

# The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



19<sup>th</sup> SESSION  
CG(19)14  
8 October 2010

## Landscape: a new dimension of public territorial action

Committee on Sustainable Development  
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### Summary

Landscape is a new field for territorial action which links together the imperatives of economic development, preservation of natural resources and requirements in terms of quality of life for European populations. Public action on landscape also provides responses to meet the major challenges related to the radical transformations of European landscapes.

The European Landscape Convention, which was drafted at the initiative of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, sets out principles for political action which are ideally suited to local and regional levels. It has led to many innovative spatial development experiences by local and regional authorities across Europe.

The Congress has decided that these experiences should be more widely publicised. It calls on the territorial authorities to shoulder their responsibilities under the Convention and to ensure that the landscape is a central element in their policies.

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<sup>1</sup> L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions  
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group of the Congress  
EPP/CD: European People's Party – Christian Democrats of the Congress  
SOC: Socialist Group of the Congress  
NR: Members not belonging to a Political Group of the Congress



**A. DRAFT RESOLUTION<sup>2</sup>**

1. Landscape performs a significant role in the relationship between populations and their environment, whether they live in an urban, peri-urban or rural setting. It is one of the major components of the natural, cultural and collective heritage of our societies, and contributes powerfully to the consolidation of Europe's identity.

2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe regards landscape as a sensitive political topic of public interest. Indeed, landscape plays an essential part in the well-being of populations and in quality of life, and constitutes a genuine factor in the social and economic attractiveness of territories.

3. The European Landscape Convention, initially drawn up by the Congress, is the foremost tool for action concerning landscape. It has given new meaning to the concept of landscape by the inclusion of ordinary everyday landscapes. It has formalised the political recognition of landscape and opened up a new dimension of public territorial action by advocating democratic landscape management.

4. The Congress recalls that while landscape requires the attention of all levels of governance, local and regional authorities have an essential role to perform in the practical implementation of the Convention. Indeed, the development of landscapes substantially depends on local and regional policies and on residents' involvement in shaping their surroundings and preserving quality landscapes.

5. The landscape has been considerably altered over recent decades by individual as well as collective acts. In future, the effects of climate change will bring about further transformations. The Congress is anxious about this continually accelerating process and about the too often standardised responses which, though emblematic of the era of globalisation, nonetheless have a cheapening effect on landscapes.

6. However, these transformations are not to be considered systematic degradations of landscapes. In that respect, it recalls that the concern is not to lay down standards and stipulations applicable to all landscapes throughout Europe, but in fact to respect their diversity and take care not to abet exclusion and segregation. Landscape should also be approached as a resource and as a factor and a driving force of local and regional development.

7. The Congress considers that landscape invokes fundamental values not only in the aesthetic register, and that it constitutes a common asset. Its protection, enhancement and management call for a holistic, multidisciplinary approach, and hence regenerated practices in many fields of competence of local and regional authorities, particularly in the decisions with regard to urban and spatial planning and infrastructures.

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<sup>2</sup> Preliminary draft resolution and preliminary draft recommendation approved by the Committee on Sustainable Development on 27 September 2010.

## Members of the Committee :

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N.B.: The names of members who took part in the vote are in italics.

Secretariat of the Committee : M. Moras, N. Howson

8. Since the European Landscape Convention was opened for signature, numerous local and regional authorities in Europe have implemented landscape policies and actions, many of them stimulating, innovative and effective. The Congress welcomes the diversity of these initiatives which set an example for other European authorities.

9. Accordingly, it recalls that public territorial action in respect of landscape must not be contingent on the signature of the Convention by States, but that the pooling of knowledge and experience is essential for the effective implementation.

10. In that regard, as it had advocated for as soon as the Convention had come into force, it welcomes the creation of the European Network of Local and Regional Authorities for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention - RECEP -. The RECEP's work, like that of other associations bringing together the agents of civil society, or research bodies and universities committed to landscape, contributes positively to the promotion of the Convention and to its practical application.

