

Minutes - ESEB Membership Meeting 2023

Location: virtual meeting

Date: Thursday, 31st August 2023

Time: 16.30 - 18.00 CEST

Attendees:

Officers: Tracey Chapmen (President, Chair), Mike Ritchie (President-Elect), Josefa González (Vice-President), Kees van Oers (Executive Vice-President), Max Reuter (JEB Editor-in-Chief), Rhonda Snook (EL Officer), Ellen Decaestecker (Secretary),

Apologies: Astrid Groot (Past President), Toni Gabaldón (Congress Organizer)

Members: 38 members attended and voted.

T. Chapman opened the meeting at 16.30 CEST, introduced herself and welcomed everyone.

1. Minutes of the last members meeting in 2022

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

2. Distinguished Fellow

ESEB will open a call for suggestions of two candidates for the Distinguished Fellow 2023 and 2025, respectively, this autumn. The candidates should be evolutionary biologists with a strong scientific record and merit and/or should have shown a strong commitment to the Society. More details about the application process will be given in the call. A statement with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion will be integrated into the call.

3. Secretary's Report

3.1. Introduction of new officers and councillors

E. Decaestecker presented the new officers Mike Ritchie (President-Elect), Josefa González (Vice-President), Kees van Oers (Executive Vice-President), and Rhonda Snook (Evolution Letters Officer) elected in 2023. Together with T. Chapman (President), A. Groot (Past President), E. Decaestecker (Secretary), and T. Gabaldon (Congress Organiser) these officers form the steering committee. E. Decaestecker further introduced the new Council members for the term 2023 – 2027. More detailed information about the Council is available at the ESEB website.

E. Decaestecker noted that the procedure of electing council members was changed slightly this year as all ESEB members were invited to nominate candidates for Council. The officers proposed to continue this open call in the future and, additionally, recommended that new council members are elected by the membership. These changes will be included in the current amendment of the constitution.

The current ESEB student representatives are Oonagh Barker and Viktor Kovalov. They can be contacted by email (egsr@eseb.org). Oonagh is also a member of the organising committee of the next European Meeting of PhD Students in Evolutionary Biology (EMPSEB) in 2024.

3.2. Membership status

The ESEB Membership is stable with ups and downs depending on congress and non-congress years. The members are geographically well-distributed. The top five countries include UK, Germany, France, Switzerland and newly India, after ESEB introduced discounted membership subscriptions for researchers based in low-GDP countries.

3.3. ESEB initiatives

E. Decaestecker briefly presented the Initiatives of the Society. Further detailed information on all initiatives is available at the ESEB website.

- Conference Travel Awards

Committee members: C. Peichel (chair), L. Kratochvil, and M. Somel.

Conference Travel Awards support young researchers based in low-GDP countries to attend EMPSEB, the ESEB congress, and the Evolution meeting. The next deadline will close in early 2024.

- Environmental Impact Committee

Committee members: C. Primmer, D. Ebert, C. Fricke, O. Ronce, A. Tellier, and A. Westram

The committee aims at generally reducing the carbon footprint of the Society.

Currently, the main activity focusses on reducing the environmental impact of ESEB congresses (see point 3.4.).

- Equal Opportunities Initiative

Committee members: A. Charmantier (chair), C. Beraldo, M. Jennions, K. Leung, Ö. Marachi, and S. Rajpurohit.

The initiative organises three grant schemes: the EO Fund to support projects that increase equal opportunities, the ESEB Under-represented ECR Achievement (EUEA) award to distinguished young researchers for their scientific achievements under difficult circumstances, and the Congress Attendance Aid (CAA) grant (CAAG) to support diversity at the ESEB congress and EMPSEB. The winner of the 2023 EUEA award, Paul Bangura (University of Helsinki) and Zabibu Kabalika (University of Glasgow) will be awarded officially at the joint Evolution meeting in 2024. E.

Decastecker also noted that the CAA grant differs from the Conference Travel award as the aim is to increase diversity of participants at the meetings. The upcoming

deadlines for all three grant schemes will be available at the ESEB website in autumn 2023.

