

Report on the second international congress of EUGEO Bratislava (Slovakia), August 13–16, 2009

EUGEO is the society of scholarly geographical societies, associations of geographers and other membership organisations representing geographers and geographical science in the European Union. The EUGEO initiative was first conceived in January 1994, at a meeting in Rome organised by the Italian Geographical Society. The idea was to encourage and enhance greater collaboration among geographical societies of EU member states and in general, geographers of the continent. The Royal Dutch Geographical Society (KNAG) initiated the first congress of EUGEO in Amsterdam in August 2007, which was a turning point in the life of the society. The success of the Amsterdam congress convinced both the participants and EUGEO Board members about the necessity of such an event where – similar to the AAG annual conferences in the US – European geographers can meet and discuss the most relevant issues of the discipline. In Amsterdam decision was made by EUGEO Board to organise the biennial congresses.

The second international congress of EUGEO entitled ‘Challenges for the European Geography in the 21st Century’ was organised by the Slovak Geographical Society in close collaboration with Comenius University, Faculty of Sciences and the Institute of Geography of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The congress was held in Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, between August 13–16, 2009. Bratislava with its geographical location provided also excellent opportunity for geographers of the former state-socialist countries (including Hungary) to get involved in the work of the major international conference. The second congress of EUGEO was attended by ca. 150 participants from 28 countries. During the three day long meeting plenary and thematic sessions as well as poster sessions were organised. The congress was followed by optional excursions to various parts of Slovakia and to the neighbouring countries (including Hungary).

The congress was officially opened by Vladimir IRA, president of the organizing committee, followed by high rank representatives of the Comenius University and the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and not least by Christian VANDERMOTTEN, president of EUGEO. After the opening ceremony three keynote papers were delivered in the opening plenary session. Tadeusz STRYJAKIEWICZ (Poland) introduced the results of a major EU funded project (ACRE) focusing on the location factors of the creative and knowledge-intensive industries in European metropolitan regions. Armando MONTANARI (Italy) explored the topic of human mobility and local development from a broad theoretical perspective. Finally, Jozef MINÁR (Slovakia) presented his research findings in the context of geographical fields and spatial organisation of landscape. During the congress 12 sessions were organised under the main topic, these explored broad but relevant issues, such as:

- Theoretical geography;
- Land use and land cover change;
- Geomorphology;
- GIS and spatial data processing;
- Sustainable development;
- Population development;
- Global mobility;
- Political geography and governance;
- Urban renewal;
- Geography of governance;
- Trends in tourism geography;
- Regions – development – disparities.

In the closing plenary session three presentations took place. Christian VANDERMOTTEN (Belgium) summarized his long experience about regional disparities within Europe under the title 'The new map of the European regional structures and their evolution'. Jiří BLAŽEK (Czech Republic) devoted his lecture to the challenges and dilemmas of the future EU cohesion policy. Finally, Zoltán Kovács (Hungary) summarised the most important features of urbanisation in East Central Europe prior to and after the change of regime in 1989–90.

The scientific programme of the congress was extended by a book exhibition, a guided tour in Bratislava old town and different social events like the congress dinner, which was held on a ship cruising on the Danube river.

It can be concluded that the second congress of EUGEO was an outstanding event of European geography: it stimulated fruitful discussions about research, education, and developments in the subject. The diversity of disciplines represented by the participants emphasised a rich dialogue between geographers and practitioners, researchers and teachers. Hopefully the next EUGEO congress to be held at The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) in London at the end of August 2011 will attract even more geographers from all over the continent and beyond, and it will further strengthen the academic appreciation of EUGEO and the European congress of geographers. Further details about forthcoming congresses of EUGEO can be found in the following website: www.eugeo.org.

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