2019 SPIE Student Chapter Annual Report

Prepared by:
Koen Vanmol (Former President)
Yousef Pourvais (Vice President)
Mathilde Patin (President)
Olga Rusyakina (Treasurer)
David De Vocht (Communications Officer)

Executive Summary:
The Vrije Universiteit Brussel SPIE student chapter was founded in 2006 as the first SPIE student chapter in Western Europe. Under the auspices of SPIE and the local advisor, Prof. Hugo Thienpont, the chapter has grown to the largest SPIE student chapter in Western Europe.

The missions of the student chapter are to build and enhance the network, improve the knowledge and broaden the horizons for bachelor, master and PhD students in Photonics and Optics, offering them a platform to interact with each other, academics in photonics (post-docs, professors...), industrial photonics and international photonics societies (SPIE...). Therefore, the student chapter organizes many activities during the academic year. Social events like a welcome lunch and bowling night making it possible for the student members to get to know each other, the board, and the network at the internal level. Outreach activities, amongst others, our annual Science Show, give the involved student members the opportunity to train their presentation skills and teach them to bring photonics to a broader audience and inspire kids and young students to pursue studies in science and technology. Finally, our main annual event, the Light Night, brings academy, industry and society together in a very interesting evening with innovative speakers in different fields and allows the students to network with these speakers, something that would otherwise only be possible during distant conferences, which not all student members have access to. Besides, our student chapter is involved in several international activities, such as this year in the SPIE leadership workshop in San Diego, U.S.

We would like to thank SPIE for the financial and administrative support, and especially their student services for the outstanding guidance and help during the years. Also, thanks to the VUB B-PHOT department, and our advisor Prof. Hugo Thienpont, for the extra financial resources, their help in practical organization, and advice for the many successful events. Last but not least, we would like to thank our board for the hard work and support. We are looking forward to seeing what this chapter will become and what activities will be brought to our members in the near future.

Contact Information:
For general questions about our chapter, please email our chapter advisor, Hugo Thienpont, at hthienpo@vub.be.
Web: http://www.b-phot.org/www/Education-Photonics/Studying-B-Phot/SPIE-Student-Chapter
Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/SPIEstudentchapterVUB/
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He/Him/His
**Student and Community Membership**

At the time of this report, there are 41 student members and 7 alumni affiliated to the Vrije Univ. Brussel Chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Expected Grad Month/Year</th>
<th>SPIE Membership Expiration Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brian Angeli</td>
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<td>Anahit Babajanyan</td>
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<td>Miriam Cisneros González</td>
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<td>Remco Desmet</td>
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<td>Hans Ingelberts</td>
<td>December 2016</td>
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<td>Yunfeng Nie</td>
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<td>Jürgen Van Erps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin Virte</td>
<td>October 2014</td>
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Activities Report

Sinterklaas
Organizer: Koen Vanmol (President)
Speaker: --
Date/Time/Location: 6th December 2018 / Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Participants: 23 SPIE students and B-PHOT staff
Cost: 72.61 EUR

Every year, on December 6th, the children in Belgium celebrate Saint Nicholas (or Sinterklaas as he is known in Belgium). It is the tradition that around December 6th, children place an empty shoe near their fireplace or window for Sinterklaas. Sinterklaas will then pass by overnight and bring some toys and sweets. In the spirit of this tradition, the chapter board prepared small bags of candy for their student members and colleagues and secretly placed one in the shoe of each colleague in the evening of 5th of December. A glimpse of the holy man was even spotted on the campus.

