

ECOVAST REPORT
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Editor: Pam Moore

EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR THE VILLAGE AND SMALL TOWN

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the August edition of our Newsletter. The holiday period has resulted in less copy than usual, and a slight delay in publication, but I hope you will still enjoy this issue. ECOVAST is continuing to have a busy year, and this will culminate in our Biennial Assembly events on the Isle of Wight in October – I hope to meet many of you there!

The next Newsletter will be published just before Christmas, and I would be pleased to receive any copy by **30 November 2010**. I look forward to hearing from you!

Pam Moore

REPORT of the PRESIDENT

In the heat of summer down on the Adriatic island of Krk I am thinking of yet another island where ECOVAST members will have this year their Annual gathering in mid October – the Isle of Wight in England. This will also be a chance to discuss the island culture and problems of isolated places, among other themes that the programme offers.

News from our Sections indicate that a variety of actions were undertaken in various parts of Europe by our members. There are a number of conferences already organized or on the way, as well as workshops, exchanges, exhibitions and other activities. However, I have to mention our worry about the situation in Russia with fires, then floods causing serious problems for people in many areas, while our Russian Section is trying to bring the organization of the important conference on 'Culture in Wood, Wood in Culture' to a successful ending in September. We wish them good luck in their endeavours!

While I regret that I will not be able to participate at yet another interesting conference that our ECOVAST members are partly organizing in Romania in October on the theme of 'Landscape, City Planning, Tourism', I am glad that there will be other colleagues presenting the work of ECOVAST and our 'Guide to Good Practice in Landscape Identification', as well as giving examples of the use of European Landscape Convention.

At this moment I am getting prepared for the PREPARE Gathering and Conference that will take place in Macedonia, around lakes Ohrid and Prespa from 30 August to 3 September 2010. It will comprise a series of events including 'Travelling Workshops' focusing on good practices in sustainable development in rural Macedonia, the Conference with an Opening Session on 'Networking in Rural Areas' and discussion on 'Common Agriculture Policy after 2013', as well as an exchange among participants for the future co-operation and action of the PREPARE Programme, with particular attention to South-Eastern Europe. The Macedonian Section of ECOVAST is involved in the preparation of this event and I hope to meet a number of its members to discuss our possible international Assembly in Macedonia next year.

My past activity in the last few months included participation at the Conference in Krakow, Poland, 20-22 May 2010, on 'Sustainable Rural Development in Europe' organized by the EU and SURE to discuss the theme, and to formulate the Krakow Declaration as a concluding activity (see report below by Michael Dower). An interesting excursion was organized for participants on the last day, where we travelled in the suburban area where a LAG of North Krakow Korona was organized to connect in partnership several local communities some of which were former villages (Nova Huta, Luborzyca and others).

In June I was present at the ECOVAST IC meeting in Wittstock, Germany after which I attended the Session of the European Council in Strasbourg, France, where International NGOs were meeting to discuss the future organizational and financial operating and networking. Membership at the Council of Europe gives ECOVAST the possibility to participate at INGO-OING sessions (4 times per year) and present our views related to rural development, landscape protection and ELC, social problems, civil rights and territorial democracy, as well as rural networking in general (see more in my 'Report from Strasbourg' further below).

Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Since the last issue of this Newsletter, I have attended three events for ECOVAST. In early June, together with Vice-President Phil Turner, and Past President Michael Dower, I was present at a major conference in Brussels related to CAP Reform – Michael Dower has written in more detail about this below.

Later in June, we travelled to Germany for an International Committee meeting in Wittstock, Brandenburg, a small town close to the hearts of many in ECOVAST. On the way, the last of the ECOVAST archive was deposited in Tellow, thanks to our German Section member Rolf Peter Bartz.

