Minutes for Board Meeting-January- 9-2026

Present: Verena Siewers, Paola Branduardi, Jussi Jänti, Jan Maarten Van Dij, Diethard Mattanovich, Ralf Takors, Pau Ferrer, Kjeld Olesen, Stephanie Heux, John Morrissey.

1. **Welcome, and adoption of the agenda**
2. **Apologies for absence**

   Pablo Iván Nikel, Karen Polizzi, Jean Marie Francois.

3. **Report on the past conferences and initiatives (i.e.: shared survey, membership)**

   <u>RPP12 – Report and Discussion (Ralf)</u>

   - RPP12 was very successful, with approximately 200 attendees. Overall feedback was extremely positive, including praise from the Microbial Division Board. The Conference was recognized for its scientific rigor and engaging atmosphere, with many participants expressing interest in future editions.
   - Pau reported a succesful satellite meeting, noting that attendance numbers increased slightly compared to Girona. Verena highlighted the presence of several newcomers joining the meeting, which was widely appreciated, particularly the presentations of their recent work. Ralf emphasized the very high quality of the talks. Around 100 people attended the pre-conference meeting, with strong participation from young researchers. Paola highlighted the importance of having satellite events conference to maintaining community connections and fostering collaboration.

   <u>Future Conference Organization</u>

   - Diethard presented two potential options for the next conference, as two colleagues expressed their willing to host RPP13:
     - First option: Nico Callewaert, University of Ghent, expressed interest. This option appears strong, although the timing may need to be adjusted.
     - Second option: Baris Binay, a researcher from Turkey, is also a potential organizer. While viewed as a higher-risk option, Ralf noted the group has EU project funding to support the event. Additionally, involving new regions and research groups would be a strategic benefit.
   - If possible, it was agreed that the conference should continue to be held every two years.
   - The next step is to contact the potential organizers to request further details regarding:
     - Organizational capacity
     - Possible dates and timing
     - Location
     - Financial and institutional support

- This information will be shared with the board, and a meeting will be organized if needed to make a final decision. Pau, Diethard, Paola, Ralf, and John will jointly draft and send the email.
- To assist future planning, it was also suggested to collect and store all useful materials for organizing the congress (e.g., timelines, checklists) in the shared folder. Ralf will take responsibility for this.

Survey on the EU Biotechnology Act

- John reported on the survey related to the EU Biotechnology Act. Because the survey was extensive, he has prepared a consolidated summary of the division's responses, which he will upload to the shared folder.
- The group evaluated the utility of participating in such surveys. The consensus was that these activities are very relevant: if the EFB aims to be a recognized voice for biotechnology within the EU, it must actively engage in these consultations.
- A key question raised was whether the division feels comfortable responding under the name of the EFB. The general consensus was that it should do so. Kjeld noted, however, that he did not feel comfortable responding under the name of his company. Ralf emphasized that, as an institution, EFB should take the opportunity to contribute its perspective, especially since being on the stakeholder list may lead to invitations to future surveys. This is an important chance to ensure the scientific community's voice is heard. Diethard reinforced that this activity aligns with the role and purpose of the EFB. He noted that if other divisions share interest in this topic, they should be consulted.
- Paola suggested a workflow for future surveys: they should be forwarded to her for appropriate circulation. She also committed to raising the topic of policy engagement at the next Executive Board (Expo) meeting.

Membership

- Paola highlighted the possibility of obtaining institutional EFB membership at the university level. Members were encouraged to check with their respective universities about this option.
- All relevant information regarding institutional membership and benefits will be uploaded to the shared folder.

4. Next activities for the coming and following years:

Revision and approval of the document containing the Terms of Reference for Conference Chair

- The Terms of Reference for the Conference Chair have been updated to provide greater flexibility to Conference Chair. The intention is to move away from a strict contractual framework toward a lighter agreement that clarifies mutual expectations and support.
    - Any surplus generated by the conference will be shared with the Conference Chair, rather than allocated solely to the division.
    - Any financial loss will be absorbed by the division.

- Paola will circulate the revised document by email once it is finalized and will ask the board to review and approve it.
- For context, under the standard EFB contract, EFB covers any losses and any surplus is allocated between the EFB and the Division.

