



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

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Secretariat

COST 282/09

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Subject : Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as COST Action IS0906: Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies

Delegations will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for COST Action IS0906 as approved by the COST Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) at its 176th meeting on 1 December 2009.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
For the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as
COST Action IS0906
TRANSFORMING AUDIENCES, TRANSFORMING SOCIETIES

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 270/07 “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 advance state-of-the-art knowledge of the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies.
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 96 million in 2009 prices.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect on being accepted by at least five Parties.
5. The Memorandum of Understanding will remain in force for a period of 4 years, calculated from the date of the first meeting of the Management Committee, unless the duration of the Action is modified according to the provisions of Chapter V of the document referred to in Point 1 above.

A. ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

The Action will coordinate research efforts into the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their complex interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies. Four interconnected but distinct topics concerning audiences will be developed, all of pressing importance to both European communication research and European societies: (1) New media genres, media literacy and trust in the media; (2) Audience interactivity and participation; (3) The role of media and ICT use for evolving social relationships; and (4) Audience transformations and social integration. The Action will offer a perspective which is different from that of conventional ICT-focused audience research, by (a) bringing together experts who study a wide range of media, ‘old’ mass media included, to understand how these relate to each other and to everyday life, and (b) paying equal attention to audience-focused issues (especially media interpretations and mediated experiences) and user-focused issues (both adoption and use of technologies). The Action will be of benefit to the scientific and education communities, to media, communication and ICT industries and professionals, to policy-makers and regulatory bodies, and to media-oriented NGOs and citizen initiatives.

Keywords: Transforming audiences, media literacy, participation, social relationships, social integration.

B. BACKGROUND

B.1 General background

For approximately two decades, audiences have been experiencing major transformations of their media and communication environment. Researchers have stressed the convergence across technologies, the hybridisation of genres, the transnationalisation of (mass) media and communication, tendencies towards fragmentation and specialisation, the blurring of boundaries between private and public domains, and the increasing commodification and manipulation of audiences. Today, ‘Web 2.0’ tools (e.g. blogs, social network platforms) together with mobile information and communication technologies (ICTs) reinforce and extend these movements, and yet further changes are in the making.

This COST Action aims to build a detailed understanding of the key transformations undergone by European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their complex interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies – for example, the formation of cultural identities, the integration of societies within nations and across Europe, or private and formal relationships.

The COST framework is well suited for it supports the networking of researchers from diverse backgrounds, which is vital for an interdisciplinary approach to audiences. Moreover, audience research in Europe is fragmented and in some countries just emerging. The COST framework is ideal for bringing together such a large but dispersed community. Finally, the COST framework allows some flexibility in the day-to-day programme management, useful insofar as this Action addresses original issues likely to require decisions that could not be fully anticipated from the outset.

This Action has the full support of the Audience and Reception Studies section of ECREA (European Communication Research and Education Association), which has now more than 200 members from about 35 countries.

B.2 Current state of knowledge

Audience researchers have long investigated how people make sense of and use media texts across a range of genres (the news, drama, soap operas, talk shows, reality television, current affairs, children's programmes). The focus of qualitative audience research has been on the shaping of meaning construction as this is embedded in the routine activities of everyday life from the domestic setting of the home to 'interpretive communities' in the wider society. Findings reveal that these apparently mundane contexts can set the scene for contestation over meaning. Contrary to earlier arguments that audiences passively or consensually absorb media messages, audiences are now seen to actively negotiate the complex meanings encoded in media texts, thus supporting particular patterns of identity, social relations and communication in and outside the home. Yet audiences are not hyper-active: on the one hand, their media use is framed by cultural, social and ideological structures, while on the other hand, their interpretations are constrained by the generic and discursive features of media texts themselves, along with the technologies that convey them.

The view that audience activity is important is also shared by quantitative audience research, especially media psychology, an approach which has been expanding its range considerably in the past years. This perspective focuses on individuals' subjective experiences, perceptions and emotions, and offers detailed models of information processing and learning. Individual states are used to explain outcomes of media use such as knowledge acquisition, attitude and behavioural change. Increasingly, more complex media experiences are being conceptualised to explain the phenomenology of virtual world experiences, experiences with media characters (e.g. parasocial relationships), and narrative experience. Media psychology is also developing our understanding of media choice, encompassing psycho-physiological (e.g. mood-regulation) and social (norms, peers) factors that affect selective exposure to media. Sophisticated models of users' decision-making acknowledge, for instance, the role of habitual routines and the emergence of multi-tasking. Audience research is facing new critical problems, as changes in media formats and emergence of new technologies are constantly transforming and expanding audience practices:

Problem 1: Hybridisation

The media and communication landscape is increasingly hybridised – the private becomes public, the ordinary articulates with both popular and elite forms, fiction merges with reality. Reality television is but one example of such blurred genres flourishing on conventional broadcast media. On the Internet, the diversification of forms and genres – forums, blogs, social network sites, etc. – adds urgency to the need for a thorough and critical analysis of the processes and resources involved in constructing, interpreting and evaluating these hybrid materials, especially as practitioners, policy makers and publics still need to develop a critical repertoire by which to determine authenticity, trust and quality.

Problem 2: Interaction and participation

With the advent of Web 2.0, audience research has embraced the concepts of interaction and participation, focusing on a range of 'ordinary' content producers such as bloggers and social network users. Researchers have pointed out that user-generated content challenges mainstream

(online) media organisations in their role of content providers, offering multiple spaces for criticism and alternative sources. Thus far, however, much research tends to underestimate the continuing importance of mainstream media structures and professional identities and practices, and to neglect community and alternative media critiques, thereby reinforcing the over-optimistic conflation of potentialities and realities. The critical question remains: To which extent are new media and communication technologies truly empowering tools for audiences?

Problem 3: Technology

Research on ICT use examines the factors affecting the diffusion, appropriation and consequences of new technologies and applications (e.g. mobile phones, Web 2.0 tools). Prominent here, the ‘social shaping of technology’ perspective examines how ordinary users, along with other stakeholders, participate in the process of innovation itself. The role of traditional media is also affected by ICTs, when audiences shift away from mass viewing towards more niche engagement, undercutting the legitimation of once-significant institutions. However, existing user studies only partly address audience transformations, often regarding new media primarily as technologies to the neglect of their symbolic importance in mediating the audiences’ understandings, and tend to disregard traditional media that are however still an important part of the audience's lives.

