Dear members of the Groupement AMPERE,

this summer, EUROMAR will finally be held in Bilbao after the failed attempt four years ago. If you ever have organized such a conference, you know how much effort, time, and energy goes into it. I can only imagine how frustrating it was for the organizers to bin all the preparations during spring of 2020 and just run a small online conference in the fall. So finally, the efforts pay off and we are looking forward to a great conference with a very diverse program in Bilbao.

The special atmosphere of EUROMAR is rooted in the fact that it rotates around Europe, and we see different styles and cultures that shape each edition of the conference in different ways. This is only possible because in each location volunteers are willing to invest countless hours into planning and organizing EUROMAR in a local way. Thank you, Oscar and all the other local organizers this year, in the past, and in the future, for putting up such an effort for the magnetic-resonance community. Besides the local organizers, the EUROMAR board and the scientific committees play also a major role in getting the conference going year after year. This is also a lot of work, especially in times where there are uncertainties. Thank you, Geoffrey, Lucio, Thomas, Anne, and all the unnamed members of the board for making EUROMAR such a success during the past 20 years.

I wish you all a good summertime and hope to see many of you in person in Bilbao.

Matthias Ernst
Secretary General
Groupement AMPERE
Why magnetic resonance and why NMR and MRI?

I initiated my exploration of Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) during my second year of Master’s at the University of Paris VI, under the guidance of Professor Paul Vigny. Right from the start, I was captivated by the interdisciplinary nature of this spectroscopy and the associated concepts. From quantum mechanics and spin operators to mathematical treatments of NMR signals, through the origins of line widths, console electronics or the effects of molecular dynamics, each aspect deeply fascinated me. At the time, at the age of 23, having just completed a training in mathematics and engineering techniques, all these fundamental concepts sparked my interest. Concurrently, NMR is essentially experimental, and I immediately enjoyed the process of conducting NMR measurements. Recording an NMR spectrum involves various facets, ranging from sample formulation to setting up instrumentation, selecting nuclei and pulse sequences, calibrating parameters... The data analysis itself often poses a real challenge, and as a young student, I saw myself as an investigator tracking clues to elucidate the structure of a molecule.

In essence, NMR appeared to me from the outset as a technique with almost infinite possibilities, with considerable potential (I started in the 90s, a period where solution NMR for structural biology garnered significant attention and excitement), enabling the deployment of rigorous approaches to address a multitude of scientific challenges in chemistry or biology.

What is your favorite frequency?

My favorite nucleus is undoubtedly the proton, given its sensitivity, ubiquitous nature, and the numerous challenges it presents, especially in solid-state NMR. Today, thanks to very fast magic angle spinning and high magnetic fields, we finally achieve highly resolved proton spectra on solid substrates, fully unlocking the potential of this nucleus for NMR spectroscopy. For proton NMR in the solid-state, my favorite frequencies are between 800 and 1000 MHz. I did not have a change yet to run proton spectra at 1200 MHz but I would love to.

What do you still not understand?

There is a multitude of concepts in NMR that I do not yet understand, and I could certainly spend several more decades improving my knowledge.

Luckiest experiment you have ever done.

One of my most memorable experiences dates back to the time when I was working at ENS de Lyon with Professor Lyndon Emsley on the implementation of the INADEQUATE experiment in solids. We demonstrated the feasibility of exploiting carbon-carbon scalar couplings in microcrystalline samples such as powdered amino acids to achieve correlations through chemical bonds. Our next goal was to extend this approach to disordered solids, which posed a significant challenge because in such systems, the carbon-13 linewidths can be ten or a hundred times larger than the scalar coupling values. We conducted the first trial on a carbon-13 enriched cellulose sample provided by Michel Bardet. I initiated the experiment one evening in the year 1999, and I still vividly remember my enthusiasm when, the next morning after processing the signal, I observed a beautiful INADEQUATE spectrum with all the expected correlations. At that time, the concepts of inhomogeneous and homogeneous broadening were not yet deeply rooted, and the possibility of implementing this type of spectroscopy on disordered samples was extraordinary. This led to one of my most cited papers!

What was the worst mistake you have made during your lab time?

When I was a young engineer at the Department of Chemistry at ENS Lyon, my responsibilities included filling magnets with helium. I recall a day where I almost quenched magnet during the filling because I did not check whether the helium tank was full. On that day, the supplier had delivered an empty dewar. Fortunately, a more experienced colleague noticed something strange was happening and halted the process just on time. I think that I could not sleep for two nights afterwards. Since, I have never repeated that mistake...

