



EAAP 2018

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The AGRIHORSENET COST action attempt

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OUTLINE

- COST Actions
- History
 - The idea of the AGRIHORSENET project
 - Origins
 - Objectives & details
- Analysis of results
- Possible reasons for failure
- Points for discussion



WHAT ARE COST ACTIONS?



From http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions

- Promote efficient networking instruments aimed at the cooperation and coordination of nationally funded research activities
- COST support workshops, conferences, training schools, short-term scientific missions and dissemination activities, but no research itself
- Researchers and stakeholders

THE AGRIHORSENET IDEA



- “Horse network for advancing knowledge on European native horse breeds in agriculture”
- Network of researchers involved in horse studies and linked to breeding associations
- 14 members involved from 12 EU countries
- Application to 2 deadlines:
 - September 2013
 - March 2014



ORIGIN OF THE NETWORK



- Horse Heritage Foundation (HHF) meeting held in Geneva in November 2010 coordinated by Bertrand Langloise (INRA)
- HHF mission: to preserve horses' genetic diversity and to disseminate awareness on rare horse breeds
- Meeting's aim: to organize a scientific committee and a preservation project for coldblooded breeds

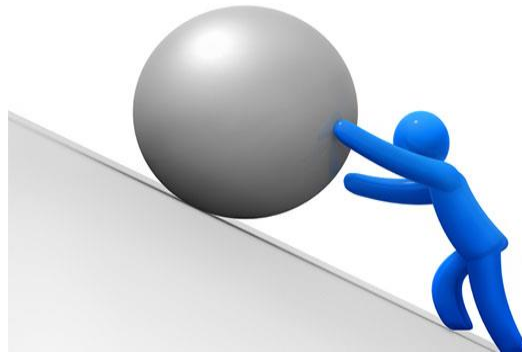
MINUTES FORM GENEVA MEETING

- Plan to preserve genetic diversity of coldblooded breeds widespread across Europe:
 - Heavy draught & “Carrossier” breeds
 - Horses and ponies in farm evolving toward leisure
- Phenotypic (conformation, gaits, drawing power and temperament) and genotypic characterization (blood sample -> DNA bank) for 50-60 animals representative of each breed
- Ideas & money required



SHIFT TO A COST ACTION

- First launch in Nantes at EAAP 2013 meeting
- Enlargement of the network to a wider group of researchers experienced with horses not used in sport (i.e., in farms)
- Quick definition of a challenge proposal (10.000 characters) within September 2013



GOAL OF THE AGRIHORSENET



- Sharing information within the network on native horse breeds widespread across Europe building a general inventory of breeds (i.e., preserving traditions, cultural heritage) but also analyze their economic role in the EU farming system
- Use of COST for meetings, workshops, training schools, etc. useful for the aim above

SPECIFIC POINTS OF AGRIHORSENET

Specific sharing information on native horse breeds:

1. Geographical distribution
2. Historical aspect
3. Genetic relationship among breeds
4. Population size and characteristics of selection/conservation plans if existed
5. Traits measured (including temperament/behaviour)
6. Analysis of socio-economic roles in agriculture
7. Specific diseases and welfare issues
8. Communication to a wider audience (including guidelines for selection or conservation purposes)

FIRST APPLICATION RESULTS

- Overall score at first submission 27.86 on 36 (77% of the total score available)
- Some nice comments on the novelty of network and potential applications
- Need to improve mutual scientific benefits, link novelties to further aspects, better description of the dissemination

RIGHT FOR COST?

Is COST the best mechanism for achieving the Action's objectives?

- Q.1
- High marks are given to proposals for which COST is the best adapted mechanism.
 - Lower marks are given otherwise. (Answered by a value from 1 to 6)

Score: **5.43**

PUBLIC UTILITY/SCIENCE

Does the proposed Action address real current problems/ scientific issues?

- Q.2
- High marks are given to highly exciting and interesting proposals on a very important and/or timely topic.
 - Lower marks are given otherwise. (Answered by a value from 1 to 6)

Score: **4.57**

INNOVATION

Is the proposed Action innovative?

- Q.3
- High marks are given to highly innovative proposals.
 - Lower marks are given otherwise. (Answered by a value from 1 to 6)

Score: **4.71**

IMPACT

Would the proposed network make a significant difference in terms of knowledge, capacity building, social impacts, etc?

- Q.4
- High marks are given to proposals with high potential impact.
 - Lower marks are given otherwise. (Answered by a value from 1 to 6)

Score: **4.57**

NETWORKING

Are networking aspects well motivated and developed in the proposal?

- Q.5
- High marks for proposals that both motivate the need for networking in the field and show how the proposed networking will add value to the current state-of-the-art.
 - Lower marks are given otherwise. (Answered by a value from 1 to 6)

Score: **4.14**

PRESENTATION

Is the proposed Action presented in a clear, rational and understandable way?

