

COST Action E53
Quality control for wood and wood products

Draft Minutes of the 4th Management Committee Meeting

Kyriad Prestige Hotel
2 Towarowa St, Warsaw, Poland

Wednesday, 17 October 2007, at 8:00 hrs

1. Welcome to participants

In opening the fourth meeting of the Management Committee of COST Action E53 Action Chair Prof. Kliger welcomed all participants.

Representatives from the following 21 countries were participating in this meeting:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without any amendment.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the third meeting of the Management Committee held on 15 May 2007 in Hamburg have been approved.

4. General Information from the COST Secretariat

The representative of the COST Office Ms. Idir informed the Management Committee about the most recent developments concerning the COST Programme, addressing in particular the following issues (for details see News from COST, [Http://www.cost.esf.org](http://www.cost.esf.org)):

11/10/2007 COST is present in the Debate on the Future of Science and Technology in Europe

- 02/10/2007. A new success for COST: the overwhelming response of the European scientific community
- 01/10/2007 The COST President attends the ESF Governing Council in Helsinki
- 21/09/2007 COST participates in the EC Workshop "Strengthening the coordination of Community and Member States policies and programmes for international S&T cooperation: impediments and opportunities"
- 06/09/2007 Another COST Success Story: Phenological Responses to Climate Change in Europe
- 05/09/2007 Conference on Computational Physics (CCP2007) – COST/ESF involvement
- 03/09/2007 A new COST success story: Green Chemistry and cooperation with African countries
- 01/08/2007 The European Science Foundation and the European Commission sign contract for COST in FP7
- 06/07/2007 Joint preliminary statement of COST and ESF on the Panel Report on the Final Review of the EC-ESF Contract for COST in FP6
- 03/07/2007 COST contributes to the consultation on the EC Green Paper on "The Era: New Perspectives": The role of COST in the European Research Area
- 15/06/2007 COST in Italy
- 04/06/2007 COST in Croatia
- 28/05/2007 COST in Russia
- 08/05/2007 COST Information Day in Armenia
- 04/05/2007 Cern Hosts Cost- Enlight Strategic Workshop on Hadron Therapy

COST Website

The official COST Web-site is accessible under the following address:
<http://www.cost.esf.org>.

Status of the COST Action E53

So far, according to the files 23 countries have joined COST Action E53:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom

Intention to sign: Slovak Republic

CSO approval: 14 June 2005
Entry into force: 14 October 05
First MC Meeting: 06 March 06
End of the Action: 05 March 2010

Chair: Prof. Robert Kliger
Vice-Chair: Dr. Johannes Welling
Rapporteur: Dr. Vahik Enjily

Working Groups:

Working Group	Coordinator	Email-address
WG 1: Scanning for Wood Properties in Quality Control and Processing	Arto Usenius	arto.usenius@vtt.fi
WG 2: Moisture Content and Distortion in Quality Control and Processing	Johannes Welling	welling@holz.uni-hamburg.de
WG 3: Strength, Stiffness and Appearance in Quality Control and Processing	Charlotte Bengtsson	charlotte.bengtsson@sp.se

Budget Status

After all Management Committees of the COST Domain on Forests, their Products and Services have been contacted, the budget plan for the 2008 (1 June 2007 – 31 May 2008) were drafted, and in the light of its activities 95.000 Euro were allocated to COST Action E53.

In the budget year 2008 all items (STSMs, Trainings Schools, Publications ect.) have to be financed out the Action Budget.

Training Schools

In the course of the year 2004 the COST Programme has introduced the new tool of ‘COST Training Schools’ aiming to provide within the frame of the Action topic for a group of scientists over a period of normally five days intensive training in a new emerging subject in one of the laboratories of the Action with unique equipment or know how. The participants are basically but not exclusively young researchers from across Europe but should also cover appropriate-training as a part of ‘life-long learning’.

5. Year budget planning

The officeholders as well as all delegations were asked to assure that in the light of the limited financial means all future participants of activities organised by COST Action E53 will dedicate adequate attention to the *principle of the most economical overall expenditure* when asking for reimbursement.

Budget 2007 (budget year expired on 1 June 2007)

In the budget year 2007 the COST Action E53 has spent 67.700 Euro (Steering Committee Meeting (Hamburg, 22 March 2007, 8 reimbursements), Working Group meeting (Riga, 23 April 2007, 24 reimbursements), Management Committee Meeting (Hamburg, 14 May 2007, 43 reimbursements), 3 STSMs (6850 Euro), 1 General Support Grant (2000 Euro)).

