

CA21112 2nd MC Meeting minutes

Time and location

01/03/2023, 09:00 am CET, Valletta, Malta, and online

Attendees

Find attendance list in annex.

Agenda items

1. Welcome to participants, verification of the quorum, and adoption of agenda

Aaron Micallef welcomed everyone and presented the agenda, to which the MC agreed. He also presented the proportion of ITC, YRI, and gender balance attending this meeting. Of 38 participants, 20 were males and 18 females (ratio of 53%:47%), 28 participants were experienced and 10 were YRI (Ratio 74%:26%), and 25 participants came from ITC countries, 11 from COST non-ITC countries, and 2 from NNC/Cooperating Member (Ratio 66%:29%:5%). With participants present from 20 countries of the 22 countries represented in the MC, the quorum was reached. A quick round of personal presentations was carried out.

2. Information to the MC

a) Recap of the minutes of the last meeting, e-votes and matters arising since the last meeting

Aaron shared the decisions taken during the September 2022 MC online meeting, that is the WG distribution and names, the leadership positions, that the WG applicants can apply to maximum 2 WGs, that the daily allowance for the current meeting was lowered to €175, as well as the Leadership positions as follows: Chair: Aaron Micallef, Vice-Chair: Claudia Bertoni, WG1 (Assessment): Leader Michela Giustiniani and vice-leader Davide Gamboa, WG2 (Innovative technologies): Leader Katrin Schwalenberg and vice-leader Johanna Lofi, WG3 (Utilisation): Leader Ariel Thomas and vice-leader Lukasz Janowski, WG4 (Challenges): Leader Elizabeth Quiroga-Jordan and vice-leader Yaniv Edery, WG5 (Training and dissemination): Leader Wei-Li Hong, vice-leader Martha Papathanasiou, and Grant coordinator: Ana Fociro.

Aaron mentioned that Dr. Antonis Toumazis has been nominated to become an MC member for Cyprus.

b) Core Group: report from the Core Group, including delegated decisions

Aaron said that no important matters arose since the last meeting, and that a short Core Group meeting will happen in the afternoon that would tackle the following topics: risk control and monitoring of the different WGs, approval and refusal of MC and WG applications, and COST Excellence and Inclusiveness policy.

c) Action Membership

Hiba Wazaz presented an overview of the affiliation institution's countries of MC and WG members. 22 countries are represented in the MC (Albania, Bosnia I Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom), of which 13 (60%) are ITC and 1 is Cooperating Member, which is an increase of 4 countries and 10% ITC proportion since the beginning of the Action. As for the overall Action members, there are 102 members from 33 countries (of which 1 Partner Member (South Africa), 2 Near Neighbouring countries (NNC) (Lebanon and Tunisia), and 6 International Partner Countries (IPC) (Canada, China, India, Iran, New Zealand and USA)).

3. Follow up and discussion on the

a) Action management: structure, leadership positions and other supporting roles.

Aaron presented the current leadership positions (see above) and the Action's management activities, which are annual meetings, WG workshops and Leadership online meetings which should happen every three months for both the Core Group and each WG. He then described the different risks to the project and proposed mitigation measures, and emphasised the importance of the participation of everyone to engage stakeholders, and share their activities. He also shared the external experts' suggestions for the project which include presenting results with the associated uncertainty, taking into consideration the imbalance between earth and environment scientists and other scientific fields, better defining interaction between WGs, and reinforcing results by selecting specific study areas to become long-term references. Aaron also emphasised that we have to increase the YRI involvement.

b) Implementation of the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy

Aaron presented the COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy, and emphasised on the importance of recruiting and involving ITC members and YRIs, as well as gender balance. He emphasised on the importance of expanding the network towards ITC by contacting the COST National Coordinators and by sharing the Action with the associations we are part of. As for the involvement of YRIs, Aaron mentioned that we planned the training schools and STSM to specifically increase skills and knowledge of mostly YRIs, and the Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Network proposal. He also asked the Core Group to assess the gender balance for all the activities.

