

Brussels, 23 June 2017

COST 024/17

## DECISION

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Subject: **Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the COST Action “New Exploratory Phase in Research on East European Cultures of Dissent” (NEP4DISSENT) CA16213**

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The COST Member Countries and/or the COST Cooperating State will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for the COST Action New Exploratory Phase in Research on East European Cultures of Dissent approved by the Committee of Senior Officials through written procedure on 23 June 2017.

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## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

For the implementation of a COST Action designated as

**COST Action CA16213**  
**NEW EXPLORATORY PHASE IN RESEARCH ON EAST EUROPEAN CULTURES OF DISSENT**  
**(NEP4DISSENT)**

The COST Member Countries and/or the COST Cooperating State, accepting the present Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) wish to undertake joint activities of mutual interest and declare their common intention to participate in the COST Action (the Action), referred to above and described in the Technical Annex of this MoU.

The Action will be carried out in accordance with the set of COST Implementation Rules approved by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), or any new document amending or replacing them:

- a. "Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities" (COST 132/14);
- b. "COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval" (COST 133/14);
- c. "COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment" (COST 134/14);
- d. "COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation" (COST 135/14).

The main aim and objective of the Action is to To trigger a new discovery phase of the cultural legacy of resistance and dissent in former socialist Europe 1945-1989 and to incorporate it into the core historical and social consciousness of the EU, by providing a platform for incubating networked, transnational, multidisciplinary and technology-conscious research applying innovative dissemination methods.. This will be achieved through the specific objectives detailed in the Technical Annex.

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 80 million in 2016.

The MoU will enter into force once at least five (5) COST Member Countries and/or COST Cooperating State have accepted it, and the corresponding Management Committee Members have been appointed, as described in the CSO Decision COST 134/14.

The COST Action will start from the date of the first Management Committee meeting and shall be implemented for a period of four (4) years, unless an extension is approved by the CSO following the procedure described in the CSO Decision COST 134/14.

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**OVERVIEW**

**Summary**

Resistance and dissent in former socialist Europe 1945-1989 constitutes a remarkable chapter of Europe’s recent past, which not only informs in a decisive way the identities of post-socialist societies, but has also reshaped the continent as a whole and still provides an important reference for contemporary social movements worldwide.

The proposers of this Action believe that, after a period of growth and consolidation, this field of study and the respective domain of cultural heritage have stalled and fell short of its true significance. This state of affairs results from (1) the inheritance of Cold War-era conceptual distinctions, (2) confinement of research within national silos and (3) neglecting the problem of access to original archival sources for digitally enabled research due to both their heterogeneity and uneven investment in research infrastructures.

The main aim of the Action is to trigger the next discovery phase of this legacy through forging a new, reflexive approach and providing a platform for incubating networked, transnational, multidisciplinary and technology-conscious research with creative dissemination capacities.

The Action will create a valuable interface for communication between three communities of practice: researchers and archivists, art and cultural heritage curators and IT experts with humanities and social sciences expertise in order for future research to be technologically advanced and better disseminated. The Action will enable participant researchers to train with cutting edge digital tools, and to increase their capacities for creative dissemination through engaging in productive dialogue with art and cultural heritage curators, proposing best practices of cooperation between those three communities of practice.

<p><b>Areas of Expertise Relevant for the Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● History and Archeology: Modern and contemporary history</li> <li>● Other humanities: Cultural heritage, cultural memory</li> <li>● Media and communications: Museums and exhibitions</li> <li>● Media and communications: Media and communications, social aspects of information science and surveillance, socio-cultural communication</li> <li>● Media and communications: Databases, data mining, data curation, computational modelling</li> </ul>	<p><b>Keywords</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DISSENT UNDER COMMUNISM 1945-1989</li> <li>● POST-SOCIALIST MEMORY CULTURE</li> <li>● DIGITAL HUMANITIES</li> <li>● ART AND CULTURAL HERITAGE CURATORSHIP</li> <li>● CIVIC EDUCATION</li> </ul>
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**Specific Objectives**

To achieve the main objective described in this MoU, the following specific objectives shall be accomplished:

Research Coordination

- To develop a shared understanding of how the consolidation of research agendas and relevant documentary legacies have hitherto shaped the field of research on dissent under communism across Europe and globally, and to set new research trends for the future.
- To expand the field of research on dissent in former socialist countries by identifying actors and phenomena which have been hitherto underrepresented and understudied.
- To give a higher research profile to the transnational dimension of cultural dissent in socialist Eastern Europe and in particular to give attention to the many ways in which a common European culture was forged before 1989 across the divided continent.
- To examine the manner in which memory of cultural dissent has been constructed and disseminated after

the fall of state socialism in 1989.

- To serve as an intermediary and communication platform between the emerging transnational research initiatives.

#### Capacity Building

- To overcome national and disciplinary isolation of scholarly communities active in the field of research on resistance and dissent under communism and create an integrated network.
- To create synergies between existing innovative projects and to incubate new initiatives that will continue after the end of the Action.
- To facilitate knowledge transfer of digital research methods, tools and infrastructures for humanities and social sciences to researchers working on pre-1989 opposition under state socialism.
- To strengthen the dissemination capacity of research in the field by designing more effective ways of incorporating knowledge about the material and intellectual legacy of cultural dissent into various art and cultural heritage curatorship initiatives throughout Europe.
- To introduce Early Career Investigators (ECIs) to a networked, transnational, multidisciplinary and technology-conscious research environment.

## 1) S&T EXCELLENCE

### A) CHALLENGE

#### I) DESCRIPTION OF THE CHALLENGE (MAIN AIM)

Resistance and dissent in former socialist Europe 1945-1989 constitutes a remarkable chapter of Europe's recent past, which informs the identities of the post-socialist societies in distinct and highly significant ways and, as such, has reshaped Europe as a whole. The Action will contribute to incorporating into the core historical and social consciousness of Europe an awareness that a shared commitment to the European project had been forged by citizens from both sides of the Iron Curtain long before it fell in 1989. This has been a commitment, which preceded and served as a foundation for those efforts leading to the accession of the post-socialist states to the European Union after 2004. The study of opposition under state-socialist regimes of the Eastern bloc and Yugoslavia will be a timely contribution to current debates on the future shape of the European Union.

Although the most spectacular forms of dissent in formerly socialist countries are well known, the proposers of this Action believe that after a period of growth and consolidation in the decades after 1989 this field of study and related domains of cultural heritage have stalled, failing to achieve its true significance. This state of affairs results from (1) the persistence of Cold War-era conceptual distinctions biased towards directly political and contentious activities to the detriment of indirect cultural challenges to state socialism, (2) confinement of research within national and disciplinary silos, and (3) the difficulty of coping with the heterogeneity, ephemerality and linguistic diversity of the cultural legacy of this period.

