

Minutes of the ESEB Members' Meeting 2021

27.08.2021, 12.00 – 1.00 pm, video conference

Attendees:

Officers: Astrid Groot (President, Chair), Tracey Chapman (President-elect), Ophélie Ronce (Past President), Koen Verhoeven (Executive Vice-President), Max Reuter (*JEB* Editor-in-Chief), Mike Ritchie (*EL* Officer), Ellen Decaestecker (Secretary), Lukas Kratochvil (Congress Organizer)

Excused: Andrea Betancourt (Vice-President)

Members: 36 persons provided their name in the chat box: F. Ben-Ami, L. Beukeboom, K. Boomsma, J. Buschborn, R. Butlin, N. Cook, D. Cvetkovic, L. Dougherty, H. Dugdale, J. Dutheil, D. Ebert, P. Edelaar, M. Egas, M. Elliot, D. Fisher, C. Fricke, G. Fusco, I. Häussermann, C. Jordan, J. Kitano, M. Lammers, M. Maan, R. Merrill, Y. Michalakis, U. Moniatte, N. Nadeau, F. Nagies, J. Reid, Y. Sapir, J. Schroeder, A. Simons, C. Smadja, R. Snook, B. Stojanova, M. Vrtilek, and F. Weissing

Astrid Groot opened the meeting at 12.00 and welcomed everyone.

1. Minutes of the last Members' Meeting in Turku 2019

The minutes have been approved online by the Steering Committee and signed by the President and the Secretary.

2. Secretary's Report

2.1. Presentation of new Officers and Council members

Ellen Decaestecker (ED) thanked the Election Committee chaired by Karine van Doninck, introduced herself as new secretary, and presented the new officers Tracey Chapman (President-Elect), Max Reuter (*JEB* Editor-in-Chief), and Andrea Betancourt (Vice-President) elected in 2021. ED thanked Ophélie Ronce, who will continue as Past President, Wolf Blanckenhorn (outgoing *JEB* Editor-in-Chief), Sara Magalhães (outgoing Vice-President), and John Pannell (outgoing Secretary) for their excellent work for the Society.

ED briefly introduced the new Council members and pointed out that detailed information about the Council is available at the ESEB website. The Council members serve for four years.

2.2. Membership Status

ED reported that the ESEB membership management will be taken over from Wiley to allow more flexibility and will be handled by the ESEB Office Manager. The ESEB Membership declined in 2021, likely due to the fact that the congress was postponed due to the pandemic, and is expected to increase again next year.

2.3. ESEB Initiatives

ED pointed out that ESEB offers many initiatives and detailed information is available at the ESEB website. ED announced that several initiatives are looking for interested members to join the committees and encouraged the members to contact the committee chairs.

ED briefly presented the initiatives of the Society: Conference travel award, Equal Opportunities Initiative, Godfrey Hewitt mobility grants, Outreach Initiative, Progress Meetings in Evolutionary Biology, Policy Committee, and the recently launched Global Evolutionary

Biology Initiative. The Global Evolutionary Biology Initiative is replacing the Global Training Initiative and will have a broader range of activities to promote evolutionary biology in countries where this field is under-developed. ED reported that ESEB will establish an Environmental Impact group which welcomes volunteers from the membership. ED announced that two new Special Topic Networks will start in September:

- J. Kulmuni *et al.*, “IOS - Integration of speciation research”
- D. S. Richardson *et al.*, “WAME - Wild Animal Microbiome Evolution”

The currently running networks, “European *Drosophila* Population Genomics Network (DrosEU)”, “Linking local adaptation with the evolution of sex differences”, “ADAPT – Ancient DNA studies of Adaptive Processes through time”, “Ecological Genomics of coevolutionary interactions”, “Synthesizing micro- and macro- evolutionary processes shaping prokaryotic genomes”, and “The evolutionary ecology of thermal fertility limits” were granted an extension due to the pandemic and will be evaluated in early 2022. ED noted that all networks are encouraged to submit publications to the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*. ED reported that the JMS Prize has been awarded to Stefany Moreno Gamez in 2021. The three JMS Prize winners (2020, 2021, 2022) will present talks at the ESEB congress in 2022.