Problem 4: Social networks

Audience researchers need to examine in what ways media and communication technologies affect the social dimension of audiencehood, as many social networks rest on chosen, weak and sometimes continuously changing relationships, motivated by shared interests or lifestyles and primarily organised heterarchically rather than hierarchically. This clearly challenges the conventional representations of audience as mass, community and primary group. Research into computer-mediated communication (CMC) – e.g. e-mails, instant messaging systems or chat-rooms – provides important insights to audience researchers, as it has produced a rich account of mediated social relationships, virtual communities and social networks.

This Action will address these problems from a distinct and fresh perspective, with a number of new approaches that build on existing innovations but broaden and integrate them across audience studies.

Innovation 1: Facing convergence and cross-media challenges

Current research on audiences tends to focus on single rather than linked technologies and on modes of reception focused on individual media as defining the audience experience. The audience, however, rarely uses just one medium – use is always contextualised in a larger media repertoire in which the different media interact with each other. For these reasons, audience research fails to fully understand how new technologies integrate into a rich and convergent media and communication environment. Cross-media contents also question single-media approaches to reception and use, asking for new comprehensive approaches that fully recognise the many types of media with which people engage every day and help better our understanding of how single medium contents (e.g. programmes) have now become pan-media brands (e.g. Doctor Who).

Innovation 2: Exploring user-generated content

The changing media and communication landscape requires that researchers complement the reception-based approaches which sought to understand how mass-media audiences ‘read’ media material produced elsewhere by professionals, with innovative approaches which are able to deal with ‘ordinary’ media users who are also authoring, modifying, annotating, archiving and circulating media materials. Although there has long been interest in ordinary people’s participation as citizens, including in the area of content production (cf. audience activism in relation to community and alternative media), these rarely focused on the audiences of these media. The latter have recently been examined in relation to such mainstream broadcast formats as the talk show, but the explosion of genres and formats that, today, invite public participation across diverse platforms, has barely been scoped.

Innovation 3: Methodological innovation

Audience practices are increasingly embedded in daily routines, dispersed over (virtual) space and time, and carried out across a wide range of media and communication technologies. There is a clear need for innovative research methods which will not only give access to the ‘what’ of media use but also to the ‘where’, the ‘how’ and the ‘what for’ – the tensions, the conflicts and the motivations of everyday audience practices. In this sense, an audience-oriented perspective means to firmly anchor media engagement in relation to the diversity of contexts and purposes to which people put media in their daily lives, contexts and purposes often unanticipated by industries and professionals. Another challenge is to reconcile methodological frontiers to triangulate the complex social factors underpinning audience experience from different perspectives. For instance, social and psychological perspectives are commonly found in distinct literatures, although it makes sense to use the two perspectives to complement rather than exclude each other. This Action will explicitly encourage methodological innovation and cross-paradigm research to counter traditional, often unproductive separations.

B.3 Reasons for the Action

The Action will substantially develop the scientific field, enabling it to encompass the critical analysis of audience transformations. To some degree, such work is in progress, but it lacks visibility, coordination – it is dispersed across many countries and fields of study (e.g. studies of technological innovation, computer-mediated communication, civic participation or transnational cultures) – and, especially, a space for contestation and advancement of key debates. Not only are many productive synergies thereby missed, resulting in a ‘reinvention of the wheel’ theoretically and methodologically, but important historical continuities are lost and, thus, any novelty obscured, as the analytic lens shifts from the era of mass communication to that of new media convergence.

European societies are undergoing social, cultural and political changes that intersect with significant changes to the media landscape and associated audience transformations in vital but insufficiently understood ways. The fragmentation of social ties, the crisis in identity and the decline of civic participation, to name but a few societal problems, cannot be disconnected from the

changing media and communication environment. This Action will impact on European societal needs through an enhanced understanding of the role of media and ICTs in these areas. Questions of media and communication regulation are being hotly debated across Europe, for regulation often makes assumptions about the changing interests, practices and skills of ordinary people; here, too, the insights of the Action will be most valuable.

The Action will also contribute considerably to the economic needs of European industries in the field of media, communication and ICT, providing important insights into audience new media adoption and substitution in media and communication services, emerging patterns of cross-media consumption, and the demand for new services, among other issues. This up-to-date knowledge will help cultural industries adapt their contents, services and technologies to the changing conditions of audiences. The Action will also impact on corporate communication strategies, raising the social responsibility and responsiveness of cultural industries.

B.4 Complementarity with other research programmes

This Action differs from Action A20 for it concerns the ‘audience’ side of the communication process, especially social aspects of audience transformations. Some of the work of Action A20 is relevant, however – for instance, the research interest group DRACE. This Action will also complement Action A30 by an in depth examination of audiences. It is different from Action 298, incorporating all media forms, new and old, and researching audience-related issues not addressed by Action 298. While Action IS0703 focuses on literacy in a traditional sense, this Action will link literacy with new media and communication technologies. Finally, this Action will complement Action IS0801, since it will compare the role of traditional media and ICTs for a range of social relationships.

This Action contrasts with and adds to the research outputs of a number of FP6 projects. It differs from ARENA, which consists in developing new audience measurement technologies, by focusing on audience activities beyond the ‘contact’ with media applications, contents and services.

This Action relates to EMEDIATE and EUROSPHERE insofar as (mediated) participation is concerned. This Action will enrich current debates on European public spheres, considering a range of connected issues such as trust in media institutions. CIDEL, RECON, DEMO-net, CINEFOGO and EUROPUB.COM concerned the governance of European society. This Action will extend the analysis of participation processes to societal domains and non-formal political spheres.

This Action also complements a number of FP7 projects. It will complement COMEL, INCLUSO, REPLAY and UMSIC, by considering the opportunities for social integration offered by a range of (new) media, especially public service media. In this respect, this Action contrasts with existing research projects on cultural diversity and integration of migrants (e.g. TRANS-NET, EUMARGINS), as it will focus on the role of (new) media in these areas. This Action will also be of benefit to PUPPYIR, providing this project with important insights into new media literacy, and to TA2, which will gain a detailed understanding of how media and communication technologies mediate social relationships. In contrast to ENRI-EAST, EUROIDENTITIES and SPHERE, this Action will connect the issue of European identities to that of transforming audiences. Related FP7 projects with an explicit focus on the media (MDCEE, Media & Citizenship) will feed into this Action insofar as participation and citizenship are concerned.

