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Digital Educational Geoinformatic Methodologies for Monitoring Landscape – GEOLAND

Intellectual Output 3

EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION POLICY OUTREACH

Output 3: Policy Outreach: Landscape Protection in Europe

Policy Recommendation Report

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Introduction

This report presents research on European, national and regional landscape policy developments in terms of landscape protection, management and planning.

The main target group for this report are higher education students from different countries. The report offers them examples of European, national and regional landscape policies and a template to use to collect information about policies in their own area in order to evaluate the rate of implementation of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) and how they comply with it.

The policy recommendations provide valuable results that can be used not only by researchers and academics, but also by public authorities and NGOs that have an interest in monitoring landscape and the impact of policies.

The case studies offered here allow students to compare the differences between the responses of different governmental organisations and based on detailed research to assess their effectiveness. In addition, the students will have the chance to evaluate the rate of implementation of ELC in their countries.

The GEOLAND Project

GEOLAND is an Erasmus Plus higher education project that aims to provide a unique opportunity to HE students to study how the European Landscape Convention (ELC) is implemented, adopted in different EU countries and illustrate how public authorities have adopted policies and measures at local, regional, national and international level for protecting, managing and planning landscapes throughout Europe. In practical terms GEOLAND partners have focussed their local activities on NATURA 2000 sites.

The aims of GEOLAND are to:

1. explore and develop educational procedures for the effective participation of higher education (HE) students in decision-making for landscape management, planning and protection of NATURA 2000 sites.
2. enable the uptake of novel ways to engage and empower HE students in environmental science and stimulate participatory decision-making. In particular, it will provide the opportunity to students, stakeholders including citizens interested in the definition and implementation of landscape policies to play an active part in setting sustainability indicators of desirable landscape quality objectives (Landscape Quality Objectives/LQO).
3. identify and summarize the environmental/cultural stratification in the examined landscapes through a sophisticated Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). On the basis of this Assessment, the capabilities of geospatial technologies (Earth Observation and Geographic Information Systems) and web-based GIS applications will be exploited.
4. encourage/introduce innovative pedagogies (citizen science), technologies and state of the art approaches to higher education studies in Europe, while addressing issues

of teaching and learning about Landscape as a multidisciplinary subject area in universities.

The goals of the GEOLAND Project are to

- promote the latest innovative digital tools and technologies for landscape monitoring in higher education.
- increase the comprehension about the European Landscape Convention among university students and specifically regarding their knowledge of landscapes (identification, analysis, assessment) and the definition of Landscape Quality Objectives.
- make progress towards a coordinated and targeted approach to the best use of geospatial technologies and relevant data and their fusion on a multidisciplinary level in educational landscape ecological services.
- support the participation of students in environmental monitoring and landscape management practices.
- synthesize and integrate readily communicable survey results to a wide audience, findings suitable for awareness raising and policy negotiations in Europe.
- highlight the role of training students in using available geoinformatics technologies.

GEOLAND seeks to awaken the spirit of the Convention, by producing five results:

I. An Educational Handbook for monitoring European Landscape
II. A Training Course - Web based GIS platform
III. Policy outreach activities
IV. An online gallery of student's work
V. A digital educational readiness assessment tool.

Report Methodology

Partners used a template survey (Annex 1) developed during the project to research and collect landscape policy information from Greece, Spain, Italy, Belgium and Bulgaria. Specifically, the trainees in collaboration with all the partners collected valuable information about the status of current landscape policy implementation in partner countries, leading to this policy recommendations document.

Following the publication of this report, the higher education partners will reach out to education policy stakeholders from their countries and communicate the results of the report to university students in order to demonstrate how policy reform takes place.

NATURA 2000 sites

Natura 2000 is a network of protected areas covering Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats (Figure 1). It is a large coordinated network of protected areas extending across all EU Member States, both on land and at sea. In 2017, Natura 2000 protected 27,312 sites covered approximately 18% of European Union land, with a terrestrial area of 787,606 sq. km and a marine area of 360,350 sq. km.

