



COST ACTION E43
Harmonisation of National Inventories in Europe:
Techniques for Common Reporting

Draft Minutes of the 3rd Management Committee Meeting

Accademia Italiana di Scienze Forestali, Florence, Italy
2 December 2004 from 17:00-18:00hrs

1. Welcome to participants

In opening the meeting Action Chairman Prof. Erkki Tomppo welcomed all participants.

Representatives from the following 19 countries have participated in the meeting:

Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

2. Adoption of agenda

The draft agenda have been adopted without any amendment

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the 2nd meeting of the Management Committee held on 9 September 2004 at Horsholm (DK) have been approved without any amendment

4. General Information from the COST Secretariat

10/11/2004 COST Devolution continues

On 3 and 4 November 2004 COST President Professor Francesco Fedi chaired the second meeting of the core Group of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) - the JAF Group - formed to address the need for the CSO to introduce the devolution of decision making as far

downstream as possible in order to reinforce the strategic role of the CSO and its function as the highest governing body of COST. During the meeting a series of very important issues were discussed.

The considerable number of 19 proposals for new COST Actions were carefully examined and, after further editing work, recommended to the CSO for approval during its next meeting on 1 and 2 December. In view of the expected increase of new COST Action proposals, the Group discussed the possible need to introduce a more elaborated ranking system of new Action proposals, based on the quality of the scientific and technical content, the envisaged impact of the results, the form of the presentation, the economic dimension and the geographical impact (number of interested countries) taking the budgetary constraints into consideration.

The position of COST in the ERA was another important topic. The Group examined both the Report of the Rapporteur related to the `position of COST in the European Research Area` and the Statement of the President concerning the `position of COST in the future EU research policy`. The complementarity of the two documents was underlined. The first document concerns the long-term strategic positioning of COST within the ERA: it will be submitted to the next CSO meeting for final adoption with the understanding that, given the nature and the scope of the document, which constitutes a solid base for further strategic orientations and discussions by the CSO, it may result in a regular updates following new developments in ERA. The second document is the `political` Statement which, with the title of `Statement from the CSO President`, was sent to the European Commission as the COST reaction to the Commission's communication on this subject and to meet the deadline of October 15. It took into account all the comments received and will be proposed to the CSO that it be adopted as a formal `Statement from COST`.

Other important issues concerned the recommendation to the CSO of several proposals prepared by the COST Office and the JAF Rapporteurs.

COST was represented by Dr Sylvain Joffre, former Chair of the COST Technical Committee of Meteorology, at the international conference `Fostering international cooperation between scientists in Europe: the role of research councils` organised on 4/5 November in Amsterdam by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the European Science Foundation (ESF), in the framework of the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The conference was attended by key persons from independent public research funding organisations as well as scientists from over 30 European countries and from outside Europe.

In the perspective of developing the European Research Area (ERA), improved coordination of national funding programmes for basic research, based on enhanced collaboration between research councils, is one of the six major themes suggested by the Commission for the 7th Framework Programme (FP7). As a tool in the preparations of FP7, the conference identified existing instruments, analysed barriers, and developed recommendations for best practice for stronger cooperation between research councils in the future. More specifically, the following issues were addressed:

- a) career development and mobility
- b) division of tasks and responsibilities between funding arrangements at the national and European levels
- c) inter-council cooperation with organisations outside Europe
- d) inter-council cooperation in medium sized research infrastructure matters.

With respect to (b) above, with its long record of successful networks, COST was identified as one of the relevant instruments to address the requirements of critical mass, de-fragmentation, capacity building, trans-frontier collaboration and coordination which were identified as major barriers for Europe to reach its Lisbon objectives. COST was recognized as having the necessary characteristics for the successful and effective collaboration between scientists in both applied and basic science and to be able to achieve tangible scientific and technological impacts throughout Europe.

02/11/2004 Position of COST in the future EU policy for research support

In response to the European Commission's consultation on its Communication published in June 2004 ('Science and technology, the key to Europe's future - Guidelines for future EU policy to support research' - COM (2004) 353), the President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials has submitted the statement below:

COST (Cooperation in the Scientific and Technical Field) is the oldest and widest European intergovernmental networking system for cooperation in research. As such, it represents an important cornerstone for the development of the European Research Area (ERA) and for achieving the ambitious objectives set by the European Councils of Lisbon and Barcelona.

As an organisation bringing together national research activities across the 'wider' Europe and serving the needs of many thousands of European researchers, COST is particularly well placed to contribute to the debate on the future EU policy for research as set out in the European Commission's Communication published in June 2004 ('Science and technology, the key to Europe's future - Guidelines for future EU policy to support research' - COM (2004) 353).

