

REPORT of the PRESIDENT

Hello from your new President !

First of all I would like to thank you for your support on my election. I am immensely pleased to take on this new role and hope I can do it justice. As many of you already know I have been made redundant from my last job. The new government in the UK has decided to abolish Regional Development Agencies in England and I am one the first batch to go ! I shall now be devoting my time to working in a voluntary capacity on ECOVAST work and the European Rural University where I serve on the Council of Administration. I also remain on the Board for the South East Rural Towns and a Regional Rural Research Partnership. I have also been asked to serve on a national advisory group in England on the 'Future of Smaller Towns' – I don't think I will be any less busy than before !

I know I have met many of you before, either at ECOVAST International gatherings or at the conference I organised with ECOVAST Austria and the region of Lower Austria in Retz in 2005, but I would like to meet as many of you as possible during my next two years as your President.

I am fully aware that times are hard where salaries and pensions are being cut and many people are losing their jobs and that is costly to travel. However, I do hope we will be able spread our meetings across Europe so that as many people as possible can attend over the next 2 years. I will be asking different Sections to look at whether it would be possible to host Committee Meetings or a General Assembly.

I would also like to look at the possibility of using the International Committee meetings to meet local members of their section so that they can tell us what they have been doing. I know that lot of valuable work is being done in each country but it is always a good idea to meet people face to face.

Our international voice on the pan European stage is very important to us and I know will you continue to make our point of view heard and understood, as I shall too. We have a large number of members and a vast range of rural interests and various bodies in Europe do seek our opinions. To that end, it would help if we could complete and update our membership lists. Whilst names of members will remain confidential within ECOVAST, we do need to be able to report to Europe on the strength and depth of interests to give real credibility to our international voice. A big thank you to all Section representatives who have sent your updated membership lists to Pam, but for those who have not done so could you please send her your list as soon as possible.

As you know ECOVAST International are interested in keeping an eye on the Rosie Montana gold mine in Romania and I was going to Brussels to an updating event arranged by Europa Nostra. However, I was prevented by the snow and could not even get to the Eurostar station! Papers from that meeting are available for anyone who is interested. I attended a Civilscape meeting in Antwerp in December, as ECOVAST International is a member of their Board. The UK section has joined them as a new Associate member (no fee needed) and that will allow them to use networks in the UK who are interested in landscapes issues.

I would also welcome any ideas from you, and I look forward to working with you for the next two years.

Valerie Carter, International President ECOVAST

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

The organisation of the Isle of Wight events has precluded a great deal of other activity this Autumn, but since the last Newsletter, Phil Turner and I have given a paper at the Irish Rural Studies Symposium in Cork, Ireland in August, on the impact of CAP Reform on the Heritage, and attended a meeting in Brussels of the DG Agri Rural Development Advisory group (see report elsewhere). At the time of writing, we are about to go to Brussels again for another CAP Reform related meeting organised by DG Agri.

Otherwise, tasks have been confined to general admin, such as website updates, and advising the authorities of the new ECOVAST Officers following the Assembly.

Pam Moore

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

AUSTRIA – We have to report negative results of the negotiations with “our” department of the Lower Austrian Government (Section for spatial planning and landscape) about any way of funding ECOVAST Austria. Up to now, it is the same with other possible partners (concerning the Danube Strategy, the region “Centropo”, the TEN network and others). However, we have positive signals of funded co-operation (partner) of the “IRUB” at the University of Life Science (Boku) in Vienna, concerning their taking part in the European project “Green Belt”. First talks will start in January 2011. Further development will be reported.

The Section took part in the “Prahova Conference” on the invitation of our Romanian section with Arthur Spiegler presenting. We have offered further collaboration, and now are waiting for their response to these proposals.

ECOVAST Austria was also present at the “Zagorie Conference” at the invitation of the Croatian national section. There was a striking similarity in the aim of the meeting compared to the earlier Prahova conference: Landscape (identification in behalf of the whole country) and regional development. An ongoing process from this meeting was envisaged for 2011.

