

# **LP3LP**

## Landscape Policy for the Three Countries Park

**Targeted Analysis 2013/2/21**

**Final Report | 31/12/2013**  
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*Executive Summary*



This summary presents the final results of a Targeted Analysis conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2013 Programme, partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

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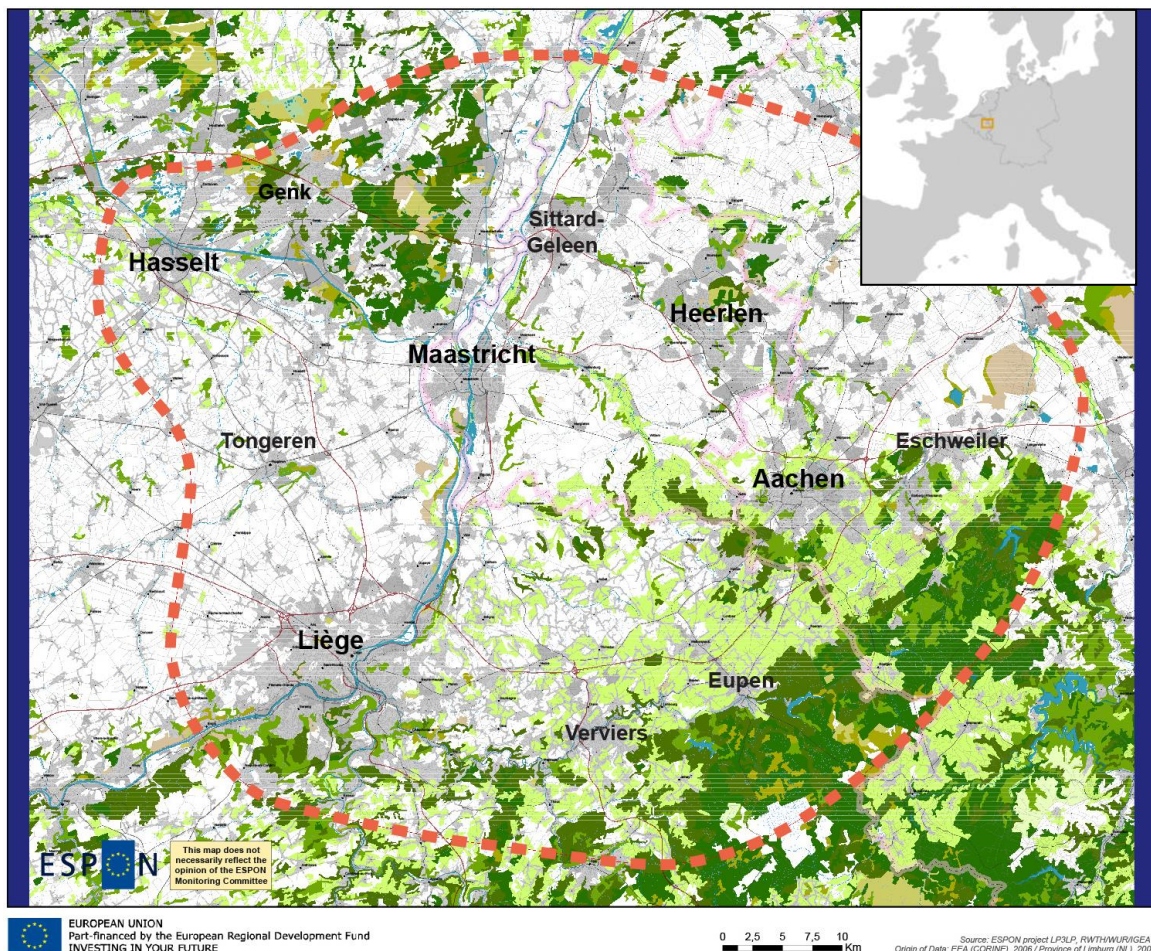
## Abbreviations

