



ECOVAST REPORT 61

April 2016

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EDITORIAL

In this edition a special feature spotlights the considerable exemplary work of ECOVAST **Romania**, involving the conservation of many historic buildings.

There is article about the Congress in Krakow where **Small Towns** were of interest. Now that the ASSET project has ended, there is no separate report, but it is heartening to see from the reports of the German and Austrian Sections that there is continued interest in Small Towns and that ECOVAST is considering what future action could be taken on the topic, following the European Rural Parliament of 2015.

Our members in Austria and Germany are active on the "Green Belt" **landscape** (former Iron Curtain).

There is news that 2018 will be the **European Year of Cultural Heritage**.

Work in **Croatia** includes sun dried clay, dry stone walling and gas lamps in Zagreb.

Olga Sevan reviews books on **Wooden Buildings** of Russia, and a conference in Karelia, Russia in September on the preservation of wooden monuments is one of the events this year.

The 2016 ECOVAST General Assembly is announced for 21 - 24 October in Germany.

A PDF of this newsletter can be accessed at:
<http://www.dorfwiki.org/upload/PhilTurner/ECOVASTNewsletter61April2016.pdf>

Please send copy for the next Newsletter to me, at p.turner@semantise.com by October 31 2016

Phil Turner (Editor)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Best wishes to you all for the year of 2016 – a little late but this is our first Newsletter for this year.

I have represented ECOVAST at the 2nd Congress of Local Governments in Krakow, Poland April 5-6. I was one of the invited panelists in May 2015 and it was an honour to be invited back to present again at one of its workshops. My full report is described later on in this Newsletter.

I thought I would try something different in this Newsletter. I hope that a more in-depth article will enable members to learn a little more about the countries which have ECOVAST National Sections. This time the 'spotlight' is on Romania, and it has been compiled by Magdalena Banu and Calin Hoinărescu with a little scene setting from myself. Romania is a very active Section and the article draws together some of their activities reported in Newsletters over the years. It also lists other rural activities which might be of interest.

ECOVAST Romania are to be congratulated on their work and the high profile they have achieved in their part of Europe.

This is the first 'special article' on one of the countries who have a National Section and it is hoped that it will spur others to prepare an article on their country in future Newsletters and so give us all a taste of their country.

Finally I want to make sure that you put the date of the next ECOVAST Assembly in your diaries. The dates are the **weekend 21-24 October 2016** and it will be held in Germany, which is fairly central for all members. I do hope you will make every effort to come. We need to discuss the future direction for ECOVAST International.

Valerie Carter

SPOTLIGHT ON ROMANIA

Romania covers an area of 238,391 square kilometres – the 12th largest in Europe, and is the 7th most populous member state of the European Union with 20 million people; and bordered by 2 other Member States – Hungary to the west and Bulgaria to the south; and 3 other countries – Ukraine to the north, Serbia to the west and Moldova to the east. Its capital Bucharest is the sixth largest city in the EU. The river Danube – Europe’s second longest river (after the Volga) rises in Germany and flows through ten countries before it empties into the Black Sea in Romania.



Geographically, Romania is divided almost equally between mountains, hills and plains. The Carpathian Mountains dominate the centre of Romania with 14 mountain ranges reaching above 2000 metres –with the highest at Moldoveanu Peak at 2544 metres. The mountains are surrounded by hills and the Moldavian and Transylvanian plateaux and the Wallachian plains. The Danube forms the border with both Serbia and Bulgaria and it flows into the Black Sea via the Danube Delta, the second largest and the best preserved delta in Europe. The great variety of landscapes in Romania has been recognised by many formal designations. The Danube Delta covers 5,762 hectares and in 2000 was declared a World Heritage Biosphere Reserve. There are 2 others Biosphere Reserves at Retezat in the southern Carpathians and the Rodna mountains in Maramures; there are 12 National Parks; 17 Nature Parks and 10 Nature reserves. The Black Sea is

also home to seaside resorts which attracted more than 1.3 million tourists in 2009 and the Carpathian Mountains boast several popular skiing resorts. Romania has signed the European Landscape Convention.

Historically modern-day Romania was part of the ancient Roman province of Dacia. The modern country was formed by a union of the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, and was officially named ‘Romania’ in 1866. Transylvania had been part of the Kingdom of Hungary since the 11th century. Most of Hungary (with Transylvania) and Moldavia and Wallachia had come under Ottoman suzerainty by 1541 until Romania gained its independence in 1877.

Transylvania became part of the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918 when it proclaimed union with Romania but years of dispute did not finalise the current boundaries between Hungary and Romania until 1947. Several other boundary changes have taken place, particularly the loss of eastern Moldavia which was annexed by the Soviet Union and eventually became the new country of Moldova. Politically Romania was a Kingdom in the 19th century; and in 1947 it became a Peoples Republic and remained part of the Russian communist bloc until 1989. After the fall of communism in Europe, Romania has had many democratic changes to its government and it developed closer ties with Western Europe and the United States. Romania became a member of the Council of Europe in 1993; it joined NATO in 2004 – hosting the 2008 summit in Bucharest and became part of the European Union in 2007.



Former Regions of Romania



Current Regions of Romania

As well as attractive rural landscapes, Romania has a wealth of historic villages, towns and cities – both large and small and has a rich heritage of folklore and traditions. It is particularly famous for its fortified villages; its painted churches, and its wooden churches. This has been fully recognised in UNESCO's World Heritage List which cites the whole of the historic centre of the small town of Sighișoara, Transylvania founded by German craftsmen and merchants and a fine example of a small fortified medieval town.

