General Chairs Welcome

Dear GECCO attendees,

Welcome to the 2021 Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference (GECCO), hosted from Lille, France. GECCO'21 is the second edition, after GECCO'20 in Cancún, México, to be held online due to the global coronavirus crisis. For most of 2020, the Organizing Committee was making preparations for a hybrid mode. However, as progress at fighting the pandemic was slower than we had hoped, in December 2020 the decision was made to go fully online.

GECCO is the premier peer-reviewed conference in the field of Evolutionary Computation, and the main conference of the Special Interest Group on Genetic and Evolutionary Computation (SIGEVO) of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). To identify the most important and technically sound papers, the conference implements a rigorous and selective review process, conducted by two chairs per track in coordination with the Editor-in-Chief. The technical program is divided into 13 tracks reflecting all aspects of our field, including the new Neuroevolution track.

This year, we received 362 regular paper submissions and accepted 134 of them as oral presentations (37% acceptance rate) and 136 as posters. Besides the technical tracks, GECCO'21 offers 38 tutorials selected from 45 proposals, 22 workshops that cover important topics in our field, and a range of events: the Humies Awards ceremony, 13 competitions, Women@GECCO, Evolutionary Computation in Practice, a five-day SIGEVO Summer School preceding the conference, and more.

The highlights of the event are the keynotes given by three esteemed researchers: Joshua Tenenbaum of MIT, USA, Marc Mézard of École Normale Supérieure, France, and Melanie Mitchell of Santa Fe Institute, USA (SIGEVO keynote).

We are thankful to all authors, tutorial speakers, as well as workshop and competition organizers who contributed to GECCO despite the precarious pandemic conditions. We would also like to express our thanks to all organizers, in particular to all chairs: tracks, tutorials, workshops, publicity, competitions, late breaking abstracts, and hot-off-the-press. We also thank the organizers of the Humies, and of Women@GECCO, as well as to the members of our Program Committee. We sincerely appreciate all these efforts and contributions.

Some members of the organization team deserve particular recognition: Francisco Chicano, Editor-in-Chief; Bilel Derbel, Local Chair; Nadarajen Veerapen, Electronic Media Chair; Arnaud Liefooghe, Virtualization Chair; Aniko Ekart, Publicity Chair, and Alberto Tonda, Proceedings Chair. The effort of this core organizing team was essential for the success of GECCO'21. We also thank Ahmed Kheiri for optimizing the schedule of the conference, Brenda Ramirez and Roxane Rose of Executive Events who helped us with registrations and the logistics of the event, as well as Franz Rothlauf, Enrique Alba, Darrell Whitley and Peter Bosman from SIGEVO and the Business Committee for their valuable advice and guidance.

Last but not least, our gratitude goes to our generous business sponsors and institutional supporters: Cognizant, Google, eMapa, as well as Université de Lille and Centre de Recherche en Informatique, Signal et Automatique de Lille (CRIStAL).

The Organizing Committee worked hard to provide diversified means for participating remotely in GECCO'21. To this aim, we engaged a few interlinked online platforms, which should facilitate not only listening to talks, but also more informal interaction in coffee breaks, poster sessions, and other events. We hope these arrangements will translate into a great experience for all attendees. Enjoy the conference!

Krzysztof Krawiec, GECCO 2021 General Chair
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