The Safer Internet Plus programme's European research network, 'EU Kids Online' (2009-2011) examines uses of online technologies by children in 21 countries. It will feed into this Action insofar as it analyses media literacy and parental mediation in a fast-changing media and information landscape.

C. OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

C.1 Main/primary objectives

The main objective of the Action is to advance state-of-the-art knowledge of the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies.

C.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives of this Action are:

1. Revitalising the audience research agenda

The mainstream agenda of audience research fails to embrace a number of audience transformations. Vital issues need to be addressed that take into consideration the latest social and technological innovations. For instance, audience research must investigate the role of social networking technologies in changing social relationships, understanding these not only in their own right but also how they transform audience activities in relation to other media, new and old. One purpose of this Action is to renew and revitalise the agenda of audience research.

2. Developing innovative approaches to audiences

A related objective of the Action is to revise the existing theoretical and methodological approaches to audiences. New approaches are needed that make new connections across the field and give researchers a greater 'feel' for the everyday audience practices. Yet one should not throw out the baby with the bath water. The potential of traditional (and well-proven) approaches to provide (at least some) theoretical and conceptual foundations for a better understanding of transforming audiences should not be underestimated. This Action will capitalise on existing theories, methods and findings, extending valuable theoretical insights, readapting tried-and-tested methods, and recognising historical continuities as well as changes.

3. Transcending established boundaries in the field

Developing new approaches to audiences requires from researchers that they cross disciplines (e.g., between the social science tradition and the critical/cultural tradition) and long-established boundaries in the field (e.g. between 'old media' and 'new media'; between mass communication and group communication; between content/production and audience/reception). This Action will ease the process of boundary crossing constructively.

4. Promoting new empirical research on audiences

Claims about the nature and the magnitude of contemporary audience transformations are often made on the basis of observed media and technological developments, without taking into careful consideration actual audience practices – how individuals and groups make sense/use of media material and communication technologies in context. This rather speculative, often deterministic approach will be countered by this Action, for it aims to build empirically-informed, critically framed knowledge of audience transformations.

5. Scoping the new media and communication environment

Researching media audiences cannot dispense with keeping abreast of the media and technological developments, for audience practices are shaped at the interface of media and technologies on the one hand, and social, cultural, political and ideological processes on the other. Participants in the Action will therefore coordinate their research efforts in order to build a detailed and up to date picture of the contemporary European media and communication environment, which includes a diversity of media organisations (public service media, commercial media, alternative media) and technologies (conventional media technologies as well as the Internet and other ICTs).

6. Networking audience researchers and building capacity

Finally, the Action aims at establishing a long-term culture of cooperation among European audience researchers, which includes linking early-stage researchers and senior researchers. Scholars agree that audience research should address transnational issues across a wide range of European countries, build interdisciplinary approaches and integrative frameworks, collaborate over methodological developments, and find ways to share research materials and findings. This is only feasible if researchers active across diverse backgrounds and European countries become used to working together. This Action is intended as a determined first step towards achieving this.

C.3 How will the objectives be achieved?

Advancing state-of-the-art knowledge of audience transformations requires that researchers in the field obtain valuable practical opportunities for regularly sharing, coordinating, integrating and disseminating their research over a sustained period of time. Such opportunities will include (without being limited to) regular workshops and conferences, publications, and a specific project website (for internal as well as external purposes). These measures will be detailed in the subsequent sections of the proposal.

The challenge of transforming audiences calls for concerted research that involves a substantial number of participants active across the whole of Europe. Yet at this time, a unified and exhaustive overview about the landscape of European audience research is lacking. Such a resource is needed, however, to effectively promote the connection of audience researchers and the dissemination of research results. Therefore, a key measure to achieve the Action's objectives will be a survey of the institutions and people across Europe that are involved or interested in audience research, resulting in an online database entitled 'Mapping European Audience Research' which will be accessible via the Action website.

C.4 Benefits of the Action

The main benefit of the Action will be the advancement of scientific progress by:

- providing an up-to-date understanding of the transformations undergone by European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, and identifying their interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies;
- developing theoretical and methodological approaches suited to the specificities of the transformed media environment and audience practices;
- inspiring new research questions and opening up new fields of inquiry.

The Action will also have substantial impact on the development of a European network and profile, as it will:

- integrate the currently disjointed field of audience studies in Europe;

- connect established research centres with emerging ones from new accession European countries;
- foster coordination of European research and create long-term synergies;
- develop a genuine European profile in audience studies.

Finally, this Action will strengthen the connection between basic research and policy making, educational practices, industries' needs and interests, NGOs and citizen initiatives.

As these benefits relate variously to the target groups of the Action, they will be developed further in the next section.

C.5 Target groups/end users

The beneficiaries of the Action will be:

1. The scientific community

Understanding audience transformations as well as developing innovative theories and methods that will really help in achieving this goal are priorities for the scientific community. Although this Action will be of primary interest to communication researchers, it will also benefit researchers from a range of disciplines across social science, political science, information science, education science and the humanities. Indeed, as media and communications become more embedded in the functioning of many spheres of life, other disciplines will be interested in this Action.

2. The educational community

Educators in the field of media and communication will gain an up to date, empirical picture of audiences, a critical account of relevant social and cultural changes, and new theoretical and methodological frameworks for teaching in these areas. Moreover, the educational community in a broad sense, extending beyond higher education in media and communication, will receive transformative insights about media-related literacies and the interlinkages between media-anchored learning across informal and formal learning contexts.

3. Policy makers and regulatory bodies

The changing media and communication environment demands new policies and regulatory frameworks that balance cultural industries' interests with audiences' needs and skills. Policy-makers and regulatory bodies (e.g. European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe) will be important beneficiaries of this Action, including (but not exclusively) as regards the changing role of public service media. Decision-making requires contextualised, rigorous empirical knowledge about (new) media perceptions, uses and effects. Most topically, media literacy represents a key issue on the European media policy agenda, raising questions regarding critical and discerning audiences, creative media participation, determining trustworthiness, vulnerable or gullible audience segments, and more, all of which are themes central to this Action.