- **Global Evolutionary Biology Initiative (GEBI)**
Committee members: D. Agashe (co-chair), N. Sletvold (co-chair), L. Bacigalupe, J. Höglund, T. Kawecki, S. Immler, M. Somel, and E. Sucena.
The initiative supports a broad range of activities to promote evolutionary biology in countries where this field is under-developed. GEBI received a high number of applications in their first call that led to a high rejection rate due to the limits of the initiative's budget. The next call will be launched in autumn 2024.
- **Godfrey Hewitt Mobility Award**
Committee members: C. M. Garcia (chair), A. Betancourt, and R. Nichols. Mobility Awards support fieldwork or lab visits of young researchers. The next call will be announced in autumn 2023.
- **John Maynard Smith Prize**
Committee members 2023: A. Betancourt (chair), A. Buckling, C. Peichel
Committee members 2024: J. González (chair), others to be announced soon
Chaired by the ESEB Vice-President, the JMS Prize committee awards the prize annually to an outstanding young evolutionary biologist. Paul Jay (Stockholm/Berkely) won the JMS Prize in 2023. The next call will be announced in autumn 2023.
- **Outreach Initiative**
Committee members: J. González (chair), D. Sicard, R. Snook, H. Uecker, and K. Van Doninck.
The initiative supports projects that increase the public knowledge of evolutionary biology globally. Outreach proposals are accepted once a year. The next deadline will close on 15th March 2024.
- **Policy Committee**
Committee members: J. Bridle (chair), A. Jeffries (EvoKE representative), K. King, J. Kulmuni, and J. Pannell.
The committee aims at creating discussion and awareness of potential policy impact of the research within ESEB and providing expert opinion on key issues (briefing notes). The committee recently launched a survey to all members for specific input on the topics/issues the committee should consider. The survey will close on 1st October 2023. Members can contact the ESEB office if they have not received an invitation to participate in the survey by email.
- **Progress Meetings in Evolutionary Biology**
Committee members: L. Holman (chair), M. Reuter, M. Ritchie, and T. Schwander.

The initiative supported one meeting on a specific topic per year that should produce an Invited Review or Special Issue in the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*.

➤ Stearns Prize

Committee members: M. Reuter (chair) and a panel of editorial members of the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology (JEB)*.

The Stearns Prize is awarded annually to three students for their outstanding graduate research paper published in *JEB*.

➤ Special Topic Networks (STN)

Committee members: F. Weissing (chair), E. Decaestecker, T. Day, S. Immler, and Y. Michalakis

ED announced that four new Special Topic Networks will start in September:

- Joint Evolution of Dispersal and Mating Systems (speaker: Greta Bocedi)
- The network of Socially Transferred Materials (speaker: Adria LeBoeuf)
- The Integrative Biology of Brain Evolution (speaker: Katja Heuer)
- Internal Conflicts and Organismal Adaptation (speaker: Martijn Schenkel)

The following STNs will be continued in the funding period 2023-2025:

- Ecological Genomics of Coevolutionary Interactions (speaker: Amandine Cornille)
- The Evolutionary Ecology of Thermal Fertility Limits (speaker: Claudia Fricke)
- Integration of Speciation Research – IoS (speaker: Jonna Kulmuni)
- Synthesizing Micro- and Macro-Evolutionary Processes Shaping Prokaryotic Genomes (speaker: Deepa Agashe, Ed Feil)
- Wild Animal Microbiome Evolution - WAME (speaker: David Richardson)

3.4. Upcoming congresses

➤ Joint Evolution conference 2024

O. Ronce reported that the joint conference of the North American societies and ESEB will be held from 26 – 30 July 2024 in Montreal, Canada. In addition, the societies will organise a virtual meeting part in June/July 2024 similar to the virtual Evolution meeting in 2023. 40% of the symposia will be thematic symposia (ESEB congress format) and the others will be grouped symposia as usual for Evolution meetings.

➤ ESEB congress in 2025

The next ESEB congress will take place from 18 – 22 August 2025 in Barcelona, Spain. The preparations for the congress are running well.

➤ ESEB hub congress in 2027

About 90% of the CO₂ emissions of an ESEB congress comes from plane travel. A. Tellier reported that in order to reduce the carbon footprint of ESEB congresses, the Environmental Impact (EI) committee explored the option of organising the ESEB congress as a hub meeting in 2027. The organising committee of this hub congress consists of members of the EI committee (C. Primmer, A. Westram) as well as the organisers of the hub meetings in four locations: Munich, DE (organiser A. Tellier), Gothenburg, SE (organiser K. Johannesson), London, UK (organiser M. Reuter), and Istanbul, TR (organiser M. Somel). With about 300-500 participants at each location, and streaming between the hubs, this congress format seems to present a compromise, allowing scientific exchange with reduced CO₂ emissions. If the meeting proves successful in 2027, ESEB would continue organising hub meetings alternating with regular ESEB congresses (e.g., 2029 regular ESEB congress, 2031 ESEB hub meeting) and thus becoming a forerunner in environmentally friendly meetings among the evolutionary societies.

