



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

9th Session – 2025-2026

APPLICATION FORM

State Party: Portugal

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.

The 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Reykjavík on 16 – 17 May 2023, recognised “the urgency of additional efforts to protect the environment, as well as to counter the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.” It committed the Council of Europe to strengthening work on the human rights aspects of the environment and initiate the Reykjavik process of focusing and strengthening the work of the Council of Europe in this field, as laid down in Appendix V of the Reykjavik Declaration on “The Council of Europe and the environment”.

Appendix V of the Reykjavík Declaration references the Landscape Convention to highlight that “landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields and is a key element of individual and social well-being, and that landscape protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone.”

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), no later than 31 December 2025, 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.

*

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 \(coe.int\)](#)

*

I. STATE CONCERNED AND APPLICANT

1. **State** Portugal

Represented by	Mrs. Fernanda do Carmo
<i>Address:</i>	Direção-Geral do Território Rua Artilharia 1, 107 1099-052 Lisboa Portugal
<i>Telephone:</i>	(+351) 21 381 96 00
<i>E-mail:</i>	fcarmo@dgterritorio.pt

2. **Applicant** Municipality of Arganil
Name of the local, regional authority(ies) or NGO(s)

- ☒ X Local / regional authority project
☐ NGO Project

Website of the Applicant (if exists) www.cm-arganil.pt

Represented by	Mr. Luís Paulo Costa
<i>Address:</i>	Câmara Municipal de Arganil Praça Simões Dias Apartado 10, 3304-954 Arganil Portugal
<i>Telephone:</i>	00 351 235 200 150
<i>E-mail:</i>	florestaserradoacor@gmail.com

II. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJET

3. Name of the Project

Serra do Açor Forest Project

4. Location of the Project

Serra do Açor; Arganil

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

The Serra do Açor Forest Project is dedicated to restoring a forest landscape devastated by the catastrophic wildfires that swept through Portugal in October 2017. The project's implementation covers an extensive area of approximately 2,500 hectares of *baldios* (common land), managed by ten distinct local communities within the municipality of Arganil.

The initiative is centred in the Serra do Açor, a territory severely impacted by the aforementioned fires, which ravaged roughly 88% of the municipality's forest landscape. Backed by €5 million in funding from a Portuguese business group, the project is a cornerstone of the municipal strategic vision for wildfire defence and the revitalisation of degraded forest areas.

It is built upon a collaborative governance model unprecedented in Portugal, which led to the establishment of the FSA Association, chaired by the Municipality of Arganil. With over five years of implementation and tangible results already visible, the project ensures the long-term enhancement of the landscape and the ongoing maintenance of the interventions already in place.

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



Baldios de Celavisa
2025 April

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

--

III. CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

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

9. **End of the Project** month year
*The project must have been
completed at least three years previously*

10. **Partners**

Jerónimo Martins S.G.P.S Coimbra Agriculture School of the Polytechnic University of Coimbra Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Alqueve and Bocado Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Caratão Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Celavisa Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Cepos and Casal Novo Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Lomba, Nogueira and Aveleira Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Luadas Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Porto Castanheiro Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Salgueiro Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Teixeira Local Community of the <i>Baldios</i> of Vinhó
--

11. **Financing bodies**

The Jerónimo Martins Group is providing €5,180,000.00 in funding for the operations through a financial support agreement that covers the project's entire 40-year lifespan, starting from 2020. This commitment is granted under the framework of environmental patronage.

12. **Central aims of the
Project**

*What are the main objectives of the project regarding landscape?
How does the project contribute to the implementation of the Convention at the
national level or transnational level?*

The Serra do Açor Forest Project emerged as a response to the urgent need to reverse the cycle of landscape degradation in the region, addressing both its ecological and socio-economic dimensions. Grounded in the principles of Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR), the project proposes an integrated and transformative approach aimed at biodiversity recovery, productive revitalisation, and the enhancement of the territory's cultural heritage.

The 2017 wildfires, which ravaged approximately 88% of the municipality's forests, highlighted the critical need for a more resilient form of forest landscape management—one capable of withstanding fires, pests, and diseases, while adapting to the ongoing challenges of climate change.

