



International Association of Hydrogeologists
Early Career Hydrogeologists' Network (ECHN)



Annual Report 2019/2020

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1. Introduction

The Early Career Hydrogeologists' Network (ECHN) was established during the reorganization of the commissions and working groups of the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH) on July 1st, 2011, and provides a forum for Hydrogeologists at the start of their professional or academic careers. An "Early Career Hydrogeologist" is someone having less than 10 years of professional experience in the field of hydrogeology independently of the age.

The ECH Network aims to support hydrogeologists in the early stages of their careers (e.g., mentoring, career development) and to promote their involvement in IAH affairs. The ECH Network focuses on information sharing, networking and strengthening the status of early career hydrogeologists within IAH.

This report presents activities carried out by the ECHN from July 2019 to December 2020, as well as the plans for the year 2021.

2. ECHN structure and ECHN Steering Committee

The present structure of the network consists of a Steering Committee (SC), led by a chairperson and two co-chairs, and complemented by a task team. The SC is supported by a group of advisors composed of former members of the committee (i.e., former chairs or co-chairs).

To ensure active participation of the ECHN SC, members are invited to join the committee for one year as part of the task team. Following this time, members can re-apply if they are willing to continue their involvement. Membership of the steering committee is not automatically renewed to allow for new member involvement, changing priorities of existing members and also reflect that involvement may be task-specific or due to geographical location (e.g. assisting the organizing committee in a specific annual IAH congress).

After the IAH Congresses held in Malaga, Spain (September 2019) the ECHN SC was renewed as follows:

- Fatima Monji (The Netherlands) and Jade Ward (UK) joined the SC [Sept. 2019].
- Sabine Henry (South Africa) decided not to renew her commitment with ECHN SC [2nd half 2019].
- Raquel Sousa (Portugal) has resigned as co-chair and became an ECHN advisor [Sept. 2019].
- Jade Ward (UK) accepted the invitation to be co-chair [Sept. 2019].
- Yassine Echelfi (Morocco) and Sten-Magnus Mostek (Japan) were not reachable [last contacts in 2019].

Current steering committee

Jared Van Rooyen (South Africa)	Chair
Jade Ward (UK)	Co-chair
Stefania Stevenazzi (Italy)	Co-chair
Tirza Contreras (Honduras)	Task team
Luis Camilo Suescún (Colombia)	Task team
Richard Hoffmann (Belgium)	Task team
Antonia Genot (Chile)	Task team
Fatima Monji (The Netherlands)	Task team

Advisory team

Raquel Sousa (Portugal)	ECHN Advisors (Past Co-chair)
Carlos Maldaner (Brazil/Canada)	ECHN Advisors (Past Chair)
Viviana Re (Italy)	ECHN Advisors (Past Chair)
Judith Flügge (Germany)	ECHN Advisors (Past Chair)
Matthys Dippenaar (South Africa)	ECHN Advisors (Past Co-chair)

Information on the ECHN-SC is regularly updated and available online at:

<https://echn.iah.org/about>

3. Activities

3.1. Meetings of the Steering Committee

Regular meetings are held by video conferences (about 3 to 4 per year). These meetings allow an efficient exchange between the members of the SC and for the joint planning of the activities of the ECHN during the year. During the reported period, steering committee meetings were held on the following dates:

- September 10, 2019
- January 28, 2020
- April 23, 2020
- October 22, 2020
- January 15th, 2021

Personal meetings among the chair and co-chairs with the SC members were held in summer 2020 in order to improve communications within the SC:

- July 27, 2020: Jared Van Rooyen and Stefania Stevenazzi
- September 12, 2020: Jared Van Rooyen, Stefania Stevenazzi and Luis Camilo Suescún
- September 19, 2020: Jared Van Rooyen, Stefania Stevenazzi and Fatima Monji
- September 28, 2020:
 - Jared Van Rooyen, Stefania Stevenazzi, Jade Ward and Antonia Genot
 - Jared Van Rooyen, Stefania Stevenazzi, Jade Ward and Richard Hoffmann
 - Jared Van Rooyen, Stefania Stevenazzi and Jade Ward

