



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

**Brussels, 4 July 2012**

---

**Secretariat**

-----

**COST 4139/12**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

---

Subject : Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as COST Action IS1204: Tourism, Wellbeing and Ecosystem Services (TObeWELL)

---

Delegations will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for COST Action as approved by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) at its 185th meeting on 6 June 2012.

---

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**  
**For the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as**  
**COST Action IS1204**  
**TOURISM, WELLBEING AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (TOBEWELL)**

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 examine the relationships between tourism and wellbeing within the framework of ecosystem services.
3. The economic dimension of the activities carried out under the Action has been estimated, on the basis of information available during the planning of the Action, at EUR 72 million in 2012 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**

This project is based on bringing together principles of ecosystem services (ES), which focus on life support systems, with more non-material services such as culture, health and wellbeing through tourism. It aims to link research on wellbeing provided by ecosystems and their use via tourism, leisure and recreation activities. The underpinning issue of this Action is to produce new and collaborative research on how and in what way can tourism be a catalyst for improving human health and wellbeing, by using in a symbiotic and sustainable way natural resources and services provided by ecosystems, as well as exploring the challenges of (e)valuation of such services. This will be achieved by creating a collaborative European network of research centres based around four key working groups, namely (a) theoretical relationships between tourism, wellbeing and ES ; (b) empirical and methodological research challenges and approaches; (c) interrelations between ageing, wellbeing and ES; and (d) policy frameworks' analysis and research-informed policy making.

**Keywords:** Nature-based tourism and recreation, Health and Wellbeing, Ecosystem Services, Natural and Human Capital, Interdisciplinary research.

**B. BACKGROUND****B.1 General background**

The UN's Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA 2005) brought the principles and framework of ecosystem services to a higher policy profile, by highlighting a way of assessing how ecosystems influence human wellbeing, along with means to support decision matters utilising additional social and economic information. Constanza et al. (1997) estimated the value of ecosystems services (ES) of the entire biosphere to be a (conservative) average of US\$33 trillion per year. In this context ES are defined as the benefits humans derive either directly or indirectly from ecosystem functions (Constanza et al. 1997; Fisher 2009). Furthermore, The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity Study (TEEB 2010), promoted by UNEP and others, published its final reports with a compelling business case for an ES approach. These highlighted the need to incorporate ES in economic decision-making to help prevent prejudicial decisions being made to the well-being of both current and future generations by the destruction of natural capital. At the European level examples have been given in a range of case studies (European Commission May 2010).

Informing much of the intense policy making activity is a rapidly growing literature on ES which to date is mainly focused on the importance of bio-physical assets. However, a significant complementary aspect of ES is the provision of cultural services, such as educational, spiritual and aesthetic values, along with related, important opportunities for recreational activities.

Unfortunately, these latter are the least understood aspects of ES (Fish 2011), and yet they are significant parts of political agendas within the EU and globally. For example, health and wellbeing benefits provided by ES can be fed back to inform research on economic values, development strategies and public policy options derived from such knowledge. Tourism and recreation can be key factors of human wellbeing (Hjalager and Flagestad 2011) and provide a key interface between the different dimensions of ES, i.e. the tangible bio-physical vs. the intangible cultural services (Gee and Burkhard 2010) and their related health and wellbeing dimensions, which is as yet an under researched theme.

This COST Action aims to address this gap in knowledge and sets out to: a) explore, challenge and develop the interdisciplinary potentials of research in the fields of tourism, recreation, wellbeing, health and ecosystem services; and b) build bridges and promote knowledge transfer between the research, practitioner and policy-making communities, both across these knowledge areas and different European regions and contexts. This will be achieved by creating a collaborative European network of research centres in the fields of tourism and health sciences in a framework of resource management based on aspects of ES.

Given these aims, the COST framework stands as the most appropriate instrument to support these goals (when compared with others like FP7 or Eureka), given that there is already a range of research happening in these topics separately (both nationally and/or EU funded), but no common platform to provide opportunities for cross-disciplinary research and capacity-building. This Action will provide such a platform, delivering the following benefits: i) the creation of a new research network that will act as a catalyst to innovate around tourism, well-being and ecosystem services by providing examples of best practice via case studies; ii) the transmission of best practice to wider groups - thereby acting as a mechanism for knowledge transfer; iii) the provision of new perspectives at an academic level as well as to practitioners and policy makers; and iv) the enhancement of a cohort of Early Career Researchers (including PhD students) across a range of disciplines reflecting the Action's aims and the expertise of the network.