The Municipality of Arganil identified significant management gaps within the baldios (common lands), which account for roughly 20% of the municipal territory. These gaps revealed a clear disengagement of local communities from the traditional management practices previously applied to this landscape.

The project defines a multifunctional forest landscape model based on reforestation with mixed stands and locally adapted species, such as maritime pine, Pyrenean oak, pedunculate oak, cork oak, sweet chestnut, birch, and strawberry tree. This selection ensures resistance to fire, pests, and extreme weather events. Such diversity is bolstering ecological resilience and creating a multifunctional landscape mosaic that integrates fire prevention, nature conservation, biodiversity enhancement, and the economic revitalisation of the territory.

Beyond reforestation, the project promotes the sustainable commercial use of traditional forest products, including cork, chestnuts, honey, and wild mushrooms. By doing so, it adds value to local heritage and the economy, contributing to population retention in rural areas. The project also incorporates water protection and erosion control zones, ensuring the provision of essential ecosystem services and safeguarding the overall quality of the landscape.

Implementation is conducted through a phased approach designed to ensure the long-term maintenance of all interventions. While the project has a 40-year horizon, several key measures have already been successfully executed. Its delivery is supported by an adaptive governance architecture involving multiple public, private, and community stakeholders, allowing for continuous adjustments in response to evolving environmental and social conditions.

The project contributes directly to the implementation of the Council of Europe Landscape Convention by recognising the landscape as a common asset, essential for the well-being and quality of life of the population. It integrates landscape management into national public policies concerning forestry, climate, and spatial planning, while promoting local participation and sustainable development. The model established here is both replicable and exemplary, serving as an inspiration for other regions affected by severe wildfires and climate vulnerability, thereby strengthening the protection, recovery, and valorisation of European landscapes.

13. Type of the Project

Describe the nature/type of the project:

Does it focus on landscape protection and management, or does it involve landscape planning, or both?

Is the project related to specific measures or to a landscape public policy?

Is it implemented at a national level or a transnational level?

The Serra do Açor Forest Project (FSA) is a comprehensive initiative for the restoration and integrated management of a fire-degraded forest landscape, seamlessly combining components of spatial planning, protection, and landscape enhancement. Grounded in the principles of Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR), the project proposes a multifunctional and transformative approach that links ecological conservation, climate change adaptation, and high-quality forest production with the valorisation of non-wood products and the provision of ecosystem services—including food production, nature tourism, recreation, and the improvement of air and water quality.

The project operates at a landscape scale, promoting the recovery of ecological diversity, the reconstitution of forest and agricultural mosaics, the creation of ecological corridors, and the protection of watercourses and vulnerable areas. While forest production remains a core pillar, it has been reconfigured to focus on sustainable economic value (timber for construction, cork, berries, honey, and mushrooms). The landscape is valued not only for its ecological function but also for its cultural, scenic, and historical attributes, preserving high-value heritage assets such as terraces (socalcos), irrigation channels (levadas), rural buildings, and traditional agricultural mosaics.

The governance model is both participatory and innovative, involving a four-pronged partnership: local baldios communities (represented by an inter-community association), a private patron, the Arganil Municipal Council, and a higher education institution. This architecture ensures operational autonomy, scientific and social monitoring, direct co-funding, and community participation, creating a robust foundation for the implementation of actions and the long-term sustainability of the project.

The technical strategy is centred on an adaptive silviculture model, species diversification (primarily native, with some exotic species for structural or aesthetic roles), reforestation through mixed stands, minimal soil disturbance, natural regeneration, the eradication of invasive species, and the preservation of existing vegetation. Approximately 23% of the area is dedicated to ecological protection, 6% to fire defence infrastructure, and 12% to community-managed silvopastoral zones. In total, the project covers 2,500 hectares across 146 intervention units, employing 18 distinct silvicultural models tailored to the territory's ecological, climatic, and edaphoclimatic diversity.

The FSA incorporates adaptive management and multi-scalar monitoring, allowing for a continuous cycle of observation, evaluation, and readjustment. The system includes physical execution monitoring, annual performance evaluations, and long-term technical-scientific monitoring. This framework ensures technical rigour, transparency, social legitimacy, and the capacity to adapt to evolving ecological and climatic conditions.

