

Editorial

The promotion of biodiversity was the focus of the two-day European conference 'European regions as champions for biodiversity 2010', held in February in the Netherlands. The conference was a great success, attracting over 200 participants from across Europe. During the event 17 parties signed the Countdown 2010 declaration, thus expressing their willingness to contribute actively to enhancing the quality of biodiversity and halting the decline of biodiversity by 2010. For a full report on the event, see page 2 of this issue.

Also in February, staff from the ALTER-Net partners met for the first time at the ALTER-Net All Parties' Conference. The conference allowed the partners to showcase some of the important work being done, and to exchange views and develop plans and common approaches for the final two years of ALTER-Net. In addition, the Network Advisory Committee and other key stakeholders were able to experience the full range of ALTER-Net activities. See page 7 for further details.

We also report on the commencement of two new projects by ECNC. The first of these will focus on improving the practical implementation of ecological networks in Europe, and the second will examine the level of interaction between the policy sectors dealing with spatial planning and those dealing with ecological networks in Europe.

*On behalf of the Editorial Team
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Support to International Organizations and Policy Initiatives

Biodiversity and climate change – European regions and local authorities join forces

15 & 16 February 2007, Oisterwijk, the Netherlands

'Regions and local authorities should step up their efforts to halt the decline of biodiversity' was the main message of the international conference 'European regions as champions for biodiversity 2010 – Europe meets Brabant, Brabant meets Europe'. The conference, held in Oisterwijk on 15 and 16 February 2007, brought together 200 participants from 27 European countries.

The conference resulted in concrete recommendations on ways and means of putting the European biodiversity 2010 commitments into concrete actions at regional and local levels by learning from inspiring examples and views. It was decided to develop a down-to-earth and bottom-up interregional European biodiversity programme to facilitate practical cooperation between regions and local authorities across Europe.



ECNC President Sir Brian Unwin addressing the conference.
(Photo: Maikel Samuels)

Various interregional biodiversity 2010 project concepts were elaborated on, among others, the interaction between landscape identity and biodiversity, climate change and biodiversity, and support to safeguarding biodiversity hot spots in Eastern Europe.

The conference host, Noord-Brabant's Regional Minister for Environment, Nature and Water, Ms Annemarie Moons, presented a report prepared by ECNC on climate change and biodiversity and the role of regions (see the following article).



Ms Annemarie Moons signing the Countdown 2010 declaration.
(Photo: Maikel Samuels)

A special feature of the conference was the strong involvement of youth in its preparation and programme.

During a Countdown 2010 signing event, 17 new parties signed the Countdown 2010 declaration. The Countdown 2010 initiative was launched by a partnership of governments and NGOs to create awareness about the importance of biodiversity and the 2010 target to halt its decline. The conference participants and leaders from European institutions applauded the inspiring example and proactive approach of the Province of Noord-Brabant, the first region in the world to join the Countdown 2010.

The Province of Noord-Brabant was the main organizer of the conference, in cooperation with ECNC–European Centre for Nature Conservation and with involvement of the

B&E (Brabant & Europe Partnership for Sustainability), under the auspices of the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the Countdown 2010 partnership.

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Mrs Hanja Maij-Weggen, Queen's Commissioner of Noord-Brabant, spoke on the challenges faced. (Photo: Maikel Samuels)

Climate change and biodiversity – the role of the European regions

What are the impacts of climate change on biodiversity? How can biodiversity help in mitigating and adapting to climate change? What are the roles of the European regions to win the battle against climate change?



Coastal erosion due to increased sea-level rise and storm activity on the Holderness coast in East Yorkshire, UK. (Photo: English Nature)

These are some of the topics addressed in the newly published report *Climate change and biodiversity – the role of the European regions*, produced by ECNC–European Centre for Nature Conservation at the request of the Regional Minister for the Environment, Nature and Water of the Province of Noord-Brabant, the Netherlands.

The report gives an overview of the direct and indirect impacts of climate change on biodiversity, highlights key issues such as the major contribution biodiversity can make to adaptation and mitigation, and identifies the role that the European regions could play in responding to a changing climate, including some of the key actions that they might undertake in relation to communication, policy and target setting and delivery.

The report revealed that biodiversity is declining globally and in Europe. In order to combat the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, a more flexible approach towards biodiversity development and targets – taking into account the dynamics of a more rapidly changing nature – has to be adopted.

The key areas for investment in biodiversity in relation to climate change are connecting habitats, increasing the size of existing habitats and creating new habitat – especially wetlands.

