

# ESF RESEARCH CONFERENCES

## Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	ESF
Conference Title:	Bacterial Networks 2010
Dates:	4-9 September
Chair:	Prof Urs Jenal; Vice chair Prof Regine Hengge
Rapporteur:	Dr Max Dow

### General Comments

The scientific area covered by this conference was mechanisms of regulation in bacteria involving systems that act to sense different environmental cues, integrate these multiple signals and influence changes in bacterial behaviour to include developmental programmes, virulence, chemotaxis, cell-cell signaling, control of the cell cycle and stress responses. This overall theme was explored through description of diverse regulatory networks in a range of organisms, as well as studies of modeling and engineering of regulatory networks. I gave a short talk in the session on Global Regulation.

### Quality of Scientific Programme, Presentations and Discussion

The scientific programme provided a good balance between most areas of current interests in the field of bacterial regulatory networks. The invited speakers are all regarded as leaders in their respective fields and consequently the quality of the oral scientific presentations was excellent. The short talks, which were selected from the Abstracts submitted, were also excellent. The discussions within the formal sessions were very lively and informative for the members of the audience not immediately familiar with the specific topics. The quality of the posters (presented in three separate sessions during the meeting) was uniformly very high. The time allotted to the poster sessions and the timing of the sessions promoted extensive discussion and it was evident that enthusiastic exchanges of views were occurring in each poster session. In a session led by the vice-chair, the need to include topics of emerging interest in future meetings was also discussed, reflecting the responsive nature of the meeting organisers to newer research directions.

### Informal Networking and Exchange; Atmosphere

The schedule and atmosphere were certainly conducive to an easy exchange of information. The coffee breaks, lunch and evening meals, free afternoons, the poster session in the evening and the late bar all provided the possibility to chat informally to other delegates. It was clear that the younger researchers were incorporated into these discussions.

### Balance of Participants

There was there an appropriate balance between young and senior participants. I spoke to a number of graduate students at the meeting, and FEMS provided grants for graduate student attendance. There were a quite a number of post-doctoral researchers, young or starting PIs as well as the more established scientists. The important balance of national groups and researchers from different fields was achieved.

### Outlook and Future Developments

Undoubtedly new collaborations will emerge from this conference. These will involve collaborations between individuals working on highly related topics as well as researchers wishing to employ cutting-edge research tools that are not available within their own laboratories. Meetings of this nature really promote this latter type of collaboration since attendees become aware of new areas of research and the possible uses of techniques used in other (sub)-fields. Contacts made at the meeting could promote the establishment of networks of researchers to bid competitively at European level for funding to advance interdisciplinary research in this area within COST and EU framework programs.

### Follow-up

Collaborations and dialogues begun at the conference would benefit from funding of short-term research visits to allow access to technology not widely available or to promote technology transfer. In addition funding of lecture visits would aid in the establishment of networks for funding purposes.

### **Organisation and Infrastructure**

The venue, catering and accommodation were appropriate for the conference. There was a three-hour protest action by hotel employees during the meeting, but efforts of the Chair and hotel management meant that this had minimal impact on the meeting. The efforts of the two ESF staff members Miss Victoria Ibbertson and Ms.Kajsa Svensson in ensuring the smooth running of the meeting were greatly appreciated by all participants.

### **Summary & Overall Assessment**

In summary the conference was extremely successful. I consider this meeting to be one of the best that I have attended. The consistently high quality of oral and poster presentations surpassed that of the several Gordon Research Conferences and Keystone meetings in which I have participated. The aim of the conference to bring together leading researchers together with younger scientist in discussions of the latest developments in the area in a congenial atmosphere was eminently achieved.

Max Dow 17<sup>th</sup> September , 2010