The project is fully integrated into national and European public policies, such as the National Plan for Integrated Wildfire Management, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Nature Restoration Law (2024), and the New EU Forest Strategy for 2030. It also aligns with Portugal's Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR), specifically under "Action 1.4 – Better Forest", where it serves as a pilot area promoting technical innovation and digitalisation

(including the use of AI and drones). Furthermore, it contributes to an estimated sequestration of 45 million tonnes of CO₂ over the life cycle of the restored stands.

Ultimately, this project represents an unparalleled model for landscape regeneration, serving as a benchmark for both national and transnational contexts. By combining ecological restoration, socio-economic innovation, cultural and scenic valorisation, and community participation, the FSA strengthens landscape resilience, economic sustainability, and territorial identity. It stands as a reference instrument for the management of complex and vulnerable landscapes.

14. Outcome

What are the effective and measurable results of the project on the landscape?

The progress of the Serra do Açor Forest Project is systematically tracked. Periodic technical reports document physical and financial execution rates, species survival rates, stand development, and natural regeneration, allowing future interventions to be adjusted through an adaptive management framework.

Since January 2021, when stand establishment began, interventions have been completed across plots identified in the Forest Management Plan representing 1,265 hectares. This includes approximately 1,017 hectares of fully established stands achieved through planting, infill planting (adensamento), and the promotion of natural regeneration. Service contracts are multi-year (typically 3 years) and cover ground preparation, planting, and "beating up" (replacing failed saplings), as well as an initial maintenance phase for young plantations, thereby significantly increasing the likelihood of success.

A significant positive outcome is that since the establishment of the Serra do Açor Forest Association (FSA) - the legal entity responsible for managing these forest spaces - and the commencement of works, the managed area has grown. The entry of an additional local community into the consortium reflects the growing trust and hope that local populations place in this developed model.

Another key milestone is the diversification of activities and the development of parallel projects in collaboration with the Coimbra Agriculture School (ESAC). Most notably, the project has been integrated into the transForm Agenda, funded by the national Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR), which seeks a structural transformation of the Portuguese forestry sector. The Serra do Açor Forest project was selected as a pilot area for "Action 1.4 – Better Forest," in recognition of its maturity, innovation, and potential for replication. Its involvement in this agenda catalyses applied innovation, particularly through the modernisation and digitalisation of monitoring systems. This involves the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and drones (UAVs) to develop advanced forest inventory methodologies. The association, led by the Municipality of Arganising, and the project itself, serve as a living laboratory for the transformation and management of degraded landscapes. It provides a platform for scientific research in fields such as silviculture, social sciences, and landscape architecture - as seen in the collaboration with Harvard University. These studies are based on the specific landscape design developed, as well as the rigorous recording and analysis of data regarding project successes and challenges, over a timeframe consistent with "forest time."

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

15. 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?

Does it respond to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss? How?¹

The Serra do Açor Forest Project is a landscape-scale forestry intervention aimed at recovering and reforesting approximately 2,500 hectares of common land (baldios) in the municipality of Arganil. These areas were devastatingly impacted by the October 2017 wildfires, which consumed roughly 88% of the local forest. Integrated into the municipal strategy for territorial fire defence and the restoration of degraded landscapes, the project has a 40-year execution horizon and is aligned with the National Forestry Strategy, the National Energy and Climate Plan, and current legal instruments for forest management and spatial planning.

The project adopts a multifunctional and integrated approach, blending ecological, social, cultural, and economic objectives. The intervention prioritises ecological restoration through reforestation with native species—such as maritime pine, sweet chestnut, various oaks, cork oak, and strawberry tree—established in mixed stands. This promotes greater diversity and resilience against pests, diseases, wildfires, and heatwaves, while bolstering ecological connectivity. Green corridors have been created along watercourses, alongside erosion protection strips and adaptive silviculture practices, ensuring soil protection, water regulation, and biodiversity conservation. The project also includes the control of invasive exotic species, strengthening the territory's ecological integrity.