We also took part at the “Potsdam Conference” on the ASSET project in November, when Arthur Spiegler and Gerhard Fasching presented papers on “The Essence of Small Historic Towns” and the meanwhile advanced “Small Town Register of Austria”. Finally, in December Arthur took part at the “Power Down Conference” in Vienna, co-organized by Franz Nahrada’s G.I.V.E. group.

Arthur Spiegler & Brigitte Macaria

CROATIA - A Croatian Section delegation participated with four of its members at the ECOVAST Biennial Assembly and conference 'Challenges of Effective Rural Development and Heritage', 15-17 October 2010 on the Isle of Wight, England. The team included Section's President Biserka Dumbovic Bilusic and its Secretary Valerija Kelemen Pepeonik as well as Majda Rubic from the Croatian Ministry of Regional Development and Tihana Stepinac Fabijanac in the role of President ECOVAST International (now Vice President) who besides other organizational duties also gave a presentation on the problems of development of European islands in comparison with the situation in Croatia. The team found the whole event very useful and inspiring, including visiting of sites of interest and meeting local communities.

Soon afterwards, on 21-22 October 2010 the Section successfully organized an international conference and workshop 'Landscape of the Hrvatsko Zagorje Region – Past, Present and Perspectives' in Tuheljske Toplice (Spa), North-western part of Croatia. The Conference, building on experience of the neighbouring countries Slovenia and Austria, was the third event within the

project 'Sustainable Development of Small Towns and their Hinterland in Croatia' (after the Samobor 2007 and Moscenice 2009 conferences).

Finally, on 10 December 2010 the Annual Assembly of the Croatian Section was held in Marija Bistrica, a well known pilgrimage centre to the North of Zagreb, where Biserka Bilusic was elected as President for another two years period, while the post of the Secretary was given to Mr. Niksa Bozic, one of the active members of the younger generation (you can see his design and arrangement of the web page www.ecovast.hr with links to our international pages and to other organizations). Discussion was also organized with members of the regional and local community related to rural development and heritage protection themes. The meeting with some 30 participants ended in a local hotel with a feast of traditional delicacies and lively music from the local saxophone quartet – for a good start of the New Year! Hopefully with Croatia in EU...

Tihana Stepinac Fabijanac

GERMANY - Represented by Irmelin Küttner and Angus Fowler the Section has developed its links with the group on Brandenburg Villages, organized by Prof. Kurt Krumbach, (Rosa-Luxembourg Foundation) taking part in various meetings in Berlin. This group which is closely involved with other national groups working on villages (for instance in Sweden) will be organizing an international conference on Villages in Berlin in May 2011 and we hope that ECOVAST will be well represented

A particular useful link was forged by participation at a conference organized by the German Federal Ministry for Transport, Building and Urban Development in June 2010 in Berlin on the new programme and initiative on small and middle sized towns being organized by the Ministry. This Ministry addressed a programmatic greeting to the ECOVAST meeting in Potsdam on 16th November 2010. The Section was particularly involved in the preparation of this event and also well represented at the meeting which took place at the Fachhochschule Potsdam where we found interest and a new possible ally. Unfortunately the Federal State of Brandenburg could not be represented as the responsible ministry could not decide which of its divisions should represent it! Information on the workshop can be found elsewhere.

The German Section was well represented at the AGM and events of the International Organization ECOVAST on the Isle of Wight mid October 2010. Irmelin Küttner has put together her pictorial impressions of the island and the events on a CD. The Section, once again, together with Europa Nostra, organised and presented a combined stand at the Monument Fair in Leipzig in November 2011 which was well attended.

Angus Fowler participated for the German Section in the conference on wooden architecture organized by the Russian Section of ECOVAST in Rostov Veliki (the Great), north-east of Moskau, in meetings in Berlin on solar energy and historic buildings, on energy saving, insulation and historic buildings. He has helped organize a German national conference on village churches which takes place in Marburg in April 2011.

Angus Fowler

MACEDONIA - In November 2010 we took part in a Slovakian national conference of the CITIES project in Bratislava. I tried to meet Lubica Pincikova, but she was out of the town due to professional engagements.

