

Climate change and renewable energy: challenges of the modern world

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Climate change, hardly noticeable a few decades ago, has been accelerating to the point of becoming one of the most serious global issues. Fossil energy systems, which generate the majority of greenhouse gas emissions, are widely recognised as the main drivers of climate change. This has a growing impact on biological and physical systems and affects basic access to water, food production and other economic sectors, as well as the environment. It also causes increasingly frequent natural disasters with social, economic and environmentally damaging impacts. Curbing the speed of climate change and limiting the extent of its negative impacts requires significant initiatives in many public policy areas and also presupposes major changes in the functioning of society.

The Council of Europe Landscape Convention aims to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organise international cooperation on landscape issues.¹ Regarded as the first sustainable development convention, it is a major contribution to achieving the Organisation's objectives concerning human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Its member States' signatories of the Convention have expressed their concern to achieve "sustainable development" based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment, considering the cultural dimension of territories. The issue of climate change and the new energy paradigm is an integral part of the Convention's concerns.²

In subscribing to the principles and objectives of the Convention, the Parties undertake to adopt a series of measures. They are in particular required to:

- establish and implement landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning; and
- integrate landscape into regional and town planning policies and into cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as into any other policies which may have a direct or indirect impact on landscape.

The acceleration of climate change and the need for a new energy paradigm call for urgent territorial development initiatives. Policies based on this "landscape approach" can help. With regard to facilitating a change of energy paradigm, the landscape policies have to contribute:

- to the promotion and use of renewable energy sources, while ensuring environmental sustainability and social equity,
- to the adaptation of transport systems, to the good management of mobility needs, and to the implementation of energy-efficient measures in the design of buildings and urban settlements; and

¹. Council of Europe Landscape Convention / Official website (coe.int) - To date, 40 Council of Europe member States have ratified the Convention.

². Proceedings of the 8th Council of Europe Meeting of the Workshops for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention entitled "*Landscape and Driving Forces*" (Malmö/Alnarp, Sweden, 8-9 October 2009), Session 1- "Climate change and the new energy paradigm", European Spatial Planning and Landscape Series, 2010, n° 93 – <http://www.coe.int/web/landscape/publications> - General conclusions in the appendix of this contribution; Report "Landscape and wind turbines", in: *The Landscape Dimensions*, Council of Europe Publishing Editions 2017.

– to optimisation of the economic benefits to be reaped in the territories from these new approaches, ranging from research and development activities to the widespread implementation of new practical solutions tailored to each territory.

To minimize the negative effects of climate change, these policies should:

- intensify preventive measures against potential damage from natural disasters (floods, drought, storms, landslides...);
- develop structural measures aimed at facilitating the adaptation both of productive systems (agriculture, forestry, tourism) and urban settlements;
- strengthen the protection of natural resources and biodiversity, where potentially affected by climate change.

These policies should integrate mitigation and adaptation measures into development strategies at local, regional and national as well as in decision-making at all levels.³

It is necessary to promote the recognition of the responsibilities of people to play an active role in the processes of acquiring knowledge, taking decisions and managing the quality of the places where they live.⁴ Their involvement in decisions to take action and in the implementation and management of these decisions over time is regarded not as a formal act but as an integral part of protection, management and planning procedures.

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³. Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Guidelines for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention is intended for Parties to the Convention which wish to draw up and implement a landscape policy. Nine general principles of the “landscape approach” are designed to provide guidance on some of the fundamental articles of the Convention: consider the territory as a whole; recognise the fundamental role of knowledge; promote awareness; define landscape strategies; integrate the landscape dimension in territorial policies; integrate landscape into sectoral policies; make use of public participation; achieve landscape quality objectives; develop mutual assistance and exchange of information. See also the Landscape Award Alliance of the Council of Europe (<http://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/landscape-award-alliance>) and Council of Europe, Moscow Declaration on “*Future challenges: sustainable territorial development of the European continent in a changing world*” adopted by the Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning at the 15th Plenary Session of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT) (Moscow, Russian Federation, 9 July 2010), European Spatial Planning and Landscape Series, 2012, n° 94 – <http://www.coe.int/web/landscape/publications>.

⁴ Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons, *Humans Rights and the Environment*, Council of Europe Publishing 2002, 341 p.