Further information on all Initiatives is available at the ESEB website.

2.4. Upcoming congresses

- **ESEB 2022**

In 2022, the ESEB congress will take place from 14. – 19. August in Prague, Czech Republic organised by Lukas Kratochvil.
There will be no congress in 2023.

- **Joint Conference 2024**

The joint conference of the North American societies and ESEB will be held from 26. – 30 July in Montreal, Canada.

- **ESEB 2025**

In 2025, the congress will be organised from 18. – 22. August in Barcelona, Spain.

3. Executive Vice-President’s Report

3.1. Financial report 2019

Koen Verhoeven (KV) reported that the income from publishing the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* and *Evolution Letters* comprises most of the income and a minor income derives from membership fees. The expenses include office and journal costs, budgets of the Society’s initiatives, and the conference support. KV pointed out that the Society’s annual accounts closed with a positive balance in 2019, as the ESEB congress expenses were lower than estimated.

On request of KV, the members approved the presented Annual Financial Report 2019 with no dissenting votes. One member abstained.

3.2. Financial report 2020

KV explained that the income is similar to the previous year, with the main income deriving from the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*. Expenses were about 100,000€ lower than estimated due to less meetings and related activities during the pandemic. KV pointed out that the income from the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* has steadily increased in the last decade.

KV presented the balance sheet of 2020 and reported that the society's assets sum up to about 1100K €. As a non-profit organisation ESEB must restrict its capital, and therefore most of the capital (898K €) has been committed to future activities. In addition, 250K € of the remaining capital is earmarked for emergency funds to cover unforeseen losses of ESEB congresses. In summary, the Society is in a healthy and stable state.

On request of KV, the members approved the presented Financial Report 2020 with no dissenting votes. Two members abstained.

The majority of members granted discharge to the officers in duty. There had been no dissenting votes. Three members abstained.

3.3. Presentation of the new Policy Plan 2021-23

As a non-profit organisation ESEB is obliged to establish a policy plan, which states the goals of the Society and describes the activities planned to accomplish them. KV presented the ESEB Policy Plan for 2021-23 and highlighted the following points:

- The Society will support the ESEB congresses in 2022 and 2025 with 200,000 € each.
- The Society will support the joint conference 2024 in Montreal with 200,000 €.
- The EMPSEB meeting will be supported with up to 15,000 €.
- The Society will support EvoKE with 10,000 € annually.
- The Conference Travel Award will have an annual budget of 15,000 €.
- The Equal Opportunities Initiative will have an annual budget of 15,000 €.
- The newly established Global Evolution Biology Initiative will have an annual budget of 12,000 €.
- The Godfrey Hewitt Mobility Award will have an annual budget of 15,000 €.
- The John Maynard Smith Prize will have an annual budget of 5,000 €.
- The Outreach Initiative will have an annual budget of 20,000 €.
- The Policy Committee will have an annual budget of 10,000 €.
- The Presidents' Award committee will have a budget to cover travel expenses and the ESEB congress registration fee of the prize winner.
- The Progress Meetings in Evolutionary Biology Initiative will have an annual budget of 15,000 €.
- The STN Initiative will have an annual budget of 60,000 € (10,000 € per STN per year).
- The Stearns Graduate Student Prize will have an annual budget of 250 €.
- ESEB's income is comprised of the profit shares of the journals (*EL* and *JEB*), membership dues, journal referral fees, and returns from the new investment.

On request of KV, the majority of members approved the presented Policy Plan 2021-2023. There had been no dissenting votes. One member abstained.

