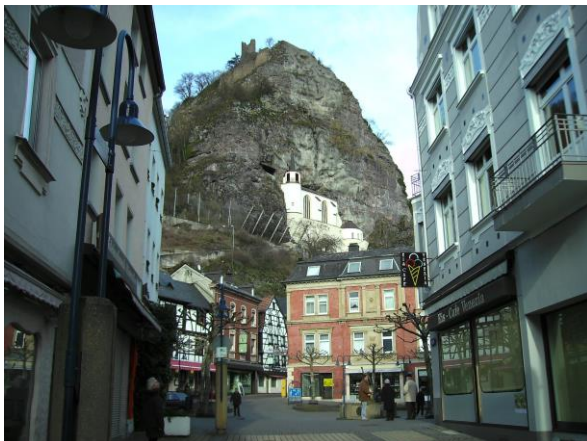


THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL TOWNS



The European Council for the Village and Small Town (ECOVAST)



November 2014



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ECOVAST: Information on the organisation can be found on our website: <http://www.ecovast.org>
Information on the **ASSET** project and its surveys can be found via the ECOVAST home page http://www.ecovast.org/english/asset_e.htm and at <http://www.dorfwiki.org/wiki.cgi?SmallTowns>

The original formal ECOVAST Position Paper 'The Importance of Small Towns' was produced in 2013. That Paper has been converted into this publication, compiled by Valerie Carter, together with the ASSET Team, and additional examples from other ECOVAST members and partners, Wikipedia and Town Websites. The ECOVAST **ASSET Team** consisted of Dr.Arthur Spiegler (Austria); Tihana Stepinac-Fabijanac (Croatia); Dr.Ralf Bokermann; Angus Fowler, Andrea Weigert (Germany) and Valerie Carter, Pam Moore and Phil Turner (United Kingdom). Other contributions have been made by Dr. Gerhard Fasching and Silvia Mayer of ECOVAST Austria and Magdalena Banu of ECOVAST Romania.

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FOREWORD

Our ECOVAST research has shown us that there are thousands of small towns all over Europe, with millions of people living in them. They have similar histories in their origins but now find themselves today under many different political regimes and statutory systems.

This document is not a tale of doom and gloom - although we are well aware of the challenges small towns face - it is a good news story about the way small towns have, over many years, used their considerable assets to improve their local economy for the benefit of regional, national and European economies as a whole.

Small towns are an important part of the hierarchy of European settlements. They are urban in character but on a much smaller scale than large towns and cities. Although some small towns may have lost some of their services through increasing centralisation, they still serve a hinterland of villages and rural areas, providing a valuable link between larger urban areas and rural areas, particularly in relation to rural/urban partnerships.

Small towns with their local customs and traditions as well as their appearance and closeness to the natural landscapes around them form an important part of the diverse cultural landscape of Europe.

ECOVAST promotes the vital importance of such small towns to the future well-being of Europe and calls upon policy makers to reflect the needs and high potential of small towns, so they may truly serve as assets to Europe, particularly as the continent emerges from a severe economic recession.

We consider that the current urban and rural policies in Europe do not reflect the importance of small towns, and we wish to promote the need for a specific set of policies in both the European Union and the Council of Europe which reflect their uniqueness and special needs; to maintain their character; and enable them to continue to serve as rural service centres.

This booklet sets out what we have found out from our experience of working across Europe and specific survey work. It is based on our formal Position Paper on the 'Importance of Small Towns' which was produced in October 2013 and sent to the European Union, and the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

We hope that policy makers who have a real influence over the small towns in their areas will find it useful. We particularly hope that local municipalities will find useful the examples of opportunities which other towns have made use of to improve their economies.

The examples demonstrate the uniqueness and distinctiveness of small towns. It is hoped that other small municipalities will be similarly inspired by their efforts and use some of the examples to adapt them to their own local circumstances.

We know there are many hundreds of good examples across Europe and we cannot do justice to all – but we have tried to use examples of small towns from as many countries as possible and we have focussed on examples of towns with fewer than 30,000 population.

The publication of this document marks the culmination of ECOVAST's major project called ASSET (Action to Strengthen Small European Towns) which was 'born' at the international conference held in Retz, Austria in 2005.

Valerie Carter: President of ECOVAST

1: THE POLICY CONTEXT IN EUROPE

At the current time there are no specific European policies for small towns, yet upland areas have been recognised in policies as 'less favoured areas' (now called Areas facing Natural Restraints); and the rural fringes around major metropolitan areas have a voice through the PURPLE network so that their specific needs and opportunities are being recognised in the European Union.

The development of more integrated economic development policies for urban and rural areas is being actively pursued in the European Union. The European Union has also been working with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which has carried out a series of case studies on rural-urban partnerships and is submitting its findings to working parties for Territorial Indicators and Territorial Policy in Rural and Urban Areas for discussion and approval. The OECD case studies have been the basis for a series of conferences staged in 2012-13 to discuss the findings which in turn may influence future EU policy. If post 2014 there is to be an emphasis on rural areas linking with urban areas, this work on the importance of small towns serving a hinterland of villages and countryside should be of value to the debate as these small towns are a critical link between urban and rural areas.

2014 also sees the start of a new 7 year programme period for the European Union which will have a significant impact and offer potential support for projects in 28 states. The new approach will use the Common Strategic Framework for combining funds for Regional, Social, Rural and Fisheries Funds in Community Led Local Development. This gives opportunities to promote the well-being of small towns but a lot will depend on each Member State and what they decide to implement.

Small towns do meet several of the key '**Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent**' set out by the Council of Europe. These guiding principles have been accepted by all the Ministers for Regional/Spatial Planning (CEMAT) except for Belarus. The particular planning policies numbers 2, 7 and 9 are specifically appropriate – the ones which:

- encourage urban development generated by functions and improving the relationship between the town and the countryside
- enhance the cultural heritage as a factor for development
- encourage high quality, sustainable tourism

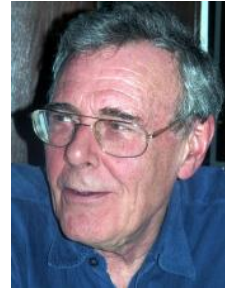
2: ECOVAST's WORK ON SMALL TOWNS

The European Council for the Village and Small Town (ECOVAST) has been working for 30 years to promote the well-being of the people and heritage of the rural regions of Europe. We know that millions of people across Europe live in small towns and that their role has evolved and changed over the years and their vitality fluctuated in response to historical forces of all kinds. Changes will continue and there is a crucial need to understand the challenges they face in a modern world. Small towns cannot be 'frozen' or preserved in aspic.

ECOVAST prepared a formal Position Paper on the Importance of Small Towns in October 2013 identifying their characteristics and their roles; their challenges and opportunities, and highlighting a few examples of good practice. The intention of this Position Paper was to influence policy makers across geographical Europe, the Council of Europe, as well as policy and programme designers of the European Union and to set out why 'small towns' are an important part of the settlement hierarchy in Europe and form a link between urban and rural areas. We considered that the paper was timely coming at the start of a new era of EU policies; for the first time there is a deliberate attempt to integrate and harmonise urban and rural policies and the promotion of community led development.

We consider that the information on small towns is not just relevant at the European level but to individual countries, regional and local authorities, business organisations and voluntary bodies. We are aware that there is a lot of interest in towns across Europe and that various initiatives are being pursued. Our opinions are not just based on our experience but on specific research which arose out of our project Action to Strengthen Small European Towns (ASSET) which in turn resulted from a conference on small towns held in Retz, Austria in 2005.

Phil TURNER
Past President ECOVAST
Member ECOVAST International Committee
Lead ASSET Project Team
Member ECOVAST UK



“The Retz event in 2005 was the third symposium to be held in Austria to discuss the issues facing small towns. It was sponsored by the South East England Development Agency, ECOVAST International and ECOVAST Austria with attendees from 9 different countries. It was at this event that we recognised that we needed to find out a lot more about small towns in order to form any firm opinions about them. The project ‘Action to Strengthen Small European Towns’ (ASSET) was born, and a programme of research and evidence-gathering begun. The programme involved most of Europe not just the European Union and potential accession states.

The ASSET project had four specific aims:

- to promote co-operation, and the exchange of good practice between Governmental and other agencies throughout Europe who offer support to small towns
- to promote contact and the exchange of good practice between individual small towns throughout Europe
- to speak on behalf of small towns to influence the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the Committee of the Regions and Governments
- to facilitate, support and encourage the delivery of research to enable evidence-based policy approaches to strengthen the well-being of small towns

We have discussed the ASSET project and its findings across Europe - north, west, central, east and south Europe - recognising the striking differences in different parts of the continent and the need to engage with all areas.

We have held our own events or attended ones arranged by others in Austria, Croatia, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom where the needs of small towns, exchanges of best practice and our research findings have been discussed. All these events and meetings have contributed to the development of this document. The body of evidence gathered and our ECOVAST conclusions has not only been discussed in many countries listed above but also with the Council of Europe and the Committee of the Regions”.

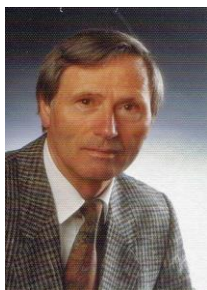
There has also been considerable other work on small towns that ECOVAST has been involved with. Several national sections have been very active with small towns in their countries.

