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Welcome to the First FEMS Congress!

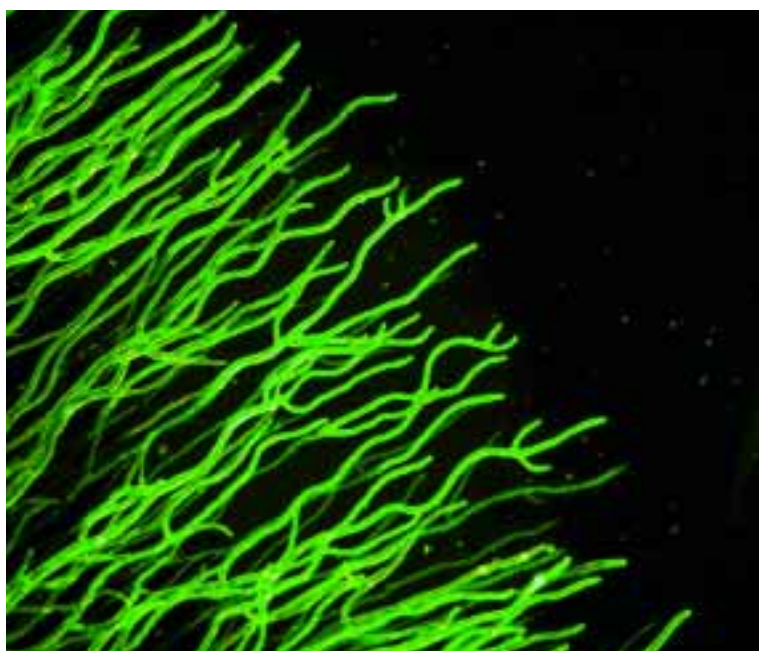
FEMS organizes its first Pan-European congress of microbiologists in Ljubljana, Slovenia, June 29 –July 3, 2003. The president of FEMS, Dr Hans Trüper, the organizing committee and the program committee invite you to participate in this unique opportunity for mutual scientific exchange between scientists of all Europe.

The program of the congress has now been completed as far as the morning symposia are concerned. The congress will be opened with a lecture by Dr Rolf Zinkernagel, **Swiss Nobel laureate**, with a talk on "immune protection", and be closed by the **IUMS president** Dr Julian Davis, Canada, with a talk on "The biology of small molecules". Plenary lectures in the morning will introduce major fields, followed by the symposia in which internationally recognized scientists provide up-to-date information on the latest developments. We have organized **15 symposium sessions**, covering food biotechnology, food safety, prokaryotic evolution and systematics, microbial diversity, metabolic engineering of microbes, emerging pathogens, modern diagnostic methods, development of new antibiotics against resistant bacteria, stress in microbes, microbial physiology and biochemistry, environmental microbiology, microbial interactions, functional genomics, fungi in medicine and biotechnology, and highlights in virology.

The subjects covered in the plenary sessions and symposia in the mornings are complemented by more specialized sessions in the afternoons. Contributions to these sessions and to the poster sessions are selected from the submissions that we received in December and January. Recent issues of science development and politics are discussed at Round Tables in the evenings. Of course, also a social program has been organized, and Ljubljana and its magnificent surroundings welcome you all to enjoy some summer days in the charming heart of Southern Europe.

Now we want to invite you to register for this special event as soon as possible; registration before 30 April 2003 will be accepted at reduced fees. Detailed information on the congress and the registration procedure is available in the second announcement that has been distributed end November 2002. You find all information also online at <http://www.fems-microbiology.org/congress2003.htm>. Hope to see you in Ljubljana!

Dr Bernhard Schink, Program Committee.



Aspergillus oryzae expressing the green fluorescent protein GFP
(R. te Biesebeke et al., *FEMS Yeast Research* 2 (2002) 245–248)

FEMS Meetings Calendar

2003

Assessing the Variability in Aquatic Microbial Populations: Facts and Fiction

2003 February 16–20
Mondsee, Austria

International Conference on the Molecular Biology and Biotechnology of Ciliates and Anaerobic Protozoa

2003 March 4– 6
Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Cold Adaptations of Aquatic Micro-organisms

2003 May 11–14
Bremen, Germany

11th European Workshop on Bacterial Protein Toxins (ETOX-11)

2003 June 28–3 July
Praha, Czech Republic

1st FEMS Congress of European Microbiologists

2003 June 29–July 3
Ljubljana, Slovenia

Bacillus 2003: Applications and Systematics of Bacillus and Relatives

2003 June 30–1 July
Ljubljana, Slovenia

Central European Symposium on Antimicrobial Resistance (CESAR-2003)

2003 July 4– 7
Brijuni, Croatia

21st International Conference on Yeast Genetics and Molecular Biology (ICYGMB-21)

2003 July 7–12
Göteborg, Sweden

Continued on page 2



Registration for the first FEMS Congress is possible either electronically or by downloading the registration form, printing it, filling it out and sending it to the congress address:

Cankarjev Dom
Cultural and Congress Center (for FEMS Congress 2003)
Presernova 10, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
Fax: +386-1-241 72 96

