

EUSJA News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations

Spring 2002

New Schedule

Double issue

This issue is rather larger than usual, because it is a double one, covering both winter and spring. My apologies to both readers and contributors for the long gap since the last issue, which will not be repeated.

From now on, there are to be three issues a year, so the next one is due in the summer, and will be back to normal size. If you have news or views to contribute, please send them to me at [<anolan@iol.ie>](mailto:anolan@iol.ie) by 6 June. I look forward to receiving material from every member country.

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EUSJA news editor*

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Editorial

Waking the giant

In my last annual report, on the year 2000, I called the EUSJA a sleeping giant, because it seemed to me that the potential of our Union with regard to the overall number of science communicators organised in it is as impressive as the potential audience that we reach.

But the giant had been asleep in the past years, mainly due to the fact that one of the most important reasons for its existence, mutual contact between scientists and science journalists in events organised by the national member associations, had somewhat weakened owing to the economic crisis of the nineties.

I am happy to say that a number of signs now make me feel that the giant is slowly waking up.

First of all, science communication has become a major topic in the policy of the European Commission. EUSJA is in the process of preparing an application for an EU science communication project (see article inside).

Outside Europe, similar observations concerning the growing interest in the necessity of global science communication can be made. In October last year, an international conference of science and technology journalists took place in Tokyo (report inside). This year, the world community of science journalists has already met at the AAAS in Boston and will meet again at the end of November in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

As regards EUSJA members, the EUSJA Board has had many contacts with the national associations, and it seems that some of them who had also gone to sleep for a while seem to be getting active again. The simple proof may be that the large attendance at the 2002 General Assembly, which was probably a record in the history of EUSJA.

Exchanges among the various national associations have always been a major theme of our work. In the nineties the number of exchanges died down dramatically, and it was one of the primary goals of our Board to try to revive this good tradition. I am happy to say that we are on the right lines, because a number of events took place in 2001, and there are several scheduled for this year.



A new event in 2001 was the study trip based around the European Science Foundation general assembly (report inside). We hope to make this an EUSJA tradition and run it again this year. The ESF is an important partner, and I would like to express our gratitude to ESF for our facilities in Strasbourg.

*Werner Hadorn
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EUSJA president*

EUSJA General Assembly March 2002

The EUSJA General Assembly took place at ESF headquarters in Strasbourg on 23 March 2002.

The following countries were represented by their national delegates or substitutes: Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The four board members (president, vice-president, treasurer and honorary secretary) attended, as did the EUSJA secretary, a representative of ESF, and a representative of Deutsche Welle.

Before the formal meeting, Jens Degett of ESF gave a presentation on that body. He said that it was discussing the possibility of setting up a European Research Council in Strasbourg. It would also be responding to moves by the European Commission to set up a European news agency, and he would try to involve EUSJA.

President's Annual report 2001

After the adoption of the minutes of last year's meeting, President Werner Hadorn gave his annual report for 2001. He was generally positive, noting that there was now a greater emphasis being placed on science communication both within the European Commission and worldwide. EUSJA had made an unsuccessful application to run a project under the EU "Raising public awareness in science and technology" strand (see separate article this issue).

He said that the number of visits arranged by member associations had risen, and that several more were planned for 2002. He listed some important events that had taken place in 2001:

- an EUSJA study tour to Hungary in June, hosted by the Hungarian association;
- a meeting of the ARGE (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mitteleuropa) regional group in Vienna, also in June;
- an EUSJA study tour to the British Association for the Advancement of Science festival in Glasgow in September, hosted by the UK association;
- a bilateral exchange between France and Denmark in September/October;

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- a bilateral trip by the Swedish association to London in November; and

- an EUSJA-organised event in Strasbourg on the occasion of the ESF General Assembly.

Ties with the ESF are to be strengthened, with the 2001 common meeting at the ESF annual General Assembly to be repeated. The president expressed gratitude to ESF for hosting EUSJA in Strasbourg.

He reported on participation in the Tokyo International Conference of Science & Technology Journalists by vice-president Istvan Palugyai and himself, and on the steps taken to found a World Federation of Science Journalists. (Both of these topics are covered in separate articles in this issue.)

The Board has had four meetings in the past year, one in Budapest, two in Strasbourg and one in Milano.

He apologised for the delay in the publication of the EUSJA Newsletter, and promised that three issues would appear in 2002. He also explained that difficulties with the EUSJA website had arisen because of software changes, but that the site was being improved and updated.

He said that he hoped that a history of EUSJA would be written. He had asked Giancarlo Masini, a founder and former president of EUSJA, for his memoirs. He requested the national delegates to find out if their senior members could help to reconstruct the history.

[The above is a very brief summary of the report: the full text will be on the EUSJA website, and is also available by e-mail from the editor at anolan@iol.ie]

Highlights of the Assembly

- Croatia's new science journalists' association was unanimously voted in as EUSJA's newest member.
- The accounts were approved.
- The four members of the board were unanimously re-elected for a period of two years. This means that Werner Hadorn of Switzerland remains the president, Istvan Palugyai of Hungary the vice-president, Marialuigia Bagni of Italy the honorary secretary, and Kaianders Sempler of Sweden the treasurer. The two auditors, Kaianders Sempler and Lizet Kruyff of the Netherlands, were also unanimously re-elected.
- There were reports of plans for events in 2002, in countries including Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK, and at Strasbourg. Some of these are briefly described in separate articles in this newsletter. There is also a pipeline of possible visits in 2003 in countries including Germany, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovenia and Spain.
- It was pointed out that the funding for east-west exchanges is not being taken up. It was decided that the regulations governing funding for these should be put on the EUSJA website.

