

Deliverable: D2.2

Year Two Interim Report of the International Advisory Board

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Interim Report of the International Advisory Board

1. The International Advisory Board

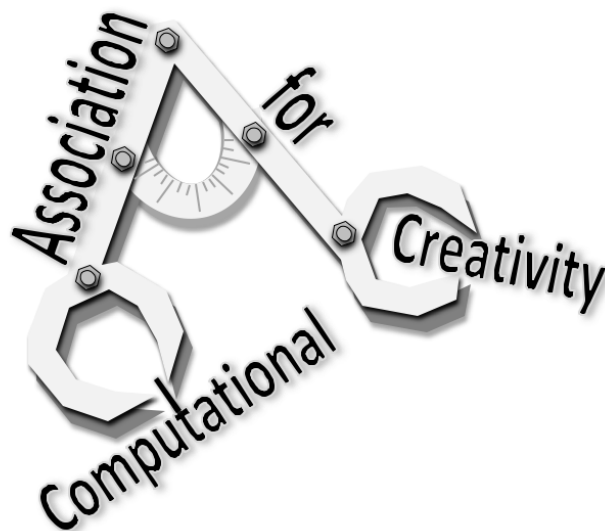
PROSECCO encourages oversight from other members of the Computational Creativity community to ensure that its goals are addressed in a way that maximally benefits the community. The advisory board draws its members from the international community. At the end of Y1 the board comprised 4 international CC researchers, though in year 2 one of these members cycled out of the board and a new member, from Mexico, took his place.

The following 4 international researchers were selected by unanimous agreement at the initial PROSECCO kick-off meeting in April 2013:

- **Dan Ventura**, Brigham Young University, Utah, USA
- **Bipin Indurkha**, IIT, Hyderabad, India (and, at present. Krakow, Poland)
- **Graeme Ritchie**, the University of Aberdeen, Scotland
- **Oliviero Stock**, Foundation Bruno Kessler (FBK), Trento, Italy

This current composition of the advisory board incorporates the views of American, Asian and European researchers. It is hoped that an advisory board member will be in attendance at every PROSECCO flag-ship event, with the attendance of *two* members being the norm. Bipin Indurkha and Graeme Ritchie were thus invited to the 2013 Autumn School in CC, while Oliviero Stock and Dan Ventura were invited to the first annual Contact Forum in 2014. In each case the advisory board members did more than attend their events: they actively contributed to its success, by engaging with talks and demonstrations, or by hosting workshop sessions (e.g. Bipin Indurkha hosted an evening Creativity Workshop and social mixer at the Autumn school in CC – see section 5).

In 2015 Dr. Rafael Perez y Perez of Mexico was asked to join the advisory board, replacing Bipin Indurkha. The board now has two members from Europe and two from the Americas, to offer a global perspective on the development of the CC field. Dr. Perez y Perez is currently the president of the Association for Computational Creativity (ACC) – whose charter constituted deliverable D1.3 in year one – and thus brings a field-spanning view to his role on the advisory board.



2. Interim Report of the International Advisory Board

We solicit feedback from the advisory board members on the activities of the PROSECCO consortium. Their feedback is especially valuable regarding the big-ticket events that are funded at substantial cost by PROSECCO, to ensure both that these funds are being used wisely and that the desired effects on the field (consolidation, maturation, etc.) are achieved. To ensure the relevance of their feedback, two advisory board members are invited to each big-ticket PROSECCO event. This process is already proving its worth, insofar as we have received invaluable feedback (of a positive *and* a constructively critical nature) that will help us fine-tune the organization of future PROSECCO events (such as the Y3 Code Camp/School event).

