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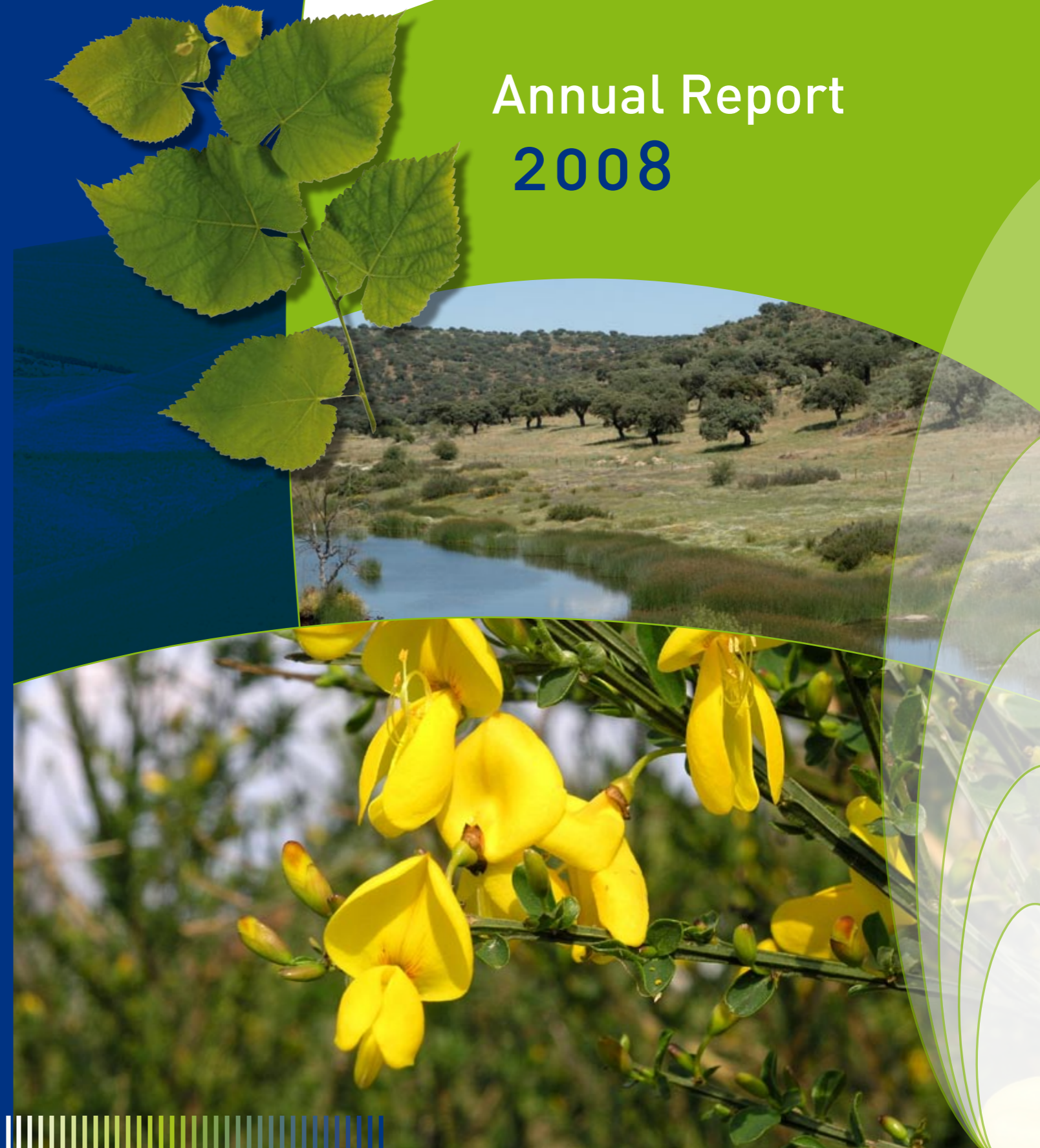
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15 years
of working
for a
Beautiful
Europe



Annual Report 2008



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This annual report can be downloaded from www.ecnc.org/publications/annualreport, where you will also find more detailed information on inter alia ECNC's projects in 2008.

Messages

Message from ECNC's President and Executive Director

In 2008 ECNC marked the 15th anniversary of its establishment. We celebrated this memorable occasion throughout the year, not by organizing large meetings, but by putting the emphasis on the people of ECNC. It is the people of ECNC who are behind its successful 15 years of existence and ensure that ECNC is more dynamic and vigorous than ever.

The people of ECNC came together in an appealing and stimulating mission, or perhaps we should say, dream: the conservation and sustainable use of Europe's nature, biodiversity and landscapes for the sake of both nature and people. This dream is very much alive, and the commitment of ECNC is stronger than ever.

2008 was special in other respects as well. It was the year in which the governing councils of ECNC and the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) decided to gradually integrate the two organizations under the flag of a new-style ECNC. The rationale behind this far-reaching decision was to increase the strength of the institutional structures to better serve the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the integrated management of coasts and seas. The conservation of both land and water will thus be brought together under the same dedicated organization.

The year 2008 saw an important further increase of ECNC's work in challenging areas such as climate change, biofuels, business and biodiversity, and working with local authorities and stakeholders.

In 2008 ECNC's activities in South-East Europe increased substantially. ECNC's Board, together with the Croatian Government, decided to establish a regional office for East and Central Europe and Central Asia in Zagreb, which will allow ECNC to further strengthen its activities in the region.