c) Grant awarding by the Action

Ana Fociro presented the scope and benefits of COST Grants, the different tools (STSM, ITC Conference Grant, and Virtual Mobility). She presented the budget and application process of STSMs. While €25,000 from budget is present for STSMs, currently, 5 STSMs were granted and another 8 STSM will have funds during the current Grant Period, encouraging participants to apply at future STSM calls. She then presented the current STSM awardees as well as the future or open grants. She also presented that we still have an ITC Conference Grant budget for 2 grants of maximum €1250.

4. Presentation and discussion of WG1

Michela Giustiniani focused on the description of the tasks (from 1.1 to 1.4), activities and deliverables of WG1. A brief description of the available dataset and open questions for each task was given. For this WG, the activation of 7/10 Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) to perform tasks 1.1-1.4 is planned. Davide Gamboa described the 5 STSMs projects already approved and highlighted the contribution to each task. WG1 is composed of 54 members from 25 countries of which 20 are females and 34 are males, 21 members are YRI, and 22 members come from an ITC, 3 from a NNC, and 4 from an IPC.

5. Presentation and discussion of WG2

Katrin Schwalenberg (KS) presented the focus of Working Group (WG) 2 “Innovation technologies”, which lies on the synthesis and analysis of available instruments and numerical modeling approaches and their applications, and building upon these on the development of new instrument designs and interpretation tools to effectively characterize and identify OFG bodies. This includes the joint efforts of offshore geophysics, geochemistry, well logging, lab analysis, numerical modeling, joint inversion and integrated interpretation. The outcomes will be summarized in a review paper, and best practise guidelines along with protocols and training materials as hands-on leaflets for future OFG studies. WG2 is currently composed of 59 scientists from 27 countries of which 19 are females and 40 are males, and 24 members declared to be young researchers. We have a wide range of expertise in the group covering various geochemistry disciplines, geology, geophysics, hydrology, oceanography, numerical modeling, as well as data and water management. Thus, we feel well prepared to meet the tasks and deliverables of WG2. In a next step we plan to actively involve WG2 members by dividing the group in sub-groups for each method, which will be ideally led by sub-group leaders reporting in quarterly WG2 online meetings.

6. Presentation and discussion of WG3

Ariel Thomas presented the WG3 members as for their Institution’s origin, field of work and emphasized the need to engage more industrial partners. He then explained the mission and key tasks of WG3, described the deliverables, activities, ways to engage more stakeholders, and the future STSMs themes. He then opened the floor for discussion about workshop locations, STSM ideas and participating organizations. Davide Gamboa suggested Portugal, Lukasz Janowski suggested choosing a location where industry partners are located. Elizabeth suggested an STSM Grantee to join her team in Norway, which is a location close to IOs and NGOs & APMG. Elizabeth also mentioned that her company’s field of work is more towards the humanitarian water supply and Ariel agreed this side of things would be very interesting. WG3 is composed of 29 members from 15 countries of which 11 are females and 18 are males, 11 members are YRI, and 17 members come from an ITC, and 1 from a NNC.

7. Presentation and discussion of WG4

Elizabeth Quiroga-Jordan presented WG4 aims and members. She emphasised we should make an effort to bring in more legal and other experts, such as policy and environmental impact experts. She then described Working Group 4 tasks, which will begin in year 2. The main two objectives are 1) to

use the geological and hydrogeological model from 1.3 and 1.4 (Group 1) to identify and quantify the environmental impacts associated with OFG use, and 2) to evaluate the legal implications for the extraction of OFG and propose new policy guidelines. For the latter, we will review the LOSC of 1982 and current frameworks for transboundary aquifers to propose new policy guidelines. The policy outline should take the form of a brief document devoted to major principles only. The process of formulating it should accordingly include as many of the important stakeholders as possible and should provide the basis for drafting legislation and regulations. It is important to ensure that environmental issues associated with the extraction of offshore freshened water are considered and integrated in the proposed policy. WG4 is composed of 34 members from 22 countries of which 17 are females and 17 are males, 10 members are YRI, and 18 members come from an ITC, 2 from a NNC, and 3 from an IPC.

