

EAMBES 2011: state of the alliance

Dear European Biomedical Engineers and Scientists:

It is now an established tradition that every year at this time the President of the European Alliance for Medical and Biological Engineering & Science (EAMBES) addresses all European biomedical engineers and scientists affiliated to one of the scientific societies or research institutions that are members of EAMBES, with the so-called "State of the Alliance" message, where we try to summarise the activity of EAMBES in the last year.

Since we have new member institutions, and established ones probably also have new members, a few words are due to explain what EAMBES is. Most societies and institutions involved with biomedical engineering and science worldwide are affiliated to the *International Federation of Medical and Biological Engineering* (IFMBE). In the early 2000s it was agreed that the consolidation of Europe as a political union required this region to have a more specific coordination for Biomedical Engineering activities than that IFMBE could provide, and in 2003 EAMBES was established as a non-profit international organisation according to the Belgian law, whose members were scientific societies or research institutions active in the territory of Europe. Today EAMBES represents over 60 institutions or societies, and through them around 8,000 biomedical engineers and scientists working primarily in research and higher education. According to our statute, EAMBES aims to:

- Serve and promote MBES at the European and International levels,
- Foster, co-ordinate and provide added value to the activities of member organizations in MBES and collaborating, where appropriate, with national and international organisations, particularly the International Federation for Medical and Biological Engineering (IFMBE),
- Support and promote MBES education, training and accreditation programmes,
- Support and promote MBES research and development,
- Establish recommendations for the general responsibilities, organizational relationships and roles of those engaged in the field of MBES,
- Establish and maintain liaison with national and European governments and agencies
- Improve intersociety relations and co-operation in Europe within MBES and related fields,
- Encourage and assist in the formation of organizations in MBES where such organizations do not exist,
- Recognize individual and group achievements and contributions to the field of MBES.

Starting in 2009 EAMBES underwent a massive reorganisation, aimed to transform it into a more efficient and effective organisation. With the next electoral ballot in 2012, which will bring back to 16 the number of Councillors, this reorganisation will be considered complete.

As a result of last year's elections, a new Council was appointed. Due to the reorganisation, it was agreed that only eight councillors would be appointed in 2011, whereas the remaining eight would be elected in the 2012 electoral ballot. The [complete list of 2011 Council](#)

[members](#) can be found on the EAMBES web site.

During the Council meeting on March 14th, 2011 the new Council elected me as new President of the EAMBES. To know a little more about me here is a [brief interview I gave to EAMBES News](#).

Probably the most important element of EAMBES action in 2011 was the establishment of the Policy Affairs Working Group (PAWG). This working group, which every representative of a member organisation is welcome to join, is working to ensure that policy makers understand the opportunities BME represents and increase support for our field so as to create more opportunities for our community. The Working Group set itself three objectives:

- Position Biomedical Engineering on the EU research and policy agenda
- Strengthen the presence of EAMBES in the opinion-leading environment at EU level
- Create an exchange between EAMBES and key policy makers in the area of biomedical engineering

The Working Group is led by the Councillor for Public Affairs, Karin Lohmann, and is supported by Giovanni Asta and Leire Solis-Garate two consultants working for Rohde Public Policy, a public affairs company specialised in health and research-related topics. The workgroup, that holds a conference call every month, has been very active in 2011. Here is a brief list of the principal activities, with links to the relevant documents¹:

1. Active participation in the Health directorate initiative "Priorities for Cutting Edge Research in the Field of Biomedical Technologies". After the [2010 workshop](#) EAMBES participated in this consultation process, with EAMBES representatives attending various events and holding meetings with European Commission officers. The calls on Health Technology in the final part of FP7 Health workprogramme are a direct consequence of this consultation process. EAMBES contributed also by assisting the European Commission in identifying qualified [candidates for the role of reviewer](#) in these calls.
2. [Recommendation submitted to the "Consultation on the pilot European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing"](#). Some of EAMBES recommendations were clearly reflected in the ["Synthesis report on the public consultation on the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing"](#).
3. Submission of the [Position paper on the "European Commission Green Paper - From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding"](#). EAMBES PAWG is closely monitoring the definition of the next framework program, named Horizon 2020, in order to ensure that biomedical engineering research is suitably recognised and funded as a strategic research topic, wherever appropriate in the workprogrammes.
4. Elaboration and dissemination of the 2011 [EAMBES Key messages](#), a set of messages for policy makers and the media. These are the messages that the members of the PAWG and our consultants systematically deliver to the European Commission officers and to the Members of the European Parliament that we regularly meet.

