

Letter of the EuSSS Founding Committee

Dear Colleagues;

The election of the five members of the new Steering Committee of EuSSS out of 15 candidates by 13 national representatives of the 14 member countries has been concluded. The results (Boguslaw Buszewski 12, Attila Felinger 11, Francesco Dondi 10, Hartmut Frank 10, Chris Bevan 6) is a clear indication that the electorate has voted for continuity, at the same time giving the eastern countries a stronger representation than previously.

With the election of the first statutory Steering Committee of EuSSS, it is now time to conclude the founding period of EuSSS and to set sails for reaching out towards further goals envisaged in the EuSSS Memorandum of Sep. 2002. When we, Guenther Bonn, Udo Brinkman, Francesco Dondi and myself, started in 2002 to discuss about the necessity of the Society we received a lot of encouragement from colleagues of all reaches of separation science, of universities, research institutions, industries, and public administrations. As the methodological developments and services of separation science are of fundamental importance to almost all areas of the exact sciences, to many industries, to safety and quality control agencies, its consolidation was considered by many as important for the well-being of European science and technology. These visions and the mission of EuSSS, as expressed in the EuSSS Memorandum, are still valid today.

The practical work towards the implementation of EuSSS gave us a lot of satisfaction. Very important indeed was the encouragement we received from most colleagues with which we discussed about the necessity or justification of a Europe-wide umbrella organization for separation science - although the discussions with some colleagues in various national and Europe-wide organisations about the positioning of EuSSS within the field of existing bodies was not always so simple and straightforward as originally thought. Time and money had to be found to finance the first meetings of the Steering Committee, to establish the web-site, to draft and translate the statutes, to register the society, to organise the first young-scientist workshops and the awards given at various symposia. In 2005, when Udo Brinkman signalled his intention to retire, Marie-Claire Hennion joined in and continued to help promoting these ideas. Without the enthusiasm of all the members of the first Steering Committee - and especially the generous financial contributions from Guenther Bonn - the foundation of EuSSS would not have been possible, or at least much more difficult; also the prompt assistance of the web master Armin Maerk should be mentioned here. Certainly, it also must be said that sometimes we have become tired and frustrated about some protracted processes and questioning of some of our activities. All of us were at the same time actively involved in research and/or teaching, and most of us were strongly committed. Due to these other duties we had not always - especially in 2007 - the extra energy, time and money for promoting EuSSS as actively as it could have been. Nevertheless, considerable progress has been made, and today EuSSS is a stable, well recognized organisation.

What has been achieved:

- EuSSS is recognised as an important European scientific umbrella organisation by 14 member countries, with others considering eventual application for membership;
- a statute has been created, translated into English, and accepted by the members;
- a web-site has been established which is maintained and financed by the Innsbruck Group;
- EuSSS has been and is registered in Germany (Bayreuth) as a tax-exempt non-profit organization of public benefit;
- EuSSS has been and is involved in the organisation of 12 conferences and symposia including ISC 2004 and 2006, by funding various young scientists awards and, at the ISC 2006, a "Science-for-Life"-Award sponsored by Thermo Electron Corporation;
- six international doctoral students workshops were held as an effort to promote the Europe-wide understanding and cooperation especially among the young scientists generation;
- successful negotiation with an international publisher led to the potential of publishing Society News in an international chromatographic journal (J. Sep. Sci.).

On the other hand, in the beginning we had set our expectations high, and perhaps we overestimated what could be achieved. So we did not succeed to reach all our goals such as to

- convince a number of national groups to become full members of EuSSS or to help establishing separation science groups in countries where they do not yet exist;
- attract all major industrial firms using or based upon chromatography to become members and sponsors;
- continue the first attempts to establish regular Europe-wide topical doctoral students symposia;
- establish regular workshops devoted to special methods and/or applications connected and organised within the realms of topical subsections of EuSSS;

- gain influence as a partner on the determination of scientific goals and directions, as well as the directives for financial priority-setting in the European research funding schemes;
- to become active as an agency for catalysing more efficient international cooperation and mutual recognition, in the facilitating the organization of Europe wide synergism and – in particular – to harmonise the symposia organisation between interested parties, maintaining some reasonable level of competition.

So there remains a lot to be done for the New Steering Committee; to achieve these goals continues to be challenging. In order to ensure continuity, two of us members of the founding committee (FD, HF) will remain on the SC for some time to ensure a smooth transition and to help the new Steering Committee to develop full strength and independence until another two new members join in two years. We wish the new and future Steering Committees good luck, inspiration and enthusiasm to muster the energy and persistence required to further promote our common stance. The mission of EuSSS is an important one, and we hand over a reasonably well functional institution. There are promising leads which should be further exploited, sleeping activities invigorated, and new possibilities explored. The potential is here. It will require active promotion, investment of time and energy, but the top of the activation energy hump is in sight, and if all, with the eventual help of the old members, push together, EuSSS may quite naturally become an internationally respected body for promoting the common good.

January 2009. Marie-Claire Hennion, Guenther Bonn, Udo Brinkman, Francesco Dondi, Hartmut Frank.