REPORT OF RURENER 2021 GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

ENER'PRESPES

GREECE

OCTOBER 20TH - 23RD

RURENER

TABLE

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Philippe CORTES, Granges Solaires, France

Marta COURTADA, CIM do AVE, Portugal

Xenia ECONOMIDOU, Cyprus

Kyriakos GEORGIOU, University if Nicosia / PESAP, Cyprus

Evangelos KARAGIANNIS, Prespes, Greece

Vassiliki KAZANA, International Hellenic University, Greece

Alberto LOPEZ, Diputación de Ávila, Spain

Florian LOUGNON, Syndicat mixte Est Creuse, France

José MARTINS, CIM do AVE, Portugal

Dominique OLIVIER, Modes d'emploi, France

Panagiotis PASCHALIDIS, Prespes, Greece

Michalis PETRAKOS, Prespes, Greece

Céline SEINCE, RURENER, France

Eleftheria TANTSOUKI, Prespes, Greece

Gérard THOMAZON, Bussière Saint George, Communauté de communes Creuse Confluence, France

Vincent TURPINAT, Jarnages / Communauté de communes Creuse Confluence, France

Also participated: Giorgos Kasapidis, governor of the Region of Western Macedonia, Kalliopi Kyriakidou, vice-governor for Energy, Infrastructure and Environment of the Region of Western Macedonia, Pali Kolefski, Mayor of Bashkia Pustec, Albania.

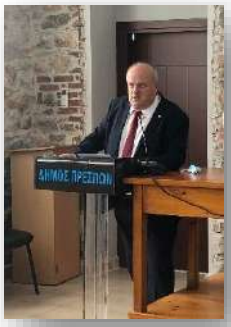
WEDNESDAY 20TH OF OCTOBER

The group arrives at the Thessaloniki Airport at around 19h and the Prespes bus picks us up to drive us all the way to the municipality.

After 4 hours of bus, a few badgers and rabbits on the road, we arrive at 23h30 local time at the Mimallones Hotel in Laimos.

THURSDAY 21ST OF OCTOBER

Presentations in Laimos



The official opening of the event takes place of Thursday morning at the City council in Laimos. The President of the network, Mr Panagiotis Paschalidis, mayor of Prespes gives the welcoming speech to all participants. Michalis Petrakos continues with the presentation of Prespes's history, its 20 years of Energy projects and experience in European cooperation.

History has shaped the Prespes we know today. Indeed, its geographical situation made it a place of conflicts during the Greek Civil War (1947-1949), conflicts over boarders that lasted long after the war. Prespes decided to look at boarders as an opportunity for cooperation rather than a place for conflicts and over the past 20 years, many transregional cooperation projects have been developed.

The municipality counts 1560 inhabitants, which makes it the least populated in the mainland. However, the territory hosts a rich and diverse fauna, in particular birds that nest on the shores of the Prespa Lake. The path to the energy transition was taken in 2005 by the Prespes municipality, starting by addressing building efficiency. Around the years 2010, the first European cooperation projects were developed, paving the way to Prespes's membership to the RURENER European network. Along with projects, ambitions went up, with the goal of being carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon negative after 2030: Prespa would capture more carbon than it emits.

The full presentation of Prespes' energy projects is annexed to this report, it includes details about the projects:

- PEEBPE related to the Promotion of Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Protection of the Environment – funded by the Greece- the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border Programme (2007-2013)
- HOLY WATER that developed solar electric boats for sustainable tourism on the lake – funded by the Interreg IPA CBC Greece Republic of North Macedonia programme,

- NET Metering for the integration of Photovoltaic Plants for self-consumption under the Net Metering Concept in Public Buildings and Pumping Stations and Replacement of Low-Efficiency Municipal/Street Lighting with LED Lights – funded by the Interreg IPA CBC Greece Albania programme,
- Green Inter-e Mobility addressing carbon Neutral mobility – funded by the Interreg IPA CBC Greece Republic of North Macedonia programme,
- nZECom on sustainable and almost zero-emission communities and the role of public buildings) – funded by the Interreg IPA CBC Greece Albania programme

To illustrate the presentation, the group will discover the Green Boats and visit one of the buildings of the PEEBPE project later in the day.

