

# ECOVAST NEWSLETTER 63

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## EDITORIAL

I am now the editor of this ECOVAST Newsletter. In this edition ECOVAST is putting the 'spotlight' on Austria and highlighting the considerable and exemplary work of ECOVAST Austria. Its concentration on landscapes and landscape Identification became a major initiative for ECOVAST International and its early conference on small towns became the basis for the major project of ASSET which developed over a 10 year period.

The idea of having a 'spotlight on one of the countries which have an ECOVAST National Section was started in Newsletter 61 with an article on Romania. The articles are written by the President and the National Section and it allows our ECOVAST members to understand a bit about the background of that country and reports on some of the major initiatives that they have been involved with.

It is intended to do such articles only occasionally. If you would like to have the 'spotlight' on your country please let me know.

**Please note that the 2017 ECOVAST Biennial Assembly is to be held in Austria in the Neusiedler See National Park on 25-26 October 2017.**

Please try and attend. We really need feedback on your activities since the critical meeting in Marburg last year which voted unanimously for the organization of ECOVAST to continue. Without you and your activities it cannot survive and not only do we all want to know what each other are doing under the name of ECOVAST but we need to meet at least once a year in a general assembly meeting – this year to agree on what our international work should concentrate on for the next few years.

This Newsletter will be put on the dorfwiki site in PDF format

**Valerie Carter - Editor**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

### **Personal message**

Best wishes to you all for the year of 2017 – this is a little late but this is our first Newsletter for this year. I have not been active for a few months as I have had an illness which led to a major heart operation in February 2017 and this was followed by three months of convalescence. Thank you for all those who sent me such kind messages. I was not able to go to the EU European Social Committee event in Brussels in February as it coincided with my entry into hospital but Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic and Pal Hajas represented us (more of that event below), nor was I able to speak at the Third European Congress of Local Authorities (although I hope to be invited again in 2018). I am now back on my feet and fully active again; and looking forward to meeting you at our General Assembly in Austria in October.

### **The United Kingdom ECOVAST Study on UK Towns and Cities**

The last ECOVAST ASSET project was for the UK Section to complete its work on the list of Towns and Cities in the United Kingdom. Most of the ASSET work was pan European surveys and studies of best practice across Europe – the only national work was the Austrian Register of Town and this UK work. I had been preparing the list of all UK towns (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) since 2014 and I just managed to complete it and get it printed and published before I fell ill.

### **The new cooperation between ECOVAST and the EU Economic and Social Committee EESC**

For the first time ECOVAST has been involved and working with the EU Economic and Social Committee (we were already well known by the EU DG Agri and the EU DG Regio). I met up with Tom Jones from Wales who chaired one of the EESC committees in [Schärding](#) at the European Rural Parliament and we spoke about the ECOVAST work on small towns and what might happen to the agreed importance of such towns set out in the Manifesto. Tom had prepared a paper for the EESC which put forward the view that rural regeneration was dependent upon the well-being of its communities – small towns and villages. Tom suggested that he and the EESC should work together and Tom and I met up in London in November 2016 to look at the possibility of presenting our ideas to a formal panel. I then wrote a short paper and prepared a questionnaire about the importance of rural communities and a list of individuals and groups of people that it should go to. It was the Secretariat of EESC who carried out the consultation by email. I was given copies of all responses and carried out a report of the findings. It was agreed that I would be part of the meeting in February in Brussels when the panel met and also that ECOVAST provide two of the speakers. I suggested Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic with a presentation on the work on Croatian Small towns and Pal Hajas from Hungary to explain what the village of Kozard had done to revive its fortunes (you will recall that the 2013 General Assembly was held in Kozard). I was bitterly disappointed that I could not attend the event in Brussels but I understand from Tom that the event went very well and that the EESC wishes to carry on this work – hopefully working with both the ERP and ECOVAST and I hope to discuss this at our October assembly.

### **The History of ECOVAST**

I started to write up the history of ECOVAST in 2015 and have spent considerable time in looking at archive material – minutes of meetings and newsletters – from 2003 onwards. This material was kept by Pam Moore, Phil Turner and Andrea Weigert and myself. To check what happened before 2003 I had to check archive material kept by Angus Fowler and Michael Dower. In October, in Marburg, during the ECOVAST General Assembly event, I had the chance to look at some of the archives kept by Angus in his FAK office in Marburg – where he had material sorted 1984 to 1989. From Marburg I went to Tellow to visit the Tellow Museum and look at the archives of Michael Dower which were kept by Rolf Peter Brantz of the Museum. They had been partly sorted by Pam and Phil into large boxes and I managed to check the years 1990-2002. I managed to find out all the dates and venues of the ECOVAST International Committee meetings and the dates and places of all the annual assembly meetings. I also have a list of all those ECOVAST members who were elected onto the ECOVAST International Committee. There are a few gaps as some minutes seem to be missing and I intend to go to Tellow again in 2018 to complete the work. However I have now produced a draft record of the history (90 pages long) and I intend to put this on the ECOVAST web pages as a draft – so that the work is not lost. It has been a fascinating piece of work and ECOVAST members should be proud of what they have done since 1984. It has proved a fascinating piece of work and ECOVAST members should be proud of what they have done since 1984.

We do need to have a clear single place where we can store our archives and be able to have access to them. It would be ideal if we could have two simple files: one with minutes of every meeting and another with a copy of every Newsletter. I already have copies from 2004 and I hope to collect the rest when I go to Tellow in 2018. I also hope to have a discussion on archives at the assembly meeting in October.

**Valerie Carter**

## SPOTLIGHT ON AUSTRIA

Austria, is a land-locked country of over 8.7 million people lying in Central Europe, which today covers 83,879 square kilometres. It is bordered by the Czech Republic and Germany in the north; Switzerland and Liechtenstein in the west; Slovenia and Italy to the south and Hungary and Slovakia to the east. The population of the capital city of Vienna and its suburbs is 2.6 million people. About 74% of Austrians are registered as Roman Catholics and 5% as Protestants.

It is divided into nine states with seven of them (Upper Austria; Lower Austria; Styria; Carinthia, Salzburg, Tyrol and Vorarlberg having long historical links with Austria before the Republic of 1918. Burgenland was originally part of Hungary and became a province after World War 1 and Vienna became a province at the same time. These states are divided into districts and statutory cities; and districts are subdivided into municipalities.



