



EUSJA News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations

Autumn 2012

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A letter from the President

What we have been doing

Science and science journalism are strange bedfellows. Here in the UK we are still seeing science stories appearing in the newspapers and on television. Even the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games, "Enlightenment – a journey of discovery" was loosely scientifically based, with Professor Stephen Hawking giving the



The EUSJA board during the gala dinner of the Health Forum Gastein, in October.
From the left: Menelaos Sotiriou, Barbie Drillsma, Fabio Turone, Elmar Veerman, Viola Egikova and Wolfgang Goede.

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual writers, and not necessarily those of the EUSJA Board, the Editor or the Layout and Design Director

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opening speech! Yet this interest is not reflected in the job market. The few positions advertised are mainly in science communication, with even fewer in reporting.

The first goal of the board was finding ways to raise EUSJA's profile internationally

And look what is happening in Australia. Wilson Da Silva's Cosmos popular science magazine is going from strength to strength, but major newspapers are getting rid of their respected mainstream, serious science journalists. Reporters like Leigh Dayton from the Australian and Jo Chandler, a well-known freelance writer on climate change, are just two writers who have recently lost their jobs and are not being replaced. The WFSJ is taking up their case.

This makes it even more crucial that EUSJA fights for its members and does everything

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it can to stress the importance of science journalists and the vital role they can play in interpreting and presenting science stories. Since our general assembly the Board has been working hard in attempting to fulfil the role we set ourselves - raising our profile. This is a resume of what we have been up to.

At ESOF we met with and explained our organisation to a number of movers and shakers, including Professor Anne Glover, the EU's Chief Science Advisor. Since then we have been asked to pass to Anne the names of some of our members who write about science policy. This we have done.

***In Dublin, during ESOF,
we had several important meetings***

We have, thanks to our Honorary Secretary Wolfgang Goede, started a debate and blog on ESOF and have passed on our observations to Peter Tindemans, Secretary General of Euro-science, the organising body of ESOF. We have stressed the need for more newsworthy sessions as an incentive to attract in more reporters.

I am also delighted to report that our plan to organise a European Investigative Science Writing Award is taking shape. National Delegates Olivier Dessibourg and Jop De Vrieze have prepared a proposal, which the board discussed at its board meeting in Gastein, Austria during the European Health Forum.

***Discuss with us about present and future
European initiatives on our blog***

And talking of European – I must thank our new associate board member Menelaos Sotiriou who has been ploughing through reams of unintelligible documents relating to our possible involvement and co-operation with future European initiatives.

Fellow associate member Fabio Turone has, even during his summer holiday, been keeping our website and blog up to date. I encourage, indeed urge, all members to contribute.

As you will see from our emails our Vice President Viola Egikova has been busy organising study trips and trying, in these difficult financial times, to raise financial support for future events.

Finally, our Treasurer Elmar Veerman, who played a prominent role in discussions at ESOF, has our accounts under tight control and in order. Annual subscriptions are now due and you will shortly receive (or may have already received) a request for payment.

As you can see, we have been busy. In addition we have been working on proposals for the next world conference in Helsinki, June 2013 and the next ESOF meeting in Copenhagen, June 2014. Our session in Dublin, which I hope you have all read about on www.eusja.org, "Europe's Energy Future", was a great success!

If you have any comments, criticisms, observations or questions on what we are doing and how you can help, please email me: Barbiedrillsma@gmail.com.

Best wishes

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**BARBIE DRILLSMA,
EUSJA PRESIDENT**

EUSJA and Health Forum to co-operate

The EUSJA board and eight other delegates have just returned from an excellent study trip at the European Health Forum in Gastein, Austria, where EUSJA has been recognised as the important body representing voices of science journalists across Europe.

Elmar Veerman and Fabio Turone spoke out about the need to include science journalists during a session on communication and as a result the board was invited to a private meeting with the Forum's newly elected President, Prof. Helmut Brand, chair of the department of International Health at the University of Maastricht. Prof. Brand is only the second president during the Forum's 15-year history and is keen to communicate the work, findings and actions the European Health Forum members are involved in.



**Gastein Forum's newly elected President,
Prof. Helmut Brand.**

He has suggested, if funds are available, that EUSJA runs a session at next year's Forum. He has also confirmed that EUSJA will again be invited to hold a study trip in Gastein next October. More than 600 decision-makers from the health care sector, science and research attended the Forum and our business cards and leperellos were flying out of our hands as delegates asked for more information about EUSJA. Onwards and upwards!

Barbie Drillsma

Networking by science journalists in South-Eastern Europe

MIĆO TATALOVIĆ (ABSW)

A special session at PCST2012 (12th International Public Communication of Science Conference) in Florence this year examined the quality of science journalism in South-Eastern Europe, with participants coming from Albania, Croatia, Greece, Israel, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. It found that there are common challenges, such as a lot of pseudoscience and uncritical and sensational science coverage, as well as a lack of quality coverage of domestic science. Another big challenge is a lack of national and regional forums for discussions and professional development of science journalists. UNESCO's Venice office (<http://unesco.org/new/en/Venice/home/>) is to compile a document based on presentations and discussions at PCST2012 and feed it into the next regional science ministers' meeting (which takes place biennially under the auspices of UNESCO), with the hope of moving things forward. But even the informal discussions have led to some small, initial improvements. Networking that started at the session led to an idea to set up a science journalists' association in Serbia, as an off-shoot of a successful series of workshops organised for journalists by the country's Centre for Popularisation of Science (CPN), <http://cpn.rs>. This is now under way. Meanwhile, an idea to set up a national science press release service in Croatia, and trialled briefly last year through the Connect Znanost online portal (<http://portal.connect.znanost.org>), has now progressed and fundraising is active. Also, a networking and discussion group for science journalists in the Balkans area has been set up on the LinkedIn social media network.

