

EUROPLANET PRESS NOTICE FOR EUROPEAN PLANETARY SCIENCE CONGRESS (EPSC) 2014

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No Embargo

LOOKING FOR MARS (AND OTHER PLANETS) ON EARTH

Planetary analogues are places on Earth with geological, environmental or biological conditions that mirror processes that have been observed - or that may exist - on other planets or moons, either in the present or in the past. They also provide a testing ground for instrumentation designed for future missions or even to prepare astronauts for surface activity. On Tuesday, 9 September, a Town Hall meeting to discuss current activities and future plans for planetary analogues will be hosted by the European Planetary Science Congress (EPSC) 2014 at the Centro de Congressos do Estoril, Cascais, Portugal.

Planetary analogues are a hot topic in planetary science, since scientists are constantly looking for places on Earth where they can easily study and test other worlds. The places chosen for these experiments can be surprising: if you want to study lava tubes on Mars, you could consider using Iceland, Hawaii or Tenerife. There are many analogue sites scattered across Earth because the Solar System destinations they are chosen to represent are very diverse: extremely hot, cold, acidic, cratered, salty, flooded places can be very useful to simulate other worlds' features, for rover testing or to find out where life might exist beyond Earth.

The EPSC2014 session follows on from the first meeting of this kind held at the Lunar and Planetary Sciences Conference (LPSC) in Houston, Texas in March 2013. Both meetings were organised by individuals working for international agencies that share a common interest in planetary analogues. The 2014 session will be attended by representatives of the Italian Space Agency (Agenzia Spaziale Italiana, ASI), the Canadian Space Agency (CSA), the German Space Agency (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e.V., DLR), and the Norwegian Space Centre (Norsk Romsenter). Several conveners also participate in the International Space Exploration Coordination Group (ISECG), a committee of 14 space agencies born in 2006 to coordinate planetary exploration.

Town Hall meetings provide an open, informal platform where all members of the analogues community (scientists, engineers, mission managers) are invited to participate to discuss recent activities over the past five years and propose new concepts for research projects and missions in

support of future Solar System exploration. Topics that will be discussed in the forum will include space exploration analogue project goals and results, how these results are communicated, how analogue missions could be expanded in future to answer requirements of space missions and how all these activities could become more visible to the global space exploration community.

About the European Planetary Science Congress (EPSC)

EPSC is the major European meeting on planetary science. EPSC 2014 is taking place at the “Centro de Congressos do Estoril”, Cascais, Portugal, from Sunday 07 to Friday 12 September 2014, with more than 800 scientists participating from Europe and around the world and a programme that includes 52 sessions and workshops, and more than 800 scheduled abstracts for oral presentations and posters sessions. Details of the Congress and a full schedule of scientific sessions and events can be found at the official website: <http://www.epsc2014.eu/>

EPSC 2014 is organised by Europlanet and Copernicus Meetings.

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About Europlanet

Europlanet is a network of planetary scientists, whose aim is to bring together the disparate European community so that Europe can play a leading role in space exploration. Europlanet’s activities complement the mission activities of the European Space Agency through field work at planetary-analogue terrains on Earth, laboratory measurements, computer modelling and observations from ground-based telescopes. Founded in 2002 and funded by the European Commission from 2005-2012, Europlanet has evolved into a community-based organisation that will carry on this work and plan for future missions and mission support.

www.europlanet-eu.org