

## Editorial

ELO has over thirty years experience in lobbying. However, it would be a mistake to reduce this to contacts, proposals, information and networking with the world of politics. It also acts as mediator between political and environmental decision-makers, the private sector and representatives of the European institutions.

Our organization is developing a flexible approach to European countryside issues. In all the programmes and concepts it develops, in all the positions it defends, ELO promotes a balanced, joint approach to social, economic and environmental interests. This attitude is based on the conviction that the building of Europe cannot be founded on primitive conflicts such as public v. private sector, or the environment v. business.

Europe's challenges are different - what pace of construction should apply to the new member states and the candidate countries? What are the limits of Europe? What kind of common budget should it have and for what policies? What kind of future do we want for our countryside? What will be the role of man and business? Answering these questions means going beyond obsolete concepts. Our non-partisan, inclusive position on rural activities authorizes us to speak for most rural stakeholders. Focusing on a handful of sectors is not going to promote the countryside. Only a subtle, comprehensive approach highlighting the way everyone's interests interconnect in all their abundance and diversity will turn out to be beneficial.

Our communication skills do not mean we are not constantly striving to be more representative. The fact that ELO is present everywhere in Europe and even outside is a plus, but it is not enough. The quality of the people in the network will determine that of the network. With confidence in the future we do never hesitate to invest in them, and this has allowed us to absorb all the Union's cultural registers and strengthen the team by adding environmental, forestry and political specialists in order to reach all areas of the countryside.

This has shown us that sustainability involves considering all aspects of the trilogy of excellence - environmental, social and economic considerations, none of them excluding or distorting the other two. Uniting our forces rather than opposing them is the way to future success.

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE

## *Corporate Social Responsibility: Striking the middle ground*



**A**t a time when concerns about the environment and about the status of the developing world have increasingly come to the fore, it is a generally held view that the engagement of businesses in 'sustainable development' and 'corporate responsibility' can go a long way towards alleviating some of the problems faced by today's society. Professor David Henderson's "The Role of Business in the Modern World" challenges this view in a somewhat provocative and yet convincing manner.

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By examining the economic history of the last century, Professor Henderson paints a picture of society where businesses can best contribute to the general welfare by pursuing their "primary role" - that is to say, by engineering profit. In a competitive and free economic market, with both opportunities and pressures, businesses would thus unconsciously be acting as vectors of economic progress, simply by following their primary objective.

The validity of this theory is illustrated by several examples from the past fifty years, in particular by the success story of the four 'Asian stars': Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan. While in 1950 the GDP per head of these countries was at about one third of the world average, the IMF now ranks them, along with the core OECD countries, as "advanced economies". The economic success of these countries owed "little or nothing to direct foreign assistance".

'Myths' about globalisation, such as that about the marginalization of poor countries, have led to the belief that the business world needs to reform its ways. Yet as Henderson points out: "one cannot blame globalisation in the world as a whole, nor liberalisation at home, for the deep-seated economic problems of Cuba under Castro, North Korea under Kim, Iran under the mullahs, Liberia and Somalia under their respective warlords, Nigeria under successive corrupt military dictatorships, Zimbabwe under Mugabe, Belarus under Lukashenko, Venezuela under Chávez, or Haiti under any of the governments that have held power there in recent decades. It is not 'globalisation' which has marginalized these and many other faltering economies, but rather internal factors, not least, in many cases, the actions and policies of their own governments". Businesses, therefore, are not to blame.

Yet many still hold that the business world, though perhaps not accountable for the state of affairs today, nonetheless needs to shoulder some of the responsibility when it comes to prospective improvements. Though the pursuit of profit sufficed to boost the economy and promote general welfare in the past, current business practice cannot be measured against past business practice for the simple reason that never before has such a richly developed economy been in place. As this evolves, it might be reasonable to assume that with it, the role of multinational enterprises should evolve as well. Is it enough, in a modern society, for businesses to focus their attention solely on the generation of profit?