There are many people involved in science writing across the region, but so far the widespread self-recognition of science writing as something unique, which has led to national and regional organisation of science journalists and numerous conferences, has evaded the region.

Indeed, a new report on science and media published in Croatia in November 2011 and presented at various events since has found that there is a lack of professionalisation within the science journalism community – out of 100 or so, only a handful are considered science journalists and are continuously engaged in covering a science beat.

There is still too much room for pseudoscience in the media

The report, *Znanost i mediji* (Science and media), was based on speeches given at an event to gauge the state of science in Croatian media. It contains about 20 presentations from leading scientists and science journalists in the country, trying to identify key challenges in communicating science in the country and to propose some solutions (see the report on <http://www.idi.hr>).

Some of the key messages coming out of the report include the need for more integration and education for journalists who cover science. There is a need for PR offices and press release services for research organisations. These are currently lacking – and as a consequence journalists do not have easy access to information, and scientists are not comfortable speaking to the media.

Also, existing government plans and policies for boosting science popularisation remain largely unimplemented but European collaboration programmes such as FP7 are helping to change scientists' habits and encourage them to engage more with the media (as there's a requirement to communicate that comes with funding). Currently a lot of the scientists that do talk to the media are émigré scientists, based outside the country.

Science coverage is generally bad – for example, sources of media stories on science are rarely identified – leaving a lot of room for pseudoscience in the media, and science policy is especially badly covered. Let's hope the momentum is sustained and that it leads to a more networked and sophisticated science journalism community and improved science coverage in the region. ●



Some journalists from South-East Europe at PCST2012

Manuel Calvo Hernando, pioneer of popular science

JUAN MARÍA, JOSÉ MANUEL, SUSANA, MERCEDES
AND ANTONIO CALVO ROY

Manuel Calvo Hernando, a journalist who specialised in the dissemination of science, died in Madrid on August 16. There will be no burial: he donated his body to science, and with him medical students will now learn as those studying journalism did earlier. This way, a circle that began in 1955, when he attended the first international meeting of Atoms for Peace, will close. There he found his vocation in science journalism, of which he was a pioneer in Spain and Latin America.

His life always revolved around three pillars: scientific journalism, Latin America, and his family.

Forty books and thousands of articles make him a reference in science journalism in Spanish. In 1971 he founded the Spanish Association for Science Journalism, the Spanish branch of the Ibero-American Association, which, together with Venezuelan Aristides Bastidas, he had founded in 1969. Born in 1923 in Fresnedillas de la Oliva, Madrid, his life always revolved around three pillars: scientific journalism, Latin America, and his family. The Spanish newspaper *Ya*, where he began as an editor and finished as Deputy Director, and the Institute of Hispanic Cul-

Science journalism lost one of its heroes with the death in August of Manuel Calvo Hernando. An obituary written by his children was published in El País, and the text printed here is a translation.

ture, where he was head of press, were the twin tracks of his professional life. At the Institute in the morning, he received, with his proverbial sense of humour, scholarship holders from many countries, with whom he established long-lasting relationships. In the afternoons, as Editor-in-Chief of *Ya*, when newspapers had only one Editor-in-Chief, he was struggling with daily information. For this reason, at home there have always been news circulat-

ing and the Spanish language from both sides of the Atlantic has been always heard. And perhaps for this reason, his three sons are devoted to this job, in which we have seen him enjoy a lot.

Our father always had kind words for those who approached him asking for advice and always tried to help them. That was so since he shouldered his first responsibilities until the day before his death, when a young Paraguayan journalist asked via email for tips for his career.

The family table, a genuine raft, seemed to be an Ibero-American international organisation

In that long half-century, in addition to his professional effort, he also held out his hand to other people: thanks to his wife, ally and companion, María Josefa, there was always food for everyone on the family table and it was always expected that some of it was left - in case



some guest would come. That table, a genuine raft, seemed to be an Ibero-American international organisation.

Manuel had a more than remarkable capacity for work, and was able to attend his various jobs, to write books, to be with his family, to cross the Atlantic more than hundred times and give courses, seminars and lectures on science journalism. Aged 75, in 1999, he received his doctorate in science journalism. The thesis he defended was a compendium of the books and manuals of history and theory of science journalism he had written. More than an academic ceremony, it was a tribute.

In 1982, already in other times, he was appointed director of Spanish Television (Televisión Española, TVE), where he worked with his close friend Carlos Robles Piquer, by then President of TVE, where Manuel had already worked hard to disseminate science-related issues.

After his retirement from Ya, in the mid 1980s, just coinciding with the declining of the old morning newspaper, which would disappear in 1996, he devoted his time to writing a dozen books, and to teach again, now at the Universidad San Pablo-CEU. In addition, he actively contributed to various media and, above all, responding to requests arriving from anywhere, mostly from Latin America. All this until 2008, when his memory began to decline.

He was also Vice President of the Madrid Press Association, for which he had the number 35 on his professional card. During the Spanish transition to democracy, while maintaining his professionalism, he held out his hand to colleagues that had been arrested and he sided with the new era, if only to keep pace with the winds that slipped in through the windows in his children's rooms.

**He always tried to
“take the pulse to the world in every moment”**

While Juan Carlos I was sworn in as the King of Spain, Manuel was before the prison - feeling somewhat deceived by them, to tell the truth - to claim amnesty and freedom for all. That was his more hasty running battle with the police. Throughout his professional life as a journalist, he tried to “take the pulse to the world in every moment”, as the poet Jose Garcia Nieto defined the craft of journalism in a sonnet he dedicated to Manuel.

