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COUNCIL OF EUROPE

EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

10th COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONFERENCE ON

THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

Results of the
19th Council of Europe Meeting of the Workshops for the implementation of
the European Landscape Convention
“The implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level: local
democracy”

Brno, Czech Republic, 5-6 September 2017

Council of Europe
Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg
6-7 May 2019



Document of the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe
Directorate of Democratic Participation

Summary

European Landscape Convention

For the purposes of the European Landscape Convention, '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' means "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"; 'Landscape protection' means "actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity"; 'Landscape management' means "action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, in order to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes"; and 'Landscape planning' means "strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes".

The 19th Council of Europe Meeting of the Workshops for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention on "The implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level: local democracy" aimed to address the implementation of the European Landscape Convention at the local level.

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19th Council of Europe Meeting of the Workshops for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention on "The implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level: local democracy", Brno, Czech Republic, 5-6 September 2017



Chairmanship of the Czech Republic
Council of Europe
May – November 2017
Présidence de la République tchèque
Conseil de l'Europe
Mai – Novembre 2017



EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
CONVENTION EUROPÉENNE DU PAYSAGE



**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**

***NINETEENTH COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION***

***"The implementation of the European Landscape
Convention at local level: local democracy"***

**Brno, Czech Republic,
5-6 September 2017**



The 19th Council of Europe Meeting of the Workshops for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention on “The implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level: local democracy” was organised under the auspices of the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, by the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of School, Youth and Sport, of the Czech Republic, in partnership with Mendel University in Brno and South Moravian Region, in Brno, Czech Republic, on 5-6 September 2017.

The Meeting aimed to present experiences of national policies adopted or being developed at local level, considering notably the provisions of the Convention, which states that its Parties undertake:

- to recognise 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;*
- to establish and implement landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning, through the adoption of the specific measures (set out in the Convention);*
- to establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies;*
- to integrate landscape into their regional and town planning policies and in their cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape.*

The Convention provides for the “Division of responsibilities”, that “Each Party shall implement this Convention ... according to its own division of powers, in conformity with its constitutional principles and administrative arrangements, and respecting the principle of subsidiarity, taking into account the European Charter of Local Self-government. Without derogating from the provisions of this Convention, each Party shall harmonise the implementation of this Convention with its own policies”.

Four Workshops were entitled :

- “The implementation of the European Landscape Convention in the Czech Republic”;*
- “Instruments for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level”;*
- “Experiences taking into account the landscape dimension at the local level”;*
- “Local democracy for the landscape: participation and commitment”.*

The Meeting aimed at government officers – members of the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP), of the Council of Europe Conference on the European Landscape Convention, and representatives of other ministries –, representatives of local and regional authorities, professionals, academics, representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations, and other persons, working in the fields of landscape and sustainable development, with its environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions. Some 200 participants from several European and non-European States took part in the Meeting.

Link to the Programme, speeches and proceedings:

www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/19th

The Conference is invited to:

- warmly thank the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of School, Youth and Sport, of the Czech Republic, in partnership with Mendel University in Brno and South Moravian Region, for their co-operation with the Council of Europe in the organisation of the 19th Council of Europe Meeting of the Workshops for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention on “*The implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level: local democracy*”, held in Brno, Czech Republic, on 5-6 September 2017, and their hospitality;
- take note of the speeches and presentations made at the Meeting, as they appear on the website of the European Landscape Convention, as well as the conclusions of the Meeting (also appended to this document): www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/19th and to make any proposal;
- decide to take full account landscape in the policies for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level (Chapter II of the Convention on National measures);
- welcome the results of the 1st International Landscape Day of the Council of Europe, 20 October 2017, and the “Message from Brno” on “Landscape at local level”, launched on this occasion www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/international-landscape-day

Appendix



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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

COUNCIL OF EUROPE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

NINETEENTH COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

*Organised under the auspices of the Czech Chairmanship
of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe*

***“The implementation of the European Landscape Convention
at local level: local democracy”***

**Brno, Czech Republic,
5-6 September 2017**

www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/19th

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

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The European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe plays an important role for the protection, management and planning of the landscape. Thanks to its philosophy, it is also a tool for enhancing collaboration on all levels, and for all the phenomena and aspects covered by the term “landscape democracy”. Supporting democratic processes related to landscape is a crucial form of maintaining generally all democratic processes in society. The importance and contribution of the convention as a tool for promoting and supporting democracy is evident,

especially in the post-communist countries that have to cope with reconstructing democratic processes after long periods of totalitarian regimes.

