

Minutes of the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting

November 3, 2009

Stockholm, Sweden

Agenda

1. Adoption of agenda
2. Adoption of minutes of last meeting
3. Report of Action Chair
 - a. current status of Action – signatures, non-COST country members
 - b. planned activities for 2009 & 2010
 - c. website
 - d. Action budget
 - e. transition to Grant Holder system
 - f. STSMs (call system, evaluation, feedback)
 - g. support of young researchers
 - h. coordination/ interaction with other COST Actions
 - i. FPS Annual Progress Conference (March 3-4, 2010)
4. Joint workshop of WG3 and Action IE0601 on modeling of wooden cultural objects in Krakow, April 12-13, 2010 (date to be confirmed)
 - a. current state of planning
 - b. workshop format and topics
 - c. workshop budget
5. Joint workshop of WG1&2 and MC meeting in Biel, May 27-28, 2010 (date to be confirmed)
 - a. current state of planning
 - b. workshop format and topics
 - c. workshop budget
6. Training School in Golm, March/April 2010
 - a. current state of planning
 - b. lecturers, topics, kind of training
 - c. call and selection of participants
 - d. training school budget
7. Annual workshop Hamburg, autumn 2010
8. Next meeting
9. AOB

The meeting starts at 14:05. Karin Hofstetter welcomes all participants and thanks Lennart Salmén for providing the facilities for the meeting.

Item 1:

Karin Hofstetter presents the agenda, which is unanimously approved.

Item 2:

The minutes of the first Steering Committee meeting in Golm (February 16, 2009) have been sent to all members via email on February 23, 2009. They are unanimously approved.

Based on the general decision taken at the last meeting, the minutes of this meeting will be sent to the MC members and also uploaded to the public domain of the Action's website.

Item 3a:

19 countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom) have already signed the MoU. Moreover, the Czech Republic has shown intention to sign the MoU. Unlike the announcement at the 2nd MC meeting in May in Vienna, there are currently no activities in Romania and Croatia to join the Action.

Karin Hofstetter reports on changes of the MC members of France, which are currently under way. Joseph Gril and Petrick Perré will be replaced by Olivier Arnould and Xavier Frank and become deputy MC members instead.

Kristofer Gamstedt informs about the interest of Gary Chinga Carrasco from PFI Trondheim to become deputy MC member of Norway. He could replace Eva-Lena Hult-Mori in this position, who has moved to Finland and, thus, could join the Finnish team. Nomination of MC members is handled by the COST National Coordinators. Karin Hofstetter is going to inform Gary about the procedure and the right persons to contact.

There are two non-COST country members at the moment, Hydro Quebec (Canada) and SCION (New Zealand). One more application by University of Canterbury (New Zealand, contact Clemens Altaner) has already been approved by MC and DC, the final approval by JAF is expected by mid November. The Forest Products Laboratory (USA, contact Joseph Jakes), which had shown interest in joining the Action in the framework of the workshop in Vienna last May, has not filed an application yet.

Item 3b:

Karin Hofstetter briefly outlines the planned activities for the years 2010 and 2011, namely

2010:

- Training School, March/April, 2010, Potsdam, Germany
- Joint WG3 and Action IE0601 Meeting, April 12-13, 2010, Krakow, Poland
- Joint WG1&WG2 Meeting and MC-Meeting, May 27-28, 2010, Biel, Switzerland
- Annual Workshop & MC-Meeting, October 2010, Hamburg, Germany

2011:

- Training school (possibly Stockholm)
- Workshop (possibly Helsinki)
- WG meetings
- MC meetings

Details about the activities in 2010 will be discussed in the framework of items 4-7 of the agenda, also in view of the current budget situation.

Pekka Saranpää has indicated readiness to organize the annual workshop (including all WGs) in 2011 in Helsinki. Mike Jarvis also showed willingness to host a smaller meeting in Edinburgh. A thematic workshop on genetics of growth and biomechanical function, which was considered after the Vienna workshop, could be held there.

Items 3c:

Some new items have been included in the Action's webpage:

- list of conferences and meetings related to our COST Action. This list was announced by email and information to be included in this list requested. After first input, no further information has been received during the last months. To prevent out-of-date information on the website, this list will be (temporarily) removed if all announced events have passed.

- database, listing equipment available and modeling techniques applied at the institutes participating in the Action. This database is run as a Google document and was set up by Olivier Arnould. Only very few entries are included so far. Lennart Salmén and Michaela Eder point out that it takes a lot of effort to fill the list for institutes with a lot of equipment. It is decided that only equipment used in the framework of the Action should be mentioned. The usefulness of the database for promoting and facilitating collaboration and STSMs is accepted by all SC members. Thus, one more promotion initiative will be started, most probably at WG level.

