

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1
on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008
at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)¹*

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year 2020

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State: Georgia (country)

Name of the area: Vashlovani Protected Areas

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:

Vashlovani Protected Areas has been granted with the European Diploma Status in 2015, award has been renewed in 2020.

Central authority concerned:

Name: Agency of Protected Areas

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Authority responsible for its management:

Name: Administration of Vashlovani Protected Areas

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¹ As amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 on 2 July 2014 at the 1204th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.
Internet : <http://www.coe.int/cm>

1. **Conditions:** List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

N/A

2. **Recommendations:** List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. Finalise and start implementing in 2020 a new Management Plan for the next 9-years period. Include specific provisions dedicated to climate change and how to address this issue in relation to the long-term preservation of species and habitats typical from the area-

Preparing a new Management Plan for the next 9-years period is under the process of finalization and planned to be finished by the end of 2020. The current management plan is elaborated with the support of Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) and Society for Nature Conservation (SABUKO) with the active involvement of Agency of Protected Areas, administration of Vashlovani Protected Areas and local stakeholders. It should be noted that the plan is developed from “the bottom up principle,” thus, piecing together of systems to give rise to more complex and modern management system of high engagement performance from the bottom, as well. During an active working process, numerous public discussions have been organized by the Agency of Protected Areas to ensure the full involvement of stakeholders, representatives of donor organizations and local community.

2. Continue to fully implement the Pasture Management Plan as part of the general Management Plan. Carefully monitor the pasture activities and the respect of the lease contracts by the farmers. Secure the corresponding budgets from state and other sources.

Ensuring the full implementation of Pasture Management Plan represents one of the key priority directions for the Agency of Protected Areas, accordingly various important activities and projects have been facilitated with an active involvement of the Agency, local administration representatives and donor organizations. Attained experience in this regard is a valuable achievement, respectively. Successful completion of the following project “Sustainable management of pastures in Georgia to demonstrate climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits and dividends for local communities” within the financial cooperation of the EU and UNDP, is another important testimony in this regard. Within the above mentioned project, evaluation of pasture productivity has been conducted. The map for the core plant species of Vashlovani Protected Areas has been prepared with the GIS database, as well as an adjusted map of pastures.

It’s noteworthy and it is a really good tendency, that the Agency for Protected/VPA Administration have already received applications from the shepherds for the lease. The active working process in this direction is underway, which gives us an opportunity to predict, that by 2021 pastures will already be leased. Regular awareness raising meetings with the farmers are also held by the local staff of Vashlovani Protected Areas.

3. Collect all the available scientific data and integrate them into the database under construction. Present a systematic list of habitats with short description and respective coverage in the Vashlovani Protected Areas. Establish a comprehensive list of endemic, rare and threatened species with differentiation between the Caucasus, Georgian and local respective species.

According to the management Plan of Vashlovani Protected Areas Administration, administration has the direct obligation to annually conduct biodiversity research and monitoring activities of the respective species. Based on this, the above mentioned data is periodically collected by the natural resources specialists and the agency ensures the integration of an updated information into the database respectively.

Systematic list of habitats with short descriptions is represented as an appendix to the report document.

Besides the mentioned above, an active and comprehensive working process is underway to meet the existing requirements of full database. For instance, on behalf of the Agency of Protected Areas an official request letters have been sent to the researchers kindly asking them for the reports on conducting research works and attained results. The prior mentioned will facilitate the enrichment and update of the existing data base. Additionally, the agency relies on the technical and financial support of its donor organizations who express their readiness to allocate financial resources for the upgrading of existing database.

4. Continue working closely with the local authorities and communities, especially in the field of tourism and sustainable development.

The administration of Vashlovani protected areas continues close coordination with the local authorities and tourist service providers. Representatives of the National Park are active members of “Dedoplistskaro Tourism Development Association” and the “Local Action Group” (LAG). There is a joint work in order to increase awareness of the park and municipality on local and international level. The Administration of Protected Areas promotes the development of local tourism businesses. Despite the pandemic, in 2020 several new hotels and guest houses, as well as food facilities were arranged in municipality.

Representatives of the local tourism business always have the opportunity to receive recommendations from representatives of the park administration. It needs to be noted that this happens mostly in an informal way, like phone conversation, social networking, etc. Indicated approach helps to establish an even closer relationship between the local businesses and the national park.

5. Continue maintaining and improving the visitors’ infrastructures in the park; carefully control the motor traffic on the roads inside the protected areas and monitor the visitors’ activities.

The maintaining process of the tourist shelters is under the process. By the end of 2020, 7 tourist shelters in Mijniskure and 8 tourist shelters in central Vashlovani will be refurbished. Roads are being repaired regularly. Restrictions on driving motorcycles inside the park were imposed.

