

Registered number: 03565643 Charity number: 1072117



THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

Annual Trustees' Report 2023

For the year ended 31 December 2023

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE COMPANY, ITS TRUSTEES AND ADVISERS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Trustees (at time of signing)

Dr A Ventosa, President (appointed from 01 January 2024)
Dr B Vasiljević, Secretary General
Dr C M Thomas, Director of Finance (formerly called Treasurer)
Dr J Jass, Director of Grants
Dr P M Bavoil, Director of Research and Publications
Dr P Cos, Director of Business & Policy
Dr A Sibirny, Director of Education & Public Engagement
Dr V Taleski, Director of Events & Internationalization

Trustees (in office during 2023)

Dr H Lappin-Scott OBE, President (completed term of office 31 December 2023)

Company registered number 03565643

Charity registered number 1072117

Registered office

Salisbury House, Station Road, Cambridge, CB1 2LA

Executive Director

Elise Kuurstra

Independent auditors

Peters Elworthy & Moore, Salisbury House, Station Road, Cambridge, CB1 2LA

Bankers

National Westminster Bank PLC, 13 Market Place, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 2EP, UK.
ABN-AMRO, Business Services Sector, Postbus 283, 1000 EA, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Investment Managers

Brewin Dolphin Limited, 12 Smithfield Street, London, EC1A 9BD, United Kingdom

Central Office

Delftechpark 37a, 2628 XJ Delft, The Netherlands

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The Trustees of the charity (who are also Directors of the Company for the purposes of the Companies Act), present their annual report including the audited financial statements of The Federation of European Microbiological Societies (the Company) (also referred to in the document as FEMS) for the year ending 31 December 2023. The Trustees confirm that the Annual Trustees' Report, including the financial statements of the Company, comply with the current statutory requirements, the Company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP). The SORP is applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Since the Company qualifies as "small" under section 383, the strategic report required of medium and large companies under The Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Director's Report) Regulations 2013 is not required.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Policies, objectives, and activities

The FEMS mission is to advance the visibility, reputation, and impact of microbiology by helping to connect people and share knowledge, without borders or barriers.

FEMS was founded in 1974 to encourage scientific collaboration, facilitate international communication and support meetings, training, and research amongst Europe's microbiologists. Since then, FEMS activities have expanded but its core mission remains focused on those guiding aims.

Our strategic purpose and objectives were reviewed and refreshed during 2020 and published in our [Strategic Plan 2020-2024: Connecting People - Sharing Knowledge](#). This document outlines the goals FEMS wants to accomplish but also describes the value FEMS places on achieving these in a fair, open and inclusive way. It details the challenges FEMS needs to consider as a not-for-profit federation and that its Member Societies and indeed all microbiologists will face in the immediate future. Our responses are outlined in a series of priorities, all of which are aimed at promoting microbiology and supporting microbiologists:

- Create and support a connected, collaborative community of microbiologists sharing experiences, knowledge, research outcomes and best practice.
- Publish and promote high-quality scientific research that is accessible and more easily shared across borders with no barriers to knowledge exchange.
- Increase the visibility and reputation of microbiology by helping to connect people and share knowledge, without borders or barriers.
- Support researchers' ability to travel and work without hindrance, encouraging and enabling collaborations to produce global responses to global issues.
- Promote meaningful dialogue between scientists and policy makers at a national and European level.
- Support for microbiologists to develop the skills and knowledge to keep up to date with recent developments, in a changing world and with changing research priorities.
- Increase public awareness of the role of microorganisms in daily life and their benefits, beauty, and risks.

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

ACTIVITIES AND PERFORMANCE

Review of activities – delivering strategy

FEMS delivers a range of activities across seven broad areas to achieve our strategic objectives:

- **Publications** - publishing seven scientific journals, highlighting the best research carried out by the international community of microbiologists.
- **Events** - organizing the biennial Congress of European Microbiologists and other events, as well as supporting other scientific meetings, laboratory courses and summer schools across Europe.
- **Grants & Awards** - supporting early career scientists and meeting organizers to attend, organize and pursue research and training opportunities, as well as recognizing and promoting academic excellence.
- **Communications** - leading outreach initiatives and promoting science communication for and from the microbiology community.
- **Education & Outreach** – promoting continuing professional development for microbiology researchers, scientists and educators and raising the profile of microbiology as a field of study and employment.
- **Industry & Policy** – working to build connections between microbiological research and its medical, commercial, and industrial applications and to increase the uptake of scientific advice by policymakers.
- **Business Administration and support services** - supporting and building the capacity and visibility of our Member Societies and promoting and sharing their achievements.

