

Dear colleagues and friends,

The International Year of Global Understanding is now underway and off to a wonderful start. Throughout the year, a newsletter will be produced every three months to update you on the process made and to inform you about upcoming events.

Outlined below are the most significant updates, events, progress, and, at the very end, a summary of important upcoming events and our planning.

### **Opening Ceremony**

- In December and January we had our hands full with organizing the IYGU opening ceremony. In addition to finalizing travel plans and the venues for the press conference and ceremony, numerous interviews were held with various public broadcasters, radio, and television, as well as the print press.
- The opening ceremony was held on February 2 in Jena and was preceded by a press conference. Both were well attended and received, with participants traveling from countries as far away and as diverse as Australia, Mali, India, and the USA. The attendees heard interesting keynote speeches and witnessed the representatives of the three umbrella scientific organizations (ICSU, ISSC, CIPSH) confirming their backing of and co-operation with the IYGU.
- The hard work didn't stop once the ceremony was over. We dealt with an increase in media and public enquires into the IYGU, while handling all the travel expense claims and other financial matters. For those who didn't attend the opening ceremony, photos and videos of the keynote presentations and welcoming speeches have been uploaded to the IYGU website and YouTube channel
- <http://www.global-understanding.info/resources/pictures-and-videos/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbnAgUgUb9fbLnv-un5tJVw>

### **Regional Action Centers (RACs)**

- The number of RACs keeps growing, as well as the number of signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), which now include Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, and francophone Canada. The MoU with Santiago de Compostela is ready to be signed, and an Italian RAC with the Università degli Studi di Genoa has been confirmed. We have begun the process of establishing new RACs in Cape Verde and Buenos Aires, as well as establishing some in

Eastern Europe and the Middle East: Georgia, Iran, Qatar, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

- The growing number of RACs has led to an increase in their planning and activities. Once they have been confirmed, their events will be entered on the IYGU website calendar. Additionally, the number of RACs with their own websites and Facebook pages is increasing and now includes Portugal, Greece, Croatia, Slovenia, and Brazil; these pages are also linked to the IYGU site. If you have upcoming events, please let us know so that we can spread the news.
- <http://www.global-understanding.info/people-behind/continental-centers/>

## Focus RAC

- In each newsletter, we will highlight the progress of a specific RAC. This will be done to give developing RACs a better understanding of the steps involved, and to focus on different corners of the IYGU world. This newsletter focuses on the Athens RAC.
- General information
  - The Greek RAC has identified five key sectors for targeted action in the form of the diffusion of information on good practices: education (primary to high school), tourism, agri-food sector, urban sector (municipalities and ministries), and the banking sector.
  - The RAC has started communication with the relevant institutions, ministries, and academic colleagues likely to contribute to this undertaking. Efforts are also underway to establish co-operation between the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) and the Agricultural University of Athens through a MoU.
- Planned outcome
  - Presenting good practices via the RAC's website calendar in a concise and more extended version, the latter linked to a website presentation.
  - With the support of the relevant associations and ministries, a series of one-day conferences will be held, presenting successfully implemented examples of good practices in each sector.
  - Producing "Good Practice Guides" for further and more targeted diffusion through ministries, sector associations, and other institutions.
- Further communication. In addition to the aforementioned sectoral one-day conferences, the IYGU will be presented at the following conferences:
  - 1st Euro-Mediterranean and Exhibition Conference on "Smart urban development and blue growth opportunities for cities, communities and islands in the Mediterranean basin", organized by NTUA and the University of Cyprus, April 14-16, Limassol, Cyprus
  - 8th National Conference on the "Integrated Development of Mountainous and Geographically Isolated Regions" in Metsovo,

- Greece, organized by the NTUA's MSc Program on "Environment and Development"
- A final conference at the end of 2016 organized by the NTUA in cooperation with the MSc Program "Environment and Development," the Centre for the Assessment of Natural Hazards and Proactive Planning, and other NTUA laboratories, as well as departments of other universities. The RAC will try to engage all of the NTUA's schools, as well as the Ministry of Energy and Climate Change.
  - Discussions with the Director of the MSc program "Environment and Development" are on the way regarding ways that 2016 postgraduate students can be made aware of the IYGU objectives and students can be engaged in a range of case studies and MSc theses on IYGU considerations.
  - Efforts are also being made to engage NGOs, especially two of the largest Greek NGOs (WWF-Hellas and Med-SOS), which have done much work on issues of IYGU interest; they also have good connections with, have had a high impact on, and enjoy a good reputation in Greek society.

