Minutes of the First Management Committee Meeting (MC1) of COST Action CA17118: Identifying Biomarkers Through Translational Research for Prevention and Stratification of Colorectal Cancer

Brussels, Belgium

1/10/2018

1. Welcome to participants

The participants were welcomed by Dr Inga Dadeshidze, Science Officer and by Ms Gabriela Cristea, Administrative Officer of the Action. The Science Officer chaired the first part of the meeting, including the election of the Action Chair, Vice Chair, and Selection of Grant Holder Institution that was carried out under agenda items 8 and 9.

2. Verification of the presence of two-thirds of the participating COST Countries

CSO Approval: 13/04/2018
Start of the Action: 1/10/2018
End of Action: 30/09/2022
Total number of COST Countries having accepted the MoU: 22 (**Annex 2**-Action Fact Sheet)
Total number of COST Countries intending to accept the MoU: 0
Number of parties present at the meeting: 18

The quorum (2/3 of COST Countries participating in the Action) was reached: 18 COST countries out of 22 having accepted the MoU attended the meeting (**Annex 6**, COST doc. 134/14 "COST Action Management Monitoring and Final Assessment" Annex I, Article 9).

3. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (**Annex 1**) for the 1st Management Committee (MC) meeting was adopted.

4. Tour de table/ introduction of the MC members

The officially nominated delegates participating in the MC1 (**Annex 3)** introduced themselves and presented their background and interests.

5. General information on COST mechanism and the funding and reporting of coordination activities

Dr. Inga Dadeshidze presented the COST overview, policies, and COST Actions: participation, management and monitoring (**Annex 4**). Ms Ingeborg Nolte, head of the Communications, presented to the MC the COST Action Dissemination strategy and tips (**Annex 5**). Ms Gabriela Cristea continued with an introduction to the COST Action's Administrative Rules and the COST Grant System **(Annex 4**).

Relevant information is on the COST website at http://www.cost.eu/participate and http://www.cost.eu/participate/networking, including the following reference documents:

- Rules of Procedure for COST Action Management Committees (COST doc. 134/14, Annex I)
- COST Grant System Vademecum
- Grant Agreement Template
- Guidelines for Action management, Monitoring and Assessment

6. Agreement on the internal rules of procedure for the MC of the COST Action

The Rules of Procedure for the Management Committee (**Annex 6**) were agreed by the MC.

7. Setting the frame for the Action

The recommendations by the Scientific Committee were presented to the MC by Dr Inga Dadeshidze **(Annex 4).** The Grant Periods (GP) and the budget allocated to the Action for the 1st GP was communicated (**Annex 4**). At the day of the MC1, 26 parties had officially joined the Action. The budget 100 000 EUR for 1st Grant Period (01/11/17-30/04/18) has been allocated. The Action Grant Agreement, Work and Budget Plan drafting, Action management and activities planning principles and also tips how to optimize Action budget were presented.

8. Election of the Chair, Vice-Chair

Dr Sergi CASTELLVI-BEL (ES) was elected as the Chair.
Dr Richarda DE VOER (NL) was elected as the Vice-Chair.

9. Selection of the Grant holder institution (GH Scientific representative appointment) and FSAC rate

CONSORCI INSTITUT D'INVESTIGACIONS BIOMEDIQUES AUGUST PI I SUNYER Centre Esther Koplovitz (CEK), Barcelona (ES) was selected as the Grant Holder Institution.
Dr Sergi CASTELLVI-BEL was appointed as the Scientific Representative of the Grant Holder Institution.
The MC decided 15% as FSAC rate for the Grant Holder institution.

10. Presentation and discussion of the Action

The elected Action Chair presented the Action, its objectives and implementation plan based on Memorandum of Understanding.

 Objectives and deliverables by Working group

Working Group 1. Disease risk profiling

This WG will use low-penetrance germline genetic variants for CRC, microbiome characterization, epigenetics, metabolomics and environmental factors to model disease risk and apply it to better select individuals eligible to be screened for CRC or advanced adenomas.

Objectives

- To construct a CRC risk model using low-penetrance germline genetic variants, microbiome characterization, epigenetics, metabolomics and environmental factors.

- To improve the current CRC screening strategies by using the new CRC risk model.

Deliverables

- Research publications regarding microbiome, metabolomics profiling and CRC risk modeling.
- Software and protocols for CRC risk modeling.
- Guidelines for CRC screening.

Working Group 2. Non-invasive biomarkers

It will apply state-of-art liquid biopsies for the detection and characterization of circulating tumor cells (CTCs), cell-free tumor DNA (ctDNA), tumor-derived exosomes and tumor-educated platelets (TEP), and test diagnostic value for adenomas and early-stage CRCs.

Objectives

- To establish a set of validated standard operating protocols (SOPs) that can be used to assess circulating biomarkers from patients with CRC and adenomas.
- To apply liquid biopsy SOPs to improve CRC screening, diagnosis, and monitoring.

