Report on the activities of the Working Group

Vertical Datum Standardisation

A common initiative of

GGOS Theme 1: Global Height System	International Gravity Field Service (IGFS)	IAG Commission 2: Gravity Field	IAG Commission 1: Reference Frames

Initial members

L. Sánchez (Germany), chair
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J. Ågren (Sweden)

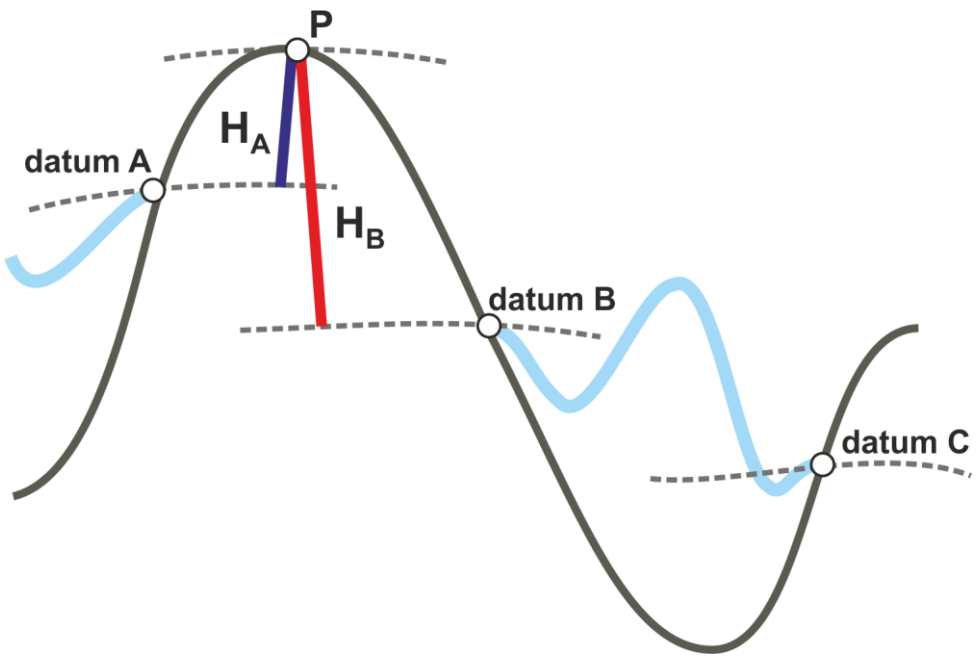
Motivation 1: inconsistent height systems

The Global Geodetic Observing System (GGOS) requires geodetic reference frames with

- an order of **accuracy higher** than the magnitude of the phenomena and effects we want to study (e.g. global change);
- **consistency** and **reliability worldwide**;
- **long-term stability**.

The existing height systems

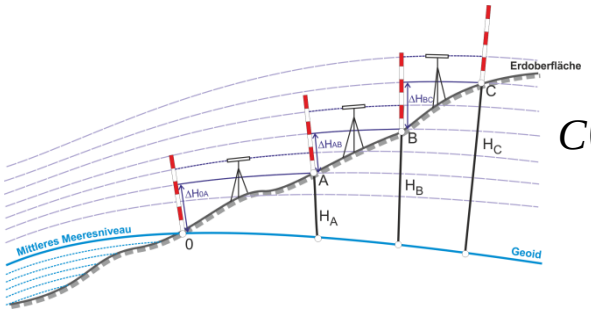
- refer to **different levels** (many [dm] of discrepancy);
- realise **different types of heights** (normal, orthometric, etc.);
- omit (sea and land) **vertical variations** with time;
- do not support the precise combination of **h-H-N (= ?)**



Motivation 2: new methods for height determination

Today

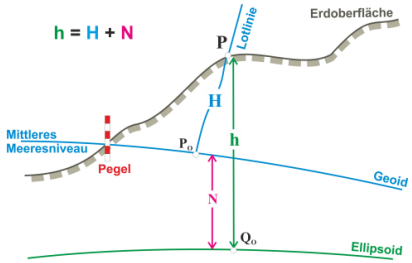
Levelling in combination with gravity reductions



$$C(g,dn) = W_0 - W_P = \int_0^P g\,\delta n \cong \sum_0^P g\,dn$$

Desired

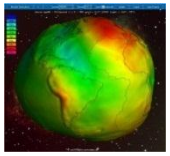
Disturbing potential in combination with a reference ellipsoid