Also of world-wide importance are: Transylvania founded by German craftsmen and merchants and a fine example of a small fortified medieval town; the Monastery of Horezu, Wallachia a masterpiece of the 'Brancovenesti style; 7 medieval fortified churches in Transylvania built by the Saxons between the 13th and 15th centuries (Biertan, Călnic, Dârjiu, Prejmer, Saschiz, Valea and Viscri); 7 painted monasteries in Bucovina with painted exterior walls and elaborate frescoes, Moldavia (Arbore, Humor, Moldovita, Pătrăuți, Saint George's Church/Saint John the New Monastery, Voroneț); 8 wooden churches in northern Romania in the Maramureș region (Barsan, Budești, Josani, Desești, Ieud, Plopiș, Poienile Izei, Rogoz, Surdesti); and 6 Roman defensive Dacian fortresses in the Orăștie Mountains, Transylvania.

The University of Bucharest carried out research on its smaller towns (populations of less than 20,000 inhabitants) in 2009 and produced a paper called 'Romanian Small Towns Searching for their Identity' by Daniela Zamfir, Cristian Talanga and Ilinca Valentina Stoica.

The beautiful landscape and heritage of the ancient village of Rosia Montana is seriously threatened by a Canadian mining company proposal that wants to create Europe's largest gold mine. Local NGOs, national organisations and international heritage organisations were galvanised to raise heritage and environmental concerns and thousands of people protested in the streets of Bucharest. The environmentalists have won an important court ruling against the mining company and the future

remains undecided. The European campaign was led by EUROPA Nostra and has been supported by ECOVAST.

ECOVAST developed its own National Section in Romania in 1991 - and is not only well-known in Romania and successful in winning contracts to carry out a variety of different projects - but is also active in ECOVAST International as Mrs Magdalena Banu is currently a Vice President and Calin Hoinărescu, as well as being the President of the Romanian National Section is also a member of the ECOVAST International Committee.

Work of the Section has been much involved in mapping and helping preserve traditional rural buildings. Much of its work is concerned with the restoration of churches in many parts of Romania with the work being funded by the Romanian Union of Architects and the National Union of Restorer of Historic Monuments (UNRMI) – some of whose members are also members of ECOVAST Romania. UNRMI has produced a series of detailed brochures illustrating the work of restoration of churches and monastery complexes, with many of the examples include restoration works led by the architect Calin Hoinărescu.

ECOVAST Romania has also been successful in securing EU funding for the restoration of monuments in rural areas of Romania, particularly for monastery complexes all over the country. ECOVAST studies made over the years showed that the recovery and revitalisation of important monastic nuclei will generate significant tourist activity, especially ecumenical tourism. All restorations have involved restoration training schools for craftsmen in traditional building crafts – supervised by ECOVAST members.

The National Union of Historic Buildings in Romania (UNRMI) is the main body for the conservation, protection and enhancement of monuments in Romania and is a professional organisation of the specialists with great experience in this field. It represents the interests of more than 3,000 specialists with another 30 or so associate members recognised at national and international level for their work around the country; researchers, archaeologists, art historians, chemists, biologists, geophysicists, architects, engineers with different specialities, painters and restorers. UNRMI have a strategy for raising awareness and supporting initiatives to attract a large number of civil society representatives to the restoration and enhancement of historical monuments.

Listed below is a selection of some the projects carried out by ECOVAST Romania over the last few years.

In 2008 The Romanian Section, together with the National Sciences Museum from Ploesti, arranged a symposium on traditional food, an event involving 12 villages. At the end of the event there were awards for best products and some for local people. In the same year the section also helped the villagers of Bertea, in Prahova County, to create a village museum, having completed the rebuilding of an 18th century house with the local community directed by a young and very enthusiastic Mayor.

In 2009 they gained European funding for the restoration of the old Vărbila Monastery in Prahova County, to become a centre to train guides specialising in cultural and religious tourism.



Vărbila Monastery

Also in 2009 they obtained funds to finance the restoration and enhancement of the monastic medieval ensemble of the Turnu Monastery, near the village of Târgșoru Vechi in also in Prahova County – cells, abbot house, the enclosure wall, white church ruins, church ruins of the Prince Mihnea Turcitu, church ruins of the Prince Vladislav Vlaicu, and ruins of Roman thermal baths. This work was finalised successfully in April 2016.



Turnu Monastery

In 2011 ECOVAST Romania participated as co-organiser in arranging a special conference 'Landscape, City Planning and Tourism and the Role and Responsibilities of Local and Regional

Authorities in implementing the European Landscape Convention in Prahova County. Calin and Manuela Hoinărescu presented their work and Arthur Spiegler of ECOVAST Austria was also invited and he spoke about Landscape Identification – A Guide to Good Practice (an ECOVAST publication) and 'The Landscape Fund of Lower Austria.

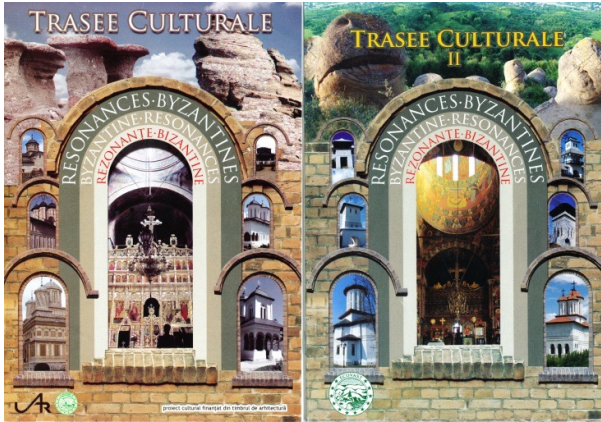
In 2012 they completed the restoration of the former Monastery Church of Măxineni, in Brăila County, in the plains and have funding for the restoration for other parts of the medieval monastery complex enclosed by walls and organise the park area around it which will include accommodation and form an important base for religious and cultural tourism in the lowlands. Also in 2012 ECOVAST Romania moved its legal office to Apostolache village, in Prahova County, near the monastery of the same name.



