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EUGEO

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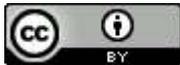
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EUGEO

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Introduction

- 1 Each and every human activity always has a beginning, an opportunity, an event, but more often and above all a group of people who, in deeming the activity ripe, take the responsibility for giving a concrete form to an innovative idea. Not that this has much bearing on the future of the initiative but after a few years it is necessary to attempt to organize the course of events and to acknowledge those pioneers, whether individuals or institutions, that showed us the route and began to travel along it. Since throughout the last decade we have witnessed a series of events and activities which led to the constitution of EUGEO, we considered it fitting to recall the stages and backdrop against which it all took place.
- 2 In January 1994, a meeting was organised for the first time in Rome, at the headquarters of the Italian Geographical Society (SGI) in Villa Celimontana, and upon initiative of the SGI, between a group of people with the precise aim of discussing why there was the need to create a European geographical “dimension”, how to bring this about and how to proceed.
- 3 The encounter in Rome constituted the official beginning of the EUGEO initiative, but in order to prepare for that meeting, many other informal meetings had taken place during the previous months. The motivation for these meetings lay in the inspiration of L. Buzzetti, who in turn spoke to G. Ferro, the then president of the SGI. In that succinct style of his which contradicted his expositions, he communicated to A. Montanari his intention to support an initiative to facilitate a greater coordination and collaboration between the European geographical societies, associations and institutes and to evaluate the feasibility together with L. Buzzetti. This took place at the beginning of the 1990s in a context rich with political initiatives on a European scale. On the 7th February 1992, the new Maastricht Treaty was signed, which came into force on the 1st November 1993 and on the basis of which the European Union (EU) was established, to which twelve countries

adhered. During those same years the fall of the Soviet Union had determined a new map of Europe and the geographical societies of Central and Eastern European countries reappeared on the continental scene to renew past forms of collaboration. During the decades under Soviet regime, the geographical societies had continued to exist but their role had changed, also because in general they had been reabsorbed into the national science academies.

- 4 By definition, geography had always been the promoter of international collaboration in favour of science and culture. Therefore, from the 19th century, when the various national geographical societies were constituted, there was an intense exchange of information, the initiation of collaboration, the custom of trading visits and the practice of international meetings, conferences and congresses. However, two further factors were added to these circumstances. The 20th century had brought about a significant reappraisal of the role and traditional function of geographical societies. Many national societies had for a considerable time remained in a critical situation which did not allow them to conserve those spacious, and often prestigious, premises which they had made use of during previous decades. Subsequently, these circumstances forced them, because of a lack of space and organisation, to alienate themselves from a substantial part of the archival and cartographic heritage that was their property and, because of a lack of initiative and activity, to seriously reassess their role in public society. The reduction in activities and functions during these years was justified by the need to reduce costs and thus to enable them to continue to exist. In some cases, this reduction in activities led to the sole conservation of historical tradition with the risk, at the same time, of merely allowing dust to accumulate, both on shelves and on geography itself.
- 5 A second factor sprung up due to the fact that the European dimension was perceived as a “reduction” in the international role of geography. Furthermore, the European societies, although in some cases impoverished, were still proud of the part they played in world culture and deemed that a formal European collaboration constituted a *deminutio* (diminution) of their own aspirations and capacities in international relations. A solution to these initial difficulties was offered by the possibility of discussing this project in a friendly and informal manner during the meetings held on the occasion of the seminars and congresses of the Regional and Urban Restructuring in Europe (Rure) project promoted by the European Science Foundation (ESF). Circa fifty geographers participated in the Rure project, representing the scientific communities of approximately twenty European countries, amongst which certain were responsible for, or collaborated with, their own country’s geographical societies and associations. In this way, it was possible to approach in a friendly and informal manner the presidents of numerous national geographical institutes and to verify their willingness to embrace more structured forms of collaboration at a European level.

