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National Commission for Stratigraphy Belgium

NCS meeting report 17/12/2018

Meeting report: National Commission for Stratigraphy Belgium

GSB-RBINS, 17/12/2018

Present (9): Isabelle Belanger, Frieda Bogemans, Marie Coen-Aubert, Alain Herbosch, Stephen Louwye, Bernard Mottequin, Noël Vandenberghe (Chair), Jacques Verniers, Kris Welkenhuysen (Secretary, Webmaster)

Excused (4): Marleen De Ceukelaire, Katrien De Nil, Michiel Duser, Vanessa Heyvaert

The Chair opens the meeting at 10h05.

1. Approval of the previous meeting report

The report of the 2017-11 meeting is approved without remarks and is available on the website.

2. Reports of subcommissions

2.1 Lower Paleozoic (Jacques Verniers)

- There are two new names in the Cambrian: Miaolingian (formerly Series 3) and Wuliuan (formerly Stage 5).
- A proposal document for new Groups in the Lower Paleozoic was prepared for the commission, which was not continued. It is mentioned in the 2012 NCS meeting report, but not put on the website. The text should be reposted on the website, including the new stratigraphic names. Alain Herbosch remarks that the new groups are already used in later publications by himself. Noël Vandenberghe replies that the only official stratigraphy is on the website. Jacques Verniers asks if it is possible to define a group on the map, without defining formations. Noël Vandenberghe says in theory this is possible if a lower and upper boundary are recognisable in the field and no subdivision is made yet.
- In their PhD's of some time ago, Jan Vanmeirhaeghe and Jan Mortier (UGent) have proposed a new subdivision of the Silurian, and will now publish their work. There are two issues identified: which type localities should be used (4 have disappeared), and the mapping was nearly finished when their PhD's started and problems were identified. Noël Vandenberghe advises to have a meeting between cartographers and biostratigraphers. These issues are also why there is a RegWal subcommission. Isabelle Belanger says that now is the moment to revise, put the maps together and identify problems (regarding stratigraphy in this case).

2.2 Devonian (Marie Coen-Aubert)

Regarding the members, a selection made, there are 4 new members. There is also a proposal regarding the revision of stratigraphy in the Dinant region.

2.3 Carboniferous

Absence.

2.4 Permian-Triassic-Jurassic (Isabelle Belanger)

No remarks.

2.5 Cretaceous

Absence.

2.6 Paleogene-Neogene (Stephen Louwye)

The last meeting of this subcommission was on 20/04/2018 and had 13 attendants.

- The new subdivision of the Ieper Group is published and distributed as a flyer. This document is well received and interesting for different user groups such as students.

- The discussion text for the Formation of Brussels by Rik Houthuys et al. is discussed. The discussion text is good, but is almost one year on the website. There is a problem for recognising members, therefore they are called units". Etienne Steurbaut has remarks, he will add an introduction and biostratigraphical data, probably in spring 2019. Noël Vandenberghe says there are problems with the Brussels stratigraphy. It is very difficult to identify members, which is why a system of units is used. A (very good) sedimentological division is made by Rik Houthuys. This is however not very useable in daily life by e.g. engineers. Noël Vandenberghe says that regarding lithostratigraphy, one should think of the users (usually not specialised geologists). Nonetheless, the remarks of Etienne Steurbaut, mainly based on biostratigraphy, are very academic, which is why they are difficult to integrate in lithostratigraphy. We need to be analytical and perform bio- and lithostratigraphy next to each other, not integrate them at the start. Afterwards, they can be combined for chronostratigraphy. Wednesday (next meeting) there will be an update.
- Regarding the discussion of the Beselaere Member, Johan Matthijs will write the document.
- An update of the Neogene 2020 manuscripts is given. Neogene 2020 will give a synthesis of the Neogene, possibly with symposium or similar. Rik Houthuys wrote the Diest section. Noël Vandenberghe et al. are well advanced for the Kasterlee section. The Lower Miocene section (Berchem etc.) is in progress with met Jasper Verhaegen and Jef Deckers. On the data management section by Katrien De Nil there is no update. Noël Vandenberghe mentions that the use of data is not easy: Marleen De Ceukelaire and Katrien De Nil want all data to be unified (numbers in archives do not match etc.). This work is in progress, the ideas are being developed. Regarding the Pliocene Stephen Louwe is nearly finished and proposed to Stijn De Schepper to help finish. For the introduction, it is apparently difficult to find profiles. In general, there are five publications in the state of a manuscript, there is one year left to finish.
- An excursion to the core repository of the GSB in Perennes-Lez-Binche is mentioned and will be discussed further in the subcommission meeting on Wednesday.

