EUSJA News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations

Autumn 2011

Stop press

Travel Grants for Journalists to attend ESOF 2012 in Dublin, 11–15 July 2012

Nature Publishing Group has kindly agreed to support ESOF by offering travel grants for journalists wishing to attend. We highly recommend that you apply now at http://www.esof.eu/hub/user_session/new. Sign into the ESOF database, click on "Apply for a Scholarship" at the bottom of your profile page and follow the application process. Good luck!

Upcoming events:

Our next General Assembly will be taking place in Leiden, Netherlands from March 8th–11th, 2012. The day of the meeting is Saturday, 10th. There is a communications festival on the 8th and study trips are being arranged for the 9th. More details as soon as plans are finalised.

Inside...

Editorial

Taken for a ride?

President Hajo Neubert gives the background to the fiasco surrounding the on off study trip to Benidorm

For our British friends, "Benidorm" is a prime-time sitcom of the British ITV set in Spain. For all the others it is a holiday resort at the coast of Costa Blanca, half an hour away from Alicante, Spain. It is known for its Manhattan-like skyline, a symbol for the cementation of Spain's shoreline, for its building and ground speculation scandals since the late 1950s, and a synonym for cheap underclass holidays.

Prize for Environmental Journalism

I was in Benidorm last summer on the occasion of the award ceremony for the First International Prize for Environmental Journalism about the Mediterranean Sea, worth 18,000 EUR –a really big one.

The Prize was announced by Casa Mediterraneo, a cultural organisation for networking with all states around the Mediterranean Sea under the umbrella of the Spanish foreign ministry. However, applications were welcomed from all over the world as long as the works dealt with the environment of the Mediterranean. It was endorsed by EUSJA member AECC, the Spanish Association of Scientific Communication, and also by the Spanish Association of Environmental Information Journalists – thus an honourable one. EUSJA and the World Federation of Science Journalists WFSJ circulated the call for applications a year before

The first prize went to Felix Tena, editor at the Spanish Canal 9 TVV, for its documentary "El Pais de las palmeras" and to Jacopo Pasotti for his excellent story "Mare Nero" in National Geographic with his own pictures documenting the oil pollution and the chase for polluters in the Mediterranean Sea. Jacopo Pasotti, writing in several languages, is actually a member of two of EUSJA's associations, the Swiss Club of Science Journalism and the Italian SWIM.

Off the symbol of cementation

I went out to an island off Benidorm in order to gain the full view of the sky-scraping hotels along the two small people covered beach strips. The view was negatively impressing, but positively impressing was the island itself, a well preserved nature reserve of high ecological value

The environmental journalism prize was scheduled to be awarded every two years, with the award ceremony taking place in Benidorm. Thus this year (2011) Casa Mediterraneo advertised the second round for the prize during the World Conference of Science Journalists WCSJ in Doha, Qatar. There EUSJA board members met the director of Casa Mediterraneo, Yolanda Parrado, the officer responsible for the prize, Elia Carceller, and the mayor of Benidorm, socialist Agustin Navarro. Of course we asked: "Why Benidorm, a resort with quite a low reputation of sustainability?"

Benidorm, Spain.

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Risk and bioethics at Doha

(from a European perspective)

European science journalism was represented at the WCSJ 2011 in Doha by two panelists from Italy: Fabio Turone, who produced a panel on the communication of risk, and myself, in charge of a session on bioethics.

Moderated by Wilson Da Silva, editor in chief of Cosmos, the most widely read popular science magazine in Australia, the panel on risk offered three very diverse points of view on the issue. Nigeria's Akin Jimoh, who is the Anglophone coordinator for the SjCOOP mentoring program of the World Federation of Science Journalists, discussed the many difficulties a reporter has to overcome when trying to involve the population of African countries in the debate on risk, difficulties summarised in the picture of two motorbike riders wearing ludicrous – but not uncommon - substitutes for the helmets mandated by the law.

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Already in 2008 the BBC published a piece entitled "Benidorm - the new face of eco-tourism And now we heard even more astonishing things: Wastewater recycling, energy efficiency, solar power, environmental education, regional food, great nature reserves.
Curious about eco-tourism
Yes, we became curious as we received information demanding morecloser looks, promising good stories.

Thus we asked the people from Casa Mediterraneo and the mayor if they would be interested to show the efforts of Benidorm to become the most sustainable holiday resort in Spain. They promised to consider our proposal.

"Tourism in Benidorm: sustainability with Mediterranean taste" was the title of an urgent study trip invitation sent to the EUSJA delegates on 19 October, as a result of our talks in Doha. But the trip was already scheduled for 27 to 28 October, thus the deadline for an application had to be the next day. EUSJA had never before announced a study trip with such a short deadline.

But the EUSJA journalists showed enormous flexibility as applications rushed in, but only 12 could be considered. Their names were sent to our Spanish host.

The outrageous happens

As soon as Casa Mediterraneo received the names of the EUSJA journalists, immediately 7 were rejected and uninvited – another unparalleled incident in the 40 years long history of EUSJA.

As a reason the organiser said, that no journalists from southern Europe were on the list, and that it now wants to look for other, even non-science journalists on its own.

The EUSJA Board considered this a serious offence against the European science journalists and the European public. For the Board it was absolutely not acceptable that journalists were disregarded this way, and that a lot of time and effort had been trashed. Thus we complained strongly in a letter to the Director of Casa Mediterraneo.
We even asked the selected participants to boycott the trip, if they can still manage it. Some thought about it, but had already reserved newspaper space or airtime for a story.

However, the endeavour to find other journalists from southern European countries seemed to have failed. So two days before departure, the study trip was completely cancelled by Casa Mediterraneo.

Controversial opinions

A lively e-mail discussion among the delegates sprang up. Some complained about the short announcement, while others wrote that journalists have to be flexible. One complained that the Board accepted an invitation from a "tourist board" while having no influence on the programme. However, Casa Mediterraneo is not a "tourist board" as mentioned above and the idea for the trip was born during WCSJ in Doha.
Others demurred also of the PR character of the trip. But every study trip has a certain amount of PR messages, even WCSJ was full of such PR messages, as one replied.

There was even a voice that Benidorm is the "opposite of sustainable tourism and the worst you can imagine to be done in an originally very nice Mediterranean village. Benidorm promoting a prize on environmental journalism ... seems to me like a contradiction." But our own researches and talks gave us different pictures – which could have been verified by seeing the place and talking to residents.