The 1994 Meeting in Rome

- 6 Once the initial enquiry phase had been overcome, the SGI fixed a convenient date for a meeting at its premises in Rome, at Villa Celimontana, and invited a small number of colleagues from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK. The group photograph (figure 1) taken in front of Villa Celimontana on 29th January 1994, shows the fourteen participants representing the geographical organisations of six European countries (table 1). Hence, the first documentation on where, when and who laid down

the first foundations of EUGEO. It was a beautiful sunny day, one of those days in which the Roman winter appears particularly mild, an aspect highlighted by the absence of overcoats on certain colleagues from the North, bravely emulated by some, not all, of the shivering Southerners. It is possibly precisely for this reason that the photograph seems almost “underexposed”, as does perhaps the whole initiative. It was technically difficult to reproduce the photograph and hence it would be pointless to search for it in the archives. Perhaps the possibility was overlooked that the photograph would become of historical importance and that one day it could and should have been published.

Figure 1. The participants in the Rome Meeting, 29th January 1994.



Table 1. Rome, 29th January 1994, list of participants.

Belgium	Royal Belgian Geographical Society	Henri Nicolai, Christian Vandermotten
Germany	Union of Geographers at German Universities	Lienhard Lötsher, Brigitta Schütt
Italy	Association of Italian Geographers (AGEI) Italian Geographical Society (SGI)	Claudia Robiglio Rizzo Luciano Buzzetti, Alessandro Gallo, Armando Montanari, Giorgio Spinelli
Netherlands	Royal Dutch Geographical Society	Frans Dieleman, Frans Vonk
Portugal	Centre of Geographical Studies	Jorge Gaspar

UK	Institute of British Geographers	Peter Daniels, Allan Findlay
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- 7 During the preparatory phase of the meeting, an agenda was drafted (table 2) in which were defined the responsibilities of each delegation in each theme. The Italian delegation had explained the three main objectives in the attainment of European collaboration. There were many forms of collaboration that seemed possible, but at a moment when the European institutes were entering a phase of expansion of their capacities and the members of the EU were being requested to provide closer collaboration, it seemed necessary to establish an entity sufficiently solid to create a lobbying centre for geography on a European scale. According to Article 2 of the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union, the EU had to encourage, inter alia, “harmonious and balanced development of economic life within the Union... durable, non-inflationary and environmentally-sustainable growth”. In Article 130R, the objectives to be achieved included the conservation and protection of the environment, protection of human health, prudent and rational use of natural resources, promotion of measures at an international level to deal with regional or global environmental problems. On the basis of the Maastricht Treaty, the environment and territory were to have assumed increasing importance and thus this would make room for geography and the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary capacities of geographers, both economic and physical. At a global level, 1992 was the year of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro and hence of the introduction of the concept of sustainable development and the commitments of Agenda 21.
- 8 Moreover, coordination would enable a better synchronization of the studies to be carried out at a European level in a phase during which funding for research was increasingly within the competence of the European Commission. A third objective was linked to the identification of new scientific and educational responsibilities for European geography in a phase of economic transformation linked to urban and regional restructuring, new forms of work organisation, and significant geopolitical changes that entailed the repossession of space within the European continent. In more operative terms, it was also necessary to reposition geography at the centre of the European debate, recuperating the connection between the discipline and the different types of users and scientific operators. A relationship that had deteriorated to the advantage of other disciplines and professions which had been more efficient in identifying their own role at a European level. Furthermore, the immense linguistic and cultural wealth of European societies had contributed towards creating a barrier of information and communication which had to be removed in order to increase the exchange of ideas and to spark the mass media’s interest in the valuable themes of education and geographical research. The discussion that followed the presentation of these issues confirmed the notable differences in the aims, functions and modes of operation between the European geographical organizations. Certain reflections emerged from the other issues discussed during the meeting in Rome which, even ten years on, are worth remembering for their relevance today and also in order to reflect upon the difficulties which prevented their realization.

Table 2. The Agenda of the Rome meeting, 28-29th January 1994.

