



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

Brussels, 24 May 2013

COST 025/13

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Subject : Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as COST Action IS1301: New Communities of Interpretation: Contexts, Strategies and Processes of Religious Transformation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Delegations will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for COST Action IS1301 as approved by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) at its 187th meeting on 15-16 May 2013.

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

COST Action IS1301
NEW COMMUNITIES OF INTERPRETATION: CONTEXTS, STRATEGIES AND
PROCESSES OF RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY
MODERN EUROPE

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 develop and communicate a better calibrated and nuanced understanding of religious and cultural change in the “long fifteenth century” (1350-1570), as well as to stimulate new interdisciplinary and multilingual approaches to late medieval and early modern society and culture.
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 52 million in 2013 prices.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect on being accepted by at least five Parties.
5. The Memorandum of Understanding will remain in force for a period of 4 years, calculated from the date of the first meeting of the Management Committee, unless the duration of the Action is modified according to the provisions of Chapter IV of the document referred to in Point 1 above.

A. ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

This Action aims to coordinate research activities being currently developed at several European universities and research institutes and create a (virtual) centre of expertise for the study of religious culture in late medieval and early modern Europe, a period traditionally depicted as one of great cultural discontinuity and binary oppositions between learned (Latin) and unlearned (vernacular) and ecclesiastical hierarchy and the lay believers. Challenging stereotypical descriptions of exclusion of lay and non-Latinate people from religious and cultural life the project, with participation of European entities from at least 13 countries, will concentrate on the reconstruction of the process of emancipation of the laity and the creation of new “communities of interpretation”. The project will therefore analyse patterns of social inclusion and exclusion and examine shifts in hierarchic relations amongst groups, individuals and their languages, casting new yet profoundly historical light on themes of seminal relevance to present-day societies.

Keywords: Late Medieval and Early Modern History; Cultural and Religious Studies; Cultural and Religious Transformations; Social, Literary and Linguistic Patterns; European Networks of Religious Exchange

B. BACKGROUND

B.1 General background

Although the Europe of the fourteenth to the sixteenth century is no longer automatically characterised in current scholarship in a division between “late medieval and early modern”, there remains nevertheless a strong tendency to assume sharp divides between, for example, manuscript and print cultures, Middle Ages and Humanism and Renaissance, and between a landscape dominated by papal power and ecclesiastical control and a “confessionalised” Europe defined by religious and political fragmentation. A key goal of this COST Action is to formulate a more nuanced understanding of these transitions and changes.

Moreover, at the heart of this composite period lies one momentous and still underappreciated transformation, which strongly influenced cultural and religious life: the making of new “communities of interpretation” alongside the traditional “*respublica clericorum*”, the learned community of intellectuals and religious who used Latin not only to communicate but also to dominate cultural life through Church institutions, schools and universities. These new “communities of interpretation” were often formed by an urban laity active in politics, finance and

commerce. Over time, this “*respublica laicorum*” took a growing interest in the organisation of cultural and religious activities and in the production of literary, religious and scientific texts – and most interestingly recognised the opportunities offered by reading and writing in the vernacular to further their interests (Amsler 2011; Brunner 2009; Wogan-Browne 1999; for a socio-economic analysis of this evolution, Luiten Van Zanden 2009). Right across Europe, the vernacular was the medium that had hitherto typified the “unlearned”. In the period under examination, vernacular textual production flourished, and the language of the laity established itself as a channel for the transmission of religious knowledge. No longer was the cultural hegemony of Latin indisputable. The “*respublica clericorum*” and the “*respublica laicorum*” were brought into a much closer association with each other than ever before through vernacularisation processes. Their development of shared interest in the diverse religious cultures of the period resulted in what should be described as a decisive turning point. Modern scholars have yet to realise the full impact of this hugely significant intellectual development, which can be characterised as nothing less than a translation of intellectual power and textual creativity to new pragmatically literate groups of lay believers and audiences for religious texts.

The study of these “new communities of interpretation”, their development and their influence and decisive role in the social, religious and cultural transformations in the so-called “long fifteenth century” (ca. 1350-1570; Van Engen 2008) will be at the very core of this COST Action, which brings together scholars from at least 13 COST countries (with the additional potential of participation of scholars from other countries). The involvement of research teams and existing projects from several European countries, with the possibility of enlarging the group after the acceptance and the funding of the Action, is one of the most important reasons for this COST Action application. The Action will be international and pan-European in its geographical scope as well as inter- and multidisciplinary in its methodology and will contribute to the creation of an extended European cooperation platform. This will offer an entirely fresh perspective on a set of important scholarly concerns since the Action aims at developing a comprehensive European approach to social, religious and cultural change.

