
Professor Salvador Reguant and his work on the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP)

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International co-operation between geologists has a long history, a function of the necessity to undertake part of the research task on the ground. In Spain, this co-operation has been, and continues to be very fruitful, and has involved collaborating with colleagues from various countries, particularly from Europe.

At the beginning of the 1970s the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) was founded and one of its first projects was the establishment of an agreement with UNESCO for the creation of the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP), an agreement that was signed in 1972. The programme covers a broad range of areas of work within Earth Sciences, from the strictly geological to more applied areas of knowledge; from this comes the informal name given, on occasions, to this programme – that of ‘Geo-sciences at the service of society’. In line with the international nature of the IGCP, the projects adopted must reflect a regional interest, globally speaking, in both the area covered and the composition of the research teams. Both the pressure on natural resources and the effects of natural disasters have produced a tendency to redirect some aspects of the work of the IGCP towards a more intelligent use of our planet.

The IGCP, like other UNESCO programmes, has as its aim not only the acquisition of new knowledge but also its dissemination, particularly among the less-developed nations, transferring, in this way, both scientific and technological information. The IUGS officially recognised the effectiveness of the IGCP in 1993, considering it to be the most successful of all of the internationally developed geological programmes.

Dr. Reguant has been involved in the IGCP from the beginning, reflecting his interest in questions directly

related to those covered by the programme. Thus, he participated, as one of the Spanish delegates, in the International Conference of Experts that took place in Paris in October 1971. This conference was to lay the foundations for the IGCP by defining its organisational structure and establishing its objectives. The reports presented paved the way for the approval and the setting up of the programme by the IUGS and UNESCO in 1972.

The organisational structure of the IGCP envisaged the creation of national committees. These were to undertake the tasks of co-ordinating the different projects, encouraging the participation of researchers, etc., in their respective countries. Their work was to be that of supporting the development of the IGCP at a national level. The contribution of the Spanish Committee has been important, as is evident even if we only consider the purely quantitative data. The level of Spanish participation in the IGCP since 1976 has remained at between 16 and 37% of the projects being actively worked on. This despite the limited financial resources available, which can only be used to subsidise the Spanish participation in the various activities of the programme and not the research itself, as recommended in the UNESCO guidelines. This highlights once more the role of the IGCP as a catalyst, bringing together human and financial resources that multiply the effectiveness of those that would otherwise be available in a single country.

Once again, we find here the active presence of Dr. Reguant, but this time playing a role of central importance. We saw him earlier participating in the International Conference of Experts in Paris, in October 1971, a conference that designed the basic configuration of the IGCP. This marked the beginning of a very substantial amount of work, carried out at national level, that extended over a period of

some twenty years, from the 'pre-history' of the Spanish Committee when it operated as an ad-hoc commission of the Superior Council of Scientific Research (CSIC). This commission worked from 1973 to 1975, and Dr. Reguant acted as secretary. Its task was to deal with everything related to the IGCP in Spain. It had to establish a functioning organisation that could guarantee effective communication between the various Spanish working groups, be they part of CSIC or not, and the Spanish Commission of UNESCO, the National Geological Committee and the General Secretariat of the IGCP in Paris. In practice, this ad hoc commission functioned as a National Commission.

As a result of this work, the president of the Exact and Natural Sciences Working Group of the Spanish Commission of UNESCO proposed the establishment of a fully-fledged National Commission for the IGCP. Once this had been set up, in July 1975, Dr. Reguant was appointed Secretary, a position he held until 1986. He then assumed the Presidency of the Spanish Committee for the IGCP, a post he occupied until 1992. This is why I said earlier that Dr. Reguant had worked for more than two decades in various capacities related to this programme.

During this time, practically the whole of the history of the IGCP in Spain, the achievements can be considered to be more than satisfactory. Between 1976 and 1992,

numerous researchers from the universities, the CSIC, the Spanish Geological and Mining Institute, (IGME), and other research centres contributed to 61 projects within the programme, investigating very diverse geological matters.

Dr. Reguant was personally involved in several projects. The earliest of these was the 'International Stratigraphic Guide', to which he made significant contributions both in terms of the content and the Spanish translation. He was also the Spanish representative in two other projects: No. 28, 'Geo-Scientific Terminology in America', and No. 174, 'Geological Events on the Eocene-Oligocene Boundary', apart from collaborating with various other projects.

The IGCP has left its mark on the development of the Geological Sciences in Spain, contributing appreciably to the successful conclusion of many research projects by giving them coverage, and through its promotion of international collaboration and cross-border relationships involving the Spanish geological community. In this way, we have moved on from simply being the receivers of our foreign colleagues and their knowledge to becoming active participants in the exchange of information. This is manifested in the Spanish presence in the many international geological congresses, and in the geographical areas in which we undertake our research. Dr. Reguant's work has greatly contributed to this.