

ESF RESEARCH CONFERENCES

Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	ESF-EMBO Symposium
Conference Title:	Molecular Bioenergetics Of Cyanobacteria: Shaping The Environment
Dates:	15-20 April 2013
Chair:	Prof. Elke Dittmann, University of Potsdam, DE
Rapporteur:	Dr. Paola Campus, European Science Foundation, FR

General Comments

The focus of the Conference, cyanobacteria, is a very actual topic which includes the deep understanding of the processes ruling the behaviour of this category of bacteria which played a key role in the evolution of our Planet by strongly influencing the evolution of the atmosphere and, as a consequence, of the biology and geochemistry on Earth.

The Chair and Co-Chairs of the Conference have put lots of efforts to successfully develop a Program which would further expand the area of discussions held in the previous ESF Conferences series on cyanobacteria and dedicated as well some time to explore future areas of scientific discussions, in view of a potential new application to the ESF Conferences' Call.

Most of the attending scientific community showed a great level of enthusiasm for the event and actively contributed to scientific discussions.

I would only like to recommend, for the future, to make sure that both the ESF and the Chair of the event would ensure, as much as possible, that all the attendees would be present for the whole duration of the event, in order to maximize the scientific interactions between young and senior researchers. One of the most relevant speakers of the first day left the Conference after two days to continue his stay in Warsaw before taking off at the end of the week: this choice prevented the young scientist from fully benefitting of the continuous scientific advice of this person.

Quality of Scientific Programme, Presentations and Discussion

The Chair and Co-Chairs of the Conference have developed a dense Program of contributions from international experts and merged it with the presentations of young scientists and researchers, thus generating a valuable playground for a fruitful interaction between senior and young scientists.

The presentations have been all of high quality from the scientific point of view and served very well the purpose of highlighting the results achieved until now in the understanding of cyanobacteria, the areas still in need of further investigations and the limits and perspectives of the existing techniques of investigation.

Informal Networking and Exchange; Atmosphere

The schedule, as well as the location of the venue, generated an ideal environment for an easy exchange of information and discussion: experts and young scientists could easily interact at any time, during the coffee breaks, lunch, dinner and during the evening poster sessions. Young scientists were a bit reluctant to intervene with questions during the oral sessions, in particular at the beginning of the Conference, but they took the chance to contact experts in more informal contexts, in the course of the venue and during the poster session.

The participants suggested that a way to further stimulate discussions and interactions between young students and senior scientists would be to locate the poster area inside the conference room, showing all the posters for the whole duration of the Conference in order to facilitate mutual references between oral and poster presentations.

Balance of Participants

A good gender balance, as well as a good balance between young scientists and experienced researchers and professors has been achieved.

Outlook and Future Developments

Based on the active discussions and on the deep motivation of several participants to continue to expand their cooperation, there is a very good potential for the generation of new collaborations thanks to this ESF Conference. The Conference contributions and outcomes could generate a special issue in a scientific journal and set the ground for the establishment of an international database for accessing and sharing data: both options will bust new collaborations in the community. The ESF could be instrumental in facilitating the dissemination of information related to the research of this community and in generating links with the scientific community exploring the application of cyanobacteria and cooperating under the EuroSolarFuels EUROCORES Programme.

Follow-up

As previously mentioned, a link with the scientific community focusing on the technical applications of cyanobacteria would be a very promising follow-up of this Conference. The establishment of a common database platform would be also crucial to promote new cooperation among the scientific communities and assure a stable and long-term follow-up of activities.

Organisation and Infrastructure

Venue, catering and accommodation were extremely appropriate for this conference, facilitating the interaction among scientists. Perhaps some improvement could be made with the internet wifi connection, not always easily accessible from the rooms. In general, participants were very satisfied with the on-site administration and support. A special mention should be made to highlight the efficiency and high level of professionalism of Ms Allegra Roccato, ESF Conference Coordinator, who promptly responded to any kind of question or emergency.

Summary & Overall Assessment

The Conference was definitively a success and I would mostly welcome any new conference, follow-up of this series.

About ESF Research Conferences

The Scheme

This conference is part of the European Science Foundation's (ESF) Research Conferences Scheme. The Scheme aims to promote scientific excellence and frontier level research throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Conferences aim to provide leading scientists and other participants, including young researchers, with a platform to present their work, to discuss the most recent developments in their fields of research and to network.

Conference Format

The core activities should be based on lectures by invited speakers, who are leaders in their respective fields, followed by extensive discussion periods. An informal exchange of ideas, both inside and outside the lecture room, should be encouraged, and the number of sessions in the daily timetable should be limited in order to allow sufficient time for interaction between the participants. Time should be reserved for a 'Forward Look Plenary Discussion' about future developments in the field.

Participants can take all their meals together to encourage further contact and networking, which can be particularly beneficial to younger researchers who may be less outspoken in the formal lecture room setting. In order to gain optimum benefit from the conference, both the speakers and the participants are asked to stay for the whole duration.

Division of Tasks

The Conference Chair is responsible for ensuring the quality of the scientific programme through the selection and invitation of speakers, and through the selection of participants.

The ESF Conferences Unit is responsible for managing all the logistical aspects of the conference organisation, including the provision of an on-site secretariat.

Further information: www.esf.org/conferences