

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 312 (2010)¹ Landscape: a new dimension of public territorial action

1. Landscape performs a significant role in the everyday 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 (ETS No. 176), 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 heighten exclusion and segregation. Landscape should also be approached as a resource and as a factor and 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.

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 its effective implementation.

10. In that regard, as it advocated for as soon as the Convention came into force, it welcomes the creation of the European Network of Local and Regional Authorities for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention (RECEP). 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, local and regional authorities should 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 protection, management and/or sustainable 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 to:

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

b. make landscapes – 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. improve social and political awareness of the importance of landscape, for the sake of sustainable development and of the identity of territories;

d. apply most especially the precepts set out in the European Landscape Convention as regards 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 about their own surroundings;

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

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

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

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

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 27 October 2010, 2nd Sitting (see Document [CG\(19\)14](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: D. Çukur, Turkey (R, SOC) and I. Linge, Sweden (R, EPP/CD).