

European Geoparks Network

Activity Report 2024



EGN
EUROPEAN
GEOPARKS
NETWORK



The European Geoparks Network (EGN) continued to grow and strengthen its activities in 2024, fostering international cooperation, knowledge exchange, and sustainable development in UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGGp's) across Europe. This report provides an overview of the key activities, meetings, and initiatives undertaken throughout the year.

The EGN welcomed **11 new UNESCO Global Geoparks**, bringing the total number of EGN members to **109**. The network saw an increase in collaborative projects, educational initiatives, and engagement with local communities and stakeholders. The EGN Coordination Committee (CC) met twice in 2024 in mixed sessions of presentations, EGN institutional activity and workshops.

49th EGN Coordination Committee Meeting, 5-9th March

The **49th EGN Coordination Committee Meeting** was held in Kula Salihli UGGp, Turkey, with nearly **200 participants**. The meeting facilitated discussions on network governance, working group progress, and the integration of new members. The EGN CC took a number of official decisions: it voted to approve the 2024 budget, and also the use of the EGN Creative Commons Licence 4.0, a standardized way to grant public permission to use creative work under copyright law. In the absence of specific copyright permissions, European UGGp's will now use CC licenses for shared network output. The SDG Working Group prepared a successful workshop on SDG activities in Geoparks. Starting with activities in smaller groups, the whole EGN then came together to share good practice examples and learn from different geoparks.

Finally, elections for the EGN Advisory Committee (AC) and the EGN Coordinators took place, with new members joining an enlarged leadership team. The members of the EGN Advisory Committee comprise:

Institutional Members

Sophie Justice, Chablais UGGp France, Coordinator
Babbis Fassoulas, Psiloritis UGGp Greece, Vice-coordinator
Alessia Amorfini, Apuan Alps UGGp Italy, Institutional Member
Cristian Ciobanu, Hateg Country UGGp Romania, Institutional Member
Daniela Rocha, Arouca UGGp Portugal, Institutional Member
Ilias Valiakos, Lesvos Island UGGp Greece, Institutional Member
Javier Lopez Caballero, Institutional Member
Kristin Rangnes, GeoNorwegica UGGp Norway, Institutional Member
Mikko Kiuttu, Rockua UGGp Finland, Institutional Member
Suzana Fajmut Štrucl, Karawanken/Karavanke UGGp Austria-Slovenia,

Individual Members

João Carlos Nunes, Portugal, GGN Individual Member
Martina Pásková, Czech Republic, GGN Individual Member

Non-elected Members

Andreas Schuller, Founding Member - Vulkaneifel UGGp, Germany
Guy Martini, Founding Member - GGN
Nickolas Zouros, Founding Member - Lesvos Island UGGp, Greece
Tony Ramsay, Magazine Representative - Fforest Fawr UGGp, UK

Observers

Asier Hilario, IUGS – Basque Coast UGGp, Spain
Kristof Vandenberghe, UNESCO
Tim Badman, IUCN

EGN sincerely thanked Chris Woodley-Stewart, Maria Elena Mateo Mederos and Thuridur Aradottir Braun for being active EGN AC members from 2022-24 and who made significant contributions to the life of the network during this time.

50th EGN CC Online Meeting 18th & 19th September 2024

The EGN meeting in September 2024 took part in two sessions on 18th & 19th September. The meeting included plenary addresses from UNESCO and GGN as well as networking time.

The eleven new European UNESCO Global Geoparks were welcomed into the network : **ArmoriqueUGGp**, France, **Biokovo-ImotskiLakes UGGp**, Croatia, **BükkRegion UGGp**, Hungary, **Calatrava Volcanoes Ciudad Real UGGp**, Spain, **Impact Crater Lake –LappajärviUGGp**, Finland, **Land of Extinct Volcanoes UGGp**, Poland, **MeteoraPyliUGGp**, Greece, **Normandie-Maine UGGp**, France, **Oeste UGGp**, Portugal, **ScheldeDelta UGGp**, Belgium & Kingdom of the Netherlands, **The South Fyn Archipelago UGGp**, Denmark.

During EGN CC business, the network agreed the importance of seeking to be exemplary in its climate decisions and actions. The EGN CC was invited to work on this topic to understand its network carbon footprint, it was suggested that this could be done in the timeframe of 2027. On a further matter, the

EGN CC voted to approve the EGN Youth Involvement Strategy (89% support), confirming that involving youth is a necessity and to offer young people an opportunity to get engaged the values and activities of the UNESCO Global Geoparks, as well as to offer the motivation and practical tools for UGGps for working with youth.

