



Dear Sarash de Wilde

The **12th Symposium on Bacterial Genetics and Ecology (BAGECO)** held in Ljubljana from 9-13 June 2013, hosted 279 participants (men 145, women 134). A total of 306 abstracts were contributed of which approx. 20 have been withdrawn after rejection of oral presentation. The abstract authors originated from 53 different countries although the national diversity of registered participants was slightly lower. More than 50% of participants were PhD students or postdocs.

The scientific programme involved 48 oral presentations (13 key notes -35 min) and 35 contributed presentations (20 min), many of which were given by young participants. All lectures stirred very lively discussions and were very well attended.

The main theme of the congress, reflected in the congress title »Networking and plasticity of microbial communities and the secret to success«, aligned nicely with the opening lecture by Nicole Dubilier (Germany), who talked about chemosynthetic symbionts of hydrothermal vent mussels.

Two sessions were devoted to prokaryotic evolution with T. Dagan (Germany) speaking about trends and barriers to lateral gene transfer and F. Cohan (US), discussing the origin of bacterial species.

In addition to 7 contributed talks on mobile genetic pool, evolution of terrestrial thaumarchaea, diversity, phage carrier state and evolution of social interactions in biofilms.

K. Foster (UK) gave a key note on Social evolution in microbes providing good bases for the session on sociomicrobiology, which was new to BAGECO. We heard 5 very interesting presentations on this topic addressing the ecology of signalling, synergism, volatiles as infochemicals and division of labour in microbial communities.

Moreover we had sessions focusing on interactions of microbes with eukaryotic host (plants, insects, fish, bovine plasmidome, mammals). P. Bakker (The Netherlands) was talking on rhizosphere microbiome and P. Newell (US) discussed *Drosophila* gut microbiota.

The highest number of contributions (mostly posters) was addressing Microbial diversity and ecosystem function. Our two key note speakers P. Hugenholtz (Australia) and T. Vogel (France) discussed genomics, including single cell genomics and new ways for gene discovery by metagenomics. Also enzyme diversity at microscale, viral metagenomics and enzyme diversity studied through metagenomics or activity were addressed.

Our session on beneficial microbes, opened by J. Marchesi (UK) on human gut metagenomics, also covered a novel probiotic, bacterial chitinases and the bacterial interspecific interactions as a way to novel antibiotics.

The next session on Ecophysiology was opened by J.D. van Elsas (The Netherlands) who talked on interactions between *Burkholderia* and soil fungi. In addition to this others discussed organohalide respiration, Metallosphera genomics and physiology of denitrifying bacteria.

The last session addressed Microbial responses to anthropogenic impacts and approaches to alleviate them and was opened by our keynote speaker I. Head (UK) who was talking about oil degradation.

J.I. Prosser (UK) critically evaluated advances in microbial ecology during the recent years in addition to 7 contributed talks on degradation of pollutants and problems associated with the spread of antibiotic resistance.

Furthermore we had a very lively and well attended round table discussion on the plant microbiome and on its perspectives for biocontrol and growth promotion with 6 guests. The moderation was done by G. Berg (Austria).

Last, but not least, there were 231 posters thematically aligned with the programme and presented during two 3 hour very well attended sessions. The quality of science of oral and poster presentations was very high and we obtained many congratulations on the programme.

Due to the financial support of ISME we were able to invite and cover the travel expenses of our high profile speakers coming from further abroad, such as Australia and the United States. At this point we would like to thank ISME again for their support!

Kind regards
Ines Mandic-Mulec
Conference chair BAGECO12