PART A – OPENING SESSION
Meaning and scope of the SGI initiative (Italian delegation)
PART B – POSSIBLE COLLABORATIVE VENTURES
Network and euro-conferences (German and Portuguese delegation)
Training programmes (Netherlands and UK delegation)
Co-operation with societies from Central and Eastern European Countries (Belgian and Italian delegation)
Computerization and co-operation between libraries and map libraries (Italian and UK delegation)
Research programmes (all)
PART C – CONCLUSIONS
Operational structures (general discussion)

- 9 The idea of European geographical conferences was proposed by the German delegation which suggested the organisation of a meeting in Heidelberg in the autumn of 1994 of an organising committee which could also request funding from the European Commission. Dietrich Barsch, from the University of Heidelberg, who coordinated relations concerned with European initiatives for the Central Union of German Geographers (Zentralverband der Deutschen Geographen), was unable to support the initiative due to poor health and therefore the meeting in Germany was postponed and then definitively cancelled. Nobody else in this first decade of activity offered to organise a European congress and therefore the proposal was only resurrected at the beginning of the year 2000 on initiative of the Royal Dutch Geographical Society. The importance of a congress was highlighted as the necessity for closer cooperation between European geographers. They indubitably have the possibility of meeting at the congresses organised by the International Geographical Union (IGU), but the IGU initiatives have a global dimension and standing. In a situation of limited economic availability, as is the case of young scholars and PhD students, it would be much easier to move within the European continent. Moreover, the custom of numerous European geographers of participating in the annual conferences of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) is no doubt praiseworthy and of great scientific relevance. The fact then that these European colleagues end up meeting each other only on the occasion of AAG conferences confirms the need for events on a European scale, organised in Europe. The European conferences referred to here would in any case not substitute prospective forms of regional coordination promoted by the IGU. The idea was not merely to organise meetings between geographers from specific regions, but rather to encourage them to express themselves, through their research, on priority themes for that part of the European society that was represented by the EU.

- 10 The possibility of a coordinated teaching activity was examined in relation to the characteristics which the four educational levels (undergraduate, graduate, PhD, post graduate/doctorate) assumed in the various national scenarios as well as in relation to the movements of students rendered possible by the specific European programmes, such as Erasmus. Therefore, special attention was given to how to promote an educational activity taking as a reference point the cultural heritage consisting in books, maps and finds belonging to the European geographical societies.
- 11 Collaboration between the societies of central and Eastern Europe was already underway in Belgium and Germany where there had been exchanges of information and personal missions. Upon completion of these experiences, on 30th July 1993 the President of the SGI wrote to the Presidents of the geographical societies in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Croatia, Romania, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia with the aim of resuming a coordinated form of collaboration. Furthermore, at the same time Unesco/Roste became involved, providing collaboration in the form of a letter of support of the initiative, addressing it to the Science Academies and National Commissions of Unesco throughout central and Eastern Europe. A positive response to this initiative and an offer of collaboration was received from the societies of the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania, and contact was established with those of Russia and Byelorussia. These geographical societies, however, presented certain common problems: almost all were experiencing a phase of reorganisation and repositioning in a society being transformed from a centrally-planned economy model to a market economy system, and had found themselves confronted with an unexpected lack of public funding. It was decided to widen this collaboration at a European level and to organise a meeting between the societies of central and Eastern Europe on the occasion of the IGU Conference of Prague in August 1994.
- 12 The specificity of the cultural heritage of geographical societies is represented by their map collections. A decision was made to collaborate in the sector of the cataloguing of material in order to adopt data processing systems that would enable the subsequent exchange of information and the creation of a European geographical communication network.
- 13 The session on research programmes was structured around the following themes:
- human mobility with particular attention to the evolution of the concept and its forms (social and economic changes, brain drain, the elderly):
 - regional differences (internal mobility, East-West, South-North);
 - impact on the environment (effect of mobility on the natural and cultural environment, on the urban and rural environment, on the areas dedicated to leisure and tourism).
- 14 The theme of human mobility appeared to be the most apt to represent a common area of research also in relation to a more extensive European integration, to breaking down the barriers within the EU and to better commercial relations between EU countries and the rest of Europe and the Mediterranean. The participants were asked to: (i) refer to the research situation in their own countries; (ii) identify their priorities for European research in the subsequent decade (iii) list the capacities and items of interest in research of each national society; (iv) indicate the themes they considered to be most apt for collaboration and most likely to produce results. The German delegation indicated as their research priorities those that had been determined during the 1993 German Geographers' Congress and which were structured around four main themes (i) restructuring old industrial regions, (ii) ecology and environment; analysis, education,

