

Press Office Report for EPSC2015 Conference (27 September – 02 October 2015), Author Livia Giacomini livia.giacomini@iaps.inaf.it, Anita Heward

1. EPSC2015 Press Office in numbers

In 2015, EPSC had 706 participants and among them, 21 were Press/Media representatives. The Press Office comprised two full-time EPSC Press Officers (Livia Giacomini and Anita Heward) and was also supported through the collaboration of Press Officers from ESA (Karen O'Flaherty and Emily Baldwin).

Before, during and after the Conference, the Press Office:

- published 7 press releases (including two media invitations), some in collaboration with ESA and NASA. These press releases were (depending on the press release): sent with direct email to media, posted on the AlphaGalileo media service, published on the EPSC2015 website Press and Media Page http://www.epsc2015.eu/press_and_media.html and on the EUROPLANET OUTREACH WEBSITE <http://www.europlanet-eu.org/epsc2015>), and published on NASA and ESA official websites.
For more information, read second paragraph and see Attachment 1;
- collaborated with ESA and NASA to organize and live-stream two Press Conferences on science presented at the Congress (Rosetta, Dawn and AIDA)
For more information, read section 2. and see Attachment 2;
- collaborated with NASA for two scientists at EPSC to participate remotely in a NASA headquarters Press conference. Due to the great amount of requests coming from the media the following day, the EPSC Press Office also organized an informal Press Conference (in English and French) with participating scientists for journalists attending the Congress. This was filmed and posted on the EPSC YouTube channel.
For more information, read second paragraph and see Attachment 2;
- collaborated with ESA to produce official Blog Posts about Rosetta, published by ESA press officers participating in the Congress
For more information, read Section 2 and See Attachment 3;
- collaborated with the Press Offices of other scientific institutions involved in the Congress to coordinate the publication of news from the Congress
For more information, read second paragraph and See Attachment 3;
- managed contacts with the media (remotely and locally), opening the Press Office to media representatives and answering their requests. The Press Office also monitored media activities, examining how the Congress has been covered in the media and producing a report on what has been published
For more information, read Section 3 and see Attachment ?;
- organized social media activities and published images and videos of the Congress
For more information, read Section 3 and see Attachment 5.

2. Press Releases, Press Conferences and Collaboration with ESA, NASA and other Institutions' Press Offices

The Press Office identified science stories presented at EPSC2015 that were likely to be of particular interest for the media and the public, and concentrated efforts around these topics. The five main themes highlighted in 2015 were:

- EPSC in general and the associated exhibition in Nantes (especially for the local press). This included the Farinella Prize, which is awarded during the opening ceremony of EPSC.

- Rosetta results about the nature of Comet 67P
- New results from Dawn mission
- AIDA mission
- Discovery of water on Mars

Press releases were prepared, or arrangements made for joint press releases with NASA and ESA (see **Attachment 1 for EPSC2015 Official Press Releases**). With the assistance of Copernicus and the University of Nantes, three press conferences were also organized during EPSC and webstreamed via the EPSC website (see **Attachment 2 for details of Organized Press Conferences**).

Overall, there was good coordination with other press offices (NASA, ESA, other scientific Institutions) and the media in general. The situation was less difficult than in 2014, when the new results from the Rosetta mission presented at EPSC were all subject to Nature's embargo policy, which made promotion to the media very difficult. In fact, this year, after having been contacted by EPSC Press Office, ESA and the Rosetta science team, Nature agreed to postpone publication of one paper to coincide with the Congress and also was flexible in allowing a press conference to take place one hour before the normal embargo time for a second paper on Rosetta results. Nature Geoscience also contacted EPSC to flag up that Lujun Ojha's presentation on water on Mars during the conference would be covered in a paper published on the Monday. Nature also had a journalist registered onsite, following and writing from the Congress (Elizabeth Gibney), for the first time since 2013. All these actions suggest a growing recognition of the value of EPSC both by ESA and by Nature.