COST POSITION WITH REGARD TO THE COMMISSION PAPER

COST, through its Committee of Senior Officials, representing the Ministers of Research and Science of the 34 COST member countries, broadly welcomes the thrust of the Commission's document and fully endorses the importance of research as a key element underpinning Europe's future development and prosperity. It is particularly important that effective European policies for research are developed, especially in the face of the current and future global challenges posed by the USA and from Asia.

In addition, the aim of the European Commission in using the Communication as a means of encouraging debate within the research community is also endorsed by COST. Encouraging this debate should allow for a better development of future Framework Programmes, reflecting the needs of the Member States and of the research community, and should provide a greater degree of 'ownership' by all concerned, which is an important factor for their future success.

Although welcoming the general approach of the Commission's Communication, COST considers important to make some comments of a general nature.

From the COST viewpoint, not enough emphasis is given in the Commission's Communication to the need for the coordination of researchers across Europe and the added-value that can be achieved by integration and synthesis of otherwise independent research. Furthermore, coordination not only brings together the researchers and their research groups,

but it also levers mobility through exchanges, especially for the younger generation of researchers, and links the various national research support mechanisms. This is not the same as the coordination of national programmes. The linking of the researchers themselves is an essential `bottom up` element which does require to be sustained. In this regard, Europe has established an enviable lead in research networking, due, in no small measure, to COST and similar mechanisms. Furthermore, as the Framework Programme represents some 6% or so of total European research investments, any mechanisms for maximising the impact of the investments and creating the required scientific critical masses are essential, especially for achieving the Lisbon objectives. It is the opinion of COST that research networking is fundamental to the success of most of the aims set out in the Commission's Communication and supports large parts of the six axes of activities which have been described. Consequently, the COST Committee of Senior Officials particularly welcomed the conclusions reached by the Council of the European Union when in its Competitiveness meeting of 24 September 2004: `recognised the important role of the Framework Programme in furthering the development of the European Research Area (ERA) and in this context stressed the importance of reinforcing the ties between it and European intergovernmental organisations such as EUREKA and COST`.

Moreover, COST welcomes the acceptance by the European Commission and, hopefully, by the EU itself that research investment at the European level has to be significantly increased, if not doubled, if the next Framework Programme is to succeed in meeting the objectives set out in the Commission's Communication and the expectations of the research community, of the EU and of the general public. The COST Committee of Senior Officials expresses the hope that that if this increase is obtained then this could be reflected in the same percentage increase in the funds made available to COST from the next Framework Programme in order to meet the continuing and increasing proven demand of the scientific community.

30/10/2004 Cost attends Eureka high level group and other important meetings

Professor Francesco Fedi, President of the COST CSO, at the invitation of Mr Roel Kramer, Chair of the High Level Group(HLG) of EUREKA, participated in the EUREKA meeting held in Rotterdam on 27 October 2004, accompanied by Mr Erwin van Rij, Head of the COST CSO Secretariat. During the meeting Professor Fedi gave a presentation on COST in general, on the possible contribution of COST to the European Research Area and on the synergies that could be established between COST and EUREKA, in spite of the different character of the two networks. COST mainly representing academia and new knowledge could act as a precursor of scientific ideas and endeavour which could transfer to the EUREKA industrial network. It was noted with satisfaction that the roadmap established in June aimed at encouraging contacts between EUREKA umbrella and clusters projects and COST Technical Committees was already giving the first results.

EUREKA Euroagri, Euroenviron, Logchain and Celtic projects already had held common meetings with the COST Technical Committees of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Food Sciences, Environment, Transport and Telecommunication and Information Sciences & Technology (TIST). Representatives of EUREKA will attend the COST DAY on 30 November and will give a presentation on EUREKA during the next CSO meeting on 1 December.

