



**European Cooperation
in Science and Technology
- COST -**

Brussels, 8 December 2011

Secretariat

COST 4179/11

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Subject : Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as COST Action IS1107: European Network for Conflict Research (ENCoRe)

Delegations will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for COST Action as approved by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) at its 183rd meeting on 30 November 2011.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
For the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as
COST Action IS1107
EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR CONFLICT RESEARCH (ENCORE)

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 4154/11 “Rules and Procedures for Implementing COST Actions”, or in any new document amending or replacing it, the contents of which the Parties are fully aware of.
2. The main objective of the Action is to coordinate and accelerate the construction and maintenance of conflict datasets with an integrated online portal that allows researchers and policy makers to analyse and forecast the outbreak and course of political violence.
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 40 million in 2011 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 Chapter V of the document referred to in Point 1 above.

A. ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

The upheavals in North Africa and the Middle East in early 2011 caught most analysts and decision makers by surprise. In order to better prepare researchers and policy makers for future conflicts, this COST Action will build a new network called the European Network of Conflict Research (ENCoRe). Bringing together scholars in at least 10 COST countries, the network is supported by innovative tools for data integration and analysis. The aim of the Action is to coordinate and accelerate the construction and maintenance of conflict datasets with the help of an integrated online portal that allows researchers and policy makers to analyse and predict the outbreak and course of conflict processes around the world. Focusing on civil war and related types of political violence such as violent protest, riots, state repression and terrorism, our goal is to overcome institutional fragmentation currently hindering progress in European conflict research and to complement country-based analyses of countries with integrated data that enable scholars to study a wide range of risk factors. To achieve these objectives, the Action will launch a series of activities organized around the database system, as well as workshops with scientists and policy makers and training sessions for younger researchers.

Keywords: conflict research, risk analysis, political violence, relational data bases, geographic information systems

B. BACKGROUND

B.1 General background

The upheavals in North Africa and the Middle East in early 2011 caught most analysts and decision makers by surprise. In order to better prepare for future conflicts and situations with a potential for violence, the Action will build a network of conflict research, called the “European Network of Conflict Research” (ENCoRe). Gathering researchers in at least 10 COST countries, the network is supported by innovative tools for data integration and analysis. Focusing on civil war and related types of political violence such as massacres, violent protest, riots, state repression and terrorism, the Action is designed to coordinate existing data collection efforts and integrate new datasets around Europe.

The ENCoRe initiative addresses urgent societal problems relating to political violence, which threaten to destabilize entire world regions, as illustrated in the aforementioned turmoil in the Middle East. Such instability already affects the EU Member States through forced migration and disturbances in the supply of natural resources, and frequently calls for interventions well beyond the territory of the EU. In response, policy makers within the EU and beyond need the best available information about such geopolitical risks in order to devise preventive policies, organize interventions, and manage difficult post-conflict situations.

There are several reasons why ENCoRe should be launched as a COST Action. First, excellent, innovative research is already being produced in several COST countries, but this research has so far only been partly coordinated among a small subset of these research centres. Second, our proposed coordination activities are innovative and fit the framework of COST Actions perfectly in terms of scope and level of ambition. Third, the open architecture of the COST framework offers ideal opportunities to expand the activities beyond the already existing informal network that includes researchers from four COST countries. Fourth, although several European teams have been very successful in raising funds for conflict research, both at the national and European levels (including past EU Framework and ECRP projects), it appears much more difficult to find alternative funding sources for the ENCoRe initiative. For one, the calls for ESF ECRP and research network proposals have been put on hold pending the current restructuring of the grant programs. Finally, it is generally very hard to finance international infrastructural networking activities through national research grants. Therefore, the COST program presents a unique opportunity to realize the vision of ENCoRe.

B.2 Current state of knowledge

Contemporary conflict research increasingly relies on quantitative data, thus complementing a rich tradition that draws on qualitative approaches. Key debates about the causes and cures of civil wars involve systematic empirical research to evaluate theoretical propositions. Initially primarily funded by the World Bank, these efforts have spawned a rich and influential literature across the social sciences that has taught us a great deal about the conditions that make countries more likely to experience civil war and other types of political violence.