**The main aim of the Action is to trigger a new discovery phase of this remarkable European legacy by providing a platform for incubating networked, transnational, multidisciplinary and technology-conscious research on cultures of dissent under socialism, and for developing innovative dissemination methods.**

The Action will employ a new, reflexive approach, spotlighting diverse, hitherto under-researched, manifestations of cultural subversion and fostering understanding of the many and diverse ways in which the concept of "dissent" (and related categories such as opposition or resistance) has been constructed, perceived, used, and acted upon by a broad variety of actors. The proposers will not take "dissent" as a given category, but rather problematize this notion, guided by such questions as: (1) when or why was someone or something designated as "dissident" and how this has subsequently influenced archival and, more broadly, documentary practices; (2) which phenomena of resistance have been captured through the lenses of different collections of documents, artefacts and testimonies, or embodied by symbolic spaces; (3) which manifestations have been rendered invisible by the prevailing definitions of cultural dissent; and (4) how is the legacy of dissent shaped by the broader memory culture in its multiple, state and non-state, local and transnational contexts?

**This challenge can be properly addressed only through creating an international research network designed to cross-fertilize and consolidate national research agendas and incubate novel collaborative initiatives. Taking advantage of cutting-edge digital humanities tools and methods, as well as strengthening the capacity for dissemination**

**through cooperation with art and cultural heritage curators will increase the impact of the Action.**

## II) RELEVANCE AND TIMELINESS

The legacy of opposition and resistance under state socialism in Eastern Europe is as diverse as the diverse were the countries forming the Eastern bloc and Yugoslavia, politically, socio-culturally and in terms of their autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The **political manifestations of that legacy** have crystallised around a canon of documents and artefacts, figures, movements and practices, places and events, infused and diffused by both works of scholarship and workings of cultural memory, which has reified certain groups and activities as emblematic. **Cultural dissent, however, represents a much more complex and ambiguous phenomenon**, resonating to a greater extent with the diversity mentioned above. Understanding this legacy in terms of “cultures of dissent” redeems not only the indirect manifestations of opposition in the realm of culture, but also, in anthropological sense, points out to existence of different social worlds populated by historical actors with their specific and localized repertoires of practices, discourses and platforms of expression. **Thus besides scrutinizing the very processes of canonization and objectification, the Action proposes to broaden the knowledge of the cultural multiplicity of styles of oppositional practices and their vehicles; to explore the variety of state and transnational institutions and networks engaged in defining the contours of that historical reality; and to trace transcultural and transnational processes that shaped its cultural memory** (Erl1 2011). It will break new ground by expanding the field of inquiry to encompass a broad spectrum of subversion in three major problem areas (corresponding to the Action’s Working Groups): the regimes’ surveillance of culture and its effects of exclusion, marginalization or infiltration of certain cultural or artistic ideas, currents, movements and groups; expert networks and dilemmas of negotiated autonomy within the official realm; and alternative cultural phenomena that were considered marginal both by the dissidents and the powers they opposed. Further it will explore these problem areas in a broad temporal perspective, from post-war to post-socialism, encompassing both lived and remembered realities. This broad conceptualization will enable research on dissent and resistance in the countries until now weakly represented as their oppositional heritage has often been considered meagre (e.g. East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria or the Soviet Baltic republics). It will promote investigation of newly available sources documenting both licenced and unlicensed forms of cultural expression – such as private collections and oral histories – in addition to already well-scrutinized materials, such as samizdat. It will also revisit, from a new perspective, the accessible security files, which hitherto were examined mostly with the intention to study the political aspect of resistance and repression.

Furthermore, the Action aims at opening the field to new research methods which will yield innovative insights. European Research Area is advancing in building its digital research infrastructures for humanities and social sciences, such as Common Language Resources and Technology Infrastructure (CLARIN), Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities (DARIAH), or Europeana Research. **However, digital tools and techniques have been rarely applied in this particular domain of scholarship. The Action will enable such knowledge and technology transfer by creating an interface between the participating researchers and the communities of digital research environment experts and digital humanities practitioners.** While the Action will not undertake infrastructural development as such, participants will train with digital tools (such as online platforms for collaborative research, tools for annotation, visualization and exploration of sources) in order to learn how to make their research smarter and how to prepare, structure and mark-up their data in order to make that possible. IT professionals working in the area of humanities and social sciences will probe whether existing digital environment for research satisfies the needs of this particular field and explore possibilities of developing new services. It will also survey digital tools and methods already exploited in historical scholarship in order to create a catalogue of best practices, which could be applied to the field of research into cultural dissent.

**Significant attention will be given to creative strategies of research dissemination, which are instrumental for ensuring transfer of knowledge to the wider public.** The Action's participants will increase their capacities in this regard through engaging in productive dialogue with art and cultural heritage curators to reflect upon best practices of cooperation with these two milieus and the challenges of transferring research results to the wider public. Bringing researchers, programmers and curators together, tools and best practices in creating online exhibits will receive a central focus.

The challenge that the Action addresses is timely as it is designed to resonate with and provide a historical perspective on issues which are either a subject of debate inside Europe or will contribute to an understanding of Europe's neighbouring societies. **In particular, it will serve to rethink and fortify European identity in the context of the ongoing crisis which intertwines a drama of forced mobility and a challenge of commitment to a shared European project, unfolding between old and new member states.**

Moreover, the four research themes underlying the Action's Working Groups (WGs), namely the surveillance of culture, grey zone condition of artist and scholars under repressive regimes, alternative media, and remembrance, are important for understanding of and relating to contemporary societies suffering from authoritarian rule and soliciting the support of EU citizens (e.g. the case of Euromaidan protests in Ukraine). Furthermore, this legacy should make audiences more critically aware of the role and effects of contemporary cultural protest movements in democratic countries in and beyond Europe.

## **B) SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

### **I) RESEARCH COORDINATION OBJECTIVES**

1. To develop a shared understanding of how the consolidation of research agendas and relevant documentary legacies have hitherto shaped the field of research on dissent under communism across Europe and globally, and to set new research trends for the future.
2. To expand the field of research on dissent in former socialist countries by identifying actors and phenomena which have been hitherto underrepresented and understudied.
3. To give a higher research profile to the transnational dimension of cultural dissent in socialist Eastern Europe and in particular to give attention to the many ways in which a common European culture was forged before 1989 across the divided continent.
4. To examine the manner in which memory of cultural dissent has been constructed and disseminated after the fall of state socialism in 1989.
5. To serve as an intermediary and communication platform between the emerging and established transnational research initiatives.

