



Meeting of the EBSA Executive Committee

09.00 Saturday 25th January 2020 in Room Palais, Motel One Wien Staatsoper, Vienna

Present: Jesus Perez-Gil (President), Elena Pohl (Vice President), John Seddon (Secretary), Tony Wilkinson (Treasurer), Rob Gilbert (EBJ), André Matagne (Bursaries), Jacqueline Cherfils Mauro dalla Serra (IUPAB cross-representative), Sarah Köster, Nuno Santos, Dejan Žikić, László Mátyus (co-opted: EBSA Webmaster), Helmut Grubmuller (co-opted: future congresses)

Guests via Zoom: Maria Sunnerhagen (Chairman of the Swedish Society for Biochemistry, Biophysics and Molecular Biology, Linköping University), Jerker Widengren (National Committee for Molecular Biosciences), Lena Måler (Stockholm University), and Erik Lindahl (Stockholm SciLifeLab).

Minutes

1. Welcome and Apologies (JP-G)

Jesus Perez-Gil welcomed the Committee, introduced Sarah Köster and Dejan Žikić, and reported that Apologies were received from Anthony Watts (Past President), Ilpo Vattulainen (co-opted: EBSA Newsgroup) and Pierre Emmanuel Milhiet (co-opted: EBSA Workshops Coordinator).

2. Minutes of the First meeting of the EC in Madrid (JMS)

The Draft Minutes of the First EC meeting were Approved without further discussion.

Minutes of the Second meeting of the EC in Madrid (JMS)

Jesus reported that the total number of participants at the Madrid Congress was 986, of whom 650 paid the Registration Fee, 286 were guests, volunteers or Bursary holders, and 50 were Exhibitors.

The new ISE representative was confirmed as Nuno Santos.

It was noted that the 1st European Biophysics Congress was held in 1971, in Baden Austria. Thus the 2021 13th EBSA Congress in Vienna will be the 50th anniversary of the first Congress, and this should be noted. [Note added later: The 1971 Baden Congress was on on nuclear medicine and radiation oncology, and was co-sponsored by the Austrian Society for Biophysics and IUPAB].

It was queried whether all the participants at the Madrid Congress have been emailed, asking them to opt in to the Newsgroup.

Action: Jesus to check with Ilpo and Carine Saint Rose.

Jacqueline proposed setting up a Wikipedia page for EBSA.

Action: Jacqueline

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Jesus confirmed that there will be an EBSA Symposium with the 2020 IUPAB Congress in Brazil. It will be a half-day Symposium on Translational Biophysics, and the speakers will be Tony Wilkinson (York), Jesus Perez-Gil Madrid), Peter Pohl (Vienna) and Amit Chattopadhyay (Hyderabad).

The Draft Minutes of the Second EC meeting were Approved.

3. Minutes of the EBSA General Assembly in Madrid (JMS)

Minor corrections were noted.

Tony Wilkinson reminded the EC of the reasons behind the decision, approved at the General Assembly, to restrict the Trustees to those members of the EC who are based in the UK, where EBSA is Registered as a Charity. A key reason is that our Trustee Indemnity insurance only covers UK members. It was noted that this policy does not provide cover for the EBSA Congress, and Congress organizers should be aware of this in their planning, and consider whether they should take out insurance against some unforeseen event causing the Congress to be cancelled.

4. EBSA President's meeting in Madrid (JMS)

This item is just for noting.

5. Treasurer's report (TW)

Tony reminded the EC that our accounts are audited and approved via accountants Sam Rogoff. Increasing amounts of information on our policies are required and it will be sensible to update the EBSA Constitution to reflect this. For example, GDPR and Privacy policy statements will be required. We may be able to adapt examples from other learned societies such as the British Biophysical Society. These should then be posted on the EBSA website.

Action: Jesus, Tony Wilkinson and John

Tony noted that our balance in Euros has dropped from €260 in 2015, to approx. €130K in 2020. Our income from Springer is approx. €75, of which €9k is for office expenses. Subscriptions bring in a further €5k - €10k per year. We are paying €4.5k to IUPAB and €1.5k to ISE (assuming we rejoin). Thus our net income is approx. €60k per year.

Our expenditure is approx. €10k per meeting for the EC Committee meetings (€20k per year). Thus we are left nominally with €40k per year. The Congress typically costs EBSA €50k of which roughly half is the cost of bursaries. It seems sensible to limit Meetings Support and Travel Bursaries for Lab Visits to a figure in the region of €35k - €40k per year to avoid further depleting the reserves (a long term balance somewhere in the region of €100k - €150k is probably optimal). Committed EBSA support for meetings in 2020 has now reached approx. €40k, and the EC felt, giving our dwindling reserves, that we should not support any more meetings this year. This can be revisited at our next EC meeting, in light of how our financial position will be looking by that point. It was also felt that we should introduce a twice-yearly deadline for applications, perhaps in late May and late December, so that bids can be discussed at the EC meetings and assessed and tensioned against each other.