$$C(U_0,T) = -(U_0 - W_0) + \bar{\gamma}(\varphi)h - T(\varphi,\lambda,h)$$

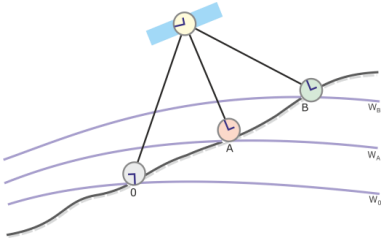
In the future

Global gravity field models in combination with ITRS/ITRF coordinates



$$C(\bar{C}_{nm},\bar{S}_{nm}) = W_0 - [V(r,\theta,\lambda) + Z(r,\theta)]$$

Comparison of clock frequencies of high-precision



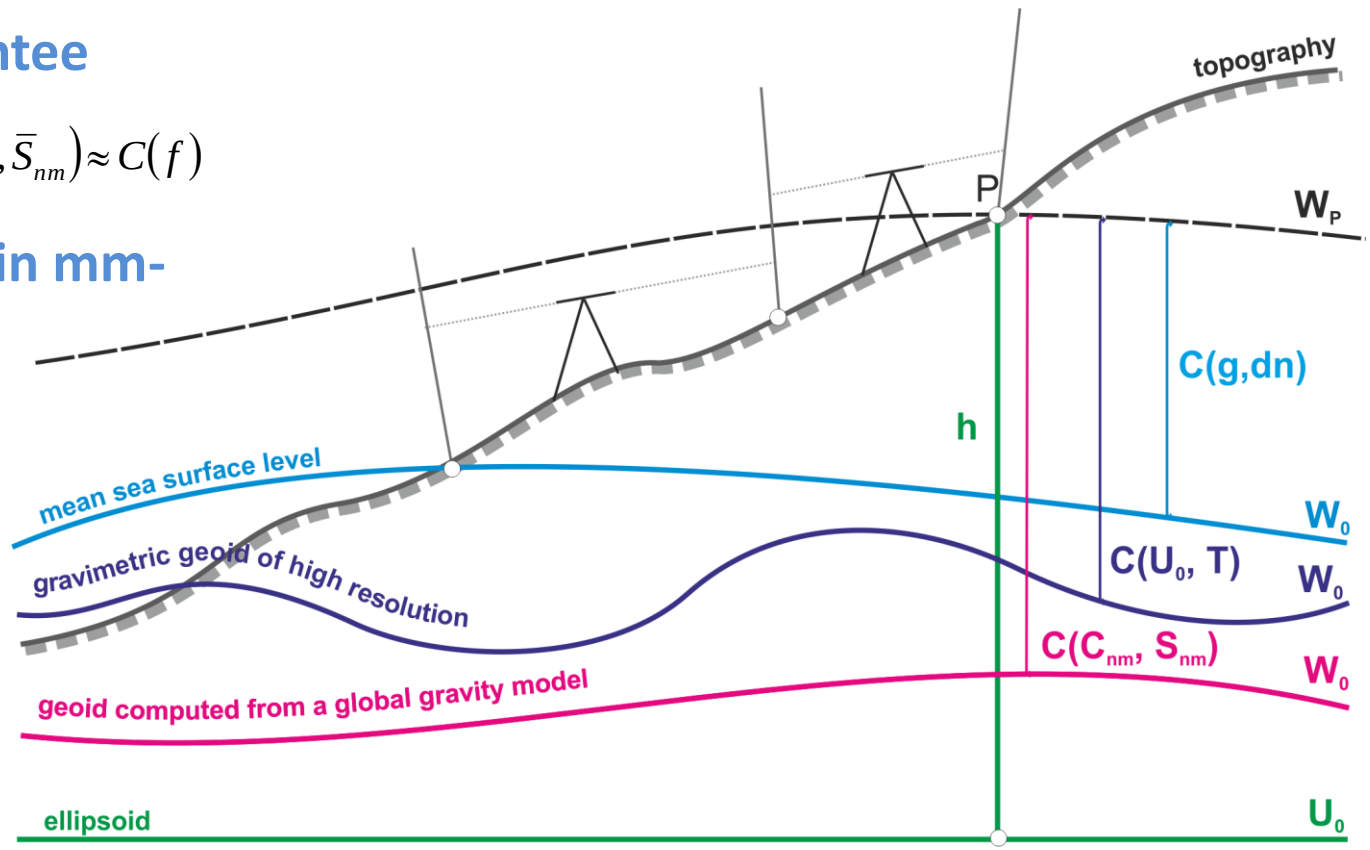
$$C(f) = c^2\left(\frac{f - f_0}{f_0}\right)$$

Reference level depending on input data?

How can we guarantee

$$C(g,dn) \approx C(U_0,T) \approx C(\bar{C}_{nm},\bar{S}_{nm}) \approx C(f)$$

in cm-level (better in mm-level), globally ?

