



ECNC Update

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Editorial ● ● ●

Having been involved with ECNC nearly since its inception I see, on the eve of its fifth anniversary year, that the organization is ripening. With effort and care, ECNC has settled and developed its flavour in various aspects; like a serious vintage.

At the last Board meeting in Thessaloniki (November 1997) I was happy to notice that the new forecasted style – ECNC's strategic orientation, its programmatic approach, the substantial Network involvement – indeed appears to be working. There is a clear increase in co-operation between the four organs of ECNC: the Board, the Network, the Scientific Council and the Secretariat. A good example was the way in which ECNC's Annual Work Plan for 1998 was drafted and discussed. A draft of this Plan was developed by the Secretariat, based on the advice and priorities of the Board, Scientific Council and Network partners. All Network partners have been invited to comment on the Plan and to express their interest in participating in certain programmes or projects. The response given by the Network was positive and showed clear commitment. The Board actively debated and approved the new style work plan. I'm happy to say that the Board liked the approach very much and encouraged the ECNC Secretariat and Network to now implement this ambitious work.

I would like to draw particular attention to a component of this Work plan. In the last few decades, nature has become a common product in European media society. Does it reflect a mere fashion? Is it starting to decline? Where is nature placed in today's European society? In 1998 ECNC will start a pilot project called 'Nature in Mind'. We will investigate how various social groups look at nature, how they assign values to it and how this differs within and between regions in Europe. This four-year project will become a real test of ECNC's idea. Such a project can only be conducted by intensive co-operation and networking; our "speciality". With 'Nature in Mind' we aim to make a substantial input into European and national policy as it surely will provide new and surprising insights into this matter.

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Meanwhile the ECNC Network has expanded with four new partners. I would like to welcome these institutes and I would like to invite them to actively help in achieving the ECNC mission. This *ECNC Update* introduces these new partners to you.

1998 is a special year for nature conservation in Europe, not in the least because of the fourth Pan-European ministerial conference "Environment for Europe" that will be held in Aarhus (Denmark) in June. At this event the European governments will express or renew their commitment to protect Europe's environment, including its nature and biodiversity. Europe is an old territory and much nature has been used and destroyed to achieve our present living standards. But there is still much remaining to be saved; a collective endeavour indeed. ECNC is proud to be at the forefront of this process. Its active involvement in the implementation of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy and the development of the EU Biodiversity Strategy as well as its good working relationships with the European Environment Agency, the Council of Europe, UNEP and numerous other international organizations, will prove to be very constructive. IUCN, The World Conservation Union has always been present in the ECNC Board, but last December ECNC became a member of IUCN in order to strengthen our increasing co-operation efforts within Europe. Nature conservation is a "perennial" challenge, so I want to take this opportunity to wish you an inspiring start for this New Year.

Dr Antonio Machado, President of ECNC's Board