



ECOVAST NEWSLETTER 65

December 2018

Email: carter73@btinternet.com

Editor: Valerie Carter
Sherborne, Ingleden Park Road
TENTERDEN, Kent, United Kingdom
TN30 6NS
Email: carter73@btinternet.com
website <http://www.ECOVAST.org>

Contents:

1. Editorial
2. Presidents Message
3. Report on ECOVAST Croatia event
 - (a) The conference
 - (b) ECOVAST International Committee
 - (c) ECOVAST General Assembly
 - (d) The Study Tour
4. Report on PREPARE
5. Brief Update on History
6. Report on Historic Small Towns 2018 from Austria
7. Request for your help to find missing documents
8. Archives: the need for Paper Copies

1. Editorial

This is the last Newsletter for the year of 2018. We are trying to keep up the tradition of producing 2 Newsletters a year – one at the end of summer and the other at the end of the year. Thanks to all of you who have provided reports for the 2018 Newsletters. We need to make sure that all international events that ECOVAST gets involved with - such as speaking, running a workshop etc – are recorded with a simple report sent to the Editor when appropriate.

Having prepared a chronological report of all the events ECOVAST has been involved with and played a significant role – which will be published as the ECOVAST History Report in the spring of 2019 to celebrate our 35th birthday – it has enabled me to compare what we have done in 2018 compared to our activity in earlier years. This evidence indicates that ECOVAST has been involved with several international events – from 3 to 5 events per year. During 2018 we were involved with 5 events. This is of course on top of our own committee meetings with associated tour and workshop.

2. Presidents Message

I would like to start by wishing you a very Happy and successful New Year for 2019. I hope you can make sure that all of ECOVAST knows the events which are planned for this year – so that they can be published and hopefully attract ECOVAST members to attend.

I would also like members to consider if their National Section could host a simple launch of our History Report - in reality it should be done in Marburg, Germany – and the Biennial Assembly for 2019 in the autumn.

3. The Event in Croatia October 2018

This two day event in BISTRA, Croatia followed a time-honoured approach where the ECOVAST annual meeting of members was developed with a conference, a study tour of the local area to look at relevant projects and meet local people from the local rural areas visited. The formal ECOVAST meetings (a short International Committee followed by the Annual Assembly) came between the conference and the study tour. The event for 2018, hosted by ECOVAST Croatia, took place in Bistra, a small municipality with six separate villages where the total population is around 6,600 people. Two of these villages - Donja (Lower) Bistra and

Gornja (Upper) Bistra have a population together of about 3,300 people. They lie at the foot of the Medvednica, which separate it from the capital city of Zagreb. The mountains are designated as a Nature Park where the air is calm yet fresh. The autumn weather was superb with clear blue skies (the day usually started a bit misty) and soft atmosphere which made us all enjoy our work over the two full days of activities.

(a) ECOVAST Croatia International conference on 'Eco-Museums' held in the Cultural Centre of the BISTRA Municipality, Croatia on 12 October 2018

Our host organiser, ECOVAST Croatia, was staging a celebration of their foundation 25 years ago in 1993. The issue to be discussed at the conference and study tour visits was that of 'eco-museums, under the title 'The Role of Eco Museums in the Development of Local Rural Communities'. Our hosts were jointly ECOVAST Croatia and the NGO Eco museum Bistra – being currently developed. The conference was staged in the Cultural Community Centre hall in Lower Bistra village. There were around 60 attendees. Our ECOVAST members were very enthusiastic and included many young members - something which most of our National Sections find difficult to attract. Our international ECOVAST members are in awe of ECOVAST Croatia and congratulate them. Croatia seems to have 'cracked' this and the essence of how they achieved it should be sent around (perhaps accompanied with a magic potion which could make it happen elsewhere !!!!!)

The event was truly international with visitors from 6 other European Countries including ECOVAST Austria, ECOVAST Hungary, ECOVAST Slovakia and ECOVAST United Kingdom together with our new ECOVAST members from the Czech Republic and a guest Albania.