Apostolache Monastery Complex

In the same year they won finance for a new type of project to look at 'Byzantine resonances in Romania' – to define the byzantine monuments in Wallachia in south eastern Romania – many restored with contributions from their members - and promote them in a Tourist trail with accompanying brochure. It has also been looking at the country's Byzantine heritage to the north of the Danube and it produced the first Tourist trail and brochure linking many historic buildings. It identified 31 historic buildings.

In 2015 a second Tourist Trail was researched and published by ECOVAST Romania identifying 12 historic buildings. ECOVAST Romania would like see these tourist trails be integrated into the repertoire of cultural routes promoted by the Council of Europe.



The 2 Tourist Trail Brochures

In 2015 the restoration of the 'Emblazoned House' in the village of Chiojdu, Buzău county was completed (the responsible architect being Calin Hoinărescu) and now houses a permanent exhibition dedicated to the 'Civilization of the free peasants from Wallachia' showing traditional habitats from the villages and offering spaces for practising crafts and traditional activities.



'Emblazoned House' in the village of Chiojdu

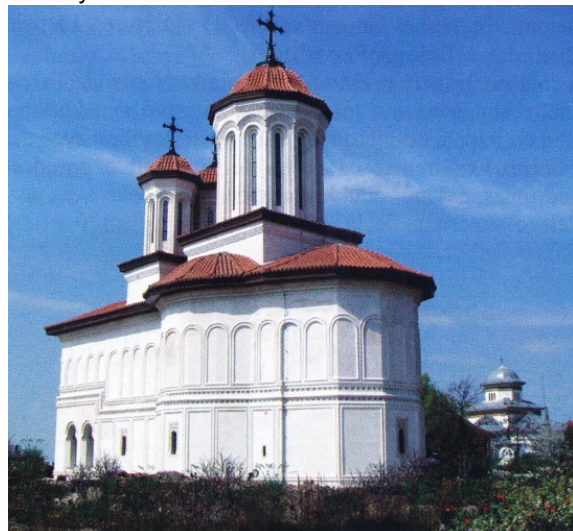


'Emblazoned House' in the village of Chiojdu Before Restoration



During Restoration

In December 2015, Architect Calin Hoinărescu was honoured with the Romanian Academy Award for the restoration of the church of the Măxineni monastery in Măxineni village in Braila County. It lies on the Bărăgan Plain – the eastern part of the large Wallachian Plain and was originally built in 1636 under the ruler Matei Basarab on the ruins of a small wooden church dating back to the 15th century.



Măxineni Monastery

In 2016 ECOVAST Romania and the Union of Architects of Romania organised a documentary exhibition in Bucharest called 'Into Sight' showing the rural monuments and other cultural contributions of the award winning architect.

Other events in Romania have attracted ECOVAST speakers.

In 2007, Phil Turner, then President of ECOVAST, spoke about rural towns at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca international conference on 'Competitiveness and European Integration'.

In 2012, Romania hosted the 4th European Conference on Rural Tourism, "Innovative Tourism – New Life for Rural Areas" organised by EUROGITES and held in the monastery of Neamt, Moldavia, Romania. Valerie Carter ran a workshop on 'cultural heritage'. She and Olga Sevan, ECOVAST Russia, and Magdalena Banu, ECOVAST Romania, all spoke at the event. The workshop day was followed by a tour of some of the famous painted monasteries nearby.

In 2013 Phil Turner represented ECOVAST at the Romanian Embassy in London to celebrate the work of the Mihai Eminescu Trust at its 25th anniversary. It was the Trust that first alerted the west about the imminent destruction of hundreds of medieval villages and towns by communist bulldozers. Mihai Eminescu was a national poet 1850-1889 who wrote about his travels through Transylvania and reflect the way of life in this part of eastern Europe.



Historic town of Sighișoara – a World Heritage Site

In 2014 ECOVAST published 'The Importance of Small Towns' and in 2015 a companion document 'The Importance of Small Towns in the Danube Basin' which highlighted several Romanian small towns demonstrating examples of best practice; including Sighișoara (pop.26,300) in Mureș County (part of historic Transylvania) a world famous attraction because of world heritage status; and Sulina (pop. 3,500) a small seaside resort in Tulcea County on the Black Sea.

Magdalena Banu and ECOVAST Romania contributed a major example of best practice – that of Tourist Trails which highlighted not only monuments but other small towns such as Câmpulung (pop.16,100), Curtea de Argeș (pop. 27,300) both in Arges County, and Sinaia (pop. 10,400) a mountain resort in Prahova County are all towns along their first Romanian Heritage Trail. Romania's formal Rural Network and their Association of Local Municipalities received copies of the ECOVAST publication 'The Importance of Small Towns'.

The small town of Caransebeș (pop. 24,000) in Caraș-Severin County, part of the Banat region in southwestern Romania formed part of the small ECOVAST small town exhibition at the Danube Forum Participation Day in Ulm, Germany in October 2015.

Romania sent a delegation to the European Rural Parliament held in Schärding, Austria in November 2015 – including The Rural Women National Association, the ERGO Network, Farmers' Association; Association for the development of Horezu village region; Terra Ecologica and the Parlamental Rural din Romania, and all were party to the signing of the agreed Manifesto on what the delegates would like to take forward.

