

General Assembly of the ISBT 2024

Date: Wednesday, June 26, 2024

Location: CCIB Convention Centre - Barcelona, Spain

Time: 17:30 – 18:30 CEST

1. Welcome

Attendees were welcomed to the ISBT General Assembly 2024 by Michael Busch (MB), ISBT President. MB thanked everyone for attending and mentioned that during this meeting it will be presented to the ISBT members the results and most important activities of ISBT from the fiscal year April 2023 to April 2024. The General Assembly meeting is attended by 68 ISBT members and is quorate.

2. Minutes of the ISBT General Assembly held June 20, 2023

The minutes from the last General Assembly 2023, the 2023-2024 annual report as well as the financial report have been previously shared with the members. MB asked the members to vote to accept the draft minutes if there are not any further comments on them. The majority of the members present voted to accept the minutes.

3. Report of ISBT President – Michael Busch (MB)

MB mentioned that the strategic goals were originally set back in 2019. The ISBT Board held an interim strategy review in Amsterdam in June 2022 in response to the challenges faced since 2019 due to the pandemic. It was decided that while the goals remain the same, the means of achieving them have had to be adapted. MB briefly reviewed the goals and noted that despite the difficulties with meetings during the pandemic years, ISBT is well on track to achieve the initial goals set. MB announced an upcoming strategic plan meeting, scheduled prior to next year's Congress in Milan, to develop the new five-year strategic plan.

MB highlighted some ISBT activities during 2023-24: ISBT has collaborated with MoU organizations such as the AABB, where they successfully held two joint sessions in Gothenburg and Nashville. ISBT also participated in the AfSBT Congress held in Kampala, Uganda, in March 2024 with an Academy Day. ISBT has been working with CSBT on translating ISBT webinars into Chinese with support from Roche, and there were discussions during 2023 to renew the CSBT MoU in 2024, which has happened during the Barcelona Congress. ISBT has been supporting CSBT with participation in their ECLBS leadership course in Shanghai in November 2023 and will participate again this year. There is ongoing collaboration with the Systematic Reviews Initiative (SRI), including Transfusion Round-ups for ISBT members. ISBT has maintained a close relationship with WHO as a Non-state Actor. This work includes support for World Blood Donor Day 2023 (at the launch and online), GBS WP leading the International Coalition for Safe Plasma Proteins (ICSPP) projects in Senegal and Ethiopia, the contribution of the Quality Management WP to WHO Guidance on the implementation of a quality system in blood establishments, and the participation of MB as ISBT President in the WHO Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB).

The ISBT Academy has financially supported 19 educational events in 12 different countries, including 3 ISBT Highlights Days in Macedonia, India, and Egypt, as well as an ISBT Academy Day at the AfSBT congress in Uganda. In total, an amount of €130K has been provided by the ISBT Foundation to support Academy activities.

MB referred to new tools and publications that have been developed and are now available through the ISBT website. The Transfusion Reactions e-learning module originally launched in English, has been made available in Spanish and, more recently, in French. Registration via the ISBT website offers complete learning quizzes and case studies, making it a very useful tool for all transfusion specialists. The Essentials of Transfusion Teaching training resources for nurses and doctors are also available online on the ISBT website. *Transfusion Today*, a quarterly publication, has now transitioned to an online version available on the ISBT website. Last but not least, the Public Health Research Toolkit has been developed by the TTID WP and is aimed at blood centres and researchers interested in expanding their services in public health programs. This framework seeks to increase recognition of the role blood donors play in public health and to efficiently gain commitment and funding from various agencies for new research and surveillance.

MB highlighted that both of the post-pandemic face-to-face congresses have been very successful. The 33rd Regional Congress of ISBT in Gothenburg in June 2023 was attended by 1,960 delegates from 106 countries, with strong regional representation. During the Gothenburg Congress, the Big Data WP was introduced, addressing a gap in ISBT WP coverage. Its first exploratory workshop was held during that congress, and it was further developed throughout 2023-24. At the current congress in Barcelona, its inaugural meeting was convened, and the first WP Chair was established. The 34th Regional Congress of the ISBT in Cape Town followed in November 2023, attended by 800 delegates from over 63 countries, again with excellent regional representation.

MB presented the list of corporate partners who have financially supported ISBT over the past year and mentioned that many continue to support ISBT, with some new ones joining in recent months. ISBT has been striving to maintain good relations with all its supporters, and there has been very positive feedback from corporate partners during the Barcelona Congress. The success of this congress was also evident by the strong attendance at corporate symposia.

4. Report of the Secretary General - Gwen Clarke (GC)

GC presented a graph tracking individual membership, which shows a rebound almost to 2020 levels and still increasing. Vox Sanguinis remains a "hybrid" journal, subscription-based but with an increasing number of open-access articles and reviews. Preparations have been made for Vox Sanguinis to go online-only as of April 2024, with ISBT WP papers being free to read. The Vox Sanguinis Best Paper Prize 2022 (awarded in June 2023) was given to Vermeulen C, den Besten G, van den Bos AG, Go M, Gouwerok E, Vlaar R, Schipperus MR, Spelmink SE, Janssen M, Lagerberg JW, de Korte D, and Klei TRL for their paper "Clinical and in vitro evaluation of red blood cells collected and stored in a non-DEHP plasticized bag system."

5. Retiring Working Party Chairpersons and Standing Committee members

GC mentioned Christine Lomas-Francis, John Semple, Marion Vermeulen, and Ravi Reddy as the recipients of the ISBT Awards 2023. She presented a list of the current Chairs of the ISBT Working Parties and also named Christian Seidl, Mickey Koh, Karin Magnussen, and Justina Kordai Ansah as retiring WP Chairs. She extended her thanks to Diana Teo, Syeldy Sasongko, Lilian Boateng, and Carla Dinardo for their contributions to ISBT Standing Committees as they have also retired from their roles.

