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### ► Letter from Satu Lipponen, EUSJA president

# Networking and conferences are future tracks for EUSJA



Some of the participants at the EUSJA Strategy Day © Satu Lipponen

**M**y first half-year as EUSJA president has been full of activities. EUSJA was very visible in the European Science Open Forum (ESOF) this summer in Copenhagen. We organised the first



President Satu Lipponen  
© Jouko Keski-Säntti

European Conference for Science Journalists (ECSJ) together with the Danish Association of Science Journalists. Then we announced the 2nd European Conference venue and date. The 2nd ECSJ will be in Budapest in November 2015. It will be organised by EUSJA and Hungarian Association. Its president Istvan Palugyai noted that while 2015 is the 25th anniversary of the found-

ing of the Hungarian association, the 2nd ECSJ would also benefit from the World Science Forum, which will be happening in Hungary during the time of our conference.

The setting for our strategy day in Copenhagen was inspiring: a spacious room and the lovely garden of the Carlsberg Academy welcomed the participants that formed five working groups. According to their work and outcomes, the board is developing strategic plan for the EUSJA General Assembly to approve.

An example from working group 5 led by Dino Trescher and Jop de Vrieze: the working group suggested that EUSJA digital spaces should be more user-driven and be more attractive to young audiences. The working group also recommended the creation of a directory of Euro-

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## ► Letter from Satu Lipponen

## Networking and conferences are future tracks for EUSJA



Wolfgang C. Goede (on left) and Menelaos Sotiriou flying the EUSJA flag as they work on the exhibition booth at ESOF © Satu Lipponen

*continued from first page*

pean science journalists, and that member organisations and individual journalists should be encouraged to use this.

### Digital divide and ethical codes

There are two things very close to my heart: how we can bridge science journalism over the digital divide and what do we need to build a digital toolbox with ethical codes? Independent science journalism is needed more than ever, but it is in a struggle for survival. I also want to emphasise the ability to be critical. This means that knowledge comes first and science journalists should be competent enough to pose critical questions and engage themselves in public debate.

The future of EUSJA strategic tracks can be sum-

marised in seven words: membership, networks, tools and skills, and conferences.

### Valuable knowledge from EU projects

EUSJA will be participating in some meetings that are preparations for the EU Horizon 2020 programmes. It was a delight to get encouragement of our work from Director-General Robert-Jan Smits, who in his letter this summer invited EUSJA to participate in specific themes.

If EUSJA is involved in future EU projects, as we do hope, there is a need to restructure our governance and accounting. This work is now very topical and we hope that it will be done in a few months.

The strategy process will continue when the board and delegates meet for our annual General Assembly next year. I am confident that the pleasant atmosphere developed in Copenhagen will continue. We are gaining valuable knowledge from our EU projects and

**There is more information on this event on the EUSJA website at [www.eusja.org/mingling-changing-critical-together/](http://www.eusja.org/mingling-changing-critical-together/), a post by Wolfgang C. Goede.**

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Dino Trescher at the Strategy Day © Satu Lipponen

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there is a need to get more members involved.

### **Uncertainties in Europe and beyond**

EUSJA is also gearing its activities towards the 9th World Conference of Science Journalists next June in Seoul, Korea. The World Federation is taking new directions under the leadership of its CEO Damien Chalaud. We had a meeting after the WFSJ General Assembly in Copenhagen about future collaboration.

Recent activities within our continent prove that EUSJA is still very much needed to provide a bridge for science journalists. Information warfare, disinformation, low quality of official news flow and unethical uses of social media are examples of a very complex media landscape. Various discussions about plagiarism in the social media show that digital frontiers still lack basic codes. Fast copying and pasting is not journalism but is widespread. I think EUSJA has a clear mandate to represent the journalistic pursuit in order to work for the best of society.