*The Emblem of Austria*



*The Provinces of Austria*

### **Brief Geography of Austria**

The terrain is highly mountainous, with the Alps making up 62% of the country; the foothills at the base of the Alps and part of the Carpathians account for 12%; the mountains to the north of the Danube (much lower than the Alps and known as the 'Granite Plateau' and part of the Bohemian Mass) take up 10%; the periphery of the Pannonian Plain to the east takes up another 12% and the Vienna Basin the remaining 4%. Only 32% of the country lies below 500 metres. The lowest point in the country is the Neusiedler See at only 115 metres. The highest point in Austria is the Grossglockner Mountain at 3,798 metres. Three quarters of the country is dominated by an alpine climate and only the eastern part is continental with much less rain.

Most rivers flow eventually into the Black Sea – the mighty Danube, and its tributaries of the Inn and the Drau/Drava flow west-east and form the main strategic routes across Austria. Parts of other tributary rivers such as the Salzach, Enns, Mur, Murz and Drau / Drava) also have bits of their lengths flowing west-east, though other parts of these rivers flow either south to north (Salzach and Enns) or north to south (Mur and Drau / Drava) to join the Danube via Slovenia and Serbia. This provides Austria with a grid of routes. Only the province of Vorarlberg has a river – the Rhine – which flows north into the North Sea. The building of the Rhine-Main-Danube canal in Bavaria, Germany has given a complete navigable route by water from the Black Sea to the North Sea. River traffic is important to Austria with major river ports at Vienna, Krems, Enns and Linz.

### **Infrastructure**

Routes linking Germany, the Czech Republic (formerly Bohemia), Hungary and parts of Slovenia are relatively easy and road and rail routes generally follow the river valleys. However the Alps form a huge natural barrier to links from Austria southwards and westwards. But there have always been ancient routes across it. The main route south to Italy has been through Brenner Pass. Another route into Italy is through the low Reschen Pass near the border of Switzerland. There are also many high mountain roads and historic routes across the Alps: the Arlberg Pass into Switzerland; the Plöcken Pass into Italy. The route westwards linking Switzerland and with high passes over the Arlberg Massif was eventually before it was replaced by a very long tunnel. Many new motorways and road and rail tunnels have improved the infrastructure across Austria. Salzburg and Carinthia are linked through two major road tunnels – the Tauern and Katschberg – to Villach leading on south to Italy or through the new Karawanken tunnel into Slovenia. This motorway also links with the west-east major motorway across Carinthia to Graz where it also joins the major north-south route from Vienna to Maribor in Slovenia and beyond to Croatia and Serbia.





*Austria rivers and mountains*

### **The economy**

Austria is the 12<sup>th</sup> richest country in the world in terms of GDP with a high standard of living and a strong economy with machinery, metallurgical products and textiles, but the most important industry is tourism (ranking 9<sup>th</sup> highest in worldwide terms in 2007 with international tourism receipts of 18.9 billion US dollars and ranking 12<sup>th</sup> in the number of international tourist arrivals with 20.8 million tourists). The alpine areas with their exceptional landscapes and the historic towns and abbeys are a great attraction to visitors. Austria also has a rich mining history. Salt has been extracted since Celtic times and linked into a series of ancient trade routes. The mining of iron started in the Iron Age and is still mined today on a very small scale. These mines are also tourist attractions.

### **Energy**

Austria currently produces more than half its electricity by hydropower and this together with wind, solar and biomass power plants provide almost 63% of its energy as 'renewable energy'. In 1978 Austria voted against the use of nuclear power to generate electricity.

### **Natural and Built Heritage and Culture**

Many of Austria's landscapes have been designated as 'National Parks'. The cultural landscapes of the Hallstatt-Dachstein in the Salzkammergut; the Fertö / Neusiedlersee in Burgenland; and the Wachau area in Lower Austria are world-renowned landscapes and included on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

As well as attractive rural landscapes, its built heritage is significant with a wealth of architecture from the medieval, baroque, rococo, neo-classical, art-nouveau, modern and post-modern periods. Examples of individual buildings and vernacular architecture using these styles can be found in its historic villages, small towns, larger towns and cities. The historic centres of Vienna and Salzburg are designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites as are the Palace and Gardens of Schönbrunn and the Semmering Railway. Austria also has a rich heritage of folklore and traditions and has been the birthplace of famous artists (such as Gustav Klimt); musicians (Joseph Haydn, Franz Liszt; Franz Schubert and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart who was born in Salzburg which was an independent principality until it later became part of Austria) and the famous conductor Herbert von Karajan. Vienna was for a long time an important centre for musical innovation and composers were drawn to the city during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries due to the patronage of the Habsburgs. Austria was the cradle of numerous scientists – in physics, medicine and psychology.



*Kreuzenstein Medieval Castle*



*Rococo architecture in Innsbruck*

The Council of Europe has designated several European 'Cultural Routes' which cross Austria, including the 'Mozart Ways'; the 'Romanesque Route'; the Iter Vitis Wine Route. There are also pilgrimage routes to Mariazell, a small town in the north Styrian Alps with a large church dating from 1644, which holds an image of the Virgin Mary carved in limewood and reputed to work miracles and which has been a centre for pilgrimage for Catholics from all parts of the former Habsburg Empire to visit. Austria also holds the world famous Peutinger Map – an ancient Roman Map of the roads around the Roman Empire thought to date from the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The map was discovered and bequeathed to the German antiquarian, Conrad Peutinger, in 1508 and eventually purchased for the Habsburg Imperial Court Library and is now kept in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. In 2007 this map was placed on the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

This wealth of heritage and culture will continue to tempt people to visit Austria.

### **Brief History of Austria**

The Celts – an early Indo European people - who probably originated from the Steppes near the Caspian Sea - wandered into Europe and appear to have settled in this area of the Alps by around 700 BC. The oldest evidence is found around Hallstatt and they mined and traded in salt and iron. The Hallstatt Culture of the early Iron Age, was succeeded by the development of the La Tene culture in the Alps during the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BC and these tribes also began to migrate westwards and on to the British Isles.

