

A scenario for the arrangement of the European Meetings of Statisticians

*To be Approved by the European Regional Committee of the Bernoulli Society
in a special meeting online in November 2013*

The European Meetings of Statisticians are central events for statistics and probability in Europe and worldwide. The meetings should be the natural forum where all European statisticians and probabilists meet to exchange ideas and learn about the latest scientific developments. The programme should be sufficiently broad to appeal to researchers of all ages and from all regions of Europe.

In the course of the many years during which European Meetings of Statisticians (EMS) have been held, a number of traditions and experiences with the arrangement of the EMS have accumulated. The more important of the traditions and experiences are collected here in a fairly, organized form, thus providing a scenario for the arrangements. The present text is revised from the original scenario, written in 1985 and modifications made in 2002.

1. **Date.** The European Meetings of Statisticians are held biennially in odd-numbered years (in the Summer months; July meetings have been particularly successful), except in those years in which the ISI Sessions take place in Europe. If this happens, a meeting can instead be held in an even-numbered year, provided a Bernoulli Society World Congress does not take place the same year. The final decision regarding the site of an EMS should be reached at least two years in advance of the meeting. Negotiations on the sites of future meetings normally concern a period of about 3–6 years ahead. It is preferable to select meeting sites that are accessible by train or other relatively cheap means of transportation.
2. **The form of the European Meetings of Statisticians.** A European Meeting of Statisticians runs from Monday morning till the afternoon of the following Friday, with Wednesday afternoon kept free of a scientific programme and devoted to excursions. The invited part of the scientific programme consists of:
 - The Forum Lectures, usually on Tuesday and Thursday in two double-sessions, including discussion. These lectures are held without parallel sessions.
 - The Opening Lecture, the Closing Lecture, and about three other lectures in the category of “Special Invited Lectures,” among which a lecture organized together with the European Mathematics Society – currently named “Bernoulli Society - European Mathematical Society Cooperation Lecture”. These lectures are usually an hour long, including discussion. The opening and closing lectures are held without parallel sessions.
 - “Ordinary” invited lectures, which are arranged into sessions around a common theme. The sessions, usually from a one and half to two hours in length, comprise typically two or three invited papers and possibly a short introduction and/or invited discussion contributions. The recommended number of invited paper sessions in the programme is around 20.
 - In addition to the invited papers, the conference programme contains contributed papers. These need not necessarily be related to the topics of the invited paper sessions. Contributed papers may be either read or presented as posters. Those read are grouped into sessions, each session comprising about 6 papers, with 20 minutes (incl. discussion) allocated to each paper. The ERC urges the programme committee to be quite strict in policing the quality of the contributed sessions and to encourage the use of the poster sessions. By shifting some contributed papers to the poster sessions, these sessions

should also be given real prominence in the programme (one can think about having every day ½ hour poster sessions in the morning, preceded by an ½ hour session, without other parallel sessions, consisting of 15 two-minute promo-talks; in this way 75 poster presenters can be accommodated during the conference.)

3. For each European Meeting of Statisticians the European Regional Committee sets up two committees, a Scientific Programme Committee and an Organizing Committee.

- 3.1. **The Scientific Programme Committee.** The size of the committee is normally between five and seven persons, of which one is normally from the host country. The committee and its chairman are appointed by the European Regional Committee, at least two years in advance of the EMS.

It is not recommended that the Local Organizer heading the Organizing Committee be a member of the Programme Committee as well. However, a good working relationship between the two Committees is extremely important for a successful EMS.

As a basis for its work, the Scientific Programme Committee should consult a suitable range of persons, including the European Regional Committee members, to obtain suggestions for invited lectures and for topics and organizers of invited sessions. Furthermore, the Scientific Programme Committee should be in running contact with the Programme Coordinator of the European Regional Committee who is the main liaison between the two committees and whose job it is to help ensure continuity and balance in respect of statistics and probability topics covered. The final responsibility for the scientific programme rests with the European Regional Committee.

It is highly desirable that the Scientific Programme Committee should meet about two years before the EMS in order to plan the invited part of the programme. This meeting of the Programme Committee is held at the site of the EMS being planned or in connection with the previous EMS. If the meeting is not held at the site of the EMS, the local facilities should be inspected at another time by the Chairman of the Scientific Programme Committee and possibly the other members of the Programme Committee or the European Regional Committee. The meeting of the Scientific Programme Committee is financed by the local organizers to the extent members of the Scientific Programme Committee cannot find other funding for their travel. During this meeting the Programme Committee should

- select the Forum Lecturer and suggest a suitable topic for these lectures;
- decide on the number of the “Special Invited Lectures”, select the lecturers (including Opening and Closing sessions), and suggest the topics; and
- decide on the number of “ordinary” invited paper sessions in the programme, their topics, and select the Session Organizers.

