

GGN/EGN - Geopark Annual Report 2020

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)
The last revalidation of our Geopark was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Representative photograph: participants of the geotour-guide training course in the High Bakony region of the Geopark (September–October 2020).

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: two people in the Geopark Group (two geoscientists, one of them is also a regional development specialist). The number of Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate (our management organization) staff: 129 employees (members of the departments permanently collaborate with the Geopark Group).

Number of visitors: 253,330 (in visitor centres, interpretive sites within the Geopark territory), 1,691 participants on 72 guided geotours by our Geopark Staff, 2,498 participants on 142 guided geotours by our contracted Geopark Partners, geo-educational programmes, etc.)

Number of Geopark events: 218

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 6

Number of Geopark press release: 5 interviews and articles in the national and regional media (1 article, 4 interviews in radio and TV)

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2020

- Working on a EU project at 22 geosites, called “Management and Interpretation of the Geological Heritage in Bakony–Balaton Geopark”.
- Declarations of protection for geological key sections and springs.
- A geotour-guide training course was held in the High Bakony region of the Geopark, mostly for local people.

Contribution towards GGN - networking and participation:

- Participation in digital fora of the EGN and GGN.
- Publishing an article in the EGN Magazine Issue 17: Geotour-guide training courses as a tool for strengthening “Geoparkian” identity”.
- Barnabás Korbély was the co-author of another article in the same EGN Magazine issue: “The European Geoparks Week 2019”.
- Submitting our revalidation dossier to UNESCO.
- EGN Week: popular guided geotours in numerous regions of the Geopark.
- Contacting one of our most active Geopark Partners with other European Geoparks in the frame of Erasmus+ “Adult education methodology development of geohike-guides and handicraft colleagues at BAB Association” project; the first study tour was in Aspiring Geopark Železné hory, Czech Republic.

Management and financial status

The management organisation of the Geopark is the Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate, a regional state organisation, established in 1997 and belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture. The Directorate is headed by the Director, who is an official delegate to the EGN CC. The Bakony–Balaton Geopark Group is an organisational unit of the Directorate, headed by a geoscientist/pedagogue, who is the other delegate to the EGN CC. The Geopark Group staff recently consists of two geoscientists (one of them is also a specialist on regional development and a certified geotour-guide, too). The members of the Geopark Group are also officials in charge of geological nature conservation. The Group closely cooperates with other units, eg. with the 21 members of the Ranger Service, the Department of Nature Conservation (13 employees), the Department of Ecotourism and Environmental Education (32 employees, in which one member is our most active geotour-guide and a geoeducational expert; she has MSc as a secondary school teacher of Geography and Biology). The Geopark Group was established by the Organisational and Operating Rules of the Directorate in 2012, after the successful application to the EGN/GGN. The overall financial status of our Management Organization in 2020:

INCOME	EXPENDITURE	BALANCE
15 273 866 EUR	10 420 319 EUR	4 853 547 EUR

Geoconservation

- Working on a large-scale EU project (“Management and Interpretation of the Geological Heritage in Bakony–Balaton Geopark”) on management of 22 geosites of the Geopark: geological key sections, caves, sinkholes, protected geological nature conservation areas, new nature trails, information booklet with holistic approach in Hungarian and English, etc.), the project budget is 520,867 EUR, anticipated period of the completion: 2021.
- Declaration of protection for geological key sections: 10 new natural monuments (by ministerial decrees) within the Geopark territory, interpretive panels and authority boards at the sites.
- Surveying numerous natural springs, preparation for their declaration of protection by the nature conservation authorities.
- Removing the vegetation at geosites by the Geopark Group staff and by contracted entrepreneurs: two geological key sections in Bakony Mts, Palaeokarst of Úrkút Nature Conservation Area, pyroclastic section near Szentbékállá, Permian–Triassic boundary geosite near Csopak, etc.
- Field trip and consultation with geoconservation specialist colleagues in Bükk National Park (northern Hungary).

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

General comment on COVID-19 pandemic in our Geopark

The first two known cases in Hungary were found on 4 March. On 11 March, the Hungarian government declared a state of emergency. Kindergartens, schools and universities were closed on 16 March. All the visitor centres, show-caves, facilities, etc., operated by Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate, the management organization of Bakony–Balaton UNESCO Global Geopark, were also closed, all the programmes and events were cancelled. Outdoor visitor sites were reopened on 4 May and most of the visitor centres, other indoor facilities and show-caves were reopened on 19 June. Due to the second wave of the pandemic (which was unfortunately more intensive than the first one), new restrictions came into force on 1 September: as a general rule, only Hungarian citizens were allowed to enter the country (they were also required to enter quarantine for a period of two weeks). Further restrictions were again lifted on 11 November: all the visitor centres, show-caves, facilities, etc., were closed, all the programmes and events were cancelled.

- The “flagships” of our Geopark’s information and interpretation activities are the visitor centres, interpretive sites (253,330 visitors in 2020 = the number of people who bought tickets). E.g. the most visited show cave in Hungary is the Lake Cave of Tapolca, the Western Gateway of our Geopark.
- Our Geopark-related nature trails and hundreds of guided geotours (provided by the Geopark staff and our contracted Geopark Partners) also attracted thousands of people.
- Creating Earth science contents and illustrations/photographs for the exhibition of Lóczy Cave Visitor Centre, Balatonfüred (to be opened in 2021).
- Handover ceremony of a new Geopark-related nature trail in Csabrendek village (result of a cooperation with local communities and a Geopark Partner NGO).
- Participation in making a new, 33-km-long thematic nature trail (“Valley of Watermills and Springs”).
- Handover of the new Kis-Balaton Visitor Centre (there is an Earth science/Geopark section in its exhibition, content was created by our Geopark staff).
- Preparation of our new guided geotours by e-bikes.

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

- Geoeducational programme for school classes in Lake Cave of Tapolca Visitor Centre (the Western Gateway of the Geopark), in Alsóörs and Nemesvámos villages.

Strategic Partnership

- Guided geotour on Szent György Hill, an iconic volcanic landmark, for the Directors of Hungarian National Park Directorates and for the State Secretaries of the Ministry of Agriculture (state-run nature conservation belongs to this ministry in Hungary).
- Voluntary work with local people and with members of a Geopark Partner NGO in an abandoned Eocene limestone quarry near Csabrendek village.
- Signing cooperation agreements with trained local geotour-guides, our new Geopark Partners.
- Successful application of our Geopark Partner civil organisation, Bakonyalja Barátai Association, for financing a geotour-guide training course to start in the High Bakony region, in co-operation with our Geopark management organisation.

Promotional activities

- New promotional leaflet of our National Park (for year 2020) with logo and main features of visitor centres and interpretive sites of the Geopark (250,000 copies, in

Hungarian and English)

- Daily updated website (geopark.hu) with Events Calendar, Facebook page (more than 7,000 followers), Instagram profile, mailing lists for our Geopark-fans, tourism leaflets.
- Information and advertisements of the Geopark in the most popular hiking maps of the area.

4. CONTACTS

Manager: Mr Zoltán PUSKÁS, Director of Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate (the Management Organization of our Geopark), puskaszoltan@bfnp.hu

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