

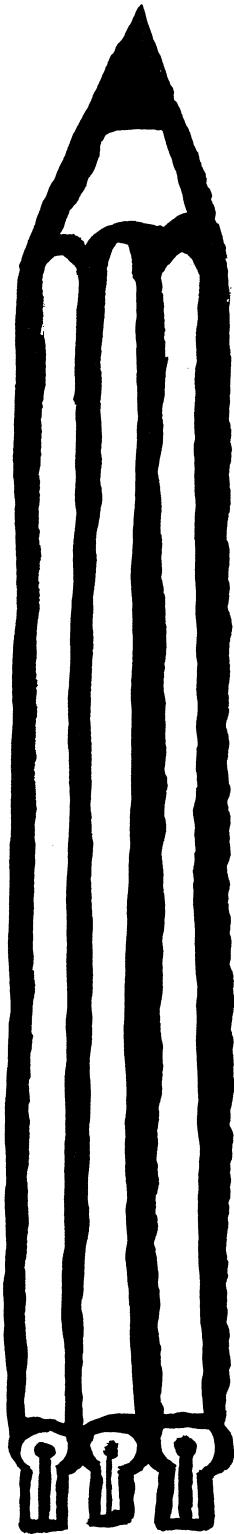


Dear colleagues,

First of all, let me wish you a belated happy 2016. I hope that this will be a healthy and fruitful year for all of you.

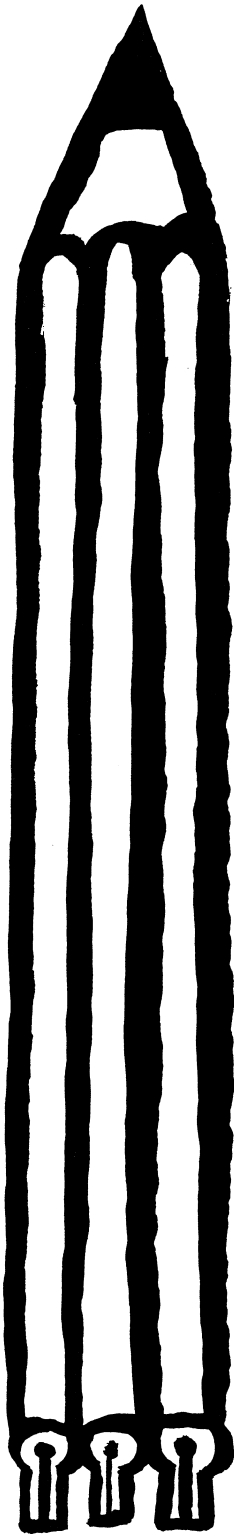
As usual, the start of the year is a time for making lists of things one would like to achieve or to change in one's life. For the most part, such new-year resolutions tend to be quickly forgotten or never materialize. However, I feel that there is value in setting oneself goals, both in our professional and personal lives, and therefore I will try to do so here, at least for what concerns my role in the EATCS.

My second, two-year term as president of the EATCS will end at ICALP 2016. The months leading to July 2016 will fly by somehow and will be full of duties at my home institution and elsewhere. However, there is still much I hope that the EATCS can do before July 2016. Together with the EATCS Council and all of you, I will try to continue promoting the development of theoretical computer science, broadly construed, and to increase the influence of the EATCS within the theoretical-computer-science community. Moreover, in cooperation with my colleagues in the EATCS Council, I will present the results of a feasibility study for a possible open-access journal of our association, covering the whole of theoretical computer science, to the EATCS General Assembly at ICALP 2016, where you will have the chance to express your opinion on whether the journal should see the light of day.



As always, I welcome your input; I should be grateful if you could send me a list of issues related to theoretical-computer-science research (in Europe and elsewhere) that you think the EATCS should try to address in the future. (Do so at your earliest convenience, as our duties follow Littlewood's zero-infinity law: either we deal with them in relatively short order or they go to infinity.) The EATCS Council will consider all your suggestions carefully.