4. Industries and professionals

Cultural industries and professionals in the field of media, communication and ICT frequently need knowledge of audiences but, lacking knowledge of academic research, they are often unaware of the real complexity of audience practices. This is especially true today given the fast-changing conditions of audiences. This Action will provide industries and professionals with up-to-date insights into the uses of new technologies and applications, and how these interact with old media uses.

5. Media-oriented NGOs and citizen initiatives

The Action will provide media-oriented NGOs and consumer groups with a detailed account of new audience practices that will help them to better define their target groups, clarify their objectives and improve their measures. As this Action will also scope grassroots media initiatives, it will be relevant to citizens actively engaged in new forms of journalism, providing them with detailed analyses of ongoing participatory projects and of the social and communicational processes involved.

6. Democracy and civil society as a whole

Finally, the Action will increase citizens', media organisations' and media-oriented NGOs' awareness of the social, cultural and political consequences of democratically constraining and empowering media practices. Fundamentally, the Action will intensify civil society's awareness of stakeholder responsibilities in shaping the 'information society'.

D. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

D.1 Scientific focus

The Action will coordinate research efforts on four topics that condense the major problems identified in section B.2. Topic 1 addresses the hybridisation of genres and its consequences (problem 1) and topic 2 addresses interaction and participation (problem 2). Problem 3 (technology) and 4 (social networks) are both reflected in topic 3 on social relationships and topic 4 on social integration. The topics have also been selected because of their importance to European society (cf. for instance the AVMS Directive), their relevancy to researchers active across a wide range of approaches, their capacity to embrace multiple and evolving objects of study, and their appropriateness for comparative research.

Topic 1: New media genres, media literacy and trust in the media

Nowadays, familiar accounts of how national audiences engage with nationally produced and well-established genres are destabilised, with significant consequences for everyday culture and for the political economy of the media and cultural industries. For instance, there is a widespread crisis of trust in news, while audiences are increasingly fascinated by new hybrid formats claiming to represent reality. As new genres promote the 'ordinary' on the national or international stage, they simultaneously play with hitherto sacrosanct conventions of representing objectivity and expertise. But audiences are developing new resources with which to engage with the changing media and communication environment. Increasingly, these resources are theorised in terms of literacy (media literacy, cyberliteracy, critical literacy).

This Action then will address the following questions:

- What do audiences want and expect from their media environment? The analysis of audiences' tastes and choices has traditionally been examined through a lens which contrasts mass (top-down) to popular (bottom-up) culture, but as media become increasingly interactive, niche-focused and user-generated, this lens requires urgent rethinking, especially as the relations between commercial and public service media in Europe become more complex. Moreover, in the society of media abundance and convergence, the specific role of any medium to some degree depends on the overall matrix of media available. Therefore audience research that takes the audience perspective seriously must develop ways to analyse cross-media patterns of media use.
- What are the discursive characteristics of new hybrid genres, and what is the source of their appeal? New genres, it seems, attract considerable controversy – from talk shows and reality television to makeover shows and national talent contests – partly because they seem to undermine established distinctions between authoritative vs. trivial, public vs. private, and partly because they seem to distract from more 'worthy' forms of participation (especially civic and political).
- In what ways are different audiences variously critical, resistant, trusting or confused? Claims of a media-savvy audience are easily made but more rarely examined rigorously. What is the extent of existing audience research on changing modes of engagement with media, and what implications has this not only for audiencehood but also for the mediation of the public's engagement with the other important social institutions (government, community, family, education, etc.)?
- What resources underpin media literacy and how could these be further developed? In policy circles, the audience's critical competences are increasingly framed in terms of 'media literacy' (or digital literacy) – as required by the AVMS Directive and as illustrated by the European Media Literacy Charter and related initiatives by the European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO, and so forth. As yet, there is insufficient interface between policy and academic developments, a gap that audience researchers are well-placed to fill – by identifying key empirical studies, critiquing and developing policy initiatives and guiding future conceptual and evaluative frameworks.

Topic 2: Audience interactivity and participation

With the advent of the new Internet-related media, the notions of access, interaction, interactivity and participation (and all the different meanings they invoke) have again entered academic, policy and public debates. These reflections point to the potentially beneficial increase in democratic communication and the strengthening of social capital and civil society. In reaction to these rather bold statements, a critical backlash has pointed to the large media and communication corporations' control of the Internet despite its potential detachment from large-scale media organisations. Moreover, such critiques have argued that these discourses lacked novelty, and that the participatory-democratic potential of the so-called 'old' media (including community and alternative media) in building citizenship should not be underestimated. Optimistic accounts are also questioned when focusing on the lack of access of some (through the digital divides). Although the level of interaction might have increased, it remains questionable whether societal and media participation has increased proportionally. The scientific programme of this Action will therefore include the following questions:

- What are the possibilities and constraints of mediated public participation? Participation covers a broad range of audience involvement, which among others includes providing access, facilitating interaction and deliberation, and allowing for co-deciding. There are a wide variety of mediated practices that focus on audience empowerment, at an evenly wide variety of societal domains (such as the cultural, the social or the political), but the participatory intensity of these mediated processes also tends to vary, as structural constraints unavoidably limit public participation.
- What new roles can old and new media institutions and professionals play in facilitating public participation and in building citizenship? Cultural institutions are embedded in specific political economies, and cherish specific cultures, which all affect the participatory process. The advent of Web 2.0 has forced many of these institutions into new initiatives, with varying success. Finally, the focus on Web 2.0 has pushed attention away from the older media institutions, which still play a crucial role in our mediated socio-political realities. Here, there is a clear need for an audience-perspective on participatory processes that incorporates the changing role of cultural (media) institutions.

