

Global Biolmaging Project

D2.4 Sustainable plan for funding future activities of Global Biolmaging including reciprocal use, training, virtual platforms for data handling

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¹ In the course of the project the task lead has been changed from ABO to EMBL

Abstract

The success of the Global BioImaging project went beyond the expectations of the project consortium and of its international partners. Over the 3 years of the Global BioImaging project duration, the international cooperation amongst Euro-BioImaging and its international partners grew stronger and stronger and the project evolved into an international network of imaging facilities and communities. In the last year the project consortium, together with its international partners, has been discussing how to bring the GBI network into the future and has put in place a strategy to ensure the network's long-term sustainability. The present report describes the process undertaken, the actions implemented as well as the future plans to further strengthen and grow the Global BioImaging network.

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1. Introduction

Since 2014, when EMBL as project coordinator successfully submitted the GBI project proposal to the EC H2020 call for international collaboration, the international cooperation amongst Euro-Biolmaging and its international partners grew stronger and stronger. The total number of partners at the international level has increased from 3 to 10, currently counting imaging facilities and communities from Argentina, Australia, Canada, Europe, India, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa and the USA. In view of the continuous and enthusiastic engagement not only of India and Australia (which had signed collaboration agreements with Euro-Biolmaging before the start of the project)² but also of all the other partners, in September 2017 the GBI ‘Management Board’ (MB) decided to open up to representatives from all involved international partners and to set up the ‘extended Management Board’ (eMB).³ Following up on this, the GBI coordinator EMBL started a dialogue with the eMB on how to ensure sustainability to the activities initiated by GBI, beyond the duration of the current H2020 funding. It was recognized that Global Biolmaging had become a truly global network of imaging infrastructures and communities, which from now on should be jointly owned by all international partners. To further support this global network, the international organization EMBL offers to the GBI partners to continue coordination in continuation of the work done since 2014.

Therefore, Federica Paina, GBI project manager, started working on a roadmap and on concrete actions to implement the vision to give continuity to the GBI activities.

The present deliverable describes the activities led by the GBI project coordination towards ensuring the continuation of Global Biolmaging beyond November 2018. It also depicts the planned actions – from the meetings and programs planned for 2019-2020 to the elaboration of a fully-fledged business plan for further funding acquisition – aiming to ensure a sustainable future for GBI.

2. Global Biolmaging as a sustainable network of imaging Research Infrastructures and communities

During the project, Global Biolmaging has evolved from being the international cooperation arm of Euro-Biolmaging to also becoming a world-wide network of imaging communities, bringing together facility managers, technical staff, scientists and science policy officers to addresses the common political, scientific, technical and data challenges linked to the set-up and running of imaging Research Infrastructures. Recognizing the benefits of these international interactions, work has been done to increase the visibility of Global Biolmaging as a whole, to put strong bases to make its activities sustainable and to pave the way towards the application for more funding also at the international level.

2.1 Outreach activities and GBI’s very own virtual long-term representation

The eMB decided that the GBI outreach activities needed to be strengthened, not only to give more visibility to the project, but also to convince potential funders to support the network in the future.

² see D6.3 “Draft collaboration agreements prepared for signature by Argentina, Japan, South Africa, as well as Unites States, and the Euro-Biolmaging Board”

³ see D6.2 “Report on outcome of international workshops in Argentina, Japan, South Africa, as well as USA”

Each representative of the GBI's international partners clearly recognizes the benefits that participation in Global BioImaging has brought and continues to bring to the national communities. However, the need to spread the message of the importance of GBI's activities and impact further, to both the imaging communities and the national and international funders, was acknowledged. To this end, during the 2nd eMB (virtual) meeting (January 2018), the group decided to prepare a professionally designed **brochure** which would evolve from an existing communication document prepared in December 2017 (Annex I). The Project Manager, with the contribution of all the international partners and the technical support of an external graphic designer,⁴ prepared the GBI Communication Brochure⁵ which was presented to the wider community at the "Exchange of Experience III" in Sydney, in September 2018. The brochure was designed to be simple and easy to read and show the value of the GBI network. Each GBI partner was given the space to present itself, starting from Euro-BioImaging but putting all partners on the same level to show the truly global nature that came to characterize the network by the end of the project.



