



## **Final Action Dissemination (FAD)**

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Report of COST Action 15221 –  
We ReLaTe

HOW TO CITE THIS PUBLICATION

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This is the final report of COST Action 15221 – Advancing effective institutional models towards cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development or ‘We ReLaTe’. The purpose of the report is to present the outputs and outcomes of the Action in fulfilment of the Action’s research and capacity building objectives. The report has been written for any reader interested in the work of a COST Action and for any reader interested in the provision of professional development/learning support for higher education staff in writing, research, learning and teaching which was the topic of the Action.

In our Action we wanted to address the challenge of creating synergy among the increasingly more specialised and centralised supports for four key higher education activities – research, writing, teaching and learning – which frequently fail to capitalise on their shared territories and common ground. Our Action addressed the identified challenge through two key goals. They were

1. classifying, as frontier taxonomies, the common ground in terms of shared purposes, processes, knowledge, values and skills among centralised institutional supports for research, writing, teaching and learning in order to capitalise on their synergies.
2. offering the most advantageous models and practices for supporting these four areas that are mindful of the availability of new technologies and assessments, and that prompt a reworking of current institutional supports which will be valuable and far-reaching.

In order to answer this question we worked together as colleagues from across Europe and beyond. In the first instance we came to a shared understanding about what we mean by centralised support for writing, research, learning and teaching. Next, we got a sense across our Action partners of the existing and desirable situations re centralised support in this areas. We then worked in collaboration to agree how we might identify colleagues whom we deemed successful across writing, research, learning and teaching. These colleagues were our key informants. We asked these key informants in focus groups and in a questionnaire what purposes, processes, knowledge, values and skills had contributed to their success. We also asked them about their professional character which we discovered contributes a great deal to professional success in the academy. We then analysed the data and in partnership suggested models of support which were based on what we had learned. We completed this work through the networking tools that all Actions use i.e. meetings, working groups, training schools, short term scientific missions (STSMs), and conference grants for early career researchers from inclusive target countries. All of this work is conveyed in this report along with other lessons learned, reflections and details of the Action’s outputs and publications.

In addition to fulfilment of the Action research objectives, which underpinned the work outlined in the previous paragraph, central to our work was learning about each other and our individual higher education settings. Equally important was learning how to work together as a diverse, multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional, multi-cultural group. It is hardly surprising that we learned as much through the process of partnership and collaboration as we did from the research elements of our Action.

This Final Action Dissemination (FAD) has been organised to guide readers unfamiliar with our Action through the work of the Action. With the publication we want to communicate the deliverables of the work and just as essentially the spirit of the work. In turn, the FAD reflects the importance of the COST networking tools and how we used them to achieve the Action objectives.

If you have any reactions to this report we would be delighted to hear from you. We can be contacted through the Action’s website [www.werelate.eu](http://www.werelate.eu)

Finally, in addition to the official acknowledgement we have recorded to the COST Association for the support of this FAD and our work, we would like to add our personal and professional thanks. The COST Association ethos of trusting and supporting bottom-up networks of researchers from across Europe, our near neighbours and international partners is the very essence of collegiality, community and collaboration. We are grateful for the pleasure and privilege of having participated in the Action. Thank you most sincerely.

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COST Action 15221

## PARTICIPATION

**34** No. of COST countries participating

**6** No. of COST Near Neighbour Countries (COST NNC)

**1** No. of COST International Partner Countries

**63** No. of Management Committee members

**34** No. of Management Committee substitutes

**12** No. of Management Committee observers

**5** No. of Working Groups

## FUNDING

**5** No. of Grant Periods

**€637,000.00**  
Total grant budget awarded to the Action

**30** No. of Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs)

**9** No. of Management Committee meetings

## NETWORKING TOOLS

## TRAINING SCHOOLS AND CONFERENCES

**5** No. of training schools

**11** No. of trainers

**62** No. of trainees

**1** No. of conference partnerships

**4** No. of conference grants

In our Action we set out to understand how institutions might better support staff as writers, researchers, learners and teachers by identifying possible synergies across current or future centralised supports in these areas. What we have learned from the research we completed and equally from the exchange of experience and expertise that occurred as a result of working together as an inter-disciplinary, inter-institutional, international group is that three factors are central to professional learning provision for writing, research, learning and teaching. Those factors are character, community and context. These three factors have frontiers that meet and overlap within the institutional and sectoral higher education ecosystem.

Character was described as the personal qualities, motivations, dispositions, habits of mind, personal and professional values of colleagues. The human quality of working in higher education emerged consistently in the Action's findings and its conversations. Our Action and experience suggests that there is no way of disentangling the person, the self, from the work of writing, researching, learning and teaching. These are human pursuits in our higher education settings and support for them must account for their human quality. Similarly, our higher education settings are communities, in and of themselves, and they are made up of and are part of other communities. In higher education writing, research, learning and teaching involves interacting directly with others in exchange of ideas, co-enquiry, collaboration and partnership. Professional learning must take account of the centrality of relationships and community in higher education. Finally, context is a key consideration for professional learning. In our Action we learned about the influence of context on writing, research, learning and teaching. Context was described in terms of policy, funding, strategies, culture, stakeholders, priorities, national plans, European and international goals and priorities.

Our Action has reinforced for us that higher education is indeed situated in 'supercomplexity' (Barnett, 2000). Within the higher education ecosystem we have identified character, community and context as the frontiers that meet each other and interact in all manner of ways. As such, each must be considered carefully when it comes to professional learning. In turn, as we recorded at the outset and as was reinforced in our work values, purposes, processes, skills and knowledge will influence the design and provision of professional learning.

This Final Action Dissemination Report describes the Action's work and points to other outputs and publications where we share our ideas and our learning. Taken together, we hope that our Action's work will contribute to the ongoing conversations around professional learning some of which are now urging for a more holistic approach, within which staff are truly and authentically valued as people and as professionals, and where we can all collaborate and contribute to the fulfilment of higher education for the common good.

#### REFERENCE

Barnett, R. (2000) University knowledge in an age of supercomplexity. *Higher Education* 40, 409–422 (2000). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004159513741>

'I really enjoyed having such a varied and interesting group of participants in the Action. I must say that I am really looking forward to keeping co-operating with most of them by organising conferences, invited visits, training schools or an STSM and I wish we could be together in another COST Action. It has been extraordinary for me not only academic wise but also at a personal level. I have now a group of outstanding scholars best friends ;-)'

Once upon a time there was an Action. The Action was called COST Action 15221. Though the Action officially had a bureaucratic name, the people who were the Action knew that it was special for a host of reasons. They knew that it was special because it was diverse and interdisciplinary in nature. They realised that this characteristic meant that being part of the Action enriched and deepened participants' understanding and knowledge. Because the Action was made up of different colleagues, from different places, different institutions, disciplines, backgrounds, professions, positions, with different experiences, cares, responsibilities and ambitions, the members of the Action found that they had much to learn from one another and they discovered how much they enjoyed learning in this way. This interdisciplinary, multicultural experience was 'amazing' and 'special'.

Action participants learned from each other about teaching and learning, about research, about what higher education looks like across Europe. They also learned about how to 'be', and to 'become' in a mixed community; they learned about collaboration and co-operation. Perhaps most surprisingly for some of the participants, they learned a great deal about themselves and even more about their own settings as they uncovered how to see them differently - through the eyes of their new international colleagues. Being part of the Action meant that these colleagues connected with people, some of whom they already knew but others were new connections. When these colleagues met, spoke and wrote to each other they found that they had many more similarities than differences. In turn, the people in the Action discovered that what they learned when they interacted, and what they reflected on after those meetings and when working on shared endeavours, didn't stop in the Action. It cascaded from it so that they could draw on it and apply it beyond the Action in their writing, research, learning and teaching; in their contributions to the enhancement of their institutions. One of the Action members was astounded by how this learning could be applied: 'Suddenly, we are seeing the possibilities offered to pool this knowledge and establish similar processes at our local level'. Another noted

This cross-European dimension has broadened my local national perspective immensely and has provided me with useful insights into good practices in the Higher Education system, which I can replicate in my home institution. More broadly, the Action has helped me develop awareness of educational policy and get a comprehensive view of the needs of the Higher Education system.

Another noted that the experience was 'enriching and stimulating, both professionally and personally' and that it made the participant 'think about possible innovations at my own workplace'. Another still noted that they had 'become more aware of the vast differences in support available for higher education researchers and teachers, and the need for the individual contexts (to continue) to develop strategies, policies and practices for professional support for researchers and teachers in higher education.' They realised that 'We have a long way to go'.

Participants could see that the learning and the work would go on beyond the Action: ‘These collaborations have led to the formation of new research networks that will continue for a long time into the future.’ The Action was greater than the sum of its parts. It facilitated

direct contact with other colleagues both formal and informal; it facilitated enjoyable and fascinating interactions with other colleagues. It has been my first COST Action and I have really enjoyed meeting other scholars with common and not so common research interests (that makes it even more interesting).

Participants learned, researched, attended, participated, networked, travelled, presented, wrote, collaborated, spoke, taught, laughed, connected, understood, empathised. They declared that the Action ‘meant a lot’ to them. They wanted

to stress the value of actually meeting one another face-to-face in the countries and higher education settings of several of the Action members. By meeting and working together at the working meetings and MC meetings, we were able to focus and collaborate intensely, as well as to socialize with one another in the in-between spaces. In this way, we got to know one another and built strong professional relationships, and some even forged friendships.

Participants could see the bigger picture of the work and could appreciate its importance:

development of knowledge and skills, building connections... this Action was unique as there were so many people from different disciplines, which is usually not the case with other projects. If we hadn’t been involved in this Action, we probably would have never met and interacted during our professional life. In a larger context, it makes you aware of how little we still know about each other although being a union.

The qualities of openness, enthusiasm, cheerfulness, respect, creativity, team work, characterised the way the Action worked. One colleague new to COST Actions and in her first ever participation sums it up perfectly:

This first participation in a COST Action has given me a marvellous opportunity to travel ... to meet local colleagues and learn from them about local academic conditions, opportunities and difficulties. From that point of view, I think this COST Action strongly contributed to creating a feeling of belonging to the same European academic community.’

For another colleague the old adage once again rang through: ‘Being part of a team proved to me one more time that the team is more than the sum of its component parts.’

## OVERVIEW

One of the planned outputs of COST Action 15221 was to provide a framework which would underpin the models proposed. In this section we present the framework.

The framework is presented in two parts. Part 1 is a presentation of the ‘3Cs Framework of Professional Learning – Character, Community and Context’ which was developed by COST Action 15221. Part 2 uses the 3Cs Framework as its underpinning and provides a blueprint for how an institution might devise and agree on a model of support for writing and research, learning and teaching. Part 2 draws directly from the participatory approach which was used by COST Action 15221 to explore alternative models of centralised support.