The area that is now Austria then became part of the Roman Empire around 15 BC – with three Celtic Tribes coming under Roman rule: Rhaetia (in the Vorarlberg/Tyrol area); Noricum (in Salzburg, Styria, Upper and Lower Austria, Carinthia) and Pannonia (in the area that is now Burgenland and the plain of Hungary). Noricum was a major provider of weaponry for the Roman armies using steel made from Austrian iron. The Romans built many cities that survive today: Vindobona (Vienna); Juvavum (Salzburg); Valvidena (Innsbruck) and Brigantium (Bregenz) to name a few. One of the most famous Roman remains today are at Carnuntum which was a Roman Legionary Fortress in Pannonia which became a large city of more than 50,000 inhabitants. Christianity was introduced to this region in the Roman empire states in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

After the decline of the Roman Empire there were a succession of migrations of Germanic tribes from the east; the Goths 300-500 AD; followed by the Bavarii 500-700 AD. These Germanic tribes developed into lots of separate territories but in 800 the Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne - the Kings of the Franks tribe – as Emperor (reviving a title after 3 centuries and the fall of the Western Roman Empire). The title was fought over by other states but eventually Otto I who unified all the German tribes became Emperor in 962. He was also the king who was called 'the savior of Christendom' as he stopped the pagan Hungarians (Magyars) entering western Europe. The 'empire' of Germanic tribes lasted for over 8 centuries until its dissolution in 1806, although the name 'Holy Roman Empire' did not appear to be used until the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Austria was to remain within the orbit of Germany until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The land that is now Austria became a margraviate – a southeastern frontier march of the empire – part of the German Duchy of Bavaria in 996, ruled by the Babenberg family, and called 'Ostarrichi'. In 1156 it became an independent duchy – although still part of Germany but independent of Bavaria - and later an archduchy. In 1273 it was inherited by the Hapsburg family under the rule of Rudolf 1 and rule of the Hapsburgs lasted for several centuries. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Mongols invaded westwards and overran the Pannonian Plain but never entered Austria. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the Hapsburgs extended their territory through marriage and alliances – taking over Bohemia and Hungary in 1526; Croatia in 1527; Dalmatia and Slovenia in 1797. It also occupied Serbia from 1788 to 1792.







*The Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1914*

In 1806 the Holy Roman Empire came to an end and Austria became the Austrian Empire although it was still part of the German Confederation and it remained under German control until the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 when it was subsequently excluded from German affairs. In 1867, following this war, the Emperor Franz Josef 1 of Austria created a dual monarchy with Hungary and created the great empire of Austro-Hungary. They added Bosnia to their territories in 1878. Austro-Hungary became rich and powerful and it occupied a critical location in central Europe, forming one of the major powers of Europe, surrounded by the German, Russian, and Ottoman Empires. World War 1 brought the Austro-Hungarian Empire to an end in 1919, with Austria and Hungary becoming two separate nations. Austria was created a Republic.

In 1938 Austria was annexed by Germany and became in effect part of Germany and much of the Jewish population killed or forced to leave. After World War 2 Austria was divided into zones between the Allied powers of America, Britain, France and Russia. It did not become a fully independent country again until the Treaty of Vienna in 1955. Since the beginning of 1995 Austria has been part of the European Union.

## **ECOVAST Members from Austria and the work of the Austrian Section**

### **(a) Members who served on the ECOVAST International Committees**

Many Austrians have served ECOVAST since the very earliest days. Franz Pammer from Austria was the first ECOVAST Vice President in 1984 and served 1984-1986; Peter Jeschke was a Vice President between 1986 and 1988. Hasso Hohman was a member of the International Committee from 1987 to 1988. Arthur Spiegler founded ECOVAST Austria in 1998 and became Vice President in 2002; then became a senior Vice President in 2004 and a Vice President again in 2010-2012; 2012-2015 and 2015-2017. Arthur Spiegler has led the ECOVAST International work on landscapes and has led the Austrian work and initiated the international work on small towns which led to the major ASSET project. The survey work for the Austrian Register of Small Historic Towns was carried out by Gerhard Fasching and Silvia Mayer. The latest work on the 'Green Belt' has been undertaken by Arthur Spiegler and Brigitte Macaria.

### **(b) International ECOVAST events held in Austria**

ECOVAST Austria has hosted many ECOVAST international events and excursions in their country. International Committee meetings have been hosted in Graz in 1984; Linz in 1987; Attersee in 1997; Vienna in 2003; 2006; 2008; 2009; and 2010; and in Kirchbach in 2007. Several General Assemblies and Biennial Assemblies have been held in Austria (with some, but not all, attached to one of the International Committee meetings mentioned above) in Graz in 1984; Attersee in 1997; Retz in 2005; and Vienna in 2011. Thanks should go to the Austrian Chairman Franz Nahrada who has hosted several events in his hotel in Vienna.





*Murau 1<sup>st</sup> Small Town Symposium*



*Retz 3rd Small Town Symposium*

There have been several international conferences or workshops staged by ECOVAST Austria in Murau in 1998; in Waidhofen an der Ybbs in 2002; Retz in 2005; and Grieskirchen in 2009. ECOVAST Austria is also hosting the general assembly for 2017 in the 'National Park Center Neusiedlersee Seewinkel', in Illmitz, Burgenland.

All these events have given members a chance to meet not only members of the Austrian Section but many people from their rural areas – both local politicians and local leaders; project leaders and farmers and rural inhabitants and to visit Austrian villages and small towns from across the country.

**(c) Listed below is a summary of some the projects carried out by ECOVAST Austria**

The main focus of ECOVAST Austria has been on landscapes and historic small towns and latterly on the 'Green Belt'

**(i) Landscape Identification**

ECOVAST's interest in natural heritage in its landscapes was built into its main aims and objectives stemming from its very beginnings in 1984. Landscape is the setting of our daily lives – if it is beautiful our spirits are raised. It contains evidence of how our earlier generations lived and used the land – it is full of human history as well as nature. Europe began to develop an increased interest in landscape – many of which were becoming gravely damaged. This determination resulted in the 'European Landscape Convention' – initiated by the Council of Europe in October 2000 and formally opened for signatures by governments in March 2004.