Figure 1: Cover page of the Global BioImaging communication brochure, 2018, "Building a sustainable international network of cutting-edge bioimaging facilities and communities"

⁴ www.zweiundeinz.de

⁵ The brochure can be downloaded from: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hOdfpjXrdd5TQsAKLAHMXEzWTcN-EsXE>

In addition to the brochure, the eMB decided that Global BioImaging needed a stronger web presence than the one provided by the web pages designed at the project outset. In fact, in December 2015 the GBI project website⁶ was created under the existing EuBI domain at the aim of demonstrating and highlighting its strong linkage with Euro-BioImaging (see also D1.2 “Publication of project website”).

During the summer of 2018, a new GBI website was created under the URL www.globalbioimaging.org and launched at the “Exchange of Experience III” workshop. The new website aims not only at increasing the visibility of Global BioImaging but also at providing an online platform for the continuation of the GBI activities after the end of the H2020 grant. Indeed, future activities such as the planned EoE workshops, the long-term job shadowing and training courses offered by GBI partners (see section 3) will be advertised and managed when feasible via the new site. Finally, the new GBI website will provide further visibility to the imaging communities and infrastructures that are part of this Global network, thus demonstrating to their funders and stakeholders their international engagement.

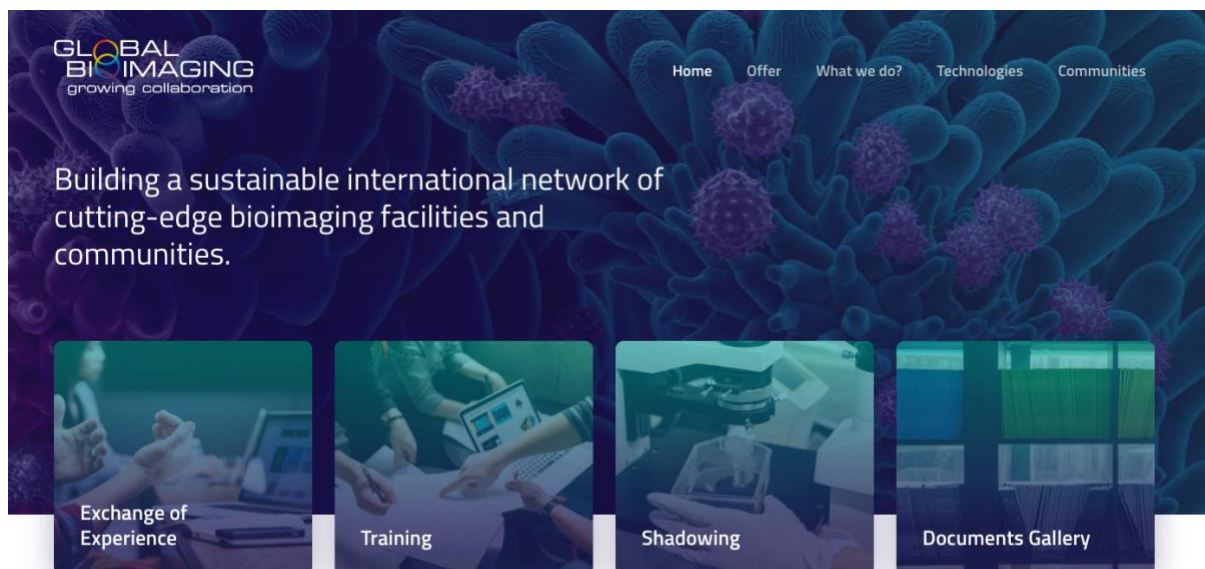


Figure 2: Screenshot from the www.globalbioimaging.org homepage: the new GBI website will be a key tool for the running of the future activities of the network.

