Didier Vancutsem  
Secretary General

Secretary General Report 2014 - 2015  
Presented in the Bureau meeting and Annual General Assembly, in Rotterdam 2015

1. General responsibilities for the Secretary General  
The Secretary General of ISOCARP is responsible for implementation of the ISOCARP strategies, of the EXCO and President decisions and programs, when and as required.  
He is providing and submitting reports on all activities, as well as responsible for monitoring, guiding and supporting the Secretariat as direct responsible person of the secretariat staff as well as internal matters such as statutes. Another activity is the development of EU projects and their policy, as well as the proposal and monitoring of the execution of the EU projects.  
Furthermore, his task is to develop and control all activities and responsibilities in relation to fund raising, looking for and submitting applications for sponsorship, grants and donations, soliciting gifts from individual donors and request. He develops and submits to EXCO for approval the ISOCARP policies on financial sponsorships, grants, requests, etc.  
Together with the other VPs, he provides and submits Progress Reports to ExCo for the regular ExCo meetings or on request, prepares strategic guidelines in relation to the 5G responsibilities at the beginning of each year and submits to ExCo for adoption, as well as annual report for BM and GM.” (SG Profile Elections)

2. Actions undertaken October 2014 – October 2015  
The actions of the Secretary General are oriented on strategic guidelines, which were presented and agreed with the Executive Committee and the Bureau in Gdynia September 2014:  
- Increasing attractiveness of the society and better involvement of the membership  
- Becoming part of a network of excellence and partnerships  
- Effective Headquarters organisation and staff  
- Worldwide reference in knowledge and research as Think Tank  
- Sustainable and stable financial situation

1. Increasing attractiveness of the society and better involvement of the membership
  
Together with the VP Communication and the Headquarters, the Secretary General worked on the concept of the new website, as well as new flyer and bookmark. This new website is going to go “live” after our Gdynia congress; it will include new functionalities for the membership, become the new “business card” of the Society and the core of the membership’s involvement. The contents and information of the website will gradually increase in the next weeks; as an example, links to existing urban planning databases are going to be established, e.g. with EUKN (www.eukn.org) and others. Newsletters and other regular information will follow. You will find more information regarding the website in the report of our VP Communication.  
Also the involvement of our members is increasing: each new project or contribution to the Society is open to our members. Open Calls are regularly sent to the members, as it was recently the case for the training courses in Abu Dhabi. We will have more of such projects in the future.

2. Becoming part of a network of excellence and partnerships
  
As a first step, a survey of relationships with other organisations, cooperation networks, public and private actors was done by the Secretary General together with the Headquarters: it turned out that the Society has already relations with 39 “partners”. Based on this survey, a collaboration and partnership strategy was elaborated, by identifying the potentials for membership and expected win-wins for the Society.
A primary importance network for the period 2014-2017 and selection of new partners were discussed and agreed by the Executive Committee in January 2014. By implementing this strategy, ISOCARP is seeking cooperation and synergies with actual selected partners, and starting new cooperation with proposed partners, in a “proactive way”. The win-wins / benefits to ISOCARP and ISOCARP members are clearly identified, to be developed in steps on short, medium and long term. A “Partnership Program” document was elaborated, describing the different ways how public and private partners can become partners of ISOCARP, and what kind of benefits they will get.

Different categories of partnerships were developed:
- MoU agreements: a new generation of agreements focusing on better win-win activities,
- Congress Partnership Agreements (CPA): an agreement on sponsorship of congress activities together with exhibition (package),
- Event Endorsement Agreement (EEA) and Project Endorsement Agreement (PEA): research or design projects can be endorsed, with identification of benefits for the Society,
- Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA): content related, the agreements with global and local players can be established. Connected to actions and ISOCARP products, agreements can bring long-term benefits to membership and Society. Here, private actors are targeted: public sector, urban infrastructure, mobility, building industry, real estate, investment banking, IT, foundations, etc,
- Project Partnership Agreement (PPA): project partnership, where ISOCARP is joining a project consortium.