Being located in Dedoplistskaro, it needs to be noted that main administration building and visitor center of Vashlovani Protected Areas has been refurbished with financial support of Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF).

CNF also supported park to prepare detail design project for reconstructing old building (researchers’ house) located in Vashlovani National Park. The reconstruction works were already started in the beginning of the year, however, Covid-19 has hampered its implementation.

6. Pursue and develop international collaboration with the Republic of Azerbaijan, especially focusing on ungulate and large mammals’ conservation.

Georgia-Azerbaijan cross-border cooperation has been in an active phase since 2013. Cooperation in the field of biodiversity restoration in the Iori-Mingechauri cross-border area is noteworthy, in which the main component is the Gazelle Reintroduction Project. The above mentioned project was launched in 2013 with the support of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Agency for Protected Areas and relevant agencies in Azerbaijan. 73 Gazelles were relocated from Shirvan National Park to the Eldari lowland in 2013-2020. The project is successful and today the number of Gazelles reaches up to 180 individuals. Most part of Vashlovani Protected Area is located near to the border of Republic of Azerbaijan and a certain section of it borders the Ilisu Protected Areas. The Gazelle Restoration Project is also underway in Ilisu Protected Area, which is an important basis for future cooperation. Employees of Vashlovani Protected Areas Administration have visited Azerbaijan several times within the Gazelle Restoration Project. The visits served to train rangers to monitor the Gazelles, share experiences and enhance cooperation. Azerbaijani colleagues have also visited

Vashlovani Protected Area to participate in the monitoring of the Gazelles. At present, the results, methods and other important information of the Gazelles monitoring in the cross-border area are being exchanged on a regular basis.

7. Use more the European Diploma designation in promotional activities and display its logo; carefully consider other potential international designations, in order to avoid confusion among local authorities and population.

Information about holding the European diploma is constantly reported in the local and international media and social networks. To ensure the high visibility of European Diploma holding area, the agency printed specific number of brochures and leaflets with European Diploma logo displayed on it. With the purpose of European Diploma designation efficient promotion, the award logo has also been displayed on a photo album of Vashlovani National Park. Granting European Diploma is a special honor for the agency and the park authority. This designation is respectively emphasized in every presentation and public speech to highlight the international acknowledgement of Vashlovani Protected Areas. Park recognizes the importance of European Diploma for the further development and strengthening of the park and for park awareness raising among local authorities and communities, on the other hand.

3. Site Management: List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

In 2019, the validity of the Management Plan has expired. By the end of 2020, a new 9-year management plan will be elaborated for Vashlovani Protected Areas.

Besides, last year new working opportunities have emerged in the National Park and the number of people employed in the administration increased by 6 units. Besides, staff under service contracts are usually hired periodically due to high touristic season (from April till November) which enhances the employment chances for the local communities as well.

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered

Demarcation was conducted in 2019 to clarify the boundaries of Vashlovani Protected Areas.

As a result, some changes have been made, in particular, the shepherds' flats, namely 44 buildings, were excluded from the specified boundaries. As a result of implemented changes, the area of the National Park has been increased.

In 2018 area of national park was 24 610 ha, in 2019 it became - 25 025 ha.

Eagle gorge-98ha; Alazani floodplain forest- 201ha; Takhti tefa mud volcano-10ha)

5. Other information: List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

It is noteworthy, that the establishment of the first ever Biosphere Reserve in Georgia is planned in Kakheti Region, connecting Vashlovani Protected Areas and Tusheti Protected Areas to each other. An active process is underway to successfully implement the above mentioned project in the rational time

scale. It is worth mentioning, that establishment of Biosphere Reserve will not be the first case not only in Georgia, but in South Caucasus Region as well. Involvement of the Council of Europe and other international organizations will be very important for successful implementation of the project.

- The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year before a renewal of its European Diploma for Protected Areas, i.e. year 4 after the award of the European Diploma or year 9 after its renewal.

6. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

- 6.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
- 6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
- 6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

- 7.1. Cultural heritage
 - 7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
- 7.2. Socio-economic context
 - 7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

8. Education and scientific interest

- 8.1. Visitors – Information policy
 - 8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
 - 8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
 - 8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
- 8.2. Scientific research
 - 8.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
 - 8.2.2. Scientific publications

9. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

- 9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
- 9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
- 9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

10. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

- 10.1. Improvements made
 - 10.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
 - 10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
 - 10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
 - 10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
 - 10.1.5. Waste management
 - 10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
- 10.2. Management
 - 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
 - 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
 - 10.2.3. Internal policing measures
 - 10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

