EFB Environmental Biotechnology Division

Meeting of the Division Board – via ZOOM, on Monday, 30th June 2025 at 17:00 CET.
Present: JSG (Chair), JC, AP, DR, FQ, MDF, MH, MS, MWK, JP, RM, SV

1. Apologies for absence and welcome.
No apologies for absence were sent before the meeting and all invited participants joined the Zoom session. JSG welcomed all participants.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not covered below.
No other matters were raised for discussion.

3. Board composition.
The new Board members joining the Division, AP, FQ and MDF, were welcomed by the Chairs. New and old members introduced themselves concerning their research interests and their roles in the Division Board in the case of the latter. The Chairs discussed the need to reorganize the Board for better efficiency: (i) one Board member should take the responsibility of organizing the regular Board meetings (scheduling and Agenda preparation); (ii) the treasurer role should be fulfilled; (iii) support to SV regarding the industrial liaison should be assigned to different Board members to diversify and geographically spread contacts; (iv) JC requested replacement as a co-chair of the Division.
Action: Board members will express their interest to assume responsibilities within the Board regarding the identified needs, via e-mail to the chairs; decisions in face of these expressions of interest should be communicated in the next Division Board meeting.
The creation of sectors within the Board to render more efficient the development of particular fields (e.g., marine biotechnology, plastics, recycling, bioremediation, xenobiotics, industrial biotechnology) was suggested by the Chairs, potentially with the appointment of coordinators for these sectors.
Action: Board members will reason the sectors that could potentially be created in the Division and their logical composition. Views should be discussed in the next Division Board meeting.

4. Green Deal Biotechnology (GDB) conference 2025.
The Chairs acknowledged the organization and the committee for the successful meeting in Aveiro. The GDB meeting definitively helped to tackle the objective of the Division on building a community with interest in environmental biotechnology in Europe and abroad.
The Board shared their conclusions concerning the programme, which can be summarised as follows. The feedback from participants was very good and in general the presentations were of very good quality. All keynote speakers were recognised as very interesting and valuable, contributing significantly for the quality of the conference programme. The coverage of omics and artificial intelligence was felt as short by the organizers provided the dynamics of these fields in science and their growing role in environmental biotechnology. Regarding the social programme, a social dinner was not scheduled for costs control and considering that a larger welcome reception was organised. The Board agreed that the social dinner is an important moment for promoting integration, especially of early-career researchers, and tighten connections within the community, thus the decision of excluding it from the programme might not have been the most appropriate.
This general assessment and the sharing of views about other details allowed the Board to summarize key organisational aspects that should be considered in the next GDB conference as follows.
The ideal size of the GDB conference should be set at the reference of 150-200 registrants. This would secure the financial sustainability of the conference while keeping the necessary closeness to promote integration and networking levels high. The financial sustainability is also dependent on the venue costs, which should be carefully addressed before finally establishing the hosts of next GDB conferences.

The slight extension of the abstracts (250 words or up to 1 page) should be implemented to allow a more feasible assessment for selection of short talks, better securing quality of the presentations. Flash poster sessions should be continued in the programme as per its dynamic character and because these are opportunities for a broader exposure of works that are not selected for short talks due to programme restrictions.

The introduction of a network evening in the second day should be considered, financed within the registration fee for better inclusion. The replacement of a full lunch with a lighter option, such as a sandwich buffet, was supported for time efficiency. The simplification of coffee breaks (drinks and fruit) was also supported.

The operational communication with the central office should be improved. Important pitfalls were verified that should be prevented, namely regarding the registration process vs. abstracts submission acceptance given that there are institutional payments that are only processed upon confirmation of acceptance of one abstract (poster or talk). The establishment of two acceptance stages, a first one leading to the communication of acceptance of the abstract into the scientific programme and a second one communicating on the type of presentation (poster or short talk) assigned to the abstract, was suggested. This would allow balancing the effort by the committee in building the programme while overcoming the institutional requests to process payments earlier in the timeline. The possibility of establishing a GDB conference-specific email channel for communication was also suggested to improve/accelerate the communication flows between registrants and the central office.

Action: JC will discuss suggested improvements with the Central Office and return on the feedback to the Board in the next meeting.

A final note was made concerning budget aspects. JC informed that a surplus was obtained in the GDB conference that will be used to fulfil the Division contribution due to the EFB for the support and that due in 2026 in advance.

5. The next GDB conference

The next GDB conference should be held in 2027 and the Board was informed that there is a proposal for organizing it in Ghent, Belgium, hosted by MS. Next steps will be to reason possibilities for the physical venues taking financial sustainability into account, and join a local organizing committee coordinated by MS. The need to consider insurance against accident liability was reinforced. In summary, MS was asked to work with the EFB office to investigate the possibility of organising our next meeting in Ghent, and any financial commitments should not be made before a contract with the venue is agreed.

Action: MS will collect approximate quotes that should be expected for the venue and associated catering for an informed discussion with the EFB office. The insurance conditions will also be checked, as well as any institutional requests for hosting if relevant.

6. New Biotechnology Journal special issue

The Board was informed that MH and JSG prepared a list of 18 potential contributions to the special issue based on short talks and poster presentations given in the GDB conference. It was remarked that the posters presented in the last day were not assessed in detail while there is the potential for selecting potential contributions within this pool.

Final arrangements have been made with New Biotechnology in a meeting joining JC, MH and the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal. MH will be the main Guest Editor of the special issue, assisted by JSG and Stephen Euston (Associate Editor of the Journal). Negotiations for a potential partial fee waiver for invited papers published in this Special Issue are ongoing.

Action: Board members attending the GDB conference in the last day will send any suggestions they might have of potential contributions for the special issue to MH, particularly those that may have been identified from poster presentations made in the last day.

Action: MH will collect the email addresses of selected authors from JC and the Central Office to start the invitations process.

Action: JC will continue the efforts to negotiate a partial fee waiver for invited publications in this Special Issue.

7. Any other business.

The acknowledgement of MH as the main Guest Editor for the upcoming Special Issue in New Biotechnology should be added to the Division website, as well as the profiles of the new Board members based on the information provided in their professional webpages.

Action: MWK will articulate the additions with the Central Office and the involved Board members for contents revision.

Action: In view of the revised social media policies of the EFB, MWK will close the Division Facebook page.

8. Scheduling of the next meeting.

The next Board meeting was provisionally scheduled to the beginning of October 2025. JSG will organize the Agenda and circulate a poll to the Board during September to establish a final date.

JP. 2 July 2025