



COUNCIL OF EUROPE LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
LANDSCAPE AWARD OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

8th Session – 2022-2023

APPLICATION FORM

Presentation

The Council of Europe Landscape Convention is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all aspects of landscape: natural, rural, urban and peri-urban. It represents an important contribution to the implementation of the Council of Europe's objectives. By taking into account the value of landscapes, with their natural and human components, the Council of Europe acknowledges that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas.

Article 11 of the Convention establishes the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe. The Resolution [CM/Res\(2008\)3](#) 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 Award and that it is in keeping with the work carried out by the Council of Europe concerning human rights, democracy and sustainable development.

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.

Each State Party to the Convention is thus invited to send by post to the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe Landscape Convention), before 31 January 2023, via its Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe, a completed application form in paper format, together with a digital copy on a USB key of the form and additional material.

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Please note that:

- 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 authors' 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:

[Convention du Conseil de l'Europe sur le paysage / Site web officiel \(coe.int\)](#)
[Council of Europe Landscape Convention / Official website \(coe.int\)](#)

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I. STATE CONCERNED AND APPLICANT

1. State	Georgia
Represented by	Mr. Otar Shamugia
<i>Address:</i>	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia 6 Marshal Archil Gelovani Ave, Tbilisi 0159 Georgia
<i>Telephone:</i>	+ 995(32) 2 37 80 09
<i>E-mail:</i>	info@mepa.gov.ge
2. Applicant	Dedoplistskaro Municipality City Hall, Georgia
<i>Name of the local, regional authority(ies) or NGO(s)</i>	
Represented by	Mr. Nikoloz Janiashvili - Mayor
<i>Address:</i>	44 Kostava st, Dedoplistskaro, Georgia
<i>Telephone:</i>	+995 (0356) 2 2 -55-34
<i>E-mail:</i>	dedoplistskaro_region@yahoo.com

II. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJCT

3. Name of the Project

Improvement of Vashlovani landscape through the reintroduction of the Goitered Gazelle

4. Location of the Project

Vashlovani Protected Areas, Dedoplistskaro Municipality, Georgia

5. Summary of the Project (10-12 lines)

Historically, the Goitered Gazelle grazed the plains of Azerbaijan and Georgia in abundance, with populations in the Kura-Ara (k)s river lowlands reaching almost to Tbilisi in the early 1900s. Due to agricultural expansion and intense hunting, the species became extinct in Georgia in the 1990s and the total number of animals in Azerbaijan dramatically decreased as well. Today, the Goitered Gazelle is categorized in the IUCN Red List as Vulnerable (VU) and in the Red List of Georgia as well.

Being absolutely extinct, from 2012, Georgia started the Goitered Gazelle reintroduction activities. The main actors in this process was Dedoplistskaro Municipality, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture¹ (MEPA), Agency of Protected Areas (APA), Vashlovani National Park and World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The project "Improvement of ecosystem biodiversity in a transboundary Priority Conservation Area, Iori-Mingechauri" aimed to improve the ecosystem biodiversity in the Iori-Mingechauri transboundary priority conservation area through the rehabilitation of floodplain forest, improvement of Vashlovani protected areas landscape and reintroduction of extinct gazelles.

The Gazelle program was based on the reintroduction of individuals taken from healthy populations in Azerbaijan and released in Georgia – in total 10 Gazelles were transferred. Since the start of the Gazelle Reintroduction Programme, individuals have been translocated to Samukhi Steppe in Vashlovani Protected Areas.

Presently, the estimated number of Gazelles in Georgia is more than 250 individuals. The gazelle reintroduction in Vashlovani Protected Areas represents one of the best examples of biodiversity restoration in the region.

