Minutes of the General Assembly
Belief Functions and Applications Society (BFAS)

International Conference Center of Sorbonne University, Jussieu Campus
Paris, France
26 October 2022

Assembly: 30 participants (29 on-site and 1 on-line) including the following board members:

1. Thierry Denoeux (President)
2. Frédéric Pichon (Treasurer)
3. Anne-Laure Jousselme (Secretary)
4. David Mercier (Webmaster)
5. Prakash Shenoy
6. Sébastien Destercke
7. Sylvie Le Hégarat-Mascle

Regrets

8. Zied Elouedi (Communication)
9. Zhunga Liu (Webmaster)
10. Johan Schubert (LinkedIn Group)

Wednesday, October 26th, 17h00—18:00 (UTC + 2)

Thierry Denoeux (BFAS President) opened the 2022 BFAS General Assembly. Seven items are present on the agenda: *Missions of the society*, *Approval of financial statements*, *Update on action items*, *Report of the BELIEF 2021 conference*, *Update on action items*, *Next event: BFTA school 2023*, *IJAR best paper award*.

T. Denoeux recalled the mission of the BFAS, which is to *promote belief functions theory and tools through different means* (conferences, schools, special sessions, special issues, LinkedIn group, supporting actions like student grants, etc). Membership is automatic when attending a BFAS event (either school or conference) and is valid for 4 years.

T. Denoeux then presented to the Assembly the current composition of the BFAS Board of Directors (BoD) with its 10 members. The Board is partially renewed every odd year and the last elections took place at the end of 2021 with the following re-elected or new members:

- Zied Elouedi (Communication) – Re-elected
- Zhunga Liu (Webmaster) – Re-elected
- Frédéric Pichon (Treasurer) – Re-elected
- Johan Schubert (LinkedIn group) – Re-elected
- Sylvie Le Hégarat-Mascle – New member

The 2022 composition of the BFAS BoD is thus:

- **Thierry Denoeux (President)**
- **Frédéric Pichon (Treasurer)**
- **Anne-Laure Jousselme (Secretary)**
- Sébastien Destercke
- Zied Elouedi (Communication)
- Zhunga Liu (Webmaster)
- David Mercier (Webmaster)
- Johan Schubert (LinkedIn group)
- Prakash Shenoy
- Sylvie Le Hégarat-Mascle

Next elections will be in 2023. T. Denoeux encouraged BFAS members to run for elections; an invitation email will be sent next year.

Frédéric Pichon (BFAS treasurer) presented the 2021 financial statements, together with forecast for 2022. The BFAS budget is increasing, with a positive balance of **17698.95€** (including **10108.66€** in the savings account). The expected balance for 2022 is **18690.89€** thanks in particular to an expected 1500€ revenue from BELIEF 2022.

A vote was organized among Assembly attendees, both on-line and on-site. To avoid any ambiguity, three distinct questions were asked: (1) *Do you **disapprove** the 2021 financial statements?* Nobody neither in the room nor on-line raised their hand. To ensure the on-line attendee heard the question, a second question was asked: (2) *Do you **approve** the 2021 financial statements?* The on-line attendee answered formally "I approve" in the chat. And the physical attendees raised their hands. Finally (3) *Do you **abstain** from voting?* Nobody raised their hand.

The BFAS financial statements for year 2021 have been formally approved by the Assembly.

F. Pichon (BELIEF 2021 PC chair) pursued by providing a brief report about the BELIEF 2021 which was held in Shanghai, China (15-17 Oct. 2021) as a hybrid event. The event was hosted on the researchers.one platform (managed by Ryan Martin), with Zoom as the video connecting tool. 53 participants attended the event (30 regular, 19 students and 4 keynote speakers), physical attendance from local people and

online for others. 30 papers were accepted, 4 student grants were awarded. The conference resulted in circa 2100€ revenue.

T. Denoeux then proposed options for the BFTA 2023 school, to be discussed and amended. After the COVID period, it was decided to have two conferences in a row (2021 and 2022) to be back on track and have the conference every even year and the school every odd year, to avoid possible conflict with event in sister communities.

New year, the school is planned to be held in Autumn 2023, and three possible locations opened to discussions were proposed:

- Back to Sienna?
- Elsewhere in Europe? Spain?
- Japan?