B.2 Current state of knowledge

This cultural transformation of late medieval and early modern European society has been a much-discussed topic in research agendas over the last twenty years (Hamm 2012; Walsham 2012). However, in the prevailing historiographical narrative this period is often described as a series of

disruptions, great divides and decisive turning points towards modernity, after a period of intellectual, religious and cultural decline, wars, apocalyptic onslaught of plague, revolts and schisms. In spite of the pivotal importance of the analysis of the long fifteenth century as a turning point in European history, the period is relatively understudied in its complexity, multiplicity and fluidity, i.e. as a period in which the simultaneous presence of tradition and innovation and old and new media and modes of communication, offered multiple and divergent options for the formation of religious and cultural identities. Rather than being a manifestation of a fixed, stable and “pure” cultural evolution, leading to a triumph of culture over barbarism and reason after superstition through strictly defined movements like the Renaissance, Humanism and the Reformation, the long fifteenth century rather yields the image of a multifaceted, ambiguous, ever-changing and ever-flexible continuum.

Traditional research has moreover mainly been conducted following scattered national modern scholarly allegiances, distinct national and linguistic parameters and according to chronological lines dictated by great divides: a separation between the medieval and the early modern period, Catholic tradition and Protestant innovation, between manuscript and print, and Latin and vernacular. Studies of the Renaissance, of Humanism and the Reformation almost inescapably use such dichotomies in order to stress these movements’ inherent novelty, always claiming this feature for the second part of each pairing (Caferro 2011; Scott Dixon 2012). Moreover, cultural and social elites and institutions have always been privileged subjects in the study of cultural life and transmission (as stated in Pollmann 2011). Although ground-breaking, the approach to the “Middle Ages-Renaissance” agenda in recent publications, such as in Cummings & Simpson 2010, has engaged exclusively in the reconstruction of “cultural reformations” in a specific geographical area and has not taken into adequate account transnational and pan-European aspects of the described developments.

Likewise, despite the growth of the study of cultural and religious change (for example in the framework of the Marie Curie ITN “Mobility of Ideas and Transmission of Texts”), the great advances in the understanding of late medieval religious movements and transformations (Caldwell Ames 2012; Duffy 2007; Gillespie-Gosh 2012; Hamm 2012; Lemaître 1988) and the fundamental importance of religion in the creation of new communities of interpretation (Jacob 2007; Stock 1990), the most important issue is still only selectively addressed: the religious, educational and political emancipation of the laity – an emancipation not merely by means of the active lay readership of religious literature in the vernacular but also by the production, transmission and circulation of such works, the organisation of religious activities in urban spaces, and the transposition of religious activities to the public sphere (Clarke 2008; Van Engen 2008; Tanner &

Watson 2006). Possible reasons for modern scholarship's relative under-appreciation of this pivotal feature of late medieval and early modern cultural life can be attributed to three entrenched preoccupations:

- * the still dominant "protestant paradigm" (Gow 2005) in the study of history, presenting a traditional image of exclusion of the laity from religious life;
- * the continued recourse to the alleged dialectical polarities of high (elite) vs low (popular) culture, learned (Latin) vs unlearned (vernacular), and ecclesiastical hierarchy (the Church) vs lay believers as well as to the scattered national narratives of religious transformation;
- * the fairly limited dialogue between national and confessional research traditions.

The COST Action will mobilise researchers collectively to challenge these preoccupations in order to identify not only the high expectations informing laypeople's religious knowledge and the religious services available to them, but also how layfolk were so often able and willing to fulfil these ambitions, at times in forms of collaborations with religious individuals and institutions. This innovative opening-up of late medieval and early modern cultural history, which goes beyond stereotypical forms of indoctrination and binary oppositions, will be the focus of the collaborative activities in the framework of the Action, which will be characterised by interdisciplinary methods and driven by a common need to create new European narratives, to challenge existing national narratives of late medieval and Reformation history and literature and to accommodate the mobility and agency of people, ideas, languages and texts.