To construct this deliverable, the four current members of the advisory board were asked to complete a questionnaire with the following questions:

1. *Please provide your name and institution.*
2. *Please provide feedback on the PROSECCO events you have attended in your capacity as an advisory board member.*
3. *Based on your experience of its events so far, do you feel that PROSECCO is reaching the appropriate audience?*
4. *Are there potential members of the CC community not being reached? If so, are there any events that PROSECCO might organize to broaden or deepen its reach?*
5. *Do you believe that gender imbalance is an issue in CC research, or at CC events? If so, how might PROSECCO help?*
6. *Do you believe that CC research is achieving a critical mass (after a decade and a half of conferences and workshops)? Are there resources that PROSECCO can provide – knowledge, data, learning texts, etc. – to ensure that a critical mass is achieved?*
7. *Are there other events that PROSECCO should be organizing?*
8. *Do you believe that PROSECCO has achieved the appropriate visibility within the broader AI community? Or do you believe it has achieved too much visibility for European CC research at the expense of non-European research?*
9. *Do you have other comments on PROSECCO, past or future?*

The rest of this document provides the unfiltered answers to these questions as provided by the four current members of the international advisory board: Graeme Ritchie; Oliviero Stock; Dan Ventura and Rafael Perez y Perez.

3. Overview of Recommendations

The specific recommendations of the advisory board members can be found on the following pages. Here we present a brief summary of the chief recommendations of the board.

- a. Organize more events such as the autumn school and code camp if possible*
- b. In future code camps, mentors could take a stronger role, educating students on the key principles of CC*
- c. We should aim to broaden our reach to embrace:*
 - i. Other academic fields, e.g., psychology, linguistics, philosophy*
 - ii. The arts*
 - iii. Other sections of society, especially to areas of industry*
with applied interest to CC (communications, advertisement, ...)
 - iv. Students already at MSc level and below, for a long-term impact*
- d. Follow up on contact forums and nurture the contacts made in them*
- e. Go global, with cooperative programs to link research across continents*

Each of these recommendations seem achievable in the remainder of the action, in many cases through the careful design of individual events. For instance, planning for the 2016 educational event (most likely a hybrid of Summer school and code camp) will embrace recommendations a and b, while aiming to include a broader swathe of students from more diverse backgrounds and geographic locales (while, of course, favoring European students).

Graeme Richie

Interim Oversight Report Form

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1. *Please provide your name and institution here.*

Graeme Ritchie University of Aberdeen
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2. *Please provide feedback on the PROSECCO events you have attended in your capacity as an advisory board member.*

(a) Autumn School on Computational Creativity (November 2013)

This was well organized, and presented a substantial and varied set of lectures for the participants, from a highly experienced collection of presenters. The video recording of the lectures was done in a remarkably efficient and non-intrusive fashion, and the subsequent editing and publishing of this material has resulted in a very useful resource for the field. The atmosphere at the School was open and supportive, although some of the CC veterans could maybe have taken a less dominant role in the discussion sessions, to give students more of a chance to ask questions or participate in debate.

(b) Computational Creativity Code Camp (January 2015)

This was well organized, and created a stimulating working environment for the participants, who seemed to enjoy the challenge. The whole idea of a code camp is very good, and I hope PROSECCO manages to arrange a further such event before the project concludes.

I felt that there were two aspects that could be improved, if another code camp were to be organized. Some of the students did not have a lot of experience of CC, and perhaps more effort should be put into explaining what the general idea of CC is, particularly to persuade

keen hackers that there is more to it than slick programming. Also, the highly experienced mentors were a largely under-used resource. The remit for the mentors was to intervene as little as possible, which raises the question of why it was worthwhile bringing in such knowledgeable CC practitioners for this role. A more active supervisory role would have given more scope for experience to be passed on from the mentors to the participants, in the manner of an “apprenticeship”. That is, there would be more of a learning experience.

3. *Based on your experience of its events so far, do you feel that PROSECCO is reaching the appropriate audience?*

Yes and also the recent school in Coimbra was a great success. In the events I have attended, it appears that the audience is primarily the academic computer science community, with much less involvement from disciplines such as psychology, linguistics, philosophy, etc. or from artistic practitioners. The CC field needs to work hard to dispel an image of involving little more than cute programming tricks. Students need to think more theoretically and more abstractly about the point of their activities.

4. *Are there potential members of the CC community not being reached? If so, are there any events that PROSECCO might organize to broaden or deepen its reach?*

(See answer to 3. above).

