COST TARGETED NETWORK TN1302

"The Voice of Research Administrators – Building a Network of Administrative Excellence (BESTPRAC)"

Minutes of the 1ST Management Committee Meeting

COST Office
Avenue Louise 149, Brussels, Belgium

15 October 2013

Minutes Summary

Chair: Jan Andersen (DK)
Vice-Chair: Martina Poell (AT)
WG1: Administration
Leader: Marion Bussemakers (NL)
WG2: Finance
Leader: Vanessa Ravagni (IT)
WG3: Legal
Leader: Diana Pustula (PL)
STSM Manager : Johan Åkerman (SE)

Transversal Task Force National: Elke Dall (AT)
Transversal Task Force Training: Anne Katrin Werenskiold (DE);

GH institute: Vienna University of Technology (AT)
GH FSAC rate: 15%
Financial Rapporteurs: Eva Vas (HU) and Gregory Makrides (CY) and as a reserve Milly Perry (IL)

First Grant Period: 1 November 2013– 31 December 2014
WB plan:

STSMs	13 860 €
Meetings	117 699 €
Training School	34 700 €
Dissemination	4 000 €
Scientific Expenditure	**170 259 €**
FSAC	**25 541 €**
Budget	**195 800 €**

1. Welcome

The participants of the inaugural meeting of COST Targeted Network TN1302 were welcomed by the Science Officer for this Targeted Network, Melae Langbein, who explained that she would chair the meeting until the election of a chairperson for the Targeted Network, which was carried out under agenda item 7.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The draft agenda of the meeting as found in Annex 1 was approved without changes or additions by the members of the Management Committee (MC) of TN1302.

3. Address by the COST Office Director

The COST Office Director welcomed participants to the COST Office and emphasised that:
- COST is supporting BESTPRAC in order to bring "out of the shadows" the staff in universities and research institutes carrying out administrative tasks in support of researchers and research projects,
- the participants must be those that do not otherwise have the possibility to travel and to meet with colleagues from other countries in order to discuss solutions to common problems, good practices and harmonisation,
- The TN shall target/ focus on the post-award period, aiming at administrative excellence to relieve researchers from administrative tasks thereby benefiting research.

4. Status of the COST Targeted Network

The Science Officer presented the status of COST Targeted Network TN1302, highlighting the following important dates (as found at
(http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/tn/Actions/TN1302?parties):

Action details

MoU	045/13
CSO Approval date	09/07/2013
Start of Action	15/10/2013
End of Action	14/10/2015
End of prolongation	-

According to the official records of the COST Council Secretariat, at the date of the first MC meeting:
- 26 COST countries had accepted the MoU, and
- 0 COST countries had officially indicated the intention to accept the MoU.

Participations

Country	Date	Status
Austria	05/08/2013	Confirmed
Belgium	12/08/2013	Confirmed
Bosnia and Herzegovina	30/07/2013	Confirmed
Croatia	03/09/2013	Confirmed
Cyprus	18/07/2013	Confirmed
Czech Republic	27/09/2013	Confirmed
Denmark	19/08/2013	Confirmed
Estonia	13/08/2013	Confirmed
Finland	16/09/2013	Confirmed
France	26/09/2013	Confirmed
Germany	04/09/2013	Confirmed
Hungary	25/07/2013	Confirmed
Iceland	03/09/2013	Confirmed
Ireland	02/08/2013	Confirmed
Israel	20/08/2013	Confirmed
Italy	30/09/2013	Confirmed
Luxembourg	14/10/2013	Confirmed
Malta	03/09/2013	Confirmed
Netherlands	17/09/2013	Confirmed
Norway	16/09/2013	Confirmed
Poland	27/08/2013	Confirmed
Portugal	11/09/2013	Confirmed
Slovenia	25/08/2013	Confirmed
Spain	24/07/2013	Confirmed
Sweden	26/09/2013	Confirmed
United Kingdom	24/07/2013	Confirmed
Total: 26		

It was recalled that according to the COST rules (specifically COST 4114/13 Article 1) COST countries (including those that have indicated the intention to accept the MoU) may accept the MoU within the twelve month period after the approval by the CSO. Thus COST countries wishing to join TN1302 have until 8 July 2014 to accept the MoU of the Targeted Network (reference under "Action details", above). After this date the approval of the MC of the Targeted Network is needed.