A closer look is necessary

Thus it is a pity that EUSJA now missed a quite interesting, maybe also controversial trip. The discussions after the cancellation showed us that prejudices are still governing our minds and prevent us from looking closer at things. "Science journalism critical questioning in the public sphere" is the motto of the next WCSJ 2013. This is just what could have been done during a study trip to a critically discussed tourist resort. We should indeed be more open while at the same time discriminate between PR, sitcoms and facts.

Hanns-J Neubert
Eusja president

The lively and entertaining contribution by former TV reporter David Ropeik, book author and instructor at Harvard, focused on the elements that contribute to make objective hazards more or less scary. These should be known and used with caution by media professionals: from trust to familiarity, from choice to uncertainty through the dualism between risk and benefit, natural and man-made and between catastrophic and chronic, and more. His extensive research on the perception of risk was recently summarised in the book "How Risky Is It, Really? Why Our Fears Don't Always Match the Facts".

From left: David Ropeik, Fabio Turone, Akin Jimoh and the moderator Wilson Da Silva.

Finally Fabio Turone analysed the available medical literature on the quality of health and specifically risk reporting, to stress the importance of providing lifelong training for science journalists by journalists, specifically to practice and reinforce a critical approach. He presented existing attempts at establishing a stronger and more effective alliance among scientific institutions, health policy makers and the media professionals in which the latter are considered "professional equals".

Bioethics is more and more important in health reporting. It is becoming harder for a science journalist to separate opinion from scientific evidence in topics such as end of life decisions or the assessment of consciousness and coma. The panel in Doha was composed by journalists from the US – Joe Palca, science correspondent from NPR, and Jon Cohen, correspondent with Science who acted as moderator – the Canadian bioethicist Eric Racine, from Mc Gill University in Montréal, and myself. Racine illustrated his research on media reporting in cases that have a strong bioethical angle, especially with regards with neurology and neuroscience. He discussed the media coverage of the Terry Schiavo case in American (a woman in a coma with relatives winning the right to "switch her off") and British newspapers through the analysis of the language used to describe her medical history, the most common mistakes in reporting and the misunderstanding of the experts' comments.

Fabio Turone, Swim, Italy.

Joe Palca discussed the hypes and hopes of stem cell research in neurological diseases and raised the question of how to report such an important issue. Finally I summarized two important cases involving end-of-life decisions that were debated in Italy for many years: the case of Piergiorgio Welby (an ASL patient who asked to withdraw assisted ventilation) and the case of Eluana Englaro (a coma patient with many similarities with the Schiavo's story).

The final discussion on the role of science journalism in ethical and scientific controversies sparked a debate about the difference between informing and teaching. The majority declared that the role of journalists is to inform and not to teach nor to judge the experts' or the families' position. An interesting part of the discussion involved colleagues from Islamic countries, where the bioethics debate is still in its infancy but is an emerging issue.

More at http://www.davidajao.com/blog/2009/01/07/nigerians-and-crash-helmets

From left: Daniela Ovadia, Eric Racine, Jon Cohen and Joe Palca.

MOSCOW'S SCIENCE FESTIVAL KEEPS ON GROWING

EUSJA plays its part, says Viola Egikova.

In the year 2006 Muscovites saw posters welcoming everyone to the First Science Festival. At that time very few people realized what it meant, for nothing equal or even similar to that event had previously occurred in our country. On the following day, however, hundreds of people, impressed by their friends' stories about the Festival, were eager to reach it. Not much time has elapsed since that time, but The Science Festival has already become an important part of our existence. Just compare: about 20,000 people has visited the very first Science Festival to Moscow over the three-day period, whereas the sixth Festival last October assembled over 500,000 participants – in Moscow alone. Yet – apart from the capital – the Festival took place in 80 regions of Russia.

I can say this tradition has been established in Russia with the help of science journalists. Our association "Intellect" has done its best to help Moscow State University – the main organizer of the event – to bring the ideas, to get in touch with scientists, to propose the important topics to Festival. Why us? Firstly: science journalists are rather a special "bridge" among science and public, we know well how to tell scientific stories to be interested for everybody. Secondly we have to interview a lot of scientists, thus we realize who could give a talk better to be understandable not only for specialists, but for public. And the third: we are usually visiting different science centers, thus we can examine which of them could present their researches to the audience with the fest spirit.

Thanks to our involvement in EUSJA we could help also to bring to Moscow Science Festival interesting presentations from the Royal Society of Britain, from the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Tartu, Losanna, Warwick University and the Technical University of Munich. The last example of this kind of collaboration was the invitation of the European Laboratory of Molecular Biology to Moscow. This happened during a EUSJA study trip to Heidelberg last summer where I approached scientists of that famous international center. The General Director of EMBL, Prof. Iain Mattaj promised to send scientists to our Festival and he kept his word. Two researchers from Heidelberg and Hamburg presented EMBL to the Russian public. I must say it was one of the most impressing presentations for general public and especially for the young generation..

Viola Egikova.

The six years experience of the cooperation with the Science Festival team helped us to find some new areas for the activities of "Intellect" inclusive of the competition in science journalism and scientific photography, discussions, surveys, interviews and so on. Maybe none of us thought from the very beginning this cooperation would be such a useful for science journalism itself. Our Science Festivals helped us better understand what the public expects from us or what we are doing wrong.

Viola Egikova, Russia

Made by young people

Science is firing up the young

How can young people do science journalism? Well, it is probably easy to say that there are hundreds of opportunities, but science (as well as journalism) requires passion and conviction, which might sometimes be hard to achieve. Polish youth shows that science can be fun.

There are more and more students taking part in the Warsaw Science Festival, which provides opportunities for both: those who want to work within science and those who want to promote it by contributing to PR or reporting. Most of the volunteers come from two main Polish organisations: The Polish Science Journalists Association Naukowi.pl and The Youth Journalists Association POLIS, but the platform grows wider. Each year we can count on more young people who recognise the importance of science for social and economical development. Scientific news enter university radios and newspapers andmore and more students take part in international science journalism programmes, study trips and teaching laboratories. It all allows Polish science journalism to become a part of an internatonal network. Who are these students? They come from various backgrounds - some are actually researchers, some study journalism, and some have a totally different background, from philological to economical. This diversity makes us all a very distinctive community, the wide scope of perspectives on science being our biggest advantage. Sounds too good to be true? Well, there are some problems as well. The group is still small in comparison to the number of issues waiting to be addressed, and not all are flexible enough to work hard during the whole year. The majority are freelancers contributing only to certain projects..

