Dynamiques environnementales

Journal international de géosciences et de l'environnement

42 | 2018

Du glint baltique au lac Peïpous

Editorial

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/dynenviron/2225>

DOI: 10.4000/dynenviron.2225

ISSN: 2534-4358

This article is a translation of:

Éditorial - URL : <https://journals.openedition.org/dynenviron/1619> [fr]

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Bordeaux

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 July 2018

Number of pages: 274-275

ISSN: 1968-469X

Electronic reference

Claudia Delmas-Scherer, "Editorial", *Dynamiques environnementales* [Online], 42 | 2018, Online since 01 June 2019, connection on 06 March 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/dynenviron/2225> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/dynenviron.2225>

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Editorial

*View of Snelli Park in Tallinn (photo:
Pascal Bartout).*

We would like to start off by thanking Dynamiques Environnementales for giving the French Embassy in Estonia and the Estonian Research Council (ETAG) the opportunity to contribute to its editorial page. Historically, research has always played a fundamental role in France, which has succeeded in maintaining its position among the leading powers in the field of research by constantly adjusting its research policies to new challenges and developments faced by the scientific world. Today, research can only be conceived within the scope of European and international cooperation. We have found in Estonia a dynamic partner who has succeeded in developing centres of excellence which the Cultural Department of the French Embassy has partnered with to set up a range of cooperation programmes (high level scientific stays, exchange of expertise, missions and invitations...).

The flagship among these programmes is the PHC-Parrot (in tribute to Georg Friedrich Parrot, a German physician who was the first Rector of Tartu University). The PHC-Parrot programme counts among the concrete achievements of the Integrated Actions Programme in the field of research, set up within the framework of the cooperation and friendship agreement treaty between France and Estonia, which came into effect on 27 April 1995. Funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MEAE) with the support of the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation (MESRI), it is managed in partnership with the Estonian Research Council (Etag). Its purpose is to develop scientific and technological exchanges of excellence between research centres of both countries, thus encouraging fresh cooperation. Allocated funds are used to support mobility for researchers from one country to the other.

Since its implementation in 2003, 58 French-Estonian projects have been funded. The success of this programme lies in its duration. Most research programmes require time, and a prerequisite for efficient cooperation is mutual understanding. Thus, numerous French-Estonian teams have strengthened their collaboration thanks to this funding and still work together to this day, such as Tiit Koff and Pascal Bartout, who benefited from a PHC-Parrot grant in 2013-2014 for their work on sedimentation and hydrodynamics in small lakes. Their work reflects the growing environmental concern on a global scale. We would like to thank Dynamiques Environnementales for furthering the progress of ideas and debates on the subject.

Today, research and innovation are a focal point of the energetic transition. French President Emmanuel Macron launched on 1 June 2017 the programme "Make Our Planet Great Again", as a reaction to the United States' decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate. It is a call to researchers, teachers and students; it invites them to come together to lead the fight against global warming, by conducting research in the field of climate change, energy transition and Earth system science. Both the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation are funding the programme and have put forward 3, 8 million Euros for the 2018-2020 period.

For its part, Estonia, since it regained its independence in 1991, has also taken significant steps to protect its environment. With one of the lowest population densities in Europe and with 50% of its territory covered in forests, Estonia can boast a certain number of species either endangered or extinct in other European countries, such as minks, lynxes, bears and wolves among its inhabitants.

But the protection of this natural heritage remains a challenge. The soviet occupation, with its forced industrialisation and militarisation of the region has left scars: air, sea and river pollution as well as chemical waste. Although the country has significantly improved since the 1990s, the 2018 Statistics Estonia Report¹ points out that there is still much to be done to reach the UN sustainable development goals.

It is said that 1000 years ago, the forest was so dense that a squirrel could jump from branch to branch from the shores of the Baltic Sea all the way to Moscow. If it is no longer possible, let us hope that the French-Estonian cooperation makes it possible for squirrels to, one day, jump from branch to branch from Tallinn to Paris.

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1. https://www.stat.ee/publication-2018_quarterly-bulletin-of-statistics-estonia-2-18

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