Magdalena Banu and Calin Hoinărescu

World Heritage Sites –



Monastery of Horezu



Biertan Fortified Church

2nd European Congress of Local Governments held in Krakow, Poland 5-6 April 2016

ECOVAST was invited to the inaugural Congress staged in Krakow, Poland in May 2015 and I was a speaker at one of the workshops. There were very few rural topics and I discussed our work on small towns as I reported in one of last year's newsletters.

A second Congress was held in April 2016, again in Krakow, and ECOVAST was invited back to be a panelist and I attended and presented a short paper. In my view it is an honour to be invited back again. The 2 day event is a platform for the exchange of views and a meeting place for local politicians representing governments at national, regional and local levels, non-government organisations and private sector businesses. The event is organised by the Institute for Eastern Studies – an independent non-government organisation based in Warsaw, Poland – committed to promoting dialogue between European countries. It is partnered with ICE Krakow Congress Centre which has been the venue for both events.

The congress is a very large event attracting many people – there were more than 1,100 attendees this year with 474 involved in 51 Discussion Panels – 60% of them from Poland but 40% from other countries. There were 674 other participants with 78% from Poland and 22% from other countries.

Delegates came from 26 countries: Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

The Plenary Session which set out the theme of the conference discussed the potential position of Local Government (as opposed to a European organisation) to be a foundation to build upon cultural, historic and religious heritage and create conditions for economic and social activity of individuals.

The session opened with a statement that influence from the European level appeared to be declining. Europe has been beset with a series of crisis – a serious recession since 2008; the huge new influx of refugees from outside Europe; possible Brexit to name but a few and citizens were looking to better functioning of local communities and that local government was likely to offer more security and more new development opportunities. It was

suggested that the dominance of the views of the major urban cities of Europe and local authority decision making was exerting a stronger influence on the life of its citizens – a more bottom up process. The key speakers generally agreed with this view.

Lilyana Pavlova the Minister for Regional Development and Public Works, Bulgaria said that it was not only about large cities, but also small cities and rural areas and both should have a say in their future too. Emil Boc (previous Prime Minister) and Mayor of the City of Cluj-Napoca, Romania said there were three basic solutions to this bottom-up approach: 'Smart Cities', using modern technology to help secure local solutions; Participative Democracy which must involve all its citizens; and ensuring that 'Quality of Life' was a driving force in any new development. The Deputy Mayor of Krakow, Poland – a major Euro-city – supported this ethic.

Thomas Kralinski, the Secretary of State in the Federation of Brandenburg, Germany, said that it was important that regions and local people made the decisions – regions were 'local too'. Joakim Larsson, from the Västra Götaland regional parliament (Sweden) said that you needed national taxation but national decisions were not always appropriate: but it was decision-making and self-government at the local level that was more trusted and they should have more power and even raise local taxes.

The final key speaker was Rey Carla, the Secretary General of the Italian section of The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), although from a pan-European organisation believed that local citizens needed to influence decisions about their communities; she cited the town-twinning movement where hundreds of communities could share experiences; in her view local authorities were the critical player in any participatory democracy and they were the places where the diversity of different peoples were represented best.

It was a very participative event. There were 51 Discussion Panel sessions – each led by a moderator and 4 to 6 speakers, divided under six main themes; self-government, Society, Innovation, Economy, Environment and Finance. Rural was included in the Economy section. There were only 2 very specific rural sessions – Entrepreneurship, Agro-tourism and Public/Private Partnerships – Development Opportunities for Rural Areas and ECOVAST had a place in the first session of this theme. The speakers in these two sessions came from Poland, Finland, Switzerland and Ukraine. I gave out several copies of our publication 'The

Importance of Small Towns' and a paper prepared for the congress.

Interest was expressed by Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine and copies of ECOVAST information and copies of the presentation and documents will be sent to them. There were two other themes which had a strong rural focus – local festivals and Trade fairs to increase the attractiveness of a region and Local Products and Regional Specialities trails.

The conference panelists and participants were from a wide ranging background including delegates from the European Union Committees or pan-European Organisations, Members of Parliament (from several countries), members and officers from the regions of Europe; local government officers and members – the majority coming from Poland – and academics and private sector business associations.

It was pleasing to see such a strong component of locally elected leaders from communities - Mayors or Deputy Majors – who attended and took part in the event. There were from 53 towns and cities, from 11 other countries, who were part of the Discussion Panels: they were from Bulgaria (Sofia); Croatia (Zapresie); the Czech Republic (Chomutov, Silherovice); France (Bordeaux, Lyon, Nancy, Strasbourg); Germany (Frankfurt); Georgia (Tbilisi); Hungary (Miskoke); Lithuania (Rokiskis, Scalininkal); Romania (Cluj-Napoca, Constanta); Slovakia (Humenne); Ukraine (Zbarazh, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Uzhgorod); and 28 towns or cities from Poland (Ciechanow, Gdansk, Gliwice, Gdynia, Karpacz, Kazimierz Dolny, Kedzierzyn-Kozle, Kielce, Kobyłka, Konin, Kowary, Krakow, Krynica-Zdvoj, Lodz, Lublin, Olsztyn, Opole, Poznan, Radom, Sandomierz, Srem, Tarnow, Wadowice, Warsaw, Wejherowo, Wlodek, Wroclaw, Zielona Gora); and from 3 from Polish communes.

Many of these were large cities but several represented small towns – with populations less than 30,000 people. Among the participants there were another 94 majors from Polish towns and 71 majors from Polish Communes; and 2 from Romanian towns; 2 from Slovakia and 4 from Ukraine. The Congress was used as the venue to present the Polish annual awards judged to be their best local communities in three different sizes of communities. The winner of the of rural commune was Mayor Tomasz Stolarczyk of Rzasnia in the Lodz Voivodship; Mayor Igor Bandrowicz of the small town of Prusice in Lower Silesia and President (Mayor) Pawel Adamowicz of the large city of Gdansk, Pomerania. The prizes were awarded during a splendid evening's entertainment from the Sinfonietta Cracovia

orchestra with a great deal of enthusiasm for local activists.