- Q.6
- High marks for proposals that are presented in a clear, rational and understandable way.
 - Lower marks are given otherwise. (Answered by a value from 1 to 6)

Score: **4.43**

SECOND APPLICATION RESULTS

- Attempt to improve weaknesses risen by reviewers
- Overall score worse than the previous one

	First Submission		Second Submission		
Questions	Score	Rate	Score	Rate	
Right for COST?	Q.1	5.43	0.91	4.60	0.77
Public utility?	Q.2	4.57	0.76	4.40	0.73
Innovation?	Q.3	4.71	0.79	3.80	0.63
Impact?	Q.4	4.57	0.76	4.20	0.70
Networking?	Q.5	4.14	0.69	4.40	0.73
Presentation?	Q.6	4.43	0.74	4.40	0.73
Overall		27.85	0.77	25.80	0.72

REASONS FOR FAILURE?

- Reduced interaction among participants during the drafting
- Lack of effective research connection among participants and WGs (and mutual benefits too)
- Low impact of defined deliverables in agriculture and food sector
- Dissemination plan lacking of a broad audience
- Too broad project (some aspects perceived no significant for the main objective)

FURTHER APPLICATIONS...

- In September 2014 no deadline
- EU changed the application process: no more challenge for pre-selection of proposals for further steps but direct application of a full proposal of 15 pages: need for a scientific committee



THE PRESENT COST PROPOSALS

- Fully science and technology-driven
 - Need to describe accurately 4 sections
 - S&T excellence (15 pts)
 - Networking excellence (15 pts)
 - Impact (15 pts)
 - Implementation (including GANTT diagram; 5 pts)
- Threshold of 34 pts (0.68) for possible funding
- Only a short list of proposals selected (those with very high score)

KNOWN CRITICISMS AROUND HORSES

1. Global horse population compared to cattle amount at 5% (65 vs. 1.300 millions)
2. Horses are low emitters of GHG and less important for food production
3. Horses have very different uses and this can generate confusion
4. Sport horses have a lot of money
5. Link with the industry is weaker than in other species
6.

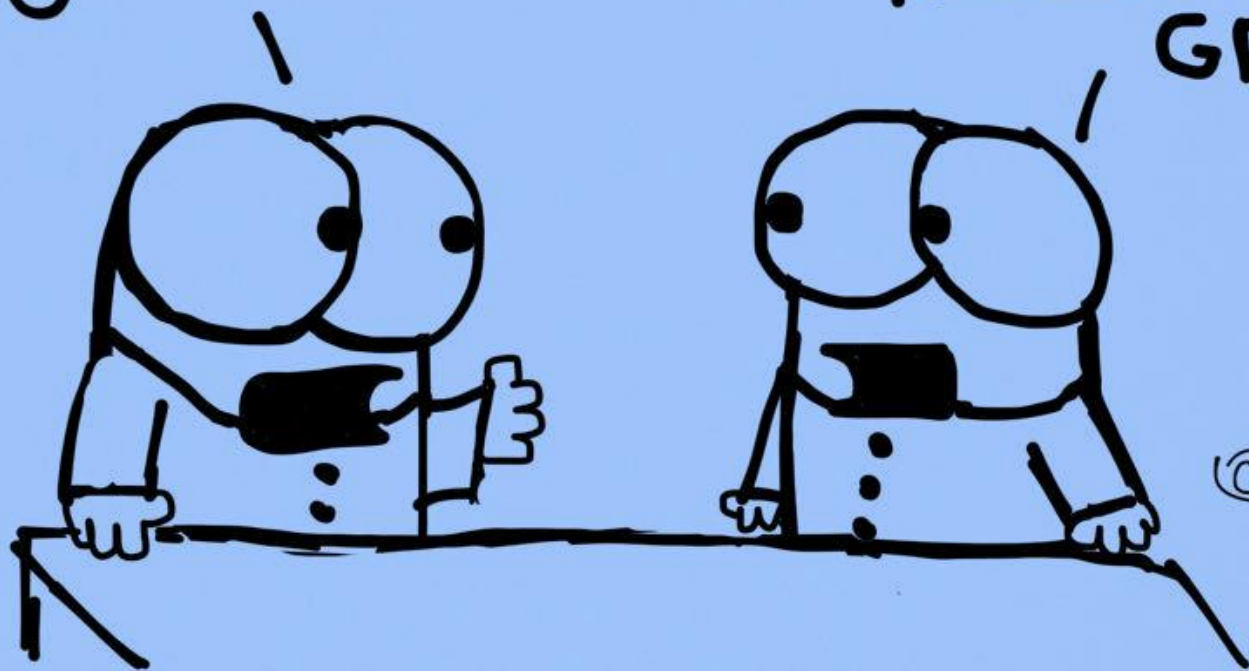
BEING PROPOSITIVE

- Create an effective collaboration team work
- Involve horse industry and a wider group of stakeholders
- Support from external agencies
- New ideas
 - Horses in wider EU projects (Animal health, ecosystem services, etc.)
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