¹ Some of the links in this document are accessible only to users who are registered to the EAMBES web site. If you have not registered yet, the procedure takes only a few minutes: <http://www.eambes.org/createMember>. In the registration process you will have to specify to which EAMBES member organisation you are affiliated. If you indicate none, you will still have access to certain document, but not to others. To make your organisation a member of EAMBES, please contact us <http://www.eambes.org/contents/contact-us>.

5. Participation to the "[Munich Round Table](#)", during the MedTech Camp 2011, a key academic and industrial stakeholders meeting organised in order to address issues and challenges to innovation within med-tech in Europe, and active contribution to the elaboration of the summary document that will be presented to representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament at the seminar, "Medical technologies. Solutions to the grand societal challenge of healthy ageing". The seminar will be held in Brussels - Rue du Luxembourg 3, on November 24, 2011, 10:00-14:00 and it aims to discuss research, innovation and competitiveness in Medical Technology. Congratulations to our member institution Technical University of Denmark (DTU) for the organisation of this important policy activity.

As a result of our activities and contacts made, we can see the profile of Biomedical Engineering being raised at EU/EC level: advanced indications are that biomedical engineering is likely to be explicitly identified in future FP7 calls, and we believe that EAMBES has contributed to this. EAMBES is also being recognized more widely as speaking on behalf of our community, with invitations to a number of initiatives within the European Parliament and Council.

And many more activities were conducted by the Councillors.

Under the guidance of our Secretary General, David Simpson, our Manager completely reorganised the EAMBES web site that now has very functional Internet content with much valuable information for European biomedical engineers. Recently the entire [EAMBES archive](#) has been converted to digital format, and the documents section has been reorganised in chronological order, to make it easier to find older documents. Please take a moment to check the quantity, quality and diversity of documents produced in 2010 and 2011 compared to the previous years; it is probably the best way to appreciate how much work we are all putting into this endeavour.

Our Treasurer, Keita Ito, is keeping finances in close control. At the last Council meeting a business plan was approved that, when fully implemented, will ensure long-term financial sustainability even with quality professional services of our Manager, Martina Contin, and of our policy consultants, Rhode Public Policy.

The Councillor for External Relationships, Chris James, has been re-establishing solid connections with our parent organisation, IFMBE, which had become somewhat nebulous. I am currently discussing with my counterpart in IFMBE Herbert Voight the best way to recognise the peculiar nature of EAMBES, the only territorial organisation within IFMBE that has our activity and legal profile.

The Councillor for Regulatory and Industrial Affairs, Patricia Lawford, has been elaborating possible strategies for involving industries more closely in EAMBES' life, without compromising the policy profile of EAMBES. We are an organisation without vested interests, and wish to be seen as such, by represents primarily not-for-profit academic institutions. However, the concerns of industry and health-care providers must also be part of a rounded vision of BME – and finding a balance between these can be challenging. At the last Council meeting there was an intense debate on this topic, and some new ideas that arose are currently being investigated.

Councillor for Academic Affairs, Maria Siebes has been working very closely with me to activate the Division of Fellows, an essential component of the EAMBES Statute that was never initiated. The problem is to find a balance between the need for autonomy of the Fellows, and the need for EAMBES to ensure that its Fellows programme represents excellence and prestige in European biomedical engineering across the broad range of topics.

