

ACECH Annual Report

2018



**Asociación de Científicos
Españoles en la
Confederación Helvética**

Letter from the President

Dear members and friends of ACECH,

Following in the footsteps of other groups of Spanish researchers abroad, we created the Society of Spanish Researchers in Switzerland (ACECH). Switzerland is such an attractive place to conduct scientific research, which has attracted a great deal of talented Spanish fellows. For this reason, we felt that establishing such a Society was a very timely and appropriate endeavor.

Our modest goal during this first year was to consolidate some basic elements, so that ACECH could stand on its own two feet, ready to grow in the future with a solid basis. I think it is fair to conclude that we have successfully achieved this goal. Let me highlight some of the main achievements to support this claim:

- We drafted our statutes, at the heart of which, is our vocation to reinforce the network of Spanish researchers in Switzerland, to build bridges with our colleagues and institutions in Spain and to disseminate the important role that science and education play in our modern societies. This process culminated in March 2018, when ACECH was incorporated at the Chamber of Commerce of Canton Bern.
- We subsequently celebrated our first General Assembly, and an associated scientific event, whereby women in science, industrial and academic research, and social sciences were represented. We celebrated subsequent scientific events and round tables in Neuchâtel, Lausanne and Zurich, whereby we vividly discussed topics related to science and scientific policy-making, and enjoyed a guided visit to the Ethnographic Museum in Neuchâtel.
- Another important milestone was our incorporation into RAICEX. RAICEX is a network of sister societies of Spanish researchers located in 15 foreign countries. RAICEX brings together over 3,500 researchers to give them a single voice, facilitating contacts between Spain and the countries where Spanish scientists are working, and serving as a sort of loudspeaker to promote and disseminate the work of its members and the science policies implemented in other countries.
- In this regard, one of our missions is to advise scientific policy-makers whenever possible, as we have been exposed to very successful scientific systems. This experience could indeed prove very valuable in strengthening the Spanish science system. Thus, we met Pedro Duque (Spain's Minister of Science, Innovation and Universities) during one of his state visits to CERN. During this meeting, he got to know our situation in Switzerland as we shared our experiences.
- Our communication team has put into place a web page, social network channels, through which our more than 200 members receive useful information such as job opportunities and grant calls from Spain and Switzerland.

Looking back, it is very difficult to express how simultaneously happy and proud I am of our first year's achievements. It has been such a privilege for me to chair ACECH during its first year. However, all this would have proved impossible without the help of many people and institutions. Firstly, I would like to thank our sponsors and collaborators: Fundación Ramón Areces, the Spanish Embassy in Bern, and the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology. Special thanks go to the remaining board of directors and volunteers, who have employed their great talent and passion to make this adventure a great success. This has been such a rewarding experience. On a personal note, I was moved when one of our most veteran members said during one of our events, that he wished an "ACECH" would have been around when he pioneered scientific mobility in the 70's. This statement gave me even more motivation to champion this project. I am convinced that the future looks bright for ACECH.

I look so forward to our continued journey together.

Truly yours,

Pablo Sinues



For more information, please contact pablo.sinues@unibas.ch



Pablo Sinues, President of ACECH

Vision and Goals

ACECH is an independent non-profit organization created by and for the community of Spanish researchers in Switzerland. Funded in November 2017 and managed entirely by volunteers, the association aims at serving as a network for mutual support and strengthening the collaboration between Spain and Switzerland by channeling and disseminating the interests and activities of its members to the authorities and civil societies of both countries.

The work of the association develops around four main goals:

- **Representative** – Representation of the Spanish research community in Switzerland to the Spanish and Swiss authorities.
- **Social** – Support and collaboration between members.
- **Informative** – Scientific dissemination.
- **Sponsoring** – Promotion and mediation to create and reinforce collaborations between Spain and Switzerland.