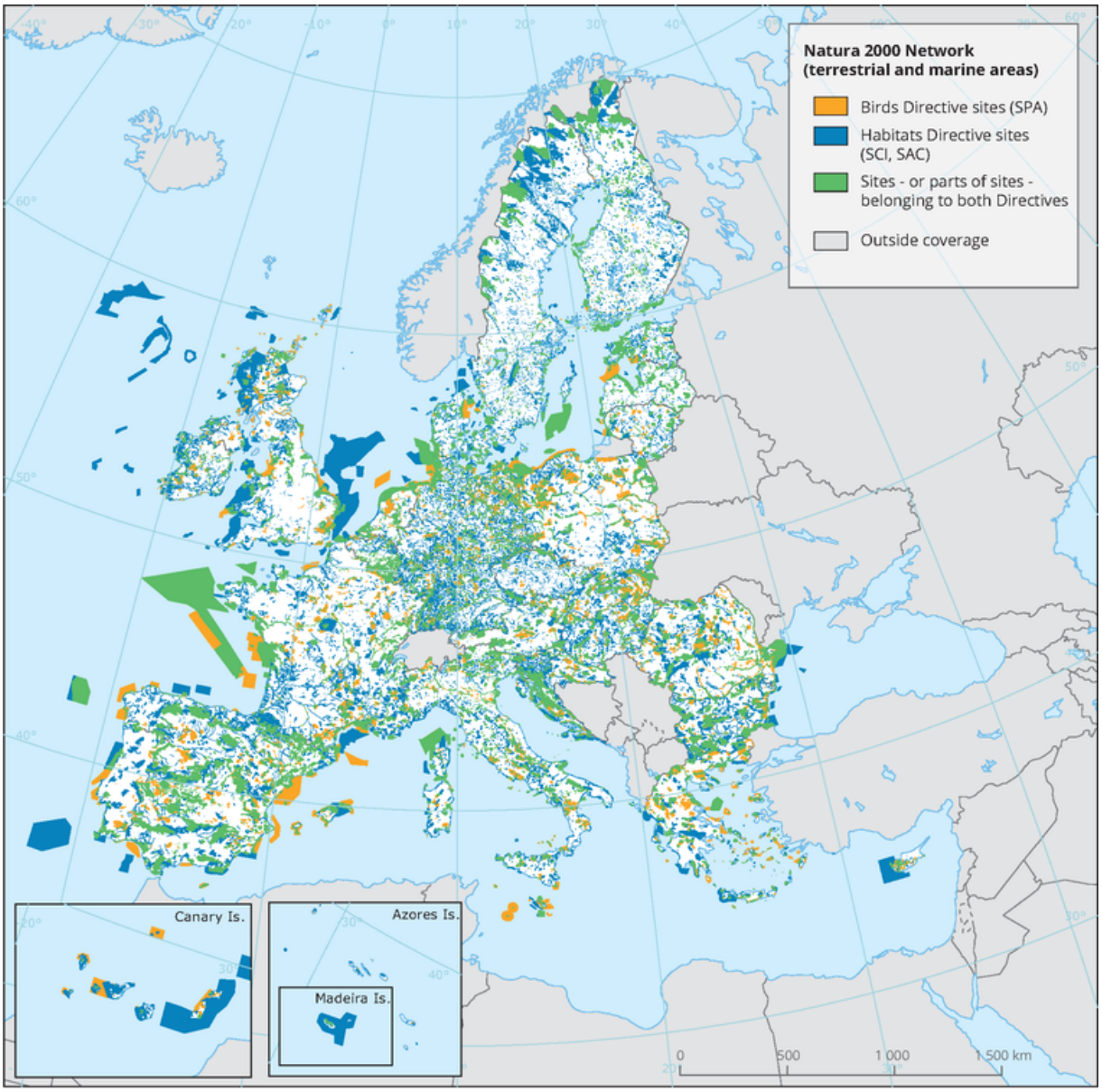

Figure 1: NATURA 2000 Network (terrestrial and marine areas) — European Environment Agency, https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/natura-2000-network-terrestrail-and

NATURA 2000 sites aim to provide protection to habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest. Conservation and management measures have to be established and implemented in order to ensure that the condition of the natural habitats and species' populations, which are of particular importance, are maintained and/or restored in order to ensure their survival. It is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas designated under the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive, respectively. Under NATURA 2000, human activities are not excluded, the aim is to ensure that the management of such sites is sustainable, both ecologically and economically.

