

Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	ESF-EMBO Symposium
Conference Title:	Cell Polarity and Membrane Trafficking
Dates:	10-15 May 2014
Chair:	Prof. Daniel Johnston and Prof. Enrique Rodríguez-Boulan
Rapporteur:	Pilar Pérez

General Comments

Any general comments you might have concerning the conference, your role, the scientific area covered by this conference, etc.

The conference was the third one on this scientific subject. The area covered is very popular in Europe and the conference was in general very well organized and can be considered a full success. The sessions in general were well divided to include four long talks (40 min) and two or three short talks (10-20min) per session, and well designed to cover important topics. The questions and discussions after each talk were very animated and stimulating, although most of the time they questions or comments were proposed by the “senior scientist”. The posters (61) presentation was divided in two sessions. However, because the time for the posters in each session was not much (8.30 to 10.00 pm), it was a wise decision of the chair to maintain all the posters exhibited during both sessions. Everybody attended the poster sessions and there was a substantial exchange of information. Perhaps it would have been useful to have available the PDF with all the abstracts for the posters before the meeting.

Quality of the Scientific Programme, Presentations and Discussion

Comments on the balance and scope of the scientific programme, the scientific quality of the presentations and discussions.

The scientific level was very high. The subtopics covered in the meeting included: Polarised Secretion and Traffic; Cell polarity and Disease; Epithelial Polarity; Polarity and Cell shape; Polarised divisions and Cancer; Endocytosis and Polarity; Polarised secretion and cell migration. The speakers were all well-known experts in their fields and talked about different model systems (mammalian cells, *Drosophila*, *C. elegans*) used in the study of cell polarity and membrane traffic. Perhaps a major criticism is that the representation of plant polarity was limited and there were no talks in fungal polarity and membrane traffic.

The talks of highly renowned scientists such as Allan Hall, who gave the opening talk, E. Rodriguez-Boulan, I. Maccara, or K. Mostov, all of whom made important scientific contributions to the fields of cell polarity and membrane traffic, were very compelling. Special mention should be made of the excellent closing lecture by Scott Emr that was addressed to young scientists.

Informal Networking and Exchange; Atmosphere

Was the schedule and the atmosphere conducive to an easy exchange of information?
Was there time and space for an informal discussion? Were younger researchers integrated?

The conference schedule was tight and for that reason the discussions after the talks could not be prolonged. Younger researchers were not very participative in these formal discussions but, due to the friendly atmosphere, there was a lot of informal exchange of information during lunch and coffee breaks, and there was a lot of participation in the poster sessions. Everybody integrated well and there was good exchange of ideas and information on experimental techniques. In general, the spirit among the young participants was very enthusiastic.

Balance of Participants

Was there an appropriate balance between young and senior participants?
Was a balance of national groups and researchers from different (sub)fields achieved?

The gender balance among the participants was quite good, with slightly more women than men. Regarding the speakers, the balance was not as good, with only 7 women among the 30 speakers who gave long talks (less than 24%). The balance between young and "senior" investigators was also very good, with many postdocs and recently established young scientists among the participants who were very dynamic and gave good short talks. Attendants were mainly from EU countries and a few from other countries in the world. Among the EU distribution, attendants were mainly from the UK (20) from FR (13), from DE (12) and PL (10).

Outlook and Future Developments

Will new collaborations emerge from this conference?
(How) could the conference outcomes be utilised further?

During the short forward look session it was clear that everybody was keen on having a future meeting in Cell polarity and membrane traffic in 2017 and two new chairs were elected (F. Martin-Belmonte and Gillian Griffiths). Due to the impossibility of submit a new proposal for this conference to ESF, it was discussed the submission of the new proposal to EMBO or some other organization in order to get funds.

Follow-up

What immediate and long term follow-up would benefit collaborations and dialogues that may have begun at the conference?

As mentioned above, the idea is to organize a future meeting in Cell polarity and membrane trafficking in 2017.

Organisation and Infrastructure

Were venue, catering and accommodation appropriate for this conference?
Were participants satisfied with the on-site administration and support?

The conference infrastructure was very well organized. The ESF persons were excellent and very professional, as usual. The hotel, Polonia Castle in Pulstok, is a beautiful environment and the manager and staff of the hotel were kind. Catering was good and accommodation was appropriate, with reasonable standards. However, a major inconvenience was that the internet connection was rather weak in the Conference Room and absent in many of the private rooms. Another problem was the lighting in the room where the posters were shown that was very dim and made difficult the visualization of the pictures.

Summary & Overall Assessment

Was the conference successful; were its aims achieved?

The conference was successful by all measures and achieved its aims. The scientific level of the meeting was excellent and the purpose to submit a new proposal for a following conference in three years was established.

About ESF Research Conferences

The Scheme

This conference is part of the European Science Foundation's (ESF) Research Conferences Scheme. The Scheme aims to promote scientific excellence and frontier level research throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Conferences aim to provide leading scientists and other participants, including young researchers, with a platform to present their work, to discuss the most recent developments in their fields of research and to network.

Conference Format

The core activities should be based on lectures by invited speakers, who are leaders in their respective fields, followed by extensive discussion periods. An informal exchange of ideas, both inside and outside the lecture room, should be encouraged, and the number of sessions in the daily timetable should be limited in order to allow sufficient time for interaction between the participants. Time should be reserved for a 'Forward Look Plenary Discussion' about future developments in the field.

Participants can take all their meals together to encourage further contact and networking, which can be particularly beneficial to younger researchers who may be less outspoken in the formal lecture room setting. In order to gain optimum benefit from the conference, both the speakers and the participants are asked to stay for the whole duration.

Division of Tasks

The Conference Chair is responsible for ensuring the quality of the scientific programme through the selection and invitation of speakers, and through the selection of participants.

The ESF Conferences Unit is responsible for managing all the logistical aspects of the conference organisation, including the provision of an on-site secretariat.

Further information: www.esf.org/conferences