



International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes

Meeting 1th October 2020
(redacted minutes)

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. London time. He welcomed the incoming JC officers as ex-officio members of the EB.

Minute 2. Record of attendance

All members of the EB participated: I. Sutcliffe (Chair), E.R.B. Moore (Vice-Chair), A. Oren (Executive Secretary), P. Nielsen (Treasurer), S.L.W. On (Secretary Subcommittees), R. Hahnke (Member-at-Large), Y. Shouche (Member-at-Large), D.R. Arahall (Chair JC), R. Rosselló-Móra (Vice-Chair JC), and M. Göker (Secretary JC).

Minute 3. Minutes of 27th August meeting

The minutes of the 27th August meeting, prepared by L. Dijkshoorn for approval by the previous Executive Board, were distributed to the members on September 30. No comments were raised.

Minute 4. Matters arising/Action points from previous meetings

- Education and Outreach: See Minute 14.
- Election of officers of the JC: completed, see Minute 10.
- Minutes of the IJSEM editorial board meeting: see Minute 11.
- Adding the chairs of the taxonomic subcommittees to the mailing list of the minutes of EB meetings: S.L.W. On will send A. Oren an updated list of email addresses of the subcommittee chairs. However, it was noted that the minutes are also made available on the ICSP website, so that interested subcommittee members have access to the documents.
- E.R.B. Moore volunteered to discuss with the IT personnel of the CCUG about the possibility of managing the website and taking care of future updates of the ICSP website after November when he will have a local IT expert to assist him. Until then I. Sutcliffe will ask F. Venter to continue updating the website if necessary.

Minute 5: Meeting format

The GoToMeeting format proved satisfactory for today's meeting with ten participants. Therefore, we will continue using this format until further notice.

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In correspondence, C. Manaia (delegate, Portuguese Society for Microbiology) had suggested that similar online meetings could be held with all ICSP members and other interested persons to discuss recent literature and other aspects of prokaryotic taxonomy and systematics of interest to the ICSP. This suggestion was considered favourably and will be addressed as appropriate topics are identified.

P. Nielsen proposed (email sent to all EB members immediately after the meeting) to divide agenda items for future meeting in three categories:

- Decisions: points wherein the EB has to make decision should come first. These issues must be debated to ensure we have clarity on what options we have to make a decision.
- Information: to be given by the chair or by others, with the option to add short comments. If necessary, the issues could be debated at a future meeting.
- Debate: issues to be discussed in-depth should be at the end of agenda, so that attendees with limited time can leave the meeting without losing information or taking part in decisions.

This proposal can be discussed at the next EB meeting.

Minute 6. Report of the ICSP to IUMS and BAM

I. Sutcliffe has prepared a draft report to IUMS – BAM summarizing the activities of the ICSP over the period 2017-2020. The report has been circulated to the previous EB for comments. The general assembly of IUMS will not convene this year, and its meeting will probably be postponed until 2022 (<https://www.iums.org/>) and so there is some ambiguity regarding IUMS officers. I. Sutcliffe and A. Oren will finalize the report in the coming weeks and send it to the appropriate officers of IUMS/BAM.

IUMS will hold an online scientific conference in November. R. Rosselló-Móra explained that this meeting would include a session on systematics that he will convene together with J. Chun. K. Konstantinidis will be one of the speakers; no further details are available yet.

Minute 7. Co-option of Giovanna Felis

After I. Sutcliffe had nominated Giovanna Felis (University of Verona, Italy) as a co-opted member of the ICSP, supported by P.-E. Fournier and F. Venter, a ballot was held among the members of the ICSP (September 7-25) with the following outcome: 20 in favour, 1 abstain, 1 did not vote. Thus, Dr. Felis was accepted as a co-opted member. A. Oren will formally welcome her to the ICSP.

A discussion followed about the importance of co-opted members and the way they must be selected. I. Sutcliffe explained that the number of regular members of the ICSP is small as it is limited by the number of IUMS member societies in good standing that have sent a delegate; not all IUMS member societies appear interested in having a representative in the ICSP. The mechanism of appointing co-opted members enables us to have a more balanced membership with respect to geographic location, gender and scientific disciplines.

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A. Oren will contact those microbiological societies that are members in good standing of IUMS and have not sent a delegate to the ICSP, reminding them of their right to appoint a delegate.

