

## EURO 2001 – An OR Odyssey

*This report is on the “EURO 2001” conference, the eighteenth conference of the Association of European Operational Research Societies, which was being held on July 9-11, 2001 in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, at the Erasmus University.*

The organizing committee can look back at the EURO 2001 conference with a lot of satisfaction. It turned out that the participants were satisfied with the events, and that new initiatives, such as company visits and invited company sessions, were appreciated. The professional conference organizer did an excellent job helping people out with practical matters.

On Sunday afternoon, a nice and informal atmosphere during the welcome cocktail started it all. A number of participants took the opportunity to write some first e-mail messages, using one of the colorful i-Macs available.

The opening plenary session on Monday morning showed the diversity of the present OR-community in Europe. After words by the rector from the Erasmus University, prof. dr. ir. J.H. van Bommel, and the president of EURO, Philippe Vincke, the gold medallist Egon Balas reflected on his important mathematical contribution to OR. Emile Aarts, representing Philips Research Laboratories, gave an impression of “ambient intelligence” in our future home and working environment, and the role of OR therein.

On each day of the conference, a semi-plenary session was organized. Prominent speakers both from academics and industry spoke about new developments and applications of OR. The initiative of the organizing committee to invite speakers from companies to discuss the use of OR in practice resulted in interesting contributions.

Coffee and lunch was being served in our general-purpose room, featuring an interesting exhibition by major publishers, computer software and hardware companies, and consultants. In this room, also the I-Macs were situated.

In the afternoon, parallel sessions were organized. Students in orange T-shirts helped out any participant who could not find his or her way. The company visits that were organized simultaneously, gave people the opportunity to visit a session at a company (TNT Post Group, Heineken, Netherlands Railways, Europe Combined Terminals, Connekt OLS, Yamaha) and experience on-site logistics operations. It turned out that all participants of these events believed it to be a success and hoped that coming EURO conferences would also feature such events. In the table below, some facts concerning these company visits are given. Participants were asked to rate the visits on a scale from 0 to 5.

Name Company	Interesting (scale 0-5)	Academic Level (scale 0-5)	# Participants
Yamaha	4.3	3.9	17
Heineken	5.0	4.0	22
Europe Combined Terminals	4.6	4.6	27
Dutch Railways	4.7	4.5	27
TNT Post Group	4.5	4.5	22
Connekt OLS	5.0	4.5	7

Facts on Company Visits.

In a nice soccer stadium of Rotterdam, which resembles a medieval castle, and therefore bears the name “Het Kasteel”, people enjoyed on Monday evening words by the mayor of Rotterdam and, among other dishes, raw herring.

Tuesday featured many parallel sessions. An experiment with beamers (available for free) showed that quite a few participants are interested in using this equipment. Unfortunately, this equipment is still extremely expensive and this prohibits use on a larger scale.

The program committee had asked companies to organize a number of parallel sessions. Of course, the scientific content of these sessions must be comparable with academic sessions, but the focus was here more on applications at the company than on methods. These business sessions were appreciated, as the following table shows.

Company Name	Interesting (scale 0-5)	Academic level (0-5)
ABN AMRO	4.3	3.6
CQM	4.4	3.4
GTS	4.4	4.0
IBM	3.9	3.6
Incontrol	4.1	3.2
KLM	3.9	3.6
KPN	4.8	4.3
Océ	4.0	4.0
Rabobank	3.3	3.0
SAP	3.9	3.2
Schering	4.0	4.5
Baan	3.5	3.0
ING Bank	4.4	3.9
Shell	4.6	4.1
TNO-FEL	4.6	4.2

Facts on Business Sessions.

Probably the most spectacular event during the conference was the conference dinner. Besides the excellent meal, the sight of 600 OR specialists in orange T-shirts, singing the song “OR Forever”, was something never to forget. For those who did not believe in magic after this took place, a visiting magician to the table could be persuasive.

*I've had my thoughts some of them smart  
I've done my research that is where  
is my hart  
Sometimes mistakes, I have made a few  
I've made models so nice and that was fun  
So I've enjoyed  
And I want to go on and on and on and on*

*Chorus:*

*O.R. for ever, my friend  
We will do research to the end  
O.R. for ever  
O.R. for ever  
Beautiful models,  
so O.R. forever is the fun*

*I've used my math and analyzed  
The models I loved and enjoyed and  
everything that goes with it  
I thank O.R.  
But it's not been only glory, no easy cruise  
I consider it a challenge before the whole  
human race  
And I will survive  
And need to go on and go on and on*

*Chorus (2x)*

Text of the song "OR Forever" by Jo van Nunen (to the melody of: "We are the Champions" by Freddy Mercury)



OR Professionals at work.

The closing session on Wednesday afternoon featured an interesting lecture by Don Ratliff and the EURO Excellence in Practice Award winners Mikael Rönqvist et al. received their price. Finally, Jo van Nunen and Luk Van Wassenhove reflected on the evaluation of “their” conference (see the tables in this report).

All in all, the conference has been a great success. For those who like to see this fact reflected in numbers, we here summarize some important figures on the conference.

Type of participant	Number
Early Regular	359
Late Regular	128
Early Student	77
Late Student	24
Non Paying	21
Guests (sponsors)	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>650</b>

Type of session	Number
Semi-Plenary	10
Parallel (Business Stream)	17
Parallel (Other Streams)	195

Type of contribution	Number
Semi-Plenary	18
Parallel (Business Stream)	50
Parallel (Other Streams)	519

Important figures “EURO 2001” conference.