



International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes

Executive Board Meeting 29th April 2021

Chair:

I. C. SUTCLIFFE
Northumbria University
U.K.

Vice-Chair:

E. R. B. MOORE
University of Gothenburg
Sweden

Executive Secretary:

A. OREN
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Israel

Secretary for Subcommittees:

S. L. W. ON
Lincoln University
New Zealand

Treasurer:

P. NIELSEN
Novozymes, Copenhagen
Denmark

Members at Large:

R. HAHNKE
Leibniz Institute DSMZ
Germany

Y. SHOUCHE
National Centre for Microbial
Resource
India

**Members of the Judicial
Committee**

Chair:

D.R. ARAHAL
University of Valencia
Spain

Vice-Chair:

R. ROSSELLÓ-MÓRA
Mediterranean Institute for
Advanced Studies
Illes Balears Spain

Secretary:

M. GÖKER
Leibniz Institute DSMZ
Germany

Minute 1. Call to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9.00 a.m. UK time.

Minute 2. Record of attendance

The following members of the Executive Board participated: I.C. Sutcliffe (Chair), E.R.B. Moore (Vice-Chair), A. Oren (Executive Secretary), S.L.W. On (Secretary Subcommittees), R. Rosselló-Móra (Vice-Chair JC), M. Göker (Secretary JC), and Y. Shouche (Member-at-Large). Apologies were received from P. Nielsen (Treasurer), R. Hahnke (Member-at-Large), and D.R. Arahal (Chair JC).

Minute 3. Minutes of the 25th March 2021 meeting of the Executive Board

The draft minutes of the 25th March 2021 meeting were approved following corrections proposed by R. Hahnke and A. Oren. A. Oren will distribute the minutes to the members of the ICSP, the Judicial Commission, and chairs of the Subcommittees on Taxonomy, and he will send a copy to E.R.B. Moore to be posted on the ICSP website.

Minute 4. Matters arising/Action points from previous meetings

- A. Oren has forwarded the redacted minutes of the 25st February 2021 meeting, including changes proposed by M. Göker, to all members of the ICSP, the Judicial Commissions and the chairs of the Subcommittees on Taxonomy, and has sent a copy to E.R.B. Moore to be posted on the ICSP website.

- E.R.B. Moore has contacted G.M. Garrity to advance the preparation of an editorial to clarify the purpose of type strains, the problematic issue of restrictive MTAs and propose emendation of Rule 18a of the ICNP. He will further report at the next meeting of the Executive Board.

- S.L.W. On is consulting with the chairs of the Subcommittees on Taxonomy on additional matter before starting the preparation of an editorial for publication in the IJSEM to present the status of the Subcommittees on Taxonomy.

- I.C. Sutcliffe's has arranged the 'mandate', the ownership of the bank account with the branch of NatWest Bank that deals with such mandates.

- A. Oren has distributed the minutes of the meeting of the Publications Committee of 15^h March to all members of the Executive Board.

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- S.L.W. On has contacted the subcommittees to consider the preparation of recommendations how to deal with yet-uncultivated members of the group based on genomic information.
- A. Oren has sent a list of voting members of the ICSP to I.C. Sutcliffe to prepare the mailing list for the ballot to resolve the status of the Cyanobacteria under the ICNP.
- I.C. Sutcliffe has sent out the ballot to resolve the status of the Cyanobacteria under the ICNP to all voting members on 1st April.
- A. Oren has sent to all Executive Board members a draft letter with suggestions on how M.E. Trujillo should reply to Dr. Broders of the USDA-ARS culture collection (NRRL), and has forwarded the consensus suggestions to M.E. Trujillo.
- D.R. Arahal has consulted the members of the Judicial Commission to decide whether to transfer more recently received Requests for Opinions to the Executive Secretary of the ICSP to be voted on by the ICSP plenary in accordance with Article 8(i) of the ICSP statutes. Further information is given in Minute 10.
- A. Oren has sent a copy of the draft manuscript prepared by the Editorial Board of the ICNP with the outcome of the ballot to include the rank of phylum in the ICNP and the necessary emendations of the ICNP to all members of the Executive Board for comments. The manuscript was submitted for publication in the IJSEM on 5th April.
- R. Hahnke and S.L.W. On are still working on the preparation of a letter to be sent to colleagues involved in prokaryotic taxonomy, encouraging them to get involved in ICSP-related activities.