B.3 Reasons for the Action

The reason for launching the Action is the need to coordinate, to stimulate and to promote a genuinely comparative and pan-European overview of religious culture and change in late medieval and early modern Europe and to present a better-calibrated image of the role played by the laity in this process, through the creation of new "communities of interpretation" and thus by their active participation in the development of new religious and cultural identities.

Immediate benefits of the Action will be the enhancement of scientific exchange amongst scholars working in different countries, and the substantial increase in scientific discussion about scholarly methods and research possibilities. *Future benefits* will be on societal, scientific and economic levels:

- * societal: by recovering and analysing the cultural dynamics and connections between religious knowledge and laity in late medieval and early modern Europe, this Action will remould our understanding of one of the most critical moments in Europe's cultural history, at the same time

challenging the existing narratives of the development of (early) modern identities that seem to dominate the self-understanding of contemporary society. It will moreover better evaluate the contribution of culture, cultural manifestations and language to the development of (early) modern societies and their impact on social and religious change;

* scientific: the Action will provide scientific benefits in History, Linguistics, Literary, Religious and Cultural studies through supporting networking and outreach activities, as well as by the creation of a virtual centre of expertise accessible to a broad range of researchers;

* economic: the Action will generate and support capacity, especially by helping young researchers to build up European scientific backgrounds and to develop interdisciplinary research skills, enabling them better to progress in their scientific careers and enhancing their employability at European research institutions.

The *means* needed for the immediate and future benefits are the organisation of international expert meetings to address and research problems and results and to discuss new methodological approaches. A virtual platform (in the form of a website) will enhance these possibilities of encounter and discussion. The activities developed in the framework of the Action will also include Summer Schools, Training Sessions for PhD-students and series of public lectures.

B.4 Complementarity with other research programmes

Not applicable.

C. OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

C.1 Aim

The main objective of the Action is to develop and communicate a better calibrated, nuanced and broader understanding of one of the most fundamental moments and complex turning points in European religious and social history as well as to stimulate new interdisciplinary and multilingual approaches to late medieval and early modern culture. The Action will investigate and reconstruct religious, cultural and social transformations in the “long fifteenth century” in terms of activity, transfer, acculturation, appropriation, interpretation and negotiation of meaning and values, instead of merely concentrating on a binary system based on some kind of restrictive national or linguistic model (Sponsler 2002). By stressing cultural dynamics and strategies of appropriation within formal and informal lay communities, instead of merely focussing on texts and objects with fixed meanings, the Action will emphasise the seminal relevance of processes, functions, uses and the values each individual and group brings to questions of culture and knowledge. These processes,

functions, uses and values were of course open to continual adaptation and change.

C.2 Objectives

The Action's objectives are to:

- * improve and propose new approaches in cultural history, challenging the traditional divides of Middle Ages/Renaissance, Catholic/Protestant, lay/religious, manuscript/print, Northern/Southern/Central Europe;
- * contribute to a re-evaluation of traditional approaches to late medieval and early modern European cultural history and to a more concretely informed and considered understanding of how cultural and religious networks can (and did) work;
- * deepen theoretical and methodological reflection on the study of religious and social transformations in late medieval and early modern Europe;
- * develop new methodological approaches in order to reconstruct processes of religious change and transformations in the period;
- * analyse the agency of lay individuals and groups in religious transformations and reformations;
- * develop new research strategies to reconstruct the dynamics of development of lay communities of interpretation of religious texts and knowledge, going beyond the traditional collocation of these communities in the sphere of religious dissent and heterodoxy (Stock 1990);
- * contribute to the creation of research networks within and outside academia including experienced scholars, upcoming generations of researchers as well as regional and national archives and libraries;
- * consolidate and develop interdisciplinary research on late medieval and early modern religious culture;
- * create a platform for new national, European and international research and research projects in the field of late medieval and early modern cultural history;
- * Quantifiable targets: min. 13 countries represented (with an average of 10 experts per country); at least 100 MA students participating in Summer Schools and at least 80 PhD students attending Training Sessions: this would bring the total number of researchers involved (from early-stage to experts) to at least 300.

