

EUSJA News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations

Spring 2004

A word from the editor

There is plenty of food for thought in this issue. Our president Werner Hadorn is asking for various proposed changes to the Eusja constitution to be discussed in associations before the General Assembly on 27 March 2004 in Strasbourg. Our board member Kaianders Sempler shares his proposal for a workshop at ESOF2004, UK member Peter Green of AplhaGalileo wonders about the impact of a European Research Area on science journalism, and Walerian Ignasiak of the Polish association considers the opportunities for improving the working lives of both science researchers and science journalists offered by an enlarged EU.

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Editorial

Important tasks

When the new Board took over in 2000, we proclaimed that our most important task would consist in reviving mutual visits for Eusja journalists. Owing to the growing difficulties in finding enough sponsors for such trips, their number had come down to very few, and this was certainly the main reason for a certain dissatisfaction with the Eusja in general.

I am happy to say that this has changed. After two years during which the number of trips organised by our members rose, 2003 was a record year. Visits have taken place in several countries, all with very good participation and good evaluation. A number of Eusja journalists were also invited to attend the Media Seminar of the UN-project Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) in Prague, and other events.

May I repeat, however, an old decision taken by the General Assembly ages ago, demanding that each member association should organise a trip once in five years. We therefore invite all associations who are behind this schedule to start thinking of their own project and, if they have already done so, to communicate dates and places to the Secretary.

"Beginners" who have never organised such an event can count on the help of experienced organisers; just contact the Board!

The Eusja has now also achieved another important goal: we can regard ourselves now as a significant partner of the European Union, mainly since the meeting with Philippe Busquin in June 2003. We have many reasons to believe that the Eusja (and science journalism in general) will become more active and more influential henceforth. In this respect, I believe it might be useful to consider a slight professionalisation of Eusja's executive work (e. g. in the form of a 5 or 10 per cent job for the president; mind you, I personally will not ask for this, but it might be necessary to go in this direction in the near future). Please discuss this within your associations as well.

Further on, the Eusja has been invited to participate with its own programme at the Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF), which will take place on 25 - 28 August 2004 in Stockholm and which is intended to become a European equivalent to the famous American AAAS. At its recent autumn meeting in Stockholm, the board has already elaborated and presented a project that attracted the lively interest of the ESOF-organisers. As a first result of this, Kaianders Sempler has been elected to the Press Office of this most important event. This will guarantee our best contacts to it. The board will make suggestions about facilitating the participation of Eusja-journalists.



Pallab Ghosh, Hajo Neubert, Werner Hadorn and Sophie Coisne in Brussels.

The meeting with Philippe Busquin in Brussels has also provided us with a number of contacts to countries where science journalism is not at all, or not sufficiently, organised. We are trying to get new members by assisting those who are

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interested in building up an association, and we hope there will be good news for the next General Assembly in this respect as well. The board has in particular met Czech colleagues in Prague and seems to have been successful in motivating them to found an association that will probably send a delegate to the next General Assembly. We have heard similar news from Romania, and we hope to revive the Portuguese, Spanish and Belgian associations.

With regard to the question of members and based on a suggestion by the Finnish association, the board would like to suggest a small number of modifications of our constitution.

- First of all, we think that it might be useful to create a sort of individual membership for colleagues who live and work in countries where there is no science journalists' association yet (a similar regulation has already been created for a membership in the World Federation).
- Secondly, a number of incidents have shown that the statute concerning the associate members should be revised, in particular as regards rights and duties.
- Thirdly, we believe that our constitution in some way threatens the continuity of Eusja activities since it implies the complete replacement of the board every four years. At the next General Assembly in March, elections will be on the agenda. The present board does not regard itself as "chair-stickers" (as we say in Switzerland), but we doubt if it is intelligent to replace the whole board at the same time if a number of affairs are on the way that depend for success on a certain continuity of contacts and background experience (recent examples include: ESOF, the final creation of the World Federation, and negotiations with Brussels).
- Fourthly, the board should increase in size from its current four members. How this is to be done should be discussed at the next General Assembly.

We therefore would like to ask the delegates to discuss this matter with the members of their associations so that they will be prepared when the item

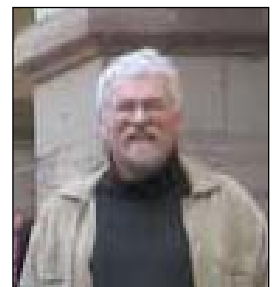
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applying for hands-on laboratory experience with EICOS, and read about the experience of a bioethics/media workshop in Ireland. You can also read reports of some of the many Eusja study tours that took place recently.

