

GEN Europe National Networks meeting, 17-19 January 2014, Torri Superiore

Participants

Alfonso Flaquer (RIE), Anna Kovasna (ERO), Anton Pugelj (SEKS), Ditlev Nissen (LØS), Edward vad Egmond (GEN Netherlands), Eian Smith (Scotland), Emel Kizilcik (Ecoyer), Fabiana (RIVE), Francesca Guidotti (RIVE), Fredjan Twigt (GEN Netherlands), Genny Carraro (RIVE), Kadri Allikmaä (GEN Estonia), Kariin Ottmar (Germany), Kevin (RIE), Macaco Tamarice (GEN Europe), Manja Vrenko (SEKS), Mauge (RIE), Monika Podsiadła (PAS), Monique Wijn (GEN Netherlands), Nara Petrovic (SEKS), Nicolas Barth (GEN Suisse), René Hirschi (GEN Suisse), Robert Palusiński (PAS), Thomas Meier (Germany), Ufuk Cakmak (Ecoyer), Ulrike Schimmel (GEN Europe).

Participating organisations

Established networks

Ecoyer, Turkish Ecologic Settlement Network
Eesti Ökokogukondade Ühendus, Estonian Ecovillage Network
Ekobyarnas Riksorganisation, ERO, Sweden
GEN Europe
GEN Netherlands
GEN Suisse, Switzerland
Landsforeningen for Økosamfund, LØS, Denmark
Polish Alternative Societies, PAS
Red Ibérica de Ecoaldeas, RIE, Spain/Portugal
Rete Italiana Villagi Ecologici, RIVE, Italy
Slovenian Eco Communities, unofficially SEKS, for Gibanje za Slovenske Ekološke Skupnost

Countries with forming networks

Germany
Scotland/UK

Facilitation

Lucilla Borio with support from Roberta, Eleonora, Sabrina and Viviana

Minutes and Documentation

Condensed minutes including decisions and to-do lists by Monique and Anna; PowerPoint by Edward; Selection of photos compiled by Nara; Photos of all flipchart papers edited and compiled by Eian; Grundtvig PowerPoint by Ulrike; List of names and emails of participants by Ulrike; All material to be gathered on a private website hosted by GEN Europe.

Basic Agreements

1. Raise your hand when you want to speak
2. Respect the list of speakers as well as time

3. Be aware of language differences
4. Speak in the I-form
5. Take care of yourself
6. Use hand signs
7. Include time for silence
8. Make sure everyone has time to speak

Cocreated program

	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM	Basic agreements; expectations; presentation of networks, sharing highlights and challenges	Sharing our vision of the future; Grundtvig Mobility and fundraising	Working groups, group work and presentation of actions
PM	Work on meeting agenda; World Café: How can the national networks support each other and GEN Europe, and vice versa? Agenda planning	Relationships and structure: GEN International – GEN Europe + between council and national networks; World Café synthesis; Presentations: GEN Sites, RIE & RIVE Ecovillage Incubator presentation	GA/Conference info, next meeting, loose ends, evaluation, sharing
Evening	The story of Torri Superiore	Presentations: RIVE, Ecoyer, GEN Netherlands. Earth Based psychology	Party!

Expectations sharing - harvested for agenda points

For plenary:

- Advocacy and political Strategies
- Education - Ecovillage Incubator
- Fundraising
- Grundtvig
- Language Issues
- Relationship between GEN Europe and networks
- GEN Sites (added later)
- GEN International (added)



For small groups:

- How to organise national network
- Visits between ecovillages
- Spirit of Europe Tour 2015
- Ecovillage Radio and Television

How can the national networks and GEN Europe support each other?