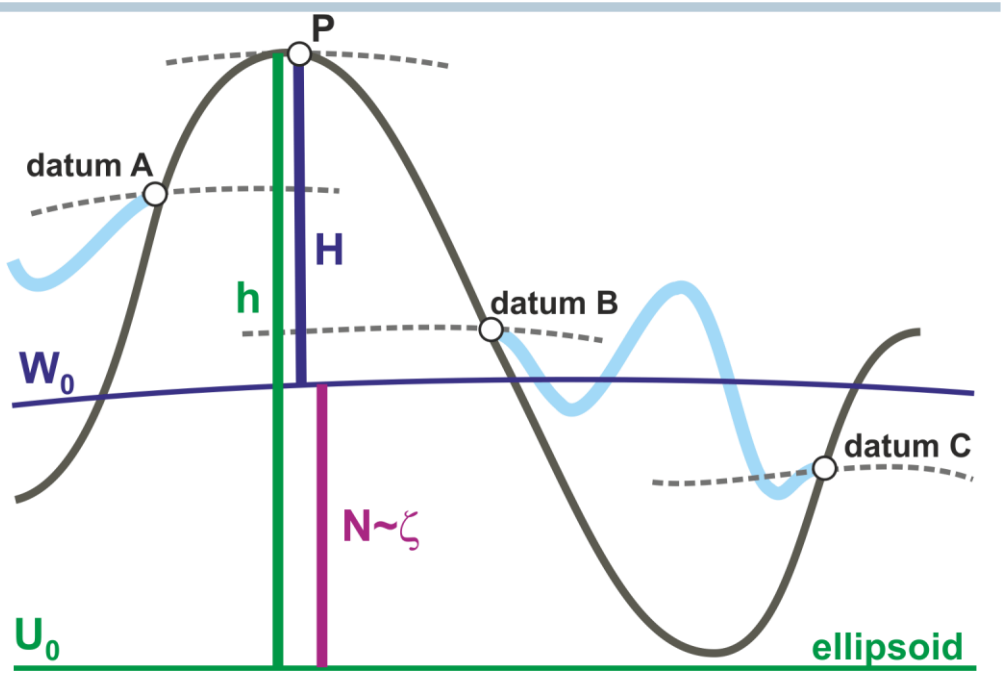


- The same W_0 value for all existing (regional) geoids?
- The same geoid with different (regional) W_0 values?
- Only one geoid with only one W_0 value?

Solution

A global vertical reference system

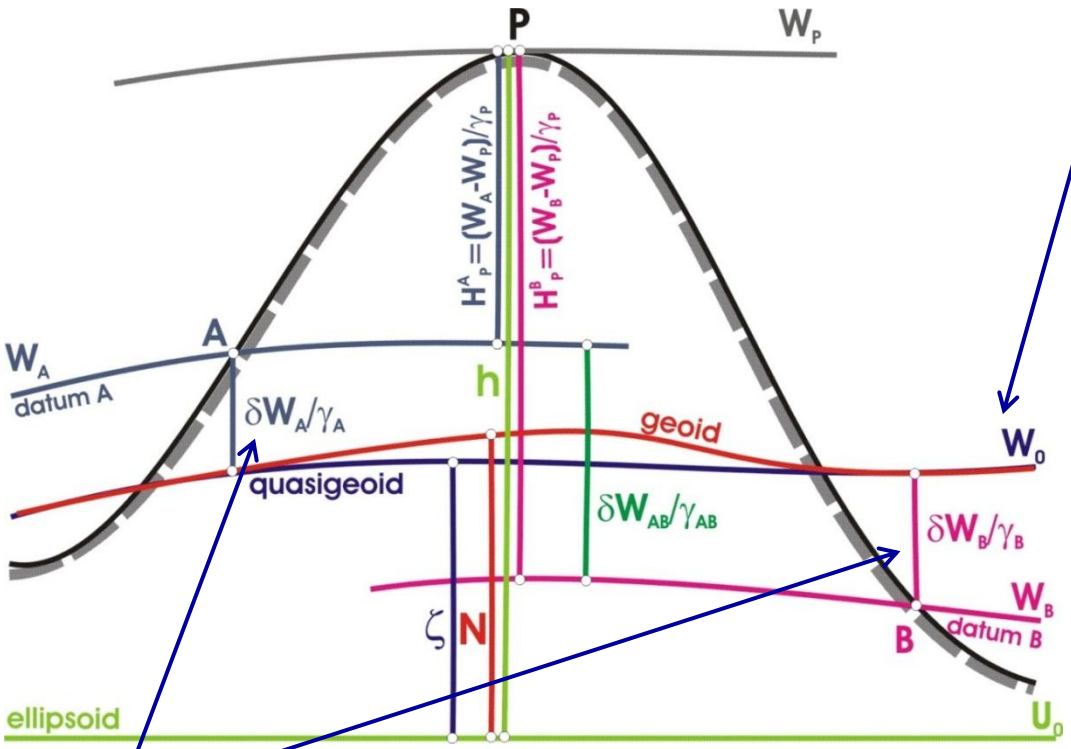
- To solve the **discrepancies** between the **existing height systems** and
- To support the **different** techniques for **height determination**.



