A Guide to the FM Symposium

Version 3.12 - October 2025

The FM Symposia ("FM 20XX") are organised by Formal Methods Europe (FME), a worldwide association bringing together researchers and practitioners in formal methods[1]. This guide is intended for those interested in proposing to host an FM symposium. Based on experiences gathered from past organisers, it covers the bidding process (Section 1), the symposium's organisation (Section 2), and financial matters (Section 3). Section 4 contains advice from organisers of recent events. Appendix A lists leading participants in the symposia to date. Appendix B provides additional information to set up a symposium budget. Constructive suggestions to improve this document are welcome and should be sent to info@fmeurope.org.

1. Proposing to Host FM 20XX

The symposia are held at intervals of approximately 12 months. A call for proposals to organise the symposium is announced on www.fmeurope.org, the FME membership mailing lists, and other social media outlets available to FME about two years in advance of the conference due date. If you are considering a proposal, we recommend getting in touch with the FME board at info@fmeurope.org. We are happy to offer information and advice. We note that the location for the symposium is not bound to Europe and we welcome proposals from all parts of the world. In order to facilitate longer-term planning, we also welcome proposals or expressions of interests to organise FM in *later years* – especially in the year 20XX + 1.

The call to organise FM 20XX contains details of the contents required in the proposal. As a minimum, you will need to identify a host institution and describe the facilities, local support from academia and industry, and forms of available sponsorship. Initial proposals are short documents, but the authors of the most viable proposals will be contacted by FME with further specific questions during the review period. Proposals are assessed by the FME board with the support of the Advisory Board.

After the winning proposal is selected, a formal contract is negotiated with the prospective organiser. The contract must contain (a) the normal commercial clauses (b) a provisional call for papers, (c) a financial budget, and (d) a symposium management plan (including a publicity plan).

2. Symposium Organisation

The key people in the organisation of FM 20XX are the **General Chair(s)** and the **Programme Committee Chairs**.

Selection of the General Chair(s): The General Chair is invited by the Chair of FME and is usually the same person as the proposer. The General Chair is normally expected to represent the host institution and must have the authority to mobilise its resources. The General Chair has full freedom and responsibility for the organisation of the event within the terms of the contract between the host institution and FME.

Selection of Organising Committee(s): The General Chair will normally select members of a team needed to organise the event and to handle specific aspects, such as publicity, sponsorship and so on. The structure and composition of this group is entirely up to the General Chair and not FME. Organising Committees typically include the following portfolios:

- Local organisation and accommodation
- Publicity

[1] www.fmeurope.org

- Tutorials
- Workshops
- Industry day
- Doctoral symposium
- Exhibition & tools demonstrations
- Other symposium tracks
- Co-located conferences and events

Selection of the Programme Committee Chair(s): The Programme Committee (PC) Chairs are selected by the FME Board and the General Chair – in consultation with selected colleagues, former PC chairs and FME members – and invited ***by the Chair of FME***. Usually, we prefer to have two PC Chairs with some diversity in background, seniority, and geographical location. ***Proposers are welcome to suggest potential PC Chairs but they must not contact potential PC chairs directly as selection and invitation is made by the board of FME.*** The PC Chairs have freedom and responsibility for the provision of a successful scientific programme for the main symposium. We note that PC chairs are expected to attend and engage in the full symposium. PC chairs are also expected to contribute to the editing of a journal special issue, dedicated to the Symposium.

PC Composition: The PC Chairs choose the PC members in consultation with FME (to help ensure consistency from conference to conference). Some members of the previous PC should be included to ensure continuity, but that does not mean that previous PC members have an automatic right to serve. The PC should also include some members of the FME board, to ensure FME's involvement in the selection process. Otherwise chairs are free and encouraged to mix new and experienced members. Geographical coverage, participation from industry and gender balance are important for FM Symposia, which are worldwide, not European, events. FME maintains a document with all members of previous FM PCs, which they will make available to the PC Chairs. The PC Chairs are encouraged to consider inviting some members of FME's committees[2], which include several active, well-regarded members of the FM community.

The **PC size** has been increasing of late in order to reduce the burden of reviewing on members without compromising the number and quality of reviews. When FM is organized as a World Congress, we seek to have full inclusion of representatives from around the globe in the PC, usually leading to a larger committee. An average review load is about 10 papers per PC member. PC chairs usually collect 3 or 4 reviews per paper.