There is one question left - what next? At a certain moment we will all graduate from our universities and even though there will be new enthusiasts of science present in POLIS and Naukowi.pl, all of us will have to decide whether we want to work in science journalism or somewhere else. At the present moment, enthusiasm is stronger than cold pragmatics. Most of the student science journalists define their future in the terms of promoting science. If not professionally, than as a free-time passion.

Dominika Jędrzejczyk, Poland

Drawing Kaianders Sempler

Hilites of the Middle East: South Asian construction workers waiting for transport to their barracks in Doha, Qatar.

Sickness report

Salmonella at the conference in Doha

70 WFSJ-delegates were infected with salmonella from foul food. 20 were sent to hospital.

One of the things that mustn't happen happened the fourth day of the conference. Was it the delicious buffé that we had for lunch? Or was it something we got at the banquet promoting the South African bid for the SKA – The Square Kilometer Array – at the Marriot Hotel?

It is not clear whom to blame. The only thing I know is that I woke up in the middle of the night shivering from fever. A nice women gave me some pills so I could participate in the Finnish session about the Nordstream project in the morning. My presentation went well, but after a while I had to leave the podium to take more medicine.

The check-in at the crowded Doha airport was an absolute nightmare. I felt like fainting, so I was supplied with a wheelchair and a doctor was sent for. After swallowing a fistful of new pills I could finally board the plane and sleep my way to Copenhagen.

Kaianders Sempler, a very patient man.

Eusjanews editors Kaianders Sempler and Barbie Drillsma posing in the Eusja booth in Doha before disaster struck.

Fighting the Assault on Science in America

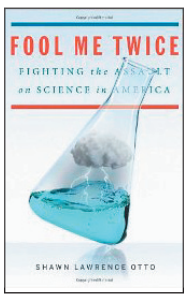
Alexander Gerber from Teli updates us on what is happening in the world-wide Science Debate and reports on "Fool me Twice: Fighting the Assault on Science in America" written by Shawn Otto, friend and supporter of EUSJA

It was the largest grassroots initiative in US history: The "Science Debate" in reaction to the presidential campaign in 2008 (see Wikipedia entry). The attempt was to assure that not a single person or party, any closed circles or politic elites decide (e.g. through funding) about the direction into which science is supposed to investigate. Some of you might recall the original reason-why of the 2008 US debate where among 3000 questions posed to the presidential candidates in more than 170 TV interviews no more than six questions dealt with the issue of "climate change" in one way or another (compared to three questions dealing with UFOs). An increase of the perceived relevance of science in the published and public political discourse was therefore the reason to start the science debate in the first place.

Among the scientific organizations supporting the campaign were the Carnegie Institution, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the US National Academy of Sciences, the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Biophysical Society as well as all the main universities, many Nobel laureate, companies and science media. Some of you might have followed the presentations I gave on this issue (in Stanford, Tallin, Madrid (interactive prezi), Vienna (in German!) etc. – or see my blog posting about our own research activities in this area), because I am truly convinced that such an initiative also needs to be facilitated in Europe (which is what we tried with a few colleagues through our Germany association of science writers, TELI, in 2009). In the meantime such an effort has also been taken in Estonia by our colleague Priit Ennet.

The let's say "father" of the US Science Debate, Shawn Otto, whom I was priviledged to have some excellent discussions with about the prospect of scientific citizenship, has now written a book about his experiences:

"Fool Me Twice: Fighting the Assault on Science in America"



Shawn was also part of our ESOF 2010 workshop on science debates in Torino, where EUSJA President Hajo Neubert heaved the issue up onto a European level.

One of the most crucial questions definitely is whether or not science itself is open for criticism and discourse

or whether a certain academic arrogance might hinder a true dialogue. Personally, I explicitly advocate for an open debate, both in terms of the participants (laypeople on an eye level with scientists and policy makers, leading us to the ideal of a "scientific citizenship") and in terms of not anticipating or prescribing any specific direction or result of the debate form the start (which is what mostly happens so far). Only such an open debate has the potential to develop the necessary transparency out of which trust may develop or even be repaired. We and you, journalists and the media, should thereby by no means be the "cheerleaders" in this debate but rather the mediators and "watchdog". I even see a new line of action, a new line of income for science journalists.

In the course of our own research we call this the 5th development stage in science communication – to make the wider public an integral part of at least the fundamental decisions – and not just a receiver of a PUSH-ed PR 'enlightenment'. We therefore need to talk much more about Open Science and Citizen Science, thereby steering the classical Public Understanding of Science into a Public Engagement for Science and – right so – just as much the Scientist's Understanding of the Public.

For links to sources or to follow the on-going discussion, please feel free to visit the blog postings at:

http://teli.de/blog/?p=1092

http://www.scienceblogs.de/sic/2011/10/fighting-the-assault-on-science-in-america.php

An Annual Award

At last year's annual assembly we vaguely discussed the possibility of organising an annual award. Sallie Robins from the UK's ABSW gives us some tips

Recognising and celebrating excellence in science journalism should be at the heart of any national science journalism association. The most obvious way of doing this is through science journalism awards; but for cash strapped associations this can be difficult as there are significant costs associated with running awards.

The ABSW were able to reintroduce their Award's for science journalism in 2010 due to securing support from Janssen Research and Development a division of Janssen Pharmaceutica NV. Prior to this the Awards had been made every year from 1966 to 2007 and were described by the former Chair of the ABSW Pallab Ghosh as the 'Oscars' of science journalism.

So what are the key considerations in establishing awards? First would be ensuring there is demand. In the UK the ABSW members see the awards as one of the main functions of the association and the annual awards ceremony is a key event in the association's calendar. However the ABSW awards are open to any science journalist and not just ABSW members, as otherwise the Awards could be viewed as a pat on the back to those already in the 'club'. Once a demand has been established then the major hurdle is usually funding. Sponsorship is probably the only way forward for most national associations, but encouragingly a set of awards is something quite attractive to sponsors. Support can either be sought for the awards as a whole or for individual awards, but should always be sought over a number of years to see the awards fully established.

Once funding is secured then decisions then need to be made on the categories for the Awards, and this can be a tricky as no matter how you carve up the Awards there will be one form of journalism that feels it has no real place to enter. A happy compromise is perhaps all that can be aimed for, and of course if too many categories are established, with very small numbers of entrants in each, it again tends to feel like a pat on the back for everyone! Luckily the ABSW's agreement with its major sponsor allowed for additional awards to be introduced and with support from other organisations our initial group of six awards has been expanded to eight.

Something that will take some time to thrash out will always be the rules and regulations for entry. Are the awards just for your members? Are the awards just for journalists living and working in your country? What about those from your country currently working abroad but for an international publication widely read in your country? How do you define science? Does it include health or medicine? Once you get down to the nitty gritty it can be quite difficult to establish rules that are simple and fair and that do not unnecessarily exclude individuals but also don't just open the flood gates to totally unsuitable entries.

