



**COUNCIL OF EUROPE LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**  
**LANDSCAPE AWARD OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

*8th Session – 2022-2023*

**APPLICATION FORM**

## **Presentation**

*The Council of Europe Landscape Convention is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all aspects of landscape: natural, rural, urban and peri-urban. It represents an important contribution to the implementation of the Council of Europe's objectives. By taking into account the value of landscapes, with their natural and human components, the Council of Europe acknowledges that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas.*

*Article 11 of the Convention establishes the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe. The Resolution [CM/Res\(2008\)3](#) on the rules governing the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008 at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, draws attention to the fact that Article 11 of the Convention institutes the Award and that it is in keeping with the work carried out by the Council of Europe concerning human rights, democracy and sustainable development.*

*Opened to the Parties to the Convention, the Award is intended to raise civil society's awareness of the value of landscapes, of their role and of changes to them. Its objective is to reward exemplary practical initiatives aimed at successful landscape quality objectives on the territories of the Parties to the Convention. The Award is conferred every two years and the files presenting applications must reach the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe.*

*At its meeting held in Strasbourg on 28-29 April 2008, the Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage and Landscape (CDPATEP) decided that applications should be submitted to the Council of Europe Secretariat through the Permanent Representations of the Parties to the Convention.*

***Each State Party to the Convention is thus invited to send by post to the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe Landscape Convention), before 31 January 2023, via its Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe, a completed application form in paper format, together with a digital copy on a USB key of the form and additional material.***

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*Please note that:*

- participation to the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe is only open to local and regional authorities and their groupings and non-governmental organisations, as stated in the Resolution CM/Res (2008)3, Appendix, Article 2;*
- the application form must be completed in all its parts, in one of the two official languages of the Council of Europe (English or French);*
- the materials submitted must be copyright-free, for use by the Council of Europe in communications aimed at promoting the Award or any other publications or activities relating to the Convention. The Council of Europe undertakes to cite the authors' names;*
- files that are incomplete or fail to comply with the rules will not be taken into consideration.*

*For further information please visit the Landscape Award section of the Council of Europe website:*

[Convention du Conseil de l'Europe sur le paysage / Site web officiel \(coe.int\)](#)  
[Council of Europe Landscape Convention / Official website \(coe.int\)](#)

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## I. STATE CONCERNED AND APPLICANT

**1. State**

PORTUGAL

**Represented by**

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**2. Applicant**

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

Municipality of Lousã

**Represented by**

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## II. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJET

### 3. Name of the Project

Villages of Serra da Lousã – Where Villages Sound Unique

### 4. Location of the Project

Serra da Lousã

### 5. Summary of the Project (10-12 lines)

The *Villages of Serra da Lousã – Where Villages Sound Unique* project consisted in recovering a mountain landscape, composed of five small traditional villages, including the recovery of their landscape in its different components, from traditional houses to endemic fauna and flora. The project began in 2002 and its implementation allowed to reverse a path of decline and abandonment, ensuring – through the adoption of planning, conservation and landscape management measures – the protection of heritage values and the revitalization of villages, giving them new purposes. Implemented by the municipality and was supported by various partners (regional entities, local associations, universities and the business sector), it is a project with a history of twenty years of work, marked by strong political and technical leadership. The typical constructions of the villages made with local materials were recovered, maintaining the characteristics of the traditional urban clusters. Access, public and circulation areas were recovered. The surrounding landscape was recovered with endemic species and, at the same time, awareness campaigns, public participation actions and landscape promotion activities were carried out. This had a strong impact on the local economy, converting a territory doomed to depopulation into a living and attractive landscape that now shows the intention of wanting to evolve toward the creation of a Protected Landscape at the Regional level, additional do the ecological value of Serra da Lousã, previously recognized in the context of Natura 2000 Network (Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 76/2000, of July 5th). This project is part of a policy of sustainable development based on a “balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment” (European Landscape Convention).

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



Author: Municipality of Lousã

7. **Website of the Project** (*if exists*)

<https://cm-lousa.pt/turismo/o-que-visitar/aldeias/>

### III. CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

8. **Start of the Project** month  year

*The project must have been  
completed at least three years previously*

9. **Partners**

**Education, Research and Development Entities**

University of Coimbra

University of Aveiro

Coimbra Agriculture School

**Regional Entities**

Intermunicipal Community of Coimbra Region

Tourism Centre of Portugal

ADXTUR- Agência para o Desenvolvimento Turístico das  
Aldeias do Xisto

**Local Organisations**

Activar – Associação de Cooperação da Lousã

DUECEIRA – Associação de Desenvolvimento do Ceira e  
Dueça

Montanha Clube

A.C.M.C – Associação de Convívio e Melhoramentos do  
Candal

Associação de Recuperação do Talasnal – A.R.T.