At the end of December in Ohrid, ICOMOS was organized the conference and celebration of the 30 anniversary of inscribing Ohrid on the list of UNESCO. As a member of ICOMOS and ECOVAST I took part also.

twinning Now, ECOVAST Macedonia with representatives of three local municipalities is preparing for the final conference of the CITIES project (Creativity and Innovation in Town-twinning Initiatives in Europe and South-eastern Europe) in Dordrecht, Netherlands in the middle of January. This Conference will be organized in 6 workshops. The workshop Twinning through cultural heritage exchanges, Urban planning in town - and twinning through business/private

sector exchanges at local level I find as very interesting. The aim of this project and conference is revitalization and creating town-twinning relationships through innovative methods in Europe. More details after the conference.

Victoria Momeva Altiparmakovska

ROMANIA - In October, ECOVAST Romania participated as co-organizer in arranging a special Conference: "Landscape, City Planning, Tourism" and the Role of Local and Regional Authorities Responsibilities for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention, organized by the Council of Prahova County with the support RECEP-ENELC ("European Network of Local and Regional Authorities for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention") under the aegis of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. At the conference, Calin and Manuela Hoinarescu presented their work „Case Study: Prahova County - Application of the European Landscape Convention in Romania". The Section invited international ECOVAST members, and Arthur Spiegler from ECOVAST Austria spoke about "Landscape Identification: A Guide to Good Practice" and "The Landscape Fund of Lower Austria". The Section has continued other work, reported earlier, in a number of locations, although much of their work is in Prahova County. (Edited from notes received from **Magdalena Banu**)

RUSSIA - In September, members of Russian ECOVAST and the Russian Institute for Cultural Research – RIC, with support from the Ministry of Culture RF, Russian Foundation for Basic Research and the State Museum "Rostov the Great" organized the International Conference "CULTURE OF WOOD – WOOD IN CULTURE". On the site <http://ecovast.ru/novosti.htm> can be seen : Programme of the conference; Conference proceedings (PDF); Conference report (PDF); Conference decision (PDF); Remarks and suggestions concerning the conference; Conference in Mass-media; Photos of the Conference; Rostov the Great through the architect's eyes.

Dr. Olga Sevan took part in the international conference in China "International Wood Culture Symposium on ancient wood preservation, restoration and ancient wood cultural industry" took place in Yangling, Shaanxi Province from 23 – 24 October 2010. The event was sponsored by International Wood Culture Society (IWCS), co-organized by Northwest A & F University and IWCS China branch and supported by IUFRO Division. More than 80 representatives from 11 countries attended from domestic and overseas organizations of research and education, literature and art, industry, culture relic's preservation and management, local industry and other related departments. This meeting is the fifth thematic seminars on wood culture held in China by International Wood Culture Society.

In September, our lovely friend and member of ECOVAST Olga Urikova died suddenly. Our colleagues from European ECOVAST will also remember her. She was a very active person and real actor in rural areas, and was the chief for many years of Cultural Centre "Devichye pole" in the city Kolomna. She organized a lot of seminars, festivities, workshops for rural people, children, developed tourism etc. and opened the site <http://www.devpole-kolomna.ru/gal.htm>. We miss her a great deal.

Olga Sevan

UNITED KINGDOM – The UK Section has primarily been occupied by the preparation for the Biennial Assembly and associated events – see below. However, Pam Moore and Phil Turner were still able to attend the Europa Nostra UK events in London in September – including the Duncan Sandys Memorial Lecture and an excellent day conference entitled "Monuments and Memories: valuing the tangible and intangible heritage of diverse communities". We look forward to further collaboration with our friends in EN UK on 2011, through their Portsmouth Conference and events.

Pam Moore

INTRODUCING ALBANIAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNES – OUR NEW MEMBERS TELL US ABOUT THEMSELVES.....

Mission:

The mission of the Association is: *" to protect local authorities, to represent interests of communes and to influence in the process of decentralisation according to European Chart of Local Authorities, to develop communities, to protect human rights especially in rural areas of Albania, to promote children and women's rights in villages."*

What is AAC?

Albanian Association of Communes (AAC) is a non profit organisation established in 1997. Its Members are the commune Mayors, representing the communes. It has a constituency of 308 members (there are 308 communes in Albania).

What are AAC goals?