11. In order to discharge their responsibilities for landscape more adequately, optimise their action and disseminate expertise and good practice, it behoves local and regional authorities to strengthen their co-operation. These exchanges in fact represent an opportunity to put methods, thoughts and experiments into circulation. They may also assist the relevant training of elected representatives and local and regional government staff.

12. The Congress moreover recalls the existence of the Council of Europe Landscape Award, made to local and regional authorities and their groupings for exemplary implementation of a policy or measures for sustainable protection, management and/or planning of their landscapes. The Award is also an opportune means of disseminating local and regional landscape action.

13. In the light of the foregoing, and in order that they may shoulder the responsibilities which the European Landscape Convention assigns to them in pursuance of the principle of subsidiarity, *the Congress invites the local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe member states:*

a. to regard landscape as a common asset under both individual and collective responsibility and to implement a democratic landscape policy geared to the citizens' well-being and not only to protection of natural habitats;

b. to make landscapes, and their recognition, protection and enhancement, a central concern of sectoral policies, in order to provide sustainable responses to the fundamental issues involved in transformations of the territory;

c. to improve social and political awareness of the importance of landscape, for the sake of sustainable development and of the identity of territories ;

d. to apply most especially the precepts set out in the European Landscape Convention as regards the members of the public, by fostering their extensive, active participation in acquiring knowledge of the territory, discussing its possible and desirable evolution, and making decisions on their own surroundings;

e. to communicate about innovative actions and inclusion of landscape provisions in the various legal frameworks to advance the knowledge and application of the Convention;

f. to endorse and actively assist the work of associations striving to develop landscape policies;

g. to submit their entry for the Council of Europe Landscape Award competition which is organised every two years.

14. *The Congress also asks the RECEP* to propose activities enabling local and regional authorities of all possible Council of Europe member countries to contribute to tangible implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

## **B. DRAFT RECOMMENDATION<sup>3</sup>**

1. Landscape makes an essential contribution to citizens' well-being and to the consolidation of Europe's identity. It is the privileged domain of the relationship between human beings and their natural and built environment and is emblematic of the territorial implementation of human activities.

2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, which instigated the European Landscape Convention, is convinced that the landscape is a political topic of general interest and a common public good.

3. The fundamental issue raised by landscape is no longer simply protecting sites regarded as highly exceptional, but rather the urban, peri-urban, rural or natural landscapes in which the vast majority of people in Europe live.

4. This is because landscape is a key component of people's quality of life and entails a collective responsibility. Action concerning landscape constitutes an opportunity to work from a grassroots democracy and human rights perspective. It provides a response to people's aspirations to have a high quality living environment and their demand to participate in decisions that transform their everyday surroundings.

5. The Congress notes that landscape policies are gradually becoming an essential means of linking the requisite improvement of the territories of local and regional authorities with their economic development needs and the long-term conservation of resources, natural habitats and biodiversity.

6. Furthermore, it considers that maintaining and improving the quality of European landscapes must be a priority and that the questions raised by the continuing transformation of landscapes must be addressed from a sustainable development perspective. In this respect, the speed of the development process in certain countries and the resulting changes in the landscape call for special vigilance.

7. The European Landscape Convention, the first international treaty linking landscape quality and the quality of life of people throughout Europe, is innovative in spirit, and has modified the concept of landscape. It has opened up a new dimension of public action at the international, national, regional and local levels and has triggered genuine, significant advances in landscape policies implemented in many European countries.

8. The Congress notes with satisfaction that it has become an operational instrument which has met with a considerable response. It welcomes the significant number of signatures and ratifications ten years after the Convention's adoption in Florence in 2000.

9. It believes that there is a real interest in landscape in today's Europe which needs to be sustained because the failure to take account of landscapes in planning processes may cause an irreversible destruction of an important element of our societies' cultural and geographical heritage.

