

**Formal Methods Europe
Minutes of the workshop and 41st meeting (Annual General Meeting)
Held at the BCS, London, UK
24 April 2006**

Present at the workshop/meeting were:

- Bernhard Aichernig [TU Graz]
- Derek Andrews [independent consultant]
- Juan Bicarregui [Rutherford Appleton Laboratory]
- Paul Boca [BCS]
- Jonathan Bowen [London South Bank University]
- Alessandro Fantechi [University of Florence]
- John Fitzgerald (Chairman) [University of Newcastle upon Tyne]
- Stefania Gnesi [ISTI]
- Cliff Jones [University of Newcastle upon Tyne]
- Volkmar Lotz [SAP]
- Nico Plat (Secretary) [West Consulting B.V.]
- Kees Pronk (Treasurer) [Delft University of Technology]

Apologies had been received from: Wolfgang Reisig, Raymond Boute, Marcel Verhoef, Dino Mandrioli and Derrick Kourie.

Workshop

The workshop had an informal character guided by questions put forward in advance by FME's Chairman John Fitzgerald:

1. What should FME aim to achieve in the next 5-10 years?
2. What are its strengths towards that aim?
3. What are its weaknesses?
4. What opportunities should FME address?
5. What are the threats to FME achieving its goals?



John Fitzgerald gave a brief summary of FME's current condition. The main points were:

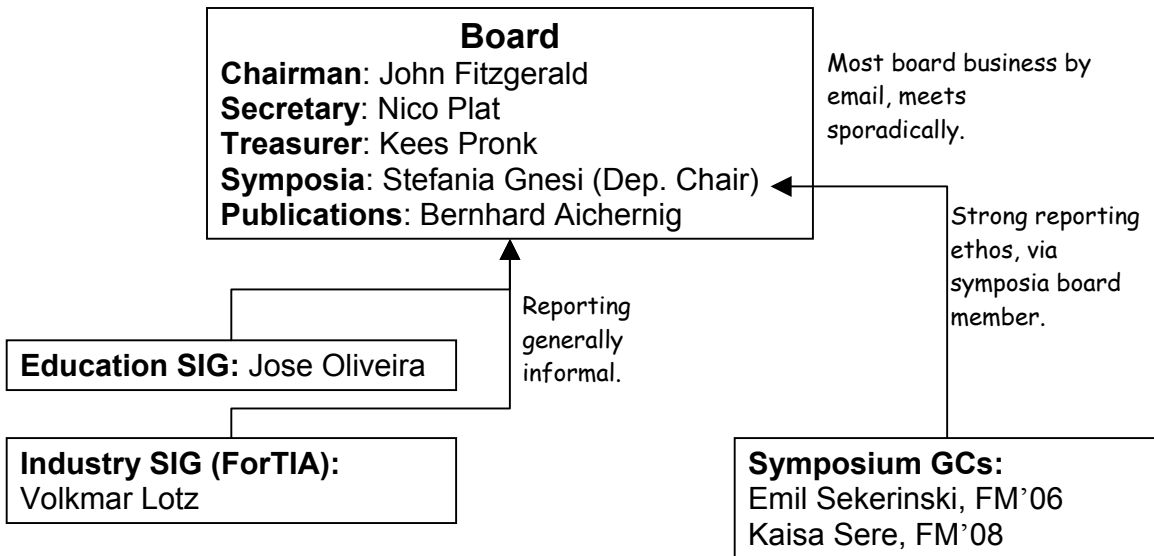
- FME's official objects are (in the terms of our constitution):
 - To stimulate the use of formal methods by European Industry
 - To promote international exchange among researchers and users of formal methods, with the object: to exchange ideas, identify common interests and make links between research and application.
- Over the last few years, we have had the following working objective:
 - To encourage and support interaction between users and researchers in formal methods.

