

Chairman's Report given in Brussels on 11 May 2017

It is 10 years since members of ESUSG first elected me as Chairman, on the kind recommendation of Robin Sharp. This was at our meeting in Vienna to consider results of our survey on Use Nationally of Wild Resources across Europe for the EU-funded project which Stratos Arampatzis had gained to research Governance and Ecosystem Management for Conservation of Biodiversity (GEMCONBIO). Robin's career was in government policy and, with a scientist taking the chair, he wisely suggested continuing to guide policy aspects as Chair Emeritus. This was wise, because although scientists often become successful managers, they seldom become successful in fields that concern policy.

ESUSG was in 2007 still a part of IUCN, but had become a legal entity under Belgian law in order to enter into contracts and support itself financially. SU activities in IUCN were coming under pressure from a organisations for whom conservation meant protection, not conservation through sustainable use. A motion was developed for WCC4, in 2008, to propose a new structure for sustainable use activities in IUCN across Species Survival Commission and Commission for Environmental Economic and Social Policy.

After a long gestation the new group for Sustainable Use and Livelihoods came to life in 2011 and decided that its annual budget could not support regional groups. Europe was given a vice-chair role in SULi and ESUG invited to choose a new name that separated it from Specialist Groups of IUCN-SSC.

In the meantime, ESUSG had won another EU contract for a project to implement findings in GEMCONBIO that huge human and financial private resources were involved in European sustainable use activities, and that governance for adaptive management and knowledge leadership should enable these to benefit conservation. The new project was to design a Transactional Environmental Support System, to provide complex knowledge to local level to guide adaptive management, while collecting local knowledge to improve that guidance. After both TESS and ESUSG met in London in 2009, a final TESS conference was kindly arranged in European Parliament by Despina Symons in 2011 and ESUSG met next day in Brussels.

TESS was unusual in that it focussed at local level rather than inter/national policy level. However, it did conduct pan-European survey at higher policy level, and an extension of that to study development in Natura 2000 sites produced results that may have made it unpopular in some quarters. Partly as a result of this, and for other complex reasons, the follow-on project to implement internet-based local projects across Europe was not funded; an informal comment suggested pan-European research was undesirable.

The ESUSG General Meeting in 2013, again in Brussels, was attended by SULi Chair. ESUSG administration focussed on starting a difficult constitutional process to change our name.

We had been working on a possible bottom-up funding model for the international networking to implement conservation through-use. This was based on multilingual knowledge-transfer capability developed for the TESS-origin international portal www.naturalliance.eu. Work by TESS-partner Anatrack had built and tested networkable local website nodes System for Community Liaison. At our 2015 meeting in Vienna, the second kindly arranged by Fritz Reimoser, we discussed building projects on conservation through sustainable use that could be organised via the internet, as proposed for the ill-fated TESSA. We had already produced www.sakernet.org under contract for the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey. IAF then saw the value of the approach for www.perdixnet.org, and has now signed a contract with ESUG for continuing support work on these and further administrative portals.

Here we are now, in Brussels once again at the kind invitation of FACE, and with funding developed at last through the TESS outreach ideas. It has required 8 years after TESS to make ESUG viable again. During this period a hardy core of Committee has kept patience, including Despina, Mari, Zenon and Robin as Chair

Emeritus. We have seen Angus Middleton, Kai Wollscheid, Stratos Arampatzis and Tobias Plieninger retire, while we gained Julie Ewald, Tetiana Gardashuk & Jennifer Ailloud. My very grateful thanks to all of them.

For the future, two things seem important. Firstly, ten years are long enough for a chair to develop a theme, and in two years I shall hand over. Our science theme has become portal projects, crucially helped with GIS and other information/management skills by Julie Ewald of GWCT, who has very kindly agreed to be a candidate for chair 2017. Nicholas Aebischer has generously agreed to support her with language skills; I know his expertise in statistics for identifying biological truths and uncertainties would also be important. I am already helping Julie and Nicholas to shadow me so that a transition would be smooth.

Secondly, ESUG's policy operations have diminished while policy has become a major focus of SULi. It was my pleasure to serve SULi as vice-chair for a while and, as your chair, to point out that regional groups were important for handling different socio-economic and cultural effects on sustainable use between regions (and that experience in African and Asian regions showed that such groups could thrive if financed by projects). In 2008 I had also opened discussions with the new chair of CEM, who understood that much of conservation through use (as opposed to merely keeping use sustainable) involved the motivations of people to conserve ecosystems suitable for the species they wish to use sustainably. Further discussion led to birth in 2014 of SUME, with remit to take ESUG's community portal outreach operation global. This will consume my time freed from ESUG responsibilities. However, SUME is not policy-focused. Although ESUG helped coordinate IUCN members at WCC6, our policy operations in Europe are now inadequate on important topics like the future of CAP implementation. Trade issues, on which SULi is so engaged at present, need addressing in Europe too. Rebuilding this policy capacity in cooperation with SULi is a future challenge for ESUG.

Robert Kenward on 11 May 2017, revised 17 June 2017