

COST-GEMINI

ORGANISERS REPORT

The undertaking of the organization of the first GEMINI meeting in Volos was rather a result of an unfortunate misunderstanding between the two Greek MC members, who are usually acting in concert. Before the meeting in Brussels, Georgios supported the Polish candidatedship, while Theodora said that Greece would be willing to organize the meeting provided nobody else would be interested. I assume the criterion of sunny and warm Greece was catalytic, and here we are loaded with a new task. It was impossible to withdraw our candidatedship; it was a matter of pride for us.

The selection of the meeting venue was the first hurdle. Athens is always an attractive and convenient place for meetings but it is very far away from where both organizers live. Thessaloniki is also a good place, but hotels and meals are extremely expensive. Volos sounded a good alternative, given the reasonable rates and the location of the city.

Our first goal was to bring participants close to each other, offering as much as possible out of the limited funding we had available. The second goal was to spend the minimum amount from our COST budget, in order to save money for other actions (e.g. STSMs etc). Hence, we had to look for sponsorship. This was really tough. The meeting's subject made the pharmaceutical companies rather reluctant to make any donation. After long negotiations, they were finally convinced to make a generous support, which effectively contributed to the successful outcome of the meeting.

During the preparatory period the most frequently asked question from people interested to participate to the meeting was the transportation to Volos. Although detailed directions for traveling to Volos were given, the same questions were asked again and again. People were afraid of driving in Greece, others insisted to fly to Volos despite the fact the local airport only operates until September, others found it extremely hard to travel by train. Eventually, when we gathered together in Volos everybody realized that it was dead-easy to travel to Volos. Handling the registrations was another time consuming and very serious task. The limited funding did not allow additional administrative costs, thus this was also undertaken by the two local organizers. However, we have to admit that charging your credit cards in Georgios office was a great fun.

However, the most cumbersome part of the organization was the design of Alireza's cake. The chef of the hotel is a terrible perfectionist. We tried to describe how the oocyte and the sperm look like and we asked if this would be possible to be presented on a cake. He stayed silent for a few seconds and then he asked for a detailed photograph of the event. We provided the photo, and a day later he started asking these peculiar –for a cook- questions. Should the zona pellucida made by transparent or coloured gel, is the cytoplasm of different texture from the nucleus, what the sperm tail length should be in relation to the head, and so on. OK chef, make it the way you can imagine it, nobody is going to understand what you made wrong, their knowledge on the subject is very limited, was Theodora's answer....

Georgios & Theodora
Local Meeting Organisers