It would be possible to have a coherent notion of CC without involving artistic practitioners, but this could result in important insights being overlooked. The need for this broader reach is often articulated, for example in ICCC announcements, but I do not know whether PROSECCO has done much to achieve this broadening (although this may be more a reflection of my not knowing enough about the full range of PROSECCO's events).

5. *Do you believe that gender imbalance is an issue in CC research, or at CC events? If so, how might PROSECCO help?*

I have no statistics on this, but anecdotally it appears that attendance at CC events is predominantly male. The ACC steering committee (as listed on its website) is made up of 12 male and 2 female members.

It may be that this sort of imbalance is similar to that in academic computer science as a whole; see, for example:

<http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=268084.268238>

http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/nise/News_Activities/Forums/Klawepaper.htm

It seems unrealistic to expect one three-year enterprise to make a great impact on a deeply entrenched and long-standing state of affairs.

It is possible that broadening the catchment area to other disciplines and areas, as suggested in earlier answers above (3 & 4), might modify the balance at CC events. However, this is probably too much of a challenge for PROSECCO alone to make much impact.

6. *Do you believe that CC research is achieving a critical mass (after a decade and a half of conferences and workshops)? Are there resources that PROSECCO can provide – knowledge, data, learning texts, etc. – to ensure that a critical mass is achieved?*

It's hard to know what would count as a critical mass, particularly as a crude count of numbers does not tell the whole story. For example, the field of Natural Language Generation has been around for over 30 years, with research into text generation now a well-established strand of CL/NLP, but its annual conferences do not attract vast numbers of participants. Similarly, CC is likely to remain a relatively minor field, compared to some of the fields with which it overlaps (e.g. computer games). The question is – has the community become established to the extent that it will keep going? One factor which makes it hard to tell is the way in which the same small group of very active academics (many of them involved in PROSECCO) have been the prime movers in CC (particularly in Europe) for more than a decade. It is unclear to me to what extent a larger community has grown around this nucleus.

Since PROSECCO is a short, fixed-term project, it should do as much as possible to leave lasting effects, for example by establishing resource repositories. There are already some of these on the website, but a long-term home must be ensured.

7. Are there other events that PROSECCO should be organizing?

The types of events so far organized by PROSECCO seem appropriate, and I can't think of others. More events of the same type would be good, if funding permits.

8. Do you believe that PROSECCO has achieved the appropriate visibility within the broader AI community? Or do you believe it has achieved too much visibility for European CC research at the expense of non-European research?

I find it very hard to know what the visibility of CC is within any broader community, whether the question is about CC as a particular subarea or is about particularly activities within the CC area (e.g. poetry generation). As PROSECCO has been running for less than two years, it is unlikely that it could have altered the visibility very much.

PROSECCO is a European project, so it would not be surprising if it tended to react to, and to foster, research in Europe. I don't see that as a problem.

9. Do you have other comments on PROSECCO, past or future?

The allocation of significant funding to the kind of community-building and infrastructural work that PROSECCO is involved in is highly commendable and very welcome. Providing the resources to facilitate development of a field is extremely important, particularly when it is at an early stage, and may turn out to be more cost-effective, in terms of science and technology, than specific project-focused funding.

Thank you for your responses. They will be collated to form the interim report of the international advisory board. If you would like any additional text to be included in the report, please provide it below.

Oliviero Stock

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1. *Please provide your name and institution here.*

Oliviero Stock

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2. *Please provide feedback on the PROSECCO events you have attended in your capacity as an advisory board member.*

1st PROSECCO Contact Forum on Computational Creativity

It was a great event, well organized near Madrid and with a lot of interesting content and lively participation

3. *Based on your experience of its events so far, do you feel that PROSECCO is reaching the appropriate audience?*

I think the recent school in Coimbra was a success. I have heard very positive comments from participants.

I only think the scope could be enlarged and Prosecco should become better known in the AI community and probably in the design community.

4. *Are there potential members of the CC community not being reached? If so, are there any events that PROSECCO might organize to broaden or deepen its reach?*

Members of the CC community are mostly reached by Prosecco.