In reviewing FEMS aims and objectives, and in planning future activities, the Trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the [Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit](#). More detailed information on activities relating to each of these areas can be found on the [FEMS website](#).

Publications

FEMS facilitates the sharing of microbiological research through seven internationally recognized scientific journals, which are published in collaboration with our not-for-profit publisher Oxford University Press (OUP). That our journals provide an important service to the microbiological research community by publishing and promoting articles that have undergone a process of rigorous peer review, is demonstrated by high levels of usage and strong global sales figures.

Articles from our journals were downloaded 5.9 million times in 2023. Our journals provide the revenue that enables our charitable activities, allowing us to continue investing in science and education. We are grateful for the hard work and dedication of every contributor to this process: the Editors, Authors, Reviewers and Oxford University Press, who together make this possible. FEMS journals also award prizes to the best research they publish each year via our [Journal Article Awards](#) and to the best research they encounter at scientific meetings via [Journal Poster & Oral Presentation Prizes](#).

2023 has seen significant work underway to support FEMS Journals moving toward an Open Access publication model in 2024. This will see *FEMS Microbiology Ecology*, *FEMS Microbiology Reviews*, *FEMS Yeast Research*, *Pathogens and Disease* become fully open access. We are excited to make this change because we believe making high quality science freely available to anyone to read anywhere in the world supports the advancement of our discipline. Work has been undertaken to ensure that the relevant publication processes are in place to support this move. In fact, the transition began in September 2023 when all new papers submitted to these journals were entered in the Open Access publication workflow. Furthermore, we reached out to all our stakeholders in the FEMS network to explain why this change is happening and what it means for them as authors in the FEMS journals (see [FAQ-page](#)).

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Journal	Subject area (World of Science (WoS))	Impact Factor	Ranking in 'Microbiology' (WoS /135)	Total articles published	Full-text downloads (HTML and pdf)
<i>FEMS Microbiology Ecology</i>	Microbiology	4.2	53	167	1,161,232
<i>FEMS Microbiology Letters</i>	Microbiology	2.1	118	133	1,887,308
<i>Pathogens and Disease</i>	Microbiology	3.3	71	38	631,154
<i>FEMS Microbiology Reviews</i>	Microbiology	11.3	13	69	1,538,518
<i>FEMS Yeast Research</i>	Microbiology	3.2	75	56	559,727
<i>FEMS microbes</i>	Microbiology	-	-	23	64,269
<i>microLife</i>	Microbiology	-	-	49	61,694

Events

FEMS organizes its own academic conferences and supports others in the community to run theirs. FEMS also runs educational and professional development summer schools. These events aim to encourage scientific interaction and collaboration and are a key contribution to achieving our goal of a connected and collaborative community of microbiologists across Europe. They provide an opportunity for microbiologists to share experiences, knowledge, research outcomes and best practice. Across all our events FEMS seeks to create a sense of community and nurture relationships and connections across all microbiological disciplines and sectors. We provide both scientific and social networking opportunities to encourage communication among microbiologists. We also participate at events organized with and by our Member Societies, assisting our Member Societies to increase the impact of the events they organize via financial contributions or administrative support.

In 2023, FEMS held its 10th Congress of European Microbiologists and its first in person Congress since the COVID-19 pandemic. While participation numbers were slightly lower than previous congresses, the event again grew in terms of sponsors and exhibitors. As always through FEMS Congress Attendance Grants, we supported microbiologists from across the world to attend the event. The Summer School for Postdocs which we also organised in 2023 provided a unique opportunity for early career scientists to receive instruction from prominent academics as well as to collaborate and network with fellow researchers from across the world.

10th Congress of European Microbiologists (FEMS2023)

- This event was organized in collaboration with FEMS Member Societies the German Society for Hygiene and Microbiology (DGHM) and The Association for General and Applied Microbiology (VAAM) and was held from 9 to 13 July 2023 in Hamburg, Germany.
- The Congress attracted 1800 participants from 78 countries. Out of the 1800 participants who attended the congress, 1011 presented their research with a poster.
- 223 microbiologists from across the world received the FEMS Congress Attendance Grant.
- The exhibition featured 2 Gold Sponsors, 10 Silver Sponsors, and 32 Exhibitors.
- The scientific programme included the following session types: 6 Plenary Presentations, 32 Symposia, 5 Special Events, 10 Flash Oral Presentation Sessions, 15 Offered Talks Sessions.
- The congress programme extended beyond the scientific programme with 5 Community Corner Sessions, 2 Industry Symposia, 9 Product Presentations, 10 Business Meetings, a Grantees reception, an Early Career Scientists networking session, a Congress Dinner and a meeting of FEMS Ambassadors from around the world.