Henderson's main worry is that unnecessary investments on the behalf of corporations in social undertakings may detract them from their primary objective in a way that would be disadvantageous to the general welfare, and that would weaken the economy, but he is also concerned that democracy and freedom may be threatened by this path of action. The risks of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), though primarily financial, are not exclusively financial. Under the heading of "global governance", corporations are asked to undertake an equal partnership with the government and with international agencies, and yet this seems to go against constitutional reasoning: businesses have no role in "global governance" whatsoever, insofar as they have not been democratically elected and are not accountable to legislature.

There is also a worry that a growing concern for 'social equality' and 'respect for the environment' may lead to important over-regulation, which would be grossly detrimental to smaller enterprises and poorer countries. When businesses are being asked to take into



account the "developmental, social, gender and environmental implications of their undertakings" (2002 UN conference, Monterrey), it seems clear that restrictions in freedom of employment and contract will ensue.

So what arguments are there in favour of CSR? This concept, generally thought to have come into play only in the past couple of decades, has in point of fact, been an existent doctrine since the days of 19th century paternalism. Many businesses have always been aware of the fact that they had moral as well as legal obligations, and have acted accordingly without any detriment to their profitability whatsoever (though of course it is true that certain 'philanthropists' were not acting without ulterior motives). Examples to consider could include the industrial villages of 19th century Britain (Saltaire, Bourneville or Port Sunlight), or Henry Ford's decision, in 1914, to increase the wage of his workers to \$5 for an 8-hour day, when the average wage in the auto industry was then \$2.34 for a 9-hour day. If this policy involves such an enormous financial investment on the part of businesses, then why is it being embraced by an ever-increasing number of companies?

The reasons do not lie exclusively with the pressure being put upon them to conform, or with a desire to preserve spotless reputations. Many businesses have simply come to a realisation that a policy of 'sustainable development' is preferable, if we are to provide for our future, and that a stable society is also necessary for the continuation of their activities. These same businesses are then free to create alliances with NGOs sharing the same opinions and objectives as them, and these partnerships, with a pooling together of resources, enable all to attain fixed goals and targets at greater speed.

In addition to the 'conscience' factor governing support for CSR, the financial benefits of 'eco-efficiency' are often shown to be positive, as internal auditing has revealed in a number of companies. This is not so much as a result of preferential treatment on the behalf of consumers (though undoubtedly this has contributed), but because running businesses in more energy-efficient ways has quite simply led directly to a decrease in expenditure.

All in all, businesses are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that they have moral, as well as

legal obligations. They need to show that they "treat people fairly and humanely", and that their activities "are not giving rise to damaging external effects". This has often proved good business with positive effects on the public image of the relevant companies. It must have also contributed to pre-empting the risk of conscious boycotts motivated by a lack of social responsibility (e.g. against Nike for using Asian child labour).

Indeed, as long as a policy of CSR is not carried to extremes and remains fairly moderate, there seems to be no reason why enterprise profitability should suffer from it. As Henderson himself admits, "the search for profit is fully compatible with professionalism, humanity, and the wish to act honourably".

■ Nathalie HANLEY

## The European Countryside Movement calls for recognition of the role of the countryside in regional development

**A**gainst the background of the work on the future of European regional development policy, the international NGOs - partners of the European Countryside Movement (ECM) - unanimously adopted the following statement on July 7, 2005. It has four points:

### A balanced relationship between rural and urban areas

- The ECM wants rural areas to be centres of development and recognized partners in regional policy, not seen merely through the town-and-country relationship.
- The ECM is calling for the rural-urban balance to be explicitly recognized as an important criterion for defining policies and for the fair distribution of ERDF funds, so that this distribution is not the sole responsibility of the member states, in the name of subsidiarity.

### The applicability and consistency of European policy vis-à-vis rural areas

- Although the structures of the countryside are above all based

on agricultural and forestry activity, the ECM recalls the need for intervention of all the structural funds in supporting the countryside, i.e. the ERDF and the ESF. EAFRD can only resolve some of the problems encountered in the countryside:

- Concerned to strengthen the consistency between projects implemented through different policies on the same territory:
- the ECM approves of the reinforcement of the territorial and integrated approach in the implementation of the ERDF programmes on a scale which allows local social and economic relations and the subsequent cohesion of rural communities.
- The ECM is calling for the European rural development strategy to be mentioned as one of the political reference documents on the implementation of

### regional development policy. The Lisbon strategy and the challenges of cohesion

- ECM recalls the significant contribution of rural zones to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy goals, in particular through economic activities profoundly anchored in their territory such as farming, forestry, tourism and crafts. A satisfactory result for the Lisbon process is unimaginable without their inclusion in the regulation's priorities.
- The ECM is however unsure about the consequences for the most fragile rural areas if the Lisbon strategy is practically the only priority for implementing community action. It recalls that social, economic and territorial cohesion is also a major priority of European action.