The Convention is about **all** landscapes not just National Parks – as all landscapes have character and quality and each matters to those who live and work in it. ECOVAST supported the Convention and urged governments to sign it.

ECOVAST set up a Working Group on landscapes led by Arthur Spiegler of Austria and he, together with Michael Dower (United Kingdom) and the group prepared a publication '**ECOVAST Landscape Identification – a Guide to Good Practice**' in September 2006. The document was produced originally for the First INTERREG Landscape Conference taking place in Lower Austria in the landscape 'Woodquarter' in Pernegg. The guide set out a 'matrix' to define the landscape character of an area which identified 10 layers of main landscape features: the rocks/geology; the climate; geomorphology/landform; soil; landcover (woods, fields etc); agriculture and forestry; houses and settlements; other man-made features (roads, mines, factories etc); historic features (castles, windmills etc); and finally feelings and associations (which have been expressed in music, painting or poetry).

The document sets out specific steps that need to be taken to identify a 'landscape' and examples of three separate landscapes were studied and the matrix used. These were 3 landscapes adjacent but very different from each other on the Austrian/Slovakian border – the Weinviertel in Austria; the Záhorie in Slovakia to the east and the small mountain chain of the Small Carpathians to the east of the Záhorie also in Slovakia.

ECOVAST Austria subsequently got involved in putting the guide into practice with higher schools with government support from the Lower Austrian Landscape Fund and during 2009 and 2010 cross border projects with Austrian and Czech schools led to a refinement of 'the matrix'. Other workshops with participants from governments and the Austrian Academy of Science and in other countries (in The Netherlands, Poland, Croatia) led to further refinements and a **revised 'ECOVAST Landscape Identification – A Guide to Best Practice'** was published in September 2012.



## **(ii) Small Historic European Towns (SHETs)**

The Austrian policy statement about the essence' of small historic towns states that all *Small Historic European Towns*, with very few exceptions, are embedded in a younger urban sprawl, extending in their hinterland). They provide a significant role for the life of their region today.

Although there is no formal agreement across Europe or even across the ECOVAST membership on the upper size limit of a small town', Austria understand 'Small Towns' as rural towns up to 50.000 inhabitants, but no lower limit. This number of their inhabitants counts for the whole town community – a town and its dependent hinterland. The number of people living in the historic centres are not covered by the official statistics. (The example of St. Veit, Carinthia shows: the town community and hinterland as being some 14.000 inhabitants; the town itself only 7.500 people and only 1,500 people are living in the historic centre. However town statistics in the formal ECOVAST publications refer to the town area only without its hinterland). Historic small towns combine, in a very special and characteristic way, urbanity with rurality - "rural urbanity". Small towns are embedded in their surrounding/landscapes, thus building an unbreakable unit with their hinterlands or landscapes.

Small Historic European Towns (SHETs) provide rural urbanity in the countryside, and form part of their regions. These SHETs act like "living beings" and therefore are subject to permanent change. It is one of our main tasks, to allow their changing without destroying or losing their essence, their character. SHETs are commercial and cultural focal points of their regions, and they provide (higher) jobs. To be called a SHET, the town needs to fulfil at least three of the five "main criteria", developed by ECOVAST Austria in the last two decades.

These SHETs are a most important part of today's European rural life, and they also should have certain functional criteria. These criteria have been used by and proved by discussions with architects and they are the crux of rural development. The SHETs are not "museum towns". In the course of the last years their value has begun to be acknowledged nationally and also on the European level by the Council of Europe based in Strasbourg.

Four **international symposiums** to discuss the problems and opportunities in small towns have been arranged and led by ECOVAST Austria – referred to above – in Murau; Ybbs an der Donau, Retz and Grieskirchen and a **workshop** held in St Veit an der Glan. The Retz event led to the development of a major project – Action to Strengthen European Small Towns or **ASSET** - which lasted from 2006-2017. Austria was part of the international ASSET team. The task of the ASSET team was to conduct surveys to provide evidence on small towns (negative and positive) which would back up the opinions being developed by ECOVAST which were used to influence rural policy across Europe.

An individual Austrian project – a **Register of Austria's small towns was one of the sub-projects of ASSET**. It resulted in a list of 164 Austrian Small Towns of which 159 can be called Small Historic European Towns. (This was one of two national pieces of survey work on small towns – the other being the survey of towns and cities in the United Kingdom published finally in 2017).

The main **ECOVAST Publications** on small towns were pan-European. '**The Importance of Small Towns**' published in November 2014 reported on the number of small towns across Europe (not just the European Union) and how many people live in them; opinion studies on the problems in small towns and listed examples of what towns have been doing to improve their future prospects. The publication included quotes from Arthur Spiegler, Gerhard Fasching and Silvia Mayer. Among the 86 best practice examples, several are of Austrian towns; Leoben which makes a direct contribution to the local economy with a former nunnery being converted into a new shopping mall in the town centre; small towns in Lower Austria associated with specific local produce celebrated with pumpkin festivals; Hallein which attracts tourist and celebrates its salt mining history; Gussing, a small town that has made significant strides to move away from, fossils fuels and instead to make use of renewable energy; and Retz which has developed a niche market by using its historic country estate as a major conference site in Austria.

'**The Evidence Base**' published in February 2015 – which records the survey work on which our ECOVAST policy document is based - includes a section on the work carried out to produce the Austrian Register of Small Towns.

The supplementary document '**The Importance of Small Towns in the Danube Basin**' published in September 2015 (to coincide with the ECOVAST involvement with the Danube Participation Day in October 2015) has further examples of best practice in another 4 Austrian towns: Durnstein offering quality local wines; Friesach – a lovely small walled town which is an example of 'widening the choice for visitors from the normal honey-pots; Eisenerz which is part of the Council of Europe Cultural Iron Trail; and Mondsee and Scharding which are towns which use and advertise the importance of their specific landscape settings of Lake-side and River-side.

