

## Opportunities after a new EU policy



*Europe of the villages*

Bert Kisjes

**The old European agricultural policy is being replaced by a rural policy. The past year politicians have been busy in meetings to set up the new policy. It has to be finished in 2005 and implemented in 2007.**

**By that time the European Union will use a sizeable portion of what is now being spent on agricultural subsidies on the countryside. What will this mean to the countryside and to villages? The European agricultural policy of the fifties has changed the countryside drastically. This is also to be expected of the coming reforms. That is why this newsletter devotes attention to it.**

### **The old policy**

The old agricultural policy was aimed at producing enough food for everyone. People in the mid-twentieth century were concerned about that. That policy has, by now, more than succeeded. There were even surpluses. But there also were unintended side effects. Such as unemployment because of the policy of mechanising agriculture. Problems in countries where the EU dumps food with export subsidies. Critical voices about production methods with respect to the quality of the products and how animals are treated. Questions about nature. Questions about landscape. Questions about the livability of the countryside because of migrations to factories and offices in the cities.

### **The new policy**

In the new policy the EU intends, firstly, to stop people moving into cities. If agriculture provides too few jobs to live in rural areas, then other subsistence bases should be sought there. They are thinking mainly about recreation and tourism. The money saved from cutting agricultural subsidies will be spent on projects in that area.

### **Qualities of the countryside**

In the reports about the new policy the phrase "quality of life in the countryside" turns up again and again. How do people in Brussels view this? About this it is interesting to read a contribution of Bryden. A presentation he held at a EU-meeting in Salzburg in november 2003.

He lists seven characteristics of the countryside that are printed elsewhere in this newsletter. To Bryden, the countryside is different from cities. It is worthwhile to compare his characteristics to the Charter of the Villages of 1999. In that Charter we have expressed our views on those qualities. Qualities in the areas of democracy, of dealing with people (security), of economy, of nature.

### **Chances**

We should not expect that state engineers will come to the villages in 2007 to reorganise the countryside like happened in 1956, when the land was consolidated in many Dutch villages in the process of rationalising the landscape. (More on this elsewhere in this newsletter). There certainly is a difference with the fifties. Then, engineers believed a hundred percent in their calculations and central policy. Now most people are saying that a 'bottom-up' approach is better than a 'top-down' one. In planology there is more uncertainty than before. But what will all those planologists do when people start 'bottom-upping'? The countryside is often misrepresented through city counsels. The rationalisation of domestic government is omnipresent. And the goal seems to be that only medium-sized to large towns survive. For villagers seems to be a chance now to adduce the missing knowledge. Chances seem to come for an own development and to stop the fruitless urbanization of the rural areas. We should make use of the opportunity to direct the developments. If we will not do it ourselves we may expect an amount of big private development companies which like to build for a lot of money and which do not care after finishing 'their' project.

# A cry for support for rural and isolated Paxos

## We are not just a holiday resort!

The Mayor of Paxos and Antipaxos –both islands included in the NATURA 2000 network - salutes the initiative of Mr Bert Kisjes, Ambassador to the Cultural Villages of Europe Organization to communicate with the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr Fischler and offer our Organization's experience and knowledge over the issue of rural development of EU areas.

Paxos is at a turning point both as a rural and touristic area. For centuries it has produced olive oil of the finest quality sustaining financially the entire community. Its olive groves dating five and six hundred years back cover almost entirely its surface, shading ancient footpaths and making our waterless island look evergreen. Small cypress trees - forests bordered the various properties and their wood served for the making of fishing boats, another source of income for the Paxiot. Kilometers of dry-stone walls identified and maintained the soil of each olive tree protecting the whole island from fluds and adding to its beauty.

When various illnesses attacked our olive trees, the Paxiots were some of the first in Greece to refuse to use pesticides against them asking the central government for alternative methods. After many years of experimenting with no results, the quality of our olive oil deteriorated so, that nowadays it is almost useless. The pressure for economic development forced our population to turn solely to tourism. The olive groves are now abandoned in sickness and old age. Foot paths are being fenced or destroyed. The dry stonewalls are left unattended. Cypress trees grow out of control. Our whole environment is in danger and our winter income is non-existent.