The ‘3Cs Framework of Professional Learning’ is based on the research findings of COST Action 15221. Throughout the Action all of the work building to the publication of this framework was captured in various documents. Colleagues interested in reading more about the process and the findings are directed to the section entitled ‘Outputs, Presentations and Publications’ in this FAD. Development toward the 3Cs Framework is also discussed in detail in the chapter entitled ‘The challenges of Professional Development in the European Higher Education Area: Targeting success in writing, research, learning and teaching’ (Melonashi et al., in press) in *Academic Writing at Intersections in Europe* (Gustafsson and Eriksson eds., in press). The principles of the framework directly reflect, and elaborate on, the Action’s Reflective Statement.

## PART 1 - '3CS FRAMEWORK OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING – CHARACTER, COMMUNITY AND CONTEXT'.

Our Action explored the purposes, processes, values, skills and knowledge of colleagues whom Action members deemed successful against agreed criteria combined with their professional judgement (a link to the criteria is available in the 'Outputs, Presentations and Publications' section of this FAD). These colleagues provided us with data about what motivates and drives them in their work, how they work, the values that underpin their work, and the skills and knowledge that they need to complete their work. We gathered this data through online focus groups and an online questionnaire. We hoped that if we could better understand these colleagues we might be able to suggest ideas around the sort of professional learning that would help all colleagues to achieve similar success and/or their potential.

Our findings suggest three essential considerations regarding professional learning. They are character, community and context.

### Character

Overwhelmingly our data suggest that successful colleagues share personal and professional characteristics. The academic disposition was central to colleagues' success. From the Melonashi report (2020) we know that certain values and traits predominated in our cohort. These colleagues are driven by the values of respect, equality, fairness, integrity. They have a positive attitude, are optimistic, and value imagination and freedom. Key success factors for them include passion for their subject, curiosity, determination, resilience and hard work. They showed openness to new experiences and rated the ability to problem solve.

Our findings also suggest that the colleagues are hugely intrinsically motivated; they want to learn more, and they want to contribute to and progress their discipline/field. They want to share what they know and what they are discovering, with colleagues and with students. They want to see their students doing well. Intrinsic motivation is central to colleagues engagement in professional/career development across the four areas.

From our Action we know that Character - who I am, the self - is central to professional learning. Any model of support, centralised or otherwise should be mindful of the need to support colleagues as individuals. Models should also tap into the very substantial intrinsic motivation that colleagues bring to their work and seek to bolster, acknowledge and reward their individual efforts.

### Community

Our findings strongly reinforce the relational aspects of higher education and of the professional learning of staff working within higher education. The findings show us that while the behaviour, knowledge and values of individuals matter a great deal in higher education all of these individuals need to operate in communities of various shapes, sizes and interests. The majority of academics in our research noted that they enjoy collaboration of one kind or another. Colleagues remarked that co-authoring and sharing one's writing and research was important, that collaborating on research mattered to them, that they seek opportunities to network and to travel in order to share their research and to work and learn in other settings, that they recognise and enjoy teaching as a social act – they want to build rapport with their students, to share pedagogical practice and to gain feedback. Our findings suggest that academic staff ask each other for advice and learn from each other. They emphasized the fundamental importance of sharing their work at conferences and other fora, and wanted opportunities for professional conversations about writing and research, learning and teaching. Working and connecting with others was an absolute necessity in their roles and in their professional learning.

Professional learning must acknowledge and build on the importance of community. It must also recognise that there are myriad communities of which academics are a part. These will include large communities such as international and national communities, their institutional community and their research/disciplinary community. It will also include much smaller departmental communities and niche research communities. In addition, colleagues will play different roles within the various communities of which they are members. In some instances, they will be leaders, in others mentors, in others silent partners, in others novices. Professional learning for colleagues needs to accommodate and support the range of roles that colleagues play in the various communities of which they are a part.

### Context

One thing that is abundantly clear in our findings is that context matters. The breadth and diversity of involvement across our COST Action demonstrated for us that our contexts and settings are vastly different. This is clearly evident in the Action's case study publication Centralised Support for Writing, Research, Learning and Teaching: Case Studies of Existing Models across Europe (O'Sullivan et al., 2020) and in 'The Story of the Action' section of this FAD. Even though the findings show remarkable similarity regardless of context, translating what we know matters in terms of professional learning for colleagues across settings means that we need to take context into account. Certainly, this will mean looking at the national context, including national policy, but it will also mean paying careful attention to institutional policies and strategies, and departmental priorities and goals.

Colleagues struggle with lack of time, competing demands and the fragmented nature of their work. Our data suggest that supporting academics to be successful involves enablers which are either side of the same coin; individual academics and academic communities need support to fulfil their roles but they also need freedom/flexibility/a lack of inhibitors. This is particularly obvious in terms of the sorts of enablers that colleagues deemed desirable regarding research. Colleagues were grateful for research funding and the necessary research infrastructure to fulfil their goals, including, especially, access to scholarship. But equally they clearly acknowledged the importance of having flexibility to adjust their commitments and manage their schedules, having academic freedom and most importantly having time to work on research.

Context also involves a number of practical considerations such as technology, infrastructure and resources – these vary significantly across settings. All professional learning must be situated to be truly effective and to make a difference for the context, the community and the individual. Where there is a lack of complementarity between these three elements it is unlikely that the professional learning will be relevant, applicable or indeed represent good value for money and return on investment. Worse than this, professional learning which is not aligned may have a demoralising effect on colleagues e.g. where a colleague commits to becoming an excellent teacher only to be told by her department and/or her institution that research is all that matters.

## PART 2 – TOWARDS AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO SUPPORT FOR WRITING AND RESEARCH, LEARNING AND TEACHING.

Against the backdrop of the 3Cs Framework of Professional Learning COST Action Management Committee members proposed alternative models of centralised supports for teaching and learning, research and writing; those models are noted in the ‘Alternative Models of Support’ section of this report.

Using the 3 Cs Framework of Professional Learning here we provide a blueprint communicated as a five stage process toward the development of an institutional approach to support for writing and research, learning and teaching. As noted previously, the approach echoes the participatory process adopted by COST Action 15221.

Note - a scoping/sounding phase might also be useful if a mandate for exploring support across the four areas does not already exist.

### 1. Declaration of intention and planning

- Statement of the aim of the initiative
- Gathering the community (staff, students and other stakeholders) who will explore and subsequently identify/build the model
- Identifying existing policies/strategies which will influence the work – institutional, national and international
- Brainstorming
- Negotiated planning of the phases of the initiative
- Identifying what success would look like
- Clarifying the risks

### 2. Consultation

- Beginning where colleagues are
- Ensuring shared ownership of the process and outcomes
- Establishing what exists across the HE landscape – current models and approaches
- Establishing what exists to date – current practice on campus
- Capturing what would be desirable

COST Action 15221 did this work through an online questionnaire, through face-to-face consultation, and through ongoing conversations. The Action considered the following elements specifically:

- agreement about the process and shared ownership
- establishing a shared understanding of centralised support across the four areas: clarifying what we mean by key terms
- devising a shared bibliography of the literature in the field
- concept mapping of what exists at present
- use of an agreed framework to examine what exists at present and what might be desirable i.e. looking at values, purposes (aims of support - why), processes (what support looks like in action – how), knowledge and scholarship, skills,
- gathering and analysing accounts of what exists at present in terms of support using the agreed framework, and through focus groups and online questionnaires with key informants

- gathering and analysing accounts of what might be desirable in terms of support using the same agreed framework, and through focus groups and online questionnaires with key informants
- collated the findings and presented them as reports and as a matrix.

### 3. Exploration

- Locating the findings in the context including institution mission (values), strategic direction of the institution, and policy (institutional, national and international)
- Sharing of the findings with staff and students
- Discussion of the findings with staff and students across campus
- Capturing reactions to the findings
- Articulating and sharing insights
- Beginning to consider possible models

### 4. Negotiation

- Presentation of draft models
- Exploration of models
- Negotiation re model to be adopted
- Building consensus
- Agreement re model

### 5. Implementation and evaluation

- Planning for implementation of model
- Model implementation
- Model evaluation

## INTRODUCTION TO ALTERNATIVE MODELS

The following models were devised during the working group and management committee meetings held by the Action in Bratislava in February 2020.

Each model draws from all of the work completed across the lifetime of the Action and reported on in this FAD; the models should be considered firmly in the context of the overall work of the Action.

The models are examples of how an institution might use the learning from the Action and the 3Cs Framework to produce an alternative approach to support for writing, research, learning and teaching. The models are not prescriptive; rather they are explorations of how the Action learning and outputs could be conceived as an alternative approach.

Please note: The colleagues who are recorded as developing the models are those groups of colleagues who worked together in Bratislava (Feb 2020) to devise the models on that day. Their outputs go some way towards capturing the efforts and articulating some of the learning of all the active COST Action members over the lifetime of the Action. We are grateful to these colleagues for developing these models in Bratislava and we acknowledge the broader collective efforts of COST Action members since the Action began in October 2016 which have led to the production of these models.

## MODEL 1 - 'CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION'

### Purpose of model

To support

- writing and research, learning and teaching
- professional development of academic and administrative staff, particularly early career investigators.

### Summary of model

The Centre for Academic Support and Recognition is a university unit which supports community and networking among academic and administrative staff, with a focus on communication and sharing of ideas and achievements. The Centre supports academic writing, teaching and learning skills (through appropriate training for improving these skills - courses, workshops, etc.), and builds research capacity. The Centre also provides financial support for researchers for conducting research and associated essential activity (experiments, travel, pre- or co-financing participation in international projects, etc.) and for rewarding researchers work (e.g. through awards and prizes).

### Underlying values of the model

- Transparency and trustworthiness
- Focus on the individual – personal and professional development
- Importance of community – emphasis on interpersonal relationships and good working atmosphere

- Parity of esteem between writing and research, learning and teaching
- Synergy between writing and research, learning and teaching
- Supporting individual personal results, as part of the support of the community, towards improved institutional success

### Characteristics of the model

The model

- has three levels – intra-institutional (between various departments); national inter-institutional (between institutions in the country); and international
- works through transparency, visibility, sharing, collaboration and dissemination of information
- endorses 'open' approaches to writing and research, learning and teaching
- offers a range of types of support – information provision, workshops, courses, networking, awards and prizes
- is of significance and is targeted at all members of the university community – interdisciplinary, different career stages (early career, consolidator, expert, emeritus), different types of positions and needs (academic, administrative and management staff).