⁶ <http://www.eurobioimaging.eu/global-bioimaging>

GBI website section	Function	Key target group
Exchange of Experience	Advertisement of future EoE workshops and reporting on past ones	All stakeholders
Training	Advertisement of future training courses in the field of imaging	Imaging facility staff
Shadowing	Advertisement and management of staff exchange opportunities	Imaging facility staff
Documents Gallery	Repository of key documents, such as GBI project deliverables, international recommendations, outreach material	All stakeholders
What we do?	Description of network nature, mission and objectives as well as advertisement of latest news	All stakeholders
Imaging technologies and global goals	Science communication: description of how imaging technologies address global societal challenges	Citizens, Funders
Jobs	Advertisement of open jobs in the field	Imaging community
Communities	Providing visibility to all GBI partners	Imaging community, Funders

Table 1: Description of the GBI website structure

2.2 The 5th meeting of the extended Management Board and the “Exchange of Experience III” workshop

On September 14th, 2018, ahead of the “Exchange of Experience III” (EoE III) workshop, the 5th meeting of the extended Management Board was held at the University of Sydney, Australia. While being the concluding meeting of the GBI Management Board, it was the occasion during which the international partners concretely committed to the continuation of the network activities.

In particular, Graham Wright (SingaScope) reported on the excitement of his national community about having the “Exchange of Experience IV” workshop in Singapore in September 2019 and Naoto Ueno (Advanced Bioimaging Support, ABiS) officially announced that ABiS will host the 5th “Exchange of Experience” workshop in Okazaki in October 2020. The activities that will be pursued thanks to the *pro-bono* contributions of all partners for the years 2019-2020 were discussed (see section 3) and agreement was reached that each of the international partners will investigate possible avenues for funding them in the longer term.

Subsequently, the WP2-organized EoE III workshop proved to be a key stepping stone in the roadmap towards building the future of the GBI network. The workshop program (Annex II) was divided in two parts, the first of which focused on the sustainability of Global BioImaging. Therein, the value of the GBI network was presented by selected GBI partners: Christopher Wood from Mexico brought in his perspective as a new partner; Teng Leong Chew from the USA described the scope of the BioImaging North America network, whose formation was an outcome of a workshop co-organized by GBI and the Janelia Research Campus in February 2018; and Naoto Ueno reported on the success of ABiS (the Japanese open access imaging research infrastructure), which was established during the GBI project lifetime. Federica Paina presented the overall value of the GBI network, from a policy perspective and as common view of all partners, on the basis of bi-lateral interviews she had conducted to map their needs and expectations vis-à-vis GBI’s future. A panel discussion aiming at defining the framework needed for the future GBI collaboration followed and

the importance of investments in open access Research Infrastructures was further highlighted by the keynote speech by Samantha Robertson from Australia’s Department of Education and Training. Overall, a momentum formed and all workshop participants enthusiastically showed their support to GBI and committed to do what they can to concretely contribute to its sustainability.



Figure 3: Group photo taken on the occasion of the “Exchange of Experience III” workshop (Sydney, September 15th, 2018)

3. The short-term plan for the years 2019-2020

As introduced in paragraph 2.3, the 5th meeting of the extended Management Board concluded a 1-year long work aiming at defining how the Global BioImaging activities would continue from December 2018 onwards. Concrete steps were taken regarding the 2019-2020 activities, which were agreed upon as described here below.

3.1 Planned activities

The “Exchange of Experience” workshop series has proven to be key in the GBI project development. The 3 annual workshops in 2016, 2017 and 2018 have been fundamental moments for the global bioimaging community to come together, discuss on the evolution of the Research Infrastructure landscape as well as of the technological and policy developments. For this reason, the eMB had judged of the utmost importance to continue them and proposed to do so via a rotatory system for the hosting infrastructure/community. While the host will be in charge of the organizational costs (e.g. venue, catering), the international participants will travel at their own expenses and contribute in the definition of the program and in providing the material for discussion. The GBI network was very fortunate to have two of its partners already volunteering for the years 2019 and 2020.