4. Journal of Evolutionary Biology (JEB) Editor's Report

M. Reuter (MR) reported that submissions continued to decrease in recent years, probably due to more competitor journals in the field of evolutionary biology. Submissions from outside North America and Europe have increased. The acceptance rate remains stable at about 25-33% and editorial rejections have increased to 20%. In 2020, *JEB* published about 150 articles. The decision times have increased to 4-6 weeks, probably due to the pandemic. The Impact Factor continued to decline, from about 4 to 2.4-2.5 in the last decade. The editorial board includes 15 Deciding Editors (five of them female). Submissions within classic topics

(phenotypic selection, adaptation, etc) are dominating and submissions from genomic and molecular evolution remain low. Publications on plant-based research are increasing due to active solicitation by two new Deciding Editors. Submissions of forum articles on policy matters remain low. Three special issues are currently in preparation.

Nicki Cook, based in St. Andrews, UK, has been a very successful Managing Editor in her first year for the Society.

Data deposition is mandatory for authors publishing in *JEB*, but the type, format and usability of the data needs to be checked more thoroughly. Wiley implemented the author-friendly free-format submission of manuscripts. After acceptance re-formatting is carried out by the journal production department. Wiley implemented the free-format submission of manuscripts, both editor-mediated and author-mediated referral options between Wiley journals, and *JEB* now accepts direct submission of preprints from bioRxiv. *JEB* is now listed as a PCI-friendly journal which means we have agreed to provide authors of manuscripts with PCI reviews and recommendations one of the following responses within 10 days: a) Accept with minor revisions at most, b) Further review required to make decision or c) Reject. A new reader (REX) will be implemented to recognise automatically author-specific data from the main text document at submission stage. The proportion of Open Access publications has increased, partly due to transitional deals by Wiley in some countries. MR noted that as a 'hybrid' journal, *JEB* is still not compatible with PlanS.

N. Cook launched the JEvBio.net Blog and a Twitter account for *JEB*; both are running well.

MR aims at improving the quality and the Impact Factor of *JEB*. Therefore, the number of submissions needs to be increased by, e.g. actively commissioning more special issues, reviews and forum articles, but also by inviting authors to submit their bioRxiv preprints. Further activities will include increasing the visibility of *JEB* through social media (blog, Twitter), and reinforcing the link to the Society.

Recommended by the *JEB* advisory group, which had been established last year to discuss the future of the journal, the editorial board structure will be changed by removing the Board of Reviewers and enlarging the board of Deciding Editors. As mentioned before, data deposition will be checked more strictly to ensure the data is usable.

5. Evolution Letters (EL)

Mike Ritchie (MGR) reported that as a jointly owned journal by SSE and ESEB, *EL*'s business is overseen by a committee (Oversight committee) of representatives from both societies. The journal had been launched five years ago and publishes 'open access only'. MGR serves as an ESEB representative and reported on behalf of the *EL* Editor-in-Chief, Jon Slate, who could not attend this meeting. The journal receives a decent number of high-quality submissions and is running well. Submissions decreased during the pandemic but are recovering to normal in 2021. *EL* received a good Impact Factor last year, and the second Impact Factor was over 5, in 2021. MGR pointed out that Jon Slate had been very successful in establishing this journal. His term will finish this year and an 'ad hoc' committee comprised of representatives from ESEB and SSE will be established to appoint the next *EL* Editor-in-Chief. MGR invited interested members to apply for the position, which will be advertised in the next months by both societies.

D. Fisher asked whether the expectations on the *EL* profit share have been met. That is not the case, but MGR noted that expectations had probably been over-ambitious, as the *EL* founders were not aware of the parallel launch of *Nature Evolution and Ecology*, a strong competitor journal, at the same time.

6. Other business

There had been no further items for discussion.

Astrid Groot closed the meeting at 12.50 pm and thanked all members present for attending. All participants were asked to provide their name in the chat box.

The minutes have been adopted by the Secretary and the President (Chair).

Date: 19.10.2021



ESEB President Astrid Groot



ESEB Secretary Ellen Decaestecker