



EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
LANDSCAPE AWARD OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

5th Session – 2016-2017

APPLICATION FORM

Presentation

The European Landscape Convention aims to promote the protection, management and planning of landscapes and to bring together European co-operation in this field. It is the first international treaty exclusively devoted to all dimensions of European landscape. Taking into account the landscape, natural and cultural values of the territory, it contributes to promoting the quality of life and well-being of Europeans.

The Resolution on the Rules governing the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008 at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, draws attention to the fact that Article 11 of the Convention institutes the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe and that it is in keeping with the work carried out by the Council of Europe concerning human rights, democracy and sustainable development. It effectively promotes the territorial dimension of human rights and democracy by acknowledging the importance of measures taken to improve the landscape for people's living conditions.

Opened to the Parties to the Convention, the Award is intended to raise civil society's awareness of the value of landscapes, of their role and of changes to them. Its objective is to reward exemplary practical initiatives aimed at successful landscape quality objectives on the territories of the Parties to the Convention. The Award is conferred every two years and the files presenting applications must reach the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe.

At its meeting held in Strasbourg on 28-29 April 2008, the Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage and Landscape (CDPATEP) decided that applications should be submitted to the Council of Europe Secretariat through the Permanent Representations of the Parties to the Convention.

*I would be very grateful if you could send no later than **30 January 2017** the following elements of the candidature file (20 pages maximum) established for your country on the basis of the proposals forwarded to you by the Ministries:*

- 1) *by E-mail, the Application form completed to: maguelonne.dejeant-pons@coe.int ;*
- 2) *by post, a copy of the Application form completed together with a CD-Rom or DVD containing the all the additional material to: Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons, Executive Secretary of the European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe, Agora (A3-32C), F- 67075 STRASBOURG Cedex.*

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- *Participation to the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe is only open to local and regional authorities and their groupings and non-governmental organisations, as stated in the Resolution CM/Res (2008)3, Appendix, Article 2.*
- *The application form must be completed in all its parts, in one of the two official languages of the Council of Europe (English or French).*
- *The materials submitted must be copyright-free, for use by the Council of Europe in communications aimed at promoting the award or any other publications or activities relating to the Convention. The Council of Europe undertakes to cite the author's names.*
- *Files that are incomplete or fail to comply with the rules will not be taken into consideration.*

For further information please visit the Landscape Award section of the Council of Europe website: <http://www.coe.int/EuropeanLandscapeConvention>

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I. STATE CONCERNED AND APPLICANT

1. State

Finland

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2. Applicant

*Name of the local,
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II. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJET

3. Name of the Project

The Shepherding Weeks
– Wool-scented volunteer work for
valuable landscapes

4. Location of the Project

The Shepherding Weeks concept has been developed in Koli National Park in Eastern Finland and later expanded throughout Finland.

5. Summary of the Project (*10 lines*)

The Shepherding Weeks is a unique concept that combines landscape management and an experience-rich holiday, which was developed by Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland Southern Finland regional unit in Koli National Park. During shepherding weeks, volunteer shepherds take care of a herd of sheep for a week as they perform landscape management in national parks and conservation areas. The week is subject to a charge, in exchange for which the shepherds get to stay in an old house in the midst of breathtaking scenery. The payment is used to cover the costs of landscape management and the maintenance costs of the buildings in the areas. The operations are organised in cooperation between Metsähallitus, volunteer shepherds and sheep farmers. Thanks to the shepherding weeks, valuable traditional rural landscapes are maintained and the public's awareness of the importance of landscape has increased.

6. Photo representing the Project (*high definition – JPEG 350 dpi*) and name of the author of the photo please



Photo: Pirjo Honkasalo

III. CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

7. **Start of the Project** month year
The project must have been completed three years previously

8. **Partners**
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| Sheep farmers, volunteer shepherds and Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland. |
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9. **Financing bodies**
- | |
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| Citizens taking part in the Shepherding Weeks as volunteer shepherds, sheep farmers and Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland. |
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10. **Central aims of the Project**

The following lists the central aims of the activities involved in the Shepherding Weeks:

1) Managing and maintaining increasingly rare traditional rural landscapes. The aim is to arrange grazing in areas that are valuable in terms of their landscapes and nature conservation in general, in order to prevent overgrowth as well as maintain and improve their diversity. The concept was developed in Koli National Park which was established, among other things, to protect national landscapes.