The budgets for COST Actions and Targeted Networks are allocated annually on the basis of the number of COST countries having accepted the MoU of the Action/ Targeted Network and on the Action/ Targeted Network's performance as assessed by the Rapporteurs and the COST Office. For TN1302:

- the first Grant Period will run from 1 November 2013 to 31 December 2014, and
- the budget for this period will be set according to the number of COST countries that have accepted the MoU of the Targeted Network, currently 26 thus approximately EUR 167 000.

5. Presentation of the delegations

A total of 33 participants from the following 24 COST countries/ cooperating states attended the meeting: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Croatia (HR), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Hungary (HU), Iceland (IS), Ireland (IE), Israel (IL), Italy (IT), Luxembourg (LU), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NT), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), United Kingdom (UK).
With 24 of the 26 (92%) COST countries having accepted the MoU to date represented at this meeting the quorum of 2/3 required under the COST rules (specifically COST 4114/13 Annex II Article 8) is attained.

The COST Office was represented by the Science Officer, Melae Langbein, and Administrative Officer, Gabriela Cristea, of the Targeted Network TN1302 BESTPRAC. The list of participants in the meeting is presented in Annex 2, their contact details can be found on the COST website

at http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/tn/Actions/TN1302?management. Each participant introduced him/herself and his/her main activities related to BESTPRAC.

6. General information on COST mechanism and on the funding of coordination

6.1 Specificities of Targeted Networks

Further to the address of the COST Office Director the Science Officer reminded the participants that BESTPRAC is a Targeted Network approved by the CSO under COST 4111/13 with the objective of networking the staff in universities and research institutes carrying out administrative tasks in support of researchers and research projects and who do not otherwise have the possibility to travel and to meet with colleagues from other countries in order to discuss solutions to common problems, good practices and harmonisation. Specifically the following are not the target of BESTPRAC:

- researchers,
- project managers,
- managers (those managing the activities of others).

It was also stated that BESTPRAC must very carefully differentiate itself from EARMA in terms of both participation (people involved) and activities and the profile of its members. In order to monitor the extent to which BESTPRAC is currently reaching its target audience of "the staff in universities and research institutions carrying out the administrative tasks in the post-award phase of European research projects" participants at the first MC meeting of BESTPRAC completed a worksheet showing the percentage of their time spent on different tasks. This worksheet appears in Annex 3.

6.2 General information on COST

The Science Officer presented to the participants the COST mechanism to promote scientific and technical co-operation in Europe. Relevant information can be found on the COST Website at http://www.cost.esf.org/module/download/6163 and the presentation is found in Annex 4.

The mission of COST is to "enable break-through scientific developments leading to new concepts and products and thereby contribute to strengthen Europe's research and innovation capacities".

COST key features are:

- building capacity by connecting high-quality scientific communities throughout Europe and worldwide;
- providing networking opportunities for early career investigators;

increasing the impact of research on policy makers, regulatory bodies and national decision makers as well as the private sector.

COST Actions and Targeted Networks are thus open networks that should aim to be as inclusive as possible. They are not a closed club that is unable or unwilling to accommodate new participants.

The key bodies involved in COST were described, including the:

- CSO (responsible for the governance of COST including the overall strategy and steering, the approval of new Actions, the approval of participation of institutions from Near Neighbour Countries, International Partner Countries and Specific Organisations

(through its executive group, JAF) and the approval of any requests for the prolongation/extension of Actions),

- Domain Committees (responsible, within their Domain, for assessment of proposals for new Actions, monitoring of ongoing Actions, evaluation of completed Actions, dissemination and exploitation of results of a COST Action and strategic developments in its domain),
- Management Committees (responsible for supervising and co-ordinating implementation of the Action, ensuring scientific coordination at a national level, managing the Action's budget, submitting the work and budget plan and the annual Monitoring Progress Report), and
- Working Groups (a small number of researchers working together comprising MC members or other scientists from the Parties, invited experts / speakers (at workshops / conferences) and members from institutions from Near Neighbour Countries, International Partner Countries and Specific Organisations.