The “**Exchange of Experience IV**” workshop will be hosted by SingaScope in Singapore, in September 2019 and will address as one key topic “career path for facility staff”. The decision on this topic is guided by the fact that it is gaining more and more interest in the scientific community and its in-depth discussion was repeatedly requested by the GBI network. In Australia for instance, a

benchmarking exercise is being done across various universities, at the aim of monitoring several key aspects related to it, such level of salaries of staff members and managers, capability of the institutes to retain good personnel, etc. While the general perception is that compared to academic professorships, facility manager positions are less prestigious, the eMB agrees that a cultural change on this subject is needed. A discussion of the subject at the international level is therefore considered timely.

The host for the “*Exchange of Experience V*” workshop has also been decided and the gathering will take place in Okazaki (Japan) in September 2020, under the coordination of ABiS. A decision on the workshop’s topic was considered premature in September 2018; however, it will be guided by the future discussions within the eMB forum and announced during EoE IV at the latest.

Another activity that the GBI network wants to continue is the provision of training opportunities for staff working in imaging facilities. While facility management has recently developed as a new career opportunity for scientists, appropriate training is often missing and the need to fill this gap is felt across the globe.⁷ The Global BioImaging project has contributed addressing this issue by organising international training courses on facility and data management (WP3 and WP4) as well as in organising a facility shadowing program (WP5). Both of these activities will be continued in 2019 and 2020 as much as possible.

In fact, for the **shadowing program** the eMB went beyond the scope defined by the GBI grant and decided that it will be extended beyond the partners in Europe, India and Australia which took part in the staff exchange program in 2016-2018.⁸ At the time of writing this deliverable, WP5 and the GBI coordination were in the process of contacting all of the established shadowing facilities as well as the ones residing in other international partners countries to ask for their availability to continue or start taking part in the program. The answer had been positive to date and as soon as the list of hosting facilities will be complete, it will be published in the “shadowing section” of the new GBI website (see also Figure 2). From this page, a light system to manage and monitor the shadowing visits will be put in place for the years 2019 and 2020 thanks to *pro bono* contributions from the University of Torino and EMBL.

Regarding the **training courses**, the GBI network will use the dedicated section in the globalbioimaging.org homepage to advertise selected events relevant to facility managers on the topics of facility management, new technologies and image data (see also Figure 2 and Table 1). The network will also look into the organization of its own courses, on the model of the international BioImage Analysis training workshop held at the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology (OIST) in October-November 2018 and co-organized by GBI and ABiS.⁹ However, it is recognized that this will require a much higher effort and time commitment, which may impede its achievement until more funding resources are gathered for the network.

3.2 The future GBI working groups

During the summer of 2018, the GBI Project Manager had bilateral interviews with all of the network’s partners. The aim was to collect their feedback and opinions both in general on the value of the GBI network (see also paragraph 2.2) and in particular on the next steps to take in order to

⁷ See also D3.3 “Publication of international recommendation: Training courses for facility staff”

⁸ For more details see D5.3 “Report on sustainable strategy for future facility shadowing beyond the duration of Global BioImaging Project”

⁹

move Global Biolmaging into the future. One of the topics discussed was which thematic areas should be approached in the future and how to do so.

A consensus was reached towards having thematic Working Groups (WGs), which will replace the current, GBI Grant Agreement Work Packages. Each working group will have a chair, with a steering role. The chair will be responsible to define the main objective of the WG and plan its work. Broader discussion on the topics dealt with by the WG will take place on the occasion of the regular eMB conference calls/meetings and at the EoE workshops.

While at the moment of writing this deliverable the WG chairs still needed to be identified, the final discussion on the WG themes was held at the eMB5 meeting and agreement was reached around the following topics:

1. Data management – with the final goal to move towards the identification of interoperability of systems and platforms
2. Training
3. Quality Management
4. Career development for service staff – with a view to prepare EoE IV
5. Impact of Imaging RIs – to make a case towards the funders and following two axes: KPIs and development of case studies
6. Funding/Business Plan

WG1, 2, 3 and 6 will move in continuation with the work carried out during the H2020 grant while WG 4 and 5 address novel topics in this consortium.

