

International Geographical Union Commission for Young and Early Career Geographers

C24.47 COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2025

The IGU Commission for Young and Early Career Geographers (IGU-YECG), previously a Taskforce, was established by the International Geographical Union (IGU) on 22nd August 2016 at the 33rd International Geographical Congress in Beijing, China, with a vision of empowering and nurturing future leaders in Geography. The primary aims of the Commission are to promote career development for early-career geographers through mentoring, training, and sharing; stimulate interdisciplinary, international, and intergenerational research conversations between Geographers; and acknowledge and elevate the achievements of early-career geographers in the Global North and South.

A. Membership Steering Committee

Chair

Dr. Gaurav Sikka, Patliputra University, Patna, Bihar (India)

Email: gauravsikkageo@gmail.com

Secretary

Dr. Gabriela Adina Morosanu, Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy/University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania

Email: gabriela.adina.m@gmail.com

Full Members

- **Dr. Komali Yenneti (Past Chair)**, School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom
- **Dr. Melgris José Becerra Ruíz**, Working Group on Geographical Issues (GTAG-Venezuela), Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA), Brazil.
- **Dr. Sinenhlanhla Memela**, Rhodes University, South Africa.
- **Dr. Yuping Bai**, Department of Land Resources Management, China University of Geosciences, Beijing, China
- **Dr. Salwa Aabid**, Université de La Réunion, Saint-Denis, La Réunion, France
- **Dr. Ana Merlos Reyes**, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Morelia, Mexico
- **Dr. Richard Sunday**, Federal university of kashere, Gombe, Nigeria
- **Iyanuoluwa Fatunmbi**, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Illinois, USA

Commission's Membership

The Commission has a listserv at geo-iguyecg@listserv.wvu.edu and a Facebook page and group to update geographers about our activities and circulate relevant information. The total number of members on the listserv is 330, and the Facebook page has 1170 followers (as of 1 December 2025).

B. Meetings held in 2025

I. IGU Thematic Conference April 2025

The IGU-YECG sessions were held on Saturday, April 12, 2025, as part of the International Geographical Union (IGU) Thematic Conference in Egypt, hosted at the Aton Hotel, Cairo. These sessions served as a significant academic platform for young scholars, graduate students, early-career geographers, and school-level researchers to present innovative, applied geographical studies. The two sessions collectively featured over 15 presentations and posters, drawing participation from five Egyptian universities, four branches of Nile Egyptian International Schools, and international scholars from Canada, India, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. The sessions were exceptionally well-attended and featured a diverse range of engaging presentations from promising young geographers and established scholars.