3LP:	Three Countries Park (Drielandenpark/Parc des Trois Pays/Dreiländerpark)
CBPMR:	Crossborder polycentric metropolitan region
ELC:	European Landscape Convention
EAFRD:	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
ERDF:	European Regional Development Fund
ESPON:	European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion
EU:	European Union
LIFE:	L'Instrument Financier pour l'Environnement
LQO:	Landscape quality objectives
LP3LP:	Landscape Policy for the Three Countries Park
PES:	Payments for ecosystem services

# 1. Introduction Executive Summary

Currently, both European as well as regional policy makers are encountering a similar question: How to increase cohesion across borders and jurisdictions – not primarily through standardization, but rather through investing in diversity across scales with place-based and complementary approaches. Moreover, following the Great Recession in 2007, needs for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth are in an explicit focus. The special subject of the LP3LP project (Landscape Policy for the Three Countries Park) is to find out, how landscape – respectively landscape policy – can serve such a wide range of objectives. Seen as an apt “cross-border testing ground” for improving the effectiveness of European policy, the ‘Three Countries Park’ (3LP) is used as a case study.

Being an ongoing cooperation for cross-border landscape development, the 3LP is a stakeholder initiative that started in 1993 as a concept focusing on the rural center area within the trinational Euregio Meuse-Rhine (countries BE-NL-DE). Today, the 3LP represents a regional “framework for cooperation” (no official administrative status), with a loosely defined project area extending around the outer edges of the city ring Maastricht – Hasselt – Genk – Sittard – Geleen – Heerlen – Aachen – Eupen – Verviers – Liège.



**Map 1** Approximate extent of the 3LP project area

The LP3LP project is to provide policy support for both the 3LP stakeholder community and the EU level as well as for other European cross-border regions. Starting with framing landscape and concepts for landscape policy, the project places the 3LP in its dynamic European context. It identifies the potential effects of EU policies, compares it with other CBPMR (Cross Border Polycentric Metropolitan Region) and takes stock of its territorial situation (Main Report Chapter 2). This information is used to formulate and establish a shared vision on the future of landscape in transboundary collaboration resulting in a cross-border landscape perspective. The landscape perspective serves as a framework for regional (cross-border) policy aiming to preserve and develop specific core qualities on the 3LP landscape in a sustainable and place-based way (Main Report Chapter 3). Via reinterpretation of the 3LP as a “European cross-border landscape partnership” for high-quality landscapes and via four thematic strategies, the interface between the landscape perspective and EU policy is strengthened. Additionally, recommendations at EU level provide insight on how European policies can be harnessed to develop a cohesive and diverse European landscape that in turn can contribute to achieving overall European objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Main Report Chapters 4 and 5).

## **2. Analytical results**

The concept of landscape diverges according to different cultural and national contexts: a first notion rather hinting towards misunderstandings or even conflicting interests within cross-border areas. However it is shown how the European Landscape Convention (ELC) of the Council of Europe offers a consensus on the topic by considering landscape a perceived area and part of physical space forming people’s living environment. Landscape can thus be understood as the distinctive physical and perceivable expression of ‘territory’ and ‘environment’.

Concepts also vary regarding the approaches towards landscape policy. The ELC requires the formulation of “landscape quality objectives” (LQO) based on public aspirations, valid in the case of 3LP for Belgium and the Netherlands as signatory states. The consideration of “landscape functions” within spatial planning has a long political tradition in Germany and the Netherlands. Landscape functions partly overlap with the concept of “ecosystem services”, which has been recognized by the EU biodiversity strategy. It remains a challenge to combine these different political agendas within one cross-border landscape policy. However, it is shown how the ecosystem services approach – to be linked with (environmental and) landscape quality objectives – can be used as a unifying theme for demonstrating non-commodified value-creation in landscapes enabling smart, sustainable and inclusive regional development across borders, and for developing ‘quality landscapes’ as a shared political goal (Main Report Chapter 2.1).

