

EC52 AGENDA and MINUTES
Meeting of the Executive Committee (EC)
International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV)
Monday October 5 – Wednesday October 7, 2020
held virtually on Zoom

EC Members

Andrew J. DAVISON (President and meeting Chair)
Stuart G. SIDDELL (Vice-President)

Arcady R. MUSHEGIAN (Secretary – Business)
Peter J. WALKER (Secretary – Proposals)
Elliot J. LEFKOWITZ (Secretary – Data)

Evelien ADRIAENSSENS (Interim Chair, Bacterial and Archaeal Viruses SC)
Balázs HARRACH (Chair, Animal DNA Viruses and Retroviruses SC)
Nick J. KNOWLES (Chair, Animal ssRNA+ Viruses SC)
Jens H. KUHN (Chair, Animal dsRNA and ssRNA- Viruses SC)
Peter SIMMONDS (Chair, Fungal and Protist Viruses SC)
F. Murilo ZERBINI (Chair, Plant Viruses SC)

Bas E. DUTILH (Elected Member)
Robert L. HARRISON (Elected member)
Sandra JUNGLÉN (Elected member)
Mart KRUPOVIC (Elected member)
Max NIBERT (Elected member)
Luisa RUBINO (Elected member)
Sead SABANADZOVIC (Elected member)
Arvind VARSANI (Elected member)

In Attendance (Wellcome Trust grant employees)

Donald SMITH
Richard ORTON

Introductory business, minutes and commitments

Andrew Davison, the EC President, welcomes everyone and introduces Evelien Adriaenssens, the Interim Bacterial and Archaeal Viruses Subcommittee (SC) Chair.

The Committee approves the Minutes of the EC51 Meeting in Berlin in 2019, and the Executive Summary of the Minutes for public release

Commitments made at EC51 in Berlin are reviewed.

General ICTV business

Virology Division News: nine articles have been published, several more are at various stages of publication. The issue of Free Access vs. Open Access is discussed; the UK funders require the latter, even though the former are free and open in a real sense. There will be negotiations with Archives of Virology and Journal of Virology to provide Open Access to the EC publications on virus taxonomy.

The 2019 newsletter is available on the website. New C.3.2. Produce the 2020 ICTV Newsletter. SGS Nov 30, 2020

The Journal of General Virology Profiles – report of the editor-in-chief and managing editor: 70 chapters have been published onwards from 2017, some are highly cited. Families grow faster than the count of chapters; no risk of peak publishing thus far. Taxa above family are not covered at all, whereas revisions of the already-published chapters are now a major part of the editorial work. Negotiations to contain the rising costs of publication are discussed.

Virus Metadata Resource (VMR) continues to grow; this puts pressure on the Data Secretary and their team at the times of the Master Species Lists. There is much to discuss about the format of the VMR, and an item will be prepared for discussion at EC53 in 2021.

Finances

EC's budget position is reported. New Financial Committee will be appointed pending the approval of the next EC. Grant writing activities and fundraising activities with regional and national virology societies are discussed.

Procedures and Policies

Discussion: modifications and clarifications regarding the submission deadlines for taxonomic proposals; proposal streamlining; amending conditionally accepted proposals; making trivial corrections during proposal approval; standardizing document format; control of TP titles. A commitment is made to develop stricter policies on the streamlining process and making changes to the proposals after their posting.

The issue of *type specimens* is discussed (a matter is completely separate from the similarly-sounding *type species* discussion held later in the meeting). Any taxonomy has a type specimen, a physical entity, deposited somewhere (e.g., herbarium, museum). EC has not required that for viruses, and now increasingly a physical virus preparation is not going to be available. A genome sequence then becomes a proxy type specimen. There are multiple issues with the quality, stability and availability of the data deposited in various databases. A policy on the permissible forms of sequence data deposition for future taxonomy proposals will be developed.

Data and Software

The ongoing development of the online proposal submission system TPMS is discussed.

The case of some species in the VMR lacking associated GenBank entries is brought up. ICTV Study Groups should be encouraged either to sequence their viruses or to remove them from taxonomy. Some plant virus species have been abolished that way.

Discussion (question raised by NCBI): how to flag and retire a GenBank record that existed in the past but is now associated with a retired taxon? The list of all names that have ever been used by ICTV exists and is searchable in several ways, but finding the GenBank records associated with a retired name remains somewhat difficult.

General taxonomy and nomenclature issues

Reminder: naming after a living person needs to have been approved by that person. Decision is made not to codify EC-wide policies for recognizing the honors of naming virus taxa after people, e.g., no EC certificates issued in batch to all people after whom the novel taxa have been named. A taxonomic proposal itself is a form of certification which becomes effective upon ratification. A policy will be developed that will prohibit naming virus realms after persons.

General taxonomic proposals

Reminder of the procedures and the Zoom voting functionality. Last year, the EC has been giving up to 2 months to amend all conditionally approved proposals, this is made the general rule from now on. There are 7 general proposals. The proposal to create a new Subcommittee on Metaviromics, also empowered with the methodology development, fails; a Bioinformatics Expert Group will be created instead, and a remit for it will be developed.

The type species is abolished.

Procedure for expedited correction of certain classes of errors is adopted.

The Vice President and Bioinformatics Interest Group are charged with providing a clarification on the use of partial genome sequences to classify viruses.

The change in the International Code of Virus Classification and Nomenclature (ICVCN) is adopted to prospectively mandate a virus species naming format that is a uniform genus-species type. The Latinized format is permitted within this mandate. The Study Groups will be charged with bringing all existing species' names into this format in time to be approved by EC55.

The International Code of Virus Classification and Nomenclature (ICVCN; “the Code”) and the Statutes are modified to cover explicitly viroids, satellites and viriforms, thereby more clearly defining the remit of the ICTV.

Subcommittee reports and proposals are considered. In total: there are 290, including 240 for streamlining and 50 for discussion (for comparison, EC51: 198/159/39; EC50 219/194/23)

The results of the EC elections earlier in the year are discussed, new Subcommittee Chairs are appointed. The logistics of taking office is discussed. Study Groups will be reappointed, effective immediately or as soon as possible. The Chair of the new Bioinformatics Interest Group is appointed.

A decision is made to conduct EC53 meeting virtually in the summer of 2021, given the uncertainties of the pandemic.

A warm farewell to the outgoing members of the EC.

Official business of EC52 concludes