In the specific context of maintaining and creating economic activity in rural zones, the ECM notes that the measures in the proposal for a regulation on support for regional development by the ERDF (Com2004/495) in particular article 9, are mainly geared to technical aspects. The ECM would like to see them broadened to the socio-cultural environment necessary for the creation of activities and jobs in the countryside.



## "Every Field a Drop of Nature"

**L**a Cassinazza is a farm of 400 hectares 20km south of Milan which produced rice and maize until 1992.



It is well-known that in Europe these crops receive subsidies, the equivalent of 1000 Euros per year per household.

Fortunately as from 1992, two innovative European regulations, 2078/92 and 2080/92 allowed farmers to use these subsidies on their land to create wooded areas with a high environmental value.

All new enterprises require pioneers. La Cassinazza was fortunate to be able to work with Ecodeco, a leading Italian environmental firm which has made the technical and farming resources available to allow it to take advantage of this opportunity. The results of this cooperation can be clearly seen in these two aerial photographs which speak for themselves.

For an idea of how successful this project has been, the duck population wintering on the land has increased from a few individuals to over 12,000 and the number of bird species has increased

from 60 to 184, butterflies from a handful to 25 and there are 27 species of dragonfly. 25 local species of trees and shrubs numbering 190,000 have been planted in copses which are typical of the region. Over 150 hectares are covered by water of various depths in order to recreate different aquatic environments with the intention of enhancing biological diversity.

In 2003, after existing as an agri-environmental farm for a few years, La Cassinazza received the International Euroducks Fund prize for wetlands because of its level of biological restoration. This prestigious prize had so far only been awarded to sites which had existed for hundreds or even thousands of years.

Even more importantly, uncultivated soil can be a reservoir for the most precious of agricultural features - fertility, which is a strategic quality in food terms. At La Cassinazza in 6 years the Exchange Index which measures soil fertility went from 7 - typical of agricultural

deserts in which single crop farming has been practiced for decades - to 12. Over the next few years it could reach 16, typical of virgin soil.

The results, which are undisputed and sometimes unexpected, encouraged Ecodeco, landowners and rural managers as well as environmental organizations to promote a major environmental improvement programme for European rural zones - the Belleuropa project for improving landscapes and biological diversity, fighting against climate change and all types of pollution including noise and for creating fertility reservations.

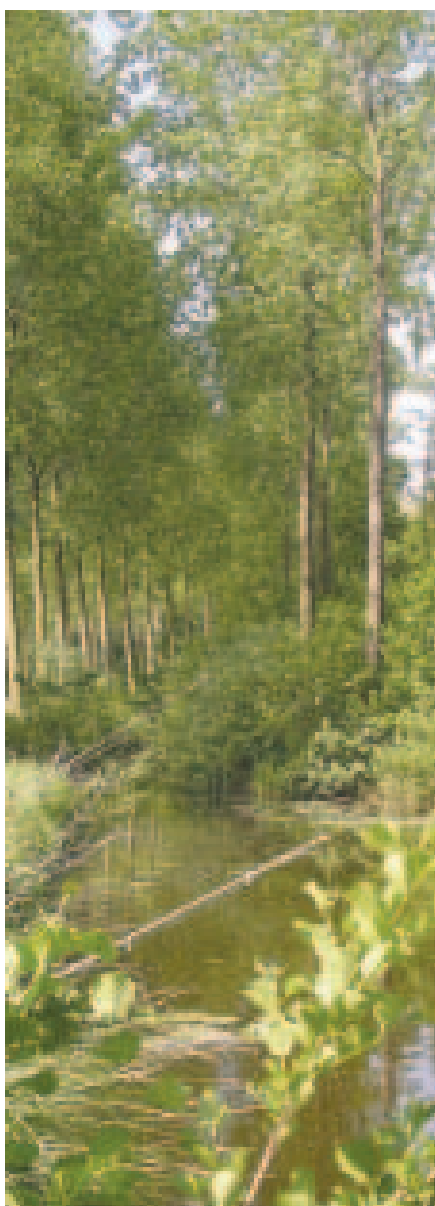
New European directives were implemented in 2005: payments are now completely independent of production (decoupled), new environmental crops are henceforth possible and pioneering projects such as those created and implemented at La Cassinazza are providing precious case studies.

