

ESEB Membership Meeting 2025

Location: Plenary Hall, CCIB, Barcelona

Date: Friday, 22th August 2025

Time: 14.00 - 15.00 CEST

Attendees: Tracey Chapmen (Past President, Chair), Mike Ritchie (President), Sara Magalhães (President-elect), Deepa Agashe (Vice-President), Jonna Kulmuni (Secretary), Kees van Oers (Executive Vice-President), Max Reuter (*JEB* Editor-in-Chief), Rhonda Snook (*EL* Officer), Toni Gabaldón (Congress Organizer), Nicola Cook (*JEB* Managing Editor), Ute Friedrich (Office Manager), and 146 members who signed the attendance list.

T. Chapman opened the meeting at 14.00 CEST.

1. Introduction new officers and councillors

T. Chapman welcomed the new officers Sara Magalhães (President-Elect), Deepa Agashe (Vice-President), and Jonna Kulmuni (Secretary) and thanked the outgoing officers Astrid Groot (Past President), Ellen Decaestecker (outgoing Secretary), Josefa Gonzalez (outgoing Vice-President) and Toni Gabaldón (Congress Organiser).

T. Chapman introduced the new Council members, who will serve from 2025-2029: Neetika Ahlawat, Luisa Diele-Viegas, Rui Faria, Ewan D. Harney, Steven Ramm, Yuval Sapir, and Martijn Schenkel. The Council members who have been elected two years ago will continue their terms: Trine Bilde, Hannah Dugdale, Inês Fragata, Andy Gardner, Ronan O'Sullivan, Inon Scharf, Efe Sezgin, and Mrinalini Walter.

The current student representatives are Florian Strahodinsky (elected in 2024) and Gokul Bhaskaran (elected in 2025).

2. Minutes of the last membership meeting in 2024

The minutes of the last meeting have been adopted and are available at the ESEB website.

3. Secretary's Report

3.1. Membership status

J. Kulmuni reported that the society has a membership of about 1,400 members, including about 300 student members. Most of the members are based in Western Europe. J. Kulmuni emphasised that everyone should encourage their colleagues and students to join the society.

Q1: The registration fee for students to ESEB2025 was equal for student members and non-member students. Did this influenced the membership numbers? A: The effect was less than anticipated. The future congress organisers will set differently discounted registration fees for member students and non-member students. TG noted that the registration fee was actually discounted for all students at ESEB2025.

Q2: Does ESEB offer gift memberships? A: This is under consideration to be implemented in the future.

3.2. ESEB initiatives

J. Kulmuni briefly presented the ESEB initiatives of the Society. Further detailed information on all initiatives is available at the ESEB website. All initiatives are welcoming new committee members. J. Kulmuni advised that all members are eligible to join committees and should state their interest either to the ESEB Office (office@eseb.org) or the chair of the relevant committee.

➤ **Conference Travel Awards**

Committee members: TBA (chair), Ronan O'Sullivan (FI), Trine Bilde (DK), Inon Scharf (IL), Rui Faria (PT).
Volunteers welcome!

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 2026.

➤ **Environmental Impact Committee**

Committee members: Tom Tregenza (chair, UK), Luisa Diele-Viegas (US), Dieter Ebert (CH), Claudia Fricke (DE), Miranda Murray (NO), Rita Ponce (PT), Ophélie Ronce (FR), Sakshi Sharda (CH), Aurélien Tellier (DE), Tom van Dooren (FR), Anja Westram (AU).

Volunteers needed!

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

➤ **Equal Opportunities Initiative**

Committee members: Anne Charmantier (co-chair, FR), Kelley Leung (co-chair, NL), Camila Beraldo (FI), Trine Bilde (DK), Noah Hensen (SE), Öncü Marachi (DE), Jaishree Subrahmaniam (DK).

Volunteers needed!

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 grant (CAAG) to support diversity at the ESEB congress and EMPSEB.

The upcoming deadlines for all three grant schemes will be available at the ESEB website in autumn 2025.