### **II) CAPACITY-BUILDING OBJECTIVES**

1. To overcome national and disciplinary isolation of scholarly communities active in the field of research on resistance and dissent under communism and create an integrated network.
2. To create synergies between existing innovative projects and to incubate new initiatives that will continue after the end of the Action.
3. To facilitate knowledge transfer of digital research methods, tools and infrastructures for humanities and social sciences to researchers working on pre-1989 opposition under state socialism.
4. To strengthen the dissemination capacity of research in the field by designing more effective ways of incorporating knowledge about the material and intellectual legacy of cultural dissent into various art and cultural heritage curatorship initiatives throughout Europe.
5. To introduce Early Career Investigators (ECIs) to a networked, transnational, multidisciplinary and technology-conscious research environment.

## C) PROGRESS BEYOND THE STATE-OF-THE-ART AND INNOVATION POTENTIAL

### I) DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE-OF-THE-ART

Research on oppositional activities in socialist countries of Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe is not an uncharted terrain of scholarship and heritage (Falk 2011). In most former socialist countries there are numerous official and non-governmental or private research institutes, centres, archives, and museums that deal with the history of the anti-communist opposition. The explorations focus in most cases on the political activities and ideological currents of the oppositions in different countries under different historical conditions (Ash 1983, Eyal 2003, Falk 2002), but important studies on cultural activities, groups, works, artefacts, and their local or international significance have also been undertaken (Bren 2010, Kenney 2002). The most renowned writings of the opposition cultures are available in translation; other material outputs have been presented, often in individual or group exhibitions; movies on dissent are screened in cinemas all over the world. In a few important cases the connections between seemingly isolated cultural practices behind the Iron Curtain and contemporaneous cultural practices in the West have been explored (Piotrowski 2009). Some of the richest archival collections have already been made accessible. **With all those efforts aimed at identifying, documenting and duly commemorating the most spectacular cases of cultural resistance within each national setting, a good deal has been achieved. Yet the proposers are convinced that the above described ‘consolidation phase’ has reached its limits and it is necessary to go further.**

The Action proposers identify the following limitations of the consolidation phase:

**Using Cold War-era distinctions and categories and thus failing to recognize certain practices as oppositional.** The consolidation phase relied on polarized concepts and categories proliferating since the early years of the Cold War and surviving even when state socialism in several countries had been somewhat reformed (Gleason 1995, Ekiert 1996). In particular the sharp distinctions between official culture (which typically categorised its adversaries as “decadent,” “imperialist,” or “bourgeois”) and oppositional culture at home and abroad (which identified itself rather as “free,” “independent,” or “national”) has often been taken for granted. This dualist perspective obscures what should be seen rather as the interplay of imposed cultural exclusion, instances of negotiation and conscious dissent. Taken together, this interplay shaped the space in which alternatives to the official cultural values could emerge. That shortcoming has been especially notable in case of such countries as East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria or the Soviet Baltic republics, where the scarcity of the emblematic manifestations of opposition led political analysts to discard them as submissive cultures (Flam 1998). This calls for rethinking and recalibration of established methodologies and categories employed in the study of former Eastern bloc and Yugoslavia.

**Relying on nationally-focused approaches, inattentive to transnational aspects of oppositional movements.** Even though the transnational dimension was considered an essential feature of dissent in its own time, the consolidation phase unfolded mostly within the confines of national states and so tended to stress the uniqueness of each country’s historical experience. In the field of art history and art curation, considerable effort has been made to create new national frameworks to allow unofficial art practices to be incorporated into national narratives. Since 1989/91 much collecting activity has been focused on this task. What remains relatively undeveloped are comparative studies of practices across the region. Still less attention has been paid to international actors and processes that contributed to forging a common European culture prior to 1989, such as the regional networks of dissident solidarity, scholarly and professional international exchanges, mutual cultural transfers or international organizations promoting cultural freedom across the Iron Curtain (Kind-Kovács & Labov 2013, Behrends & Lindenberger 2014). Those rare efforts at internationalizing the legacy of dissent in the former socialist countries have routinely employed the problematic notion of totalitarianism to emphasize the differences of the post-war history East and West, thus

building barriers within the European culture of memory (see e.g. Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism 2008).

**Neglecting the problem of access to original archival sources due to both heterogeneity of the data and the uneven investment of European countries in digital research environments and cultural heritage infrastructures.** Access to the existing collections and their reuse in research, educational or artistic environments has been limited due to their heterogeneity, linguistic diversity, and the ephemeral nature of the documents and artefacts forming this unique legacy. This limitation is strengthened by uneven quality of metadata resulting from uneven investment in this particular realm of cultural heritage in general. When it comes to opening data for critical examination employing digital methods and tools, and to pooling resources for carrying out joint research agendas, the consolidation phase lags behind the progress that has been made in Europe in the development of digital cultural heritage infrastructures and digital research environments for knowledge discovery and popularization.

## II) PROGRESS BEYOND THE STATE-OF-THE-ART

**The Action will develop a research approach going beyond the consolidation phase described above in the following way:**

**Cold War distinctions and categories.** The Action will overcome this shortcoming by a critical examination of the consolidation phase (discourses and processes orienting research agendas and collection policies) as well as by mapping the spectrum of subversive cultural forms and manifestations in a more nuanced way, including: the effects of official surveillance of culture and counteractive efforts of international institutions engaging in cultural promotion and sponsorship; efforts at creating negotiated openings within official culture; or alternative cultural phenomena that are not easily classified as either dissident or officially accepted.

**Nationally-oriented approaches.** Meant as an international platform for sharing research results and cross-fertilizing national research agendas, the Action will be an incubator for comparative research. In particular it will focus on promoting a transnational perspective, be it in reference to Cold War competition between Eastern surveillance and Western counter-surveillance organizations, the role of mobility within professional networks of scholars and artists or the transnational culture of underground print. It will also present a comparative perspective on the dissident experiences in the countries outside the region, notably those with dictatorial legacies.

**Accessibility and interrogability of data.** Involving IT experts with experience in creating research environments as well as digital humanities practitioners, the Action will examine existing types of data and its state of digital readiness against the digital methods and tools that could be employed to explore them. In so doing it will identify prerequisites for greater data accessibility for research and curatorial purposes.