Many important ideas have been presented on this occasion. I have selected several key words that best characterise their content:

Importance of municipalities

Local municipalities play a crucial role in the practical implementation of the European Landscape Convention. Their activities have a direct impact on the character of the landscape and its changes. The bodies of the local authorities are directly responsible for the development of the territory entrusted to them, for its protection, its overall management and planning. They are in daily contact with all the citizens, stakeholders and users of the landscape. As such, they can influence the behaviour of the inhabitants and their approach to the protection and management of the landscape in the most efficient way. The discussions that took place during the Meeting clearly proved that the role of the local mayor is the crucial one in implementing the convention in practical life – the mayors mediate contact and flow of information between the citizens and the outer world; they are the creators and communicators of visions; and they are responsible for organising and supervising actions leading to the improvement of the landscape. A mayor influences the character of the landscape, as well as the approach of the public to that landscape.

Enthusiasm and personal engagement

Landscape protection, management and planning are only efficient if the mayor and elected representatives receive sufficient information, as well as methodological and financial support, from higher levels of administration (regional and national institutions); they must succeed in finding good experts and collaborators; have visions that inspire and enthuse their fellow citizens; and, aided by the citizens, define planning goals and implement them. The examples presented at the Meeting clearly demonstrated that the quality of implementing ideas of the convention in everyday life is directly proportional to the intensity of the mayors' and municipal representatives' personal engagement.

Sharing and collaboration

Local governments (municipalities) have to deal with a great schedule and many issues. If they remain isolated in dealing with problems, they will lack the energy that is necessary for managing their territory in an optimal way and with the wider involvement of the public. An efficient implementation of the convention's ideas could support closer vertical linking of collaboration between the national, regional, and local levels (local authorities, planners, citizens). During the Meeting we saw some highly inspiring models of such collaboration, for example the Club "Landscape plans" in France, voluntary associations of experts and citizens in Belgium, or the landscape planning forums in Italy. Depending on local individual customs and experiences, every State should, at national and regional level, systematically support the development of such platforms to contribute to a more efficient exchange of information and co-operative solutions to various problems and issues in the landscape.

Comprehensibility and transparency

To be able to help, the supportive system of co-operation and its vital agenda, as well as all the presented information and instructions, should be as simple as possible and formulated in a clear way that can be understood by all citizens. Bloated administrative systems, although created in good faith, in fact demotivate municipalities and increase their aversion to developing the projects for which they were created in the first place.

There are no small projects

Small practically-oriented projects are often much more effective in fulfilling the ideas of the convention than sophisticated large-scale ones. We saw many smaller landscape-developing projects here at the Meeting (such as planting of fruit orchards, avenues of trees or parks, church reconstruction projects, etc.). All these projects had one thing in common – they were innovative in their form and were implemented in close collaboration with all age groups of local citizens. The results of such activities enhanced the actual site in question, but they also made the local community stronger and more coherent. A coherent local community is a vital condition of the citizens' on-going willingness to remain engaged in the protection, planning and maintenance of the landscape.

Inspiration and sharing of experience

Throughout Europe, there are many examples of interesting and inspiring projects supporting collaboration in landscape management that focuses on local democracy. As the projects presented in the framework of the Council of Europe Landscape Award Alliance demonstrate,¹ there are many interesting and inspiring projects supporting collaboration in landscape management, focusing on local democracy.

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Mr Yves LUGINBÜHL

Emeritus Research Director of the National Centre for Scientific Research, France

The Council of Europe Meetings of the Workshops for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention play a key role in the implementation of landscape policies at local level because they provide an opportunity to share experience among the 47 member States of the Council of Europe. The policies in question are extremely varied, and include protecting landscape for features that are of undeniable significance for the local community. Local policies reflect a willingness to reach decisions and take concrete action. Clearly discernible in the experiences described at the meeting is a strong sense of citizen participation, which is an expression of democracy.

Landscape policies come in many forms but they should all result in a landscape development project, whether rural or urban. Citizen participation takes many forms too, and can range from simply consulting local residents when devising a group project to raising awareness or conducting surveys: sometimes, citizen participation involves bringing together those living in a particular

1. www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/landscape-award-alliance.

urban neighbourhood or rural community and organising street parties (or erecting temporary structures) led by landscape gardeners or architects, without actually producing a project.

