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# Time to stand up proudly for our profession

Just like wine vintages there are good and not so good years. I don't think 2013 was a particularly fine one – maybe it was because it was an odd number. However, ever the optimist, I am sure 2014 is going to run much more smoothly.



Barbie Drillsma at the European Health Forum Gastein EHFG 2013 (photo by Wolfgang C. Goede)

What turmoil there was in 2013 in the world of science journalism. Jobs lost; television stations closed down without notice; respected science correspondents told their contracts were not being renewed; and lineage payments and fees reduced to the point where we all ought to set ourselves up as charities!

*“EUSJA has fared quite well, thanks to the efforts of the board”*

It is not all doom and gloom, however. EUSJA has fared quite well, thanks to the efforts of the board. We, mainly due to the hard work by Me-

nelaos Sotiriou, have enough funding to offer several paid jobs to EUSJA members. The applications are in for the first three and job offers will either be out or finalised as I write. A further six posts are currently being prepared for offer to our membership.

We also have had two session proposals approved and accepted. For the first time EUSJA will be taking part in the International Public Communication of Science and Technology Conference taking place in Salvador, Brazil in May.

And we have a good slot at ESOF in Copenhagen. Wolfgang Goede has

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► Letter from Barbie Drillsma, EUSJA president

# Time to stand up proudly for our profession

*continued from first page*

been the main instigator of our participation at these prestigious events, aided by Menelaos.

"This shows that collaboration across continental borders and the Atlantic makes a lot of sense and is a model for the future," says Wolfgang.

We held a record number of study trips in 2013 and I know Viola Egikova is working hard trying to surpass this number for this year.

However, in the early days of EUSJA, study trips were almost always suggested and generated by member associations and were organised for

their news value. As associations get poorer, corporate bodies and companies appear to be the ones with funds and consequently eager to entice a captive audience of journalists by providing a full programme and funding. It would be good if we could all have a big think to see if we can return to our previous model or at least have a balance of EUSJA association-generated study tours.

***"It is time to stand up proudly for our profession and to constantly stress the important role the media plays in our everyday lives."***

All in all I believe we should look back and check the original aims of EUSJA. We must remember we are a fellowship of like-minded people. It is time to stand up proudly for our profession and to constantly stress the important role the media plays in our everyday lives.

I read recently about a small Gandhi temple in Dhamtari, India dedicated specially to newspapers. Here, thousands of devotees gather daily to worship, bowing reverentially to a large pile of newspapers as they believe they spread knowledge, propagate human values and prevent people from doing wrong.

Now there's something to aim for, but I did say I am an optimist. Happy New Year to you all. Let's try and make it a happy, peaceful and prosperous one for EUSJA.

**BARBIE DRILLSMA, EUSJA PRESIDENT**

► Science Journalism

# Science PR



*Birgit Kofler moderating a round table on nosocomial infections*

**We recently had a most interesting panel discussion in the framework of the European Health Forum Gastein, one of the many international congresses whose media relations were organised and implemented by our agency this year. Among other things, the discussion dealt with the changing working conditions among science journalists in times of tight budgets and increasing pressure toward thrift in media organisations.**

**BY BIRGIT KOFLER\*,  
MEMBER OF THE AUSTRIAN ASSOCIATION**

**T**his is a question, by the way, though not part of the Gastein discussion, that science communicators also will have to increasingly address. In our business too we are often faced with the challenge of producing a lot of output with ever shrinking financial resources in order to more efficiently perform our bridging function between science and the media.

This situation, of course, only changes the fundamentals of cooperation between science-related PR and science journalists by degrees -not in principle. By degrees, because in times of increased cost pressures, both sides can benefit significantly from a high-quality and transparent cooperation. Not in principle, in my view, because some basic rules should shape cooperation in every case so that it can lead to the desired win-win situation on both sides.

# and science journalism:

## *some suggestions for fruitful cooperation*

And as I see it, good and solid cooperation between science communicators and journalists definitely constitutes such a win-win situation. There are two main reasons for this. On the one hand, it permits PR people to make research results or other topics of the institutions, organisations or academic conferences that they represent available to a broader public. And on the other hand, good science PR helps reporters to orient themselves relatively quickly through an otherwise unmanageable information flood, to get assistance in identifying relevant topics and to be able to use reliable and effective sources to produce good stories, all under time pressure. This cooperation should benefit both sides, which presupposes that the game is played fairly and within clean and transparent rules.

