



**European Cooperation
in the field of Scientific
and Technical Research
- COST -**

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COST 069/13

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Subject : Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as COST Action IS1308: Populist Political Communication in Europe: Comprehending the Challenge of Mediated Political Populism for Democratic Politics

Delegations will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for COST Action IS1308 as approved by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) at its 188th meeting on 14 November 2013.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
For the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as

COST Action IS1308

**POPULIST POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN EUROPE: COMPREHENDING THE
CHALLENGE OF MEDIATED POLITICAL POPULISM FOR DEMOCRATIC POLITICS**

The Parties to this Memorandum of Understanding, declaring their common intention to participate in the concerted Action referred to above and described in the technical Annex to the Memorandum, have reached the following understanding:

1. The Action will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of document COST 4114/13 “COST Action Management” and document COST 4112/13 “Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities” , or in any new document amending or replacing them, the contents of which the Parties are fully aware of.
2. The main objective of the Action is to produce up-to-date knowledge on mediated political populism via a coordinated, comparative and comprehensive scientific effort. This includes defining and explaining populist communication and exploration of cross-national patterns.
3. The economic dimension of the activities carried out under the Action has been estimated, on the basis of information available during the planning of the Action, at EUR 72 million in 2013 prices.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect on being accepted by at least five Parties.
5. The Memorandum of Understanding will remain in force for a period of 4 years, calculated from the date of the first meeting of the Management Committee, unless the duration of the Action is modified according to the provisions of section 2. *Changes to a COST Action* in the document COST 4114/13.

A. ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

This COST Action brings together researchers to investigate *populist political communication* and its impact on democratic political life across Europe. This is necessary not only in light of recent populist backlashes in many democracies against governments and political and economic developments, but also in respect to changes in national media and communication systems. In order to comprehend this poorly understood aspect of contemporary political communication this Action will examine three interconnected but distinct aspects of populist political communication: First, populist political communicators and their strategies. Second, the media and populist discourses and frames. Third, citizen's engagement with populist political messages and the effect of these messages. This Action will provide a thorough critical review of existing knowledge, much improved research co-ordination, widen co-operation between scholars, bridge gaps in existing knowledge and strengthen dialogue with various societal stakeholders, benefiting media organizations, NGOs and policy actors as well as the wider scientific community.

Keywords: populist political communication, news media, media effects, democracy, comparative research

B. BACKGROUND

B.1 General background

While populist politics is a well-known feature of many European democracies the communicative aspects of this phenomenon have been underexplored or often ignored. However, the study of populist political communication has never been more important not only in light of the current social, political and economic tumult, but also in light of recent populist backlashes against governments and the changing media environment.

This COST Action will provide information and knowledge about the conditions that give rise to the presence (or absence) of populist political communication in different democracies and its impact in various nations, so as to produce a systematic comparative understanding of populist political communication in democracies and the challenges it poses for the ideal of an inclusive democratic public sphere.

This COST Action is necessary to bring together experts from different countries to produce state of the art knowledge about presence and challenge of populist political communication in different democracies. The COST Action will allow the effective co-ordination of this network of experts.

Without COST support many synergies would be missed and it would be difficult to move the current state of knowledge forward. The flexibility of the COST framework is crucial in allowing the network to respond to the unique challenges that comparative research entails.

B.2 Current state of knowledge

Populist political communication has been largely overlooked even though populist politics is a well-documented feature of many European democracies and has attracted much attention (for a synoptic account see Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2004). Those studies that have explored populist political communication, however, shed important light on the role communication and the media plays in populist politics. One of the central insights is how important the mass media are in widening the appeal of populist political actors. Populist actors need the 'oxygen of publicity' and the media often provides them with that. Ellinas (2010) in his examination of European far-right parties found that the media control the gateway to the electoral market place and they enable smaller newer groups to reach an audience greater than their resources would ordinarily allow (see also Bos et al. 2010; Mazzoleni et al., 2003). There is though no guarantee that all publicity given is good publicity. Others observe the media can also act as a foe retarding the appeal of populist actors. As Bos et al. (2011) found in the Netherlands, the way populist actors are portrayed is also important. Populist actors often receive critical coverage in the 'elite' media and favourable coverage in the popular press (Mazzoleni et al., 2003). That said, other studies suggest the picture might be more complex with no simple binary divide between elite and tabloid newspapers (Akkerman, 2011).

Context is also important. Mazzoleni et al. (2003) note that the media might be more likely to give coverage to populist actors when certain salient issues dominate the news. Walgrave and de Swert (2004), for example, found that by focusing on certain issues, such as crime and immigration, the media aided the rise of the populist Vlaams Blok in Belgium (see also Ellinas, 2010). Other studies suggest that populist actors can help their cause through adopting communication strategies and using the internet (see Atton, 2006; Bartlet et al., 2011; Dezé, 2011; Mazzoleni et al., 2003).

The study of populist political communication is not just confined to populist actors, indeed, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) note that populism can also be seen as a political communication style, one that contains a central binary between an 'us' and a 'them' (see also Stanyer, 2007). Others have identified what they call common populist frames (see Caiani and della Porta, 2011; Rydgren, 2005). Studies of populism in the popular media have found that some tabloid media outlets in the UK readily appropriate the populist binaries in relation to immigration and the European Union

(Stanyer, 2007). In addition, studies have shown that mainstream political parties and their leaders are not averse from using populist political rhetoric as well (Cranmer, 2011).

There are a handful of studies that have examined the impact of the media on support for populist actors. These have found a link in some countries between the prominence of anti-immigration issues in the news and the share of support for anti-immigration parties even when controlling for other factors (see Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2006, 2009; Gerstlé, 2003). Other studies have found watching commercial television increases opposition to immigration, while the opposite is true for watching public service news (see also Aalberg and Strabac, 2010). There is though no consensus on the effect of different communication channels, it might be, for instance, that the Web reinforces the views of those that already identify with extreme political ideas (see Bartlett et al., 2011).

