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Integration of the landscape into policies*

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Implementation of the European Landscape Convention: Experiences of parties to the convention

Experience of Finland: Landscape awareness, training and education

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Landscape is an excellent tool when considering the relationship between humans and their environment. We are surrounded by landscapes, in nature and in towns, in the countryside and in suburbs. The landscape is both a concrete phenomenon and a subjective concept. According to the European Landscape Convention, “Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”.

Landscapes consist of numerous layers that reflect human history. Both positive and negative actions have left their trace on the landscape. When people become aware of the positive, valuable, elements of the landscape, we tend to believe that they will preserve these features or even act to produce more of these elements. When people see different kinds of damage in the landscape, we believe that they will act to repair the damage. Of course, this is an optimistic view, and it often does not come true for many economic, social and individual reasons.

If we strive, nevertheless, to reach this optimum outcome, what is most important is that a high number of people exhibit a strong enough will to try to make a difference. When society demonstrates this kind of will, the matter at hand takes on political importance, and this catches the eye of decision-makers.

The general will to manage and preserve different landscape values requires broad but also detailed knowledge of the subject. This can only be achieved through education and training. These are the essential starting points of awareness. When people's awareness of landscapes is raised, this will automatically increase the pressure to produce new information on landscape-related issues.

However, to reach this point requires a number of steps at different levels.

Steps to bring about awareness of landscapes

In early childhood, parents have a critical role in a child's development. These early years are also important in how the child's individual identity will develop. In this process, the landscapes surrounding the child play an integral part.

During early childhood education, the child learns skills for examining and interpreting his surroundings (that is the landscape), either with the help of his parents or in kindergarten. In Finland, it is common in some kindergartens to keep children outside most of the day, whether in gardens, parks, forests or other natural areas.

Primary and secondary schools also play a central role in educating children about landscapes. Different subjects can include teaching on landscapes and present differing viewpoints about them. Additionally, teachers can go deeper into landscape topics during thematic days. Another possibility is schools that specialise in nature-related subjects. Finland has a network of these specialised nature schools, where school groups can spend a day exploring nature and landscapes. See: www.luontokoulut.fi/en

Higher education, such as in high schools and universities, can be either academically independent (when the goal is to produce scientific researchers) or it can fulfil the direct needs of society by graduating well-trained professionals for different work. At universities, landscape courses are offered in different departments and landscape issues can be included in different subjects. Typical subjects are geography and landscape architecture. Turku University even has a small school for landscape research.

When landscape issues begin to appear regularly in public discussions, and gain both theoretical and practical attention, educational institutions will very quickly offer teaching in this field. One practical example of this in Finland is the *Rural Women's Advisory Organisation* that nowadays has over 20 full-time landscape specialists throughout the country. The starting point for this was in 1995 when the Finnish government made a decision for the first time on nationally valuable landscape areas. At the same time, the European Union's agri-environmental support system came into operation. Farmers began to get financial support to manage semi-natural habitats and maintain the cultural values of countryside landscapes. From this, it was evident that there was a need to provide guidance for farmers.

Every year, the Ministry of the Environment also arranges professional training on landscape issues. This includes landscape training and negotiation days for environmental and heritage administrations and their associated co-operation partner organisations.

In addition to these educational achievements, all efforts made by different NGOs are important. These efforts vary from voluntary practical work on landscape management to taking action to influence land-use plans.

To generate awareness of landscape issues requires the active involvement of different stakeholders and the production of information at different levels of administration. It is important that the issues are discussed in different media. Landscape is a very practical concept because its phenomena are easy to visualise. Through photography and other media, good and bad examples can be easily demonstrated, both to the general public and politicians. Civil society has to be provided with information on landscapes and the public has to be given the opportunity to participate in discussions on the issues. Interaction in this sense is extremely valuable.

