

# First Biannual Report of the European Society for Environmental History, 2001-2003

---



## Contents:

1. *General Overview*
  - Membership & Regional Representatives
  - Legal establishment ESEH
  - Executive Secretariat
  - Newsletter & website
  - International Co-operation
2. *Appendices*
  - Report on Legal establishment ESEH
  - Report on the ESEH Executive Secretariat
  - Report ESEH website over the year 2002
3. *Financial report 2001-2003*

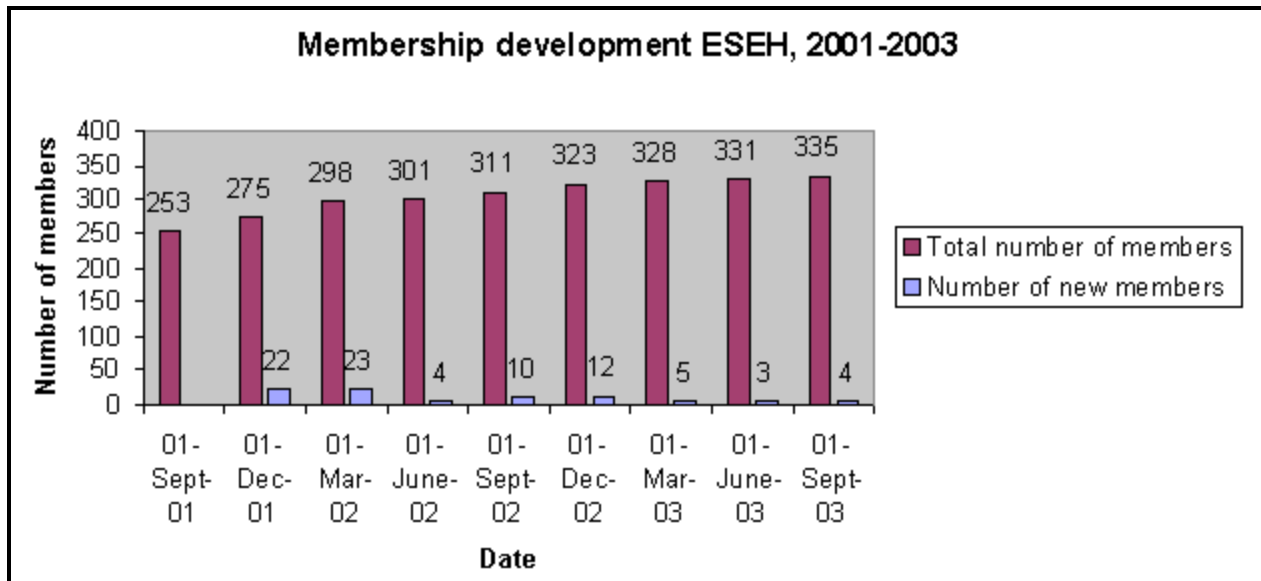
Before you lay the first biannual report of the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH). The report provides an overview for the period between the first Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) in St. Andrews, Scotland, in September 2001 and the Second OGM in Prague in September 2003. The Report is divided in thematic sections charting the activities and progress of the society with appendices about particular activities such as the website and the executive secretariat. The report concludes with a financial report and accounts.

## 1. General overview

### *Membership & Regional Representatives*

Since the first OGM the Society has grown steadily. The number of members increased from 253 in September 2001 to 335 in September of 2003. Recruiting was done through the website and by means of mouth to mouth advertisement and the efforts of the Executive Secretariat as well as the network of Regional Representatives. The membership has been served with a quarterly newsletter, emailed updates about the website and special activities of the society. Members also enjoyed free access to the journal *Environment and History* published by the White Horse Press.

The network of Regional Representatives has been firmly established and form the "eyes and ears" of ESEH. The most important role of the Regional Representatives is to disseminate information among ESEH membership in their regions as well as collect information, co-ordinate EH activities in their regions as well as advise the ESEH executive board.



### *Legal establishment ESEH*

In order to carry out all the functions of a scholarly society, such as collecting membership dues, applying for funding and establishing funds for travel and research, the ESEH had to be established as a legal body. Since law in the European Union makes no provisions for transnational bodies such as ESEH it was decided to register as a charity in the United Kingdom. The UK was chosen since it was thought that English being the lingua franca of ESEH would make dealing with legal matters easier. Unfortunately registering in the UK proved so complicated and expensive that the efforts to register got nowhere. It was then decided to look into the possibility to register the Society in Germany. That proved to be an

easier option and ESEH is now set to register under German law with its seat in Duesseldorf. For further details on this matter see appendix 1 on the constitution.