- Defend the common interests of Albanian communes to reach democratisation and decentralisation in Local Government
- Establish direct links and institutionalise the relations with the country's Parliament and central Government to make them principal actors in drafting decentralising policies.
- Represent the Albanian communes' interests in relations with different Albanian and Foreign Institutions within and outside the country
- Enable discussion of common problematic issues in association forums in order to find practical solutions
- Help to exchange the best experiences and practices among communes
- Facilitate and promote contacts of communes with partner organisations abroad, aiming at exchanging information and developing joint programs and projects
- Perform different services to Members by offering training and
- Qualifications' activities for commune decision making bodies and commune administration

What can AAC offer?

AAC is developing a set of activities to fulfil its goals:

- Different info days meeting, round tables, workshops and seminars with AAC Members to better know AAC and train Members
- Organising round tables and seminars with major representatives from Parliament and from line ministries to discuss issues of local governance
- Publishing a quarterly bulletin entitled "The forum of Communes"

- Carrying out polls and surveys on main common problems that AAC members have
- Sensitising the public opinion through mass media on issues and topics of particular interest for communes

AAC capacity strengthening

Through large support from SIDA, the Swedish International Development Agency, AAC is embarking on a programme of strengthening its capacities in the following fields:

1. Strengthening AAC representative power among its Members
2. Providing permanent offices for AAC
3. Creating a system for self financed activities
4. Strengthening AAC representative capacities and its advocate role
5. Improving AAC services to members
6. Creating an efficient system to disseminate information

ECOVAST BIENNIAL ASSEMBLY 2010

For the first time in our 26 year history, ECOVAST held its Annual Assembly events in the UK, and the location chosen was the Isle of Wight. The events took place over a three-day period. An excursion on Friday 15 October, took a group of 30 right across the island with morning calls at Newport Farmers' Market, and Briddlesford Lodge Farm, where the Isle of Wight AONB Officer, Fiona Hanna, explained the AONB designation, and two of the farm's owners answered questions on its activities.

Lunch was taken at The Sun Inn, Calbourne, enabling participants from a number of countries to sample a typical English roast dinner. A walk to Winkle Street followed, and then a visit to Calbourne Watermill, where the group had the opportunity to see the stoneground flour being produced.

The last part of the excursion comprised a tour of West Wight, travelling across to Freshwater Bay, and then back through Brook, Mottistone and Brighstone, before the final stop at Chale, where local people described their work to prepare a Village Design Statement for the settlement and the parish plan.

On the following day, more than forty people attended an international conference at Ventnor Botanic Gardens, on the topic "Challenges of Effective Rural Development and Heritage". Proceedings began with a keynote speech by the Chairman of the Commission for Rural Communities, Dr Stuart Burgess, and this was followed by a presentation on "LEADER Projects on the IOW" by Graham Biss, Chief Executive, IOW Natural Enterprise, and David Langford, Regional Director of the Country Landowners and Business Association. They presented ECOVAST with two fine engraved wooden plaques, produced through the LEADER funded Wood Works Wight project.

During the second part of the morning, Valerie Carter, former Rural Director of SEEDA talked about the agency's work on the island, and the morning session concluded with an international case study on Croatia and the particular problems faced by islands, delivered Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic, the President of ECOVAST. After lunch, Malcolm Groves presented The Chale Project, which is part of the Sustainability for the Isle of Wight initiative, and then Professor Michael Dower, former Director of the Countryside Commission, addressed the issues facing the European Union in formulating policy for the period after 2013.

The last part of the conference was devoted to workshops on "Delivering Integration in Rural Development Programmes" led by Rebecca Frost, Programme Manager, UK National Rural Network and RDPE Network, Commission for Rural Communities, "Specific problems faced by islands" with Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic the President of ECOVAST facilitating, and "Heritage and the impact of CAP Reform" under the leadership of John Sell, the Executive Vice-President of Europa Nostra.

ECOVAST's final day of events, on 17 October, was devoted to internal working groups and a Biennial Assembly, again held at the Ventnor Botanic Garden, an idyllic setting which was very popular with delegates. A new President – Valerie Carter from the UK, was elected, with two Vice-Presidents – Past President, Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic from Croatia, and Dr Arthur Spiegler from Austria. Pam Moore remains as Secretary General and Andrea Weigert was elected as Treasurer. Other Committee members were re elected.