## Web and Press

- The online IYGU presence has been expanded by adding to and updating the IYGU website. A Facebook page, Twitter account, and YouTube channel have been created and will be frequently updated.
- <http://www.global-understanding.info/get-involved/social-networks/>
- Media and press coverage increased before and following the opening ceremony. Here, in Germany, the local TV stations, MDR, and Jena TV covered the event, and the Repórter Eco in Brazil discussed the IYGU. These videos and more are on the IYGU website, under IYGU Press.
- The Verband der Geographen an Deutschen Hochschulen (VGDH) has published briefs on the opening ceremony in English and German, which can be accessed via <http://vgdh.geographie.de/international-year-of-global-understanding-iygu-eroeffnungsveranstaltung-jetzt-online/>
- The Home of Geography (HofG) has published a summary of the IYGU Opening Ceremony in their latest newsletter, which can be found via <http://www.homeofgeography.org/>
- The Österreichische Geographische Gesellschaft (ÖGG) will be publishing an update on the IYGU in its upcoming GEOGRAPHIEaktuell newsletter
- The Deutsche Universitätszeitung (DUZ) has published a piece on the IYGU titled *Er reist, er spricht, er seufzt* (He travels, he speaks, he sighs). See more at: <http://www.duz.de/duz-magazin/2016/02#sthash.foMI0X1z.dpuf>
- Benno Werlen was interviewed for a piece in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag titled *Den Kompass verloren* (The Compass is Lost). <http://webpaper.nzz.ch/2016/02/28/wissen/NXBMA/den-kompass->

[verloren?quest\\_pass=16dd7e265c%3ANXBMA%3A6ec91b2c9f9f36f78246af76469d437e2c151b4a](http://www.tlz.de/startseite/detail/-/specific/Wissen-um-die-Zusammenhaenge-ist-das-A-und-O-162609420)

- The Thüringische Landeszeitung published an article titled *Wissen um die Zusammenhänge ist das A und O* (Knowledge of the connections is the meat and potatoes) <http://www.tlz.de/startseite/detail/-/specific/Wissen-um-die-Zusammenhaenge-ist-das-A-und-O-162609420>
- The Thüringer Allgemeine published an article titled *Jenaer Geograf baut Brücken in 50 Länder: „Unser Weltbild steckt im 19. Jahrhundert“* (Jena geographer builds bridges from Jena to 50 countries: "Our worldview is stuck in the 19th century") <http://www.global-understanding.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Th%C3%BCringer-Allgemeine-3.2.16.png>

## Co-operation

- Excitingly, thanks to Ingelore Scheunemann and Sybelle de Jongh, the agreement with the Local Organizing Committee of the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio is about to be finalized. A Letter of Intent has been produced and will be signed shortly.
- Additionally, the RAC in Brazil has officially confirmed a partnership with the Brazilian Philosophy Academy-ABF. Further, they have agreements with the National Association of Entities that Promote Innovating Entrepreneurship (ANPROTEC), Organização dos Estados Ibero-americanos (OEI), Engineers Club of Brasilia (CEnB), and the Latin American University of Social Sciences (FLACSO), which have all been lined up to sign.
- It has been confirmed that H.E. José Manuel Ramos-Horta, who won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1996, is the newest IYGU patron. Currently, Mr. Ramos-Horta is the United Nations' special representative and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS); he is warmly welcomed to the IYGU.
- Contact has been made with Globaia, a non-profit NGO dedicated to promoting global environmental awareness among the general public, to explore future collaboration.
- Co-operation has been established with EUROGEO and we will be working together to produce the IYGU Story Map competition (further information under Schools below).
- The Portuguese Post Office will be issuing four commemorative IYGU stamps.
- Negotiation is underway to establish a collaboration with the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society: <http://www.carsoncenter.uni-muenchen.de/index.html>

