

Brussels, 24 May 2017

## Minutes of the First Management Committee Meeting of COST Action CA15101: “Comparative Analysis of Conspiracy Theories”

Brussels, Belgium  
01/04/2016

### 1. Welcome to participants

The participants were welcomed by Dr. Rossella Magli, Science Officer and by Ms Rose Cruz Santos, Administrative Officer of the Action. Dr. Rossella Magli chaired the first part of the meeting, including the election of the Action Chair, Vice Chair, and Selection of Grant Holder Institution that was carried out under agenda item 8.

### 2. Verification of the presence of two-thirds of the participating COST Countries

CSO Approval: 30/10/2015

Start of the Action: 01/04/2016

End of Action: 31/03/2020

Total number of COST Countries having accepted the MoU: 33 (**Annex 2-Action Fact Sheet**)

Total number of COST Countries intending to accept the MoU: 0

Number of parties present at the meeting: 21

Due to the terrorist attacks in Brussels and its airport earlier in March, the access to the city was more problematic and many flights had delays or were canceled. Some of the Action members intending to participate in the meeting had to cancel their participation. 21 COST Countries attended the meeting and The quorum (2/3 of COST Countries participating in the Action) was not reached: (COST doc. 134/14 “COST Action Management Monitoring and Final Assessment” Annex I, Article 8) by one member. Due to the exceptional circumstances, an e-mail vote was organised and managed by the SO of the Action during the meeting. The MC members who were not present were asked to vote by e-mail on the decisions concerning the election of Chair and Vice Chair, and the appointment of the Grant Holder. The quorum was reached the same afternoon, when the first pair of MC members representing a Copuntry not attending the meeting have both expressed their favourable vote.

### 3. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (**Annex 1**) for the 1<sup>st</sup> Management Committee (MC) meeting was adopted.

### 4. Tour de table/ introduction of the MC members

The list of officially nominated delegates and the participants of the meeting with their contact information is presented in **Annex 3**.

### 5. General information on COST mechanism and the funding and reporting of coordination activities

Dr. Rossella Magli presented the COST Overview, policies, and COST Actions : participation, Management Monitoring (**Annex 4**). Ms Rose Cruz Santos continued with an introduction to the COST Grant System and presentation of the financial rules (**Annex 4**).

Relevant information is on the COST website at <http://www.cost.eu/participate> and <http://www.cost.eu/participate/networking>, including the following reference documents:



- Rules of Procedure for COST Action Management Committees (COST doc. 134/14, Annex I)
- COST Grant System Vademecum (<http://www.cost.eu/download/COSTVademecum> )
- Guidelines for Action management, Monitoring and Assessment ([http://www.cost.eu/download/Guidelines\\_Action\\_management\\_monitoring\\_assessment](http://www.cost.eu/download/Guidelines_Action_management_monitoring_assessment) )

#### **6. Agreement on the internal rules of procedure for the MC of the COST Action**

The Rules of Procedure for the Management Committee (**Annex 5**) were presented to the MC.

#### **7. Setting the frame for the Action**

The budget allocated to the Action for the 1<sup>st</sup> Grant Period was communicated prior to the meeting to the Main proposer (**Annex 4**). A budget of 141 000 EUR for the first Grant Period of the Action, from May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 to April 30, 2017.

#### **8. Election of the Chair, Vice-Chair,**

Dr. Peter Knight (UK) was unanimously elected as the Chair.

Prof. Michael Butter (DE) was unanimously elected as the Vice-Chair.

#### **9. Selection of the Grant holder institution (GH Scientific representative appointment) and FSAC rate**

The University of Tübingen (DE) was selected as the Grant Holder Institution.

Prof. Michael Butter (DE) was appointed as the Scientific Representative of the Grant Holder Institution.

15% rate for FSAC was decided by MC for GP1.

#### **10. Presentation and discussion of the Action**

Peter Knight gave a presentation of the Objectives and Working Program of the Action (see attached as PowerPoint presentation).

#### **11. Establishment of Action Management structure**

The proposed Action Management Structure (see PowerPoint presentation) was unanimously approved.

Clare Birchall was unanimously elected WG 1 Chair and Massimo Leone and Estrella Gualda Caballero WG1 Vice Chairs.

Annika Rabo was unanimously elected WG 2 Chair and Doğan Gürpınar and Eirikur Bergman WG 2 Vice Chairs.

Monika Grzesiak-Feldman was unanimously elected WG 3 Chair and Nebojša Blanuša and Alejandro Romero Reche WG 3 Vice Chairs.

