



## NEWSLETTER

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.....FROM THE EFI PRESIDENT

## DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS,



HLA as well as the concept and range of its functionality have obviously always fascinated not only scientist working in the H&I field but also in other medical and life science areas. If one searches today in PubMed for “HLA” he will end up with 111.033 hits! “HLA typing” and “HLA antibodies” yield 38.859 and 26.448 data sets, respectively. “HLA function” seems to be particularly popular, yielding 96.524 entries. This shows that the work we are involved in is considered to be of substantial relevance to the scientific community and obviously attracts life scientists and medics worldwide to invest their time and brain energy for the good of the community and the patients we serve. We need to make sure on the long term that we will offer sufficient opportunities to the upcoming generation in order to enable them to continue working productively in this fascinating and highly relevant field of HLA research.

Time is running so quickly and soon we will all meet again in Lisbon. In this EFI Newsletters you will be able to read

the final program of our annual event. This year's EFI conference will be the 33<sup>rd</sup> in a row and it will be the first time where the meeting will be carried out in Portugal. Lisbon is a beautiful city and I hope that you will manage to find a couple of hours, during the conference and after, in order to visit its numerous historical and cultural sights. As every year, we will have several plenary and teaching sessions covering all aspects of immunogenetics and histocompatibility in transplantation, immunity, infection, regenerative medicine and population genetics. In addition, Teaching Sessions will offer the opportunity to refresh and improve our knowledge on “classical” H&I topics which are relevant in our day to day work. Finally, abstract sessions will give us an insight in the recent scientific and development work that is being carried out in the H&I laboratories throughout Europe and in the rest of the world. This year we will also have several Meet the Expert sessions where participants will have the opportunity to meet plenary session speakers and talk with them about their projects and perspectives in the field of their expertise. This will be an excellent opportunity for young people to enlarge their scientific horizon, receive new ideas, and decisively network themselves. One of the highlights of the Conference is the Ceppellini Lecture. This year's Ceppellini awardee will be Prof. Pamela Björkman, who first described the crystallographic structure of the HLA molecule, thus making us aware of how this so important molecule of the human immune system actually looks like. This was the basis for further studies that made us understand the functions and the functional implications of HLA. It will be a great pleasure to have Prof. Björkman with us. I am sure that her talk

and her scientific spirit will inspire us in the same manner as this happens with the numerous students she has been taking care of at the California Institute of Technology where she is currently still working. Once again, I would like to thank in the name of all our members the Local Organizing Committee and the EFI Scientific and Education Committees for the great efforts they made to put together such an excellent scientific and education program, and I wish you all a successful EFI conference.

One of the important elements of each scientific society is their statutes and their governing bodies. As I am sure you are all aware, the Executive Committee, EFI's governing body so to say, will welcome new members this year, since we had been looking for three new Councilors. I believe that EFI can only improve if its members actively participate in the processes which eventually lead to benefits for our members. Only through discussion and interaction with its members the EFI Executive Committee can understand and pursue measures which will help us improve the quality of our work and advance in science and medical service provision. This interaction comes through the Committees and through the representation of EFI members within the Executive Committee. Therefore, it is imperative that we have a wide participation in the elections. As the electronic polls had just closed while this report was conducted, I am proud to announce that we had a record in participation in the elections with more than 50% of our members having submitted their vote. I would like to thank all applicants and congratulate the three winners, i.e. Marco Andreani from Rome/Italy, Katarzyna Bogunia-Kubik from Wroclaw/Poland, and Katerina Tarassi from Athens/

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

Greece! I am sure that the new colleagues will bring novel energy into the Executive Committee, new ideas and a lot of good spirit. At the same time, I would like to thank the outgoing Counsellors, Teresa Kauke from Munich/Germany, Valeria Miotti from Udine/Italy and Fatma Oguz from Istanbul/Turkey for all the work they did within the EC in the last three years and for all their critical and encouraging words. We will definitely miss them. In addition, it should be mentioned that the term of our Officers' team, consisting of Mats Bengtsson, Dave Roelen and Gwendaline Guidicelli will be renewed for another three years, since there were no other applicants for the positions of Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Treasurer. Unfortunately, Katia Gagne, our Deputy Treasurer, decided to discontinue her term (for personal reasons), so we will have to find a new Deputy Treasurer as soon as possible. The vacancy will be announced at the General Assembly in Lisbon. I am looking forward to continue the great collaboration with the EC Officers' team and I am so thankful to them for the great work they are doing for EFI. I am sad that Katia decided to step down; however, I fully understand her reasons and also thank her from the depths of my heart for her always motivated and

efficient work as a Deputy Treasurer. Finally, I would also like to remind you that next year we will have elections again. This time, we will have to vote for the new President, who will be serving as a President Elect from spring 2020-2021 on and will take over the presidency in spring 2021 to serve until spring 2024. The call for nominations will be published in the fall issue of the EFI newsletters. So please start making your thoughts already now about who you would like to see as our next EFI President, and make sure to start collecting signatures once the announcement has been published.

One of the educational highlights of the year for the H&I community worldwide is the International Summer School (ISS). This event was carried out for the first time in Seville/Spain, back in 2004 in the time where Eric Thorsby was EFI President, and since then it proved to be a great opportunity for young scientists to interact with experienced and well-known members of the international H&I community. This year's ISS is the 14<sup>th</sup> in a row and will be carried out in Montreal/Canada. The organisation is done by our ASHI colleagues and the program has been already finalized. EFI supports the participation of its young members to this

event with dedicated bursaries and therefore I would encourage all young scientists to send their abstracts and apply for participation. There will be only 50 students accepted in the ISS which is one of the success "secrets" for this event. The restricted participation enables and ensures that there is always plenty of time for interaction between the Faculty Members and all students during the three days of the event.

Advancement in science requires, among others, vision, pioneer spirit, interaction, communication, and open minds. Seclusion, discrimination, boarders, walls and narrow minds are in contrast obstructive when it comes to continuity in scientific enhancement. EFI is proud to support and facilitate the cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and information between its members and members of sister scientific societies as well as those who work in neighbouring fields, and will continue to do so in order to advance science and improve the service in the area of Transplantation, Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics.

*Joannis Mytilineos*

*EFI-President*