Finally, last month, Phil and I facilitated a workshop in Mechelen, Belgium, at the second European Conference of Civil Society Organisations in the Field of Heritage which addressed the issues of active citizenship, civil society and volunteer organisations (NGOs) within the European heritage sector. This well attended event brought together representatives of many heritage organisations from across Europe, including, as well as ECOVAST, Europa Nostra and Civilscape.

Now our main work is to prepare for the events on the Isle of Wight, which will keep us fully occupied until mid October.

Pam Moore

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

AUSTRIA – Related to the **Danube Strategy** - the NGOs meetings are continuing. Since our last report the Austrian Section have taken part in two meetings. Firstly, Bratislava/Vienna workshop 19.-21. of April 2010 (represented by Brigitte Macaria and Arthur Spiegler). This showcased the project to politicians, but that can be important. Secondly, Eisenstadt: 28 of June 2010 (represented by Arthur Spiegler). In this historic small town (the capital of the Austrian province "Burgenland", former West Hungary), on the basis of a prepared paper (delivered by the head of the Foster Foundation, Mr. Lutgenau) we discussed and elaborated and finally adopted the organisation structure of the "Guiding Principles of Civil Society in the Danube Basin".

The pilot project **GrÜLE**, introducing school pupils to landscape character assessment, was completed in spring 2010 as reported in the last Newsletter. The final step was the presentation of the project and its positive outcome before the official school authority of the province Lower Austria. This proved to be rather disappointing; we had to accept that there is almost no interest from the education officers, who claim that specifics like these cannot be taken into account now and in the future as more and more time of the classes will be devoted to economic topics instead of Geography or even landscape. However, this experience clearly contradicts our experiences when working with the schools. In addition we had a very successful final one day workshop on landscape identification, at the end of June 2010 using the same excursion route that we used with the schools, with participants of the Lower Austrian government and a member of the Austrian Academy of Science.

Ongoing efforts and planning in co-operation with other organizations in preparing the second international meeting on the "**European Landscape Convention and Austria**" which is planned for 11/12 November 2010, following the Florence event in October.

ECOVAST Austria has again been invited to contribute to a special edition of the "**Land & Raum**" on the topic "Learning Regions", related to the "life long learning" process, (text available only in German)

Brigitte Macaria and Arthur Spiegler

CROATIA – A number of activities were undertaken in the last three summer months by members of the Croatian Section. Several conferences and workshops were attended: Niksa Bozic (one of the younger generation members) participated in the **workshop on landscape protection and heritage** organized by Expeditio on 23-25 June 2010 in Kotor, Monte Negro, which inaugurates an international exchange in the region.

Dr. Aleksandar Lukic, a geographer working at the University of Zagreb organized through ECOVAST a field visit in June for his students as part of the **co-operation programme with the Community of Bednja**, where a project on village renewal scheme continues.

Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic presented the work of ECOVAST in general, and her own experience of dry stone heritage in Croatia at 24-31 July **workshop organized by young experts** from a collaborating organization of 'Dragodid' on Ucka mountain at a former pasturing village where the Commune of Moscenice is continuing its revitalization projects, which includes restoring dry stone cottages for tourism use and initiating a 'mythical heritage path' there.

Majda Rubic, who also participated with Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic at the Strasbourg Council of Europe INGOs Session on 21-24 June (more information below) will give a paper at a **conference in September in Poreč** on Traditional Custom of 'Bikijada' (hunting the bull) in a Dalmatian region bordering Hercegovina (B&H), presenting also the work of ECOVAST in Croatia. The core team of the Section led by the President Biserka Dumbovic Bilusic has been successfully developing further organization of the **international conference Landscape of the Hrvatsko-Zagorje Region - Past, Present and Perspectives** (north western part of Croatia) that the Section briefly announced in ECOVAST Report 45. The Conference, being already the third event within the project 'Sustainable Development of Small Towns and their Hinterland in Croatia' (Samobor and Mošćenice conferences), marking the 10th anniversary of the European Landscape Convention as well, will be held in Tuheljske Toplice (Spa) on 21-22 October 2010.

