ProGEO NEWS

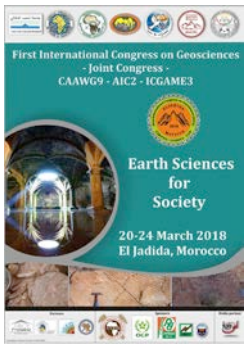
ProGEO 2018 n.1

the european association for the conservation of the geological heritage

First International Congress on Geosciences

20-24 March 2018, Morocco

by:
José Brilha [jbrilha@dct.uminho]



The "Geodynamics, Geoeducation and Geoheritage Research Group" of the Geology Department, Faculty of Sciences, Chouaïb Doukkali University and the Association Civilisations Sans Frontières (CiSaF), in collaboration with the Arabian Geosciences Union (ArabGU), the African Association of Women in Geosciences (AAWG) and the African Geoparks Network (AGN), have organized jointly the 2nd ArabGU International Conference (AIC2), the 9th AAWG Conference (CAAWG9) and the 3rd International Conference on Geoparks in Africa and Middle-East (ICGAME3). This joint congress entitled "First International Congress on Geosciences (ICG1)" was hosted by the Faculty of Sciences of the Chouaïb Doukkali University in El Jadida, Morocco, during 20-24 March 2018.

ProGEO was a partner organization of this congress and was responsible for two activities: a one-day workshop and a round table. The workshop "Geoheritage and Geoconservation: concepts, advancements and challenges" was mainly addressed to post-graduation students and participants willing to know more about these topics. The main aim of the round table "Geological heritage: how to manage an eventual conflictual relationship between its economic use and conservation" was to discuss the problem of the conservation of moveable geoheritage which is a major problem in many countries around the world. In 2016, the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has approved the Resolution No 83 stressing that "scientific information on the evolution of climates, life and humans on Earth may be lost forever if this type of natural heritage is not considered in planning and development policies, as well as international regulations".

The participants of this round table concluded that:

1. In each country, there is an urgent need to raise awareness of the geoscientific community about this subject. This community should develop the inventory of geoheritage of national relevance in order to identify which geosites should be protected to avoid illegal collection of samples and the loss of scientific data.

2. The geoscientific community should be organized in each country in order to constitute a lobbying movement near national governments to force them to follow the IUCN international resolutions and to include norms and regulations to assure the protection of geoheritage (in situ and ex situ) in the legal setting of each country.

Basaltic flow, Oued el Atchan, Middle Atlas

3. Young geoscientists should be well-informed about the particularities of geoheritage and about the loss of scientific information each time a geosite is destroyed. Therefore, the academic geoscientific community in each country should include disciplines about geoheritage in the curricula of graduation and post-graduation Geology degrees.

4. General public should also be informed about the value of geoheritage as a natural non-renewable resource of each country. Again, the geoscientific community should develop initiatives about this topic addressed to the general public, using a language and strategies suitable for non-specialists.

5. A website with geoconservation examples of good-practices from around the world should be created. Such a website could be used to raise awareness not only of geoscientists but also of politicians and managers of nature conservation and of land-use planning.

Geoparks and modern society

International conference - Bulgaria 12-13 October 2018

by:
ProGEO [progeo@progeo.ngo]

Geoparks And Modern Society:

protection, promotion and sustainable use of Earth heritage in park environment, dedicated to the 20th Anniversary of the UNESCO GEOPARK Initiative announced in 1998 at the ProGEO Meeting in Belogradchik, Bulgaria.

The conference is organised by:

ASPIRING GLOBAL GEOPARK „BELOGRADCHIK ROCKS"

In cooperation with: Municipality of Belogradchik, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Environment and Water, Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO, University of Mining and Geology "St. Ivan Rilski", Sofia

In Belogradchik – Bulgaria 12–13 October 2018

The aim of the Conference is to provide opportunity for geoscientists, public authorities and other stakeholders to share their experience and best practices in establishing, developing and managing geoparks, and to discuss increased Earth heritage significance for the economy of the underdeveloped regions. Papers representing experience in establishing aspiring geoparks and criteria for geodiversity identification in geopark environment will be of special interest.