<http://www.fems-microbiology.org/congress2003.htm>

Bringing Scientists Together

The FEMS-sponsored Workshop on Molecular Pathogenesis of Marek's Disease and Avian Immunology was held in Limassol, Cyprus, 6-11 October 2002. It was the first scientific meeting that gathered two groups of scientists who held separate scientific meetings until now: the virologists and molecular biologists involved in the Marek's disease research on one hand, and the avian immunologists on the other. During the last 2-3 years more mutual interest became evident between the two groups. One reflection of that trend was mirrored by the participation of Dr Davidson, a MDV virologist, in the European Consortium Group of scientists that collaborate in the context of the 5th EU-RTD, and is formed of MDV virologists, molecular biologists and researchers of avian immunology. Professor Heller, who is a well-known avian immunologist, had been involved in the study of avian cytokines, and included MDV as the virus of interest with respect to the chicken immunological response. The meeting included 74 oral presentation and 17 posters.

A Thematic Issue based on this Workshop will be published in *FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology in 2003*.

Organizers: Dr Irit Davidson (Israel), Prof. Dan Heller (Israel) and Dr Robert Silva (USA).



Professor Heller (left) and Dr Davidson at the LeMeridian hotel in Limassol

FEMS Council Meeting 2002



Old road from Ephesus to the sea.

The Princess Hotel in Izmir, Turkey, provided excellent facilities for the meetings of Council, The Executive Committee and the Congress Organising Committee in early October. Professor Ang, our Turkish delegate, and his colleagues in the Turkish Microbiological Society had arranged the meetings and accommodation. FEMS is grateful to Professor Ang and his colleagues for their kindness and hospitality. The Council Banquet, kindly hosted by the Turkish Society, will long be remembered by the delegates and officers, as will the evening reception, held in the roof-top gallery of the Hilton Hotel and graced by a most spectacular sunset.

Council faced a very full agenda. Highlights included the admission of the Society of Microbiologists of Ukraine as an **Affiliated Society** and the Romanian Society for Microbiology as a **Full Member**. The year so far had gone reasonably well for the Federation in spite of the fall in share values, which had adversely affected many charities. We had been helped considerably by increased royalty income.

Expenditure on grants had been maintained with **41 Fellowships** and **113 Young Scientist Grants** awarded. A substantial grant had also been made to the IUMS Congress in Paris. A new initiative was announced: starting in 2003 ten FEMS Stipends of 500 euros will be available for post-graduate students in NIS/CEEC countries to enable them to continue studying in their own countries.

Council approved a small increase in the membership fee, from 1.25 euros to 1.4 euros per society member. The membership fee had not been increased for eight years although services to members had increased dramatically during that period.

Dr Peter Raspor was elected for a second term of office as Secretary General and **Dr Maurice Lock** was elected to the post of Treasurer to replace the present Treasurer, Dr John Norris, when he retires in September 2003.

With the expansion in FEMS activities now taking place it was decided that the nature of our

FEMS Meetings Calendar

Enzymes in the Environment: Activity, Ecology, and Applications

2003 July 14-17

Praha, Czech Republic

11th International Congress on Molecular Plant-Microbe Interaction

2003 July 18-27

St. Petersburg, Russia

3rd European Phycological Congress (EPC-3)

2003 July 21-26

Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom

23rd International Specialised Symposium on Yeasts: Interactions between Yeasts and Other Organisms (ISSY-23)

2003 August 26-29

Budapest, Hungary

6th International Meeting on Microbial Epidemiological Markers (IMMEM-6)

2003 August 27-30

Les Diablerets, Switzerland

12th International Workshop on Campylobacter, Helicobacter, and Related Organisms (CHRO-2003)

2003 September 6-9

Aarhus, Denmark

Transformation and DNA Repair

2003 September 7-10

Oslo, Norway

Management and Control of Undesirable Micro-organisms

2003 September 15-18

Manchester, United Kingdom

Full information on these and other grant-receiving meetings at:

www.fems-microbiology.org
> Events > FEMS Meetings

membership regulations should be re-examined with a view to rationalizing them and allowing the introduction of new categories of membership to enable the Federation to build more effective links with other bodies such as industry and governmental agencies. A small working party was established to examine this issue and report back to Council.

Naturally a great deal of time was spent discussing plans for the **First FEMS Congress of European Microbiologists**. This promises to be an exciting, not-to-be-missed, event covering a wide range of topics.

Nominations were invited for the next Vice-President and for the FEMS Lwoff Medal Award.

As is usual on these occasions excursions were arranged to enable delegates and officers and accompanying persons to see something of the host country. Visits to Pergamon and Ephesus were greatly enjoyed by small parties who marveled at the extensive Roman remains. Some even bought carpets on the way home!

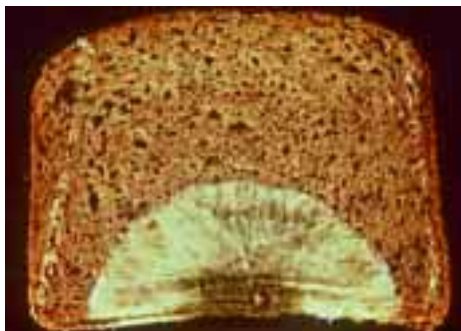
Dr John R. Norris, FEMS Treasurer.