The Eusja website may be used to publish some reports of events, as well as details of planned study tours, so please send your news items to both the Eusja webmaster Kaianders Sempler and to me, whenever you have them. Please note that, as is often the case with an organisation's newsletter, your contributions are voluntary and there is no fee payable for them.

*Anna Nolan <anolan@iol.ie>
Editor Eusja News*

comes up at the next General Assembly, which takes place at the Hotel Maison Rouge, Strasbourg, on 27 March 2004. We also invite the delegates to look around for possible candidates for a new board and send us their proposals as soon as possible.



Werner Hadorn

A last little success story concerns our website.

Kaianders has managed to cope with it, and although it is still far from being a candidate for a website beauty contest, we can now at least use it for better communication with the whole community of European science journalists.

*Werner Hadorn <wernerhadorn@bluewin.ch>
President Eusja*

Eusja General Assembly 2003 taking a break.



Photo Kaianders Sempler

VISIT REPORTS

There have been many more study visits than usual in recent times. Between traditional Eusja study trips and invitations to participate in conferences and other events, members had opportunities to travel to Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Poland, Russia, and Sweden. The following are reports on just some of these visits.

Poland

Sixteen journalists decided to come for the Eusja 13-16 May 2003 visit to Poland, the biggest of the ten countries that will become members of European Union on 1 May 2004. For most of them it was the first trip behind the "iron curtain". Although the wall dividing the continent into two zones has fallen 14 years ago, still the knowledge about the countries of "real socialism" is not too impressive. The few days' stay was intended to help Eusja journalists to get to know the modern Poland and Poles.

The visit began in Warsaw, in the Bristol hotel, a marvellous historical building placed in the centre near the representative Krakowskie Przedmieście Street. From there we went by bus to the ERA cellular network buildings. The company introduced us to the working secrets of most modern communication networks, as well as the products soon to be brought on the market.

From Warsaw we went to Poznan, a city of 600,000 inhabitants, the capital city of Wielkopolska Province, and the cradle of Polish nationality.

The following day on the Morasko campus of Adam Mickiewicz University we had a meeting with the former dean Mr Stefan Jurga and other lecturers. The problems of Polish science journalism and hopes connected with joining the EU were also brought up during our time at Collegium Pollonicum. The latter was created in Slubice, a city by the Odra river. In their free time, the participants had a chance to cross the bordering river and go to Germany, thus seeing and experiencing the Odra-Nisse border for the last time. We could also notice the beauty of Polish nature in the Chalin educational centre. The discussion about ecology ended by a bonfire.

There were visits to the pharmaceutical company Polfa-GlaxoSmithKline and the Polish firm Solaris Bus and Coach, which produces city buses for over a dozen European countries. The final point of the visit was a meeting with Wojewoda Wielkopolski (governor of Wielkopolska Province) Mr Andrzej Nowakowski. He had prepared a statement about preparations for the accession referendum especially for the Eusja journalists. (The referendum took place since then. Almost 60 per cent of Poles voted and about 75 per cent of these supported integration.)

I would like to thank all of those who supported the organisation of the visit, especially the journalists who visited Poland. I hope they had nice time here and I'm really interested in their opinions and impressions.

*Walerian Ignasiak <ignasiak@pozna.uw.gov.pl>
National delegate Polish association*

Russia

Where's the most impressive hotel in Moscow? It's in the Moscow University: when I looked out of the window of my room, I could see the whole vast city spread before me. During the Eusja trip I had the opportunity to get to know the University with its massive Soviet architecture dating from the 1950s, and get an impression of the many activities of the University.



Photo Sergej Pisto

I was happy to visit the geological collection in the big Tower of the University. I got a comprehensive view of the huge Russia with its richness.

Now I also know what dubnium is. This I learned in the institute of Dubna by the river Volga. Unfortunately I've not studied physics and therefore couldn't understand all the complicated machines and instruments that were presented to us in Dubna and also in Zvesdni - the Star city. I enjoyed the unique atmosphere of these small, restricted science cities none the less. For example, I have looked in the eyes of a young biochemist who may some day be going to Mars. I remember him when I look at the sky at night.

I hope to be back in Moscow soon!