Those attending the conference included: Aleksandar Lukic – the President of ECOVAST Croatia; the members of the organising committee: Klementina Batina, Nada Bakula, Niksa Bozic, Antonija Dejanovic, Valerija Kelemen Pepeonik, Andreja Kolic, Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic, Ives Vodanovic Lukic; speakers – Tomislav Sola, Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic, Ivana Jagic Boljat, Jasenka Kranjcevic, Lidija Bajuk, Kristijan Brkic, Vida Pust Skrgulja, Denis Gascic, Majda Rubic, Ivan Brlic, Anita Busljeta Tonkovic, Josip Cmrecnjak; posters - Ivana Hazulin, Dubravka Habus Skendzic, Davor Spoljar, Snjezana Kauzlaric; other participants: members and collaborators of ECOVAST Croatia and from the NGO Ecomuseum Bistra, participants from different museums, local and regional authorities, ministries, insitiutes, different NGO's, and others. municipality. The international attendees were Valerie Carter – ECOVAST International President from the United Kingdom; Franz Nahrada from ECOVAST Austria, Pavel Konecny and Vera Acshenbrierova, ECOVAST members from the Czech Republic; Eva Kralova and Teresa Davidova from ECOVAST Slovakia and guests Ludmilla xxxxx, Nenad Maljkovic from Croatia, and Arieta Ceka from Albania. There were several posters around the hall demonstrating similar projects including one from Pavel Konecny of the Czech Republic describing a sculpture garden in the small village of Kukljica on the island of Ugljan in Croatia – created by Emilan Grguric between 1964 and 1994. It could become the centre of the social, cultural and tourist life of the village but it does need revitalising.

The conference was opened by the representative of Bistra Municipality Darko Sever-Seni, followed by a short welcome by ECOVAST Croatia President Aleksandar Lukic. Valerie Carter - ECOVAST International President then gave a presentation on 'ECOVAST work on rural tourism. The keynote speaker was Tomislav Sola – the Director of The Best in Heritage based in Zagreb. He was followed by a series of speakers giving examples of Croatian Eco-Museums: Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic on 'Early Initiatives for Creating Eco-museums in the North Adriatic and Gorski Kotar regions of Croatia; Ivana Jagic Boljat on 'Participatory Approach to the Development of the Cultural Route of Becharac and Ganga, and Heritage Management Model used for the Preservation on folk singing forms of Becharac and Ganga; Jasenka Kranjcevic 'Are Planned Rural Settlements a Resource for Eco-museums?'; Lidija Bajuk 'Mura Eco-museum – between Autoethnology and Metaphor – a Construction of a day in the Life of a Miller'; Kristijan Brkic – 'Ecomuseum Zumberak'; Vida Pust Skrgulja – 'The Principles of Eco-museums in the Building of the Operating Concept for a New Museum Institution – the Case of Ivanic-Grad Museum; Klementina Batina – 'From Collection to Eco-museum: Local Initiatives and Development projects of the Bistra Municipalities.

After this first conference session we then drove up to have a hot buffet lunch in the parish building opposite St Nicolas church where we continued with informal discussions:

Those who were involved in the formal ECOVAST committee meetings then drove to the beautiful baroque castle of Orsic where our 2 meetings were held (see below). The castle – a very beautiful baroque building - is set right at the foot of the Medvednica mountain and is a hospital for children with chronic conditions– a very calm and beautiful place surrounded by fresh air and parkland, famous also for lots of activities carried out by volunteers.

The rest of the gathering returned back to Lower Bistra and continued with the conference with more speakers including: Denis Gascic – Media Visibility of the Eco-museum – Analysis of Current Practices; Majda Rubic – 'Eco-museums as a Partners within the EU's Interreg Central Europe Cooperation Programme'; Ivan Brlic –

Eco-museum of Croatian Winegrowing and Enology in the Vinodol area'; Anita Busljeta Tonkovic – 'Sustainable Rural Tourism with Case Study Velebit Nature Park'; Josip Cmrecnjak – 'Civil Sector as the Factor of Development of Rural Areas eg Nedelisce Municipality'; Ivana Hazulin – 'Radboa Museum in Radboj'; Dubravka Habus Skendzic – 'The Challenges of Establishing and Founding Eco-museums'; Davor Spoljar – the Zlatko Dragutin Tudjina Pregrada Municipal Museum; and Snjezana Kauzlaric – 'Reflections on the Heritage of the Brlic House and the Literary Heritage of Ivana Brlic Mazuranic in Slavonski Brod. This was followed by a round table discussion on culture and rural areas led by Dane Pejnovic.