The Conference goals are to stress the importance of landscape, both its cultural and natural constituencies, sustainability and protection, as key elements of spatial identity, but also as a resource for sustainable economic development; defining the role of spatial and urban planning as a crucial interdisciplinary tool in this process, initiating the platform for regulation betterment and also for projects and programmes involving landscape issues development. Conference work will be based on previous experience, and result in intensive knowledge exchange, new knowledge and skills acquisition needed for creative co-operation of all stakeholders involved in landscape planning and managing, exploring different models of ELC implementation and possibilities for trans-border co-operation. The conference will involve public and private sector, regional and local authorities, landscape practitioners and researchers, NGOs, etc. A plenary and five thematic sections, as well as a field trip through neighbouring parts of Croatia and Slovenia are being planned. www.ecovast.hr

Valerija Kelemen Pepeonik

UNITED KINGDOM – The Section has concentrated its activity on the preparations for the Isle of Wight events in October. However, we have been pleased to report a good level of renewals of membership, as well as some new members.

Pam Moore

ECOVAST BIENNIAL ASSEMBLY 2010

The plans for the October events are now finalized, and as I write, we are already receiving bookings. On Friday 15 October there will be an excursion by bus which will take participants to a number of sites of interest, including a farmers' market, a farm which has diversified into other activities, and a working historic watermill. We will meet the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) officer, who will explain the designation, and a group of village residents who have

produced a Village Design Statement to assist in shaping the future of their community. The tour will take in the Island's beautiful landscapes – coast, downs, and picturesque villages. The cost of the trip will be £25 including entry fees, travel and lunch.

On 16 October, there will be an international conference on the theme of “Challenges of Effective Rural Development and Heritage” when papers will be given on a range of topics by speakers local, national and international. The conference fee is £30 for ECOVAST members (£40 for non members) including lunch.

ON Sunday 17 October, our two working groups – Landscape and Rural Architecture – will meet, followed by our Biennial Assembly. Attendance at these is free of charge.

If you have not yet booked for these events, please contact me as soon as possible for further details and a registration form. !

Pam Moore

PROGRESS OF THE ASSET PROJECT (Action to Strengthen Small European Towns)

In the previous newsletter I said that we hoped to participate in events organised by others. Valerie Carter will attend the Action for Market Towns Convention in UK. She has made great progress on a study of towns throughout Europe, their population and typology. Valerie's work complements the results of the questionnaire surveys by Pam Moore. It also augments the Small Towns Register of Austria, presented at Grieskirchen, Austria in 2009 by Dr Gerhard L. Fasching and Sylvia MEYER.

In Potsdam, Brandenburg, Germany on 16 November 2010, we propose that these research findings will be presented to a seminar, organised with the help of Angus Fowler, which will focus on policy for European small towns and pave the way for a final Conference in 2011. Ralf Bokermann will also speak on his publication “Small Towns in Rural Regions” and Arthur Spiegler on historic features of small towns.

Other speakers from Brandenburg and elsewhere in Europe will open discussion, on how to influence policy at regional and European levels; on the role of towns as hubs and service centres; as well as on cultural heritage and quality of design in towns and villages.

If you would like to attend the Potsdam seminar, please contact me for further details – e mail p.turner@semantise.com

Phil Turner

SURE – SUSTAINABLE URBAN AND RURAL EUROPE

ECOVAST President Tihana Fabjancic and Past President Michael Dower attended the climax event of the SURE project, namely a two-day conference in the historic Polish city of Krakow on 20 and 21 May. This was a very lively gathering of over 70 people from 15 countries, focused on one key issue – how to connect citizens, organisations and policies to sustainability.

The outcome was the **Krakow Declaration**, a resounding policy statement which can be found on the SURE Website, www.sure-events.eu. Some flavour of this statement can be gained from the following extracts :

"We are convinced that the world is faced by what has been called *An Inconvenient Truth*, namely that climate change is accelerating; that it is substantially caused by human actions, notably emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases; and that, if the process of climate change is not halted, there will be devastating consequences for the climate and ecosystems of the planet and for humankind.