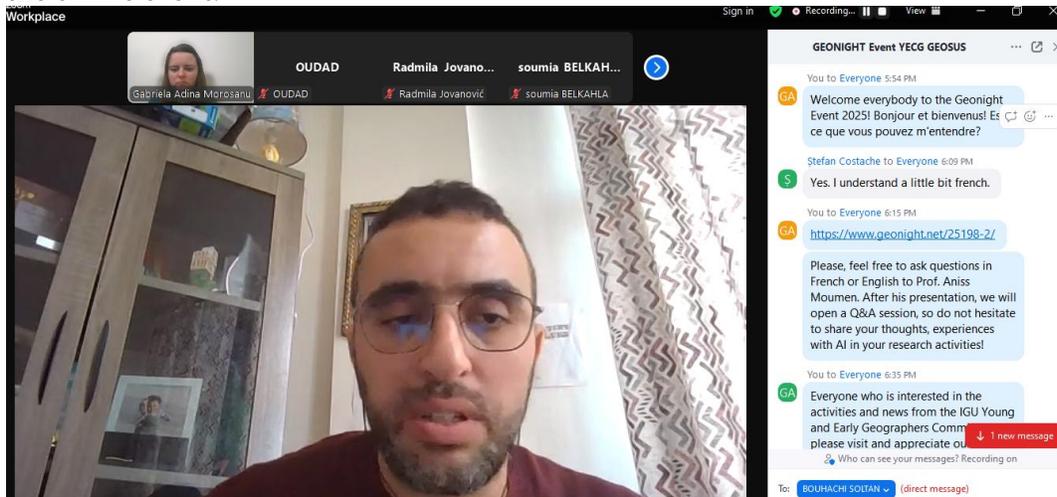
II. Geonight Event – 4th of April 2025

The online GeoNight Event held on April 4th, 2025, organized by the **IGU Young and Early Career Geographers Commission** through its Geography and Sustainability (GEOSUS) Working Group chaired by Gabriela Morosanu and Xutong Wu, brought together young geographers and researchers to reflect on the rapidly growing role of artificial intelligence in geographical research and education. The event opened with welcoming remarks highlighting the mission of the Commission and the importance of fostering critical, ethically grounded innovation among early-career scholars. The keynote lecture, delivered by **Aniss Mouden**, Associate Professor at the National School of Applied Sciences in Kenitra, Morocco, provided an insightful overview of GeoAI, emphasizing both its transformative potential and its ethical, educational, and societal challenges.



Particular attention was given to issues of data literacy, bias, transparency, and responsibility in the use of AI tools within geography. The event concluded with an interactive discussion session, encouraging participants to critically engage with the future of AI-driven geographical research and teaching in a responsible and inclusive manner.

In total, over 20 geography MSc and PhD students, as well as early careers, from various countries (India, China, Morocco, Algeria, Romania, France, Sri Lanka, Serbia, Nigeria) attended the online event.



III. 5th roundtable of ISC unions and associations- June 2025 Securing the next generation of scientists – Engagement of early- and mid-career researchers

<https://council.science/events/5th-roundtable-of-isc-unions-and-associations/>

Phil McManus, Vice President, IGU and Gaurav Sikka, Chair, IGU-YECG participated in the ISC meeting on June 10, 2025. Phil McManus acknowledged Yuko Hima and Mike Meadows, who were involved in forming the initial task force in 2016 to help establish an IGU Young & Early Career Geographers Commission to encourage future leaders in geography, promote career development, and foster intergenerational engagement. IGU is committed to supporting young and early career geographers long-term through the commission, aspiring to provide more money and support despite challenges. Phil then introduced Gaurav Sikka, chair of the Young and Early Career Geographers Commission. Gaurav Sikka confirmed the task force was upgraded to a full-fledged permanent commission in 2024. Gaurav presented about the activities undertaken by the Commission like organizing training and networking events at IGU conferences and congresses,

aiming to stimulate the presence of young geographers and ECRs in these events, including a cash award for the best paper presented by young geographers at IGU conferences. Further, collaborations are undertaken with other young and early career geography groups and other IGU commissions for joint events, workshops, and training. He added that IGU to provide registration fee waivers for young geographers to participate in IGU conferences and congresses, maintain a dedicated website and provide publication opportunities for young geographers by collaborating with journals to bring special issues specifically targeting young and early-career researchers. IGU-YECG is working on a book project targeting youth sustainable development agendas, which aims to highlight the under-representation of young perspectives in sustainable development.



IV. IGU Geography and Sustainability Symposium in China

The **IGU Commission for Young and Early Career Geographers (YECG)**, through its **Working Group on Geography and Sustainability (GEOSUS)**, actively contributed to the ***International Geography & Sustainability Symposium: From a Transdisciplinary Perspective***, organized by Beijing Normal University in the University Educational Building of the Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, China, between 17 and 20 October 2025.

The event gathered more than 200 international participants, including members of the IGU Executive Board and scholars from the USA, Brazil, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Spain, Portugal, Romania, China, France, Finland, Hong Kong, and the UK.



