

## PERSPECTIVES

### EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

# “Building Bridges”

➤ The 11<sup>th</sup> European Congress on Biotechnology which took place in Basel/Switzerland end of August attracted nearly 1,500 scientists from all over Europe. ECB11 was dedicated to the most recent developments in modern biotechnology, covering important scientific and societal aspects as well as their commercial applications. The objective was to bridge gaps between molecular and engineering sciences, between science and technology and also between bioscience and society.

ECB11 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Federation of Biotechnology, which meanwhile has grown to a professional organisation representing 185 insti-



President EFB  
Børge  
Diderichsen

tutional members, consisting of learned societies, companies (including BIOCOM AG), academia and research institutes. It also houses more than 3,400 personal members and has recently established 11 Regional Branch Offices. These regional offices have been one point of friction between EFB and the German-based DECHEMA organisation which used to run the EFB's General Secretariat in Frankfurt. In Basel the General Assembly of the EFB accepted the wish of DECHEMA not to continue the previous contract and responsibilities. The members decided that the time was right to consider an own legal registration of the Federation.

EUROBIOTECHNEWS talked in Basel with the President of the EFB Prof. Dr. Børge Diderichsen about the near future of the organisation.

Euro|BioTech|News ?  
Recently, the EFB has taken-off quite considerably. Which future role do you think will it play in the European biotechnology sector?

**DIDERICHSEN:** !  
EFB has over the last two years developed into a vigorous and dynamic organisation. It has become the only truly pan-European organisation covering the interests of academia as well as industry in the field of biotechnology. As such, we hope to build on the respect we already enjoy in the European Commission and other trans-national or national institutions. We hope that the various stakeholders will see the EFB as expressing the voice of European biotechnologists in their fields of expertise.

Euro|BioTech|News ?  
In the near future there will be regional EFB offices, whilst the General Secretariat at the DECHEMA will be closed. Looking at the cultural diversity and all the different languages in Europe will it not be very difficult to co-ordinate the work of these regional offices?

**DIDERICHSEN:** !  
The EFB's General Secretariat will be provided by the Delft Regional Branch Office until a new central office is established. At EFB we are used to and like diversity at all levels and we consider it an enrichment rather than a complication that the activi-

ties of EFB in the future will include regional aspects with their particular flavour to a much larger extent than before.

Euro|BioTech|News ?  
During the ECB11 it was mentioned that the number of congress participants is levelling off. Are there efforts to make the congresses more attractive?

**DIDERICHSEN:** !  
Congress “culture” is changing all the time. We hope that the new EFB, even better than before, will be able to respond to new trends and create congresses that are interesting to our members as well as biotechnologists at large. I know that my colleagues in Denmark who are currently planning ECB12 in Copenhagen, in August 2005 ([www.ecb12.dk](http://www.ecb12.dk)) have this very much in their minds.

Euro|BioTech|News ?  
Until now individual members of the EFB do not pay membership fees. How will the EFB's work be financed in the future?

**DIDERICHSEN:** !  
As the activities and membership of the Federation is growing, we obviously have to consider how to ensure a solid financial basis. We expect that the impact of EFB makes it natural for more universities and companies to become institutional members and to pay a modest fee in that regard, or to sign up for sponsorships. We may, however, consider additional initiatives to strengthen the financial solidarity of EFB.

Euro|BioTech|News ?  
Looking at biopolitics: Will the role of the EFB also increase on a European political level?

**DIDERICHSEN:** !  
It is our impression that the European Commission and other international organisations increasingly respect the opinions of EFB. This is for instance reflected in the increasing number of invitations we receive to participate in selected events or to offer our opinions. I am therefore convinced that the voice of EFB will continue to increase in strength and authority. ◀