A view from North America

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**JIM CORNELL (PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE
WRITERS ASSOCIATION)**

Manuel Calvo Hernando was well known as one of the premier science communicators in the Spanish-speaking world. Less known and appreciated was his seminal role in developing a world federation of science journalists.

In 1969, Calvo, then a writer for the Madrid daily Ya, together with his friend and colleague the legendary Venezuelan journalist Aristides Bastidas, created the Ibero-American Association of Science Journalism (AIPC), the first truly international association of science journalists' organisations, albeit one limited to Spain and the countries of Latin America. (The AIPC preceded EUSJA

by two years.)

Despite its distinct linguistic and regional identity, the AIPC - including Calvo - was very inclusive and welcoming to all journalists of all nations. For example, in 1977 I attended the second AIPC Congress - a model for the broader “world conferences” that would follow - as a representative of the US national association (NASW). Several journalists from other European countries were also in attendance as observers. And Canadian journalist Fred Poland represented the International Science Writers Association (ISWA).

**It was a group of Latin American journalists
who first proposed a “world federation”**

Interestingly, it was at this meeting that a group of Latin American journalists made what was perhaps the first proposal for a “world federation”. A draft constitution was written, a tentative slate of officers presented, and plans for fund-raising discussed. Alas, the ambitious scheme was not to be realised, frustrated by the limitations of language, geography, and, of course, money. Calvo was not discouraged by this setback. Indeed, one of his most outstanding traits was a seemingly unbounded optimism, matched only by his energy and enthusiasm for science journalism.

In November 1990 he organised the Fifth AIPC Congress in Spain, with activities split between Valencia and Madrid, and with featured talks by Jacques Cousteau and UNESCO Director General Federico Mayor.

But the Congress programme also reflected Calvo's concern for internationalism, with a host of speakers from EUSJA organisations in special sessions on European, Mediterranean and global issues, including a major debate about “scientific colonialism and the North-South news coverage imbalance”.

The speakers in that session included myself, representing ISWA; Julio Abramczyk, then president of AIPC; Fabiola de Oliveira, president of the Brazilian association; and, significantly, Arthur Bourne, then President of EUSJA.

Two years later, all of us, plus Calvo, would come together again for a similar discussion in Tokyo, Japan. Bourne - another under appreciated force in the creation of a world federation - after many years of lobbying, had finally convinced UNESCO to hold a “world congress” there.

In fact, he used the opportunity of Spain both to enlist AIPC and ISWA as co-sponsors of the Tokyo event and to get Director Mayor's commitment to fund it. I don't think he would have been half as successful without Calvo's pivotal role as facilitator.

The World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ), which was first proposed in Tokyo in 1991, refined at subsequent conferences, and now comprising some 40 national and regional associations, with big biennial gatherings, may really trace its origins back to the Calvo-Bastidas collaboration of 1969 that created the first international “association of associations”. ●

The obituary by the family was translated from Spanish by Mercè Piqueras (ACCC)

The original may be seen on
http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2012/08/16/actualidad/1345142996_545809.html

Investigating hospital rankings in Italy: an interview with Amelia Beltramini

FABIO TURONE

Last spring, the senior health editor of the Italian science popularisation monthly Focus, Amelia Beltramini, was able to publish for the first time a 'Guide to the best and worst Italian hospitals', based on official data from the Health Ministry, that she had been hunting for a long time. We asked Amelia, who is a founding member of Science Writers in Italy and of the Italian Chapter of the Association of Health Care Journalists, to explain to us how she achieved this important first in Italian health journalism.

In what way are your rankings new to Italy?

It is the first attempt to publish data on the quality of 1,263 private and public Italian hospitals. It is the official database of the Italian Ministry of Health, derived from hospital discharge records (Sdo) of the 11.3 million admissions made in 2010, put in context. These data are collected from 2005 and comparing the overall results you know whether the single hospital or healthcare in general is getting better or worse. It is also possible to carry out a comparative evaluation between hospitals based on quality indicators used by epidemiologists.

Are these rankings reliable?

It is difficult to assess. The source is official, but the processing of the data is for internal use, to improve the quality of health care. And epidemiologists have now six years of experience, with some previous experiments. Unfortunately the hospital doctors were not involved in the evaluation process, and in many cases had the feeling of being spied [upon], observed without their knowledge, shot in the back. It would have been useful to first discuss data with them to bring out the inconsistencies. However, it was necessary to start somewhere. In the United States it is normal to consider these data the property of citizens, and they are regularly published. Something similar exists in Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Germany and other European countries. In Italy we are very far from government transparency.

Was it easy to get them?

Far from it. I have been chasing them for two years. I also made an official request citing the Italian Foia (freedom of information

act) legislation, but to no avail. I put my hands on the data with methods of investigative journalism and only later, when I had them, I was officially given the key to access the database.

Are there better data around you are trying to get your hands on?

Some regions have similar tools. For example, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Lombardy, Piedmont and possibly others. In some cases I understand that they are discussed with doctor and nurses to assess the quality and decide together how to improve them. And then there are the internal data of hospitals. Some data are probably better, others worse.

Unfortunately, the structure of the hospital discharge records was created for the purpose of health economics, to determine how much to reimburse to hospitals. And this use is different. Cardiologists, for example, put forward a number of objections. An elderly patient dying with every kind of disease and a final heart attack might be encoded as a young man. But for the final statistics it is a heart attack without a coronary angioplasty within 120 minutes. According to cardiologists these distortions are common and may have an important role in the evaluation. Unfortunately I was not allowed to check with government epidemiologists if they had put in place some strategy to address these risks.



The cover of the insert on "Italy's Best Hospitals"

Your voluntary contributions for consideration for inclusion in EUSJA News are welcome. If you have some suggestions to make or you'd like to write an article, please check first with the editor Anna Nolan about feasibility, angle and length (anolan@iol.ie).

