

IFAC In France

IFAC activities in France are the result of the collective enthusiastic efforts of the French automatic control community. IFAC was founded in Paris in 1957, and the IFAC community met again in Toulouse in 2017 to celebrate a prestigious 60th anniversary of IFAC.

At the end of the Heidelberg International Conference on Automatic Control (1956), a Provisional Committee was established under the chairmanship of Victor Broïda of France to draft the first IFAC constitution.

On September 12, 1957, the first General Assembly convened at the constituent meeting in Paris. Delegates from 18 countries representing their national organizations assembled at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers with Victor Broïda as Chair. They voted on a constitution and bylaws; elected the first IFAC President and Executive Council members and appointed the Chairs of committees.

On that occasion, Victor Broïda was elected second Vice-President and appointed first Honorary Editor of IFAC. He was also the sixth President of IFAC, from 1969 to 1972. Janan Zaytoon has been the 21st President of IFAC, from 2014 to 2017.

The French NMO was AFRA until 1968, AFCET until 1998, and has been Société de l'Electricité, de l'Electronique et des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (SEE) since January 1, 1999. IFAC activities in France are coordinated by the national research organization/network GdR MACS (modeling, analysis and control of dynamic systems) of CNRS.

France has been among the leading NMOs in hosting IFAC events. The first was in 1967, and since then, 83 IFAC-sponsored events – including 2 congresses and 33 symposiums – and 26 IFAC cosponsored events have been organized in France.

The 5th IFAC World Congress was held in Paris in 1972. 1,300 delegates attended it, and 228 papers were presented. Highlights included the lively round-table discussions that stimulated later interest in IFAC workshops.

The 20th IFAC World Congress was held in Toulouse in 2017 and chaired by Dimitri Peaucelle. 2800 papers, including 133 extended abstracts, were presented at this Congress which attracted a record 3462 participants. Highlights included: historical sessions both concerning the IFAC 60th anniversary and history of Automatic Control; demonstrator sessions; panel sessions on industrial, educational and social impact of automation and control.

Many well-known French personalities have served IFAC in various positions. Since the early days of IFAC, France has been represented at all IFAC World Congresses and on nearly all IFAC technical committees. France is the largest-contributing country in terms of the sum of total number of papers and participants to the set of 6 IFAC World Congresses organized in the 20th century. Over the six past trienniums of the 20th century, France has been the second leading NMO in the number of technical committee chairs.

Other contributions of the French NMO to IFAC activities include:

- organizing four IFAC Council and related meetings (Paris in 1972, Nantes in 1998, Toulouse in 2007, Toulouse in 2017);
- funding the IFAC Foundation program to support young authors from developing countries to attend IFAC events in France;
- editing a booklet devoted to IFAC activities in France;
- co-organizing the Australia–France friendship evening of the 2008 IFAC World Congress in Seoul,
- organizing the next host friendship evening of the 2011 IFAC World Congress in Cape Town;
- establishing an annual IFAC French NMO Award to recognize and promote outstanding individual contributions by French personalities to IFAC activities;
- contributing to the historic control textbooks of IFAC;
- organizing the celebrations related to the 60th anniversary of IFAC in conjunction with the 2017 IFAC World Congress in Toulouse. Highlights included the IFAC Story e-book, History Panels and Sessions.