Reviewing standards: The PC chairs should specify the required content of reviews and how they should be structured, their expectations on quality and the style to follow. They should also define what constitutes conflict of interest.[3] Upon accepting an invitation to join the PC of FM, a person must accept to abide by these rules, commit to the timeline, and ensure that any person contributing to their reviews (e.g., sub-reviewers) will do the same. PC Chairs shall run the program committee meeting or equivalent evaluation session (see details below), ensuring that papers are properly reviewed and selected fairly.

Guidelines of good practice: The General Chair and the PC Chairs should not submit papers to any tracks or events associated with FM 20XX. Chairs of other events (i.e., I-day, workshops, tutorials, co-located events, etc.) are instead allowed to submit to the events that they are not responsible for. In cas of doubt, PC Chairs should consult with the FME Board and with the previous year's PC chairs to ensure that any good or bad experiences are taken into account.

[2] FME committees are listed in FME's website.

[3]See ACM CoE policy for an example: https://www.acm.org/publications/policies/conflict-of-interest

Timeline: A schedule with the main deadlines and tasks:

Time (months)	Task
-20	General Chair is appointed.
-19	Set up conference management system and preliminary website.
-19	Choose and invite PC Chairs
-19	Kick-off meeting involving: General Chair, PC Chairs, possibly Track Chairs.
-18	Choose and invite PC.
-18	Nominations for the Journal-First Track (JFT) Chair.
-17	Appoint the organising committee, including Local Organisers, Industry-Day Chairs, Workshops Chair, Tutorials Chair, Tool exhibition Chair, Doctoral Symposium Chair, Publicity Chair, Code of Conduct Advocate.
-17	Appoint JFT Chair.
-16	Invite JFT committee members.
-16	Contact Springer and the LNCS FM-subline.
-16	Apply for at least one special issue in a partner journal.
-16	Make first, preliminary version of the budget. Discuss with FME Treasurer.
-15	Issue 1st CFP and start publicity.
-14	Awards Committee Chair to make preparations for the awards.
-14	Choose and invite keynote speakers.
-12	Receive JFT paper nominations from editors-in-chief.
-12	Issue 2nd CFP with invited speakers, and special issue.
-12	Final version of the budget.
-11	Issue call for workshops and tutorials.
-9	Deadline for workshops & tutorials proposals.
-8	Workshops and tutorials proposals notification.
-8	Issue final CFP.
-7	Send JFT papers invitation to authors.
-6	Schedule JFT papers in the programme.
-6	Deadline for paper submission in main track(s).
-6	Notify Lucas Award or Fellow, and schedule award session in the programme.
-4	Paper notifications.
-4	Issue call for Doctoral Symposium, after the papers notification.
-4	Issue call for Tool Exhibitions, after the papers notification.
-3	Tool exhibition submission deadline.
-3	Notification of tool exhibition proposals.
-3	Notification of Doctoral Symposium submissions (before the early registration deadline).
-2	Plan for all awards: certificates, fellow medal (if applicable).
1	Organise journal special issue(s) as planned.

We note that the FM symposia have a strict submission deadline policy. Deadlines are not extended and we intend to keep it that way.

Symposium format: The format is up to the General and PC Chairs. In recent years, the event has lasted five days (Monday to Friday) with two days of workshops, tutorials, and the Doctoral Symposium (as well as possibly co-located events), followed by three days of technical symposium. The Industry Day (see below) can run as a parallel track. The three days of the main technical symposium have usually begun with a plenary session featuring a well-known invited speaker. Where the volume of papers requires it, parallel sessions are sometimes used to give each author sufficient time to present his or her work (typically around 20-30 minutes per regular paper), with aligned morning and afternoon coffee/tea breaks to switch tracks and visit the tools exhibition. Traditionally, tutorials and workshops have been held on Monday and Tuesday, but organisers should consider Monday and Friday instead to avoid the common problem that people leave early on the last day to be home before the weekend. *This symposium format is by no means mandatory and innovations are welcome.*

FM has been growing in recent years. In addition to co-located events, the I-Day, and workshops and a doctoral symposium, the main technical track may include dedicated tracks that focus on specific technical topics or communities within formal methods. While each track may have different arrangements, tracks typically have their own submission guidelines and chairs, who oversee the reviews and discussion of papers submitted to that track, but share the same deadlines as the main research track, and contribute to making the overall technical program more diverse, without compromises on quality. The first special track was TAP (Tests & Proofs) at FM 2026; new special tracks may be added in the future.

