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## Landscape quality and sustainability indicators

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### Abstract

Landscape is the result of the way that different components – the natural component of a territory and human activity – interact over time, giving landscape a specific identity. The landscape forms a link between a geographical area and the social aspects of the population. The gastronomic tradition and typical products give landscape its value of uniqueness. Landscape, however, is subject to considerable pressure due to both natural and human activity. The goal is to limit, if not stem, the risk or damage. Landscape indicators are very important tools. They identify resources, qualities, and criticalities of a particular area.

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### 1. European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention has defined landscape as follows: "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" (art.1 point a). This definition emphasizes the fact that landscapes change over time, as a result of nature and man's actions. The population takes an active role in the management and planning of landscape, which has an important role as element of the environment and, therefore, of life. Landscape evolves over time due to human activity: as this implies "cultural" influences, landscape can be identified as a combination of natural and cultural assets. Enhancing diversity is the desirable goal: diversities should be safeguarded and enhanced by not freezing the landscape that continuously

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changes but preserving and enriching them, thus maintaining their historical memory as their essential component. The European Landscape Convention applies to the entire territory of the Parties and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It includes land, inland water, and marine areas. It also includes landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes (art.2). Therefore, landscape is no longer seen from a purely aesthetic point of view, as a synonym of natural beauty, but it takes on a deeper meaning at a cultural perception level, becoming the symbol of a population's identity. Feeding the world with an eye to the future is a prerogative of our society; this means to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs.

## 2. Landscape indicators

Morphological, environmental, and cultural characteristics of a territory constitute the base of a series of indicators that can help choose and implement local politics for the safeguard of landscape quality.

Landscape indicators are very important as they identify resources, qualities, and criticalities of a particular area and act within the four (ecological, social, cultural, and institutional) contexts of sustainability: they should not be used alone but in a broader context. They are a wonderful tool of assessment and monitoring, mirroring the model DSIR (Driving force- State- Impact- Response). (Vallega 2009)

Benchmark indicators, proposed by Adalberto Vallega concern tangible and intangible aspects of the landscape and are grouped in chains. (Vallega 2009)

The table below summarizes the nine Vallega's chains and describes their function.

fig. 1

chain	indicators	characteristics	function
<b>biological quality</b>	1. loss of species 2. richness of species 3. endangered species 4. protected species 5. environmentally sensitive areas	environmental indicators to use in introductory phase	risk evaluation
<b>environmental quality</b>	1. transparency air 2. transparency of water bodies 3. protection of the caves 4. forest fires	quality estimation	risk evaluation
<b>urban quality</b>	1. wellness acoustic 2. spaces rural pedestrian 3. revitalization historic spaces 4. enhancement urban green	indicators to evaluate how urban sprawl has contributed to the transformation of the territory	risk evaluation
<b>Culture tangible</b>	1. protection of the Archaeological Heritage 2. enhancement of industrial 3. creating cultural trails 4. protection UNESCO sites	include indicators that relate to the material signs that culture imprints on the territory connoting the landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• richness</li> <li>• valuing</li> <li>• development</li> </ul>
<b>intangible culture</b>	1. viewpoints 2. places of Taste 3. places heterotopic 4. places of events 5. places of personality	indicators that lead to the symbolic value of places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• membership</li> <li>• richness</li> <li>• enhancement</li> <li>• development</li> </ul>
<b>aesthetic quality</b>	1. value of the skyline landscape 2. safeguarding the terraced landscape 3. landscapes injured 4. pressure of parking	indicators to monitor the extent to which the infrastructure as a pressure factor	risk evaluation
<b>institutional action</b>	1. efficiency of the measures referred to landscape planning	indicators to monitor the extent to which	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• planning</li> <li>• development</li> </ul>

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