Systems for entry need to be developed that make it easy to receive entries and to distribute them to the judges. The ABSW does nearly all of this online with the entries automatically dropping into a database that can be circulated to the judges, however, for data heavy entries like the TV category the old fashioned entry by disc in the post and redistribution to judges is still required.

How to choose your judges? The ABSW committee approves the panel and they are generally drawn from previous winners, but with others brought in to ensure a broad spread of disciplines both in terms of media outlet and in terms of scientific specialty.

All in all awards are an excellent way to celebrate and raise the profile of science journalism and to ensure a healthy and active national association. Well worth the work to find sponsorship and to sort out the fine print.

Sallie Robins, Administrator ABSW Awards

More on the ABSW Awards can be found at
http://www.absw.org.uk/jobs-awards/awards

SWIM DIVES INTO EUSJA

At our last General Assembly a new association was admitted into EUSJA's membership. SWIM – Science Writers in Italy – led by Fabio Turone, joined us and has since played an active role.

At the meeting only our long-standing Italian member, UGIS, objected to SWIM's admission on the grounds that the new group was a collective of science communicators and not solely science journalists. However, delegates said that many associations already admitted science communicators and PR members so did not see how they could object.

Fabio has promised to that he and his members will try to do everything they can to foster good relations with UGIS. He also pointed out many established science journalists are losing their jobs as a result of Italy's financial situation which is reflected in the numbers taking on PR positions.

The Earthquake that Risks Shaking Seismology (and the media)

By Nicola Nosengo, Science Writers in Italy

According to "Nature", the trial that began in the Italian city of L'Aquila on September 20 will be a "watershed case", one that will force seismologists worldwide to rethink the way they do their job, and the way science is used by policy makers. In the trial, six Italian scientists and one government official who assessed the seismic risk in the Italian region of Abruzzo before the earthquake of April 2009 are indicted for manslaughter. But the case, which will go on for a year at least, is also a test for scientific journalism, and a tough one for sure.

Getting the facts right (the first duty of a journalist) is not easy, to begin with. It is a messy story, made even more complicated by the typical Italian mix of bad politics and riddled bureaucracy. Not surprisingly, many newspapers have chosen the easy way out, describing a "trial against science" where seismologists are oddly accused of "failing to predict an earthquake".

The accusation is surely questionable, but is actually very different. It revolves around a meeting of the Major Risks Committee, a group of consultants to the Italian Civil Protection, held in L'Aquila on March 31, 2009, one week before the devastating earthquake which hit the city on April 6, killing 309 people. The population in L'Aquila was very alarmed at the time, after four months of continuous seismic activity, and the six scientists were asked to assess the probability of a major shock and its possible impact. The outcome of a meeting was a press conference where a Civil Protection official, who had chaired the meeting, said more or less that the seismic activity in L'Aquila was "certainly normal" and posed "no danger", adding that "the scientific community continues to assure me that, to the contrary, it's a favorable situation because of the continuous discharge of energy".

Now comes the messiest part of the story. The public prosecutor of L'Aquila contends that some of the victims (32 of them) were so afraid at the time that they were about to leave their homes, or at least sleep in their cars to reduce the danger, but changed their mind after hearing that press conference. The prosecutor does not accuse the scientists of a wrong prediction. But he notes that those statements about the "discharge of energy" have been criticized by most seismologists as scientifically unfounded (matter of fact, they do not appear in the minutes of the meeting). The accusation, in other words, is to have misinformed the public with an exceedingly reassuring (and unscientific) message, thus leading some people to abandon precautions which may have saved their life.

L'Alquila after the earthquake in September 2009.

The long paragraph above is enough to show some of the difficulties this story poses for science journalists. It takes many words to explain it, even on a basic level. When covering a science story, we are used to sacrifice most of the facts and concentrate on the few fundamental ones, skipping the details. But here the details are essential (as it usually happens in criminal trials,) and leaving even one element out of the story (the meeting, the press conference, the scientific consensus on seismic swarms, what the victims did and what their relatives say they were going to do, the timing of it all) results in distorting it. Also, this story forces the reporter to combine and master very different languages. On one side there is seismology (a scientific discipline where uncertainty reigns); on the other there is criminal law. Even when the two disciplines use the same words, they are often meaning very different things.

Not surprisingly, some scientific media have chosen a partisan approach, acknowledging that the accusation is less absurd than it may seem (in other words, that it is not about earthquake prediction) but taking side with the scientists: it is the case of New Scientist, for example, which published a long commentary by Thomas Jordan, a highly respected American seismologist who will testify in favour of the defendants. Others, notably Nature, have taken a more nuanced position, reporting extensively on the view from L'Aquila, particularly from the victims' relatives, and stressing that scientists have lessons to learn from the case.

Strangely enough, the case has raised much more interest abroad than in Italy, where national media have hitherto paid little attention to it. That is a shame, mostly because no one is questioning the role played by those very media in the case, and what media professionals, in Italy as elsewhere, could learn from it. The media are not at the bar (and rightly so). But it was the media that conveyed the messages, right or wrong, which are now at the center of the trial. TV stations edited and broadcasted those reassuring statements. Local papers reported about the press conference. Many of them were giving space and resonance to the so-called "predictions" by Gioacchino Giuliani (an amateur seismologist who alarmed the population by announcing a strong earthquake in the region, though in a different area), which played a big part in complicating the work of the committee.

At the trial, one of the scientists' lawyers has explicitly accused the mass media of distorting the scientific message of the meeting, implying they, and not the scientists, are responsible for what happened. She is largely wrong. The media have their own logic, and it is the work of public officials and risk communication experts to learn how to work with them in order to get the right message to the population. Still it would be a waste if journalism, in Italy as elsewhere, did not use this chance to reflect on its role in risk communication.

Trip report

The Helmholtz trip 2011

Pieter Lomans reports from EUSJA's study trip to Helmholtz Association research centres.

We were surrounded by 270.000 ton of steel but, strangely enough, the steel wasn't part of the construction. The building could easily do without it. Why then was it there? To protect people outside the building against the buzzing machine inside. When it's working, the machine makes click-clack noises in order to visualize what is hiding in the skull of a patient, so doctors and researchers can see what kind of tumor is doing its devastating work in the 'spongy selves', in the neurological wiring of the living patient. Even without opening up the skull.

