

Annual Report 2011, Berlin

NW10 continues to attract large numbers of proposals, 180 (+ 12 redirections) as compared to 144 last year. Of these, 165 were papers, 10 posters and 5 symposia. There continues to be a lack of interactivity in symposia or roundtables and a tendency for these to have loosely connected individual presentations, a more robust symposium application system as per ESERA might be able to address this at the cost of increased effort for coordinators of these sessions.

The reviewing process was, as usual, made much easier by Conftool. We were in need of more reviewers (this has now been addressed) but were able to provide at least two reviews per proposal, and sometimes up to six. Our rejection and redirection rates were slightly higher than the conference average at 18.25% and 18.25% (same number of each). We try to provide formative feedback on abstracts and authors told us this was valuable. The final number of paper presentations was 103, with 6 posters and 3 symposia. There were 39 sessions, and an interactive poster session. This was a good idea, but needs to be provided with a better venue (more space) and more opportunities for delegates to visit.

There continues to be tension between the need to reject papers on the grounds of low research interest and the need to encourage emerging researchers. We attract large numbers of papers from masters? or PhD students, and some of these tend to be formulaic but in line with basic expectations for research papers. On the other hand, more experienced colleagues can present papers which are too descriptive and lack European dimensions. We will reinforce the message in 2012 that papers need to show evidence of original thinking, a European angle and properly-conceived research questions.

The overall quality of presentations was good, possibly better than previous years but with an undesirable number of no-shows, including some chairs. The venue quality was generally excellent. There were minor complaints about errors in the programme but this was hardly surprising given the size of the task, and the overall organisation was very good. However, there was a feeling that the conference has reached a critical size where it has begun to lose its unique qualities. One solution to this is of course to increase rejection rates, but given the frequent divergences of opinion in the reviewing process, this could be problematic.

The network dinner has been a feature of NW10 for some years. Ironically, after a record attendance in 2010, we increased the capacity but had a disappointing turnout due to a combination of factors - geography, price and competing events. Hopefully this was unique to Berlin. There was a good attendance of 60+ at the network business meeting.