## **First and second European conferences for science journalists**

The programme for the first conference is on [www.eusja.org/first-european-conference-for-science-journalists-ecsj/](http://www.eusja.org/first-european-conference-for-science-journalists-ecsj/) You will find a report on this first conference and a mini-preview of the second conference being planned for next year on [www.eusja.org/2nd-european-conference-for-science-journalists-in-november-2015/](http://www.eusja.org/2nd-european-conference-for-science-journalists-in-november-2015/)

## ► EUSJA Copenhagen Declaration at ESOF 2014

# More participation of public in research and policy demanded

**EUSJA's science debate about nanotechnology resulted in a declaration. This is a call to bridge, after 20 years, the widening gaps between research, industry and civil society.**



*Nano journalist Dino Trescher (on right) in discussion with two of the experts who delivered the initial statement: nano physicist Dr Markus Lackinger, Technical University Munich TUM Deutsches Museum (middle) and Dr Steffi Friedrichs, representative of European nano industries (on left) © EUSJA*

BY WOLFGANG C. GOEDE,  
EUSJA HONORARY SECRETARY

**T**he paper recommends more solid databases as a source of public information. The engagement of citizens must be ensured in the early stage of research, in nanotechnology and other fields of science and technology. The Copenhagen Declaration and some international reactions collected by this writer are below.

1. Nanotechnology remains a research field with many promises.
2. In many fields, such as graphene, it has not been able to show its benefits for electronics.
3. One of the major reasons is that the scientific community is divided and the general public is only badly informed.
4. These deficits shall be resolved by establishing national and Europe-wide information centres, which provide sound databases with detailed information, as agreed upon by stakeholders and the audience during the ESOF debate.
5. Transparency will be further enhanced if more nano-products are labelled in a clear consumer language and at conspicuous places.
6. Regular and intensive stakeholder dialogues and polylogues are needed to bridge the gap among scientists and between research, industry and the general public, including representatives of the civil society and NGOs.
7. A new participative culture of communicating and reporting, dissemination and education which has been pondered for many years needs to be introduced at all levels of society.
8. With these conditions fulfilled, nanotechnology may after 20 years enter its second phase, its realisation and the exploitation of its full benefits, in close contact and consensus with the consumers, taxpayer, and voters.



*Prof. Dr Ortwin Renn, adviser to the president of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso  
© Renn*

9. All in all, the nano example shows that the public needs to be engaged in the early phases of research, not only with nanotechnology, but also in all fields of research, science and technology.

10. This new type of cutting edge science policy will empower Europe to compete globally and to reaffirm its number one position in world-class science.

## Reactions to the Copenhagen Declaration

*Prof. Dr Ortwin Renn, Member of the Science and Technological Advisory Council to the President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso, Environmental Sociologist and Technology Assessor ([www.ortwin-renn.de](http://www.ortwin-renn.de))*

"The Copenhagen declaration reflects the need for promoting

*continued on page 5*





**Round table discussion: 70 participants in the science debate discuss the experts' input © EUSJA**

*continued from page 4*

technological change as an agent for improving life and conserving essential resources and, at the same time, taking the necessary precautions for reducing risks and avoiding painful learning by trial and error. Nanotechnology has been used as an example in the declaration to demonstrate this dual strategy. Most important is the production of transparency and accountability. They are prerequisites for the delicate balance between innovation and precaution to be sustained. The declaration is, in my view, a forceful reminder to the scientific and technological communities that science and technology are means to help improve human welfare and sustainability and not ends in themselves. I hope that this commitment to a humane path towards a sustainable technological and social change will resonate with the scientific, economic and political decision makers around the world."

**Markus Weisskopf, Executive Director WiD, Science in**

**Dialogue, Berlin, organiser of science festivals, science slams, science debates and student parliaments ([www.wissenschaft-im-dialog.de](http://www.wissenschaft-im-dialog.de))**

"I appreciate the realisation that not only providing sufficient information, but also already engaging the public in the early stages of research is indispensable for the introduction of new technologies. Equally important is the motion that the representatives of the civil society must participate in this dialogue, as much as the industry and all other stakeholders."

**Cormac Sheridan, contributor to Nature Biotechnology & BioWorld, president of the Irish Science Journalists' Association**

"The polarised debate surrounding genetically modified (GM) crops demonstrates that many Europeans are opposed to the introduction of disruptive technologies when they per-

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► **EUSJA Copenhagen Declaration at ESOF 2014**

# More participation of public in research and policy demanded

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ceive little societal or environmental benefit when set against the very obvious financial benefits accruing to a narrow set of corporate interests. Nanotechnology is still an emerging technology, with a very broad range of potential industrial applications. The specific dynamics of its introduction will probably differ from those of GM crop technology. If there is any lesson to be learned from the GM case, it is that the successful deployment of powerful new technologies requires honest and transparent engagement with the European public."

