
Foreword from the President of the ECMWF Council — Prof. Anton Eliassen

Meteorologists have long recognised the need for greater co-operation between the different European states. Eventually, in 1967, following an initiative from the Council of the Commission of the European Communities, at the time a community of only six countries, a group of visionaries drew up a list of scientific and technical challenges in which “the possibility of international co-operation could be discussed”. By the end of that year, a proposal had been made for the establishment of a “European Meteorological Computing Centre”. This far-sighted initiative led to setting up the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), which on 1 November 2005 reaches its 30th anniversary.

I am proud of ECMWF. I can say with confidence that all those who have been associated with this most successful scientific and technical European organisation share this pride. Under the guidance of the Council and its Committees, and with the hard work of its talented and capable staff, the Centre has achieved much of what was envisaged. It has developed areas of research and applications that could not have been foreseen at the time of its establishment.

The public has become accustomed on Monday or Tuesday to being presented with a normally reliable outlook for the coming weekend’s weather. Thirty years ago, this would not have been possible. The Centre’s medium-range predictions have been of benefit at times of natural disaster, for commercial activities, in planning power supply, in planning sporting and marine activities, and much more.

ECMWF is a fine example of the advantages of international co-operation in science and technology. At the time of writing 25 countries support the Centre. We hope that our family of states will grow in the coming years.

I wish the Centre well in tackling the major scientific and technical challenges that it is facing.



Prof. Anton Eliassen
President of the ECMWF Council

Foreword from the Director ECMWF

Early in 2003, Lars Prahm, then President of the Council of the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, proposed to David Burridge, then the Director, that with the 30th anniversary of the Centre coming up on 1 November 2005, it was time to record the history of the Centre. It has been the practice of other European scientific and technical organisations, such as CERN, JET and EUMETSAT, to record the story of their early days while those involved were able to contribute their memories.

In June 2003, the Centre's Council supported the proposal. David Burridge commissioned Austin Woods, who had been at the Centre since 1978 and served as Secretary to the Council since 1984, to carry out the work. The book was started with the intention of writing the history of a highly successful European scientific and technical organisation. It is however not that history.

In autumn 2003, the Centre's first Director Professor Aksel Wiin-Nielsen was informed of the intention to write the history of the Centre. He objected strongly! His objection was entirely reasonable. One cannot sensibly write the history of a relatively young, and active, institution. At the time of writing, major construction is under way to increase the size of the Centre's Computer Hall and to provide much-needed new office space. The Centre's work is expanding to include monitoring of the global environment for important, but non-meteorological, purposes. Current affairs cannot be treated as history.

The history of the Centre will undoubtedly be written sometime in the future, when in Wiin-Nielsen's words: 'the people concerned have left this planet'. Instead, in this book we have a record of the Centre's beginning and of its work during its first 30 or so years.

The Centre is widely acknowledged to be the world leader in its field. The contribution of the staff to the Centre's success has to be emphasised. Without names, this book would be a dry read. However is not possible to name all who contributed. Indeed we would have to name many in addition who were not on the staff at all, but in the Member States and even elsewhere. A quick calculation suggests that a minimum of well over 1,000

individuals should in justice be named, clearly an impossibility! To list the scientific awards granted to Centre staff, their work as journal editors, their efforts as members and Chairs of international committees, their publications in the scientific and technical literature . . . would leave us I think with an unexciting book. Thus, the omission of a name from this book cannot be seen as neglect, nor inclusion as recognition.

I thank Austin Woods for his work in putting this record on paper. I am confident that the record of the beginnings of this successful and exciting European co-operative enterprise will interest many outside the world of meteorology.



Dominique Marbouty, Director
European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts



Foreword from the President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials — Professor Francesco Fedi

COST — the acronym for European COoperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research — is the oldest and widest European intergovernmental network for cooperation in research. Established by a Ministerial Conference of 19 European states in November 1971, COST is at present serving the scientific communities of 35 European countries to co-operate in common research Actions supported by national funds.

“Bottom up approach” (the initiative of launching a COST Action comes from the European scientists themselves), “à la carte participation” (only countries interested in the Action participate), “equality of access” (participation is open also to European countries not belonging to the European Union) and “flexible structure” (easy implementation and light management of the research initiatives) are the main characteristics of COST.

As precursor of advanced multidisciplinary research COST has a very important role for the realisation of the European Research Area (ERA) anticipating and complementing the activities of the Framework Programmes, constituting a “bridge” towards the scientific communities of emerging countries, increasing the mobility of researchers across Europe and fostering the establishment of scientific excellence in many key domains such as: Physics, Chemistry, Telecommunications and Information Science, Nanotechnologies, Meteorology, Environment, Medicine and Health, Forests, Agriculture and Social Sciences.

Today there are more than 200 ongoing COST Actions and there have been many hundred of Actions over the years. The scientific importance and relevance of COST results is well recognised by scientific communities outside Europe and, in particular, in the USA, Canada and in Asia. The Actions have also contributed to European competitiveness through their many contributions to normative and standardisation bodies, the many small enterprises originating in Europe from COST activities at the frontiers of modern technology and by the many examples of transfer of results to the European industry.

COST Action 70 “European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts” is a very good example of such achievements through its evolution to become an independent international organisation with its own structure and headquarters.

COST is proud to have been associated with the success and the growing importance of this European Centre. The key roles played by COST in establishing ECMWF are reflected in the many files in our archives from the period 1970 to 1975. They included arranging the many meetings of working groups and expert groups that lead to the decision to establish the Centre. It was at these meetings that the text of the Convention was agreed, the United Kingdom chosen as host country and the Centre’s first Director appointed.

Therefore, in my capacity as President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials, I am particularly pleased, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of its foundation, to be able to wish the Centre, its Director and its Council, the very best of luck for the future, especially in maintaining the outstanding traditions established in the past 30 years.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Francesco Fedi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Professor Francesco Fedi



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The European Approach

Woods, A.

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