Professor Fedi also attended the Conference organised by the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE) on `Building up the European Research Council (ERC)` and hosted by UNESCO at its

Headquarters in Paris, France, on 25 and 26 October 2004. The Conference was designed to identify and discuss crucial issues related to the establishment of an ERC and highlight the various possibilities of addressing them. Notably, the Conference aimed to review and discuss the general principles of the ERC, provide an update on the current views from the European Commission, confront the recommendations of the EC-EUROHORCs working group on the principles that should govern the ERC and its practical implementation with the views of the scientific community and discuss further issues affecting ERC policies. In organizing this Conference, ISE intended to help politicians to define a roadmap for the establishment of the ERC. The ERC - originating from a precise and repeated request of the European scientific community - is one of the axes of the recent proposal of the EC for the future European Policy in Research. Professor Fedi reports that this axis appears to be characterized by the following elements:

- a) basic research i.e. `curiosity driven` research or `science driven research` as opposed to the constant requirement of the past years of `society driven` research i.e. research which had necessarily to provide tangible results for the applications;
- b) bottom up as opposed to the `top down` research of the various Framework Programmes;
- c) excellence through competition without necessarily implying networking as opposed to the requirement to necessarily find European partners as a prerequisite;
- d) European Research Council i.e. proposals to be judged only by `scientists`;
- e) grants i.e. the funds should be given through instruments with a minimum of bureaucracy.

During the conference some concern was raised by representatives of countries such as the Ukraine about the possible exclusion of the scientific communities of emerging countries. Professor Fedi, participating in the debate, underlined that the other traditional instruments should remain available in the future Framework Programme and that COST had proved to be particularly well suited to involve scientific communities of the whole Europe.

Mr. Stefan Cairen, Vice President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, participated in the International Conference `Ethnic Minorities in Science and Education - A Human Resource Development Challenge to Present and Future European Union Members`, held in Dubrovnik, 15 - 16 October 2004. The Conference was co-organized by the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office Ljubljana and the African Caribbean Network of Science and Technology (ACNST), UK with about 40 participants from 16 countries. The Conference aimed to raise awareness of the challenges that science and higher education policy makers are facing, regarding the better utilisation of the human resources of ethnic minorities in the field of science and research. The COST presence was very much appreciated by the organizers and one of the conclusions of the Conference was the possibility to propose a COST Action on Ethnic Minorities, which could well fall within the domain of the Technical Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities.

12/10/2004 A series of important meetings in Brussels

Professor Francesco Fedi, COST CSO President, had two days of meetings with the COST Secretariat and the COST Office on October 5 and 6 in Brussels. The main topic for the meetings was the organization of the special COST DAY, planned to be held in Brussels on 30 November 2004 to present COST achievements and future plans and to discuss the role of research networking, in general, and of COST, in particular, in the development of the European Research Area (ERA). A series of scientifically varied presentations by senior researchers, illustrating some of the most important success stories of COST, followed by ample time for discussion, is envisaged. Key persons from the European Parliament and from the European Commission will be invited and a general exhibition material on the work of COST will be organised.

Subsequently, on October 7, Professor Fedi had a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer of the European Science Foundation, Professor Bertil Andersson, which followed the previous one held on May 18 (see News from COST 19/5/04). Professor Andersson confirmed that the stability of the COST Office leadership will be ensured, at least until next July, in view of the mid-term review of the EC-ESF contract and he asked Professor Fedi to inform the CSO members about this. Quality control in COST was another important item of discussion with a particular emphasis on the possibility of introducing regular `calls for proposals` and an extensive use of `remunerated external evaluators`. Finally, the possibility of achieving an effective synergy between COST and ESF based on a division of `instruments` was discussed. In view of changes likely to take place in the development of ESF, it may be advantageous to place research networking in ESF within the COST competence. All these aspects will be the subject of open discussions in the relevant bodies of ESF and COST. The possibility of organizing a joint meeting between the Executive Board of ESF and the JAF Group of COST in February next year was also examined.

During the same week Professor Fedi had also a meeting with Mr. Vittorio De Crescenzo, Counsellor for RDT Affairs at the Italian Representation to the EU, during which the future EU policy for scientific research and the position of COST in the European Research Area were discussed.

On October 4, COST, represented by Mr. Erwin van Rij and Ms. Ulla Mesia of the COST Secretariat and by Dr. Afonso Ferreira of the COST Office, participated in the debate organized by the Swiss mission to the EU on `how to unleash private sector R&D funding`. This will provide one of the most important answers to the economic challenges which Europe has to face. Tax incentives, the creation of Centres of Excellence to stimulate the cooperation between industry and Universities, and flexible careers for researchers inside the Academia, making possible for them to act as industry consultants for short periods of time, were some of the topics considered during the meeting.

27/09/2004 The Council of the European Union supports COST

The Council of the European Union at its Competitiveness meeting of 24 September 2004 in its `Conclusions on the Evaluation of the new Instruments of the sixth Framework Programme for Research, Development and Demonstration (2002 – 2006) and on the Future European Union Policy to support Research` recognized the important role of the Framework Programme in furthering the development of the European Research Area (ERA), and in this

context stressed the importance of reinforcing the ties between it and European intergovernmental organisations, such as Eureka and COST`.