Yet there could be specific initiatives for making this community and its results known to specific sectors of society, especially industry, which could be beneficiary of some novel ideas and potential for new products and processes: communication, advertisement, music, movies etc.

5. *Do you believe that gender imbalance is an issue in CC research, or at CC events? If so, how might PROSECCO help?*

Yes, more or less like in other scientific and especially ICT areas

6. *Do you believe that CC research is achieving a critical mass (after a decade and a half of conferences and workshops)? Are there resources that PROSECCO can provide – knowledge, data, learning texts, etc. – to ensure that a critical mass is achieved?*

I assume more applied interest (see above) would lead to enlarging the community of practitioners.

Anyway very important is the initiative on AI and the Arts proposed this year at IJCAI

7. *Are there other events that PROSECCO should be organizing?*

See 4

8. *Do you believe that PROSECCO has achieved the appropriate visibility within the broader AI community? Or do you believe it has achieved too much visibility for European CC research at the expense of non-European research?*

Yes

No, it is good to see one sector where Europe is leading!

9. *Do you have other comments on PROSECCO, past or future?*

Just go on and extend the scope of the activity. In addition, I will be pleased to contribute if I can be of any help.

Dan Ventura

Interim Oversight Report Form

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- 1. Please provide your name and institution here.*

Dan Ventura

Computer Science Department

Brigham Young University

Provo, UT 84602 USA

- 2. Please provide feedback on the PROSECCO events you have attended in your capacity as an advisory board member.*

2013 Winter School – while I myself was unable to attend this, I sent three students. It was an excellent opportunity for them to meet other students in the field as well as to learn from and interact with leading researchers with whose work they were familiar. I would enthusiastically support a similar program in the US.

2014 Contact Forum Spain – this forum was focused on building connections with researchers in complementary research fields such as general AI, games, visualization and the like. The format was a two-day intensive seminar of talks by both CC researchers and the contactees, aimed at stimulating discussion and identifying common ground as well as complementary research strategies and directions and at attracting interest and participation in CC research by these contactees. Of course, two days can only serve as the very beginning of the discourse, and while I thought it was a good beginning, I was not privy to any follow-up contact between the communities, and therefore I can not judge whether the event was successful in the sense that it was intended to be (i.e., growing the CC field).

2014 Contact Forum Slovenia – the forum was focused on building connections with practitioners of the arts and was held in conjunction with the 5th International Conference on Computational Creativity. The forum consisted of two mechanisms for fostering interactions between the artists and CC researchers: a gallery of interactive exhibits produced by the artists with which conference attendees were encouraged to interact and talks by CC researchers that the artists were encouraged to attend. I found the effectiveness of the interactions mixed. Some artists were easy to talk with, and we were able to find common ground for exploring interests, exchanging ideas, etc., while with others this was much more difficult. Other than common language issues (that is, finding a common way of looking at the world), this is not so different from interacting with CC researchers. Again, I was not involved with follow-up activities if any were undertaken, so I am unsure of the long-term impact of the forum. I think that facilitating this kind of potentially disruptive cross-disciplinary discussion is the kind of high-risk, high-reward activity we should try to do more of as a community.

3. Based on your experience of its events so far, do you feel that PROSECCO is reaching the appropriate audience?

I think that PROSECCO is targeting the right kinds of audiences for contact and exchange of ideas. I do not feel like I can evaluate how successful the program has been at producing long-term, measurable effect.

4. Are there potential members of the CC community not being reached? If so, are there any events that PROSECCO might organize to broaden or deepen its reach?

Not in the European realm, but certainly there are members of the CC community outside Europe that are not being reached. Indeed, some CC researchers not from Europe may perceive PROSECCO) and by transitivity perhaps all of European CC researchers) as something of an exclusive club and feel alienated as a result. I think the PROSECCO plan is quite careful and thorough in its networking ambitions within Europe but has little real ambition outside of Europe. Perhaps this is a necessary first step (no doubt proscribed by funding regulations), but having taken the step, the next one must be more global.