FMWEEK/World Congress: Traditionally, every tenth year (1999, 2009, 2019, etc.) the symposium is organised as a "World Congress on Formal Methods." To this end, the FM General Chair, with the support of the FME Board, will select and invite other major FM-related events to join an “FM Week”. The World Congress normally has a larger PC, with representatives of as many countries around the world as possible. Other initiatives to reach out to all formal methods communities around the globe are welcome. Given its broader scope and larger size, the organization of a World Congress usually starts earlier than a “regular” FM event.

Industry Day: FME has a Memorandum of Understanding with the ERCIM Working Group on Formal Methods for Industrial Critical Systems (FMICS) on jointly organising an industry-focused event annually. The Symposium may be requested to host this event under the name of the “Industry Day” (I-Day).

The programme consists largely, but not exclusively, of invited talks given by practitioners rather than researchers. The plenary invited speaker of the I-Day can be shared with the main track(s). Presenters are not necessarily required to have a paper. Inclusion of abstracts or papers in the proceedings is possible, if agreed with the PC chairs, but they are clearly marked as special papers associated with the I-Day. The I-day is organised by two co-chairs, one from academia and one from industry, working in close collaboration with the PC and General chairs. It can be instrumental in bringing industry to the symposium, especially if it is offered and published as a one-day networking event, backed by some local special interest group or institute. The I-Day has been notably successful in bringing industry and academia together, always with high attendance numbers and inspiring discussions. *Again this format is certainly not mandatory and innovations are welcome.* In particular, chairs can be flexible in how to organise the day.

Journal-first track: There should be a journal-first track for presentations of papers already published in partner journals selected by the FME board[4]. The selection of papers should be separate from the PC process. The track should have its own chair who should appoint two or three colleagues to form a selection committee. We suggest including the previous chair and some of the FME Fellows. The FME

[4] As of this writing, partner journals are: *Formal Aspects of Computing*, *Formal Methods in System Design* and *Science of Computer Programming*.

board will introduce the chair to the editors-in-chief of the partner journals. There should be no open call; instead, papers are nominated by the journal editors after confirming the authors' interest. Papers in conference special issues should not be considered, nor papers that extend previous conference publications. When selecting papers, the track chair should consider the following administrative criteria:

- The paper should report substantial results.
- Novelty and suitability to FM of the paper as judged by the reviews gathered by the journal or a brief evaluation by the editors in chief.
- Geographical distribution.
- No papers by the members of the selection committee.

Ideally, enough papers should be selected to fill a session or two. The papers should ideally be presented in the same session(s) to give visibility to the track. The FME Chair invites the authors of the selected papers at least one month before FM's registration deadline. Authors register as normal conference participants, not invited speakers. Participation fees should not be waived. Journal-first track papers are not symposium papers and should not be included in the proceedings, although they could be mentioned.

FME Business Meeting: FME holds an open business meeting on one of the technical symposia days at lunch time – usually coinciding with the I-Day. A suitable room with presentation facilities should be made available for this meeting. About 30-40 participants can be expected.

Awards: A "Best Paper Award" should be given for the best technical paper presented at the symposium. The Programme Chairs are responsible for organising the selection of this paper. Any costs associated with this award should be on the Symposium budget, but the FME board does not expect that any more than a certificate is presented. The Programme Chairs and General Chair may also suggest other awards (e.g., "best tutorial paper" or "best tool paper").

FME may also present its own awards at the Symposium. In that case, FME will cover the cost of the awards themselves, while the Symposium should budget for travel and free attendance for awardees. The General Chair should make sure that the Symposium schedule accommodates the "Best paper" and FME awards, as well as any other awards.

