



## **FIRST CIRCULAR**

It is with great pleasure that we announce the fifteenth International Symposium “Ecology of Aphidophaga”, which will be held in Lleida, Spain, 19-23 September 2022. Founded in the Czech Republic in 1965, Aphidophaga was conceived as a mechanism to connect entomologists studying the ecology of aphid-feeding arthropods, many of whom were separated by the “Iron Curtain” that divide eastern and western Europe at the time. We are very grateful to the Scientific Committee of Aphidophaga and the International Organization for Biological Control (IOBC Global), for selecting the University of Lleida as host institution for this Symposium.

Lleida is a friendly town in Catalonia, located between Barcelona and Zaragoza in the north-east of Spain. It is the capital city of the province of the same name (also called Lérida in Spanish) and the most important inland population and economic center in Catalonia. Its economy is based on the agrifood sector, as well as a diversity of service industries. It is easy to find your way round Lleida; the population is around 140,000 inhabitants and its center and surroundings are very walkable. Agriculture is found just when leaving the town, within a 5 minute driving.

The University of Lleida (UdL) is the oldest university in Catalonia and was founded 700 years ago. It flourished as a center of higher education until the first half of the 16th century, when it faced growing competition from the new universities that were being created in other territories in the Aragon Kingdom. A period of decadence began in the second half of the 17th century that would continue until the reign of Philip V in the 18th century. After the Spanish Succession War, that king’s reformers decided to create a new university model in Catalonia and close our university. It was not until 1968 that university studies in Lleida were effectively re-established and consolidated as extensions to various universities in Barcelona. A faculty of Law was introduced in 1968, Agricultural Engineering in 1972, Arts and Philosophy in 1975, and Medicine in 1977. In 1991, the Catalan Parliament recognized a newly-established UdL. Nowadays it is a generalist university where teaching and research are conducted on several scientific disciplines (agriculture, medicine, engineering), economics, and the humanities.

Aphidophaga is a meeting focused on the ecology of arthropods that have evolved feeding relationships with aphids, many of which provide ecological services as biological control agents of pests in agricultural, forest and urban ecosystems. At the Symposium, senior and junior researchers from around the world, graduate students and post-docs, meet to present scientific advances and ideas in a friendly and convivial atmosphere. The Symposium fosters a

variety of perspectives on aphid biological control and creates opportunities for multinational collaborations among participants.

Although SARS-CoV-2 /Covid-19 pandemic has changed life experiences for people around the world, the Scientific and the Organizing Committees remain dedicated to the idea of a physical, in-person, meeting in September 2022 to facilitate positive and creative interaction among participants. All health security measures will be implemented according to the Spanish rules. Currently, around of 70% of people in Catalonia, Spain and Western Europe people are fully vaccinated. However, if pandemic is not under adequate control as the meeting approaches, or if the risk are judged to be too great for some participants, we will try to organize a hybrid event that permits remote participation.

The International Organization for Biological Control may be providing travel grants to assist young scientists and students (< 35 years old, IOBC membership required) with travel costs to attend the meeting. These would be awarded competitively, based on the quality of submitted abstracts, and acceptance would require an oral presentation at the meeting. More information will be updated through our web page that will be activated soon.

We hope you can all attend the next Aphidophaga 15 in Lleida.

The Steering Committee, Ecology of Aphidophaga

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