The EMBnet Annual General Meeting 2009 and EMBnet-RIBIO joint conference

Figure 1. Hotel Paradisus Riviera Cancun Resort: the reception area.

José R. Valverde

EMBnet/CNB, Centro Nacional de Biotecnología, CSIC. Madrid, Spain

Abstract

The 2009 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of EMBnet took place in the Mayan Riviera, Mexico, during the last week of October 2009 (http://www.EMBnet.org/en/EMBnet-RIBio2009/).This meeting was held together with the AGM of the Iberoamerican Bioinformatics Network, both sharing and participating equally in the associated Scientific meeting, which this year was centred on High Throughput Technologies and Systems Biology. Besides producing a sound scientific event, the 2009 AGMs of both Organisations have generated a wealth of exciting new initiatives that we all hope shall produce a major impact in Bioinformatics worldwide, such as the foundation of the new Iberoamerican Society of Bioinformatics (SOIBIO) and the agreement among major networks, societies and organizations from all over the world to launch an unprecedented coordination initiative.

Introduction

The Annual General Meeting of EMBnet for year 2009 (AGM09) took place at the Hotel Paradisus Riviera Cancun Resort, in the Mayan Riviera, Puerto Morelos, Quintana Roo, México, from October 26th to October 29th, 2009 and was organized in cooperation with the Iberoamerican Bioinformatics Network (RIBIO) which was also holding its AGM. ISCB provided sponsoring for the event in the form of travel funds for students/postdocs.

This has been the first time that EMBnet AGM has taken place outside Europe and marks a landmark in EMBnet activities, underscoring the compromise of EMBnet with addressing global Bioinformatics needs and helping promote and develop the discipline all over the world. This commitment was further supported by EMBnet invitation of representatives of major organizations, such as APBionet, ASCB, EMBL, ISCB, RIBIO and SANBio to attend the meeting.

The local organizers, and chairs of the meeting, Dr. Julio Collado-Vides, Cesar Bonavides-Martínez, both from the Mexican EMBnet node at CCG, Cuernavaca, Mexico, went to considerable efforts to make this a most comfortable and welcoming environment. They not only ensured that attendants had all their needs met, but also went to great pains to provide excellent support for the scientific activities planned around the AGMs of both networks, including a modernly equipped meeting room, poster areas, and the supply of both type I and type II coffee breaks, and an attractive non-scientific program – this included a visit to Xcaret and an unforgettable ethnic party around Deads' Day, where we enjoyed Mexican delicacies, partied and honoured our beloved deceased ones (Martin Sarachu and Julián Esquivel) in the most emotional Mexican style.

Organization of the event was managed through a joint international organizing committee composed of members of both convocating networks, and including Erik Bongcam-Rudloff, Domenica D'Elia, Oscar Grau, Lubos Klucar, Enrique Morett, Lucía López Bojórquez, Oswaldo Trelles, José R. Valverde and Ana-Tereza Vasconcelos.

As is usual, the AGMs of both Organisations were associated with relevant scientific events. This year, the scientific program opened with a RIBIO conference and an Integrative Workshop

Figure 2. The conference room.

on Bioinformatics and Systems Biology, chaired by M. Defrance, A. Medina and S. Sandoval.

The driving line for this year's scientific conference was "Bioinformatics for High Throughput Technologies and the Interface of Bioinformatics and Systems Biology". It was organized through the joint effort of a large international scientific committee composed of people from both EMBnet and RIBIO and spanning all the continents: T.K.Attwood, E. Barreto, E. Bongcam-Rudloff, S. Chohan, D. D'Elia, J. de las Rivas, N.-E. Erikson, A. Gisel, D. Holmes, L. Klucar, G. Magklaras, A. Orozco, E. Pérez Rueda, O. Trelles, E. Vallejo, J. R. Valverde and A. T. Vasconcelos.

The scientific committee took care of issuing the calls for papers, inviting guest speakers and selecting papers for their presentation, either orally or during the poster sessions, following the recommendations received from a stringent peer review process that made heavy use of electronic support tools offered by EMBnet.