- How do mainstream media and non-mainstream media interlock and produce new hybrid organisational structures and audience practices? Participation, even in its more intense forms, is not new. Alternative media, social movement media, activist media, community media have a long history, exemplified by the abolitionist press in the 19th century. These older media forms have provided many of the concepts now used by a variety of media organisations, both mainstream and non-mainstream, and therefore remain relevant research areas. Of equal relevance are the new hybrid media organisations that through their participatory relationships with their audiences overcome the dichotomy between mainstream and non-mainstream media.
- What are the discourses on the audience and how do they contribute to the construction of the identities of all actors and processes involved? Media institutions make use of different audience representations that are highly ideological and key components in the participatory process, both as conditions of possibility and as discursive outcomes. They also affect the definition of a number of other key concepts like ‘the people’, ‘the citizen’ and the ‘consumer’, but also the construction of the democratic, the political and the social.

Topic 3: The role of media and ICT use for evolving social relationships

Traditional media provide a host of examples for social relationships: for example, fictional narratives in television (series, films), which still attract large audiences, often embed relational conflicts in the centre of the plot; reality television provides advice about romantic or parent-child relationships. From a different angle, ICT and CMC also shape social networks, for example by enabling communication through new channels, which impose certain restraints but also new possibilities of connecting to each other (e.g., real-time connections via Twitter). Research on relationships and media is dispersed across a variety of disciplines – media studies, mass communication, interpersonal and group communication, social psychology and sociology – that will be brought together to create synergies and address innovative questions, including:

- How do traditional media shape and change social relationships in the short and long term? Media content shows structured sequences of social action contextualised in episodes of concrete social situations and lived experience of other (fictional) people. Audiences empathise and identify with characters, understand and reconstruct goals and motives for specific actions, thus mentally simulating the scripts shown in a specific plot, and rehearsing social situations. Within genres, similar patterns of norms, values and scripts concerning social relationships may condense into stereotypical portrayals of social reality that in turn shape world views and eventually actual behavioural patterns in regular audiences.
- How do audiences use traditional media to manage relationships? While traditional effects research investigates these issues, much research has also gone into the ways in which audience groups use joint media rituals and experiences to manage relationships, for example, to share experiences, or spend time together. It is less common however to explore how audiences use media content in interpersonal communication; in this case, shared experiences may sustain the feeling of commonality and commitment. Similarly, audiences may invoke images of other audience members and feel tied to a specific community.
- What consequences do interactive media have for relationships? Increasing interactivity in the media changes the way in which audiences experience models of relationships and relational behaviours. For example, computer games favour and reward certain – often aggressive or egoistic – behaviours over others. Such interactive formats provide opportunities to rehearse such action scripts by the users’ own actions and may exert a stronger influence than traditional media.
- How do ICTs and CMC shape and change social relationships? The availability of specialised and user-generated information seems to flatten hierarchies in formal relationships, such as doctor-patient, teacher-student or journalist-audience relationships. Then, formal relationships are supported by communication technologies, but at the same time, these technologies change the quality of the communication and may reflect back on the offline relationships. Also, informal relationships are created and sustained by ICTs. The consequences of using these technologies are still unknown: How does the expansion of social online social relationships impact real-world relationships? What are their consequences on social capital and weak vs. strong ties in the network society? How do categories of evaluating people online transfer to close, offline relationships?

Topic 4: Audience transformations and social integration

The changing media and communication environment raises major concerns in respect to social integration. The increasing specialisation of the media offerings, the proliferation of transnational communication channels (e.g. satellite television), and the inflation of alternative audiences and publics – all of these may be detrimental to social ties and integration. Conversely, the media (especially here public services) and ICTs can be seen as resources, providing opportunities to sustain relationships, sharing knowledge and culture, participating in the public sphere and negotiating (new) collective identities. Social categories of class, gender, age and ethnicity continue to interact with these new conditions of social integration. Researchers need to explore the new social-economic and cultural contexts of social integration at the crossroads of audience choice, public policies and the actions of the industry, including cross-national perspectives. This Action will therefore address the following questions:

- How is European integration related to the changing media and communication environment? Mass media have not only been consistently identified as the main source of political information on the EU but they are also regarded as a sine qua non of a European public sphere. However, little is known about the extent to which news and other European mediated events (e.g. European contests) actually influence public attitudes towards Europe. Bringing together researchers studying audiences of European media materials and communication issues that cross nations (e.g. risk communication) is relevant when we consider the major challenges imposed by the EU enlargement/deepening dynamics to transnational and multilayered identities.
- In what ways do Public Service Media (PSM) serve (or not) social integration? Enhancing social cohesion, sustaining national cultures and democratic societies, and serving minority groups are obligations of PSM. Still, do PSM effectively ensure media pluralism? Dimensions to be considered include access of civil society, accuracy and depth of news, diversity of television genres, and threats to pluralism in the migration to the new digital platforms. And how do audiences from diverse social categories relate to different PSM platforms? Concerted research on these issues will help to re-think public service missions (which have been unchanged for, at least, two decades) and existing knowledge on audience behaviour (fragmented, active, multitasking and multiplatform individuals).

- In what ways does media fandom provide opportunities for connection and social integration among European audiences? Now that old and new media fandom is increasingly democratised, does it allow for new forms of social integration around tribes, cult groups or lifestyles? And how do these interact with social categories of class, gender, age, ethnicity, and so forth? Research on these topics may assess the ways in which media and communication technologies contribute to, or work against, the inclusion of groups. Also celebrities' mediated performances can act as role models and even as activists, whose influence among different audiences should be considered.
- How is the incorporation of media goods within families affected by generation, gender and social status? For instance, although considerable cross-national differences in children's internet use in Europe, there is a consistent tendency for girls to be more subject to parental mediation than boys, and for higher socioeconomic status (SES) parents to mediate more their children's online experiences than lower-income families, as it has already happened with television. Multidisciplinary research on family cultures and SES related to different patterns of communication and styles of parental mediation may contribute to a better understanding of the social uses of media and ICTs within the household, and their role for social integration within and outside the family.

D.2 Scientific work plan – methods and means

Four Working Groups (WGs) will carry out the day-to-day scientific work. Each of them will focus on one of the topics explained above:

- WG1: New media genres, media literacy and trust in the media;
- WG2: Audience interactivity and participation;
- WG3: The role of media and ICT use for evolving social relationships;
- WG4: Audience transformations and social integration.