- It was decided that the board would submit a second application in 2003 to the EU for funding for a project to raise scientific awareness (see separate article).
- The national delegates were asked to discuss the draft constitution for a World Federation of Science Journalists with their associations and report back to the board in June this year.
- Several suggestions were taken as to how the EUSJA website could be improved, including better navigation.
- Paola de Paoli (Italy) volunteered to work on the history of EUSJA with the president and Giancarlo Masini.

FORTHCOMING EUSJA TRIPS

Finland and Estonia August 2002

The Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists (FASEJ) is one of the biggest member associations of the EUSJA with more than 560 members, out of whom about 230 belong to the journalistic section, representing widely both the printed and electronic media. We are happy to invite two representatives from each EUSJA member organisation on a visit from 12 to 18 August 2002.

Arrangements are according to the normal procedure, so we take care of the accommodation, meals and the programme, while the local organisations or the participants themselves pay the travel costs to Finland.

The programme will deal mainly with science policy issues and technology, but cultural studies will also be included.

The Estonian science journalists and their partners welcome participants to a visit to Estonia, included in the seminar programme. We all believe that the questions of Estonian science have an interest for the member associations.

The organising partners in Finland are the Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists, Academy of Finland, National Technology Agency Tekes, the Ministry for foreign affairs and Finnfacts. In Estonia the organisers are the Estonian science journalists, the Estonian Office of the President, and the Estonian Academy of Sciences.

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Finnish national delegate

UK September 2002

The ABSW will be inviting associations to send members to the British Association for the Advancement of Science

Festival, which runs from 9 to 13 September. The location is Leicester, and the theme this year is "Science and the Quality of Life".

The ABSW brought guests to the annual BA Festival for the first time in 2001, and to give you a flavour of what's on offer this time, there are four reports on that trip elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Netherlands September 2002

The Netherlands Association is organising an EUSJA visit from Tuesday 17 to Friday 20 September.

A variety of topics are on the programme. The focus will be on Delft University of Technology and TNO Research, Rotterdam; Mainport, Amsterdam; Leiden Medical and Gentech; ESA Noordwijk; Philips Eindhoven; and cultural events. There will also be ample time to meet Dutch colleagues.

There is room for 25 participants on the trip, which translates to one or two per country.

Lizet Kruyff
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Netherlands national delegate

Switzerland May 2002

The Swiss study tour organised by the Swiss Association of Science Journalism has attracted a great deal of interest, with numbers oversubscribed and a waiting list in place. It will run from 22 to 25 May, and will include visits to Cern, Expo 02, pharmaceutical companies, and research establishments including the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology at Lausanne. A report on the trip is planned for the next issue of EUSJA News.

Irish study tour cancelled

The Irish Science & Technology Journalists (ISTJA) Association regrettably reports that the planned study trip failed to go ahead last September. We were unable to raise sufficient sponsorship in the necessary timeframe in

order to make the visit possible. We hope to return to the topic in the not-too-distant future. In the meantime we would be happy to assist any members of national associations who plan to visit Ireland under their own initiative. There are still plenty of stories worth covering here!



Cormac
Sheridan.

Cormac Sheridan
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Irish association president

TOUR REPORTS

Hungary

Visit by the Tisza

The world knows about the Tisza, the second biggest river of Hungary mainly because in February 2000 a 100,000 stere (cubic metre) undiluted cyanide-complex leaked from a goldmine located in Romania to the river, causing disastrous damage to its ecosystem. What damage did the cyanide pollution cause? How is nature regenerating the area? What did the Hungarian state do and what can it further do to eliminate the effects of the poisoning and to prevent future pollution? The EUSJA visitors received answers to these questions in Hungary, in June.

Eighteen journalists from 12 countries travelled around Hungary by bus and by boat for three days in a programme organised by the Office of the Hungarian Government Commissioner for the Tisza and Szamos rivers. They learned about the results of scientific research on the effects of the cyanide pollution in Várárosnamény. They also watched fish stocking in Kemece and visited a pilot project site created for the sake of natural revitalisation, modelling the effects of natural habitats in Nagykörű.

Government Commissioner János Gönczy informed them about the international initiatives and efforts to eliminate dozens of potential hot spots in the area of the Tisza river base (most of them are located in Romania).

The participants in the June Tisza tour were able to see what a beautiful landscape is endangered by old mines, and chemical and pharmaceutical factories. They were very lucky to view the "blossoming" of the Tisza, and they could also taste the delicious cuisine of a friendly neighbourhood in the area. They could furthermore personally learn how the inhabitants worry about for their beloved river. Finally they could experience that the Tisza is recuperating, and that it did not die, as was feared after the pollution, but lives on.

*Tour organiser Eva Montsko
Hungarian association*

A hugely informative trip

The trip to the north-west region of Hungary was hugely informative. I learned a lot about the old systems of agriculture in Hungary, and about how the country people there lived for centuries. There were many cultural similarities I saw with my own country. However, we do not have anything the size of the Great Hungarian Basin in Ireland. Nor have the Irish been forced to suffer from repeated and serious floods and fish kills, as Hungary has in the catchment area of the huge Tisza River.

On a personal note I found Hungary, both Budapest and the countryside outside, fascinating and I plan to

return again as soon as I can. The tour was a great way of making contacts and getting story ideas.

*Sean Duke
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Irish Science and Technology Journalists' Association*

UK

The Association of British Science Writers (ABSW) planned their 2001 EUSJA study trip around the Science Festival that is organised each year by the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BA). EUSJA associations from as far away as India sent their delegates to Glasgow. Here are some reactions, preceded by a report from organiser Barbara Drillsma. As there is to be another similar trip this September, four reports have been included. This is more than the usual number, of course, but they were included to serve as tasters for this year's trip.

Barbara says "thank you" to well-behaved visitors

Organising events for EUSJA colleagues is a fraught business. The trip to the British Association's Festival of Science in Glasgow was the first event the ABSW had arranged for a long, long time and we wanted it to go well.

