



EUREF – Reference Frame Sub-Commission for Europe of IAG

A Brief Description

1. Overview

Recognizing the potential of space-based geodetic techniques, in particular the GPS, for the establishment and maintenance of global and continental geodetic reference frames, and the need of a modern and precise continental reference frame in Europe, the IAG (*International Association of Geodesy*) constituted the EUREF Sub-Commission at the IUGG (*International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics*) General Assembly held in Vancouver, 1987, under the umbrella of Commission X - Global and Regional Geodetic Networks of Section 1 – Positioning. EUREF continues the work of the former RETrig and REUN Sub-Commissions created by the IAG in the middle of the XXth century, responsible for the maintenance of the European Datum (ED), based on terrestrial techniques, and for the adjustment of the European levelling networks, respectively.

The reference frame to be established and maintained by EUREF should be the geodetic infrastructure for multinational projects requiring precise geo-referencing (e.g. three-dimensional and time dependent positioning, geodynamics, precise navigation, geo-information). Moreover, EUREF should cooperate closely with EuroGeographics (formerly CERCO), the organisation of the European NMA (*National Mapping Agencies*).

Since then, EUREF has been developing activities related to the establishment and maintenance of ETRS89 (*European Terrestrial Reference System*) and EVRS (European Vertical Reference System). ETRS89 provides geocentric, three-dimensional positions with millimeter accuracy, in a unique homogeneous reference system for the whole Europe, while EVRS does the same for the height. These systems are the basis for geo-referencing in Europe, and have been recommended for adoption by the European Union, Eurocontrol and EuroGeographics. ETRS89 is ideally suited, and commonly used, as the backbone for modern mapping and Earth Science applications in Europe.

A key instrument in maintaining ETRS89 is the EUREF Permanent Network (EPN), covering the European continent with numerous well-distributed sites. The stations that integrate the EPN observe continuously with high accuracy GPS/GLONASS receivers, operating under well-defined standards and guidelines that guarantee the efficiency of the EPN and the long-term quality of its products. In addition, the EPN constitutes the European contribution to, and densification of, the International GPS Service (IGS), and contributes also to the realization of the International Terrestrial Reference System (ITRS), to the monitoring of tectonic deformations in Europe, to long-term climate monitoring and to the development of the standards and the operational means to disseminate GNSS data over the Internet.

As a result of the implementation of the new IAG structure at the IUGG General Assembly held in Sapporo, 2003, EUREF was integrated in the Sub-Commission 1.3, Regional Reference Frames, under Commission 1 – Reference Frames, with the designation *Sub-Commission 1.3a, Reference Frame Sub-Commission for Europe*.

2. Objectives and development of activities

The long-term objective of EUREF is the definition, realization and maintenance of the European Reference Systems, in close cooperation with the pertinent IAG components (Services, Commissions, and Inter-Commission projects) as well as EuroGeographics.

EUREF must provide the best possible unique and homogeneous reference system and respective realization, to be used Europe-wide in all scientific and practical activities related to precise geo-referencing and navigation, Earth Sciences research and multidisciplinary applications. For that, EUREF will make use of the most accurate and reliable terrestrial and space-borne techniques available, and develop the necessary scientific background and methodology for the combination of heterogeneous measurements.

The activities to be carried out to accomplish these objectives must result in a set of high quality products and services. For this, EUREF must focus on a continuous innovation and on the changing user needs, as well as on the maintenance of an active network of people and organizations.

Besides IAG components and EuroGeographics, EUREF activities are developed in cooperation with all the individuals and organizations interested in its work, devoted to its objectives, and willing to cooperate on an open, collegial and voluntary basis, based on the ethical principles that rule the international scientific cooperation.

Based on the previous work and on the established long-term objective, the activities and tasks are the following:

- Develop the EUREF Permanent Network (EPN) in close cooperation with IGS, for the maintenance of the European Reference Frame, as a contribution to the ITRF and as infrastructure to support other relevant projects, namely the European initiatives related to GALILEO;
- Improve the Unified European Levelling Network (UELN) by extending it to all European countries and in the perspective of a geokinematic computation;
- Implement the necessary projects for the long-term maintenance of the ETRS89 (European Terrestrial Reference System) and the EVRS2000 (European Vertical Reference System), as well as for the improvement of the coherence between both systems, in close cooperation with other IAG components;
- Contribute to the IAG Project GGOS (Global Geodetic Observing System) using the installed infrastructures managed by the EUREF members;
- Promote the adoption of the reference systems defined by EUREF (ETRS89 and EVRS2000) in the European countries and European-wide organizations involved in geo-referencing activities;
- Organize annual symposia addressing activities carried out at national and European-wide level related with the global work and objectives of EUREF.
- Organize a Technical Working Group (TWG) for preparing and coordinating technical and scientific activities.

3. Structure

The structure of EUREF as the following components:

- *Members*

The ***Members*** of the EUREF Sub-Commission are all the European countries contributing to its mission and objectives, taking into consideration that a full continental commitment is needed for the establishment and maintenance of the European Reference Systems.

- *Plenary*

All the persons who attend a EUREF Symposium constitute the ***Plenary***. The EUREF Symposium is an open forum, and may be attended by any person interested in the work of the Sub-Commission. The decisions of the Plenary are reflected in the resolutions, approved by the majority of its attendees.

- *Chair and Secretary*

The ***Chair*** represents EUREF officially. The main tasks are the overall coordination and management, the coordination and presidency of the annual Symposia, the creation of the conditions for the achievement of EUREF objectives and other duties defined by the TWG.

The ***Secretary*** is in charge of the preparation and organization of the Symposia and TWG meetings in cooperation with the respective local organizing committees, as well as the issuing of the symposia proceedings and the minutes of the TWG meetings. Other tasks are to disseminate the information, to maintain a list of members and contacts, to provide the relevant information to the web portal and to assist the chair.

- *TWG (Technical Working Group)*

The ***TWG (Technical Working Group)*** is responsible, in general, for the control of EUREF activities and policy, and has the following specific tasks:

- to coordinate and develop the EPN (EUREF Permanent Network);
- to evaluate and classify results of GNSS campaigns presented to the TWG for acceptance as EUREF densification or extension;
- to organise and coordinate European-wide geodetic observation campaigns for the improvement of the European Reference Frame;
- to coordinate the actions for the realisation of a European Height System and the integration of the geo-spatial and vertical components of the European Reference Frame;
- to identify the relevant actions for the continuation and development of EUREF, with respect to innovation and the changing user needs;
- to set up the working groups to run the projects defined by the plenary;
- to prepare the recommendations for the EUREF plenary.