Next Council will be held in Ohrid, Macedonia on September 20, 2003

How Important is the Home Hygiene?

Home hygiene is the sum of all measures used to prevent infection and the transfer of infectious agents within the home environment. Transmission of infection in the home can occur in a number of ways such as direct contact with infected people, self-infection from the body's own flora as well as indirectly through water, food, contaminated surfaces and pets. It has been estimated that approximately 20% of the population including neonates, geriatrics, pregnant mothers and immune-compromised patients may be classified a high-risk or "at risk" group (Gerba et al., 1996; Bloomfield, 2001). Several studies have shown high levels of microbial contamination in the home such as kitchen, bath and laundry.

Pathogens found in the home are usually brought in on raw contaminated food such as meat, raw milk, vegetables, in particular micro-organisms most commonly implicated in food-poisoning like *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and



Example of mould.

Listeria. Foodborne diseases are predominantly related to poor hygiene in the kitchen. In contact with the food an eye is to be kept on an appropriate hygiene in the household kitchen. Particular attention should be given to the preparation of poultry and the contact with raw eggs and raw milk. Many studies have demonstrated that during the preparation of chicken the surrounding work surfaces become contaminated with pathogens like *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*.

The presence of **pets** means an elevated infection risk in the house, above all in the kitchen and bathrooms. Even if the animals are healthy, they can function as carriers of *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and *Toxoplasma gondii*. High levels of contamination on the paws of dogs and cats have been found and it has been concluded that, for example, dogs may serve as a source of salmonella, especially in contact with children (Morse et al., 1976; Wall et al., 1996). Cat-scratch disease is an infection



Example of mould.

caused by *Bartonella henselae* carried in cat saliva. Households with kittens have higher rates of infection. If the kittens have fleas, the infection rate is even higher. The bacteria can be passed from a cat to a human.

In the **bathroom**, washbasins, bathtub, and shower cubicle should be more frequently cleaned. The towels should often be exchanged and hung in such a way that they dry fast. Other researchers have found a strong link between people who are sensitive to moulds that grow on surfaces in the home and cause asthma attacks (Zureik et al., 2002). Optimum air quality should be maintained by prevention of dust and surface contamination. Regular cleaning of surfaces where mould is likely to grow is important to prevent accumulation to levels that may become hazardous. As a temporary measure, moulds should be wiped away with a diluted solution of bleach and areas of mould growth treated with approved products.

Laundry: Clothing, bed-linen, towels and other objects, that have direct contact with the body, represent a high level of contamination with faecal, skin-borne or other pathogens. They should be laundered at 60°C or more, or at 40-60°C using an activated bleach-containing powder. The detergent compartment is to be cleaned regularly to stop the microbial growth. Otherwise, moulds, whose spores can contaminate the moist laundry, grow easily. Where an infected or carrier person is present in the home, laundry may become contaminated and carries a risk of transfer during the laundry process.

Young children: In order to avoid infections, particular attention should be given to the nappy hygiene and the hygiene of the feeding utensils. Feeding utensils like dishes and spoons should be decontaminated by boiling. Spills of body fluids from children, such as nasal and eye discharges, saliva, urine and vomit, also faeces, should be cleaned and disinfected.

Pregnant women are faced with a series of risks in the home environment. *Listeria*

monocytogenes is common in the domestic setting and may be found outside the kitchen, particularly in wet areas. Toxoplasmosis represents a significant problem. Pregnant women should take precautions to avoid contact with or cross-infection from cats that sometimes harbour this pathogen. Through infection with one of these causes, it can do irreversible damages to the unborn foetus or to the mother's health.

Older and suffering people: According to WHO by 2025, there will be more than 800 million people over 65 years old in the world, two-thirds of them in developing countries (WHO 1998). Also the number of those looked after in domestic surroundings is growing. Frequent problems are, for example, incontinence and, in particular, laundry hygiene.

Immunocompromised patients discharged from hospital into the home and persons infected with HIV living at home are at increased risk for all types of infection. Cancer patients are at higher infection risk because of chemotherapies that suppress the immune system massively.

Overall, evidence suggests that comprehensive guidelines on all aspects of home hygiene would be a valuable aid in educating hygiene professionals and the public on microbiological risk in the home environment and the way in which this risk might be reduced through improvements in home hygiene. In 1998, as a first step in improving home hygiene standards, the International Scientific Forum on Home Hygiene (IFH) produced a set of guidelines for home hygiene. IFH have also now produced a set of "Recommendations" which detail the procedures to be used where a hygiene risk is identified (www.ifh-homehygiene.org).

Prof. Dr. Mohammad Manafi.
Hygiene Institute, University of Vienna, Austria.

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YOUNG RESEARCHER'S CORNER

Three Months in Freiburg



Dr Ivan Berg

Our laboratory in Moscow is interested in the question how *Rhodospirillum rubrum* assimilates acetate when key enzymes of the glyoxylate cycle are missing. We have proposed the operation of a new cyclic pathway of acetate oxidation to glyoxylate. However, a detailed study of enzymes involved in this cycle still has not been carried out because our laboratory does not

have the necessary equipment. Therefore, we initiated cooperation with the laboratory of Prof. Fuchs in Freiburg (Germany) and, owing to a FEMS Fellowship; I spent three months there, from April 10 to July 3, 2002. In these three months I received the necessary results, based on which we are now writing a paper.