This COST Action is therefore expected to deliver a wide range of benefits that have relevance to research and policy making at international, national and local levels. This is backed (and will be facilitated) by the extensive network of research centres across Europe that have participated in (and committed to) the development of this Action, highlighting its relevance, timeliness and demand.

## **B.2 Current state of knowledge**

This Action is based on an innovative, interdisciplinary approach aimed at examining relationships between tourism and wellbeing within an ecosystem services (ES) framework. As such it relates to a range of research literatures. Our review of current knowledge is focused on progress as well as significant gaps in our understanding. As Carpenter et al. (2009) argue, the connections between ES and aspects of wellbeing are key themes in the MA document, but such connections are complex due to spatial scale and time horizons (MA 2005; Hein et al 2006). In a broad context, though, these have identified a definition of wellbeing comprising 5 key dimensions: basic material for a good life, health, security, good social relations and freedom of choice.

Tourism and leisure are linked to many of these dimensions, especially health and social relations, and the importance of wellbeing is being increasingly recognised as an aspect of tourism. As a starting point there is evidence that positive leisure experiences can help to foster positive moods leading to improvements in psychological wellbeing (Argyle and Crossland 1987; Sirgy and Su 2000). This idea of subjective wellbeing is an important contribution to the happiness feelings on holidays and can contribute to aspects of life satisfaction (Gilbert and Abdullah 2004; Nawjin 2011; Nawjin 2011; Nawjin and Peeters 2010). There is a body of literature on medical and health tourism that has presented a range of examples on the growth of this market segment (Carrera and Bridges 2006; Smith and Puczko 2008; 2010), but there is a gap in the literature on preventive health tourism. Other work has started to explore the relationship between illness and holidays, like the role of social tourism schemes on improving the health and wellbeing of older people (Ferreira 2000; 2006), and some research has focused on the importance of holidays to the wellbeing of people with disabilities and their families (Shaw and Veitch 2011; Shaw and Coles 2007).

More recently more innovative studies have been undertaken identifying potential relationships between tourism, health and wellbeing while pointing to the decisive importance of the environment and natural resources (Hjalager 2011; Hjalager and Flagestad 2011). In parallel, there has been a recent growth in health research on the comparative health and wellbeing impacts of physical activity in natural environments (e.g. Depledge and Bird 2009; Thompson Coon et al. 2011; Depledge et al. 2011), but these two streams of research are not usually brought together. However, new tourism research has been exploring the development of new tourism products that address aspects of lifestyle and wellbeing on natural environments (Hjalager et al. 2011; Konu et al. 2010), which could provide significant contributions to public health policy development.

The relationship between ES and aspects of wellbeing (healthy living) are of course conditional in part by consumer attitudes and public-private good aspects (Fisher et al. 2009; Turner et al. 2003; MacMillan et al. 2006). But tourism is directly linked to the other dimensions of ES and wellbeing, like security and basic materials for a good life (including access to food, water and a clean environment), both in way that these essential services support tourism and that tourism may oppose a threat to these dimensions. However these aspects have so far been mostly analysed through an environmental impacts' angle, e.g. on water depletion (Gössling et al. 2012) or climate change (Peeters et al. 2007; Scott et al 2012). An ES framework, in turn, can complement this line of research with alternative research questions on the role of tourism as a net contributor to wellbeing and ES management. For instance, the idea that ES are declining due to their value not being recognised in economic decision making (MA 2005; Fisher et al. 2009) is in terms of many tourism products/ regions not necessarily true as the experience of many protected landscapes in the EU demonstrate. There is then also a case for the exploration of synergies between tourism and natural resource management forms under a wellbeing framework.

As the MA (2005 p.25) points out 'There is a hypothesis that stimulating contact with the rich and varied environment of ecosystems... may benefit physical and mental health'. We would argue that tourism can be a means of testing it, and the interdisciplinary approach of this Action can provide the tools for such research.

