



Ministero  
dei beni e delle  
attività culturali  
e del turismo

**EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**

**LANDSCAPE AWARD OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

*5<sup>th</sup> Session – 2016-2017*

**APPLICATION FORM**

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## I. STATE CONCERNED AND APPLICANT

**1. State**

ITALIA

**Represented by**

Direttore Generale  
Dott.ssa Caterina BON VALSASSINA

*Address:*

Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali  
Direzione generale archeologia belle arti  
paesaggio

*Tel.:*

Servizio V 'Tutela del paesaggio'  
Via di S. Michele 22 -0053 ROMA  
Tel. 0039 6723 4545/4554/4452

*E-mail:*

mbac-dg-abap @mailcert.beniculturali.it

mbac-dg-abap.servizio5  
@mailcert.beniculturali.it

**2. Applicant**

*Name of the local,  
regional authority (ies)  
or NGO(s)*

Parco Archeologico e Paesaggistico della Valle dei Templi di  
Agrigento  
Dipartimento dei Beni Culturali e dell'Identità Siciliana

**Represented by**

Direttore Dott. Giuseppe Carmelo  
PARELLO

*Address:*

Via Panoramica dei Templi n.: s.n.  
92 100 AGRIGENTO (Sicilia)

*Tel.:*

Tel.: 0039 0922 621604  
Fax: 0039 09222 6438

*E-mail:*

Email: calogero.liotta@regione.sicilia.it

## II. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJET

**3. Name of the Project**

LANDSCAPE REGENERATION

**4. Location of the Project**

AGRIGENTO

**5. Summary of the Project (10 lines)**

LANDSCAPE REGENERATION project comes from the cooperation between public and private partners inside the extraordinary setting of the Valley of the Temples, in the city of Agrigento. Declared UNESCO World Heritage in 1997, the Valley of the Temples hosts one of the major archeological complex in the Mediterranean Sea, surrounded by an agricultural landscape of rare beauty, mainly composed by centenary olive and almond trees. In a view of sustainable development of the resources, the Park has coordinated the actions of public and private partners, recreating traditional products of high quality and reminding agronomic practices of the ancient Sicilian tradition, in order to combine production, protection and fruition of the territory thanks to the recovery of important infrastructure as the old railway of the Temples. Therefore, the project combines Knowledge, Cooperation, Development, Protection and Fruition.

6. **Photo representing the Project** (high definition – JPEG 350 dpi) and name of the author of the photo please





Landscape Regeneration



da agricoltura di sostentamento a moderna fruizione



Diodoros: il vino della Valle



### III. CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

7. **Start of the Project** month  year   
*The project must have been completed three years previously*

8. **Partners**
- |  |
|--|
| Università degli Studi di Palermo,<br>Dipartimento Scienze Agrarie e Forestali<br>Val Paradiso srl, FAI-Giardino della<br>Kolymbethra, Ferrovie Kaos, CVA<br>Canicattì |
|--|

9. **Financing bodies**
- |  |
|--|
| Parco Valle dei Templi 50%<br>Giardino della Kolymbethra et Ferrovie<br>Kaos 25%<br>Val Paradiso srl e CVA CANICATTI' 2% |
|--|

#### 10. **Central aims of the Project**

As proponent institution, the Park aimed to recover the historical memory of ancient productive practices, proposing and developing them within their own territory, with the realization of products of exceptional quality, that illustrate a territory of extreme beauty.

Another goal was to develop cooperation between public and private subjects as an element of strength for an active landscape protection and environmental regeneration, through an agile management model, shaped into a detailed agreement in which roles, goals and responsibilities of the individuals appear clear and defined. Through this simple management model, it was possible to mutually transfer from the scientific and research to the productive field, professionalism and know-how for landscape protection, making an amazing cultural site alive and fully usable by everyone.

In the logic of socio-cultural promotion of the landscape and its fruition, it was identified as key objective the possibility to make visit and admire the beauty of the Valley of the Temples, also through soft mobility system, recovering the ancient railway of the Temples and realizing other two different itineraries - to be covered on foot or by bicycle - called "Environmental Route" and "Green Ways".