These studies have broken important ground and point to potentially important problems but there are significant shortcomings, they tended to be single country studies or very small comparisons, focused on single elections, single individuals or organisations, they do not capture many of the latest developments or look at populism in an integrated way. Most research treats populism as a danger to democracy. Yet a more neutral and comprehensive understanding that takes seriously populism as an expression of democratic malaise may be more productive. It might open our eyes to the question of what conditions are responsible for making this political communicative style currently so popular. As below details, there needs to be a thorough definition of populism and populist actors, an exploration of their activities and their effects in a large scale comparative context. Without a concerted and co-ordinated effort the impact of populism and populist actors on democratic life cannot be fully understood.

This Action seeks to address the existing shortcomings/problems identified above taking into account social, political, and technological changes and the variety of contextual factors that exist in COST member countries. The key shortcomings the Action will address are grouped as follows:

Problem 1: Defining populist political actors and communication, and determining communication success

Early scholarship, typically within political science, defined populism as a malady of democracy that was a reaction to crises symptoms in contemporary societies. There is however, no common understanding of media populism and populism as a communication strategy. Thus, to reach a conceptual clarity in how to define and understand populist political communication is one of the first objectives in this COST Action.

While studies have tended to focus on right wing (neo-populist) political actors and their antagonism toward conventional political elites there is a need to recognise the potential *diversity* of

populist communicators. The existing understanding of what constitutes populism and populist actors needs to be rethought taking account of the diversity of actors and discourses that permeate the mediated public spheres of European democracies. Many of these actors could be described as right wing neo-populists but by no means all. A range of left wing groups have been actively involved in protests (e.g. the Syriza in Greece, the Socialist Party (SP) in the Netherlands, the Linkspartei in Germany, and the Communist party in France have become the Front de Gauche). In addition, there are more transient issue entrepreneurs appearing to fight single causes such as the Pirate Party in Sweden and Germany and, comedian Beppe Grillo's 5 star movement, in Italy. These are examples of populist actors which cannot be classified neatly as rightwing neo-populists. There also needs to be an understanding of the extent to which the use of public relations strategies empowers populist political communicators. Research in political science and communication science shows that the use of such strategies can enable advocacy groups to set the media agenda but is this success replicated elsewhere? Similarly, at a micro level, the personal communicative qualities of individual actors require more exploration, to what extent do rhetorical skills, for example, enhance or retard their ability to get their message across? The spread of the Web and proliferation of social media has provided new spaces for political actors to exercise their voice and interact with a new generation of citizens. Is the Web enhancing the communicative potential of populist actors? And if so, in what way? To what extent is the Web being used by populist political actors to engage citizens and mobilize supporters? Of course it is important to build on existing piecemeal insights on the extent to which existing main stream political parties adopt populist political communication styles and frames.

There are a handful of studies that have examined the impact of the media on support for populist actors. These have found a link in some countries between the prominence of anti-immigration issues in the news and the share of support for anti-immigration parties even when controlling for other factors (see Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2006, 2009; Gerstlé, 2003). Other studies have found watching commercial television frames, indeed, research has so far only scratched the surface of this aspect. Finally, existing studies have focused on activities within election periods paying less attention to other time periods. There is a need for a comprehensive assessment of populist political actors and their communicative activities outside election campaign periods. Understanding the extent to which populist discourses enter the mainstream requires a longer term perspective than election campaigns.

Problem 2: Establishing the role of the media in the promotion of populist politics

Current research has perhaps a too simplistic view of the role the media plays in enabling or retarding the growth of populist politics. It is a problem made all the more pressing by widely

documented commercialization and growing competition in the media environment and by the rise of the Web. This online competitive networked environment in some countries may provide populist actors with news opportunities to crash the established media gates. With Web news being increasingly driven by its readers there is the potential for grass roots campaigns to shape news agendas. Drawing on research from the US it is possible to imagine a situation where extreme views shape editorial policies of certain media in some instances. As the power of traditional established media outlets wanes in many polities, there needs to be a move away from traditional gatekeeper models and recognition of the increasing complexity of the environments in which media organizations now operate. It may well be that commercialization, growing competition and the Web weaken the traditional publicising function of established media outlets, but these forces may also encourage some ratings driven outlets to pander to populist reactionary political agendas, and adopt populist frames on range of prescient political issues.

Problem 3: Understanding the effects populist messages have on citizens and how citizens engage with populist political communication

Current approaches have focused almost exclusively on election campaigns and the impact of the media on support for populist actors. In this context widely documented trends in national electorates, such as party-voter de-alignment and exposure via different media, might make citizens more susceptible to populist appeals. Those who rely mainly on the tabloid media for news may, for example, be more prone to support populist political parties. There is though little exploration of the different possible effects of the media such as agenda setting, priming and framing, key areas in media effects research. There is little on the way citizens interact with populist messages and actors in everyday life, and where this takes place, yet citizen engagement with populist political actors and discourses is a crucial part of understanding populism. There are now more opportunities for citizens to exercise their voice in blogs and via social networking on a range of issues. New possible patterns of political engagement are emerging. To what extent is the Web being used to mobilize on specific issues? Drawing on research from the US it is possible to imagine a situation where extreme views increasingly populate a growing political fringe, due to, in part, selective exposure of like-minded actors. There needs to be a thorough exploration of public attitudes to populist messages and their consequences and of those who engage with populist messages and in populist political activity.

This proposal will be innovative in several respects when addressing these key problems.

Innovation 1: A multi-agent focus

Most studies only examine one aspect of national political communications systems, either media or political actors or citizens. This Action on populist political communication explores all three. It

will utilize communication and media theories and those from other social science disciplines to make sense of the production, dissemination, reception and impact of populist political messages. Developments such as the Web mean that simple divides between the encoders and decoders of messages are no longer so straight forward. By focusing on populist actors, texts and citizens this Action will provide a more systematic understanding of populist political communication than if there was only a focus on one aspect.

Innovation 2: Systematic large scale international comparisons

A comprehensive understanding of populist political communication and its impact is not possible without a well-conceived *internationally* comparative study. This Action will enable a large scale comparative examination of the co-construction, dissemination and impact of populist political messages. The Action will be sensitive to context and include both thick data and big data approaches.

Innovation 3: A more open normative approach

When addressing challenges to democracy, most research argues from a one-sided normative perspective whereas this Action is less prescriptive. It may be that populist political communication is a call for more democracy albeit of a particular kind, namely one that is hostile to representative and deliberative elements, and that relies on charismatic leadership, anti-elitism and direct linkages to the masses (plebiscitary democracy). This Action will investigate potential benefits of populist features such as greater responsiveness of political elites to public demands, both during and outside elections.