Opening Ceremony of the International Symposium “Geography and Sustainable Development: From a Transdisciplinary Perspective” & meeting between dr. Morosanu and dr. Wu

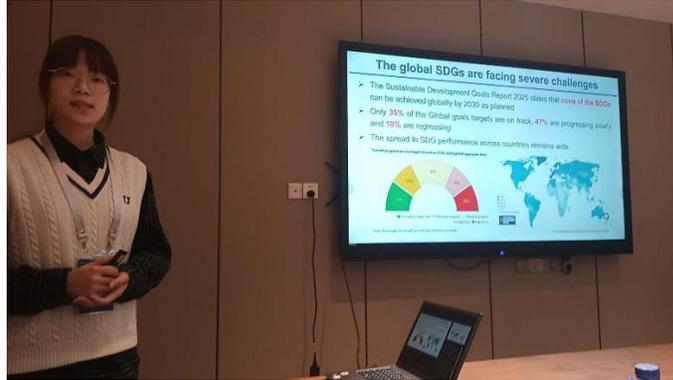
Within this high-level international forum, Dr. Gabriela Morosanu (IGU-YECG/Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy), together with Dr. Mengyao Han (Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences and core member of the IGU YECG GEOSUS working group) and Dr. Xutong Wu (Beijing Normal University), convened a dedicated session for young and early career geographers entitled “*Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus and Sustainability*”. The session provided an engaging platform for emerging scholars to share their research on the interconnections between environmental systems and sustainable development goals (SDGs).



The YECG GEOSUS Working Group Session on Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus and Sustainability

During the conference, Dr. Morosanu had the opportunity to exchange ideas with Dr. Xutong Wu and Dr. Yiran Du, co-chair and secretary of the YECG GEOSUS Working Group, regarding the current challenges, research needs, and professional development priorities of young and early career geographers across different regions. These discussions strengthened collaboration within the Working Group and outlined future opportunities for joint initiatives.

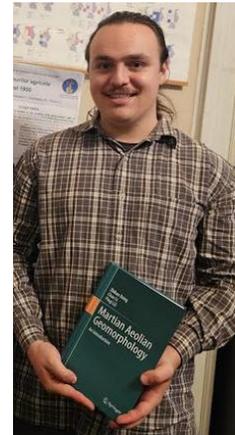
To encourage scientific excellence among early career participants, Dr. Morosanu and Dr. Wu awarded the **Best Presentation Prize** to a PhD student from Shaanxi University, and jointly evaluated the top six posters presented in the session’s poster competition.



Best presenter from the session (Liumeng Chen, Beijing Normal University)

V. Young Researchers' Workshop of Romanian Geographers

On **5 December 2025**, the Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy hosted in Bucharest the **Young Romanian Researchers' Workshop**, its annual event bringing together over 30 young researchers and teams of young geographers. Alongside the traditional awards named after prominent Romanian geographers, a **special prize** was offered with the support of the **IGU Young and Early Career Geographers Commission** and its **Geography & Sustainability Working Group (GEOSUS)**. The prize - a donated volume, *Martian Aeolian Geomorphology. An Introduction* (Springer, 2025), authored by professors Zhibao Dong, Chao Li și Ping Lü, at Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, China - was awarded to **Nicolas - Mihail Alexandru**, MSc student at the University of Bucharest Faculty of Geography, for his work "*Tool for Generating Geological Structure Orientation from DEM*".



C. Planned Meetings for 2026

I. IGU Regional Conference 2026

During the next Regional Geography Congress which will take place in Istanbul, Turkey, between 17 and 21 August, three sessions will be organized by members from the IGU YECCG Commission, as follows:

1. Geographies of the Future: Emerging Perspectives from Young and Early Career Geographers (IGU-YECCG & AGA-YGWG Best Paper Award Session)

This session, chaired by Dr. **Gaurav Sikka** & Dr. **Min Chen**, provides a high-visibility platform for innovative, forward-looking geographical research led by young and early career scholars. It focuses on how emerging generations of geographers conceptualize and investigate a rapidly transforming world. The key themes comprise: climate justice; urban and rural transformations; digital geographies; migration and geopolitics; decolonial approaches; youth and culture; sustainability transitions. The session will also offer the **Best Paper Award** and actively encourages submissions from underrepresented regions, strengthening inclusivity and global representation in geographical scholarship.

