



COUNCIL OF EUROPE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

22nd COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

*“Water, landscape and citizenship
in the face of global change”*

**Seville, Spain
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Addressing water in the framework of the activities of the Council of Europe

Maguelonne DÉJEANT-PONS, Executive Secretary of the European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe



*“The Blue Marble”, view of the Earth
Apollo 17, 1972*

*“The member States of the Council of Europe signatory hereto, ... wishing to provide a new instrument devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of **all landscapes** in Europe...*

*This Convention applies to the entire territory of the Parties and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It includes land, **inland water and marine areas**. It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes.”*

Preamble and Article 2 of the European Landscape Convention, 20 October 2000

The quality of the environment, understood in its broadest sense as encompassing ecological processes and the various natural resources on which living organisms depend, must be preserved. It is essential that the sustainability of these resources be ensured so that the needs and aspirations of present and future generations can be met and proper consideration given to the many other species with which we share the planet.

Ratified by 39 member states of the Council of Europe to date, the European Landscape Convention makes a contribution to this process and also applies to what may be termed “liquid landscapes”. It is important, therefore, that the government policies adopted in order to implement the Convention, at national, regional and local level, provide a means to safeguard the future of these landscapes.

Water

The Council of Europe’s activities at intergovernmental level are pursued within the framework of, and are grounded in, various instruments. Of particular historical significance is Resolution (67) 10 on the “European Water Charter”, adopted on 6 May 1968 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which proclaims twelve basic principles concerning water.

European Water Charter of the Council of Europe

Fundamental principles

1. There is no life without water. It is a treasure indispensable to all human activity.
2. Fresh water resources are not inexhaustible. It is essential to conserve, control, and wherever possible, to increase them.
3. To pollute water is to harm man and other living creatures which are dependent on water.
4. The quality of water must be maintained at levels suitable for the use to be made of it and, in particular, must meet appropriate public health standards.
5. When used water is returned to a common source, it must not impair the further uses, both public and private, to which the common source will be put.
6. The maintenance of an adequate vegetation cover, preferably forest land, is imperative for the conservation of water resources.
7. Water resources must be assessed.
8. The wise husbandry of water resources must be planned by the appropriate authorities.
9. Conservation of water calls for intensified scientific research, training of specialists and public information services.
10. Water is a common heritage, the value of which must be recognised by all. Everyone has the duty to use water carefully and economically.

11. The management of water resources should be based on their natural basins rather than on political and administrative boundaries.
12. Water knows no frontiers; as a common resource it demands international co-operation.

On 17 October 2001, the Committee of Ministers adopted a second key text, Recommendation Rec. (2001) 14 on the “European Charter on Water Resources”, which draws the attention of the governments of Council of Europe member states to the need to manage and protect water resources by adopting a common and integrated approach. The Committee of Ministers recommended that states apply certain principles regarding the procedural and substantive aspects of “the right to water” and “the right to sanitation” through their domestic policies.

European Charter on Water Resources of the Council of Europe

Principles concerning the right to water and sanitation

Everyone has the right to a sufficient quantity of water for his or her basic needs.

International human rights instruments recognise the fundamental right of all human beings to be free from hunger and to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families. It is quite clear that these two requirements include the right to a minimum quantity of water of satisfactory quality from the point of view of health and hygiene. Social measures should be put in place to prevent the supply of water to destitute persons from being cut off.

The public must have access to information on the state of water resources.

The information collected on quantitative and qualitative aspects of water resources, notably on suitability for drinking, must be accessible to the public and published without delay in a form that is readily understandable. Provision must be made for special warning measures to protect public health.

The public must be informed in a timely and appropriate manner of water management plans and projects for the utilisation of water resources. It has the right to take an active part in planning and decision-making procedures concerning water.