The recovery of the ancient railway allowed to activate a further access point for visitors, making them directly get to the heart of the Valley in front of The Temple of Vulcan.

## 11. Outcome

The project is based on the typical **multi-functionality** of the historic agricultural landscapes, including not only the fundamental productive functions, but also the environmental, social, cultural, ethical and aesthetic features. Examples of landscape restoring and admirable achievements in terms of “active” safeguarding, high quality production and touristic exploitation are:

- The **Kolymbethra** Garden, recovered from a state of deterioration and negligence and revealed to the public in 2001 thanks to FAI (Italian Foundation for the Environment); it has the landscape of the irrigate orchard with ancient and fragrant variety of citrus trees cultivated in the site of the ancient Greek pool. The "useful and beautiful garden," is a repository of biodiversity, ancient knowledge, productive, environmental and cultural values and a material culture going to disappear.
- The **Diodoros** project allowed the transformation of part of the 1300 hectares of protected area of the Park in dynamic places of high quality agricultural production. In economic terms, it was possible to produce and sell *Diodoros* oil and wine, multi-awarded in their respective fields, entering the elite commercial chain. It produced strong interest in the local population and emotional involvement for the discovery of traditional productive methods and typical local products, which are natural carriers of culture and knowledge. For private partners, the project represented an opportunity for investment and development by creating jobs and generating a new economy. The Park continues the work of cultural awareness for landscape production, creating high quality products.
- The **Agri Gentium** project, is the result of the granting of concessions, for the most part, of the 450 hectares of state-owned land on which agricultural activities would be realized. They would be realized in three projects addressing different subjects and different purposes: 1) community gardens, 2) agricultural areas used as spaces for social activities and agricultural management initiatives aimed at the rehabilitation and social reintegration of vulnerable people, 3) productive agriculture with agricultural production branded "Diodoros".
- **The Garden of Goethe in the Valley of the Temples**, a guided tour to discover the crops and farming techniques dating back to XVIII century, just as described by Goethe in its *Italian Journey*. Visitors are offered a guided tour and the occasion to observe practices, scheduled by the garden calendar, with an operator performing ancient gestures, methods and tools.
- The recovery of the **ancient rail road**, dating back to 1874, which gently cuts the entire area of the Archeological Park, fully restored and used for the transport of tourists on board of old trains.
- The **environmental path**, long nearly 4 km, from the Temple of Vulcan to the Temple of Demetra, twists and turns through monumental Saracen olive trees, almond trees and a Mediterranean scrub of rare beauty. In the attempt of promoting the enhancement of the territory taking into account forms of sustainable tourism with the creation of Green Ways, a path which allows a better articulation of the existing paths, today often confined to the Hill of the Temples.
- **The Plant Patriarchs of the Valley of the Temples**: visit tour to discover monumental specimens of olive, carob and myrtle inserted in the book “The Great trees of Sicily”. A planimetry depicts the entire path and also contains details of the morphological characteristics of each single specimen, hints about the origin, diffusion, history, classical myths and traditional customs.
- The implementation of the **Laboratory** for the characterization and conservation of germplasm of almond, olive and pistachio.

- The **Living Museum of the Almond Tree** “Francesco Monastra”, a “field collection” which contains about 300 varieties of ancient traditional Sicilian almond cultivations. As well as to keep biodiversity, it also has the function to show, for educational purposes, the traditional agricultural techniques. As the bank of germplasm, it will serve to evaluate the varieties taking into account their landscape value and may stimulate the promotion of pastry products, obtained by the almond trees and its products. An original example of open-air museum.
- Exhibition on the Living Museum of the Almond Tree “Francesco Monastra” at **MILANO EXPO 2015**, inside the Bio Mediterranean Cluster, on the occasion of the seminar “Dried Fruit” where the Park has contributed with the report “The Museum of the Almond: a precious gene bank”.
- The project **A Thousand Almond trees in the Valley of the Temples**. It allowed thousand almond little plants to be planted in the Valley in order to contribute to the recovery of the damaged ancient almond heritage.
- **Oliver in the Valley of the Temples: from olive to oil**, now at its ninth edition, is a program of environmental education for schools.