*Riitta Vauras <riita.vauras@lye.fi>
Finnish association*

Don't forget umbrellas!" I tried to add these words to each of my messages to journalists who were going to participate in the Russian study trip. I think this non-stop instruction was strange for Europeans who suffered from the unusual summer heat this summer, but we had so much rain here that one could think the sun forgot the way to Russia. But the Great Rain stopped just after 22 September, when the first



Photo Sergej Pisto

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Eusja assembly members

Planning a journey? Your colleagues in Europe can help

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participants arrived in Moscow. A miracle! But the real miracle was the fact of a Russian trip itself: for many long years we had tried to organise a visit, but every time we had to step back, and now here we are were at last! It's not easy to find enough money for such event in any country, but it's extra difficult to do it in Russia.

We did it thanks to the help of Moscow State University, who provided accommodation to the Eusja journalists as well as visits to its laboratories and institutes. And last but not least: the University helped with formalities needed for visas to visit our country. It was maybe the most difficult thing after collecting the financial means.

I do hope the programme of the Russian study trip was really useful for participants. Russia is a country with great science traditions, and there are a lot of places that could be rather interesting for science journalists, but we had to choose what to see during the trip. We decided to show some research work of Moscow University – the best and famous science centre we have in Russia – and institutes that collaborate with the University. That's why we named our meeting "Moscow University and Russian Science" and devoted it to the 250th Anniversary of the University to be celebrated in 2005. We spent the first and the last day of the trip visiting the laboratories in the University. I think nobody will forget the first day, which started in the Rector's study and was followed with long walks across the campus with its huge distances. The Rector, academician Victor Sadovnochi, told us about the researches of Moscow University. We left him to go to the 22nd floor of the University to see the unique Mineralogy Museum. Then we visited the laboratories of the biotechnology, chemical and physical faculties, the Institute named after Belozerski, the Institute of Nuclear Physics, and the University's Laser Centre. In the evening we had a reception given by the Rector.

Next day we left for the Institute of Biomedical Problems where we could question academician Anatoli Grigoriev and professor Inessa Kozlovskaya and watch

the training of future astronauts. The next step was the city of astronauts, Zvezdni, where we saw spacecraft, the training centre and other sights related to the Russian way in space. In the evening we met with people from the International Science Centre and had dinner in an old historical part of Moscow – in Stari Arbath. On Friday we left for Dubna, a small, pretty city near Moscow. It is a city of scientists, and is home to the famous Joint Institute for Nuclear Physics. This Institute with its laboratories and well-known collider is always interesting for journalists, but we were lucky to visit it at time of the biggest news announced by the Institute: a new element had just been synthesised in Dubna, and we were able to discuss it with the research leaders. I think journalists will also remember that day because they could have a look at the Volga – the biggest river in Europe. The day ended in the House of Scientists in one of the most interesting parts of Moscow. We could see also places of interest on Saturday during a bus excursion through the city. The last hours of the trip were again spent in Moscow University, but this time in an historical building with rare documents and books.

A few statistics. Our trip was from 23 to 27 September 2003, but we invited journalists to stay one day more until Sunday, as it was easier to get flights then and our guests had the possibility to walk and enjoy Moscow. I must thank participants of our trip: they looked to be so much interested in everything they've seen here that we were happy. There were 25 journalists from 17 countries. Could be more: we got so much applications that decided to invite 30 persons and 30 invitations were sent, but in the end five participants did not arrive.

*Viola Egikova
President Russian Association*

The Eusja group in Russia. Photo Sergej Pistoĵ.



Austria

More than forty participants from twelve European countries (taking in Russia to Malta) took part in the Eusja study trip to Graz, the capital of the Austrian federal state Styria, on 8-11 October 2003. Graz is, after Vienna, the most important centre in Austria for science and research. It has several universities, schools for applied science, university-related institutes and industry-related institutes.

The programme for the study trip concentrated on three main topics: nanotechnology research, space research and automotive engineering.

Graz was "Cultural Capital of Europe" in 2003, and as well as the scientific presentations there were two impressive social events, one in the Graz casino, and one in the Silberberg viticultural college.

*Alexander Kosz <kosz@bit.ac.at>
National delegate Austrian association*



Visiting the cleanroom.

Germany

The soul remains a riddle

The future of medicine was the main topic of the 53rd meeting of Nobel laureates in Lindau, Germany, from 30 June to 4 July 2003.

"Is there a physiological proof for the existence of a soul?" That was one of the tricky questions a student asked eleven Nobel laureates present at their traditional annual meeting in Lindau.