2) Improving the state of traditional rural biotopes, thereby protecting and managing the species that live in them and securing favourable living conditions for threatened species. The decrease in traditional cattle farming that involves grazing has made meadows and their species rare throughout Finland, as areas that have previously been open land have gradually become overgrown. A quarter of the endangered species in Finland live in traditional rural biotopes, and the list of species that have already been lost is dominated by flora and fauna that can be found in meadows.

3) Ensuring that the old buildings and yard areas in national parks and conservation areas stay in good and usable condition.

4) Organising landscape and nature management in a cost effective way. Some of the valuable landscapes are located on islands that are difficult to access, resulting in a variety of challenges in arranging landscape and nature management measures in these locations.

5) Getting citizens involved in the conservation, maintenance and management of landscapes and biodiversity. One goal of the shepherding weeks is to provide citizens with the opportunity to participate in volunteer work to benefit landscapes.

6) Increasing awareness of the value of and change in landscapes. Customer surveys have shown that landscapes are the most important draw in Koli National Park and every other conservation area. Grazing sheep in the conservation area are appealing to visitors, and they can be presented as an easily understandable means for landscape management. The aim is to show to the general populace that maintaining the beautiful vistas in national parks and other conservation areas often takes a great deal of effort, and that traditional rural landscapes in particular will not survive without management.

7) Creating a functional concept to ensure the continuity of landscape management and enable the expansion of operations to a variety of locations in Finland.

11. Outcome

The project has succeeded beyond all expectations and gained wide popularity. The following are the most important results:

1) The Shepherding Weeks serve to protect landscapes and utilise traditional grazing in order to maintain the special characteristics of landscapes that are valuable in terms of cultural history. The concept is an important enabler of nature management. So far, some 30 hectares of valuable traditional rural landscapes have been maintained and improved in 10 conservation areas, ensuring the survival of these rare and threatened environments. The operations help to keep traditional rural landscapes open in an increasing number of locations. The Shepherding Weeks have also enabled grazing sheep to be brought to areas where the challenging location would otherwise prevent landscape management by means of grazing. The traditional rural biotopes managed within the scope of the project are mainly various types of meadows, including dry meadows, old slash-and-burn fields, wooded pastures and grazed woodlands.

2) The management of traditional rural landscapes ensures the survival of the habitats of threatened species. The traditional rural biotopes are the most richly diverse environments in Finland in terms of species. Grazing animals can be used to keep the vegetation relatively low, ensuring favourable conditions for hundreds of species.

3) The shepherding weeks keep the rural buildings and gardens in national parks and conservation areas vibrant and enliven the landscapes. In Finland, properties located within national parks can only be owned by the state, which is why there are practically no inhabitants or active farms in national parks.

4) Metsähallitus' Shepherding Weeks project has proven itself as a functional and, in many ways, most cost-effective way to maintain traditional rural landscapes. In many locations, the costs of the volunteer shepherd arrangements are lower than those of cutting the vegetation in the areas. The project primarily funds itself – in addition to agricultural support received by the sheep farmers, more funding is

gained by collecting a fee from the shepherds. A portion of the fees is expended on nature management costs, while a portion is used to maintain and renovate the buildings in the locations. The fees collected for the Shepherding Weeks are not intended to yield any actual profit.

5) The Shepherding Weeks have inspired citizens to participate in the maintenance of conservation areas – over the nine years of operations, more than 1,200 volunteer shepherds have taken part. By getting involved, the volunteer shepherds play their part in the process of determining and implementing landscape policies.