It was also decided that the WG members would come from the community at large and the WGs should be inclusive of all volunteers.

3.3 The organizational structure

In terms of organizational structure, the extended Management Board (which will take the simpler name of Management Board from December 2018 onwards) will continue to be Global Biolmaging's steering body, under EMBL coordination. In light of the evolution of the Global Biolmaging network, the Board will be composed of one delegate per GBI partner and supported by a network manager. The Board will convene 3 times per year, twice virtually and once ahead of the annual “*Exchange of Experience*” workshops.

Depending on the topics to be discussed, the chairs of the Working Groups may be invited to take part in the meeting. It is possible that a partner delegate will also be chairing a given Working Group.

Finally, the Global Biolmaging network also has started discussing the possibility of bringing all the partners under one umbrella, which will define its broad objectives and modus operandi, without being legally binding. This could be achieved via a common Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which can be signed by all GBI partners, eventually alongside the already existing and future bilateral collaboration agreements between individual GBI partners.²

The GBI Coordination is studying this model, which will be further discussed during the first meeting of the “GBI network MB” (i.e. the first MB meeting outside the framework of the H2020-funded GBI project) foreseen to take place in January 2019.

4. Resource requirements – Towards the preparation of a GBI Business Plan

Having defined the scope and main activities of the future Global BioImaging network, the extended Management Board agreed that to achieve long-term sustainability, financial resources need to be secured in the medium and long term. To this end, a formalized “GBI Business Plan” shall be prepared during the next two years.

From 2015 to 2018 the GBI project has run on about 0.5 M €/year. This was found appropriate to fund the organization of events, the reimbursement of travel expenses and the position of managers taking care of coordinating all activities.

It is the general opinion of the eMB that resources for financing certain events (EoEs in particular) can be found by liaising with the local authorities: a rotation system could be put in place and each partner could host a workshop each. Co-branding of the events (GBI-funding body/host country) would take place in this case. Travel expenses could be covered independently by the participants.

Continuation of the job shadowing activities should also be achievable with minimal resources. The procedure and network is in place and running the program via the new GBI website should require little effort as long as the participants finance their own travel.

However, the funding of the positions of the GBI manager and of an eventual training coordinator, which will be needed to run a fully-fledged GBI training program, is identified as a key resource for having the network operational in the long run. The eMB members agree that 2 FTEs would be important and ideal for the general coordination at the international level.

It will also be important to continue the outreach activities, develop further the GBI website and have resources to produce some GBI branded communication material. This will have the intrinsic benefit of increasing the visibility of the network and potentially attracting more funding opportunities. Finally, the eMB considers important to have a small budget for travel expenses and travel grants: it will help participants from less resource-rich countries to take part in the GBI activities, training program and potentially even access facilities internationally. Finally it may be used to support the travel of the GBI manager/coordinator and the one of the training coordinator.

On the basis of these considerations, at the end of the eMB5 meeting it is decided that the GBI Business Plan will aim at making the case to raise – as a minimal objective – core funding for the following items:

- 2 FTEs: 1 for general management and coordination, 1 for training activities
- Communication material/outreach activities
- Travel expenses/travel grants.

Several possible avenues for funding them in the longer term will be investigated by the international partners. For Euro-BioImaging, these will include trying to secure European Commission funding – in the continuation of the current framework –and alike as well as private donors and foundations.

5. Conclusion

The success of the Global BioImaging project went beyond the expectations of the project consortium and of its international partners: a worldwide sustainable international network of bioimaging research infrastructures and communities was created and committed to the continuation of the project activities beyond the duration of the H2020 grant.

