

## Editorial

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This issue of EPJ D introduces a revised list of sections and subsections, designed in close collaboration with the whole editorial board. The aim of these modifications is to reflect more faithfully the wide diversity of activities covered by our journal.

A new section is introduced. Entitled “Atomic and Molecular Collisions”, it covers a large range of activities, from atom/atom or atom/molecules collisions (including the very active field of ultra-cold collisions in laser-cooled atomic or molecular gases), to electron scattering and molecular reactivity. The creation of this section reflects the increased interest of the journal for molecular and collisional physics, already apparent in the recent extension of the editorial board competence in this direction. We very much hope that this community will react positively to this trend and become a major component of the journal’s life.

For the other sections, we have markedly revised the list of subheadings. We think it important to make it as detailed as possible, both to indicate that EPJ D aims at being a generalist journal for AMO physics and to help our authors to find easily the proper section for their submissions. There is of course no way to describe the whole field’s activity in a few subheadings. They are all to be understood with the broadest meaning. This list is by no means an exclusive one. All theoretical or experimental papers connected to atomic, molecular, plasma, quantum or optical physics are welcome.

This revised section list appears almost simultaneously with the new WEB portal to all EPJ journals ([www.eurphysj.org](http://www.eurphysj.org)), which will be online within a few weeks. It unites the material formerly presented on our publisher’s WEB sites (EDP Sciences, SIF and Springer). All the journal contents are available there (and all WEB registrations are of course valid for this portal). We offer also a free access to the *highlight papers* (see our editorial, Eur. Phys. J. D **29**, 3 (2004) and below), for at least a year. We hope that this offer will focus more attention on these papers, selected by the editorial board for their wide interest and quality. You will also find on this portal useful information for authors and a direct access to the electronic submission procedures. We look forward to receiving your suggestions for the continued improvement of this important part of the journal.

We also think it is necessary to clearly describe, below, our editorial procedures (refereeing, appeals, ethical problems...). The fairness and celerity of the paper handling process are essential components in a journal’s image. We hope that our readers and authors will be convinced by the arguments and statistics presented below that EPJ D is worthy of their trust. We are of course also open to suggestions to improve these procedures.

As a final word, we would like to thank warmly those members of the editorial board whose term came to its end in 2004: P. Cahuzac, H. Haberland, G. Lampis, A. Politi, F. Romanelli, R. Weinkauff. They devoted considerable efforts for the continued improvement of the journal. We hope they will continue to help us with their advice and support the journal by their scientific production. May we conclude by offering you our best wishes for a happy and productive **New World Year of Physics?**

## Procedures

### Submissions

Electronic submissions through the WEB portal ([www.eurphysj.org](http://www.eurphysj.org)) or by direct e-mail to the editorial office (EO) ([epjd@edpsciences.org](mailto:epjd@edpsciences.org)) are preferred since they reduce significantly the handling time. The au-

thors should read and follow the author instructions on the WEB site for the preparation of their manuscript.

EPJ D does not enforce any size limit on the papers. It is important though to note that EPJ D is not a review journal. All EPJ D papers should contain significant

original contents (see refereeing process below). Transfer agreements will soon allow for an immediate transfer of such papers to participating journals, with the author's consent. Similar procedures already exist for transfers between Europhysics Letters and EPJ (see below). We hope that EPJ could thus be the apex of an integrated publication platform including every type of scientific publication.

For very long papers, the authors can be required to split them into two parts. Note that it is also possible to submit part of the paper as supplementary on-line material. This is particularly recommended for long table of results, such as spectroscopic data. All registrations to EPJ D provide a full access to the online version. The authors can also submit two papers simultaneously, presenting complementary results, and ask for a back to back publication, which will always be granted provided the total size of the papers is not too large.

Upon reception, the EO produces a PDF version of the manuscript, if needed. A reference number is attributed to the paper, which is used all along the editorial procedure. The date of submission is recorded. An acknowledgment of receipt is sent out to the authors, with the paper reference. In case of missing information (choice of section, PACS numbers, ...) the authors are immediately alerted at this stage. From this time on, the authors have on-line access to the status of their paper through the *Inquiry System*

(<https://articlestatus.edpsciences.org/is/Physics/epjd/>).

