

EURO Bulletin

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from L. Fortuin, P. van Beek and L. Van Wassenhove

OR netwORk BRIDGING THE GAP a report to the OR community

In the world of Operational Research, the gap between theory and practice is well-known. Here "theory" stands for a plethora of activities mainly taking place at universities; they are aimed at, e.g., developing new concepts and creating better algorithms, in other words: at the mathematics of OR. Application of the marvellous findings of our science in real life situations, e.g. in industry, commerce and agriculture, is what we mean by "practice".

Many OR workers have tried to bridge this gap, convinced that it is undesirable, for society as well as for our profession. This has resulted in articles in professional journals, books and courses especially designed to support managers. But the

gap continues to exist, albeit less wide than in the past.

At a very modest scale, we have tried since May 1986 to promote our profession outside academic circles. At the IFORS'90 Conference in Athens, we presented our ideas and achievements so far, and had the pleasure of meeting persons interested in joining an OR netwORk. Later on, we received very encouraging mail from all over the world. At EURO XI at Aachen, in 1991, we continued our efforts with the result that more people joined the network. Formal contacts with IFORS and EURO have been established also.

During the IFORS'93 Conference, on Friday 16 July 1993, another meeting of the OR netwORk was held in the "Salão de Exposições" of Hotel Ritz, in which some 15 persons took part. Its purpose was simple and straightforward: renewing contact with members of the OR netwORk, establishing contact with new members, and exchanging ideas about reducing the gap between OR theorists and possible users of OR products. There were three items on the programme:

- Overview of the present situation.
- Plans for the future.
- Discussion.

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