Dr Arthur SPIEGLER
Vice President ECOVAST
Chairman ECOVAST Landscape Working Group
Member ECOVAST International Committee
Member ASSET Project Team
Member ECOVAST Austria



“ECOVAST Austria recognised that small towns in Central Europe were being affected by many threats caused by globalisation; losses due to modern development of out of town shopping centres; and centralisation of services into larger towns. Altogether, we have staged four symposia in Austria – starting with the first in Murau in 1998. We understood the threats, but on the positive side we recognised that they had significant historic assets with compactness, distinctiveness and a physical fabric which is human in scale. The symposia supported the development of local economies which would promote local well-being and that others could develop local resources of woodlands and farm produce which in turn could strengthen and diversify sub-regional economies. There was also a recognition that new telecommunications opportunities could be of benefit to rural people and

businesses in small towns. Our interest in small towns strengthened after the first two events and after the third symposium held in Retz in 2005 we wanted to find out more about small towns in Austria so we conducted an in-depth study on all Austrian towns to identify and catalogue their individual assets. Our particular interest in Austria is in 'historic towns' as around 90% of towns in Austria could be described as historic”.



Professor Dr Ralf BOKERMANN
Member ECOVAST International Committee
Member ECOVAST ASSET Team
Member ECOVAST Germany

“I have studied small towns in several different types of rural areas in Germany. These towns have populations up to 7,000 people, and I have analysed their features and problems and the implementation of local action areas. Since 1972 (in eastern Germany since 1992) there has been a focus on local government, public and private infrastructure in small towns and surrounding villages. This strengthened the role of small towns to form rural micro-regions with the towns as the centre for the surrounding rural hinterland delivering rural services. Since 1990 there has been an increasing tendency in Germany’s rural areas of out migration and massive job losses. Some small towns have had little in-migration.”



Andrea WEIGERT
ECOVAST Treasurer
Member ECOVAST International Committee
Member ECOVAST ASSET Team
Member ECOVAST Germany

“As part of my work in the Academy for the Rural Areas of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, I have carried out research on the small municipalities in the state during 2000. I studied the level of services that they provided and was able to rank them in order of ‘upper’, ‘middle’ and ‘lower grade centres’ depending on the services they offered. Many of the towns had lost their former administrative status of them but one good aspect was that many had started to co-operate with each other”.

ECOVAST Croatia has also carried out research and held several small town events to discuss the issues facing them; ECOVAST Romania has been looking at specific Byzantine heritage assets which also included small towns and ECOVAST Russia has undertaken a lot of work on specialist ‘monastery towns’.

3: WHAT IS A ‘TOWN’?

There is no formal definition for a ‘town’. The Oxford English Dictionary refers to a ‘town’ being distinct from the ‘country’ and the word ‘urban’ as a place where people live in towns and cities and ‘rural’ being the countryside which embraces rural settlements. Our Opinion Surveys also gave a variety of answers to this question demonstrating that there is no simple or specific European definition on what makes a ‘small town’. We recognise that the debate is complex. The definition of a ‘town’ can vary from one country to another. Towns can be defined by law in some countries, for example in Austria and Germany. Towns can be classified as ‘historic’ if they meet certain criteria such as having a Town Charter dating from the Middle Ages. Some communities wish to call themselves a ‘town’ whilst others have real concerns that the simple designation of ‘town’ would mean that they will have to take unwanted amounts of growth and development. However it is the spatial planning policies of individual countries that will define which particular settlements should grow and which should not. The definition of a settlement as a ‘town’ is not the deciding factor.

Towns have mostly grown slowly over time – some dating back to Roman and/or Greek times. They reflect the various periods of their history through their street plans and buildings: with examples from medieval, renaissance, baroque, 18th century, industrial revolution right up to modern times. Many will have gone on to become a major city or metropolis but many thousands of others have remained small in size. Most towns across Europe will have grown up because of their geographical location such as:

- a coastal or river port linking places and countries;
- a river crossing;
- a cross road of routes;
- at staging posts along a major cross country route;
- on defensive sites around a castle or fort;
- around a religious centre for worship, teaching and pilgrimage;
- at places where it was convenient to do business;
- a market to sell goods produced in the surrounding areas;
- places large enough for different skills to develop – for example through the development of medieval guilds.

Some towns will have developed because of specialities: such as fishing ports; around mines or quarries where salt or other minerals were found; or through the discovery of spas for health or the popularity of the seaside.

Some towns (large or small) have been founded specifically as new settlements because of war or population explosion in the Middle Ages such as the Bastide towns of South West France or the towns developed by German settlers in central and eastern Europe across present day Czech and Slovak Republics, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia, Transylvania and the Baltic States.

There are modern 'new towns' founded to cope with the huge growth due to the industrial revolution (such as the mining towns in South Wales) or the spread of suburban settlements around major metropolises such as London.

It is therefore true that there are great similarities in many small towns which have followed a similar history over the ages but there are huge differences in the political context which different countries have faced since the 20th century after collapses of empires and the impact of World Wars; the emergence of new states and this political background will have created very different circumstances for small towns and how they may develop.

Our debates on what is a 'small town' have mainly focused on two aspects – function and size.

Function

Small rural towns are places which provide for both themselves and their hinterlands. They provide local markets, shops; as well as acting as a centre for employment and business activity and a wide range of services. Not all small towns will have all these but will provide enough to make them rural service centres for their surrounding hinterland. ECOVAST through its debates and the South East England studies has identified several major characteristics for 'towns' – based on the functions they provide:

- towns are settlements which have **hinterlands** serving the needs of the town's own inhabitants and of surrounding smaller settlements. Villages and the countryside are often the hinterland of small rural towns, and small towns in turn are the hinterland of larger towns; and in turn larger towns are within the hinterland of major conurbations.
- the pattern of dependency between places is therefore complicated. There are 'city regions' across Europe, dominated by one huge metropolis; yet other regions remain multi centred.
- towns are **a market place for the goods from surrounding areas**.
- towns are normally **freestanding** although some have ribbon development joining them to other settlements but these may still have their own hinterland. Many former small towns have been completely swallowed up by large towns.

- towns are more **compact** with a more densely developed populated area than a village – an ‘urban’ characteristic.
- they often have a pattern of narrow streets dating from historic times.
- towns have a **clear central place** – for meeting & trade – usually called the ‘market place’.
- towns will have **religious buildings** attracting people from a wide area – church, monastery, cathedral, mosque or synagogue.
- towns will have **cultural assets** such as museums or theatres also serving a wider area than the town itself
- historic towns will have many **significant remnants of their history** – walls, forts, castles, or palaces, and central places and streets with buildings in continuous historic facades.
- small towns provide employment and services not just for themselves but also for their hinterlands.
 - they provide **retail centres** – many with independent traders and some with representatives of the major food chains, some with branches of ‘magnet traders’, and many with markets;
 - they act as a **centre for business activity**
 - they provide a **wide range of other services** which can include administration, health, leisure and secondary education.

Not all small towns will have all these or to the same degree but all will provide at least some of these functions.

There are many small settlements which historically were ‘towns’ with historic ‘Town Charters’ which now no longer function as places which provide services for a hinterland. However, many of these historic places display a wealth of ‘heritage’ assets which attract tourists and have restaurants and hotels as well as important buildings to visit, providing local jobs and making contributions to the local, regional and even national economy and should be recognised for this.

Size

ECOVAST feels strongly that there are many settlements throughout Europe which could be defined as ‘small towns’ which are essential to the well-being of rural areas. ECOVAST has therefore used both size and function to define them as well as looking at their particular assets of distinctiveness and contribution to rural landscapes.

The ASSET Study looked at all town settlements across geographical Europe (except for European Russia or European Turkey) and listed them in various size bands. It used one primary source and a few secondary sources for population sizes from the largest cities down to towns with populations above 10,000 people. The data used was for town populations not for towns and their hinterlands.

It was impossible to get comparable data for all the countries of Europe for towns below a population of 10,000. This does not mean we are suggesting that a 10,000 population is the lower limit for a small town. Far from it, but it cannot be clear without major new survey work on how to find out the exact number of places with populations below 10,000 which today provide the functions of a ‘town’; but it is clear from our South East England survey that all places with a population above 10,000 had the functions of a ‘town’.

ECOVAST fully recognises that there are many very small towns below 10,000 functioning as rural service centres – for instance in Austria, Croatia, Germany and France. We are aware that in the more remote, less densely populated countries the size of towns is generally much smaller – in Finland small towns often have populations below 2,000 people. Even in the study of towns in the more crowded region of South East England, 119 of the 165 small towns identified and studied had populations of less than 10,000.

The opinion on the upper limit on size of a ‘small town’ is not uniform across Europe. In fact our first Opinion Survey (referred to on page 10) received 12 different answers from the 22 countries that responded. The average size for an upper limit was 25,000 but three countries, notably Austria, suggested that 50,000 is the upper limit for a small town. Many ECOVAST debates followed but our European Survey (referred to on page 9) concentrated upon towns between 10,000 and 30,000 although we also refer to the number of towns between 30,000 and 50,000.

4: HOW MANY SMALL TOWNS ARE THERE IN EUROPE ?

Our ASSET European Study demonstrated just how many small towns there were across Europe. Our survey area covered all the 44 States in 'geographical' Europe (but excluding European Russia and European Turkey) not just the 28 Member States in the European Union.

Mrs Valerie CARTER
President ECOVAST
Member ASSET Project Team
Member ECOVAST UK



“Our **ECOVAST** survey confirmed that there are **thousands of small towns** across Europe

- there are **4,580 small towns in the 10,000-30,000 population** size-band – making up **13.3%** of the population of the survey area. It is also **64.2%** of all towns identified in the European survey area.
- these small towns have a combined **population of nearly 78,000,000**. This represents a very large number of people living in small towns. The figure is bigger than the population of all European countries except Germany.
- together they could present a large voice to represent their particular needs.
- Another **243 million** people (**41.5%** of the population of the survey area) lived in **rural areas**, where the populations of any settlements are fewer than 10,000. **Many of these settlements will be small towns**, but difficulties exist in finding data which identifies which provide the function of a ‘town’.