The paper is then despatched, by one of the Editors in Chief (EIC), to one of the members of the editorial board (EBM) selected for his/her competence in the field. The authors may suggest an editor's choice. The EIC's may not grant this request, particularly in the case of an overburdened EBM. The chosen EBM can access all material relevant to the articles he handles through an extremely convenient WEB access to the EO data bases (*Manuscript Management System*). The EIC have permanent access to the files of all papers (see Ethics section below for peculiar cases).

### Referral process

The EBM in charge selects two referees. He may or may not follow the author's suggestions. In some cases, the referees may be chosen from the editorial board itself. This allows for a faster processing when the editor detects that the paper is of such importance that it may deserve the Highlight procedure.

If the EBM (or the EIC) finds that the paper does not fit in the journal's coverage, the authors are required to transfer the submission to another, more appropriate member of the EPJ family. The paper keeps its original submission date demonstrating the antecedence of the research.

If the EBM (or the EO/EIC) finds that the language of the paper or its presentation are not adequate for a

direct transmission to the referees, the authors are asked to produce a new version of their paper with an improved readability. In the process, the paper keeps also its original submission date.

The paper is then sent out to the referees. The cover letter clarifies the acceptance criteria that we enforce:

- the main results of the paper should be original. No review papers can be accepted;
- the paper should represent a significant step forward and not just a minor sequel of an earlier work;
- the paper should include a sufficiently general introduction to make it accessible to the general readership of the journal. It must also be as self-contained as possible.

The originality and significance are carefully screened for papers with theoretical contents. EPJ D cannot accept papers that solve problems whose only interest is to be soluble. The editorial board also insists on experimental relevance of any theoretical work. It should contribute to the explanation of already available data or suggest new and promising experimental routes. In the latter case, the suggested experiments should have a reasonable feasibility, even if they require considerable improvements in techniques. Papers dealing only with mathematical aspects of the theory should be submitted to another, more appropriate journal. Direct transfer procedures to participating journals will also be set-up.

The refereeing process is a severe burden for all of us. We take this opportunity to warmly thank the many colleagues who help us. It is certainly the only possibility to assess in a fair way the validity of the papers that we publish, forming the essential difference between a journal like ours and the preprint servers.

After a reasonable delay, polite reminders are sent to the referees. In exceptional cases, when a report is not received in a proper delay, the EBM may choose to send the paper out to another referee or make the decision on the basis of a single report, provided it is a detailed one, and his own opinion.

When the two reports have been received, the EBM makes a decision. The paper can be accepted as it stands, rejected, or sent back to the authors, together with the referee's comments, for modifications. The processing of the paper is then suspended until the authors' response is received. In rare cases, the reports are conflicting. The EBM may then ask the advice of a third colleague (possibly inside the editorial board) to adjudicate the case.

### Resubmissions

When resubmitting their paper (preferably through the WEB portal), the authors should write also a detailed answer to the referee's comments, particularly if they disagree with these comments. They can also write a letter to the EBM, for instance when they suspect a conflict of interest with one referee.

When no resubmission has been received *one year* after the first editorial decision, the file is considered as closed

and no further processing will take place. A resubmission coming after this deadline is then considered as a new submission and receives accordingly a new submission date.

The EBM can accept the paper directly at this stage. This is the case when the modifications required are simple and can be checked directly. Direct rejection is possible also if it is clear that the authors have not taken into account the referees remarks and have not provided a satisfactory answer to their concerns.

In other cases, the paper is sent back to the referees (only to one of them if the other was already in favour of publication). The referee gets the original and revised version, both referee reports of the first round and the detailed answer by the authors.

Upon receipt of the reports, the EBM makes the final decision of acceptance or rejection. In a few cases, another round of modifications can be used. If the authors disagree with the rejection, they should launch an appeal procedure. An accepted paper is sent out to the production office for publication. In case of an extensive revision at resubmission, the date of reception of the final version is appended to the submission date.

In all cases, all referees involved in the process are informed by the EBM and thanked for this contribution.

### Highlight papers

The EBM and EIC, with the help of the referee reports, may identify a paper as particularly important. These high interest and visibility papers deserve a special procedure. First, the refereeing process is kept as short as possible (the referees being possibly chosen from within the editorial board to minimize handling time). The production of the paper also receives particular attention. The minimum practical delay between submission and on-line first publication with a quotable DOI is about 8 weeks. Note that there is no size limit for a highlight paper. Highlights are not a separate section of the journal. They appear in their topical section as all other papers. The authors are not supposed to propose their papers for the highlight procedure, the selection being made by the EBM and EIC.

