

SER Europe: News from the 6th European Conference in Ghent, Belgium

The 6th European Conference on Ecological Restoration 'Towards a sustainable future for European Ecosystems' was held from September 8-12 2008 in Ghent, Belgium. About 500 delegates from more than 40 countries attended the conference, which was a big success for SER Europe, for the Belgian Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO) as local organizer and for many co-organizers and partners from universities, nature conservation authori-

(DG Environment) emphasized that interdisciplinary, society-based ecological restoration must become a vital part of the strategy to maintain and improve the quality of the Natura 2000 network in Europe. Mr. Miko encouraged the conference participants to summarize the 'state of the art' in restoring Natura 2000 habitats and species and to provide guidelines for future planning and actions within the framework of European environmental policy. Similarly, Sebastian

Decler, who acted as head of the organising committee, and due to the grateful financial and institutional support by the Belgian Research Institute for Nature and Forest, the European Commission and many other institutions.

The conference declaration, conference conclusions, press releases, photos and other documents concerning the Ghent conference can be found at:

<http://www.ser.org/europe>



ties, NGOs and from the European Commission. In the course of the conference, 80 participants became new members of SER International and SER Europe, which confirms the increasing popularity and impact of our organisation in Europe. The conference was organized in Belgium in close proximity to EU authorities, which are currently implementing the Natura 2000 system for the protection of fauna, flora and habitats in Europe. On a European level Natura 2000 has become the most important instrument to preserve diversity of species, habitats and landscapes.

Brand new data on the status of European habitats and species presented by Mrs. Rania Spyropoulou from the European Environmental Agency proved that the majority of habitats and species are in an insufficient or even bad state. To counteract this situation, Ladislav Miko, director of the European Commission's Environment Directorate-General

Winkler, IUCN senior advisor on European Policy, stated that a renewed restoration agenda is of fundamental significance for improving and not only halting the status of biodiversity of European ecosystems. Undoubtedly, this conference opened excellent opportunities to intensify the relations of SER to the European Commission and to IUCN. It strengthened SER Europe's position as the leading organisation on Ecological Restoration in Europe.

At the end of the conference a conference declaration "Investing in nature conservation and ecological restoration pays" was approved that recommends greater investment in the science and practice of nature conservation AND ecological restoration, as well as in better communication of the enormous ecological and socio-economic benefits to be gained.

This very successful conference was only possible thanks to the commitment of our board member Kris

Upcoming events:

- The 7th European Conference on "Ecological restoration and sustainable development: establishing links across frontiers" will be organized in 2010 by Thierry Dutoit (University of Avignon) and his colleagues. It will be held from 23 to 28 August 2010 in the ancient city of Avignon in France.
- A summer school on 'Species introduction and management of biodiversity in restoration projects' will be held from 29 June to 3 July 2009 at the University of Münster in Germany.

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