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

The Action networking will allow researchers to meet during Working Group meetings and Action

expert meetings and to collaborate actively in order to meet the listed objectives and to organise the yearly Summer School for selected MA-students and the training sessions for PhD students. By setting a clear research agenda and deadlines, the networking activities will improve academic exchange and stimulate the reaching of scientific targets and the envisaged dissemination activities. The dedicated website will moreover function as a platform for the presentation and pre-publication of papers presented and discussed during the Working Group meetings in order to enhance the exchange of information and the discussion among all scientists involved in the Action.

C.4 Potential impact of the Action

Scientific impact: By bringing together excellent and cutting-edge researchers from at least 13 European countries with a wide and sound experience in leading innovative research projects, the Action will have an important impact on the research field and will contribute to the writing of new narratives in the religious, cultural and social history of Europe. Through a coordinated and specific publication strategy and the start of a book series dedicated to the theme of the Action, the results of the Action will reach an extended and international scholarly audience. Research conducted within the framework of the Action will moreover be continued through the application for funding of new national and international research projects.

Societal impact: The focus on religious discourse and the growing role of the vernaculars in power negotiations will provide new insights into patterns of change in the collective mentalities of European societies, and innovative perspectives on how people experienced the use of the vernacular as a means of interpreting the world and for giving shape to their religious experience. Analysing linguistic patterns of social inclusion and exclusion and examining shifts in hierarchic relations amongst groups, individuals and their languages, the Action will cast new light on themes of still-seminal relevance to European societies. Through the organisation of public lectures, a wide non-scholarly audience will experience impact and be involved in the scientific outreach of the Action.

C.5 Target groups/end users

With regard to the prospective scientific and societal impact of the Action, it will target a large and varied groups and end users:

- * Academic audiences at large, with specific attention to early-stage researchers;
- * High school and University students;

* A wider public, which will benefit from the series of public lectures. Non-academic-stakeholders (in particular national and regional libraries and archives) will be invited to participate in Action activities and will in particular be involved in the organisation of Summer Schools and training activities (through the use of library and archive holdings for teaching purposes). Contacts with such stakeholders (archives; museums; libraries; centres of expertise on book history and religious heritage) have already been established.

D. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

D.1 Scientific focus

The most important research task of the Action will be to advance scientific knowledge of key cultural and religious transformations in the “long fifteenth century” (ca 1350-1570), the period which witnessed major religious, cultural and social transformations, including the evolution of the reproduction of written material from manuscript to print, the transition from the Middle Ages to Humanism and Renaissance, and the crumbling of the religious landscape, due to the loss of power of the Roman Church and leading to a religiously (and politically) fragmented Europe. Challenging traditional research paradigms which privilege cultural and social elites and institutions as subjects in the study of cultural transmission, and which adopt a “top-down” approach in the exploration of religious experience (the evidence for which is almost exclusively based on information in ecclesiastical archives), the Action will focus on the roles played by “communities of interpretation”, formed by urban laity active in politics, finance and commerce, in religious and social change (Briguglia & Ricklin 2011; Clanchy 1993; Van Dixhoorn & Speakman Sutch 2008; Pastore, Prospero & Terpstra 2011).

The concept of community is of seminal importance for the reconstruction of cultural transmission. As a matter of fact, “all learning takes place in some kind of community, whether it be a formal place of instruction, a lay or religious community, or simply an informal network of two or more friends” (Mews & Crossley 2010). Even without the development of formal educational structures, ideas are developed and transmitted in the framework of a community of interpretation. These formal and informal groups of literate laymen and women, whether they comprised particular parishes, devotees of prominent preachers, members of guilds, brotherhoods and chambers of rhetoric (to cite but a few examples), were bound by religious discourses and activities shaping their personal and collective lives. Far from being passive recipients of religious messages, either written, oral or visual, they were actively engaging in a process of appropriation, transformation and translation and were dynamically expanding their discursive horizons and enlarging “the full range

of texts [they could] read in print and manuscript and the oral discourse in which they participated” (Narveson 2012). Through their engagement in reading, writing, performing and organising religious texts and activities, laymen and women were continuously interpreting the “religious” (in the widest sense of the word) and re-shaping it in their quest for identity in one of the most critical moments in Europe’s cultural history.

