



## Ten years of EGU

### The Union's history in the voice of its Treasurer, Roland Schlich

*Nobody is better placed to look back on the EGU's first decade than Treasurer Roland Schlich, one of its founding fathers. Retired from his academic duties, Schlich continues to be heavily involved in the Union's day-to-day activities. To flesh out the story of this deceptively young organisation and hear what its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary means to someone who has given so much to its development, Science Communications Fellow Edvard Glücksman sat down with Roland on 14 September 2012 on a break at the recent Outreach Committee retreat in Pisa, Italy.*

On 7 September 2002 at Hotel Platzl in Munich, [Council members from the European Geophysical Society \(EGS\) and European Union of Geosciences \(EUG\)](#) came together to sign the EGU into existence. Today, just a decade later, the Union boasts over 11,000 members across 22 Scientific Divisions, publishes 14 Open Access journals, hosts Europe's largest annual geosciences conference and, through a growing number of outreach and communication projects, is taking on an increasingly prominent ambassadorial role for the Earth and planetary sciences.

Nevertheless, Schlich was not always confident the merger would work, particularly in light of the challenges inherent in assigning a small number of individuals to speak for a large and scientifically diverse group of European researchers. He recalls, "When the EGS and the EUG ceased and the EGU was built up by a handful of scientists from Germany, France, and the UK, I was not necessarily convinced that the adventure would be so successful. For its subsequent success I am very proud."

#### Competitive coexistence

By all means, merging two highly established organisations and, above all, reconciling their differences, was not an easy task. The EGS and EUG were founded in 1971 and 1981 respectively, coexisting and competing for Europe's Earth and planetary scientists for over two decades. Schlich, one of the EUG's founding members and Treasurer (1981-1996), followed by Chief Executive (1996-2004), explains, "Both organisations were running for the same reasons, the development of science, and we were competing, of course. However we were also slightly different: EGS was built on the model of the American Geophysical Union (AGU), with division sections and so on, whereas EUG had a more interdisciplinary, thematic structure."

The two original organisations also differed slightly in their scientific focus, although not enough to make it easy for young scientists to know which one to join. Schlich recalls some of the conversations he had with his students as they mulled over which side to pledge their allegiance to, "We [the EUG] were more on the geology, geochemistry, and mineralogy side, whereas they [the EGS] focused



Treasurer Roland Schlich in a photograph taken in 2010.

on geophysics. Nevertheless, it became increasingly clear that we could not continue like this: even the students in my lab were hesitating about which side to join and then every two years they would attend separate meetings at almost the same time!"

The sheer practical incompatibility of having two competing organisations soon began to weigh heavily on Schlich's mind, "I was sure that the only way forward was to open negotiations towards a merger, but even that was going to be difficult given the meeting schedules at the time [both organisations had parallel meetings every two years]. My first objective, therefore, was to convince EGS to have their big meeting on the odd years when we did not have ours, but this did not work since the leaders of both organisations were convinced they were the better one and nobody wanted to compromise!"

However, like other members of the EUG, Schlich was also increasingly aware of his organisation's potential fate within such a competitive atmosphere. He recalls, "Since the EGS had a publications model, with six journals, they were not keen to merge but, rather, wanted to absorb us. For me, this would have been a bad idea because one side always feels worse when they are absorbed. We therefore needed a merger through a common effort."

#### Moving towards a merger

Given the untenable state of affairs and the potential threat of ramped up hostilities, Schlich decided to kick-start the unification process by putting pressure on the EUG Executive and finally, in 2000, managing to convince then-president David Gee to hold an extraordinary meeting at Frankfurt airport. Schlich knew his

argument had to be compelling, “I invited all available past presidents and told them we should merge the two organisations before it was too late, before one of us would be absorbed by the other. I also told them that this was the only solution for making us competitive with the AGU, which I knew a lot about at the time after having even sent my secretary to the United States to learn how they work.”