The themes of the conference are:

I. Geodiversity identification, assessment and protection in geopark environment

II. Geopark agenda – link between geological heritage and all aspect of natural and cultural heritage: interpretation, education and networking

III. Experience in establishing aspiring geoparks – establishment of management body, management plan, geopark infrastructure, etc.

IV. Integrated geopark management – management structure, community involvement, partnership agreement and financial support

V. Geoparks towards sustainable tourism development – new approaches and trends

VI. Relation between geoparks and other categories of protected areas - National parks, Biosphere reserves, Natura 2000, etc.

VII. Establishing National Geoparks Committees according to the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP) of UNESCO

VIII. Landscape analyses and assessment, dynamics and change

IX. Presentation and assessment of geosites in geoparks documentation related to a UNESCO Global Geopark application and revalidation

X. GIS application in geopark evaluation and management.

XI. Geoarchaeology

XII. Moveable geoheritage – municipal, university and national museums

Abstracts submission deadline: 15.05.2018

The programme includes a Pre-conference field trip in Belogradchik - Magura Cave – Vidin (on the Danube) – Belogradchik and a Post-conference field trip from Belogradchik to Kladorub (K/T boundary) - Kozarnika Cave (Milankovich climatic cyclicity) - Venetsa Cave - Romantic Valley – Varbovo – Falcon bridge - Borovitsa – Belogradchik. The trip includes also several geosites of scientific value: outcrops of Precambrian, Cambrian, Ordovician-Silurian, Carboniferous and Jurassic rocks.

http://belogradchik.bg/?page_id=16099

A sort of balance

ProGEO

by:
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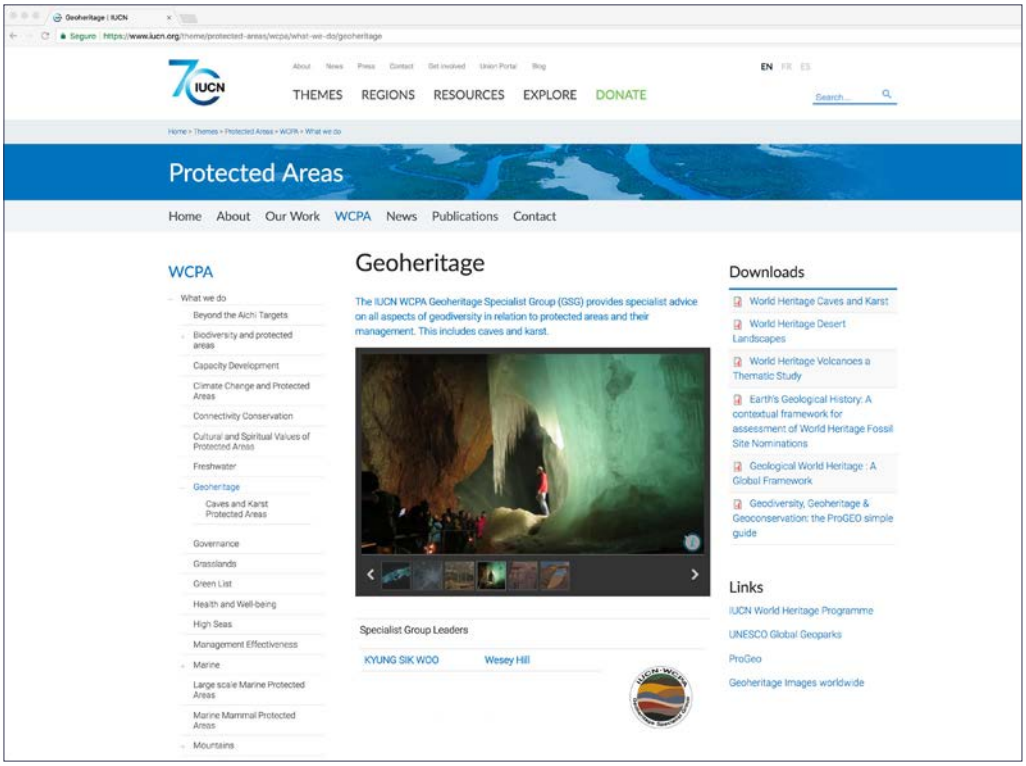
José Brilha (President 2012-2018)
Lars Erikstad (Executive Secretary 2012-2018)

The IX International ProGEO Symposium is approaching fast! These events are always a great opportunity to gather old friends, to meet new members, to learn more about geoheritage and geoconservation, and to visit fantastic geosites in the country that hosts these events (this year, will be Poland). Usually, the ProGEO Symposium is also a great opportunity to call all members of the association to discuss the results achieved in recent years, to set the strategy for the next coming years and to elect the members that will have the responsibility to lead the way. This is the last issue of ProGEO News that will be published before the next General Assembly and this is why we thought that it could be a good occasion to make a balance of the work done by ProGEO during last two mandates.