8. Progress on MoU Objectives, WG Tasks, Deliverables, and Goals for the current GP

Aaron explained OFG background, challenges, and described the Action MoU objectives. He cited the different COST Activities that can be funded. He then shared all the Action tasks and deliverables for each WG, emphasizing the importance of WG5 deliverables and how these are dependent on all members' input.

9. Planning

a) Revision of Work and Budget Plan of the current GP

Aaron shared the current budget (available in annex). He asked for an MC vote on it. Everyone agreed. He also shared the fact we will maybe get an additional budget for this Grant Period.

b) Draft plans for the following GP(s)

Aaron described tasks and deliverables for year 2 for each WG. He described more precisely the standard guidelines (WG2 Task 2.2) For WG3, tasks will be led mostly remotely. The second training school will be either on geophysics or geochemistry. As for the focus groups, he invited Martha to share more details later. He then showed the year 2 budget draft, which is €28,000 lower than the €125,000 currently allocated.

Aaron described the year 3 activities, tasks and deliverables. He shortly described the COST Connect Event which is a networking activity organized by the COST association. He then shared a year 3 budget draft which is €30,000 lower than the €125,000 currently allocated.

Aaron described the year 4 activities, which are mostly led by WG3 and WG4. WG5 will have as deliverables training material as well as a SEARICA session at the EU Parliament. He then shared the year 4 budget draft, which is €49,800 higher than the €125,000 currently allocated.

He finally asked everyone for approval and ideas about the budget.

Davide asked if the budget can be allocated to dissemination, and Aaron answered positively.

Claudia Bertoni reminded everyone to correctly acknowledge the Action in any publication. The acknowledgement sentence is available on the Action website (<https://off-source.eu/resources/communication-toolkit/>).

c) Upcoming activities

Aaron moved further to the Training school 1 planning happening in April 2023 and the fact that the Venue is still open for suggestions. Ariel answered the three shortlisted locations were Sweden, Malta, and Utrecht. Elizabeth asked about who will be the training school participants. Aaron answered that the STSM grantees will be part of them, but there will be then an open call to everyone. Elizabeth asked who the trainers will be, Aaron answered that the trainers will be Ariel Thomas, Shubhangi Gupta, but any other contributors are welcome. Marina Flores suggested getting in contact with University of Birmingham and asked the training school to be in a hybrid format.

The date of the Training school was also discussed to be postponed slightly.

d) Discussion on next hosts for MC meeting and WG3 Workshop

Aaron moved to the WG3 workshop and next MC meeting planning that will happen in September 2023. Ariel mentioned the possible locations were Utrecht (NL), Serbia or Portugal. Aaron suggested that anyone who had a location suggestion could contact Ariel.

10. Monitoring and reporting to the COST Association

Hiba Wazaz presented about the COST Countries and the difference between full Member Countries, Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC), and Near Neighbouring Countries (NNC). She then described COST Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy and how well the Action currently does in this sense. The Action needs to allocate more budget towards ITC Members, and needs to involve better Young Researchers and Innovators (YRIs). She then talked about COST Rules, funded Networking activities, and possible location of events. Finally, she talked about Reimbursement Rules and Principles, showing who is eligible to be funded, eligible expenses, ineligible expenses, administrative requirements, and finally showing how the reimbursement process works on the e-COST system.