To be able to do so, the machine generates an enormous current and with that a very strong magnetic field. We can see with our own eyes some of the tricks the machine has to offer. A vertical metal plate falls down in sloooow motion as if the laws of gravity are temporary postponed. An electrical cord, wound up like a steering wheel, can be moved in every direction. But once you connect the plugs at both ends of the cord to each other, the 'closed' cable refuses to do what you want it to do. You feel its resistance. It's magic magnetism.

This magnetic machine is an example of the newest generations of MRI's (7 Tesla) and Prof. Dr. Wolfhard Semmler and his colleagues of the German Cancer Research Centre in Heidelberg – part of the Helmholtz Association - willingly to tell us all about it. The bottom line: if we can make brain scans with more detail, we can make a more accurate diagnosis, leading to a better treatment. That's why MRI's gradually are getting more powerful; from 1,5T to 3 T in the 'old' days to 7 T now and even stronger machines in the near future.

So why the building does needs those huge amounts of steel: to keep the magnetic workforce as much as possible inside the building. So people with metal parts in their body won't get hurt when walking near the building while the MRI is on. To prevent a fatal attraction, if you'd like.

This is just one nugget of information we gleaned when, in September, a bunch of science journalists from Germany, Italy, Russia, Hungary, the UK and Netherlands crossed through 'Deutschland' by bus and plane to visit some (medical) research centers of the Helmholtz Association. It was a real pressure cooker regarding time, space, talks and topics. No lie-ins here, up at the crack of dawn and off. To give you an idea: we were in München, Heidelberg, Bonn, Berlin, Leipzig, Braunschweig and – again – Berlin. In the meantime, we were told about losing weight by drinking water, the impact of bio-banking for health science, the use of genomics and metabolomics in diabetes research, the ways in which Salmonella might help defeat cancer, sustainable mosquito control and about some new concepts to understand and treat neurodegenerative diseases. If you want to know more, please check out the Helmholtz Association.

But we even did more than enrich our minds with new topics, good scientific stories and getting acquainted with interesting research in the Helmholtz Centres. When we were eating, travelling or had some time off (too little!) we immediately were chit-chatting with each other, with our colleagues from other countries. That is why I value these trips; it's not only about knowledge, it's about people as well. This includes direct contact with researchers in Germany, as well as with the journalists from other countries joining the trip. How is it like, for instance, to write stories about scientific research in Italy, while being ruled over by premier Berlusconi? What are the hot topics for scientists in Hungary and is there enough money to do research in the first place? Why did the German government increase the research budget, while the Dutch government does the opposite? Do you make use of social media? Are you only writing stories or make videos as well? And so on, and so on.

Not to mention the small personal stories, such as Hélène's fall on the pavement (with long lasting effect) and the Segway that suddenly took off in Berlin, dragging Liesbeth with it. Ah, man, what a week with EUSJA can do to your life...

Pieter Lomans, member of the Dutch Association

The link between a three-branched tree, science journalism and the Barcelona Football Club

Investigative science journalist, Merce Piqueras reveals all!

Science journalists who attended the World Conference of Science Journalists held in Doha in June may remember the three-branched tree displayed on the conference bags, notebooks and other materials. That tree, which is the logo of the Qatar Foundation—the leader sponsor of the meeting—was already familiar to me. Since December 2010, it was announced that Barcelona Club—Barça, as we call it— had reached an agreement with Qatar Foundation for a five-year sponsorship, I had since seen the logo in Catalan newspapers and in a possible model of the new Barça's shirt.

Qatar Foundation is a government-funded organization that promotes education, research and knowledge in Qatar, the small emirate located in a small peninsula on the north-eastern coast of the bigger Arabian Peninsula, in the Persian Gulf. According to the International Monetary Fund's ranking, Qatar has the world's highest GDP. Aware that the country's current wealth lies on non-renewable resources--mainly oil and gas, Qatar Foundation tries to prepare the country for a future in which the wealth of the country would be based on knowledge. Sponsorship is a means to spread what they do. And Barça is one of the football teams best known around the world. So, having the name and logo of Qatar Foundation on the Barça's shirt would make it possible for millions of people to see it when watching a match on TV.

Let's go back to the Qatar Foundation logo. Someone from Qatar told me that the English name of that tree was 'sidra tree', which came from the Arabian name sidr. I found out that it was a Ziziphus (sometimes wrongly written as Zizyphus) species, the Ziziphus spina-christi, belonging to the Rhamnaceae family. The specific epithet of the sidra tree (spina-christi) means literally 'Christ thorn', and refers to the crown of thorns worn by Jesus Christ. In fact, it is a common shrub in Israel, which was already described in the Bible. Also the Quran mentions twice the Christ's thorn. The name of the genus (Ziziphus) is the Latin version of 'zizouf', the common Arabian name given to one species of Ziziphus that grows also in the Iberian peninsula: Ziziphus jujuba, called 'azufaifo' or 'azufeifo' in Spanish, and 'ginjoler' in Catalan.

The sidra tree and other Ziziphus species have been commonly used in folk medicine as a demulcent, depurative, anodyne, emollient, stomach and astringent, as well as for toothaches and as a mouth wash. Recently Ziziphus spina-christi has been proven to have broad-spectrum antimicrobial activity, which explains the traditional use of a decoction of fresh leaves to stimulate the healing of wounds and as an antiseptic agent.

The Qatar National Convention Centre sports the sidr...

In Qatar, poets, scholars and travellers traditionally found a shelter under the sidra tree's spread branches, probably one of the few shades they could find in that harsh climate. According to Qatar Foundation, the three main branches of the sidra tree in the logo symbolize the pillars of education, science and research, and the community development, which are the main objectives of the Foundation. Its deep tree roots connect present-day knowledge with the heritage and traditional culture of Qatar.

At the end, only the name of Qatar Foundation, but no the sidra tree, was printed on the Barcelona shirt, which was a pity. In fact, in Catalan, we have the expression "estar més content que un gínjol" ('gínjol' is the fruit of the Iberian Ziziphus), which means "to be as happy as a sandboy" or "to be as happy as a clam". Taking into account the good results obtained by Barcelona Club in most football –and also other sports— competitions, I thought that the sider tree on the shirt would have suited the mood of most Barça followers.

Mercè Piqueras, ACCC

...as does Barça's star player Lionel Messi.

The Lord of the Skies

Hawaii is not only a geological hot spot. Currently, edge cutting telescopes are nascent on the Pacific archipelago. Chief astronomer Guenther Hasinger speaks about their technology, the unsolved puzzles of space, extraterrestrial life, and the conception of "Nothing".

Professor Gunther Hasinger.