Ms Kalliopi Kyriakidou, vice governor for Energy, Infrastructure and Environment of the Region of Western Macedonia and Mr Giorgos Kasapidis, governor of the Region of Western Macedonia arrive in Prespes to welcome the group of visitors and assess the Region's support to energy and climate action, in particular given the specificities of the Region of Western Macedonia, relying largely on the coal industry that is to shut down by 2030 given the latest European directives.

Mr Pali Kolefski, Mayor of the neighboring town of Bashkia Pustec, Albania presents briefly its municipality and its interest in getting involved in European cooperation, taking Prespes as an example. The municipality of Bashkia Pustec is currently involved in a transborder cooperation project with Prespes.

Agios Germanos

Afterwards, the whole group gets to the bus for the first visits in the village of Agios Germanos. The bus parks on the side of the road and the group continues on foot, onto a nice trail, with an 11th century church on the left side. As the trail goes down and to the right, we can see the site that we are about to visit: a watermill fully restored. Agios Germanos' watermill is the only one, out of the 20 watermills in this area, that has been fully restored, both the building and the mechanisms inside as well

as the access trail that we just walked onto. The guide from the Natural Park of Prespa presents the three mechanisms:

- For the first one, the water flow gets into a rounded shaped stone, the fabrics (clothes) are put in the middle and the friction created cleans the fabrics. At the moment of the visit, the water flow is very low due to a dry summer. This mechanism is the ancestor of the washing machine without the use of any detergent.
- The second mechanism grinds flour. The water flow activates a turbine that moves a huge stone on top of another large stone. The wheat seeds are put in the middle in grinded to flour.
- The last mechanism works like the second one with the water flow entering a water turbine that moves large hammer that are then released against a piece of wood. It was used to finish textile by softening the wool, increasing its resistance.

After the visit we have lunch in a local tavern with local beans on the menu along with other traditional Greek dishes such as Greek salad or tzatziki.

In the afternoon, we visit the Information office of the **National Park of Prespes** to have an overview of the unique natural fauna and flora of this region. Prespa is one of the only lakes shared by three countries, Greece, Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia (the other is lake Constance shared by Germany, Austria and Switzerland). The Prespa lake is well known for its bird fauna. The Dalmatian pelican nests in the Park before migrating south all the way to Turkey. The Great white pelican can also be observed on the Prespa lake. Among the reasons making the Prespa lake a paradise place for pelican and other birds, we can mention the flora that gives the Pelican all the food it can need, but also the climate and tranquility of the very rural region. This biodiversity is quite unique and its protection is a great source of motivation for the municipality of Prespes very much involved in environmental and slow tourism projects.

On our way back to the bus, we stop at the primary school which building is very impressive and has been fully refurbished thanks to the European project PEEBPE.

The PEEBPE project (Promotion of Energy Efficiency in Buildings and Protection of the Environment) funded by the Greece - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-Border Interreg Programme (2007-2013) aimed at raising awareness on the great potential that

buildings have in decreasing energy consumptions and consequently on the environmental benefit of such a reduction. The project was implemented on three demonstrator buildings, 2 of them in Greece, to make them almost zero-emission buildings by implementing energy efficiency measures and renewable energy technologies. The energy upgrade on this building was tremendous: 223,9 kWh/m² before VS 33,6 kWh/m² after renovation. The renovation work consisted mainly of wall insultation and the installation of heat pumps.

The building has been insulated by the outside and the architectural characteristics have been preserved by recreating the architecture on top of the insultation to keep the cultural heritage intact. Inside the school, the ceiling is very high (it used to prevent the propagation of viruses) and has been insulated as well. The school counts around 40 pupils nowadays and is the last primary school in the municipality while they used to be a school in each village of the municipality. It shows the decline and ageing of the population which is a trend that the municipality is trying to address, in particular by creating new business opportunities and attracting younger active people.