provisions for the future, (iii) the third world within global processes of political and economic restructuring, (iv) Europe at the crossroads. The theme which aroused particular interest was the latter which envisaged six lines of research: (i) the new Internal Market, (ii) regions in Europe between regionalism and globalization, (iii) transformations in Eastern Europe, (iv) European transport: waiting for collapse?, (v) the future of the city in Europe, (vi) Europe in geographic teaching at school. The meeting in Rome acknowledged the importance of the environmental themes, their application at an urban level and the formation of a theory on the European Sustainable City. These were identified as themes for a possible European conference to be held in Heidelberg in the autumn of 1994.

- 15 The conclusion of the meeting in Rome contributed to accelerating a process which the promoters could never have imagined in such a short timeframe. It was unanimously decided to begin to consider geographical issues also from a European viewpoint. In order to do this it was not sufficient to establish a simple network of coordination and connection between the institutions but it was decided to found a new entity which on this occasion had the title of The European Association for the Advancement of Geography, for which the acronym Geuro or Eurgeo was proposed. P. Daniels, A. Montanari and C. Vandermotten were appointed with the task of preparing the bylaws. The draft of the bylaws was to be prepared by the end of April, sent to the participants for a first round of comments and amendments and thereafter resent by the end of July to be then discussed during the Prague meeting during the month of August. The commitment undertaken was to establish the European Society by the autumn and then to commemorate the first official meeting in Heidelberg. The statute was to have been simple and concise and would thus not require excessive editing. A letter of intent was to have been added to this clarifying in more detail the objectives and scientific and cultural characteristics of the European Society. This letter of intent was to have been an informal document and one therefore easily amendable and modifiable in the future. The Rome meeting immediately identified the Society's main objective: to operate within the structures and regulations of the EU. The aim was thus not to create the umpteenth European regional association, but to follow the evolution of events and to identify a level able to represent the requirements of geography in relation to the new supranational entity constituted by the EU. Therefore, a membership was required that would also be open to external collaboration, but limited to the organisations of the EU member countries. To this end it was decided to insert four categories of member in the bylaws: 1) Foundation members (geographical societies, associations of geographers and other geographical bodies in the EU); 2) Full members (geographical societies, associations of geographers and other geographical bodies in the EU); 3) Correspondent members (geographical societies, associations of geographers and other geographical bodies from countries not members of the EU); 4) Contributing members (organisations, public and private enterprises acting for the advancement of geography). In line with this definition, it was deemed necessary to complete the group of participants with the geographical bodies of the other EU countries which had not participated at the meeting in Rome.

The making of the Bylaws, 1994-1997

- 16 The formulation of the bylaws took approximately 24 months of work undertaken by the Commission composed of P. Daniels, A. Montanari and C. Vandermotten, who carried out