### Placement of the model in the organisation, including model sponsors, home department/centre/unit, associated senior leaders

The Centre would be a unit which works across the university. It would be financed by central/core university funding and governed by representatives of its range of stakeholders. It would have its own director and a team of permanent staff. Senior teaching staff could be engaged/seconded to the centre and included in different centre activities as appropriate and in a range of roles – as mentors, tutors, supervisors, lecturers, workshop/programme leaders etc. When required, expertise might be outsourced or contracted in.

### Connectedness within the institution, including interoperability with other centres/units, shared territory, common ground, connection with strategy/policy

The Centre should be recognised by university policy and included as part of the university strategy, in terms of development, capacity building, and enabling recognition.

### Sample content areas/topics/approaches/formats/processes

The Centre would offer universal support across the areas of writing and research, learning and teaching. This might include support around teaching (including introductory pedagogical skills and mentoring), support for research (including approaches to research, methodology development and statistical advisory), community building (including social skills, networking, organisational skills, building national/international groups), professional skills (including time management, stress management, etc.), context specific skills (such as English language development). The Centre could also explore approaches with the institution and staff regarding how to provide time and space for professional development.

## Desired outcomes – what success would look like

Possible indicators of success might include

- better ranking of the institution due to improved quality of research and writing, teaching and learning
- higher transparency and accessibility of research
- improved students' feedback and satisfaction with the learning experience
- increased mobility opportunities, for staff and student, as well as greater national and international collaboration
- personal satisfaction and enhanced sense of fulfilment of both students and staff
- open mind for creativity.

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## MODEL 2 - 'CLL – CPD': CAREER-LONG LEARNING APPROACH TO CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

### Purpose of model

The purpose of the model is to identify needs and provide the necessary and desirable support for staff, as individuals and members of a contextualised higher education community, as they progress through their careers.

### Summary of model

The model is designed to provide professional development across writing and research, learning and teaching. It also incorporates other areas such as management and leadership which will likely come more to the fore for many academics as they move through their careers. The model clearly recognises that professional development needs to be fit for purpose and frequently 'just in time' for staff, and that staff need and want different professional development depending on their career stage.

### Underlying values of the model

- Lifelong learning
- Flexibility
- Collaboration
- Diversity
- Inclusion

## Characteristics of the model

The model

- is comprehensive but sufficiently flexible and targeted at individual organisational needs (country, institution, professional/subject related differences)
- cultivates the attitudes, values and habits of mind which underpin success
- encourages collaboration – recognises that the successful academic needs and wants to make connections with others and to be mobile
- is individualised
- is context sensitive – acknowledges that there is no 'one size fits all'
- is mindful of the synergies and cross-cutting between topics
- incorporates knowledge, skills and competencies
- takes a holistic approach to professional development.

### Placement of the model in the organisation, including model sponsors, home department/centre/unit, associated senior leaders

There is no one-size-fits-all approach in terms of how the synergy between writing, research, learning and teaching should be achieved. However, model sponsors, change agents, participants (university employees) should all take part in the conversation about the placement of the actual model in the university organisation. Changes in placement should continuously be evaluated.

### Connectedness within the institution, including interoperability with other centres/units, shared territory, common ground, connection with strategy/policy

Strategy/policy principles should be clearly articulated, accessible to all participants, interoperable, and applicable in everyday or real writing/research/learning/teaching (WRLT) situations.

Challenges might arise from the interoperability of policies, or a lack of understanding of policies. This might constrain the synergy of WRLT. Furthermore, it might hamper the connectedness in and between universities.

Connectedness will be facilitated when researchers influence each other's attitudes, skills and competences, and engage in knowledge sharing. If the leadership of the unit, centre, and university advocates such knowledge sharing, it is more likely to become common practice.

Concretely this might be seen in strengthening participants' links to knowledge resources and involvement in developing innovations in teaching, curricular processes, writing, student learning, and research.

### Sample content areas/topics/ sample approaches/formats/processes

- Support for teaching and learning as appropriate for career stage potentially including the following: small and large group teaching, designing courses, curriculum/whole programme design and reform, reflecting on and evaluating teaching, scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)
- Various supports for research including accessing funding for research, building networks and engaging in mobility
- Technical support and support for technology enhanced learning (TEL)

- Academic writing support including support around publishing (publishing strategies), ethics, English for Academic Purposes, access to literature
- Cross-cutting skills including people management, mentoring, leadership, financial training
- Potential outsourced specialist training and support

#### Desired outcomes – what success would look like

- Personalised professional development plans for all staff which reflect career stage
- Professional development which is aligned with institutional goals
- Professional development which reflects national and European frameworks
- Institutional success, recognised in the fulfilment of mission goals, through individual and community support and achievement
- Student success and staff success working in a complementary manner and being mutually supportive
- Institutional contentment through care and compassion for staff and students
- Participants dare to innovate or experiment with writing, research, learning and teaching.
- Participants share stories of success

#### Developed by

Stacey Cozart, Aarhus University, Denmark  
Peter Musaeus, Aarhus University, Denmark

### MODEL 3 - 'VIRIBUS UNITIS' CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

#### Purpose of model

The mission of 'Viribus Unitis' Centre of Excellence is to raise the quality of writing and research, learning and teaching at the university. It will achieve this by

- raising awareness and clarifying what quality looks like across writing and research, learning and teaching
- contributing to the development and sustainable growth of the university
- guaranteeing the equilibrium and synergy of the academic community across all its activities - writing and research, learning and teaching
- encourage networking, collaboration and partnership between all stakeholders
- ensuring compliance with ethical principles.

#### Summary of model

The centre will offer support for the university community - students and staff in writing and research, learning and teaching.

#### Underlying values of the model

- Collaboration
- Inclusivity and equality
- Mutual respect and trust

- Forward-looking - promoting and encouraging modern approaches and technologies
- Trustworthy, honest and ethically sound compliance and leadership re all Centre activity
- Responsibility
- Capitalising on experience and embracing diversity
- Academic freedom

#### Characteristics of the model

The model is

- oriented towards the needs of the academic community
- open and flexible
- inclusive and supporting of disciplinarity and inter-, multi-, trans-disciplinarity
- autonomous
- situated in the local context and adaptable for internationalisation.

#### Placement of the model in the organisation, including model sponsors, home department/centre/unit, associated senior leaders

- Financially supported by the university
- Managed by a chairperson/director, supported by a team of experts, and reporting directly to the university rector/president/provost
- Representative of the university community in academic environment (university members, institutes, students)

#### Connectedness within the institution, including interoperability with other centres/units, shared territory, common ground, connection with strategy/policy

- Autonomous: stand-alone unit, distinct from schools/faculties, reports directly to the university rector/president/provost
- Integrated in the strategies and policies of the university
- Cooperates with other academic/support/professional units on specific topics (foreign language centres, IT departments, departments of education etc.)
- Addresses both the values and vision of the university and the demands of the beneficiaries

#### Sample content areas/topics

The Centre should support

- key competencies and innovative methods in writing and research, learning and teaching
- institutional research, and scholarship into writing and research, learning and teaching - data collection and processing
- staff development
- international activities – mobility, networking, international opportunities in writing and research, learning and teaching
- cooperation with actors in the economic and social environment – community, industry, professional bodies, regulatory bodies
- specific skills and competences in both maternal and foreign languages.

## Sample approaches/formats/processes

- Provide a range of training and development opportunities e.g. workshops, seminars, courses, programmes for staff and students, in face-to-face, online and/or blended formats
- Create/develop/support virtual learning platforms and other technology enabled/enhanced learning
- Provide individual consultations, mentoring or personalised learning and career counselling, in face-to-face, online and/or blended formats, and provide for planning, curation and capturing of individual professional learning through professional development plans and professional portfolios
- Develop/source methodological and support materials and resources across writing and research, learning and teaching
- Encourage and support participation in networks, partnerships and collaborations – on-campus, national and international
- Cooperate with other institutions who are working in similar areas and dedicated to related outcomes

## Desired outcomes – what success would look like

### Direct outcomes

- Development/individual growth of staff and students across writing and research, learning and teaching
- Development of the academic community through greater collaboration and networking
- Achievement of institution mission - development of scientific skills, growth in knowledge, enactment of values
- Improved and increased scientific outcomes: better rated publications, more students involved in scientific research, more projects financed from external sources, improved processes and systems, more collaboration and greater connectedness etc.

### Indirect outcomes

- Increase of the visibility and prestige of the university; university becomes more attractive from the viewpoint of the prospective students and staff
- Raised awareness on the importance of writing and research, learning and teaching
- Development of new disciplines, departments, schools of thinking, areas of and approaches to writing and research, learning and teaching
- Sustainable and supported university community contributing to reduction of brain drain and increased on-campus ambition and pride

## Prepared by

Basak Ercan, Akdeniz University, Turkey  
Aleksandra Figurek, University of Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Ilze Ivanova, University of Latvia  
Maruška Šubic Kovač, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia  
Alexandru Manole, University of Bucharest, Romania  
Metka Sitar, University of Maribor, Slovenia

## MODEL 4-ACADEMIC INTEGRITY-TOWARDS A EURO-GLOBAL ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

### Purpose of model

The purpose of the model is to transform the academic environment into one with local opportunities but a global outlook in which staff would be supported, as individuals and a community, over life-long academic careers.

### Summary of model

The model is designed to support writing and research activities, and contemporary learning and teaching approaches, through the development and achievement of qualifications, experience and results, over the three career dimensions of early career, consolidator and expert. The model advocates that the three dimensions should be in balance, with a reasonable and efficient share of work duties, support, opportunities, knowledge, skills, responsibilities, across all career stages. It reinforces the need for parity of respect across the dimensions, from openness to new ideas through respect for senior experience and expertise, in an atmosphere of community and collegiality.

### Underlying values of the model

- Intergenerational respect
- Receptive openness
- Responsible research
- Learner-centre approaches to teaching and learning
- Internationalisation
- Professional and personal development not only in a bio-psychological way but also through sociological understanding as a result of the interaction with students, colleagues, industry, and community
- Continuous advancement in research literacy including academic and professional writing

### Characteristics of the model

#### The model

- contributes to research career development
- interconnects all levels of seniority throughout a lifelong academic career
- aims at avoiding the occurrence of generation gap
- respects the values of EU as the space for equal opportunities
- follows the EU educational standards
- better research competitiveness at global level
- addresses social and economic needs.

### Placement of the model in the organisation, including model sponsors, home department/centre/unit, associated senior leaders

Home department.

### **Connectedness within the institution, including interoperability with other centres/units, shared territory, common ground, connection with strategy/policy**

Networked with interested parties including similar research centres, local authorities, public authorities responsible for research and education, various branches of industry, non-profit sector.

