



## **Conclusion of the Conference 2000 in Mellionnec**

On behalf of the Mairie of Mellionnec, we thank you all for sharing with us some of your experiences and concerns concerning our main issue *Rural life and the environment*.

All the villages here have their own history, their own cultural heritage, their own natural environment that surrounds them. As a matter of fact, we have met two different experiences with peat-bogs : in Kilingi-Nomme, peat-bogs are protected by law whereas in Lescouët-Gouarec in Central Brittany the peat-bog is no more than registered ; however, it is maintained thanks to local initiatives. As regards water management, some villages are faced with the problem of purifying the water, while Paxos in Greece meets with the more basic problem of finding and supplying water. About the issue of managing wastes, Aldeburgh in Great-Britain has to deal with household refuse whereas Wijk Aan Zee in the Netherlands is confronted with rather industrial wastes.

However, despite all these differences between us, there's at least one thing that we all have in common here : we all have highlighted our wish to continue to exist as villages and to keep our identity even though we have to overcome great difficulties.

Our main difficulties are to struggle within the context of the free market economy, against cities that attract all services, against big industrial structures and uncontrolled modernism.

Some solutions to overcome such hindrances to the development of our village lives have been put forward:

- as far as agriculture is concerned, enable small farmers to sell directly, so that all profits would remain where goods are produced ;
- encourage an ecological agriculture and the development of renewable energy ;
- continue our self-involvement, i.e. not to wait for others' (administrative) initiatives ;
- an awareness of the quality of our environment, starting at school.

Many other suggestions can be made. Anyhow, we haven't certainly exchanged ideas as much as we could have – since there is so much to tell – but this conference was only a start on the issue *Rural life and the environment*. It will continue for longer periods on the internet site that has recently been created. Of course we expect you to take part on the forum and to write your ideas, reflexions and suggestions. Everything you can add to our conference of today will be taken into account in the proceedings of the conference, which will be released before the end of October.

But now let's see what prospects are underway for the Cultural Villages of Europe – 2001 !