We look towards the future with much confidence. Despite the fact that Europe's biodiversity and ecosystem services

are still under serious threat from fragmentation, climate change and human interference, and despite financial and ecological crises, there is still room for hope and gratitude.

Again, we derive this hope from people: the commitment and increased awareness of people all over Europe towards a Beautiful Europe. ECNC's dream is shared ever more widely and we are glad to be able to support this process with expertise and positive energy.

Sir Brian Unwin
President

Rob Wolters
Executive Director

Message from the Chair of the Scientific Council

The Scientific Council advises the Board on scientific aspects of the work of ECNC. We focus on policy development, quality assurance and monitoring of all aspects related to science. We are proud to observe that ECNC continues to put into practice activities based on new research results and on its own experience and knowledge accumulated over the last 15 years. It can do so due to its unique roles as an interface between theory and practice, as facilitator and sometimes as an implementing body.

Following reorganization in 2005 and having operated in its new form since early 2006, the new Scientific Council will complete its first term in May 2009. It is my firm belief that we have found our modus operandi and contributed substantially to ECNC as an organization during this first term.

I look forward to welcoming new members to the Scientific Council in the near future. ECNC is expanding in cooperation with the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC), and in line with this the Scientific Council will be expanding its competence in coastal issues – an exciting prospect!

Dr Sjur Baardsen
Chair of ECNC's Scientific Council



Sir Brian Unwin

Rob Wolters



Dr Sjur Baardsen

1. Introduction to ECNC – What and who are we?

ECNC is an independent European biodiversity expertise centre for sustainable development, based on a foundation structure. Our motto is 'ECNC for a Beautiful Europe'.

We promote the conservation and sustainable use of nature and biodiversity in Europe, because of their intrinsic values and their relevance to the economy and European culture. We seek to bridge the gap between science and policy, between economy and ecology. ECNC prefers to find common ground in interests and promotes new, effective and practical approaches to and ways of conservation for sustainable development.

Programmes

We implement our mission via five Programme Areas, which generate a wide range of coherent project activities. These Programme Areas highlight the relationship between biodiversity, nature and people; address the business side of biodiversity; focus on ecological connectivity of nature and land uses; monitor changes in biodiversity; and combine international and European policies with regional and local realities and approaches.

The daily keepers of the mission

The ECNC staff members are the daily keepers of ECNC's mission. Together with the President, Vice-Presidents, Chair of the Scientific Council and management, they are the true 'ambassadors' of ECNC.



ECNC clients, partners and alliances

ECNC provides its expertise to various levels of governments, intergovernmental organizations, businesses and institutions working in financing, land use and research. We work closely with the NGO community. ECNC's Network, of 50 partners in 26 European countries, is an important pool of expertise and provides scientific legitimacy to ECNC's work.

In 2008, ECNC and the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) decided to gradually integrate their operations under the flag of a new-style ECNC, and we are already working closely together to introduce, promote and apply new insights, innovative approaches and effective tools for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, integrated coastal zone management, marine conservation and management, and sustainability in Europe.

We also prioritize cooperation in the framework of the Countdown 2010 Partnership, in which ECNC has a leading role at the European and regional levels, together with IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Our outreach

Being firmly anchored in the worlds of policy, science, business and economy, and regional and local authorities, the outreach of our work is extensive. We strongly support EU and pan-European policies, and assist in translating them to realities of local and regional levels, land users and the private and banking sectors.

We reach the public with our work and by assisting our partners. ECNC's website attracts an average of 27,000 unique visitors per month (about 900 per day).

2. The people behind the scenes

ECNC consists of four bodies – the Board (and Bureau), the Scientific Council, the Network partners and the Secretariat.

ECNC Board and Bureau

The Board is the highest decision-making body of ECNC and has overall responsibility for the operations of the foundation.

At ECNC's Board meeting in November 2008, Sir Brian Unwin was unanimously re-elected as ECNC's President. During the Board meeting, two new members were appointed: Ms Kornelija Pintarić, Director for Nature of the Croatian Ministry of Culture, and Mr Deryck Steer, Managing Director, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, UK. Professor Valery Tikhomirov, former Director of the All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection was replaced by the Institute's new Director, Professor Alexander Zamuraev. Mr Eddie Idle left the Board after 15 years' service. Dr Zbigniew Witkowski also left the Board in 2008.

Board members

31 December 2008

President

Sir Brian Unwin KCB

First Vice-President

Dr János Tardy

Second Vice-President

Mr Ronald Loudon

Treasurer

Prof. Dr Jan Rammeloo

Secretary

Mr Rob Wolters

Members

Dr Sjur Baardsen (Chair of ECNC's Scientific Council); Mr Eladio Fernández-Galiano; Prof. Dr Pantazis Gerakis; Ms Ivonne Higuero; Prof. Dr Mustafa Kemal Yalinkilic; Mr Bart Jan Krouwel; Mr Robert Lamb; Mr Carlos Martin-Novella; Ms Kornelija Pintarić; Mr Giuseppe Raaphorst; Mr Deryck Steer; Mr Gábor Szilágyi; Professor Alexander Zamuraev

Honorary Board members

Prof. Dr Antonio Machado (former ECNC President); Ms Niki Goulandris-Kefala (former ECNC Vice-President)

Observer

Dr Philip Buckley

Bureau members

31 December 2008

Chair

Sir Brian Unwin

Members

Mr Ronald Loudon; Prof. Dr Jan Rammeloo; Dr János Tardy; Dr Sjur Baardsen; Mr Eddie Idle (to November 2008); Mr Rob Wolters

ECNC Scientific Council

The Scientific Council gives advice on matters concerning ECNC operations, with a special responsibility for quality control of ECNC projects from inception to evaluation.