Things got off to a bad start for me. My mobile phone, which was the main point of contact for visitors, was stolen the day before I was due to fly to Glasgow. That was sorted in the nick of time. Then my aeroplane took off from London and promptly landed again - a technical hitch. So it was no surprise when I arrived at my accommodation to realise that all the visitors had been booked in student hostels on the other side of town. What's more, none of these rooms had private bathrooms and there were no alternative rooms on offer.

However, all the EUSJA delegates were superb guests. Nobody complained or grumbled - particularly about the uniform deep-fried nibbles on offer at all receptions - and everybody entered into the spirit of the festival. A big thank you for guests who will definitely be invited back!

It was a real eye-opener to see how differently journalists worked. Some wanted everything organised, speakers lined up and transcripts handed over. Others happily went off and interviewed their own newly-discovered contacts.

In addition to the science on offer there was some seriously good shopping to be relentlessly pursued. We were invited to a number of good parties and a wonderful dinner and are grateful to the British Council, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the University of Glasgow's press office, for their generous sponsorship.

*Barbara Drillsma
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UK national delegate*

Chocolate hearts

Good news for people who love to eat chocolate: eating it may help to maintain heart and circulation health.

This news came from Mars (not the planet). It all happened in Glasgow at the BA Science Festival at the university of Glasgow. You could say that u-commerce, the growing entanglement between universities and commercial operations, is becoming a trend, but being my first time at the BA Festival I have no figures to compare with. But apart from the Mars story many more lectures had a company stamp on it. You could also say that this is just a sour wisecrack from a representative of a country where science is hardly visible (i.e. Nederland). There are no such festivals and hardly any science-tv in Nederland. Only the good old journals take it seriously.

Genomics, artificial organs, the information society, supercritical fluids, the effect of culture on the brain, climate change, illusions of memory and of course the chocolate heart, all this (and more, more) was served at the festival. Not a newsy event, although BA had set up a massive press centre (and the entire staff of the New Scientist seemed to be there), but a week's meal for the omnivore gourmet, both journalist and Jack with his cap (as we say in Nederland).

We in Nederland are jealous and we're trying hard to catch up. Bessensap (berry juice), as we call it, was a first try last year. It was a co-production of our science journalists' association, Vereniging van Wetenschapsjournalisten and the Dutch science research funding organisation NWO.

*Arno Schrauwers
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Netherlands association*

Science policy comparisons

It was a great pleasure to take part in the British science festival in Glasgow. Unfortunately we have not this sort of festival in Russia, so it was a good example for us, and I wrote about it in *Obschaya Gazeta* - the weekly newspaper where I work.

In Russia scientists' meetings are usually concerned just with their own field. Although there are also annual meetings of the Russian Academy of Science where one can hear about events in different scientific areas, this is a special meeting of academicians. I think, therefore that it would be a very good idea, and very useful for Russia, to organise a public discussion as was done during festival in Scotland.

In Glasgow I was impressed by the amount of interesting work which was presented during the festival. Most of all I was interested in the discussion about possible changes in Scottish science policy. As I know from Russian realities, such things sometimes are very complicated and difficult to put into practice. But I think that the scientific situation in Scotland is not as difficult as in Russia, and I hope the scientific reforms in UK will be successful.

Vladimir Pokrovsky, Russian association

Long menu

The festival proved to be an excellent means of offering a long menu of subject matter, always a challenge when science journalists have so many differing interests, as well as providing a taste of Scotland. The last UK trip, which brought us around England in October 1992, also set before us a wide range of topics, as the group visited leading players in the gas, nuclear energy, pharmaceutical and telecommunications research areas. This time, the guests stayed put and the topics came to them. I was lucky enough to be on both trips, and found both of them worthwhile and fascinating.

*Anna Nolan <anolan@iol.ie>
Irish national delegate*

Strasbourg

On language

In conjunction with the European Science Foundation (ESF) General Assembly in November 2001, EUSJA itself organised a study tour in Strasbourg. Twenty participants came from all over Europe and the theme for the tour was the origin of language and bilingualism.

The programme began with the ESF banquet, where our president Werner Hadorn made a speech on the history of science journalism. He pointed out that news reports about science and technology were among the first topics to appear in early printed pamphlets and books in the 15th century. Werner's address was greatly appreciated, partly because of its interesting content and partly because his table folded itself up and fell to pieces during his speech. This forced him to talk without the aid of his prepared notes, which much enhanced his contact with the audience.

At the ESF the newly launched multi-disciplinary pan-European research project "The Origin of Man – language and languages" was presented. The objective is to find out more about how human language has emerged and evolved.

Today anthropologists estimate that there are some 5000 different languages in the world. Many of them are spoken by only a handful of people. Within ten years half of these languages will be extinct – a loss comparable to that of genetic variety when species become extinct, said our speaker.

The second theme of the tour was bilingualism, and how it is being promoted in France today. Alsace has changed nationality about a dozen times since mediaeval times, so the population is traditionally bilingual. The local Alsatian language, often called "le Direct", is spoken by about half of the population. It is a German dialect that is spoken but not written. High German is used when writing.

Today, however, children no longer talk Alsatian or German to their parents at home as they used to, and in a generation the area will probably be purely French-speaking. This is a pity, because the advantages of bilingualism will then be lost. Researchers have shown that children who have learnt two languages in their



Bertie the bear puts on die Hosen und die Schuhe in a bilingual class in Strasbourg.
Photo Kaianders Sempler

infancy find it much easier to deal with symbolic and abstract thinking. Bilingual children are often better at mathematics, they learn a third language more easily and they also seem to take a greater interest in music.

In Strasbourg there is a programme to promote bilingualism, which starts when the children are four years old. We visited a kindergarten class, and a bilingual school where the children study half the time in French and half in German.

