

Report on the Meeting of Presidents of Mathematical Societies, in Prague

Stephen Huggett

31 March and 1 April 2012

Please refer to the separate list for attendance.

Presentations marked like this* are available on the web site.

Section A: Preliminaries

- A1** Marta Sanz-Solé, President of the European Mathematical Society, welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked the organisers very much for the invitation to Prague during the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the Union of Czech Mathematicians and Physicists.
- A2** Bohdan Maslowski welcomed everybody and briefly described the programme for the weekend. He also explained the special stamp and first day cover which were gifts to the participants.
- A3** This was agreed.

Section B: Introductions

- B1** Everybody present introduced themselves, saying which Society they represented.
- B2** Bohdan Maslowski gave a presentation* of the history and recent activity of the Union of Czech Mathematicians and Physicists.

Section C: The European Mathematical Society

- C1** Marta Sanz-Solé gave her report* as President of the EMS, ending by inviting suggestions for new members of the Editorial Board of the *Newsletter*.
- C2** Stephen Huggett, Secretary of the EMS, presented the timetable of preparations for the meeting of the EMS Council in Kraków on the 30th of June and 1st of July:

31st March Suggestions for the agenda

15th April Societies to inform EMS of the names of their delegates

30th April Official notification of Council sent to delegates

31st May Papers for Council available

He then gave a very brief description of some of the items on the Council agenda, which include elections to the Executive Committee, choice of the site for the 7th European Congress of Mathematics, discussion of Horizon 2020, discussion of the draft code of practice prepared by the new Ethics Committee, and a one-hour poster session for EMS Committees to present their activities. In response to a question, he said that written reports from the Committees would be in the papers.

Marta Sanz-Solé asked Societies to try to avoid nominating delegates who were already delegates of the individual members.

Jouko Väänänen, the EMS Treasurer, presented a list of Societies who had not paid their fees, and pointed out that Council has to decide whether to expel these Societies. He said that in some cases there had simply been some error, and he hoped to resolve all of these cases before the meeting of Council. In other cases, if a Society were in financial difficulties, then Council could decide to waive the fee. Most difficult were the cases in which there was no response to emails: we have to ask whether the Society still really exists.

There was also a brief discussion on the possibility of a Society moving up to the new Class 4 of membership.

- C3** Stefan Jackowski, the President of the Polish Mathematical Society, presented some interesting statistics on attendance at the 6th European Congress of Mathematics in Kraków in July 2012 by nation, by Society, and by gender. Overall, the attendance is looking fairly healthy. He also described the structure of the programme.
- C4** Marta Sanz-Solé had given a brief description of the work of the Meetings Committee, inviting suggestions for EMS Weekends, EMS Lecturers, and EMS Distinguished Speakers, under item **C1**.
- C5** Marta Sanz-Solé introduced a discussion on publishing, including the implications of the boycott of Elsevier. In the longer term this might lead to a growth in the publishing activities of the EMS, and in the short term the Executive Committee had agreed to explore possible collaborations with other learned society publishers in mathematics.

Participants commented on the *Newsletter*, suggesting that it may be good to change the cover somehow, and noting with regret the shrinking of the problem column.

Marta Sanz-Solé called for suggestions for candidates for the forthcoming Publications Committee of the EMS.

Stephen Huggett invited suggestions for people to form a small team to run a blog on the EMS web site.

Finally, Jiří Rákosník gave a presentation* on the EuDML, noting the address <http://eudml.org> and emphasising that he would appreciate feedback from the community. The project ends in January 2013, but there are already plans for its continuation in some form.

C6 Marta Sanz-Solé gave a report on the preparations for Horizon 2020:

June 2011 Conference on the Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation Funding

November 2011 Press release of Horizon 2020 and draft budget: 88 billion euros

- 6% annual increase for ERC
- share of MC programmes decreases from 9% to 7%
- the European Institute of Technology doubles its budget

November 2011 Consultation on the ERA Framework

- the EMS contributed through ISE

Ongoing Parliament and Council negotiations on EU budget 2014–20 (including overall budget for Horizon 2020)

Mid 2012 Final calls under 7th Framework Programme for Research to bridge gap until Horizon 2020

End 2013 Adoption of legislative acts by Parliament and Council on Horizon 2020

1st January 2014 Horizon 2020 starts: launch of first calls

Pavel Exner gave a report on the European Research Council, of which he is Vice-President. The ERC is now five years old, and has awarded over 100 million euros in more than 140 grants for mathematics. There are two new programmes. The “proof of concept” programme has been allocated 1% of the budget, and is for help in starting up companies. The “synergy grants” programme has been allocated 10% of the budget, and has received 700 applications for about 15 grants. The starting and advanced grants programmes continue as before, but the former is growing so rapidly that it will be split into two, by age, called “starting” and “consolidating”. Under Horizon 2020 the planned growth for the ERC is much slower than originally planned (and achieved) under FP7. Also, if applications keep increasing then the success rate will fall below 10%. The ERC is under pressure, and needs defending.

Mats Gyllenberg reported on the European Science Foundation, which has a new President and Chief Executive, but is running out of money following the establishment of Science Europe. The research network funding has disappeared, but there is funding for a few exploratory workshops. This year, the Latsis Prize (of 100,000 Swiss Francs) will be awarded in mathematics.

Section D: New projects

- D1** The EMS will be asking Societies for details of their activities in attracting talented students to mathematics, in order that a database can be assembled.
- D2** Martin Andler gave a presentation* of Animath, which was followed by questions and discussion on why one should increase the number of mathematics students, the sometimes blurred distinction between raising public awareness and education activities, and the difficulty of being a mathematician competing in EUCYS. It was agreed that Animath might work well elsewhere, and that the EMS could help to share information among the different countries in Europe. There was a feeling that we already have too many competitions, but it was also pointed out that an online and multilingual competition can be used to raise overall standards, not just to pick winners.
- D3** Marta Sanz-Solé gave a brief report on the Mathematics of the Planet Earth 2013, in which the EMS is a partner, along with many other Societies and Research Institutes. The Raising Public Awareness Committee will be running a “Diderot Mathematical Forum”, and putting out a call for articles in newspapers. There will also be a book covering MPE2013 activities in Europe.
- D4** Other projects
- Volker Mehrmann presented the VEIMI proposal, which is a bid for large-scale European funding for (a) the infrastructure for a European job market in mathematics, (b) retraining in industry, and (c) a pilot of a software library. In spite of the excellent report “Forward Look on Mathematics and Industry” produced for the ESF in 2009, which prepared the ground, early indications are that this bid may not be successful. The difficulty is that European structures do not suit the needs of mathematics. Marta Sanz-Solé argued that we should review our strategy, and consider trying to set up some of this infrastructure anyway, so that it can be used as an example of successful activity in future bids.
 - Tomaz Pisanski presented* the plans for the CSASC conference in Koper in 2013.

Section E: Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Section F: Next Meeting

On behalf of the Danish Mathematical Society, Vagn Lundsgaard Hansen invited us to hold our meeting in Copenhagen in 2013. All present expressed their gratitude in a round of applause.

Section G: Closing

On behalf of all the participants, Marta Sanz-Solé thanked the local organisers of this meeting for their superb preparation and hospitality and their warm welcome. She also thanked the Czech Academy of Sciences for the use of Villa Lanna.