Christmas market visit
Organizer: Koen Vanmol (President)
Speaker: --
Date/Time/Location: 20 December 2018 / Brussels city
Participants: 11 SPIE students
Cost: 90.77 EUR

In Belgium, Brussels is known for its amazing Christmas market. Every year in December, the streets are filled with little stalls, a Ferris wheel, an open-air ice-skating ring, and much more. The visit to the Christmas market is a yearly returning popular activity. This year, the event was organized on December 20th. We tried out different foods and drinks, and shared international stories and experiences about Christmas.
The two days of Science Show is a yearly event where we welcome hundreds of pupils and their teachers from second and third grade of secondary schools for an interactive Science Show on optics and photonics. This year, it was held on the 4th and 5th of February 2019. The schools participated in an educational show about photonics that explains the basic concepts of light technology. A team of passionate PhD researchers demonstrate real-life experiments about the origin of light, infrared light, fluorescence, tunable lenses, color mixing, endoscopy and optical fibers. Students take part at the show and assist in the experiments on stage. During an exciting quiz they can test their new knowledge. In addition, during 2 half-days, a special Boys & Girls Congress allows around 800 participants to visit labs and follow workshops covering a broad range of themes such as light painting, 3D holograms with smartphones, optical communication, apps and magical tricks with light. The show and workshops aim to inspire future engineers for STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) educational programs that enable them to contribute to a lighter, brighter, and healthier world.
Teambuilding

Organizer: All board members equally contributed
Speaker: --
Date/Time/Location: 4-9 April 2019/ Oostduinkerke, Belgium.
Participants: ~50 all B-PHOT staff
Cost: 74.80 EUR

The VUB SPIE student chapter board organized several activities for the B-PHOT teambuilding event to further stimulate the bonds between the researchers. The teambuilding was organized in Oostduinkerke, Belgium, from 7th to 9th of April. For this occasion, we decided to buy some outdoor games/materials like Molky and a pétanque set, which can be used by our student members from now for future social activities. On the first evening we organized a big quiz with different rounds, where each one was managed by someone else from our board. The different rounds included questions about Belgian beers and movie music, a pantomime game, and a balloon popping and egg dropping contest. This quiz was the ideal activity to create a great atmosphere right from the start. The next day all members of our chapter’s board presented their research in a poster session. A great opportunity to see what your peer students are working on. Our chapter also organized the last activity for the teambuilding, where we had the choice to try out an altitude/agility trail (great to get the team spirit up!) or a more relaxed minigolf session. Everyone enjoyed our activities and the chapter once again brought together people who share the same love for photonics.

Secretary day

Organizer: Agnieszka Gierej (Executive Committee)
Speaker: --
Date/Time/Location: 19 April 2019/ Vrije Universiteit Brussel.
Participants: Board members
Cost: 63.80 EUR

This year again, in an effort to honor our administrative staff that support the student chapter members in various ways, on international secretary day the 19th April, we bought boxes of (Belgian) chocolates for our secretary team to thank them for all the hard work (and pay off some favors/debts).
Photography contest

Organizer: Mathilde Patin (Executive Committee), Olga Rusyakina (Executive Committee), Alejandro Madrid (Executive Committee)

Speaker: Mathilde Patin (Executive Committee), presented the award.

Date/Time/Location: 25 April 2019/ Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Participants: 12 (24 photos)

Cost: 49.68 EUR

Our student chapter does not only organize events for student members, but also provides a platform for them to show their talents and skills. During the photography contest, which we now opened for every one of our university (by not limiting the contest to our department, we try to get more students in contact with photonics and our chapter), we received many submissions of high-quality photos implying the great originality and creativity of the participants. Our jury selected the winning contestants via many criteria and announced them at the end of the Light Night 2019. The winners were awarded with surprising gifts (a 32GB SD card, a power bank and a portable speaker). Below the winning photographs by Mehdi Feizpour (1st prize), Jonathan Bertholet (2nd prize) and Sidney Goosens (3rd prize). During the award ceremony we shared information about the SPIE international photography contest. Hopefully some of the great pictures by our members will also make it internationally!