The 3LP itself is characterized by a high diversity of attractive landscapes influenced by significant European epochs. The area is located at the transition from Western Europe’s middle mountain ranges to its plains being part of the Meuse river basin crossed by the European loess band. Throughout its history, the area has been a major crossing point of different economic systems, their transformations (esp. industrialization in the 19<sup>th</sup>

century), while having also provided major physical linkages (e.g. the Roman Via Belgica as a road or the Meuse River as a waterway). Together with a dynamic history of changing borders, shifting several times between political unifications and fragmentations, gives the 3LP area a touch of being ‘the heart of Europe’, a regionally shared characteristic – rather special for a cross-border area. However, the 3LP also represents a typical cross-border situation, resulting from relatively young national borders. On the one hand, the borders can be hypothesized as a major cause for cultural diversity (e.g. three languages are spoken) and a plurality of viewpoints (e.g. regarding landscape). On the other hand, they have until recently produced hinterland effects and are responsible for today’s divergence of bureaucracies, including those related to landscape and spatial planning (Main Report Chapter 2.2.1).

Besides considering the past and its natural-cultural landscape heritage as a rich source of European and cross-border identity, anticipating on-going trends and potential future impacts is important for a landscape policy. Major territorial dynamics affect European regions and their landscapes. The analysis of a set of previous ESPON studies reveals that the example of the 3LP is especially under the influence of four typical European dynamics: ‘Intensification of land use and economic diversification’, ‘Climate change mitigation and adaptation’, ‘Demographic change and territorial attractiveness’ and ‘Suburbanization and polycentric development’. This broad variety of issues has been determining the proposals and recommendations within the LP3LP project development (Main Report Chapter 2.2.2).

Already reacting on such dynamics and their resulting challenges, the EU policy context on the one hand poses high requirements to landscapes, while on the other hand offering support to regional and local policy. While the overarching growth agenda of the “Europe 2020 strategy” generally places high site and resource demands on landscapes, the “Flagship Initiative for a Resource Efficient Europe” and the “Common Strategic Framework” for the structural funds partially, and the “Territorial Agenda 2020” explicitly support landscape values. By additionally considering policy objectives of an abundance of sectoral policies, a comprehensive list of ‘landscape demands’ in relation to landscape functions and ecosystem services is developed. These ‘landscape demands’ represent an intense spectrum of both conflicting and synergistic political requirements to European landscapes. Regarding support by EU policy, however, no direct promotion of integrated landscape development is provided: Cross-border areas that want to make use of EU support for balancing a multiplicity of territorial interests and impacts via shared landscape approaches have to rely on legal, financial and communicative instruments from different sources. Suitable instruments are available in the fields of sustainable resource management, biodiversity, and research & innovation as well as from cohesion policy and related regional, rural and territorial cooperation programs; to a lesser extent in the field of cultural heritage. Despite partially available EU support, landscape approaches remain highly dependent on direct support by regional governments, market actors, their representative organizations and the public (Main Report Chapter 2.2.3).

Comparing the 3LP with other CBPMR hints as to which European cross-border regions could potentially exchange experiences and cooperate in future with the 3LP. Three among a total of ten CBPMR investigated (Wien-Bratislava/AT-SK-HU, Lille metropolitan area/FR-BE, Greater Region/LU-DE-FR-BE) are also more or less explicitly applying

landscape as an integrative concept for addressing European territorial dynamics, especially in response to land use intensification and suburbanization. Measures are often twofold: Open areas are protected, while at the same time economic and leisure activities are initiated or supported in accordance with the rural profile of the region (Main Report Chapter 2.2.4).

Due to their specific territorial characteristics, the 3LP and other CBPMR may serve as innovative testing grounds for landscape-driven territorial development that is aligned with Europe and EU policy – in order to strengthen cohesion, while simultaneously enhancing diversity with place based approaches. On the one hand, differences between formal planning systems as well as to the relations to landscape and the ELC are highlighted as a typical cross-border characteristic. On the other hand, the example of the 3LP seems special due to an active and relatively permanent tradition of initiating or collaborating with project-based approaches that make use of existing organizations and their expertise – dealing with landscape related topics (e.g. water management and habitat development). Hence concluding for the local situation of the 3LP area, however more broadly also for other CBPMR, the following directions of landscape-driven policy development are emphasized (Main Report Chapter 2.2.5) and addressed by the LP3LP policy proposals at regional 3LP level (Main Report Chapters 3 and 4):

- **Make use of existing core competences and interests**
- **Enable critical mass for synthesis**
- **Consider approaches via the integration of market actors**