### **B.3 Reasons for the Action**

The Action will provide a range of academic and practitioner benefits as outlined as detailed in section C. Examples of immediate benefits that can be emphasized here include knowledge transfer between the three core subjects (achieved through a structured programme of networking meetings and activities) and development of research capacity in Early Career Researchers (ECRs) (through annual summer schools and short term scientific missions). Furthermore, the research will provide examples of best practice that will link to policy driven benefits. In specific terms the Action is aimed at improving the societal needs and wellbeing of EU citizens. This will be through establishing interactions between tourism products, improving lifestyles (health/wellbeing) and ecosystems at various geographical levels. The Action will produce a range of innovative results in the form of academic publications alongside policy reports and recommendations regarding the impact, use and benefits of using tourism to improve wellbeing. Within both contexts outputs should include advice on new tourism products designed around wellbeing and ecosystem services. These will allow healthy lifestyle products to be co-created between tourism organisations, consumers and land managers, which would lead to commercial benefits for tourism firms as well as improving the quality of tourism and natural resources in particular destinations.

### **B.4 Complementarity with other research programmes**

Ecosystem services and wellbeing are both growing research agendas and priorities in Europe, and the latest rounds of FP7 have been including specific calls for these areas (but usually not in an interdisciplinary way). Current FP7 projects include “BESAFE - Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Arguments for our future Environment” and “CGPESA – Communities, Governance and Payment for Ecosystem Services in Amazonia”. Directorates of the EC regularly publish funding calls for projects with relevance for this Action. Examples are the DG Environment Preparatory Action 'BEST' (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories), or the DG Enterprise and Industry “Preparatory Action on Sustainable Tourism”, with annual calls for the development of transnational actions. The CALYPSO Programme funds projects on social tourism, examples of which are the “SOWELL - Social tourism Opportunities in WELLness and Leisure activities” and “EST- European Senior Travellers” projects.

A complementary and currently open FP7(Capacities: Science in Society) call that also addresses issues of active ageing is the SiS.2012.1.2-1: “Mobilisation and Mutual Learning (MML) Action Plans - Specific Challenge 3: Healthy and active ageing”.

## **C. OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS**

### **C.1 Aim**

The aim of the Action is to explore, challenge and develop the interdisciplinary potentials of research in the fields of tourism, recreation, wellbeing, health and ecosystem services, as well as build bridges and promote knowledge transfer between the research, practitioner and policy-making communities, both across these knowledge areas and different European regions and contexts.

### **C.2 Objectives**

a) To develop inter-disciplinary research capacity, explore existing research frames and plan new research pathways through collaboration between established and early career researchers on the Action’s three key knowledge areas (tourism, wellbeing and ecosystem services), in a well-specified series of seminars, conferences, researchers’ exchanges (STSM), summer schools and joint publications (see specific objectives below); b) To explore opportunities for development of cross-disciplinary methodological approaches and promote knowledge transfer between different empirical research traditions, by bringing together different research communities experienced in the evaluation of cultural, wellbeing, economic and management dimensions; c) To provide a core inter-disciplinary body of knowledge that can support both the continuation of wider research collaborations or specific research spin-offs with different thematic and geographical foci, through the development of new EU partnerships and joint research proposals; d) To involve the policy-making and practitioner communities in order to open up the scientific discussion to these stakeholders and find effective ways to transfer knowledge and put it into practice, including the production of research-informed strategic insights and recommendations. This inter-stakeholder dialogue will be promoted both by widening the participation in the Action’s seminars and conferences to industry and public sector representatives, as well as creating dedicated outputs aimed at informing policy and practice drawing from best available research.