His persistence in the lead-up to Frankfurt paid off, “At the end of that meeting, I obtained the authorisation to proceed with merger discussions, so I contacted Arne Richter, then-Executive Secretary of the EGS, and invited him to our 2001 meeting in Strasbourg. In turn, he invited me to the following EGS meeting, where we scheduled a working session together.”

Perhaps only in hindsight, it is with great fondness that Schlich recalls the delicate, mercurial relationship between his colleagues at the EUG and Arne Richter, “The EGS was invigorated by Richter’s arrival when, in 1988, he was recruited from the Max Planck Institute. In many ways, his appointment changed everything for them. Remember, we [EUG] were founded partly because they were quickly losing visibility. They simply did not have the right people in the right places. Arne had a lot of imagination and he worked hard but, when it came to compromise, he acted like a king!”

### Dialogue and leadership

Richter’s arrival was a key turning point in the fate of the EGS and, according to Schlich, much of it could be attributed to his unique personality. He describes their first meeting in Lindau, where Richter was based, “I very much enjoyed that session because that is where I discovered him as a person, and I liked him. I like people who express themselves properly instead of turning around the pot! However, it was not all roses and, at the end of the first day, we were quite frustrated with each other.”

Discussions took their toll but, in the end, the two men were able to make headway on what would become a key moment in the EGU’s foundation. “Only on the second day did we converge on the idea that we could win only by merging and, of course, we both understood the problems with this marriage but we were both also conscious,

thankfully, that this was our best option. We wrote a memorandum of understanding which we managed to get signed by both parties.”

Having reached a preliminary agreement, Schlich and Richter now faced the delicate task of assigning the EGU’s first leadership positions. It was a pivotal moment which required two large organisations, both full of strong personalities, to reach a workable compromise. With this in mind, Schlich recalls to what extent the discussions hinged upon tactful diplomacy, “After the rather quiet steps of getting a memorandum signed – because sometimes this kind of thing has to be done quietly – we faced the pivotal allocation of positions. Arne was confident about his future [prominent] role in the new organisation. Meanwhile, I was fortunately happy with what I had accomplished during my career and I was not too stressed. I could therefore leave him with the impression that it was his baby.”

And so, finally, the two councils came together in September 2002 in order to merge the respective EUG and EGS constitutions and officially establish the EGU. Schlich describes the importance of satisfying both sides right from the start, “We came to the practical necessity of allocating a fair balance of leadership positions for the first two terms. Everyone agreed that Peter Fabian of the EGS would be the first EGU President, followed by the EUG’s John Ludden. The most animated discussion related to the Executive Secretary position. Despite strong pressure from Arne, who several people felt should be given the job on his own, a group of EUG people converged and stood up to propose we take on two general secretaries. I was subsequently chosen to serve alongside Arne who, with his team in Lindau, was in a better position to do this job, but this compromise meant there was more balance and less frustration on our side.”

### The first EGU meeting

Leaving Richter with the main decision-making responsibilities, Schlich focused on the EGU’s first major event, a 2003 meeting in Nice, bringing together EUG and EGS scientists alongside their transatlantic counterparts from the AGU. For Schlich, the practical realisation of years of his work was, it turns out, a victim of its own success, “That first meeting was truly a zoo! We brought on the AGU as a sort of alibi, a witness to our successful merger. Everyone was excited and we attracted far more participants than expected, a total



Celebration of the 10 years of EGU at the October 2012 Council meeting in Munich.



of 12,000, including up to 4,000 from the US. The science was good, of course, but the logistics were a real problem.”

Compromise remained the main driving force behind those earliest moments though, even after the official merger, the two parent organisations continued to run their finances separately. “Those early days were not easy and – very much against my character – I had to bite my tongue on several occasions, especially regarding how the finances were run,” Schlich recalls.

