The European Landscape Convention

The main objectives of the Council of Europe are to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law and to seek common solutions to the main problems facing European society today. The Organisation is active in environment protection and in promoting sustainable development in line with the Recommendation Rec (2002) 1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to Members States on the Guiding Principles for sustainable spatial development of the European continent, previously adopted by the European Conference of Ministers responsible for regional planning (CEMAT). The aim is to bring the economic and social requirements to be met by the territory into harmony with its ecological and cultural functions and therefore to contribute to long-term, large-scale and balanced spatial development. These seek to protect Europeans’ quality of life and well-being taking into account landscapes, cultural and natural values.

Origins of the Convention

On the basis of an initial draft prepared by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Committee of Ministers decided in 1999 to set up a select group of experts responsible for drafting a European Landscape Convention, under the aegis of the Steering Committee of cultural heritage (CDPAT) and the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP). Ongoing work of this group of experts, in which the principal governmental and non-governmental international organisations participated, the Committee of Ministers adopted the final text of the Convention on 19 July 2000. The Convention was opened for signature in Florence, Italy on 20 October 2000 in the context of the Council of Europe Campaign “Europe, a common heritage”.

Why a convention on landscape?

As an essential factor of individual and communal well-being and an important part of people’s quality of life, landscape contributes to human fulfilment and consolidation of the European identity. It also has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity and whose protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation; contributes to the formation of local cultures and is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity; is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas; is a key element of individual and social well-being and its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone.

(Preamble to the European Landscape Convention, Florence, 20 October 2000)

«The landscape ... has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity and whose protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation; contributes to the formation of local cultures and is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity; is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas; is a key element of individual and social well-being and its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone»

Undertakings of the Contracting Parties

National measures

In accepting the principles and aims of the Convention, the Contracting Parties undertake to protect, manage and/or plan their landscapes by adopting a whole series of general and specific measures at the national level, in keeping with the subsidiarity principle moreover. In this context, they undertake to encourage the participation of the public and of the local and regional authorities in the decision-making processes that affect the landscape dimension of their territory. The Contracting Parties undertake to implement four general measures at the national level:

- legal recognition of landscape as constituting an essential component of the setting

- protection, management and planning...
for people’s lives, as reflecting the diversity of their common cultural and natural heritage and as the foundation of their identity;
- establishment and implementation of policies to protect, manage and plan landscapes;
- procedures for the participation by the general public, local and regional authorities and other parties interested in the formulation and implementation of landscape policies;
- integrating landscape into regional and town planning policies, cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, and any other policies, which may have direct or indirect impact on the landscape.

The Contracting Parties further undertake to implement five specific measures at national level, to be applied consecutively:
- awareness-raising: improving appreciation by civil society, private organisations and public authorities regarding the value, function and transformation of landscapes;
- training and education: providing training for specialists in landscape appraisal and landscape operations, multidisciplinary training programmes on landscape policy, protection, management and planning, aimed for professionals in the private and public sector, for interested associations, and school and university courses, which, in the relevant subject areas, cover landscape-related values and questions of landscape protection, management and planning;
- identification and evaluation: mobilising those concerned in order to reach a better knowledge of landscape, guiding the work of landscape identification and evaluation through exchanges of experience and methods between the Parties at a European level;
- setting landscape quality objectives: defining quality objectives for the landscapes, which have been identified and evaluated, after consulting the public;
- implementation of landscape policies: introducing policy instruments for the protection, management and/or planning of landscapes.

Terms used in the Convention are defined to ensure uniform interpretation: landscape, landscape policy, landscape quality objective, landscape protection, landscape management and landscape planning.

**International measures:**

**European co-operation**

The Contracting Parties also undertake to co-operate at an international level in catering for the landscape dimension in international policies and programmes, and to recommend as appropriate the inclusion of landscape considerations in these policies and programmes. They accordingly undertake to co-operate in respect of technical and scientific assistance and exchange of landscape specialists for training and information, and to exchange information on all questions covered by the Convention.

Transfrontier landscapes are covered by a specific provision: the Contracting Parties undertake to encourage transfrontier cooperation at local and regional levels and, wherever necessary, to prepare and implement joint landscape programmes.