Item 3d:

Karin Hofstetter reports about the unfavorable budget situation arising from the transition to the Grant Holder system which shall take place at the beginning of December 2009. The extra expenses for the Grant Holder support, which amount to 15 % of the Action's budget, have to be covered from the currently assigned Action budget. Instead of increasing the budget in view of the changed circumstances, it has rather been reduced from € 89.000 (indicated at the 2nd MC meeting in Vienna in May for the budget period from June 2009-May 2010) to € 81.500. This means a reduction of the money available for meetings, STSMs and training schools by more than 20 %. Considering the meeting plan presented in item 3c, not even all MC members could be reimbursed at the scheduled events. Melae Langbein has been approached asking for a possible rise of the budget. Due to a very tight COST budgets, this is not possible at the moment and most probably won't become possible during the budget year.

Different strategies on how to deal with this situation are discussed. Finally it is decided to make no cuts on reimbursements but to reduce the activities in the upcoming year. In particular, the joint WG1&WG2-meeting and MC meeting in Biel will be cancelled as well as the inclusion of external lecturers in the planned Training School in Golm. Karin Hofstetter will clearly communicate the reasons for these cancellations to the COST Office and point out that cuts on the budget means cuts on the Action's program.

In the Grant Holder system, different rules will apply for the workshop support grants which then will depend on the number of participants. It is decided to make no cuts on the support grants already approved at the MC meeting in Vienna, namely € 2.000 for the training school in Golm and € 3.000 for the workshop in Hamburg. Receipts for the extra support exceeding the grant according to the new rules will have to be handed over to the COST Office by the local organizers then.

Karin Hofstetter is going to prepare a revised budget in view of the decisions made and will send it to the SC members first for comments and approval.

Item 3e:

The transition to the Grant Holder system is announced to take place on December 1st, 2009. Martina Pöll participated in a one-day training in Brussels on October 19th, 2009, organized by the COST Office in this respect.

Item 3f:

Karin Hofstetter provides a short review of past and current STSMs. Seven applications have been approved, of which three have already been completed, three were in progress at the time of the SC meeting, and one will start in December. The reports of the STSMs will be uploaded to the internal domain of the Action's website. Care has to be taken that the already approved STSMs which will not be completed until the end of November will still be funded from the budget of the current budget period and not from the budget in the Grant Holder system. Karin Hofstetter is going to contact Melae Langbein in this respect.

Together with the transition to the Grant Holder system, a call system will be introduced for STSM applications. Two calls will be launched by year – in 2010 one at the end of January and one in mid May. Both calls will be announced as soon as possible. If all of the money reserved for STSMs is spent at the second call, the COST Office will be approached in order to ask for additional money. A third call could be launched in such a case, or some applications could be funded extraordinarily following a first-come first-serve principle. There won't be strict rules and a 'point system' for the selection of the STSMs, rather the SC will decide on an application-related basis. A reasonable regional spread will be aimed at.

€ 9.000 will be allocated for STSMs next year, which is above the minimum share of 10 % of the Action's budget fixed at the MC meeting in May.

Karin Hofstetter will provide a short summary of the comments of the SC members on the application to the applicant. In the framework of the call system, it will be possible for an applicant that was declined to re-submit a revised and improved version of the proposal at the next call.

Item 3g:

Annual training schools provide a perfect framework for improving the qualification of young researchers in the Action. Moreover, they allow the young people to get into contact and to start building their own network. The training school in Vienna has already been very successful in this respect.

The share of Early Stage Researchers in all activities of the Action is extraordinarily high so far, and also the number of STSMs is good. On the whole, the participation of young researchers in the Action is very satisfactory.

Item 3h:

Karin Hofstetter reports about her participation in workshops of other COST Actions, namely of **E50** 'Cell wall macromolecules and reaction wood' (final conference in Wageningen, July 2009) and of **E54** 'Characterisation of the fine structure and properties of papermaking fibres using new technologies' (workshop in Grenoble, October 2009). She gave short introductory presentations about Action FP0802 there and promoted the Action in personal contacts. Particularly members of E54 showed high interest in joint activities and participation in upcoming events of FP0802.

Item 3i:

Karin Hofstetter presents the slides for the coming FPS Annual Progress Conference in Rome March 3-4, 2010. The slides are approved by the SC members. Kristofer Gamstedt proposes to point out the size of the fibre testing workshop, which is quite extraordinary for thematic workshops in a COST framework. Moreover, he proposes to include information about joint publications in order to show the scientific outcome of the Action.

Item 4:

Kristofer Gamstedt presents the current state of planning of the joint workshop of Actions FP0802 and IE0601 to be held in Krakow on April 12-13, 2010. A first draft program is already available (attached to the minutes), including already numerous proposals for invited lectures. Possible further invited speakers are discussed. Michaela Eder proposed to invite people from other continents to report about their specific methods and problems of conservation of wooden cultural objects. Some Japanese researchers would be interesting in this respect. Karin is going to ask Joseph Gril for possible contacts. Moreover, New Zealand researchers could be of interest, too. Michaela Eder will ask personal contacts in New Zealand about it.