The Belleuropa project can be summed up by the following slogan: Every field is a drop of nature, which means that every landowner can become the watchful guardian of his environmental resources from the moment their environmental value is recognized, in the same way as any other type of production.

■ Gabriella di MARZIO

## Training day on the environment in Bornem for the members of the 25 Cabinets....

**O**n 8 June 2005, ELO had the opportunity of contributing to the success of the training day for members responsible for environmental affairs of the Cabinets of the 25 commissioners. This was jointly organized by Martijn QUINN (member of Commissioner DIMAS' cabinet), Catherine DAY (Director General of DG Environment) and Anne TELLER (Policy officer for DG Environment). It was held at Bornem Castle, a true oasis of greenery lost in the middle of one of the most industrialized regions of Flanders and a perfect illustration of a Natura 2000 site.



This event began with an initial session intended to provide a general view of key policies linked to Natura 2000 in the form of a visit of the site during which Nick HANLEY (head of DG Environment's Nature unit), Professor Marc COUSSEMENT (Louvain University and Landelijk Vlaanderen presidency - Flemish countryside movement) and Thierry L'ESCAILLE (ELO general secretary) gave a very clear picture of the practical aspects of the Natura 2000 network and of the need for sustainable economic management of farmland.

It was an excellent opportunity to illustrate that farmers, landowners and the users of Natura 2000 are in favour of proper transposition of the project and support the EU's approach. They also highlighted the fact that certain administrative problems persist, mainly due to bad transposition at the national or regional level.

The participants were able to see that the transposition of Natura 2000 has not always been well understood by the national and regional authorities, and has therefore created tension with the farmers and landowners.

However, a site like Bornem demonstrates that it is possible to

positively combine the requirements of Natura 2000 with the efficient and productive management of land. This estate proves that a protected zone does not exist in a vacuum. The professionals of the countryside are responsible for our environmental heritage and must be able to enhance it and promote the development of activities designed to fund the protection of biodiversity. Moreover these activities such as farming, forestry, fishing and sustainable hunting, without of course forgetting proper forest management, contribute to the community's welfare by promoting sustainable economic development through the creation of stable jobs and the development of tourism in the region.

This contribution is usually underestimated and compensation for the constraints endured often fails to meet the effort involved. After the excursion the second session began with a concise introduction by Ana MARTINHO (chief adviser to President BARROSO) on the environmental Agenda, followed by an overview from Catherine DAY, Director General of DG Environment, who recalled the background against which environmental legislation was - and still is - being drafted, and the different tools of environmental policy.



Catherine DAY then explained that the environment is an unavoidable subject and very much part of the Lisbon Agenda. Environmental standards are effectively 'innovation catalysts', contributing to the creation of 2.2 million jobs in Europe's 'eco-technology' industry.

When the Agenda for the months to come was presented the director general underlined the fact that the impact assessment is a very important instrument and that incorporating the environment into European policies is one of the Commission's major challenges.

Inter alia the Agenda includes the role of the environment within the Lisbon Strategy, the 'better legislation' concept, the 7 thematic strategies and specific subjects such as air quality, climate change,

GMOs and chemical products (REACH project - Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals).

The second part of the second session took the form of a round table with three speakers chaired by Nancy KONTOU, head of Commissioner DIMAS' cabinet.

Jacqueline McGLADE (Executive Director of the European Environment Agency - EEA) mainly insisted on two points. On the one hand the need to circulate useful up-to-date information for the political decision-makers and the broader public, so that European citizens feel confident about European environmental legislation, and on the other hand the need to change the habits of industry and citizens in order to save energy because of the

terrible impact on climate change. It has often been demonstrated following a cost-benefit analysis that a solution which seemed expensive at first turns out to be much cheaper, with a long-term gain far higher than the initial expense.

