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COUNCIL OF EUROPE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

11th COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONFERENCE ON THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

*Conference organised under the auspices of the Presidency of Hungary
of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe*

Council of Europe
Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg
26-27 May 2021
Online meeting [Room 9]

Opening speech

*Mrs Suzanne BROLLY,
Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg in charge of the resilient city and green spaces*

Dear Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Dear Minister of Agriculture of Hungary,
Dear friends,

First of all, I would like to thank you on behalf of the Mayor of Strasbourg for this invitation to participate in the 11th European Landscape Conference. Of course, I would have preferred to be able to welcome you in Strasbourg rather than by videoconference, in order to let you enjoy the richness of our landscapes.

Since 1949, when the Council of Europe was created and the first meeting of the Committee of Ministers was held in Strasbourg City Hall, the Council of Europe and the city of Strasbourg have maintained very strong links. Over the years, our city has asserted itself on the international scene as the city of the fundamental values of Europe, namely human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

In 2010, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Council of Europe, the two institutions sealed their collaboration with a partnership agreement aimed at fostering the exchange of experiences and the joint promotion of fundamental European values.

Ten years after the signature of this partnership agreement, in September 2020, the Council of Europe and the City of Strasbourg decided to reaffirm their links of proximity and co-operation during an official meeting between Mrs Jeanne Barseghian, Mayor of Strasbourg, and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Through this new partnership agreement adopted at the City Council of 3 May 2021, the two institutions reiterate their willingness to co-operate on major contemporary issues related to the priorities of the new municipality, namely democratic renewal, the preservation of human rights, the fight against social and territorial inequalities, as well as the health and environmental challenges.

This new partnership agreement contributes to the European and international influence of Strasbourg, and allows both bodies to mutually benefit from their geographical proximity.

It is important to us to work on the issue of ecological transition in close connection with the landscape. Over the last few decades, the landscape has been greatly affected by the increasing urbanisation of society and its territory, often in a way that is detrimental to its quality. It is in this perspective that landscape atlases and reference systems have been developed at different scales of the territory.

It appears that Strasbourg is at the intersection of several landscape entities. The dense and complex hydrographic system that irrigates the Rhine alluvial plain has developed numerous wetlands and floodplains that have preserved vast natural spaces and defined a great diversity of water landscapes. Water, in its natural and human components, forms the backbone of Strasbourg. In addition to being the main support for nature, it is the catalyst for the urban framework. Human activities have shaped this natural base by developing around water, whether for economic reasons (transportation, motive power) or as a resource.

These contrasting landscapes, both in terms of the character of the environments that coexist and in terms of the forms and atmospheres: the natural landscapes of the Rhine forests, which are primary, very dense and homogeneous, are contrasted with the lively industrial landscapes of the port of Strasbourg and Kehl, and the many gravel pits that are in operation along the Rhine.

To protect these landscapes, the City and the Eurometropolis rely on the local urban plan, which includes a development and programming guideline aimed at preserving the green and blue framework. The objectives pursued must contribute to improving and reinforcing the quality and diversity of landscapes, reducing fragmentation and the vulnerability of species and taking into account their movement in the context of climate change.

- The development projects carried out by the community are subject to an accompaniment taking into account the landscape and biodiversity issues in a reinforced way.
- The agricultural spaces are not left out with the establishment of hedgerows on land owned by the community. The proximity of the agricultural landscapes to the Strasbourg urban area and their interweaving with the peri-urban fabric offer a particular attraction to an essentially urban population... and guarantees for the creation of a nourishing territory.
- The natural areas are protected and management plans are in place, notably for the Rohshollen Island and the two peri-urban forests classified as National Nature Reserves, which I invite you to discover during your next visit to Strasbourg.

- The city has also defined two urban nature parks that aim to preserve the specific landscape features of the territory. The Urban Nature Park (PNU) is an approach to sustainable development of a territory based both on the heritage wealth of the districts and on a close collaboration of local actors.
- Organised by its successive fortifications, Strasbourg is clearly defined by its island ellipse and also, but less clearly, by its Glacis belt. In September 2020, the city committed itself to transforming this green belt into a real climate shield, supporting biodiversity and amenities for the population.

Urban densification and generalised urban sprawl are strongly and irreversibly marking our landscapes. They consume agricultural spaces, trivialise and degrade the landscape by the standardisation of urban forms and the architectural mediocrity of the constructions and by a development without relation with the natural base of the territory. It is up to us to ensure that the artificialisation of the land is reduced to guarantee the ecological functionality that is essential to ensure a healthy and resilient territory for its population. Ecology and landscape are the keys to reconsidering our way of developing or rather managing our territory.

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