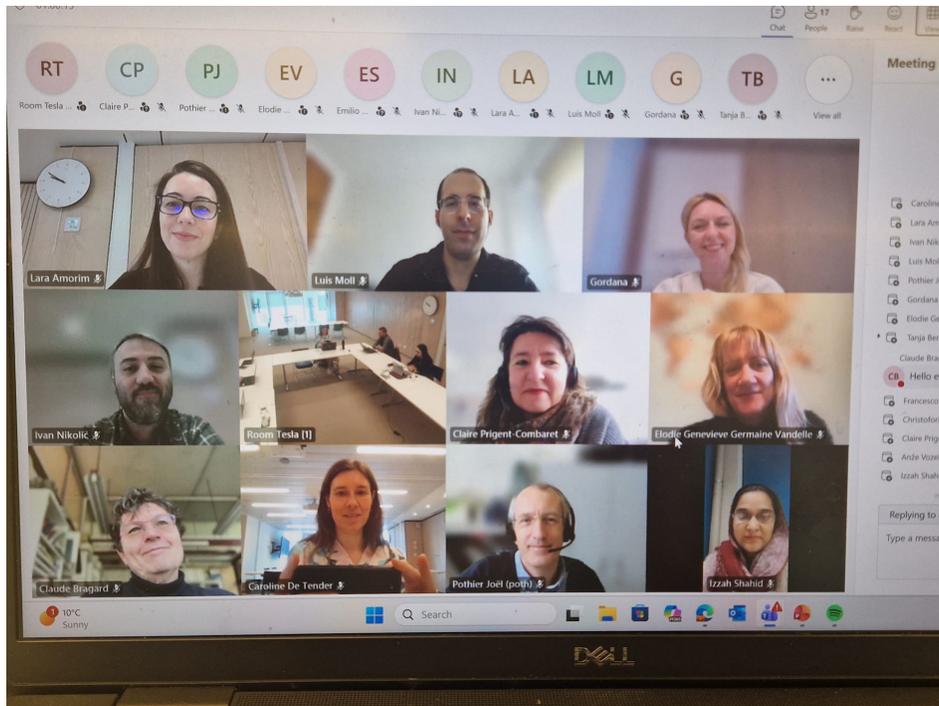


# WG5 face-to-face meeting, Brussels, March 23, 2026

## 1. Pictures of participants



2. **Overview of the different work packages**
3. **STSMs**
4. **Task force education: where do we stand now?**

The meeting focused particularly on the task force education that is led by Lara Amorim. The education task force is conducting an international survey to explore microbiome literacy among upper-secondary students (16-18) enrolled in science/technology.

The questionnaire is established, ethics have been approved.

In Portugal, Belgium, Slovenia and Serbia, we have already students who filled in the questionnaire.

Spain, Switzerland and Greece: there the ethics approval is still pending and thus we cannot start the questionnaire.

Minimum number of students to respond is 100 per country.

#### **5. Task force education: how will we be proceeding now?**

Proposal for next steps and commitment dates:

1. Close data collection window
2. Upload national datasets
3. Create central database
4. Preliminary descriptive analysis
5. Formation of writing group
6. Draft publication

It will be good to divide responsibilities where people want to volunteer for each of the tasks.

First, for the countries where it has been started already:

#### Belgium

- ⇒ For Walloon the questionnaire has been sent out as well as to some high schools so that will increase the number of participants in Belgium tremendously.

#### Portugal

- ⇒ Probably one month more to finalize the questionnaire.

#### Slovenia (FINALIZED)

- ⇒ Ethical approval done.
- ⇒ Proceed with distributing the questionnaires. Received 145 responses from 5 different high schools.
- ⇒ Here the questionnaire is closed and finalized.

### Serbia (Tanja and Gordana) => ACTIVE BUT CAN BE FINALIZED.

- ⇒ Distributed in the Google format in Serbia. Here too, no ethical approval was required.
- ⇒ Now 575 responses in total. So, a very good spread.
- ⇒ Much more information from the cities than from rural areas.

### Spain

- ⇒ Ethics approval has already been granted there, and more than 100 people have already responded. In Spain there are two regions. North of Spain we have already approval, South of Spain Luis Moll is taking care for and will be distributed soon.
- ⇒ North of Spain: another month for committee approval and one month for collection of data more or less.
- ⇒ Will hope to get around 300 participants in total.

For the countries where we have no response so far:

### France (Claire)

- ⇒ Normally the ethics approval is pending in CNRS.
- ⇒ The moment the survey will be distributed, then it will be done in the region of Lyon specifically.

### Germany

- ⇒ No work done for now.
- ⇒ Reach out to them once more to see if they still want to be involved.

### Poland (Joana/Kryzstof)

- ⇒ They made the translation of the questionnaire. Lost contact with them the moment that we need ethical approval.
- ⇒ Reach out to them once more to see if they still want to be involved.

### Czechia (Miroslav)

- ⇒ Dropped out.

### Switzerland (Joël)

- ⇒ French translation has already been done so can be distributed.
- ⇒ Ethics approval. Only internally ethical approval. It has passed, but official confirmation should be ok.
- ⇒ Not allowed to use Google. For the survey the data should not be in some servers that are open to others.

