

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2023

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: Lauhanvuori - Hämeenkangas UNESCO Global Geopark, FINLAND, European Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2020/2023

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



The first revalidation mission of our Geopark took place at the end of June 2023. 60 local persons in total participated in the mission session (SDG 17). During the whole mission, local services were used (SDG 8). E.g., Lauhanvuori geosite was evaluated by bikes rented by local entrepreneur.

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 3 staffs including 2 geoscientists

Number of visitors: If total number of the visitors to the geopark is difficult to estimate, show the number of the visitors to the major geosite(s), museum or visitor center.

Number of visitors in the major geosite areas (2 National Parks and 1 hiking/multi use area): 112 400 visits in 2023 (57 % increase in six years, slightly downward trend after the worst covid-19 years)

Table 1. Development of the number of visitors in major geosites in the Lauhanvuori - Hämeen kangas Geopark area 2016 - 2023.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development 2016–2023 %
Kauhaneva - Pohjankangas	7 941	10 995	11 454	14 240	29 166	29 698	27 900	26 300	231
Lauhanvuori	11 901	13 767	14 336	14 502	22 680	20 510	21 300	21 300	79
Hämeen kangas	51 927	44 361	47 803	60 163	62 669	69 323	66 800	64 800	25
Total	71769	69123	73593	88905	114515	119531	116000	112400	57

Number of Geopark events: Clarify the events held by management body and cooperative organizations.

Table 2. Geopark events (celebrations, opening ceremonies of trails, excursions, webinars, seminars, presentations, workshops for different target groups).

Organizer	Number of events
Lauhanvuori - Hämeen kangas UGG	7
Member municipalities of the UGG (Geopark is participating)	3
LH UGG together with other partners (e.g., Entrepreneurs, associations, EU projects, LAGs, authorities...)	23
Total	33

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes:

Six schools (one more than last year) have participated in water quality measurement and downloaded and published the results in the “Adjacent water research” database, webpage yesi.geodialogue.com/ we have created together with local schools. All primary schools of the area are invited to participate in the measurements, some of them start their actions later.

The schools have monitored the same nearby waters (rivers, lakes) at least twice so far, some even ten times.

The educational Geopark project run by the schools of the area came to an end in 2023, and a new project was decided to be applied by the Geopark organization the next year.

Educational materials created by Geopark are available in national Mappa portal. They can be found via our website, also.

8 school classes with 2250 persons (pupils and their teachers) have visited the geosites during 2023.

Number of Geopark press release:

6 press releases about Geopark’s and Geopark area’s development and activities during 2023.

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2023

- The first revalidation has been successful.
- A website renewal project has been conducted: www.lhgeopark.fi.
- A national project with all the other Finnish Geoparks has started and the Geoparks Finland Network has been established.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Participation in the EGN Spring meeting in Hateg Geopark, Romania
- Participation in the Tourism Working Group and Fossil Record and Evolution Working Group
- 3 persons participated in the 10th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks in Mgoun M'Goun UNESCO Global Geopark, Morocco
- Two presentations from our Geopark were held in the GGN conference, and because of the earthquake, one was left for the next conference.
- Good cooperation with other Nordic Geoparks, common communicating materials were created.
- A common project with other Finnish Geoparks going on to e.g., promote geotourism, Geoparks, and national cooperation – Geoparks Finland Network established.

Management and Financial Status

- No changes in management structure
- 1 development project (EU funded) going on managed by the Geopark (turnover about 50 000 €), ending by the end of July, other three projects managed by partners where our Geopark was a partner (total 63 000 €, one ended 12/2023, others continue)
- LH UGG had 82 business and association members.
- Several development cases together with universities

Geoconservation

- Participating in the LAC (limits of acceptable change) sustainable tourism management process in the Geopark area in co-operation with Metsähallitus, Parks and Wildlife Finland. Follow-up measures were taken.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- Participation in the Sustainable Travel Finland program
- 6 Geopark member firms signed in the Sustainable Travel Finland program (Valkoinen Puu which has a certificate already, Korsuretket, SyVilla, Taikapolku, Kirkkokadun Hyvän Olon Keskus, and Visoko)
- Managing a cycling tourism project
- Participating in regional sustainable tourism development projects, especially cycle tourism development projects
- Co-operation with Finnish Center for Cycling Tourism in promoting cycling friendly services, mutual participation in Outdoor Expo, and for example helping companies to get the Welcome Cyclist -certificate.
- Developing new sustainable cycling tourism routes in the Geopark and to the Geopark
- Cooperation with Visit Tampere e.g., in Sustainable Tourism Mobility project
- LAC sustainable tourism system follow-up measurements
- Partnership in the common project of Finnish Geoparks, "Geoparks as attractive factors for sustainable tourism"
- Participating in virtual tourism product development in co-operation with one of our Geopark Ranger and students of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences.

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

- A new concept for teaching geological heritage to pre school children has been created.

Strategic partnership

- Close regional management and development cooperation with Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland

- Development cooperation with universities of Turku and Tampere, Universities of applied sciences of Satakunta and Seinäjoki and research institutes
- Participation in the strategic work of LAGs in the area.
- Membership in four provincial Visit organizations
- Organizing the Geopark's first Scientific team meeting. 13 universities and research institutions participated.
- Co-operation with the Geological Survey of Finland and University of Oulu in arranging the INQUA Peribaltic Working Group excursion and symposium: From past to present – a paradigm of glacier dynamics in the central part of the Fennoscandian ice sheet (21.-25.8.2023).
- Participation in the 20th International Boreal Forest Research Association conference in Helsinki (28. – 31.8.2023) with an abstract in session "Remote sensing of northern peatlands" in cooperation with Aalto University and Natural Resources Institute Finland.
- Partnering with Natural Resources Institute Finland in producing a scientific article on remote sensing of peatlands in the Geopark area in the publication *Suo – Mires & peat*.
- Participating in the Ikaalinen water route advisory board hosted by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment

Promotional activities

- Several social media campaigns, including the Geopark week and Geodiversity Day promotion campaigns.
- Arranging the opening event of the new Geobike mountain bike route in Hämeenkangas
- Participation in many kinds of events and markets.
- Travel fair campaigns: Travel 2023 (Helsinki), Outdoor Expo (Helsinki), Parkano Sportsmen's Fair, Kauhajoki Food Fair.
- Active posting to social media
- Creating video content to Youtube
- Creating seasonal content for regional Visit organizations
- Giving interviews to different media
- Presentations about the Geopark to numerous groups
- Writing articles to different publications and media
- Hiring young people to make social media posts in the geosites
- Creating cycling related podcasts together with LAB University of applied sciences.

4. CONTACTS

Manager: Terttu Hermansson, terttu.hermansson@lhgeopark.fi

Geologist: Pasi Talvitie, pasi.talvitie@lhgeopark.fi