

ORBEL
General Assembly meeting
on Thursday 30 January 2025
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES IN 2024

Dear President, dear Members of the Administration Board, dear ORBEL Members

This document reports on the following activities: the ORBEL 38 conference held at the University of Antwerp, the ORBEL award 2024, the involvement of the society into scientific publications, and news from other activities of the society in 2024, including links with the European association EURO.

The 38th national conference on Operations Research, called **ORBEL 38**, has been organised by Kenneth Sörensen, Christof Defryns and the Antwerp Operations Research Group ANT/OR of the University of Antwerp on Thursday 8 and Friday 9 February 2024. Regarding timing, the conference is back at its older timing after two exceptional organisation periods in September 2022 and May 2023. The organising team has managed to host 140 participants (of which 73 (PhD)-students and 67 non-students), with 80 scheduled presentations across 23 parallel sessions, and two invited talks. The conference succeeded in attracting contributions from both Operations Research and Data Science. The conference enjoyed the support of four sponsors: Engie Impact, Hexaly, OMP and the University of Antwerp.

The following distinguished plenary speakers took the floor: (1) Margaretha Gansterer (Universität Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, Österreich) with a talk entitled 'Last-mile delivery with shared resources: modeling and recent developments'; and (2) Dolores Romero Morales (Copenhagen Business School, København, Danmark) with a talk entitled 'A tour through Explainable and Fair Machine Learning with an OR lens'. The conference dinner took place at the HORTA - Art Nouveau hall in the heart of the city of Antwerp. Many thanks go to the organising team for the successful conference.

The **ORBEL award** is an award handed out by our society, every year, to the best student's Master thesis in the field of Operations Research. The award amounts to 1500 Euro and is sponsored by OMP, a provider of supply chain planning software with head office located in Wommelgem near Antwerp and several regional offices over the world. Out of nine submissions, three selected candidates presented their work during a special ORBEL conference session on 9 February, live not only in front of the jury but for also of an audience of OR and Data Science researchers. For the ORBEL 2024 award, the jury, presided by our board member Roel Leus, selected Anton Hens from KU Leuven to be the winner with his thesis entitled "Development of a Variable Neighborhood Search algorithm for scheduling and routing fully flexible 'on-demand-only' feeder bus systems". Our board member Pieter

Vansteenwegen was the promotor of this thesis. Congratulations to the student and the promotor.

With respect to the publications, the society is actively involved in the journal **4OR (A quarterly journal of operations research)** through the duty of the main editor Yves Crama (together with Michel Grabisch and Silvano Martello). Note that, among the area editors, also one of our past-presidents appears, Marc Pirlot (emeritus from UMONS). Our society has re-negotiated the contract with the publisher Springer Verlag leading to better conditions for publishing 4OR in 2025. The details on the recent volume of the journal have been prepared by our board member Yves Crama.

Regarding other activities, it should be mentioned that our society has sponsored the organisation of some conferences or symposia. First, the *ECCO 37 (European chapter on Combinatorial Optimization) conference* held in June in Gent, chaired by our board members Greet Vanden Berghe and Tony Wauters. Second, the *Belgian Mathematical Optimization Workshop* held in April in La Roche, chaired by our president Bernard Fortz. Third, the *Workshop on Fairness in Sports* held in June in Gent, chaired by David Van Bulck and our board member Dries Goossens. Fourth, a seminar called *Road Pricing: does it make any sense* held in April in Leuven, organised by KULeuven Institute of Mobility, chaired by our board member Pieter Vansteenwegen.

As a member of EURO, the Association of European Operational Research Societies, it should be mentioned that EURO will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025. Our society has been one of the founding member societies and has delivered three presidents: Jean-Pierre Brans (VUB) in 1983-1984, Philippe Vincke (ULB) in 2001-2002, and Martine Labb   (ULB) in 2007-2008. During the celebration year, EURO will publish a magazine, on initiative of Marc Sevaux (Universit   de Bretagne Sud, France), in which the member societies present themselves. Also our society has contributed to this magazine.

I would like to thank all members of the society for bringing out research results in their publications and presentations at the numerous conferences in 2024, to let the world know that there exists an active Operations Research Society in Belgium. Further, my thanks go to the board of administrators for observing and suggesting a smooth operation of the society. Let me also thank our president, Bernard Fortz, who kept the society alive with a great spirit last year. Thanks also go to Dries Goossens, for taking the responsibility as our treasurer. Thanks to Wouter Verbeke for taking care of the job as the ORBEL secretary. Thanks to Michael Schyns as our webmaster. Thanks to Roel Leus for organising the ORBEL award. Thanks to Yves Crama for being the representative of the society to the journal 4OR. Thanks to Dries Goossens and Kristof Coussement for keeping the links active with EURO and to Dimitri Papadimitriou for the links with IFORS.

Gerrit Janssens, Delegate Administrator on January 31, 2025