

CA18119

Core Group Meeting 1/06/2020

The Core Group meeting was scheduled to discuss the following questions:

1. How do we arrange a plenary meeting as well as WG meetings in November (now December) 2020 or in the Spring 2021? We need a plan A and a plan B. For the December 2020 meeting we will most likely combine participation via zoom with the actual presence in Florence of as many WG and project leaders as is feasible. Several rooms have already been reserved at the Villa Salviati for 7-8 December, so as to facilitate parallel sessions. Working with zoom requires long breaks between sessions and a 2 or 3 day meeting in order to accomplish what can be accomplished in a day and half under normal circumstances.
2. How do we plan other smaller WG meetings?
3. A discussion of transversal projects on the current COVID crisis (Aniko, Benoit and Yohann's projects)
4. Valorizing the research done by our members and WGs; crucial role of our fabulous and drastically under-utilized website here
5. STSM and ICT grants in times of COVID?

Due to the COVID-19 situation, we held our Core Group meeting online via Zoom.

Participants:

BERTHEZENE Clarisse, Université de Paris

DOWNS Laura Lee, European University Institute

SUSTROVA Radka, University in Prague

MAJETIĆ Filip, Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar

DOHOTARIU Anca, University of Bucharest

ZAHARIJEVIĆ Adriana, University of Belgrade

GIOMI Fabio, CNRS

MATTER Sonja, Universität Bern

VAN LEEUWEN H.d. Marco, Utrecht University

MARKKOLA Pirjo, Tampere University

AVDELA Efi, University of Crete

COVA Anne, University of Lisbon

PREVENDAR Tamara, Blagoje Bersa Music School

COQUART Clara, UP (Grant Manager)

## WELCOME AND ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

At 9:30, Clarisse Berthezène, Prof d'université and Action Chair, welcomed the attending participants. Each Core Group member briefly explained the situation in their home institution/country. This first exchange showed that all researchers' institutions had been closed for several months now due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Some institutions are slowly and carefully opening. Participants also exchanged briefly about the organization of their Working Groups and the difficulties related to the cancellation of physical meetings. Anca Dohotariu and Adriana Zaharijević have been so discouraged by the loss of momentum that the cancellation of our April 2020 meeting entailed for WG1 (Families) that they both asked to step back from their role as WG1 co-leader. Both expressed the feeling that the WG needs to

be re-launched, in a sense, and that perhaps another pair of co-leaders could create the new dynamic that is needed.

All CG participants agreed that the logic of organizing our activities via the 4 WGs had already begun to shift in late autumn 2019, as our Action began to build bridges linking the 4 WGs via a series of transversal projects. As far as the internal coherence and dynamism of the 4 WGs is concerned, the COVID-19 pandemic merely exacerbated a situation that was already developing. Core Group members then discussed the recent evolution of the Action more broadly. Thanks to the cancellation of the meetings in Leiden and Florence, planned States-of-the-art (SOA) have not yet been fully completed. As these SOAs are intended for “publication” on the Action’s intranet only, we decided to gather all the existent SOAs from all 4 WGs and post them for internal consumption only. This is in keeping with the Action’s deliverables for the 1<sup>st</sup> year, as announced in the MoU.

Clarisse then urged Anca and Adriana to please remain at the head of WG1, observing that this would entail very little work on their part over the next six months. Both Anca and Adriana graciously accepted to do so.

It should be pointed out that the cancellation of our April meeting affected the 4 WGs in different ways, thanks to the fact that each WG has its own internal dynamic. WGs 1 & 3 were perhaps most immediately and negatively affected, as the dynamics building within each were abruptly curtailed by this cancellation. This means that both have been waging an uphill battle to set things back in motion; a battle that they would surely not have faced had the Leiden and Florence meetings gone ahead as planned. For these 2 WGs in particular had strong, well worked out plans for consolidating their membership and moving forward with a series of well-defined but not yet launched transversal projects. While WGs 2 & 4 have also suffered setbacks in the face of these cancellations, the evolution of their work and state of the transversal projects seems to have allowed for a bit more continuity even under the current extremely trying circumstances.