**Dr Marc Denis Weitze, science communicator and moderator of science in society processes, facilitator of Alpine Science Days ([www.wissenschaftstage-tegernsee.de](http://www.wissenschaftstage-tegernsee.de))**

"Nano' originated in the US in the 1990s as a catch phrase from research policy. Soon, it became hype, also in Europe, and until today is a central word when it comes to funding of science and research. Therefore, it is noteworthy that this became a general reference point in the dialogue between science and society. I can think of no more heterogeneous field than 'nano', ranging from pharmaceuticals to materials for tennis rackets to scanning microscopes. Could a shift of the discussion, away from the abstract 'nano' back towards more concrete fields – such as chemistry and electronics or the 'grand challenges' – help to surmount the difficulties in science communication mentioned in the Copenhagen Declaration? Then, the stakeholders from both science and society could more easily agree what actually is up for discussion!"

**Priit Ennet, EUSJA board member, chairman of the Estonian Science Journalists and organiser of Estonian Science Debates ([www.sciencedebate.org/news20110210.html](http://www.sciencedebate.org/news20110210.html))**

"Just imagine that a multitude of science debates such as the Nano Science Debate in Copenhagen were to be intensely linked up with each other so that they function as nodes in a vibrant, participatory, deliberative network. If such a network were then put into use as a key element in the societal feedback mechanism of science policy making, how much more transparent, just, well-argued and legitimate would it make the policy decisions that, to a greater or lesser degree, inevitably affect us all."

**Dino Trescher, science journalist and co-editor of *nanomagazin.net*, promoter of crowdfunding campaign ([www.nanomagazin.net/crowdfunding](http://www.nanomagazin.net/crowdfunding))**

"Labelling of all nano-products must be mandatory. Comprehensive EU wide nano registration must also be mandatory, following the example of France, with public access for everyone. Missing data leads to lack of transparency, which makes consumers concerns reasonable and may lead to severe damages in trust. If there is no compliance with these demands, then the general consumer protection rule becomes valid: no data, no market. A continuous science debate is needed to find the best available knowledge on benefits and risks so that consensus between stakeholders can be achieved based on mutual understanding."

**Shawn Lawrence Otto, inventor of the US Science Debate 2008 & 2012, book author (*Fool me twice, assault on US science*), panellist for EUSJA science debates at ESOF Turin 2010 and the World Conference of Science**

**Journalists Helsinki 2013 ([shawnotto.com](http://shawnotto.com) and [www.sciencedebate.org](http://www.sciencedebate.org))**

"As Sir Francis Bacon observed almost four hundred years ago, 'knowledge and power go hand in hand, so that the way to increase in power is to increase in knowledge'. That makes the creation of new knowledge through science, and its application through technology, an inherently political act. This power and its political aspect both increase as our knowledge advances. For society to accept, embrace, and fund new science and technologies, scientists need to involve the public in the discussion. This is a critical ethical component of knowledge creation and application in modern society, and science debates are perhaps the best tool yet devised for having this discussion."

**Maren Schuepphaus, Science Dialogue and Science Debate Moderator, EU GAMBA Project Facilitator ([www.sciencedialogue.de](http://www.sciencedialogue.de))**

"New scientific developments need an early societal feedback. Lay people are stakeholders and experts: their everyday life experience and values as consumers or patients is useful to identify a lack of acceptance or to adjust research goals. For every dialogue, multi-perspective and comprehensive information is essential. Early dialogues and participation will contribute to more transparency in science and technology."

## Further reactions

The Copenhagen Declaration has been introduced to the EU political process and was submitted to Professor Anne Glover, Chief Scientific Adviser to the European Commission and its president, José Manuel Barroso. He opened ESOF Copenhagen and picked up the motto "Building Bridges" with the statement: "We need to build five bridges (...) the second one between research and the general public". Glover responded that she had forwarded the paper to the relevant Directorates-General, DG Enterprise and Industry, DG Health and Consumers, and DG Research and Innovation.

Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General Research and Innovation, administers the EU master plan Horizon 2020. It calls for the investment of 70 billion euro in Europe's science, with some of it to be used for the more efficient dissemination of science and reporting on the continent. The Copenhagen Declaration could be a helpful measure in the implementation of Horizon 2020. DG Smits has positively responded to EUSJA's Copenhagen Declaration. And we are happy to report that ESOF organiser EuroScience put the Copenhagen Declaration on its website under Latest News ([www.euroscience.org](http://www.euroscience.org)) as a sign of recognition.

