

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear members,

Welcome to today's General Assembly of the Cyprus Biological Society which has a new beginning for the Society as the main goal, in a new environment that is quite different from what the pioneer Biologists-Naturalists in 1983 when they laid the foundation stone for the creation of the Society had in mind.

A new environment, complex, but with many opportunities that open before us particularly within the European Union with the potential to seize opportunities and use funds available to the EU for a discipline such as ours, which is the vanguard with many research projects running and being scheduled constantly.

In the period under review (2019), in addition to the great steps taken in the organisation of the Pancyprian Olympiads that experienced a real flourishing, the Society managed on a more massive level to cover a wider range of activities. One could argue that the Society could have done more. But let me remind you that the Society consists of people with an already busy schedule.

I am referring to the daily routine that weighs on our colleagues during the school year. The material to be covered, the pressure for good results, the duties and activities within the school units that have no end. I will give you some examples.

For a few years now, CBS has been organising 6 Pancyprian Olympiads per year. Four of them are done in two rounds and one in three rounds. This means that 9 papers must be prepared each year. Five of them in two languages since they are also addressed to students of English language schools. This is a very time consuming but also soul-destroying process in which the same people are involved every year. This is followed by proofreading. This is another huge task that only those who have been through it can really appreciate the magnitude of the work being done. But it is a job that generously rewards all who participate. This is best understood during the awards ceremony in June each year.

At the same time, there are other tasks, like the Olympiads. The papers must be prepared in time to be printed. The competition halls must be booked. Cleaners must be found along with rooms and people to perform and supervise the Olympiads. Then, diplomas, awards and a final concluding activity must be prepared for which the ceremony hall of the Ministry of Education is now proving to be quite small. By the way, I can tell you that in recent years CBS now offers cash prizes to our excellent students while initially we offered books.

I do not mention all the above to discourage participation in the Society. I think the new Governing Body can meet the challenges with a proper division of labour and with the help, as always, of the Inspectorate at the Ministry of Education, whose role in handling the Olympiads is catalytic.

At IUBMB we are represented by Andriani Odysseos. The Society regularly participates in the annual FEBS Conference. We can even consider cases of participation in other international organisations.

This year, within the framework of FEBS, we organised a highly successful Conference in Nicosia with the participation of distinguished scientists from several European countries. The Conference subject was the "Human Microbiome". On this occasion I would like to congratulate Dr. Pavlos Neophytou who was the soul and body of the Conference and the many volunteers who helped in its successful completion. Currently, CBS is in contact other similar Societies in other countries to organise a large 3+ scientific conference with four or more countries.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Andreas Hadjihambis for creating information groups through Facebook. This is an established and modern way of communicating with members. There is now a private page in which members participate and an open page to which everyone has access. I also mention that Andreas has introduced an innovative way of marking the papers of the Olympiads using a computer and related software. This year Andreas corrected about 4000 papers, but his work does not end with the correction. Statistics are prepared for each paper that help to evaluate each question individually and to distinguish the good from the weakest questions, so that the papers become more and more correct and weighted year by year. The people involved in the preparation of exam papers are:

Andreas Hadjihambis

Andreani Beitelman

Christina Sidera

Konstantinos Fanis

Dimitra Hadjihambi

Prokopis Kalli

George Lazos

Michalis Christodoulides

Fr. Dimitrios Mapouras (also involved in overall supervision)

It is worth mentioning that CBA also participated in a series of communications representing the Biologists of Cyprus as in the relevant Parliament Committee on the issue of the Directors of Biomedical Laboratories and is in communication and consultation with the Ministry of Health. Andreas Hadjihambis and Mikis Hadjineophytou represented CBS in the last session of the relevant committee of the Parliament. We also had contacts with various services and departments such as the Ministries of Education, Health, Environment and Foreign Affairs and the Commissioner for the Environment. Much work has been done and is being done in different areas that may not be easily understood or known, but certainly not, we are perfect.

In relation to the finances of the Society now. The latest report is from the Audit Office (Ioannou Theodoulou Ltd - Certified Public Accountants). In the last 9-10 years the Company has provided with an amount exceeding 5,000 the Association of Biologists OELMEK recognising and appreciating the serious work it does, especially in the organisation and conduct of Scientific Conferences and Seminars. At this point I would like to emphasise that the Society does not receive state or other sponsorship. Indicatively, I also mention that in July 2018 we participated in the Annual Conference of FEBS that took place in Prague, while this year we participated in the Conference that took place in Krakow. Thank you Dr. Pavlos Neophytou warmly for the worthy representation of CBS in these two Conferences. We also participated in the FEBS Education Committee with Dr. Myrtani Pieris, which took place in April in Tbilisi. I would also like to mention that for every Pancyprian Olympiad exam that we prepare, we pay for the prints of the copies. The final ceremonial activity that takes place every year costs about 800 euros plus cash prizes. In this way a highly professional management of the papers of all the Olympiads is secured, dare I say it, equal to acclaimed international exams such as GCE.

Now that I hand over the baton, I would like to appeal to all Biologists in Cyprus to join the Society. There is a glorious field of glory for all who can contribute to achieve the goals of CBS. Either as members of the Council or as ordinary members

Mikis Hadjineophytou

President of CBS