

# GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

## 1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

**Geopark name, country, regional Network:** Swabian Alb UNESCO Global Geopark, Germany, European Geoparks Network

**Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation:** 2015 / 2024



Revalidation Mission UGGp Swabian Alb, 9<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> July 2024

## 2. GEOPARK FIGURES

**Number of Geopark staffs:** 5 employees, including 3 geoscientists

**Number of visitors:** The 24 Geopark information centres are very heterogeneous and range from small museums run by associations to highly frequented tourist facilities such as show caves or a thermal bath. The number of visitors therefore vary enormously. Most of the Geopark-infocentres had between 1000 and 56.000 visitors each. 2024 in total, more than 1 million people visited the Geopark info centres. As four information centres are no longer part of the network due to a new partnership agreement, the figures have fallen slightly compared to the previous year.

The 12 show caves and the visitor mine stayed stable compared to 2023 with about 300.000 visitors.

The SAT (Swabian Alb Tourism association) states that 5,98 million overnight stays were recorded in the area of the Swabian Alb 2024, including 1 million international guests.

**Number of Geopark events:** 6 (management body) and about 26 (cooperative organization)

**Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes:** Currently 11 Geopark-schools work with the management body of the UNESCO Global Geopark. The geowindows project has been provided every Geopark school with an innovative medium in which complex geological processes can be simulated and understood.

**Number of Geopark press release:** 3 (Geopark Office), about 25 (Member districts and partners)

### 3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

#### Major achievements in 2024

- Revalidation Mission: Green card
- First Geopark symposium with over 50 participants as a kick-off event for the EGN Geopark Weeks
- Geopark festival 2024 at Open Air Museum Beuren (participation of more than 30 institutions)
- Inauguration of one new geopoint (Journey through Earth's history), Danube seepage

#### Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Participation on the 49 th EGN Meeting, Kula- Salihli UGGp, Turkye
- Participation on the 17th European Geoparks Conference, Reykjanes UGGp, Iceland
- Contribution to EGN MAGAZINE 22
- Contribution to EGN weeks: 1<sup>st</sup> Geopark symposium, lecture on the topic of climate change, guided tours and events of our Partners, social media
- Contribution to EGN Newsletter No 26

#### Management and Financial Status

- Dr. Sibylle Knapp, Geologist, is manager of the Swabian Alb UGGp.
- Geopark is mainly financed by the members of the association, which are 10 counties, 3 communities and 3 associations.
- Additional funding was secured for 2024/2025 via third-party funding provided by the Ministry of Food, Rural Areas and Consumer Protection, Federal State of Baden Württemberg (Ministerium für Ernährung, ländlicher Raum und Verbraucherschutz Baden Württemberg). Until 2023, the Geopark received pure project funding. Since 2024, institutional funding has been granted, which offers the Geopark far more opportunities.
- The Geopark received European funding through the INTERREG project "Danube GeoTours Plus". (Duration of the project 2024-2026)

## **Geoconservation**

- Creation of a new survey form for the development of an updated geotope register and planning of the 2025 fieldwork

## **Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)**

- Start of the INTERREG project “Danube GeoTour Plus” to develop strategies for inclusive and engaged geopark communities by offering unique, responsible and high-value geopark heritage experiences and a sustainable and balanced visitor management. It is an EU-funded cooperation between 9 geoparks and other relevant institutions from various countries bordering the Danube.
- New geopoint at the Danube seepage in cooperation with the local tourist association Continued cooperation with the SAT (Swabian Alb Tourism association) to develop the region holistically and create a sustainable visitor guidance concept.
- Continuation of the cave explorer map project for children
- Free updated “Geopark Discovery Map” based on a geological map, that combines geo-education and sustainable tourism. Available at all tourist information centers and geopark information centers.

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

- Landscape guide training on the topic of signs of climate change and geohazards
- Training at geopark schools on the topic of sustainability in everyday school life
- Network meeting of the show caves with topics including sustainable visitor management
- Successful finalization of ESD project of the 8 German UGGPs, the German Commission for UNESCO, the German Environmental Foundation and the Töpfer Nature Foundation
- Introducing a new innovative teaching medium “Geowindows” for all Geopark schools

## **Strategic partnership**

- Continuation of the round table established in 2021 with the other UNESCO stakeholders within the Geopark: Biosphere reserve Schwäbische Alb and the three Cultural Heritage sites.
- Continued cooperation with the SAT (Swabian Alb Tourism association) to develop the region holistically and create a sustainable visitor guidance concept.
- Participation in the working group "ESD pilot community Alb Donau Kreis", one of the ten districts of the Geopark. (since 2022)

- Partnership with University of Applied Forest Science Rottenburg and Bruderhaus Diakonie (in the context of INTERREG Project Danube GeoTours Plus)

### **Promotional activities**

- Development of an image figure that appeals to children and families: “MONI”
- Update and new edition of our main print medium “discovery map”
- Reinforcement and realignment of our social media presence (facebook and instagram)
- Creation of a calendar 2025 for the 10th anniversary of the UNESCO Geopark
- Beachflags for all Geopark Information centers as a low-threshold and easy-to-transport solution to achieve more visibility.
- Conception of an automated quarterly Newsletter (starting 2025)

### **4. CONTACTS**

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