

General aims of ALAS - All About Salt

- establishing a stable and durable co-operation network of the participating areas, open for other areas and partners, to base economic development on the cultural heritage of these areas, in particular their salt-works exploited in a traditional way, and to maintain and create permanent jobs;

- gaining, exchanging and transferring experience and know-how through the implementation of a concerted programme of activities related to the cultural and natural heritage of traditional salt-works;

- enhancing economic development and creating additional job opportunities in the partner regions, both with regard to the traditional production of salt and its marketing and to quality tourism;

- improving awareness with regard to the importance of cultural heritage for development;

- supporting the management and maintenance of the

cultural and natural heritage in the areas of the network as a basis of regional development, in particular for tourism;

- producing visible, long-lasting outputs, such as pilot realisations and publications useful beyond this project;

- sustainable improvement of the public and private management structures, methods and capacities in the partner areas;

- contributing to the solution of specific local problems that the partner areas are facing;

- identifying possibilities of using other private and public financing sources, including future mainstream Structural Funds, in relation to the subject of the project;

- having the partners of the network better prepared for the future challenges and tasks of economic development in their particular situation.

The ALAS logo

The ALAS logo has been made specifically for this project by our Portuguese partner, Mae d'Agua together with Pedro Farinha. It shows salt-piles and a bird. The salt-piles symbolise the four participating sites and the bird is a Black-winged stilt, a well-known wader that breeds in the salinas.

The Black-winged stilt *Himantopus himantopus* is a peculiar looking bird with its disproportionally long red legs. Standing it is 40 cm high. Most birds spend winter in tropical Africa south of Sahara, but some can stay around the Mediterranean. In the end of March or beginning of April, the birds return to their breeding grounds, which very often are coastal salinas. Their nasal cries are easy to recognise. They breed on small islets or banks inside the salinas, often close to Avocets and Common terns. A female lays 3 or 4 eggs. The Black-winged stilt feeds on insects, spiders and crustaceans that are found in the pools.



ALAS calendar for coming meetings in 2001

23-24 June
Project Management Committee
in Pomorie

September
Annual Conference
in Figueira da Foz

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Photos: Hjalmar Dahm, if not indicated otherwise.

Next ALAS Newsletter: September 2001. Please send manuscripts before 1st September.



All About Salt

Newsletter

Issue 1, June 2001

Notes from the editor

Welcome to the first issue of ALAS Newsletter. It will be edited several times per year and give you regular information about this specific project. We intend this to be attractive to a wider audience and we therefore invite everyone to send in contributions to the editor.

On the last page of this issue, you will find a description of the aims of ALAS, but here is a brief summary of the project.

First of all, the choice of the name. ALAS is not only an acronym for All About Salt. It is also the ancient Greek name for salt (in today's Greek it is *αλάτι*). Just like the Latin *sal* has given words and names like salinas, Salzburg and Salins-les-Bains, *alas* (or in its earlier form *αλς*, which initially means sea) has given us halophytes, Halle and Hallstatt.

The general aims of this project is to deal with the conservation of traditional salinas. All around the European and Mediterranean coasts, from Bretagne (Brittany) on the French Atlantic coast to the Black Sea and on many islands, some sites still produce salt in the same way - or at least with only minor modifications - as it was done 1.000 years ago. These salinas form a fascinating cultural heritage. They are also important wetlands for breeding and migrating birds and they play a significant economic role. Traditional salinas are valuable for pedagogical and scientific purposes, the salt is of high quality and they provide work for many people. But the traditional salinas are also threatened by abandonment, transformation, aquaculture, new land use... In coming issues of ALAS Newsletter, we will be able to further investigate several of these themes.

ALAS was initiated as an attempt to bring some of the European sites with traditional salt production together and to start working on common topics. The first try to put up a programme dates from 1997, when several people previously had met at an Insula-UNESCO conference in Paris. But it was not until the end of 1999 that the final project was accepted for financing by the European Commission as an Ecos-Ouverture programme. Four sites agreed to join ALAS. You will find a description of these on page 2.

After a long period of networking and informal contacts, the four partners finally got to meet at the ALAS Launching Conference in the end of March this year. The results of the various meetings are found on page 3.

During the coming months there will be a lot of activities in ALAS. Many studies will be carried out, the 6 Technical Working Groups will start to produce information packages and many meetings will take place.

In sale salus,

Hjalmar Dahm
Editor

Dear colleagues and friends

I believe that it is a great pleasure to us all to have the ALAS project up and running despite the difficulties that we have to face as implementation started. It is my belief that things will go well and we will all benefit the most from this interregional cooperation. This, in fact, will be a challenge for us and our countries to promote.

All the participating sites have their own culture and

tradition, things that people living in "civilized" and rich countries, look for and pay for. I am sure that during this trip that we will do together we will discover many more things that we have in common.

Best regards

Spiros Efstratiou
Project Manager, AENAL (Lesvos)

The fragility of nature

Between Christmas and New Year 1999/2000, the Maltese tanker *Erika*, was caught in a storm outside the South coast of Brittany. It was transporting highly toxic oil for the French Total. The tanker was in poor shape, it broke and sunk in the rough sea.

Also on this coast, everybody was preparing to celebrate the new millennium. But instead of a feast, the days and months to follow turned out to be a disaster. The stinking oil arrived on the beaches, the oyster banks were destroyed, the

fishing boats blocked in the harbours, thousands of sea birds died, the coming tourist season ruined. The salters (*paludiers*) in Guérande managed to prevent the oil from penetrating into the salinas. They managed to protect their land, their "working tool", the pride of a whole region. But at what costs; ecological, financial and human? For the first time in 2.000 years no salt was produced on the Guérande peninsula in year 2000.

