

# **Guidelines for the Congress Organization of the European Society for Evolutionary Biology (ESEB)**

Approved by the ESEB Executive Committee on 06.08.2018

## **I. PROPOSALS**

Proposals for the congress organization can only be submitted by researchers, i.e., not by congress centres. The proposal should be submitted to the Secretary of ESEB at least 2.5 years before the Congress and in time for the spring meeting of the ESEB executive committee, usually in March or April. The proposal should detail the following points:

- the preliminary budget, including a break-even point calculation
- information about the venue (number, size and arrangement of lecture halls and other spaces, availability of hotel and dormitory rooms, etc.)

The proposal is discussed by the Executive Committee, which then recommends whether it should be accepted. The ESEB constitution requires that the Congress Organizer must be officially appointed by a vote at the General Meeting of the ESEB membership. The appointed Congress Organizer will join the ESEB Steering Committee at the ESEB congress preceding the proposed Congress. Although not required by the constitution, proposals for future congresses are routinely discussed at Council meetings.

## **II. ORGANIZER(S) and COMMITTEES**

It is very helpful if the organizers of previous meetings, especially the last meeting, inform organizers of the next of any lessons learned. A depository has been established for sharing documents; the Organizers should thus contact the previous organizers for an update on the availability of useful information.

At least two years before the Congress, the Congress Organizer proposes an Organizing Committee, with details of the Scientific Committee of the Congress.

The Congress Organizer is responsible for ensuring that both committees are diverse and gender-balanced on all hierarchy levels, and the Congress Organizer will communicate best practice guidelines to these committees (including guidelines about data protection). The Organizing Committee is responsible for the logistic and financial aspects of the organization. The Scientific Committee is responsible for putting together the scientific program, in particular choosing the plenary speakers and symposium organizers. Both committees of the Congress are subject to approval by the Executive Committee, which can recommend that particular individuals be added to or removed from the Organizing Committee and/or the Scientific Committee.

## **III. FINANCES**

1. ESEB sponsors the Congress, as detailed in a written agreement between the Congress Organizer and the Society. The financial support will be paid out in several instalments, mainly before the Congress. Any profit on the Congress is shared by the Society and the Congress Organizer in a manner spelled out in the contract. The contract is signed by the Congress Organizer and the Executive Vice-President of ESEB.
2. Members pay a registration fee that is lower than the non-member registration fee by at least 1.5 times the annual membership fee of the Society. All students pay a registration fee that is two-thirds the member's registration fee or less.

3. If possible, reasonably priced lunch served at or close to the meeting venue should be included in the registration fee.
4. The Organizer should pay close attention to the details of catering (i.e., lunches, coffee breaks, Welcome Reception, Congress Dinner) to ensure a high quality/price ratio. For example, detailed menus should be examined before signing contracts with caterers. It can be a good idea to sample their food at another congress they are catering for. We have had problems in the past with caterers who have promised more than they delivered.
5. Expensive events (in particular excursions) should be billed separately, so that participants are not forced to pay for them in the registration price.
6. The registration fee for plenary speakers is waived, and the Congress pays for their travel costs and accommodation (within reasonable limits). If the budget permits, the Organizer may waive the registration fee for the invited speakers of the symposia, people locally involved in congress organization, and journalists covering the Congress.
7. All officers of ESEB, Councillors, Chairs of ESEB Committees, the John Maynard Smith (JMS) Prize winner(s), the Stearns Graduate Student Prize winner(s), and the Editors of the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology (JEB)* and *Evolution Letters (EL)* register as normal participants and pay the registration fee. These persons are reimbursed by the Society or the publisher after the Congress, in line with the ESEB bylaws.
8. The Organizer submits the final financial report to the Executive Vice-President no later than three months after the end of the Congress. The report states the names and functions of individuals who obtained free registration and of the people who received reimbursement of travel costs and accommodation. The report also gives a full specification of Congress expenses and income, and the final balance of accounts.