Associação de Recuperação do Casal Novo

Association CVAC – Cerdeira Village Art & Craft

**Business sector**

Enjoy Adventure, Lda.

Turislousã – Desporto Aventura, Lda.

Naturelousã – Turismo e Aventura Unipessoal, Lda

Veado Verde / Green Deer

Paradigmo

BLUEMOTION

Tour In Village – Serra da Lousã

Cerdeira Home for Creativity

Among other companies (55 local housing units)

## 10. Financing bodies

Municipality of Lousã  
Regional Coordination and Development Commission of the Centre  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
Ministry of Environment and Climate Action  
European Commission (FEEL)  
Private Entities

The investment made between 2002 and 2022 is estimated to be around EUR 3.5 million, distributed by the following investment field: built heritage and infrastructures (road network, water supply, sanitation and electrification) and natural heritage (reforestation, recovery of faunistic species, self-protection measures, structural prevention actions concerning rural fire management).

## 11. Central aims of the Project

The Project aimed at the following objectives:

- Recover and revitalize the architectural, landscape and cultural heritage of the Schist; Villages of Serra da Lousã;
- Reverse the path of decline and abandonment of villages and give them a new dynamics of sustainability;
- Support the local economy and promote job creation;
- Preserve and improve the environmental quality of Serra da Lousã;
- Disseminate the landscape of the villages and its heritage;
- Safeguard and enhance the tangible and intangible heritage of the landscape of Serra da Lousã;
- Preserve, recover and enhance the native fauna and flora;
- Promote the experience of the villages of Serra da Lousã, giving them new purposes that are up-to-date and have sustainable projection in the future ahead;
- Attract and involve local population, tourists and visitors.

## 12. Outcome

The following results can be identified from the implementation of the project:

### **Built Heritage**

- Restoration of the buildings (buildings and corrals) of the five mountain villages (Candal, Casal Novo, Cerdeira, Chiqueiro and Talasnal);

### **Nature Conservation**

- Revival of habitats with increased numbers of native animal species, some of which with protection status (red deer, which has been in extinction since the 19th century), roe deer, boar, fox, weasel, genet, rabbit, hare and otter;
- Growth of the forest area of Serra da Lousã populated by endemic species with emphasis on native foliage species (Portuguese oak, cork oak, chestnut tree, strawberry tree and several fragrant plants);
- Hunting activity management;
- Execution of the project “Área integrada de gestão da paisagem da Serra da Lousã”

(Integrated landscape management area of Serra da Lousã), intended to promote the valorisation of the territory through the landscape and the economic revitalisation of the low density forest territories, making them more resilient to risk, namely fire.

#### **Appreciation and Valorisation of the Landscape**

- Creation of the “Marca Aldeias do Xisto” brand (Schist Villages Brand) as high quality landscape for visitors and new residents;
- Classification of villages in 2015 as “Conjuntos de Interesse Municipal” (Municipal Interest Sets)
- Average number of visitors between 2019 and 2022: 40,000 visitors.

#### **Mobility**

- 70 km of approved, signposted walking routes, including identification, information and educational signs;
- 14,8 km of access routes to the villages restored through the public investment;
- 50 km of signposted cycling routes;
- Provision of electric car chargers in the parking area of the village of Cerdeira.

#### **Raising Awareness**

- Creation of a dynamic landscape experience, with regular programmes of cultural activities centred on the values of heritage, the identity of the territory, and traditional habits and customs;
- Number of events and participants, per year, in the different social, cultural, religious and sports activities: 100 events / 15.000 participants;
- Promotion of Training Activities and Workshops such as Basketry with Vegetable Fibres; Chestnut Woodwork; Pottery Wheel Starter Course; Introduction to Natural Cosmetics and Handmade Soap Workshop;
- Holding Cultural Events according to the annual calendar such as Christmas at Candal, Fado at Talasnal; Fado at Candal; Schist Sounds; Xjazz – Jazz meetings in the Schist Villages; Seasonal Festival – Mother Nature Cycles;
- Promotion of Exhibitions of different types such as “Elements on the loose”, “Make a Kite”, “Uses of water in Serra da Lousã”;
- Food Promotion Actions such as Chanfana Gastronomy Festival; Craft Beer Festival; Meeting of Masters and Chefs – Ceramics and Gastronomic Experiences;
- Religious pilgrimages undertaken to enhance self-esteem and identity of the population;
- Creation of the brand «Isto é Lousã» (This is Lousã) by a group of young people from the municipality of Lousã;
- Holding of international sports events such as The European Downhill Championship, the Vodafone Rally of Portugal and the SkyRace (Trail) World Cup;
- Villages hosting of events of great national importance such as National Trail Championships; National Enduro Championships; Volta a Portugal (Tour of Portugal); National Paragliding Championships;
- Holding of leisure events such as motorcycle, bicycle and walking tours.

