



The International Geographical Union before its centennial: new challenges and developments

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The International Geographical Union (IGU, <http://www.igu-online.org>) is the only truly global organization reuniting geographers from about 100 countries – scholars, teachers, practitioners. It is one of the oldest academic associations in the world. The IGU was officially founded under the auspices of the International Research Council in Brussels in 1922, having been conceived some years earlier in Paris. However this debut was formal: the IGU was established as part of the broader organization of inter-national science that occurred in the early decades of the last century. Its creation was preceded by ten International Geographical Congresses, the first of which was held in Antwerp in 1871. The IGU is preparing to solemnly celebrate its centennial soon at the extraordinary congress symbolically planned in Belgium and France: a special commission comprising well known geographers from all over the world should suggest a great number of events devoted to this date.

Early IGU congresses addressed such specific topics as the international standardization of the prime meridian for mapping and the agreement on the world's time zones. In later years up to 1922 the congresses became more

general in scope, establishing commissions to address salient aspects of geography and cartography. The IGU was a founding member of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and remains an active member of that organization, in addition to its membership in the International Social Science Council (ISSC); both function under the auspices of UNESCO.

IGU membership is constituted by countries which are represented either by the national geographical society or by a special national committee, or sometimes by the leading geographical institution. The heads or other officials from each member country participate in the General Assembly which normally meets every four years during International Geographical Congresses, elects the Executive Committee, the President and the Secretary General, appoints the Chairs of the Commissions, approves the venue of the next Congresses and takes other important decisions. The latest 32nd International Geographical Congress and the General Assembly were held in Cologne, Germany, in August 2012. The Congress was attended by about 2,900 geographers from 90 countries. Attendance was restricted to the results of peer reviewed abstracts by a special International Scientific

Committee, including well known experts from many countries.

The Union relies mainly on dues from member countries to support its operations, and is supplemented by grants from outside organizations for specific projects (especially ICSU) and donations. Payments of dues fluctuate from year to year depending on national funding cycles. The IGU has a travel grant programme aimed at facilitating the participation of young scholars and colleagues from low income countries at its Congresses and Regional Conferences.

In the period between the Congresses the IGU activity is guided by the Executive Committee of 11 members and functions through its 41 Commissions, two Task Forces and one Special Committee. Commissions and Task Forces are, respectively, the research and action components of the IGU. Commissions, Task Forces, and Special Committees are created in response to the changing needs of international geography. They are specialized in both different sub-disciplines (like, for instance, geomorphology, geography of transport or political geography) and in particular problems (for example, coastal systems, cold regions environment or mountain response to global change). The mandate of each Commission is confirmed by the Executive Committee every four years; some of them are replaced with the new ones. The Commission on Geographical Education is one of the most active and is now co-Chaired by Professors Joop van der Schee (the Netherlands) and John Lidstone (Australia).

The IGU's Commissions consist of the 11 members of the Steering Committee and a considerable number of people (not necessarily geographers) who more or less regularly participate at the meetings and conferences organized by them at least twice a year and are subscribed to the E-Newsletter of their Commission. Their number varies between a few hundred and a few thousand.

The growth in the number of Commissions reflects the further differentiation in geographical science. Geographers still remain all too often divided by institutional and even mental boundaries. At the same time, the major challenges of the contemporary world – climate

change, the goals of sustainable development on a local and global scale increasingly require a better understanding of the nature-society interface, i.e. close cooperation between Earth sciences and social disciplines, between the natural and social wings of geography. The IGU pays great attention to the involvement of geographers in large international programmes, its own interdisciplinary projects and welcomes the participation of all commissions at the Congresses and Regional Conferences organized in the in-between periods. In 2010-2016 such Conferences were held annually; the most recent one being in Kyoto, Japan, which gathered about 1,500 participants. The next Regional Conferences before the Congress in Beijing, China (2016) are scheduled in Krakow (Figure 1), Poland (2014), and Moscow (Figure 2), Russia (2015).