Innovation 4: Methodological developments

This COST Action will be methodologically innovative drawing on a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods in order to understand the relationship between populist actors, texts and citizens. It will establish best practice in comparative research, providing joint definitions and operationalization of central concepts and variables and developing customised research instruments for empirical investigations. It will encourage trans-methodological innovations to counter what are often staid divides between different approaches, such as surveys, interviews, experiments, content analysis or use of big data.

B.3 Reasons for the Action

While there is a growing interest in populist political communication scholars are spread over many countries and fields of study and there is no central co-ordination or forum for conducting debates and advancing theoretical and methodological knowledge. Without this it is not possible to produce

state of the art knowledge about presence and impact of populist political communication. This Action is critical to develop the scientific field allowing scholarly synergies to emerge and prevent unnecessary and unproductive methodological and theoretical repetition.

It has never been more important to examine populist political communication and its impact on democratic political life across Europe. Trans-European migration, immigration, and economic austerity are exploited by a range of populist political opportunists some with access to media resources and adept at spreading their messages. In addition, a proliferation of digital and social media is in some countries providing new spaces for these actors to disseminate their messages and gain mainstream media attention. Some mainstream media organisations, facing increasing commercial competition, have pandered to populist reactionary political agendas, in certain instances being at the forefront of campaigns. These often extreme responses may be more than mere evidence of intolerance or dissatisfaction with democracy; they may present an increasingly complex but none the less significant response to democratic shortcomings. Through a systematic transnational collaboration drawing on national experts from a wide variety of countries this Action *will provide a wide range of societal stakeholders with an understanding of the nature and possible effects of populist political communication across European democracies.* This will be invaluable information informing assumptions about the changing political environment and guiding multi-level policy formation.

This Action will also contribute to European economic and societal needs in a number of ways. It will provide a range of civil society actors with important insights into the emerging activities of populist political actors, their visibility and that of their messages in national mediated public spheres and the citizen's engagement with these messages. This knowledge will also be useful for news media organizations enabling them to adapt their editorial policies where necessary.

B.4 Complementarity with other research programmes

Although there are no COST Actions that specifically deal with the topic of this Action this Action does complement an existing Action. COST Action ISO906 (Transforming audiences, transforming societies) advances knowledge of the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment. Our Action will also draw on knowledge accumulated in previous Actions such as COST Action A30 (Media, Nationalism and European Identities) which the transformation of the media landscape in the Eastern and Central European context, including a focus on democratic performance of the media; and COST Action 298 (Cultures of participation – media practices, politics and literacy) which focused on how the presence and use of new media

affected modes of social participation. The knowledge accumulated in these previous Actions will act as a baseline to which our Action adds a specific focus on populist political communication (which adds in general to understanding democratic performance) and on the ways citizens make use of this information and what kinds of effects it has.

This Action contributes to the research outputs of several FP6 and FP7 projects. For example, FP6 ‘Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society’ addresses the role of migrants and ethnic minorities in socio-economic, political and cultural life. It attempts to recognize different strategies for fighting racism and xenophobia and to assess how different societies deal with the reception of different waves of refugees and asylum seekers. Our Action’s focus on media coverage of populism and on citizen’s reception of the coverage will build on this FP6 project. Our Action will also integrate the relevant knowledge about immigrants and Islam in the FP7 EURISLAM project. In addition, it will add to the FP7 EUMARGINS project, which explores the issue of inclusion and exclusion of young adult immigrants in seven European countries, by providing information and understanding of the way anti-immigrant populist movements are communicating in various European countries and audiences’ response to this anti-immigrant communication.

C. OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

C.1 Aim

Despite the rise of populism across Europe, the presence and impact of populist political communication has not been at the centre of scientific interest until now. The primary objective of this COST Action therefore is to produce up-to-date knowledge on this issue via a coordinated, comparative, comprehensive and concerted scientific effort. This includes defining and explaining populist communication as well as examining the similarities and differences between European societies with respect to 1) populist actors and populist communicative strategies, 2) the role of old and new media and 3) the effects on citizens, and more widely European societies and the European public sphere. This Action is specifically designed to provide a problem-oriented and policy-relevant response to this phenomenon.

C.2 Objectives

1. Putting a spotlight on populist communication in Europe

In recent years we have seen a rise of populist political actors and populist communicative strategies in various European societies. Faced with political challenges like trans-European

migration, immigration, and economic austerity on the one hand and fundamental changes of media landscapes and communication practices of citizens on the other, the description and explanation of populist communication structures and dynamics becomes a vital issue for European democracies. Therefore, an objective of this COST Action is to put a spotlight on the communicative processes that make up the core of political and media populism and raise scientific, media and citizen awareness of populist communication.

2. Advancing conceptual clarity in research on populist communication

A fundamental prerequisite for scientific progress and the development of new approaches for research is to advance conceptual clarity on the key concepts related to populist political communication and related effects. In order to do so, researchers from various disciplinary, methodological and national backgrounds will be brought together in this COST Action. Only then it will be possible to integrate various scientific perspectives and bodies of literature that are often separate even though they deal with similar phenomena. In addition, diverse theoretical and methodological expertise will be needed to comprehensively conceptualize the complex processes that constitute populist communication and that span across the macro-, meso- and micro-levels of various societies.

3. Initiating comprehensive comparative research on populist communication

Understanding the factors crucial for the patterns and processes of populist communications across Europe is impossible without comprehensive and truly comparative research. Therefore, this COST Action will take into account the whole communicative process of populist communications from communicators via the media to citizens and the feedback loops of citizen user-generated communication and expressions of public opinion. In doing so, boundaries between disciplines and subfields will be crossed in order to arrive at a comprehensive picture of the relevant processes. Maybe even more importantly, understanding national differences and similarities in strategies, media resonance, and audience reactions is only possible when taking into account a variety of macro-, meso- and micro-level factors and investigating them in truly comparative research designs. Finally, this COST Action will identify the relevant factors and develop research designs that allow a gauging of the relative impact of those factors across countries.