Producing a landscape project is essential, though, because it represents an expression of political and popular will; developing a project, however, means having to contend with the many various social perceptions of landscape, which raises the key question of how to reconcile conflicting opinions. The answer here is to seek compromise, not consensus.² In many cases, consensus stifles innovation because the parties involved in the negotiations are so busy opposing the other side's suggestions that they end up with projects which are rather mundane and unoriginal. Compromise, on the other hand, provides a means to build innovation into the landscape development project, which is the product of an open debate. Debate, however, requires time for discussion between stakeholders, something that is not always compatible with the needs of elected officials eager for a quick decision. It is better, though, to take a little extra time to arrive at a project that satisfies all the parties involved, rather than rush to complete one that has only partial support.

A key consideration when devising any landscape development project is social sensitivity to landscape, which has evolved greatly in recent decades. The question then arises of what it means to be sensitive to landscape: sensitivity is bound up with the human senses, i.e. hearing, smell, taste, touch and sight. The connection with aesthetics demands that due account be taken of the shift in how society relates to landscapes and ways of accommodating this shift. Sensitivities thus need to be linked to something substantive. Landscape is as much tangible as it is intangible; for example, the smell of manure which farmers spread on the fields has to do with a physical fact, a particular soil, and a particular ecological or economic process. At the same time, sensitivities are a factor in the well-being and "ill-being" now receiving attention from some economists (see the report by Joseph E. Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics), thereby calling for the use of criteria and indicators that are not only quantitative but also qualitative.

Citizen participation occurs primarily at local level but the latter is heavily dependent on the national and inter-national level; participation at local level is thus an opportunity to raise national and international awareness of people's needs regarding the quality of their living environment and well-being. It is also an opportunity to fight back against lobby groups, especially in the agri-food and agri-chemical sectors: e.g. the pesticide Gaucho produced by Monsanto (which has been taken over by Bayer) and which kills the bees that play a vital role in the pollination needed for plants to reproduce. It is crucial, therefore, to galvanise NGOs into action at national and international level.

Finally, we must not forget that the meaning of landscape is bound up with the tangible and the intangible (see the definition of landscape given in the European Landscape Convention: "an area, as perceived by people"). Landscape is the outcome of interaction between biophysical and social processes. For example, the pastoral model which harks back to Virgil and the Bible³ is not merely an image: it refers to green meadow-type landscapes, with a particular type of vegetation and social activities such as animal husbandry and a unique ecosystem. For example, Spain's open woodlands known as dehesa, which have served as a pastoral model, are a reflection of an ecosystem that combines trees, crops, meadows and animals. Any local policy that seeks to shape

2. The term consensus in the English language is synonymous with compromise in the French language, whereas often it is unfortunately translated in French as consensus.

3. Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters..."

this landscape, therefore, must take into account not only what it represents for the populations concerned but also how it functions, socially, economically and ecologically. It is thus easy to understand, too, the interaction between the local level and national and international levels, as the economic and ecological system in question hinges largely on the decisions taken by international institutions such as the World Trade Organisation and the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy. As has already been pointed out, local policies are interdependent and never fully separate.

Powerpoint presentation:

<http://rm.coe.int/16807454bd>

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Mr Patrice COLLIGNON

Chief executive of the International Association Rurality-Environment-Development (RED), Belgium

Local democracy as an ideal instrument for implementing the European Landscape Convention

It is both an honour and a pleasure for me to contribute to the conclusions of this 19th Council of Europe Meeting of the Workshops for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Czech authorities and the Council of Europe on planning and organising such a successful event. Given the number and variety of States which have signed the European Landscape Convention, the magnitude of that task should not be underestimated. Local democracy and citizen participation are themes that are close to the heart of the association Rurality-Environment-Development, local democracy and citizen participation being, in our view, the best way of delivering European policies.

Over the last, very busy, two days, it has become apparent that the local level is the ideal one for implementing the European Landscape Convention, and that co-construction initiatives involving local players are invaluable when it comes to protecting, managing and planning landscapes, in the words of the convention.

One interesting aspect of the reports presented over the past two days has been the way in which references to landscape projects have been intermingled with references to local spatial development programmes, with some speakers talking about citizen participation through landscape programmes, while others mentioned it in the context of local development operations. Any project that starts with landscape is naturally going to expand into other sectors, in order to address the various challenges that affect the quality of that landscape. Likewise, no spatial development initiative can afford to ignore the quality of the living environment, of which landscape is clearly a key element, and in that context landscape becomes part of the process of strategic co-construction as a component to be considered, but also as a factor in development. The two approaches are not contradictory, and may even co-exist. It is important, however, that they be pursued, not separately, but in interaction with one another.

