

20th Excellence in Services International Conference (EISIC) (formerly Toulon–Verona Conference)

In 1997, in the city of Zhengzhou in the heart of China, Professor Michel Weill of the University of Toulon in France and Professor Claudio Baccarani of the University of Verona in Italy were attending a conference. The joys of the city of Zhenzhou being fast exhausted, Prof. Weill and Prof. Baccarani started discussing the idea of launching a new conference centred on Quality and Higher Education, a relatively new field of research at the time, and one that was becoming “hotter” by the day. Back in Europe, they immediately worked on organising the event with the help of some colleagues. A few months later, the package was ready and the first conference was planned to take place at the University of Toulon in June 1998. Naturally, the question arose of how to name this Conference. Very simply, as Prof. Weill was from Toulon and Prof. Baccarani was from Verona, it was decided to call it the Toulon–Verona Conference on Higher Education. Since 1998, it has been hosted by different universities in Europe and beyond. The second edition in 1999 naturally took place at the University of Verona. The Conference was then hosted by the University of Derby, England, in 2000, by the Polytechnic of Mons, Belgium, in 2001, by the ISEG of Lisbon, Portugal, in 2002, by the University of Oviedo, Spain, in 2003. It went back to Toulon in 2004. It moved down South to the University of Palermo, Sicily, in 2005, then North to the University of Paisley, Scotland, in 2006. The Conference paid a visit to the University of Thessaloniki, Greece, the city of Aristotle, in 2007. Then it settled in Italy for two years, at the University of Florence in 2008 and back to Verona in 2009. The Iberic peninsula hosted the Conference, at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, in 2010, and at the University of Alicante, Spain, in 2011. The Conference crossed the Mediterranean eastwards to the College of Management Academic Studies of Rishon LeZion in Israel in 2012. It was back in Europe at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2013. In 2014, it crossed the channel for the second time to be hosted by John Moores University in Liverpool, England. The conference headed south again to take place at the “Ricerche e studi direzionali” institution in Palermo, Italy, in 2015 and at the University of Huelva, Spain, in 2016. To celebrate its 20th anniversary, the Conference went back to the University of Verona, Italy in 2017. On that occasion, it was decided to alter the name of the Conference and to rename it “Excellence In Services international Conference” (website: www.eisic.net) both to make its purpose clear to everybody and to take into account the widening scope of the Conference over the years.

Starting with higher education, this scope was widened to include health care, local government and public services, tourism, banking services, logistics, servitization, IT, innovation and entrepreneurship, so that today it covers all types of services. In 20 years, the Conference has welcomed around 2,000 delegates and key-note speakers from more than 30 different countries in the world and more than 1,500 papers have been presented. Since 2008, the scientific committee of the Conference has made a selection of the best papers presented each year. To date (2017) 51 papers have been rewarded. A study of these “best papers” by Prof. Antigoni Papadimitriou can be found in this issue giving an insight into the research work presented at the Conference.

For its 20th edition, thanks to the support of Prof. Alex Douglas and Prof. Stan Karapetrovic, editors of this journal, this issue offering a selection of the best papers presented at Verona University in September 2017 has been made possible. We warmly thank them for this support.



In total, 28 papers were submitted for possible inclusion in this special issue. All papers went through the *TQM* journal's rigorous review process with an initial blind peer review by two independent reviewers. Some papers were rejected, some accepted and some subject to revision and re-review before acceptance. Our thanks go to those very many reviewers for their hard work and help. Of those initial 28 papers the best 11 are included in this volume. We thank all the authors who initially submitted their papers but special thanks and congratulations are due to the successful authors in this special issue for their valuable contribution.

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