Tony LONG, (director of the WWF European Policy Office) introduced the notion of the 'European Ecological Footprint', explaining that Europe's contribution to exceeding the ecological tolerance threshold is far from negligible and that most of this footprint is due to the energy problem. Europe is unable to separate the consumption of resources and pollution from economic growth, and a solution must therefore be found. In his view the environment will become a widely accepted political priority for reasons of safety (nuclear safety), sta-





bility (water conflicts) and sustainability (climate change).

Philippe de BUCK (general secretary of UNICE) recognized that the environment is a crucial challenge, and opted for a slightly different view. He felt that in the light of the current economic situation, the priorities for European citizens are firstly to find a job - and keep it - and then only in second position, breathe clean air.

He also underlined that we should never forget that consumers are not necessarily prepared to sacrifice their hard-won comfort in exchange for environmentally friendly restrictions.



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Moreover, the general secretary of UNICE highlighted the importance of the precautionary principle which must be addressed from a pro-active angle, and expressed concern about greenhouse gases and their consequences for climate change. Finally he recalled the fact that the nuclear approach must be reconsidered in the near future, and he illustrated his words with the example of the Finnish nuclear power station.

These presentations were then followed by lively discussions on the different subjects addressed by the speakers. The result of these debates indicates that the population of Europe feels concerned by environmental issues and that Community legislation seems to be a good way of firstly reassuring citizens and secondly opening up the way to other breakthroughs thanks to a compulsory regulatory framework.

Catherine DAY concluded this session by recognizing the need for a major effort in future, but underlined the multiplier effect of all 'good practice'. She recalled the fact that the environmental sector was a fertile source of jobs, the resources of which are far from exhausted. This view is shared by ELO, whose action always aims at promoting sustainable development.

The day ended with a guided tour of Bornem Castle by the owners of the estate.

ELO welcomes this new form of fruitful cooperation with the European Commission which reflects its own approach to the environment, in particular as part of Natura 2000.

The European Union is going through a budgetary crisis due to pressure exercised by the states in favour of a 1% ceiling on the European budget. If these restrictions are adopted they are bound to affect the budget allocated to environmental policies, either directly or as part of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy).

This explains why on Commissioner DIMAS was so keen to defend the environmental strategies which will apply to all European policies on July 20. The choice made by the commissioner's cabinet to involve ELO in this event is significant. As part of the new Commission's guidelines, the environment needs allies which will give it general credibility including economic, social and environmental aspects. For some time ELO has been considering this topic in depth and advocates a balanced approach to conservation, in particular to NATURA 2000.

ELO's action is therefore part of a broader process reinforcing its visibility and credibility with the European institutions, and with its partners.

■ Cécile BONINO

## "Hunting rights and property rights in Europe"

*A parliamentary intergroup organized by ELO in Strasbourg*

Last 6 July as part of the intergroup "Sustainable hunting, biodiversity and rural activities", ELO, in coordination with FACE (Federation of Associations for hunting and the conservation of wild fauna in the EU) and the chairman of the intergroup, MEP Michl EBNER, addressed MEP regarding the link that exists in Europe between hunting rights, property rights and sustainable territorial management.



Intergroup "Sustainable hunting, biodiversity and rural activities"  
European Parliament, 6 July 2004

The situation in Europe varies greatly of course, since hunting rights and property rights are the fruit of a long process of historical sedimentation influenced by the legal background in each member state. A quick scan of the situation does however provide a picture of the main spheres of influence - Roman law around the Mediterranean, Common Law in the British Isles and Ireland, Germanic law in Eastern Europe, Scandinavian law in the North. But a more careful look at the legal systems indicates that generally speaking, property rights and hunting rights are closely linked.

In the Europe of 15, the only exceptions to the rule are Portugal and certain Italian regions where hunting rights do not belong to landowners. This is due to the vestiges of socio-economic structures governing private estates which no longer exist, without which local populations would not have been able to hunt. Moreover, in many new member states, the weight of the communist heritage is still perceptible and hunting rights still belong to the state.

