



I have had the pleasure of meeting the German National Section in Crossen at their German General Assembly where they voted in a new German Committee and gave us an interesting tour of the local area around Crossen. I also plan to speak at a Croatian section event in November, just after our International General Assembly and we will be in Austria for that meeting. I hope to meet more members in Vienna.

I have managed to represent ECOVAST at several events: a CIVILSCAPE meeting in Antwerp; a PREPARE Organising Group in Brussels; The ERCA conference in Berlin; and the meeting in Brussels about the future of ARC.

I look forward to meeting other members of ECOVAST during my second year of office. We have been looking at a meeting in 2012 in Hungary to focus on rural buildings and I hope personally to visit Macedonia – although we will not be able to have a meeting there as it has proved too difficult for many members.

I would welcome more reports from the National sections on the work they have been doing in their own countries. I am sure there is a lot going on that we do not hear about and yet would be very interested in and which could go onto our International website, as well as help Pam fill out Newsletters like this with informative articles.

I continue to work on small rural towns, which links into our major ECOVAST project of ASSET. The research work by Pam Moore, Prof Dr Ralf Bokermann, Dr Gerhard Fasching, Andrea Weigert and myself were all presented to the University of Applied Sciences: Fachhochschule, Potsdam in November 2010. During this year I have also carried out another piece of research on my original study of small towns in South East England and this is ready to be submitted. I remain a member of the Board of South East Rural Towns Partnership, and a national forum called Smaller Towns for Tomorrow in England and interest in this work remains a priority with the intention of talking to the Committee for the Regions in Brussels in 2012.

The one thing that has been disappointing is a falling off of attendance at meetings. I fully understand that times are difficult and people cannot afford to travel and we did recognise this and cut the number of International Committee meetings down to one this year rather than two. As most people could not attend we were not able to stage any kind of event to run alongside it either. I know just how difficult financially it can be as most of us are volunteers and I myself was made redundant just before I was elected President and I have not been able to do all I would have liked. An event in Scotland that I was planning to speak at was cancelled at a fairly late stage and the whole team arranging it made redundant too. I have also made several attempts to get in touch with all national sections by email but with little response, sometimes none.

**Valerie Carter, President**

## **REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

As indicated in the reports from our sections, activity tends to be less over the summer. Only now are meetings beginning again, following the break. We are now looking forward to the general Assembly in Vienna next month, and preparations for that are well advanced.

Phil Turner, Angus Fowler and myself all attended the Europa Nostra Annual Congress in Amsterdam in June, so the International Committee was well represented, and several other ECOVAST members were also present. The events included not just the Annual Assembly, but also the splendid Europa Nostra Awards ceremony, a day conference focusing on volunteering, a keynote lecture by the architect David Chipperfield, and a reception at the Royal Palace, where we were honoured to be presented to both HRH Princess Margriet of the Netherlands, and Europa Nostra's new President, Placido Domingo.

A few days ago, our President attended a meeting of the PREPARE Organising Group, and a brief report is to be found later in this Newsletter – we hope to offer an update in the December issue.

By then, Valerie will also have attended the Slovenian Rural Parliament and the Irish Rural Studies Symposium, as well as speaking at an event on small towns hosted by our Croatian Section.

**Pam Moore**

### **OBITUARY - PROFESSOR CHARLES CHRISTIANS 1930-2011**

The death of Charles Christians, at the age of 80, brings to ECOVAST the loss of a warm and convivial friend and a distinguished and versatile academic.

For 50 years, Charles was based in his native region of Wallonie, at the University of Liège, as (successively) student of geography, researcher, head of research, and Professor of Human and Regional Geography. He taught in his own department, in other faculties of that University, at the University of Louvain, the Luxembourg University Foundation at Arlon, and the Luxembourg University Centre. His research focused mainly on agriculture and rural life and development in Wallonie, Belgium and the cross-border regions in France, Luxembourg and Germany. But he had links with researchers and policy-makers in many parts of Europe and other continents.