Concluding the analysis in relation to the EU level, three dimensions of landscape are hypothesized to show a high potential for EU policy development – in order achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and territorial cohesion via place-based approaches (picked up on Page 15 with specific recommendations):

- **Landscape as asset**
- **Landscape as place**
- **Landscape as common ground**



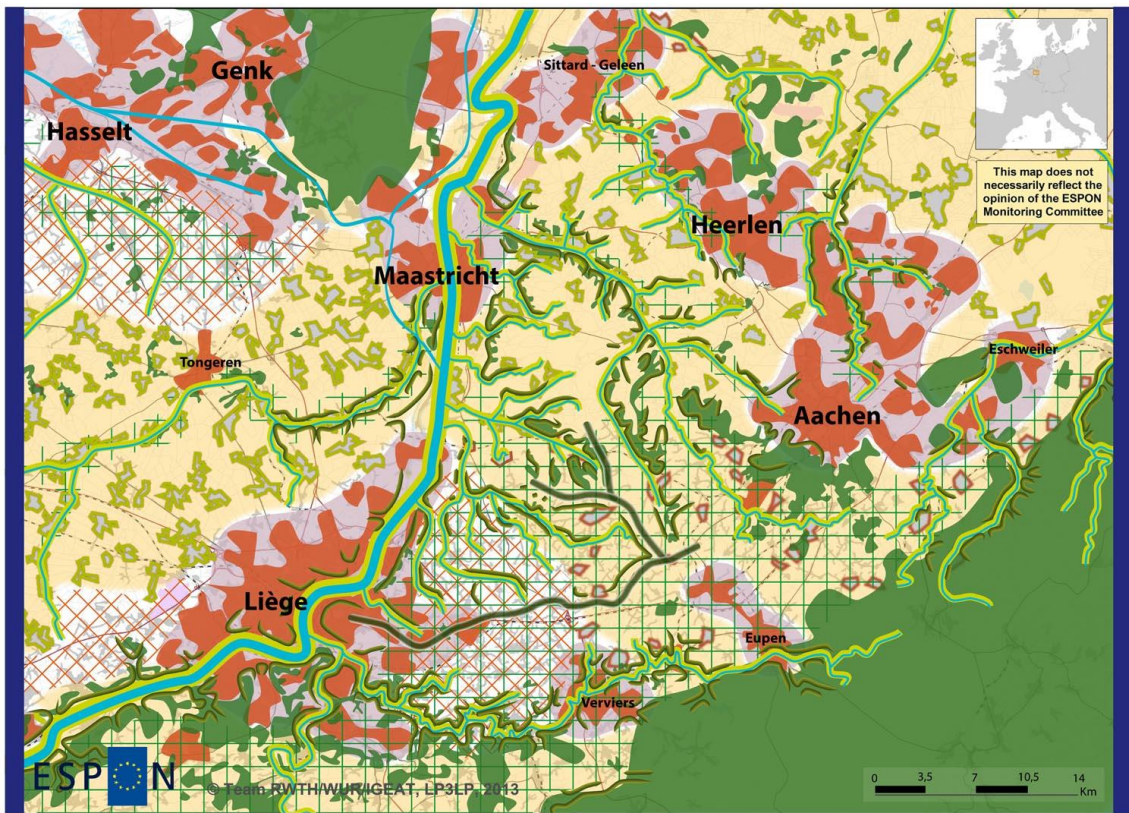
### 3. Options for policy development

#### *Landscape Perspective (Main Report Chapter 3)*

The unique quality and value of the landscape of the Three Countries Park has already been formally recognized in the first cross border spatial development perspective for the region: the 1993 MHAL perspective of the cross-border city network Maastricht Heerlen, Aachen, Liège. Since then, several landscape studies have followed. Focused on various parts of the Three Countries Park, together these cover almost the entire 3LP area. However, until now an overall landscape perspective has been missing, one which crosses the national borders and overarches the differing approaches. This is the aim of the present study LP3LP: Its landscape perspective is a structured plan to preserve, enhance and develop the qualities of the landscape of the region. It aims to guide developments and decisions that affect the future physical form and function of the landscape. Based on interviews with stakeholders, discussion in workshop-sessions, a map-analysis, the characteristics of the landscape types and the identification of valuable landscape assets in previous landscape studies, five core qualities of the Three Countries Park landscape were derived: (1) Diversified relief (2) Abundance of water appearances (3) Varied green character (4) Polycentric settlement pattern (5) Manifold cultural heritage. The Landscape Perspective for the Three Countries Park aims to preserve, maintain and enhance these core-qualities of the landscape. It builds upon the double requirement