#### IV. RESPECT OF THE CRITERIA OF THE ATTRIBUTION OF THE AWARD

##### 12. Sustainable territorial development

*Is the project part of a sustainable development policy?*

*Does it contribute to the enhancement of environmental, social, economic, cultural or aesthetic values of the landscape? How?*

*Has it successfully countered or posed a remedy to any pre-existing environmental damage or urban blight? How?*

The project is part of a sustainable development policy which, with its multidisciplinary, was able to strengthen environmental, ethical, social, cultural and aesthetic values of the Valley landscape. It is the result of the combination between natural characteristics and human genius, the slow evolution in the relationship between nature and culture, a collective project which measured the need to produce with available resources and considering environment features.

A traditional agricultural landscape whose founding characters appear very remote: already in 480 B.C., Diodorus Siculus reports the presence of vineyards of “exceptional size and beauty”. At the basis of the agricultural success of the landscape there is its fertility, a feature which catches the attention of Al-Idrisi, Arab geographer under the Norman court, who in 1138 visited the city which “owns orchards and lush gardens, as well as a wide variety of fruits...” Travelers’ reports of *The Grand Tour* reconfirm a rich agriculture in a landscape of extraordinary fertility.

From the agricultural and natural point of view, today the landscape of the Valley of the Temples is complex. Almond yards and olive groves in mixed culture constitute the landscape of dried arboreal cultures and represent the most peculiar plant-based component of the Park. The *Diodoros* initiatives, *Agri Gentium* and the creation of the Living Museum of the Almond, have effectively contribute to mend situations of degradation of olive groves, vineyards and almond groves of the Park and have been characterized by the enhancing of traditional cultures, the ancient agricultural practices and the creation of excellent products, multi-awarded in the field of viticulture and olive growing, entering the elite commercial chain.



The project of environment and landscape recovery of the Garden of Kolymbethra is set up as a virtuous example of cooperation between public and private for the active safeguarding of the other famous landscape of the Valley of Temples: the irrigate orchard.

Cultivated in a small valley within the high walls of limestone between the Temple of Castor and Pollux and the Temple of Vulcan, the site identified as that of the Greek pool described by Diodorus Siculus, the Garden of Kolymbethra risked to disappear for the cultivation negligence it had been intended to, until 1998, when FAI obtained the concession of the area for 25 years in exchange for the intervention of environmental and landscape recovery of the area. After the conclusion of the project, Kolymbethra opened to the public in 2001 in order to return visitors an agricultural and cultural landscape of inestimable value.

The abandonment was hiding a long productive history founded on the fertility of the alluvial soil, the abundance of water and a microclimate which limestone walls make constantly mild. The basic idea of the project was to consider the garden as part of a historic agricultural landscape, to recover it preserving plants, use of soil, traditional farming techniques and to return it to those visitors attentive to the history and nature of Mediterranean landscape. Today Kolymbethra Garden summarizes in six hectares the agricultural and natural landscape of the Valley of the Temples. In the steepest areas, the plants of the Mediterranean scrub, beyond the small river, fed by the still perfectly working drainage tunnels, one of the last Sicilian “gardens” with lemons, mandarins and oranges represented by ancient varieties and irrigate according to the techniques of Arabic tradition.

Where water does not arrive, here they are mulberry trees, carob trees, and prickly pear, almond and majestic Saracens olive trees. Nearby 80,000 visitors a year for the Kolymbethra: most of them are students for whom several educational paths have been created. They explain the importance of preserving and protecting the biodiversity of the garden which puts it at the odds with the modern intensive monoculture fruit systems, perhaps more productive and efficient but lacking all those smells, flavors, colors and shapes which only traditional agricultural landscape can conserve, because repositories of ancient knowledge, productive, environmental and cultural values and of a material culture in process of disappearance. Kolymbethra is an example of how to promote active protection of a traditional agricultural landscape, recognizing the characteristic of multi-functionality.

Last but not least, Kolymbethra landscape should be recognized the value of beauty: a beauty linked to the shape of trees, the color and flavor of fruits now disappeared. A beauty linked to the charm that comes from the re-flowering phenomenon: fruits and flowers follow one another without interruption season after season, shade and coolness assured by the evergreen foliage of the trees.