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Summer School for PostDocs 2023

- FEMS Summer School for PostDocs took place between the 4-11 September 2023, at the Mediterranean Institute for Life Sciences (MedILS) in Split, Croatia.
- FEMS received 28 interested applicants for this 4th Summer School. 22 were selected and attended. The School had a total of 16 internationally renowned speakers, with 6 giving their presentation online.
- In the post-event evaluation, 94% of respondents reported that they would recommend the Summer School to others. Most importantly of all, all respondents indicated they would apply the lessons learned back at their institutions.

Grants & Awards

FEMS Grants provide support to microbiologists in the early stages of their career and, enable our Member Societies and their members to organize scientific and educational events. Our grants programme provides support for:

- early career scientists to visit institutions in other European countries, with the aim of growing their professional networks and to learn new techniques, skills, and expertise.
- organizing or attending meetings, conferences, and events with the aim of sharing research, encouraging career development, and facilitating networking.

All individual members of a FEMS Member Society are eligible to apply for a FEMS grant (and non-members are eligible to apply for Congress Attendance Grants). Our FEMS Ukraine Support Grant, which was introduced in 2022, was extended in 2023 for a further year to provide ongoing support to help microbiologists caught up in Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Grant name	Number of applications (combined across application rounds)	Number of grants awarded	Value of awarded grants (EUR)
Meeting Organizer Grants (MOG)	42	30	220,541
Research and Training Grants (RTG)	78	57	188,500
Meeting Attendance Grants (MAG)	72	43	27,866
Conference Attendance Grants (CAG)	570	223	192,905
Ukraine Support Grant	7	6	30,000
Industry Placement Grants (IPG)	7	5	15,700

FEMS Awards recognize excellence in scientific research, teaching, and public outreach. We have a variety of awards to recognise scientific merit found across our diverse community and at all stages of a scientific career. These awards give recognition and exposure to individuals and teams of researchers and include financial contributions to further activities. Two of our awards are jointly awarded with our partner organisations: the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) and European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID).

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Award name	Recipient	Criteria/Recognizing	Value of award (EUR)
Early Career Microbiologist Award	Khaled Selim	<i>Recognizing Early Career Scientist that has an excellent body of (published) research.</i>	EUR 1,000 and registration and costs to attend FEMS Congress.
Science Communication Award	Joanna Verran	<i>Stimulating Europe-based microbiologists at any stage of their career that apply science communications and public relations to contribute significantly to the public discourse about science and evidence.</i>	EUR 1,000 towards science communication projects
FEMS-ASM Mäkela-Cassell Award	Paul Solis-Reyes	<i>Benefit early career scientists from both organizations by giving them the opportunity to present their work overseas and experience the best of microbiology in the partner country.</i>	Registration and travel costs to attend FEMS Congress
FEMS-ESCMID Awardee	Claudia Antonella Colque	<i>Out of ESCMID's Research and Training Grantees, FEMS annually selects at least one grantee, the ESCMID-FEMS Awardee.</i>	Registration to attend FEMS Congress and EUR 1,000, paid for by ESCMID)
ESCMID-FEMS Awardees	Pedro Puerta Alcalde and Nicolás Sarute	<i>Out of the FEMS Research and Training Grantees, the European Society of Clinical Microbiology, and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) annually selects at least one grantee, the FEMS-ESCMID Awardee.</i>	Registration to attend FEMS Congress (not used) and EUR 1,000, paid for by ESCMID)
Lwoff Award (awarded 2022)	- <i>Rewarding those that create high quality knowledge that helps to solve today's societal problems around microbiology.</i> -		
Jensen Award (awarded 2022)	- <i>Recognizing academic achievement and superior research accomplishments showing significant potential to develop an outstanding research career.</i> -		

Education & Outreach

The FEMS Education group consists of individuals involved in teaching microbiology and aims to share new developments in teaching and advocate for best practice in education. The group organised a symposium at FEMS Congress in Hamburg, Germany in 2023. Education remained a key theme for the FEMS Congress with sessions dedicated to providing early career scientists in particular the tools to support and develop their career in microbiology.