### (iii) The Green Belt project

The project has been to study and report on the 'Green Belt' to try and influence future rural policy on this unique rural area. The Green Belt is a 'green ribbon' along the former 'Iron Curtain' and involving 24 countries. In total between Travemünde on the Baltic Sea to Trieste on the Adriatic Sea is some 3,400 kilometres long with about 50 different landscapes and around 200 Small Towns – most of them being historic. The Austrian section is 1,216 kilometres long with 15 different landscapes with 40 some small towns. The short Slovenian / Italian section hosts 4 landscapes with 5 (historic) towns. ECOVAST Austria is also working together with ECOVAST Germany and at a meeting with the German National Section in November 2015 Angus Fowler of Germany reported on his considerable time and effort which has now identified some 30 different landscapes and 150 small towns along the German stretch of the Green Belt. All these findings offer a good basis for future collaboration. ECOVAST Austria's ongoing work on this project has already looked at 13 different landscapes and more than 50 small towns or market towns.



*Land & Raum Magazine*

*Brigitte Macaria moderating the round table at the Vienna Republic Club*

ECOVAST Austria has also held two lectures with both private and official institutions concerning the Green Belt, its landscapes and Historic Small Towns – for example they took part in a 'round table' at the Vienna Republic Club institution regarding the social-political activities along the Central European section of the Green Belt, with the title: "European Green Belt, quo vadis?". Brigitte Macaria is keeping contact with the Council of Europe (Strasbourg), and with institutions of the Austrian-Hungarian border region and the Green Belt. Brigitte Macaria is the official Secretary General of ECOVAST Austria for many years and is continuously keeping in touch with national and international contacts particularly in the matter of Small Historic Towns and the Green Belt.

One of Austria's publications, Land & Raum / The Austrian Council for Agricultural Engineering and Rural Development, contains articles about the ongoing work of ECOVAST Austria on the Green Belt and its historic towns and landscapes - with a major article in Volume 2 2014.

It is hoped that the results of this work will be used to develop a 'sustainable regional development' in these areas – recognizing both the threats and opportunities of the area. It is hoped that there will be the creation of a network of 'Green Belt Heritage Trails'; a platform of cooperation between its small towns; and a network of local leaders to assure its well-being. The Green Belt could lead to a World Heritage Site as a site which represents a prominent role in recent European History – the possible transformation from a 'zone of death' to a 'green ribbon of life'.

### (iv) The European Rural Parliament

The second pan-European Rural Parliament was staged in Austria in the small historic town of Schärding in November 2015. Austria sent a delegation and provided a small exhibition of their ECOVAST work in the marquee in the main town square and took part in the workshops and discussions on small towns. This contributed to a specific statement on 'small towns' in the ERP agreed Manifesto. The subsequent Action Programme stated the ERP would like to take forward an initiative based on small towns which it hopes will involve ECOVAST international participation.

Article written by Arthur Spiegler and Brigitte Macaria (information on the work by ECOVAST Austria) and Valerie Carter (information taken from Wikipedia entries on history and geography of Austria)

## REPORT ON ECOVAST NATIONAL SECTIONS

### Austria

This is the autumn report of ECOVAST Austria: **Austria is about to host this year's General Assembly of ECOVAST International. It will be held from, 26. to 27. October, in the National Park Centre of the trans-border World Heritage Site of Neusiedler See - the western most step lake of Europe. The main topics for discussion will be the future options for the Green Belt and the future topics for ECOVAST itself.**

There have been recent and hopeful developments in Austria and the long absence of Austria in not ratifying the European Landscape Convention (ELC) seems to be coming to an end. The Core Team of ECOVAST Austria, (Arthur Spiegler & Brigitte Macaria) have received personal invitations from Ms. Maguelonne Dejeant Pons, (Head of the Landscape Division, Executive Secretary of the ELC, Steering Committee of Culture, Heritage and Landscape of the Council of Europe) to attend the **'19th Council of Europe Meeting and Workshop on 'The implementation of the ELC at local level: local democracy'** in at an event **5-6 September 2017** at the **Mendel University in Brno** in the Czech Republic Strasbourg. The Workshop will be about experiences - taking into account the landscape dimension at the local level- with a special focus on the Green Belt. Arthur Spiegler and Brigitte Macaria have been invited to speak at this event and present a paper and give a Power Point presentation on the Green Belt.

ECOVAST Austria will take this opportunity also to announce the good ELC news that Austria is now on the way of ratifying the European Landscape Convention and they have asked their source at the Ministry of Internal Affairs - Ms. Dr. Elsa Brunner - whether they are yet allowed to spread the news, and she gave the "go ahead". **ECOVAST Austria also hope to use the event in Brno to suggest holding an ELC Landscape Workshop for the first time in Austria.**

ECOVAST Austria also has been invited to participate at the **"Monumento Salzburg"** being held on **11-13 January in 2018**, where cultural heritage and landscapes are going to be a strong focus for the event. ECOVAST Austria will present and discuss their views about the Green Belt. The year of 2018 is the "European Year of Cultural Landscape". <http://www.monumento-salzburg.at/start-1905.html>

The Green Belt is still a specific interesting topic for us; specially taking about the cultural heritage/cultural landscape "Kulturlandschaften 2018". <https://sharingheritage.de/en/>

We are pleased to announce that our Iranian friend and member of ECOVAST Austria - landscape arch., Masha Bazrafshan, whom we supported in matters of small towns and landscape identification has won a post-graduate scholarship at the ETH Zurich. There might be a chance to meet her in person on her visit to Austria.

The General Assembly of ECOVAST Austria will be held, as always, in December 2017.

**ECOVAST Austria Core Team: Brigitte Macaria, Arthur Spiegler**

### Croatia

Report of ECOVAST Croatia in 2017: The Croatian Section of ECOVAST started 2017 by organizing its General Assembly. Associate Prof. Aleksandar Lukić, Department of Geography, University of Zagreb, was elected as a new chairman. The Steering Committee now consists of both long-time active members of ECOVAST but we also welcomed some new and enthusiastic experts working in different fields of small towns and village development. An Action plan was drafted and we have recognized the importance of fundraising in order to achieve our aims of stronger presence of our section in the rural development processes in Croatia.

Therefore, we have mapped potential sources and prepared the project application for European Social Fund under the Call for "Art and Culture for Youth". The Call aimed at overcoming the restrictions on youth's access to cultural and artistic events and activities, and encourage young people to actively participate in the community cultural life, especially in less developed rural areas of Croatia. Our project proposal was entitled "Cultural Landscapes – an Opportunity for Artistic Participation of the Youth in Villages and Small Towns". The project proposal builds up on the existing experiences of ECOVAST in recognizing and protecting rural landscapes while at the same time providing the opportunity to enrich them through artistic expressions of the young people. The final decisions concerning the success of our application will be notified by the end of the 2017.