Implicit characteristics:

- One reference level (W_0 or geoid) to be used globally;
- All existing geo-potential numbers (physical heights) referring to one and the same global level;
- Precise combination with geometric heights and geoid models of high resolution, i.e. h-H-N=0.

Strategy



1. Selection (**Definition and realisation**) of a global reference level W_0
   - W_0 = potential of the geoid
   - Geoid = equipotential surface best fitting the global mean sea (Gauss definition)

GGHS 2012, Section 5 (Thursday morning)

2. Connection of the individual reference levels with the global W_0
   - Basic approach: $h - H - N = \dfrac{\delta W}{\gamma}$

GGHS 2012, Section 5 (Wednesday afternoon)

Poster session today and tomorrow!

Empirical estimation of W_0

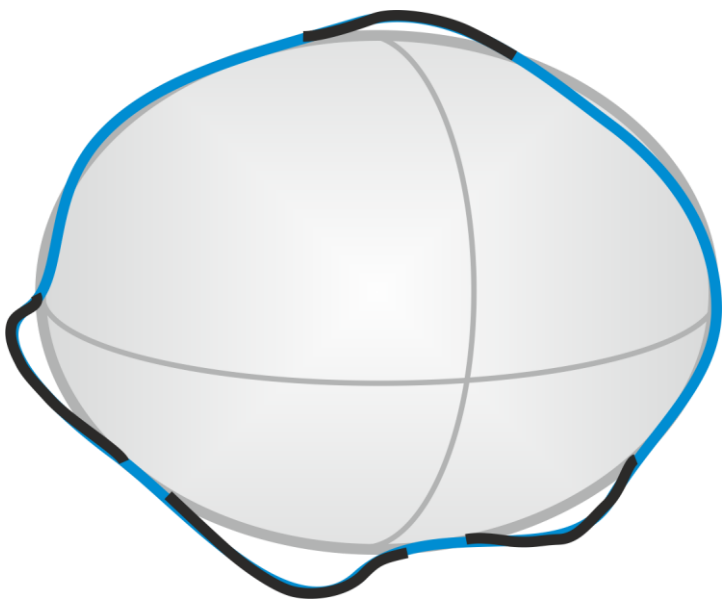
In the 1990s and before:

- Determination of the parameters for a best fitting ellipsoid

$$U_0 = U(a, f, \omega, GM); \text{ or } U_0 = U(a, J_2, \omega, GM)$$

Then by definition:

$$W_0 \overset{!}{=} U_0$$



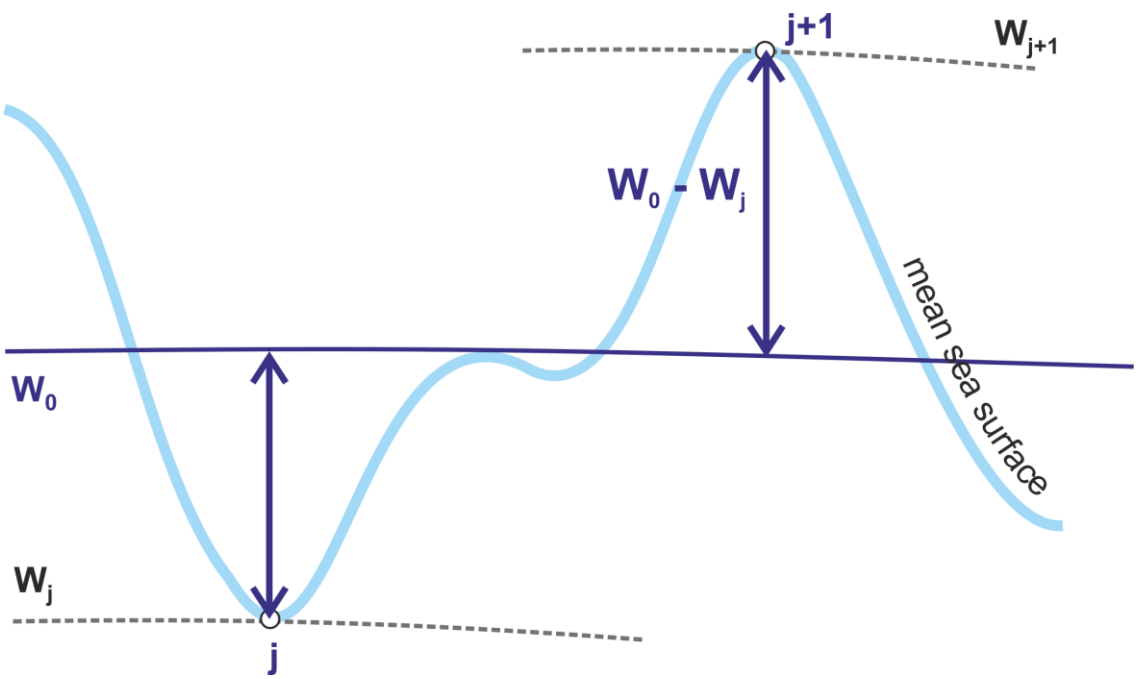
Empirical estimation of W_0

Late 1990s and 2000s:

$$\int_S \Xi^2 ds = \min; \quad \Xi = \frac{W_0 - W_j}{\gamma_j}$$

Ξ : Sea surface topography

- Points *j* with coordinates from satellite altimetry describe the mean sea surface;
- Potential values *W* are derived from a global gravity model