Secondary/specific objectives: a) Research network meetings (conferences, workshops and training schools) i) Two large scale research conferences ii) Four joint WGs workshops/seminars over four years (one joint workshop per year), bringing together all WGs to allow the development of work both *within* and *across* each WG. b) Support to Early Career Researchers (developing research capacity): i) Four training schools in four years, with at least 60% of spaces reserved for ECRs; ii) 16 STSM over 4 years aimed at PhD students and early career researchers (ECRs); iii) Promotion of at least one new PhD project around each WG's theme. c) Publications/dissemination: i) Two sets of conference proceedings; ii) One Final Action Publication, in the format of an edited book of key issues and findings; iii) Publication of research results in high quality peer-reviewed journals per WG and four; iv) A dedicated Action website, together with a virtual research network community

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

At this stage the Action has already secured the interest of research centres in 18 different European countries, and will continue to work on its expansion. To capitalize on its geographic reach, different geographic and cultural contexts, and promote a larger involvement of ECRs from a variety of different European regions, network meetings/activities will be spread across the four key European regions in the network so far: i.e. Southwest Europe (Portugal and Spain), Northern Europe (e.g. UK, Iceland, Denmark and Finland), Western Europe (e.g. Netherlands, France, Switzerland) and Eastern Europe (e.g. Slovakia, Hungary and Romania). Individual research centers from each of the regions above have already expressed interest in organizing and commit the necessary resources for planned network meetings and activities (Working Groups' workshops, summer training schools and Scientific Short Term Missions).

The majority of the partner organizations have ongoing nationally funded PhD programmes on the topics of the Action and all partners are committing at least one senior researcher to the Action. Therefore, the key means needed to secure the Action's objectives in terms of human resources, time and funding are secured through national programmes, be it in terms of senior leading academics, ECRs or doctoral projects.

#### **C.4 Potential impact of the Action**

The benefits of the Action are at multiple levels, namely: i) To contribute to the filling of a key research and knowledge gap. There is currently little or no translation in existing research between tourism, wellbeing and ecosystem services, and no existing network of experts (to our knowledge) in the overlaps in these areas. This Action will start a new interdisciplinary area of study, as well as educational and research that will outlast the life of the project, as it clearly addresses several theoretical and practical challenges. ii) To inform the development of policy at national and EU level. This can range from recommendations for Destination Management Organisations and/or National Health Organizations on how to improve general health, happiness and quality of life through sustainable forms of tourism and recreation, to assisting government organizations with knowledge on evaluation and management tools on managing natural resources for wellbeing. iii) Through informing and influencing (ongoing and future) nationally funded research the Action will have positive impacts and engagement with locally based tourism development stakeholders in the participating regions, delivering relevant guidelines and insights for these. Pilot projects resulting from the network research, expertise and benchmarking, if implemented by government, non-government or private institutions can prove to be a significant positive outcome of the Action.

#### **C.5 Target groups/end users**

The Action's objectives, expected benefits and outputs are aimed at the following target groups: i) The research communities involved in tourism, wellbeing and health, along with those concerned with ecosystem services. This involves a range of research workers some of whom will be working within Europe whilst others are non-European; ii) A particular focus of the dissemination of the results will be aimed at early career researchers, including those studying for PhDs and those on related MSc courses. Tourism research is particularly popular at the MSc courses level across a range of countries. In this context the Action will provide a new and critical research dimension to these postgraduates; iii) EU and national policy makers involved in tourism policy, health care and prevention, as well as natural resource management; iv) There is also considerable scope to disseminate results to commercial tourism organisations given the strong public – private interface within the tourism industry.

## **D. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME**

### **D.1 Scientific focus**

The current literature review has shown the need to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between tourism and wellbeing through a framework of ecosystem services. Furthermore the construction and implementation of such new inter-disciplinary approaches and dialogues calls for knowledge transfer between these research areas. This in turn will require the development of new methods and metrics that bridge the interdisciplinary boundaries more effectively. These are the key building blocks which the Action will encompass.

The literature identifies a range of measures of well being developed in health and social sciences that may be associated with tourism. Such feelings of wellbeing need to be examined more carefully within this context and in particular relative to different ecosystem services.

