

COST – a flexible research networking tool

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Abstract—COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is based on an inter-governmental agreement and is a long-running, economical and highly successful way to build networks between Europe's researchers. It reflects the human dimension of science, supporting researchers to share not only the results of their work but also their aims and methods. COST aims at strengthening Europe in scientific and technological research for peaceful purposes through the support of cooperation and interaction between European researchers.

researchers across Europe and fosters the establishment of scientific excellence in nine key domains as well as through trans-domain activities.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COST

One of COST's main characteristics is its flexibility, allowing for an easy implementation and light management of the research initiatives, the so-called COST Actions.

Each COST Action is a network centered on nationally-funded research projects in fields that are of interest to at least five COST countries. COST provides the COST Actions with financial support for joint activities such as conferences, short-term scientific exchanges and publications. Each COST Action has an objective, defined goals and clear deliverables.

Activities are launched following a "bottom-up" approach, meaning that the initiative of launching a COST Action comes from the European researchers themselves. The COST member countries participate on an "à la carte" principle. World-wide participation of individual scientists in COST Actions is possible under the principle of mutual benefit.

COST has clearly shown its strength in non-competitive research, pre-normative cooperation, and solving environmental, cross-border and public utility problems. It has been successfully used to maximize European synergy and added value in research cooperation and is a useful tool to further European integration.

As a precursor of advanced multidisciplinary research, COST plays a very important role in building the European Research Area (ERA). COST contributes to reducing the fragmentation in European research investments. It anticipates and complements the activities of the EU Framework Programs and other major international research programs, also constituting a "bridge" towards the scientific communities of emerging countries. COST increases the mobility of