## Arts

- We are working on expanding our global network to include more artists and artistic institutions, on building networks with important partners who work in film, photography, and other visual art types, including painting and drawing.
- Together with Margalit Berriet of Mémoire de l'Avenir, planning is underway for a collective initiative to unite artists around the globe to demonstrate the implication of and the need for Global Understanding and the contribution of artists and the Arts to it. An MoU, which will be used in all future artistic collaborations, is underway and will be signed soon.
- A collaboration has been proposed with the Ethnografilm Festival in Paris (March 29–April 2) to create a film on Global Understanding, one that would potentially use segments from the 100 films selected to be included in the Ethnografilm Festival.
- The theme for the University of Jena's 2016 Arts prize will be Global Understanding. Painting, graphics, sculpture, textile design, photography, video, and new media will be accepted between May 2 and June 3, 2016. Further information can be found <https://www.uni-jena.de/Kunstpreis.html>
- The organizers of the Andre Stenin Award 2016 have aligned "Visualizing a Path to Global Understanding" with the IYGU. More information can be found at <http://www.rps.org/news/2015/december/andre-stenin-award-2016>
- We were asked to include an upcoming film, called "Tomorrow," in our newsletter. This film addresses climate change and everyday actions, and, although not directly linked to the IYGU, it does involve and mention the IYGU's central claims and helps show why Global Understanding is important and relevant. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUN0QxRB7e0>

## Schools

- Based on a program run by the Feininger Gymnasium (Germany), a postcard competition will be held. Students are shown that everyone has an opportunity to change the world through their actions, that they have to understand their life in a global context, and produce a postcard that embodies this concept. They can choose one of the six Springer brief themes.
- A cartoon competition influenced by the works of Alan Mitcham will be held in co-operation with the RACs. Past examples can be found at <http://www.postcardpolitics.org/>
- The Forschungszentrum Juelich (Germany) is running "Vom Knirps zu Kenner - Eine Bildungsinitiative zur Anregung einer Reduzierung des CO2-Ausstoßes" (From kids to experts - an educational initiative to stimulate a reduction of CO2 emissions), which is a regional education concept addressing the transfer of decarbonization knowledge.

- Planning for a Story Map competition (in co-operation with ESRI and the IGU Commission for Geographical Education) is well underway, and will be launched in Malaga at EUROGEO 2016 on September 29/30. It is a good example of an activity that includes the younger generation, with the participants divided into two groups: up to 14 years old and up to 18 years old. As an IYGU initiative, the Mação-Coimbra RAC collaborated with ESRI and the IGU to produce a story map, published in March, of the Middle Tagus from the dawn of agriculture to the middle ages.
- We have received many requests for materials and class tools to be used when working on Global Understanding from schools and institutes all over the world. If you have produced, or are working on materials, let the Secretariat know and we will upload these to our website.

## Upcoming events, activities, and competitions

- From March 29–April 2, the American Association of Geographers will hold their annual meeting in San Francisco. During this meeting, the IYGU will be presented at a session from 3.20–5.00 pm on March 31. Douglas Richardson will chair the session, which John Wertman will introduce. The panelists will be Benno Werlen, Jack Dangermond, Farhana Sultana, Ronald Abler, Lee Schwartz, Gary Knell, and Douglas Richardson, who will discuss the IYGU in order to propagate the important goals.
- The 2016 IGU International Geographical Congress will be held in Beijing. In addition to sessions that focus on the IYGU and, in collaboration with the YES Network, a concert targeted at young scientists with the theme "Promoting Global Understanding among Young Earth Scientists" has been suggested.
- Several meetings will be conducted with local organizations in Jena to set up different forms of co-operation. The team in Jena has been, and continues to be, busy with enquiries from the media, interested groups, and individuals, the coordination of existing and the setting up of more RACs, and maintaining and expanding the already extensive IYGU network. We will also be planning and coordinating events and the attendance of conferences that will be held throughout 2016.
- The Mação-Coimbra RAC and the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH) negotiated with the National Commission of UNESCO to launch a national Humanities contest for youth (individuals in the three last years of high school before they are allowed to enroll at a university). The basis is that a crucial component of the IYGU relates to the role of the Humanities in the web of academic knowledge, although this competition does not target "human sciences-oriented students," but all

students. The students will be asked six questions which are in line with the six themes of the 2017 World Conference of the Humanities.

- A series of geographical colloquium conferences are underway or happening soon at several German-speaking universities in cities such as Kassel, Heidelberg, Leipzig, Vienna, Mainz, Nürnberg-Erlangen, and Bochum.
- Many interesting events are planned for the IYGU. Please see below for a detailed list of dates and locations, and event titles. If your RAC is planning an upcoming event, if you know of an event that promotes the ideals of the IYGU, or if there are geographical colloquium conferences planned in your area, let the Secretariat know and we will disseminate the information.