their own work in direct contact with the national geographical institutions. On the 16th May 1994, the first draft of the statute had begun to circulate between Birmingham (P. Daniels), Brussels (C. Vandermotten) and Rome (A. Montanari). Thereafter, the definitive version of the text of the statute was published as an annexe to the *Moniteur belge* dated 25th December 1997. During this period, almost four years, there was no stop to the meetings, seminars and all the other activities necessary for the advancement of the idea. Representatives of the geographical societies and associations of geographers from six countries had participated at the meeting in Rome; the statute was signed by representatives from ten countries, that is, only two less than the prearranged number - the twelve countries that in those years were members of the EU. Only the representatives from Luxembourg and Greece were excluded. Each time a new adhesion was achieved it was justly necessary to give new explanations and therefore to reinstate discussions. In the search for as far-reaching a representation as possible, the group of promoters had been in contact with many different situations which characterized highly varied national or regional contexts from country to country. Thus, a further complication was encountered in attempting to maintain a balance between the different national situations. Indeed, no significant results had been obtained from the numerous disquisitions on how to define the various circumstances of European associations within the geographical field, with the risk of imbalances in the representation of each individual country. With this aim, it was decided to activate the European society with a number of founding members equal to that of the EU member countries and that these would constitute by statute the Board of Directors for the first four years. The name of the society was also worked on intensely: from a post-modern formula, as had emerged during the meeting in Rome, in which the intention was to highlight the concept of promotion and development of geography, to a more classical terminology which evoked the geographical institutes of the 19th century. Other than the advantage of a classical quality, this name also raised less problems in its translation into the EU languages, and in effect, Article 1 of the Statute refers to the “European Society for Geography” and at the same time to the translation into the seven other European languages represented by the founding members. With this linguistic wealth and, without wishing to or being able to indicate any reference language, an acronym was searched for which would perhaps represent an element of oneness. Initially, the acronyms GEurO and EURGEO were used, with many variations of upper and lower case letters. Then, during the meeting in Brussels in January 1996, it was discovered that the European Council of Madrid had decided to name the new European currency the Euro and hence the definitive acronym Eugeo was opted for.

The Eugeo activity, 1996-2003

- 17 From 1994 to 1996 many meetings were held, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the scientific and geographical encounters and seminars organised for other motives throughout Europe. In 1994 and 1996, the opportunity given to numerous colleagues to participate at the IGU conference in Prague and The Hague also allowed the organisation of informal meetings. One specific meeting, although still informal, aimed at discussing and approving the definitive version of the statute, was organised in Brussels in January 1996. During the Brussels meeting, the statute was approved. During 1996 the signatures of the founder members' legal representatives attesting to their adhesion were

collected. Therefore, from the moment of the meeting in Paris in December 1996, and in anticipation of the publication of the *Moniteur belge*, preparations were made for the organisation of the formal meetings of the Board of Directors, which for the first four years also served the role of general assembly. In Paris in 1996, therefore, the first meeting of the Board of Directors of Eugeo and simultaneously also the first general assembly were held. Table 3 shows the dates and locations of the meetings organised by Eugeo during the period 1996-2003. A summary of the main themes discussed and the results of the main decisions is given. The updates of the various themes were obviously not indicated, and amongst these there was certainly always room on the agenda to present and discuss the budget under the guidance of H. de Weert, the web-site on the basis of the proposals of L. Buzzetti, and to update and develop the “Textbook on the geography of Europe” project coordinated by C. Vandermotten.

EUGEO meetings, 1996-2003.