We also took an active part in organizing the Second Croatian Rural Parliament. The initiator and main organizer of the Croatian Rural Parliament was Croatian Rural Development Network (HMRR - Hrvatska mreža za ruralni razvoj). The network has 46 members (in August 2017), and ECOVAST Croatia was one of its founding members back in 2006. Preparations for the Second Croatian RP lasted for the past two years. Nikša Božić from ECOVAST was a member of the Organizing Committee and took an active part in organizing this event. He was also the editor of the small booklet published on this occasion and took an active part in creating the draft and final version of the Declaration of the Second Croatian RP. Tihana Stepinac Fabijanić also attended the event and participated in its plenary sessions and workshops. Conclusions of the three-day work are summarized in the **Declaration of the Second Croatian Rural Parliament** (available in English): [http://www.hmrr.hr/media/76829/deklaracija\\_2hrp\\_en.pdf](http://www.hmrr.hr/media/76829/deklaracija_2hrp_en.pdf)

Our plan for the future includes organizing the conference on role of the eco-museums in the local rural development in 2018, the idea initiated by our new Steering Committee member, Dr. Klementina Batina from Croatian Academy of Sciences and Art.

**ECOVAST Croatia Aleksandar Lukić and Nikša Božić**

## **Germany**

Report of the German Section August 2017: Little of real importance has happened in the German Section since the last Report. The Section has intervened – at the request of Ralf Bokermann – with various authorities (Town, District, State Conservation Authority of Hessen) for the preservation of the section of the Town Wall in Witzenhausen/Hessen, threatened by plans for the expansion of the Red Cross Hospital there. At the request of SAVE Europe's Heritage we have enquired about the situation of the Hessisches Hof in Treffurt an der Werra/Thüringen – an imposing timber-framed building of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century - threatened by demolition and are considering possible action (a possible information event).

As a result of our visit in October 2016 a project for preservation work and concepts for possible use of the Brücker Mühle/Amöneburg near Marburg are being developed in cooperation with the Architecture Faculty at the University of Kassel. Considerable information has already been collected on preservation and varied use of watermills throughout Europe with the help of the Mills Section of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in London, the Hague Office of Europa Nostra and Monumentenwacht Noord-Brabant/Netherlands. Perhaps it may be possible to present this project in the framework of the European Cultural Heritage Year (ECHY) 2018. Projects for churches (care/stewardship of redundant churches in Germany and Europe) in cooperation with Future for Religious Heritage, the Foundation for Fortified Churches in Transylvania etc. have been suggested by the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen in particular in connection with the former churches in Niedereisenhausen and Bürgeln (also visited by ECOVAST October 2016), both now in the hands of local associations, who need further help and support. Another project under consideration is the dendrochronological dating of timber-framed churches (Germany, England, France).

Irmelin Küttner has been active writing articles and involved in the official inquiry in Brandenburg on further local government reform (reduction of the number of districts/regions/Kreise), Ivar Henckel with various projects, in particular with the small town St. Andreasberg in the former inner-German border area (Green Belt), threatened by depopulation and other negative developments. Ralf Bokermann is active resisting unfavourable developments in Witzenhausen, attending conferences and meetings concerned with agriculture and rural development.

Members of the German Section have attended events organized by CIVILSCAPE and the Bund Heimat und Umwelt/German Landscape Forum, in particular concerned with securing the support of the Federal Republic of Germany for the European Landscape Convention.

DenkmalWacht Brandenburg-Berlin continues to lobby for the further development of preventive maintenance (as in the Netherlands, Belgium, partly in the UK etc.) and helped organize a well-attended workshop in October 2017 in Bonn, organized by the German Foundation for Preservation of Historic Buildings. A. Fowler attended a high-powered workshop in November 2016 on the Island of Vilm (next to Rügen/Vorpommern) on developing better sustainability of World Heritage Sites, he and Michael Strecker attended an interesting international workshop in February 2017 at Louvain/Belgium, organized by the UNESCO Chair for Preventive Maintenance at the University there.

The German Section together with the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen (Marburg) and other organizations organized as in past years a common stand at the Monument Fair in Leipzig November 2016 and will do this again in November 2018. A. Fowler attended a meeting of the European Heritage Alliance (EHA) in connection with the Europa Nostra meetings in Leipzig November 2016 on behalf of ECOVAST and will attend a further meeting of EHA in Brussels mid October 2017.

**ECOVAST Germany - Angus Fowler**

## **Hungary**

This is the report from Hungary for 2017. The Hungarian Section has not been so active in this period. During the last EU rural programme 2007-2013 we were a member of the Monitoring Committee with a voting right. This activity finished in the last year. We were not invited to be a member of the new Monitoring Committee for the present programme period 2014-2020.

In the second half of 2016 and in 2017 we have tried to find our place, function and activity in the Hungarian Rural Policy arena. During this period of seeking activity we realised that:

- there is no real and coherent rural policy in the country, (there is just an EU rural programme but it is not realistic in terms of defining a rural policy for the country); and there is no room for the non-government sector to take part in any partnership framework - particularly if the organisation has an international background or it is not rather close to the actual political government.

In 2017 we have tried to find convenient projects with financial help to save our existence and form the basis for future activity.

- we know that we have a competent knowledge in the micro-region programming because our previous LEADER experience and our pilot activity in Szob territory and also for dealing with CLLD possibilities at the beginning of this period.
- we need to better understand the mystics of 'trickle down' to see how it can work and we wait a future of rural areas
- we would like any next steps to include investigations into the connections between small towns and their rural surroundings.
- we have tried to find a good entry point into the European Citizens Programme – such as thematic crossborder networking among villages and/or small towns.
- we have thought about working together with universities which deal with territorial, or even closer rural development questions and are open to cooperation with others as teacher or pupils. (In some universities the pupils who are interested in rural development question and want to work in an organised way with others could work with ECOVAST Hungary)
- we could help with networking in the National Talent Care activity in rural areas – we know that the teaching infrastructure is declining in these territories.

