

Editorial

In the previous issue of the *ECNC Update*, we reported on preparations for the Fourth 'Biodiversity in Europe' Conference, held in Plitvice, Croatia from 22 to 24 February. The Conference concluded that in order to address the continuing challenge of halting the loss of biodiversity in Europe, regional cooperation should be increased and partnerships with the forestry, agriculture and other economics-driven sectors need to be strengthened. See page 2 for further information on the Conference outcomes.

The new ECNC Scientific Council met for the first time at ECNC headquarters on 29 March. The Scientific Council fulfils the role of think-tank, and gives independent advice on matters concerning ECNC's operations, including quality control of ECNC projects. At the meeting, Dr Sjur Baardsen, of the University of Life Sciences, Norway, was elected to the position of Chair of the Council. A report on the meeting is presented on page 7.

On behalf of the Editorial Team
Glynis van Uden

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Europe's governments seek to redouble efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010: Fourth 'Biodiversity in Europe' Conference

22-24 February 2006, Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia

Officials from 40 European governments and 32 environmental organizations have recognized the need to redouble their efforts if they are to achieve the goal agreed in 2003 of halting the decline in Europe's biological diversity by 2010. This was one of the conclusions of the Fourth Intergovernmental 'Biodiversity in Europe' Conference.

ECNC provided substantial input into the Conference preparations as well as the Conference itself. ECNC's Director Rob Wolters participated in the panel on protected areas and ecological networks and in the ad hoc Contact group on biodiversity financing, which discussed ways to increase public and private financing for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target. ECNC's Deputy Executive Director Sandra Rientjes co-chaired, with PEBLDS President Sylvi Ofstad, the session on education, communication and public awareness, and presented a project on communicating biodiversity. ECNC Project Manager Ágnes Bruszik supported the media activities for the Conference together with UNEP and provided information on ECNC projects. Rob Wolters and the Head of ECNC's Regional Office Mihály Véghe presented a map indicating progress in the development of

national ecological networks in the Council of Europe region. The final version of the map will be available in a few weeks.

The Conference noted that, despite positive developments, the loss of biological diversity continues to increase rapidly throughout Europe. Major challenges include urban sprawl, climate change, reduced public funding for biodiversity, and the low ranking of biodiversity as a political priority. To address these challenges, the Conference agreed to step up regional cooperation and strengthen partnerships with the forestry, agriculture and other economics-driven sectors.

The participants stressed the need to inform people about the economic benefits of Europe's biodiversity and landscape, and welcomed initiatives by a number of banks to establish European biodiversity investment funds. The Conference also welcomed the Apeldoorn Appeal, which resulted from the European Nature Conference in Apeldoorn, September 2005.

For the Conclusions of the Conference and the official press releases, please consult www.strategyguide.org



Rob Wolters (second from left) participating in the panel on protected areas and ecological networks. (Photo: Peter Skoberne)

NatureNet Europe develops programme for Wadden Sea

NatureNet Europe has developed a framework for a support programme for the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea area as a contribution to the discussion on the priorities for the Wadden Fund. ECNC and EUCC took the lead in developing the programme, entitled 'Wadden Sea – beyond existing borders', with inputs from Eurosite.

The programme supports the implementation of various recommendations in the 'Breaking the ice' report of the Wadden Sea Forum. The aim of the programme is to assist in further developing the Wadden Sea as a testing ground for sustainable development. Its two main elements are:

- the stakeholder approach – combining interests;
- the international dimension of Wadden Sea conservation and sustainable use.

Representatives of NatureNet Europe have participated in several coordination meetings about the priorities of the Wadden Fund and about exploring and fine-tuning cooperation with other partners.

