

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: Holy Cross Mountains UNESCO Global Geopark (Poland)

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2021 / 2024

Representative photo with caption (from the most important event this year)



Participants from the local community on the Świętokrzyski Geotourism Rally - photo. Krzysztof Sabat

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 10 staffs including 3 geoscientists: 4 employees from member municipalities and 1 employee from partner organization (members of the Geopark Management Board) and 5 educators working at the Geoeducation Center in Kielce - the main informational and educational center of the Geopark managed by the Kielce Municipality, a member of the Geopark

Number of visitors: The number of the visitors to the major geosites, museum or visitor center:

Kadzielnia (geosite) – 330 366 visitors

Chęciny: Medieval Royal Castle and historic town (cultural site) – 214 950 visitors

Ethnographic Park at Tokarnia (cultural site) – 110 022 visitors

Wietrznia (geosite) with the Geoeducation Center – 103 123 visitors

The Raj (Paradise) Cave (geosite) – 106 824 visitors

Śląchowice (geosite) – 62 719 visitors

Botanical Garden (natural site) – 50 469 visitors

The Cracov Bishops Palace (cultural site) – 59 000 visitors

Podzamcze Chęcińskie – Palace-park complex and Science Center (cultural site and education center) – 70 000 visitors

Miedzianka (geosite) with the Ore Mining Museum Chamber (museum) – 3 227 visitors

Chałupki - Center of Pottery Tradition (cultural site - museum) – 5 100 visitors

Total number of visitors at the territory of the Holy Cross Mts. UGGp in 2024: 1 115 800 visitors

Number of Geopark events: 60

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 110

Number of Geopark press release: 16

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2024

- Successful cooperation with the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society - Świętokrzyski Branch (non-governmental organization bringing together local tourist guides) in the field of organization of the **1st Edition of the Świętokrzyski Geotourism Rally**
- **Co-organization of the 4th Edition of the GeoFestival Kielce** – a large geotourism event focused on promoting geological and natural heritage, as well as active education and tourism within the Kielce Municipality, part of the Świętokrzyski Geopark.
- Successful cooperation with the Department of Geology and Geotourism AGH University of Krakow, Polish Geological Institute, The University of the National Education Commission in Kraków and the and representatives of Polish geoparks and geotourism centers in the field of **organization of the 9th Edition of the National Geo-Product Forum in Chochów**, the largest event in Poland dedicated to popularizing knowledge on the protection and sustainable use of geological heritage in geotourism, as well as integrating communities representing geoparks, geoeducation centers, scientific and research institutes, universities, non-governmental organizations, and business entities.
- **GEO-VOLUNTEERING in the Geopark** – effective collaboration with the “Siła Woli” Association and engaging youth in activities related to the geopark (including the initiative to

create the geopark mascot, Tymek the Trilobite).

- **“ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKA CLAY” PROJECT** – effective collaboration with the Institute of Design, the National Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning, and the local Pottery Tradition Center in Chałupki as part of an educational and artistic project showcasing ceramic raw materials and their use in traditional crafts and modern design.
- **GEOLOGY ENTHUSIASTS CLUB** – a year-round educational initiative involving meetings, classes, and workshops for the local community (mainly families) and engaging this community in Geopark activities; in 2024, 30 meetings were organized.
- **Organization of Popular Science Conference "60th Anniversary of the Discovery of Raj Cave"** – co-organization of the event in collaboration with the Łysogóry Foundation and the Świętokrzyski Branch of the Polish Geological Institute
- **Organization of National Popular Science Conference "Mineral Resources in the Service of Man. Geology – Mining – Geoeducation"** – organization of the event in cooperation with partner institutions, including the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Świętokrzyskie Teacher Training Center,
- Successful cooperation with non-governmental organizations aimed at preparing and implementing projects that take into account sustainable development goals, including:
 - cooperation with the "Recover the Environment" Foundation in organizing educational events and information campaigns related to promoting recycling, environmental education, and counteracting the negative effects of climate change,
 - Successful cooperation with partners (schools from Latvia, Spain and Turkey) within the Erasmus+ project "Back to Green," focused on education aimed at counteracting the negative effects of climate change, environmental education, and exploring the geo- and biodiversity of the areas participating in the project (including the Holy Cross Mts. Geopark).
 - cooperation with non-governmental organizations ("We See Differently" Foundation, "Chance for the Blind" Foundation, "Świętokrzyski University of the Third Age") to improve the accessibility of geo-educational facilities and to prepare geo-educational offerings for people with disabilities and seniors.
- Effective partnership collaboration with Polish UNESCO Global Geoparks to local, regional and international partners, including UNESCO Global Geoparks from Poland, Germany, Denmark, Czech Republic, Island.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Active participation of representatives of the Holy Cross Mountains UNESCO Global Geopark

