

# Landscape identification and assessment: an exercise in democracy

## Latvia

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# A special value of Latvia are its natural and semi natural rural landscapes



# Approaches to the landscape assessment

Approaches to the landscape assessment have changed during the last century. There were three periods of different methodologies in landscape assessment:

- the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- the time in Soviet Union (1945.-1991.)
- the time after regaining of independence (after 1991.)

# The first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

- The method of scientific investigation - studies of landscapes were based on the studies of relief and vegetation
- As a result - identification of different types of landscape. These types of landscape were used as basis for determination of geographical areas for whole territory of Latvia
- The first nature protection areas in Latvia - Moricsalas and Grīņu nature reserves - were established and more than 1000 cultural monuments were approved during this period

# The time in Soviet Union

- After incorporation of Latvia in the USSR a scientific evaluation of landscape served for the purpose of intensification of the agriculture and forestry
- The areas with limited economic activity - nature reserves, nature parks, national parks and areas of landscape protection were established



# The time after regaining of independence

- a site assessment according to criteria, which were agreed in the policy documents of the EU
- the assessment of sites focused on the inventory of natural habitats with EU importance
- the general evaluation of landscape was not carried out
- several international projects were carried out

# Since ELC came into force in Latvia in the year 2007

- Landscapes have been recognized as one of the most valuable component of the Latvian cultural and natural capital at the national level - underlined in the **Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia up to 2030** ( approved by the Parliament in the 2010)
- In order to implement the Strategy and ELC, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development elaborated a **Landscape Policy Strategy** (approved by the Government in August 2013)

# Landscape Policy Strategy

- the main pressures impacting landscapes:
  - overgrowing of previous agricultural areas
  - degraded former industrial sites
  - an urban sprawl of the largest cities
- the Working Group concluded that the current landscape management is ineffective: existing situation in landscape inventory, assessment and planning varies highly from the region to region and from the municipality to municipality



# Main challenge at the moment

## **Landscape management improvement, emphasizing landscape assessment and planning:**

- an elaboration of a methodology for landscape assessment
- to performing of the integrated landscape inventory at the national, regional and local level
- development of guidelines and landscape management plans
- production of the Landscape Catalogue

# A new approach on the landscape assessment in Latvia is needed

- up to now the assessment of landscapes was mostly done by the experts in the field
- conclusions of experts tend not to be accepted by general public and are widely discussed

Therefore, an elaboration of methodology for landscape assessment, emphasizing the role of society in the process is of high importance!



# International cooperation

In order to develop this new approach for the landscape assessment in Latvia, international cooperation and knowledge about experience of other countries is and will be very important!



**Thank you!**

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