While the important contribution of “non-professional” users of religious literature and participants in religious activities in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century has been stressed and investigated and has often been connected to the dawning of reform movements and Protestantism, a re-evaluation of the contexts, strategies and processes of religious transformation in late medieval and early modern Europe will be at stake during the activities organised in the framework of the Action. Most importantly, the Action will strive to

- * collect a substantial selection of case studies testifying to the active participation of laypeople in religious life and in the production and dissemination of religious knowledge from the European area, crossing traditional national and regional boundaries and thereby developing a truly pan-European approach;

- * develop and reflect on new inter- and multidisciplinary methodological approaches to the reconstruction of the birth, development and functioning of these “new communities of interpretation”;

- * reconstruct European networks of knowledge exchange, focussing on shared texts, practices, experiences and attitudes in the domestication and commodification of knowledge sources.

The central goals will be reached through the organisation of the scientific activities in three Working Groups (WGs), focussing specifically on a) methodological issues; b) the reconstruction of pan-European knowledge networks, and c) the analysis of case studies of contexts and strategies of religious transformation.

In order to give cohesion to the activities of the three WGs and to create a platform for the first plenary meeting (in the form of a conference open to all scientists and stakeholders involved in the Action) a preliminary working protocol has been prepared. In this preliminary document, formulated on the basis of meetings and collaborative workshops organised by the scientists involved in the first drawing-up and organisation of the Action, five essential strategies of cultural transformation have been described, which will form the backbone of the research activities coordinated by the Action:

- * translating;

- * reading;

- * collecting;

* writing;

* performing;

All these activities presuppose a growing level of production and reception activity in the dynamics of cultural transformation and take into account the fluidity, instability, flexibility, multiplicity and multiformity which characterises the activities of these new communities of interpretation. It is important to stress that next to the “traditional” (but still understudied) textual activities of “reading”, “translating” and “writing”, the Action will also focus on non-professional users’ strategies of “collecting” and “performing”. The process of collecting, that is the assembly of systematic collections of texts, both in manuscript and in print, in which a process of selection and readjustment of knowledge is started (i.e. commonplace books and miscellanies), culminating in a form of cultural and textual *bricolage* (Levi-Strauss), presents a complex but fascinating opportunity to reinvestigate the channels of cultural transmission important for research on the long fifteenth century. Some of these channels include private and public libraries, activities organised by confraternities and guilds, exchanges with other scribes, editors, authors and readers, often in combination and in exchange with other forms of cultural transmission, such as oral culture (public preaching, public religious activities, public reading of texts) and visual arts (images and tables in religious and lay public space; Keizer & Richardson 2011). One recent approach to “performing” (Gragnotati & Suerbaum 2010; Stevenson 2010) advocates a picture of self-confident laypeople engaging in performances of a (semi-)public nature, in educational, devotional, ritual or festive settings, especially as performers (orators, teachers, preachers, reciters, singers, actors) of sermons, orations, songs, poems, dialogues and plays.

This preliminary framework will be discussed and finalised during the inaugural conference for all the participants in the Action. Here, scientific goals and a theoretical and methodological framework will be discussed, clarified and if necessary, taking into account the importance of the flexibility of the structure and of the organisation, more sharply formulated. During the first meeting the organisational structure will also be defined. All activities will be coordinated by a Steering Group (SG), which will organise Action events, dissemination of research findings, website management, public activities, Summer Schools and Training Sessions. The Steering Group will be formed by the leaders of the three WGs, with a Chair nominated at the first meeting of the COST Action. The leaders of the WGs will organise the yearly scientific meetings, moderate and animate the WGs, and document activities.

The website will function as a central platform for ongoing discussion among the participants in the Action and for the planning and organisation of the meetings of the WGs, the yearly plenary meeting, the Summer School and Training Sessions, and the pre-publication of papers and working

documents.

The means needed to achieve the Action's objectives will be:

- * building up an extended European research consortium, with a strong multi- and interdisciplinary profile;
- * coordinating and organising scientific meetings on a regular and structured basis;
- * creating a stable, yet flexible, cutting-edge research environment with a strong theoretical and methodological focus;
- * creating an infrastructure (website) in order to promote an ongoing communication and exchange of scientific ideas and materials.