In October 2008 Prof. Dr Jozef Keulartz of Wageningen University and Research Centre resigned from the Scientific Council. Dr Anke Fischer of the Macaulay Institute (UK) was appointed as a new member in 2008.



Dr Sjur Baardsen,
Chair

Prof. Dr Ruslan
Butovsky

Dr Eeva Furman

Dr Anke Fischer

Dr Julius Oszlányi

Mr Carlos Sunyer

ECNC Network partners

The ECNC Network is a vast reservoir of knowledge, data and experience. Partnership to the ECNC Network is open to research institutions, reference centres or conservation agencies active in the field of nature conservation in Europe. The Network spans a broad range of expertise and a wide geographical area.

'During the past 15 years ECNC has evolved into one of Europe's leading organizations in the field of nature conservation and biodiversity policy research and advice. It has been fascinating to watch ECNC's development and to participate in it since IOER became a Network member in 1997.'

Prof. Dr Bernhard Müller, Director of the Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development (IOER), Germany

Front row, left to right: Ronald Busio; Veronika Mikos; Angelique Beekes; Vineta Goba; Hanneke Wijnja; Rob Wolters; Aysegül Çil.

Back row, left to right: Mark Snethlage; Andrew Schrauwen; Kristijan Čivić; Ad Vleems; Merijn Biemans; Ben Delbaere; Lawrence Jones-Walters; Astrid van Hemert; Amor Torre-Marín; Frans Ghering.

Not present: Glynis van Uden.



Four organizations joined the Network in 2008: the National Environmental Research Institute (NERI), Denmark; Moscow City Pedagogical University, Russian Federation; the Turkish Environmental and Woodlands Protection Society (TÜRÇEK); and the Swedish Species Information Centre (SSIC). The milestone of 50 Network partners was reached at the end of ECNC's 15th anniversary year, when SSIC joined the Network. We now have 50 partners in 26 countries.

A full list of Network partners can be found at www.ecnc.org/people/networkpartners

ECNC Secretariat

The ECNC Secretariat takes care of the daily operations of the foundation, coordinates the ECNC programmes and maintains contacts with the other bodies of ECNC. The ECNC staff consists of qualified people of various nationalities and skills.

3. Highlights in 2008

2008 was the fifteenth anniversary of the establishment of ECNC. While celebrating this occasion, the staff and Board of ECNC looked back on ECNC's development from a pioneer organization to a European biodiversity expertise centre, and looked forward to the future. At the end of this anniversary year, ECNC welcomed its 50th Network partner, bringing membership of the Network to 50 partners in 26 countries.

In 2008 the governing councils of ECNC and the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) decided to integrate the two organizations. The integrated organization will consist of two units: Biodiversity & Nature and Coastal & Marine. This will increase the strength of the institutional structures and better serve the conservation of both land and water. The regional offices of both ECNC and EUCC will represent both coastal and marine and biodiversity interests, and thus increase their outreach.

Coastal & Marine Board: green light for integration

Albert Salman

Director General, Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC)

Since its creation in 1989, the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) has invested in collaboration platforms for environmental management and conservation. Our most important achievements are the result of cooperation with partners in the European Habitats Forum (EHF) and the ECONET Action Fund (EAF). In this spirit of cooperation, in 2008 the EUCC General Assembly and Council gave the green light for a process of integration with ECNC into a common organization, ECNC 'new style': a European expert centre for biodiversity and sustainable development. EUCC will become the coastal and marine unit of this new-style ECNC. EUCC's Coastal & Marine Board has expressed its commitment to fully exploit the synergies with ECNC on the basis of a complementary thematic scope and a common approach contributing to European policies and programmes.

EUCC's Mediterranean Centre in Barcelona will evolve into a common regional centre, as will the new ECNC office in Zagreb, Croatia. These, in combination with the headquarters in the Netherlands, EUCC's national offices

network around the Baltic Sea (in Denmark, Germany, Poland and Lithuania) and for the Black Sea (Romania), will ensure our presence throughout Europe. Together we will be able to better serve the European Union, UNEP, Council of Europe, regional conventions as well as individual European and Mediterranean states in the development of policies and implementation strategies.

Important working fields of the coastal and marine unit are: integrated coastal zone management; the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive; the development of the integrated EU Maritime Policy, of Maritime Spatial Planning, and of strategies for sustainable fisheries in connection with the new Reform of the Common Fisheries Policies.

Albert Salman.



By working with national and local authorities and stakeholders, the ECNC **Nature and Society** Programme aims to improve communication about the conservation of nature and biodiversity and the active involvement of stakeholders. Activities in 2008 included:

- The project 'Communicating Nature Conservation' in Croatia and FYR Macedonia (completed in 2008) built communication skills among national and regional authorities and demonstrated the importance of involving key stakeholders in conservation activities.
- The 'Knowledge for Ecological Networks' (KEN) project continued work on understanding the role of stakeholders in the implementation of ecological networks in Europe.
- The project 'Biodiversity works in the region' focused on preparing information for an online database that will inform local and regional authorities in the Netherlands about possibilities to integrate biodiversity into their policies.

