

COST Action CA18201
**Action Title: An integrated approach to conservation of threatened plants for the
21st Century**

Minutes of the 3rd Management Committee Meeting

On-line ZOOM meeting
Hosted by the University of Primorska, Faculty of Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Information
Technologies, Koper, Slovenia
November 18, 2020

Beginning of the meeting: 10:00 A.M. End of the meeting: 12:20 P.M.

1. Welcome to participants

Action Chair Živa Fišer opened the meeting and welcomed the participants and presented the schedule of the Working Group meetings between 18-20 November 2020. Action Chair explained that in case of voting, MC members who disapprove with the vote can do so by leaving a message in the ZOOM chat.

2. Verification of the presence of two-thirds of the Participating COST Countries

Representatives from 29 out of 37 Participating COST Countries were present at the meeting, therefore the presence of two-thirds verified the meeting. Representatives from 2 Near Neighbour countries were also present at the meeting (Ukraine, Lebanon).

3. Adoption of agenda

Agenda was accepted without any disapproving votes.

4. Approval of Minutes and matters arising from the last meeting

Minutes of the MC meeting in Pruhonice (5 February 2020) were approved without any disapproving votes.

5. Update from the Action Chair

a) Status of Action:

- Action Chair presented the start and end dates of Action (15/10/2019 - 14/10/2023), participating COST countries (37 COST countries), participating members from NNC (Ukraine, Lebanon, Armenia) and the changes in the Grant Period, which was extended for 6 months due to Covid-19. End of the 2nd Grant Period is now 31/10/2021 instead of 30/04/2021.
- Action Chair presented the leadership positions: Chair: Živa Fišer, Vice-Chair: Giovanna Aronne, Science Communication Team: Marta Galloni and Sandro Lanfranco, ITC Grant Team: Aida Dervishi and Maja Lazarević, STSM Team: Loukia Vassiliou and Hana Pankova.
- Members of different working groups were presented; WG1: Silvia Castro and Boštjan Surina, WG2: Sandrine Godefroid and Andreas Ensslin, WG3: Peter Glasnović and Michael Kiehn, WG4: Justyna Wiland-Szymańska and Jasmin Joshi, WG5: Phil Aravanopoulos and Marcin Klisz.

- Action Chair presented a new member of the Action, Baiba Pruse (MC Latvia), who recently joined the Action and has been very active within WG4. Baiba Pruse briefly introduced herself and her research interests. Action Chair proposed to vote for Baiba Pruse to become co-leader of WG4 and to be included in the Core group. MC voted in favour and the vote was accepted without any disapproving votes.

b) Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM):

- STSM coordinator Loukia Vassiliou presented some general information about STSMs (Main aim, Duration of each STSM, Budget, Possible applicants, Evaluation criteria). She presented the Call from the 2nd Grant Period, which was open on 03/09/2020 and closed on 21/09/2020; Final decision was taken on 25/09/2020. The call was open to applicants applying for 6 defined topics as specified by the WGs leaders. 6 applications were received and approved; one STSM (“Preparation and analysis of the Database of Conservation actions and institutions”) is still pending. Among the successful applicants, 1 is a PhD student, 1 MSc graduate and 4 ECIs. The total approved amount was EUR 11 680. 2 STSMs are already running, while 4 STSMs have not yet started. The approved applications are the following:

Name: Dr Aida Dervishi
Beneficiary institution: University of Tirana (Tirana), Albania
Host institution: Justus Liebig University, Giessen, Germany
Duration: 26 days
Title: Population genetic tools for studying of rare species
Granted Amount: EUR 2500

Name: Mr Ali Murat Gulsoy
Beneficiary institution: Central Anatolian Forestry Research Institute (Ankara), Turkey
Host institution: Justus-Liebig-University, Germany
Duration: 12 days
Title: Population genetic tools for studying of rare species
Granted Amount: EUR 1800

Name: Dr Alrun Siebenkäs
Beneficiary institution: Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (Halle), Germany
Host institution: Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic
Duration: 89 days
Title: Influence of habitat and climatic conditions on population dynamics of endangered species
Granted Amount: EUR 1680

Name: Dr Anastasia Stefanaki
Beneficiary institution: Wageningen University & Research (Wageningen), Netherlands
Host institution: University of the Aegean, Greece
Duration: 6 days
Title: Assessing floral complexity as plant vulnerability indicator of the European flora – Data analyses
Granted Amount: EUR 1200

