



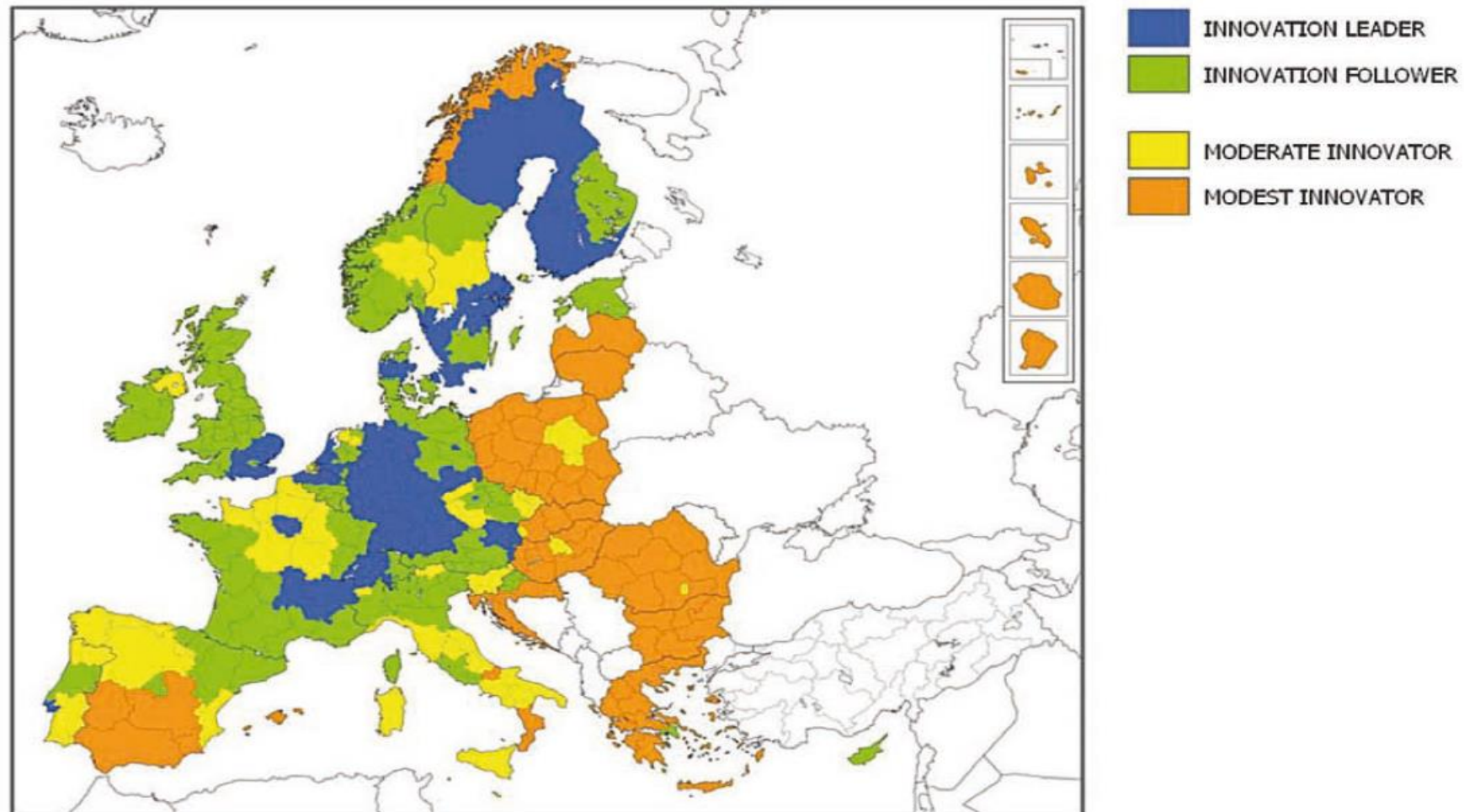
# The role of COST within the Programme Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation (SEWP) of Horizon 2020

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# The Innovation Divide

Figure 23: Regional performance groups



The EU Member States Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Malta are not included in the RIS analysis. Group membership shown is that of the IUS. Map created with Region Map Generator.

