

GGN – VIKOS-AOOS Geopark Annual Report 2023

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: VIKOS-AOOS UNESCO Global Geopark, GREECE

European Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2010 / 2021



Figure: Representative photo and the banner of the exhibition held during the European Geopark Week 2023.

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 5 staffs including 2 geoscientists

Number of visitors: 75.000 (based on estimation of overnights in the Vikos-Aoos UGGp's territory)

Number of Geopark events: 6 main events from Vikos-Aoos UGGp's Management Authority.

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 78 schools (3567 students, 270 teachers).

Number of Geopark press release: 10

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2023

- The Vikos-Aoos UGGP's Management Authority organized the exhibition "The rocks of the Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark under the microscope: Aspects of their microcosm" to showcase the regional geo-heritage. The exhibition was prepared by members of the School of Geology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece and was held at Ioannina between June 7 and 10, 2023. The exhibition attracted hundreds of visitors that had the opportunity to

make a captivating journey into the geology of the geopark and the intricate hidden world of its rocks through photographs taken under a petrographic microscope. Thirty-three representative microphotographs printed in large dimensions covered the exhibition walls, while hands-on experience of characteristic samples of rocks and minerals was offered.

- The 2nd Vikos-Aoos UGGp Summer School on Geohazards – Natural Disasters – Climate Change has been taken place in the Vikos-Aoos UGGp (Konitsa, July 9-15, 2023). It was organized by the Vikos-Aoos UGGp MA in cooperation with the School of Geology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Municipality of Konitsa. Thirty students and 9 experts participated.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

The Vikos-Aoos UGGp participated to all meetings & events of the EGN, GGN and the Greek forum (digital or non digital):

- 10th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks, September 7-11, 2023, Marrakesh, Marocco, with 2 representatives
- 4th Conference of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Greece-Cyprus, May 25-27, 2022, Sitia, Crete, Greece, (in Greek), with 3 representatives. Four submissions related to the V-AUGGp were presented, including: (a) Papaioannou, H., “Vikos-Aoos Geopark: An Ark Preserving the Rich Biodiversity of the Northern Pindos Mountain Range”, (b) Papaioannou, H., Kitsaki, G., “Vikos-Aoos Geopark Visitor Counting System: A Useful Tool with Diverse Management Applications”, (c) Alexopoulos et al., “LiMnADs Project: Unveiling the Secrets of Vikos-Aoos Geopark’s Precious Yet Vulnerable Alpine Lakes” and (d) Mitropoulos, D., Stergiou C., Chatzipetros, A., Kitsaki, G., Papaioannou, H., “Future climate assessments and geotourism in the Vikos-Aoos Geopark: Analysis of rainfall and temperature trends using regional climate model data (EURO-CORDEX 2006-2100)”.
- 47th EGN CC meeting in Hateg Country UGGp (Romania) with 2 representatives.

And to other activities as well, eg:

- Participation to the International Geodiversity day (6/10/2023), staff of the Vikos-Aoos UGGp MA, geoscientists and volunteers gathered at the famous view point “Rachi” (Geosite 27) of geopark at Vikos village and informed the visitors about the geopark’s geodiversity and geoheritage and replied to their questions.
- Participation to the International Mountain Day (11/12/2023) by co-organizing with the School of Geology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Hellenic Mountaineering Association of Ioannina an event with popularized scientific presentations on how the mountains and caves are formed.
- Participation to the EGN magazine publication with an article for issue 21.

- Preparation and submission of an article titled: “Seismic hazard in an actively uplifting area: the case of Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark, NW Greece” to be considered for publication in the special volume “Geohazards in European Geoparks”, which was published at the 49th Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the European Network of UNESCO Global Geoparks.

Management and Financial Status

- Vikos-Aoos UGGp is coordinated by a committee especially designated in close relation with the official contract between Vikos-Aoos UGGp MA and the Region of Epirus. All the administration of the Geopark is carrying out by Epirus SA, which is the Vikos-Aoos UGGp's Management Authority.
- The Management and financial Status in 2023 was in line with the year's budget.

Geoconservation

- A cartographic digital application relating to all aspects of the geopark has been created and it will be soon in operation, open to public both through the information centers and PC and smart phones.
- A thorough investigation and clarification of the petrology of the V-AUGGp was held for the preparation of the exhibition “The rocks of the Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark under the microscope: Aspects of their microcosm”. Field survey and sampling were carried out. Twenty-five thin sections were produced and studied under the microscope, clarifying the classification of the various rock types.
- A project, supported by a team of new scientists (Limnads) regarding the monitoring of hydrological and meteorological data inside and around an alpine lake (Dragonlake) in the V-AUGGp is in progress.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- A visitor counting system has been installed at 8 locations near geosites in order to collect data on the number of visitors. The purpose is to draw useful conclusions related to the protection and promotion of geotopes in relation to sustainable tourism (Geotourism).
- Three new mega-signs have been constructed and installed in locations of panoramic view, interpreting geology, landscape and geosites.

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

- The Vikos-Aoos UGGP's Management Authority organized for the first time a two-day training seminar for educators wanting to conduct educational field courses in the geopark. The educational material of the seminar has been developed by the Laboratory of Geographical and Environmental Education, Department of Primary Education, University of Ioannina, covering the entire Geopark (geo-diversity, biodiversity, man and culture) and

includes basic information, activities implemented indoors and in the field on two pilot geo-trails in Konitsa and Zagori (Voidomatis river and Skala Vitsas). The seminar was open to those interested in using the Geopark's educational material (e.g. staff of Environmental Education Centers and of Protected Areas Management Units, mountain guides and companions, employees of Municipal Information Centers, staff and collaborators of Social Cooperative Enterprises specialized in the environment, educators, etc.) in order to educate, inform and raise awareness of specific population groups or the general public.

Strategic partnership

- All the basic stakeholders of the area participate at the Coordination Committee Council of the Vikos-Aoos UGGp.
- A cooperation agreement between Vikos-Aoos UGGp, all others Greek UGGPs, the Ministry of Environment and the Natural Environmental & Climate Change Agency is active and well done.
- A project regarding promotion through cooperation among Greek UGGps (including Vikos-Aoos UGGp) has been started in the frame of CLLD LEADER programme.
- Vikos-Aoos UGGp MA has signed a memorandum with the Grevena-Kozani UGGp MA for further cooperation on several topics and continues to be active a memorandum regarding cooperation between Vikos-Aoos UGGp and Chelmos-Vouraikos UGGp.
- Vikos-Aoos UGGp MA has signed a memorandum with the University of Aegean regarding further cooperation on research and education and another one with Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Geology, regarding the implementation of the 2nd Summer school for the geopark in the geopark.

Promotional activities

- Several promotional activities related to the major activities in 2023.

4. CONTACTS

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