

**Message to LREC 2020 participants by Frédéric Béchet and Philippe Blache,  
Chairs of the Local Committee**

May 2020, in Marseille. Sea, Science and Sun, the cocktail was perfect! Breathtaking views of the Vieux Port from the conference location, meetings and discussions around a poster, at a coffee table, or on the best rooftop in the port at sunset, everything was ready! We would have loved to give you all that this spring. Unfortunately it won't be possible.

May 2020, everywhere in the world. Here we are now, with our eyes glued to computer screens, last link with the outside world, following the latest news about the pandemic, praising our medical staff and trying to work, exchange thoughts and ideas, and keep in touch with each other. And this forces us to think: how do we keep in touch, how do we converse, how do we bring out new projects, new ideas if we can't actually be together? LREC has always been an opportunity to be together, sharing these unique creative moments by talking directly to each other in front of a poster or at a coffee break, sharing a meal, having a good time at a social event . . .

So where do we go from here? Between concerns about the carbon footprint of big international conferences such as LREC and about the impact of international gatherings on the spread of a pandemic, how can we keep one of the most valuable assets of our scientific community: making people from all over the world socialize, exchange ideas and work together towards a common goal.

We don't yet have the solution. Of course, virtualization is part of the answer, as many events have gone "virtual" nowadays. However, we also know that nothing will replace direct contact and face-to-face meetings, and that visiting colleagues in other parts of the world is the best way to rethink our beliefs and advance science.

We have to consider and imagine a new model for sharing and working together, looking for new ideas to enable events like LREC to continue to be places of scientific and cultural exchange. Guaranteeing, of course, the safety of our community while allowing us to continue to be researchers, not restricted by any border, including intellectual ones.

We really hope that we will be able to offer you this cocktail of Sea, Science and Sun that we had prepared for you, in the beautiful city of Marseille! We'll find a solution, we promise!

Marseille, France, May 13, 2020  
Philippe & Fred  
Co-chairs of the Local committee