

Introduction

Dear Readers and Colleagues,

It's been a busy 12 months since our last newsletter. But as I write this, the sun is shining, the 'winter without end' appears to have ended, and I have a few moments to look back on the extraordinary period Summer 2012 to Spring 2013.

Last summer was one of extremes. Summer 2012 saw heat waves which brought record-breaking temperatures to some parts of Europe, with drought and wildfires in some areas too. In contrast, the UK experienced its wettest June for over a hundred years along with some significant flooding. The rain and flooding continued into July, though drier conditions returned just in time for the Olympics, much to the relief of forecasters and the UK government in particular. Much more seriously, the severe flash floods on the Black Sea coast of Russia in early July brought a sobering reminder of just how deadly the weather can be. From my perspective, it seemed as if my own corner of Europe remained in a constant state of heightened flood risk as rain continued to fall in abundance during the autumn and early winter. But then cold weather and snow took hold of much of the continent, only releasing its grip in April. As forecasters we've taken a leading role in helping others prepare for these events. The ongoing financial situation continues to affect us all, whether through budget restraints, reduced staffing levels, or loss of key customers, but recent severe weather highlights how our profession can make a real contribution to people's lives and to the effective functioning of our nations.

Of course, quieter periods of weather give us the opportunity not just to reflect on past events, but also to document our experiences, identify lessons to learn, and to share them with our fellow forecasters. As a means of building links between operational meteorologists across Europe, the WGCEF offers something a little different. We take an interest in new science, new modelling techniques and new technology. But we take a particular interest in the human element: in forecasters and forecasting, in the way we develop our skills and experience, the way we make our decisions, and the way we communicate our assessments and predictions to make sure they are understood and acted upon. Most importantly our group is a forum for forecasters to share their experience and knowledge, and in doing so we find common ground and build friendships across organisations and across borders. Recently we have come to realise that our knowledge can be shared more widely and become more influential within the meteorological community. This is a key factor in our decision to formalise our links with EUMETNET, which we hope to finalise in the coming months.

As usual, we have a broad range of interesting articles in this year's newsletter. Its publication to such a professional standard is only possible due to the generosity of Meteo-France, and I would once more like to extend our thanks to Bernard Roulet and his colleagues. I will also thank Andre-Charles Letestu for his ongoing management of the WGCEF website www.euroforecaster.org. And many thanks must go to Vida Raliene and her colleagues who organised and hosted our excellent 2012 meeting in Vilnius. Most of all, I'm sure we are all grateful to Frank Kroonenberg for his efforts as WGCEF Chairman over the last four years.

I hope you find this newsletter an enjoyable and informative read, and look forward to seeing you at our next meeting in Luxembourg on Friday 4th October 2013.

Will Lang
Chairman of WGCEF