



## From the President

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The European Physical Society was born 20 years ago, concluding two years of discussion and negotiation that had started in Pisa at the Scuola Normale Superiore. The idea of constituting a free and single association of European physicists, as promoted by Gilberto Bernardini, together with distinguished and enthusiastic colleagues from many countries, was finally accomplished. Essential to achieving this goal was the goodwill and support of a great number of national societies amongst which the Italian Physical Society, whose President at that time was Bernardini, played an important role.

It is, therefore, a great honour and a privilege for me to become the third Italian elected to the Presidency of EPS, twenty years after Gilberto Bernardini and ten years after Antonino Zichichi. It is moreover, a heavy responsibility to take over this office from the very capable hands of my predecessors, particularly those of our out-going President, Werner Buckel.

In accepting this charge I am witness to the richness of European culture, whose science, despite the widely different national backgrounds, contributes so much to peaceful competition and cooperation between peoples all over the world. European physics continues to play a fundamental part in this. It is today at the frontier of all fundamental, applied and interdisciplinary fields of research: from elementary-particle and

high-energy physics to condensed matter, from nuclear physics to plasma physics, geophysics, biophysics and electronics. Its pursuit, in fair competition with overseas countries, notably the USA and Japan, is a model for a cultured civilization, showing the way to a better-based European community.

The fact that since 1984, the Nobel Prizes in physics have been conferred on European scientists, not just for so-called "big science" but even more for individual genius, clearly shows the important and vital quality of European culture. EPS in representing a major part of that culture has had and will continue to have a quite essential role.

We should, therefore, be aware of this task and try to strengthen and develop further the main purpose of the founders of EPS: that is to establish a "hot spot" (an expression coined by Erik Rudberg that is so appropriate) that encourages an extended interaction between East and West and, therefore, a widening contact which will lead at the same time to a deeper knowledge of the world and a better understanding among peoples.

There were 445 Individual Ordinary Members and 22 National Societies, Academies and Groups associated to the EPS by the time of the EPS First General Conference at Palazzo Vecchio in Florence in April 1969, seven months only after the founding of the Society in Geneva in September 1968. We shall celebrate that event in June at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa in a proper way and in a proper atmosphere with a scientific meeting on the "Past and Future of Physics in Europe".

Today EPS comprises about 4000 Individual Members, 29 National Societies, Academies and Groups, 75 Associate Members and it counts 11 Collaborating Societies. Its activity involves 11 specialized Divisions and Interdivisional Groups, plus 12 Sections while seven Advisory Committees report to the Executive Committee. Through these bodies, numerous undertakings have developed in different fields: scientific meetings, study and divisional conferences, workshops and reports on social, technical and didactic problems. Among them, questions arising from the organization of research and universities, schools and training of young physicists, relationships and cultural exchanges between different countries, including scientific freedom. Furthermore the great success of our editorial venture, the scientific journal "Europ physics Letters" is proof of the scientific community's ever growing interest in EPS.

This common heritage is a challenge for future actions and enterprises which will take EPS into the world of the XXI century. Just think of the problems posed by: energetic needs; improvement to the standard of life of more human groups; new ways of balancing technological development and environmental protection; and the new possibilities offered by informatics, biotechnologies and newly discovered materials. EPS with the essential support of all its members can play a consequential role in this challenging cultural and social venture.

This is not only a wish, but also a commitment.