

# Foreword

COST – the acronym for European COoperation in Science and Technology – is the oldest and widest European intergovernmental network for cooperation in research. Established by the Ministerial Conference in November 1971, COST is presently used by the scientific communities of 35 European countries to cooperate in common research projects supported by national funds.

The funds provided by COST – less than 1% of the total value of the projects – support the COST cooperation networks (COST Actions) through which, with € 30 million per year, more than 30,000 European scientists are involved in research having a total value which exceeds € 2 billion per year. This is the financial worth of the European added value which COST achieves.

A “bottom up approach” (the initiative of launching a COST Action comes from the European scientists themselves), “à la carte participation” (only countries interested in the Action participate), “equality of access” (participation is open also to the scientific communities of countries not belonging to the European Union) and “flexible structure” (easy implementation and light management of the research initiatives) are the main characteristics of COST.

As a precursor of advanced multidisciplinary research, COST has a very important role in the realization of the European Research Area (ERA) anticipating and complementing the activities of the Framework Programmes, constituting a “bridge” towards the scientific communities of emerging countries, increasing the mobility of researchers across Europe and fostering the establishment of “Networks of Excellence” in many key scientific domains such as: biomedicine and molecular biosciences; food and agriculture; forests, their products and services; materials, physical and nanosciences; chemistry and molecular sciences and technologies; earth system science and environmental management; information and communication technologies; transport and urban development; individuals, societies, cultures and health. It covers basic and more applied research and also addresses issues of pre-normative nature or of societal importance.

More information is available at: <http://www.cost.esf.org/>.



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# List of Contributors

**Slavisa Aleksic**

Vienna University of Technology  
Institute of Broadband  
Communications,  
1040 Vienna, Austria

**Carlos Almeida**

Istituto de Telecomunicacoes  
Universidade De Aveiro, Campus  
Universitário  
3810193 Aveiro, Portugal

**Ramon Aparicio-Pardo**

Universidad Politecnica de Cartagena  
30202 Cartagena, Spain

**Javier Aracil**

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid  
Madrid, Spain

**Siamak Azodolmolky**

Athens Information Technology  
Peania-Attica 19002  
Athens, Greece

**G. Bosco**

Dipartimento di Elettronica  
Politecnico di Torino  
10129 Turin, Italy

**Davide Careglio**

Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya  
08034 Barcelona, Spain

**Ching-Hung Chang**

University of Hertfordshire  
Science and Technology Research  
Institute, Herts AL10 9AB, UK

**Jiajia Chen**

The Royal Institute of Technology  
KTH, The School of Information and  
Communication Technology  
164 40 Kista, Sweden

**Walter Colitti**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel  
1050 Elsene, Brussels, Belgium

**Didier Colle**

IBBT, Ghent University  
9050 Ghent-Ledeberg, Belgium

**Franco Curti**

ISCOM - Italian Ministry of  
Economic Development Sector  
Communication  
00144 Rome, Italy

**Grzegorz Danilewicz**

Poznan University of Technology  
Chair of Communication and  
Computer Networks  
60965 Poznan, Poland

**Piet Demeester**

IBBT, Ghent University  
9050 Ghent-Ledeberg, Belgium

**Silvia Di Bartolo**

Università di Roma "Tor Vergata"  
Dipartimento di Ingegneria  
Elettronica  
Via del Politecnico 1  
00133 Rome, Italy

**Taisir E.H. El-Gorashi**

School of Electronic and Electrical  
Engineering, University of Leeds  
Leeds, UK

**Jaffar M.H. Elmirghani**

School of Electronic and Electrical  
Engineering, University of Leeds  
Leeds, UK

**Karin Ennser**

Institute of Advanced  
Telecommunications,  
Swansea University, UK

**P. Fasser**

TU Graz,  
Technical University of Graz,  
8010 Graz, Austria

**Daniel Fonseca**

Nokia Siemens Networks  
2720093 Amadora, Portugal and  
Istituto de Telecomunicacoes,  
Optical Communications, Instituto  
Superior Técnico,  
1049001 Lisbon, Portugal