#### **IV. ADVERTISEMENT, ORGANISATION**

1. The Congress Organizer should advertise the biennial meeting in a timely and comprehensive fashion.
2. At least two months before the early registration deadline, the Congress Organizer sends a call for abstract submissions to the ESEB office, which will forward the call to the ESEB membership. The Congress will also be announced on the ESEB website. In addition, the Congress Organizer should broadly advertise the congress, including EvolDir and other relevant mailing lists or social media. An ESEB officer present at the Evolution congress of SSE in the preceding year may inform the attendants of that meeting about the upcoming ESEB congress (e.g. at the banquet or wherever the subsequent SSE meeting is announced).
3. The Congress Organizer is responsible for creating and maintaining a Congress website, which is separate from the ESEB website. If the Congress website has been installed at a new domain, this domain should not be available for purchase within the next ten years at least. If needed, ESEB can assist with this aspect after the Congress. The website should allow online registration. The registration should open at least six months before the meeting and at least two months before the early registration deadline. The online registration includes a Code of Conduct, which must be signed by all participants.
4. Personal data of participants, Scientific Committee members, Organizing Committee members, and any other person affiliated with the Congress must be in line with the

European General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679). Thus, the Congress Organizer is responsible for arranging for data processing agreements with sub-processors (professional event organizers, catering, etc).

5. The organizers are responsible for collecting data on diversity of the Congress committees, plenary speakers (invited and declined), symposium organizers (all submitted proposals, and successful proposals), invited speakers (for submitted symposia and for successful symposia, including both declined and accepted speakers in the latter), congress attendants, regular speakers, and poster presenters, and for handing these data over to the Equal Opportunity (EO) Committee after the Congress. Note that such information must not include actual names or information that could be linked to individuals.

## **V. CONGRESS PROGRAM**

1. Traditionally the meeting starts with a Welcome Reception on a Monday evening and ends with the Congress Dinner on the following Friday evening (with participants typically leaving on Saturday morning). Alternatively, a four-day meeting can be organized, but any excursions would then take place before or after the meeting.
2. Registration desk(s) should be open on the arrival day at or close to the site of the Welcome Reception, as well as throughout the Congress at the congress venue.
3. The Congress Organizer should provide publishers with space for book displays at a reasonable charge. Wiley-Blackwell, JEB, and/or Evolution Letters should be treated preferentially.
4. The Congress program consists of plenary lectures, symposia, poster sessions, special events, and business meetings.
5. If oral presentations are streamed or recorded (audio or video), a written agreement must be obtained with the speaker upfront. Pictures can only be taken, stored, and published if all persons on the picture have given their consent in writing.
6. Each congress participant can only present once during the Congress but may be listed as co-author on other presentations. If poster space is limited, anyone giving an oral presentation should not also present a poster.
7. The plenary speakers are chosen by the Scientific Committee, based on their scientific achievements, their ability to give a good talk, and the diversity of topics. The Scientific Committee is further responsible for ensuring that the choice of plenary speakers is diverse and gender-balanced, and that invited speakers have not already given a plenary presentation at a recent ESEB congress.
8. The topics of symposia and their organizers are chosen by the Scientific Committee from proposals submitted by ESEB members. The call for symposia proposals should be advertised early enough so that they can be chosen at least twelve months before the congress. Members of the Scientific Committee should not submit symposium proposals themselves (to ensure transparency and fairness of the selection process), and they should not vote whenever there is a conflict of interest (e.g. if the committee member might be invited as symposium speaker or if a symposium proposal was submitted by a close colleague or collaborator). The Scientific Committee should consider a double-blind reviewing process for the symposia proposals (e.g. the committee ranks symposia

proposals without knowing the names of the proposers). If two or more similar symposium proposals are submitted, the Scientific Committee may propose merging them into one.