#### **Sample content areas/topics/ sample approaches/formats/processes**

- Development of strategic documentation aimed at identifying and specifying needs and distinctiveness of any stage of academic career development
- Establishment of centres for the development and support of key competences across writing and research, teaching and learning
- Maintaining a focus on addressing the needs of the society and industry across writing and research, learning and teaching
- Scholarly research sustainability
- Co-operation with industry, non-profit sector and policy-responsible institutions
- Globalisation in writing and research, including development of academic writing standards and modern tradition of academic writing, adopting and adapting of English as a lingua franca in academic writing, through, amongst other interventions, academic writing laboratories

#### **Desired outcomes – what success would look like**

- Better understanding of academic and scholarly career
- Raising research competitiveness
- Assuring scholarly development and continuity in academia
- Developing comprehensive educational models compatible with EU standards
- Enabling academic writing literacy
- Comprehensive educational and research models, locally enacted as part of a Euro-global academic environment

#### **Developed by**

Albena Vatsova, Sophia University, Bulgaria  
Ingrida Vaňková, Prešov University, Slovakia  
Alena Kačmárová, Prešov University, Slovakia

### **MODEL 5 - INTEGRATED CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (AKA 'FEASIBLE UTOPIA' AFTER BARNETT)**

#### **Purpose of model**

The purpose of the model is to provide staff in Higher Education across Europe, at each and all stages in their career, with Continuing Professional Development (CPD), in order to counteract what is significantly perceived as the competing demands and the fragmented nature of academic work, irrespective of geographical and disciplinary backgrounds.

#### **Summary of model**

The model tries to capture the needs and values voiced by key informants and elicited through the focus groups and the survey conducted as part of COST Action 15221. It therefore builds on three keywords: context, community, character (professional personality/attitude) which summarise the

key findings captured in the 3Cs Professional Learning Framework. The model, however, is to be understood as a situated process, allowing for each institution to make the necessary adjustments depending on the local context and the different national policies.

#### **Underlying values of the model**

- Adaptability to local context
- Flexibility
- Inclusivity
- Compatibility with organisation rewards system
- Equality
- Diversity, including linguistic diversity

#### **Characteristics of the model**

The model is

- flexible (allowing for different career tracks, addressing shifts in student populations, adaptable to shifts in society such as IT)
- context-sensitive (in terms of support units/centres and the extent of its centralised nature)
- trajectory-based (it supports all career stages, including pre-career and senior staff)
- cross-disciplinary and at the same time rooted in the disciplines
- compatible with organisations' rewards system
- holistic in approach (it looks holistically at writing and research, teaching and learning)
- encouraging of networking and mobility.

#### **Placement of the model in the organisation, including model sponsors, home department/centre/unit, associated senior leaders**

Because this will depend on the individual local context, no specific solution is suggested here. Regardless of its placement, the proposed model will have to promote opportunities for staff to share, to connect and to collaborate across writing and research, teaching and learning.

#### **Connectedness within the institution, including interoperability with other centres/units, shared territory, common ground, connection with strategy/policy**

The model of support envisaged will be compatible with the organisation's rewards system. It might decide to outsource the support that it cannot offer in-house by encouraging staff mobility.

#### **Sample content areas/topics/approaches/formats/processes**

The model is context-sensitive, i.e. reflective of the institution/organisation mission: a research university may guarantee support of research and writing, while an institution whose aim is teaching before research may start by supporting learning and teaching. The model speaks to the disciplines, while at the same time tapping into values that cut across the disciplines (e.g. freedom, openness, collegiality, ethics, mobility). It will try to reinforce the individual personality traits that are considered central by key informants irrespective of the disciplinary background, while providing the kind of

support that is required by each disciplinary area and that can vary greatly from one discipline to another. It will commit to the needs of the disciplines. The disciplinary-based component will be connected to the overall strategic mission of the institution.

It will adjust its formats and approaches as needs be. Being understood as a process, the model is rather a recommendation general enough to encourage self-reflection (for example, through portfolios), while the approaches/formats will be informed by more surveys, focus groups and interviews of staff (at individual and group level) and adjusted accordingly, as support is being implemented.

The model will mix a top-down and bottom-up approach. It will be top-down to the extent that provision will be offered by the institution, and bottom-up in that it will ask staff what they need, through focus groups with mixed participants.

#### Possible content areas/topics might include

- Team-skills
- Leadership skills
- Linguistic diversity
- Writing in the disciplines

#### Desired outcomes – what success would look like

- Career progress of staff, across all groups
- Integrated CPD at individual and group levels (e.g. as a disciplinary group)

#### Developed by

Geneviève Bordet, Université Paris Diderot, France  
Stacey Cozart, Aarhus University, Denmark  
Sonia Oliver Del Olmo, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain  
Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova, Masaryk University, Czech Republic  
Maria Freddi, University of Pavia, Italy  
Svetlana Hanusova, Masaryk University, Czech Republic  
Nadja Sennwald, College of Popular Arts (SRH Hochschule der populären Künste), Germany  
Jolanta Sinkuniene, Vilnius University, Lithuania  
Maria Zaleska, University of Warsaw, Poland

# OUTPUTS

**12** institutional case studies

**3** matrices

**1** bibliography

**30** Short Term Scientific Mission reports

**6** Focus Groups

**252** Questionnaire responses from across 31 countries

**1** Professional Learning Framework

**5** Alternative approaches to centralised supports across writing and research, learning and teaching under CC licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

**32** associated peer reviewed publications, published outputs and presentations

All COST Actions involve two types of objectives – research objectives and capacity building objectives. The objectives are recorded in the Action’s Memorandum of Understanding - MoU (2016). In this section of the report we record how our Action achieved its objectives.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objective	Outputs and evidence
Clarify and publish what we mean, collectively, by key terms associated with the Action	Agreed working definitions (2017) Shared bibliography on which definitions are based (2017)
Develop a common understanding of the desirable functions of higher education centralised supports for teaching, learning, research and writing internationally	Summary of desirable functions based on MC meeting (Lisbon, 2017) Meyhöfer report (2018) Matrix of desirable functions (2018)
Co-ordinate the identification of existing centralised models which aim to support teaching, learning, research and writing in higher education with particular regard to their place institutionally and their existing interconnectedness/interoperability	Farrell report (2018) Case studies publication (2020)
Co-ordinate the mapping of the purposes, processes, knowledge/scholarship basis, skills development and values of the existing aforementioned centralised models of support	Matrix of existing functions (2018) Matrix mapping existing and desirable functions (2018)
Develop a replicable, reusable data gathering instrument, for use with key informants in order to capture their individual purposes, processes, knowledge, skills and values which lead to their success, effectiveness and productivity, in each of the four areas	Bespoke focus group protocol, including focus group questions (2018) Bespoke questionnaire (2018)
Agree criteria for the identification of key informants and subsequent identification of key informant group	Agreed criteria (2018)
Co-ordinate the deconstruction of each of the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing with key informants in order to classify the elements that have typically led them to success, effectiveness and productivity	Conducting focus groups and running the questionnaire
Co-ordinate the collation and cross tabulation of data gathered from key informants in order to identify the common ground that exists, in terms of positive development and performance through purposes, processes, knowledge/scholarship, skills development and values, across the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing	Analysis of data: Carmody (2018); Melonashi (2020); Melonashi et al. (2020) Other related publications listed in ‘Outputs, Presentations and Publications’

Consider and propose, mindful of the insights provided from the analysis of data and taking into account existing models, what alternative centrally provided models and practices might best support the effective, successful and productive development of learning, teaching, research and writing	Alternative models to centralised supports for writing and research, teaching and learning – recorded in this report (Alternative Models of Support)
Produce a framework, publications and electronic resources which serve two purposes: 1. presentation of alternative approaches; 2. Blueprint for how such models might be adopted or integrated in an institutional environment.	3 Cs Professional Learning Framework recorded in this report

CAPACITY BUILDING OBJECTIVES

This table was completed by Action Management Committee members. It records not only the achievement of the capacity building objective but also the ethos of the Action.

Facilitate knowledge exchange across the Network in order to establish a clearer picture of current provision, arrangement and organization of centrally offered supports for teaching, learning, writing and research	This was achieved through: the network of participants and the connections made within and beyond the network e.g. through trainers (the diversity and number of same); face-to-face meetings, working groups and workshops; training schools; the achievement of the research objectives; the Action’s data (questionnaire and focus groups), the collaborative development of the research tool and the collaborative processing of the research data; STSMs; presentation of Action outcomes and outputs at international conferences and in publications; the academic output of the Action including the collection of case studies.
Commit to growing the Network, over the life of the Action, in order to expand the dialogue and to acknowledge the value that diversity of experience can bring to the Action	The Action grew steadily over its lifetime; the number and diversity of partners was increased and we consistently reached out to colleagues outside of the Action particularly through the training schools and the STSMs.
Bring together colleagues, who work in central support and development of teaching, learning, research and writing, in order to facilitate immediate and ongoing professional, global conversations about how these four areas could complement each other towards greater success, productivity for staff and students and capacity building for institutions	This was achieved through: the case studies publication; the network of participants and the diversity of same; training schools; participation in Action meetings, working groups and workshops; STSMs; the Action research outputs; the variety in terms of meeting locations; the diversity and interdisciplinarity of the group; the way that the Action sowed the seeds for partnerships that began at the meetings and through the Action but continued past the Action; the process by which the Action achieved its outputs i.e. working as a group from brainstorming, through all the stages of the Action provided cohesiveness culminating in the proposed models; the conversations about the Action that took place in other jurisdictions e.g. CCCC 2017, EATAW, training schools.

