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The major topics of the current development of protein–lipid interactions and of the COST Action are:

- 1) structure–function relationship,
- 2) protein–protein assembly in the biological membrane,
- 3) membrane domain formation.

Duration: 5 years, starting early 2000.

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Introduction to the COST Symposium

Philippe Renaud*

Keywords: COST

COST (a French acronym for ‘Coopération Européenne dans le domaine de la recherche Scientifique et Technique’) was set up in 1971 to stimulate and to provide a framework for European cooperation in the field of science and technology. This research forum now brings together 32 European countries. COST is oriented towards pre-competitive research. COST activities currently cover the following areas: computer sciences, telecommunications, transport, oceanography, materials, environment, meteorology, agriculture–biotechnology, food technology, social sciences, medical research, urban civil engineering, chemistry, forests–forestry products, physics, and nanosciences.

Chemistry is a central science with a distinguished history and recent success in Europe (five Nobel prize winners between 1990 and 1999 are European). The chemical industry is one of Europe’s most international, competitive and successful industries and contributes to the prosperity and quality of life of modern European society. In order to maintain and even to improve this position, it was decided to use the COST forum to elaborate a strategic scientific scheme for basic research in chemistry in Europe. In this respect, a Technical Committee (TC) in chemistry was formed in 1990. In 1992, through a proposition of the TC, COST decided to launch seven Actions (D1–D7) in the field of chemistry. These Actions were followed recently by eleven new Actions (D8–D18) and four new Actions (D19–D22) will follow in the near future (see list below and the report by A. Merbach on ‘Seven New COST Chemistry Actions’, in this issue of CHIMIA on p. 43). More information about COST Chemistry is provided at the website <http://www.unil.ch/cost/chem/>.

The COST system is characterized by the bottom-up approach (the initiative comes from the researcher) and by the fact that the funding of the research is national. In Switzerland the main sources of funding for COST Chemistry are the Office of Education and Science, and partially the Swiss National Science Foundation.

The success of the COST Chemistry program is demonstrated by:

- the increasing number of networks: 55 in 1993, 86 in 1994, 113 in 1995, 117 in 1996, involving the participation of 564

research groups corresponding to collaborations between five research groups on average per project from different European countries,

- the number of activities within the networks and the Actions: scientific meetings, workshops, seminars, workshops for young scientists, exchanges of students (short-term scientific missions),
- the high quality of results and publications obtained.

The goal of this symposium was to present the chemical research taking place in Switzerland and in Europe within the COST framework. By inviting ten prominent Swiss and non-Swiss scientists, we have presented the different research fields covered by the eight COST Actions that were running by the beginning of 1999 (Actions D8–D15). The program consisted of 10 invited lectures and 47 posters.

List of COST Chemistry Actions:

A. In Progress

- D8: Chemistry of Metals in Medicine (1996–2001)
- D9: Advanced Computational Chemistry of Increasingly Complex Systems (1997–2002)
- D10: Innovative Methods and Techniques for Chemical Transformations (1997–2002)
- D11: Supramolecular Chemistry (1998–2003)
- D12: Organic Transformations: Selective Processes and Asymmetric Catalysis (1997–2002)
- D13: New Molecules for Human Health Care (1998–2003)
- D14: Functional Molecular Materials (1999–2004)
- D15: Interfacial Chemistry and Catalysis (1998–2003)
- D16: Combinatorial Chemistry (1999–2004)
- D17: Oligomers, Polymers and Copolymers *via* Metal Catalysis (1999–2004)
- D18: Lanthanide Chemistry for Diagnosis and Therapy (1999–2004)

B. To Be Launched

- D19: Chemical Functionality Specific to the Nanometer Scale
- D20: Metal Compounds in the Treatment of Cancer and Viral Diseases
- D21: Metalloenzymes and Chemical Biomimetics
- D22: Protein–Lipid Interactions

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