

EURO-INFORMS 2013 Posts Record Breaking Attendance

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While there was expectation that a joint conference hosted in Italy's beautiful capital city would attract a lot of interest, how this translates to the number of participants was not appreciated until the deadlines approached. The previous EURO-k conference record at 2500 delegates for the 2010 Lisbon conference was surpassed as Figure 1 shows, particularly as the extended deadline approached. By July 1, 3500 delegates were greeted by beautiful weather, an impressive location and an exciting programme with eminent plenary and keynote speakers. The program was the result of collaboration between EURO and INFORMS, two major groups within IFORS.

More than 70 parallel sessions were organised over the three and a half days. One can only be grateful that the organisation of an event of such proportion was left in the very capable hands of Operational Research specialists! Proactive in advertising and organising themed sessions, stream organisers were honoured with a cocktail party hosted by the Sapienza Università di Roma. The theme of the conference programme was *All Roads Lead to OR* and the range of topics presented confirmed the value of OR in so many aspects of day-to-day life.

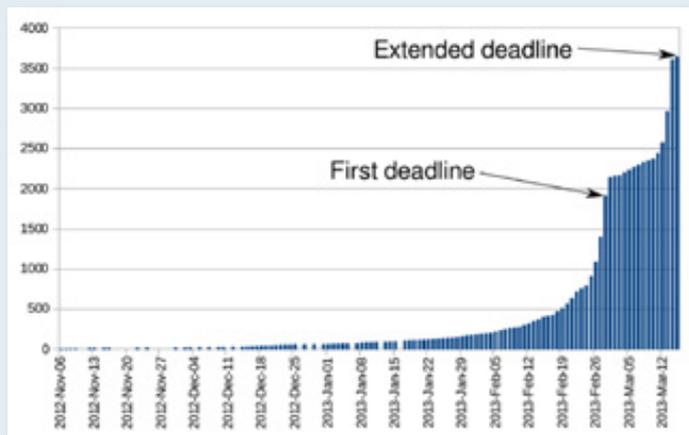


Figure 1: Number of abstract submissions over time

Delegates were officially welcomed on the first day of July at the Opening Session held at the Aula Magna, the Great Hall built between 1933 and 1935 and designed by Marcello Piacentini. The session was introduced by the two programme committee chairs Marc Sevaux (EURO) and David Simchi-Levi (INFORMS). Standing in front of Sironi's 1935 fresco *Italy between the Arts and Sciences*, they thanked the programme committee, the organising committee chaired by Paolo Dell'Olmo, and the professional congress organiser EGA. President of EURO Gerhard Wäscher welcomed INFORMS members to the first joint conference held since 2003, and he thanked the organisers for their hard work in coping with the challenges of such a large conference. For her part, INFORMS President Anne Robinson tackled the importance and future of OR and the special relationship between INFORMS



Organizers welcome participants at the Aula Magna with Sironi's fresco at the background

and EURO in hosting such a conference. Delegates also received a local warm welcome from Anna Sciomachen (AIRO), Luigi Frati (Rector of Sapeinza) and Luigia Carlucci Aiello (Dean of the Faculty of Information Engineering, Informatics and Statistics at Sapienza). Sponsors and exhibitors were also thanked for their vital contribution to the event. Following the tradition of EURO-k conferences, awards were announced during the opening and closing sessions. At the opening session, the EURO Distinguished Service Medal award was presented to Theodor Stewart for his contribution to a large number of EURO and IFORS activities over a number of years and for being instrumental in negotiating South Africa's entry into EURO in the early 1990s. The EURO Gold Medal was presented to Panos Pardalos in recognition of his work in global optimization.

Participants from 83 countries then spent the next few days attending some of the 3000+ talks from the scientific programme and forging new collaborations with other participants. For the first time in a EURO-k conference, a thinner abstract book was produced sans the abstracts of the papers. These were contained in a USB flash drive cleverly attached to the name badge lanyard. In addition to a mobile app, delegates were given the option to plan their conference with the new 'My Program' application, which synchronized with their electronic calendars. In addition to the convenience offered to the participants, it allowed the organisers access to statistics on the number of people who have planned to attend each of the sessions. Based on 1415 users, The most popular parallel sessions were related to OR education, which are major areas for both INFORMS and EURO.

Plenary speakers were Hal Varian, George Nemhauser and John Little. Hal Varian presented OR in a very modern world by using Google data for economic predictions. George Nemhauser emphasized the impact of integer programming across a range of applications. John Little, as IFORS Distinguished Lecturer, showed how Little's Law applies to different types of queues. Keynotes on important current aspects of the discipline summarized core messages and offered insights by accomplished speakers.



IFORS President Nelson Maculan (left) presents the IFORS Distinguished Lecture award to John D.C. Little.

As always, the social programme is central to such an event and the social dinner at the Caffé delle Arti adjoining the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea was a particular highlight.





▲ Old and new friends enjoyed good food and wine in rooms adorned by wonderful paintings and sculptures. There was also a fantastic opportunity for all to browse the collection in the gallery which provided an excellent impression of modern Italian art. Many people also attended Night@Sapienza and enjoyed live music played by MuSa (short for Musica Sapienza) as the sun went down over the Piazzale della Minerva. The volunteer students led by Linda Foster recruited a number of delegates to dance on the steps.

A number of competitions were held, among them, the EthOR Award presented to Robyn Moore. During the closing session, the EURO Doctoral Dissertation Award was presented to Christian Raack and the EURO Excellence in Practice Award was presented to Andreas Brieden, Steffen Borgwardt, and Peter Gritzmann. Finalists for all these awards presented their work before their respective members of the jury in dedicated sessions during the conference. Awards for the best EJOR papers were given to Florian Jaehn, Peter Letmathe, Christian Bierwirth, Frank Meisel, Maria Isabel Gomes Salema, Ana Paula Barbosa-Povoa, and Augusto Q. Novais during the closing

session. All award winners were given the recognition due them with the members of the jury for each competition, gratefully recognized.

Reminders for future conferences were given by: Elena Fernández for the IFORS Barcelona conference in 2014; by Valerie Belton and Tim Bedford for the Glasgow EURO-k conference in 2015. Anne Robinson and Gerhard Wäscher presented gifts to members of the programme committee and organising committee and praised their efforts in making the conference a huge success. This was echoed by Sally Brailsford, EURO Vice President, who also expressed pleasure at having worked with such a committed team. As chair of the closing session, Paolo Dell'Olmo concluded the conference by thanking his colleagues for their tremendous efforts and by inviting the ubiquitous student assistants to the stage. The students received a tremendous applause from the grateful delegates who, at one point or another, have sought them out for guidance on various concerns throughout the conference.



The success of the conference was a product of the exceptional efforts of the programme committee and organising committee, in particular, Marc Sevaux, David Simchi-Levi, Paolo Dell'Olmo, and Giovanni Felici. Gerhard-Wilhelm Weber, advisor to EURO-k conferences had likewise extended his invaluable contribution and limitless enthusiasm for the success of the conference. 🌐

▲ EURO President Gerhard Wäscher (right) presents token of appreciation to advisor to EURO-k conferences Gerhard Wilhelm Weber.