Publicity: We stress the importance of advertising all the parts of the symposium, especially workshops and tutorials, as well as the "traditional" conference. For workshops and tutorials, care should be taken to select suitable dates for submission (considering the dates of related conferences shared through the dedicated FM conference coordination mailing list[5]) and notification of decisions, in order to maximise participation. Flyers, an up-to-date web site, use of mailing lists and social networking sites are means to organise publicity and advertise the symposium. This may also be important to prospective sponsors of the event. Special care has to be taken to attract local industrial practitioners. Social media are also important channels for information to and communication with attendants before, during and after the symposium. FME's Communications Committee can provide guidelines and advice for effective publicity.

All chairs and committee members are expected to actively contribute to advertising FM 20XX as widely as possible among their colleagues and professional network.

Proceedings: All previous symposium proceedings have been published in Springer's Lecture Notes in Computer Science (LNCS) series, and from 2016 in the Formal Methods subline. The Programme and General Chairs should approach our contact person[6] at Springer for initial approval *as soon as possible*. Springer will advise on the schedule for producing the proceedings in time for the conference. You need to work back from this to get submission dates, using the rough schedule above. General chairs should contact their immediate predecessor (the General chairs of FM 20XX - 1), before contacting Springer, in order to check the ins and outs of the publishing contract. In the recent past, Springer has also sponsored

[5] it-fmeurope-conference-coordination@lists.uu.se

[6] The FME board can supply you with the name and contact details of the responsible person at Springer.

a best paper award. Purely electronic proceedings are now the norm. Since the 2024 edition, FM has published its proceedings as open access.

Social programme: An attractive social programme increases the interest in participating in a conference. However, it can present a financial risk because many participants end up not wishing to participate in such side initiatives. Consider a compromise solution where some of the social programme costs are included in the regular symposium fee. This option also avoids the difficulties participants can have in obtaining reimbursements for such expenses had they been charged independently. This option is recommended as long as the impact on fees is acceptable.

Sustainability: The organising committee should make an effort to make the symposium a sustainable event. Some options that can be considered are:

- Plan for an environment-friendly *Reduce–Recycle–Reuse* mode of operation.
- Cut back on printed material, both for promotion and proceedings (electronic proceedings are already the norm).
- Use tableware made of reusable materials.
- Use recyclable badge holders.

3. Symposium Finances

The primary goal of the symposium is to be a major scientific success, not to return a surplus. However, it must be run in a financially responsible way and should not make a loss.

FME is a non-profit association[7] with no significant sources of income other than its symposia. We spend any surplus accrued on other activities to pursue our aims of fostering application, research and international cooperation in formal methods, in consultation with the membership. Usually, the surplus is used to sponsor workshops, bursaries, speakers and small projects, to provide a financial cushion for future FM symposia, and to cover running costs.

Organisation of the symposium is subcontracted to the host institution on a shared risk basis. A surplus or loss is split between FME and the host in a (negotiable but usually 3:2) ratio, but with an upper limit on any loss sustained by FME (typically € 35 000).

A formal budget is drafted for each symposium. The budget is an integral part of the contract between FME and the organising institute. Without an agreed budget, there is no contract.

In order to cover start-up costs, FME can provide a repayable float (usually € 5 000) to the local organisers, once the contract has been signed.

We have found that some general budgetary principles help to make for more conferences with fewer nasty surprises. These are listed in Appendix B.

[7] FME is registered at the Chamber of Commerce in The Hague as an association and operates under the law of the Netherlands.

