



Speech by the General Director of Spatial and Urban Planning at the Landscape and Transfrontier Cooperation conference organized by the European Landscape Convention.

Good afternoon. I'd like to thank the organization for inviting me to this wonderful conference. This is a truly fascinating initiative that has provided us with an opportunity to come together and share our knowledge and experience with neighbouring countries.

Looking beyond our borders, gaining and sharing experiences (as we have seen today), and conducting research are ways of developing and advancing our understanding of landscape. To understand landscape as a continuous element that knows no administrative boundaries is to understand the reality of our territory, which is both rich and diverse.

This way of thinking about and intervening in the landscape enables us to move towards comprehensive, universal land management, a more modern and contemporary approach that has had a very direct bearing on spatial planning and land management.

Catalonia pledged its commitment to landscape in December 2000, when its highest representative body, the Catalan Parliament, ratified the **European Landscape Convention** just two months after its approval. From this point on, this institution's concern for the preservation and improvement of the landscape came to the fore.

A major boost came with the adoption of **Act 8 of 8 June 2005 for the protection, management and planning of the landscape**, and the launch of the **Landscape Observatory of Catalonia**, which has been operational since 1 March 2005 and was created a year earlier. The observatory was conceived as the advisory body to the government of Catalonia and aimed to raise awareness of landscape matters among the general public.

In 2005, the government of Catalonia launched the **landscape catalogues**, which are based on the Landscape Act and are prepared by the Observatory with the aim of reconciling better knowledge of landscapes with intervention in the landscape. The Landscape Act describes them as "Documents of a descriptive and forward-looking nature that define the various types of landscapes in Catalonia, identify their values and state of preservation and propose the landscape quality objectives to be met".

These catalogues therefore represent an extremely useful tool for introducing landscape protection, management and planning policies into spatial, urban and sector planning through the use of landscape quality objectives; for integrating new



uses and built elements into the character of each landscape unit; and for promoting a form of landscape governance based on participation and consensus.

The Landscape Act stipulates that each region must have its own catalogue. A total of seven have been created. Six have been approved so far (Camp de Tarragona, Comarques Gironines, Terres de l'Ebre, Terres de Lleida, Alt Pirineu i Aran and Regió Metropolitana de Barcelona), with that of Catalunya Central, which is due to be approved shortly.

The creation of the seven landscape catalogues resulted in the very first **map of the landscapes of Catalonia**. With 135 landscape units, the map reveals the great diversity and value of Catalonia's landscapes. The landscape units therefore provide a good basis for developing local landscape policies and serve as a point of reference for urban planning, tourism and cultural policies.

It is worth noting that the landscape quality objectives defined by the landscape catalogues have been included in the corresponding partial territorial plans or territorial master plans prepared by the Ministry of Territory and Sustainability, through **landscape guidelines**, a tool created by the Landscape Act for facilitating the shift from the landscape catalogues to planning instruments, sector policies and, ultimately, action on the land. The Ministry of Territory and Sustainability is responsible for drawing up the landscape guidelines with advice from the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia. The landscape guidelines for the Comarques Gironines, the Regió Metropolitana de Barcelona and the Terres de l'Ebre have already been created. These are vitally important and are one of few such references in Europe.

The only instruments promoted by the Landscape Act at supramunicipal level are the **Landscape Charters**, voluntary instruments for pursuing and concluding agreements, which are translated into real landscape strategies between municipalities, with the involvement of local authorities and economic and social agents, in order to promote and implement measures aimed at improving and managing the landscape. Landscape Charters have been drawn up in Alt Penedès, Priorat, Berguedà and Vall de Camprodon.

Another tool created by the Landscape Act, this time financial in nature, is the Fund for the Protection, Management and Planning of the Landscape set aside for the development of actions related to the landscape and financed through the budget of the government of Catalonia and contributions from other public authorities.

Studies and reports on landscape impact and integration aim to ensure that activities carried out on rural land are properly integrated and allow the government to analyse the appropriateness of urban planning activity, which is known to have a clear impact on the landscape.



The landscape catalogues, guidelines and charters that have been created by the Landscape Observatory have had a very direct bearing on spatial planning and land management.

Given that Catalonia has borders with France and Andorra, it shares the reality of a cross-border landscape identity.

Our closest experience, as we have heard in today's speeches, is the Cross-Border Landscape Plan of Cerdanya that is being developed as a tool for promoting knowledge, action and awareness and aims to engage the key social and economic agents, as well as the whole population of Cerdanya.

Cross-border landscape management is vital, since it helps highlight the quality of the landscape between territories that have always been administratively separate, based on a common strategy aimed at transmitting cultural and historical values, enhancing and recovering the identity of the area, creating and promoting a quality environment and moving towards the joint management of the territory.

The landscape is a complex, cross-cutting issue, and is therefore inevitably linked to other disciplines. This is evident when we consider its impact on the analysis, planning and decision making carried out at urban and territorial level by the government I represent and Catalonia in general. At the moment, we are also working on new legislation, the Catalan Territory Act, which uses the landscape as a reference and incorporates the concept of a common territory based on landscape units as one of the foundations for developing rural land management, also at supramunicipal level.

Lastly, I would like to highlight the excellent and important work that the European Landscape Convention has carried out up to now, as well as the work done by the Landscape Observatory, which has worked in close collaboration with this organization to lead the way in landscape matters in Catalonia and become a strategic reference in the field of landscape on a European and global level.

Finally, I cannot finish without thanking the organization and partner institutions for arranging this conference so efficiently and for making it possible for all of us to come together today to share our experiences, based on this vision of cross-border cooperation, which has shown us that a united landscape often knows no administrative boundaries and that the policies and initiatives to be carried out will require a spirit of consensus, collaboration and cooperation on all sides of the border if we are to achieve a high degree of effectiveness.



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In short, this shared experience has provided us with the knowledge we need to continue moving towards cross-border landscape management and improvement and tackle new challenges.

Many thanks to everyone.