In the socio-economic sphere, the project valorises local natural resources and products, such as cork, chestnuts, honey, berries, and mushrooms. This creates direct and indirect employment opportunities, contributing to population retention, mitigating rural desertification, and promoting participatory management models involving local communities, scientific institutions, and private funding entities. Furthermore, the project incorporates cultural and aesthetic components, preserving historical and traditional landscape elements that reinforce local identity while promoting nature tourism and environmental education.

To mitigate climate risks, the strategy combines the selection of less flammable species, structural diversification of stands, and the installation of fuel management zones and vegetation mosaics. These infrastructures help to compartmentalise the territory and reduce the spread of wildfire outbreaks.

¹ Appendix V to the Reykjavík Declaration

In the context of the Triple Planetary Crisis, the project acts on three integrated fronts:

- Climate Change Mitigation: Through carbon sequestration in both biomass and soil;
- Reversing Biodiversity Loss: By restoring habitats and ecological corridors and promoting native species;
- Combating Environmental Degradation and Pollution: By protecting soils, water resources, and local microclimates, thereby enhancing the ecological quality of the landscape.

The project's approach is sustained by an innovative collaborative governance model, involving the local *baldios* communities, the Municipality, scientific bodies, and private patrons. This architecture ensures adaptive management and continuous monitoring, strengthening the project's social legitimacy and allowing for constant adjustments based on scientific evidence and direct field observation.

In summary, the Serra do Açor Forest Project constitutes a sustainable territorial planning strategy that integrates nature conservation, sustainable rural production, and socio-economic impact—transforming a degraded landscape into a resilient, multifunctional, and lasting forest.

Project's response to recent wildfires:

The wildfire that broke out in Arganil (Piódão) on 13 August 2025 became the largest ever recorded in Portugal, consuming over 64,000 hectares and affecting multiple municipalities and districts. Within the municipality of Arganil, approximately 40% of the territory was hit, including around 100 hectares that had already undergone intervention under the Serra do Açor Forest Project.

The response of the territory demonstrated the robustness of the project's intervention model. Only a few weeks after the fire passed, abundant vegetative regrowth was observed, with estimated survival rates of between 50% and 80% for broadleaf species in three-to-four-year-old stands. These results confirm the resilience of native species and highlight the importance of an intervention model that combines long-term planning, technical expertise, and respect for the natural pace of recovery. This ensures that ecological restoration, landscape protection, and the continuity of ecosystem services are maintained even in the face of extreme phenomena.

16. Exemplary value

Can the project be considered of exemplary value? Why?

Which are the good practices that it implemented? Which of these practices are considered of exemplary value at the national or transnational level?

An exemplary and inspiring project for other territories

The Serra do Açor Forest Project is more than just a symbol of hope and resilience; it is a replicable, viable, and inspiring model for other territories, both in Portugal and in other regions facing similar post-fire recovery challenges. It stands as a benchmark of excellence and innovation in forest management, combining a unique set of characteristics that make it truly transformative.

Beyond its sheer scale, innovation, and environmental and social impact, the project is underpinned by a collaborative forest management model involving private entities (the Jerónimo Martins Group), a local authority (Municipality of Arganil), a higher education institution (Coimbra Agriculture School), and local communities (comparte assemblies). This model is legally robust and aligned with national legislation. The existence of legal frameworks, such as the Forestry Intervention Zones (ZIF) and the Estatuto dos Baldios, (Common Land Statute) allows this co-management approach to be replicated in other forested areas across the country, while respecting local specificities and community rights.

This partnership ensures not only substantial funding but also the active and committed engagement of the community in managing the forest. This bolsters co-management, social sustainability, and a genuine sense of ownership. By directly involving those who live, work, and invest in the forest, the project creates local economic opportunities, adding value to both the land and its people.

The project is, therefore, as much a tangible endeavour as it is a symbolic one: it proves that it is possible to reverse the cycle of neglect and lack of accountability, restoring a more resilient forest—paired with a more diverse and sustainable landscape—to the community.

With a long-term strategic vision, the project is planned for the next 40 years. Resources have already been secured for the reforestation of 2,500 hectares and the planting of approximately 1.8 million native trees. This temporal and material commitment demonstrates an ambition rarely seen in landscape forestry, resulting in a structural and enduring intervention.