In retrospect, the overall quality of the conference was excellent and the coverage of the topics addressed was -if not fully comprehensive- wide enough to give all participants a broad overview of the current state of the art, of emerging trends and future directions, and most importantly, spurred us to consider many new ideas, and to foster warm expectations and suggestions for cooperation at the subsequent EMBnet-RIBIO joint discussion session.

In addition to these events, this year's meeting was intended to address major issues in the current organization of Bioinformatics around the world. To this end, we invited representatives of major organizations to a joint strategic meeting, where we agreed on common strategies to be developed in the coming years that will hopefully help bring closer all the major communities in Bioinformatics and foster further cooperation. In addition to the mentioned events, this year meeting was intended to address major issues in the current organization of Bioinformatics around the world. To this end, we invited representatives of major organizations to a joint strategic meeting were we agreed on common strategies forward to be developed in the coming years that will hopefully help bring closer all the major communities in Bioinformatics and foster further cooperation.

A special EMBnet.news issue dedicated to the conference will be released soon. Here we provide just some pics which express the good feeling of all us enjoining this "expectacular" meeting!

Coordination activities

The fortunate outcome of the meeting of many excellence scientists for the business and coordination activities of EMBnet and RIBIO AGMs is an opportunity for promoting scientific exchange and cooperation that cannot be missed.

This year, we took advantage of this exceptional opportunity to take our collaboration one step further: we all felt that this was a great opportunity to increase our ties, not only among EMBnet and RIBIO, but also with other existing organizations (like ISCB or APBionet) and emerging networks (like African bioinformatics initiatives). To this end, we invited key people from these organizations to attend our meeting and participate in a special joint discussion session: here, we addressed the opportunities for collaboration and mutual support among all the organizations, possibly leading to a future, joint enterprises that may foster communications and cooperation at an unprecedented level, spanning the various geographic locations, professional interests and organizational approaches to coordination of Bioinformatics.

We are happy to report that this session was a success, where all participants agreed on pursuing this common coordination interest and to promote the enterprise within their respective organizations; we look forward eagerly to future developments in this area.

EMBnet Annual General Meeting

The proper business meeting of EMBnet was carried out at the end of the scientific events. This meeting was consciously kept short, achieving efficiency by only addressing topics that required direct member participation, leaving all other coordination and planning work for the monthly virtual general meetings we have been maintaining through videoconferencing for several years now.

Below, we share some news of general interest that emerged from this business meeting.

The AGM opened with an introduction by the chairman, Erik Bongcam-Rudloff and proceed-ed to the Welcome words by the local organisers, Cesar Bonavides and Julio Collado-Vides.

Figure 3. Cesar showing Erik how to manage difficult tasks.

The EMBnet constituency

The secretary, Laurent Falquet, called all member nodes to signify their presence. The assembly effectively consisted of 15 national nodes, 2 special nodes and 9 proxies (26 valid votes).

Present [voting right]:

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Finland, Greece, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Pakistan, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, IRLI-BECA – Kenya, IHCP/GMO.

Represented:

Australia (proxy to Nils Einar-Eriksson), China (proxy to Spain), Costa Rica (proxy to Spain), Hungary (proxy to Sweden), ICGEB (proxy to Argentina), Portugal (proxy to Italy), Russia (proxy to Switzerland), South Africa (proxy to Kenya), UMBER (proxy to Sweden).

Absent with apologies:

Belgium, Chile, France

Absent:

Canada, Cuba, India, Netherlands, Poland, MIPS, ETI, EBI

Observers or members of EMBnet committees, with no voting right:

Andreas Gisel (Italy), Nils-Einar Eriksson (TMPC chairman – Sweden), Jaufeerally-Fakim, Yasmina (Mauritius representative), Ezekiel Adebiyi (Covenant University, Nigeria)

Designation of the Election Committee

Andreas (IT) and Cesar (MX) were designated for the election committee

Approval of the Minutes of previous Business Meeting in Martina-Franca - Italy, September 2008

Approved without any objection.

