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**COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**

***NINETEENTH COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING  
OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION***

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***“The implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level: local democracy”***

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***WORKSHOP 4***

**Commentary to Powerpoint presentation:<sup>1</sup>**

**How local democracies are strengthened by people’s voice in the planning: Norwegian Guide on Public Participation in Planning**

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***Picture 2 Introduction***

In the field of democracy and landscape in the public planning, we have to aim high to be where international commitments and ambitious policies are directing us. Norwegian politicians are dedicated to this

***Picture 3 Organisation map of the MoLGM***

I represent the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation the Department of planning. Our planning department has also the responsibility for the mapping authority. At the same time, we have a close relation to the municipalities and counties, as they are the main planning authorities.

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1. <http://rm.coe.int/1680739f13>

#### ***Picture 4 Planning then***

Limited public involvement in planning processes; Participation tended to reflect an unbalanced power situation where the interests represented the main public authorities and/or private interests with resources. Law regulation limited to announcing the commence of the planning process and public hearing. Public participation was only done because it was written in the law; and it was often too late to use the public's input in the decision-making.

#### ***Picture 5 Planning now***

Norwegian society changed - more diversity, more individualization and emphasise on citizen perspective/human rights – higher expectation to have a say

Not because we have to, but because we want to! By involving the public in the early stages of a decision-making process, we:

- apply the expertise voice and competence of the public to improve the plans
- recognize the contribution of everyone

Thereby we improve the relationship we have with the public with positive impact on the community and legitimate planning effect, and eventually we will have less objections/appeals against the final decision.

#### ***Picture 6 Content***

After these historical introduction I will draw your attention to the main topic of the presentation. Firstly, I will give you a brief introduction to the public participation in the Norwegian planning of today. Secondly, I will present you a tool that represents an implementation of the Norwegian planning legislation and planning system with an inclusive moderation. And finally, the presentation will give you an example on how the landscape convention is benefitting from the national guidelines and an inclusive planning approach in the land-use planning of a Norwegian municipality.

- Part 1 -

#### ***Picture 8 Sustainable, vibrant society***

The intention of the Norwegian planning system and its legislation is to build sustainable societies. The economic and environmental areas represent important dimensions or values in such a development – and - to make it sustainable the social /human dimension must be included. This requires local democratic involvement – which makes the processes vibrant and the solutions sustainable. Norwegian planning system envisions this. Democracy in the planning is also about letting all voices be recognized and heard before decisions are effectively made.

#### ***Picture 9 Traces of democratic tradition***

A simplified illustration of democratic and inclusive tradition in Norway.

#### ***Picture 10 Vibrant democracies***

The current government (Solberg) has had a political ambition to strengthen local democracy whilst implementing local government reform. It has launched the project "vibrant democracies"

as an initiative to this. The philosophy behind is that "vibrant democracies" are dependent on its citizens to take an active role in developing the society. In order to have a vibrant democratic system in place, effective enforcement by its institutions is closely linked to an involving culture and participation capacity of the members of the society. The local democracy will thereby elaborate and deepen itself more efficiently and effectively, being representative and more relevant to the people.

The Norwegian participatory democracy is a democratic system which is represented by a collective decision-making that combines elements from direct and representative democratic systems. The Norwegian planning system represents a democratic arena and a supplement to the representative system. By facilitating close contact with the public, the local authorities manifest the representativity in the planning process and legitimize the decision basis.

- Part 2 -

### ***Picture 12 Inclusive Planning in PBA – definition and elements***

We define inclusive planning as: *An individual's or a group's right to take part in and influence public assessment and decision-making processes* (Official Norwegian report of the PBA). An influential/effective involvement in the planning produces a better plan solution, ensures better local communities, activates and motivates the communities to be involved and has a learning (better common understanding of the challenges and possible solutions involved) and democratic value of its own. The legal intention is to promote *sustainable development* in the best interest of the citizen, the society and future generations. The prime tool for inclusive planning is the application of inclusive participation provisions under PBA Chap. 5. The planning principle of "Universal design" ensures processes and results that are inclusive. Universal design is articulated in the preamble of the PBA and highlights that everyone shall have access to safe and inclusive communities, no matter demographic background. This approach affirms the necessity of an inclusive process from a strategic phase of the planning up to the projecting phase. Measurements vary in accordance with the intention of the planning and local circumstances.

### **Picture 13 Main provisions**

To ensure the principle of inclusive planning the Norwegian PBA sets forth a security mechanism through some basic provisions. The effective application of these provisions in coherence, are important to deliver the expected contribution in line with the preamble of the PBA. The main provisions are:

- Plans with significant effects on the society and the environment should have a concrete **working programme**, including arrangement for participation
- Planning proposer shall
  - ensure public participation in general
  - take concrete steps to facilitate **active participation** from groups who requires special attention, incl. participation from children and adolescents
  - present the process **digitalised** and ensure **dialogue**
- The municipality has the end responsibility to ensure that participation is fulfilled in the planning. The reason for this is that 80 % of all detailed zoning plans in Norway are initiated on basis of private proposals.

### **Picture 14 National Guide in Public Participation**

Guidelines launched in 2014, encompasses principles and recommendations for facilitating adapted public participation (inclusive participation), and envisages 70 expedient methods and techniques. No quick fix. Local conditions as premise for design of and facilitating the participation.