But the bigger problem is, of course, the way that COVID19 brought everything to a screeching halt in late February/early March, and the terrible impact this has had on our Action from a financial and moral point of view. **The Core Group members agreed that we must write to Miceal Pero, science officer of the Action, for a 6-month to one-year extension.** Clarisse Berthezène and Laura Lee Downs will draft an e-mail and send it to Mickael Pero after approval of the Core Group.

The Core Group then returned to the topic of WGs vs transversal projects as means of organizing our Action and how to strike a good balance between the two. The Action is divided into 4 Working Groups and more and more countries are joining the Action (we now have 33 as of this report). The Working Groups are increasingly cumbersome to carry and are not adequate by themselves to the organization of our Action. Individual projects that traverse the 4 WGs are, on the contrary, assuming an ever- greater role. **The Core Group agreed to re-orient the Action towards our transversal projects, but without undermining the Working group structure as this latter is a) relevant to the COST Association and b) enables us to reach individual members who may not (yet) be involved in one of our transversal projects.** Moreover, it is not yet clear how to link up the various transversal projects, or at least to put them in communication with one another, and the Working Groups might well be a way to coordinate the evolution of these individual projects. Creating a functional complementarity between projects and WGs is a work in progress whose realisation will enhance the efficacy of our Action.

The Core Group Members agreed that the COVID-19 situation poses very real problems for our Action. Online meetings and e-mail exchanges are possible but these are not, and cannot be the heart of our Action. Physical meetings are the key to brainstorming and creative interaction, whereas Zoom and its ilk are the Bermuda Triangle of the human soul. Core Group members exchanged about our current options for helping our Action to move forward. Online meetings are one possible option, but as members repeatedly emphasized, they are not always fruitful in term of scientific ideas or brainstorming. This is largely because the various media (Zoom, skype for business, Teams) inevitably, by their very nature/structure, reinforce hierarchy, or create one where before there was none. These tools thus place the organizer at the top, in terms of whose voice carries, and make it very difficult for her to pick up the kinds of bodily cues that signal a wish to intervene on the part of others in the virtual “room.” Hybrid meetings (physical meeting with some participant following via Zoom) might be another solution, keeping in mind that the challenge will be to keep the online participants active in a conversation that will inevitably happen more easily in the space of actual human encounter. **Another solution could be the organization of smaller group meetings on a project basis rather than on a WG basis.** Marco H.d. Van Leeuwen explained that it could be possible to add a third panel to the

postponed Leiden meeting, now scheduled for late March 2021. NB: the fact that this meeting is organized around a non-COST event (the ESSHC) will not be an issue as COST allows us to invite guests.

Beyond the challenges posed by online (or largely online) meetings are those posed by the STSM and ICT Conference Grants. Under current conditions, it is well-nigh impossible to use this part of the budget effectively. Initially (June 2019), the Core Group had hoped to use some of these funds for translation but COST rules make such re-purposing quite difficult. Hence, the STSMs are intended for archival research trips only, while the ICTs are for the sole purpose of travel to conferences, and all conferences have been either postponed to spring 2021 (at the earliest) or cancelled altogether. In light of all this, Radka Sustrova and Tamara Prevendar raised the issue of what might be done with the next round of STSMs and ICT Conference Grants. Three candidates have signaled their interest in applying for an STSM but they are currently blocked from applying, thanks to COST's decision to block access to the e-cost site where STSMs and ICTs are handled until the pandemic situation stabilizes across Europe (at least). The uncertainties surrounding travel over the next six months further complicates the implementation of these tools. Both Tamara and Radka suggest that we might speed up the granting process in order to distribute STSMs (and perhaps ICT Conference grants) during the summer, before a possible return of COVID-19 in the fall. As some libraries and archives have re-opened (for example, in parts of Italy, Portugal, the Czech Republic) and more may well do so in the upcoming weeks, speeding up the process by which we evaluate STSM applications seems like a good solution. However, both Tamara and Radka underlined that, on the COST Association website (<https://www.cost.eu/who-we-are/about-cost/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-actions/>), it is recommended that all physical meetings be suspended and all Training schools and STSMs be cancelled. The Core members agreed that the Grant Holder Manager will write the Project Officer to know when we may start up once again with the STSMs.