If you have suggestions for, or queries about, the EUSJA website, please contact the webmaster Fabio Turone (turone@sciencewriters.it).

BYPASS AORTO-CORONARICO	Numero ricoveri	Rischio di mortalità aggiustato per la difficoltà del caso (%)
STRUTTURA SANITARIA		
BENCHMARK NAZIONALE	1172	0.20
ITALIA MEDIA	16 162	2.78
PIEMONTE		
OSP. UMBERTO I - TORINO	122	1.11
OSP. CIVILE S.S. ANTONIO E BIAGIO - ALESSANDRIA	154	0.41
A.O. S. CROCE E CARLE - CUNEO	173	2.38
OSP. MAGGIORE CARITÀ - NOVARA	328	4.94
OSP. S.G. BATTISTA - TORINO	107	1.91
CC CITTÀ ALESSANDRIA - ALESSANDRIA	124	5.90
CC S. GAUDENZIO - NOVARA	106	1.46
CC VILLA MARIA PIA HOSPITAL - TORINO	91	2.41
LOMBARDIA		
POL. S. DONATO - SAN DONATO MILANESE - MI	369	2.02
IST. CLIN. HUMANITAS - ROZZANO - MI	260	1.72
IST. DI RICERCA S. RAFFAELE - MILANO	130	1.84
CENTRO MEDICO MONZINO - MILANO	179	2.35
OSP. S. MATTEO - PAVIA	140	1.98
OSP. L. SACCO - MILANO	212	1.78
OSP. CA' GRANDA - NIGUARDA - MILANO	164	0,00
OSP. S. GERARDO - MONZA - MI	216	5.10
PRES. OSP. C. POMA - MANTOVA	192	1.41

BYPASS AORTO-CORONARICO	Numero ricoveri	Rischio di mortalità aggiustato per la difficoltà del caso (%)
STRUTTURA SANITARIA		
LIGURIA		
A.O. RIUNITI - TRIESTE	257	0.60
A.O. S. MARTINO - GENOVA	212	6.78
CC VILLA AZZURRA - RAPALLO - GE	102	0.41
EMILIA-ROMAGNA		
A.O. UNIV. DI BOLOGNA - BOLOGNA	188	0.64
A.O. UNIV. DI PARMA - PARMA	340	1.21
CC VILLA MARIA CECILIA - COTIGNOLA - RA	282	2.76
CC HESPERIA H. - MODENA	181	0.79
TOSCANA		
OSP. G. PASQUINUCCI - PISA	166	1.49
A.O. UNIV. CAREGGI - FIRENZE	235	1.37
A.O. UNIVERSITARIA PISANA - PISA	231	5.88
CC VILLA M. BEATRICE - FIRENZE	210	3.54
UMBRIA		
A.O. DI PERUGIA - PERUGIA	134	1.97
MARCHE		
PRES. OSP. G.M. LANCISI - ANCONA	491	2.50
LAZIO		
A.O. POLICLINICO TOR VERGATA - ROMA	274	3.51
A.O. S. ANDREA - ROMA	190	0.75

Come leggere questa tabella.

Le tabelle raccontano gli esiti delle strutture di cardiocirurgia che ricoverano più di 85 pazienti l'anno per bypass aorto-coronarico e almeno 60 per valvuloplastica (da pag 34).

I colori sono il modo più facile di leggere la tabella:

● = il risultato è migliore della media italiana;
● = il risultato non è significativamente diverso dalla media italiana;
● = il risultato è inferiore alla media italiana.

In colonna 1 l'elenco delle strutture divise per Regione. Seguono due colonne numeriche: la colonna 2 dice quanti pazienti sono stati ricoverati in quella struttura; la colonna 3 esprime con una percentuale il rischio **aggiustato** (vedi sotto) di mortalità in quella struttura.

Some of the data published by Focus (republished with permission): for the first time, Italian citizens were allowed to compare outcome data from different hospitals - both public and private - for the most significant quality indicators collected by the Health authorities, but so far unavailable. The Focus journalistic team led by Amelia Beltramini was very careful in explaining the limits of existing data, but had to rely on the comments by specialists outside the Ministry of Health. Health officials - says Beltramini - provided "no collaboration, only spokes in the wheels"

Was it easy to get authoritative feedbacks elsewhere?

I spoke with heads of departments with the best results. They did not know the results and, flattered, they cooperated. It was, however, impossible to communicate with government epidemiologists who had carried out the research, despite having tried dozens and dozens of times. At the end, the press officer of the ministry told me to draw up a list of written questions, but then refused to submit them to the epidemiologists, telling me to "do my job" and publish it. If I had had something wrong the Ministry would deny it and correct me through official channels.

Who cooperated, and who refused?

Researchers of the Ministry are prohibited from talking to the press. We are obliged to pass through press offices who do everything to prevent these contacts. Really no collaboration, only spokes in the wheels.

There are some exceptions to be protected as whistleblowers because they risk damage to their career as if they had revealed war battle plans of the Ministry of Defence.

What feedback did you get after publication?

I can't say yet. We printed 45,000 copies, and put them on sale at €2.90. I've had requests from readers who didn't find the

magazine on news stands, but it was not advertised and even colleagues from other newspapers have refrained from talking about this publication.

Some local newspapers have even used the data without citing Focus as their source.

But I have created some direct channels to pursue future investigations on Italian health quality data. And of course I hope to create channels with European colleagues in order to compare Italian data and methods with theirs, to better inform readers and help them to choose where to be treated.

Don't forget to make your plans to attend next year's World Conference of Science Journalists in Helsinki in good time. Why not block out the last week in June in your diary? The event runs from 24 to 28 June 2013.