Most memorable conference story

I remember a funny story from the ENC 2015 conference held at Asilomar, where I was attending as a regular participant. The Chair was Professor Teresa Carломagno. The conference was really great. And every day, about ten people who confused me with Teresa were congratulating me for the remarkable organization.
With whom (historical person) would you like to meet?
I recently visited Brazil, and I took the opportunity to delve into Brazilian literature. I particularly discovered the masterpiece „Dom Casmurro“ by Machado de Assis. I loved this book so much that I wish I could meet its author and have a conversation with him.

When do you get your best ideas?
When I hike. Walking in beautiful landscapes often soothes the mind and allows new ideas to emerge.

If you had just one month time for travelling - where would you go to?
I would like to go to Japan because it’s a country I have never visited. I would love to explore the blend of modernity and tradition that characterizes this country, discover its culture, enjoy its cuisine, and climb Mount Fuji!

Your idea of happiness.
For me, happiness involves spending time with those I love and giving back the attention and care that I have had the chance to receive.

Position: Research engineer at CNRS

Awards:
2010. Cristal medal of the CNRS
2016. Prié Jaffé and Berthelot medal of the French Academy of Sciences
2023. Gönther Laukien Prize
2023. Grand Prix Pierre Sée of the French Chemical Society

Homepage: https://perso.ens-lyon.fr/anne.lesage/

Education:
1992: Degree of Engineer, Ecole Centrale de Paris, Paris
1992: M. Sc. in Biophysics, University of Paris VI, Paris
1995: Ph. D. in Biophysics
2003: Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches, University of Lyon

Interests:
Mountain hiking, yoga, knitting, cooking... and NMR.

Second Announcement

XIIth EF-EPR Conference
8-12 September 2024 – Marseille – France

The local organizing committee and the French EPR association, ARPE, are pleased to invite you to the XIIth Conference of the European Federation of EPR groups (EF-EPR) that will be held in Marseille (France) in September 2024. This coincides with the 20th anniversary of ARPE.

Plenary Speakers
Dr. Patrice Bertet    Université Paris-Saclay, FR
Prof. Enrica Bordignon  Université Geneva, CH
Prof. Daniella Goldfarb  Weizmann Institute, IL
Prof. Eric McInnes  University Manchester, UK
Dr. Sabine Richert  Universität Freiburg, DE
Prof. Sharon Ruthstein  University Bar-Ilan, IL
Prof. José Vidal Gancedo  ICMAB, ES

Keynote Speakers
Prof. Jan Behrends  Freie Universität Berlin, DE
Prof. Valérie Belle  Aix-Marseille Université FR
Dr. Bela Bode  University St Andrews, UK
Prof. Maria Fittipaldi  Università Firenze, IT
Dr. Daniel Klose  ETH Zurich, CH
Dr. Andreas Pöppl  Universität Leipzig, DE
Dr. Emma Richards  University Cardiff, UK
Dr. Mantas Šimėnas  University Vilnius, LT
Dr. Claudia Tait  University Oxford, UK
Abstract Submission
Abstract submission opened on March 1st 2024. Participants can submit an abstract for oral presentation or poster until June 14th 2024. Abstract submission must be done through the official website of the conference: https://efepr2024.sciencesconf.org/

Registration and payment
Registration is done through the official website of the conference. Payment must be done on the Azur-Colloque website; the link is provided on the registration page of the conference website. Registration fees include conference bag, welcome reception (Sunday 8th September evening), coffee-breaks, lunches and social program. The Conference Gala Dinner will have an additional cost of 60 €.

Full registration prices
Academics   650 €
Students    450 €
Industrials 1200 €
Accompanying  250 €
Gala dinner  60 €

Social Program
Social activities to visit the Calanques by boat or discover one of the new museum attractions in Marseille will be organized on the afternoon of Wednesday 11th September. The Gala Dinner will be held the same evening.

Important Dates
14th June 2024: Dead-line for abstract submission

In Memoriam
Professor Vladimír Sklenář
(April 16, 1951 – April 13, 2024)

In mid-April this year, the Czech and international NMR community received the sad news that Professor Vladimír Sklenář had passed away. The news came as a shock to those who had not seen Vladimir in recent months. It was hard to believe such a vital and energetic person was gone.

Vladimír Sklenář was born in Brno in 1951. He studied physical chemistry at the Faculty of Science of Masaryk University (then Jan Evangelista Purkyně University) and received his Master's degree in 1975 for his thesis on electrochemistry.