Empirical estimation of W_0

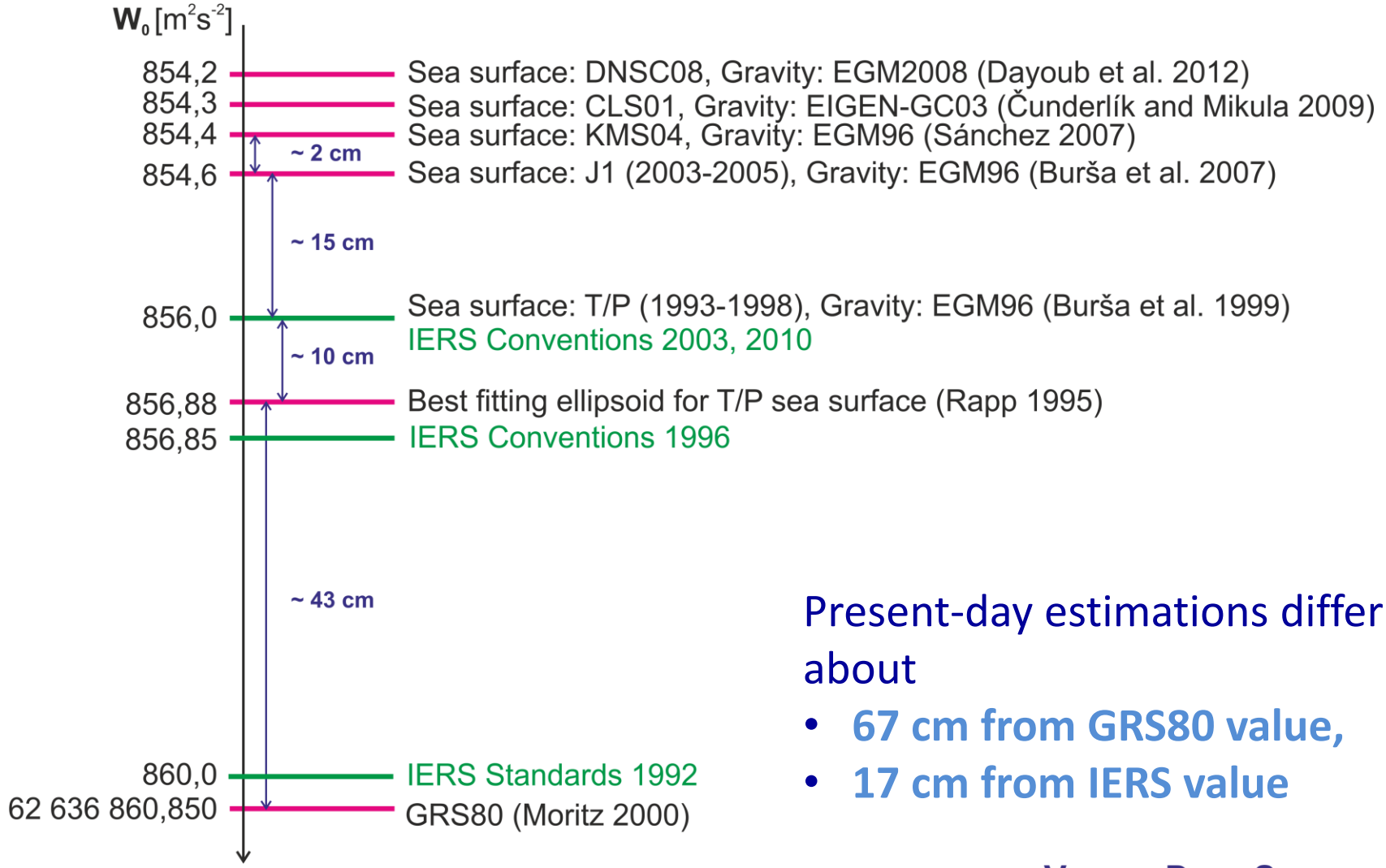
Today: solution of the fixed geodetic boundary value problem:

$$\nabla^2 \delta W(\mathbf{X}) = 0 \qquad \mathbf{X} \in \Omega$$
$$\delta W(\mathbf{X}) \to 0 \qquad \mathbf{X} \to \infty$$
$$\delta g(\mathbf{X}) = g(\mathbf{X}) - \gamma(\mathbf{X}) \qquad \mathbf{X} \in \Sigma$$