of unity *and* diversity. On the one hand a shared perspective is given on preservation, development and cultivation of the core qualities of the 3LP landscape. On the other hand it provides opportunities to respect different identities, to reflect cultural differences and to enable specific place-based solutions. In order to meet the two aims, the landscape perspective is defined on a regional scale 'representing unity', while providing opportunities for detailed, tailor-made and culturally-embedded local solutions (thus promoting diversity) in landscape planning & design, protection and management. The Landscape Perspective consists of the following elements:

- 13 Guiding principles (Map 2, legend): General spatial principles for landscape development, based on shared objectives for preservation, development and cultivation of the core qualities
- Present structures: Landscape structure (based on relief, water system, and polycentric infrastructure) and cultural identities (based on names of landscape areas common to the public). Important components of the region's identity and physical elements, defining which guiding principles can be applied where, and how.
- Future structures: A green-blue framework and an urban-open space framework show what structures will emerge on a regional scale by applying the guiding principles (see Map 2, "Overall Landscape Framework"). The green-blue framework will provide a backbone in the landscape for enhancing the core qualities and maintaining key landscape functions and ecosystem services. The urban-open space framework will support this by ensuring space for the green/blue framework and improving the accessibility of the landscape for recreation and tourism.

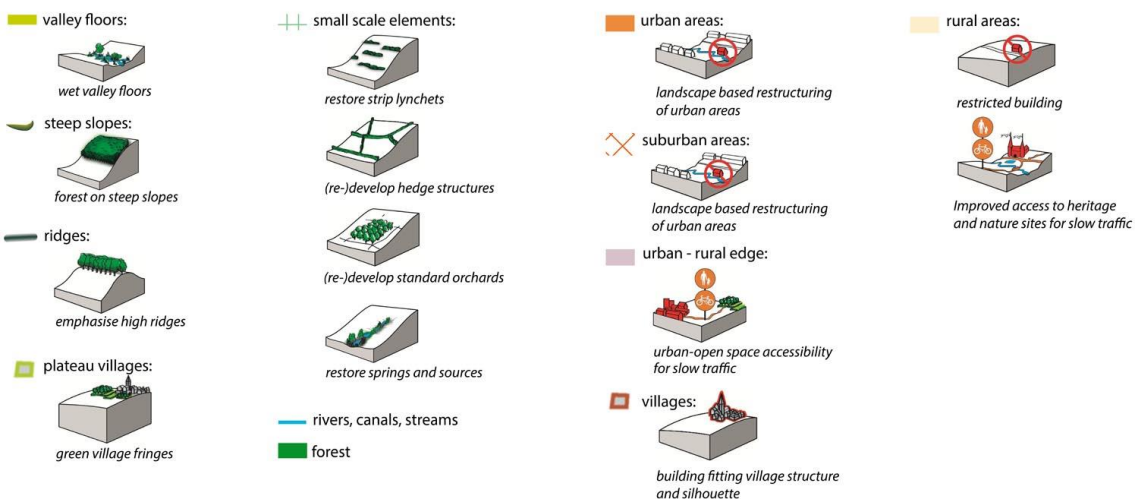
The frameworks and principles are to be seen as frames of reference, a long term goal or as ambitions. For the future development of the 3LP landscape, smart implementation strategies are needed to take the step from perspective to action.