There is also a need for information exchange and cooperation between the research networks, national and regional authorities and stakeholder networks dealing with climate change on one side and those dealing with biodiversity and ecological networks on the other. Regions have a key role in making this

happen and in providing leadership in order to drive forward society's response to climate change.

The report can be downloaded here:
<http://www.ecnc.org/jump/page/649/Climate%20change%20%20the%20role%20of%20the%20European%20regions.html>

A new future for the pan-European biodiversity cooperation?

On 29 and 30 March 2007 the annual meeting of the Council of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) took place in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting focused on the preparations of the biodiversity segment of the next Ministerial 'Environment for Europe' Conference in Belgrade and the future of the pan-European biodiversity cooperation as facilitated by PEBLDS. ECNC was represented by Mr Rob Wolters, Executive Director.



The PEBLDS Council members.
(Photo: Peter Skoberne)

The European non-governmental organizations present at the meeting – ECNC, IUCN and CEEWEB – officially withdrew from the discussions on the preparation of the Belgrade Conference in the light of their objections to the marginal role that biodiversity currently has on the official programme. The Council decided to support the appeal of the non-governmental organizations, and hopefully this will result in a change of the Belgrade agenda. It was decided to focus the Ministerial segment on the issue of biodiversity and climate. The Council also decided to refocus PEBLDS

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towards a pan-European forum for practical cooperation and exchange of views on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity via the so-called Kyiv Biodiversity Targets. The Biodiversity in Europe conferences, which will take place every two years, will take over the role of the annual Council meetings. This structure will for the time being be served by the joint secretariat of UNEP and the Council of Europe, although further discussions on another structure are to be expected in the near future.

Besides providing an active input into the above-mentioned discussions, ECNC presented results of the SEENET programme, the European Task Force on Banking, Business and Biodiversity, the PEEN mapping process, and the results of the 'European regions as champions for biodiversity 2010' conference (see page 2).

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The Chair and Joint Secretariat of PEBLDS.
(Photo: Peter Skoberne)

Catalysing stakeholder involvement in the practical implementation of ecological networks

In March 2007 ECNC started a new, ambitious project 'Knowledge for ecological networks' which will focus on improving the practical implementation of ecological networks in Europe.

One of the major gaps in knowledge concerning ecological networks is in the identification and role of stakeholders, the conditions for and approaches to the practical implementation of ecological networks on the ground, including obstacles, opportunities, best practice, lessons learned and regional differences and commonalities within Europe. Application of the ecological network approach requires full involvement of a broad range of relevant stakeholders, so it is crucially important to improve knowledge of these conditions and of how obstacles can be overcome.

The overall goal of the project is to stimulate practical partnerships and consensus building within and between the stakeholders involved in the practical implementation of ecological networks, including organizations and

sectors. The project will identify the current state of knowledge, make this knowledge available to relevant actors and/or stakeholders and provide a platform for making the implementation of ecological networks more effective, through a range of the instruments and options that are available to policymakers and practitioners.

ECNC is leading this two-year project; the partners are: Alterra, Wageningen UR (the Netherlands); Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection; Estonian University of Life Sciences; Federal Office for Environment (Switzerland); Leibniz-Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (Germany); Natural England (UK).

The project is funded by the Research Programme of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

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European Ecological Network

Message from South-East Europe welcomed at the CEMAT

On behalf of ECNC and the SEENET programme team, Mr Jan-Willem Sneep, President of the PEEN Expert Committee, conveyed the message from the South-East European and Black Sea region at the 86th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the CEMAT process.

The country representatives of the CSO meeting, in preparation for the next European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT), welcomed the

recommendations that were formulated by the participating experts of an international seminar 'Balancing regional planning and ecological networks in the South-East European and Black Sea region' (Strasbourg, 2006). The seminar was one of the activities of a special programme that was developed to facilitate the establishment and implementation of the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) in South-East Europe and the Black Sea region (the SEENET programme: www.seenet.info).

In his speech Mr Sneeep expressed the need for close cooperation between the Secretariats of the PEEN and the CEMAT. He called upon regions to include the nature conservation sector in their processes.

The SEENET intervention opened up the agenda of the annual meetings of the Committee of Experts for PEEN and offered to include reporting on the ongoing work of the CEMAT process to the PEEN experts. To stimulate the exchange of information, the Secretariat of the Committee of Experts for PEEN will distribute the technical report on

the assessment of the PEEN that is to be presented at the Ministerial 'Environment for Europe' Conference (Belgrade, October 2007) and is also to be presented to the parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The report gives a good impression of the development and implementation of the PEEN concept in all European countries.

