

GRANADA CONVERSATIONS: Reflections from a TMS/FEMS Scholar at EUROMAT 2025

Eva Zarkadoula



Eva Zarkadoula with a view of the Alhambra in Granada, Spain, during FEMS EUROMAT 2025.

I was honored to be selected as the 2025 TMS/Federation of European Materials Societies (FEMS) International Scholar and attend the 18th FEMS European Congress and Exhibition on Advanced Materials and Processes (EUROMAT 2025) in Granada, Spain. The Scholar program is intended to strengthen ties between two international materials communities. For me, the value of the experience lay not in any single formal event but in the many direct conversations it made possible. Throughout the week, those conversations ranged from research and professional practice to the broader question of how TMS and FEMS can interact in ways that create lasting value for both communities.

Although the trip included formal presentations at the FEMS conference, its unique value came from the accumulation of many conversations—about science, about how we work, about where collaboration can be most productive, and about the interactions of the two international entities: TMS and FEMS.

As part of the conference program, I delivered the keynote in the 2D Materials session: “Ion–Matter Interactions for Material Modification and Functionalization: Insights from Atomistic Modeling.” The session brought together a broad range of topics and approaches, making it easy to see common questions emerging across different methods and materials areas. That breadth led to useful exchanges about shared challenges, especially around how to connect understanding, validation, and practical outcomes.

Another especially useful part of the week was the industry workshop, “Materials Assisted by Digital Science.” I found this workshop valuable because it highlighted how industry approaches many of the same issues that are central in academic materials research—data integration, model credibility, workflow efficiency, and the challenge of turning digital methods into useful decision tools. It also showed how industry is approaching some of the same problems we face in research and opened discussion about collaboration between industry and research institutes. Many of the most useful discussions focused on shared challenges and on how stronger pathways between research and industry might be built.

A major highlight of the conference was the opportunity to meet FEMS board members and to talk directly about the role of FEMS, its community, and its interaction with TMS. I was pleased to meet FEMS leaders, including Assistant Professor **Anna Zervaki**, past FEMS President and EUROMAT 2025 Congress Chair; Professor **Aldo R. Boccaccini**, FEMS President at the time of EUROMAT 2025 and now Immediate Past President; Professor **Paula Vilarinho**, now FEMS President; and Professor **Rodrigo Moreno**, EUROMAT 2025 Congress Chair and now FEMS Vice-President. We had valuable conversations about how professional societies build community, support international engagement, and create lasting connections between organizations such as TMS and FEMS.

A second highlight, separate from the conference meetings, was a visit in Granada with Professor **Aldo R. Boccaccini** to the institute where we met Professor **Juan Antonio Marchal** at the Universidad de Granada. That visit added a different dimension to the trip. Conferences are excellent for concentrated interaction, but visiting a research group provides another kind of perspective: it allows time to see a different environment in which the work is done. I appreciated the chance to visit with Professor Boccaccini and to meet Professor Marchal and his research group in that context.



Pictured, from left to right, are Juan Antonio Marchal, Eva Zarkadoula, and Aldo R. Boccaccini on a visit to the Universidad de Granada during FEMS EUROMAT 2025.

Looking back, the combination of these two settings is what made the trip especially worthwhile. The conference created a high density of interactions across the broader materials community, and the visit in Granada provided a more focused opportunity for exchange. Together, they made the Scholar experience feel complete: formal participation in the meeting, informal conversations with FEMS leadership, exposure to industry perspectives, and a direct research visit that added another useful dimension to the trip.

The experience also reinforced for me the value of international society partnerships. TMS and FEMS each support strong and active materials communities, and there is clear benefit in creating more points of contact between them. Programs like the Scholar exchange are important because they make those interactions personal and specific. They create space not only to present work but also to understand how another community organizes itself, what challenges it prioritizes, and where there is natural overlap.

By the end of the week, I came away with a stronger sense of the opportunities created when these connections are made deliberately. I returned from Granada with new contacts, a better understanding of how industry and academic perspectives intersect around digital approaches, and several conversations that felt like realistic starting points for future collaboration. For me, that was the most important outcome of the trip. I also appreciated the opportunity to experience the beauty of Granada, which gave the visit a memorable sense of place beyond the conference itself.

I am grateful to TMS and FEMS for supporting the Scholar program and for making this kind of international exchange possible. I am also grateful to the colleagues I met in Granada—particularly Professor Aldo R. Boccaccini, Assistant Professor Anna Zervaki, Professor Paula Vilarinho, and Professor Rodrigo Moreno—for their time, generosity, and willingness to engage in thoughtful discussion. EUROMAT 2025 was a valuable experience that clearly showed how much can come from bringing the right people together in the right setting.



Pictured, from left to right, are Paula Vilarinho, Anna Zervaki, Eva Zarkadoula, and Aldo R. Boccaccini at the FEMS EUROMAT 2025 industry workshop "Materials Assisted by Digital Science" in Granada, Spain.

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