Further publications and interpretations may be found on [idw-online.de/de/news596168](http://idw-online.de/de/news596168), [wissenschaftskommuniziert.wordpress.com/2014/07/17/schluss-mit-dem-domroschenschlaf-forschung-und-gesellschaft](http://wissenschaftskommuniziert.wordpress.com/2014/07/17/schluss-mit-dem-domroschenschlaf-forschung-und-gesellschaft)

Readers – please disseminate this information, and post comments about it on EUSJA's website & Facebook page!

## Useful links

[www.eusja.org/no-evidence-of-harm-evidence-of-no-harm/](http://www.eusja.org/no-evidence-of-harm-evidence-of-no-harm/)  
[www.eusja.org/kopenhagen-declaration/](http://www.eusja.org/kopenhagen-declaration/)



► ESOJF 2014

# Successful picnic at ESOJF

About one year ago, I answered a call by the EUSJA board about submitting ideas for events at ESOJF 2014 in Copenhagen. The objective was enhancing science journalism and finding novel ways for facilitating discussion with fellow journalists.



A view of the discussion at the picnic © Jacopo Pasotti

BY JACOPO PASOTTI,  
SWIM

After the success of a media lunch organised at ESOJF 2010 in Turin, where I, with the support of Fabio Turone, invited 50 journalists to meet biologists at a gourmet lunch, I thought of presenting something similar this year. For ESOJF 2104 I wanted something even more informal than a lunch, and open to the blurred cloud of professionals, semi-professionals and non-professionals that deal with media work. I was also aware that my position and the novelty of the format would make it difficult for me to raise substantial funding.

It took me seconds to conclude that a picnic would be the solution. Tired of panel discussions, focus groups and meetings, and convinced that the science café formula has reached a certain level of saturation, I believe that the key to success for novel ideas comes from simplification. After all, we just want to meet and share views and experiences.

I therefore suggested to the EUSJA board to have a picnic where journalists, bloggers, scientists, and anybody interested in or dealing with media work at ESOJF could join in. During the picnic a professional journalist, in this case Richard Van Noorden (staff journalist at Nature) and a scientist-blogger, Mark Lorch (chemist at the University of Hull, UK, and blogger at The Guardian) would discuss blogging from their individual perspectives. My role lay in persuading the EUSJA board that the event was worth supporting financially, then organising, promoting and moderating the event.

The day of the picnic I had about 24 persons booked in to the event. I could not check that everybody really showed up, but I shook hands with no fewer than 10 persons who came over without having booked. Considering

that the weather forecast was uncertain (that's something to consider in a picnic), and that one month before the start of ESOJF I was informed about the First European Conference of Science Journalists that was planned for the same day, I am glad of the result.

The engagement of and feedback from the guests and the speakers was very positive too. The guests included some journalists, a few PR people (EU, science organisations or university departments), a book writer, a visual communicator and various bloggers. There was intense activity on Twitter during and after the event.

As for the content of the discussion, Mark highlighted that as a scientist he is now allocating about 30 per cent of his time in blogging and replying to comments. He added that his university values his outreach activity and this pays off for the time lost from doing research. He also is paid by The Guardian for blogging. This, I believe makes this task, at least in part, a professional activity. Lorch also said he writes about topics he loves to share, which is, of course, the soul of blogging. No filter is applied by The Guardian editors.

The situation is quite different for Richard because he is a staff journalist. His blogging activity has a smaller degree of freedom and is often an addition to his reporting. His blog is a place where he can deepen some information and receive feedback – but he still applies journalism rules and tone to his blog writing. And the editors may have a say in his blog's topics and arguments.

Some rewarding feedback came at the end of the event, when, after one hour of discussion, I reminded participants that this was a EUSJA-sponsored event and that I had to bring the picnic to an end: the guests were not showing any inclination to end the conversation, leave the green and return to the main ESOJF hall. Fifteen minutes after the event closed, it started raining.

