



European Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration

Annual Report 2016



Participants from 36 countries attended the SER2016 Conference, held at the Technical University of Munich (Freising, Germany).

ORGANIZATION

SER Europe status

Since June 2012 SER Europe is officially established as an international non-profit organization with legal seat in Belgium, hosted by the Research Institute for Nature and Forest in Brussels. The full text of the SER Europe statutes is available on the SER Europe website.

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Management

During the member's assembly in Freising (SER2016 conference) the SER Europe Board was renewed and now consists of 14 members from 12 different European countries.

Executive Committee members:

- Jordi Cortina (Chair), Universidad de Alicante, Spain
- Agata Klimkowska (Secretary / communication), Eco-Recover, Netherlands/Poland
- Kris Decler (Treasurer, webmaster, policy-interface), Research Institute for Nature and Forest INBO, Belgium
- Anne Tolvanen (European representative in SER International), Natural Resources Institute, Finland

Other board members:

- Ása L. Aradóttir (SER2018 Conference), Agricultural University of Iceland
- Melinda Halassy (at large), Institute of Ecology and Botany, Hungary
- Sabine Tischew (at large), Hochschule Anhalt, Germany
- Elise Buisson (at large), l'Université d'Avignon, France
- Johannes Kollmann (at large), Technische Universität München
- Klára Řehounková (at large), University of Ceské Budejovice, Czech Republic
- Dagmar Hagen, Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, Norway
- Tatiana Marras, University of Tuscia, Italy
- Francis Isselin-Nondedeu (at large), Polytechnic School of the University François Rabelais
- Jonathan Mitchley, University of Reading, UK

Board meetings

In 2016, several meetings were held on internet (18 January, 30 May, 18 July, 21 December) and in person (21 August). The board, together with external experts, also met in person at Alicante (Spain) on 16-17 March 2016 to develop the SER Europe Strategy 2016-2020. Intensive within-board communication was needed to support conference organization and further tasks related to collaborations with other organizations, strategic planning and else. Detailed agenda and minutes were prepared, circulated to all board/general assembly members, and finally approved and archived.

General Membership meeting

The bi-annual General Membership meeting took place on 25 August during the SER2016 Conference in Germany. The next one will take place in early September 2018 at the SERE2018 Conference in Iceland.

Affiliations and networking

SER Europe aims to function as a 'network of networks' to 'connect and educate the European restoration community'. Affiliating with national organizations supporting SER Europe's vision and carrying it out through local and national work, is essential to build a consistent and sustainable network. In 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with the Dutch Knowledge Network for Restoration and Management of Nature (OBN), an independent and innovative platform where policy makers, site managers and scientists cooperate in the management and restoration of natural areas in the Netherlands. This MoU follows earlier ones with organizations in Finland (Finnish Board on Ecological Restoration), Italy (Italian Forest Restoration Society), France (REVER) and Spain (Asociación Española de Ecología Terrestre). These organisations represent national networks of ecologists, researchers, and practitioners in their respective countries. Negotiations started with the Eden Project (UK), Landlife (UK), the British Land Reclamation Society (UK) and German working group on Restoration Ecology (GfO).

In addition, and thanks to invitations by the National University of Loja (Ecuador), Von Humboldt Institute (Colombia) and Distance Learning State University (UNED, Costa Rica) SERE contributed to the creation of the Ecuadorian ER network, and assisted the Colombian ER network (REDCRE), the Latin American and Caribbean ER network (SIACRE) and the Costa Rican landscape restoration network.

Collaboration with SER International

For the past years, SER Europe has been a driving force for a global restructuring of SER. Following the announcements in 2015, the transition process was started in 2016 toward a truly international and decentralized organization, while keeping its current assets and strength. Anne Tolvanen is representative of SER Europe in the board of SER International and member of the Chapter Relations Committee. Kris Decler is at-large board member of SER International and member of the Science and Policy Committee. SER International kindly provided financial support to organize the board meeting on the Strategic Planning 2016-2020 in Alicante (16-17/03/2016).

