Opening Ceremony

Address by SEBASTIÀ XAMBÓ
President of Societat Catalana de Matemàtiques and
Chair of the Organising Committee

Honourable authorities, guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Barcelona and to the Third European Congress of Mathematics. Welcome on behalf of the Societat Catalana de Matemàtiques (Catalan Mathematical Society), and on behalf of the Organising Committee. We are grateful for your presence, and we hope that your stay will be pleasant and of much profit to you.

Let me briefly introduce the members of the presidential table:

- Excel·lentíssim Sr. Joan Clos, Alcalde de Barcelona (Mayor of Barcelona);
- Honorable Sr. Andreu Mas-Colell, Conseller d'Universitats, Recerca i Societat de la Informació de la Generalitat de Catalunya (Minister for Universities, Research and Information Society of the Catalan Government);
- Excelentíssimo Sr. Ramón Marimón, Secretario de Estado de Política Científica y Tecnológica (Secretary of State for Scientific and Technological Policy of the Spanish Government);
- Excel·lentíssim Sr. Manuel Castellet, President de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans (President of the Institute of Catalan Studies);
- Professor Rolf Jeltsch, President of the European Mathematical Society.

The composition of the presidential table reflects quite faithfully the public institutional support granted to the 3ecm: the Catalan Government, the Spanish Government, the Barcelona City Council, the Institute of Catalan Studies, the European Mathematical Society, and the three Universities in Barcelona which award degrees in mathematics, here represented by the minister.

It is a pleasant duty to thank you for accepting our invitation to be at the presidential table, and also to thank the institutions that you represent for the constant support granted to the 3ecm. At the same time, I am proud to say that participation in the Congress has perfectly matched this support, not only by the number of participants (over 1300 at this moment), but also through their very high professional qualifications.

The opening ceremony will have two parts. In the first part, which lasts about half an hour, we will listen to the speeches of the Secretary of State, of the Catalan Minister for Universities, Research and Information Society, and finally of the Mayor of Barcelona.

(The speeches are included on pages xxxiii–xxxvi below.)

(… )
Now there will be a short musical interlude. The Toldrà String Quartet will play music of two Catalan composers: Eduard Toldrà and Xavier Turull. Meanwhile, I shall accompany the Mayor, the Minister and the Secretary of State to the door, for they have other duties in their schedules that do not allow them to remain with us any longer.

Let us now start the second part of the opening ceremony. Please allow me to say a few words before the addresses by the President of the European Mathematical Society and the President of the Institute of Catalan Studies (in this volume their speeches are on pages xxxvii–xliii).

First let us remember those involved with the 3ecm who passed away.

- August Palanques, a member of the Organising Committee: born in 1957, he was Associate Professor at the University of Barcelona, and died in 1997.
- Felipe Mellizo, who was to chair the round table “How to increase public awareness of mathematics”: born in 1932, he was a civil engineer, a philosopher, a writer and a journalist. He died last Friday.

Ever since the European Mathematical Society Council meeting in Budapest entrusted the Catalan Mathematical Society with the organisation of 3ecm, we have
been very busy in an involved and laborious collective process. Now it is a delight to crown it with this opening and all the activities that will follow. It is therefore appropriate to thank here all the people and institutions without whose involvement this event would not have been possible.

To organise the 3ecm, the Catalan Mathematical Society appointed an Executive Committee. Chaired by the President of the Society, it has five other members: Carles Casacuberta, in charge of information and publications; Julià Cufí, for finances; Rosa M. Miró-Roig, programming and activities; Marta Sanz, organisational secretary; and for the infrastructure, Ferran Puerta in the first year and Marta València since then. The organisation would not have been possible without their sustained dedication to the cause. On behalf of the Catalan Mathematical Society, our much-felt gratitude to them.

Our thanks must be extended to all the people who, proposed by the Executive Committee for diverse organisational tasks, were subsequently appointed by the Catalan Mathematical Society. An Organising Committee of 16 members was appointed soon after the Executive Committee, and their contributions have been numerous and indispensable in all areas. Later on, working groups were formed as the needs arose. 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 Catalan Mathematical Society, whose number has more than doubled in the last four years.

As for the institutions, our thanks to the Institute of Catalan Studies, for its decisive role in the sponsoring of the Congress, and for housing the 3ecm. Thanks are due to its President, Manuel Castellet, for his vision to submit a bid to organise the Congress and his subsequent constant support. Thanks also to all the Institute staff, who have been helping in one way or another.

We are much indebted to the public universities in the Barcelona area for their 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 encouraged the members of the committees and groups to work for the 3ecm.

It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge the continuous support and encouragement of the European Mathematical Society (EMS), particularly expressed by its 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 (chaired by Professor Michael Atiyah), the Round Table Committee (chaired by Professor Miguel de Guzmán) and the Prize Committee (chaired by Professor Jacques-Louis Lions) for the enthusiasm and effectiveness with which they have undertaken their crucial tasks.

We much appreciate the sponsorship granted by the International Mathematical Union, and the fact that its President, Jacob Palis, informed us that the International
Mathematical Union regards the 3ecm as a main international mathematical event of World Mathematical Year.

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 Catalan Government and the Spanish Government have strongly backed the Congress, through sponsorships by the Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, representing Spain, and 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, representing Catalonia.

The 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. Fundación Retevisión is providing, among other things, all the information and communications infrastructure. Compaq supplies the computing equipment that you can find in the main hall and which you are invited to use according to your needs, 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 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. Codorniu, Nestlé, Panrico, Vichy and Coca-Cola have contributed to the catering, which all participants will surely notice and appreciate.

Our main task has been to provide an environment in which the scientific programme, and other important concomitant activities, could be decided upon and scheduled in detail, and an environment in which they could develop as planned. Our highest reward will be to have succeeded.

If this is the case, I would like that it be shared by our entire Catalan mathematical community, for after all this is the rich and strong soil out of which the organisation has grown. I hope that the Congress will definitely promote this community into playing a role proportional to its achievements on the international level.

As Allyn Jackson said in the article published in the May issue of the AMS Notices, “Barcelona is known for its great weather, arresting architecture, and excellent seafood”. So, as well as wishing you an inspiring Congress, please have also some fun in this City which is the most wonderful in the world. Thank you very much again for your presence here today.

Palau de Congressos de Barcelona
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