‘The Action developed and enhanced existing partnerships and created new partnerships with colleagues from different countries.’	
‘Teamwork was great throughout the whole COST Action. We could exchange views and experiences freely and we could learn from other colleagues working in other settings and within, sometimes, other circumstances and educational/work contexts. The synergy of the four areas (writing, research, learning and teaching) was thoroughly discussed’.	
Capitalise on the wealth of discipline experience, specialist expertise and research that exists currently across the higher education sector globally in order to craft new shared models and frameworks	This was achieved through: involvement of experts as key informants for the data gathering; Action participants were researchers recognised for their expertise in this field; invited global experts facilitated training schools and collaborated on Action publications; the sharing of Action findings with experts through conferences and publications; the diversity of participation across the Action; the action research approach; Action member co-authoring with global leaders; the proposed models of support – Action output; realising what the conventions and practice in different disciplines are; realising the different impact of discipline, culture and institutional setting in understanding existing and crafting new models; the questionnaire and interviews with scholars highlighted similarities as well as cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural differences in the conceptualisation of excellence in teaching, learning, writing and research; the Final Action Dissemination – FAD; sharing of STSM learning at meetings; the exchange of ideas; the multi-disciplinary approach facilitated by the collaborative examination of the issue from a range of theoretical and practical perspectives and the exchange of ideas.
‘The diversity among the participants, coming from different countries and different disciplines, hard and soft sciences, offered a rare opportunity to share our views about the new models and frameworks which would improve the type of support required in all concerned fields.’	
‘CA15221 MC members are from a variety of disciplines, from universities of rather different types and of different experience or expertise levels. Work in such community was pleasure for participants and precious for the Action.’	
Broker links within and beyond the Action Network to prompt further ground-breaking research into innovative and synergistic ways of viewing staff and student support around teaching, learning, research and writing	This was achieved through: the participative approach of the group; joint publications and conference participation; the scientific output from the STSMs and the fulfilment in-and-of themselves of STSMs; the newly formed relationships through the Action; the opportunity to be part of a bigger conversation; the Action outputs; discovering new ways of seeing and new perspectives; global leaders facilitating training schools, sharing their knowledge, and these same trainers learning from the trainees, from the Action and by working in completely different settings and countries; the transfer of Action learning into local settings.
‘dissemination of our work through publications, conferences, each of the MC member is now enriched with a new perspective based on the interdisciplinarity and geographical diversity of the Action thus can transfer that to their home institution and carry on research’	

‘The fact that you have to discuss innovation and synergy across the four areas makes you more aware of the reality in your own home country. Therefore, you can appreciate what you have or observe what you do not have and try to learn from others and apply good practices in your own context (whenever this is possible).’	
Build research capacity by including, where appropriate, continuing professional development elements around securing and engaging in significant research projects at Action meetings and training schools	This was achieved through: the provision of training schools; the facilitated connection with global experts throughout the Action; ITC Conference grants and STSMs; through participation in, and leadership of, a European project such as the Action – the project participation and processes were CPD; the building of digital capabilities through the Action communication and research tools; the way we worked in meetings around planning and designing research was CPD (research methodologies, data collection and analysis, quantitative and qualitative analysis)
Share current successful practice and new proposed models and frameworks around centralized support with colleagues in near neighbour and developing countries in order to collaboratively bolster development efforts across the four areas of teaching, learning, research and writing	Through our website, this FAD, Action publications and other outputs noted on the website; by reaching out to these colleagues and asking if they would like to hear about the work and if so, how; by seeking to build new networks; through the individual efforts of each MC member in this space; by connecting with other relevant associations/ networks and sharing our work through them. At the final MC meeting (March 2021) a number of ideas for dissemination were discussed and work on agreed next steps out of these discussions will be considered as post-Action activity.
Advocate for and with near neighbour and developing country colleagues with regards what provision of central support might best fit their particular developmental stage and cultural and socio-economic context	By collaborating with our NNCs on how best to do this; sharing the data gathering tools and Action processes; future possible joint projects including exchange of staff, mobility, internships, training and development programmes, shared research, joint publications; giving colleagues evidence that they can use to convince their leadership that the support is important; ongoing relationships and commitment; sharing of the outputs including the models; emphasizing that not all support requires funding
‘emphasizing that having a better support does not depend on the economic resources (something we cannot change) but more on quality colleague interaction (we can change that)’	
‘The provision of central support (which is not usual in some near neighbour and developing countries including our country) would definitely contribute to higher quality of teaching, learning, research and writing. However, introducing it in the contexts where it does not exist requires financial investments. In order to convince university managers to invest in the central support of this kind the outcomes of the Action might provide solid arguments based on the survey ... Also, the suggested models will be inspiring in this respect.’	
Enthuse and excite colleagues to work together towards the development of comprehensive research projects which would re-imagine and reinvent the way that we currently view staff and student support for teaching and learning, research and writing	Our work together as an Action has been exciting and enthusiastic. This spirit of the Action is captured in ‘The Story of the Action’ section of this FAD and in the various quotes from MC members included in this FAD.

Inspire colleagues at all career stages, particularly those from under-represented groups and early career investigators, to make beneficial connections and to be courageous in their own contributions to international professional conversations and research	There were lots of opportunities to get involved and good variety in the networking tools; participation demonstrated the benefits and possibilities that can arise as a result of connections at national and international level; the way we worked; co-authoring on publications. This impact is best communicated in the quotes from participants.
'It was my pleasure to be part of this Action because it gave me the chance to meet professionals from different disciplines. To share ideas and experiences were very inspiring in that I could see different points of views causing self-development.'	
'Most of my colleagues back home asked me about "these interesting research trips" you do once in a while...I was so enthusiastic about the work that we were carrying out that besides from the pleasure of travelling abroad and experiencing new places and cultures I was working in a different setting with highly motivated members whom I shared research interests.'	
'The exchanges between colleagues across the Action from all areas of expertise and all career stages was phenomenal. As the Action draws to a close, it is wonderful to see our early career investigators growing in confidence, participating fully in the Action and presenting and publishing as a result of their participation in the Action.'	
'Early career investigators were inspired to share their knowledge and expertise with senior researchers and other young researchers, collaborating in groups and projects.'	
'It was gratifying to see the major roles in the Action were held by women who are under-represented in leadership roles in the HE hierarchy.'	
'The majority of the STSMS granted throughout the duration of the Action have been for early career investigators and/or researchers from Inclusiveness Target Countries and have allowed them to carry out research hosted by more experienced researchers in Research Intensive Countries.'	
Model good practice in terms of international collaboration founded on robust ethics, sound values and respect for difference and diversity	These issues were discussed throughout the Action; the way that we worked in the Action with respect and inclusion; the tone and content of the work; learning more about each other's settings and visiting each other's institutions and countries built understanding and empathy; the Action leadership
'The group management by the organising team was by itself a demonstration of how to give each member of the group an equal opportunity to express one's view on debated topics as well as decisions on the Action process.'	
'Highly inclusive practices, with emphasis on collaboration across disciplines, national backgrounds, languages, academic levels. Everyone has been encouraged to used their respective knowledge and skills in our collaborative process.'	
'The tone of the engagements were friendly, jovial, focused on task and always respectful of difference.'	
'The very topic of the Action, namely developing new models of centralised support for Teaching, Learning and Research and Writing at University, has been nurtured by international collaboration and cultural diversity.'	
'The Action united researchers from different backgrounds, of various nationalities and age groups - who strongly believe that international collaboration is founded on robust ethics, sound values and respect for difference and diversity.'	
Share all Action outcomes and outputs through publication, or equivalent, under Creative Commons, or equivalent, licensing.	Completed.
Communicate our work within the higher education community, including policy makers, and beyond the higher education community in order to share the benefits of our collaborative learning.	To be managed by each MC member in their own national context drawing on the outputs of the Action including this FAD.

**Catherine Kanellopoulou (COST Action 15221 STSM Co-ordinator)**  
**Biljana Šćepanović**  
**Alison Farrell**

OVERVIEW

In this section we record the Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) activity which occurred as part of COST Action 15221 We ReLaTe and we examine researchers' STSM experience through the lens of the We ReLaTe 3Cs Framework of Character, Community and Context. In addition, we reflect on what we have learned as a result of the STSM process throughout the COST Action.

**What is an STSM?**

The COST Association describe an STSM as follows:

'Short-term scientific missions (STSM) are exchange visits between researchers involved in a COST Action, allowing scientists to visit an institution or laboratory in another COST Member state ... Their aim is to foster collaboration in excellent research infrastructures and share new techniques that may not be available in a participant's home institution or laboratory' (<https://www.cost.eu/cost-actions/cost-actions-networking-tools/>)

In practical terms an STSM is an opportunity for a researcher, with the written support of their home institution and a host institution, to travel to another country to complete a defined piece of research that aligns with the objectives of an Action. The duration of an STSM varies: it must last for at least five days but it could be for up to 6 months. When awarded an STSM the researcher receives financial support to help them to fulfil the research mission. This financial support is a contribution to travel costs, accommodation and other legitimate expenses associated with the STSM. Further information about STSMs is available on the COST website and in the COST Vademecum.

**STSMs in COST Action 15221 – We ReLaTe**

The infographic (Figure 1) captures the STSM activity of COST Action 15221 – We ReLaTe. COST Actions run for 4 years. The We ReLaTe Action began in October 2016 and had a completion date of October 2020 which was subsequently extended to April 2021. Over this timeframe 30 STSMs were completed with researchers from 17 different countries being hosted in 17 different countries. The vast majority of the STSMs were for between 5 and 15 days, and the Action's spend on STSMs during this timeframe was €56,282.00

## PARTICIPATION

No. of Short Term Scientific Missions  
**(STSMs) 30** 

Total value of STSM grants provided  
**€56,282.00**

### HOME

No. of Home countries **17**

### HOST

No. of Host countries **17**

HOME	HOST
Latvia	Czech Republic
Germany	Sweden
Germany	Sweden
Ireland	Sweden
Germany	Ireland
UK	Ireland
Latvia	Lithuania
Ireland	Spain
Lithuania	France
Malta	Denmark
Sweden	Germany
Ireland	Germany
Ukraine	Bosnia & Herz.
Montenegro	Serbia
Ireland	Malta
Turkey	Latvia
Denmark	UK
Germany	Ireland
Sweden	Ireland
Montenegro	Spain
Ireland	Portugal
Serbia	Montenegro
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Austria
Serbia	Austria
Spain	Lithuania
Ukraine	France
Poland	Latvia
Albania	Poland
North Macedonia	Serbia
Montenegro	Serbia

## STSMs Grant period 2 Actual total grant 11390 E

Applicant: **Dr Yulia Stukalina**

From: Transport and Telecommunications Institute, Riga, Latvia

To: Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic – Prof Milan Pol

Title: Forms and methods of centralized support for four key higher education activities at Masaryk University.

Duration: 5 days (16.04.18 -20.04.18)

Grant: 1100 E

Applicant: **Dr Katrin Girgensohn**

From: European University Viadrina, Germany

To: University of Göthenburg, Sweden – Dr Ann-Marie Eriksson

Title: Effectiveness, success and productivity of writing centres in Sweden, Ireland and Germany: A collaborative research project on strategic action fields related to teaching, learning, research and writing.

Duration: 5 days (16.04.18 -20.04.18)

Grant: 1200 E

Applicant: **Ms Gina Henry ECI**

From: European University Viadrina, Germany

To: University of Göthenburg, Sweden – Dr Ann-Marie Eriksson

Title: Effectiveness, success and productivity of writing centres in Sweden, Ireland and Germany: A collaborative research project on strategic action fields related to teaching, learning, research and writing.