11. Science Communication Plan

Wei-Li Hong presented the MC Members who are part of WG5, he then presented the WG5 goals, target audiences, and deliverables. WG5 is composed of 19 members from 14 countries of which 11 are females and 8 are males, 4 members are YRI, and 11 members come from an ITC, and 2 from an IPC. Wei-Li then presented the Action website, Twitter and Linked-In accounts, asking participants to visit these, give us their feedback, participate in sharing them and share with us any related content. He then described more precisely the Newsletters (every 6 months) and Factsheets (once a year), asking participants for input to feed the newsletters. He then described the training material that is aimed at a less specialised audience, and the promotional video, which depends on the visual material sent by participants. He then described the scientific outputs and the policy and technology activities, emphasising the need for participants' involvement to reach the Action's targets. Wei-Li finally shared the activities aimed at the general public, suggesting that STSM Grantees could be asked to write the larger audience articles.

Davide suggested having a presentation template to share the Action to conferences. Wei-Li agreed to have such a template that could be adapted to different audiences.



Ariel suggested having a profile on Smart Water Magazine which is a type of blog more in contact with policy and NGOs.

Katrin suggested having on our website a calendar of Events linked to OFG in order to better network both with participants going to these events (such as EGU) and new stakeholders. Hiba answered that a news section on the website would be welcome but needs active input from participants, Wei-Li agreed to the good idea to share events.

Davide asked if a specific journal was already considered for the special issue. Aaron answered that “Water” was one of the choices but that suggestions are welcome.

12. Brainstorming session on network expansion plan and focus groups

Hiba led a stakeholder mapping exercise and the participants populated the white board, found in the annex.

Hiba then asked participants how the stakeholders can be involved with the Action.

Elizabeth mentioned her company can reach out to certain oil companies, WWQ, UNESCO, and other NGOs.

It was then agreed to have a template email to contact any stakeholders the participants have in their contact.

Amin Shabaan asked about what is expected of making contact with stakeholders. Aaron answered the main point is to ask them to join the Action, and deciding on what type of involvement of specific stakeholders will happen can come later.

Ariel and Elizabeth suggested a well-presented flyer/email to encourage non-academic stakeholders to be interested in the Action.

Finally, Hiba presented the Action website and it was suggested that an additional page was added for all the dissemination material.

13. Presentation of Action plan for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Network proposal

Aaron described what the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Network are, and that the calls are open between 30 May and 28 November 2023, and Aaron suggested that the Action submit a call early to be able to improve it before the deadline if needed. He shared a list of potential topics for an application.

Xavier Garcia suggested focusing on polar OFG (interaction between gas hydrates, OFG and permafrost).

Michela suggested adding a legal aspect to the proposal.

Claudia agreed on the application to the grant and emphasised the legal and social aspects needed for the proposal, and she suggested using COST funds to organise a proposal writing workshop.

Yong Jiang gave further ideas on the non-geological aspect of OFG, such as social and economic aspects.

Finally, Aaron suggested having an open questionnaire online for everyone to share their ideas for topics, methods, and collaboration partners, and further discussing the grant application at a future Core Group meeting.

14. Summary of MC decisions

Aaron repeated the two positive votes about agenda and budget. He also suggested sending later the decided venues for future meetings to be voted through e-vote.

15. Other

A discussion was led about internal communication, as Slack was initially suggested to be used to ease small communication topics between Action/WG members but its success is very low. As the amount of people using Slack in the audience was limited, another suggestion was to use WhatsApp, which was more widely used. Ariel offered to open a WhatsApp Community, which allows a similar structure to Slack with separated groups linked within the Community. It was later agreed that WG Leaders will be responsible to include their WG Members to the WG Group on WhatsApp to be able to better communicate with them.

The Zotero library was shortly discussed and will be soon set up for participants to view and help populate by sending any relevant publication to Hiba.

16. Closing remark

Aaron thanked everyone for their presence and contribution. He also thanked Claudia and Hiba for their efforts, and reminded his and their availability for anyone's comments or ideas.

17. Core Group Meeting

Attendants: Aaron Micallef, Claudia Bertoni, Hiba Wazaz, Michela Giustiniani, Davide Gamboa, Ana Fociro, Katrin Schwalenberg, Ariel Thomas, Lukasz Janowski, Elizabeth Quiroga-Jordan.