### **13. Exemplary value**

*Can the project be considered of exemplary value? Why?*

*Which are the good practices that it implemented?*

The project can be considered as an example which can be reproduced in other territorial contexts where landscapes of historic agriculture have suffered extended transformations due to intensive production processes typical of specialized fruit farming systems.

Over the last 50 years many landscapes of Italian agricultural traditions expired, because they were based on agronomic techniques and genetic resources not adequate to the dominant needs of global market and productive efficiency. The abandonment of traditional agricultural landscapes led to negative consequences in terms of environmental risks, loss of territorial identity and landscape peculiarities. For natural and historic features, these landscapes are related to fruit trees, whose productions represent a living testimony of the local culture and history, which cannot be assimilated to any other else.

With them it often disappear a very ancient biodiversity, ancient material cultures difficult to reproduce, landscapes which characterized the identity of an entire geographic region. The LANDSCAPE REGENERATION project, divided into different initiatives, is an exemplary and reproducible project because it is founded on the recognition of typical multifunctionality of traditional agricultural landscapes.

The active protection lies on the multi-functionality of the agricultural landscape of the Valley, including in it not only the founding productive functions but also those of safeguard of the environment (socio-cultural, ethics and aesthetic). The project enhances and promotes the agricultural and cultural landscape of the Valley of the Temples which contains and preserves an extraordinary archeological heritage.

The project supports the productions obtained inside the Park, such as *Diodoros* oil and wine, which are considered typical and which – thanks to private partners – became products of excellence, winning national and international awards. These good practices enabled the Park to propose similar activities for other agricultural sectors as the Living Museum of the Almond Tree and, in terms of cultural promotion too: for example, the creation of the Goethe Orchard or the Garden of Experimental Planting, created to make visitors relive the charm, colors, perfumes of the agricultural crops of Girgenti countryside and through which the Park experimentally recreates the traditional crops preserving the historical memory of the territory and its genetic diversity.

The Garden of Kolymbethra, managed by FAI (Italian Foundation for the Environment) is another example of exemplary landscape regeneration. Recovered after decades of negligence and abandonment, it opened to public in 2001.

With actions aimed at the enhancement of the landscape as an element of creative inspiration, the project has set up thematic paths where it is possible to recognize how the landscape of the Valley is not substantially changed compared to the reports of the *Grand Tour*, or to the masterpieces of some important writers who have always been fascinated by its extraordinary beauty and that sense of wellness that it assures to those who have the privilege to visit it. From Pirandello to Camilleri, the landscape of the Valley is not only a scenic background, but it is the key player of lived or fictional lives.

The theme of complete lodging industry has been addressed in the key of interconnection of landscapes with the restoration of the historic railroad Kaos. On board of 1970 railcars, tourists can enjoy a deliberately slow trip to appreciate the beautiful landscapes, visit the Archaeological Park of the Valley of the Temples, the Garden of Kolymbethra, with the deliberately extended link through the districts of Kaos to the Scala dei Turchi, this charming white marl cliff overlooking the sea. With the new logic of openness and active protection, the lands of the Valley become an educational workshop for landscape and traditional culture lovers aimed at enriching the scenic beauty as the intimate union between archeology and agricultural and natural landscape. The project is reproducible for being able of 1) maintaining a harmonious interaction between nature and culture through the protection of the landscape, ensuring the traditional land use, preserving the artifacts, social and cultural expressions; 2) supporting lifestyle and economic activities in harmony with nature and with the culture of the involved communities; 3) maintaining the diversity of landscape and habitat, conserving intraspecific biodiversity, between species and ecosystems; 4) avoiding land exploitation and inappropriate activities; 5) Creating opportunities for the public related to recreational and touristic appropriate activities; 6) Creating economic opportunities linked to local products and touristic facilities.

#### **14. Public participation**

*Does the project actively encourage the public's participation in the decision-making process? How?*

*Is the project in line with the wider policies implemented by national, regional or local authorities?*

In line with the cooperation policies promoted at regional and national level, the project finds its strength on the active involvement of public subjects, such as the Department of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Palermo (scientific area) and the Park of the Valley of the Temples (management area) in cooperation with private partners. Particularly, the Park – as proponent subject – has played the vital role of planning and coordinating

activities, with the specific goal of enhancing this extraordinary world heritage cultural deposit.