Although many political economists single out economic conditions including wealth, employment and access to raw materials, other researchers look for answers in grievances, political demands, and institutional change, such as democratization. The pioneering data-collection activities supporting this kind of research emerged in the USA, such as the “Correlates of War” project and the “Minorities at Risk” dataset, but European researchers have in recent years become much more active in data collection and publication. For example, the currently leading database on civil-war violence is developed and managed by Scandinavian scholars. Based on these and related data sources, European students of conflict have produced cutting-edge research that has found its way into prestigious peer-reviewed journals both in Europe and in the United States. Many of these publications rely on innovative research methods, such as geographic information systems (GIS), spatial statistics, online surveys, and various simulation techniques, including computational modelling. Thus the centre of action in empirical conflict research has started to shift away from the United States to European universities. The current Action is designed to reinforce this trend and to consolidate this strong position in quantitative conflict research by deepening and formalizing the cooperation among the core members of past informal collaboration involving research groups in four countries, and to expand it to at least six other COST countries that have so far not participated in regular cooperation of this type.

Investments in scholarly networks are badly needed in European conflict research. Although important insights have been gained from existing research efforts, several obstacles stand in the way of further progress, because the conventional conflict datasets are (1) over-aggregated, (2) incompatible, (3) decontextualized, and (4) opaque:

1. Contemporary research often suffers from a disconnection between empirical data collected at the country level and theoretical explanations, which typically refer to causal mechanisms involving individuals, groups, or other local entities.
2. Divergent definitions and standards complicate efforts to combine information from different data sources.

3. Maintaining and updating datasets that differ in terms of time (annualized, sequence of dates) and space (country-specific, state-level, gridded data, points, polygons) requires substantial capabilities in data management and geographic information systems (GIS) that are unavailable to most conflict researchers.
4. Quantitative conflict research is often unintelligible to policymakers and the wider public, thus preventing wider dissemination outside academic circles. Differences in underlying data produce inconsistent answers and confusing advice.

As a consequence, quantitative conflict analysis tends to produce seemingly conflicting and fragile findings. The resulting conceptual discrepancies are subject to ongoing controversy, thus undermining most efforts to offer policy advice.

B.3 Reasons for the Action

Addressing the four challenges head-on, this project aims to pool and coordinate the efforts of conflict researchers in Europe in order to secure access to *disaggregated, integrated, spatially explicit, and user-friendly* conflict data. The objectives of the Action are both scientific and policy-oriented in that the new networks will produce high-quality data that will promote conflict research and at the same time allow for more precise information about the key risk factors that drive different types of political violence. Diverging results and disconnected information sources frustrate the task of designing effective policies to solve and mitigate conflicts. Thanks to ENCoRe, researchers and policy makers will be in a better position to address crucial questions such as:

- *To what extent does exclusion from political power cause violent civil war?*
- *How do resource scarcity, resource abundance, and environmental change impact on the risk of armed conflict?*

- *Under what conditions does economic inequality lead to polarization and violence?*
- *What types of political institutions can help prevent conflict and manage post-conflict situations?*

As we have seen in the previous section, European researchers are ideally positioned to reap the fruits of their strong position in actor-focused conflict theory and quantitative civil war research. By strengthening and expanding the critical mass of systematic empirical conflict research, and consolidating and deepening already existing contacts, this COST Action will generate substantial benefits for European research in this area.

This COST Action will lead to a number of concrete deliverables. The most obvious product is an expanded data portal that already exists in prototype form. Thanks to ENCoRe new layers of data will be added and integrated to the core functionality of the system through contributions by national research teams. In particular, these data collection and integration efforts will ultimately encompass a wider spectrum of political violence than civil wars, which the current focus of the system. Beyond these online tools, the present COST Action will build on an already impressive academic publication record by prioritizing peer-reviewed articles in prominent journals. These publications will be followed up by policy briefs and tailored events as a way to reach policy makers and the broader public.