The European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention is part of the Council of Europe's work on natural and cultural heritage, spatial planning and the environment. It was a response to the concern for sustainable development expressed at the Rio Conference in 1992 that restored landscape to a central role in planning.

The **European Landscape Convention** (ELC) (https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/the-european-landscape-convention) was developed by members of the Council of Europe as the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape, promoting landscape protection, management and planning across Europe, and to organise international co-operation on landscape issues. The Convention was adopted in 2000 and it became a legally binding treaty on signatory states in 2004.

According to Déjeant-Pons (2021), the European Landscape Convention addresses the Council of Europe's key challenges in the areas of **human rights, democracy and the rule of law.** The Council of Europe member states signatory to the Convention have declared themselves "concerned to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment", while considering the cultural dimension of the landscape. The concept of sustainable development is described as fully integrating the environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions. The Convention was therefore **also the first international treaty devoted to sustainable development, with the cultural dimension a particularly relevant factor.**

Article 1 of the Convention states, "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors". LIFESCAPE (2022) suggests the ELC introduces an extended definition that encompasses many different dimensions that exist in landscapes. These multiple elements include visual components, but also environmental and anthropogenic aspects like biodiversity, soil, water, climate, heritage and socio-economic components.

The Conventions covers a wide variety of landscapes, including those which are rural, urban and peri-urban areas, upland and lowland areas including land, inland water and marine areas. It concerns not only natural landscapes that might be considered "outstanding" but also those that might be thought of as "everyday" or even degraded. Landscape is therefore both the physical reality of the land and its features, its qualities and attributes but also the representation we make of it ,such as the empathy with have with the land and the feelings and emotions that it arouses in us.

The Convention encourages public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, regional, national and international level for protecting, managing and planning landscapes throughout Europe. It provides opportunities for a flexible approach to landscapes whose specific features call for various types of action, ranging from strict conservation through

protection, management and improvement to actual creation. It also proposes legal and financial measures at the national and international levels, aimed at shaping "landscape policies" and promoting interaction between local and central authorities as well as trans-frontier cooperation in protecting landscapes. It sets out a range of different solutions which States can apply, according to their specific needs.

The Landscape Convention therefore provides a definition of protection, management and planning of landscapes (Council of Europe, 2023). Protection of landscapes means the actions undertaken to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity. Landscape management concerns action, from a sustainable development perspective, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, in order to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes. Planning means strong, forward-looking actions that can be taken to enhance, restore or even create landscapes.

ELC Principles

The European Landscape Convention is a general European landscape protection framework for states. It establishes a set of general principles on which national, regional and local policies on landscape protection and international co-operation are directed.

It consists of the preamble and eighteen articles divided into four chapters.

- Chapter I - General provisions - Art. 1 - 3; objectives and scope; key definitions,
- Chapter II - National level measures - Art. 4 - 6;
- Chapter III - European co-operation - Art. 7 - 11; (basis for cooperation, international level measures, role of Committees responsible for monitoring implementation aspects),
- Chapter IV - Final clauses - Art. 12 – 18; procedures for adopting the convention.

The preamble to the Convention states that landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures and that it is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage. It is a key element of individual and social well-being and an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere.

Table 1 provides a summary of the Convention articles.

Table 1: Summary of the articles of the European Landscape Convention

Article	Summary
1	Defines key terms, such as: "Landscape" – an area perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