This visit provided me with a great opportunity for scientific work, but it also gave me a chance to see Freiburg. Freiburg is a beautiful city, with an amazing nature, friendly people and very nice wines. It lies in the heart of Europe, near the border of Germany, Switzerland and France.

Fellowships like FEMS Fellowship play an important role. They not only enhance cooperation between laboratories in different countries in Europe, but also help to support science in countries like Russia. Unfortunately, Russia does not have enough resources to

finance scientific studies nowadays. Quite often cooperation with foreign laboratories is the only opportunity for our scientists to do research at a modern level. In conclusion, I would like to express my hope that future continuation of such cooperation will help Russia to preserve different scientific schools and qualified specialists, for the time, when Russia will overcome the economic crisis.

Dr Ivan Berg.
Department of Microbiology, Biology Faculty,
Moscow State University, Russia.

Online Submission Expands

Because of the considerable benefits and advantages of electronic submission over traditional methods, FEMS introduced online submission and peer review in 2002. Now in 2003 FEMS offers Manuscript Central®, by ScholarOne, for her complete set of journals, including the rapid turnaround journal FEMS Microbiology Letters. For more information and to submit a manuscript through this system go to <http://fems.manuscriptcentral.com> and check the Instructions and Forms icon for detailed submission instructions.

FEMS Yeast Research is now Covered by ISI

FEMS youngest journal, FEMS Yeast Research, is entering its third year and third volume. FEMS Yeast Research has been accepted by ISI and is added to Science Citation Index as well as Current Contents (Agriculture, Biology and Environmental Sciences).

If you have not already signed up to receive an e-mail alert when new issues of FEMS Yeast Research are available, you can register for ContentsDirect. ContentsDirect is the FREE e-mail alerting service that delivers Elsevier Science book and journal tables of contents directly to your PC and provides links to full text of journal content if your institute subscribes to ScienceDirect. Register online via: <http://contentsdirect.elsevier.com>.

Grant Applications

Applications for Research Fellowships should be submitted to the FEMS Delegate for approval. The Delegate will then submit approved applications to FEMS. Deadline for receipt at FEMS Central Office: 1 December and 15 June.

Applications for Meeting Grants should be submitted to the FEMS Delegate of a society in the country where the meeting takes place for approval. Deadline for receipt at FEMS Central Office: 1 March of the preceding year.

Applications for Young Scientists Meeting Grants by young scientists wishing to attend selected FEMS Meetings should be submitted to the meeting organisers. The organisers will then forward the applications to FEMS.

Detailed Regulations and Application Forms are available at the FEMS website: www.fems-microbiology.org.

ScienceDirect Features FEMS Backfiles

The Immunology and Microbiology backfile collection of ScienceDirect comprises 56 journals, the oldest title dating as far back as 1962. Top titles included are Vaccine, Journal of Immunological Methods, Journal of Virological Methods, Molecular and Biochemical Parasitology and the FEMS journals.

For the FEMS journals, the backfile year ranges are:

- FEMS Microbiology Letters: 1977–1994
- FEMS Microbiology Reviews: 1985–1994
- FEMS Microbiology Ecology: 1985–1994
- FEMS Microbiology Immunology (continued as FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology): 1988–1992
- FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology (continued from FEMS Microbiology Immunology): 1993–1994

The journals in the collection trace important developments across the breadth of basic and applied immunology, microbiology, virology and parasitology.

Benefits for researchers in these fields:

- Complete collection from 1994 back to Volume 1, Issue 1
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- Sophisticated search options and personalization features
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In Order to Move Forward, You Sometimes Have to Take a Step Back (<http://www.sciencedirect.com>)

Further News about the Journals

New Chief Editor FEMS Microbiology Letters

After seven years Dr Fergus Priest (Edinburgh, Scotland, UK) retired as Chief Editor FEMS Microbiology Letters. Together with the introduction of the new online submission system, a new Chief Editor has started, Dr Jeff Cole from Birmingham University, UK.

Online subscription still available

Every member of our European microbiological societies is in 2003 entitled to receive the five FEMS journals online at only 120 Euro. You can find a downloadable form on the FEMS Website, at: www.fems-microbiology.org.

FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology now also has a MiniReviews Editor, i.e. Dr Willem van Leeuwen from Erasmus MC, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Two new Editors are appointed for FEMS Microbiology Ecology: Dr Max Häggblom (Rutgers, New Brunswick, USA) and Dr Konny Smalla (Braunschweig, Germany).

A selection of the Thematic Issues that will appear in 2003 are as follows.

