



Landscape, our inmost selves reflected

The European Landscape Convention

Florence, 20 October 2000



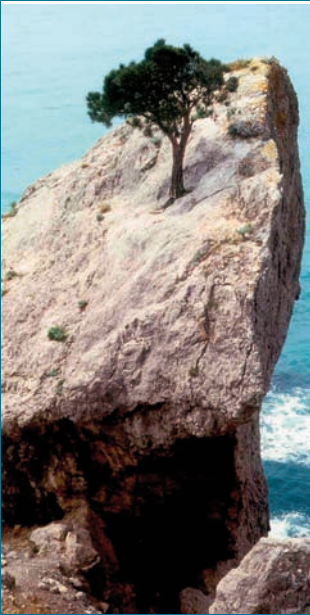
On the basis of a first draft elaborated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided to create a restricted group of experts mandated to draw up a European Landscape Convention, under the aegis of the Cultural Heritage Committee and of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of Biological and Landscape Diversity. As a result of the work of this Group of experts, in which the main international governmental and non-governmental organisations concerned were involved, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the final text of the Convention on 19 July 2000.

The European Landscape Convention was opened for signature in Florence, Italy, on 20 October 2000 in the framework of the Council of Europe Campaign “Europe, a common heritage”.



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Why a Landscape Convention?



As a key element of individual and social well-being and quality of life, landscape plays an important part in human fulfilment and in reinforcement of European identity. It has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activities, particularly tourism. Unfortunately, developments in agriculture, forestry, industrial and mineral production

techniques and in regional planning, town planning, transport, infrastructure, tourism and recreation and, at a more general level, changes in the world economy, have often damaged the landscapes or obliterated their distinctiveness.

Although the individual undoubtedly has a part to play in preservation of landscape quality, laying down the general framework for protecting landscape quality is the public

authorities' responsibility. The Convention establishes the general legal principles by which national policies on landscape and international co-operation in the matter must be guided.



What are the Convention's aims and innovations?

The Convention's purpose is to promote landscape protection, management and planning of European landscapes and to organise European co-operation on landscape issues.

It is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with protection, management and enhancement of European landscape.

It is extremely wide in scope: the Convention applies to the Parties' entire territory and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas, which include land, inland water and marine areas.

It deals with everyday or degraded landscapes as well as those that can be considered outstanding. In other words, it recognises the importance of all landscapes, and not just of exceptional landscapes, as having a crucial bearing on quality of life and as deserving attention in landscape policy.

A great many rural and peri-urban areas, in particular, are undergoing drastic change and merit greater care from the authorities and the public.

A key aspect of the Convention is the active role it assigns the public as regards perception and evaluation of landscape. Awareness-raising is therefore crucial in order to involve the public in decisions affecting the landscape in which they live.



What are the Parties' obligations?

National measures

In accepting the Convention's principles and objectives, the Contracting Parties, respecting the principle of subsidiarity, undertake to protect, manage and/or plan their landscapes by adopting a range of general and special measures. This entails promoting participation of communities and public authorities in decisions affecting the landscape of the region or locality.

International co-operation

The Contracting Parties undertake to engage in European co-operation on the consideration of the landscape dimension of international policies and programmes, and to recommend, where relevant, the inclusion in them of landscape considerations. They also undertake to co-operate in technical and scientific matters, to exchange landscape specialists for information or training purposes and to exchange information on all matters covered by the Convention.

There is a provision on trans-frontier landscapes. The Contracting Parties undertake to encourage transfrontier co-operation on local and regional level and, wherever necessary, to prepare and implement joint landscape programmes.



Measures which the Parties undertake to put into effect at national level

General measures

1. Recognition of landscapes in law as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity.
2. Establishment and implementation of landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning.
3. Establishment of procedures for participation by the general public, local and regional authorities and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of landscape policies.
4. Integration of landscape into regional and town planning policies, and in its cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape.

Specific measures

1. Alerting civil society, private organisations and public authorities to the value of landscapes, their role and changes in them.
2. Promoting training for specialists in landscape appraisal and operations, multidisciplinary training programmes in landscape policy, protection, management and planning for professionals in the private and public sectors and for associations concerned, and school and university courses which, in the relevant subject areas, address the values attaching to landscapes and the issues raised by their protection, management and planning.
3. Enlisting the help of all interested parties to improve knowledge of landscapes and to ensure that identification and assessment procedures are guided by exchange of experience and methodology between the Contracting Parties at European level.
4. Defining quality objectives for the landscapes identified and assessed, after public consultation.
5. Putting landscape policies into effect by introducing instruments aimed at protecting, managing and/or planning the landscape.

Definitions

Terms used in the Convention are defined so as to ensure uniform interpretation:

“Landscape” means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

“Landscape policy” means an expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes.

“Landscape quality objective” means, for a specific landscape, the formulation by the competent public authorities of the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings.

“Landscape protection” means action to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by the landscape's heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or human activity.

“Landscape management” means action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes.

“Landscape planning” means strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes.

Landscape Award of the Council of Europe

The Convention provides for a Landscape Award recognising policy or measures which local or regional authorities or non-governmental organisations have adopted to protect, manage and/or plan their landscape, which have proved lastingly effective and which can thus serve as an example to other territorial authorities in Europe.

It is hoped the Award will be an incentive to local bodies to engage in and seek recognition of exemplary landscape management. The Award will be given by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, further to proposals from the Committees of experts in charge of monitoring and implementing the Convention.

The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an international intergovernmental organisation founded in 1949. Its headquarters are in Strasbourg, France, and at present it has 43 member States. Its main objectives are to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law and to seek common solutions to the main problems facing European society today. It is active in environment protection and in promoting sustainable development in line with the “Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent”, which the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) adopted in Hanover on 8 September 2000. These seek to protect Europeans' quality of life and well-being taking into account landscape, cultural and natural values.



For more information

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