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Latvia has ratified the European Landscape Convention in the year 2007 and the main task regarding implementation on ELC was the development of landscape policy in Latvia. In order to identify and plan the necessary measures, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development commenced elaboration of a Landscape Policy Strategy.

We started with assessment of the situation on landscape preservation, protection and planning and identification of the main problem. At first we worked with experts that made evaluation of the current situation, but to define objectives and key tasks of the strategy, a working group that includes representatives from other ministries, planning regions, as well as universities and NGOs was established. In order to ensure the public participation, the information on the development of Strategy was placed on ministry`s website.

We had intense discussions in this working group, because some experts wanted to set strict requirements for landscape planning, while others argued against them by stressing out the need for flexibility. For example - a question of landscape planning in the municipalities - is it mandatory or not? Therefore, a consultation was carried out within municipalities and a compromise was reached – that the final decision about the necessity of landscape plan is made by the municipality. This was decided because the professional and financial capacity of municipalities differs substantially – some bigger cities have designated posts for landscape planners, whereas some have only very basic administrative staff.

Nevertheless, strategy is adopted by government and next year we have a challenge – prepare first middle-term evaluation of the Landscape strategy for Latvia. Therefore we do believe that this workshop will help to find out possible solutions and new approaches for the further development of landscape policy in our country.