Every year in July, Nobel laureates and selected students or postgraduates from all over the world meet in the pretty medieval city on an island on Lake Boden (Bodensee). There were participants from 38 countries at this meeting. In turn, laureates of medicine (our meeting), chemistry (2002) and physics (2004) attend together with an audience of 500 to 600 and enjoy casual summer days, mixed with serious scientific debates. Laureates of literature and peace are only exceptionally invited. "We want to stick to natural sciences," says Swiss laureate

Werner Arber, member of the curatorium of the Lindau foundation. This year's main topics oscillated between genetics, cell research and neurobiology.

The origin of the annual meeting was an idea of two doctors in Lindau who wanted to break the scientific isolation of Germany after the Second World War. They found support from a local count, Graf Lennart Bernadotte, an aristocratic Swede who could easily make contact with the Nobel committee in Stockholm.

This was the first time that the organisers invited the Eusja to attend the meeting. A number of European (and one Indian) journalists came to report on the unique event, which provided numerous informal occasions for contacting a real bunch of famous scientists. The organisers want to make such Eusja visits a tradition, and members will be informed later about the 2004 meeting.

None of the laureates, by the way, was willing or able to give a conclusive answer to the question regarding the soul. The questioner smiled, rather triumphantly ...

*Werner Hadorn <wernerhadorn@bluewin.ch>
President Eusja*



Nobel laureates Günter Blobel and Bert Sakmann answering questions from local children during a show for the First German TV programme.

Photo Werner Hadorn

India

Eusja journalists were invited to the third National Science Communication Congress held in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, on 29 and 30 August 2003.

A four-page conference report in PDF format report was made available on the EUSJA-L list by ISWA, the Indian association. If you missed it and you would like to be emailed a copy, please send your email address to <anolan@iol.ie>.

Get Your Hands on Science

Once a year, EICOS, the European Initiative for Communicators of Science, invites journalists into its Hands-on Laboratory and to the Extended Assignments. During the Hands-on Laboratory, conducted at the Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Göttingen, Germany, journalists spend eight days working with scientists on actual projects, using state-of-the-art molecular biology methods, and are encouraged to discuss issues of public understanding of science with researchers and with their colleagues. A social programme provides opportunities to enjoy Göttingen and its surroundings. The next Hands-on Laboratory will take place from 5 to 12 June 2004.

Following this Laboratory, journalists are invited to spend up to two weeks in an Extended Laboratory Assignment in selected laboratories of the Max Planck Institute in Göttingen as well as other leading research institutions in Europe. All costs of the programme, including board and travel of the journalists, are borne by EICOS.

Professional journalists from any European country (including Israel) and working for any print or electronic media can apply, including freelancers. A scientific background is not required, and generalists with an interest in research are particularly encouraged to apply. Reasonable competence in English is, however, mandatory, as all activities are carried out in English.

The overall intention of the programme is to enhance the communication between scientists and journalists. EICOS offers the unique opportunity for journalists to gather first-hand experiences of techniques of molecular biology, to gain a better understanding of the scientific process and a realistic impression of chances and risks of biological research, to establish contacts for future stories, and to meet colleagues from different media and different countries. The programme is not only beneficial for journalists: scientists may learn about the rules of daily journalism and get some hints on the functions of journalism in general, and science journalism in particular, for the public.

The deadline for returning the application form is 1 March 2004.

Application form and further information:
www.eicos.mpg.de, or

Dr Ulrich Kuhnt <eicos@gwdg.de>
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The leporello, the Eusja information leaflet, folds twice. It can be ordered from Eusja secretariat.

What do we do?
 Eusja acts as a network between science journalists throughout Europe. Our aim is to facilitate gathering of information, promote discussions on topics related to journalism and to open a forum for broader reporting on European science.

Study trips in Europe
 The national associations in co-operation with Eusja regularly organize international study trips in their countries for science journalists. The aim is primarily to visit interesting science and research institutions that would otherwise be closed to journalists, but also to bring science journalists from different countries together. Four to five events take place every year, where one or two journalists are invited from each country.

East-West exchange
 Eusja also promotes and finances exchange between science journalists from eastern and western Europe.

Who finances Eusja?
 Eusja is financed by its member associations, but receives website and secretariat facilities from ESF – the European Science Foundation – in Strasbourg, France. Eusja is fully independent of any political and/or commercial parties or interests.

