



# Editorial

## Bio-crossroads: the 15th European Congress of Biotechnology, Istanbul, September 2012

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European Congresses of Biotechnology have been sponsored by the European Federation of Biotechnology since 1978. Although the 2012 Congress was the 15th in the series, it was the first to be held outside of mainstream European states, to the Eastern limit where Europe meets Asia.

Following an open call early in 2009 on the EFB website, the successful Turkish bid was coordinated on behalf of the Turkish Biotechnology Society by Professor Hüseyin Avni Öktem, who was ably supported by Assoc. Prof. Füsün İnci Eyidoğan, and Ipek Kucukturan from the Turkish Society. The Istanbul Congress maintained our tradition of inviting the world's top biotechnologists to present the Plenary lectures, with presentations by Professors George Whitesides (Harvard), Yang Huanming (Beijing), Ruedi Aebersold (ETH Zurich), Werner Arber (Basel), Jonathan Knowles (Lausanne) and Christian Patermann (Bonn). A major aim of the 15th Congress was to provide far more

opportunities for young scientists to speak than in recent Congresses, so the number of invited speakers was more limited than previously. Consequently, many of the short talks were presented by PhD students and young scientists who had only recently graduated, especially from Turkish Universities. By locating it with one foot in Asia and the other in Europe, the 15th Congress attracted many Arabian participants who had been unable to travel to Barcelona for the previous two events.

The ECB series, like so many other large scientific meetings, had declined in popularity in the early years of the century, but numbers of registrants gradually increased in Barcelona in 2007 and 2009, reaching a final figure of 1,000 participants in Istanbul. This was in part achieved by linking the Congress to several other small meetings. This trend and the emphasis on scientific presentations by young biotechnologists will be continued for the 16th European Congress that will be held in

Edinburgh from 13th–16 July, 2014. The scientific programme for the meeting was designed around four “colours” of biotechnology, with red, white, green and purple streams, with each stream being organised by a stream leader. This attracted specialists interested in mainstream areas of biotechnology, but inevitably neglected some other areas of equal importance, for example, environmental or synthetic biotechnology. The Edinburgh Congress will redress this by providing a mosaic Congress that avoids overlaps between the four streams.

The Federation is grateful to the Turkish Society for Biotechnology, the members of the local and scientific committees, the Professional Congress Organizer, ZED, and the industrial companies who formed the trade exhibition for their support.

**Jeff Cole**

*Vice-President of the European Federation of Biotechnology*