4. Activities stories (extended)

4.1. 1st International Geosciences Student Conference

Two years ago, students from the Bucharest Student Chapter (BSC), a student association affiliated with the University of Bucharest, laid the groundwork for the 1st International Geosciences Student Conference (IGSC) in Bucharest, Romania. The goal for this First international student based event was to give qualified students the opportunity to interact with industry professionals and participate in various networking and career-building activities. This event was student-envisioned, constructed and implemented! IGSC was cosponsored by SEG, AAPG, EAGE, the Romanian Society of Geophysics (RSG), and the Romanian Geological Society (RGS).

Despite travel disruptions associated with the volcanic ash eruption over Europe, the conference kicked off on 22 April 2010 at the World Trade Center in Bucharest. The Opening Ceremony welcomed students, recruiters, industry and academic professionals, and society representatives. Victor Mocanu, chairman of the Organizing Committee, officially opened the conference with a welcoming speech to the 300+ attendees. He pointed out, “This conference is actually a platform for several meetings—including the 11th National Romanian Student Symposium, an International Job Fair for Geology and Geophysics students, a series of advanced courses by SEG, AAPG and EAGE lecturers, and the SEG Challenge Bowl—which also provides networking opportunities and field trips. We hope that at the end of so many events, you will return to your home countries and institutions with a better understanding of the present-day world of opportunities in the field of natural resources which will represent a most important component of society in the years to come.” The Opening Ceremony was honored by the presence of Emil Constantinescu, former President of Romania and professor of geology at the University of Bucharest. Representing the sponsoring societies were Candice Chinsethagid (SEG), Herman Darman (AAPG), Shannon de Groot (EAGE), Dumitru Ioane (RSG), and Valentin Paraschiv (RGS).
In addition to students, 60 company delegates, 25 guest delegates, and 16 exhibitors registered. Ten companies exhibited: Prospectuni, Enviropian, MOL, Sterling Resources, Search Corporation, OMV Petrom, Brantax, Geocomar, Danubian Energy, and Weatherford. Conference sponsor ExxonMobil was not able to attend due to the ash cloud. Aurelian Oil&Gas was another conference sponsor. The IDEA League, the University of Bucharest, and the Kogayon Association also had booths in the exhibition hall.

The students shared their work via 84 oral and 19 poster presentations. This brought together many students who will work together in the future in either academia or in industry. It was a real pleasure to see so many smart and motivated students in one place, networking and having a great time.

The International Job Fair gave students an understanding of opportunities available after university studies are completed and gave them a chance to discuss ways to advance their careers. The companies, likewise, were able to see what students are studying. A presentation theater allowed industry representatives to describe their latest techniques, projects and opportunities for young professionals.

Students were able to take short courses provided by the sponsoring societies and large groups gathered to listen to Jose Carcione (SEG Honorary Lecturer), Herman Darman (of AAPG’s Visiting Geoscientist Program), and (via an online presentation) Pascal Breton (of EAGE’s Student Lecture Tour). The students engaged the lecturers in question and answer sessions and got firsthand exposure to leaders and technology in the field for free!

Friendly competition was definitely a key component of the conference. A highlight was the Eastern European SEG Challenge Bowl in which eight teams, each with two students, displayed their geoscience knowledge (Figure 1). After two exciting hours, the two finalists—a joint team from Russia/Azerbaijan and one from Serbia—battled it out for the top prize: a trip to Denver for a chance to compete in the Challenge Bowl Finals at the SEG Annual Meeting. It was a nail-biting atmosphere to the last moment before the all-female team from Serbia (Belgrade University) pulled ahead.
Awards were given for the best presentations in various categories at the closing ceremony. This was followed by a tour to Muzeul Satului (Village Museum) where students got a taste of Romanian history and culture. The closing gala, which featured a live band, was a celebration for having completed a great conference and having met many new colleagues and friends. “It was great to see the IGSC Organizing Committee be able to kick back and celebrate a job well done; they definitely deserved it, for all of their hard work paid off,” commented Jenny Cole, who represented SEG’s University and Student Programs.

The last day was dedicated to a Field trip to South Carpathians (Buzau Valley) where students observed the interesting geology of the region, including salt diapirs and the Vulcanii Noroiosi (mud volcanoes)—certainly a great end to a great conference (Figure 2).

The event brought together 243 students, representing 12 nationalities, giving it an unprecedented international aspect. For the three societies, this was the First Student Expo outside the United States and all were pleased with the outcome, especially given the commotion stirred up in the days (and hours!) preceding the conference from the volcanic ash cloud. Many new connections were formed to work on future projects together; equally important, on a personal level, many new friends were made.

The IGSC started the ball rolling for international student activities in Eastern Europe and neighboring countries. Students inquired how they could host the next International Geoscience Student Conference at their university, or how they could participate in a regional Challenge Bowl, or host one of the SEG, AAPG, or EAGE lecturers at their university.

When planning the event and preparing the budget, the Organizing Committee considered the need for travel grants for students making oral or poster presentations.
Participant’s reflections:

**Nevena Andric** (one of the travel grant recipients from Serbia)

“This was my first time to a SEG/AAPG/EAGE event and it was experience I won’t forget. I can still remember waiting for my train tickets to come from Bucharest. I was very nervous, but also I was lucky, since they arrived in the last minute, just few hours before departure. This expectation was worthwhile, because the conference was incredible. I met students from other universities and talk about our different research experiences and future ideas. On the Job Fair I had the opportunity to speak with industry professionals about their experiences and job opportunities. Presenting my own research was an editing experience. The award for scientific approach encouraged me to do more and better in coming years. Competing in SEG Challenge Bowl was a unique event. At the beginning of the quiz I was nervous, but after a few minutes it was very fun and exciting. It was tight, but we finally won. This award gave me opportunity to go to Denver for the SEG Annual meeting and attend the CB Finals. I left this conference with a lot of great ideas and I hope to return next year. Without the support of the IGSC travel grant, I would not have had the opportunity to be part of this meeting. Thank you!”

**Tiffany Piercey** (Memorial University, Canada – Young Professional Committee of AAPG)

“Being no stranger to conferences like this one, knowing that it was student organized was so empowering. Students bringing together students is an inspiring effort and knowing that all of the professional societies support these initiatives is fantastic”

**Aaron Girard** (SEG), a student, but also a member of the organizing staff, said:

“It was very different from the professional conferences I have been to because it focused on the students. I got to meet some very cool people there who I plan to keep in touch with in both my personal and professional life. I really hope to see more of these conferences because the opportunities opened to students were unprecedented, and I hope that as many students as possible can participate in the coming years.”

---

**Fig. 44.** AAPG booth: Herman Darman, Anwar Al-Beaiji and IGSC Organizing Staff

**Fig. 46.** Field trip’s first stop
Thanks to our sponsors!

Gold sponsors

Silver sponsors

Bronze sponsors