



Co-funded by
the European Union



European Heritage Award/ Europa Nostra Award 2024 for the National Trust of Georgia

In 2021-2023, the National Trust of Georgia set up a collaborative European project to restore a medieval tower in danger of collapse, in Khevsureti, a remote high-mountain region of Georgia. The complex project was successfully implemented thanks to the high commitment and excellent collaboration of British, French, Polish and Georgian partners, an experienced team of professionals, and the tireless effort of 46 young Georgian and European citizens working on a volunteering basis. The project has brought much-needed national and international attention to this remote mountain community of Georgia and enhanced its potential for future sustainable development.

[The National Trust of Georgia](#), with [The International National Trusts Organisation \(INTO, UK\)](#), the lead partner, [REMPART](#) (France) and Association '[Ducal Tower in Siedlecin](#)' (Poland), is proud to announce that this project, titled '*Citizens' Rehabilitation of the Tsiskarauli Tower, Akheli, Georgia*' was selected for Europe's most prestigious award for heritage, the *European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award*, co-funded by the [Creative Europe](#) programme of the European Union. The project was commended by the [European Commission](#) and [Europa Nostra](#) on 30 May as one of **26 outstanding winners from 18 countries**.

The project was supported by a grant from **ALIPH - the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas**. Georgia benefitted with an amount of US\$ 157,290, of which about US\$ 34,000 went directly to the local community, actively involved in the project activities.

The 19-metre medieval watchtower is set in one of the nation's remotest regions – cut off by a 2,900 metre pass, eight months of the year. The tower, severely damaged by a Russian missile in 2001 during the Second Chechen war, had been in danger of collapse. 46 Georgian, French, Polish and British citizens worked alongside technical experts, local villagers, and traditional craftspeople to restore the tower, which is now a model for rehabilitation of Georgian defensive architecture.

Alongside the tower's stabilisation, a large focus of this project was knowledge sharing and capacity building. As well as learning new skills in stonemasonry and trail building, participants experienced one another's intangible heritage, thus showing the peacebuilding capacity of collective restoration. The project has raised the profile of volunteering in Georgia and provided sought-after opportunities for young citizens to engage with their heritage, fostering local pride and identity.

The project faced many challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and a major landslide. Against all odds, the Tsiskarauli Tower carries a new, positive layer of history, marked by European collaboration. [This short film](#) (5 minutes) shows the project coming to fruition.

Marine Mizandari, Co-chair, National Trust for Georgia, said:

'The commitment of British, French, Polish and Georgian professionals and young volunteers and their determination to rescue the medieval tower in danger of collapse in Georgia, were instrumental to overcome all challenges and to successfully fulfill this worthy mission.'

This was a collaborative European project in the field of safeguarding Georgian cultural heritage on a scale I have never seen before. Multiple benefits and impacts of this joint initiative are already tangible: through this project, we have strengthened the local community, have increased the potential of eco-tourism in this remote region, and have put a solid international network of young volunteers in place. Through the extensive media coverage, we have raised awareness of the uniqueness of Georgia's cultural heritage and importance of its protection, both within the country and internationally. I am convinced that the fully rehabilitated tower will continue to be a focal point around which new initiatives can flourish'.

Today the tower, with its internal museum, stands open to the public – inviting a new population of tourists up to this remote and beautiful valley. The visitors can read about the tower's history on interpretation panels, see the remains of the Russian missile, learn of its restoration, and explore the surrounding villages.

"The Citizens' Rehabilitation of the Tsiskarauli Tower embodies excellence in heritage conservation through a holistic approach, integrating the restoration of built heritage, community engagement, international collaboration, and capacity-building, following the severe damage to the monument caused by a Russian missile fired during the Second Chechen war. Engaging in a broader network and consortium, the project provided a platform for the exchange of knowledge and culture", the Awards' [Jury](#) commented.

"The use of traditional materials and techniques has enhanced the authenticity of the work, while community engagement, involving locals, international volunteers, and the diaspora has created a sense of stewardship. The project has served as a catalyst for international cultural relations, peace, and trust building, demonstrating the power of heritage-led collaboration in overcoming conflict and rehabilitating local communities", the Jury concluded.

Please consider voting in Europa Nostra's [Public Choice Award](#) for the National Trust of Georgia's work at Tsiskarauli Tower and Boulouki in Greece! The vote is open until 22 September.



2024 WINNERS
CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT
AND AWARENESS-RAISING

