

Benelux Section**Claude Oestges****Section Vitality**

As the ExCom agreed in 2020 that meetings should be scheduled three times per year, roughly in February, May and October/November. The first meetings in 2021 took place on February 23 and May 19 and were held online given the sanitary rules in the Benelux. The third meeting of 2021 will take place on November 9 and is tentatively planned as a face-to-face meeting.

The IEEE Benelux Section is traditionally doing very well in retaining members as well recruit new members. The new members recruitment is mainly done via the student branches. Actively involve and engage students in IEEE activities is working well. We stimulate these activities via the Section. Note however that a significant number of activities were cancelled or postponed because of the current sanitary crisis.

In May 2021, the membership was showing a 2.9% decrease (year-to-year comparison), mostly caused by a drop of student membership.

Students

In the Benelux, we are addressing the future IEEE members in the Student Branches at the various Universities. This used to work quite efficiently, but was hampered by the sanitary crisis. Four branches are active for now: KU Leuven, Ghent, UCLouvain and Eindhoven. Some others are inactive: Twente, Delft, Antwerpen, Liège. Among all active student branches, only UCLouvain and TU Eindhoven managed to successfully organize a significant numbers of online activities. All active branches reported that the current situation makes it very hard to recruit new members. There are actually no incentives for students to get affiliated., so the section hopes that the activities of the student branches will restart as the pandemic gets solved, hopefully in 2022. The Section is supporting the Student Branches financially and content wise as well. Students in the Benelux Section are very active in the IEEE paper contest. Recently, one Benelux student (O. Leblanc) won the R8 IEEE student paper contest 2021 (SPC2021).

Affinity Groups and Chapters

The vitality in the Affinity Groups and Chapters is related to the number and quality of the activities: in 2021, more than 50 events took place. However, larger physical events were mostly postponed. Stimulating to organize local activities like conferences, network opportunities, cross-chapter activities etc, is one of the actions of the Section. Chapters and affinity groups were also encouraged by the Section to see the current crisis as an opportunity as well, moving to more online events. In our ExCOMs, we invite the Chapters explicitly, let them present their activities and help them wherever we can. Of course, some Chapters are more vibrant than others, but in general we are very pleased with the local activities in the Benelux.

Industry

There are a couple of things we do in the Section to increase industry participation in the IEEE activities. For a start, we try to find industry partners in the Section board. We also motivate Chapters to do the same. Some Chapters in the Section are even run by volunteers from industry. Most actions were however slowed down due to covid-19.

Activities since the last report

On May 19, 2021, the Benelux held its annual general assembly, as a fully online event. The past and present chairs presented the Section report. The General Assembly was followed by a *Meet the Fellows* event. The following Benelux Fellows elected in 2019 and 2020 gave a keynote talk and presented their research fields: [Nuria Llobart Juan](#) (TUDelft), [Johan Nuyts](#) (KULeuven), [Jacquelin Scherpen](#) (RUGroningen), [Filip de Turck](#) (UGent).

Planned activities

The next ExCom meeting will be organized online on November 9, 2021.

How Region 8 can be of help to your Section, members, and activities

No particular challenge, beyond those associated with the current crisis.

Any other issues of interest

None.