A. Tellier presented the following details of the hub meeting proposal:

- Five-day (Mon – Fri) meeting at four locations with about 700 presentations in total.
- In the morning, four parallel symposia are organised that will be selected from the abstracts on a first come, first served basis.
- In the afternoon, keynote plenaries (one physically at each hub) and four parallel thematic symposia (ESEB congress style) across all hubs will be organised and streamed. Hence the afternoon program will be the same at each hub.
- ESEB will sign the congress agreement with the main hub organiser in Munich. Sub-agreements will then be signed between the Munich organiser and the three other hubs.
- The budget is estimated to sum up to 600,000-800,000 € in total. Costs of about 130,000 € are estimated per hub, and additionally, 150,000 € for the main organisation (registration, abstract submission) and streaming.

The EI committee will evaluate the advantages/disadvantages of the hub meetings, and the estimated reduction of CO₂ emissions in order to decide if this format is worth continuing in the future.

T. Bakker asked whether all presentations will be recorded and are available online. C. Primmer advised that this will be the case and remote access to the meeting will be possible.

R. Butlin enquired if the total estimated budget is similar to the budget of a regular congress and indeed this is the case.

T. Chapman thanked the organisers and members of the Environmental Impact committee for their work and commitment in preparation of the proposal and noted that

the officers and the ESEB Council fully support the organisation of this proposed hub meeting.

The ESEB membership approved the above outlined proposal of a hub-format ESEB congress in 2027 with one dissenting vote. One member abstained.

4. Executive Vice-President's Report

4.1. Annual report 2022

K. van Oers reported that the society is in a healthy state. For many years, activities have been increased in order to spend more of the accumulating capital. Nowadays, the expenses are significantly higher than the income and therefore, the expenses of the society need to be balanced against the income from 2024 onwards.

K. van Oers presented the financial status at the end of 2022. The assets consist of the profit share from the journals, stocks & bonds, and cash money. The total assets summed up to about 1.1 M €. The liabilities comprising the support for congresses, initiatives, and the congress emergency fund. The total liabilities summed up to 1.1M €. The free capital of 117K € on the bank account doubled compared to 2021, hence the Society could manage its expenses better than expected.

K. van Oers highlighted the following details from the annual accountant report 2022:

- The income from JEB and the membership dues increased in 2022
- The general cost increased due to more administrative tasks handled by the Society, but mostly the higher expenses were due to one-off exceptional expenses, e.g., additional consultancy costs occurred during the transition of the journals to OUP.
- The investment portfolio closed with a loss of about 60K in 2022, in line with the general trend for investments in this period.
- The expenses for congresses, initiatives, and prizes stated in the accountant's report represent the net result of i) the level of earmarked budgets at the start of 2022 ii) the expenses paid, iii) and the open commitments at the end of the year. Therefore, the given expenses do not represent exactly the actual amount of money spent in 2022.

On request of T. Chapman, the members approved the presented Annual Accountant Report 2022 with no dissenting votes and granted discharge to the officers in duty. Five members abstained.

4.2. Policy Plan 2023-2025

K. van Oers presented the policy plan 2023 – 2025. As mentioned above, the expenses of the Society need to be balanced against its income in the next years. After discussions in the ESEB steering committee and the Council, the Council approved the following budget cuts:

- The joint Evolution congress in North America will no longer be supported financially after 2024.
- The budget of the Global Evolutionary Biology Initiative will be reduced to 10,000 € annually.
- The budget of the Godfrey Hewitt mobility award initiative will be reduced to 12,000 € annually.
- The budget of the Outreach initiative will be reduced to 12,000 € annually.
- The support of the European Meeting of PhD students in Evolutionary Biology (EMPSEB) will be reduced to 12,000 € annually.
- The Policy Committee will not be supported financially in 2023-2025.
- The Progress Meeting in Evolutionary Biology initiative will be discontinued in 2023.
- The non-ESEB initiative EvoKE will no longer be supported financially.
- The Special Topic Networks initiative will receive a budget of 30,000 € annually from 2025 onwards.

