



Opening address by ICOS ERIC Director-General Werner Kutsch of the 2nd ICOS Science Conference, 27-29 September, Helsinki, 2016



Hello, dear conference participants, good day and welcome to Helsinki

For those who are not so familiar with some stories of the inner circles of ICOS I have to explain something. We have a running gag about the dress code in ICOS particularly for the DG of ICOS ERIC. This goes back to my interview. Before going to the interview I was thinking about how to dress. The reason why to think about this at all was that I was going to face a committee that was quite mixed in terms of a dressing: two French – très chic, two Finnish, one most probably in a suit the other for sure in a T-Shirt, one Swiss working in Germany probably not in a suit and a Swedish in outdoor clothing...



So my idea was – since I was going for the position of a Director General of a European Institution - that I should dress like “the incarnation of a compromise” and I decided to wear a fancy and expensive jacket, a good shirt etc. but not a tie. At the end of the interview the later Chair of the GA asked me why I was not wearing a tie and I told him my ideas.

Today I should for sure wear a suit and a tie for opening this conference and welcoming you - the ICOS Community and our guests from all over the world. However, I decided for a T-Shirt and this has two reasons: the first one is that Timo opened this conference today in a suit and with a tie which is a rare experience against which I cannot compete at all. The second reason is that wearing a T-Shirt can be a statement depending what’s printed on it. It can be you favourite political party, rock band of beer, the last sports event or your football club.

I’m doing my statement today by wearing an EU T-shirt. And this is a very important statement since the EU is under big pressure those days. We are facing a general mood towards the EU that can be summarized in the saying: “When the sun shines it’s Berlin, Paris, Warschau or Rome, when it’s raining it’s Brussels.” The worst outcome of this mood has been the Brexit decision. But I’m afraid that this is only the beginning. It seems to me that the old nationalistic narrative that has brought so much harm to the world during the last century is taking over the minds again. The modern European narrative of trans-national cooperation towards a peaceful future is fading away and with that we are putting the treasure we have build together during six decades at risk. ‘We are stupid Europeans!’

In this situation it is important to reflect about the role of science. As a student in the 80ies I was active in the movement against nuclear weapons. In those days I read some studies about the so called nuclear winter. Most of you are for sure aware about the facts: a nuclear war could not be survived by any side, since the dust and the aerosols carried up to the stratosphere would lead to a drop of average global temperature by 8 – 11° C meaning that those who survive the direct effects of the bombs would die from cold and starvation. The interesting thing was that some of the respective research was done by an international team of researchers from the Soviet Union, the US and Europe.



Scientists were an avant-garde of cooperation between the blocks towards a nuclear disarmament.

Today, our scientific cooperation provides knowledge on climate change. We measure data about greenhouse gases, the response of ecosystems and oceans to climate change and many many more aspects of this problem. Maybe the threat is not smaller than it was in the 80ies. However, our cooperation is established and the Paris Agreement of last year wouldn't have been achieved without the international cooperation over decades in the IPCC. In Europe, we have become familiar with the idea that cooperating in Integrated Projects and Infrastructures is much more efficient than doing our own national thing. I know many of you since more than 20 years, we have done field measurements together, we have published papers and books, organized summer schools, wrote proposals for more field work. It's simply the default way of doing it. We're natural born Europeans.

And we should be proud of it and tell those people back home from our experience and make sure that they understand that the national narrative is nothing than an illusion. A bad illusion that will bring us straight back to the disaster the European Union took us away from.

Having that said, I have also to state that not everything is perfect with the EU. I don't have the time and this is not the right place to talk about this. Instead I want to talk about ICOS. I have stated many times that ICOS is like the European Union in a nutshell. Although there is one exception that I have to mention here: our colleagues from the United Kingdom became members exactly in the week of the Brexit Referendum – here ICOS is different, but otherwise we have indeed many positive and many negative properties that are similar to the big game in Brussels. I've talked already about the positive so let me also talk about some more critical aspects:

1. We have sometimes also the typical European tension between the common goals and national or even institutional interests.