### ***Executive Secretariat***

In order to assist the ESEH board with firmly establishing itself the Society an executive secretariat was opened in Sweden at the beginning of February 2002. The Secretariat has been made possible through the efforts of Sverker Sörlin, Vice-President of the Society, who secured Swedish funds to employ a part-time executive secretary. Sofia Åkerberg at Umeå, took up this post with much enthusiasm and ran the secretariat until the beginning of May 2003, when she left to take up a post-doc position. The secretariat was located at the Department of Historical Studies, Umeå University, Sweden. The main tasks and responsibilities of the executive secretary were the maintenance of the membership directory, providing information about ESEH and handling queries, and maintenance of the website. After Dr Åkerberg left, the remaining money has been used to employ on a part-time basis an assistant with the task to carry out work on the ESEH bibliography, including expansion of Swedish titles, and other small tasks as directed by ESEH Secretary Jan Oosthoek. For a full report on the Executive Secretariat see appendix 2.

### ***Newsletter & website***

Since the ESEH was begun in 1999 the website has been the central means of communication between the Society, its members and the outside world. The website had grown considerably over the past two years with an increase of about a third in the number of visitors. The size of the site has also expanded at an ever-quickening rate since an increasing number of people post announcements to the site. The site was also redesigned in the summer of 2002 to make it more user-friendly and easier to maintain (see for more details Appendix 3). At the moment a survey is underway to access what users think of the site and to gain an insight of what should be improved. So far twenty-five survey forms were received since the forms became available on-line in mid-August 2003.

In February 2002 the first ESEH Notepad newsletter was published in the journal *Environment and History* (E&H). This was made possible by the generous offer of Andrew Johnson of White Horse Press, publisher of E&H, and the editors of the Journal, to make space for the newsletter in the journal. Since then seven issues of the newsletter have been published and also made available through the ESEH website.

### ***International co-operation***

The ESEH has established ties with a number of international organisations including the American Society for Environmental History (ASEH), the Forest History Society (FHS) and the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO) working group on forest history.

### **FHS and the bibliography**

In 2001 the ESEH and FHS began to discuss the possibility of working jointly to improve the information available to members of both groups as well as Internet users around the world. As a result Dr Jan Oosthoek, ESEH Secretary, visited the FHS offices to learn the criteria used by FHS for selecting publications, writing annotations, and formatting citations. ESEH decided as a result of this visit to utilise the existing environmental history database to hold

into the FHS database. In addition another 146 titles were collected, mainly through the ESEH website, which brought the total number of European titles up to about 1821 in June 2003. This is an excellent example of how ESEH can co-operate with other organisations to create international resources for scholars, scientists, students and others.

### ASEH

ESEH also co-operates on a number of issues with its counterpart in North America, the ASEH. Both organisations are supporting and actively managing the H-Environment discussion list, which is part of H-NET, the Humanities & Social Sciences On-line. The ESEH President represents the Society on the advisory board of H-Environment and the ESEH secretary is a member of the editor team of the discussion list. Furthermore a European review editor was added to the H-Environment team.

Both ASEH and ESEH are actively encouraging their membership to participate in each other's meetings to present papers and put panels together. Co-operation between the two organisations is likely to increase in the near future with the establishment of the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations (ICE-HO).

## 2. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Report on Legal establishment ESEH

#### **Why a new constitution is needed**

At the first ESEH meeting in St. Andrews two years ago the OGM voted on a draft constitution, which was written in English. This draft constitution was subsequently revised according to proposals from several members. I tried to include all suggestions and I worked out a revised draft constitution together with Verena in October 2002.

However, in the meantime we were confronted with another problem: The constitution had to be designed for submitted to the authorities in the UK. We picked the UK as the country to register ESEH for two reasons:

- 1) As the statutes are in English (because this is the working language of ESEH), and other countries require them to be in the official language of the respective country, we would have needed to translate them, which was unthinkable at that time
- 2) We acted upon the information that UK laws did allow the society's bank account to be set up in any country. Our treasurer is located in Germany, and the executive secretariat was hosted in Sweden, so ESEH was not prepared to have an account in the UK.

After several negotiations with the London lawyer it turned out that the main problem was to register ESEH as a charity in the UK in order to avoid paying taxes. Charities, we were told, have to submit their account books to the charity commissioner. Thus, to obtain charitable status, you need to have most of your money in the UK, not just a bank account. Whereas the London lawyers we consulted were right in pointing out that anyone can open up an unincorporated organization in the UK, this does not imply that everyone can open up a charity in the UK. This does just apply to businesses such as a small pizza stand on a London backstreet owned by a Pakistani. To conclude: The considerable amount of money we spent for the London lawyer was spent on asking the wrong questions.