9. In addition to topic-focused symposia chosen by the Scientific Committee, there should also be an 'open symposium' to accommodate excellent abstracts that might not fit into a regular symposium. The chair and vice chair of the Scientific Committee are typically responsible for co-ordinating the open symposium.
10. The Scientific Committee should inform symposium organisers that ESEB offers discretionary grants to improve sex ratio among invited speakers. These grants are to prevent invited female speakers, if underrepresented, from declining an invitation. Symposium organizers who have invited speakers in a balanced way but where more females than males declined, and who believe that this can be remedied with financial aid, should contact the EO Initiative committee chair, detailing whom they invited, who declined, and how this affects equal opportunities at ESEB. In addition, symposium organizers should be aware that ESEB offers "Congress Attendance Aid Grants" to increase the number of female speakers and poster presenters (<https://eseb.org/prizesfunding/equal-opportunities-initiative/congress-attendance-aid-grant/>).
11. The Stearns Graduate Student Prize-winners of the previous years should be allowed to present a talk in the open symposium if they have not been accepted to present their work in another symposium.
12. The Scientific Committee is responsible for informing the symposium organizers about their responsibilities. In summary, symposium organizers are responsible for:
  - ensuring that the invited speakers and speakers selected for their symposium are diverse and gender-balanced;
  - considering issues of diversity and equal opportunities when choosing the contributed talks, e.g. symposium organizers should refrain from presenting in their own symposium section, and repeat invites might be avoided (i.e., speakers who have tended to present at previous ESEB congresses).
  - using discretionary grants to increase the number of female (invited) speakers
  - contacting the EO initiative committee chair if they encounter difficulties recruiting a diverse line-up of speakers;
  - ensuring that the two winners of the Stearns Graduate Student Prize are offered a slot for an oral presentation in the open symposium, if they are not chosen to present in another symposium.
  - reminding all speakers and symposium organisers to be vigilant against the use of language or images in their presentations that might contravene the Code of Conduct (see below); this point should be sent along with instructions concerning presentation formats, e.g., the length of talks, the size of posters, etc., as well as a reminder just prior to the conference.
13. To publicize ESEB activities to its members, chairs of ESEB Initiatives should be given the opportunity to provide a short (3 minute) talk before each plenary about recent and future activities of their Initiative. Additionally, slides should be used in the breaks between talks to highlight ESEB members' recent papers in the Society journals JEB and Evolution Letters: e.g. the publication details (title, authors, journal, date, volume, pages) or perhaps a figure from the paper, if informative and/or attractive. A template for these slides can be requested from the ESEB secretary.
14. Sufficient time and space should be allocated to poster viewing during the Congress. If possible, posters should be displayed throughout the Congress. The attractiveness of the

poster sessions could be increased by offering alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and/or by poster prizes.

15. Special events include the Welcome Reception, two JMS lectures, the Presidential Lecture, and the Congress Dinner. Additional special events (e.g. "Meet the Editors" workshop, Distinguished Fellow Lecture), may be included at the discretion of the Organizers or at the request of the Executive Committee.
  - The Welcome Reception should be open for all participants.
  - The JMS Prize lectures and the Presidential Lecture should be scheduled at a time when attendance is likely to be good. These lectures should be specially advertised in the program booklet as well as orally during the meeting. The JMS Prize winners should be introduced by the outgoing Vice-President (or another member of the JMS Prize committee); the new President may be introduced by the outgoing President. The Organizer should contact the Vice-President and the outgoing President to arrange these events.
  - The Congress Dinner is an event where congress participants can interact in an informal setting. In particular, participation of students and postdocs should be facilitated; it is thus important to keep the costs reasonable. A good atmosphere is more important than gourmet food or a fancy location.
16. The following business meetings usually take place during the Congress: (a) the Officers' meeting; (b) the Officers & Publisher meeting; (c) the ESEB Council meeting; (d) the General Assembly of ESEB members; (e) the JEB Editors' meeting; (f) the JEB Editorial Board meeting; and (g) the Evolution Letters Editorial Board meeting. The slots for those meetings should be arranged in consultation with the ESEB Secretary (meetings a-d) and the Editors of JEB and Evolution Letters (meetings e-g). Those meetings must not overlap with one another; as a rule, meetings a, b, c, d should occur in this order, and the JEB Editors' meeting should precede the JEB Editorial Board meeting. In the event of a four-day congress, the Officers' meeting will have to take place on the arrival day (i.e., before the Welcome Reception). Appropriate rooms should be provided for these meetings (up to 12 people for the Officers' meeting, Officers & Publisher meeting and JEB Editors' meeting; up to 35 people for the Council meeting; up to 80 for the Editorial Board meeting). The General Assembly of ESEB members should take place in one of the lecture halls with a capacity of 300 places at least.
17. A program booklet should be distributed to participants as part of the registration package. The special events and business meetings should be highlighted in the program booklet, as they are an integral part of the congress. In particular, the name and short bio-sketch of the JMS Prize Winners and the abstracts of their talks should be included, as well as the title of the Presidential address. In addition, the program booklet should include the names, affiliations and email addresses of all participants. After the congress, a (pdf) file of the program booklet as well as of the abstracts should be sent to the ESEB office to be published on the ESEB website.
18. Excursions can be offered but must not conflict with the scientific program.