Main goals of ACECH

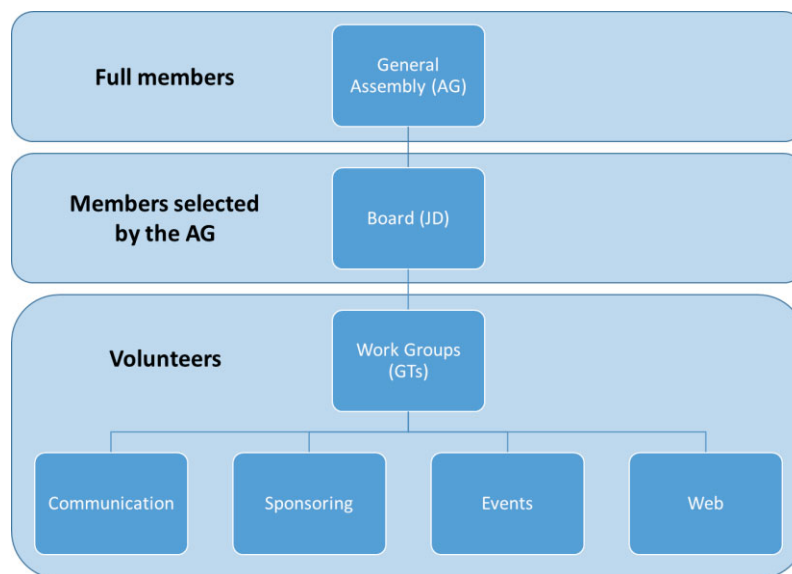
These goals are carried out through a series of both continued and eventual activities including networking, social and scientific events for members and public, distribution of relevant information among members, development of mentoring and support tools for young researchers and newcomers, collaboration with the Office for Education on outreach activities and bilateral discussions with the Spanish Embassy and Ministry for Education to advocate for better return opportunities and promote positive transformations of the Spanish science system.

ACECH belongs to the Network of Spanish Researchers Abroad (Red de Asociaciones de Investigadores y Científicos Españoles en el Exterior: RAICEX). This network, formed by 15 associations registered in different countries, appears as an answer to the growing need of joining and representing under a common frame the community of expatriate Spanish researchers interested in sharing and transferring their competences and acquired knowledge in a global and multilateral scientific context.

Structure

ACECH was created and is managed exclusively by volunteers. The association is structured as follows:

- **The General Assembly (Asamblea General: AG)** is the highest decision-making body of the association, and it is composed of all the full members.
- **The Board (Junta Directiva: JD)** is the managing body of the association, and it is composed of five members elected by the AG.
- **The Work Groups (Grupos de Trabajo: GTs)**, composed by voluntary members, are responsible for the operation of the association in coordination with the JD.



Structure of ACECH

The structure and functions of the GTs is adapted to the running needs of the association, covering both permanent and continuous tasks and temporary actions. ACECH is currently composed of four GTs, run by around XX volunteers.

- **GT Communication** takes care of all the digital communication activities, including email correspondence and management of ACECH social networks (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram).
- **GT Sponsoring** is in charge finding and stablishing sponsoring agreements with public and private bodies to fund the operation and activities of the association.
- **GT Events** is responsible for planning and organizing all ACECH events such as the yearly General Assembly and various networking, scientific and social activities.
- **GT Web** takes care of updating and maintaining the ACECH website.




Pablo Sinues
 Presidente
 Tenure-Track Assistant Professor
 University of Basel & ETH Zurich
 Translational research



Natalia Guerrero Alburquerque
 Vicepresidenta y coordinadora del grupo de financiación
 PhD Student
 EMPA
 Non-isocyanate polyurea aerogels & polymers



Moisés Bueno
 Secretario y coordinador del grupo de comunicación
 Senior Scientist
 EMPA
 Functional Materials Department




Javier Ribera Regal
 Tesorero
 Scientist at EMPA
 CRO at MycoSolutions AG
 Wood biotechnology, microbiology



David Salido Monzú
 Vocal y coordinador del grupo de desarrollo web
 Postdoc
 ETH Zurich
 Optical metrology



Paula Díaz Redondo
 Coordinadora del grupo de organización de eventos (Zurich)
 PhD ETH Zurich
 Energy policy, environmental management



Clara Galán Navarro
 Coordinadora del grupo de organización de eventos (Romandía)
 PhD EPFL
 Bioengineering




Daniel Rodríguez Gutiérrez
 Voluntario del grupo de comunicación (LinkedIn)
 Assistant Doctor
 University of Fribourg
 Endocrinology & sex development



