

Minutes of The FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY of EUROPEAN ASTROBIOLOGY INSTITUTE

Liblice, Czech Republic
29 May 2019, 16:30 – 19:45

1 Opening of the Meeting

The participants of the General Assembly (GA) were welcomed by Scientific Secretary of the Interim Board, W.Geppert. The voting cards were consigned to the eligible voters, i.e. the delegates from each of the Core Organisation and Participating Institutions.

Voting in the GA on motions is by simple majority.

2 Approval of the Agenda

No one had any objections to the proposed GA meeting agenda. The agenda was thus adopted

3 Election of Assembly Meeting President (the one who chairs the meeting)

Before the election, the rule of the Meeting President was clarified by Wolf Geppert. The GA Meeting President is a person leading the Assembly meeting. It is NOT necessarily the Chair of the EAI.

Subsequently, GA delegates suggested Prof Nigel Mason for the position. N. Mason has accepted to be the chair of the Assembly and started the meeting.

4 Election of Meeting Secretary

Wolf Geppert proposed Zuzana Kanuchova to act as Secretary of the meeting and taking the minutes. She agreed and she was elected

5 Election of Vote Counters

The GA elected two vote counters: M. Battistuzzi and M. Laneuville. N. Mason verified the total vote count as 28.

6 Statutes of the EAI (Motion 1)

Wolf Geppert and Nigel Mason informed the Assembly that apart of the addition of Article 23, no major changes of the Statutes of the EAI have been made since the agreement of the participating entities. Article no. 23: "Liability" has been added to the Statutes of the EAI on the request of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy.

Several articles of the Statutes of the EAI were discussed by the Assembly and clarified by the W. Geppert and/or N. Mason as follows:

Article 3-4: Participating Entities and their admission

- In principle, an institution from a non-EU country can join the EAI. The Management Committee (MC) decides about the admission of the entity.
- Getting EU funding could be difficult only in a case of too many non-EU members, but the problem so far does not exist and is unlikely to materialise. Participation of entities from non-EU European Countries, e.g. Switzerland and Iceland is OK even for most EU funding schemes.

Article 15: Finance and Administration Officer

- the Finance and Administration Officer and, in absence of this person, the Deputy Finance and Administration Officer have voting rights in the Management Committee and Executive Committee (EC)

Article 16: The EAI Board of Trustees (BT)

- The role of BT is to advise the Management Committee and the General Assembly on the overall strategy of the EAI and the the proposed budget. Apart of delegates from each Core Organisation, one delegate from EANA (European Astrobiology Network Association) as well as AbGradE (Astrobiology Graduates in Europe) are members of the BT. There are several reasons for this. EANA has been established already in 2001 and it can be seen as a "grassroot" organisation of astrobiology in Europe. AbGradE, on the other hand, represents the "voice" of early career scientists. The role and importance of this two organisations is clear. However, they are membership societies and will not be able to pay the regular EAI member fee. Consequently, EANA and AbgradE members are not eligible for refunds for participation in EAI activities just on the basis of their membership. It was remarked that the General Assembly can also waive or reduce the participation fee for participating entities. BT members should also act as a voice for the EAI in their respective organisations.

Article 18: Confidentiality

Attendees were asked to read this article thoroughly since it might be important for cooperation with industry.

N. Mason asked for a vote on Motion 1 and the voting results are as follows:

In favour: 27

Against: 0

Abstaining: 1 (silent abstention)

The statutes of EAI were thus approved by GA. (Resolution 1).

7 Working Groups of the EAI (Motion 2)

According to the article no. 12 of the approved Statutes of EAI, the GA may establish Working Groups (WG) in order to coordinate the activities of the EAI.

A smaller number of WG can make EAI more efficient and active than massive number of WGs. General Assembly delegates proposed the following six Scientific working groups:

- Formation and Evolution of Planetary Systems and Detection of Habitable Worlds
- The Pathway to Complexity: From Simple Molecules to First Life
- Planetary Environments and Habitability
- Evolution and Traces of Early Life and Life under Extreme Conditions
- Biosignatures and the Detection of Life beyond Earth
- Historical, Philosophical, Societal and Ethical Issues in Astrobiology

Notes:

- Members of a working group can suggest to change the name of the WG. A new name of WG has however, to be approved by the GA
- WGs enjoy a great autonomy in the EAI, but, of course, cannot engage in unlawful activities or such that are contrary to MC and GA decision and the overall strategy of the EAI

