

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### **The International Conference of the European Society for Soil Conservation (ESSC), Průhonice, the Czech Republic, June 22–25, 2009**

The International Conference of the ESSC was held in Průhonice (near Prague, Czech Republic) in the framework of the National Rural Network and on the occasion of the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Research Institute for Soil and Water Conservation (RISWC). This Institute deals with applied research into and problems of soil and water in relation to agriculture. The Czech Soil Science Society and Czech Agricultural University cooperated with the organisers. The place for the Conference had been chosen at the ESSC Congress in Palermo 2007 in appreciation of the long and fruitful history of the research into soil science and soil conservation in the Czech Republic, and of the important results achieved by them. The main leading theme of the conference was “Protection of the ecological and productivity functions of soil in a pan-European context”.

The conference took place in the Congress and Education Centre Floret in Průhonice, near Prague. The comfortable Congress Centre is attached to a nice old castle with famous flower and tree gardens, and it includes a congress hall, several smaller parlors, a very good restaurant and a hotel for the participants. All of the conference participants had therefore everything for their work. About 90 scientific and also administrative workers from all European countries took part in the event. Seven general contributions in the plenary session, 5 keynote lectures, 22 oral scientific contributions, and 37 posters were presented in four thematic sessions during two days of the agenda. All thematic sessions were held in the common plenum.

The comprehensive lecture of top importance “Update of the Soil Thematic Strategy and the Proposal for Soil Framework Directive” (Luca Marmo from European Commission – Environment Directorate General) was the most important part of the first day opening program. The problems concerning the progress and acceptance of this document were listened to with extraordinary attention and the following discussion was long. It was a strong voice for a substantial contribution to the EU Soil Thematic Strategy.

The first thematic session was devoted to the problems of soil sealing. Generally, it pointed out the threatening consumption of soil – and mostly of the high quality soil – for building areas all over Europe. The attention was drawn to the lack of suitable methods for the sealing assessment, namely for agricultural or forest use but also from the view of the soil environmental functions and from the impact of soil sealing on the water management and landscape. The problem requires studies on different ways of the soil consumption. Some possibilities were presented.

The second session concerned the soil degradation. The diagnostics and trends of different soil degradation processes, impact of soil degradation on soil multifunctionality, ecological rehabilitation of degraded soils, different ways of land management including irrigation, and the supply of possibly polluted materials into soil were the main questions presented and discussed.

The third thematic session was partially tied up with the preceding one. It dealt with different ways of soil reclamation. The impact of high irrigation and various methods of tillage on the infiltration and retention of water, influence of acid deposits, and improvement of degraded soils similarly as the reclamation of man-made soils (Anthrosols, Technosols) were the objects of the presentations.

The last thematic session was devoted to the soil and water monitoring. It was pointed out that monitoring is the only method which can demonstrate the state and changes of the soil characteristics. The effort for establishing a unified European soil monitoring system has not yet been successful due to the difficulties in methodical approaches to this process and the use of the results.

The poster presentation was a natural part of the conference. 37 presented posters covered the whole range of event problematics. Competition for the best poster was arranged.

The program of the conference was closed by the acceptance of the General Conclusion evaluating the conference contents and results that followed from the agenda of each thematic session. The farewell dinner was the social conclusion of the conference.

One day long post-conference excursion to the North-Bohemia Open Coal Region was focused on the problems of open mining, soil and land reclamation works which follow after the mining activities, and similarly on the technical, financial, and legal questions connected with them. All the excursion participants were captivated by the range of mining and by the range of reclamation activities carried out in agricultural, forest, or hydric parts of the reclaimed land. The rich discussion with mine specialists taking place at each excursion stop was evidence for proof of mostly foreign participants' interest. It was a really successful close of the conference.

We hope that all the participants left Průhonice with a good impression ensuing from the well organised congress at a high scientific level including an interesting excursion.

*Ing. JANA PODHRÁZSKÁ, Ph.D., Research Institute for Soil and Water Conservation, Brno*

*Ing. JANA KONEČNÁ, Research Institute for Soil and Water Conservation, Brno*

*Ing. PAVEL NOVÁK, CSc., Research Institute for Soil and Water Conservation, Prague*

*e-mail: podhrazska@vumopbrno.cz*