Humeira Iqtidar (Chair), Simona Stano (Vice Chair), Eva Kimminich, Tamás Scheibner and Jan Willem van Prooijen were unanimously elected to the STSMs & Conference Grants Subcommittee.

Péter Krekó (Chair), Anca Minescu (Vice Chair), Jakov Bojovic, Claus Oberhauser, Michał Bilewicz and Kateřina Králová were unanimously elected to the Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee.

Stef Aupers (Chair), Zuzana Panczová (Vice Chair), Asbjørn Dyrendal, Rumena Buzarovska, Franciszek Czech and Lóránt Győri were unanimously elected to the Dissemination Subcommittee.

The MC voted unanimously to limit the time for the acceptance of e-COST invitations to two weeks.

The MC discussed how the admittance of additional Action Members should be decided. Three models were put to the vote:

- a) the whole MC decides
- b) the Chair and Vice Chairs of the WG the applicant wishes to join decide
- c) the Core Group decides

Model a) received 2 votes; model b) received 5 votes; and model c) received 7 votes. As there is not yet a majority, the MC countries not represented at the meeting need to cast their votes (email Annika) within the next seven days.

## **12. Action implementation planning**

Objective Achievement Indicators for MoU Objectives were presented and discussed (see PowerPoint presentation).

The overall aim for the First Grant Period, the WG tasks and the deliverables were presented and discussed (see PowerPoint presentation).

The Budget Plan for the First Grant Period was presented and unanimously approved. The MC voted unanimously to reduce the flat rate for accommodation reimbursement for the MC/WG Meeting in Leuven in September 2016 to € 100 per person per night.

The Dissemination Strategy for the First Grant Period was presented.

The places and dates for the next meetings were presented (see PowerPoint presentation).

## **13. WG Implementation Planning**

The present members of the WGs met for 30 minutes to begin discussing the WGs' work plan for the next meetings. They then reported back to the plenum.

## **14. Closing**

Action Chair Peter Knight thanked the COST Office and all MC members. The meeting was closed at 4.20pm.

**Annexes**

**Annex 1- Agenda**

<https://e-services.cost.eu/ghs/CA15101/1767/meetings/71499/participants/generateAgenda/>

**Annex 2- Action Fact Sheet :**



COST Action CA15101  
COST Association

COST Grant System  
25 April 2016

**Action CA15101 Fact Sheet**

**Title**

Comparative Analysis of Conspiracy Theories (COMPACT)

**Contacts**

MC Chair	Science Officer:	Administrative Officer:
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**Details**

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Start of Action: 01/04/2016	Entry into force: 17/11/2015
End of Action: 31/03/2020	CSO approval date: 30/10/2015

**Objectives**

Conspiracy theories play an increasingly visible role in the political life in Europe, not least because the EU itself is often viewed as a vast conspiracy. Although sometimes seen as harmless entertainment, conspiracy theories can contribute to extremism within particular regions, as well as fuelling tensions between nations. They can erode trust in democratic institutions and the media. Despite the increasing prominence of conspiracy theories in the age of the internet, there has been little systematic research on where they come from, how they work and what can be done about them. The aim of this Action is to develop an interdisciplinary and international network to provide a comprehensive understanding of conspiracy theories. Existing research has tended to concentrate on specific national traditions, and is often confined to the perspective of a single discipline. In contrast this Action will adopt a comparative approach, investigating the causes, manifestations and effects of conspiracy theories in different regions and times, and drawing on insights from history, politics, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and psychology. The Action will pursue the inquiry in three broad areas: the manifestations and modes of transmission of conspiracy theory in different historical and cultural contexts; the variety of actors and audiences involved in the production and consumption of conspiracy theories; and the psychological and cultural causes and political consequences of belief in conspiracy. Working closely with stakeholders, this Action will build a better understanding of conspiracy theories in order to develop an effective response to them.

**Annex 3-** Attendance list



CA15101\_MC1\_Signed Attendance List C

**Annex 4-** Science Officer & Administrative Officer presentation:



CA15101\_1st\_MCM\_SO\_AO\_April1st\_201

**Annex 5-** The Rules of Procedure for COST Action Management Committees (COST doc. 134/14, Annex I)  
[http://www.cost.eu/download/COST\\_Action\\_Management\\_Monitoring\\_and\\_Final\\_Assessment](http://www.cost.eu/download/COST_Action_Management_Monitoring_and_Final_Assessment)

**Annex 6-** Chair's and Vice Chair's presentations