Boundary surface Σ known;
Unknown: disturbing potential δW ($=W_0-U_0$)
Boundary condition: gravity disturbances δg
Regularisation: δW vanishes at infinity

$\mathbf{X} \leftrightarrow$ sea surface from satellite altimetry, continental surfaces from SMRT
$g(\mathbf{X}) \leftrightarrow$ global gravity model
$\gamma(\mathbf{X})$, $U_0 \leftrightarrow$ GRS80

Some examples of W_0 estimates



Present-day estimations differ about

- **67 cm from GRS80 value,**
- **17 cm from IERS value**

Remarks on W_0

- The reference level W_0 for potential differences **can arbitrarily be appointed**. However, to get the worldwide consistency desired within a global vertical reference system, the selected **W_0 value must be realisable** with **high-precision at any time and anywhere** around the world.
- Since W_0 represents only one quantity and it is not sufficient to estimate position and geometry of the equipotential surface it is defining; **the main problem to solve here is not the determination of the W_0 value *per se*, but its realisation**.
- Therefore, it is necessary to estimate it from **real observations** of the Earth's gravity field and surface.
- The **uniqueness**, **reliability** and **repeatability** of the global reference level W_0 (or global geoid) can only be guaranteed by introducing **specific conventions** (like any other reference system!). On the contrary, there will exist as many height systems as W_0 computations.

WG on Vertical Datum Standardization

Objectives

- To **bring together all teams working on the computation of W_0** to elaborate an inventory describing individual methodologies, conventions, standards, and models presently applied;
- To implement **a new W_0 computation** following individual (own) methodologies, but applying the same input geodetic models;
- To make a proposal for a **formal IAG/GGOS convention about W_0** supported by a document containing the detailed computation of the recommended value.
- To provide **a standard about the usage of W_0 in the vertical datum unification** describing an appropriate strategy to connect (unify, transform) any local height system with the global W_0 reference level.

WG on Vertical Datum Standardization

On going-activities

L. Sánchez (Germany)	⇨	W_0-computation based on fixed-GBVP, analytical solution
R. Čunderlík (Slovakia) Z. Faskova (Slovakia) K. Mikula (Slovakia)	⇨	W_0-computation based on fixed-GBVP, Boundary Element Method (BEM), Finite Element Method (FEM) and Finite Volume Method (FVM).
N. Dayoub (Syria) P. Moore (United Kingdom)	⇨	W_0-computation based on averaging W-values from a GGM on points describing the sea surface (MSS) W_0-computation based on a reference ellipsoid ($W_0 = U_0$)
Z. Šima (Czech Republic) V. Vatrt (Czech Republic) M. Vojtiskova (Czech Republic)	⇨	W_0-computation based on averaging W-values from a GGM on points describing the sea surface (MSS)
J. Huang (Canada) D. Roman (USA) Y. Wang (USA) J. Ågren (Sweden)	⇨	Regional realisation of a global W_0

First results

The different teams computed W_0 using the same input data, but their own methodologies.