➤ **Global Evolutionary Biology Initiative (GEBI)**

Committee members: TBA (co-chair), Nina Sletvold (co-chair; SE), Leo Bacigalupe (CL), Tadeusz Kawecki (CH), Simone Immler (UK), Yannis Michalakis (FR), Mehmet Somel (TR), and Elio Sucena (PT).

Volunteers needed!

The initiative supports a broad range of activities to promote evolutionary biology in countries where this field is under-developed. The next call will be launched in autumn 2025.

➤ **Godfrey Hewitt Mobility Award**

Committee members: Andrea Betancourt (chair, UK), Inês Fragata (PT), Richard Nichols (UK).

Volunteers welcome!

Mobility Awards support fieldwork or lab visits of young researchers. The next call will be announced in autumn 2025.

➤ **John Maynard Smith Prize**

Committee members: Deepa Agashe (chair, IN), TBA.

Volunteers welcome!

Chaired by the ESEB Vice-President, the JMS Prize committee awards the prize annually to an outstanding young evolutionary biologist. The next call will be announced in autumn 2025.

➤ **Outreach Initiative**

Committee members: Florence Débarre (chair, FR), Trine Bilde (DK), Hannah Dugdale (NL), Andy Gardner (UK), Efe Sezgin (TR).

Volunteers welcome!

The initiative supports projects that increase the public knowledge of evolutionary biology globally. Outreach proposals are accepted once a year. The next call will be announced in autumn 2025.

➤ Policy Committee

Committee members: J. Bridle (chair, UK), J. Pannell (CH).

Volunteers needed!

The committee aims at creating discussion and awareness of potential policy impact of the research within ESEB and beyond.

➤ Special Topic Networks (STNs)

Committee members: Yuval Sapir (chair, IL), Troy Day (CA), Simone Immler (UK)

Volunteers needed!

The initiative offers funding for small workshops, summer schools or similar events on specific active, controversial, or developing evolutionary topics organized by networks.

All members are welcome to join STNs or organise one. The next call will open in autumn 2026.

J. Kulmuni announced that two new Special Topic Networks will start in September:

- Evolutionary role of structural genomic variation (chair: Claire Mérot)
- Reconciling quantitative genetics & molecular population genetics (chair: Neda Barghi)

The following STNs will be continued in the funding period 2025-2027:

- The Evolutionary Ecology of Thermal Fertility Limits (chair: Claudia Fricke)
- Integration of Speciation Research – IoS (chair: Jonna Kulmuni)
- Synthesizing Micro- and Macro-Evolutionary Processes Shaping Prokaryotic Genomes (chair: Deepa Agashe, Ed Feil)
- Wild Animal Microbiome Evolution - WAME (chair: David Richardson)
- Joint Evolution of Dispersal and Mating Systems (chair: Greta Bocedi)
- The network of Socially Transferred Materials (chair: Adria LeBoeuf)
- The Integrative Biology of Brain Evolution (chair: Katja Heuer)
- Internal Conflicts and Organismal Adaptation (chair: Martijn Schenkel)

➤ Stearns Prize

Committee members: Max Reuter (*JEB* Editor-in-Chief) 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*.

3.3. Upcoming congresses

3.3.1. ESEB hub congress in 2027

About 90% of the CO₂ emissions of an ESEB congress comes from plane travel. As ESEB strives to become carbon neutral, the Society decided to pioneer in the organisation of an ESEB congress in hub format in 2027. Beside the advantage to reduce the carbon footprint of congresses, this format also offers a chance for smaller communities to host an ESEB congress locally and to reduce costs by organising the congresses in smaller institutional venues. If the meeting proves successful in 2027, ESEB would continue organising hub meetings

alternating with regular ESEB congresses. A. Tellier emphasised that the communities that are interested in organising a future hub congress are welcome to contact the ESEB Secretary/Office.

