

# The French Learned Societies and the EMS

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*The presidents of the French learned societies in mathematics Grégoire Allaire (SMAI), Anne Gégout-Petit (SFdS) and Marc Peigné (SMF) share their experiences of the academic year 2013-2014 with the EMS.*

During the 2013–2014 academic year, the three French mathematical learned societies, the SMF (French Mathematical Society), the SMAI (French Society for Applied and Industrial Mathematics) and the SFdS (French Society of Statistics) had the opportunity to meet the EMS three times.

The first was in November 2013 when the EMS Executive Committee held a meeting at the Institut Henri Poincaré in Paris. The two days featured a meeting with the three French societies, which gave them a good opportunity to introduce themselves and describe their missions as well as the specific context for mathematics in France. The discussion that followed focused mainly on the future of publications, the economic models that are currently emerging and the ways to promote the network of academic mathematics libraries at a national level. It was underlined that one of the specificities of French research is the role played by the CNRS (National Centre for Research and Science) in managing the mathematics library network and in helping academic publications – not only those published by the learned societies but also those coming directly from universities or other institutes (Ecole Polytechnique, IHES, IHP, etc.). The French societies, reflecting the position of the French mathematical community, are very much convinced that academic publications must keep their share of the market and are a key alternative to the numerous commercial publishers. Therefore, they continue to support the development of well-established academic journals, while at the same time encouraging the creation of new, quality, open access electronic journals (a project is planned for the next academic year to that end). The medium-term goal is to reinforce this policy, which mirrors the one proposed by the EMS at a European level, the main difficulty being to secure long-term financing for this model of publication within the framework of European laws, especially regarding open access issues. It is obvious that the EMS and the French mathematical societies are all at a crucial development stage in their publishing activities and are facing quite similar challenges, a hot topic that was continued more informally during the convivial evening that followed.

A second opportunity to meet arose in April 2014 during the EMS Presidents Meeting in Istanbul. This was a great opportunity for presidents of national mathematics societies to interact and discuss issues of common inter-

est. The three French societies were represented by G. Allaire, the President of the SMAI. Among the important topics discussed in Istanbul, such as scientific activities (conferences, summer schools, etc.), mathematical education and public awareness, participants were particularly concerned with two crucial issues for the future. One is the creation of EU-MATHS-IN, the European network which connects national networks of mathematicians collaborating with industry and society. In the context of the EU Research and Innovation programme HORIZON 2020, which never mentions mathematics (!), it is essential that we convince governments, funding agencies and, more broadly, the general public that mathematics is a key to research, innovation and technological developments for Europe's global competitiveness. The second remarkable issue is the impact of two Deloitte reports which recently appeared in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands. These reports, which deliver very precise figures on the economic impact of mathematics at a national level, are instrumental in convincing parliament members and high ranking executive officers in administration and government that mathematics deserves to be highly supported. The French mathematical societies are considering recruiting a consulting company similar to Deloitte to report on the influence of mathematics in the French economy.

The last meeting took place during the EMS Council meeting in Donostia/San Sebastian at the end of June 2014. The main purpose of the meeting was to elect new officers, hear reports from the various committees and discuss broad issues concerning the EMS. But equally important were all the informal discussions between representatives from all over Europe. The three French learned societies really appreciated the open-minded discussions with the EMS and found it very helpful to have access to a wider overview of the mathematical context within Europe.



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