FEMS Microbiology Reviews

Bacterial Interactions with Metals

FEMS Microbiology Ecology

Aquatic Microbial Ecology (8th SAME, October 2002, Italy)

Subsurface Microbiology

(2002 ISSM, September 2002, Denmark)

FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology

An issue from 8th International Symposium on Yersinia (September 2002, Finland)

An issue from 3rd International Workshop on Molecular Pathogenesis of Marek's Disease and Avian Immunology (October 2002, Israel)

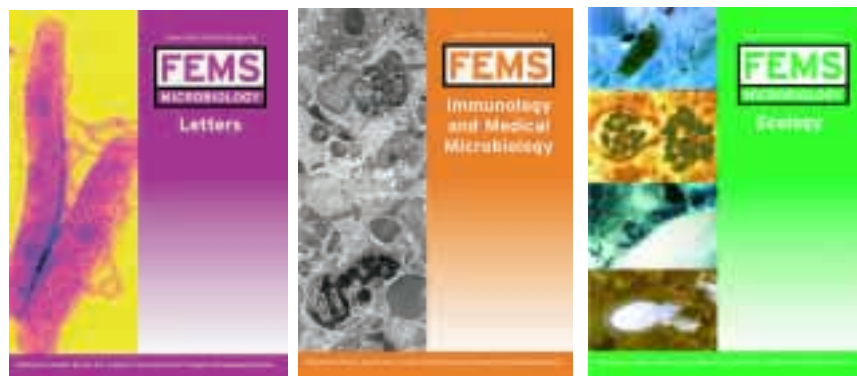
An issue from The Versatility of Listeria Species (October 2002, Turkey)

FEMS Yeast Research

An issue about Yeast Fermentations from the 22nd ISSY (March 2002, South Africa)



The new covers for the FEMS journals in 2003.



Impact of the EU FP6 Program on Microbiology

The European Union (EU) Sixth Framework program (FP6) for research for 2003–2006 succeeds FP5 and its scope is now defined. The FP6 program as it stands today is the way for the EU and the European Research Area (ERA) to promote research in Europe. The new project types – or instruments – introduced with the FP6 represent a drastic change. The **Integrated projects (IP)** and the **Networks of Excellence (NoE)** both aim at much larger projects with more collaborators than those we know from FP5. The IPs shall generate new knowledge, while the NoEs are expected to coordinate and structure research throughout Europe. The intention is that these extensive networks shall already make up a large proportion of FP6 from the First call and partly run in parallel with some of the project forms known from the FP5.

An IP should be ambitious and goal oriented and will contain three components – research, networking and training & mobility – within a common integrated management structure. At least 3 partners from at least 3 EU- or EU-associated countries are required to make up an IP and the duration of the projects will be 3–5 years. To help ensure critical mass, an IP should contain a minimum of 150 researcher-years effort, containing the top European research centres in the field. The large constellations that make up NoEs will provide relatively small amounts of funding per person (will cover travelling and meetings).

The research community was invited to influence the priorities among the thematic areas in FP6 by submitting their **Expressions of Interest (Eoi)** before June 7, 2002. More than 13 000 Eois were submitted, and they were grouped and evaluated throughout the summer and fall sessions. The content of FP6 and the research topics that were selected for the First call and indicated for the Second call, have been influenced by various inputs including the analysis of the Eois of 2002. The final form of FP6 was nailed on November 11–13, 2003 in Brussels.

Among the activity areas of priority in FP6 the topics “Genomics and health”, “Food quality and safety” and “Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems” stand out as the most relevant for microbiology.

The main objectives of the **Genomics and health** part of the program is integrating post-genomic research into the more established biomedical and biotechnological approaches. The thematic areas of the subsection a) “Advanced genomics and its application for health” include “gene expression and proteomics, structural genomics, comparative genomics and population genetics, bioinformatics and multidisciplinary functional genomics approaches to basic biological processes”. Subsection b) “Combating major diseases” will focus on “genomic approaches to major diseases and confronting the major communicable diseases linked to poverty”. The indicative budget allocated to “Genomics and health” for the duration of FP6 is 2255 mEuro.

The second thematic area where microbiology is important is **Food quality and safety** to assure health and well-being of European citizens through a better understanding of the influence of food intake and environmental factors on human health. The thematic areas encompass “epidemiology of food-related, impact of food on health, traceability processes all along the production chain, methods of analysis, detection and control, safer and environmentally friendly production methods and technologies and healthier foodstuffs, impact of animal feed on human health and environmental health risks”. The budget for the “Food quality and safety” is 685 mEuro.

The third area where microbiology is particularly relevant for is “Sustainable development, **global change and ecosystems**”. Among the thematic areas involved are “biodiversity, natural disasters, operational modelling and complementary research”. This subsection is budgeted to 700 mEuro.

For the microbiology worker there should be reasonable opportunities for funding provided that relevant focus and prominent networks and alliances are established.

Considering the emergence of FP6 and its consequences for microbiology, in making proposals for FP6 funding, it will be important for **members of FEMS societies** to bear in mind the nature and requirements for the new instruments. Networking between strong alliance partners, which highlight how complementary expertise within the networks will promote new synergies, and outcome is more important than ever. All FP6 activities are implemented through calls for proposals, and the First call was announced on 17 December 2002. **The Application deadline for the First call is in March 2003.**

Dr Tone Tønjum.
Centre for Molecular Biology and Neuroscience and Institute of Microbiology, University of Oslo, Rikshospitalet, Oslo, Norway.