Financial statement

The financial situation of EMBnet remains similar to previous years, with a limited budget for promoting activities. To this end, the treasurer made some recommendations that might help reduce expenses in benefit of the overall budget, and the point was raised that we need to be more proactive in ensuring appropriate processing of membership fees.

New applications for EMBnet membership

This year we received a formal application for a new EMBnet node from Nile University, Egypt, which was introduced by Erik Bongcam-Rudloff; an expression of interest to move the Australian node to South Wales University, Australia, introduced by Bruno Gaeta; and an expression of interest to apply for membership from CGPR, South Africa, which was also introduced by Erik Bongcam-Rudloff. All of these applications were accepted, and we want to express our appreciation for their interest and support, and our most warm welcome to them all. There is also an expression of interest in becoming an associated node from Covenant University, Nigeria until they obtain approval to become the national node, but formal paperwork was not complete before the AGM.

The constituency was reminded that the Associated Node status is a solution to become a member between AGMs and without official government support. It is also less expensive for those entities that have funding issues.

Confirmation of continued activity from temporarily inactive partners

The issue of active participation and how to deal with inactive partners in EMBnet was discussed next, bringing to the table the fact that there are

several nodes that are very silent (ETI, EBI, NL, CA, MIPS) but still pay their fees, and that furthermore, there are some other nodes have not paid for the last 3 years… (ICGEB, CU). These points are accompanied by bad news from Switzerland, Belgium and Australia, which are experiencing serious trouble to remain in EMBnet.

Switzerland will temporarily remain in a dormant status. In Belgium, the current node is being phased out and there is activity to define an appropriate alternative to assume its functions. Australia is also phasing out its current node and there is a proposal to switch it over to South Wales University.

Figure 4. EMBnet at the ethno party.

Reports

Following this discussion, nodes up for re-election were asked to produce activity reports introducing the work done at each of them during the period since the last review. Below, a summary is reported for each node.

Complete reports by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Greece, Pakistan, Spain, Sri Lanka, ILRI-BECA, UMBER and the SBI at South Wales University, are included in this issue as separate articles.

Argentina

Since the last review, a LiveCD with bioinformatic tools and wEMBOSS was produced by the late Martin Sarachu. The node's hardware has been upgraded to hold new services like MRS or Gold Sting. Argentina has acted as coordinator for the Iberoamerican Bioinformatics Network, organizing conferences and meetings and contributing to organize the previous joint conference EMBnet-RIBIO in Spain, 2007. The services available for users were described and span a wide

Figure 5. EMBnet-RIBIO ladies community!

array of tools for sequence analysis and assembly and macromolecular structure analysis, as well as related databases.

Australia

The University of Sydney has decided to close down the national bioinformatics services they have been delivering in the last 19 years for a reorganization, and plan on resurrecting the Centre in three years time. A proposal was brought to move the node to the Systems Biology Initiative at South Wales University, led by Bruno Gaeta and its inclusion as specialist node in the interim. Bruno is also assuming relevant roles in APBionet and ISCB.

The constituency expressed its sadness for missing Sonia Cattley and our most warm farewell and best wishes in her new assignments.

Brazil

The facilities available at the Brazilian node were described at large, with detailed descriptions of hardware and software services. The Brazilian node is distributed among various cooperating institutions.

The Computational Genomics Unit Darcy Fontoura de Almeida, led by Ana Tereza Ribeiro de Vasconcelos is associated to LNCC and has the purpose of integrating high throughput sequencing and bioinformatics analysis in a single centre. This unit is a national centre of excellence and reference in HTS with access to advanced laboratory equipment. The node has participated in numerous financed projects, launching new Bioinformatics networks and initiatives in the region. They have been producing copious publications and several courses on Genomics and Bioinformatics in addition to service delivery.

Fundaçao Oswaldo Cruz, FIOCRUZ, described its support, staff, services and activities, centered on proteomics and molecular modelling, and including hands on courses, online training and post-graduate programs, as well as research, development and dissemination activities with potential economic impact.

