

Draft minutes
4th Management Committee Meeting

COST Action 872
Exploiting genomics to understand plant-nematode interactions
Toledo, Spain, 26th May 2009

Present: J. Jones (Chair – UK), G. Gheysen (vice-chair – BE), K. Davies (UK), P. Abad (FR), E. Grenier (FR), G. Smant (NL), D. Cai (DE), M. Sobczak (PL), W. Golinowski (PL), M. Holterjman (CH – substitute), B. Geric Stare (SI), S. Sirca (SI - substitute), M. Mota (PT), L. Robertson (ES), C. Escobar (ES), C. De Giorgi (IT), F. Grundler (AT), H. Koltai, (IL), Y. Spiegel (IL), U. Gozel (TK – substitute), T. Kakouli-Duarte (IE), R. Holgado, (NO), C. Magnusson (NO), Albino Maggio (COST Office), Zdenek Opatrny (Rapporteur).

0. Welcome to participants:

J. Jones welcomed all participants to the meeting.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was accepted unanimously

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record of the previous meeting.

3. Matters arising

A group from Croatia had previously expressed an interest in joining COST 872 and the MC had voted to allow Croatia to join the activities of COST 872. However, no further communications have been received by the Chair or by COST Office. Pierre Abad agreed to contact the group to enquire whether they were still intent on joining COST 872.

Action: Pierre Abad to contact Croatian group and report to Chair.

4. Report from COST Office

Albino Maggio provided an update on the current year's budget (which has been spent in full) and the projected budget for 2009-2010 (€102,000). No additional countries had requested participation but one additional non-COST institution in Egypt had joined COST 872 in the last year. Some discussion on the forms of grant system took place with the MC re-iterating its previous decision to remain on the pay as you go system rather than switching to the annual grant system. The participation of COST 872 in an inter-Action training school in genomics tools was reported to the MC. This was funded (on a competitive basis) in addition to the funds allocated to COST 872.

5. Progress report of working groups

Pierre Abad provided a summary of a WG2 workshop held in Sophia-Antipolis in November 2008. The meeting provided training in the tools used for annotation of the root knot nematode genome and was judged a success both by the delegates and in terms of the impact on a resource of value to the entire community.

6. Action planning

6.1 Annual progress conference

Barbara Geric Stare attended the 2008 annual progress meeting and provided the MC with details of a poster presentation made on the activities of COST 872 and of her discussions with the Rapporteur at the meeting. Zdenek Opatrny and Albino Maggio confirmed that COST 872 had received a favourable evaluation.

J. Jones informed the MC that he would attend the 2009 annual progress meeting and would give an oral presentation on the activities of COST 872. J. Jones sought input from the MC on areas of significant achievement that should be highlighted in the presentation and the MC agreed to provide examples that could be included.

Action: All MC members to provide examples of significant achievements for presentation.

6.2 Action budget planning

The MC agreed that no detailed discussions on this point were required since the planned activities for the coming year broadly followed the established pattern of previous years.

6.3 Future meetings

The MC discussed various suggestions for future COST 872 events. Aaron Maule (Belfast, UK) has offered to host a WG1 workshop on RNAi in plant parasitic nematodes. The MC agreed unanimously to approve this event. Albino Maggio suggested that this meeting may be best held as a training school in order to maximise opportunities for ESRs. JJ sought and received MC approval for a meeting support grant of up to 3000 Euro towards the costs of organising this meeting.

DECISION: The MC unanimously agrees to hold a WG1 training school in Belfast on RNAi in plant parasitic nematodes late in 2009.

DECISION: The MC unanimously approves a meeting support grant of up to 3000 Euro for this meeting.

The MC then discussed future meetings of COST 872. It had originally been planned to hold the 2010 meeting in conjunction with the European Society of Nematologists meeting in Vienna in September 2010. However, COST 872 ends in December 2010 and would therefore not have sufficient funds available to support a substantial meeting held in September 2010. The MC agreed to organise an event that would take place as part of the ESN meeting to be organised in such a way as to provide ESRs with funds that would help them to attend the ESN meeting. The MC agreed to make a final decision on the nature of this event at a later date.

