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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
CONVENTION EUROPEENNE DU PAYSAGE

DIX-NEUVIEME REUNION DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
DES ATELIERS POUR LA MISE EN ŒUVRE DE
LA CONVENTION EUROPEENNE DU PAYSAGE

*Organisée sous les auspices de la Présidence tchèque du Comité des Ministres
du Conseil de l'Europe*

***« La mise en œuvre de la Convention européenne du paysage au niveau local :
la démocratie locale »***

Brno, République tchèque
5-6 septembre 2017
Visite d'étude, 7 septembre 2017

CLOSING SPEECH

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After long years of demand from professionals both in the Czech Republic and abroad, the Czech Republic finally hosted more than 140 representatives of member states of the Council of Europe, the public administration, academics and experts on sustainable landscape management.

The European Landscape Convention is an international treaty to which the Czech Republic had already acceded in 2004. Landscape management is understood as a continuous process consisting of a combination of conservation, management and planning activities, and as a shared responsibility of public administrations and the public – in other words, landscape users. The central theme of this year's working session has been the implementation of democratic principles in landscape management activities at local level, as this approach contributes to raising the values of the local landscapes, thus improving the quality of life and identity of local people.

Representatives from the Czech Republic and other countries within the 19th Meeting of the workshops of the Council of Europe for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention presented a number of very good projects in the first two days of the meeting. These projects can be considered good practice examples of sustainable landscape-based activities at local level. Presented

projects are the result of personal interest and the deployment of both experts and, in particular, local government representatives without whom specific activities in the landscape cannot be realised. On the last day of the session the participants had the opportunity to visit the Lednice-Valtice area. There they could not only admire the beauty of the UNESCO-protected area, but they also became familiar with the problematic issues of this unique area which are the shared responsibility and managed by mayors and representatives of the Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve.

The principle of the sustainable care of the landscape, its surroundings and its community is primarily in the hands of the local inhabitants. This responsibility cannot always be shifted to state or regional governments, which, on the contrary, should create the conditions of help and support for the inhabitants or the local government in order to manage the landscape. In the end, they are local people who live in that particular landscape. A number of positive examples from across the Czech Republic demonstrated this.

The state of general awareness about the European Landscape Convention in the Czech Republic, as well as the state of landscape management in many municipalities, in my opinion, was very well described by mayor Mrs. Dočkalová from the municipality of Sudice. She presented activities in her village with the words: "While preparing the presentation for this event I looked at what the European Landscape Convention is about, and with enthusiasm I realised that by our activities, we fully comply with the international legislative document here."

Another good practice example from the Czech Republic that I would like to highlight is the Neratov project, or in other words Neratov miracle. There, one key person, the preacher Mr Suchár, built up from an abandoned village a living community of handicapped people taking care of local estates and surroundings by renovating the local church, rebuilding a local pension, restaurant, gardens, orchards, different factories, and lately also brewery. As Mr Suchár stressed: "We do not do it for them, but we do it with them!" Some other families returned to the village and it became a well known pilgrim spot and a place for relaxation and recovery for many people from near and far. Some consider it a social project, but it is also apparent what close relation the project has with the state, mutual support and finally the physique of landscape. The community is living again.

That is why I also believe that the announcement of the International Landscape Day on the occasion of the anniversary of opening the European Landscape Convention for signatures is very desirable and an ideal opportunity for the implementation of awareness-raising activities on this subject. Improving the awareness of the general public and mayors about the possibilities and benefits of sustainable landscape management, including the use of Local Agenda 21, Local Action Groups or other community or participative planning tools, is a great opportunity to realise the objectives of the European Landscape Convention itself.