In his viewpoint contribution that appears in this issue of the Bulletin, Thomas Henzinger raises some thought-provoking issues. I think that reflecting on them will be beneficial and I will certainly discuss them with the EATCS Council in the coming months. For instance, what can the EATCS do to make sure that Europe does not fall further behind the United States in, to quote from Henzinger's article, "the dynamism of the information technology industry, the popularity of the computer science major, and the impact of frontier research in computing"? There is no denying that nearly all the Turing Awards, and in fact nearly all the ACM awards, go to researchers who work in the United States. Is this an indication that research in computer science in Europe (and elsewhere) does not have the same quality and impact of research in the United States? Is it a sign of a bias in those awards? Or is this the result of a combination of those two factors? If we look at the list of the 16 recipients of the EATCS Award so far, we see that five of them work in the United States and one works in Israel. Among the seven young



researchers who have received the Presburger Award to date, five work in the United States. Four of the 15 EATCS Fellows named thus far work outside Europe (three in the United States and one in Australia). As current president of the EATCS, I am proud of these figures, since they indicate that the EATCS is a scientific association that has a worldwide perspective and that honours outstanding members of the theoretical-computer science community regardless of their geographical location. However, perhaps, we should try to be more active in nominating scientists who do not work in the United States for ACM awards and in highlighting the excellent work that is done in Europe in theoretical computer science. A recent successful example at the interface of theoretical computer science and systems is provided by the 2014 ACM Software System Award to Coq, “a software tool for the interactive development of formal proofs, which is a key enabling technology for certified software.”

Thomas Henzinger states that “Europe desperately needs new organizational structures in academia, a greater entrepreneurial spirit of society, an improved image for computer science as a career choice, especially among women, the mandatory acquisition of computational thinking and coding skills in secondary education, and more emphasis on principles of systems building which are critical to industry in university curricula of computer science.” It is up to each of us to contribute to changes in the mindset of our own institutions, where and when we feel that it is appropriate. We should



strive to give young researchers and junior faculty early independence, so that they can develop and pursue their own research programmes. We should encourage them to explore new research collaborations, new ideas and the wealth of opportunities that is available to them. The world of research is their oyster and they should not feel that by leaving their “scientific nest” they are taking unwarranted risks and embarking on a journey of no return. These young researchers are the future of our field and their growth is our growth as a research community.

EATCS members as well as the association as a whole can definitely contribute to improving the image of computer science as a career opportunity amongst women. Our community is blessed with excellent role models. These scientists should be recognized for their contributions to the field and we should create opportunities for them to interact with female students in computer science from the start of their studies. (Readers of the report on the Nordic Workshop on Programming Theory 2015 that appears in this issue of the Bulletin will see that this is what Anna Inólfisdóttir and I tried to do at that workshop in October 2015.) Active associations of female students in computer science at our institutions can help to foster a sense of community amongst female students, leading to better retention rates and to outreach activities using female computer-science undergraduates to expose female high-school students to the principles of our science.

Perhaps it is also time for the EATCS to become involved in activities leading to

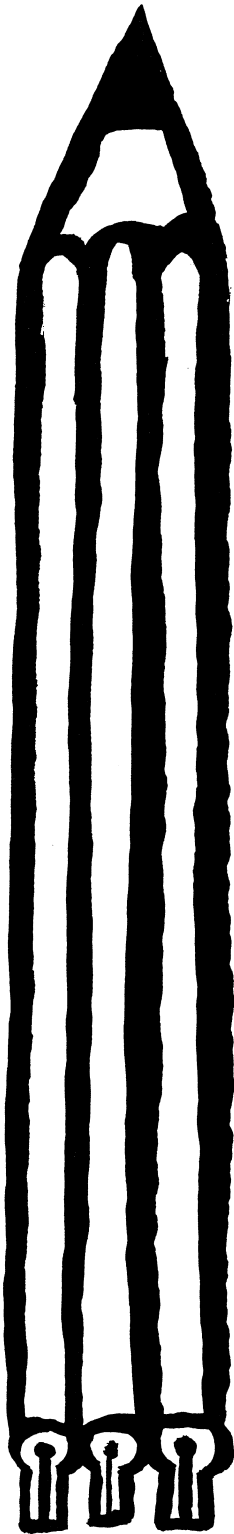


the mandatory acquisition of computational thinking and coding skills in secondary education.

We live in interesting and challenging times, when the world around us seems to be changing too fast for us to adapt to the new scenarios and to develop rational approaches to understand the new developments and to deal appropriately with their consequences. In our small world (at least in the sense of

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_World:_An_Academic_Romance David Lodge's classic campus novel), there is some bad news from Finland, where universities are about to lay off a large number of people due to very substantial cuts in the financial support they receive from the Finnish government. For instance, Aalto University is cutting 350 jobs and the University of Helsinki is currently in the process of getting rid of up to 1,200 employees. See the following two articles kindly provided by Jukka Suomela for more details.

