

Special issue

On 26 September 1968, the European Physical Society was founded. It unites physicists throughout Europe, North, South, East and West, and those from neighbouring countries. The Society will provide a forum for the discussion and resolution of problems involving the physics community which need to be tackled on a supra-national basis.

This special issue of *Europhysics News* is devoted to the foundation of the European Physical Society — the history of the movement, the official inauguration, the Constitution of the Society. Future issues will be concerned with the activities of the Society and with news of relevance to European physics as a whole. There will be six issues per year, distributed to all individual members and member Societies of the EPS. Non-members may receive copies, at a cost of 15 Swiss francs per year, on application to the Main Secretariat.

From Bologna to Geneva

A history of the movement towards creating the European Physical Society.

Bologna

The Annual Conference of the Italian Physical Society in November 1965 took place in Bologna. At the end of a dinner party, a discussion began on the co-ordination of European research efforts, on the future of European physics journals and on similar broad issues. For the first time, ideas were openly voiced that a European Physical Society would provide the proper forum for the discussion of such issues of supra-national importance. It was decided to organize a meeting to examine in more detail and in concrete terms the usefulness of a European Physical Society and the steps that would need to be taken to bring it into being.

Pisa

This meeting was held in Pisa at the Scuola Normale Superiore on 16-17 April 1966, bringing together about a hundred European physicists under the chairmanship of G. Bernardini (Rector of the Scuola). The agenda included a few specific topics, such as the situation concerning physics journals, collaboration between high-energy physics laboratories, etc... But, as had been expected, the main subject of

interest was: "Should a European Physical Society be created?"

The discussion, initiated particularly by an address of S.R. de Groot (Amsterdam), was extremely lively and the clash of ideas very evident. However, at the end of the discussions the following resolution was unanimously approved —

"The meeting is strongly of the opinion that steps should be taken towards the foundation of a European Physical Society.

Its function will be:

- a) to provide a forum for the discussion of subjects of common interest to all European physicists, and
- b) to provide means whereby action can be taken on those matters which cannot conveniently be handled by national bodies."

The resolution also recommended the immediate constitution of a 'Working Group for further action', which later acquired the name 'Steering Committee'. The number of people participating in the work of this Committee grew steadily over the following two years until, by the time of the foundation of the Society, it comprised a total number of just over fifty physicists.

CERN

The next steps were taken in rapid succession. The Steering Committee called a meeting of its members and of delegates from various National Physical Societies at CERN on 25 November 1966, with B. P. Gregory (Director-General of CERN) as President. The

meeting discussed possible structures for the projected Society; it defined the fields of the Society's activities and considered the minimum conditions necessary to make it a dynamic organization. Two alternative structures were suggested — a completely new Society based on individual membership only, or a federation of existing national bodies.

London

No solution was found until the Steering Committee met again, with an increased number of delegates from National Societies and Academies, on 16 May 1967 at the Institute of Physics and the Physical Society (IPPS) in London. This meeting was presided over by Sir James Taylor (President of the IPPS). Two Working Groups were formed: one, under the chairmanship of A. Abragam, charged with drafting a provisional Constitution for the European Physical Society and the other, under the chairmanship of G. Bernardini, charged with planning the steps to bring the Society into being.

The Working Group on the Constitution submitted a compromise solution for the structure of the Society, suggesting that it be based on **both** individual membership **and** collective membership by National Physical Societies and equivalent bodies. It proposed three categories of member: (a) individuals, (b) societies, groups or laboratories, (c) individuals who are members of a society or group which itself is an ordinary member of the European Physical Society. The Group also made

proposals concerning the number of delegates on the Council from the categories of membership; these rules remained unchanged during all subsequent discussions.

All these recommendations were formulated in a few hours' time in London, clearly demonstrating the basic willingness of all the people involved to reach a positive conclusion.

The second Working Group recommended the setting-up of a Secretariat of the Steering Committee at the Ecole de Physique of the University of Geneva, with a branch office at the IPPS in London. It also suggested that a bank account be opened so that Societies, Laboratories and similar organizations would be able to directly sponsor the work of the Steering Committee if they wished to do so. It proposed English as the working language of the Society.

The Group recommended the setting-up of a Bureau of the Steering Committee in Geneva, charged with carrying out the decisions taken by the Steering Committee. In London, and during the months that followed, the Bureau was formed; it consisted of G. J. Béné, L. Jansen, J. M. Jauch (Geneva), L. Cohen (London), W. Gentner (Heidelberg), G. Bernardini — Chairman (Pisa), with Mrs L. Etienne-Amberg (Geneva) as Scientific Secretary.