Science in times of austerity

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KAIANDERS SEMPLER (SMVJ)

In the autumn of 2007 the bottom went out of the market in Ireland. Real estate prices had been skyrocketing since Ireland joined the euro, and could take advantage of the low interest rates, but now crisis struck with full force. All construction came to a grinding halt, unemployment went up and the Irish government had to refinance the Irish banks with about 70 billion euros (according to the Swedish economy professor Mats Persson at Stockholm University). Which left the country with an enormous debt and a large deficit in the budget.

One of the last major constructions to be finished in Dublin before disaster fully struck was the Samuel Beckett Bridge in the Docklands district, designed by the Spanish star architect Santiago Calatrava and inaugurated in December 2009. The bridge can be opened for shipping on the Liffey and it is built as a cable-stayed bridge giving the impression of a harp, the Irish national symbol.

A stone's throw south of the bridge is the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre (originally called the Grand Canal Theatre) by another celebrity – Daniel Libeskind, who designed the Holocaust memorial in Berlin and Ground Zero in New York. Just north of the bridge is the new conference centre, a building that looks like a leaning cylinder pressed into a cube. Evil tongues say that it shows the perfect inclination for pouring a pint of draught Guinness.

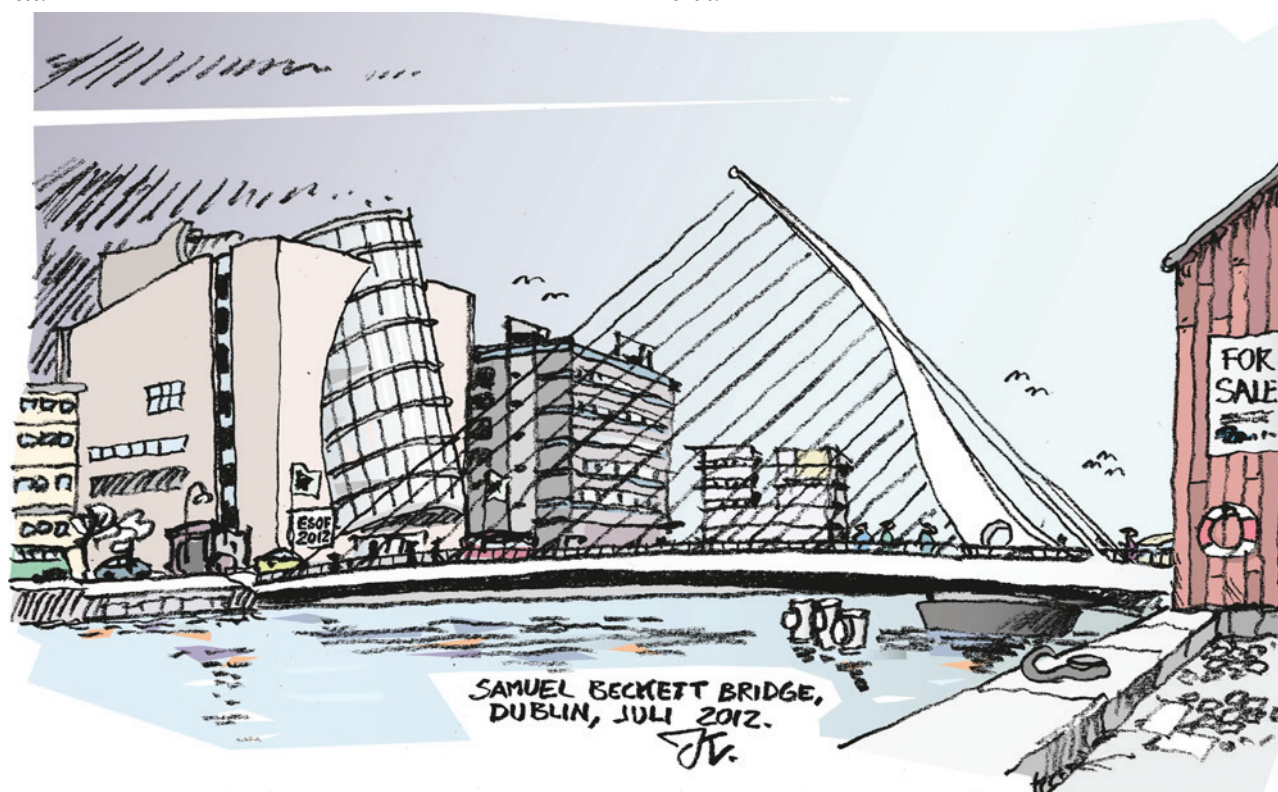
It was the new conference centre that housed ESOF2012 in July, like previous ESOFs an event with an abundance of interesting presentations. Rolf-Dieter Heuer from Cern staged a stand-up show talking about the newly found Higgs boson, and Craig Venter spoke about his project with DNA genome put into a bacterium. Coded in the genome were not only 457 genes, but also quotes by James Joyce ('To live, to err, to fail, to triumph, to create life out of life'), Oppenheimer's Prometheus ('See things as they are, not how they might be') and Robert Feynman ('What I cannot create I do not understand').

"Yes, the budget for research has been heavily cut", said Mark Ferguson, head of Science Foundation Ireland. "But we will get by. Ireland was the first country to be hit by the euro crisis, but we will also be the first to recover. In the meantime we can quote an Irish scientist from the 1980s (at which time the Irish government gave no grants for science at all): 'Gentlemen, we have no money, so we shall have to think'."

At a dinner in one of the deserted shopping malls that never got finished before the euro crisis struck, our Irish host science journalist Cormac Sheridan confessed:

"Actually, I think we Irish feel more at ease in a crisis than trying to live up to a tiger economy. It sort of fits the Irish mentality better."

A big thanks to the association of Irish science journalists, ISTJA. It was great to come to Dublin. May you soon be rid of the euro crisis.



Is ESOF doing its job? What is its job?

