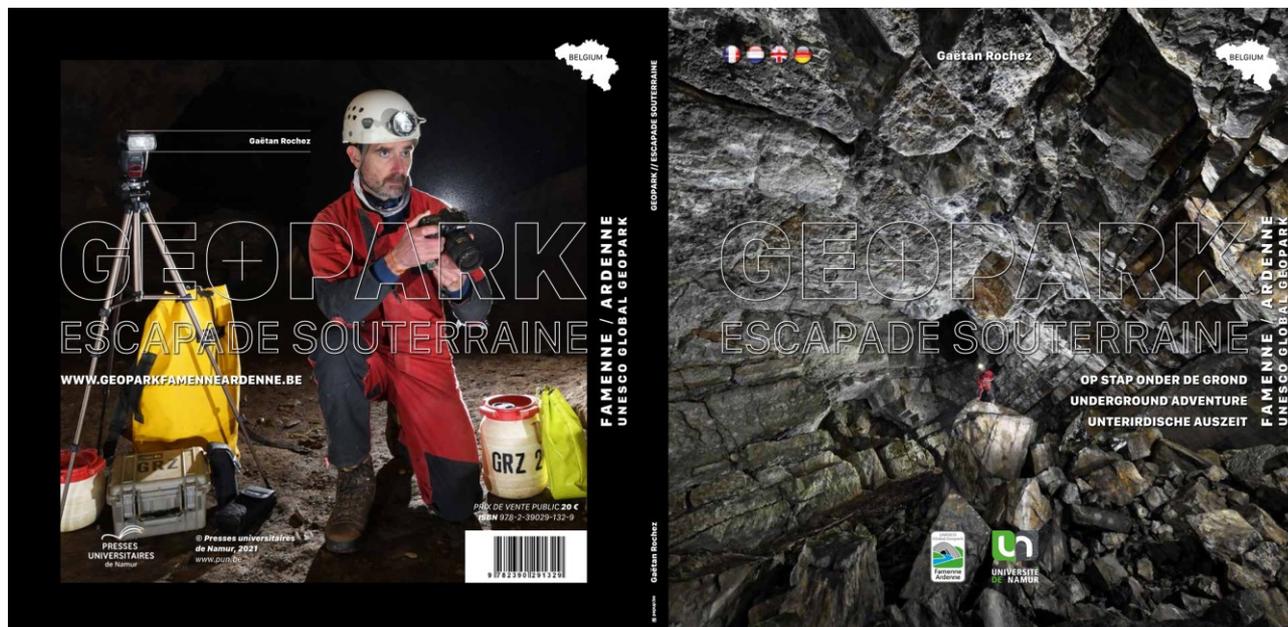


GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2021

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: Famenne-Ardenne UNESCO Global Geopark, Belgium, European Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2018 / 2021



2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 4 staffs including 2 geoscientists

Number of visitors: 220.000 visitors (Han caves - major geosite)

Number of Geopark events:

- events held by management body : 2
- cooperative organization : 3

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 2

Number of Geopark press release: 5

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2021

- **GEOPARK, UNDERGROUND ADVENTURE**

This book, "*Geopark, Escapade Souterraine*", is on sale for 20 €.

This 160-page book in four languages features glimpses of extraordinary, inaccessible places and the rare and fragile landscapes they contain. This collection of photographs of the underground realm of the UNESCO Famenne-Ardenne Global Geopark reveals underground caves and quarries that are, by definition, hidden and often unseen except by a

very few. Speleologists alone enjoy the privilege of exploring, studying, protecting - and photographing - this vast and lovely underground heritage. To date, according to the Atlases of Wallonian Karst (Atlas du karst wallon) published by CWEPPSS (Wallonian Commission for the Study and Protection of Underground Sites), no fewer than 1,000 karst sites (caves, sinkholes, resurgences and more) have been identified within the Famenne-Ardenne Geopark. The Union Belge de Spéléologie (UBS) relies on its extensive knowledge of these sites to manage the caves, both for their preservation and as an educational resource.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- In June, our project manager, participated in the Digital Course on UNESCO Global Geoparks - UNESCO Global Geoparks and Sustainability from the Lesvos Island in Greece. In September our delegates participated in 5th EGN digital forum in Papuk UNESCO Global Geopark in Croatia. In December the Geopark team took also part in the digital 9th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks from Jeju Island in Republic of Korea. On this occasion, we were able to give a lecture on "Sustainable Tourism : Positionning and developping a green identity".