Cristina Freire Sanz
 Voluntaria del grupo de comunicación (Instagram)
 PhD Student
 University of Geneva, Centre Medical Universitaire
 Genetic medicine



Santiago Erroz Ferrer
 Voluntario del grupo de desarrollo web
 Postdoc
 ETH Zurich
 Astronomy



Rocío Rama Ballesteros
 Voluntaria del grupo de desarrollo web
 PhD Student
 University of Lausanne
 Machine learning applied to biology



Marina García González
 Voluntaria del grupo de organización de eventos
 PhD Student
 PSI
 Synchrotron radiation, condensed matter



Marina A. González Lazo
 Voluntaria del grupo de comunicación (Facebook)
 Materials Specialist
 SICHH S.A.
 Physics, material engineering

Members

One of the main objectives of the first year was to define the different types of memberships that the Association offers. These were included into the official statutes document and approved during the first General Assembly as well as the corresponding annual fees to be applied from 2019.

A summary of the types of memberships and their benefits are shown in the following table:

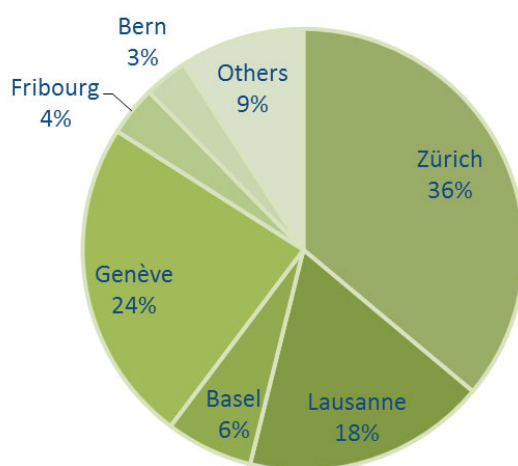
Advantages and rights of ACECH memberships

	Full Members	Associated Members
Updates about activities and Scientific Events	✓	✓
Free Attendance to Events	✓	✗
Linkedin Acech Group (job offers, networking)	✓	✗
Dissemination of Scientific Publications	✓	✗
Executive Board and Task groups involvement	✓	✗
Personal Development (grants, courses, mentorship program)	✓	✗
Attendance and Vote in the Annual General Assembly	✓	✗
Annual Fee (CHF)	50 / 25*	Free

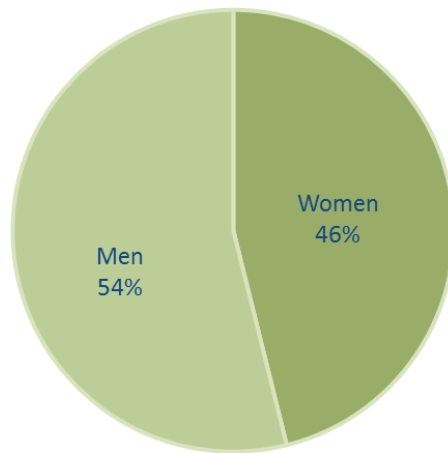
*Students and unemployed members

At the end of the year (2018), we counted **230 scientists** interested in the Association as potential members, 55 applications approved by the Executive Board.

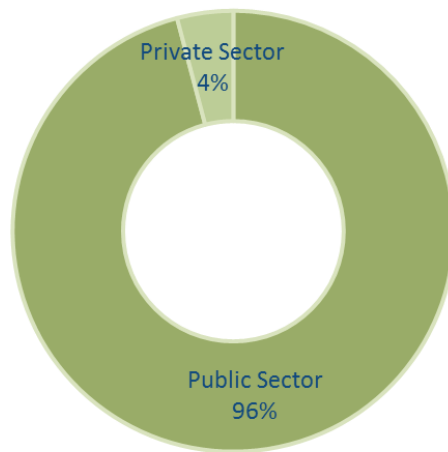
Some other figures and statistics updated (December 2018) can be found in the next graphics:



Geographical distribution of the members (Dec 2018)



Gender Balance amongst the members (Dec 2018)



Distribution by type of sector of the institutions of the members (Dec 2018)

Actions

General Assembly 2018

June 9th, 2018 (10:00-17:00). University of Bern, and Embassy of Spain in Bern.