What is Eusja?
 Eusja is a not-for-profit umbrella organization for the national science journalists' associations in Europe. Eusja has today (May 2002) 23 member associations. The Eusja secretariat is situated in Strasbourg, France, where the national delegates meet once a year at the general assembly.

Contacts
 You will find our website with contacts, resources, mailinglist etc. at <http://www.esf.org/eusja/index.htm>. There you will also find links to the member associations' websites, reports from and news about future Eusja events and a newsletter in English.

EUSJA
 – European Union of Science Journalists' Associations.

“Your network to science reporting throughout Europe.”

www.esf.org/eusja/index.htm

Strasbourg, France
 11.05.2002

Euroscience Open Forum 2004

The Euroscience Open Forum 2004 (ESOF2004) will take place in Stockholm 25-28 August. The European Science Foundation supports this event, which will highlight science in Europe and bring a new dimension to European communication on science, art and humanities.

An introduction to the event, the background and the intentions are given on www.esf.org/generic/598/esof.pdf; for more information and updates please visit www.esof2004.org.



Jens Degett
Head of Communication,
European Science Foundation

Science journalists - loudspeakers, storytellers or critics?

The Eusja Board submitted a proposal for a seminar/workshop on Science journalism for the ESOF2004 conference to be held in Stockholm in August 2004. They are suggesting that a session called "Science journalists – loudspeakers, storytellers or critics?" be held. The following is adapted from the proposal written by Kaianders Sempler.

"We propose a seminar on the changing view on science and science communication in society. A starting point for the discussions could be the changed position in



Kaianders trying to be heard.

society that science and technology have taken since the beginning of the 20th century.

When the radical republican François Raspail proclaimed the republic during the February revolution of 1848, he raised his

glass and proposed a toast: "À la science, sans laquelle tout n'est que folie! À la science, la seule religion de l'avenir!" In those days science was a radical force, a weapon in the service of reason and enlightenment against prejudice, superstition and oppression.

Those were the days. The Norwegian physicist Svein Sjøberg writes in his book "Naturvetenskap som allmänbildning" (Science as cultural literacy) about the shock felt by many scientists when it became clear how science had been used during the first world war, with millions of soldiers left dead in the trenches. The second world war was another, even worse, catastrophe. Massive protests against weapons for mass destruction emerged all over the world. And in 1964 Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" was published, the book that first showed how science and technology threaten to completely destroy the earth's ecosystem.

Has science lost its revolutionary impetus?

Have science and technology become instruments in the service of big companies and the political establishment? A growing part of research and development is today done by the military and in private industry. From having as its main task to reveal truth and expand human knowledge, research is now primarily concerned with increasing production and strengthening the establishment.

Since the time of Raspail science and technology have changed sides, and can today be found on the other side of the barricades. How do the science journalists reflect this? Have they ever thought about it, or are they but megaphones in the service of the establishment and the scientists? And have the scientists themselves realised their situation?

There is, however, an exception to the dark picture I have sketched, and that is computer science and the emergence of the internet. Here research and computer technology have created a flourishing free culture where national and geographic borders have been erased. Raspail would surely have been most satisfied, and in his heaven he probably raises his glass to "computer science, humanity's best weapon against indoctrination and ignorance".

During a seminar that discusses science journalism and the role of science and technology in western and other societies, many provocative questions are bound to pop up.

Like: Is science no longer revolutionary? Is science on the side of the Western establishment against the Third World? Has science lost its good reputation? Why isn't science exciting? Why has science lost its revolutionary impetus? Is science good or evil? Is science a threat to democracy? Why are there ten astrologers to every astronomer? Science communication - yes, but on which side of the barricades?"

Unfortunately, this concept did not interest the Esf2004 program committee. The proposal was bluntly turned down.

Kaianders Sempler
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Treasurer Eusja and Swedish delegate

New Irish popular science magazine

Science Spin is a popular magazine aimed at a wide readership, reporting on everything from astronomy to zoology, with a presentation designed to capture immediate attention.

The quarterly was started in Spring 2003 by Sean Duke, Tom Kennedy and Mary Sweetman, who are all members of the Irish association. The three are experienced science journalists who, like others in this field, found it hard to place science rather than technology or business stories. In spite of various official reports demanding more coverage of science, and a lot of talk, little was being done to improve that situation. In one way, this may have been an advantage, as it gave the three a fresh opportunity to create the sort of publication they thought people would want to read.

