

A brief history of Scandinavian society for immunology

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Abstract

The Scandinavian Society for Immunology (SSI) was established with the purpose to advance the study of immunology in Scandinavia and to facilitate contacts between individuals and laboratories working within the field. To fulfill this the Society should organize scientific meetings and laboratory courses and take any other measure to support the development of immunology. A second objective was to establish contact and scientific exchange with other societies in Europe and overseas. By joining five national societies from the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) into one umbrella society this has given SSI a more powerful voice in international organizations such as European Federation of Immunological Societies (EFIS) and International Union of Immunological Societies (IUIS). The Scandinavian Foundation for Immunology and the Scandinavian Journal of Immunology has greatly facilitated the annual meetings to be of international high quality and by attracting more participants. Thus, SSI provides a forum for Nordic immunologists to share their research results and to increase collaboration over the borders. In conclusion, the SSI has undoubtedly been and will hopefully continue to be a major strength for Scandinavian immunology.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The Scandinavian Society for Immunology (SSI) was officially established on March 1969 at a meeting in Stockholm. This meeting was arranged by the Swedish Society for Microbiology with the special purpose of founding a Scandinavian Society for Immunology.¹ According to the invitation issued in early March 1969, the proposed objectives of the Society were as follows:

1. To advance the study of immunology in Scandinavia and to facilitate contact between individuals and laboratories working within the field. For this purpose, the Society should organize scientific meetings and laboratory courses

and take any other measure to support the development of immunology within the area; and

2. To establish contact and scientific exchange with other societies in Europe and overseas. The Society should take the necessary steps to become an affiliated member of the International Union of Immunological Societies, which probably would be founded in the near future.

The 1960s was a time when societies for immunology were being founded in many countries and plans for an International Union of Immunological Societies had come a long way. The reason for this was that there had been a rapid development of immunology, which sparked the initiatives to form national societies. Societies for allergology

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were already established in the Scandinavian countries, and in Denmark a joint society with immunology was already established in 1965. Discussions in 1967 and 1968 concluded that a Scandinavian Society for Immunology was to be preferred rather than acting through various national societies. This has also been shown to be a strategically wise decision, when dealing with a much broader context like the European Federation of Immunological Societies (EFIS) and International Union of Immunological Societies (IUIS).

Participants of the March 1969 meeting decided unanimously that the Scandinavian Society for Immunology (SSI) should be formed. It was decided that the society should be organized so that membership could be either individual or through the collective association of national societies. It was also concluded that annual meetings of the society should follow a consecutive schedule among the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden). The official language of the society should be English. Finally, an interim organization committee was elected. The purpose of this committee was to invite interested scientists in Scandinavia to become members, arrange the first annual meeting in 1970, and work out statutes for the constitution of the society to become definitely established at the first meeting.

The first regular meeting of the Scandinavian Society for Immunology, after the foundation of the Society in 1969, consequently took place on 28-30 May 1970, at Scanticon close to Aarhus, Denmark.¹

At the General Assembly, which took place on 28 May 1970, the constitution of SSI was formally and unanimously approved. The statutes, which had been worked out by the interim committee, were likewise approved. According to the original statutes of the SSI, the council, which is the executive body of the society, shall consist of one member from each country. In addition, one deputy member from each country should be elected. Members and deputy members were elected for a period of 2 years and were eligible to re-election for another period of 2 years. At the 16th meeting in Reykjavik in 1985, some changes in the statutes of SSI were approved. In accordance with the new statutes, the council shall consist of 10 ordinary members, two from each member country, who will be elected for a period of usually 3 years and are eligible for re-election for another period of 3 years.

SSI summer schools have been organized yearly since the first one in Iceland in 1985. The annual meetings have been held regularly since 1970 as shown in Table 1.

According to article III of the statutes of the Society, the council can appoint honorary members. Since the foundation of the Society, it has been a custom to appoint particularly the invited speakers at the annual meetings as honorary members, but also others, who have served the society over the years. Honorary members appointed up to 2020 are shown in Table 2.

2 | THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF IMMUNOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

The Scandinavian Society for Immunology participated in the foundation of the International Union of Immunological Societies (IUIS). As a founding member of the IUIS, the Scandinavian Society has had a representation in the council of IUIS since the beginning in 1971. Several council members have been elected over the years.

