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Shaping the 21st Century. This was the motto attached to the bid to organise the Third European Congress of Mathematics (3ecm). It was meant to underline the power of mathematical thinking in helping to anticipate and conform the future of society. This power has been ever increasing in the past and conceivably it will continue to grow in the “knowledge society” into which the world seems to be entering.

As was realised later on, this idea was similar to that of “Mathematics, a Key for Development” expressed in one of the points of the International Mathematical Union declaration of the year 2000 as World Mathematical Year (WMY).

Hopefully, the 3ecm will also contribute to the other two points of the WMY declaration: to chart the great mathematical challenges of the 21st century, and to improve the image of mathematics in society at large.

The publication of this programme book represents a particularly pleasing milestone in the organising process. Ever since the European Mathematical Society Council meeting in Budapest entrusted the Societat Catalana de Matemàtiques (SCM) of the Institut d’Estudis Catalans (IEC) to organise the 3ecm, an involved and laborious collective process was undertaken, and now it is a delight to see that this publication heralds its final stage. After all, our main task was to provide an environment in which the scientific programme, and other important concomitant activities, could be defined and scheduled in detail, and in which they could be developed as planned.

It is therefore appropriate to thank here all the people and institutions without whose involvement this event would not have been possible. First, a special mention is due to the key role played by the president of the IEC, Manuel Castellet. He had the vision to start the whole initiative more than eight years ago and he has unfailingly supported the mission of the SCM, not only with encouragement and advice, but also in making it possible to use, from the very beginning, the IEC infrastructure for 3ecm activities.

To organise the 3ecm, the SCM appointed an Executive Committee (EC). Chaired by the president of the SCM, it has five other members: Carles Casacuberta, in charge of the information and publications area; Julià Cufí, in finances; Rosa M. Miró-Roig, programming and activities; Marta Sanz-Solé, organisational secretary; and in the infrastructure area, Ferran Puerta in the first year and Marta València since then. The organisation would not have been possible without their dedication to the cause: more than forty half-day intense meetings and much silent individual hard work. On behalf of the SCM, our much felt gratitude to them.

Our thanks must be extended to all the people who, proposed by the EC for diverse organisation tasks, were subsequently appointed by the SCM. An Organising Committee (OC) of 16 members was appointed soon after the EC and their contributions have been numerous and indispensable in all areas. Later on, working groups were formed according to the current needs of the organisation and their accomplishments have also been excellent in number and kind. We are thankful to them all.

None of these endeavours would have been possible without the context of a strong and reliable local mathematical community, with a remarkably positive attitude and constant support. This includes numerous volunteer students whose help will be visible during the Congress. It

also includes the members of the SCM, whose number has more than doubled in the last four years.

As for the institutions, our thanks to the IEC, for its decisive sponsoring of the Congress, and for housing the 3ecm. Thanks also to all the IEC staff who have been helping in one way or another.

We are much indebted to the public universities in the Barcelona area for their explicit financial support. Moreover, the Universitat de Barcelona, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (the three universities that offer degrees in mathematics) have contributed substantial human resources, as they have permitted the members of the committees and groups to work for the 3ecm.

After the honour of entrusting the SCM with the organisation of 3ecm, it is a pleasant duty to acknowledge the continuous support and encouragement of the European Mathematical Society (EMS), usually expressed by its two successive presidents during this period, namely Jean-Pierre Bourguignon and Rolf Jeltsch. We are also grateful for its sponsoring of 3ecm. Many thanks also to the Scientific Committee, the Round Table Committee and the Prize Committee for the enthusiasm and effectivity with which they have undertaken their decisive tasks.

We much appreciate the sponsoring granted by the International Mathematical Union, and the fact of regarding the 3ecm, through the voice of its president Jacob Palis, as a top international mathematical event of WMY.

The London Mathematical Society, the Real Sociedad Matemática Española and the Sociedad Española de Matemática Aplicada are sponsoring mathematical societies of the 3ecm and they are also to be duly thanked for their support.

On the governmental side, both the Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan Government) and the Spanish Government have strongly backed the Congress, through sponsorings of the Ministerio de Educación y Cultura (S.E.U.I.D.) in the latter case and, in the former, of the Departament d'Universitats, Recerca i Societat de la Informació, the Fundació Catalana per a la Recerca, the Departament d'Ensenyament and the Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya.

The Ajuntament de Barcelona (City Council) is also a major sponsor of the Congress, in part through related institutions such as the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona. Finally, the Diputació de Barcelona sponsors one of the prizes.

Many private institutions are sponsors of the 3ecm. The Fundación Retevisión is providing, among other things, all the information and communications infrastructure; Compaq supplies the computing equipment and Springer-Verlag has made possible the publication of the Barcelona Intelligencer. Our deepest recognition for these generous contributions.

We are indebted, for sponsoring prizes and round tables, to the Borsa de Barcelona, Port de Barcelona, Fundació Caixa Catalunya, Fundació Banc Sabadell, Fundació Caixa de Sabadell, Fundació Caixa de Manresa, Logic Control, Comsol AB and Nokia, and to Codorníu, Nescafé, Panrico and Vichy Catalán for reinforcements of the catering system that all participants will surely notice and appreciate.

Welcome to the 3ecm, Barcelona-2000, with the wish that all participants have a fruitful and pleasant stay and that its winds have lasting inspirational effects on the sails of all.

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