Our focus for public outreach in 2023 was the International Microorganism Day (IMD2023) event. FEMS helped to organize 63 parallel events which ran across 31 different countries. These had an estimated 8000 attendees in total, of which the majority were children and young students. To further support IMD2023, we ran our Microbe Art Competition for the fifth year in a row. Winners were announced on 17 September which is the official International Microorganism Day and received microbiology-themed prizes. Three new blog pieces which shared interesting aspects of microbiology helped promote the event. There was a concerted social media campaign with the hashtag #InternationalMicroorganismDay which was used over 2.5 million times in 2023 alone. In 2023, the IMD website reached new levels of traffic, with over 25,000 unique visitors and over 50,000 page views.

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Communication

Marketing and Communication is a central part of our delivery strategy for all our major activities. In 2023, FEMS continued to update our community with all the relevant news and to engage with our audience on our social media platforms and via newsletters.

A key activity in 2023 was the move to the onboarding of more of the marketing, branding and communications in-house to support the delivery of FEMS events, from the aforementioned International Microorganism Day to the FEMS Summer School for PostDocs and 2023 Congress. In particular for the FEMS Congress, these activities had all traditionally been the responsibility of our Professional Conference Organizers in-house for previous events. This required taking on a range of new activities by the FEMS team. For the FEMS Congress in Hamburg we created graphics to support our abstract submission and registration campaigns, we designed our booth, merchandise, and signage for our venue. We managed the social media and email marketing campaigns in combination with administering the FEMS2023 website. We managed creative teams to produce photography and videography of FEMS2023.

This year FEMS also managed the operations and marketing of 3 webinars with the FEMS Journals, in total 851 people attended. The recordings of these webinars have now been watched over 1000 times on our YouTube channel.

A big part of our communications delivery is the creation of graphics, audio, and video to support our messaging. In 2023, we released 8 podcast episodes, 43 blogs, 16 long-form videos and published press releases to announce the new incoming FEMS President and the shift to Open Access publications for the FEMS Journals, including communication with all stakeholders. We also worked together with our volunteers for various communications projects, including the #OnThisDay team, Journal Social Media Editors, blog writers, illustrators, and translators.

Industry & Policy

FEMS aims to build stronger connections between microbiology research and its commercial, medical, and environmental applications. To encourage and facilitate this collaboration we have been seeking to better understand how best to support industrial microbiologists and the companies they work for. We have been working to increase the participation of industry representatives at our events and improved understanding of the sector.

The FEMS Policy Network met in May 2023 with new members knowledgeable and interested in policymaking from FEMS Member Societies. In 2023, following recommendations from the FEMS Policy Network in 2022, FEMS has joined the "The Science Organisations for Policy Networks", an informal, monthly online meeting of policy officers at various organisations active at the "Science for Policy" interface at the European level.

FEMS organised a Policy Session at FEMS Congress in Hamburg (9-13 July 2023) on the topic of "Why and what do scientists need to get involved with policy?" During the FEMS Congress in Hamburg, a "Community Corner" was held to inform Early Career Scientists and industries about the new (since 2022) Industry Placement Grant scheme. There were also roundtables with industry representatives and networking sessions led by the Director of Business & Policy.

Business Administration and Support Services

We continuously work with our Member Societies to find ways to further support their work and we aim to share and celebrate their achievements via our communication channels, to learn from them and, share our expertise in return. We also aim to have clear and robust governance system in place for all our processes.

A key part of this development process in 2023 was FEMS governance review of its Articles of Association to ensure our key documents reflected governance best practice. Throughout the process Member Societies were deeply involved with shaping the changes to be made to the way FEMS would be governed. Following discussions at Council in 2022, FEMS reviewed and proposed changes to the Articles which addressed the key points decided with Member Societies in 2022 to help improve FEMS governance and the Articles overall legal compliance with UK Charity law. The voting reflected the decision of the Association to approve the updated FEMS Articles of Association and passed with 87% of the vote.

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

We held our annual hybrid Council meeting in Vienna, Austria in September 2023 which included the Annual General meeting. At the Council meeting, a new FEMS President was elected, and our current Secretary General and Director of Business & Policy were re-elected for a second term. The Council also saw the formal welcoming of FEMS new Executive Director and the new delegates. The Council agreed to retain the existing membership fee for 2024 and to review the membership model in the future. The Council also approved to continuing using PEM as FEMS financial auditors.