A way out of this deadlock was offered by our treasurer Ulrich Koppitz in January, 2003. He had explored the possibility to have the legal seat of ESEH in Germany with a (much cheaper) German lawyer. It turned out that it was relatively easy to found ESEH as a so-called "eingetragener Verein e.V." (i.e. registered society) in Germany. Most German scientific societies have this status of registered society. However, this solution had to comply with the requirements of German Law. Inter alia it postulates the following

1. The legal seat needs to be in Germany

2. At least one member of the board needs to have its residence in Germany
3. The authoritative version of the Constitution needs to be written in German.

Fulfilling these requirements is somewhat in disagreement with the spirit of ESEH, of course.

On the other hand there was no other choice when we wanted to have ESEH founded in due time. And for this reason the OGM has to vote on a new version of the Constitution.

According to the proposal of the board the seat of ESEH e.V. will be in Düsseldorf where our treasurer has his residence. In addition the draft Constitution had to be adapted to the new requirements. In particular we needed to include an additional member into the board to be the legal representative (LR) of ESEH e.V. who needs to have his residence in Germany.

Moreover the Constitution had to be translated into German. Ulrich Koppitz and myself did this. Finally, the English version of the Constitution had to be adapted to the new situation. In particular, new paragraphs had to be included and translated from German into English, because German Law requires them.

This legal procedure was described in such detail to demonstrate the members how complex and how expensive in time and money this registration process has been so far. For this reason the board urges the OGM to approve the draft constitution in its present form. Of course, this is not an ideal solution for ESEH but it is certainly a solution we can work with during the first difficult years of our Society. After all, it is the spirit and the goodwill of all of us which decide about our future. The constitution should serve us in terms of setting a space for communication and collaboration, and the board is sure that it fulfils this requirement.

Bern, August 30,2003

Christian Pfister, Vice President

## ***Appendix 2: Report on the ESEH Executive Secretariat***

The executive secretariat of the European Society for Environmental History (hereafter ESEH) started its activity in the beginning of February 2002. The secretariat employed one person at half-time during its time of activity and was placed at the Department of Historical Studies, Umeå University, Sweden. The tasks for this person mainly fell within four categories with some additional specific responsibilities. These categories can be labelled thus:

1. Members
2. Information
3. Web site
4. Communication
5. Miscellaneous

### **1. Members**

One of the most crucial assignments for the secretariat was to provide the members of ESEH with a fixed person to whom they could direct their questions. The contact with the members constituted mainly of accepting requests for membership, record the membership data in the ESEH membership database and updating this database on request. This database was furthermore transformed into an e-mailing list for collective information e-mails to the members. Members had the possibility of asking to be removed from said list. When collective e-mails were sent out and certain member e-mail addresses were indicated as faulty the secretariat also tried to locate these members and via regular mail ask them for a functioning e-mail address. Moreover, the secretariat answered questions from members, mainly by directing them to the proper person within the executive board, but also from non-members who wanted to contact persons interested in a certain field of environmental history.

### **2. Information**

The secretariat also tried to spread information about ESEH throughout Europe. A project of sending information to all departments of history at European universities was initiated but not fully completed (information sent to various departments in Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Austria and Belgium). A PDF-information sheet was created and placed on the Society's web site for members to download for distributing at conferences, etcetera. The person employed at the secretariat also attended the Nordic Interdisciplinary Conference of Environmental History (11-13 June 2002, Umeå) as a representative for ESEH and furthermore did presentations of ESEH at the courses of Environmental History at Umeå University.

### **3. Web site**

The most important mean of communication with the members ESEH possess is its web site (located at <http://www.eseh.org>). It was the responsibility of the secretariat to keep this web site continuously updated, to receive pieces of information from the members to post at the web site and also to search the web for information that would interest the members of ESEH. Initially it was intended that this web site was to be removed to a server at Umeå University but for various technical reasons this was not feasible. A lot of the secretariat's initial time was spent on this business.

The web site was foremost updated with information concerning conferences (world wide) that might be of interest to environmental historians, various courses in environmental history

European and American universities. These updates were communicated to the members via a web site updates mail which was sent to the members on a weekly basis.

#### **4. Communication**

The secretariat served as the foremost link of communication between the executive board and the regional representatives (hereafter RR), between the RR's themselves and between the board and the members. All types of information sent to the members were sent via the secretariat, for example how they would be able to access the online version of the journal *Environment and History* which was an ESEH member benefit. When information needed to be collected from the various RR's this also came through the secretariat which collected and compiled the requested information and passed this on to the executive board.