The EGN CC members participated in an online workshop organised and facilitated by the EGN Climate Change Working Group. This well-prepared event was packed with information and aimed to provide all European UGGp's with a solid baseline on mitigation and adaptation. This was the first in a series of workshops to be proposed for the EGN CC on this topic.

17th European Geoparks Conference, Reykjanes UGGp 2 – 4 October 2024

The **17th European Geoparks Conference** took place in **Reykjanes UNESCO Global Geopark, Iceland**, bringing together geopark representatives, scientists, and partners from across Europe. The conference focused on **geohazards, climate resilience, and sustainable geotourism**, reflecting the unique geological activity of Iceland's landscapes and the difficulties faced today in the communities affected by active volcanism.

Key Highlights:

- **Main Theme:** "Geoparks and Climate Resilience – Adapting to Change"
- **Opening Ceremony:** Featured keynote addresses by UNESCO representatives, Icelandic politicians, and a powerful keynote about disaster risk reduction by the Icelandic meteorological office.
- **Parallel Conference Sessions:** Covered topics such education, sustainable tourism and geoheritage.
- **Workshops:** Explored community engagement, education, and geodiversity.
- **Field Excursions:** Participants visited key geological sites within Reykjanes UGGp, including active geothermal areas and lava fields, showcasing the impact of geological forces in real time.
- **Networking & Collaboration:** Delegates discussed future partnerships, funding opportunities, and shared success stories from their respective geoparks.
- **Geofair:** Stands presenting national fora and Geoparks in a lively setting with music and an artistic backdrop.

In addition to the activities, a special presentation was made of the second 100 IUGS Geological Heritage sites listing specifically those sites that are located within European geoparks. The conference reinforced the **role of geoparks in addressing global environmental challenges** while promoting **sustainable tourism and education**. It concluded with a commitment to increased collaboration and knowledge exchange between geoparks, ensuring that best practices continue to evolve within the European Geoparks Network.

EGN Working Groups

Several **EGN working groups** made significant progress in 2024, focusing on specific themes such as:

- **Geohazards and Risk Reduction:** The EGN Geohazards Working Group published a book on disaster risk reduction, sharing best practices and case studies.
- **Geotourism and Sustainable Development:** A cross-border initiative was launched to enhance sustainable tourism models within European geoparks.
- **Fossil Record and Evolution** Finalised a declaration for the Protection, Enhancement and Promotion of Palaeontological Heritage that has now been shared with the GGN.

- **Temporary Working Group on Governance and Resources:** Identified the missing information and the external assistance the network needed to investigate a robust future structure for the EGN.
- **Education:** The first session of the Geopark teacher's forum took place in October 2024.
- **Temporary Youth Engagement:** Developing outline approach developing an EGN action piloted by youth and not the established members.

EGN Communications

- **EGN Magazine:** Publication of edition N°21 featuring EGN Week feedback, Geopark articles and a celebration of the 20 years of GGN.
- **Social Media Growth:** Increased engagement through targeted campaigns, highlighting geopark activities and conservation efforts.
- **Newsletter:** Regular EGN newsletters showcase themed EGN activity for members and the public.
- **EGN Members News:** Information for institutional and individual members about the network.
- **EGN Website:** Simple updates were made to the existing EGN website and needs were discussed for an updated website.

EGN continued to promote public engagement through various events:

- **EGN Week 2024:** Geoparks across Europe organized events, guided tours, and community projects to raise awareness about geological heritage – the 20 Years of the GGN was celebrated.
- **International Days:** Participation in Mother Earth Day, Geodiversity Day, Disaster Risk Reduction Day, and other global occasions.

External EGN Activities

As well as the work within Geoparks, the EGN was represented at a workshop for UNESCO National Commissions by Sophie Justice, EGN Coordinator. Providing examples of the everyday, community work that UGGp's in Europe engage in, Sophie highlighted the opportunities for closer support and collaboration between national geoparks and their commissions.

The EGN was also invited to participate in the EuroGEO workshop 2024 in Krakow, Poland, on October 8th and 9th, which gathering over 300 participants from research institutes, the European Commission, and partner organizations. During the event, the EGN Coordinator delivered a presentation highlighting how a deeper understanding of geodiversity can inform better decision-making in managing natural heritage. This aligns with EuroGEO's goal to provide science-based support for EU policies and explore how these policies can be effectively translated into local actions. Additionally, a review paper on the relationship between geodiversity and biodiversity was accepted for publication in late 2024 and is expected to serve as a key resource for the group's future activities.

Closing Remark

The EGN remains committed to fostering sustainable development anchored in its geoheritage throughout European geoparks.

Thank you to all EGN members and partners for another successful year!