The logistical difficulties encountered at the Nice meeting backfired the following year, with profound financial implications for the organisation. This, according to Schlich, was a real turning point, ultimately leading him to take on the position he still occupies today, “The 2004 meeting was truly a catastrophe! We imagined we would have over 10,000 people yet again but, because people were so put off by the poor logistics in Nice, we struggled to get 6,000 and ran into a deficit of almost half a million Euros. Since I had to pay for this with the EUG’s reserve funds, the only sensible next step was to merge the finances of the two organisations. Based on this experience, I was elected Treasurer in 2005. The rest, as they say, is history!”

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## A decade on

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Ten years on, Schlich is constantly reminded of why he worked so hard towards getting the EGU up and running. In particular, he remains ever-inspired by the Union’s young scientists, “Two years

ago, a guy came up to me at a conference and shook my hand. He said to me, ‘Roland, I have to thank you because the first paper I ever presented, many years ago, was in Strasbourg at one of your meetings, with a travel grant signed by you.’ You can imagine that, up on hearing this, I was over the moon! He wasn’t obliged to remember the details and, even less so, to tell me about it years later. I still use this story to demonstrate why our travel grants are such an important part of what we do.”

“Young people often remember the first time they present in public. To me, this is the best publicity we can make for our organisation and one of the most important contributions we can make to the scientific process.”

Year upon year, Schlich is proud to see the EGU developing into a dynamic organisation with a growing international influence. However, he insists that its greatest strength remains unchanged, “I have been delighted to witness the growth of this organisation from the very beginning: a true adventure! However, without a doubt, one of my greatest pleasures is to observe the quality of the science presented by our members.”

Here’s to another ten years of dialogue, compromise, and world-class science!

*Edvard Glücksman*  
EGU Science Communications Fellow

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## The Union of the future

*Recently elected to the EGU presidency, Günter Blöschl writes about his vision for the future of the Union.*

On describing his ancient world, Heraclitus said: “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.”; this ever-present change is equally valid in today’s world. Where is the EGU going at a time when almost every aspect of life is changing more rapidly than ever before? Clearly, it will not suffice for us to respond to any changes. The Union needs to play an active role in shaping a community of geoscientists, fostering a climate where the Earth, planetary, and space sciences can thrive, and in shaping a society where our research findings have a real-world impact. To realise this pro-active role, the Union will continue to focus on the cooperation between disciplines and across borders, raising the profile of young scientists, investing in outreach and science policy, and on perpetual innovation.

The annual EGU General Assembly has been steadily increasing in size and scope in the ten years of the Union’s existence. The [2012 meeting](#), with a vibrant programme and varied opportunities for networking across borders and disciplines, was one of the most successful to date. As the most thrilling research questions are getting more interdisciplinary, more and more sessions are

being co-organised by scientists from different fields. The General Assembly is a superb forum for the exchange of ideas across the Union disciplines and I think it is important for the EGU to actively encourage this cross-fertilisation, both within the Union and through strategic partnerships with other learned societies.

But the EGU has much more to offer than the General Assembly. Our many [co-sponsored topical meetings and conferences](#), summer schools and other training programmes are booming. This is one of the main growth areas of our Union, one where the EGU can play an important catalytic role in enabling researchers to increasingly cooperate across borders to enhance the competitiveness of geoscientists in Europe. A network of topical events revolving around a multitude of themes and a wider use of social media will be instrumental for this integration. As I strongly believe in one global science community, encouragement and increased travel support for economically disadvantaged scientists will be a key element of this integration.