Management and Financial Status

- We received funding of 47.900 € from our partner municipalities. We also received our annual subsidy of 150.000 € from our regional government and 5.000€ from provincial government. With the covid 19 crisis, we also received an additional grant of 6.500€ for our wage costs.

Geoconservation

- The year 2021 was marked in Belgium by major floods in mid-July, the like of which had not been seen since 1928, 1953 and, secondarily, 1993. They caused heavy loss of life and considerable damage, partly in the Geopark. Once the crisis management was over, the Geopark team carried out a post-flood inventory of the geosites. For this, we were able to count on the mobilisation of our partners and members. Fortunately, the damage observed is generally low. Some karst geosites have been temporarily submerged by water leading to substantial modifications in the endokarst. For example, the Nou Moulin loss on the Lomme River was heavily polluted with hydrocarbons, anthropogenic waste and remnants of forestry operations (on the river bank). This pollution has now been removed thanks to the intervention of citizens and the community. The non-touristic part of the Hotton cave has unfortunately been significantly and permanently impacted. The water has reached levels never known in human memory, as shown by the large deposits of silt in certain galleries. At the beginning of 2022, a large-scale operation will be organised by the Geopark. The deposits will be analysed and removed from the damaged galleries to ensure the

conservation of the rest of the cave. Some speleothems will be (re)investigated in order to look for traces of former floods and to determine the return period without climate change.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- In 2021, we have decided to focus on the development of soft mobility. In order to develop this theme, we have set up two major projects :
- The creation of a long-distance hiking trail, crossing the entire territory of our Geopark and highlighting our various geosites. This trek, called "Tour de la Famenne - A la découverte du Geopark Famenne-Ardenne", was set up with the collaboration of the Asbl GR from Belgium.
- The creation of 3 cycling circuits in the Durbuy municipality, allowing cyclists to discover the geomorphology of the region, as well as the limestone statues of our Geopark, created by various local and international artists. This project should also be applied in the other communes of the Geopark

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

- We set up a pilot programme of 3 half-day activities in a school in the Geopark area on the theme of "These rocks that tell us a story that is millions of years old": rocks, fossils, landscape and heritage.
- We also reintroduced our training courses for our partners: Gîte KALEO, Guides of the Domaine des Grottes de Han, staff of the Beauraing Tourist Office.
- As far as our activities for the Geopark public (inhabitants, visitors, partners ...) are concerned, we have set up, in collaboration with the Beauraing Tourist Office, guided walks with a Geopark theme. These walks, which have been in progress since the Global Geopark UNESCO label was awarded, aim to make the public aware of the richness of its environment, with a view to raising awareness of the preservation and enhancement of this heritage.
- We have also pursued a project for a geological showcase representative of the territory of the commune of Beauraing. This project is the basis of a complete educational tool for a diverse public (tourists, schools, associations....). It will also be replicated in the other information offices in the area.
- Finally, we have established a programme of guided walks for the Geopark's partners (tourism, municipal staff, partners, etc.): "This is your Geopark". Commune after commune, we discover the "local Geopark". It is a convivial moment of exchange, discovery and meeting between the different actors-partners of the Geopark Famenne-Ardenne.

Strategic partnership

- We continued to develop our network of local and academic partners (9 new partners). We can note the arrival of two main partnerships:

- The Haute Ecole Robert Schuman, with whom students in Sustainable Tourism were able to work on specific sustainable development themes in the Famenne-Ardenne UGGp as part of their courses.

- A new educational trail was set up on the Fond des Vaulx geosite with the collaboration of the Marche-en-Famenne municipality, the Fond des Vaulx non-profit association and the Famenne-Ardenne UGGp.

Promotional activities

- Due to the covid crisis in 2021, we were only able to participate in one face-to-face event, the Festival de la micro-Aventure in Rochefort in June.

In addition, we were able to host 3 press trips with Belgian and foreign journalists. One of them was a big project with the newspaper "Le Monde" in France.

In order to continue to promote our geosites despite the fact that our foreign visitors could no longer visit them, we created virtual tours of several geosites which we published on our website.

4. CONTACTS

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