"We believe that human activity is also making unsustainable demands upon the earth's resources of land, soil, water, minerals and biodiversity

"We support the proposals that have been made for a new paradigm, which is both sustainable and equitable. (This) must embrace radical reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases; radical reduction in use of non-renewable (fossil and nuclear) fuels; a halt to deforestation, particularly of tropical forests; (and) sustainable management of water resources throughout the world. (It must embrace also) a radical shift in the present economic systems, to enable investments of all kinds – public, commercial, non-profit and community-based – to be focused on the creation of sustainable growth in the places and for the people who need it, while eliminating unsustainable external effects."

The Krakow Declaration includes proposals for action by the European Union; national, regional and local governments; commerce and industry; and citizens throughout Europe. It has been placed on the websites of SURE, PREPARE and ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability); and is taken into the ARC process which is described below. I hope that ECOVAST members will find it, read it and consider what it may mean for their actions as citizens, as consumers and as promoters of the ideals that ECOVAST stands for.

<http://ecovast.webs.com/apps/blog/show/4410823-ecovast-supports-sure-and-the-krakow-declaration>

<http://www.preparenetwork.org/web/index.php?pid=5>

Michael Dower

CAP post 2013

Every seven years, at the mid-point in its current programme period, the European Union starts the process of shaping its policies for the next period. We are now at that point in the present cycle, halfway through the 2007 to 2013 period and planning the new policies to come into effect in January 2014.

The programme that most affects the well-being of rural people and the rural heritage, which is ECOVAST's mission, is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), including its so-called 'Second Pillar' which is focused on support to rural development. Over many years, ECOVAST has sought to influence this Policy and how it is implemented, through membership of the EU's Rural Development Advisory Group and in other ways. We believe in the active involvement of citizens and civil organisations. So we were very pleased that the new Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacjan Ciolos from Romania, decided to launch in April a wide debate about the future policy.

This debate attracted an exceptional volume of comment from individuals and organisations. ECOVAST submitted evidence, focusing on the need to protect the cultural heritage and the landscape, to recognise the role of small towns, and to involve people actively in rural development processes. We also joined with Europa Nostra, Eurogites, RED and others in submitting a detailed policy statement about the Cultural Heritage, entitled 'Living Landscapes'. Our evidence can be found on the ECOVAST Website, together with a link to the joint statement. http://www.ecovast.org/english/cap_reform.html

As a climax to the public debate, Commissioner Ciolos convened a major two-day Conference in Brussels on 19 and 20 July, attended by over 600 people representing a wide range of bodies. ECOVAST was represented by Past President Michael Dower, who - in the final plenary session - made a direct plea for the landscape to be treated as a major policy issue, and for small towns (the subject of ECOVAST's ASSET programme) to be given full recognition as focal points of social, cultural and economic life in rural areas.

ECOVAST has offered active support to ARC, the Agricultural and Rural Convention, which has been created as a platform to enable concerned citizens and their organisations to work together in offering ideas on the CAP reform. This cooperation is focused on debate within the ARC Website, www.arc2020.eu. Phil Turner, ECOVAST Past President, is leading a Working Group on Heritage on this Website. ARC presented a first outcome of this work, a Statement of Principles, at the big July Conference. In a four-page statement (the full text of which can be found on the ARC website), it called for :

- A paradigm shift in agriculture, from a dominant European model of intensive industrial farming and a centralised food industry to sustainable farming everywhere and a diversified pattern of regional and local production and processing of food, with closer links between farmers and consumers, and high care for public health and environment.
- An economic renaissance of rural areas, building upon the strength and diversity of communities and cultures and the sustainable use of human and natural resources.