Name: Dr Meleksen Akin
Beneficiary institution: Iğdır University (Iğdır), Turkey
Host institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
Duration: 62 days
Title: Genetic and genomic approaches in plant conservation
Granted Amount: EUR 2500

Name: Ms Nina Loncarevic
Beneficiary institution: Environment Programme (Podgorica), Montenegro

Host institution: University of Primorska, Slovenia
Duration: 30 days
Title: Overview and analysis of existing conservation policy documents
Granted Amount: EUR 2000

c) ITC Conference Grants:

ITC Conference Grant coordinator Aida Dervishi presented the awarded ITC Conference Grants from GP1 (3 grants in the total amount of EUR 2460):

- Catarina Siopa (Centre for Functional Ecology, Coimbra, Portugal) attended XVII EcoFlor 2020
- Sara Mendes (Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal) attended VII International Frugivores & Seed Dispersal Conference
- Ziva Fiser (University of Primorska, Slovenia) attended XVII EcoFlor 2020

Afterwards, Aida Dervishi presented the 2nd call, Eligibility Criteria, the application and evaluation steps. She informed the MC that due to Covid-19, COST allows grants for on-line conferences as well. Two grants in the total amount of EUR 409 were awarded:

- Iris Reinula, University of Tartu, Estonia will attend BES conference (Festival of Ecology organized by British Ecological Society, 12-18 December 2020 (online). Title: The influence of landscape features on the gene flow of *Primula veris* in landscapes with contrasting grassland connectivity; Granted Amount: EUR 254
- Sissi D. Lozada Gobillard, Institute of Botany of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech will attend BES conference (Festival of Ecology organized by British Ecological Society, 12-18 December 2020 (online). Title: Potential risk of interspecific in ex situ collections; Granted Amount: EUR 155

6. Update from the Grant Holder: Action budget status

COST Action administrator Amy Simmons presented the expenditures from GP1: Meetings - 38,828.75 STSM - 14,000.00, ITC Conference Grants - 2,460.00, Action Dissemination - 4,500.00. Total networking expenditure was 59,788.75, FSAC was 8,968.31. Total - 68,757.06 EUR.

Grant Period 2 Budget was also presented: Meetings – 67 812.00, Training Schools – 30 400.00, STSMs – 18 450.00, ITC Conference Grants – 2 640.00, Dissemination – 11 800.00. Total science expenditure: 131 102.00, FSAC 19 665.30. Dissemination activities were explained in more detail. GP2 was extended for 6 months, so there will probably be some changes in the activities.

7. Update from the COST Association

Science Officer Karina Marcus was invited to present the updates from the COST Association

- New COST Partner country: South Africa.
- International cooperation: new process based on individuals (no institutions)
- New Vademecum was released in June 2020: <http://www.cost.eu/Vademecum>
- New daily allowance rates entered in force in May 2020
- Covid-19 related activities now coordinated by COST under Network of Actions COVID-19; ConservePlants included in the Network
- Virtual meetings replacing physical ones, COST Academy events still organised (on-line)
- Call for new Action proposals was closed on 13 November – results in spring 2021
- Invitation to MC members to become COST experts (in e-cost by ticking the box in “Scientific Expertise”)
- Dealing with COVID 19: Do not dismiss the hope for physical meetings and activities in the Spring. STSMs are probably easier to implement. Up to 500 EUR for virtual communication tools. Cancellation insurance for flights and local organiser. ITC Conference Grants and Dissemination Meetings can include virtual conference fee. Dissemination Materials: Action Website, Videos, Flyers, Open Access for Papers, Training Materials to be publicly available. Additional Financial support for virtual meetings possible.

- Brexit update
- Extension of Grant Period for 6 months without budget increase for the moment (still under internal analysis)

8. Monitoring of the Action

Action Chair presented the 1st Progress Report, submitted on 2/11/2020. Karina Marcus commented that the Report will be probably evaluated in spring, but the implementation of COST policies seem to be adequate.

