



10 years of Geosciences Information for Teachers (GIFT) workshops

Best practice for the science–teaching interface

The EGU Committee on Education tells of the past and future of the EGU's most successful education activity: the GIFT workshops.

In 2002 in Nice, France, then-EGU Executive Secretary Arne Richter announced a collaboration between scientists and schools all over Europe. The aim was to bring state-of-the-art science via high school teachers into tomorrow's classrooms. Carlo Laj was appointed chair of the EGU Committee on Education (CoE) and, in 2003, the first GIFT workshop took place at the General Assembly, featuring 42 teachers from seven European countries.



The theme of the 2013 GIFT workshop at the EGU General Assembly (07–12 April, Vienna, Austria) is [Natural Hazards](#).

Growing success and a Nobel Prize laureate: the early years of GIFT

The workshop quickly became known amongst teachers all over the European continent and, in the following years, the number of participants doubled. Due to the importance of the valuable hands-on activities, which require an intimate setting, and the limited space at the conference venue, the maximum number of participants had to be limited to 85. In 2005, the EGU Assembly moved to Vienna, Austria and 70 teachers from 17 countries attended the presentation by Nobel Prize laureate Paul Crutzen at the GIFT workshop. Since then, the workshop has become a two-and-a-half day fixture within the General Assembly calendar. With so many teachers wanting more access to research experience, the CoE added the Teachers at Sea programme, where high school teachers can apply to become members of staff on scientific research vessels during research expeditions.

GIFT: more than 'just' a workshop

Meanwhile, the number of applicants significantly exceeded a manageable number of participants. In addition, GIFT teachers from more distant countries like China, Malaysia and the USA were

included in the workshop. Teachers began to apply for a second participation at the workshop and started to form teachers' networks beyond their national borders. A regular exchange of teachers between the AGU GIFT workshop in San Francisco and the EGU GIFT in Vienna was established. A few years later, the European GIFT concept also became international, with the CoE helping to organise workshops abroad.

2009/2010: GIFT on video and in the footsteps of Alexander von Humboldt

The year 2009 brought further additions to the GIFT concept. For the first time, some lectures were filmed during the workshop. Along with all the other workshop material (programmes, brochures, abstracts of presentations) these recordings were made available as web streams and are openly accessible free of charge [via the EGU website](#). In 2010, the first GIFT workshop at an [Alexander von Humboldt Conference](#) took place, in Merida, Mexico. In addition, the CoE launched the GIFT Distinguished Lecture Series, which brings GIFT speakers directly into classrooms and to teacher conferences.

2013: GIFT goes to Africa!

The upcoming year will bring new and fascinating prospects for GIFT. The EGU has teamed up with UNESCO to take the GIFT workshop idea to Africa. The scope is to disseminate the latest findings in science to the teachers there, to support the development of the next generation of Earth scientists in Africa. The opportunities and challenges in the Earth sciences there are great, starting with traditional mineral extraction and extending into environmental management such as climate change adaptation, prevention of natural hazards, and ensuring access to drinking water. The first UNESCO–GIFT workshop on African soil will deal with climate change and human adaptation. It will take place at the African Earth Observatory Network at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elisabeth, South Africa in partnership with the African Center from Climate and Earth System Science and organised by UNESCO's Windhoek office.

After more than ten years of existence, the GIFT idea has not only grown significantly and reached more than 1,000 science teachers; it has also broadened its views and targets to share scientific findings beyond the borders of Europe.

EGU Committee on Education