6.3 The global dimension of COST

The COST International Cooperation Rules (COST 4115/13) outlines the rules regarding the participation of institutions from outside the COST countries. In order to join a COST Action an institution from outside the COST countries must make a specific application. The steps in the process are:

1. MC Chair encodes the institution and applicant's institution name, country and researcher name and email address into eCOST (using the Chair's personal login and not the GrantHolder eCOST account login) and eCOST sends an email to the Near Neighbour Country/ International Partner Country/ Specific Organisation institution applicant inviting them to complete an application to join the Action.
2. The applicant completes the online application form, submits the application and sends by email to the MC Chair a "motivation letter".
3. The MC Chair uploads the "motivation letter" to eCOST, completes the section of the application that requires a description of the benefit to the Action of the institution joining and presses the button to send the application for SO validation.
4. The SO validates the application in eCOST.
5. eCOST then sends the application for approval by the MC, then by the DC, then by JAF. Each body has 2 weeks (5 days in the case of NNC applications under the "accelerated procedure" to foster participation) to register their vote (approve/ reject) the application, any votes not cast are counted as approval.
6. Once the JAF approval step has been completed:
   - The institution appears as an official NNC/ IPC/ Specific Organisation participant in the Action (listed on the BESTPRAC page on the COST website – see the hyperlink at point 4 of these minutes), and
   - the applicant receives an email from eCOST inviting them to complete their registration as a NNC/ IPC/ Specific Organisation institution participant in BESTPRAC.

Special provisions apply for funding the participation of researchers from approved institutions from particular groups of countries:

- The Near Neighbour Countries (Balkan countries (Albania, Montenegro); Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, The Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia) and Eastern European countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine) – participants from these countries are eligible for reimbursement by COST;
- International Partner Countries with a Reciprocal Agreement with COST countries (Argentina, New Zealand, South African)
    o Participants from these countries can apply to their country's "Reciprocal Agreement implementing agent" for funding to travel to COST Action meetings, and
    o Participants from the COST countries can apply to COST to undertake a "Reciprocal Short Term Scientific Mission (RSTSM)" to visit the participating institution in one of the Reciprocal Agreement countries.
- All other IPCs and Specific Organisations must finance their own participation in Action activities. The Action can finance, from within the Action budget, a STSM to the approved IPC/ Specific Organisation.

Actions are encouraged to add institutions from Near Neighbour countries to the Action and additional budget is available to facilitate this.

6.4 Implementation of COST Actions and Targeted Networks
The participants were informed about framework within which COST Actions and Targeted Networks must be implemented. This framework is defined by the following documents:

- Memorandum of Understanding of the Targeted Network (ref. at Section 4)
- Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities (COST 4112/13) *http://www.cost.eu/download/st04112.en13.pdf*
- COST Action Management (COST 4114/13) *http://www.cost.eu/download/st04114.en13.pdf*
    o incl. Annex II "Rules of Procedure for Management Committees"
- COST International Cooperation rules (COST 4115/13) *http://www.cost.eu/download/st04115.en13.pdf*
- COST Vademecum (Part 1) COST Actions– Instruments for financing of COST Action activities *http://www.cost.eu/download/COST_Vademecum_Part_1*
- Guidelines for Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions (COST doc. 4112/11) *http://www.cost.eu/download/COST_doc._4112_11*
- COST Strategy for Early Stage Researchers (COST 295/09) *http://www.consilium.europa.eu/igcpdf/en/09/st00/st00295.en09.pdf*
- COST Code of Conduct (COST 4160/10) *http://www.consilium.europa.eu/igcpdf/en/10/st04/st04160.en10.pdf*
- COST Action Plan for Inclusiveness and Excellence (COST 4156/12) *http://www.cost.eu/download/COST%20Action%20Plan*

In particular the participants were informed that Targeted Network MCs are required to respect a good balance in terms of gender, geography and Early Stage Researchers in the management (specifically in the appointment of Core Group Members) and the conduct (eg allocation of reimbursement places, STSMs, Training School student grants etc) of the Targeted

Network's activities. According to the COST rules (specifically section E.4 of the MoU) gender balance and the participation of Early Stage Researchers must be discussed by the MC at each meeting and the key points of the discussion recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

In order to adopt the Early Stage Researchers to the TN, it was decided that an Early Stage Administrator is defined by being less than 8 years after final degree education. The ESA Report will be supplemented with additional information on how many years each participant have in research administration.

The MC must use the standard COST MC Agenda template (downloaded through eCOST by the Grant Holder) as the agenda for all subsequent MC meetings. The minutes of MC meetings should be taken in the same format.

6.5 COST instruments and procedures
The Administrative Officer described the COST instruments and procedures. The slides of this presentation appear in Annex 5. Detailed instructions for using the Online Travel Reimbursement Request form appear in Annex 6.

6.6 Monitoring of the Targeted Network
The participants were informed that the Committee of Senior Officials will appoint 1-2 Rapporteurs to monitor TN1302.

7. Agreement on the internal rules of procedure for the Management Committee of the Targeted Network.
The MC adopted as its rules of procedure the Rules of Procedure for Management Committee (COST 4114/11 Annex II).

8. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair
Recalling that according to the COST rules (specifically COST Action Management (COST 4114/13) Annex II: "Rules of procedure for Management Committee" Article 7) "The MC shall appoint from among its members representing Parties or European bodies, by a simple majority vote, a Chair and a Vice-Chair for the duration of the Action" the Science Officer invited volunteers or nominations for each position. The MC elected the following MC Members as Chair and Vice Chair of the Action:
- Chair – Jan Andersen (DK) jaan@science.ku.dk,
- Vice Chair – Martina Poell (AT) Martina.Poell@tuwien.ac.at.

9. Selection of the Grant Holder and Financial Rapporteur(s)
The MC appointed Vienna University of Technology (AT) as the Grant Holder for the Action, represented in the Management Committee by the institution's Scientific Representative (Martina Poell Martina.Poell@tuwien.ac.at).
The MC agreed that the Grant Holder will be entitled to claim 15% of the Action's scientific expenditure as the Grant Holder's Financial & Scientific Administration and Coordination

("FSAC") fee. The Grant Holder Scientific Representative confirmed that the Grant Holder will respect the COST rules with regard to flat rates when making participant reimbursements.

The MC appointed the following two Financial Rapporteurs (the role of the Financial Rapporteurs is described in the COST Vademecum (Part B) Grant System):

- Eva Vas (HU) vase@ceu.hu,
- Gregory Makrides (CY) makrides.g@ucy.ac.cy.

  The MC also appointed a reserve Financial Rapporteur (Milly Perry (IL) millype@openu.ac.il) to replace one of the Financial Rapporteurs in the case of leaving the Action or having a conflict of interest in any Grant Period

The template that Financial Rapporteurs must use in assessing the Action's Yearly Financial Reports is http://www.cost.eu/download/financial_rapporteur_template.

10. Working plan for the implementation of the COST Action (based on the Memorandum of Understanding):

10.1   Objectives and working programme

The objectives of the Targeted Network are outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding. The newly elected Chair, Jan Andersen (DK) presented a summary of the Targeted Network background on networking the staff in universities, research organisations and related entities supporting researchers involved in the lifecycle of European funded projects. The slides of this presentation appear in Annex 7.

According to the MoU the main objective of the Targeted Network is to network the administrative, finance and legal services in universities, research organisations and related entities supporting researchers involved in the lifecycle of European funded projects in order to exchange experiences and share and develop best practices, encourage knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer and increased efficiency.

10.2   Working method - organisation and management

It was agreed that, as per the MoU of the Action, the Targeted Network will be carried out mainly through 3 Working Groups: WG1: Administration, WG2: Finance and WG3: Legal. The Action will also function through Short Term Scientific Missions (STMS). All 3 Working Groups will address the relevant key areas as described in the MoU. The Management Committee agreed that the Working Groups must cooperate as closely as possible to ensure the necessary flow of information.

10.2.1 Working Group Leaders

After a comprehensive discussion the following structures and responsibilities were agreed upon:

- **Working Group 1: Administration**
  Leader: Marion Bussemakers (NL) m.bussemakers@ncmls.ru.nl

- **Working Group 2: Finance**
  Leader: Vanessa Ravagni (IT) vanessa.ravagni@unitn.it

- **Working Group 3: Legal**
  Leader: Diana Pustula (PL) Diana.Pustula@adm.uw.edu.pl

It was decided that WG members would be appointed as follows: Two week after the receipt of the Draft Minutes each country must inform Vice Chair Martina Poell of their country's 2 members per Working Group (noting that MC Members must also be active in a Working Group). MC Members were reminded that WG Members must be staff in universities and research instiutions carrying out as their main function administrative tasks in support of researchers during the post-award phase of European projects: The profile of the WG-Members and Substitutes are research administrators with daily hands-on experience with research administration of EU-research projects.

The Management Committee also created two Transversal Taskforces:
Transversal Taskforce on "National": Elke Dall (AT) dall@zsi.at,
Transversal Taskforce on "Training": Anne-Kathrin Werenskiold (DE) kwerensk@biochem.mpg.de.

10.2.2 Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs)

The MC appointed Johan Åkerman (SE) as the STSM Manager who will receive applications. Applications will be assessed by the Core Group (with the exception of anyone whose institute is involved as applicant or host in any application).