Our study tour ended with a visit to Colmar, the Alsatian city an hour's drive south from Strasbourg.

Kaianders Sempler

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EUSJA treasurer and Swedish national delegate

Latsis prize for climate research

The European Science Foundation (ESF) awarded the 2001 European Latsis Prize to Professor André Berger from the Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics Georges Lemaître at the Catholic University of Louvain, for his outstanding contributions to the understanding of the Ice Age climate cycle. The prize ceremony took place at ESF's General Assembly in Strasbourg in November, and was attended by participants in the EUSJA study tour.

The prize, worth 68,000 euro, is financed by the Latsis Foundation and awarded by the ESF to an individual or group that, in the opinion of their peers, has made the greatest contribution to a particular field of European research. The chosen field for the 2001 prize was climate research.

Recognised for his outstanding contribution, which began thirty years ago, to the understanding of our current ice age, Professor André Berger was the first to establish an accurate description of the variations in the astronomical factors that influence the global climate. Since then, he has used his expertise to understand how the climatic fluctuations during ice ages are generated, using computer models of different complexity.

Further information available from Jens Degett of ESF *<jdegett@esf.org>*

Around the members

Thirty years in Austria

The Austrian Club for Education and Science Journalists celebrated its 30 years of existence in November. Since 1971 the Club has been a kind of megaphone for, and a critical observer of, science and education in Austria. At present the Club has about 150 members.

At the Club's "birthday party", the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Culture, Elisabeth Gehrler, congratulated the members, as did university rectors, members of the Austrian Parliament, renowned scientists, and science and technology policy experts.

The Austrian Club aims to promote science and education journalism within the mass media, along with further education of journalists and establishing contacts with colleagues from other countries. It organises events such as congresses, press conferences, talks and travels, and the election of the "Austrian Scientist of the Year". The Austrian Club took part in founding EUSJA in 1973. In 1991 the Austrian Club initiated the foundation of the working group for Middle European science journalists.

Alex Kosz

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Austrian national delegate

Austrian Scientist of the Year

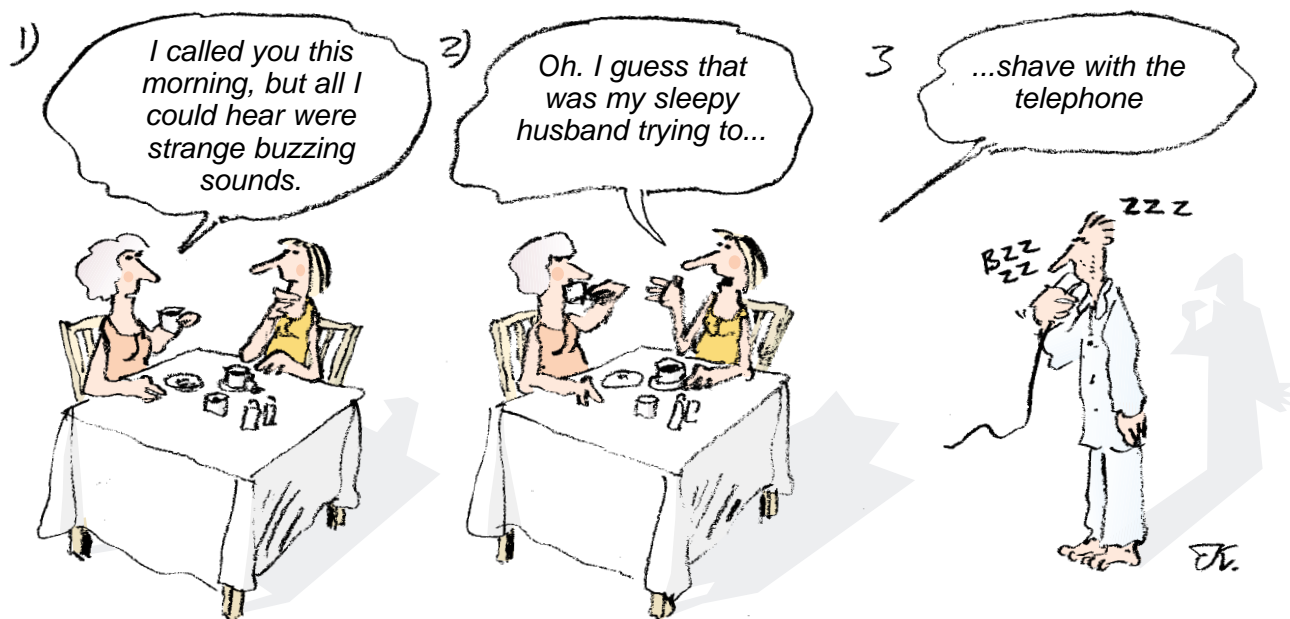
The Austrian Science Journalists' Club annually elects the "Austrian Scientist of the Year". The last prize-winner was Hildegunde Piza, a surgeon at the University in Innsbruck (Tyrol).

Piza led the medical team that attached two new hands onto a bomb victim. It was the second operation of its kind in the world. The operation was performed in spring 2000 and by autumn 2001 the patient was able to drive his motorcycle.

Erich Witzmann

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Austrian association



Cartoon by Kaianders Sempler

Elections and meetings in Germany

Hanns-J Neubert was elected president of TELI, the German Association, by the TELI General Assembly, replacing Klaus Goschmann, who retired after more than 12 years of presidency. Neubert has a degree in biology, and works as a freelance journalist in the field of readily comprehensible research, science and technology for newspapers, weekly papers, magazines, business-to-business communications, and public relations. He lives in Hamburg.

The 1st vice-president is Axel Fischer, who replaces Gerhard Kirsch. Fischer has a degree in chemistry, and works as a freelance journalist for all the major German newspapers and for TV and film media. He lives near Munich. Both Neubert and Fischer have been fellows of the Robert Bosch Foundation.

