



EGU election for Division Presidents and Treasurer

Propose a candidate by 15 September



The autumn 2012 election, where 2012 EGU members will be able to vote for Division Presidents and EGU Treasurer, is taking place from 1 November to 1 December. Until 15 September, you are kindly asked to propose a candidate to either vacancy by filling in the [Candidate Proposal Form](#) on the EGU website.

You are welcome and encouraged to nominate yourself. If you are nominating someone else, please get the candidate's consent.

More information about the elections is available from the [Election page](#) on the EGU website.

An earlier version of this article was published on the EGU website

EGU Twitter journal club

The initiative launched on June 12, and two online discussions on papers published in EGU journals followed on 21 June and 12 July. Check [GeoLog](#), the EGU blog, or follow us on [Twitter](#), for information about forthcoming journal club discussions.

How does it work?

Initially, we will present you with a publicly accessible journal article (likely from an [EGU publication](#)); you read it, then all of us 'discuss' it on Twitter at a specified time using a specific hashtag ([#egutjc](#)). The [Storify](#) transcript of the event (a story made up of the 'tweets' sent about the paper during the journal club) will subsequently be published on our blog. As the club progresses, you will be asked to recommend articles for discussion based on your own interests and expertise.

How long do we get to read the article?

You will get around a week to read each article before the discussion takes place.

How long is the discussion?

The formal portion of the discussion will last one hour but, if there's more to say, feel free to continue for longer.

Will we be provided with background information?

Yes, we will precede each discussion by tweeting any relevant links and information we can find – and we hope you will do the same. The announcement of the article will be accompanied by a short summary as well as discussion points to get you started.

What if I have more questions?

Please [email](#) the EGU's Science Communications Fellow Edvard Glücksman with further questions.

An earlier version of this article was published on the EGU blog



Geotalk: The new monthly column on the EGU Blog

This summer we launched a new monthly blog column on GeoLog, the EGU Blog. [Geotalk](#), featuring short interviews with geoscientists about their research, serves as a platform to promote the Earth, planetary and space sciences and give voice to young scientists and other researchers in all areas represented by EGU divisions.

In the first post of this regular Q&A series, published in July, [we talked to Guillermo Rein](#) of Imperial College London about “the

largest fires on Earth” and how they can contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. The [August column featured Pedro Jiménez Guerrero](#) of the University of Murcia and focused on air pollution and its relation with climate change.

If you'd like to suggest a scientist for an interview, please contact Bárbara Ferreira at media@egu.eu.



To the ends of the Earth

To grasp the complexity of the Earth system is both the goal and the greatest challenge of the geosciences, as EGU President Donald Dingwell explains to *Public Service Review*

At the heart of the sciences linking Earth, ocean and atmospheric sciences together, geoscience encompasses a number of disciplines. Geosciences also borders on social sciences, other physical and life sciences and even humanities, and common solutions are often sought.

In an interview with *Public Service Review*, President of the European Geosciences Union (EGU) Donald Dingwell talks about recent breakthroughs in the field, why funding in geoscientific research is still insufficient, and why geoscience should be elevated across the academic and industrial landscape of Europe to enable better knowledge of the Earth to result in improved living conditions for all.

Why is geoscience important?

Geoscience sounds simple enough as a word. It calls to mind an understanding of the geological realm through scientific investigations. That, in and of itself, is more or less accurate. It fails, however, to place geosciences in their vital context of our modern world. Geosciences, and their close allies, the planetary and space sciences, span an astonishingly wide array of disciplines and methods of investigation. Geosciences are also at the core of the Earth



Donald Dingwell, President of the European Geosciences Union
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system sciences that link the Earth, ocean, and atmospheric sciences together.

In addition, geosciences are the direct neighbours to social sciences such as risk analysis and social geography, physical sciences and engineering disciplines, such as physics and chemistry, and geotechnical and other sorts of engineering. The future will

likely reveal even more relationships between geosciences and disciplines that, at the moment, are thought to be even further afield, such as humanities, where ancient texts and paintings have been evaluated for their environmental information. The EGU embraces all these aspects in its relation to geosciences.

What are the challenges facing the field of geosciences at present?

Some of the greatest challenges in geosciences come from the complex nature of the field itself. We can perceive the noble challenges of coping with the complexity of the subjects to be understood, and organizational challenges related to the history and current structures of geosciences.

Firstly, to the noble part. Can there be any greater goal than a full understanding of the natural world in which we live? The geosciences stand at the gates of this paradise of investigation. We, ourselves, live in a special period in the history of investigation of the natural world – one in which the actions of man are actually turning the state of the planet into a moving target of challenges and questions. To grasp the complexity of the Earth system and to attempt explanations is the great goal of the geosciences and their greatest challenge.

Secondly, we can observe that the organization of geosciences is anything but simple. Some major international organizations have made great strides in the amplification of our impact and voice regarding the geosciences in our society. However, in many ways, and primarily due to the hybrid nature of methodologies present in the geosciences, the landscape in Europe is characterized by organizational geoscientific structures in teaching and research that, in the past, have detracted from us rising as a community to tackle some of the enormous challenges facing us and, sometimes, the equally enormous opportunities they engender.

Is there currently enough funding for this field?

Let me be clear: there is never enough funding. If you recall that the scientists – who toil away at the problems solvable by geoscientific research – are all motivated entirely by simply getting it right, then what could be a better use of capital? Better knowledge of our world will result in better living conditions for us all.



The Bifertenstock in the Glarus Alps looking east: the region in the middle ground is part of the 'Tectonics Arena Sardona', a UNESCO nature world heritage region (Image by K. Stueve, distributed by EGU under a [Creative Commons licence](#))

In Europe, in particular, geosciences do not have the same voice with regard to scientific infrastructure and large-scale research as their neighbouring domains. Further, the average European (someone whom I have never met) has a far better identification with physics, mathematics, chemistry, biology, etc., than they do with geosciences. In Canada, where I was born and educated, the situation is quite different.

What recent breakthroughs have been made in geosciences?

There are countless examples. Let me commit the sin of naming a few:

- Identification of the acidification of the oceans;
- Development of forecasting for natural catastrophes;
- Documentation of global change in the Earth's present and past;
- The rise of comparative planetology;
- Flood management modelling and strategies;
- Understanding regional and global impact of volcanic ash;
- Mapping of the history and current state of the Earth's magnetic field intensity – the shield against cosmic radiation to mankind;
- Powerful rupture models for understanding earthquakes;
- Coping with the inventory of the cryosphere;
- The stabilization of mankind's water budget.

And many, many, more...

How is Europe supporting the discipline?

We could be doing much better, but we must admit that the initiatives in European research infrastructure are setting an excellent example of the potential for pooling resources in order to play the research role at a far higher level than is sometimes the case today. Dedicated research institutes in Europe already cover many major themes in a worldwide leading role. Nevertheless, gaps exist in the landscape; too many gaps to be specific here and to lend a priority to some.

What do you hope to see achieved in the future?

I hope, and sincerely believe, that the role of geosciences in the top universities, in the corridors of power in Brussels and the national and regional governments, in the national academies of Europe, including the European academy, in the private philanthropic foundations of Europe, and in the industrial landscape of Europe, will far increase.

To put it simply, 'it is one thing to want to save the world – it is quite another to invest, intellectually and infrastructurally, in the capability to do so'.

This interview is reproduced with permission from [Public Service Review, European Union journal issue 23](#)

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