In these circumstances, journalists must be able to rely on the information provided being current, relevant and correct. It leads to their justifiable irritation when PR people lure them to an event through promises of great stories and then nothing newsworthy is offered. Not so rare among the 'sins' of PR actors, in this regard, is the peddling of old scientific findings as new. Rather than being clever, this is a disruptive factor in the relationship of trust with journalists.

Similarly, a not infrequently applied trick on the part of communicators, that is also bad for trustful relations, is sailing under false flags: one pretends to be the official mouthpiece of a particular event, a congress for example, but only uses the occasion to disseminate interest-driven information that is in no way relevant to the event itself. Other 'no-goes' on the part of science communicators are circulating press releases without substantial content that could be used for reporting, or presenting data and results without verifiable sources. Another deplorable tactic is to present study results in a selective and distorted fashion, so that important elements fall between the cracks.

On the other hand, science communicators should be able to trust journalists to deal accurately and fairly with the topics and material offered to them. It is neither correct nor fair, for example, to make use of resources, materials and contacts gathered at scientific events or to conduct inter-



*Birgit with Professor Helmut Brand, president of the European Health Forum Gastein, at a meeting with science journalists (Photo by Viola Egikova)*

views with leading experts and then fail to insert a single word in their coverage about the context in which the information was acquired.

Another irritation we experience is media people extracting to the fullest the wealth of information from their science PR sources, and then putting the assembled findings and statements in the mouth of friendly experts who have absolutely nothing to do with the study or conference. Also problematic is accepting research or study tour invitations and then, despite good content offered by the programme, reporting nothing about it. Just to avoid misunderstanding, the issue for me here is not about exercising influence concerning what is reported, but simply about a common understanding that reporting be done -that too involves a serious handling of scarce resources.

As far as fruitful cooperation for the benefit of both sides is concerned, the track record of our agency is widely positive after all these years with many projects, many congresses and intensive cooperation with journalists. This is borne out by the fact that we have been working together with many journalists (in ever increasing numbers) over a long period of time, an indication that both sides are convinced of its usefulness and mutual benefit. Let's try to keep it that way.

**\* Birgit works for B&K Bettschart & Kofler Kommunikationsberatung, which has offices in both Vienna and Berlin. In this article she suggests ways in which science journalists and science PR people can cooperate effectively, and points out some professional sins committed on both sides.**

► From her office in Moscow, Viola previews the EU-Russia Year of Science

# The New Year started in November



From left to right: Richard Burger (Head of the Science & Technology Section, Delegation of the European Union to the Russian Federation), Robert-Jan Smits (General Director, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission), Máire Geoghegan-Quinn (European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science) and Vygaudas Ušackas (Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Russian Federation) during the launch of EU-Russia Science Year (Photograph by Ludmila Cherneta)

**I do not invite you to change your calendar, not at all! But there is something pretty unusual in the Russian tradition of celebrating the start of a year. Actually we celebrate it twice – first with the rest of the world on 1 January and later inside the country: on 14 January we meet the so-called “old new year”. We got that tradition thanks to the Orthodox Church, which preferred to stay with the former calendar when much of the rest of the world changed for the new one.**

BY VIOLA EGIKOVA,  
EUSJA VICE-PRESIDENT

It's a long story, but in short: annually we have two New Years (and so two Christmases) during two weeks. Not so bad since it is a cheerful time that continues till mid January. But this year we exceeded our tradition: the fireworks on the Moscow

river on 25 November were in honour of the launch of EU-Russia Science Year 2014.

One may say we've got the third New Year. If so, it should be the most innovative and scientific. As it was said during

the official launch about the aim of the event, it was “to celebrate the vibrant and multifaceted cooperation in science, technology and higher education between

the EU, our Member States and the Russian Federation”.

Speaking at the event, Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn mentioned that the EU-Russia Year of Science was “a chance to look to the future and renew our scientific relationship”. This relationship, commented General Director of DG Research and Innovation, European Commission Robert-Jan Smits, has a long history, but the Year has to take it to the next level.

About 200 events are planned in both Russia and EU Member States. Some will be dedicated to ongoing projects including some under the 7th Framework Programme; some will introduce the new EU-Russia collaboration within Horizon 2020. These are the shared research projects in space, supercomputing, biomedicine, climate change and environmental health, the search for new energy sources and so on.