► *Kaianders gives his impressions of an ESOF session on lunar mining and muses about treaties*

# Mining the Moon



Could mining on the Moon be like this? © Kaianders Sempler

**It is high time to plan for serious exploitation of space, according to Bernard Foing from the European Space Agency, speaking at the session 'Mining then Moon' at ESOF 2014.**

BY KAIANDERS SEMPLER,  
SWEDISH NATIONAL DELEGATE

**F**orget about Mars. We shall concentrate on robotised mining on the Moon surface. And it will be done by privately run commercial activities. The taxpayers will not have to supply capital for the exploitation, as in the past. As a matter of fact, private entrepreneurs are now investing heavily in the space industry and infrastructure. Think of Burt Rutan and Richard Branson and the Virgin Galactic, Elon Musk and the Space-X anchors, Bigelow Aerospace space modes and James Cameron and Larry Page's crowdfunded company Planetary Resources.

Could mining the Moon really be profitable? What's there?

Metals, for a start, including iron, rare earths and precious metals of the platinum group. Then there is helium-3 in the upper 10 centimetres of the surface, the so-called regolith. Helium-3 would be the preferred fuel in future fusion reactors, as it would not produce any neutrons in the reaction. This means that there would be no radioactive nuclear waste, and the reactor itself would not be ra-

dioactive. Furthermore, there is water on the Moon. Oxygen in the rocks could unite with protons (hydrogen nuclei) from the solar wind and produce water. The water molecules could then be dissociated by electricity from solar panels, and the hydrogen and oxygen used as rocket fuel. In this way the mining would be self-sustaining and material from the Moon could be sent down to Earth.

It sounds too good to be true, but Bernard Foing insists that the era of space mining is approaching rapidly, not least because of the giant carrot launched by Google.

In 2007 Google founder Larry Page launched the Lunar X-prize with a prize sum of 30 million US dollars. The group or company that before the end of December 2015 can land a module on the moon and then make it move 500 metres on, above or under the surface while sending high definition video to earth will win 20 million dollars. The remaining 10 million will go to groups that achieve specific milestones and solve certain technical problems. The teams have to be privately funded.

At the moment there are 18 teams in the competi-

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*Kaiaanders (on right) playing at ESOF 2014 © Hanns-J. Neubert*

*continued from page 8*

tion. Apart from the US there are contestants from Italy, India, Israel, Canada, Hungary and more. We shall see who – if anyone – wins.

The Moon is the Earth's eighth continent, says Bernard Foing. And now we will start colonising it, at first with mining robots, but later on with people.

But, I ask, can anyone just go up there and grab whatever he wants? Don't we need international legislation first?

There is already an Outer Space Treaty, says Bernard Foing. The United Nations Office for Space Affairs formulated it in 1967, before the Moon landings. In brief, the treaty states that:

- the exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and shall be the province of all mankind;
- outer space shall be free for exploration and use by all States;
- outer space is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means;
- States shall not place nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies or station them in outer space in any other manner;
- the Moon and other celestial bodies shall be used exclusively for peaceful purposes;
- astronauts shall be regarded as the envoys of mankind;
- States shall be responsible for national space activities whether carried out by governmental or non-governmental entities;
- States shall be liable for damage caused by their space objects; and
- States shall avoid harmful contamination of space and celestial bodies.

The treaty has been signed and ratified by all major nations, except Iran. There are, however, some legal space nuts to crack before production can start. For anyone to invest in prospecting and mining some kind of Lunar Property Rights are needed. And all actors must agree on how a future lunar infrastructure should be organised.

## Moments @ ESOF2014



*Various views of the band called 'Martha and the Cadillacs' playing at ESOF2014. The ensemble included four science journalists, two teachers, one heart surgeon and one physiotherapist © Hanns-J. Neubert*

## Writing for EUSJA News

**Your voluntary contributions for consideration for publication in EUSJA News are very welcome. This includes news reports, articles, photographs, drawings and book announcements. If you would like to write something, please check first with the editor Anna Nolan about feasibility, angle and length ([anolan@iol.ie](mailto:anolan@iol.ie)).**

## Social media and EUSJA

**All 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 [twitter.com/eusja](https://twitter.com/eusja), and its LinkedIn group is open to all those interested.**

► *European Conference for Science Journalists*

# Nerdy science goes hippy

**Cafés scientifiques and science slams are old news. A new format, science & cocktails, is attracting non-scientists in crowds. The synthesis of science and loose lectures, music and exotic drinks comes from Copenhagen's famous hippy district and Freetown of Christiania.**



*Science & cocktails* © Thomas Steen Sorensen

BY WOLFGANG C. GOEDE,  
EUSJA HONORARY SECRETARY

**J**acome Armas was one of the stars at the first European Conference for Science Journalists (ECSJ), the curtain raiser at this year's Euroscience Open Forum in Copenhagen. The physicist raised the question of why most people are not interested in science and offered an answer. "School sucks," he exclaimed. Our educational system makes children lose interest in science. As young adults they hang out in pubs and drink beer rather than pursuing their curiosity. "So you have to merge drinking and scientific information into one platform," he argued. If in addition you provide a framework of art then hundreds of people will flock in.