It is recognised that the towns **between 30,000 and 50,000** are still ‘small’ compared to the larger towns and cities of Europe and the study identified **1,210** of them – **7.7%** of the population of the survey area with a combined population of more than **45,000,000**.

There are **1,341 towns/cities** which have populations of **more than 50,000** with a total population of **219,600,400** – **37.5%** of the population of the survey area.

However, it was decided that it is the smaller towns (those under 30,000) which have managed to resist the severe impact of major modernisation of their retail centres which make many larger towns look like ‘clones’ – certainly at ground level - and so they are the ones which are more likely to retain a more complete and cohesive record of their history.

It is also these smaller towns that have found it difficult to maintain their historic roles in the modern world dominated by economies of scale and which are most likely will continue to have the most difficulty in adapting to new circumstances.

Our second set of surveys involved an in-depth look at the assets of **165 individual small towns in South East England**. It is accepted that this region is one of the more densely populated regions of Europe but it has significant rural areas with a variety of nationally designated landscapes and some 1,400 village settlements as well as 165 small towns.

These towns are nearly all historic and have grown up since medieval times and remain compact reflecting architecture and history throughout the ages and not overwhelmed by modern development (because of strict English planning policies). Many have Town Charters issued in medieval times.

They are typical of all small towns in England and also similar to small towns across Europe sharing a common heritage and serving the needs of themselves and their hinterlands across the ages, whatever political regimes have existed in their countries”.

5: THE CHALLENGES SMALL TOWNS FACE

Small towns have suffered over recent years from a variety of problems and our ECOVAST Opinion Surveys sought the views of many countries across Europe.



Mrs Pam MOORE
Former ECOVAST Secretary General
Member ECOVAST International Committee
Member ASSET Project Team
Member ECOVAST UK

“We felt it essential to talk to people directly about how they felt about the current state of small towns in their area and how did they foresee the future. Our first Opinion Survey provided this information.

The surveys indicated that the picture is very complex, although there seems to be much activity going on albeit in a piecemeal way. The responses came from 22 countries.

On the question of ‘size’ of a **small** town in their countries there were many different answers varying from 2,000 to 50,000. Even within countries it also varies – for example South East England used an upper limit of 20,000 for its Small Town programme whereas other regions in England used 25,000 or 30,000 as the upper limit.

The respondents highlighted several major problems including outmigration; loss of employment and unemployment generally; loss of facilities; new development; out of town shopping centres and the growth of traffic and consequent demand for car parking. They also cited loss of traditional buildings, weak infrastructure; poor public transport, pressures on land and planning and housing policies.

They did accept that there were some things in place to help them with information exchange, development of networks, lobbying and even some financial help from either governments, regions or other bodies. Many thought that larger towns received more help than smaller towns.

Most countries reported that there were many interactions between small towns and the hinterlands they serve – particularly on shopping, markets; local food; leisure; health, tourism and transport.

But the overwhelming message from all quarters of Europe was about the problems they have faced over the past few years:

- **Globalisation** : the fact that food is a world commodity rather than primarily produced and sold locally and this has led to food processing being carried out in larger and larger units away from the site of production and often in major cities rather than in villages and small towns.
- **Centralisation**: evidence from surveys of South East Towns in England has shown that many small towns have lost their original administrative roles with 38 former administrative centres declining to only 10 today. Many have also lost services, particularly hospitals which have become much more specialised and reflect economies of scale for complex medical conditions.
- **Loss of Population**: a serious problem felt by many countries was that people move out from their small towns, especially young people. Many people leave to find jobs in in large urban areas or to pursue higher education, but few of them return, and this is threatening the demographic balance of many towns. It is also a brain-drain as well.
- **Pressures of New Development**: many respondents had concerns about the pressures for new development in small towns - for industry; new housing – and also the loss of agricultural land. A major part of this concern was related to out of town shopping centres and their devastating impact on independent traders in small town centres.
- **Impact on landscapes**: pressures for new development were having a detrimental impact on the landscapes and causing ‘urban sprawl’ around many small towns.

The responses from our Second Opinion Survey gave a valuable insight into the impact which the economic downturn is having across Europe.

All countries reported that they had been affected adversely by the recession - no country has escaped but some had been affected more than others.

- **Loss of jobs:** most respondents commented on loss of jobs – both by the closure of businesses, or reductions in their workforces – and the impact caused by the problems in neighbouring countries. They also recognised that the decline in employment has implications not only on the town itself but also on the villages in their hinterlands.
- **Loss of retail:** almost all had lost facilities in the small town, particularly in the retail sector. For some, this was due to small businesses being unable to compete with larger stores in urban centres, but also “out of town” shopping which has been an issue long before the current recession. Evidence showed that this “out of town” development had not ceased during the recession but slowed down a little. New developments in the towns themselves have suffered with many half completed sites as well as empty premises. The recession has led to the closure of several major and well-known retail chains.
- **Impact on Tourism and Heritage:** the impact on heritage is particularly worrying as it is heritage tourism that often offers a potential for the future with possible sustainable visitor spend. Countries reliant on tourism have major concerns about its decline and consequent loss of employment and facilities. Fewer tourists visiting result in less spend in towns, with historic buildings running the risk of becoming disused, leading to lack of maintenance and decay, fewer being sold or let, in a stagnant property market or even lost altogether.
- **Impact on Housing:** many countries report on difficulties in their housing markets – most citing a shortage of finance available, and house repossessions. Previous housing booms have left many properties partly completed, or finished, but empty.
- **Declining public purses:** local authorities everywhere have been facing a declining public purse yet often increasing demands for these scarce resources. The economic recession has added to these pressures and the future outlook continues to be bleak. The impact of diminishing public services will impact on libraries, social care, health and support to public transport as well as repairs to roads and car parking.
- **Long Term Sustainability of Projects:** funding through grants or public bodies is time limited particularly for on-going management of a project. This is unlikely to improve in the future and all projects need to look for long term support from the private sector if a project is expected to go on after the initial setting up phases”.

6: OPPORTUNITIES

However, this is not just a story about problems, it is about the amazing and diverse activities that small towns have undertaken which provide real examples of what can be done and which could be replicated or adapted to other local circumstances.

Most small towns have considerable assets offering opportunities to improve their economic situation. Many have already taken up this challenge and can demonstrate the benefits. They offer a variety of ‘good practice’.

Not all will be directly replicable in every country but the many different examples set out below give ideas which could be followed up and adapted by others.

There are 9 types of activity set out below with one category having 10 sub-types. The list includes examples which we have found during our experiences in Europe but there will no doubt be others which are not included. The examples are very varied and are taken from across all parts of Europe and demonstrate what towns have done or can do to improve their economies.

6.1 Direct Contribution to Economies

More than 12,000 businesses were found in the survey of 165 small towns in SE England - providing local jobs for both the town and its hinterland, pumping money into the local economy and also contributing to the economy of the wider region. Successful towns can offer opportunities to **increase their business base** and **improve the business performance** of existing enterprises. Many towns have gone on to develop economic projects which will increase the opportunities for additional trade.

Opportunities exist for **converting redundant buildings** into new uses, providing space for new businesses or services. One example is the town of **Leoben** in Styria, Austria which has converted a former nunnery into a new shopping mall, keeping the old cloister walls as well as a new modern steel-glass construction, all fitting into the almost unbroken historic facades of the old square (picture on cover). Many old town centres suffer from the development of large shopping malls on the outskirts of town but this development in Leoben has provided a new retail focus in the town centre with 80 shops and 500 new employees.

Local Loyalty schemes have been taken up by many towns in the United Kingdom. They are designed to improve trade by motivating customers to be more loyal to local shops. The customers gain rewards in the form of points or vouchers to be exchanged later for goods so improving the trade of member shops (usually independent shops rather than part of a national chain).



Haslemere England, United Kingdom accepting its national award: © Haslemere Town Council



Councillor Penny BRADLEY
Mayor of Haslemere, Surrey, ENGLAND

“**Haslemere** in Surrey, England launched its Loyalty Scheme in 2005. We were one of the earliest schemes in England and our project won the Action for Market Town’s national award in 2006 and the picture above shows us celebrating our award in the town. It has proved very popular with nearly half the residents of Haslemere buying a Haslemere Rewards Card. A considerable number of purchases have been made by cardholders, who also increased their spend in these shops with an average of 30% more on each visit”.

6.2 Using New Technologies

The **Internet** has enabled businesses to be located almost anywhere and today many are based in villages and small towns. It has also enabled many people to work at home – either full time or part time. People based at home also use local facilities giving the town increased trade. **Telecottages** have been popular for many years since the 1980s. They brought access to new technology to isolated communities and remote rural areas. They can be run as commercial enterprises or as charities/non-profit organisations as part of the community-based voluntary sector. They operated out of schools, libraries, village halls as well as self-contained buildings. The original experiment began in the remote Swedish town of **Vemdalen** and this model was adopted elsewhere. Nowadays most people and most businesses have their own computers but a lot depends upon the **availability** and **speed of broadband**. Not all rural areas or small towns have an adequate broadband speed. **Internet cafes** set up by private sector entrepreneurs have sprung up all over Europe in both large and small towns and many **public buildings**, where local authority centres such as libraries provide computers and access to the internet. British Telecom, one of the main broadband providers in the UK is providing a series of **'hot spots'** in different locations, in both small and large towns, that BT customers can use when they are on the move. Companies such as Starbucks are now places which people can use for work or social purposes as well as having coffee and food. Customers are increasingly **ordering on-line**, and there is a **trend to 'click and collect'** to avoid the constant constraint of timing a home delivery. **Collection points** are now extending from major retail stores to local premises, including those of independent traders, thus offering opportunities for purchase of other goods and services at these locations.

