

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2023

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: Buzău Land UNESCO Global Geopark, Romania, European Geoparks Network

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



Snapshot from one of our Geopark Mobile Science Lab workshops. Thanks to this new approach in geo-education, we are able to reach a large number of students and organize educational activities in various locations. It has been a great success from its first year.

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 9 staffs including 2 geoscientists.

Number of visitors: Visitors estimated at 150,000, based on data collected from the Institute of Statistics, and based on the accommodation occupancy in the Geopark and surrounding area.

Number of Geopark events: 101 events.

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 18 schools involved in Geopark educational programmes, with over 4,600 beneficiaries of which 137 were teachers. 8 schools use Geopark infrastructure for their weekly science classes.

Number of Geopark press releases: 3 press releases with national coverage and over 180 mass-media articles, news and interviews (radio, TV and newspapers).

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2023

- We published two bilingual (English-Romanian) digital publications, the “Guide to the Rock-Hewn Dwellings in Buzău Land” and the “Guide to the Mud Volcanoes in Buzău Land”. Both materials include the scientific interpretation of these geosites, as well as maps of the available trails.
- We created a Geopark Mobile Science Lab for educational activities with children, which includes microscopes and rock and fossil samples. It aims to increase the attractiveness of scientific disciplines for children and young students (especially geology, biology, and environmental sciences). It also contributes to developing key skills like creativity, active involvement, interdisciplinarity, collaboration and analytical thinking.
- Together with our partners from the Romanian National Institute for Earth Physics, using geophysical techniques, we started a research campaign in the Geopark focusing on studying landslides, identifying underground water sources, and investigating the deep structures of the mud volcanoes.
- We marked a circular trail that leads to a new geosite discovered by our team, the Stone Mushrooms from Odăile village. The trail takes about one hour to complete and leads visitors on a forest path that is surrounded by sandstone concretions of various shapes and sizes (mostly mushroom-shaped ones) and connects to cultural and historical objectives.
- We filmed and launched the first episode of our new educational science series, which aims to raise awareness about hazards and hazard mitigation. The episode is about landslides, it is subtitled in English and available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D72DknLG-I0>

- We created four new Science Labs in schools from four different communes from within the Geopark, as well as from neighboring areas. The new labs have been equipped with new microscopes, computers that allow students observe the studied sample in real time, digital microscopes and different types of thin sections. The labs have been a success and are currently host biology, chemistry, geography and physics classes as well as extra-curricular activities. They are used by over 1,500 students.
- We have obtained an International Erasmus Grant, in cooperation with Universities from Norway (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences and Stavanger University), UGGps from Norway (Sunnhordland UGGp) and Italy (Parco Tecnologico Archeologico delle Colline Metallifere UGGp), and an aUGGp from Ireland (Dhúiche Sheoigheach). The project focuses on creating methodologies, resources and guidelines for teachers to use Geosites in their educational activities.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- We collaborated with the European Geoparks Network and the Global Geoparks Network for the inclusion of Buzău Land UGGp in promotional campaigns on social media.
- We collaborated with several Geoparks from Portugal, Finland, Belgium, Japan, Spain, Luxembourg and Sebia and provided promotional materials, under the coordination of the Famenne-Ardenne Geopark in Belgium for the publication of a Geoparks Geotourism Guide.
- We contributed to the creation of the Romanian UNESCO Global Geoparks intangible cultural heritage virtual catalogue, by creating a digital poster with the main intangible values of our territory. The catalogue was promoted through the UNESCO networks.
- We attended the EGN meetings, both in person and online.

Management and Financial Status

Buzău Land UNESCO Global Geopark is managed by the Buzău Land NGO (non-governmental organization), in close cooperation with the Buzău County Council (regional administration) and the University of Bucharest. In 2023 the UGGp had a budget of 90,000 euro from the Buzău County Council, and an extra budget of over 77,000 euro attracted by the Buzău Land NGO from private companies and project grants.

Geoconservation

- We identified conservation solutions for two of the Ulmet sandstone concretions that are in danger of collapsing. We also identified an alternative safe trail that allows visitors to access the site without being in danger.
- We scanned the sandstone concretions from Ulmet, with the support of a drone engineer and expert in terrestrial measurements. The measurements will support the conservation efforts for this geosite and will also be used for educational and promotional purposes in various activities.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- We helped with the organization and promotion of the Local Artisan's Fair Market in Buzău Land at the initiative of the local entrepreneurs. This included promotion, visibility, networking, and participating at the fairs.
- Our team organized guided tours for tourists, visiting amber, salt, eternal flames and mud volcano geosites.

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

- Together with our partners from the Romanian National Institute for Earth Physics, using geophysical techniques, we have investigated the landslides from Rătești. This is a monastery complex located in the south of the Geopark that was severely impacted by this phenomenon.
- Together with our partners from the Romanian National Institute for Earth Physics, we have installed two seismic stations in two separate locations in the Geopark for earthquake monitoring.

Strategic partnerships

- We have continued our long-term partnership with the Buzău County Council and the local administration, ensuring the functioning of our Geopark.
- We have initiated a partnership with one of the leading research institutions in Romania, with the scope of co-organizing research and educational activities related to Natural Hazards and Risks.

Promotional activities

- After successfully signing a promotion contract with a prestigious Romanian PR company, we have organized multiple national advertising and PR campaigns. Overall, there were 184 media appearances with an audience reach of 42.8 million people, an effective reach of 6.3 million people (3.3 million online and 3 million offline - print/radio/TV), adding up to an effective reach of 6.7% nationwide. The most important topics covered were the launch of the Buzău Land Slowfood Community, the documentary about longevity in Buzău Land, the overview of our activity over the 18 months since Buzău Land became a UNESCO Global Geopark, the Plastic Mills, our FutureLabs and various sustainability topics.
- On social media our video and photo content reached over 480,000 people on Facebook, and 127,000 people on Google, while our YouTube channel got over 61,000 views.
- We have also increased our visibility by participating at the Romexpo National Tourism Fair, together with the Romanian Geoparks Network and the Buzău County Council, and also by attending the Slow Food fairs and various other local festivals and fairs.
- We continued our successful YouTube series, “Buzău Land, piece by piece”, with 2 more documentaries filmed at one of our partner guesthouses, starring a famous Michelin-trained Romanian chef, who has reinterpreted a few traditional recipes. The videos will be finalized and published in 2024.
- We continued to promote our successful short film, “The Old Man and the Grass”, which was screened at various international film festivals like the Iconic Images Film Festival, the Golden Bridge Istanbul Film Festival, the Meihodo International Youth Film Festival and the Alpin Film Festival.
- We continued producing short documentaries that focused on the Geopark’s traditional crafts (amber carving, glass and Christmas baubles painting) as well as on the Geopark’s living heritage (a local family of musicians, where the passion for music has influences three generations of musicians).

4. CONTACTS

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