The recent Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF 2012) in Dublin on July 12-16 marked the tenth anniversary - and fifth iteration - of a biennial gathering of scientists, policy-makers, and journalists that has become arguably Europe's largest multi-disciplinary science conference. To mark this anniversary, and evaluate its significance, **Wolfgang Goede** of Germany's PM Magazine asked colleagues who had attended ESOF meetings since their inception to comment on its successes and failings, as well as its impact of European research.

The responses of four journalists, representing appropriately enough, Northern, Eastern and Southern Europe, as well as the United States, are posted online at the EUSJA website. The blogs are long and detailed, so what follows is a summary to whet your appetite. You'll find it on www.eusja.org, labelled as "Four opinions on ESOF".

Have your say on
www.eusja.org



The ESOF concept, of course, was modelled on the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting. And, in one sense, it may have followed that model too closely. According to **Jim Cornell** of the USA, who, as President of the International Science Writers Association (ISWA) served as a 'mentor' to a host of international Bosch Fellows, the AAAS meetings have been always short on news and long on policy, but ESOF meetings seem totally dominated by the latter. For American journalists, who are much more interested in results than processes, the ESOF programme seems overloaded with famous scientists offering reviews of past work and grand (but often vague) plans for future research. This is not necessarily all bad, says **Hajo Neubert**, EUSJA's immediate past-president. European science is so diverse and dispersed that it is sometimes difficult to get a cohesive, picture of its totality. The science review sessions at ESOF offer a comprehensive vision of past and current research across the continent. And the policy panels provide context for stories he may be writing in the future. Most important are those key European scientists whom he can meet and talk with on an informal basis at ESOF - or contact in the future - without the intervention of administrators, politicians and public relations people.

Istvan Palugyai of Hungary, another EUSJA past president, agrees that there many positive aspects of ESOF's rather broad and general overview of European science. But he - and others - argue that there are also enough new results coming from

European labs and academic institutions on such a regular basis that announcement of these achievements could be timed for release at ESOF, giving journalists (and their audiences) some better sense of science's immediacy and excitement. In fact, as a member of the ESOF Communications Committee, this is one of many suggestions for improving news coverage Istvan and others made to the organisers.

Alas, like so many other suggestions, they were ignored; and

ESOF has been forced to reinvent itself, and its media operations, in each new venue.

No wonder then that **Michele Catanzaro** of Barcelona can write: "Almost a decade after the first edition, ESOF still lacks a clear objective. Speakers and topics... in Dublin were of high quality. But the event has not found its audience". Catanzaro cites several instances where speakers themselves seemed confused about what, how and to whom they were supposed to tell their stories.

Not surprisingly, all four writers voiced concerns specific to journalists. Jim Cornell says that it will be interesting to see if this informal blog provokes any similar responses from the science, policy, and public information communities.

There has been just one comment at time of writing. **Sergio Pistoï** found a lack of clear focus at the three ESOF gatherings he attended, which were held in Munich, Turin and Dublin. He says that ESOF should tap into its diverse and powerful resource: European scientific research, where there are many interesting stories. The next ESOF should be a main showcase for European research for the public and the media, he suggests. Secondly, it should provide a discussion forum on the future of European science.

The blog awaits your comments

Let's EUSocJAlise!

FABIO TURONE

You can see a short clip with a very amused Richard Dawkins explaining Michael Kenward's blunt philosophy behind his work when he was the Editor-in-Chief at New Scientist, and you can discuss the role and meaning of ESOF meetings, the use and abuse of embargoes or the sloppy coverage of stories that have wide societal implications – such as Tony Nicklinson's unheeded request for help to die.

You can also relax listening to the fascinating video with a "Higgs boson song" composed by a smart physics student (who created the "A cappella Science" channel on YouTube) with an incredible voice and a talent for music and videoediting, and science communication.

Last, but not least, you can be alerted in real time to troubling news involving colleagues from all over the world, and share for instance the concern about the recent dismissal of several science correspondents from Australian media, and take action in a concerted way.

These are just a few examples from the last few weeks of online exchanges within the growing EUSJA community on Facebook, that has now reached 170 members. Some food for thought comes from the EUSJA website, and from the blog proposed by our Honorary Secretary Wolfgang Goede, which we started publishing last May, but many other themes just come from the kind of exchanges that are common on Facebook: I share something interesting with my comment on it, and invite others to join the discussion.



Europe's Energy Future: Flaws, Hopes & Challenges in Science Journalism

Posted on 27. July 2012 | No Comments

EUSJA Seminar at ESOF 2012 Dublin – It was a few hours before the closing ceremony on Sunday, July 15, when the EUSJA seminar finally was held. „What will power...

[Continue Reading...](#)



A few notes, and images, after ESOF 2012 in Dublin

Posted on 26. July 2012 | No Comments

I invite you to look at the photographs Wolfgang posted in the photo gallery here. They show the EUSJA stand during the ESOF meeting in Dublin. The stand wasn't always...

[Continue Reading...](#)



Is Science Journalism Dead-Or Does it Just Smell Funny? By Wolfgang C. Goede

Posted on 21. July 2012 | No Comments

While there is a lot of big-time research going on, which costs billions of Euros, our profession likes to act as „descendents of Prometheus, taking the fire from the scientific...

[Continue Reading...](#)



Science: it's not a PR thing – by Elmar Veerman

Posted on 22. June 2012 | 3 Comments

The EC has just launched a new campaign to get more girls into science. 'Science: it's a girl thing'. Perhaps you have already seen the official teaser. If not, here...

[Continue Reading...](#)

● Visits



Come and visit

Since its renewal last spring, the EUSJA website (www.eusja.org) has been visited more than 6.000 times, with a weekly peak for the blog post by our Treasurer Elmar Veerman about the worldwide uproar against the contested EU campaign "Science, it's a girl thing".