The IGU Executive Committee is working out its mid-term strategy including several priorities. The first one is to keep and to strengthen the role of the IGU as a truly global organization, i.e. to increase the participation of geographers from the countries with low incomes and at the same time to make the IGU attractive to geographers from the “North”, particularly the young generations. IGU meetings and publications have to be important milestones in their careers. In 2013-2014 a few countries have either formally re-established membership or become new IGU members (for instance, Kazakhstan and Serbia) or indicated their intention to enter the IGU shortly. The EC paid special attention to networking African geographers and worked out a “roadmap” to promote membership in African and other developing countries. The first conference of African geographers initiated and co-sponsored by the IGU should be held in late 2014 in Libreville, Gabon.

The second IGU priority is communication and the integration of the IGU Commissions' activity, the development of interdisciplinary research by promoting problem- and region-oriented programmes and the cooperation between natural and social wings of geography in studying future environmental conditions and their consequences for people, and institutional, economic, and behavioral changes enabling effective steps toward global sustainability.

Changes
Challenges
Welcome
Responsibility

IGU 2014 Venue Registration Field trips Geography Olympiad Exhibition box Contact Français

IGU 2014

Welcome to IGU Regional Conference in Kraków, Poland
18-22 August 2014

IGU UGI

We are pleased to invite you to participate in the 2014 IGU Regional Conference which will be held in Kraków, Poland, 18-22 August, 2014. It will also be an excellent opportunity to discover the beauty and variety of the environment and the culture of Central and Eastern Europe.

The main theme of the conference is **Changes, Challenges, Responsibility**. Modern geography faces significant challenges focusing on the recognition of and response to contemporary changes in the environment, society and economy. All this calls for our responsibility. The conference aims to create a forum at which these issues can be addressed. It is open to all geographers across the spectrum who specialize in all fields of the discipline. The conference is going to be an event contributing to efforts undertaken, for example, by ICSU/ISSC Future Earth, and aimed at defining pathways towards sustainability and responding effectively to the risks and opportunities of global environmental change.

Kraków, the former capital of Poland, is the seat of the second oldest university in Central Europe, established in 1364. The Jagiellonian University is the seat of the first ever Chair of Geography in Poland, established in 1849.

We believe that the 2014 IGU Regional Conference will be an important and meaningful event, bringing together geographers from all over the world and contributing to a better understanding of the changes and challenges faced by the world and our discipline as well as the responsibility we all share.

Registered users
E-mail
Password

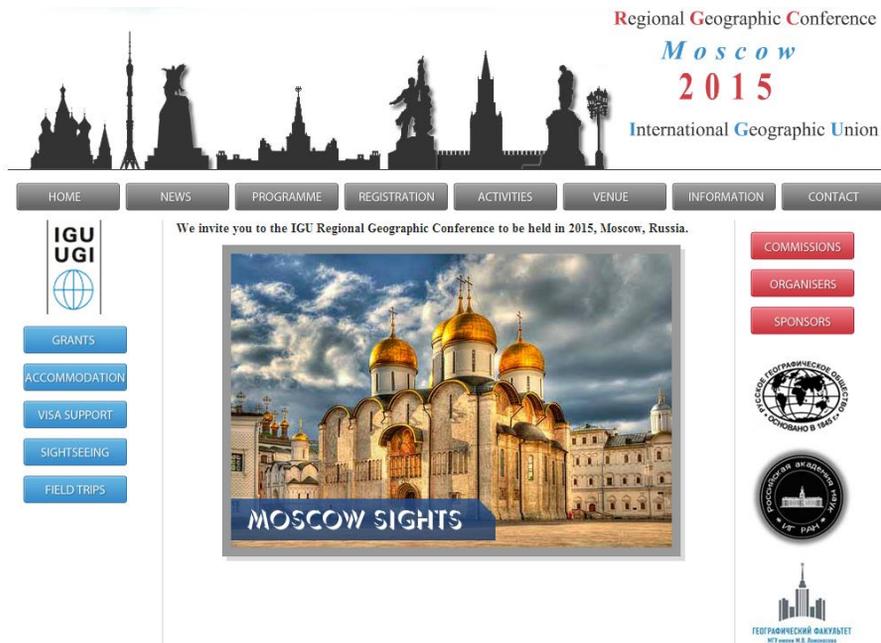
The Main Square in Kraków (source: Foto Polska)

Figure 1. IGU Regional Conference in Kraków, Poland, 18-22 August 2014.
Source: <http://www.igu2014.org/>.