9. Implementation of COST policies

Action Chair presented the implementation of COST policies on the promotion of gender balance, Early Career Investigators (ECI) and involvement of Inclusiveness Target Countries in the Action. The Action ConservePlants has above-average inclusiveness of participants from ITC countries. Over 50% of leadership roles are also represented by participants from ITC countries. Although the percentage of ECI MC members is higher than average in COST Actions, these numbers are still relatively low. However, the ECI are quite well represented in leadership positions. Gender balance of MC members is satisfactory, although leadership roles are strongly skewed towards females. In general, Action ConservePlants is successful in implementing the SC Recommendations.

Action Chair briefly presented the Action plans related to the SC Recommendations: Representatives from ITC will be motivated to take functions as task leaders. STSM and training school calls will always promote a balanced involvement of participants from ITC countries. All Early Career Investigators will be encouraged to take responsibility in leading tasks within the WGs or to be actively involved in the WG activities. STSM and training school calls will always promote the involvement of ECIs by giving them priority in case of many applications. ECIs will be motivated to promote their research by writing short popular science articles which will be distributed through the Action social media, website and other.

10. Follow-up of MoU objectives & Scientific planning:

- a) Working group leaders briefly presented the progress and future plans.

Working Group 1 - Improving knowledge in plant biology for appropriate in situ conservation
Sílvia Castro presented planned activities to date and outlined the change in Activity plan. She summarized priorities of suggested activities and outlined the objectives and ideas which were addressed during the following Working Group meetings. For more, check the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Working Group 2 - Sharing experience in plant ex situ conservation
Sandrine Godefroid presented planned activities to date. She summarized the priorities of suggested activities and outlined the objectives and ideas which were addressed during the following Working Group meetings. For more, check the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Working Group 3 – Filling the gaps in plant conservation
Peter Glasnović presented planned activities to date. He summarized the priorities of suggested activities and outlined the objectives and ideas which were addressed during the following Working Group meetings. For more, check the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Working Group 4 - Human dimension in plant conservation
Justyna Wiland-Szymańska presented planned activities to date. She summarized priorities of suggested activities and outlined the objectives and ideas which were addressed during the following Working Group meetings. For more, check the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Working Group 5 - Genomic Approaches to Plant Conservation

Phil Aravanopoulos presented planned activities to date. He summarized priorities of suggested activities and outlined the objectives and ideas which were addressed during the following Working Group meetings. For more, check the attached PowerPoint presentation.

b) Action Budget Planning

Action Chair presented the planned activities for GP2 and the possibility to move some of the activities from GP3 to the prolonged GP2. Changes in the Work & Budget Plan, such as in-person meetings, will be made when the situation with Covid-19 is more clear. Two training schools are planned for spring: Training school in modelling environmental suitability and Plant Translocation – Theory and Techniques. The latter will be organised by Thomas Abeli, Sandrine Godefroid and Andreas Ensslin in Rome, and the call is already being prepared. The MC was asked to vote for the change of dates of the training school to 24-27 March 2021. The vote was approved by the MC.

11. Dissemination planning (publications and outreach activities)

Sandro Lanfranco presented the Science Communication Team, composed of Marta Galloni, Andrea Francesca Bellia (MC Substitute from Malta) and himself. He presented the activities of the Dissemination team: group meetings, published popular articles written by himself and Andrea Bellia (The COST of COVID-19; Life on the Edge, Dangerous beauties), articles published in BG journal and in Praxis. Marta Galloni attended several COST Academy Training Events: “Present your research with impact”, “Advanced social media”, “Mobile video training (how to shoot and edit a video with mobile phone)” and Storytelling training (writing a story of your Action). MC members were asked to promote their events or news by emailing the details of the events to the Dissemination team (marta.galloni@unibo.it, sandro.lanfranco@um.edu.mt, andrea-francesca.bellia.17@um.edu.mt). Graphic elements (pictures) should always be included in the promotion.

12. Requests to join the Action

There were no new requests to join the Action.

13. AOB

No discussion.

13. Location and date of next meeting

The location and date of the next meeting were not determined due to the current uncertain situation with Covid-19.

14. Summary of MC decisions

Vote to include Baiba Pruse in the Core Group and as WG4 co-leader.

Vote to change the dates of the training school Plant Translocation – Theory and Techniques to 24-27 March 2021.

Both proposed changes were accepted without any disapproving votes.

15. Closing

Action chair thanked the MC members for their attendance at the meeting and invited the participants to attend the WG meetings.