ECNC's involvement in **business and biodiversity** continued to expand in 2008, with project activities including:

- The project 'Promoting pro-biodiversity business in Bulgaria and Croatia' closed with an international seminar in Croatia on the challenges and requirements of pro-biodiversity business in Europe.
- ECNC organized and chaired a financial instruments workshop in Hungary and a branding seminar in Bulgaria as part of the 'Biodiversity Technical Assistance Units' project.
- Work started on a follow-up to the Scenar 2020 study, which developed three scenarios identifying the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy on agriculture and rural regions, and identified the resulting opportunities and challenges for European agriculture and rural regions for the period to 2020. The new study will refine and add to the original work.
- The ECNC project 'Impacts of biofuel production on biodiversity in Europe' resulted in the elaboration of a report that was distributed to a wide range of stakeholders, and presented at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Bonn, Germany, May 2008).

Work on the establishment of the **European Ecological Network** is moving from planning to actual implementation; this was reflected in ECNC's activities in 2008, which included:

- Completion of the 'Spatial Planning and Ecological Networks' (SPEN) project, which studied the interaction between spatial planning and ecological networks. An international workshop was held in the Netherlands, together with the ECNC-coordinated project 'Knowledge for Ecological Networks' (KEN). Among others, the workshop addressed the latest advances in planning and implementing ecological networks and formulated recommendations for improved delivery of networks.
- Practical recommendations from the above workshop were presented at the 12th Meeting of the Committee of Experts for the Development of the Pan-European Ecological Network (Strasbourg, October 2008).
- ECNC commenced a new project to develop a National Ecological Network in FYR Macedonia (MAK-NEN).

Activities related to monitoring and reporting on the **state of European nature and biodiversity** included:

- Contribution to the drafting of the first indicator-based assessment of progress towards halting the loss of biodiversity in Europe, as part of the SEBI2010 - 'Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators' project.
- The ECNC-coordinated project BioScore developed a user-friendly tool to assess the possible impacts of European Community policy on biodiversity.
- An interregional project 'Climate change and biodiversity in South-East Europe', which focused on increasing the capacity of the South-East European region to maintain its biodiversity and to avoid further damage to ecosystem services on which local communities are dependent. The project concentrated on five countries in the region, and brought together experts and policymakers from the region as well as other European countries through various activities, including an interregional conference.

ECNC continues to support the review and implementation of international, European, national, regional and EU policies. **Policy support** activities in 2008 included:

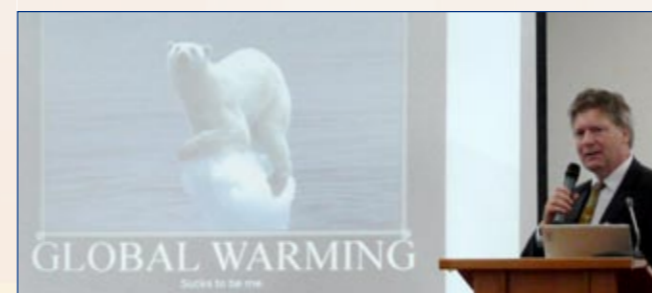
- Participation in meetings in the framework of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), input into discussions on the future of the Ministerial 'Environment for Europe' process, and preparations for the next 'Biodiversity in Europe' conference.
- Participation in the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Bonn, Germany, May 2008); contributions to the organization and discussions of various side events.

- Participation in the EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria) European Carnivore Campaign, which started in 2008.

Activities in the framework of ECNC's cooperation with the Dutch Province of Noord-Brabant included:

- Promotion of the Countdown 2010 initiative towards municipalities, water boards, businesses and organizations in the Province.
- Provision of the secretariat of the Noord-Brabant Task Force on Biodiversity and Countdown 2010.

For a more detailed review of project activities in 2008, please see Chapter 4 and www.ecnc.org/publications/annualreport



In 2008, while undertaking innovative work in areas such as climate change and business and biodiversity, ECNC's Board and staff also celebrated ECNC's 15th anniversary.

4. ECNC Programme Areas in 2008

Nature and Society

Connecting people and nature

This ECNC Programme Area aims to contribute to the development and implementation of conservation policies that focus on the social and cultural context of nature and biodiversity conservation, in order to stimulate improved communication and stakeholder involvement. The main drivers for change in nature and biodiversity are clearly linked to socio-economic processes, and the challenge is to find innovative, inclusive and participatory approaches that reconcile the economic development underpinning Europe's current standard of living with the conservation and wise use of Europe's nature and biodiversity. This ECNC Programme Area seeks to contribute to answers to the complex relations, tensions and possible synergies between nature and biodiversity conservation and society. Three key concepts provide an overarching framework to the projects developed: understanding processes, communicating knowledge and engaging stakeholders.

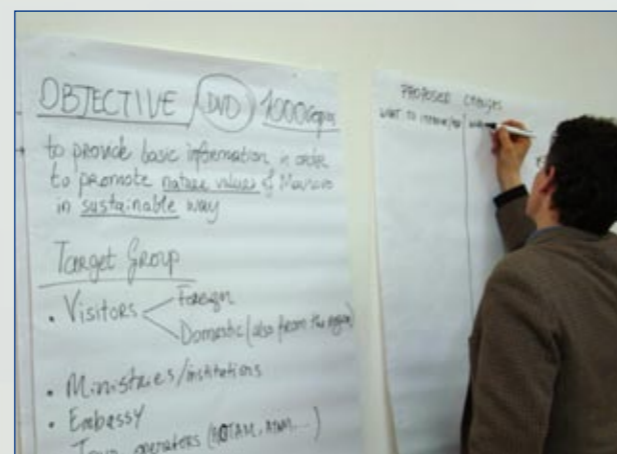
'If we are to achieve effective, integrated management that delivers multifunctional landscapes with benefits for people, livelihoods and nature then we have to communicate better.'