Complementarily, there is a growing research and development of theoretical and empirical frameworks on evaluation of ecosystem services. These however have focused for the most part on bio-physical assets and the ‘economic invisibility of nature’, with cultural services being the least understood. Tourism and leisure research can have an important role in the development of this area, being in itself an interdisciplinary research field but drawing substantially from the humanistic and social sciences. On the other hand, tourism research and tourism development often depict a biased approach, with strategies and projects being structured regardless of the natural and social assets they use and the overall objectives they can promote, besides tourism development itself. Hence, an ES and wellbeing approach can equally contribute in a significant way to a more holistic development of tourism. In fact, this comes as a necessity, as tourism and recreation in nature-based environments is becoming increasingly important in societies across Europe, and sustainable management practices need to be considered to maximize both social and economic benefits. This Action aims at this step forward, by getting interrelated topics and different background researchers to jointly explore the synergies in their respective fields, compare theoretical frameworks and challenge current assumptions.

Similarly, there is also a strong focus on how the Action can inform policy-making and explore how tourists (and residents) can benefit from such a focus on wellbeing and ES. More particularly attention will need to be given to how new tourism products can be co-created with both health policy-makers and the tourism industry. This is a particular key challenge that has the potential to unlock the resources of ecosystem services within the contest of tourism and wellbeing. The Action is therefore a threefold interdisciplinary package drawing on research from tourism, health care and ecosystem services. Given these needs the Action will undertake the following key research tasks or activities:

- (i) Examine the varied methods used to assess health, wellbeing and cultural ES in the context of tourism experiences.
- (ii) Explore new conceptual frameworks between tourism, wellbeing and ecosystem services that will help inform policy makers.
- (iii) Investigate the development of innovative tourism products and services to develop wellbeing within an ecosystem services framework.

The operationalisation of these will be done through thematic working groups (see section D.2) which will have the flexibility to decide on specific research questions in their areas. These will be drawn from the partners' research and expertise at the national level, and further developed through the networking and capacity-building opportunities provided by the Action (see C.2).

## **D.2 Scientific work plan methods and means**

The Action is designed around 4 Working Groups (WG) that will explore complementary research areas under the following themes and plans of action:

**WG 1.** Network – Relationships between tourism, wellbeing and ecosystem services: theoretical aspects, impacts and interdependences.

In order to build up a strong conceptual level of interdisciplinary knowledge this working group will focus on exploring the interdisciplinary constructs of the Actions' themes. Particular attention will be given to the identification and evaluation of health and wellbeing in terms of their relationships with different tourism products. In addition, the links/impacts of tourism and recreation development on ecosystems will be explored as well as the capacity to provide not only products for tourism and wellbeing but also to help in the maintenance of different ecosystem services. Key objectives of this group include:

- Knowledge mapping of the fields and their interrelationships, utilising meta analysis techniques to construct the data base that will identify the key gaps in our conceptual knowledge.
- A comprehensive Baseline Report showing the results of the meta-research to inform academia and policy.
- Development of research proposals (including PhD level) to explore the knowledge gaps identified.

**WG 2.** Network – Empirical and methodological research issues and approaches for tourism, wellbeing and ecosystem services.

This will explore the opportunities for the development of cross-disciplinary methodological approaches that may better address the challenges of an ecosystem services approach in the context of tourism and wellbeing. Part of the WG will also give attention to testing any appropriate models along with the use of dynamic modelling to explore empirical relationships. For example, within the academic communities in tourism and health/wellbeing there is a history of developing and evaluating methods for assessing methodological approaches. By contrast work on the value of ecosystem services relating to tourism and recreation have not been considered an empirical/methodological context, largely because existing literature has largely ignored economic decision making in such contexts. The bringing together of these different researchers in this network presents exciting new opportunities for synergies and the testing of new interdisciplinary methodologies. The main objectives of this working group include:

- A wide scale literature review with a focus on methodological approaches;
- Identification of starting point of key case studies.
- Organization of training schools to develop research capacity on trans-disciplinary research methodologies.

**WG 3.** Network – Ageing, wellbeing and Ecosystem services

This WG will explore how tourism in the framework of ecosystem services can have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of ageing populations in Europe. This is a major concern within the EU as Eurostat predicts that by 2050 it will have 20% of its citizens aged 65 or over. Furthermore, the EU is committed to promoting the concept of active ageing – which includes improving the health and quality of life of older people to ensure they can play an active role in society. The WG is aimed at researching the role tourism and ecosystem services can play in this context. The WG will undertake an international survey of relevant research and place key studies within a meta-analysis data base. This will be followed by a more detailed assessment of examples of case studies the results from which will be added to the data base.