Recent activity has been concentrated on the following areas:

- Symposia
- SIG activities:
 - SoE: 1st Intl. conference, Gent; Knowledge Base

- ForTIA: I-Days
- Board-level operations:
 - Operating procedures & regulations (sponsorship, symposium, expenses)
 - More detailed advance budgeting
 - Improvement of web site maintenance

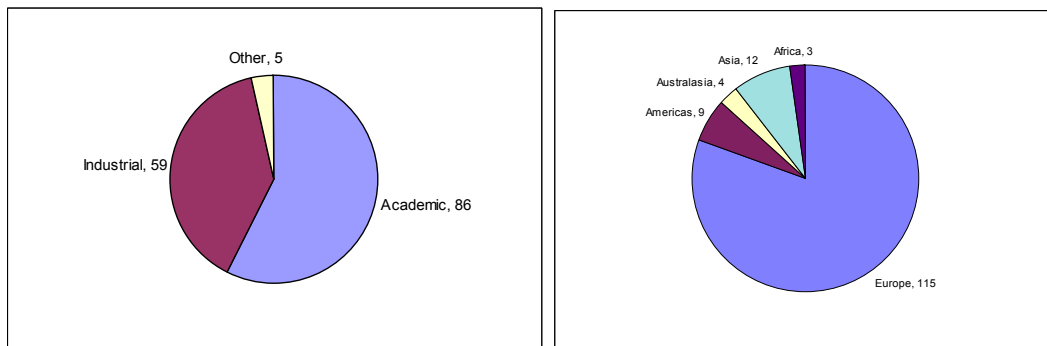
The structure of the organisation is currently as follows:



The Board was considering bringing additional members in to represent the interests of industry and academia, and the respective SIGs. John also noted that no election to the Board had ever been contested. As a result, no Board member had ever had to describe their role or their goals.

The membership situation is as follows (base don recent figures):

- We have viewed membership as being for “activists” (not a representative organisation).
- ~150 (up 11%)
- Industry/academic split reasonably healthy (not changed)
- Very Euro-centric
- Never held a serious membership drive
- But do urge Symposium GCs, PCCs and SIG members to join.



The financial situation is:

- Healthy

- Uncommitted reserves ~ € 115k
 - But the symposia are a source of risk
- Principal Income: symposia
- Principal Outgoings:
 - Board costs (travel/subsistence)
 - Sponsorship
- Budget annually, including sponsorship and special initiatives fund.
- Sponsorship requests are numerous; bids to the initiatives fund are rare.

Discussion

This is a brief capture of the points and actions that were put forward.

FME

The term “formal methods” is still biased, and Derek Andrews remarked that IT professionals’ and students’ knowledge with respect to the developments in the area over the past 20 years is still poor. Positive is that even Microsoft is using formal methods these days. FME could form an umbrella organisation (Jonathan Bowen) or a “think tank” (Paul Boca) to set out the strategy for formal methods in the next 5 to 10 years. Juan Bicarregui offered to write a text on the motivation to use formal methods for software development.

Action 41/1: Juan Bicarregui to write a text on the motivation to use formal methods for software development

An important issue is the integration of formal methods in conventional software processes (which, however, differ from company to company which makes this a difficult issue (Cliff Jones)), tools and testing (Volkmar Lotz).

A strong point of FME is its ability to “get people together” (Nico Plat) and that it is not linked to any specific projects (Alessandro Fantechi). Another strong point is the reputation of FME’s Symposium. A weak point perhaps is that FME does not have a very “flashy” outward appearance (the web site, lack of other activity, etc.). In other words: FME does not sell itself very well; it should better use the potential of the knowledge and experience that its members have.

The Wiki potentially provides a good channel for better communication. Perhaps a student can be hired during the summer to initially fill the Wiki.

Membership and membership services

Should FME actively try to increase its number of members? And if so, should members be asked for a financial contribution to the association? How to deal with the administrative overhead this will cause? It was felt that emphasis of FME’s activities should be on increasing the number of membership services first and after that on trying to increase the number of members. Examples of additional membership services could be the provision of an annual state-of-the-art account on formal methods, tool reviews, course reviews, case studies, academic papers from the past published on FME’s web site (agreement with Springer Verlag on copyrights is needed then), a forum on the web site, book reviews and synopses of papers on the web site, etc. Perhaps a special “member section” on the web site should be created.

Symposium

The idea of establishing a Steering Committee was put forward, not for day to day dealing with the Symposium but to provide overall advise on the style and culture of the Symposium to the Organisation Committee and Programme Committee (establishing e.g. rules for scientific arguments), and to aid in bringing the committee in contact with the appropriate people, or suggesting locations for holding the Symposium, when necessary. The Steering Committee

should consist of senior people in the field with an FME background. The choice if the Symposium should become a yearly one or remain an 18-monthly one should also be left to the Steering Committee. Cliff Jones suggested awarding a best paper prize at each occasion.

Grand Challenge 6

The issues addressed by GC6 are closely related to the goals of FME. How can FME actively contribute? GC6 will provide a repository of verified software. Perhaps FME can play a role coordinating access to the various repositories provided.