SER Europe Strategy 2016-2020

A draft SERE strategy was presented during the General Membership meeting in 2014. In 2015 we were open to receive feedback from members and had discussions with SER International on the further development of the strategy. With the support of SER International a meeting was held in Alicante, Spain (16-17 March 2016) with SER Europe Board members and invited experts to discuss our trajectory and find the most appropriate ways to achieve SER Europe aims. The strategy was officially presented to the SERE membership during the SER2016 Conference in Freising (Germany) where it was approved. The strategy can be summarized in 22 actions as follows:

EVENTS

1. Promote a web-based forum to discuss issues related to ER and SERE.
2. Organize or support at least two events (courses, workshops) per year.
3. Organize SERE 2018 Conference and negotiate future venues.
4. Define terms of SERE collaboration with Conference organizers.
5. Prepare Conference declarations.

6. Promote Conference follow-up activities.

TOOLS

7. Promote diffusion tools: LinkedIn group, Facebook, Tweeter, Newsletter.

8. Support writing of Restoration Prioritization Frameworks of European countries.

9. Develop ER standards for different sectors.

10. Launch a student video contest.

11. Adapt SER International Professional Certification program.

12. Develop a semantic internet search engine for ER.

13. Promote the use of SERE Knowledge base.

14. Participate in RTD and implementation programs (H2020, LIFE+, etc.) as subcontractor or as part of the advisory team.

POLICY

15. Foster EC and member states policy on ER, and provide support as needed.

16. Continued support to EHF.

17. Contribute to define H2020 priorities and participate in other DG-RTD initiatives.

GOVERNANCE

18. Connect with major national organizations dealing with ER.

19. Create structures to link with affiliated organizations.

20. Negotiate reciprocal benefits with affiliated organizations.

21. Organize SERE Board into action committees.

22. Define a plan to renew SERE Board and ensure wide participation.

ACTIVITIES

COMMUNICATION

Newsletters

Several newsletters were produced to promote the SER2016 Conference.

Twitter

Board Member Jonathan Mitchley created a Twitter account: @SER_Europe. If you are Twitter user please link to SERE to keep track of the latest news in ER in the EU.

Publications

Two special issues from the SER2014 Conference were completed. Karel Prach and Anne Tolvanen put together the one entitled '[How can we restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in mining and industrial sites?](#)' for Environment Science and Pollution Research volume 23 number 14, containing 16 articles, and Anne Tolvanen and James Aronson coordinated '[Ecological Restoration, ecosystem services and land use](#)' for Ecology and Society 21, containing 12 articles.

Website

SER Europe's website has been regularly updated with information on events, reports, reviews of recent publications, etc. News, together with general SER Europe information can be accessed at www.ser-europe.org. Contributions and comments should be sent to Kris.Decleer@inbo.be.

Knowledge Base

One of the aims of SER Europe is to disseminate knowledge on ecological restoration in Europe for practitioners, policy people, scientists and further stakeholders. With our Knowledge Base and its supporting search engine, we provide a tool for the restoration community to share knowledge, best practice experiences, interesting case studies, etc. The Knowledge Base continued to grow in 2016. Further contributions and comments can be sent to Kris.Decleer@inbo.be.

CONFERENCES and TRAINING EVENTS

10th European Conference on Ecological Restoration

The SER2016 Conference was successfully held at the Technical University of Munich (Freising, Germany, 22-26 August), and attended by 323 participants from 36 countries. A total of 197 oral presentations in 27 thematic sessions and 66 posters were presented. The Conference included seven workshops, nine full-day guided field trips, two pre-conference excursions and two short courses. As a novelty, the Conference successfully organized a Practitioner's Day, specifically designed to attract participants from NGOs and Planning Agencies that are often reluctant to participate in the Conference due to language barriers, limited time and funds. A Conference declaration presented by An Cliquet (Dept. Public International Law, Ghent Univ.) and Kris Decler (Research Institute for Nature and Forest, Brussels and SERE Board member) was approved by SERE Board and SERE members' assembly and later distributed among key actors in European policy. More information: <http://ser2016.org>.