EPSC was mentioned in most of the official communications by ESA and NASA (in the case of Dawn) relating to science presented at the meeting. In addition, EPSC was also flagged up in official press releases/articles published before and during the Congress by the Press Offices of Scientific Institutions involved in the meeting (See **Attachment 3 for articles and blog posts published by scientific institutions participating**).

The fact that EPSC was also accredited in non official communications and by general media is encouraging (See **Attachment 4 for a general coverage of EPSC2015 in the media**).

A special positive mention needs to be made for the very effective collaboration with ESA. The EPSC Press Office was assisted by ESA Press Officers who participated onsite and collaborated remotely during the meeting, writing blog posts and generating social media activity.

By contrast, NASA did not include a reference to EPSC in the press release it sent out following its "Water on Mars" press conference. This is particularly disappointing as (following the alert from Nature Geoscience) the EPSC Press Office contacted Lujun Ojha to suggest a press release and it was through this route that NASA was alerted to the story. Following NASA's decision to hold press briefing featuring the results by Ojha and Alfred McEwan, the EPSC Press Office, Copernicus and the EPSC 2015 Local Organizing Committee provided substantial assistance and technical support to NASA in investigating options for Ojha and McEwan's remote participation in the briefing. Following the briefing, the EPSC press office provided further assistance in arranging media interviews with Ojha and McEwan, including finding a camera crew for a news item by the Discovery Channel Canada. Despite the omission by NASA, EPSC was mentioned in much of the coverage of the story, particularly by CNN, Le Monde and the French media.

3. Media Coverage of EPSC

The topics listed in Section 2 captured the attention of journalists on-site and around the world, who contacted the Press Office for information, images, press releases and opportunities to interview scientists attending EPSC. A number of articles and interviews have been published as a results of activities by the EPSC Press Office (in **Attachment 4: EPSC2015 in the media**, a non-complete report of the topics picked up by the European and international media).

Among the most significant results that should be noted:

- Science presented at EPSC was covered by many key European media outlets, including the BBC and Le Monde,
- EPSC was also mentioned in stories by media outlets in North America (for example see article by CNN);
- In France, EPSC, the exhibition and/or the news about Mars and Rosetta were featured in most of the national media in France. We hosted and received requests from almost all national French TV Channels (France 1, France 3, France 5...)
- The AIDA story was picked up by many mainstream outlets worldwide, including the UK's Daily Mail and Metro free newspaper, mentioning both EPSC and Nantes .

4. Social media activities

Social media channels were used by the EPSC Press Office with EPSC official accounts (on Twitter https://twitter.com/EPSC_2015 on Flickr <https://www.flickr.com/photos/101575961@N04/> and on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBYcSduFwNq6_iaWhng5Ahg).

Social media were also used indirectly, with the help of collaborators, volunteers and participating scientists using social media during the congress.

Overall, there was substantial coverage of science presented at EPSC via social media channels. The presence during the congress of two ESA Press Officers and the direct collaboration with a number of scientists was very effective: news from the meeting was circulated not only via traditional media channels but also via social channels in a fluent way.

For a brief report about EPSC on Social Media, a summary has been published using the Storify tool (**Attachment5: Social media for EPSC2015 on Storify**).

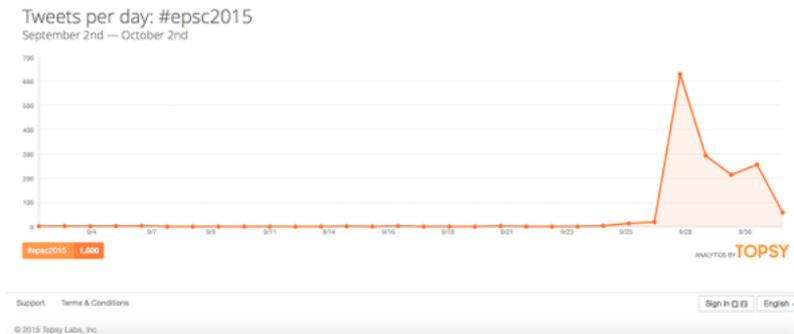
Of particular note:

Twitter: Before, during and after the Congress, the **EPSC_2015** Twitter account was used to launch the Congress and the scientific topics presented, and announcing the official hashtag #EPSC2015. Traffic was generated with the Hashtag #EPSC2015 by Twitter users participating in the Congress and outside. At the moment, the account is still active and #EPSC2015 is still mentioned.