A number of other points caught my attention. The first is the importance of the initial political impetus and the role it seeks to assign to local democracy. The political ambition expressed at this point determines the momentum that will drive civic engagement. If these initial discussions are no

more than a box-ticking exercise, they will tend to create resistance to the project, rather than support. If the initiative is backed by calls to develop a shared vision of the future, however, it will have the potential to trigger a dynamic process of co-construction and to deliver social cohesion and integration. Confidence in the process is essential and requires both a clearly articulated political goal and compliance with commitments.

Embracing participatory local development may certainly mean a less comfortable existence for elected officials, but this will be largely outweighed by the ensuing collaborative process, providing an opportunity to go even further, as one of the Norwegian speakers pointed out.

In relation to the aim of the convention which concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding, as well as everyday or degraded landscapes, local development has also emerged as a means of recognising ordinary landscapes. One point to note here is that most of the areas talked about over the past two days have been agricultural or natural rural areas featuring landscapes that are of special significance. Having acted as co-ordinator of the European Countryside Movement for over 20 years, I am obviously delighted to see these rural amenities being promoted. Rural areas, however, are also home to a wide range of non-agricultural economic activities which help make Europe strong and where a large proportion of the European population lives. To consider them purely as natural areas or farmland would be to overlook much of their potential to contribute to Europe's health and vitality.

Citizen participation as a way of addressing the different local development challenges

The challenges facing those whose job it is to manage landscape are myriad, and it is clear from the reports presented over these two days just how diverse and acute those challenges are, whether they be climate-related (drought, fires, floods, etc.), demographic (desertification, land pressure), environmental (soil, biodiversity, etc.) or economic (intensive farming, etc.). Energy issues received little mention, despite the fact that implementing alternative energies, especially wind power, often demands a response from local managers and residents, regarding their impact on the landscape. Similarly, local development initiatives associated with the development of public spaces and the quality of the internal landscape also exist in cities, yet there was not much mention of them at the meeting.

If these participatory development projects are proving increasingly popular today, it is not only because they are relevant and effective but also because they are taking place against a backdrop of major global uncertainty. This latent anxiety is prompting citizens to focus more on the local level, as that is where their capacity to take practical action appears greatest, at a time when they have little confidence in their power to influence macro-economic policies. There are forces at work today which are conducive to local development and from which landscape policies should benefit.

Any discussion of local democracy inevitably also raises the issue of how to harmonise the policies conducted at the different territorial levels. Several speakers described attempts at alignment in the form of "landscape" partnerships involving actors from various national, regional or local levels. One example suggests that there is still room for improvement but other projects – Leader area initiatives conducted by local action groups – have been shown to be very useful when it comes to taking integrated action to support the landscape. Many of you also spoke about the negative impact of intensive farming policies on the landscape. Considering that the former are financed by the second pillar of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy and the latter are supported

by the first pillar, more effort is needed to ensure consistency, in terms of both policy direction and delivery.

The local participation processes described vary widely according to the local context. They range from initiatives where participation takes the form of an activity, with volunteers playing a central role, to others where participation is financial, such as sponsoring a fruit tree in the Czech town of Sudice. The target groups evidently span a number of sectors and may include local, elected officials, citizens, researchers, management teams and, in several cases, young stakeholders.

The tools used to support or generate this co-construction process also cover a wide spectrum: charters, atlases, competitions, plans and tools to aid decision-making, good practice sharing, etc. Some make use of the opportunities offered by digital media, including via mobile applications that canvas opinions. The basic objective, however, must be to promote good practices and quality landscapes and not to write off “less good” areas by prompting an influx of hasty or knee-jerk criticisms. Considerable care must be taken to ensure that these applications do not stymie the redeployment efforts or overstrain the capacity of areas where there is a lack of good quality landscape. When it comes to landscapes, the number of clicks is an indicator rather than an objective. It is important to avoid stigmatising landscape-poor areas and those who live there, as otherwise there is a risk that territorial imbalances could be exacerbated.

From the examples of local democracy presented over the last two days, it is clear that landscape is a local resource that is vital for the individual and collective well-being of its inhabitants and part of a wider shift defined by citizen participation. The many different strategic co-construction processes under way have been shown to be a valuable means of designing and conducting programmes that seek to ensure the quality of our landscapes.

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