6.3 Markets for Local Products

Small towns offer a good opportunity to **develop food processing** and to **sell produce that is grown locally** – providing jobs and cutting down the 'food miles' travelled by produce. Selling locally enables customers to meet the food growers and links farmers with their communities. **Farmers markets** are now well established and have proved very popular, many of them in small towns. They offer 'quality' food and also encourage people to recognise the seasonality of produce. Some towns have become famous as **'food towns'**, which pride themselves on their development of cuisine based on local food produce, and many hotels have contracts with local farmers to supply them. The 'slow food' food movement - called **Cittaslow** – was founded in Italy in 1986 as an alternative to 'fast food'. The member towns strive to preserve traditional and regional cuisine. One example is **Hersbruck**, Bavaria, the first town in Germany to join Cittaslow.

Some local foods have become specifically linked to some small towns. For example the small town of **Edam**, in the Netherlands is famous for its cheese of the same name and a re-enactment of the old cheese market is staged every Wednesday in July and August.



The Cheese Market, Edam, Netherlands

Lower Austria is famous for its pumpkins which are made into oil, and exported world-wide. The pumpkin harvest is celebrated by many small towns all over Styria and Lower Austria – an example is the very small town of **Raabs an der Thaya**. The small town of **Borschiv** in Ukraine celebrates the national dish of Borsch which comes from the town and **Suzdal** in Russia is famous for growing cucumbers – a very popular ingredient in Russian dishes - and stage a cucumber festival every year.

However, it is not just about farm products from the land, but about produce from the sea and freshwater lakes and rivers.

Fish festivals can be found all over Europe in both large and small towns and villages. Small coastal towns in Spain and Italy celebrate fishing with special events. One such example is the annual fish festival at **Castellammare del Golfo** in Sicily.



Suzdal, Russia –cucumber festival



Castellammare,Italy - fish: © website italyheaven.co.uk

The world famous wine areas of France, Germany, Italy and Spain have seen many small town wine festivals develop to celebrate their wine harvests every year.

In Germany small towns and villages along the River Mosel celebrate the harvest of Mosel wine. For example the small attractive tourist town of **Bernkastel- Kues** stages a Wine Festival of the Middle Mosel every September; in France the town of **Chablis** in the Burgundy area celebrates the **Chablis Wine Festival** every spring; similarly in Italy the spectacular hill-top town of **Montepulciano** in Tuscany celebrates the wine of the same name and includes activities such as barrel rolling.

In eastern Europe for example, the Hungarian dessert wine of Tokaj is celebrated every year in the small town of **Tokaj** and Moldova is a country well-known for its wine production with the small town of **Cricova** being famous for its wine cellars, the largest wine caves in the world. Many other towns with more locally important wines also have festivals, usually at harvest time.



Bernkastel, Germany - Wine Town



Tokaj, Hungary – wine town: Copyright crwflags.com

6.4 Revitalising the Economic Role of a Small Town

The historic small town of **Wittstock** in Brandenburg, Germany, suffered many years of decay of its architectural heritage whilst part of Eastern Germany. It lost both population and businesses. Since 1990 the local administration has tried to combat these losses.



Bürgermeister Jörg GEHRMANN
Mayor of Wittstock, Brandenburg, GERMANY

“Our small town of Wittstock in Brandenburg still possesses a rich architectural, historic and cultural heritage, and we are proud of our well preserved town walls, the castle and many old buildings. Our town is also the site of the famous Battle of Wittstock during the 30 Years War with a permanent exhibition in the castle which draws in many tourist visitors. During my time as Mayor, I have been very keen to promote the town as a centre for the hinterland of villages and rural area and put Wittstock firmly back on the map. I refer to the town as a **‘metropole’** and **a place performing the role that it has always done**. It is much smaller than the larger towns and cities which are now the only the type of settlements that attract the word ‘metropolises’ yet small towns like Wittstock carry out the same role of providing jobs, retail centre, services and education and acting as a transport hub but on a much smaller scale. This has led to a renewed view of the town and encouraged neighbouring small towns too. Like all small towns we still face threats of more centralisation but like many small towns we are fighting back”.



Small town of Wittstock, Brandenburg, Germany

6.5 Sharing Services

Small towns provide a range of services for themselves and the villages in their hinterlands. However they are often in danger of further centralisation of services – usually to bigger towns – or the removal of some services through declining local authority funding where difficult decisions are needed to balance budgets when faced with major financial cuts.

Many services are dependent upon public sector funding. If small towns are to remain or become more sustainable the level of community services provided at local level is a critical factor. There are examples where towns are combining their services under one roof rather than in separate buildings. One example of this is the small historic and ancient Cinque Port town of Tenterden in England.



Councillor Jennifer CRICKMORE-PORTER
Mayor of Tenterden, Kent, ENGLAND

“Our small town of **Tenterden** in Kent, England has made use of an empty shop premises to combine the services of the Library, Post Office and a drop-in centre for the Borough and County Councils. In addition to the improvements in accessibility for residents, the scheme has enabled a new business to take over the old library premises and helped to arrest the decline of local libraries and Post Offices”.



Tenterden, England



Combined Post Office, Library & Drop-in Centre

6.6 Centres for Tourism

Tourism opportunities cover many aspects and hundreds of large and small towns will have exploited their assets to bring in visitors who will spend money in the towns and improve the local economy. This tourism section is divided into 10 categories.

It can cover celebrating the local food and drink of the area; recognising the passing of the seasons – geographical and religious; celebrating the birth of famous saints or artists, musicians; or specific events on music, film or literature or keeping alive folk traditions and local culture; or historic events that relate to the town or events to mark the 1000 or 500 years of the town's foundation. It can exploit specific interests such as heritage or sports events.

Tourism can be aimed at world-wide audiences or be quite local. There are hundreds of examples that are already regular calendar events but many other small towns have assets that could be exploited. The impact of the recession has reduced the visitor market but long term the prospects will still be there. The tourist season is no longer limited to summer holidays and package holidays or winter sports holidays but covers the whole year spreading into spring and autumn breaks, with day visits, weekends and short breaks.

6.6(a) Distinctiveness and Heritage

No-one can deny that there are wonderful large historic towns and cities such as Rome, Prague, Salzburg and Seville which are highly regarded all over the world. However the sheer wealth of history and archaeology, with different architectural styles using local building materials are demonstrated in thousands of small towns across Europe and the majority of them have managed to retain their distinctiveness. The study of heritage assets in South East England's small towns demonstrated that most of them still maintain a distinctiveness reflecting many materials and styles from different periods of history and are well suited to be significant heritage tourist destinations. If this percentage was applied to the whole of Europe it would equate to a very considerable number of towns having tourism potential – numbering several thousand European towns.

Many small towns across Europe have been recognised as exceptional examples of architecture and history and included in the **UNESCO World Heritage List**: They attract many millions of visitors from all parts of the globe. Naming just a few they include: **Gjirokastra** in Albania; **Telč** in Czech Republic; **Quedlinburg** in Germany; **Corfu Town** in Greece; **Valletta** in Malta; **Røros** mining town, Norway; **Sighişoara** in Romania and **Banská Štiavnica** in Slovakia.



Historic Valletta, Malta

There are many whole 'planned towns' which have remained virtually intact - for example as the small town of **Mirepoix**, France which lies in the foothills of the Pyrenees. The town has the normal grid iron street plan of a bastide town and is dominated by the vast arcaded Place de Couverts and is famous for its unusually large number of timber-framed houses.



Mirepoix, Bastide town in Pyrenees, France

Individual World Heritage Buildings can have the same effect – such as the famous Roman Amphitheatre in the small town of **Orange** in France; the ancient Greek archaeological remains in the small town of **Argos**, Greece; or the Rila Monastery in the small town of **Rila** in Bulgaria. or the castle complex in the small town of **Mir** in Belarus.



Gjirokastra, World Heritage Town, Albania



Rila Monastery, Rila, Bulgaria

It is not only specifically designated World Heritage places that attract visitors. Other iconic buildings such as castles, or large scale fortifications attract large numbers of people. The massive hilltop castle in **Vianden**, Luxembourg is a major attraction bringing visitors into the small town.

Many small towns became famous as 'Spa Towns' when the spring waters were found to have medicinal properties. They are still popular destinations and display distinctive architecture. Examples are **Mariánské Lázně** in the Czech Republic which has 100 mineral springs and **Bad Sooden-Allendorf**, Germany which was famous for salt since the 8th century and then a spa since the 1880s.



Vianden, Luxembourg: © website luxalbum.com



Mariánské Lázně, Czech Republic – Spa Town

Architecture itself is celebrated in Slovenia with an annual event which includes a conference known as the **Days of Architecture** staged in the attractive old historic town coastal town of **Piran**.

Many small towns will already be using these assets but others may be able to follow their example. Targeted promotion of such towns with good quality heritage or distinctiveness could attract new private sector investment and attract new businesses to set up there.

6.6(b) Widening the Choice Away from 'Honey Pots'

It is not just the most well-known and popular small town resorts such as Dubrovnik, Croatia that people flock to. There is a wealth of other small towns along the Adriatic such as **Budva** in Montenegro or the tiny town of **Lovran**, near Rijeka in Croatia (cover picture), that are promoting their historic assets. Spreading tourism promotions to places outside the tourism 'honey pots' will help improve the economy of not only the regions but the country too.

The small island of Nin joined to the mainland of Croatia, with its very small town of **Nin**, is one such example.



Marija DEJANOVIC
Director of The Tourist Board of Nin, Island of Nin, CROATIA

“Even though we might not be as well-known as other islands nor as a top destination in Croatia, **Nin** has more to offer than one might think. Nin is located in a shallow lagoon in the eastern Adriatic Sea and is linked with the mainland by two 16th century stone bridges, one where the statue of Duke Branimir will welcome you. Present-day Nin is one of the oldest towns on the Mediterranean and the oldest Croatian royal town and the cradle of the Croatian state.