**Curatorial innovation.** Much of the material legacy of dissent is ephemeral or even immaterial – unlike the well-resourced official zones of culture prior to 1989/91. Art and cultural heritage curators, including librarians, will work with researchers and archivists to design new ways of making such objects accessible in ways which stimulate public understanding and discussion. Within the network formed by the Action, this dialogue will incorporate a new community of practice, the IT professionals with humanities and social sciences expertise, and re-focus on tools and best practices of digital curation.

## III) INNOVATION IN TACKLING THE CHALLENGE

**The main innovation of the Action is the development of a new, multidisciplinary and reflexive approach to the concept of dissent, taking into consideration the diversity of its manifestations in different cultural and artistic media, in different countries of the region and in different historical periods. The Action aims at elucidating cultures of dissent falling outside the canon of emblematic representations of opposition and resistance in diverse domains of arts and culture, such as literature and publishing, visual and performing arts, architecture, alternative music, amateur photography and film, humanities and social science scholarship.**

This new exploratory effort will infuse the study of socialist counter-cultures with a vast array of methodologies hitherto underrepresented among scholarship in this field, including: gender studies, media studies and media archaeology, visual culture studies, research on cultural transfers and entangled histories, among others.

The new approach will **broaden the understanding of surveillance of culture under socialism and its role in both conceptualising subversion as a category to describe cultural actions, and generating it.** The approach will extend the prevailing focus on censorship to include other aspects of cultural policy, such as institutional management of culture through professional associations (such as writers' or journalists' unions), the monitoring of Western media, or control over transnational mobility.

It will **reconceptualise the concept of "dissent" through the lens of the notion of cultural marginality**, encompassing ideas, actors and phenomena which fell outside of the main field of contention for cultural legitimacy, and which were not necessarily considered subversive either by its official wielders or its opponents. That includes non-canonical forms of cultural resistance, often in the grey zone between official and unofficial activity, especially in countries which did not experience mass, organised opposition movements during the period of communist rule, such as East Germany or Bulgaria. But these are also niche communities established without specific subversive intent, from confessional, ethnic and sexual minorities to punk music groups, science-fiction fan clubs and video games developers.

Through **investigation of the various alternative means and platforms of expression** (ranging from illegal broadcasts and music recordings, amateur photography and film, to exhibitions and performances in private or otherwise marginal spaces) alongside the landmark underground publishing culture, it will put emphasis on the social, practical and material aspects of cultural autonomy as it was fostered under socialism.

Focussing on the **cultural transfers between dissident milieus of different socialist countries as well as across the Iron Curtain**, enacted by networks of mobile individuals, centres of exile and Western institutions promoting cultural freedom, it will examine how attempts to overcome divisions of European culture were a common enterprise of European citizens East and West, that started well before 1989. It will investigate how these efforts compare with dissident legacies of the countries of the European South that lived through dictatorships (Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey) as well as forms of cultural and social radicalism in Western Europe.

Furthermore, the Action will also investigate the **contested ways in which the oppositional legacy has informed memory cultures** in post-socialist countries and Europe as whole.

The divergence between, on the one hand, the consolidated historical record that can be written about and understood from accessible sources through tried methods and, on the other hand, the picture that could emerge from a more comprehensive record explorable through new digital tools, remains the 'grand challenge' of modern historical scholarship in the digital era. **From a digital scholarship point of view, the Action will use the knotty problems of the legacy of state socialism to test, validate and improve mechanisms (technical and social) for making such material accessible and usable for knowledge creation and dissemination by scholars and citizens in digital environment.**

In addition to providing a hub for cutting-edge research, the Action will harness the multi-stakeholder character of the field through **providing a platform for dialogue between researchers, archivists, digital research infrastructure experts, and art and cultural heritage curators.**

## D) ADDED VALUE OF NETWORKING

### I) IN RELATION TO THE CHALLENGE

Dissent and resistance under socialism as a research area presents a paradox. It is inherently comparative and transnational as a topic due to a combination of societal diversity and homologous institutional design of the regimes, as well as the prominence of dissident solidarity networks across some countries of the Eastern bloc and Yugoslavia. Yet, the

attempts to conduct such comparative and transnational research are very piecemeal because of a mixture of funding incentives and the persistence of uncorroborated assumptions. On the one hand, the research field has hitherto benefited from relatively generous state funding, making international collaboration seem less urgent. On the other hand, due to the relatively generic nature of the socialist regimes, researchers tend to succumb to a *pars pro toto* fallacy, assuming that studying one national setting gives license to extrapolate research results to dissent and resistance in other countries, without proper corroboration stemming from comparative research.

The Action will provide such badly needed incentives. First, it will work as a **forum for the mutual enrichment of local research agendas and alignment of research approaches in a multi-country, multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder environment**, providing extensive coverage in terms of both geography and chronology of opposition and resistance. Secondly it will leverage nationally funded projects to **incubate new international collaborations in order to achieve a critical mass of consistently comparative and transnationally-focused scholarship** which overcomes linguistic and institutional barriers through collaborative effort.

The Action will create a valuable **interface for communication between different communities of practice: researchers and archivists, art and cultural heritage curators and IT experts with humanities and social sciences expertise** in order for future research to be technologically advanced and better disseminated.

## II) IN RELATION TO EXISTING EFFORTS AT EUROPEAN AND/OR INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The Action will provide a **networking hub** for participants of the following projects whose thematic scope is relevant for the Challenge:

Two international research projects, **Socialism Goes Global** (2014-2018, funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK) and **1989 after 1989: Rethinking the Fall of State Socialism in Global Perspective** (2014-2019, funded by Leverhulme Trust, UK) aim to elucidate the transnational dimension of state socialism and its fall. The Action shares the aim of both in terms of creating a critical mass of innovative research into the transnational history of dissent under socialism and will exploit opportunities for fruitful exchanges and collaborations.

**Cultural Opposition – Understanding the Cultural Heritage of Dissent in the Former Socialist Countries (COURAGE)** is a Horizon 2020 project, whose aim is to create the first digital database of both online and offline private and public collections in Europe in order to present a panorama of various forms of cultural opposition in the former socialist countries. The Action will engage with the archival output of COURAGE, using it for digitally-enabled research and for creative dissemination initiatives involving art and cultural heritage curatorship. This in turn may constitute a valid feedback for COURAGE archival practices.