From: Proceedings of the Conference: Changing climate, changing biodiversity in South-East Europe; Belgrade, 18-19 June 2008 (ECNC & REC, 2008)

In 2008 ECNC coordinated several result-oriented projects aimed at improving the understanding of processes and engaging stakeholders, including:

- The project 'Communicating Nature Conservation' in Croatia and FYR Macedonia made important progress and came to a conclusion in 2008. During the final phase of the project the capacity of the local partners as trainers was strengthened, thus also achieving the project's aim of extending the

knowledge and capacity beyond the project area. The project's results and its approach of 'learning by doing' were presented at the first European forum for managers of natural areas 'Jobs for Nature' (Lyon, France, November 2008). One of the most important aspects of the project was the acceptance and understanding of the importance of communication and the involvement of key stakeholders in the process of conservation activities as early as possible.



The provision of training to improve skills in the communication of nature conservation with stakeholders was an important part of the 'Communicating Nature Conservation' project.

- Important progress was made in the project 'Knowledge for Ecological Networks' (KEN), implemented by ECNC together with partners from six European countries. This project aims to understand the role of stakeholders in the implementation of ecological networks in Europe. In 2008 a joint stakeholder report was produced on the basis of six country reports on the practical implementation of ecological networks. The potential for creating synergies and cooperation with its 'sister' project, 'Spatial Planning and Ecological Networks' (SPEN), was also examined through joint workshops and conferences. Recommendations were drawn up for further exploration in the future activities of the project, such as developing practical guidelines for practitioners.



Three elements for success in nature conservation projects are: understanding the processes involved, communication and stakeholder involvement.

- In the framework of Countdown 2010, ECNC, together with the Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM), continued coordination of 'Biodiversity works in the region', a project aimed at encouraging local and regional authorities in the Netherlands to build partnerships and to develop projects for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Activities in 2008 focused on the collection and description of inspirational and innovative examples of local biodiversity-related projects. The project descriptions were prepared for inclusion in the online database on VROM's website, which has a section dedicated to biodiversity. The database will inspire and inform local and regional authorities (municipalities, provinces and water boards) about the possibilities offered by the integration of biodiversity into their policies and actions.
- At the end of 2008 ECNC began a new project, together with the Regional Environmental Center (REC), aimed at promoting biodiversity and sustainability among rural municipalities and their local communities in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo/a – UNSCR 1244). The project aims to assist in reducing the downward spiral of poverty, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation by increasing local participation and awareness of local authorities and their citizens.

Business and Biodiversity

Nature as a provider of business opportunities

This ECNC Programme Area facilitates the integration of biodiversity issues in the financial and economic sectors and facilitates investment in biodiversity-related business. ECNC also promotes economic thinking in the biodiversity sector and addresses the market-based approach to conservation and viable use of biodiversity and its ecosystem services. Concern for biodiversity is integral to sustainable development, competitiveness, economic growth and employment, and improved livelihoods.

All businesses, irrespective of their size, sector or location, ultimately depend on biodiversity. Whilst business operations can have major adverse impacts on biodiversity, they also possess knowledge, technical resources and managerial skills that are highly relevant to biodiversity conservation. How companies manage biodiversity risks and opportunities is increasingly seen as critical to their financial performance. Finally, all businesses need to maintain good relations and reputations, as customers, employees and investors increasingly expect responsible environmental stewardship.



ECNC promotes activities that will help to create a biodiversity-friendly economy, with benefits for business, biodiversity and society in general.

The development of biodiversity business also depends on having an appropriate framework of laws, regulations, taxes, incentives, social norms and voluntary agreements. For businesses to value biodiversity, it must ultimately become more profitable to conserve biodiversity than to ignore or destroy it.



ECNC's study on the impacts of biofuel production on European biodiversity aims to contribute to establishing a platform for the debate that is required in relation to policy and practice.

'It has been acknowledged that biodiversity does not necessarily pose a risk to businesses, and even that biodiversity can be an important success factor for increasing product quality, raising the image of a company, and creating new business opportunities.'

From: European Biodiversity Finance Compendium (ECNC, 2008)

The main highlights of this ECNC Programme Area during 2008 include:

- Finalization of 'LIFESCAPE – YOUR LANDSCAPE'. In April, the LIFESCAPE 'Feels Like Home' event was held in Boxtel (the Netherlands). Those present participated in various workshops and excursions about experiencing the landscape. Project results and preliminary end products were presented to the participants and the project partners, and the cooperation was celebrated.

- The project 'Promoting pro-biodiversity business in Bulgaria and Croatia' closed with an international seminar (Zagreb, Croatia, March 2008). The participants discussed findings concerning the needs of small and medium size pro-biodiversity entrepreneurs and the readiness of the financial sector to provide tailored solutions in the project countries. Experiences were exchanged with the EU 'Biodiversity Technical Assistance Units' project and the UNDP COAST project, thus achieving cross-fertilization and awareness raising concerning challenges and needs of pro-biodiversity business in Europe.
- In 2008 work on the 'Biodiversity Technical Assistance Units' project included preparing and chairing a financial instruments workshop (Budapest, Hungary, July 2008) and a branding seminar (Sofia, Bulgaria, September 2008).
- In October 2008 ECNC, together with two partners, started on a follow-up to the Scenar 2020 study. The follow-up study will refine and add to the

original 2006 Scenar study on agriculture and rural development in the EU on the 2020 horizon. The work will provide important analytical input into the debate on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy.