Light Night 2019 – Photonics: Building a rewarding career

Organizer: All board members contributed equally

Speaker: Prof. David Giltner (keynote speaker), Prof. Hugo Thienpont (keynote speaker) and Mathilde Patin (host)

Date/Time/Location: 25 April 2019/ Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Participants: 52

Cost: 224.68 EUR

Our SPIE student chapter successfully organized the annual 'Light Night' on April 25th. The theme of 'Light Night 2019' was 'Photonics: Building a rewarding career' for which we invited our chapter’s advisor Prof. Hugo Thienpont and SPIE speaker Dr. David Giltner. A very interesting evening, organized to answer the many questions students had, moderated by one of our board members Mathilde Patin. As Director of B-PHOT and Vice-Rector Innovation and Industrial Policy at the VUB, Prof. Thienpont has the perfect experience and insights upon photonics in academia and industry. His view on how innovation is essential to bridge the gap between both worlds was eye-opening for our student members and gave them an update of the newest opportunities that photonics and optics offer.

Dr. David Giltner explained what the essential habits are for a successful industry career. Many students appreciated his clear breakdown of how academia and industry typically differ and what you can expect from a job in industry.

The talks were followed with a Q&A session where both speakers stood together and had an extensive exchange of views on the questions that the students asked regarding career decisions and photonics opportunities. The president of the SPIE student chapter Koen Vanmol also took the opportunity to show some of the outreach activities where our chapter had helped during the past months and invited them to participate in these great experiences. Finally, Mathilde
announced the winners of our Photography Contest. After the Light Night, the participants had the opportunity to talk to the speakers profoundly during the network reception. In total the Light Night attracted more than 50 people from different departments and universities. The day after the Light Night, our chapter invited Dr. Giltner on a lab tour where many of the PhDs showed their work and setups and the day ended with a delicious dinner together. In addition, on his third day with us we organized a private guided tour around Brussels which was kindly offered by Ahmad Wali. We thank Dr. Giltner again for his visit, SPIE to make this event possible with their Invited Speaker Grants, and our research group B-PHOT for the support behind the scenes. Finally, we had a delicious dinner together.
Bonfire
Organizer: David De Vocht (Secretary)
Speaker: --
Date/Time/Location: 7 May 2019/ Vrije Universiteit Brussel.
Participants: 15
Cost: 92.09 EUR

On May 7th our student chapter organized his traditional bonfire. Inside the campus of the VUB, we dispose of an adapted place for grilled marshmallows and warm discussions gathering VUB student chapter members as well as internship students from other student chapters around the world!
This year, one of our SPIE members, Mathilde Patin, participated to the VUB PhD Cup 2019 (https://student.vub.be/phd-cup#intro). She has been supported by the VUB student chapter on April 2nd during the Natural Science Engineering Doctoral school for the preselection and gave a 3-minute talk about her PhD research during the finals on May 27th at Muntpunt, in the center of Brussels. To explain the principle of absorption spectroscopy, that she applies on historical flat glass, she used an educational kit for optical experiments provided by SPIE.

Thanks to her selection for the final, she won a personal training by ‘The Floor is Yours’ to learn tips on elevator pitch. An outcome of her participation has been the recording of a short video of her talk that will be visible online from January 2020 on https://www.sciencefiguredout.be/videos with the title ‘The Science of Light and our Cultural Heritage’.
**Staff barbecue**

**Organizer:** B-Phot  
**Speaker:** --  
**Date/Time/Location:** 7 June 2019 / Vrije Universiteit Brussels.  
**Participants:** 30  
**Cost:** 0 EUR (Funded by B-PHOT)

As previous years, summer started at the VUB with a staff barbecue co-organized by the SPIE student chapter. This event was organized on Friday June 7\textsuperscript{th}, 2019. There were around 20 people attending from the SPIE student chapter.

