GTSnext and Earthtime-EU a progress report.

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EARTHTIME started as a science driven initiative sponsored in the period 2003-2009 through the NSF. The main aim was to provide a multi-disciplinary, global platform for researchers of the Geological Timescale, with the objective to transcend traditional limitations of a mono-disciplinary approach. The European contribution to EARTHTIME includes: an ESF sponsored Exploratory Workshop (2007), an EU FP7 Initial Training Network ‘GTSnext’ (2008-2012), and an ESF-sponsored Research Network Platform (2010 – 2015), and an ambition further develop the Earthtime concept on a global level by stimulating the interaction between ESF and NSF.

GTSnext has now passed its midterm review, and is entering the phase where projects should start yielding new data: 1. on the three time slices that form the focus of GTSnext: Neogene, Paleogene, and Cretaceous, and 2. on technical developments. Technical developments include improved capabilities for U-Pb dating of zircons, now allowing the analysis of small zircon fragments that crystallized upon eruption, thus by-passing the residence time problem, and the development of a protocol for a ‘first principles’ calibration of a mineral standard for 40Ar/39Ar dating.

Earthtime-EU is now planning a kick-off meeting in Barcelona, Spain, in February 2011 with the objective to involve the science community in setting the agenda for Earthtime-EU in terms of workshop topic proposals. The main contributions of Earthtime-EU will be in thematic workshops, such as the next Earthtime isotope geochronology workshop in 2012.

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