# Background

- Disparities in research excellence and innovation performance >>> barrier to competitiveness, growth and jobs across Europe
- Some countries are experiencing low participation (success) in the EU Framework Programmes because of:
  - insufficient national R&D investments
  - lack of synergies between national research systems and the EU research landscape
  - Differential wage level between countries
  - system learning effects
  - Existing networks constituting barriers to entry
  - Large projects can be problematic for small countries and new actors
  - problems with information, communication and training

## **Strategic challenges for Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation in Horizon 2020**

- *Reconcile principles of excellence and cohesion in Europe*
- *Finding the right balance between competition and co-operation*
- *Establishing synergies with cohesion policy via smart specialisation (RIS3)*
- *Stairways to excellence*
- *Institutional reforms*
- *Attract talents and revert brain drain*
- *Integration of research institutions both into regional innovation ecosystems and global value chains*
- *Contribute to a well-functioning and diversified research system in target countries*

## Actions for **WIDENING PARTICIPATION** under Horizon 2020

New set of measures in Horizon 2020 under the separate specific objective  
**"Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation" (WIDESPREAD):**

- Teaming for Excellence
- Twinning (institutional networking)
- ERA Chairs (bringing excellence to institutions)
- NCPs (information, communication, support)
- Policy Support Facility (support for R&I Policy design)
- COST (stimulating cross border science networks) **run under intergovernmental framework**

Widening actions will also create synergies between R&I (H2020) and Cohesion Policies (ESIF) notably through Smart Specialisation

Indicative Total Budget in H2020 ~ **€ 816 million** 5

## **COST**– Facts and Figures :

- Intergovernmental Framework for transnational **C**ooperation in **S**cience and **T**echnology
- Success story since 1971
- Networking of nationally funded research projects-> up-scaling and leveraging effects
- bottom-up and excellence principle -> open to all disciplines, science and technology (S&T) ideas and to all categories of partners
- Reaches far beyond EU-> 36 COST Member States + Near Neighbourhood Countries + International Partners
- On average 20 countries per networking action, duration 4 years
- EU funding 250 Million € under FP7 and 300 Million under Horizon 2020
- Aligned with H2020 work programmes on "Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence" & "Europe in a Changing world – inclusive, reflective and innovative societies" contribution 50:50 to the budget
- New implementing structure -> COST AISBL (international non-profit association)

## How does COST contribute to widening ?

- Proven success record for integration of new players from less RTD performing countries into European research activities
- Dedicated Inclusiveness Policy with a gender, career stage and geographical (**widening countries**) component
- Low hurdle entry gate for excellent researchers from widening countries due to openness and bottom-up principle
- Openness of networks allows easy access for newcomers
- Established network of COST National Co-ordinators (CNC) to mobilise national research communities
- Connecting pockets of excellence
- In Horizon 2020 particular commitments to foster participation from inclusiveness/widening countries
- Widening will be a strategic priority for the governance board of COST (i.e. CSO Committee of Senior Officials)
- **But: No closed shop or silos exclusively for less research performing countries!**

## How we will implement widening and inclusiveness with COST ?

- Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) signed between COST and the European Commission (EC) in 2014 underpinned by specific grant agreements (SGA)
- Agreement on Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITC) aligned with Horizon 2020
- Contractual commitment to invest at least 50% of Horizon grants at the benefit of the research communities in ITC
- Key performance indicator (KPI) based on real expenditures items for networking instruments
- Additional output oriented indicators e.g. publications, proposals, project funding
- Capacity building e.g. by empowering ITC researchers to take over leadership roles such as actions chairs, vice-chairs, leading working groups
- Awareness raising and information campaigns (info days and workshops)
- Regular monitoring and reporting system
- CSO working group on Excellence and Inclusiveness

