

Report from the EMS Executive Committee Meeting in Stockholm, 18–20 March 2016

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This Spring, the Executive Committee gathered in Stockholm for a meeting at the historic Institut Mittag-Leffler of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. To mutual regret, the institute's director (and former EMS President) Ari Laptev was unable to greet the assembled company in person. Instead, on Friday evening, the committee enjoyed a short film telling the fascinating story of the institute, which is the oldest mathematics research facility in the world.

Officers' Reports

The President Pavel Exner welcomed the Executive Committee to the meeting before relating his recent activities. He reminded the committee of the news that the Simons Foundation has decided to support mathematics in Africa through the EMS with 50,000 euros per year for five years. This development was enthusiastically welcomed.

The treasurer then presented his summary of the budget, income and expenditure of the society for 2015, reporting a surplus. The committee then discussed future financial strategy. As points of principle, it was agreed that the society should take a low risk approach to its

investments and that financial gains should be reflected in increases in the budget for scientific activities. At the EMS council meeting in July, the treasurer will propose a detailed plan to enact the agreed strategy.

Membership

The committee expressed regret that the Belgian Statistical Society had cancelled its Class 1 Membership of the society. Meanwhile, the status of the Armenian Mathematical Union's application for Class 1 Membership is unclear. The invitation to present this application for approval at the forthcoming council meeting remains open.

At the start of 2016, the President wrote to a number of member societies who have not paid their dues for several years. The committee expressed sympathy for the financial difficulties in which learned societies may find themselves. However, member societies struggling to pay their dues are expected to contact the EMS to negotiate a way forward. The committee agreed that membership will be terminated for any society who neither pay their dues nor respond to letters from the President.

There was also concern about individual members who fail to pay their dues promptly, especially when these people are active in EMS bodies. The committee agreed to bring a proposal to the council to add to Rule 23 of the by-laws on sub-committee membership the sentence: "Each member should be an individual member of the EMS in good standing."

To make membership more appealing to younger mathematicians, the committee also agreed to propose to the council a modification of Rule 30 as follows: "Anyone who is a student at the time of becoming an individual EMS member, whether PhD or in a more junior category, shall enjoy a three-year introductory period with membership fees waived. All the standard benefits will be granted during this time, except printed copies of the Newsletter."

The committee was pleased to approve a list of 90 new individual members. It then discussed a proposal for a new lifetime membership, the major question being how to compute a fair fee. The treasurer Mats Gyllenberg proposed a formula (due to Euler!) that purportedly solves this problem. The Executive Committee agreed that Mats Gyllenberg will present his proposal at the forthcoming council meeting.

Scientific Meetings

The Executive Committee discussed the report from Volker Mehrmann on the preparations for the 7th European Congress of Mathematics in Berlin in July. The committee expressed its sincere appreciation to the local organisers and its confidence in the success of the congress.

Over the weekend, the committee heard presentations from both bids to host the 8th European Congress of Mathematics in 2020, in either Sevilla in Spain or Portorož in Slovenia. It was clear that both bids have merit and should proceed to the EMS Council in July, where a final decision will be taken by a simple majority vote. (The Executive Committee will neither issue a recommendation to the council nor provide evaluation criteria for the delegates.)

The President reported that memoranda of understanding have been signed for the seven Summer Schools that will be supported by the EMS in 2016.

Society Meetings

Preparations for the council meeting in Berlin in July are well underway. The committee agreed the draft agenda and heard that the nominations of delegates to represent associate, institutional and individual members at the council are now closed, with no need for elections. Associate members are represented by one delegate (the maximum permitted), institutional members are represented by three delegates (the maximum allowed is four) and individual members are represented by 25 delegates (the maximum allowed is 26). One task for the council will be the replenishment of the Executive Committee, with at least three new officers required. It was decided to organise the election in two rounds using an electronic voting system.

The next society meeting will be the meeting of the Presidents of Members Societies in Budapest in April (see separate report).

Standing Committees

The Executive Committee agreed to improve the database of past members/chairs of EMS committees (a task, it was noted, which may require some time and work to complete). It then considered reports from the Chairs of the Committees on Applied Mathematics, Developing Countries, Electronic Publishing, Ethics, European Solidarity and Raising Public Awareness of Mathematics.