During their time on the island, many of the visitors managed to see other areas and enjoyed what that the Isle of Wight has to offer. For many it was their first time on the island, but all were enthusiastic about its charms, and will undoubtedly spread word of its attractiveness.

Pam Moore

SMALL TOWNS SEMINAR, POTSDAM

On 16 November 2010, eighteen people, ECOVAST members and others, from Germany, Austria, UK and Poland, attended a seminar at the Fachhochschule (University of Applied Sciences), Potsdam, Germany on the topic of European Small Towns. Held under the auspices of the ECOVAST Project 'Action to Strengthen Small European Towns (ASSET)', event was organised by Angus Fowler of the German ECOVAST Section and Phil Turner of the UK ECOVAST Section.

The 3 purposes of the seminar were to:

- To report progress of the ASSET project of ECOVAST
- To discuss policies for small towns in Europe, member states and regions
- To arrive at recommendations for a major European Conference on Small Towns in 2011

Poster displays on various research reports included:

- Work by Professor John Shepherd of Birkbeck College, University of London, on the development of a strategic database for small towns in England
- Information from Steffen Maretzke of the Federal Institute for research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development and the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development and also from the Brandenburg Ministry of Infrastructure
- Dirk Michaelis showcased the region of Altmark, Sachsen-Anhalt
- Activity on small towns by the ECOVAST Croatian Section.

- Copies of the New Wittstock Declaration 2008 by ECOVAST Germany, the Brandenburg Chamber of Architects and the Municipality of Wittstock/Dosse

The morning session was a series of **presentations on research** that has been carried out by ECOVAST and others. **Phil Turner** introduced the conference and the aims and objectives of the ASSET project and gave an overview of the progress of the work on small European towns in Germany, Croatia and the United Kingdom. He referred to the real policy gap in European policy concerning small towns as the current emphasis is on urban areas and rural area, peripheral areas, mountains and islands.

The first presentation was by **Valerie Carter**, the President of ECOVAST, about her research during 2010 on towns with a population above 10,000, regarded in the UK as the minimum level at which towns provide a good range of functions for their surrounding hinterlands. The study highlighted that more than 77 million people across Europe lived in small towns – between 10,000 and 30,000. This evidence should be a lever to persuade Europe to develop policies for smaller towns and small towns should be encouraged to work together to press these arguments.

Andrea Weigert (ECOVAST Treasurer) made an intervention on work that had been carried out in Schleswig-Holstein, in Germany

Dr Gerhard Fasching from ECOVAST Austria reported on the work that he and Silvia Mayer had undertaken. They have now completed a database of all small towns in Austria and a Small Towns Register has been set up. It lists what assets each town has. This Register can now be used by towns in Austria for a wide range of purposes.

Pam Moore (Secretary General of ECOVAST) reported on her research aspect of the ASSET project, since 2006, when a questionnaire was devised to gather a wide range of information about Europe's small towns. It addressed such topics as governance, population definitions and the levels of support operative in different states, and also sought to ascertain the principal challenges faced. A second questionnaire, on the effects of the economic downturn, was completed by contacts from more than a dozen countries. There is now a proposal for a third phase of research, which will commence early in 2011, to seek more in depth information on governance, on involvement in community led planning and the role played by local businesses in helping to encourage the vitality of small towns, and the stimulate their role as "hubs".

Professor Dr Ralf Bokermann, from ECOVAST Germany, described his published work on German small towns (up to 7000 inhabitants) in different types of rural areas, covering analysis of features and problems as well as implementation of local action areas. Since 1972 (in eastern Germany since 1992) there had been a focus on local government, public and private infrastructure in small towns and surrounding villages. This strengthened rural micro-regions as centre points. Since about 1990, there had been an increasing tendency of migration and massive job losses. Small towns had little in-migration.

Dr Arthur Spiegler, of ECOVAST Austria, gave a presentation on the characteristics of historic towns in Austria. The characteristic elements of small towns were illustrated, as handed down from their long lasting history and their current role. They had a part to play in the future of regions and landscapes of Europe.

