



Date 27 February 2003

Protocol 3433/21.5

Subject: Convocation of the National Meeting of Ecomuseums
(Biella 9-12 October 2003)

Ecomuseum as a cultural project, an instrument for expressing the culture of a territory, approximately thirty years after its foundation, is experiencing a period of great vitality: a large number of institutions are now involved in the Ecomuseums project (64 in Italy and approx. 150 in Europe) since it is felt to be increasingly respondent to the more or less conscious needs to document and valorise those cultural aspects of a territory or a population that are not allocated with adequate interpreters, instruments and space in traditional museums.

Ecomuseum has in fact demonstrated that it is able to guarantee an attention and a use of the territory that is oriented towards safeguarding and valorising its complex of material and immaterial values together with the rich texture of interconnections and relations which brings them together and may be defined as "local heritage".

Within this perspective Ecomuseum can effectively exercise an influence in relation to other policies, directing them towards forms of development that encourage the production of heritage rather than its consumption. This approach would permit a leap forward in quality and a possible pathway for growth between the limits of nostalgic memory on the one hand and the dangers of the mercification of cultural heritage on the other.

For that to happen it is therefore important that Ecomuseum develops into a recognised and authoritative structure from a cultural point of view, one that can act as a local reference point in the valorisation of territorial heritage. However, no organisation is authoritative if it fails to define its identity, clarifying what it has in common with other analogous projects and in what way it differs.

Bilateral meetings and seminars held in recent years between operators of Ecomuseums, local government administrators and officials, experts have been an important opportunity for sharing mutual knowledge. At the same time they have revealed a need for greater comparison and knowledge, combining all the Italian initiatives that are explicitly or factually linked to the Ecomuseum project to verify the possibilities and conditions required to achieve a common language making it possible to link the various activities within in a cultural project that may be delineated at the leading edge as innovative and significant for the progress and modernisation of Italian society.

Ecomuseum makes it possible to rediscover and define new work spaces, new values, new stimuli, new objectives that

can reanimate and feed into local environments, making them aware of their cultural and natural heritage, building on that awareness, on a reconstruction of local identities, a series of long-term and sustainable development strategies and prospects.

Within this perspective the Ecomuseums project structure is fully consistent and in line with the policies launched by the European Union regarding the subject of cultural heritage and in particular the objectives of the Culture 2000 Programme.

Comparing each other about the different projects which have been launched, how the Ecomuseum project is to be interpreted, the possibility of finding common references and, within the said context, verifying shared strategies and objectives and the conditions for the definition of an "Ecomuseums Charter", constructing a possible agenda for work and comparison – this is the goal which this Regional Administration intends to achieve through the convocation of a National Meeting (with international references) of all bodies and organisations (institutional and non) which are competent or have acquired experience in this area.

The National Meeting, which is programmed to last four days, will be held next October (from Thursday 9 to Sunday 12) in the area of the Biellese Ecomuseum, a project recognised by the Region in 2000, in a Piedmont territory (Province of Biella) that has experienced, in an overall and homogenous manner, one of the most rapid and radical economic and social transformations from an agricultural based economy to an industrial and post industrial

environment which at the same time strongly conserves the memory of its collective knowledge deriving from its local small communities.

Scientific coordination of the Meeting has been entrusted to the Piedmont Region "Laboratorio Ecomusei" located at the premises of the Protected Areas Planning Sector in Turin.

At the same address has been set up the Organisational Secretariat of the Meeting, which has to be contacted for any information and communication regarding this event: Piedmont Region - Protected Areas Planning Sector, Via Nizza no. 18, 10125 Turin (Italy)

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Yours sincerely

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