Russia takes part in many European projects. One well-known example is CERN, where there is a major

*“The fireworks on the Moscow river on 25 November were in honour of the launch of EU-Russia Science Year 2014.”*



*EUSJA vice-president Viola Egikova with Patrick Vittet-Philippe, head of the Russia and Japan desks at the European Commission (Photograph by Ludmila Cherneta)*

participation of Russian scientists. Another interesting example is ITER in Cadarache - the biggest scientific experiment to test the viability of fusion as an energy source. The largest shared project is the European XFEL in Hamburg, which will generate ultra short X-ray flashes with a brilliance a billion times higher than that of the best conventional X-ray radiation. Another big project is being planned with ESRF in Grenoble where the biggest neutron source was built. There are shared projects for space discoveries, where Russian scientists collaborate with their counterparts in ESA.

Science journalists probably know about these contacts better than anybody else since we are always meeting scientists. Also some EUSJA study trips have improved EU-Russia contacts on various occasions: we recently visited Cadarache and learned about ITER, we were in ESRF in Grenoble, we have seen the research centres of the Helmholtz Association in Germany, and we are planning to visit Hamburg and see XFEL in 2014.

I hope that the EU-Russia Science Year will lead to the organisation of different events - a Russian study trip for example. If we manage to set up such a trip, we shall visit some interesting research centres and meet Russian colleagues. Another plan is connected with the Science Festival in Moscow: there is an idea to organise a "European village" in order to introduce different scientific centres to the general public. This idea needs shared efforts, so any advice will be highly appreciated.

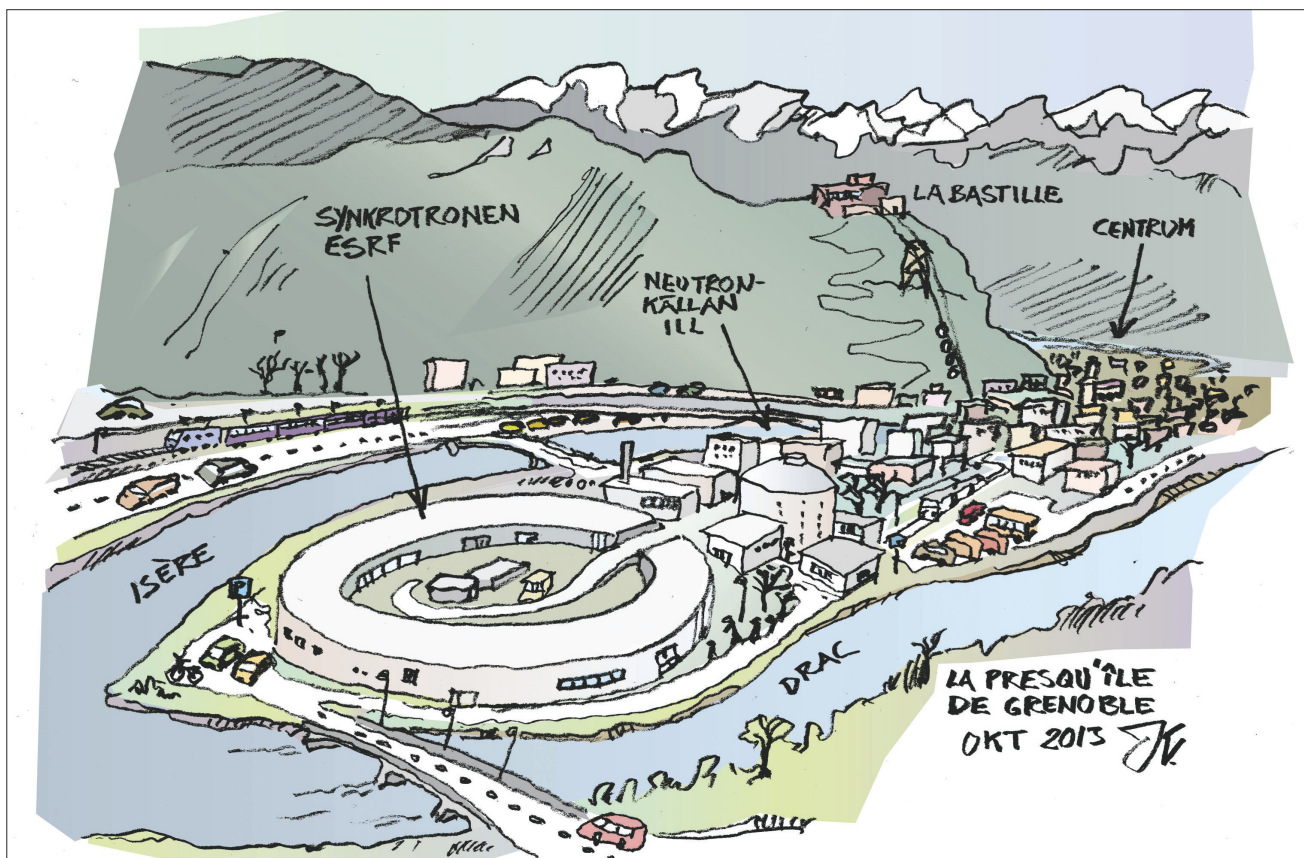
Why not join EU-Russia Science Year? EUSJA participates in its schedule. A Happy New Year!