Island of Nin, Croatia: Copyright V.Jakupovic



Holy Cross Church, Nin: Copyright M.Dejanovic

The municipality of Nin takes a great deal of pride in conserving the historical city core. The source of Nin’s wealth is salt production which goes back to prehistoric times. Two of our top historical attractions are: the Church of the Holy Cross – called ‘the smallest cathedral in the world’, and the Church of St Nicholas where seven Kings of Croatia were crowned.

The natural sandy beaches which surround Nin are one of its trademarks and once you have visited them, they will always stay in your memory.

We have worked hard to get our island recognised as a tourist destination with lots to see, many places to stay and plenty of activity. The development of sustainable tourism has earned us the **Eden Award** for aquatic tourism in 2010”.

6.6(c) Festivals, Pageants and Carnivals

Festivals, Pageants and Carnivals are usually annual events and celebrate a variety of things. Whilst there are costs to stage an event it will bring in money from those who visit, and also help put the town on the map and can lead to repeat visits. Events can be more generic, not related to the town’s history but to topics which have become popular.

Many people go on tours of **Battlefields** and **War Graves** and nearby towns such as **Ypres**, in Belgium benefit from such visits. Other towns benefit from the **re-enactment of historic battles**. One of the main re-enactments in Europe is the Battle of Grunwald (also known as the Battle of Tannenberg) fought in 1410 during the war between the Teutonic Order and the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland, and takes place in the Masurian Lake District in Poland, a place visited by tourists and surrounded by many villages and small towns – all of which will benefit from visitors to the battle re-enactment event.



Binche Carnival, Binche, Belgium – Spring Festival

Events can celebrate the **different periods of the year** - such as the world famous **Binche Carnival** in Belgium held in the days before Ash Wednesday to chase away the cold and evil spirits and welcome spring; or the **Russian Winter Festivals** held in towns across Russia.

Literature is celebrated by the **Poetry Festival in Macedonia** held annually in the small town of **Struga** situated on Lake Ohrid in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and the **Welsh Annual Book Festival** is held every year in the small town of **Hay on Wye** in Wales - where life has almost been given over to book shops. Both are international events.



Struga small town in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – International Poetry Festival



*Small town of **Gränna**, Lake Vattern, Sweden – site of Blue Grass Music festival*

Many small towns now hold **annual music events** such as the **Gränna Blue Grass Music Festival, Sweden** held in the very small town of Gränna situated on the shores of Lake Vattern and the **International Jazz Festival** held annually in the historic fishing port of **Nairn, Scotland, United Kingdom**.

The small town of **Guča**, Serbia in the southern part of the country hosts an annual **Trumpet Festival** which attracts more than 600,000 visitors. The small town of **Kremnica, Slovakia** hosts the European Organ Festival.



Guča Trumpet Festival, Serbia



Kremnica, Slovakia Organ Fest. Copyright Slovakia Travel

Many festivals are held to preserve the **folk traditions** rather than let them disappear. Folk festivals abound in the Baltic republics in northern Europe – for instance the small lakeside town of **Talsi** in Latvia holds events to celebrate their culture with singing and dancing; the small town of **Voru** stages the oldest and biggest annual folk festival in Estonia – to promote and share the folklore and traditions of different nations to strengthen the friendship between countries.



Talsi, Latvia - local cultural events



Voru, Estonia - folk festival: Copyright visitvoru.ee

Folk festivals are also held in many countries in central Europe such as the very small town of **Kazimierz Dolny**, in central Poland which hosts an annual Festival of Folk Bands and Songs to promote Polish culture and traditions; and also in the small town of **Straznice** in Moravia in the Czech Republic.



Straznice, Czech Rep. website czechtourism.com



Kazimierz Dolny, Poland Copyright J.Andrej Wrotniak

Film festivals abound all over Europe and small towns have joined in too. For example the little maritime town of **Grimstad** in Norway stages an international Short Film Festival annually and the Midnight Sun Film Festival, held in the small town of **Sodankylä**, Finland brings in thousands of visitors to land north of the Arctic Circle and shows films through the day and night. Visitors to the town will also be able to visit the Sami culture of Lapland, and the nearby National Park and the only working amethyst mine left in Europe.



Grimstad, Norway – Short Film Festival



Sodankylä, Finland – Midnight Sun Film Festival

6.6(d) Development of Tourist Trails

Many countries have set up 'tourist trails' and many of them will go through small towns - which could benefit from visitors who walk, cycle or drive these recommended routes. An early example is the theme route called the 'Romantic Road' which was devised in the 1950s in Germany and applies to 350 kilometres of highway between the major towns of Wurzburg and Fussen in southern Germany. It links many small towns with the most well-known being **Rothenburg ob der Tauber** in Bavaria, Germany which is a classic example of a medieval town and one of the most picturesque towns in Germany attracting thousands of visitors every year.

A series of **Cultural Routes** have also been designated by the **Council of Europe**, and they are now very popular with tourists passing through both large and small towns. The first was the 'Way of St James' the routes taken by pilgrims to the shrine of St James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain designated in 1987. One town on this route is **Sahagún** in Spain, one of the best examples of early Moorish Mudejar architecture. Another route is the one taken by Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury who travelled in 990 to visit Pope John XV in Rome and called the **Via Francigena**, designated in 1994. The small town of **Saint Maurice**, in Switzerland - the site of the Roman Martyr who was massacred there with his followers in the 3rd Century - lies on this route. A monastery was founded in 515 to honour him and it has a famous and exceptional treasury of the gifts given by the thousands of pilgrims who visited the site.



Mrs Magdalena BANU
Member ECOVAST International Committee
Member ECOVAST Romania

"ECOVAST Romania was asked to research the development and potential of a new specialist **Cultural Tourism Trail in Romania** and promoting it. Our project was designed to highlight Byzantine influences and the religious and civil architecture north of the River Danube with a view to linking it with the more well-known Byzantine heritage south of the Danube. The intention was that in the future it could be linked and integrated with the repertoire of cultural routes proposed by the Council of Europe.

Whilst the monuments that have been researched for this route lie generally outside the towns the route does pass through many small towns: For instance the Princely Church of Curtea de Arges is situated within the town of **Curtea de Arges** which is one of the oldest towns in Wallachia; and the Negru Voda Monastery lies just outside the town of **Campulung**. Also the small town of **Sinaia** which is also a mountain resort is built around the Monastery of Sinaia. Increased tourism visits using this newly promoted tourism trail to see these Byzantine highlights should also benefit the towns nearby."



Princely Church, Curtea de Arges, Romania



Negru Voda Monastery, Campulung, Romania

6.6(e) Exploiting and Celebrating Local Industries

Many towns are now trying to exploit their industrial heritage. They can be former mining centres for gold, silver, copper, iron ore or mercury; stone quarrying, or towns famous for specific industries. The towns have invested in local museums displaying photographs of the people involved and artefacts from their past to portray their former glory. Some towns are still involved in their specific industries.

Many former salt mining towns abound in the Alps in France, Germany, Switzerland and Austria, and have famous mines to visit. The small town of **Hallein**, Austria has the oldest salt mine in the world open to the public. The town of **Idar-Oberstein** in Germany (cover photo) was a place where semi-precious gemstones of agate and jasper were mined. The mine is open to the public and the town is devoted to locally carved items in a range of stones. The town still boasts two schools for cutting gems and attracts students from all over the world. **Idrija**, a small town in Slovenia is a former mercury town where the mine is now a museum, open to the public and has just been recognised as a World Heritage Site.

The small town of **Thiers** in France is famous for cutlery, particularly knives and **Meissen** in Germany still produces the famous porcelain. The small town of **Blaenau Ffestiniog**, in Wales, United Kingdom, was the centre of a thriving slate mining industry until the end of the 19th century and still produces some slate today. The Llechwedd slate mine is now a very popular tourist attraction with underground tours of the mine.



Former slate mining town of Blaenau Ffestiniog, Wales: Copyright James Morris

6.6(f) Celebrating People Associated with the Town

Many **famous people** have been born or lived in small towns and many municipalities are promoting this to attract visitors usually having developed local museums to illustrate the person. Famous authors, composers, even politicians who were born or lived in small towns can be celebrated and anniversaries of their birth or death can be used to host a special event, a pageant or carnival.

The small town of **Paphos** on the island of Cyprus is famous as the birthplace of the mythical Greek Goddess of love, Aphrodite, of ancient legends, who is also known as the 'Lady of Cyprus'.

The small town of **Assisi**, in Umbria, Italy lies on the flanks of a mountain. Not only is it a beautiful hill-top town, it is also world famous as the birthplace of two great religious figures: St Francis who founded the Franciscan Order of Monks and of St Clare who founded the Order of Nuns called the Poor Sisters. The town is revered as a Holy Place and attracts many thousands of pilgrims every year to its churches and shrines of the Saints.



Assisi, Italy - a major religious tourist destination

Many other small towns have religious sites in them or nearby which attract visitors and their money helps improve the local economy. **Westport**, Ireland, lies next to 'Croagh Patrick', known as the holiest mountain in Ireland. It was originally a pagan site but is now a site for Christian pilgrimage where pilgrims climb to the small chapel on the top. The town itself is one of the only planned towns in Ireland with tree line boulevards built around the river giving the town lots for visitors to see.

It is not just about historic religious sites. Modern visions, such as those of the Virgin Mary, now attract many thousands of pilgrims. One such example is the small town of **Medjugorje** in Bosnia Herzegovina where the vision was seen in 1981; and the birthplace and former family home of Pope John Paul II in **Wadowice** in Poland is now a place of pilgrimage and a museum in his memory. .