Overall, according to Google Analytics there have been more than 11.000 pageviews, with an average visit duration slightly under two minutes.

Interestingly enough, most visits came from the United States.

Visits and Avg. Visit Duration by Country/Territory

Country / Territory	Visits	Avg. Visit Duration
United States	691	00:00:55
Germany	645	00:02:01
Italy	641	00:03:13
United Kingdom	404	00:01:13
Spain	395	00:02:48
Belgium	244	00:01:45
Netherlands	233	00:01:44
Russia	219	00:01:47
France	146	00:03:09
Ireland	132	00:01:59

Don't mess with journalists, please

EUSJA Statement on embargoes and manipulation

BY EUSJA BOARD – 5. OCTOBER 2012

POSTED IN: DEBATE, NEWS



The European Union of Science Journalists' Associations (www.eusja.org) condemns the outrageous abuse of the embargo system that was perpetrated a few days ago to manipulate the press in order to get a favourable, acritical coverage of a study on the controversial and important issue of food safety in relationship to genetically modified organisms.

The main reason for embargoes is to give reporters more time to write better stories, and to collect qualified opinions by trusted experts not related to the study.

In the case of the paper by Seralini et al, journalists received the full-text in advance only after signing a non-disclosure agreement barring them from contacting any independent expert before publication.

Such non-disclosure agreements go against the rationale for embargoes, and transform them from a useful tool to help science journalists to better inform the public into a tool for manipulating the media, and must then be condemned as unacceptable and unethical for journalists and for scientists.

Science must be open to outside scrutiny by the society, and by the press.

Signed unanimously by the EUSJA board

(Barbie Drillsma, UK; Viola Egikova, Russia; Elmar Veerman, The Netherlands;
Wolfgang Goede, Germany; Menelaos Sotiriou, Greece; Fabio Turone, Italy)
in Bad Gastein, October 4th 2012.

Follows an excerpt of the results of the initial review by the The European Food Safety Authority:

«The European Food Safety Authority has concluded that a recent paper raising concerns about the potential toxicity of genetically modified (GM) maize NK603 and of a herbicide containing glyphosate is of insufficient scientific quality to be considered as valid for risk assessment.

EFSA's initial review found that the design, reporting and analysis of the study, as outlined in the paper, are inadequate. To enable the fullest understanding of the study the Authority has invited authors Seralini et al to share key additional information.»

Link to the press-release: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/121004.htm>

Listening to the many protests by science journalists worldwide,
the EUSJA board approved unanimously,
during the last meeting in Gastein,
a statement proposed by Fabio Turone.
The statement condemning the abuse of a non-disclosure agreement
and reaffirming the need for science to be open to scrutiny came out in perfect sync
with the preliminary results of the review by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Students, skills and development

.....
MIĆO TATALOVIĆ (ABSW)

British science journalists organised their second ever conference of science journalists in June 2012: the UK Conference of Science Journalists (UKCSJ). Following the success of the first UKCSJ in 2010, which brought together about 100 science writers and researchers for a full day at the Royal Society in London, UKCSJ2012 grew to some 250 attendees, journalists, science writers, press officers, scientists and students. This year's programme was divided into three streams: contemporary issues, essential skills and professional development. The focus on skills and development also stemmed from the wish to support early career science writers, and the conference sponsored five student scholars as well as several editors of student science magazines.

Apart from the stall for the main sponsor of the conference, there was also space for showcasing student science magazines, including BlueSci, EuSci, The Gist, Au, Bang! and I, science, from the universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Oxford and Imperial College London, respectively.

Nicola Guttridge, editor of I, science, said: "I found it really interesting to meet the other student editors and see the wide variety of magazines brought to display. We got lots of questions about the magazine, its layout, appearance and how it's run, and people we spoke to seemed to like the fact that they could discuss the magazine with us personally."

"All the publications on display were of a really high quality and demonstrated the skill of what will potentially be the next wave of professional science journalists."

She added: "I was really pleasantly surprised by the breadth of the sessions; there was a danger of just re-hashed versions of past debates - particularly in the discussions about narrative, scientific misconduct and 'is science journalism special?' However, each one was really interesting, in-depth, thoughtful and had very interesting speakers."

***"It was a great chance to chat
with the other science magazine editors
and see what they are doing and how they work"***

As a result of student editor involvement at the conference, ABSW is now setting up a special category for student science writers and student science magazines at its annual awards. It is also considering setting up a fund to support such student-run popular science publications.

Heather Doran, editor of Aberdeen's Au Science magazine, said: "It was a great chance to chat with the other science magazine

editors and see what they are doing and how they work. We have discussed working together in the future to help each other out. I feel that the magazines are a great chance to practice and improve science writing."

***A great mix of scientists, students, scientists
that write and science journalists***

"What was really great is that there was a mix of scientists, students, scientists that write and science journalists. A structured networking session could have helped people find others in the field that they were looking for."

UKCSJ2012 had also raised money to bring three science journalists from our twinned association in Uganda, The Uganda Science Journalists Association (USJA), but only one of them made it past the (overzealous?) immigration control. Apart from attending the conference there was a rich one-week programme of visiting various media in UK for the one journalist that did make it, Lominda Afedraru. She invited ABSW members to attend the USJA Annual Science Journalism Forum to be held in November 2012 in Kampala.

Bloggers wanted!

Do we want a European Science Media Centre, or indeed centres in individual countries? There is much talk and debate following a session in Dublin at ESOF that investigated the pros and cons of opening up an SMC in Brussels. Some see it as jobs for journalists; others are wary of being spoon-fed official information. What are your views? Can we collect your thoughts and comments? We do actually have an EUSJA blog and although it looks as if it is only Fabio Turone contributing pieces, this is not the case. Others of us blog too but as it is Fabio, as webmaster, who posts them, it is his smiley face that comes up first. Please help us improve our communications between each of us. Check out the EUSJA website for information on how to post your blog on science media centres or anything else which could promote a lively discussion. Thanks.

