

EFB Environmental Biotechnology Division

Meeting of the Division Board held online (ZOOM platform) on Wednesday, 27th September 2023 at 5:00 PM CET.

Present: JSG (Chair), JC (Co-chair), CM, DS, EW, JP

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Apologies for absence were from MWK and MV.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not covered below

No additional matters were identified by Board members.

3. EB Division event(s) in ACB 2023

CM informed the Board that the abstract was submitted and that she reached an agreement with the organization to attend online (given the lack of support from different consulted sources to attend in person) and deliver a pre-recorded talk. The abstract will be circulated in short; the talk being dedicated to the support that can be given by marine biotechnology in boosting marine transformation. Aspects such as the EU efforts in using marine biotechnology in food and feed production complying to UN SDGs, the mission of the EFB-EB Division in this context and the opportunities for collaboration with Asia will be addressed in the talk. The schedule for the talk will be circulated when available. JC informed the Board that he will be attending the first three days of the Conference as part of an EFB delegation addressing the topic of climate-resilient food plants; he will be happy to attend CM's talk if the scheduling allows it, and respond or follow-up on any questions/issues raised by the audience. Report to the Board on the success of the participations should be made in the next Board meeting.

4. Environmental biotechnology meeting in Poznan, in November 2023

JSG briefly summarised the progress: 47 participants are currently registered and 10 more registrations are expected in short; 42 abstracts were submitted, and more than half are already evaluated; distribution of abstracts per session is uneven and special attention is now being given by organizers to the carbon capture session that currently collects no abstract submissions.

Action: CM will send contact lists to EW towards a final effort to promote registration in the field of marine biotechnology

5. Thematic issue of the Bioeconomy Journal

Contacts concerning submission to the thematic issue were received from 20 participants of previous meetings, and three presenters were offered the possibility of submitting transcriptions of their talks. Several participants in previous meetings are expected to submit directly to the thematic issue. DS was asked to jointly identify with LC speakers that should be invited to submit to the thematic issue on the basis of the quality of their talks. The Board was informed that a new Editor-in-Chief was appointed for New Biotechnology, potentially bringing some changes in the editorial policy that may possibly have a positive impact in the collection of submissions and the success of the thematic issue.

6. EB Board participation and contribution to the ECB

The ECB organization has been progressing very well, successfully securing several high-profile speakers. JC recently proposed a list of topics for the EFB symposia, several relevant for the EB Division. For these specific topics, there is still a shortage of suggestions for keynote speakers and the Board was asked for suggestions on nominees that may possibly be addressed by the ECB organisation. Carbon capture, wastewater treatment and marine biotechnology are three of the fields that should be addressed.

Action: after confirmation of topics, JC will circulate a request for suggestions on 4-5 high-profile keynote speakers that can be presented as nominees to the ECB committee.

7. EB Board composition.

Following previous collaboration, particularly within the scope of the organization of ECB, JC suggested a colleague for joining the Board, covering for environmental microbiology. The Board agreed. The Board discussed other possibilities and the need to identify someone involved in soil biotechnology was raised.

Action: JP and JSG will interact to proceed with the invitation to cover the environmental microbiology field.

Action: JC was delegated to negotiate with another contact on a confidential basis.

Action: JC will consult with prof. Ivo Frébort, who attended the Healthy Soil meeting for suggestions.

8. Regular activities of the EB Division and activities for 2024.

Concerning operational guidelines for the production of Newsletter content on hot topics, the Board agreed to select three topics in the Poznan meeting, and invite the speakers to write a summary on that topic. This summary can then be published in the Division website, with a short entry (2-3 sentences plus the link) in the Newsletter. The abstract of the Thematic Issue in New Biotechnology was also proposed as a topic that could be incorporated in the Newsletter. The realistic schedule agreed for this Newsletter entry by the EB Division in the mid-term was every three months.

Concerning the organization of workshops for early-career researchers, the timeframe for organization was agreed targeting implementation in Spring 2024. The link of ecotoxicology with environmental biotechnology was agreed to be the topic for the first workshop, the planning and organization being allocated to JP and CM.

Cooperation with COST Actions where Board members are involved in the organization of meetings at reduced costs were also found good opportunities to enlarge the set of activities that the Division can promote.

Action: JP will interact with CM to draft the workshop structure.

9. Any other business.

JP presented a recent contact to the Board regarding possible support to an international conference on the development of photobiorefineries for waste and wastewater treatment, under the framework of an ongoing EU-COST Action, in Spain. Considering the EFB practice in these cases, a reply will be given shortly providing the options available for the requested support.

Action: JP will draft a reply to the request considering the EFB rules and practices and send it for revision to JSG, JC and EW.

10. Scheduling of the next meeting

The next EB Division Board meeting was scheduled to the 29th November 2023, at 17:00 CET.

Action: JP will schedule the online meeting and circulate the Agenda in due time.

JP. 27 September 2023