**D.M. Forin**

ISCOM - Italian Ministry of  
Economic Development Sector  
Communication,  
00144 Rome, Italy

**Maurice Gagnaire**

Telecom ParisTech (ENST),  
Computer Science and Networks  
75013 Paris, France

**Michael Galili**

DTU Fotonik, Technical University  
of Denmark  
800 Kgs. Lyngby, Denmark

**Joan García-Haro**

Universidad Politécnica de  
Cartagena,  
30202 Cartagena, Spain

**Belen Garcia-Manrubia**

Universidad Politecnica de Cartagena  
30202 Cartagena, Spain

**Christian Gaumier**

Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de  
Lausanne  
1015 Lausanne, Switzerland

**Sebastian Gunreben**

University of Stuttgart  
Stuttgart, Germany

**Pasquale Gurzi**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel,  
1050 Elsene, Brussels, Belgium

**Guoqiang Hu**

University of Stuttgart  
Stuttgart, Germany

**Mikel Izal**

Public University of Navarra  
31006 Pamplona, Spain

**Marek Jaworski**

National Institute of  
Telecommunications,  
Warsaw, Poland

**Wojciech Kabacinski**

Poznan University of Technology  
Chair of Communication and  
Computer Networks  
60965 Poznan, Poland

**M. Karasek**

Institute of Photonics and  
Electronics, Academy of Sciences of  
the Czech Republic  
18251 Prague 8, Czech Republic

**Kostas Katrinis**

Athens Information Technology  
Peania-Attica 19002  
Athens, Greece

**Andreas Kimsas**

Norwegian University of Science and  
Technology,  
Trondheim, Norway

**Martin Köhn**

University of Stuttgart  
Stuttgart, Germany

**Pandelis Kourtessis**

Science & Technology Research  
Institute (STRI),  
University of Hertfordshire  
Herts AL10 9AB, UK

**Marko Lackovic**

University of Zagreb  
Faculty of Electrical Engineering and  
Computing (FER)  
10000 Zagreb, Croatia

**Ozren Lapcevic**

University of Zagreb  
Faculty of Electrical Engineering and  
Computing (FER)  
10000 Zagreb, Croatia

**Janusz Kleban**

Poznan University of Technology  
Chair of Communication and  
Computer Networks  
60965 Poznan, Poland

**M. Klinkowski**

Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya,  
Barcelona, Spain and  
National Institute of  
Telecommunications,  
Warsaw, Poland

**Dimitrios Klonidis**

Athens Information Technology  
19002 Peania-Attica, Athens  
Greece

**Jochen Leibrich**

University of Kiel  
Kiel, Germany

**Erich Leitgeb**

TU Graz,  
Technical University of Graz,  
8010 Graz, Austria

**Ilse Lievens**

IBBT, Ghent University  
9050 Ghent-Ledeberg, Belgium

**Mário Lima**

Istituto de Telecomunicacoes  
Universidade De Aveiro, Campus  
Universitário  
3810193 Aveiro, Portugal

**Markus Löschnigg**

TU Graz,  
Technical University of Graz,  
8010 Graz, Austria

**Eduardo Magaña**

Public University of Navarra  
31006 Pamplona, Spain

**Marian Marciniak**

National Institute of  
Telecommunications, Transmission  
and Optical Technologies  
04894 Warsaw, Poland

**George Markidis**

Athens Information Technology  
19002 Peania-Attica  
Athens, Greece

**Juan Antonio Martínez-León**

Universidad Politecnica de Cartagena  
30202 Cartagena, Spain

**Branko Mikac**

University of Zagreb  
Faculty of Electrical Engineering and  
Computing (FER)  
10000 Zagreb, Croatia

**Daniel Morató**

Public University of Navarra  
31006 Pamplona, Spain

**Ann Nowé**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel,  
1050 Elsene, Brussels, Belgium

**Leif K. Oxenløwe**

DTU Fotonik, Technical University  
of Denmark  
2800 Kgs. Lyngby, Denmark

**Ioannis Papagiannakis**

Athens Information Technology  
19002 Peania-Attica  
Athens, Greece

**Francesca Parmigiani**

Optoelectronics Research Centre  
University of Southampton  
SO17 1BJ Southampton, UK