FP6 – Priority thematic areas of research Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area (ERA)

- **Genomics and biotechnology for health**
- Information Society Technologies
- Nanotechnologies and nanosciences, knowledge-based multi-functional materials and new production processes and devices
- Aeronautics and space
- **Food Quality and Safety**
- Sustainable developments, **global change and ecosystems**
- Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-based society

Important websites

Cordis: www.cordis.lu/fp6/home.html

Europa-server: www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/nfp.html

Expression of Interest: www.cordis.lu/fp6/eoi-instruments/home.html

(advertisement)

BioNumerics

The study of massive amounts of biological information is called bioinformatics

The universal solution is called BioNumerics

BioNumerics is an integrated software package that will import and analyze all possible experiment types employed for characterization: electrophoresis patterns, chromatography profiles, phenotypic test panels, micro-arrays, DNA and protein sequences, etc.

Analysis functions include polymorphism analysis of fingerprints, powerful clustering and phylogeny, principal components analysis, multi-dimensional scaling, neural networks, MANOVA, identification with libraries, evaluation of congruence between techniques, and much more.

BioNumerics offers an impressive list of unique features, such as multiphase clustering based on multiple data sets, database protection and quality management, history recording, ODBC compatibility, database sharing tools, client-server database exchange over internet, just to name a few.

Applied Maths

Kestraat 120, 9830 Sint-Martens-Latem, Belgium
512 East 11th Street, Suite 207, Austin, Texas 78701, U.S.A.

www.applied-maths.com

Power of Microbes in Industry and Environment

In the days of global processes of joining scientific efforts, particularly in the field of life sciences, regional cooperation is important, especially for smaller countries with still developing scientific potential, such as mid-European transition countries. Having this in mind, microbiological societies of three countries decided to extend their collaboration through a joint symposium "Power of microbes in industry and environment", held June 7-9, 2002 in Opatija, Croatia. Symposium topics covered all aspects of industrial and environmental microbiology, as well as food microbiology. 159 participants from Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, but also from other seven European countries exchanged their experience during working sessions, excellent lectures and poster discussions.

An excursion through the south of Istria, which ended in one of typical Istrian restaurants (see photo), appeared to be an inspiration for further ideas. As a result, the first issue of the journal **Food Technology and Biotechnology** in 2002 will be dedicated to papers related to the work presented at the Symposium.



Janos Minarovits (Hungarian FEMS representative), Peter Raspor, Dusko Ehrlich (Director of INRA, France) and Vlado Mrsa wear jerseys from the Croatian football team since Croatia won over Italy at the World Cup.

The International Conference **Role of Antropogenic and Natural Pathogens in Infectious and Noninfectious Human Diseases. Medical and Ecological Aspects** was held in Minsk, Belarus, from October 8 to 9, 2002. The Conference was organized by the Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Belarus, the Belarusian Research Institute for Epidemiology and Microbiology (**BRIEM**), and the Belarusian Medical Research Society of Epidemiologists, Microbiologists and Parasitologists (BMRSEMP) with the support of School of Medicine, University of California, Davis (USA).

VAAM Annual Congress

The next annual congress of the VAAM (Vereinigung für Allgemeine und Angewandte Mikrobiologie) will take place in Berlin, Germany, March 23-26, 2003, under the title "from molecules to cells - information processing in microbes". Internationally recognized scientists from Germany and abroad will give plenary sessions in the mornings. In the afternoons free contributions in oral sessions and posters are welcome. The congress language is English. More detailed information is available at www.ctw-congress.de/vaam.

Hans G. Trüper Received Honorary Doctoral Degree from the University of Bremen, Germany



Hans G. Trüper (left) on the campus of Bremen University, together with the Dean of the Faculty of Biology and Chemistry, Prof. Dr. Ulrich Fischer.

The president of FEMS, Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Dr. phil. Hans Georg Trüper, was awarded the degree of an honorary doctor by the faculty of Biology and Chemistry of the University of Bremen on October 22, 2002.

Hans Trüper was born in a village close to Bremen, and maintained close linkages to Bremen all through his life. He studied biology in Marburg and Göttingen, and received a doctoral degree in microbiology in 1964, with a thesis on "CO₂ fixation and intermediary metabolism in *Chromatium*

okenii" in Göttingen. After postdoc stays in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and Athens, Georgia, he returned to Göttingen where he obtained his habilitation in 1971. He became professor of microbiology at Bonn University in 1972 where he was director of the Institute for Microbiology and Biotechnology over the last 30 years. Parallel to his activities as full professor and institute director, he studied history in Bonn and completed a further doctoral degree in medieval history in 1998 at the University of Vechta, with a thesis on the origin and social development of the lower nobility in the archbishopric of Bremen. The honorary degree was awarded to him recognizing his specific achievements in general microbiology (especially in the fields of microbial sulfur metabolism, osmoregulation by compatible solutes, bacterial taxonomy and nomenclature). Several congratulation addresses emphasized his multiple talents in biology and chemistry as well as in history and humanities, his multilingual abilities, and his aptitude to communicate with people of so many different cultural backgrounds. Both his former doctoral advisors and several of his former students attended the promotion ceremony, which was framed by the performance of music pieces of late baroque Bremen composers.