The IGU believes that the involvement of geographers is very important in the implementation of *Future Earth*, the most ambitious international research programme integrating natural and social sciences that has been ever created. Through its national committees, the IGU carefully selected the candidates for its *Future Earth's* Science Committee. The world geographical community is represented in it by several members, including IGU Vice-President Dahe Qin (China, Beijing). The IGU also encourages joint and special workshops, sessions and research projects sponsored by two or several Commissions. The EC worked out the

criteria for an IGU Commission excellence award and established the committee to administer it.

The third priority is cooperation with local organizing committees (LOC) of IGU Congresses and Regional Conferences in order to keep their high standards, look for new flexible formats, and to bridge the gaps between geographers, policy makers and community leaders. The IGU EC closely cooperated with the LOC of the next Regional Conference in Poland and for the first time signed the Memorandum of Agreement establishing mutual commitments and financial responsibility.



GENERAL PROGRAM FOR THE CONFERENCE		
16 aug (Sun)	Registration	13:00 – 20:00
17 aug (Mon)	Registration	09:00 – 13:00
	Opening Ceremony	10:30 – 11:30
	Commissions & Special Sessions	11:30 – 13:00
	Lunch	13:00 – 14:00
	Commissions & Special Sessions	14:00 – 15:30
	Coffee Break	15:30 – 16:00
	Commissions & Special Sessions	16:00 – 17:30
	Cocktail Party	18:00 – 19:30
18 aug (Tue)	Poster exhibition	09:30 – 17:30
	Half-Day & Full-Day Fieldtrips, Program for Young Scholars	09:30 – 17:30
	Commissions & Special Sessions	09:30 – 11:00
	Coffee Break	11:00 – 11:30
	Plenary Lecture	11:30 – 13:00
	Lunch	13:00 – 14:00
	Commissions & Special Sessions	14:00 – 15:30
	Coffee Break	15:30 – 16:00
	Commissions & Special Sessions	16:00 – 17:30
19 aug (Wed)	Poster exhibition	09:30 – 17:30
	Half-Day & Full-Day Fieldtrips, Program for Young Scholars	09:30 – 17:30
	Commissions & Special Sessions	09:30 – 11:00
	Coffee Break	11:00 – 11:30
	Plenary Lecture	11:30 – 13:00
	Lunch	13:00 – 14:00
	Commissions & Special Sessions	14:00 – 15:30
	Coffee Break	15:30 – 16:00
	Commissions & Special Sessions	16:00 – 17:30
20 aug (Thu)	Poster exhibition	09:30 – 17:30
	Half-Day & Full-Day Fieldtrips	09:30 – 17:30
	Commissions & Special Sessions	09:30 – 11:00
	Coffee Break	11:00 – 11:30
	Plenary Lecture	11:30 – 13:00
	Lunch	13:00 – 14:00
	Commissions & Special Sessions	14:00 – 15:30
	Coffee Break	15:30 – 16:00
	Commissions & Special Sessions	16:00 – 17:30
	Gala Dinner	18:30 – 21:00
21 AUG (Fri)	Commissions & Special Sessions	09:30 – 11:00
	Coffee Break	11:00 – 11:30
	Plenary Lecture	11:30 – 13:00
	Lunch	13:00 – 14:00
	Commissions & Special Sessions	14:00 – 15:30
	Coffee Break	15:30 – 16:00
	Closing Ceremony	16:00 – 18:30
22 AUG (Sat) - 27 AUG (Thu)	Post-conference Fieldtrips	

Figure 2. IGU Regional Conference in Moscow, Russia, 2015, and the General program.

Source: <http://www.igu2015.ru/>.