2. Geographies of Sustainability in Uncertain Times: Young Geographers' Perspectives on AI Ethics and Shifting Research Agendas

This session will be chaired by dr. **Gabriela Adina Moroşanu-Mitoseriu** & dr. **Sinenhlanhla Memela** and will consist in a mixed platform for free debate and structured scientific communications. The topics will explore how young geographers respond to **deep uncertainty**, including war, ecological crises, political instability, and rapid technological change. It foregrounds **key topics such as:** Ethics of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies; evolving sustainability agendas; environmental governance under pressure; funding precarity and institutional constraints; tensions between ambition, responsibility, and limitation in contemporary geography. A registration fee grant will be offered to one presenter from a low-income country, reinforcing the Commission's commitment to equity and accessibility.

3. Accelerating Transformations towards Sustainable Development Goals: Climate Change and Sustainable Management of Land Systems

This session will be chaired by Dr. **Yuping Bai** & Dr. **Gaurav Sikka** and promotes interdisciplinary and multiscale research addressing the interactions between climate change, land systems, and food security, with a strong focus on pathways towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The key themes are: Land-use and climate change interactions; climate impacts on land systems and food security; GHG mitigation in land-use and food systems; climate adaptation and land management; land restoration and carbon sequestration; future scenarios linking climate change and SDGs. Target participants include MSc and PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, and early career scholars, fostering dialogue between emergin research communities across disciplines and regions.

- II. International Conference under the aegis of 05 IGU Commissions on Ecosystem Restoration, Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilient Society in Changing Climate

Host: University of Burdwan, West Bengal, India Date: 30 January 2026- 01 February 2026

- III. IGU Thematic Conference 2026

Theme - 21st Century Urbanizing World: Emerging Challenges, Circulations, Connectivities

Host: Aligarh Muslim University Dates: 03-05 November 2026

IV. GeoNight Event

In April 2026, the IGU YECG Commission, together with its Geography & Sustainability Working Group, will continue the **GeoNight tradition** by organizing an online event dedicated to scientific writing and publishing challenges faced by young geographers, with the participation and support of members of the IGU EC, including Prof. Dr. Nathalie Lemarchand, IGU president. The event will critically address open-access publishing constraints, methodological and technological inequalities, and linguistic diversity in academic writing. Designed as a recorded debate / mini-MOOC format, it will ensure broad international accessibility beyond time-zone limitations.

V. Regional Conferences in Latin America (2026)

These activities are coordinated by steering committee members of the **IGU YECG Commission**, namely Dr. **José Becerra Ruiz** and Dr. **Ana Merlo**. While detailed programmes are still under development, **two major events have been announced for Latin America in 2026:**

- **Geography and Peace**, Lima (April 2026)
- **Latin American Young Geographers Annual Gathering**, Costa Rica (September 2026)

VI. Society of South African Geographers Conference 2026 will be hosted by the University of Mpumalanga in Mbombela Campus (**Best Paper Award Session**)

D. Networking

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2017 between the US based **International Association of Young Geographers** and IGU-YECG, is active for providing a new domain for the website, maintaining the website, financially supporting the IGU-YECG and IAYG Best Paper Awards.
- **Young and Early Career Geographers Working Group on Geography and Sustainability (IGU-YECG_GeoSus)**
IGU-YECG collaborated with IGU Commission on Geography for Future Earth and established a Young and Early Career Geographers Working Group on Geography and Sustainability (IGU YECG_GeoSus) in 2021. Chairs - Dr. Moroşanu Gabriela Adina (Steering Committee Member, IGU-YECG, Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy) & Dr. Xutong Wu (Faculty of Geographical Science, Beijing Normal University). This working group is an extension of IGUYECG and aims at complementing the activities of IGUYECG in the areas of sustainability. The mission of YECG-GeoSus is to promote research and education in sustainable development for young and early career geographers. While the working group complements the YECG Taskforce in the areas of sustainability, it aims at promoting, coordinating and supporting geographic research and education in an integrated and sustainable perspective.
- IGU-YECG has collaborated with the **IGU Commission on Global Sustainability** and signed **The Jena Declaration** for planning future events with Prof Benno Werlen, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, UNESCO-Chair on Global Understanding for Sustainability.
- IGU-YECG has collaborated with the **Young Geographer Working Group of the Asian Geographical Association** to jointly organise Best Paper Award Sessions in the IGU Congresses and the Annual Asian Young Geographers Workshop. To date, 4 Annual Asian Workshops have been organised successfully.
- IGU-YECG collaborated with **Postgraduate and Early Career Researcher Network (PECN) of the Geographical Society of Ireland** and organized events during the 35th IGC, Dublin, Ireland, August 2024.