A recent session asked whether we could become super-duper geeks if we improved our brain performance by stimulating it. The renowned experimental psychologist Roi Cohen Kadosh, Oxford University, presented this subject, using unusual pictures. Afterwards the star mingled with the audience and everyone was able to chat with him about the limits of human enhancement, to the accompaniment of tunes played on Turkish instruments, while smoky dry-ice chilled drinks such as Primordial Soup, Fracking Fluid or Famous Penicillin were served.

The Christiania format differs in many ways from conventional lecturing and interactive forums. A lecturer is introduced by a short movie, consisting of a walk through natural phenomena as if one is being teleported to a different world, explained Armas.

The events range from the exploration of weird insects to cannabis medicine, from the investigation of the collective social stupidity of humans to the construction of biological time machines, from stardust as the origin of life to the question of whether the universe has a consciousness. In four years, dozens of sessions have been suc-

cessfully staged.

Widely popular topics are given a special spin to spice them up and make them even more intriguing. This recipe is also known from popular magazines, however the Copenhagen seduction to enlightenment comes free and is casual and interactive, just as if you were going into a pub. No entrance fees are charged, big shots including Nobel laureates lecture for free, and financial gains are given to developing countries to finance research there. The overall policy in the Byens Lys underground theatre is quite hippy-like: sharing knowledge with everybody. Partners who launch this platform abroad are welcome.

Science is, in the science & cocktails inventor's words, "not much different than other forms of art". He compares painting with physics. "Realist painters are aided by a visual language when attempting to accurately describe reality while theoretical physicists use mathematics as a language to describe reality," he explains.

There is a catch, however. "The notion of truth in art is not unambiguous as in science," he ponders: science many times misses "a notion of community-based knowledge". From all this, Armas derives a new definition of art which is a "person's individual science" and science as "an art with concrete boundaries". Common to both is the method, he states: "an endless attempt to describe concepts, ideas, phenomena either subjectively or objectively. After all, science and art have always been considered twins. Traditionally a researcher is an artist."

To merge science and art is a process of deconstruction, he said, in summing up his presentation at ECSJ. He gave thanks for the award that he received for his pioneering work from Jens Degett, chairman of the Danish Science Journalists' association.

For more information, please see [www.scienceand-cocktails.org](http://www.scienceand-cocktails.org)



## ► Study visit

# Estonia, the most digital country in Europe

Some shortened excerpts from the English translation of a report on the study trip to Estonia form this article. Full-length versions in Catalan and Spanish are on the author's website, [www.cristinaribas.net](http://www.cristinaribas.net)

BY CRISTINA RIBAS,  
PRESIDENT ACCC

**E**stonia, with an area comparable to that of Denmark and with a population of only 1,300,000 inhabitants, is one of the most digitised countries in the world. It has taken advantage of this condition to improve the economy and living standards of its inhabitants. Thanks to a recent EUSJA study trip, I have seen the model and understood the main reasons for the impressive Estonian development.

Estonian society became very dynamic after the declaration of independence in 1991, following a long period of Soviet occupation. As in Finland, education is a high priority, resulting in a high public investment and similar results in the PISA report ([www.oecd.org/pisa/](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/)).

The information communication and technologies (ICT) sector is of great importance, accounting for 9% of gross domestic product (GDP), and is the driving

force of the economy, even if it only employs 4.5% of the workforce. This has led Estonia to prioritise efficiency and innovative ICT solutions.

The commitment for an inclusive information society at the time of independence is related to the will to democratise and modernise the country. Estonian scientists also played a crucial role in the technological development of the country. Although Sweden and Finland have been a source of inspiration for them, Estonians say they are very proud to have surpassed those countries in some aspects and are also proud of their EU membership.