	"Landscape policy" – an expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes. "Landscape protection" – actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity. "Landscape management" – action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes. "Landscape planning" – strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes.
2	Describes the territorial and functional scope of the treaty, which covers: • natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas; • land, inland water and marine areas • landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes. It also states, with the exception of Article 15 that the Convention applies to the whole area of signatory states.
3	States the aims of the treaty, which are to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organise European co-operation on landscape issues
4	The responsibilities are described "Each party shall implement this convention in particular Articles 5 and 6 according to its own division of powers in conformity with its constitutional principles and administrative arrangements and respecting the principle of subsidiary, taking into account the European Charter of Local Self Government. Without derogating from the provisions of this Convention, each party shall harmonise the implementation of this Convention with its own policies."
5 and 6	Signatory states are committed to a number of actions which are designed to help ensure compliance with the overarching aims of the ELC. These include the need to recognise landscapes in law, to establish policies aimed at landscape planning, protection and management and the integration of landscape into other policy areas. These articles state the general and specific obligations under the Convention. They include: • establishing and implementing landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning • integrating landscape into their regional, town planning, cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies. • increasing awareness of the value of landscapes, their role and changes to them • promoting training and education in landscape policy, protection, management and planning • identifying and assessing the landscapes in their territories.
7-9	These articles are concerned with the international co-operation, assistance, exchange of the specialists and information, and encourage those concerned to prepare and implement joint landscape programmes through European co-operation in the consideration and implementation of landscape policies and programmes through providing support, exchange of information and identification of trans-frontier landscapes.

10	Establishes monitoring processes and procedures.
11	Addresses the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe. This is created to designate a lastingly effective landscape policy, implemented by a Parties territorial authority, which can serve as an example to other territorial authorities in Europe.
15	Allows signatories to specify areas to be excluded from the Convention.
16	Allows signatories permission to denounce the convention, at any time, by a notification addressed to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe

The Convention is thus an international legal framework for aimed at consolidating and sharing a long-term approach to landscape issues across the continent, so that policies take into account the common surroundings for present and future generations and address cross border needs. The landscape policies should be holistic, developed throughout the entire region, so that people can enjoy their surroundings in dignity and without discrimination.

Several legal and financial instruments are proposed in order to implement landscape policies (Landgrebe and Naumann, 2013). These include landscape planning, with the inclusion of the landscape in sectoral policies and instruments; shared charters, contracts, strategic plans, impact and landscape studies on, for instance, protected sites and landscapes, as well as resources and financing, landscape awards and special issues like trans-frontier landscapes, the creation of landscape observatories, centres and institutes and reports on the state of the landscape and related policies. To meet these requirements, human and financial resources should be designated by public authorities. These can either be specifically earmarked or else they can be derived from other sectors as landscape considerations should be introduced into their policies.

By signing and ratifying the European Landscape Convention, each country commits to implementing the following requirements:

- Legitimising landscape as an important part of the environment that surrounds people and their general cultural and natural heritage
- Setting and implementing a landscape policy that seeks to protect, manage and plan landscape
- Increasing public, organisational and governmental awareness about the value of landscapes, their role and changes
- Integrating landscape into their spatial and urban planning policies as well as their cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape (LIFESCAPE, 2022).

The states also agree 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. Recommendations to the Convention Guidelines provide a set of theoretical, methodological and practical guidelines intended for those public authorities who draw up and implement landscape policies on the basis of the Convention (Council of Europe, 2023a). These are supplemented by work undertaken to integrate the European Landscape Convention into plans, policies and strategies (Natural England, 2015), providing information that helps government departments, agencies, local government and other organisations to protect and manage landscapes better.

The Convention proposes a set of legal and financial measures at the national and international levels, aimed at shaping "landscape policies" and promoting interaction between local and central authorities as well as trans-frontier cooperation in protecting landscapes. Its provisions concerning the division of public responsibilities make an explicit reference to the principle of subsidiarity and local self-governance. Accordingly, the Signatory States undertake to involve local and regional authorities in the establishment and the implementation of landscape policies, landscape identification / assessment procedures, the definition of quality objectives and interventions in the areas concerned.

The Council of Europe (2023b) confirm the Convention has been open for signature by the member States of the Council of Europe, and for accession by the European Union, European non-member States and non-European States. According to their Web site (ibid) as of 1st January 2020 40 States had ratified the Convention (Table 2). The signatory States have declared themselves "concerned to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment", considering the cultural dimension of the landscape.

Table 2: Signatory States to the European Landscape Convention (2020)

Signed and ratified	Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.
Signed but not ratified	Malta
Neither signed nor ratified	Albania, Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, Monaco and Russian Federation

The Convention signatories undertake to integrate landscape in all their relevant policies and to establish procedures for public participation in the definition and implementation of landscape measures. They further agree to increase and promote awareness, training and education in landscape-related issues, to identify and assess landscape, to define landscape and quality objectives, and to adopt measures aimed at protecting, managing and/or planning the landscape.