The WGs will use a working method composed of five scientific tasks:

Task 1: Reviewing relevant initiatives

As a first task, participants will review existing and emerging research in the fields being investigated, including and extending beyond their immediate interests. The ultimate purpose of this exercise will be to identify (i) avenues of research that will really advance the agenda of audience research, (ii) opportunities for cross-disciplinary developments, and (iii) possibilities of cooperation with other research networks and programmes (including relevant COST Actions). The reviewing work will be based upon the Mapping European Audience Research database and at the same time it will feed into it.

Task 2: Defining a concerted research agenda

The second task of the scientific work will consist of developing a well-focused concerted research agenda (including a dissemination plan) within the framework defined by this MoU. Participants will take into consideration the research needs and opportunities previously identified (cf. task 1), as well as their specific research interests and the projects they are (or plan to be) engaged in. Special attention will also be devoted to familiarisation with the needs and the interests of non-scientific target groups such as policy makers and cultural industries. The research agenda will need to be regularly updated since it is supposed to help participants in identifying common research topics for which collaboration can be built up all over the duration of the Action.

Task 3: Scoping audience and society transformations

The third, crucial task of the scientific work will consist in accumulating and integrating research results. Participants will share, comment and combine new empirical findings in order to build a coherent knowledge of European audience transformations and interconnected changes in social, cultural and political areas. The point will be to build up a comprehensive picture of the roles of (new) media and communication technologies at the individual, group and societal levels, without neglecting the contextual and country-specific factors that shape audience and society transformations.

Task 4: Revitalising audience research

Participants will draw theoretical and methodological lessons from their concerted works and progressively build new approaches that will revitalise audience research and pave the way for further developments regarding, for instance, integration of approaches and disciplines. Key questions that will be addressed include: What are the shortcomings of conventional models and methods? What are the needs for innovative approaches? What is the current state of innovation and what are the lessons from early applications? In what way can other fields and disciplines (e.g. visual sociology, education science, information science) feed the reflections on theoretical and methodological challenges in audience research? What are the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 tools for audience research methods? What kind of methodological, practical and ethical problems do they raise?

Task 5: Developing recommendations

As a final task of the Action, participants will reflect on the significance of their research results for civil society, industry and policy players in the field, and provide them with insightful recommendations for their future activities and responsibilities. Although certain recommendations can be targeted to particular groups of stakeholders, the Action will strive to go beyond immediate and specific interests and promote a common, balanced vision of new media and communication developments.

As explained in the next sections, the WGs will be frequently interconnected in order to address cross-WG issues and to progressively build a broad and coherent picture of the theoretical, methodological and empirical outcomes of the Action as a whole.

E. ORGANISATION

E.1 Coordination and organisation

A Management Committee (MC) will be responsible for the long-term planning and the overall coordination of the Action. It will meet twice a year in order to make the strategically crucial decisions regarding the scientific programme and the dissemination plan of the Action, and to supervise the WG activities. Members of the MC will maintain regular contact through emails and the internal area of the Action website. Over the duration of the Action, appointed groups of MC members will organise two Action Conferences (AC) and three Action Workshops (AW), which will bring the four WGs together. These events will provide participants with exhaustive overviews of the research being carried out. They will also strengthen the connections between WGs, support the integration of findings, and foster the dissemination of the results. At least four Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) per year will be set up, with one MC member promoting and coordinating them. Another MC member will take charge of the Mapping European Audience Research database.

A Steering Group (SG) will be responsible for the day-to-day coordination of the Action, within the framework defined by the MC. The SG will be composed of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the MC, and the Chairs of the WGs. Before each MC meeting, the SG will draft the agenda and the proposals that will then be decided upon by the MC. Members of the SG will maintain regular contact through emails, online conferencing and the internal area of the Action website, in order to share up-to-date information concerning WG activities and manage the day-to-day business of the Action in a rapid and flexible way.

A regular newsletter and a specific Action website will ease the overall coordination and the dissemination of results. One group of MC members will be responsible for the newsletter and the website (development, maintenance). They will be kept informed by the MC and WG members in charge of activities and publications. The newsletter will focus on past and future activities of the Action, as well as on the key achievements of the WGs (e.g. publications). It will be widely distributed to any people interested in the Action. The website will consist of two areas: a public

and an internal area. The public area primarily aims to disseminate up-to-date information to the target groups and to attract persons to join the network. The internal area will focus on the communication among members of the network. This part of the website will be based on a free social network platform where participants will share their ideas, discuss and debate about questions related to audience research, upload and share documents (reviews of existing research, WGs' research agendas...), and organise specialised interest groups under the umbrella of the Action. The website will also allow for an efficient and easy contact to all members, for example, spreading the word about projects, workshops and conferences.

Using the timetable and the dissemination plan as points of reference, the Chairs of the WGs will formally report every four months on their WG decisions, activities and results (e.g. publications) to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Action. Using the reports from the WG Chairs, as well as their own inputs regarding general matters such as the developments of the website and the Mapping European Audience Research database, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Action will compile progress reports to be submitted every four months to the MC and used confidentially for management and research purposes only. These reports will feed the annual progress reports and the final report required by the COST Office.

An Editorial Board (EB) will monitor conference and workshop organisation as well as evaluate publication procedures and outcomes. To be more specific, the tasks of the EB will be:

- controlling for quality: for each of the activities, organizers will submit their call for papers and a description of the review procedure to the EB who then will evaluate the plan according to the quality of the call (relevancy to the Action, theoretical potential, novelty and originality, clarity), the soundness of schedule and publication plan, and the measures taken to protect gender balance and ensure national and career stage diversity;
- controlling for schedule and output: the EB will control whether envisaged deadlines are met and whether planned publications are actually published;
- reporting to the MC: once a year; the EB will report to the MC about activities accomplished in one year and makes suggestions for improvement.

The EB will be independent from the MC and the management teams of the WGs - all of them being key organisers and publishers. Each WG Chair will appoint one person to join the Board; additionally, the Action Chair will appoint one person as Board Chair. The Board Chair will be responsible for keeping track of all Action activities, distributing tasks to Board members, and reporting to the MC. Any Action activity will be assigned to one Board member who will follow the event from beginning to end and report to the Board Chair. The Board Chair in turn will assemble all reports into an annual report to be submitted to the MC. These reports will feed the annual progress reports required by the COST Office.