R. Hahnke reminded the meeting that according to Article 4(d) of the statutes of the ICSP, the business of the ICSP will be conducted publicly, with minutes reported of all meetings of the ICSP and its committees to be made publicly available. If so, we may not need many co-opted members. Additionally, R. Hahnke reminded the meeting that a co-opted member can act as private person in contrast to full members who are delegates of their society. Thus, co-opted members who are not delegates of a society have the right to vote in changes of the statutes although they are members for the purpose of assisting with the work of the Committee.

I. Sutcliffe agreed to send the EB some short observations on issues relating to broadening ICSP membership.

Minute 8. Editorial Board and Editor-in-Chief of the ICNP

I. Sutcliffe explained that it is necessary to appoint an Editor-in-Chief for the ICNP, based on Article 13 of the statutes. A. Oren was appointed in July 2019, and until December 2019 the editorial board of the ICNP consisted of A. Oren (chair), ex officio members I. Sutcliffe, F.A. Rainey, D.R. Arahal, and R. Rosselló-Móra, and co-opted members M. Chuvochina, G.M. Garrity, C.T. Parker, and W.B. Whitman. On December 28, the chair submitted his resignation as Editor-in-Chief.

A. Oren nominated himself to become once more Editor-in-Chief of the ICNP. If elected, he will be joined by ex-officio members I. Sutcliffe, E.R.B. Moore, D R. Arahal, and R. Rosselló-Móra, and any co-opted members the team will appoint. A. Oren briefly explained his views how he intends to proceed, if elected:

- Organize a ballot as soon as possible to have the ICSP decide about inclusion of the rank of phylum under the rules of the ICNP, based on proposals by Oren et al., *IJSEM* 2015;65:4284-4287 and Whitman et al., *IJSEM* 2018;68:967-969.
- No later than March 2020, have a ballot to vote on the three current, and fundamentally different proposals on how to deal with the cyanobacteria under the ICNP, based on the timeline given Oren, *IJSEM* 2020;70:4406-4408. According to the statutes, a decision must be finalized no later than June 2021.
- Prepare an annotated copy of the entire text of the ICNP and its appendices, including all proposed changes and emendations published thus far and any further suggestions to improve the text (a draft version is ready and very little time will be needed to finalize it). This document will be made publically available on the ICSP web site and will be open for comments and discussions, before a draft final text will be submitted to the ICSP for approval. Sections that need special work are Appendix 9 – Orthography and Appendix 11 – The provisional status ‘Candidatus’.

I. Sutcliffe called upon all members of the EB to submit further nominations for the role of Editor-in-Chief of the ICNP no later than October 14, so that at the next EB meeting, the members can vote and a new editor-in-chief can be appointed.

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E.R.B. Moore asked why it took so long between when the last changes were incorporated in the current version of the ICNP (in 2008 in Istanbul), the approval of the current version by the ICSP (2016) and the publication in final form as a supplement to the IJSEM (January 2019). A. Oren replied that this was due to an unfortunate combination of slow work by one or more members of the editorial team, long delays before the old text files became available for editing, and a slow typesetting and proofreading process. Now, since the files are all with the Microbiology Society journal production staff, we may expect that a new version of the ICNP can be produced within months of the date the approval of the final text by the ICSP plenary.

Minute 9. The impact of the Nagoya protocol on type strain accessibility

I. Sutcliffe presented the problems caused by the Nagoya protocol and the local interpretation of the Nagoya protocol by national authorities in countries such as India, Brazil, and South Africa, preventing making type strains, their DNA and sequences (all kind of use) available from culture collections to serve as nomenclature type and enabling valid publication of names under the rules of the ICNP. R. Hahnke added that Indonesia and Myanmar are also restricting the distribution of genetic material sampled there.

A working group should be established to clarify the position of the ICSP regarding the availability of type strains to fulfil the demands of Rule 30 of the ICNP. E.R.B. Moore stressed that Rule 30 (4) of the ICNP is not sufficiently detailed about the nature of the 'restrictions' to the access and distribution of type strains that may prevent valid publication of names of species and subspecies. The new editorial board of the ICNP, soon to be appointed, must further deal with this.

