

## COST Action IS1107

### European Network for Conflict Research (ENCoRe)

#### FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (29 March 2012 – 28 March 2016)

**This report assessing the full lifetime of the Action is submitted by the Rapporteur.**

**Confidentiality:** This report, other than the Summary Assessment, is confidential to the Management Committee and the COST Association (including the Committee of Senior Officials, Scientific Committee and Administration). The Summary Assessment is non-confidential.

#### **Summary assessment of outcomes and impacts (for publication):**

This COST action has produced outstanding outputs, a hugely valuable data resource and a European network of world-leading academics. I would suggest that this action is the gold-standard by which other COST actions need to be judged against. The COST action has clearly achieved its main objective by developing the European Network of Conflict Research (ENCoRe) and training them to analyse conflict processes using sophisticated methods. The successes of this network in terms of outputs, resources and network development are outlined below.

Firstly, examining the outputs associated with this COST action: the prize winning book by Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug is truly excellent, providing the academic community with a sophisticated understanding of the causes of civil war. Likewise, publications in *The American Political Science Review*, *International Organisation*, *International Security*, *International Security* and *The Journal of Peace Research* suggest that these academics are very much at the top of their game. These scholars have produced incredibly important research articles that have improved the quality of research into intrastate conflict enormously. The COST action has brought together academics who have produced world-leading research outputs, which would not have been possible without this funding.

Secondly, the production of a new user friendly conflict dataset and portal is very valuable to both the policy and academic communities. Cutting edge research into intrastate conflict needs multiple layers of spatial data that can be easily linked together. The standardisation of several datasets and the linking of them together using the Geographical Research on War, Unified Platform (GROWup) is massively important and will provide conflict researchers with an important resource for many years to come. Not surprisingly, it was awarded a prize. Again without the underpinning research and networking opportunities provided by the COST action this would not be possible.

Finally, the network itself helps lay the foundations for future research into intrastate conflict. In particular the network organisers were keen to foster young female researchers (which are generally underrepresented in the conflict processes field). The workshops on GIS, visualisation and events data methods are extremely useful in developing the skillsets of political scientists in Europe and the involvement of experts from the United States will clearly enhance the sophistication of the research carried out by this group of promising academics. In some ways the development of these links and skills are the most important success of this COST action, leading to a future generation of world-leading researchers.

Overall, the success of this COST action is hugely impressive, it has produced outstanding outputs, but has also developed tools and a sustainable research capacity. This was an outstanding COST action and deserves top marks.



Confidential to COST Association and Action Management Committee

<b>I. Assessment of Achievements</b>					
<b>MoU objectives</b>					
I believe that the action has achieved all of its objectives.					
<b>MoU deliverables</b>					
The COST action appears to have delivered on most of its objectives and where it was only partially successful in terms of dissemination forecasting. However, looking at the authors justifications for only partial delivery I would say that they are being a little harsh on themselves. They seem to have delivered a hugely successful project.					
<b>Co-authored publications and FP7/ H2020 proposals/ projects</b>					
Publications are of the highest international standard. FP7/H2020 proposals/projects is probably the weakest part of the project. While the COST action was hugely successful, there seem to be no plans for follow on funding.					
<b>Additional Outputs and achievements</b>					
The dataset and portal is hugely important as is the development of young researchers.					
<b>General assessment of achievements</b>					
To make the overall assessment of achievements:					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Select the overall level of risk that best corresponds to that of the MoU objectives and deliverables<sup>1</sup> (high/ moderate/ low) at the time the Action was approved and</li> <li>2. Select the statement that corresponds to the level of achievement of these objectives, delivery of deliverables and any additional outputs. Policy as well as scientific/ technological outputs and impacts must be addressed.</li> </ol>					
Correlate the selected options in order to arrive at the overall assessment (which is a result of the combination of achievement level and risk/ ambition level).					
	Level of MoU objective achievement, MoU deliverable delivery and additional outputs	General risk/ ambition level of Action MoU objectives and/ or deliverables (at the time of submission)			
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Low	
Scientific/ technological and policy outcomes and impact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Achieved all MoU objectives and delivered MoU deliverables and delivered multiple valid additional outputs, contributed to the COST mission of “COST enables break-through scientific developments leading to new concepts and products and thereby contributes to strengthen Europe’s research and innovation capacities.”	Excellent	Excellent	Very Good
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Achieved all MoU objectives and delivered MoU deliverables and delivered at least one valid additional output.	Excellent	Excellent	Very Good
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Achieved all MoU objectives and delivered MoU deliverables OR achieved most MoU objectives and delivered some MoU deliverables AND delivered at least one valid additional output.	Excellent	Very Good	Good
	<input type="checkbox"/>	The majority of MoU objectives achieved and MoU deliverables delivered and no valid additional outputs.	Very Good	Good	Fair
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Half of the MoU objectives achieved and MoU deliverables delivered.	Good	Fair	Poor