6.6(g) Developing Niche Markets

Many niche markets are being exploited and different specialised uses for small towns have been developed. For example artists, potters and artisan craftspeople have taken up residence in many small attractive towns; if they become well known they can get thousands of visitors who are interested in painting or pots.

Szentendre, Hungary, an attractive walled town on the banks of the Danube, north of Budapest has become renowned for its artisan, particularly pottery workshops. Another example is **Ebeltoft**, Denmark - a small, pretty harbour town with cobbled streets, popular with artisans and famous for its contemporary glass art.

The very small town of **Retz**, Austria has become well known as a venue for conferences. It was in this town that the ECOVAST project called ASSET (referred to on page 5) was born.



Bürgermeister Karl HEILINGER
Mayor of Retz, Lower Austria, AUSTRIA

“We have helped develop our small historic town of **Retz** in Lower Austria into a specialist town as a **major conference centre**. The local hotel which was formerly a chateau on the edge of the small town centre has expanded considerably to accommodate major conferences with staying delegates. The town itself is historic and attractive with a main square surrounded by traditional buildings and has walls and the remains of a former abbey and wine caves under the town. The many delegates who stay there bring profitability into the town through their spending”.



Historic centre of Retz Copyright Retz Town Council



Conference Hotel, Retz, Austria: Copyright expedia.com

6.6(h) Sporting Activities

Small towns which are near **major national or international sporting events** are likely to benefit from visitors to the sport, particularly as many will stay overnight in the area.

Many small towns in the Alps are dedicated to the winter season tourism where winter sports are a huge industry. The small town of **Gstaad** in Switzerland is a classic example of this and it also attracts many summer visitors as it has a beautiful setting in the Bernese Alps. Winter sports are not exclusively limited to the Alps but resorts are found wherever there is a snowy winter and hills to ski down. Examples include the ski resorts **Anykščiai**, Lithuania and **Otepää**, Estonia.



Gstaad, Switzerland



Anykščiai, Lithuania

6.6(i) Make Visitors Feel Welcome

Visitors need to feel welcome if they are to come back or tell their friends about the town. Clear **signposting** helps them find their way around the town, particularly where they can park. Recommended **Town Walks** let visitors know what they can see. Convenient, well-maintained, **secure car parks** and **clean public toilets** are essential. One town in England made this a priority - **Sandwich** in Kent improved their public toilets which are now manned and make visitors welcome. They won the United Kingdom 'National Public Loo Award' for their efforts in 2010.

6.6(j) Research on Town Assets to Attract Visitors



Dr Gerhard L FASCHING
Chair ECOVAST Austria

and



Silvia MAYER
Member of ECOVAST Austria

“Austria fully recognised the significant role that small towns played for the well-being of rural areas. In 2005 ECOVAST Austria was asked to establish a ‘Register of Small Towns’ with data about towns and also markets across the whole country. The 'Register' is able to standardise and compare these settlements with a wide range of criteria recorded; including buildings and density; historic and cultural assets such as castles and walls, theatres and museums; administrative assets such as town halls; education assets; medical assets and all given a geo-reference. This survey has established a matrix for the character of small towns with criteria needed to provide a ‘central function’ of these settlements; and identifies those specific historic and cultural assets which give the town its unique identity. Each criteria is graded as ‘dominating’ or ‘strong’ or ‘medium’ or of ‘low’ impact. This 'Register' formed part of the contribution of ECOVAST Austria to the ASSET project. This 'Register' can be used by others who wish to do further comparisons and those who are developing proposals for new investments in small historic towns”.

6.7 Developing Renewable Energy

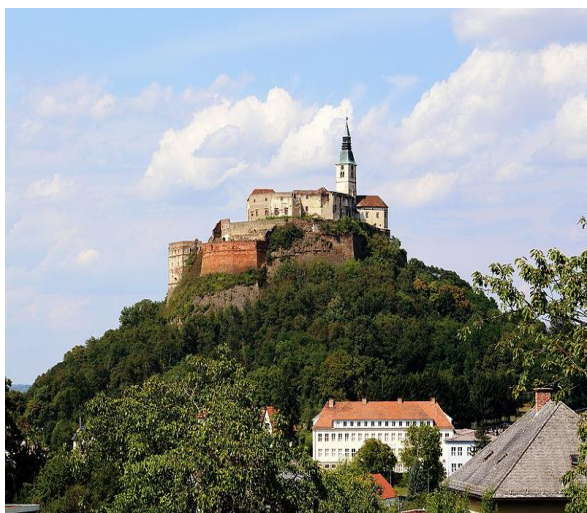
The small town of **Güssing** in Burgenland, Austria is the capital of a District with approximately 27,000 people. By 1988, the region was one of the poorest in Austria, situated in a geographically unfavourable area near a border, with no major trade or industrial businesses and poor transport infrastructure with neither rail nor major highway.



Bürgermeister Vinzenz KNOR
Mayor of Güssing, Burgenland, AUSTRIA

“We were very concerned about our District, the scarcity of jobs, the very high numbers (70%) of weekly commuters, and the high rate of migration to other regions. In addition, there was a problem of substantial capital outflow from the region caused by energy being bought from outside, yet our forest cover (45% of our landmass) remained largely unused. In 1990 experts developed a model which provided the complete abandonment of fossil-fuel energy. The objective was to supply, in the first step, the town of Güssing and subsequently the whole District with regionally available renewable energy sources thus providing the region with new forms of added value. The model comprises heat

generation, fuels and electric power. The first steps towards implementation were targeted energy saving measures in Güssing of all buildings in the town centre and expenditure on energy was reduced by almost 50%. Numerous demonstration energy plants in the town followed and the region promoted the model to be implemented step by step. Examples included the successful biodiesel plant using rape-seed oil, two small scale biomass district heating systems for part of Güssing, and finally a district heating system based on wood fuel supplying the whole town. Then in 2001, the biomass power plant was installed which uses a newly developed biomass-steam gasification technology. Furthermore, together with Austrian Universities, other technologies were developed to transform regional resources into efficient energy forms – project called Multifuel Polygeneration – and the aim is to spread know-how and technology to neighbouring municipalities and supply the overall region with heat, electricity and fuel and an initiative called ‘ecoEnergyland’ involving 18 communities was founded”.



The castle Güssing, Burgenland, Austria



Biomass Gasification plant, Güssing, Austria

Projects such as the one described above involve substantial investments of funding and some projects come to an end without enough money to continue to develop. Such innovation can meet one of the challenges facing small towns, but continual funding is difficult to find.

6.8 Making Use of Landscape Assets

The quality and distinctiveness of small towns is not only about the buildings. The dense sea of roofs, towers, domes, and chimneys of small rural towns are small enough in scale to be an attractive part of the general countryside view. Both small towns, and the landscape they are set in, form an important part of the ‘cultural landscapes’ of the rural Europe.

The **landscape setting** of a small town is a critical part of its general ambiance and adds an extra dimension to the views from around the town. Major towns and cities that sit within well-known landscapes such as the Italian Lakes or the Swiss Alps are a draw for tourists, but within these wider landscapes there are myriads of small municipalities that could be enjoyed and the towns benefit from their tourist visits.

Many countries of Europe have **designated their best landscapes** as National Parks or Regional Parks with formal trails for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and areas set aside as visitor centres or beauty spots. Many small towns lie in or on the edge of such areas and can capitalise on these assets.

Millions of tourists visit the seaside resorts or the islands or lakesides or go on river cruises. There are many small towns which lie on the coast or lakes or rivers which could encourage people to visit them. It is the water itself that forms the dominant feature for these small towns and the following examples are just a few from the hundreds across Europe.

There are many picturesque **ports**. An example is **Honfleur**, France which is favoured by artists as well as tourists for its houses covered in grey-blue slates surrounding the harbour full of fishing boats and yachts. It has one of the largest timber-framed churches, with freestanding belfry, in Europe.



Port of Honfleur, Normandy, France

There are also many small town **seaside resorts** that can be found along North Sea and Atlantic coasts, the Mediterranean and Baltic seas. One such example is the lively seaside resort of **Palanga**, Lithuania on the Baltic coast.

The world famous **fjords** of Norway have many small towns along them which are popular with visitors and are used as excursion centres. One example is the small town of **Odda** which lies at the end of the Sorfjorden – an arm of the major Hardanger fjord – and is surrounded by dramatic mountains with outstanding views and is a centre for access to Norway’s third largest glacier, the Folgefonna, in the Folgefonna National Park.

Riverside towns are highly attractive. **Ponte de Lima** is one of the oldest towns in Portugal and the first town in that country to get a Municipal Charter. Its townscape is dominated by a long medieval bridge across the River Lima.



Seaside resort of Palanga, Lithuania



Ponte de Lima, Portugal



Lake Bled and town of Bled, Slovenia

Lakeside towns are found all over Europe. Two examples are: **Ascona**, Switzerland which is a on the shores of Lake Maggiore and a popular destination for tourists; and the small town of **Bled**, Slovenia which is dominated by the lake of the same name.

Islands have a particular attraction for many tourists. The spectacular Dalmatian coast of Croatia and the Ionian and Aegean Seas of Greece are dotted with islands and many of these have small historic towns upon them. Examples include the town of **Krk**, Croatia on the island of the same name; the white town of **Mykonos** on the island of the same name and the historic, former Hanseatic town of **Visby**, on the island of Gotland, Sweden, recognised as the best preserved medieval city in Scandinavia, and founder member of the Most Ancient European Towns Network and a World Heritage Site.



