

Report on the Ninth Meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation between European Forecasters (WGCEF)

Rome, Italy, 20th September 2003

Introduction

The ninth annual meeting of the WGCEF took place at the Italian Meteorological Service (C.N.M.C.A) in Rome, Italy on the Saturday following ECAM 2003. Liisa Fredrikson (Chairperson, Finland) opened the meeting, welcomed the participants and extended thanks to Giuseppe Frustaci for hosting the meeting. Copies of the draft agenda were circulated and a final agenda agreed. In total, there were 24 participants representing 20 Meteorological Services (see Appendix I) and it was good to welcome back the founder member of the group, Manfred Kurz. This proves that meteorologists can never really retire completely.

Report of the chairperson of the WGCEF

Liisa Fredrikson noted that there had been a number of new representatives over the last couple of years and it was important to keep the list of names up to date so that the correct people can be informed about meetings etc. The new members at the meeting were welcomed and introduced themselves. Once again there were delays with the production of the newsletter, mainly due to differing file types and problems with quality of graphical items sent by e-mail. It was agreed that sending future contributions on CD-ROM would be the best way forward.

The status of the group was discussed and it was agreed that it should remain informal whilst seeking to strengthen links with the European Meteorological Society. Manfred Kurz suggested that the spirit of these meetings encouraged members to provide short contributions and presentations.

Forecasting activities at the Italian Met Service

Giuseppe Frustaci welcomed everyone on behalf of C.N.M.C.A and gave a resume of the work performed within the Italian Met Service as a whole. His presentation can be found within this newsletter. He is looking forward to the future that promises to be an exciting time as far as forecasting is concerned. Plans are already in place to train forecasters to understand and benefit from Meteosat Second Generation (MSG) products. In addition, Giuseppe explained that the Italian Met Service was also preparing to become involved with the EMMA system.

Discussion of Newsletter No.8 and WGCEF website

Production of the paper version of the newsletter had been particularly difficult this year due to funding problems at DWD. In the event, Liisa Fredrikson managed to publish hard copies using facilities at the Finnish Meteorological Institute and we are all very grateful to them. This led to a discussion on how to proceed in future. Nick Grahame (Vice-chairperson, United Kingdom) suggested that the group should approach EUMETNET to see if they would be willing to fund publication of the newsletter. Bernard Roulet (Météo-France) said that he would investigate the possibility of producing the newsletter at Météo-France.

Nick Grahame suggested that the distribution list for the newsletter should be extended to directors of the National Meteorological Services (NMS's) and EUMETNET. Liisa Fredrikson pointed out that Denmark is the only country in Europe that does not have a representative in WGCEF and subsequently its forecasters do not have access to the newsletter. Tomas Halenka (Czech Republic) would also like to see copies distributed to selected Universities.

There was also some discussion about the preferred format of newsletter articles displayed on the website. André-Charles Letestu (Webmaster, Switzerland) gave the group some guidance on this and is planning to create an archive of previous newsletters.

Action: Liisa Fredrikson and/or Nick Grahame to contact EUMETNET to check on possible funding of newsletter production.

Action: Bernard Roulet to investigate the possibility of Meteo-France taking over publication of the newsletter.

Action: Nick Grahame to extend distribution of newsletter to NMS directors, EUMETNET and some Universities.

Action: Dirk Heizenreder (Germany) and/or Sverker Hellström (Sweden) to contact the Danish Meteorological Service and supply a contact name for Liisa Fredrikson

Actions from the last meeting

An action from the 2003 meeting was to investigate how warnings and objective verification schemes can be devised to measure the impact of severe weather. This is an interesting topic and it was agreed that such schemes should be incorporated into the EMMA system as it develops. Herbert Gmoser (Austria) stated that ZAMG is actively pursuing the topic and some other countries are doing the same (e.g. Severe Weather Impact Model in the United Kingdom).

Herbert Gmoser also put forward an action at the last meeting for members to document some of the techniques used in the forecasting of severe weather. In view of this, some members had prepared case studies for presentation. Dirk Heizenreder described an interesting situation that occurred on 10th June 2003 when severe thunderstorms developed ahead of a cold front crossing Germany with much damage and loss of life. Doppler radar showed that there was some tornadic activity. For very short range forecasting, DWD are developing techniques to identify and predict the development of individual convective cells. An automated first guess scheme for severe thunderstorms is also being developed. Dirk provided an update on the DWD warning system that will be linked to EMMA.

Herbert Gmoser presented two cases of heavy rain and flooding in Austria during August 2002. The first involved a mesoscale convective system (MCS) between 6th and 8th August that was not picked up in advance by the EPS Extreme Forecast Index whilst the Aladin-Vienna model (9.6km horizontal resolution) also failed to predict the event accurately. Manfred Kurz mentioned that MCS's are very difficult to represent in numerical models. The second case of heavy rain took place between 11th and 13th August but this involved larger scale dynamic ascent and rainfall accumulations over Austria were captured better by models. However, Dirk Heizenreder did point out that rainfall totals over southern Germany were underestimated.