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CEMAT Recommendation document reference: CEMAT-CHF 86 (2007)*

Do the sectors of spatial planning and ecological networks interact?

What is the level of interaction between the policy sectors dealing with spatial planning and those dealing with ecological networks in Europe? This is the central question of a new project that ECNC is to lead in the next 22 months.

The Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality is funding this project, which aims at providing an answer to questions like: Do both policy sectors start from the same conceptual and policy assumptions? What is the practical experience in Europe with regard to cooperation for implementing ecological networks? To what extent is the ecological network approach known and seen as relevant and applicable by various actors? And how can active involvement of the spatial planning sector be improved, if needed?

The project will not only deliver knowledge on the subject matter, but also aims at providing practical outcomes towards policy processes such as the development of the Pan-European Ecological Network, the EU Communication on Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and beyond, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

ECNC will coordinate the project, that will be carried out by a team of six project partners. The project will study European processes as well as cases in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain.

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[Photo: PNR Caps et Marais d'Opale]

ALTER-Net All Parties' Conference

5-9 February 2007, Palma de Mallorca

The ALTER-Net All Parties' Conference brought together people from all ALTER-Net partners as well as selected invitees from other organizations. Ben Delbaere, Aysegul Cil and Network partners Aris Gaaff and Mart Klvik represented ECNC at the conference.

Key messages were given by EC delegates Martin Sharman, Giuliana Torta and Guy Duke, who stated the grand challenge for creating durable integration of European biodiversity research capacity to address biodiversity policy needs. The key messages focused on the integration of research as a community and the effective transfer of knowledge. Mr Sharman stated that: 'ALTER-Net is an important flagship project that helps overcome the current wasteful fragmentation of European biodiversity research capacity'. Ms Torta pointed out that currently policymakers in the biodiversity sector primarily get their knowledge from NGOs and national expert networks. ALTER-Net can ensure that this knowledge-providing role is strengthened, for example through its vast network of Long-Term Ecosystem Research sites and through its role as a hotline to answer questions of policymakers and other end users, as proposed by ECNC's Ben Delbaere in his paper on 'ALTER-Net, Tell Me...'.
The Network Advisory Committee meeting, organized by ECNC, was held on the third day of the conference. The Committee discussed

the key integration goals related to knowledge transfer in science and policy together with key policymakers from Europe. It was recognized that a science-policy interface is a necessity and useful in order to reach policymakers.

The conference gave participants an opportunity for networking with the 180 delegates via plenary sessions giving an extensive overview of the activities carried out by the ALTER-Net research community.

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Conference participants enjoying a coffee break.
(Photo: Aysegul Cil)

BioScore maps the impacts of policy measures on biodiversity

27 & 28 February 2007, De Bilt, the Netherlands

The preliminary maps showing the potential distribution of species using environmental variables were presented at the third BioScore project team meeting, which was organized by ECNC and took place in De Bilt,

the Netherlands. The next step will be to compare the maps with the actual distribution of species in order to produce maps showing the change of species composition in Europe due to some of the main drivers in Europe

(e.g. land use, fragmentation, infrastructure, climate change, pollution).

Already a year has passed since BioScore started and a lot of work has been done towards building the tool that will allow assessment of the impacts of Community policies on biodiversity in a cost-effective way.

BioScore will build on existing maps and scenarios and will aim to answer specific policy questions formulated by the decision makers. BioScore will provide answers to 'what happens if...' questions in terms of number of species affected if policy measures change.

In May 2007, a workshop will be held in order to discuss the possible applications and outcomes of the BioScore tool with the end users. The BioScore Steering Committee and key stakeholders will be invited to this event.

For more information: Ben Delbaere, BioScore Project Coordinator; delbaere@ecnc.org. See also www.ecnc.org/Bioscore



ECNC Organizationally

Staff news

Peter Nowicki left ECNC in March 2007. Peter was Programme Manager - Ecology and Economy for five years.

Ronald Busio joined ECNC in March as Finance Officer. Ronald has many years' experience in bookkeeping and financial management.

Andrew Schrauwen joined ECNC in March as Project Officer. Andrew had been working as a volunteer for ECNC since February 2007.

Dzintra Ailte joined ECNC for a four-month internship starting in February. Dzintra comes from Latvia, and is currently working on her Masters degree. She will be assisting mainly on the SEENET programme and ALTER-Net.

ECNC Update Volume 14, No. 2

ISSN 1388-0039

ECNC Update is the newsletter of ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation
Editor: Glynis van Uden • ECNC Update is freely available from the ECNC website (www.ecnc.org).
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