

INFORMATION
ON IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL LANDSCAPE POLISY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Dear Colleagues,

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of this event for the high level of organization and warm hospitality. I am confident that this event will be another important level for the practical implementation of European Landscape Convention ideology.

The convention is based on the simple idea according to which the quality of human life is directly dependent on the quality of the surrounding environment and, consequently, not only valuable natural landscapes, but also everyday environment, deserted and degraded areas are important.

It was also a new ideology based on the pattern that landscapes formulate original image of the earth, reflect the value system of living people, as well as promote or impede economic development.

Taking into consideration the small size of our country, its geographical location, energy resources and the lack of exit to the sea, as well as the limited amount of land suitable for settlement and agriculture and, in the meantime, particularly rich cultural and natural heritage, it is especially important to properly evaluate and promote resources available for endogenous development, creating harmonic urban and rural environments, i.e. well-groomed and attractive landscape. This idea completely coincides with the main goal set before the urban development, which is legally defined as "Creation of Environment Favorable to Life".

Thus, to avoid the unfavorable influence upon the landscapes resulting from economic development, the possibly wide-ranging investments of interrelated activities in protection, management and planning of landscapes in accordance to the European standards is very important in our country through the application of contemporary methods of spatial and landscape planning and the landscape policy formation.

It must be noted that a lot of problems related to the natural and cultural landscapes on the national, regional and local levels fixed by the country's basic law, in particular

- RA Law "On specially protected natural territories" /2006-11-27/
- RA Law "On protection and use of historical and cultural monuments and historic environment" /1998-11-11/
- RoA Government Decree 2008-12-18 N1563-N "On rental, provision of construction permission and urban development activity implementation in the land of "Sevan" national park and its adjacent areas".
- RoA Government Decree 2005-12-29 N2404-N "On measures of regulating construction of adjacent areas of interstate roads and republican significance roads of motor vehicles".
- RoA Government Decree 2009-06-26 N728-N "On separation of the areas of special regulation objects of urban development activity of Gyumri, Vanadzor, Dilijan, Jermuk, Vagharshapat, Ashtarak, Goris urban and Tatev and Halidzor rural communities".
- RoA Government Decree 2009-06-29 N792-N "On approving the provision of implementation of urban development activity in the areas of special regulation objects of urban development activity".

Implementation of European Landscape Convention in Armenia

During the recent years a number of consistent steps have been taken in Armenia towards discovering landscape problems, analyses, and providing basis for national policy. Phase activities have been prescribed by the relevant legal acts, including;

- Inter-ministerial Committee has been established to coordinate the implementation of European Convention in Armenia based on the Decree of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia N650-A, dated July 31, 2009

Representatives of all parties interested in landscape problems, i.e., state and local governments, scientific, educational institutions and NGOs have been included in the Inter-ministerial Committee coordinating the implementation activities of European Landscape Convention in the Republic of Armenia, established by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. Based on the same Decree the Ministry of Urban Development of the Republic of Armenia shall be responsible for the implementation of the Convention. The large size of the Committee enables to establish both horizontal and vertical cooperation ties around landscape problems. The Committee is an effective consultative platform for implementation of mutually agreed activities.

- “List of Measures on Fulfilling Obligations Assumed by the Republic of Armenia Emanating from European Landscape Convention” has been approved by the Republic of Armenia Government Decree N308-N, dated March 24, 2011;

Within the framework of the implementation of the provisions, the Ministry of Urban Development of the Republic of Armenia has prepared a series of legal acts of landscape protection, management and planning strategy, as well as development of spatial planning documents important for Armenia. According to points 2 and 3 of the same decision, the prepared by Committee Convention Implementation Reports per six months are submitted to the Government of Armenia, and the annual reports are placed in the official website of the Ministry of Urban Development of RA.

- “The Republic of Armenia National Landscape Policy Implementation Directions” have been approved by the Protocol Decree N45 of the Republic of Armenia, dated November 17, 2011, which also set out training, education and outreach raising, as well as public policy key issues aimed at attracting public.
- By the Decree of Civil Service Council N 952-A, dated December 12, 2011, addenda have been made to the civil service trainings with the purpose of including landscape problems. The requirement concerning the knowledge of the Convention has been added into the job descriptions of relevant civil servants;
- “The Republic of Armenia Strategy for Landscape Protection, Management and Planning” has been approved by Protocol Decree N 29 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, dated July 19, 2012;
- The Decree N164-N on “The Republic of Armenia Landscape Prize Award” has been approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia on February 16, 2012;
- The Republic of Armenia Government Decree N 807-A, dated June 28, 2012, on “Approval of Sketches and Description of the Republic of Armenia Landscape Award, i.e. Diploma and Statuette”;
- Legal acts regulating the elaboration of spatial planning documents have been supplemented by provisions related to landscape organization issues;

- RoA Government Decree N1920 – N as of December 2011 “Order of develop expertise, approval and change of master plans of the communities of the Republic of Armenia”.
- Methodological manual of “Instructions for Development of “Landscape Management” Section in Spatial Planning Documents” has been developed and published. Its main objectives are to promote the harmonious development of regional and local centers of the settlement system, to support the restoration of viability of underdeveloped communities, to prevent and reduce the effects of natural disasters, protect and improve the natural and human environment, increase public participation in the development and implementation of spatial development plans and projects.
- During 2003-2008 within the framework of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT) a number of conferences were organized in Yerevan within the framework of which the landscape issues were among the key topics of discussion.