We all met up again for dinner in the Lower Bistra and consumed a vast amount of meat (and some even took some of it home) – bring the first day to a close – a bit tired as we had worked hard but looking forward to seeing more of the countryside and examples of eco-museums the next day.

Report by Aleksander Lucic, Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic, Valerija Kelemen Pepeonik

(b) ECOVAST International Committee meeting held in Castle Oršić, BISTRA, in the County of Zagreb, Croatia on 12 October 2018 *This meeting took place just before the Annual Assembly for 2018*

Our hosts were ECOVAST Croatia. Those attending and apologising are the same as the General Assembly which followed:

The Minutes of the last International Committee meeting held in Illmitz, Austria in October 2017 were proposed as correct by Valerija Kelemen Pepeonik (Croatia) and seconded by Valerie Carter (United Kingdom). The committee members present then approved them and they were formally signed by Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic and Chairman Valerie Carter.

The Agenda for the General Assembly (to follow) was agreed.

(c) ECOVAST Annual General Assembly meeting in held in Castle Oršić, in BISTRA, in the County of Zagreb, Croatia on 12th October 2018

The meeting was attended by 10 people (with 7 ECOVAST members) from 5 countries (Albania, Austria, Croatia, Slovakia and the United Kingdom) and included:

President: Valerie Carter

Vice President: Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic (Croatia)

International Committee members: Franz Nahrada (Austria) and Eva Kralova (Slovakia)

Other ECOVAST members: Aleksandar Lucic (Chairman of ECOVAST Croatia) and Valerija Kelemen Pepeonik (Croatia); and Teresa Davidson (Slovakia)

We were pleased to welcome our 3 guest: Ludmila Vacic and Mehmet Maljkovic from Croatia and Arieta Ceka from Albania

We are pleased to announce two new members to ECOVAST – Pavel Konecny and Vera Berkova who had attended the earlier conference. We were being joined on the tour on the following day by these 2 new members and by Dezso Kovacs of Hungary.- which meant the ECOVAST Croatian event attracted 7 nations to attend

Apologies had been received from Brigitte Macaria, Arthur Spiegler (Austria); Ivar Henkel, Irmelin Kuttner, Andrea Weigert (Germany); Gabor Rajnai (Hungary); Victoria Momeva-Altiparmakovska (Macedonia); Magdalena Banu, Calin Hoinarescu (Romania); Olga Sevan (Russia); Michael Dower, Pam Moore, and Phil Turner (United Kingdom)

The first working item is to formally approve the minutes of the last Biennial Committee meeting held partly in the Pension zur Sonne in Illmitz and part in the offices of the Neusiedler See National Park Centre in Burgenland, Austria in October 2016. The minutes had been written by Valerie Carter and corrected by Angus Fowler (ECOVAST has no formal Secretary General but minutes taken by agreed persons at each meeting). The Minutes with Actions Agreed had been circulated.

These minutes were proposed as correct by Valerija Kelemen Pepeonik (Croatia) and seconded by Valerie Carter (United Kingdom). The Minutes were then formally agreed by those committee members present and signed by Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic (Croatia) on behalf of the Committee and countersigned by Valerie Carter (Chair of the meeting). A copy of the signed Minutes (in English) and a copy in French will be sent to the Tribunal in Selestat, France.

International Working Groups

The only International Working Groups that are still active are Landscape and Small Towns. Brigitte Macaria (Austria) reported that the Landscape group was still active but was now involved with Karst landscapes and caves. Valerie Carter reported that the Small Towns work was still ongoing but

focussing on research on the ‘state of the High Street’ Rural Buildings and Rural Tourism were discussed – with a proposal to try and revive them.

National Sections

It is expected that all National Sections should report annually to the International Committee. It is not expected that all sections will be as active as others but even a short report will let us know that they are still around. All the 10 National Sections have been asked to submit their reports (as demanded by our agreed protocols) and 6 of them (Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and the United Kingdom) have done so and their news has been published in Newsletter 64 which was sent out in the last week of September. That means that 4 National Sections (FYROM Macedonia; Poland; Russia and Slovakia) had not yet reported.