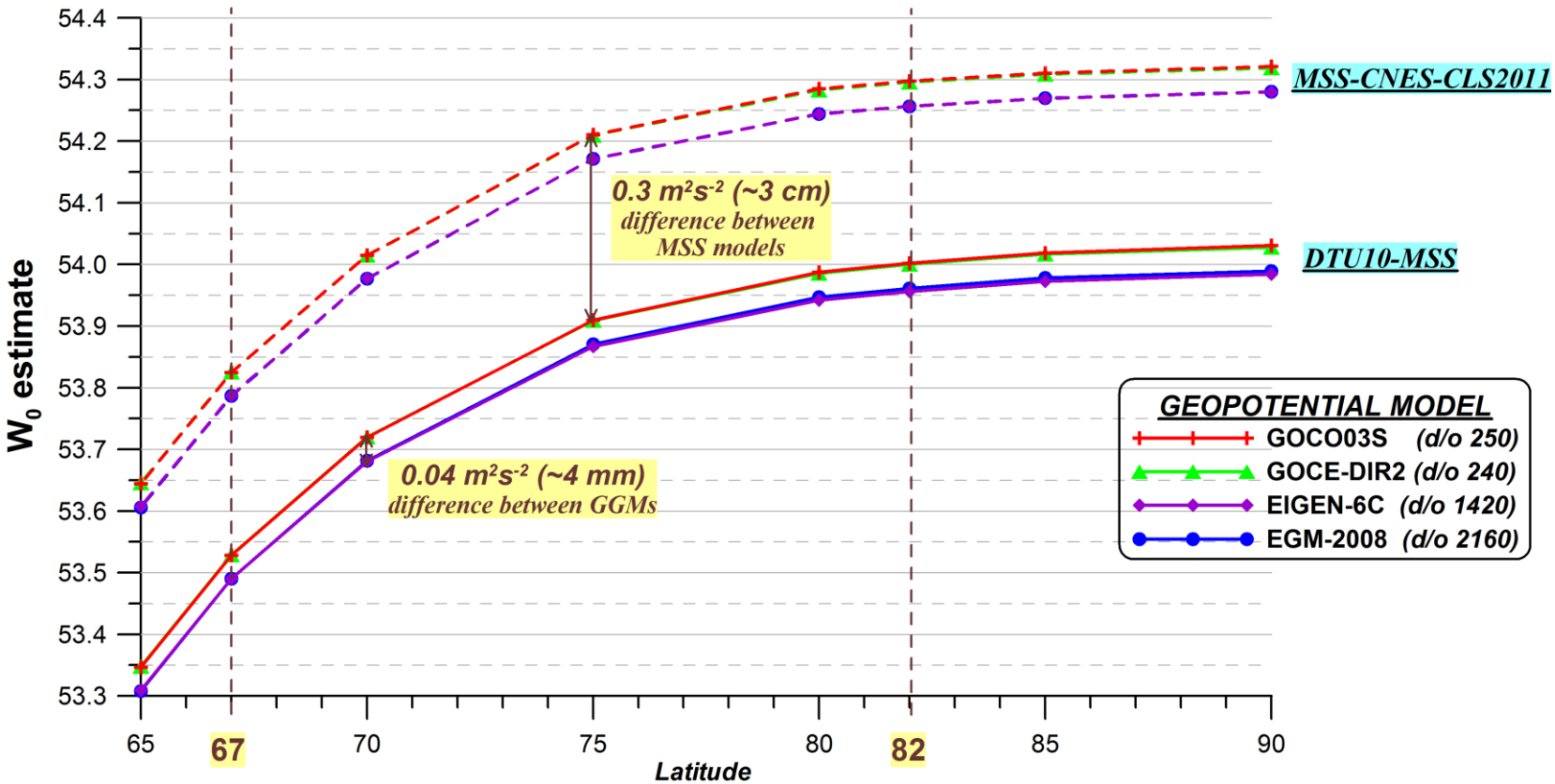
Estimates provided by N. Dayoub

MSS	Domain N/S	GGM	Max degree	$W_0(m^2s^{-2})$		
				1996.0	2001	2005
CLS11	82°/82°	EIGEN6C	n=200	62636854.43		62636854.19
		GOCO03S		62636854.43		62636854.19
	67°/67°	EIGEN6C		62636854.06		62636853.82
		GOCO03S		62636854.06		62636853.82
DTU10	82°/82°	EIGEN6C			62636854.11	62636854.00
		GOCO03S			62636854.11	62636854.00
	67°/67°	EIGEN6C			62636853.75	62636853.64
		GOCO03S			62636853.75	62636853.64

- W_0-dependence on the latitude coverage.
- W_0-dependence on the reference epoch of the mean sea surface model and potential coefficients.

First results

Estimates provided by R. Čunderlík, Z. Faskova, K. Mikula

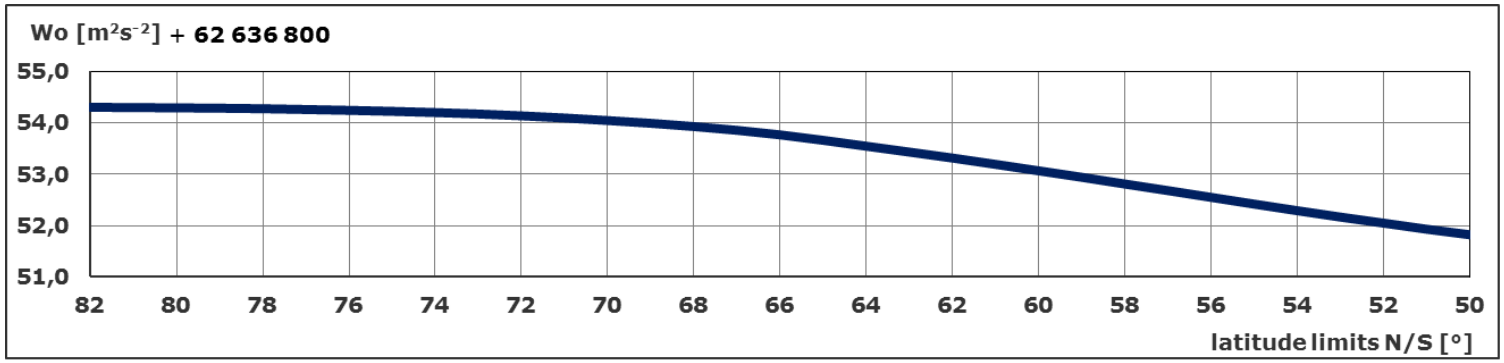


- W_0-dependence on the spectral resolution of the gravity model.