- ⇒ Data collection: good contact that can spread the survey (in German speaking part). In French speaking part Joël will be able to spread it himself. Will easily reach 100 participants, hopefully.
- ⇒ Should be done before July 1 when summer break is going to start.

#### Italy (Denise Khouri Chatoih)

- ⇒ No answer from her.
- ⇒ Questionnaire translated, but no response.
- ⇒ Francesco Spinelli can ask if there is ethical approval necessary. Elodie will also distribute the translated version. This will give us information on the North of Italy.
- ⇒ Lara will send the translated Italian version to Francesco and Elodie.
- ⇒ For University of L'Aquila we can do the South-Central Italy. However, the ethical approval can take up too many months in our University.
- ⇒ There will be a short meeting among the Italian partners.

#### Greece (Irene Christafiordi)

- ⇒ Ethical approval pending.

#### England (Joana)

- ⇒ Reach out to her once more to see if they still want to be involved.
- ⇒ The English questionnaire is available already so it will depend on the ethical approval.

#### Morocco

- ⇒ Reach out to him once more to see if they still want to be involved.

#### Tunisia

- ⇒ Reach out to her once more to see if they still want to be involved.

For the further timing of the task force:

- ⇒ Closing the questionnaire by July 1.
- ⇒ Include a 1 hour or 1.5 hours workshop on task force education in the program. To bundle the datasets here too.
- ⇒ Finalized questionnaire upload on the Google docs of MiCropBiomes (will limit access to the people actively involved.) **TO DO CAROLINE**

Different tasks that need to be done:

1. Data harmonization (Lara Amorim)

- a. Make the match of the questions here, to see if this is the same, to convert it to a single language.
  - b. All people actively involved should help here for the validation. Need to make sure that the order is.
2. Statistical analysis (Manuel Arriaza).
  3. Literature review
    - a. Would be good that this is done before the meeting in Belgrade.
    - b. Information regarding this information should be compiled.
    - c. The main concept, knowledge behind this that is supporting this study should be here.
    - d. Lara will take the lead to produce this file. **TO DO LARA**
    - e. Intermediate meeting somewhere beginning of May/mid-May.
  4. Writing first draft.

**Question:** what other outreach are we going to do with this questionnaire.

- Do we need to reach out again to the teachers?
- Do we envision to write a policy brief?
- How can we actively engage the community (students and teachers)?

Strategies to be used. Lara created a website to be used for teaching and outreach. This website can be used to bring it to the schools.

## **6. Book 'Integrating microbiome science into risk assessment: concepts and applications' (by Frédéric Debode)**

Editors: Frédéric Debode, Claude Bragard, Vanessa Gelhay

Preface by EFSA (Kostas)

Question by Frédéric. Can the COST Action be integrated in the book? The introduction will be drafted by EFSA. Still some flexibility to change the order of the book chapters. Book will be done by the University of Liège and everything will be open access.

If the MiCropBiomes COST Action is mentioned in the acknowledgement and if the logo can be provided, that would be good already. By now, involvement of Claude Bragard and Frédéric Debode.

## **7. Conference in Belgrade**

Newsletter and info sheet have already been sent. Call for abstracts has been sent too (deadline April 12).

First round of invitations has been sent as well. Now we have 33 accepted invitations, but a lot of MC members have not responded yet. So, a reminder of invitations has been sent. In total, 69 places for reimbursement.

Two invited speaker per working group?

Posters: are there restrictions in space? => No restrictions here in space for the number of posters.

Program changes:

- Include a workshop for WG5 on the task force of education
- Change the order of WP2 and WP3.
- For WG5 it would be nice to invite some people from industry. Already contacted some people from Serbia and North-Macedonia.
- Maybe even have an outreach to schools? To cover this facet as well (idea of Joël, Gordana agrees). Maybe the directors of the schools. They could be interested to join.
  - o Education ministry. Can maybe someone from the cabinet be invited? Someone between the schools and industry. Maybe he/she can be invited as well?
- In the botanical garden: can we maybe do some outreach here as well to citizens? Maybe set up something 30 minutes => but this is out of the regular working hours. But maybe some poster or action at front to showcase our MiCropBiomes COST Action.
- 2027: Another face-to-face meeting would be nice. They are very productive.

## **8. Reaching out to other stakeholders**

Ideas:

- 2027 - For industry: a kind of summer school in Belgium where we can go from company to company working on microbials. We can also organize then Ghent ("green hub").
- Gordana can already reach out to farmers in Serbia, to bring the posters. This is in field days. They have also contact with companies. There we can support this task as well.
- Portugal: can write a short article in "AGROTEC" (<https://www.agrotec.pt/>) about the COST Action? Then we need to have a common opinion, a consensus, on the topic before this can be translated.
- 2027 - Production of video, can be done in partnership with Portugal. In the Root-Benefit COST Action, they are creating a video of their project. They hired a company who will create this video. The workshop is intended to discuss the content of the video.

- This can be an idea for the beginning of next year, to have it on our next meeting to show.
- Organize a workshop with the WG leaders to say in 30 seconds the aim of their working group and what has been accomplished.

## **9. Closing words**

We thank everyone to be present at this meeting and for the good discussions. Several steps have been taken.

Next meeting is planned in Belgrade (June 3-5) where we foresee a one-hour workshop to proceed with the questionnaire and divide work for the writing process. In addition, we will organize an additional meeting for the literature study of the paper.