IGU-YECG collaborations are aimed to align with the **UN SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals** – which emphasizes the importance of partnerships, which can enhance youth engagement in global and local initiatives.

E. Publications

The **Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy**, through **Bianca Mitrică**, Vice-Editor of the **Revue Roumaine de Géographie / Romanian Journal of Geography**, collaborated closely with guest editors **Gabriela Moroşanu** and **Gaurav Sikka** in the preparation of the **IGU Young and Early Career Geographers (YECG) Special Issue, Geographies of Change: Emerging Perspectives from Young and Early Career Geographers** (Vol. 69, No. 2, 2025).

This collaboration reflects a shared commitment to **supporting early career scholarship**, fostering **international academic dialogue**, and promoting **thematic and geographical diversity** in contemporary geographical research. The special issue brought together contributions from young geographers across multiple world regions, addressing pressing challenges related to sustainability, climate change, land use, cultural heritage, tourism, urban studies, water systems, and human–environment interactions.

The editorial partnership combined the **institutional continuity and academic standards** of the Romanian Academy’s flagship geography journal with the **global outreach and youth-focused mission** of the **IGU Young and Early Career Geographers Commission**. Through a rigorous peer-review process and close editorial mentoring, the issue provided an inclusive platform for emerging voices in geography, reinforcing the journal’s role as an international forum for innovative and interdisciplinary geographical research.

ROMANIAN ACADEMY
INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY

REVUE ROUMAINE DE GÉOGRAPHIE ROMANIAN JOURNAL OF GEOGRAPHY

Call for papers
Special Issue
Volume 69, no. 2, 2025

Guest Editors : Gaurav Sikka^{1,2}, Gabriela Adina Moroşanu - Mitoşeriu^{2,3}, Bianca Mitrică³

¹ Patliputra University, Patna, Bihar, India
² International Geographical Union, Young & Early Career Geographers Commission (IGU YECG)
³ Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Romania



more information and access: www.rjgeo.ro Paper submission: igar@geoinst.ro

IGU YECG Special Issue
Geographies of Change:
Emerging Perspectives from Young and Early Career Geographers

The *Revue Roumaine de Géographie / Romanian Journal of Geography* is the main scientific journal of the Institute of Geography, Romanian Academy, and one of the most significant publications under the aegis of the Romanian Academy. Established in 1957, the journal has evolved through various titles, becoming the *Revue Roumaine de Géographie* in 1990. Since 2009, it is published biannually, offering a platform for quantitative and qualitative research across diverse environmental science topics, including geomorphology, climate change, land use, biodiversity, and urban development. The journal is indexed in international databases such as Scopus, Copernicus and DOAJ, and is accessible via www.rjgeo.ro, with exchanges with over 200 libraries globally.



In collaboration with the **National Committee of Geography of Romania**, led by Prof. Dan Bălăţanu - Member of the Romanian Academy - from the Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy, and the **Young & Early Career Geographers Commission of IGU**, we are pleased to announce an open call for contributions from young geographers.

