

## **General Assembly 2004, GEN-Europe at ZEGG National Networks Reports**

### WAS – Polish Ecovillage Network, Nicole GrosPierre

Just before the GEN-E GA we had a meeting of our polish network WAS. That time we wanted to do so that our more important members would come and we wanted to contact an interest in ecovillage movement, representative from Struga walley. We invited them to make a presentation for local inhabitants and local authorities and members of our new association we created with decision makers from our commune. Its name is Klucz that means key and its aim is to work for local development. I must say local presentation was not a success it was already holiday's time ... But the meeting between our guests, which are stars of the polish rural development, was very interesting

Mainly

- Stowarzyszenie Ziarno from Grzybów is running a 3 years program on education for adults from the countryside with 4 other countries. Courses are held in winter during that time there is not too much work and they are very holistic. They published very good schoolbooks for green education in ecological farms. They manage funds of a little school of grants for children of the all region where children from 12 years old can learn to write applications and realize their own projects
- ICPPC from many years defend ecological values of the Polish countryside, with a very active political campaign. Actually they are creating a centre for alternative technologies and offer courses on traditional skills
- Strug walley : It is an association of 4 communes working for sustainable development of their region with the support of the local government.
- Ten years ago they created their own telephone company so that all local phones are free (they offer workshops on this issue). They created a company for direct distribution of healthy products that takes products from 200 local farmers and distribute them to 70 thousand customers from the region. They created a drinking water company that supports people who stop to drink alcohol (One of the main problems in Poland) They opened a school where you can learn about local development. In this 4 commune internet is free for schools

During this meeting we spoke about education and how we could link to a GEN-E educational project.

### Francophone network – Jean Michel Pochat

The network started in 1997 but was mostly made by non-ecovillage residents, and then in 2000 some GEN-E representatives went to the network meeting and the structure changed. In Summer 2003 the community people declared they have no time to give for network work, and there was no real dynamic. JM proposed to set up another meeting that will be held in August, Jonathan will attend, some people also from Africa. The movement itself is active beyond the network, and there are quite a few communities starting and others are doing well, like La Borie. Here at this GA a group of French youth came from Lyon and worked on a project that will hopefully take place in France, with

Ismael Diallo (GEN-Senegal), Jacques (Epidaure from Switzerland) and others involved. Jean Michel is the spokesperson and not the coordinator.

Jean Luc Girard talks about Passerelle Eco and its role in France. Lots of wonderful seeds had been thrown onto the sand, with no nutrients, so he decided to start a magazine to give information for the creation of the different world. 4 directions: vision, offerings, and material resources, sharing. The hope is to bring people together by networking actions and try to create ecovillages. The experiment then became a real magazine with many partners and subscribers, and exchange initiatives. Some consulting has also been offered on the creation of new communities in South France. PE was important in the creation of an alternative and active network. Question by Achim: why do you not find out more about big communities like Longo May, La Lix, Plum Village etc, that have also places in eastern Europe. JM they have not been really interested in the past, but would like to do this in the future, and contact as many as possible. Longo May is an own network and GEN-E is seen too much like a new-age place.

#### GEN SENegal - Ismael Diallo:

Presents activity report on years 2003 – 2004: the aim was to promote the activities of Ecovillages, create partnership between EV and NGOs, to represent EVs and to develop ecovillages. The Senegal government has officially recognized GEN SEN. 2 meetings organised to see the direction for the present year. In September we presented a report on CAT; in January we had another meeting and Jonathan was there, on how to promote ecotourism and present the ecovillage concept in Europe and other countries. About finances: we worked for 2 years, and recently we visited with J a number of ministries and other partners. The GEF had promised funding but not delivered yet, so after the visit we received the first 2 grants out of 12. At the same time the Sen. Environment Minister promised to send support to other projects and 8 were submitted. The network has organised regional local days to promote the concept and bring about solidarity and start exchanges. Eco Yoff is the centre of GEN SEN, is a training centre that provides EV training and has received about 200 trainers over the last years. They live in the local villages and study nutrition and do student exchanges. Many villages received Permaculture and computer training; the biggest one is the sustainable development training starting 2004. He will report on this GA as soon as he gets back.

#### Italian Network RIVE: Lucilla Borio and Paolo Battino:

Founded in 1996 at a conference on sustainable villages, since 96 there have been many meetings. Presently it is not very active, but has at least 2 meetings, one in winter, one summer meeting (larger, open for everyone). Will soon be formalized now as a non-profit association. There have been long discussions on statutes, now almost finalized. With this association it is easier to apply for funds. In the moment there are probably 6 projects active. Closely linked to the magazine AAM Terra Nuova, where all information gets published. Out of a Ecovillage Design training at Torri Superiore in 2003 three new projects got started, they bought land and want to start a community. Paolo Battino is the official RIVE delegate and works in team with Lucilla to receive orientation in the first period, and promises to keep the network more active!

