

EMBnet AGM2015

A new start

by Teresa K. Attwood

The successful events of the 2015 AGM were hosted by Pedro Fernandes at the [Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciencia](#), Oeiras (PT), 10-12 June. This was one of our most important meetings in recent years because i) having been in post for six years, most members of the Executive Board (EB) were obliged to step down, and ii) the assembled Board ratified a major new initiative to invest strategically in EMBnet's future.

The events included a full-day Operational Board (OB) meeting (10 June), the "Active Investment Strategy" workshop (11 June), and finally, the formal business meeting (12 June) – here, of the 25 paid-up members, 19 were present or represented by proxy.

Crucially, during the AGM, three nominations were made, and accepted, for new members to step up to the EB. In consequence, we warmly welcomed a new leadership team: Domenica D'Elia, Lubos Klucar, Emiliano Barreto and Erik Bongcam-Rudloff (whose term will end at the 2016 AGM). Given the scale of this change, it was agreed that Etienne de Villiers and Terri Attwood would remain affiliated with this team as part of an interim 'extended EB', to mentor the new



members and help implement and evaluate the success of the investment strategy.

In addition, as they have not functioned optimally in recent years, it was agreed that the Committees would not persist in their current guise; however, their interests will continue to be championed through Special Interest Groups (SIGs) led by Axel Thieffry, George Magklaras and Pedro Fernandes, representing EMBnet's publicity & public relations, technical and education/training needs respectively.

Importantly, the Board also unanimously endorsed the OB's proposals to i) hire an editorial assistant for one year to support the work of [EMBnet.journal](#), and ii) make a substantial donation to [GOBLET](#) in order to hire an assistant for two years, tasked with producing educational materials jointly branded and endorsed by GOBLET.

The progress made as a result of these investments will be reported monthly to the extended EB, and evaluated by the full Board at the next AGM. Collectively, these are very exciting steps forward, and we look forward to seeing how the journey develops in the years ahead.



Recent highlights from the CNR Institute for Biomedical Technologies: EMBnet Italy

by *Domenica D'Elia*

The CNR-ITB research team in Bari, Italy, was among the pioneers of bioinformatics research in Italy. As a founder member of EMBnet, it served as the national bioinformatics service hub from 1989, and has continued to do so for more than 20 years.

Alongside this primary role, the Institute was also the first in Italy equipped with a 454 ROCHE Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) platform. The advent of NGS technologies has completely transformed how research is performed, requiring multidisciplinary collaborations and establishment of strong interconnections between wet-lab and bioinformatics researchers.

The Italian EMBnet team comprises biologists (specialising in functional genomics and transcriptomics, cancer research, neurological diseases, organism evolution and phylogeny) and computer scientists, statisticians and bioinformaticians (specialising in the development of analysis algorithms, databases and platforms for integrative bioinformatics).

Thanks to this wide variety of competences, the Institute is able to carry out research in:

- biomedicine and biotechnology applications for cancer research, and identification of diagnostic and prognostic biomarkers for multiple sclerosis, Parkinson and Alzheimer syndromes;
- functional genomics and transcriptomics, including the most recent focus on expression profiling of non-coding RNAs for



functional studies on their role in human gene expression, and genome epigenetic modifications in virus- and viroid-infected plants;

- biodiversity, involving development of bioinformatics tools for rapid identification of species and metagenomics studies.

Notable recent highlights come from two research lines, one focused on a [strategy for p53 re-activation in chemo-resistant clear cell Renal Cell Carcinoma \(RCC\)](#), the other focusing on the study of cross-kingdom interactions between miRNAs from edible plants, and human gene targets involved in cancer and age-related diseases. These projects are revealing interesting insights that could have significant impacts on the clinical treatment of RCC, and on the development of biotechnology applications in nutraceutical research for preventive medicine.

We welcome collaboration with members of EMBnet; to learn more, please feel free to contact Domenica D'Elia at domenica.delia@ba.tib.cnr.it.



Elixir-Denmark: First Annual Danish Bioinformatics Conference

by Axel Thieffry



The First Annual Danish Bioinformatics Conference was held on 27-28 August 2015, in Odense, Denmark. Organised by [ELIXIR Denmark](#), this 200+ participant conference was also supported by the University of Copenhagen ([UCPH](#)), the Technical University of Denmark ([DTU](#)), the University of Southern Denmark ([SDU](#)) and Aarhus University ([AU](#)).

As one of the Nodes of ELIXIR (the pan-European initiative to build a sustainable infrastructure for biological information to support life-science research), the event ([#elixirdk](#)) provided the scientific community with an overview of the current state-of-the-art of bioinformatics and systems biology in Denmark.

The conference was organised around five main themes:

- Systems Biology and Medical Informatics,
- Proteomics Informatics,
- RNA Bioinformatics,
- Population Genetics, and
- Medical Genomics.



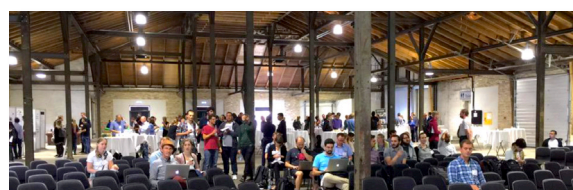
Picture @anttipursula

Poster sessions were organised to showcase the latest achievements in Danish

EMBnet.digest

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bioinformatics research areas and tools development. Students and early-stage researchers were also invited to join [CBIO Vikings](#), an ISCB Regional Student Group, to promote scientific interactions, collaborations and social networking.



Picture @vignirisberg

Of particular note, in an effort to bridge the gap between academia and industry, several private companies (Novo Nordisk, Exiqon and Novozymes) discussed the industrial view of Danish Bioinformatics, its challenges and opportunities.



Picture @axthief

Following the conclusion of this successful first conference, the second annual event has been scheduled to take place 25-26 August 2016.