Some interesting examples in Finland of raising awareness of landscapes

This section includes some examples of projects and initiatives that have been successful or noteworthy in raising awareness of landscapes. The examples highlight achievements by different stakeholders, such as authorities, NGOs, schools and academic institutions. All actors are important, and they have different roles in awareness-raising, whether separately or in co-operation with others.

Cultural Heritage Makers

European Heritage Days date back to 1984, when France began to arrange open-door events for historical monuments. Soon thereafter, many countries started to organise their own similar events and, in 1991, the Council of Europe established the European Heritage Days. In 1992, Finland began to participate as well.

The theme for this year is *European Year of Cultural Heritage*. One of the planned events is a heritage education initiative – *The Heritage Makers' Competition* – which was originally launched by Finland. School groups at all levels can take part in this competition through projects on cultural heritage and landscapes. The last winner in the competition in Finland was the Keravanjoki School with its project *Stone Bridge*. The project consists of a story, a video and a puzzle, all of which were planned and produced by the 13-year-old schoolchildren. The old stone bridge is an important monument that is part of the local landscape and a pleasant place to visit and meet friends.

<http://europeanheritagedays.com/Event/33af2/Cultural-Heritage-maker-2017%2c-Kerava%2c-Stone-bridge>

www.europeanheritagedays.com/EHD-Programme/Press-Corner/News/%E2%80%9CDiscover-Nature-Together%E2%80%9D-Launched-in-Finland

www.europeanheritagedays.com

Green Year 2016

Green Year 2016 in Finland was launched by the Ministry of the Environment, but the main organisational work was done by the Finnish Association of Landscape Industries. The patron of the year was the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö.

The goal of the Green Year was to encourage individuals, organisations and companies to act for a better, greener and more pleasant environment. In 2016, the theme was *Sustainable Finnish Landscapes* and the slogan was *My landscape – in the town and in the countryside*. Numerous stakeholders organised over 400 events in 70 municipalities. The events ranged from guerrilla gardening to park planning in towns. A competition was held where people sent in their photos and stories about their favourite landscapes. *Hug a Tree Week* was also an enormous success, and many people took a huge number of selfies and published them on social media sites. Social media seems to be a very convenient and effective way to spread information on landscape experiences.

The very first Green Year was held in Finland in 1985. The most recent one was the sixth such year. The next step is the initiative for the *European Green Year 2020*.

Finnish Landscapes in photographs

The Finnish Association of Professional Nature Photographers celebrated its 100-year anniversary of Finland in 2017 by publishing a four-book series on Finnish landscapes. Additionally in 2017, the Association arranged a photo competition, *My Landscape*, that was open to everyone. Over the course of the year, people sent in their landscape images and every month the best photos were nominated by a jury. The public's favourites were chosen by an open vote. Almost 44,000 photos were submitted to the competition by 7,500 amateur and professional photographers. Over one million votes were cast by more than 35,000 people for photos that were taken all around the country.

<http://kilpailu.minunmaisemani.fi>

Landscape Observatory of Finland

The Landscape Observatory of Finland was established in 2016. It is a consortium of several universities, governmental and public institutions, and NGOs. The aim of the Observatory is to encourage a more open and holistic view of the landscape. To this end, it works to promote research, discussion, participation and actions on landscape issues. Furthermore, the Observatory supports the involvement of all stakeholders and partners in the planning and management of landscapes.

The Landscape Observatory recently completed an assessment of how the European Landscape Convention has been implemented in Finland. In the coming years the conclusions of the assessment will guide the work of the Observatory. International co-operation partners include other European landscape observatories and UNISCAPE.

<https://areeweb.polito.it/LOD>

<http://arts.aalto.fi/en/current/news/2018-01-26-004>

www.uniscape.eu/landscape-observatories



Raising awareness of landscapes is a multidimensional, life-long process
Vartiosaari in Helsinki, Finland.

Photo: Tapio Heikkilä

[Powerpoint presentation](#)

<http://rm.coe.int/16807b5557>