D.2 Scientific work plan methods and means

The COST Action will run for four years. Its main research activities will be coordinated within three cross-national and interdisciplinary WGs, each focussing on one specific aspect of the reconstruction and the analysis of religious and cultural transformations in the “long fifteenth century”. Each WG will plan the contents of their scientific and outreach activities in collaboration with the Steering Group, which will be responsible for the cohesion of the general research activities and for the exchange of information and working material amongst the WGs. The four plenary meetings will have the function of finalising the research protocol and defining the activities of WGs (first meeting), presenting the results and the scientific process of the WGs (second and third meeting), and disseminating the results of the collaboration (fourth meeting). As described in D1, the Action will work with reference to three “aggregation points” in the form of WGs meeting once a year and presenting the results of their individual meetings and discussions during the plenary expert meetings. The regular and carefully planned interaction between the three WGs will be one of the major and most fundamental tasks of the Steering Group. As a matter of principle and practice, the combination of the theoretical and the empirical research conducted in the framework of the Action will enable the participants not only to open new paths of research but also to meet their scientific and societal goals.

WG1: Theoretical Approaches. Although the discussion of theoretical approaches is of general importance for all participants in the Action, the fundamental importance of evaluating and creating innovative specific approaches to the reconstruction of cultural change and to the evaluation of the role played and the strategies used by the new communities of interpretation requires specific attention, consideration and effort. Indeed, preliminary discussions have made clear the difficulties

of defining a theoretical and terminological set of ideas in the process of analysing these new cultural manifestations, which are characterised by their hybridity, fluidity and multiformity (for an overview of methodological approaches, see Burke 2009). A specific and innovative feature of the activities of the WG will be to develop new and better-calibrated instruments of investigation of these processes of cultural exchange (Muchembled 2007) in a stronger and richer European and pan-European perspective, taking into account highly specific religious, social and cultural dynamics at the same time as accommodating general trends and developments.

WG2: Strategies of Transformation: Translating, Writing, Reading, Collecting and

Performing. The WG will concentrate on the selection of case studies, according to the number of participants and the specific background and expertise of the members, which will be studied during the duration of the Action (e.g. medieval and early modern libraries; manuscript miscellanies; specific texts, such as the vita Christi-tradition; domestic devotions). These can be used as test cases for a more accurate and empirical reconstruction of the strategies of transformation. A wide selection of disciplinary backgrounds and cultural and linguistic competencies will enable new evaluations of a broad range of textual (e.g. specific genres, manuscripts and printed texts) and visual material, with a focus on spaces and places of cultural transmission (e.g. semi-private libraries and book collections), which will be systematically studied in an interdisciplinary and a multilingual setting. Fundamental to the choice of case studies will be a broad geographical and chronological perspective, encompassing textual and visual material spanning the late fourteenth century and the sixteenth century, thereby breaking the traditional “great divides”.

WG3: European Networks of Knowledge Exchange. The WG will take stock of the social and cultural implications of religious transformation in the long fifteenth century and will focus in particular on reconstructing European networks of knowledge exchange, exploring how religious ideas and strategies of transformation “travelled” and were shared in European cultural space (e.g. mobility of “readers”, printers, authors and groups of believers; dialogues and discussions within literary associations and institutions; organisation of and participation in Church Councils). As a matter of fact, a better-calibrated reconstruction of intellectual and mercantile networks, clusters of literary associations and institutions, networks of collaboration with religious communities and religious orders, mobility of people, texts and ideas is essential for the reconstruction of the circulation, the appropriation and the transformation of religious knowledge and the essential challenging of national paradigms. As in the case of WG2, case studies will be selected, studied and subsequently discussed during the yearly WG-meetings.

E. ORGANISATION

E.1 Coordination and organisation

The Management Committee (MC) and its Chair will be in charge of the overall management in accordance with COST Guidelines (doc 4159/10) and will be supported by a Steering Group (SG) to optimise coordination. The SG, which will submit activity reports to the MC, will be formed by the leaders of the three WGs, with a Chair nominated at the first meeting of the COST Action. It will coordinate scientific and networking activities, as well as the organisation of the first conference and the discussion of the scientific contents of the three WGs. The SG will moreover coordinate the dissemination of Action results according to the Action dissemination plan (see H) and be responsible for the evaluation of the scientific contents of the WGs and for the meeting of the described scientific targets. As explained in C.4 (Potential Impact of the Action) one of the strategies of dissemination of research results will be the start of a book series dedicated to the central themes of the Action. In order to coordinate and to optimise publication activities, an Editorial Board (three representatives) will be set up. First task of the Editorial Board will be to draw up a proposal for the dedicated series and to present and discuss it with international publishers in order to guarantee the best possible platform for the publication efforts of the WGs and of the Action-meetings. The Editorial Board and the Steering Group will collaborate in the design of the book series and will monitor the publication process. As the involvement of early stage researchers will form one of the pivotal elements in the activities of the Action, three Summer School and Training Session coordinators will be nominated. Their main task will be the organisation of scientific activities as well as the selection of students and early-stage researchers.