Macedonia: A short report was received from Macedonia which highlighted the experience of a very difficult economic and political situation in their country which meant that they were not able to ensure finances for their activities. The committee thanked them for their report and wished them well for the future. We hope they will be able to revive their activities in the future. We recognise the difficulties.

Victoria Momeva-Altiparmakovska

Slovakia: Eva Kralova reported on the revival of the Slovakian Section which she had announced in Neusiedler in 2017. She now has 4 active members (2 of them attending this meeting) and they were now looking at what was going to be the focus of their activities. The committee wished them well and offered support and encouragement. Eva also stated that she would like to arrange a meeting in Slovakia in 2019.

Eva Kralova

Russian National Section

During the year, members of the EKOVASt Russian Committee carried out the following work:



- April. A meeting - the Assembly of members of EKOVASt and friends of our organization was held in the Union of Architects of Russia. By this evening, Olga Sevan presented the book “Socio-Cultural Design of Rural Settlements and Small Townes of Russia. Public participation and partnerships” published by Olga at the beginning 2018. It analyzes the experience of the author, members of EKOVASt and employees of the Russian Institute of Cultural Research during of 30 years. Moreover, a collection of articles was presented, which was released in 2017 “Actual problems of studying and preserving the architectural and town-planning heritage of historical settlements”. It also mentions the European work experience, including EKOVASt. Those who came to the meeting donated both books.

- July. Olga Sevan participated with the report "Decoration of Residential Houses of the Russian North" in an international conference in the small town Kirillov, later visited the city Vologda and the museum of wooden architecture "Semenkovo". O. Sevan worked several years ago on the general plan of the museum, its individual sectors, etc. During the day, she consulted the museum director and the architect to the restorer. Today, 10 houses of the 19th century, a church of the 17th century and a chapel, barns, mills have already been transported here. Amazing and good museum! Many interesting and important educational programs and projects offered in the museum. <https://www.semenkovo.ru/ru/o-muzee/istoriya-muzeya>.

In addition, a number of specialists visited the "Abramtsevo Museum-Reserve" in the Moscow region, where the wooden architecture of the late 19th - early 20th century (the manor house, workshops, as well as the unique stone church) remained; the landscape of this protected complex was preserved. We conducted a survey of buildings, a park; collections and we had a meeting with the museum staff.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2112410472128019&set=pcb.2112410608794672&type=3&theater>



- August. Workshop of students and young architects on modern wooden architecture "DREVOLUTION" in the Kostroma region <http://www.re-wood.ru/> Olga Sevan took part as jury member for the analysis of projects and buildings in rural forest areas near a unique monument - Terem in the place Astashovo/ It was restored from the ruins within 5 years by a young businessman. There are a museum, hotel rooms, cafes, workshops, etc. today in a unique house. <https://www.houzz.ru/ideabooks/113010428/list/ideya-dlya-puteshestviya-terem-v-astashovo-i-art-obaekty-drevolyutsii>



- October. A book "Klaugu Muizha" published in 2018, in which a member of EKOVAST architect Andrey Ivanov took part. It addresses the reader to the process of creating, filling and living a new architectural object, designed by the famous Russian architect Totan Kuzembaev in Latvia. A complex composition of several buildings devoid of deliberate "glamor" unfolds on a large landscape scene. Nature, architecture and interior decoration exist in unity and harmony, interacting favorably with each other. This is an interesting object of modern buildings with the use of wood. https://tatlin.ru/shop/klaugu_muizha
Report by Olga Sevan

We have now had 9 of our 10 National Sections have met their required obligations. Only Poland has not reported.

(b) Study Tour of Hrvatsko Zagorje, Varazdin Podravina and Medimurje on 13 October 2018

The study tour of the rural areas of the north west corner of Croatia which borders Slovenia and Hungary, organised by ECOVAST Croatia started when the coach picked up the delegates at the hotel Laguna in Zagreb.