Action: Tony Wilkinson, Pierre Emmanuel, Andre', and John

The possibility of increasing the EBSA subscription fee was discussed but it was felt that this would be of such little financial benefit that the negative effects would outweigh the positive.

Jacqueline suggested that the EBSA President should send a letter each year to the National Societies' Presidents, reporting on what EBSA has done that year. This can be in

part based upon the President's report to the President's meeting at the General Assembly.

Action: Jesus and John

6. Report on 12th EBSA Congress in Madrid (JP-G)

Jesus reported that the final figures for the Madrid Congress were as follows: There were 986 participants (650 paying). The income was €385 (€267 Registration Fees, €74k Sponsorship, and €44k in grants from EBSA, IUPAP and Complutense), and the Expenditure was €388. The small loss of €3k will be covered by EBSA. Altogether, EBSA contributed €52k (€25k subvention, €21k for Bursaries plus one dinner, €3k Poster Prizes, €3k covering losses).

The breakdown of attendees by country was discussed (Spain 194, Germany 135), and it was noted that some numbers were disappointing (UK 75, France 66, Italy 40).

Laszlo provided some web analytics for 2019, which showed peaks in March and July 2019, and showed that the maximum EBSA website traffic came from Spain (12.4%), Germany (9.9%), US (9.2%), UK (5.9%), France (5.9%), and Italy (4.6%).

It was agreed that the advert for the 2021 Congress should be sent to the Presidents for them to circulate within their Societies, to the EBSA Newsgroup, and to participants at the Madrid Congress via Gruppo Pacifico.

Action: Elena / Ilpo / Jesus

It was also suggested that members of the EC should send the advert to their National Committees, and those of neighbouring countries, where not represented on the EC

Action: John to divide up member countries among the EC

Jesus mentioned that Madan Rao wishes to forms links between India and EBSA.

Action: Jesus and Tony Watts to investigate whether this is a good idea

7. Report of El Escorial School (JP-G)

Jesus mentioned that the School was very successful and the costs were modest. The premises at El Escorial could be available to use for future EBSA activities. 35 students attended. The income was €7k, of which €4.3k was a grant from IUPAB. The net cost to EBSA was €11k. Jesus asked whether a similar School was planned before the Vienna Congress.

Action: Tony Watts to liaise with Elena

8. EBJ (RG)

The Renewal of the contract for EBJ will be put out to competition (Springer, IOP...). It was noted that the Open Access landscape is changing fast and this may affect the situation. We will need to know the publishers' approaches to this, and whether it will work for EBSA. It was noted that EBJ is cheap compared to journals such as Biophysical Journal or the Journal of Biological Chemistry.

Action: Tony Watts to arrange a meeting in London in early to mid-2020 with potential publishers and the EBJ publication committee

It was noted that could be a danger that EBJ might 'disappear' within the portfolio of IOP. EBJ has an IF of 2.5 in 2018 (compared to 3.6 for Biophysical Journal), and is one place below quartile 2 in Web of Science (37 / 73). Jacqueline asked whether EBJ is in the Web of Science Core Collection, and Helmut confirmed that this is the case. In terms of promoting the journal, Rob has asked one of the Editors to look after the social media presence.

There were 182 article submissions in 2019 until 12/12/19. Submissions have been slow so far in 2020. There are not enough submissions from Europe or North America. Rob reminded the EC that the rejection rate is high. EBSA prizewinners are strongly encouraged to submit articles to EBJ, but frequently do not do this. It was felt it would be counter-productive to try to force them to do so, but that the wording of the awards could be modified to state that they are expected to do so.

Rob confirmed the following list of upcoming Special Issues of EBJ:

- AUC2019 meeting, Auckland, New Zealand (Renwick Dobson and colleagues) ;
- Multicomponent Lipid Membranes (Claudia Steinem and colleagues);
- Regional Biophysics Congress 2020, Pécs, Hungary (Beáta Bugyi, András Lukács);
- Nanoengineering for Mechanobiology (Silvia Caponi and colleagues) ;
- ARBRE-MOBIEU COST Action (Tom Jowitt and colleagues).