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Local level: not to scale  
Source: LP3LP, RWTH/WUR/IGEA  
Origin of data: EuroStreets/Geodan BV 2009, CORINE/EEA 2006

OVERALL LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK



**Map 2 The landscape framework of the 3LP Landscape Perspective, the legend below showing its 13 guiding principles (Source: own elaboration)**

### ***Landscape partnership (Main Report Chapter 4.2.):***

As most of the guiding principles relate to privately owned land, their application will require intense communicative and coordinative action, in cooperation with a multiplicity of land owners, -users as well as municipalities and local authorities. In order to operationalize the landscape perspective with landscape policy, a '3LP landscape partnership' is proposed, based on developing the existing 3LP initiative further. It is suggested, that the basic partnership (mainly regional governments and landscape associations) starts with an agreement of the partners to adopt the landscape perspective as a guiding framework for their individual – as well as their coordinated policy actions – with the overall goal to develop 'quality landscapes'. Coordination with interregional organizations, such as in the case of the 3LP the 'Euregio Meuse Rhine' foundation, is highly recommended as well as to build up capacity for cross-border "landscape management", the latter e.g. by using the cohesion policy instrument of "Integrated Territorial Investments". Central task of the partnership is the bundling of cross-border communities to realize thematic strategies. Strategic partnerships should be formed with further stake- and knowledge-holders like river basin organizations, conservation groups, tourism agencies, forestry, agricultural advisory services, etc. through concrete (pilot) projects. Moreover it is suggested, that the partnership integrates a public participation process, e.g. for defining more specific landscape quality objectives, in close cooperation with landscape associations and responsible authorities. Overall it is hypothesized, that informal governance arrangements as described with the 3LP landscape partnership are an efficient way forward – also for other cross-border regions in Europe – and that they can transfer results into the "formal" national systems of landscape- and land use planning. Finally, it is recommended to investigate also long-term options to build up a 3LP Fund from public and private sources and to transform the partnership into a 3LP foundation or landscape trust.

### ***Thematic strategies (Main Report Chapter 4.3):***

Based on the proposed 'update' of the 3LP initiative as a landscape partnership that is in line with the landscape perspective, four thematic strategies are developed in conjunction with existing regional landscape assets (core qualities) and expertise (the 3LP stakeholders, landscape associations, special interest groups, etc.) linking the guiding principles of the landscape perspective to the strategic EU policy level. The four thematic strategies are recommendations that give advice how selected European policy instruments can be used in regional landscape development (i.e. for the integral development of spatial/ landscape functions) and the implementation of the 3LP landscape perspective in particular. All LP3LP policy options are summarized by the following table, including the four thematic strategies (white background):

Table 1 **An overview of options for policy development by the LP3LP project** (Source: own elaboration)

3LP landscape policy proposal	Main objectives	Key EU instruments
<b>Landscape perspective</b>	To provide common goals and principles in a spatially distinct way	ESPON targeted analysis (this study)
<b>Landscape partnership</b>	To build-up integrative cross-border capacity and cooperative partnerships for effective management of 3LP quality landscapes	European Regional Development Fund: -Integrated territorial investments -INTERREG program -Community led local development EAFRD: LEADER program
<b>Green infrastructure strategy</b> (Pilot project relating to green-blue framework: Green infrastructure in the Geule-Gulp, Jeker, Berwinne, and Wurm basins; pilot project relating to urban-open space framework: Spatial planning for quality landscapes)	To protect and enhance 3LP biodiversity, ecosystem services and core qualities (focus: water, soil and climate regulation/ adaptation, habitat and cultural services)	-Green infrastructure financing facility -LIFE+/ integrated projects -River basin management planning/ Water framework directive -Climate adaptation strategies and carbon credits -Natura 2000 network and payments/ Habitats and Birds directive -Common Agricultural Policy/ direct payments: 5-7% ecological focus area
<b>Cultural heritage and access strategy</b> (Pilot project: 3LP Landscape information platform)	To valorize cultural heritage and to enable informational, emotional and sustainable physical access to 3LP landscapes and heritage sites	-European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and INTERREG programs -Rural development measure (EAFRD): 'Basic services and village renewal'
<b>Complementary biomass strategy</b> (Pilot project: Complementary biomass production in the 3LP)	To introduce the use of complementary bioenergy crops, production practices and technologies, which yield ecosystem services and landscape quality as added value	-Horizon 2020 research & innovation program -European Innovation Partnership Agricultural productivity and sustainability -ERDF & INTERREG programs/ Smart Specialization
<b>Quality production strategy</b> (Pilot project: PES-scheme for transboundary ecosystem services)	To encourage and support farmers and other land users to simultaneously co-produce high-quality (food) products and quality landscapes	Measures within national/regional programs for rural development (EAFRD), especially: -Agri-environment-climate payments -Forest-environment-climate payments -Quality schemes -European Innovation Partnership Agricultural productivity and sustainability