This experience, and these wide interests, made him a much valued member of ECOVAST. For example, he contributed strongly to our report on 'Agriculture and Forestry in Europe', published in 1995. But his greatest gift to us was as prime organiser of the Pan-European Conference on 'Sustainable rural development in the whole of Europe', held at Worriken in Wallonie in September 2000, the year that he moved into a very active retirement. Jointly sponsored by the University of Liège and ECOVAST, this landmark event (including a cross-border excursion into Luxembourg and Germany) attracted over 100 participants and a remarkable international team of leading speakers, and climaxed with the Worriken Declaration, which guided ECOVAST's contribution to the implementation of Agenda 2000 and the then new EU programme period, including LEADER+.

I remember with great pleasure the detailed exchanges with Charles over the year preceding the Conference; his patience and good humour; the youthful eagerness of his response "Quelle Nouvelles ?" (what news ?) to my telephone calls; his lovely mansion at Louchert, embowered in trees and rose-bushes; and cheerful talk with him and his wife Madeleine. We offer her our loving condolence and remember a splendid man.

**Michael Dower**

### **NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS**

In the period over the summer, vacations always result in a reduction of Section activity. So this time, there are fewer reports than usual....

**AUSTRIA** – There are no really new matters to report, but the continuous proceeding of the regular work. This has included:

Preparation of the international conference on historic water supply systems, Vienna 19 – 23 October, to which the yearly meeting of the General Assembly on Sunday 23 is related. On Monday 24 October, a one day excursion to Graz and the small town Frohnleiten (both Styria) is planned via the historic railway track over the Semmering (World Cultural Heritage) to contact the persons in charge for Europe Nostra Austria. Participants are welcome.

About the tribulation of taking part in a "European project": ECOVAST Austria for the first time was invited in December 2009 by Prof. Gerlind Weber, University of Agriculture, Vienna, to take part as an external partner in the "Green Belt Project" to identify the landscapes of (and around) the hotspots of specific areas along the European Green Belt, and doing so, involve interested local people. The year 2010 passed by to formulate the project, the part of the Viennese University and that of ECOVAST Austria. In the summer the project was approved by the international partners and the authorities in charge. So we thought to start in March 2011. In January we were told that the whole project had a little "hair cut" concerning all partners, and therefore had to be re-evaluated. In April we were told that for the reduced part of ECOVAST Austria there had to be two additional bids and Prof. Weber had to justify why she chose us. This done there emerged a further delay because the partners in charge to select the hot spots could not agree until now on their exact positions. So we cannot start before January 2012(!)

The procedure of organising a trans-border small town symposium with Bavaria related to the country's exhibition of the Austrian province Upper Austria in 2012 is progressing and is being carried out by our Section Secretary General Brigitte Macaria, having roots in Upper Austria. We will report in due time.

**Arthur Spiegler & Brigitte Macaria**

**CROATIA** – Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic tells me that Section activity is at present concentrated on the organisation of their small towns' conference on 11 November to be held in Ivanic Grad (see events Section). Tihana's own work has concentrated on the Danube Strategy Group. She will be representing ECOVAST at their next meeting in October, and we hope to include a report on this next time.

**Pam Moore**

**MACEDONIA** – During the last few months the Section of ECOVAST Macedonia have been engaged in considerable activity. In collaboration with the Local municipality of Bitola and NI Institute for preservation of cultural heritage and Museum - Bitola, at the end of July, the exhibition "Traditional rural architecture in Sub Pelister Region" was organized. In the authentic conserved building Magaza there were exhibited 25 framed posters of rural dwelling houses and economic buildings (photos and technical documentation) that belong to the villages of Bitola and Prespa area. The goal was the promotion of tangible rural heritage, awareness rising for its preservation and stimulating investment in its conservation. During the event four ethnographic films concerning intangible heritage were projected by the ethnologist Danica Dzokic from Pozarevac, Serbia and there was discussion about possible co-operation of our Section with the professionals from Serbia.

