

Introduction

This Policy Plan describes the desired course of the association for the next five years. It contains a summary of activities in accordance to our by-laws and rulebook and it describes the structure of the association and decisions made during the international board meetings, held on 11 August 2020 and the general members meeting, held on 14 August 2020 and the international board meetings held on 14 June 2021. A recapitulation of all plans can be found at the end of this document.

More information about the general goals and rules of the association can be found in the by-laws and rulebook, published online at: <https://www.isme-microbes.org/reports>

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General

The International Society for Microbial Ecology (ISME) is a scientific members association, registered in Wageningen, the Netherlands at the Chamber of Commerce (09191073 / RSIN 820279328).

The general goal of the association, as described in the by-laws, is:

- a) To stimulate education and research activities in microbial ecology at regional and international level.
- b) To facilitate interaction amongst researchers in microbial ecology and related disciplines
- c) The organization of meetings that promote the exchange of scientific information on microbial ecology, including the international Symposium on Microbial Ecology as defined under article 9 of the present by-laws.
- d) The sponsoring of publications that broadly communicate knowledge in microbial ecology to scientists, policy makers and the general public.
- e) To publish newsletters and journals related to microbial ecology.

The association is non-profit. The policy of the association must be a charitable one, as meant in article 5b of the Dutch general Tax Act: *artikel 5b Algemene wet inzake rijksbelastingen*

Policy plan:

- i) *to expand outreach to the wider-community and broaden the publication possibilities for the isme-community*

Organization

ISME has the following bodies installed which must represent the international nature of the association:

- Executive Board (Vice President, President, Past President and Treasurer)
- International Board (8 members)
- Editors (approx. 6 chief editors, 35 Senior Editors and 100 Editorial Board Members)
- Ambassadors (approx. 100 members)
- Regular & Student Members in various categories (600-1600 members)

Furthermore, ISME has appointed the following committees:

- Nomination Committee - consisting of 3 association members and the Vice President
- Award Committee - consisting of 2 board members and the Vice President
- Advisory Committee - consisting of 3 association members
- Local Organizing Committee - consisting of regional scientists of upcoming symposium
- Early Career Scientific Committee - consisting of 9 early-career members

The role of these committees are described in the society's (online) rulebook. The number of members within each committee or body are numbers per date but can change without losing its status.

Policy plan:

ii) to develop the UnCode initiative and help index uncultured taxa through a new ICSPDSD committee

Secretariat

Besides the legal bodies and committees, the association makes use of a secretariat. The secretariat of ISME, from now on referred to as the ISME Office, is hosted by the Netherlands Institute of Ecology (NIOO) in Wageningen. NIOO is part of the Royal Academy of Arts & Sciences (KNAW).

The ISME Office currently holds 3 permanent employees representing 2 fte.

At the request of the ISME Office and Executive Board, employees are appointed by NIOO-KNAW (under the Labor Agreement of Dutch Universities). The association quarterly reimburses NIOO-KNAW all employee costs plus overhead.

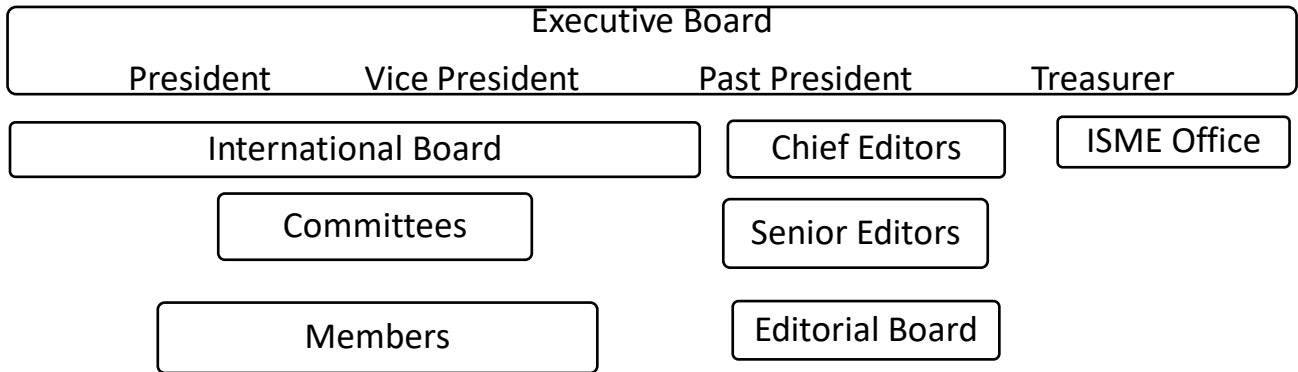
The primary tasks of the ISME Office are (but not limited to) :