BUDGET 2008

The budget for the budget year 2008 will amount to approx. 95.000 Euro. So far the following activities have been financed or commitments have been made:

Joint MC/WGs Meeting (Warsaw, 15 – 17 October 2007)	39.000 Euro
Joint MC/WGs Meeting (Oslo, 19 - 20 May 2008)	38.000 Euro

In the run of the year 2008 the COST Action E53 has to migrate to the grant system. A detailed description of the grant system can be found at the following Web-site: www.cost.esf.org/fileadmin/cost_documents/guidelines/2-financial_instruments/2.6-COSTGrantSystem.pdf. The following web-site contains the template for the financial report form www.cost.esf.org/fileadmin/cost_documents/guidelines/2-financial_instruments/Financial-Report.xls. The grant system will request Actions to submit a detailed plan for the life span of the contract.

The Chair as well as the Vice Chair expressed concerns on the grant system. They asked whether this administrative part could be outsourced. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Forschung located in Munich, which is specialised in administering research project funding, has been considered as service provider.

6. STSM status, applications

The Management Committee has been informed that STSMs have to be financed out of the limited financial means of Action budget. In this context it has to be underlined that applicants should only make binding bookings after having received the official letter of approval.

Researchers applying for STSMs have to use the relevant on-line registration tool (<http://www.cost.esf.org/stsm>, details see http://www.cost.esf.org/fileadmin/cost_documents/guidelines/2-financial_instruments/2.3-STSM.pdf).

The Management Committee has been informed 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).

In the budget year 2007 3 STSMs have been undertaken.

So far, in the budget year 2008 2 STSMs have been financed.

The Management Committee has been invited to encourage young researcher to take advantage in the course of the budget year 2008 of this specific scheme.

The Management Committee has been informed about the following interests:

1 STSM from Hamburg to Ljubljana will take place (end of the year 2007)

1 STSM from Greece to Delft will also be carried out (end of this year, beginning of next year).

7. Publication, annual report

The representative of the COST Office reminded that each Action has to submit a Progress Monitoring Report before the end of a calendar year. A template can be found in the annex of the COST Document titled Guidelines for Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions (COST doc. 203/07, see www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=38). The Action Chair has been asked to pay adequate attention to the description of the scientific achievements. Furthermore, the Management Committee members were requested to provide the Action Chair with an updated list of those publications which can be considered as an outcome of this Action.

From the beginning of the year 2007 those reports will have to be posted at the Action related sector of the official COST Web-site.

The Action Chair was asked to submit not later than by 15 November 2007 a brief report high lightening the outcomes of the Warsaw Workshop for being published in the next issue of the COST Newsletter (Quarterly Report) and/or to be put on the sector of the COST website reserved for this Action respectively.

During the meeting the publication strategy has been discussed. It was agreed to post all publications on the Action Website and to update the list of publications.

All MC members have been encouraged to inform at the national level about the most important outcomes of COST Action E53. At least one copy of all relevant articles should be sent for documentation to the Action Chair as well as the COST Office regardless in which language they are written. However a small summary in English would be helpful.

The Management Committee was invited to contribute to the efforts of the COST Office to raise the awareness for the programme by informing the interested audience by publishing also articles in sectoral or even regional newspapers/newsletters using scientifically popularized language.

8. Evaluation

The COST Document titled *Guidelines for Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination of Results of COST Actions* (COST doc. 203/07, see www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=38) contains information on the evaluation process implemented by Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), subsequently adapted by the Domain Committee on Forests, their Products and Services.

It will be the main objective of the final evaluation to demonstrate the effectiveness of the completed COST Action in terms of:

- 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 evaluation report of the Action is aimed at the:

- users of the Action resources and results
- Management Committee of the Action
- Technical Committee of COST FPS
- the COST Administration

and may also be used to evaluate proposals to initiate follow-up Actions by the MC.

The Rapporteur will chair the Evaluation Panel. In this task he will be supported by two external evaluators who will be nominated in time by the DC FPS.

The MC was invited to initiate the preparation process for the Final Evaluation by compiling copies of all relevant publications (reports in particular).

9. Request for new members

The period within which COST member states can join this Action without any conditions being imposed, has run for twelve months from the date of approval of the Committee of COST Senior Officials and has expired on 13 June 2006. Any request of a COST member state for accession to COST Action E53 which will be submitted after this date will have to be approved by its MC.

The requests from Croatia and the Slovak Republic for accession to this COST Action were approved by the Management Committee.

10. Non COST participation

Since the last MC meeting the COST Office has not received any request from a Non COST institution.

11. Web news

The Web-site of Action E53 is accessible under the following address:
<http://www.cost53.net/>

A brief update on the status of the Website has been given.

12. Progress Report of Working Groups

The MC was informed by the 3 WG Coordinators about activities so far carried or planned by their Working Group. The outcomes of the Working Group meetings will be recorded separately.