After the recent Commission's decisions on EU rural development and agri-environmental measures, we sincerely hope that the link between NATURA 2000 and EU agricultural policies will become real and active. We need to apply farming practices suitable to maintaining and enhancing the natural value of sites such as our own in terms of the habitats that our socie-

ty wishes to protect and in terms of financially sustaining our population on the island during the whole year. Our olive groves must be farmed in a way better suited to our land, more so since there is a continuous human presence in them, as our homes are inside the groves. This way all related activities will become more attractive, e.g. the direct sales of oil, honey, wine etc labeled as coming from a Natura site, the promotion of rural tourism linked to the discovery not only of nature, but also of our culture and history. Now that each EU Member State is preparing their plans for rural development, We, the resident populations of rural areas must make our voices heard and our needs and diversities taken into account, if we wish to continue existing proudly into the third millennium.

Faye

---

## The seven characteristics of a healthy rural area of John M Bryden

Speech on the conference about Rural Development on the Salzburg Meeting in November 2003

1

First and foremost, they are at least maintaining their population and within it a viable age structure. Usually this also means that they have a positive rate of net immigration.

2

Secondly, healthy rural communities have diversified their economic base beyond the primary sector, maintaining or even increasing employment rates in the face of inevitable declines in primary sector jobs. These conditions would also tend to mean that poverty and unemployment rates are no worse than those in cities and larger towns.

3

Thirdly, the physical and mental health of the rural population is as good as it is elsewhere. Public health depends on socio-economic determinants, especially poverty and major risk factors including high blood pressure and blood

cholesterol, obesity, smoking and excessive alcohol, and exercise.

4

Fourthly, healthy rural communities value their history, culture and environment and have a pride in their identity, and use these both to enhance the quality of life and develop new economic activities and improve the rewards to existing economic activities. The education system supports these values.

5

Fifthly, healthy rural communities have widespread property ownership, clear titles, and relatively high rates of locally financed and initiated new small enterprise start ups. People have access to collateral, hence loans at reasonable interest rates. The transactions costs of doing business are low. There are open and active networks with links across ngos<sup>1</sup> business and

public sector, and good links with the outside world.

6

Sixthly, public agencies work together towards common goals and with an agreed value basis, and do not fight against each other. These goals and values are set through local democratic and participatory process: ie they are bottom-up... There is a lively and democratic local government, with reasonable fiscal and decision making autonomy.

7

Lastly, and most important of all, healthy rural communities are doing their own development, and not having it done to them by others.

<sup>1</sup>Non Governmental organisations

# The process of urbanising

'A boy from the village' recounts the developments of the village Ingen in the 20th century. The author, Chris van Esterik, describes the major changes that did not originate within the village but were forcibly imposed from outside.<sup>1</sup>

## The price of grain

Because of the development of trade routes and the free world market by sea the farmer in Ingen had to start competing with his colleagues in the United States. Just before 1900 the price of grain fell from 13 to 5 \_ guilders. The Dutch people started to bake bread from American grain. The farmers in the Betuwe started to grow fruits instead.

## Money traffic

Moving money around played a minor part in day to day life. For your own house, your vegetable garden, a pig sty and many repairs you did not need money. It was only necessary for food-stuffs like sugar, salt, pepper, oil and vinegar. The first bank was set up in the hot-house of a farm. When a building for the bank became necessary people discussed where it should be built; in the center or somewhere out back.

Because borrowing money was a disgrace, people tried to be independent. And when you had a lot of money people started to gossip about you. The personal loan, later on the motor of consumerism, only dates to 1969.

## Land consolidation

In 1956 the state did not enter the village with social policies only. Engineers of the Heide-maatschappij entered the cafe in Ingen with rolled-up maps and briefcases full of plans. They were the ones taking on one of the largest national projects after the war, land consolidation. The agricultural engineers, driven by the post-war desire to rebuild, being men of rationalisation and of action, discovered a great area to develop. The slogans were "developing an effective production landscape", "scaling up" and "mechanising". In those days many thought that, with the right planning, you could make

anything work. The conservative farmer was the target. The Betuwe was overrun by experts and PR-officers. The farmer now not only had to harvest his crops but finally had to turn in to an entrepreneur.

