

**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 2018

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

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 Area has been awarded in 2015; Number of years - 3 years

Central authority concerned:

Name: Agency of Protected Areas; Ministry of Environmental protection and Agriculture of Georgia

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Authority responsible for its management:

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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.

Conditions:

1. By the end of 2015, remove the shelters located on the immediate border of the Vashlovani Strict Nature Reserve, and rigorously enforce the existing regulation for grazing in the reserve;
2. accelerate the drafting process of a comprehensive sustainable grazing management plan, taking into account the socio-economic context and the effects of grazing, positive and negative, on the long-term conservation of the features of the Vashlovani Protected Areas; this plan will have clear objectives, a time frame for implementation and indicators of progress, and will address the matter of dismantlement and relocation of grazing equipment and activities outside the strict nature protection areas and the restoration of degraded zones of the Vashlovani National Park. A draft will be submitted to the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma by the end of 2016, with alternative grazing areas located at a reasonable distance from the borders of the zones where these activities are forbidden; the State Party is also urged to enforce the existing regulation on grazing in the whole Diploma area, without delay, and to limit grazing activities to the carrying capacity for the Vashlovani Protected Areas (to be determined);

Response:

1. The Agency of Protected Areas has discussed the above mentioned topic related to the existing shelters in Strict Nature Reserve, hence taking into consideration all the recommendations and the importance of the issue, demarcation of the given area was conducted, based on which the area was excluded as the part of Strict Nature Reserve and was granted the status of National Park – Category II.

2. A Pasture Management plan for Vashlovani Protected Areas elaborated in 2016 is in place. It ensures rehabilitation of grazing areas on Vashlovani Protected Areas and introduces sustainable grazing practices.

On the other hand, in the frames of the financial cooperation with EU and UNDP, the Agency of Protected Areas has completed the Project “Sustainable management of pastures in Georgia to demonstrate climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits and dividends for local communities” within which 4,064 ha of degraded pastures were rehabilitated, about 300 ha of migratory route was introduced, as well as sustainable pasture management practices among farmers and sheep-breeders in the Vashlovani Protected Areas were implemented.

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.

Recommendations:

1. Develop and fund an operational and comprehensive monitoring programme of the Diploma area; this programme should be focused on the specific natural and landscape features of the Diploma area and the anthropogenic pressures on it;
2. prepare and implement a programme to maintain and renovate field equipment and the infrastructure for tourists and visitors
3. Pursue, update and complement inventories and mapping of species and habitats (distribution, abundance, state of conservation and tendencies), taking into account the Emerald Network's standards and requirements
4. secure the Vashlovani Protected Areas core budget, from internal sources preferably, and provide funding to ensure that the 2013-19 management plan is fully implemented
5. start the process of drafting the next management plan in a timely manner, so that the whole award period of the European Diploma for the Vashlovani Protected Areas is covered
6. improve further the expertise and skills of the staff members, especially in the field of ecology and the knowledge and monitoring of species;
7. continue and develop cross-border co-operation for the protection of large carnivores

Response:

- Operational plan for Vashlovani Protected Areas has been developed after the elaboration of Management Plan and thus, represents one of the important guideline for defining the further steps of the Administration. Besides, a comprehensive Monitoring Programme is also in place and the administration actively uses the elaborated methodology to conduct monitoring on the "Red Listed" species spread on the given area. The database is being updated permanently, at this stage information of the last two years is already available on the website.
- Annual action plan is being developed which covers the programmes and activities from the Management Plan that can be implemented in the upcoming year.
- For maintaining and renovating field equipment and infrastructure 3-year project is implemented in Cooperation with CNF, which is regularly updated after each 3 year.
- The inventory of the species is carried out permanently with taking into account the standards and requirements of the Emerald Network as far as Vashlovani Protected Areas together with Batsara-Babaneuri and Lagodekhi Protected Areas designated as Emerald Network Sites. Though, it's very crucial to renew and strengthen monitoring of endemic and relict species, Gazelle and other "Red List" species that are spread on the European Diploma area, as well as collecting climate monitoring data.
- The budget for financing 2016-2019 management plan activities is consisted by state budget and the funds from Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) and WWF (TJS programme).
- A 6-year Management Plan is already elaborated and is valid till 2020. However, the revision of an existing management document, revealing essential needs and priorities for the next year is important and will be undertaken. Additionally, a Tourism Development Strategy in Vashlovani Protected Areas is under the process of development.
- The Agency as well as CNF and TJS programmes imply capacity building activities for the administration staff to provide qualification and knowledge enhancement opportunities for them and hence ensure a better management skills and service quality of the Diploma area.
- Experience sharing activities with partner international organisations is carried out regularly. For instance, cooperation with Azerbaijan referring to Gazelle reintroduction is in the process currently. Developing further steps is under way together with WWF.

2. 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.

No changes have been implemented in this regard.

3. 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.

Amendment of the boundaries of Vashlovani Protected Areas has not been undertaken for the current reporting period.

4. 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's worth mentioning that the number of local and international visitors at Vashlovani Protected Areas is increasing permanently. Based on the source of APA, according to the data of November 2018, 12 357 visitors have visited Vashlovani Protected Areas. The park's Income in 2018 is GEL 65 583.

The interest toward Georgian Protected Areas is rapidly increasing year by year.