As described below, the action is constituted by five main types of activities, including data coordination meetings, database development and maintenance, analysis and forecasting, as well as educational and outreach activities. It goes without saying that our goal of integrating and pooling data sources cannot be achieved without considerable coordination, which is why networking is absolutely essential to the success of future European conflict research.

B.4 Complementarity with other research programmes

This Action will work closely with the EU 7th Framework project Climate Change, Hydro-conflicts and Human Security (CLICO) through a number of overlapping nodes. One national team contributing to this Action has secured long-term funding for developing an infrastructure for collecting conflict-related information in a more precise and cost-effective manner. ENCoRe will complement and extend this project. There are a number of large nationally funded projects that will go into this Action. Researchers associated with this COST Action have acquired long-term funding from their own governments. The Action usefully complements other research programs that focus on disaggregation and data sources, but whose emphasis is primarily on the consequences of conflict rather than on the causes, such as the Households in Conflict Network and MICROCON (A Micro Level Analysis of Violent Conflict). COST Action IS1101 has proposed a plan for the collection of geographically disaggregated information on migration to be analysed as a predictor of conflict. The members of the current Action will contact this Action to propose collaboration.

C. OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

C.1 Main/primary objectives

The aim of the Action is to coordinate and accelerate the construction and maintenance of conflict datasets with the help of an integrated online portal that allows researchers and policy makers to analyse and forecast the outbreak and course of political violence around the world.

C.2 Secondary objectives

By strengthening and expanding the critical mass of systematic empirical conflict research in Europe, and consolidating and deepening already existing contacts, this ENCoRe initiative will generate substantial benefits for European collaboration. More specifically, this COST Action has the following specific objectives:

- provide access to *disaggregated, integrated, spatially explicit, and user-friendly* conflict data
- overcome institutional fragmentation, which currently blocks progress in European conflict research

- reduce redundancies and incompatibilities in data collection at European research centers
- expand and further develop a unique online tool for data generation and visualization
- improve the technical and methodological skills of young European researchers within and beyond the ENCoRe context, especially in COST countries that have invested less in the education of conflict researchers
- increase the international visibility of European conflict research through high-quality publications
- improve dissemination of research findings to the general public and policy makers in Europe and beyond

C.3 How will the objectives be achieved?

The COST Action will achieve its objectives through the following sets of activities:

1. Dataset coordination activities

Frequent and regular interaction between the national research teams constitutes the core of the COST Action's efforts toward coordinating and managing the key resources of conflict research. The data-providing groups will meet regularly to discuss coding standards, interface projects linking datasets to one another, and the inclusion of new datasets to the central database.

2. Database development

The ENCoRe initiative will bring together European conflict datasets in a unified computer-based platform called GROWup (Geographic Research On War: Unified Platform), which supports the creation, coordination, maintenance, storage, use and dissemination of conflict data. GROWup directly confronts the aforementioned challenges confronting conventional data projects by:

- securing access to disaggregated data on sub-national entities,
- guaranteeing a high level of internal conceptual compatibility across different component datasets,

- providing computational support for updating and using both spatial and non-spatial datasets in research, and
- introducing user-friendly online tools for researchers and lay users.

3. Analysis and forecasting

In order to have an impact on policy makers and research, the new, integrated data produced by GROWup need to be properly analysed through innovative methods that extract findings of theoretical importance. Conventional statistical models treating individual observations as independent are typically of limited use when it comes to capturing spatial and temporal context. Therefore, the stress will be on applying spatial and dynamic modelling techniques, including spatial statistics and computational modelling. In addition, using the integrated database, forecasting and out-of-sample prediction will be attempted.

4. Educational activities

Building on the success of several past methods workshops, the Action will hold one training workshop a year, targeting primarily younger researchers. Such activities will help spread the knowledge required to make advanced use of our data sources and spread analytical skills in statistical and formal modelling beyond our network. The latter is especially important since such skills are very unevenly distributed among European centres of conflict research. Suitable topics include geographic information systems, spatial statistics, the open source statistics package R and formal modelling.