## Environment and landscape.

At the end of the 20th century a new wave of engineers reached Ingen. They came with other tools than their rulers, efficiency, 'production landscape' and 'intensifying'. The new slogans are 'rural, ecological, culture-historical, hydro-logical structures', 'environmental policy', 'bird's eye views'.

<sup>1</sup> 'Een jongen van het dorp'  
by Chris van Esterik. Publ. Bert Bakker 2003

# Cuív in Westport

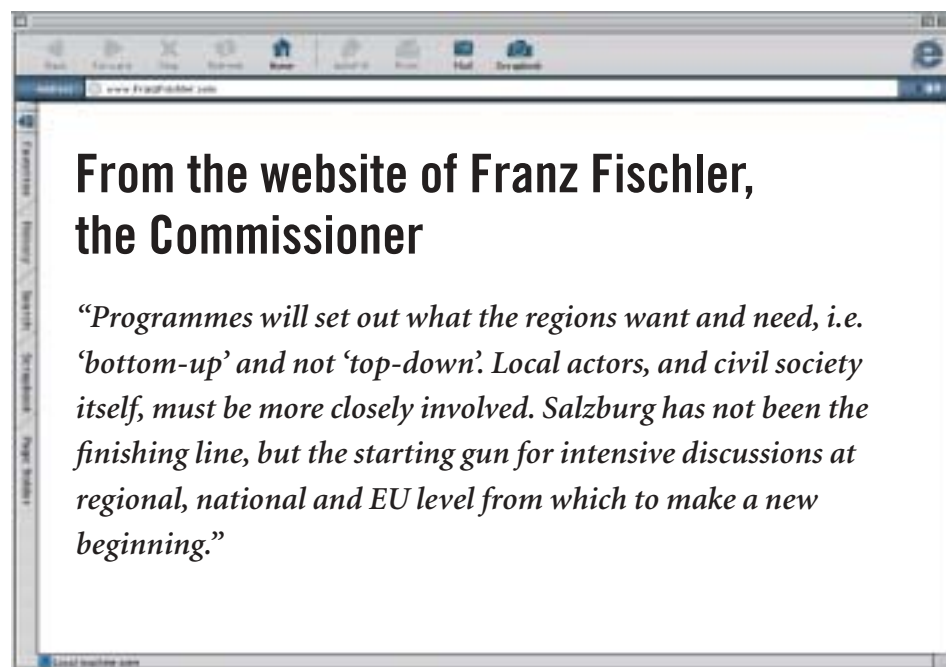
The Irish Minister Cuív welcomed the findings and said that he hoped that European Rural Development Policy would evolve into an effective, user-friendly and common sense strategy.

"...rural development is all about people and communities. We have to listen to the people who live in rural areas all over Europe. These people are well able to tell us what their needs are and what the EU should be doing for them. In general, the input of the people on the ground is extremely sensible, practical and realistic. We, the policy makers must listen to them and make policy to suit the people instead of trying to change people and the world to suit policy. We will know when we have a successful Rural Development Policy when we have stopped the haemorrhage of people from the countryside all over Europe and when our rural young people automatically expect and benefit from the same opportunities as their urban counterparts," Minister Cuív stated.

## John M Bryden in Salzburg:

*General de Gaulle is credited with the rhetorical question: how is it possible to govern a country with 500 different kinds of cheese?*

The enlarged EU may after all have 1000 or more different kinds of cheese in 1000 different rural areas. My response would be let 1000 cheeses bloom! And, of course, support them with a proper Territorial Rural Development Policy!



# 8th of May: Day of the European Villages

The Cultural Village Organisation is a closed organisation. For other villages it is not possible to be a part of the existing network of 12 villages. The organisation would grow too big blowing up itself. In 2001 in Bystré has been agreed that we will go on until 2010. In this year each of the 12 Cultural Villages will have been Cultural Village of Europe for one year.