Agios Achilios

The next stop on the programme is the island of Agios Achilios where the two Green Boats of the municipality are waiting for us. The Green Boats were developed through the project HOLYWATER funded by the Interreg IPA – CBC Greece – Republic of North Macedonia programme. The project was identified as good practice by the Interreg Europe programme. The two boats are powered by photovoltaic solar panels (700 W) installed directly on the boats. The 3.8 kW electric motor allows the boats to reach the speed of about 10km/h. The batteries store power for 10 hours of operation (apart from PV power). The boats are very silent, which is ideal for bird watching and to avoid noise pollution on the pristine lake. Each boat can carry 8 passengers and the circumnavigation of the Agios Achilios island takes about 40 minutes.

After enjoying this peaceful boat tour, we get to the island and visit the ruins of the Saint Achilios Basilica from the 10th century AD, learning about the story of Saint Achilios and the Basilica.

The sun is already quite low and we enjoy the sunset on the lake before getting to the local tavern for dinner.

FRIDAY 22ND OF OCTOBER

General Assembly

On Friday morning, we are back to the town hall for the RURENER General Assembly. The videoconference is organized for the participants joining online. The General Assembly is conducted in English and translated in French. The presentations used are available on the RURENER website and can be sent upon request.

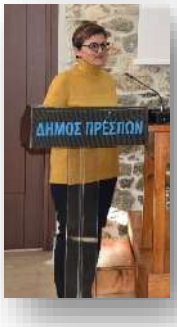
Panagiotis Paschalidis, President of RURENER and chairman of the session gives the opening words, thanking all participants for coming to Prespes for this important moment for the RURENER network. Energy and climate challenges are of big concern in Prespes, in particular because the unique biodiversity around the Prespa lake is highly dependent upon the climate and the balance in the ecosystem.

Céline Seince, coordinator of the RURENER network starts the meeting with a highlight on the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on RURENER but also what RURENER has done to promote the local actions taken by municipalities. The initiative “Faces of resilience” was born in April 2020 to bring visibility to the resilience of rural territories across Europe when facing a crisis of this size.

Philippe Cortès, one of RURENER vice-presidents, continues the session by presenting the in-person and (mostly) online events in which RURENER participated. He highlights two learnings from this special year:

- RURENER was ready to work remotely and use online tools to keep up the activity despite the crisis.
- In-person events remain a strong pilar of the RURENER network and must be articulated with online events to keep the conviviality of the gatherings and deepen the discussion with follow-up online meetings.

Vassiliki Kazana, RURENER’s Secretary follows with a presentation of RURENER’s projects that were built or conducted in 2020. The COLEOPTER project remaining the main ongoing project. Quite a few other projects have been submitted in 2020 but without successful results for most of them. Competition is programme like Horizon 2020 – now Horizon Europe – is one of the



reasons of failure despite the good grades received by the projects submitted (all above the selection threshold). Given these results, the weak point of the projects submitted does not appear to be the quality of the projects but rather the political support that makes the difference between two good projects when only one can be funded.

From these learnings, a new project involving RURENER members must be developed and submitted in 2022 to keep up RURENER's activity. It would allow RURENER members to benefit from EU funding directly and strengthen partnerships between them.

After Vassiliki's presentation, Aline Brachet, RURENER Treasurer takes the floor to present RURENER's 2020 financial result and balance. The 2020 result is negative by a few thousand euros, mainly due to the service providing contracts that were cancelled due to the sanitary situation. However, the support from France Active granted in the beginning of 2021 to cope for this loss will allow RURENER to have a balanced result for 2020. Another weak point highlighted by Aline is the lack of diversity of funding in 2020 compared to 2019, again the crisis is partly responsible with less private funding, but also the end of the "2017 Year of Innovation for Rural Energy" project that ended and through which contributions from the participants in the project were asked. The diversification of sources of funding remains a priority to strengthen RURENER's financial model, the option of crowdfunding / donations is mentioned and to be explored in the coming months.

