

President's Message Board

Dear Friends, Environmental Historians,

The first World Congress in Environmental History is approaching fast and I would like to encourage you to check the programme available on the congress website: <http://wceh2009.org/> if you have not done that already. Thanks to the hard work done by the Local Organising Committee and the Programme Committee, this programme is a high quality one. I am sure that this congress, for which more than 550 participants have registered already, will be a very exciting and stimulating event.

As you will see, our ESEH Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) will be held on Thursday 6 August afternoon, from 17:00 to 18:30. There will be no collision with any other event so I hope you will attend it. Those who are not yet members of ESEH will also be able to join us on this occasion.

Let me remind you that the OGM plays an important role in ESEH democratic life. At this meeting, ESEH President, Vice-Presidents and Secretary will be renewed, as well as some of our Regional Representatives, whose term is finishing. Of course, the outgoing team will report on its action during the two past years and on the advancement on the different projects it has driven.

Even more importantly, this General Meeting will also be the time for a change in ESEH constitution. This change aims at an even better democracy in the Society and revises quite deeply the mode of governance to make it more efficient. The proposed new constitution will soon be available on the website. Please look at it before the OGM. The preparation of this revised constitution has required a lot of work. The presence of 20 percent of ESEH members is compulsory for any vote to be valid. As not all members will be able to attend this congress, it is all the more important that all ESEH members present in Copenhagen attend it. I rely on you!

This congress will also give the ESEH an opportunity to celebrate its tenth anniversary. On this occasion, a Toast will be offered to all those who, as we do, enjoy the consolidation of environmental history in Europe. This toast should be held during the Tuesday afternoon break, from 3:00 to 3:30. Please check the definitive programme. You will all be welcome.

I look forward to meeting you in Copenhagen for what will certainly be a memorable congress.

Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud
President of ESEH

Environmental History in Hungary

Almost two years have passed since the ESEH Conference in Amsterdam and this summer in Copenhagen for the first time a World Conference for Environmental History will attract researchers in the field from all over the world. I would like to take the opportunity to sum up the current development of Environmental History in Hungary – the results we have achieved in developing the field as well as the shortcomings and the opportunities.

To begin with our results, we have managed to stabilize the institutional background of the Environmental History research. In particular three institutions currently form an important basis for Environmental History research in Hungary: The Central European University, Budapest, which offers English-language education, Szeged University and the Historical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. A network of communication between Hungarian researchers dealing with the Environmental History has taken shape. We have initiated common research applications and organized Environmental History conferences. In Szeged University we formed the Regional and Environmental History Department at the end of 2007. Being a little department, its eventual fate is uncertain, but it means a bridgehead for Environmental History. Supported by the publisher of the Historical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Science in 2008 we have launched a ‘History of Nature’ book series. In the past year (effectively this year) two books were published. The first volume, *Environmental History of Hungary until the End of the 18th Century*, was authored by the writer of this report, the second, *The History of the Cognition of the Air*, was written by Mészáros Ernő, a meteorologist. We also intend to present volumes in English translation and therefore hope for a broad interest in the publishing program.

Hungary, like many other European nations, is a riparian state of the River Danube. Common research interests dedicated to the Danube have played an important role for the foundation of a regional cooperation with our Austrian colleagues. Within the interdisciplinary ‘Danube Environmental History Initiative’ scholars from several countries co-operate. We are organizing an Environmental History summer school at the Central European University in Budapest in 2010 focused on the environmental role of the Danube.

But some shortcomings have also to be noted. There are still only a few common research programs. Financing research in Environmental History remains an unsolved problem. We have not yet succeeded in setting up working research contacts with our Slovak, Serbian and Romanian colleagues. There still is no regional Environmental History website. In general, communication between Hungarian researchers in Environmental History has to be put on a more effective and regular basis. Regrettably also ESEH has not yet attracted many Hungarian members.

To sum up this report, there still is a lot of work to be done but there are also opportunities to be grasped. One major opportunity is that Hungarian researchers can play an important mediatory role in the East Central European region.

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European Society for Environmental History

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ESEH aims to promote environmental history in Europe, by encouraging and supporting research, teaching and publications in the field. The ESEH maintains its web site at <www.eseh.org>.

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Items for the next Notepad should be sent by 1 October 2009 to the address shown below.

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