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COUNCIL OF EUROPE LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
CONVENTION DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE SUR LE PAYSAGE



COUNCIL OF EUROPE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

10th COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONFERENCE ON THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

*Conference organised under the auspices of the Presidency of Finland
of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe*

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



Intervention

Mrs Júlia TÓBIKOVÁ, National representative to the European Landscape Convention, Ministry of the Environment

Report: 19th Council of Europe meeting of the workshops for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention was dedicated to the topic of “The implementation of the European Landscape Convention at local level: local democracy”.

The workshop was held in the auditorium of the Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic on 5 – 6 September 2017. The meeting was organised under the auspices of the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The European Landscape Convention understands landscape management as a shared responsibility of the state and its constituents (ministries), experts, but especially the public, as users and managers of

the landscape. Landscape management takes place at both national, regional and local levels. The session dealt with the theme of the relationship and context between promoting the application of the principles of democracy and the implementation of the European Landscape Convention at the local level. This meeting addressed the question of how the application of democratic principles within the framework of landscape management at the local level contributes to increasing the values of the landscape and thereby improves the quality of life of the local population.

The meeting was attended by more than 130 representatives of the member States of the Council of Europe and experts on sustainable landscape management from abroad and the Czech Republic. Within the first two days of the meeting, more than 26 projects from 17 countries were presented. All presented projects can be seen as paradigmatic examples of sustainable landscape management at local level. These projects are the result of personal interest and commitment of both experts and ordinary residents, but especially representatives of municipalities, without which concrete work in the landscape cannot be realized. On the last day, 7 September 2017, foreign guests visited the Lednice-Valtice cultural landscape area, where they could not only admire the beauty of the UNESCO protected area, but also were presented the issue of shared care for this rare area by local mayors and representatives of the Lower Moravia Biosphere Reserve.

One of the conclusions of the conference presented by associate professor Alena Salašová, was the statement that local municipalities play a crucial role in the practical implementation of the European Landscape Convention. Their activities have a direct impact on the landscape and its changes. Local authorities are directly responsible for the development of the territory they have been entrusted with, for protection, overall management and planning. They are in daily contact with all citizens, stakeholders and landscape users. As such, they can influence the behavior of residents and their approach to protecting and managing the landscape in the most effective way. The discussions that took place during the workshop clearly showed that the role of local mayor is essential for the implementation of this convention in practice - mayors mediate contact and information flow between citizens and the outside world; they are the creators and communicators of vision and managers who organize and oversee actions to improve the landscape. The mayor affects the landscape as well as public access to the landscape. Landscape protection, management and planning are only effective if the mayor and elected representatives receive sufficient information and methodological and financial support from higher levels of government (regional and national institutions) if they succeed in finding good professionals and co-workers, have visions that inspire and they will enchant their fellow citizens and, with the help of citizens and experts, define and implement planning goals. The examples presented at the meeting clearly showed that the quality of the Convention's implementation ideas in everyday life is directly proportional to the intensity of personal engagement of mayors and other municipal representatives.

One of the main outputs of the meeting is the so-called “Message from Brno”, in which participants expressed the wish that local authorities would 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”. The first Landscape Day was announced by the Convention Secretariat on 20 October 2017, the day the European Landscape Convention was made available for signature.

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