The research papers could address topics aligned with the following sub-themes, among others:

- **Sustainable Urban Development:** Exploring approaches to the implication of geographical methods and knowledge in urban planning, blue-green spaces, and resilient cities.
- **Climate Change and Human Impact on the Environment:** Investigating the geographical implications of climate and environmental changes and strategies for adaptation of communities.
- **Cultural Landscapes and Identity:** Analyzing how cultural practices shape and are influenced by geographical changes, in the actual and future contexts of global migration.
- **Digital Geographies:** Bringing in the perspectives and experiences of young geographers regarding the impact of AI and GIS on geographical research, spatial analysis, education and community engagement.
- **Any other relevant emerging perspectives on the theme of the special issue.**

We invite proposals that include a tentative title, an abstract, and up to 5 keywords. Detailed manuscript submission guidelines can be found at <http://www.rjgeo.ro/for-authors.html>

Join us in advancing geographical research of and sharing your insights with a global audience!

Please submit articles to igar@geoinst.ro, biancadumitrescu78@yahoo.com before February 28, 2025.

Sikka, G., Moroşanu – Mitoşeriu, G.A., Mitrică, B. (Guest Editors) (2025), *IGU YECG Special Issue Geographies of Change: Emerging Perspectives from Young and Early Career Geographers*. *Revue Roumaine de Géographie*, 69(2)

F. Popularization (to highlight the expertise of geographers on social issues):

a. Publications: newspapers or reports for public or private actors (from local to national in the local languages of the members)

Memela, S., Irvine, P., and Dlongolo Z., (November 27, 2025) No space for culture: ‘matchbox housing’ leaves residents unable to honour customs in a South African town. Available online <https://theconversation.com/profiles/sinenhlanhla-memela-2243910/activities>

b. Interviews as expert in media (radio, TV, etc.)

Dr. Gaurav Sikka gave an interview on India’s National TV Broadcaster Doordarshan. The weblink of the interview is <https://youtu.be/anZbWPJA-a8?si=dDjbdsiReoFUPnVi>

Rhodes University was celebrating 10 years of New Generations Academic Programme (nGAP). **Dr Sinenhlanhla Memela** was invited as a mentor to be panel speaker on the Nurturing the Next Generation workshop. She was one of the first generation nGAP academics at Rhodes and joined the Geography Department.



c. Events promoting geography education (GeoNight and others)

IV. GeoNight Event

IGU YECG GEOSUS Working Group organized for the 2025 GeoNight Event an online event "AI Tools for Researchers: Benefits, Limitations & Risks", on the 4th of April 2024.

G. Archival Contributions

All the annual reports of IGU-YECG meetings were sent to the IGU secretariat. We use our Commission website, LinkedIn and Facebook page as a kind of archive. It offers all available meeting reports, photos and annual reports representing our meetings.

The current (accurate) URL of the commission's website: <https://iguyecg.org/>

It serves also as an on-line archive of the Commission with all meetings, conference alerts, job opportunities available, as well as photo galleries related to the IGU-YECG activities. The website represents the major tool for the exchange of information among the members of the Commission and other young scholars.

<https://www.facebook.com/IGUYECG/>

IGU-YECG has expanded its online presence through running a fully fledged, active and updated Facebook page. Regular updates on IGU meetings, IGU-YECG events, young scholar competitions, members' updates and other relevant information is uploaded on the page. A Facebook group is also in process to share academic resources useful for early career academics like Teaching materials, geography promotional material and new research.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/igu-yecg/>

A LinkedIn account helps IGU YECG connect young geographers globally, share opportunities, and boost visibility. It fosters networking, collaboration, and professional growth, enhancing the commission's impact and support for early-career geographers.

H. Finances

The commission is planning to spend the IGU subsidy in the form of 3 Registration Fees waivers, 01 best paper award and support travel for participation in IGU Regional Conference Istanbul 2026 and other upcoming IGU thematic conferences.

This report is structured following the instructions of the IGU Executive Committee.

Dr. Gaurav Sikka
Chair, IGU-YECG

Dr. Gabriela Adina Morosanu
Secretary, IGU-YECG