Between 1989 and 1992, Jacob B. Natvig was president of IUIS after having served as the Secretary General, Treasurer and Vice-president of IUIS. Over the years, Scandinavian members of IUIS subcommittees have contributed considerably to the establishment of immunology in developing countries. Anders Örn acted as the Chairman of the Education Committee 1992-1998. During this period, around 12 international courses were organized in South and Central America, Africa and Asia, mainly on the topics of immunology in infectious diseases. Seppo Meri was the Secretary General of IUIS 2010-2016. During this time, SSI continued participating in promoting a number of educational IUIS activities and immunological research across the globe and in the reorganization of IUIS to make its activities more efficient. In 2001, SSI organized the 11th International Congress of Immunology in Stockholm. Jacob B. Natvig acted as the meeting President, and Anders Örn was the Secretary General. The meeting gathered 5000 participants.

3 | EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF IMMUNOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

Scandinavian Society for Immunology has been an active member also in the European Federation of Immunological Societies (EFIS), which is affiliated to IUIS and has organized European Immunology Meetings. SSI has arranged the EFIS meetings twice, in 1976 in Copenhagen, Denmark, and 1991 in Espoo, Finland. From 2006, the European meetings were completely reorganized and renamed as European Congress of Immunology (ECI). They have been organized every third year (Table 1). A few attempts to offer organization of ECI by SSI have been put forward during recent years but were lost in tough competition. SSI was one of the five founders of the ECI format and financial arrangement together with the German (DGfI), British (BSI), French (FSI) and Italian (SIICA) immunological societies. Since the beginning, SSI has been actively involved in organizing ECI meetings. The new principle involved the fact that national societies would not have their separate meetings during the year that ECI is being organized, but that all European immunologists would gather the ECI meetings. The ECI meetings have become popular attracting as many participants as

TABLE 1 Scandinavian Society for Immunology Meetings 1970-2019

Number	Place	Time	Meeting Secretary	In combination with
1st	Aarhus, Denmark	28-30 May 1970	Klaus Jensen & Jørgen V. Spärck	
2nd	Sandefjord, Norway	10-12 June 1971	Kristian Hannestad	
3rd	Espoo, Finland	25-27 May 1972	Martti Virolainen	
4th	Gothenburg, Sweden	10-12 May 1973	Leif Lindholm	
5th	Copenhagen, Denmark	29-31 May 1974	Jørgen V. Spärck	
6th	Bergen, Norway	14-16 May 1975	Olav Tønder	
7th	Copenhagen, Denmark	27-29 August 1976	Jørgen V. Spärck	3rd European Immunology Meeting
8th	Pori, Finland	25-27 May 1977	Jussi Eskola	
9th	Stockholm, Sweden	3-5 May 1978	L. Hammarström & E. Smith	
10th	Lillehammer, Norway	29 May-1 June 1979	Bjarte G. Solheim	
11th	Aarhus, Denmark	11-14 June 1980	Flemming Kissmeyer-Nielsen	
12th	Oulu, Finland	16-19 September 1981	Anja Tiilikainen	
13th	Umeå, Sweden	20-24 June 1982	Antonio Coutinho	
14th	Beitostolen, Norway	11-14 April 1983	Ove J. Mellbye	
15th	Odense, Denmark	18-20 May 1984	Sven-Erik Svehag	
16th	Reykjavik, Iceland	12-16 June 1985	Helgi Valdimarsson	1st Summer School
17th	Tampere, Finland	3-8 June 1986	Kai Krohn	2nd Summer School
18th	Uppsala, Sweden	1-6 June 1987	Kjell Olof Grönvik	3rd Summer School
19th	Trondheim, Norway	8-12 June 1988	Torolf Moen	4th Summer School
20th	Copenhagen, Denmark	19-22 June 1989	Ole Werdelin	5th Summer School
21st	Stockholm, Sweden	11-14 June 1990	Göran Möller	6th Summer School
22nd	Espoo, Finland	9-12 June 1991	Olli Mäkelä	11th European Immunology meeting and 7th Summer School
23rd	Oslo, Norway	26-31 May 1992	Sigbjørn Fossum	8th Summer School
24th	Aarhus, Denmark	22-26 May 1993	Jens Chr. Jensenius	9th Summer School
25th	Reykjavik, Iceland	13-17 August 1994	Ingileif Jonsdottir	10th Summer School
26th	Gothenburg, Sweden	25-28 May 1995	Nils Lycke	11th Summer School
27th	Turku, Finland	24-27 May 1996	Olli Vainio	12th Summer School
28th	Geilo, Norway	10-13 April 1997	Ann Spurkland	13th Summer School
29th	Copenhagen, Denmark	10-14 June 1998	Arne Svejgaard	14th Summer School
30th	Lund, Sweden	25-29 August 1999	Rikard Holmdahl	15th Summer School
31st	Majvik, Finland	23-27 August 2000	Seppo Meri & Hanna Jarva	16th Summer School
32nd	Stockholm, Sweden	22-27 July 2001	Jacob B. Natvig	17th Summer School, ICI 2001 Special Issue of Scand J Immunol
33rd	Bergen, Norway	24-28 April 2002	Roland Jonsson	18th Summer School
34th	Reykjavik, Iceland	24-27 August 2003	F. Hardardottir & I. Jónsdóttir	19th Summer School
35th	Aarhus, Denmark	13-16 August 2004	Steffen Thiel	20th Summer School, ICI 2004 Special Issue of Scand J Immunol
36th	Kiel, Germany	21-25 September 2005	Dieter Kabelitz & Seppo Meri	21st Summer School, Joint SSI-DGfI Meeting
	1st ECI, Paris, France	No SSI Meeting 2006	Catherine Sautès-Fridman	ECI 2006 Special Issue of Scand J Immunol
37th	Turku, Finland	6-9 June 2007	Sirpa Jalkanen	22nd Summer School, ICI 2007 Special Issue of Scand J Immunol

