

IMPLEMENTING THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

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Since its opening for signature in October 2000, 35 of the 47 Council of Europe member states have signed and 29 have also ratified the European Landscape Convention. Although it is not a Convention of the European Union, 24 of the countries which have signed and or ratified the Convention are European Union member states, leaving only three member states of the European Union have not yet even signed the Convention.

Austria, arguably the European country which 'lives' most from its landscape as a result of the high proportion of the GDP contributed by revenue from tourism, is one of these three. Other countries which have shown 'solidarity' with Austria in resisting signing the Convention include Russia, Andorra, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Monaco and Montenegro.

The Convention commits signatory states to a range of different actions. As a result the issue of implementing the Convention needs to be seen in a differentiated manner as it calls for actions in a range of policy and planning fields. Most signatory states and indeed many non-signatories can point to a number of areas in which they already comply with certain of its requirements.

Requirements of the Convention regarding implementation

Under Article 5 each Party to the Convention undertakes to carry out the following 'general measures':

- Recognise landscapes in law;
- Establish and implement landscape policies;
- Involve the general public in the formulation of these;
- Integrate landscape into planning and other policies affecting the landscape.

Under Article 6 parties to the Convention commit themselves to a series of 'special measures' relating to education and training, identification and assessment of landscapes, defining quality objectives and implementing policies. These include:

- Raising awareness of landscape issues within all parts of society;
- Training specialists in landscape appraisal, policy, protection, planning and management;
- Promoting relevant university courses
- Identify, analyse and assess its own landscapes with the participation of the public;
- Keep changes and their driving forces under review;
- Exchange European expert experience in carrying out the above landscape studies;

The third chapter of the Convention, encompassing articles 7, 8 and 9 covers matters of international cooperation in relation to landscapes. These include:

- Recommending the inclusion of landscape considerations in international policies and programmes;
- Providing mutual specialist assistance and exchange information regarding all matters relating to the Convention;
- Encouraging trans-frontier cooperation at all levels to implement joint landscape programmes.

To consider examples of the implementation of all these aspects of the Convention in relation to all the signatory states is clearly not realistic. For this reason the presentation focuses on examples of only four selected issues: awareness raising; landscapes identification, public participation and education, including the exchange of experts.

Awareness raising

In terms of awareness raising an interesting example of a comprehensive approach to this is provided by the ‘Landscape Observatory of Catalonia’ which has been established as a new institution in response to the Convention.

Landscape identification

Examples of work on landscape identification can be found in the Landscape Character Analysis carried out in the United Kingdom, as well as the work undertaken by ‘English Heritage’ in pioneering methods for ‘Historic Landscape Classification’

Public participation

Providing the necessary framework for the public to participate in the questions of identifying and assessing landscapes is something which has also been addressed in the United Kingdom. An example of this can be found in the work of ‘Scottish Natural Heritage’. Other interesting work which has been carried out by an NGO is that of ‘Common Ground’. Although this predates the Convention it provides useful models for how the public can be involved in questions of landscape assessment.

Education and the exchange of experts

Education and the exchange is something which is taking place both in the context of regular degree programmes in landscape architecture as well as through EU funded cooperation projects such as the LE:NOTRE Thematic Network in Landscape Architecture – in fact the only Thematic Network Project which is being coordinated from Austria.

Further reading

An overview of the status of implementation of the European Landscape Convention has been prepared by the Council of Europe: SYNOPTIC PRESENTATION OF THE STATUS OF LANDSCAPE POLICIES PURSUED BY THE MEMBER STATES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE -2006-2007- and can be found on their web site at the following address:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/Source/Conventions/Landscape/T-FLOR_2007_7rev.pdf

Countries sign, cities and regions in many cases need to implement, other implementation is in the fields of other institutions such as universities and international organisations.

Article 5 – General measures

Each Party undertakes:

- a.* 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;
- b.* to establish and implement landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning through the adoption of the specific measures set out in Article 6;
- c.* to establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies mentioned in paragraph *b* above;
- d.* to integrate landscape into its regional and town planning policies and in its cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape.

Article 6 – Specific measures

A. Awareness-raising

Each Party undertakes to increase awareness among the civil society, private organisations, and public authorities of the value of landscapes, their role and changes to them.

B. Training and education

Each Party undertakes to promote:

- a.* training for specialists in landscape appraisal and operations;
- b.* multidisciplinary training programmes in landscape policy, protection, management and planning, for professionals in the private and public sectors and for associations concerned;
- c.* 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.

C. Identification and assessment

1. With the active participation of the interested parties, as stipulated in Article 5.c, and with a view to improving knowledge of its landscapes, each Party undertakes:

- a.* i) to identify its own landscapes throughout its territory;
- ii) to analyse their characteristics and the forces and pressures transforming them;
- iii) to take note of changes;
- b.* to assess the landscapes thus identified, taking into account the particular values assigned to them by the interested parties and the population concerned.

2. These identification and assessment procedures shall be guided by the exchanges of experience and methodology, organised between the Parties at European level pursuant to Article 8.

D. Landscape quality objectives

Each Party undertakes to define landscape quality objectives for the landscapes identified and assessed, after public consultation in accordance with Article 5.c.

E. Implementation

To put landscape policies into effect, each Party undertakes to introduce instruments aimed at protecting, managing and/or planning the landscape.

Chapter III – European Co-operation

Article 7 – International policies and programmes

Parties undertake to co-operate in the consideration of the landscape dimension of international policies and programmes, and to recommend, where relevant, the inclusion in them of landscape considerations.

Article 8 – Mutual assistance and exchange of information

The Parties undertake to co-operate in order to enhance the effectiveness of measures taken under other articles of this Convention, and in particular:

- a.* to render each other technical and scientific assistance in landscape matters through the pooling and exchange of experience, and the results of research projects;
- b.* to promote the exchange of landscape specialists in particular for training and information purposes;
- c.* to exchange information on all matters covered by the provisions of the Convention.

Article 9 – Transfrontier landscapes

The Parties shall encourage transfrontier co-operation on local and regional level and, wherever necessary, prepare and implement joint landscape programmes.