In terms of digital research infrastructures and research environments, the Action will benefit from experience of the following projects:

The **Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)** - international consortium established in 1987 to develop, maintain, and promulgate hardware- and software-independent methods for encoding humanities data in electronic form. Over nearly three decades the TEI has been extraordinarily successful at achieving its objective and it is now widely used by scholarly projects and libraries around the world. The FP7 funded **Collaborative Digital Archival Research Infrastructure** (CENDARI) has among its aims the creation of virtual research environment for historians for interacting with and annotating archival resources with advanced exploration functionalities. **Pelagios** is a collective of projects which common denominator is to introduce Linked Open Data into the online resources that refer to places in the historical past in order to enable new modes of discovery and visualization of research geodata on Antiquities. **Reassembling the Republic of Letters 1500-1800** (COST Action IS1310) aims at designing a digital research environment for the study of Early Modern History. This Action will aim at capitalizing on the experience of all these projects for the study of contemporary history.

In addition, the Action will collaborate closely with and capitalize from the expertise and services provided by Europeana Research and by two European Research Infrastructure Consortia: **CLARIN** and **DARIAH**.

## 2) IMPACT

### A) EXPECTED IMPACT

#### I) SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND/OR SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

##### Short-term impacts:

1. To create a unique, pan-European and multidisciplinary network of researchers from Eastern and Western Europe sharing an aligned conceptual approach to research on dissident culture in former socialist countries of Eastern Europe.
2. To strengthen the comparative and transnational dimension of research on dissent in the Eastern bloc and former Yugoslavia.
3. To expose scholars active in this field to the benefits of working in a digital research environment in terms of practicing contemporary historical study.
4. To overcome barriers and to set new standards in the domain of exploiting research results in collaboration with art and cultural heritage curators.

##### Long-term impacts:

1. To produce a critical-mass of innovative research and eventually to trigger a new discovery phase in the field.
2. To establish a strong and active international and interdisciplinary community undertaking new collaborative initiatives that integrate in a meaningful way ECIs.
3. To achieve knowledge and technology transfer, and so to alleviate the uneven development of digital research tools and environments between EU member states in this field.
4. To achieve greater visibility and relevance of research on dissent for general audiences and so to enrich the understanding of political, cultural, and existential challenges of living under repressive regimes among EU citizens.
5. To inform debates on the identities of post-socialist EU member states and of Europe as a whole.

### B) MEASURES TO MAXIMISE IMPACT

#### I) PLAN FOR INVOLVING THE MOST RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

While particular research results will be of interest to the **(1) scholarly community**, the Action also targets those communities of practice which either **(2) mediate access to knowledge** about the past by providing services to investigators (archivists and librarians, but also IT professionals) or **(3) channel the results of their studies to wider audiences** (art and cultural heritage curatorship). The Action will directly engage these three groups of stakeholders through hands-on collaboration in dedicated Working Groups, through Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) and Training Schools targeting primarily ECIs. The first group will train with cutting edge digital tools and strengthen their dissemination capacity. The second group will understand better the needs of scholars working in the field in order to provide better services. The third group will capitalize on scholarly expertise for art and cultural heritage curation purposes. Together, the three communities of practice will discover new opportunities of digital curation. Throughout the Action's course, external representatives of each of these target groups will be solicited feedback. The record of this collaboration will be summarized in the Closing Report and expanded in the final dissemination volume.

#### II) DISSEMINATION AND/OR EXPLOITATION PLAN

To strengthen the impact of the Action, dissemination activities will be targeted at diverse audiences. For the academic community an important vehicle for disseminating the Action's results will be **publications in national and international peer-reviewed journals or**

**collected volumes.** Whenever possible, publishing in open access will be preferred. To maximize impact, participants will be encouraged to seek external funding for future collaborations incubated by this Action.

Throughout the Action participants will share their research findings and results **participating in national and international events.** In addition, to promote Action's outputs the **proposers will organise a series of three thematic conferences.** The conferences will address the following cross-cutting themes shared across two or more research Working Groups:

1. *Approaches to the Records of Communist States beyond the Coming to Terms with the Communist Past* - of particular interest to WG01 and WG02 which put records of communist states in focus and for WG04 with its research on transitional justice.
2. *Meanings of Marginality in Official and Unofficial Culture in the former socialist countries* - of particular interest to WG02 and WG03 which reflect on fringe cultural ideas and practices in the official and unofficial realm respectively.
3. *Cultural Transfers across the Iron Curtain* - of particular interest for all research areas given the central importance of the focus on transnational circulation of people and ideas.

The conference series is designed to validate the Action's research results in the larger scholarly community. It will combine presentations by WG participants with feedback from invited experts and academics in panel sessions. It will be accompanied by workshops to discuss the opportunities and challenges of collaboration between different communities of practice: scholars, archivists, IT professionals and art and cultural heritage curators. The last conference of the series will have the character of the final event, giving an overview of the findings of the Joint Closing Report, with participation of all WGs. The conference series proceedings will be published after the Action's end pending approval of the COST Association.

The Action will support with COST networking tools the creation of online exhibits and digital humanities projects accessible online, that will result from the collaboration between participants.

The Project **website** will be set up to serve as the main communication channel for all target audiences. It will contain announcements concerning the progress of the Action, key deliverables (IPR permitting) and calls for participation in open events. It will also embed the Action's media feeds. To make potential visitors and users of the website aware of the project, a **mailing list** of potentially interested institutions and individuals will be generated early in the project. It will include relevant researchers, digital humanities community and art and cultural heritage curatorship community.

## C) POTENTIAL FOR INNOVATION VERSUS RISK LEVEL

### I) POTENTIAL FOR SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGICAL AND/OR SOCIOECONOMIC INNOVATION BREAKTHROUGHS

As detailed in sections 1.3.2., 1.3.3 and 2.1, the Action will focus on triggering a new phase in research on cultures of dissent in socialist Europe. It will establish a strong pan-European and multidisciplinary community of researchers which will produce new knowledge on phenomena and activities of cultural opposition based on a shared conceptual framework.

The Action will produce research collaborations which in long term will lead to elucidation of hitherto less known phenomena in dissident culture under communist regimes. Many of these are already identified and researched, or are under research at national level by Action participants. Moreover the Action will capitalize on newly available materials (including security files, oral histories and private papers), as well as revisit archival sources that are well known locally and internationally. **By bringing together and coordinating a large network of experts the Action will enable comparative and synthetic studies**

**revealing a much larger and much more complex picture both in geographical and chronological perspectives.**

The scope of expertise that the Action harnesses is larger than the current country composition of the research network. While not every former socialist country has its representative in the Action at the stage of application, all regions of former socialist Europe are represented and in case of many of the scholars the workplace is different from their area of expertise, often involving a comparative perspective. As detailed in section 3.3, the Action participants are already able to cover the topic sufficiently geographically, chronologically and in terms of scientific disciplines. Nevertheless the participation of further COST countries relevant to the Action's mission will be sought.