Also, a representative from the Section took part in the conference "Promoting eco-tourism" organized by the European Commission's DG Enlargement within the framework of the TAIEX Instruments in Brussels in June this summer.

In these two cases the goal was promoting ECOVAST Macedonia and our activities.

**Victoria Momeva Altiparmakovska**

**UNITED KINGDOM** - The Section has not itself held an event since we hosted the Biennial Assembly and associated activities in October 2010. We hope to organize something for 2012. However, Section members have attended events in the UK where we have been able to publicise ECOVAST, including the Europa Nostra UK Annual Meeting, held this year in Portsmouth on the theme "Defence of the Realm". Shortly before that, we attended a seminar in Blenheim Place Oxfordshire, organized by the Heritage Alliance, on the issues facing rural heritage.

**Pam Moore**

## **ECOVAST GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2011**

The 2011 General Assembly, together with meetings of the two working groups on Landscape and Rural Architecture, will be held at the Hotel Karolinenhof, Vienna on SUNDAY 23 October. There is also an excursion for members on Saturday 22 October. This minibus tour will look at the landscape overlooking Vienna and those in surrounding areas.

Members should have all received an Agenda for the General Assembly; if not please contact me.

**Pam Moore**

## **THE ASSET PROJECT – Action to Strengthen Small European Towns**

Following the success of the seminar in Potsdam late in 2010, we have approached the European Committee of the Regions to work with us to stage an international conference in Brussels, early in 2012.

The Committee of the Regions has invited ECOVAST members to attend the European Congress of Rural Communes Warsaw 20 October 2011

However, that is close to our General Assembly in Vienna on 23 October, and means that International Committee members of ECOVAST will not be able to be there.

<http://pl2011.eu/en/content/european-congress-rural-communes>

You may find information on the ASSET Project on the following websites:

[http://www.dorfwiki.org/wiki.cgi?SmallTowns/The\\_ASSET\\_Project/Draft](http://www.dorfwiki.org/wiki.cgi?SmallTowns/The_ASSET_Project/Draft)

Valerie Carter has added to her study of UK Towns in the South East of England. See the file (UK Typology Study SE Rural Towns 2010 Addendum 2011 Size and f.doc ...) on the ECOVAST DISCUSSION GROUPLY site:

<http://ecovastdiscussion.grouply.com>

[http://ecovastdiscussion.grouply.com/files/folder/11073/fnLZLxqzGOF8tQS-KVWKVwPM7flvRHR5taVMWJ82g0eHLFBL17\\_YFvLcmMyt4\\_GDqtw](http://ecovastdiscussion.grouply.com/files/folder/11073/fnLZLxqzGOF8tQS-KVWKVwPM7flvRHR5taVMWJ82g0eHLFBL17_YFvLcmMyt4_GDqtw)

**Phil Turner**

## **A FEDERAL ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL INITIATIVES**

In 2005 the Federal Association of Regional Movements was founded in Germany. The aim of this association is to represent a large number of regional initiatives at state level. The group will endeavour to lead the key regional sectors together. These are mainly: agriculture and food manufactures, retailing, the catering trade, building crafts, renewable energy, financial services and regional networks. The vast majority of approximately 55 affiliated regional initiatives have shifted the focus to food production based on regional agriculture. A number of these regional initiatives were presented at a conference in Fulda (Hesse) in June 2011. Using the example of a typical organisation, the general goals, the organisation and the products of these regional initiatives were portrayed.

As an example, the initiative "bergisch pur" from the region "Bergisches Land", located east of Cologne, was selected. This region is predominantly mountainous and the agricultural area is primarily used as grassland. General goals of the initiative include:

- networking of farmers and consumers for a range of high quality regional food
- climate protection by shortening transport distances and avoiding import fodder
- active preservation of the landscape
- animal - friendly farming
- co-operation only with regional firms
- consideration of costs without public support.

