



MEETING OF NATIONAL CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES

Perth Convention Centre, Perth, Australia, 17 September 2013

Background

IAH has about 40 national groups of varying sizes and levels of activity, and which have grown up in different ways over a long period of time and operate rather independently of each other and of IAH centrally. However, both in the questionnaires and at the Forward Look meeting there were suggestions that IAH's national groups could be given more prominence and could provide improved benefits to members. Specific comments were made that they could be governed in a more uniform and transparent (but not entirely rigid) way, they could communicate more with each other and with IAH centrally, pass on their experiences and learn from each other, and that the central Secretariat could provide more support to national groups.

It was agreed at the Forward Look meeting in Reading that the first step was to convene a meeting of national chapters at the Krakow congress in September 2010 and this was done and reported on. A similar meeting was planned for Pretoria in 2011, but there were insufficient national chapters represented there to make such a meeting viable, but a chapter meeting was held in Niagara Falls. Over the last two years, the IAH Secretariat has made significant efforts to strengthen its communication with and support for national chapters. One consequence of the increased profile and activity of national chapters is the growth in interest in holding national or regional IAH meetings.

Meeting Agenda

1. Introduction and welcome from the IAH President, Ken Howard
2. Interim report on the review of national chapter guidelines
3. Redevelopment of the IAH website:
 - General
 - Provision for national chapters
4. Proposal for a standing committee of national chapter representatives
5. Reports of activities from national chapters

Notes of Meeting

Colleagues from the Irish, Portuguese, US, Serbian, Italian, Hungarian, Croatian and Slovenian chapters (listed below) met with members of the IAH Executive. After a warm welcome from IAH President Ken Howard, Bruce Misstear explained the background to the current review of national chapter rules and guidelines, and outlined some of the responses received so far. Of the 40 or so chapters, responses had been received from only seven chapters, but these included many useful comments and suggestions.

In response to comments from Irish and US colleagues, there was a good discussion about the prospects for extending twinning arrangements between chapters. The presently generalised guidelines referring to twinning could be improved to embrace a broader range of possible links, taking account of the differing needs and aspirations of both partners. It was agreed that the regional Vice Presidents of IAH should be more involved and could make more efforts to promote twinning, as could the Secretariat. Both the US and Irish chapters were interested in further developing twinning links. It was agreed that this should be facilitated and guided through the Secretariat to avoid overlaps and to ensure our efforts in this direction were best focussed, but should where possible build on established contacts between chapters and historical and cultural relationships between countries.

In its response to the NC guidelines, the US chapter also made the suggestion, which was discussed at the IAH Council meeting in June, that there should be a standing committee of chapter representatives, as a means of strengthening the links between chapters and with the IAH Secretariat and Executive. This suggestion was put to the meeting, and generally endorsed. Given the global spread of the IAH membership and chapters, this could present some logistical difficulties in its operation. Most exchanges would need to be electronic, with meetings at IAH congresses each year. It was suggested that it could be operated via social media, perhaps with a Facebook site or LinkedIn group, and the Croatian representative, with the support of the Secretariat, agreed to take the lead in setting this up, liaising with the other chapter representatives present at this meeting.

The views of the chapter participants were sought with regard to student fees; opinion was divided between those in favour of completely free student membership and those favouring a small fee. Finally, short reports of chapter status and activities were provided. Serbia reported the chapter has 51 active members, although there may be 300 hydrogeologists in the country. The programme of the chapter includes lectures for students with national and international speakers, and considerable involvement in karst activities, including the DIKTAS project. Petar provided information about a karst meeting in Trebinje in June 2014. Colleagues from the Slovenian Chapter are also very much involved in karst activities, including the Trebinje meeting, and will encourage members and students in Slovenia to attend. The Slovenian chapter had 63 members in 2012 but now has less [40 in October 2013, JC]. The chapter arranges national meetings for students and there is a joint field trip between the Slovenian and Croatian chapters proposed for the spring of 2014. The chapter is also supporting the restoration of old water wells in Slovenia.

The Croatian Chapter held elections in 2013 and Tamara is the new president. The chapter had bid for the 2015 IAH congress and is very interested to host the congress in 2017. The chapter currently has 34 members and has a website in the national language which would be re-designed for the 2017 congress.

The Italian Chapter currently has 147 members and has been operating a website since 2012. A national meeting was held in 2012 with invited international speakers (reported in the IAH newsletter). There are four working groups in the chapter for: tunnelling, geothermal energy, karst and developing countries. The chapter would host the 2013 Darcy Lecture in Rome in October, and is planning a second Flowpath conference in Italy in 2014. Eight members of the chapter had come to Perth and some had gone to the Central European conference in Hungary in May.

Portugal has about 40 members, has just completed the editing of the groundwater and ecosystems book for the IAH green book series, and will soon have elections for a new national committee.

The Hungarian Chapter currently has 35 members. At the Central European Groundwater Conference in Hungary in May 2013, five chapters presented their activities and there will be a second meeting of Central European chapters at the meeting in Trebinje. Planning is underway for the second Central European Groundwater conference in 2015.

The Irish chapter emphasised its inclusiveness in terms of encouraging participation from those who are not strictly hydrogeologists but are working in groundwater. The chapter has about 100 members, down from 132, due largely to the prolonged economic downturn. The objectives of the chapter focus very strongly on national professional development, and to assist this regular use is made of video links to enable members based around Cork, Galway and Belfast to take part in the monthly meetings held in Dublin.

Overall, although relatively few chapters were represented in Perth, those present agreed that the meeting had been useful and wanted to continue to build up communication between chapters.

Participants

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| Antonió Chambel and Luis Ribeiro | IAH Executive (Antonio) and Portugal |
| Bruce Misstear and David Ball | IAH Executive (Bruce) and Ireland |
| Vic Heilweil | US |
| Marco Petitta | Italy |
| Teodóra Szócs | Hungary and IAH Council |
| Petar Milanović | Serbia |
| Timotej Verbovšek | Slovenia |
| Tamara Marković | Croatia |

And Ken Howard and Shammy Puri (IAH Executive) and John Chilton (IAH Secretariat)

The meeting would have benefited from having the regional vice-presidents take an active role in encouraging the involvement of chapters in their region, as there were other chapters represented in Perth who would have benefited from being at the meeting.

John Chilton
October 2013