NatureNet Europe is well-placed to support sustainable development in the Wadden Sea area, because ECNC, EUCC and Eurosite bring together wide expertise on integrated coastal zone management and on communication and site management, and promote a positive approach towards combining interests in the fields of economy, ecology and social aspects. To facilitate a strong link between the regional and international dimensions of programme and project activities, Dr Bert van der Moolen has been appointed as NatureNet Europe's Regional Wadden Coordinator.

More information: Rob Wolters, Director NatureNet Europe, Executive Director ECNC; wolters@ecnc.org

**NatureNet
Europe**

Nature and Society

ECNC working hard in South-East Europe

In March ECNC's Deputy Executive Director Sandra Rientjes and Senior Project Officer Natasja Hulst, together with ECNC Associate Tom Kovacs and Lawrence Jones-Walters, an expert from ECNC Network partner English Nature, conducted a week-long mission in Croatia and FYRO Macedonia to set up one of the four new projects that ECNC has started in South-East Europe.

The project concerned – 'Communicating Nature Conservation in Macedonia and Croatia' – follows on from ECNC's development of a capacity-building programme in the field of communication and stakeholder invol-

vement for nature conservation. This programme has so far been successfully applied in a number of Central European countries, such as Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia.

Many countries in South-East Europe have a solid tradition of ecological and environmental education. However, they have not yet established a routine concerning the strategic use of stakeholder communication in solving problems related to nature conservation and management. Therefore, ECNC has started a programme in the South-East European region with a training project for staff of natu-

re conservation authorities, national parks and NGOs in Croatia and FYRO Macedonia. The project aims to train staff of nature conservation organizations and authorities in the two countries in the professional use of communication as a policy tool. The aim of this recent trip to Zagreb and Skopje, and an earlier one in January to Zagreb, was to adapt the capacity-building programme to the specific needs and cultural context of Croatia and FYRO Macedonia by meeting with ministry officials, local authorities, national park managers and representatives from NGOs to discuss their specific situation and the problems they face.

The first phase of the project started in August 2005 and will last until August 2006. The capacity-building workshops will be held in Macedonia in the last week of May and in Croatia in the last week of June.

For more information contact Natasja Hulst, Senior Project Officer; hulst@ecnc.org



ECNC at the Macedonian Ministry of the Environment. (Photo: Tom Kovacs)

Countdown 2010 in the Dutch regions

As part of the Countdown 2010 initiative ECNC has started a project, financed by the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, that aims to stimulate the involvement of regional authorities in the Netherlands in the implementation of Countdown 2010 and in realizing the target of halting the decline of biodiversity. The focus of the project will be on creating a clear and practical framework for action for local and regional authorities, and on providing advice and help on how to develop and implement local/regional 2010 action plans. Motivating and creating enthusiasm for the initiative will be of primary importance.

Activities will include:

- creating an inventory of networks that could be mobilized to reach crucial regional stakeholders;

- developing an expertise database;
- developing web pages for providing information to and communicating with regional stakeholders;
- developing and actively disseminating information materials targeting regional stakeholders;
- making an inventory of activities in the Netherlands that could serve as examples for regional Countdown 2010 implementation;
- evaluating lessons learned during these activities;
- organizing a seminar with the province of Noord-Brabant for regional authorities to share experiences.

The main goal of the project is to achieve increased involvement of the regional authorities in the Netherlands concerning the European 2010 target and to create a basis for

concrete steps for the regional level to contribute to halting the decline of biodiversity. This project also creates opportunities for bringing the European and regional levels closer together, thereby creating a broader base and involving the public in realizing the 2010 target. This project can serve as an example to other countries in Europe. In the long run, and most importantly, it will contribute to realizing the 2010 target: halting the decline of biodiversity.

For more information: Natasja Hulst, Senior Project Officer (hulst@ecnc.org) or Ben Delbaere, Senior Programme Manager – Biodiversity (delbaere@ecnc.org). See also: www.countdown2010.net.