## Publications

- Concrete progress has been made on three of the Springer briefs. A partnership has been proposed between the IYGU and the OEI, with the latter offering to translate and potentially publish the six briefs into Spanish and Portuguese. So far, the first three briefs that are nearing publication are:
  - Working/housing/urbanizing (editors: Jennifer Robinson, Allen Scott, Peter Taylor)
  - Communicating/networking/interacting (editor: Margaret Robertson)
  - Eating/drinking/surviving (editors: Peter Jackson, Walter Spiess, Farhana Sultana)
- *International Year of Global Understanding. An Interview with Benno Werlen*, by Benno Werlen, was published in the Journal of Research and Didactics in Geography, Dec 2015.
- Luiz Oosterbeek, Maurizio Quagliuolo, and Laurent Caron have edited a book for *Apheleia*, titled *Sustainability Dilemmas. Transdisciplinary contributions to Integrated Cultural Landscape Management*.
- Benno Werlen, Luiz Oosterbeek, and Maria Helena Henriques will publish *2016 International Year of Global Understanding: Building bridges between global thinking and local actions in Episodes*, the quarterly journal of the International Union of Geological Sciences.
- Bridging the Gap Between Local Acts and Global Effects. *The Importance of Global Understanding for Sustainable Living* by Benno Werlen, Spring Edition 2016, ArcNews Magazine (ESRI), which has a circulation of 800,000.

We hope that everyone has had a successful year so far, and look forward to hearing about all the developments and progress made.

With best wishes,

Benno Werlen

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[www.global-understanding.info](http://www.global-understanding.info)

## Calendar of Events

### *January-March*

- Santarém** January 13: XVIII Encontro Internacional de Jovens Cientistas das Escolas Associadas da UNESCO
- Évora** January 20: Ciclo de Conferências – Desenvolvimento, Direitos Humanos e Segurança
- Berlin** January 28-29: The 2<sup>nd</sup> German Future Earth Summit, where Benno Werlen presented the IYGU to participants
- Mt. Qomolangma/  
Mt. Everest  
Base Station** February 1-10: Philatelic Exhibition Forum on Climate Change on the Roof of the World and IYGU Action in China
- Jena** February 2: The IYU Press Conference and the IYGU Opening Ceremony (see above for a summary)
- Mação / Coimbra** March 6-9: Iberian-American Journey on Human Rights, Mobility, Frontiers, Trade and Global Understanding
- Mação / Coimbra** March 7 - X Photography Contest on Geodiversity - XI Congress of Young Geoscientists at the University of Coimbra
- Mação / Coimbra** March 9-18: The APHELEIA Erasmus Mundús<sup>+</sup> Intensive Programme on Cultural Integrated landscape management and global understanding (supported by the European commission) at Mação
- New Delhi** March 17: Opening Ceremony of the South Asia Regional Action Center: Initiative towards International Year of Global Understanding 2016
- San Francisco** March 29–April 2: AAG Annual Meeting
- Quebec** March 31: Les assises du CIRODD: Le Québec en transition, opérationnaliser ensemble le développement durable (organized by Waridel, CIRODD)

*April*

- Paris** April 5-6: The Inception Symposium on Broadening the Application of the Sustainability Science Approach in support of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNESCO Headquarters
- Manchester** April 7-9: British Geographical Association Annual Conference. Special Session on IYGU 'Making Geographical Connections'
- Mação / Coimbra** April 8-9: XI Congress of Young Geoscientists at the University of Coimbra – Celebrating 100 years of the Continental Drift Theory
- Mação / Coimbra** April 9 - Semifinals of the Chemistry Olympics Junior 2016 at the University of Coimbra
- Mação / Coimbra** April 11-15 - Engineering Week - Sustainable Development for Global Understanding at the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar
- Limassol** April 14-16: 1st Euro-Mediterranean and Exhibition Conference on "Smart urban development and blue growth opportunities for cities, communities and islands in the Mediterranean basin", organized by NTUA and University of Cyprus
- Mação / Coimbra** April 16-17 - 15th National Meeting of the Network of UNESCO Associated Schools at Figueira da Foz
- Riyadh** April 19: A Panel Discussion in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Jena** April 22-24: Weiterbildungen zur ReferentIn für Globales Lernen 2016 – Einführungsseminar Frühjahr 2016 in Jena
- Mação / Coimbra** April 26: Seminário Nacional do projeto "Nós Propomos! Cidadania e inovação na educação geográfica" at Lisbon University