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

¹ There was the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources by that time



Author: Lasha Gigauri - The Agency of Protected Areas of Georgia

7. Website of the Project (*if exists*)

<https://apa.gov.ge/en/media/News/djeirnebis-reintroduqciis-proeqti-saqartveloshi-.page>
<https://nationalparks.ge/en/site/vashlovaniip>
https://www.wwfcaucasus.org/our_work/all_initiatives/gazelle_reintroduction_programme/
<https://apa.gov.ge/ge/media/News/djeirnebi-vashlovaniis-dacul-teritoriebze.page>
<https://nationalgeographic.ge/story/qurcikis-dabruneba/>
<https://www.facebook.com/WWFGeorgia/posts/274917768438052/>

III. CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

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

9. **Partners**
- | |
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| Dedoplistskaro Municipality, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), Agency of Protected Areas (APA), Vashlovani National Park and World Wildlife Fund (WWF); BMZ, WWF Germany, Government of Azerbaijan |
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10. **Financing bodies**
- | |
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| BMZ, WWF |
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11. **Central aims of the Project**

The central aims of the Project are (1) the establishment of a healthy, genetically diverse, self-sustaining population of Gazelles in Vashlovani Protected Areas (2) improvement of the ecosystem biodiversity and restoration of the landscape, to be appropriate for Gazelles; (3) the rehabilitation of the floodplain forest (4) improvement of the ecological environment in the area (5) the enhancement of awareness among the local population and improvement of their social-economic conditions.

12. Outcome

Project implementation contributed to the reintroduction of a species that became extinct many years ago in Georgia. Successful implementation of the project certifies that the landscape of Vashlovani Protected Areas has a high biological value and the areas are Gazelles' vital historical habitat since their population size increased significantly – from 10 individuals to almost 300, already.

The ecological environment in the area was improved.

Due to increased number of visitors at these areas, new working places were created, which lead to the improvement of the the socio-economic condition of the local population. Eco-friendly guest houses, local products, and local cafes have been developed there harmonized with the environment and nature. Consequently, visitors began to actively visit Vashlovani National Park and its surroundings, and tourists' motivation to stay in the areas increased as it is possible to monitor the Gazelles with binoculars at any time. Visiting these landscapes and its surrounding areas became more accessible and comfortable.

As a consequence of this successful project, in 2022 the new protected areas on 13 273.43 ha - The Samukhi Multiple-use Management Area (IUCN category VI) was established by Parliament of Georgia. This particular protected areas was established exactly due to the reason that it is the vital habitat for Gazelles and establishment of this protection system there ensures that landscape will be maintained untouched and the Gazelles will be protected safely.

These areas are part of Vashlovani National Park and Vashlovani National Park is considered to be one of the top 5 tourist destinations in Georgia.

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

13. 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?

Since Gazelles were absolutely disappeared from 1990s, the local population had already forgotten about these species. The Samukhi Steppe was under severe pressure of being damaged due to the fact that there was no Gazelles grazing at this areas. After the successful implementation of the Gazelle Reintroduction project the landscape became alive and returned its primary conditions.

After the successful implementation of the Gazelle Reintroduction project, awareness about the importance of Gazelle conservation has been enhanced among the local population which had a positive influence on the development of the Vashlovani Protected areas since illegal poaching and human irresponsibility have drastically decreased. The gazelle population has increased in their historical habitat underscoring the greatest importance and scenic value of Vashlovani Protected Areas. New eco-friendly infrastructure, a sustainable environment, and more opportunities translated to the local populations' social-economic conditions improvement. More international and local tourists started visiting the area because they had the possibility to stay there and observe the Gazelles all the time.

As restoration and protection of landscapes is one of the highest priorities for the country, this project was paid a crucial importance from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture as well. It became the part of sustainable development policy, and consequently the Ministry created a new protected areas on 13 273.43 ha to ensure long-term presentation of these habitats.

14. Exemplary value

Can the project be considered of exemplary value? Why?

Which are the good practices that it implemented?

The gazelle reintroduction in Vashlovani Protected Areas represents one of the best examples of biodiversity restoration in the region. The project improved the ecosystem biodiversity in the Iori-Mingechauri transboundary priority conservation area through the rehabilitation of the floodplain forest, improved protected areas management system and reintroduced extinct gazelles.