The EAMBES Council appointed Prof. Jos Spaan, former President of EAMBES and one of the leading figures in European Biomedical Engineering, as chairman of the Fellowship Committee and of the Division of Fellows Executive Committee. As Initiator of the Fellows program, Prof. Spaan nominated three additional peers, who were approved by the EAMBES Council. Thus, the first four Fellows of the European Alliance for Medical and Biological Engineering and Science are: Prof. Jos Spann, Prof. Niilo Saranummi, Prof. Sergio Cerrutti and Prof. Akos Jobbagy. I would like to be the first to publicly congratulate Jos, Niilo, Sergio and Akos for this recognition of their impressive careers, and for their services to EAMBES and European biomedical engineering in general. The founding fellows are now working on a set of procedural rules that will define how the EAMBES Fellows select new Fellows. We shall give full details of the process during the next General Assembly.

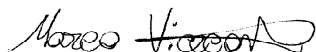
I could go on, but I see this message is already too long. I hope that in these lines you can read the enthusiasm and the drive of all that are working on the EAMBES project. I think I can speak on behalf of all my fellow Councillors in saying that we EAMBES can really make a difference, provided we continue to receive the unfaltering support of our member organisations.

As we prepare for Horizon 2020 (the follow-on from FP7) the role of EAMBES will increase in importance. Thus it is vital that each member organisation tries to identify one or more colleagues that are willing to work with us. There is currently an electoral ballot open for the election of eight more candidates, and the PAWG is open to every member organisation's representative. If you feel you can help EAMBES in other ways (web site, secretarial services, contacts with national policy makers, etc.) please get in touch with our Manager, Martina Contin, and she will surely make the best use of your voluntary efforts.

Best Regards

Marco Viceconti

President of EAMBES



EAMBES 2011: facts and figures

- End of the extraordinary management: In 2011 due to the special situation the Alliance was facing, it was decided that EAMBES would have been governed by a reduced Council and only eight Councillors were elected instead of 18. In 2012, the extraordinary management will officially terminate: during the forthcoming elections eight new Councillors will be elected, returning to a full composition.
- 2012 General Council elections: The call for candidate closed on October 31st, even though late nominations may still be considered as the list of candidates will be finalized at the end of January. For further information, please contact the Manager (manager@eambes.org). The election will be held by electronic ballot from the 1st to the 28th of February 2012. (Only the representatives of the Institutions in good standing will have the possibility to vote, so please make sure to renew your membership in due time.) On the 2nd of March 2012 the new elected members of the General Council will be formally announced.
- Management: Martina Contin was confirmed part-time Manager and she will continue to take care of the day-by-day business of the society. For any queries please consider the Manager as your first point of contact: manager@eambes.org, phone +39 051 6366965, fax +39 051 6366863
- Public Affairs: Rohde Public Policy's contract was renewed with the goal of further positioning biomedical Engineering (BME) and health-technology on the EU agenda. Some important strategic initiatives will be developed during the next months in close collaboration with the Policy Affairs Working Group (PAWG), one among the others, the organization of an EAMBES event at Parliament level.
- Web-site: SCS was re-contracted to further implement the EAMBES portal in both its graphics aspects and operatives tools (newsletter, invoicing, registration...). The website will become our first communication channel: if you have not done it yet, please register as soon as possible: <http://www.eambes.org/createMember>
- Newsletter: From May 2011, an EAMBES newsletter has been distributed on monthly bases to all the EAMBES representatives and EAMBES web-site users. If you wish to be included to the distribution list, please register to the website: <http://www.eambes.org/createMember>
- Events: EAMBES governing bodies had several meetings during the course of the year, and the interactions will be maintained regular and assiduous also in the future:
 - Past events:
 - March 14th 2011, Brussels: first General Council meeting of the newly appointed Councillors
 - [March 15th 2011, Brussels](#): General Assembly
 - [September 16th, Budapest](#): second General Council meeting during the 5th European Conference of the International Federation for Medical and Biological Engineering.
 - Future events:
 - [December 14th 2011](#): third General Council meeting (held via conference call)
 - [March 12th 2012](#): First Council meeting with the Council in its full composition
 - March 13th 2012: General Assembly