- Quebec** April 29: 50 ans de participation citoyenne en aménagement du territoire au Québec : Perspectives, enjeux et défis (organized by Étienne Berthold, département de géographie, Université Laval)
- Santiago de Compostela** April 28-29: Opening Ceremony of the RAC for Spain, University of Santiago de Compostela, Regional Government of Galicia and Spanish Association of Geographers
- May-June*
- Mação / Coimbra** May 6 - Awards Ceremony of the 7th EDITION CONTEST FOR THE NETWORK OF UNESCO ASSOCIATED SCHOOLS at the Olympic Academy of Portugal in Lisbon
- Heidelberg (t.b.c.)** Date to be decided: The Heidelberg Geographical Society will be hosting a one-semester lecture series on the IYGU
- Leipzig** Dates to be decided: The department of geography and the Leibniz Institute of Regional Research will be hosting a semester lecture series on the IYGU
- Hong Kong** May 11-13: 5th conference on sustainable tourism: Sustainable Tourism and Global-Local Understanding.
- Weimar** May 11: Public debate on sustainable local and regional energy supply
- Mação / Coimbra** May 13 - III Archaeology Journeys of the Tagus Valley at Vila Velha de Ródão.
- Leipzig** May 24: Opening Ceremony of the research program 'Processes of Spatialization under Globalized Conditions' with Benno Werlen as the keynote speaker
- Antalya** June 1-5: Commission Mediterranean Basin-COMB Annual Conference. Mediterranean sustainability between climate change and human mobility.
- Macao** June 7-9: Fourth Annual Conference of World Cultural Forum (Taihu, China) on 'Join Hands for a Human Destiny'

Community' and 'High-level Dialogue between Chinese and Foreign Personages: New Situation of Civilization'

**Genoa**

June 18-19: Festival dell'Università di Genova in the framework of IYGU in collaboration with the RAC for Italy

**Jena**

June 24: Sommer-Gartenfest at the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena with a focus on IYGU (Building Bridges)

**San Diego**

June 27–July 1: ESRI International User Conference

**Adelaide**

June 29–July 1: Annual Conference of the Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG) Conference with a strong IYGU focus

**July–August**

**Rio de Janeiro (t.b.c.)** August 5-21: Olympic Games: IYGU side events \*

**Seoul**

August 14-17: IGU Commission Cultural Approach with IYGU events for Southeast Asia

**Beijing**

August 21-25: IGU International Geographical Congress with multiple sessions dedicated to the IYGU

**September–October**

**Jena**

September 8-18: Summer-School on 'Global Understanding' in collaboration with the University of Buenos Aires, the University of Chile at Santiago de Chile and the RAC's for Argentina and Chile

**Quebec**

September 21-23: Colloque "Baie-Saint-Paul: inspirer le monde" (organized by the Ville de Baie-Saint-Paul, in collaboration with the département de géographie at l'Université Laval and the CIRODD).

**Rio de Janeiro**

September 22: Brazilian Chamber of Industry (CNI) will host an IYGU Opening Ceremony for Brazil

**Belo Horizonte**

October 4-7: American Regional Conference of the Humanities for Global Understanding (organized by CIPSH)

- Malaga** September 29-30: EUROGEO 2016 in Malaga – Story Map competition launch
- Kyoto** October 2-4: Science and Technology in Society Forum at the Kyoto International Conference Center Takaragaike, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto , Japan
- St. Dié de Vogues (t.b.c.)** October date to be decided: Festival International de Géographie
- Nürnberg Erlangen (t.b.c.)** Date to be decided: The geography department at the University will be hosting lectures that focus on Global Understanding during the winter semester 2016/17

***November-December***

- Moscow (t.b.c.)** November date to be decided: IYGU and the Geographical Imagination of the Future
- Quebec** November date to be decided: Atelier “Le développement durable et ses avatars dans les approches pédagogiques” At the département de géographie at l’Université Laval.
- Bamako** Date to be decided – African Regional Conference of the Humanities for Global Understanding (CIPSH)
- Byblos/Lebanon (t.b.c.)** Date to be decided – Middle East Regional Conference of the Humanities for Global Understanding (CIPSH)
- N.N.** December date to be decided: Closing Ceremony – Results and Outreach activities in 2017 and later

\* Activities at the OLYMPIC GAMES can’t be made public until the Memorandum of Understanding has been signed.