Among the achievements:

- Followers were increased from 321 at the end of EPSC2014 to 414 (+ 28%)
- Several of mentions of #EPSC2015 with a maximum of 600 mentions per day in the week of EPSC (see image below).
- The most successful Tweet was the one showed in the image on the right, on the 29th of September





Photos and Videos on Social media: During the Congress, videos and photos posted via Youtube and Flickr. At the moment, photos and videos are in the Europlanet accounts, with a growing number of viewers.

4. Conclusions and lessons learned

EPSC2015 Press Office fulfilled 100% of the objectives outlined before the meeting and the experience can be considered very positive. Of particular note was the progress made in the collaborative relationship with Nature and the European Space Agency's media team.

It should be noted that uncertainties over funding and the delayed start date of the Europlanet 2020 Research Infrastructure meant that, as in 2014, the press office was operating under more limited staffing than in previous years. The practical result of this was that there was less staff-time invested prior to the meeting in assessing all abstracts submitted for potential stories and, hence, less press releases issued (an average of 16 press releases were issued per year from 2007-2013 when the press office was operating at full support with funding from Europlanet). An agreement was reached at EPSC 2015 that Europlanet 2020 RI and EPSC would fund the press office 50:50 from 2017-2019.

Nonetheless, thanks to the high-profile nature of the stories issued during the conferences, the coverage by the European and international non specialized media was very good and compared favorably to previous years. As well as the efforts made to identify the key stories to highlight before the Congress, the good results were helped by the organization of the webstreamed press conferences, which allowed journalists to participate remotely (e.g. the BBC's coverage of the Dawn results came about through remote viewing of the press conference). A more efficient collaboration with the European Space Agency was also very important to optimize the efforts. The EPSC 2015 results also confirm the growing importance of feedback via social media and multimedia (such as videos on YouTube and Hangouts), which also support the participation of media remotely in the Congress.

Some improvements can still be identified for the next years on the following topics:

- A better identification of stories of interest to the press in the scientific programme. To fulfill this task, more working time is needed before the Congress and additional tools need to be implemented to make efforts more efficient. The commencement of Europlanet 2020 RI should assist with the time-investment needed before the meeting. However, it is also a priority to update the abstract submission procedure to simplify the Press Office job in identifying in advance the abstracts that can be of interest for the media. This could be simply achieved through adding an abstract summary field in the abstract submission form. This has been discussed with Copernicus, but the EPSC Press Office would be grateful of support from the EPSC Steering Committee in ensuring that this is put in place for future meetings);
- An increased presence of EPSC through Social media. Social Media accounts should be active all year around and, during the Congress, young researchers who participate could be involved to actively collaborate with the Press Office (maybe with a free registration or some other prize?). Also, the opportunity of streaming key

sessions could be useful (maybe with a protected account for journalists?) for increasing coverage of the Congress by the media.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Name: att1-2015EPSC-press-releases

Description: Press releases published by EPSC Press Office in collaboration with NASA and ESA

Attachment 2 – Name: att2-2015EPSC-press-conferences

Description: Information on organized Press Conferences

Attachment 3 - Name: att3-2015EPSC-scientific institution

Description: articles and blog posts published by scientific institutions participating

Attachment 4: att4-2015EPSC-articles

Description: EPSC2015 in the media

Attachment5: att5-2015EPSC-social-media

Description: Social media for EPSC2015 on Storify