

---

**COST Action CA16107**  
**EuroXanth: integrating science on *Xanthomonadaceae***  
**for integrated plant disease management in Europe**

**Minutes of the Core Group Meeting**

**Zürich, Switzerland, 10-12 August 2021**

---

**Minutes of the Core Group Meeting written by R. Koebnik and reviewed by all participants**

Attending:

Jens BOCH [JB]	DE	WG3 Leader (online)
Eran BOSIS [EB]	IL	WG2 Vice Leader (online)
Vittoria CATARA [VC]	IT	Vice Chair
Joana COSTA [JC]	PT	WG1 Leader (online)
Katarina GAŠIĆ [KG]	RS	ITC Conference Manager
Monika KAŁUŻNA [MK]	PL	STSM Coordinator (online)
Ralf KOEBNIK [RK]	FR	Chair
Tamás KOVÁCS [TK]	HU	WG4 Vice Leader
Joël F. POTHIER [JP]	CH	WG2 Leader
Emilio STEFANI [ES]	IT	WG4 Leader
Joana VICENTE [JV]	UK	Science Communication Manager (online)

**DAY 1 - Tuesday, August 10**

The first half-day was used to evaluate the status quo of the COST Action and the budget situation. At the beginning, EuroXanth publication grants and the proposed manuscripts (including Pathogen Profiles) were discussed. It appeared that ten manuscripts won't make it in time before the end of the budget period, which also reflects the rather optimistic view when the publication grant proposals were submitted. Since Core Group members were typically among the authors, it can be assumed that the manuscripts will nevertheless be published, even without financial contribution from COST for the Open Access publication fees. We then discussed the opportunity to re-open the Special Issue at MDPI Microorganisms. This idea was supported and JC will inform the publisher about our decision to re-open the issue until 31 March 2022.

When discussing the budget in the context of the publication grants it became evident that our COST Action will have an enormous underspending, which for the most part results from the COVID-19 pandemic and is specifically due to:

- Switch from in-person to online format for the Annual Conference (thus saving 59 000 EUR),
- Cancellation of two STSMs (thus saving 6 500 EUR),
- Delays with half of the planned manuscripts (10 out of 20), which will only be accepted after the end of the COST Action and therefore not eligible for financial support (thus saving 12 164 EUR).

The Core Group members gave an overview about their activities and concerns and how to make use of the Virtual Networking Tools, if possible. JV suggested to produce new videos as a dissemination activity. An interesting proposal was to use cartoons for raising awareness and to inform people about

activities in basic and applied research. A long-term strategy for keeping the EuroXanth network alive beyond the end of the COST Action was sought, that will include keeping the website and our channels in the social media (Twitter, Scoop.It!), finding a solution for curating and hosting the DokuWiki, perhaps also extending its content by including information about molecular diagnostics. For these initiatives, Core Group members will use the new Virtual Networking Tools, thus also partially compensating the underspending.

ES proposed that it would be interesting to assess the impact of the various networking tools, such as Training Schools and STSMs, for scientific and career development. For such impact assessment, a questionnaire could be used with questions like:

- Did the activity lead to a new research project?
- Did you develop a new grant proposal based on the outcome of this activity?
- How many papers / conference contributions resulted from this activity?
- Did you implement new methods / approaches in your lab after this activity?
- Did you learn new skills?
- Was your career development facilitated?
- Did the activity help to get a new job?
- Did the host offer a position?
- Do you still have contacts to the host?
- Did the activity lead to new collaborations?
- Did the activity trigger the creation of a new research consortium?
- Did the activity provide more independency?
- Did the activity help to get a new responsibility in your institution?
- Would you recommend this activity to your colleagues?

Since some activities were very recent, whereas others date back up to four years, it appeared that it might be too early to assess the impact by now. Moreover, impact assessment is probably more in the responsibility of the COST Association in order to evaluate the usefulness of their networking tools.