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<sup>3</sup> See footnote 2

10. Therefore, implementation of the Convention requires rigorous and careful interpretation which takes into account all the dimensions it covers, that is to say, social, economic and ecological. A hasty or simplified implementation of the Convention could lead to a superficial, and possibly even merely cosmetic, approach with detrimental effects on landscape.

11. The Congress points out that the institutional contexts in which landscape policies are implemented differ from one country to another and that the unequal development of democracy in European countries, the innovative methods that the Convention proposes and the lack of practical experience are all impediments to be overcome.

12. It accordingly considers that there is a need for wide-ranging exchanges of experience and for reinforced international co-operation to improve the quality of European landscapes. It also recommends promoting cross-border action on landscape, as landscapes form a continuum that does not end where it crosses a frontier.

13. Improvement of the landscape entails greater democratisation and, in particular, more public participation in decision-making processes. It also requires the development of teaching, training and awareness-raising measures targeting the public and, especially, elected representatives.

14. The Congress welcomes the desire of a growing number of local and regional authorities to take action regarding the landscape quality of their territories, as they have a key role to play in protecting, managing, developing and enhancing landscapes in areas for whose development they bear responsibility. This new dimension of public territorial action must be supported and assisted.

15. *Consequently, so as to guarantee the effective implementation and the optimum monitoring of the European Landscape Convention, the Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:*

a. give full recognition to the experience of local and regional authorities by ensuring that the monitoring system under preparation pays significant attention to their action on the landscape;

b. take into account the issues of citizens' democratic participation, of their involvement in local affairs and of their right to a better living environment when it renews the terms of reference of the steering committees in the heritage, landscape and spatial development sectors;

c. invite the Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage and Landscape (CDPATEP) to reinforce the involvement of civil society bodies in the Convention monitoring process.

16. *The Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers encourage member states that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the European Landscape Convention.*

17. *The Congress also invites the Committee of Ministers to call on member states when implementing the European Landscape Convention:*

a. to incorporate the concept of landscape into all national legislation and sectoral policies having a direct or indirect impact on the quality of the living environment;

b. to comply with all the principles laid down by the Convention, in particular the principle of subsidiarity as defined by the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No.122) and the Reference Framework for Regional Democracy.

18. In addition, *the Congress asks the European Union* to take greater account of the landscape dimension in its spatial development policies and to support the exchange of experience among local and regional authorities through purpose-built programmes. In this connection, it draws attention to the advantages of reinforced co-operation between the European Union and the Council of Europe, notably through joint programmes, with a view to fostering the implementation in the field of the principles enshrined in the Council of Europe's landscape and heritage conventions.

19. Lastly, *the Congress invites the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe* to support its efforts to foster greater participation by local and regional authorities in the implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

## C. EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

### I. Introduction<sup>4</sup>

1. Landscape is the privileged domain of the relationship between human beings and their natural and built environment and, more broadly, the territorial implementation of human activities as a whole. The questions posed by changing landscapes must be addressed from a sustainable development angle. Gradually, in all European countries, landscape has become a key issue for people's quality of life, and it is now the main means of linking up the requisite improvement of the everyday environment of all territorial communities in Europe with their needs in terms of economic development and long-term conservation of resources, natural habitats and biodiversity.

2. Local and regional authorities in Europe have a significant role to play in protecting, managing, developing and enhancing landscapes in the areas for whose development they bear responsibility. This new dimension of public territorial action on landscape, the innovative action suggested by this sector, as well as the incorporation of provisions for landscape into various legislations, constitute a promising way forward for regional planning.

3. This was the thinking light behind the development of the European Landscape Convention, which was instigated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and adopted in Florence in October 2000. It was drafted in response to the radical changes in European landscapes, by considering landscape as the major axis for spatial planning and sustainable development. In assigning to public territorial action the objective of protecting, managing and developing landscapes in such a way as to promote the quality of life of European populations, the Convention is perfectly in line with human rights, the Council of Europe's main field of action.