![Staff barbecue](image1.png)

**SPIE Optics + Photonics**

**Organizer:** --  
**Speaker:** --  
**Date/Time/Location:** 11-15 August 2019/ San Diego, CA.  
**Participants:** 1 (David De Vocht, Secretary)  
**Cost:** 0 EUR (Funded by SPIE Travel Grant, 1663USD reimbursed)

Thanks to the travel grant of SPIE, our active board member, David De Vocht had the great opportunity to travel to San Diego, USA for the conference Optics + Photonics from 10\textsuperscript{th} to 15\textsuperscript{th} of August 2019. As the representative of the VUB chapter, David participated in the Student Chapter Leadership Workshop together with 120 other student representatives. During this workshop he learned a lot of new skill and also tackled together with the other representatives’ different situations which could occur in a SPIE Student Chapter. Meeting all these other chapter representatives was a unique moment to exchange information about the situation of our chapters. Besides the leadership workshop, David followed several other workshops with topics varying from leadership and networking skills, to writing a grant or scientific paper. These skills he obtained can definitely help him in his future research. The conference was also a good opportunity for him to discover the different fields which are out there in Photonics. David also represented the participation of VUB Student Chapter in the Optics Outreach Games at SPIE Optics + Photonics 2019. At the occasion of the 10th annual games, our team won the second place with ‘PHABLABS 4.0’ ([https://spie.org/news/op19_optics-outreach-games](https://spie.org/news/op19_optics-outreach-games)). B-phot, our research group, is highly involved in the coordination of ‘PHABLABS 4.0’, a European project to connect the outreach of PhabLabs and photonics. This project is quite a recent project (2016) and our chapter has been actively promoting it during the Brussels Science Day and tested some preliminary designs. David presented three of the PhabLab workshops within this project: Art with polarization, the Gobo projector and the Smartphone controlled RGB Lamp.
With the price money (200USD) we invested in different banners for the PHABLABS 4.0 to further promote it with our chapter during the Brussels day of Science 2019. Since last year our chapter has opened the road for Master students to become board members, this is the first time that we send a master student to this conference. Therefore, we also decided to share the experience on the Instagram page of our European Master of Science in Photonics, to inspire them about the photonics community which is out there.

“This was a unique opportunity to meet the photonics community which is out there. I got to know a lot of other student chapter representatives and am still in contact with some of them. I learned a lot from the different workshops, and especially liked the large amount of interaction (a discussion group, openness for questions, case studies and et cetera). And I can definitely recommend this experience to future Master students!”
Board elections
Organizer: Board members
Speaker: --
Date/Time/Location: 28 August 2019/ Vrije Universiteit Brussel.
Participants: 9
Cost: --

Our board elections took place on August 28th. Previous board members are finishing their PhD during the Academic year 2019-2019 and consequently the board has been completely renewed. Last year, we opened board member position to VUB master student for the first year. David De Vocht was the first master student having an important position as secretary and is still part of the VUB student chapter board as communications officer. We opened this new position, distinct from secretary to avoid work overloads and have a deeper focus on social media networks and publicity for outreach. Consequently, the new board is now composed by:

- President: Mathilde Patin
- Vice-president: Yousef Pourvais
- Treasurer: Olga Rusyakina
- Secretary: Alejandro Madrid
- Communications officer: David De Vocht

Executive Committee (additional board members): Astghik Chalyan, Artem Shcheglov, Koen Vanmol, Sergei Mikhailov, Samuel Plazas, Martin Skenderas, Robbe De Mey.

SPIE welcome pizza lunch
Organizer: Mathilde Patin (President), Artem Shcheglov (Board Member), Sergei Mikhailov (Board Member)
Speaker: Mathilde Patin (SPIE Introduction talk)
Date/Time/Location: 14 October 2019/ Vrije Universiteit Brussel.
Participants: 25
Cost: 119.85 EUR

To attract new students and explain them the working of the Brussels SPIE student chapter, the chapter board organized a pizza welcome lunch on October 14th, 2019. During this lunch, the chapter board traditionally gives a short presentation to introduce itself and its goals for the next year. The previous years, a laptop with internet connection was available for the students to create or renew their membership. This year, in order to recruit students that are very motivated in joining our SPIE chapter, the laptop was available for them to give us their contact if interested and we asked us to take an appointment to guide them to create/renew their membership.
SPIE+NSE PhD Halloween Party