Over the years the Park signed precise agreements with University of Palermo, Department of Arboreal Crops, with FAI and Ferrovie dello Stato (National Railways).

The collaboration with the University provided the joint management of the Living Museum of Almond Tree "Francesco Monastra", valuable field collecting biodiversity of almonds in Sicily, with the presence of almost 300 varieties. The main goal of the Museum is the preservation of the genetic heritage of ancient varieties of almond groves, many of which are likely to disappear both for the abandonment of the cultures on the hills of the Sicilian hinterland and for the introduction of varieties coming from other Italian and European agricultural realities. In addition to biodiversity conservation, the Museum of the Almond Tree has always the function of studying the genetic diversity of the almond tree in Sicily, identifying those varieties which better maintain the excellence in quality and taste of the traditional Sicilian pastry and showing, for educational purposes, the cultural techniques of the traditional agriculture in the hinterland of Agrigento.

The Sicilian Region, even before the establishment of the Archeological and Landscape Park of the Valley of the Temples entrusted the management of the Garden of Kolymbethra to FAI. The Park promoted and established closed cooperation with FAI in order to know, promote and enjoy this historic and precious garden.

The last, just in order of time, precious collaboration has been initiated with the state railways, in particular with FS Italian Foundation which together with RFI proceeded to recover the ancient railway of the temples. This collaboration makes now visitors directly reach the Valley with the historic train.

The Park completed its institutional task through the precise identification of tasks and responsibilities of the various parties while maintaining its basic role of coordination and control.

## **5. Awareness-raising**

*Is the project effectively increasing the public's awareness of the importance of landscape in terms of human development, consolidation of European identity, or individual and collective well-being? How?*

The law 3 November 2000 n. 20 of the Sicilian Region which instituted the Park, at the art. 1 comma 2 states that:

*"The Park aims at protecting and enhancing the archaeological, environmental and landscape resources of the Valley of the Temples and particularly aims at:*

- a) The identification, preservation, study and research, as well as the enhancement of the archaeological heritage for scientific and cultural purposes;*
- b) The protection and preservation of historical and archaeological, landscape and environmental interests;*
- c) Enhancement of the archaeological, environmental and landscape for educational and recreational purposes;*
- d) The promotion of information and awareness-raising policies in order to stimulate and increase, since school, public awareness about conservation of the cultural heritage and the environment;*
- e) The promotion of all initiatives and interventions appropriate to the development of local resources for touristic purposes and more generally to ensure the enjoyment and social enjoyment.*

With these aims, a number of awareness initiatives have been undertaken. They have reached important goals:

The attention to the media coverage of the ethical and socio-cultural contents of the project was the pivot of the whole project. In addition to traditional media presence (TV, Internet, print) it has been decided to focus on the human relationship of trust, organizing academic

conferences and involving citizens. It has been paid particular attention to the educational purpose of the project, inviting families to visit and organizing guided tours for children and students, in order to bring them closer to the world now so far of the traditional agricultural production. Children and young people directly involved in the "harvest of the olives of the Valley" (recreational and educational purposes), with subsequent pressing of the olives in the mill.

The action of development of agricultural production of the Park territory is projected towards the creation of a basket of high-quality products, branded Diodoros, to sell to the markets. In the coming months, it will begin the sale of almonds and honey, obtained from Ape Nera Sicula farms.

The natural prosecution of the awareness raising process, socialization and sharing of a public good as the state-owned asset of the Park was to personally engage locals with the issue of a notice called *Agri Gentium* aimed at assignment to citizens, free of charge, plots of lands to be used as orchards with the dual aim of safeguarding and developing the territory and encouraging socialization.

Another interesting and peculiar aspect was the free granting of an agricultural area intended to agricultural management initiatives aimed at the social rehabilitation and reintegration of vulnerable people.

The project has also created strong interest in the local population, strengthening public awareness and sensitivity towards landscape values, as an essential element of cultural growth for the achievement of individual and collective welfare.

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