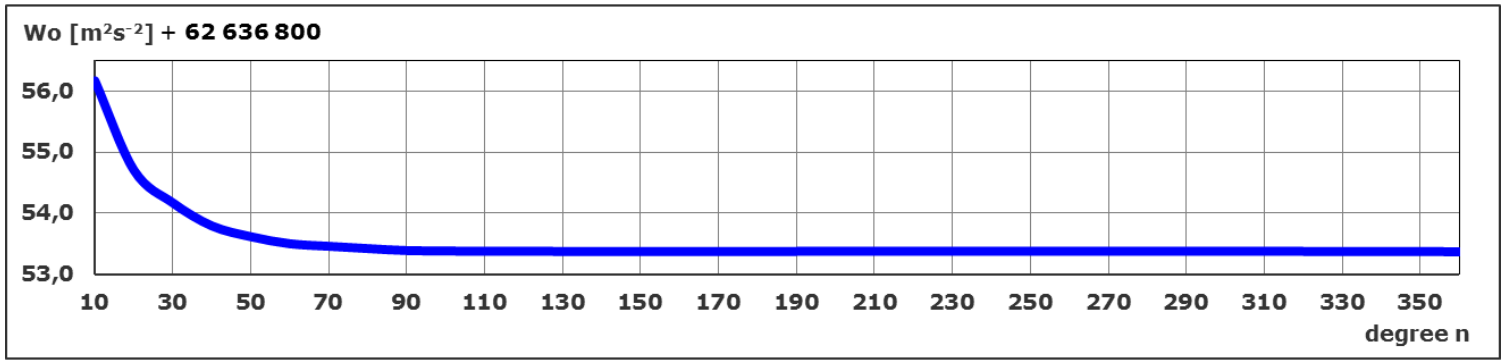
WG on Vertical Datum Standardization

First results

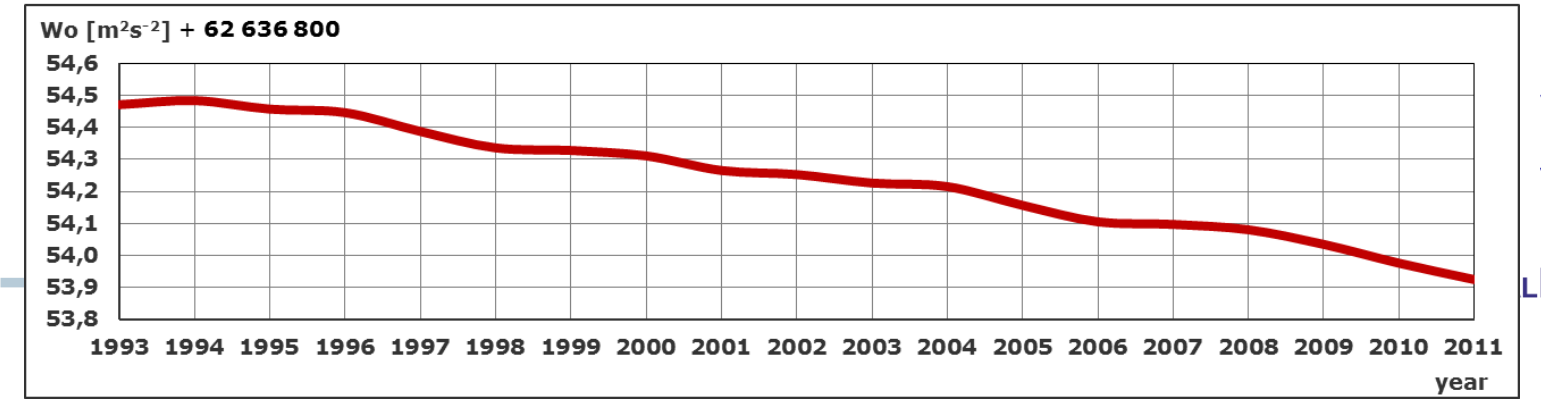
Estimates provided by L. Sánchez



W_0-variation with latitudinal coverage.



W_0-variation with degree *n* of the GGM.



W_0-variation with time.

Outlook

- All the computations are delivering very close results, but there are still differences of about 0,5 m^2s^{-2} (~ 5 cm). It is necessary to start defining the standards and conventions for a formal recommendation on W_0.
- Activities to be faced in the close future:
  - Combination of a "geodetic" sea surface model and an "oceanographic" DOT-model to reproduce a sea surface closer to an equipotential surface (geoid);
  - Integration of polar regions on the Earth's surface representation;
  - Differences between W_0 values obtained from a long-term mean sea surface model and yearly mean sea surface models;
  - A formal procedure for the error propagation analysis.

Splinter Meeting @ GGHS 2012: Thursday, Oct. 11, 6:15 pm. Room 8.
To join the group visit http://whs.dgfi.badw.de or send a message to sanchez@dgfi.badw.de.