Action 41/2: Cliff Jones and Juan Bicarregui to make a proposal on possible contribution of FME to the CG6 effort



Annual General Meeting

1 Welcome

John Fitzgerald welcomed all those present at the meeting. He thanked Paul Boca and the BCS for hosting and organising the meeting.

2 Agree upon agenda

The agenda was agreed upon.

3 Minutes of the meeting held in Newcastle, UK, on 21 July 2005

The minutes of the meeting were approved without modification.

4 Action list

Action 39/3: John Fitzgerald to enquire amongst FME member if they are satisfied with the way FME meetings are run.

Done but no response had been received. Action closed.

Action 39/4: John Fitzgerald to initiate discussion regarding fundamental issues with respect to the existence of FME.

Done in the form of the workshop that was held this morning. Action closed.

Action 39/7: Marcel Verhoef to propose the use of FME's CMS for the ForTIA web site as well to the ForTIA board.

This plan was changed: ForTIA now also wants to use a Wiki instead. Nico Plat will setup the necessary software to be hosted by West Consulting B.V. Action closed.

Action 41/3: Nico Plat to setup Wiki-software for ForTIA

Action 39/8: José Oliveira to provide a plan for further activities of the FME Education Subgroup.
No progress, action continues. A discussion on further plans will take place during FM'06.

Action 40/1: Nico Plat to set up open source Wiki-software under fmeurope.org.

Done, action closed.

Action 40/2: Bernhard Aichernig to further promote and provide structure for FME's Wiki.

Ongoing, action continues.

Action 40/3: Bernhard Aichernig to coordinate discussion on on-line publications by FME.

Ongoing, action continues.

Action 40/4: John Fitzgerald and Stefania Gnesi to send out a call for bids for FM'08.

Done, action closed.

5 Financial report regarding the period 1 January 2005 – 31 December 2005

Kees Pronk presented the financial report for 2005. He had detected a minor float error in the accounts that will be repaired in the budget for 2006. The financial position of FME is solid, although FME remains dependant on its income from the symposia. John Fitzgerald thanked Kees for his work as FME's Treasurer during 2005.

The meeting approved the Financial Report *nem con*.

6 Report by the Audit Committee

The members of the audit committee (Randolph Johnson and Judi Romijn) had individually checked the FME accounts and found no irregularities. The meeting discharged the Treasurer from his responsibilities during this period. John thanked the Treasurer and audit committee for their work. Derek Andrews volunteered to serve as member of next year's Audit Committee. His nomination was approved *nem con*. Judi Romijn (as this was her first term as member of the Audit Committee) will be asked to serve on this committee again in 2006.

Action 41/4: Nico Plat to ask Judi Romijn to serve on the FME Audit Committee for 2006

7 Sponsorships

In 2005, FME has sponsored the following events (costs for student attendance, invited speakers, etc.): ZB 2005, IFM 2005, ICFEM'05, SEFM 2005 and the Overture Workshop held at FM'05. Kees Pronk has put procedures with respect to sponsorship in place.

8 Account of activities during the past period

John Fitzgerald presented the annual report of activities over 2005 (enclosed with the minutes). The members present accepted the report. John thanked all active FME members for their work.

9 Report on FM'05

This issue was only briefly dealt with since an extensive report had already been given at the previous meeting. The accounts on FM'05 have now been closed. A surplus of roughly € 29.000,- has been achieved. John thanked the organisation of FM'05 again for their work.

10 Board member election

In accordance with Article 10.5 of the FME Statutes, John Fitzgerald (Chairman) and Stefania Gnesi stepped down as Board members of FME and indicated their willingness to serve a further term. There were no other candidates to take their position so John and Stefania were re-elected unopposed.

11 Budget for 2006

Kees Pronk presented the budget proposal for 2006. The association has a comfortable reserve of almost € 115.000,-. A reserve of roughly € 60.000,- is considered enough not to jeopardise the association in a financial way. Therefore, FME's members should be stimulated to provide plans in agreement with the association's goals that may cost FME money.

Action 41/5: Kees Pronk to invite members to submit plans for further achieving FME's goals with possible financial commitment by FME

Stefania Gnesi proposed to increase the budget for sponsorships from € 2.500,- to € 3.500,-. Her proposal was accepted. Taking this into account, the budget was accepted by the meeting *nem con*.