4. Promoting innovative empirical research on populist communication

A lot of the assumptions about the nature of the communicative processes involving populist communications have not or have not been comprehensively investigated empirically. In trying to

understand the structures and dynamics of populist communications, innovative research designs have to be developed and state of the art techniques of data gathering and data analysis have to be developed and applied. These will include, for example, new tools for the analysis of online and offline messages of populist actors, media, and citizens engaging in political (online) discourses. It will also include the usage of social science experiments and survey research in both online and offline environments.

5. Building a network of dedicated scholars and a basis for comparative research

And finally, this COST Action sets out to establish a long-lasting network of scholars dedicated to the investigation and promotion of inclusive, democratic public spheres across Europe. This network shall include both early-stage and senior researchers from across Europe with various disciplinary and methodological backgrounds. However, this network will not only provide state of the art knowledge about populist communication in Europe, but also, once the theoretical and methodological issues have been solved, start developing large-scale comparative research projects addressing the questions left open by prior research.

C.3 How networking within the Action will yield the objectives?

In order to produce state of the art knowledge about the presence and impact of populist political communication the scholars involved need opportunities to: share and integrate knowledge in coordinated ways, discuss theoretical and methodological questions, and disseminate the results within the network and beyond. Such opportunities will on the one hand include regular offline workshops and conferences as well as joint publications and on the other, various online-tools to facilitate easy ways of coordination and discussion. These tools will enable the sharing of papers and presentations by network members with possibilities for online-debates and webinars. In addition, as one of the purposes of this COST Action is to transfer the knowledge produced in the network to policy makers, media professionals, civil society actors, such as NGOs and individual citizens, a website will be established presenting core information about the COST Action and its findings in various European countries. Moreover, the transfer of knowledge to stakeholders will be promoted by offline conferences and workshops (see section H2).

C.4 Potential impact of the Action

This COST Action will advance scientific progress by:

- raising scientific and public awareness of the impact populist communication on democratic societies across Europe;
- providing state of the art knowledge and understanding of the patterns and mechanisms of populist political communication in European societies;
- developing coherent definitions and theoretical conceptualizations of the structures and dynamics of populist political communication in Europe;
- developing truly comparative research designs and innovative methodological approaches that can capture the various processes of populist political communication and help to explain cross-national differences and similarities;
- connecting dedicated researchers from various European countries and diverse disciplinary, theoretical and methodological backgrounds;
- establishing a lasting, long-term European research network among political communication scholars.

C.5 Target groups/end users

The beneficiaries of this COST Action will be:

1. The scientific community

Given the societal relevance of populism in Europe and elsewhere across the world, promoting our understanding of populist political communication is a major priority for media studies, communication science and political science. In addition, the theories, methods and questions related to this issue will likely be of interest to other disciplines such as sociology and psychology.

2. Policy makers

The effects the intertwined changes of societies and media have on the democratic process already are of crucial interest to policy makers on both the national and European levels. But this is especially true for populist political communication because of the potential threat this kind of communication may pose to rational policy making in certain areas, such as trans-European

migration, and to informed public deliberation on sensitive issues, and citizen's support for further European wide policy initiatives. The analysis of the reasons why populist communication fails or succeeds will provide valuable background knowledge for the prevention of the potential negative consequences of populist communication. Some policy makers approached already have expressed an interest in participating in this Action.

3. Media professionals

Raising awareness amongst media professionals of the potential effects of populist messages on citizens is one important objective of this COST Action as is an exploration of the impact of changing media environments. More and more, newsroom decisions are influenced by competition, economic factors, time pressure, and expectations about what audiences will like or dislike. These developments also change the patterns of news reporting and provide better chances for populist communications. If media makers are not aware of populist strategies populist communicators nor their effects may be able to easily capitalize on the structural changes of news decision making. Some media professionals approached already have expressed an interest in participating in this Action.

4. Civil society actors and citizens

Other beneficiaries of this Action will be civil society actors and ordinary citizens. They will not only benefit from a general raising of awareness of the impact of populist communication but also from state of the art knowledge, which will equip civic education bodies and NGOs with knowledge to critically engage populist political communicators. In addition, by revealing the argumentative patterns of populist communications and the reasons why populist communication fails or succeeds under varying circumstances, this COST Action will provide starting points for countering populist communication where necessary in both public and private contexts (personal conversations). Therefore, the analyses provided by this COST Action network will be relevant to NGOs or citizens interested in populist issues or confronted with populist patterns of argumentation. Some civic education associations approached already have expressed an interest in participating in this Action.

5. European democracy and the European public sphere

All in all, this COST Action will increase scientific, policy makers', media professionals', and citizens' knowledge of and awareness of the impact of populist communications and the challenges it may pose to European democracies and the ideal of an inclusive public sphere. In doing so, it will confront all relevant actors with their responsibilities for the democratic process, for the future of European societies and thereby – hopefully – affect their future actions.

D. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

D.1 Scientific focus

This COST Action brings together researchers to address the major shortcomings in research on populist political communication. The Action will focus on 3 areas. *Area 1* will identify and define populist political actors and communication, determining the contexts of communication success. *Area 2* will concentrate on the role of the media in populist activities and discourses, establishing their role in the promotion of populist politics. *Area 3* will focus on the effects populist messages have on citizens and how citizens engage with populist political communication. These areas not only reflect and cover the most relevant issues in connection with populism for European citizens, policy-makers and the process of European integration but are also very well suited for interdisciplinary and comparative research.

Area 1: Populist actors as communicators

There needs to be a systematic definition and documentation of populist political actors and their communication strategies and rhetoric. Existing studies of populism have tended to focus almost exclusively on right wing (or neo-populist) political actors and parties, but as mentioned earlier a diversity of actors and discourses permeate the mediated public spheres of European democracies need to be taken account of. Studies show that what is defined as populist rhetoric is found in non-populists parties and mainstream media as well. One of the main goals, therefore, is to better define and identify populist actors and populist styles and the communication strategies and outputs of these actors.

Against this background, this COST Action will address the following questions:

- Our main question is this: *Is there a specific and unique style(s) of communication that can be defined as populist?* That is, one of our major tasks would be to distinguish between a populist style and the style known as ‘media logic’, that is, catering to the production values of the news media by providing dramatic events, verbal attacks and the like. Previous studies on populism sometimes tend to equate a populist style with media logic. However, this style characterizes media strategies of politicians in general in the era of *mediatization*. If a populist style and ‘media logic’ fully overlap, then there is nothing particularly unique about populist style. It is possible that some political actors use a style that could be categorised as populist. This Action would be the first to address this question from both theoretical and empirical perspectives, as further developed below.