The two key ideas, underlined above, were mentioned in the concluding statements at the Conference. Debate will continue on the ARC website, and in the autumn ARC will offer to the Commission and other European institutions a Communication from Civil Society on the future of the Common Agricultural and Rural Development Policies. Please visit the Website if you would like to take part in the debate. See <http://www.arc2020.eu/pg/groups/1390/european-heritage-landscape-and-people/>

Michael Dower

PREPARE – PARTNERSHIP FOR RURAL EUROPE

ECOVAST is a member of this long-standing partnership, set up in 1999 to strengthen civil society in rural areas, notably in new EU member states and candidate countries, and to promote exchange in rural development. As reported in the last Newsletter, the main focus of PREPARE's current work is on South East Europe, in order to encourage the strengthening of civil society in the rural areas of Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova. We are also building up contacts in Turkey.

Accordingly, the PREPARE Gathering this year will be held 1 to 3 September in Macedonia, near Lake Ohrid, with a focus on 'Networking in Rural Areas'. The aim is to bring together representatives of civil society and of governments, mainly from Central and South-Eastern Europe but also from EU member states.

ECOVAST will be represented by President Tihana Fabijanic and (from our Macedonian group) Victoria Momeva Altiparmakovska.

PREPARE (like ECOVAST) contributed to the public debate on CAP post 2013; is supporting the ARC process; and was represented by its Coordinator Goran Šoster at the Conference in Brussels on 19 and 20 July.

Pam Moore

REPORT FROM STRASBOURG

Summer Session INGOs – OING, Strasbourg, Palais de l'Europe, 21-24 June 2010

The Summer Session of the INGOs group took place in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from Monday to Thursday, 21-24 June 2010. As President of ECOVAST International I participated, together with Majda Rubic from the Croatian Section, at several meetings.

The *Social Cohesion* (Monday, June 21) and *Gender Equality Transversal Group* (Tuesday) focused on eradication of poverty and the involvement of all strata of society, especially women's groups, into actions and decision making at European political and other levels – the connection is through the document of the CE and its Resolution which serves as a guidance to NGOs (www.coe.int/equality). NGO experience is very important in that respect and helps to achieve a better balance in social and gender dialogue (e.g. themes covering women's rights, violence against women and other groups, inter-cultural tensions etc.) not only in Europe but in the whole World (with a stress on Africa).

More interesting for ECOVAST participants was the *Europe and Global Challenges Transversal Group* (Tuesday, June 22), where discussions concentrated on the actuality of this important theme and the necessity to make links with other groups and commissions at European institutions and elsewhere. There was also information on the social consequences of the Lisbon Treaty, where EU 'millennium goals' (now evidently unrealistic) are threatened by an erosion of human and civil rights. The conclusion was that the present world crisis situation could not be resolved by sacrificing social and civil rights (especially in the 'third world' and developing countries, Africa in the first place), but that strong support should be given to the organizations present at this conference and others; all should be aware of the legal instruments of the EU related to social rights (tools made in the last 40 years of European experience).

On Wednesday (June 23) the *Sustainable Territorial Development Committee*, whose Chairman is Anne Marie Chavanon, worked together with the *Civil Society and Democracy Committee* and gathered participant representatives of different organizations which meet regularly (4 times per year) discussing questions of territorial development and human rights. On this occasion the connecting document was the Protocol 3 LU See ink: http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/Articles/OING_Calendar_2010_3.asp

The exceptional crisis period in which we live (poverty, uneasiness, demographic and environmental changes) stresses the need for organized local action and partnership and demands multi-level systems of government (acting more flexibly and efficiently). According to the words of Maguelone Dejeant-Pois (an acknowledged expert on the European Landscape Convention) the Conference of INGOs has contributed to the democratic participation process – and this permanent contact of Governments and NGOs should continue. This is the view of EU politician Alan Meale (a former UK Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment) who understands how important civil society organizations are: 'We in EU Parliament want to work in partnership with you' – he called and invited NGOs to help in preparing debates, resolutions, strategic plans etc.

