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The 4th Palaeontological Virtual Congress

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The emergence of new applications and technological advances has opened new and wider pathways for people to ensure effective science communication. This has become more significant after more than two years of difficulties and restrictions due to the COVID-19 epidemiological crisis, in which online platforms gained great relevance and proved key to keep up the drive for science communication (Barral, 2020). Aware of this, the first edition of the Palaeontological Virtual Congress (PVC) was organised in December 2018 by a team of young researchers from different nationalities. The purpose of that new congress format was simply to disseminate worldwide the most recent scientific advances in palaeontology in a fast, easy, inexpensive and inclusive way.

Now the PVC aims to become an event occurring every year and a half, as supported by the unprecedented success and learning of its previous editions (Crespo & Manzanares, 2019; Crespo & Citton, 2021). The PVC was the first palaeontological congress to be developed in a fully virtual meeting format. Compared to in-person meetings, the virtual platform overcomes any economic or geographic barriers, making it possible to reach a much wider audience. This has an extra-positive impact in groups with limited economic resources or scientists

working from low- and middle-income countries, widening participation and giving them international projection, which ultimately signifies a scientific progress.

The organisation of the event has made excellent strides towards making the experience as open as possible to all scientists and creating a supportive environment to share ideas and knowledge. To build an inclusive meeting continues one of the main goals of the PVC and this can be seen in the increasing range and diversity of ages, gender, nationalities and areas of expertise of all the participants, from the organising committee to the presenters or viewers. Thanks to the creation of a social fund, the congress offers free registration to participants from low- and middle-income countries listed as such by The World Bank. In addition, the figure of ambassador has been set up for participants who wish to publicize the congress and make the information more accessible to their colleagues and/or area of expertise. In total, 535 scientists from 56 countries attended the congress in its third edition, held in December 2021.

Since its very beginning, the palaeontological community has shown a very positive response to this congress. Different international teams leading the study of the most important fossil insect sites worldwide have actively participated with contributions at different levels.

Overall, three thematic sessions, one invited talk, and about 10% of the contributions presented in previous editions were related to fossil arthropods (Crespo *et al.*, 2018; Vlachos *et al.*, 2020, 2021). This year the congress is once again committed to arthropod palaeontology studies, with an invited lecture by Dr Ricardo Pérez de-La Fuente (Oxford University Museum of Natural History, UK), and a thematic session dedicated to “Palaeoecological implications of organisms in amber” by Dr David Peris (Botanical Institute of Barcelona, CSIC, Spain). Further, the International Palaeontological Society has become a supporter of the event.

The new edition of the PVC, the “4th Palaeontological Virtual Congress”, will be held in May 2023. Contributions may be in the form of pre-recorded video presentations or static slideshows and will be compiled in a book of abstracts. The virtual forum will allow to attend the various invited lectures, conferences and virtual field trips, and will provide a safe space for discussion. The new edition will benefit from a renewed website and an app to attend the congress from a device other than a computer. In addition, it will be possible to participate in the 1st PVC Photography Contest and the 1st PVC Palaeoart Contest. Details about the congress, as well as its deadlines, can be found on its website (<http://palaeovc.org/>), social networks (@palaeovc) or in the circular.

The organising committee will continue working to adapt to the evolving needs of the scientific community and the science of palaeontology. We hope that the congress will be successful as in previous editions, consolidating itself as a regular appointment for researchers in this field.

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