

Report from the EMS Executive Committee Meeting in Barcelona, 9–11 November 2018

Richard Elwes, EMS Publicity Officer

Barcelona is a beautiful city at any time of year, and last November, unlike most of Europe, it was a luxuriantly warm place for the EMS's Executive Committee (EC) to gather. The meeting was generously hosted by the Catalan Mathematical Society (CMS) at the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, in the magnificent 17th century surroundings of the Casa de Convalescència de Sant Pau.

On Friday evening, the meeting was addressed by Xavier Jarque i Ribera, then President of the CMS, who told us about his society. The CMS comes under the umbrella of the Institute of Catalan Studies (founded in 1911), within its Science and Technology Section. It comprises around 800 members, both University and High School teachers (as well as a few professional members outside academia). It is an active society, awarding prizes for research, running several mathematical publications, and organising conferences, including the triennial Barcelona Mathematical Days. Yet its biggest activities are focussed on education, notably the annual *Proves Cangur*, a day of mathematical exercises in which over 100,000 school students participate. The CMS has long been an important member of the EMS family, including organising the 3rd European Congress in 2000, and providing the EMS President for the period 2011–2014, Marta Sanz-Solé.

Officers' Reports and Membership

The meeting was opened by the chair, Pavel Exner, for the final time as EMS President. After some initial formalities, he provided an update on his activities since the Council meeting in June 2018. EMS Treasurer Mats Gyllenberg followed with an update on the society's budget. The finances continue in a healthy state, and pleasingly the expenditure on scientific activities has risen accordingly. The Treasurer noted that donations to the Committee for Developing Countries (whose budget is handled largely separately) have recently increased too, following a specific call. However, there will be more to do to continue to raise funds for this important stream of activities. The Secretary and Vice-Presidents had nothing specific to report (with the Secretary Sjoerd Verduyn Lunel unable to attend, the Publicity Officer Richard Elwes took notes throughout the meeting, from which the official minutes were later constructed).

The EC was pleased to formally approve an application for institutional membership from the Department of Mathematics at the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology), along with 51 new individual members. Following the recent introduction of EMS individual life-mem-

bership, several applications have been received, and the EC discussed the implementation of this system.

Scientific Meetings

The EC considered the ongoing preparations for the 8th European Congress of Mathematics (ECM8, 5–11 July 2020, Portorož, Slovenia) including the calls for nominations for the EMS, Felix Klein, and Otto Neugebauer Prizes. Looking ahead, the call for organizing ECM9 in 2024 will appear in the December 2019 issue of this Newsletter.

The EC then discussed applications for financial support for other scientific activities. Regrettably, there will be no EMS distinguished speaker for 2019. However, the EC agreed to provide support the Diderot Mathematical forum on "Mathematics and Architecture" to be held on 8th June 2019 simultaneously in Helsinki, Porto, and Prague (Czech Republic), along with 14 mathematical Summer Schools over the course of 2019. (A further Summer School will be formally endorsed by the EMS, without financial assistance.)

Committees and Projects

The EC examined the make-up of the EMS's ten vitally important standing committees, several of which were due major personnel renewals. The EC was pleased to appoint new members to several committees, as well as naming Sophie Dabo as Chair of the Committee for Developing Countries with Francesco Pappalardi as Vice-Chair, David Abrahams as Chair of the ERCOM (Scientific Directors of European Research Centres in the Mathematical Sciences) committee, and to reappoint Roberto Natalini as Chair of the Committee for Raising Public Awareness of Mathematics.

The EC then considered reports from the committees, beginning with first report from Stéphane Cordier, new Chair of the Applied Mathematics Committee, in attendance as a guest. Likewise, Jürg Kramer Chair of the Education Committee, also present as a guest, reported on his committee's activities, including a draft survey on the problematic secondary-tertiary transition in mathematics education (this is now available at www.bit.ly/2DjyvVE – you are kindly requested to spend around 15 minutes completing the survey). The EC continued with discussion of the reports from the Committees on Developing Countries, Ethics, European Solidarity, Raising Public Awareness of Mathematics, and Women in Mathematics.

The EC discussed a number of ongoing projects in which the EMS is involved, including the European Digital



The Executive Committee and guests.

Mathematics Library (<https://eudml.org>), the online Encyclopaedia of Mathematics (www.encyclopediaofmath.org), EU-MATHS-IN (the European Service Network Of Mathematics For Industry And Innovation), and plans for a future Global Digital Mathematics Library.

Publicity and Publications

EMS Publicity Officer Richard Elwes presented his report, commenting that the day marked exactly five years since the EMS joined Twitter (@EMSNewsletter). The society currently has over 4000 followers there, and over 2000 on Facebook (@EMSNewsletter).

The Editor-in-Chief of the EMS Newsletter, Valentin Zagrebnov, presented his report. The EMS President Pavel Exner then updated the committee with details of the proposed official move of the EMS Publishing House from Zurich to Berlin. The EC endorsed this plan, including the formal establishment of a new foundation under German law. On behalf of the society, the members of the EC expressed their profound gratitude to the Publishing House's founding Managing Director Thomas Hintermann, who is due to retire in 2019.

The EC discussed other matters relating to publications, including the EMS's quarterly e-news, and Zentralblatt (<https://zbmath.org>).

Relation with Funding Organisations and Political Bodies

The President reported on recent developments regarding the EU funding framework Horizon 2020 and its successor programme Horizon Europe. The committee agreed on the importance of grants being evaluated by suitably qualified individuals, and recalled that EU-MATHS-IN encourages mathematicians to register as possible evaluators.

The committee discussed developments regarding the European Research Council, as well as the European Science Open Forum (ESOF) whose next meeting will be in 2020 in Trieste. It is hoped that the EMS committee for Raising Public Awareness will provide some mathematical content.

The President led a conversation about "Plan S", an initiative for Open Access, with a focus on its possible consequences for mathematics.

Relations with other Mathematical Bodies

The President provided an updated on the International Mathematical Union (of which the EMS is an adhering organisation) including details of the new leadership under President Carlos Kenig, starting in 2019, and the next ICM (to be held in 2022 in Saint Petersburg).

The committee discussed the EMS's joint work with other mathematical organisations, including ICIAM (The International Council for Industrial and Applied Mathematics), CIMPA (the International Centre of Pure and Applied Mathematics), the Abel Prize, the Gordin Prize, and the Bernoulli Society.

Close

The committee expressed its thanks to Xavier Jarque i Ribera and the Catalan Mathematical Society, for the warm hospitality and the event's flawless organisation.

The end of this meeting marked an important moment in the life of the EMS, being the final society meeting with Pavel Exner as Chair, his presidency ending in just a few weeks' time. On behalf of the whole European mathematical community, incoming EMS President Volker Mehrmann presented him with a card and a gift, communicating our sincere appreciation for all his hard work, and wise leadership, over the last 4 years. Pavel was touched by this gesture, and brought the meeting to a close with an expression of confidence that the future of the EMS is in safe hands.



Three EMS Presidents: Volker Mehrmann (2019–2023), Pavel Exner (2015–2018), Marta Sanz-Solé (2011–2014).