Some reactions from the audience:

- ▪ [S. Destercke] Next ISIPTA will be in Oviedo (Mid-July 2023)
- ▪ [T. Denoeux] BFAS would support students if the school takes place in Japan. Japan is easy to travel to, from Asia, Thailand, China…

T. Denoeux reviewed the list of action items collected at the last General Assembly in 2021 in Shanghai, opening the discussion on the different topics:

- **Support to students for conferences and schools**
  - o 7 grants have been awarded for the School in 2019; 4 in 2021; 7 in 2022.
  - o So far, student grants covered only registration fees. It is considered to be extended to partially cover travel fees.
- **Joint action with other societies**
  - o Joint organization of BELIEF 2018 and SMPS in Compiegne (FRA);
  - o Joint organization of BELIEF and Cognitive Analytics, Granular Computing, and Three-Way Decisions (CCGT) in 2021, but the CCGT was cancelled;
  - o Tutorial presentations at the FUSION conference (S. Le Hégarat (2020) and F. Pichon and A.-L. Jousselme (2020, 2021));
  - o Presence at the FUSION conference should be reinforced, as ISIF has sponsored the BFAS for many years, and belief functions are very relevant to the FUSION community (many papers on BFs presented each year). Consider organizing special sessions or/and tutorials.
- **Develop communication**
  - o The 2 mailing lists on the bfas.org domains (members and mailing list) have been useful to advertise events in 2022, and to invite active BFAS members to the 2022 General Assembly.
  - o Again, for the third year (after 2019 and 2021), the idea of developing a YouTube BFAS channel (or the like) received great support. Some ideas exchanged:
    - ▪ Put tutorials and school material available online, continue tutorials in other

conferences.

- ▪ [Ozgur Erdinc] Could be at machine learning conference, or robotics, where evidential classification methods would be of high interest for the audience.
- ▪ [Philippe Xu] No video is currently available, and proposed to build short classes, with worked out examples. He agreed to share a draft that he prepared previously, as a starting point.
- ▪ [Sébastien Destercke] Could add a pointer to existing classes (e.g., Ryan Martin)
- ▪ [David Mercier] Reinforced the idea of making available 10 minutes short videos on a specific topic
- ▪ [Dairia Pinto Prieto] Asked about possible available funding from the BFAS do videos with good quality (like a professional editing of videos)
- ▪ [Sylvie Le Hégarat] Building such a video could be under the form of a competition.
- ▪ [Sabine Fritella] Allowing attending school online could help gaining more visibility.

- **Fund visiting projects by society members**
  - ○ postponed due to the COVID-19 restrictions; still pending.

- **Define important problems deserving a prize if resolved**

  - ○ Still pending.

- **Best PhD or Master thesis (new topic)**

  - ○ Best thesis (PhD/Master) on BFs every other year. Winners could be then invited to give a talk. This initiative could also incite teachers to propose topics on BFs

- **Other topics or ideas discussed**

  - ○ [Constance Thierry] Create challenges (i.e., competitions). For instance, provide a dataset and apply different methods and compare the results

  - ○ [Sylvie Le Hégarat-Mascle] Possible issue if students are the targets for such competitions: Master students do not have knowledge/background on BFs and PhD students are busy

  - ○ [Sébastien Destercke] Raised the issue of having evidential data (and labels)

  - ○ [Ozgur Erdinc] Maybe get closer to the area of autonomous vehicles

Finally, T. Denoeux (IJAR Editor in Chief) mentioned the best paper award sponsored by the International Journal of Approximate Reasoning (IJAR). The IJAR best paper award is delivered each year to a student, and has been extended this year to young researchers. The process and results were not discussed in detail during the General Assembly, but rather on Thursday 27th at the gala dinner, where the awards were announced (see Annex A).

The meeting closed at 18h00 (UTC+2)

La Spezia, Italy, 15 November 2022

Thierry Denoeux, President

Anne-Laure Jousselme, Secretary

Annex A: IJAR Best Paper selection process and results

Thursday, October 27th, 21h00 (UTC + 2)

The IJAR best paper award was presented at the gala dinner, after wine testing together with a really nice tour of the *Musée du Vin de Paris* (wine museum of Paris).

The BELIEF 2022 chairs selected 6 papers with an early-career researcher (PhD student or postdoc researcher) as first author, based on the average review scores, with a threshold of 2 points. These 6 papers were judged and ranked by the BFAS Board of Directors members, excluding the 3 members who were co-authors of candidate papers (T. Denoeux, F. Pichon and D. Mercier). Vote was handled by the Helios voting system, ensuring anonymity of voters.

This year, three papers were recognized, with a tie for the first runner-up. A prize of 1000 euros will be shared amongst the awardees. The papers and authors are:

- **1. Tuan-Anh Vu**, Sohaib Afifi, Éric Lefèvre and Frédéric Pichon. *On Modelling and Solving the Shortest Path Problem with Evidential Weights*
- **2 - tie. Andrea Campagner**, Davide Ciucci and Thierry Denoeux. *A Distributional Approach for Soft Clustering Comparison and Evaluation*
- **2 - tie. Yassir Idmessaoud**, Jérémie Guiochet and Didier Dubois. *A qualitative counterpart of belief functions with application to uncertainty propagation in safety cases*

The award was announced by Sweitze Roffel, senior publisher for Artificial Intelligence journals at Elsevier.