

DRAFT (V2)

President's letter November 2015

Firstly my enthusiastic welcome to all 246 of the new members that were elected by the Council at our Annual Conference in Darmstadt (September). As of today, some 213 have already accepted the invitation to become members. You will all receive your certificates, membership pins and other information in the welcome packs that our Hub staff in Wroclaw are preparing to mail out, as I write. My personal thanks to Ola Nowak and Kasia Majkowska in Wroclaw for this extra support. As with all organisations, a lot of work goes on “backstage” and I want to specifically thank the whole Graz Information Centre team at TU Graz and especially Dana Kaiser who puts in a lot of work to ensure that the annual nomination and election cycle runs smoothly and that our website is constantly updated. If any members, new or old, have any issues about the website or database, Dana Kaiser is your first port of call. Of course time does not stand still and the 2016 nominations cycle is already open. Any ordinary member can nominate candidates to any Section – have a look at the AE website for full instructions.

Talking about Darmstadt – our distinguished member and Director of the Fraunhofer IGD, Prof. dr Dieter Fellner and his wife Ursula organised a wonderful annual conference programme and hosted us in real style in Darmstadt in early September. I understand that photos will be made available via the event website in the near future. I must also pay a tribute to our eminent 2015 **Erasmus medallist and lecturer Prof Edith Hall**, whose lecture was both challenging (to me as a non-classicist) and stimulating. Hopefully it will be published in a future issue of our Journal ‘The European Review’. One important decision taken at Darmstadt was the establishment of a new AE prize for excellence in research – “**The Adam Kondorosi Prize**”, this prize (of two parts) has been set up by the generous patronage of Prof Eva Kondorosi, in memory of her husband who was a significant contributor in the field of Plant sciences (Nitrogen Fixation) and microbiology. The International award is under preparation, with a junior prize to be given at the European Nitrogen Fixation Congress of Budapest 2016 and the senior AE prize to be awarded for the first time at the 29<sup>th</sup> AE annual conference in Budapest in 2017.

As with all our annual conferences, I encourage one of our Earth and Cosmic Sciences Section members to arrange a Geological field trip for anyone who is interested. This year was no exception and it was a particular pleasure, that my long-time friend and colleague Prof. dr Jörg Negendank organised a wonderful visit to the UNESCO World Heritage Geopark network site: the [Messel Pit](#) fossil site. This is a ‘must see’ for anyone in the vicinity of Darmstadt. Of course the visit was followed by a welcome and extensive local lunch! This tradition will be continued in 2016, 2017 and long beyond.

I was pleased to be invited to a major event in Kiev during September, hosted at the Bogomoletz Institute for Physiology. It was on [Brain communication](#) and was held to honour the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of our most distinguished member Prof [Oleg Krishtal](#) – a true pioneer of his field. The event was supported in part from our 2015 Hubert Curien Fund for new initiatives, and had a stellar

international programme. I was impressed not only by the quality and impact of past achievements at the Institute, but also with the current researchers from the Eastern countries who are operating under very challenging conditions – a feature specifically highlighted during an excellent session on European research opportunities and a presentation given by ERC Council member Prof Eva Kondorosi (Hungary) on the ERC scheme for “Widening European Participation”. It will be a priority for my Presidency of the AE, to develop and strengthen our links with Eastern Europe. The community spirit of science and scholarship transcends geopolitical boundaries. These rather delicate issues were raised in two [television interview](#) sessions that I took part in and also alongside our Ukrainian host and other AE members in a face-to-face with the Research Minister of the Ukraine. I want to thank Alex Verkhatsky (Manchester), Dmitri Rusakov (UCL), Ole Petersen (Cardiff) and our Executive Secretary for enabling the event and Nana Voltenko who was the local lynchpin. We really do need to support more events in the Ukraine and other Eastern states and I want your ideas and proposals, which are always welcome!

On the European science policy and advice front. Our collaboration with ALLEA, FEAM, euroCASE and EASAC continues to develop. We are currently defining the detailed workpackages needed for a response to a targeted call under Horizon 2020. This project will provide the European Commission and the newly announced High Level Expert group with a ‘science into public policy advice’ platform. Already, this initiative has stimulated some positive developments. We will collaborate with ALLEA, who will join us for our 2017 Annual conference in Budapest. Plans are also advancing for a reciprocal arrangement in 2018. I hope that this new collaboration will mark the start of a close and long-term relationship.

Let me briefly mention 2016. Ole Petersen (a new Vice President of the AE) who is the Academic Director of our fourth regional knowledge Hub at Cardiff University has agreed to organise the 2016 annual conference June 26 – 29<sup>th</sup>. Further information will be publicised via the website and E-newsletters. Put the dates in your diaries now!

It is therefore with immense pleasure that I am able to announce, that after an extensive search and evaluation by our prize panel: **The 2016 Erasmus medal** will be awarded to **Professor [Martin Rees](#)**, the globally famous Astronomer; a former President of the Royal Society and current Astronomer Royal. Martin Rees is a long standing and active member of our Academy [and many others!] His presentation ceremony and the delivery of the 2016 Erasmus Lecture will take place in Cardiff, Wales on 27<sup>th</sup> June on the occasion of the opening of the 28th Annual conference. This event will also mark the official launch of the ‘Cardiff Regional Knowledge Hub’. I am especially grateful to Prof. Ole Petersen our mentor for this development and also I would like to thank the Vice Chancellor of Cardiff, Professor Colin Riordan, for his enthusiasm and support.

The Young Academy of Europe (YAE) is closely associated to our Academy. I am pleased to announce that Prof. [Nicole Grobert](#) (Materials Science at Oxford) was elected as the new President of the YAE in Darmstadt. I am also pleased to report that Young Academy member [Robert Gerwarth](#) (University College Dublin) has been elected this year into our ‘Senior Academy’. So I would like to invite and encourage all members of our ‘Senior Academy’ to look for suitable younger scholars and propose them as possible members of the Young Academy. Full information is on the [YAE website](#).

I have just returned from participating in the World Science Forum in Budapest and I would like to thank our members; Balazs Gulyas, Eva Kondorosi, the President of the Hungarian Academy of

Sciences - László Lovász who found time in the midst of this exceptionally busy program to organise an excellent first meeting of our Hungarian members. Over 60 AE members attended for an afternoon session of stimulating talks and a substantial reception. I am sure that this large group of members will now develop some exciting new collaborations and activities. My appreciation goes also to József Pálincás, the head of the National Research, Development and Innovation Office, and a former President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences for his initiatives strengthening science in Hungary and academic relationship with our academies and the ERC.

On a personal note. It is with real sorrow that I have to report the untimely death of my friend and colleague [Evgenii Burov](#). He was an outstanding scholar and tireless worker in the field of Geophysics. He will be greatly missed by the whole Earth Sciences community. I also want to mark the sad passing of [Lisa Jardine](#). She was a truly remarkable scholar moving from Mathematics to History, Philosophy and Ethics. It is true to say that our Academy contains the very best in European scholarship and 'Wissenschaft'.

Finally and again, welcome to our new members. I am looking forward to your active engagement with your colleagues in the Sections and with our Regional Hub staff. I also hope to meet with you over the coming months and in particular in Cardiff in 2016.

Sierd Cloetingh

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