EMBRAPA, with its laboratory for Computational Biology has a long record doing research, training, development and delivering advanced protein sequence and structure analysis tools like Sting. They are active in running courses on computational biology and structural bioinformatics, developing databases and software, participating in projects and producing publications through extensive cooperation with other groups in the region.

Chile

In the last years, their activity has strengthened in Systems Biology and Bioinformatics with an impact in the local community, organizing Mathematical Modelling courses, obtaining major grants and engaging on a large number of collaborations bridging Mathematics, Life and Health Sciences, Proteomics and Biotechnology.

Colombia

CNIN provides bioinformatics tools, genomics databases, training and support for the Colombian research community. They have been developing in-house some tools like SINCO, BLA.id, ENKI or BLEE addressing topics like molecular identification, pharmaceutics or taxonomy for biodiversity. Besides organizing 6 courses, they have also organized workshops on Sequence Analysis, General Bioinformatics and Microarrays.

Costa Rica

Already reported last year, although an update was submitted this year, during which they have consolidated the Master's course on Medical and Systems Biology Bioinformatics, which is estimated to be ready for launching on 2010 and would become the first academic certification in Bioinformatics in Central America. Besides this, they have been active in dissemination, research, collaborations and the constitution of the Iberoamerican Bioinformatics Society.

Cuba

No report was received.

Greece

BRFAA delivered a short address presenting the activities organizing courses, participating in EMBnet committees and organizing workshops on topics like Bioinformatics, Statistics, Proteomics, Data Mining, Sequence Analysis, doing R+D and getting actively involved in core EMBnet initiatives like project proposals.

Hungary

The Hungarian node is currently undergoing a major overhaul as it is being moved to a new location, which has precluded Endre Barta from submitting a more detailed report in time,

India

No report was available

Mexico

A short oral presentation addressed the enhancements and work developed in Mexico, including involvement in Grid initiatives, dissemination efforts to bring Bioinformatics closer to society, large research initiatives, etc... and, of course, organization of the current AGM.

Netherlands

No report was available

Norway

In a short oral presentation, the Norwegian EMBnet platform was described, with the services it delivers, both public and to registered users, including access to bioinformatics tools, statistical systems (R+bioconductor), DBMS, etc. They also reported about training activities (centered on EMBOSS, PERL and MRS), participation in the organization of the HTS workshop to be celebrated in November and on their active participation in the TMPC of EMBnet. The scientific output obtained by the node was also enumerated as well as their future plans on EMBOSS and MRS.

Pakistan

Their report was produced in a short oral presentation where they reviewed their strong efforts to bring up Bioinformatics in Pakistan, their facilities and major achievements like the institution of a large program for the exchange of students, which is now yielding excellent results thanks to the support of other EMBnet nodes, organization of regular workshops for CIIT Biosciences faculty, active participation in reforming existing curricula, developing online resources (BIREC, http://www.birec.org) and organizing meetings.

Figure.6. EMBnet-RIBIO gentlemen community!

Poland

No report was available

Portugal

Pedro Fernandes sent a short note stating he is currently suffering health problems and apologizing for not being able to be more active at the moment, although he maintains his interest in being active on EMBnet committees.

South Africa (SANBI)

No report available.

Spain

The Spanish node has been active within EMBnet committees, organizing courses on Bioinformatics, Biostatistics, Molecular Dynamics, Quantum Biology and UNIX. It organized the 2007 AGM and has participated in many external courses and workshops both local and international on a variety of topics, and has been pursuing cooperation roads with other organizations, such as RIBIO and APBionet. It has also recently applied as coordinator for a new network on Free Software for the Life Sciences.

Sri Lanka

Activities were quickly summarized, including their strong efforts in organizing training and cooperation with other EMBnet nodes.

MIPS

No report was available.

ILRI-BECA

Their mission is to provide tools, database and services to east and central Africa as a centralized platform. They have been actively involved in research activities, workshop and conference organization, developing and testing the eBioUSB and eBioMacKit developed in Sweden, as well as

Figure 7. Mexican folk singers at the ethno party.

training and capacity building through courses on Bioinformatics, Perl, R, Proteomics, etc.., and dissemination and coordination initiatives to develop a Regional Student Group associated with ISCB.

