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regards croisés sur quelques démarches paysagères  
à différentes échelles, de part et d'autre des frontières*

Strasbourg, 26 novembre 2019

**MARDI 26 NOVEMBRE 2019**

*Réunion au Palais de l'Europe (Salle 1), Conseil de l'Europe*

### **Forging links between landscape and agriculture**

**The National Strategy of Hungary for Landscape: elements for the contribution of agriculture to landscape quality**

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Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

The *National Landscape Strategy for Hungary for the period 2017-2026* was approved by the Hungarian Government in 2017. The entire administrative area of settlements, including water bodies, is considered to form part of the landscape asset of the country in accordance with the European Landscape Convention.

This National Strategy reflects the creation of the Hungarian landscape from its past to the present identifying the most dominant landscape formation processes. The Strategy reviews the evolution of Hungarian landscape policy and reflects how Hungary satisfies international expectations in this respect. It demonstrates the drivers which help to determine the condition of Hungarian landscapes as well as the quality of the national landscape.

Approximately half of the Hungarian landscapes are of an everyday quality. About a quarter of them are intensively used landscapes and are often represented in a degraded condition. The remaining quarter are semi-natural landscapes which, while under extensive cultivation, nevertheless offer a more positive perception, producing typically favourable psychological effects that are mainly associated with plants and water, with vistas, pleasant sounds, good thermal sensations, other natural associations, colours, natural shapes, etc.

In the past 25 years, the overall size of areas specifically dedicated to agriculture has decreased by approximately 1.2 million ha. However, despite the shrinking size of these production areas, Hungary is still among the leaders in terms of the national proportion of agricultural lands in Europe. Arable cultivation is the dominant sector of Hungarian agriculture with the main production being grain, chiefly wheat, corn and sunflower. **Diversification is low** in large-scale farming. Nearly 90% of small farms are engaged in the production of a maximum of three types of crops and nearly half of them cultivate only one. **The traditional land use** (e.g. grazing, wine growing, fruit and vegetable production, homestead farming) is **shrinking** and **as a result, landscape is losing its traditional patchwork pattern on an increasing scale.**

Although **animal husbandry** has significantly decreased there is still a strong concentration of this type of farming in Hungary. Livestock farming has changed, grazing has diminished and thereby the livestock farming (stalls) generally far from arable land thus **separated from grasslands and crop production.**

However, it is important to note that **the landscape-specific farming** and the **development of short food chains can ensure healthier food** and can also **open new opportunities for launching products of increased value.**

Between 10-15% of the arable lands is now more often subject to flooding. This increase in flooding is partly caused by the degradation of soil structure over several decades caused by inadequate soil cultivation, the lack of deep ploughing and subsoil loosening (e.g. plough sole) and the lack of permanent crops.

Financial support, strengthening green farming, sustainable land use and better landscape management (e.g. agricultural practices which respect climate and environmental issues – green farming practices, agri-environmental sub-measures) motivate and enable farmers to use agricultural production methods that are compatible with sustainability, as well as contributing to an efficient and intelligent utilization of landscape and natural resources.

The Common Agricultural Policy, through funds made available to farmers, is able to stimulate favourable changes in agricultural land use, especially in rural landscapes, where binding requirements related to payments commit farmers to specific actions.

Green farming practices can help to realise compulsory changes in the course of land usage. Consequently, farmers profiting from such funds, are obliged to **preserve Cumanian Barrows** (tumulii), **conserve shadoofs** (traditional wells with lifting arms) and **groups of trees and bushes**, as well as maintaining other features such as **river banks and lake shores. The impact of European funds is already appreciable.**

As a result of the latest reform of Common Agricultural Policy, since 2015, a greater diversification of crops has been realised along with the conservation of permanent grasslands and other important landscape elements that represent the traditional patchwork pattern of the Hungarian landscape. The most important green farming practices are therefore concerned with **crop diversification**, the **maintenance of permanent grasslands** and the **identification of ecological focus areas**.