In total, the expenses of the Society will be reduced by about 100K €. K. van Oers pointed out that the budgets of initiatives supporting young researchers (Conference Travel Awards, JMS Prize) as well as the budget of the Equal Opportunities Initiative remained unchanged.

The policy plan 2023 – 2025 also includes the following commitments unchanged relative to the previous policy plan:

- The support of 200K € for each of the next ESEB congresses in 2025 and 2027.
- An emergency fund of 250K € for losses in case of unforeseen extreme events at a congress.

V. Kovalov asked if the reduction of the support for EMPSEB will be effective for the next EMPSEB meeting already. K. van Oers confirmed this but offered help in case the organisers will experience issues due to the reduction.

J. Ellers asked if the decision on the reductions of budget for initiatives was also based on the actual spending of the initiatives in previous years. K. van Oers advised that this was the case.

On request of T. Chapman, the members approved the presented Policy Plan 2023 - 2025 with one dissenting vote. Nine members abstained.

5. *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* Editor in Chief's Report

M. Reuter reported that the journal is running well. The *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* (*JEB*) is the flagship journal of the Society and the journal's income enables the majority of the Society's activities. M. Reuter encouraged all ESEB members to submit their publications to *JEB* and welcomed members to consider reviewing for the journal or joining

the editorial board. The journal is running well. In 2022, submissions and publications increased and more papers were published Open Access than in any previous year. This is largely due to “Read and Publish” agreements established between the current publisher Wiley and various countries and institutions.

In addition to research papers, *JEB* also publishes Invited Reviews and Special Issues e.g., submitted by ESEB Special Topic Networks. Last year, Methods Articles were introduced and recently non-English abstracts that allow the authors to publish the abstract of a paper in an additional language, e.g., their native language or the local language of a region that might benefit specifically from that article.

The new Data Editor Sebastien Lequime is now well established in his role since starting in early 2022. *JEB*'s Open Data policies are leading the way in the field of evolution and have been well-received by the community.

The editorial board was restructured and expanded in February 2022 from a team of 15 Deciding Editors to c.40 Associate Editors (AEs) and 4 Handling Editors (HEs). The increased range of expertise among the AEs provides a more nuanced peer review process that reaches deeper into the community, and the HEs oversee the decision-making process to ensure continuity. The board also consists of the Commissioning Editor, Data Editor, Managing Editor and Editor-in-Chief.

M. Reuter, N. Cook and members of the ESEB Executive Committee have been meeting regularly with the new publisher Oxford University Press (OUP) to ensure a smooth transition at the end of 2023. As of 1st January 2024, *JEB* will officially be published by OUP.

One member asked about the percentage of Open Access publications and M. Reuter advised that Open Access publications increased to about 60% in 2022.

One member asked about the success of Special Issues/Review for the journal in terms of citations. N. Cook advised that she could not speak to the citation rates without looking at data but did know that e.g. Invited Reviews often have higher download rates than other manuscripts in the journal.

One member enquired whether OUP has the same number of Read and Publish agreements with institutions as Wiley. M. Reuter/K. Verhoeven confirmed that the number of agreements of OUP might be lower but seems to be more targeted to the readership.

6. Evolution Letters

R. Snook introduced herself as new Evolution Letters (EL) Officer and thanked the outgoing *EL* Officer M. Ritchie for his strong commitment and work in the preceding years. The transition of *EL* to OUP is running smoothly. Judith Mank started successfully as Editor-in-Chief in 2023, replacing Jon Slate, the inaugural Editor-in-Chief. R. Snook thanked Jon Slate for his tremendous leadership of establishing journal. Three new associated Editors were appointed in 2023 expanding the expertise of the editorial board: Florencia Camus (University College London), Matt Pennell (University of Southern California), and Thomas Batallion (University of Aarhus). Melinda Modrell joined the editorial board as Managing Editor. Calculations for impact factors have been modified recently, but the impact factor of *EL* remains high at 5.0.

J. Ellers, currently chairing the *EL* Oversight Committee managing the journal, pointed out that there are several options available for ESEB members to receive reduced Article Publication Fees when submitting to *EL*.

T. Chapman closed the meeting at 17.50 CEST.

The minutes have been adopted by the President and Secretary.

October 2023



Tracey Chapman, ESEB President



Ellen Decaestecker, ESEB Secretary