A **Workshop Session** in the afternoon was chaired, in turn, by Valerie Carter (President ECOVAST); Phil Turner (ECOVAST UK Section); and Angus Fowler (ECOVAST Germany). This looked at the programmes and policies in Europe on small towns and what should be the next steps taken after the end of this seminar in Potsdam. Valerie welcomed everyone to this second

session. A message was then read out from **Prof. Dr.-Ing.Hagen Eyink**, Head of rural infrastructure, cultural landscapes at the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development, Berlin.

Phil introduced the topic of urban and rural integration and co-operation - What are the policies for small towns in Europe, member states and regions? He pointed to some recent examples, at European, national and sub-national levels, of attempts to address the policy gap which has been obvious for some years. Small towns are rarely featured in policies. Larger cities have policies to support them because they have the strongest economic opportunities, larger numbers of voters within their boundaries and more concentrated social problems.

Jörg Gehrman, Mayor of Wittstock an der Dosse, Brandenburg spoke of the German National Programme for Small and Medium Sized Towns: an appreciation of that programme and its benefits from the point of view of the mayor of a participating town (i.e. bottom-up). A sound economic structure, with business tax income, is essential for the future of the town and its surrounding settlements. In the global financial crisis the way forward is to keep the companies Wittstock has, rather than attract new ones and to plan for the longer term.

The municipality has a population 15,500, some 5,000 in the core town. A programme for urban development funding is important and there is a need for this to be linked to an integrated rural development strategy for the 25 villages and the urban settlements. In 2005 the 'middle centre status' had been withdrawn from Wittstock and it now shares functions with other towns. This is having an impact on the services in his town and they are fighting hard to maintain them. Governance is enhanced by joint working with neighbouring municipalities, notably Pritzwalk, pooling functions to improve delivery, without merging political entities or staffing. Retaining the identity of places is essential. Villages are linked to the 'metropole' or 'mother town' - "decentralised concentration".

Ms. Kathleen Bierbaß, from the Working Group "Towns with historic centres" of the State of Brandenburg, spoke about the quality of development in small towns in Brandenburg. Kathleen explained the Federal funding programme "Städtebaulicher Denkmalschutz" (Urban Monument Protection). This had involved inter-municipal co-operation in Brandenburg, covering the smallest town (Lenzen 2,381 population) to Potsdam (1.5 million population). Her presentation generated discussion on the quality of new building in historic areas.

Valerie Carter opened discussion with the notion that hubs must have a hinterland. **Angus Fowler** drew attention to the distinction between a hub and a core. Gerhard Fasching, as a geographer, perceived the town and surroundings, the town having a radial impact. Ribbon development was to be avoided, as had been successful in France and Switzerland. **Dirk Michaelis** considered that small towns had been ignored, but there had been a focus on villages.

Irmelin Küttner described a visit to a Baltic coast town, where there had been successful investment in the seaside promenade and street furniture. A woodland fringe had a cycle path. Large villas had been maintained without changes to their facades. Parking spaces for visitors had been inserted discretely. New hotels and a new colonnade for small retail premises had been created. There was a range of goods and services for people with different financial capacity.

Frau Menz, of the Brandenburg Chamber of Architects, considered that young companies sometimes found that older buildings in urban areas were limited in space, and a rural environment was favoured. For architects, the dream was the right client in the right building in the right area. Clusters of enterprises, such as artists and other creative industries had potential for sharing of support services and joint marketing. Gerhard urged mutual help amongst neighbours. He saw church buildings as purveyors of culture, and castles and palaces as sub-

regional centres – a magnet for identity. In the past the wealthy families had great influence. Who were to be the champions of today? Former Managing Directors? One from an agricultural company in Austria has a grasp of a whole region.

For the concluding discussion, on the way ahead, Valerie Carter outlined three actions for the future work of the ASSET Project:

1. Further research phases of the work by Pam Moore and herself.
2. A conference in Brussels, hosted by the EU Committee of the Regions, and involving the European Commission (DG Regio and DG Agri).
3. Involvement in finding international partners for an INTERREG IV project with UK South East Rural Towns Partnership as Lead partner, supported by UK Hampshire County Council.