SER Europe was official partner in the organisation of the following international events:

- 5th International EcoSummit Congress (EcoSummit 2016 – Ecological Sustainability: Engineering Change), Montpellier, France, 29 August-1 September 2016. More info: <http://www.ecosummit2016.org/>.

SER Europe backed other initiatives in Europe and beyond, where it was invited to promote the Society and explain its view on ecological restoration, e.g.:

- Carolina Martinez (Spanish Association for Terrestrial Ecology, affiliated to SERE) represented SERE at the International Congress of the European Federation of Soil and Water Bioengineering (Donostia, Spain, 9-11/11/2016).

PROJECTS

SER Europe has received an increasing number of invitations for partnering in research projects (e.g. Horizon 2020) and consultancy projects (e.g. calls from DG ENV), and to provide letters of support for proposals of consortia. However, SER Europe must avoid direct competition with the interests of its members who may be involved in different consortia. In order to keep transparency, internal guidelines were approved to deal with such invitations:

- Participation in or support for proposals is only possible when the goals and methods of the proposal are in line with SER Europe aims.
- Participation in proposals can only be considered for tasks where SER Europe provides added value as 'the network of networks' on ecological restoration or as an international platform for communication and discussion (e.g. via SER conferences and workshops, website, knowledge base, etc.).

- If participation is considered appropriate, SER Europe will preferentially engage through subcontracting via one of the partners of the consortium. In case the selection procedure foresees two rounds, the subcontracting will be preferentially negotiated during the second round.
- SER Europe encourages its active members involved in relevant project proposals to promote the participation and potential added value of the Society as subcontractor to the project (also in order to reduce competition between consortia with different representatives of the Society).
- Any engagement in a project proposal needs to be approved by the Board.

POLICY SUPPORT

SER Europe is recognized by the European Commission as a scientific stakeholder organization to advise policy matters, in particular the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy. During 2016 we continued our support to the European Commission and the Member States to achieve the commitments made under the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. This included meeting a delegation from DG-ENV in Brussels, where EU policy on ER and SERE support was discussed (Jan 22nd). Karin Zaunberger of DG-ENV gave a keynote speech in Freising.

SER Europe is also active member of the European Habitats Forum, a stakeholder organization of different European conservation societies, organizations and institutions with secretariat at the policy office of IUCN in Brussels. More information: Kris.Decleer@inbo.be; <http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/europe/work/?uNewsID=50>.

SER Europe is active member of the European Habitats Forum and participated in several consultation events coordinated or supported by the European Commission (e.g. Working Group on Green Infrastructure and Ecological Restoration).

The Board sent a letter to the international journal Nature which was published on July 12th. Scientific support was provided for the development of the 'Fitness Check' evaluation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives (Dec 16th) concluding that, within the framework of broader EU biodiversity policy, Nature Directives remain highly relevant and are fit for purpose. Over 2016 we supported initiatives to deter attempts to re-define these Directives and conversely, to strengthen its implementation.

Katalin Török acted as member of the Steering Committee of EPBRS (European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy), and participated in the scoping expert group for Land Degradation and Restoration, a task included in the Work programme of IPBES (Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services). More info: torok.katalin@okologia.mta.hu (www.epbrs.org; www.ipbes.net).

Jordi Cortina (SERE chair) contributed to the Spanish Strategy for Green Infrastructure, Connectivity and Ecological Restoration by leading the panel on ER. A 12-month effort in coordinating and writing that was completed and presented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Environment to the Regional Governments for discussion in early December.

An open letter was written to the Polish Government to protest against further logging of the iconic and multi-protected Bialowieza Forest.

Financial Report

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

BALANCE ON 31/12/2016	€ 6.212,55
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CURRENT ACCOUNT

BALANCE ON 31/12/2016	€ 10.969,56
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Membership

Actual number of SERE members (31/12/2016): 146



SER Europe thanks all the members and other donors who contributed to the Society in 2016

Join SER and support our efforts to advance ecological restoration.

Contact: info@ser-europe.org; European Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration, Research Institute for Nature and Forest, Kliniekstraat 25, 1070 Brussels, Belgium.

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