According to the fourth priority – the cooperation with the leading international organizations in contributing to the cohesion of geography and its better international visibility – the IGU participated in the activity of the ICSU and ISSC in involving the IGU in global research programmes and networks. The IGU has established closer relations with the Association of European Geographical Societies (EUGEO) and the European Association of Geographers (EUROGEO), and signed with them the Memorandum on cooperation. The IGU EC is also organizing “the IGU lecture” at the International Geographical Festival in Saint Dié (France). The IGU sponsors the activity of the joint Commission on Toponymy with the International Cartographic Association and maintains working contacts with the International Union of Geological Sciences (IGS) and the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG), in particular in Geounions, the association of international unions in the field of Earth Sciences within the ICSU.

The IGU strongly supports the trans-disciplinary project of the *International Year on Global Understanding (IYGU)*, (<http://global-understanding.info>). It was initiated, though in another form, by the former IGU President Professor Adalberto Vallega and is coordinated by Professor Benno Werlen, Chair of IGU Commission on Cultural Geography (Germany). The main idea of the project is to bridge the gap in awareness between local actions and global effects and to stress the urgent need for global action in an effort to resolve the problems arising from global, social and climate change. It was stressed that geographical education for global understanding is critical for addressing global challenges – for providing sustainable sources of clean water, food and energy, and for maintaining an intact environment for the well-being of all people. The interdisciplinary project embraces scientific research and vast programmes in the field of education and knowledge dissemination. The IGU initiative obtained the support of the ISSC and ICSU and a great number of other international and national institutions. Last year was marked by spectacular progress in the implementation of

this project. The UNESCO Executive Board and later the UNESCO General Assembly have unanimously adopted the resolution of the IGU initiative for the IYGU presented by the group of the East African countries in the name of Rwanda. Therefore, there is a real chance that the UN General Assembly could proclaim 2016 as the IYGU in 2014.

There are many journals globally that deal with the broad range represented by the discipline of Geography. In recent years the domination of major publishing houses in the scientific journal market has become much stronger and it is clear that many geographical journals are published that have a much lower profile and yet could provide a very valuable resource for geographers – researchers and teachers alike – in particular national or regional contexts. It was for this reason that the IGU embarked on a project to establish a searchable global database of geographical periodicals. Regularly updated information, including contact details, impact factor (where appropriate) and website addresses of more than 1,000 journals from more than 80 countries worldwide are now available online on the IGU website.

The IGU also supports the project of making the site on *cities' sustainable development (OurSus)* created in 2010 on the initiative of Dutch and Chinese geographers and coordinated by Professor Ton Dietz (the Netherlands) of the world information and certification centre working under the sponsorship of the IGU. This project is based on the idea that despite their different size, location and functions, all cities are facing similar challenges in terms of sustainable features, such as green R&D, environment-friendly consumption, green campaigns, challenges, and education, etc. In 2013 the project had a full double Internet infrastructure, in English and Chinese (<http://www.oursus.org> and <http://zh.oursus.org>). There were numerous cities presented on its website and many academics and professionals made use of it, albeit still mainly from China. It is expected that the project will reach full maturity in 2016 towards the IGU Congress in Beijing. It should have a wide and internationally balanced representation of both cities

and users. It is necessary to mobilize geographical communities in many countries and to create national project centres.

Geographical education is one of the major *raison d'être* of the geographical community and its main priorities. The IGU is engaged in continuously showing the value of geographical education in various international and national academic and policy contexts. We believe it is necessary to reunite the efforts of all international and national geographical unions and associations in strengthening the positions of geography in school curricula and in adapting the teaching of geography to the needs of every person in the XXI century. In September 2013 during the IY Congress of EUGEO in Rome the joint Declaration on Geographical Education was adopted at the meeting of the representatives of the IGU, the Italian Association of Geography Education (AIIG), EUGEO and EUROGEO. This declaration (published in the October 2013 IGU E-Newsletter) stresses the role of geographical education in a changing world and expresses the growing concern of the international geographical community over the shrinking role of geography in secondary school curricula.

The declaration is now being transformed into real research projects and dissemination programmes. The Roadmap of its practical implementation was approved at the recent meeting of the Presidents of all three international geographical organizations. The first general objective is to work out basic requirements for geographical knowledge of each citizen in the 21st century. Such document could serve as reference point for national geographical communities, ministries of education, and other educational bodies.