Innovation is another fundamental pillar: the management of this forest landscape is based on the creation of mixed stands, combining maritime pine with native species such as oak, chestnut, and cork oak. This approach promotes natural regeneration and biodiversity. Unequivocal priority is given to fire-resilient species, integrated into a process of continuous adaptive management. This is technically validated and monitored by the project's academic partner (Coimbra Agriculture School), ensuring rigour and effectiveness in its execution.

In terms of scale, this is currently the largest and most flagship forestry intervention in the country, standing as one of Portugal's most ambitious landscape reforestation plans. The project's territorial scope—2,500 hectares—reinforces its strategic nature and its positive impact on the region.

Its impact is multidimensional: beyond tackling deforestation, it protects soil and water resources, bolsters local biodiversity, and increases landscape resilience against wildfires. The intervention is not limited to planting; it involves the comprehensive and ongoing management of the area—including pruning, thinning, and supplementary replanting—

ensuring that the forest consolidates and flourishes over the coming decades.

Finally, the project stands out for its potential for replication. Based on an innovative model that aligns public, private, and community interests, it represents a serious and inspiring investment. It promises to leave a mark on future generations by exemplifying a sustainable and professional way to manage a forest landscape. It paves the way for structural solutions tailored to the diverse regional realities of the country, always within the existing legal framework.

Ultimately, this is a project that not only transforms and restores a landscape but also creates a lasting and exemplary legacy. It serves as a national benchmark, capable of being replicated across other Portuguese and European territories, and acts as a beacon for future sustainable landscape management initiatives.

17. Public participation

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

Which stakeholders were involved, and how and when were they engaged? When did the active public consultation and dialogue take place, and in what form?

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

Community involvement is a core tenet of the project, reflecting a participatory and collaborative forest management model. This approach is carried out in close coordination with the governing bodies of the baldios (common lands) and various public and scientific entities. The local communities currently participating in the project represent a total of 23 mountain villages. Each community comprises its own universe of compartes (commoners/rightsholders), totalling approximately 550 citizens, all of whom hold voting rights within their respective Common Land Assemblies.

Participatory Governance Structure

From the outset, the Common Land Assemblies entrusted the management of these lands to the FSA Association. This represents an unprecedented act of cooperation in Portugal, strengthening the autonomy and responsibility of local communities in managing their own territories. Community management, as enshrined in the Common Land Act (Law No. 75/2017), provides for communities to administer their common lands (baldios) through assemblies and elected bodies, ensuring that land use respects traditional customs while remaining technically sound.

The FSA – Floresta da Serra do Açor Association is established as a private law association whose members are the local communities that own the baldios (common lands). It is officially recognised as a Forest Management Entity (No. 5/EGF/2020) by the National Forestry Authority. The FSA provides the technical capacity for planning, procurement, and the execution of interventions, ensuring the implementation of sustainable practices tailored to the specificities of the landscape. Its General Assembly meets regularly to approve activities; this body is composed of one representative from each local community, appointed by their respective Common Land Assembly, with voting rights proportional to the area they represent.

Public Consultation Period – Forest Management Plan

During the project's development phase, between March 2018 and June 2019, several consultations and workshops were held with the governing bodies of the baldios, involving all local communities holding common land in the municipality of Arganil. These meetings addressed:

- Management models for the forest landscape
- Silviculture strategies
- General and specific objectives for landscape enhancement
- Traditional land uses and sustainable alternatives

These consultations provided insight into the dynamics of each community and helped define methods of cooperation between different entities. This ensured that identified traditional uses were integrated into the project while safeguarding their compatibility with the broader goals.

From September 2019, Common Land Assemblies were held in the communities interested in joining the FSA Association. During these sessions, the association's objectives and management model were presented and discussed, culminating in the formal incorporation of the FSA – Floresta da Serra do Açor Association via public deed on 7 March 2020. In July 2020, a public clarification session was held to provide citizens with direct access to information regarding landscape management strategies, planned works, and project goals, thereby reinforcing transparency and active community participation.

This process resulted in the drafting of a Forest Management Plan, which was subsequently presented to the Common Land Assemblies for approval (May–June 2020). In accordance with legal requirements, a formal Public Consultation period took place between 12 July and 7 August 2020, during which technical documents were made available and feedback forms were provided. All minutes and reports resulting from these actions were included in the analysis and approval process of the Plan by the Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF), the National Forestry Authority.