Our biggest resources are the talent and enthusiasm of young scientists. To make the EGU an even more attractive forum for young researchers, we need to cultivate an environment that fosters a free and open exchange of ideas, in accordance with the bottom-up



Günter Blöschl was elected to the presidency of the Union last year. He will serve as EGU Vice-President for one year, becoming EGU President at the 2013 General Assembly.

philosophy of the Union where contributions of each individual are valued and encouraged. Raising the level of excitement and relevance of the geosciences amongst young scientists, identifying and encouraging young, talented members to take up leadership positions as convenors at the General Assembly or as editors of our journals will be important. The EGU already has an award programme for young scientists but there are more opportunities. Some divisions are now forming youth committees to organise activities, such as summer schools, for master and PhD students. And there are plans for think tanks to be formed by young scientists to work out ideas for the Earth sciences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In a rapidly changing world, the geosciences should play a key role in a Europe-wide open space for knowledge. The EGU is a society which should claim leadership in the European research agenda. The Union already has a very active [outreach programme](#) and plans to contribute to the European science policy agenda through strategic partnerships and other activities. Encouraging the involvement

of officers of the European Commission, the European Research Council and other agencies in EGU forums, and increasing the visibility of the Union by enhancing its communication with the media and the public will be important. Conversely, EGU members and the Union itself have an important role in supporting policy-makers and society at large, providing advice and forward-looking recommendations on societal issues related to the geosciences. The LAquila earthquake and subsequent trial, for example, highlighted the delicate balance of responsibilities of Earth scientists for society. I hope the EGU can become an important discussion and information platform relevant to decision making.

Pro-active innovation, I believe, is a key to success in a changing world. The EGU has a strong track record in innovation and even as a trend setter in the Earth sciences and beyond. Take the EGU Interactive [Open Access Publishing Policy](#) as an example. Only ten years ago, Open Access publication was considered exotic by many. Today, the EGU is publishing 14 extremely successful Open Access journals that can be read, free of charge, by anybody across the globe! More importantly, the idea has spread like wildfire across the science community. The publication marketplace is still evolving towards improved web-design and integrated, adaptive communication systems, including social media. The EGU will continue to play a leading role in this exciting process.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that EGU's fortes are the ideas and dedication of its members. I would encourage all of you to come up with new ideas on how to make the EGU and our community an even stronger and more thriving forum. As Heraclitus said, "there is nothing permanent except change." Innovation needs to be permanent. We are in for an exciting future.

Günter Blöschl  
EGU Vice-President

## Copernicus and EGU

### 25 years of success stories

*The relationship between EGU and its meetings organiser and publisher in the voice of the Managing Director of Copernicus.*

It was in February 1988 that Sir Ian Axford, then president of the European Geophysical Society (EGS) and director of the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research, had the idea to provide a permanent office to the EGS. During that time, the society was registered in Switzerland, without staff members. The idea for a permanent office arose from the need to handle membership business, as well as to organise the EGS General Assembly, a medium-sized conference with up to 1,000 participants, continuously. Before then, meeting businesses were dealt by each local organising committee, who were doing a great job but unnecessarily 're-inventing the wheel' each year.

Axford reached out to his colleagues in the direction of the Max Planck as well as to some scientists, and gathered seven people to found the [Copernicus Gesellschaft e.V.](#) (incorporated society, non-profit status). One of the founders was Arne Richter, later EGS Executive Secretary. Although being two independent corporations, the relation between Copernicus and EGS was a very strong one.

The EGS was growing and so did Copernicus. In 1994, the EGS decided not to continue their publishing activities with major commercial publishing houses. A logical consequence for Copernicus was to offer publishing services to EGS and the publishing segment of Copernicus was launched.

When the community of EGS started to think about Open Access and liberal handling of copyrights and distribution licenses,



Martin Rasmussen is Managing Director of Copernicus since 2004. The publisher and conference organiser is based in Göttingen, Germany.

Copernicus was fulfilling this job and became an Open Access publishing house. Together with a very active group of scientists led by Ulrich Pöschl, now chair of the EGU Publications Committee, the flagship journal *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics* and an innovative approach to [Public Peer Review – the interactive Open Access publishing](#) – were launched.