#### **Economic Development**

- Revitalisation of the local economy with the emergence of 7 companies / associations in cultural and tourist activities;
- Creation of 50 new jobs, which bring sports activities, organized hikes, bike treks and other activities related to nature tourism (Geocaching, Birdwatching and Paragliding);
- Installation of catering and bar services and opening of accommodation units in schist houses (Candal – 12; Casal Novo – 5; Cerdeira – 6; Chiqueiro – 4; Talasnal – 29);

**Circular Economy**

- Promotion of the project “Aldeias Resíduos Zero” (Zero Waste Villages) that aims to valorise solid urban waste. Taking into account the type of residents and visitors population, bilingual awareness actions on composting and reuse of waste were developed.



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

### 13. 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?*

#### **Integrating the Project in a Sustainable Development Policy**

The implementation of this Project is part of a municipal policy to promote the sustainable development of this region. This policy jointly outlined several measures, including the Intervention Plan called “Planos de Aldeia” (Village Plans), which served as the basis for this application and involved the revival of five schist villages (the Candal, Casal Novo, Cerdeira, Chiqueiro and Talasnal villages).

The same policy includes a wider universe of other Plans/Programms, namely: the *Programa de educação ambiental para o desenvolvimento sustentável da Serra da Lousã* (Environmental education programme for the sustainable development of the Serra da Lousã); the Creation of the *Agência para o desenvolvimento da Serra da Lousã* (Agency for the Development of Serra da Lousã); the *Programa Aldeia Segura, Pessoas Seguras* (Safe Village, Safe People Program) and the *Programa para Controlo/Erradicação da Flora Exótica Invasora para a Conservação de Habitats* (Control/Eradication of Invasive Alien Flora for Habitat Conservation).

The initiatives developed in these villages fall within the sustainable development strategy adopted by this Municipality, which incorporates the 17 objectives of the United Nations (UN) Resolution, published on January 1st, 2016, and intends to meet tourism demand and the reasonable and rational use of natural resources and the preservation of natural ecosystems. This strategy also includes the implementation of environmental education programs for sustainable development, the inclusion of environmental concerns in municipal policies, the development of local sustainability indicators and the implementation of the Agenda XXI Local.

#### **Enhancement of environmental, social, economic, cultural or aesthetic values of the landscape**

*The Schist Villages* of Serra da Lousã due to the implementation of this project – are now recognised and preserved as heritage of great value and scenic interest. Due to the implementation of the project these villages were classified, by Regulatory Decree, as “Conjuntos de Interesse Municipal” (Municipal Interest Sets). The project drew attention to the environmental values of the mountain landscape, enabling the recovery of habitats, but also raised awareness of the culture underlying the villages buildings, true examples of popular architecture.

The project also brought to light the ancestral past of its original inhabitants, their way of life, customs, culture and local traditions, values that today are the object of craft stalls, exhibitions and workshops. The restoration of the built heritage respects the original materials and techniques preserving that memory. The program and cultural activities allow visitors and new residents to learn about local traditions.

The quality objectives of the landscape were achieved (see field 12. Outcome).

#### **Posed a remedy to any pre-existing environmental damage**

The project reversed the trend of decline and abandonment to which the villages were condemned, with many of the dwellings in advanced state of degradation. The villages, which

were becoming abandoned, gained a new lease of life. The landscape has been recovered while maintaining its original aesthetic. The local economy that was in decline was recovered. The natural space surrounding this network of villages is part of the Natura 2000 Network, Sítio de Interesse Comunitário Serra da Lousã, PTCO0060 (Serra da Lousã Community Interest Site) which covers territories classified as Special Areas of Conservation (Zonas Especiais de Conservação, ZEC) and Special Protection Areas (Zonas de Proteção Especial, ZPE).

Despite the potential of this territory to rural fires, there are no records of large rural fires in Serra da Lousã, since 1998.

The improvement in environment and landscape quality and the successful sustainable development of the territory due to the implementation of this project led the municipality to propose to the Government the classification of this territory as a Protected Landscape at the regional level. This initiative, which starts from the local level, meets the European policy targets for 2030 in the field of nature conservation and biodiversity, doing so by revitalizing a landscape that was in decline.

