Étienne Ghys was born on December 29th 1954 at Lille, in the North of France. He received his PhD degree in 1979 at the University of Lille, where he developed his career until 1989. He obtained a CNRS position in 1983, after a post-doctoral position at IMPA (Brasil, 1979-81) and a teaching position at CUNY (USA, 1982-83). He moved to École Normale Supérieure de Lyon (ENS-Lyon) in 1989 as a CNRS director of research.

Ghys mathematical work is known for its beauty, with an original mixture of geometry and dynamics, and interactions with topology, group theory, and several other fields. Among his most relevant contributions, we can mention his PhD thesis on locally free actions of the affine group, his classification of Anosov flows with smooth invariant manifolds, his work on foliations and the topology of leaves, his work on holomorphic geometry and dynamics, his rigidity theorem for continuous group actions on the circle, and many, but many other results that are nowadays fundamental pieces in each subject that is concerned. A nice and clever panorama of all of this (up to 2001) written (in French) by Ghys himself is the notice for his nomination to the French Academy of Sciences, available here: http://www.academie-sciences.fr/pdf/membre/Ghys_notice_2001.pdf. Besides this honor, some other of his prizes are the Golden medal of the CNRS (1991), the D'Alembert of the French Mathematical Society (2010, with A. Alvarez and J. Leys), and the Clay Award for dissemination of mathematics (2015).

Nevertheless, it is not at all our goal here to give a full review of all these achievements. Indeed, Ghys' work seems difficult to be measured using the standard parameters of a mathematical career, mainly beacause of his own approach to mathematics as a science that should be done "by a community", and not by individuals working in isolation in a competitive way. In this view, at the very same level of his very important theorems, one should count the enormous quantity of results by other people that are deeply influenced by his work, and also inspired by his empassioned style of teaching mathematics and his kind support and encouragement, specially to young mathematicians. Being always open to generously share his ideas and insights on many subjects, he is certainly one of the most influencial mathematicians of his generation. Besides this, his extraordinary talent as a speaker and, in general, for communicating mathematics, has made of him one of the most popular mathematicians of the world. For those who attended the 2006 ICM in Madrid, it became impossible to speak about him without

remembering his spectacular plenary talk. And this was just a kind of announcement of his briiliant dissemination work that came just after, including the movies *Dimensions* and *Chaos* (together with A. Alvarez and J. Leys), the launch of the CNRS site *Images des Mathématiques*, and many other instances aiming to show to a quite broad audience that mathematics is both beautiful and fun.

In 2015 at ENS-Lyon, the conference *Geometries in Action* was held to celebrate Ghys 60th anniversary. This was preceded by a small local meeting at Chateau de Goutelas, a nice place close to Lyon. The picture below was taken in that occasion. In it, Ghys is surrounded by the many PhD students he had had up to that time. Together with many other people that feel themselves to be informal Ghys' students, they will certainly pursue the Ghys vision of mathematics, and help his influence to impact many future generations.

Note: This letter was written to be published in a Journal but, due to the short delay, it couldn't go to print in due time…