- Supporting all bodies and committees
- Administration of finances
- Administration of membership
- Leading editorial offices
- Administration of (and reporting to) bodies and committees
- Advising and guarding the by-laws and legal status
- Organization of events and meetings
- Content Management, marketing and communication
- Outsource management of staff, software, consultancy and legal support

Policy plan:

iii) to review current roles and tasks

Organizational Chart



All of the functions as listed above are unpaid positions, with the exception of the ISME Office staff.

Policy plan:

iv) to continue to serve the association, its members and wider-community in the best manner possible and in the most ethical way by updating committees, editors and boards when appropriate

Members

Anyone with an interest in microbial ecology can become a member of ISME. Students, developing countries and retired members get an extra discount on membership fees.

Membership benefits:

- Online access to The ISME Journal and ISME Communications
- Discount for corresponding authors on open access fees
- Discount to ISME Symposia or other events organized by ISME
- Obtain funding for activities within the field of microbial ecology
- Access to keynote talks of previously held symposia
- The right to cast votes during board elections or to stand elect as board member
- Free advertising of jobs and events on the website of ISME
- Submitting bids to host future symposia
- Access to online membership database
- Receiving ISME newsletters

Policy plan:

v) review benefits, growing membership number and stabilizing numbers between symposium years and review the possibility of free memberships.

Publications

ISME publishes two journals in corporation with publisher Springer Nature via ISME Publications BV Company. The volume is 12 issues per year per journal. Articles in the journals are edited according to the so called peer-review system. The commercial aspects of the journals are being handled by the publisher; the content by the ISME community. The editorial officers from chief editors to reviewers are unpaid functions.

Policy plan:

vi) to successfully launch the new publication ISME Communications

vii) to expand the editorial team in various topics and expertise in order to relief the work pressure on editors

viii) to update and simplify the manuscript tracking system

ix) to review inhouse publishing possibilities

UPDATE (20-6-2021) *Within the coming 2 years both publications will be 100% Open Access*

Other Publications:

- Quarterly newsletters for members
- Symposium proceedings / abstract book
- Reports of sponsored events and ambassadors reports
- Financial year reports
- Policy plans
- Activity reports
- By-laws and rulebook

Symposia

ISME organizes international symposia in the even numbered years. The organization lies with the executive board, local organizing committee (LOC) and the ISME Office. The symposium is realized with its own budget and has a break-even purpose where potential shortage can be topped by the association. Symposium income consists of registration fees and sponsorship.

Policy plan:

x) to offer the widest scale of topics and developments within microbial ecology

xi) to attract and involve young researchers

xii) to focus highly on:

gender equality (minimum of 50% of speakers/presenters should be female)

internationality (a fair and global representation of speakers)

xiii) distributing more grants to young researchers from developing countries

xiv) to offer social events within the registration fees as much as possible (though heavily depending on the specific budget each time)

xv) develop the transit to hybrid-symposia where delegates can attend virtually and physically

xvi) to become more sustainable

Other events

Besides the main symposia, ISME organizes, funds and assists in smaller events, online and physical.