#### 14. Exemplary value

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

*Which are the good practices that it implemented?*

##### **Exemplary value**

The project Villages of Serra da Lousã – Where Villages Sound Unique is a success story that has been replicated in other territories.

The interest in improving the mountain villages of Lousã, as part of the framework and with the participation of the owners and inhabitants, began in the late 80s, with the exhaustive diagnosis of the existing situation and with the definition of the courses of action to develop. The proposed interventions for the revival and preservation of the villages and surrounding areas considered the following guidelines: i) preserving the architectural features of the villages; (ii) creating and reinforcing basic infrastructure (water, sanitation, communications and electricity); (iii) paving existing roads and building new roads, in order to facilitate the connection between places; (iv) preserving local fauna and flora; (v) marking hunting areas; vi) promoting sports support infrastructures.

Started in 2002, the project aimed at these five villages was pioneering in the revival of mountain landscapes with dwellings made exclusively from materials that could be obtained on site, such as stone (schist) and chestnut or oak wood. The landscape planning and management, along with the restoration of the heritage, improved the aesthetic and environmental quality of these places. The intangible cultural heritage has been an object of interest and study, and we are witnessing today the promotion of cultural tourism and ecotourism, revitalising the villages and supporting the local economy and job creation. This model of revitalisation was later adopted in other villages, resulting in the creation of *Rede das Aldeias de Xisto* (Schist Villages Network), which now includes a total of 27 villages (<https://www.aldeiasdoxisto.pt/en/villages/territory/>), spread across different territories, four of them inserted into classified areas. Many of these sites were abandoned, with no strategy or policy aimed at revitalising them. Pioneering and innovative, the project submitted in this application has already been replicated in many places. It is an inspiring example whose management model can provide a reference for other degraded, abandoned and devitalised landscapes. Its implementation generated know-how about the rehabilitation of the built heritage of schist villages that is now used in other contexts and locations.

##### **Good practices that it implemented**

There are several initiatives included in the development strategy and that constitute a set of best practices, from which the following stand out:

- Recovering housing buildings and corrals using original materials and preserving the original architecture and plan, still using traditional techniques;
- Restoring buildings and structures of great documentary value (mills and schools), converting

them into spaces of cultural interest and village activity (regional product shops, support point for sports activities, hosting space for people and entities that carry out activities in Serra da Lousã and in the region);

- Restoring village paths and public spaces using original materials;
- Involvement and awareness-raising actions among residents through their respective associations, created in the meantime, with a view to restoring the building, and promoting and enhancing the village;
- Organising sports, recreational and cultural events, at the local, regional, national and international level, only possible due to the unique characteristics of the landscape;
- Marketing and communication actions to disseminate the history, and the heritage, cultural and religious value of the villages;
- Reviving the native forest through the planting of endemic species;
- Awareness-raising for the recovery of urban solid waste – The “Zero Waste Villages” project was pioneering in Portugal, since Lousã was the first municipality to apply the integrated concept “Zero Waste” in a schist village;
- Boosting and promotion of environmental awareness actions directed to the school community, involving local associations (seed collection and consequent creation of nurseries and keepers; reforestation; cleaning of walking paths).

## 15. 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?*

### **Public participation in the decision-making process**

The interest in improving the mountain villages of Lousã, as part of the framework counted on the participation of the owners and inhabitants from the beginning, who supported the municipal executive board by completing an exhaustive diagnosis of the existing situation and defining the main courses of action to be developed. These movements aimed at creating a project for the villages began in the late 80s. Currently, regarding the proposed interventions for the revival and preservation of the villages and surrounding areas, the owners and residents agreed the following guidelines with the executive board: i) preserving the architectural features of the villages; (ii) creating and reinforcing basic infrastructure (water, sanitation, communications and electricity); (iii) paving existing roads and building new roads, in order to facilitate the connection between places; (iv) preserving local fauna and flora; (v) marking hunting areas; vi) promoting sports support infrastructures. The Village Plans were approved and obtained financing for their implementation, integrating even more elements, particularly with regard to the enhancement of intangible heritage and cultural dynamism. Public participation was decisive for the success of the project.