13. Long term planning

The Steering Group has been charged of the preparation of the next Joint MC/WGs meeting.

The Management Committee expressed interest in a joint meeting with COST Action E55.

14. Time and place of next meetings

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

Oslo (Norway)	19 – 20 May 2008	Joint MC/WGs meeting (60 reimbursements)
Lisbon (Portugal) (Alternative Delft (the Netherlands))	27 – 28 October 2008	Joint MC/ WG meeting
Slovenia	end of October 2009	Final Conference

Budget relevant decisions:

The Management Committee has approved the following request:

Grant of 2.000 Euro for the Action Chair has been approved for the years 2007 and 2008.

15. Any other business

The MC Members have been informed about the possibilities of the instruments provided by COST Strategic Workshops (*), ESF (Research Conferences); INTAS; EUREKA as well as NATO Research programme.

(*) Strategic Workshops are an important new element in the positioning of COST. The aim is to bring researchers and decision makers together to discuss forefront topics, principally of an inter-disciplinary nature, which can be used in the future development of the topic and which may form the basis of future proposals, not only to COST, but also to the framework programme and to other European organisations responsible for research networking.

On 19 – 21 April 2007 a Strategic Workshop on ‘Health and the Natural Outdoors’ has been held in Larnaca, Cyprus. Its purpose was to identify the extent of knowledge in this field and the implications for policy and for future research. The Workshop

found that nature-based approaches can contribute significantly to health objectives in Europe by ensuring that people have contact with nature in their everyday lives and that nature would be an integral feature of health care environments and approaches, an aspect of growing importance in steadily ageing and urbanising society. More effective coordination and communication of existing knowledge and understanding, combined with increased investment in new research, is necessary to capitalise on the benefits of nature-based approaches.

Continuously Open Call

At the beginning of the running year the second COST Open Call for Proposals to support Scientific and Technical Collaboration in Europe has been launched. Approx. 400 teams have submitted preliminary proposals for a new COST Action.

31 March 2008 has been determined as the next collection date for continuous COST Open Call (further details will be soon available at www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=721).

COST Near Neighbour Policy

At its 167th meeting (March 2007), the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) approved extended support from the involvement of researchers from institutions in the Balkans and Europe's "Near Neighbours" not already members of COST.

Countries qualifying for support:

Balkans

- Albania
- Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Eastern Neighbours"

- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Georgia
- Moldova
- Russian Federation
- Ukraine

COST Strategy towards increased support of early stage researchers

Introduction

A widely accepted deficiency in European research is the lack of opportunity for early stage researchers to develop independent careers and to establish their first research group under their own responsibility. This is a structural problem that leads to a dramatic waste of research talent in Europe. It limits or delays the emergence of the

next generation of researchers, who bring new ideas to the European Research Area (ERA).

The definition of the term “early stage researchers” used in this document is based on the time that elapses between the date of the PhD/doctorate (or similar experience) and the date of involvement in the COST Action. If this time span is less than 10 years, a person fits the definition; of course, periods of careers’s leave have to be added to the time span mentioned. A similar definition will be used, e.g. in the European Research Council (ERC) and other support schemes.

Suggestions of support measures

There are a large number of possibilities for COST to give early stage researchers better support through the existing instruments. The list of support measures is not conclusive; proposals are not given in priority order. The Action-related support measures can be strongly recommended to all COST Actions and either be implemented by the COST Office or by the Actions, according to their needs. More general support measures shall be given as recommendations to the Actions or to the COST National Coordinators.

Support measure 1: Short Term Scientific Mission

- Set a target figure, from which a percentage of the Action budget shall be used for STSMs (Domain Committee together with the COST Office).
- STSMs of early stage researchers can be expanded in duration beyond 3 months in well justified cases. Financial support shall be increased accordingly.

Support measure 2: Training Schools

- Training Schools shall already be planned at the proposal stage of a new COST Action. This shall be reflected in the criteria for the open call at the full proposal stage.
- The current level of this activity shall be raised.

Support measure 3: Action Think Tank

- An early stage researchers' network may be created within the Action as a “think tank”.
- Each year one of the workshops of the Action would involve early stage researchers to strengthen links with each other and with experienced scientists involved in the management
- of the Action.

Support measure 4: Conference Grant

- A Conference Grant shall be established: Each Domain offers 3 supporting grants (max. 3000 euro each) per year for early stage researchers to participate in an international conference outside of the COST Action activities.
- In order to be eligible for this grant, an accepted oral contribution is required.
- The grant can be used to cover travel and subsistence costs, conference fees, and the costs of conference workshops.