Halt the loss of biodiversity

Ecology and Economy

MEA-Scope policy scenario meeting *21 and 22 February 2006, Berlin, Germany*

The MEA-Scope project aims to define impacts of future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms at both the farm and landscape levels. ECNC's responsibilities include research work on indicators to quantify the non-commodity outputs of multifunctional agricultural land use.

During the recent policy scenario meeting of the project in Berlin three orientations for the MEA-Scope scenarios were discussed:

- *Environment and food quality*, taking into account the implementation of Natura 2000, single farm payments, stricter cross-compliance (conditions for farming in return for support), individual contract payments for environmental services and the increased importance of certified/quality products (or Non Commodity Outputs);
- *Competitiveness*, taking into account a ceiling of direct payments, decoupling and an increased production and use of renewable energy sources such as biomass;
- *Rural viability*, taking into account the importance of cohesion objectives of the European Union, regional diversification, localized policy instruments, decoupled single farm payments, increased 'green box' subsidies (related to WTO agreements) and a relative shift from Pillar I to Pillar II of the CAP.

The next step in the project will be to elaborate these orientations into fully developed scenarios. The three scenarios will then be used for modelling the impacts of CAP reform in the seven case study regions in Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Slovakia.

Further information: Yuca Waarts, Project Officer Ecology and Economy; waarts@ecnc.org. See also: MEA-Scope website: <http://www.mea-scope.org/>

Kick-off meeting 'Facilitating the Pan-European Ecological Network in South-East Europe and the Black Sea Area' - SEENET

1 February 2006, Tilburg, the Netherlands

ECNC is starting up a two-year programme to facilitate the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) in South-East Europe and the Black Sea Area. This programme will be carried out in cooperation with EUCC-the Coastal Union and Eurosite, and with various partner organizations and the governments in this region. The programme is funded by the BBI Matra fund of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The programme will adopt an integrative approach, aimed at involving all relevant stakeholder groups and specifically including non-governmental stakeholders. The focus will be on:

- promoting the concept of PEEN among relevant actors and in relevant forums;
- initiating capacity building for ecological networks;
- stimulating involvement of the region in international processes;

- providing support to organizations from the region in successfully applying for funding for projects in support of ecological networks and PEEN.

On 1 February the programme partners met at ECNC headquarters to kick off the work. First outcomes of the meeting are the establishment of a website which will provide easy access to background information and relevant publications on PEEN, funding sources and a contact database of experts and stakeholders dealing with ecological networks. A calendar showing main events on ecological networks will also be accessible from this website. Capacity-building events and workshops are planned for later in the year, on completion of an assessment of training and information needs of stakeholders in the targeted regions.

More information: Sandra Rientjes, Head of Programme Development / Deputy Executive Director ECNC; rientjes@ecnc.org

State of European Nature and Biodiversity

News from ALTER-Net

ALTER-Net aims to achieve durable integration to build the required capacity for terrestrial biodiversity research. Such integration may not always be obvious to the outside world, but a lot is happening in ALTER-Net. A recent workshop, organized by two ALTER-Net work packages and bringing together many others, demonstrated that the integration does work. The workshop discussed ways of using ALTER-Net results as input for biodiversity policy and management, the link with the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy and the use of scenarios in ALTER-Net.

The two-day workshop, hosted by CONEFOR in Rome, Italy, and attended by some 30

participants, identified how ALTER-Net work packages can contribute to the development of future biodiversity policies and management options. It was agreed that ALTER-Net would benefit from planning its activities more clearly towards the development of a coherent research agenda from the perspective of improved, cost-effective and socially accepted biodiversity management. ECNC's Ben Delbaere's presentation on the review of lessons learned with regard to science-policy interfaces, as part of work package I5, demonstrated that there is much ground for cooperation and improvement.

The second day was largely devoted to discussing the use of scenarios. Like the first

day, interaction was stimulated by working in small groups that discussed the same topics. Participants felt that ALTER-Net does not need to develop scenarios but rather use existing ones, based on a review of what is available. ALTER-Net could provide added value by taking existing storylines and trying to mobilize its capacity to help assess possible biodiversity impacts.