These personal meetings were conducted in order for the leadership team of the ECHN to become more acquainted with one another and align our goals and perspectives for the future. During these meetings several deliverables and network operations were agreed upon and included:

- The wishlist of the ECHN to be submitted to IAH central in February 2021
- The outlook for the future of the ECHN
 - Goals and roadmap for the coming decade
 - Ethos
 - Steering committee structure
 - Correspondence and coordination with national chapters
 - Membership retention and attraction
- Roles and responsibilities of steering committee members
- Participation in upcoming congresses (Brazil and Belgium)
- Participation in volunteering activities with ECHN and support more initiatives with others (i.e., IAH, IGRAC, Josh's Water Jobs, etc.)
- ...

3.2. IAH Congress

46th IAH Congress (Malaga, Spain)

The 46th IAH Congress was held in Malaga, Spain from September 22-27, 2019. The congress was once again a great occasion for ECH networking and development of our professional careers. ECHN activities counted with the great support of the Congress Organizing Committee and IAH Central. Following are listed the ECHN activities in the 46th IAH Congress:

- Attendance at IAH Council meeting by the ECHN chair at the time (Jared van Rooyen).
- ECHN SC members participation during the open chair sessions (Jared van Rooyen, Jade Ward, Stefania Stevenazzi, Luis Camilo Suescún, Raquel Sousa).

- ECHN SC members were actively present at the IAH booth during the whole conference. In addition, a book exchange activity was offered at the IAH stand from September 24 to 26 during refreshment breaks and lunchtimes. This provided an opportunity to share knowledge, books and experiences.
- The ECHN annual general meeting (AGM) took place on the evening of the first conference day (23rd), which made it possible to initiate the exchange between ECHN early on during the congress. Thanks to that, about 30 attendees were present, most of whom were keen to learn more about how the network operates and showed interest in being part of the ECHN's SC. Afterwards, about 7 ECHs were interested in having a dinner with the SC in the city of Malaga for further networking.
- Annual ECHN / Congress event (24th): it started with an icebreaker dynamic followed by a "Hydrobingo", where each ECH had to ask specific questions (e.g., related to groundwater, the scientific background of the ECH) to another ECH. This activity promoted the communication and networking between different ECHs and made it easier to get to know each other. In addition, the social session was an opportunity for attendees to meet junior and senior hydrogeologists, exchange ideas and have fun.
- A thematic side session on "Groundwater Governance" was held as "A round table discussion on the differences in groundwater governance globally and how we can learn from each other's experiences" and moderated by the former ECHN co-chair Raquel Sousa. It counted with the presence of senior hydrogeologists working in the government, industry and academia: Dr. Makoto Taniguchi, Hydrogeologist and a deputy director general at the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), Japan; Dr. Neno Kukuric, Hydrogeologist and a deputy director of IGRAC, the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre of UNESCO; Fanus Fourie Scientific Manager at the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) in Pretoria, South Africa. Questions from the moderator were supplemented by questions and interactions from the audience and early careers (around 15) with the panelists.
- There was the 3rd edition of an ECHN keynote lecture. This time an ECH could apply to give the keynote lecture. Submitted applications and abstracts were reviewed by the SC and so the ECH Stefano Viaroli was invited to present his abstract entitled "The Good, the Bad and the Bottled: considerations of the effects of our habits on water and environment protection" as ECHN keynote lecture.

Furthermore, IAH Congresses always allow ECHN members to have the chance to disclose their work and talk, advise, receive suggestions and counselling from ECHs, students, professors and professionals attending the meeting.

As the Brazilian congress was postponed to 2021, there were no ECHN congress activities in 2020. Nonetheless, the plans and preparations made with the Brazil organizing committee will roll on to the 2021 congress, in which at least two steering committee members have confirmed attendance.

As part of our online efforts, 5 keynote lectures from the 2019 congress in Malaga were recorded and edited by the ECHN for posting by IAHgroundwater on Vimeo. These videos were produced exclusively by our ECHN team and 5 more videos are to be produced in 2021. Talks have begun to perform a similar role in the coming 2021 congress with the relevant organizing committee members.