Further points the Scientific Programme should consider in its meeting are the following:

- (a) The range of topics covered by the invited programme should be broad and should, in particular, comprise applied and computational as well as theoretical and methodological aspects of statistics and probability.
- (b) A suitable geographical spread of the invited speakers should be aimed at.
- (c) It is important that also younger people be invited to lecture.
- (d) Particular care should be exercised in the selection of speaker, topics, and possible invited discussants of the Forum Lectures. These lectures should be of interest to a wide section of the statistical community, and they may well be mainly of survey type.

(e) The Session Organizer is a person to whom the Programme Committee delegates the task of arranging an “ordinary” invited paper session. The Committee may decide to suggest some particular topics and/or speakers to a Session Organizer, but such guidelines should not be too strict. The Committee should also discuss, whether the Session Organizers should perhaps be encouraged, or discouraged, to speak in their own session.

(f) There are always some who either decline the invitation or do not respond. It is therefore advisable that the Programme Committee decides on a “reserve list” of topics, speakers and Session Organizers from which the missing items can be filled in.

(g) It is helpful if the Programme Coordinator (and/or other members of the Conference Committee of the European Regional Committee) can be present at the Programme Committee meeting. If this is not possible, the Programme Committee Chairman should inform the Programme Coordinator immediately about the decisions made at the meeting. The invitations should not be sent out before the Conference Committee of the European Regional Committee has had an opportunity to comment upon the proposed programme.

(h) It is also important if the Local Organizer, representing the Organizing Committee, is either present at the meeting or otherwise easily reached for questions regarding the conference facilities and local arrangements. Close collaboration with the local organizers is very important.

(i) Finally, the Programme Committee should decide at the meeting which of its future responsibilities are delegated to the Programme Committee Chairman and which need to be handled by a correspondence between members. Even if the most of later handlings are delegated to the Chairman, it is a good idea that the Chairman keeps the members informed about how the plans of the Committee materialize.

After the meeting of the Programme Committee, and when the Conference Committee of the European Regional Committee has had a chance to comment, invitations to the Forum Lecturer, the Special Invited lecturers and the Session Organizers should be sent out. These invitations should be signed by the Programme Committee Chairman. The letters can contain specific suggestions if the Programme Committee so decides. The following list contains some additional guide-lines:

(j) The invitations should first be sent by e-mail and should set a date by which the answer is needed, for instance one month. If there is no answer, a polite reminder should be sent without delay, with a firm deadline for response. Often the invitees will also need a formal letter of invitation by ordinary mail (or PDF via email), for instance, to obtain a financial support.

(k) Once the Forum and Special Invited Lecturers have accepted, they should be asked for an exact title of their talk. Closer to the EMS, they should also send an abstract of the talk to be included in the conference abstracts.

(l) The e-mails to the Session Organizers should explain the general structure of the “ordinary” invited paper sessions, and the responsibilities of the organizer. Once the Session Organizer has accepted to arrange a session, on a suggested topic, he or she should make a tentative plan for the session and communicate this to the Programme Committee Chairman. The organizer is then given a few months for correspondence with the speakers and possible discussants. Optimally, the Session Organizer is able to come up with a complete design for the session (the speakers, the titles of their presentations, and time table). The Session Organizer should consult with the Programme Committee Chairman regarding any problems that may arise. The Programme Committee Chairman finally confirms the arrangements made by the Session Organizer by writing a letter, on behalf of the Programme Committee, to those invited to speak in the session.

(m) It is very desirable that the names of the Forum Lecturer and the Special Invited

Lecturers, and a majority of the topics and organizers of the ordinary invited sessions, are known early to be included in Information Bulletin 1 of the EMS. Such information should also be sent to the Bernoulli Society Scientific Secretary, to be announced in the ISI Newsletter and Bernoulli News, and to the Editor of the IMS Bulletin. Bulletin 2, which should be mailed when the programme has been finalized, and not later than in February before the EMS, would optimally contain the invited part of the programme in full detail. This entails that most invited paper sessions should be completed by the end of December. The Programme Committee Chairman and the Local Organizer should be in close contact to guarantee that the information concerning the scientific programme printed in the Bulletins is as complete as possible.