The chairman of the intergroup meeting, Dr Dariusz GRABOWSKI, an MEP of Polish origin, described

the situation in his country. The return of confiscated land has been blocked and 80% of forests are still public and the same applies to hunting rights even on private property. This situation can be explained by the desire to give local populations access to the forest.

As recalled by Karl LEUTRUM von ERZHINGEN and Kraft HOHENLOHE OERHINGEN, representatives of the German Association of Rural Landowners, in their country public access to private forests is not only possible but actually guaranteed by law. There is therefore no contradiction.

Invited by ELO, Karl-Heinz MÜLLER of the environment ministry of the state of Thüringen and Ando EELMA, land and forest owner in Estonia, took turns to explain the transition measures necessary to adapt hunting rights in former Eastern Germany to the realities of a reunited Germany, and the deadlock in the Estonian countryside where landowners do not hold hunting rights. In the countries of Northern Europe, not only do landowners not benefit from hunting rights but even the hunters' associations can practice their hobby on private territory without paying any compensation, even if they damage the game. In the long term the situation is untenable.

Like Gérard d'OUTREMONT, an Belgian economist specializing in the rural economy, the MEPs felt strongly about this situation. The

relationship between hunting rights and property rights must be based on balanced management of socio-economic and environmental interests. But the link between hunting rights and property rights is without a doubt one of the most efficient ways to achieve this balance. The landowner, guarantor of the survival of the property he is responsible for, is without doubt the best person to come up with a long-term strategy. He juggles the different activities which draw the most benefit from his land. In a rural economy which survives increasingly due to its multifunctionality, there is no reason to sacrifice one activity for another and hunting is both a management tool and a source of income. It plays a fundamental role in the countryside.

In the debates that followed in the presence of Rudolf SCHWARZBÖCK, the president of COPA (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations of the European Union), Pierre-Olivier DREGE from the ONF (National Forestry Office) and Gert LINDEMANN, agriculture minister from the state of Lower Saxony, a consensus emerged on the concept of economic fairness. If the

landowner also holds the hunting rights, he will naturally also benefit from the economic spin-offs of this activity, or at least on a personal level, from the pleasure of hunting himself. Otherwise the landowner must receive compensation in the event of damage to game, as appears to be the case in Poland. It is in everyone's interests for all rural areas to benefit from economic mechanisms allowing long-term management - and this is not the case in Estonia.

Minister LINDEMANN proposed the idea of a charter of general principles applicable to the management of hunting grounds to make them part of a real socio-economic process. The case of Estonia speaks volumes. The landowner can neither hunt nor benefit from income from hunting, nor even prevent damage to game and even less get any compensation for it. The value of trees planted by a forest owner will decrease if they are damaged by game. If the professionals abandon the countryside, areas will close up and game become more scarce.

The presidency of the intergroup therefore submitted a draft resolu-

tion to the MEPs covering the whole problem. It in particular underlines:

- the link between property rights and hunting rights as a tool for coordination and compatibility between the different uses of a single area.
- The responsibility of landowners for the management and conservation of the area's natural resources in order to ensure the continuity of their economic, environmental and social roles - including management of hunting and game.
- The need for member states to review certain situations where the separation of rights over land ownership and hunting rights has a negative impact on the balance of natural resources, economic activity and socio-cultural interests.
- The importance of access to hunting grounds for local populations.

This motion is currently being discussed and will be proposed for a vote at the next intergroup meeting in September.



MEP Michl EBNER



MEP Dariusz GRABOWSKI

## The river contract: the principle

**T**he river contract consists in bring together around the same table all those with a connection to the valley, with the intention of reaching a consensus on an action programme to restore water courses, their surrounding areas and the resources in the water basin. Representatives from associations and from political, administrative, socio-economic and scientific life are invited to participate.

In 1988, the not-for-profit organization IDEF (Institut pour le Développement de l'Enfant et de la Famille) and the Permanent Deputation of Namur signed a 3 year convention through which the parties undertook to cooperate as part of a project to purify the Fosses stream and its tributaries and make the affair an educational experience. The 'river contract' concept was new to the Wallonia region at the time, and this first experience embarked upon a multidisciplinary approach through specific action based on partnerships, with the aim of restoring a water course.