The first General Assembly of the ACECH was the first public event of the association. The provisory board of directors has been working since November 2017 to formally constitute the association, thanks to the invaluable help of the Embassy of Spain. The main aim of the General Assembly was to explain the association's statutes and objectives, the types of members and quotas, and to ratify the members of the board of directors. The board also explained the process of creation of the ACECH and some potential future activities. The ACECH planned the event to serve as a platform to receive comments and proposals from interested attendants. Additionally, the members of the board of directors and the responsible members of the working groups presented the various groups of activities with the aim to gather volunteers to steer the proper functioning of the association (IT, Communication, sponsoring and founding, and events). The second part of the day consisted of a scientific event where two scientist, with different roles and expertise (a doctor fellow and a senior scientist), presented their personal experience as researchers in Switzerland. This activity was thought to expose possible challenges during the scientific career, and explain how in those cases the ACECH could provide help. At the end of the day, the Embassy of Spain provided a reception with appetizer in its dependencies. Attendants could then interchange personal experiences and interests among them, as well as with members of Spanish diplomatic representatives.



*"Con un pie en Suiza y el otro en España:
experiencias de una joven científica"*

Ariadna Lorenzo Sunyer,
Section d'histoire et esthétique du cinéma



*"Cómo contribuir al progreso de la sociedad?
Investigación e innovación de dominio público"*

Dra. Elisabet Capón García,
Dept. Control & Automation



The two presenters of the scientific event, part of the General Assembly of the ACECH.

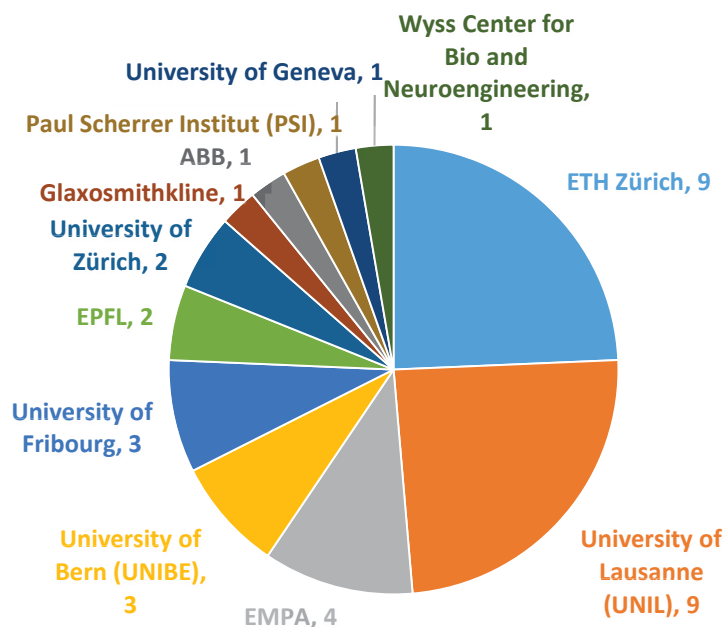
Objectives of the General Assembly:

- Explain to the public the creation of the ACECH, their statutes and their objectives (scientific dissemination, social, mediation, representation).

- Introduce the provisional members of the board of directors and ratify them by public vote.
- Transparently present the association’s finance, and publicly thank the financing bodies.
- Present the social network platforms where potential members can find the ACECH and contact us.
- Propose potential ACECH scientific events.
- Present RAICEX, the network of associations of Spanish scientists around the world.
- Present the ACECH working groups, their members and activities, and recruit new volunteers.
- Capture members for the association.

Attendants

About 40 Spanish scientists working all around Switzerland attended the first General Assembly. Additionally the counselor of the Embassy of Spain attended the scientific event. At the end of the day, numerous members of the Embassy and its Education and Work Departments received the attendants at its dependencies. The provisional board of directors and the event organizers put emphasis to create a plural event where all branches of academia and researchers in private companies could find their place. According to the list of attendants, this objective was fulfilled.



Attendants to the General Assembly by Institution (Total=37).

