

# GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

## 1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

**Geopark name, country, regional Network:** Rokua UNESCO Global Geopark, Finland, European Geoparks Network

**Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation:** 2010 / 2022

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



Picture: Public workshop for a new environmental artwork “The Mark” and the outcome with the artists in Leppiniemi, Muhos, western part of Rokua Geopark. Picture: Mikko Kiuttu / Rokua Geopark.

## 2. GEOPARK FIGURES

**Number of Geopark staffs:** 7 staffs including 1 geoscientist(s). Number of permanent staff is two.

**Number of visitors:** Estimated total 200 000; Rokua National Park 50 700, Lake Oulujärvi Hiking Area 41 800 (two sites with exact data).

**Number of Geopark events:** 20

**Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes:** 10

**Number of Geopark press release:** 10

## 3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

### Major achievements in 2024

- Seven new environmental art works were completed all over the area, including designing workshops, constructing workshops and publishing ceremonies.
- Trail markings were renewed for a 100-kilometres hiking trail and new information boards were assembled to 17 rest places along the trails.
- A new, 20-kilometres-long hiking and mtb trail was opened.

- Several field trips were organized for schools. The biggest environmental education event was a camp for 10-year-old children, organized by Oulu parishes, where Rokua Geopark was responsible for a nature activity.
- Rokua Geopark participated in three tourism fairs and hosted four tour operators familiarization trips in the geopark to promote the sustainable tourism services.

### **Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation**

- School exchange program with Katla Geopark and Trollfjell Geopark continued and ended in spring, when students from the other geoparks arrived in Vaala. Rokua Geopark's geoscientist was planning and organizing the exchange week's program.
- School exchange programs with Swabian Alb Geopark, Trollfjell Geopark and Katla Geopark.
- Participation in EGN CC meeting in-person in spring and remotely in autumn.
- Participation in EGN conference in autumn.
- Participation in EGN AC meetings along the year.
- Participation in GGN general assembly in autumn.
- Active collaboration like preparation of a common project application and several remote meetings with Nordic Geoparks.
- Commitment to a joint tourism project with all the Finnish Geoparks.
- Director of Rokua Geopark participated in the Finnish national geoparks meetings.
- Director of Rokua Geopark visited Itoigawa Geopark in Japan in April and organized a collaboration seminar between Finnish and Japanese Geoparks from there.
- Rokua Geopark signed a sistership geopark agreement with Aso UGGp, Japan

### **Management and Financial Status**

- Rokua Geopark was managed by Humanpolis Ltd and financed by the founders of the Geopark: Municipalities of Muhos, Utajärvi and Vaala, Rokua Foundation and Metsähallitus. The annual funding is based on a four-years agreement. For the period 2023-2026, the amount of annual funding is 273 100 € for Humanpolis Ltd, of which 213 100 € is pointed for the operations of Rokua Geopark. The total funding realized in 2024 was ca. 299 000 €, of which ca. 239 000 € was pointed for the Geopark operations. Besides the main founders, the operations were funded by project grants (mainly EURDF) and by the joint marketing fees from the Geopark companies (ca. 5 800 €).

### **Geoconservation**

- New duckboards were assembled along the hiking trails (ca. 5 km) to prevent erosion.
- New information boards (17 pcs) were assembled along the trails to promote responsible trekking.

## **Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)**

- Trails and camp fire sites along River Oulujoki were renovated by renewing weathered infrastructure, assembling new duckboards and assembling new information boards to the rest places.
- Rokua Geopark continued its work towards national label for sustainable tourism destinations and worked together with region's tourism companies ("Geopark companies"). Until the end of the year, eight companies were agreed with the principles of the label and were studying and developing their businesses according to the criteria and in collaboration with the Geopark organization, and four had been achieved the certificate. Rokua Geopark's tourism coordinator coordinated the work and assisted the companies.
- Sustainable tourism workshops were organized for the entrepreneurs together with regional partners.
- A common project for sustainable tourism development was continued and completed with other Finnish geoparks.

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

- Within the international school projects, activities to study sustainable community planning, sustainable energy production and sustainable water management were developed and piloted.
- New business-based educational programs (not-free) were also launched, especially for international groups.

## **Strategic partnership**

- Rokua Geopark collaborated with following Geoparks in the field of education: Trollfjell UGGp and Katla UGGp. Furthermore, partnership with Swabian Alb UGGp was maintained in communication and student exchange level. Rokua Geopark also started to look for new partners in Japan, having discussion with Japanese Geoparks Network and visiting Itoigawa UGGp in Japan. In addition, a common educational project application was prepared together with Reykjanes Geopark, Odsherred Geopark, Gea Norwegica Geopark and Platåbergens Geopark.
- Rokua Geopark signed a sistership geopark agreement with Aso Geopark, Japan.
- Partner Geoparks and partner schools for a new Erasmus+ project were searched, especially from Croatia and Portugal.

## **Promotional activities**

- Rokua Geopark participated in three webinars and in-person meetings and hosted four familiarization trips for international tour operators. The events were organized together with

Pohjola Route / Oulun Matkailu Oy (joint-marketing brand and organisation of Oulu region/province) and Visit Finland.

- Together with local tourism companies, Rokua Geopark coordinated and carried out a summer campaign in different media.
- Rokua Geopark published a summer magazine for the second time to promote the geopark's stories, attractions and tourism services.

#### **4. CONTACTS**

##### **Manager:**

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##### **Geologist:**

- Jari Nenonen, [jarinenon@gmail.com](mailto:jarinenon@gmail.com) (representative in the EGN CC, professional in board of directors of Rokua Geopark).
- Mikko Kiuttu, [mikko.kiuttu@humanpolis.fi](mailto:mikko.kiuttu@humanpolis.fi) (daily geoscientist)