Cost Action Multi3Generation (CA18231)
Multi-task, Multi-lingual, Multi-modal Language Generation

Minutes of the MC meeting
Chaired by Anabela Barreiro (Multi3Generation COST Action MC Chair and Grant Holder Scientific Representative), with presentations by the COST Officers Giuseppe Lugano and Olga Gorczyca.

Scheduled meeting from 9:00 -- 18:00 WET - Western European Time (Lisbon time) / CET+1 / EET+2
December 11, 2020, INESC-ID Lisboa, Portugal
Online event via the Zoom platform

Minutes by: Anabela Barreiro and Elena Lloret
The minutes refer to and complement the MC meeting documents (programme, presentations, etc.) marked along the text. Those documents are available on the Multi3Generation website/intranet: https://multi3generation.eu/

Attendees:
Adisa Imamović (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Adrian Muscat (Malta); Anabela Barreiro (Portugal); Andrii Babii - MC observer from a COST Near Neighbour Country (Ukraine); Anette Frank (Germany); Boris Assanovich (Belarus); Branislava Sandrih (Serbia); Christian Hardmeier (Sweden); Ciprian-Octavian Truică (Romania); Dimitra Gkatzia (United Kingdom); Elena Lloret (Spain); Elena Simina APOSTOL (Romania); Enriketa Sogutlu (Albania); Gabor Berend (Hungary); Gianfranco Modoni (Italy); G. Anbarjafari (Shahab) (Estonia); Gražina Korvel (Lithuania); Goran Martinovic (Croatia); Irene Russo (Italy); Inguna Skadiņa (Latvia); Jakob Suchan (Germany); Konstantinos Diamantaras (Greece); Krenare Pireva Nuci (Kosovo); Letitia Parcalabescu (Germany); Liviu Dinu (Romania); Marie-Francine Moens (Belgium); Marcin Paprzycki (Poland); Matej Rojc (Slovenia); Mike Salampasis (Greece); Nihada Delibegovic Dzanic (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Oleksii Turuta (Ukraine, MC observer from a COST Near Neighbour Country); Riste Stojanov (N. Macedonia); Sanda Martincic-Ipsic (Croatia); Sanja Berberovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Sejdi Sejdiu (Kosovo); Sergio Escalera (Spain); Viktorija Mazeikiene (Lithuania); Vladimir Despotovic (Luxembourg).

Anabela Barreiro opened the MC meeting and laid out its agenda.
Agenda:
1. Welcoming by the Grant Holder & Multi3Generation Chair and Vice-Chair - presentation by Anabela Barreiro (INESC-ID)
2. Welcoming and update by the COST Association - presentations by Giuseppe Lugano & Olga Gorczyca (COST)

3. Multi3Generation Report - Anabela Barreiro, Elena Lloret, Iacer Calixto, François Portet, Marcin Paprzycki - presentation by Elena Lloret (University of Alicante)
4. Working Groups - video-presentations by the WG leaders Albert Gatt, Aykut Erdem, Dimitra Gkatzia, Irene Russo, Fabio Kepler
5. Invited Speaker - presentation by Helena Moniz (INESC-ID)
6. WG Meetings - Separate meetings for each WG - Moderation by the WG leaders & participation of the WG members
7. Multi3Generation Wrap up & Further Steps - Anabela Barreiro, Elena Lloret
8. Additional Issues, Q&A, Suggestions, Discussion - MC members
9. Multi3Generation Meeting Closing - Anabela Barreiro

See Programme on the website

1. Introduction:

Participation of MC representatives of 24 countries (out of a total of 32) were recorded, thus the quorum for taking decisions by e-vote was met (at least two thirds of the participating COST countries were represented). The attendance was registered by each participant of the MC meeting writing in the chat box of the Zoom platform session their name & country plus the word "Attended" (e.g., Elena Lloret, Spain - Attended). Due to COST regulation for virtual meetings, there were no reimbursements for participation. Such as in any presential meeting, there were coffee and lunch breaks. There were also Zoom breakout rooms for individual WG meetings and an open room for chit-chat and networking.