9. Engagement with ISE (JP-G)

Nuno has agreed to take over as the ISE representative on the EC, will attend the next ISE meeting, which is imminent, and will report back whether it is sensible for EBSA to rejoin ISE (we have paid the €1,000 subscription for 2020). Nuno explained that ISE lobbies for Science in Europe, and that future Horizon programmes will be discussed at the upcoming meeting. We will add ISE as a standing item on the EC Agenda.

10. Encyclopedia of Biophysics, 2nd Edn.

Discussion of this item was deferred in the absence of Tony Watts.

11. EBSA Website (LM) and Newsgroup (IV)

Laszlo reported that the website is kept updated, and they have tried to improve the background. He noted that no personal data are kept on the website and so no GDPR action is required, and there is no need for an agreement box for people accessing the site to tick. He also noted that the site is now generating a lot of spam. It was agreed that the Vienna Congress logo should be prominently displayed on the EBSA website.

Action: Elena to send logo to Laszlo

12. Requests for EBSA support and reports (PEM)

The EC decided that the bid from M Naziroglu for the Turkish meeting should not be supported.

The following support was approved, following extensive discussion:

- €2,000 for the IC-ANMBES conference in Brasov, Romania (M. Florescu);
- €11,000 for the Membranes Course, Fuenterrabia, Spain (F. Goni).

The Membranes Course will be reviewed later, along with the Croatian School, to determine whether further EBSA support is appropriate in future.

A decision on the Sumeg, Hungary meeting (P. Nagy) was deferred, pending further information on the scientific programme. However, it was subsequently realized that this meeting is actually ineligible for support, as we already agreed to support the RBC meeting in Pecs, Hungary this year, and EBSA does not sponsor more than one meeting in any one member country in any given year.

EBSA support for meetings in 2020 has now reached approx. €40,000, and the EC felt, given our dwindling reserves over the last 5 years, that we should probably not support any more meetings this year. It was also suggested that we should introduce a twice-yearly deadline for applications, perhaps in late May and late December, so that bids can be discussed at the EC meeting, and assessed and tensioned against each other. These suggestions can be revisited at our next EC meeting, in light of how our financial position will be looking by that point. In any event, according to the EBSA rules, no support will be available for 2021, other than for Vienna Congress Satellite meetings.

13. Student Visit Bursaries (AM)

André reported that €6,200 was given out as 3 Bursaries last year. The total awarded has been less than €10k per year over the last four years. He feels that there are not enough applications, and that more publicity is needed of the scheme. It was agreed that a message advertising the scheme should be sent via the EBSA Newsgroup.

Action: André to send a suitable message to Ilpo for the Newsgroup

14. Future EBSA Schools / Biophysics Courses (JP-G)

Jesus confirmed that the EBSA Workshop on 'Problems and Methods in Membrane Biophysics' (Chairs: Felix Goni and Alicia Alonso), will be held in Fuenterrabia / Hondaribia, Spain from Monday 22nd – Friday 26th June 2020, and that everything is booked.

15. EBSA 2021 Congress in Vienna (EP)

Elena informed the EC that 2021 is the 50th Anniversary of the First European Biophysics Congress, which was held in Baden, Austria in 1971. [Note added later: EBSA itself did not come into existence until 1984, with the first EBSA Congress being held in 1997, in Orleans, France].

Elena confirmed that the Congress will take place in Vienna from 24th – 28th July 2021, and the venue will be the Hofburg palace, which can accommodate up to 1,200 participants for the Plenary sessions. The company RAM have been chosen as the conference organizer.

Registration will open in September 2020, with Early Bird ending in March 2021. The conference app should be ready by May 2021.

The total expenses are estimated as €512k, of which the rental of the Hofburg for 4 days amounts to €142k. The income is estimated as €604k, based on 900 paying participants, and Registration Fees of €640 (full) and €318 (student). The number of non-paying participants should be limited to 120. It is planned to offer Plenary Speakers €500 (European), or €800 (Overseas), plus free Registration and accommodation.

The Registration desk will be open from 15.00 on Saturday 24th July. Elena suggested that it should be followed by the Conference dinner that evening. There was an extended discussion of this, with the rest of the EC being of the strong view that the dinner should take place one evening later in the Congress, and that there should instead be a welcome drinks reception on the Saturday evening. The ideal scenario would be to have registration, then an opening Plenary lecture, then the drinks reception at the Hofburg on the Saturday afternoon / evening. However, Elena stated that this would incur an additional cost of some €25k for the hire of the venue. Another option would be not to have an opening Plenary on the Saturday, but the fear then is that this might cause many of the participants to delay appearing until the Sunday morning.