## VI.FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Language use  
The Congress Organizer is responsible that language use is inclusive for all communications and that all persons involved in the congress organisation are aware of it. The ESEB EO committee can be contacted for help at any time.

2. Child Care

A child care option should be established during the congress week, preferably at near to the venue.

3. Environment

The Congress Organizer should take reasonable measures to minimize the environmental impact of the congress. In particular:

- A printed abstract book should be avoided, but a pdf version should be distributed electronically.
- Excessive packaging should be avoided, e.g. for lunch packets.
- If possible, additional recycling capacity should be arranged for PET, glass, cans, etc., and materials should be chosen that reduce waste. If a composting program is available, bins should be arranged.
- Consider additional initiatives to reduce the ecological footprint of the meeting (e.g. minimizing unnecessary items given to participants, arranging for a voluntary carbon offset program).

4. Code of Conduct

At the time of registration, all delegates will need to agree to a Code of Conduct for the Congress.

- Rules and protocols for responding to violations of the Code of Conduct, or to relevant complaints, have been established by ESEB and should be accessible to delegates prior to, during and after the Congress at the Congress website. The Organiser should familiarise themselves with these rules, but ESEB will be responsible for acting on violations or complaints, i.e., the Congress Organiser should facilitate action by ESEB in this context in case of need, such as through the provision of a room for conversations in confidence.
- The Congress Organiser should communicate with the ESEB Secretary about measures that have been put in place by the Society for acting on violations of the Code of Conduct.
- The Congress Organiser should ensure that those responsible for communicating matters relating to the Code of Conduct to delegates presenting their work at the meeting (those responsible for this communication will be members the Scientific Committee for plenary lectures, symposium organisers for symposium talks and posters, etc.). In particular, they should be reminded that the use of certain language or images in oral or poster presentations may be interpreted as contravening the Code of Conduct, e.g., if they are deemed to represent disrespectful criticism of individuals or teams rather than valid criticism of their science, if they are seen to objectify women or to demean a minority group. It is important to recognise that sensitivity to such aspects of communication varies, and that what might be acceptable or humorous to some people might not be so to others.

## VII. ATTACHMENT

### Boilerplate text to send to potential symposium organisers

*We wish to encourage potential symposium organisers to take diversity (of gender, nationality and career stage) into account when proposing speakers for their symposium.*

*As ESEB members will be aware, research shows clearly that (gender) bias in academia is usually not the result of intentional acts of exclusion, but rather the effect of subtler mechanisms like implicit bias. Substantial concern has been raised about gender bias among invited speakers for symposia at previous ESEB (and other) meetings. The organisers of the ESEB congress acknowledge this concern and wish to ensure that symposia selected for the congress draw participants (both invited and those selected for inclusion when abstracts are reviewed) as broadly as possible to reflect the full research strengths of the fields represented.*

*Balance in terms of gender, nationality and career stage will be included as one criterion used by the scientific committee when selecting symposia.*

### TIPS for ensuring sufficiently diverse line up of speakers

1. Make a list of qualified women and minority candidates before deciding who to invite for your symposium. Databases such as DiversifyEEB (<https://diversifyeeb.wordpress.com/list-2/>) are useful resources. Make sure you have more women and minority candidates on your list than you need for the symposium: analysis of previous conferences has revealed that invited women are twice as likely to decline invitations as invited men.
2. If invitations are declined, be aware that ESEB offers "Congress Attendance Aid Grants" to increase the number of female speakers and poster presenters. <https://eseb.org/prizesfunding/equal-opportunities-initiative/congress-attendance-aid-grant/>.
3. If it is difficult to attain equal gender representation due to low acceptance rates, consider inviting promising early-career scientists.
4. When deciding between equally qualified candidates, preference should be given to the female or minority candidate.
5. Consider a blind reviewing process of submissions for contributed talks, at least for the initial rounds, to create a ranking of the abstracts. However, before making final decisions, it may be helpful to know more about the participants to ensure diversity of gender, level of seniority, country of origin etc.
6. Read this paper with 10 simple rules for gender balance:  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4238945/>
7. Contact the ESEB EO Initiative committee for help with reaching gender balance and diversity.