



Strasbourg, 20 November 2001

T-FLOR 1 (2001) 4

**EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
– Florence Convention –**

***FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING AND
SIGNATORY STATES TO THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION***

*Council of Europe, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg
22-23 November 2001
Room 10*

Implementation of the European Landscape Convention at national level

by

Mr. Benoit CARDON de LICHTBUER

*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belgium to the Council of Europe, Chair
of the Group of Rapporteurs on Education, Culture, Sport Youth and Environment (GR-C) to
the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe*

*Document by the Secretariat General
prepared by the Regional Planning and Technical Co-operation and Assistance Division*

1st Conference of the Contracting and signatory states to the European landscape Convention
Strasbourg, 22-23 November 2001

Mr Benoit CARDON de LICHTBUER,
Belgian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Council of Europe

1. Origins of the Convention

On the basis of an initial draft prepared by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), the Committee of Ministers decided in 1999 to set up a select group of experts responsible for drafting a European Landscape Convention, under the aegis of the Cultural Heritage Committee (CC-PAT) and the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP). Pursuant to the work of this group of experts, in which the principal governmental and non-governmental international organisations participated, the final text of the Convention was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 19 July 2000. The Convention was opened for signature in Florence, Italy on 20 October 2000 in the context of the Council of Europe Campaign "Europe, a common heritage".

As at 23 November 2001, 22 States have signed it and one, Norway, has approved it. The Convention will come into force once it has been ratified by ten Signatory States.

2. Why a convention on landscape?

As an essential factor of individual and communal well-being and an important part of people's quality of life, landscape contributes to human fulfilment and consolidation of the European identity. 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 tourism.

Now, the advances of production techniques in agriculture, forestry, industry and mining, together with the practices followed in town and country planning, transport, networks, tourism and recreation, and more generally the global economic changes, have in very many cases led to degradation, debasement or transformation of landscapes.

While each citizen must of course contribute to preserving the quality of landscape, it is the responsibility of the public authorities to define the general framework in which this quality can be secured. The Convention lays down the general legal principles which should guide the adoption of national and Community landscape policies and the establishment of international co-operation in this field.

3. The objectives and originality of the Convention

The object of the Convention is to further the protection, management and planning of European landscapes, and to organise European co-operation for these purposes. Today it represents the first international treaty wholly devoted to the protection, management and enhancement of the European landscape.

Its scope is very extensive: the Convention applies to the entire territory of the Parties and relates to natural, urban and peri-urban areas, whether on land, water or sea. It therefore concerns not just remarkable landscapes but also ordinary everyday landscapes and blighted areas. Landscape is henceforth recognised irrespective of its exceptional value, since all forms of landscape are crucial to the quality of the citizens' environment and deserve to be considered in landscape policies. Many rural and urban fringe areas in particular are undergoing far-reaching transformations and must receive closer attention from the authorities and the public.

Given the breadth of scope, the active role of the citizens regarding perception and evaluation of landscapes is another essential point of the Convention. Awareness-raising is thus a key issue, in order that the citizens participate in the decision-making process which affects the landscape dimension of the territory where they reside.

4. Undertakings of the Parties

National measures

In accepting the principles and aims of the Convention, the Contracting Parties undertake to protect, manage and/or plan their landscapes by adopting a whole series of general and specific measures at national level, in keeping with the subsidiarity principle moreover. In this context, they undertake to encourage the participation of the public and of the authorities – those at the most immediate tier – in the decision-making processes that affect the landscape dimension of their territory.

The Contracting Parties undertake to implement four general measures at national level:

- legal recognition of landscape as constituting an essential component of the setting for people's lives, as reflecting the diversity of their common cultural and natural heritage and as the foundation of their identity;
- framing and implementation of policies to protect, manage and plan landscapes;
- procedures for participation by the general public, local and regional authorities and other parties interested in the formulation and implementation of landscape policies;
- accommodating landscape in town and country planning policies, cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, and any other policies which may have direct or indirect impact on the landscape.

The Contracting Parties further undertake to implement five specific measures at national level, to be applied consecutively:

- awareness-raising: improving appreciation by civil society, private organisations and public authorities regarding the value, function and transformation of landscapes;
- training and education: providing specialist training in landscape appraisal and landscape operations, multidisciplinary training programmes on landscape policy, protection, management and planning, aimed at professionals in the private and public sector and at interested associations, and school and university courses which, in the relevant subject areas, cover landscape-related values and questions of landscape protection, management and planning;
- identification and evaluation: mobilising those concerned in order to attain better knowledge of landscape, and guiding the work of landscape identification and evaluation through exchanges of experience and methods arranged between the Parties at European level;
- setting landscape quality objectives: defining quality objectives for the landscapes which have been identified and evaluated, after consulting the public;
- implementation of landscape policies: introducing policy instruments for the protection, management and/or planning of landscapes.

INTERNATIONAL MEASURES: EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION

The Contracting Parties undertake to co-operate at international level in catering for the landscape dimension in international policies and programmes, and to recommend as appropriate the inclusion of landscape considerations in these policies and programmes. They accordingly undertake to co-operate in respect of technical and scientific assistance and exchange of landscape specialists for training and information, and to exchange information on all questions covered by the Convention.

Transfrontier landscapes are covered by a specific provision: the Contracting Parties undertake to encourage transfrontier co-operation at local and regional level and, wherever necessary, to prepare and implement joint landscape programmes.

5. LANDSCAPE AWARD OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Convention provides for the conferment of a “Landscape Award of the Council of Europe”. This constitutes an acknowledgement of the policy or measures applied by local and regional authorities or by non-governmental organisations to protect, manage and/or plan their landscape, which have proved lastingly effective and can thus serve as an example to other territorial authorities in Europe.

The award thus helps to stimulate local agencies in encouraging and acknowledging exemplary landscape management. It is to be made by the Committee of Ministers at the proposal of the committees of experts responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

* * *

Contemporary lifestyles are such that people aspire more and more to rediscover an unspoiled setting and to preserve their natural as well as cultural heritage. By means of this growing social demand, landscape gains or regains prestige and begins to be perceived as a major component of environmental policies. It also represents a major asset for regional development in the tourist sector. The Convention raises great hopes on the issues of recognising the importance and value of landscapes and reconciling the right to achieve profitability with the right to enjoy well-being, health and scenic beauty.

This first Conference of Convention Signatory States represents a significant opportunity for urging the signature and/or ratification of the Convention in order to hasten its entry into force, for discussing legal assistance to the Signatory States and the Council of Europe Member States invited to sign, and for considering the effective implementation of the Convention after its entry into force.

The Rapporteur Group on Education, Culture, Sport, Youth and Environment (GR-C) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will follow attentively and with a great deal of interest, the work conducted under the Convention.