Access to information and participation by natural and legal persons and their associations, organisations or groups in the decision-making process concerning water resources are essential, in particular in order to enhance the quality and the implementation of the decisions, to foster public awareness of issues, to give the public the opportunity to express its concerns and to enable public authorities to take due account of such concerns. The authorities must make available to the public as soon as possible information on water resources that is requested of them, including, if the request is made, copies of documents in which such information is actually recorded, without the public needing to advance a particular interest. A request for information on water resources cannot be refused unless it concerns documents in the course of being prepared or if it is contrary to the rights of other persons protected by national legislation. Reasons for refusal must be interpreted restrictively and must be communicated to those concerned. The public must also be able to participate in preparing plans and programmes on water resources management at an appropriate stage. The relevant authority may identify the persons invited to participate. Sufficient time-frames must be fixed to allow for effective participation, and the public must be given the opportunity to comment, directly or through representative consultative bodies. The result of public participation shall be taken into account as far as possible.

The persons and bodies concerned must be able to appeal against any decision relating to water resources.

Any natural or legal person wishing to contest any decision, act or omission and in particular any refusal to provide information or allow participation in connection with the management or utilisation of water resources must be able to lodge an administrative or judicial appeal.

Without prejudice to the right to water to meet basic needs, the supply of water shall be subject to payment in order to cover financial costs associated with the production and utilisation of water resources.

Water has not only an ecological but also an economic value. In addition to water as such, infrastructure for its extraction, conveyance, distribution and purification generates costs which may vary from one place or community to another, but which cannot be ignored. Water, costing nothing, might be used wastefully, which is particularly dangerous in situations in which water resources are becoming relatively scarce. On the other hand, water is also a commodity with a social value, one that is necessary for meeting the basic needs of every human being. To finance the supply and purification of water, it is essential to implement the “polluter-pays” principle. To this end, appropriate charges must be set (proportional or progressive rates, rates for low-income categories or supply of a minimum quantity of water on preferential terms), depending on the use. Charges will depend on the expected evolution of water resources, the investment required and social considerations. The “user-pays” principle, pursuant to which the price of water available for given uses – and thus of adequate quality – must be borne by the user, must be taken into account, subject to basic needs being met.

The question of the right to water and to sanitation has also been addressed at the Council of Europe Conferences of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT). In 1997, one of these conferences focused on sustainable regional and spatial planning in Europe and the protection of water resources.

Landscape

“The landscape approach” to water resources and landscapes is being developed through the activities connected with the European Landscape Convention.

Adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 19 July 2000 in Strasbourg and opened for signature by the member states in Florence (Italy) on 20 October 2000, the Convention aims to promote European landscape protection, management and planning and to organise European co-operation in this area. Regarded as the leading convention in the field of sustainable development, it plays a major part in the implementation of the Council of Europe’s objectives, by promoting quality of life and individual and social well-being, taking account of landscape, natural and cultural values. The member states of the Council of Europe which have signed the convention have declared themselves “concerned to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment”. The cultural dimension is also to the fore here.

An innovative instrument, the Convention is an international treaty exclusively dedicated to the landscape as a whole, seen as the living environment for individuals and societies. Each contracting party undertakes 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.

In pursuance of the European Landscape Convention, “landscape’ means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. Territory is viewed from both a geographical and a historical perspective. In terms of physical geographical, the Convention is concerned with all aspects of territory: terrestrial, aquatic (inland water such as lakes and ponds) and marine (coastline and territorial sea). In terms of human geography, the Convention covers the

Parties' entire territory, whether natural, urban or suburban. The preamble states that the landscape "is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: both in urban areas and in the countryside". It accordingly takes into account the complex ways in which urban and rural landscapes interlock. Approaching territory from a historical perspective, in terms of its past, present and future, it is recognised that landscapes evolve through time, as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings.

In subscribing to the principles and aims of the Convention, the contracting parties undertake to protect, manage and/or plan their landscapes by adopting a series of national, general and specific measures. In this context, they undertake to encourage the participation of the public and the authorities in the decision-making processes that affect the landscape dimension of their territory.

At national level, the Contracting Parties undertake to:

- frame and implement policies to protect, manage and plan landscapes; and
- to accommodate landscape in town and country planning policies, cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, and any other policies which may have direct or indirect impact on the landscape.