#### **5. Miscellaneous**

##### 5.1 Questionnaire

On the request of Marco Amiero, RR of Italy, the secretariat sent a questionnaire (attached) to the RR's in the beginning of March 2002 asking them about the state of environmental history in their respective areas. The answers were collected and compiled by the secretariat and published in the ESEH Notepad in the journal *Environment and History*.

##### 5.2 Statutes

A large portion of the ESEH work in 2002 went into the drafting of the statutes. The secretariat was responsible for distributing the draft to all concerned board members for commenting, collect and compile these comments and pass them on to the executive board. The secretariat furthermore posted the statutes on the ESEH web site in order to give the members a possibility to comment on these and, when this was done, organised the signing of the documents by the members of the executive board.

##### 5.3 ESEH Publication Prize

When the ESEH announced its publication prize to be awarded at the second international conference of ESEH in Prague 2003 some contributions were sent to the secretariat which copied these and sent them on to the three members of the prize committee.



### ***Appendix 3: Report ESEH website over the year 2002***

The year 2002 was a good year for the ESEH website. The site further developed into a mature resource for scientists scholars and others with an interest in environmental history. The most important development was the launch of the redesigned site in September 2002. The aim of the new site was to make navigation through the ever expanding site easier and to cope with the latest technical developments on the Internet. Another objective was to standardise the site and implement procedures in order to make site maintenance simpler and less time consuming. The site also starts to develop into an archive of ESEH and European environmental history with features such as the Notepad newsletter, an events archive, statutes and minutes of the first general assembly.

#### **Growth**

The general trend of the site can be easily summarised as growth. Although the number of visitors did not increase as spectacular as in 2001, the past year showed a sustained growth. The number of visitors jumped from 4.765 in 2001 to 6.237 in 2002, an increase of 23.6% (fig. 1). The monthly average number of visitors was 519 and this number never fell below the 400 mark (fig. 2). The average number of daily visits was 17, with a peak of 99 on 20 September, the day the redeveloped site was launched. During 2002 the ESEH website also saw an increasing number of people posting announcements and news for inclusion in the site. The number more than doubled from 7 in 2001 to 15 in 2002.

In 2003 we expect the site to develop further along the lines of 2002. No major developments are scheduled for the moment but new features to meet the needs of our visitors will be continuously added. The website will be important for presenting the programme and other information concerning the second international meeting of ESEH in September 2003. A post conference site will be made available after the conference. Other aims for 2003 are to further increase the number of visitors, make all information regarding environmental history in Europe available as quickly as possible on the website and to serve as an interactive communication medium between ESEH, its members and the wider academic and professional community.