Dr Bernhard Schink.
Universität Konstanz, Germany.

Quality Control for Molecular Diagnostics

Five years ago the European Society for Clinical Virology was founded from a merger of the European Society against Virus Diseases (ESAVD) and the European Group for Rapid Viral Diagnosis (EGRVD).

From the beginning the new Society became very popular among Clinical Virologists throughout Europe, resulting in about 700 members at this moment. Recently several new developments took place. It has been decided that the ESCV will be registered as a Charity under UK law.

The **ESCV** is increasingly involved in joint meetings with other, often more specialized, organizations such as meetings on Molecular Diagnostics (Scheveningen, October 2001 and 2003), and the European Meeting on Chronic Hepatitis (Lyon, August 2003). Furthermore, the ESCV will participate in the meeting of the Asian-Pacific Society for Medical Virology in Kuala Lumpur (December 2003).

Many ESCV members are actively involved in a new program called Quality Control for Molecular Diagnostics (<http://www.qmcd.org>), which is supported by the ESCV, ESCMID, and different manufacturers of molecular diagnostic kits. Recently, proficiency panels have been distributed for the detection of HBV, HIV, HCV, enterovirus, HSV, CMV, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, and *Chlamydia trachomatis*. We advice all laboratories routinely performing diagnostic amplification assays to participate in this program.

Dr Jurjen Schirm.
President of ESCV (<http://www.escv.org>).

International Symposium on Culture Collections

During 24 and 25 October 2002, an International Symposium on Culture Collections, organized by the Spanish Type Culture Collection (CECT), was held in the Botanical Garden of the University of Valencia (Spain) under the auspices of the **Spanish Society for Microbiology (SEM)**. The Spanish Ramon Areces Foundation sponsored it. Microbiologists attending the Symposium were given 16 lectures about the history, organization and services of the culture collections all over the world. The role of culture collections in the maintaining of microbial strains, in microbiological patents, medical microbiology, genetics, biochemistry, food technology and hygiene and in bacterial, yeast and fungal taxonomy was explained as well.

Visit the new website of The British Mycological Society's at www.britmycolsoc.org.uk.



British Mycological Society promoting fungal science

SIGURDSSON (1913–1959): Crucial in the Rescuing of the Icelandic Farming Industry

Dr Björn Sigurdsson made several major contributions to microbiology, some of which have left a lasting impact. His name is irrevocably associated with the first critical steps taken in the understanding of retrovirology. Today, he is best known for being the first to characterize slow virus infections.

Dr Sigurdsson was born into a large family in a small farmhouse, Vedramót, in Skagafjörður, Iceland, on March 3, 1913. Within this small farming community, his family had a reputation for good farming practices and generous social activities. He received his M.D. Degree from the **University of Iceland** in 1937. Subsequently, he sailed to Copenhagen for postgraduate studies at the Carlsberg Fund Institute for Biology and at the Danish Institute for Serology where, until 1940, he studied and did research in microbiology and pathology. Following an internship at the University Institute of Pathology in Reykjavík, he transferred to the **Rockefeller Institute in Princeton, NJ**, specializing in animal and plant virology from 1941–1943. He defended his doctoral thesis on paratuberculosis of sheep, new diagnostic methods and development of a killed protective vaccine, at the **University of Copenhagen** in 1955.

After returning to the Institute of Pathology in Iceland in 1943, Dr Sigurdsson worked, besides his research, on the founding of an institute, which would primarily be concerned with research on animal diseases and related problems. The Rockefeller Foundation (USA) awarded a grant for the establishment of the Institute, with the understanding that it would be affiliated to the University of Iceland and that Dr Sigurdsson would lead it. With the support of the Icelandic Government, **the Institute for Experimental Pathology at Keldur, Reykjavík**, was formally established in 1948 and was, and remains, affiliated with the University Faculty of Medicine. There, for the next eleven years, Dr Sigurdsson led a small group of scientists, which soon gained an international reputation. He devoted most of his time and energy to the interests of the Institute as well as general scientific progress in his home country, never sparing himself, until his untimely death from cancer at the age of 46, on October 16, 1959.

The list of Sigurdsson's publications on human and animal diseases is long and of high quality despite

them in the British Veterinary Journal. He was the first investigator to **grow visna virus in vitro**, which became the first *in vitro* grown lentivirus. He was one of the first scientists to **investigate scrapie** (rida), a prion disease of sheep, characterizing it as a slowly developing infection. In 1948–1949, he led a group of scientists investigating a major outbreak of a previously unknown disease, then called Akureyri (or Iceland) disease and later known as myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (M.E./CFS), being first to define the **chronicity** of this disease. He led studies on influenza epidemics occurring in Iceland in the years 1948–1957, resulting in the production of a successful vaccine. During 1952–1958, he published studies on coxsackie-, poliomyelitis- and ECHO-viruses and also on two further epidemics of M.E./CFS, in 1955–1956.