For the offer of regional food the following enterprises are working together: 11 farmers with cattle – 5 sheep farmers – 5 hunting grounds – 8 bee keepers – 1 pig keeper – 2 egg producers – 1 trout keeper – 1 fruit grower – 1 potato grower – 1 on-farm-processing of milk – 2 juice producers – 1 producer of mineral water.

The processing of agricultural products into food is mainly done by local specialists or directly on farms. Marketing is largely handled on the food retail by regional kiosks being placed in the supermarkets. A total of 80 types of food are offered. The logistics have been handed over to a commercial enterprise.

The management of business plans and financial control of "bergisch pur" is done by engaged volunteers. Supply and sales are steadily expanded with this organisation. This begs the question, at what point the use of volunteers must be replaced by full- time employees. This may be when the range is so diverse that it cannot be reliably marketed by a voluntary management.

**Ralf Bokermann**

## **Second ARC Conference**

For the last 18 months, ECOVAST has been working with other NGOs in the framework of ARC 2020, the Agricultural and Rural Convention, to influence the future EU policies for agriculture and rural development.

Valerie Carter, as President of ECOVAST, was among two hundred people – from NGOs, government, European Parliament and others – who attended ARC's Second Conference in Brussels on 13 July. Held one year on from the European Commission's big Conference of July 2010 on the future CAP, this event was a chance to understand how far the ideas that we and others have expressed have been accepted by the European Institutions, and to consider how civil society can best continue to influence that reform over the next year.

In the morning, a Gathering of ARC network members allowed us to probe key themes – market measures; direct payments to farmers; sustainable farming and greening the CAP; public health and agriculture; global food security and fair trade; and rural development. It became clear that the announcements so far made by the Commission and the Parliament on the future CAP fall far short of ARC's aspirations; and that policies and actions outside the CAP, for example in health, trade and regional development, must relate coherently to those for agriculture and rural development. ARC must continue its activity over the next year, in order to influence the continuing policy debate.

The afternoon Conference, attended by a broader range of people, heard from three invited speakers :

- Jim Harkness, Director of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, from the USA, sketched the policy challenges and attitudes to agriculture and rural development in the United States, in China and in the broad sweep of developing countries. He said that ARC's theme of sustainable farming and locally-based rural development is shared by many

people in these different international settings, and that we could gain much from exchange of ideas with others around the world.

- Tim Lang, Professor of Food Policy at City University, London, made a passionate plea that we, and others who focus on farming and food, should grasp the crucial link between these issues and health. He endorsed ARC's call for a paradigm shift from the present global system based on 'productivism' to one based on sustainability in the total food supply chain, with far greater attention to the links between food quality, diet and health.
- Erik Mathijs, Professor of Agriculture and Food Economics at Leuven University, outlined the findings of his recent report, "Sustainable food production and consumption in a resource-constrained world". He pointed to the dangers of the present productivist paradigm, and outlined the alternative of a 'sufficiency' model, which focuses on the true needs for food and the sustainable ways to meet those needs.

The presentations made by the three speakers appear on the ARC Website, [www.arc20210.eu](http://www.arc20210.eu)

A lively discussion followed, with a focus on the challenges that the new paradigm would pose to people, enterprises and politicians, such as changes in lifestyles, in world trade and aid policies, in power relationships within the food chain and much else. Persuading people to accept such changes may demand the use of fiscal, financial and legal signals, education, information, media coverage and hard political debate.

The final session was addressed by key spokesmen for European Institutions. Dacjan Ciolos, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, thanked ARC and others for active input of ideas for the future policy, and said that "the voice of civil society has been heard". He said that the balance between agriculture and rural development would be retained in the new policy. The support systems for farmers would continue, with equity between member states and between farms of different sizes. There would be simple support for small farms, and for diversified economic activity in rural areas. The LEADER concept would be retained and extended, with clear links between urban and rural areas (a key point which ECOVAST has emphasised) and between the CAP and other EU funds.