However, this important development of the green infrastructure network requires greater coordination.

The Strategy sets out dual vision: it outlines the future status of Hungarian landscapes as well as establishing a vision of Hungarian landscape policy. This policy draws on the concept that land use must be based on landscape configuration and assets.

The overall objective of the National Landscape Strategy is: *Responsible land use based on landscape configuration and assets*.

**Proper landscape management based on landscape configuration and assets** is an instrument to ensure that important environmental, economic and social interests contribute substantially to our well-being.

To achieve this overall objective, adherence to the following overlying principles must be realised in the implementation of the National Landscape Strategy:

- A) General protection of natural resources and cultural heritage;
- B) Intelligent and rational use of areas;
- C) The mitigation of the impacts of climate change and adaptation to it.

To achieve the overall objectives, three headline targets are set by the Strategy.

- I. Laying the foundations for land use based on landscape configuration and assets;
- II. Liveable landscape – liveable settlements – intelligent land use;
- III. Enhancing landscape identity.

The National Landscape Strategy sets out 97 actions for the government, local governments, civil organisations, Universities and research institutions grouped in sub-objectives. The main promoter of the interventions is of course the government, which provides for the realisation of the measures through the government programme, sectoral policies and finance.

In accordance with the sub-objective I.1: Establishing the framework for land use based on landscape configuration and assets: To achieve the overall objective, first **the registers containing the spatial data of landscape configurations** and providing the planning system and the work of the authorities **must be developed through both site surveys and using automated methods**. This development includes the updating of existing databases as well as the identification and creation of missing spatial data structures.

The following actions are noted as follows:

- **Improvement of the soil register** (soil maps and databases), with special attention to the factors typical of the soil use and the configurations of the production area, e.g. updating **agronomic data on soil structure that influence soil fertility**.
- **Improving the register of fruit production areas** (among others digitizing the maps of the register).

- Undertaking a **survey** and condition **assessment of areas affected by melioration**.
- Undertaking a **survey** and **re-assessment of agro-ecological potential**.

In accordance with sub-objective I.3: Integrating land use based on landscape configuration and assets into decision-making: **Land use based on landscape configuration and assets** should be represented as a principle in **strategic and planning documents and in legal regulations**. **Support schemes and economic incentives** should take the landscape configuration and assets into account as much as possible. Calls for proposals related to activities significantly modifying land cover should take into account the principle of land use based on landscape configuration and assets as much as possible, if this option is included in the EU programme and it does not represent unreasonable costs for the farmers. The **ministries** and the **sectors** should reinforce common reflection and cooperation during the **modelling and the complex management of the processes** provoking changes in landscape.

- **Integrating the principle** of land use relying on landscape configuration and assets **into the legal regulations** of the sector.
- **Integrating the requirements** for land use relying on landscape configuration and assets **into the support scheme** as much as possible.
- **Integrating the** (landscape potential-based) **quality objectives** related to landscapes **into the incentive schemes** as much as possible.

In accordance with the sub-objective II.3: Production functions based on landscape configuration and assets

**Agriculture and forest management must adjust to the local configurations and assets**, while taking into account the requirements for safety and security of national food supply and sustainability.

**Adapting to climate change**, agriculture will need to invest in using more diverse cultivars. Forest management should also adopt a patchwork system. Agriculture and forest management in adapting to climate change also have a key role in influencing climate. Therefore, the goal in agriculture and forest management is **to maintain areas permanently covered with plants in order to improve the balance of water and heat**. There is a need to create patchwork landscape for producing healthier food and products of increased value. In production areas, consensus-based rehabilitation interventions; in some areas, changes in land use or change in intensity of use are necessary for the adjustment to landscape configuration and assets.

To ensure a more holistic approach, the National Landscape Strategy can only properly succeed in its role if **the overlying landscape approach and related actions are integrated with other strategic policies** in the next review.

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