

## Foreword

The Mediterranean Morphology Meetings (MMM) are organized by a committee of three morphologists: prof. Geert Booij (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), prof. Angela Ralli (Univ. of Patras, Greece) and prof. Sergio Scalise (University of Bologna). They do this work together with a local organizer. MMM 4, held in Catania was a very successful meeting, not in the least thanks to the efforts of our colleague and local organizer, prof. Salvatore Sgroi.

The aim of these meetings is to bring together linguists who work on the morphology of (mainly, but not exclusively European) languages in an informal setting which guarantees maximal interaction between researchers, and gives young linguists the chance to present their work at a conference of moderate size where fruitful contacts with senior linguists can be established. Thus, a European network of morphologists has developed.

The first four meetings, in 1997 in Mytilene (Lesvos, Greece), in 1999 in Lija (Malta), in 2001 in Barcelona, and the last one in 2003 in Catania (Sicily) - have proven the success of this formula: the interest in attending these meetings was high, many abstracts were submitted, and the abstracts were selected anonymously which gave young linguists the chance to present their work on the basis of quality, not primarily reputation. In addition, each meeting had a number of invited speakers, leading morphologists of the world.

Each MMM has a specific topic that forms one of the criteria for the selection of abstracts. The topic of the Catania meeting was 'Morphology and linguistic typology'. At first sight, this may look like a very obvious topic since morphological parameters have always played an important role in the classification of languages. We are all acquainted with labels such as 'isolating language' or 'polysynthetic language'. Indeed, morphological typology forms a long-standing and very fruitful research tradition. Yet, there were good reasons to have a fresh look at the relation between morphology and linguistic typology. For many years, debates on morphology focused on theoretical issues, such as its relation to phonology and syntax. There are many different views on the degree of autonomy of morphology, but it is clear by now that morphology is well-established subdiscipline of linguistics. Typological issues have also received new interest, and there is no longer a fruitless separation of typological and theoretical research. Therefore, the MMM committee wanted to put the relation between morphology and typology high on the agenda. Many of the papers in these proceedings show that comparative and typologically informed morphological research is essential for proper morphological analyses of individual languages, and for the development of an empirical adequate theory of morphology.