BARBIE DRILLSMA
EUSJA PRESIDENT

transforming
αβσω
ideas

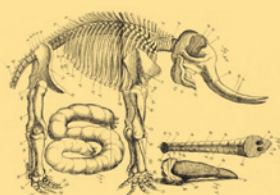
Association of British Science Writers

Here are details of books written by members in Ireland, Italy and the UK/US. If you have published a book related to science journalism in the last few months, and you'd like it to be mentioned in a future issue of EUSJA News, please email Anna Nolan (anolan@iol.ie)

Where in Dublin can you peer inside a Victorian diving bell? Or see the skeleton of Tommy, the prince's elephant? Where was the world's first earthquake experiment done? Did you know the hypodermic syringe was invented in the former Meath Hospital? And that Dublin algebra helped to land a man on the Moon? You can discover the answers to these questions and many more in

INGENIOUS DUBLIN

MARY MULVIHILL'S GUIDE
TO THE CITY'S MARVELS
INVENTIONS AND DISCOVERIES



Ingenious Dublin, a new guide to Ireland's capital and county Dublin, packed with fascinating and quirky stories from Dublin's long history. Written by science heritage writer Mary Mulvihill, the book looks beyond the usual views of Dublin to explore the very fabric of the city, and how it was built, and tell of the many great ingenious people who lived and worked here, and whose discoveries and inventions helped to change the world. The 216-page book is richly illustrated, and packed with stories and recommendations of places to visit, all organised by location.

Explaining why she wrote the book, Mary Mulvihill said: "We are great at celebrating our Irish writers and artists, but we also produced lots of great thinkers. Many well-known and important inventions and discoveries were made here too, by scientists and engineers, and I'd love more people to know these stories, and be proud of them." "For instance, the skeleton of the elephant featured on the cover comes from an amazing dissection that was done in Temple Bar in 1681 and is world famous – an English theatre company is even talking about recreating the event in Essex Street next year." The new guidebook is an e-book. It comes with a complimentary e-book of 10 detailed maps. The book is selling on Amazon. A science writer and broadcaster with over 20 years experience, Mary won the IBM Science Journalist of the Year Award for her first book, *Ingenious Ireland* (2002). Her other books include two collections of biographies of historic Irish women scientists, and a practical guide to green living called *Drive like a Woman, Shop like a Man* (2009). Answers to the questions: The Victorian diving bell is on Sir John Rogerson's Quay. The Skeleton of Tommy can be found in the Zoology museum in Trinity College Dublin. The world's first earthquake experiment was done on Killiney beach and Quarternion algebra, invented in Cabra, helped put a man on the moon.

Further details: <http://ingeniousireland.ie/ingenious-ireland-mary-mulvihill/>

Publisher: Ingenious Guides Limited,
Dublin, Ireland
€3.99 (ebook) • ASIN B0081KXH70

Il DNA Incontra Facebook (in Italian. Translation: **DNA meets Facebook – a trip to the genetics supermarket.**)
by Sergio Pisto

The world of genetics has just moved from the laboratories into our homes. Today, we can order our personal genetic profile on the internet for less than the cost of a new cell phone, and obtain information about

our traits, our ancestry, and the predisposition to a number of diseases.

What happens now that our individual genomes can be decoded and transformed into a digital content made of bits, like a picture or a video taken with our cell phone? How will we adapt to living in a world of pervasive genomics, where DNA redefines our notion of friends and family, and permeates our daily lives? In search of answers, Sergio Pisto, a EUSJA science writer and a biologist, played the journalistic guinea pig and sent his own DNA to the internet company 23andme. His recount is an intriguing and documented journey into the opportunities, dangers, and future of this revolutionary phenomenon.

"The book is getting a very positive reception in Italy", says Sergio, and he is now looking for an English publisher to translate it internationally.

Further information on <http://www.marsilioeditori.it/component/marsilio/libro/3171241-il-dna-incontra-facebook>

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€ 4.99 (ebook) • ISBN: 978-88-317-1241-5

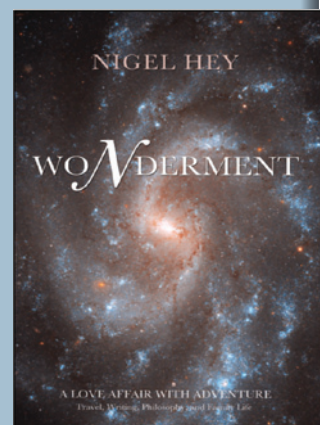
Wonderment
by Nigel Hey

Nigel Hey's sixth book, *Wonderment: A Love Affair with Adventure, Writing, Travel, Philosophy, and Family Life*, is more than an autobiography about an English-American science writer - it is a trip around the world and around the mind. The heart of this story lies in its varied collection of memoirs about writing, printing, publishing, media, travel, and amateur theatre.

Hey considers that his life has been both enriched and at times endangered by an apparently insatiable curiosity that has filled his world with adventures of mind and body. In his boyhood his parents took him to a new home, touching off a semi-nomadic five years that eventually take him to the American West. With his university years completed, he headed for his first fulltime job, in Bermuda, then a second in England. These marked the start of an exhilarating rollercoaster life.

The story is laced with scores of real-life anecdotes as he explores his personal philosophy and tackles the biggest question of all - where does he really belong? British-born Nigel Hey is a career journalist, publisher, and author who maintains residences in New Mexico and London. He has written articles for many periodical publications, from the London Sunday Times to Smithsonian.

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