in conferences and meetings (including online meetings) organized in 2024 by GGN and EGN:

- EGN Spring Meeting in Kula-Salihli UGGp (Turkie) 5-9 March 2024
- 17th European Geoparks Conference 2024 in Reykjanes UGGp (Island)
- meetings of the GGN Advisory Committee.
- Collaboration in organizing and participating in the **EGN Geopark Teachers Forum** 21 October: an initiative aimed at creating a collaborative space for teachers from geoparks, including the exchange of experiences and best practices in education and project implementation.
- Active participation of the Holy Cross Mountains UNESCO Global Geopark in actions and promotional campaigns organized by GGN, including, above all, EGN Week 2024, International Geodiversity Day, World Water Day, International Museum Day, World Cleanup Day, World Soil Day, International Tourism Day.
 - Continuation of the implementation of international projects and collaboration with institutions/organizations (including geoparks) initiated in 2022/2023: Project „*Geotourism and Geoparks – developing Earth sciences and environment education for sustainable societies*” (successful cooperation with Department of Geology and Geotourism AGH University of Krakow and Katla UNESCO Global Geopark)
 - Active participation of the Holy Cross Mts. UGGp in the V4 Geoparks Conference 13-15 May 2024 at the Barrandien Geopark (Czech Republic) related to the exchange of best practices and the initiation of cooperation between geoparks (including UNESCO Global Geoparks) from the Visegrad Group countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary).

Management and Financial Status

- The Holy Cross Mts. UGGp is managed by the Association of five Municipalities. The Association has a statute, legal personality and is the organization responsible for managing the Geopark. According to the Polish law, the members of the Association are five local government units, of whom the representatives of the association's organs are elected: the General Assembly, the Management Board and the Audit Committee. In 2024, the management structure of the Geopark remained unchanged.
- The Holy Cross Mts. Geopark Association of Communes has an independent budget and a financial management system resulting from formal and legal conditions of communes as local government units. Funding for the basic operations of the Geopark and financing investments/initiatives/projects related to the statutory activities of the Geopark comes from

four different sources:

I - basic budget of the Holy Cross Mts. UGGp Association: membership annual fees of each of five communes

II – project budget of the Holy Cross Mts. UGGp Association: External financial resources obtained from international/national/regional programs and grants (Erasmus+, EEA Grants, Regional and Local Grants).

III - An independent budget of the municipalities – members of the Geopark's Association, related to expenditures for the tourism and promotion of geological/natural/cultural heritage as well as the investment projects related to Geopark's area (ex. touristic development of geological, natural, and cultural sites; tourism route and path)

IV - Expenditures (EU funds and contributions from member municipalities of the Geopark) for large investment projects related to the construction or modernization of tourist infrastructure at geological, natural, and cultural sites located within the Geopark.

In the budget summary for the year 2024, the two main components of the budget: funds from membership fees (I) and funds directly acquired by the Association from external sources (II), amounted to a total of 40 706,93 EUR.

