



## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

### EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

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

#### *Sustainable Landscapes and Economy*

*On the inestimable natural and human value of the landscape*

Urgup, Nevşehir, Turkey  
1-2 October 2014

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BUNDESKANZLERAMT  ÖSTERREICH

KULTUR

Dr. Anna Steiner

Dear Chairpersons,  
Dear colleagues,

Having heard very interesting approaches and policies to urban landscapes and economy from an economic, architectural and marketing point of view, coming from a Ministry of Culture, please allow me some remarks from a cultural perspective.

To me, one of the most striking elements of the Convention is its holistic approach to the development of landscape policies, not only comprising the aspects of agriculture, ecology, economy/tourism, regional policy and biodiversity but also addressing aspects of social life, aesthetics, culture and education in landscape issues. As we know, the Convention relates to natural but as well to urban and peri-urban areas, outstanding but also everyday landscapes and degraded areas. Most importantly, the quality of life for citizens and sustainable development are in its centre.

We will all agree on the need for cultural co-operation, sustainable territorial development and social cohesion, also as a prerequisite for democratic governance in culture. It is this interface of globalization and local initiatives that offers a great potential for developing people's identities with their landscapes and their heritage and for the protection of cultural diversity. The non-monetary value of related cultural projects contributes to achieving people-centred, inclusive and sustainable development and a fulfilled life.

You may be aware that this important impact is also acknowledged by the *United Nations Creative Economy Report* that has been launched last December. And there are also complementary approaches in the implementation of the *UNESCO World Heritage Convention* and the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

This approach of involving local and regional authorities, grassroots associations, universities and professional organizations in fostering (cultural) landscapes inevitably brings me to another very important Council of Europe Convention for heritage policies that deserves our full attention. The *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, the so-called *Faro-Convention*, is a sound and all-embracing instrument that deals with heritage as an object of individual rights. Heritage is given a special meaning and the growing importance of cultural values in the character of landscape, the environment, territorial identity and the environmental dimensions of cultural heritage is underlined. I am pleased to announce that Austria has recently signed the Faro Convention and we are presently in the process of ratifying the Convention.

In many countries of Europe (and beyond) we are currently experiencing a paradigm shift which is reshaping our developed cultural and natural landscapes. People are frequently *leaving rural regions*, the infrastructure of which also deteriorates because there are no more young people there. As a consequence, the attractive centres of the developed urban landscapes are growing, putting them under great pressure of change. There is an increasing need for green spaces and leisure areas and free spaces.

Particularly in rural areas, access to art and culture is often difficult. However, we know that a dense cultural programme highlights the quality of life and contributes massively to the attractiveness of a region. By safeguarding heritage for local communities we foster the people's identity, their sense of belonging and their well-being. Regional cultural initiatives to strengthen the region, furthermore, promote social cohesion, social inclusion and contribute to the prevention of rural depopulation. It also has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity, particularly to tourism.

Thus, our commitment to protecting natural and cultural heritage is of great importance for sustainable development.

2 October 2014