Professor Fedi, President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, noted with satisfaction the recognition by the Council of the role that COST can play in the development of the European Research Area and took further initiatives to strengthen the synergy between COST and EUREKA.

COST Website

Although a transfer of the official COST Web-site to the ESF server is planned, during the next few months the Web-site still can be reached under the following address: <http://cost.cordis.lu/src/home.cfm>. All MC members will be informed in time about the intended transfer.

Status of the COST Action E43

So far, according to the files 25 countries have joined COST Action E43:

Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Expiring date: 27 June 2008

Budget Status

After having contacted all Management Committees the budget plan for the year 2004 has been drafted. In the light of its activities 115.000 Euro have been allocated to COST Action E43.

In the run of the year 2004/2005 STSMs and publications will be financed out of a central budget line.

5. Year budget planning

According to the files 150.800 Euro have been spent respectively committed for the seven below listed meetings carried out by COST Action E43 in the run of the year 2004 (details see below listed table).

The officeholders as well as all delegations are to be asked to assure that in the light of the limited financial means all future participants of activities organised by COST Action E43 will dedicate adequate attention to the principle of the most economical overall expenditure when asking for reimbursement.

BUDGET 2004

E43	28/06/2004	Brussels (B)	16593	PAID	
	15/07/2004	Helsinki (FIN)	4800	APPROVED	
	09/09/2004	Horsholm (DK)	53250	APPROVED	
	30/09/2004	Nogent-sur-Vernisson (Paris) (F)	6000	APPROVED	
	21/10/2004	Gembloux (B)	24000	APPROVED	
	05/11/2004	Brussels (B)	1200	APPROVED	
	02/12/2004	Florence (I)	45000	APPROVED	
					150843

The budget for the year 2005 will presumably amount to approximately 90.000 Euro corresponding to approx. 110 reimbursements (further, more precise information will be soon available).

6. STSM status, applications

A special central budget line has been established for a centrally financing of STSMs. As the CSO attaches great attention to the promotion of young scientists the above mentioned budget line will also be available during the year 2005.

The Management Committee has been invited to encourage young research to take advantage from this specific COST tool.

The Science Officer informed the Management Committee that the revised guidelines offer also the possibility of Group STSMs (two – three experts (each from a different signatory country) visiting one host institute at the same time).

7. Publication, annual report

The Science Officer informed the Management Committee that each Action has to submit a Progress Report before the end of a calendar year. A template can be found in the annex of the COST Document 222/03 'Guidelines for assessment, monitoring and evaluation of COST Actions' approved by the CSO on 6-7 February 2003 (see COST Web-site).

The Action Chair presented a detailed Draft Publication Strategy which envisages the publication of the following documents:

- 2005 publication containing country-related State-of-the-Art reports
- 2006 publication of the first outcomes concerning the harmonisation of the national forest inventories in Europe, compilation of national field manuals
- 2007 publication of the further outcomes concerning the harmonisation of the national forest inventories in Europe
- 2008 publication describing the achievements of the Action

Appreciating the efforts of the officeholders regarding the development of a publication strategy, the Management Committee invited the Working Group members to provide the support necessary for its successful implementation.

With reference to the role model presented by the Science Officer the Management Committee has been invited to prepare an Action folder.

8. Evaluation

The Science Officer informed the Management Committee that the main objective of the mid-term evaluation is to assist the Management Committee to achieve the goals outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding, as well as to allow the relevant parent bodies and the COST Administration to assess the effectiveness of the Action since its beginning. The outcome of the mid-term evaluation will also be used to evaluate a prolongation of the Action or proposals to initiate follow-up Actions by the MC.

The evaluation team will particularly focus on

- achievement of the objectives stated in the MoU
- value added by the Action
- management of the Action
- dissemination of information by the Action
- level of participation in the Action
- economic impact of the Action.

The Technical Committee on Forests and Forestry Products (TC FFP) will be asked to carry out the mid-term evaluation of COST Action E43 in the year 2006. As besides the self-evaluation the documents produced by the Action are the main sources of information for the Evaluation Panel, the Management Committee is invited to prepare an adequate set of documents. In the course of its next meeting the TC FFP will nominate the members of the evaluation panel.

The Management Committee has been invited to initiate the preparation of the Mid-Term Evaluation by beginning to compile all relevant information.

9. Request for new members

The period within which COST member states can join a COST Action without any conditions being imposed, runs for twelve months from the date of approval of the Committee of COST Senior Officials. Therefore any request of a COST member state for accession to COST Action E43 received after 16 February 2005 has to be approved by its MC.