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*Reminder:*

*STSM applicants must be engaged in an official research programme as a PhD Student or postdoctoral fellow or can be employed by, or affiliated to, an institution, organisation or legal entity which has within its remit a clear association with performing research.*

*Conference Grants are exclusively reserved for PhD students and ECI's with a primary affiliation in an institution located in an ITC*

Page 33 and 35 <https://www.cost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/20180501-Vademecum2.pdf>

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Core Group Members expressed once again their frustration with the rigidity of COST Association budget rules, which do not allow funds to be carried over from one budget year to the next, even under the extraordinary circumstances in which the world has found itself since winter 2019-2020. The unavoidable cancellation of meetings in Leiden (March 2020) and then Florence (April 2020) means that we lost about half our 2019-2020 budget. Ongoing uncertainty about future margins of manoeuvre, particularly with respect to travel and actual face-to-face meetings, threaten us with further losses on this front.

These discussions on matters of principle (avoiding future loss of annual funds, the question of how we might continue to use our STSMs) framed the presentation of our second year budget.

Clara Coquart presented briefly the budget spent during the past year (Image 1: Financial Report) and the budget for next year (Image 2). This budget was drafted in late May, very shortly before the deadline. Clara recommends that we start drafting next year's budget a bit earlier in order to have time for proper feedback from the Core Group members.

Meeting dates and locations, as well as the indicated number of participants, can all be changed in keeping with the evolution of the Action's needs.

Image 1: Financial report submitted on Mai, 28 2020 (pending approval)

Networking Expenditure	Grant budget (a)	Expenditure			Delta (g=d-a)
		Actuals (b)	Accruals (c)	Total (d=b+c)	
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Total Meetings	92 080.00	48 103.07	0.00	48 103.07	-43 976.93
Total Training Schools	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total STSM	10 000.00	1 580.00	0.00	1 580.00	-8 420.00
Total ITC Conference Grants	5 000.00	1 640.00	0.00	1 640.00	-3 360.00
Total Action Dissemination	4 500.00	2 776.87	0.00	2 776.87	-1 723.13
Total OERSA	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total Networking expenditure</b>	<b>111 580.00</b>	<b>54 099.94</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>54 099.94</b>	<b>-57 480.06</b>

  

Eligible Networking Expenditure	Grant budget (a)	Expenditure			Delta (g=d-a)
		Actuals (b)	Accruals (c)	Total (d=b+c)	
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>Eligible Networking expenditure</b>	<b>111 580.00</b>	<b>54 099.94</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>54 099.94</b>	<b>-57 480.06</b>
FSAC (max 15%)	16 737.00	8 114.99	0.00	8 114.99	-8 622.01
<b>Total eligible expenditure</b>	<b>128 317.00</b>	<b>62 214.93</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>62 214.93</b>	<b>-66 102.07</b>