The MC agreed that all MC members should encourage, in particular, Early Stage Administrators, to participate in the scheme. It was agreed during the MC meeting that the applications for STSM should be assessed by way of fixed collection dates. The first collection date will be 1 January 2014 and every three months thereafter (1 April, 1 July, 1 October) for STSMs starting no sooner that six weeks after the collection date and finishing no later than the end of the first Grant Period. The Management Committee mandated the Core Group to determine the basis on which to assess the proposals for the first Collection Date.

It was emphasised that the complete application file (as described in the COST Vademecum), including MC approval, must be received by the Grant Holder at least four weeks before the start date of the proposed STSM. Applications can only be submitted by using the on-line registration tool (www.cost.eu/stsm) described in COST Vademecum and forwarding the necessary documents to the Chair and STSM Coordinator.

The MC of TN1302 wishes to inform the COST Office that many Early Stage Administrators have child care responsibilities and this will often prevent them from undertaking a Short Term Mission. As this can also introduce a gender discrimination element the MC of TN1302 asks the COST Office to approve the payment of childcare costs in a Short Term Mission grant.

10.2.3 Core Group

In accordance with the existing COST rules the MC has set up a Core Group consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chair, the three Working Group Leaders, the two Transversal Task-force leaders and the STSM Manager.

10.2.4 TN website

To facilitate communication between the members of the TN and to promote distribution of information on the research activities relevant to the TN the MC agreed that the Grant Holder institution should manage and maintain the Website for this TN on its server as part of the Grant Holder activities. As soon as this website is established the Grant Holder will send the address

of the TN website to the COST Office Scientific and Administrative Officers so that a link to the site can be established from the Targeted Network page (see point 4 of the minutes) on the COST website. The MC wished to set the website up with the URL www.BESTPRAC.eu.

11. Budget plan

The COST Office reiterated that the TN's priority should be to make efficient arrangements that maximise the number of participants able to be reimbursed within the available budget. The MC decided that the budget for the first Grant Period should be allocated as follows:

STSMs	13 860 €
Meetings	117 699 €
Training School	34 700 €
Dissemination	
Scientific Expenditure	170 259 €
Grant Holder	25 541 €
Budget	195 800 €

The MC decided that MC Members will have 2 weeks in which to accept/ decline the eCOST invitation for BESTPRAC activities. Any invitations not accepted/declined after two weeks can be cancelled by the Grant Holder and reallocated to other participants that would like to attend the meeting (always respecting an appropriate geographic balance).

12. Place and date of next meeting

12.1 Next meeting

Note: once the Work & Budget Plan was submitted to the COST Office the meeting arrangements chosen by the MC had to be changed as follows:
*   MC2-WGs Zagreb Croatia, 23-24 January 2014
*   H2020-Hot Spot Bratislava, Slovakia in summer/ autumn (to be agreed with the host)
The Work & Budget Plan containing these details was approved by the MC by email on 2 December 2013.

The MC decided that the next meeting of the TN would be:

Date	Event	Location	Justification
January 2014	MC2-WGs	Madrid, ES? (subject to agreement, otherwise CY)	Accessibility, prepration in time for first H2020 calls (pub 11 Dec, closing March 2014)

The Management Committee decided that the LOS for the MC2-WGs meeting will be made on the basis of 20 EUR x number of participants x number of days. The Management Committee authorised the Steering Group to approve changes in this regard if requested by the Local Organiser.

12.2 Long-term planning
Note: once the Work & Budget Plan was submitted to the COST Office the meeting arrangements chosen by the MC had to be changed as follows:
*   MC2-WGs Zagreb Croatia, 23-24 January 2014
*   H2020-Hot Spot Bratislava, Slovakia in summer/ autumn (to be agreed with the host)
The Work & Budget Plan containing these details was approved by the MC by email on 2 December 2013.

The TN established the following long-term planning

Date	Event	Location	Justification
July, 2014	H2020-Hot Spot	Tallin, EE	Discussion of issues found during proposals submitted under first H2020 calls. Co-located with EARMA Annual Conference..
2014	Training School	TBD	

13. AOB

Many participants complained that they were unable to get accommodation for less than 120 EUR per night, even at the hotels on the list provided by the COST Office (http://www.cost.eu/module/download/35812). The hotels on the list stated that no rooms were available at the COST agreed rates at the participants were instead given rooms at a higher rate. The participants requested that the COST hotel list is clearer regarding the number of rooms available at the COST rate at each hotel and that more rooms are available close to the COST Office at rates that are covered by the COST accommodation reimbursement rate.

14. Closing

The meeting closed at 16:15.

Jan Andersen (DK)
Chair
COST Action TN1302

Melae Langbein
Science Officer

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Agenda