They approached the main players involved in the promotion of science in Ireland, arguing that general support by all was needed to ensure a high degree of editorial independence. Presentations were made to agencies and institutions around the country. Although the concept was universally welcomed, an enormous effort in time and resources had to be put into these presentations, and raising enough finance to get started proved to be extremely difficult. Finally, however, with sponsorship from the Marine Institute, the Geological Survey of Ireland, and the Higher Education Authority, there were enough resources in place.

As expected, there proved to be a sizable demand for readable news about science, and the magazine is successfully maintaining a prominent position in newsagents around Ireland. Plans are in hand to increase bulk distribution into the colleges, and the Department of Education sends copies out to all Irish second-level (students aged 12 to 18 years) schools.

The website is at <www.sciencespin.com>

Reference database

The Wellcome Library has launched psci-comlit, a new bibliographic database, available free of charge. The database has been developed by the Wellcome Library in collaboration with the BIOME team at the University of Nottingham, to provide a searchable source of journal, newspaper and book references on science communication, public engagement with science and the wider issues of science in society.

A broad range of journals, newspapers and new book acquisitions are scanned to create the descriptive records in the database. In addition, the records are

used to produce a monthly current awareness bibliography, also accessible from the psci-comlit page. Other topics covered include public attitudes towards science, science communication, science and the media and science education.

The psci-comlit database is located on the psci-com.org.uk/psicomlit website. If you have any comments or suggestions about the new database, please contact me

Louise Simon <l.simon@wellcome.ac.uk>

FEATURES

Union accession an opportunity for Polish science and journalism

Soon we will be together in European Union. The enlargement of the EU by ten central-east European countries is a crucial event for the whole "old continent". It is, however, most important for the joining countries. Joining the Union seems to us as a way to democracy, modern society, and safe and wealthy living. Taking advantage of the chances which participation of Poland and her neighbours opens to us requires a lot of effort. The government of Poland as well as most of Polish society is aware of this. A great emphasis is therefore put on development and level of education, as only educated people can be competitive in a common market.

In recent years the range of high schools' activities in Poland has developed. Many new private schools were created and teenagers have more possibilities to acquire knowledge. It is possible for teenagers to receive scholarships from the PHARE funds or go on foreign school exchanges.

Unfortunately, the development of science requires financial support, which is now insufficient in comparison with needs. Money is lacking for the realisation of many ideas and science programmes. The cooperation in multinational groups is a chance for our scientists. It helped Prof. Alexander Wolszczan from Torun (a city famous for Nicolas Copernicus, the astronomer) to discover the planetary system around other stars.

The difficult situation of Polish science influences Polish science journalism. Common changes appearing in the press don't support a long-term policy of science popularisation. Most daily newspapers have given up such subjects or limit themselves to publishing summaries interesting to everybody. Apart from that, journalists specialising in scientific subjects are scarce. Still, some publishers seeing this situation decided at least to publish reprints from the international press. Reprint magazines have a steady position on the market.

On the other hand, the market of specialised papers is developing. These magazines are, however, meant to match the tastes of a narrow group of readers and are

highly dependent on sponsors. Some attention to science is also given by television and radio, but as they are involved in the struggle of private competition, and they prefer cheap sensation, reality shows and music.

A problem for Polish journalists, not only the ones dealing with scientific subjects, is the worsening economic situation of most magazines. Publishers look for savings by reducing wages and employment. Polish journalists are hoping that EU enlargement will bring about the improvement of their working conditions.

*Walerian Ignasiak <ignasiak@poznan.uw.gov.pl>
National delegate Polish association*

A public face for the European Research Area

European research still fails to get the coverage it warrants in the world's media. A combination of sometimes uncommunicative researchers and press offices that lack resources and credibility in their universities and laboratories has helped the more media-friendly US organisations to dominate broadcast, print and online media.

Does it matter?

It does, because if Europe's tax-payers are to be able to debate the directions that the research they fund should take, then they must believe that significant research is something that happens close to them, in their own town, region or country. And when young people consider a career in research they should be aware that Europe offers them challenges and intellectual rewards. Finally if we want to help wealth creation in Europe, business around the globe ought to look first in Europe for knowledge transfer opportunities. Without wider and better coverage of European research on television and in the press, achieving these aims is extremely difficult, and the European Research Area will remain a concept understood only by the research community.

AlphaGalileo was created to help increase the amount of European research news in the media. It was to be a single portal for all European research for the world's media. We have met our target of creating better distribution for European research news, but there is still much important research work being carried out that never reaches the media.

