

GGN/EGN - Geopark Annual Report 2022

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: Bakony–Balaton UNESCO Global Geopark, Hungary, European Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2012 / 2021 (the last revalidation of our Geopark was postponed from 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic). The recent period of designation: 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2024.



Representative photograph: 'The Wonderful World of Nagy-berek Marshland' Visitor Centre in the outskirts of Fonyód, opened in March 2022.

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: two people in the Geopark Group (two geoscientists, one of them is also a regional development specialist). The number of Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate (our management organization) staff on 31 December 2022: 134 employees (members of the departments permanently collaborate with the Geopark Group).

Number of visitors:

- 319,421 (in visitor centres, visitor sites within the Geopark territory),
- 1,848 participants on 79 guided geotours by our Geopark Staff,
- 1,449 participants on 73 guided geotours by our contracted Geopark Partners, geo-educational programmes, etc.)

Number of Geopark events: 90

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 15

Number of Geopark press release: 7 interviews and articles in the national and regional media (3 articles, 4 interviews in radio and TV)

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2022

- Opening of the new 'Wonderful World of Nagy-berek Marshland' Visitor Centre in the outskirts of Fonyód (content of its exhibition was partly created by our Geopark staff).
- Working on a EU project at 22 geosites, called "Management and Interpretation of the Geological Heritage in Bakony–Balaton Geopark" (total budget: 614,600 EUR).
- A geotour-guide training course was held in the Tapolca Basin region of the Geopark, mostly for local people.
- Declarations of conservation areas for springs.

Contribution towards GGN - networking and participation:

- Attending the meetings of the EGN and GGN:
 - GGN AC digital meetings (April, June),
 - 45th EGN CC meeting, De Hondsrug UGGp, The Netherlands (April),
 - 46th EGN CC meeting, Sesia Val Grande UGGp, Italy (September)
- Attending the 16th European Geoparks Conference, Sesia Val Grande UGGp, Italy

(September)

- Welcoming and guiding our colleagues from Eisenwurzen UGGp, Austria.
- Article in the European Geoparks Magazine issue 19 by Barnabás Korbély (“New, interactive exhibition on the diverse volcanic heritage”) and he was the co-author of another article in this issue (“The European Geoparks Week 2021”).
- EGN Week 2022: popular guided geotours in numerous regions of the Geopark.

Management and financial status

The management organisation of the Geopark is the Balaton-felvidéki National Park Directorate, a regional state organisation, established in 1997 and belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture. The Directorate is headed by the Director, who is an official delegate to the EGN CC. The Bakony–Balaton Geopark Group is an organisational unit of the Directorate, headed by a geoscientist/pedagogue, who is the other delegate to the EGN CC. The Geopark Group staff recently consists of two geoscientists (one of them is also a specialist on regional development and a certified geotour-guide). The members of the Geopark Group are also officials in charge of geological nature conservation. The Group closely cooperates with other units, eg. with the 19 members of the Ranger Service, the Department of Nature Conservation (12 employees), the Department of Ecotourism and Environmental Education (23 employees, in which one member is our most active geotour-guide and a geoeducational expert; she has MSc as a secondary school teacher of Geography and Biology). The Geopark Group was established by the Organisational and Operating Rules of the Directorate in 2012, after the successful application to the EGN/GGN. The overall financial status of our Management Organization in 2022:

INCOME	EXPENDITURE	BALANCE
7 270 004 EUR	6 445 113 EUR	824 891 EUR

Geoconservation

- Working on a large-scale EU project (“Management and Interpretation of the Geological Heritage in Bakony–Balaton Geopark”) on management of 22 geosites of the Geopark: geological key sections, caves, sinkholes, protected geological nature conservation areas, new nature trails, information booklet with holistic approach in Hungarian and English, etc.), the project budget is 614,600 EUR, anticipated period of the completion: 2023.
- Surveying numerous natural springs, preparation for their declaration of protection by the nature conservation authorities.
- Removing the vegetation at geosites by the Geopark Group staff and by contracted entrepreneurs: geological key sections, Palaeokarst of Úrkút Nature Conservation Area, pyroclastic section near Szentbékáll, Permian–Triassic boundary geosite near Csopak, etc.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- The “flagships” of our Geopark’s information and interpretation activities are the visitor centres and visitor sites (319,421 visitors in 2022 = the number of visitors who bought tickets). E.g. the most visited show cave in Hungary is the Lake Cave of Tapolca: its visitor centre is the Western Gateway of the Geopark.
- Our Geopark-related nature trails and numerous guided geotours (provided by the Geopark staff and our contracted Geopark Partners) also attracted thousands of people.
- The Head of the Geopark Group was the guide of the ‘Slowalk’ near Dörgicse village: it was a new, innovative outdoor lead-up programme of Veszprém–Balaton 2023, European Capital of Culture.

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

- Geoeducational programmes for school classes in Lake Cave of Tapolca Visitor Centre (the Western Gateway of the Geopark), in Várpalota, Zamárdi and Balatonfüred.

Strategic Partnership

- Launching collaboration with a new Geopark Partner School in Balatonfüred (named after a famous Hungarian geologist, Lajos Lóczy).
- Together with our Geopark Partner School in Tapolca, hosting the 3rd intermediate meeting of the Erasmus+ project VR@Geoparks.
- Signing cooperation agreements with trained local geotour-guides, our new Geopark Partners.

Promotional activities

- New promotional leaflet of our National Park (for year 2022) with logo and main features of visitor centres and interpretive sites of the Geopark (250,000 copies, in Hungarian and English)
- Daily updated website (geopark.hu) with Events Calendar, Facebook page (more than 9,000 followers), Instagram profile, newsletter for our Geopark-fans, tourism leaflets.
- The crew of a popular children's TV show made a two-part programme about the geological heritage of the Tihany Peninsula, one of the most iconic landscapes in the Geopark.
- Geopark booth in the Valley of Arts Festival (Kapolcs village), one of the most popular summer festivals of Hungary (July), during the DinoExpo in Bakony Mts (July) and at the 'Earth Science Whirl' in the Hungarian Natural History Museum, Budapest (November).
- Information and advertisements of the Geopark in the most popular hiking maps of the area.

4. CONTACTS

Head of the Geopark Group, Geoscientist: Mr Barnabás KORBÉLY,
korbely@geopark.hu

Regional Development Specialist, Geoscientist: Mr Gergely ANCSIN,
ancsin@geopark.hu

Manager: Mr Zsolt BENDE, Director of Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate (the Management Organization of the Geopark), bendezsolt@bfnp.hu