6) Awareness has increased among the general population of the value and management of and the change in traditional landscapes thanks to the many newspaper articles, radio interviews and television appearances covering the Shepherding Weeks. In addition to this, the shepherds have shared a lot of their videos and experiences on social media. The Shepherding Weeks increase awareness of the value and management of and change in traditional landscapes, particularly among participants but also among other citizens. The project improves the participants' relationship with landscapes and nature. Alongside tending to the sheep, the shepherds also have time for hiking and exploration – one of the motivations for taking part is the opportunity to experience a spectacular natural location. The Shepherding Weeks have emerged as an excellent means for environmental education, because many families with children participate in the project.

7) The Shepherding Weeks have proven to be an effective and popular means of landscape and nature management. The operations that began as small-scale trial have been developed into a functional concept, which has been successfully duplicated and spread across the country. Everything from safety considerations, responsibilities and possible problems have been properly thought through and prepared.

8) The experience improves well-being among the volunteer shepherds, which supports social sustainability. Even a brief stay in nature helps to relieve stress, relax the mind and body, lower blood pressure and improve overall mood. Activities in nature increase social well-being and bring people together. The volunteer shepherds can often clearly tell that the experience has had a positive effect – many have said they have felt like completely different people afterwards.

9) So far, slightly more than 300 sheep have been involved in the arrangements. There are three threatened native sheep breeds in Finland: 'suomenlammas', 'kainuunharmas' and 'ahvenanmaanlammas'. The majority of the sheep used for landscape management are from these breeds. In other words, in addition to promoting the conservation of landscapes, biotopes and the habitats of threatened species, the arrangements also support the protection of native sheep breeds.

10) The sheep farmers gain access to high-quality pastures, which are sometimes scarce. The sheep, on the other hand, receive good care and get to live on good pastures. The shepherds assist the sheep farmers in caring for and keeping an eye on the animals.

11) The concept has been found to be so effective that businesses have followed suit and arranged similar commercial activities in conservation areas and other locations. Sheep farms have diversified their operations, expanding to side business activities in nature tourism and landscape management. What this means is that duplicating the concept keeps rural areas vibrant and promotes economic sustainability.

12) Some of the shepherds have been so infatuated with the experience that they have acquired their own sheep so they can provide landscape and nature management services in their own municipality.

IV. RESPECT OF THE CRITERIA OF THE ATTRIBUTION OF THE AWARD

12. Sustainable territorial development

Is the project part of a sustainable development policy?

Does it contribute to the enhancement of environmental, social, economic, cultural or aesthetic values of the landscape? How?

Has it successfully countered or posed a remedy to any pre-existing environmental damage or urban blight? How?

The Shepherding Weeks concept is compliant with the policy of sustainable development, and it has been implemented in agreement with the regional organisations in each respective area. The operations were initiated in 2008 in Koli National Park, which was established for a variety of purposes, including landscape conservation. Since the operating model was found to be effective and beneficial to all parties, related activities have been arranged every year since. In other words, the public has had the opportunity to take part in the project for nine years now.

The long-lasting and constantly expanding operations have had a practical impact on the conservation and management of landscapes. The Shepherding Weeks concept has promoted environmental, social, economic, cultural and aesthetic sustainability in an exemplary way. It has been successful in maintaining and strengthening the value of landscapes and nature. The operations have engaged the public in landscape management efforts that have been arranged in the best possible way.

The project has improved the environmental, social, economic, cultural and aesthetic values of the target areas in the following ways:

Environmental: The Shepherding Weeks have enabled management arrangements for areas with special value in terms of their landscape and nature. The locations are situated in national parks and conservation areas. The project has increased the area of traditional rural biotopes covered by the management measures, including the prioritised Natura 2000 biotope 6270* 'Fennoscandian lowland species-rich dry to mesic grasslands', which is one of the most valuable and diverse meadow types in the country. The operations already cover some 30 hectares of rare traditional rural landscapes and their threatened species. The Shepherding Weeks have increased the visibility of the locations in the media and their appeal as domestic

travel destinations, which may partially contribute to increasing the popularity of domestic tourism, along with supporting ecology and sustainable regional development. The locations selected for the project are traditional rural biotopes that Metsähallitus' conservation biologists have deemed valuable. The biologists have also been involved in planning the management and care of the locations, whose values cannot survive without appropriate efforts.