• *Are there unique communication strategies and tactics that distinguish populist parties from mainstream parties?* Some scholars argue that lacking a strong base of partisan support populist parties must rely on the media and are dependent on charismatic leaders to a greater extent than mainstream parties. However, these findings may be less decisive than thought as personalities in general, and charismatic leaders in particular, may be found in mainstream parties as well. And, as noted above, what is defined as a populist rhetoric is found in non-populist parties as well. Similarly, are there unique communication strategies and tactics that distinguish right-wing and left-wing populist parties? And can parties be classified according to this distinction?

• Also regarding language usage, are there systematic differences in the style of language used by mainstream parties and by right-wing and left-wing populist parties? Do parties and leaders defined as populist use more straightforward and simplistic language compared with other parties and leaders? Are they more hostile in their language to representative politics and to the ‘establishment’ compared with other parties? Does their style contain a central binary between an ‘us’ and a ‘them’, and ethnocentric and xenophobic language, to a greater extent compared with non-populist actors?

• *Are there unique political issues that distinguish populist parties from mainstream parties?* As noted while populist parties focus on issues such as national and cultural identity and anti-immigration sentiments, populist and mainstream parties do not necessarily differ in their focus of these issues. This Action will analyse the agenda building and frame building attempts of large number of parties from many European countries, in order to answer this question.

• *Is there a systematic difference in the tactics of populist and non-populist parties?* And of right-wing and left-wing populist parties? For example, is there a difference on the level of reliance on media experts? Are there systematic differences in issue management?

• *Do political actors use different styles, strategies and language (i.e., populist and non-populist) when approaching different media?* For example, does the need to be newsworthy in order gain coverage in traditional media lead to different communication strategies and a different language compared with those used when using social media or even paid traditional media?

• *Do leaders of parties identified as populist differ in terms of charisma and particularly their communication skills from leaders of other parties?* Studies in political science that have focused on the media coverage of leaders have not found a significant difference between populist and non-

populist leaders. This Action will attempt to analyse the actual communication skills of the leaders. These include factors such as communication motivation and rhetorical ability.

Area 2: The media and populism

European media environments have changed dramatically for political actors and citizens in recent years. These changes provide new opportunities for populist actors and their communicative strategies, their issues, frames, and arguments. In the *traditional, offline journalistic media* like newspapers, television, and radio, increasing economic pressures and commercialization have pushed media makers to change their criteria of news selection and construction. The strive for greater market share has increased the orientation towards audiences and has made news more entertaining, personalized, emotionalized and conflict-oriented (tabloidization). As a result, journalistic media logics more and more converge with the political and communicative logics of populist political actors, possibly providing them with better opportunities for a (favourable) coverage in the offline journalistic media. In the *new online media environment*, populist actors are on the one hand confronted with online journalism, which is much faster and probably even more “tabloidized” than its offline counterpart. On the other hand, populist actors find new opportunities online to bypass journalistic media and reach audiences without having to pass the filter of professional journalistic gatekeepers. By means of their own websites, blogs and activities in social networks they can communicate populist issues, frames and arguments to audiences directly. In addition, those discourses are more and more likely to be picked up again by journalists because of their growing tendency to take social media as an indicator of public opinion and citizen discourses. Against this background, this COST Action will address the following questions:

- *How do populist actors and their communicative strategies resonate with European journalistic media?* Populist actors seem to fit the logic by which journalistic media select and present news. However, it cannot be taken for granted that this really increases the chances of populist actors to get their issues, frames and arguments across in those media. Journalistic media may be reluctant to pick up their activities because of, for example, political leanings or institutional guidelines banning extreme political positions. Therefore, it is necessary to find valid ways (a) to measure the frequency and intensity with which journalistic media give a forum to populist actors, their issues, frames, and arguments, (b) to identify the situational and thematic contexts, in which populist actors and communications resonate with the media, and (c) to determine the way in which media evaluate and frame those populist actors and communications themselves.

• *What are the reasons for differences between European countries, types of journalistic media and individual media outlets?* It is likely that the resonance of populist actors and communications will differ across countries, media and individual outlets. Therefore, a core issue will be the explanation of those differences according to macro-, meso- and micro-level factors. On the macro-level, the presence of populist actors may be affected by the fragmentation/diversity or intensity of competition in party and media systems. In addition, the strength of populist parties and the situation of the country regarding typical populist issues may play a role (e.g. immigration, economy). On the meso-level, the institutional background may play a role, i.e. whether journalistic media are commercial or public service, online or offline, tabloid or quality, politically balanced or clearly positioned. And on the micro-level, journalists' professional norms may be a factor.

• *How do populist actors and communications resonate in non-journalistic online-media like blogs, forums and social networks?* Populist actors are increasingly trying to bypass journalistic media and use their own blogs or web-presences to communicate directly to citizens. In addition, citizen political discourses have found a new place in social networks. As we know very little about the presence of populist actors, issues, frames and arguments in online-discourses, it is necessary (a) to get an idea of the number of populist blogs, forums and online-groups in European countries, (b) to investigate the presence of populist actors, activities, frames and arguments in interpersonal communication taking place in regular social networks and forums of journalistic media, (c) to analyse if those discussions are the result of journalistic media coverage, (d) to investigate how citizens react to populist frames and arguments by uttering support or dissent, and (e) to analyse whether populist online-discourses are picked up by journalistic media because this may provide an indirect way for populist actors to get covered by journalistic media.

• *What are the reasons for differences in the resonance of populist communications in citizen online-discourses?* Given that there will likely be differences in populist-driven online-discourses the question arises, what their macro-, meso- and micro-level reasons may be. Besides the macro-level factors mentioned above, political culture and traditional patterns of political discourse may be especially important here as well as the general importance of online-media for citizen discourses.