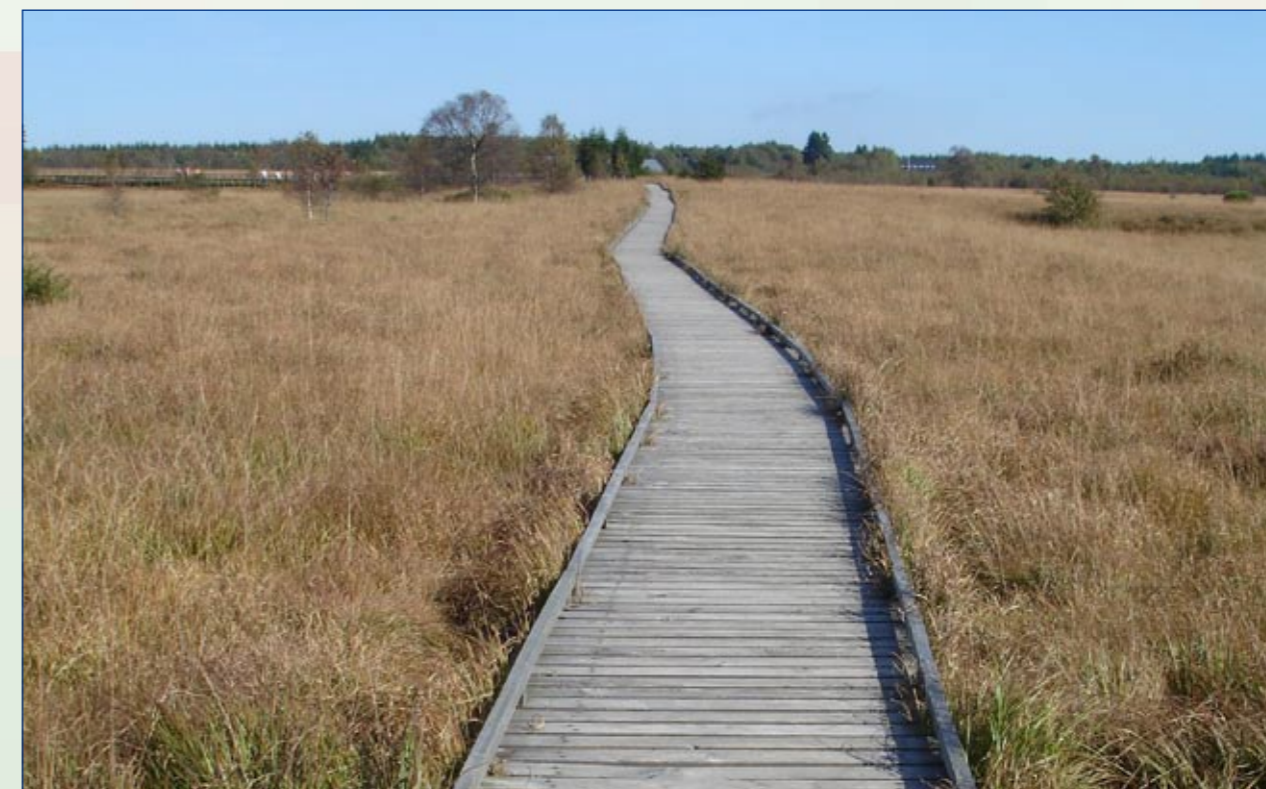
- The ECNC project 'Impacts of biofuel production on biodiversity in Europe' resulted in a report that was distributed to a wide range of stakeholders. The report focuses on the impacts of second-generation biofuels on biodiversity, and the need for an appropriate policy framework. The report was highly appreciated by a wide range of policymakers and other recipients. During the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Bonn, Germany, May 2008), ECNC presented a discussion paper based on the report.
- At the end of 2008, ECNC started a project entitled 'European Learning Network for Functional Agrobiodiversity'. This project will cover the EU 27 plus Switzerland and Norway. The Network will provide a platform for exchange of knowledge on functional agrobiodiversity, provide best practice examples and disseminate practical guidance to European farmers and landowners.

European Ecological Networks

Shaping the European Ecological Network

This ECNC Programme Area supports the establishment of the European Ecological Network by building a knowledge base around the theory and practical implementation of ecological networks at all geographical levels and by analysing the threats and opportunities arising from sectors other than nature and biodiversity conservation. The development of the Network is based on common objectives adopted by European states, and builds on the implementation of nature conservation instruments in Europe. The EU's Natura 2000 and the Bern Convention Emerald Network of protected areas are particularly important in this context.

The European Ecological Network provides stability and resilience to Europe's biodiversity and contributes to mitigation and adaptation measures for the ecological impacts of climate change, in particular in relation to protected areas. In many ways 2008 should be considered as a 'watershed' in the development of the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN).



Ecological networks ensure the conservation of European ecosystems, habitats, species and landscapes.

The international map is almost complete (with the exception of the Caucasus) and a shift is taking place from planning and policy formulation to regional, national and local implementation of the network in practice. To this end the focus of ECNC's involvement in the European Ecological Network in 2008 was on practical delivery. Highlights therefore included:

- The conclusion of the ECNC-coordinated 'Spatial Planning and Ecological Networks' (SPEN) project. SPEN addresses the links between spatial planning and ecological networks and is based on the decisive role that spatial planning can play in providing a platform for the integration of sectors and improving the quality of decision making in relation to the design, location and management of built and other infrastructure in order to reduce the impacts of these activities on biodiversity and to increase sustainable development.

