

STEERING COMMITTEE FOR CULTURE HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE (CDCPP)

THEMATIC SESSION OF THE CDCPP

**Embracing democratic values in culturally diverse societies.
The role of culture, heritage and landscape in supporting children and
young people to become active and engaged citizens**

With respect to the above it is important to recall the relevance, importance, influence and added value that the Landscape Convention (formerly European Landscape Convention) contributes to this theme. Having been in existence for over twenty years, forty member states are now signatories to the Council of Europe Landscape Convention which has at its heart the importance of education. With respect to this thematic session the Convention states that

School curricula at various levels should foster an awareness of landscape themes through learning to read landscapes and through sensitisation to relations between cadre de vie and landscape, to relations between ecology and landscape problems, and to social and economic problems.¹

Furthermore, in Appendix 2 of the document notes that

Primary and secondary education syllabuses should include landscape education in the appropriate subject areas.²

Since the adoption of this part of the Convention (2008), there have been many national and international conferences and workshops where encouraging children and young people to engage with landscape has been a theme. Indeed, with the introduction of the European Landscape Days (unfortunately omitted from the official CoE calendar in 2023, but continued to be pursued by many member states where it is already established) connections with the younger population continue with this important objective in mind - to celebrate the landscape 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”.

In another important context, the European Landscape Awards has regularly seen projects put forward which introduce young people to a variety of aspects which relate the importance of landscape, and landscape issues to everyday life, for example access to open space, blue/green routes away from pollution and traffic, bio-diversity and nature-based solutions to provide a more sustainable future. Examples include

The project of education and awareness-raising: city, territory, Generalitat of Catalonia and Landscape Observatory of Catalonia, Spain – Special Mention in the 2nd Session of the Landscape Award of the CoE European Landscape Convention 2011

Environmental Education in the town of Strakonice – a national pilot project, Czech Republic - Special Mention in the 3rd Session of the Landscape Award of the CoE European Landscape Convention 2013

Agricultural Park of Paduli, a collaborative work involving local stakeholders, raising awareness of landscape value, persuading young people to practice innovative management activities. Special Mention in the 4th Session of the Landscape Award of the CoE European Landscape Convention 2015 ...

...and many more

¹ Council of Europe (CoE), European Landscape Convention and Reference Documents, Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)3 on the guidelines for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention, Section D – Education page 53, adopted 6 February 2008

² CoE, European Landscape Convention and Reference Documents, Appendix 2, section 5 – Knowledge, awareness raising, education and training, para. c

The proceedings of the 21st Meeting of the CoE Workshops for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Tropea, Italy in 2019 “Landscape and Education” reported on promoting landscape education at primary, secondary and university levels, and a publication *Landscape education activity for primary schools* – and a pedagogical booklet was produced.

However, sadly, during the last ten years, the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity as well as the need to protect the environment and counter these threats has become increasingly obvious. Nevertheless, understanding how these phenomena seriously impact on the quality of life, health and well-being of European citizens, of which over 70% live in towns and cities, is still poorly appreciated and the relevance of the Council of Europe in actively addressing this subject has recently been noticeably absent.

Our generation is largely failing to react substantially to these threats, through the combined forces of ignorance, vested interest and apathy. In an era where the lives of young people are increasingly dominated by technology, which is by its nature sedentary, it is even more important to encourage them to engage with their external environment.

Crucially, supporting children and young people to become active and engaged citizens is essential not simply for their future, but also globally for the future of the planet.

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