There was 1 MC observer from a COST Near Neighbour Country (NNC) - Boris Assanovich from Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, Belarus (BY)
8 participating countries were not represented at the meeting: Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Ireland, Israel, Norway and Slovakia.

1. Welcoming by Anabela Barreiro

The Multi3Generation Grant Holder representative & Chair Anabela Barreiro started her presentation by welcoming all the participants. Then, she called everyone's attention to the recommended documents (MoU and Vademecum) that MC members need to read and consult for all issues related to the COST Action. Anabela presented the start and end dates of the Action, and justified the extension of GP2 by 6 months due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the change/switch of the roles of Chair from Isabelle Augenstein to Anabela Barreiro and Grant Holder from University of Copenhagen to INESC-ID Lisboa. She also added that, if the pandemic is controlled by the summer, there is the possibility of organizing an hybrid (presential + online) MC Meeting in October 2021. Pre-booking of a conference center has been done at the University of Lisbon (Instituto Superior Técnico), but any other proposal can be taken into consideration and voted for (Poland, for example?). Another important note

was the need to find a replacement for Dimitra as WG3 leader, and a candidate to fill in the role of vice-leader for WG4 to help support Irene (the only leader without a supporting vice-leader). Another issue presented was the e-vote on the eCOST voting system. From the online meeting registered in these Minutes, 3 e-votes would be launched: (1) e-vote 1 on leadership roles; (2) evote 2 on budget shifts; and (3) evote 3 on the online MC meeting minutes approval. Anabela also refreshed our memories about the leadership roles (Core Group members); presented some statistics on MC members (and substitute MCs), countries, MC observers, Near Neighbour Countries (NNC), International Partner Countries (IPC), and main contacts. Finally, she presented a brief summary of the 1st year progress report submitted via eCOST, the percentage of "participating countries", "MC members", and so on, corresponding to Women, ECIs and ITCs. A table shown in her presentation highlighted the numbers for Multi3Generation with the average percentages of current cost actions. Multi3Generation meets the requirements and it is above the average compared to other actions in terms of Gender Balance, ECIs and ITCs. Finally, after explaining the attendance registration, and other relevant rules, she gave the floor to the COST Association officers.

See presentation on the website

2. Presentation by M3G Science Officer Giuseppe Lugano & Administrative Officer Olga Gorczyca
Giuseppe Lugano presented an **update from the COST Association** (standard in all MC (online) meetings) and reinforced on how to identify MC members (name and country) in the Zoom chat window for attendance (registration) purposes, etc.. Next, Guiseppe mentioned the change of GH and Chair and the extension of 6 months for GP2 to allow for spending of the allocated budget. Then, he highlighted the display of the allocated budget and up-to-date expenditure for the 1st two GPs. He also mentioned the change of Action Chair and Grant Holder at the end of GP1; and referred to the 3 MC Meetings held up to the day: (1) MC1 (kick-off): 9 September 2019, Brussels (BE); (2) MC2: 20 January 2020, Copenhagen (DK); and (3) MC3: 11 December 2020, Lisbon online. Then, he moved on into the Action plans and progress, pointing out the importance of the upload and sharing of scientific and other content online (website, social media, Action members' area) to increase the visibility of the Multi3Generation Action. Guiseppe also reminded all the MC members of the 7 deliverables at M24 (October, 31st 2021). The Covid-19 context was another point of discussion due to the challenging and uncertain situation affecting planning and implementation of COST Action activities, and Giuseppe mentioned both the risks (slower progress and lower spending) and the opportunities (experimenting new forms of communication and coordination). Virtual and hybrid meetings are the current feasible way of communicating, networking and brainstorming. There is a budget for technical support (LOS) and purchase of licenses. The impact of the pandemic in the format of STSMs, and ITC conference grants, dissemination and other meetings was also mentioned, and the COVID-19 Network of Actions (NoA) was presented. Finally, Giuseppe highlighted the COST Association's constant attention to the evolution of the situation and involvement in finding the best solutions for the Actions.