E.R.B. Moore, Y. Shouche and R. Hahnke volunteered to serve on this working group, and they will invite F. Venter to join. The first priority is to contact the local authorities to try to define the national restrictions on the respective national resources and to try to solve the problems of the microbiologists/taxonomists working in some countries. The members of this working group will then report to the EB and to the ICSP.

Minute 10. Report from the JC

The JC has elected as its officers D.R. Arahal (chair), R. Rosselló-Móra (vice-chair), and M. Göker (secretary).

M. Göker reported that the JC chair had divided 10 of the pending 'Requests for an opinion' over the different members to prepare those for discussion in the JC, in an attempt to speed up the process and reduce the backlog.

Minute 11. IJSEM matters

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E.R.B. Moore attended the online IJSEM editorial board meeting held on 2nd September 2020. The minutes of that meeting were sent to all members of the EB before the meeting and can be forwarded to all members of the ICSP.

IJSEM will soon be published online only and move to continuous publication.

During the editorial board meeting, discussions were devoted to the possibilities to improve the quality of taxonomic descriptions by 'stronger' editing and reviewing and, possibly, reducing the number of papers describing species based on single strains and to prevent 'salami slicing' – producing multiple very similar papers describing similar species from a single study. Several proposals were made and discussed as to how to achieve these goals, but no clear consensus was agreed upon. These issues are under active review by the IJSEM Editorial Board.

Minute 12. Update on subcommittees

S.L.W. On has started contacting the chairs and some other members of the taxonomic subcommittees to monitor the levels of activity of the different subcommittees based on the list he received from D.R. Brown. Currently 16 subcommittees are listed on the ICSP website, and most appear to be active. It may be important to try to revive the subcommittee on the taxonomy of *Enterobacteraceae* and some (former) subcommittees that have not been active in recent years. At the beginning of next year, the EB should receive an update about the status of all subcommittees and, if necessary, recommend discontinuing inactive subcommittees. The consensus of the EB was to try to avoid discontinuing any subcommittee and to look for ways to 'activate' them, e.g., through soliciting new Chairs and new memberships.

Minute 13. Treasurer's report

There was nothing to report.

Minute 14. Working group on Education & Outreach

Since C.T. Bull and L. Dijkshoorn left the EB, the chair called for volunteers to continue and extend the work of the Education & Outreach working group. R. Hahnke, S.L.W. On and Y. Shouche volunteered to help coordinate this working group with C.T. Bull and L. Dijkshoorn.

It was suggested that Dr. Tanja Woyke, recipient of the van Niel prize, may choose to present an online talk about systematics of microorganisms for the general public. The chair will contact Dr. Woyke.

Minute 15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday Oct 29th 8 am UK time.

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Minute 16. AOB

Nothing was reported.

Minute 17. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11.02 a.m. UK time

Minutes prepared by A. Oren – 1 October 2020

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Action points:

- S.L.W. On, to send an updated list of names and email addresses of the chairs of the taxonomic subcommittees to A. Oren, for distribution of the minutes of EB meetings.
- I. Sutcliffe, to contact F. Venter, requesting to continue maintaining the ICSP website until confirmation that E.R.B. Moore can take over.
- I. Sutcliffe and A. Oren, to finalize the report over 2017-2020 to IUMS – BAM and to send the document to the IUMS Executive including Chair of BAM.
- A. Oren, to formally welcome Dr Giovanna Felis as a co-opted member of the ICSP.
- A. Oren, to contact those microbiological societies that are members in good standing of IUMS and have not sent a delegate to the ICSP, reminding them of their right to appoint a delegate.
- I. Sutcliffe, to send notes to the EB on issues relating to ISCP membership
- All members of the EB, to send nominations for a new Editor-in-Chief of the ICNP to I. Sutcliffe.
- E.R.B. Moore, R. Hahnke and Y. Shouche, to invite F. Venter to join the ad hoc committee to discuss the impact of the Nagoya protocol on the availability of type strains.
- A. Oren, to forward the minutes of the IJSEM editorial board meeting to all members of the ICSP.
- I. Sutcliffe, to contact Tanja Woyke to invite her to give an outreach online talk.

Action points remaining from the 27th August meeting:

- L. Dijkshoorn, to finish the minutes of the ICSP plenary held during the FEMS congress in Glasgow in July 2019.