

Subject | Minutes of the Fifth Management Committee Meeting of COST Action CA16107

EuroXanth: Integrating science on *Xanthomonadaceae* for integrated plant disease management in Europe, Zoom, August 19, 2021

1. Welcome to participants

On 19 August 2021 at 1:30 p.m. CET, all participants were welcomed by Ralf Koebnik, Chair of the COST Action CA16107. Afterwards, COST Science Officer Estelle Emeriau gave a welcome speech in which she congratulated on the success of the EuroXanth COST Action.

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

The quorum (2/3 of COST Countries participating in the Action) was reached: 25 country representatives out of 31 attended the meeting. The list of participating delegates with their contact information is presented in **Annex 1**.

3. Adoption of agenda

The agenda (**Annex 2**) of the 5th Management Committee (MC) Meeting was unanimously adopted.

4. Approval of minutes and matters arising of/since last meeting (if applicable)

Minutes of all events have been approved. They are accessible at the EuroXanth website (<https://euroxanth.eu/documents>). The election of the new WG1 Vice Leader was approved via e-vote in October 2019.

5. Update from the Action Chair, STSM Coordinator, ITC Conference Grant manager, Science Communication Manager, Virtual Networking Support Manager

5.1 Status of Action

The Chair Ralf Koebnik reminded all participants that the COST Action started on 16 March 2017 and was initially scheduled to end on 15 March 2021. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting delays with planned activities, we had applied for a grant extension of six months, which was accepted by the COST Association. Therefore, the EuroXanth COST Action will end on 15 September 2021.

Over the last 4.5 years, the EuroXanth network has grown impressively from 17 proposers (incl. 7 ITCs) and 1 IPC to 31 members (incl. 17 ITCs), 3 NNCs and 2 IPCs.

5.2 Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

The STSM Coordinator Monika Kałużna gave an overview about all ten STSM grant calls and the distribution of grants with respect to gender (>50% females), working groups (WG1 most active) and organisms (*Xanthomonas* > *Xylella*). In total, 47 grants were given (two of them withdrawn due to COVID-19 uncertainties), which corresponds to a success rate of two-thirds.

5.3 ITC Conference Grants

The ITC Conference Manager Katarina Gašić informed about all seven ITC conference grant calls. Six grants were awarded to Early Career Investigators from four ITCs, with a success rate of 100% for those applications that were in the scope of the EuroXanth COST Action.

5.4 Virtual Networking: VNS and VM Grants

The Virtual Networking Support Manager Ralf Koebnik explained the aims and details of the two new Virtual Networking Tools: Virtual Networking Support (VNS) grants and Virtual Mobility (VM) grants. Calls were launched in June 2021 and five applications were received (1 for VNS, 4 for VM grants), all of which were approved.

6. Update from the Grant Holder

First, an overview about the budget situation was given by the Chair. There was significant underspending for the Annual Conference (59 000 €), since the conference had to be held as a virtual event. There was also underspending for STSMs (3 740 €), which was caused by two cancellations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Another underspending of ca. 10 000 € came from the fact that some manuscripts, for which publication grants were offered, won't be accepted in time, *i.e.* before the end of the COST Action.

7. Update from the COST Association, if a representative is present

Unfortunately, our Science Officer Estelle Emeriau had to leave the meeting early and was not available for longer remarks.

8. Monitoring of the Action

The Chair presented activities that had been organised after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the 3rd Workshop in Brussels (February 2020), the 3rd Training School in Toulouse (March 2020) and the 2nd Core Group Meeting in Zurich (August 2021, organised as an hybrid event). Between March 2020 and August 2021,

when travel was much restricted, four online workshops were organised (September to December 2020) and the 4th Annual Conference with 160 participants from 33 countries was held as a virtual event (June 2021).

9. Implementation of COST policies

The Chair reminded of the key elements of COST policy, *i.e.* gender balance, geographic balance and commitment to Early-Career Investigators (ECIs). The EuroXanth COST Action is very good with respect to the first two criteria and efforts were made for a stronger involvement of ECIs (special “Meet-the-expert” session during the 3rd Annual Conference, elections of an ECI as WG1 Vice Leader).