During Sigurdsson's time, sheep farming was one of the mainstays of livelihood in Iceland. Paratuberculosis, or Johne's disease, as well as the slow virus infections maedi/visna and jaagsiekte arrived in Iceland in 1933, subsequent to the introduction to Iceland of the Karakul breed of sheep from Germany. All these new infections caused devastating diseases among Icelandic sheep. Dr Sigurdsson and his co-workers' research led to the development and production of an **efficient vaccine against paratuberculosis**, which is still in use. This work furthered the understanding of the pathogenesis of slow viral infections as well as the development of new diagnostic methods. These new insights were crucial in the rescuing of the Icelandic farming industry from collapse.

Dr Sigurdsson served for years as a consultant on epidemiological matters to the health authorities in Iceland. He participated in the establishment of the WHO World Influenza Center in 1948. He was an accomplished lecturer and contributed frequently to international meetings. Due to his ability to think laterally across scientific disciplines, he was often asked to sit on or chair committees dealing with various activities both on national as well as international matters.

As a person, Dr Sigurdsson is described as a hard working, enthusiastic man with a wide range of interests and a keen sense of humor. His mind was sharp and he was always quick to detect the core of any issue. His presentation was frank and



Björn Sigurdsson

Dr Bjarnheidur K. Gudmundsdóttir,
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This summary is based on:

Björn Sigurdsson, Dr med., Ritverk, Collected Scientific Papers, 1936–1962. Björnsson, J. and Björnsson, S. 1990, Reykjavík.

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

IBS now called The International Biodeterioration and Biodegradation Society (IBBS)

At the 12th IBBS in Prague more than 200 submissions and 123 attendees from many different countries including UK, West and East Europe, North and South America, India, China, Japan and Australia, reflected the international status of IBBS. The financial support from FEMS who awarded a FEMS Meetings support grant and a Young Scientist Grant was greatly appreciated and allowed an excellent programme to be put together including the participation of so many young scientists. A wide range of subject areas was discussed including Biosorption and bioaccumulation of heavy metals, Biocides – use and regulation, Measurement of biodegradation products, Biodegradation of persistent compounds, Microbial corrosion and biofilms, Use of GMO in bioremediation, Industrial biofouling and its effects on water quality, Building materials and cultural property and Phytoremediation and Rhizoremediation.

The next IBBS meeting will be "Management and control of undesirable microorganisms" at Manchester Metropolitan University, September 15–18, 2003.

It is intended that the conference will prove to be attractive to young scientists particularly as FEMS has provided a Young Scientist Support Grant. Two events have been planned with this group of delegates in mind.

Dr Jimmy Walker,
President of IBBS (www.biodeterioration.org).



Institute for Experimental Pathology, University of Iceland, at Keldur Reykjavik 2002 (photo by S.H. Richter)

his brief career and often unfavorable working conditions. Only a brief account of his achievements will be given here. He published his first scientific paper in 1936, at the age of 23, on the investigation into an **outbreak of typhoid fever** on a remote island, Flatey, off the northern coast of Iceland. His major scientific work was his introduction of the concept of slow viral infections, where he demonstrated the transmissibility and progressive course of visna, maedi, and pulmonary adenomatosis. He first presented these findings in a series of lectures at the University of London in 1954 and later published

he never hesitated to speak his mind. He was a lover of the arts and found the time to enjoy them. To his family, friends, coworkers and students **Björn Sigurdsson remains unforgettable.**

In his family live, Björn Sigurdsson was a fortunate man. His wife was Una Jóhannesdóttir (1913–2000), whose support contributed greatly to his achievements.

They had three children who all became medical doctors: daughter Edda an ophthalmologist; the older son Sigurdur an oncologist; and the younger son Jóhannes a pathologist.

CENTRAL OFFICE

Central Office

The preparations for the 1st FEMS Congress in Ljubljana are generating heat waves – even in this winter season – that reach as far as Delft. The Congress Bureau division, supported by Dr Colin Davey, is contacting potential exhibitors & sponsors, handles abstracts and grant applications, and is involved in most organisational matters. Also in the past half year, a Society Secretariat was established, with Ms Michelle Oord as the first employee. This Division was set-up with the aim to support FEMS Societies with their membership administration and related activities. The Netherlands Society for Microbiology was the first to take up this offer and now receives staff support equivalent to one day per week. The Publications division is gearing itself up for the next challenge in the area of online submission: incorporating FEMS Microbiology Letters, the largest of the five FEMS journals, in Manuscript Central. Mr Victor Boughey has been appointed as

the editorial administrator for this journal. In the Administration division, Ms Margarita Pérez, has started handling the various grants, and is maintaining the Events Calendar on the FEMS website. The FEMS central database is continuously expanding and now approaches 7 000 entries. It has proved its great value recently in producing mailing lists for the congress. Over the last period, we especially focussed on adding European companies, organisation and institutes engaged in microbiology. For example, we now hold some 900 addresses of microbiology institutes across Europe. As a spin-off from the activities in the Society Secretariat division, the database also develops into an advanced tool for membership administration. The FEMS Central Office team is looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that the coming year has in store for us.

Dr Diman van Rossum.
Executive Officer.

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FEMS is devoted to the promotion of microbiology in the European area.

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