### ***Recommendations at European level (Main Report Chapter 5):***

Recommendations targeted at European level address potential impacts of EU policy on the quality of the 3LP and other regional landscapes, linked with the questions of how investments in landscape can support EU policy objectives, vice versa how a landscape approach could be strengthened by EU policy. The discussion of the three hypothesized territorial potentials of landscape – as asset, place and common ground – result in the following recommendations:

- Recognize ‘landscape’, beyond an aesthetical & heritage concept, as the physical and visual expression of territory and peoples’ living environment as per the ELC.
- Dedicate a focal research area to the linkages of landscape quality objectives with ecosystem services/ landscape functions (including indicators) and smart, sustainable, inclusive regional growth.
- Develop a guidance document for the place-based policy approach with a focus on landscape and encourage the inclusion of landscape analysis in territorial analysis for evidence-based policy.
- Encourage cooperative mechanisms and training activities which closely link EU regional development to landscape policy and consider setting up a landscape policy knowledge & exchange platform as a joint operation with the European Landscape Convention.
- Concerning Common Agricultural Policy: Consider extending the 7% ecological focus area also on permanent grassland; provide for a collaborative and coordinated design and implementation of agri-environment-climate schemes; consider linking direct payments even further to the provision of public goods, especially regulating, cultural and habitat services.
- Take further the proposal for a soil framework directive relating soil functions with ecosystem services and spatial/ landscape functions.
- Enhance standardization of geographic data generation on regional to local scale and guarantee free data access for non-commercial uses on basic topics such as relief and soil, water system, land cover/ use, infrastructure and production, natural/ cultural heritage, property regimes.

## **4. Conclusions and transferability (Main Report Chapter 6)**

### ***EU level, cross-border level and the example of the 3LP area***

The LP3LP lays out a conceptual pathway, on how ‘quality landscapes’ can become addressed locally, while at the same time contributing to the EU objectives of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth and territorial cohesion. Yet not fully utilized potential is shown via the definitions and aims by the ELC, and the application of concepts such as ecosystem services, linking landscape core qualities with the strategic policy level. Particularly the 3LP’s ‘landscape perspective’ in combination with the thematic policy proposals may offer an inspirational model for other regions. Moreover, via its recommendations to EU policy makers just mentioned above, the project also gives

suggestions regarding three major paradigms within EU cohesion policy (as e.g. outlined in the Territorial Agenda 2020):

1. Regional value needs to be assessed at more detail, e.g. by developing core qualities into regional ‘quality landscapes’, in any case responding to a broad spectrum of functions beyond mere considerations of heritage and aesthetics. This needs the support via new research areas/indicators at EU level – keeping up with the EU’s high demands to landscapes.
2. Further development of place-based approaches is needed. As an example, the application of a landscape approach by the LP3LP project revealed the case study’s embedment into 4 European-wide territorial dynamics, that became linked with the tailor-made policy strategies proposed for the 3LP region.
3. Such goals can only become achieved through flexible horizontal-vertical-territorial integration<sup>1</sup>, as e.g. the LP3LP proposal regarding a future ‘3LP landscape partnership’ suggests. This partnership could form one of many within a European network.

Regarding support by EU instruments and regulations, landscape approaches seem largely neglected, often still in the shadow of more generic classical-economical, technological approaches. However, the LP3LP provides a scan of a broad width of EU policy instruments and is aligned with them (where meaningful) in its thematic strategies. Especially area-based tools of cohesion policy may be further expanded to support integrated approaches to landscape development.

