

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2016

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional network: Bakony–Balaton UNESCO Global Geopark, Hungary, European Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2012 / 2016 (green card: 2017–2020)



Representative Photo: a geo-activity day for schoolchildren at the Geological Asset of the Year (on Earth Day, in a disused Permian sandstone quarry near Alsóörs village)

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 6 people (3 female, 3 male), including 3 geoscientists

Number of visitors: altogether 342,221 (mostly at visitor centres, interpretive sites); from this 7,509 visitors on geo-activity days, geo-events, guided geotours, geopark contest, etc.)

Number of Geopark events: 150

Number school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 88

Number of Geopark press release: 46 interviews and articles in the national and regional media (38 articles, 8 interviews in radio and TV)

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2016

- Starting a new EU project on management of 22 geosites.
- Active role in the establishment of the Hungarian Geoparks Committee.
- Launching the Geopark Product label programme for local entrepreneurs.
- Starting the Danube GeoTour INTERREG DTP project on geotourism networking and development.
- A new region of the Geopark was covered by a geotour-guide training for local people.
- Our Geopark's booth at the 95th Lavender Fair in Digne-les-Bains, Haute Provence UNESCO Global Geopark, France.

Contribution towards GGN - networking and participation:

- Participation in the 37th EGN CC meeting in Basque Coast Geopark, Spain.
- Participation, oral and poster presentations at the 7th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks, English Riviera Geopark, UK. At the same venue, participation in the 38th EGN CC meeting, in the 1st GGN General Assembly, our delegate is also member of the GGN Advisory Committee and the GGN Election Committee.
- Collecting and preparing for publishing the European Geoparks Week programme 2016 and the progress reports from all the members of the EGN.
- Participating in the work of the EGN Volcanic Geoparks Working Group, creating and updating the layout design of the future e-book, titled "Volcanic Geoparks in Europe".
- Hosting the inaugural session of the Hungarian Geoparks Committee at the Headquarters of our Geopark.

- Publishing two articles in the European Geoparks Magazine.
- Participation in the successful Danube GeoTour INTERREG DTP project on geotourism networking and development (Coordinator: Ildrija UGG, other partners include 9 Geoparks, total budget: 1,665,509 EUR, BBUGG budget: 257,000 EUR).
- Participation of a student group from our Partner School and of a colleague from the Geopark staff in the International Geoparkcamp “Arts Meet Geology” (Muskau Arch Geopark, Germany–Poland), with its artworks to be exhibited in the participating Geoparks.
- Thanks to the invitation of Haute Provence UNESCO Global Geopark, our Geopark and some local producers could present themselves in a 100 sq metres booth at the 95th Lavender Fair in Digne-les-Bains, France
- Visit of mayors, tourism experts, etc. from the territory of Novohrad–Nógrád UNESCO Global Geopark (Hungary–Slovakia)
- Volunteers’ and young ambassadors’ study tour in our Geopark from Hateg County UNESCO Global Geopark, Romania
- Our Geopark staff colleague, as an invited speaker, gave an oral presentation on our Geopark at an international conference in the aspiring Saarte Geopark, Estonia.
- Two-day-long field trip in our Geopark for 30 visitors from Ildrija and Karavanke/Karawanken UNESCO Global Geoparks (Slovenia–Austria)
- Two presentations on volcanic Geoparks of Europe and on UNESCO Global Geoparks at the Lavender House Visitor Centre (calling information and photos from the GGN members)

Management and financial status

The Geopark's organisation and its predecessor organisations have been in operation for decades. The organisation has been operating as Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate since the foundation of the national park, 1997. The Bakony–Balaton Geopark Group, as an organisational unit within the directorate, established in 2012 is responsible for the tasks directly related to the Geopark's goals and it works closely with other units of the directorate (e.g. Ranger Service, Department of Ecotourism and Environmental Education, Financial Department). Visitor sites managed by the directorate are operated by permanent and temporary employees or by contracted local entrepreneurs. The management structure is designed especially to enhance protection of natural heritage, thus protection of geological heritage is included. The directorate's substantial activities, experience and existing infrastructure in the field of tourism and connections to local businesses provide an ideal ground for the geopark organisation to promote sustainable regional development for the proposed geopark area. The Director of the Directorate and the Head of the Bakony–Balaton Group are the two official delegates to the EGN Coordination Committee.