The highlight papers have a special presentation in the printed version. They are also strongly advertised on the WEB site. The authors produce a short introductory paragraph, stating in terms accessible to a general audience the main results and interest of their paper. This paragraph is posted in the "Highlight papers" section of the WEB portal. The full text of the paper is freely accessible through the WEB journal interface. Copies of the paper are also mailed by the EO to colleagues selected by the authors, on their behalf.

### Topical issues

EPJ D publishes one to three topical issues per year. They are intended to present a comprehensive overview of a particularly active and important field. They gather generally

high-visibility papers which are among the most quoted in the journal.

Propositions for new special issues are welcome, from EBM or colleagues. Due to space limitation, and to avoid a backlog of regular papers, we cannot welcome all propositions, even quite interesting ones. The EIC thus make the final decision about these propositions.

One to three 'guest editors' are then appointed. They are responsible for attracting papers and for the reviewing process. They act thus as full EBM members during the lifetime of the issue (see ethics section below). They are also invited to write an editorial to open the special issue. This editorial can take the form of a 'perspective paper', presenting an overview of the field, stressing the relations between the papers in the issue and discussing the perspectives of the field. This type of paper is particularly important and receives generally a large audience.

### Appeals

Authors may appeal against an editorial decision. Their appeal should be clearly motivated, with a detailed letter to the EBM and a detailed answer to all comments of the referees. The appeal is forwarded to the EBM who was in charge of the paper. He has the choice between several options:

- return the appeal with the resubmitted version (if any) to the original referees;
- return the appeal to new referee(s);
- transmit the appeal to one of the EIC.

In the latter case, the EIC may make the decision him/herself, getting access to the whole manuscript record. He can also seek external advice, with or without formal referee reports. The EIC makes the final decision and informs the authors. No further appeal of this decision is possible.

### Special cases

#### *Rapid notes*

Rapid notes are short contributions, not exceeding four journal pages, deserving rapid publication. The EBM in charge decides whether a paper deserves to be included in this section. In this case, he tries to expedite the refereeing process in the shortest delay. The production time is also kept to a minimum once the paper is accepted. This procedure is not exclusive with that of highlight papers. We insist though that highlight papers should even be of a higher standard than rapid notes. Moreover, the authors are not supposed to propose their paper as a highlight, whereas they have to explicitly submit a rapid note as such.

### *EPL transmission*

There is an editorial agreement between Europhysics Letters and EPJ D. A paper assessed by both EPL referees as valid and interesting, albeit not of wide enough interest to deserve publication in a letter form is transmitted, with the authors' consent, to EPJ D. The original date of submission to EPL is maintained at EPJ D. The EIC can decide for an immediate acceptance, based on the EPL referee reports. He/she can also decide to ask for additional advice. In the case of an immediate acceptance, the publication delay is extremely short (2 weeks after proofreading, see below).

### *Comments*

“Comments” are papers which criticize or correct the work of other authors previously published in EPJ D. The paper is registered at the editorial office as a regular article. The paper is then sent to the authors whose work is being criticized. These authors may (i) act as reviewers (ii) submit a reply for simultaneous consideration. If they review the comment, they may or may not want to publish a reply to the comment.

The editor usually consults an independent referee on the comment and the reply. Both can be published in the same issue but the editor may also decide to publish the comment without the reply. There is no reply to the reply.

### *Errata*

An erratum is submitted by the authors who generally have noticed an error after the publication of their article. The editor is not informed when the erratum concerns a minor point. But in case of major modifications the erratum is submitted to the editor. Errata should be as brief as possible. A careful proofreading is essential to minimize the number of errata.

### *Withdrawal*

Authors may withdraw a paper from EPJ D. The processing is then stopped immediately. The editorial office informs the EBM in charge and the referees if the paper is under evaluation. Any resubmission of the material will be considered as a new submission.

### **Paper production**

The production of the final version of the paper is performed at EDP Sciences, one of our publishers. The paper is carefully edited and cast in the journal's format. The typesetting being performed in L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, we strongly encourage the authors to use this standard and our specific macros (available on the WEB portal) for the preparation of their manuscript.