- Selection Process by written procedure: written application through the COST Office/grant holder to the Executive group of the Domain Committee through the Action's Management Committee, selection based on a list of criteria (to be defined by the Domain Committee), preparation of a short list of max 3 applications by DC. Final decision shall be taken by written procedure by DC Chair and 2 members of the Executive Group of the Domain three times per year for one grant each.

Support measure 5: Selection of Chairs

- Recommendation to the Actions to nominate early stage researchers as Chairs of Working Groups.

Support measure 6: Open Call

- The text as well as the criteria of the Open Call shall encourage early stage researchers to submit proposals to the Open Call.

Support measure 7: Early stage researchers as national MC delegates

- Recommendation to the COST National Coordinators to nominate early stage researchers as national delegates whenever feasible.

Final statement

COST follows an overall policy of increasing its support to early stage researchers. The preferred strategic initiative is to use the existing instruments and to apply them in favour of early stage researchers and as a means of capacity building. Based on the availability of funds, the support measures described in this paper shall be implemented by the COST Office or recommended to the Domain Committees, the Actions or the National Coordinators.

The strategy is described in detail in COST Document 212/07 titled COST Strategy for Early Stage researchers.

Pilot Scheme to foster non-COST institution participations in COST Actions

COST has a long standing tradition of non-COST country institutions participating in Actions. Applications for such participations are assessed by the respective Management Committee of the Action, endorsed by the respective Domain Committee and by JAF and approved by the CSO taking into account the mutual benefit expected from this interaction.

The COST strategy for cooperation with non-COST countries defines the scope of these activities. It pays special attention to the EU "Near Neighbours" policy. The COST Office implemented a special scheme to support participants from the respective countries setting aside € 100.000 p.a. for this specific purpose.

The following pilot scheme for Australia and New Zealand is approved:

Only COST Actions for which participation of institutions from Australia and New Zealand has been approved by the CSO are eligible for this reciprocal additional

STSM support. According to the normal COST procedures these approvals require the positive response of the MC of an Action to the request of the institution from Australia and New Zealand. If the MC considers this participation in the interest of the Action the MC requests this particular participation to be endorsed by the DC and eventually approved by the CSO.

The extended STSM support is available to institutions in Australia and New Zealand based on a reciprocal agreement between the COST Office and a dedicated partner organisation. The dedicated partner organisation will receive a specific budget from the authorities of the respective country to ensure the reciprocity.

At present Australia and New Zealand are prepared to support such a reciprocal scheme. For New Zealand the dedicated partner institution will be the “Royal Society of New Zealand” (RSNZ) – and for Australia it is expected to be the “Forum for EU-Australia Science and Technology cooperation” (FEAST).

The COST Office will provide up to € 25.000 p.a. respectively for travel of European scientists in the respective COST Actions to the Australian and New Zealand institutions. An adequate amount will be provided by each dedicated partner organisation as additional support for the participation of researchers from respectively Australia and New Zealand in COST Actions.

The strategy is described in detail in COST Document 211/07 titled Pilot Scheme with Australia and New Zealand.

COST Strategy for Cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries

The CSO takes note of the report by the rapporteur (doc. COST 220/07). CSO recalls its previous orientations regarding the cooperation with non-COST countries and confirms, in particular, that COST is open to participation of institutions from non-COST countries in COST Actions following the bottom-up principle and for mutual benefit, to be approved by the CSO on a case by case basis. In this context, the CSO agrees furthermore that:

- The arrangements previously agreed by the CSO for the Balkan Countries and the Near Neighbours (doc. COST 329/05) are extended as follows:
 - up to two researchers from each of these countries may be reimbursed for attendance at the meetings of COST Actions,
 - researchers from these countries are eligible to participate in other activities decided at the level of individual Actions (such as meetings, short-term scientific missions, training schools and conferences),
 - the Management Committees of the respective Actions report on the success of these extended Near Neighbour activities,
 - the COST Office provides appropriate budget allocations within the COST Grant System. The present level of funding of these Near Neighbour activities remains unchanged until the demand exceed the available budgets based on an indicative annual report by the COST Office on this matter.

The strategy regarding the cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries is described in detailed in COST Document 229/07 titled COST Strategy for Cooperation with institutions from non-COST countries.

COST Office Newsletter

The sixth issue of the COST Office Newsletter has been released recently and can be found on the COST Website.

([www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=18&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=336&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=441&cHash=3963d2863a](http://www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=18&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=336&tx_ttnews[backPid]=441&cHash=3963d2863a))

16. Closing

In closing the Management meeting, Action Chair Prof. Kliger expressed his gratitude to the Working Group Coordinators, the authors of the presentations as well as all other officeholders and MC members for their active role in preparing the Warsaw meeting. In particular he thanked the local organizer Prof. Ewa Dobrowolska and Dr Marek Grzeskiewicz and there team for the excellent preparation of the meeting.