Bernard Roulet showed a case of extreme rainfall in Gard, southern France in September 2002. This presentation can be found within this newsletter and on the website.

Karen-Helén Doublet (Norway and new member) presented a short case study of heavy rain in Norway on 14th-15th August 2003. Large amounts of rain are not normally a problem in Norway but this particular event caused localised flooding and some damage. There is a developing relationship between met.no and the agencies concerned with flooding.

Exchange of forecasters between NMS's continues to be rather difficult due to various constraints. It was reported that short visits would be taking place between forecasters at the Italian Meteorological Service and those based at ZAMG, Météo-France and MeteoSuisse. Michael Walsh (Ireland) announced that there is a planned one-week exchange of forecasters between Met Eireann and Met Office, Belfast (Northern Ireland).

The group broke for a marvellous five course lunch with excellent service which was much appreciated. An opportunity for the official photograph followed in the warm sunshine.

Other contributions

Herbert Gmoser showed some verification statistics relating to 'added value' provided by the forecaster. Further verification schemes are being developed for other products generated at ZAMG.

Norvald Bjergene (Norway) described the weather warning systems used in Norway and Frank Kroonenberg (Netherlands) provided an update on the EMMA project. Both of these presentations can be found within this newsletter and on the website.

Following the record-breaking summer across most of Europe, Bernard Roulet presented some preliminary statistics relating to the canicule (heatwave) in France. In some cases, the mean minimum temperature during the summer of 2003 was actually higher than the normal maximum temperature. There were many days when maximum temperatures exceeded 40°C.

Election of new Chairperson

When Liisa Fredrikson became Chairperson in 2000, it was decided that the group would elect a new Chairperson every four years. Liisa proposed that Nick Grahame should take over and this was carried unanimously by the members present. Frank Kroonenberg was elected to take over as Vice-Chairperson. Otilia Diaconu (Romania) agreed to remain as Secretary.

Nick Grahame thanked the group for their support and thanked Liisa for the hard work that she had put in over the last few years. He vowed to take the WGCEF forward and raise its profile further whilst also strengthening its links with the European Meteorological Society.

Plan of action for 2004

In addition to the actions mentioned earlier, Herbert Gmoser proposed that each member should provide a demonstration of their operational warnings system at the next meeting. This was accepted. Frank Kroonenberg also mentioned that some countries would become involved with the prototype EMMA system during 2004 and progress should be documented and presented at the next meeting.

Action: All members to consider presenting details of their warnings systems and/or their involvement in the EMMA system at the next meeting.

Norvald Bjergene was keen for members to provide details on the measurement of air quality and associated systems but it was agreed that many forecasters were not directly involved with this. Norvald also opened up a discussion on whether commercial weather forecasters should be included within the group.

Action: Chairperson to consider inviting forecasters from private weather companies to WGCEF meetings.

Finally, Herbert Gmoser suggested that members should consider presenting the use of new diagnostic tools in Nowcasting (including MSG products).

Date and place of next meeting

Ana Casals Carro (Spain) kindly invited the group to the Instituto Nacional de Meteorologia in Madrid, Spain for the 2004 WGCEF meeting. This offer was accepted but the exact date had not been set. Confirmation and further details will be put on the website and communicated to members by e-mail.

AOB (any other business) and closing of meeting.

Norvald Bjergene reminded members that he would be retiring soon and that this was likely to be his last meeting (having attended all previous ones). We wish Norvald well in his retirement.

On behalf of all present, Liisa Fredrikson then thanked Giuseppe Frustaci and other members of C.N.M.C.A for arranging another successful meeting. A short visit to the operational forecast room followed before being transported back to Rome city centre. In the evening, a table had been booked in a traditional trattoria where a good time was had by all.

Nick **Grahame**
Chairperson elect of WGCEF

Appendix 1

List of participants:

Giuseppe Frustaci (Italy),
Liisa Fredrikson (Finland),
Nick Grahame (United Kingdom),
Marta Sallai (Hungary),
Sverker Hellström (Sweden),
Mauro Bruni (Italy),
Bernard Roulet (France),
Hans Plets (Belgium),
André-Charles Letestu (Switzerland),
Frank Kroonenberg (Netherlands),
Dirk Heizenreder (Germany),
Herbert Gmoser (Austria),
Dimitris Ziakopoulos (Greece),
Chryssoula Petrou (Greece),
Otilia Diaconu (Romania),
Alessandro Fucello (Italy),
Norvald Bjergene (Norway),
Manfred Kurz (retired),
Jean Nemeghaire (Belgium),
Ana Casals Carro (Spain),
Michael Walsh (Ireland),
Karen-Helén Doublet (Norway),
Claude Sales (Luxembourg),
Tomas Halenka (Czech Republic).