• *Is there a decoupling of online- vs. offline and journalistic vs. citizen discourse as indicated by the varying presence of populist actors and communications?* Because of the increasing number of media channels the potential for politically motivated, dissonance-avoiding selection of information sources has increased. This may lead to a more and more fragmented public sphere in which

politically homogeneous “echo chambers” form separated spheres of discourse. In the case of populist actors and communications this may be fostered by the perception of populist actors and their supporters that their views are not adequately represented in the mainstream journalistic media. To get an idea of the intensity of fragmentation the structures of online vs. offline and journalistic vs. citizens discourses as well as their connections will be investigated.

Area 3: Citizens and populism

The media use of European citizens has changed in the past couple of decades. Responding to a different media environment and increasing, almost abundant, choice for political information from new and old media, citizens can by today select a diet of political information, according to their own preferences. Considering the emergence of populist political actors and how these actors communicate (Area 1), the differences across old and new media and how these actors communicate and interact (Area 2), and also the fact that many electorates across Europe have become increasingly volatile, switching between political candidates and parties, it is imperative to also analyse and understand how citizens engage with this information and what kinds of effects it has. This Area concentrates on the different roles played by different media and how this affects different segments of citizens. Effects of media exposure are not likely to be uniform, neither for different populist actors nor for different citizens. This area will focus on effects on knowledge, trust in democratic institutions, and also participation in politics as well as political preferences including voting.

Against this background, this COST Action will address the following questions:

- *How do European citizens inform themselves about politics, including populist politics?* Despite concerns that political information would be driven out by increasing competition in the news market, there is today an abundance of political information. However, it is an open question how citizens across Europe inform themselves about politics, including populist politics, today. It is perfectly possible to neglect politics in this abundance of choice, but it is also possible to consume political information to an unprecedented extent. With this as a starting point, we can expect that European citizens inform themselves in different ways.
- *What kind of differences in political information acquisition can be distinguished?* Following from above, we can expect that the differences found in Area 1 and 2 in the way both journalistic media and direct communications from political actors devote attention to, evaluate and frame populist politics, that citizens fall into different kinds of political information acquisition strategies. In

current research we know about general media consumption, but we know little about the total usage of political information by citizens, including both mainstream traditional media and populist blogs, forums and online-groups.

- *What effects of media use can be found?* General media effects theories suggest an array of effects that media (both traditional and new) can have, such as raising the importance of issues, affecting issue interpretations, giving direction to evaluations of political actors, (de-) mobilizing, and affecting voting preferences. Much public discussion centres on these effects, and is often assumed that the media are even more important for populist actors to raise awareness about their candidacy/party and for receiving favourable public evaluations, and preferences in terms of voting. Most often, these remain assumptions, however. This Area will focus on the role played by different types of media vis-à-vis knowledge about populist actors, the understanding of issues often central to populist actors (e.g., immigration, economy), the evaluations of political actors, (de-) mobilization, and voting preferences. Comparisons will be made between media effects across different individuals, different countries (see also below), different populist actors, and between populist and non-populist actors.

- *What are the reasons for differences between European countries in terms of political news usage and effects?* It is likely that the political information usage and the effects stemming from this use will differ across countries and individuals. Therefore, a key issue of Area 3 will be an investigation of the effects of media exposure pending on macro level factors such as the electoral competition (number and type of (non-)populist competitors), electoral systems (PR systems are more conducive to newcomers), and media system (a strong tabloid system and high usage of the internet might be more conducive to populist actors).

D.2 Scientific work plan methods and means

Three Working Groups (WGs) will carry out the scientific work described in the Areas above. Each of them will focus on one of the Areas:

- WG1: Populist actors as communicators
- WG2: The media and populism
- WG3: Citizens and populism

The WGs will engage in a number of scientific tasks over a four year period:

Task 1: Reviewing relevant material and literature

Members in the working groups will review existing and emerging research in the fields being investigated, including and extending beyond their immediate interests. The ultimate purpose of this exercise will be to identify (1) avenues of research that will advance the understanding of populist actors, media coverage of these actors, and citizens' perceptions of these actors and their messages; (2) opportunities for cross-disciplinary developments, and (3) possibilities of cooperation with other research networks and programmes (including relevant COST Actions).

Task 2: Defining a research agenda and direction

Developing a well-focused research agenda, including an information and dialogue strategy. Members of the working groups will take into consideration the research needs and opportunities identified in Task 1, as well as their specific research interests and the projects they are (or planned to be) engaged in. Special attention will also be devoted to familiarization with the needs and the interests of target groups such as policy makers, NGOs and media professionals. The research agenda will be regularly updated since it is supposed to help participants in identifying common research topics for which collaboration can be built up all over the duration of the Action.

Task 3: Integrating findings to produce coherent knowledge

Accumulating and integrating research results of the three WGs. Members in the WGs will share, comment and combine new empirical findings in order to build a coherent knowledge of European mediated populism. This will be achieved by regular Trans-Action Workshops (see section F). The point will be to build up a comprehensive picture of the various facets of populist political communication (populist actors as communicators, the media and populism and citizens and populism), without neglecting the contextual and country-specific factors that play role in these facts of mediated populism.

Task 4: Revitalizing research on populist political communication

Participants will draw theoretical and methodological lessons from their concerted works and progressively build new approaches that will revitalize research on populist political communication and pave the way for further developments in this area. Key questions that will be addressed include: What are the shortcomings of conventional models and methods? What are the needs for innovative approaches? What is the current state of innovation and what are the lessons from early applications? In what way can other fields and disciplines (e.g., sociology, political science) feed the reflections on theoretical and methodological challenges in populist political communication research?

Task 5: Developing recommendations

Members in the working groups will reflect on the significance of their research results for civil society, media and policy players in the field, and provide them with insightful recommendations for their future activities and responsibilities. Although certain recommendations can be targeted to particular groups of stakeholders, the Action will strive to go beyond immediate and specific interests and promote a common, balanced vision of ways to approach the possible societal problems that are generated by populist political communication.

