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INTRODUCTION

I would like to briefly expand on the relations between culture, cultural heritage and landscape, from the perspective of international cooperation under the aegis of the Council of Europe.

As a member of the Bureau of CDPP Committee I am strongly convinced that the Council of Europe through its legal acts, among them treaties dedicated to the cultural co-operation, cultural heritage and, of course to the landscape offer a unique ground for achieving the main goal – leading us to new, better (better because more beautiful, friendly, diverse, well cared for) space for living in Europe. This conviction do not need to much evidence if we consider all the benefits that the European society may have through the approach presented by the European Landscape Convention.

The perspective of the Landscape Convention, which should be considered as a unique act perfectly covering various issues connected with different areas and referred policies such as agriculture,

environment, architecture, culture and cultural heritage, regional planning as well as the media, research, and tourism is quite wide. So, trying to define somehow the landscape policies within the framework of the Convention we have to reflect on various areas and even have a deep insight into some of them. E.g. culture deals with artistic expressions, cultural heritage comprises not only monuments, historical cities and archeological sites, but also archives. Culture and cultural expression flourish in favourable conditions, societies develop harmoniously only if there is a respect for cultural heritage. Without this preconditions we will observe proceeding degradations of various areas in Europe.

The Convention presents an interesting concept, not quite very new one, but it reflects the evolution of human mind which nowadays tries to look at the surrounding environment from a wider, cross-sectoral perspective. This shift make possible indicate important linkages among various elements connected to culture, cultural heritage and the landscape leading to certain reevaluation of priorities of spatial planning and reassessment of regional policies.

“The separation of nature and culture—of people from the environment which surrounds them—which has been a feature of western attitudes and education over the centuries, has blinded us to many of the interactive associations which exist between the world of nature and the world of culture” (Adrian Phillips, “The nature of cultural landscapes” 1998)

The Preamble of the Landscape Convention opens our eyes to the landscape’s important public interest role in the cultural, environmental and social fields. Landscape, by the virtue of the Convention is acknowledged then as an intrinsic element of human life, area covered also by the other international treaties adopted by the Council of Europe and other organizations. In this regard the Convention embraces such issues as quality of life and well being ensuring interactions of spatial planning with citizens in a sustainable way. Once again, a human being and his right to live and work in favorable conditions has gained a special attention. It revokes us another Council of Europe Convention – The Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society which was the first legal act linking the concept of the "common heritage of Europe" to human rights and the fundamental freedoms for which the Council of Europe remains one of the guardians. The Faro Convention provides an original contribution to the issues related to "living together", quality of life and the living environments where citizens wish to prosper. Both Conventions play an overarching role trying to combine various areas of different nature, breaking the old patterns of perception. E.g. examining the fields of nature conservation and cultural resource preservation side by side illustrates the dramatic dichotomy in the perception of landscape and the relationship of humans and the environment. One perspective is biocentric, based on the intrinsic value of wildness and its complex of species in the absence of humans; the other, anthropocentric, celebrating the many aspects of cultural achievement and development.

Looking from the other regional organization’s perspective let me share with you some concerns referred the EU policy concerning the elements mentioned. In the EU, cultural heritage falls under what is described widely as “culture”. But there are no regulations concerning cultural heritage, especially its protection and conservation. Moreover, there is no coherent EU landscape policy – this is a part of the sector belonging to e.g. the environment and protection of wildlife and nature. Some other areas which should be elements of broad spatial EU policy because of their transversal nature are not underpinned well. Last year I participated in the Forum of Architecture organized by the Irish Presidency in EU which concluded with some reflections on the links of various policies which should aim at sustainable territorial development. It was said that its intrinsic and inextricable element is architecture – a cultural dimension of city and landscape, although it is not properly reflected in the

EU policies, which up to today haven't solved the problems of interlinked areas, especially in broad sector of culture, mainly considered as belonging to the domain of subsidiarity of Member States. So, the looking from this point the Landscape Conventions is a legal instrument, which is richer in being transversal and intersectorial, moreover it does not infringe subsidiarity encouraging to move towards cohesive policies on behalf of the landscapes in Europe.

The meaning of the Council of Europe's Convention the landscape is multifunctional, its nature can be seen from various perspectives – economic, social, environmental, historic and even contemplative (spiritual) etc. So we are convinced that the assistance offered by the Council of Europe for the implementation of the Convention will be gradually expanding the network of national and international co-operation. The Landscape Award is an evident proof that the Convention works and even if still there are no synergies in national policies and no political agenda there are active coalitions on behalf of the landscape on regional level. Again, congratulations to the Lower Silesian Association of Landscape Parks for its success with the project concerning Szprotawa river valley.