<sup>1</sup> When assessing achievement of MoU objectives and delivery of MoU deliverables any changes approved by the (Scientific Committee/ CSO) must be considered the base against which the assessment is made.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Few if any of the MoU objectives achieved and MoU deliverables delivered although there were some other valid outputs.	Fair	Poor	Fail
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Action failed to achieve any MoU objectives, deliver any MoU deliverables, or deliver any valid additional outcomes.	Poor	Fail	Fail

### II. Assessment of the Networking

**Added value of the networking**

1. Comment on the Action's description of the added value of the networking

The development of the research network added significant value to European scientific research. The outputs in the top journals would not have been possible without this network

2. For each of the Action MoU objectives achieved and any additional outputs listed by the Action identify whether the networking added value was essential for their achievement (would the output have been generated anyway, to the same level of quality, without the networking via the Action).

MoU objective	Dependence of achievement on the Action networking		
	Fully	Partially	Independent
To coordinate and accelerate the construction and maintenance of conflict datasets with the help of an integrated online portal.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide access to disaggregated, integrated, spatially explicit and user-friendly conflict data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
improve the technical and methodological skills of young European researchers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copy additional output from Final Achievement Report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Select which of the following statements best summarises the added value of the Action networking with regard to the Action achievements (MoU objectives and deliverables, co-authored publications and FP7/H2020 proposals/ projects and additional outputs) as listed in point I.D of the Achievement Report and point 2 above:

All of the Action's achievements were fully dependent on the Action networking [Excellent]

All of the Action's achievements were fully or partially dependent on the Action networking [Very Good]

Most of the Action's achievements were fully or partially dependent on the Action networking [Good]

At least half of the Action's achievements were partially dependent on the Action networking [Fair]

The majority of the Action's achievements were independent of (would have occurred anyway, even without) the Action networking [Poor]

All of the Action's achievements were independent of (would have occurred anyway, even without) the Action networking [Fail]

3. Assess the validity of the Action's statement regarding the necessity of the added value of the Action networking for the Action co-authored publications:

Action statement is valid

Action statement is not valid for the following publications for the following reasons

(specify which publications and justify/ explain)

### III. Assessment of Impacts<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Scientific/ technological, Economic, Societal



1. With reference to the definition of impacts in Annex 1 comment on the validity, relevance and significance (in particular importance and timeliness) of the impacts (Scientific/ technological, Economic, Societal) claimed by the Action (in Section I.D of the Achievement Report).

2. Indicate any additional possible impacts not considered by the Action.

Transfer of knowledge and best practices between European researchers; More and better research at a lower cost. This has clearly been achieved and is hugely valuable for the science base of Europe.
Improved communication strategies. Transfer of research output to general public. See <i>The Economist</i> 9 Nov 2013 for example. Again has been achieved.
Development of a machine-learning classifier to select articles for event coding as part of a semi-automatic coding pipeline (Croicu/Weidmann) A very important tool, and again extremely useful for academic research in the discipline.

**Overall assessment of impacts**

Select the statement that best describes the Action's impacts:

Multiple highly significant impacts are reasonably foreseen, at least one of which is already observed [Excellent]

Multiple highly significant impacts are reasonably foreseen for the future OR one highly or moderately significant impact is already observed [Very Good]

One highly significant or multiple moderately significant impacts are reasonably foreseen for the future [Good]

One moderately significant impact or multiple impacts of low significance is/ are reasonably foreseen for the future OR one impact of low significant is already observed [Fair]

At least one impact of low significance may occur in the future [Poor]

No impacts have occurred or can be foreseen to occur in the future [Fail]

#### IV. Assessment of Dissemination and exploitation of Action results

1. Assess the effectiveness of the Action's dissemination and exploitation approach.

Perhaps a little more could be done here considering the importance of the research. However, they have engaged with the relevant actors and the workshop and policy-brief seem appropriate for engagement outside of the academy.

2. Indicate whether each initiative implemented by the Action was effective and added value or not.

Item/ activity	Target audience	Result	Hyperlink	Effective and added value Y/N
Conference in Bonn at the German Development Institute, 3-5 March 2015	Policy community	A much better understanding of what policy makers and governments need as well as improved information about what our research can offer	<a href="http://www.die-gdi.de/en/events/encore-meeting-2015/">http://www.die-gdi.de/en/events/encore-meeting-2015/</a>	Y
Policy brief	Policy community	DIE Briefing paper 4/2016	<a href="https://www.die-gdi.de/en/briefing-paper/article/pro-government-militias-human-rights-abuses-and-the-ambiguous-role-of-foreign-aid/">https://www.die-gdi.de/en/briefing-paper/article/pro-government-militias-human-rights-abuses-and-the-ambiguous-role-of-foreign-aid/</a>	Y

3. Select which of the following statements best describes the Action

There were many highly effective Action activities focusing on dissemination and exploitation of Action results [Excellent]