The partnership between Copernicus and EGS was pioneering, even in those days. Today, more and more publishers and conference organisers realise that scientists know how to communicate science better than business people could ever do. The role of publishers is changing from a content-locking copyright keeper to a service provider, helping scientists realising their visions. The role allocation between Copernicus and EGS was always like this: EGS as the voice of the (geo)sciences and Copernicus as the partner to implement all the society's great ideas. Borrowing a term from our colleagues in ecology, Copernicus and EGS were a great symbiosis.

When EGS and the European Union of Geosciences (EUG) decided to merge to create the EGU, the symbiosis celebrated the next success: the first conference above 10,000 participants (Nice 2003).

The year 2004 was then a very exciting one for the new-born EGU and its partner Copernicus. The first EGU General Assembly took place, [new interactive journals were launched](#), and most of the existing 'traditional' journals were transformed into Open Access (the last closed-access journal followed in 2009).

Since late 2004, Copernicus has been headed by me, also a geoscientist by education. We started to re-arrange the partnership in a way that the non-profit society activities of the EGU and the business part were strengthened by splitting the duties amongst the two parties. Arne Richter continued to serve as EGU Executive Secretary and the growing EGU committees have focused on various activities regarding membership, outreach, education, and scientific policy. Copernicus has focused on two segments: conference organising and Open Access publishing. All EGU journals are owned by the Union and the editorial policy and content is clearly ruled by the chief editorial boards and, on the Union level, by the Publications Committee. Similar to this is the organisation of duties between Copernicus and the Programme Committee regarding EGU's General Assembly. This arrangement was fully established when Philippe Courtial started to serve as EGU Executive Secretary and founded the Executive Office in Munich.

The collaboration of Copernicus and EGU is, even after 25 years, one of the best-functioning marriages I have ever seen. We trust and know each other like an old couple, but we are vibrant and innovative like teenagers.

Copernicus serves other scientific associations and research initiatives. Our very [active involvement in the Open Access movement](#) brings in a variety of new ideas for scientific communications. I am convinced that this is a clear advantage of our open relationship and I think that even the EGU can sometimes benefit from our other affairs.

For me personally, but also for all our staff members at Copernicus, the collaboration with the EGU and its wonderful Council and Committee members, authors, reviewers, meeting organisers and participants, as well as its more than 11,000 members, is a very pleasant one. We feel happy and very honoured that we have been allowed to serve the EGU all these years and we look very much forward to the continuation of this partnership.

All the best, EGU, for your next 10 years!

Martin Rasmussen  
Copernicus Managing Director

## A year to remember

### EGU Science Communications Fellow Edvard Glücksman says goodbye to the Office

*With his stint at the EGU Executive Office coming to an end, Science Communications Fellow [Edvard Glücksman](#) looks back on an action-packed year of geosciences, social media, and life in the Bavarian capital.*

Only a year ago, I was putting the finishing touches on my doctoral thesis and agonising over the prospect of life beyond the expiry date of my student card. Today, as I prepare to leave the Executive Office,

those nervous moments seem so far away, replaced by a whirlwind of new experiences and acquired skills, friendships forged, and a sense of belonging to a city I had never previously visited.

I arrived to the Office with large boots to fill, taking over from the prolific [Jennifer Holden](#) as the second ever Postdoctoral Fellow. Already a veteran General Assembly participant at the time, Jennifer played a vital role in the early development of the EGU's social

media channels and its outreach strategy, in particular through her dedication to galvanising the Union's young and [female](#) scientists. Tasked with on the one hand helping Media and Communications Officer Bárbara Ferreira launch the new-look [GeoQ](#) newsletter and, on the other, continuing Jennifer's social media legacy, I was immediately thrown into the deep end in the run-up to the [2012 General Assembly](#). Preparing for a conference of over 11,000 participants in such a wide range of subject areas was an eye-opening experience for me, having just completed my doctorate in the field of protistology, the study of protists (Protozoa), where the largest international conference barely exceeds 300 scientists.