Visby, on Gotland, Sweden © website visitsweden.com



Mykonos, Greece, website yogaonvacation.com

Mountains and hills are dominant features in any landscape. Many small towns are perched on the top or the flanks of mountains throughout the Alps, the Carpathians; the Apennines and the Pyrenees, and other mountainous parts of Europe. The cluster of their narrow streets and buildings seem to defy gravity as they cling to the hill-tops. Many of them would have been ancient mountain kingdoms in the past. The spectacular hill-top town of **Arcos de la Frontera**, one of Andalucia's famous 'white towns', which lies in the Sierra de Cadiz mountains in Spain is one such example.



Arcos de la Frontera, Andalusia, Spain – spectacular hill-top town: © website sevillaonline.es

The Municipal Tourist Office
City of Arcos de la Frontera, SPAIN

“Arcos, by its own geographical location has been a privileged vantage point giving shelter to many civilizations. Its Roman name was Arx-Arcis, later renamed Medina-Arkos after the Muslim invasion. It became a truly prosperous and flourishing city, becoming a small Taifa kingdom under the rule of Ben Jazrum king of Berber origin. In 1255 King Alfonso X of Castile took the city. The city of Arab narrow streets and whitewashed houses began to grow outside the old walls with the building of new Christian monasteries and chapels. The old town was declared a Historic-Artistic Monument by Royal Decree in 1962. The old historic town balances dramatically atop a rocky limestone ridge, on the edge of a sheer cliff which plunges down to the fertile valley of the river Guadalete and the lower town and groves of olives and oranges. The hill-top location is one of its greatest assets as an attraction for visitors and gives exhilarating views over the rolling plains below”.

Landscape is not just about the town setting or the views out of the town to its surroundings, it includes modern development and how the **internal landscaping** of open spaces within the town are dealt with.

Adrian SCHMID
Chairman Swiss Heritage Society



“The **Swiss Heritage Society** honours municipalities which can show special achievements in the development of townscape of settlements. The **Wakker Prize** in 2014 this was awarded to the small town of **Aarau** for the way it put both landscape and architecture at the centre of all its development. The town is historic but it has also ensured that areas outside the historic city core have really high quality planned neighbourhoods, which together contributes to the high quality of life for the people who live in Aarau”.

6.9 Working Together

The European Survey showed the vast number of population across Europe living in small towns. Networking could be better exploited to develop a 'common voice' for their concerns, to promote what they have to offer and to influence future policy development in both the European Union and the Council of Europe. As well as ECOVAST there are also many other specialist organisations focusing on towns which are pan-European, or smaller areas such as countries or regions, and many countries already have their own networks of towns where they exchange views and best practice, and new ones are also emerging. However many of these associations are not just limited to 'small towns' and can include both very small settlements and large towns of more than 100,000.

- The **European Federation of Towns and Municipalities of the European Union (CTME)** was founded in 2011 and facilitates the sharing of knowledge and exchange of experience among its members – which include associations from France; Germany; Hungary; Italy; Poland, Romania and Spain.
- The Council of Europe set up the **European Association of Historic Towns & Regions** in 1999.
- The **European Walled Towns Association** is dedicated to sustainable development of walled towns, walled cities and fortified historic Towns in Europe.
- Austria and the United Kingdom have **Associations of Small Historic Towns and Villages**.
- Germany also has a **Working Association for German Timber-Framed Towns**.
- The **European Green Belt project**, which looks at natural and cultural heritage along the former Iron Curtain is leading to new town networks.



Mrs Tihana STEPINAC FABIJANIC
Past President ECOVAST
Member ECOVAST International Committee
Member ASSET Project Group
Member ECOVAST Croatia

“Our **National Association of Municipalities in Croatia** was founded in 2002 (before Croatia joined the European Union) and was separated from the union with the Association of Towns which now represent big and middle-sized towns. The municipalities promote and protect their common interests which are mainly directed to smaller settlements in rural areas of Croatia. By 2014 there were already 281 members from 20 counties. One of its recent projects includes RURact a partnership with social impact in agriculture. ECOVAST Croatia has for many years championed the importance of small towns and our Assembly in 2012 was held in Nin – the oldest Croatian Royal town referred to earlier in this publication (page 19)”.



Radim SRŠEŇ Vice Chairman
The Association of Local Government of the CZECH REPUBLIC

“Our **Association of Local Government of the Czech Republic** is an apolitical non-governmental organisation that brings together and represents the interests of municipalities and cities in the Czech Republic. It was founded in 2008, and now has 1,078 municipalities and towns as members and is an influential partner of the Government, the Parliament and regions in the Czech Republic. We comment on legislative proposals, make representations on the needs of smaller towns and cities, co-operating in the fight against corruption as well as protecting the interests of the countryside and its inhabitants. At the present time we are particularly concerned with the promotion of a fair division of tax revenues between municipalities in the Czech Republic and our motto is “our country will not get rich, if the municipalities get poor”.

Angus FOWLER
Past President ECOVAST
Member ECOVAST International Committee
Member ASSET Project Team
Member ECOVAST Germany



“Small and medium-sized towns have received considerable attention in Germany. At the central government level a Federal Ministry (now called the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection, Building and Reactor Security) has initiated various programmes for such towns. Much has taken place in the Federal State of Brandenburg, where in 1998 the Chamber of Architects issued its first major statement on the problems and development of towns in Brandenburg – called the ‘Wittstock Declaration’. It was supported by the Brandenburg State, who was also a partner at a conference in 2008 in the small town of Wittstock, together with the Chamber of Architects and ECOVAST. This resulted in a 2nd enlarged ‘Wittstock Declaration’. Important work has also been done for many years by the Working Association of Towns with Historic Town Centres of the State of Brandenburg. In 2010 ECOVAST also organised an international workshop on small towns in Potsdam, Germany – bringing together several pieces of research on small towns.”

Wojciech DŁUGOBORSKI
President of the Polish Union of Small Towns (USPT)



“I was one of the founders of the **Polish Union of Small Towns** in 1991 - an association of municipalities, with 30 members, mostly small towns (from 3,800 to 20,000) throughout Poland. Participation is voluntary, and members pay a fee. The Union is a forum defending the interests of such small urban settlements which play a role of centres for neighbouring rural communities. We are an active member of the Joint Commission of Central and Local Government discussing drafts of new laws and other intergovernmental issues where I am co-chairman representing local government, together with the Minister of Administration who represents Government. The Union takes part in works of Parliamentary Committees providing opinions to legislative process in Parliament and are also participants in works of Committee of Regions and the European Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The Union is also a platform of sharing experience in important issues of management among members, co-organising workshops and conferences”.

Chris WADE
Chief Executive
Towns Alive, UNITED KINGDOM



“**Towns Alive**, a United Kingdom membership organisation providing information and advice, examples of best practice and making national representation on behalf of smaller towns. In England alone there are 1,600 small towns which collectively serve 20% of the national population and are a vital social and economic link to surrounding villages contributing to national well-being through a high proportion of business start-ups, housing growth, development of low-carbon economy and local service provision. It is important that these towns form part of any policy debates. Towns Alive helped initiate the Small Towns for Tomorrow policy forum which promoted a greater understanding of small towns”.

7: CONCLUSIONS - WHY SMALL TOWNS ARE IMPORTANT

ECOVAST research has found 4,580 small towns across Europe where the populations are over 10,000 but under 30,000 and nearly 78 million people live in them – more people than in any single country in Europe except Germany. There will be many thousands of settlements with smaller populations though detailed evidence across the whole of Europe is not available. ECOVAST research identified some 243 million people living in areas where the population was in settlements of less than 10,000 people and many will be small towns.

(i) Small towns are a vital asset to Europe. Their role has evolved and changed over the years and their vitality has fluctuated in response to historical forces of all kinds. Changes will continue and there is a crucial need to understand the challenges they face in a modern world. Small towns cannot be ‘frozen’ or preserved in aspic.

(ii) Small towns are essential to the well-being of millions of the population as they serve a hinterland of rural areas surrounding them with many villages and hamlets and their joint future of surviving and thriving is bound together. Activities in small towns will therefore have an impact on many millions of people across Europe.

(iii) Small towns could develop a much stronger voice if they worked together.

(iv) They are vital centres in the areas remote from major urban influences.

(v) The economic activities of small towns contribute not only to local economies but to regional and national and European economies.

(vi) They have a strong focus on some form of historic central place, often surrounded with impressive buildings.

(vii) Small towns are distinctive and reflect the architecture of their regions and are more complete examples of history than larger towns which have succumbed to pressures of development, that have led to large high rise buildings of a different scale, large shop fronts, wider roads & multi-storey car parks.

(viii) Small town distinctiveness and the closeness of the countryside that surrounds them, together with their traditional food and customs, make them key elements in the cultural landscapes of Europe.

(ix) Small towns are threatened by economies of scale and the possibilities of more centralisation of services into larger towns.

(x) However it is not a gloomy picture. Small towns offer opportunities through their distinctiveness for rural tourism, improvements to local services, local food supply, local energy supply, culture and places for providing learning and skills. These new opportunities will develop and contribute to local, regional and national economies.

(xi) This study highlights 18 different types of best practice (9 main types with 1 of them having 10 sub-headings). Examples highlight 86 towns (with 42 accompanied with a photograph) from 39 countries in Europe. This study does not seek to be exhaustive and we know that there are many hundreds of other examples that could have been chosen, but room would not allow. Each country should promote their best examples and use them to form policies for their small towns.

(xii) There are no specific European policies for small towns although small towns do meet several of the key ‘Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent’ set out by the Council of Europe.

(xiii) Hopefully, opportunities will exist to support small towns in the European Union Member States through the new 7 year programme period 2014-2020; and there will also be potential for them if any initiatives develop to support rural / urban partnerships.

Enquiries about this report can be addressed to info@ecovast.org or to the individual National Section contacts listed on the ECOVAST website

List of towns used in the Opportunities Section of the report: in country order, with population; page number and relevant Opportunities Section. The towns with photographs are in **bold** text. (No examples are listed for Andorra, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or the Vatican).