All Action activities focusing on dissemination and exploitation of Action results were effective [Very Good]

- Most Action activities focusing on dissemination and exploitation of Action results were effective [Good]
- A few Action activities focusing on dissemination and exploitation of Action results were effective [Fair]
- The activities undertaken focusing on dissemination and exploitation were ineffective [Poor]
- The Action did not undertake any valid activities focusing on dissemination and exploitation of Action results [Fail]

## V. Assessment of Action Success(s)

COST regularly communicates the successes of Actions. Please comment on the validity of the aspect(s) identified by this Action as its greatest successes (see Final Achievement Report Section I.G). An absolute success, a hugely important research tool and will make a lasting impact on the discipline and on policy decisions. However, the COST coordinators could have also highlighted the upskilling of numerous young researchers and the production of world-leading outputs. They undersell themselves.

If you believe that another aspect(s) (outcomes and/ or impacts, rather than activities) of the Action should be considered its greatest success(es) please define these below (maximum two).

Description of the success story	Dimension of the success Breakthrough: scientific, technological or socioeconomic Policy implementation (specify which policy) Capacity building)
GROWup: Construction of a user-friendly data portal based on a relational database and supported by an active network of scholars who contribute to its creation and maintenance. Receiver of the 2015 J. D. Singer Data Innovation Award, American Political Science Association (Conflict Processes Section)	Scientific breakthrough, capacity building

## VI. Assessment of the management of the Action budget

### Funds spent outside of the COST countries

- If the Action spent funds on STSMs to approved institutions in International Partner Countries (IPC) or Near Neighbour Countries (NNC) and/ or STSMs from an approved institution in a NNC please assess the value of these activities to the Action.

Add comment here

- If the Action spent funds on any "Invited Speakers" for meetings and/ or Training Schools or on Dissemination meetings please assess the value these added to the Action

World-leading experts were invited. There is no doubt in my mind that they are some of the most important researchers in the field and as such will provide invaluable insights for the European academics. Wholly justified.

### General comments on Action management

It appears to be a very well run COST action.

## Action Rapporteur details and procedures

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In completing the Assessment Report the Action Rapporteur

- reviewed the following documents:
  - Action MoU (insert hyperlink)

- Draft Action Achievement Report
- XXXXXXX
- used the following methodology: XXXXXXX.

Please remember to write a summary assessment of outcomes, impacts and successes on the first page of this report. This summary will be made public, while the rest of this report will not.



## Annex

### Definitions:

<b>COST Action Challenge (main aim)</b>	"The research question addressed by the COST Action targeting scientific, technological, and / or socioeconomic problems"
<b>COST Action Innovation</b>	"The creation and / or development of new or improved concepts, products, processes, services, and / or technologies that are made available to markets, governments and society"
<b>COST Action objectives</b>	"COST Action objectives are the results that an Action needs to achieve in order to respond to meet its challenge. These are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) and twofold: research coordination objectives and capacity building objectives."
<b>COST Action research coordination objectives</b>	"Achieving these objectives turns COST Actions from initially scattered teams into one transnational team and leverages the existing funded research. These objectives entail the distribution of tasks, sharing of knowledge and know-how, and the creation of synergies among Action participants to achieve specific outputs."
<b>COST Action capacity building objectives</b>	"Achieving these objectives entail building critical mass to drive scientific progress, thereby strengthening the European Research Area. They can be achieved by the delivery of specific outputs and / or through network features or types and levels of participation."
<b>COST Action networking activities</b>	"any activities organised by the COST Action (whether or not directly funded by COST) in order to achieve research coordination and capacity building objectives."
<b>COST Action networking tools</b>	"instruments through which eligible activities can be funded"
<b>COST Action outputs</b>	"direct results from the COST Action activities. These can be codified knowledge, tacit knowledge, technology, and societal applications."
<b>COST Action impact</b>	"the short- to long-term scientific, technological, and / or socioeconomic changes produced by a COST Action, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended."
<b>COST Action deliverable</b>	"a distinct, expected and tangible output of the Action, meaningful in terms of the Action's overall objectives such as a report, a document, a technical diagram, a software etc. Action deliverables are used to measure its progress and success."
<b>COST Action milestones</b>	"Control points in the Action that help to chart progress. They are also needed at intermediary points so that, if problems have arisen, corrective measures can be taken. A milestone may be a critical decision point in the Action where, for example, the MC must decide which of several technologies to adopt for further development (e.g. core group and MC meetings, mid-term reviews)"
<b>Inclusiveness Target Country (ITC):</b>	Current COST Member Countries targeted by the COST inclusiveness Policy ("Inclusiveness Target Countries" (ITC)): EU 13 (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia), EU candidate countries (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Turkey) and potential EU candidate countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina). In addition, to comply with the EC criteria for 'Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation', Portugal and Luxemburg are included.