4. The Convention represents a major turning point in the social conception of landscape insofar as its conception of landscape differs from that which is often embodied in texts envisaging the landscape as an "asset" by qualifying it as "cultural" or "natural" and considering it as part of the physical environment. The new conception expresses the determination to comprehensively and radically face up to the subject of the quality of people's habitats, as a precondition for individual and social well-being,<sup>5</sup> in order to secure sustainable development, and as a resource for promoting economic activities. It identifies landscape as a product of interaction between the natural and cultural spheres, without prioritising either of these factors. It regards landscape as a common heritage necessitating collective responsibility.

5. Owing to their inherent dynamics, European landscapes give rise to fundamental challenges relating to their transformation, management, protection and development of resources and natural habitats, economic development and the exercise of democracy in the spatial development decision-making process.

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<sup>4</sup> The Congress Secretariat should like to thank Mr Yves Luginbühl, Director of Research at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), University of Paris I, France, for his valuable contribution to this report.

<sup>5</sup> In the physical, physiological, psychological and intellectual senses.

## II. Challenges of the landscape in public territorial action

### *Transformation of the European landscape: unprecedented evolution*

6. European landscapes are evolving on a scale unprecedented in history. While such transformation is inherent in the very existence of landscapes, the change inflicted on the earth's surface since the industrial revolution is incommensurate with those of any previous periods.

7. These transformations should not be considered as systematically degrading processes. They correlate to social, economic and technical improvements characterising the evolution of European societies and reflecting a social aspiration to modern comfort and facilities for communicating, moving, exchanging, and benefiting from the advantages of quality landscapes, that is, acquiring a degree of individual and social well-being. Nevertheless, landscape changes also have their drawbacks, which have not always been adequately assessed or addressed under specific policies tailored to the modern globalised world.

8. These processes have manifested themselves in several ways; by intense development around major conurbations and along coastal areas, a residential exodus from the urban centres, a boom in individual construction around small towns and villages, by a radical transformation of rural landscapes reflected in either simplification of landscape structures in easily farmable regions or dereliction of land and an increase in wooded areas in less accessible regions, by a considerable expansion in transport infrastructures, leisure amenities and energy production, and deindustrialisation of old mining and industrial regions, in particular.

9. These transformations are currently causing many problems in the day-to-day lives of the populations concerned, because of difficulties with housing and access to the job market or traffic in suburban landscapes, because of the loss of public services in disadvantaged regions, or owing to heavy demand for access to coastal landscapes, etc. Furthermore, these changes pose serious problems of sustainability of natural resources, habitats and biodiversity, and pollution of surface or ground water and air in the major urban centres.

10. Nevertheless, these changes can have beneficial effects on local and regional employment, contribute to economic development processes or create new landscapes. However, their effects on local life or ecosystems have not always been properly measured, leading to local conflicts which highlight malaise among local populations, social and regional discrimination, or else eliminating items which might be considered part of the local and regional heritage.

11. Moreover, the core landscape issue is no longer the need to protect sites which are considered highly exceptional, but rather those landscapes in which the vast majority of European populations live.

### *A demand corresponding to the need to improve quality of life and democracy, and to social concerns*

12. Landscape provides an opportunity to work from a grassroots democracy perspective. It responds to a pressing demand from European populations for a chance to influence their living environment and participate in the political decision-making process which transforms their everyday landscape. European citizens are expressing an increasing desire and need to participate in the development of their own living environment and to be heard by the world of experts and politicians.

13. The rising standard of educational qualifications at European level is a trend conducive to a more socially conscious and reflective society concerned about the quality of everyday landscapes and the processes of transforming resources and natural habitats. It encourages public debate on the quality of landscapes regarded as living environments for the populations.

14. The public demand for a role in development decision-making by the local and regional authorities also expresses a deep-seated social concern about the future of our planet and its resources; global processes of ecosystem transformation over which the inhabitants of a local and regional community have no influence prompt them to take action at the level of their everyday living environment.