6. Report of the Treasurer – motion to accept financial accounts - Eric Jansen (EJ)

EJ presented the finance report, outlining the financial highlights of 2023-24. He identified congresses as the most important source of income for ISBT. He noted that both post-COVID conferences were successful scientifically and with positive financial results, although the income was not as high as originally budgeted, which was disappointing. EJ highlighted the increase in ISBT membership, which has exceeded 2,000—a very important accomplishment for ISBT. There was also an unexpected increase in Vox income due to a rise in Open Access (OA) income. Staff expenses increased because of high inflation in the Netherlands, necessitating salary adjustments, but all other costs remained stable.

EJ reported an expenditure of €147K related to the Blood Group Allele (BGA) Database, a significant investment for the society, which is expected to be available to the public closer to the end of the year. Presentations on the database have been shown during the congress, and it is currently being tested by Working Parties (WPs), with positive feedback. The I TRY IT program, which was initiated by the TTID WP and has now been handed over to ISBT, continuing to operate successfully. ISBT has invested €37K in this program. The financial result is negative by €160K.

EJ presented the financial results by category in comparison to the previous two years, showing a significant increase in membership fees and congress income compared to 2022-2023. Vox income also saw a substantial increase due to OA income, while income from corporate partnerships remained stable and strong. Advertising income also remained at similar levels. There was an annual donation income of approximately €20K and an increase in interest rates, leading to a positive interest income of €29K, which is expected to grow in the coming years. EJ also presented a chart showing the composition of income sources over the last four years.

He then presented the expenditure statement for the past year, highlighting the increase in personnel expenses due to inflation adjustments, the investment in the BGA database, and the I TRY IT program. Other expenses remained stable, and there were contributions to the Working Parties' activities. The final net result was negative by €160K, similar to the previous year.

EJ mentioned that in previous years, ISBT transferred all positive results to the Foundation, but they have decided to stop this practice due to fluctuations in income during even and odd years caused by congress cycles. This change aims to bring more stability to ISBT's financial situation and more flexibility in use of income to achieve strategic goals, even though it has the potential to result in higher profit taxes. EJ highlighted that the accumulated surplus remains at 2.5 million euros, indicating a very good financial condition for the society.

EJ asked the audience for questions on the financial statement. Marion Vermeulen inquired about the increase in interest rate income, and EJ explained that the interest rate in the Netherlands has recently increased to a little more than 3% (compared to a negative interest rate in 2022-2023), leading to higher income from interest.

A recommendation to accept the financial statement was proposed by Christian Seidl and seconded by Silvano Wendel. The majority of the members present voted to accept the financial statement.

7. Membership fees 2025/2026

EJ mentioned that the membership fees were increased the previous year and suggested that the fees for 2025-26 should not be further increased. The motion to keep the membership fees unchanged for 2025-26 was proposed by Silvano Wendel and seconded by Rada Grubovic. The majority of the members present voted in favour of keeping the membership fees unchanged.

8. Retiring Board Directors

MB acknowledged the retiring board members for their contributions to ISBT. He mentioned that Erica Wood joined the board as a Regional Director and then progressed from President-Elect to President and Past President. She demonstrated great leadership skills, guiding the society through the pandemic and continuing to achieve significant progress and success. MB then thanked Eric Jansen (EJ) for serving the society as Treasurer for a total of eight years, highlighting that EJ worked very hard for the society in this voluntary, unpaid role.

MB noted that some of the retiring board members are not leaving the board but are increasing their level of participation. He named Yoke Lin Fung, who also joined the board as a Regional Director, then continued as Vice President, and will now proceed as President-Elect. Cynthia So-Osman retired from her duties as Regional Director for Europe and will now continue as Vice President. MB also thanked Shirley Owusu-Ofori, Mahrukh Getshen and Denese Marks for their contributions to the ISBT board as Regional Director for Africa, South-East Asia, Western Pacific, respectively.

9. Announcement of the new Board 2024

MB announced the results of the elections and introduced the newly elected board members. Yoke Lin Fung is the new President-Elect, and she was already serving on the Executive Committee. Martin Smid was announced as the new Treasurer, and MB invited him to the stage along with the rest of the Executive Committee. Marion Vermeulen was elected as Regional Director for Africa, Mickey Koh as Regional Director for Europe, and Satyam Arora as Regional Director for South-East Asia. MB introduced the President of ISBT, Pierre Tiberghien (PT).

10. Incoming President's address

The new President of the International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT), Pierre Tiberghien (PT), thanks MB and expressed deep honour in leading the organization, highlighting ISBT's pivotal role in advancing transfusion medicine globally. He emphasised the importance of education, knowledge dissemination, and addressing critical issues like donor health and blood product safety. A key strategic goal is transforming knowledge into practice, which ISBT is actively pursuing through various initiatives. However, gaps remain between knowledge and its effective implementation in transfusion practices worldwide. To address this, PT suggested enhancing support for members through education, training, and practical recommendations. The overarching aim is to improve patient outcomes, donor health, and global transfusion standards, with a focus on collective efforts and collaboration within the ISBT community and the wider transfusion community.

PT announced the next General Assembly which will take place during the Milan congress in June 2025.

11. Any other business

PT asked if there were any other business, but no questions or comments were heard.

12. Close of meeting

PT thanked the members present for attending, proposing, seconding and voting.