The project played a crucial role in two conservational directions: (1) the landscape was restored as it was damaged due to no grazing; (2) the food chain of different species living in Vashlovani Protected Areas was restored.

Project implementation as its value is also distinguished due to the fact that its implementation totally changed the situation in the region. After the effective implementation of the reintroduction project, local and international visitors began to actively visit Vashlovani National Park and its surroundings, and tourists' motivation to stay in the areas increased since it is possible to spot the Gazelles with binoculars to watch at any time.

15. 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?

Public participation is an integral component of protected area management. Most protected areas are a public asset and public participation is essential to ensuring they are properly managed and strongly supported by the public. Therefore, all levels of Government recognize the value of involving local communities in decision-making and to take a more active role in managing their local environments. State governments also now realize that community capacity building and enhancement of social capital can have significant flow-on effects in improving a State's environmental, social and economic well-being. The reintroduction project was primarily a communications project with an aim to raise awareness about the impact on the landscape and consequently – nature, therefore the society was directly and indirectly involved and engaged during all project.

While implementing the project, the Local Municipality and Agency of Protected Areas arranged consultation meetings with locals who expressed their opinion on how they saw the development of the area and how to tackle the obstacles coming up during the processes. All the involved parties had their role in this process: Ministry and Agency provided all the activities that were necessary for landscape restoration, on the other hand, the Municipality and local representation of the Agency of Protected Areas (Vashlovani National Park Authorities) made a great contribution in terms of communications with locals and making all the infrastructural facilities to make the road more accessible for visitors. Municipality also supported locals to start their ecotourism business activities and involve in the area revival process.

After the implementation of the project, eco-tourism has been developed in the mentioned area, in particular, family hotels, and shops have been developed, and various services have been introduced, for example, the visitor of Vashlovani Protected Areas has the opportunity to explore the off-road trails by jeep tours, experience a drive through breathtaking landscapes and observe the Gazelles at the same time.

Furthermore, along with the effective implementation of the project, additional human resources were needed for 24-hour monitoring of the Gazelles. Consequently, with the support of the local government new jobs were created employing local populations. They started working mainly as guides, rangers, etc.

Since the Vashlovani National Park area is a border region, the above project also promoted the establishment of a kind relationship between the border police and the local government, and the local population.

16. Awareness-raising

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

The project was significant for awareness raising regarding the landscape and its role in nature conservation. The Municipality together with the Agency of Protected Areas introduced a number of awareness-raising campaigns for spreading the news to different stakeholders. The central element of the campaign were training programmes, printing materials, and making videos, that stressed the importance of the project for nature and also for personal well-being and national identity.

Securing official and public support for the restoration programme is essential to its long-term success, especially if the gazelle reintroduction is intended to serve as a model for other species. Good communications and awareness-raising are therefore vital. A simple communications strategy was also developed by Agency of Protected Areas to identify the different target audiences and the most effective ways to reach them, as well as allocate responsibility for its implementation. The principal audiences were the government, the public, young people, and local communities (dealt with above). The strategy explained the rationale and aims of the programme and encompassed the press, radio, TV and the internet including social media such as Facebook. The aesthetic and cultural appeal of gazelles made them an attractive subject and facilitates their acceptance by the media.

It should be noted that Gazelles became the symbol of reintroduction and the “public face” of the restoration programme that had a valuable role in raising awareness. WWF also produced toys of “Gazelles” and they were distributed to wide society to remember people that Gazelles are integral part of Georgia’s biodiversity.

In total, the project added significant level to the understanding of landscape but also showed that it is closely tied to esthetical, social, economic, and historical aspects. The project showed that the landscape of Vashlovani National park is important as it is part of how we are formed, and therefore our today's actions will impact the identities of future generations.

V. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Together with the printed version of the Application form, additional material in digital format should be included in one USB key, and returned by post to:

*Secretariat General of the Council of Europe
Council of Europe Landscape Convention
8th Session of the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe
F-67075 STRASBOURG, Cedex*

- 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 (15 min max.): *mpeg 2 format - It is recommended to present a video (even of amateur quality).*