Social: Citizens have been successfully encouraged to take part in the management of valuable areas and landscapes. Those who participate benefit from improved well-being, as the concept provides the opportunity to spend a week in the peace and quiet of nature amidst breathtaking landscapes. The health benefits of spending time in nature have been demonstrated in numerous studies. These positive effects benefit individuals and then translate into social sustainability and general well-being on a wider scale. Spending a week caring for sheep is more affordable than renting a cabin. National parks and other natural locations offer environments for hiking and outdoor recreation that are both inexpensive and accessible to everyone. The landscape management efforts implemented through the Shepherding Weeks project have increased the value of the locations as recreational environments, benefiting all those who visit them. Experiencing the landscapes is one of the most important reasons for visiting many of the locations.

Economic: The Shepherding Weeks are primarily funded with the fees collected for the experience and the funding for coordinating Metsähallitus' operations. The fees paid by the volunteer shepherds are used to maintain buildings and cover nature management costs. Sheep farmers can apply for support for grazing arrangements and rearing indigenous breeds through the agri-environmental support system. Using natural pastures for grazing in the summer is an important part of the operations of many sheep farms. This links grazing arrangements to maintaining the vitality of agricultural trades and rural areas in general. By funnelling funds to public locations that can be visited and seen first-hand, the Shepherding Weeks make the public more accepting of agricultural support. Visitors can see what the support arrangements enable and that the money goes towards a good cause. In addition to this, taking sheep to graze in traditional rural biotopes frees up fields for other production use. The Shepherding Weeks have also increased the appeal and recreational value of the locations, drawing more tourists to the areas.

Cultural: The Shepherding Weeks enable the management of landscapes, traditional rural biotopes, buildings and yard areas in locations that are important in terms of rural cultural history. The operations ensure that the traditional landscapes remain vibrant and in good condition. Bringing new life to the old farms enriches the landscapes and brings the people who stay at and visit the locations closer to the old days and their own cultural heritage. The volunteer shepherds who experience living in the old buildings can also serve to pass on knowledge of past ways of life: for example, how to make firewood, heat up fireplaces and get water from a well. They also learn other valuable nature and wilderness skills, and are introduced to the time-honoured means of maintaining traditional rural biotopes – i.e. grazing and scything.

On the Kaapin Jouni farm, visitors can learn about the cultural heritage of the only indigenous people in the Nordic countries, the Sami. The grounds tell a rich tale of the diversity of the Sami way of life at a time where the transition to more permanent accommodations was under way.

Aesthetic: The aesthetic values of the locations have increased as management arrangements have been implemented for neglected areas that are valuable in terms of rural heritage, rural landscapes and nature. Traditional yard areas, buildings and pastures remain vibrant, aesthetically pleasing and in good condition. The locations lie in areas with particularly valuable landscapes and nature.

The operations seek to combat damage caused to the landscape and structures by preventing overgrowth along with maintaining and renovating traditional buildings, yards and environments. The management efforts cover traditional rural biotopes that would otherwise be neglected. The project has enriched landscapes by breathing new life into old living environments in a way that respects traditional values.

13. Exemplary value

*Can the project be considered of exemplary value? Why?
Which are the good practices that it implemented?*

The operating principles and measures of the Shepherding Weeks concept are an example to others with regard to observing good practices. The landscapes and nature are managed in an exemplary and effective manner that respects traditions and benefits all parties involved. The sheep farmers and sheep gain access to quality pastures that may be hard to find. The shepherds help the farmers with caring for and keeping an eye on the animals in locations that are far from the actual farm. The operations also strengthen peoples' relationship with landscapes and nature, providing them with new experiences and improving their well-being. The concept has emerged as a success and sparked a great deal of interest. All aspects from safety and responsibilities to possible problems have been taken into account in the arrangements. The project primarily funds itself, and the operations aim to secure the continuous management of the locations. The concept can also be utilised to arrange maintenance for valuable sites that would otherwise be neglected due to poor accessibility.