**For more information on the EU-Russia Year of Science, including the latest news and events, please see <http://eu-russia-yearofscience.eu>**

♦ EUSJA study trips

# Lindau and Grenoble study trips

Several people who took part in EUSJA study trips have posted their personal reports on [www.eusja.org](http://www.eusja.org), which is well worth a visit. To whet your appetite, here are two trip reports written specially for EUSJA News, one on Lindau and one on Grenoble.



An overview of the Grenoble complex drawn by Kaianders

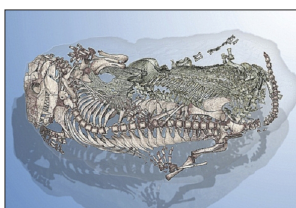
## A GIANT visit to Grenoble

BY KAIANDERS SEMPLER,  
SWEDISH NATIONAL DELEGATE

The French city of Grenoble is home to an international research park that is among the most modern in Europe. I visited Grenoble on an EUSJA study trip in October, to learn about GIANT, Grenoble Innovation for Advanced New Technologies. GIANT comes about with the cooperation of eight institutions. In one of the eight, the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF), using x-rays and neutrons researchers are able to analyse everything from ancient fossils to influenza viruses. The ESRF has

Europe's top x-ray source, at least according to its researchers. It has 40 lines where experiments are made in fields as diverse as electronics, nanotechnology and molecular biology.

I was intrigued by the results of X-ray analysis of some fossils of mammal-like reptiles that had burrowed down to protect themselves as best they could when a natural disaster killed off 90 per cent of all terrestrial species about 250 million years ago.



One of the fossils studied

You can read more, in Swedish, in an article by Kaianders in *Ny Teknik* at <http://goo.gl/fHsdKj>



Lindau harbour

## Nobel laureates meeting at Lindau

BY VALERIA FIERAMONTE,  
MEMBER OF UGIS

It's not every day that you see together more than 30 Nobel laureates and over 600 of the elite troops of the best young researchers in the world, but that's what happened at Lindau this summer. The 63rd meeting, which ran from 30 June to 5 July, was focused on chemistry.

Green chemistry and climate change were among the many topics discussed. As Sir Harold W. Kroto (Nobel prize in chemistry in 1996 for carbon-60) said: "we are called to clean up the dirt we have created".

Steven Chu (Nobel prize in physics in 1997 for the development of methods to cool and trap atoms with laser light), former US Secretary of Energy during the first Obama term, was one of the main attractions of the meeting. Now he has returned to being a professor at Stanford University.

I asked him if he did not think that in the field of green chemistry and renewable energies everything happens 'too little too late', but he said that he is convinced that 'it is not too late'.

The meeting topics were too vast and complex to sum up in a simple article and I have therefore made a summary, referring to the thousands of web pages written before, during and after the meeting, and the questions put to specific researchers.

It is not long since scientists began to treat nature not as an enemy to dominate but as a friend of great experience from which to copy techniques and strategies. The use of solar panels and wind is one example; the study of how photosynthesis takes place in nature and the attempts to

copy its methods of production is another.

