

ESF RESEARCH CONFERENCES

Rapporteur Report

Partnership:	ESF-LFUI
Conference Title:	Modes of Variability in the Climate System: Past-Present-Future
Dates:	27 May - 1 June 2012
Chair:	Hubertus Fischer , Climate and Environmental Physics, Physics Institute & Oeschger Centre for Climate Change Research, University of Bern, CH
Rapporteur:	Masa Kageyama, Unité mixte de recherche CEA-CNRS, FR

General Comments

Any general comments you might have concerning the conference, your role, the scientific area covered by this conference, etc.

This conference brought together experts and students on climate variability at different time-scales: the relatively short time-scale of year to year variability traditionally thought of when thinking about “modes of variability” but also the longer future and more prominently past climates, with time scales of centuries to millennia. So it was a good melting pot of people who usually don’t meet so often, with plenty of new things to learn even for experts in one field. I appreciated the balance between formal talks and shorter talks from students and the ample time left for poster discussions.

Quality of Scientific Programme, Presentations and Discussion

Comments on the balance and scope of the scientific programme, the scientific quality of the presentations and discussions.

Excellent presentations. The format of having long presentation allows for more pedagogical talks for students, it’s important to keep this long format. Shorter talks on specific results were also good. Those presenters could have benefited to get an opportunity to discuss their results even more with associated posters. Conversely, it would have been good to have short (1 slide) presentations from poster presenters at the beginning of each poster session so that they can introduce themselves and their topic of research.

Overall, I found the balance between long and short talks and posters very good. I also appreciated the discussions organised in groups, which worked very well. The idea of having young researchers summarising each discussion was great, it made them take part in the discussions, which were very lively.

Informal Networking and Exchange; Atmosphere

Was the schedule and the atmosphere conducive to an easy exchange of information? Was there time and space for an informal discussion? Were younger researchers integrated?

Yes (see above) although longer schools do that even better. The conference venue offered pleasant places to meet and I have the impression that there was a very good atmosphere in the evenings and during the breaks.

Balance of Participants

Was there an appropriate balance between young and senior participants? Was a balance of national groups and researchers from different (sub)fields achieved?

Yes. Good balance between the subjects, with people who don’t have the time to meet so often, of countries, with attendance from students and speakers from far from Europe, who don’t get the chance to meet so often, and between students, young researcher and advanced scientists.

Outlook and Future Developments

Will new collaborations emerge from this conference? (How) could the conference outcomes be utilized further? Are there suitable (ESF) programmes or instruments to further the work of the conference?

I hope so, even though it is difficult for me to answer this question in detail. As a first basis, it would be good to have the presentations on a web site so that participants could refer back to it. There was a lot of very nice material shown that could be used for reference. It would then give further opportunities of interactions between the participants. As this field is growing rapidly, meeting again in a few years time on a related topic could be very useful.

Follow-up

What immediate and long term follow-up would benefit collaborations and dialogues that may have begun at the conference?

This conference was a very good opportunity to bring together scientists working on understanding modes of interannual variability and scientists aiming at understanding longer term climate evolution as recorded in paleodata. I think both communities benefited from the rapidly growing knowledge of the other and I've seen discussions starting between participants that would not have met otherwise because of their different scientific interests or geographical distance. Let's hope that these continue.

Organisation and Infrastructure

Were venue, catering and accommodation appropriate for this conference? Were participants satisfied with the on-site administration and support?

Very nice. Could have hoped for the ski lifts to work (for skiing or quick hiking and more lively village) but the venue was nice and provided a cosy atmosphere for informal exchanges. I didn't hear of any major complain about the administration and support or about the venue.

Summary & Overall Assessment

Was the conference successful; were its aims achieved?

I think most participants were very satisfied with the conference.

About ESF Research Conferences

The Scheme

This conference is part of the European Science Foundation's (ESF) Research Conferences Scheme. The Scheme aims to promote scientific excellence and frontier level research throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Conferences aim to provide leading scientists and other participants, including young researchers, with a platform to present their work, to discuss the most recent developments in their fields of research and to network.

Conference Format

The core activities should be based on lectures by invited speakers, who are leaders in their respective fields, followed by extensive discussion periods. An informal exchange of ideas, both inside and outside the lecture room, should be encouraged, and the number of sessions in the daily timetable should be limited in order to allow sufficient time for interaction between the participants. Time should be reserved for a 'Forward Look Plenary Discussion' about future developments in the field.

Participants can take all their meals together to encourage further contact and networking, which can be particularly beneficial to younger researchers who may be less outspoken in the formal lecture room setting. In order to gain optimum benefit from the conference, both the speakers and the participants are asked to stay for the whole duration.

Division of Tasks

The Conference Chair is responsible for ensuring the quality of the scientific programme through the selection and invitation of speakers, and through the selection of participants.

The ESF Conferences Unit is responsible for managing all the logistical aspects of the conference organisation, including the provision of an on-site secretariat.

Further information: www.esf.org/conferences