10. Follow-up of MoU objectives

The responsible Core Group members presented their achievements with respect to the COST Actions’ Goals and Objectives.

10.1 Transversal: Deliverables 1 to 4 and science communication

Since the Science Communication Manager was not available, Ralf Koebnik gave an update about our dissemination activities, such as presence in the internet and social media (website, newsletters, Twitter, Scoop.it!), four press releases, several publications and the Special Issue in the MDPI journal MICROORGANISMS with 13 contributions. He then reminded of the MPP Pathogen Profiles, which will be a way to valorise the achievements of all four working groups and address several of the proposed deliverables of the COST Action.

Ralf Koebnik also informed that the EuroXanth COST Action succeeded in receiving a Final Action Dissemination grant (10 000 €), which however is not required to pay all the proposed publications in the MICROORGANISMS Special Issue due to the general underspending.

10.2 WG1: Deliverables 5 to 8

WG1 Leader Joana Costa presented the composition of WG1 (36 members from 23 countries) and the WG1-specific Deliverables, which had been carefully discussed at the WG1 Meeting in Zagreb (September 2018). Deliverable 5 has been addressed when Joana participated at the 22nd Meeting of the EPPO Panel on Diagnostics in Bacteriology in Gent (November 2018) and also during the 1st Core Group Meeting (February 2019).

Members of the COST Action were/are involved in revising EPPO Standards on Diagnosis of *Xanthomonas* or *Xylella fastidiosa*. Deliverable 6 has been assembled in an Excel-based database, which was later valorised in a comprehensive review in MICROORGANISMS (coordinated by the Vice Chair Vittoria Catara and WG1 Leader Joana Costa). Deliverables of WG1 are also included in the MPP Pathogen Profiles, which are co-authored by WG1 members. Importantly, two Training Schools with 38 Trainees (Deliverable 8), several STSMs and ITC Conference grants gave ECIs unique opportunities to acquire new skills and to help in their career development.

10.3 WG2: Deliverables 9 to 10

WG2 Leader Joël Pothier provided details how Deliverable 9 was achieved by drafting Pathogen Profiles, by editing the MICROORGANISMS Special Issue and by revising EPPO diagnostic protocols for regulated pests. He highlighted how the 3rd Training School „Tracking bacteria *in planta*“ also contributed to the success of WG2. He then presented the status and the remaining steps for improvement of the DokuWiki project on

virulence factors and resistance genes (Deliverables 10 and 11), which he will address in the frame of his VM grant.

10.3 WG3: Deliverables 10 and 11

WG3 Leader Jens Boch gave an overview about the composition of WG3 (9 members from 8 countries) and in which activities members of WG3 were actively involved. He explained that WG3 addressed topics that take much more time than those of other WGs, such as discovering novel resistance traits and generating durably resistant crops. Even if COST networking tools were not that much involved in addressing these aims, COST members certainly contributed to progress in the field.

He also pointed out that the regulatory situation in Europe with respect to GMOs and novel breeding techniques (NBT) is not very encouraging and may hinder progress in the field and their successful application. An inventory of plant resistance genes (Deliverable 11) has been compiled in the DokuWiki online document.

10.4 WG4: Deliverable 12

WG4 Leader Emilio Stefani gave a progress report on Deliverable 12, which had been addressed during the WG4 Meeting in Viterbo (July 2019). Several STSMs, papers, communications and posters prove the success of this working group. Yet, it was stated that some of the WG members did not report anything of relevance for WG4 over the last years, which may indicate that their WG allocation was not optimal.

WG4 was/is involved in updating several diagnostic EPPO protocols and the EFSA pest categorisation of *Xanthomonas citri* pv. *viticola*. Links were created or strengthened to NPPOs and policy makers, which is important for acceptance and application of control measures.

11. AOB

11.1 Preparation of Final Assessment

Ralf Koebnik informed about the Final Assessment, for which a preparatory discussion took place during the 2nd Core Group Meeting in Zurich (August 2021). A timeline was presented with a two-week window for MC Members to provide feedback on the draft before a final meeting of the Core Group in the last week of September will finalise the report. Specifically, all MC Members and Substitutes were invited to provide data on the Outputs (publications, projects, co-supervised PhD theses), Impacts (stakeholders, new collaborations, career development) and Dissemination (non-Action meetings, e.g. with EFSA, EPPO, NPPOs).