More information: Ben Delbaere, Senior Programme Manager – Biodiversity; delbaere@ecnc.org; and www.alter-net.info



ECNC Organizationally

Renewed ECNC Scientific Council to strengthen ECNC's quality

ECNC's renewed Scientific Council believes that ECNC should put more emphasis on presenting and selling its work to the outside world as a coherent package of activities which all contribute to achieving ECNC's mission and vision. The Council felt that ECNC's work of restoring ecological connectivity and resilience in Europe could serve as an 'anchor' around which other thematic work is clustered.

The Scientific Council met for the first time in its new composition on 29 March in Tilburg. The Council has reduced in size to act as a lean and efficient body to review ECNC's products, the quality of work and the linkages with other processes in Europe. Dr Sjur

Baardsen from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences was elected Chair of the Council, succeeding Richard Leafe from English Nature, who has been Chair for six years. Dr Július Oszlányi (Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences) was elected Vice-Chair. ECNC's Head of Programme Development and Deputy Executive Director Sandra Rientjes and the Programme managers presented ECNC's work programme. The Scientific Council was impressed by the amount and variety of work and provided very constructive advice to ensure better uptake of our output.

Full composition of the Scientific Council:
www.ecnc.org/ScientificCouncil/Index_29.html



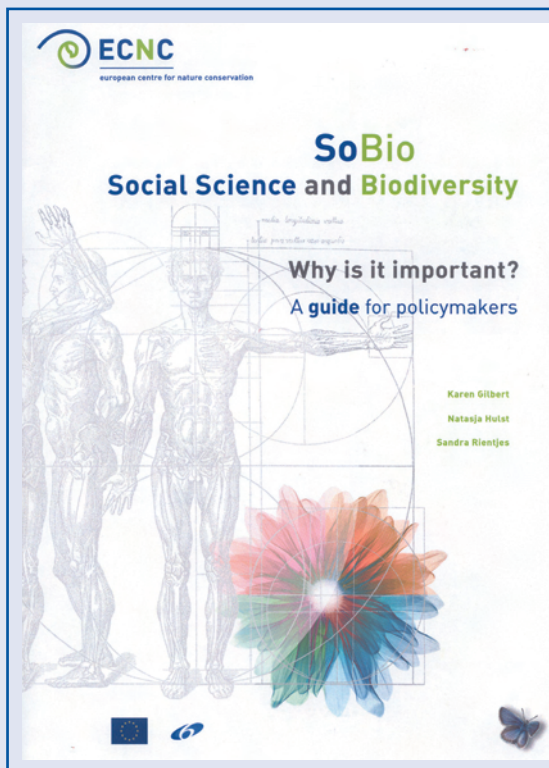
The new ECNC Scientific Council: (left to right) Dr Mark Felton, Prof. Dr Ruslan Butovsky, Mr Carlos Sunyer, Ms Sandra Rientjes (Council Secretary), Dr Sjur Baardsen, Prof. Dr Jozef Keulartz and Dr Július Oszlányi.

(Photo: Rob Vinke)

Staff news

The contract of Natasja Hulst, Senior Project Officer, has been extended until 1 January 2008.

Karen Gilbert, Programme Manager - Nature and Society, left ECNC at the end of March; Karen joined ECNC in July 2003.



New ECNC publication

Gilbert, K., N. Hulst & S. Rientjes (2006) *SoBio Social Science and Biodiversity: Why is it important? A guide for policymakers*. – Tilburg, ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation.

The purpose of this guide is to provide an insight for policymakers and managers on how social science can contribute to biodiversity and ecosystem management, showing that ultimately social science can help improve the effectiveness of biodiversity and ecosystem management policymaking. The guide also outlines opportunities and challenges to strengthen the link between social science and biodiversity.

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