A full report of the discussion and proposals for future activity generated at the Seminar will be available on the ECOVAST website:

<http://www.ecovast.org>

A version can also be seen, with slide presentations at

http://www.dorfwiki.org/wiki.cgi?SmallTowns/The_ASSET_Project/Draft#December2010

And also, with synopses and papers at:

<http://ecovastdiscussion.grouply.com/message/24>

Phil Turner

RURAL VITALITY FEATURED AT PUBLIC GOODS SEMINAR 10 DECEMBER 2010 IN BRUSSELS

By invitation, many attended this one-day event, but few others from the Rural Development Advisory Group. PREPARE, as a participant in the European Network for Rural Development Coordination Committee, had received an early invitation, so I represented them, and as travel expenses were not offered by the European Commission, I used Air Miles for a Eurostar ticket from London.

For some months I have been following the topic of 'Public Goods' related to the revision of the Common Agricultural Policy, and ECOVAST made a statement at the RD Advisory meeting in March 2010 :

<http://ecovast.webs.com/apps/blog/show/3517868-secretary-general-of-ecovast-speaks-at-dg-agri-advisory-committee>

Loretta Dormal-Marino, Deputy Director-General, European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development has said: *...Public goods are things of benefit to the public which cannot be bought in the Marketplace. Matters such as the health and quality of the rural environment and the countryside, as well as the viability and vibrancy of rural areas, are clearly vital interests for society as a whole. Indeed, these things are not easily delivered through markets, and therefore policy must step in to fill the gap. Otherwise the supply of these public goods will be systematically low, and in some cases may dry up almost completely. Clearly, then, rural development policy is a vital player in the delivery of public goods in rural areas..*

Martin Scheele of DG AGRI, and chair of the ENRD Thematic Working Group 3 "Public Goods and Public Intervention" conducted the seminar.

At the seminar, the output of TWG3 was shared and discussed, with many opportunities for interventions from the audience. I did not speak out, because Steve Trow, English Heritage (UK), was on the top table for the closing session, to make a short presentation on cultural landscape and built heritage in rural areas as public goods, referring to the paper he had authored for ECOVAST, Europa Nostra and archaeologists entitled "Europe's Living Landscapes" which had been submitted to the Commission and may be downloaded from the ARC2020 site at: <http://www.arc2020.eu/elgg/pg/groups/1390/european-heritage-landscape-and-people/>

All the presentations at the December 2010 seminar, a Brochure and the December 2010 Final Report of TWG3, may be downloaded from: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/enrd-seminars/en/public_goods_seminar_en.cfm

David Baldock's presentation, explaining the concept of 'public goods' was a useful introduction. Prof Allan Buckwell's paper and helpful interventions throughout the seminar were illuminating. Mark Redman's description of semi-subsistence farming in the Sibiu/Brasov area of central Romania was well received by many at the seminar. There were many references in the papers and in discussion, to 'Rural Vitality'

Scope of the work of TWG3 demonstrates an integrated approach to rural development – social, economic, environmental and cultural. For PREPARE and ECOVAST, it was reassuring to see in the Final Report (5.2) that Social Effects – Improving Social and Human Capital – are relevant in the context of environmental land management. However, rural public goods are not seen as exclusively environmental.

Earlier, in November, Pam Moore and I were at the RD Advisory meeting in Brussels. I was also at the two-day conference of ARC2020 Brussels, hosted by the Committee of the Regions, during the process of finalizing a communication to DG AGRI, on behalf of NGOs, on rural development and agriculture. This may be found at :<http://www.arc2020.eu/elgg/> That will be used, before the deadline of 25 January for an ECOVAST response to the Commission's consultation document on "The Reform of the CAP Towards 2020" . http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/consultation/index_en.htm

Phil Turner

CAP post 2013

In the September Newsletter, we reported that ECOVAST contributed actively, in the first half of 2010, to the public consultation on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy. We 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 joined with Europa Nostra, Eurogites, RED and others in submitting a detailed policy statement about the Cultural Heritage, entitled 'Living Landscapes'. We were represented, and spoke, at the major two-day Conference in Brussels convened by the European Commissioner in mid-July, attended by over 600 people representing a wide range of bodies.