Following the report from the ERCOM (European Research Centres On Mathematics) Committee, the Executive Committee was pleased to approve BCAM (the Basque Centre for Applied Mathematics in Bilbao) as a new ERCOM centre.

Projects

The European Digital Mathematics Library (EuDML) initiative is progressing at pace, with Volker Mehrmann to be the EMS representative on the EuDML Board.

Volker Mehrmann then reported on the activities and the new board make-up of EU-MATHS-IN (the European Service Network of Mathematics for Industry and Innovation), which is coordinating proposals for three infrastructure calls.

Publicity, Publishing and the Web

The committee discussed the report of the publicity officer and plans for a future letter-writing campaign to increase membership. As stocks of flyers and posters are now beginning to run low, it was also agreed that a new set of publicity materials will be designed and printed later in the year or early next year. The committee heard from the web team, including a discussion of ways to increase the EMS online presence. One possibility is the incorporation of a blog on the EMS website, perhaps with cooperation from member societies.

The committee continued its contemplation of the future direction of the EMS Publishing House and was pleased to hear that JEMS (the Journal of the EMS) is currently functioning well.

In a report on the EMS Newsletter, the committee heard that transition is underway between the outgoing Editor-in-Chief Lucia Di Vizio and her replacement Valentin Zagrebnov. The committee again thanked Lucia Di Vizio for her invaluable work.

A report from Olaf Teschke on Zentralblatt was received. The President recalled that Klaus Hulek will replace Gert-Martin Greuel as Editor-in-Chief of Zentralblatt from April 2016. The President thanked Gert-Martin Greuel for his hard work and offered the opinion that Zentralblatt has improved significantly under his tenure.

Relations with Political and Funding Bodies

The President reported on the latest developments regarding Horizon 2020, notably its running calls, its open

consultation on mathematics and the installation of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors of the EC Scientific Advice Mechanism, with Cédric Villani as a representative for mathematics.

The President reported on the latest developments regarding the new legal status of ISE (the Initiative for Science in Europe) and reminded the committee that the membership fee for the EMS is set to double to 3,000 euros. After two years, the Executive Committee will re-evaluate the benefits of ISE membership. The committee heard that, in July, Roberto Natalini (Chair of the Committee on Raising Public Awareness) will organise a session at ESOF (EuroScience Open Forum) in Manchester, UK, about Alan Turing, in which the EMS Publicity Officer Richard Elwes will also participate. Meanwhile, the President is also involved in an ESOF session about the ERC.

The committee regretted that attempts to secure funding for EMS Summer Schools from the COST programme were not successful. It was suggested that prospects for funding EMS activities through this programme may generally be poor.

The committee was delighted to hear that there will be a mathematics session at the World Economic Forum in Davos and considered what input the EMS might make.

Relations with Mathematical Organisations

The committee discussed news from the IMU, the ICIAM and other mathematical bodies. It then congratulated Andrew Wiles for his Abel Prize. Following a long tradition, EMS Vice-President Martin Raussen will interview the Abel Prize winner in May but confirmed that this will be his last year doing so.

The 2017 EMS-Bernoulli Society Joint Lecture will be delivered by Alexander Holevo at the 31st European Meeting of Statisticians in Helsinki, 24-28 July 2017.

Alice Fialowski presented a report on the activities of the TICMI (Tbilisi International Centre of Mathematics and Informatics). The Executive Committee will gather in November in Tbilisi and it was agreed that EMS President Pavel Exner will meet the Director of TICMI.

Gert-Martin Greuel took the opportunity to advertise the Snapshot series from Oberwolfach on modern developments in mathematics, which is aimed at the general public (<http://www.mfo.de/math-in-public/snapshots>).

The committee was delighted to hear that agreements for collaboration and reciprocity membership have been signed between EMS and the Mathematical Society of Japan (MSJ). The committee then considered the possibility of holding a joint meeting.

Other Business

The Executive Committee was alarmed at developments in Turkey, which have seen a colleague imprisoned for signing the Academics for Peace petition. It was decided to write letters of concern to the Turkish prime minister and to the President of the European Parliament, and to follow developments closely. Copies of these letters were sent to our sister organisations at the European level and to the Presidents of our Member Societies.

Conclusion

The committee expressed its gratitude to the Institut Mittag-Leffler and, in absentia, to its director Ari Laptev, for the magnificent hospitality it enjoyed over the weekend.