

Thymio Papayannis: summary of activities on nature and culture

[Updated on 30.01.2009]

Responsibilities (January 2009)

Committee on Religion Science and Environment: Member

Cycle of Patmos: President of the Board

Grado+20 Symposium on Mediterranean wetlands: Chairman of the Organising Committee

IUCN/WCPA: Member of the Steering Group of the Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas (TF/CSVPA), joint Co-ordinator of the Delos Initiative on Sacred Natural Sites in Technologically Developed Countries

Med-INA: Director, Co-ordinator of the project on the Cultural Aspects of Mediterranean Wetlands

MedWet: Honorary Member of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee, Facilitator of the MedWet Association

Ramsar Convention: Co-ordinator of the Culture Working Group

Society for the Protection of Prespa: President

Tour du Valat Foundation: Member and Secretary of the Board

WWF Greece: Honorary President, Board Member, Chair of Conservation Committee

WWF International: Member of the Board, Co-ordinator of the Governance Working Group, Member of the Nominations Committee

Main activities

European Commission

- Consultant of the EC General Directorate of Environment responsible for the natural areas of Greece during 1985-1989.
- Member of the EC Forum for Environment and Sustainable Development during 1992-1997.
- Co-ordinator of the LIFE Third Countries Project on Mediterranean wetlands, involving Algeria, Albania, Croatia, Morocco and Tunisia in 1997-1999.

IUCN and the Delos Initiative

As member of WCPA¹, TP has been actively involved in IUCN activities.

- Member of the Task Force on Cultural and Spiritual values of Protected Areas (TF/CSVPA) since 2000 and of its Steering Committee.
- In the framework of TF/CSVPA, established in 2003 the Delos Initiative on sacred natural sites in technologically developed countries and is its joint Co-ordinator (with Josep-Maria Mallarach).

Med-INA (Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos)

This non-profit, non-governmental organisation was established in September 2003 to deal with issues related to the interface between humanity and nature. TP has been the main force in its establishment and has funded its first four years.

- Founder and Director of Med-INA.

¹ IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas.

- Co-ordinator of the 2007-2010 project on the cultural values of Mediterranean wetlands.
- Co-editor, with Peter Howard, of the book *Nature as Heritage* (2007).
- Author of the Med-INA book *Action for culture in Mediterranean wetlands* (2008).

MedWet Initiative

Under the aegis of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the MedWet Initiative aims at arresting and reversing the loss of Mediterranean wetlands. It brings together 25 countries and other stakeholders participating in the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee. TP proposed its establishment and co-ordinated it during its first 10 years.

- Proposed the idea of a Pan-Mediterranean Initiative in 1991 and worked for its establishment in collaboration with various states (Italy and Greece) and organisations (such as Ramsar, ICBP, WWF and Tour du Valat).
- Co-ordinated the MedWet Initiative from 1991 to 2001. After that he remained as Senior MedWet Advisor until 2007 when he was elected Facilitator of the MedWet Association.
- Elected in 2002 as Honorary Member of the Mediterranean Wetlands Committee.
- Major publications: *Mediterranean Wetlands at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (1999) and *Regional Action for Wetlands* (2002).
- In 2008 appointed by the Ramsar Secretary General as chairman of the Organising Committee of the Grado+20 Pan-Mediterranean Wetland Symposium.

Prespa Lakes

A Ramsar wetland site shared by Albania, Greece and the FYR of Macedonia. TP has been actively involved in its protection since 1985.

- Sent on a mission to Prespa by the European Commission (DG Environment) in 1985 and produced the report 'The Prespa debacle', on the environmental damages caused by IMP² activities in the area.
- Founded in 1986 'The Friends of Prespa', an NGO that lobbied for the protection and mild development of Prespa. Organised in 1987 with WWF a conference on 'A future for Prespa'.
- Founded in 1990 with Luc Hoffmann the Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP), consisting of seven Greek and three international NGOs. Became its President in 2005, succeeding Luc Hoffmann. In 1999, the work of the SPP was recognised by the first Ramsar Award and two years later by the Goldman Prize.
- Proposed in 2000 the establishment of the transboundary Prespa Park and helped in 2001 in its realisation organising the first meeting of the Prespa Park Co-ordination Committee and preparing the basic documents on which it was based.
- Has participated since in the work and meetings of the PPCC as representative of MedWet.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

² Integrated Mediterranean Programmes.

TP has been intimately connected with the Ramsar Convention and its Secretariat since 1991.

- Participated in the past 7 Conferences of the Contracting Parties (Montreux 1990, Kushiro 1993, Brisbane 1996, San José 1999, Valencia 2002, Kampala 2005, Changwon 2008) with various functions.
- As Special Advisor to the Secretary General, he prepared the documents for the incorporation of cultural values in the work of the Convention and represented Ramsar to the related contact groups in COP8 and COP9, which led to the approval of Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21 on the cultural aspects of wetlands.
- Co-ordinated the Ramsar Culture Working Group since 2006.
- Organised workshops on culture and wetlands during the Ramsar European Meeting (Stockholm, May 2008) and Ramsar COP10 (Changwon, October-November 2008).
- Co-author, with David Pritchard, of the Ramsar Guidance document on culture, entitled *Culture and wetlands*.
- Has advised and assisted various transboundary and regional initiatives, including NigerWet, ChadWet³, NorBalWet and BlackSeaWet.

Orthodox Church and ecology

Under the leadership of HAH The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the Christian Orthodox Church has been developing a positive attitude towards environmental and nature conservation issues, organising specific initiatives. TP has played a significant role in these efforts.

- He has been a member of the Committee on Religion, Science and the Environment, organiser of the Patriarchate ecological symposia and has participated in such symposia in the Aegean, the Adriatic Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Amazon River (2006) and the Arctic (2007); planning now a symposium in the Nile Delta.
- Since 1990, he has been involved in the environmental matters of Mt. Athos in Northern Greece, a World Heritage Site for both culture and nature. In particular, he has worked closely with the Monastery of Simonopetra on the ecological management of their forest lands and continues to do so. He has encouraged and assisted the Holy Community of Mt. Athos in preparing an environmental study for the entire area. In February 2006, he represented IUCN in a UNESCO mission to Mt. Athos.
- Organised in October 2007 a Delos Initiative workshop on sacred natural sites in Ouranoupolis, Mt. Athos.
- Was elected in November 2008 president of the Cycle of Patmos, an association which supports the ecological work of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat

This important research centre in the Camargue, South of France, has been playing a key role in the improvement of knowledge and conservation of Mediterranean wetlands.

- TP has been a member of the Board of Tour du Valat from 1991 to today. In 2008 he has been elected Secretary of the Board.

³ He has been elected Honorary Member of the Co-ordination Committees of these two regional initiatives.

- In 2003 he has been responsible, with Doug Taylor, for the evaluation of the Tour du Valat five-year conservation programme.

WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature)

TP has participated in matters related to WWF both at the national (Greece) and international level since 1986.

- Advisor to WWF International for projects in Greece from 1986 to 1991.
- Founder of WWF Greece, in collaboration with Luc Hoffmann in 1991. Vice President and acting chair of WWF Greece 1994-1999. President of WWF Greece during 1998-2004. At present Honorary President, Member of the Board and Chair of the Conservation Committee.
- Trustee of WWF International on 1999-2002 and 2006-2009.
- Co-ordinator of the WWF International Governance Working Group since 2001, which is at present responsible for the International Board review. Member of the Task Force on new decision-making system in 2007. Member of the Nominations Committee and Co-ordinator of the Presidential Search working group.