Aline makes two additional propositions to RURENER members:

- Include in our revenues the voluntary work on the financial result and consider the pay at 500€/day. After being discussed, this proposition was approved on principle by all with a "wage" increase to 550€, which is the "wage" assigned to voluntary work according to EU standards. This will be included in RURENER's future financial balances.
- Include in our expenses our carbon footprint: the price of the equivalent number of trees to plant to cope for our footprint for example (carbon compensation). After being discussed, this idea appears to be good and coherent with RURENER values, however the legal aspect must be checked so it does not make RURENER's financial document invalid. Alberto (Diputación de Avila) proposes another way to cope for RURENER's carbon footprint instead of planting trees through investment in a renewable power plant, which would have the advantage of bringing revenue to RURENER on the mid-term in addition to paying for our carbon footprint. The legal aspect of this idea must also be checked as it might not be considered as carbon compensation. The legal and financial aspects of this proposition will be researched in the coming months and the final decision will be taken during RURENER 2022 General Assembly.

The temporary 2021 budget is also presented to the members for validation. It is mostly composed of the same expenses than in the previous years with staff cost and social taxes as

first expense and travel costs and service providing within the COLEOPTER project coming next. As for the revenues, subsidies from the ERDF and from the French government are expected with the beginning of a new experimental project in the Massif central area. Private funding from membership fees (to increase again after a year of stagnation in 2020), from France Active and from the Rexel Foundation complete the table. Volunteering time will be added to this temporary budget as agreed previously on the basis of 550€/day.

As the time is running, the resolutions are presented to the Assembly and approved unanimously by all present and represented (or later validated by email for some absents). The discussions about future RURENER projects and the presentation of the newest members are postponed to after lunch.

Psarades

Before lunch, a boat trip is scheduled in Psarades, a traditional fishing village on the shore of the big Prespa lake. The boat trip drives us to the hermitages on the lake's coast. We visit the hermitage of Panagia Eleousa which offers an impressive view of the lake and illustrates the building skills of the monks who built the place in such a steep cavernous environment.



After the boat trip we walk to a local tavern for lunch. As time is running out, the participants are invited to use lunch time to discuss project ideas with the people sitting next to them. The project ideas will then be collected by Céline and shared with everyone. The main project ideas that come out of lunch are the following:

- Building a participative observatory of local climate policies in rural areas of Europe and their impact. This project would allow to measure the efficiency of local policies, the barriers they are facing and to influence European policies using fact-based recommendations. Vassiliki Kazana (International Hellenic University) and Kyriakos Georgiou (University of Nicosia) are the contact people on this idea.
- Working on "Green Energy Industrial Clusters" for rural areas in order to attract industries – and in particular green business – to rural areas and develop sustainable model for industrial zones following circular economy principles. Alberto Lopez (Diputación de Avila) is the contact person on this idea.
- Working on the rehabilitation of heritage buildings and in particular changing local policies that are not compatible with necessary energy efficiency work (obligations to use the same building techniques as the original ones in Guimarães, Portugal for instance). Marta Courtada, José Martins (CIM do AVE), Dominique Olivier (Association Modes d'emploi, Figeac), Florian Lougnon (Syndicat Est Creuse) are contact people on this subject.

- Developing alternative fuels for sustainable mobility in rural areas. Florian Lougnon (Syndicat Est Creuse), Dominique Olivier (Association Modes d'emploi – Figeac), Philippe Cortès (Granges Solaires Limousin) are contact people on this subject.

It was decided that a workshop involving not only the participants in the General Assembly but all members of RURENER will be organized to discuss and develop these ideas.