'Spatial planning should play a crucial role in the implementation of ecological networks on the ground. ... It is important that spatial planners are well informed about the backgrounds and possibilities of ecological networks and how they can contribute without placing pressure on other social interests.'

From: Interactions between policy concerning spatial planning policy and ecological networks in Europe (SPEN – Spatial Planning and Ecological Networks) (ECNC, 2008)

- An international workshop held in Oisterwijk, the Netherlands, in October 2008 under the banner of the SPEN project and the ECNC-coordinated 'Knowledge for Ecological Networks' (KEN) project, to: present the latest advances in the planning and implementation of ecological networks; consider what represents best-practice policy; formulate clear and practical recommendations for a better delivery of ecological networks Europe-wide; and identify their specific benefits for different sectors of society.
- The practical recommendations from the above workshop were presented at the 12th Meeting of

the Committee of Experts for the Development of the Pan-European Ecological Network (Strasbourg, October 2008). Under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the meeting convenes to consider current progress, new developments and the future of the PEEN. The Committee confirmed their support for the transition from policy into practical implementation and agreed that both projects were timely in providing information and knowledge to support the process of delivery.

- ECNC began a new project to create a National Ecological Network for FYR Macedonia. This project embodies the principle of moving from policy into practice and from international to national delivery. In order to test and put ideas into practice, as well as completing a national ecological network map, it will also provide a management plan for a specifically identified habitat corridor that has a high importance for the European Brown bear population in FYR Macedonia. Of necessity it therefore includes a significant element of stakeholder involvement and a public awareness campaign and takes into consideration a range of socio-economic issues.



The MAK-NEN project's 'Bear Corridor Management Plan' will improve understanding of the bear's ecological functions, habitat connectivity and the ecological networks concept.

State of European Nature and Biodiversity

Monitoring the achievement of policy targets

This ECNC Programme Area deals with all aspects of relevance to reporting on the state of nature in Europe, from indicators and data collection, monitoring and assessments, to reporting and user feedback. Since the beginning of the millennium the European Biodiversity Target on 'Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010' has sharpened national and international focus on the status of a range of habitats and species of European importance. More recently, there has been a growing realization of the importance of ecosystem services, and the impacts of socio-economic activities and climate change on ecosystem functioning.

The work of this Programme Area has therefore been particularly targeted on helping to drive achievement of the 2010 target and, increasingly, on ecosystem assessment and the consideration of trends in relation to environmental change and its impacts on biodiversity. Over 15 years ECNC has built up essential knowledge in these areas, and has a track record of successfully translating this knowledge into applicable information for policymaking and business decisions at global, European and national levels.



ECNC contributes to developing knowledge of trends in Europe's biodiversity, a basic foundation for assessing the impact of policies, land-use activities and businesses.

Specific highlights in relation to ECNC's work in 2008 include:

- The establishment of a set of benchmarks or indicators against which progress toward the 2010 target can be measured has been a crucial part of the process. The SEBI2010 – 'Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators' project has derived a core set of 26 indicators based on the thematic framework provided by the 16 European 'Headline Indicators' for biodiversity and the Convention on Biological Diversity Focal Areas. In 2008, through its role as consortium partner of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity, ECNC played a major role in the SEBI2010 process through its contribution to the drafting of the first indicator-based assessment of progress toward halting the loss of biodiversity in Europe, to be published in 2009.
- Also as part of its role in the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity, ECNC played a significant part in the preparation for the European Ecosystem Assessment project – EURECA. This initiative will identify and economically value the services that ecosystems provide to European society. ECNC provided the main source of moderation and knowledge-based facilitation for a number of workshops held during the course of 2008 by the European Environment Agency, in which the overall approach for EURECA was debated amongst experts and practitioners.
- The highly influential project 'Climate change and biodiversity in South-East Europe' was concluded in 2008. The project, implemented by ECNC and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), included a major conference (Belgrade, Serbia, June 2008): 'Changing climate, changing biodiversity in South-East Europe', which was attended by over 50 regional stakeholders and international experts and which resulted in a common understanding and agreement on priority actions. The conference recommendations were published in the conference proceedings, and the outcomes were also incorporated in a detailed technical background report. A concise summary of the scientific and policy context, issues and recommended actions was also published and made available in English and six translations.

'This project ... has already led to an increased understanding and sharing of expertise about the effects of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Even better, in terms of added value, it has led to a growing consensus about the urgency of additional policies and measures.'

From: Climate change and biodiversity in South-East Europe – impacts and action (ECNC & REC, 2008)



The interregional conference on climate change and biodiversity in South-East Europe resulted in a call for a targeted and concrete action plan for climate change and biodiversity in the region.

- The ECNC-coordinated project BioScore has developed a user-friendly tool based on a sound set of ecological principles and species-specific data, in order to assess the possible impacts of European Community policy on biodiversity. As such, it provides highly valuable assistance to the development of future policies in order to ensure the least possible damage to biodiversity, or even to result in positive effects. Work continued on the development of its database, which contains information about ecological preferences for certain environmental variables; in total over a thousand species have now been considered and integrated into the database, covering a wide variety of groups that together represent European biodiversity in general. In 2008 three case studies were performed within the framework of the project to test the usefulness of

the predictive power of the tool: afforestation; air and water quality; and the production of biofuels. The case studies show that BioScore is a very valuable impact assessment tool to be used in scenario studies to assess the possible effects of EU policy changes.

