



Dear Participants,

At the time of submitting our bid for SSW11, I hoped that we can re-create the atmosphere of SSW1 in Autrans that was the first international speech conference I could attend in 1990. I enjoyed the single-track approach that allowed everyone to listen to all the presentations. At the age of 31 years, coming from a country where an ordinary citizen until then only once in 3 years was allowed to travel to Western Europe, that conference was a sort of „open door” to the speech synthesis research community. We could have a chat anytime with world-famous researchers (e.g. Ken Stevens). That was when we could start a friendship with one of the organizers, Christian Benoit, whose name is still well-known although he passed away 23 years ago. Fortunately, the other organizer of SSW1 – Gérard Bailly- will be with us on-site. That is one of the reasons why I encourage everyone to come to Budapest in person.

Another important reason is that Hungary was among the first TTS developers of the world. The HungaroVox formant-based TTS system was demonstrated in 1981 by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. One of the HungaroVox developers - Gábor Olaszy - will be also on-site with us.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID pandemic, our original plans could not be fulfilled. Initially, we wanted to have everyone in the same hotel (just as it was at SSW1 in Autrans) by Lake Velence. Due to travel restrictions and uncertainty, we moved the conference to a hybrid setting, and the location is a wellness hotel in Budapest which is more flexible in terms of lecture room size and reservations. Although Hungary and Budapest are some of the safest places worldwide, it seems that most participants could only afford remote registration. Even with these limitations, we try to provide as much interaction possibility during the conference as possible.

All submitted papers were reviewed by three members of the Scientific Committee. The accepted 40 papers will be presented in oral sessions, where 24 minutes are devoted to the introduction, the talk, and Q&A activity. On each day, we start with an oral session. One-hour keynotes are planned for the middle of the day in Europe so that the audience spanning from Vancouver to Tokyo had a chance to be fully aware. Discussions may be mixed with lunch after the keynotes. In selecting the keynotes, we tried to follow the special topic proposed for SSSW11: *“Speech uniqueness and deep learning”*. The first plenary speaker is Lior Wolf, who will present the crossroads of speech, singing, and music. Our second keynote speaker, István Winkler, will introduce us into his basic research on the development of the communication of infants. On the last day, Thomas Drugman will present the latest results on expressive TTS, which is an essential requirement for more extended human-machine speech dialogues.

Authors are encouraged to submit an extended version of the papers to a special issue on speech synthesis of the Infocommunications Journal (<https://www.infocommunications.hu/>).

Please use the breaks and the session discussions for both private and group forms of exchanging ideas and opinions. The platform of the presentations will be Zoom Webinar. To facilitate discussions, we shall use the Spatial Chat infrastructure.

Those who come in person have the advantage of personal participation at the welcome reception and the social event besides the regular program.

I would like to thank members of the Organizing Committee for all the effort that made SSW11 possible. Both the past and current Synsig Board members have helped a lot during the preparation. Péter Nagy and Mária Tézsla from the Scientific Association for Infocommunications have taken up the

burden of organizational and financial administration. Scientific Committee members spent several hours on thoroughly evaluating the papers and give helpful feedback to the authors.

Our sponsors, Google, Apple, Samsung, iFlytek, ISCA, and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, allowed us to keep registration fees low while providing high-quality services to the audience. I hope that against all the difficulties caused by the COVID pandemic, SSW11 will provide a remarkable contribution to the development of speech synthesis. Although smaller in numbers, but hopefully through intensive interaction with each other and the two keynote speakers who will be in Budapest, on-site participants will have a unique chance. On behalf of our Speech Communication and Smart Interaction Labs of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, you are all welcome anytime when you visit Budapest.

I hope that one of the young researchers participating at SSW11 will chair SSW26 30 years from now. That would be a remarkable result.

Looking forward to meeting you at SSW11.

Budapest, August 10, 2021.

Géza Németh, Chairman