* **Coordination of national research.** National representatives will ensure that the activities of the Action are communicated and implemented in their national research environment and will therefore play a substantial role in the recruitment of researchers involved in the international and interdisciplinary WGs. They will also be involved in outreach activities at a national level and be responsible for contacting and involving non-academic institutions in outreach and dissemination activities. They will in addition be actively involved in the scouting and selection of early-stage researchers participating in Summer Schools and Training Sessions.

* **Website.** As described in the milestones, the website will be the first platform for the publication of Working Papers and for the interim results of plenary conferences and WG-meetings. The website will also be the platform for contact with potential participants in Summer Schools and Training sessions and with non-academic stakeholders. Editing, updating and maintaining the

Action webpage will be the responsibility of the Action's Webpage Editor, who will work in collaboration with the MC and the Steering Group.

Milestones

1. Year 1, first half: Action website
2. Year 1, first half: First plenary Action conference; drawing research protocols and selection of case studies (during specific WG panels); Publication of working papers from the plenary conference on website
3. Year 1, second half: first meetings WG1, 2 and 3; drawing of specific research protocols and discussion of selected case studies; publication of descriptions of case-studies chosen for discussion in WG1, 2 and 3.
4. Year 1, second half: organisation of first Summer school and first Training Session for early stage researchers
5. Year 2, first half: Second plenary Action conference; publication of working papers presented during plenary conference and publication of first collection of essays
6. Year 2, second half: Meeting of WG 1, 2 and 3; discussion and implementation of WG specific publication plans
7. Year 2, second half: organisation of second Summer school and Training Session for early stage researchers
8. Year 3, first half: Third plenary Action conference; publication of working papers from the plenary conference on website
9. Year 3, second half: meeting WG 1, 2 and 3; discussion and implementation of WGs' specific publication plans
10. Year 3, second half: organisation of third Summer school and Training Session for early stage researchers
11. Year 4, first half: first meeting WG 1, 2 and 3; publication of Working Papers on Action website and publication of WG-specific volume of essays
12. Year 4, second half: organisation of fourth Summer school and Training Session
13. Year 4, end: concluding conference
14. Year 4, end: publication of results of summative conference
15. Year 4, end: preparation of at least one collaborative European research project

E.2 Working Groups

The Action's main activities will be coordinated within three international multidisciplinary WGs.

Every WG will choose two WG leaders during the first meeting, who will be responsible for the work agenda and for the choice and the implementation of the chosen case studies. The members of the WG will meet once a year and organise specific sessions within the plenary meeting.

E.3 Liaison and interaction with other research programmes

The Action intends to cooperate with research projects and research initiatives implemented in the framework of European Research as well as with interdisciplinary research projects funded by national research agencies. Contacts have already been established with the principal investigators of the Marie Curie Initial Training Network “Mobility of Ideas and Transmission of Texts”. The Action is moreover planning collaboration with the ERC-Synergy “Domestic Devotions: the Place of Piety in the Renaissance Italian Home” (UK), with a number of HERA JRP in the 2013-2017 research framework Cultural Dynamics and with researchers affiliated to the Excellenzcluster “Religion und Politik” at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (DE) and with the CESR (Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance) in Tours (FR). Contacts have also already been established with scholars from Canada, United States and Australia working on religious transformation in the late medieval and early modern period(s).

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

Early stage researchers will be involved not only through the organisation of specific activities, such as Summer Schools and Training Sessions, but also by challenging them to participate in theoretical and methodological discussions. The Action will moreover be very keen to promote and actively stimulate an appropriate gender balance in the field of science, both in the selection of participants for Summer Schools and Training Sessions and in the recruitment of the Steering Group, the Editorial Board and the WGs. Talent development, coaching and mentorship of (female) early and mid-career researchers will be put high on the Action agenda.

F. TIMETABLE

The COST Action will run for four years, starting each year with a plenary conference (with the exception of Year 4, see milestones), followed by a workshop for each WG in the second half of the year. In the second half of each year a Summer School and a Training Session for early-stage researchers will be organised. The Action will be concluded by a major conference for all

participants in the Action.