Aaron explained the necessity of a 6 monthly internal report from each WG Leader/Vice-Leader to monitor the progress of the Action and control any risk. He suggested that these reports contain the tasks, activities, deliverables planned for each year, an explanation of if/how these have been implemented, or an explanation of why it was not implemented and what remediation will be taken. These reports will start as of 1 September 2023, and should be discussed in a following Core Group meeting. These reports will also be the base for the Annual Report that will be prepared by Aaron, Claudia, and Hiba. The Core Group agreed on these reports.

Aaron then explained the WG acceptance of applications, namely that he will ask each WGL to evaluate WG applicants and let him know if any applicant should not be accepted. He also talked about new MC Members Antonis Toumazis from Cyprus and Omer Kovcic from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and how the acceptance process has to pass by an online MC vote.



Aaron asked if anyone had ideas concerning the Excellence and Inclusiveness Policy. Hiba shared more ITC Conference Grants could be added, but the lack of applicants is a challenge.

Many suggestions to improve the online presence were made: Ariel suggested content professional writers, Katrin suggested some interviews, Claudia suggested to use our Institutions' social presence to increase the Action's visibility. Elizabeth suggested a planning of weeks for members to send social content to Hiba.

Katrin asked if members can join more than 2 WG. It was suggested to join any additional WG more informally by getting in contact directly with WGL.

Finally, a formal confirmation of the website provider by the core group was done.

MC Decisions

1. Agenda agreed
2. Budget (attached) agreed

Actions and deadlines

Action	Person	Deadline
Lead Core Group meeting every 3 months	Aaron Micallef	
Assess gender balance for led activities	Core Group	
Contact the COST National Coordinators and share the Action with the associations we are part of	Everyone, especially ITC members	
Prepare next STSM call	Ana Fociro, Michela Giustiniani, Davide Gamboa	End April 2023
Apply to ITC and STSM calls	Everyone	June 2023
Divide WG2 in sub-group and assign sub-group leaders	Katrin Schwalenberg, Johanna Lofi	
WG2 sub-group leaders to report in quarterly WG2 online meetings	WG2 sub-gorup leaders	
Plan Training school 1 in a hybrid format	Ariel Thomas	May 2023
Contact University of Birmingham for additional experts for training school	Ariel Thomas, Marina Flores	April 2023
Whatsapp WG Group lead (to include all members)	WG Leaders	
Start a social media posting schedule	Hiba Wazaz	End March
Start the Zotero library	Hiba Wazaz	18 March
Presentation of the Action Powerpoint Template	Wei-Li Hong	End April
Having a profile on Smart Water Magazine		
Prepare a stakeholder engagement email template	Wei-Li Hong	End March
Contact any relevant stakeholder with template email	MC Members	
Prepare an Action flyer to be shared with stakeholders	Wei-Li Hong	
Add a page for dissemination material on the Action website	Hiba Wazaz	18 March
Develop an online questionnaire for Marie Curie proposal.	Aaron Micallef	End April
Submit Marie Curie proposal	Aaron Micallef	28 Nov 23
WG internal reports	WG Leaders/ Vice-Leaders	Every 1 March and 1 Sept.
Annual report	Aaron, Claudia, Hiba	30 Sept

Annexes

Budget plan for year 1

Category	Description	Cost (EUR)
Management committee meeting	1 day, 40 participants	26,050
Working group 1 meeting	1 day, 25 participants	16,250
Working group 3 meeting	1 day, 20 participants	13,720
Training school 1	3 days, 11 participants	9,900
STSMs	7-10 participants	25,000
ITC conference grants	2 grants	2,500
Dissemination conference grants	2 grants	2,500
Website		5,000
Logo		500
Newsletter		2,000
Factsheet		2,000
Map		2,000
Financial and scientific administration and co-ordination		16,263
TOTAL		124,683



Stakeholders' mapping

