



Norwegian University
of Life Sciences

NORA Newsletter no. 1

February 2014

It is now one year since the NORA project started and it has become a well-functioning and fully operative research network. Most of us have met at least once during this first year, and we will all meet each other in meetings in 2014. The NORA project now involves more than 30 reputable scientists, all experts in their field; forming a cross disciplinary network enlightening the environmental problems with nitrous gas emission. So far, all has gone well and we look forward to three exciting years with active collaborations and lots of excellent research.

General information:

- **Our Project Officer** Agne Dobranskyte-Niskota was in November replaced by Lucia Pacillo (Lucia.PACILLO@ec.europa.eu).
- **Next NORA meeting** will take place 12-14 November 2014 in Delft, organized by VUA and TUD. The 14th November will be used for a Mid-term review meeting.
- **Summer Schools 2 and 3** will be arranged in Delft, in connection with the next project meeting, in November 2014.
- **NORA logo:** A high resolution version is now available for all partners in [the Nora intranet](#).

Although everything seems to go well so far, there are a few, urgent issues that all of you should keep in mind:

- **NORA webpage:** Please use the NORA webpage actively and help us to keep it updated. We welcome popular texts/essays on relevant topics. Please also note that we now have a blog on the intranet where you can discuss specific topics, exchange lab protocols etc.
- **Outreach:** All dissemination activities **MUST** be reported! *See below under WP6.*
- **Research:** We have promised to have **“incubator workshops/think tanks”** twice a year (see our Grant Agreement), to present recent results and discuss progress and plans. All full partners should feel responsible for organizing such meetings, either as 2-day gatherings or just as video-conferences. They can include a few or several partners, depending on topic. *For more information, see below under WP1, 2, 3.*

The following contains a report from each of the work packages about the first year of the NORA project. We encourage everyone also to visit the [NORA web-site](#), for further information.

Work Package 0 (WP0) - Recruitment

NORA has recruited 9 ESR and 3 ER fellows, as planned, with start dates varying from 1 September 2013 to 1 February 2014, the latter being one ER. The positions were advertised in one eye catching advertisement on the European Community Euraxess server, in the ISME journal and on Nature jobs. A copy of the advertisement can be found [here](#). Application deadline for all positions was June 17, 2013. There were a total of 129 applicants. To ensure a transparent process, the applications were sorted, and made available for the partners in the NORA intranet pages. After a first selection, interesting candidates were interviewed and the final decisions were taken by the local supervisors after a review by the Technical Committee (TC).

In the period between July and December, all partners engaged their fellow(s), see Table 1.

- Three of the fellows are connected to WP1 (Regulatory biology), and will examine regulatory networks in N₂O-producing bacteria and archaea through an iterative process, employing both experimental and mathematical approaches.
- Six fellows are connected to WP2 (Systems) and will explore the composition and activities of microbial communities in soils and wastewater systems, and correlate them to NO/N₂O production.
- Three fellows are connected to WP3 (Emissions and processes), which will upscale the findings from the two other WPs to field-scale emissions, using newly developed measurement technologies.

Table 1. The NORA fellows. ESR = Early Stage Researcher (PhD student); ER = Experienced Researcher (post doc.); WP = work package.

Position	Responsible	Work Package	Person engaged	Start date
ESR1	UMB, Åsa Frostegård	WP1	Pawel Lycus	Sept 1 st 2013
ESR2	UEA, David Richardson	WP1	Manuel Soriano-Laguna	Nov 23 rd 2013
ESR3	VUA, Rob van Spanning	WP1	Daria Kaptan	Sept 11 th 2013
ESR4	TUD, Mark van Loosdrecht	WP2	Monica Conthe Calvo	Nov 1 st 2013
ESR5	UNIABD, Jim Prosser	WP2	Linda Hink	Jan 1 st 2014
ESR6	SLU, Sara Hallin	WP2	Martina Putz	Nov 11 th 2013
ESR7	INRA, Laurent Philippot	WP2	Luiz Horta	Oct 1 st 2013
ESR8	ECL, Pascal Simonet	WP2	Christoph Keuschnig	Oct 1 st 2013
ESR9	UGOT, Leif Klemedtsson	WP2	Philipp Schleusner	Sept 1 st 2013
ER1	UMB, Lars Bakken	WP3	Jan Reent Köster	Dec 1 st 2013
ER2	YARA, Joachim Lammel	WP3	Carlo Lammirato	Jan 1 st 2014
ER3	Bioclear, Inez Dinkla	WP3	Aline Ramos da Silva	Feb 1 st 2014

The Declarations of Conformity (DoC), signed by the respective fellow and main supervisor, were uploaded to the REA Personal Portal by each supervisor (except ER3 at Bioclear who is hired from February 1st, 2014). The DoCs were subsequently submitted to REA by the coordinator. We foresee that our Project Officer in Brussels may require a revision of some of these so that it is better clarified what amounts are paid from NORA (before deduction of social costs etc).

Work Packages 1, 2 and 3 (WP1, WP2, WP3) - Science **Respective leaders Rob van Spanning, Jim Prosser and Lars Bakken**

Personal career development plans have been written by each ESR and ER in collaboration with their local supervisors, (except ER3 who is hired from 1 February 2014). The plans have been quality checked by the leaders of the respective WPs 1, 2 and 3 and discussed in the Technical Committee (TC meeting). After revisions, all plans were accepted during a follow-up TC meeting and made available to the Supervisory Board (SB) on the NORA intranet page. ***Please note that the Personal Career plans should be revised regularly (twice during the first year and then at least once a year). All fellows will be asked for a first revised plan in June (2014).***

The first year's secondments have been planned for all fellows (via e-mail and at the Kick-off Meeting). In most cases they are in agreement with the plans stated in our Grant Agreement.