The following are good practices implemented in the Shepherding Weeks project:

1) Increasing the amount of grazing in nature and landscape management efforts through multi-party cooperation that benefits all those involved. There are plenty of areas that could be managed through grazing, and also animals that need additional pastures. In particular, there are many people who would be thrilled to spend a week as a shepherd amidst spectacular landscapes and would also be willing to pay for the opportunity.

2) Management and maintenance can be arranged for valuable locations with poor accessibility. Many of the Shepherding Weeks sites are situated in locations where grazing would be difficult to arrange without the volunteer shepherds. The shepherding measures ensure the management of threatened traditional rural landscapes and the protection of endangered species dependent on them.

3) The majority of the sheep used for grazing are of a rare native breed, which means that the efforts also support the survival of these threatened breeds.

4) The operations largely fund themselves and, in addition to all other benefits, provide the most cost-efficient method for maintaining the landscapes in many locations. This way of maintaining the landscapes is more affordable than hiring someone to cut back the

encroaching vegetation, for example.

5) The interesting and appealing activities have got the public excited about and involved in landscape management. The activities are fully volunteer-based.

6) Awareness of the value of landscapes and their management has increased with the wealth of media coverage. In addition to this, those selected as volunteer shepherds are provided by more detailed information on the operations and locations by Metsähallitus. The shepherds also share information about the experiences on social media.

7) The Shepherding Weeks help to strengthen and deepen the volunteer shepherds' relationship with landscapes and nature. For many participants, the week is an utterly unique and heart-warming holiday experience that improves their well-being. Many children with families take part in the Shepherding Weeks, which is why they are an excellent way to provide environmental education to the younger generations. All those who visit the areas benefit from the results of the landscape management efforts. The landscapes are among the most important reasons for people to visit conservation areas, and the volunteer shepherd arrangements have increased the recreational value of these locations.

8) Supports and diversifies the operations of sheep farms. The local business operations are supported by providing the sheep farmers with access to high-quality natural pastures, which may sometimes be scarce. The efforts involve local sheep farmers and sheep, which supports regional sustainability and keeps the transport distances as short as possible. Sheep farmers can apply for support for grazing arrangements and rearing indigenous breeds through the agri-environmental support system. In addition to this, taking sheep to graze in traditional rural biotopes frees up fields for other production use.

9) The concept was started off through small-scale trial, but everything was carefully thought out from the beginning and the development has continued throughout the entire process. Safety, responsibilities, insurances and problem situations have been taken into account. The concept has been duplicated successfully. The operations that began with a small pilot in Koli National Park in 2008 now cover 11 locations throughout the country. In 2017, the operations will be further expanded by including a location where the landscape will be maintained by grazing cows.

10) Applications to all locations are submitted on a single form at the same time. The shepherds are provided with the necessary information and, in some locations, with orientation.

The concept has been very successful and popular – demand is constantly increasing at a faster rate than supply. In 2016, the number of people wanting to participate in the Shepherding Weeks quadrupled from the previous year, with 3,621 applications in total. The lucky winners were selected in a draw for the 113 Shepherding Weeks arranged over the course of the summer in ten different locations. The arrangements have been so popular that some entrepreneurs have duplicated the product and organised similar experience-based travel services.

14. Public participation

Does the project actively encourage the public's participation in the decision-making process? How?

Is the project in line with the wider policies implemented by national, regional or local authorities?

The Shepherding Weeks encourage people to actively participate in practical landscape management efforts and influence decision-making affecting the development of the concept. In every location, the shepherds can record observations and feedback on the experience over the course of the week. The Shepherding Weeks have received plenty of attention in the media, so feedback is also received from other members of the public. In addition to this, feedback is collected from sheep farmers who have been involved in the arrangements.

The locations managed by means of the Shepherding Weeks feature valuable traditional rural landscapes that have been jointly deemed to require special care in the plan for managing and using national parks. The commitment to the management and use plan also binds the operations to a larger framework of landscape management measures.

