



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

9th Session – 2025-2026

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.

The 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Reykjavík on 16 – 17 May 2023, recognised “the urgency of additional efforts to protect the environment, as well as to counter the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.” It committed the Council of Europe to strengthening work on the human rights aspects of the environment and initiate the Reykjavik process of focusing and strengthening the work of the Council of Europe in this field, as laid down in Appendix V of the Reykjavik Declaration on “The Council of Europe and the environment”.

Appendix V of the Reykjavík Declaration references the Landscape Convention to highlight that “landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields and is a key element of individual and social well-being, and that landscape protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone.”

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), no later than 31 December 2025, 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.

*

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 \(coe.int\)](#)

*

I. STATE CONCERNED AND APPLICANT

1. State

Latvia

Represented by

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Ms Luize Eglite

The Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional
Development
Peldu iela 25, Riga,
LV-1494, Latvia

+371 67026553

+371 66016740

Luize.eglite@varam.gov.lv

2. Applicant

Name of the local,
regional authority(ies)
or NGO(s)

Latvian Fund for Nature

☐ Local / regional authority project

☒ NGO Project

Website of the Applicant (if
exists)

www.ldf.lv

Represented by

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Ms. Jeļena Žukova

Blaumaņa street 32-8, Riga, Latvia, LV-1011

+371 67830999

jelena.zukova@ldf.lv

II. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJET

3. Name of the Project

Restoration of the wooded meadows in Lejzemnieki and Kalnkalci, located within the Natura 2000 site “Ziemeļgauja”

4. Location of the Project

Natura 2000 site “Ziemeļgauja”, Lejzemnieki and Kalnkalci, Valka Municipality, Latvia

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

Wooded meadows and pastures are distinctive landscapes with rich biological diversity, high aesthetic value and a deep cultural heritage. They feature scattered trees or small clusters interwoven in a mosaic with semi-natural grasslands, which have been managed through grazing or haymaking for centuries.

Historically, such landscapes – like *Fennoscandian wooded meadows and pastures* in the Baltic states and Scandinavia, *Dehesa* in Spain, *Montado* in Portugal or *Camps* in France – were widespread across Europe. However, over the past 70 years, the homogenization and intensification of agriculture and forestry have led to the loss of most of these landscapes across Europe. A particularly rapid decline occurred in Latvia and other countries under Soviet rule, where large-scale homogenization peaked in the 1970s. During this period, extensive land drainage and field consolidation was carried out, and “unnecessary” landscape elements—such as old homesteads and ancient trees—were removed to increase the area of productive land, while sites that were too complex to improve were abandoned and subsequently overgrown. As a result, wooded meadows and pastures are among the rarest types of semi-natural grassland habitats In Latvia, remaining only in certain river valleys. Their total area does not exceed 1,137 hectares. Most of these sites are overgrown, as their maintenance is incompatible with productive, intensive agriculture, while the remaining open fragments are small and highly fragmented.

The NGO *Latvian Fund for Nature* (LFN) has been actively involved in the restoration of these rare landscapes since 2003, securing funding through the EU LIFE programme to restore wooded meadows at several Natura 2000 sites across Latvia. This work continued in 2021, when national funding was obtained to restore overgrown wooded meadows in Lejzemnieki and Kalnkalci, located within the Natura 2000 site “Ziemeļgauja”.

The removal of unwanted trees and shrubs, stump grinding, and the management of regrowth brought the ancient meadow trees back into view. Through restorative grazing and the sowing of characteristic grassland species, the species-rich ground layer of semi-natural grasslands was re-established. To ensure the long-term maintenance of the restored landscape, grazing enclosures were installed and appropriate grazing management was reinstated. In addition, a range of public awareness and educational activities was carried out to motivate other landowners of overgrown wooded meadows to initiate restoration of their own sites.

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



Restored wooded meadows at Natura 2000 site “Ziemeļgauja”, Photo: Kristaps Kalns

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

n/a

III. CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

8. **Start of the Project** June 2021
The project must have been completed at least three years previously
9. **End of the Project** October 2022
The project must have been completed at least three years previously
10. **Partners** -

11. Financing bodies

Latvian Environmental Protection Fund and Latvian Fund for Nature

12. Central aims of the Project

What are the main objectives of the project regarding landscape?