Geoconservation

- Ongoing maintenance (cleaning, maintenance of green areas, repair of tourist infrastructure) of selected, representative geosites from the funds of communes - members of the Geopark Association
- Effective cooperation with non-governmental organizations (Speleoklub Świętokrzyski, Świętokrzyski Klub Alpinistyczny) and private entities (Tyrolka na Kadzielni, blogger TymRazem.pl) in the protection and conservation of selected geosites (Kadzielnia, Wietrznia, Moczydło).
- Special campaigns for cleaning selected geosites carried out in cooperation with local associations and schools,
- Collaboration with the Regional Environmental Protection Directorate in Kielce in the scope of the protection and conservation of geological heritage, as well as consultation of documents related to protection plans and protective tasks of selected geological reserves - representative geosites of the Geopark: Wietrznia, Kadzielnia, Ślichowice, Biesak-Białogon, Zelejowa, Moczydło

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- Effective cooperation of the Geopark (including member municipalities of the Geopark) with local non-governmental organizations in organizing events promoting geotourism,

sustainable and active tourism, including among others: Świętokrzyski Geotourism Rally, Kielce Geological Walk, Hiking tour "In the Footsteps of Earth and Man," Polish Nordic Walking Cup, XXXII 50th ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKA Walking Marathon, „Gwarków Rally along the Kielce Marbles Trail" – hiking and cycling rally.

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

- Development and implementation of a new educational offer at the Geoeducation Center – the main information and educational centre of the Geopark (among others: new geo-educational workshops for children and youth „4 ELEMENTS OF GEONATURE")
- Collaboration of the Geopark with the "Recover the Environment" Foundation in organizing a nationwide informational campaign and educational program "Poland's Recycling Capital," aimed at promoting pro-environmental attitudes and the idea of sustainable development.
- GEOLOGY ENTHUSIAST CLUB – as part of the year-round activities of the Club, new geo-educational sessions for children, youth, and adults have been introduced, with a focus on topics related to geoconservation, nature conservation, and ecology.

Strategic partnership

- Continuation of strategic partnership between Polish and Germany geoparks: Muskau Arch UGGp, Holy Cross Mountains UGGp, and the Land of Extinct Volcanoes aUGGp;
- Continuation strategic partnership between geoparks and institutions form Visegrad Group countries (Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungarian);
- Strategic partnership and cooperation with leading universities and research institutes in Poland: Polish Geological Institute, Warsaw University - Faculty of Geology, AGH University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Earth Sciences University of Silesia
- Strategic partnership and collaboration in the promotion of geotourism and the geopark with national and regional organizations associated with tourism: Polish Tourist Organization, Regional Tourist Organization of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, Świętokrzyskie Branch of the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society.
- Partnership collaboration with organizations/institutions associated with selected geoparks (including: Madonie UNESCO Global Geopark, Vestjylland UNESCO Gobal Geopark, Katla UNESCO Global Geopark) as part of international projects (see point: Networking and participation)
- Partnership with schools and organizations from Turkey, Spain, and Latvia in the project „BACK to GREEN" under the Erasmus+ program, focused on several key topics: environmental education, sustainable development, botany, biodiversity conservation, climate change and its impact on biodiversity.

Promotional activities

- promotion in social media as part of facebook, instagram and YouTube channels; official fb profile: <https://www.facebook.com/geopark.swietokrzyski/>
- promotion on the official website of the geopark: <https://geopark.pl/>
- Promotion in local and national media (TV, radio, press)
- Promotion of the Geopark as part of cooperation with Polish and international travel bloggers (including organizing study visits in the Geopark, publishing articles on blogs, and creating multimedia content by bloggers to promote the Geopark)
- Promotion of the geological and cultural heritage of the Geopark through the new quest "Kielecki Geological Paradise," organized in collaboration with the Regional Tourist Organization of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship and the Questing Foundation "Treasure Hunt Adventure."
- Joint promotional campaign of Polish Geoparks (Muskau Arch, Holy Cross Mts., Land of Extinct Volcanoes) on the occasion of International Geodiversity Day 2024
- Promotion as part of international circumstances (including Earth Day, Sustainable Tourism Days)
- Promotion of the Geopark as part of local events (science picnics, field games, quests, trips, lectures)
- Promotion of the Geopark in cooperation with local tourist guides and hotels

4. CONTACTS

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February 28, 2025

Przewodniczący Zarządu

Michał Poros

Michał Poros - Chairman of the Board

Holy Cross Mts. UGGp