In recent years, many European countries have been under a serious economic crisis that has caused significant impacts in the lives of many citizens and, consequently, in the activity of many institutions. Some ProGEO members have lost their jobs and were obliged to change to another professional activity and many national agencies related with nature conservation and land-use planning (geological surveys included) have experienced significant budget cuts and reduction of staff. As in most associations, the activity of ProGEO is highly dependent on the voluntary work of its members and on the stability of their professional and personal lives. The reduction of funding and staff in many of the institutions where ProGEO members develop their professional activities has a negative impact on the working capacity of ProGEO. Many members have had to manage an extra work load due to a staff decrease and many geoheritage projects and activities were reduced because in times of limited funding, these actions are quickly considered with low priority. In universities that teach and research geoconservation, there was also a decrease of projects and grants that could support more post-graduation students.

It was in this European setting that we had to work in recent years. In spite of these drawbacks, ProGEO has maintained its regular activity and its members have contributed to significant improvements of the situation of geoconservation at the European and international levels. We are convinced that the recognition of geoheritage and geoconservation in each country can only be succeeded when international organisations produce regulations/principles/policies that can then "infiltrate" in the structures of each country. This is what happened in Europe concerning many environmental policies that were originated in European Directives and later incorporated in the legal setting of each country. This is why ProGEO has been active in partner organisations as IUCN and IUGS. The IUCN approval of several resolutions related with geodiversity and geoheritage and the setup of a specialists group under the World Commission of Protected Areas are positive changes in the way IUCN sees nature and its conservation.

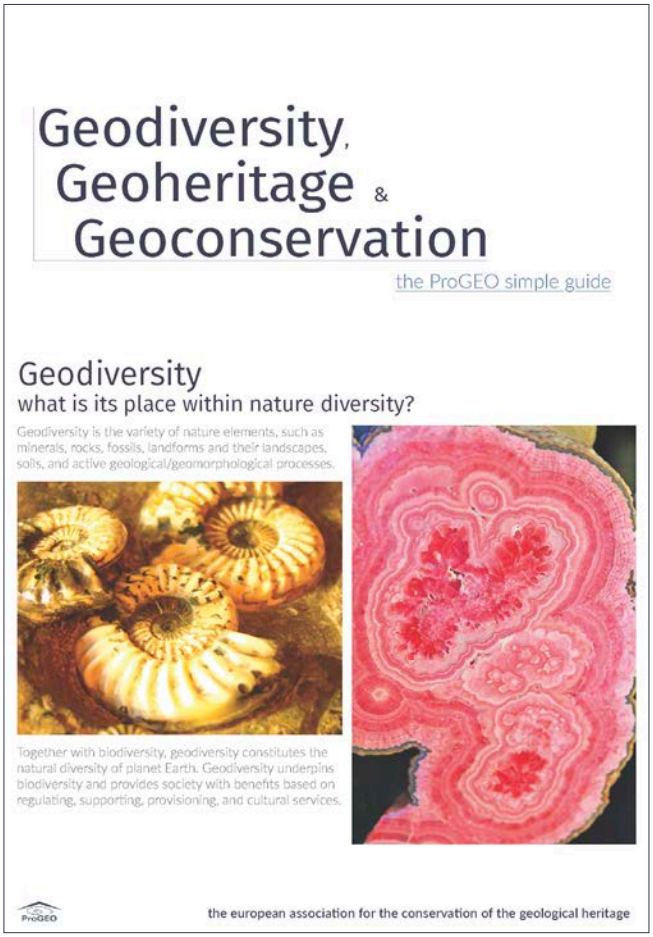


The opening page of the World Commission of Protected Areas, Geoheritage group (IUCN) https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/wcpa/what-we-do/geoheritage)

A small sign of this change is available to all in the IUCN's website, where now anyone can obtain information about geoheritage and geoconservation. Also significant was the publication by IUCN of a handbook on protected areas management where, for the first time, a chapter is entirely dedicated to geoconservation in protected areas.