The Contracting Parties are further invited to implement specific measures at national level, including,

- identification and evaluation of landscapes: mobilising those concerned in order to attain better knowledge of landscape, and guiding the work of landscape identification and evaluation through exchanges of experience and methods arranged between the Parties at European level. Each Party accordingly undertakes to identify its own landscapes, through its territory, to analyse their characteristics and the forces and pressures transforming them and to take note of changes. It also undertakes to assess the landscapes identified, taking into account the particular values assigned to them by the interested parties and the population concerned;
- definition of landscape quality objectives: defining quality objectives for the landscapes identified and assessed, after public consultation.

The Parties undertake to implement at national level other measures, both general and specific, concerning the social dimension of the landscape issue. These involve:

- public participation: establishing procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of landscape policies;
- awareness-raising: increasing awareness among civil society, private organisations, and public authorities of the value of landscapes, their role and changes to them;
- training and education: each Party undertakes to promote training for specialists in landscape appraisal and operations, multidisciplinary training programmes in landscape policy, protection, management and planning, for professionals in the private and public sectors and for associations concerned, school and university courses which, in the relevant subject areas, address the values attaching to landscapes and the issues raised by their protection, management and planning.

Water has always added value to the landscape, of course, but in many countries there is a fresh awareness of this, with riverbank and shoreline improvement works, the development of "green and blue infrastructure" and the concept of waterfronts, and efforts to preserve ponds, lakes and coastal areas. The way water and "waterscapes" are viewed is changing and new instruments are being adopted or implemented to preserve them and develop their potential.

Sharing information on the implementation of the European Landscape Convention

The Council of Europe Information System on the European Landscape Convention is a data base containing information about government policies conducted at national, regional and local level in the field of landscape.¹ Information sharing between the Parties to the Convention about government policies on landscape is based on the data contained in this system.

The Council of Europe's Landscape Award Alliance – an opportunity to showcase projects

The Council of Europe's Landscape Award Alliance brings together exemplary achievements presented by the States Parties to the European Landscape Convention at Landscape Award sessions. They show that it is possible to promote the territorial dimension of human rights and democracy by improving the landscape features of people's surroundings.² Many of these outstanding projects involve water and "waterscapes".

The Landscape Award of the Council of Europe

The landscapes of water

1st Session 2008-2009

- *The Park de la Deûle*, Lille Métropole, France
- *Landscape Management of Hämeenkyrö National Landscape Area*, City of Hämeenkyrö, Finland
- *Implementation of the Complex Nature Conservation and Landscape, Management Programme in the Zámoly Basin*, Public Foundation for Nature, Conservation Pro Vértes, Hungary

2nd Session 2010-2011

- *The Durham Heritage Coast*, Durham Heritage Coast Partnership, United Kingdom
- *The management of endangered traditional biotopes and the preservation of the traditional rural landscape*, Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, Finland
- *The Port aux Cerises Outdoor Leisure Centre*, Joint Committee for investigation, planning and management of the Port aux Cerises Outdoor Leisure Centre, France
- *The landscape of Backi Monostor village*, Podunav Backi Monostor, Serbia

3rd Session 2012-2013

- *Preserving ecological value in the landscape of the Szprotawa River Valley*, Lower Silesian Association of Landscape Parks, Poland
- *The Gate of Gornje Podunavlje*, NGO Podunav, Backi Monostor, Serbia – Special Mention for "Contributing to European ideals"
- *Bere Island Conservation Plan*, The Heritage Council and the Bere Island Project Group, Ireland
- *Planning policy for conservation and sustainable development of 20 national landscapes in the Netherlands*, Stichting Nationale Landschappen (NGO), the Netherlands

¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/landscape-observatory>

² European Landscape Convention: The Landscape Award Alliance of the Council of Europe, European Spatial Planning and Landscape Series, 2018, No. 105; www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/landscape-award-alliance

