



COUNCIL OF EUROPE LANDSCAPE AWARD EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

FOURTEENTH COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

Council of Europe Landscape Award Forum of National Selections 3rd Session 2012-2013

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Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to the 14 Council of Europe Workshop "Implementation of the European Landscape Convention". This meeting is very special and important to us. It is the third time when Council of Europe Landscape Award will be granted, and for the first time the winner is from our country.

In accordance with the Convention, Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factor. It is therefore perceived subjectively and subjected to constant pressure and change. The direction and nature of the changes in the landscape is of great importance for the environment, economy, culture and society. Thus, landscape policy must be the center of attention of all those forming and managing landscapes.

The growing awareness of the importance of protecting the landscape, is reflected in the European Landscape Convention signed on 20 October 2000 in Florence – a document of a

comprehensive approach to the landscape. The Convention covers natural, rural, urban and suburban areas; areas of land, inland water and marine. It concerns landscapes that might be considered as a unique landscape, as well as areas of everyday or degraded landscapes.

As it is indicated in the preamble of the Convention, 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. The Convention also emphasizes that the landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures and that it is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity. It 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 areas high quality, in areas recognized as being of outstanding beauty as well as common areas. The Polish President signed it on 24 June 2004. The Convention came into force on 1 January 2005.

The aim of established Council of Europe Landscape Award is to encourage countries signatories to Convention to make efforts in forming and managing landscapes and to raise civil society's awareness of the value of landscapes, in accordance with the provisions of Convention. The Award is conferred every two years by the Committee of Ministers. It is awarded for exemplary initiatives to protect the quality of the landscape. The award is to encourage the winners to ensure the sustainable protection, management and / or planning of landscape protection in the area. Its objective is to reward exemplary practical initiatives undertaken by public authorities and non-governmental organizations to achieve the objectives of landscape quality.

In Poland landscapes are appreciated and protected for a long time, both in terms of nature, but also historical and cultural heritage. Thus, landscapes have the special kind of protection form – landscape parks and protected landscape areas. We have 121 landscape parks covering 2,607,728.0 hectares (8.3% of Poland area) and 386 protected landscape areas covering 7,078,116.6 hectares (22.6% of Poland area). They cover over 30% of our country altogether. But we still do a lot to improve managing of landscapes and the implementation of ELC. I am therefore particularly pleased that these efforts were appreciated and the winner of the Council of Europe Landscape Award in 2014 is Lower Silesian Association of Landscape Parks, awarded for the project: “Preserving ecological value in the landscape of the Szprotawa river valley – ecological area Przemkowskie Wetlands – Przemkowski Landscape Park”.

It was the long-term program implemented to actively conserve the natural assets of the site while allowing sustainable development. The site was in the Przemkowski Landscape Park, and included the Przemkowski Wetlands Ecological Area and Przemkowski Ponds Special Protection Area belonging to the European Ecological Network under NATURA 2000. The landscape of the Szprotawa river valley in the Bóbr watershed and associated wetlands are continuously being shaped and conserved. This involves both the protected area and the surrounding agricultural land. As part of the project are implemented agri-environmental programs and activities in the field of active nature conservation and also free educational activities on nature-related topics for children and youth in Lower Silesia. The next goal of the project is to activate an ethnic minority, the gypsies of Przemków, thereby reducing their marginalization and exclusion.

My congratulations to prizewinner, and I hope that this particular award will be an encouragement and a driving force for the other areas in Poland, because, both in terms of nature and the landscape, we have what to protect and with what to praise, certainly.