

Report of the Gender Champion on Conferences sponsored by IUPAP, held in 2015.

by Alinka Lépine-Szilý

The IUPAP 27th General Assembly, London, UK, 2-4 November 2011, has among its resolutions :

That IUPAP will appoint a gender champion from the Executive Council. A Vice-President will act as gender champion. The chair, or other representative, of the Women in Physics Group is requested to liaise with the Gender Champion.

In 2015 the number of conferences which received IUPAP sponsorship is 31. From these 31 conferences we could gather partial information on 20. The attached Excel file gives the numbers that could be extracted from the conference reports or from information given by conference chairs.

The relevant informations from the Gender Champion's point of view are:

Number of women attendees/ total number of attendees, in percentage : mean value is 16.7%, and varies between 7.8% and 36.9%, with 5 conferences where this value is below 10%, 9 conferences between 10% and 20% and 4 conferences with value larger than 20%.

Number of female invited speakers/ total number of invited speakers, in percentage : mean value is 12.6%, and varies between 5% and 27%, with 7 conferences where this value is below 10%, 8 conferences between 10% and 20% and 4 conferences with value larger or equal to 20%.

Number of female members of international organizing committee/ total number of members of international organizing committee, in percentage : mean value is 16.1%, and varies between 0% and 39%, with 6 conferences where this value is below 10%, 8 conferences between 10% and 20% and 6 conferences with value larger than 20%.

These numbers are quite similar and with a few exceptions there is a clear correlation between them. Examples with the lowest numbers : “Advances in non-equilibrium statistical mechanics” (C3): 8.2%, 8.3%, 0% realized Florence, Italy with no female members in the organizing committee, or the “13th international symposium on Origin of Matter and Evolution of Galaxies (OMEG2015)”(C12): 10%, 5% and 4.5%, realized in Beijing, China.

Examples with the highest numbers are: “XI Latinamerican Symposium on Nuclear Physics and Applications (LASNPA 2015)” (C12) with 33,5% of female attendees, 20,3% of female invited speakers and 28% of female members in the organizing/advisory committee. Or “21st International Conference on Few-body Problems in Physics” (C12), with 16,2% of female attendees, 27% of female invited speakers and 25,5% of female members in the organizing/advisory committee. Or even “The 12th International Conference on Nucleus-Nucleus Collisions”(C12) with 23,6% of female attendees, 21,4% of female invited speakers and 8.5% of female members in the organizing/advisory committee. All three were recommended by the Commission on Nuclear Physics C12. The International Conference on Physics Education held in Beijing, China, and the International Cosmic Ray Conference also show very good numbers, above 20%.

There are also examples where, although presenting a good number of female presence in the organizing committee (22%) and among the attendees (19%) , these do not guarantee a good proportion of female invited speakers, which is low (8.7%). This happened at the “International Conference on Phenomena in Ionized Gases” (C16), realized in Iasi, Romania. Or the “Astroparticle Physics, a joint TeVPA/IDM” (C4) conference in Amsterdam, Holland, where 24,5% of the attendees were women, 17.5% of the organizing committee were women and only 3,7% of the invited speakers were women.

There are also examples on the contrary: the “The 12th International Conference on Nucleus-Nucleus Collisions” (C12) with only 8.5% of female presence in the organizing/advisory committee, 23,6% of the attendees and 21,4% of the invited speakers were women.

I tried to see geographical correlations, but they are not clear: Italy, where there are many female physicists, also in leading positions, hosted one conference in Nuclear Physics with excellent numbers (Nucleus-Nucleus collisions), another in Statistical Mechanics (Advances in non-equilibrium statistical mechanics) with much worse numbers. This probably indicates that there must be a strong correlation with the particular field of physics, but there I would need an input from my colleagues, chairs of the IUPAP Commissions.

I always heard that the number of female scientists in Japan and China were relatively low, and effectively the numbers are not good for the conferences organized in Japan (Joint conference: 21st International Conference on Electronic Properties of Two-Dimensional Systems and 17th International Conference on Modulated Semiconductor Structures; C8) held in Sendai (9.8%, 7.4% and 5.9%) and in China (OMEG2015 already quoted above). Prof. Thewalt, chair of the C8 told us that C8 was unhappy with the female participation as outlined below, and made this clear when the organizers presented their conference summary during the C8 meeting which took place at the conference.

Suggestions:

Here I would like to ask for a modification in the conference report form, which asks for numbers about the international organizing committee, however in my opinion we should ask for two different informations: the numbers of local organizing committee (LOC) (usually small number of members ~10) and the international advisory committee (IAC) (usually a larger number). Looking at the dispersion of these numbers in the forms I realized that some give the LOC others the IAC numbers. The participation of female scientists in both committees is important and we would like to have both numbers.

The Commissions have the possibility to influence and demand for larger female participation in the Local Organizing Committees and the International Advisory Committees of the recommended conferences. Once in C12 we gave a conditional approval for a conference sponsorship demand due to the low female participation in both committees, even being this conference a traditionally IUPAP supported one. We asked the conference chair to correct these numbers. After a considerable increase in these numbers, we approved the conference for sponsorship demand. It was interesting that it was an unanimous opinion in the Commission. Of course, we have no means to influence the number of female invited speakers, but there is hope that after a little pressure the conference chairs understand that this is an important issue.