COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Committee of Ministers
Comité des Ministres

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 2022

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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	ladotrapaidze@gmail.com
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Authority responsible for its management:	
Name:	Administration of Vashlovani Protected Areas
Address:	5 Baratashvili str, Dedoplistskaro
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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 nine-year period. Include specific provisions dedicated to climate change and ways to address this issue in relation to the long-term preservation of species and habitats typical of the area

A new nine-year management plan is already elaborated and approved by the Agency of Protected Areas of Georgia. The new document has been prepared within the support of the Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) and Society for Nature Conservation (SABUKO) with the active involvement of the Agency of Protected Areas, Vashlovani National Park Administration and local stakeholders.

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 lease contracts by farmers; secure the corresponding budgets from state and other sources;

The Agency of Protected Areas with the financial cooperation of the EU and UNDP has completed the Project “Sustainable management of pastures in Georgia to demonstrate climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits and dividends for local communities”. The project referred to the winter shelters of livestock on protected areas and the nearby located 45 farms of Vashlovani. Within the 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 pasturelands. Vashlovani Protected Areas Administration and the Agency for Protected Areas have already received applications from the shepherds for the lease. About 60% of pasturelands are already leased. Regular meetings to raise awareness among the farmers are also held by the administration staff of Vashlovani National Park.
In order to improve the living conditions of farmers, the construction of two water pipelines "Mlashetskali - Bugha Moedani" on 24 kilometers and "Mamachai Khevi - Samukhi" on 7 kilometers were carried out.

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

According to the work plan approved by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, as well as within the new 9-year Management Plan of Vashlovani Protected Areas, Administration has the direct obligation to annually conduct biodiversity research and monitoring activities of the onsite represented species. Based on this, the abovementioned data is periodically collected by the natural resources specialists and later integrated into the shared database. Systematic list of habitats with short descriptions is represented as an appendix to the report document.
The park administration cooperates with various environmental organizations and universities that implement research and monitoring projects in Vashlovani National Park. After the research is completed, the report is sent to both, to the administration and to the Agency of Protected Areas.

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

The administration of Vashlovani protected areas works closely 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). An active joint involvement is on face 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 business. In 2022 several new hotels and guest houses, as well as food facilities were arranged in the municipality.
Representatives of the local tourism business always have the opportunity to receive recommendations and tips from the park administration staff. It is noteworthy that this happens mostly in an informal way. For example: by phone conversation, social networking and etc. Such an approach helps to establish closer relationship and networking between the local business and representatives of the national park. Vashlovani

Protected Areas administration cooperates with Dedoplistskaro Tourism Development Association. The administration representative is involved in several joint projects.

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

The maintaining process of the tourist infrastructure is completed: Roads are being repaired regularly, restrictions on driving motorcycles and large camper trucks inside the park were imposed. During 2022, the administration continuously monitored the state of infrastructure units. Repair works were being carried out. 3 new picnic tables were constructed, covered and painted for visitors in Mijniskure bungalows. In Vashlovani, rangers station picnic area has been renovated. The wooden structures were renewed and covered with new roof. At the bear canyon, Vashlovani rangers station the Kakliskure, Central Bungalows and Kakliskure picnic areas were cleaned, renovated and arranged. The bathrooms of Mijniskuri bungalows were repaired. Barriers were installed at the nature monument of the Eagle Gorge, board stickers were renewed. The construction of the hiking trail of the Eagle Gorge has been completed. 175 units of road signs were installed in Vashlovani National Park and nearby.

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

Georgia-Azerbaijan cross-border cooperation has been in an active phase since 2013. Cooperation in the field of biodiversity restoration in 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, the Agency of Protected Areas and relevant agencies in Azerbaijan. 73 Gazelles were relocated from Shirvan National Park to Eldari lowland in 2013-2021. The project is successful and today the number of Gazelles reaches up to 300 individuals. Most part of Vashlovani Protected Areas is located near to the border of Azerbaijan and a certain section of it borders the Ilisu Protected Areas. The Gazelle Restoration Project is also underway in Ilisu Protected Areas, which is an important basis for future cooperation. Employees of Vashlovani Protected Areas Administration have visited Azerbaijan several times under the Gazelle Restoration Project. The visits served to train rangers to monitor Gazelles, share experiences and enhance cooperation. Azerbaijani colleagues also visited Vashlovani Protected Area to participate in the monitoring of the Gazelles. At this stage, the results, methods and other important information of the Gazelle monitoring in the cross-border area are being exchanged on a regular basis.

Agency of Protected Areas of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia and the Service of the Protection of Biodiversity of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan (hereinafter referred to as the Participants);

The cooperation between Participants under the MoU may include:

a. exchanges of information and materials, including digital communications and technology;
b. joint organization of symposiums, seminars, workshops, and forums;
c. planning, development, and implementation of joint projects and programs;
d. staff exchange, training, and other capacity-building programs;
e. reciprocal assistance and advice;
f. any other activities that may be jointly decided upon by the Participants.

It should be noted that the Parliament of Georgia has already granted the status of "multi-use area" to Samukhi Valley. This fact will make the protection and monitoring of Gazelles even more effective.

7. Use more frequently 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 the population.

Information about holding European diploma is constantly reported in the local and international media. Local and international tourists have the opportunity to get the proper information while visiting the Visitor Center To ensure the high visibility of European Diploma holding area. European Diploma designation and logo is represented on Vashlovani trekking maps as well. Leaflets and brochures are always printed with European Diploma logo on it. This designation is respectively emphasized in every presentation and public speech to highlight the international acknowledgement of Vashlovani Protected Areas

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.

The Previous Management Plan of Vashlovani Protected Areas was expired in 2020. From the beginning of 2021 the Agency together with Vashlovani Protected Areas Administration, various stakeholders and within the financial support of donor organisation, has ensured the elaboration of a new Management Plan which will be valid for the next nine years. In 2022, the staff of Vashlovani protected areas has been increased, 6 locals were employed as rangers.
Compared to 2021, revenues of VPA have increased by which it is the positive tendency and hopefully will be maintained in the upcoming years as well. (63133 GEL in 2021; 71355 GEL in 2022)

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. In 2021 there was a little changing in boundaries.
The total area of Vashlovani Protected Areas represents 35292 ha
(Vashlovani strict nature reserve- 9962ha; Vashlovani national park- 25021ha; Eagle gorge-98ha; Alazani floodplain forest- 201ha; Takhti tefa mud volcanoe-10ha)
In 2022, there is no changes in boundaries.

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 should be highlighted, that the first ever Biosphere Reserve in Georgia in Kakheti Region is already established.It connects Vashonavi Protected Areas and Tusheti Protected Areas to each other. It is worth mentioning, that establishment of Biosphere Reserve Is the first case not only in Georgia, but in South Caucasus Region as well. Involvement of the Council of Europe and other international organizations is very important for successful implementation of the project.

From January 2022, the employees of the security department started "SMART patrolling" of the territories in testing mode. Based on the available data in February, the report for January was prepared with the assistance of a foreign expert.
In order to correct errors made during data collection, rangers of the security department were additionally trained in the use of smartphones. In September, the database was updated in the Smart Patrol program and accordingly in the smartphones as well. New computers were purchased. ‘’Smart patrolling’’ is successfully implemented in the protected areas.

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The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year before a renewal of its Euroean 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

11. Influence of the award of the Euroean Diploma for Protected Areas