12 Plans for the coming period

Plans for the coming period will be based on the results of the workshop that took place prior to the meeting and will be formalised during the FME Board meeting taking place on 25 April 2006. The plan will be sent to the members as soon as possible and can then be electronically approved.

Action 41/6: FME Board to make a plan for the coming period

13 Status report on FM'06 and FM'08

Stefania Gnesi reported on the progress of FM'06. Decisions had been made on a healthy

number of submissions. Registration for the Symposium has been opened. Signing of the contract that FME usually has with organisation of the Symposium has been somewhat troublesome since the legal department of McMaster University had objections against the proposed construction. Nevertheless, Emil Sekerinski (General Chair for FM'06) has signed the contract on his own account and the contract should therefore be regarded as a "symbolic agreement" between FME and the organisation of FM'06. Progress with organisation, in combination with the number and quality of the submitted papers, give enough confidence however for the members present at the meeting to formally agree with the continuation of the event.

The presence of FME at FM'06 was discussed. It was decided to make a flyer on FME and distribute the flyer during the event. Nico Plat will make such a flyer based on a text that Kees Pronk already prepared in the past.

Action 41/7: Nico Plat to make a flyer on FME for distribution during FM'06

Proposals to organise FM'08 have been received from four potential hosts in Europe. After a careful selection process, based on detailed proposals, the Board had decided to award the organisation of FM'08 to Åbo Akademi University's Turku Centre for Computer Science in Finland. The dates are to be finally decided, but the organisers are currently looking at 26-30 May 2008. The members present at the meeting expressed their support for this decision. The Board expressed its thanks to the representatives of the four centres that made proposals, particularly for their responsiveness to queries.

14 ForTIA

Volkmar Lotz presented the annual report of ForTIA's activities over 2005 (enclosed with the minutes). The members present accepted the report. John thanked all active ForTIA members for their work.

15 FME Education Subgroup

José Oliveira had submitted a report of the activities of FME's Education Subgroup over 2005 (enclosed with the minutes). The report was discussed and the members present accepted the report. John thanked all active members of the subgroup for their work.

16 FME web site/Wiki

Bernhard Aichernig and Nico Plat presented the current state of affairs with respect to FME's website and the FME Wiki (which has recently been set up). The web site seems more suitable for more static content on FME itself, whereas the Wiki is more dynamic and seems a more suitable form for publication of material on the subject "formal methods". It was therefore decided to slim down the FME web site and move material to the Wiki. A student can be hired during summer time to aid with this job.

Action 41/8: Bernhard Aichernig to slim down FME's web site and move material related to formal methods to the Wiki

Nico also reported on the (many) FME mailing lists. The lists receive so much spam at the moment that it is impossible to check all messages being sent to it. As a result, a number of messages sent to the lists that were valid have not been approved in time. The solution to this problem could be a technical one (upgrade of the mailing list software, installation of spam filters) but this will require a considerable effort from West Consulting B.V., the company that is sponsoring FME's web site, the Wiki and the mailing lists. Nico was asked to put forward a proposal to solve this problem.

Action 41/9: Nico Plat to put forward a proposal to solve the current problems with FME's mailing lists

17 Date and place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held during FM'06 (21-27 August), in Hamilton, Canada. The exact date, time, and location will be announced.

18 Other Business

There was no other business.

Summary of actions

Action 39/8: José Oliveira to provide a plan for further activities of the FME Education Subgroup

Action 40/2: Bernhard Aichernig to further promote and provide structure for FME's Wiki

Action 40/3: Bernhard Aichernig to coordinate discussion on on-line publications by FME

Action 41/1: Juan Bicarregui to write a text on the motivation to use formal methods for software development

Action 41/2: Cliff Jones and Juan Bicarregui to make a proposal on possible contribution of FME to the CG6 effort

Action 41/3: Nico Plat to setup Wiki-software for ForTIA

Action 41/4: Nico Plat to ask Judi Romijn to serve on the FME Audit Committee for 2006

Action 41/5: Kees Pronk to invite the member to submit plans for further achieving FME's goals with possible financial commitment by FME

Action 41/6: FME Board to make a plan for the coming period

Action 41/7: Nico Plat to make a flyer on FME for distribution during FM'06

Action 41/8: Bernhard Aichernig to slim down FME's web site and move material related to formal methods to the Wiki

Action 41/9: Nico Plat to put forward a proposal to solve the current problems with FME's mailing lists

Enclosures

- Annual report by FME
- Annual report by ForTIA
- Annual report by the Subgroup on Education