Website Statistics

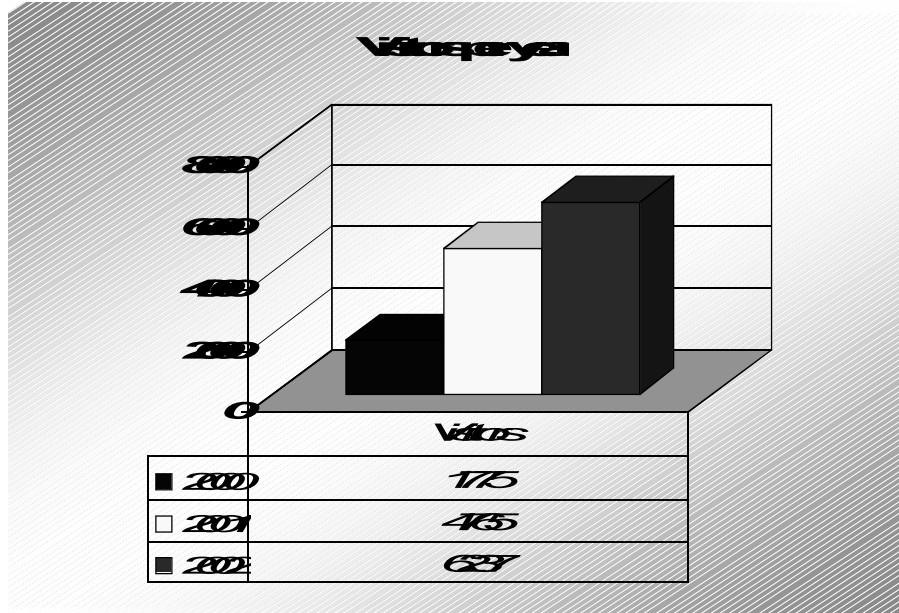


Figure 1

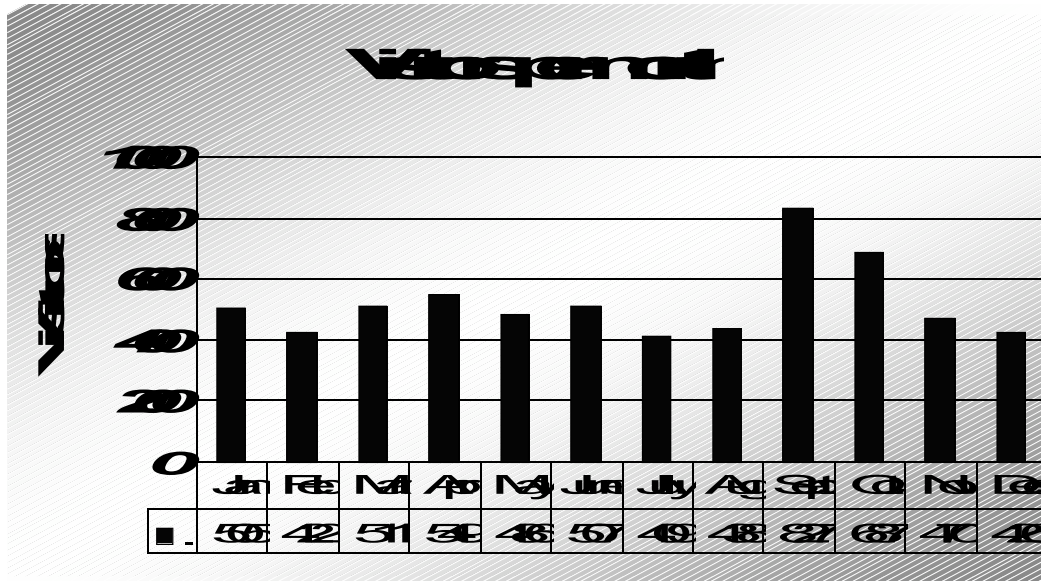


Figure 2

Historical overview			
Total number of hits since 15 June 2000	12.782	Average number of hits per day (2002)	17
Lowest number of visitors on 25 December 2002	1	Highest number of visitors, 20 September 2002	99
Percentage of European visitors	47%	Percentage of Visitor from other continents	53%

Table 1

### 3. Accounts ESEH 2001-2002

<b>Income2001_02</b>	<b>Donors</b>	<b>SumInEuro</b>
General Assembly travel funding	Breuninger Foundation DM 15.479,75	7,914.67
Website funding 2001	Breuninger Foundation DM 1.856,-	948.95
SEK198.000/14x12	Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation	18,638.25
SEK100.000/14x12	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	9,413.25
Website funding 2002	Breuninger Foundation	464.00
Travel funding Dec02	Breuninger Foundation	3,656.57
Legal advice funding	Breuninger Foundation	593.94
Travel funding FHS	Breuninger Foundation	400.78
	Swiss EAEH Prof Pfister	500.62
	Dr Winiwarter	100.00
	Mr Koppitz	210.00
	Fees	60.00
<b>SUM</b>		<b>42,901.03</b>

<b>Expenses01_02</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>SumExEuro</b>	<b>notice</b>
Travel costs St Andrews Sept 2001	Board members	7,914.67	2001
Homepage maintenance	Mr Retzbach, Stuttgart	948.95	2001
Secretariate Umea	Prof. Soerlin, Dr. Akerberg	28,051.50	
bank charge	Postbank, Mr Koppitz	61.80	
Homepage maintenance	Mr Retzbach, Stuttgart	464.00	
Bibliography FHS travel	Dr Oosthoek	400.78	Breuninger
Legal advice	Solicitor London	1,327.62	2001
FHS Software Toll	Dr Oosthoek	36.31	
Travel Goettingen-Prag ScCom Dec02	Prof. Hermann	550.00	Breuninger
Travel Esbjerg-Prag ScCom Dec02	Prof. Holm	700.00	Breuninger
Travel ClermontF-Prag ScCom Dec02	Dr Massard-G.	900.00	Breuninger
Travel Edinburgh-Prag ScCom Dec02	Dr Tripping	1,350.00	Breuninger
Travel Vienna-Prag ScCom Dec02	Dr Winiwarter	156.57	Breuninger
	<b>SUM</b>	<b>42,862.20</b>	
STATE OF ACCOUNT 31.12.02	Postbank	38.83	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42,901.03</b>	