Hartmut Michel, winner of the Nobel prize for chemistry in 1988, says that photosynthesis is the most important chemical reaction on earth, and won his award for clarifying how a membrane protein active in the photosynthetic process is built up.

The key issues regarding green chemistry, however, were a little simpler: the use of environmentally friendly and less polluting catalysts, water splitting and energy storage.

As to water splitting, for example, one can say that it has existed since electricity was invented, but to do the splitting we use methane, which produces polluting effects. New techniques based on solar energy could really open the chapter of hydrogen: if instead of the final product being  $H_2 + CO$  (obtained via the use of methane plus water) it produced the reaction  $H_2 + O_2$  (using electricity plus water) then it would release oxygen instead of carbon monoxide. Researchers are studying how to make the anodes and cathodes react directly with sunlight.

Finally, a piece of useful advice given to the young researchers at Lindau by Richard Ernst (Nobel in chemistry 1991 for his contribution to the development of nuclear magnetic resonance) was that excessive and competitive work is not needed when aiming for a Nobel, as it is more important to have an original thought and set one's own goals clearly.

**Reports and videos of the 2013 and earlier Lindau meetings can be found on the [www.lindau-nobel.org](http://www.lindau-nobel.org) website.**

► *ESOF 2014 Copenhagen preview*

# Live debate to bridge the science democracy-gap

**After four years of R&D in the EUSJA labs, participants of this year's EuroScience Open Forum may attend the rollout of a new journalistic tool and platform.**



Photo: Visit Carlsberg, © ESOF

**BY WOLFGANG C. GOEDE,  
EUSJA HONORARY SECRETARY**

**E**urope's largest science conference is coming to Copenhagen. The Danish capital will host the 6th EuroScience Open Forum this June. Evaluation of previous conferences has shown that the audience has become tired of the traditional expert panels.

ESOF 2014 is therefore experimenting with more interactive sessions with the intention of leading the way to more participation in science. EUSJA will cater to this new programme design and has received

the go-ahead for "A Live Debate about Nanotechnology".

For years, nanotechnology has been hailed as the next scientific revolution. "Nanotech" has already become a fancy brand that is supposed radically to advance medical diagnosis and treatment, provide cheap and sustainable energy, resolve environmental issues and improve consumer products. There remain severe doubts about the health risks of using nanoparticles, however. Moreover, nanotechnology is feared to pose deeper ethical challenges with respect to human enhancement, equity, privacy and security. Despite these legitimate fears, as well as fundamental questions, this new technology is proliferating and conquering everyday life. Nanoparticles reinforce sun blocks, keep our clothes fresh and clean, and prevent scratches in our glasses. Electronic equipment and LED lamps contain these extremely small elements. Is this solid scientific and technological progress or are we gambling with our future?

To shed light on this conflict EUSJA has invited some

**ESOF  
2014  
COPENHAGEN  
EUROSCIENCE  
OPEN  
FORUM**



**New interactive and participatory formats in science, technology and innovation: Roundtables during ESOF 2012 in Dublin on what will power Europe's future. (Photographs and illustrations: ESOF 2014 materials © ESOF and © GOEDE)**

principal stakeholders for a live debate. Confirmed participants of research and industry are:

- Wolfgang M. Heckl, International Nano Research Expert, Prof. Dr, Technical University Munich (TUM), and
- Steffi Friedrichs, Dr, Director General Nanotechnology Industries Association, Brussels.

Representing Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) will be:

- Claus Jørgensen, Danish Consumer Council, Senior Policy Adviser, Environment and Social Responsibility, and

- Lone Mikkelsen, PhD Biology, Danish Ecological Council, European Environmental Bureau (EEB).

The session will be audience-centred. After an introduction about the SWOTs — strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of nanotechnology — the participants will develop specific questions. The representatives of research and industry as well as of environmental protection and consumer rights will be asked to answer

these very briefly and concisely. The debate that will follow among the experts and the audience will focus on the questions of whether Europe needs more regulation and whether nanotech products should be labelled accordingly. The results will be recorded and a report submitted to the European Commission with recommendations.

The debate is based on EUSJA sessions held during the previous four years. At ESOF 2010 Turin, ESOF 2012 Dublin and WCSJ 2013 Helsinki, the European science journalists unfolded, step by step, a theory of the science debate. The Copenhagen Live Debate will be the first implementation of this preliminary work.