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Number	Place	Time	Meeting Secretary	In combination with
38th	Stockholm, Sweden	12-15 August 2008	Hans-Gustaf Ljunggren	23rd Summer School
	2nd ECI, Berlin, Germany	No SSI Meeting 2009	Reinhold Schmidt	ECI 2009 Special Issue of Scand J Immunol
39th	Tallinn, Estonia	2-5 June 2010	Pärt Peterson & Kai Kisand	24th Summer school, Joint Baltic and Scandinavian Society Meeting
40th	Geilo, Norway	5-8 April 2011	Bjarne Bogen	25th Winter School
	3rd ECI, Glasgow, United Kingdom	No SSI Meeting 2012	Eddy Liew	ECI 2012 Special Issue of Scand J Immunol
41st	Copenhagen, Denmark	14-17 April 2013	Trevor Owens	26th Summer School, ICI 2013 Special Issue of Scand J Immunol
42nd	Reykjavik, Iceland	11-14 June 2014	Ingileif Jónsdóttir	27th Summer School
	4th ECI, Vienna, Austria	No SSI Meeting 2015	Winfried Pickl	ECI 2015 Special Issue of Scand J Immunol
43rd	Turku, Finland	11-13 May 2016	Riitta Lahesmaa	28th Summer School
44th	Stockholm, Sweden	17-20 October 2017	Petter Höglund	29th Summer School
	5th ECI, Amsterdam, The Netherlands	No SSI Meeting 2018	Marieke van Ham	ECI 2018 Special Issue of Scand J Immunol
45th	Geilo, Norway	2-6 April 2019	Inger Sandlie	30th Spring School

the IUIS and the American Association of Immunologists (AAI) meetings.

4 | OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES BY SCANDINAVIAN SOCIETY FOR IMMUNOLOGY

The international activities of the Society have also resulted in a bilateral agreement in 1986 with the Polish Society for Immunology, aiming at an increased exchange and collaboration between the societies. In 1991, this agreement was modified in order to include the Baltic states through the Baltic Society for Immunology. This collaboration led up to a series of courses on Autoimmunity, ABC 1-6, with the start in Tartu 1994 (organized by Raivo Uibo), as well as a joint Scandinavian and Baltic societies annual meeting in 2010. A joint Scandinavian and German Immunological Society Meeting was organized in Kiel in 2005. Seppo Meri from SSI and Dieter Kabelitz from the German society (DGfI) acted as meeting presidents.

The SSI Council has awarded travel grants to young members of the SSI to assist their presentation of papers or posters at the Annual Meetings and in European and International Immunology Meetings, in numbers proportional to the membership from each Scandinavian country. Grants supporting inter-Scandinavian laboratory visits have also been available to member scientists. All these grants are important assets of SSI Nordic and international activities.

5 | SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION FOR IMMUNOLOGY

The Scandinavian Society for Immunology has had an excellent collaboration with Scandinavian Journal of Immunology through the Scandinavian Foundation for Immunology (as the owner of the journal) with which the society shares the surplus of the Journal. The Journal was established in 1972 and has since 1975 been acting as the official Journal of the Society. In 1985, an agreement was established between the Journal and the Society in accordance with the new statutes of the Society. This agreement regulates the relationship between the Journal and the Society and decides that the President of the SSI is a member of the board of the Scandinavian Foundation for Immunology and that SSI elects an additional board member.

