

The memorable XVII Congress of the European Mycological Association (EMA) Funchal (Madeira, Portugal, September 20th- 25th 2015)

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The XVII Congress of the European Mycological Association (EMA) was hosted for the first time in Portugal, in Funchal in the beautiful Atlantic island of Madeira, from the 20th to 25th September 2015. João Baptista-Ferreira from the Lisbon University was chair of the organizing committee, and David Minter, CABI, the EMA president, was president of the Congress .

In spite of the global crisis, the conference had a great success. Indeed, about 150 mycologists from 34 countries (Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom) came together. Italy was well represented by 12 participants from the North, the Center and the South of the country.

The Congress started with the formal opening session and the address of the president D. Minter. Firstly, he remembered the loss of Erast Parmasto and Reinhold Pöder, two scientists whose contribution inside EMA was fundamental. Among important initiatives of EMA, the president cited the *Index Fungorum*, the well know online database that most of us refer to, and that someone contributed to, and the freely available CYBERTRUFFLE, which is, as it is written on its homepage, “something extra for fungi”. The EMA president remembered that Fungi are present in various other networks and initiatives, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and he invited all of us to continue to collaborate and to contribute. He pointed out that it depends on us how strong EMA can go on, how fungi can be considered, and how to involve a new generation of mycologists.

During the following days, invited speakers presented results of their long time observations and monitoring. The topics were the following: changes in climate bring to changes in fungal fruiting patterns and consequently in interactions (Alan Gange, UK), changes in environment bring also to changes in lichens and their ecological niches (William Purvis, UK), increased global trade brings

to changes in alien invasive pests and pathogens threatening our forests (Stephen Woodward, UK). Then, particular aspects of symbiosis were reported by analyzing arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi and their multitude of interactions that can bring to changes of a community of different organisms (Alison E. Bennett, UK). Finally, the knowledge and still open questions surrounding truffles, their soil ecology and the importance of their cultivation, were discussed (Alessandra Zambonelli, IT).

Oral communications (59) and posters (88) were distributed in the following parallel sessions: Applied mycology and fungal biotechnology; Environment, ecology and interactions; Cell biology, biochemistry and physiology; Fungal pathogenesis and disease control; Evolution, biodiversity and systematic; Field mycology and conservation; Genomics, genetics and molecular biology.

Two afternoons were dedicated to symposia titled “Biodiversity, informatics and fungal data” and “Fungal conservation and ECCF meeting”. During the first symposium, some authors (Rui Figueira, Lyobomir Penev, Urmas Kõljalg, Matias Pasquali, Dimitry Schigel) underlined from different point of view the importance of open-access databases which are fundamental for collecting and sharing digital data. Various possible links were presented and applications were explained. They are generally underutilized even if they are essential to promote mycology and fungal conservation. Different kinds of data can be memorized: the UNITE database for molecular identification of fungi community adopted the Species Hypotheses approach for ITS-based molecular identification and discovery of fungal species; a large dataset, in which also Italians participate, on *Fusarium* species producing mycotoxins has been created in order to try to answer epidemiological questions. The GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility) is globally recognized as Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the connected Data Paper, like Integrated Publishing Toolkit (IPT) and Pensoft’s Journals (see MycoKeys), are rapidly evolving. Collaboration and community building were solicited. This was also the goal of the second symposium: encouraging every one of us to promote fungal conservation. It is also our fault if our governments don’t know fungi. David Minter underlined how we can contribute through stressing the importance of fungi and their conservation at various levels (for example, incrementing Wikipedia sources, taking attention on Country reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity). On the other hand, it is fundamental to know which fungi we have, where they grow and if they are threatened or not. Martyn Ainsworth exposed “The lost and found Fungi project” that started in 2014 in the UK, and André Fraiture presented the publication “Distribution, ecology and status of 51 macromycetes in Europe”, that is the result of a long time mapping project of ECCF. Once again, both examples are about networking and sharing data, at national or international level.

The participation at the various sessions and symposia was active with varicolored discussions and some fruitful debate.

The congress closed with the General Assembly and the report of the EMA president David Minter.

The main functions of EMA were summarized and the fulfilled aims listed. Then a more relaxing part started during which different awards were distributed.

Stephanos Diamandis and Maria Lawrynowicz become **Honorary members**; the **founders award was presented to** Paul Kirk, Pedro Cruz, David Hawksworth, and the **congress medal to** João Baptista-Ferreira, the chairman of the XVII CEM Organizing Committee. André Fraiture, Peter Otto and Beatrice Senn-Irlet were elected **for the work for conservation**, Miguel Torrejon-Herrero for the deep **field mycology**, Vadim Melnik for **systematics**, Lynne Boddy and Urmas Kõljalg for **outstanding contribution to ecology**. The first and second prize for the **best poster of young mycologists** was given to Luis Quijada for “Exploring the phylogenetic and morphological relationships of disregarded genera in Helotiales s.l.”, and to Vineet Meshram for “Antimicrobial

and mycofumigation potential of novel Indian *Muscodor* species at enhancing the shelf life of fruits and vegetables”.

David Minter accepted to be the president for the next 4 years assisted by the following officers: Tetiana V. Andrianova, Vijai Kumar Gupta, Eske De Crop, Izabela Kałucka, Tatiana Semenova Paulo de Oliveira, Beatrice Senn-Irlet, Susana C. Gonçalves. Finally, Poland was selected to be the host country for the next congress in 2019.

In conclusion, we can't forget the memorable social events, such as the traditional icebreaker party on the evening of arrival, the Conference dinner at the picturesque São Tiago Fortress in Funchal old town, and the Excursion to the Pico de Arieiro at 1818 m a.s.l. followed by two spectacular itinerary, one walking along the characteristic water channels Levada do Furado from Portela to Ribeiro Frio, the other to Vereda dos Balkoes.