Spatial planning and landscape

Spatial development problems of the country are closely interrelated with landscape management issues and one is the result of the other. Taking into consideration characteristic features, historically formed environment and traditions of each region, it is necessary to evaluate the potential which will promote the desired development scenario.

In disproportionately developed areas can be singled out a number of advantages (strengths) that can be assigned as a basis for a balanced resettlement system. Spatial development disparities also reflect the qualitative features of the country’s landscapes. On-going process of urbanization inevitably generates new human aspirations and priorities.

In the Convention “Landscape Planning” is defined as a sustainable activity aimed at predetermination of perspective development, restoration, establishment (creation) of landscapes. In fact its target goals are the same as the goals of spatial planning, which, taking into consideration economic, natural on-going social developments, are meant to plan such landscape changes, which will meet the requirements of the society and, in the meantime, be compatible with sustainable development goals.

A number of important factors coming from the conception of the landscape can be implemented by the management tools of regional changes – spatial planning (regional planning projects, master plans, zoning and building up projects, etc.) development.

Spatial planning documents are elaborated on the national, regional and local levels with the participation of all the interested bodies related to the problems of the management of the areas, thus providing conditions for both horizontal and vertical integration. Complex problems of landscape organization are a part of spatial planning documents. Landscape component exists on all the levels (national, regional and local) of spatial planning documents. All major components of natural and anthropogenic/urban/ landscapes are subject for complex analysis and evaluation.

Under the extant legislation of our country the scopes of spatial planning already include a substantial part of landscape measures, and may respond to the full diversity of landscape problems in terms of knowledge acquisition, definition of long-term goals and development of measures to achieve them.

Knowledge achievement and communities involvement in the implementation of Convention policy

Acquisition of knowledge about the landscapes in educational and scientific institutions of Armenia educational and training programs, as well as scientific works (Masters, doctoral) have been developed. Scientific studies have the best opportunities to discover the forces transforming the landscapes, make predictions for future and test the proposed solutions.

In this regard, in educational programs of Geography and Geology Department of Yerevan State University the subjects “Landscape Science”, “Landscape Planning” and “Landscape Ecology”, in Yerevan State University of Architecture and Construction “Landscape Architecture”, “Stable Urban development”, “Urban development and Ecology” and “Ecological Principles of Architectural Design” are included. In the curricula and subject plans methodological provision of landscape planning is based on scientific works of famous landscape specialists, which are in line with the requirements of European Landscape Convention.

In practice, in Jermuk city twice a year scientific sessions devoted to landscape architecture with participation of students and the faculty are held.

Landscape strategy implementation actions, among other priority measures to increase public awareness of the communities in the regions of Armenia, seminars are held. The purpose of the seminars is the presentation of the basics of the ideology of the Convention in an accessible format in order to be understood by all the layers of population, as well as involvement in the active discussion of landscape issues. During the workshops knowledge is obtained about the value of landscapes, their role and affecting changes, ways of community development under the landscape activities and spatial planning documents are discussed. Population, in its turn, is interested in what practical benefits the communities will receive as a result of the implementation of the landscape policies. To obtain an overview of individual perceptions of landscape, it is important to search for motives and actions. In the various regions depending on natural and economics specifications we try to explain what kind of actions are people have to undertake to conserve their landscape. At the same time, these discussions provide an opportunity to explore weak and strong factors of different regions that can be taken into account in landscape policy implementation process on national level.

In the recent past, the ordinary people had very little say in landscape interventions by others. Increasingly today, legislation at all levels is providing people with democratic role in the process of landscape change and management. The ideas of the Convention (its principles, definitions and actions) represent both a meeting point and point of departure towards a goal that offer benefits for everyone, because Convention brings together aesthetic and moral traditions, humanistic and experimental viewpoints, and extend to the whole territory and society solution.

In this context I would like to add that implementation of National Landscape Policy of the Republic of Armenia pursues a goal of establishing necessary prerequisites for sustainable development based on well-balanced and harmonious interactions between the needs, economic activity of the society, and environment in compliance with the ideology of European Landscape Policy.

Thank you for attention.