To work together and support each other and GEN Europe, networks can

- Exchange skills, experiences and produces
- Create learning partnerships in order to apply for funds
- Help establish and strengthen national networks where needed
- Keep the ecovillage database updated and well filled
- Share information, documents and best practices for both organisations and ecovillages
- Create inter-network team for preparing national gatherings and events
- Visit each other's events, exchange facilitators, support national ecovillage incubators, offer educations and trainings to each other
- Actively represent GEN at national events
- Create systems for ecovillage couch surfing or WWOOFing or for sharing houses and holidays in peer-to-peer exchange
- Use and expand the Solutions Library

Together with GEN Europe, networks can also

- Identify the needs and interests of networks and GEN Europe better
- Encourage free flow of information in many languages to discover points of connection and opportunities and create a common identity, story and agenda
- Hold more national network gatherings
- Create common fundraising database, fundraising trainings and work together on applications and crowdfunding initiatives
- Create ecovillage/GEN currency for exchanging products, skills, knowledge and visits with each other.
- Organise youth exchange programs with NextGEN and supported by GEN Europe (logistics, funding)

GEN Europe can

- Support the networks largely by creating platforms for sharing, such as GEN sites and the Solutions Library, and the GEN Interexchange already in the works.
- GEN could host a database or lists with expertise, skills and talents of organisations and individuals in member organisations.
- Host an E-bazaar for exchange between ecovillages



Synthesis of world café on mutual support

The new Erasmus+ and Grundtvig Mobility

For detailed information, please see Ulrike's PowerPoint presentation and the more elaborated notes sent separately. This is a condensation of main points, questions and calls for action.

The new Grundtvig program has two branches that are of particular interest to GEN – Mobility and Strategic Partnerships. This is about Grundtvig Mobility, where the main aims are:

- to develop and broaden skills, knowledge and competences
- to support structured courses and trainings or conferences as well as
- to support job shadowing/observation periods
- to support international teaching assignments

The program covers costs for:

- travel, food and accommodation according to a flat rate
- Course fees of maximum 70 € per day for a maximum of 10 days
- Project administration costs - € 350 per person
- 80% of the money is given immediately, 20% after completion

Only organisations can apply. Each application has sending and receiving organisations, but it is only the sender that applies. The application is based on the learning needs of the sending organisation. These have to be needs that cannot be met in the organisation's home country. The application can be written without specifying the exact people, course, training etc. involved.

More facts:

- One or two year projects
- One organisation is lead partner = responsible for money and outcomes
- A lot of paperwork! Not worth it for 2-3 people, but applications can include 100 or more
- Large applications give opportunities for job creation in administering projects
- Sending organisations need to supply a European business development plan where they show how the project benefits the whole organisation
- All organisations involved need to register for a participant identification code, PIC, number. Applications will then come with basic info already filled in automatically
- An organisation can only submit one application per round, but can still partner in other applications as well
- Deadline for Mobility projects is March 17 each year

What does this mean for the GEN family?

- More cooperation and networking needed to hand in applications
- Ideally, national networks can be sending organisations and ecovillages receiving
- Huge potential for good quality training and networking
- Potential for job creation in sending organisations / networks

GEN Europe has gathered a group of experienced fundraisers to write a draft application that all networks can use as a template. The group also wrote a leaflet with information and are working on applications from GEN Europe (for German citizens) and GEN International (for UK citizens).

Members of the group are Eva Stützel, Martin Stengel, Robert Hall, Camilla Nielsen-Englyst, Theodora Borghoff, Kosha Joubert and Ulrike Schimmel

What national networks can do to get started and support the creation of more applications:

- Get a PIC number for the organisation (information in English of how to do it can be found here <http://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/how-to-apply>)
- Contact your national agency to ask about local rules, requirements and support (if you do not know who they are, try to google Erasmus+ and your country name)
- Compile a list of
 - Your training needs
 - Courses that you are offering that could be good for others/and international audience
 - Teachers you would like to invite to your country/organisation
- Contact Ulrike to say that you are interested

Other funding possibilities

- Youth in Action
- Crowdfunding
- Horizon 2020 – EU's research and innovation program
- Erasmus Internships/ Work Placements can be used for extended ecovillage stays (for students)
- EU InterReg – to replicate the Baltic Ecovillages for Sustainable Rural Development project plans are underway in the Danube and Mediterranean regions