Planned WP “incubator” workshops: One important thing to keep in mind is that we are urged to have regular, smaller workshop meetings to present and discuss our research. In our contract (Grant Agreement) it is stated that *“The partners within each WP will meet twice annually in workshops that will function as “think-tanks” at which the latest results will be presented and new ideas and hypotheses formed. Depending on specific needs, workshops will be either 2-day regular meetings or videoconference meetings, thereby saving travel/time costs. WP2, which involves several groups, may need to meet ad hoc in smaller groups to interact on specific aspects of individual projects.”*

WP1, with some of the partners in WP2, is planning to have a first workshop in spring 2014 (tentatively in May, in Brussels). The meeting will focus on mathematical modelling and how to link this with experimental approaches. A second WP1 workshop is planned to take place in spring 2015 (tentatively in February, in Alicante) to present and discuss our recent comparative phenotypic/biochemical studies of different denitrifying bacteria.

Work Package 4 (WP4) – Management Leader Åsa Frostegård



Photo: KoWi, Brussels

Project meeting 1 (“Start-up”) was held in Brussels (February 2013). All partners were represented with 1-3 researchers (altogether 23 persons) and thus the entire Supervisory Board was present. Important outcomes were the consolidation of the consortium; agreement on the recruitment process; agreement on the structure of the NORA website. The minutes from the meeting are available [here](#) (NORA intranet).

Project meeting 2 (“Kick-off”) was held in Oslo (October 2014). All partners, including the associated ones, were represented with 1-3 researchers each, and thus the entire Supervisory Board (SB) was again present. Altogether 32 persons attended this meeting. All newly recruited NORA fellows participated, except for ER3 who was not yet hired at that point. Important outcomes were:



Photo: Pawel Lycus

- Every partner presented their ongoing research relating to NORA themes and gave an overview of their planned research within NORA
- Outreach was discussed and it was agreed that all NORA outreach will be posted on the NORA website
- Ideas for a more professional logo were agreed on
- Plans for collaboration and secondments were discussed in the individual WPs 1-3 groups and presented to the SB.

Minutes from the kick-off meeting are available [here](#) (NORA intranet).

The Technical Committee (TC) has had two Skype meetings to discuss and accept the Personal Career Plans of the fellows.

Next NORA meeting will take place 12-14 November 2014. The meeting will be held in Delft and organized by VUA and TUD. The 14th November will be used for a Mid-term review meeting as agreed with our Project Officer.

Reports

The first Progress Report was registered in the Participant Portal February 7, 2014. A copy of the report can be read via the NORA intranet page. Next report is due in October 2014.



Norwegian University of Life Sciences

The Coordinating Institution – change of name

The Norwegian University of Life Sciences has changed its Norwegian name, its acronym and logo. After the Veterinarian School in Norway became a part of our university, we became “**NMBU**” (Norges Miljø- og Biovitenskapelige Universitet) instead of “UMB”. The English name is

unchanged, however. NORA people working at NMBU have changed their e-mail addresses accordingly; ...@nmbu.no (instead of ...@umb.no). Soon, the website will change address to <http://nora.nmbu.no>.

Work Package 5 (WP5) – Teaching Leader Mark van Loosdrecht



Photo: Manuel Soriano-Laguna

The first NORA Summer School “Microbial N transformations and NO/N₂O emissions” was arranged (Oct 13-18) at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås, Norway. The work load was equal to 4 credits (ECTS); a detailed description of the course can be found [here](#) (NORA intranet). All NORA ESRs participated in, and passed, School 1, including those not yet engaged. In addition, two of the NORA ERs as well as eight non-NORA PhD students from

different European countries participated in, and passed, School 1. Non-NORA participants covered their own expenses. School 1 was evaluated using a [QuestBack survey](#); the overall feedback was positive.

Summer Schools 2 and 3 will be arranged in Delft, in connection with the next project meeting, in November 2014. School 2: “*Systems biology and biochemistry of N₂O producing bacteria; Waste water treatment technologies*” (responsible is TUD and VUA). School 3: “*Entrepreneurial skills and IPR*” (Responsible TUD/Bioclear/yara/Paques). These schools are major events within NORA and all fellows are expected to participate. A preliminary schedule for the two courses will soon be sent out by e-mail.

Work Package 6 (WP6) - Dissemination / Outreach

Leader David Richardson



The NORA logo was improved by the University of East Anglia (UEA). A high resolution version is now available for all partners in [the Nora intranet](#).

All dissemination activities related to NORA can now be registered by the partners in the NORA web site ([NORA in the public](#)). This site is open to all readers, but can be edited by NORA partners only (if logged on the NORA intranet). Dissemination activities include scientific publications, oral presentations, newspaper articles, radio interviews etc. In addition to being uploaded on the NORA web-site all dissemination activities must be reported to the WP6 leader. Please keep in mind that we have all agreed to contribute regularly to different outreach activities!!

A blog site has been made ([here](#)) on the NORA intranet, open for all NORA partners. You are all encouraged to please test it and report to the coordinator how it works.