The general consensus of the event was that local decision making was essential to the quality of life in local communities whatever the size.

Valerie Carter

News from ECOVAST National Sections

Austria

It has not been possible to go ahead in 2016 on projects with Hungary about Small Towns and landscapes.

European Green Belt

A first result from the co-operation with ECOVAST Germany, discussed with Arthur at the German Section's meeting in November 2015, is about the amount of landscapes and Small Towns along the German stretch of the "Green Belt" (former Iron Curtain). Angus Fowler invested much time to identify some 150 Small Towns and 30 landscapes. In total along the Green Belts stretch from Travemünde (Baltic Sea) to Trieste (Adriatic Sea) there are at least 200 Small Towns and 50 landscapes. We think this result to be a good basis for further collaboration.

We held two lectures on private and official institutions concerning the Green Belt, its landscapes and Historic Small Towns.

We were invited to organise a round table for a well known critical institution in Vienna (Republic Club) regarding the social-political ongoing along the central european section of the GreenBelt, with the title : "European Green Belt, quo vadis?"



Brigitte Macaria moderating the round table at the Vienna Republic Club, with Arthur Spiegler (right)

Brigitte is keeping contact with the Council of Europe (Strasbourg), and to institutions of the Austrian-Hungarian border region (Green Belt).

One of ECOVAST Austria's publications is about the ongoing work on the "GreenBelt" area and its **Historic Small Towns & Landscapes Land & Raum/ The Austrian Council for Agricultural Engineering an Rural Development, dedicated a special Magazine about this topic (volume 2/2014, English summaries by ECOVAST Austria),**

<http://oekl.at/publikationen/landraum/lr2014-2/>

Small Towns

At the European Rural Parliament (ERP) in Schärding, Austria (November 2015) a European Rural Manifesto was debated and adopted and includes a section on Small Towns. The ERP 2016-17 Action Programme includes a project focused on small towns in which ECOVAST international has been invited to participate.

Valerie Carter has responded by pointing to the Manifesto ERP Item 20:

We call for increased co-operation between communities, organisations and authorities in rural and urban areas in order to gain the full benefit of social, cultural and economic links which such co-operation can bring; and for vigorous exchange of ideas and good practice between those involved in rural and urban areas,

Valerie considers that funding could be available from "Europe for Citizens" Programme.

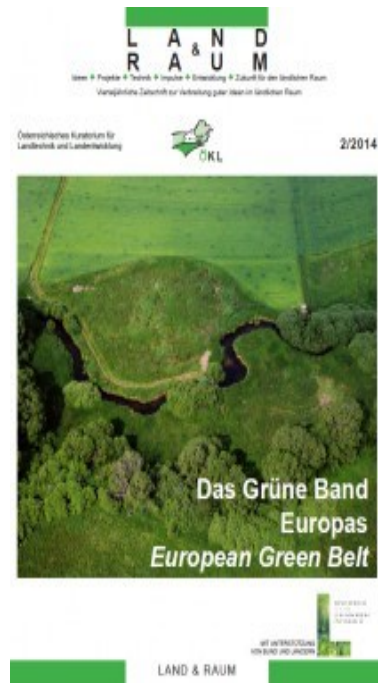
Potential project:

- 1. To help small towns develop their own **inclusive local partnership** (participative democracy involving all local groups); to assess local needs; agree local actions – a bottom up process – and identify the key top-down players;*
- 2. To help a state or country **develop a 'register of small towns in their domain'** which can then be used by local authorities or others as a basis for action*
- 3. Taking specific examples of best practice from an individual town in one country to a town or group of towns in another country where this will be a new concept – joint face to face inter-town workshops*
- 4. These concepts are based on a 'buddy system' where a partner is actively encouraged to develop ideas which are 'novel to them' through inter-active working groups*

ECOVAST Austria would like to suggest that a brainstorming workshop could be a step forward. This could consider whether the idea of a European platform "European Small Town Association"

(ESTA) is desirable and feasible (as roughly discussed in Schärding in November). We would be happy to contribute with our experience to such a workshop.

ECOVAST Austria has developed a register of Austria's Small Towns. It results in a list of 164 Small Towns of which 159 can be called Historic Small Towns



The Essence of Small Historic European Towns

All *Small Historic European Towns* (SHETs) – with very few exceptions – are embedded in a younger urban sprawl, extending in their hinterland). They provide their significant role for to days life of their region.

We understand Small Towns as rural towns up to 50.000 inhabitants, but no lower limit. (The number of their inhabitants counts for the whole town community. The number of people living in the historic centres are not covered by the official statistics. (The example of St. Veit, Carinthia shows: Town community some 14.000 inhabitants, the town itself some 7.500 and in the historic centre are living some 1500 people).

(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 hinterland(s) or landscape(s).

The Small Historic European Towns (SHETs) provide rural urbanity in the countryside, for 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, they need to fulfil at least three of the five “main criteria”, developed by ECOVAST Austria in the last two decades. As these SHETs are a most important part of today’s European rural life, they also should cope with certain functional criteria. These criteria are proved by discussions with architects and the praxis of rural development. The SHETs are not “museum towns” !

In the course of the last years they began to be acknowledged also on the European level (Council of Europe/Strasbourg)

Arthur Spiegler, Brigitte Macaria

Croatia

The Croatian Society ‘Matica Hrvatska’ in Austria was presented a report by Tihana on ‘Traditional Pannonian House made of Sun-dried Clay’.