How does the project contribute to the implementation of the Convention at the national level or transnational level?

The project aimed to restore a small (35 ha) fragment of wooded meadow landscape within the Natura 2000 site “Ziemeļgauja” to its historical form. The results were used to inform and motivate other owners of overgrown wooded meadows by highlighting the uniqueness and value of these wooded meadow landscapes, the need for their restoration and conservation, and practical ways to become involved in their restoration and management.

The project outcomes are being shared with other landowners, habitat experts, and representatives of NGOs and institutions involved in the restoration of protected landscapes in Latvia and the Nordic countries. The experience gained is being applied to the planning and implementation of the restoration of other wooded meadow landscapes within the Natura 2000 site “Ziemeļgauja”, as well as at other sites across Latvia. It has also enabled the LFN to act as a competent partner in the international wooded-meadow restoration project *WoodMeadowLIFE* and to carry out restoration activities on a much larger scale following the project’s completion.

Although the project restored only a small fragment of the wooded meadow landscape, it made a meaningful contribution to the implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Latvia. This was achieved by demonstrating practical approaches to restoring landscapes of high nature value, introducing sustainable management solutions, and actively involving landowners, institutions, and the wider public.

13. Type of the Project

Describe the nature/type of the project:

Does it focus on landscape protection and management, or does it involve landscape planning, or both?

Is the project related to specific measures or to a landscape public policy?

Is it implemented at a national level or a transnational level?

The project focused primarily on landscape protection and management through the restoration of a biologically, culturally and aesthetically significant wooded meadow landscape. It included a range of practical restoration measures such, as thinning trees and shrubs, grinding stumps, mowing regrowth, and restoring grazing infrastructure.

The restored landscape corresponds to the EU habitat type 6530* *Fennoscandian wooded meadows*, as listed in the EU Habitats Directive. The restoration works were carried out in accordance with the management and restoration guidelines for the EU habitat *Fennoscandian wooded pastures* developed by the European Commission (DG ENV), as well as with the national conservation plan for habitat 6530* in Latvia, the National Conservation and Management Programme for Natura 2000 sites in Latvia, the Prioritized

Action Framework for Natura 2000 in Latvia, and the management plan of the Natura 2000 site “Ziemeļgauja”. Planning of the restoration activities was based on a careful assessment of site-specific restoration needs to ensure that the interventions were appropriate, sustainable, and fully aligned with the relevant planning documents, and carried out in agreement with the landowner.

Information on the restoration activities and the conservation needs of wooded-meadow habitats was disseminated through the LFN’s social media channels, as well as through a range of national and regional media outlets in Latvia. By raising public awareness of wooded meadow landscapes and the actions required to restore them, the project supported the implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

Although implemented at the national level, the project also achieved transnational outreach. By hosting delegations from LIFE project teams in Lithuania, Estonia, and Sweden, as well as participants of the 14th European Conference on Ecological Restoration organised in Estonia in 2024 by the Society for Ecological Restoration, the project’s results were demonstrated internationally. This promoted the transfer of good practices and fostered a shared approach to landscape management, restoration, and preservation across countries.

14. Outcome

What are the effective and measurable results of the project on the landscape?

By removing the trees and shrubs that had encroached the ancient wooded meadow landscape over the past fifty years, grinding the stumps, and managing regrowth through mowing and grazing, the landscape was restored across an area of 35 hectares. Together with other wooded meadow restoration initiatives in Latvia, this work has contributed to improving the conservation status of the EU Habitat type 6530* Fennoscandian wooded meadows, both within the Natura 2000 site “Ziemeļgauja” and at the national level.

The installation of grazing infrastructure has enabled the long-term management and maintenance of the restored open landscape. By involving local livestock farmers in the ongoing management of the restored areas, the project has also contributed to strengthening rural businesses.

Through educational events that included practical activities – such as building bird and insect houses and sowing seeds collected from nearby species-rich semi-natural grasslands – the local community has been strengthened and inspired to carry out similar restoration work on their own properties.