Professor Guenther Hasinger, in your new position as the director of the Hawaiin Institute of Astronomy you are one of the world's leading astronomers. Have you found time to relax under a shady palm tree, play „Aloha Oe" and zip a Mai Tai?

I moved to Hawaii to work, which is sometimes difficult in a place where most people come for vacation. However, we have bought a beautiful house with a small palm tree forest and a pool, so I can even swim under palm trees. I have started to learn the Ukulele and indeed can already play "Aloha Oe" in the Hawaiian language.

Under your directorship astronomy on the Pacific archipelago is expected to make big leaps. What does that mean in concrete terms?

We are in an exciting period of astronomy. On the Maui volcano Haleakala, a new telescope system called PanSTARRS (PS1), a wide angle telescope with the largest camera in the world (1.4 billion pixels), has started operations more than a year ago. We have already made a number of very exciting discoveries, e.g. a new distant comet, which will visit the sun and become visible with the naked eye in early 2013 and also a new class of extremely luminous supernova explosions. Currently we are building a second copy of this distributed aperture telescope PS2 on Haleakala and, ultimately, we hope to build a 4-telescope system PS4 on Mauna Kea on the Big Island of Hawaii. The Advanced Technology Solar Telescope (ATST) is the next one which will be constructed in this decade. Its 4 meter diameter primary mirror will dwarf all other solar telescopes in the world. Finally, the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) will be one of the most powerful telescopes in the world. Its primary mirror will be composed of 492 segments and it will contain the utmost of optical and fine mechanical technology currently available.

As one of the pioneers of X-ray astronomy you were instrumental in launching the ROSAT satellite, which opened a whole new window on our universe. Which other wavebands could be employed to "see" the big bang and even beyond?

O.k., ROSAT was operational for almost 10 years and then hibernated in orbit for another 11 years, before it safely fell into the Indian Ocean a few weeks ago. By making an all-sky survey and then later thousands of pointed observations it opened the eyes of all astronomers for soft X-ray radiation. In the meantime similarly or even more powerful telescopes have been launched for other wavebands, like hard X-rays (e.g. Chandra, XMM-Newton), Gamma Rays (e.g. INTEGRAL and Fermi), or the infrared waveband (e.g. the Spitzer and Herschel Space Telescopes). Also exiting results came from ground-based Cerenkov-Telescopes in the extremely energetic Gamma-ray region. We are all eagerly hoping that the next generation James Webb Space Telescope will survive the current financial struggles in Washington and open our eyes for the earliest generation of stars. It becomes more and more difficult to open a completely new window in astronomy. My largest hopes are for a break-through in gravitational wave astrophysics, where the first signals should be detected in this decade.

Looking into the night sky makes us feel so tiny and powerless. Will we ever understand what's going on up there? What do we get out of astronomy?

It is, on one hand, at the center of our curiosity – where do we come from and where do we go. As such it has already changed the paradigm of our sheer existence several times. Astrophysics and space science, however, also play another important role for our society. They are so exciting that they inspire kids to later pick up a profession in the science, technical and mathematical jobs, something which is essential for survival of our civilization. Finally, technology innovations motivated, triggered and developed by astrophysics are playing a major role in our daily life. Think e.g. about the bifocal eye glasses, cooking plates which do not heat up but rely on induction, the GPS system or in the future, the fusion power plants.

Milky Way has 100 billion stars and is part of another 100 billion galaxies. So there must be billions of planets around, many of them just like earth in the habitable zones of their solar systems. Are there millions of technologically advanced civilizations out there?

Life has been found on Earth in many locations, where it was not expected, e.g. deep underground or deep down in the sea. I am convinced that primitive forms of life should be rather common in the solar system and everywhere in our galaxy. However, the history of Earth shows that it takes much longer to develop more complex forms of life, let alone intelligence. The conditions for this are so far unique on our Earth. But the largest unsolved question is, how long an intelligent civilization can survive. Even if there are one thousand intelligent civilizations in our Milky Way, their average distance will be about 1000 light years. If we would like to communicate with them e.g. by telephone, **Continued on page 12.**

a simple "Hello – Hello" call would last 2000 years! Are we still able to pick up a telephone in 2000 years?

Is there a coherent theory in sight which can explain the deep space mysteries?

Many generations of physicists, already starting with the late Albert Einstein, try to combine the two fundamental and extremely successful theories of the 20. century, Relativity and Quantum Theory. So far there is no real break-through in sight and according to my judgement things are getting too complicated. I still hope for a wonder, though.

In your book „The Fate of the Universe" 13,7 billion years shrink to a single one. The Big Bang coincides with the New Year's fireworks, eight months later our planet was formed, pine trees were invented by nature just before Christmas, the dinosaurs died on December 29, Christ was born 4.6 seconds before midnight, on February 12 of the next year the planet becomes unbearably hot for human beings, on July 10 our sun explodes and turns into a Red Giant, then, 7300 years later, all stars are dying, it becomes dark again, and in ten exponent hundred years (a one with ninety zeros!) nothing is left. What does that mean?

In my simplistic view the universe starts from "Nothing", which is a very complicated and highly energetic chaotic quantum state. The universe then borrows some energy from this "Nothing" and develops a long and beautiful life of its own. But in many aeons this energy has to be given back, so that the final state is "Nothing" again.

Interview: Wolfgang C. Goede, TELI
Many thanks, Professor Hasinger!

Debate

Looking back to the future

WPK 25 years

Martin Schneider is Chairman of the Board of the German Science Journalists' Association (WPK)
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Journalism has changed dramatically in the last 25 years, and this does not exclude science journalism. Such change has shaped the German Science Journalists' Association which is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2011.

It is more than a little ironic that the history of the German Science Journalists' Association (WPK) has been marked by two nuclear disasters. Coincidence? Perhaps, but not only. When the reactor exploded in Chernobyl 25 years ago, this was indeed the spark that led to the foundation of WPK: it became blatantly obvious that there were far too few science journalists. The catastrophe in Fukushima earlier this year is thus an appropriate peg on which to review the developments in the field since then.

Today, no one could claim we are short of science journalists. Reporting on Fukushima saw science journalists of all media competently reporting from the front line. All the papers have science sections, there are stacks of sci-magazines on sale, most TV channels have one or more science programmes – including four daily ones – and an entire radio channel is exclusively devoted to knowledge-based themes. Has WPK fulfilled its mission?

You don't have to dig far beneath the shiny surface to discover massive fractures and problems. The most recent edition of a German specialist magazine even went so far as to predict the "end of science journalism." The financial pressure on editorial offices, the professionalisation of science PR and the drastic changes brought about by the Internet and Web 2.0 are confronting science journalism with new challenges, if under a different flag.