We then drove around the Medvednica mountain on the edge of the plain of the Sava River, followed the tributary of the Krapina river into Croatian Zagorje (which means trans-mountain) countryside. Our first stop was the small village of **Radoboj** (also a municipality with the same name) in the county of Krapina-Zagorje. The finding of sulphur in 1811 developed the local economy and the mine and development of processing of the ore started and the unique machine for refining sulphur was invented here and known as the Radoboj machine. Financed by the State treasury - mine was initially owned by the state. But mining was not popular work for the traditional farmers. At the end of the 1828 the sulphur mine in Radoboj employed two clerks and servants and 63 miners. Mining equipment was still quite primitive: a small steam engine and a large furnace for distilling sulphur. Despite major investments by the state, mine was still unprofitable, so the decision was made to suspend the work, and the mine was sold to private individuals. After 1878 production was rapidly decreasing and becoming less profitable and ceased by 1882 and there is no information on any extraction of sulphur in the area after 2017. The local community has built a new eco-museum dedicated to the memories of a sulphur mining community. After looking at the museum exhibits we went upstairs for refreshments and to look at local handicrafts by local women, dressed in national costumes. They also entertained us with Croatian songs.

We left Radoboj and drove over gently rolling hills of the Hrvatsko Zagorje to our second stop at the small town of **Lepoglava** (population of 4,500 people) in the County of Varazdin lying below the Ivanščica Mountain where we were joined by Deszo Kovacs of ECOVAST Hungary.

The town became a cradle of science, art, and culture that was formed by the Pauline order -- the white friars -- from as early as 1400. The first secular secondary school and the first college in Croatia with the right to grant academic titles were founded here. The Pauline order -- which follows the Rule of St Augustine -- was formed in the 13th century in Hungary -- and rapidly spread across central Europe. One of the most important monasteries of the entire Pauline Order, the Monastery of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded in 1400 in Lepoglava. (Among the other famous houses of the congregation is the Polish monastery in Częstochowa, with its Miraculous Icon of the Black Madonna).

Our main visit was to the Eco-museum -- the **Lepoglava Lace Museum**. The marvellous lace -- beauty and enchantment, which is believed to have been introduced in Croatia by the Pauline Order, is a special feature of Lepoglava and its surroundings. The art of making lace was gradually accepted among the village inhabitants and became a tradition that was never entirely interrupted. Lepoglava lace experienced its true flowering at the end of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century, thanks to the Honorable Zlata Šufflay, who first organized the production of lace and its refinement through the use of folk decoration, and her work was continued with exceptional success by Danica Brossler after the First World War. Through official institutions, she encouraged manufacture, and for this purpose started lessons, workshops, and schools of lace-making. The skill of lace-making became a constant source of extra earnings, as the lace was sold at markets, exhibits, and at the Zagreb Trade Fair, as well as throughout Western Europe, where the Lepoglava lace won awards at World Fairs: gold in 1937 in Paris, and bronze in 1939 in Berlin. This was the period of the greatest flowering of the Lepoglava lace craft. The Second World War caused the school to interrupt its work, but many lace-makers continued and the Lepoglava tradition continued. Every September since 1997 the town has held a lace making festival and -- together with lace making on the islands of Pag and Hvar - became designated as an intangible UNESCO heritage event.

The Lepoglava Lace Museum also gave a display of a semi-precious stone mined in the area called '**Ahat**'. This area was part of the great Pannonian Sea and when it dried out many volcanos emerged and intensive tectonic movements caused rock fractures. A hill of andesite emerged and the ahat stone was discovered. These agates were found in the cavities and fissures in the andesite and was formed the long process of layer by layer of precipitation of the mineral quartz - its beautiful blue grey banding being the only semi-precious stone found in Croatia. The hill also provided rock suitable for road building which was mined by prisoners from Lepoglava from 1923 to 1967 leaving a huge crater in the earth.

After a very good traditional lunch in the town some of us took the opportunity to look at the monastery church. During its turbulent past, the monastery was redesigned several times, with the most significant being the reconstruction in the Baroque style that began in 1650. The paintings are the work of the famous Baroque painter Johann Baptist Ranger, one of the most important representatives of late Baroque in Croatia, and his workshop dating to 1747. After Joseph II issued a decree in 1786 that abolished Pauline monasteries, the monks had to leave and the monastery was then converted into a penitentiary, which it remained until 2000. The biggest devastation of the former Pauline complex occurred in 1945, when a huge amount of ammunition

exploded while the German army was retreating. The entire west wing was completely destroyed. Reconstruction of the entire complex, along with conservation and restoration, started in 1946. After the monastery was returned to the Diocese of Varaždin in 2001 and major conservation research and restoration work began. The work was carried out by the Croatian Conservation Institute, almost all the work on the inventory of the nave, shrine and chapels has been completed, as well as on the wall paintings in the sanctuary. After the work has finished, a large reconstruction of this extremely valuable monument of Croatian cultural heritage will be completed.