5. Outreach and dissemination activities

In order to disseminate new results and gather first-hand input from policy makers, the Action will organize policy workshops, if possible in conjunction with the Annual Conferences (see Sections E.1 and D below).

C.4 Benefits of the Action

In short, the ENCoRe initiative will offer more researchers better access to better data at a lower cost. ENCoRe will significantly improve data availability in conflict research through the relational database. New data collection projects can build on the existing work rather than re-invent the wheel, which both reduces costs and improves quality. Analysts can construct their datasets at their own specification, erasing numerous sources of error in the pre-processing stage of the research process. On this basis, conflict researchers in COST Countries will be in a much better position to accelerate the accumulation of academic knowledge on conflict processes and to offer useful advice to policy makers.

In sum, the ENCoRe initiative is highly innovative because it

- promotes the collaborative nature of large-scale data collection projects
- integrates data sources that have so far been unconnected
- supports the whole “life cycle” of data collection, merging and analysis
- introduces major technological improvements to conflict research, including relational data bases, geographic information systems, and a new generation of visualization tools

C.5 Target groups/end users

This COST Action targets both academic and non-academic end users. First, ENCoRe will intensify already existing interactions among well-established research centres in Europe. Even more importantly, the open architecture of the Action is designed to include researchers from COST countries that have so far had less experience with datasets of this type. Second, ENCoRe explicitly strives to produce information that is directly useful to policy makers and other non-academic end users. These improvements will be achieved through improved software, especially user-friendly online tools and advanced visualization techniques that allow complex data structures to be understood in an intuitive way. Moreover, a set of outreach and dissemination activities will promote the use of these tools and data sources beyond the community of scholars.

D. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

D.1 Scientific focus

Conflict research stands and falls with the access to high-quality data covering different types of political violence and relevant risk factors. The central mission of the Action is to improve the availability of this type of data through a major effort to pool the resources of European research centres. The scientific focus of the Action is on the full “life-cycle” of empirical research, from data collection to analysis. As explained in Section B above, the ENCoRe initiative differs from previous data collection efforts, especially those that cover civil wars, in that it allows for a wider set of data types. Building on the success of previous collaborative projects involving key members of this Action, the emphasis is on:

- Disaggregated data on sub-state groups and organizations
- Geographically explicit data
- Data on trans-border processes, including refugee flows, ethnic-kin connections, demonstration effects

The ENCoRe initiative will also go beyond these priorities by expanding the scope to micro-level data on events and different types of political violence beyond civil wars, especially acts of terrorism, state terror, assassinations, mass killings, genocide, ethnic cleansing, and communal violence.

The very core of the Action is constituted by the GROWup portal. Building directly on the experiences of a previous ECRP project, one of the research groups taking part in this COST Action is in the process of producing a prototype of this data environment. This prototype will initially feature limited functionality and use data from the previous collaboration, but will later be extended to encompass additional data provided by other members of the Action in accordance with the flexible geometry of the COST framework.

The main building blocks of GROWup are linked together in a structure that corresponds directly to the workflow of database generation: A module called Coding Front End (CFE) allows researchers to feed data into the Database Back End (DBE), which processes them and makes them available to end users through a Public Front End (PBE) and a Research Front End (RFE). The main components can be described as follows:

The Coding Front End (CFE) is a standardized online interface that allows researchers to edit the component datasets. The CFE will be provided as a generic online tool that helps teams of data collectors carry out large-scale coding, including support for GIS-based data. Thanks multi-user functionality and project monitoring features, data collection tasks can be distributed to an entire team of coders.

The Data Back End (DBE) is a relational database that ties together the datasets in a fully consistent and non-redundant way. The database is constituted by linked component data tables that are “populated” through a procedure that checks for coding mistakes and inconsistencies. The DBE can be queried by SQL calls, i.e. commands that extract complex information from several layers of the database.