Minute 5. Financial support of LPSN by the ICSP

At its meeting of 14th April, the Publications Committee discussed whether the ICSP needs to continue its financial support to List of Prokaryotic Names with Standing in the Nomenclature (LPSN), subsequent to LPSN being taken over by the DSMZ. The Executive Board unanimously agreed that LPSN is an highly valued resource for the taxonomic community, and that it must remain freely accessible. M. Göker explained that currently LPSN is reasonably well funded as part of the DSMZ. However, funding in the future at the same level is not certain, and more funds will be needed to improve the website to cope with the increasing rate of description of new taxa and to include *Candidatus* taxa, and possibly names under the SeqCode (see Minute 6). Therefore, financial support from the ICSP will likely remain very helpful.

There was general support for the proposal to continue funding LPSN, though it was also suggested that LPSN should in return acknowledge the support from the ICSP prominently on its website. At the suggestion of S.L.W. On, M. Göker will provide information about the current financing of LPSN, to aid Publications Committee in deciding about the amount of the annual 'honorarium' from the ICSP. If possible, this information should be available before the upcoming meeting of the Publications Committee on 10th May, and no later than the next meeting of the Executive Board on 27th May.

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Minute 6. Response to the SeqCode initiative

Following an introduction about the SeqCode initiative by I.C. Sutcliffe (see <https://www.isme-microbes.org/seqcode-initiative> and <https://isme18.isme-microbes.org/seqcode-workshops> for further details), the Executive board discussed whether the ICSP should respond. The alternative is ignoring the initiative, as General Consideration 5 of the ICNP states that the Code applies to all prokaryotes. S.L.W. On recommended further time to consider a response. The topic will be further discussed at a future meeting of the Executive Board.

Minute 7. Response of the ICSP to the article “Microbial taxonomy run amok” by R.A. Sanford *et al.*

The Executive Board discussed the question whether the ICSP needs to react to the article “Microbial taxonomy run amok” by R.A. Sanford *et al.*, Trends in Microbiology 29, 394-404, 2021 (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tim.2020.12.010>). One of the topics discussed in this paper is the small size and unrepresentative nature of the ICSP membership (including potential conflicts of interest) and of its subcommittees. Moreover, it discusses the need for an ‘official’ taxonomy of prokaryotes and that the ICSP “should reconsider the proposal to use gene/genome sequences as type material for the naming of prokaryotes”. A. Oren explained his involvement in this manuscript that resulted in his name being mentioned in the Acknowledgements section. M. Göker stressed that we need to educate the public that there is an official nomenclature but no official taxonomy. Most members of the Executive Board were of the opinion that there is no need for a formal reply by the ICSP. However, E.R.B. Moore suggested that it still might be useful to respond as a Letter to the Editor. The Chair suggested that if one of the Executive Board members wished to draft a reply, then it should be sent to all the Executive Board for further consideration.

Minute 8. Discussion of the memo received from G.M. Garrity on the sustainability of deposition of type strains in two culture collections

The Executive Board discussed a memo received from G.M. Garrity about the cost involved in deposition of type strains in two culture collections as required by Rule 30 of the ICNP. M. Göker and E.R.B. Moore explained that indeed processing and authentication of type strains is costly, but that the money is well spent to prevent problems in the future. It is not clear whether the problem explained in the memo truly exists. As Y. Shouche noted, there indeed are ‘endangered culture collections’, but as far as is known, the major culture collections are not yet stressed by the cost of the processing of type cultures submitted.

It was decided that Y. Shouche and E.R.B. Moore would respectively consult the World Federation of Culture Collections (WFCC) and the European Culture Collections’ Organization (ECCO) to inquire whether the current system of deposition of type strains causes problems due to the cost involved in processing of cultures and authentication. I.C. Sutcliffe will draft a reply to G.M. Garrity.

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Minute 9. Management of the ICSP Twitter account

I.C. Sutcliffe reported that the Twitter account (@IcspEb), which is largely inactive, was set up by C.T. Bull but is attributed to the ICSP Executive Board. He suggested that it may be better to start a new account more clearly labelled for the ICSP. All agreed with this proposal. I.C. Sutcliffe will ask C.T. Bull to close the account.

Minute 10. Report from the Judicial Commission

M. Göker and D.R. Arahal (by email) reported that the Judicial Commission members all wish to handle the backlog of Requests for an Opinion chronologically, including those published after the current statutes were adopted (June 2019), except when there is overlap between requests dealing with the same topic, as is the case for requests no 106 and 127 and for requests no. 109, 113, and 115. After the current backlog is dealt with, Article 8(i) of the statutes of the ICSP will be implemented in the future, if necessary. All voting members of the Executive Board approved this proposal.