Regarding institutional partners, ISOCARP was in the last months actively developing relationships with several partners, such as:
- ICLEI World: the MoU signed just before the Gdynia congress is aiming to develop close cooperation between the two organisations regarding joint events, projects, expertise and Urban Resilience Task Forces – a new Expert Task Force product organized jointly with ICLEI;
- Metropolitan Solutions: the MoU signed is including ISOCARP into the new Urban Fair organized by the Hannover Messe in Berlin in May 2015.

More partnerships are in the discussion with other national or international organisations, such as “Les Ateliers de Cergy – France”, UIIP – the International Union of Public Transport, RICS – the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, the World Bank Group, the European Investment Bank, or the EEA - European Environment Agency.

Regarding private partners, ISOCARP is at the moment also in active discussion with several partners, which could become strategic partner of our Society, such as Siemens or Plantagon (pioneer of urban agriculture).

3. Effective Headquarters organisation and staff

The internal management of the Headquarters is effective and is continuously supervised. The Secretary General has a daily communication with the staff. Questions regarding staff functions and responsibilities were clarified early 2014: the staff hierarchy and the corresponding salaries were adopted during the last Exco. Gaby and Monica will have their salaries automatically yearly updated to Dutch level. The employment contracts of Eline van Haastrecht, Project Assistant, and Bart van Tongeren, Project Assistant, were prolonged (Eline until October 2015, Bart until End 2014). Eline is helping now three days/week the secretariat, Bart will continue to work on UN-Habitat issues together with Shipra. Talya ten Brink, Student, was helping the secretariat in layout questions and print; she lefted the Headquarters; another student, Iris Ploum, was helping us some months and had to leave us again. Not to forget the precious help of Hajo Vis, our bookkeeper, who is helping the secretariat with all financial questions. We are constantly discussing how we can enhance the effectiveness of the secretariat as the workload was substantially increasing in the past months and will increase again regarding the 50th Anniversary celebrations. Thanks to the secretariat for their very good job!

4. Worldwide reference in knowledge and research as Think Tank

We hear more and more that ISOCARP is considered as a Think Tank. ISOCARP is part of the global network and is becoming a worldwide reference in knowledge and research. We are aiming to achieve a balanced partnership in research, practice and institutions, by having a bottom-up process starting by the members and the National Delegations, encouraging initiatives on local level - and top-down by having key roles in high-level institutions, such as UN-Habitat or World Bank. Research and education institutions and partners are involved in the process, e.g. with AESOP, interested universities and research institutions.
Early this year, we started to have regular brainstorming sessions in the Executive Committee, discussing actual topics and future topics related to congresses, events or projects. In our discussions we identify the trends and challenges of our Society, which themes are relevant and could be developed. The Habitat III Think Tank going to take place during our Gdynia congress is an example of this process.

The Secretary-General was participating in several events during the last months, representing the Society and making its visible, e.g. in February 2014 at the Cities of Tomorrow Conference, in Brussels, organized by the European Commission, at the Hannover Messe – Metropolitan Solutions in April 2014, at the Geospatial World Forum, Geneva in May 2014, presenting a keynote on “Geodata and urban planning challenges”, at the ICLEI Resilient Cities 2014, Bonn in May 2014, where very good contacts and meeting with interested colleagues took place. In June 14, the Secretary General was attending together with the President the World Cities Summit Singapore, where also important meetings with potential partners took place.

5. Sustainable and stable financial situation

Together with the Treasurer, the Secretary-General is working on a balanced and sustainable financial situation, which is stable today, thanks to the several projects – please have a look at the Treasurer report. As we are facing new challenges with the 50th Anniversary celebrations and the several products we are planning towards our next congress, we constantly work with financial discipline and at the same time on new strategic partnerships and sponsorships, good event results, joint events with financial return, projects and products (UPATs, YPP, training courses). This allows us to be optimistic and looking forward in the future. Together we build a brighter future.

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