Information about GEN International and GEN Europe

Until recently, work in GEN International has been held largely by GEN Europe. Now, with the creation of GEN Africa and the strengthening of the other regional networks, it is time to shift some functions and responsibilities from GEN Europe to GEN International. These areas are PR and design, IT, education and research and to some extent also fundraising. All regional networks will still have all these functions to a smaller extent, but the main holder will be GEN International. The shift is part of the larger process of creating a more coherent organisational structure for GEN International and the regions.

GEN is also working on developing new and shorter courses as well as a pool of GEN trainers.

Clarification of relationships between council, staff and networks

National networks are full members just like ecovillages, and have the same status and rights as them. Alf is currently the only person in the council who comes from a national network. He is trying to bring in the perspective of networks, but there is no formal role for representing networks in council.

Points for clarification:

- Communication channels between networks, other members and the council
- How can the networks support the work of GEN-Europe council and staff?

- Council – national networks cooperation, what could it look like?

Gen-sites and IT

GEN International has always had a database, but that will now be replaced with GEN Sites. GEN sites will offer many more functions, and can also host customizable websites for GEN members. The project is almost finished, and will in the end be able to offer many of the sharing, exchange and presentation platforms that our network wants. GEN sites is at the moment available in English, German and Spanish, with more translations possible. Some quick facts about GEN sites:

- Can host websites that can be customised to reflect different needs. Sites can be very interactive, almost like Facebook, or like classical static websites moderated by a few
- Offers social media functions, blogs and forums
- Calendars for dates and events
- Online marketplace
- A worldwide searchable database of ecovillages and events
- Existing websites can be connected to GEN Sites, even if hosted somewhere else
- Data from GEN Sites can be imported to and synchronised with external sites, so that updates will automatically sync with the main database, giving us a complete view of ecovillages and events across the globe

Needs

- More skilled people on the IT-team
- Testing of the website to debug
- Writing of user manuals, documentation
- Volunteers for translation to more languages
- Country moderators for entries in database

Volunteers and interested IT-people are warmly welcome to contact Ulrike! Other IT-tools available: Solutions Library and the still developing Gen-interexchange.

Ecovillage incubators in RIE and RIVE – a short presentation of a great idea

RIE

Inspired by Diana Leafe Christian's findings that 90% of ecovillages fail in the first 10 years, RIE created the ecovillage incubator to support people starting a community. In RIE, 30 communities died in the 10 years before the project was started – it is important to do something about it!

The incubator is connected to the Iberian summer gathering, because all the best trainers are usually there. The incubator starts with a sharing in the plenary so that new communities feel they are part of something much bigger. Immediately after the gathering, there is then a two day workshop tailored for new ecovillages. Only groups that actually have land can take part in the incubator. RIE has seen that the first two years of a project are the most critical, so support is most intense during that period.

RIE quickly realised that the need was greater than the workshop could fulfil, so now there is also a group of trainers, experts and facilitators that travel to where they are needed. These

visits are financially supported by RIE, which can pay for travel costs that the starting communities cannot afford. The trainers all have experience from living in community, and have expertise and skills in specific areas. They can be group facilitators, but also experts in fields like ecology, economy, water, energy systems etc. The network also developed indicators to help groups find their strengths and weaknesses.

What is the most important advice for a community to succeed? Respect agreements!

It is important that the incubator is held by the network instead of one single ecovillage. In this way, new communities can see a wide variety of examples, and choose what they like and what fits best for them. There is not only one way to be an ecovillage.

RIVE

RIVEs incubator is also for people who already have group and land, and has been in place for three years. It starts in a separate three day meeting. In this meeting, mornings are for sharing needs in the plenary, afternoons are for specific workshops and evenings are for parties – celebration is important!