EBI
No report was available.

UMBER
As a Specialist node its main role is in R+D, where they have been highly involved in many projects like EMBRACE, IMPACT, EuroKUP, etc... They continue providing support for PRINTS, CADRE the DbBrowser web server, UTOPIA and MINOTAUR data analysis tools. In addition they have joined the International Society for Biocuration, and have established a relationship with Portland Press.

Sweden
Although the Swedish node was not up for re-election, Erik reported their activity during this last year. The Swedish node is actively participating in many excellence projects like EMBRACE and ELIXIR, and has been highly collaborative with other nodes to promote joint activities, like Sri Lanka (bioinformatics clustering, conferences, exchanges), Kenya (workshops), China (WebLab), Pakistan (PhD student exchanges), etc.. In addition it has participated in EMBnet committees (TMPC, EB) and is organizing the upcoming NGS workshop in Rome with other institutions.

Voting
The reports were followed by a formal vote about their re-election or discharging from EMBnet. All nodes were re-elected except for Cuba, India, Netherlands, Poland, South Africa and MIPS, which will be up for re-election next year.

EMBnet activity reports
This year activity reports came packed with exciting achievements and news which we would like to summarize here.

Presentation of new candidate nodes
The delegates from candidate nodes were invited to present themselves, their projects and their current status (personnel, resources, expertise area, services, user base, etc.) in not more than 15 min.

Erik Bongcam gave the presentation for Egypt and CPGR (South Africa) and Bruno Gaeta for SW University. All of them were accepted and we want to express our appreciation for their interest and support and our most warm welcome to them all.

EMBnet activity reports
This year activity reports came packed with exciting achievements and news which we would like to summarize here.

Executive board report
Members and functions: Erik Bongcam-Rudloff (SE), chairman, Laurent Falquet (CH), secretary, Oscar Grau (AR), treasurer, Jose R. Valverde (ES), member.

We held 11 monthly VGMs since the last AGM; the usual schedule is the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 4pm CET. The number of participants can vary from 8 to more than 20. VGM minutes are sent by email to the admin list and deposited on the web site in PDF, usually within one week after the meeting. They can be found on the web site (using your private login): http://www.EMBnet.org/VGM-reports.

Actions by the EB (report by Erik Bongcam-Rudloff)
- EGI LS SSC participation in FP7 ROSCOE proposal
- HealthGrid membership
- Regular virtual meetings connected to the VGMs or when needed
- Support for Sri Lanka Master programme
- Support for the creation of the Mauritius Bioinformatics SanBio node
- Support for the ISCB Africa ASBCB Conference in Mali

- Financial support for the creation of an Intercontinental 'Umbrella` organization with the participation of RIBIO, SanBio, Beca, ASBCB, APBionet and EMBnet.
- Direct contact with the PCs when it was needed, EMBnet.news, etc
- Affiliated EMBnet to ISCB
- Support for PARADIGM COST proposal (which was sadly rejected)
- Help for creation of South American Bioinformatics society
- Support for submission of FreeBIT proposal (an Iberoamerican Free Software network for the Life Sciences).

E&T PC report (report by Matej Stano)
Members and functions: Vassilios Ioannidis (CH), chairman (leaving), Jingchu Luo (CN) treasurer, Sofia Kossida (GR), member, Matej Stano (SK), member.

Brief report by Matej, who indicated that after Vassilios left, all activities stopped. They are currently waiting for the constitution of the new committee, and need a new Chair to lead the work.

Matej mentioned his own developments of the their education system (a portal of practical bioinformatics in Slovakia) and EMBnet page on Slovak Wikipedia.

