



Minutes from the AGM ECS O Grove 2023, 20 April

Present (Council): Joan Gonzalvo (Chair), Aviad Scheinin (Rapporteur, Vice-Chair), Morgana Vighi, Frank Zanderink, Ida Carlen, Carla Chicote, Silvia Frey (Treasurer), Michael Dähne, Andre Moura, Dimitar Popov.

The meeting started at 14:54 CET.

1. Welcome from the chair and the quorum requirement

The Chair, Joan Gonzalvo, opened the meeting and welcomed the members. Meeting was preceded with a few minutes of silence to honour those members of the society that have left us in the previous year. With more than 15% of the membership present (182 members present of a total of 548 members) quorum was reached, and the Chair declared the meeting open.

2. Adoption of the Agenda.

The agenda was presented and approved by the membership.

3. Annual report

Membership

Council presented the Membership status. In 2023 the ECS had 548 members (of which 236 student members) from 41 countries and 5 continents.

Financial Report (accounting and budget)

Council presented the financial report from 2022.

Accounts receivable refer to funds that were used for the ECS Council premeeting in O Grove, and will be regained in 2023 after conference accounting is finished. Accounts payable refer to registration fees for the 2023 ECS conference, and will be transferred in 2023 to cover the conference costs. Regarding expenses, some funds were used to reimburse the travel costs for attendees who couldn't cancel their travel in time to adjust to the change of format for the 2022 conference in Israel.

Further funds were needed to cover the update of the website to a more modern system. Costs were also used to cover bank fees in Belgium where the society is registered. The financial year 2022 ended with a net result of Euro -1,994.00.

Assets of the ECS ASBL as of 31/12/2022 were 133,931.7 Euros.

No questions from the audience regarding the financial report from 2022.

The financial Budget for 2022 was presented.

Income from membership are expected for 2023. More expenses are anticipated for 2023 for a necessary update for the content managing system of our website, as well as administration fees in Belgium, as well as transfer fees. Furthermore, some advance payments for the Council premeeting and seed money for the 2024 ECS conference were presented.

Both the financial report from 2022 and the budget for 2023 were approved.

The discharge of Council was granted.

4. Changes in Council Membership

At the ECS conference 2023, Morgana Vighi, Michael Dähne and Aviad Scheinin stepped down as ECS Council members. Their dedication and commitment to our Society during their tenure was acknowledged by all members of the Council and our membership.

Five candidates presented themselves for the three vacant positions of council members: Guido Pietroluongo; Laura Gonzalez-Garcia; Simon Ingram; Joana Castro; Emily Griffith.

Audience was explained about the voting procedure. Candidates presented themselves briefly, after which they left the room, and voting took place by raising hands.

Voting results were:

Guido Pietroluongo - 85

Laura Gonzalez-Garcia - 105

Simon Ingram - 160

Joana Castro - 58

Emily Griffith – 88

A second count was arranged for Guido and Emily, due to very similar number of votes on the first round, with the following results:

Guido Pietroluongo - 100

Emily Griffith - 90

With the most votes, Simon Ingram, Laura Gonzalez-Garcia and Guido Pietroluongo were elected new members of the council. Congratulations were given to the new members, and thanks given to those who applied but were not elected.

The ECS Council is therefore made up of the following members for the coming year:

Joan Gonzalvo (Chair), 2020-2024

Silvia Frey (Treasurer), 2016-ongoing

Andre E. Moura (Conference Advisor), 2022-2026

Yaly Mevorach (Student Representative), 2021-2024

Carla A. Chicote (Conference Advisor), 2022-2026

Ida Carlén (Student Awards Coordinator), 2020-2024

Frank Zanderink (Communication Officer), 2020-2024

Dimitar Popov (Webmaster), 2022-2026

Laura González García (role tbd), 2023-2027

Guido Pietroluongo (role tbd), 2023-2027

Simon Ingram (role tbd), 2023-2027

5. Matters arising during the year

ECS Registration Fee increase

An increase of the individual membership fee by 10 euros was proposed to the members, with no increase for the student membership. Membership was asked to raise hands if they did not agree with the increase. One person raised their hand and therefore, the increase in fee was therefore approved.

Website

- Online server was upgraded to Ubuntu 20.04
- Drupal transfer from version 7 to 9 has been ongoing. Data for previous conferences has been migrated, and update is being carried out of the registration system and the website appearance.
- Council recognised some issue with the production of the abstract book for 2023, and corrections are underway.
- An email contact was given for reporting of further problems by the membership.

6. ECS conference 2023

The chair expressed the council's deep gratitude to the local organizing committee for organizing a successful conference with record attendance numbers.

Total balance of the ECS 2023

Workshops: 15

Total number of presentations: 107
Oral presentations: 80
Speed talks: 27
Posters: 306
Total number registered attendees: 586 from 41 countries

7. NCP

Some gaps for NCP have been filled during last year: Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania.

The composition of the NCP was changed for some countries: Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain.

Gap in NCP for some countries in the Baltic and SE Mediterranean Sea were noted, and a request for possible contacts was made.

A request from Ukraine NCP was mentioned regarding the need for emergency monitoring of the impact of current military activities in the Black Sea in local cetaceans.

8. Student matters

A mental health workshop was organised by the student representative. It was free for students, and 10 people attended. The workshop was well received by the participants, which requested that similar initiatives are repeated for future conferences.

A second student focused workshop on QGIS was also organised. Participants thought the workshop was very useful, as they were not familiar with this open source software.

Student party was also very popular, with more than 200 tickets sold.

On Wednesday, the student meeting was organised. 28 students participated, all new members. Students requested the organisation of more online meetings before the conference, to allow new members to establish networks in advanced and facilitate participation in the conference.

9. Future conferences

The location for the 2024 ECS was announced to be in Catania, Italy. The membership reacted positively to the announcement.

The local organisers of the Catania conference gave a short presentation of their proposal. Local organisers thanked the council and membership for the selection of their proposal, and presented brief details regarding the location and the organisation that will be responsible for organising the 2024 conference.

A call for candidates for the ECS 36 in 2025 was announced.

10. Other business

Council announced that they are aware of a couple of abstracts with potential ethical issues. Council was not aware of this situation ahead of the conference, and announce changes will be made to avoid similar situations in the future.

Mental Health and well-being matters:

The council acknowledged that mental health issue is an important issue to tackle in science and academia, and showed relevant statistics support the statement. A statement was read acknowledging the problems posed by mental health issues, that the ECS is committed to be a safe place for young researchers, and it calls on members of the society to be role models in being supportive and showing empathy to those suffering from such issues. The society acknowledges the need for a discussion and a new mindset to avoid stigma regarding mental health issues. Council announced plans to implement initiatives in support of the cause.

Peter Evans presented a letter of concern regarding the need to protect the Baltic sea porpoise, and request support of the Society for this cause. The statement would encourage local authorities to engage with cetacean acousticians to arrange a solution to minimize impact on the porpoises from military sonar testing. Audience was given the opportunity to raise any issues they might have regarding this letter of concern.

11. Social Media

Council presented updates on social media issues. To tackle the issue with the old facebook group having excessive amounts of spam, the group was replaced with a new facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanCetaceanSociety>), where content is now posted from the council. A twitter account (@EuroCetSoc) also exists, where content is uploaded, especially in relation to upcoming conferences.