



Announcing a Conference March 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> 2013 in Berlin

## **Friends of Mathematics Education - A European Initiative -**

Mathematics has a unique place in the school curriculum. It tends to be high stakes for schools and students and there is no other school subject that has more or less the same curriculum across different countries, with the only differences being largely in pace or progression rather than substantive content. In addition, internationally accepted tests of comparative performance in mathematics, such as TIMSS and PISA, are widely used to shape policy and practice nationally. Since 1908, mathematics educators have been cooperating under the auspices of International Commission of Mathematics Instruction (ICMI) and meet every four years at an international congress (ICME) to share overarching issues and challenges. The next meeting of ICME is to be held discussing in July 2012 in Seoul.

Mathematics and its teaching at school has not only a proud history, but is also crucial for a skilled workforce. There is considerable demand for a mathematically qualified workforce in a world driven by new technologies and automation. There are diverse initiatives to promote mathematics and to support the teachers of mathematics who will produce an appropriately skilled future workforce. An example of this support was provided by the Government in the UK in 2006, which set up the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCEM). This Centre was one stimulus for Deutsche Telekom Stiftung (DTS, charitable foundation of Deutsche Telekom) to establish the German Center of Mathematics Teacher Education (DZLM) along similar lines. There have been many projects to support mathematics by major foundations across Europe, whether to support professional learning as above, to offer student enrichment or to scaffold early mathematical learning. However we conjecture that the scope, extent and impact of these projects across Europe is neither known nor widely acknowledged in Europe.

The European Mathematical Society (EMS), the union of the mathematical societies in Europe set up a Committee of Education in 2009. The Committee provided a first forum for interchange between mathematics educators and mathematicians. It recognized that there is no counterpart for what we have termed the 'Friends of Mathematics Education'; the companies and charity foundations across Europe who have funded and supported a variety of mathematics education initiatives - no simple means for international communication of activity and impact or possible cooperation. Profs Hoyles and Törner who have taken forward this FOME proposal and signed this paper are members of the Committee. As mentioned above Deutsche Telekom Stiftung (DTS) is funding the German Centre (DZLM) and was keen to learn about other initiatives in Mathematics education and expressed a wish to help to initiate such a forum for debate. Thus we - a subcommittee of the EMS - decided to try to take this forward. EMS offered support and we have to date also gained the support of some national learned mathematical societies that we have approached; namely the German Mathematical Society (DMV), the Institute of Mathematics and Applications (IMA), the Italian Mathematical Society (UMI) and the Israel Mathematical Union (IMU). We have to date also discussed our plans with just a few charitable foundations, and received support for the ideas from the Nuffield Foundation and Wellcome Trust in the UK as well as DTS. This letter is to start the process of securing more support from countries across Europe as well as seek more foundations and companies in UK and Germany.

We have identified as an initial starting point 4 areas where we knew companies, charitable and private foundations have supported mathematics education. These are:

- Networks of schools and mathematics school leaders
- Teachers and their professional development
- Public understanding of mathematics and mathematics enhancement
- Early intervention

Our next step is to hold a meeting with the support of DTS where stakeholders from across Europe can come together to share what they have done to support mathematics in schools and discuss the impact of their work and possible plans for the future.

We have made contact with various foundations and companies in different European countries and received positive feedback for our plans so we intend go ahead with a meeting in Berlin in March 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> 2013.

## **The Berlin meeting**

The overarching aims of this meeting are more or less self-evident: simply to raise awareness among funders of what is going on, the goals of the initiatives, the different methods used and their effects. We hope this will enhance impact and open up possibilities for collaboration in the longer term across Europe. The community of 'Friends of Mathematics Education' is as yet not defined - but it would include all those organizations which have funded or set in place projects that have had a direct influence on the practice of mathematics education.

### **Objectives of the Berlin meeting**

- To gain friends for mathematics education in Europe who might individually or collectively be potential supporters of initiatives in the area
- To exchange information about different national projects and their impact and to set up personal networks across 'friends'
- To provide a conduit between national projects and the European scene to improve the visibility of the projects and potentially to widen their impact in the immediate and longer term future
- To stimulate institutions to become partners in joint initiatives
- To catalyze new cooperation across borders to support mathematics education
- - and more to emerge in next weeks and months...

### **Who should come?**

- Charitable foundations in Europe, non-governmental organizations; private funding and various stakeholders who have supported mathematics education at a national level or might be interested in doing so in the future

### **What do participants need to do?**

- Express their interest in the meeting by contacting Britta Berndtsen ([britta.berndtsen@uni-due.de](mailto:britta.berndtsen@uni-due.de))
- Complete a short submission that documents: the country, the project in mathematics education they had undertaken, what it was, who it was for and the impact. A template will be derived and circulated and all submissions collected together for the participants of the meeting
- Stakeholders will also be asked to prepare a poster based on their submission
- A list of contributors and contributions will be put together

The program of the meeting is still under discussion and we are open to your recommendations and suggestions. But it will be in Berlin in the Representative Office of Deutsche Telekom, starting late in the afternoon of March 14<sup>th</sup> with a reception with some speeches, and following the next day with speakers along with poster presentations. We will ensure there is plenty of time for sharing and networking. There will be no registration fee but participants will be expected to pay their own travel, accommodation and food.

Don't hesitate to contact us.

Celia Hoyles (London, UK) (NCETM & EMS Committee on Education)  
Günter Törner (Duisburg, DE) (Secretary of DMV & EMS Committee on Education)