



International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), Initiative on Forensic Geology (IFG)

Monthly Update and Information for IUGS E-Bulletin, March 2026

GSL Distinguished Service Award 2026, Prof Silvia Peppoloni

Congratulations to Prof Silvia Peppoloni (IUGS-IFG Geoethics Adviser and Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Rome, Italy), who has been awarded the Geological Society of London Distinguished Service Award 2026. Prof Peppoloni has been instrumental in leading Geoethics around the world. She is also the founder, former Secretary General and current President of the International Association for Promoting Geoethics. She is leading the IUGS-IFG interests on the importance of geoethics in forensic geology.

<https://www.geoethics.org/post/silvia-peppoloni-has-received-the-gsl-distinguished-service-award-2026>



Prof Silvia Peppoloni

Sands of Change, Geological Society of London

On 18 March 2026, IUGS-IFG held a joint conference with the British Geological Survey and Geological Society of London, Forensic Geosciences Group, which focused on sand resources and illegal sand mining. The hybrid event attracted delegates from throughout Europe, USA, Australia and Asia. The conference drew attention to sand being the second most utilised resource on Earth after water. Sand crime involving so called 'sand mafias' was also debated, which generates up to US\$ 350 billion per year according to some calculations. Geological techniques and strategies were presented to assist the police and law enforcement investigate sand theft and associated crimes.

https://www.geolosc.org.uk/media/sc1haoq1/sands-of-change_programme_and-abstracts-volume.pdf
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Sands of Change, Geological Society of London, 18 March 2026.

Forensic Geology in Malta

IUGS-IFG has endorsed an application for forensic geology research in Malta, with a focus on the detection of unmarked graves. This is being undertaken in collaboration with Prof. Sebastiano D'Amico, Head, Department of Geosciences Coordinator, Geophysics Laboratory & Malta Seismic Network, University of Malta. Training in forensic geology has been provisionally considered to take place in 2027, subject to confirmation. This project will be the first controlled forensic burial experiment in Malta to advance the detection of clandestine graves using integrated geophysics and geomatics. Designed for shallow soils over limestone in a Mediterranean climate, the study addresses the lack of locally validated reference data for burial detection.

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Edinburgh Science Festival, Scotland

IUGS-IFG have been invited to participate in the 2026 Edinburgh Science Festival. This will comprise a series of lectures and a panel interview session, on the evening of Friday 17 April 2026. The event will be titled: *'Forensic Geoscience: How to find out where in the world the crime was committed.'* IUGS-IFG will host the event in collaboration with the James Hutton Institute. Dame Prof Lorna Dawson will chair the panel discussion. Guest presentations will be provided by Dr Laurance Donnelly (illegal mining crime and illicit mineral trafficking) and Dr Fabio Salvador (Clean Gold Programme). Associated presentations will include global wildlife crime.

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'Investigating the After Death', MSc in Human Taphonomy, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

On Friday 17 March, Dr Laurance Donnelly, provided the opening lecture for the MSc in Human Taphonomy, University of Lausanne, Switzerland. This focused on the international role of IUGS-IFG in advancing and promoting forensic geology and the Geoforensic Search Strategy to locate shallow, unmarked graves and human remains. Other presentations on geological trace evidence and search will be provided by Dame Prof Lorna Dawson, Dr Alastair Ruffell and Prof Duncan Pirrie.

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<https://www.unil.ch/eb-ht>



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Investigating
the « after death »

'Investigating the After Death', MSc in Human Taphonomy, (Source: University of Lausanne, Switzerland).