



## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

### EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

#### *National Workshop on the implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

*Drawing landscape policies for the future*

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#### ***SESSION 1***

##### **SLOVENIA**

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Nowadays, landscape is being recognised as one of the key elements of European culture and heritage, since it has been shaped by many past generations. Natural diversity, combined with diverse social and political systems, has resulted in the mosaic of landscapes, which are now becoming more and more uniform. Defining landscape character and identity is the first step towards protection of the regional and local characteristics. In spite of the fact that landscape is an important spatial resource, as well as the common denominator of numerous sectors, it is rarely explicitly considered in either spatial plans or sectoral development policies.

Over time, the interaction of natural processes and human activities has created the diverse and wonderful landscapes that are so important for Slovenian people, its economy and its international reputation. They are a shared resource for everyone. They provide a living history of Slovenia's past, and an inspiration for Slovenian nature and culture. Many Slovenian landscapes are valued for their natural beauty and attractiveness, providing a strong sense of place at the local and regional level, and they are part of our national identity. Some of them are considered national icons. They provide a wide range of social and health benefits and underpin Slovenia's economy. Stunning Slovenian landscapes and wildlife attract tourists from near and far, and are consistently given as the top reasons for visiting Slovenia. In the competitive global market, our landscapes are a key part in promoting Slovenia as a desirable location, attractive to businesses and staff.

The European Landscape Convention entered into force in Slovenia in 2003. The ratification brought new demands, potentials and challenges in the field of spatial planning in Slovenia, especially in terms of the integral approach to spatial planning. There is no specific Slovenian landscape policy or landscape law or landscape agency, but there are a number of sector policies or laws for wider aspects of the landscape. Since the ratification of the European Landscape Convention, Slovenia has integrated the ideas, issues and principles of the convention and the landscape dimension into spatial development and other sectoral and intersectoral policies and plans, and these include a network of protected landscapes and landscape elements in various ways. There are three Ministries involved in the development, protection and management of landscapes: the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. “Landscape” is defined in the Spatial Planning Act (2017) in terms of spatial planning and in the Nature Conservation Act (2014) in terms of the importance of landscapes for biodiversity conservation. Cultural aspects of landscapes, important for preserving the cultural heritage, are defined in the Cultural Heritage Protection Act. In Slovenia, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning is a carrier of the national activities concerning the implementation of the convention in co-operation and inter-ministerial co-ordination with the other ministry.

Some general information about implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Slovenia:

- A landscape analysis and character assessment project was launched before the ratification of the convention and it was completed in 1998. Slovenia is an extraordinarily varied and rich country in terms of its landscapes. The pressures on the landscapes are strong, and the landscape is changing quickly, so we need to re-evaluate them and renew the atlas. This will be an important step forward.
- We have now a new spatial and building act, which, compared to the current one, better integrates the landscape dimension and landscape documents.
- We are now in the middle of preparing a new Strategy of Spatial Development, and new Spatial Order of Slovenia, which will better integrate the landscape dimension applied to the protection, management and planning of landscapes. The methodology of designating landscape character features and areas has become out-dated, not only because of spatial, socio-economic and political changes but also due to advances in the knowledge and methods in the field of landscape analysis and evaluation.
- The aim in Slovenia is a). to verify and upgrade the existing methodology of identification and assessment of landscapes, and designating landscape character areas, which are both important for national identity, and to link state of the art knowledge to policy development processes and action required for the protection and increase of valuable landscapes and; b). to develop general rules for landscape management in landscape character areas of national importance, including spatial management guidelines; c). to designate the landscape character areas and spatial management guidelines and; d). to initiate several actions for increasing awareness of the landscape in general, both with professionals and the institutions dealing with landscape.

We will contact the representatives of landscape-related institutions, and collect their opinions in structured interviews. The proposed method will be tested in pilot areas such as Triglav national park. The work will be based on a conceptual framework, analysis of experience, empirical research

in general, discussions with professionals and stakeholders, and verification on pilot cases. The results will be directly applicable in the process of the renovation of the Strategy of spatial development (SPRS2050) with action plan 2030, and the Spatial order of Slovenia, and in the preparation of landscape concepts for regional and local land use plan (in accordance with the new spatial planning legislation).

The results will also be integrated in the development of strategic documents of different sectors, such as management plans for nature protection and cultural heritage areas, water and forest management plans, and agricultural payments. The methodology for determining landscape character areas and elements should be followed by measures for implementing these contents into spatial and/or sectoral development acts. This project addresses one of the key issues, emphasised in the European Landscape Convention – the identification and assessment of landscapes.

This issue is a starting point for action in other fields that are mentioned in the convention, namely landscape conservation, management and planning. At this point it should be emphasised that the term ‘protection’ does not indicate the skanzen (outdoor museum) type of protection or the conservation of the current conditions. We understand the term ‘protection’ not to be a static form: it takes into consideration the processes which have shaped the landscape, as well as their functions. These processes are reflected in regionally and locally characteristic management practices, as well as in the importance of landscape for individuals and social communities.

- Recent EU agriculture and nature conservation policies explicitly target cultural landscape preservation. In the absence of a national policy on cultural landscapes, the measures of these policies are transposed to national legislation without much consideration of their impacts in local territories. As a result, we are also preparing guidelines for landscape features, which are important for biodiversity conservation in Slovenia. This requires certain actions: a). determining the relationship between landscape heterogeneity and biodiversity and the relevance of agro-technology for the former, b). identifying landscape features that are important for biodiversity, and c). preparing the guidelines for their management. A theoretic model for the assessment of structural landscape heterogeneity and a list of landscape features, important for biodiversity, were prepared.
- The model was tested on three different landscape regions of Slovenia. The general recommendations for conservation and management of landscape heterogeneity include protection of the identified features and the extensive use of their surroundings, especially on the intensively-used agricultural land. The specific guidelines are described for each of the identified features and they can be implemented through a nature conservation policy, in the frame of the agricultural policy. The model for heterogeneity assessment, as well as management guidelines, was discussed in the seminar for relevant stakeholders, and their suggestions were incorporated in the final proposal.
- We have a very successful Association of Landscape Architects of Slovenia which plays an important role in popularisation of landscapes. For a number of years in April, the month dedicated to Landscape Architecture, the Slovenian Association of Landscape Architects has organised – and will continue to – many different events and consultations about the landscape and its instruments.

- Slovenia also supports the Landscape Award of the European Landscape Convention and has so far participated in the selection of the European Landscape Award three times. In 2014 and also in 2016 we organised the call for candidate selection for the Council of Europe Landscape Award, but so far our submissions have not won the Award itself.
- To promote knowledge of the landscape we informed all the local authorities about the first Landscape Day on 20 October 2017.
- Finally, in Slovenia we will set up a working group to implement the European Landscape Convention at ministerial level, in order to prepare a national landscape policy.

We in Slovenian landscape planning are now facing a real dilemma: how to proceed? Should Slovenia swim with the stream and develop its own “landscape department” with similar mechanisms of control over events in physical space as do other departments, or should it return to the point from which landscape planning in Slovenia started? It is certainly necessary to establish a framework for co-ordination of different interests and needs. We believe that a spatial planning system would be the appropriate framework for this purpose. It is desirable that the landscape dimension should be taken fully into account in Slovenian debates conducted on the theme of sustainable development.