## **DAY 2 - Wednesday, August 11**

The second half-day was used to discuss Virtual Mobility (VM) Grants and to collect suggestions for future activities. Several ideas for VM Grants were proposed, such as

- supporting Dissemination Activities by virtual networking,
- launching a Special Issue in the MDPI journal *Nanomaterials* (<https://www.mdpi.com/journal/nanomaterials>) by WG4,
- finding a solution for curating and hosting the DokuWiki after the end of the EuroXanth COST Action (WG2/3),
- perhaps extending its content by including information about molecular diagnostics or finding another solution to generate an internet-accessible platform for diagnostics and diversity of xanthomonads (WG1),
- evaluating the possibility to convert the CIG Grant proposal into a full COST Action proposal.

Other ideas for future COST Actions were discussed as well, such as a COST Action on “Bacteriophages – From Research to Application”, an idea that was already proposed by TK in the frame of a Dissemination Meeting in Grenoble (France), or a COST Action on “Microbiota Engineering (From Understanding to Design)”, a topic that has emerged during the preparation of the CIG Grant proposal.

VC then gave a comprehensive overview about EU-level grant opportunities, such as ERC, Horizon Europe... Since RK and JP were aware of an initiative by Doron Teper (Israel), EB suggested to connect with him to learn more about this idea, which was achieved at short notice. We also discussed opportunities to link the EuroXanth community to upcoming international conferences, for instance by organising a special session or back-to-back workshop. For the International Conference on Plant Pathogenic Bacteria (ICPPB) in Assisi 2022, 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 International Congress of Plant Pathology (ICPP) in Lyon, 2023, RK will contact the conference organiser to learn more about the conditions of organising a satellite event.

### DAY 3 - Thursday, August 12

The third half-day was used to prepare the MC Meeting, scheduled on 19 August 2021, and the Final Assessment Report. It was agreed that all WG Leaders and the other colleagues with leadership positions (Chair, Vice Chair, STSM Coordinator, ITC Conference Manager, Science Communication Manager, Virtual Networking Support Manager) will prepare short presentations to report about achievements and problems, if there were any. It was agreed that VC will inform the MC Meeting participants about EU-level funding opportunities, RK will inform about international conferences, and TK and Jaime Cubero will present their ideas for future COST Actions emerging from the EuroXanth network.

The Core Group Meeting ended with a point-by-point evaluation of the items (Goals, Objectives, Dissemination, Impact, Success) for the Final Assessment Report, which is due on 15 October 2021. Suggestions for including new networks and projects, participation at national and international meetings with stakeholders (EPPO, EFSA, parliaments...), co-supervised PhD students, etc. were collected. A timetable for drafting, revising, validating and submitting the report was established and will be shared with the Management Committee during the MC Meeting.

---

In summary, the three-day meeting was characterized by constructive discussions and a strong cohesive effect among the eleven COST participants. Those who were able to travel to Zurich had the pleasure to meet for dinner, where the day ended over Röstli and a good beer in a friendly, almost family-like atmosphere.



Participants of the Core Group Meeting – Day 1. From left to right: On-site group in Zurich (Joël F. Pothier, Katarina Gašić, Emilio Stefani, Tamas Kovacs, Vittoria Catara, Ralf Koebnik), Monika Kałużna, Joana Costa, Joana Vicente, and Eran Bosis.



Participants of the Core Group Meeting – Day 2. From left to right: On-site group in Zurich (Joël F. Pothier, Katarina Gašić, Emilio Stefani, Tamas Kovacs, Vittoria Catara, Ralf Koebnik), Monika Kałużna, Jens Boch, Joana Costa, Eran Bosis, and Joana Vicente.



Participants of the Core Group Meeting – Day 3. From left to right: On-site group in Zurich (Joël F. Pothier, Katarina Gašić, Emilio Stefani, Tamas Kovacs, Vittoria Catara, Ralf Koebnik), Joana Vicente, Jens Boch, Joana Costa, and Monika Kałużna.