The Judicial Commission will soon vote about ten Requests for an Opinion.

Minute 11. Report from the IJSEM

As of the April issue, the journal has officially switched to the single-stage continuous publication process, which is now open and being populated with articles:
<https://www.microbiologyresearch.org/content/journal/ijsem/browse>.

E.R.B. Moore reported he had been sent an email from Prof. Paul Hoskisson, chair of the Publishing Panel of the Microbiology Society, to Martha Trujillo, Editor-in-Chief of the IJSEM. E.R.B. Moore was advised that the Publications Committee was the appropriate forum to consider this and whether a reply is needed.

Minute 12. Update from the Editorial Board of the ICNP

The manuscript prepared by the Editorial Board with the outcome of the ballot to include the rank of phylum in the ICNP and the necessary emendations of the ICNP was submitted by A. Oren for publication in the IJSEM on 5th April.

I.C. Sutcliffe has sent out the ballot to resolve the status of the Cyanobacteria under the ICNP to all voting members on 1st April. Thus far, only two members have submitted their votes. I.C. Sutcliffe will send a reminder to those voting members of the ICSP who have not yet responded.

A. Oren has made much progress preparing different sections of the ICNP for future public discussion. The Editorial Board has discussed the format to be used, and agreed on a table format, with the text of the current version in column 1, the proposed emended text in column 2, explanations, comments and points to be further discussed in column 3, and the references relevant to proposals to emend the Code in column 4. A. Oren expects to finish this work within

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1-2 months. Then he will convene the Editorial Board for in-depth discussions of the proposed modifications and the preparation of a consensus version for public discussion.

I.C. Sutcliffe has set up a Slack platform that will contain all relevant documents for discussion among the Editorial Board. If it proves effective, this platform may also be used for the public discussions.

Minute 13. Treasurer's update

I.C. Sutcliffe reported that some progress is being made obtaining access to the ICSP bank account at NatWest Bank but the process is ongoing.

Minute 14. AOB

There was no other business.

Date of next meeting: **Thursday May 27th 9 am UK time**

Minute 15. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11.05

Minutes prepared by A. Oren – 30 April 2021

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Action points:

- A. Oren, to incorporate the changes proposed by R. Hahnke and A. Oren in the minutes of the 25st March 2021 Executive Board meeting, and to forward the minutes to all members of the ICSP, the Judicial Commissions and the chairs of the Subcommittees on Taxonomy, and send a copy to E.R.B. Moore to be posted on the ICSP website.
- E.R.B. Moore, to prepare a summary of his correspondence with G.M. Garrity concerning the preparation of an editorial to clarify the purpose of type strains, the problematic issue of restrictive MTAs and propose emendation of Rule 18a of the ICNP.
- S.L.W. On, to complete the preparation of an editorial for publication in the IJSEM to present the status of the Subcommittees on Taxonomy.
- I.C. Sutcliffe, to send a reminder to those voting members of the ICSP who have not yet responded to the ballot to resolve the status of the Cyanobacteria under the ICNP.
- R. Hahnke and S.L.W. On, to prepare a letter to be sent to colleagues involved in prokaryotic taxonomy, encouraging them to get involved in ICSP-related activities.

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- M. Göker, to provide information about the current financial status of LPSN, if possible before the upcoming meeting of the Publications Committee on 10th May, and no later than the upcoming meeting of the Executive Board on 27th May.
- All members of the Executive Board to familiarise themselves with SeqCode initiative (links in Minute 6) to inform future discussions.
- I.C. Sutcliffe, to prepare a draft reply to the memo received from G.M. Garrity.
- Y. Shouche, to inquire with the World Federation of Culture Collections (WFCC) whether the current system of deposition of type strains causes problems due to the cost involved in processing of cultures and authentication.
- E.R.B. Moore, to inquire with the European Culture Collections' Organization (ECCO) whether the current system of deposition of type strains causes problems due to the cost involved in processing of cultures and authentication.
- I.C. Sutcliffe to ask C.T. Bull to close the ICSPEB twitter account.
- E.R.B. Moore to forward correspondence from Prof. Paul Hoskisson to the Publications Committee.
- I.C. Sutcliffe to continue engaging with NatWest Bank about registering new ICSP users.