### **III. The European Landscape Convention: an innovative initiative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe**

15. The Congress, convinced that landscape is a political topic of general interest and a common asset for all European populations, conceived the European Landscape Convention, the first international text linking landscape quality with the quality of life of populations throughout Europe. By July 2010, the European Landscape Convention had been signed by seven States and ratified by 32 States, figures which show a real interest in landscape in Europe.

16. The European Landscape Convention affirms that action on the landscape no longer solely concerns the most outstanding landscapes but also covers everyday landscapes and landscapes which are considered degraded, with a view to improving them and taking joint action to develop, manage and protect them. Accordingly, the Convention takes up the main challenges of landscape development concerning those landscapes in which the majority of the European population live, and it was the first text to put the populations at the centre of the problem by enabling them to contribute to the preparation of spatial development projects to improve the quality of their living territory.

17. Moreover, the European Landscape Convention assigns responsibility for its implementation to the public authorities closest to the populations concerned. Article 5 requires States parties to the Convention to establish procedures for the participation of local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of the landscape policies, while Article 4 explicitly refers to the principle of subsidiarity and the European Charter of Local Self-Government.<sup>6</sup> Thus, local and regional authorities can contribute to the development of democracy and mobilisation of forces in their territories with a view to sustainable development, and to the implementation of appropriate measures to improve landscapes in their territories at their levels.

18. The process of implementing the European Landscape Convention includes general and specific measures facilitating public action on landscapes and mechanisms for informing, training, educating and involving populations in decision-making on the protection, management and development of landscapes. The local and regional authorities can promote these general and specific measures by developing programmes at their specific levels and adapted to their means, by ensuring public consultation and participation,<sup>7</sup> involving the population right from the start of the process of elaborating landscape policies; or by devising interdisciplinary consultation mechanisms involving scientists, landscape practitioners, NGOs and elected representatives.

19. Landscape quality objectives for identified and qualified landscapes are the end result of the process of elaborating landscape action, which involves the above-mentioned process. Quality objectives must be defined on the basis of appraisal of the specific features and qualities of the sites in question, highlighting their dynamics and potential as well as taking into account social perceptions of the populations. These objectives contribute to the general landscape policy instruments at the different levels (national, regional, local, etc) and are formally implemented by means of urban and spatial planning and development documents, as well as by sectoral instruments. These documents can, in return, provide a specific contribution to formulating landscape quality objectives.

20. The local and regional authorities of Europe can enrich landscape appraisal and public action programmes by conducting exchanges of experience and methods with political institutions and authorities, at all the different levels.

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<sup>6</sup> European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS 122) Strasbourg, 15 October 1985.

<sup>7</sup> Convention on access to information, public participation in the decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters (Aarhus, 25 June 1998).

#### **IV. Responsibilities and initiatives of local and regional authorities**

##### *Landscape as a vital asset for the development of European local and regional authorities*

21. The local and regional authorities of Europe have the inestimable advantage of being institutions close to the European populations, and of being able to promote the quality of the landscapes which characterise their living environments and the areas in which they conduct their public action. In most cases they have statutory and political tools for acting, at their levels, to protect, manage and develop landscapes. They have geographical and political features which are particularly well-suited to implementing the European Landscape Convention.

22. They can also implement international legal texts in the fields of protecting and managing the natural and cultural heritage, spatial planning, local self-government and transfrontier co-operation. Thanks to decentralisation, which varies in degree from country to country, they can apply appropriate regulations to promote landscape protection, management and development. The action of local and regional authorities may vary according to the institutional context in which they operate. Some regions have enacted specific legislation to incorporate the principles of the European Landscape Convention into their internal legal systems and adopted new instruments for action, such as Catalonia (2005 Landscape Law) and Wallonia (inventories of landscape territories).

23. Landscape quality and diversity in the local and regional authorities of Europe are a shared resource for spatial development; they are vital factors for sustainable development based on a harmonious balance among social needs, the economy and the environment.

