

# How joining two COST Actions changed the way I think about research

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Recently, I was asked several times what is the COST programme about and if it is worth considering at all. This is not a difficult question to answer. I joined two COST Actions and it influenced the way I understand scientific networking and research collaboration.

Everything started in 2016. Together with Agnieszka, the PhD student that I co-supervise, we established collaboration with the ILK-Dresden. We learned that they are involved in something called COST Action. Few months later, we were flying to Spain for the NANOUPTAKE Management Committee meeting and the first Training School. It was just the beginning of collaboration that resulted in research, internship, more training schools, conferences, and joined papers...

## Well then, what is the COST?

Chances are that being a researcher in a European country you have already heard about the COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology). It is an EU-funded programme that helps to build and facilitate research and innovations networks. It is said that COST is Europe's longest-running intergovernmental framework, as it was founded in 1971. Long before The Maastricht Treaty and establishment of the European Union as we know it today.

The networks funded by the COST Programme are called Actions, and there is a good reason for that. Networks often sit passively waiting for something to happen. Like a club that you join to be able to reach your colleagues only if necessary. COST Actions are more dynamic. People meet regularly and work together. They communicate, share knowledge, and solve problems... The COST (short from COST Programme) provides funds for all that networking activities: conferences, meetings, training schools, short scientific exchanges or other networking activities.

## Joining the Action

So, what does it mean joining the COST Action? Well, I am currently a member of two. Both are huge and their aims are spectacular. Their topics are very different though, and my involvement in each of them is different as well.

The (<http://nanouptake.uji.es>) NANOUPTAKE (<http://nanouptake.uji.es>) aims to create a Europe-wide network of leading R+D+i institutions, and of key industries, to develop and foster the use of nanofluids as advanced heat transfer/thermal storage materials to increase the efficiency of heat exchange and storage systems. The members of NANOUPTAKE focus their research on various types of nanofluids. Our own contributions are about properties of graphene oxide nanoparticles. We were able to observe some interesting things happening in a thermosyphon filled with this nanofluid. Research paper is underway. I will write more about it in a separate blog post after it is published.

**The RESTORE** (<http://www.eurestore.eu>) (REthinking Sustainability TOwards a Regenerative Economy), (<http://www.eurestore.eu>) is very different. Its goal is to affect a paradigm shift towards restorative sustainability for new and existing buildings across Europe. Here, a huge group of interdisciplinary researchers is working on principles behind Restorative Sustainability, Processes, Methods and Tools for and Restorative Designs, and more. During the kick-off meeting, I volunteered to serve as a Science Communication Officer. It turned out to be a learning opportunity and, at the same time, a challenging adventure!

While being a contributor, you don't have to change anything in your research activities. Well, almost... You can continue the research the same way as you've always done. The difference is that your work is now a part of a larger goal. As there is an audience to share knowledge and people to collaborate with, you will see your own research in a different way. You may suddenly find larger purpose!

This is a EU-funded project, which means that there are many rules to be followed. The structure of the COST Action, administrative procedures, reimbursements... everything is precisely explained in multiple documents at cost.eu website (<http://www.cost.eu>). For example, this is how you join an existing COST Action. ([http://www.cost.eu/participate/join\\_action](http://www.cost.eu/participate/join_action)).

Being a part of the COST network can be leveraged in many ways. For example, you can use it to build consortium for H2020 grant. You can develop your PhD students by sending them to other institutions or laboratories for Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM). You can send them for a

dedicated Training School (all Actions organize specialized trainings), or perhaps some conference. All that can be funded from the budget of the Action (there are some limitations though).

Participation in the COST not only widened my horizons, but allowed me to meet incredible people from many countries. The experience is great, so I strongly encourage you to consider joining the Action and try yourself!

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