How do the "boom and crisis" fit together? To understand this, you have to take a look back at what has happened to science journalism since the founding of WPK. While a review like this is bound to be broad-brush, a positive take on today's problems does reveal that science journalism has found its place in journalism as a whole.

In the mid-1980s, science journalists were a rare breed in editorial offices, if they existed in the first place. Basically, they were "science translators" and, as such, part of the science system. At the time, translation was thought to be necessary because the scientists themselves kept the public at arm's length. "Science dialogue" was not yet on the agenda. Hard as it is to believe today, quite a few universities didn't even have proper press offices.

In 1986, WPK set out to promote dialogue between science and the public and to gain more exposure for science and technology topics in the media. Up to 59 press conferences a year in Bonn, and later in Berlin, provided WPK members with access to the themes. WPK set its own agenda and this included strict rules: only journalists were eligible to become members, not press officers. Whilst maintaining the proximity to science, this guaranteed journalistic distance which was to become ever more important in the years to come.

By the end of the 1990s, accessing information was no longer the problem. On the contrary, editorial offices were flooded with invitations to press conferences and press trips. This was a direct consequence of research institutions professionalising their public outreach. Scientists had discovered how to use the media for their own purposes – and that media presence could have a positive effect on the award of third-party funding.

The concept of the science journalist as translator became obsolete. The scientists and their press offices could do that themselves. A change started to emerge in WPK's mission.

At about the same time, the journalists' mission

came under threat from another side, too. The Internet gave anyone who wanted it immediate access to factual knowledge, which made the classic journalistic tenets of classification, evaluation, assessment and uncovering vested interests even more important.

WPK responded by changing its portfolio: fewer classic press conferences and more workshops to promote journalistic skills, off the record discussions and press trips. WPK still continues to adapt its portfolio to meet the new challenges of the day.

At present, we are faced with the effects of the professionalisation of PR coming together with an unprecedented, existential requirement for press offices to economise. The slump in advertising revenue is having an increasingly disastrous impact on budgets. And the poorer you are, the more reliant you are on charity. The ready-to-serve agency texts and press releases come right on cue.

Even the venerable scientific journals have now entered the competition for the best story. And the consequence is that whereas scientists used to accuse journalists of sensationalising the news, they or their press offices now do it themselves. Increasingly, science journalists find themselves having to trim down apparent sensations to uncover their real significance.

While all this is going on, the Internet is continuing to challenge science journalism unabated. Everyone can google, and with the emergence of Web 2.0 another monopoly has been broken: blogging scientists publish and comment themselves, and the recipient responds online. Effectively, everyone can become a publisher nowadays.

All these developments taken together mean that business has speeded up enormously. You have to be able to evaluate a report almost before you've read it. The problem with this acceleration and the concomitant work load is that the public get a completely lopsided impression of science which seems to be an unceasing succession of breakthroughs. You don't have time to write research-intensive background stories because you would have to abandon your office chair. And this is practically out of the question.

The changes in editorial structures are responsible for another change in job description and mission. The newsroom is increasingly taking over editorial offices. This is a development that draws science out of the ghetto but also exposes it to the bitter winds of competition with all the rest of the news, and demands new approaches. And, lastly, today's science journalists need crossmedia competence. In the electronic media the boundaries between radio, television and internet are crumbling, and even the online versions of newspapers use multimedia more than ever before.

In its 25th anniversary year, WPK has already started to address these new challenges. The focus is now on continuing education in journalistic skills, investigative trips and press conferences at selected locations that create space for unhurried background stories and active debate on quality in science journalism.

Against this backdrop, it would be absolutely essential to found an organisation like WPK – if it weren't for the fact that this happened 25 successful years ago.

Martin Schneider

Doha newspaper covered the WCSJ

Well, we didn't exactly make the headlines on the first page, but inside one of the issues of the Doha newspaper "The Peninsula" the Qatari public could read an article in English about the Finnish morning session on Nordstream, and some information about the conference and The World Federation of Science Journalists. So now we've been in the paper! Not bad for science journalists.

From left: Barbara Drillsma, science journalist, ABSW and EUSJA in the UK; Kaianders Sempler of Ny Teknik magazine in Sweden; Janne Hukkinen, a professor at the University of Helsinki, Finland; Marzenna Nowakowska, MWN Media, Poland and Helena Raunio of Tekniika and Talous business magazine in Finland. (ABDUL BASIT)

Meet focuses on way journalists do stories

BY RAYNALD C RIVERA

DOHA: The morning plenary on the concluding day of the World Conference of Science Journalists 2011 titled 'One Gas Pipeline, Seven Versions of Reality: Framing in Journalism' discussed the varied ways of framing stories using the case of Nord Stream pipeline project across the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany.

The 1,220km long gas pipeline worth €7.4bn will meet about 25 percent of the growth in Europe's gas import needs between 2005 and 2025. The controversial project has raised various concerns from different countries which will be affected by it and the job of the journalist is to

Panellists comprising journalists from Sweden, Finland and Poland shared their experiences on the issue, revealing diversity of ways journalists from each country treat the issue from political to environmental to economic.

Explaining the background and development of the project, Kaianders Sempler of Ny Teknik magazine in Sweden said Swedes thought the project would never happen because it would be difficult for the Germans and Russians to comply with Swedish demands. But to everyone's surprise, the Nord Stream consortium showed they had solved all environmental and diplomatic problems.

With Swedish journalists exhausting the various angles

people even the media doesn't anymore talk about, said Sempler.

In Finland, however, it is still a hot topic in the media circuit, said Helena Raunio of Tekniika and Talous business magazine in Finland, adding the issue was seen as purely environmental by politicians and media practitioners.

"During the planning and construction years of the pipe the media did not discuss the political consequences of the project. The concern was focused more on the pollution of Baltic Sea and Russian oil tanker traffic," she said.

The Finnish media has framed the key issues surrounding the gas pipeline project as one of balancing economic and energy security benefits with potential ecological

Finland. However the project has much broader concerns including post-Soviet geopolitics, indigenous people's rights, global climate change and potential for catastrophic accidents.

For the Polish media, the project was more of the political concern with many considering the pipeline as 'a new Kremlin idea to blackmail Poland', explained Marzenna Nowakowska, MWN Media, Poland.

Hundreds of stories appeared in the Polish media concerned over the impact of the project on the energy security of the country. "Our energy security is threatened as Russia is using and will use natural gas as a foreign policy tool."