Conclusion

The members of the board of directors were ratified in General Assembly by 33 votes in favor and none against. This was interpreted by the board as a success, meaning that the attendants, potential ACECH members, welcomed the initiative and agreed with the concept and objectives of the association. The assembly was also considered a success because during the event the attendants proposed a possible future activity with a possible venue -the Ethnographic Museum of Neuchatel-, which ultimately ended up being celebrated. Finally, after the General Assembly many attendants showed their interest to become ACECH members.



Pablo Sinues, the president of ACECH, inaugurates the I General Assembly (left), at the end of the event, the participants in the first General Assembly attended a reception with appetizer provided by the Embassy of Spain in their dependencies (right).

NanoTalks, ACECH Contest

October 20, 2018 (1000-17:00). Neuchâtel Ethnography Museum.

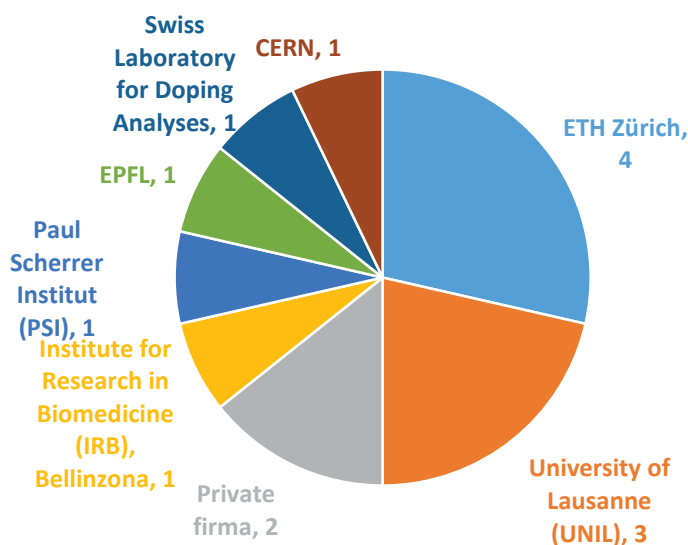
The NanoTalks are a platform to inspire and stimulate talks about art, science and technology. Speakers create understandable talks for all audiences on complex issues, and inspire the audience with new ideas. In our event, speeches of varied topics – vaccination, galaxies, x-ray, energy and contemporary art) were chosen expressly to bring the different fields of science closer together. To close the event, Prof. Cristina Nevado, University of Zürich, gave an inspiring speech. After this, the attendants made a guided tour in the exhibition of the Ethnographic Museum of Neuchatel, thanks to Sara Sánchez del Olmo, assistant curator of the museum.

Objectives of the NanoTalks:

- Provide a platform to bring closer the different branches of science (human sciences, natural sciences, health sciences, arts, etc.).
- Exchange research findings in a fresh and dynamic way.
- Continue disseminating the ACECH objectives (scientific dissemination, social, mediation, representation).
- Continue gathering new ACECH members.
- Gather new volunteers for the different ACECH activities (communication, IT, events, and sponsoring)

Attendants

The board of directors and the event coordinators consider the attendance to the NanoTalks a big success. The event gathered 35 people, of which 33 were scientists, and 2 representatives of the Spanish Counselor for Education. Along the day, 14 scientist presented their outstanding research in NanoTalks of about 7 minutes, followed by rich discussions among all attendants. The graph shows the varied affiliations of the presenters in the NanoTalks:

