

About the 14th International Symposium of the Bee Protection Group in Bern

Jens Pistorius, Anne Alix, Thomas Steeger, Steering Committee members

For many years, the symposia of the ICPPR Bee Protection Group have been organised principally every three years. At the 2017 Symposium in Valencia it became apparent that a 2 year cycle was considered to be of best advantage to address, assist and discuss the rapid developments in bee risk assessment testing methodology, official requirements, risk assessment and risk management.

Symposia started in 1980 in Wageningen, the Netherlands, and the 14th symposium was organised for the first time in Switzerland, in its beautiful capital city of Bern. The local organiser was Lucas Jeker, Scientific Associate with the Agroscope Swiss Bee Research Center in Bern. Agroscope graciously hosted the meeting at the Zentrum Paul Klee facility with its picturesque view of Bern and the surrounding Swiss Alps. The symposium held on 23 - 25 October 2019, included about 163 participants from 13 European, 3 Asian, 1 South American and 2 North American countries. This was the first year that conference organizers relied on a concierge service to orchestrate registration.



Photo: Participants in the 14th International Symposium of the ICPPR Bee Protection Group, Bern, Switzerland.
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Country	Participants	Country	Participants
Austria	1	Italy	4
Belgium	7	Japan	2
Brazil	9	Korea	1
Canada	4	Netherlands	4
China	1	Slovakia	1
France	13	Spain	10
Germany	59	Switzerland	29
Great Britain	2	United Kingdom	9
Greece	2	USA	4
Ireland	1		
		Total	163

The symposium started with welcoming remarks from Dr. Jens Pistorius and was formally opened by Dr. Eva Reinhard, Head of Agroscope. Afterward, Dr. Jean Daniel Charrière provided an overview of the Swiss Bee Research Center and Dr. Katja Knauer presented on the the Swiss National Action Plan for Bee Health.

The symposium included three full days and a total of 37 oral presentations of 20 minutes each along with 25 poster presentations. During the day, participants were treated to a sampling of Swiss cuisine. During the evening of October 26, participants were also provided the opportunity to celebrate Swiss culture and food at Highland-Gurten, a working farm atop Gurten Mountain, and to hike in the Alps with friends, colleagues and many new contacts.

Plenary sessions included: lab, semi-field and field studies; non-*Apis* bee testing; monitoring; risk assessment; and, other general themes. After each session Bee Protection Group subgroup co-chairs reported on the status of their subgroup efforts to advance study designs, ring-testing, and address data gaps/uncertainties.

At the end of the three day symposium, Jens Pistorius, Tom Steeger and Anne Alix of the board of the Bee Protection Group, decided to honour two departing long-standing group members, *i.e.*, Dr. Gavin Lewis and Dr. Roland Becker. Dr. Gavin Lewis served as one of the first active members, and probably one of the members who participated in most [if not all] of the 13 preceding symposia. Over the past three decades Dr. Lewis' expertise and tireless efforts have contributed enormously toward the advancement of appropriate testing and risk assessment methodologies.

Dr. Roland Becker from BASF, has also contributed to the work of ICPPR BPG for several decades and has been a very active and constructive member, who served as a chair of the Bee Brood Working Group. Dr. Becker has always worked to ensure that decisions are based on-data-supported facts; his efforts have significantly advanced the development of bee brood testing. Dr Becker also coordinated ring testing activities toward reducing sources of variability.

Preparations are already underway for the 15th International–Symposium of the ICP-PR Bee Protection Group. Our colleagues from FERA in the United Kingdom have confirmed that the next meeting can take place in York, United Kingdom, most likely in mid-October 2021.

Thanks to Lukas Jeker, the staff of Agroscope, and Agroscope Bee Research Center for a successful and memorable 14th International Symposium of the ICPPR Bee Protection Group!