

EFB Environmental Biotechnology Division

Minutes of an online meeting of the Division Board held Monday, 20 April 2026

In attendance:

- Joanna Surmacz-Gorska (Co-Chair)
- Joana Pereira (Co-Chair)
- Marcella Fernandes de Souza
- Monika Harnisz
- Rita Mota
- Anna Parus
- Sónia Patricia Marques Ventura
- Marta Wozniak-Karczewska
- Mauro Di Fenza
- Agnieszka Kuźniar

Apologies:

- Anna Parus
- David Richardson
- Felice Quartinello

1. Apologies and Welcome

Joanna opened the meeting and welcomed all participants, with a special welcome to Agnieszka Kuźniar, attending her first Board meeting. All members briefly introduced themselves, outlining their institutional affiliations and research backgrounds.

2. Matters arising from previous minutes

No matters arising were reported.

3. Planning of the next Green Deal Biotechnology Meeting

Marcella presented a preliminary draft programme for the next Green Deal Biotechnology meeting, based on the structure of the previous edition, with some adaptations. The programme foresees an afternoon start on the first day to allow sufficient time for registration and poster set-up, followed by thematic scientific sessions and networking opportunities.

The Board agreed that session titles should remain broad, with detailed session descriptions guiding abstract submissions and allowing flexibility during abstract allocation. Flash poster presentations were considered again an effective format and should be included at the end of sessions, with timing adjusted if necessary.

Mauro stressed the importance of clearly integrating industrial biotechnology aspects into the meeting, particularly bioprocess development, biomanufacturing, and applied industrial biotechnology. The discussion converged on highlighting these elements within session descriptions and the call for abstracts, ensuring visibility to applied research communities and industrial stakeholders while remaining aligned with the Division's environmental focus.

The scope of sessions addressing soil health, sustainability, and bioproducts was discussed, with agreement that such topics are appropriate when framed within environmental sustainability, avoiding overlap with the Plant and Agricultural Biotechnology Division. The inclusion of these topics in session descriptions rather than titles was considered appropriate.

The issue of keynote speakers was briefly discussed, with the observation that a closing lecture by an external speaker might pose attendance risks. Consequently, the option of inviting a local or internal speaker for the concluding session was suggested, with the topic to be revisited once the programme structure and dates are further defined.

Regarding logistics, Marcella confirmed that she has contacted the venue and plans an on-site visit in early May. Sponsorship opportunities are being explored with support from the Central Office, including preparation of a list of potential Belgian sponsors and promotional material. Timing of the meeting was discussed, with May–June identified as a congested period and early September considered a potentially more suitable alternative, subject to further checks.

Action: Marcella will organize a shared folder to collect contributions from the Board for the programme and other aspects as needed.

4. ECB2026 Congress Update

David was not present, and therefore no direct update on the Congress was available. It was noted that representation of the Division may be limited due to funding uncertainties for some Board members.

7. Special Issue of New Biotechnology

Monika reported on the status of the Special Issue, noting that submission numbers remain very low. Only one manuscript is currently under consideration, while previous submissions were either rejected after peer review or by the Editor-in-Chief. Despite extensive dissemination efforts, the high article processing charges were identified as a major barrier to attracting submissions.

The possibility of keeping the Special Issue open beyond the current deadline and linking it more closely to outputs from future conferences was discussed. Before approaching the Editor-in-Chief, the Board agreed that advice should be sought from Francesc Gòdia and Ivo Frébort regarding the feasibility of this approach and possible alternatives. The option of journal-supported conference promotion, as practiced by some Elsevier journals, was also mentioned, although further clarification would be required.

Action: Joanna will contact Francesc Gòdia and Ivo Frébort for advice and follow-up with Monika to adjust a possible contact with the Editor-in-Chief regarding the Special Issue

8. Collaboration with Proteinn Club

No new information was available on this topic. It was recalled that previous discussions had been managed by Jeff and that David had volunteered to re-establish contact. An update will be sought before the next meeting.

9. Any Other Business

No additional items were raised.

11. Scheduling of the Next Meeting

The timing of the next Board meeting will depend on progress with conference planning and feedback regarding the Special Issue. A meeting in late May or early June was tentatively suggested, subject to Board availability.

Action: Marcella will share her availability to adjust the possible slots in a new poll (requested circulation to Anna) for scheduling the next EB Board meeting as soon as possible.