5. *Do you believe that gender imbalance is an issue in CC research, or at CC events? If so, how might PROSECCO help?*

Gender imbalance is an issue in many if not all STEM fields, and while I think that CC is doing better in this regard than some, I do think that gender imbalance is still an issue in the CC field as well. I think we as a community are aware of this and are making efforts to correct it. Things that PROSECCO can do to help include variations on building and maintaining support infrastructure for underrepresented groups. Of course, these kinds of things should be done naturally and organically rather than gratuitously.

6. *Do you believe that CC research is achieving a critical mass (after a decade and a half of conferences and workshops)? Are there resources that PROSECCO can provide – knowledge, data, learning texts, etc. – to ensure that a critical mass is achieved?*

I think CC has the potential to achieve critical mass, and it is slowly moving in that direction. However, for reasons that are not yet completely clear, that movement is quite slow. I think the planned journal and possibly a textbook will help facilitate this movement. We as a field need to do a better job at proselyting and at being inclusive without losing our cohesion and core vision. I think programs like PROSECCO are critical for this. Perhaps the missing component is a strong international (i.e. extra-EU) cooperative program (see more on this below).

7. *Are there other events that PROSECCO should be organizing?*

The only thing I can think of that is missing in the PROSECCO purview is some development of relationships with CC researchers outside of Europe. I am confident this omission is due to current EU grant proposal guidelines for the program funding PROSECCO, rather than an oversight of the PROSECCO team, and I see a real opportunity for an international version of the PROSECCO networking program that facilitates collaboration with researchers interested in CC in the US, Canada, Australia, Asia and elsewhere. I think this will likely do as much or more to encourage and develop real critical mass as anything else in the current work plan.

8. *Do you believe that PROSECCO has achieved the appropriate visibility within the broader AI community? Or do you believe it has achieved too much visibility for European CC research at the expense of non-European research?*

This is an interesting question that suggests others are having some of the same thoughts as I have expressed in question 7 above. In fact, as might be guessed from my response to that question, I do not believe that PROSECCO has achieved broad international awareness in the AI community outside of Europe, and I think that is unfortunate. We need cooperative programs between the US and Europe that foster international team building, exchange of ideas at conferences that are equally and regularly attended by researchers from both sides of the Atlantic as well as those from the Pacific rim, journals of international scope with diverse editorial control, etc. There are people in place in both the US and Europe that can push this kind of international growth, and they need funding mechanisms that encourage this.

9. *Do you have other comments on PROSECCO, past or future?*

N/A

Rafael Perez y Perez

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Rafael Pérez y Pérez

Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Cuajimalpa

México D. F

2. *Please provide feedback on the PROSECCO events you have attended in your capacity as an advisory board member.*

Contact forum, Madrid (February 2014).

This was an interesting event. The organization was pretty good. The social events help lots to establish contact between the different participants. However, there are two points I am concern about.

1) I am not sure if most of the participants had a clear idea of what the event was about. As far as I understood, the main goal was to know each other in order to explore possible collaborations related to CC. My impression was that, at least during the presentations, most people showed a tendency to talk about the “results of their latest paper” rather than trying to point out possible points of common interest to other participants.

2) I do not know if, after one year, the organizers have analyzed the impact of the event. My impression is that no much collaboration emerged from it. It is very hard that someone that has worked for several years in one research area changes to work on CC, unless he or she sees a clear connection with its current work.

So, taking this into consideration, and the fact that the participants had different backgrounds, maybe it would be useful if the organizers, in future events,:

- point out the importance of the interdisciplinary work for CC and provide some examples.
- detect and suggest some core problems in CC that requires the participation of research teams with different backgrounds and point out how the participants might contribute to sort them out.

These ideas might help the participants to see clearer possible opportunities of collaboration.

Code-Camp, Coimbra (January 2015).

This was a very successful event. The number of participants was big enough to make it interesting, but not too big to make it unmanageable. They came from diverse areas of knowledge, which make the experience richer.

I talked to some of the participants during the event and they expressed to me that this was their first encounter with CC. They also declared that the experience had been interesting, and they would like to participate again in similar events. These are important points because they show that the code-camp fulfilled one of PROSECCOS' most important goals.