Other villages can profit from the experiences of the Cultural Village Network. On the 8th of May a Day of the European Villages will be organised

in Le Caylar in Larzac in southern France. A village that wants to take part is welcome to participate in this meeting. This meeting gives an opportunity to make acquaintance of the organisation of Cultural Village and to create new networks. In next newsletter more information about this event may be expected.



## Looking for stars on Paxos



What happens if you put 50 youngsters, from all across Europe for one week together on an island? Indeed, you create a multicultural society that even can't be touched by the city of Amsterdam. People are forced to use all their skills and bodyparts to make them understand each other, and after all I can say that we succeeded. I'm now talking about the Youthcamp on Paxos Cultural Village 2004.

50 a bit shy youngsters (with me included) welcomed each other on the 12th of July and some of them left one week later with tears in their eyes. I'm now going to tell you what happened in between:

The first day, the group was divided in three parts, one part went walking, the second part went to an excavation and the third part was

going to dive. After lunch we made dolls and did Greek dancing. This is how we spent the first three days, and as the days passed by, all the shy faces started to open, and started to communicate with each other. Good examples were the meals, we were eating at two large tables, in the beginning almost every youngster was sitting within his own group. But at the end everyone was mixed up and making new friends. The "astronomy classes" in the evening were very special. Seeing this man explaining the most difficult and fascinating things, with great help from the beautiful pictures of galaxies, was a fantastic experience. We all brought a tent, but after a couple of days, we discovered that it was more fun to sleep on the beach watching stars. At the third day, the multicultural society really

started to live, there was a BBQ on the beach and every country brought some typical food and drinks to share, e.g. the French brought their crêpes and cider. It was a big party with people who all wanted to taste each others goods, it was "remarkable" that very many countries had taken some of their native drinks. Later that night people started to do some dances from their own country's and the Dutch guys made some music. The shyness that was fading away now really disappeared. Later we made a boat trip around the island of Paxos and payed a visit to Anti-Paxos, both are very very beautiful. In the evening there was again a party and every country had to do an act, the Danish people made their own version of Punch and Judy and destroyed their handmade dolls after the show and of course the Italians had a boyband. The next day the camp was over and the first started to go homeward with mixed feelings, happy for a great week and sad that it was over. The unique combination of a beautiful landscape, nice people and a very good organisation made this an unforgettable week for me. At last I really want to thank Johanna, Ada, Fony, Gina and everyone from Mongonissi Beach.

Jelle Bruineberg, Wijk aan Zee



# Paxos embraces the European villages of Wijk aan Zee, Mellionec, Pergine Valdarno, Bystre, Aldeburgh, Palkonya and the European Villages youth.

## Faye

---

Since last May the Paxiots have warmly welcomed the groups from the above European villages. The tour of the island started each time in the afternoon on Fridays. Some of the most interesting sites they all visited were:

- the archeological site in Magazia, where our guests visited 6th and 4th century graves and the borders of an ancient settlement.
- Various water cisterns, Greek, Venetian and English, where our foreign friends met with the Paxiots ingenuity
- A traditional oilmill, where they were explained the various fashions of extracting the precious olive oil.

Each Saturday morning they visited:

- the Folk Museum, where they learned a lot about the locals everyday living.
- The art gallery, where they were able to admire the technique and beauty of the works of the Vicar Christodoulos Aronis.
- the St. Nicholas island, where they were stunned by its natural beauty and the breathtaking views from its Venetian castle.

Each Saturday and Sunday evening the villages' presentations took place. Traditional dishes were prepared each time inside the small kitchen of the old Loggos school. Each village usually started with the presentation of their own traditional songs and dances and continu-

ed with the exchanging of gifts. The celebration lasted usually until early next morning under our local sounds, with a lot of Greek dancing accompanied by local food and drinks. The food was always impeccably cooked, the wine was abundant, the music carried us all away into euphoric land.