Tihana, who works at the Croatian Academy of Science and Art Institute in Rijeka, reported at the Open Doors event on ‘Cultural Landscapes and Traditional Built Heritage in Rural Croatia’ .

She is preparing materials for the ‘Round Table’ of the Croatian Ministry of Culture’ on the subject of protection of dry stone walling in Croatia, seeking for this traditional skill (known most widely in Carstic Mediterranean countries in Europe) to be added on UNESCO heritage list.

Valerija Kelemen Pepeonik is still trying to find ways how to inspire Zagreb City officials to support idea on a common project for protection of gas lamps existing in Zagreb as well as in Berlin (where Angus Fowler is most active on this), and some other towns in the world.

Our former president Dr Biserka Bilusic continues to manage the Ministry of Culture Regional Institute for Protection of Monuments in Rijeka, as well as working partly in Zagreb as well.

Tihana Stepinac Fabijanić

Germany

In January 2016, members of the German Section participated in events at the International Green Week in Berlin.

One of the main speakers at the opening of the Forum for Rural Development which several of us attended, was Prof. Peter Dehne (University Neubrandenburg). In his talk he mentioned small towns specifically. Andrea Weigert will send him the ECOVAST report on small towns and we have agreed to meet. He has been commissioned on a project on small towns in peripheral regions by Prof. Eyink (Federal Ministry for Environment). Another speaker was Franz Fischler (former EU Commissioner for Agriculture) to whom I spoke very briefly. I made contributions during discussions, questions etc. and an official of the Federal Ministry for Agriculture came up to me and wanted contact with ECOVAST.

At the March meeting of the German Section Committee we discussed the proposal to hold the AGM of the German Section and of the Annual General Assembly of ECOVAST International together in Germany, and had a proposal for a venue from Irmelin Kuttner.

Angus Fowler

Russia

Wooden Buildings

Olga Sevan has reviewed the two volume published book “Russian Wood. View from the XXI century” prepared by the staff of the Museum of Architecture (Moscow) with the help of experts in the field of history, restoration and preservation of wooden architecture.

Here is one of the illustrations.



Arbour "Hut on Chicken Legs" architect VM Vasnetsov, 1882 Abramtsevo village, Sergiev Posad area, Moscow Region. AA photo Alexandrov, 1966-1967 gg. From the collection of the State Museum of Architecture named after AV Shchusev

That prompted me to look at Wikipedia to learn that "In Slavic folklore, Baba Yaga is a supernatural being who appears as a deformed and/or ferocious-looking woman. Baba Yaga flies around in a mortar, wields a pestle, and dwells deep in the forest in a hut usually described as standing on chicken legs".

Olga's review follows.

Phil Turner

It is safe to say that this edition is unique. The First volume covers the monuments of XV-XIX centuries: examples of religious architecture and dwelling houses. There are also references to Russian museums in the open air, which made it possible to save many of the described monuments. The Second volume is devoted to a later period, and rich examples from the neo-Russian style of the XIX – beginning XX century, about the buildings of the soviet time and present day - XXI century. It is regarded as the history and typology of various constructions made of wood.

The book is the result of work on a large exhibition, held in Moscow in late 2015 - early 2016. The publication and exhibition, were "epic" as an exposition of wooden architecture, talking about surviving and lost monuments, as well as new buildings. But the book is much deeper than the exhibition and widely presents a detailed picture of the maintenance, preservation, maintenance, restoration and development of wooden architecture up to date. It is difficult to define its genre - this directory, and a collection of articles on various topics, tending to the monograph, projects and elegant album of drawings, paintings, photographs, and layouts ... summarising the work of architects, artists, art historians, museum staff and many people who are not indifferent to the "Russian wood".



AV Opolovnikov. Church of the Transfiguration on about. Kizhi. The western facade. 1714 Restoration drawing, 1949 From the collection of the State Historical-Architectural and Ethnographic Museum-Reserve "Kizhi"

...The story begins with a short introduction about the importance of wooden architecture, its role in shaping the identity of the country and wider - its culture... Further, readers submitted a large number of known and new names of experts, their research projects, many of them one way or another have been published before - especially with regard to heritage...

The book reveals the problems of preservation of monuments of wooden architecture, valuable, vulnerable and many of which have been lost. On the other hand, it demonstrates the dynamic development and the value of wood as a material: living, sustainable, renewable and warm. It attracted and attracts both residents of the Russian hinterland and the metropolitan intellectuals: people who understand the value of monuments of wooden architecture and a good judge of wooden buildings. The interest in wood as growing ... even in the business community... Reference is made to the many archival materials from the collections of the Museum of Architecture... former employees who have kept all this wealth, and their current counterparts are to be congratulated. Also to be congratulated are the publishers and designers who have issued a book with love and understanding.

Olga Sevan

Partner organisations



EUROPA NOSTRA UK

Annual Duncan Sandys Lecture

Associated with the AGM of EN UK on 7 April at Europe House, Smiths Square, London, Michael Dower presented the 2016 Lecture in the presence of Lady Duncan-Sandys. Michael based his talk on the theme of "Folk, Work and Place" (inspired by the thinking of Patrick Geddes - Scottish biologist, sociologist, geographer, philanthropist and pioneering town planner, 1854 - 1932).

Local Awards Ceremony:

Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović was present at the Middleport Pottery, Newcastle Staffordshire to present the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Award to The Prince's Regeneration Trust.

HRH Prince Charles spoke informally, over a precariously hand-held cup of tea, to Dr Peter Collins, Chairman of Europa Nostra UK and other UK Committee members, including Phil Turner. Pam Moore was pleased to tell Prince Charles of industrial heritage projects in Hampshire rural areas, with the prospect of a twinning event with the Prince's Trust.



