

EMS CDC meeting, Oxford, 5-6 April 2019

Outline minutes

A. Meeting for Members and Associate Members

Participants: Sophie Dabo (chair), Francesco Pappalardi (vice-chair), Leif Abrahamsson (by skype, Friday morning only), Giulia Di Nunno, Nick Gill, Klaus Hulek, Bernd Schroers (Friday only), Balazs Szendroi, Tsou Sheung Tsun (Friday only), Paul Vaderlind, Begoña Vitoriano Villanueva (Friday only), Fernando Rodriguez Villegas, Michel Waldschmidt, Mats Gyllenberg (EC liaison)

1. Choice of secretary for writing minutes. BSz was selected as secretary for the meeting.
2. The Minutes of the 2018 meeting were accepted.
3. Presentations. Three presentations were given.
 - a. A summary of the meeting “Supporting mathematics research in Africa, Oxford October 2018”, by Balazs Szendroi. This was followed by a lively discussion of e-learning, blended learning and e-assessments in an African context, where class numbers are high and still growing. It was suggested that the Committee might play a role in promoting best practice; it was also recognized however that it is not clear that we have relevant expertise.
 - b. AIMS centres, by Mouhamed Moustapha Fall and Youssef Travaly of AIMS Senegal (by skype, in fact given after item 3). Exciting developments in the AIMS-NEI network were noted, including Africa Science Week, AIMS Industry Initiative, the AIMS Masters in AI, and the work of the Research Chairs.
 - c. ERASMUS+: opportunities in developing countries, by Thomas Heckly, University of Lille (by skype). Opportunities were presented under the headings Mobility, Cooperation and Policy Reform.
4. News from EMS EC, by MG. The EMS is reported to be in a strong financial position, with EUR 240k surplus last year, leading to total assets in excess of EUR 1M, a large proportion of which is invested with good returns. There is scope for applying for further support for development-related activities, with full proposals to be sent to EC by the end of September 2019 the latest for their October meeting; this was discussed further in Item 13 below.
5. Simons in Africa, by SD. It was reported that applications were up for the second year, with 44 evaluated in 2018 and 18 applications granted support (out of which 14, respectively 5 were female applicants). Out of the USD 65k budget for 2018, only USD 32.5k was used; one reason is that several grantees never took up their grants, or postponed them very substantially. It was agreed to clear up hanging grants.

It was also noted that the geographical distribution of both applications and grants was very uneven; it was agreed to increase efforts to disseminate information about the scheme, especially in East Africa.

It was agreed that a template should be developed to help applicants to put together

sensible applications, with simple headings Travel/Accommodation/Per Diem/Visa and other costs, with indicative maximum figures given.

It was also agreed that the requirement that the host institution give financial support should be weakened to support possibly given in kind (office space, accommodation, etc). The Committee was reminded that all spending has to happen by 2021 and that there should be “overbooking” to make sure that the grant is spent down.

BSch and BSz were added to the subcommittee evaluating Simons applications.

One further idea that emerged was that one satellite meeting of the 2020 EMS Congress will be the ICRA 2020 workshop on Representations of Algebras, with FR-V as one of the organizers; delegates could apply for a Simons grant to come to this meeting and also stay on in Trieste.

6. EMS-CDC Patronage Programme, by FP. There were 2 application; both were accepted for patronage.
7. Financial report, by PV and MG. It was reported that the Committee saw a balanced year for its budget in 2018 (excluding the Simons grant, kept under a separate heading, on which there was an underspend as reported above), with income and expenditure both around EUR 5k. Twice as many mathematicians (900) donated to the Committee compared to previous year. Donations are encouraged via the website, in correspondence, and also via Zentralblatt (via Springer), which is now a major contributor to funds. The balance of the Committee’s budget stands around EUR22k.
8. Applications for direct financial support from the Committee. Three applications were discussed.

[The meeting meeting broke up for the day at this point.]

9. Zentralblatt, by KH. Updates were heard regarding ZB’s operations. Event-based free access can be granted to ZB content on an occasional basis. The Committee was also reminded of the list of developing countries from where institutions can apply for full free access.

Funds from ZB reviewers donating to the Committee are sent regularly to EMS for the Committee’s use; this is an important contribution to Committee funds as noted above, which was thanked.

10. ICTP book donation programme, by FR-V. It was reported that ICTP was going through a period of transition, with both change in leadership and a re-evaluation of the importance of a physical library. It was reported that ICTP is continuing to make individual papers available to researchers from developing countries through the eJDS service. For now, the book donation programme is continuing, with EUR 18k worth of books shipped to overseas destinations, but the importance of this programme for institutions in developing countries appears to be diminishing; efforts might be better directed elsewhere.
11. Website, by NG. It was noted that the EMS CDC website as currently configured can be updated quickly with new information, but its appearance is very traditional, and does not

always present information from possible users' (or supporters') point of view. MG reported that the whole EMS website will be redesigned professionally during 2019 and this presents an opportunity for the Committee website to be redesigned also. It was agreed that this is a good way to move forward, and that in the process the Committee should carefully think about what information it wishes to present.

12. New full Members of the Committee. Partly prompted by the earlier discussion concerning the website, as well his long-standing work as Associate Member, Nick Gill, UK was proposed as a full Member of the Committee. A second possible other Member was also proposed.

There was some discussion of the question whether the committee is sufficiently representative, in particular to be an efficient coordination and information exchange forum. It was agreed that some further Associate Members should be added from developing countries also.

It was confirmed by MG that there are no specific guidelines from EC or the Secretariat on the exact size of an EMS Committee; no other committee works with Associate members.

13. ERCE matters, GDN. The next ERCE call is planned in 2020. There have been discussions with two further institutions, which will be pursued.

The question of renewals was also discussed, and more generally how to keep in touch with existing ERCEs better. It was agreed to allocate each partner institution to one or two members of the Committee as designated contact point, to solicit reports and follow developments. It was agreed that a minimal expectation remains yearly contact, and a report after 2 years and at the end of the 4-year period. It was also agreed that information about the Centres should be stored in an accessible format electronically (perhaps in a DropBox).

It was noted that it had always been an expectation that ERCE are interdisciplinary, and that they provide teaching regionally to students from neighboring countries. It was also noted that this could be facilitated by scholarships for visits to ERCEs by graduate (Masters and PhD) students from their region. This was identified as a suitable project to take forward to EMS EC for further funding, to be discussed at their October meeting.

14. EMS CDC pamphlet. There has not been any movement on a pamphlet since the last meeting. Interviews with MW as well as XX from Senegal in the current Newsletter of the EMS were noted; it was agreed to post these on the Committee website.
15. Next meeting. The date for the next meeting was agreed for 4-5 April 2020, with proposed location Trieste.

B. Meeting for Members only

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1. The Minutes of the 2018 Meeting were accepted.
2. Nick Gill was confirmed as a full Member of the Committee. It was agreed to invite one further Mathematician to be a Member.
3. All financial decisions recommended earlier have been confirmed, in particular on the Patronage Programme, webpage re-design and ERCES, including an application to EMS EC for funding for visits to ERCES. It was agreed to remove mention of the book donations project from the Committee website.
4. Direct financial support from the Committee's budget was agreed.

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