Duration: 5 days (16.04.18 -20.04.18)

Grant: 1200 E

Applicant: **Dr Íde O’Sullivan**

From: University of Limerick, Ireland

To: University of Göthenburg, Sweden – Dr Ann-Marie Eriksson

Title: Effectiveness, success and productivity of writing centres in Sweden, Ireland and Germany: A collaborative research project on strategic action fields related to teaching, learning, research and writing.

Duration: 5 days (16.04.18 -20.04.18)

Grant: 1500 E

Applicant: **Mr Frank Meyhöfer ECI**

From: Göthe Univeristy, Frankfurt, Germany

To: Maynooth University, Ireland – Dr Alison Farrell

Title: WeReLaTe qualitative data analysis.

Duration: 21 days (19.01.18 -08.02.18)

Grant: 2500 E

**Figure 1.** Infographic

All of the STSMs addressed topics that were aligned to the Action’s objectives. A list of the topics is included in Table 2.

**Table 2:** List of STSMs with STSM recipient, home and host institution, dates of STSM, value of STSM, title of STSM

<b>Applicant: Mr Tim Crawford ECI</b>
From: Queen's University, Belfast, UK
To: NUI, Galway, Ireland – Prof. Niall McSweeney
Title: Identifying best practice in a centralised model for advancing teaching, learning, writing and research.
Duration: 7 days (15.04.18 -21.04.18)
Grant: 1390 E

<b>Applicant: Mr Anton Patlins ECI</b>
From: Riga Technical University, Riga, Latvia
To: Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas, Lithuania – Dr Robertas Kersys
Title: Teaching, Learning, Research and Writing - Borderlands and Motivation.
Duration: 18 days (03.04.18 -20.04.18)
Grant: 2500 E

### STSMs Grant period 3 Actual Grant – 28310.00

<b>Applicant: Dr Alison Farrell</b>
From: Maynooth University, Ireland
To: University of Seville, - Dr Maria José Lera Rodriguez
Title: Thematic analysis and mapping of existing centralised models which aim to support teaching, learning, research and writing in higher education.
Duration: 5 days (22.05.18 – 26.05.18)
Grant: 1000 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Jolanta Šinkūniene</b>
From: Vilnius University, Lithuania
To: Paris Diderot University – Prof Geneviève Bordet
Title: Epistemological priorities, values and processes as reflected in research article acknowledgments across disciplines.
Duration: 12 days (18.07.18 – 29.07.18)
Grant: 2220 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Michelle Attard-Tonna ECI</b>
From: University of Malta, Malta
To: VIA University College, Århus Denmark – Ms Anne Haugaard Hansen
Title: The mentoring of beginning teachers: A resource pack for schools and higher education institutions as part of COST Action CA15221.
Duration: 7 days (26.08.18 – 01.09.18)
Grant: 1590 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Ann-Marie Eriksson ECI</b>
From: University of Gothenburg - Sweden
To: European University Viadrina – Dr Katrin Girgensohn
Title: Effectiveness, success and productivity of writing centers in Sweden, Ireland and Germany: A collaborative research project on strategic action fields related to teaching, learning, research and writing
Duration: 6 days (26.11.18 – 01.12.18)
Grant: 1660 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Íde O’Sullivan</b>
From: University of Limerick, Ireland
To: European University Viadrina – Dr Katrin Girgensohn
Title: Effectiveness, success and productivity of writing centers in Sweden, Ireland and Germany: A collaborative research project on strategic action fields related to teaching, learning, research and writing
Duration: 6 days (26.11.18 – 01.12.18)
Grant: 1660 E

<b>Applicant: Prof Anatolij Goncharuk</b>
From: International Humanitarian University, Odessa, Ukraine
To: University of Banja Luka – Dr Aleksandra Figurek
Title: Exploring the performance of academic institutional model: a case of Banja Luka
Duration: 8 days (21.01.19 – 28.01.19)
Grant: 1680 E

<b>Applicant: Prof Stevo Popovic</b>
From: University of Montenegro
To: University of Novi Sad, Serbia – Dr Radenko Matic
Title: Estimation of Different Research Expectations of First-Year Students from the Sport Science Programmes and Their Teachers.
Duration: 17 days (01.02.19 – 17.02.19)
Grant: 2500 E

<b>Applicant: Mr Alan Carmody ECI</b>
From: Maynooth University, Ireland
To: University of Malta, Dr Michelle Attard-Tonna
Title: A comprehensive thematic analysis of interview transcripts to discern and understand excellence in teaching, learning, research and writing at higher education.
Duration: 15 days (11.02.19 – 25.02.19)
Grant: 2500 E

<b>Applicant: Ms Basak Ercan ECI</b>
From: Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey
To: University of Latvia – Prof Ilze Ivanova
Title: Perceptions / Applications of Continuous Professional Development of Language Teachers in Higher Education: A Case Study for Language Schools and Higher Education Institutions.
Duration: 6 days (04.02.19 – 09.02.19)
Grant: 1400 E

<b>Applicant: Ms Laura Felby ECI</b>
From: Århus University, Denmark
To: International Centre for Guidance Studies (ICEGS), University of Derby, UK – Ms Nicky Moore
Title: Research stay in relation to career learning and development
Duration: 15 days (01.03.19 – 15.03.19)
Grant: 2500 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Katrin Girgensohn</b>
From: European University Viadrina, Germany
To: University of Limerick – Dr Íde O’Sullivan
Title: Effectiveness, success and productivity of writing centres in Sweden, Ireland and Germany: A collaborative research project on strategic action fields related to teaching, learning, research and writing.
Duration: 7 days – (30.03.19 – 05.04.19)
Grant: 1720 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Ann-Marie Eriksson 2<sup>nd</sup> ECI</b>
From: University of Gothenburg, Sweden
To: University of Limerick, Dr Íde O’Sullivan
Title: Effectiveness, success and productivity of writing centres in Sweden, Ireland and Germany: A collaborative research project on strategic action fields related to teaching, learning, research and writing.
Duration: 9 days (28.03.19 – 05.04.19)
Grant: 1840 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Biljana Scepanovic</b>
From: University of Montenegro, Montenegro
To: University of Granada, Spain – Prof Luisa Maria Gil Martin
Title: Analysis of institutional support for WRLT in the field of civil engineering at the University of Granada and possibility of similar method application at the University of Montenegro.
Duration: 8 days (23.04.19 – 30.04.19)
Grant: 1880 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Matthew Fogarty ECI</b>
From: Maynooth University, Ireland
To: Piaget Institute of V. N. Gaia, Portugal – Prof Silvia Fernandez
Title: Towards Frontier Taxonomies: Identifying Discordant Patterns and Articulating Insights Across COST Action Data Sets
Duration: 11 days (13.03.19 – 23.03.19)
Grant: 2200 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Radenko Matic ECI</b>
From: Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, University of Novi Sad – Serbia
To: Faculty for Sport and Physical Education, Montenegro – Dr Stevo Popovic
Title: Examining the Gap between Science Research and Teaching among Teachers Activities at Faculty for Sport and Physical Education at University of Montenegro.
Duration: 11 days (24.03.19 – 03.04.19)
Grant: 1960 E

## STSMs Grant period 4 Total Budget 12500 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Aleksandra Figurek ECI</b>
From: University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
To: Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences, Austria – Dr Regine Plail
Title: Exploring the performance of academic institutional model
Duration: 14 days (08.07.19 -21.07.19)
Grant: 2500 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Bojana Ikonic</b>
From: Faculty of Technology, University of Novi Sad - Serbia
To: TU Wien, Austria – Prof Gerd Mauschwitz
Title: Analysis of institutional support in the fields of writing, research, learning and teaching at the TU Wien – Example of good practice and possible application at the University of Novi Sad.
Duration: 9 days (01.08.19 – 09.08.19)
Grant: 1740 E

<b>Applicant: Dr Sonia Oliver</b>
From: Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain
To: Vilnius University, Lithuania – Dr Jolanta Sinkuniene
Title: Exploring an effective Academic English writing model: teaching, learning and research oriented practices in Lithuania.
Duration: 14 days (28.08.19 – 10.09.19)
Grant: 2540 E

<b>Applicant: Prof Anatoliy Goncharuk</b>
From: International Humanitarian University, Odessa, Ukraine
To: Paris Diderot University, France – Dr Geneviève Bordet
Title: Studying the performance of academic institutional model: a case of Paris Diderot University.
Duration: 14 days (16.06.19 – 29.06.19)
Grant: 2500 E

<b>Applicant: Prof Maria Marczewska-Rytko</b>
From: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland
To: Transport and Telecommunication Institute, Latvia – Prof Yulia Stukalina
Title: Institutional models towards cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development - case study.
Duration: 5 days (27.05.19 – 31.05.19)
Grant: 1100 E

<b>Applicant: Ms Erika Melonashi</b>
Title: Quantitative Research Analyses
From: University College Wisdom, Tirana (Albania)
To: University of Warsaw (Poland)
Duration: 7 days (15.12.19 – 21.12.19)
Grant: 1420 E

## STSM Grant Period 5 Total Budget €4782.00

<b>Applicant: Dr Aleksandar Petrovski</b>
Title: Research on centralized support models for teaching and learning in HEI architectural schools
From: Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje (North Macedonia)
To: University of Belgrade (Serbia)
Duration: 23 days (02.02.21 – 24.02.21)
Grant: 2500 E

<b>Applicant: Prof Stevo Popovic</b>
Title: Social media and e-learning use among Serbian Sport Science students
From: University of Montenegro (Montenegro)
To: University of Novi Sad (Serbia)
Duration: 12 days (24.02.21 – 07.03.21)
Grant: 2282 E

**Table 2:** List of STSMs with STSM recipient, home and host institution, dates of STSM, value of STSM, title of STSM

## STSMs viewed through the We ReLaTe 3Cs Framework – Character, Community and Context

A requirement of the STSM process is that each researcher produce a report based on their mission. Those reports can be accessed on the We ReLaTe website. In our Action we also asked colleagues to write a short reflection on what the Action meant to them. In this examination of the researchers' experience of completing an STSM through the We ReLaTe 3Cs Framework we draw from the researcher reflections.

### Character

As part of our Action we found out about the purposes, processes, knowledge, skills and values of successful academics. As noted in the section in this FAD entitled '3Cs Professional Learning Framework – Character, Community and Context' we discovered that successful colleagues are hugely intrinsically motivated, that they have a passion for their discipline, they want to learn more, want to share their learning, have/require access to the relevant literature, see connections between their teaching and their research. We also discovered a great deal about the 'academic personality' and the particular shared characteristics that stellar colleagues possess. Those traits, and values, included: curiosity; optimism/positive attitude; freedom; sound values – respect, equality, fairness, integrity; imagination; determination; persistence; openness to new experiences; ability to problem solve; openness to collaboration.

