



## European Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration

### Annual Report 2015

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Field trip during the workshop 'Developing and using donor site registers for near-natural re-vegetation' in Bernburg (Germany)

# ORGANIZATION

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## 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.

*European Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration (in short: SER Europe or SERE),  
p/o Research Institute for Nature and Forest  
Kliniekstraat 25, 1070 Brussels.  
International non-profit company N° 849.548.764  
[www.ser-europe.org](http://www.ser-europe.org)  
[info@ser-europe.org](mailto:info@ser-europe.org)*

## Management

In 2015 the SER Europe Board consisted of:

Executive Committee members:

- Jordi Cortina (Chair), Universidad de Alicante, Spain
- Kris Decler (Treasurer, webmaster, policy-interface), Research Institute for Nature and Forest INBO, Belgium
- Johannes Kollmann (SER2016 Conference), Technische Universität München
- Agata Klimkowska (Secretary / communication), Eco-Recover, Netherlands/Poland
- Péter Török (communication / blog / contacts) University of Debrecen, Hungary
- Anne Tolvanen (European representative in SER International), Finnish Forest Research Institute, Finland

Other board members:

- Norbert Hölzel (at large), University of Münster, Germany
- Katalin Török (at large), Centre for Ecological Research, Institute of Ecology and Botany, Hungary
- Sabine Tischew (at large), Hochschule Anhalt, Germany
- Elise Buisson (at large), l'Université d'Avignon, France
- Karel Prach (at large), University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic
- Eszter Ruprecht (at large), Babeş-Bolyai University, Hungarian Department of Biology and Ecology
- Ása L. Aradóttir (at large), Agricultural University of Iceland
- Francis Isselin-Nondedeu (at large), Polytechnic School of the University François Rabelais

## Board meetings

Communication within the Board were more fluent, due to frequent board meetings and informal interactions. In 2015, several meetings were held on internet (13/03/2015, 11/06/2015) and in person (Manchester 25/08/2015). 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. The next General Membership meeting will take place in late August 2016.

### Affiliations

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 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with organizations in Finland (Finnish Board on Ecological Restoration), Italy (Italian Forest Restoration Society) and Spain (Asociación Española de Ecología Terrestre) were signed. These organisations represent national networks of ecologists, researchers, and practitioners in their respective countries. Negotiations started with the OBN (the Dutch Network on Ecological Restoration), the Eden Project (UK), Landlife (UK), the British Land Reclamation Society (UK) and German working group on Restoration Ecology (GfO).

### Collaboration with SER International

For the past years, SER Europe has been a driving force for a global restructuring of SER. During the 6th World Conference on ER in Manchester, Bethanie Walder (SER new Executive Director), Marguerite Nutter (SER Membership and Communications Director) and Levi Wickwire (SER Program Manager) presented the outlines of the future SER Board and organizational structure. The global SER structure will substantially change within the next years to build a truly international and decentralized organization, while keeping its current assets and strength. At the Manchester Conference, the term of Kris Decler as SER Europe representative ended and he was replaced by Anne Tolvanen, while Kris Decler was re-elected as an at-large board member of SER International.

### Developing a strategy for SER Europe

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. At the same time a process of restructuring of the Chapter system of the Society for Ecological Restoration International started. Also the possible role and the relations with the European Commission were discussed and scoped (resulting in the meeting with several officials in Brussel in January 2016). The conditions are now set to redefine the SER Europe strategy. A meeting will be held in 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.

## ACTIVITIES

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### COMMUNICATION

#### 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](http://www.ser-europe.org). Contributions and comments should be sent to [Kris.Decler@inbo.be](mailto:Kris.Decler@inbo.be).

Additional communication tools will be implemented in 2016.

### 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 2015. Further contributions and comments can be sent to [Kris.Decleer@inbo.be](mailto:Kris.Decleer@inbo.be).

### Preparations for the 10<sup>th</sup> European Conference

In 2015 the preparations for the next European Conference on Ecological Restoration have started, under the leading theme 'Best Practices in Ecological Restoration'. Local organisers are Prof. Johannes Kollmann, Prof. Julia Hermann and colleagues from Technische Universität München. The conference will take place from 21st till 27th of August 2016.

In March 2015 the conference website ([www.SER2016.org](http://www.SER2016.org)) was operational and systematically developed throughout the year (sessions submissions took place in December 2015, the preliminary program and registration and abstract submission were online from January 2016). During preparations, great care was taken to (1) offer an interesting and diverse programme (including insights on ecological research, practice, policy and socio-economics), (2) encourage practitioners to participate ('Practitioners Day'), and (3) offer special opportunities for students (student courses). The organizers developed an ambitious diffusion plan using various communication channels and networks.

