Dear Members, the year 2023 has undeniably been transformative in many ways and presented various challenges on multiple fronts. The lingering effects of the pandemic continue to impact individuals, politics, and scientific endeavors. Additionally, there has been considerable political turmoil worldwide, with outcomes that remain unpredictable for the years ahead. Thus, it becomes even more important to reflect on the many positive and notable achievements, and advancements of 2023, while also looking ahead to the exciting events that lie ahead in 2024.

Section Meeting 2024: If you are interested in organizing the **section meeting in 2024** please notify any of us by **31st of January 2024!** We are happy to help you with the organization and planning.

In case we do not receive any notification of interest, we will proceed from February 2024 onwards with organizing a 1-day section symposium (either on the 21st or 25th of October 2024) as satellite meeting to the Dechema 5th *European Conference on Natural Products* in Würzburg (22nd-24th of October 2024).

Promote our VAAM section group! Please advertise the VAAM section to your group members or students by distributing our VAAM flyers (e.g. student members are e.g. eligible for travel grants to conferences, PhD prices and other promotions).

Publication Highlights: Section members have published many excellent papers in 2023! Amongst the many excellent contributions, there have been also many notable collaborative efforts:

Structure of Staphylococcus aureus *ClpP Bound to the Covalent Active-Site Inhibitor Cystargolide A*, in Angewandte Chemie with contributions from the Grond, Sieber, Kaysser, Groll and Brötz-Oesterhelt labs.
antiSMASH 7.0: new and improved predictions for detection, regulation, chemical structures and visualization in *Nucleic Acids Research* led by Weber, Medema with contributions from other PIs of the section.
ABC-HuMi: the Atlas of Biosynthetic Gene Clusters in the Human Microbiome in *Nucleic Acids Research* led by Keller and Gurevich with contributions from other PIs of the section.

You want to get your publication highlighted?! Please send us an email with the doi number of your article and 2-3 sentences why you find this article of importance to the section!

VAAM Meeting September 2023. We also would like to thank all of you for your participation and excellent contributions to the VAAM section meeting. Congratulations to our awardees of the poster and oral presentations. We are also happy to announce that Dr. Nadya Abbood (Goethe Universität) received this year's **Hendrik Wolff Award for mass spectrometric methods in microbiology** for her excellent contributions to the field.

Congratulations to the cooperation project **MICROBELIX**, which was jointly launched in spring 2023 by researchers from the **Helmholtz Institute for Pharmaceutical Research Saarland (HIPS) and the Naturlandstiftung Saar (NLS)**. Together, both institutions set out to compete in the citizen science contest *Auf die Plätze! Citizen Science in deiner* Stadt. After a public voting phase and the evaluation by a jury of experts, the MICROBELIX team could claim one of the three winning places.

Meet A Member: Florian Hubrich studied chemistry and biology at the University of Freiburg. Following his Staatsexamen he started his PhD in chemical biology with focus on chorismatases supervised by Jennifer Andexer and Michael Müller at the Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences in Freiburg and finished in 2014. In 2015, Florian moved to Switzerland where he worked for the BACHEM AG a world leading company for peptide drug manufacturing as project chemist and group leader for analytical method development. In 2019, he returned to academia and joined Jörn Piel's lab as a postdoctoral researcher at the ETH Zurich, where he studies the biosynthesis of peptide natural products with ribosomal origin. In February 2024, Florian will start a position as a junior group leader at the Helmholtz Institute for Pharmaceutical Research Saarland (HIPS) and the Saarland University. In Saarbrücken, his group will focus on elucidating and engineering new biosynthetic pathways for drug development.

Wishing you a merry Christmas time
and a good start into 2024!
Nadine Ziemert and Christine Beemelmanns

Pablo Picasso, 1961

You want to get introduced in our Newsletter or write a note about a breakthrough publication important for the community?
Send an Email to the speakers and we are happy to include you. https://vaam.de/die-vaam/fachgruppen/biologie-bakterieller-naturstoffproduzenten/