The general assembly of TELI decided to start an initiative to form an alliance of all organisations of science and technical journalists in Germany, i.e. with the Wissenschaftspressekonferenz, the medical journalists and others.

Some regional organisations of TELI meet regularly. The Stuttgart group meets on the first Thursday of each month. The Munich group meets on the last Tuesday of the month, and also meets on the second day of the great Munich technical fairs in the Bierstueberl on the fairgrounds. All EUSJA members are invited to join these meetings if they are in the vicinity at these times.

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German national delegate

National Science Communication Congress in India

The Indian Science Writers' Association (ISWA) has organised the first ever National Science Communication Congress (NSCC-2001) in association with the National Council for Science & Technology Communication, Government of India. This was held at the end of November 2001 at the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, a northern province of India. The objective was to provide a forum for the researchers and practitioners of science communication to discuss their views and findings, in order to accelerate the pace of science and technology communication in the country.

Mrs Prabha Dwivedi, the Honourable Minister of Technical Education, inaugurated the Congress, as the chief guest. She emphasised the need for reporting issues of local importance in the mass media. She said that networking of science communication efforts with the rural sector must be further strengthened to reach every corner of the country.

This writer, Manoj Patariya, hon. secretary of ISWA, described various programmes being undertaken to take science to the masses. An exhibition of Indian popular science periodicals was also organised, with some two hundred magazines in eighteen Indian languages on display. The exhibition was well received by science writers from various language regions of the country.

The Congress was divided into five technical sessions: print media and science communication; audio-visual media and science communication; traditional/folk media and science communication; interactive and

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Planning a journey? Your colleagues in Europe can help

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continued from page 7

...digital media and science communication; and science communication policy. Some thirty papers were presented on various aspects of science communication through various mass media. The participants to this congress included members of ISWA, students and teachers of science communication courses, scientists, journalists and renowned media persons.

ISWA conferred its honorary fellowships on four famous science communicators in recognition of their long-standing efforts in popularising science in India. A National Award for best efforts in science writing was shared by two young science writers.

The Annual General Meeting of ISWA was also organised on 29 November in the evening following the Congress. It was unanimously decided by all present that the next ISWA Meeting would be organised in Ranchi, the capital city of Jharkhand (an eastern province of India) sometime in August 2002. The

AGM also decided to set up ISWA chapters in various parts of the country.

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Hon. secretary Indian association
and Indian national delegate

Swedes go to the theatre - in London

Carl Djerassis imagines a retro Nobel prize in his new play "Oxygen"

The Swedish Association for Science Journalism - the SFVJ - decided in November that it was time to break old habits. In all haste a study trip to London was organised. Our aims were to visit some scientific magazines, meet people, do a story to pay for trip and expenses and, last but not least, have a good time.

Nine of us left Sweden on a foggy Thursday night. It turned out better than we had expected. We were gallantly received by the New Scientist, Nature and The Alchemist. With the kind co-operation of Barbara Drillsma of the ABSW (UK association) we joined the English science journalists for a theatre night with mingling, snacks, drinks, and the playwright himself chatting along.

What we saw was a play called "Oxygen" by Carl Djerassi. He is originally a chemist, known as "the father of the pill". It was he who created the first contraceptive pill in the 1960s. For the last decade, however, Djerassi has found a new career as writer and playwright. "Oxygen" is about the appointment of the winner of an imagined "Retro Nobel Prize". The idea is to give a retrospective prize to the discoverer of oxygen, because this discovery changed the concept of chemistry



Carl Sheele, Antoine de Lavoisier and Joseph Priestley debate who among them first discovered oxygen.
Photo Kaianders Sempler.



Kaianders and playwright Carl Djerassi

completely. But the problem is, who should get the prize? The Swede Scheele, who first discovered oxygen, the Englishman Priestley, who first published his discovery or the Frenchman Lavoisier who first understood the implications of the discovery?

An entertaining play with science, laughs and an unexpected ending. Djerassi himself was laughing, and revealed that he is currently working on a new play about the controversy between Newton and Leibnitz. Who really invented calculus?

In London we also took the opportunity to inspect the Millennium Foot Bridge, the Tate Modern, the Science Museum, the Northern Line and a handful of local pubs. Everyone was quite satisfied with our inexpensive and quick trip. Next time we shall go to Hamburg and torment our German colleagues.

It is often difficult to sleep in a hotel, especially if a persistent alarm keeps going off in the middle of the night. We learnt in the morning that a room on the first floor had been on fire, and that lots of guests had been evacuated and spent two hours in the street, while we on the sixth floor tried to sleep.

Kaianders Sempler

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EUSJA treasurer and Swedish national delegate

Active Italy

The initiatives organised by the UGIS (the Italian association) for its members have been quite impressive. In addition to ten specific workshops in the various fields of science, UGIS organised the following in 2001:

- an educational tour of one week to visit the European Joint Research sites in Germany (Karlsruhe and Heidelberg), Belgium (Geel and the Brussels headquarters), and the Netherlands (Petten and Amsterdam);
- a Conference in Pisa on "Science and the Public" with

Scuola Normale Superiore, for which the Proceedings have been published; and

- an educational visit to the Italian Institute of Nuclear Physics (INFN) laboratories near Pisa, focused on the Babar and Virgo experiments.

Finally, in 2001 UGIS assigned four grants (of about 8,000 euro each) to young Italian science journalists for their training, and gave 50 per cent support to two Giovanni Armenise Harvard Foundation grants which gave two Italian colleagues the opportunity to stay for a while at the Harvard Medical School in Boston. Other grants are being made this year.