Several Committees of Experts are designated by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe as having responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Convention. Their work is reported to the Secretary General and then to the Committee of Ministers.

Procedures for participation

Signatory States undertake to implement national level measures including:

- awareness raising
- training and education
- identification and evaluation

- setting landscape quality objectives; and
- implementation of landscape policies.

The Convention provides that each Signatory State should establish procedures for the participation of other interested stakeholders with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies. Indeed the Recommendations from the Committee of Ministers (2017), states that Member States should "guarantee the right to participation by the general public, local and regional authorities, and other relevant parties including non-governmental organisations, with an interest in the definition, implementation and monitoring of landscape policies".

Special measures such as awareness raising, training and education should be undertaken to implement landscape policies aimed at applying human rights and democracy with a view to sustainable development through landscape protection, management and planning. This is about increasing awareness of the value of landscapes, their role and changes to them, among civil society, private organisations and public authorities. The measures include promoting training for specialists in landscape appraisal and operations, as well as multidisciplinary training programmes in landscape policy, protection, management and planning, for professionals in the private and public sectors, and for the non-profit associations. School and university courses are promoted in the relevant disciplines, address the values attaching to landscapes and the issues raised.

Signatory States are expected to introduce specific legal, administrative, fiscal or financial instruments to fulfil the objectives outlined by the convention. Moreover, they agree to cooperate internationally by providing technical and scientific assistance and exchanging landscape specialists for training and information.

Implementing the European Landscape Policy at European scale

In general there is broad agreement that greater collaboration at different scales has been necessary to address landscape issues. According to Reed et al. (2023), integrated multi-level governance landscape approaches are required to engage the diverse stakeholder groups concerned in the multi-sectoral, social–ecological challenges involved in landscape governance.

Bynoe (2021) describes international Multi-Level Governance (MLG) as creating a stable hierarchy of political authority with decision-making processes that engages a multiplicity of politically independent but otherwise interdependent transnational actors – private and public – at different scales in more-or-less continuous negotiation, deliberation or implementation processes. In addressing landscape, the Landscape Convention has encouraged collaborative networks to spring up in response to the complex social-environmental challenges.

MLG also focuses on the increased participation and interaction of non-state actors in governance combined with the decentralization of the power from the central state. In terms of landscape, policy issues are complex multi-state problems where solutions need to be addressed through the linkages between social and ecological components.

According to Déjeant-Pons (2021), developments in agriculture, forestry, industrial and mineral production techniques and in regional planning, town planning, transport, infrastructure, tourism and recreation and, at a more general level, changes in the world economy, have in many cases led to the degradation, standardisation or transformation of landscapes. The Convention points out that many rural and peri-urban areas in particular have undergone and are continuing to undergo far-reaching changes and deserve great attention both on the part of the authorities and the public.

The main aim of the Landscape Convention is to promote the establishment of landscape policy in an integrated cross-sectoral co-operation at European level. The Convention confirms that landscape should be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape. Competent public authorities were tasked with introducing a general planning and development process by establishing a set of agreed general principles, strategies and guidelines that would encourage specific measures to be taken in different sectors, aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscape at different scales.

Competent Committees of Experts of the Council of Europe, set up under the statutes of the Convention, are designated by the Committee of Ministers of the Organisation, to monitor its implementation. The Work Programme of the Convention, adopted by the Council of Europe Conferences on the Convention and the Steering Committee in charge of landscape (Steering for Culture, Heritage and Landscape – CDCPP), is implemented by the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe, which transmits reports on the work carried out, and on the operation of the Convention to the Committee of Ministers.

The means of implementing landscape policies, or introducing a landscape dimension into sectoral policies, may be either regulatory or voluntary. Regulatory implementation depends on the legislation that exists and the type of objective; that is, it depends on the desired outcome in terms of protection, management or planning. Measures may be included in spatial-planning documents or provide for specific instruments. Voluntary implementation is based on agreements, charters, quality labels or contracts between the authorities and relevant stakeholders.