P&PR PC report (by Domenica D'Elia)
Members and functions: Pedro Fernandes (PT), chairman, Lubos Klukar (SK), secretary, Kimmo Mattila (FI), treasurer, Domenica D'Elia (IT), member. Brief report by Domenica D'Elia.
- Organization of 20th EMBnet conference
- BMC Bioinformatics supplement (2009, Vol. 10, Suppl 6) published as outcome of the Conference organized for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of EMBnet
- Publication of the article "The 20th anniversary of EMBnet: 20 years of bioinformatics for the Life Sciences community" in the BMC Bioinformatics supplement (v10, S6)
- OCS/OCJ systems from Public Knowledge Project are now in full production:
    - conference.EMBnet.org
    - journal.EMBnet.org
- Support in the organization of EMBnet/RIBio International conference & Meeting 2009
- EMBnet.news
    - Development of a new format
    - Addition of new sections
    - 5 issues producedDistribution of printed copies in many places and meetings.

- Guidelines for authors are now available on the web page
- Others:
    - Addition of EMBnet in Google maps
    - Wikipedia pages
    - A booklet describing EMBnet is deemed necessary
    - New quick guides:
        ° gLite 3 released
        ° mySQL, and AWK, by Nazim are on the works.

TM PC report (report by Nils-Einar)
Members: Nils-Einar Eriksson (SE), chairman, George Magklaras (NO), secretary, César Bonavides-Martínez (MX), member, Guy Bottu(BE), member, Emil Lundberg (NO), member.

Figure 8: Xcaret. Cancun's most amazing eco park.

At present the TMPC membership is being reconsidered, as Emil Lundberg, has been on leave since 2009-03-01. His functions were those of resident DNS/mail/Mac/UNIX guru. Guy Bottu was the MRS expert, but due to the current refurbishing of the node, Guy writes: '...I am available for giving some advice about subjects I know well, but I cannot engage in doing heavy work'. Nils-Einar Eriksson, is reaching the end of the second 3-year period as a TMPC member (up for re-election), he manages the EMBnet mail lists, takes care of some DNS-issues and does some system surveillance. He is now focusing on Next Generation Sequencing applications. Cesar Bonavides, reaching the end of the first 3-year period as a TMPC member is in charge of the EMBnet.org website, offers technical support for website users, helps other TMPC members when required (updating software or taking care of security issues) and tries to give/put a smile on other EMBnetters whenever he can. George

Magklaras is on his 4th year of its TMPC membership, George is our DNS/UNIX/Linux expert, addressing data security and RDBMS issues with the EMBnet.org website and specializing on data storage systems and large infrastructure (HPC) system administration.

Activities:
- Maintenance of the web site using Drupal
- Update the e-Learning web site
- Development of the backup system (advice about having a mirror system is taken and will be considered further)
- NGS approaches and participation in the organization of the Workshop in Rome next November.
- Work on analysis and deployment of distributed file systems. A summary and recommendation will be produced for the NGS workshop.

EMBnet related projects

Proposal for a committee on external relations
A proposal was raised for a new special committee to be created, dedicated to the creation of the Umbrella organization.

This proposal was accepted with unanimity.

The new committee will take care of contacts with other institutions, and pursuing funding proposals and finding partners. Work with the new Umbrella to be created between the societies and networks present in this AGM: APBionet, SANBio, RIBIO, EMBnet, ASBCB, ISCB.

Future Directions
Electronic voting system: this is a proposal that has been raised several times regarding the adoption of a voting system that could enable us to reach decisions with greater agility. An initial proposal to use the Ballotbin.com system was approved for first try as an interim solution until other options (Drupal) are studied, proposed and implemented by the TMPC (Nazim)

Alternative ways to raise EMBnet funds: this issue was discussed in a parallel session that took place separately in conjunction with representatives of other societies. A decision was taken to explore join ventures for creating an umbrella organization and prepare joint proposals to non-EU organizations and funding agencies.

PC goals for next year
PC goals have already been partially defined during reports and will be refined by new constituencies of each committee and presented in next VGMs with requests for funds needing approval.

New project proposals
Currently several proposals are ongoing and pending submission (e.g. ROSCOE) or evaluation (e.g. FreeBIT).