Policy plan:

xvi) to invest in virtual meeting tools, software and IT-solutions

UPDATE (20-6-2021) in light of Covid-19 the symposium in Africa was postponed to August 2024 and the next symposium will be held in Lausanne (August 2022)

Revenues

ISME's revenue comes from:

- Members (membership fees)
- Trust funds (donations of external parties to be used for symposium awards)
- Symposia surplus (if applicable)
- Donations of ISME Publications BV, the fundraiser, to ISME*

In 2016 ISME has legally demerged the fundraising activity (publishing the journals) from the association and placed it in a new, separate ltd company named ISME Publication BV.

Financial management

The capital of ISME lies with the Rabobank under various checking and savings accounts. No investments are being made with the capital. Money transactions are made through the Rabobank Internet Banking system, submitted by the ISME office and signed off by the treasurer. No automatic debits can be made without second signature of the treasurer of ISME, who holds a proxy to act on behalf of the association.

ISME has appointed Mazars Accountancy to review and compose the financial year reports.

Policy plan:

xvii) to manage the funds and capital of the association in a responsible manner, with regards to the mission of the association and with benefit to the members and rest of the community in microbial ecology.

xviii) to review current funding opportunities made available by ISME

Spending review

Every year the executive board writes an annual society budget for the coming year. In the budget all income and expense items are listed with preliminary amount predictions. The budget has to be approved by the international board before effective. In case proposals are made to change budget-items, the international board must give approval.

The capital of the association is used for the following:

- (a) To hold substantial reserves to cover calamities such as a canceled symposium (force majeure) and devaluation of foreign currencies. The board finds it most important to reserve a substantial amount to cover conference center rent and other related costs and obligations. This reserve will guarantee the continuance of the association.
- (b) Fixed costs, as described in the published year reports
- (c) Travel costs reimbursement. Reimbursements are paid on the basis of submitted declarations and receipts (based on 2nd class or economy fare prices).
- (d) Awards & Travel Grants: to distribute monetary prizes to young scientists to sponsor the travel costs to the symposium.
- (e) Sponsoring activities (workshops, lectures, symposia, within the field of microbial ecology).
- (f) Ambassadors fund. For regional activities through the ambassadors program.

- (g) Development & Promotional fund. For events and activities organized by national or regional associations with a strong focus on developing regions. And to fund visiting scientists at local events.
- (h) Topping of the symposium budget if applicable
- (i) To co-organize workshops in developing countries
- (j) When the capital of the association exceeds what is needed to guarantee the continuance of the association, together with the above named bullets, at all times the surplus will be used to serve the common interest and can be allocated to future activities.

5-year plan Summary

- i) to expand outreach to the wider-community and broaden or publication possibilities*
- ii) to develop the UnCode initiative and help index uncultured taxa through the outsourced ICSPDSD committee*
- iii) to review current roles and tasks of ISME Office and executive Board*
- iv) to continue to serve the association, its members and wider-community in the best manner possible and in the most ethical way.*
- vi) to successfully launch the new publication ISME Communications*
- vii) to expand the editorial team in various topics and expertise in order to relief the work pressure on editors*
- viii) to update and simplify the manuscript tracking system*
- ix) to review inhouse publishing possibilities*
- x) to offer the widest scale of topics and developments within microbial ecology*
- xi) to attract and involve young researchers*
- xii) to focus highly on:*
 - gender equality (minimum of 50% of speakers/presenters should be female)*
 - internationality (a fair and global representation of speakers)*
- xiii) distributing more grants to young researchers from developing countries*
- xiv) to offer social events within the registration fees as much as possible (though heavily depending on the specific budget each time)*
- xv) develop the transit to hybrid-symposia where delegates can attend virtually and physically*

xvi) to invest in virtual meeting tools, software and IT-solutions

xvii) to manage the funds and capital of the association in a responsible manner, with regards to the mission of the association and with benefit to the members and rest of the community in microbial ecology.

xviii) to review current funding opportunities made available by ISME

Wageningen,

On behalf of the executive board,



Executive officer ISME Office