**The Action will adopt a bottom-up approach, building on existing research and knowledge of archival collections, and a wish to collaborate expressed by Action participants.** The bottom-up approach, confirmed by active involvement of the participants in developing this application and by already existing collaborations, will outweigh the risks inherent in coordinating research in a large network. The collaboration will be further strengthened by COST networking tools (STSMs, workshops, training schools, etc.) aiming primarily ECIs.

The Action aims at strengthening the ability of researchers, especially ECIs to apply digital tools and methods. The risks related to this aim are minimised by the fact that there are digital research environments experts among Action participants and that the group has already established contacts with digital-humanities projects mentioned in section 1.4.2.

It is also planned that the Action will develop a platform for dialogue between researchers, collectors, digital research infrastructure experts, and art and cultural heritage curators leading to dissemination of knowledge about the phenomena of cultural dissent. Risks related to this aim are minimal due to the fact that curators experienced in working on this phenomenon are a part of the Action.

## 3) IMPLEMENTATION

### A) DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK PLAN

#### I) DESCRIPTION OF WORKING GROUPS

##### **WORKING GROUPS: OBJECTIVES**

The main principle organizing the Action's activities, informed by the most promising emerging trends in recent scholarship, distributes the broad spectrum of manifestations of cultural subversion into three major problem areas corresponding to Action's WGs 01-03: *Culture under Surveillance*, *Culture in the Grey Zone* and *Alternative Cultures*. The cross-cutting theme of post-socialist culture of memory will be addressed by WG 04. The participants solicited to join the Action at this stage provide for a balanced distribution between the working groups, a principle that will be proactively maintained at the Action's course. Thus, **four WGs will be created with the following objectives:**

##### **WG01: Culture under Surveillance**

This WG will analyse dissent as it was influenced in a direct and top-down manner by institutions wielding power of surveillance in the realm of culture, i.e. of documenting, classifying, analysing, reporting and intervening in what was deemed to be subversive. It will examine the effects of the exposure of culture to political surveillance, i.e. the impact of censors, the security apparatus and the professional organizations in the former socialist countries on the life trajectories of cultural creators, cultural events and objects, as well as the strategies of counter-surveillance performed by Western state institutions and transnational centres of cultural transmission such as Radio Free Europe. In particular, it will examine how such transnational rivalry opened spaces for cultural alternatives.

##### **WG02: Culture in the Grey Zone**

The activities of this WG are informed by an understanding of resistance as an act of negotiated autonomy and are aimed at exploring the ambiguous realm between the official culture of former socialist countries on the one hand, and openly dissenting cultural activities on the other. This WG examines the dilemmas of members of academic and artistic communities who, without engaging in open dissent, cultivated ties to both organized opposition and transnational scientific and artistic networks, and often played a mediating role in introducing subversive, often Western ideas, trends and theories to the arts, humanities and social sciences as well as to everyday cultural practices. This research will enable a better understanding of the double roles played by these individuals and groups, namely those of simultaneously legitimizing and subverting official culture and engaging in East-West dialogue. The research will take into consideration the circumstances affecting life choices of the grey zone artists and scholars such as the existence of organized cultural opposition outside the official realm, degree of dependence of such professions on state patronage, the degree of cultural isolation from the West or relationships to Western institutions promoting cultural freedom.

### **WG03: Alternative Cultures**

This WG will explore the role of the alternative platforms in the creation and dissemination of unlicensed ideas and cultural practices in the former socialist countries that fostered cultural autonomy. It aims at generating a novel understanding of the origins, conditions and effects of the alternative media through cross-examination in a comparative, transnational and interdisciplinary perspective of its most emblematic forms, such as the underground culture of print, together with the less studied expressions ranging from illegal broadcasts and music recordings, amateur photography and film, to exhibitions and performances in private or otherwise marginal spaces. It will examine how the ephemerality of the alternative media products testifies to the precarious conditions of their creation and how it is reflected in an uneven archival record of different forms of alternative cultural practices, ranging from national and international collections of samizdat and tamizdat to a variety of objects which have yet to be archived and recorded in a systematic fashion.

### **WG04: Cultural Memory of Dissent**

The activities of this WG will focus on exploring the variety of interrelated cultures of remembrance of pre-1989 dissent across the breadth of Europe. Its aim is to examine understandings of the oppositional legacy in both official and alternative narratives and their different readings; the efforts aimed at integrating this legacy in the broader European culture of remembrance and their impact; the contemporary uses of the dissident past in the recent instances of civic protest both in the EU and among its close neighbours, in particular the Ukraine. WG04 will also examine the relationship between commemorating oppositional practices and transitional justice, an important dimension of post-communist politics, which has influenced the relationships both within the group of former socialist countries, and between them and their partners in the European Union.

In addition, **two interface WGs will be created** to strengthen the impact and innovation capacity of the researcher participants of the Action through engagement with two groups of stakeholders: IT professionals with humanities and social sciences expertise (WG05) and practitioners in the area of art and cultural heritage curation (WG06). The activities of both WGs will be coordinated with the workflow of the research WGs 01-04.

### **WG05: Mediating Research through Technology**

This WG will facilitate the knowledge transfer of the advances in digital research environments for the specific needs of the Action's participants. The group will include both researchers with experience in applying digital humanities methodologies and tools and IT professionals. Together they will map the technologies applicable to various stages of a research project (data capture, processing, exploration and presentation) against the specificity of the Challenge in terms of approaches and corresponding digital tools, sources and collection policies, as well as issues of ethics and privacy. Their findings will be consulted with other WGs to ensure their validity. The review will inform Joint Review Report which will describe both the state of the art and possibilities for providing new services to researchers. Based on

the review, trainings (STSMs and training schools) will be organized to enable a hands-on experience of working with selected digital initiatives most suiting their needs.

#### **WG06: Art and Cultural Heritage Curation**

This WG will strengthen the capacity of the Action participants for disseminating their research through working with art and cultural heritage curators. Its aims are to share experiences and to understand better the legal, institutional and social challenges of providing public access to documents and artefacts in exhibitions and digital humanities, to explore the role of investigator as contributor to curatorial events and initiatives at different stages of their lifecycle, and to probe the generative role of exhibitions in generating further research. It will especially explore the tools and best practices of online curation. The group will include researchers, art and cultural heritage curators and digital environments professionals and will consult their initial findings and ideas with other WGs.

#### **WORKPLAN: ACTIVITIES, TASKS AND DELIVERABLES**

The Action is organized into four interlocking phases that distribute in a coherent and uniform way the tasks, and the respective activities and deliverables. It provides a balance between incremental progress towards the achievement of Action's objectives and inclusiveness towards participants that might wish to join the network in the course of the Action.