- ECNC coordinated several activities for ALTER-Net, the EU's 'Network of Excellence' on terrestrial biodiversity. Since its launch in 2004, ECNC has led the process of integrating the science that is carried out by the ALTER-Net network with EU policy on biodiversity and biodiversity research. In 2008 ECNC organized a Network Advisory Committee meeting, bringing together end users and policymakers to discuss ALTER-Net progress. With a view to the future of ALTER-Net, ECNC also participated in the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding between all parties, which lays down the principles for further integrating biodiversity research capacity in Europe for the years to come.

Policy Support

Keeping policy commitments alive

The focus of this Programme Area illustrates part of ECNC's strength: being closely attuned to national, EU, pan-European and global policies and, in recent years, regional and local policies. By providing practical, tailor-made support to the implementation of the priority targets of policies and action plans, this Programme Area promotes synergy between global and European actions on nature and biodiversity and provides support to international, national and regional processes and organizations.

The European target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 remained at the focus of ECNC's European policy support in 2008:

- ECNC participated in relevant meetings in the framework of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS).
- ECNC was involved in activities such as the Committee of Experts for the Development of the Pan-European Ecological Network.
- ECNC participated in the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) to the Convention

on Biological Diversity (Bonn, Germany, May 2008). ECNC's involvement focused on Countdown 2010 and communication, business and biodiversity, financial investments in biodiversity, communication for nature and biodiversity conservation, protected areas and ecological networks, and biodiversity conservation in South-East Europe. ECNC contributed to the organization and the discussions of various side events.

- ECNC provided input into the discussions about the future of the Ministerial 'Environment for Europe' process, and preparations for the next 'Biodiversity in Europe' conference.
- ECNC participated in the meetings of the EU Coordination Group for Biodiversity and Nature (formerly the Biodiversity Expert Group), also bringing views of other NGOs and providing ideas for the implementation of the EC Communication 'Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 ... and beyond'.

The EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria) European Carnivore Campaign started in 2008. ECNC

provided input into the campaign's committee, the involvement of children and the development of PR activities. In September 2008 ECNC's Communication Officer delivered a speech on ecological networks at the EAZA Annual Conference in Antwerp, Belgium.

In 2008 ECNC undertook various activities in the framework of its cooperation with the Dutch Province of Noord-Brabant:

- Promotion of the Countdown 2010 initiative towards municipalities, water boards, businesses and organizations in the Province of Noord-Brabant.
- Drafting of local and business biodiversity plans, concretization of biodiversity activities and reporting on the results.
- Provision of advice on biodiversity monitoring and the management of landscape and nature by private landowners.
- Provision of the secretariat of the Noord-Brabant Task Force on Biodiversity and Countdown 2010, and assistance in preparing its strategy, action plan and communication efforts.



ECNC continues to promote the Countdown 2010 initiative among municipalities and businesses, encouraging them to sign the Declaration.

5. Resources and communication

Social report

Over 2008 ECNC employed a total of 23 staff (22 in the Netherlands and one in France). Two volunteers provided support to the ECNC Secretariat; one intern joined ECNC in November 2008. The spirit in this international team was in 2008 again very good.

2008 was also characterized by increased staff social activities, partly as a result of ECNC's 15th anniversary in that year. Activities included a joint Board–staff meeting in November and a staff long weekend in the Ardennes.

Monday mornings started with a staff briefing and information session. Several full staff meetings were held, addressing thematic issues. Staff members organized Food for Thought sessions, which introduce relevant themes of projects.



ECNC staff at a training session in facilitation techniques.

The ECNC Board and Scientific Council provided guidance and advice to the ECNC management in implementing human resource and institutional decisions. Recommendations made by the Scientific Council to increase the potential of ECNC's human capital were taken up in 2008.

Information, communication and media

Various activities as part of the ECNC communication strategy for internal and external communication and information were implemented in 2008. In addition

to ECNC's contributions to conferences, seminars and other events in the form of speeches and presentations by staff, ECNC actively profiled itself and its activities at these events via an exhibition stand. In order to attract the public, and also to profile ECNC more effectively, promotional materials were produced, such as ECNC-style writing pads and bookmarks.

In 2008 a start was made on improving and totally revising the ECNC website. A great deal of effort went into the development of the new ECNC website (launched in January 2009). In 2008 the average number of visitors to ECNC's website was 900 unique visitors a day (an average of 27,000 unique visitors per month).

Several ECNC project websites were maintained in 2008, including the SEENET programme website www.seenet.info.

Details of reports and other publications produced in 2008 can be found at www.ecnc.org/publications/annualreport.

Financial management

Based on recommendations by ECNC's external and independent auditor, in 2008 additional important steps were taken to further improve ECNC's financial management and bookkeeping, with respect to i.a. comprehensive time-writing and contract registration. These actions were based on a comprehensive Administrative Organization (AO) strategic plan.

ECNC and the Directorate-General of Research of the European Commission disagreed about the interpretation of financial rules of Research Programme funded projects in the framework of an EC audit. This issue was not resolved in 2008.

ECNC's annual financial report 2008 was approved by ECNC's Bureau and certified by a statement of an independent auditor.

ECNC's clients and sponsors

In 2008 ECNC's projects were financially supported by various organizations and institutions, without whom ECNC would not have been able to carry out its work.

AECID – Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development).

BBI-Matra fund of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Elsevier Science

European Commission, Directorate-General for the Environment

European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development

European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, Sixth and Seventh Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development

European Environment Agency, European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity

EU INTERREG IIIB Programme for North-West Europe

Manfred Hermsen Stiftung

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Municipality of Tilburg, the Netherlands

Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency

Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Directorate Knowledge Management

Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment

Norwegian Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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