Olga Gorczyca emphasized the rules for STSM within the circumstances, taking into consideration issues like mission dates, quarantine, cancellation insurance for travelling for physical meetings; for the ITC conference grants and dissemination meetings, eligibility of the fees for virtual meetings. Olga reminded us to use the budget for dissemination materials. Giuseppe added that there is now more funding for dissemination fees (e.g., fees for open access publications, etc).

Giuseppe highlighted the COST Association initiatives and opportunities in reaction to the Covid-19 crisis, e.g., informal network and cooperation between distinct COST Actions that could be connected in order to provide answers to the impacts of Covid-19 on society. 64 Actions have expressed interest in working on topics related to Covid-19 both on health and social and other sciences and provided examples on how they could use their expertise at the disposal of the network. This is published in a booklet. Benefit of this informal interdisciplinary network is not in offering funding, but joining efforts for a research project, joining a consortium across different disciplinary areas. If any project is funded, this is of great importance for COST and a benefit for the COST members.

COST is an intergovernmental framework entirely funded by the EU, not by the EU country governments. Despite the impact of the pandemic on researchers' lives, COST did and will not change the way funding operates (contractual obligations towards the COST governance and the EU commission). No buffer budget can be used for emergencies at this time. M3G will run until 2023, that means that it will run under Horizon Europe, which **may** bring novelties to the EU COST programme, also based on the lessons learnt and challenges faced in 2020.

Q&A related to the COST presentation:
Q (Anabela and Elena): What's the difference between GP and financial year (Year1, etc.).
A (Guiseppe): Focus on MoU and yearly periods (GPs), deliverables that are required to be achieved, and provide answers for the scientific needs for each GP. The Financial manager from the GH institution will provide support on the definition of the budget for GP in the context of the financial year. The administrative and financial periods (GPs) are not aligned with the deadline months for the deliverables or milestones.

Q (Elena): Do we have to report the 7 deliverables in independent documents or together with the GP2 overall progress report? Can the progress report be a paper or a previously published report?
A (Guiseppe): For the end of GP2 a report will be written and the work evidence checked by an external rapporteur. Every GP Progress Report requires evidence of achievement (DOI of the publication; documents of data, etc.) - There is no need to report independent documents on each Deliverable. The best means to show the evidence of the deliverables and all the work done is to list everything on the website. The data should be visible and accessible for 2 or 3 years after the end of the Action.
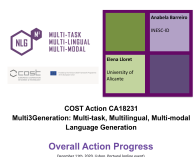
See COST presentation on the website

3. Multi3Generation Report

The M3G Vice-Chair Elena Lloret presented the progress report, an overall monitoring of the Action and the Scientific planning (strategy and related budget) for GP2. She mainly focused on revising and informing about what has been already achieved and what needs to be done with respect to the scientific advances of the Multi3Generation. In particular, she did a quick revision of the milestones already achieved, i.e., M1 at the end of Month 3, where the 1st Progress Report was submitted, the Action Website and the social media were up and running and the first MC meeting had taken place in Brussels, also coinciding with the starting of the action. Concerning the issues that need to be taken into account related to the first milestone, she talked about the improvement of the dissemination of the action, as well as the update of the Website. Concerning the second milestone that was due at the end of year 1, although reports and publications from the workshops and conferences held were done, the other planned activities, such as methodologies for jointly processing vision and text reflected in reports and training courseware, benchmarking datasets, shared-task definitions and annotations for a selected application were still in progress. Moreover, she also informed about the activities that were carried out, which included the workshops: *Intelligent Information Processing and Natural Language Generation*[1] (IntelLanG), co-organized by Albert Gatt, and *Artificial and Human Intelligence: On Formal and Cognitive Foundations for Human-Centred Computing*[2], organized by Mehul Bhat, as well as 1 STMS conducted in October 2020, where the French researcher François Portet visited Albert Gatt at the University of Malta. After that, she recalled the attention on the milestones to be achieved by the end of year 2, which are mainly a continuation of the milestones defined for year 2. A Gantt chart was also provided for the temporal planning of the activities for year 2. Regarding the scientific strategy & budget planning, she emphasized again the deliverables that have to be completed by end of year 2 (month 24), stressing the importance of a collaborative and coordinated work between all action members. These deliverables were already stated in the presentation given by the M3G Science Officer, Giuseppe Lugano, & Administrative Officer, Olga Gorczyca. As far as the activities to be conducted and planned, there will be a training school[3] in January 2021, and Multi3Generation COST Action was disseminated at INLG 2020 conference in December 2020. She also encouraged action members to report to the chairs[4] on any activity that is planned, conducted, as well as to propose/suggest any activity related to the objectives of the action. So far, no ITC grants were applied for. Finally, as the last point of her presentation, she proposed to the MC the idea of moving some funding initially planned for meetings into STSM (specifically, move 15000 euros from the budget of the meetings to STSM, thus increasing the budget for STSM up to 22.500 euros. This is informed that it will have to be voted by eVote.