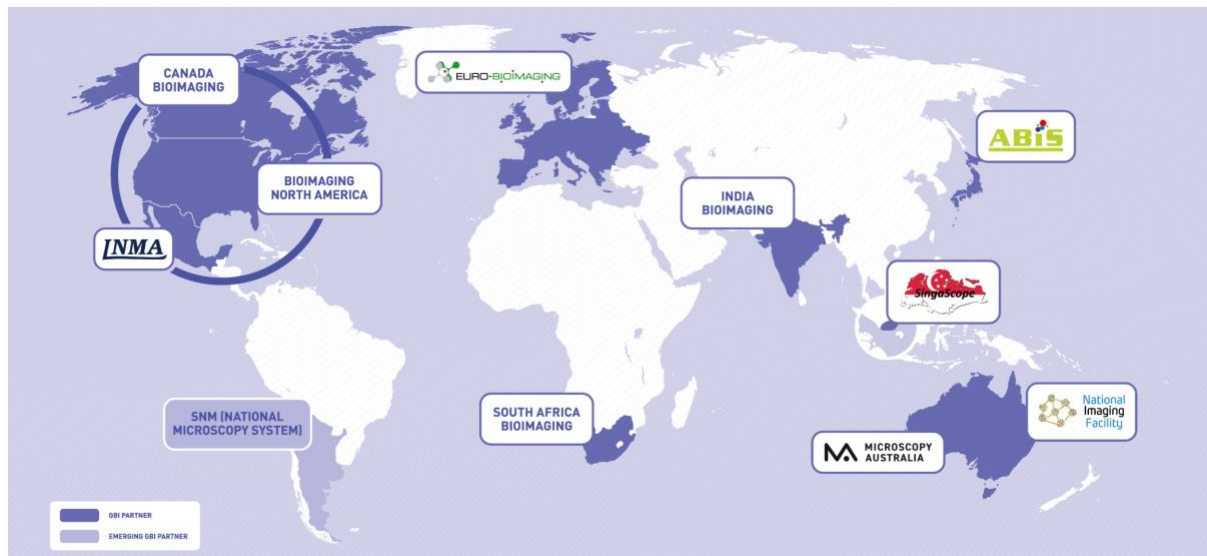


Figure 4: Map of the Global BioImaging network in November 2018.

Recognizing that scientific, technical and data challenges are universal and not restricted by geographical boundaries, Global BioImaging has brought together imaging facility managers and technical staff, scientists and science policy officers from around the globe, to join forces and build capacity internationally. Global BioImaging now provides a unique forum for international discussion and cooperation to tackle the practical challenges as well as the strategic questions linked to operating open access infrastructures for cutting edge imaging technologies in the life sciences. This international network remains open to new partners and is looking forward to continuing growing and becoming stronger thanks to the enthusiastic engagement and practical contributions of all its partners.

Annex I: GBI Communication Document for the mobilization of national imaging communities

The Global Biolmaging project
Building an international network of Imaging Research Infrastructures

The aim of this document is to inform the national imaging communities, outside of Europe, about the Global Biolmaging project to illustrate the activities that it entails and to promote opportunities for participation in this international network.

What is Global Biolmaging?

Global Biolmaging (GBI) is an international cooperation project funded until the end of 2018 by the European Commission's "Horizon 2020" framework programme for Research and Innovation. The project is built upon the expertise gained by Euro-Biolmaging – the pan-European Research Infrastructure for Imaging Technologies in Biological and Biomedical Science. It aims to share the know-how needed to support imaging communities and, at the same time, act as a tool to establish an international imaging network.

More specifically, the Global Biolmaging project is building on two collaboration frameworks between Euro-Biolmaging and its international partners Australia and India. Since December 2015, Euro-Biolmaging is also working together with new international partners – Argentina, Canada, Japan, Singapore, South Africa and the USA – with the aim of strengthening partnerships and formalising structured agreements.

Global Biolmaging supports imaging facility staff from around the world

In the most practical sense Global Biolmaging plans, builds and implements networking, training and collaboration activities for the Imaging Infrastructure community at large, with particular focus on its managers and facility staff.

Since 2016 it has organised:

- two international "Exchange of Experience" workshops on infrastructure operation;
- five workshops and visits in its international partner countries;
- two international training courses on data management and facility operation;
- two rounds of international facility job shadowing.