Left to right: Peter Collins EN UK, Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović and Pierre Laconte EN with HRH (right)



Prince Charles chats with Pam Moore

Europa Nostra, based in The Hague, Netherlands, has increased membership fees for organisations, and ECOVAST has responded to say that this means that, reluctantly, our international organisation will no longer be a member of EN from 2016.

I have Joined EN as an individual member and serve on the EN UK Committee.

Phil Turner

Europa Nostra International European Heritage Alliance 3.3

ECOVAST, though no longer a member of EN, is welcome to continue to be involved in EHA, set up to promote Cultural Heritage, and of which we were one of the founder organisations. Phil Turner and Valerie Carter were unable to attend the meeting of the EHA in Brussels on 18 April.

However, we are pleased to receive this message from Europa Nostra.

“The day of 19 April 2016 shall be remembered as a historic day for our ever-growing European movement for cultural heritage!

During the opening session of the bi-annual **European Culture Forum** in Brussels, **Tibor Navracsics**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, publicly announced that the European Commission will propose to the EU Council and the European Parliament that 2018 will be the European Year of Cultural Heritage, following an exchange of letters between President **Jean-Claude Juncker** and President **Martin Schultz** (click [here](#) for the address made by Commissioner Navracsics).

This announcement was followed by a powerful and engaged speech by **Silvia Costa**, MEP, who is the Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament. Silvia Costa has been one of the main supporters of the proposed Year within the European Parliament and is in close dialogue with all stakeholders concerned. “Culture and cultural heritage should be the new soul and new identity for a new Europe,” concluded Silvia Costa. In the afternoon, the Italian Minister of Culture, **Dario Franceschini**, also expressed the full support of his government to the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018.

Together with Europa Nostra’s Vice-President **Piet Jaspert**, I have had the great pleasure to attend the European Cultural Forum and to witness this important public announcement. Representatives from other European Networks working in the wider field of heritage, who are members of our [European Heritage Alliance 3.3](#), also participated in the Forum. Together we have had the opportunity to congratulate in person Commissioner Navracsics and MEP Silvia Costa immediately after their speeches on their decisive leadership and commitment to rallying the support of the European Commission and European Parliament for the proposed European Year of Cultural Heritage. We also assured these high-level representatives from the EU Institutions that the civil society networks and organisations active in the field of heritage stand ready to contribute to the implementation of the European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018 with creativity and energy.

During the plenary session of the European Heritage Alliance 3.3., held on the eve of the European Culture Forum (18 April - World Heritage Day!), at the Europa Nostra's Brussels Office, we had a preliminary discussion on the main messages we hope to convey, the tools we intend to use, as well as the outcomes which we aim to achieve during the Year.

Europa Nostra and our President, Maestro **Plácido Domingo**, applaud this important development at this high level of the European Union, which is a remarkable achievement for us all, but also an immense responsibility. We look forward to celebrating the future European Year of Cultural Heritage, together with Commissioner Navracsics, with many members and partners, and together with proud laureates of our European Heritage Awards run in partnership with the European Commission, on the occasion of our forthcoming [European Heritage Congress](#) which will be held in Madrid on 22-27 May. We therefore hope that you will join us in Madrid in big numbers where we will have the opportunity to continue our discussion on the ways in which we can ensure that the European Year of Cultural Heritage will serve as a platform for connecting and amplifying many excellent heritage initiatives - local, regional, national and European - which have already been developed across Europe.

At a time when the European Union is confronted with a wide range of political, economic and social challenges, and at a time when the entire European project is threatened by alarming forms of extremism and Euroscepticism, the decision to declare 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage has a very special meaning and significance, both for the European Union Institutions and Member States and for Europe's communities and citizens. Therefore we now wish to reach out to each and every member of our wide European family, to listen carefully to your views, concerns, dreams and ideas, and to invite you to get actively engaged in the exciting process ahead of us. Let us have a regular and creative dialogue in the months to come which we shall gladly bring to the due attention of policy and decision makers in Europe and incorporate as much as possible in Europa Nostra's 3-year strategic and action plan for 2017-2019 with the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 at its heart. "

Looking forward to this challenging new phase of our joint European action for heritage,

With warmest regards from Brussels,

Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović
Secretary General

PREPARE



There has been no meeting of PREPARE partners since our last Newsletter. PREPARE awaits decision by the Belgian Ministry of Justice on its formal registration as a non-profit international Association : this will help it to widen the scope of its work and its search for funds. Meanwhile the partnership has grown by the creation (with PREPARE's help) of the Albanian Rural Development Network, which will host PREPARE's annual Gathering in September 2016. Also with PREPARE's help, its national partners in the Balkans and Turkey have secured a grant of €1.1 million from the European Commission for a three-year project to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations working in rural areas of those countries. PREPARE is in process of launching an initiative in the Black Sea countries, focused on the well-being of small-farming communities.

The three co-initiating bodies of the European Rural Parliament – PREPARE, ERCA and ELARD – are shaping a series of projects to implement the European Rural Manifesto adopted last November. As reported earlier in this newsletter, one such project is focused on Small Towns. ECOVAST International and ECOVAST Austria have both said they will support the Project, and interest has been expressed by at least nine of the ERP national partners. More will be reported in the next newsletter. The next European Rural Parliament will be held in autumn 2017.

Michael Dower

From the PREPARE website:

The fourth meeting of the European Rural Networks' Steering Group (SG) took place in Brussels on 4 March 2016. The main themes of the meeting were the capacity building and the exchange of experience. It was emphasised that there is huge potential in strengthening the synergies between green economy and competitiveness of rural areas as well as building linkages between different actors at European and national levels.