Through a range of dissemination activities, the project’s results have been demonstrated not only to local residents and owners of overgrown wooded meadows, but also to experts, organizations, and institutions involved in the restoration of valuable landscapes in Latvia and the Nordic countries. The experience gained during the project is being used as an example of good practice to guide the planning and implementation of further wooded meadow restoration initiatives within the Nature 2000 site “Ziemeļgauja” and at other sites across Latvia.

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

15. 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?

Does it respond to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss? How?¹

Wooded meadows rich in flora and fauna are an essential component of Latvia's historical mosaic landscape. This landscape type was almost lost during the 50 years of Soviet rule, when all private property was nationalized, and land use was collectivized and intensified. These processes completely disrupted the traditional management practices that had created and maintained these valuable landscapes for centuries. When Latvia regained its independence in 1991, land was returned to its historical owners, and – aligned with European democratic values – landowners once again gain the opportunity to decide how to manage their land. However, many traditional values, skills, and forms of knowledge had been lost during the Soviet period, and most of the valuable wooded meadow landscapes had already disappeared. As a result, there was a clear need for good examples to encourage their recovery.

Restoring overgrown wooded meadow landscapes brings back the site's historical character, visual quality, and biological diversity. The ancient trees that define these landscapes developed and matured under open conditions. Without ongoing extensive management, younger trees and shrubs encroach, increasingly shading the ancient trees until they gradually die — along with many associated species of mosses, lichens, vascular plants, and invertebrates. By uncovering and freeing the ancient wooded-meadow trees, their lifespan can be extended for another hundred years, providing long-term habitat for numerous plant and animal species.

The careful selection and preservation of individual younger trees supports the long-term continuity of the wooded meadow landscape. By installing grazing infrastructure and managing the restored areas in cooperation with local livestock farmers, the project not only ensures the ongoing maintenance of restored sites but also contributes to local business development and strengthens rural communities.

Using the restored areas as demonstration sites for landscape restoration practices has stimulated the recovery of other overgrown wooded meadows both in the region and across Latvia. These efforts have strengthened landscape governance, fostered cooperation among landowners, entrepreneurs, municipalities, and national institutions, and improved public understanding of the value of visually, ecologically, and functionally high-quality landscapes and the need for their conservation.

The project also strengthens local landscape resilience to climate change and the biodiversity crisis. Wooded meadows are among the most species-rich habitats in our region and one of the

¹ Appendix V to the Reykjavík Declaration

densest plant communities in the world in terms of species richness. As demonstrated by examples from Estonia, up to 76 plant species can occur within a single square meter of such sites. While such records are not yet reached in our restored meadows, a significant increase in species richness has already been observed.

Large trees provide habitat for numerous species of invertebrates, lichens and polypores, including hermit beetle *Osmoderma barnabita*, the orange polypore *Hapalopilus croceus*, and other priority species of EU importance. The mosaic structure of the wooded meadows increases ecosystem tolerance to drought and heat. Sustainable grazing preserves habitat functionality, promotes carbon sequestration in the soil, and enhances the landscape's capacity to adapt to a changing climate.

16. Exemplary value

Can the project be considered of exemplary value? Why?

Which are the good practices that it implemented? Which of these practices are considered of exemplary value at the national or transnational level?

The project has exemplary value, as it achieves several objectives simultaneously: restoring biologically valuable and culturally significant landscapes, implementing a sustainable management model, promoting local community involvement and facilitating experience exchange while encouraging the transfer of knowledge and results at both national and international scales.

The approaches applied in the project are now being used in the planning and implementation of similar restoration initiatives in the region and elsewhere in Latvia. Key approaches include:

- Careful planning and coordination of restoration activities;
- Detail documentation of restoration work and achievements;
- Thoughtful selection of restoration contractors, prioritizing local entrepreneurs who are able not only to carry the required works but also ensure the long-term maintenance of restored sites;
- Intensive grazing of regrowth and unwanted species during restoration phase, which enabled to accelerate the short-term results;
- Sowing seeds collected from nearby species-rich semi-natural grasslands on soil exposed by stump grinding, significantly accelerate the recovery of a species-rich grassland understory;
- Public demonstration of progress and results, combined with active involvement of the local community in practical habitat restoration activities, fostered public support, improved understanding of the need for such initiatives, and inspired other owners of similar overgrown landscapes to undertake similar work on their own properties.