A. Tellier presented the following details of the hub meeting in 2027:

- The congress will take place at four locations: Munich (organised by A. Tellier), London (organised by M. Reuter), Istanbul (organised by M. Somel), and Gothenburg (organised by K. Johannesson).
- The format is a four-day congress starting on Monday afternoon to allow participants arriving on Monday morning (family friendly).
- Half-day parallel symposia are organised locally, selected from the abstracts on a first come, first served basis.
- Four keynote plenaries (one physically at each hub) and four parallel thematic symposia will be streamed across all hubs.
- A sufficiently high number of presentation slots will be available.
- The schedule will be different to regular congresses taking into account the three different time zones.

Q1: How in detail will the symposia be organised? A: Participants should travel to the nearest hub and submit an abstract. Abstracts will be grouped in symposia.

Q2: How do costs differ compared to regular congresses? A: Venue costs are lower as the rents for institutional venues are usually cheaper than for congress centres. Streaming costs will be higher but covered by the registration fees.

Q3: Please consider not only to stream plenary keynote talks. A: There will be half-day sessions streamed and we consider recording of talks.

Q4: When will it be clear that a hub has reached its capacity? A: This remains unclear at the moment.

Q5: How will you ensure social interactions are virtually compensated? A: We are currently developing various ideas on that.

Q6: Will ESEB only organise hub meetings in the future? Only if the meeting in 2027 was successful, we will introduce hub meetings alternating with regular ESEB congresses.

Q7: Will you monitor/evaluate the outcome of this congress format? A: Yes. We established a congress evaluation team that will survey the congress and compare it to the current ESEB2025 congress.

3.3.2. Joint Meeting in Evolutionary Biology 2029

E. Decaestecker proposed to hold the Joint Congress in Evolutionary Biology in 2029 in Ghent, Belgium. The city is central in Europe and easily reached by plan and train. The organising committee includes Ellen Decaestecker, Steven Van Belleghem, Luc De Meester, Hanne De Kort (KU Leuven), Nicky Wybouw, Dries Bonte, Olivier De Clerck (University of Ghent), Karine Van Doninck (Free University of Brussels), Alice Dennis (University of Namur), and Ann Moerenhout (KU Leuven Congress organisation). In addition, representatives of the tri-societies (Society for the Study of Evolution, American Society of Naturalists, Society of Systematic Biologists) will join the committee. The organisers estimate that the proposed budget breaks even with 2,500 on-site and 250 virtual participants. E. Decaestecker confirmed that the renovation of the congress centre will be finished in 2028. In order to offer sufficient low-cost accommodation, the organisers are negotiating with schools, hostels and accommodation outside the city centre that can be reached by bike. The current budget aims at registration fees similar to the ones of ESEB2025 and the fee will include lunches. The main auditorium offers about 1,000 seats. The congress dinner is planned at a venue with a capacity for about 850 participants and two party locations are available afterwards.

The officers and the ESEB Council fully support the organisation of this proposed joint congress.

The majority of the ESEB members present at this meeting approved the above outlined proposal of a Joint Congress in Evolutionary Biology in 2029.

4. Executive Vice-President's Report

4.1. Annual report 2024

K. van Oers presented the annual accounts prepared by the accountant. The annual account shows assets and liabilities of the society at the end of 2024. The assets consist of the profit share from the journals (242K€), stocks & bonds (339K€), and cash money (618K€). The liabilities comprising the support for congresses & initiatives (376K€), and the congress emergency fund (250K€). The free capital of 571K€ more than doubled compared to 2023. Hence, the society is in a very healthy state.

K. van Oers pointed out that the income from royalties of the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* (JEB) increased after the move to the new publisher Oxford University Press (OUP) due to more institutional subscriptions (Read & Publish deals) than expected. This income allows ESEB to finance all initiatives and activities. In addition, only half of the budget (200K€) that had been reserved for the Joint Congress in Evolutionary Biology 2024 was spent. An early estimation in 2025 showed that royalties from JEB will remain high this year.

Q1: Why were membership numbers lower last year? A: Membership fluctuates between congress and non-congress years. Compared to regular non-congress years, the membership numbers were actually higher last year due to the Joint Congress in Evolutionary Biology in Montreal.

