

## 2nd IENE meeting, Hoga Kusten, Sweden, 9-13 April 1997

### Report of the meeting

#### INTRODUCTION

The second meeting of the Infra Eco Network Europe was organized by the Road and Hydraulic Engineering Division of the Dutch Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, in cooperation with the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute and the Swedish National Road Administration (SNRA). This event has been attended by 20 participants representing the IENE coordination points in twelve European countries and three international organizations: PIARC - the World Road Association, ECNC - the European Centre for Nature Conservation and the Directorate General VII - Transportation of the European Commission.

The perfect location chosen by the Swedish organizers close to one of the biggest infrastructure projects in Sweden under construction in a natural protected landscape has positively influenced the workshops of the meeting. Problems raised from the concern to integrate harmoniously roads and bridges in the natural landscape and to mitigate their negative effects on fauna have been actively debated by all the participants. The Höga Kusten bridge and the construction of a segment of the E 4 highway has been taken as an example that motivates the importance of the activities developed by the Infra Eco Network Europe.

The main subjects tackled during this three days meeting were:

- introduction of the new countries: Slovenia and Spain
- ways of cooperation between IENE and other European initiatives;
- assessing the process of network development on national level;
- changing experience and results obtained from different study cases
- representation within the Steering Committee of IENE;
- comments on the proposed new COST Action: 'Habitat Fragmentation due to Transportation Infrastructure'
- the future development: the third IENE meeting

#### 2. IENE and other European initiatives

PIARC - The World Road Association has been presented by Mr. Kurt Sutter, head of the Commission C14 - Environment of PIARC. The Work Programme of PIARC Committees and Working Groups for 1996-1999 was approved in September 1996 by the PIARC Executive Committee. The Work Programme of the

Committee on the Environment includes four work areas and subsequent goals:

- AREA 1 Environment in Transport Policies. Identify the role of environment in strategic transport policies to ensure sustainable development; Improve the understanding of the topic in PIARC and its member organizations.
- AREA 2 Environment and Road Location and Design New roads versus making better use of existing roads through SEIA methodologies; Fitting road infrastructure into the landscape, taking account of local landscape character; How to take flora, fauna, archaeology, water and noise pollution into account in road location and design.
- AREA 3. Environment and Construction of Road Projects Soil and water protection; How to deal with contaminated land; Recycling of used materials; How to take account of flora, fauna, archaeology, water and noise pollution.
- AREA 4 Environment and Existing Roads Evaluate environmental impacts of traffic management alternatives on existing roads; To evaluate environmental impacts and measures taken to protect the environment; To evaluate environmental impacts of road maintenance and best management practices.

It has been proposed that IENE should be linked with PIARC - C14, workgroup 2 (Environment and road location and design).

The approach of the European Commission on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) for the Trans European Transport Networks (TENs) has been presented by Mr. Hans Koier from the Directorate - General VII Transport of the European Commission. Through possible consultations with the experts from the network and the products of the proposed COST Action, IENE may help the Commission in fulfilling its objectives regarding SEIA of the TENs. The deadline revision of the TENs is scheduled in 1999.

An assessment of how IENE responds at the Action themes of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Conservation Strategy and how this can be improved are the subjects of the paper of Mr. Ben Delbaere from the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC). The mitigation measures that allow species to move freely across or under transportation infrastructure are seen as ecological corridors thus ramifications of the Pan-European Ecological Network. IENE acts as a link between environment and infrastructure, combining knowledge and experience from both fields for the enhancement of biodiversity and traffic safety. IENE is a coordination center in LYNX (a SIN - Special Interest Network), being responsible for providing information on habitat fragmentation through transportation infrastructure.

### 3. Progress reports on network development

Efforts have been done to promote the ideas and objectives of IENE at various levels: government, scientific world, public. Information on IENE has been translated in some countries becoming thus more accessible to national institutions. At various national and international meetings, the participants have been informed on IENE.

Cooperation among universities, national road administrations, and other involved bodies has been strengthened. Ministries of Environment to great extent and Ministries of Transportation have saluted the initiative of IENE. Research themes and strategies can be developed in cooperation with IENE. However, more support from the governments is needed, both moral and financial.