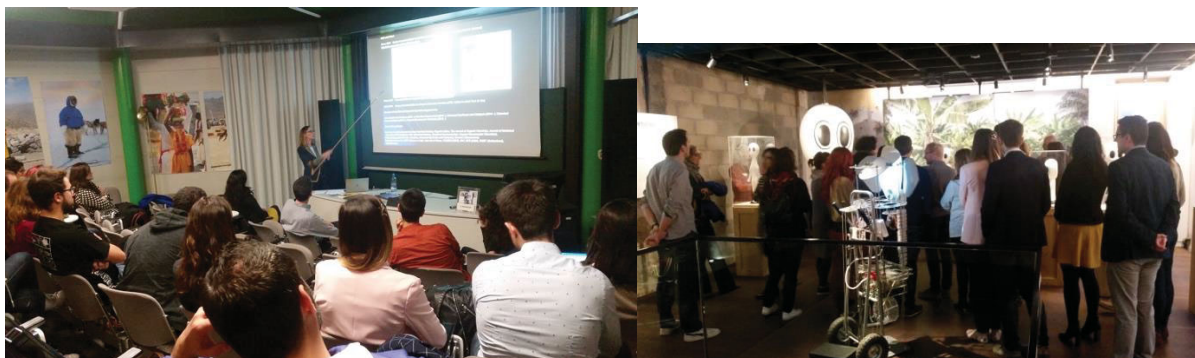


Presenters in the NanoTalks by Institution (Total=14).

Conclusion

The board of directors and the event organizers consider the NanoTalks to be a success. Prove of it was the participation of scientists from very different Swiss research institutions and private companies. The attendants showed great interest in the progress of the association and its future activities, they information exchange was very active during the day. Interestingly,

the fact that presenters had to fit their speeches to 7 minutes was a great effort for many, and therefore a good learning process. After the NanoTalks, the number of ACECH members increased. Due to the good experience with the NanoTalks, the direction board decided to continue doing this event every year.



Presentation of Prof. Cristina Nevado, University of Zürich, during the NanoTalks (left) and visit to the Ethnographic Museum of Neuchatel (right).

Round Table: "Scientific Experiences in Switzerland"

December 1st, 2018 (17:00 – 21:30). Spanish cultural House "Ateneo Popular Español de Zürich" y Centro Cultural Aipes de Lausanne.

The ACECH celebrated the end of its first-year's activities by joining Spanish science and culture. The round table was planned with the aim of bringing the experiences and challenges that scientists have in their daily work closer to the general public. The round table encompassed, as well, all branches of science. On this occasion, we took advantage of our first anniversary since the provisory board began planning the creation of the association, as well as the proximity to the designated Christmas dates, to offer typical products of the Spanish gastronomic culture. In order to facilitate and increase participation along Switzerland, this event took place on the same day in parallel in 2 cities: in Lausanne and Zürich.

Objectives

- Bring the experiences and challenges that scientists' have in their daily work closer to the general public.
- Compare science resources devoted in Switzerland and Spain, and learn from both experiences.
- Exchange experiences among scientist to learn and solve future challenges.
- Receive interesting feedback from non-scientists, which could be applied to scientists' work.

The round table: “Scientific experiences in Switzerland” gathered about 40 people in the Spanish cultural House “Ateneo” in Zurich. Half of them were scientist and the other half non-scientist, mostly Spanish migrants. The panel of speakers was composed by Dr. Salvador Pané Vidal, Department of Mechanical and Process Engineering of the ETH Zürich and ACECH member; Prof. Dr. Pablo Sinues, University Children’s Hospital Basel and president of the ACECH, and Dr. Paula Díaz, event organizer of ACECH. The round table was presented and moderated by Dr. Moisés Bueno, EMPA and secretary of ACECH.

The parallel event in Lausanne gathered 10 people, all of them working on or closely related to scientific positions. This round table was moderated by Clara Galan (EPFL), event organizer of ACECH, and attended by Cristina Freire (UNIGE), Laura Lozano y Nathan (EPFL), Juan Carlos Allica (CERN), Maria Jesus Narvaez y Fernando Huertas (NHI), and Ana Lopez, Daniel Ortiz and Javier Santos Moreno (UNIL).

Conclusion

The event lasted 4 hours and was cataloged as a success by the group of heads of the Spanish cultural house Ateneo, who expressed their willingness to have further activities of a scientific nature. The ACECH’s board of directors think the event was a success because it gathered new members, as well as ACECH members that also attended previous events. This fact means that ACECH has already created a consolidated group of members.



