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EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

*National Symposium on the implementation
of the European Landscape Convention in Georgia*

*Interministerial Round-Table:
Integration of the landscape into policies*

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

Experience of Serbia: Participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties, with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies

Mrs Biljana FILIPOVIC

Assistant Minister responsible for International Co-operation, Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, National focal point responsible for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Serbia

Mrs Jasminka LUKOVIC JAGLICIC

Director Advisor, Regional Economic Development Agency, Sumadija and Pomoravlje, Serbia

Landscape is our common resource: all landscapes in Europe are one beautiful mosaic and our efforts in planning and protecting their unique beauty, in saving their natural and cultural identity, will be important for future generations.

Serbia has progressed in the implementation of the European Landscape Convention, and is very much committed to adopting landscape policies at national and regional level.

We have established procedures for the participation of the general public and local and regional governments, and also for raising awareness among civil society and public authorities; we are promoting training and education with Belgrade University, involving not only our students, but also

exchanging experience and organising training with international universities and schools, on landscape issues.

After ratifying the European Landscape Convention, we recognised landscapes in national laws, regulations and policies, representing an important contribution to the implementation of the Council of Europe's objectives: promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and seeking common solutions to the main problems facing European society today.

The opening of Chapter 27 in the negotiation process with European Union, which covers the environment and climate change policy, remains the best chance we have to harmonise the regulations with the EU *aquis* related to environment, nature conservation, biodiversity.

So far, landscapes are recognised in several existing laws:

- Law on Nature Conservation, (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 36/09, 88/2010 and 14/2016), regulates the protection and conservation of nature, biological, geological and landscape diversity;
- Law on Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, for the period 2016-2020;
- National Strategy for Sustainable Use of Natural Goods (Official Gazette of RS No. 33/2012);
- Biodiversity Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2011-2018 (Official Gazette of RS, No. 13/2011);
- National Sustainable Development Strategy;
- National Strategy for Approximation of Environment of the RS (Official Gazette 80/2011);
- National Programme for Environmental protection (Official Gazette of RS 12/2010);
- Rulebook for characterisation of landscapes and their specific features (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 119/17 of 29.12.2017).

The following documents, created in the period from 2010 to 2017, are relevant for establishing the landscape policy:

- Spatial plan of the Republic of Serbia from 2010 to 2020. The chapter 1.3.4 of the Spatial Plan is dedicated to landscape protection and management. This chapter provides the establishment of Landscape Study (Landscape characterisation).

There are three groups of areas for which the development of Landscape Study is foreseen:

- areas designated from the point of view of natural values;
- areas whose landscape quality or present physical structures are significant for future development;
- areas under special pressure of development.

Further activities, include the creation of three documents supported by the Project Fund for Institutional Development (PROFID), financed by the Swedish Agency for International Development:

1. Baseline Study/Review of compliance of the existing regulations with the European Landscape Convention. It represents the first result of the project "Development of the draft Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention".

2. Rulebook on the criteria for identifying the landscapes and the method of assessing their significant and characteristic features (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 119/17 of 29.12.2017).

3. Draft Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Serbia.

Legal basis for drafting and adoption of the Rulebook on the criteria for identifying the landscapes and the method of assessing their significant and characteristic features (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 119/17 of 29.12.2017):

(i) the Law on Nature Protection, Article 26, paragraph 5, stating that the criteria for landscape identification and the conditions for evaluation of their significant and characteristic features is stipulated by the Minister;

(ii) the Law on Ratification of the European Landscape Convention; and

(iii) the Law on Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (SPRS), specifying that the strategic priority is characterisation of Serbia’s landscape.

Other activities

It was a great challenge for Serbia to participate in the selections for the Council of Europe’s Landscape Award. Even before becoming a party to the convention, Serbia applied with the project, “The Gate of Gornje Podunavlje, NGO Podunav”, Backi Monostor

A Special Mention of the Committee of Ministers was given to Serbia, for “Contributing to Europeans ideals”. The location of the “Gate of Gornje Podunavlje” project on the banks of the Danube in the historic region of Backi Monostor has enabled some particularly interesting cross-border and multi-ethnic objectives to be pursued. The attention given to the Serb, Croat, Hungarian heritages, with a view to a shared European identity, was particularly appreciated. This project reflected a public commitment to better economic and social well-being and, at the same time, to the preservation of the character of the landscapes. Within a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, this project had a well-adapted, integrated approach. The development of cross-border ecotourism, in conjunction with a return to agricultural production geared to traditional diets, reduced the number of young people leaving the countryside.

In 2017, Serbia submitted the project, “Protection and Management of Zasavica Special Nature Reserve: a tool for sustainable development” for the Council of Europe Landscape Award, a project delivered by the NGO Nature Conservation Movement of Sremska Mitrovica. Supporting Serbia’s attempts to adopt the European Union Habitats Directive and the protection of two endangered cattle species, this project facilitated the development of a management and development plan, detailing protection methods and new opportunities for the reserve. Nature conservation in Serbia was predominantly based on the traditional approach of isolating protected areas from human activity in and around these areas. Previously, nature conservation organisations lacked the capacity to work with modern approaches such as those promoted by the directive. In view of the rapprochement of Serbia to the European Union, there was a need to introduce these new approaches, including participatory management planning, the identification, designation and management of protected areas, and linking nature conservation with the wider perspective of rural development.

Several other on-going projects promote the protection of landscapes:

- INTERREG Trans-border Co-operation Project with Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary, supported with EU Funds, aiming to secure ecological and landscape diversity of the future UNESCO

trans-border biosphere reserve, Mura Drava Danube. This area, along three rivers, connects almost a million hectares of natural and cultural heritage in a unique and most important ecological corridor in Europe;

- Building capacities of Central Serbia and the Province of Vojvodina for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

Identification, classification and description of landscape character types of Sumadija and Pomoravlje, Backa and Srem regions and creating a mechanism (basis) for strategic management and preservation of landscapes; recognition of these landscapes as development resources which contribute to the establishment of local and regional identity; recognition of the value and attractiveness of Sumadija and Pomoravlje landscapes for investments in tourism, agriculture and rural development, preservation of nature and biodiversity, environmental protection, cultural landscape protection etc.; creating the landscape spatial database; creating the website; contributing to proper understanding of the European Landscape Convention by local authorities, institutions, organisations, public and private sector, and civil society organisations.

Examples of public participation:

- Organisation of the International Co-operation Day in Kragujevac, as one of the REDASP's promotional activities dedicated to continuation of the implementation the European Landscape Convention in Serbia;
- National Conference organised as a finalisation of the project: "Golija, a transition from planning to development". Participants agreed that all interested parties in the project were striving to change the lives of local populations for the better, through strategic development of Golija nature park, and this implies not only preservation of natural and cultural heritage, but also economic progress of the region as a whole;
- The project was led by the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications of the Republic of Serbia and funded by the European Union and the Government of Switzerland through the European PROGRES programme with EUR 300,000. The project aims to create conditions for sustainable development of Golija Nature Park;
- Promotion and co-operation with the countries from the Region with similar landscape policies.

Conclusion

There is an on-going transformation of the planning system in Serbia, along with expectations in acquiring its legitimacy and establishing greater efficiency of practice in planning and managing the development. The planning system and the relevant legislation will be recognised on the basis of the EU strategic framework, regulations and instruments. These circumstances represent an advantage and convenience for the development of sustainable landscape planning, and their co-ordination with, and integration into, the planning system in Serbia.

[Powerpoint presentation](#)

<http://rm.coe.int/16807b5677>