It can truly be said that the London meeting was the turning point at which the European Physical Society changed from being a subject of discussion to being something which was definitely becoming a reality.

Geneva

The next meeting of the Steering Committee and delegates from the National Physical Societies took place on 30 January 1968 in Geneva at the Institut Battelle, under the presidency of H. Thiemann (Director-General of the Institute). One of the highlights of this meeting was the exposé given by P. Lalive, Professor of International Law at the University of Geneva, on basic principles concerning international organizations.

The Working Group on the Constitution was reconstituted and became a Subcommittee under the chairmanship of E. Rudberg (Stockholm). Two further Subcommittees were added, one under the chairmanship of J. de Boer (Amsterdam) concerned with Publications and one under the chairmanship of H. Curien (Paris) concerned with the Inaugural Conference of the Society to be held in Florence.

It was proposed at the London meeting that the European Physical Society

should be legally founded in the fall of 1968 in Florence, in conjunction with an Inaugural Scientific Conference. The 'Florence Subcommittee' concluded, however, that it would not be possible to organize the Conference in time. The meeting therefore decided that the Society would be legally founded in September 1968 in Geneva, and that the Inaugural Scientific Conference would be held in Florence in the spring of 1969. It was also decided that Geneva would be the official seat of the Society.

Prague

A further subject of great importance discussed in Geneva concerned efforts to ensure the active participation of all countries. It was decided that the Steering Committee would meet, if possible, in Eastern Europe and that any particular problems regarding the participation of the Eastern European countries would be given detailed attention. Prague was suggested as the most appropriate meeting place, in view of its tradition as a centre of European culture.

Much of what had been accomplished since Bologna seemed a miracle even to those directly involved and the Prague meeting became part of that miracle. It took place on 3-4 May 1968 at Charles University, and approximately sixty participants received a very warm welcome from their Czechoslovakian colleagues. In his opening address as President of the meeting, O. Stary (Rector of Charles University), pointed to the traditionally strong ties of the University with the science and culture of Europe; numerous distinguished physicists had lived and worked in Prague (Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Bolzano, Mach, Doppler, Einstein). He stressed the importance of physics for social, economic and cultural progress and he showed how intimately modern physics is interwoven with other branches of science. Referring to the European Physical Society, he said 'If European physicists unite, we think that they will be able to contribute far more effectively to human society and cultural values and help to ensure that the results of science are not misused. They may also be able to help more effectively in reducing tension in international relations'. J. Tauc (Prague) then welcomed the participants on behalf of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the Initiative Group of Czechoslovak Physicists.

After this introduction, the three Subcommittees (on Constitution, Publications and Florence Meeting) went

to work in separate sessions. Emphasis was placed on relations with Eastern European countries and on the organization of the Florence Conference. It was decided to envisage the establishment of a Branch Secretariat in Prague to facilitate financial transactions among the Eastern European countries and place proper emphasis on the importance of these countries in the Society. F. Janouch (Prague) joined the Bureau of the Steering Committee.

A preliminary budget was drawn up for 1969 and a sliding-scale procedure established for calculating membership fees for National Physical Societies. The legal foundation of the Society was fixed for 26 September 1968 in Geneva.

Shortly after the Prague meeting, the Secretariat of the Steering Committee moved from the Ecole de Physique of the University of Geneva to the Institut Battelle in Carouge, a suburb of Geneva.

The activities of the Steering Committee, its Bureau and its Secretariat required appreciable financial resources. These were generously provided, on one hand, directly by sponsors (local government agencies, individuals, Research Laboratories and National Physical Societies) and, on the other hand, indirectly by different organizations (for example, in terms of the salaries and services of the personnel of the Bureau).

CERN

A final meeting of the Steering Committee was scheduled for 25 September immediately prior to the official inauguration. However, the political events of August precipitated an emergency session on 12 September at CERN. It was unanimously decided that everything should go ahead as planned — that the European Physical Society should be founded on 26 September. This decision did not reflect an attitude of indifference on the part of the Committee; on the contrary, the meeting concluded that the events emphasized the need for closer relations between the physics communities of all the countries of Europe.

On 25 September, the Steering Committee gathered together for the last time. Reports were received from the Subcommittees on the Florence Meeting and on Publications but the day was given mainly to polishing some final points of the Constitution. In the late afternoon, the Steering Committee was formally dissolved by its President G. Bernardini. Its work was done; the European Physical Society was about to be founded.