**ECOVAST Hungary: Gabor Rajnai**

## **Russia**

During the last year 2017 Russian section of ECOVAST take part at the seminars:

In the estate "Suchanovo" of the Union of Russian Architects, Association of Wooden Housing, Private workshop by Nicolay Belousov. Olga Sevan was in the jury of the practicum "Drevolocia" of the young architects, which made the wooden elements in this estate. <https://archi.ru/russia/75062/plach-sukhanovo-plach>

Olga Sevan took part in the meeting in the famous State museum "Archangelskoe" with the members of Committee UNESCO. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1558164094219329&set=pcb.1558165464219192&type=3&theater>

**ECOVAST Russia: Olga Sevan**

## **United Kingdom**

Report of ECOVAST United Kingdom 2017: The UK Section is now very small and does not have many active members. The task of getting in touch with all past members of the Section is underway. Unfortunately we have lost 5 members during the last few years.

The most recent work of the UK Section has been to complete the final ASSET project with the publication of the List of all UK Towns and Cities in February 2017. They have also led the new work with the EU European Economic and Social Committee and Tom Jones of Wales who leads one of their Social Committees, with Valerie Carter preparing and helping to analyse a questionnaire on the importance of rural communities to help rural revival. The results were presented to an EESC Panel Meeting in Brussels which was under the banner of the EESC and ECOVAST and specific ECOVAST evidence of the importance of rural communities was given – small towns in Croatia (Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic) and villages in Hungary (Pal Hajas).

An ongoing piece of work has been the research and production of the first draft of the History of ECOVAST. The draft will go onto the International website shortly but the final work will go on into 2018.

**ECOVAST United Kingdom - Valerie Carter**

## NEWS FROM PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

### CIVILSCAPE



- The CIVILSCAPE Taskforce met on 17-18 March in Bolzano Italy to decide on their contribution to the European Year of Cultural Heritage to be held in 2018.
- The CIVILSCAPE General Assembly for 2017 was held in Seville, Spain on 26 March 2017.
- An International conference on Landscape Observatories was held in Amersfoort, Netherlands on 11 February 2017 and 15 countries participated.
- A Marinescape Forum was held in Poole, Dorset, United Kingdom on 16-17 May 2017.

### EUROGITES



During 2017 Eurogites, together with the European Countryside Movement (ECM) organized a conference in Bergamo, Lombardy, Italy on 16 February 2017 to celebrate the 'International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development'

### EUROPA NOSTRA INTERNATIONAL



- 16 May 2017 Turku, Finland hosts the European Heritage Congress and the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage/ Europa Nostra awards
  - 13 June 2017 Europa Nostra takes part in the Committee of the Regions Congress in Turku, Finland
  - 20 June 2017 Europa Nostra took part in the Belgrade Conference on the positive and cohesive force of heritage for South-East Europe
  - 21 June 2017 the launch of the campaign to save the House of Bizet in Bougival, France
  - 29 June 2017 Europa Nostra gives a statement on the endangered heritage site of Hasankeyf, Turkey
  - 12 July 2017 Europa Nostra takes part in the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee
  - 18 August 2017 – the launch for the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards 2018
- EUROPA NOSTRA UK Annual meeting is to be held in Bath, England in September 2017
- <https://www.europanostra.org/events/europa-nostra-uk-annual-meeting-bath/>

### EUROPEAN HERITAGE ALLIANCE 3.3

- On 22-24 March 2017 the 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop on Industrial Heritage was held in Borås, Sweden
- On 27 April 2017 the European Heritage Alliance 3.3 met at Bozar, Brussels. The highlight of the meeting was the adoption of the European Year of Cultural Heritage by the European Parliament
- On 3-6 May 2017 was the European Museum Forum (40<sup>th</sup> anniversary) and European Museum of the Year Award held in Zagreb, Croatia



## PREPARE



Partnership for Rural Europe

- In March 2017 there was a Black sea travelling workshop with participants, in the rural regions of Georgia and Armenia focused on studying small farming communities and discussing how they could be supported in pursuing their own well-being.
- In April 2017 PREPARE took part in the first Albanian Rural Parliament held at the University in Tirana,
- Since the 2016 PREPARE Gathering and the election of the new PREPARE Board the organization has been involved with the arrangements for the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Rural Parliament with the lead of Kim Smedslund, together with ERCA (Vanessa Halhead) which will be held in the Netherlands in October 2017 (see below)

## NEWS FROM OTHER PAN-EUROPEAN ORGANISATIONS

### EUROPEAN LEADER ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



- On 17 April 2017 ELARD delegation met Mr Mihail Dumitru- DG Agri Deputy Director General
- On 9 June 2017 ELARD produced a summary of the Rural Networks Steering Group meeting which had been held on 17 May 2017 in Brussels, Belgium
- On 6 June 2017 there was a LEADER/CLLD Gathering – ‘Role of bottom-up approach renewing ESI Funds for 2021-2027’
- On 18 July 2017 ELARD attended the conference ‘CAP: Have your say’ held in Brussels Belgium

### EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



- 26-28 June 2017 the 8<sup>th</sup> National Rural Network meeting was held in Jyvaskyla, Finland
- On 7 July 2017 a conference was held in Brussels, Belgium to discuss the results of the consultation ‘CAP: have Your Say’
- On 28 August 2017 an event labelled ‘Food Integrity in the Food Chain – How can the Animal Production Sector contribute ?’ was held in Tallinn, Estonia organized by European Stakeholders
- On 29 August 2017 an event on ‘The Role of LAGs in Support of Rural Development Policies in Europe’ was held in Parma, Italy
- On 3<sup>rd</sup> September an event ‘Resilient Communities: Pillars of Sustainable Rural Development was held in Cork, Ireland and organized by European Stakeholders
- From 5-7 September an event ‘Transforming Food and Farming – Making it happen was held in Tallinn, Estonia and organized by European Stakeholders
- On 8<sup>th</sup> September an event ‘Innovation in Agriculture – What Should Agriculture Look Like in the Future was held in Berlin, Germany and organized by European Stakeholders
- On 23 September 2017 an event ‘European Day of Sustainable Communities is to be held in Brussels, Belgium, organized by European Stakeholders
- On 25 September 2017 a ‘Conference on the Future of EU Finances’ is to be held in Brussels, Belgium, organized by EU Institutions
- On 28 September 2017 an event ‘Modern Biotechnologies in Agriculture is to be held in Brussels, Belgium, organized by EU Institutions

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS FOR 2017

### ECOVAST



**25- 26 October 2017 ECOVAST will hold its Biennial Assembly at Neusiedler See, in Burgenland, Austria.** There will be an excursion to look at the 2 national parks surrounding the lake, one in Austria and one in Hungary. There will also be a short ECOVAST International Committee on the evening of the first day with the Biennial Assembly being held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day.