The session exposed the many ways and angles on how a story

SiS Catalyst:

Children As Change Agents for Science and Society

EUSJA is acting as an advisor on SIS Catalyst. We asked co-ordinator TRICIA JENKINS to give a brief overview of the project.

Across the world there are streets where 8 out of 10 young people go to university, there are also neighbourhoods where it is less than 8 in a 100. The reasons for this are historical, socio-economic and educational but also cultural. Where you live, and the income of your parents, defines the life chances of a child. However, increasingly universities are starting to ask themselves the question, what is their role in addressing this inequality?

SiS Catalyst is an ambitious project which seeks to identify the changes in culture that we need to embrace by addressing the fundamental question of how we include children in our institutional learning. The pace of change is accelerating and our children's ability to operate within the developing technology will soon put them in a position which outstrips our ability to teach them. What we must now do is recognise that the time has come for us to learn from them, mutual learning for their future.

The four year project is funded by the European Commission Framework and involves a consortium of over 30 Partners/Advisers from 23 countries. It is one of the first Mobilisation and Mutual Learning Action Plans (MML), which will lead to new ways of doing research, addressing the 'grand challenges' and developing technologies which encompass societal needs and concerns.

SiS Catalyst takes a broad approach to science as interconnected branches of learning, because we believe that the solutions to the big research questions of the future will be found through interdisciplinary working, free from the artificial boundaries that we have created between academic disciplines. At the heart of this, is collective learning at institutional and community levels.

There are two main pillars of work within the project; the mainstreaming of science in society activities for children through the development of practical and easy delivery guidelines and support, and the mobilisation of the political processes involved which are required to effect change. There are three crosscutting themes: Listening to Young People, Recognising the Role of Students and Building the Dialogue with Key Players (organisers, scientific researchers and managers). These will work across the lifetime of SiS Catalyst to ensure that these unique perspectives are listened to in all aspects of delivery.

Our work will focus on young people currently unlikely to progress to higher education, and an important element of the project will be the identification of 'locally defined minorities', an important first step towards defining social inclusion targets and priorities at institutional, national and European levels. Our society needs the talents and ideas of all our young people.

As this project involves children and students, there will be work which focuses specifically on the ethics of this and we will produce guidelines with pan-European applicability. The impact of the project will be measured through the development of tools which enable Higher Education Institutions to self evaluate and to test their progress, both on a strategic and practical level, and to contextual these in regional, national, European and global contexts.

Octavio Quintana Trias, Director of the European Research Area, said: "By placing education at the heart of the dialogue between science and society, and by considering children as highly relevant actors in the science and society relationship, this new project brings together the core issues required for responsible behaviours in a sustainable society.

Our children are growing up in a world where our beautiful planet Earth is under direct threat from our human activities, where technology is developing exponentially and where our ability to communicate globally is becoming commonplace. Our society and our institutions need to find a way to keep up with these changes.

www.siscatalyst.eu Coordinator: Tricia Jenkins MBE, Director, International Centre for Excellence in Educational Opportunities, The University of Liverpool, UK tjenkins@liv.ac.uk

More on how EUSJA will be involved and any role different member organisations will play will be discussed at our General Assembly –in March.

Editors for this issue of EusjaNews have been Barbara Drillsma **<drillsma-milgrom@lineone.net>** and Kaianders Sempler **<kaianders.sempler@nyteknik.se>**

Christina Scott Killed in Car Crash

Christina Scott, one of the world's most admired and respected science journalists, has died in a freak car accident on 31st October in Cape Town. It is a tragic loss to all who knew her.

Christina with her children Ben, Ali and Nozipo.

Christina was a managing editor for Research Africa, and hosted the weekly Science Matters programme on South Africa's main national English-language radio station, SAfm. Originally from Canada, Christina had made South Africa her home. Her pride in Africa was clear when, on one of my many trips to the continent, she greeted me saying, "Welcome to the land of your ancestors!"

Christina came originally from Canada, with a Masters degree in English literature. But she soon became fascinated by science journalism. She told a workshop in Port Elizabeth in 2006, "There's nothing more interesting in South Africa than science journalism because you can use it to look at the entire country."

Christina was a prolific and talented science journalist who loved to share her knowledge and skills. She was a mentor for the World Federation of Science Journalists from 2006-2009, Africa news editor for SciDev.Net (2007-9), and an energetic and entertaining contributor to the World Conference of Science Journalists in Melbourne (2007), London (2009) and Doha (2011).

In Melbourne, she had the lights of the main auditorium switched off, plunging delegates into darkness, and lit a small lighter, to illustrate one of the technical challenges often faced by journalists in Africa – electrical power failures.

For many of us, a light has now gone out. Christina will be hugely missed by all who knew her.

Christina is survived by her 3 children, Ben, Ali and Nozipo, of whom she was immensely proud, and her mother and sisters in Canada.

See here for a news story on the website of the World Federation of Science Journalists:
http://www.wfsj.org/news/news.php?id=266

Julie Clayton

A Suggestion

Dear EUSJA Colleagues, We as science journalists – and our profession - are getting less and less newspaper space and air time. This is bad for science journalists; science; journalism; the public and democracy. So what can we do about it?

Please, no complaining or whimpering in public, let's do something creative, something funny and something spectacular. Let us show the public, politicians, scientists and publishers why we, as specialist journalists, should be given more space, not less.

Here's a rough suggestion (scribbled at Barbie's request on a bus hurtling though Germany on the Helmholtz study trip) to get the ball rolling.

Let us show the world what it will look like without science journalism. Let's design a campaign – ourselves! We can design an advertisement with the message showing how things would look like without our profession. We can highlight the questions that will not be asked and answered and lies which will be told and not answered. We can also make a commercial video with this message. We can show the world what we offer and what will be missed without us. This is something all EUSJA associations can do individually as well as us having a collective effort, maybe involving the World Federation.

Let us all start thinking of being creative and productive – it is what we are good at!

Liesbeth Jongkind, Netherlands

FINNS GET WCSJ 2013

The Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists, FASEJ, will arrange the 2013 World Conference of Science Journalists.

Yes, they finally did it! The Finnish bid for the 2013 World Conference of Science Journalists was adopted with acclaim in Doha, and the next conference will take place in Helsinki.

Small wonder, as the were no other competitors. Anyway, congratulations to our Finnish collegues. Veesa Niinikangas, who is now president of the World Federation, says humbly that he does not wish to be addressed as "his exellency". It is quite sufficient with "mr President", he says.

Isnt' he a darling?

Kaianders Sempler, collegue

Vesa Niinikangas, new WFSJ president.

Eusja 2011

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