Q2: How far is ESEB from losing the non-for-profit status? A: KvO explained that a couple of years ago, the society accumulated capital and established new initiatives and activities to overspend and reduce the capital. In 2023, the overspending had to be reduced in order not to stabilise the finances. If the income from royalties remains at the current high level, ESEB could consider spending more money again in 2027.

Q3: Can ESEB still consider itself a not-for-profit organisation despite the high income from publishing the journal? A: Yes. ESEB spends all income on society initiatives.

On request of T. Chapman, the majority of the members approved the presented Annual Accountant Report 2024 and granted discharge to the officers in duty.

4.2. Policy Plan 2025-2027

K. van Oers presented the policy plan that will apply from August 2025 – August 2027 and highlighted the following points:

- due to the higher income the policy plan 2025-2027 remains relatively unchanged to the previous policy plan.
- Initiative budgets remain stable as shown in the table below.

		Aug'25-Aug '26	Aug'26-Aug '27	TOTAL
ESEB congress	EUR	100000	100000	200000
Conference Travel Awards	EUR	30000		30000
Equal Opportunities Initiative	EUR	15000	15000	30000
Global Training Initiative / GEBI	EUR	12000	12000	24000
Godfrey Hewitt Mobility Grant	EUR	12000	12000	24000
JMS Prize	EUR	10000		10000
Outreach Fund initiative	EUR	12000	12000	24000
EMPSEB	EUR	12000	12000	24000
Special Topics Networks	EUR	2 x 5,000/yr (6yr)		60000
Stearns Graduate Student Prize	EUR		6000	6000
ESEB CONGRESS	EUR			200000
ALL OTHER INITIATIVES COMBINED	EUR			232000

Q: Why were the membership fees increased? A: Mainly because ESEB has to include VAT now.

On request of T. Chapman, the members approved the presented Policy Plan 2025 – 2027 unanimously.

4.3. Budget Plan 2026

K. van Oers presented the budget plan for 2026 and highlighted the following points:

- The budget plan shows the estimated expenses and incomes of the society.
- Journal costs are mostly covered by the signing bonus received from OUP.
- The total expenses sum up to 401K€. The total incomes are estimated with 456K€.
- The income is calculated conservatively but a first estimation predicts about 200K€ more than included in the budget plan.

5. JEB Editor in Chief's Report

The journal is running well. M. Reuter pointed out that that *JEB* is ESEB's journal, creating most of the income that funds all the ESEB initiatives as well as other activities of the society. Submissions have slightly increased year-to-date and the impact factor has also slightly increased. *JEB* publishes 12 issues per year including Special Issues and Reviews. The journal is well promoted (thanks to the Managing Editor Nicola Cook) at ESEB2025. M. Reuter encouraged everyone to submit their research papers and particularly, reviews to the Society's journal.

Q: Could ESEB consider transitioning JEB to a diamond open access journal? Are there waivers for the APCs for authors from low-economy countries? Society journals should promote how special they are in the publishing landscape, particularly, when publishing with a non-for-profit publisher such as OUP.

M. Reuter explained that switching *JEB* to a full open access journal is considered but as this will have a huge impact on the income of the Society, other income sources have to be secured first.

6. Evolution Letters (EL)

R. Snook reported that the journal is running well and highlighted the following points:

- In order to improve transparency and inclusivity on how to join the editorial board as Associate Editor, an online form for self-nominations was implemented at the *EL* website.
- An increase in Associate Editors led to shorter handling times.
- *EL* now accepts Reviews.
- Guidelines on generative AI were supported by a recent editorial by Judith Mank, *EL* Editor-in-Chief (<https://doi.org/10.1093/evlett/qraf027>).
- The majority of authors publishing in *EL* are ESEB or SSE members.

R. Snook emphasised to all members considering *EL* as the Society's journal for their next publications.

T. Chapman closed the meeting at 15.00 CEST.

The minutes have been adopted by the President and Secretary.

01/09/2025

Mike Ritchie, ESEB President

Jonna Kulmuni, ESEB Secretary