Those opening months flew by as I learned to juggle regular office tasks with Assembly preparations. Little by little, I also grew to know the EGU as an organisation, including by attending the General Assembly Programme Committee meeting in Utrecht in late February. There, I witnessed first-hand the [Council members](#) in action and put faces to those names I had heard so much about.

At the same time, I made an effort to explore Munich and find my place within its distinctively international social scene. With my colleagues and newfound friends I experienced, with fascination, Bavaria's many traditional events, including Fasching (carnival) and the Starkbierzeit (the season of the 'strong' beers). In hindsight, those were just intimate little gatherings compared with the mother of all parties, Oktoberfest, where Munich gets turned upside down by two relentless weeks of beer, meat, and tourists.

After months of tweeting, blogging, writing, editing, and designing General Assembly content, we were suddenly Vienna-bound for the EGU's annual flagship event. Charged with the Assembly's social media duties, I gained a true insider's perspective from the comfort of a sofa in the EGU Booth. It was at the Assembly, in that complex maze of poster halls, corporate stalls, and lecture theatres, that I learned the true global significance of the EGU. The sheer number of scientists from all over the world was staggering; so too were the number of oversubscribed sessions, each covering a fragment of the Union's seemingly infinite range of subjects. Though it is sometimes hard to gauge the success of online outreach activities, I knew our social media efforts were paying off when, on the final day, a 'tweet-up', or meetup of our Twitter followers, brought together fifteen scientists for coffee. A well-deserved opportunity for everyone to experience human contact!

With the General Assembly done and dusted, I was finally able to settle into a steady office routine. Over the summer, we prepared the next edition of this newsletter, launched our [blog network](#), and continued to develop our social media channels. At the same time, I made the most of the barbecues, brunches, and Biergartens that characterise warmer months in Munich, a city that lives for the outdoors.

In August, I travelled to Colorado and California for a study tour of the US energy sector, covering my meetings and site visits on the EGU blog (see [entries](#) for 17–31 August). The trip, hosted by the Emerging Leaders in Environmental and Energy Programme ([ELEEP](#)), provided a hands-on introduction to some of the most



Edvard Glücksman during a visit to the 2012 Oktoberfest.

pressing transatlantic energy challenges and I returned with fresh perspectives and a heightened enthusiasm for many of the most important issues covered by our burgeoning [Energy, Resources and the Environment](#) Division.

I have always been keen to travel and, to that end, was also fortunate enough to participate in some of the EGU's public outreach activities, witnessing first-hand the Union's potential to inspire younger generations by introducing its structure in lectures to students at schools and universities. September's Outreach Committee meeting in Pisa confirmed that the EGU will remain one of the largest and most dynamic Earth and planetary sciences institutions around, exemplified by our steadily increasing number of online followers and their heightened levels of engagement and visible enthusiasm. Bárbara and I understood just how far we have progressed when we recently attended [SpotOn London 2012](#), a prestigious science communication conference, finding ourselves pleasantly surprised. The regularity and quality of our content closely matches the output of many of the biggest and most active organisations in Europe.

We live in an age where the value of work experience is judged by the acquisition of 'transferable skills'. To that end, I am most grateful for having been offered the opportunity to spend a year immersed in the many facets of science communication within such an international and scientifically diverse scientific organisation. A year ago, freshly severed from my student life, I had the privilege of arriving to an EGU on the cusp of its social media revolution and, importantly, at the very moment of [GeoQ's](#) birth. This special issue, then, not only commemorates a fantastic first decade of the Union's existence but also the first successful year of this new-look newsletter, not least thanks to Bárbara's tremendous efforts. Her presence, alongside Philippe Courtial, Robert Barsch, and Karen Resenberger at the Executive Office, have made this a truly unforgettable year of learning, personal growth, and quirky Bavarian traditions. Servus!

*Edvard Glücksman*  
EGU Science Communications Fellow