24. Landscape is a fundamental component of the people's living environment, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage and the basis of their identity. It therefore makes a major contribution to the general interest at the cultural, ecological, environmental and social levels, and is a resource conducive to economic activities, with appropriate measures promoting job creation by enhancing the qualitative image of their territories.

25. The landscape of the towns, cities and regions of Europe helps develop local and regional cultures and represents a vital part of the cultural and natural heritage of their territories and of the European continent, promoting human fulfilment and the consolidation of local, regional and European identities.

26. Public action to promote landscape quality, which is a major factor in people's quality of life, provides a response to people's desire for landscapes that live up to their aspirations and their wish to play an active role in transforming them. Landscape is a vital element in individual and social well-being; landscape protection, management and development entail rights and responsibilities for everyone.

##### *An increasing number of initiatives by the local and regional authorities of Europe*

27. In a number of countries, the entry into force of the Convention has led an increasing number of local and regional authorities to show their political and institutional commitment to the landscape issue by gradually adapting their frameworks for legal, administrative and technical action. The number of experiments in implementing the European Landscape Convention at local and regional levels is constantly growing, which shows the importance the authorities attach to the text.

28. Initiatives launched by local and regional authorities are usually based on a landscape action mechanism, which is implemented as set out below, drawing on the principles of the European Landscape Convention:

- landscape appraisal: identification, characterisation and qualification;
- definition of landscape quality objectives;
- implementation of these objectives via temporal management (special actions and measures and ordinary actions and measures);
- monitoring transformations, assessing the effects of policies, possibly redefining choices.

29. This process is also based on public consultation and participation methods, reinforcing the relationship between populations and their living environment and helping consolidate the identities of the populations who identify with the landscapes in question. While public involvement may lead to contradictions arising from the different value systems inherent in society, it must be considered primarily as an enrichment and an opportunity for validating appraisals, defining objectives and taking action.

30. Taking account of the social perception of the landscape and the aspirations of the general public in the choices of landscape protection, management and development involves exercising democracy in such a way as to accept differences and pinpoint shared features, until operational syntheses can be formulated. This provides an alternative to merely letting experts draw up hierarchical lists of landscape qualities.

31. Identification and social perception of landscapes are part of the knowledge required for formulating landscape quality objectives: it consists in locating landscapes which are of local importance because of various values assigned to them by the population, whether the landscapes are considered as transformed, stable or requiring special measures. The perceptions must be spatialised in order to ensure that the action on the landscape has practical, well-defined public support. Several local and regional authorities in Europe are trying out these methods (Pays de la Loire Region in France, Spanish Catalonia, Italian Piedmont, etc).

32. Landscapes can be identified (Article 6 of the European Landscape Convention) via an instrument to collect data on landscapes in their individual territories, identifying landscapes by defining their characteristics and the dynamics and pressures transforming them. Several French, British and Spanish regions, and Wallonia and Emilia Romagna have drawn up atlases or catalogues of landscapes or inventories of landscape.<sup>8</sup> The experiments associate expert work with public consultation, by means of surveys, public meetings, site visits organised by activity leaders or consultations via Internet networks and local associations. These methods help identify the specific values assigned to the landscapes by local populations and facilitate collective exchange of the results so as to foster sharing and recognition of the diversity of views on the part of inhabitants and the operators concerned.

33. Monitoring transformations and assessing the effects on the landscape of the measures implemented is vital for evaluating policy effectiveness. The landscape observatories and information systems which are developing in several European countries comprise appropriate cartographies compiling and linking up information on landscape features and dynamics, protected landscapes, elements of the local heritage, the policies which are being implemented, etc. They facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of these changes.

34. Developing political action strategies and landscape quality objectives constitute a vital stage in the landscape action process. These strategies help bring out scenarios for the future with short-, medium- and long-term objectives which take into account the current social values and development prospects of the territory concerned. They also prompt public debates organised by the local and regional authorities geared to promoting citizen contribution to political decision-making.