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|
| First Half | Action website; Discussion and choice of case studies for WG 1, 2 and 3; Plenary Conference | Plenary conference; Publication first collection of essays | Plenary conference | Workshop WG 1, 2 and 3; publication WG-volume of essays |
| Second Half | Workshop WG 1, 2 and 3, including planning activities for year 2; Summer School and Training Session | Workshop WG 1, 2 and 3, including planning activities for year 3; Summer School and Training Session | Workshop WG 1, 2 and 3, including publication of WG- results and planning activities for year 4; Summer School and Training Session | Summer School and Training Session |
| End of year | | | | Concluding conference; preparation of a European collaborative project; publication of results of summative conference |

G. ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The following COST countries have actively participated in the preparation of the Action or otherwise indicated their interest: AT, BE, CH, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FR, HU, IT, NL, PL, UK. On the basis of national estimates, the economic dimension of the activities to be carried out under the Action has been estimated at 52 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 target audience for the dissemination of the results of this Action comprises three groups: the first group includes senior researchers within the field of medieval and early modern cultural and religious history, in particular those interested in the methodological and theoretical re-formulation and re-calibration of scientific approaches to religion and secularisation as historical and textual phenomena across geographical, linguistic and national divides. It will in particular stimulate an inter- and transdisciplinary approach to religious and social history and enhance the importance of pre-modern studies in the much-discussed European themes of participation, religious and social identities and cultural transformations. The second group includes new generations of researchers in the humanities and social sciences. A third target group will include members of non-academic institutions (in particular national and regional archives and libraries), as well as the general public. Archives and libraries will be actively involved in the organisation of Summer Schools and Training Sessions.

H.2 What?

The Action requires a calibrated and differentiated dissemination plan.

For researchers, the Action results will be disseminated through:

- * articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals (including Open Access publishing and discipline-specific repositories);
- * founding of a dedicated book series;
- * at least three edited volumes;
- * organisation of conferences, which will be open to other researchers, to non-academic participants and to a more general public;
- * working papers on the Action website.

For early stage researchers:

- * organisation of a Summer School;
- * organisation of Training Sessions;
- * contribution of Action members to national research platforms and Graduate Schools;
- * selection of papers written in the framework of Summer Schools and Training Sessions for publication in Action volumes and journal thematic issues;
- * involvement and participation in an extended European research network;
- * creation of specific internship possibilities for Masters students.

For non-academic institutions and the general public:

- * organisation of a series of public lectures in collaboration with libraries and archives;
- * organisation of thematically focussed exhibitions of relevant manuscripts and early printed texts in regional and national libraries and archives;
- * distribution of description of research results through a mailing list;
- * Action website (description of research activities; working papers);
- * publication of articles in journals and magazines for the wider public;
- * publication of a volume with user-friendly accounts of case studies and scientific backgrounds for teaching purposes (high school and undergraduate level).

H.3 How?

Each WG will produce at least one volume of selected essays as well as articles (to be published by individual researchers or by a group of researchers in international peer-reviewed journals). One of the objectives of the Action will be to start a dedicated book series, which will host the Action collaborative volumes as well as the publications on three specific themes (Methodology; Strategies of Transformations; European Knowledge Networks) of the Working Groups. In order to engage in a publication strategy that will reach a broad and diverse audience, the participants in the Action will strive to publish at least one thematic issue in an Open Access environment and to make use of discipline-specific repositories. They will also strive to translate their scientific results into more “popular” forms of publication, including national newspapers and magazines. Specific attention will be given to the publication of research results for didactic purposes and for use in the classroom and university teaching as well as to the organisation of public activities (lectures and exhibitions in collaboration with national and regional libraries and archives).

The official website will be central to the dissemination activities of the Action. It will host:

- * Working papers and summaries of plenary conferences and WG meetings;
- * A complete Action publication list;
- * An update description of scientific activities for senior and early stage researchers and organisation of public activities;
- * Description of primary sources and research material (with links to relevant collections and items in libraries and archives);
- * Links with other research projects and with non-academic institutions.

The Action members will moreover participate in activities outside the Action, such as conferences, workshops and other research groups, thereby contributing to the dissemination of the Action’s

results within and outside academia.