Kristofer Gamstedt reports that Action IE0601 has approved a budget of € 10.800 for the workshop for reimbursements of participants connected to this Action. It is decided that an equal amount will be made available also from Action FP0802. This should allow reimbursement of about 19 participants in total (both Actions).

The workshop will be officially announced as soon as all details are fixed.

Item 5:

Due to budget constraints, the joint WG1&WG2 meeting and also the MC meeting in Biel will be cancelled. Karin Hofstetter is going to inform the local organizer, Parviz Navi, and the COST office about this. Biel could be considered as possible meeting venue for workshops in the following years.

Item 6:

Michaela Eder reports about the current state of planning of the Training School (TS) 2010 in Golm. For reasons of limited budget, it is decided to hold the school only with lecturers from the MPI in Golm and not to include additional lecturers from the UK. The school will focus on training on experimental techniques. The limit of participants is set to 12, and each person wishing to attend will be asked to write a letter of motivation, as the SC suspects that more than 12 will be interested in participating. The selection will place much emphasis on this motivation letter, which should point out how this training will be beneficial in the scientific activities of the Early Stage Researchers. The selection will be made by the SC members.

A date in May/ June is considered as optimal by the SC members. Michaela Eder is going to check possible dates with her colleagues in Potsdam. The decision on the date is left to Michaela Eder without the need for a further SC approval. Michaela Eder is going to take care of the announcement and the organization of the TS. There will be no cuts on the support grant provided to the MPI as decided at the MC meeting in May (€ 2.000). According to the new COST rules in the Grant Holder system, only an amount of € 30 times the number of participants will be provided without proof. Thus, receipts will have to be sent to the COST office justifying a support grant of € 2.000.

Item 7:

The annual workshop including all three working groups will be held in Hamburg in 2010 and organized by Uwe Schmitt. Out of two proposed dates by Uwe Schmitt, the later option October 6-8, 2010, is chosen. The workshop will last 2,5 days and end at lunch time after a MC meeting on the third day. This will allow participants to return on the same day and make less nights of reimbursement necessary.

Uwe Schmitt proposed 'Wood structure/function-relationships and modeling methods' as possible title for the workshop. The SC members propose to skip 'and modeling methods', but otherwise consider the title very appropriate and sufficiently broad.

It is decided to have two keynotes by highly distinguished researchers. Michaela Eder is going to contact proposed researchers and ask about their interest and availability.

It is discussed how WG meetings could be organized at future meetings. Discussions in these meetings are difficult to prepare and depend very much on the participants, who are usually not known in advance. In any case it is crucial to prepare these meetings very well and to focus on particular questions. Decisions on such a thematic focus should be made as early as possible and could also be included in the workshop announcements. A now possible format for WG meetings is to have 5-minutes presentations related to a particular problem. They could serve as starting point for discussions and help to make them livelier. This format will be tested in the framework of the Hamburg workshop. Abstracts will have to be submitted also for these presentations.

Moreover, the WG meetings should be held not at the end of the meeting to avoid early departure of the participants. The first session after lunch of the second day is considered as ideal in this respect and will be proposed to Uwe Schmitt.

The idea of organizing tutorials in the afternoon/ evening before the workshop dedicated to a particular experimental method is picked up again. Karin Hofstetter is going to ask Uwe Schmitt about costs for a lecture hall. Organizing a tutorial will only be considered in case of only minor additional costs. A possible topic is micro-tomography, which could be presented by a representative of the University in Jyväskylä. Kristofer Gamstedt would check availability of the speaker and his general interest in participation in the Hamburg meeting. A pre-investigation of the interest of workshop participants would be necessary in order to decide on holding the tutorial or not. This could be performed via an email survey. The minimum number of participants is set to 15.

It is confirmed that the final publication should be a special issue of *Holzforschung* or another renowned, relevant scientific journal. A first meeting of a 'final publication task force' will be held in the framework of the workshop in Hamburg. This task force will consist of the SC members and additionally the WG deputies. The aim is to decide on topics/ articles and authors, who will be approached immediately after the meeting. This should make it possible to publish the special issue very close to the end of the Action.

Item 8:

The next meeting of the SC will be held in Hamburg at the day before the annual workshop (October 5, 2010). In view of the budget constraints, no spring meeting will be organized for 2010. Karin Hofstetter is going to provide a written report in April/ May. Karin Hofstetter and Martina Pöll will keep close contact with Uwe Schmitt and assist him in the preparation of the workshop. The review procedure of the abstracts for this workshop will be handled in a remote manner via email.

Item 9:

No further comments.

The meeting ends at approximately 17:30.