In the **first phase (M0-6)** the Management Committee (MC) and WGs will discuss concepts and methodologies to ensure common understanding of Action's objectives and activities and subsequently refine the workplan to allow for the successful and effective completion of the Action. During **Working Group Kick-off Meetings**, WGs 01-04 will establish a protocol for sharing their current research projects as well as broader research agendas and approaches in order to facilitate pooling them together. WG 05-06 will plan for the state-of-the-art reviews, i.e. how to effectively map, respectively, the digital research infrastructures and environments in the humanities, and the relevant best practices in art and cultural heritage curatorship, against the specificity of the Challenge and the particular needs of the Action's participants. They will also establish a consultation procedure to ensure feedback from other WGs and from stakeholders beyond Action participants.

In the **second phase (M6-18)** the participants will organise the **Working Group Review Meetings**. During the meetings WGs 01-04 will discuss and pool together novel research agendas, approaches and data in order to launch future collaborations. WGs 05-06 will conduct their state-of-the-art reviews and discuss their results both with other WGs and with stakeholders beyond the Action participants. This phase will be closed with delivering the **Joint Review Report**, synthesizing reviews conducted by all WGs analysing the state of the art, and scoping possibilities of leveraging and creating synergies between existing research initiatives, digital research tools and dissemination best practices. These will serve as guidelines and priorities for the work of the WGs, as well as reference material for interested stakeholders. COST networking tools, especially STSMs, will be used in the process of preparing the Report subject to quality review.

In the **third phase (M12-48)** members of WGs will collaborate on projects, implementing plans submitted to the MC subject to quality review. There will be at least three submission rounds (one per year, depending on the Action's budget). In each round, participants will submit implementation plans requesting employment of COST networking tools necessary to achieve their objectives. The implementation plans will be submitted in three broad categories, corresponding to the Action's main aims:

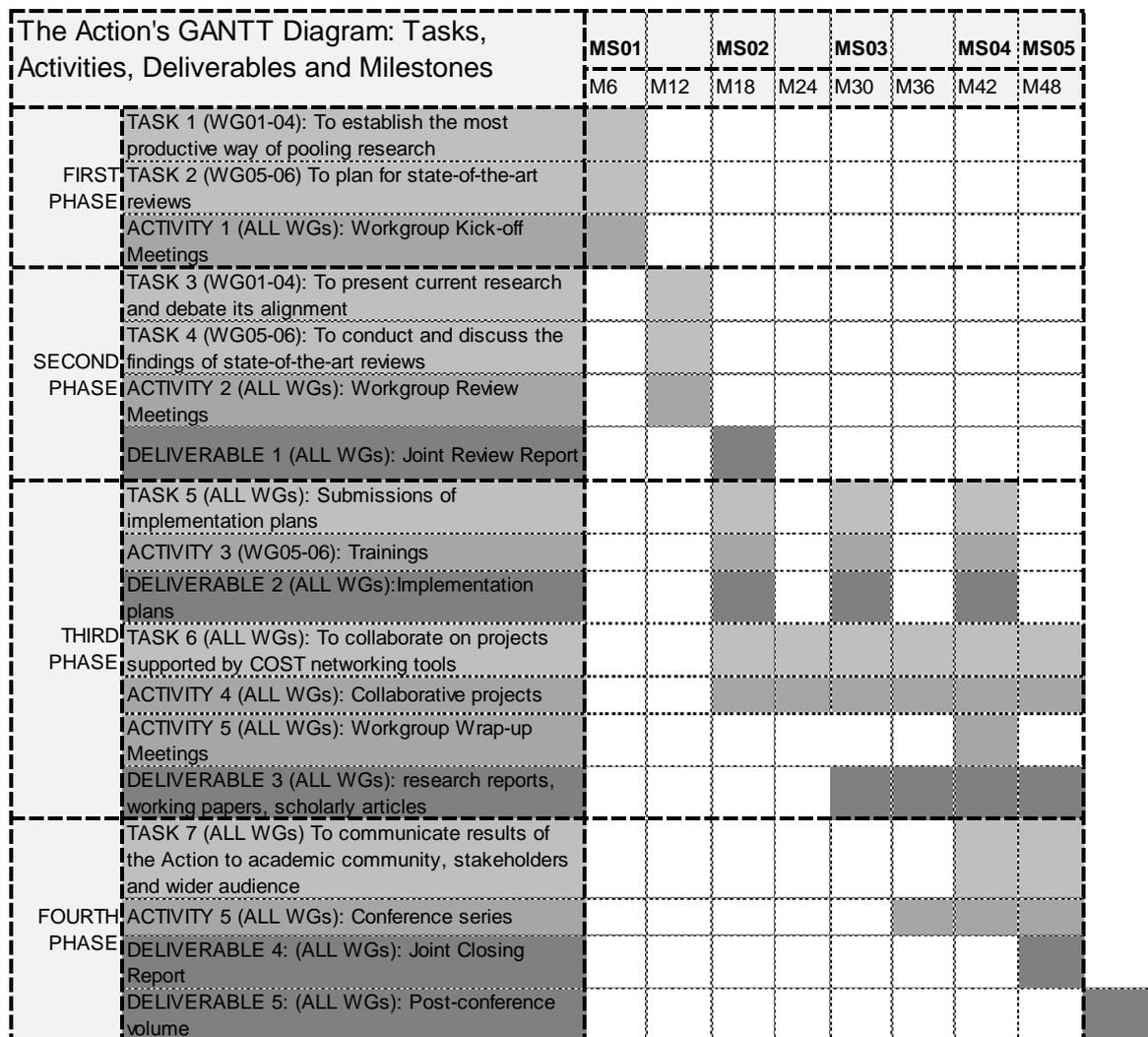
- (1) Leveraging current research through collaborative projects
- (2) Exploiting digital methods and tools for research on cultural dissent under socialism
- (3) Strengthening dissemination capacity through collaboration with art curators

In each round, depending on the Action's yearly budget, the MC will allocate funding to implement those plans using COST networking tools (STSMs and others, if applicable) based on the evaluation of the submitted plans by a Review Committee. WG's 05-06 will organize **trainings** (Training Schools or STSMs) for researchers to enhance their skills in the corresponding area of expertise: the application of digital methods and the dissemination of knowledge to the wider public via traditional as well as virtual exhibitions.

To document results of the collaborative projects, Action participants will submit research reports, working papers, or scholarly articles. **Working Group Wrap-up Meetings** will be held to sum up the progress of the Action and plan for post-Action activities.

