



COST

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COST Action TD1105
Meeting on New Sensing Technologies and Methods for Air Pollution Monitoring
European Environment Agency
Copenhagen, Denmark

Dear participants,

I am sorry not to be with you today, but very pleased to welcome you all to the meeting of one of our outstanding Actions, “New Sensing Technologies and Methods for Air-Pollution Monitoring” (TD1105), with the European Environment Agency.

I have been involved in COST for soon three years now, and yet I am still fascinated by how COST is old and young at the same time. It is old because it has the longest history than any other European science-funding framework – 42 years – and it is young because it is and has always been based on the most cutting-edge understanding of how knowledge and innovation evolve in our society.

In fact, COST is based on the understanding of a very simple concept: that knowledge accumulation, knowledge share, knowledge creation, knowledge diffusion and knowledge application are all social – not solitary – endeavours. Knowledge does not simply spread in networks: knowledge is born in and nurtured by communities of people sharing passions, goals, tools, vocabularies and places to communicate. Research is a social activity that needs the right ecosystem to thrive. The more hospitable this ecosystem is and the faster progress and innovation take place.

This is the simple yet powerful idea behind COST. But it is not COST’s only secret.



COST is about creating communities of passionate people around S&T topics that the researchers themselves choose. As such, COST is bottom-up in terms of content. However, and more originally, COST is bottom-up also in terms of implementation. COST's simple rules allow the research communities to grow and to adapt their internal organization as their work progresses. The best topics are selected and the best people and then we entrust and empower researchers to drive home the very achievements they dream of, in a spirit of absolute openness: disciplinary, geographical and methodological. In fact, when COST panels hold Hearings to select new COST Actions, a recurring question to proposing researchers is: 'What is your dream?'

I would therefore define COST as a method rather than as a financial instrument or funding scheme. This simple but powerful idea explains why COST manages to do so much with so little money.

Finally, COST is extraordinary because it is pan-European and local at the same time.

- Pan-European, because 35 Member Countries proudly and enthusiastically participate in its activities, as stated by their representatives in the COST Ministerial Conference of June 2010.
- Local, because its networking nature delivers a local approach to innovation, whereby research teams from all COST countries and regions are connected to each other and work jointly, but still in a distributed manner. This avoids unnecessary duplications of efforts and has a multiplier effect on S&T investments.

However, those who hold COST close to their hearts cannot fail to see the challenges that still lie ahead. COST Member Countries have already established the COST Association (19 September 2013). COST needs to be in shape for the future and it needs its unique features to be appropriately understood and represented in the next Framework Programme, Horizon 2020.

Indeed, facing this challenge, we are relying on our Action participants for support and enthusiasm in their endeavours. Reaching out to the policy-makers and stakeholders is one of the most important tasks of COST. We aim to make the researchers' voice heard across different decision-making bodies, and to let the research outcomes of the networks we support to become visible in the informed decisions taken.

Your Action is an excellent example. I was told the scientific progress of your Action has the potential to lead to socio-economic impacts in the very in key sectors such as sensors materials, nanotechnologies, wireless sensor networks, intelligent algorithms, air-quality modelling, and standards among others. This Action which includes a European network of spin-offs (7) and a large participation of SMEs (10) from several COST Countries demonstrates that COST principles of openness and inclusiveness are a reality and that they can significantly contribute to link



research and innovation leading into new business with added value in the environmental technologies and related services/products and last but not least to this meeting today with the European Environment Agency.

I would like to take this chance to once again thank all Action participants for their contribution to the European Research Area and their continuous belief in COST.

Dr. Monica Dietl