The trainers and facilitators have all lived in ecovillages for a long time. They volunteer their time, but RIVE pays some travel costs. Money for this comes mainly from the gatherings RIVE organise. The incubator meetings are hosted by different ecovillages, and the income is shared between RIVE and the ecovillage.

This summer, a new program will start. This program will be open to all, not only those with land. It will be held in different ecovillages and is based on the four EDE dimensions plus a fifth dimension – inner transformation. Ecovillages propose themselves as hosts for trainings and which dimension they would like to cover, so each place offers its unique flavour and expertise. During trainings, participants also take part in ecovillage life. The cost is maximum €150 for 4 days – the idea is to keep it affordable.

Working groups: Presentation of action points

Grundtvig Mobility	Ecovillage Incubator	GEN EU - national networks relations	Language issues (cancelled)	
Host: Ulrike	Host: Mauge	Host: Kariin	Host: Fabiana	
Advocacy & political strategies	Spirit of Europe tour	How to organise national networks	Grundtvig partnerships, EV exchange	Media training, incl. radio & TV (cancelled)
Host: Nara	Host: Thomas	Host: Fredjan	Host: Monique	Host: Robert

Grundtvig Mobility

Activities coordinated by group but in some cases carried out by networks as well.

What: Discuss in national network.

Who: Network representatives.

When: As soon as possible

What: Get PIC codes for all interested organisations.

Who: Networks.

When: ASAP

What: Contact national agencies, collect information and send to Ulrike

Who: Networks.

When: ASAP

What: Collect information on network training needs and offers in a Google doc.

Who: Group

What: Create draft proposal.

Who: Group

When: By February 5

Interested networks, please contact Ulrike.

Ecovillage Incubator

What: Translate documentation from RIVE and RIE into other languages.

Who: Coordinated by Mauge.

When: February 5

What: Check possibilities for Grundtvig Partnership project in next working group.

Who: Manja & Ditlev

What: Create common template for presenting trainers and facilitators.

Who: Thomas.

When: In time for GEN Conference.

What: Presentation of incubators during GEN Conference this summer.

Who: Coordinated by Alf.

What: Advice national networks to make list of local trainers.

Who: All.

When: To be ready at GEN Conference.

Relationships between GEN Europe and National Networks

This is a long-term initiative to join in the continual development of GEN and find good ways to grow and support all of GEN Europe together. Dialogue and cooperation with GEN Council and ecovillage members is necessary.

What: Contact others for input and advice.

Who: Eian: Robert Gilman. Fredjan: Sociocracy experts.

When: By mid-February.

What: Do an inventory of current structure and practices.

Who: Eian.

When: By mid-February.

What: Write a proposal to Council and GA.

Who: Group focalised by Fredjan.

When: To Council latest by May 1.

Everyone interested in getting involved, please contact Kariin.

Advocacy and political strategies

What: Develop a draft strategy paper to strengthen members' identification with GEN and clarify what we represent together as a movement

Who: Anton, Nara, Nicholas. Council member?

When: Ready 1 month before GA

Advice for advocacy work:

- Choose one person as public representative
- Consult the policy recommendation of the Ecovillages project
- Use political language
- Offer things to politicians rather than ask for them

Ideas:

- Develop an ecovillage charter explaining the values of community, our ethics and spirit and the concept of being service based. Include non-verbal elements like song, gesture, ritual, movement, pictures and graphics
- Develop more good PR material
- It is important to work towards ecovillages becoming recognised legal entities

Spirit of Europe Tour

The project is a tour through Europe to present GEN, Transition Towns and Permaculture through visits, workshops, advocacy, media and fun. The plan is to travel during summer 2015, and ideally attend the GEN Conference in Findhorn along the way.

What: Translation of documentation from Karavan 2006 project, from Spanish to English.

Who: Alf.

When: Before May 2014.

What: A written proposal and presentation of the idea.

Who: Thomas and the original team.

When: End of February.

What: Next preparation meeting.
Who: Thomas.
When: May 2014.

