

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**

**CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
CONVENTION EUROPEENNE DU PAYSAGE**

***21st MEETING OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE EUROPE LANDSCAPE CONVENTION***

***21^e REUNION DES ATELIERS POUR LA MISE EN ŒUVRE DE
LA CONVENTION EUROPEENNE DU PAYSAGE***

***“Landscape and education”
« Paysage et éducation »***

Tropea, Italy / Italie

3-4 October 2018 /3-4 octobre 2018

Study visit, 5 October 2018 / Visite d'études, 5 octobre 2018

WORKSHOP 1 – General debate on public policies

Implementation of the European Landscape Convention – landscape and education in Latvia

Mrs Kristīne KEDO

Head of Spatial Planning Policy Division, Spatial Planning Department, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvia

Latvia is a small and green country and we are proud of our natural and cultural heritage which eventually forms our outstanding landscapes. These landscapes are part of our national identity and as our national treasures are valued since early childhood in almost every family.

Nevertheless, establishment of national landscape policy was not an easy task. We ratified the European Landscape convention in 2009, but Latvian Landscape strategy was elaborated and approved by the government only in 2013.

Actions for landscape education was one of the hardest tasks when developing the strategy. We involved all relevant institutions, including Ministry of Education, but we could not agree on clear actions in the framework of existing education system. The compromise between all involved parties was to focus on informing society and organisation of public campaigns about landscape values for awareness raising of general public.

One of the first successes and the main instrument in education of society for four years was the national selection of for the Council of Europe Landscape Award, which raised awareness about the importance of landscape from various aspects, including environmental, social and economic aspects.

The number of participants doubled each session and we are very proud that our national award winner *Regeneration of Daugavpils fortress* was selected as the winner for 5th session of the Council of Europe's Landscape Award. Therefore we were honoured to welcome European landscape family to Latvia this June and had an opportunity to share our landscapes and good practices internationally.

The main theme of this intervention is the various events commemorating the Latvian centenary or 100th anniversary of the independent Latvia which emphasise the value of our landscapes, both from a historic and a forward-looking perspective.

Since 2017 Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, together with the National Library has been organising its first public campaign for the implementation of a Landscape strategy. The activity is entitled *Latvian Landscape treasures – yesterday, today and tomorrow* and is organised in three phases: we have now reached the final phase.

The activity of citizens was astonishing in the first phase of the campaign – more than 1,000 proposals for the title *landscape treasure* were received during first two months. Taking into account the visual and cultural values landscape, experts selected 243 of 1,000 proposals that were submitted for electronic voting on the website of National Library.

While voting was ongoing, there were several contests organised to promote the activity of the different target groups, including an activity entitled *Vote with your class*, which was targeted to pupils and teachers from secondary schools. In order to win one of three excursions for the whole class, pupils together with their teacher had to take a photo of them voting for landscape treasures. Again, the response was unexpected: 91 classes from secondary schools throughout Latvia participated in the contest, and therefore awareness was raised to more than 1,000 children and their teachers.

In total there were 46,000 votes in two months and a dedicated board of landscape experts summarised them and developed a list of 10 landscape treasures for each of five planning regions. In the concluding part of first phase, additional information, photos, memories and wishes for the future were collected. Over three months, 959 photos and 72 personal memories about landscape treasures were donated by citizens.

The second phase of landscape treasures was less visible for society, but very active for the organisers, as high quality photos of all 50 landscape treasures were made and exhibition stands and discussion topics were prepared for regional events. Also the work on the main output of this activity – electronic storage of landscape treasures – was carried out during the second phase.

The third phase started in September 2018 and its first month was an intensive marathon of landscape treasures, as five regional exhibitions were kicked-off together with five regional discussions. Even in such a small country as Latvia, each of the five regional events were one of a kind with their unique stories and perceptions on their landscape treasures. For example, we had a very professional story about flat meadows in Zemgale region and a very enthusiastic story about a hobby of researching on sacral heritage – crucifixes in Latgale region. Also, a family from Vidzeme region living in a historical manor shared their experience of evaluating the past values in the renovation of this manor and the adjacent park over the last 10 years. Meanwhile discussions in the region of Riga emphasised the importance of spatial planning in preservation and development of everyday landscapes. The last discussion was in Kurzeme region, where an excellent experience on preservation of traditional

coastal landscape was shared by fishermen from a traditional coastal village. These are just some highlights to share our great satisfaction for the outcomes of the regional discussions.

The next step of the activity is envisaged on 26 October 2018, the gala event *Freedom – Landscape – Us*, for 400 participants who actively participated in all phases of the activity by sharing photos and memories. During this event the electronic storage of landscape treasures will be presented and officially published for Latvian society. An English version of the electronic storage is also being developed and it is planned that by the beginning of 2019, the heart and soul of Latvian landscapes can be shared with our European landscape family!

Thank you for your attention!