

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF GLOBAL ECOVILLAGES NETWORK – EUROPEAN BRANCH

From 7th to 13th July 2013 the annual [Conference of the European branch of Global Ecovillage Network](#) will take place in Brienz, Switzerland, hosted by [Schweibenalp Center](#). The Conference is meant to be a space for exchanging best practices from all over the world, and this year will particularly focus on the following themes: policy-development for sustaining eco-villages initiatives, innovative technologies for eco-villages and the use of eco-villages strategy in traditional/indigenous villages. During the Conference some workshops will also be organized on waste recycling, fund-raising and sustainable economies.



The movement of eco-villages is nowadays spread worldwide: particularly present in North and South America and in Europe, eco-villages are indeed becoming more and more interesting strategies for communities from Africa and Asia.

Diane and Robert Gilman's, founders of the movement, define the eco-villages as *human scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be continued into the indefinite future*. Thus, they are not only environmentally sustainable neighborhoods, but communities built around the values of comprehensive human development. Eco-villages sustain their members and integrate marginal groups, respect differences and promote cultural expressions, protect biodiversity and properly manage energy and waste, produce their own food using organic methods, build eco-houses using locally adapted materials, promote the circulation of money within the eco-village (i.e., producing what their members need inside the eco-village, or financing their activities through participating in eco-tourism initiatives).

An example of eco-village that is worth to mention, being the first in Ireland, is the experience of [Cloughjordan Village](#). Placed in the very heart of the small town of Cloughjordan, the Village has started its activities few years ago, and could already count on the completed construction of 50 building out of the 114 low-energy homes and 16 live-work units foreseen in the original plans. The Village also has 67 acres of fields and woods and a center for energy production that provides electricity from renewable sources to all the buildings. Moreover, 12 acres of the Village land integrate the 28 acres of Cloughjordan Community Farm, an organic, bio-dynamic farm (the first and largest Community Farm in Ireland) supported by 50



Cloughjordan families, that in exchange for a weekly amount of money receive its products.

Under the lead of [Danish Gaia Trust](#) in 1994 the Global Eco-village Network (GEN) was founded by nine of the first attempts of eco-villages from Scotland, United States, Germany, Australia, Russia, India and Denmark. The need for cooperation and networking was indeed strongly felt, such as the necessity of presenting eco-villages as positive solutions applicable both in the North and in the South of the world.

Today GEN is an umbrella organization promoting and connecting eco-villages around the world, and working for the enhancement of environmental protection, human rights, conflict resolution and active citizenship, with the plan of mainly concentrating its future efforts in the educational field. In the last 19 years, GEN continental branches have been created, for connecting eco-villages from the same continent.

In 1998 the eco-village experience of [Findhorn](#), UK, one of the founders of GEN, entered in the [list of 100 best practices](#) identified by United Nations around the world, exemplifying the success eco-villages can obtain in implementing a holistically sustainable way of living.

To learn more:

[GEN website](#)

[Gaia Trust website](#)

[GEN Europe website](#)

[GEN Africa website](#)

[GEN Oceania and Asia website](#)

[GEN America website](#)

[GEN Latin America \(CASA\) website](#)

[Spanish Network of Ecovillages](#)

[Portuguese Network of Ecovillages](#)