Although restoring species-rich wooded meadow and pasture landscapes is a long-term process, the project has already delivered strong results in the short term. Just three years after the restoration works, previously overgrown areas now offer visually high-quality landscapes and flower-rich pastures. Over this period, plant species richness has doubled and continues to increase.

The demonstrable success of the project has encouraged the LFN to engage in further wooded meadow restoration initiatives, including the ration on a much larger scale within the

WoodMeadowLIFE project, under which 200 hectares of wooded meadows are currently being restored. In addition, the project has inspired other owners of overgrown wooded meadows, both in the region and across Latvia, to initiate similar restoration activities on their properties. The restored landscapes and their management solutions continue to be showcased to landscape restoration practitioners and planners in Latvia and internationally.

17. Public participation

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

Which stakeholders were involved, and how and when were they engaged? When did the active public consultation and dialogue take place, and in what form?

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

Restoration activities were carried out in full compliance with applicable regulations, nature protection requirements, expert assessments, and agreements with landowners.

During the restoration work, the local community was actively involved in building and installing bird and insect houses, as well as in sowing seeds collected from nearby species-rich semi-natural grasslands. In subsequent years, public engagement has continued through participation in annual spring clean-up events and through donations supporting collection and sowing meadow seeds, within the initiatives such as 'adopting' a square meter of the restored meadow.

Annual landscape education tours have become a cherished LFN tradition. These guided hikes offer participants the opportunity to learn about the plants, fungi, mosses, insects, birds and bats of the restored landscapes and understand their conservation needs. The tours traditionally conclude with a communal meal and a musical performance, further strengthening local community cohesion.

LFN actively promotes nature values by regularly publishing information on its [website](#) and social media platforms ([Facebook](#) – 18,000 followers; [Instagram](#) – 5,500 followers; [YouTube Channel](#) – 30,200 subscribers) and by organizing targeted media campaigns in support of biodiversity conservation. These campaigns highlight the ecosystem services provided by natural resources and encourage practical actions, such as locating species-rich meadows and weaving flower crowns for the summer solstice, removing invasive Canadian goldenrod that suppresses native vegetation, and collecting only part of fallen leaves while leaving the remainder to support soil and insect ecosystems. LFN also organizes annual events such as the [Meadow Festival](#) and the seminar “*I Want a Meadow*”, and regularly participates in national-level information exchange and public discussion events, including the democracy and dialogue festival “*Lampa*”.

The experience gained during the project has enabled LFN to act as a support organization, advising landowners on the conditions required for restoring overgrown landscapes and encouraging them to use of livestock for restoration and long-term management. These activities are complemented by LFN's broader initiatives, including the [“Semi-Natural Grassland Product”](#) label, grant competitions supporting volunteer-based meadow restoration events, and other good-practice programs.

The project contributed to the fulfilment of Latvia's nature protection commitments by aligning with the Latvian Biodiversity Strategy, the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, and the principles of the European Landscape Convention, thereby promoting the preservation of natural values and sustainable landscape management in the public interest.

Building on this experience, continued support from the EU LIFE programme has enabled the restoration of 288 hectares of wooded-meadow landscapes and the establishment of three demonstration farms. These initiatives encourage other landowners to restore overgrown landscapes on their properties and integrate restoration with environmentally friendly livestock farming. The project clearly demonstrates that agriculture and nature conservation can coexist and mutually reinforce one another.

18. Awareness-raising

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

As a result of the project, a successful example of wooded-meadow restoration and management was established, which continues to be used in subsequent LFN initiatives for public engagement and education, including landscape tours, social media campaigns, and experience-sharing events. By demonstrating the restoration work to land owners of overgrown wooded meadows, local residents, and the wider public, the project has significantly enhanced understanding of the importance of visually and ecologically valuable landscapes and the need for their restoration.

All project activities were carried out in close cooperation with landowners and in full respect of human rights and the rule of law, thereby fostering public trust and reinforcing shared values within Latvia and Europe.

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
Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG I)
Directorate of Social Rights, Health and Environment
Department for the Reykjavík Process and Environment
Council of Europe Landscape Convention
9th 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 (5 min max.): *mpeg 2 format - It is recommended to present a video (even of amateur quality).*