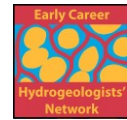




International Association of Hydrogeologists
Early Career Hydrogeologists' Network (ECHN)



Annual Report 2023

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1. Introduction

The Early Career Hydrogeologists' Network (ECHN) was established during the reorganisation 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 January 2023 to December 2023, as well as the plans for the year 2024.

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 reflecting that involvement may be task-specific or due to geographical location (e.g. assisting the organising committee in a specific annual IAH congress).

The ECHN SC was renewed as follows:

- Isadora Kuhn (Brazil) joined the SC [Feb. 2023].
- Klara Zagar (Slovenia) joined the SC [Feb. 2023].

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 (Germany)	Task team
Paulo Filipe Silva Borges (Portugal)	Task team
Fatima Monji (The Netherlands)	Task team
Isadora Kuhn (Brazil)	Task team
Klara Zagar (Slovenia)	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:

- February 10th, 2023
- March 31st, 2023
- September 5th, 2023
- November 29th, 2023

3.2. IAH Congress

The 50th IAH Congress was held in Cape Town, South Africa on September 18-22, 2023. 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 50th IAH Congress:

- The IAH Council supported the attendance of four ECHs allowing them the free registration to the congress (Jared van Rooyen, Stefania Stevenazzi, Isadora Kuhn, Stéphanie Musy).
- Annual ECHN social event: ECHN animated the Congress icebreaker event held at the congress venue on Tuesday September 19th, 2023. It started with a welcome from past ECHN chairs and co-chairs (Viviana Re and Matthys Dippenaar). Then the icebreaker event involved the early careers in a network game: “Hydrobingo”, that consisted in a game where each ECH had to ask specific questions (e.g., related to groundwater, the scientific background, personal aspects of their life) to other attendees, and the objective was to fulfil the characteristic table with names of other participants. 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. The IAH Council (Ian Davey, IAH Executive manager) awarded the first players filling the “Hydrobingo” with four IAH Series books and IAH gadgets.
- In the closing ceremony, there were several awards given to ECHN participants, these included a best poster and best oral presentation, as selected by the ECHN SC member who attended the congress. Prizes were provided by the IAH Council and facilitated by the IAH South Africa President, Mr Julian Conrad and the South African Groundwater Division, Professor Matthys Dippenaar.
- There was the 5th edition of an ECH keynote lecture invited by the Local Organising Committee with the support of ECHN. In the closing session, Awonda Magingi (South Africa) presented a keynote lecture entitled: “Research and implementation of managed aquifer recharge in a changing climate”. The Keynote speaker, Ms Awodwa Magingi, was awarded a free registration to IAH 2024 in Davos, Switzerland.

3.3. Annual General Meeting

The ECHN Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place in the afternoon of the 21st of September during the IAH Annual Congress in Cape Town (South Africa). This meeting was the first one after the long break due to travel restrictions after the COVID pandemic. About 35 attendees were present, most of whom were keen to learn more about how the network operates. The meeting was an opportunity to present the different programmes maintained by the ECHN, such as IAH mentoring scheme programme, the funding opportunities to attend IAH Congresses, and the support for the creation of an ECHN Branch. It created a propitious moment to share opinions and concerns regarding job opportunities for early careers in different countries, and early careers perspective respective to IAH,. Some of the attendees expressed their interest in joining the activities of ECHN. Afterwards, the attendees were contacted by email and invited to send an

application and a motivation to be part of the ECHN SC. About 13 ECHs responded to the invitation and sent the application. Currently, their applications are under evaluation.

A raffle was organised among the AGM participants and the lucky winner was rewarded with a present from David Kreamer (IAH President).

Here is the AGM Presentation:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1xZbh65Bg1lzIE1aBoPCXR0IPTpgb2KrB/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=114706927919509586263&rtpof=true&sd=true>

3.4. Collaboration with other youth organisations

In January 2022 ECHN was invited by the newly constituted UNESCO Groundwater Youth Network (UN-GWYN) as a support for the first steps in the creation of the network. In 2023, ECHN continued the interaction with the UN-GWYN. Main activities were 1) participating in the monthly Steering Committee meetings, 2) continuously supporting the activities of the GWYN Steering Committee with our experience (e.g., 2023 ECOSOC Youth Forum, UNECE Region's Forum on Sustainable Development) and 3) supporting the application and implementation for UN Youth Office side meetings related to the 2023 UN Water Conference - formally known as the 2023 Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028) - which took place from March 22-24, 2023 at the UN Headquarters in New York. At the UN Water Conference, UN-GWYN co-organized the side event "Groundwater: An invisible, cross-sectoral foundation for implementing the Water Action Agenda". The session was a continuation of the contribution to the Groundwater Summit in Paris in December 2022. ECHN accompanied and reviewed the preparations and provided active feedback.

In addition, ECHN and UN-GWYN have jointly submitted a proposal for a side event/session at the next IAH Congress in Davos, Switzerland. It is proposed to set up a "Groundwater Youth Hub" during the IAH Congress. This will most likely be a formal side event.

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 updated by Tirza Contreras and Jared Van Rooyen. The current number of members of the ECHN's LinkedIn group is 1230.

The network takes advantage of most of the 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 2770 followers (2659 likes), open since January 2014;
- *X / Twitter* account, administered by Stefania Stevenazzi and Luis Camilo Suescún, with 1262 followers, open since December 2014;
- *Instagram* account, administered by Jared Van Rooyen, with 142 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 socialising 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 organise 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.
12. New Zealand

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>

Among the various questions raised by the attendees of the AGM, some early careers asked for some tips to create a new ECHN National Branch. In particular, early careers from Spain asked for help. In this way the AGM was the floor for a first contact between them and members of the well established ECHN-Italy.

6. Outlook

The main objective of the ECHN for 2024 are:

- Continuation to engage with the Unesco Youth Groundwater Network (UN-GWYN), e.g., at least one representative of the ECHN will continue to participate in the monthly meetings of the steering committee.
- 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;
 - Delineate a regulation for the distribution of tasks among the members of the Steering Committee;
 - Engage a discussion within ECHN and with the IAH Council to include the ECHN Chair among the people of the IAH's advisory council elected by all the members;
- Engage a reorganization of the Steering Support the launching of National Branches and improve the interaction between them and with the Central ECHN;
- Improve communication between IAH / ECHN community and with ECHN National Branches;
- Support the interaction between Junior and Senior hydrogeologists, with a special dedication to the Mentoring Scheme held by IAH.

March 11, 2024

Jared Van Rooyen

On behalf of the Early Career Hydrogeologists' Network