What: Look for funds for the preparation phase and meetings.
Who: Anna, Thomas, Eian.
When: May and autumn 2014.

What: Present the project at the GEN Conference in ZEGG.
Who: Core Team.
When: July 2014.

What: Send out monthly updates to core team.
Who: Thomas.
When: Starting now.

How to Organise National Networks?

What: Create a set of guidelines for creating a national ecovillage network
Who: Mauge
When: By GEN Conference

What: Make and send out a questionnaire for the national networks on how they were created
Who: Kadri

Grundtvig Partnerships

What: Read form, contact national agencies, investigate business plan, and get PIC
When: January 30
Who: Network representatives interested in project

What: Ask the Danish network if they want to be the lead partner
When: February 15
Who: Ditlev

What: Write vision for the project in a google doc
When: February 1
Who: Manja

What: Skype meeting
When: Week of February 7
Who: Representatives for networks or other adult education organisation

What: Send Doodle to find time for Skype meeting
When: As soon as possible
Who: Manja

General Assembly and Conference 2014

GA starts after dinner July 6. Conference starts after dinner July 8 and runs until the 13th. This year we meet in ZEGG.

All full members can make proposals. Deadline for proposals is 60 days before the GA. Email Ulrike for questions or to submit a proposal.

The main organisers of the conference this year are Kosha and Pavitra. Contact them for questions, suggestions, program points etc.

After the conference:

Thomas invites all interested for a short tour of German communities.

Next National Networks Meetings

The networks will meet during the conference, in the afternoon of **Friday July 11**. Time is limited, however, and the conference program is packed as usual.

Networks will also meet in **January 2015** for a longer meeting similar to the one at Torri Superiore. Suggested location is Los Portales in Spain (thank you!). Ulrike and Genny hold main responsibility – with the help and support of everyone.

If needed and wanted, the networks could also meet in the autumn of 2014. RIVE cannot make it the last weekend of October, and November is very busy for LØS.

Open ends

Economy, GEN-currency and exchange between ecovillages. This is a good topic for the GA and conference. Matthew Slater is developing the platform GEN Interexchange and is now contacting ecovillages to research needs and opportunities.

There is still a need to clarify and work on the future relationship between the GEN Europe Council and this new emerging structure of a network of networks. To have an active network of networks is a historical shift in our organisation. How do we fit together, what are our interests and how can we best support each other? It would be great to have a conversation with Council about this during the GA.

Some question marks about how welcome decentralised initiatives for Grundtvig applications really are. Can the networks go ahead, or must they wait for approval from Council? This still needs to be discussed and addressed.

Celebration of the birth of this network of networks!

Useful links

Some national networks

Balkan: <https://www.facebook.com/mreza.ekosela.balkana>
Denmark: <http://okosamfund.dk/>
Estonia: <http://www.kogukonnad.ee/>
Finland: <http://rihmasto.fi/skey>
France: <http://rfev.free.fr/>
Iberia: <http://rie.ecovillage.org/> (this is a GEN Sites page!)
Italy: <http://www.ecovillaggi.it/>
Latvia: <http://www.ekociemati.lv>
Lithuania: <http://ekogyvenvietes.lt/>
Norway: <http://okosamfunn.no/>
Russia: <http://gen-russia.ru/>

Fundraising

Crowdfunding advice:

<http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/crowdfunding-sites/>

Information in English about Erasmus+, how to get a PIC code etc:

<http://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/how-to-apply>

Advocacy and political relationships

Policy recommendations and manuals from the Baltic Sea Region Ecovillages project:

<http://balticecovillages.eu/project-outputs>

The Baltic Ecovillage Road project:

<http://www.ecovillageroad.eu/>

Reading

Articles:

<http://gen.ecovillage.org/iservices/publications/articles.php>

Lots of links:

<http://www.balticecovillages.eu/useful-links>

IT

GEN Sites portal:

<http://sites.ecovillage.org/>

The Solutions Library:

<http://solution.ecovillage.org/>