Sunday morning was usually dedicated to the tour of the island on speedboats and swimming on the sandy beaches of Antipaxos. Each time our visitors' sentiments were intense and their admiration for our crystal clear blue waters, the colours and the blue caves was true and obvious. Between the 10th and the 19th of July we were happy to welcome the young representatives of all the European Villages taking part in the Cultural Villages Organization except Aldeburgh and Kilingi Nomme. They camped under the olive trees at Mongonissi Bay, on a small island between Paxos and Antipaxos. They visited all the island's sites, they walked on some of its ancient paths, they took part in the archeological excavations of a 6th and 4th century B.C. cemetery and settlement, they took diving lessons, they studied our starlit sky, they became familiar with puppet theater, but most of all enjoyed swimming and sunbathing.

We sincerely hope that all our guests received a rich taste of the Paxos hospitality and beautiful surroundings and that we managed to offer to all of them a few unforgettable moments of leis-

ure, fun and relaxation. God and weather permitting we promise to show ourselves soon to come new guests from Ströbeck, Kilingi Nomme, Porrúa, Tommerup and Kircheim an even better time.

---

## Closing Conference

In the weekend of 5/7 of November the closing Ceremony of the Cultural Village Year of Paxos will take place. The programme is not completed yet but on this meeting will be spoken also about next year's plans and about domestic questions of the organisation.



# Schachdorf Ströbeck

Chess education in Schachdorf Ströbeck became worse. In Newsletters February edition has been written about this issue. The primary school (6 – 10 years old) has been maintained with chess education as an obligatory subject. For the secondary school (11 –16 years old) the pupils have to go to Dardesheim. There Chess education will be offered as an optional subject. The Secondary School of Schachdorf Ströbeck has been closed in July.

## Short news

### Cultural Village of Europe 2005

In 2005 Kilingi Nomme will be Cultural Village of Europe. The mayors meeting will take place in May, 20-23rd. The Cultural Festival will be divided in three parts:

- (1) June 22-25. It is not in the weekend but June 23 and 24 are important national holidays.
- (2) July, 15-18 and (3) August 5-8. There are no dates available yet for the Youth camp and a meeting in autumn.

### Jedlova and Korouhev in Pergine

In the first week of October the families of Jedlova and Korouhev (near Bystré CZ) who hosted in 2001 Pergine Valdarno are invited to come to Pergine Valdarno. A lot of families who hosted the guests from Pergine 2001 haven't had the opportunity to return their visit to their Italian friends.



The 10th edition of the recreative market 'El Mercau' in Porrúa on the 21 and 22 August was again a big success. The objective is passing on the old handicraft traditions. About 250 people joined the market as a hand crafter, animator or as an assistant. Both days started with a procession where the gaita's (bagpipes) played. There was a possibility to taste all kinds of local foods like cheese, ham, marmelade and cider. People showed at the market how to create from wood, leather and stone, how to weave, do pottery, make shoes and musical instruments. During those two days, there was also folk dancing and street theatre. There were also some acrobats.

In the region of Asturias are similar markets in all different places at the moment. The Porrúa market was the first one and she's receiving a big public interest. The whole society of Porrúa was involved in this beautiful market.



Jaroslav Pecháček working during the summer-symposium for woodcarvers in Bystré. This symposium was held in June for the second time. In the neighbourhood of Bystré is a lot of wood. That's why! The symposium has taken place in a grassfield in front of the church. On the picture does Pecháček the finishing touch at Joseph. And he will (with the chainsaw) complete the holy family. The sculptures will be showed with Christmas. In Tsjech the making of sculptures for a crib has a long tradition.

---

## CULTURAL VILLAGE of EUROPE

---

### Colophon:

This newsletter is published by Cultural Village of Europe in Wijk aan Zee. Julianaweg 35, 1949 AN Wijk aan Zee. Website: [www.cultural-village.com](http://www.cultural-village.com) E-mail: [villages@cultural-village.com](mailto:villages@cultural-village.com) Editors: Jacky de Vries, Bert Kisjes and Ab Winkel. Cooperators: Erica de Roeber, Jelle Bruineberg, Faye, Renate Krosch, Mila, Romina Zamponi and Ivan Kisjes. Layout: Peter Neijenhoff - [www.nietweggoien.nl](http://www.nietweggoien.nl)

---