

Offspring

Undoubtedly young physicists constitute a reasonable part of the membership of the national member societies of the European Physical Society (EPS). However, it would be difficult to find many young people who know something of the activities and role of EPS. The fact that membership of EPS is automatic to any member of a national physical society is nearly unknown. Young physicists and their interests thus remain under-represented.

The problems of so called 'young physicists' do not differ substantially from country to country within Europe. The job market is shrinking, especially the R&D sector, which, often regarded as the 'promised land', loses more and more of its presence in industry year after year. Many young graduates find jobs in other sectors of industry.

On recruiting, managers from industry increasingly look for skills which are not inherent in a typical university degree. Being keen on physics is no longer a guarantee for getting a job. Communication skills and insights into fields apart from physics are more important than pure knowledge.

EPS as well as any of its member societies are in charge of informing their members about the changing situation in the workplace and feasible ways forward. This needs severe structural changes, and a change in attitude. To take action on the social aspects of studying physics, and at the same time retain a competence in pure physics, is the only way to cope with these demands.

National societies are confronted with this problem in the same way as EPS is. To claim that pure physics must remain their only 'core competence' will not make membership more attractive, either for students or for young graduates with a job, who are the societies' future.

EPS has appointed a student liaison officer to facilitate communication with its younger members – ideas can reach the organization directly without losing time propagating through organizational structures. Young physicists are invited to contribute directly to European initiatives. They may find it *fun* to be involved in an international project carried out on different levels. Existing links to industry will appear even more attractive in this context.

Keeping informed will involve using the Internet. This is important, why? Young physicists are equipped with most of the characteristics needed to be successful in our daily-changing multimedia world. Society expects them to understand more about technology and its inherent opportunities for future use than the average citizen does. To stay actively involved in this, even in non-pure physics contexts, is a responsibility we have to take.

Stefan Kubsky, Bochum University, Germany

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Good Storytelling

If you've nodded off recently you may have missed a second change of editor at

Europhysics News this year. That aside, one of the first things to cross the new editor's desk was a pamphlet from the European Commission (*The European Union: key figures*) with statistics on population, standard of living and employment. This kind of literature is often produced by the EC – four more pamphlets followed it over the following month. Producing the pamphlets is a form of storytelling: it's the way the EC chooses to tell the world what it does. The problem with the European Union is that this is virtually its *only* storytelling. And certainly there is a lack of good storytelling. When did you last hear an inspiring tale from a key figure in the EU about tackling unemployment in Europe? When did Jacques Santer last enthral an audience with his vision of a united Europe? *Europhysics News* recognises a good story when it hears one as this is the standard diet of any magazine (good stories usually include physicists talking about their own work). And *EN* pities any of Europe's unemployed because it realises that behind every good story is a good heart, a belief in a principle, and often a desire to do something. We should wonder why the EC enjoys producing free pamphlets. It is because it has little else to say to many of Europe's citizens.

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EPS counts among its members some 4000 Individual Ordinary Members and 36 National Member Societies throughout Europe whose members participate in EPS activities.

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Subscriptions

ISSN print edition 0531-7479

ISSN electronic edition 1432-1092

Volume 28: 6 issues will appear in 1997. Recommended annual subscription prices, institutions: DM 198.-; individuals: DM 98.-. Special rate for new individual subscribers: DM 78.- for one year. All prices plus carriage. EPS Individual Ordinary Members receive *Europhysics News* free of charge. Members of EPS National Member Societies, except the German Physical Society and the Institute of Physics, UK, receive *Europhysics News* through their society. Subscriptions can either be placed via an agent or sent directly to: Springer-Verlag, Postfach 31 13 40 D-10643 Berlin, Germany telephone +49 30 827 87 358 telefax +49 30 827 87 448 e-mail subscriptions@springer.de Cancellation must be received by 30 September to take effect the following year.

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Printer

Universitätsdruckerei H. Stürtz AG, Würzburg