### **Picture 15 Principles for Adequate Planning Process**

The guide encompasses 4 principles for processing public participation. They are the foundation for the 9 technical recommendations and the selection of methods that can be perceived as expedient to effective and democratic planning processes;

**Transparency** - the equal access to the pertaining information and process in order to advocate and represent their interests efficiently. Transparency is a premise for an efficient participation and trust in the planning system.

**Management Efficiency** – promotes a more active process management ensuring compliance with citizen participation rights in the public planning

**Universal Design** – ie. low participation threshold ensuring involvement of all interests in the process without discrimination of any kind. Strengthen the possibility of better inclusive society.

**The Principle of Equality** in the planning – ie. a participation on equal terms no matter the ruling conditions has due weight when presence of diversity of interests, resources in participation are uneven distributed, and the more complex and political the planning situation is.

### **Picture 16 Recommendations**

The guidelines set forth advises and rec that can provide basis for programming of the participation in the planning.

1. Involve parties concerned within the municipality organization
2. Ensure participation by the politicians throughout the process
3. ***Ensure that all parties concerned are represented from the start***
4. Commence with the public perspective and ensure active facilitation measures as required
5. Provide a clear framework in order to secure a meaningful process
6. Ensure a good kick-off - commence involvement activities as early as possible
7. Allow for flexibility in the application of the methods so adjustments are possible
8. Allow space for creativity with emphasis on the possibilities
9. Inputs and results from all parties involved should be made public

### **Picture 17 Rec. #3 Ensure that all parties concerned are represented from the start (pictures 18-21)**

I will in the following focus on one of the abovementioned recommendations – rec. # 3, which highlights the importance of timing, the right to say when concerned by a decision, and the assessment of method application according to target group involved.

**Picture 18 Influence is at its best when in the initial planning phase.** It requires an understanding of the planning purpose and overview of the past, present, future planning situation of the municipality. This provide basis for assessing the planning needs, with implication on the definition of the strategy and planning of the process.

The **timing** is crucial – early inputs affect the degree of democratic processing and contribution from the population to the plan, and the final output/quality of the plan.

**Picture 19 Target group and method adaption.** There can be differentiation in modes of facilitating the process according to which concerned group one seek to engage. When society is broadly affected, a work program regarding how to go about the processing in the elaboration of the plan is important. Interests and concerned parties in such situation can be plenty. The programming in itself is also subject to hearing. Target group identification is important and there are mapping tools for that. Such mapping affects which methods to apply. It's important that the planner ensures that the participation composition reflects the community in terms of age, gender, interests etc, key-task when securing democratic rule of law and legitimate decision-making in planning. Be aware of possible gaps in capacity and competence. Maintaining culture for democratic involvement as a general rule allows for more timely and quality processing in the concrete planning.

In order to decide the **kind of involvement** to apply, the guide refers to a model that can be useful to have in mind when planning and designing the participation:

**Picture 20 Circle of Influence:** A model that can be applied when going into assessing and selecting type of method to use is the circle of influence. The smallest circle (1) shows facilitation of information which can be made available without following up with other participation methods except the announcement of the planning process. Circle (2) illustrates collection of information. It includes an open process and greater opportunity to participate, allowing supplement of qualitative based contribution from the public, enhancing a broader basis for decisions.

The next circle (3) shows dialogue-based participation, with a combination of communicative and engaging methods being used, increasing the opportunity to influence. Circle (4) shows situations where the influence is at its strongest, namely in cooperation and close interaction with others affected. In Norway we operate with local advisory boards on issues representing the elderly and persons with disabilities that allows participation throughout the decision-process. This gives the boards a strong participation right. In order to balance the mentioned principles in the guide, a broad planning process will normally move between the circles.

**Picture 21 Overview of methods from the guide – a selection of active methods**

There is no one right method – some methods have several purposes and must be applied/designed specifically pursuant to the purpose of the planning situation.

In questions of more overall plans in the municipality, general methods like public hearing, are not always engaging and efficient in order to mobilize and facilitate informed dialogue and useful inputs. With reference to circle # 3 from previous presentation, such dialogue methods stress the need to be more active in facilitating inclusive processes establishing active participation and ensuring quality contribution to the plan.

- Part 3 -

**Picture 22 Validity Test with application of social network and social media, Lyngen municipality**

In elaboration of the land-use part of the municipality plan in Lyngen, Validity Test (VT) was applied as part of the landscape analysis. This involved assessment by the inhabitants of expert-based data and information from selected landscape areas. The areas were defined by "landscape categories" and followed up by questions in an electronic questionnaire including a commentary box, and presented on the municipality's website and Facebook. Invitations to participate were distributed to landowner associations and rural community organizations. Inputs introduced new elements in the planning providing evaluation of areas from a user's perspective, and expressing the community validation and perceiving of the landscape in a more complete way.

***Picture 23 Lessons learnt***

Citizens as users of a landscape is a critical target group to the quality of the plan. VT is a democratizing tool and delivering more precise user added information for a comprehensive planning, and thereby representing a quality-ensuring value in the planning. Going beyond the hearing and public scrutiny turned out decisive to reach a representative target group. Effective communication served as a key to enable the broader involvement. This meant presenting the communication in a simplistic and adaptive way, with weight on adequate wording, well-designed questions and user-functionality of the questionnaires.

***Picture 24 Final note***

Democracy is basic for a society in development, and a community landscape where everyone feels at home. The guide envisions how to put people first in the community planning by practising democratic principles and applying inclusive methods. To further enhance principle of inclusion and effectiveness in landscape planning, the case illustrates the need for adapting awareness and communication modes, new technologies and perspectives.