After completing his military service in 1976, he joined the Institute of Scientific Instruments of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (ISI), where he focused on NMR spectroscopy. At that time, the pulse method of measuring NMR spectra with Fourier transform was beginning to dominate, opening the way for the rapid development of NMR spectroscopy methods and a wide range of applications in chemistry and biochemistry. At ISI, which at that time was mainly technology-oriented, Vladimir immediately embarked on a path of fundamental research and publication of original scientific results in international journals. His contributions, particularly in developing methods for pulse NMR spectroscopy, were instrumental in shaping the field. In collaboration with Jaroslav Kypr and Michaela Vorlíčková of the Biophysical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, he published several papers on the structure of DNA based on $^{31}$P spectra.

In 1984 he defended his dissertation on composite pulses in NMR spectroscopy at the Technical University in Brno and obtained a PhD in applied physics.

The milestone in Vladimir Sklenář's scientific career was his postdoctoral fellowship at the Laboratory of Chemical Physics at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD, USA, in 1986 and 1987. During his fifteen-month stay at the NIH, Vladimir published thirteen original scientific papers with Adriaan Bax and other colleagues, mainly on the study of proteins and nucleic acids using NMR. These papers, which gained international recognition, became the basis for the development of biomolecular NMR methods in the following years and are still cited today. His work not only advanced the field but also facilitated the career advancement of many of his younger Czech colleagues, including the author of these lines.
After returning from the USA, Vladimír could not continue his work at the ISI due to a lack of equipment and suitably qualified staff. His scientific work in the late 1980s and early 1990s was mainly carried out in collaboration with Professor Juli Feigon from the University of California, Los Angeles. Together, they published several seminal studies on the structure of nucleic acids using NMR spectroscopy, including the first paper on the structure of a DNA triplex, published in *Nature* in 1990.

After the US period, Vladimír spent several years in Strasbourg as a researcher with Marion Merrell Dow. The most famous work from this period is the WATERGATE method for measuring the NMR spectra of molecules in aqueous solutions. This method achieved universal application in biomolecular NMR and the original article in *J. Biomol. NMR* from 1992 is one of the most cited scientific works by a Czech author with over 3500 citations. In 1995, Vladimír Sklenář returned to Brno, where he established the NMR Spectroscopy Laboratory at the Faculty of Science. Under his leadership, the laboratory focused on the development of NMR spectroscopy methods and their application to the study of the structure and dynamics of biomolecules. In 1997, Vladimír was appointed full Professor of Physical Chemistry. The laboratory he led was incorporated into the Laboratory of Structure and Dynamics of Biomolecules, which became the National Centre for Biomolecular Research in 2001.

Together with Professor Koča, Vladimír Sklenář played a key role in the establishment and development of the Central European Institute of Technology (CEITEC) at Masaryk University. He advocated the hitherto unknown concept of central laboratories with state-of-the-art equipment and qualified staff, providing services far beyond the capabilities of individual research groups or departments. Although NMR spectroscopy was close to his heart, his foresight and insight allowed him to recognize the importance of a modern integrative structural biology approach, which enables the study the complex spatiotemporal organization of biological machines. He materialized his vision by promoting the establishment of a structural biology center that harbors all major structural biology techniques, including high-end electron cryo-microscopy, under the umbrella of CEITEC. Until 2016, Professor Sklenář was the coordinator of the structural biology program at CEITEC. He has also been involved in projects supporting research infrastructures such as the Czech Infrastructure for Integrative Structural Biology (CIISB) and Instruct-ERIC. Thanks to Professor Sklenář’s organisational and communication skills, the Josef Dadok National NMR Centre (CEITEC) is now an integral part of the European network of structural biology infrastructures.

During his scientific career, Professor Vladimír Sklenář authored 147 scientific papers, the importance of which is demonstrated by more than 10,000 citations. He was a member of the Learned Society of the Czech Republic and served on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Magnetic Resonance* and the *Journal of Biomolecular NMR*.

We expected Professor Sklenář to remain a driving force and organizer in the scientific community of structural biology and a mentor to younger colleagues for many years to come, but a serious illness decided otherwise...

Radovan Fiala, Richard Štefl, Lukáš Trantírek, Lukáš Žídek
Central European Institute of Technology, Masaryk University, Brno
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Future conferences

Ampere Event 2024

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ampere NMR School 2024</td>
<td>Zakopane, Poland</td>
<td>June 16-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euromar 2024</td>
<td>Bilbao, Spain</td>
<td>June 30 to July 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th MRPM</td>
<td>Tromsø, Norway</td>
<td>August 26-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIIth EFEPR Conference</td>
<td>Marseille (France)</td>
<td>September 8-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ampere Event 2025

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpine Conference</td>
<td>Chamonix, France</td>
<td>September 14-18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>