We then left Lepoglava and continued north through the countryside of Varazdin Podravina, around the town of Varazdin; across the river Drava into the countryside of Medjimurje. The countryside of this north western area of Croatia is rich farmland of fruits and vegetables and vines. Our third stop was the banks of the River Mura (a tributary of the River Drava and later the Dunav/Danube). The river is very close to the Slovenian border. We drove through the small village of Žabnik to visit a floating water mill, moored to the river bank, with an impressive wooden waterwheel – a unique example of traditional architectural heritage in Croatia (an eco-museum) and beyond. The sound of murmuring water and creaking millstone take the visitors back to 1902, when flour was ground for the first time on that floating “old man”. An educational trail called the ‘Miller’s Path’ has been laid out round the mill in the idyllic nature. The river also has a river ferry - a vessel that crosses the river from one river bank to another, but without engine, sails or paddles. The centre of this tourism site is a large wooden building which acts as a café and on the top floor is another eco-museum dedicated to the life of the local people and their traditions which we visited. The countryside around the river has been designated as an area of ‘natural and traditional heritage’ called the ‘Mura Significant Landscape Area’.

On our journey back into Zagreb we were serenaded by a coach full of “singers” of Croatian songs (it does not take much for a Croatian to burst into song!). This rounded off a very successful study tour and marked the end of full and enjoyable event in Croatia.

Report by Aleksander Lucic, Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic, Valerija Kelemen Pepeonik and Valerie Carter

4. Report on the PREPARE event in Kosovo

(a) The PREPARE Gathering

The event started with the PREPARE Gathering with Travelling Workshops and a multi-national thematic meeting, followed by the 4th Annual Assembly of PREPARE – all held in the Hotel Dukagjini, in PEJA, Kosovo between 29 October – 1 November 2018. This was a joint event between NORDK (The Network for Rural Development of Kosovo); the ALTER project (Active Local Territories for Economic Development of Rural Areas – in the Western Balkans and Turkey with lead partner of Serbia) and the PREPARE Network. The Peja event was an international event - well attended by about 60 delegates from 12 countries - with many members from Kosovo and other organisations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom (represented by Valerie Carter of ECOVAST) and the Connecting Natural Values and People from Nederland network..

The event started with Travelling Workshops on the first day – organised by NORDK and formed part of the PREPARE Gathering where we met local people and visited a range of projects. There were 3 tours:

- A tour of the western region of Kosovo and the countryside and farming businesses between the towns of Peja, Decan, Gjakove and Prizen
- A tour of the southern part of Kosovo visiting agriculture enterprises around Zhupe, Suhareke, Dragashe and Prizen
- A tour of the area known as the ‘Capital of Agriculture’ and visit to see businesses in the village of Krushe e Madhe, Hoce e Madhe and the town of Rahovec (chicken farming, pickling vegetables, wine growing, fish farming and barrel maker.

A **conference** followed – also part of the ‘Gathering’ and arranged by NORDK -on the second day which spread over into a third day. The conference was opened by the Minister of Agriculture of Kosovo, followed by presentation about the work of NORDK, the Alter Project and the PREPARE organisation. The conference was then broken into 4 workshops

- The role of civic society in Rural Policy Development
- LEADER as a driving force for integrated local development
- Community development and volunteering
- Capacity building and sustainability of the PREPARE network

The afternoon of the first day most of the delegates went on a tour of the town of Peja (whilst the members of PREPARE held their annual assembly meeting). The day ended with the conference dinner accompanied by a local guitarist and singer. The third and final day saw a continuation of the workshops, followed by a summary

of their conclusions and a report from each of the three tours of Kosovo. It had proved a very interesting event in a country not known by very many of the attendees. We had been made very welcome and the new member of PREPARE will form a valuable part of the newly elected board.