ALBANIA: **Gjirokastra** pop.19,800 (p.18) (*Distinctiveness*)
AUSTRIA: **Güssing** pop 3,800 (p.28) (*Renewable Energy*); **Hallein** pop 20,100 (p.24) (*Celebrating Industry*); **Leoben** pop.24,300 (p.12) (*Contribution to Economies*); **Raabs a.d. Thaya** pop.2,900 (p.14) (*Local Products*); **Retz** pop.4,100 (p.26) (*Niche Markets*)
BELGIUM: **Binche** pop.33,000 (p.20); **Ypres** pop.35,000 (p.19) (*both Festivals*)
BELARUS: **Mir** pop.2,500 (p.18) (*Distinctiveness*)
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA: **Medjugorje** pop.4,000 (p.25) (*Local People*)
BULGARIA: **Rila** pop.3,000 (p.18) (*Distinctiveness*)
CROATIA: **Krk** pop.6,200 (p.30); **Lovran** pop.3,200 (p.18); **Nin** pop.1,200 (p.19) (*Widening Choice*);
CYPRUS: **Paphos** pop.32,000 (p.25) (*Local People*)
CZECH REPUBLIC: **Mariánské Lázně** pop.14,000 (p.18): (*Distinctiveness*); **Strážnice** pop.5,800 (p.22) (*Festivals*); **Telč** pop.5,800 (p.17) (*Distinctiveness*)
DENMARK: **Ebeltoft** pop.7,400 (p.25) (*Niche Markets*)
ESTONIA: **Otepää** pop.2,200 (p.26) (*Sport*); **Võru** pop.12,600 (p.22) (*Festivals*)
FINLAND: **Sodankylä** pop.8,800 (p.22) (*Festivals*)
FRANCE: **Chablis** pop.2,500 (p.14) (*Local Products*); **Honfleur** pop.8,100 (p.29) (*Landscape*); **Mirepoix** pop.3,100 (p.17); **Orange** pop. 30,000 (p.18) (*both Distinctiveness*); **Thiers** pop.16,000 (p.24) (*Celebrating Industry*)
GREECE: **Argos** pop.24,000 (p.18) & **Corfu** pop.28,000 (p.17) (*both Distinctiveness*); **Mykonos** pop.10,000 (p.30) (*Landscape*)
GERMANY: **Bad Sooden-Allendorf** pop.8,500 (p.18) (*Distinctiveness*); **Bernkastel-Kues** pop.6,600 & **Hersbruck** pop.12,000 (p.14 & 13) (*both Local Products*); **Idar Oberstein** pop. 31,000 & **Meissen** pop.27,000 (both p.24) (*both Celebrating Industry*); **Quedlinburg** pop.21,500 (p.17) (*Distinctiveness*); **Rothenburg Trauber** pop.10.800 (p.23) (*Tourist Trails*); **Wittstock** pop.15,600 (p.15) (*Revitalisation*)
HUNGARY: **Tokaj** pop.5,000 (p.14) (*Local Products*); **Szentendre** pop.23,500 (p.25) (*Niche Markets*)
IRELAND: **Westport** pop.5,500 (p.25) (*Local People*)
ITALY: **Assisi** pop.27,600 (p.25) (*Local People*); **Castellammare del Golfo** pop.14,900 & **Montepulciano** pop.14,400 (both p.14) (*both Local Products*)
LATVIA: **Talsi** pop.11,300 (p.22) (*Festivals*)
LITHUANIA: **Anykščiai** pop.11,900 (p.26) (*Sport*); **Palanga** pop.17,600 (p.29) (*Landscape*)
LUXEMBOURG: **Vianden** pop 1,800 (p.18) (*Distinctiveness*)
FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA: **Struga** pop.16,500 (p.20) (*Festivals*)
MALTA: **Valletta** pop.6,700 (p.17) (*Distinctiveness*)
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: **Cricova** pop.9,800 (p.14) (*Local Products*)
MONTENEGRO: **Budva** pop.18,000 (p.18) (*Widening Choice*)
NETHERLANDS: **Edam** pop.7,400 (p.13) (*Local Products*)
NORWAY: **Odda** pop.5,000 (p.29) (*Landscape*); **Røros** pop.3,700 (p.17) (*Distinctiveness*); **Grimstad** pop.20,400 (p.22) (*Festivals*)
POLAND: **Kazimierz Dolny** pop.3,500 (p.22) (*Festivals*); **Wadowice** pop.19,200 (p.25) (*Local People*)
PORTUGAL: **Ponte de Lima** pop.2,800 (p.29) (*Landscape*)
ROMANIA: **Campulung** pop. 16,100; **Curtea de Arges** pop. 27,300 (both p.23) (*both Tourist Trails*); **Sighişoara** pop.26,300 (p.17) (*Distinctiveness*); **Sinaia** pop.10,400 (p.23) (*Tourist Trails*)
RUSSIA: **Suzdal** pop.10,500 (p.14) (*Local Products*)
SERBIA: **Guča** pop.2,000 (p.21) (*Festivals*)
SLOVAKIA: **Banská Štiavnica** pop.10,600 (p.17) (*Distinctiveness*); **Kremnica** pop.5,500 (p.21) (*Festivals*)
SLOVENIA: **Bled** pop.5,400 (p.30) (*Landscape*); **Idrija** pop.5,800 (p.24) (*Local Industry*); **Piran** pop.4,000 (p.18) (*Architecture / Distinctiveness*);
SPAIN: **Arcos Frontera** pop 28,000 (p.31) (*Landscape*); **Sahagún** pop.2,800 (p.23) (*Cultural Routes*)
SWEDEN: **Gränna** pop.2,500 (p.21) (*Festivals*); **Vemdalen** pop.less 1,000 (p.13) (*Making use of New Technologies*); **Visby** 23,500 (p.30) (*Landscape*)
SWITZERLAND: **Aarau** pop.20,100 (p.31) (*Landscape Prize*); **Ascona** pop.5,400 (p.30) (*Landscape*); **Gstaad** pop.3,200 (p.26) (*Sport*); **St Maurice** pop.4,300 (p.23) (*Cultural Routes*)
UKRAINE: **Borschiv** pop.11,400 (p.14) (*Local Products*)
UNITED KINGDOM: **Haslemere**, England pop.10,400 (p.12) (*Contribution to Economies*); **Sandwich** pop.4,500 (p.27) (*Make Visitors Feel Welcome*); **Tenterden** pop 7,800 (p.16) (*Sharing Services*); **Nairn** Scotland pop.12,000 (p.21) (*Festivals*); **Blaenau Ffestiniog**, Wales pop.4,800 (p.24) (*Local Industries*); **Hay-on-Wye**, Wales pop.1,900 (p.20) (*Festivals*)



The European Council for the Village and Small Town (ECOVAST)

ECOVAST was founded in March 1984 in Bellnhausen, near Marburg, in Germany, to foster the economic, social and cultural vitality and the administrative identity of rural communities throughout Europe and to safeguard the sensitive and imaginative renewal of the built and natural environments of such communities. ECOVAST has members from many countries across Europe, both individuals and networks. We have two formal aims:

- to foster the economic, social and cultural vitality and administrative identity of rural communities throughout Europe: and
- to safeguard and to promote the sensitive and imaginative renewal of the built and natural environments of such communities.

We are a volunteer-based organisation that seeks to influence policy and action by citizen involvement. Our network supports its members, and encourages cooperation between them, as they pursue their activities in rural areas. ECOVAST is an International Non-Government Organisation and has been a member of the European Commission's DG Agri Rural Development Advisory Group (1998-2014); a member of DG Regio's RURBAN group (2011-2014) and is a current member of the Council of Europe. ECOVAST was also a founder member of other pan-European networks of PREPARE and CIVILSCAPE; and a member of EUROPA NOSTRA and EUROGITES.

Our members come from a variety of backgrounds (including academics, anthropologists, archaeologists, architects, economists, ethnologists, geographers, historians, industrial archaeologists, researchers, sociologists, town planners, and rural practitioners) who work in the public, private and voluntary sectors. On our study tours and surveys we visit many varied rural projects and meet people from rural communities in many European countries and in rural areas where political situations vary considerably. These have given us a wealth of experience which we use in our work.

ECOVAST is managed by an International Committee that meets at least once a year and stages an Annual Assembly. It has 10 National Sections – in Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and the United Kingdom which focus on local rural issues in those countries. Its international work focuses on landscapes, rural buildings, rural tourism and small towns. ECOVAST has advanced its support of small towns since 2005 through the development of a project called 'Action to Strengthen Small European Towns' (ASSET).

The ECOVAST Evidence Base referred to in this document

There have been six separate studies carried out by ECOVAST as part of the ASSET Project:

- Empirical surveys of data carried between 2008 & 2010 include: European level study to determine the number of small towns across Europe and how many people live in them – referred to on page 9; & three in-depth surveys of different assets (economic, social and heritage) of 165 small towns in South East England – referred to also on page 9 .
- Opinion surveys carried out in 2006 & 2009 using networks and known rural contacts in various countries across Europe referred to on pages 10-11.

Sources used:

- The European Survey used primarily the website: Tageo.com, supported by additional information from the ECOVAST German Section; the former UK Countryside Agency; Michelin Red Guides and various maps which give population of towns. The figures are for the population of the town, not the whole municipality or district in which it lies.
- The survey of towns in SE England are the results of actual survey visits to each individual town carried out by ECOVAST, and the use of a database of businesses from the former South East England Development Agency, and Yellow Pages Business Pages and various internet sites of local authorities.
- The Opinion Surveys were carried out by ECOVAST by post/email