Table 1: Timetable for completion of tasks (see above)

	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4			
Quarter	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Tasks	1	1	1&2	2	2	2	2&3	3	3	3	3&4	4	4	4	5	5

E. ORGANISATION

E.1 Coordination and organisation

The *overall planning and co-ordination* of the Action will be the responsibility of a Management Committee (MC). The MC will consist of a Chair, Vice Chair, the Chairs and one Vice Chair from the WGs, and other members. Members of the MC will meet formally twice a year to make key decisions on the scientific programme, the 'information and dialogue strategy', and to oversee WG activities – including gender balance and the involvement of early-stage researchers. In addition, MC members will be in contact over the four years of the Action by email, Skype and via the Action website. Further, to bolster connections between the WGs and to enhance the integration of and dissemination of the findings over the period of the Action, various subgroups of MC members will organise *two* Action Conferences (AC), *two* Action Workshops (AW) and an Early-Stage Researcher Think-Tank (ESRTT). Also promoted by the MC will be Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM) with the goal of maximising the exchange of experience amongst participants especially early-stage researchers.

The *day-to-day co-ordination* of the Action will be responsibility of a Steering Group (SG) formed of members of the MC. The SG will be in regular contact by email, Skype and via the Action website sharing information about WG activities and the daily business of the Action. The SG will

also have responsibility to draft the agenda for each MC meeting.

A communication subgroup of MC members will be tasked with producing an e-newsletter and the development and maintenance of the Action website. The e-newsletter will be widely distributed to a variety of stakeholders and contain the latest information on the activities of the Action as well as publications arising from the Action. The specially designed website will be both a platform to promote the Action in different languages and encourage new participants, and a closed space for the Action participants to interact. The members-only section of the website will offer opportunities to discuss developments and share documents, and enable the quick dissemination of information regarding meetings and activities. The website will also have a Twitter alert function so that interested scholars and non-academic stakeholders are alerted when new website postings are made. The communication subgroup in liaison with each WG will also be responsible for preparing and disseminating all non-academic publications, such as the education kits for schools, as part of the outreach strategy.

The MC will task a subgroup to take a lead in organizing, promoting and overseeing the Training School in year three for PhD students. This will be done in liaison with various graduate networks of academic bodies (such as European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) and the European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR))

The Chairs of the WGs will report on their decisions, activities and findings to the MC every three/four months. The Chair and the Vice Chair of the MC will use the reports to produce a progress report every four months. These will form part of the annual progress report and part of the final report required by the COST office.

To oversee procedures and outcomes including publications and monitor conference and workshop organisation the Action will have an Editorial Board (EB). The EB will be independent from the WGs' management teams and the MC. Each WG will appoint a person to the EB and the MC chair will appoint one person to be the EB chair. The EB Chair will supervise a range of EB tasks including evaluating: the Action plan and activities, the soundness of the schedule, the publication plan, and the measures taken to ensure a gender balance and academic career stage diversity.

Finally, it will monitor the adherence of the Action to the schedule. The EB will produce a progress report every six months for the MC. These reports will form part of the annual progress report and part of the final report required by the COST office.

E.2 Working Groups

The scientific programme will be carried out by three WGs (see D2). Each WG will be managed by a Leader (who is a member of the SG and the MC) and two Vice Chairs (one who is a member of the MC) and other appointed actors who together will form a Working Group Steering Committee (WGSC). They will be in regular contact with each other and the WG membership by email, Skype and via the Action website and will meet formally twice a year. Each WGSC will be responsible for overseeing the scientific work plan for each WG and ensuring the tasks are achieved, including organizing and promoting *two* WG workshops annually, and that the schedule is met.

Each WGSC will appoint a STSM subgroup to organize and oversee each STSM. Each WGSC will also appoint a gender balance subgroup to specifically monitor WG gender balance and report back to the WGSC throughout the period so that appropriate action can be taken. The WGSC will also task a committee member to monitor and regularly report back on early-stage researcher involvement in each WG. Each WGSC will also produce a progress report every three/four months for the MC. These reports will feed into progress reports and the final report.

E.3 Liaison and interaction with other research programmes

The WG Chairs will identify members of the WGs who participate (or have participated) in other COST Actions and research programmes (see section B4). These members will constitute key links between this Action and the other relevant Actions and programmes. The aim is two-fold: find common synergies and set-up seminars or co-organise conferences with the other Actions and programmes if feasible, and keep them regularly informed about the Action by email and the Action website.

E.4 Gender balance and involvement of early-stage researchers

The Action will ensure gender balance in the make-up of the various management bodies outlined in section E1. The envisioned Action Chair is female. The MC and WGs will also ensure a gender balance in membership, presentation and authorship of findings. The MC will regularly monitor and assess progress of the Action in this respect.

All experts in this Action already work with early-stage researchers in their home countries so realise the centrality of giving them the appropriate levels of support. The encouragement of early-stage researchers to participate in all activities undertaken by this Action will be of central importance. The MC and WGs will actively encourage and support applications from early-stage

researchers for conference grants, and to participate in STSMs. The Action will also exploit its member's links to graduate networks of various academic bodies (such as European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) and the European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR)) to build an Early-Stage Researcher Think Tank (ESRTT). Finally, the Action in liaison with other academic bodies will organise a summer school on the themes of this Action.

F. TIMETABLE

Four years is considered an appropriate length of time for this Action, in order to provide a measured and accurate insight into the conditions that give rise to the presence (or absence) of populist political communication and to make the necessary conceptual, methodological and theoretical advances and make the necessary recommendations for civil society and policy players. The timetable is as follows (see also Table 2).

First year

Inaugural meeting of the MC

The MC will make any adjustments to the organizational structure, fine tune the scientific programme and planning. The MC will meet formally twice a year thereafter.

2 WG Workshops

The first WG Workshops will be focused on establishing a common research atmosphere and reviewing existing research identifying new research avenues and opportunities for collaboration with other networks and research programmes. The second WG Workshops will invite various non-academic stakeholders (media, NGOs) and target groups to highlight the Actions aims and needs.

Action Conference

Held at the end of the first year the 'Launching Stakeholder Conference' will establish important connections between the WGs, and assess progress so far. It will also invite various non-academic stakeholders (media, NGOs, policy actors) and target groups.

Early-Stage Researcher Think Tank

The ESTT will be established.

Outcome

Task 1 completed, Task 2 started (see section D2).

Second year

2 WG Workshops

The first WG Workshops will complete defining the research agenda. The second WG Workshops will begin the next research task.

Action Workshop

At the end of the second year the Action Workshop will bring together all three WGs to share findings and start combining the achievements so far.

Outcome

Task 2 completed, Task 3 started (see section D2).