***Please make sure you respond to the email invitation sent out to you 15 August 2017***

### CIVILSCAPE



- On 5-6 October 2017 CIVILSCAPE will hold an 'Ocean Conference'
- On 9-11 November 2017 the CIVILSCAPE Taskforce meets to discuss 'Local heritage in Europe'
- On 1 December 2017 there is a Landscape Forum to be held in Berlin, Germany
- On 8 December 2017 there is the European Cultural Forum to be held in Milan, Italy

### EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE 2017

The European Union designates one or two cities to become The European Capital of Culture for a period of one year during which it organizes a series of cultural events with a strong European dimension. It was started in 1985 with the designation of Athens in Greece as 'The European City of Culture' but the title was changed in 1999 to 'The European Capital of Culture'. Since 2001 it has designated two cities. For the year 2017 the two cities are Aarhus in Denmark and Pafos in Cyprus. To find out what events are being organized to celebrate these cities for the remaining part of 2017 please see the two web sites:

[www.aarhus2017.dk](http://www.aarhus2017.dk)

[www.pafos2017.eu/en/](http://www.pafos2017.eu/en/)

### EUROPEAN HERITAGE ALLIANCE 3.3

- On the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017 will be the next meeting of the European Heritage Alliance 3.3 to be held in Brussels, Belgium – a date which unfortunately clashes with the European Rural Parliament being held in the Netherlands.

### EUROPEAN LEADER ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



- On 3 September 2017 is the 16<sup>th</sup> Summer Academy – 'Resilient Communities: pillars of sustainable rural development'
- On 10 October 2017 ELARD and LDnet workshop - 'Communities as change agents; local development in the EU beyond 2020'
- On 8 November 2017 there is a CLLD Seminar to be held in Hungary

## EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



- On 3 October 2017 an event 'Innovation and Cooperation in Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Rural Regions' is to be held in Eisenstadt, Austria and organized by European Stakeholders
- Also on 3 October 2017 an event 'Impact of CAP on Natura 2000 Habitats' is being held in Eger, Hungary and organized by EU Institutions
- On 5 October an event 'Our Ocean, an Ocean for Life' is being held in Malta and organized by EU Institutions
- On 10 October 2017 an event 'Solutions for Wood Mobilisation in Europe' is being held in Paris, France and organized by European Stakeholders
- On 17 October an event 'Rural Development in Europe: How can CAP Support Social Cohesion and Growth' is to be held in Brussels, Belgium and organized by European Stakeholders
- On 18 October an event 'Global Timber and Agriculture Investment Forum' is to be held in London, United Kingdom and organized by International Organisations
- On 8-10 November a European Seminar 'Capitalising on CLLD Experiences' is to be held in Gyor, Hungary

## EUROPEAN RURAL PARLIAMENT



The third European Rural Parliament is to be held in the village of Venhorst in the Municipality of Boekal in the Province of North Brabant in the Netherlands and will run from Wednesday 18 October to Saturday 21 October 2017. The Parliament has been organized by 3 partners – ERCA (Vanessa Halhead); PREPARE Kim Smedslund); and ELARD (Kirsten Birke Lund). Registration Forms have been sent out.

## PREPARE



PREPARE announces an International Conference for the Black Sea Region – 'CSOS Participation in the Implementation of Rural Development Policies' is to be held on 12 September 2017 in Hotel Ukraine in Kyiv, Ukraine. The date and venue of the PREPARE General Assembly is not yet known but is expected in late autumn.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2018

### CIVILSCAPE



CIVILSCAPE has posted the following events for 2018

- 23-26 February 2018 for the European Cultural Landscape Forum and for the General Assembly 2018
- May 2018 for the Marinescape Forum to be held in Burgos, Spain
- June 2018 for the Baltic Landscape Forum



## **DENKMAL 2018**

ECOVAST Germany together with the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen (Marburg) and other organizations had a common stand at the Monument Fair in Leipzig November 2016 and other former years. A 3 day event 8-10 November 2018 will be held in the Leipzig Exhibition Centre in Leipzig, Germany. This is an event showcasing products from building construction, office and commercial supplies, business services and architecture and design industries.

## **EUROGITES**



EUROGITES will stage the 6<sup>th</sup> European Congress of Rural Tourism in October 2018 in Lithuania

## **EUROPA NOSTRA INTERNATIONAL**



The Annual European Heritage Congress and the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europe Nostra Awards for 2018 will be staged in late spring in Berlin, Germany

<http://industrial-archaeology.org/queen-street-mill-entered-for-europa-nostra-7-most-endangered-sites-2018/>  
<http://7mostendangered.eu>

EUROPA NOSTRA UK propose a visit to Whitchurch Silk Mill and Winchester in 2018, organised by Pam Moore and Phil Turner, possibly in October/November 2018 - when the building works funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund at the Mill will be complete. The mill was preserved by the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust (HBPT). The repairs undertaken were awarded the Civic Trust Commendation and Diploma of Merit by Europa Nostra. 1990. Since then the Whitchurch Silk Mill Trust has managed the site and continues to produce silk whilst also making it available for the public to enjoy.

## **EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE 2018**

The cities of Leeuwarden in the Netherlands and Valletta in Malta have already been designated by the European Commission as the two European Capitals of Culture for 2018. Each will hold a series of events to celebrate these cities. Look for press releases on the European Commission website.

## **EUROPEAN YEAR OF CULTURE**

For the first time the European Commission is designating a 'European Year of Culture'. The main objectives of this European Year are: to promote cultural diversity, international dialogue and social cohesion; to highlight the economic contribution of cultural heritage to the culture and creative sectors including small and medium sized enterprises and to emphasize the role of cultural heritage in EU external relations.