From the data gathered from colleagues who completed an STSM we can see that participation in that programme facilitates the development of individual professional skills which echo those of successful colleagues. Colleagues reported expanding their knowledge within discipline spaces but also in terms of research methodologies. They welcomed advice that they received and the opportunity to learn new practices. The STSM gave them dedicated space and time to devote to their research projects. Some researchers noted that the STSM gave them a chance to re-purpose research skills and to apply them to different questions in different disciplines and settings – the chance to stretch themselves beyond what they knew. They found STSMs enjoyable, inspirational and motivational. In some instances early career researchers noted that the STSM helped them to imagine or visualise a potential future. Participants overwhelmingly recommended STSMs to other colleagues.

### Community

In our Action we learned about the importance of community to academics. Connecting with others in a range of different ways for a variety of purposes was central to the life of successful colleagues. Melonashi (2020) notes in her report on the quantitative data gathered from colleagues that collaboration is a factor which cuts across writing, research, learning and teaching. Colleagues noted that the desire to share work was a motivational factor in terms of writing as was the wish to be recognised in their field, that mentoring and structured feedback were particularly beneficial supports for academic writing, that successful colleagues seek opportunities to share their research with others. The desire to progress their field and the opportunity to collaborate with others are important to these colleagues, as is connectedness and the sense of being part of a professional community. In terms of teaching, colleagues noted two social elements which were important for teaching development: feedback from students and colleagues, and sharing pedagogic practice with colleagues through informal professional conversations. They also noted that building rapport with students was very important. In terms of their learning opportunities, Melonashi notes that the top five learning opportunities for colleagues all involve connecting with others:

'Tables 114-130, show participants' answers as regards learning opportunities they consider most helpful. Top 5 items rated as most helpful by the majority of participants (rated as 4 or 5) include:

1. Support on engaging in EU/international projects (74%)
2. Conference attendance (73%)
3. Disciplinary related research support (72%)
4. Support on building collaborations and networks (67%)
5. Cross disciplinary research support (64%)'

(Melonashi, 2020: 46).

Across the STSM researchers we see strong parallels with the stellar colleague data. All STSM participants remarked on collegiality and the different shapes that that took when they were away. They enjoyed meeting colleagues, talking with them, listening to and learning from them, sharing their own work, and working with them. Participants noted experiencing academic goodwill and the sense of being part of an academic community. They enjoyed meeting experts. They realised that community and networks really matters and recognised that the STSM offered the potential to build to more collaboration and greater networking. They were reminded of the importance of 'face-to-face' communication and realised the STSMs as a chance to 'strengthen' professional relationships and friendships.

Two other interesting comments were: that the STSM helped researchers to recognise and value what they themselves know: 'being respected for the kind of learning I could contribute to this institution and given the opportunity to share knowledge coming from my own context'; that in addition to working with colleagues who shared the researchers' home disciplines, STSM researchers noted that the STSM gave them ways into other communities and other research spaces.

In addition, according to the successful colleagues and STSM participants mobility is an important part of academic professional development and indeed academic careers.

### Context

Our successful colleague data tells us that there is a good deal of variety in terms of support for writing, research, learning and teaching, despite the fact that there is a great deal of similarity around what academics both require and value in terms of professional development. One of the things that we were reminded of throughout the Action was that context matters. None of our work is devoid of context, either as individuals or as communities. We are influenced by national and European/international policies, by national and institutional financial and other resource parameters, by institutional ethos and mission, by institutional and departmental strategies and goals.

STSM participants noted that stepping out of their familiar context into an unknown one provided them with specific insights. The importance of viewing things from 'different perspectives and "with different eyes"' became clear to them. They remarked on 'How different understandings ... [are] across countries and scientific disciplines and traditions, and how complex these understandings are'. They saw value in the way being in a different context broadens your way of seeing and understanding, and expands your knowledge from an institutional/national perspective to an international one. And at the same time, it reminds you of the influence and importance of 'local features and spirit'. As observed in the Action data, STSM participants realised 'that despite all the differences, teachers from our countries have much in common, which makes us closer to each other'. STSM participants also remarked on one essential factor that the research missions provided them with, and that our successful colleagues also cherish – time: time away from home institution gives you breathing space and time to think.

## Reflections on the STSMs

STSMs are an invaluable tool for COST Actions. They represent COST core values and philosophy with respect to European researchers' communication and mobility, which is so difficult to come across nowadays. STSM participants invested their time and effort to produce reports that will be incorporated into the Action's findings and thus contribute to its goals.

Upon reflection, participants primarily valued coming in contact with colleagues abroad:

- Meeting such a diverse range of people was very enjoyable.
- What I enjoyed most about my STSM was the chance to do a research project with other people – collaboration!
- I very much enjoyed ... meeting happy colleagues, who came from various countries and continents, and who work gladly in cross-cultural environment.

They also appreciated being given the luxury of devoting all their time to their research uninterrupted by other daily responsibilities in their home institutions:

- What I enjoyed most about my STSM was a possibility to have a full focus on one research task
- (An STSM gives you) the opportunity to work hard on your project or mission.

STSM participants viewed their experience as an opportunity for self-development:

- Great opportunities don't come every day, so do not miss a great opportunity to enhance your research expertise in the context of your professional self-development. (My STSM) has enhanced my knowledge on the topic and my research expertise.
- It can be a wonderful experience and hugely beneficial in terms of continuing professional development.

Furthermore, they enjoyed discovering similarities among colleagues and institutions that they had not suspected:

- It is amazing how much in common have teaching staff of two rather different universities, from two rather different countries (Montenegro-Spain), when it comes to seemingly plain, but still crucial problematic issues of their everyday job – plenty of same worries and concerns bother us.

In a nutshell:

When carrying out an STSM, you are given the chance to research on your main interests, to get to know scholars with the same motivations as yours, to expand your relationships by networking, to explore other possibilities in terms of teaching methodology, assessment, ways of thinking, etc. Having positive discussions in the field of knowledge of your choice leads to progress in the subject matter and doing so in a foreign culture where you experience new food, other landscapes, rich cultural possibilities....it is a luxury.

## Concluding remarks

Short Term Scientific Missions have been very successful among our MCs and other researchers. It has been a pleasure to provide colleagues and young researchers with the opportunity to self-develop and progress within their field of expertise. Despite colleagues' initial hesitations, STSMs met with a lot of enthusiasm and produced great reports for our Action's development. Along with the reports, stronger ties developed among our MCs and the prospect of fruitful collaboration which we envisage will continue after the end of our action, on multiple levels. Perhaps the most important gain, relevant to our Action's main focus, is that of trust and solidarity which has settled in among all of us who participated in CA15221. Admittedly, any kind of development requires interaction among people; this is what our STSMs have successfully achieved, mainly through the lens of scientific collaboration and collegiality.

## References

COST website <https://www.cost.eu>

COST STSMs <https://www.cost.eu/cost-actions/cost-actions-networking-tools/>

COST Vademecum <https://www.cost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Vademecum-20062019-V7-.pdf>

COST Action 15221, 'Advancing effective institutional models towards cohesive teaching, learning, research and writing development' <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA15221/#tabs|Name:overview>

Melonashi, Erika (2020). Quantitative research analysis of questionnaire data: Report of Short Term Scientific Mission COST Action 15221. Maynooth: COST Action 15221. Maynooth: COST Action 15221

We ReLaTe website [www.werelate.eu](http://www.werelate.eu)

We ReLaTe STSM reports <http://www.werelate.eu/stsm-2/>

## OVERVIEW

The COST mission is best illustrated by its own acronym, leading with the word ‘*cooperation*’ and followed by the words ‘*science and technology*’. This key concept is further reinforced by the nature of COST Actions which are defined as science and technology ‘*networks*’. The essence being that COST helps implement the idea of the European Research Area about the importance of sharing knowledge between researchers and innovators in order to strengthen Europe’s research capacities.

Important in-and-of themselves, networking opportunities within a COST Action are also designed to achieve the specific objectives determined in the Action Memorandum of Understanding. Since COST Actions are usually large networks, consisting of participants from numerous countries, a lot of cooperation and coordination is needed. The main Networking Tools within an Action are: meetings, workshops and conferences, Short Term Scientific Missions, ITC<sup>1</sup> Conference Grants and Training Schools.

Training Schools can help researchers, especially early career investigators (ECIs), to develop new skills and knowledge, not least because ECI and PhD students are prioritized as trainees. Schools are not organized to provide general training, rather, as all other Networking Tools, Training Schools should have the Action objectives as their main focus. According to the COST Vademecum, Schools should last a minimum of 3 days and a country balance should be present for trainee participations.

There was a series of five Training Schools in the COST Action 15221 (unfortunately, the sixth Training School intended to take place in March 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic). To obtain immediate feedback on the Schools’ efficiency and value, participants were asked to answer a short questionnaire on the last day of their Training School. This report is a synthesis of all the responses recorded during the Training Schools. The report starts with an overview of the Training Schools COST Action 15221 (dates, venues, content taught, facilitators) and continues with the summarized responses divided into four sections (‘Most valuable aspects of the training schools’, ‘Training schools’ contribution to participants own research and work interests’, ‘Participants’ interest in broadening a specific content’, ‘Insights, reflections and comments from participants’). The report ends with some concluding remarks.

<sup>1</sup> Inclusiveness Target Country

## INFORMATION ABOUT COST ACTION 15221 - WE RELATE TRAINING SCHOOLS

Within the COST Action 15221, five Training Schools (TS) were organized between December 2017 and September 2019, each lasting five days (see Table 1). The schools could be seen as bridges needed to move from one Action goal to another. In order to classify the current common ground for the support of teaching, learning, writing and research, a large amount of data had to be gathered using different methods. Therefore, TS 1 and TS 2 focused on qualitative research methodology while TS 3 on quantitative methodology. TS 4 and 5 dealt with the interpretative and dissemination stages of research in the social sciences. Examples of topics discussed included: TS 1 - *data gathering tools, focus groups, surveys, interviews*; TS 2 - *questionnaires, collaborative thematic analysis of data*; T3 - *issues in questionnaire design, types of variables and basic descriptive statistics for examining questionnaire data, exploring relationships among variables*.