Discussion then turned to the 2010 main meeting. It was agreed that an inter-WG workshop and MC meeting would be held, some time between March and May 2010. However, it was not possible to decide where the meeting would be held and the MC agreed to make this decision using the written procedure. The Chair agreed to find a venue for the meeting and report to the MC as soon as possible.

Action: J. Jones to contact potential meeting organisers and report to MC.

The MC then discussed other potential meetings. JJ suggested that a meeting be held to provide researchers with the opportunity to contribute to the annotation of the *Globodera pallida* genome sequence. The MC agreed to this in principle but since no details on the likely date or venue for this meeting are yet available it was agreed to make a final decision by the written procedure at a later date.

7. STSMs

J. Jones reported that a total of 16 STSMs had been funded through COST 872 with three of these still to be undertaken. J. Jones requested that the MC members remind researchers in their countries of the availability of STSM funding.

Action: All MC members to remind researchers within their countries of the availability of STSM funding.

Decision: The MC unanimously approved the decisions taken by the STSM committee since the previous MC meeting.

J. Jones then suggested that the MC co-opt additional members for the STSM committee (currently composed of the Chair, Vice-Chair and WG leaders) since there were times when STSM committee members are unavailable making it difficult to obtain a majority decision on an application or report in a timely manner. After some discussion Thomae Kakouli-Duarte (IE) and Hinanit Koltai (IL) agreed to join the STSM committee.

8. Publications, dissemination and outreach activities

G. Gheysen provided an outline of proposed chapter titles and authors for a book that is currently being planned. Authors are currently in the process of producing outlines for their chapters and once this process is complete a publisher will be chosen. Four publishers have expressed an interest in the book to date. The MC proposed minor changes to the structure of the book.

9. Requests for new members

Albino Maggio reported that no requests had been received.

10. Promotion of gender balance and Early Stage Researchers

Albino Maggio provided clarification on what COST Office expected the MC to be doing in this area. It was agreed that there was a fair gender balance on the MC of COST 872 and in terms of delegates at the meetings. It was also apparent that ESRs form a substantial proportion of meeting delegates within COST 872. Albino Maggio suggested that use of STSMs and training schools was an appropriate method to ensure ESRs are receiving funding through COST 872.

Albino Maggio informed the MC of a conference grant scheme open to ESRs. Through this scheme ESRs can receive a grant towards the costs of attending an international conference, as long as they have been selected for an oral presentation. The possibility of funding ESRs associated with COST 872 to attend the MPMI meeting in Quebec was discussed. A final decision on this will be taken once the MPMI organisers have made decisions on oral presentations.

11. Non-COST country participation

Three non-COST countries participate in COST 872, Australia, Ukraine and Egypt. Florian Grundler provided the MC with information on the Egyptian group that has joined COST 872 this year as a researcher from this institution is currently working within his group.

12. Web news.

J. Jones provided a brief update on the COST 872 website and requested further suggestions and material from the MC.

13. AOB

13.1 B. Geric-Stare had tabled a request that the MC discuss the possibilities for a “follow on” Action to continue after COST 872. Albino Maggio and Zdenek Opatrny provided information on the procedures and emphasised that any new Action should reflect a development in the field rather than a continuation. The low success rate under the new open call was highlighted but Albino Maggio and Zdenek Opatrny were keen to stress that the current Action was viewed as a successful one. In further discussions the possibilities of using COST 872 as a tool to prompt a FP7 call were discussed. The importance of lobbying appropriate EU staff was mentioned and Albino Maggio suggested that EU staff may be present at the progress meeting in July. With this in mind J. Jones agreed to use this as an opportunity to present the problems posed by nematodes and potential solutions offered by the research community in his talk to the progress meeting. The MC agreed to provide input into this proposal.

Action: J. Jones to circulate a draft of his talk to the MC for input.

13.2 Manuel Mota presented details of a Erasmus Mundus course in Nematology (EUMAINE) to the MC.

14. Close

There being no further business John Jones declared the meeting closed.