35. Landscape quality objectives enable us to define specific landscape protection, management and development measures, which may be combined or juxtaposed on sections of the territory concerned, since it is possible to protect one section of the territory while deflecting certain changes in other parts and conducting creative landscape redevelopment in the adapted areas. These measures can be discussed at public workshops, facilitating assessment of their social impact and launching a debate throughout the territory concerned. Methodologies cannot be transposed wholesale from one landscape to another, but must be adapted to suit the individual landscape, which is unique, with its own unique features.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf., in Great Britain, Landscape Character Assessment; in France, Système d'Information sur la Nature et les Paysages; in Catalonia, the Catalan Landscape Observatory, etc.

36. Some of these measures facilitate incorporation of the landscape dimension into the sectoral policies under their responsibility, e.g. housing or infrastructure policies; they can adopt measures to offset the effects of national or supranational sectoral policies, eg local replanting programmes to mitigate the consequences of removing hedgerows owing to the enlargement of farming plots; or measures to integrate housing and other buildings into the landscape, taking account of their characteristics and foreseeable medium- and long-term changes; or measures to develop renewable energies; or else densification provisions to prevent urban sprawl. thus favouring access to the requisite urban services and functions as well as leisure areas and preserved natural areas.<sup>9</sup>

37. The experiments conducted often have recourse to the expertise of scientists and landscape specialists, to devise action programmes and to initiate awareness and training activities with the authorities or the population, e.g. organising exhibitions or discovery trails. In all cases, the specialists and scientists intervene in close co-operation with local and regional stakeholders in order to encourage exchanges of knowledge and viewpoints.

*A need for improved cooperation and exchange of experience among territorial authorities*

38. Exchanges of experience and pooling of methods and tools suited to the landscape, which have already been going on for some years in Europe (cross-border landscape workshops involving France, Wallonia, Spain, Italy, England and Catalonia) facilitate not only exchanges but also, and above all, methodological improvements through joint consideration of the effects of the measures and methods implemented.

39. Local and regional authorities can also apply for the Landscape Prize, which the Council of Europe awards for exemplary achievements in implementing the fundamental principles of the European Landscape Convention.

40. The Congress, being convinced that the European Landscape Convention opens a new dimension of territorial public action, recommended on the occasion of its entry into force that local and regional authorities should engage in regular exchanges, and therefore suggested that they set up a European network<sup>10</sup> to promote knowledge and facilitate the exchange of experience.

41. The European network of local and regional authorities for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention (RECEP), which was set up in 2006, represents an opportunity in this respect. RECEP's activities, like those of other existing organisations embracing civil society stakeholders, and also research organisations and universities working for the landscape, make a positive contribution to promoting the Convention and foster its practical application.

42. European territorial authorities will benefit from acceding to the Convention and participating actively in the work, which must cover as many Council of Europe member states as possible, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

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<sup>9</sup> European Urban Charter II : Manifesto for a new urbanity.

<sup>10</sup> Resolution 178 (2004) and Recommendation 150 (2004) on the contribution of local and regional Authorities to the implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

## **V. Conclusion**

43. Landscape provides a means of guaranteeing the territorial and social cohesion which is vital for redistributing resources and ensuring energy savings for European populations and the local and regional authorities of Europe.

44. Implementing the methodological principles inspired by the European Landscape Convention and based on participation by all local and regional stakeholders and populations is part of an ongoing spatial development process helped along by the lessons gleaned from actual experience. This contributes to a new developmental approach involving all the energies of the European local and regional authorities, geared to improving individual and social well-being throughout Europe. It places the action to promote landscapes squarely within the sphere of human rights protection and the exercise of democracy.

45. The celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening for signature of the European Landscape Convention bears witness to the interest prompted by the landscape and its management and development, but this does not prejudge its actual implementation; as in the case of democracy, fine words must be backed by a constant effort to mobilise the relevant social and political forces.