The Action Chair informed the Management Committee, that experts from Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro as well as FYR Macedonia have expressed their interest in joining the Action.

10. Non COST participation

Dr. Jesus San-Miguel-Ayanz, representative of the Institute for the Environment and Sustainability of DG Joint Research Centre (JRC) expressed the interest of his institution in joining COST Action E43 as the institute is responsible for the management of the

INFOREST Action of JRC focusing on forest monitoring in Europe, including the assessment of forest condition, forest fires, biodiversity and forest resources.

The Management Committee approved the request of Institute for the Environment and Sustainability of DG Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, asking the Science Officer to ensure the further administrative processing of the request.

After taking into consideration the aspects of the intellectual property rights, also the request of the Forest Inventory and Analysis Program (FIA) of the USDA Forest Service has been approved.

11. Web news

The Action Chair Prof. Tomppo presented the newly established Web-site of COST Action E43 which can be reached under the following address: www.metla.fi/eu/cost/e43

The Management Committee expressed its gratitude to Prof. Tomppo for his efforts towards the establishment of the Action Web-site.

To assure that the Action Web-site will be soon become a rich source of information all experts participating in the Action have been invited to provide input.

Furthermore, the Action members have been invited to check the listed names and addresses.

12. Progress Report of Working Groups

Informing the MC about the activities of his Working Group the Co-ordinator of Working Group 1 on *'Harmonised definitions and measuring practices'* Dr. Claude Vidal highlighted that the Working Group is currently finalising a questionnaire for the collection of national definitions and measuring practices. It is the intention of the WG to compile the received data until the next meeting.

The Co-ordinator of WG2 on *'Harmonised estimation procedures for carbon pools and carbon pool changes'* Dr. Goran Stahl reported that the objectives of work within WG2 has been to:

- (i) summarize the work carried out by the task force in Gembloux,
- (ii) present preliminary results of the questionnaire submitted after the Gembloux meeting,
- (iii) study (in-depth) the new reporting requirements of UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol,
- (iv) follow up results from other relevant projects, mainly COST E21 and CarboInvent
- (v) plan for the work to be performed until the next meeting.

Two experts, Zoltán Somogyi from the JRC and Wojtek Galinski from Joanneum Research, have been invited to help WG2 with issues (iii) and (iv).

Slightly more than 50% of the questionnaires were received before the Florence meeting. The preliminary results verified the indications already assumed before the questionnaire was submitted, i.e. that the process of developing new reporting systems is on-going in almost all countries, but that very few decisions on details have been decided so far. Thus, to assess the final conditions regarding the reporting systems in the different countries, there is a need to resubmit the questionnaire in about a year from now.

The main part of the time of the WG2 Florence meeting has been spent on studying the details of the reporting requirements, as a basis for our future work. In this context, the members of WG2 have been very grateful to the invited experts who have given a thorough review of IPCC's Good Practice Guidance and of other projects in this field.

Dr. Annemarie Bastrup-Birk, Coordinator of Working Group 3 on '*Harmonised indicators and estimation procedures for assessing components of biodiversity with NFI data*' reported that in the frame of the Florence meeting the analysis of the replies to questionnaire sent out after the Gembloux meeting, has been initiated. A detailed report will be presented at the next WG meeting.

13. Long term planning

In the light of the discussions of the Working Groups during the first meetings, the Work Programme has been revised. The new version has been posted on the Action Web-site. In the course of its next meeting the Steering Committee will evaluate the revised Work Programme.

14. Time and place of next meetings

The Management Committee has revised and updated the meeting plan elaborated in the course of the last MC meetings, as follows:

Switzerland	3 -4 March 2005	Steering Committee Meeting
	10 – 11 March (alternative)	
Vienna	14 – 15 April 2005	MC4 & Joint WGs
Graz	2 – 4 May 2005	TF WG2
Freiburg	6 – 7 October 2005	MC5 & Joint WGs
Prague	8 – 11 October 2005	Trainings Course (subject to confirmation)

15. Any other business

No issue has been raised under this agenda item.

16. Closing

In closing the Joint Management and Working Groups meeting, Action Chair Prof. Tomppo expressed his gratitude to the Working Group co-ordinators, the authors of the presentations as well as all other officeholders for their active role in preparing and conducting the ending workshop. In particular, he whole-heartily thanked Prof. Marchetti and his team for the excellent organisation of the Florence meeting. Furthermore he expressed his appreciation to all delegates for their active participation.

*Günter Siegel
December 2004*