

MSc Geology at Leiden University (Netherlands) in 1965; PhD in Civil Engineering at Karlsruhe University (Germany) in 1971 with Leopold Müller; Associate Professor Engineering Geology at International Institute for Earth Observation and Information Science (ITC) Enschede (Netherlands) and Faculty of Mining Engineering of Delft University of Technology until retirement in 2004; visiting Professor at Chengdu University of Technology (China), since 2007.

My involvement as president of the IAEG cannot be described without an introduction to my previous activities within the IAEG as vice president. In 1998, the IAEG council meeting in Vancouver (Canada) elected Antonio Gomes Coelho and me as the two vice presidents of the IAEG for the European region from 1998 to 2002 under the presidency of Sijing Wang from China. Traditionally the IAEG had divided the European region into Eastern and Western parts, but Antonio and I decided to break with this tradition, and divided Europe into Northern and Southern regions. With more than 30 European national groups of the IAEG, we had a large share of both the national groups and IAEG members worldwide.

During my vice presidency I twice organized a regional meeting of national group representatives for northern Europe, in Hanover (Germany) in October 2000 and in Helsinki (Finland) in August 2001. The most important issues discussed at these meetings were: a) how to arrive at a stronger position as engineering geologists in the professional field of geo-engineering in competition, or collaboration, with our colleagues from soil mechanics and rock mechanics, and b) how could we, with responsibility for engineering geology, contribute to the harmonization, or at least a common system of content definition, of educational programs in our discipline at the universities in Europe that would improve the mobility of engineering geologists between the different European countries.

Helmut Bock was at that time chair of our German national group and a long term personal friend of mine since we both spent our PhD study period at the Department of Rock Mechanics of Karlsruhe University in the late 1960s. Upon Helmut's suggestion we proposed to the presidents of the ISSMGE (William van Impe, Belgium) and the ISRM (Marc Panet, France) to setup a Joint European Working Group (JEWG) of the three associations to prepare a report with recommendations on these issues. The IAEG Council meeting in Helsinki approved this approach as did the other sister societies.

I was convinced that it was important to work towards closer collaboration with engineers in ISRM and ISSMGE in the field of geo-engineering, instead of competition. Consequently, I decided to accept the nomination for the next presidency of the IAEG (2002 to 2006). The Council of IAEG in Durban elected me president for 2002 to 2006. During the four years that I served as president, I experienced a very pleasant collaboration with the regional vice presidents and strong support from our secretary general Michel Deveughèle, with his assistant Françoise Nore and treasurer Pierre Potherat, all from France. Thanks to their efforts, the administrative and financial affairs of the IAEG were in very safe hands.

The excellent administrative and financial performance of the Association during the period of my presidency is fully the result of their hard work and commitment to the IAEG.

During the period of my presidency the IAEG membership decreased roughly from 7,500 to 4,000 (based on numbers presented during the council meetings in 2002 and 2006). The decline of our membership during this period was partly due to the cleaning-up of our administration but partly also due to the fact that young engineering geologists did not see the benefits of becoming a member of a learned society. The IAEG is not unique in this aspect: our sister societies (the ISRM and ISSMGE) experienced the same trends. Our executive committee discussed this issue time and again, and tried to develop activities to increase the attractiveness of the IAEG to our younger colleagues. The main activities targeted at reaching this goal were: 1) the startup of a website, 2) the improvement of the impact of the IAEG bulletin by acquiring a position on the list of Science Citation Index, and 3) especially for our younger colleagues in developing countries, we initiated a support fund to enable them to participate in our international conferences with considerable support for travelling and for a reduced participation fee. In all three issues we invested parts of the annual IAEG income. Furthermore we modified the procedure for the Richard Wolters Prize to encourage young engineering geologists to participate with an important role in our international conferences.

An important issue during my presidency, and before and after it, was the work of the commissions. Despite the hard work of Fred Baynes, who prepared an important report for the council on the issue and reminded our members by letters, emails and by his interventions during council meetings, only two or three commissions produced tangible success. During the council meetings, there were strongly stated intentions to improve the commissions' activities, but soon after those meetings, everybody had so much other work to do that all promises were forgotten.

I see it as an important task for our Association to honor outstanding achievements of our members. Special occasions during the time of my presidency were the presentation of the Hans Cloos Medal to John Knill (UK) in 2002, Vincenzo Cotecchia (Italy) in 2004 and Robert Schuster (USA) in 2006 and the Richard Wolters Prize to Atiye Tuğrul (Turkey) in 2002, Hyeong Park (Korea) in 2004 and Yanjung Shang (China) in 2006. In Nottingham, we honored Asher Shadmon with honorary membership of the IAEG. He was the IAEG's first president from 1964 to 1968 and for many decades chairman of our commission on building stones.

From among a number of international travels to national groups, I recall specially my visits to Vienna in 1999 to give a new start to the Austrian national group, to Toronto in May 2005 to discuss closer collaboration with our North American national groups and the recognition of the AEG as the IAEG national group of the United States. The meeting in Toronto was also attended from the IAEG side by our vice president for northern America, Jacques Locat, our past presidents Owen White and Paul Marinos as well as by our former vice president for northern America, Dick

Gray. It resulted in a memorandum of understanding defining the relationship between the IAEG and AEG and the rights for the members of both organizations to participate in the activities of the other. In October 2007, I visited Carlos Delgado in Madrid to discuss with the board of the Spanish national group AEGAIN the preparations for the 2008 European regional conference of the IAEG. Finally, I was invited for a long trip to China to deliver a number of lectures in Beijing and Chengdu and an interesting visit to hydroelectric projects in the Himalayas. This visit resulted in closer connections with the State Key Laboratory for Geohazard Prevention and Geo-environmental Protection at Chengdu University of Technology, which led after my presidency to a visiting professorship for many years at this prestigious institution.

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