The fully volunteer-based Shepherding Weeks are the result of cooperation between a number of parties. Once a site that requires maintenance has been selected, a suitable sheep farmer is found to arrange the sheep for the location. Instead of renting the sheep from the farmer, an agreement is drawn up on the right to use the pasture in question. The agreement also specifies insurance-related matters. Using natural pastures for grazing in the summer is an important part of the operations of many sheep farms, which is what links the Shepherding Weeks project's wider efforts with maintaining the vitality of rural areas.

Volunteer shepherd applications are usually accepted between January and February for all locations at the same time. The application process is public, meaning that anyone can apply through the project's website. As the number of applicants far exceeds the number of weeks available, the lucky winners are selected by means of a lottery. The selected shepherds are provided with instructions and further information on the arrangements and the location by e-mail. In some locations, the shepherds are also provided with some on-site orientation upon arrival.

In Finland, the most important tool for landscape policy is the list of nationally valuable landscape areas, which is one of the criteria for preparing land-use plans. The aim of designating landscape areas as valuable is to secure prominent and viable rural landscapes and to increase public interest in landscape management. Many of the shepherding locations are situated in areas with nationally valuable landscapes. The volunteer shepherds and sheep farmers involved play their part in implementing the landscape policies of the national and regional authorities by participating in and committing to the efforts to maintain these landscapes.

The project is in line with the landscape policies of the national, regional and local authorities, such as the European Landscape Convention, the Finnish Land Use and Building Act, Finnish environmental legislation and the Finnish Cultural Environment Strategy.

15. Awareness-raising

Is the project effectively increasing the public's awareness of the importance of landscape in terms of human development, consolidation of European identity, or individual and collective well-being? How?

The Shepherding Weeks project has increased awareness among citizens, associations and the authorities with regard to the value and importance of and change in landscapes. People have also been successfully encouraged to take part in landscape management efforts. The operations have increased awareness of the importance of landscape and nature management and traditional rural biotopes among the volunteer shepherds and sheep farmers involved, as well as citizens who have followed the related media coverage.

Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland issue communications at the beginning of the Shepherding Weeks in April each year, and the arrangements have been a popular topic for a variety of media outlets: the Shepherding Weeks have received frequent TV news, newspaper, magazine and radio coverage. They have also been covered in many bulletins, radio interviews and newspaper articles. In addition, the project has its own website. The sheer volume of applications for the volunteer shepherd positions is an indication that the coverage has reached a huge number of people, as only a small portion of those interested are likely to ultimately send an application.

Tens of thousands of people are reached through the Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feeds of Metsähallitus and the national parks. In addition to this, the Shepherding Weeks have received plenty of visibility on social media and blogs, thanks to the participating volunteers, who write about their experiences, sharing information on the project with others.

While staying at the old farm locations, the volunteer shepherds get a closer look at times past and their own cultural heritage. The traditional landscapes and small farms in rural areas are an important element of the Finnish cultural heritage. Keeping them alive in a way that respects traditions offers valuable experiences to both the volunteers and other visitors to the areas. The arrangements also increase understanding of the importance of landscape as part of the European identity.

The health benefits of landscapes and nature are highlighted in communications regarding the Shepherding Weeks, which means that distributing related information also increases general awareness about the effects of landscapes and nature on the well-being of individuals. Many past participants have found that the week in a serene natural environment amidst breathtaking scenery has significantly improved their well-being, and they have often shared their positive experiences on social media and blogs, for example, thereby increasing general awareness of the benefits.

V. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Together with the printed version of the Application form, additional material in digital format should be included in one CD-Rom or DVD and returned by post or courier to:

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- Text (20 pages max.): *PDF format*
- Photos (10 max.): *JPEG 350 dpi high definition*
- Posters (2 max.): *PDF format high definition or JPEG 350 dpi high definition*
- Video (15mn max.): *mpeg 2 format - It is advised to present a video (even of amateur quality).*

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