

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION /
CONVENTION EUROPEENNE DU PAYSAGE**

***22^e REUNION DES ATELIERS DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE POUR LA MISE EN
ŒUVRE DE LA CONVENTION SUR LE PAYSAGE***

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

***“Water, landscape and citizenship in the face of global change”
« Eau, paysage et citoyenneté face aux changements mondiaux »***

***Seville, Spain / Séville, Espagne, 14-15 March / mars 2019
Study visit./ Visite d'études, 16 March / mars 2019***

WORKSHOP 2 – Water landscapes: international experiences

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Amber coast of the Baltic Sea

Representing the Ministry responsible for implementation of European Landscape Convention in Latvia, I would like to express my thanks to the organisers for the relevant and abundant agenda of the event.

Latvia's landscape is rich in water and it owns a 500 km coastline along the Baltic Sea. Latvians often call our country an “Amerland” or “Amber coast”. Amber is one of the strongest symbols of the Latvian culture and ancient Latvian craftsmanship. Amber is certainly considered one of the treasures of the coast of the Baltic Sea, with a powerful magical and symbolic meaning, even today.

Last year Latvia celebrated its centenary since its foundation in 1918, and in this context our ministry invited the National board of landscape experts to recommend a list of Latvia's most outstanding landscapes to be included in the Latvian cultural canon (<https://kulturaskanons.lv>). The Board of Experts held several meetings to discuss how to reduce the longlist to a shortlist of 50 of the most outstanding. One proposal was to vote, another to make use of the results of public hearings. They could not reach an agreement and finally came to the conclusion that they had to define Latvian mental landscapes – landscape components without which Latvians cannot imagine themselves. For example, publicly accessible forests, seacoast, small fishing villages with wooden buildings. The amber coast was the first example that came to our minds, and now we are in the process of developing a narrative for 15 key mental landscapes which will be published in the Latvian cultural canon and become a part of the school teaching content in the nearest future.

The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030, “Latvia 2030” states that the coast of the Baltic Sea is one of the Spaces of National Interest, and “one of the largest values of Latvia where the preservation of nature and cultural heritage should be balanced with the promotion of economic development”. The national level instrument describes how this mental landscape, Amber coast, is supported and protected through the National long-term thematic plan for the coastal area adopted in 2016.

Plan declares nature and cultural heritage as the main coastal development resource shall be preserved and rediscovered.

The guideline character of the plan allows for specific solutions considering local site-specific features, opportunities for financial support and the scale of local government and institutional co-operation. Active co-operation and co-ordinated decision-making in local governments, institutions and non-governmental organisations is the key to successful implementation of the plan.

The coastal plan is a guiding document that sets a framework for coastal development. Local governments can adapt the solutions for public infrastructure development offered in coastal development sites, helping to preserve and develop tangible and intangible cultural heritage and natural heritage.

We expect the first results of the plan this year. By a joint effort – having financial instruments and combining them with education and national policy recommendation – we do believe the next generations will keep in their hearts the meaning of our mental landscape, the Amber coast.