Image 2: Budget for Phase 2 of the Action

Meeting	Date	Activity	Duration	Eligible Night	Daily Allowance/Grant	Transport	Participants	Sub total	Total
Leiden	March 23, 2021	WG1	1	3	190,00 €	320,00 €	9		
<b>Total Leiden Meeting</b>									<b>8 010,00 €</b>
Florence	November 23 & 24, 2020	WG	1		180,00 €	320,00 €	45		
		MC meeting	0,5	3	180,00 €	320,00 €	45	25 800,00 €	
		Core Group Meeting	0,5	4	180,00 €	320,00 €	15	15 600,00 €	
<b>Total Florence Meeting</b>									<b>41 400,00 €</b>
Lisboa	April 5-7, 2021	Conference	1		173,00 €	320,00 €	45		
		MC meeting	0,5	3	173,00 €	320,00 €	45		
		WG	0,5	4	173,00 €	320,00 €	45	30 360,00 €	
		Core Group Meeting	0,5	5	173,00 €	320,00 €	15	17 775,00 €	
<b>Total Athens Meeting</b>									<b>48 135,00 €</b>
STSM					2 500,00 €		3		7 500,00 €
ICT Grant					2 500,00 €		2		5 000,00 €
Website									1 500,00 €
<b>Total network activity</b>									<b>111 545,00 €</b>
<b>FSAC (15%)</b>									<b>16 731,75 €</b>
<b>Total</b>									<b>128 276,75 €</b>
<b>Max grant</b>									<b>129 000,00 €</b>

While drafting the budget, Clarisse Berthezène, Laura Lee Downs, and Clara Coquart scheduled (provisionally) the first physical meeting in Florence on 23-24 November. After exchanging agendas, the Core Group members decided to re-schedule this meeting for 7-8 December. Another possibility (if some borders remain closed) would be to schedule several meetings during roughly the same dates, one in Paris and one in Eastern Europe.

Before the meeting closed, Filip Majetić made a summary of points related to the Action website. There are only 46 members who have registered on the site and it is, as a consequence, not being used: not a single post or topic has been opened since its creation last September. In the face of this deplorable news, some Core Group members, pointing to the increased levels of work involved in distance teaching, asked whether it would be possible to receive notification of activity on the site via e-mail. It is probably technically possible but the real problem, Filip reminded us, is the lack of Action member activity on the website. Clarisse Berthezène reminded everyone that the “News” part of the website is regularly fed.

The meeting ended around 11:45 am.

**Outcomes of this online Core Group Meeting:**

- A letter to Mickael Pero, asking for an extension of our Action, which has thus far lost at least six months due to COVID19 and may well lose more once the cold weather returns (Clarisse Berthezène, Laura Downs). This letter has now been sent to Mickael and we will let you know what we hear back from him. At that point we will set a second Core Group meeting in order to discuss the next steps of our Action, considered in view of what Mickael is able to guarantee our project (or not).
- Addition of a new space on the website for individual/transversal projects (Filip Majetić)
- Next physical meeting in Florence, on December 7 & 8, with substantial zoom participation. The MC meeting will certainly be conducted largely by zoom, with only those people present who are in Florence for project meetings and brainstorming sessions
- Ask the PO when physical meetings and STSMs will be allowed again (Clara Coquart)
- Have leaders of all 4 WGs send in all SOAs they have gathered so far, or that were presented last fall in Prague and Rome. We suggest a deadline of 30 June 2020, as we will not be pressing anyone who has not already sent in her/his SOA, or already presented one in the Prague and Rome meetings. Even if, in the latter case, some of the SOAs presented may have been based on notes, their transformation into slightly more elaborated texts, suitable for internal consumption only, should not take very much time.
- Send the Minutes to MC members & underscore the Action's evolution toward a project-based organization that is complementary to the 4 WGs. It is vital that all who want to sign up for one or more projects. The list that Laura compiled in winter 2019-20 needs to be updated, with the new COVID19-related projects added and those projects that are, for now, on hold, taken down from the list. Finally, remind everybody about the website! Members should all register and start using our intranet as the excellent networking tool that it is. Smaller transversal projects, in particular, can really benefit from the tools our website offers, but other groups, like the ECI group, can also "meet" and exchange via the ECI group's dedicated discussion forum on the website. Surely there is much to discuss right now with the way that the pandemic and distance learning are reconfiguring our labor in what are often very worrisome directions. Perhaps we could organize some smaller group discussions via Zoom or Teams around this and other urgent topics.