- <http://www.finlandtimes.fi/education/2015/11/10/22181/Aalto-University-to-scrap-350-jobs>
- <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/13539-axe-threat-a-shock-to-university-staff.html>



This news was particularly shocking since Finland has so far been considered by many a role model in its support of educational activities at all levels, and of research and development. I do hope that the Finnish government will recognize the importance of supporting its universities in order to keep Finland at the forefront of research and technological development. The EATCS will do what it can to provide scientific support to TCS activities in Finland and to showcase the excellent work done by our Finnish colleagues in theoretical computer science.

Of course, the economic problems several countries face have impact on the available research funding and the resources universities have at their disposal. Especially in times like these, it is important for all of us and for scientific associations like the EATCS to provide cogent arguments for continuous support for research in computer science. In particular, as Thomas Henzinger states in his viewpoint piece in this issue of the Bulletin, we should continue supporting the ERC, which, in my humble opinion, has done a great service to the theoretical-computer-science community since its inception.

At the beginning of the year, we also received the sad news that Rusins Freivalds, one of the pioneers of theoretical computer science in Latvia and conference chair for the 40th ICALP, passed away. You can read an obituary for Rusins in this issue of the Bulletin.

I hope that many of you will submit their



best work to ICALP 2016 (deadline: Tuesday, 17 February 2016). The PC chairs for this year's edition of ICALP are Yuval Rabani (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, Track A), Davide Sangiorgi (University of Bologna, Italy, Track B) and Michael Mitzenmacher (Harvard University, USA, Track C). As you know, ICALP 2016 will be held in Rome, Italy, and Tiziana Calamoneri, Irene Finocchi, Nicola Galesi and Daniele Gorla are working hard in order to make the conference a memorable event.

ICALP 2016 will feature four invited talks delivered by Subhash Khot (New York, USA), Marta Z. Kwiatkowska (Oxford, UK), Xavier Leroy (INRIA, France) and Devavrat Shah (MIT, USA). The EATCS Award 2016, the Gödel Prize 2016 and the Presburger Award 2016 will all be presented at the conference, during which we will also honour the EATCS Fellows vintage 2016 and the recipients of the EATCS Distinguished Dissertation Awards for doctoral theses in theoretical computer science that were defended in 2015. The award committees for all these panels are busy selecting the award recipients from collections of truly excellent nominations. I thank their members for the work they are putting into making some very difficult choices.

Starting from ICALP 2016, and for a five-year period, the proceedings of ICALP will be published in open-access form in LIPIcs (Leibniz International Proceedings in Informatics). This is an exciting development, which I hope our community will appreciate. It will be interesting to see the number and the quality of the submissions to ICALP 2016 to have a preliminary indication of whether the move



to open-access and electronic publication of the proceedings of the conference will have any effect on them. The experience of other conferences who made this step earlier gives the EATCS grounds for optimism.

LIPICs currently charges an article-processing charge of 15 EUR (net) per published paper. However, according to what I read at these charges will increase because of restrictions put on Dagstuhl on the use of public funds for the purpose of their publication activities. This is a worrying development for a large conference like ICALP. I can assure you, however, that the EATCS will do its best to play a role in shaping the future developments related to the article-processing charges at LIPICs.

A recent positive development has been the establishment of the Alonzo Church Award for Outstanding Contributions to Logic and Computation. This award is jointly sponsored by the ACM Special Interest Group for Logic and Computation, the European Association for Theoretical Computer Science, the European Association for Computer Science Logic and the Kurt Gödel Society. The first award will be presented this coming June at LICS 2017. I strongly encourage you to submit nominations for the award; the deadline is March 1, 2016. (See for the call for nominations.)

I am also happy to inform you that the seventeenth ACM Conference on Economics and Computation (EC'16) will be held in Europe for the second time this coming summer. This is a welcome development and the EATCS is using this opportunity to forge ties with ACM SIGecon, the ACM Special Interest



Group on Electronic Commerce, which organizes the conference.

As usual, let me close this letter by reminding you that you are always most welcome to send me your comments, criticisms and suggestions for improving the impact of the EATCS on the theoretical-computer-science community at association, and we will consider all your suggestions and criticisms carefully. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Luca Aceto, Reykjavik, Iceland
February 2016*