The European Academy of Microbiology (EAM), our leadership group of eminent microbiology experts grew in 2023 to more than 170 fellows, increasing the representation of countries and fields of microbiology. The academy hosted two symposia at the FEMS Congress (FEMS2023) with expert speakers in their field, which were well attended. Fellows from the academy also contributed to a number of publications in *microLife*, the journal of the EAM and attended meetings worldwide representing the academy and its mission.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

2024 will mark the end of FEMS current 5-year strategy plan as well as the 50th anniversary of Federation. It will also mark the start of a period where FEMS will need to transition its business model to meet the challenges faced from Open Access publishing. The move of FEMS Journals to an open access publishing model have the threat to seriously affect FEMS income. In previous years, significant work has been underway to ensure that FEMS has assessed the risks and to develop the steps needed to ensure its ongoing sustainability into the future. These activities will require FEMS to heavily invest its resources to generate a sustainable way of delivering its charity aims. In the forthcoming year key activities will include:

- Preparation for FEMS Congress 2025 in Milan as a key charitable activity of FEMS. To be able to deliver this event, FEMS capacity and its systems will need to continue to be increased while giving FEMS the space to explore ways that the event can become a future source of income.
- Development of a FEMS Strategy from 2025 based on agreed organisational objectives. Work on this will focus on developing an organisational strategy and in particular an event strategy and will involve consultancy support throughout 2024 for its development.
- Introducing key processes and expertise to FEMS to help support the ongoing delivery of its objectives. This will involve development of FEMS financial management tools and oversight processes and addressing operational and IT gaps of FEMS.
- Supporting these activities, a FEMS Development Fund will be created which will provide significant resources to help develop these key long-term activities which will require high levels of investment above FEMS annual operational budget.

FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE YEAR TO 31 DECEMBER 2023

Results for the year

The organization's full results for the year to 31 December 2023 are set out in detail in the statement of financial activities.

FEMS journal income for 2023 was €2,680,248 (2022 €2,735,863).

The total value of funds held at the end of 2023 was €21,483,201 (2022 €18,977,837). A small proportion of these funds is held as a restricted fund.

Restricted funds

A total of €121,877 is secured as a restricted fund - The Jensen Award.

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The Jensen Award was set up, through the generosity of J R Norris, to enable the Federation to support an outstanding researcher to work for at least 6 months in a laboratory of their choice. It is the intention that the award is given at intervals which allow for the generation of sufficient capital to make the award worthwhile, while preserving initial capital. The most recent award (€10,000) was made in 2022 to Dr Rosana Alves of the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal. The fund balance is invested as part of FEMS' investment portfolio and a transfer has been made to the fund representing its share of the total return on the investment portfolio. FEMS has a dedicated team at central office that oversees the Grants & Awards programmes, and the Jensen Award continues to be managed by this team.

Reserves policy

It is the policy of the Company to maintain sufficient funds to meet its objectives and obligations on an ongoing basis. An imminent threat to its main source of income, namely that from its journal business, is the move from a subscription base to Open Access. Other threats include uncertainty in the financial markets, financial austerity, and uncertainties of the global economy (as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic). While active measures are being taken to develop the FEMS publishing strategy and to develop initiatives to provide additional sources of income, the Board of Trustees considers it judicious to maintain a high level of unrestricted general reserves to cover both capital requirements and recurring and non-recurring expenditure going forward.

The underlying principles regarding the levels of reserves held are:

- to distribute as much of the resources as possible in furthering the charitable aims of the Federation, given the caveats above regarding current (transient) uncertainties with respect to revenues and the ability to maintain the organization's existing activities;
- to ensure that the secure investment of the company's reserves results in best possible long-term financial gain;
- to ensure that, in the unlikely event of a catastrophic failure of the Federation, the company could be closed down in such a way as to meet all outstanding debts and demands on the resources in an orderly manner.

Principal funding

FEMS does not actively fundraise or seek donations from the public. The charitable activities of FEMS are funded by:

1. Royalties from publishing seven scientific journals. These royalties make up 64% of the company's income which, in turn, is used as much as possible in the pursuit of its charitable activities (*vide supra*).
2. Capital gains and dividends from the company's investment portfolio. This income depends on the overall performance of the portfolio. To date it has been in line with major indices.
3. Membership fees paid by its member societies. The annual fee is currently kept at a very modest level, enabling all relevant microbiology societies to become members of FEMS or to maintain their membership regardless of variations in the exchange rate of national currencies to the Euro.

Performance of investments

At the end of 2023, the investment portfolio value stood at €19,703,557 (2022 €17,848,808).