We have plans to offer more to the broadcast media, which will help the coverage of European news, but the real challenge now lies in trying to eliminate one of the other contributory factors to the poor visibility of European news. This is the failure of much research news to emerge from the laboratory or university. To overcome this we believe that the relatively poor status of research press officers across Europe compared to their commercial or political colleagues must be addressed.

There has been considerable effort devoted to enhancing the communication skills of researchers and the performance of science journalists, while press

officers, the crucial third element in the communication mix, are often ignored.

With the European Commission we are exploring a vision of a European research press agency. It is thought that this would encourage and support the increased professionalism of European research press officers as a direct route to making more raw news available to the world's media. AlphaGalileo's independence and its mission to provide a service that meets the needs of the media and the research community can, we believe, provide a basis for this work. We believe that to take the traditional press agency route would compete with other press agencies and above all with the media in general, and that would ultimately be counter productive to the credibility and coverage of European research news.

But what do you think? We have produced an outline of our ideas and a questionnaire on its contents. If you would like these please send an email to <peter.green@alphagalileo.org>.

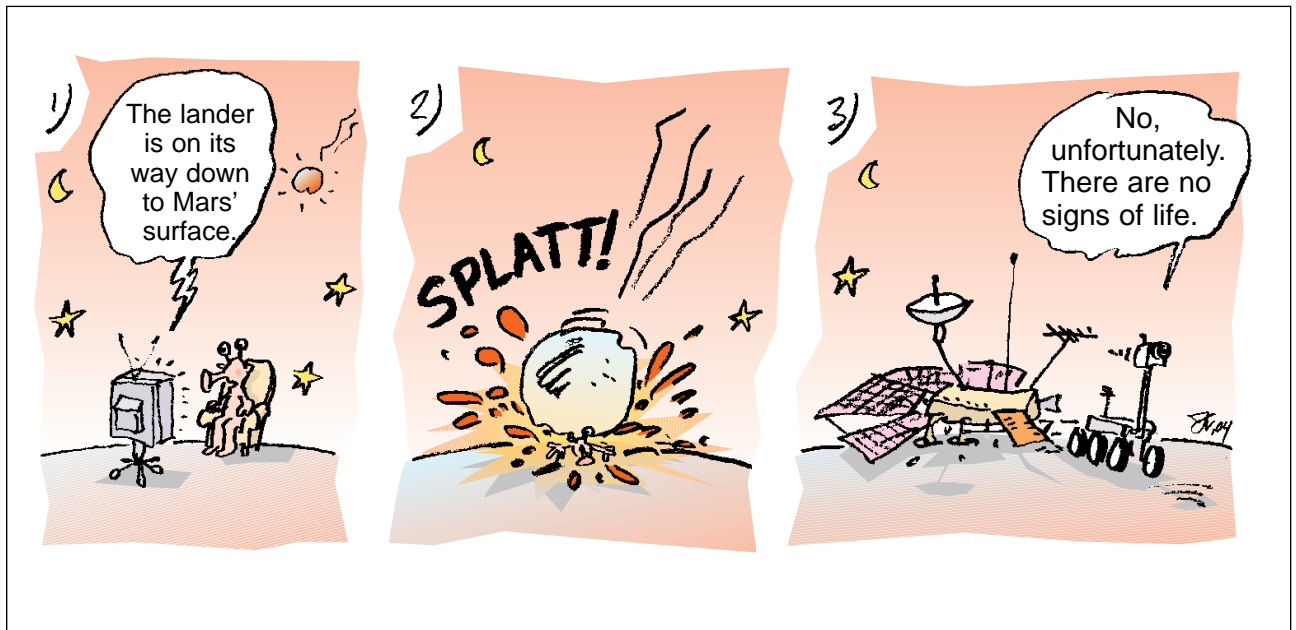
*Peter Green <peter.green@alphagalileo.org>
Chief Executive AlphaGalileo Foundation*

Grappling with bioethics

Most science journalists, it can be safely assumed, have a reasonable understanding of basic scientific concepts. Most of us - one would hope - can recite the second law of thermodynamics or outline how the genetic code works. Because of the increasingly close associations between science, technology and industry, many of us also have a basic familiarity with the financial markets, with the jargon of initial public offerings, private placements, and convertible bonds. But how many of us are comfortable with the intellectual foundations underlying ethics? How many of us are equipped with the tools for analysing ethical arguments? Who can tell the difference between an intrinsic consideration and an extrinsic one: or between the concepts of validity and soundness?