It will undertake a critical review of the benefits of using tourism to promote healthy lifestyles within the context of older people. The WG will also identify those innovative tourism products that will be most suitable for this target group. The key objectives of this WG therefore include:

- A comprehensive Baseline Report of the benefits that can be obtained from the interrelationships between tourism, wellbeing and ecosystem services on this important market segment via an international review
- To help provide an informed framework for possible applications/practical applications – this analysis would be followed by specific guidelines (possibly in the form of a handbook)
- An implementation procedure (e.g. possible pilot project) that could be implemented in sample countries – comparative research)

**WG 4.** Network – Towards research – informed policy making on Tourism, Wellbeing and Ecosystem Services.

This WG aims to provide a critical analysis and review of EU policies and practices with regard to their impact on the interrelationships of tourism wellbeing and ecosystem services. The review will also embrace a comparative international study exploring policy and best practice within and beyond the EU. The WG will construct a detailed data base of such policy evidence. The key objectives of the WG include:

- An examination of key policy questions, such as what are the institutions, mechanisms, incentives on regulations that are the most effective in securing the benefits of health and wellbeing from tourism
- To bridge the gap between research science communities and policy making, by promoting a dialogue and learning exchange between the different regions and countries of the project partners.
- Translating and making accessible the research undertaken by the Action into a format of use to policy makers.

The 4 main WGs are clearly interrelated and they also share a series of key common features. These include:

- (i) The idea of developing inclusive networks. This includes a good mix of experienced academics, early career researchers, PhD students and an appropriate gender balance. Indeed some of the applicants already have national and European (ESF) funded PhD students working on aspects of tourism and wellbeing . In addition, whilst many of the network partners are lead experts in their areas of research, we also recognise the need include other expertise. Meetings will therefore be open to other interested parties. This will include establishing links with those key complementary research programmes listed in Section B.4.
- (ii) The creation of an accessible data base from the result research accessible to the wider academic community.
- (iii) The publication of a series of key papers in high impact academic journals and a jointly edited book on the key research findings.

## **E. ORGANISATION**

### **E.1 Coordination and organisation**

The Action will be centrally coordinated by a Management Committee (MC), with a permanent Secretariat support provided by the grant holder. As per the COST rules, participating COST countries can nominate up to 2 representatives for the MC, as well as the European Commission and other European Bodies.

Given the strong focus of this Action in producing research that can inform policy, an open invitation will be made (but not limited) to key policy and representative organizations to participate in the MC, including the DG Enterprise and Industry, DG Environment, World Tourism Organization, World Health Organization, European Network for Accessible Tourism, Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS), amongst others.

The MC will meet twice yearly to determine, monitor and review the direction of the work plan, including the dissemination of outputs and exchange of results with key international bodies and wider public.



The MC and its secretariat will be directly responsible for the organization of two main opening and closing milestones of the project, the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on ‘Tourism, Wellbeing and Ecosystem Services’ to mark the launch of the Action and form the WGs, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on ‘Tourism, Wellbeing and Ecosystem Services’ which will include in its programme the dissemination of the Action’s results. Other milestones will be annual summer training Schools and annual WG meetings.

The MC and its Secretariat will also be responsible for the management and updating of the Action’s website, which will serve as a central point for the dissemination and coordination of the Action, including downloadable outputs, calendar and programme, and possibility of online networking between participants.

The research element of the Action will be operationalised by four thematic Working Groups (see sections E.2 below), which will coordinate the research carried out and financed by the individual partner countries. WGs will meet annually in a joint workshop/seminar to compare progress within and between WGs. Each WG will coordinate their work through the Action’s website throughout the rest of the year and be responsible for deciding the frequency of meetings.