(b) PREPARE Annual Assembly held on 31 October 2018

It was the fourth general assembly of PREPARE AISBL since a new Board was formed in Albania in 2016. PREPARE has 18 formal member associations and 11 members were present: from the Albanian Network for Rural Development, Croatian Rural Development Network, Latvian Rural Forum, Lithuanian Rural Communities Network, National Network of Local Action Group in the Czech Republic, National Rural Development Network of Serbia, Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, Slovenian Rural Development Network, Village Action Association of Finland and ECOVAST represented by Valerie Carter.

Full members who did not attend but had appointed proxies were from Forum Synergies: the Hungarian Rural network, Network for Rural development of Montenegro and the Rural Parliament of Slovakia. Three other member organisations – the Estonian Village Movement Kodukant, Polish Rural Forum and Forum Synergies joined the meeting by Skype. There had been no news no member Hela Sverige Ska Leva. We had a guest Julia Bakota from Croatia (who kindly took the notes for the minutes) and 2 representatives from Kosovo and Leotrin Germizaj from the Network of organisations for Rural Development of Kosovo

The PREPARE were very happy to welcome a new member from Kosovo and they were voted in unanimously. The main part of the meeting was to vote in a new Board for PREPARE. The existing members – except for Aris Adler stood down. Dragan Roganovic of Serbia was standing down as Secretary due to pressure of work from his day job, but would remain the member for Serbia; Visna Jelic Mueck had retired and was replaced by Niksa Bozic; Anneli Kana also announced she was stepping down.

The new board which was elected consisted of Goran Soster of Slovenia, Niksa Bosik of Croatia; Ursula Budic of Poland, and Leotrim Germizaj of Kosovo, who joined the existing member of Aris Adler of Latvia. Kim Smedslund became the new secretary general and Anita Selikas remained the treasurer. The members of PREPARE voted Aris Adler (Latvia) to be the new President of PREPARE

Report by Valerie Carter (ECOVAST)

4. ECOVAST Austria Paper on ‘The Essence of Small Historic European Towns’- SHETs

Background:

This policy paper on small ‘historic’ European small towns has been prepared by ECOVAST Austria and is a summary of their thoughts from their work over many years. It was ECOVAST Austria who first started to work on small towns in 1998 when they introduced this topic to an international audience in the Murau Symposium. This was followed by a second symposium in Ybbs an der Donau in 2002. The third event which led to a major ECOVAST project Action to Strengthen Small European Towns (ASSET) was held in RETZ at the end of 2005 and sponsored by both Austria and a regional development agency from England. Much research followed and a formal ECOVAST policy on the ‘Importance of Small Towns; (all small towns not just historic ones) was published and circulated to major European bodies. More research on what initiatives are taking place across Europe led to a major publication which was circulated across all 44 countries of geographical Europe and accompanied by the Research document and a version which looked at more examples in the Danube countries. Austria then held its 4th symposium in Grieskirchen in . ECOVAST Austria also researched all small historic towns across Austria and published this in 2009. ECOVAST UK then published their research that listed all the small towns in the United Kingdom – in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This brought the ASSET project to a formal end. However ECOVAST UK is working on a piece of research on ‘What has been happening to our High Streets’ which will be completed in 2019. Set out below is the report from ECOVAST Austria setting out its conclusions in the report called the ‘Essence of Small Historic European Towns’ and has asked for it to be circulated to all ECOVAST members.

The Policy Paper States

Small Historic European Towns (SHETs) represent a rich cultural heritage and are an indispensable part of Europe’s history and identity. They combine rural and urban way of living. The historic date of the towns founding alone is not sufficient to qualify as “historic”. They also must show historic architectural characteristics like a clearly discernible historic centre and the historic public court (as enlisted below).

The historic towns fulfil a significant cultural and economic role in and for their regions. Thus they also offer identity for their people that of the whole region and often even beyond. We consider Small Towns as rural towns up to 50.000 inhabitants, but with no lower limit.

We strongly propose ECOVAST to make up its mind in using this limitation when speaking of small towns. Historic Small Towns combine in a very special and characteristic way urban and rural living, thus constituting a sort of “**rural urbanity**”. Today almost every Historic Small Town is embedded in a new town-sprawl

extending into the hinterland. The numbers of the inhabitants of the historic centre is no matter of official statistics. Therefore In this relation we are depending on estimations.