(n) The deadline for submission of contributed papers should not be too early. About four months before the meeting is suitable. The Programme Committee should reserve the possibility of some screening of the contributed papers after their abstracts are received. This screening should not have as its purpose any ranking of papers, merely the exclusion of those inappropriate to the conference. It is recommended that final grouping of the contributed papers is done jointly between the Programme Committee Chairman and the Local Organizer. This should be done at least 2 ½ months before the meeting. At the same time the final scheduling of the sessions can be decided. The goal should be that there is a minimal overlap between the topics of parallel sessions. The contributed paper session should be given descriptive names to make it easier for the participants to decide which session they want to attend. It is recommended that the authors of contributed papers are informed by a letter, signed by the Programme Committee Chairman, that their paper has been accepted for oral presentation or as a poster. Such a letter can be an important document when the author makes the necessary arrangements for travel. No participant should present more than one contributed paper.

(o) It has been frequently the case that small “Workshops”, “Satellite Meetings” or “Short Courses” are organized either immediately before or after an European Meeting of Statisticians, at or near the conference site. Such meetings are not part of the official scientific programme of the EMS, and their advertisement in the Information Bulletin requires the approval of the Scientific Programme Committee. Of course, the Programme Committee may decide to take an active role in the organization. The responsible organizers should be clearly mentioned in the advertisement.

(p) At its meeting in Grenoble 1976 the European Regional Committee decided not to endorse, neither formally nor informally, the publication of proceedings from the European Meeting of Statisticians.

3.2. The Local Organizing Committee. The Organizing Committee, which takes care of local arrangements, consists of people selected by the local host institution(s). Points to be regarded by the Organizing Committee are

(a) The tradition of fairly modest circumstances to the European Meeting of Statisticians should be continued and the conference fees should be kept correspondingly low. Thus expensive conference centres must be avoided and university buildings preferred. If a professional conference organizer is hired to do parts of the organizing, it should, before a contract is signed, be ensured that the company in question understands and accepts nature of the European Meeting of Statisticians. A reduction in the registration fee should be given to Bernoulli Society members.

(b) The optimal time for mailing Bulletin 1 of the EMS is in September of the year before the EMS. The recommended time for mailing Bulletin 2 is not later than February. Before printing, the final drafts of the international bulletins should be sent to the Chairman and the Programme Coordinator of the European Regional Committee for comments. All advertisements about the EMS should mention clearly that the responsible organizing body is the European Regional Committee of the Bernoulli

Society and should, if possible, use the Bernoulli Society logo.

(c) The Organizing Committee should maintain web-pages where up-to-date information on the programme and on practical aspects of the EMS are available.

(d) The participants of the EMS should on arrival to the meeting receive a programme, a booklet with abstracts of all invited and contributed papers, and an alphabetical list of participants with addresses and other contact information.

(e) Cheap accommodation (for instance, in student dormitories), and light and cheap luncheons should be available along with ordinarily priced facilities. Excursions (including a cheap one) are to be arranged for Wednesday afternoon. The fee for excursions should not be included in the registration fee.

(f) Conference rooms should be available for off-the-programme meetings of smaller groups of people (committee meetings, informal scientific discussions, etc.).

(g) It is recommended that the Local Organizer sends formal invitations, on behalf of the Organizing Committee, to the invited speakers and session organizers (perhaps mentioning financial details, which are the primary concern of the Organizing Committee). In particular, invitees who must obtain a visa will need a letter of invitation from the Local Organizer. It is recommended to waive the registration fee for the Forum Lecturer and the Special Invited Lecturers (including the Opening and Closing Lecturers). The registration fee can be waived for invited speakers and session organizers from universities or countries with only little funding for travel. Otherwise remunerations or economic support are given in exceptional cases only.

(h) Statisticians and probabilists in some European countries have only little funding for travel and are therefore often unable to participate on the EMS. It would be a helpful contribution to the promotion of European scientific collaboration if a part of the income from registration fees, book and software stands, official carrier agreements, sponsors, etc., could be set aside to support the participation in the EMS of scientists from such countries. If the Local Organizer wishes, the European Regional Committee can assist in the selection of scientists to be supported among those who apply. The Local Organizer could also apply to national or international organizations (e.g., the European Union) for this type of support, possibly jointly with the Programme Committee and the European Regional Committee.

(i) A final point is that it would be a pleasing token if the Bernoulli family colours green and silver (white) and the Bernoulli logo were used somehow in connection with the meeting, for instance, on the cover of the information bulletins and on web-pages. This emphasizes that the EMS are a coherent series of meetings.

3.3. Reports. After the EMS has taken place, the Scientific Programme Committee and the Organizing Committee should provide the Programme Coordinator of the European Regional Committee with such available information on the meeting (number of participants, budget, etc.) as is of importance for future EMS organizers and the Archive of the European Regional Committee. An article about the EMS should be written for Bernoulli News by the Local Organizer and/or the Programme Committee Chairman.