

## **Welcome to Dubrovnik**

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

We wish you a warm welcome to the 21st Meeting of the European Chapter on Combinatorial Optimization (ECCO XXI), organized by the Croatian Operational Research Society (HDOI). The scientific part of the meeting will take place at the University of Dubrovnik. We emphasize “the scientific part”, because we hope that the social and the less official contacts will allow you to explore the magic of Dubrovnik and its surrounding area.

Many books have been written about Dubrovnik, its amazing history and its seductive beauty. A few basic facts will reveal that Dubrovnik was founded in the first half of the 7th century. In the following centuries Dubrovnik progressed as a free state that reached its peak in the 15th and 16th centuries. It was the birthplace of many artists and scientists, among them the finest Croatian Renaissance playwright and prose writer Marin Držić (1508-1568), the economist Benedikt Kotruljević (1416-1469), and the famous mathematicians and physicists Marin Getaldić (1568-1626) and Ruđer Bošković (1711-1787). A catastrophic earthquake of 1667 killed over 5000 citizens and signaled the downfall of the Republic. Yet, Dubrovnik survived.

Situated on Croatia’s Dalmatian coast and known as the 'Pearl of the Adriatic', the Old City of Dubrovnik is the home of many beautiful Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque churches, monasteries, palaces and fountains. Dubrovnik became part of the UNESCO World Heritage in 1979 due to the following UNESCO criteria: it represents a masterpiece of human creative genius; it bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; it is an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates significant stages in human history.

Unfortunately, Dubrovnik was damaged in 1991 by armed conflict. This fact bears relevance for the ECCO meeting since the 4<sup>th</sup> ECCO Meeting was scheduled to take place in Dubrovnik, May 29 – 31, 1991. The meeting was cancelled due to the war in Croatia. The bomb attacks on the Old City created damage, but in subsequent years Dubrovnik was the focus of a major restoration program coordinated by UNESCO. Now, 17 years later, purely by chance

having the same dates in May 2008, Dubrovnik is – once again - in its full splendor and ready to welcome its ECCO visitors. Hence, this is the 20<sup>th</sup> held meeting of the ECCO and we are very happy with the significant interest and the response of the combinatorial community and the ECCO members.

We have 84 abstracts scheduled for presentations. There are 101 registered participants, and 197 authors contributed to the abstracts. We will have 21 sessions in 7 time slots, i.e. we will be running three parallel sessions. In addition, we will have 6 plenary talks. Given the timeframe, this schedule is quite ambitious and demanding for the participants. However, since the nature of our profession is to seek challenges, we look forward to a very creative and productive atmosphere. Following the meeting, there will be calls for papers for special issues of two journals: the Journal of Scheduling, and Algorithmic Operational Research. We hope that the meeting will generate worthwhile and interesting contributions. In addition, we hope that there will be some time for relaxed, collegial and friendly discussions among participants, and for exploring the fun part of the city of Dubrovnik.

We express sincere thanks to our sponsors, and to the ECCO Board members participating in the Programming Committee, especially to Silvano Martello who provided many helpful suggestions.

Welcome to Croatia and to Dubrovnik – *Dobro došli* !

Your local Croatian team, in alphabetical order:

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