The Research Front End (RFE) is an online tool for generation of customized research datasets, including replication datasets, based on merged data. The RFE is primarily designed to serve researchers who will be able to download popular types of datasets with countries, substate groups and organizations, as well as conflicts as the standard units of analysis. Public Front End (PFE): Online visualization tool that displays combinations of data in time and space.

The PFE will allow the user to zoom in and click on regions and groups within countries, thereby retrieving data directly from the DBE. A slider allows the user to browse the history of countries, organizations and groups, thus tracing changes in their outer boundaries and various key properties, such as political institutions, ethnic configurations and conflict activities. The PFE will also include maps showing the spatial distribution of various features, such as terrain features, environmental conditions, communication networks, wealth, natural resources, demographics and synthesized risk estimates.

While offering convenient and easy access to complex conflict data, the GROWup system is a federation of data sources rather than a new dataset in its own right. Ultimately the quality of the data depends directly on the member organizations. The datasets are created by the individual members of this Action, who retain ownership and the responsibility for each original data source. Coordinating meetings are intended to serve the purpose of collegial discussion and problem solving with respect to coding standards, but each contributing organization retains full control over the dataset in question. The architecture of the GROWup portal lends itself to be gradually expanded as new members join the Action.

Intended as a major leap in the facilitation of quantitative conflict research, this Action will by no means obscure the past or future achievements of the data providing institutions. Extensive mechanisms clarifying authorship will be built into the system. The names and logos of all member institutions will be prominently displayed in the web interface and the PFE will refer to the data home pages of all relevant institutions. The RFE will also include mechanisms that require all users to register and sign an agreement to the conditions of use, which obliges them to reference the relevant data-providing institutions in all publications. Such credits will be automatically generated by the RFE for each extracted dataset.

The complete “life cycle” of empirical research can be broken up into specific research tasks that will be facilitated and coordinated by this Action:

Data collection

Data collection will be carried out primarily of the members of the Action. Such teamwork will often rely on the CFE, but it is ultimately up to each data-providing institution to choose the procedures that work best for the data project in question. There is a wide variety of data collection methods available to researchers including online surveys, scanning of existing maps, remote sensing satellite data, automatic text retrieval, etc. Pioneering efforts are underway to collect data through Twitter and similar communication technologies. The Management Committee will actively seek to recruit infant data collection projects into the Action.

Dataset coordination and updating

The merger of several datasets into a coherent database is a central research task of this Action. Overcoming incompatibility and setting standards are essential functions that require regular meetings and short-term visits as does the challenge of keeping datasets updated on a regular basis (see Working Group 1 below).

Storing and maintaining the data

The GROWup portal needs to be maintained and further developed as new datasets are integrated into the relational database and new functionality is added to the software tools (see Working Group 2 below).

Analysis and forecasting

Keeping in touch with the users helps to make sure that the data sources stay current and that weaknesses are detected and addressed. ENCoRe constitutes a natural forum for conflict researchers who rely on data provided by this Action to discuss their data needs (see Working Group 3 below).

D.2 Scientific work plan methods and means

The research tasks outlined in the previous section will be carried out with the help of three Working Groups:

Working Group 1. Dataset coordination

This working group serves the purpose of coordinating the creation, updating and expansion of datasets, and allow for their integration into the GROWup portal. All members of the Action are autonomous in the sense that they make their own final decisions about their own datasets, but it is expected that they will discuss and attempt to reach agreement on design issues such as coding standards and data formats. Such standard setting is crucial for the merger of information into the relational database. The members will be able to float new ideas about changes to their own datasets that may require action by other members of the group. Another important function is to provide a forum to share ideas about how to improve data collection efforts that could be useful to several of the members of the Action.

In view of the open architecture of the COST framework, perhaps the most important task will be to determine what datasets are suitable to be included into the GROWup platform. Such deliberations will have to consider the quality and compatibility of the data source in question, and will lead to recommendations to the Management Committee (see Section E.1 below). In some cases, a major coding effort will be necessary to assure compatibility in terms of data formats, such as creating mappings between different units of analysis.

