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The fifteenth meeting of the European Colloid and Interface Society (ECIS) was held in the historic university city of Coimbra from 16th to 21st September 2001. This follows in the tradition of these annual meetings, which started in Como, Italy, in 1987. From the beginning these were intended as interdisciplinary meetings, with participation from chemists, physicists, life and materials scientists, both from academia and industry. The 15th meeting followed this tradition. There was a broad scientific programme, with sessions on *Self Assembly in Mixed Systems*, *Surface Modification*, *Biological and Biomimetic Systems*, *Theory and Modelling*, *New Techniques and Developments*, *Food and Pharmaceuticals*, *Dynamics at Interfaces* and *Mesoscopic and Mesoporous Systems*. In spite of the shadow of the tragic events of September 11th, the meeting attracted 340 participants from 34 countries. It was especially gratifying that our aim to encourage participation of younger scientists succeeded.

The meeting had a very strong scientific programme. We were particularly pleased to be host to the first *Rhodia* Colloid Prize Lecture, which was presented by Professor Kre Larsson of the University of Lund, Sweden. In addition there were 16 invited lectures, 62 oral presentations and 184 posters.

This special issue of *Progress in Colloid and Polymer Science* contains a selection of the contributions, all of which have been peer reviewed. We take this opportunity to thank all the colleagues who accepted to review these manuscripts. We also thank all the members of the scientific committee, the local organising committee and the sponsors who helped to make ECIS 2001 such a memorable meeting. Finally, we hope that you will enjoy reading the contributions to this special issue, which we feel highlights some of the important contemporary advances in the area of colloid and interface science.

Maria da Graça Miguel
Hugh D. Burrows

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