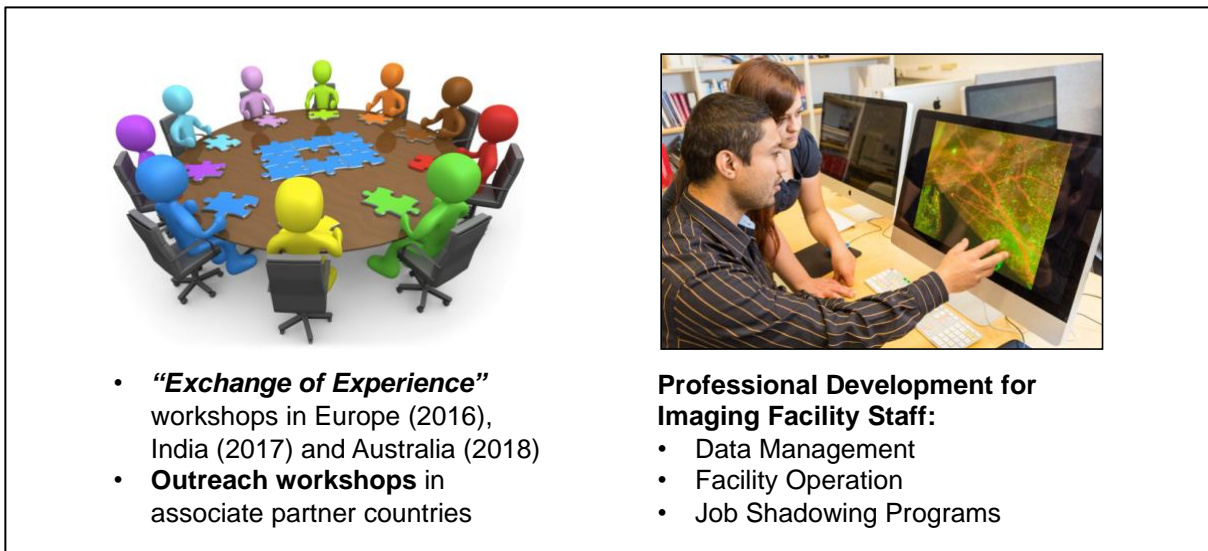


Fig. 1: GBI main events and activities

Why Global BioImaging?

In most cases, the scientific imaging community faces challenges, problems and bottlenecks that are ubiquitous rather than country-specific. For example, managing relationships with the facility users, attracting investment, integrating new technologies into existing portfolios, managing data storage and analysis and providing state-of-the-art trainings to users and facility staff are challenges which are being faced by everyone in the field, transnationally.

Building strong scientific relationships and finding the most suitable forum for discussion of these topics has proven to be beneficial to tackle these common issues. “[GBI] has provided the opportunity to learn how similar issues are dealt with by other nodes and independent feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of our facility” said Dr. Andrew Menhert from Australia on the GBI Job Shadowing program.

The first steps have been taken, and this new dialogue in the global community allows for the identification of pragmatic, viable and sustainable solutions for everyone, supported by national funders.

Joining Global BioImaging

Euro-BioImaging engages formally via collaboration frameworks with organisations which have a clear national mandate to represent the biological and biomedical imaging community in their country. As a member of such community you are invited to build or consolidate your national network, contact your ministry or funder(s) for information, and get in touch with us to identify the first common objectives and become part of this vibrant network.



Fig. 2: Group photo taken during the 2nd “Exchange of Experience” workshop in Bangalore (India) with representatives from Australia, Europe, Japan, South Africa, Singapore, the USA and India.

Contacts

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Annex II: EoE III program

Global BioImaging – Exchange of Experience III
Sydney, Australia
14-15th Sep, 2018

Friday 14th of September

Location: Breakout room 60.03

10:30 – 12:30 Extended Management Board meeting (closed session)

Day 1: Building international linkages for research infrastructure

Location: Seminar room 6102

12:30 – 13:30 Registration and Coffee / Sandwiches

13:30 – 13:45 Opening and Welcome (*Antje Keppler – Global BioImaging*)

Session chair: Julie Cairney - Microscopy Australia, & John Eriksson – Euro-BioImaging

13:45 – 14:10 Global BioImaging – mission and achievements
Global BioImaging was founded in 2015 as a partnership between bioimaging infrastructures in Europe, Australia, India and Japan. The network has grown to include facilities from 9 countries. The network partners exchange their experiences in operating local, regional, national and continental imaging research infrastructures, and support their staff with dedicated training and staff exchange programs.