Russian Network and the Anastasia movement – Vasudeva Kirbatjev:

The Anastasia movement is becoming big, at least 7 books are published and in the last 3 books they talk about ecovillages and to raise children, but most of all on how to create the vision on how to live in this present life on earth. They have meetings with hundreds of people, mostly very young. They print newspapers and magazines, and a directory of Anastasia communities in the Moscow area (about 200).

The Russian EV network was presented in a new film, presentation on 7 EVs, one very new.

3 EVs were at the meeting with Jonathan, in the end Kitesh decided not to be officially part of the network but to be part of some programmes.

Insa Freese, Danish EV Network, LOS

Founded in 1993, is a non-profit association, has a council and about 30 members (EV, enterprises, folk-high schools, 200 individual members. Produces four editions of a newsletter a year. Since the last Danish government cut the funds, the work became very difficult. This means at the moment there are no secretaries and no official office any more. There is still a little income, but not enough to continue the previous activities. Everything is done voluntarily, also the editing of the newsletter. Especially the support for Cristiania has been important. Last year the LOS network published a book on Danish communities, it is a directory and includes also articles on community building. LOS joined a political organisation and the secretary of LOS became also involved in the council of this organisation.

Esa Aaltonen from Finland

History of GEN-Finland, the Finnish Sustainable Lifestyle Communities has 10 rural members, and some urban ones have created a new association too. The work was started about 20 years ago, the network has the same purpose as GEN. Activities: discussions about EVs as a possible tool to develop the country and stop the urban exodus. Most of the members are in the southern part of Finland. They went to the Eastern European meeting and participated in some other winter meeting: the circulating school is teaching EV models to the public. Some photos of their members: one rebuilt an old timber sailboat and used it to transfer the produce to different parts of Finland (Fair trade); Keuuru – Liisa will present; Katajamaki is very cultural and the spirit of sauna is taught. One or two new ecovillages are being established this year; the groups are getting together and looking for a place, possibly the perfect one. All are welcome to go and help with the building.

EVNUK, Tony Gosling:

Started in 1997 in Bristol. Work on a database called the people-finder to help people find each other and live in ecovillages. It is a small group of volunteers and goes together to at least one festival per year where they find an emphasis on sustainable living, this year is Earth Wise (end of July). Other activities are media work, help press to access information and report on EVs. Help with planning permission, great gift when the authorities allowed Tony Wrench not to tear down the Roundhouse at Brithdyr Mawr in Wales. Great pressure on building permissions (one guy was shot dead somewhere, and a lady committed suicide) so now they are going to say NO when they are told to knock down an ecological house. There has been a great success with non-violent actions to protest against the orders for the Roundhouse. (Video shown)

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### Torri Superiore - Balkan Exchange

Supported by GEN-Europe in 2003, and also in 2004, the BEN (Balkan Ecovillage Network) programme applied for funding at the EuropeAid agency in Hungary and received 30'000 Euros for a cooperation programme between several Balkan countries (Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia). Drazen Simlesa of GNAG (Green Network of Laternative Groups) is the coordinator of the programme. They will organise a Permaculture design course, and two ecovillage management courses. Funds: with the support of GEN-Europe, the aim is to create a regional network.

### Romania, Teodora Borghoff

Many traditional villages are disappearing, the idea is to develop strategies to support rural development, Ecotopia is founder of a network to support rural development, existing villages can be restored. There is already cooperation with a Hungarian project on organic agriculture. Retrofitting villages!!!

### Hungary, Imre Kilian

Informal network, 6 involved projects, initiatives, established EV, Robert Gerzany is the coordinator, self nominated. Two Institutions: 2 meetings a year, summer meeting was in Mariahalm, a newsletter is published, edition 100, disseminated amongst members. Idea is to set up an email list about ecological lifestyle. There is the need to decide if the network should stay informally or become official to be more efficient.

**These two reports are added and have not been presented at the GA due to lack of time.**

### German national network „Come Together” by Elke Wiegand:

As the Network is very sleepy, I did not mention it at the general assembly. But in fact there is still a little bit of activity. Dieter Federlein is still feeding the e-mail list with information from GEN and others concerning the network. We also have a little money lying at the bank for future activities. And those who have met at the GA were very happy and not willing to call this network dead now. So we call it sleeping and we will try again next year or the following to arrange a meeting of German speaking intentional Communities. My feeling is that there are a lot of activities on exchange on the personal level. On the other hand – a lot of small communities and initiatives dissolved themselves. This shows the importance for support. Existing communities are in duty to give this support, but on the other hand, it is very important for the starting communities to really ask for help and to take it.