11.2 Upcoming EU-level grant calls

The Vice Chair Vittoria Catara gave a comprehensive overview about EU-level grant opportunities, such as Horizon Europe, ERC grants and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. Several programmes were identified that fit well to the scope of the EuroXanth COST Action, e.g. the European Green Deal. Some of the calls have a too close deadline (6 October 2021), but others seem appropriate for application (Risk assessment of new low risk pesticides; Microbiomes in food production systems; Emerging and future risks to plant health).

11.3 Opportunities and plans for future COST Actions

WG4 Vice Chair Tamás Kovács informed about planning of a new COST Action on “Bacteriophage research and application”, which should integrate the knowledge on bacteriophages in order to coordinate the research and strengthen the application of

bacteriophages in the EU. He came with a proposal of five working groups, already identified candidate participants and created a website for information exchange (<http://www.europhage.net>).

Jaime Cubero introduced the concept for another new COST Action on “New strategies for disease diagnosis of plant-pathogenic bacteria based on genomics-informed target innovation”, which is based on the EuroXanth COST Innovators Grant (CIG) proposal from February 2021. To assess the opportunity and define the scope and structure for such a COST Action, he will use a VM grant, where he will virtually meet with interested participants and stakeholders.

Finally, Ralf Koebnik reminded that during the preparation of the CIG proposal, several MC Members had expressed their interest in coordinating research on microbiota, which could be in the scope of another COST Action. To evaluate the general interest and identify candidate participants for the three proposed COST Actions, he has prepared a Doodle poll (<https://doodle.com/poll/74ymtks2kud5b5tk>).

11.4 Upcoming international conferences of interest for the EuroXanth COST Action

Ralf Koebnik gave an overview about upcoming international conferences with interest for the EuroXanth community:

- 7th *Xanthomonas* Genomics Conference (XGC), Clearwater Beach (USA), 13-17 June 2022;
- 14th International Conference on Plant Pathogenic Bacteria (ICPPB), Assisi (Italy), 3-8 July 2022;
- International Congress of Plant Pathology (ICPP), Lyon (France), 20-25 August 2023.

He then discussed opportunities to link the EuroXanth community to these conferences, for instance by organising a special session or back-to-back workshop. For the ICPPB, which was postponed twice due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we had already identified five invited speakers for a session on bacteria that colonise the vascular system. It is hoped that these speakers will be available as well even if the EuroXanth COST Action cannot cover their travel and accommodation costs. For the ICPP, he has contacted the conference organiser to learn more about the conditions of organising a satellite event but did not yet receive any feedback.

Inspired by the 4th Annual EuroXanth Conference, Ralf Koebnik share the data of a Doodle poll, where participants were asked how much they would be willing to spend on a similar online meeting. Most of the participants were ready to spend 100 to 150 €, which may allow to organise such events in years when no other appropriate conferences take place, provided that a few enthusiastic colleagues take the lead.

12. Summary of MC decisions (if any)

Ralf Koebnik summarised all MC decisions that were taken since the last MC Meeting:

- Election of the new WG1 Vice Leader (October 2019)
- Formal approval of the Minutes on the MC Meeting 4 in Lednice (November 2019)
- Formal approval of the FAD request (May 2020)
- Action Extension request (June 2020)
- COST Innovators Grant (CIG) application (February 2021)
- Mandate to evaluate VNT Grant applications (May 2021)
- Evaluation criteria for VNS Grant / Profile of VNS Manager (May 2021)

- Evaluation criteria for VM Grants (May 2021)
- Launch of calls for VNT Grant applications (May 2021)

13. Closing

In closing the meeting on 19 August 2021 at 4:05 p.m., Action Chair Ralf Koebnik congratulated all MC Members and Substitutes on the successful 4.5 years of cooperation and networking, recalled the good memories that many will take away and expressed his gratitude to all participants for their active participation in the COST Action, for their input and feedback and for their more than timely e-votes in the past.