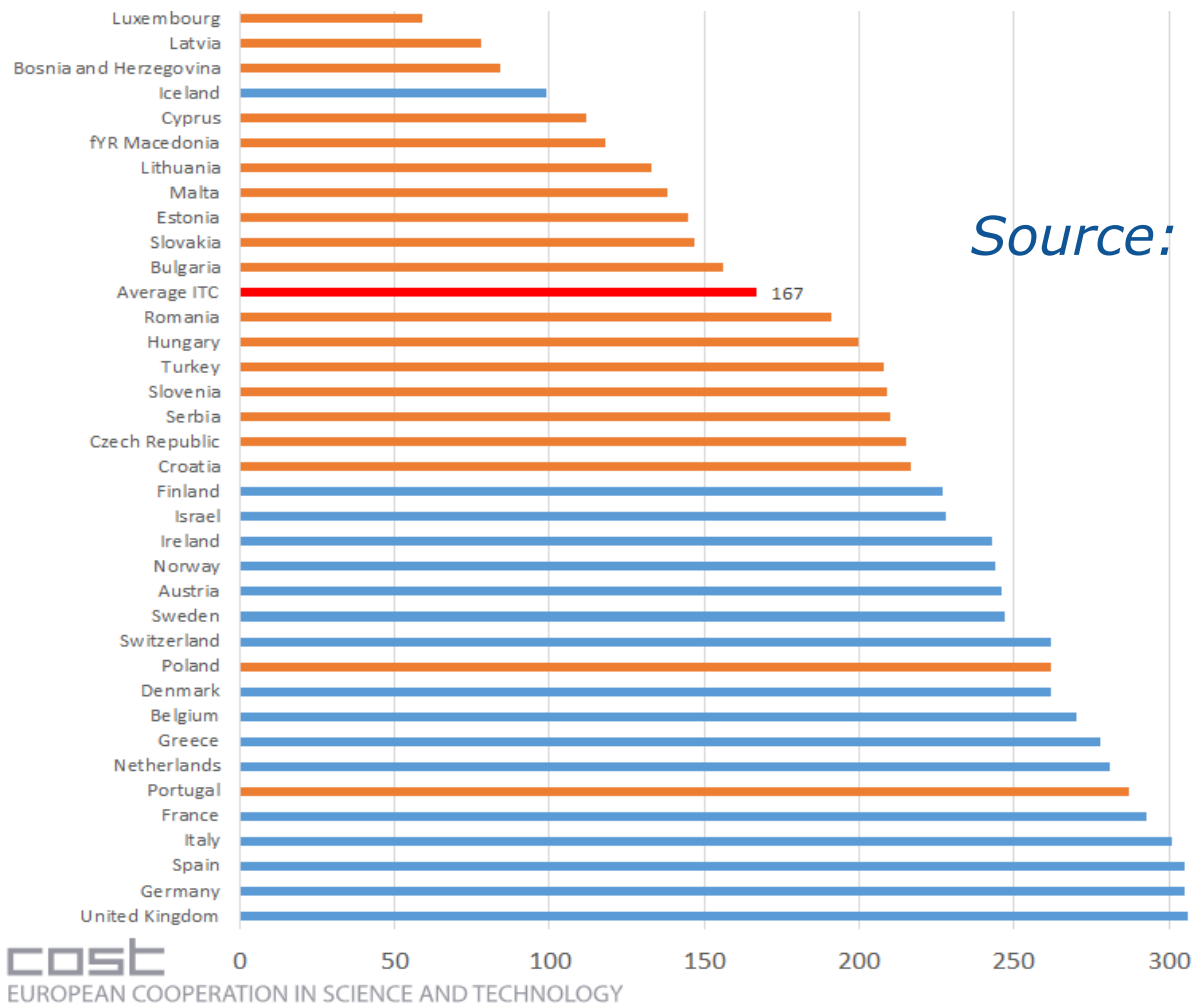


## **COST Inclusiveness Target Countries**

<b>COST Member Countries</b>	
EU Member States	Associated Countries to Horizon 2020
<p>Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia</p>	<p>Bosnia-Herzegovina the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Turkey,</p>

*Source: COST Association, 2016*

## Example: Participation of ITC in ongoing COST Actions



*Source: COST Association, 2016*

## What challenges and barriers are encountered?

- Still untapped potential for COST participation in ITC
- However, possible saturation effects in smaller ITC
- Lack of institutional support to take leadership roles in COST network
- Lack of national funding for underlying research
- Reluctance of ITC institutions to take over grant holder responsibilities
- Awareness raising in ITC
- Need to develop strategic initiatives at the benefit of ITC
- .....

## Conclusions

- COST Networking Actions successfully contribute to overcome disparities of R&I performance in the EU and beyond
- COST Inclusiveness policy well aligned with Horizon 2020 widening pillar
- Encouraging first results under Horizon 2020 but further efforts needed
- COST Actions are effective low hurdle entry gates for research communities from less performing countries
- Synergies and partnerships with other European funding instruments and initiatives need to be strengthened
- Strong potential for empowering ITC researcher for becoming research leader of tomorrows
- COST Networking Actions help to break silos and to bring new players into European research networks



European  
Commission

**Thank  
you for  
your  
attention**