The structures of the national Infra Eco Networks generally are in the process of forming. In some countries this structure is very well established, in others the screening process for the identification of virtual members is to begin. In almost all countries, a substitute for the national coordinator has been nominated. Some national coordinators are supported and paid by their institutions for their contribution at IENE, while the majority of national coordinators are still performing their tasks on voluntary basis.

In most of the countries, the IENE national coordinators have contacted the national representatives of the COST - Transport programme, giving details on the proposal for the new COST Action "Habitat Fragmentation due to Infrastructure". This PR will positively influence the future of the proposal and the participation of each IENE country at the Action.

### 4. Proposals for the IENE Steering Committee

The number of countries that will become IENE members will grow continuously. The ideal situation would be to have one IENE coordinator in each European country. That means more than fifty national coordinators. In order to ease the decisional processes within the network, the existence of a balanced steering committee is well motivated.

The new component of the Steering Committee of IENE will be:

- RHED - The Road and Hydraulic Engineering Division, the Netherlands
- PIARC - The World Road Association
- ECNC - The European Center for Nature Conservation
- IUCN - The World Conservation Union
- PIANC - The Permanent International Association of Navigation Congresses
- UIC - l'Union Internationale de Chemins de Fer

Whether the NGO's will have a representative in the Steering Committee or they will participate at the IENE meetings as observers only, is still an open issue. The cooperation with them is desirable and very efficient for the fulfillment of the goals of IENE. Having a comprehensive view and experience on global level, the

international NGOs can offer helpful comments to the various IENE developments (organisation, strategy, projects, knowledge).

Suggestions: link with the field of environmental economics, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank. These banks are financing road construction projects. At least they will be informed about IENE and we will wait for their reaction. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) will be as well contacted.

#### Study cases

- 'Habitat fragmentation caused by waterways' by Jeroen Reinhold;
- 'A long term experiment on habitat fragmentation on calcareous grassland in Switzerland' by Peter Oggier;
- 'Evaluation of the use of wildlife passages by fauna' by Hans Bekker;
- 'Introduction to the excursion: fragmentation due to infrastructure - the northern perspective' by Andreas Seiler  
New COST Action: 'Habitat Fragmentation due to Transportation Infrastructure'  
The draft proposal has been distributed to the members of the COST Technical Committee early February. On May 29, in Prague, the Czech Republic, the proposal will be presented by the initiator to the representatives of the COST countries. This hearing is meant to answer the questions of various countries on the proposal. The COST Secretariat will invite the COST National Coordinators in the member countries to respond to the Proposal before a specified date, usually one month after the hearing. The COST countries will send their formal answer on the action to the COST Secretariat in Brussels, to the initiator of the Action and to the COST National Coordinator in the Netherlands (as proposing country). If at least for countries will give positive Responses, the procedures to begin the action will continue with a meeting of the New Action Group. The comments and remarks made by the participating countries will be integrated in a second draft Proposal. The cost of the Action will be recalculated, according to the allocated funds in each country.

The discussions on the Proposal with the participants at the the 2nd IENE meeting have been mainly concentrated on the content, goals and benefits of the State of the Art report. The participants have been split in small workgroups. Their conclusions are summarized below.

The state-of-the-art report can be build by developing the areas mentioned in the questionnaire that has been filled out by the IENE national coordinators in cooperation with the members of the network in each country based on the existing documentation. The emphasis should be on the work that is going on and/or has been done. The draft content list has to be based on the specific goals of such a SoA (for whom, for what). The potential beneficiaries of it are: IENE network members, the European Commission, the national ministries, policy and decision makers, the scientific community (identification of research gaps, promoting collaborative opportunities), relevant NGO's. The SoA is oriented to the decision makers, while the handbook on fragmentation can be used especially by planners. The SoA is a tool to fulfil (inter)national agreements. A possible method to draw the SoA has been suggested. The steps are:

1. Give an overview of the conflict points between nature and infrastructure or overlap road, rail, channel networks with the ecological network (the Dutch approach might be used as a model);
2. If no map of ecological network, use other maps: landcover, protected areas, species distribution;
3. If no maps are available, list the related projects in your country;
4. Make a comparison between now and the situation (of habitats) 10/50/100 years ago;
5. Give a directory of institutions and organizations involved;
6. Present the legislative framework: national legislation and the way that the international policy is

implemented on national level;

7. Describe the current state of solving the problem:
8. - overview of mitigation, compensation measures taken  
- results/evaluation/effectiveness of these measures.
9. Future infrastructure development and recommendations.

The CORINE data-base on habitats and the maps of the European transport lines will be used for an overview of fragmentation at European scale. It has to be further defined whether the SoA will refer to the main national and European transport network only, or also to secondary infrastructure, so as forest and local roads and railways. The SoA will take into consideration the barrier effect of the waterways (man-made channels) on migration of species.

The goals and benefits of the State of the Art are:

1. Background for the preparation of the European Handbook on Defragmentation;
2. Positively influence on national policies and strategies and thus enhance the implementation of international acts;
3. Recommendations will be given and improvements of defragmentation are expected;
4. Future actions that are needed can be defined.

The SoA will describe in details what does habitat fragmentation mean and to what extent is this recognized at national level. Attention will be paid to define the degree of fragmentation. The SoA must finally conclude whether habitat fragmentation due to infrastructure is a national environmental problem, if men should be concerned about it and to recommend action and establish priorities.

By participating at a COST Action, every country has to finance the work done by the experts at national level. For the transition countries in Central and East Europe, this condition is difficult to be fulfilled, despite their commitment to participate at the Action. Funding programmes (as PHARE) might offer some financial support.

#### Future activities of IENE

The 3rd IENE meeting will take place in Vladimir, Russia, September 25 - October 1. The event will be organized by the Moscow State University (Biological Faculty), in cooperation with the Department of Auto-roads and Development of the Ministry of Transportation of Russia. One day will be reserved for an 'Open session' for the specialists of the hosting country. Simultaneous translation will be provided. Two days the attention will be given to expert discussion and exchange of knowledge and experience. An excursion will be organized to visit the Moscow ring road with emphasis on an area suitable for the construction of an ecoduct. Preliminary proposal programme to be sent to all participants for comments (three months before the meeting).

Switzerland will organize the 4th IENE meeting in April - May 1998. The 5th IENE meeting will be hosted by Hungary, in the autumn of 1998. A concrete subject of the meeting is to discuss on environmental aspects in the planning and implementation of the trans European transportation networks (TENs) at regional level (Central and East-Europe). To reach this aim, all the neighbouring countries of Hungary will be invited at the meeting. The United Kingdom is a possible candidate to host the 6th IENE meeting, in the spring of 1999.

Next year the conference of the ministers of the environment will take place in Denmark. This would be a good opportunity to present IENE. Information about IENE on posters and/or folders has to be distributed. Ideas and proposals on an IENE poster have to be sent to the Coordination center in two months time after the meeting.

## Evaluation of the meeting

After closing the meeting, the Swedish organizers have done an inquiry among the participants. The results showed that the information given before the meeting was sufficient and well prepared, the duration of the meeting was ideal and its programme good defined. The topical/professional outcome of the meeting was high. More final documents are requested. The discussions on fragmentation are not finished.

The geographical location chosen by the organisers has been the right one for such a meeting. The excursion at the Hoga Kusten bridge and the roads in its vicinity was very relevant to IENE. Its duration was The information and guidance during the excursion was perfect, thanks to Mr. Lennart Folkesson from the Swedish National Road and Transport Institute, Bengt Schibbye from 'Schibbye Landskap', Inga-May Eriksson and other representatives of the Swedish National Road Administration (SNRA).

At the future IENE meetings, other objectives like railways and waterways will be visited. At last but not at least, the accommodation, meals, meeting room and the hotel reception service have been much appreciated by all the participants. This was no one's surprise, the Swedish hospitality being well known worldwide.