EFB Environmental Biotechnology Division

Meeting of the Division Board held online (ZOOM) on Monday, 8th July 2024 at 17:00 CET.

Present: JSG (Chair), JC, DR, JP, MS, MWK, RM, SV

1. Apologies for absence and welcome.
JSG welcomed all present and informed the Board that apologies for absence were received from MH.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not covered below.
The Board was made aware that the Division website is being updated, especially concerning the composition of the Board. All Board members will be linked to their professional URLs and ideally ORCiD, if possible, provided the resources available for the website.
Action: MWK will request from each Board member the validation of the information in the website when the update is finished, and collect any requests for changes.

3. Thematic issue of the Bioeconomy Journal.
There are not many papers submitted to the Bioeconomy Journal (approx. 5); Division Board members have contributed. Although the current average number of papers in Special Issues has been low, this low number is still concerning and a continued effort to engage speakers in previous meetings is needed. It was also noted that the Open Access policies and related agreements have been negatively impacting several scientific societies through their Journals, thus this is not a matter of concern for the Bioeconomy Journal and the EFB. In this context, the status of the Bioeconomy Journal will be re-assessed before the end of the year.

4. EFB-AFOB meeting on "Plastics: challenges and biotechnological solutions".
The Board was informed by JC that the meeting was very successful, with approximately 100 participants and with a stable attendance rate within session that is worth highlighting. There was no profit achieved by the EFB in this meeting, but the balance was still positive regarding community engagement. A note was left on the extent of the meeting, that should likely be reduced from four to three sessions in next similar events.
Action: JSG will ask the Central Office for a view on whether this meeting was a trigger to enhance registration in ECB.

5. ECB and the Division participation in ECB
The Board discussed the fact that very few presentations were made within the field of environmental biotechnology (the short participation when the call for topics was placed and/or the clashing with other relevant conferences in the field) and the lower attendance/registration on topics related to plant, agriculture and food biotechnology was also mentioned. It was reinforced that the two Divisions would likely benefit of joining efforts in meetings to leverage participation. Synthetic Biology was a field clearly growing in Biotechnology.
The impression of Board members attending ECB was generally very positive, with the quality of the plenary and keynote speakers being commended and the overall technical organization, including the conference application. Some suggestions were made regarding the organization of the Flash Poster presentations, mostly for the enlargement of the time (from 2 to 3 minutes) and the possibility of having specific sessions for the purpose. It was clarified that these aspects have been discussed and that changes are not straightforward to implement as it depends on the conditions offered by the venue, the budget, the number of submissions, etc. The occasional lack of consistency among talks within a given session was also noted, but this is largely dependent on the dynamics of the submission, which often is unbalanced across the different topics.

A final note was made on the effective dissemination of the Aveiro meeting with leaflets distributed and many participants asking for details. An estimation for 80-100 registrations can be made for this meeting based on the interest felt.

6. Next EFB-EB regular meeting, Aveiro, Spring 2025.

JP briefly updated the Board on the steps already taken, namely that venue, general conditions and indicative prices for catering and social activities were already pre-reserved or collected, and that the relevant information was already forwarded to the Central office for the elaboration of the first version of the budget. This item will be likely available in short. A key remark was made by JC was the need to control the immediate offer of support to invited speakers for better budget sustainability, with the recommendation for analysing the possibilities on a case-by-case basis following on each positive reply to an invitation letter. Other items agreed by the Board as relevant matters to address regarding the organization of the meeting were as follows.

The list of speakers that potentially will be invited should be suggested in the shared organization document by all members of the committee, along with notes on priority ranking. The final list will be organized by JP, consulting JSG and SV, who will articulate with the Central Office on invitation dynamics. Invitation letters should be signed by the Division Chair and the two representatives of the local organizing committee, JP and SV.

The Board recognised that a matter of utmost importance is the setup of the conference scope for communication with invited speakers, sponsors and to attract participants in general. This scope is composed of the topics and sub-topics where the committee is willing to receive registrations, already drafted in the shared organization document, but requiring improvement - sub-topics should be as detailed as possible to avoid missing relevant fields and discourage participation of audiences that may feel underrepresented.

After the setup of the scope of the meeting, the committee should concentrate also efforts in gathering sponsors. The shared organization document can also be used for noting on sponsoring possibilities. The contacts in this context should be made before the end of the year to ensure that companies consider it in their budget for 2025.

Action: JC will share with the committee template invitation letters that have been refined for other meetings.

Action: JP will send a reminder email to the committee with the link to the shared document, as well as the request for contributions (sub-topics and potential invited speakers) until the last week of July.

Action: JP will merge contributions on topics and sub-topics by the end of July and organize the complete scope of the meeting for approval in the next Board meeting).

7. Membership of the Division Board

The Board agreed with transferring this topic for discussion in the next Division Board meeting.

Action: JP will keep this topic in the Agenda for the next Board meeting.

8. Any other business.

No other specific businesses were raised for discussion.

9. Scheduling of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board was tentatively scheduled for the first week of September (2-5 September), by 17:00 CET.

Action: JP will circulate a poll to find the most suitable day of the week proposed for the Board meeting.

JP. 11 July 2024