

## Chair report for the ESUG General Meeting June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Dear ESUG members – I am very glad to say that it has been only two years since our last general meeting in 2023. It is so good to get back onto having meetings every two years. Our last meeting was held in Brussels on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. We met at the offices of FACE, and we were ably supported by the team there, including ESUG members David Scallan and Sabrina Deutz and. This time we are meeting in Tallinn, Estonia and will be supported by Mari Ivask, Jane Raamets and the rest of the team – including Kaire Luuk.

Looking back over the last two years and comparing them to the previous four years we can say that some things we have learned to live with – it seems that this includes Covid 19 and the effects of Brexit. Encouragingly there are even signs that some of the negative aspects of Brexit are being reversed – with indications that compromise is winning out. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the war in Ukraine. And the new administration in the US (it does not feel new I know but it is relatively new) is not helping things. Ukraine is still here, and I am sure that we all look forward to being able to have an ESUG meeting there, hosted by our own Tetiana Gardashuk (currently working in Germany) as soon as we can.

As at the last meeting, many ESUG members have been actively involved in reviewing recent IPBES assessments, including the assessment exploring the Interlinkages among Biodiversity, Water, Food, and Health – the Nexus Assessment and the Transformative Change Assessment. This included Robert Kenward, Alexandra Kalandarishvili, Julian Mühle, and Adrian Lombard to name but a few.

The case of our IUCN membership has been confusing – at the last meeting we reported that we had been accepted as members. It appears that this was not the case (there were some administrative problems involved on the IUCN side as well as misinterpretation), but we have since reapplied and are hopeful that this time things will be straightforward and the application will be successful. Perline Bastid and Robert Kenward will report on the situation at the AGM. Also, at the AGM Frank Voorhies will report on his review of the Motions being put forward at the next IUCN meeting in Abu Dhabi and Adrian Lombard will report from SUME.

At the last meeting we mentioned that we were awaiting an EU decision as to whether the Pro-Coast project, steered by Stratos Arampatzis and his team at Tero, including Olympia Papadopoulou, would get funded. Pro-Coast did get funded and that has taken over several of our lives since then.

Pro-Coast kicked off in November 2023, with a kick-off meeting held at the FACE offices in Brussels. Again, we were kindly hosted by David Scallan and his team. The number of attendees took us all by surprise – but then perhaps with a project having 20 different partners we should have expected a big turnout. The project has involved many ESUG members on a daily basis. The team in Brussels, consisting of Véronique Blontrock,

Boukje Tuinhout and Julian Mühle, have helped sort out administrative issues (the horrendous bank again – thank you for your patience with this Veronique) and attended face-to-face meetings and seminars – representing both Pro-Coast and ESUG. Thank you to David Scallan as well for help with the bank situation. Tetiana Gardashuk has helped with the first steps in clustering with other EU projects and in the early tests of translation and development of the Community Sustainability Platform. Ben Kenward and Nick Casey have turned the idea of an online knowledge exchange tool into a reality. Ben has also provided much needed social science expertise and has initiated the quantitative analysis of the first results from the project. Elena Bužan, a relatively new member of ESUG, runs the Pro-Coast case study in Slovenia and brings a fresh perspective to data recording and management. Bridget Kenward has taken on much of the Arne case study work and supported us all. Perline Bastid has also recently joined the ESUG team, and has provided much needed support for Ben, Robert, Bridget, and me – updating the website, testing software, ensuring that administrative tasks are completed and keeping us moving forward. There is a whole team of ESUG members currently or soon to be setting to work on translating information coming out of Pro-Coast, including Heidi Krüger, Sándor Csányi, and Janusz Sielicki, as well as Tetiana, Perline, Veronique, Boukje, Julian. Robert has been the rock that we all rely on, keeping the case study partners – who are effectively the guinea pigs in the Pro-Coast project – calm and on track. He has been working much harder than he expected but we all thank him for it. I have tried to support the project as best I can whilst also balancing my usual day job with the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, who have been generous with my time. Suffice it to say that Pro-Coast has kept us all busy, but we are very happy for it to do so. It has opened the possibility of achieving many of the goals that ESUG has set itself over the years and we thank Stratos for engaging us in it. At the AGM meeting Robert, Ben and I will update you on where we are with those goals.

Currently ESUG membership stands at 139, with 62 members of SULi and 43 members of SUME.

Of course, we could not have survived before Pro-Coast without the kind support of our Patrons, The British Association for Shooting and Conservation, together with FACE, Robin Sharp, and Anatrack. We thank them wholeheartedly.