invited as trainers to a COST Action Training School are eligible for reimbursement.

The participation of International Partner Countries does not require the acceptance of the Action's MoU⁸.

3. Conditions for Participation of Specific Organisations⁹

In order to facilitate the dialogue and transfer of knowledge COST has always fostered the participation of science actors, policy makers and other relevant organisations and institutions in the COST Actions.

European Commission and EU Agencies¹⁰

The general rules governing the participation of European Commission (EC) and EU Agencies are as follows:

⁷ Researchers from NNC may be asked to sign a letter of confidentiality containing, inter alia, provisions about the non-disclosure of confidential information and IPR related matters.

⁸ Researchers, engineers and scholars from International Partner Countries shall sign a letter of confidentiality containing, inter alia, provisions about the non-disclosure of confidential information and IPR related matters.

⁹ COST 132/14 "Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities"

¹⁰ http://europa.eu/about-eu/agencies/index_en.htm

- The EC and EU Agencies can propose new Actions if associated with the minimum number (five) of COST Member Countries;
- When the EC or an EU Agencies takes part in a COST Action proposal its participation is approved de facto when the Action is approved by the CSO without MC consent; within a period of 12 months after the Action's approval by the CSO the EC or an EU Agency can join an Action without MC consent; after this 12 month period the participation will require MC approval;
- They can participate in the MC as MC Observer (no voting rights); and as a WG Member (not as WG leader) upon MC decision;
- EC and EU Agencies Action participants are not eligible for reimbursement, unless there are special provisions decided by the CSO.

European RTD Organisations¹¹

- European RTD Organisations can propose new Actions if associated with the minimum number (five) of COST Member Countries;
- European RTD Organisations can participate in a COST Action;
- When an RTD Organisation takes part in a COST Action proposal, its Action participation is approved the facto upon the Actions' approval by the CSO, without MC consent; within a period of 12 months after the Action's approval by the CSO, the European RTD Organisation can join an Action without MC consent; after this 12 month period, the participation will require MC approval;
- They can participate in the MC as MC Observers (no voting rights); and as a WG Member (not as a WG leader) upon MC decision;
- If they are nominated by the host COST Country as country representatives, they can participate as MC Chair, MC member or WG leader as they represent the country and not the organization;
- Action Participants from European RTD Organisations are eligible for reimbursement, unless there are special provisions decided by the CSO.

International Organisations

- These organisations cannot propose new Actions, even if the researcher is based in a COST Member Country or Cooperating State; they may however be invited by the network of proposers to take part in a COST Action proposal;
- International Organisations can participate in a COST Action on the basis of ascertained mutual benefit;
- When an International Organisation takes part in a COST Action proposal, its Action participation is approved de facto when the Action is approved by the CSO, however subject to the consent of the MC once established;
- When an International Organisation does not take part in a COST Action proposal, its Action participation requires the approval by the MC, SC and EB on a case by case basis;
- International Organisations can participate as MC Observers (no voting rights) and as WG Members (not as WG leaders), upon MC decision;
- Action Participants from International Organisations are not eligible for reimbursement, unless there are special provisions decided by the CSO.

¹¹ <http://www.euroforum.org/about/organisations/index.html>



The participation of the Specific Organisations does not require the acceptance of the Action's MoU¹².

Final Provisions

The present COST International Cooperation Rules are part of the COST set of rules including the COST Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities and other related documents. The provisions contained herein and therein are directly applicable to all COST Actions and participants.

Any change or derogations to the current Rules are subject to the approval of the CSO.

¹² Researchers from Specific Organisations shall sign a letter of confidentiality containing, inter alia, provisions about the non-disclosure of confidential information and IPR related matters.

