



ISME

International Board member – Role and responsibilities

ISME International Board Members are non-executive directors of the ISME Board. The ISME Board follows a one-tier board structure under Dutch law and consists of executive directors and non-executive directors within the same board. In short, executives handle day-to-day operations and non-executives focus on oversight, strategic decisions, and safeguarding fairness.

International Board members have several roles and responsibilities, including:

- **Oversight and accountability**
 - Oversee the performance of the Executive Director(s) and ensure alignment with Board-approved strategy and policies.
 - Ensure the organisation is being run in line with its mission and strategy
 - Monitor the general affairs of the association
 - Hold executives accountable for results and conduct
- **Strategic direction**
 - Provide constructive challenge and independent judgment
 - Contribute to and approve the long-term strategy
 - Challenge and refine strategic proposals from management
 - Ensure decisions align with the association's purpose and members' interests
 - Safeguard scientific integrity and independence
 - Actively contribute to Board discussions on scientific, educational, conference, and community-building activities.
- **Governance and compliance**
 - Ensure that the Society complies with legal, regulatory, and ethical standards
 - Uphold the constitution, bylaws, and internal policies
 - Maintain proper governance structures and processes
 - Participate in board recruitment and succession planning (nomination committee), ensuring transparent elections and inclusive leadership pathways.
- **Financial stewardship**
 - Approve budgets and major expenditures
 - Review financial reports and approve annual accounts
 - Ensure long-term financial sustainability of the society

- **Committees, activities and initiatives**
 - Serve on Board committees, task forces, or working groups as required.
 - Participate in reviewing applications for funding, awards, and nominations.
 - Contribute expertise and advice to Society programmes, initiatives, and strategic projects.
 - Support the development of new activities and initiatives that advance ISME's mission, subject to Board approval and available resources.
 - Support the development and maintenance of partnerships with scientific societies, funding organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.
 - Undertake special assignments or projects on behalf of the Board when requested.
- **ISME representative to the community**
 - Act in the best interest of the association as a whole (not representing personal or institutional interests)
 - Serve as ambassadors for the organisation at events and meetings
 - Safeguard the society's reputation and integrity
 - Promote ISME society and publications globally
 - Strengthen partnerships with other organizations
 - Support early-career researchers and underrepresented regions
 - Maintain awareness of emerging issues and opportunities relevant to the microbial ecology community and bring these to the attention of the Board.

These duties come with personal and collective liability. Non-executives can be held liable if they fail to properly supervise or ignore clear risks or governance failures.