

Raquel Ochoa

General Co-Chairwoman of the IYNC Steering Committee & President of *Jóvenes Nucleares España*

IYNC 2014 has been a forum and meeting place for young people who work in the nuclear field.

The former editions have taken place in Slovakia (2000), South Korea (2002), Canada (2004), Sweden/Finland (2006), Switzerland (2008), South Africa (2010) and United States (2012).

What were the factors that helped Spain be selected as the venue for the 2014 congress?

We presented a solid proposal, where every single detail was taken into account. It was not easy, though, because of the financial situation of Spain in the past few years. However, we showed the motivation, enthusiasm and commitment required to defend it and succeed.

What are the objectives of this congress? How does it promote young people's interest in nuclear science and technology?

The main objective pursued is to serve as a global platform to exchange experiences among fellow young professionals and students from all over the world. The result, I might say, is a unique congress with a great deal of importance given to the technical program but also as a very interesting event that promotes communication and relationships between the participants.

I would say that it is precisely the excitement that young people transmit that is passed on to the rest of participants, creating in this way an atmosphere that is perfectly suitable for discussions about nuclear science and technology.

How is the organization of the IYNC coordinated with the host Society, in this case the SNE?

From the very beginning the Spanish Nuclear Society has been very supportive and provided everything we asked for. I like to think of the SNE as our mother society, which is actually how it is called in all the countries with a YGN (Young Generation Network) and Nuclear Society structure. It is indeed a supportive and fatherly relation that the SNE has shown with us in the *Jóvenes Nucleares*. They have made a big effort, helping us to find sponsors and offering material, technical support and advice. This help



is very much appreciated given the challenges posed by the tight financial status and the extra efforts required for the SNE's 40th anniversary.

From an organizational point of view, the IYNC2014 congress was chaired by two people: the IYNC President, Nicolas Anciaux, and the local YGN President, me. Given that *Jóvenes Nucleares* depends on the SNE, a MoM was signed between the two parties, IYNC and SNE. Then it was my duty as the local General Co-Chair to coordinate the international part with the SNE in order to achieve a good agreement between all the parties, always to the benefit of the congress.

How many people attended? How many countries do they represent? What countries had the largest number of congresspersons?

There have been around 380 participants from 34 countries. The country with the most representatives was Spain, obviously, with 85 participants. To complete the top ten, there were 48 people from United Kingdom, 33 from USA, 24 from China, 21 from France, 19 from South Korea, 17 from Belgium, 15 from Japan, 14 from Russia and 13 from Germany. In terms of continents, Europe had a representation of around 68%, 17% for Asia, 11% America (10% for North America), 2% for Africa, and 1% for Oceania.

The Asia-Pacific region is developing an important program for building nuclear power plants. Has this fact been reflected in the number of attendees?

As I just mentioned, Asian countries such as China, South Korea and Japan had a good representation in the congress, with around 17% of the total, which is huge if we take into account that former IYNC congresses had a very poor representation from Asian countries.

The case of China is maybe more characteristic, since it has a strong nuclear new build project with 28 units under construction and more about to start construction. This fact led IYNC to set as a priority the extension of the network to Asian Pacific countries, in particular China. To this end, the IYNC delegation made a trip last November to China, where we had meetings with the different representatives of the Chinese nuclear sector and had the opportunity to visit the new sites under construction. As a consequence, Chinese people started to show more interest in IYNC activities, they were added to the network, and they communicated their aim to host the next IYNC congress. Actually the latter objective was eventually achieved because the next congress, IYNC2016, will be held in Hangzhou, China.

In addition to the technical program, which Denis Janin reports on, what activities have taken place to promote relationships between the attendees and to help the foreigners learn more about the Spanish nuclear industry?