As the complexity of the source data increases and more members join the Action, it may prove necessary to create sub-groups that specialize on coordinating specific types of data, such as data on conflict events, ethnicity, interventions, environmental factors and natural resources.

Working Group 2. Database development

ENCoRe relies on sophisticated and complex software technology. Constituting the main switchboard for development in this area, WG2 will bring together software developers in the national research groups to exchange ideas and information about key technologies, such as database design, interface development, web programming and visualization techniques. While the Swiss team is responsible for the development and maintenance of the GROWup system itself, its expansion is a highly collective endeavour that requires active involvement on the part of the data-providing institutions when it comes to adjustment and addition of dataset-specific GROWup infrastructure. WG2 will coordinate these efforts and also allow technically interested members of the Action to gain knowledge about how to develop and maintain relevant parts of the open-source code. The members of WG2 will also advise the Swiss team on designing and maintaining the central ENCoRe web site.

Working Group 3. Analysis and forecasting

Any dataset that is not being used is a dead dataset. Therefore, the present Action brings together “live” datasets that are actively used in on-going research. Serving as a focal point for the user communities within ENCoRe, WG 3 is the main forum within which applied research can be presented and discussed. Within this context, researchers will have the opportunity to

- present the newest research results using data from GROWup,
- discuss methodological developments relating to analytical methods that can be brought to bear on the data, including formal and computational modelling, spatial statistics, and other advanced econometric techniques.
- share skills about how to apply various forecasting techniques, including econometric approach to out-of-sample prediction, neural networks, semi-parametric regression (GAM), discrete choice analysis, spatial econometrics, simultaneous equations, split-population event history, quantile regression, and structural estimation (QRE) techniques.
- evaluate data quality, report data problems, propose extensions to existing datasets and take the initiative to new data collection efforts.

E. ORGANISATION

E.1 Coordination and organisation

The Action is carried out by the ENCoRe researchers from the participating COST Countries. Its implementation is coordinated by a *Management Committee* (MC) according to the COST regulations.

The Action will hold *Annual ENCoRe Conferences* to give researchers at the member institutions and beyond the opportunity to present their most recent findings. These conferences will include a part that is especially designed to be of interest to policy makers. In connection with the Annual Conference, the MC and the Working Groups will also be holding meetings.

In addition, *Coordination Meetings* organized by the Working Groups will be held whenever the need arises, but typically at least once a year.

As a complement to these meetings, *Short-Term Scientific Missions* will enable teams of researchers to engage in intensive collaboration, which will often prove necessary in connection with the integration of new datasets into the integrated database.

E.2 Working Groups

As outlined in Section D.2, this Action contains three Working Groups:

- Working Group 1. Dataset coordination
- Working Group 2. Database development
- Working Group 3. Analysis and Forecasting

Working Group 1 may be divided into subgroups if the amount of data increases significantly through the joining of new member institutions.

E.3 Liaison and interaction with other research programmes

Four of the member institutions that took the initiative to this Action have started a dialogue with the colleagues who maintain the Minorities at Risk Dataset at the University of Maryland. This Action will support an intensification of these interactions, which will allow for a merger of data on ethnic groups that goes beyond the ENCoRe initiative.

We also intend to collaborate with the Households in Conflict Network (HiCN) and FP7 MICROCON (Micro Level Analysis of Violent Conflict) programmes, which carry out complimentary activities in collecting and combining household and individual level survey data, especially for analysing the consequences of violent conflict. Several of the institutions in the ENCoRe initiative have participated in HiCN or MICROCON activities.

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

This COST Action will respect an appropriate gender balance in all its activities and the Management Committee will place this as a standard item on all its MC agendas. The Action will also be committed to considerably involve early-stage researchers. This item will also be placed as a standard item on all MC agendas.