For those of us who cover the life sciences field in particular, ethics, or that branch of it called bioethics, has become increasingly important for reasons we do not need to rehearse here. Yet many of us - in Ireland certainly - have little if any formal grounding in the field. Recently, several members of the Irish Science & Technology Journalists' Association (ISTJA) participated in a workshop that provided an introduction to the "mechanics" of bioethics.

The two-day event, organised by the Institute of Bioengineering and Agroecology at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, provided a space for journalists and for scientists working in fields other than biology to explore both the basic laboratory techniques used in life sciences research and the techniques used to dissect the bioethical dilemmas engendered by that research. NUI Maynooth biologists hosted tutorial and hands-on laboratory sessions to demonstrate basic



Cartoon by Kaianders Sempler



Cormac Sheridan,
Ireland.

techniques such as bacterial transformation, plant transformation and DNA isolation. Gary Comstock, director of the ethics programme at North Carolina State University, led the ethics strand of the workshop.

The aim was not to provide a compressed summary of current thinking in bioethics; nor were any grand conclusions reached during the event. More importantly, it passed on valuable insights into how bioethical arguments are constructed; and how those of us at the receiving end of them can interrogate and probe their assumptions.

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President Irish association

Remember to visit
the Eusja website at
<www.esf.org/eusja>
to keep up to date.

Diary

- EICOS Hands-on Laboratory application deadline 1 March 2004. See article.
- Eusja General Assembly, ESF, Strasbourg, 27 March 2004.
- Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST-8) is to take place in Barcelona on 3 - 6 June 2004. The main theme of the conference is "Scientific knowledge and cultural diversity. Further information on www.psct2004.org
- The EICOS Hands-on Laboratory will take place in Göttingen, on 5 - 12 June 2004, followed by optional extension.
- The Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF) will take place in Stockholm on 25 - 28 August 2004.
- The Fourth World Conference of Science Journalists which will take place in Montreal on 4 - 8 October 2004, on the theme "Reporting the future: journalism meets emerging science".
- Several Eusja trips are in the process of being organised by member associations, but no formal announcements have been made at time of publication of this issue of Eusja News. Please check www.esf.org/eusja for announcements.

WFSJ membership voting

At the General Assembly in March 2003 in Strasbourg, it was decided that the Eusja should become a member of the World Federation of Science Journalists (provisionally founded in Brazil in 2002) if an absolute majority of the Eusja's member associations voted to do so. It was left open to individual associations to become full members on their own.

We asked the delegates to send to the Board the decisions of their associations by the end of July 2003. At the Board meeting in Stockholm in September 2003, it was stated that 13 out of 21 full members of the Eusja, i.e. an absolute majority, had agreed to Eusja membership of the WFSJ. This is the result in detail:

Country	Membership	
	Eusja	Individual
Austria	yes	no
Croatia	yes	no
Denmark	yes	no
Finland	yes	no
France	yes	no
Germany	yes	yes
Hungary	yes	no
Ireland	yes	yes
Italy	yes	no
Netherlands	no	no
Russia	yes	no
Slovenia	yes	no
Sweden	yes	no
Switzerland	yes	no
Total out of 14	13 yes	2 yes

India, one of two associate members (the other is Israel), has also agreed to Eusja membership. In addition to this, the Indian association wishes to become an individual member of the WFSJ.

Werner Hadorn <wernerhadorn@bluewin.ch>
President Eusja

Greetings from Moscow.





Highlights of Europe: Doctor Ignats "wash your hands" Semmeweis' house in Budapest.

Eusja News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations. Any views expressed here are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of Eusja or the editor.

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Eusja website

The Eusja website at www.esf.org/eusja/ is a useful resource for science journalists. Here you will find information such as programmes for trips, messages from the Eusja president, Eusja News, helpful practical tips on science journalism and so on. Kaianders Sempler of the SFVJ, the Swedish association, is the new e-minder for Eusja. It's also worthwhile checking out www.absw.org.uk, as there is a lot of information there that is relevant outside the UK.

EUSJA-L discussion list

The EUSJA-L discussion list is open to all journalists belonging to Eusja member associations. Any topic relating to with science and technology journalism can be debated, and helpful tips can be exchanged. To subscribe send the message `subscribe EUSJA-L` firstname lastname to the address: <listserv.rl.ac.uk>.