



COLOSS Conference 2017

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Robert Brodschneider 

The 13th conference of the honey bee research association COLOSS (Prevention of honey bee Colony LOSSes) was held in Athens, 2nd to 3rd November 2017. COLOSS (<http://coloss.org/>) is an international, non-profit association based in Bern, Switzerland that is focused on improving the well-being of bees at a global level. Between 2008 and 2012, COLOSS was funded by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) through the COST Action FA0803. At the moment, COLOSS is funded by sponsors, which are the Ricola foundation, Veto-pharma and the University of Bern. The conference further received funding from the Eva Crane trust and the Agricultural University of Athens. The 13th COLOSS conference was held as a standalone conference (i.e., not associated with another conference which had been the case several times for previous meetings) but nevertheless attracted almost one hundred participants (Figure 1). It was held at the Agricultural University of Athens, the third oldest university in Greece. The rector of the university, George Th. Papadoulis (Figure 2), opened the conference, stressing the importance of honey bees and then handed over to local organizer Maria Bouga and the president of COLOSS, Peter Neumann (Figures 3 and 4). This conference was dedicated to the recently passed Ingemar Fries (see de Miranda & Forsgren, 2017) and the

audience remembered Ingemar with a minute of silence.

After oral presentations of the activities of the three COLOSS core projects (beebook, B-Rap and colony losses monitoring) and all task forces, several parallel discussion sessions were held. In one of the monitoring sessions, selected presentations on colony mortality in different countries were given, for the first time in COLOSS also a representative from New Zealand presented their research there (Figure 5). COLOSS task forces are special interest groups of researchers dedicated to facilitate coordinated research on a particular research question. Very often this research is conducted on a large scale, which cannot be accomplished by single research laboratories, which is why COLOSS is focussing on coordinating research efforts of many international partners. Examples for such task forces are the task forces on sustainable bee breeding, varroa control, the small hive beetle, the Asian yellow legged hornet *Vespa velutina*, or honey bee viruses. As in previous meetings the event did not follow a classic conference scheme with strictly limited time slots for oral presentations but rather allowed plenty of time for networking, discussion and planning of common activities of these different sub groups of COLOSS. For example, the “survivors” task force, coordinated by Fanny Mondet and Peter Neumann will

start actively seeking for managed honey bee colony populations in Europe that survived several years without treatment against the varroa-mite. This search for “survivors” will also need the help of beekeepers. The knowledge obtained from such colonies could help in understanding the mechanisms enabling colony survival in such populations. Two of the core projects, colony losses monitoring and B-Rap (which stands for Bridging Research And Practice, an aim very similar to that of Bee World) decided to join forces more closely in the future, for example by combining workshops and approaching beekeepers. Dissemination of research results to practitioners is often seen as a chore in science, but feedback from the field is crucial for ongoing improvements. As the COLOSS core project is collecting data from beekeepers on colony losses for risk analysis in close contact with beekeepers from all over Europe, this seems to be a perfect opportunity to streamline also communication of scientific results to beekeepers.

At the poster session about 30 posters were presented. The abstracts of most of these posters (depending on permission of authors for printing in this journal) are published in this issue of Bee World to give an overview of the ongoing research conducted by COLOSS members (edited by Özkirim, 2018, in this issue). There



Figure 1. Attendants of the 13th COLOSS conference at the Agricultural University of Athens. Photo: Anna Gajda.



5

▲ Figure 2. Rector George Th. Papadoulis opening the 13th COLOSS conference. Photo: Robert Brodschneider.



10

▲ Figure 3. COLOSS president Peter Neumann remembering our colleague Ingemar Fries, to whom the 13th COLOSS conference was dedicated. Photo: Robert Brodschneider.



▲ **Figure 4.** Local organizer and COLOSS executive committee member Maria Bouga. Photo: Dirk de Graaf.



▲ **Figure 5.** Pike Brown presenting colony loss data from New Zealand at the discussion session of the COLOSS core project on colony losses monitoring. Photo: Robert Brodschneider.

was also a competition on the best student poster, which was won by Phd student Elena Facchini from the University of Milan (Figure 6). In her poster entitled “Catch me if you s-can! Computed tomography analysis on a brood comb” she developed a methodology to produce cross-sectional slices of brood combs. She could demonstrate with her newly developed technology that pupae in cells infested with one or two mother mites of *Varroa destructor* were significantly shorter than pupae in varroa-free brood cells. The method could in the future be used to provide a non-invasive tool to assess infestation rates in honey bee colonies, but is also a valuable research technique. The judges were also very much impressed by the way the information was graphically presented on her poster.

The next COLOSS conference is scheduled to be held on 16th and 17th of September 2018 in Ghent, Belgium, prior to EurBee 8 (see de Graaf, 2018, in this issue). Guess what colour conference buttons will have then (Figure 7)! A number of core projects and task forces will also hold workshops in 2018, details can be found at the website www.coloss.org.

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▲ **Figure 6.** Award ceremony for “best student poster” with Asli Özkirim, Yves LeConte, winner Elena Facchini, Dirk de Graaf and Joachim de Miranda. Photo: Karl Crailsheim.



▲ **Figure 7.** The buttons for conference participants were yellow this time, according to the 2017 queen colour code. Photo: Robert Brodschneider.

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