

Women in OR, EURO 2019, Report

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The video of the Women in OR panel session is now available [here](#).

Following the work of Dr.s Lucía Medea-García López and Ana López Navajas at EURO 2018 in Valencia, Spain, Dr Paula Carroll was invited to organise a stream on Women in Operational Research (OR) at the 30th European Conference on Operational Research (23rd - 26th June 2019, Dublin Ireland). Drs Sarah Fores (EURO), Frances O'Brien, University of Warwick, and Christina Phillips, University of Leeds assisted with preparation of the stream.

The panel included Prof Sally Brailsford, Professor of Management Science, University of Southampton, UK; Prof Martine Labbé, Professor of Operational Research, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium; Prof Anna Nagurney, Professor at the Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts Amherst, US; Prof Ulrike Reisach, Professor and Commissioner for International Affairs, Neu-Ulm University of Applied Sciences, Germany, and Prof Daniele Vigo, Department of Electrical, Electronic, and Information Engineering, University of Bologna, Italy.

The panellists shared their thoughts on strategies for "Weighing a tonne of feathers" within the OR discipline. The "tonne of feathers" metaphor comes from the gender studies literature and tries to convey the idea of the heavy workload carried by many, particularly women, in academia who may be asked to sit on many committees and perform teaching and administrative duties (Caplan, 1993). Sometimes the value of the work is not recognised, and women may be less visible because of the type or volume of work they do. There is the sense that whereas the whole is often greater than the sum of its parts, the weight/value of the tonne of feathers is perceived as less than the sum of its parts. Other metaphors to understand the career path experience of women include the leaky pipe, the sticky floor and the glass ceiling. Strategies for career progression include advice to "Lean In" (Sandberg, 2013), but evidence shows that this places the burden of responsibility for change on women (Fouad, 2014).

The panellists discussed some of the societal and disciplinary challenges facing women in OR. A lively discussion followed with constructive suggestions on creating inclusive welcoming environments, paying attention to the little (cultural and gendered) things, and beginning to organise networking and mentoring opportunities.

Following on from the panel discussion, Dr Carroll and other interested members of the OR community are working with the EURO executive to create WISDOM (**W**omen **I**n **S**ociety: **D**oing **O**perational Research and **M**anagement Science). WISDOM is a forum to support/empower/encourage the participation of all genders in Operational Research within EURO. In particular it aims to:

1. Advise/make recommendations/highlight best practices to the EURO executive on issues facing women in OR. Such guidelines can be disseminated to EURO member societies;
2. Promote networking/mentoring, particularly of women at the early stages of their career in OR;

3. Promote a conversation around how OR can be utilised to help create a diverse and inclusive future.

References

Caplan, P. J. (1993). *Lifting a ton of feathers: A woman's guide for surviving in the academic world*. University of Toronto Press.

Fouad, N. A. (2014, August). Leaning in, but getting pushed back (and out). In *American Psychological Association Annual convention*.

Sandberg, S. (2013). *Lean in-Women, Work and the Will to Lead*. London, WH Allen.