

NARRATIVE

The Ninth Liquid Matter Conference

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Narrative

The Ninth Liquid Matter Conference

Guest Editors

José Maria Tavares
*ISEL—Lisbon Polytechnic
School of Engineering*

Margarida Telo da Gama
University of Lisbon

Maria da Graça Miguel
University of Coimbra

Paulo Teixeira
*ISEL—Lisbon Polytechnic
School of Engineering*

Liquids 2014 was organized jointly by the Liquids Section of the Condensed Matter Division of the European Physical Society (EPS), the University of Lisbon, and the School of Engineering of the Lisbon Polytechnic Institute (ISEL). Previous conferences in this series were held in Lyon (1990), Firenze (1993), Norwich (1996), Granada (1999), Konstanz (2002), Utrecht (2005), Lund (2008) and Vienna (2011).

The conference comprised 11 plenary lectures, 25 keynote lectures, 93 contributed talks and 520 posters. As an innovation, two poster sessions were held for each topic: this gave delegates the opportunity to view more posters that might be of interest to them, and allowed the Organizing Committee greater freedom to accommodate late or misplaced posters. We are pleased to report that the poster sessions were well attended and accompanied with much lively discussion.

In common with earlier editions of the Liquid Matter Conference, the most popular topics were Colloids and Confined Fluids, which together accounted for one-third of contributed talks and 40% of all posters. However the trend already identified at Liquids 2011—a shift within the community towards non-equilibrium and biological or bio-inspired systems—looks set to continue.

The recipient of the EPS Liquid Matter Prize 2014 was Professor Robert Evans FRS, of the University of Bristol, UK, ‘for seminal works applying density functional theory to the statistical mechanics of liquid matter, including highly original and lasting contributions to understanding interfaces and phenomena such as criticality, wetting, capillarity, and phase transitions of simple and complex fluids’. After reviewing work on simple fluids in confinement, Professor Evans finished off his lecture titled ‘Simple liquids in confinement—eight liquid matter conferences on’ with some of his recent work on the role of critical fluctuations in determining the phase behaviour of colloids immersed in a confined binary mixture.

Two other prestigious prizes were awarded during this conference, which were highlights of the scientific programme. The EPS Invited Speaker Prize went to Professor Francesco Sciortino, of Università di Roma ‘La Sapienza’. In his lecture ‘Providing valence to colloids: equilibrium gels and ultrastable liquids’, Professor Sciortino described some of his recent work on how valence determines the phase behaviour of colloidal particles. Finally, the European Physical Journal E Pierre-Gilles de Gennes Lecture Prize honoured Professor Ludwik Leibler, of ESPCI Paris Tech, France, ‘for his seminal contributions to polymer physics and the revolutionary polymeric materials, self-healing elastomers and *vitrimers* that he invented’. Professor Leibler’s lecture on ‘Nanobridging and organ repair’ explored adhesion by solutions of nanoparticles as an alternative to sutures in medicine, a subject aptly lying at the crossroads of soft and living matter, fundamental and applied research.



Figure 1. The sponsors of LMC9.

As is customary at Liquid Matter Conferences, the student poster prizes were presented at the Closing Session on Friday 25 July, as follows: the EPS poster Prize went to S Gokhale (Bangalore, India); the EPL Prize was split among A Fialho (Lisbon, Portugal), A Newton (Amsterdam, The Netherlands) and L Paciolini (Cambridge, UK); and the Soft Matter Prize to S James (Maynooth, Ireland).

Liquids 2014 was attended by more than 680 delegates (of whom about 180 students) from over 40 countries. These numbers are a bit down on the previous conference in the series (Vienna 2011), which probably reflects the current economic uncertainty in some parts of Europe and the wider world. However, it is noteworthy that more than 150 delegates (>20% of total) were based at institutions outside Europe, including in such countries as Algeria and Colombia, which are traditionally less well-represented at Liquid Matter Conferences.

We were especially successful in attracting local sponsorship, in particular from the Faculty of Sciences of Lisbon University, which enabled us to run our conference at a very conveniently located and well-equipped venue. We were also gratified to be able to award just under 30 bursaries, in the form of fee waivers, to students and other delegates from less wealthy countries/institutions. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the financial contributions of all our sponsors, listed in figure 1, as well as the effort and dedication of our colleagues on the Local Organizing Committee, student helpers, University of Lisbon, ISEL and Agência Abreu staff, and, last but not least, our International Programme Committee members, who together made Liquids 2014 possible.

Finally, the EPS Liquids Board met during Liquids 2014 and decided that the Tenth Liquid Matter Conference will be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 16–21 July 2017.