The Geopark's leading organisation, the national park directorate is a regional state organisation that manages its budget independently. The budget is partly supported by the state via the Ministry of Agriculture and mostly by incomes from tourism and other fields. Within the directorate's budget, the Geopark is supported via the salaries of the Geopark Group staff members and other members and via amounts paid for other costs of the Geopark (office costs, conference participation costs, GGNA membership and EGN promotional fees, travel, etc.). Successful project applications prepared by the Geopark staff for the development of the Geopark also contribute to the budget. Financial support from the EU, through our successful applications for geotourism investments (eg. building a visitor centre or renewing an exhibition of a visitor centre) and geological nature conservation investments (eg. clearing geosites) in the Geopark are also important elements of the budget. The Geopark Group defines the costs needed for different projects and activities and the Director of the leading organisation makes the decision regarding these costs.

Geoconservation

- Starting a new EU project on management of 22 geosites (key sections, caves, sinkholes, geological nature conservation areas, new nature trails with holistic approach, etc.) of the Geopark (budget appr. 500,000 EUR)
- Consultations with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Hungarian national park directorates about declaring geological key sections and fossil sites, springs and caves protected

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- Altogether 95 geotours with 2,876 participants (62 geotours were guided by the staff of the Geopark leading organization, 23 were guided by our Geopark Partners (local entrepreneurs).
- New installations and panels in the Lavender House Visitor Centre, the Eastern Gate of the Geopark (topics: geology, volcanology, volcanic UNESCO Global Geoparks)
- Designing and installing new panels for a geological nature trail in a disused sandstone quarry near Alsóörs village, new information boards at an old wash-house near Kővágóörs village and at the Permian/Triassic boundary near Csopak village.

New education programmes on geoconservation, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction

Geopark Contest for students on the geological, ecological and intangible heritage of the Geopark

- Outdoor geo-pedagogic activity days for students at 'Geological Asset of the Bakony–Balaton Geopark of the Year'
- Guided geo-walk and activities for kids at Hegyestű Geological Interpretive Site
- "Car-free" days in Balatonalmádi and Tapolca
- "Meet Santa Claus" programme for small children in Lóczy Cave
- "Snail Shell Stroking" in Várpalota Disused Sand Pit Nature Conservation Area

Strategic Partnership

- Signing cooperation agreements with trained geotour-guides, our Geopark Partners
- Clearing a Permian-Triassic boundary geosite by a local foundation (Csopak village)
- Volunteer camp by Pangea Association: renewal of a geological trail, new information panels, clearing a disused Permian sandstone quarry in Alsóörs village
- Volunteer camp by a student group of our Geopark Partner Steiner School in Nemesvámos: clearing the Úrkút Palaeokarst Nature Conservation Area
- Launching the Geopark Product programme, calling local producers, the first evaluation of the submitted products (involving experts).
- "Ammoniterrace": a new contemporary art installation in the park of the Geopark leading organization, designed and built by the team of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (via Hello Wood project).
- Successful application of our Geopark Partner civil organisation, Bakonyalja Barátai Association for financing a geotour-guide training course to start in the Southern Bakony I. region, in cooperation with the Geopark leading organisation

Promotional activities

New geopark leaflet with UNESCO logo, etc. (Hungarian, English) • installing 3 large Geopark welcome boards (with UNESCO logo) along main roads at the boundary of the Geopark • 10 new supplementary panels (with UNESCO logo) to traffic boards near our visitor centres • National promotion of caves in the framework of a tourism campaign • Daily updated website (geopark.hu), Facebook page, mailing lists, tourism leaflets • Celebrating and promoting of the 'Geological Asset of the Bakony–Balaton Geopark in 2016' • Highly visited Geopark booths in the Valley of Arts Festival (Kapolcs), on "Dino Days" (Iharkút) and at "Earth Science Whirl" (Budapest), etc. • Information and advertisements on the Geopark in the most popular hiking maps • Media publicity and informing the local communities and partner organisation about our UNESCO Global Geopark designation

4. Contacts

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