Conflict research has traditionally been an especially male dominated discipline. While senior staff continues to be predominantly male, previous research activities of the members of the Action have done much to include younger female researchers. There is a new generation of young female conflict researchers who will be part of this Action, and there is a very high share of current female PhD students who we expect will play an active role. Therefore, in effect, the involvement of early stage researchers and the issue of gender balance address the same challenge.

The research community must work hard to maintain gender equality at the junior level and achieve gender equality at the senior and professorial levels. The latter is a long-term ambition that can only be reached by supporting aspiring young female researchers. This Action will enable bright female researchers to enhance their networks, facilitate access to the best data material available, access to potential co-authors, and provide specialist training in cutting-edge methods.

Building on the success of several past methods workshops, the Action will hold one training workshop a year, targeting primarily younger researchers. This will promote the spread of the knowledge required to make advanced use of our data sources and analytical skills in statistical and formal modelling beyond our network. The latter can be expected to be especially important since such skills are very unevenly distributed among European centres of conflict research. Suitable topics include geographic information systems, spatial statistics, the R statistics package and formal modelling.

The progress of these targets will be monitored by the Management Committee, as a separate point on the agenda at each MC meeting.

F. TIMETABLE

The current Action will be preceded by the completion and publication of the prototype system of GROWup in November 2011. The main timetable of the Action is marked by two main releases of the database, namely in Year 1 and in Year 4. The first release will include the core datasets already included in the current prototype together with an extended range of data on political violence. New datasets will then be gradually integrated during Year 2 and Year 3, leading up to a second release in Year 4. Intermediate versions of the database will be made available between the two main releases.

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4	
	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn
Major data release		x						x
Annual Conference		x		x		x		x
WG meetings	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Workshop in Conflict Area			x		x			
Training workshop		x		x		x		x

G. ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The following COST countries have actively participated in the preparation of the Action or otherwise indicated their interest: CH, DE, ES, FR, IE, IL, NL, NO, 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 40 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 Dissemination Plan of the COST Action targets several audiences:
- Conflict researchers and other social scientists both within and outside Europe,
- Policy makers at the levels of governments of COST Countries and European decision making bodies
- Members of Think Tanks and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- The general public in all COST Countries.

H.2 What?

The dissemination strategy centers on the web platform GROWup, which will be made available through the main web site of ENCoRe. Because of the platform's user-friendly interface, it can be expected to attract attention from both researchers and policy makers around the world.

Another major means of dissemination is through peer-review scientific publications. The teams that prepared the Action have already acquired a solid reputation for successful academic publishing. In addition, policy briefs addressing a wider, partly non-academic audience, will be published (both online and on paper) on specific, conflict-related topics. The members of the Action will also be presenting findings produced by the Action at international conferences and workshops.

The annual conferences will serve as another key instrument in our dissemination strategy. At least two of the conferences will contain a part that features participation of policy makers, a format that several members of this Action have already implemented successfully in past conferences.

European capitals, such as London or Berlin would be prime candidates for such events. In addition, two policy workshops will be organized in previous or current conflict regions in order to gather information from experts and policy makers with direct experiences from real conflicts processes.

The members of the Action will actively seek and cultivate media contacts by inviting journalists to major data releases, by publishing journal articles and participate in media interviews. Since all ENCoRe scholars are responsible for their own research and analysis, the Action will not seek to harmonize public messages. Yet, researchers referring to ENCoRe are expected to inform their colleagues about major media initiatives, and whenever useful, coordinate the dissemination actions in more than one country.

H.3 How?

As illustrated by the media world's tremendous interest in the "Arab spring," conflict research often attracts considerable interest from the broader public as a result of salient political events.

Therefore, it is crucial that the dissemination strategy be flexible such that it can react quickly to new historical turns. However, the ultimate sign of success would be warn against future risk factors, but it is obviously difficult to make accurate forecasts and perhaps even more difficult to attract media's attention before an event has taken place. Risk maps and rankings of countries exposed to risk may prove helpful in this respect. Thus, the Action will attempt to adopt a media approach that is pro-active rather than reactive.