The municipality of Lousã, as managing entity of the Urban Rehabilitation Strategy of Villages, promoted this project, through awareness-raising actions among local populations and agents, highlighting the importance of the restoration of this landscape for local economic development, the advantages of the restoration process of the built heritage for the quality of life and well-being of the populations and visitors to the villages. In addition to these awareness-raising actions that encouraged the populations to participate, incentives were given to urban restoration of a technical-administrative, financial and fiscal nature. As a result of this involvement, it was possible for the owners to adhere to the rehabilitation and revitalisation measures of this territory. The restoration of the villages also brought new residents (domestic and foreign), some of the houses were sold for second housing, other serve as accommodation for tourists, with a balanced diversity that allows the villages to be endowed with life and guarantee the economic sustainability of these territories.

Meanwhile, the residents of the villages organised resident associations with the purpose of defending landscape interests, implementing and proposing actions to preserve the cultural and natural heritage and alerting the municipal authorities to possible abusive practices.

The dynamics around the villages, at the social, environmental, cultural, religious and sporting level continues to deserve the interest and participation of permanent and temporary residents, owners, tourist agents, but also of the entire population of the municipality of Lousã. The villages are an excellent asset to preserve space to identify with the rural and local history.

#### **Alignment with the wider policies implemented by national, regional or local authorities**

The project is aligned with the intermunicipal strategy promoted by the Intermunicipal Community that this municipality is part of, called Agenda XXI local. This strategy, which in addition to the municipality of Lousã comprises 13 other municipalities, is built upon a participatory and dynamic process that aims to promote the sustainable development of the intermunicipal territory, through shared management actions that guarantee a sustainable future for that landscape.

The project is part of the Strategic Plan “Lousã Horizonte 2031”, which identifies as a strategic vision for the 2031 horizon to “Qualify the territory, Empower resources, Create opportunities and Mobilize networks”, recognising its dimension as “Lousã sustainable territory, of environmental reference for the enhancement of resources and the natural framework.”

#### **16. Awareness-raising**

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

##### **Increasing Public Awareness**

It is understood that over time, the implementation of this project has been significantly contributing to awareness of the value of the landscape of Serra da Lousã, both in terms of the appreciation of its built heritage, as well as in the cultural issues, knowledge and appreciation of local traditions, as well as the natural heritage.

Much of this increasing awareness is owed to the activities developed by local associations and by the Municipality of Lousã that have been developing cultural programmes and implementing different activities, widely disseminating the culture of Serra da Lousã, its traditions, local products, gastronomy and crafts, from which the following stand out:

- Creation of a dynamic landscape experience, with regular programmes of cultural activities centred on the values of heritage, the identity of the territory, the traditional habits and customs;
- Promotion of Training Activities and Workshops such as Basketry with Vegetable Fibres; Chestnut Woodwork; Pottery Wheel Starter Course; Introduction to Natural Cosmetics and Handmade Soap Workshop;
- Holding Cultural Events according to the annual calendar such as Christmas at Candal, Fado at Talasnal; Fado at Candal; Schist Sounds; Xjazz – Jazz meetings in the Schist Villages; Seasonal Festival – Mother Nature Cycles;
- Promotion of Exhibitions of different types such as “Elements on the loose”, “Make a Kite”, “Uses of water in Serra da Lousã”;
- Food Promotion Actions such as Chanfana Gastronomy Festival; Craft Beer Festival; Meeting of Masters and *Chefs* – Ceramics and Gastronomic Experiences;
- Religious pilgrimages undertaken to enhance the identity and self-esteem of the population.

The activities referred to are part of a much wider and more comprehensive annual program of about 100 events, with an estimated participation of about 15,000 people per year.

The pedestrian and clickable routes networks totalling 120 km ensure safe access to the Serra

landscape, exposing its native flora and fauna. This landscape and intangible heritage is now the object of study in Universities and has a great recognition on a national context.

All these aspects contributed to the consolidation of the identity of the villages, to the recognition and identification with the territory by its residents who organise in associations and promote activities.

The increasing awareness of the importance of this landscape allowed to create conditions for the development of a proposal that aims to give this territory the classification of protected landscape, with the inclusion of Serra da Lousã in the National Network of Protected Areas, which will allow it to further reinforce the protection of its natural values.

## V. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

**Together with the printed version of the Application form, additional material in digital format should be included in one USB key, and returned by post to:**

*Secretariat General of the Council of Europe*

*Council of Europe Landscape Convention*

*8th Session of the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe*

*F-67075 STRASBOURG, Cedex*

- Text (20 pages max.): *PDF format*
- Photos (10 max.): *JPEG 350 dpi high definition*
- Posters (2 max.): *PDF format high definition or JPEG 350 dpi high definition*
- Video (15 min max.): *mpeg 2 format - It is recommended to present a video (even of amateur quality).*

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