A collection of the cuttings published, related to the above initiatives, is available also for EUSJA colleagues who are familiar with Italian. Please apply to UGIS Secretariat, at [<teresella@iol.it>](mailto:teresella@iol.it)



Paola de Paoli

The Proceedings of the Pisa conference are also available. Please apply to UGIS member Gianni Fochi, at [<fochi@sns.it>](mailto:fochi@sns.it).

Paola De Paoli

<teresella@iol.it>

*Italian association president,
EUSJA president emeritus
and Italian national delegate*

UK

Telling the future

We would all like to know what's going to be happening. And now we can, thanks to the UK ABSW, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), and a new website calendar launched in December. Called "The Year Ahead in Science 2002", it is aimed at science journalists and writers, and attempts to be a comprehensive resource-site with science events and anniversaries.

All the copy has been written by the ABSW, while the project is funded by GSK.

Although "The Year Ahead in Science" has been produced in the UK, it includes a large number of events taking place across Europe and worldwide. Hundreds of major science and technology conferences, meetings, festivals and talks are listed, including areas such as the public understanding of science, science and art, the history and philosophy of science, and science policy.

All entries have web links to sites where more details of the events and related topics can be found. There is a monthly e-mail alert, telling you what is coming up in the next month, and for Palm and iPAQ fans the site has been configured for PDA access. The idea is to update the calendar throughout the year, and suggestions are naturally welcome.

Visit the new Year Ahead in Science 2002 at www.the-year-ahead.co.uk. Ideas should be e-mailed to [<absw@absw.org.uk>](mailto:absw@absw.org.uk).

Emily Johnsson
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UK association

SciDev.Net and developing countries

David Dickson, formerly news editor of Nature, is the founding director of SciDev.Net. He has provided the following report:

The first global website dedicated to both reporting on and discussing the role of science and technology in meeting the needs of developing countries was launched in London in December.

The website, known as SciDev.Net, has been created on the premise that those who stand to benefit most from modern science and technology tend to be those who have least access to information about either, leaving them ill-equipped to take part in discussions about issues that profoundly affect their lives.

The Internet provides an unprecedented opportunity to address this dilemma, and thus help to bridge the divide that separates the 'knowledge-rich' from 'knowledge-poor' nations of the world. We hope that this website will therefore make a fundamental contribution both to the creation of knowledge-based development strategies, and to informed debate about the directions in which these strategies should lead.

In order to achieve this goal, SciDev.Net, which can be accessed at www.scidev.net, aims to provide a focal point for both authoritative information and informed debate about issues such as climate change, human cloning and intellectual property.

The website is backed by Nature and Science. In addition to these journals - from which SciDev.Net is both financially and editorially independent - the project is also supported by the Third World Academy of Sciences.

One-stop shop for science and society web resources

The Wellcome Trust Information Service has re-launched [psci-com](http://psci-com.org.uk) (psci-com.org.uk) after a period of development and re-design. This is a web gateway to high-quality internet resources on science communication, public engagement with science and the wider impact of science on society.

Resources include funding sources, practical guides for science communicators, competitions and awards, and science centre information. The gateway also covers the wider issues of science and society including public attitudes to science, science education, science policy and science and the arts. All of the resources are evaluated to ensure they meet defined criteria.

The re-design of the web site has enabled the creation of a totally new browsing facility that makes it much easier to browse by topic. Other features include an electronic calendar of conferences, workshops and other events, access to monthly digests of books, reports and articles on science and society, and access to an electronic discussion forum, also called psci-com.

Please e-mail me if you have any comments, queries or suggestions.

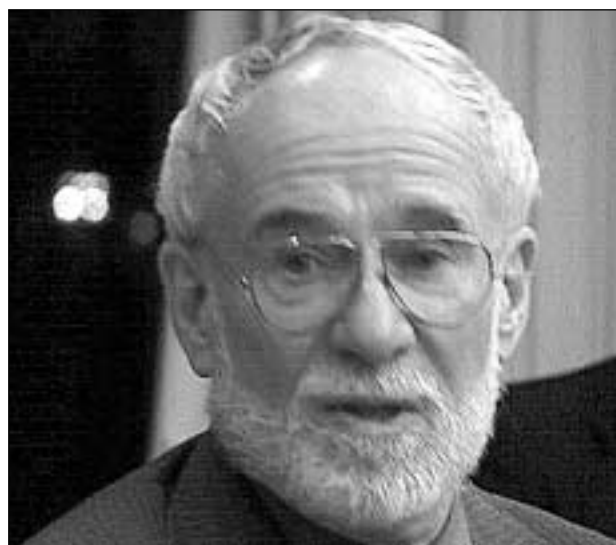
Louise Simon
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Information Officer, Wellcome Trust Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine, London

WORLD CONFERENCE

Developing international networks

The increasing commercialisation of the mass media has given rise to a form of corporate journalism that blurs the line between news and entertainment, responds to advertising considerations rather than public needs, and strives to reach demographic groups determined by marketing experts rather than editors. ... Although more science information may be available, in a depth and detail never before accessible, it is increasingly accessible only at specialised sites, e.g., the trade magazine, the cable channel, and the website. The result is a 'ghettoisation' of science and technology news."

Critical words from Jim Cornell, president of the International Science Writers Association and one of today's eminent science journalists. Cornell uttered them at the International Conference of Science & Technology Journalists that was held in Tokyo, Japan, from 23 to 26 October. A total of 336 participants, including university students and non-journalists, attended this second international science journalists' meeting in Japan (the first had been organised in 1992). Most of the



Jim Cornell. Photo Werner Hadorn



Gate shrine near Hiroshima.
Photo Werner Hadorn

participants were Japanese, but there were also fifteen international guests from nine countries, including the president and the vice-president of EUSJA.

More than 30 speakers tried to outline the present state of science journalism, and Jim Cornell was not the only one to call for common endeavours to improve science communication worldwide. Your EUSJA president, in a lecture that presented the history of science journalism as it started in Europe, showed that science communication, once the main topic in the press along with foreign policy, has lost much of its former importance.