E.2 Working Groups

The WGs will be responsible for implementing the scientific programme. Each WG will be coordinated by a Chair who will be part of the SG and, preferably, the MC. Each Chair will appoint one or two Vice-Chairs who will assist in coordinating and organising the WG activities. WGs will also maintain frequent contact through emails and the internal area of the Action website.

The WG Bureaus will be responsible for organising regular workshops (see the timetable in section F), plus potential meetings in smaller groups on more specific subtopics. The WG Bureaus will also promote STSMs, encouraging WG members to examine both their scientific significance and their practical feasibility.

E.3 Liaison and interaction with other research programmes

A number of participants in this Action are involved in other COST Actions and European research programmes, and will therefore constitute key interlocutors for initiating links with them. Measures intended to implement interactions with other research projects include joint seminars or workshops, contributions to conferences organised by other research networks, and contributions from other research networks to the Action conferences. Related COST Actions and European research programmes will be kept informed about the developments of the Action. The management of the liaison with other COST Actions and European research programmes is explained in section H.3.

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

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

The Action will be attentive to ensure gender balance whenever possible at all levels of its management structure. The MC and the WGs will also be considering the needs and conditions of gender equality within the project itself, which includes, for example, debating on gender implications of decisions regarding research tasks, means of communication and dissemination methods, and applications for STSMs. The MC, the EB and the WG Bureaus will be committed to ensure gender balance in authorship, presentations and scientific missions, and progress reports will inform regularly on weaknesses and achievements in this respect. Through its connections with female scholars networks (e.g. the Women's Network of ECREA) and gender-related research networks (e.g. the Gender and Communication section of ECREA), the Action will improve members' concern with gender balance in all its activities.

The Action will give a special attention to encouraging early-stage researchers to participate in all its activities (for instance in the calls for papers). The STSM coordinator will actively promote scientific missions among them, the Action Chair will support their applications for conference grants, and at least one early-stage researcher will be part of each WG Bureau, either as Chair or Vice-Chair. Another measure will be to establish a structural link with YECREA, the Young Scholars Network of ECREA. YECREA aims 'to give a voice and provide a network within ECREA specifically for the young generation of European Media and Communication scholars. YECREA provides a forum for the segment within ECREA that involves (but is not limited to) doctoral students and post doctoral researchers to inform, assist, share ideas, get peer support and peer-review' (ECREA website). The Action will also connect with the yearly ECREA Summer School - it aims to provide 'a supportive international setting where doctoral students can present

their ongoing work and meet students and academics from other countries, establishing valuable contacts for the future' (ECREA website). Young scholars linked to the Action will get access to the ECREA Summer School. Finally, participating researchers will connect master theses and doctoral dissertations to the topics of the Action. Through this measure, the Action will at the same time enlarge its scope of dissemination and provide early-stage researchers with additional scientific support.

F. TIMETABLE

The duration of the Action will be four years, for it requires a sufficiently long working period in order to get an accurate and balanced appraisal of the audience transformations under way, the scientific innovations needed to advance audience research, and the recommendations that are most relevant to social, industry and policy players.

Year 1.

- At its first meeting, the MC will refine the scientific programme, the planning, the organisational framework and the dissemination plan. The more general objective of the first MC meeting will be to build a common vision of the Action.
- The first workshop of the WGs will primarily intend to establish a common research atmosphere and review relevant initiatives (task 1). At their second meeting, the WGs will invite representatives of non-academic target groups (industries and professionals, policy makers and regulatory bodies, NGOs and citizen initiatives) in order to familiarize with their needs and interests. WGs will also establish a specific provisional research agenda within the framework defined by the MC (task 2) and agree on specific means of cooperation.
- The first Action conference (AC) will be held in the end of the first year. The primary objectives of this public conference will be (1) to establish connections between WGs, (2) to feed the reviewing work with inputs from a wide range of relevant research projects (task 1), and (3) to expand the Action's network.

Year 2.

- The WG workshops to be held in the second year will aim at finalizing task 2 and engaging in task 3 – i.e. scoping audience and society transformations.
- In the end of the second year, an Action workshop (AW) will bring together the four WGs. It will constitute a first occasion for combining achievements across WGs and start building a coherent whole.

Year 3.

- In the third year, two WG workshops will provide the participants with the opportunity to continue scoping audience and society transformations (task 3) and to develop new theoretical and methodological approaches towards audiences (task 4).
- The AW that will be held in the end of the third year will aim at finalising task 3 while integrating research findings across WGs.

Year 4.

- The fourth year will start with a WG workshop, in order for the WGs to make progress on task 4 and launch task 5 – i.e. developing recommendations for the social, industry and policy players in the field.
- One last AW will be the occasion to finalise tasks 4 and 5 and, most importantly, to combine research developments and recommendations across WGs.
- The second AC in the end of the Action will have as the most important objective to disseminate research results, including recommendations. Participants will also identify major avenues for future audience research.
- MC members will meet one last time in order to evaluate the whole Action.

Figure 1 synthesises the whole timetable of the Action.

Year	1			2			3			4		
Month	1-4	5-8	9-12	1-4	5-8	9-12	1-4	5-8	9-12	1-4	5-8	9-12
Task 1. Reviewing initiatives	X	X	X									
Task 2. Defining the agenda	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Task 3. Scoping transformations				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Task 4. Revitalising research							X	X	X	X	X	X
Task 5. Developing recommendations										X	X	X
Activities	MC	WG	MC	MC	WG	MC	MC	WG	MC	MC	AW	AC
	WG		AC	WG		AW	WG		AW	WG		MC

G. ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The following COST countries have actively participated in the preparation of the Action or otherwise indicated their interest: AT, BE, BA, HR, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, IE, IT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SI, ES, CH, TR, UK. On the basis of national estimates, the economic dimension of the activities to be carried out under the Action has been estimated at 96 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 of this Action belong to two broad categories. Scientific groups include participants in the Action themselves, communication researchers, researchers from other, relevant disciplines (e.g. social science, education science, information science), and the educational community in a broad sense, extending beyond educators in the field of media and communication.

