

Introduction

Dear readers,

Trying to put together a mental picture of striking severe weather events since our 16th edition (May 2011) makes me feel a little confused! The only thing that comes to mind immediately is the 2011/2012 winter in Europe. From late January until early February 2012 we were really in the grip of extreme conditions. From The Ukraine, via the Balkan region and Italy, then towards the United Kingdom and the Low countries, extreme low temperatures and heavy snowfall ended a winter that had been relatively mild until then. Many people died or were injured in the cold spell. Beyond this, I cannot recall many extremes. Have I forgotten the weather events of 2011 entirely? That could very well be due to the ‘meteorological memory overflow’ from which I necessarily suffer in order to survive the vast amount of data that come to forecasters daily? Or it might be the case that we really did encounter fewer big weather events during this period. And yes looking at the internet I feel relieved, with only some relatively small heat waves during the 2011 summer and some major rain and river flooding events in France, Italy and Ireland from late October to early November.

Writing this introduction for the 17th edition of the European Forecaster I am well aware that this will be my last one. During our upcoming meeting a new Chairperson will take on this post and I realise that this will end a long period for me. I have had more than 10 years of direct involvement with the Working Group, and to be honest not much has changed in terms of the ‘spirit’ of the group. Of course within our forecasting business huge progress has been made by the use of ensemble techniques and also from the new non-hydrostatic very high resolution models. Meteocalarm has made us change and improve our warning systems on the national level. And the way we communicate with our colleagues from Civil Protection during severe weather events and the way we make use of New Media is bringing a lot of change. But the spirit within our WGCEF seems to be very stable, devoted and directed towards improving our working abilities by sharing best practice examples and by having discussions on topics of common interest.

We consider ourselves as the professional representatives from the community of European weather forecasts, and Eumetnet, the European network of co-operating weather services, has got an eye on us because of that. This can be seen as a major compliment on all the work that has been done and will continue in the WGCEF. For this we will discuss our future relation with Eumetnet during our upcoming meeting in October.

And now it is reading time. This nice edition of the European Forecasters’ newsletter again reflects all the topics discussed in Bergen during our 2011 meeting. I call on all of you to recommend this edition to your colleagues. I also call on all readers to send in new contributions for the next (18th) edition. All articles were reviewed by Will Lang (from UKMO). Bernard Roulet and Météo France made it again possible to present the high quality edited and printed edition. Thanks to André-Charles Letestu (Météo Suisse) our website www.euroforecaster.org is updated with actual information on the Working Group. Our web archive shows the previous editions of the Newsletter.

I wish you inspiring reading hours and hope to see you during our next WgCEF meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania, on Friday 5th October 2012.

Frank **Kroonenberg**
Chairperson of WGCEF