Organizer: NSE PhD Network + Mathilde Patin (president), Yousef Pourvais (vice-president) and Olga Rusyakina (Treasurer)

Speaker: --

Date/Time/Location: 31 October 2019/ Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Participants: ~25

Cost: 0 EUR (Funded by NSE Network)

In collaboration with (Natural Science and Engineering) NSE PhD Network of VUB, the student chapter have publicized and participated in the Halloween party at VUB Etterbeek Campus. In this fun and exciting evening, PhD students from the photonics division had friendly conversations and fun activities with other PhDs mostly from Engineering Department. Mathilde Patin as the president of the chapter had a few productive conversations with the organizers of the event and have made decisions to hold joint social activity events from SPIE and NSE in future. The chapter were invited to have a short presentation in the NSE movie night later in November.
**SPIE+NSE PhD Movie Night**  
**Organizer:** NSE PhD Network + Mathilde Patin (president) and Yousef Pourvais (vice-president)  
**Speaker:** Mathilde Patin (SPIE Introduction Talk)  
**Date/Time/Location:** 13 November 2019/ Vrije Universiteit Brussel.  
**Participants:** ~20  
**Cost:** 0 EUR (Funded by NSE Network)

This was a social event for networking between PhD students from different departments by NSE PhD Network. The SPIE student chapter was invited to participate and have a short presentation about the chapter and its activities and inviting other interested PhDs for further collaboration. The presentation was given by Mathilde Patin (president) which was welcomed by the event participants. Afterwards, the NSE PhD Network projected a movie and provided food and drinks.

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**Flemish Science Day**  
**Organizer:** Flemish Government, Sergei Mikhailov (Board Member), Astghik Chalyan (Board Member), Núria Solerdelcoll Vila (Chapter Student Member), Ayman Morsy (Chapter Student Member)  
**Speaker:** Sergei Mikhailov (Board Member), Astghik Chalyan (Board Member), Núria Solerdelcoll Vila (Chapter Student Member), Ayman Morsy (Chapter Student Member)  
**Date/Time/Location:** 24 November 2019/ Muntpun, Brussels  
**Participants:** Visitors of the 1-day exhibition  
**Cost:** Funded by Flamish Govt. and B-PHOT

Each year, the Flemish government organizes the Day of Science (Dag van de Wetenschap). In 2019 this event occurred on November 24th. The objective of this day is to present science to the broad audience and especially to Flemish children all over Belgium. The venue is free and different partners propose activities in various locations. As the VUB is one the Dag van...
de Wetenschap partners, B-BHOT and our SPIE student chapter took the opportunity to present photonics with laser maze, laser painting, holograms at Muntpunt in the city center of Brussels.
Sinterklaas
Organizer: Koen Vanmol (President)
Speaker: --
Date/Time/Location: 6th December 2019 / Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Participants: 20-25 SPIE students and B-PHOT staff
Cost: 80 EUR (anticipated)

This year Saint Nicholas will pass by B-PHOT with his donkey on the 6th in the afternoon. In 2019 Saint Nicholas will be accompanied by his companion Zwarte Piet and together they will distribute gifts for the nice SPIE members and encourage the students to continue their hard work!