*Cristina's article gives many more details on the indicators below, and also offers reasons for the success of digitisation in Estonia. In addition, she describes lessons that can be learnt from the Estonian project. There are also other reports on Estonia on the [www.eusja.org](http://www.eusja.org) website.*

## Main indicators of digitisation

- 99.8% of banking transactions are electronic;
- 95% of medication is prescribed electronically, both in the public and private sectors;
- 66% of the population updates its census data online voluntarily and 95% made their annual tax returns online;
- over 25% of citizens who vote do so online;
- 93% of the population uses an ID card, which is unique and works for everything: online ban-

- king, use of libraries, digital signature, requesting a scholarship, accessing data from the health records, accessing government services;
- 100% of schools operate digitally and students begin programming at 7 years of age;
- 97% of businesses and 76% of households are digitally equipped;
- the Estonian Constitution states that the internet is a social right because it is the channel for democracy; and
- in recent years numerous internet start-up businesses have been set up with great success.

► *Study trip to Russia*

# “Are these dates magic for you?”

**It seems my colleague was serious when asking me his question. He was checking the programme of a previous Russian study trip that EUSJA had in 2003 and noticed a strange coincidence: that trip was from 23 to 27 of September. The same days that we have chosen for our study trip this year! Well, it happens to be a random occurrence since I had not remembered the schedule of the last meeting. But I hope that this coincidence is a good sign: in 2003 we had very successful trip. I hope that the current trip turns out to be no less interesting and happy.**

**BY VIOLA EGIKOVA  
VICE PRESIDENT EUSJA, PRESIDENT OF INTELLECT**

**W**hy 2014? First of all, we have not met in Moscow in over ten years. It's a long time. Secondly, 2014 is called the EU-Russia Science Year. But the real reason is that we want to show our friends some interesting scientific projects. We hope the journalists will find it worthwhile to write articles about them. We decided to concentrate on some certain topics: space researches and life sciences.

We are visiting the famous Lomonosov Moscow State University that will celebrate its 260th anniversary in January. I believe it will be interesting to learn about a very ambitious project: the biggest Russian university has begun to create the Vorobiovy Gori technological valley, named after the area in which it is located. This project involves the construction of multiple clusters. We shall see just the details of it: the fine Medical Centre that has just

been commissioned; the powerful Super-computer Centre, one of the biggest in Europe; and the Centre for monitoring of space weather that belongs to the Institute of Nuclear Physics of MSU. Here we shall learn about University space satellites, including a new one named “Lomonosov” that is ready for launch. We shall hear about a new Caucasian observatory that we hope will start its activities around this time.

We are visiting three very interesting institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences – the Institute for Biomedical Problems, the Institute for Space Researches, and the Vavilov Institute of General Genetics.

Journalists have the possibility of learning about international experiments for Mars (for example, the “Mars-500” experiment, a simulation of the flight to Mars); special trainings for the astronauts; new studies of Mars and the Moon; and forthcoming launches of space vehicles in collaboration with ESA and NASA. No doubt it will be interesting to meet scien-