Figure 9: Bruno Gaeta presenting South Wales University activities and resources

Elections to positions inside the EMBnet Stichting

Elections were preceded by a short introduction where the topic of PCs constitution was addressed. The tradition was to have 4 members per committee, the Statutes or Bylaws do not impose any number – this meeting may decide upon number of members for each committee.

After consideration of vacancies and proposal of new members, candidates were voted resulting in the following changes to the various committees:
- **Executive Board:** Erik Bongcam-Rudloff, Laurent Falquet and Oscar Grau have left the EB. The new EB is now constituted by Terri Attwood, Andreas Gisel, Jose R. Valverde and Etienne de Villiers.
- **Education and Training:** Vassilios Ioannidis and Sonia Catley stepped down, and new members were elected, the committee is composed now of Sophia Kossida, Matej Stano, Jingchu Luo and Shahid Chohan.
- **Publications and Public Relations:** Andreas Gisel steps down to join the EB, and Martin Norling was elected. The committee now is composed of Pedro Fernandes, Domenica D'Elia, Lubos Klucar and Martin Norling.
- **Technical Management (R+D):** Guy Bottu leaves the committee, Nazim Rahman and Harald Dahle were elected to a full committee of Nils-Einar Erikson, Cesar Bonavides, George

Magklaras, Emil Lundberg, Nazim Rahman, Harald Dahle.

- **Foreign Relations:** this new committee is initially composed of Erik Bongcam-Rudloff and will be augmented with other members in future virtual general meetings.

Planning of EMBnet Virtual General Meetings

The monthly schedule of "Virtual General Meetings" (VGM) using the Marratech e-conferencing software proved adequate over the last year. A decision upon the periodicity of these meetings for next year, as well as a schedule of virtual meetings of the PCs was adopted to continue with the usual schedule (every second Tuesday of the month at 4pm CET).

Date and place of next EMBnet AGM meeting

Candidate nodes were welcome to present offers with as many details as possible: venue, date, facilities, connected scientific meeting or collaborative workshop, financial aspects, etc.

The date and place should be determined as soon as possible to organize properly. J. R. Valverde presented a proposal, seconded by Laurent Falquet that we start considering from now on planning AGMs two years in advance.

Matej Stano mentioned that Lubos is willing to organize next AGM. Pedro Fernandes could also do it next year. We had therefore two volunteers, but since none of the managers of these were present, we could not obtain more details.

Both candidates were asked to bring a detailed proposal with budget for the next regular VGM to be held on November 24th so a decision may be made as soon as possible.

Concluding remarks

The chairman thanked everybody for the good work and closed the meeting at 13:3

The AGM closed with an emotive farewell presentation by Laurent Falquet for the exiting chairman, Erik Bongcam-Rudloff.

Acknowledgements

First of all, we want to thank the organizing Networks and the Sponsors for their support, especially ISCB who contributed student/postdoc travel funding.

Figure 10. The AGM closed with an emotive farewell presentation by Laurent Falquet for the exiting chairman, Erik Bongcam-Rudloff.

A big thank you goes to the local organizers, Julio Collado-Vides, Cesar Bonavides-Martínez and Cristina Bojórquez for the huge efforts they made before, during and after the meeting to make this a most successful event. Their warm hospitality and meticulous care for details made this an unforgettable reunion of friends rather than a formal scientific meeting.

Thanks must be given as well to all the members of the Organizing and Scientific Committees, for their strenuous effort to successfully put together a high quality conference, to the session chairs, all the speakers, specially the key note speaker Chris Sander, and all the presenters of posters, whose excellent work has made this a brilliant scientific event.

We also want to thank the members of other networks, societies and organizations that attended the meeting: Chris Sander, Bruno Gaeta, Ezekiel Adebiyi, Yasmina Jaufeerally-Fakim, and many others... as well as to all those who intended to come but could not make it to the meeting due to other commitments, and to all of our colleagues of the former South American Bioinformatics Network (RIBIO), and now Sociedad Iberoamericana de Bioinformática (SOIBIO).

Finally, of course, we want to give a big thank you to all the participants in this meeting who contributed with their work and friendliness to make it a successful event.