

The Nafplion Statement on Greek Landscapes

The experts, who participated in the international workshop on 'Reclaiming the Greek Landscapes' in Nafplion on 17-20 May 2010, have agreed on the following positions concerning the protection, management and conservation of the landscapes of Greece.

Basic positions

1. Landscapes, as perceived by people, are geomorphological, ecological and cultural areas with multiple values –aesthetic, symbolic, experiential, etc. – and vital functions –natural, productive, social, cultural, etc.– that result from and sometimes determine their dynamics.
2. Landscapes have been, continue to be, and will be shaped by the diachronic interaction between natural processes and human interventions. Thus, landscapes are also affected by the daily activities of human beings and contribute decisively to their standard of living, quality of life, health and spiritual well-being. They are an important part of humanity's common heritage and future.
3. The European Landscape Convention can assist in the identification and stewardship of all landscapes, the special and the everyday, and applies to the entire territory including the sea and the cities. As this Convention focuses on the relationship between people and landscapes, the participation of all those involved is a requirement, through an effective participatory system carefully balancing the needs and views of local people, resource users, specialists and other stakeholders involved in activities impacting upon the landscape.
4. Greece encompasses a large diversity of landscapes as a result of its geographical position, its climate, its geomorphology, its fauna, flora and biodiversity, its history and culture, and habitation patterns and land-uses since ancient times. These landscapes – some of which are unique at a global scale– constitute a large part of the country's natural and cultural capital and are a key factor in promoting the country's natural and anthropogenic identity and image.
5. Nowadays, however, many Greek landscapes are critically threatened by deterioration and/or destruction due to insensitive and thoughtless human interventions, resulting from non-sustainable exploitation of natural resources, inadequate spatial land use planning and control, and more generally of short-sightedness and ignorance, which in turn will affect the well-being of future generations, and constrain their choices.
6. Understanding the natural and cultural evolution of Greek landscapes would assist in a better appreciation of their values and functions and ensure that in the future changes respond to society's evolving needs and values, and not only those of individuals.
7. Greek landscapes should be protected, planned, enhanced, managed, and (if practicable) restored by a range of mechanisms including statutory and non-statutory designations and policies, monitoring procedures and the use of sustainability indicators. The European Landscape Convention could provide guidance for landscape management and enhancement.

Actions required

8. After the ratification of the European Landscape Convention by the Greek Parliament in February 2010, public authorities, academic institutions and non-governmental organisations are required to increase awareness, thus organising concerted campaigns for making this Convention known and understood by the Greek public, and visitors.
9. The Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, being the authority responsible for landscapes, as well as the public administration in general, is urged to proceed with the preparation of the necessary measures, regulations and structures for carrying out the obligations that Greece has undertaken through the European Landscape Convention. This should be done in conjunction with the provisions of national, European and international legislation. An important step would be the codification and harmonisation of legislation affecting landscapes.
10. Future landscape policies and practices in Greece must be integrated in the overall efforts for sustainable development of the country, by linking landscape management with other social, cultural, political and economic agendas, including climate change.
11. With regard to physical and urban planning, landscape issues should be taken into account during all relevant processes, especially in spatial and regulatory planning. Similarly, landscape issues should be incorporated in environmental planning regimes. Thus, every Environmental Impact Assessment, Natural Environmental Protection Study and Strategic Environmental Assessment Study should be required to include an explicit statement of effects on landscape quality.
12. Guidelines for integrated approaches that recognise the full range of the unique qualities identified in Greek landscapes need to be produced. Such support mechanisms could assist in adopting planning-based approaches to development in order to respond to the locality of landscapes and promote sustainable development.
13. Relevant public, private and social institutions are encouraged to contribute actively by launching actions that would lead to the perception, recognition, understanding, assessment, and management of all Greek landscapes and the designation of some, where appropriate, under a protection status. Better understanding would ensure consistency between landscape management initiatives and sustainable development decisions.
14. Such processes would be facilitated by the establishment of a Greek Landscape Observatory, as already begun by Professor Costis Hadjimichalis on: <http://www.greekscapes.gr/>. Its main tasks would be inventorying landscapes and monitoring their changes, as well as disseminating information on good and bad practices. The Observatory should act as a clearing house of information, making its research findings available by disseminating them to all educational institutions, official agencies and people at all levels. It may also explore possibilities for the establishment of a pan-European programme for a Master's degree in Landscape Conservation and Management.

15. Higher education institutions and research centres are called upon to strengthen their programmes on Greek landscapes, so that corresponding knowledge can be broadened and enriched, research results fully documented, and the scope and effectiveness of any intervention objectively assessed. In this context, trans-disciplinary co-operation between landscape researchers and practitioners from various fields should be encouraged.
16. The Greek State is encouraged to establish the necessary preconditions for the broadest public participation in all phases of planning and implementation of landscape policies and practices. Contributing to this task, civil-society organisations (in particular environmental ones) are invited to include landscape conservation among their activities, strengthening public awareness.
17. Finally, it should be recognised that landscapes are a public good and their protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone.

Nafplion, 19 May 2010