## **E.2 Working Groups**

The research element of the Action will be mostly operationalised by four thematic Working Groups, which will coordinate the research carried out and financed by the individual partner countries (see description of WGs goals and objectives in section D.2): WGs will meet annually in a joint workshop/seminar, and coordinate their work through the Action’s website throughout the rest of the year and be responsible for deciding the frequency of meetings necessary for each. Each WG is expected to produce an annual report of research outputs, which will be compiled by the MC and made publicly available in the website. To promote the development of ECRs, these shall have an active role on the coordination and chairing of the WGs, with the support of more experienced academics. Of the four WG, two will be chaired by ECRs and co-chaired by experienced researchers, and two will have co-chairing of ECRs. Also, to capitalize on the wide geographic spread of the partners, increase networking reach and promote a bigger ECRs involvement from different regions, the chairing and activities of the four WG would also be spread across four key European regions (Southwest Europe; Northern Europe; Central Europe and Eastern Europe).

### **E.3 Liaison and interaction with other research programmes**

Because of its interdisciplinary nature, this Action can build working links with several ongoing research programmes and networks on the areas of tourism, health and/or ecosystem services. Some of these include: 1) ERNEST - European Research Network on Sustainable Tourism (ERA-NET/FP7) ii) BESAFE - Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Arguments for our future Environment (FP7) iii) PECS - Programme on Ecosystem Change & Society (ICS/UNESCO) iv) The Health and Environment Linkages Initiative (HELI) – World Health Organization v) Lifelong Health and Wellbeing programme 2011-15 (UK Medical Research Council) vi) DIVERSITAS– Integrating Biodiversity Science for Human Wellbeing (ESSP/ICS) vii) ESPA - Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (UK DFID/NERC/ESRC) viii) CALYPSO Social Tourism programme – DG Enterprise and Industry ix) Wellness Tourism Worldwide (WTW) network. These projects have the potential to both provide and receive added-value from the Action's network and activities, so representatives of these would be invited to formally join the annual WGs joint network meeting for both sharing of experiences and acting as informal advisory members. Alternatively, and if willing, such representatives can also consider formally joining the Action as full partners, as well as the MC. Finally, the Action's dissemination programme will include these and any other relevant projects or networks in newsletters and updates.

### **E.4 Commitment to 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. The applicants have agreed several conditions that ensure these goals and make capacity building of ECRs a key output of the Action, including: i) At least 60% of available spaces in the Training School are reserved for ECRs. ii) The 16 Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) are specifically aimed at PhD students and ECRs iii) Each WG will be promoting at least one new PhD research project on its theme. The monitoring of these goals will be made through the MC and its secretariat.

## F. TIMETABLE

The duration of the Action will be four years with the indicative timetable:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<p>Activities</p> <p>1st Semester:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1st MC meeting</li> <li>- Opening Conference</li> <li>- WGs joint workshop</li> </ul> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Semester:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-2<sup>nd</sup> MC meeting</li> <li>-1<sup>st</sup> Training school</li> </ul> <p>Throughout the year:</p> <p><b>- 4 STSM</b></p>	<p>Activities</p> <p>1st Semester:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3<sup>rd</sup> MC meeting</li> <li>- WGs joint workshop</li> </ul> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Semester:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-4<sup>th</sup> MC meeting</li> <li>-2<sup>st</sup> Training School</li> </ul> <p>Throughout the year:</p> <p><b>- 4 STSM</b></p>	<p>Activities</p> <p>1st Semester:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5<sup>th</sup> MC meeting</li> <li>- WGs joint workshop</li> </ul> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Semester:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-6<sup>th</sup> MC meeting</li> <li>-3<sup>rd</sup> Training School</li> </ul> <p>Throughout the year:</p> <p><b>- 4 STSM</b></p>	<p>Activities</p> <p>1st Semester:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7<sup>th</sup> MC meeting</li> <li>-4<sup>th</sup> Training school</li> </ul> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Semester:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Final MC meeting</li> <li>- Closing Conference</li> <li>- WGs joint workshop</li> </ul> <p>Throughout the year:</p> <p><b>- 4 STSM</b></p>
<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conference proceedings</li> <li>- WGs reports</li> <li>- Website</li> <li>- Newsletter</li> </ul> <p>Intermediate progress report</p>	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WGs reports</li> <li>- 4 journal submissions</li> <li>- Newsletter</li> </ul>	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WGs reports</li> <li>- 4 journal submissions</li> <li>- Newsletter</li> </ul>	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conference proceedings</li> <li>- WGs reports</li> <li>- 4 journal submissions</li> <li>- Newsletter</li> <li>- Final Action publication</li> </ul>