Major non-scientific target groups include policy makers and regulatory bodies (e.g. the European Commission, Information Society and Media Directorate-General; the Council of Europe, the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities – EPRA), mainstream media organisations and associations (e.g. publishing and broadcasting companies, the European Broadcasting Union), professional organisations (e.g. the European Federation of Journalists – EFJ; the South East European Network for Professionalization of the Media – SEENPM), community and alternative media (for instance AMARC-EUROPE, Community Media Forum Europe, Indymedia), media-related NGOs (e.g. NGOs promoting media literacy), and associations of viewers and listeners (i.e. European Alliance of Listeners' and Viewers' Associations – EURALVA; Voice of the Listener & Viewer – VLV).

H.2 What?

The dissemination methods that will be relevant to both scientific and non-scientific target groups are:

- an Action website;
- workshops and conferences organised within the Action (see timetable in section F);
- proceedings of the two Action conferences;
- per WG, at least one research report related to tasks 1 and 2, and published on the Action website (in year 2);

- two edited books: at least one volume bringing together the works of the four WGs on task 3 (in year 3), and at least another volume bringing together the works of the four WGs on task 4 (in year 4). In this respect, the ECREA book series (in collaboration with Intellect Press) offers a valuable dissemination opportunity;
- short and concise essays about the field – about present and future challenges, limitations, and visions – provided on the Action website by selected authors (e.g. academics, industry representatives, policy makers, regulatory body officers) involved or interested in audience research (at least one essay per month all over the duration of the Action). The essays will help to illustrate the network even for the less familiar person. They will also help to stimulate interaction between the Action's target groups, as various stakeholders will be invited to comment shortly on the essays. Discussions will then feed into publications, workshops, conferences and even teaching, since students in relevant disciplines will also be encouraged to respond.

In order to reach the scientific community, the following dissemination methods will be used:

- per WG, at least one series of scholarly articles in an international and peer-reviewed journal (e.g. *Communications*, *European Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Communication*, *New Media and Society*) or e-journal (e.g. *International Journal of Communication*, *Observatorio – OBS**, *Particip@tions*) with high reputation and academic impact (in year 2 or 3);
- per WG, at least two panels at international conferences such as other COST conferences and ECREA, IAMCR and ICA conferences (in years 2 and 3);
- the Action participants, be they early-stage researchers or confirmed scholars, will participate in the ECREA Summer School.

The dissemination methods that will be relevant to non-scientific target groups are:

- per WG, one of the workshops planned in year 1 will be targeted at non-scientific groups, in order to launch cross-group collaboration and to familiarize with the needs and interests of non-academic stakeholders;

- one recommendations report for the entire Action (task 5) will be published on the Action website (in year 4, before the final AC in order for the recommendations to be discussed by the stakeholders);
- at the final AC, each of at least three thematic sessions will be targeted at one category of non-scientific target groups (policy makers and regulatory bodies, industries and professionals, NGOs and citizen initiatives), in order to disseminate and discuss findings and recommendations.

The execution of the dissemination methods will rest on the implementation of the website and the feeding of the Mapping European Audience Research database with all relevant information about the target groups. These tasks absolutely need to be undertaken at the very beginning of the Action (in year 1) in order for the dissemination process to reach its highest efficiency. Of course, the website and the database will be frequently updated all over the duration of the Action.

Figure 2 provides an overview of major deliverables and milestones.

Year	1			2			3			4		
Month	1-4	5-8	9-12	1-4	5-8	9-12	1-4	5-8	9-12	1-4	5-8	9-12
Website	X	X										
Database	X	X	X									
Conference proceedings			X	X								X
Research report				X	X	X						
Essays		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Conference panels				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Scholarly articles				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Edited books							X	X	X	X	X	X
Recommendations report											X	

H.3 How?

The MC will define the overall dissemination plan and supervise its implementation, considering the need for updating the dissemination plan depending on the evaluations provided by the progress reports and the Editorial Board (see section E.1). Appointed (groups of) MC members will be in charge of organising specific dissemination activities of the Action as a whole and liaising with the relevant target groups. These activities will include the Action conferences and their proceedings, the Action workshops, the edited volumes bringing together the works of the four WGs, the essays about audience research, and the recommendations report targeted to non-scientific groups. The Chair of the Action will promote the participation of Action members in training schools.

Besides these centralised events and publications, the WG Bureaus will be responsible for organising the WG-specific dissemination activities and promoting them among the target groups. These activities will include the WG workshops, the research report, the series of articles in scholarly journals, and the panels at other workshops and conferences.

The target groups will be regularly informed about the Action activities through various means including:

- the newsletter and the Action website, which will regularly inform participants about the main developments of the project;
- the public area of the Action website, which will, in addition, inform about the scope of the network, encourage people to join, and provide information about how to join;
- announcements to scientific associations in the field of media and communication: international communication research associations (e.g. ECREA, IAMCR, ICA, AoIR) and regionally- or nationally-based communication research associations (PACA, ANZCA, MeCCSA, DGPuK, TOY, SFSIC, AE-IC, etc.);
- announcements to relevant thematic sections and networks within scientific associations in the field of media and communication (e.g. Audience and Reception Studies section of ECREA, Digital Culture and Communication section of ECREA, Audience section of IAMCR, Mediated Communication, Public Opinion, and Society section of IAMCR, Communication and Technology section of ICA, Mass Communication section of ICA);

- announcements to scientific associations across a range of other relevant disciplines, for instance sociology (e.g. ISA), psychology (e.g. IAAP) and information science (ACIS);
- targeted emails sent to stakeholders (communication research institutes, communication departments in universities and university colleges, related COST Actions and European research programmes, media organisations, policy makers, regulatory bodies, etc.);
- personal contacts that many Action participants already have with other researchers and lecturers, media and communication professionals, representatives of regulatory bodies and media-related activists.

The website will be monitored using tools such as Google Analytics. The webmaster will regularly report on the website traffic, which will support the MC in its task of evaluating and adjusting the dissemination plan.

The Mapping European Audience Research database will be crucial to the liaison with the target groups of the Action: it will not only consider the field of researchers, but also cultural industries as well as experts in social, policy and regulatory domains, centralising all relevant information about them and making it easily available to all Action participants. To map the full European landscape, the existing network of ECREA will be used, media and communication associations will be contacted, and audience researchers will be asked to share contact data of European colleagues. Special care will be devoted to surveying the field of audience research in the new EU member states. The 'Mapping European Audience Research' database will feed into the 'Mapping the Communication Landscape' project carried out by ECREA.