

General Assembly Meeting of the European Astrobiology Institute

18 June 2020

Resolution 1

The General Assembly approved the following Report of the Activities of the European Astrobiology Institute for the year 2020.

Report about the activities of the European Astrobiology Institute

Year 2019

Recruitments of institutions

The first part of the year (until May) was largely devoted to the recruitment of member entities. An advertising message was already widely distributed in October 2018. Up to the date of the report (May 2020) there were 5 Core Organisations (CNRS (FR), CNES (FR), DLR (DE), FNRS (BE), INAF (IT) and around 25 participating institutions. This gives the EAI an ample number of affiliations with a sound financial basis.

First General Assembly

The first General Assembly took place at Liblice Castle (CZ) from 28 to 30 May 2019. The interest was unexpectedly large with about 80 scientists and students from Europe, USA and Japan attending. Thus, a very good scientific programme could be organised as well spanning over 2.5 days. The last day was devoted to discussions about EAI activities (outreach, dissemination, training, etc.) and the business meeting of the General Assembly. The statutes of the institute were approved. Furthermore, a management committee was elected including a chair (Wolf Geppert (Stockholm University, SE)) and two vice-chairs (John Brucato (INAF, IT) and Muriel Gargaud (University of Bordeaux, FR)). 6 thematic and 8 activity working groups have been installed by the General Assembly:

Thematic Working Groups

- Investigation into formation of planetary systems and detection of habitable planets and moons
- Early Earth environment and habitability
- The pathway to complexity: From simple molecules to first life
- Early life and life under extreme conditions
- Detection of life in early and extreme terrestrial environments and other celestial bodies
- Historical, philosophical, societal and ethical issues in astrobiology

Activity Working groups

- Policy and Funding (coordinating EAI approaches to governmental and intergovernmental organisations)
- The European Astrobiology Campus (EAC) as affiliated organisation (with the status of an Activity Working Group)
- Field work, field site management
- Access to European Research Infrastructures and Analysis Facilities
- Outreach and corporate identity
- Dissemination and Intellectual Output
- Industry Liaison

Furthermore, 4 project teams were launched:

- Impacts and their role in the evolution of life

- Science Fiction as a tool for Astrobiology outreach and Education
- Tracing life and identifying habitable environment
- Protoplanetary disks and their physical and chemical processes

In addition, the budget was approved and the European Science Foundation was chosen as a host institution. All over all, the first General Assembly was an ideal launch event for the institute.

Training

The RED'19 was held in LeTeich also his year:

The website is available at <http://www.exobiologie.fr/red/index.php/en/red19-program/>, lectures have been recorded and are available on: <http://astrobiovideo.com/en/> . Unfortunately and due to the Covid pandemics, RED'20 has been cancelled and postponed to March 2021: <http://www.exobiologie.fr/red/index.php/en/red16-astrobiology-course/>

Due to the great success of the 2018 workshop a follow up event was held in Tartu from which 4 different mission plans were discussed by the attendees, which were also offered additional lectures special building on the ones offered in 2018. A training programme for the next year has been develop at the European Astrobiology Campus and will be presented to the General Assembly 2020.

A summer school on “Formation of planetary systems and detection of habitable planets and moons” was planned to take place in Torun (PL) was prepared in August 2020 but also had to be cancelled.

Outreach and corporate identity

The preliminary website of the EAI was launched in autumn 2019. A team for creating a new website was formed and will work on the new design. A focus was on social media. A Facebook and a Twitter account was created and entries were published on a daily basis. At Facebook we have now (May 2020) more than 2000 followers and usually get 10-20 “likes” for each entry. At Twitter we have well over 800 followers.

In addition, the anthology “Strangest of All” was developed in by Julie Nováková. This is an anthology of astrobiology-themed science fiction stories aimed to both entertain and educate. It takes one on a journey to encounter life in the universe, as imagined in SF stories by award-winning authors, and our chances of finding it outside of the Earth, detecting it remotely, learning its limits and more in original nonfiction essays following each story.

Funding and policy

A major activity was the preparation of the bid for a Horizon 2020 Starting Community Grant. First discussions happened in November 2019 and a preparatory team led by Karen Olsson Francis (Open University, UK) and Wolf Geppert (Stockholm University, SE) was constituted. The proposal preparation involved a multitude of EAI institutions and was submitted in May 2020.

General Assembly 2020

A lot of work was devoted to preparatory for the General Assembly 2020, which was scheduled to take part from 20-24 April 2020. There were more than 170 registrations were received and 140 abstracts submitted. A pre-meeting for early career scientists was also organised before the meeting with an excursion to a lava cave and 2 field trips (a bus tour to the telescopes on Roque de los Muchachos and a walk on the Ruta de los Volcanes) had been scheduled. Unfortunately, all that had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak and the meeting was adjourned to 16-20 April 2021. The General Assembly will be held electronically on 18 June 2020 at 14:00 CEST.

Other activities

A conference on "*Impact and their Roles in the Evolution of Life*" was organised by members of the respective Project Team of the institute and Stockholm University in Tällberg, Siljan crater area, Dalarna from 10 to 14 June 2019. Although no funds of the EAI were used for the meeting, around 60 scientists and students from all over the world attended. The meeting thus was a great success and an excellent start of EAI activities in that field.

Administration

The administration was carried out by our host organisation (European Science Foundation). The following line of actions were undertaken for the period of the report:

EAI management

Maintain EAI Funders Directory

- Participating Organisations: MoU (Reception, Archiving, Reminders)
- FOs: Invoices (generation and follow up)
- Discussions about the layout of the website
- Billing information retrieval

Organisation of BEACON 2020

- Management of the registrations for the meeting
- Meeting preparation
- Work associated with cancellation and reimbursement (this is still ongoing, expected to finalise in May 2020)

It is expected that in the future costs for meeting organisation will be reduced by introduction of a commercial registration/billing system (in order to avoid double checking payment/billing details, which took a lot of personnel time).

A detailed financial and administrative report from ESF will be distributed to delegates at the EAI and presented at the EAI General Assembly.