The second general objective is to prove the need for geographical knowledge in the everyday life of different communities via interviews and other methods, and to find the evidence that geographical knowledge obtained in secondary schools can help solve or contribute to a solution of a great number of local problems, insofar as geography is very practical and useful in everyday life. Geography is concerned with human-environmental interactions in the context of specific places and

locations and with issues that have a strong geographical dimension like natural hazards, climate change, energy supplies, land use, migration, urbanization, poverty and identity. Geographical knowledge is at the basis of the everyday use of new information technologies. It is necessary to improve the image of geography in society and among decision makers. Geography plays the unique role in culture and education, in shaping our identities and understanding of the world. Answering the question "*Where, in which country and locality do I live?*", we unavoidably answer the question "*Who am I?*", "*What are my ideals and values?*". Geography is the only school discipline forming an integrated vision of the world, helping young generations to appreciate its biological and cultural diversity, making them aware of the global interdependence and global implications of everyday living, showing the relationships between local and global natural and social processes.

The third general objective is cooperation between geography teachers. The first step is the collection and analysis of national geographical curricula for the identification and dissemination of best practices and the development of a research agenda on geographical education. Despite the growing number of publications in this field, they lack focus and are often not grounded in data- and evidence-based studies to support decision making in geography education.

There still is a gap between academic geography and geographical education. That is why a special programme, "School at the IGC and the IGC at school", was created by the organizers of the International Geographical Congress in Cologne. School teachers came to the Congress for a full day of sessions and lectures. The programme was supported by the federal and regional ministries of education and sponsored a series of lectures by well-known geographers at high schools of North Rhine-Westphalia. It will now become a tradition of large international meetings held by the IGU. Each Congress and Regional Conference hosts the World Geographical Olympiad (Figure 3). For instance, in Cologne the Olympiad reunited 128 high school pupils from 32 countries. Its agenda consisted of written and multimedia tests and a field tour. As well as this the participants

of the Olympiad had to prepare a presentation on water resources and the problems of water use. The winners are traditionally honoured by high officials at the opening ceremony of the Congress.

Thus, at the end of the first century of its existence the IGU is a living, developing and complicated body open to cooperation with other disciplines, teachers, governmental organizations and practitioners.

It communicates with its community via the quarterly Newsletter, compiled by Vice-President

Giuliano Bellezza and via the website, maintained by Secretary-General Mike Meadows. Four issues of the new series of the E-Newsletter were published in 2013 and can be downloaded from the website by following the newsletter link from <http://www.igu-online.org>. The IGU now has a Facebook page and the new website design. In 2013 volume 61-62 of the *IGU Bulletin* was published representing the years 2011-12. The IGU also issued a leaflet on its current activity and updated the handbook for its members.

The image shows a screenshot of the iGeo2014 website. At the top left is the iGeo Kraków 2014 logo. To its right are three circular logos: 'OLIMPIADA GEOGRAFICZNA', 'UNIWERSYTET PEDAGOGICZNY W KRAKOWIE', and '1918'. Below these is a blue navigation bar with the following menu items: ORGANISERS, VENUE, PROGRAM, TESTS, PRACTICAL INFORMATION, POST-IGEO FIELDTRIP, PARTNERS AND SPONSORS, and CONTACT. The main content area features a large banner image of Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków. Below the banner is the text 'Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków – the host city of the iGeo2014' and a 'Read More' link. To the right of the banner is a countdown timer for 'iGeo2014 in Kraków starts in: 56 Days 03 Hours 20 Minutes'. Below the banner is a section titled 'PLACES FOR POST-IGEO FIELDTRIP STILL AVAILABLE' with a date '12/08/2014 In News' and a paragraph of text: 'Please be informed, that there are still places available for the post-iGeo Fieldtrip to the northern parts of Poland. For more information please visit Post-iGeo Fieldtrip tab.'

Figure 3. The 11th International Geography Olympiad webpage.

Source: <http://www.igeo2014.pl/>.