Appendix A. Previous FM symposia

Symposium	Programme Chairs	Invited Speakers
01: VDM '87 **(Brussels, Belgium)** LNCS 252	Dines Bjørner Cliff B. Jones Mícheál Mac an Airchinnigh	Cliff Jones Dines Bjørner Peter Lucas
02: VDM '88 **(Dublin, Ireland)** LNCS 328	Robin Bloomfield Lynn Marshall Roger Jones	Donald Good Jean-Raymond Abrial
03: VDM '90 **(Kiel, Germany)** LNCS 428	Dines Bjørner Tony Hoare	Ole-Johan Dahl Joseph Goguen Reiji Nakajima
04: VDM '91 **(Noordwijkerhout, Netherlands)** LNCS 551 & 552	Søren Prehn	Michael Jackson Robin Milner John V. Guttag
05: FME '93 **(Odense, Denmark)** LNCS 670	Jim Woodcock	Cliff B. Jones Antonio Cau Willem-Paul de Roever Peter Lupton
06: FME '94 **(Barcelona, Spain)** LNCS 873	Tim Denvir	Ralph Back Babak Dehbonei Fernando Mejia
07: FME '96 **(Oxford, England)** LNCS 1051	Marie-Claude Gaudel Jim Woodcock	Tony Hoare Terje Siversten Jan Peleska
08: FME '97 **(Graz, Austria)** LNCS 1313	John Fitzgerald Cliff B. Jones	Hermann Kopetz Loe Feijs Robin Bloomfield
09: FME '99 **1st World Congress** **(Toulouse, France)** LNCS 1708 & 1709 (+CD)	Jeanette Wing Jim Woodcock	Tony Hoare Cliff B. Jones Amir Pnueli Joseph Sifakis John Rushby Michael Jackson
10: FME 2001 **(Berlin, Germany)** LNCS 2021	Jose Nuno Oliveira Pamela Zave	Daniel Jackson Jayadev Misra Simon Peyton Jones

11: FME 2002 **(Copenhagen, Denmark)** LNCS 2391	Lars-Henrik Eriksson Peter A. Lindsay	Natarajan Shankar (shared with FLoC) Anthony Hall David Basin
12: FM 2003 **(Pisa, Italy)** LNCS 2805	Keijiro Araki Dino Mandrioli	Kouichi Kishida Brian Randell Gerard Holzmann Jean-Raymond Abrial
13: FM 2005 **(Newcastle, England)** LNCS 3582	Ian Hayes Andrzej Tarlecki	Marie-Claude Gaudel Chris Johnson Mathai Joseph
14: FM 2006 **(Hamilton, Canada)** LNCS 4085	Tobias Nipkow Jayadev Misra	Ernie Cohen Nicholas Griffin Thomas A. Henzinger Peter Lindsay George Necula
15: FM 2008 **(Turku, Finland)** LNCS 5014	Jorge Cuellar Tom Maibaum	Arvind Paolo Bresciani Dawson Engler Schmuel Katz Jayadev Misra
16: FM 2009 **2nd World Congress FMWEEK** **(Eindhoven, Netherlands)** LNCS 5080 (+ DVD)	Ana Cavalcanti Dennis Damms	Wan Fokkink Carroll Morgan Colin O'Halloran Sriram Rajamani Jeanette Wing
17: FM 2011 **(Limerick, Ireland)** LNCS 6664	Michael Butler Wolfram Schulte	Jasmin Fisher David Harel Bashar Nuselbeh Janos Sztipanovits
18: FM 2012 **(Paris, France)** LNCS 7436	Dimitra Giannakopoulou Dominique Méry	Martin Abadi Asaf Degani Alan Wassyng
19: FM 2014 **(Singapore)** LNCS 8442	Cliff B. Jones Pekka Pihlajasaari Jun Sun	Gerwin Klein Zhenjiang Hu Jim Woodcock
20: FM 2015 **(Oslo, Norway)** LNCS 9109	Nikolaj Bjørner Frank de Boer	Elvira Albert Werner Damm Valérie Issarny Leslie Lamport

21: FM 2016 **(Limassol, Cyprus)** LNCS 9995	John Fitzgerald Stefania Gnesi Constance L. Heitmeyer	Manfred Broy Peter O'Hearn Jan Peleska
22: FM 2018 **(Oxford, England)** LNCS 10951	Bill W. Roscoe Jan Peleska	Annabelle McIver Leonardo de Moura Kim G. Larsen
23: FM 2019 **3rd World Congress FMWEEK** **(Porto, Portugal)** LNCS 11800	Annabelle McIver Maurice ter Beek	Erik Poll June Andronick Shriram Krishnamurti
24: FM 2021 **(Beijing, China)** Held online. LNCS 13047	Marieke Huisman Corina Pasareanu Naijun Zhan	Mingsheng Ying Paula Herber Clark Barrett Assia Mahboubi
25: FM 2023 **(Lübeck, Germany)** **LNCS 14000**	Marsha Chechik Joost-Pieter Katoen	Jeanette M. Wing Laura Kovács Harald Rueß
26: FM 2024 **(Milan, Italy)** **LNCS 14933**	André Platzer Kristin Yvonne Rozier	David Basin Hadas Kress-Gazit Marta Kwiatkowska Byron Cook
27: FM 2026 **(Tokyo, Japan)** (Proceedings reference not known at this time.)	Augusto Sampaio Mariëlle Stoelinga	Cristian Cadar Ichiro Hasuo Daniel Kroening Ruzica Piskac

Appendix B: Budget Principles

These principles are based on past experiences (good and bad!). We strongly recommend following them to reduce the risk of unknown unknowns!