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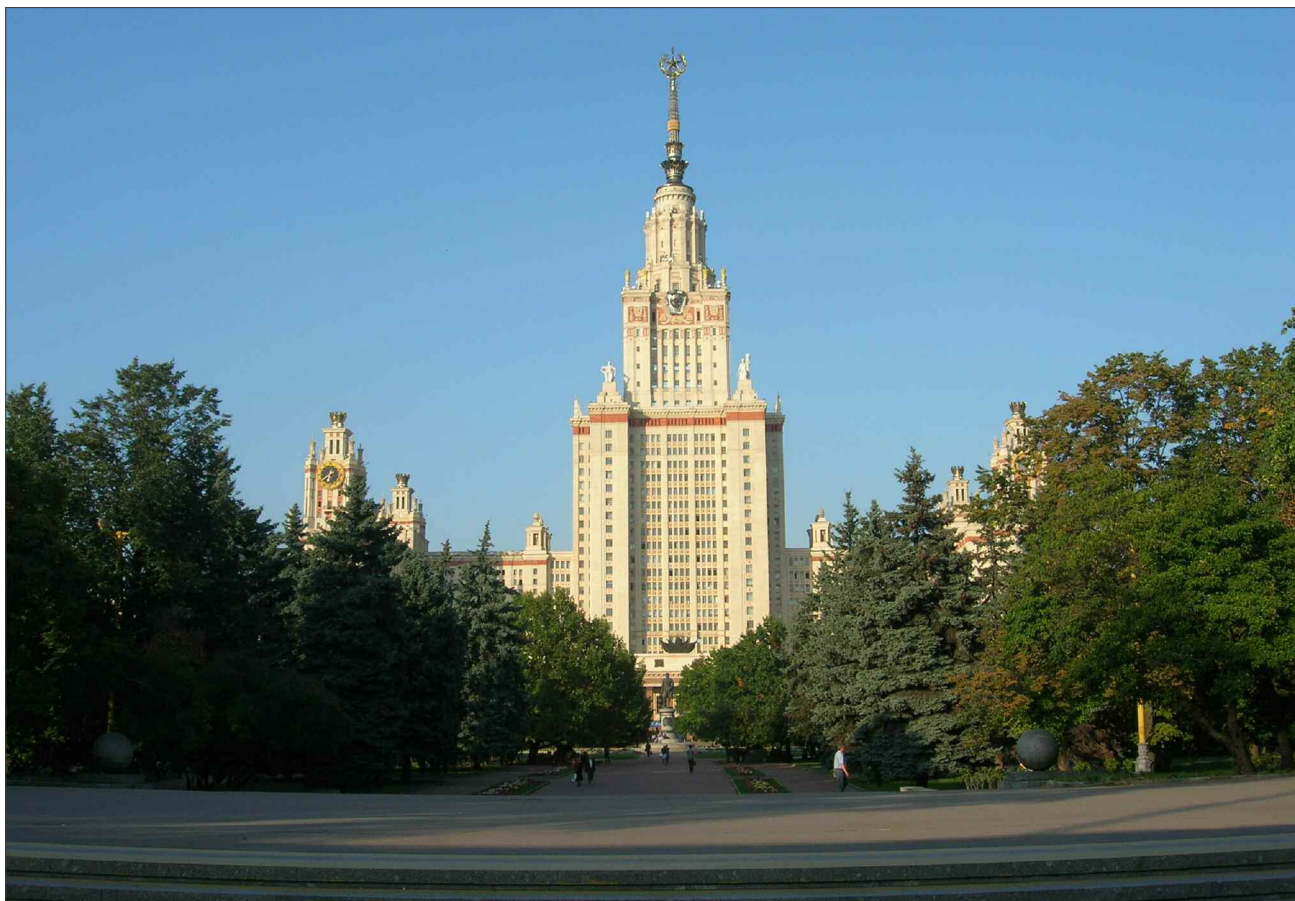
***A study trip to Moscow, organised by Viola's association Intellect, concentrating on space researches and life sciences***

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■ **This article was written just as the Moscow study trip was about to start. See [www.eusja.org](http://www.eusja.org) for participants' reports.**

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A view of Lomonosov Moscow State University © MSU

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tists who are involved in new genetic researches and to visit the Nicolai Vavilov Museum, named after the outstanding scientist who was imprisoned and killed as an “enemy of the people”, to learn about repression in science.

One of the icons of Russian science is the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research (JINR) in Dubna. We are visiting the laboratories that are part of European megascience, and learning about the synthesis of new chemical elements in JINR and a new collider NICA under construction (the so called “younger sister of LHC”). We are meeting with the Russian mini-

ster of education and science and the president of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Last, but not least, the study trip is a part of the All Russia Science Festival. The main festival events will start later, but we decided to include our study trip to its programme, because the history of Russian science festivals is closely linked with the Intellect, the Russian association of science writers and journalists. We in Intellect helped to establish the tradition of science festivals in Russia and our members still participate in the preparation of the programmes.

■ The African members of the World Federation of Science Journalists and the Federation itself have signed a communiqué on the urgent need to close the communication gap between scientists, journalists and communities made evident by the ebola outbreak. “In a world where online resources and social media are often used as proxies for immediate reporting, the need for science journalists is ever more critical,” the communiqué states. “We have the

depth of knowledge and range of tools required to cut through the flood of rumour and scaremongering to provide information that is truthful, trustworthy and effective.”

The full version may be found in both English and French on the [www.wfsj.org](http://www.wfsj.org) website, along with several other interesting news items.

Meanwhile, preparations continue for the World Conference on Science Journalism scheduled for 8 to 12 June 2015 in Seoul, Korea. A newsletter giving detailed reports on progress so far is on the [www.wcsj2015.or.kr](http://www.wcsj2015.or.kr) site.

Anna Nolan, Editor

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