Technical and Scientific Involvement

The project benefits from the technical oversight of the Forestry Department of the Coimbra Agriculture School and the institutional support of the Municipality of Arganil. This ensures that all decisions reflect both best practices in forest management and the best interests of the local communities.

18. Awareness-raising

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

The transformation of the Serra do Açor landscape is not confined to the planting of tree species or the technical interventions carried out by the Association; this transformation equally integrates and depends upon the active and informed engagement of the community. The project seeks to foster a close relationship between the population and the landscape, promoting knowledge, participation, and the appreciation of native forests.

School-Based Initiatives

The project develops educational and participatory actions involving schools across various educational levels:

1. Arbour Day (21 March 2022)

- Organised in partnership with the Municipality of Arganil, the Jerónimo Martins Group, and the Coimbra Agriculture School (ESAC).
- Included field visits and practical sessions on brashing, pruning, and staking, with the participation of over 80 volunteers, technicians, and students from the Arganil School Group.
- Objective: To raise awareness regarding the continuous maintenance of the forest and the importance of native species.

2. Native Forest Day (23 November 2024)

- Held in the village of Vinhó, focusing on the maintenance of intervention plots.
- Participation from the Coimbra Agriculture School, common land associations, and local volunteers.
- Objective: To strengthen the community's commitment to building a resilient and sustainable forest.

Higher Education and Research Projects

1. Master's in Forest Resources – ESAC (November 2022)

- Two-day field visits to the Integrated Landscape Management Areas (AIGP).
- Involvement of students, faculty, and the local community, contributing to the development of management operations and the collection of local insights.

2. “Terraced Landscapes” – Community Fellowship (2018)

- A residency for Master of Landscape Architecture students from Harvard University.
- Work focused on the enhancement of socalcos, levadas (traditional irrigation channels), and paths, culminating in the publication of the “*Almanaque da Benfeita*” (Almanac of Benfeita) and the exhibition “*O que leva a levada*” (What the Levada Carries).

3. “The Canary in the Mine” (2021 and 2023)

- Residencies and design studios from Harvard University.
- Development of interdisciplinary scenarios with the participation of the Municipality, local communities, and national/international experts.
- Resulted in publications and exhibitions promoting environmental education, sustainable land management, and wildfire mitigation..

Media Coverage

The project has been featured prominently in national, regional, and local media, bolstering

its public profile and awareness. Key reports and publications include:

- SIC: <https://youtu.be/LWr-MMgEGos>
- Centro TV: <https://centrotv.sapo.pt/dono-do-pingo-doce-investe-5-milhoes-de-euros-na-reflorestacao-de-areas-ardidas-em-arganil/>
- Diário de Coimbra: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKeavH2vZKw>
- Município de Arganil: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijXtDEbGmyc>
- Município de Arganil: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImR5FT0RFR8>
- WWF Portugal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JP8qJD3B-cg>

Public Recognition and Dissemination of Best Practices:

- **“Into the Forest” Sustainability Conference (October 2025)** – Presentation of the Serra do Açor Forest Project as a benchmark for best practices in landscape-scale forest management and regeneration, highlighting its contribution to the transformation of the municipality’s landscape and the recovery of areas affected by the 2017 wildfires.
- **Presence at FICABEIRA 2025 (September)**
The project was represented with a stand at the 2025 edition of FICABEIRA, one of the region’s premier trade fairs. This initiative allowed the project’s goals and results to be shared with a wider audience, engaging hundreds of visitors in awareness-building activities and reinforcing the importance of forest regeneration.

Together, these actions have deepened the understanding of the project, allowing participants to experience native species and landscape management practices first-hand. Simultaneously, local technicians and decision-makers gain a clearer vision of the long-term challenges involved in managing such landscapes, strengthening the recognition of the inherent value of the Serra do Açor forest.

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
Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG I)
Directorate of Social Rights, Health and Environment
Department for the Reykjavík Process and Environment
Council of Europe Landscape Convention
9th 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 (5 min max.): *mpeg 2 format - It is recommended to present a video (even of amateur quality).*

*