

**Final scientific report of the  
Vth Annual Meeting of the European Social Cognition Network  
sponsored and financed by European Science Foundation**

**The aim of the initiative**

From the 4th until the 7th of September 2003, the Fifth Annual Meeting of the European Social Cognition Network (ESCON) took place in Padova, Italy. The goal of the conference was to examine the effectiveness of the forum for knowledge transfer regarding new scientific advances among senior scientists, and in particular facilitate the training of the new generation of scientists in the field of Social Cognition, in particular the Ph.D. students. The conference was designed to provide the unique opportunity for graduate students and senior staff to be able to get feedback from the foremost experts in their respective fields of research. In particular, the meeting was intentionally planned to accommodate increased participation of colleagues from European countries whose science foundations were either not forthcoming, or temporary unable to support the initiative at its conception. Thirteen ESF Member Organisations supported the participation of researchers from their national scene. Furthermore, four national organisations expressed interest in confirming their participation.

**The participants and the symposia**

Eighty-eight participants took part in the event, 57 of which were graduate and post-doctoral students and 31 of which were senior researchers in the area of Social Cognition. Participants came from the following countries: Belgium (14), Czech Republic (1), France (6), Germany (17), Italy (15), Netherlands (20), Poland (3), Portugal (5), Switzerland (1), United Kingdom (4), United States of America (2).

The complete program of the meeting appears in the appendix A. Most major themes of Social Cognition research have been treated. In the course of the eighteen parallel sessions most major areas of social cognition have been addressed. One symposium investigated the cognitive processes involved when stimuli elicit positive versus negative responses. Two symposia focused on the way in which social categories, and the self, are cognitively represented. Two symposia examined the variables involved in decision-making tasks. Two symposia examined automatic processes in social cognition, both in relation to affect and with respect to the relation between the implicit and the explicit components of attitudes. Three symposia focused on the role of stereotypes, especially in relation to identity threats and impression formation tasks. One symposium dealt with the behavioral consequences of cognition. One other symposium focused on the way in which contextual and cognitive factors affect persuasion processes. One symposium presented research on the emotional components of the expression of attitudes towards social groups and social events. The last three symposia addressed the issue of mental control, social inference and the role of priming in social cognition research. A lot of space was given to both graduate and post-doctoral students (53 on a total of 63 parallel presentations). In addition, four senior researchers presented their latest work in four plenary sessions on topics in which they are leading researchers. Finally, a social event, three dinners and two lunches were offered, allowing participants to exchange ideas and get to know each other.

## **Results**

The first result of the conference was the exchange of the most recent scientific developments in the field of Social Cognition. The second and equally important result was to provide a broad platform for young researchers to both present their research ideas and projects and receive extensive feedback from experts in the field whom they would otherwise not be able to meet. Finally, and more importantly, the meeting gave the opportunity to reach more enduring solutions for both the

development of intra-European research and scientific collaboration and a more permanent platform for graduate training that combines the distributed expertise across a number of European countries.

Luciano Arcuri

Local organiser