For 2001 the situation is better and the *paludiers* are preparing for a new salting season, but the memories of *Erika* will always remain.

I took this aerial photo in summer 1996.



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The four partners in ALAS

Lesvos (Greece)

The island of Lesvos lies in the North East Aegean and is characterised by its rural activities (olive-oil, fishing, husbandry). It is famous for its gastronomic delicacies (salted fish, cheese, ouzo, olive-oil). The island has 90.000 inhabitants. Two salinas are in operation, but they are no longer considered as traditional. The local ALAS project activities include for instance the creation of a salt-museum and a traditional salina together with the implementation of ecological management plans.

Principal partner of the project: Development Company of Lesvos Prefectural Authority, AENAL.

Associate partners: Prefecture of Lesvos, University of the Aegean and Hellenic Saltworks S.A.

Additional partners: Municipality of Polichnitos and Agrotouristic Co-operative of Women of Polichnitos.

Contact: Spiros Efstratiou and Hjalmar Dahm, AENAL, P.O. Box 146, GR-81100 MYTILENE, Greece. Tel. 0030 251 44 945, Fax 0030 251 48 115.



Salt-harvest in Polichnitos with the future salt-museum.

Figueira da Foz (Portugal)

Figueira is located at the mouth of the Mondego Estuary and is known as an important port for coastal and open sea fisheries. Figueira has 62.000 inhabitants. The local salt production was formerly of high importance, but is today declining. Many of the traditional salinas have been transformed into fish farms. The local activities linked to the project are mainly: re-establishment of traditional salinas, training of salters, creation of a salt-museum.

Principal partner of the project: Municipality of Figueira da Foz.

Associate partner: Regional Environment Administration.

Additional partners: Association of Salt producers, Sociedade Figueira Praia S.A.

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A salina in Figueira da Foz with the future museum.

Piran (Slovenia)

Piran is located in the narrow coastal strip of northern Istria, in the Adriatic Sea. Piran has 17.000 inhabitants. For ages, salt has been traditionally produced in salinas close to the town. A salt-museum was established 10 years ago and an abandoned salina was restored inside the landscape park (*Ramsar site*). The local ALAS activities include maintenance and up-grading of the traditional salinas, marketing measures, training of salters and extension of the salt-museum.

Principal partner of the project: Commune of Piran.

Associate partners: Regional Institute for the Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage, Maritime Museum Sergej Masera, Ornithological Association Ixobrychus.

Contact: Robert Turk, Regional Institute, Trg Bratstva 1, SLO-66330 PIRAN, Slovenia. Tel. 00386 56 731 537, Fax 00386 56 731 536.



The restored salina in Secovlje with the salt-museum and the wind-driven water pump.

Pomorie (Bulgaria)

The town of Pomorie lies on the Black Sea coast. It is an important tourist and health resort. Pomorie has 15.000 inhabitants. For over thousand years, Pomorie has been a site of salt production, but recently the production has declined. Under the ALAS project the local actions cover upgrading of traditional salinas, training of salters, marketing and establishing a salt-museum.

Principal partner of the project: Municipality of Pomorie.

Associate partner: Tourist Council of Pomorie.

Additional partners: Municipal Museum, Cultural Club Prosveta, Health Resort Complex, Pomorie Saltworks, Solari 98 Ltd. and 25 Centuries Pomorie Foundation.

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Harvesting salt by hand in Pomorie.

What happened at the ALAS Launching Conference?

The official start of the project was the Launching Conference, held on the Aegean island of Lesvos during the last days of March 2001. Between 7 and 10 delegates came from each of the participating sites.

On Thursday 29, the **Project Management Committee** met in Mytilene. This is the supreme body of the project and it is composed of a representative from each Principal Partner plus opted members. The PMC thoroughly went through the interregional tasks inside the project and prepared the following meetings.

The **Technical Working Groups** met the same evening and the allocations of the 6 TWG were approved together with the responsibilities for the technical letters and other interregional publications and tasks.

The **Launching Conference** itself took place on Friday 30 in the small town of Polichnitos, where one of the island's two salinas is located. The four sites could here give detailed presentations of their respective areas and the ALAS work programme was approved. The Chairpersons of the four Local Steering Committees signed the **ALAS Co-operation Charter**.

On Saturday 31 March, the participants visited the salina of Kalloni and could get a glimpse at the future salt-museum in Polichnitos.



Launching Conference in Polichnitos, photo: Renato Neves.

The detailed minutes from all meetings and the ALAS Co-operation Charter can be ordered by sending a simple request to: alas@otenet.gr

The ALAS Technical Working Groups

The Technical Working Groups play an important role in the work of ALAS. They will produce the technical letters and give valuable advice to all the other issues (printed material, video, web-site, studies, reports...). The TWGs will be able to meet during all the main events. The responsibilities for the different TWGs are allocated as follows:

- TWG1 Basic issues, dissemination and awareness raising - Lesvos
Contact : Spiros Efstratiou, alas@otenet.gr
- TWG2 Management plans, environment and natural heritage - Figueira da Foz
Contact : Antonio Martins, amartins@dra-centro.pt
- TWG3 Restoration, up-grading, construction and operation of traditional salt-works - Figueira da Foz
Contact : Renato Neves, littorina@mail.telepac.pt
- TWG4 Training of salters, co-operative structures, marketing and related measures - Piran
Contact : Flavio Bonin, Flavio.Bonin@pommuz-pi.si
- TWG5 Cultural heritage and salt-museums - Piran
Contact : Zora Zagar, Zorislava.Zagar@pommuz-pi.si
- TWG6 Tourism issues - Pomorie



Conference excursion to the salina in Polichnitos.

News from the sites

In the next issue of ALAS Newsletter, we will report on the actions carried out