### ***Cross-border regions and the 3LP area***

As it was already mentioned, the 3LP’s identity is to a large degree influenced by dynamics that are also affecting many other regions in Europe. Vienna-Bratislava (AT-SK-HU), Lille metropolitan area (FR-BE) and the Greater Region/LU-DE-FR-BE - have been highlighted as to some degree comparable, i.a. since they also pioneer in tackling the resulting regional challenges and potentials with landscape policy. Apart from similarities, all cross border regions are experiencing also their own territorial dynamics, internal national differences – and have their specific landscape characteristics and potential. The relevancy of a direct transferability of the present LP3LP ideas on a how to develop a shared landscape policy is therefore difficult to determine. Nevertheless, other cross-border regions may consider the following steps:

1. Position the territory in a EU territorial context in order to define the large driving forces of landscape change;
2. Harmonize the geographical data;
3. Take stock of the existing landscape capital and define core qualities;
4. Develop guiding principles based on qualification of the above;

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<sup>1</sup> or “horizontal coordination”, “integrated functional area development” and “multilevel governance” as usually referred to within cohesion policy

5. The overall approach of the LP3LP landscape perspective may be transferred to other (cross-border) regions;
6. Identify existing organizations active in the landscape and their specific field of intervention;
7. Think of potential strategies, and validate them by (thematic) experts;
8. In this relation, the general approaches of the 4 thematic strategies of the LP3LP may be transferable (e.g. the Green Infrastructure strategy and its unifying effect or the complementary biomass approach);
9. Link strategies with existing EU policy documents and funds. In this relation, the findings of the LP3LP project are largely transferable.

### ***3LP area - specific***

The landscape perspective for the 3LP landscape, presented in this report, envisions three clear outcomes:

1. it enhances the characteristics and core qualities of the landscape,
2. improves and expands its ecosystem services,
3. and makes the landscape more robust and resilient to future change.

The landscape perspective is defined on a regional scale, providing opportunities for detailed, tailor-made and culturally embedded local solutions in landscape planning/design, protection and management. The landscape perspective synchronises landscape objectives – developed in previous and existing landscape studies - and objectives related to a cross-border ecological network; and creates a shared set of guiding principles, which may be understood as regional landscape quality objectives on a joint level of scale and abstraction. Local examples illustrate how the guiding principles can lead to place-based solutions on a detailed scale, taking cultural identities and landscape specifics into account. This will enhance the distinct character of the local landscapes as well as their spatial functions especially with regard to habitat, water management, climate adaptation, and recreation etc. Successful implementation or good performance of the Landscape Perspective relies on support from local, regional and national authorities, and involvement of stakeholders and local initiatives.

Apart from the above, it has been already mentioned, that the 3LP is a forerunner of innovative cross-border landscape policy within Europe. However climate change adaptation and mitigation is a yet little considered topic under the initiative's umbrella. Due to its rising relevance, it is addressed in the landscape perspective (e.g. guiding principles that reduce flooding or soil erosion) and the thematic strategies (e.g. the 'complementary biomass strategy').

## **5. Further work and research (Main Report Chapter 7)**

### ***Dissemination LP3LP:***

2014, May: Along with planning the final public dissemination event of the project in 2014, the lead stakeholder and the TPG will publish a brochure that can convey the LP3LP project in summarized and simplified form to a broader public (incl. politicians). Other dissemination activities are currently under preparation.

***First steps for 3LP policy implementation:***

From the regional stakeholder's perspective, a sequence of next steps from 2014-2016 is suggested: It starts with communication/discussion of the LP3LP landscape perspective and the 4 thematic strategies, reflects benefits from public participation, the enabling of projects for implementation and options for setting up a 3LP foundation or trust.

***Issues for further analytical work and research on a European scale*** From the EU perspective, further analytical work is to focus on how a landscape approach could be mainstreamed into regional and cohesion policy. Three fields are highlighted in this regard as a possible future research avenue and orientation for the ESPON program:

- (1) Linking standardized concepts with a place based landscape approach
- (2) Indicator based landscape monitoring for territorial analysis and evidence-based policy making
- (3) Integrated landscape-scale management of regulating, cultural and habitat services by means of cohesion policy and the Common Agricultural Policy



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