Speaker: Antje Keppler – Global BioImaging

14:10 – 14:30 Value of joining GBI - Mexico's perspective as a new partner

Speaker: Christopher Wood – Laboratorio Nacional de Microscopia Avanzada Mexico

14:30 – 14:50 Value of joining GBI - BioImaging North America's perspective

Speaker: Teng Leong Chew – Janelia Research Campus

14:50 – 15:10 Value of joining GBI – Japan's perspective as an established imaging infrastructure

Speaker: Naoto Ueno – ABiS (Advanced Bioimaging Support)

15:10 – 15:40 Coffee Break

15:40 – 16:10 Building a sustainable GBI network

Speaker: Federica Paina – Global BioImaging Manager

16:10 – 17:10 Panel discussion
Development of a framework and activities for ongoing collaboration
Session chair: Ian Smith – Monash University

Panel members: Julie Cairney, Graham Galloway, Jan Ellenberg, Federica Paina, Naoto Ueno, Christopher Wood

17:10 – 17:45 **Keynote speech: The value of open access national research infrastructure**
Over the last decade, the Australian Government has spent billions of dollars building and supporting world-class research infrastructure that is openly accessible to researchers inside and outside the host facility. These investments are made through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) within the Federal Department of Education. This Keynote Speech will highlight the drivers behind this model of investment and the value delivered to the Australian economy.
Speaker: Samantha Robertson, Research and Economic Group, Higher Education, Research and International, Australian Federal Government

17:45 – 18:00 Wrap-up of Day 1: Next steps and future vision of the GBI network
Speaker: Antje Keppler – Global BioImaging

19:00 Dinner (Sydney harbour cruise)

Saturday 15th of September

Location: Seminar room 6102

Day 2:

Session I: Importance of quality management in imaging core facilities

Session chair: *Graham Galloway – National Imaging Facility*

- 09.00 – 09.40 Quality control and quantitative imaging in microscopy cores
Speaker: Claire Brown, Director of Imaging facility at McGill University, Canada
- 09.40 – 10.10 Implementing a quality management framework into core facilities: lessons learnt
Speaker: Julie Rothacker, Director of Platform Operations & Strategy at Monash University, Australia
- 10.10 – 10.30 Integrating advanced optical development and biological application at Micron Oxford
Speaker: Lothar Schermelleh, Micron Advanced Bioimaging Unit, University of Oxford, UK
- 10.30 – 10.50 Measuring and maintaining service standards of an imaging core facility, a perspective from Singapore
*Speaker: Graham Wright, A*STAR Microscopy Platform at A*STAR, Singapore*
- 10.50 – 11.00 Close of Session I
- 11.00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

Session II: Towards international recommendation for quality assurance and management in open access imaging infrastructures

Session chair: *John Eriksson – Euro-BioImaging*

- 11.30 - 11.40 Introduction to common recommendation
Speaker: Inga Pukonen – Euro-BioImaging
- 11.40 - 13.15 Open discussion: First steps towards common international recommendation for quality assurance and management in open access imaging infrastructures
- 13.15 - 13.30 Wrap-up of Day 2: Towards international recommendations presented by GBI
(John Eriksson – Euro-BioImaging)
- 13:30 – 13:45 Signature ceremony of Collaboration Agreements
- 13.45 Light Lunch

Satellite meetings

Location: Breakout room 60.03

14.30 – 15.30 Working meeting: Towards International recommendation: training courses for facility staff

15.30 – 16.00 Coffee Break

16.30 – 17.30 Working meeting: international recommendation: image data standards and open access repositories