

Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	ESF/EMBO
Conference Title:	Bacterial networks – Bacnet15
Dates:	14 – 19 May 2015
Chair:	Chair: Prof. Victor Sourjik, Max Planck Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Marburg, DE Co-chair: Prof. Vorholt Julia, ETH Zürich, CH
Rapporteur:	Tanel Tenson

General Comments

Any general comments you might have concerning the conference, your role, the scientific area covered by this conference, etc.

Bacterial networks is a rapidly developing scientific discipline. There have been previous European meetings on the topic but as the field develops rapidly, every meeting has a new focus and includes novel subtopics (sessions).

Quality of the Scientific Programme, Presentations and Discussion

Comments on the balance and scope of the scientific programme, the scientific quality of the presentations and discussions.

The scientific programme was of very high quality. The sessions included two 30 minute presentations by invited speakers and two 15 minute presentations selected according to the abstracts submitted. The invited speakers were leading scientists in the field and the short talks were of high quality. It is important to emphasize that the programme has a whole was a success: the presentations covered a wide variety of topics but still matched each other well. New and exciting research directions were covered.

There were three poster session with around one hundred posters. The poster sessions were very active, with plenty of discussion.

Informal Networking and Exchange; Atmosphere

Was the schedule and the atmosphere conducive to an easy exchange of information?

Was there time and space for an informal discussion? Were younger researchers integrated?

The atmosphere was conducive for easy exchange of information. The discussions occurred during coffee breaks, meals that were organized jointly for all participants and poster session. In addition, there was a longer lunch break that allowed informal discussions in smaller groups. Younger researchers were well integrated.

Unusual for a scientific meeting was incorporation of a Science & Society: Visual communication in science. This included a presentation by image analysis specialist who commented on the culture of image analysis, processing and presentation in microbiology. The session also included presentation by an artist who connects her work to microbiology and environmental problems. This session was a great success by inspiring discussions and contributing to the atmosphere of the conference.

Balance of Participants

Was there an appropriate balance between young and senior participants?

Was a balance of national groups and researchers from different (sub)fields achieved?

Most of the participants were from Europe, the participants outside Europe being real leaders in the field. There were more invited speakers from Germany and Switzerland than from other countries. This probably reflects the research activity in the field in different European countries. Still, it has to be noted that the participation from Northern Europe (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark) was very small or missing although the fields covered are strong in these countries.

There was a good balance between young and senior participants, male and female participants and between different subfields.

Outlook and Future Developments

*Will new collaborations emerge from this conference?
(How) could the conference outcomes be utilised further?*

The Bacnet conferences are a series of meetings that have been organized for more than 15 years. The last meetings have been supported by the ESF/EMBO program. Unfortunately the ESF networking activities have been discontinued. At the forward look session the participants expressed strong support for continuation of the conference series by looking for other funding options. Chair and co-chair for the next Bacnet were already appointed.

In addition, the participants discussed possibilities of establishing local networks (inside one country, joint programming actions between countries where possible, COST).

Follow-up

What immediate and long term follow-up would benefit collaborations and dialogues that may have begun at the conference?

It was a common opinion of the participants that the meeting was a great success and it should continue as a conference series.

Organisation and Infrastructure

*Were venue, catering and accommodation appropriate for this conference?
Were participants satisfied with the on-site administration and support?*

In general the venue, catering and administration were appropriate for the conference. Participants were satisfied with the administration and support. Social events in the conference programme are perfect for stimulating discussions. This conference included an excursion that was very appropriate for the season (botanical gardens are beautiful in Spring).

Summary & Overall Assessment

Was the conference successful; were its aims achieved?

I find that the conference was extremely successful.

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