Third year

2 WG Workshops

The first WG Workshops will continue share, comment and combine new empirical findings to create a coherent picture of the nature of populist political communication. The second WG Workshops will begin to draw methodological and theoretical lessons and develop new approaches to understanding populist political communication.

Training School

Post-graduate summer school on populist political communication.

Action Workshop

At the end of the third year the Action Workshop will bring together all three WGs to share findings and start combining the achievements.

Launch of STSMs

STSM organised by the WGSC will take place.

Outcome

Task 3 completed, Task 4 started (see section D2).

Fourth year

1 WG Workshop

The final WG Workshops will reflect on the significance of the research and develop recommendations for non-academic stakeholders (Media, NGOs, policy actors) and target groups.

Action Workshop

Toward end of the final year the Action Workshop will combine the research developments and recommendations across WGs.

Action Conference

Held at the end of the year our 'Concluding Stakeholder Conference' will disseminate developments and recommendations to leading scholars at the periphery of the Action, media, and

NGOs active in the topic of the Action.

Final meeting of the MC

The MC will produce the final report for the COST office.

Outcome

Task 4 completed, Task 5 completed (see section D2).

Table 2: Timetable for the Action

	Year 1				Task 1 Finished	Year 2				Task 2 Finished	Year 3				Task 3 Finished	Year 4				Task 4 & 5 Finished
Quarters	1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4	
MC Meeting	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X					
WGSC Meeting	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X					
WG Workshops	X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X					
Action Workshop									X						X					
Action Conference				X												X				
Training School											X									
STSMs										X										

G. ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The following COST countries have actively participated in the preparation of the Action or otherwise indicated their interest: AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, EL, ES, FR, IL, IT, LT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, UK. On the basis of national estimates, the economic dimension of the activities to be carried out under the Action has been estimated at 72 Million € for the total duration of the Action. This estimate is valid under the assumption that all the countries mentioned above but no other countries will participate in the Action. Any departure from this will change the total cost accordingly.

H. DISSEMINATION PLAN

H.1 Who?

The theme of this COST Action is socially highly relevant and we therefore feel that the dissemination plan is a crucial component of the Action. Our objective is to pursue an ‘information and dialogue’ strategy as the guiding principle for the Dissemination Plan. This implies that the plan includes both traditional dissemination activities as well as more interactive features. We distinguish four target audiences for the dissemination of the results of the Action: a) researchers working in the field and in the wider scientific community, b) educators, c) media and d) the general public.

- a) Researchers: the Action is interdisciplinary in nature and we target researchers working on the theme of *populism* specifically, but also researchers engaged in media and communication research, journalism research, political science, sociology, and social sciences more broadly.
- b) Educators: the Action will generate *material to be used in high school curricula*, as part of social science classes, on the nature and working of populism in society. In addition, educators and high school students will be targeted by making researchers available for *guest lectures*.
- c) Media: the results of the Action will be communicated to the media directly and indirectly. Direct dissemination includes *op-ed pieces* in various media in different countries and indirect dissemination includes a *one day conference* to be held in a centrally located European capital targeting (inter)national media.
- d) The general public: this broad category is also an explicit target of the Action. The theme is of broad interest and through the *education and media activities* (see above). This will also be achieved using an Action website

H.2 What?

The specific activities are tailored to the different target audiences.

- Researchers will be targeted through standard scientific channels (submission of conference papers, conference panels, articles, and book chapters). The key journals include leading outlets in communication (Journal of Communication, Journal of Press/Politics, Political Communication, European Journal of Communication), in journalism studies (Journalism, Journalism Studies), in political science (European Journal of Political Research, Comparative Political Studies), and public opinion (Public Opinion Quarterly, International journal of Public Opinion Research). In addition,

the Action groups will produce an edited volume on the topic. The scientific community will be kept abreast of the research progress through the Action website. This website will include a Twitter alert function so that interested scholars are alerted when new website postings are made.

- Educators will be targeted by putting together an ‘education kit’ with material on populism, media, and citizens. This kit will be developed in English, and will offer guidelines and examples to be used in a social science class in high schools on the topic of the Action. This will be a voluntary, free-of-charge kit that will be disseminated through the Ministries of Education. The Action will also offer the opportunity to have an Action participant lecture at a high school. This activity is built upon the principles of e.g., The Young Academy of the Netherlands (offering scholars to high schools for lectures and instructions) and the Universities of Denmark’s ‘Find a Researcher’ (<http://dkuni.dk/omdkuni/Find-en-forsker>) programme in which researchers can be identified for lectures and debates. This is an important and efficient, yet manageable activity to be undertaken in each participating country. These activities form a feedback function so that experiences and questions emerging from these activities can feed in to the future activities of the Action.
- Media will be targeted by offered op-ed pieces on the topic of the Action. Moreover as findings are published, we will engage with initiatives like <http://www.bitescience.com/> for dissemination. Towards the end of the programme the Action will organize a one-day conference in which the particular role and responsibility of the media vis-à-vis populism will be part. These activities also form a feedback function so that experiences and questions emerging can feed in to the future activities of the Action.
- Citizens will be targeted through different channels: young citizens are reached by the activities listed under b). General audiences are reached by interaction with the media, see section c). The Action website is an entry point for the general public interest in the topic. When results permit, we will produce a final report (typically 12-15 pages) summarizing the main outcomes of the Action and listing a number of recommendations
- We will invite leading scholars at the periphery of the Action, media, and NGOs active in the topic of the Action to our ‘Launching Stakeholder Conference’ in year 1. The core ideas in the Action will be presented and feedback and input will be obtained to allow for additional features being included in the Action. This activity is part of our dialogue strategy.

H.3 How?

The MC will define and supervise the ‘information and dialogue strategy’ which will be carried out by the Communication Subgroup, a special subgroup of MC members who will be charged with

organizing specific dissemination activities.

Over the Action these MC Subgroups will:

- Organize all Action Conferences and Action Workshops, and the invitation of all relevant stake holders.
- Oversee Action participant school lectures.
- Liaise with the EB as to the most appropriate academic publications, including the editing of special collections.
- Oversee the production and distribution all ‘education kits’, conference proceedings etc.
- Take responsibility for the website, distributing the e-newsletter, targeting of stakeholder actors as necessary.