Albert Dess, Rapporteur of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, described the tough negotiations between political parties which led to a consensus in the Parliament, broadly supporting the proposals in the Commission's Communication of November 2010. He stressed the Parliament's concern for continuation of CAP funds at the present level; for greening of the farm support system; for simple and effective monitoring, with minimal 'green tape'; and for continued growth in farm productivity.

Marek Sawicki, Polish Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, representing the current EU Presidency, welcomed the role of civil society in the CAP debate. He said that the CAP must be reformed, in order to assure a secure supply of safe food, to raise the average income of farmers and to give them the confidence to invest. There was need for greater equity between countries in the levels of farm support, and increased support for innovation, research and development. Farming must become more energy-efficient, in order to cut carbon emissions. Production of renewable energy offers a source of future income for farmers.

The final discussion brought pleas from the floor for :

- lump-sum support, possibly of 2,500 euros per year, to each small farm
- top-up grants to those who manage permanent grasslands
- clear and enhanced environmental standards on farms
- promotion of healthy diets
- support for capacity-building within civil society at local level, and for application of LEADER principles in a widespread and flexible way

- strengthening of partnership between governments and civil society at European, national, regional and sub-regional levels.

Commissioner Ciolos accepted the need to encourage healthy diets. He is working on ideas to enhance and widen the LEADER approach, so that it can be an effective trigger for innovation and for social and economic renewal. There may be a special focus on LEADER in new accession countries and in regions which have not yet used LEADER; and a fund, administered from Brussels, to support small innovative projects. The Commissioner urged ARC to continue its work, in order to contribute to the debate which will follow the publication of the Commission's legislative proposals for the future CAP.

We understand that this publication will take place on 12 October. A summary of the proposals will be sent to ECOVAST national sections, so that they can take part in the debates, as Member States (individually, and collectively through the European Council) and the European Parliament react to the proposals.

**Michael Dower**

### **PREPARE ORGANISING GROUP – MEETING IN BRUSSELS**

I represented ECOVAST at the PREPARE OG meeting in Brussels 20/21 September. They reported that they had a very successful Gathering in Zlatibor in Serbia and Serbia are now formally members of the Organising Group and attended their first meeting in September. Macedonia are still not yet formal members as the two organisations who applied to join have not agreed to merge with each other – but we only know unofficially, so far. We wait to see what happens now.

The current funding agreement for PREPARE with the USA Mott Foundation ends in 2012.

The PREPARE Gathering in 2012 will be in early summer and could be in Turkey; Bosnia and Montenegro or Albania but a lot of work remains to be done before this is agreed.

**Valerie Carter**

### **EVENTS NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

**October 19 – 23** Vienna, "Historic Water supplies, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow" , symposium organized by ECOVAST Austria and others. Information from Dr Arthur Spiegler

[a.speigler@reflex.at](mailto:a.speigler@reflex.at) or Dr Brigitte Macaria [b.macaria@chello.at](mailto:b.macaria@chello.at)

**November 11**, Ivanic Grad, Croatia, conference is 'Models for Management of Historical Towns Revitalization and Development Processes'. Details at <http://www.ecovast.hr/>

**November 22–25** "Preservation of Cultural Heritage", Moscow, Russia contact [vp@Vvcentre.ru](mailto:vp@Vvcentre.ru)

**December 6** – Irish Rural Studies Symposium, Dublin, contact David Meredith

**May 28 – June 2 2012** Europa Nostra Congress Lisbon, Portugal – more information in January Newsletter. Also <http://www.europanostra.org/past-events/190/>

**November 22-24 2012** Denkmal - European Trade fair for Conservation, Restoration & Old Building Renovation Leipzig, Germany