The fourth European meeting of the National Rural Networks (NRNs), 20142020, took place in Bled, Slovenia, 29 February - 1 March 2016. Its main objective was to support Network Support Units (NSUs) and other NRN stakeholders in identifying and developing relevant activities to improve the implementation of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). Such activities are expected to include thematic working groups and events; workshops;

collection of good practices; and digital communications.

The ENRD Contact Point and DG AGRI jointly organised a conference on 'Unlocking the Potential of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs)' on 1 February 2016 in Brussels, Belgium. The event brought together all the national and regional Managing Authorities responsible for designing and implementing the RDPs and National Rural Networks' (NRNs) representatives. Conference reports and presentations are published at:

<https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/en-rd-events-and-meetings/4th-NRNs-Meeting-20160229>



APURE

During 2015 APURE has completed the legal process of registration of APURE Association in Poland, which for formal reasons lasted quite a long time. Please note that the Polish Court registered the association under a new name: APURE - Association for the Development of Regions, and all those who submitted an application for membership, have been made its members. The new Association took over the legacy of the previous Association and adopted its goals and objectives for future operations, as intended by the General Assembly of Members, which took place in Portugal in April 2012.

Currently, the Board of the Association consists of: Istvan Bali – CEO; Maria Grzechynka - Vice President; Peter Fast - Vice President

Recently the Association has implemented two important projects:

- NEW COMPETENCIES FOR ACCESSIBLE TOURISM IN V4 COUNTRIES - the project financed by the International Visegrad Fund in partnership with the University of Kaposvar, Hungary, Catholic University in Ruzomberok, Slovakia and the Institute for Social Innovation, the Czech Republic. The main objectives of the project were: to improve the accessibility of tourism services through customised training courses for tourism employees working in tourism services aimed at the elderly and disabled, and to enhance competitiveness of tourist facilities and tourism workers in the labour market. The project included a pilot training course consisting of four thematic modules: Accommodation base and recreational facilities, Catering sector, Tourist information centers and Cultural information.
- 'YOUTH ACADEMY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE - EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS, PROMOTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE' -

The aim of the project was to improve the quality of life in the region by organising educational activities for children and teens, and to promote the cultural heritage of the Podbabiogórze region. The project participants took part in activities aimed at providing them with knowledge about the region's history and folklore, traditional handicraft, tourist attractions and natural assets of the Babia Góra National Park, etc. The result of the project was publication of a promotional folder. The project was co-financed by the European Union.

One of the main objectives of the Association is stimulation of rural areas and small towns in the spirit of European integration. We would like to continue to carry out and develop the exchange of experience, disseminating best practices, in co-operation with public and non-governmental organisations and institutions, and to co-operate with domestic and foreign associations and institutions of similar nature.

The Association participates in activities promoting and supporting comprehensive socio-economic development of regions, creating conditions for reducing disparities in the civilisational development among different areas in Europe. In order to achieve this goal, APURE would like to further implement EU projects, conduct training and advisory activity, organise meetings, panel discussions, conferences and exhibitions. To ensure sustainable rural development, the Association is going to take actions that will contribute to the development of entrepreneurship, the renewal and development of rural areas, e.g. by supporting bottom-up initiatives realised by local communities.

It is hoped to be faithful to the ideals which APURE has followed conducting its previous activities. Therefore, APURE asks all present and future members of the Association to engage in the work for its development. Next year it is hoped to become involved in various EU projects. APURE would like to invite you to co-operate as partners and as creators of activities which can be implemented within these projects. APURE also plans to organise a working meeting in Poland, during which we would like to discuss further options and directions for the Association's activities and its further development; also to discuss the possibility of organising the next edition of the University of Rural Development at the turn of September and October 2016 in Hungary.

<http://en.regionyeuropy.pl>

Valerie Carter

Events notified to the Editor



22 - 27 MAY 2016

EUROPEAN HERITAGE CONGRESS, MADRID

23 May Inauguration of the Exhibition

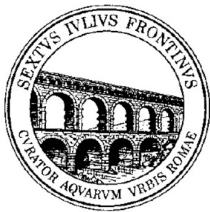
'Recognising Spanish Heritage in Europe'

In the presence of Her Majesty the Queen Letizia of Spain. College of Architects of Madrid, Hortaleza 63, 28004 Madrid

24 May 2016 European Heritage Awards Ceremony

26 May General Assembly

[European Heritage Congress](#)



25-29 May 2016 Trier, Germany. **'Water Management during the Time of Frontinus. Buildings - Technique - Culture'**. International Conference on the Occasion of the Anniversary of the Frontinus-Society with Archaeological Excursions to the Region Trier - Luxembourg - Metz.

An international archaeological conference at one of the most important places of the Roman time north the Alps. Many remnants of this prosperous period in which Sextus Iulius Frontinus acted as the Curator Aquarum of Rome along with his many other important duties in places throughout the Roman Empire still exist. Trier (Augusta Colonia Treverorum) with its important Roman buildings is the ideal background for this conference during which scholars as well as younger scientists will present actual research results to an international audience.

<http://www.frontinus.de>



23 – 25 June 2016. International Forum of Towns in Graz "Advantages and Uses of Historical Architecture". The Franciscan Monastery, Graz, Austria .

www.staedteforum.at



12 -14 September 2016. International Academic and Research Forum "Systematic approach to preservation of wooden architecture monuments".

15 - 16 September 2016. Conference on conservation, restoration and research of wooden architecture monuments. Petrozavodsk – Kizhi Island. Karelia, Russia

http://kizhi.karelia.ru/index_en.html



Open air museum, Kizhi



21- 24 October 2016

ECOVAST General Assembly. Marburg Germany

The German Section of ECOVAST will hold its Annual General Meeting on this weekend. There will also be an ECOVAST International Committee before the General Assembly.

Other details to be notified.

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