

## **SAME13, The First EMBO Conference on Aquatic Microbial Ecology - Final report for ISME**

The 13th Symposium SAME, this year called First EMBO Conference on Aquatic Microbial Ecology: SAME13 after the very welcome acknowledgment of the quality of the SAME series by the European Molecular Biology Organization, has been held at the Conference Palace of Stresa (Italy) between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2013.

About 440 researchers joined the conference, doubling the average attendance of the former SAME meetings. About 50 countries, and a huge number of different institutions were represented. The proportion of women (over 50% of the participants), of young researchers (64%, equally divided in PhD students or young researchers with less than 3 years of experience after graduation) and of extra-European researchers (almost 30%, from every continent), allow us to consider the SAME13 as a Worldwide Conference in Aquatic Microbial Ecology.

Such a high attendance to SAME13 was spin by different factors: the great time of microbial ecology is for sure the most important. After the metagenomic-era, microbial ecology has now a sufficient base to explore new frontiers, coupling the massive datasets built in the last decades with the general ecological theory and with deeper investigations on physical and chemical processes at the community as well as at the single cell level. This renewed interdisciplinarity of microbial ecology promotes the need for meetings, for ideas exchange, and SAME13 was, indeed, the place for it.

The support by ISME, EMBO and FEMS ensured a large promotion of the event. The amount of travel grants and prizes, covering part of the costs for more than 50% of the students and young researchers attending the conference, favoured the participation of delegates from developing countries.

As organizers, we can proudly affirm that our goal was reached, and overtaken by far: the scientific level of SAME13 was outstanding. The 75 plenary presentations, selected through a triple review of the almost 400 abstracts received, covered all the fields of aquatic microbial ecology, often showing unpublished and mind blowing results. The 12 plenary lectures, focused on different approaches and environments, were awesome. The two opening lectures by Prof. F. Azam and Dr. S. Collins gave a perfect introduction to what microbial ecology nowadays is: a great tool to understand the oceans, and the water global cycle, but at the same time the most amazing tool to understand the basic question of the ecological and evolutionary theories. The final lecture of Prof. R. Stoker was a merge of the potential interactions of microbial ecology and technical sciences, and built with amazing videos, could be considered one of the best lectures in microbial ecology of the last years.

The 3 poster sessions, organized in the late afternoons of Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the foyer of the Conference Palace, hosted over 280 presentations. The presence of the limited SAME13 Official Beer bottles (produced by the largest Italian independent brewery, Menabrea from Biella, 50 km from Stresa) ensured a huge attendance at the sessions, up to 8:30pm!

The social events organized started on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>, with a welcome aperitif in the Panorama Room of the Conference Palace: local wines and finger food, as well as local risotto rice and prosciutto was served while a jazz band was welcoming the attendees to Italian culture and masterpiece music.

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>, 5 social excursions, involving about 60% of the attendants has been organized to enjoy the spectacular surrounding environments, such as mountains, lakes, gardens and beautiful Villas facing the Lago Maggiore.

To conclude the day, over 250 attendants participated with an unforeseen enthusiasm to the lakeshore beach party organized, with drinks and music, up to late night. The SAME13 Dinner took place on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>: almost 300 attendants could cross the Borromean Gulf by taxi boats at the sunset time, to reach the private peer of Villa Rusconi-Clerici, a wonderful art-deco villa in Pallanza. Aperitif and dinner were organized by Slow Food Lago Maggiore only with local products and they were served in the garden and in the Liberty Pavillon of the Villa. By 10 PM, participants could choose between going back to Stresa or joining the pop-rock concert organized in the cellars of the Villa.

All in all SAME13 was a big success in terms of numbers, scientific quality, and comfort of the attendants. The very important financial contribution by ISME will be used to cover the expenses of three invited speakers present at the SAME13: namely the journey of Dr. Sinead Collins (euro 435, flight ticket Edinburgh to Milan), Dr. Josep Gasol (euro 145, flight ticket Barcelona- Milan) as well as of Dr. Christopher Marx (euro 920 flight from Boston to Milan).