

European Society for Environmental History,  
the Board and the Nomination Committee

Belgrade, Ljubljana, Zagreb, 23 February 2019

**Proposal for creation of the new ESEH region Croatia-Serbia-Slovenia**

Dear respected colleagues!

Following the examples of successful ESEH regions linking several countries we propose the transformation of two existing ESEH regions—Croatia and Serbia—as well of Slovenia (which has so far been one of the few white spots in Europe on the ESEH map) into a larger ESEH region Croatia-Serbia-Slovenia. We believe that the proposed broader region will be helpful to stimulate further development of environmental history in all three countries. We all share dinaric and (peri)pannonian environments. Environmental history of (sub)mediterranean environments also links the whole proposed region – while Slovenia and Croatia include (sub)mediterranean regions, environmental history investigations in Serbia have recently also dealt with (sub)mediterranean environments in the South-Eastern Europe. Due to the similar mother tongues (Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian) and the partially common 20<sup>th</sup>-century political history, Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian investigations into environmental phenomena, into history and into the interrelationships, dialectic processes between people and environment have also had a long history of reciprocal influences and cooperation – the investigations into karst phenomena, processes and people in karst in

particular. Environmental history based on recently developed scientific approaches is recognized as a legitimate field of research in all three countries. However, the number of environmental historians in our proposed region is still low and activities carried out jointly will help us attract further researchers.

We plan to extend our already existing environmental history cooperation and research activities. As we all share dinaric regions we will open a call for an edited volume on environmental history of dinaric karst in the next months in order to stimulate environmental history researches in the proposed region.

In January 2019 we introduced visiting environmental history lectures (by environmental historians working at faculties within the proposed region) for our students whom we consider a very important target audience. We will continue with this practice in the summer term and we aim to exchange our lectures also in the next years. We also plan to organize an international summer school on environmental history of karst in Slovenia in 2020 in order to promote environmental history in our proposed region. As the school will be truly international and students from outside the region will be invited as well, the school will also promote international contacts among students.

We plan to create a common online-available regional environmental history bibliography and to regularly announce environmental history news either on a website or via a mailing list.

In Croatia, the *Association for Croatian economic and environmental history* has existed since 2005 and the journal *Ekonomska i ekohistorija: časopis za gospodarsku povijest i povijest okoliša* (*Economic- and Ecohistory: scientific research journal for economic and environmental history*) has been published annually in Zagreb since the same year. Papers dealing with environmental history topic have been widely published in other Croatian and international journals and publications as well. The scientific project on *Environmental change, cultural landscapes and regional identities* financed by the Ministry of Science has been carried out at the Department of Geography at the University of Zagreb since 2007. Among other projects including environmental history, the international research project *Triplex Confinium*, which started as early as 1996, has to be noted. Several environmental history conferences have been held in Croatia, like the *Ecohistory of the Triplex Confinium* (2000), the international *Conference on the History of Environmental Movements and Development of Environmental Thought* (2014), the international symposium *History of the River Drava – link between the regions* (2016), and the biennial ESEH conference (2017). Students can study environmental history at the University of Zagreb and Croatian environmental historians also organized the ESEH 2017 summer school.

The first Slovenian member joined the ESEH in 2003. Slovenian environmental historians presented their papers e.g. at ESEH and WCEH conferences, in 2014 they organised the international symposium *Man, Nature and Environment between the Northern Adriatic and Eastern Alps in Pre-Modern Times* in Ljubljana, attended by presenters from Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Serbia and Switzerland. Every second year Slovenian archaeologists

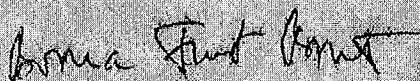
organise an interdisciplinary conference on long-term environmental change. Some environmental history research projects have been carried out, e.g. the project dealing with selected environmental history aspects of the territory of present day Slovenia in the Middle Ages and in the Early Modern Times (2011-2014). Research based on early 19<sup>th</sup> century land cadastre has a long tradition in Slovenia, especially among geographers investigating land use changes; their results have been internationally recognised. Research into historical climatology and into the history of natural hazards started in 1990s, at that time with a strong emphasis on published older compilations, but especially since 2013 historical climatology analyses based on primary sources followed. Some topics of the environmental history of karst have been analysed e.g. at the Karst research institute, at the University of Primorska and at the University of Ljubljana. In 2018, a short but intensive summer school, participated by masters' students from Ljubljana and Vienna (within the frame of the CEEPUS network Ecology and Management of Aquatic Ecosystems in Central, East and Southeast Europe) was organized in Slovenia. In order to further stimulate environmental history among students, the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts (Philosophische Fakultät) in Ljubljana is involved in a project funding water history researches by two masters' students in the summer term 2018/19. Selected environmental history topics are represented in the lectures for students of History, of Geography and of Archaeology at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and at the Department of Geography, Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska. Environmental history papers by Slovenian authors have been published in Slovenia and abroad.

Promoting environmental history research in Serbia has been in the last decade, since WCEH congress in Copenhagen, an enthusiastic, single-handed activity, and it had its limitations in the scope, but also some success. Due to the overwhelming dominance of traditional historicism within and discipline 'specialization' in Serbian academia, the attempts to recruit the colleagues from the Faculty of Geography and of Chemistry, and to establish cooperation, have failed. The prevalence of 'national history discourse' and administrative division of chairs is also very strong, and it hinders the attempts to draw students to pursue environmental history as a true cosmopolite, trans-cultural discipline. The attempt to introduce a new teaching program for foreign students in English at the Faculty of Philosophy, where Dr Mrgić offered a syllabus on Environmental history of SEE, failed since it was rejected by voting at the Faculty's assembly. Perhaps some changes into study programs could be introduced during the next cycle of accreditation, but there is no guarantee. What has been achieved is the establishment of a good and very solid scientific cooperation with colleagues from Ljubljana and from Zagreb, including participation in conferences and edited volumes, where topics, sources and results from Serbia as a part of the broader, Southeast European region are presented, and draw attention of international audience. Two edited volumes are very important starting points – *Man, Nature and Environment* (2014), and *Environmentalism in Central and South Eastern Europe: Historical Perspectives* (2017). It may be added that there is a handbook on environmental pre-modern history, accessible to the students of the shared region: J. Mrgić, *Zemlja i ljudi: iz istorije životne sredine Zapadnog Balkana* [Land and People: From the environmental history of the western Balkans], Beograd 2013. With this

new regional framework within ESEH, the previous cooperation is expected to thrive and be more successful.

With best regards,

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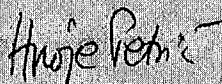
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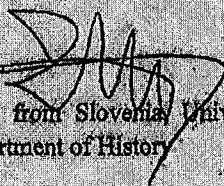
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