

ESF RESEARCH CONFERENCES

Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	EMBO
Conference Title:	Emergent Properties of the Cytoskeleton: Molecules to Cells
Dates:	October 3-8, 2010
Chair:	Michelle Peckham and Claudia Veigel
Rapporteur:	Pilar Perez

General Comments

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

The conference was well organized. It was the first one on this scientific topic and it was very popular (117 participants). The sessions in general were well divided based on the cytoskeletal elements, and included talks on both structural and dynamic properties of the cytoskeleton. The questions and discussions after each talk were in general interesting and everybody was participative. It was also good that there were many short talks mixed with the long ones.

The number of posters (60) was right for the size of the room and they did not need to be divided in two sessions, so there was more time to see them and have discussions around them. It would have been useful to have the abstracts with the programme announcement.

Quality of 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 level was very high, with excellent speakers, all very well-known experts in their fields, and, as I mentioned, the talks covered most of the cytoskeleton elements and dynamic properties. There was not a single particularly hot topic but many interesting ones. Perhaps the representation of cell signalling and regulation of the cytoskeleton was a bit limited, and it would have been interesting to include a session on new microscopy developments.

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 conference schedule was very tight and for that reason the discussions after the talks were not as long as desired but they were very lively and young people participated and interacted with the more "senior" scientist. The atmosphere and the place were adequate to facilitate exchange of information, everybody mingled, and there were many informal discussions during lunch and coffee breaks, and a lot of participation in the poster sessions.

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?

Clearly the chair and co-chair were very careful about gender balance and there was practically equal number of male and female speakers and participants. The balance between young and "senior" investigators was also very good, with many recently established young scientists, who were very dynamic and gave good short talks. Participants were from all over Europe and the world, including 20 from the USA. Perhaps the only criticism was the overrepresentation of speakers from United Kingdom (7 out of 20).

Outlook and Future Developments

Will new collaborations emerge from this conference? (How) could the conference outcomes be utilized further? Are there suitable (ESF) programmes or instruments to further the work of the conference?

The forward look session was organized by discussion groups matching the different programme sessions. After the discussions, some common ideas were presented for future developments with the aim of organizing a new ESF research conference that will include new and more multidisciplinary subjects such as:

- Health problems related to cytoskeleton, cancer and cytoskeleton, intracellular pathogens, diseases affecting the cytoskeletal elements, etc.
- Function of different actin filaments.
- Traffic and cytoskeleton.
- Bacterial cytoskeleton.
- Primary cilia and mechanosensing related to microtubules.
- Cell communication.
- Nuclear cytoskeleton.
- Cell motility and adhesion.

It was also suggested that more mathematic modeling of cytoskeleton dynamics be included, although there were already several talks about modeling in the meeting. Another proposed topic was new approaches to the study of the cytoskeleton.

As a main criticism I should say that during the forward look session, after all the new ideas were presented, there was not a general discussion to set up priorities for the future in this field.

Follow-up

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

In general, all the participants considered that having a future meeting will be good and there were several volunteers to be chairs and submit a new proposal for this conference in the next ESF call. Therefore the idea is to continue with this kind of meeting and mount another conference in 2013.

Organisation and Infrastructure

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

The conference infrastructure was very well organized. The ESF person Anne Blondeel-Oman was excellent, very kind, and very efficient. The hotel Eden Roc by the Mediterranean Sea was a beautiful environment and everybody liked it. Catering was very good and accommodation was appropriate, with reasonable to good standards. The manager and staff of the hotel were very kind. The audio-visual settings were good although the lighting of the room in the poster area could be improved.

Summary & Overall Assessment

Was the conference successful; were its aims achieved?

The conference was successful by all measures and achieved its aims. The scientific level of the meeting was excellent and it would be good to have another in three years.

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