## **CONFERENCES and TRAINING EVENTS**

The 6th World Conference on Ecological Restoration took place from 23 to 27 August 2015 in Manchester, UK. Various SER Europe members provided support in the preparations of the Conference, acted as member of the scientific committee, set up sessions and field trips, etc. More information on the Conference can be found on the Conference website: <http://www.ser2015.org/>. The SER2015 Conference on Ecological Restoration provided an excellent platform to discuss the state of ER in Europe and globally. The conference was well attended with numerous stimulating presentations and lively discussions.

A regional workshop on 'Developing and using donor site registers for near-natural re-vegetation' was co-organized by SER Europe and Anhalt University of Applied Sciences. It took place in Bernburg (Germany) from 2-3 June 2015 and was organized by Prof. Sabine Tischew from Anhalt University of Applied Sciences (Bernburg, Germany) and colleagues. About 100 representatives from nature conservation organisations, landscape associations, planning agencies, seed propagation and agricultural companies, farmers' associations, road administrations, and other private and public institutions participated. The report on this event has been uploaded at: <http://chapter.ser.org/europe/ser-europe-workshop-developing-and-using-donor-site-registers-for-near-natural-re-vegetation-bernburg-germany/>

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

- 4th Iberoamerican and Caribbean Congress on Restoration Ecology, 12-16 April 2015, Buenos Aires, Argentina. More info: <http://www.siacre2015.com.ar/>.
- 2nd International Conference on integrative sciences and sustainable development of Rivers, Lyon, France, 22-26 June 2015. More info: [http://www.graie.org/ISRivers/a\\_index.htm](http://www.graie.org/ISRivers/a_index.htm)

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

workshops and courses in Buenos Aires, Neuquén and Bariloche (Argentina); Beirut (Lebanon); Linares, Ensenada and Mexico DF (Mexico); Budapest (Hungary) and Solsona, Murcia, Lugo, Valencia and Madrid (Spain).

## 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.

In 2015 SER Europe was in contact with various consortia preparing proposals under the Horizon 2020 Program (call SC5-7-2015: 'More effective ecosystem restoration in the EU'). Following internal guidelines, SER Europe was included as subcontractor in five proposals for the second evaluation round. Unfortunately, none of the proposals was funded.

SER Europe was also subcontractor in a project proposal for DG Environment (call ENV.B.2/SER/2015/0023, 'Technical Support in relation to the promotion of restoration in the context of the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020'). Unfortunately the proposal was not granted.

In 2015 SER Europe reached a cooperation agreement with the University of Alicante (Spain) for the purpose of student work placements. Under this agreement, a student developed his M.Sc. thesis on the design of a semantic search engine on ecological restoration. This valuable work will be continued.

## POLICY ADVICE

SER Europe is recognized by the European Commission as a scientific stakeholder organization to advise policy matters, in particular the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy. In 2015 SER Europe actively participated in the working group on 'Green Infrastructure Implementation and Restoration' (WG GIIR), and several in-person meetings were held under the leadership of DG Environment.

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](mailto:Kris.Decleer@inbo.be); <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm>; <http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/europe/work/?uNewsID=50>.

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](mailto:torok.katalin@okologia.mta.hu) ([www.epbrs.org](http://www.epbrs.org); [www.ipbes.net](http://www.ipbes.net)).

In 2015 SER Europe provided substantial support to the EU Nature Fitness Check ([http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/nature\\_fitness\\_check\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/nature_fitness_check_en.htm)). Furthermore, SER Europe supported the Land Stewardship Declaration (<http://www.landstewardship.eu>) and the European Citizens Initiative to develop a specific legal framework to protect European soils ([www.people4soil.eu](http://www.people4soil.eu)),

SER Europe has expressed its concern about the lack of attention and/or delay in the preparation of National Prioritization Framework Plans for achieving the 15% restoration target under the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Aichi Targets. This led to an open letter to the European Commission and a policy position note to be published in a scientific journal. Additionally, there were contacts with the leadership of the CBD and national Ministries and expert groups (Spain, Finland). In Spain SER Europe (Jordi Cortina) co-organized discussion sessions on the creation of a Spanish national platform on ecological restoration (within the 3rd Joint Meeting of the Spanish Society of Forest Sciences and the Spanish Association for Terrestrial Ecology; 2nd Forum Building Networks in Madrid). The sessions were attended by representatives of numerous professional organizations, research networks, private firms, NGO's and the Spanish administration.

## Financial Report

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<b>Income</b>		Amount
Total income		€ 2.789,65
<b>Expenses</b>		
Total expenses		-€ 256,23
BALANCE AS OF 31/12/2015		€ 2.533,42

SERE bank and savings accounts are located at the socio-environmentally friendly TRIODOS bank. The maintenance of both accounts is free of charge.



***SER Europe thanks all the members and other donors who contributed to the Society in 2015***

***Join SER and support our efforts to advance ecological restoration.***

***Contact: [info@ser-europe.org](mailto: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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