The local organization was excellent.

It is clear that the organizers invested an important amount of time preparing the material, contacting the mentors, developing presentations. My impression is that the code camp was very professional.

However, as in any product developed by humans, always there is space for improvements.

I think it would help to have a better communication with the mentors. For instance, it is necessary to make their roles very clear to them.

Regarding the roles, I tend to agree with Graeme Ritchie's comments about "exploiting" more the mentors. One option is what Graeme suggested about the "project manager" (although we should be careful about the risk of imposing one particular way of approaching CC). There are other possibilities. For instance, to organize pairs of mentors; each pair provides face to face feedback to each group. In this way, all groups interact with all mentors in a more private and direct way. During dinner mentors might exchange opinions that can enrich the whole experience. There are many other possibilities that should be considered.

I also agree with Graeme's idea of providing a more solid background in CC to the participants. I believe that the Helsinki event had that intention (I did not participate there). Nevertheless, there were people that attended the code-camp and did not go to Helsinki.

We should encourage participants to keep in contact. For instance, suggesting to them to submit to the ICCC student track the work they developed here. Another idea is that PROSECCO could organize a kind of medium-term long-distance competition, where the teams can work from home to improve their systems. I know of at least one team that is still working on their bot.

3. *Based on your experience of its events so far, do you feel that PROSECCO is reaching the appropriate audience?*

Yes

4. *Are there potential members of the CC community not being reached? If so, are there any events that PROSECCO might organize to broaden or deepen its reach?*

Yes.

My impression is that PROSECCO must expand its scope and influence. However, I do not live in Europe and therefore I do not have evidence of this. However, I have the impression that PROSECCO is not well known between all those interested in CC.

In order to have a better understating of this point, it might help to analyze why the participants attended the code camp. How did they know about it? I would like to know how many of them came because his/her supervisor has contact with some of the PROSECCO members.

Maybe in the next ICCC PROSECCO can ask some of the attendees to answer a brief questionnaire to learn how much they know about PROSECCO

However, I must say, events like the ones that PROSECCO is organizing, definitely will spread the voice between the whole CC community.

5. *Do you believe that gender imbalance is an issue in CC research, or at CC events? If so, how might PROSECCO help?*

I do not believe that the gender imbalance situation is an issue. That is, I do not see that it has caused problems. However, it would be good to have more women working in the area.

In recent years, there are some knowledge areas that attract women, for instance psychology or design. It might help if the relation between CC and those areas were made clear.

6. *Do you believe that CC research is achieving a critical mass (after a decade and a half of conferences and workshops)? Are there resources that PROSECCO can provide – knowledge, data, learning texts, etc. – to ensure that a critical mass is achieved?*

It is clear that the number of people interested in the area has grown in the last years. However, I would not claim that we have achieved a critical mass. It is necessary to keep on working.

The resources that PROSECCO can provide certainly will be very useful to reach such a critical mass.

7. *Are there other events that PROSECCO should be organizing?*

- Events with MSc and undergraduate students. If we want to have a long term impact, we need to target younger students. Definitely MSc students, and probably undergraduate students. So, I would think of ways to reach them. For instance, a contest between MSc students from different universities, working from home, that are required to develop a creative system. It might be interested to have a “before” and “after” meeting, face to face, with the tutors of these students.

- Promotion between those researchers working in CC and which are not in contact with PROSECCO; e.g. University of Sussex has a tradition of being interested in CC; has PROSECCO a good contact with them?

- Events specifically designed to establish contact and possible collaborations with people outside Europe, particularly between young people. Maybe some contests?

8. *Do you believe that PROSECCO has achieved the appropriate visibility within the broader AI community? Or do you believe it has achieved too much visibility for European CC research at the expense of non-European research?*

I believe that it is necessary that PROSECCO establishes links with research groups and students outside Europe.

9. *Do you have other comments on PROSECCO, past or future?*

I think that PROSECCO is doing a great work.

It is having, and it will have, an important and transcendental impact in CC.

Congratulations!