Small towns also are embedded in their surrounding landscapes, thus building an unbreakable unit with their hinterland(s). Small Towns differ from cities very distinctly and tangible with their climate. Whilst cities, because of their size and great number of buildings, create their "own" climate, their hood of dust (smoke), the small towns, due to their small size mostly show the climate of their surroundings.

SHETs act like "living beings" and therefore subject to permanent change. One of our main challenges is, to allow their changing without destroying or losing their essence, their character. They for sure are no "Museum Towns"! Every single Small Historic Town differs from the other, not one is like any other.

SHETs are commercial and cultural focal points of their regions, and they provide more professional jobs than villages. Even if the towns are threatened by the loss of inhabitants, they still act as "inbound commuter places" for their hinterland. To be called a SHET, the town needs to fulfil at least three of the five "historic main criteria", developed by ECOVAST Austria in the last two decades (see list below). As these SHETs are a most important part of today's European rural life, they also should fulfil certain functional criteria.

Both criteria are proven by discussions with architects and the practice of rural development. In the course of recent years the small towns began to be acknowledged also on the European level, the Council of Europe (Strasbourg), the Commission, and last but not least, by the European Rural Parliament. The historic houses with their old facades and narrow lanes in between them are assembled and huddling around the historic, public court, thus representing the historic centre of the town.

List of the main historic and functional criteria:

Historic Criteria:

1. A significant historic centre
2. Central, historic and public court
3. A castle or ruins, remnants of fortifications
4. Historic facades surrounding central court
5. A dominating sacral or profane building characterising the town centre

Functional Criteria

1. Centre of Higher Education
2. Centre of medical care
3. Economic centre
4. Centre of regional authority
5. Traffic and / or tourist centre

The Small Historic European Town must at least fulfil three of the historic and functional criteria. They must have a recognised centre with a characteristic dense setting and narrow lanes. Historic Small Towns are anything but "Museum Towns", as they are full of life and fulfil a lot of functions for their regions.

So what are the most important results of some 20 years tackling with the problems of Small Historic Towns?:

- the loss of population, especially of towns with less than 10.000 inhabitants and
- the commercial decaying of the (historic) town centres.

But the assets remain

- the beautiful architecture of the historic centres and
- the surrounding landscapes

Report by The Core Team of ECOVAST Austria : Brigitte Macaria, and Arthur Spiegler

6. Request for your help to find missing documents

The work on the ECOVAST history has managed to find copies of nearly all ECOVAST Minutes and Newsletters. However although most minutes have been read and notes taken – but no copy is available for the archives and there are often some papers missing. I would like to find as many of these missing papers as possible. I would like to thank Michael Dower, Phil Turner and Pam Moore (United Kingdom) who had most of the documents but also Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic (Croatia) and Andrea Weigert (Germany). Angus Fowler had most of the papers (most not sorted) but they are no longer available to be seen. The following list of documents are the ones I would really like to find.

- General Assembly 1995 held in Noszvaj, Hungary 7 September
- International Committee 1997 held in Reading, England 15 November
- International Committee 2001 held in Seddiner See, Germany 21 January
- International Committee 2001 held in Skepe, Poland 22 April

Could you all please look through any records you might have and post paper copies to me (I will return them after scanning). They would really add to the work already done and make a more complete record of ECOVAST's History.

7. Archives: The Need for Paper Copies as well as Digital Copies

It had been noted that we have not been strictly adhering to our Statutes. The Minutes of all meetings were approved by the next meeting (either International Committee Meeting or Annual Assembly Meeting) by being put to a vote and agreed or agreed with alterations. They were not always formally proposed and seconded. They were not formally signed by the Secretary General or other person present at this next meeting and then countersigned by the Chairman of that meeting. Copies of the signed version of the Minutes must be kept in the Archives (paper and scanned pdf). These signed Minutes will usually be a year after the Minutes were written. It was agreed that this formal process will be followed from now on.

Every event referred to in this Newsletter are recorded in the new ECOVAST chronological record of event international events with both paper and electronic versions put into our archives collection. They are also translated (from now on into French and German – these translations use Google which does not produce very good German. It does need an offer from a German speaking member to correct it.