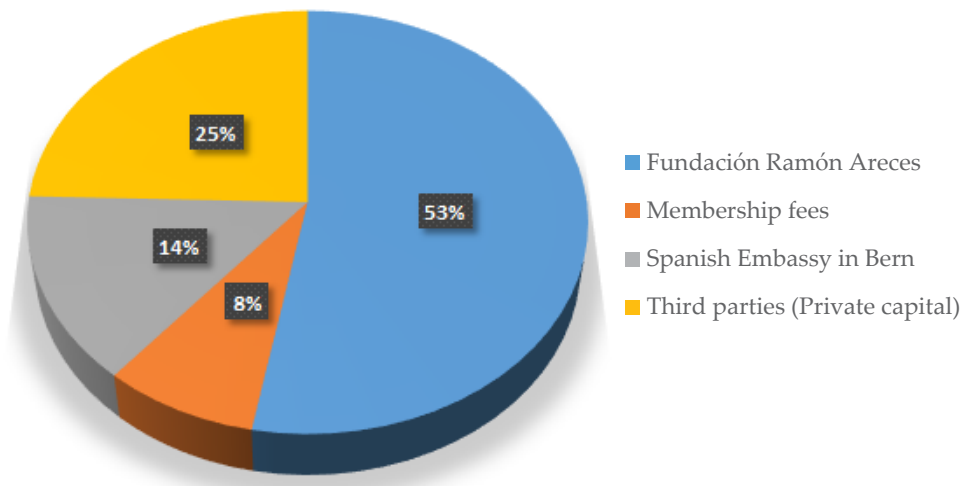
Participants in the Round table: “Scientific experiences in Switzerland” held in the Spanish cultural house Ateneo in Zürich (left), Ápero with typical products of the Spanish gastronomic culture provided at the end of the round table in Zürich (right).

Treasurer Report

Only volunteers manage ACECH and the membership fees of the associates provides its economical independency. However, the Board of directors has requested economical support from public and private institutions in order to achieve all the proposed activities. It is thanks to this economical support that ACECH has been organizing a range of activities during 2018. Fundación Ramón Areces that contributed up to 59% of the total income has provided the main economic support.

Income

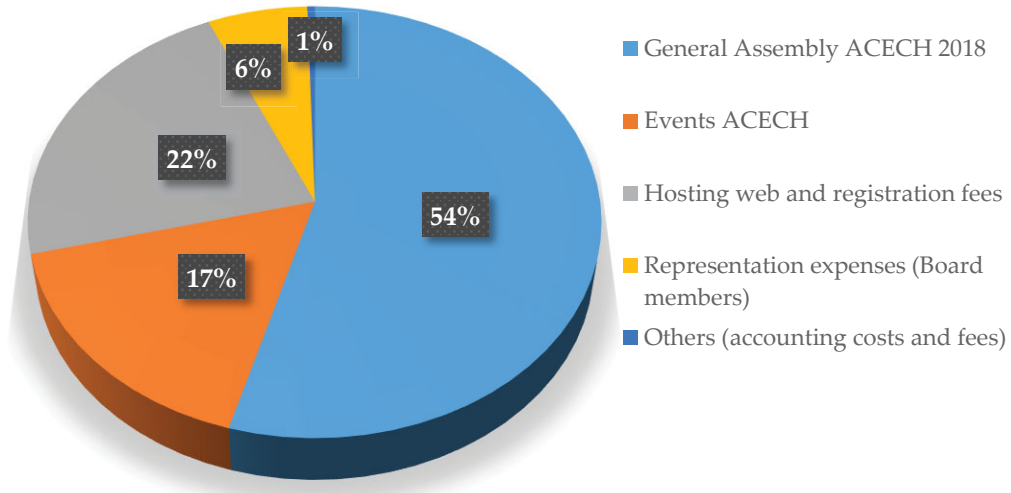
Income (CHF 17'151)



Fundación Ramón Areces	CHF 9'048
Membership fees	CHF 1'450
Spanish Embassy in Bern	CHF 2'453
Third parties (Private capital)	CHF 4'200
TOTAL	CHF 17'151

Expenditure

Expenditure (CHF 6'217)



General Assembly ACECH 2018	CHF 3'383
Events ACECH	CHF 1'040
Hosting web and registration fees	CHF 1'381
Representation expenses (Board members)	CHF 383
Others (accounting costs and fees)	CHF 30
TOTAL	CHF 6'217

Strategic Plans for Next Year

General Assembly 2019

During the third quarter of 2019, ACECH board will organize the second annual general assembly. This event will allow all the members of the association to execute their rights such as the appointment of the members of the Committee and elects, approval of the annual fees and budgets and discuss the future strategic plan of the association among others.

