

## A message from the president



Photo by Jim Høyer,  
University of Copenhagen.

We are all preparing for a new academic year and for many of us our focus right now is on our teaching. Personally, in my work I have always considered teaching as important as my research. The impact we make through our teaching cannot be underestimated, whether teaching first year calculus or advising PhD students or mentoring postdocs. Through our Education Committee the EMS stays deeply engaged in issues of teaching. Of course, much of the focus is on university teaching, but education at all levels concerns us. The EMS sees it as one of its main roles to highlight the importance of mathematics in all aspects of society. No one questions the general importance of mathematics. After all, it is probably the only subject taught in first grade (or even earlier) worldwide. But that this goes well beyond simple arithmetic may not be universally appreciated. The true importance of mathematics as a force behind many aspects of society at large including the economy, sustainability, and modern technologies, is something we must continuously emphasize. It is also something the EMS will be focusing on in the near future. In this message I would like to speak about education. If, indeed, mathematics is the foundation for much of our modern society, the value of a good mathematics education cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, the level of mathematical skills among secondary school students across Europe is declining, as

evidenced by the latest PISA and TIMSS reports. Part of the problem seems to be a lack of qualified mathematics teachers in our primary and secondary schools. The problem is not that we do not educate excellent mathematicians at university level, but rather that being a teacher may no longer be as attractive a proposition—or at least not as appealing in terms of the salary offered and the work conditions—as many of the other jobs available to mathematicians. Indeed, mathematicians are in high demand, and on the whole this is of course a good thing for our field, but sadly the tendency has not had a positive influence on the quality of mathematics teachers employed in our schools. The EMS Education Committee has decided to take steps to address this problem. The first initiative is a lecture series by leading experts in mathematics education, to be streamed and hosted by the EMS. I am taking this opportunity to ask for your help with supporting the EMS Education Committee in these efforts and in identifying both good speakers for the lectures and the right audience and how to reach them. We are looking for policymakers, educators, professionals, and academics. If you have suggestions of any kind, please contact the Chair of the EMS Education Committee Ann Doods ([Ann.Doods@vub.be](mailto:Ann.Doods@vub.be)). It is a wonderful initiative and I want to thank Ann and the whole Education Committee for taking the lead on this.

Let me now finish by wishing you all a great start to the academic year and great success with your teaching and research.

Jan Philip Solovej  
President of the EMS