

1st meeting of the EPS Awards and Distinctions Committee

Participants: Luisa Cifarell (co-chair), Richard Dendy, Enrique Diez Fernandez, Anna Di Ciaccio (co-chair), Lukas Gallmann, Gina Gunaratnam, Anne Pawsey

1. Welcome and Introduction

Anna Di Ciaccio made a brief introduction. First, she thanked the new Awards and Distinctions Committee members for accepting this role. She recalled that EPS awards many prizes (about 50: 5 "central" and others awarded by Divisions/Groups) to outstanding individuals in physics and is responsible for ensuring high procedure standards. The Committee's main task is to advise the Executive Committee on the policy for this activity.

We do not yet have a single procedure for prizes/distinctions/awards, but several divisional/group award procedures. Looking to the future, we could provide general guidelines for improvement and consistency, for example, if we decide to stop awarding a prize. Here are some areas we want to improve:

- increasing the visibility of the nomination (via the internet, post, etc.) to reach a wider community, i.e., get many more nominations;
- gender equality (no women are nominated for several awards), diversity, and inclusion.

2. EPS central prize guidelines, rules, and statistics on nominations

Anne Pawsey presented the five central EPS prizes. The Executive Committee awarded three prizes: the Gero Thomas Medal, the EPS Early Career Prize, and the EPS Outstanding Achievement Award; for the other two, the EPS Honorary Member and EPS Fellow, the recommendations are passed to the Council while for the Emmy Noether Distinction, the nominations are collected centrally but attributed by the EO committee. She showed statistics on prizes and women's nominations collected over the past year. She stressed the low number of nominations overall, with three prizes awarded with only one nomination; moreover, in 2023, among all prize nominations, only five were females, and seven prizes were awarded with NO female nominees. There are quite different rules from prize to prize, i.e., self-nominations are permitted for the EPS Early Career Prize but not for EPS Fellow, and there is a difference in prize money (Emmy Noether Distinction has no prize money!)

3. Inputs from divisions/groups

Lukas Gallmann presented the QEOD awards in a few slides. He explained his division's rules to select the best award candidates. Diversity tends to be acceptable in the composition of award committees. However, he claimed there were not enough high-quality nominations (too many prizes) and suggested that some should be quietly dropped. Award committee members are asked to encourage the nomination of suitable female candidates. Increasing the pool of nominees makes ensuring a balanced selection of winners easier. Enrique Diez Fernandez of the CMD Division has a similar experience: low numbers of applications and more support to achieve a better gender balance. To increase the number of Spanish EPS members, he asked Anne if it would be possible to become EPS members with an additional fee to the

Spanish Physics Society registration. Richard Dendy, former Plasma Physics Division Chair for six years, briefly described his Division's prizes, rules, and past awardees, all available on the Division's website. He indicated that the evolving gender balance of this research community, starting from a very low proportion of women scientists in the 1970s and 1980s, is reflected in the gender balance between more experienced honours and early career awards.

4. **Proposal of resuming the EPS Edison Volta prize**

Luisa Cifarelli proposed to resume the EPS Edison Volta Prize (established as an EPS central prize) awarded every two years from 2012 to 2018 and then abandon it for lack of interest of the sponsor to finance it. The EPS Edison Volta Prize was awarded biennially to individuals or groups of up to 3 people. The prize consisted of a cash award of Euro 10,000 for the prize winner(s), a diploma, and a medal. Luisa will contact the sponsor again to understand if they could renovate the interest to a new sponsorship for this prize. Richard Dendy pointed out that the track record of this Prize is itself a significant asset for EPS, especially given the high standing of all past awardees. This asset should not be lost to EPS merely because a commercial sponsor no longer prioritizes it. The financial element is probably less important to prospective awardees than the prestige. Hence, if necessary, the prize could be continued as an unsponsored "EPS Volta Prize" with a token financial reward. Of course, other potential commercial sponsors should first be approached, if possible, on the relatively short timescale needed to re-establish the continuity of this prize.

5. **Conclusions**

For most of the prizes, we concluded that there is a real need to increase the number of applications and to have an adequate number of female nominations (this may vary depending on the target of the prize (younger or more experienced physicists)). Increasing the number of nominees could facilitate a gender-balanced selection of awards.

We recognize that, logically, increasing the number of nominations implies increasing the number of unsuccessful nominations while also increasing the workload for proposers. Nevertheless, we consider that this collective investment in the future of the European physics research community would be highly desirable.

A few suggestions:

Improve the website's current layout (www.eps.com) to provide clear and complete information about EPS prizes, add deadlines and guidelines, and explicitly encourage female applications in the call for nominations.

In addition, Anne could send an e-mail to the Chairs of the Divisions/Groups, informing them of the open call for nominations for the central EPS prizes and soliciting applications.