6 | SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF IMMUNOLOGY

One of the lasting legacies of Scandinavian immunology occurred in 1972 when Jacob B. Natvig together with Morten Harboe, founded the Scandinavian Journal of Immunology (SJI), with Scandinavian collaborators Gunnar Bendixen, Olli Mäkelä and Hans Wigzell. SJI has grown each year and become acknowledged as an important international journal of basic and clinical immunology (more recently experimental and human immunology). The first article in

TABLE 2 Honorary Members of Scandinavian Society for Immunology 1969-2019

Name	Year	Name	Year
N. A. Mitchison	1969	W. Bodmer	1990
G. J. V. Nossal	1969	P. Marrack	1990
N. K. Jerne	1970	L. Montagnier	1990
C. Milstein	1970	A. F. Williams	1990
J. L. Gowans	1971	N. Hogg	1992
M. Sela	1971	I. MacLennan	1992
B. Benacerraf	1972	N. Barclay	1993
M. Cohn	1973	C.A. Janeway, Jr	1994
M. Feldmann	1973	J. J. Oppenheim	1994
H. J. Müller-Eberhard	1973	T. Mak (confirmed 2007)	1995
I. M. Roitt	1974	W. Strober	1995
J. Uhr	1974	R.N. Maini	1996
L. Brent	1975	P. Matzinger	1996
E. C. Franklin	1975	M. Oldstone	1996
H. G. Kunkel	1976	P. Golstein	1997
J. F. Soothill	1976	P. C. Doherty	1998
B. H. Waksman	1976	J. B. Robbins	1998
J. F. Bach	1977	V. Kuchroo	1999
R. M. Zinkernagel	1977	E. K. Wakeland	1999
M. F. Greaves	1978	J. B. Natvig	2000
W. Haas	1978	E. Möller	2001
J. J. van Rood	1978	A. Örn	2001
F. Dixon	1979	J. Mestecky	2002
J. L. Strominger	1979	C.-A. Siegrist	2003
H. Wagner	1979	J. F. Kearney	2004
R. Buckley	1981	F. Powrie	2004
F. Melchers	1982	D. A. Hafler	2005
S. Ohno	1982	D. Kabelitz	2005
W. E. Paul	1982	L. Glimcher	2007
S. Tonegawa	1982	M. Nussenzweig	2007
M. Weigert	1982	H. Valdimarsson	2008
J. Gergely	1983	A. Abbas	2010
J. Klein	1983	R. Uibo	2010
V. Nussenzweig	1984	R. Flavell	2013
H. F. Oettgen	1984	A. Oxenius	2013
D. K. Peters	1984	J.-L. Casanova	2014
R. Gallo	1986	I. Jonsdottir	2014
G. Goldstein	1986	J. Bleustone	2016
H. von Boehmer	1987	I. Weissman	2016
H. McDevitt	1989	R. Jonsson	2017
G. Möller	1989	A. Mantovani	2017
M. Simonsen	1989	M. R. Clathworthy	2019
J. V. Spärck	1989	S. K. Meri	2019

the Scandinavian Journal of Immunology, volume 1 1972, was the seminal contribution by Frøland and Natvig about surface-bound Ig as a marker for B lymphocytes in man.² Other Editors over the years have been Göran Möller, Per Brandtzaeg, Zlatko Dembic and Nils Lycke.

In 1999, Roland Jonsson started as Editor-in-chief with Hans-Gustaf Ljunggren as deputy; they continued until 2017. During this period, the function of Associate Editors was initiated. In 2006, the Journal started to use electronic submissions and from 2015 onwards the Journal went over to only on-line publishing. In 2018, a new Editor-in-chief was chosen, Petter Höglund, with a 5-year assignment. Over the years, Scandinavian Journal of Immunology has produced a number of special issues in connection with both ICI and ECI conferences (Table 1).

7 | WHY SCANDINAVIAN SOCIETY FOR IMMUNOLOGY?

From a strategic point of view, joining five national societies from the Nordic countries into one umbrella society has given SSI a more powerful voice in international organizations such as EFIS and IUIS. Also, by the greater resources available, for example via SFI and the Scandinavian Journal of Immunology, this has facilitated the annual meetings to be of international high quality and by attracting more participants. However, this ‘resource availability’ goes both ways, these meetings being underwritten by SSI/SFI and often generating income. In the context of a community

spirit—SSI provides a forum for Nordic immunologists to share their research results and to increase collaboration over the borders. Regarding teaching—the annual meetings always include a ‘summer’ school (whatever the season). To conclude, the SSI has undoubtedly been and will hopefully continue to be a major strength for Scandinavian immunology.

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