The echo of this invitation might be seen as an invitation to NGOs to co-operate in the future CAP Policy of the European Commission, where ECOVAST has given its input.

However, there is also a big problem - since much less money is now available for the INGO sessions (next one is due in October 2010) there is also fear that it may mean gradual ending of the NGO meetings which would be a downslope of democratic development in EU ('but the revolution started with the NGOs involvement will not stop!' – a final remark). This is why NGOs

should be more visible in the society, put more effort into projects and speak in a louder voice about their achievements.

Finally, the Chairman Anne Marie Chavanon gave a summary of what has happened since January 26, which was a very special occasion when the Declaration on Biodiversity Protection was signed for the first time by 3 bodies of the Council of Europe (Parliament, Congress and the INGOs - OING) which will have its feedback also at the UN and in other environment agencies in the World.

On the final day (Thursday, June 24) the *Meeting of the Conference of INGOs* (http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/Articles/CONF_PLE_2010_OJ2_en.asp) was organized in Agora building, and was opened by its President Jean-Marie Heydt. The Agenda consisted of the election of a Member of the Bureau of the INGO and between 3 candidates Yulia Zvereva was chosen for the post of Rapporteur; then the discussion was opened on the contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the Reform of the Council of Europe (related to some ideas from the previous day), followed by a discussion on Evaluation of the Conference of INGOs (with filling in of a questionnaire) – which is seen as a common tool for further strategy development clarification of the vision and cost-effective management used in all international organizations (especially in the large NGOs).

Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic, President ECOVAST International
Majda Rubic, Member Croatian Section ECOVAST

EVENTS NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL

August 31 2010, Cork, Ireland, Irish Rural Studies Symposium, see details at following site :
www.ruralstudies.ie/?page_id=214

September 24-28, 2010 International Scientific Practical Conference "Culture of Wood - Wood in Culture", Rostov Velikij, Yaroslavl region, Russia. Organised by The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, Russian Institute for Cultural Research, ECOVAST Russia and ICOMOS. For more information please contact Dr Olga Sevan, e mail ecovast@rambler.ru

September 16-17 2010 – Europa Nostra UK Annual meeting, The Hellenic Centre, London. Details from Dr Lester Borley, e mail lesterborley@waitrose.com

October 1 2010 – Ploiesti, Romania "Landscape – Urbanism- Tourism conference. This conference is organized under the aegis of the European Council- Congress of Local and Regional Powers, by the County Council Prahova and the European Association for implementation of the European Landscape Convention-RECEP ENELC, and in association with ECOVAST Romania. Further information from Magdalena Banu e mail banumagdalen@yahoo.com

October 15-17 2010 ECOVAST Biennial Assembly, Isle of Wight UK more details from Secretary General ECOVAST – pam.moore59@ntlworld.com

October 18-19 2010 - Scientific Conference "Living Landscape – The European Landscape Convention in Research Perspective" to celebrate 10th Anniversary of the European Landscape Convention, Florence. Details from e mail livinglandscape@uniscap.eu

November 11-13 2010 – Canterbury UK, Church Conservation Trust, "Working together for Historic Places of Worship", details from lhockley@cct.org.uk

November 16 2010, Potsdam Germany, ASSET Project seminar, details from p.turner@semantise.com

November 18 – 20 Leipzig, Germany, Denkmal Fair – see http://www.denkmal-leipzig.de/LeMMon/denkmal_web_eng.nsf/

May 13 – 14 2011 ERCA Conference, Berlin. Further details later.

June 2011 Europa Nostra Congress, Amsterdam, more details later.

September 10-13 2011 Europa Nostra UK Annual Meeting, Portsmouth “Defence of the Realm”, more details later.

October 19 – 23 Vienna, “Historic Water supplies, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow” , symposium organized by ECOVAST Austria and others. Contact gilbert.wiplinger@oeai.at for more details and to offer papers