See Action Report presentation on the website

Video from Iacer Calixto, coordinator of STSM

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[1] https://intellang.github.io/

[2] https://www.codesign-lab.org/ecai2020/

[3] http://lig-alps.imag.fr/

[4] chairs@multi3generation.eu

Iacer reported on the STSMs, 1 accomplished, 2 approved and 2 under evaluation. He emphasised the need to allocate more funding for STSM due to the fact that the participation in a presential Meeting is now jeopardized by the Pandemic. STSM for highly motivated researchers working in important topics of the Action is more feasible because it allows for a longer stay and enables enough time for quarantines, etc.

Videos are available on the intranet only.

4. Working Groups
The work progress of each WG was presented in a video, except for WG5.
Presentations are available on the website (videos on the intranet)

WG1

WG2

WG3

WG4

WG5

5. Invited Speaker
The presentation is available on the website

6. WG Meetings (available on the website)
Minutes (WG1, WG2, WG3, and WG4) - no minutes for WG5

WG1

Working Group 1: Meeting Summary
Online, December 11, 2020

The following is a summary of the discussions of our WG meeting.

1. Brief overview of activities by WG1 members:

Note: These were already reviewed in the main session presentation.
- Panel discussion at Workshop on Artificial and Human Intelligence, ECAI 2020
- STSM by Francois Portet, focussing on grounding of natural language. Outcomes:
  - Position paper (in progress)
  - MSc project (underway)
- Ongoing collaboration between UM, Heidelberg and UvA on probing pretrained V&L models.

2. Update on actions agreed during the January 2020 meeting

- June 2020: plan panel discussion at ECAI workshops
  - This has happened, but was postponed to September, due to Covid-19
- By September 2020: members can volunteer to give a short talk at the next WG1 meeting. Call to be announced in good time.
  - We agree that this should be on the agenda for our next meeting (see below).
  - People will be asked whether they would like to announce any ongoing work that can be built upon, as well as ideas for other tasks.

3. Website

- We have created a shared document to keep track of new information for the website. This can then be shared with whoever is responsible for the website. Things to add to this document include any outputs, including papers, preprints, datasets, code.
  - We need to check on how this will work. Our current understanding is that this will go to Marcin, who will then update the website.
- Emails of all members of WG1, for inclusion in the mailing list. These will be handled by Albert based on the Slack membership.

4. Planning our next (full) meeting.

- We're agreeing on a meeting in mid-February. We will put possible dates up for vote on Slack. The meeting will be online, and will take up at most 3 hours. On the agenda for the meeting there will be:
  - Short presentations by members on their interests. We will make it structured and quick, but the aim is to identify common research interests and enhance collaborations.
  - Discussion of benchmark or shared tasks
  - Discussion of possible survey on some aspect of grounding
  - Long-term plans for a Dagstuhl Seminar

WG2

Working Group 2: Meeting Minutes | Virtual, December 11, 2020
The following is a summary of the points discussed in our WG meeting.