The first general assembly took place in the campus of the University of Bern in an attempt to ease the journey of most of the members coming from all corners of Switzerland given the central location of the city, as well as the possibility offered by the Spanish Embassy to provide a welcome cocktail for all the members. In this context, we have opted by establishing this event as a fix periodical encounter that would allow us to have certain visibility at the same time that it becomes a recurrent annual meet for former and new ACECH members to network and gather within a pleasant environment.

ACECH also plans to merge the annual general assembly with a scientific event, notably a talk given by one of the many leading Spanish scientist by inviting him/her to expose his/her work and personal experience outside Spain during an informal talk and from which all members can profit and learn about new interesting topics. The travel expenses of scientific speakers will be covered by ACECH. To facilitate attendance, support for travel expenses is also available to ACECH members on demand.

Scientific Event at CERN

CERN is one of the world's largest and most respected centers for scientific research and as such, the presence of Spanish scientist community is very significant. Hence, the possibility of collaborating with such an organization remains crucial for ACECH.

One of the main objectives set by ACECH in 2019, is to increase the involvement and participation of the southern part of Switzerland since it is currently larger the support coming from the northern part of the country. In order to promote the scientific activities, ACECH members will have the opportunity to claim travel support.

Therefore, within this context, we plan to organize one of the main ACECH annual events housed by CERN. The event will take place during the spring semester and it will also foster the Italian, French and German parallel associations of Spanish scientist aboard allowing an unmatched collaboration opportunities among all sister associations. This event will entail seamless networking possibilities for attendees within an excellent environment as well as great visibility for ACECH on this second year of the association existence. It would also

represent an opportunity to increase our engagement of members from the Geneva hub given the proximity of the location.

With this aim, a close alliance and teamwork has been taking place between board members of the association and scientist established on CERN during 2018.

Mentoring Program – B.NOMIO –

ACECH plans to put in place a structured mentoring program during last semester of 2019. Such program will consist on the match of two members of ACECH in order to bridge the gap between senior scientist and younger professionals and connect people across different backgrounds and geographies while also engaging members with the association's activities. New arrivals would have a "go-to" person for advice and expertise regarding not only carrier counsel and networking building but also would facilitate real-world information about life in Switzerland and personal support.

We believe that this kind of mentoring programs will give value to the association by providing structure for networking among members. A mentorship platform will be put in place through ACECH website where assigned mentors and mentees would interact. Signing up to the mentoring program would be free of charge for ACECH members.

ACECH Scientific Monologues

ACECH wants to keep bringing science closer to the general public, presenting and discussing the latest news from different scientific disciplines. The event would consist of scientific monologues of about 15 minutes each. The scientists would explain the latest scientific developments in a fun and understandable way. At the end of the Monologues session, there would be a round of "Questions and Answers Laboratory", where the public will direct their doubts, contributions and curiosities to the presenters. This last session will serve to expand the knowledge of the attendants in the different scientific fields presented, as well as probably, to advance in their own scientific field. In order to motivate participation, financial support for travel expenses will be provided to ACECH members.

NanoTalks

Due to the good experience with the NanoTalks, ACECH will further prepare it during 2019. Young Scientists (BSc, MSc and PhD) are specially encouraged to participate. The best 3 participants will be awarded with up to CHF 500 aimed at supporting attendance to an international conference.

Best Poster and Best Oral Communication

To support and encourage early career of young Spanish scientist (PhD and PostDoc), ACECH will organize an international symposium where they will be able to present their aims, potential ideas and future initiatives. The best presenter will be appointed for an Emerging Talent Award 2019 provided and supported by one of our sponsors (Fundación Santander, Fundación La Caixa, Fundación Telefonica, ...). The Award consists of CHF 10'000, and could be invested in any aspect that helps in developing the winner's career.

Sponsors and Partners

Fundación Ramón Areces

**FUNDACIÓN
RAMÓN ARECES**

FECYT: Fundación Española para la Ciencia y la Tecnología



AECID: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo



Embajada de España en Suiza



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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AsoACECHSuiza/>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/aso_acech/

