

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Vikos–Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark, Greece, European Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2010 / 2024



Strengthening Collaboration for the Protection of Heritage between the Vikos-Aoos UGGp and the World Heritage Cultural Landscape of Zagori

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staff: 4 staff members including 1 geoscientist.

Number of visitors: 95,000 people visited the most attractive landscape and geo-site of the Vikos–Aoos UGGp.

Number of Geopark events: 12 major events held by the management body and partner organizations.

Number of school classes implementing Geopark educational programmes: 52 school classes implemented educational programs.

Number of Geopark press releases: 14 press releases and articles.

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2024

Strengthening Collaboration for the Protection of Heritage: The UNESCO World Heritage Centre's Director, Dr. Lazare Eloundou Assomo, and the IUCN European Director, Dr. Boris Erg, participated in an event organized by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture within the territory of Vikos–Aoos UGGp. The celebration marked the recent designation of one of the UGGp's municipalities as World Heritage Monument — the Zagori Cultural Landscape. During the event, representatives of the Vikos-Aoos UGGp guided the official guests and Ministry delegates on a full-day field visit in the Geopark, offering an in-depth presentation of the area's exceptional natural and cultural values and fostering discussions on the intrinsic links between nature and culture. This close collaboration highlights the shared commitment to safeguarding the outstanding heritage of the region through a holistic approach that unites environmental protection with cultural preservation. It embodies the principles of partnership, mutual understanding, and coordinated action promoted by UNESCO and the IUCN, and stands as a model of sustainable heritage management in which landscapes, geosites, ecosystems, and cultural identity are protected together for future generations.

- A new 4-year financial contract between Epirus SA (management body of the Vikos–Aoos UGGp) and the Regional Authority of Epirus was signed.
- A cartographic digital platform relating to all aspects of the geopark has been created and is in operation, open to public, through the information centers screens and PC and smart phones, including 360 images of the spectacular landscapes and geosites of the Geopark.
- Launch of the Inter-territorial Cooperation Plan of 4 Greek UGGps titled “Empowerment, Promotion and Networking of UNESCO Geoparks”, implemented through the CLLD/LEADER programme.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Participation in the 49th European Geoparks Network Coordination Committee Meeting at Kula–Salihli UGGp, Turkey.
- Participation in the Technical Meeting organized by the Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO in Athens on “UNESCO Global Geoparks: Greece's Participation in the International Programme”.
- Participation in the 5th Conference of the UNESCO Global Geoparks of Greece and Cyprus titled “GEOPARKS AND GEO-STORIES”, held on 13–15 June 2024 in Kalavryta (Helmos–Vouraikos UGGp).
- Participation in the 17th European UNESCO Global Geoparks Conference in Reykjanesbær, Iceland.
- Articles in the EGN Magazine: “Rocks Under the Microscope: A Photographic Exploration of Vikos–

Aoos Geopark” (Issue 21) and “Geology Meets the Horizon: Educational Viewpoints in the Vikos–Aoos Geopark” (Issue 22).

- European Geoparks Week 2024 – Celebrating 20 years of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. Organization of a special event titled “Earth, Water, Stone: Geological Stories in the Vikos–Aoos Geopark”.
- Preparation of a report linking the actions of the Vikos-Aoos UGGp with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Completion of the revalidation mission for the Vikos–Aoos UGGp for the period 2020–2023.

Management and Financial Status

- A new 4-year financial contract between Epirus SA (management body of the Vikos–Aoos UGGp) and the Regional Authority of Epirus was signed.

Geoconservation

- Collaboration with a geologist to support the operation of the Vikos–Aoos UGGp for the period 2024- 2025.
- Event for the International Mountain Day 2024 (11/12/2024) in cooperation with the Higher Vocational School of Konitsa and the participation of students from the Mountain Guides Department, titled “Solutions for Mountains for a Sustainable Future – Innovation, Adaptation and Youth”.
- Joint social media post for International Mountain Day together with other UNESCO Global Geoparks of Greece and Cyprus and the Hellenic Geoparks Forum.
- Scientific study/publication investigating the formation of caves through sulfuric acid speleogenesis in Greece, highlighting the contribution of Vikos–Aoos UGGp and collaborating scientists in understanding karst processes.
- Research and related scientific publication in the volume “Geohazards in European Geoparks” published by the Association of Geoparks Municipalities, focusing on seismic hazard in the Geopark area.
- Scientific presentations for the Vikos-Aoos UGGp at conferences on several topics, including biodiversity (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), visitor management (eco-counters), promotion of geotourism, and Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable Tourism (Geotourism)

- Post for International Geodiversity Day (6/10/2024). Vikos–Aoos UGGp participated in the celebration of International Geodiversity Day, with the central message: “Preserving the Past – Preparing the Future”.