Elena wondered about reducing the length of the Congress to reduce the costs, but the EC was of the opinion that there must be a minimum of four full days. Other possibilities

were raised of shifting the start or close of the Congress to try to reduce the venue rental, but no clear conclusion could be reached.

A number of names were suggested as possible Plenary speakers.

Action: Elena to send a copy of her Powerpoint slides to the EC, along with details of the Congress Sessions, and the state of play with regard to the Chairs and Co-Chairs. She should also check and confirm the budget details, and determine whether it is possible to have a Plenary on the Saturday, and what the additional cost would be of doing this. She should also confirm who are planned as the Plenaries, and go ahead with inviting them as soon as possible.

16. Future EBSA Congresses (JP-G)

A Swedish bid to organize the EBSA 2023 Congress in Stockholm was presented via Zoom by a team consisting of Maria Sunnerhagen (Chairman of the Swedish Society for Biochemistry, Biophysics and Molecular Biology, Linköping University), plus Jerker Widengren (National Committee for Molecular Biosciences), Lena Mäler (Stockholm University), and Erik Lindahl (Stockholm SciLifeLab).

Their bid is enthusiastically supported by the Swedish academies and societies, as well as facilities such as SciLifeLab, Max IV and the ESS, Lund.

They propose to hold the Congress from 30 July – 4 August 2023 at Stockholm University, which can be reached by subway from the centre of the city in 9 minutes. There are accessible and fairly cheap flights to Stockholm from many destinations. The Aula Magna (used for the Nobel Prize lectures) holds up to 1,200 people. A free reception will be held at the City Hall, and a subsidised congress dinner will be held at the Vasa museum. Satellite meetings can easily be accommodated close by in locations such as the Karolinska Institute or the Royal Institute of Technology.

The price range of hotels is €60 – €230, and hostels cost €30 for a double room. Student accommodation may also be available. Dinner costs are in the range €10 – €30 for a main course.

Organization of the Congress will be handled by SSBBM (a division within the Swedish Chemical Society). The Danish and Finnish Societies will be involved in the scientific organization.

The cost of the Congress is estimated at €427K. This includes all technical assistance and facilities, and Poster Boards are free. Based on 1,000 participants and Registration Fees of €525 (Full – Early Bird will be less) and €300 (Student), the income is estimated to be €500k. The Fees include 5 lunches and partial costs of 2 dinners. The Congress is still economically viable with 800 participants.

Jesus thanked the Swedish team for an excellent bid, and informed them that the EC will make a decision by June 2020. The Swedish team then left the meeting, as did EC member Dejan Zikic to allow discussion of the Swedish, Serbian and Israeli bids to host the 2023 Congress.

The EC were unanimously enthusiastic about the Swedish bid, with the following points being made: biophysics in Scandinavia is very strong; EBSA has been keen to take the Congress there for some years; it is a great opportunity being able to use Stockholm University as a venue; the bid was very professional; it is geographically appropriate to go north in 2023; they have addressed all of our concerns; the costs are good; the Vasa museum is a splendid location for the Congress dinner.

For the Serbian bid, it was felt the location is too close to that of the 2021 Congress in

Vienna. There were also some concerns expressed about the breadth of biophysics research within Serbia, and that some of the strengths were more towards medical physics. The EC was unsure about the level of experience within the Serbian Society for organizing a major Biophysics Congress. It was felt that someone from the EC should be invited to attend a suitable conference organised by the Serbian Society to get a feel for the biophysics being reported there. The EC is keen to help promote biophysics within the Balkan region, and EBSA would encourage the various societies there to consider organizing joint activities in the coming years.

For the Israeli bid, it was felt that given the current political instabilities in the middle east, it would be too risky to take the EBSA Congress there for the time being. However, excellent biophysics is done in Israel, and Helmut urged the EC to keep on the table the possibility of taking the Congress to Israel at some point in the future.

17. Any other business

It was agreed unanimously that we should propose at the next General Assembly to introduce the position of Honorary Membership of EBSA, and that we should nominate Tony Watts for this award. In addition to acknowledging the very extensive contributions that Tony has made to EBSA over many years, it will also provide a mechanism for retaining access to his expertise, for the EBSA EC, as and when needed.

Tony Wilkinson reminded the EC to try to keep their travel expenses as low as feasible.

18. Next EC meeting: Saturday 27th June or Saturday 4th July? Location to be agreed.

19. Sub-Meeting of EBSA Trustees (TW, RG and JMS)

There was no time to hold this meeting, and so it was postponed.

The meeting closed at 5pm to allow a visit to the Hofburg to see the facilities.