- *Furnas Landscape Laboratory (Furnas LandLab)*, Azores Regional Directorate of the Environment, Portugal
- *Landscape and water-management restoration of Škocjanski Zatok Nature Reserve*, DOPPS, BirdLife Slovenia, Slovenia

4th Session 2014-2015

- *The Town of Kuldīga in the Venta Valley: preserving a unique landscape for future generations*, Kuldīga Municipality, Latvia
- *The New Dutch Waterline*, Board of the New Dutch Waterline, the Netherlands

5th Session 2016-2017

- *Alna Environmental Park: a Blue-Green Corridor of Biodiversity, Recreational Opportunities and Sustainable Urban Water Management*, Municipality of Oslo, Agency for Urban Environment, Norway - Special mention for “Social cohesion and respect for the environment”
- *Hriňovské lazy: Landscape of Values*, Town of Hriňová, Slovak Republic - Special mention for “Preservation of a unique landscape under threat”
- *Landscape as a Link*, Saint-Paul, La Réunion, France
- *Developing “Water Codes” in Larissa City Centre: the “Sculpted River” of Larissa*, Municipality of Larissa, Greece

Conclusions

Humankind’s responsibility for water resources is seen as the quid pro quo of what can now be considered the right to water and to sanitation. As early as 1967, the Committee of Ministers Resolution (67) 10 on the European Water Charter underlined that water is a common heritage, the value of which must be recognised by all and that “everyone has the duty to use water carefully and economically. Each human being is a consumer and user of water and is therefore responsible to other users. To use water thoughtlessly is to misuse our natural heritage.” The Resolution emphasises that “it is up to everyone to help conserve water resources and use them prudently” (Principle X). As with the environment in general, the responsibility to conserve water resources cannot be regarded as a matter for governments alone. As a consumer and user of water, each individual has a responsibility towards other users. To use water thoughtlessly is effectively to misuse our natural heritage. It is to be hoped that the shift towards a growing recognition of the value of water, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, will continue.

In a speech given in 2002 entitled “Towards a sustainable future”, the former Secretary General of the United Nations and Nobel Prize winner Kofi Annan was already sounding the alarm, saying that water and sanitation were among those key areas where concrete results could and must be achieved: “More than 1 billion people are without safe drinking water. Twice that number lack adequate sanitation. And more than 3 million people die every year from diseases caused by unsafe water. Unless we take swift and decisive action, by 2025 as much as two thirds of the world's population may be living in countries that face serious water shortage. We need to improve access. We need to improve the efficiency of water use, for example by getting more “crop per drop” in agriculture, which is the largest consumer of water. And we need better watershed management, and to reduce leakage, especially in the many cities where water losses are an astonishing 40 percent or more of total water supply.”

The year 2025 is approaching and access to safe water and sanitation, aquatic life, sustainable cities and communities and action to combat climate change are now sustainable development goals on the UN’s 2030 agenda.

This 22nd Council of Europe Meeting of the Workshops for the implementation of the European Landscape, entitled “Water, landscape and citizenship in the face of global change” (Seville, Spain, 14-15 March 2019) must contribute to the growing awareness of the essential value of water and its social, environmental and cultural dimensions. It also needs to come up with ideas about how to develop appropriate institutional, legal and financial mechanisms.

This gathering is also intended to show the “visible face” of water, with its aesthetic dimension. Whatever its form, still or free flowing, and wherever it comes from – seas and oceans, streams and rivers, lakes or wetlands – water has an endless ability to enchant and inspire us, and to make us dream.

When the astronauts on Apollo 8 travelled to the moon in December 1968, they gave millions of television viewers the chance to see the Earth from space for the first time. Many of those watching will no doubt have experienced the same emotions as those evoked by the poet Archibald MacLeish³:

« To see the earth as it truly is, small blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold...»



Earth from the Moon, Apollo 8, 1968

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³ “*Riders on earth together, Brothers in eternal cold*”, printed on Christmas Day 1968 on the front page of the New York Times.

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