

Towards a Europe of ecological communities

On the 6-8 February 2015, around 50 people, representing over 30 different organisations from across Europe met in Freiburg for the first General Assembly of ECOLISE, the European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability.

Established in May 2014, ECOLISE brings together members from all the main movements engaged in community-led action on climate change and sustainability in Europe, including the Ecovillage movement, the Permaculture movement and the Transition Towns movement. It currently has 34 member organisations, most of which were represented at the meeting, along with other invited guests and observers

This first official meeting of the member organisations was an important opportunity for reflection on the network's main goals and objectives, especially in the context of the crucial COP21 Climate Conference in Paris in December 2015. It was also the time to elect the team that will lead ECOLISE during this critical period.

What came across strongly at the meeting was the desire among the members for ECOLISE to act as a bridge between the pioneering communities it represents and mainstream society. A wealth of knowledge and experience in sustainable living has, and is being developed in these communities and the overwhelming desire now is that this is shared across Europe, and beyond.

ECOLISE will seek to raise awareness of, and facilitate access to this valuable resource, while also reaching out to policymakers and other stakeholders in order to ensure that community-led action is given due consideration in any deliberations on future policy responses.

“We are called to put forward a vision of the European society we think is possible and to show how this can be achieved,” said Claudian Dobos (Transition Romania), the newly elected President of ECOLISE. “The members of ECOLISE are already doing this on a micro-scale. In villages and neighbourhoods across Europe they are showing how we can live in a way that does not damage or deplete environmental resources. These are happy, productive, enterprising communities, which disproves the perception that such change is necessarily burdensome and retrograde. Experience shows that the benefits go well beyond the environmental and also include social and economic. However, in order to achieve global impact a sense of deep inter-connection and more communities engaged in this transformative process are needed.. This is what ECOLISE is all about.”

In leading ECOLISE in this task, Claudian will be assisted by a Council of ten other members, including a Vice-President, Sarah McAdam (Transition Network). The Council will be supported by the former Interim President, Eamon O'Hara (AEIDL), who will take on the new role of Director General.

The full report from the General Assembly is available [here](#).

Giving a personal perspective on the General Assembly, Nara Petrovic (Sustainability Park Istra) also wrote an [interesting piece](#) which was published in the Slovenian national press. The English translation is available here.