2.7 Quaternary (Frieda Bogemans)

Not much is to report because of the departure of Timothy Lanckacker, who stopped working and moved abroad. The discussion of the Maas Group upstream Liège is finished, the discussion for the downstream part is ongoing. It is aimed to meet again in spring 2019 to finish. The new text is composed and needs to be approved.

3. Composition of the National Commission for Stratigraphy Belgium

The current procedure for the composition of the NCS is the following: the Belgian National Committee of Geological Sciences appoints the Chair, the Chair appoints a Secretary and cooperates with the chairs and secretaries of the subcommissions. The resigning Chair proposed to the National Committee to have a French speaking chair for the following reasons: the past chairs and secretaries have been Dutch speaking, and a major challenge for the future lies in the integration and harmonisation of the Walloon mapping. Bernard Mottequin agreed to this task, this proposal was circulated by the Belgian National Committee of Geological Sciences has among its members, and was accepted.

From 2019 on, Bernard Mottequin (RBINS) will be the new chair of the NCS, Kris Welkenhuysen (RBINS) will be secretary and webmaster, Marleen De Ceukelaire, former webmaster, will remain available to assist Kris Welkenhuysen. The Chair wishes Bernard Mottequin good luck and fun during his task as chair. The chair guides the NCS, cooperates with the subcommissions, and is responsible for the installation and application of the rules and procedures. In the past years, a major investment was made in the development of the website. All subcommissions are attributing to this and it should certainly be continued in the future. In general, the role of the NCS is to guide the subcommissions and deal with lithostratigraphy (rather than chronostratigraphy, a task of the ICS). Noël Vandenberghe will remain active within the Paleogene-Neogene subcommission. There was an incentive to invite past presidents to the NCS meeting, but no decision was taken.

4. Challenges for the NCS

The Chair formulated a number of future challenges for the NCS.

- Website: the structure and editing can be improved, the main structure should be clearer. Moreover, the structure and individual pages should be formulated such that a correct reference to a page can be made (for example, add a reference above each unit page).
- Communication: part of the NCS' work is to provide information on stratigraphy to the scientific community (for example the work of Marleen De Ceukelaire providing NCS news in the Miscelanea). The subcommissions can also organise stratigraphic meetings/days, excursions on a certain theme. Noël Vandenberghe thinks there is sufficient interest to gather people. This is also an opportunity to update the member lists and get (PhD) students involved.
- Added subcommissions: The RegWal website section can be updated and ameliorated. Proposals can be added temporarily to the RegWal section until ratification. In the Alteration Units section, only one unit added until now. These units can be very important for engineers, though maybe less for geoscientists e.g. limonite/goethite alterations in the Cenozoic (Diest, Poederlee...). Johan Yans is encouraged to actively pursue this subcommission work.
- Regional involvement: it is important to keep engaging the regional representatives (Katrien De Nil and Martin Laloux) It is important for the NCS to have active representation and to involve them to have a common stratigraphy. In the Flemish region, the involvement of the government into geosciences comes mainly from VPO and VITO. In the Walloon region, there is less recognition of the importance of the subsurface.

5. Any other business

- The International Chronostratigraphic Chart can be translated in local languages. The newest version was translated in Dutch for the Netherlands, according to their rules (-ien has priority, e.g. Maastrichtien). To avoid for teachers using this Dutch translation using the "wrong" -ien naming, a Belgian-Dutch translation was made including the new Holocene stage names (Greenlandiaan etc.).
- The next meeting will be an electronic meeting around June 2019.
- The Chair reminds that if the discussion period has finished, a proposal is posted on the website for three months.
- The Webmaster reports on the website usage. The number of sessions has increased from almost 3000 in 2016 to almost 8000 in 2018, with most visitors coming from Belgium and surrounding countries. The share of Belgian visitors increased from 36 to 74% in the same period. 52% of visitors reached the website directly, 33% through a search engine, 14% through a weblink, and 1% through social media. The most popular page is the Quaternary (39%), followed by the Kortrijk Formation (6%) and the home page (5%). The top ten is completed by Paleogene-Neogene pages.
- The resigning Chair thanks the attendants for this and previous meetings. Jacques Verniers thanks the Chair for his work.

The Chair closes the meeting at 11h30.

Noël Vandenberghe (Chair), Kris Welkenhuysen (Secretary, Webmaster)