FEMS's investment portfolio is held in London using the services of an Investment Manager. The portfolio's investment objectives are to generate an income and growth return with a diversified risk. The portfolio is a conservative one, consisting of a mixture of UK and overseas equities, UK government stocks, unit trusts, property, commodities, and cash, carefully blended to generate income and long-term capital growth. The portfolio is managed on a discretionary basis with its content and performance monitored by the Finance Director. The investments are held in Sterling (GBP) and therefore the valuation is dependent on the current GBP/EUR exchange rate.

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Statutes

The Company is registered as a charitable company limited by guarantee and is governed by its [Articles of Association](#) (revised and accepted by Council in 2023). In accordance with Article 30, each of the Companies Members has undertaken to contribute to it a sum not exceeding GBP 1 in the event of its being wound up while they are members, or within one year after they cease to be members.

Method of appointment or election of Trustees/Directors

The governance of the Company is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees whose members are elected under the terms of the Articles of Association. Vacancies on the Board of Trustees are advertised widely and with clear role descriptions. Previous experience of charity governance or with FEMS is not required but is preferred. Each Trustee, except the President, serves a term of 3 years, up to a maximum of two terms. The President serves for one three-year term.

Organisation structure and decision making

The Company's Members are scholarly societies and other associations with a predominant interest in microbiology, based across Europe and beyond. Each such Member Society has the right to nominate one delegate to the Council of the Federation. The Council meets annually to receive reports from the Board of Trustees and to elect members to the Board who lead the organizational strategy and governance of the Company. The Trustees in turn appoint the Executive Director and delegate the day-to-day management of the Company according to the statutes of the Company (Article 24.2).

Pay Policy for senior staff and Trustee/Directors

The Trustees are tasked with the development of the strategy of FEMS and ensuring proper oversight and quality assurance of the activities of the charity. All Trustees give of their time freely and no Trustee received remuneration in the year. Details of Trustees' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in the accounts.

The senior management of the charity are tasked with managing FEMS on a day-to-day basis. The pay of the senior staff is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings, broadly consistent with the Dutch higher education collective labour agreement (CAO). Where recruitment has proven difficult, a market addition may also be paid in accordance with an agreed pay maximum that is in line with benchmarked salaries for comparable roles.

Principal risks and uncertainties

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the Company is exposed, which are those related to the operations and finances of the company and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. The Trustees consider that the major risks to the Federation remain a significant loss of income from FEMS Journal portfolio due to their move to Open Access publishing. Additionally, in this rapidly changing professional landscape, a failure to implement state-of-the-art IT systems and to establish sufficient staffing capacity for FEMS needs were also marked as further major risks.

To help address the impact of the changes to its publishing business model, FEMS has undertaken a range of activities. We have secured a new contract with our publishers from 2024 which recognises this changing landscape and increases the communication resources to help promote OA flipped journals. From September 2022, development plans have been initiated to flip FEMS Journals over to Open Access and delivery plans have been developed to ensure new Journals are successful in this new era. FEMS has also approved a Development Fund to help FEMS invest in the future sustainability of the organization and has established a Finance Committee to monitor the financial delivery of its transformation goals. The Development Fund will help support the Board of Trustees and Executive Director in their strategy work, mapping the potential danger and developing an appropriate response plan. FEMS also continues to maintain a medium risk and diversified portfolio and continues to operate well within its reserve requirements.

THE FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN MICROBIOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

(A company limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Regarding the need to implement appropriate IT systems and establish sufficient staffing capacity for FEMS, the previous years have seen the development of a series of IT infrastructures. This has supported FEMS activities in 2023 and will function as a stable potential IT platform to support the expansion of FEMS products and services in the future. FEMS will look to work with technology advisors to review FEMS's current technology provision and make recommendations for appropriate ways forward. The FEMS Development fund will enable future funding for both IT and human resources investment, beyond the annual operations budgets.

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of The Federation of European Microbiological Societies for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Trustees/Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the Directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they provide a true and fair view of the situation of the charitable company and of the existing resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees/Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity Commission's SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees/Directors are responsible for keeping adequate records that are sufficient to show and account for the charitable company's transactions and which disclose at any time and with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charitable company. The financial records should also enable the Trustees/Directors to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Trustees/Directors are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Disclosure of information to auditors

Each of the Trustees/Directors, at the time when this Trustees' Report was approved, has confirmed that:

- as far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware of, and
- they have taken all the steps necessary as a Board of Trustees to ensure that any information relevant to the audit has been identified and that the charitable company's auditors are aware of that information.

This report was approved by the Trustees/Directors and signed on their behalf by:

Dr C M Thomas

Director Finance

Date: 3/5/2024