

EDITORIAL

The SNS website (www.geo.uu.nl/SNS) - placed on the server of the Faculty of Earth Sciences in Utrecht - has been officially launched December 20, 2001. We celebrated this memorable event with a few bottles of excellent Italian wines (for the many connoisseurs within the SNS: Dolcetto d'Alba DOC 2000 from Icardi and Lagrein I Baldazzini DOC 200 from La Vis). In the choice for Italian wine, the SNS gratefully acknowledges that the Italian nation is the world's leading supplier of Neogene GSSPs. The website has been designed with great skill and enthusiasm by our ex-Ph.D. student Joris Steenbrink who recently finished a very interesting thesis on orbital signatures in late Neogene lacustrine sediments from NW Greece (Geologica Ultraiectina no. 205, 2001). The website includes a.o. the first electronic Newsletter (number 8, 2001). Important news herein is that the bureau established two new working groups: one for defining Tortonian and Serravallian GSSPs (chaired by Frits Hilgen) and another for defining Langhian and Burdigalian GSSPs (chaired by Isabella Raffi). Four potential Tortonian GSSP sections have now been identified, measured, sampled and tuned to astronomical target curves, and a decision on which of these will receive the golden spike is close. Only two potential Serravallian GSSP sections have been identified. One of these is located on Malta and is presently under study by several groups. Frits and myself were sampling here beginning November together with Wout Krijgsman and two students being visited by a 3 days lasting storm loaded with African dust; the responsible cyclonic trough caused floodings and hundreds of casualties in Algeria. The designation of Langhian and Burdigalian GSSPs is definitively a more complicated affair. Continuous and essentially undisturbed sections with the potential for astronomical tuning will be hard to find but I feel confident that Isabella and co-workers will get their teeth into this matter.

Other important news concerns the merging of the SNS and SQS (the INQUA Subcomission on Quaternary Stratigraphy). The merging was proposed by the ICS and had much to do with the ICS opinion to remove the antiquated name Quaternary from the Global Chronostratigraphic Scale and to extend the definition of the Neogene in such a way that it includes the Pleistocene and Holocene. The ICS proposal has since been accepted with open arms by the INQUA. However, simple merging both subcommissions into a new one having 2 chairmen and 40 voting members would have resulted in an unworkable situation. We therefore proposed the ICS to disband the SQS and to transfer their task to the present SNS. We further proposed to set up a new WG with maximally 5 voting members of the former SQS whose mandate is to evaluate the present status of Pleistocene chronostratigraphy, to propose a formal chronostratigraphic subdivision of the Pleistocene and to define related GSSPs.

The above proposal has been accepted by the ICS and means that from now on the SNS is also responsible for Pleistocene chronostratigraphy. The task of the new WG on Pleistocene chronostratigraphy will not be easy and I am therefore very happy that our vice-president of the SNS Davide Castradori is willing to chair this new WG.

I wish you all a Merry Xmas and happy New Year!
Willem Jan Zachariasse/Chairman SNS