Christmas market visit
Organizer: Koen Vanmol (President)
Speaker: --
Date/Time/Location: December 2019 / Brussels city
Participants: 10-20 SPIE students
Cost: 90 EUR (anticipated)

Before the Christmas break (starting from 23rd December) the student members of our chapter will be invited to gather a last time before 2020. The best activity in this period is the visit of the Brussels Christmas market, holding in the city center with possibilities of discovering traditional food, drinks and gifts for family and friends. Depending on the mood of the group it will be possible to do some ice-skating or a wheel tour...
Treasurer’s Report

Below are submitted all financial activities for the period from 1 December 2018 through 30 November 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Credit (Income)</th>
<th>Debit (Expenses)</th>
<th>Conversion to USD (Expenses)</th>
<th>Total (Euros)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/1/2018</td>
<td>Start balance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$3149.95</td>
<td>€2773.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/5/2018</td>
<td>Sinterklaas</td>
<td>Sweets</td>
<td>€30.26</td>
<td>$34.47</td>
<td>€2631.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/20/2018</td>
<td>Christmas market</td>
<td>Drinks and Snacks</td>
<td>€74.40</td>
<td>$84.78</td>
<td>€2556.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/1/2019</td>
<td>Bank administrative costs</td>
<td>Changes for card maintenance</td>
<td>€40.15</td>
<td>$45.95</td>
<td>€2516.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/15/2019</td>
<td>Team building</td>
<td>Accessories for the quiz and outdoor activities</td>
<td>€74.8</td>
<td>$84.51</td>
<td>€2441.94</td>
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<td>4/18/2019</td>
<td>Secretary day</td>
<td>Chocolate presents for administrative staff for their help in events</td>
<td>€63.8</td>
<td>$72.1</td>
<td>€2378.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/25/2019</td>
<td>Light Night 2019</td>
<td>Food, drinks and the presents for the speakers</td>
<td>€112.39</td>
<td>$125.78</td>
<td>€2265.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/25/2019</td>
<td>Photography contest</td>
<td>The prizes for 3 winners</td>
<td>€49.68</td>
<td>$55.6</td>
<td>€2216.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/25/2019</td>
<td>Reimbursement</td>
<td>Drinks with the speaker Train tickets for the speaker for the lab tour in the campus outside Brussels</td>
<td>€112.29</td>
<td>$125.67</td>
<td>€2103.78</td>
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<td>6/17/2019</td>
<td>Bonfire</td>
<td>Firewood, drinks</td>
<td>€92.09</td>
<td>$103.2</td>
<td>€2011.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/22/2019</td>
<td>SPIE welcome lunch</td>
<td>Pizza</td>
<td>€119.85</td>
<td>$133.7</td>
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<td>*12/1/2019</td>
<td>End balance</td>
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<td>*12/5/2019</td>
<td>Sinterklaas</td>
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<td>$80</td>
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<td>*12/2019</td>
<td>Christmas market</td>
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<td>*12/31/2019</td>
<td>Anticipated End Balance of the Year</td>
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<td>$1,912.9</td>
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</table>

*anticipated events and expenses taking place before the end of the year 2019.
Conclusions and Recommendations

Following the election in August, the new board proposed to our advisor, Prof. Hugo Thienpont the event planning for 2019-2020. During our first meeting, decisions on the new lines of the chapter have been taken:

- Encouraging the master students to involve more in the chapter, especially in the organization of the events. This will be done by giving certificates of attendance and participation.
- Proposing additional career building events. In the optics of encouraging the master students to involve in the chapter, we thought labs tours, company visits and talks about experiencing research at B-PHOT would be a good power of evoking interest.
- Proposing additional cultural event. Indeed, our members are in majority non-Belgian or even non-European. We would like then to give them the opportunity to discover and learn more about Belgian culture and traditions.
- Offering the students from the ULB (Université Libre de Bruxelles) to be part of our chapter. As the optics and photonics labs in the ULB are smaller than the ones at VUB, they are not able so far to open their own chapter. Consequently, we went to meet them to present our chapter proposing to join our events and the board in the next years. We received good feedbacks and maybe will have subscriptions from some of the PhD students.
- Increasing our online activities being regular in posting news and pictures on Facebook, creating a what’s app group and planning a twitter account to communicate fast and directly with all our members. To highlight our SPIE chapter on social media we also decided to record small videos/gifs during each meeting/event and take high-quality pictures with a camera instead of using our phones.