The idea from the very beginning was to show the attendees the Spanish traditions and gastronomy through a complete agenda of social events. It was very important to provide a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere where the participants could meet each other and share experiences and anecdotes regarding nuclear development in their home countries. To start with, we offered a welcome reception on Sunday evening at the *Fórum Evolución*, which was kindly offered by the Burgos City Hall. On Monday, a visit to the Portia winery was scheduled, where participants had the opportunity to taste Spanish wine and enjoy the gastronomy of Burgos. On Tuesday evening there was a gastronomic tour through the streets of Burgos, where professional guides described the history of Burgos *between tapa and tapa*. On Thursday, the Official Dinner took place at the Coco Atapuerca restaurant, where wonderful food was served in the incomparable setting of a cave. After the dinner, there was an Atapuerca show with people in

prehistoric dress performing. Finally, to complete the agenda and for those who signed up, there was a caípea on Saturday, where participants were able to see bulls and an exhibition with professional bull-fighters in the arena. With all those activities, I believe, participants had the opportunity to catch a bit of the essence of Burgos and Spain at the same time that networking was promoted.

But the congress also offered us Spaniards the possibility to promote the competitiveness of the Spanish nuclear industry. Actually, during the opening session, the SNE President, Francisco Lopez, very precisely explained the current status of the Spanish industry, highlighting its maturity and broad scope. Later on, during the country report session, Silvia Ortega also mentioned the current situation of the Spanish nuclear industry. Moreover, the Spanish companies were well represented as sponsors. In particular, the Spanish Nuclear Power Plants were joint sponsors (CNAT, ANAV, Garoña, Cofrentes, Iberdrola, Gas Natural Fenosa and ENDESA) at the Platinum level, which gave them the opportunity to have a booth which participants could visit in order to make further inquiries.

Finally, the technical visits for the participants on Friday provided a good overview of the Spanish nuclear industry. Attendees had the opportunity to choose between the Fuel Manufacturing Facility in Juzbado, Salamanca (ENUSA); the large components factory in Santander (ENSA); Garoña Nuclear Power Plant training simulators in Madrid (Tecnatom); TJII Stellarator & Neutron Standards Laboratory in Madrid (CIEMAT); or the Zorita NPP under decommissioning and dismantling in Guadalajara (GNF-ENRESA).

How did the city of Burgos embrace this initiative? How did the local and regional authorities respond? And the communication media?

We knew we had the support of Burgos before engaging in this project, but the actual response of the city of Burgos went beyond our expectations. We could not have dreamt of anything better. First, the City Hall, represented by the Mayor Javier Lacalle, helped us tremendously. Not only did they host the Welcome Reception on Sunday and give us the possibility of inaugurating the congress in the magnificent *Fórum Evolución* on Monday morning, but they also provided us with the advice and

support of the City Hall's expert in organizing congresses. The communication media also responded very well, showing a great deal of interest. On Monday morning a press conference took place with the presence of the Mayor, the SNE President, the IYNC President and me as President of *Jóvenes Nucleares* and General Co-Chair of the congress. In addition, several interviews were held on the local TV, radio and press.

From a personal point of view, what has it been like to be the President of the Nuclear Youth group organizing the event?

It has been one of the most intense and enriching experiences of my life. Without a doubt, all the skills I have learned while dealing with problems and making important decisions make it a worthwhile experience. However, it has not always been easy, especially due to the fact that my other responsibilities did not allow me to invest all the time I would have wished. But thanks to my team, the most professional and committed people I could have found, everything worked out pretty well and the congress was a complete success.

If I had to choose a moment to remember, it would be on Thursday during the Official Dinner, when the volunteers and local people I convinced to be part of the team came to me and sincerely thanked me for having involved them in the project. This, together with the smiles on the faces of many participants, who enjoyed the congress the most, is what I believe made all the efforts and sacrifices completely worth it.

Bearing in mind the broad perspective that your knowledge of the sector in the different countries gives you, what is your opinion about the future of nuclear energy?

I am confident of the fact that nuclear energy will be one of the main sources of energy in the future. It might still take some time for some countries in Europe to restore confidence in nuclear and start building again, but I believe it will happen in the end. Actually, this is already a fact for most of the developing countries, such as India or China, and a lot of efforts are being made in research worldwide in order to improve the safety of new designs. In my opinion, nuclear is essential for a sustainable future. ■