After various data needed for the Action was collected and analyzed, TS 4 was organized to help participants develop deeper analytical skills and strategies for synthesizing different data sets. Examples of topics discussed on TS 4: *semantic data analysis, inductive data analysis, synthesizing ideas across a range of data sets and associated analyses, crafting the research narrative and articulating insights*. The next goal was to publish the Action findings therefore TS 5 dealt with writing processes and strategies associated with publication. Examples of some topics discussed on TS 5: *planning a publication strategy, peer reviewing, writing groups, reading circles, collaboration writing and co-authoring*.

Finally, the cancelled TS 6 should have dealt with writing across genres. Even though it was regrettable not to be able to provide this final link of our planned networking activities, it was really reassuring to learn, from the participants’ feedback, the amount of planned and added-value benefits the other five TSs brought.



<https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA15221/#tabs|Name:overview>

**Table 1:** Summary of all COST Action 15221 - WeReLaTe Training schools

School date, Venue, host	Facilitators	School participants & countries represented
<p>December 2017</p> <p><b>European University Viadrina</b> Frankfurt Oder, Germany</p> <p>Host and facilitation: Dr. Katrin Girgensohn</p>	<p><b>Dr. Christopher Anson</b> North Carolina State University Raleigh, North Carolina, USA</p> <p><b>Dr. Christiane Donahue</b> Dartmouth College Hanover, New Hampshire, USA</p>	<p><b>Trainees: 14</b></p> <p><b>Countries</b> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, UK</p>
<p>September 2018</p> <p><b>European University of Tirana</b> Tirana, Albania</p> <p>Host: Dr. Erika Melonashi</p>	<p><b>Dr. Jessie L. Moore</b> Elon University Elon, North Carolina, USA</p> <p><b>Dr. Peter Musaeus</b> Aarhus University Aarhus, Denmark</p>	<p><b>Trainees: 9</b></p> <p><b>Countries</b> Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, UK</p>
<p>January 2019</p> <p><b>Goethe University</b> Frankfurt an Main, Germany</p> <p>Host: Dr. Nora Hoffmann</p>	<p><b>Dr. Mauro Gasparini</b> Turin Polytech Torino, Italy</p> <p><b>Mira Dobutowitsch</b> Maynooth University Maynooth Ireland</p>	<p><b>Trainees: 11</b></p> <p><b>Countries</b> Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Serbia</p>
<p>March 2019</p> <p><b>Ss. Cyril and Methodius University</b> Skopje, North Macedonia</p> <p>Host: Dr. Mimosa Ristova</p>	<p><b>Dr. Rachel Riedner</b> George Washington University Washington, DC, USA</p> <p><b>Dr. Shelagh Waddington</b> Maynooth University Maynooth Ireland</p>	<p><b>Trainees: 14</b></p> <p><b>Countries</b> Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Montenegro, Morocco, Poland, Serbia</p>
<p>September 2019</p> <p><b>Juraj Dobrila University of Pula</b> Pula, Croatia</p> <p>Host: Dr. Gordana Dobravac</p>	<p><b>Helen Fallon</b> Maynooth University Maynooth Ireland</p> <p><b>Dr. Carol Hayes</b> George Washington University Washington, DC, USA</p>	<p><b>Trainees: 14</b></p> <p><b>Countries</b> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Spain, UK</p>
<b>Total number of countries represented in training schools: 22</b>		

## THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECTS OF THE TRAINING SCHOOLS

As apparent in the participants' feedback, Training Schools have many valuable aspects. However, what is most valuable is their double use as an opportunity for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of trainees and as a tool towards achieving specific Action goals.

For individual trainees, TSs associated with CA 15221 have offered opportunities for expanding knowledge of social research methods, within the methodological spectrum used in education from qualitative (e.g. the focus group) to quantitative (e.g. the questionnaire and the survey). Given the often diverse background of trainees, having a whole series of one-week schools of intensive exposure to theory and practice of research design, data collection and analysis has proven invaluable for participants, who in most cases were either ECIs in need of expanding their methodological apparatus, or mid-career researchers and practitioners lacking time and opportunity for their own professional training. For the latter group, TSs have represented a break from professional routine and a welcome study period together with colleagues from all over Europe and beyond, and guided by experienced trainers. For both groups, TSs offered a unique opportunity for networking with colleagues from a variety of institutions and for establishing new synergies and cooperations even beyond the scope of the Action. As a general remark, common to all TSs, participants expressed enthusiasm for working with colleagues from different disciplines and countries. In some cases, the TS experience brought about changes in the participants' attitudes and research approaches, as evident, for example, in the comments made about TS 5 in Pula on writing practices, where collaborative writing was considered both profitable and enjoyable, and TS 3 in Frankfurt am Main, where people felt they had become more autonomous with quantitative analysis.

In terms of specific Action goals, the TSs provided a place for dissemination about the Action purposes and topics to those not already involved and a venue for reflecting and working on some of the Action research questions (e.g. tapping into researchers' needs in terms of Teaching & Learning, Writing & Research support by analysing responses to the survey).

## HOW THE TRAINING SCHOOLS CONTRIBUTED TO PARTICIPANTS' OWN RESEARCH AND WORK INTERESTS

The value of TSs in contributing to the participants' own work is already evident in the premise above that TSs promote CPD and is also articulated further in the following section (*What participants wanted to learn more about*). In all TSs the unanimous comment concerned the expansion of theoretical and operational knowledge about research methodology and the consolidation of tools and approaches for conducting research in education and writing. This was particularly true for those involved in doctoral or postdoctoral research, as stated with reference to TS 4 in Skopje, and TS 1 in Frankfurt an der Oder, where participants stated that, after these particular TSs, they would be more confident in applying a mixed methodology, i.e. both quantitative and qualitative, in their research. With reference to TS 2 in Tirana, participants appreciated the multidisciplinary constitution of this group of trainees, commenting on how working together had provided them with 'new ways of seeing and researching'. In some instances, TSs also activated ideas for incorporating instruction on similar topics in graduate programmes which may not traditionally have had such elements, specifically on conducting qualitative research, thus triggering a virtuous educational cycle: 'I enjoy the kind of training I got as an already practicing teacher/researcher, so when I go back home I will offer that in turn to the students at my institution, who are the practitioners of the future'. Similarly, participation in a TS was said to affect assessment practices (TS 1). In other cases, they helped with larger research projects carried out at the local institutions, as with analysing large quantities of data collected within a writing centre to advance writing research (TS 3). In general, getting together and being given a chance for supporting one another in their research was seen as a major contribution to one's own research and professional growth.

## WHAT PARTICIPANTS WANTED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT

TS participants frequently wanted to expand their knowledge and to learn new skills. The TS topics varied but within this variety there were specific elements which participants honed in on as being beneficial. As noted previously, our TSs considered research design and methods and participants noted that they were interested in learning about particular approaches within quantitative and qualitative research methods. Many of them were also keen to learn more about our COST Action and COST Actions in general. In turn, participants were interested in aspects of the TSs that related to publishing and sharing one's work. In addition, some participants were actively seeking to cascade their learning and they were interested in knowing more about how they might teach certain topics covered in the TS when they returned to their own settings; they noted that the TS participation would impact on their teaching and their research.

In some instances the learning was 'just in time' and participants had identified that the TS topics would help them to learn something they needed for their research e.g questionnaire design. The learning they gained would have been enough for them to identify 'where to next' and to better understand what more they needed to know. Because of the TSs, participants were better able to articulate what more they wanted to learn; they could drill down into the topics a bit and be more targeted with regards to their next steps in their learning.

## OTHER INSIGHTS, REFLECTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

When we provided the opportunity for participants to add other comments at the end of their evaluation forms a few themes emerged consistently.

Participants expressed gratitude to the hosts and the trainers for the experience of the TS; they often remarked on the venue as well. This is captured exceptionally in this comment about the hosts for the first training school where a strong connection was also made with the theme of the Action: 'I would like to thank all three contributors, Tiane, Chris and Katrin for all the amazing work they have done. I guess they represent what a great teacher, researcher, writer and learner is. We could have studied them and derived the model after all :)'. Participants appreciated not only what the trainers knew and shared, but also how they communicated their knowledge and expertise which modelled good practice in terms of teaching and learning.

In turn, participants frequently noted how much they enjoyed the experience of the TSs especially with regard to meeting and working with new people. They found the TSs motivating and insightful. They described how positive the group dynamics were, the cultural diversity of the groups, and the range of perspectives that were shared. They were pleasantly surprised at how successful this diversity could be: 'I wouldn't expect that people from so many countries and different fields would be able to cooperate so well'. They also liked that time was given to building relationships and that this was seen as important; they enjoyed exchanging experiences and stories.

Trainees also noted in the final comments that they appreciated the financial support provided by the COST Action which allowed them to attend the school. It was recorded that this support was a practical step to contributing 'more broadly to equality of opportunity across Europe especially for partners from ITCs and NNCs'. Many participants noted that they would welcome more opportunities to participate in TSs and that they would recommend the TSs to others. They noted that the TSs helped to address gaps in local training and development opportunities.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Reflecting on the TSs, as Management Committee members of the CA 15221, it is very heartening to revisit how much the experience of participating in the TSs has meant to participants. There is a strong sense of the schools being collaborative learning hubs which, though clearly structured and organised, always allowed for starting where participants were and honoring the contributions and experiences that individuals brought to the school.

While we did not gather feedback from the trainers on the experience of facilitating the TSs, informally we have discussed the work with them. Trainers, though travelling to the TSs as experts, consistently remarked on how much they learned by visiting a different institution, in a different country and working with different colleagues. All of the trainers agreed to facilitate the TSs on a voluntary basis - no trainers are paid for this work that takes them in some cases 1000s of miles from their homes. Neither is there any support for the training school preparation. Likewise, when presenting their short report about training schools at MC meetings, the TS hosts commented on how the TS organization and management process ran smoothly due to the participants' positive attitude. The hosts and participants also often engaged in informal activities, like guided tours, which provided a great opportunity for learning about the culture of different countries. On the whole, the training schools turned out to be an enriching experience on many levels for everybody involved - participants, facilitators and hosts. The commitment from the hosts and the trainers is a wonderful enactment of the generosity that exists across the sector, and an excellent example for ECIs about the ideal character of academia.

Indeed, the TSs model epitomises elements of what is good of academia. TSs work because of the collegiality and tolerance of the participants, hosts and trainers. They rely on everyone remaining open-minded and curious, and engaged. They involve everyone proceeding in good faith and recognising the unique contributions of others. They offer an opportunity for those involved to learn not only about the TS topics, that new knowledge and those new skills, but also to learn about themselves and to learn about others. They are only possible because of the generosity of the hosts and the trainers all of whom go well beyond what is expected in terms of their commitment to the TS work. They are human experiences which are successful because of their tone of rigour, expertise and credibility, but equally because of their spirit of friendship, kindness and care.

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