
THE FACE OF THE EARTH – PROCESS AND FORM

EGU President Günter Blöschl and EGU Programme Committee Chair Gert-Jan Reichart introduce this year's themed General Assembly.

For the first time in 2014, the EGU General Assembly will have a theme: The Face of the Earth – Process and Form.

Why a theme?

The theme intends to enhance coherence between disciplines and provide conference participants with a stronger community feeling. It also reflects the fact that the most thrilling research questions are becoming more interdisciplinary, and we hope it will facilitate the exchange of ideas across EGU disciplines. Why not dip your toes into something different at this year's Assembly? Take this opportunity to take a peek at sessions outside your area of research and get an idea of what other disciplines within the geosciences are all about!

In addition to making the General Assembly even more attractive to participants, we also hope the theme will make the conference more visible to the wider public: a theme allows us to better communicate what the conference is about to those less familiar with it. We are also enhancing the visibility of the EGU and the geosciences to school children – the future of science – by encouraging educational visits to the conference centre.

What does the theme refer to?

Our planet exhibits intricate shapes and patterns. We are interested in the processes and forms spanning our planet, from the core of the Earth to interplanetary space, at various space and time scales. Patterns are formed by processes in the dynamic Earth system, and they change with time: they continuously create, modify and destroy specific forms while, at the same time, individual forms and larger patterns constrain how processes operate. Process, form and the complex inter-relationships between them are basic to the understanding of the origin and development of the Earth and space.

Like a human face, the Earth's processes and forms present a wide variety of features. The theme intends to celebrate the diversity of geoscience processes and the great variety of associated forms. It spans all spheres of the geosciences: from the shapes of crystals and minerals to those drawn by aurora in the sky, to mountain formation and swirling waves, patterns of motion in the Earth's atmosphere, and foraminiferal tests, to mention just a few.

This diversity is reflected in the five subtopics: Rocks of the Earth (how tectonics shape the Earth's surface, for example), Waters of the Earth (including the interplay of oceanic flow patterns and the

atmosphere), Life of the Earth (such as the role of microbes on shaping geo-biosphere patterns at a range of scales), the Atmosphere of the Earth (how aerosols affect the climate patterns, for example) and Space and the Earth (including the comparison of patterns on the surface of other planets with those on Earth).

What will be different this year?

General Assembly participants will notice a few changes around the conference centre. There will be a display of different 'spheres', highlighting the face of the Earth diversity and representing each of the subtopics, and a few other surprises. With regards to sessions, there will be Keynote Lectures on Rocks, Waters, Life, Atmosphere and Space on each of the five days of the conference, and a Union Symposium on The Face of the Earth. All changes and theme-specific activities will be advertised through a flyer distributed to conference participants.

The theme does not constrain the topics being presented at the Assembly. Rather, we hope it will add to the conference experience. We look forward to welcoming you in Vienna!

*Günter Blöschl and Gert-Jan Reichart
EGU President and EGU 2014 Programme Committee Chair, respectively*