The Recommendation specifies that in order to implement landscape policies, a general planning and development process should be introduced. This should use specific instruments and provide for the landscape dimension to be included in sectoral instruments. It notes that instruments are already being employed in several countries and each can be a model for either creating new instruments or improving existing ones. The main categories are: landscape planning (landscape study plans included in spatial planning); the inclusion of the landscape in sectoral policies and instruments; shared charters, contracts and strategic plans; impact and landscape studies; evaluations of the effects of operations on landscape not subject to an impact study; protected sites and landscape; relationship between landscape and regulations concerning the cultural and historic heritage; resources and financing; landscape awards; landscape observatories, centres and institutes; reports on the state of the landscape and landscape policies; and the management of trans-frontier landscapes.

Different organisational and planning instruments are already being employed in many countries and they are shared through the Council of Europe so that each could be used as a model for either creating new approaches or improving existing ones. The main policy categories are landscape planning (landscape study plans included in spatial planning); the inclusion of the landscape in sectoral policies and instruments; shared charters, contracts and strategic plans; impact and landscape studies; evaluations of the effects of operations on landscape not subject to an impact study; protected sites and landscape; relationship between landscape and regulations concerning the cultural and historic heritage; resources and financing; landscape awards; landscape observatories, centres and institutes; reports on the state of the landscape and landscape policies; and the management of trans-frontier landscapes.

The Council of Europe has regularly held national or regional seminars and symposiums, workshops, meetings and conferences on the European Landscape Convention. They aim to foster debate on landscape and the adoption of policies for the implementation of the Convention. The purpose is to present the progress being made in different countries and contexts in the operation of the Convention, and to deal with practicalities related to its implementation. They provide a forum for debate on landscape and landscape policies, with the participation of government representatives, professionals, representatives of the population and the private sector. These events continue to provide opportunities for experts and working groups to meet and draft recommendations. They also address the thematic reports produced by Council of Europe experts and formulate proposals for action. Additionally, they consider proposals from the International juries for the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe. Council of Europe implementation workshops aim to present new concepts and achievements. They represent a forum for exchanging practices and ideas.

Catering for the landscape dimension in international policies and programmes has led to co-operation in respect of technical and scientific assistance and the exchange of landscape specialists for training and information sharing. The exchange of theoretical, methodological and empirical ideas between landscape specialists and learning from these experiences are of fundamental importance in ensuring the social and territorial relevance of the European Landscape Convention and in achieving its objectives.

European Landscape Convention Information System

An Information System has been established by the Council of Europe Landscape Convention (https://elcl6.coe.int/WebForms/Public_List.aspx). It gives online access to information about the main themes of the Convention, summary reports on national and regional policies for the implementation of the Convention and the work being carried out for its implementation. The information system is targets authorities, organisations or citizens seeking useful information on landscape policies. A Glossary has been produced in order to explain certain terms that are in use.

The Information Platform of the European Landscape Convention is intended to ensure the collection and sharing of information for monitoring of the implementation of the Convention in the various member States Parties. Reports setting out the landscape policies pursued in the member States has been produced on a regular basis and presented during the Council of Europe Conferences on the Convention.

Trans-frontier landscapes

Trans-frontier landscapes have specific provision under the European Landscape Convention where co-operation on managing these regions and encouraging the implementation of local and regional programmes. Article 9 of the European Landscape Convention identifies the importance of trans-frontier landscapes and their environmental, cultural, social and economic values. Local and regional authorities are encouraged to work together to draw up, where appropriate, joint landscape programmes based on the Convention. The organisations concerned are encouraged to inform others of their activities through the Council of Europe Information System and foster an exchange of experiences.

Landscape Award and International Landscape Day

A Landscape Award is provided by the European Landscape Convention to recognise highly effective policies or measures adopted by local or regional authorities or non-governmental organisations to protect, manage and/or plan their landscape These thus serve as examples to other territorial authorities. The award and special mentions are conferred every two years based on proposals by a jury and a Committee of Ministers' decision. There are four criteria for the Award, sustainable territorial development, exemplary value, public participation and awareness-raising.

Each year, the 20th October is celebrated as International Landscape Day of the Council of Europe when the opening of the Convention for signature takes place. On this occasion, political declarations are adopted, and events organised.

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