During the period up to July, we also offered active support to **ARC, the Agricultural and Rural Convention**, which had been created as a platform to enable concerned citizens and their organisations to work together in offering ideas on the CAP reform. Phil Turner, ECOVAST Past President, led an ARC Working Group on Heritage. Since then, ECOVAST's interests have been reflected in ARC's continuing activity. In July, ARC published a Statement of Principles, calling for a paradigm shift in agriculture and an economic renaissance of rural areas. In the following months, there was intense debate among the wide range of non-government organisations within the ARC Network, in order to agree the wording of an ambitious 'Communication from Civil

Society on the future of the Common Agricultural and Rural Development Policies'. This was finalised at a two-day ARC Conference in Brussels in early November, and formally submitted to the Commission and other European institutions on 18 November, the same day that the Commission published its own Communication.

The full text of the ARC Communication can be found – in English, French and German – at the ARC Website <http://www.arc2020.eu/> ECOVAST is among over 80 organisations which have formally signed this document.

We have now entered the next stage in this process. The European Commission has launched a further round of public consultation, prior to publishing its legislative proposals in mid-2011**. ECOVAST and many other organisations within the ARC Network will be responding to this. ARC will be represented by Michael Dower (ECOVAST Past President) at the official hearing of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament on the future of the CAP scheduled for 26 January 2011. ARC aims to give more detail to the policies stated in the ARC Communication, and to spread its message to all decision-makers in governments and Parliaments of the Member states as well as in Brussels. In these ways, we hope to achieve real change in the policies for agriculture and rural development.

**The Commission's Consultation Document and Questionnaire can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/consultation/index_en.htm

Michael Dower

PREPARE – PARTNERSHIP FOR RURAL EUROPE

One hundred participants from 20 European countries gathered at PREPARE GATHERING 2010, which was held from 30th August to 3rd September in Ohrid (Republic of Macedonia). Throughout the Gathering, which discussed two main topics – **Networking in Rural Areas** and **Common Agriculture Policy Reform after 2013** – new interesting ideas were generated, new friends and partnerships were formed and everyone in attendance gained new knowledge on sustainable development of rural areas. ECOVAST was represented by our then President, Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic.

Representatives of PREPARE Network recently met with old and new leaders of the ELARD Network (www.elard.eu) and agreed to launch some common activities. In the near future both networks will check their capacities for the common project in the field of rural development.

The fifth LEADER sub-committee took place on 12th November 2010 in Brussels. Four thematic working groups gave the reports from their two years work. Representative of PREPARE suggested to arrange the separate scheme for LEADER programme in the future and pledged for constructive dialogue with national Managing Authorities to simplify the LEADER administration. More on the event can be found at enrd.ec.europa.eu

Pam Moore

GLOBAL BEE EMERGENCY

Urged by Tihana, and aware of the vital role of bees in pollination of crops and other vegetation in the landscape and the place of honey in local rural produce, I signed the following petition in my name and that of ECOVAST:

"To US and EU decision-makers:

We call on you to immediately ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides until and unless new

independent scientific studies prove they are safe. The catastrophic demise of bee colonies could put our whole food chain in danger. If you act urgently with precaution now, we could save bees from extinction.”

Phil Turner

EVENTS NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL

February 17– 18 2011, Ancona, Italy. See eaae-seminar.univpm.it The Seminar focuses on the evaluation of agricultural and rural policies, its methodology and practical experiences, with specific attention to the challenges raised by new emerging objectives of agricultural and rural policies in developed countries. Though the Seminar does not limit its focus on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), still both pillars of the CAP and their recent evolution are exemplary of the need for robust evaluation approaches and promote policy evaluation as a scientific.

April 5-8, Dubrovnik “Energy Management in Cultural heritage Buildings”, conference. More information from dubrovnik2011ee@undp.hr.

May 13 – 14 ERCA Conference, Berlin. More information available from Prof. Dr. Kurt Krumbach e mail krumbach@rosalux.de

June 8-11 Europa Nostra Congress 2011, Amsterdam, more details at www.europanostra.org

September 10-13 Europa Nostra UK Annual Meeting, Portsmouth “Defence of the Realm”, more details from lester.borley@waitrose.com

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