

AbGradE - Connecting the next generation of early-career astrobiologists. P. Schwendner¹ and T. Samuels¹, M. Baqué², B. Byloos^{3,4}, M. Fox-Powell¹, M. B. Journaux⁵, M. Mora⁶, M. Musilova⁷, P. Nauny⁸, L. Noack⁹, A. Peras⁶, P. Serrano¹⁰, E. Simoncini¹¹, A. Stevens¹², R.-S. Taubner¹³, and C. Verseux^{2,14}

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Introduction: Astrobiology can be an exciting yet daunting field for those who are new to it, particularly so for early career researchers. Being a highly interdisciplinary field that brings together astronomy, biology, geology and much more, it is easy to feel out of your depth.

AbGradE: AbGradE (Astrobiology Graduates in Europe) is a newly formed association of Europe-based early-career researchers in the field of astrobiology. In 2013, the group emerged in response to the rising need to foster multidisciplinary international collaboration as well as the creation of a solid scientific and social network across Europe's early-career astrobiological scene. An additional goal is to set a common interdisciplinary background in astrobiology ranging from astronomy to geology, chemistry and biology for PhD students and Post-doctoral researchers joining the field. Moreover, a dedicated symposium to early-career researchers gives more opportunities for students' first time presentations in a stress-free environment. Besides, the association will also use the fascinating, multidisciplinary research area to meaningfully inform public about public astrobiology outreach events, one of which was organized and held during our first Symposium. These events help to improve the public understanding of the close connections between the processes of life, the response of the environment to change and the importance of space sciences.

In October 2014, the 1st Symposium was successfully launched in Edinburgh, UK, prior to the annual European Astrobiology Network Association Workshop (EANA). Combining educational talks that cover the different fields within astrobiology, along with student presentations, a public outreach event and ample opportunities for networking, that is exactly what the 1st symposium of AbGradE achieved.

The AbGradE network is now growing, and we look forward to convening again this year at the European Space Agency's ESTEC complex in Noordwijk, Netherlands.



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