



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021 - ISSUE 95

.....FROM THE EFI PRESIDENT

DEAR EFI MEMBERS,

It is with pleasure that I write my first newsletter report as EFI President. I am honoured to take on the position of President of our exceptional society EFI. Thank you to everyone that has supported me on my journey to this position.

On behalf of all the EFI membership, I wish to thank Joannis Mytilineos, our now Past President, for his excellent presidency over the last three years and especially for his thoughtful handover to myself. Under Joannis's tenure, improved communication channels within the Executive Committee and between the other EFI committees were implemented, which enabled us all to respond quickly to how we conducted EFI business during the turmoil of a pandemic. Indeed one of Joannis's objectives, to implement 'virtual' learning opportunities for EFI members, became a reality during this period in partnership with the Scientific and Education Committees. Thank you Joannis.

There have also been several changes in the chairs of our EFI committees. We welcome Blanka Vidan Jeras as chair of the Accreditation Committee, Luca Vago as chair of the Scientific Committee and Helle Bruunsgaard as chair of the External Proficiency Testing committee. Thank you for your commitment to the work of EFI. I wish you success and



enjoyment in your new roles. My appreciation is sent to the chairs that are stepping down: Andrea Harmer, Katharina Fleischhauer and Falko Heineemann. Thank you for all the work you have undertaken in support of EFI and I wish you well with your future professional activities.

This is the first newsletter since our virtual EFI conference which was held jointly with the British Society for Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics. Normally the EFI President congratulates the organisers on the (always) successful EFI conference. This is a little strange for me to do, as I was one of the organisers. So instead I will congratulate my co-organisers, Helen McFarlane and David Turner. Thank you – we had a huge challenge turning our live conference plans into, what has sadly become routine in our lives, the virtual event. Thanks to the support of our corporate partners and the commitment of the lecturers, oral abstract presenters, poster presenters, session chairs and the 1089 registered attendees we had, in my humble opinion, an excellent virtual conference. You will find a few reports on this event elsewhere in this newsletter.

So the EFI flag has virtually been passed to the organisers of EFI 2022 which will take place following the International Histocompatibility Workshop in Amsterdam on May 17th to 20th. The organisers, Eric Spierings and Sebastian Heidt and their team are putting together an excellent scientific and social programme. We are all looking forward to a face to face conference, with hopefully no travel restrictions in place.

Following Amsterdam 2022 we can look forward to Nantes 2023. The

Nantes meeting will be the first conference organised by the EFI appointed professional conference organiser (PCO) Guarant. The EFI secretariat and myself have established a regular meeting with the PCO and the local organisers to ensure optimum communication between involved parties, and continued success with future EFI conferences.



Another victim of the SARs-CoV-2 pandemic has been the International Summer School. Originally planned for the summer of 2020 to take place in the beautiful city of Prague, the event has been made virtual and is taking place as I write this report. The organisers, predominantly David Turner, Tony Slavcev and Sandra van Hensbergen have put together a faculty panel from the contributing societies: EFI, ASHI, APHIA and ARSHI. Attendees from all continents are participating, which has made the timings of the interactive sessions a little challenging! It is hoped that the presentations from the faculty will be made available for the EFI membership following the closure of the summer school.

It is now almost two years since EFI held a face to face business meeting. The committees usually meet during the annual conference and, when required,

.....FROM THE EFI PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)

in the autumn. Due to restrictions on travel and the lack of financial income from conferences, the Executive Committee made the decision to not have face to face committee meetings in the autumn of 2021 and instead the committees will continue to undertake their business via video conferencing. We appreciate that this is disappointing for our committee members especially as travel is now easier for most people within Europe. However we look forward to resuming face to face committee meetings in 2022.

EFI has several 'Memorandum of Understanding' agreements with other societies reignited by Gottfried Fisher when he was President, and this endeavour continued with subsequent Presidents Elissaveta Naumova and Joannis Mytilineos. These agreements have led to joint sessions being hosted at conferences organised by various societies. During the EFI 2021 conference we had a very interesting joint session with ESOT called 'Increasing access to transplant', and during the ESOT conference which has just taken place there were two joint sessions with EFI: 'Present and future role of HLA and antibodies' and 'How to set up an ABO incompatibility programme'. In addition, Katharina Fleischhauer and the Scientific Committee organised a joint session at the European Congress on Immunology (ECI) entitled, 'Immunogenetics in Cancer'. These joint sessions are important for highlighting the impact of histocompatibility and immunogenetics to scientists and clinicians who do not work directly in our field and I hope we will continue with this successful programme of shared activities.

EFI also has representation within other organisations. There are two EFI representatives on the board of the Worldwide Network for Blood and Marrow Transplantation (WBMT), (www.wbmt.org) Mats Bengtsson and Steven Marsh. The Executive Committee have invited Mats and Steven to continue in this role until their terms come to an end on July 1st 2022. Furthermore, Sebastiaan Heidt just handed over his position in the ASHI Science and Technology Initiatives Committee (STIC, analogous to the EFI Scientific Committee) to James Robinson as EFI representative.

Since taking up the position of President, the Executive Committee has had one video meeting with another scheduled before this newsletter will be issued. We completed the changes to the Constitution as agreed at the General Assembly meeting and thanks to Gwendaline Guidicelli and Paul Rouzaire, these documents have been translated into French and approved by the Court of Strasbourg. This was a very important action as it allows EFI to continue its business using virtual General Assemblies and virtual Executive Committee meetings and also legitimises the minimum number of attendees that typically attend the annual General Assembly meeting.

It was highlighted to the Executive Committee, by the EFI accreditation software providers, that EFI does not have formal documentation to describe how we meet the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that came into effect on 25th May 2018. The EFI Councillors, led by Kay Poulton have been addressing this issue and we are

currently collating all the required information to enable us to be compliant with the regulation.

An important function of the Executive Committee is to support the work of the EFI committees. We had a meeting with the chairs of the committees prior to the EFI 2021 conference and following this several requests have been approved by the Executive Committee and you can learn more about these activities within the reports from each of the committees in this newsletter. We can look forward to new Scientific Webinars, more e-learning and a new database for recording our continuing professional development activities.

Sadly, in March this year, we lost Erik Thorsby. Erik was EFI President from 2002 to 2004 and was also an active member of the EFI Scientific Committee. I first met Erik at a conference in Bratislava in 1996, where there were more guest speakers than delegates, so we all got to know each other very well. I have many fond memories of our subsequent chats at various EFI conferences and Ceppellini dinners. He will be missed by many. Please take time to read the obituaries prepared by Ludvig Sollid and colleagues, and Frans Claas, which are published in this newsletter.

Well, I think I have taken up sufficient space in this newsletter. I welcome any suggestions from the membership regarding EFI activities, so if you wish to contact me, please use the following email address president@efi-web.org.

With best wishes

Ann-Margaret Little