In 1990 the King Baudouin Foundation and Inter-Environnement Wallonie started a river contract project on the Upper Meuse, while during the same year the local authorities in Bertrix brought together people with links to the Munos basin, an entirely local water course.

Then in 1992 a new project developed in the Dendre basin. The pollution of the water course had received a lot of attention in the media and the town of Ath then signed an agreement with the Wallonia region with the intention of drafting a river contract for the Dendre. A set of guidelines for the basin was signed in 1997 by the river committee partners.

These 4 initial experiences provided food for thought about what sort of river contract could be created for the Wallonia region, and illustrated how beneficial this type of approach could be.



In March 1993 the Wallonian environment minister institutionalized the river contract by publishing a ministerial circular defining the Wallonian procedure.

The process of drawing up a river contract includes 6 stages:

1. The project's start-up phase.
  - a) Drafting a preparatory dossier.
  - b) Preparing a study agreement to form the basis of a river contract.
2. Approval of the study agreement by the minister responsible for river contracts.
3. Setting up a river committee and implementation of the study agreement.
4. Signing the river contract.
5. Carrying out the commitments.
6. Assessments and updates of river contract.

Stages 1 to 3 prepare the river contract which comes into effect as soon as it is signed by the partners on the river committee.

The procedure can be initiated by any public or private entity (e.g. a province or one or several local authorities) wishing to seek a consensus on solutions for the protection of the river and the water basin resources.

The local authority approach is to designate a strong political personality (mayor, MP, minister) who will lead the project and who is personally involved or has been approached on the matter by local persons or by local council representatives (e.g. anglers, local authority eco-advisers etc).

The river contract covers many aspects directly or indirectly linked

to water courses, their surroundings and water basin resources. The programme is adapted to the function and uses of the water in the relevant zone as well as the proposals of the river committee and the agreements it reaches.

Two types of action are mentioned in this programme.

- the administration's official tasks (e.g. purification programme, managing water courses, permits).
- measures arising from the river contract (e.g. specific local authority projects, clean river operations etc).

These may include some of the following:

- quality of surface water and ground water.
- risks linked to flooding and quantitative management.
- restoring water courses and management consultation.
- land planning in the valley.
- nature conservation and preserving aquatic eco-systems.

- landscape management
- water-related economic activity.
- agriculture and forests.
- tourism and leisure.
- river transport.
- waste management.
- information and public awareness-raising.
- educational activities on the theme of water.
- angling.

**I am a riverside landowner and very familiar with the river. I have heard about the river contract. How may I participate?**

The first stage consists in identifying which catchment area you are in (see river contract map). For a specific request or for information purposes, the best course of action is to contact the local coordination unit. There are currently 16 river contracts in Wallonia. The contact details of the river contract coordinator for your river contract can be found on the following website : [http://environnement.wallonie.be/co\\_ntrat\\_riviere/](http://environnement.wallonie.be/co_ntrat_riviere/)

The river committee meets twice a year and is open to all.

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## Diary Dates 2005

### 4-5 November, Sofia

"Challenges of safe food and health in candidate countries"  
Benefits and difficulties linked to the application of European standards in an area as sensitive as food safety.

### 9-10 November Stockholm

Conference - "Forest-based Sector Technology platform" of the European Forestry Institute.

### 15-16 November Hertfordshire, UK

"Manage your soils, grow your business" - seminar providing

practical bases to apply land management theories, organized by Rothamsted Research. Guest of honour Lord BACH, minister of food production, agriculture and renewable energy, whom ELO met in June 2005.

### 21-22 November, Prague

ELO seminar, "What is the current state of cooperation between private land managers and the public administration in the implementation of Natura 2000?"

### 22 November, Brussels

Conference - "Climate Change Now - what can Europe deliver?" - by European Voice.

### 23-24 November, Bratislava

ELO seminar, "The process of restoration of land ownership rights".

### 28-29 November, Vienna

ELO general assembly with the Austrian minister of agriculture.

### 30 November Libramont, Belgium

"Forest die-back and forest health: current state, prevention and restoration" - conference organized by the Royal Forestry Society of Belgium.



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