The Region of Lower Silesia where we are today is rich in landscapes and cultural heritage so you can enjoy the diversity it offers.

For the most part of its history Lower Silesia was a frontier land, and at the same time one of the richest regions of whichever country it happened to belong to. In the previous millennium, Lower Silesia passed through the hands of many rulers. Since the 10th century, when its written history begins, it was under the rule of the Piast prince – Polish dynasty, then it was taken over by the Czech kings, the Hapsburg dynasty and Prussian kings. In the first half of the 20th century it belonged to Germany, and after the fall of the Third Reich in 1945 it became part of Poland again.

The region has a varied landscape and three distinctive zones: the lowland occupied by the forests (Bory Dolnośląskie and Lasy Milickie); the Silesian Lowland (Nizina Śląska) along the proglacial stream valley of the Oder River in the central part; and the rugged foothills of the picturesque Sudeten mountains in the southern part. The region's main river is the Oder, which overflows Wrocław. The Lower Silesia landscape is dotted with cultural heritage - more than 160 castles and palaces, some of them have been transformed into hotels and museums what is a sign of growing tourism. Two exceptional heritage sites from the region are on the UNESCO List: The Churches of Peace in Jawor and Świdnica, the largest timber-framed religious buildings in Europe, built in the mid-17th century and The Centennial Hall, situated in Wrocław, considered as one of the most important works in the world architecture of the 20th century.

For the past 50 years, Lower Silesians have been perceived as an exceptional 'melting pot' of different nations, however their coexistence was severely broken in 1945 with Potsdam Agreement and post war forced expulsions of the population. Numerous immigrants came to Lower Silesia from different regions of pre-war Poland, mostly from its eastern territories, which under the new political division of Europe after World War II became part of the Soviet Union (nowadays Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine) while German inhabitants disappeared from the local map.

The present-day Lower Silesians form a relatively young, well-educated, open and enterprising community. More than 30% of the region's population inhabits its four biggest cities. The region's capital, Wrocław, is Poland's fourth most populated (640,000 inhabitants). Today, Lower Silesia is nearly entirely ethnically Polish, yet traces of Austrian, Prussian or German influences remain in architecture, infrastructure and cuisine. Towards the south of the province, strong ties with the Czech Republic link many communities on both sides of the border together. In Wrocław, a small (yet steadily growing) Spanish, Portuguese and Italian population now calls the city home.

Wrocław is the capital of the Province and one of the country's main economic, scientific and cultural centres of international significance. Its written history begins in 1000 when the king, Bolesław I Chrobry, founded the Diocese of Wrocław (then known as Vratislav, Wrotizla, or Prezla).

The most dramatic changes happened in Wrocław with the mentioned Potsdam Agreement which led to the total exchange of its population. Moreover, in 1945 the city lost a big part of its urban substance because of aerial and artillery bombardments. So, the postwar period was then a long way to a total recovery in social, economic and cultural perspective of the city. Common efforts of Wrocław's citizens and democratic changes in Poland rebuilt this place - In year 2000 Wrocław celebrated its millennium fully proud of its long history and rich contribution of various nations into its culture and cultural heritage. Nowadays we can say Wrocław gained a next life based on reconciliation and respect for common heritage and cultural diversity. Norman Davies, an outstanding researcher of European history, has hailed the city "a flower of Europe" in his monumental monograph of Wrocław: *Microcosm: A Portrait of a Central European City*.

As a city of great cultural, academic, tourist, and economic significance. Wrocław is regarded as one of the most influential centers of education in Poland. Universities and research institutes of the city represent a universally recognized high standard of scientific and educational effort. Wrocław is a City of 29 Universities and Higher Education Institutions, and 100 000 students. So, taking into consideration its overall population of 630 thousand of inhabitants it's a city of young people.

It is a vibrant cultural scene. The city's Lower Silesia Opera House has gained prominence for its monumental, open air staging of classical works, and numerous top class performances take place in the City Filharmonic Hall, Capitol Music Hall and 14 theater houses. Wrocław's cultural offer consists of many music, theatrical and cinema festivals, some of them gained an international fame, i.e.: Wratislavia Cantans, Jazz on the Oder, Musica Polonica Nova, Brave Festival, Wrocław Guitar Festival, New Horizons Film Festival and international theatre festival. Wrocław stages numerous exhibitions, artistic performances, happenings, concerts, and multimedia shows.

So, if you have a chance visit its magnificent market square as well as boulevards along the Oder river. Remember that in 2016 Wrocław alongside the Spanish city of San Sebastián, will boast the honour of becoming European Capital of Culture, so do not miss this opportunity of participation in numerous cultural events prepared especially for this occasion. Explore then Wrocław' microcosm and the cultural excitement it may offer.