

The WMO-CGMS Virtual Laboratory on Training and Education in Satellite Meteorology (VLab)

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Established by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Coordination Group for Meteorological Satellites (CGMS) in 2000, VLab is a global network of specialized training centres and meteorological satellite operators working together to improve the utilisation of data and products from meteorological and environmental satellites. Currently eight satellite operators (including NOAA NESDIS) and twelve recognized training Centres of Excellence are contributing to ongoing VLab activities worldwide. Other important organizations supporting the VLab include the Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere (CIARA, USA), the European Virtual Organisation for Meteorological Training (Eumetcal), the EUMETSAT-sponsored international training project (EUMeTrain), and the Cooperative Program for Operational Meteorology, Education and Training (COMET, USA).

Important successes of the VLab include the formal recognition of new Centres of Excellence around the world and the delivery of training services in a growing number of subject areas in five UN languages and Portuguese. VLab members regularly organize training events and web meetings to discuss training activities and developments. Several Regional Focus Groups are being organised by the CoEs to widen the access to training events and training resources to other countries in their region. In addition, training in the format of 'Event Weeks', where a series of online sessions on a specific theme are presented within a week, are also organised and supported by the VLab. Some examples are the High Profile Training Event (HPTE) organised in 2006, the Mediterranean Weather Week and the Dust Week organised by EUMETSAT (2009 and 2010, respectively); and most recently, the Aviation Week organised by the VLab CoE Australia (2011).

All future training events planned by VLab CoEs are shown in the online calendar on the VLab website at <http://vlab.wmo.int>. The VLab calendar is shared with Collaborators and Partner Projects such as Eumetcal, EUMeTrain and the RA-II Pilot Project, showing a variety of opportunities available for training related to satellite meteorology in all WMO Regions. To highlight VLab successes, future plans and to distribute VLab news to a wider audience, a newsletter is also issued every 6 months.

A key success of the VLab is the greater use of blended learning, a training concept that combines online and traditional methods for training at relatively low cost. For distance learning sessions, common course management systems and teleconferencing tools are being increasingly used by

the VLab partners.