The conference, perfectly organised by the Japanese Association of Science and Technology Journalists (president: Kenji Makino) and the Japan Science and Technology Corporation, took place in the ultramodern National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation whose director is a Japanese astronaut, no less. He

presented his adventures with spectacular images from his space experience. Unfortunately, but this is probably a characteristic of the Japanese style of managing events like this, there was not much time for open discussion in plenary meetings. On the other hand, there was plenty of discussion of common issues



Kenji Makino

between the sessions. Thus, the conference also provided an important opportunity for developing international journalism networks in the future, in particular the World Federation of Science Journalists (see separate article in this issue).

An exhibition of science mass media from all over the world presented additional means of information and comparison. The Europeans, at least, were quite amazed about the amount and power of science communication in the land of the rising sun ...

Werner Hadorn
EUSJA president

World Federation - one step further

Budapest 1999 was step 1, Tokyo 2001 step 2: an international group of science journalists intends to create a world federation of science journalists.

The idea is not, as was wrongly presumed by some colleagues on the EUSJA-L e-mail discussion list, an excuse for a few people to travel around the world at someone else's expense. The main purposes of a World Federation are summed up in a proposal put forward in Tokyo on the occasion of the International Conference of Science & Technology Journalists in October 2001. There an ad hoc group of international science journalists proposed to establish a World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) that would serve as an umbrella organisation for international, regional and national science journalism associations as well as individuals.

The group hopes that the WFSJ "might implement the goals of the Budapest Declaration of 1999 and foster a new culture of science journalism intended to meet the challenges of the 21st century".

The proposal document continues as follows:

"Further, it is proposed that the WFSJ will:

- have its seat at the European Science Foundation (ESF) in Strasbourg (France)
- maintain a website and other means of global communication for disseminating information about present problems, current opportunities and future trends in science journalism
- facilitate training and education for young science journalists in the developing world
- promote the expansion and improvement of science mass communication worldwide
- organise regular exchanges between its member organisations
- co-ordinate periodic convening of world conferences of science journalists.

The ad hoc committee will contact the world science journalism community and, on the basis of the response, will develop a constitution, a governing structure, and possible sources of funding. It is intended to found the WFSJ officially on the occasion of the 3rd World Conference of Science Journalists, tentatively planned for later this year in Brazil."



Tokyo from above. Photo Werner Hadorn

The proposal was signed in Tokyo on 26 October 2001 by Alun Anderson, UK; James Cornell, USA; Jim Detjen, USA; Lisbeth Fog, Columbia; Wolfgang Goede, Germany; Werner Hadorn, Switzerland; Philippe Gauthier, Canada; Kenji Makino, Japan; Darryl D'Monte, India; Istvan Palugyai, Hungary; Paul Raeburn, USA; and Mariko Takahashi, Japan.

The members of the ad hoc group were unanimously of the opinion that communication within the Federation should mainly happen on an electronic basis. They also agreed that the UNESCO should be requested to provide financial support.

Werner Hadorn

(It was decided at the 2002 EUSJA general assembly that the draft constitution for the World Federation should be discussed by each EUSJA national association, with a report to the EUSJA Board in June. – Ed.)

Raising public awareness of science – a second attempt

Under its Fifth Framework Programme, the European Commission invited proposals for Raising Public Awareness of Science and Technology projects. The General Assembly last year decided that the EUSJA would participate, and subsequently, the Board formulated a proposal. The idea was to organise visits of sites of European research centres; the published articles resulting from these visits would be compiled in a publication.

Unfortunately, the Commission services, on the advice of its independent experts who evaluated our project, did not accept it. Their report stated, however, that "the evaluators really welcomed the idea of a participation of the European Association of Science Journalists, as journalists play a crucial role in the public

communication of science and technology and should be more implicated into the reflections and initiatives dealing with this issue". They found the idea of making European research more visible to European journalists excellent ("an important and not frequently addressed objective"), but criticised the "low originality" of the project. Visits, the jury says, are just a classical way to get press coverage, and the award (that we included in our project) was regarded as "trivial".

The 2002 General Assembly has agreed that the EUSJA Board should make a new submission in 2003.

Werner Hadorn
EUSJA president

New European science communication association

A new European association called EUSCEA, the European Science Events Association, has been founded. It aims to promote science events as a means of getting science across to the public.

EUSCEA is based in Vienna at the office of the General Secretary, Mr Peter Rebernik, Director of "ScienceWeek @ Austria".

The organisation as set up at a meeting in Vienna in December of 52 professional science communicators from 39 organisations in 23 European countries. Mr Joachim Lerch from the Freiburg Science Days in Germany was elected president.

Proponents of EUSCEA come from the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

Further information at <www.eusca.org>.

New Science Media Centre in the UK

The Royal Institution has launched a Science Media Centre at its premises in Albermarle Street in London. The aim is to promote new, improved relationships between scientists and the media based on a greater understanding of each sector.

It's worth taking a look at the coverage of the event in The Science Reporter, the newsletter of the Association of British Science Writers (ABSW), on their website at www.absw.org.uk. There are three short articles/comments about it in the November 2001 issue, in which the centre is welcomed as an additional source of information, but some of the ABSW members express reservation on its potential usefulness.

Celebrating the birth of genetics

The life of the father of classical genetics, Gregor Mendel, is to be celebrated in a unique exhibition in the Czech Republic from May 2002 to May 2003. The exhibition will pay tribute to Mendel, the abbot of the Augustinian abbey in Brno, who experimented with peas and developed the early concepts of heredity.



