



# NORDIC LANDSCAPES

and the European Landscape Convention



## **Nordic Landscapes and the European Landscape Convention**

***The landscape is the physical arena for our life and is important to us for both industry and recreation. On a daily basis we influence the landscape, and at the same time the landscape influences the people that live and work there. As such the landscape contributes to the content and quality of our lives.***

Despite considerable variation in geology and environmental conditions in the Nordic countries, there are many common elements in the landscape. There are also many similarities in our relationship to natural and cultural heritage, as well as in the way we manage this inheritance. This is related to the long common history between the Nordic countries and many similarities in how the society is organised in regards to democracy, culture, historical traditions and planning and building traditions.

### **The Landscape is always changing**

We all have a picture of the landscape of our childhood. This picture can be a fertile farming area, or a windswept fishing village, a dense forest area or an open mountain area, a station town, an industrial town or busy metropolis or a suburban area. Today that picture is no longer how we remember it. Life and activities have changed, as well as the landscape and the physical framework. Such changes influence us and can affect both our feeling of association and other aspects of the quality of our lives.

The landscape around us is exposed to increasing pressure for change. There are continually increasing challenges to efforts to manage and develop its values. This concerns our individual wishes and needs, as well as the considerations that the landscape with its natural and cultural values represents enormous resources to the society. Also in the future people will have to live in and from the landscape. Our challenge is to use the landscape as a resource in social development in a way that allows the preservation and development of its qualities in a long-term perspective.

***What happens?***

***Why does it happen?***

***What do we wish would happen – what should we avoid?***

***What can we do?***

### **European Landscape Convention**

The European Landscape Convention gives us a common framework for our work in answering these questions and solving the challenges we meet daily. An important goal for the Convention is to strengthen the individual's and local society's influence in protection, management and planning related to landscape.

The Council of Europe presented the European Landscape Convention in 2000. As of 15 November 2002, 24 countries have signed, among them Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Norway and 4 other countries have ratified the Convention. When 10 countries have ratified, the Convention takes effect.

The complete text of the Convention with explanatory report and additional information can be found on the Council of Europe's web pages

***<http://www.coe.int/EuropeanLandscapeConvention>***

### **What does the Convention concern?**

The Convention concerns all landscapes, both inhabited and uninhabited areas, cities and villages, fields and pastures, forests and mountains as well as coasts with islands and fjords. It encompasses the landscape in its entirety, our common daily surroundings as well as the especially valuable landscapes. It also includes landscapes that are in a negative development. The Convention emphasises the values that all types of landscape have for us as individuals, as well as the need for deliberate and long-term management.



### Who does the Convention affect?

The Convention affects us all! Politicians, civil authorities, sectors, businesses, organisations and schools – all citizens in the Nordic countries are important in relation to what happens in the landscape. The Landscape Convention emphasises that preservation, management and planning of landscapes gives both responsibilities and rights to everyone.

- Everyone should require landscape consideration where they travel and live, in all landscapes which have a meaning to them, and in their own and others activity.
- Everyone should be engaged in taking care of the landscape through political organs, interest organisations and in public debate.
- Everyone should be allowed to participate when experts, bureaucrats and politicians discuss landscape values and future development.
- Everyone should be allowed participation when local and regional authorities incorporate landscape and landscape considerations in planning and management.

### The Convention's general measures

The Convention requires that each country establish a framework for their landscape efforts:

- **Legal frameworks** must reflect that the landscape is an important element in people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity in their common cultural and natural heritage and a foundation for their identity.
- **Policy** for protection, management and planning of landscape must be developed and implemented.

- **Regional and urban plans and sector policies** that can have direct or indirect influence on the landscape must integrate landscape considerations.
- **Procedures** for participation from the public, local and regional authorities and other interest groups must be developed.

### The Convention's special measures

Within this framework the concrete and goal oriented work on the landscape topics is linked to efforts for securing:

- **Awareness** about landscape among the public, business and public authorities.
- **Competence** for experts in the private and public sectors as well as in the educational sector.
- **Knowledge** through mapping and evaluation, with the participation and co-operation of the public, managers and experts.
- **Objectives** for quality in specific landscapes that are formulated in processes where both the public and managing authorities participate.
- Necessary **instruments** to reach the goals.



#### **What are we doing in the Nordic countries?**

The Nordic countries co-operate on the Landscape Convention as part of the co-operation under the Nordic Council of Ministers. A project group under «The Working Group for Nature, Outdoor recreation and Cultural Environment » has established areas of emphasis for the Nordic countries further efforts with the convention. The report «Nordens landskap» will be available at: <http://www.norden.org>



#### **Information**

*In each country the following agencies have authority and a special responsibility for landscape considerations and for efforts in regards to the convention:*

Denmark:

Danish Forest and Nature Agency (Skov- og Naturstyrelsen)

<http://www.sns.dk>

Finland:

Ministry of the Environment (Miljöministeriet )

<http://www.ymparisto.fi>

Iceland:

The Directorate for Environment (Umhverfisstofnun)

<http://www.umhverfisstofnun.is>

Norway:

Ministry of the Environment (Miljøverndepartementet)

<http://www.md.dep.no>

Sweden:

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency  
(Naturvårdsverket)

<http://www.naturvardsverket.se>

and The National Heritage Board  
(Riksantikvarieämbetet)

<http://www.raa.se>

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