The Congress in a few words

"I represent a mutual association in the north of Germany and I am also the chairwoman of the board of a reinsurance company which is a mutual too. For me, the Congress is very interesting as most of my members are very small and are not very up to date on innovation processes. So it is good to see how other mutuals behave and hope to be able to use this to convince all of my members to get into the new world."

Monika Köstlin, Verband der Versicherungsvereine auf Gegenseitigkeit e.V., DE

"Congresses are necessary for an organisation like AMICE as it gives us the opportunity to share issues that are of interest to all members of AMICE and to strengthen the relationship between the members. In addition to the regulatory issues, what I liked the most about the Congress so far was the afternoon panel on the collaborative economy."

Pablo Mongelos García, Seguros Lagunaro, ES

"As Delegate General of ROAM I am delighted to be here. I feel a growth of fresh air, a particularly good atmosphere, a very professional organisation and also an institutional focus with the presence of the Chinese delegation. The Congress is also an opportunity to meet participants from other countries and to exchange with other cultures."

Mikaël Maslé, ROAM, FR

From San Francisco to Berlin via Kenya, the digital insurance revolution is well underway. During this workshop, Mark Mullin from Guidewire used concrete examples to show how insurers can exploit the numerous opportunities that this revolution offers insurers. Guidewire supplies specialised software to the insurance industry and has more than 200 clients worldwide.
During the opening session of the 5th AMICE Congress, outgoing President Hilde Vernaillen introduced the new President, Grzegorz Buczkowski.

The new President described his enthusiasm at being elected President of AMICE, at a time when mutual societies are endeavouring to claim their rightful place at the heart of the insurance sector. He explained how their market and premium shares have been consistently increasing since the financial crisis in 2008, proving that their members are increasingly placing trust in the mutual and cooperative business model.

Next, Mayor of Ghent Daniel Tremont warmly welcomed the congress delegates and spoke of the city of Ghent’s historic interest in the cooperative movement. This interest endures to this day, through the various initiatives taken daily as the city develops.

Hilde Vernaillen went on to describe the positive results recorded at global level during the past year by mutual companies, compared to the downturns witnessed by other companies which follow the dominant model. She also highlighted the important work carried out by AMICE in the implementation phase of Solvency II.

Although consumer protection is part of our DNA, we must continue to make our voices heard and make sure the specific characteristics of our model are kept in mind when developing regulations. This work has borne fruit thanks to all our efforts, and now all of our members can benefit from it.

She also affirmed the importance of close collaboration between members. Such cooperation is likely to intensify in future given the cooperation with ICMIF, and will lend more weight to our model at the global level, helping us to operate on the global scene. This cooperation must go beyond simple protocol and move towards a true exchange of experiences as, in addition to promoting and increasing understanding of our model, such ground work will serve to protect our future and provide our members with more efficient services which meet their needs.

Sarah Goddard, the new Secretary General of AMICE, will play a major part in this process.

Bernard Thiry, President of UAAM-WCV, introduced the organisation hosting the Congress. He reminded the assembly that AMICE first came to light following the merger of AISAM and ACME, initiated in Bruges during a congress organised by UAAM 10 years ago. He then expounded upon the numerous advantages of our model, as well as the importance of the present Congress in seeking to address the numerous environmental, technological, societal and regulatory challenges which we will have to tackle in the coming years.

The mutual model is sustainable and inspiring, attracting interest from organisations in far-off countries. This was proven by the presence of Mr. Liang Tao, Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Regulatory Commission, the Chinese regulator. He spoke about the different initiatives implemented to develop the mutualistic model in China, emphasising its high growth potential. Mr. Liang Tao also expressed his desire to maintain close links with AMICE, thus contributing to the expansion of our European business model in China.

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With regard to proportionality, Gabriel Bernardino believes that “it makes a lot of sense, but it doesn’t mean that your members deserve any less protection than others.” Rather than setting minimum thresholds, he would prefer each stakeholder to explain their particular characteristics to the authorities: “That might not be easy, but it’s better than setting minimum thresholds. I know it’s hard for SMEs to fulfill our requests, but we are at your service and would be glad of your feedback. SMEs cannot be allowed to die because of SII.”

He affirmed that prudential control is designed for consumer protection: “if consumer trust disappears, insurance disappears.” Mutual societies have an advantage in this domain, because their very nature means that consumers are their highest priority: “You need to set an example for the whole of the industry, because citizens want to see the financial sector demonstrate ethical behaviour.”

Gabriel Bernardino, Chairman of EIOPA, delivered an update on the work of his institution: “The ‘regulation’ phase of Solvency II is complete. We are now in the implementation phase, seeking to provide equal protection to all consumers in all countries.” To achieve this, EIOPA has created a user guide collating best practices.

EIOPA’s role is to ensure coherence in the system and provide added value. It also provides feedback to national authorities and challenges them to move towards supervisory convergence.

According to Gabriel Bernardino, it is normal for there to be incoherence between countries: “Full harmonisation doesn’t happen overnight, but we work to ensure interpretation is the same. In order to do this, we ask you to tell us where there is incoherence, so that we can bear it in mind when meeting with national authorities and adapt our recommendations accordingly.”

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EIOPA is aware that this is a difficult time for the insurance sector, but will take undesirable effects on investments or consumers into account as long as practical proof of these are provided.

EIOPA has three objectives for 2018: to reduce complexity, improve proportionally and analyse sensitivity to cyclical risk. A broader revision is planned for 2021 and will be opened up to stakeholders in the sector.

“If the app is free, that means you're the product.”

During his speech, Hans Kooij, Privacy officer at Achmea, explained the impact of the General Data Protection Regulation (entry into force in May 2018). He gave several examples of apps which use their users’ private data without their explicit consent. From now on, it is important to consider how customer data is used right from the app design stage, by consulting a security specialist and documenting your decisions. This is an opportunity for mutual societies, because they involve customers more than other insurers. Moreover, the terms of use for the apps must not be ambiguous but explicit, and they must elicit the customer’s positive and express consent.

Jos Brumagne, Chief Risk Officer at Curialia, explained how his company, which was declared a victim of SII, dealt with this regulation. In order to survive, the mutual society adapted the properties of its products. The guaranteed interest rate (4.75% for some) was dropped, with the approval of 78% of