- International Geodiversity Day – A presentation about the Geopark’s values at the experiential workshop organised by “Boulouki, Traveling Workshop for Traditional Arts” in Agia Paraskevi.
- Installation and operation of visitor counters at geo-sites and hiking trails in the field.

New Education Programmes on Geoconservation, Sustainable Development and Disaster Risk Reduction

- Event for Earth Day: Educational excursion with the 2nd Primary School of Ioannina – Kaplaneio on 22/4/2024 and with the Private Primary School of Volos “Agios Iosif” on 26/4/2024.
- Educational excursion to the Vikos–Aoos Geopark by the 2nd Primary School of Konitsa.
- Organisation and implementation of the 3rd Summer School of the Vikos–Aoos UGGp in Konitsa, with 31 students and 12 lecturers. Theme: “Geodiversity, Biodiversity and Field Research Methods”. The activity was co-organised by the Epirus S.A., the Department of Geology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and the Municipality of Konitsa, under the auspices of the School of Science, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
- International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction: Organisation and implementation of an educational event titled “Living with the Power of the Earth: The Konitsa Fault and Safety Rules from Natural Disasters” in cooperation with Konitsa Gymnasium and Lyceum.
- Educational field excursions for students, based on the Geopark educational material in cooperation with the Social Cooperative Enterprise Oikomuseum of Zagori: 4 schools from the Ioannina region with 8 teachers and 106 students.
- Educational field excursions for students, based on the programmes of the Environmental Education Centre of Konitsa, attended by 1,605 students from 45 schools across Greece.

Strategic Partnership

- Participation in the 3rd Transboundary Meeting of Aoos/Vjosa Authorities, held in Aspraggeloi, Zagori, with representatives from Greece and Albania, discussing environmental management and river protection issues.
- Memorandum of Cooperation signed with the School of Geology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, for the organisation and implementation of the 3rd Vikos–Aoos UGGp Summer School.
- Memorandum of Cooperation signed with the Development Agency of Western Macedonia (ANKO S.A.), as the Management Body of the Grevena–Kozani UNESCO Global Geopark, for cooperation between the two geoparks.

Promotional Activities

- Design, construction and installation of new recognition signage for the Vikos–Aoos UGGp, some

of which also present the Geopark together with the “Zagori Cultural Landscape (World Heritage Monument)” according to UNESCO rules.

- Posting of GGN poster featuring the biodiversity of the Vikos–Aoos UGGp.
- Virtual tour / 20th GGN anniversary: Publication of digital tour material of Vikos–Aoos UGGp on the social media of the GGN.
- Social media post celebrating International Mother Earth Day (22 April), within the joint initiative of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Education Committee of Greece & Cyprus.
- Post for International Museum Day within the joint action of the UNESCO Global Geoparks of Greece & Cyprus.
- Event for International Museum Day in cooperation with the Municipality of Konitsa, dedicated to the oenological, natural and cultural wealth of the region.
- Creation and display of a video about Vikos–Aoos UGGp on Athens Metro screens. Previously, a joint video with other Greek UGGps had been displayed for the same purpose.
- Participation of the Vikos-Aoos UGGp, as institutional sponsor, in a two-day event in Konitsa including a 15 km mountain running race in the Aoos gorge.
- Support of the event “14th Epirus Mushroom Festival”.
- Organisation of exhibition titled “Vikos–Aoos Geopark Rocks Under the Microscope: Views of their Inner World” in cooperation with the Department of Geology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and the local community in Aristi, Zagori.
- Participation of the Vikos-Aoos UGGp, as institutional sponsor of the most popular mountain running race in Greece “Zagori Mountain Running 2024”.
- Presentation regarding the Geopark’s actions in relation to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals at a seminar held in the Geopark (Vitsa village) under the auspices of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture.
- Presentation on linking the natural and cultural heritage in Vikos–Aoos UGGp at the 4th Pan-Zagorisian Conference titled “Zagori – Corfu – Gjirokastër, UNESCO World Heritage Monuments. Sharing Knowledge and Experience”, Aristi, Zagori.
- Guided tour of the Geopark for a popular French journalist from the French website Rutard.com.
- Post for International Soil Day – 5 December 2024.
- Design / print / distribution of the 2025 promotion calendar for Vikos–Aoos UGGp

4. CONTACTS

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