Deliverables

- Research publications regarding detection and characterization of CRC and adenomas CTCs, ctDNA, exosomes and TEP.
- SOPs for the detection of CRC and adenomas CTCs, ctDNA, exosomes and TEP.
- Guidelines for the inclusion of liquid biopsy for the diagnostic and follow-up of CRC.

Working Group 3. Tumor profiling

It will focus on the genomic, epigenomic and transcriptional profiling of colorectal adenomas and carcinomas in a multiregion analysis fashion in order to identify novel biomarkers with prognosis and predictive value for CRC patient stratification.

Objectives

- To generate genomic, epigenomic and transcriptional profiling of adenomas and CRC.
- To integrate the data generated in this section with clinical features to identify new biomarkers for prognosis and prediction of treatment response.

Deliverables

- Publication of the adenoma and carcinoma genomic profiles and their associated transcriptomic signatures in high profile journals.
- Tools to delineate tumor evolution.
- Therapeutic impact of intratumor heterogeneity.
- Bench-to-bed transferability of biomarkers for prognosis and treatment response prediction.

Working Group 4. Functional genomics and therapy

This WG will functionally validate candidate genetic variants from germline or tumor studies by using cutting-edge approaches such as CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing. On the other hand, it will conceive novel routes to CRC therapy including immunotherapy.

Objectives

- To link unequivocally genetic variants with an altered gene function or pathogenicity.
- To develop treatments for metastatic CRC more efficient and with less adverse effects.
- To develop immunomodulatory strategies sensitizing CRC not currently amenable to immunotherapy.
- To optimize the combination of immunotherapy with current (neo-)adjuvant therapies.

Deliverables

- Research publications about new pathogenicity links for genetic variants and their involvement in germline or somatic CRC predisposition, and about novel CRC immunotherapies.
- Protocols for CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing.
- Guidelines for functional evaluation of candidate gene variants by gene editing.
- Optimized pipeline for neo-antigen screening in CRC patients.
- Clinical protocols for the introduction of immunotherapy in (neo-)adjuvant treatment setting.

 Working Groups

Working Group leaders

5 leaders with different scientific backgrounds including one SME and covering all disciplines involved

Science communication committee

Build a communication strategy and implement tools to communicate outputs and activities of the action (announcements, Action-specific website and other social media, scientific publications, press releases)

Short-term scientific missions (STSM) committee

Disseminate, approve and manage these short stays

Training schools committee

Agree on the focus of this intensive training in emerging research topics, define location, dates, trainers and trainees, and prepare training program and minutes

Meetings and workshops committee

Agree on the focus of meetings and workshops, location and dates, participants, and prepare agenda and minutes

Research funding committee

Be aware of and disseminate available funding opportunities fitting our COST Action objectives and select partners among participants

SME committee

Facilitate the integration of the SME participating in this Action and their active involvement in activities, and articulate innovation opportunities and patent licensing prospects

 Implementation of COST policies on the promotion of Inclusiveness and Excellence (see below list of Inclusiveness Target Countries), gender balance and Early Career Investigators (ECI)

Multidisciplinary European-based network

Seek excellence in line with H2020 objectives, open to new participants

Gender balance

Balance gender in activities and management to help improve women academic positions

Early-career investigators

Pursue their involvement in activities, including management, training schools and STSM to boost their careers

Inclussivenes targeted countries (ITC)

Search for active contribution of participants from less research-intensive countries. ITC participants are included in management committees

Industrial sector

Help in creating collaborations between researchers and industrial sector. Engage SME in activities and management

Dissemination

Maximize the impact of the Action

Besides implementing previous policies…

Strong management structure

Several leaders in each committee sharing management. Diverse committees to cover all objectives and activities

Commitment is golden

Commitment is key to a successful Action. Committed managers and participants are needed. There are participation and management duties

Promote collaborations

Facilitate interdisciplinary networking and foster new collaborations. Be inclusive and reach out to additional participants. Collaboration is essential to achieve Action's objectives

Optimal meetings and activities

Plan for efficient meetings. Separate WG meetings are envisioned. Meetings in ITC will be prioritized to be able to maximize attendance

Effective science communication committee

Very important strategic role within and outside the Action. In contact with COST Science Communications Officer and other Actions

 Deliverables and timeline

	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4			
Kick-off meeting																
MC meeting																
WG meeting																
Workshop																
Training schools																
STSM																
Final conference																
CRC Risk model																
Screening implementation																
Non-invasive biomarkers discovery																

Non-invasive biomarkers replication								
Tumor biomarkers discovery								
Tumor biomarkers replication								
New germline genes								
Improved CRC therapies								
Publications								
Protocols								
Software								
Website								

MC, management committee; WG, working group; STSM, short-term scientific mission; CRC, colorectal cancer.

 Implementation of Scientific Committee recommendations and COST policies

Inclussivenes targeted countries (ITC)
Search for active contribution of participants from less research-intensive countries. ITC participants are included in management committees

11. Establishment of Action Management structure

The elected Action Chair presented the Action structure.