Delegates proposed the creation of the following 8 Activity Working Groups (with the working title of the Working Group Leader and Deputy Leaders in brackets):

- Policy and Funding (Policy Officer and Deputy Policy Officer)
- The European Astrobiology Campus as Working Group on Training (Chair and Vice-Chair of the European Astrobiology Campus)
- Field work and Field Site Management (Field Site Officer and Deputy Field Site Officer)
- Access to European Research Infrastructures and Analysis Facilities (Infrastructure Officer and Deputy Infrastructure Officer)
- Outreach, Media and Corporate Identity (Outreach and Media Officer and Deputy Outreach and Media Officer)
- Education (led by Education Officer)
- Dissemination and Intellectual Output (Dissemination Officer and Deputy Dissemination Officer)
- Industry Liaison

N. Mason called for the vote on Motion 2 and the voting results are as follows:

In favour: 28

Against: 0

Abstaining: 0

Consequently, 6 Scientific WGs and 8 Activity WGs were established. (Resolution 2).

8 Interim Management Committee structure (Motion 3)

The Interim board proposed to elect an Interim Management Committee for the period until the next ordinary GA meeting in 2020. The Interim MG of EAI should consist of:

- the Interim Chair of the European Astrobiology Institute
- up to two Interim Vice Chairs of the Institute
- Working Group Leaders elected by the General Assembly in Liblice
- Members of the Interim Board who want to continue.”

N. Mason called for the vote on this motion. Results were as follows:

In favour: 28

Against: 0

Abstaining: 0

Consequently, the creation of the Interim Management Committee according to the proposal was decided (Resolution 3)

9 Election of Interim Chair, Vice Chairs and Management Committee Members of the EAI

The Interim board advised the assembly to vote for the retention of the members of the previous interim board in the Interim management Committee because their previous experience will be valuable for the Interim Board. The Interim MC will be appointed only for the duration of one year, namely until the GA meeting in 2020.

The results of voting are summarized in the Table 1. Note that: Y= in favour, N = against, A=abstain.

Table 1:

Position	Leader	Co-leader	Voting results	NOTES	Resolution
Chair and vice-chairs	Wolf Geppert (Sweden)	John Brucato (Italy), Muriel Gargaud (France)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		Elected
Scientific Working Groups					
Formation and Evolution of Planetary Systems and Detection of Habitable Worlds	Antonello Provenzale (Italy)	Ewa Szuskiewicz (Poland)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		Elected
The Pathway to Complexity: From Simple	Thomas Henning (Germany)		Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		Elected

Molecules to First Life		Carlos Briones (Spain) Grégoire Danger (France) Rafaele Saladino (Italy)	C.B.: 17 G.D.: 6 R.S.: 4 A: 1	confidential voting	Carlos Briones elected
Planetary Environments and Habitability	Vinciane Debaille (Belgium)	Doris Breuer (Germany)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0	Lena Noack withdrew her candidature and proposed Doris Breuer instead of herself	Elected
Evolution and Traces of Early Life and Life under Extreme Conditions	Emmanuelle Javaux (Belgium)	Karen Olsson-Francis (UK)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		Elected
Biosignatures and the Detection of Life beyond Earth	Jean-Pierre de Vera (Germany)	Michel Viso (France)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		
Historical, Philosophical, Societal and Ethical Issues in Astrobiology	David Düner (Sweden)	Jacques Arnoult (France)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		
Activity Working groups					
Policy and Funding	Nigel Mason (UK)	Tilman Spohn (Germany)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0	Tilman Spohn proposed by W. Geppert during GA.	elected
Training	Kalle Kirsimae (Estonia)	Ruth Sophie Taubner (Austria)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		elected

Field work and Field Site Management	Akos Kereszturi (Hungary)	Mickael Baquè (Germany)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		elected
Access to European Research Infrastructures and Analysis Facilities	Miguel Mas Hesse (Spain)	Elias Chatzitheodoridis (Greece)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		elected
Outreach, Media and Corporate Identity	Julie Novakova (Czech Republic)	Caterina Boccato (Italy)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		elected
Education	Riho Motlep (Estonia)	Zuzana Kanuchova (Slovakia)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		elected
Dissemination and Intellectual Output	Muriel Gargaud (France)	Hervè Cottin (France)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0	Hervé Cottin was proposed by M. Gargaud during the GA	elected
Industry Liaison				GA asked the MC to find candidates for this position*	posts unfilled

* E. Javaux took the view that the Industry Liaison Officer should not be from industry because of potential conflict of interests

10 Choice of Host Organisation (Motion 4)

The Interim board proposed The European Science Foundation (ESF-Science Connect) to act as the Host Organization of the EAI.