Annex 1: Attendance list

Chair of the COST Action	
Dr Ralf KOEBNIK koebnik@gmx.de	
(1) Albania	
Prof Jordan MERKURI (MC Member) jordanmerkuri@gmail.com	
(2) Belgium	
Prof Claude BRAGARD (MC Member) claude.bragard@uclouvain.be	
(3) Bosnia and Herzegovina	
Ms Biljana RADUSIN SOPIC (MC Member) biljana.radusin.sopic@igr.unibl.org	
(4) Bulgaria	
Dr Svetoslav BOBEV (MC Substitute) svetoslavbobev@abv.bg	
(5) Croatia	
Prof Edyta DERMIC (MC Member) edermic@agr.hr	Dr Sara GODENA (MC Member) sara@iptpo.hr
(6) Czech Republic	
Dr Miroslav BARANEK (MC Member) baranek@mendelu.cz	Dr Pavel BERAN (MC Member) pavel.beran@centrum.cz
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(7) Denmark	
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(8) Estonia	
ABSENT	
(9) France	
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(10) Germany	
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(11) Greece	
Dr Maria HOLEVA (MC Member) m.holeva@bpi.gr	
(12) Hungary	
Dr Tamas KOVACS (MC Member) kovacst@enviroinvest.hu	
(13) Ireland	
Dr Alexandre DE MENEZES (MC Member) alexandre.demenezes@nuigalway.ie	

(14) Israel	
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Dr Doron TEPER (MC Substitute) doront@volcani.agri.gov.il	
(15) Italy	
Prof Vittoria CATARA (MC Member) vcatara@unict.it	Prof Emilio STEFANI (MC Member) emilio.stefani@unimore.it
Dr Massimiliano MORELLI (Guest; WG1 Vice Leader) massimiliano.morelli@ipsp.cnr.it	
(16) Latvia	
Dr Inga MOROCKO-BICEVSKA (MC Member) inga.morocko@llu.lv	
(17) Lithuania	
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ABSENT	
(19) Netherlands	
ABSENT	
(20) North Macedonia	
ABSENT	
(21) Norway	
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Annex 2 – Agenda

COST Action CA16107
Action Title: EuroXanth: Integrating science on <i>Xanthomonadaceae</i> for integrated plant disease management in Europe
Management Committee Meeting No. 5
Zoom, https://zhaw.zoom.us/j/9675823973
19 August 2021, 13:30 to 16:30 (CET, Paris time)
1. Welcome to participants
2. Verification of the presence of two-thirds of the Participating COST Countries (Quorum)
3. Adoption of agenda
4. Approval of minutes and matters arising of last meeting (if applicable)
5. Update from the Action Chair, STSM Coordinator, ITC Conference Manager, Science Communication Manager, Virtual Networking Support Manager
a) Status of Action: start and end dates of Action, participating COST countries, participating NNC/IPC institutions and Specific Organisations (Ralf Koebnik)
b) Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM): review of completed reports and new applications (STSM Coordinator Monika Kałużna)
c) ITC Conference Grants: review of completed reports and new applications (Katarina Gašić)
d) Virtual networking: VNS and VM Grants (Ralf Koebnik)
6. Update from the Grant Holder: Action budget status
7. Update from the COST Association, if a representative is present
8. Monitoring of the Action (in the context of COVID-19)
9. Implementation of COST policies on:
a) Promotion of gender balance and Early Career Investigators (ECI)
b) Inclusiveness and Excellence
10. Follow-up of MoU objectives: progress report of working groups
a) Transversal: Deliverables 1 to 4 and science communication (Ralf Koebnik, on behalf of the Science Communication Manager Joana Vicente)
b) WG1: Deliverables 5 to 8 (WG Leader Joana Costa)
c) WG2 & WG3: Deliverables 9 to 11 (WG2/WG3) (WG Leaders Joël Pothier & Jens Boch)
d) WG4: Deliverable 12 (WG Leader Emilio Stefani)
11. AOB
a) Preparation of Final Assessment (Ralf Koebnik)
b) Upcoming EU-level grant calls (Vittoria Catara)
c) Opportunities and plans for future COST Actions (Ralf Koebnik, Tamás Kovács, Jaime Cubero/Joana Costa)
d) Upcoming international conferences of interest for the EuroXanth COST Action (Ralf Koebnik)
12. Summary of MC decisions (if any)
13. Closing