- *Be realistic in terms of both expected income and expenditures*. Participation fees should be in line with comparable conferences and recent previous editions of FM, also taking into account the typical costs in the host country. We aim to keep fees at broadly the current level or lower, with the aim of increasing participation. Sponsorships account for a significant part of the income; get these committed (in writing) and obtained as early as possible, and estimate a risk that they will not come through. Similarly, verify your expenditures up front by getting quotations from subcontractors and suppliers. Get competitive bids from multiple suppliers if possible, so that you can make good quality/price trade-offs and give some room for negotiation with prospective suppliers. On-site conference registration (and credit-card processing) services have been notoriously expensive at past events. Local applicable taxes must be reflected in the budget.
- *The budget must be conservative and aim for a surplus*. Round all income estimates down but round all expenditure estimates up. Risks (for example: not obtaining the estimated sponsorship fees) must be clearly visible[8]. Include an explicit contingency (usually 5% mark-up on the fixed costs and 5% mark-up on the variable costs). The right sort of surplus to aim for depends on the scale of the event and typically ranges between € 10k and € 25k. As a rule of thumb, the projected budgetary surplus should be roughly equal to the total planned contingency.

- *Make profit and loss calculations for several participation scenarios*. Show explicitly at what participation level the symposium would break even and how these figures evolve when participation levels are both lower and higher than this break-even point. The break-even point should be well within reach, assuming the number of expected accepted papers times 1.5, which provides a reliable lower estimate for the number of fully paying participants, based on previous experience. Furthermore, there may be thresholds in expenditures at certain participant levels (for example: hire extra buses for local transportation to conference modulo 50 participants), these should be made visible in these calculations if the impact is significant.

- *Provide a rationale for the estimates made*. Setting up an FM symposium budget requires making many estimates: the number of expected conference participants (fully paying, early versus late, students), number of accepted papers, number of parallel conference tracks, number of (parallel) tutorials and workshops. It should be clear how these estimates relate to the budget figures used. Numbers from past conferences are available from the FME Treasurer on request.

- *Limit the potential risks in case the event is (or needs to be) [partly] cancelled.* Although this has never happened, and we certainly hope it never will, it is better to be safe than sorry and plan ahead[9]. You can mitigate substantial risks in several ways, for example:
  - Make sure all contracts with local suppliers have clear cancellation policies in writing, as part of their quotation.
  - Consider the cancellation and refund policies for participant and hotel registrations; at the very least make sure these are well publicised and that associated expenses are covered.
  - Consider taking suitable event insurance (in particular for third-party liability).
  - Check that institutes (government, national science foundation or trusts) might provide financial backing in case of residual risks like this.

[8] For example, if 5000 Euro is estimated as a target for future fundraising with 25% likelihood, then only 1250 Euro is added as expected income in the budget.

[9] For example, international travel was heavily disrupted by volcanic ash clouds over northern Europe in 2010.

  - Plan in broad terms how the conference could be moved online if unforeseen events happen.

- *Co-located conferences must not increase the organisational risks significantly*. Co-locating FM20XX with other major conferences[10], either back-to-back or simultaneously, has been a great success in the past. If you choose to do this, it should be clear how the events may interact financially (for example, if shared local services are used). In particular, the FM event budget needs to consider the case where either event is cancelled or is significantly changed. Other examples include registration discounts offered to participants attending both conferences, or contributions owed to the co-located event organisation for services provided.

- *The FM budget must be in Euros*. If a different currency is used locally, then the associated banking cost and/or exchange rate fluctuations must be addressed.

[10] Here we mean full-scale conferences with separate financial management (i.e. participation fees, registration), organisational structure (program committee), published proceedings and so on.