



EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

MULTIFUNCTION SEASIDE PARK IN LIMASSOL

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Limassol is the southernmost coastal city of Cyprus, with about 140,000 recorded residents (110,000 Cypriots and 30,000 foreigners), who make up 16% of the island's total population. It is spread over an area of 56 square kilometres.

Limassol has the biggest Cyprus port and harbour, incorporated into a large natural bay. It has 4,000 years of history and has been known since ancient times as the link between the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, Asia and Africa.

The vision of the Limassol Authorities to change the city into a more sustainable urban living space was achieved mainly through the construction or the support of the major projects in the last 15 years:

Limassol City in 2003 in co-operation with the Town Planning & Housing Department, in an attempt to face its problems and needs proceeded with the preparation and adoption of a Strategic Plan for an Integrated Sustainable Urban Development to solve urban issues like abandoned spaces, city planning, urban mobility, cultural and heritage and urban renewal.

The Plan determined the functional structures, permitted uses of land, pedestrian modules, creation of open spaces and organized parking areas; all within an existing and already structurally defined area.

The objectives were defined, such as the completion and modernization of a basic infrastructure in the area, the creation of areas of special interest, traffic management, the identification and promotion of monuments and the combination of old and new.

The Plan described the scope of the city regarding the function, quality improvement and specialization of services, the separation of incompatible uses, the modernization of basic infrastructure, proper urban planning and the creation of sites of special interest, and the protection of the historic character.

In Limassol, a city with a vision, problems became opportunities, through their successful identification, bearing in mind the importance of the area as its historical, social, cultural and natural core.

Over 15 years, Limassol successfully managed the sustainable development of the city.

In Limassol, this step-by-step procedure enabled economic and social actors to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges.

The Area Plan for the city centre was issued by the Department of Town Planning and Housing of the Ministry of Interior in cooperation with Limassol Municipality.

The Local Authority was financially unable to undertake this huge restructuring intervention consisting of large infrastructure projects, due to its limited budget. State involvement, as well as semi-government organisations and private sector initiatives were essential. Methods such as BOT, PPP and others proved to be particularly efficient. Additionally, co-financing from European Union funds for projects was also crucial, wherever feasible.

Limassol has had new life breathed into it as a result of several major urban regeneration projects that have improved the city's historic centre, the seafront and elsewhere.

The environment and quality of life have been improved and the city's marketability and competitiveness boosted. As a result, new businesses have opened and new jobs created.

The projects have improved the attractiveness and the air quality of commercial and residential areas. The local economy has been boosted thanks to more visitors, charmed by the city's new look. The city's residents have benefited from the regeneration projects, as have those of the wider metropolitan area.

As the city became more attractive, its public places increasingly became meeting places for social activities. The projects have helped preserve the cultural identity of Limassol's historic centre by highlighting its traditional architecture: old buildings have been restored and are now used for cultural, educational and residential purposes.

The vision of the Municipality of Limassol has been achieved: the redevelopment, upgrading and sustainable evolution of the centre of Limassol, as a unified, single place consisting of individual functional areas, which constitute the main commercial and service provision zones, whilst maintaining its own symbolism and character. All these improvements have led to the opening up the horizons to new jobs and essentially revitalizing the city socially and economically.

The positive results have already materialised as, despite the economic crisis plaguing the country, the centre of the city is one of the very few areas in Cyprus exhibiting growth and development.

Limassol Municipality now follows a more integrated approach to Urban Development and is committed to continue its efforts, always aiming at further Sustainable Urban Development.

One of the major projects was the **COASTAL AREA (Environmental Interventions to protect and promote the existence of the sea with enriching the greenery)**

The 1950 Municipal Authority took a strategic decision to purchase or expropriate all private properties located along the urban coastline, in order to provide free space along the seafront, giving access to the public to enjoy the sea. This costly and difficult process lasted until 1995, when the Municipality gained ownership of all the private estates in the area.

In 1970, the Government with the Municipal Authorities proceeded with the reclamation project, expanding the land into the sea in order to cope with erosion, to protect buildings along the beach, and to create a large seaside park.

When the projects at Akti Olympion, 2.5 Km long, were inaugurated in 2006, which included the creation of a beach area for relaxation, physical exercise, walking and swimming, Limassol had regained its lost identity as a seaside town. Until then, the seafront had been more or less unexploited and neglected.

As a continuation of the seafront development, the need arose for the reconstruction of its western section, i.e. the seaside promenade commonly referred to as the 'mole' or 'reclamation'.

The various designs and changes made to the core area of the town from 1974 and afterwards have influenced its planning network. The existing seafront situation, the 'mole', which had been created by the Town Planning & Housing Department, needed modifications that would make it part of the new, modern face of central Limassol by means of an integrated, unified design.

The landscaping of the whole seafront area was completed with the widening of the area of the Old Port and, to the west, the Marina, the planned Conference Centre and the planning of the Coastal Road (Aktaia Odos) to Limassol new port.

The aim of the particular Project was to reshape the seafront, based on the new developments dating from 2002 when the 'Central Limassol Plan – provisions and policy matters' was drawn up, and on the new demands and needs of those using the area.

The aim was for the seafront promenade to link up both functionally and semantically with the rest of the town with the various access points and changes to the seafront so as to bring back the functional relationship between the town centre and the sea, which had been lost for many years.

In the context of the upgrade, existing functions and infrastructures were taken into consideration, such as fountains, sculptures, green areas and play areas, without at the same time overlooking the general design principles which govern the town as a whole.

The reconstruction included a bike lane along the main road, a small amphitheatre, lounges, walkways, seating areas, playgrounds, a skateboard area, wooden piers and decks for walking, greenery and lighting.

Today, the Limassol seafront area is buzzing with life and is one of the most important places with the town's residents as well as with thousands of visitors who walk, exercise, rest and enjoy some recreation there.

The project was co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund of the EU as part of the 2007-2013 programming period in the "Competitiveness and Sustainable Development operational programme, with priority given to the regeneration of urban and rural areas and with the particular aim of regenerating the urban environment and the promotion of entrepreneurship".

The total cost of the project was €12 million and it was completed in February 2015.

The project implemented the objective set up by the municipal Authorities, “**Helping Limassol regain a view of the sea and keep in touch with the shore**”.