The assembly has discussed several issues, which have been clarified by Interim board

- ESA was considered to host the EAI with the institute being a Foundation, however due to the legal issues this option was not followed. EAI would in this case be a legal employer with lot of unwanted consequences and duties.
- If a university (or one institute) would take the position, it would be difficult to choose an institution (ensuing discussions about the fairness of the choice) and usually universities are

reluctant to transfer money to other universities (especially in another country) for an aim like EAI.

N. Mason called for the vote on Motion 4 and the voting results are as follows:

In the favor: 26
Against: 0
Abstaining: 2

The European Science Foundation thus became the Host organization of EAI. (Resolution 4).

11 Contribution of Participating Entities (Motion 5)

- The MC decides on categorization of a prospective participating entity (i.e., if it becomes core organization, participant institution, or affiliated group)
- The GA decides the membership fees. Any changes change will be applied only in the second years after the decision. (e.g. a decision by the GA in 2020 will come into force on 1 January 2022 offering participant entities the possibility to leave the EAI before the new fees are applied)

Ni. Mason asked to vote on Motion 5 and the voting results are as follows:

In the favor: 28
Against: 0
Abstaining: 0

The proposed EAI participation fees were approved by GA. (Resolution 5).

12 Budget (Motion 6)

The Interim Board proposed the preliminary budget and Expenditures for the fiscal year 2020.

- It was decided to employ staff starting from October 1st 2019 to allow the collection of membership fees and help the preparation of proposals like the one for a Research Infrastructure Starting Community under the EU Horizon 2020 scheme .

Several issued were discussed and clarified:

- M. Viso asked that in case of a future grant to the EAI in which the overheads exceed the 18% defined by ESF the difference should be on the disposal of the EAI.
- Direct cost in the budget are defined as any costs apart the overhead

N. Mason asked to vote on Motion 6 and the voting results are as follows:

In favor: 28
Against: 0
Abstaining: 0

The General Assembly approved the preliminary budget of the European Astrobiology Institute for the fiscal year 2020 (Resolution 6)

13 Other Motions (7-10)

The role of Project Teams was shortly summarized by W., Geppert:

- The GA can create Project teams working on special, more focused research questions and projects (Article 13 of The Statutes of GAI)
- Project groups are not necessarily restricted in time, but yearly reports about the activity have to be submitted to the GA
- Membership of Project Teams is open to all interested people on the discretion of the coordinator
- Coordinators of Project Teams are not members of Management Committee.

Four project teams were proposed to GA. The results of the voting are summarized in the Table 2:

Table 2

<i>Name of</i>	<i>Coordinator(S)</i>	<i>Voting results</i>	<i>NOTES</i>	<i>Resolution</i>
Project Teams				
Impact and their role in the evolution of life	Anna Losiak (UK)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		Project Team created
Science Fiction as a tool for Astrobiology outreach and Education	Natacha Vas-Deyres (France)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		Project Team created
Tracing life and identifying habitable environment	Inge Loes ten Kate (Netherlands) Lena Noack (Germany)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		Project Team created
Protoplanetary disks and their physical and chemical processes	Catherine Walsh (UK)	Y: 28 N: 0 A: 0		Project Team created

14 Any other business (EAI logo etc.)

- Ruth-Sophie Taubner, delegate of AbGradE informed about the ongoing competition for the EAI logo. Up to date only 6 proposals were received. The competition is open till June 30th
- Catherina Boccato proposed to spread the info about the competition amongst artists
- The web page of the EAI should be ready before the end of the year
- The press release about the EAI is now finalised and can be circulated
- Sohan Jheeta announced the following astrobiology related events:
 - the: 10M-S3 conference in Moscow, Russia, October 7-11, 2019, <https://ms2019.cosmos.ru/>
 - the NoR CEL conference, St. Adrews, Scotland, August 25-27, St. Andrews, Scotland.

15 Conclusion of the meeting

Nigel Mason formally closed the meeting at 19:45