

Call for interest

Working group for the monitoring of the European Landscape Convention

If you are interested to participate or for all questions, please contact: [Francesco Moccia](#)

Introductory statement :

The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (of May 2000) and Congress (June 2000), the Committee of Ministers adopted the European Landscape Convention (ELC) on 19 July 2000.

The Convention was opened for signature to Council of Europe Member States on 20 October 2000 in Florence (Italy), at a ministerial Conference organised by the Italian Ministry for Cultural Assets and Activities and the Council of Europe Secretariat (Congress' Directorate), in co-operation with the Tuscany Region. After ten Council of Europe member States had deposited the instruments of ratification, the Convention entered into force on 1 March 2004.

As of 1st March 2009, 30 States had ratified the Convention: Armenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. Six States have signed but have not yet ratified the Convention, i.e.: Azerbaijan, Greece, Malta, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland. Finally, Albania, Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco and Russia have neither signed nor ratified the Convention.

The Convention has been either signed or ratified by 24 out of the 27 European Union Member States and it is in force in 21 of them.

The main and more innovative objectives of the Convention are:

- 1) to strengthen the awareness of the landscape issue all over Europe, to assure the higher standards of the living environment for all the people;
- 2) to promote active policy for the preservation as well as the recovery or the European landscape, protecting the valued sites of the human pressure and rehabilitating or qualifying the deprived environment;
- 3) to indicate the local community as the main actor to preserve and value local resources, able, indeed, in taking care of the landscape according to the *subsidiarity* principle and the *European Charter of Local Self-Government* (Article 4);
- 4) to recognise landscape as a constitutional element of the community identity at any level;
- 5) to overcome the distinction of spaces of landscape value and make the commitment to include in the landscape awareness the whole territory without distinctions of natural sites and cultural heritage:

Some international organizations are been created to promote the Convention in the different fields where it wanted to act.

Given the local perspective, the first network pointed to involve local governments. Local and regional authorities are building the *European Network of Local and regional authorities for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention* (RECEP-ENELC). Education was also considered the important tool to make a better landscape planning and management through better prepared professionals. The second network involves universities (*UNISCAPE*) *European Network of Universities for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention*. At the least, *CIVILSCAPE – Non-governmental organisations for the European Landscape Convention* has been constituted in Amsterdam – The Netherlands on 23 February 2008.

21 national European Governments modified their legislation to incorporate the principle of the ELC while other same incorporations are in the progress. The some principles are guiding planning practice at the different levels thanks to the cultural dissemination of them among professionals or regional and local governments.

Nonetheless the reception of the principle is occurring not without difficulties due to the different national and regional background in many fields ranging from the planning system to the cultural traditions.

For instance, the Italian national government updated the law devoted to the landscape protection: the Landscape Code (drafted by the Ministry Urbani) and modified in two following times. But a full reception of the European principles ha not yet happened. Central state authorities want to preserve the main power in the field and they are helped by the poor performances of some Regions and local governments, gaining the favour of preservation local movements and networks of cultural heritage advocates.

It is very difficult to move from the long standing tradition of regulatory preservation to active policy and strategic planning on the field of landscape reevaluation. In addition, programs aimed to this kind of objective are suspected of “commoditization”. Experiences of landscape restorations are lacking, neither guidelines nor pilot projects are been elaborated.

Some cultural and movements are opposing integration of landscape planning in the general territorial planning fearing a subordination of the landscape interest to more powerful development initiatives.

Why to promote an AESOP working group on this issue, given the many networks already existing (one of them involving Universities)?

The aim of the working group will be to compare the implementation of the ELC in European counties both in legislation and in the planning practice. To have exchanges in this field will be very helpful not only in learning better and more effective planning tools, but also to accelerate the process of an unified treatment of the landscape in Europe to rise its quality everywhere. There are associations as the IALE (International Association of Landscape Ecology) whose collective work has a great value in the specialized field. These contributions give important scientific advancement on the knowledge on central parts of the issue. Nevertheless, all sector contribution has to converge in a unified spatial planning. This one is our topic.

The already mentioned networks promoted by the Council of Europe, are building an interesting database and trying to connect their activity respecting their single autonomy in representation of different interests. The AESOP working group may have interesting exchanges with them, but, at the some time, may have a more independent and critical vision.

The observation point may be from the outside, less involved in the “operations”, to make more objective assessments.