4. Exchange and dissemination of knowledge

Since the beginning of ECHN's activities, the LinkedIn group has been used as a platform for sharing information and for discussions. Each member of the group can post jobs, conference announcements, groundwater events, make questions, leave comments and suggestions. The platform is used by ECHN to also promote ECHN and IAH activities, special sessions and the events and activities that are held at the IAH International Congresses.

The profile of the group is regularly updated by Tirza Contreras and Jared Van Rooyen. The current number of members of the ECHN's LinkedIn group is 1050.

The network takes advantage of all social media platforms available nowadays, in order to communicate with the various young generations. Therefore, the platforms used by ECHN are:

- *Facebook* page, administered by Jared Van Rooyen and Stefania Stevenazzi, with 2387 followers (2295 likes), open since January 2014;
- *Twitter* account, administered by Stefania Stevenazzi and Luis Camilo Suescún, with 1082 followers, open since December 2014;
- *Instagram* account, administered by Jared Van Rooyen, with 106 followers, created in September 2018.

The aims and usages of the social media platforms, as well as their pros and cons, are still a point of discussion with the IAH Council.

The ECHN website, launched in 2014 (<https://echn.iah.org/>) is currently administered by Stefania Stevenazzi. The website is periodically updated mainly with news and pictures regarding ECHN activities (especially activities done during the IAH congresses).

5. ECHN Branches

The ECHN National Groups allow ECH's to network and share technical information with other hydrogeologists in their own country and/or city. Examples of events include side events at hydrogeological national meetings, technical presentations, hydrogeological tours or socializing with local/national experts in the field of hydrogeology. Please note that some smaller IAH National Chapters don't have an ECHN national branch, but organize activities for early careers in the same way (e.g., Belgium or France National Chapters of IAH).

Current National branches are:

1. West Australia
2. Brazil
3. Canada
4. Chile
5. Colombia
6. Italy
7. Japan
8. Portugal
9. South Africa
10. United Kingdom
11. U.S.A.

Contacts and other information (website, social media) are collected in the interactive world map that is present at the link: <https://echn.iah.org/echn-national-branches>

In addition, the Steering Committee would like to improve the connection and the communication between the Steering Committee and the National branches. Currently, we have begun to form a second larger committee that will include a representative ECH from each one of the national branches in addition to the SC members. This "2nd cycle" should then hold a semi-annual meeting in addition to the annual network meeting (AGM) at the IAH congress to ensure an efficient exchange of information on progress/issues/ideas.

6. Outlook

The main objective of the ECHN for 2021 are:

- Definition of new ECHN agenda/goal for the coming decade;

- Forming a relationship with other young societies as well as job pages (e.g., Josh's water jobs, IGRAC) and generate more professional and academic opportunities/connections for the ECHs;
- Promote Groundwater awareness within the public domain through online community platforms and engagement activities;
 - Participating in the development of videos related to groundwater topics, e.g., collaborate on videos about groundwater quality around the world, why it is important for us to investigate it and how the importance of groundwater is perceived by different age generations worldwide, the role of groundwater in industry;
- Inspire ECHs to become members of IAH and the ECHNetwork;
 - Delineate a regulation of new ECHs to be part of the Steering Committee;
- Maintain/improve the activities organized during the Annual IAH Congresses. In 2021, the challenge for the ECHN SC in terms of time and budget (mainly travel) is to have a representative presence/participation at both congresses (47th Congress in Sao Paulo, Brazil and 48th Congress in Brussels, Belgium) in order to ensure a similar quality of the ECHN activities at both Congresses.
- Support the launching of National Branches and improve the interaction between them and with the Central ECHN (as explained above);
- Improve communication between IAH / ECHN community and with ECHN National Branches (as explained above);
- Support the interaction between Junior and Senior hydrogeologists, with a special dedication to the Mentoring Scheme held by IAH.

January 31, 2021

Jared Van Rooyen

On behalf of the Early Career Hydrogeologists' Network