Laimos city council

After this fruitful lunch, the group gets back on the bus for the presentation of RURENER's newest members in the town hall in Laimos. Three territories are presented:

- The Intermunicipal Community (CIM) of AVE located in the north of Portugal. CIM do AVE is local public authority, link the municipal and the national level. The territory is composed of 8 municipalities with very distinct characteristics, some being urban municipalities while others are very rural.
- The territory of Figeac in the South West of France represented by the association Modes d'Emploi. Largely rural, the territory is mainly composed of forests (40 500ha) and grasslands (34 000ha) and its economy relies largely on farming and agriculture despite a decline in the numbers of farmers. Linking energy and farming challenges was an obvious choice for some pioneers of the territory who developed short supply chains to keep the revenues on the territory.
- The Troodos mountains in Cyprus represented by the PESAP organization focused on the Pitsilia region of the Troodos mountains. The region faces great demographic challenges with an ageing and decreasing population, resulting in part from the incentives for young people to join the cities to work. The region has an incredible potential for tourism both for its natural and cultural heritage but also for its climate, however, many services and infrastructures and to be improved to revive the territory.

The full presentations made by Marta Courtada (CIM do AVE), Dominique Olivier (Modes l'Emploi) and Kyriakos Georgiou (PESAP) are annexed to this report. An additional presentation created by Henry P. Huntington is also introduced by Kyriakos Georgiou as it is very relevant to the network's existence, highlighting how territories that may look very different on paper shared very similar challenges which is very much true of rural territories across Europe (presentation available upon request, an oral presentation by Kyriakos will be considered in a future RURENER event).

After the presentations of the three territories, each representant signs the RURENER charter symbolically in presence of RURENER President.



Antartiko

After a very short coffee break, the group is already on its way to the last visit of the day in the village of Antartiko. The site to visit is an electrical hydropower plant. The intake is a river located at an altitude of 1210 meters and the station is at an altitude of 1070 meters which gives 14 bars of pressure that is used to generate electrical power. 70% of the water of the river is used for power generation and the 30 remaining % keep the river going. The system of water level in the tanks, water pressure and electricity generation are digitally controlled 24:7 by a SCADA system.

The power plant uses a steel pipe called penstock with a 700mm diameter to connect the intake to the power generation equipment. The station is designed to use up to 750L/sec of water which produces a maximum of 840kW of electrical power.

The water coming from the steel pipe enters a turbine (2-jets Pelton turbine) connected to a 1MW Synchronous 3-Phase generator. Th power produced is injected into the national grid trough a circuit breaker (400 V/20kV transformer with the appropriate switching gear and metering devices).

The annual power generated by the Hydroelectric power plant is about 2500 MWh. A typical coal power plant produces about 1Kg of CO2 by KWh, which means a saving of 2 500 tons of CO2 every year by using hydropower instead of burning coal.

The selling price of electricity is 0,087€/kWh, of which 6% + 7% are taxes paid to the municipality (only around 5% of which actually goes to the municipality, the rest is impacted on inhabitants).

Closing in Laimos

This passionate visit comes to an end and the groups is brought back to the hotel for the final evening of the event in presence of the famous music band the *Valkanis Brothers Brass Band*. The Band is composed of members of the 3rd and 4th generations of the Valkanis family and enchants the evening with Greek music. Dance is in order to close this fantastic edition of RURENER General Assembly.

SATURDAY 23RD OF OCTOBER

The bus leaves the Mimallones hotel at 8h in the morning to get the group back to the airport. On the way, we take a last look at the Prespa lake, the bear signs on the side of the road before leaving the countryside and entering a new landscape shaped by the many coal mines of the Region of Western Macedonia. Given the European Union regulations, all of the coal power plants will have to close in less than a decade, changing this landscape forever. The future is yet to build, green industries could flourish and transform the region into a model of sustainability. Let's get to work!

ENER'Prespes will remain in our memories for a long time and we want to thank the Prespes municipality for having us, in particular: Mr Panagiotis Paschalidis, Mayor of the municipality and President of RURENER for offering to host the event, Mr Michalis Petrakos for the organization, Mr Evangelos Karagiannis for being our guide, Ms Eleftheria Tsansouki for her coordination and support, our bus drivers and boat captains, the cooks and the rest of the Prespes team that made this event such a success!