**Natasa Pavlovic**

Istituto de Telecomunicacoes  
Universidade De Aveiro, Campus  
Universitário  
3810193 Aveiro, Portugal

**Pablo Pavón-Mariño**

Universidad Politécnica de  
Cartagena,  
30202 Cartagena, Spain

**Jordi Perelló**

Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya,  
08034 Barcelona, Spain

**Periklis Petropoulos**

Optoelectronics Research Centre  
University of Southampton  
SO17 1BJ Southampton, UK

**Mario Pickavet**

IBBT, Ghent University  
9050 Ghent-Ledeberg, Belgium

**P. Poggiolini**

Dipartimento di Elettronica,  
Politecnico di Torino  
10129 Turin, Italy

**Bart Puype**

IBBT, Ghent University  
9050 Ghent-Ledeberg, Belgium

**Werner Rosenkranz**

Chair for Communications  
University of Kiel  
24143 Kiel, Germany

**Sébastien Rumley**

Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de  
Lausanne (EPFL)  
1015 Lausanne, Switzerland

**Joachim Scharf**

Institute of Communication Networks  
and Computer Engineering (IKR)  
Stuttgart, Germany

**Y. Shachaf**

Science & Technology Research  
Institute (STRI), University of  
Hertfordshire  
Herts AL10 9AB, UK

**Nina Skorin-Kapov**

University of Zagreb  
Faculty of Electrical Engineering and  
Computing (FER)  
10000 Zagreb, Croatia

**Radan Slavík**

Institute of Photonics and Electronics  
AS CR, v.v.i.,  
Prague, Chaberska 57, 182 51,  
Czech Republic

**Salvatore Spadaro**

Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya,  
08034 Barcelona, Spain

**Maria Spyropoulou**

Athens Information Technology  
19002 Peania-Attica  
Athens, Greece

**Dimitri Staessens**

IBBT, Ghent University  
9050 Ghent-Ledeberg, Belgium

**Kris Steenhaut**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel  
1050 Elsene, Brussels, Belgium

**Stefano Taccheo**

Politecnico di Milano,  
Milan, Italy

**Antonio Luis Jesus Teixeira**

Instituto de Telecomunicações (IT)  
Universidade de Aveiro  
Campus Universitário  
3810-193 Aveiro, Portugal

**Torger Tokle**

Research Center COM  
Technical University of Denmark  
2800 Lyngby, Denmark

**Ioannis Tomkos**

Athens Information Technology  
19002 Peania-Attica  
Athens, Greece

**Giorgio Maria Tosi Beleffi**

ISCOM - Italian Ministry of  
Economic Development Sector  
Communication,  
00144 Rome, Italy

**Anna Tzanakaki**

Athens Information Technology  
19002 Peania-Attica  
Athens, Greece

**Emmanouel Varvarigos**

Department of Computer  
Engineering and Informatics,  
University of Patras Research  
Academic Computer Technology  
Institute,  
Rio 26500, Greece

**Javier Veiga-Gontán**

Universidad Politécnica de  
Cartagena,  
30202 Cartagena, Spain

**Kyriakos Vlachos**

Department of Computer  
Engineering and Informatics,  
University of Patras Research  
Academic Computer Technology  
Institute,  
Rio 26500, Greece

**Cedric Ware**

Institut TELECOM, TELECOM Paris  
Tech (formerly ENST), France

**Slawomir Weclewski**

Poznan University of Technology  
Chair of Communication and Com-  
puter Networks  
60-965 Poznan, Poland

**Lena Wosinska**

KTH-Royal Institute of Technology,  
Information & Communication  
Technology  
SE-164 40 Kista, Sweden

**Chunmin Xia**

Chair for Communications  
University of Kiel  
24143 Kiel, Germany

**Konstantinos Yiannopoulos**

Department of Computer Engineer-  
ing and Informatics, University of  
Patras Research Academic Computer  
Technology Institute,  
Rio 26500, Greece

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