In the **fourth phase (M30-48)** the final results of the Action will be communicated to the researcher community, the stakeholders and the broader audience, through articles submitted to scholarly journals and through the conference series. Individual articles accepted for quality publications will be supported from the Action’s budget (see section 2.2). **Joint Final Report** will summarize the Action’s experiences. A Final Action Dissemination volume, including final conference proceedings and the final report will be published after the Action’s end, pending approval of the COST Association.

## II) GANTT DIAGRAM



### Milestones (MS):

MS01: Procedures and workflows established.

MS02: Joint Review Report submitted.

MS03: Trainings held, implementation plans submitted, collaborations ongoing.

MS04: Outputs submitted. Wrap-up Meetings held.

MS05: Conference series held, Joint Closing Report submitted.

## III) PERT CHART (OPTIONAL)

#### IV) RISK AND CONTINGENCY PLANS

RISK	CONTINGENCY PLAN
Inability to develop a shared understanding necessary for consolidation of research agendas and for setting new research trends for the future.	A core group of proposers have already developed a theoretical framework for this collaboration; new participants are recruited on the basis of this framework.
Insufficient expertise in terms of geographical or chronological scope.	While the Action involves participants from all the regions of former socialist Europe, including most of the countries, as well as participants from research centres of excellence in Western Europe, in case of detecting significant gaps in the scope of expertise, involvement of relevant experts will be actively pursued.
Insufficient coordination of research agendas and projects to produce tangible outputs: reports, scientific publications, applications for collaborative funding.	MC and the Core Group will monitor progress of each WG and the production of outputs and make adjustments when necessary.
Insufficient knowledge transfer between researchers and experts in digital humanities methods and environments.	Interests and preparedness of researchers will be evaluated at an early stage and trainings adapted to their needs.
Weak collaboration between researchers and stakeholders: art and cultural heritage curators.	Action participants will involve their already existing contacts and networks of art and cultural heritage institutions and individual curators.

#### B) MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES

Management structure and procedures of the Action will follow the rules and principles governing COST Actions and established in a series of documents under the collective heading of "COST Implementation Rules."

The Action will be managed by a **Management Committee (MC)** comprising up to two nominated representatives of each participant COST country. The Committee will elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair at its first meeting. At this meeting the MC will also take a decision on a Grant Holder institution. ECIs will take part in the MC on equal footing with their more experienced colleagues. This will provide them with a hands-on opportunity to learn how collaborative projects are developed and managed, and will prepare them to submitting applications for new projects. To ensure efficiency **MC Core Group (CG)** will be created including Chair, Vice-Chair and chairs of Working Groups (WG), a Grant Holder representative, and supported by Action secretary. The WG Chairs will also be elected during the first MC meeting. **The MC will define, plan and approve** Action's scientific activities and a related budget. It will also **monitor the overall progress** of the Action, the achievement of Action objectives and the timely submission of deliverables. The MC will meet twice a year, when possible in a conjunction with other Action activities and will use electronic communication between the meetings. The activities of the Action will be monitored on a day-to-day basis by the **Core Group (CG)** which will meet as necessary, preferably in conjunction with other Action activities. CG will also use electronic communication tools. **The Chair** with the input from the CG will be responsible for the submission of required reports.

MC may set up **ad hoc committees** if necessary (e.g. a Review Committee) to which it will delegate specific tasks and responsibilities. **Dissemination Group** under the leadership of members of the MC will be established to initiate, coordinate and monitor dissemination activities of the Action and the individual WGs. The Group will plan for the architecture of the website and for a schedule of its development and launching. A protocol for providing new, relevant information will be agreed. During the fourth, final phase of the Action a plan for the maintenance of the website after the end of the Action will be discussed.

**Project-management software** will be implemented to facilitate communication and collaboration between MC and CG members and between participants on common documents, preparation of events and other activities. Detailed communication will be facilitated by the use of internal discussion board or a wiki, along with cloud services to host important documents.

**The Action participants will work in 6 WGs**, participation in more than one WG will be possible as well as joining temporarily any activity of specific interest organised by any WG. **WG Chairs** will be responsible for planning and implementation of WG activities and for the timely submission of deliverables. Each WG will meet at least once a year. At its first meeting each WG will define in more detail their overall workplan and activities in order to achieve the planned objectives. Every year each WG will define a workplan for the next year and a related budget taking into consideration the achievements of the previous period.

### **C) NETWORK AS A WHOLE**

The composition of the network corresponds to the ambitions and objectives of the Action. **55 proposers from 21 European countries** of both Eastern and Western Europe participated in developing the proposal. The network features **expertise on dissident movements covering the majority of former socialist countries belonging to Eastern bloc and Yugoslavia. Representatives of every historical region of Europe relevant to the Challenge (East, Central and Southeastern Europe as well as the Baltics) are involved and their geographical scope of expertise is complemented by participants from Western Europe.** The participation of further COST countries relevant to the Action's mission will be sought. **The majority of relevant research centres in Europe will be involved** in the project which ensures that it will integrate the research community across Europe and will enable achieving the Action's objectives of research coordination, knowledge exchange and transfer, and capacity building.

The co-proposers represent different disciplines of the humanities and social sciences relevant for achieving the Action objectives: anthropology, art history, archival studies, digital humanities, history, literary and cultural studies, philosophy, political science and sociology which corresponds to the **interdisciplinary design of the Action**. Several of the participants specialise not only in the study of the opposition under communist regimes but also its afterlife in post-1989 period. Some have studied also authoritarian regimes of Western Europe and will contribute a comparative perspective. **Participation of key stakeholders** – experienced IT professionals with digital humanities and social sciences expertise, as well as art and cultural heritage curators – will increase the impact of the Action. Among the latter group, the Ukrainian Maidan Museum will bring in expertise in documenting contemporary protest movements and relevance of dissident legacy in post-1989, while benefiting from the exchange of best practices in WG06.

**Participation of ITC in the Action is predominant**, with researchers from centres in ITC countries leading the preparations of the proposal. They will continue to play an active role in initiating, leading and organizing Action activities including organization of meetings.

The network includes a **balanced number of experienced researchers and ECIs with significant achievements in the field**. Nevertheless further participation of ECIs will be sought and ECI participants will be offered opportunities to act as initiators and leaders of activities.

The network of proposers is committed to the principle and practices of **gender equality** and represents a good gender balance among co-proposers. In proposing and selecting candidates to leadership positions in the Action (Core Group members, WG chairs, etc.) gender equality principle will be further respected.