## **G. ECONOMIC DIMENSION**

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

## **H. DISSEMINATION PLAN**

### **H.1 Who?**

The target groups for the dissemination of the Action's results include:

1. International research and academic communities on the areas of tourism & recreation, health & wellbeing, and ecosystem services & natural resource management. a) A particular focus of the dissemination of our results will be aimed at early career researchers, including those studying for PhDs and those on related MSc courses. Tourism research is particularly popular at the MSc courses level across a range of countries. In this context the Action will provide a new and critical research dimension to these postgraduates. b) Other research networks and projects with related themes (see point E.3 above 'other research programmes')

2. Policy-making and practitioner communities on the areas above, including but not limited to:
  - a) National level:
    - i) Government bodies responsible for policy making on Health, Tourism, Environment, Science and Education
    - ii) Local and regional government authorities
    - iii) Destination Management Organisations (inc. national, regional and local)
    - iv) Tourism boards and operators
    - v) National Parks and Protected Areas' networks
    - vi) Regional and local environmental and development agencies
    - vii) Non-profit sector (associations, foundations, charities, etc) working on tourism development, environmental protection and human health and well-being.
  - b) Transnational level:
    - i) European Commission Depts, including DG Enterprise and Industry, DG Environment and DG Agriculture and Regional Development
    - ii) World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
    - iii) World Health Organization (WHO)
    - iv) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
    - v) Relevant European networks like EDEN- European Destinations of Excellence, European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), EUROPARC Federation, etc.

## H.2 What?

The dissemination strategy of the Action consists of 3 key approaches:

- (1) Events
  - a) Organization of two international conferences by the MC:
    - i) 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on 'Tourism, Wellbeing and Ecosystem Services' (year 1) – formal opening of the Action, with the goal of raising awareness and present its objectives to the academic community
    - ii) 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on 'Tourism, Wellbeing and Ecosystem Services' (year 4) – closing of the Action, focused on presentation of results to the academic, policy-making and practitioners' communities.
    - iii) Both events will have published conference proceedings, printed and available online.
  - b) Annual Working Groups workshops/seminars
  - c) Annual training schools
- (2) Publications
  - a) Publication of a final Action edited book identifying key issues and findings
    - i) An executive summary of the findings will also be made available through the web site aimed more at the policy-making communities
    - ii) WG reports and interim reports (available online)
    - iii) Each WG to produce at least one joint journal paper per year (from year 2 onwards), targeted at high impact journals.

- (3) Online communication channels a) Dedicated public website: i) For promotion of the Action's activities (e.g. training schools ii) For general public availability (in pdf) of the documents and publications listed above (conference proceedings, WG reports, executive summaries, etc) b) Online newsletter and mailing list c) Electronic communication networks

### **H.3 How?**

- (1) Events: a) Conferences i) the two key conferences will be organized by the MC and its secretariat, and will be targeted at both the academic and policy-making communities. These will be widely advertised and will preferably take place in two different European regions (1<sup>st</sup> conference will be hosted by the University of Exeter Business School) b) Working Groups workshops i) Managed directly by the working groups (with central coordination by the Action secretariat), who are responsible to promote them to specific target audiences, according to their themes and work plans. WG1 and WG2 will be targeted more at the academic community and other research networks (see E.3), and workshops of WG3 and WG4 will be more targeted at policy-makers. c) Training Schools i) Aimed mainly at ECRs and PhD students and will be widely advertised both online and through the partners' networks and dissemination channels.
- (2) Publications: a) MC will be responsible for the production of the conference proceedings and final Action publication. WGs will be responsible both for the production of joint research papers for journal submission and annual reports aimed aim at translating the produced research into insights and recommendations for practitioners and policy-makers. All reports will be edited with one publication per year, available online in the project's website.
- (3) Online communication channels: a)Website will have public and password protected area, to be able to host working documents by WG. b)Publication of at least 3 online newsletters a year to report progress on partners' research. c) Preference will be given to the use of well established and widely used electronic networking methods (like LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter) to maintain communication with and between partners/participants, as well as allow dissemination to wider community.