Lichen-associated fungi: recent advances and challenges in their biology, interaction, diversity and systematics

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Lichen associated fungi –understood as all kinds of fungi, other than the lichen mycobiont, living within lichens– have captivated lichenologists' attention from the middle of 19th century. Early studies focused primarily on describing their diversity but, with time, the interest on them has extended across all areas of biology. This session focuses on lichen-associated fungi that have been referred to as lichenicolous, endolichenic, mycobiome… - acknowledging that the boundaries among these terms are seemingly artificial. We would like to bring together scientists studying lichen- associated fungi from any angle – including diversity, evolution, systematics, biology, physiology, ecology. We promote a deeper understanding of these fungi with a broader phylogenetic scale and will work towards convening outstanding investigations of different character – ranging from species surveys and systematics, where knowledge has dramatically increased over the past 15 years, to the most advanced imaging or genomic studies. Our proposed session aims at being a platform for multidisciplinary and cross-generalization interexchange of ideas,

where young up-and-coming students as well as experienced scientists can get visibility and opportunity to present and discuss their work. We aspire to bring on the stage important knowledge gaps and key questions in the study of lichen associated fungi, and to get informed o how these are being addressed, both through traditional and cutting-edge methodologies and techniques. We hope to boost scientific networking and inspire new directions of research in this fascinating group of organisms.