

MINUTES OF THE GEN-EUROPE COUNCIL FINDHORN, SCOTLAND, March 25 to 29, 2002

The last Council meeting in Findhorn was centred around the issue of structural development of our organisation. All five Council members attended: Agnieszka Komoch , President, Lucilla Borio, Secretary, Mete Hacıoğlu, Treasurer Lepre Viola, Member, Jean Michel Pochat , Member. Jonathan Dawson of the Findhorn Foundation facilitates the meeting.

After an in-depth analysis of our situation over three days, the following conclusions were drawn:

Purpose:

The purpose of GEN-Europe is to support the growth and the strengthening of ecovillages in Europe, Africa and the Middle East through information collection and dissemination, networking, advocacy and promotion of educational activities. The principle that ecovillages are at the core of GEN-Europe was strongly reaffirmed.

Structure:

After an initial period of 5 years with the central office in Lebensgarten and then in Torri, we now have the choice to transform GEN-Europe into a more service-providing NGO/type of organisation or into a more democratic membership organisation. Several Council members felt we are a hybrid between the two, and it is advisable to go in either direction to allow functional development and better clarity. We have many members but they are not directly involved in managing the association and this has caused a level of detachment and lack of participation. Mete, Lepre and Jean Michel advocated for a more decentralised model where many functions are "farmed out" directly to ecovillages (which can be elected or appointed), while a "lighter" central office has solely co-ordination and administration functions. Lucilla and Agnieszka were also in favour of getting members more involved but in a longer time-frame and with caution not to underestimate the risks of such transition.

Council:

The role of the Council was also discussed at length, and there are choices to be made between a Council composed mainly of representatives of ecovillages directly involved in programmes (therefore in a staff position) versus a degree of separation between staff and decision makers (with two or three non-staff on the Council), or even a non staff body with only the appointed secretary either as a voting or non-voting member. All models present pros and cons. Again, Lepre and Mete favoured the more-staff model while Lucilla was in favour of a more non-staff Council.

Lepre, Jean Michel, Lucilla are available to stay on the Council if the GEN-E assembly sees it appropriate. Agnieszka needs a period of distance from the organisation after many years of full-time involvement, and does not wish to sit on the next Council. Mete is uncertain but needs to have a paid job (nb: Mete found a full-time job in Turkey in May and is no longer available as a Council member, but as an advisor to the process).

Programmes:

In order to achieve the purpose, the following programmes were identified as important:

COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION:

Creation and circulation of thematic newsletters among evs
Creation of folders with building permissions and press coverage
Technical database

Improve website
Absorb info from EV-Travels
Sale of products

NETWORKING:

Consult with ecovillages about their needs
Explore what ecovillages can contribute to the network and to each other
Co-ordinating needs and offers, facilitate collaboration between ecovillages, promote exchanges of people, goods and skills
Promote the establishment of national networks (and through them the establishment of individual ecovillages)

ADVOCACY:

Revising our public image
Preparing presentation pack
Creation of GEN-E press book
Attend WSSD in Johannesburg

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Bursaries
Courses before annual meeting
Living and Learning Centres
Conference
Certification (not sure)
Co-ordinate curriculum (not sure)

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT:

Administration
Fund-raising
Co-ordination

Programmes have to be identified first and then the necessary funds have to be researched.

Office transition:

The next transition of the central office has to take place in 2003, at the end of a 4 year mandate to Lucilla and the Torri team. Lucilla is willing to pass it on in early 2003 but the Council asked her to keep it until summer 2003. She is considering this request, and will give the Council an outline of minimum office costs for the next fiscal year.

Budget:

We will receive the answer from the EU on our grant request at the end of May. The funding was requested at the Environment DG for Activity funding (the same budget line that financed us in year 2001/2002). We know that Gaia Villages will give GEN-Europe about Euro 60.000 for regional office, GEN-International (communication secretariat), Living and Learning Centres, South Development. A detailed budget will be prepared as soon as we hear from the EU.

General Assembly:

It will be held at L'Arche La Flessiere, France. Dates are defined: July 8 to 16, and more precisely:

- ✧ 8 arrival
- ✧ 9 Course and Council meeting
- ✧ 10 course and Council meeting

- ◇ 11 break
- ◇ 12 to 15: general meeting
- ◇ 16 in the evening : Festival

Lucilla and Jean Michel will define the logistics of the meeting and inform the Council and members.

The meeting was closed with a little ceremony, and many thanks to Jonathan for his facilitation.

Minutes taken, edited and revised by Lucilla Borio.

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