The new method focuses on what has been called the “science democracy-gap”. Citizens, voters, taxpayers

***EUSJA has received the go-ahead for “A Live Debate about Nanotechnology”.***

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► *ESOF 2014 Copenhagen preview*

# Live debate to bridge the science democracy-gap



After the speeches at ESOF 2012, the audience discussed in small groups about an issue of choice concerning Energy, and each group was invited to express in a few words the results of the debate (left hand caption). Science Debate ESOF Dublin 2012 (right hand caption).

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and consumers generally feel badly informed about major scientific and technological themes. This deficit is, however, detrimental to a democratic society. Only well-informed people can be entrusted with their government, said Thomas Jefferson more than 200 years ago. This dictum holds true also for the scientific-technological and innovative cluster in our modern, science-driven society.

Citizens need to participate in the societal dialogue about science and technology if they want to make an informed choice about their future. They have to be accepted as stakeholders and drawn into decision-making processes for this reason, and also for the sake of making the flow of public money transparent and holding the investors accountable.

During the last few years, dialogues have been established in many parts of Europe, but analysts have come to the conclusion that their social engineering is geared towards top-down processes. So far citizens

are only invited in after the experts have made the essential decisions. This type of peripheral or domesticated rather than empowered participation does not contribute to social robustness of the science and technology sector but, on the contrary, leads to exclusion and subsequently resentment.

So goes much of the philosophical background to the EUSJA Live Debate. It zeroes in on the widely led discourse about a collaborative and deliberative, inclusive and empowering society. The EUSJA debate scheme introduces these civil society standards, which have been raised so far only for the political realm, to research and related fields.

In journalistic terms, this model is based on the classic principle of mass communication. Journalists are impartial and, by and large, mediators of the societal talk, bridging gaps and addressing conflicts. But the principle has never been systematically and methodologically applied to science, technology and innovation. Copenhagen will become an important test bed for this innovative approach.



## Useful links

■ **EuroScience Open Forum 2014 Copenhagen**

<http://esof2014.org/>

■ **Shawn Otto on the science democracy-gap**

[http://www.maecenata.eu/images/documents/mi/resources/2013\\_op68.pdf](http://www.maecenata.eu/images/documents/mi/resources/2013_op68.pdf)

■ **Philosophy of science debates**

<http://www.eusja.org/science-debates-journalism-or-pr/>

## ► EUSJA

# General assembly and elections

**The annual general assembly will take place on Saturday 29 March. Thanks to the work of Oliver Lehmann and the Austrian association, it will take place in Vienna.**

**T**here will be elections at this GA for the positions of EUSJA president, EUSJA vice-president and EUSJA honorary secretary, and those elected will hold office for two years. Priit Ennet was elected treasurer at the 2013 GA in Prague, and therefore there will be no election for this position in Vienna.

A three-person committee to organise the reception of nominations was elected in Prague. The members are Raili Leino, Jacopo Pasotti and Mercè Piqueras. They have sent a request for nominations to the EUSJA delegates, with a closing date of 2 February 2014.



*The EUSJA board and delegates at the General Assembly in Prague, March 2013.*

## ► ESOF 2014

## Scholarships to ESOF for members of EUSJA associations

**A**s a member of the ESOF International Marketing and Communication Committee, I am pleased to report that at a recent meeting of this committee the organisers decided to allocate ten scholarships to EUSJA to assist science journalists to participate.

**-ISTVAN PALUGYAI,  
HUNGARIAN NATIONAL DELEGATE**

**■ ESOF, the EuroScience Open Forum, is scheduled to take place in Copenhagen from 21 to 26 June this year. Be sure to check the [www.eusja.org](http://www.eusja.org) page for information on how to apply for an EUSJA scholarship, when it becomes available.**

## Writing for EUSJA News

**Your voluntary contributions for consideration for inclusion in EUSJA News are very welcome. If you would like to write an article, please check first with the editor Anna Nolan about feasibility, angle and length ([anolan@iol.ie](mailto:anolan@iol.ie)).**

## Social media and EUSJA

**As well as a wealth of information, EUSJA has blog facilities on [www.eusja.org](http://www.eusja.org), and its Facebook page can be accessed through this website. Its Twitter address is [www.twitter.com/eusja](https://twitter.com/eusja), and its LinkedIn group is open to all those interested.**

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