DATE	PLACE	MAJOR ISSUES DISCUSSED
1996, January 13	Brussels	Final draft of the bylaws. Final text of the Annexe to the bylaws. H. Nicolai is elected President, L. Buzzetti and Lord Jellicoe, Vice-Presidents, H. de Weert, Treasurer. A. Montanari is appointed Secretary General.
1996, December 16	Paris	Celebration of the 175th anniversary of the foundation of the Société de Géographie. First contacts with the European Commission for participation in the Socrates Programme.
1997, March 15	Vienna	C. Vandermotten presents a programme which should finalise the publication of a common text book on the geography of Europe. Proposal for a document on the role of geography in the building of the European Union. Initiatives for the official launch of the Eugeo initiative. Formal contacts with IGU. Three categories of annual fees are decided.
1997, October 11	Bonn	Celebration of the 51st Meeting of the German Geographers. Preparation of a document on geography in the European school system on initiative of the Austrian Executive member.
1998, September 1	Lisbon	The Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography accepted as founder member. Participation in the Raphaël Programme of the European Commission. The projects ‘Cartographical Heritage of the European Geographical Societies’, ‘Accessibility and valuation’ and ‘Multi-media Geo Exhibition’ are presented.
1999, June 19	Brussels	H. Nicolai is confirmed for a second term as President, L. Buzzetti and Lord Jellicoe, Vice-Presidents, H. de Weert, Treasurer. The Eugeo logo, colour ‘blue Europe’, is presented and approved.
2000, March 4	Rome	Conference on ‘The role of Geographical Societies in the 21st Century’. Participation of Eugeo at the Conference on ‘The role of geography in the 21st Century, at the service of peace and sustainable development’, organised by the Société de Géographie together with Unesco and IGU, Paris June 15-16, 2000. The programme ‘The cultural photographic heritage and the programme ‘Geography diversity and common heritage: a growing Europe’ are presented to the European Commission. Proposal for the preparation of a programme on ‘Historical cartography on-line’ to the Information Society technology Programme of the European Commission.
2002, February 22-23	Brussels	Celebration of the 125th anniversary of the foundation of the Société Royale Belge de Géographie. The Finnish Geographical Society and the Catalan Geographical Society are accepted as new members. Renewal of the Eugeo Executive. J.-R. Pitte is elected President.
2002, June 8	Paris	A. Montanari is elected Vice-President, and H. de Weert Treasurer. R. Gardner is appointed Secretary General. Programme of Activities, 2002-2004. Proposal for the Eugeo European Geography Congress in the NL. Status of geography in secondary education, Eugeo - RGS-IBG European Survey.
2002, November 16	Lisbon	The organisation of an Eugeo Session at the RGS-IBG annual Conference in London, September 2003.
2003, September 6	London	C. Vandermotten is elected President to substitute J.-R. Pitte who has taken on new responsibilities at his University. J.-R. Pitte is elected Vice-President and therefore confirmed in the Eugeo Board. The participation of Eugeo at the IGU Congress in Glasgow, August 2004. The organisation and the programme of the first Eugeo European Geography Congress, NL, 2006, KragEugeo. The enlargement of the EU and the new Eugeo membership.
2004, February 28	Barcelona	Constitutional matters. The participation of Eugeo at the IGU Congress in Glasgow, August 2004 (Eugeo Stand, Belgique special issue, Conference sessions). KragEugeo Conference postponed to 2007. Supporting postgraduates at Eugeo Conferences.

- 18 Furthermore, on several occasions research activities were organised and presented to the European Commission for funding. Already in the summer of 1995, even before Eugeo had been formally constituted, the “Network proposal on tourism and environment” was presented. At that time, Eugeo did not yet exist and thus it was not possible for it to participate formally. Therefore, the initiative was taken by the Italian Geographical Society in collaboration with partner geographical societies in Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Spain. Neither this nor any other of the many proposals indicated in Table 3 were ever accepted and thus funded by the European Commission. These failures were a source of deep reflection and it was therefore decided not to present further projects at this stage. An initial problem was encountered in the fact that Eugeo had not yet acquired sufficient exposure or reputation in order to be acknowledged as a valid partner at a European scale. In addition to this, and even more substantially, is the fact that not all

European societies undertake research or consultancy activities in a manner enabling them to show as such in their own curriculum vitae and it therefore becomes difficult to prove that they are equipped and capable of doing so. The European Commission requests that all proponents commit to co-finance their projects, the matching funds which certain societies, due to the reduced size of their activities and administrative management, are not able to undertake. On the other hand, the fact remains that European geographical societies are proprietors or custodians of substantial cultural heritage which deserves to be better known and divulged, also and especially because of their ability to contribute towards the development of that supranational European culture that is vital for the creation of the EU.