Working Group leaders
5 leaders with different scientific backgrounds including one SME and covering all disciplines involved
Science communication committee
4 members
Short-term scientific missions (STSM) committee
4 members
Training schools committee
3 members
Meetings and workshops committee
3 members
Research funding committee
3 members
SME committee
4 members

The MC discussed who was going to be the leader in each management committee. Underlined participants were agreed to be the leaders-

The Working Group Leaders, STSM Manager and other management roles were been elected by the MC. The approved structure is as follows:

Working Group leaders

Disease risk profiling applied to the optimization of current screening programs **(WG1)**
Claire Palles (UK), Toni Gabaldon (ES), Barbara Pardini (IT), Victor Moreno (ES), David Kerr-Oxford Cancer Biomarkers (UK)

Non-invasive biomarkers for early detection and disease follow-up **(WG2)**
Nikolas Stoecklein (DE), Veronika Vymetalkova (CZ), Claus Lindberg Andersen (DK), Michael Bretthauer (NO), Alper Poyraz-PRZ Biotech (TR)

Tumor profiling to identify biomarkers with prognostics and predictive value for patient stratification **(WG3)**
Jordi Camps (ES), Romina Briffa (MT), Beatriz Carvalho (NL), Andreas Scorilas (GR), Bart Janssen-GenomeScan (NL)

***Functional genomics and new therapies* (WG4)**
Regine Schneider-Stock (DE), Noel de Miranda (NL), Laura Valle (ES), Sreeparna Banerjee (TR), Fabienne Hermitte-HalioDX (FR)

Science communication committee
Aleksandra Nikolic (RS), Wenche Sjursen (NO), Eitan Friedman (IL), Javier de Las Rivas (ES)

Short-term scientific missions (STSM) committee
Godfrey Grech (MT), Yael Goldberg (IL), Clara Ruiz-Ponte (ES), Marija Sollner Dolenc (SI)

Training schools committee
Aleksandar Dimovski (MK), Tadeusz Holak (PL), Albert Tenesa (UK)

Meetings and workshops committee
Tom van Wezel (NL), Manuel Teixeira (PT), Tamara Cacev (HR)

Research funding committee
Andrea Gsur (AT), David Hughes (IE), Pavel Vodicka (CZ)

SME committee
François Boissel-Novadiscovery (FR), Claudine Grech Spiteri-Applied Biotech (MT), Davide Barberio-BIOCLARMA (IT), Fabienne Hermitte-HalioDX (FR).

12. Action implementation planning

a. Development of Objective Achievement Indicators for MoU Objectives

Objective achievement indicator	Working group
CRC risk model	1
Screening implementation	1
Non-invasive biomarkers discovery	2
Non-invasive biomarkers validation	2
Tumor biomarkers discovery	3
Tumor biomarkers validation	3
New germline genes	4
Improved CRC therapies	4
Publications	1-4
Protocols	1-4
Software	1-4

Achievement of objectives will be monitored by each related WG

b. 1st Grant Period (GP)

- Grant Period Goals, WG tasks and deliverables

01/11/2018-30/04/2019 (6 months)

Goals	Working group
CRC risk model	1
Non-invasive biomarkers discovery	2
Tumor biomarkers discovery	3
New germline genes	4
Publications	1-4

Steering group meeting in Barcelona (Spain), 01/2019
MC + WGs meeting in Skopje (FYR Macedonia), 02/2019
STSM: 4 (adjusted to the grant period)
Dissemination planning

- Dedicated website (www.transcoloncan.eu)
- Publications

Interaction with other COST Actions initiated

- CA16113, CliniMARK: 'good biomarker practice' to increase the number of clinically validated biomarkers
- CA16120, European Epitranscriptomics Network
- CA17107, New diagnostic and therapeutic tools against multidrug resistant tumors (STRATAGEM)

- Activity and budget planning (Work and Budget Plan preparation)

A. COST Networking Tools	EUR
(1) Meetings	69,500
(2) Training Schools	16,100
(3) Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM)	5,000
(4) ITC Conference Grant	2,500
(5) COST Action Dissemination	10,750
(6) Other Expenses Related to Scientific Activities (OERSA)	500
B. Total Science Expenditure (sum of (1) to (6))	104,350
C. Financial and Scientific Administration and Coordination (FSAC) (max. of 15% of B)	15,652.5
Total Grant (B+C)	120,002.5

- Dissemination strategy/ planning (Publications and outreach activities)

As dissemination tools, the first period will implement the dedicated website (www.transcoloncan.eu) and some publications may be produced by participants.

List of Annexes

Annex 1- Agenda

Annex 2- Action Fact Sheet

Annex 3- Attendance list

Annex 4- Science Officer (SO) & Administrative Officer (AO) presentation

Annex 5- Communications Officer presentation

Annex 6- The Rules of Procedure for COST Action Management Committees (COST doc. 134/14, Annex I)
http://www.cost.eu/download/COST_Action_Management_Monitoring_and_Final_Assessment

Annex 7 – Presentation of the Action Chair