**Council of Europe Landscape Award**

The Convention provides a „Council of Europe Landscape Award“. This constitutes an acknowledgement of the policy or measures applied by local and regional authorities or by non-governmental organisations to protect, manage and/or plan their landscape, which have proved lastingly effective and can thus serve as an example to other territorial authorities in Europe.

The award will thus help to stimulate local agencies in encouraging and acknowledging exemplary landscape management. The proposal was initiated by the Committee of experts responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention and adopted by the Committee of Ministers.

**Implementation of the Convention**


Two Conferences of Contracting and Signatory States of the Convention were already organised on 22 and 23 November 2001 and 28 and 29 November 2002 in order to bring together the Contracting and Signatory States, the States invited to sign it and observers3. They notably allowed:
- to urge the signature and ratification of the Convention;
- to discuss on legal assistance to the Signatory States and to the Member States of the Council of Europe invited to sign the Convention;
- to overview the effective implementation of the Convention after its entry into force.

A Declaration was adopted by the second Conference4. A document compiling summary descriptive notes on the landscape policies pursued in the Council of Europe Member States was done5 and an Internet site of the Convention established6.

Two meetings of the workshops on the implementation of the European Landscape Convention were moreover organised in Strasbourg on 23 and 24 May 2002 and on 27 and 28 November 2003 in order to discuss and present concrete examples and experiences7.

The following five themes were examined in 20028:
- Landscape policies: the contribution to the well-being of European citizens and to sustainable development – social, economic, cultural and ecological approaches (Preamble of the Convention);
- Landscape identification, evaluation and quality objectives, using cultural and natural resources (article 6 of the Convention);
- Awareness-raising, training and education (article 6 of the Convention);
- Innovative tools for the protection, management and planning of landscape (article 5 of the Convention);
- Landscape Award (article 11 of the Convention).

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**Definitions**

Terms used in the Convention are defined to ensure uniform interpretation:

“Landscape” means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

“Landscape policy” means an expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes.

“Landscape quality objective” means, for a specific landscape, the formulation by the competent public authorities of the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings.

“Landscape protection” means action to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by the landscape’s heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or human activity.

“Landscape management” means action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, to guide and harmonise changes, which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes.

“Landscape planning” means strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes.

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**Tab. 1: Definitions**

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3 Two Conferences of Contracting and Signatory States of the Convention were already organised on 22 and 23 November 2001 and 28 and 29 November 2002 in order to bring together the Contracting and Signatory States, the States invited to sign it and observers. They notably allowed:
4 A Declaration was adopted by the second Conference. A document compiling summary descriptive notes on the landscape policies pursued in the Council of Europe Member States was done and an Internet site of the Convention established.
5 Two meetings of the workshops on the implementation of the European Landscape Convention were moreover organised in Strasbourg on 23 and 24 May 2002 and on 27 and 28 November 2003 in order to discuss and present concrete examples and experiences.
6 The following five themes were examined in 2002:
7 Landscape policies: the contribution to the well-being of European citizens and to sustainable development – social, economic, cultural and ecological approaches (Preamble of the Convention);
8 Landscape identification, evaluation and quality objectives, using cultural and natural resources (article 6 of the Convention);
9 Awareness-raising, training and education (article 6 of the Convention);
10 Innovative tools for the protection, management and planning of landscape (article 5 of the Convention);
11 Landscape Award (article 11 of the Convention).
APPENDIX 1

Declaration of the Second Conference of Contracting and Signatory States
to the European Landscape Convention,
meeting in Strasbourg on 28 and 29 November 2002

The second Conference of Contracting and Signatory States to the European Landscape Convention, meeting in Strasbourg on 28 and 29 November 2002 via the committees of experts, which the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has instructed to monitor implementation of the Convention, viz. the Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage (CDP AT) and the Committee for the Activities of the Council of Europe in the field of Biological and Landscape Diversity (CO-DPB),

Considering:

● the importance of the European Landscape Convention as regards respect for the values, which the Council of Europe promotes, namely upholding human rights, fostering democracy and seeking solutions to the major problems of the society;
● the Convention’s fundamental contribution to implementing the results of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in August and September 2002;
● the need for early entry into force of the Convention,

Points out that:

● the European Landscape Convention, acknowledging the diversity of landscapes, calls for the working out and establishment of landscape policies, which precludes attempting to impose any one standard landscape policy;
● landscape is a factor in the well-being of the individual, whether considered as such or as a member of civil society, and is of benefit not only to the local community as the familiar setting of their daily lives, but also to those who merely pass through for tourist or work reasons;
● landscape is a key element in sustainable spatial development of the European continent in so far as it reconciles social, environmental and cultural needs while also being a contributory factor in economic development and, more particularly, job creation;
● landscape is shaped by natural and cultural processes, and awareness of its history and particular characteristics is necessary to its management;
● taking landscape into account in all types of territory and in all policy sectors is a basic principle and requirement if landscape policy is not to be confined to landscapes, which are already protected;
● landscape change needs to be controlled by protection, management and planning on a human scale;
● landscape is an important factor in the well-being of the individual, whether considered as such or as a member of civil society, and is of benefit not only to the local community as the familiar setting of their daily lives, but also to those who merely pass through for tourist or work reasons;
● taking landscape into account as far as possible, notably in peri-urban areas, substantially enhances people’s well-being and thereby helps to maintain social cohesion at the regional level;
● local and regional authorities have a key role to play in effective and consistent implementation of the European Landscape Convention, with support from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
● the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters helps facilitate implementation of the European Landscape Convention,

Invites Contracting and Signatory States to:

1. introduce, without delay and at the appropriate levels, permanent institutional machinery for co-ordinated action and consultation on landscape matters, taking into account the principle of subsidiarity;
2. develop and provide innovative tools for integrating landscape into sectoral policies and introduce incentive measures for applying them;
3. be careful to observe the consistency principle in order to avoid clashes between landscape policies and other sectoral policies;
4. ensure that landscape-quality objectives are formulated and that protection, management and development policies are properly implemented;
5. carry out landscape identification and assessment, if they have not already done so, with active co-operation between the different people involved, be they elected representatives, scientists, professionals or local residents;
6. optimally develop the awareness-raising, training and education provided for in the Convention so as, in particular, to promote the necessary professional skills and abilities and facilitate dialogue between citizens, elected representatives and other parties; to establish in universities training, in particular, of landscape specialists;
7. support quantitative and qualitative research on the value of different kinds, which people attach to landscape and investigate the interconnections between different spheres of landscape significance;
8. promote knowledge of traditional skills together with mutual recognition of traditional and scientific knowledge;
9. facilitate access to the results of scientific research and help render them intelligible not only to the scientific community but also to the whole of society;
10. promote co-operation on projects investigating the value systems, which societies attach to landscape;

Asks the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to associate the Committee of Senior Officials of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) in the work of the committees of experts which have responsibility under Article 10 for monitoring implementation of the Convention;

Decides to forward the present Declaration to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.
Three new themes were examined in 2003 by the second meeting of the workshops:

- Integration of landscapes in international policies and programmes (article 7 of the Convention) and transfrontier landscapes (article 9 of the Convention);
- Individual and social well-being (preamble of the Convention);
- Spatial planning and landscape (article 5, d of the Convention).

During the Workshops, an exhibition on „Landscape through the eyes of the children of Armenia“ was also organised.

Contemporary lifestyles are such that people aspire more and more to rediscover an unspoiled setting and to preserve their natural as well as cultural heritage. By means of this growing social demand, landscape gains or regains prestige and begins to be perceived as a major component of sustainable development policies. It is necessary to recognise the importance and value of landscapes and reconciling the right to achieve profitability with the right to enjoy well-being, health and scenic beauty.

**Sites of the European Landscape Convention:**

http://www.coe.int/EuropeanLandscapeConvention
http://www.coe.int/ConventionEuropéenneDuPaysage

See also the site of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for spatial planning:
http://www.coe.int/CEMAT
http://www.coe.int/CEMAT/fr

See also the site of the Naturopa magazine:
http://www.coe.int/naturopa
http://www.coe.int/naturopa/fr

**Remarks**


2 See Appendix 2.

3 See the reports of these Conferences: T-FLOR 1 (2001) 19 and T-FLOR 2 (2002) 27.

4 See Appendix 1.


6 www.coe.int/EuropeanLandscapeConvention;


8 See the documents of these Conferences: T-FLOR 2 (2002) 20, 21, 22, 23 et 24.

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