1. Progress on actions agreed upon in the January 2020 meeting
- December 2020: Survey on the state-of-the-art on neural natural language processing
  - 18 contributors (members from WG1 and WG2)
  - Almost finished -- we investigate several different NLG tasks from 4 unique dimensions: multilinguality, multimodality, controllability, and learning strategies
  Action points regarding the survey:
  - Finishing the draft by the end of this year (only conclusion and abstract sections are missing at the moment)
    - Collecting bullet point summaries from the for the conclusion by the end of next week
    - Albert will go over the draft
  - Contributing to NLP progress
    - Collecting information about authors' implementations. We can use our shared document for this
  - Submitting a proposal to JAIR soon
  - Planning to submit the final version by the mid of February 2021

3. Action Website
- We will be using a shared document (follows WG1's template) to keep the website up to date on the action related papers, preprints, datasets, code, etc.
- Emails of all members of WG2, for inclusion in the mailing list and WG2 Slack channel.

4. Planning of our next (full) meeting
- We plan a half-day virtual meeting at the beginning of February 2021. This will be after the ACL deadline (February 2)
- We will decide the exact date in mid January.
- The tentative agenda for the meeting:
  - Short presentations by the WG2 members (presentation of recent work or research interests
  - Discussion of the final
  - Discussion of possible survey on some aspect of grounding
  - Discussion of the progress on the second survey (computing efficient ML for NLG)
    - Kostas will take the lead from Marcin

WG3

If you don't have access to **slack** or the **WG3 mailing list**, please type your email below:

Vladimir Despotovic: vladimir.despotovic@uni.lu
sejdi.sejdiu@uni-prizren.com

Minutes from meeting on the 11th of December: (Please add anything I miss below)

- Reiterated that the position for the WG3 leader is open - if you are interested, please contact the action chairs: Anabela and Elena.
- Discussed that a meeting with all members of this group should be organised in early 2021, e.g. January (a doodle poll is needed to identify a date/time).
- At the meeting, participants should give short presentations on their research interests/ projects that they want to work on so we can form smaller groups and focus on achieving the action's goals.
- We could invite participants from the other WGs as there is overlap between groups' aims.
- There could be an invited talk/webinars and break out sessions.
- Goal: to agree on workplan; possible division in sub-groups

Ideas for future work include (but not agreed): (Please add anything I miss below)

- Plan a survey paper on NLG for dialogue including languages other than English.
- Identify relevant datasets and create a repository.
- Develop a multilingual dataset.
- Multilingual speech to speech machine translation

WG4

Multi3Generation COST Action - Minutes online WG4 meeting - December 11, 2020

Seven participants took part in the meeting, which lasted approximately two hours.
- We found a co-leader for WG4: Liviu Dinu
- There was a discussion about the postponement of a deliverable (the one about literature review and state-of-the-art on linguistic theories combining linguistic and perceptual information in semantic representations).
- Discussion about dissemination activities: it could be a good idea writing a blog post for the Action website about each WG to explain to not specialists the topic of our research

Organising future work:
- with the collaboration of all the participants, collection of a reading list of papers that are relevant for WG4;
- each participant could add to this list one publication that she/he co-authored in order to introduce herself/himself to other participants;
- reviewing NLG papers (starting from the last edition) to refine the set of metadata useful to describe the role of resources and KBs in NLG;
- annotating an existing resource (most probably the Open Affective Standardized Image Set because it is not subject to copyright restrictions) with multilingual emotion labels for emotion captions generation.

7. Other topics & Wrap-up
No other topics were brought up for discussion.
The meeting concluded at about 17:00, 1 hour earlier than the previously scheduled ending. The closing was done by the Chair Anabela, reminding of the work ahead and thanking everyone for the joint efforts to make the meeting possible.