

ESMTB – European Society for Mathematical and Theoretical Biology

This January, the “European Society for Mathematical and Theoretical Biology” reached the age of 15. It was founded on Alpe d’Huez near Grenoble during the first *European Conference on Mathematics Applied to Biology and Medicine*. This alpine conference was followed by Triennial Conferences taking place at Lyon, Heidelberg, Amsterdam, Milano and, in June of last summer, at Dresden Technical University. The resonance has increased dramatically in recent years: in Dresden there were about 800 participants, of whom 170 were Society members. At present the Society has a membership in excess of 300. They include scientists, students and institutions from nearly all European countries, as well as from most other continents including Africa, the Near East, and Asia.

What unites Society members at such conferences, at the regular *European Summer (or Winter) Schools* and at additional themed *Workshops*, are the interests which are common in a field that is rapidly becoming a cornerstone, if not a centrepiece, of Biology and Medicine. Recent advances of experimental and observational methods in molecular biology, biomedicine, biotechnology as well as physiology and evolutionary ecology have increased markedly the need for, value of, and appreciation for *quantitative modelling and statistical analysis*. With ever more precise temporal and spatial resolution, the amount and quality of data being gathered is daunting. Having created such a wealth of quantitative data, experimental biologists and medical practitioners now expect that mathematical methods should be readily available with which to make sense of their data. Due to the inherent complexity of the field, this presents a great challenge to Mathematical and Theoretical Biologists who therefore feel a need to meet, exchange ideas and mutually test their new concepts and methods. This is already leading to sustained collaborations, addressing exciting new themes and problems of relevance to our growing interdisciplinary area.

Thus, different fields and effective methods of Applied Mathematics are needed to contribute to this challenging task in research and education. The more often mathematicians interact with bioscientists, the more successful we will be. To support these ideas and activities, our Society (ESMTB – www.esmtb.de) offers help in organizing conferences, financing travel to meetings and exchanging information. There is a regular *Communication Bulletin* (see its recent edition *ECMTB No.8, Jan. 2006* - www.esmtb.de/communication/ecmtb8.pdf), where new research groups present themselves, young scientists describe their recent theses, and further reports are given. A major organ for publishing scientific articles is *JMB*, the *official journal of ESMTB*. Within these 2 pages in every *JMB* issue, we will publish additional contributions by leading scientists in our field, our aim being to specify and examine those *perspectives in mathematical and theoretical biology that are currently the most important*. Questions concerning the Society as well as critical remarks and other responses are also welcome.

Wolfgang Alt (Bonn, Germany) wolf.alt@uni-bonn.de
President of the ESMTB