



## How International Is ECS?

**R**ecently I attended a meeting in Bologna, Italy, as a guest of the ECS European Section. The meeting was organized by the Italian Chemical Society and co-sponsored by ECS. Together with the leaders of other electrochemical scientific organizations, such as the International Society of Electrochemistry (ISE), the Electrochemical Society of Japan (ECSJ), and several European societies, I had an opportunity to speak to the attendees. Two of the speakers before me referred to ECS as the "American" Electrochemical Society. While one may think that these speakers made a mistake, there is a message in their statements. It was exactly that point that I attempted to address and that I will try to address here.

The quality and integrity of our publications and meetings have attracted a high percentage of non-American participation. Our *Journal* is a truly international scientific publication with 60% of the papers coming from outside North America. It is pointed out sometimes that its editorial board is "American." From membership benefit surveys we learn that the *Journal* is highly appreciated and a main motivation for ECS membership. The same can probably be said for *Letters*, but this publication is too new to draw solid conclusions. Looking at our Spring and Fall meetings, one can also conclude that they are truly international events, judging from the affiliations of authors and attendees. Here it is also pointed out that symposium organizers and session chairs are mainly "American," even though the record indicates that many non-North Americans fill these functions. In an effort to accommodate a growing international audience, ECS has increasingly scheduled non-North American meeting locations which, outside the continental U.S., have been joint meetings with ECSJ and JSAP in Honolulu, Hawaii and with ISE in Paris. This trend will continue and expand. In the membership arena, the roster indicates that 36% of our membership is from outside North America.

Despite these laudable statistics, ECS is seen by many non-North Americans as an American organization. Many of these colleagues are ECS members because of the benefits mentioned before, however, they do not always have a sense of being a part of the process. My opinion is that this lack of "belonging" is because ECS is governed primarily by those living in North America. Surely we can identify non-Americans in Division executive committees, on the Publication Committee, the Honors and Awards Committee, on Technical Affairs, and other committees; but certainly not anything close to 36%. We can think of all kinds of reasons. The point is, that where improvements are called for, to think of ways to change it.

To increase involvement of our membership outside North America in the governance of ECS, we need everybody's initiative. Identifying the problems is fine, but practical and reasonable solutions are needed. Participating in the ECS governance means attendance and participation in Division and Group committees as well as in Society committees. This can include the Editorial Board and all the way to the Board of Directors and the ECS Executive Committee. It means having ideas and energy and the willingness to give time to the governance of ECS. It is recognized that attendance and participation is more difficult when it is a long distance to the meeting site. At the same time airline fares for overseas travel have reduced significantly and are often comparable to U.S. domestic prices. A challenge for ECS is to find ways to effectively move the

Society's business forward, in a cost-effective, time-efficient, inclusive manner. We recognize that with modern communications, such as e-mail, fax, and (video)phone, one's physical presence is not always required and effectiveness can still be assured.

So, I invite our non-American members to come forward, show your initiative, identify how you want to participate, and be practical in order to be effective. The procedures are in place to get you involved. At the same time, I would encourage current committee members to make sure that overseas members are nominated and that we all bend over backwards to find ways to

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accommodate overseas committee participation and others with travel constraints. It is critical for the well-being of ECS that all members are able to participate equally in ECS governance as well as in the benefits, because only then are we a truly international society.

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