Gregor Mendel, 1822-1884

"The Genius of Genetics, a celebration of Gregor Mendel through science and art" is the theme for the first phase of an ambitious project, with historical material from various collections including Mendel's papers and objects to be housed in the monastery of St Thomas in the town of Brno, two hour's drive from Prague and Vienna. It has been initiated by the abbey in partnership with the curators, Professor Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace, directors of the art-science company Artakt.

Bringing art and science together, the exhibition will merge history and interactive high-tech elements with modern imaging and new works of art to generate broad appeal to the public and specialists alike. Mendel's experimental garden is to be regenerated with the help of the John Innes Centre in Norwich, UK.

There are also long term plans to create a museum of genetics for schoolchildren and the general public, as well as a conference centre where researchers would discuss the ethical implications of genetic research.

EUSJA Website

The EUSJA website at www.esf.org/eusja/index.htm is a useful resource for science journalists. Here you will find information such as programmes for trips, messages from the EUSJA president, back issues of EUSJA News, and so on. There are plans afoot for a major overhaul, following a decision taken by the General Assembly in Strasbourg on 23 March 2002.

Michael Kenward of the ABSW, the UK association, is the e-minder for both EUSJA and his own association. 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 Newsletter as PDF, anyone?

Michael Kenward, our e-minder, has kindly offered to set up an electronic mailing list to deliver the EUSJA newsletter in PDF format. Just send him a message about it at web@absw.org.uk.

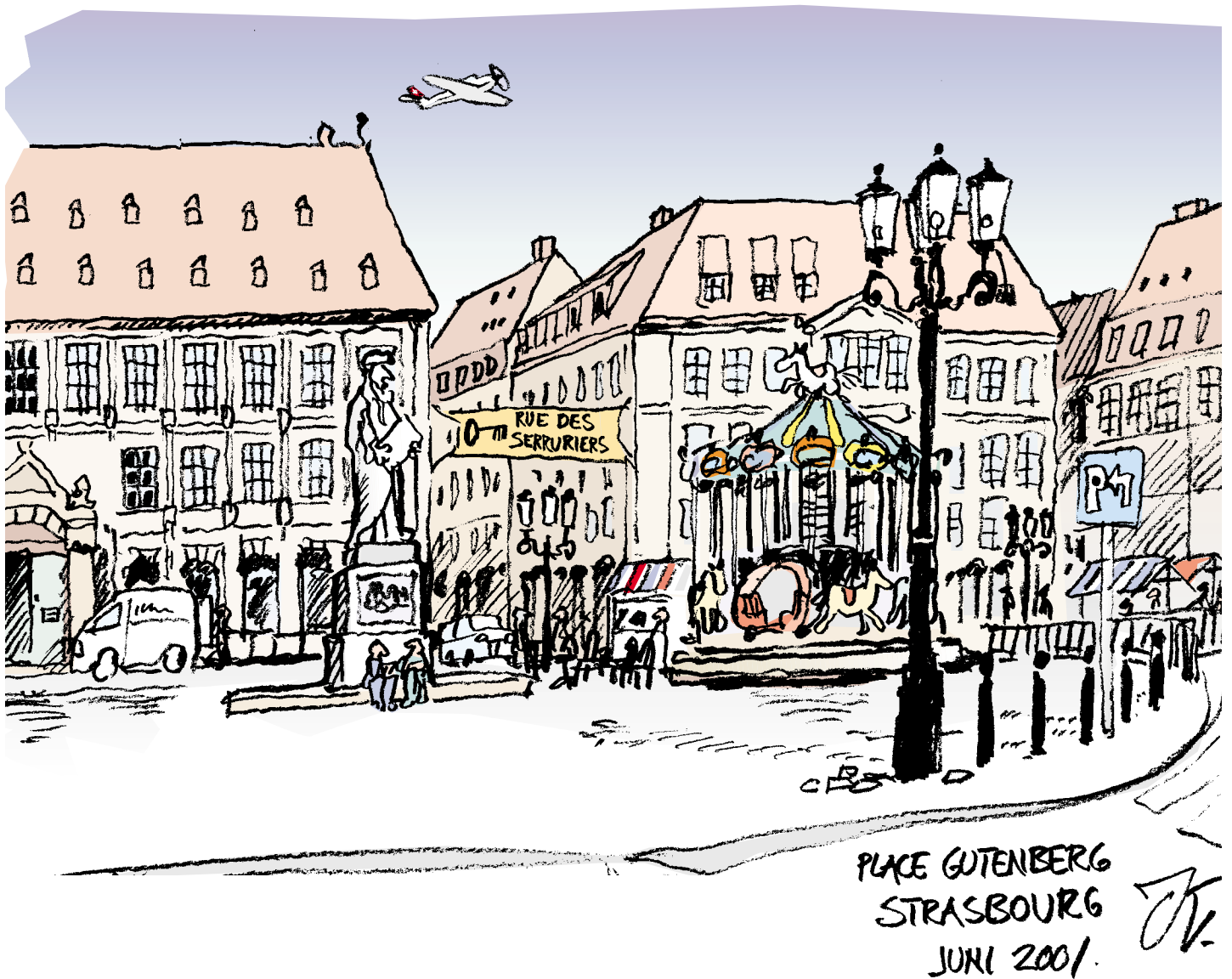
EUSJA-L discussion list

The EUSJA-L discussion list is open to all journalists' belonging to member associations. Anything to do with science and technology journalism can be debated, and helpful tips can be swapped. To subscribe send the message `subscribe EUSJA-L firstname lastname` to the address: listserv.rl.ac.uk.



Eusja Board 2002:

Istvan Palugyai, Hungary; Werner Hadorn, Switzerland; Marialuigia Bagni, Italy; Kaianders Sempler, Sweden



Highlights of Strasbourg 3:
Place Gutenberg with the statue of the world's first science writer.

Illustration by Kaianders Sempler.

EUSJA News

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

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