Vademecum for organizing a congress

- The idea is to create a guidance document on how to organize a conference. An initial version will be uploaded to the shared folder, and members will be invited to add suggestions, modifications, and additional content. The document should include:
    - A timeline for conference organization
    - A table of possible grants, including deadlines and relevant websites
    - Information on previous conference chairs
    - A standard budget template
- Ralf raised the issue of taxation, noting that complications can arise when staff are paid directly by the EFB or the division (located in Spain) while the conference itself takes place in another country (e.g., Germany). This is a common issue with international payments.
- VAT in particular can be problematic, although the situation has now been clarified. It was agreed that this point should be clearly addressed in the vademecum, stating that taxes and VAT should always be included by default, and that any exemption or refund should be treated as a benefit rather than assumed from the outset.

Update on the next conferences (PYFF , ECB2026, Stress and RPP meetings..)

- PYFF Conference (John): registration is open. The program is available, featuring strong speakers, and the location was highlighted as very attractive.
- ASBE 2026 (Verena): The ASBBE conference will take place on 4–6 November 2026. The venue has been changed because exclusive access to the original venue (Whitworth Art Gallery) was not possible. Three keynote speakers have been confirmed (Chris Voigt; Irina Borodina & Roman Jerala) with three invited speakers (Nicola Patron; Adam Feist and Jenny Molloy). The FEMS grant application was rejected, making sponsorship an important topic for further discussion. Potential opportunities with foundations such as Boehringer were mentioned (see other minutes).
- ECB / EFB Activities (Paola): No additional information was reported beyond current communications. An ExBo meeting and an EFB strategic meeting will take place in February.
- Stress Meeting: The previous Stress meeting was held in Vienna. The next meeting was planned to be organized by Sofia Pauleta; however, because of the agreement related to ECB 2026, PYFF9 was postponed to September, causing the Stress Meeting Conference to be delayed to 2027. This could be important, since until now limited progress has been made.
- It was emphasized that finalizing RPP13 remains a priority. Paola will provide an update in June.

EFB Lecture and Support for Young Researchers

- The possibility of involving young researchers through EFB lectures and related initiatives was discussed.
- The MBD agreed to support the support the participation of a winner of the 'rising star' competition at "HIT 2026" – Himmelfahrtstagung on Bioprocess Engineering, which takes place in Mainz in May 2026. This is the most established conference for the Bioprocess Engineering community in Germany and is an excellent opportunity to spread the messages of the EFB. Ralf Takors is involved in the organisation of the conference and he will present on the EFB at the event.

5. Report of the Treasurer (Pau)

- The budget is still being finalized. The transfer of funds from PYFF8 has been pending since September. In addition, the allocation of the RPP budget is still under discussion.
- There is an existing agreement between UAB and EFB for UAB to host the funds. This agreement has expired and needs to be renewed. As part of the renewal, a justification must be provided explaining why it is relevant for UAB to host the account. The intention is to maintain the same conditions as in the previous agreement. The renewed agreement will be shared with the board for review before signature. It will be signed by the President of UAB and the Chair of the Division. The previous agreement had a duration of five years and was extended three times.
- Current Budget Overview: Approx. €80,000 + €7,700 from PYFF + Additional income expected from RPP

6. Late items

- Kjeld had intended to discuss potential initiatives to involve young researchers with Marjan de Mey. However, this did not take place because he was unable to access the minutes at the time.

7. Next meeting of the Board

- It was proposed to hold the next meeting during ECB 2026, with the possibility of remote participation. Members will be asked to indicate who will be present in person.

Action Items :

- ➢ Contact potential RPP12 organizers and report details to the board; finalize RPP12: Pau, Diethard, Paola, Ralf, and John.
- ➢ Upload and complete the conference organization vademecum (timeline, grants, budget, VAT): Ralf et al.
- ➢ Finalize and circulate the Conference Chair agreement for approval: Paola
- ➢ Upload the EU Biotechnology Act survey response: John.
- ➢ Upload info on institutional EFB membership and encourage universities to check eligibility: All members.
- ➢ Follow up on PYFF budget transfer, RPP funds, and renew the UAB–EFB agreement: Pau.

- Plan the next meeting at ECB 2026 (with remote option) and confirm attendance: Stephanie.
- Restart discussion on young researcher involvement based on what have been discussed previously: Kjeld.