During the last General Assembly a stakeholder from a national ministry of science gave the statement that his ministry will thoroughly monitor the amount of money that will flow back to his country through EU projects and that it will compare this to the national investments. I'm not entitled to



comment this publicly. However, among us: I think this attitude is dangerous and not in line with the basic ideas of the European Strategic Forum on Research Infrastructures. We should be careful and avoid seeing the participation of a country in ICOS as an investment that expects short-term financial return, it's an investment in better understanding our present and developing our future. Instead of nit-picking, the return on investment should be accounted by the long-term scientific and societal impact of an infrastructure. In any case: it has been agreed that this investment comes from the national budgets and our countries should comply with this agreement.

2. However, also we have to ensure compliance.

The attitude of saying: "I make the rules and if I cannot make the rules I break the rules" is widespread in the European Union. ICOS is not totally free of this. We have a basic approach that we develop our internal rules and standardisations in long bottom-up processes. Those have been organized in sometimes complex discussions ensuring broad participation. The results are sometimes not satisfying. They are compromises and as such not perfect. However, better a compromise that reaches 90 % than longing for perfection and reaching nothing. With that attitude we have come far and we are in a much better state than many fellow infrastructures. We have achieved the ERIC status with now 12 participating countries and we have defined and standardized our observational networks and our data life cycle in an impressive way. In addition, we have almost reached consensus about the internal management of finances, defining the work plans and monitoring their performance. This wasn't always easy but now everything is there and we can become operational. But this means that we now have to comply with what we have decided for, not question it again and again nor trying to get around it for the sake of our own interests. Our statutes say very clearly: "The principal task of ICOS ERIC shall be to establish a distributed Integrated Carbon Observation System Research Infrastructure (ICOS RI) and to coordinate the operations of ICOS RI, distribute information from ICOS RI to user communities and to establish integrated data and analysis from GHG observation systems." I am willing to take the term "to coordinate the operations of ICOS RI" seriously.

And this means that I together with my Head Office and Carbon Portal colleagues will remind you top-down on our bottom-up agreements and care for compliance and progress. And this brings me to the last weak point I have to mention:

3. We are running out of time.

“ICOS ERIC shall provide effective access to coherent and precise data...” This is also written in our statutes. Ten years ago we entered the ESFRI roadmap, almost one year ago we became an ERIC. I am often asked “where can I download the data?” My answer is then: “Well, we have started in 2008 to define our side standards, and since 2014 we are discussing our data life cycle and now we’ll only need a few years to label our stations” This has to come to an end. We have to provide data very very soon. The goal should be to label quickly and provide 2016 data from all networks in the first half 2017 – in one or another way.

Data is the keyword to finally talk about the purpose of this conference. Many of you are already producing data at sites that are about to become official ICOS sites. This pre-ICOS data have fed into extremely vibrant science. I’m really looking forward to hear about your scientific results. I’m curious as a man in a T-shirt can be.

Before I open the conference I want to introduce briefly our ideas. We have organized this Conference along five themes, two focusing on scientific results, one on new technologies, one theme is on making our science relevant to the societal processes after COP 21 and this is impossible without talking about communication. Getting our knowledge





out of the ivory tower is essential for our success. I am very grateful for this mixture showing that we have not only excellent but also relevant research.

We also have an exhibition this time and we are proud that many manufacturers followed our invitation. This shows that ICOS is also important for them and we can support the interaction for the development of our instrumentation. We have organized so called 'vendor sessions' where manufacturers can introduce their exciting new products and discuss with you.

I have to admit that my share in organizing this conference has been the smallest. The main work was done by a – as always – extremely efficient and constructive Head Office Team build by Eija Juurola, Jost Lavric, Gorana Jerkovic, Mari Keski-Nisula and Evi-Carita Riikonen together with the Scientific Program Committee, supported by the Carbon Portal team in Lund and Konffa. Please give a hand to the excellent conference preparation.

And with that I want to open the second ICOS Science Conference.