### Developments concerning the Gen-Europe, Turkish section:

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. *Demet IRKLI ERYILDIZ*

#### 1. Networking

The EKILAT - Turkish networking can be supplied at the Internet address

[ekolojikyasam@yahooogroups.com](mailto:ekolojikyasam@yahooogroups.com), which is at present activated.

A wide range of information flow regarding Ecological life can be provided at this address.

Those whom appreciate the importance of life and the need for improving their environment use this address. Within the last year, notices received from GEN-Europe by mail, were distributed to this address.

## 2. Personal Information:

I have been interested in the approaches / effects to ecology, on both education and living. **There is a recognised stone/pip concerning Environmental Architecture.** Together with this, we are working to spread the public education. The climate here is suitable for ecologically positive living surrounding. We are also working towards spreading this belief to the building sector.

3. There have been **applications** from some village initiatives, to the General Assembly, which is due to take place this year. I have directed them to GEN Central Office.

4. The **present Ecovillages**, also the new ecological living projects are constantly multiplying. Due to the fact that finding a place to live, as an eco-village community can be a very long and tiresome process, it is difficult to talk about the eco villages that are completely settled.

However there are sample studies, Harman Balaban, and Güne Köy, etc. Similar and important initiatives and nucleuses are on way in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which temporarily and on academic research reasons, I have been.

I regret that due to my academic work on my university in the Summer School , I will not be able to attend the General Assembly. I wish you all success at the General Assembly.

## Report from the Czech Ecovillage Network Meeting during the weekend of July 31st and August 1st.

The title is perhaps a contradictory in terms, as there is no established ecovillages in Czech, at least not in accordance with the GEN- definition of an ecovillage...

But, ever since the early 90'ies people have attempted to create such communities and at present there's a few on it's way, with the newest and fastest growing being the Anastasia movement which were represented at the GEN GA by Pavla and Michael. During the GA it was suggested to stop the Czech network due to above reasons, which was an area of debate this weekend.

Permalot arranged and hosted the event, which was advertized in 3 major alternative Monthly's as well as through our homepage and various email lists. Several cities also had A5 posters published by our members and friends. Despite the effort in advertising only a few people came for the event; throughout the weekend we counted 17 people, with about half taking part in the whole program. :o(

None-the-less, we had a very good day, starting Saturday with a delicious breakfast and morning circle, which included a game to wake us all up. The program was introduced; it

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started out with 1,5 hours practical event around our new earthen oven and herb spiral. The rest of the morning was used for presentations of the various Czech initiatives present: Anastasia, PermaLot, 'Martin & Dita's Initiative' (a child of last years meeting), and brief exchange of news of Lunaria and other attempts in the republic.

A plentyful mainly organic cold buffet was served and a couple of hours was designated to eating, digesting and seeking shelter from the very hot mid-day sun.

The afternoon was spent in the shady forest, first with a game training the senses, later through a presentation of GEN-Europe and the GA. I tried to present the (again) the issue of cultural context and differences from the N.W. model to the less social models of Eastern Europe; .....[Personal comment: This topic is always difficult for me as I'm Danish and favor the social approach, and have to avoid being cultural imperialistic! I do believe GEN needs to take an active decision in the debate about what an constitutes an EV internationally].... This talk was rounded off with a debate about wether to carry on the Czech Network or not.

The conclusion was that it would be good to continue, and Pavla/Crystoph volunteered to be the Czech coordinators, (mastering French, English, Czech and German!), while leaning on Martin to update the [www.ekovesnicky.cz](http://www.ekovesnicky.cz) homepage [ecovillage], as the home page already is a good attractive information point for several EV. initiatives. It was pointed out that every initiative is very different, however a network of information could be beneficial. On the international level we felt there would be much to learn from abroad, though as we're all initiatives we don't feel it's correct to have the same 'political' (voting) influence as networks representing established networks.

After the afternoon in the forest we arrived to a camp with additional 7 visitors, cooked dinner and rounded the day of by the campfire with a jam session.

To several participants the Sunday morning was the climax of the weekend, as sharing circle over the theme of "respecting community/what does community mean to me" was facilitated. The afternoon was spent with casual talks and networking, as well as enjoying the new information trail in the PermaLot Land Trust. Franta had his home-ground, Earth baked, sour dough breads ready for lunch, and we look forward to meeting several of the Anastasia participants at the natural building collouium in Mariahalom in 2 weeks time...

Peace and Love,  
Max