

The 29th Mediterranean Conference on Control and Automation

The 29th Mediterranean Conference on Control and Automation (MED 2021) was held virtually on June 22nd–25th, 2021. MED – that is the annual conference of the Mediterranean Control Association (MCA), with Panos Antsaklis serving as the current president – brings together researchers in the area of Control Systems and Automation from the Mediterranean countries, which share technical interests and much more, including culture and history.

This edition stands out, because it was first organized as a regular conference to be held in a nice resort on the Adriatic sea. Then, due to the COVID-19 pandemic's restrictions, the conference venue was relocated to the Hotel Nicolaus in Bari, Italy, as a hybrid conference (both virtual and in presence). Finally, due to the continuing pandemic situation, and because of the restrictions of the Italian government that forbade in-presence conferences till July 2021, the event moved to a fully on-line virtual conference, like, unfortunately, many other conferences.

A virtual event cannot fully replace the informal human contacts, which are so rich and constitute the essence of such a scientific gathering. The editions taking place in Italy have been always a success for many

reasons and it is a pity that in 2021 the MED attendees were not able to enjoy the culture, food, and the sea in the Italian country.

The general chair and co-chair for MED 2021 were Mariagrazia Dotoli from the Polytechnic of Bari, Italy, and Laura Giarré from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy, respectively.

TECHNICAL PROGRAM

The technical program was overseen by Laura Giarré from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy, and Elisa Franco of the University of California at Los Angeles, USA. The technical program consisted of three plenary lectures, five parallel tracks

of regular and invited sessions, and one free panel, in addition to six preconference workshops and one free tutorial.

In response to the call for papers, 295 contributed and invited papers were received. All these submissions went through a rigorous peer-review process, which was supervised by the members of the International Program Committee (IPC). As a result of this process, 200 regular papers and 24 presentation-only papers were accepted for presentation at the conference. In particular, 83 of the accepted papers have been submitted as a part of 14 invited sessions. The corresponding authors of the 224 accepted papers come from 48



General Chair Mariagrazia Dotoli and General co-Chair Laura Giarré together with the cardboard cut-outs of Organizing Committee members and plenary speakers.



A view of Bari city where the local staff operated.

countries. All accepted technical contributions are already available on IEEEXplore at <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/xpl/conhome/9480136/proceeding>

The main topic of the conference was smart cities and smart systems; in addition, the presented papers covered subjects ranging from fundamental issues in linear and nonlinear systems to various applications of control engineering, including networked and multiagent systems, decision support systems, pandemic forecasting and mitigation strategies, intelligent energy management, and Industry 4.0, among others.

Three excellent plenary talks were included in the program. On the first day, Prof. Anna Stefanopoulou from University of Michigan, USA, gave her talk titled “FAST with Electric Vehicles”. The speaker on the second day was Prof. Anuradha Annaswamy from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA, who presented “Towards Deep Decarbonization and Autonomous Power Grids”. Finally, on the last day, the plenary talk “Distributed optimal control in complex multi-robot and energy networks” was given by Prof. Giuseppe Notarstefano from University of Bologna, Italy. Their leitmotif was the impact that optimization and control approaches

have on modern society, specifically in power systems and green mobility. The conference also included a round-table session open to all participants on the theme “Women and STEM: Opt Out or Lean In?”, held on June 24th.

Photos and recordings of some of the MED 2021 events are available at <http://med2021.poliba.it/>

WORKSHOPS

Six workshops and one tutorial were held as preconference sessions, covering several topics in control systems and research:

- W1: Modeling and Control Tools for Sustainable and Connected Mobility in Smart Cities;
- W2: Control, Robotics, Sensing and Artificial Intelligence for Precision Agriculture;
- W3: Management and socio-economic impacts of sustainable mobility in smart cities;
- W4: Research and innovation development in the gender equality perspective;
- W5: Toward Industry 5.0: Sustainable and Regenerative Economy with Focus on Smart Small Towns;
- W6: Modelling, control and optimization of flexible devices for a sustainable and efficient future power grid;

- T1 (for free): A user’s guide to Girls in Control – Tutorial for colleagues, instructors and teachers on how to prepare, organize and run a GIC workshop.

Thanks to the support of the MCA, the MED 2021 offered to PhD students the opportunity to participate for free to the organized workshops.

ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

MED 2021 was sponsored by the MCA and the Polytechnic of Bari. The conference was technically co-sponsored by the IEEE Control Systems Society, IEEE Robotics and Automation Society, IEEE Systems Man and Cybernetics, and IEEE Women in Engineering Italy Section WIE Affinity Group. It was also supported by the Italian Society of Professors and Researchers in Automation (SIDRA).

The IPC members and the reviewers are deeply thanked for their hard work: without their effort such an event could not have been put together.

Finally, special thanks go to members of the Organizing Committee that for the first time in the history of MED was an only a female Committee. The effort of all committee members was extremely valuable as they rapidly stepped up to accomplish new tasks, often with blurred lines between



The local staff showing team spirit at the conference closing session.

traditional positions, to produce high-quality results.

NEXT CONFERENCE

MED 2022 will take place in Athens Greece, June 28th – July 1st, 2022.

Visit the conference website at <https://www.med-control.org/med2022/> for more information.

Mariagrazia Dotoli

General Chair

Laura Giarré

General co-Chair