Conclusions

- 19 The content of this paper does not constitute an assessment of Eugeo's experience, but attempts merely to reconstruct certain elements in order to contribute towards a reflection upon how much has been done and how much is still left to achieve. In order to evaluate Eugeo's experience it is undoubtedly not sufficient to take into consideration the decade that has elapsed since a group of people sat down around a table for the first time with the aim of reflecting upon the viewpoint of a European collaboration in the field of geography. Recalling the enthusiasm, determination and lucidity in the identification of objectives of those who ten years ago decided to initiate this collaboration could induce disappointment. Indeed, the product is not at all comparable to the project. If one is to consider the actual state of affairs in the administration of national geographical societies and other organisations, of their role in public society, of the space attributed to the geographical disciplines by European schools and universities, then maybe the approach becomes more realistic. The evaluation can only then leave room for optimism and satisfaction insofar as how much has been accomplished until now. The problem is not only that of assessing the progress of the initiative but also of reflecting upon its validity and present relevance. The founding members have often broached this issue and have always confirmed the effectiveness of the decision, acknowledged the timeliness in which the decision was made and reasserted their commitment. Geography as a discipline is considered to be in a crisis at the present moment in time. In spite of this, other disciplines and society in general continuously make reference to issues related to geography and its elements of great vitality and novelty. One is thus looking at a form of cultural expression which uses geography without making reference to those organisations which, for now almost two centuries, have attended to its method, application and divulcation at a national and international level. It is reasonable to think that the responsibility for the crisis also exists within the geographical societies themselves, which often in their vast and complex history have not been able to come out unharmed from one evolutionary cycle to the next and therefore have not found themselves capable of efficiently dealing with the transformations occurring in the society in which they operate. This consideration is confirmed by the policies undertaken by certain national societies which are successfully following the path of restructuring and revival. Eugeo's experience thus proves to be useful not only in order to affirm the geographical situation within EU institutes, but, via meetings, confrontations and comparisons, to contribute to the necessary evolution of our continent's associations of geographers.

Some reflections on EUGEO



- 20 EUGEO got into its stride after a period of time that could seem rather long to some of its members and should now experience a speeding-up as well as a diversification of its activities. From now on, EUGEO will attempt to multiply information contacts with its different members, but also with the European public at large. The development of its web site, a decisive basis for this orientation, will provide its member societies with all the necessary links.
- 21 One specific aspect of its agenda will be aimed at the schoolchildren of the European Union. Indeed, the knowledge one has, in a given country, of the other countries is too often filtered. It can include second-hand ideas, prejudices or even mere factual errors (in addition to unavoidable interpretation errors), which the textbooks unfortunately repeat all along the editions. One of the EUGEO projects consists in the writing of a textbook about Europe in which every country will be dealt with under the supervision of the corresponding national geographical society, but on the basis of a common model. Overall insights on Europe will precede the national contributions. The textbook, obtainable in paper and electronic version, should be totally or partly available on the web sites of EUGEO and of the collaborating societies.
- 22 EUGEO will pursue the set of conferences opened by the Dutch society related to Europe-centred topics. The latter, not exclusively European, will have a strong or a particular connection with Europe, and should provide the EU officials with research and reflection material. From the start, one of the ambitions of EUGEO has been to represent, on the European scale, if not the voice, at least one of the voices of geographers toward the public at large, the civil society and the political and economic decision-makers. One of the original aspects of geography consists in positioning itself at the interface of natural and human sciences. At the time when the relationships between humans and their environment are felt as a more and more crucial problem, the original approach of such issues by geographers should be better disseminated in all European circles. This is all the more important and necessary since those who are in charge of the future of our continent sometimes tend to draw their arguments from or search explanations in geography, but in a geography, not to say simplistic, at least badly and incompletely known, and consequently badly interpreted.
- 23 Last but not least, EUGEO will have to take up the challenge of its opening to the Central-Eastern European countries that have just joined the EU or those applying for membership.

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