If the editor/referee(s) feel that the English language needs some improvement before publication, the editing

is performed by an English-speaking physicist. The corresponding author receives the corrections and is asked to amend his manuscript accordingly.

The proofs are sent out to the corresponding author for a final check. After the author has returned the proofs, no more corrections can be accepted. The authors should thus submit an erratum instead. It is thus of high importance to do the proofreading very carefully.

The authors can follow all steps of their paper production on the inquiry system.

The article is accessible on-line before being available in the printed form, only 2 weeks after proofreading by the authors. As soon as it is available, it receives a DOI identifier. This unique number is quotable, just as a standard reference.

### **Ethics**

#### *Simultaneous submissions*

It is understood that a manuscript submitted to EPJ D is not published elsewhere and/or is not presently submitted for publication in another journal. Therefore, it is the policy of the journal to immediately reject a paper without further processing when it becomes apparent that it has been submitted for publication elsewhere. Typically, such a situation is recognised by one or both referees who inform the EBM in charge. The information is immediately forwarded to the editorial office and to the EIC's.

The editorial office sends a letter explaining the reason of the rejection to the authors. A copy of the letter is sent to the referees. The EIC may decide:

- to inform the authors' institutions of this gross misconduct and/or;
- to ban the author from any further publication in EPJ.

Similar procedures will be used in case of other non-ethical behaviours.

#### *Changes in authors list*

No changes in the authors list can be admitted between submission and resubmission. Authors can be added at the resubmission time, provided they have really contributed to the new version of the paper. No author can be removed from the list at this stage without an explicit written and signed consent from him, sent to the editorial office by Fax, regular or express mail. No e-mail is admissible for this purpose. The consent should explain clearly the reasons of this modification.

#### *Editorial board member papers*

The EBM and their groups are of course warmly welcome to contribute to the journal, since they are among the most active specialists in their field. The editor's submissions (including the EIC ones) are treated as regular papers, with the same objectivity. The authoring editor has no way to access the electronic file of his paper (specially protected in this case). He has no access to the referee names or to the correspondence between the EBM in charge and the referees.

### *Editorial board and EIC designation*

The EIC are designated by the journal's Steering Committee (made up of representatives of the publishers and of the participating learned societies), on the proposition of the Scientific Advisory Committee (grouping representatives of most learned societies in Europe).

The EBM are invited by the EIC, with advice from the Scientific Advisory Committee. All contracts have three years duration. They can be renewed.

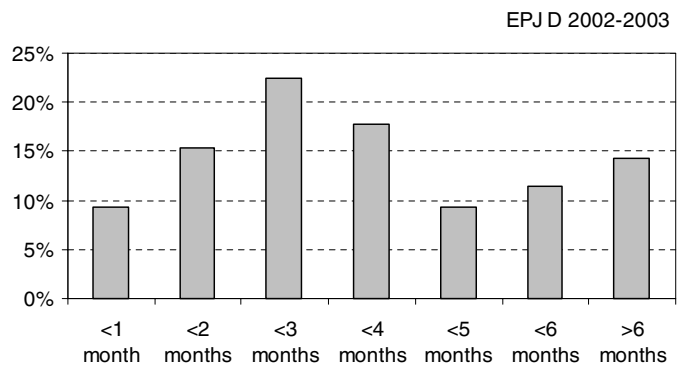
### *Editorial board remuneration*

The work of the EBM and of the EIC deserves a (modest) remuneration from the publishers. The EIC get a fixed lump sum, decided upon each year by the Steering Committee. The EBM are paid on a per-handled paper basis, whatever the final fate of the paper is. There is thus absolutely no interaction between the remuneration of the EBM and their scientific decision. We stress that these remunerations are modest and that they are not, by far, the main motivation of our editors.

### **Statistics**

The following histogram presents the delay between submission and acceptance (online publication follows two weeks after the proofs are returned by the authors). 65% of the papers are accepted in less than four months and 86%

in less than 6 months. This includes the revision times. The editorial delays are thus quite reasonable.



The next histogram reflects the history of EPJ D's impact factor (as supplied by the ISI data bases). It is well in the average of archival journals. The recent increase is rather encouraging for us.