Geoheritage is also gaining relevance inside IUGS, with the establishment for the first time in its history of an International Geoheritage Commission. ProGEO members were actively involved as convenors of geoheritage sessions in the last 3 International Geological Congresses, were engaged in the Geoheritage Task Group that preceded this new commission and are now pushing the commission forward.

Another significant step forward at the international level was the establishment of the new UNESCO's International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme. This accomplishment was certainly due to the work done in the last two decades by many persons around the world, some of them ProGEO members that have understood the role of geoparks in the promotion of geoconservation.



The ProGEO leaflet found on the IUCN website
https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/progeo_leaflet_en_2017.pdf

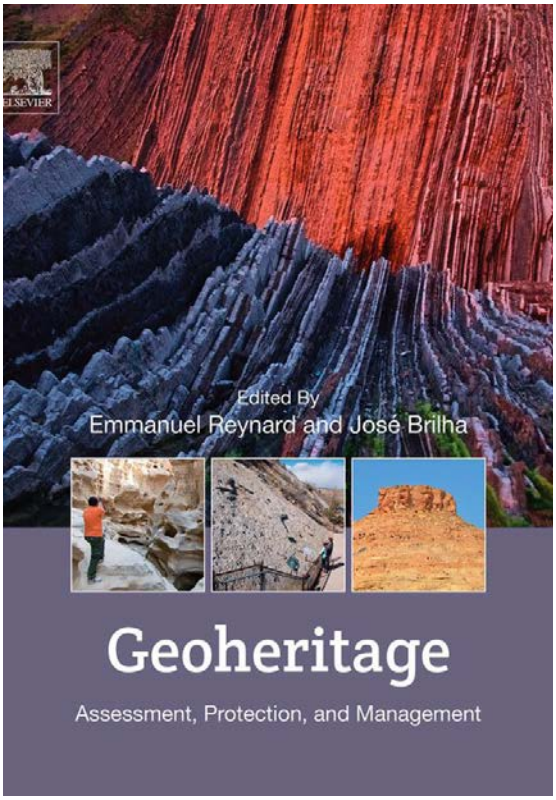
However, a huge barrier still exists in Europe which is preventing the advancement of geoconservation in this continent: the inexistence of any effective policy/strategy/programme/directive dedicated to geoheritage and geoconservation. This is something that will demand a greater effort in ProGEO, certainly in conjunction with key institutions that could help to create a partnership with this major goal. The absence of such a European tool is a major obstacle to the development of a geoconservation agenda in all countries of the European Union. In order to raise awareness in the EU, ProGEO has participated in the European Commission initiative for the Fitness Check of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives (the entire EU package regarding nature conservation) and has also sent its position to the European Environment Agency concerning the document SOER 2015 (The European environment – state and outlook 2015).

ProGEO has clearly understood the importance of communication, addressed to different types of public. Our scientific journal – Geoheritage – is clearly a successful project. Today, it is the reference journal for geoscientists around the world that wants to publish the results of their research. In the last couple of years, ProGEO has restructured its website and has adopted a modern layout for the ProGEO News. The Facebook page has more than 2000 followers, which is a quick and easy tool to spread the word about ProGEO and its activities. There are updated prospects about geoconservation and ProGEO in English, French, and Spanish languages and addressed to the general public and to policy makers. The final approval of a glossary of geoconservation terms is something that is in its final stages. It is also worthwhile to refer the increasing number of requests by many institutions that ask ProGEO support in the organisation of their scientific events. In many of these events, ProGEO members are entitle to pay reduced fees.

Book review

Geoheritage: Assessment, Protection, and Management. Edited by Emmanuel Reynard & José Brilha (Elsevier)

by:
Chris Cleal [chris.cleal@museumwales.ac.uk]



It has been fascinating to watch how the field of geoconservation has expanded over the last 40 years. With growing practical experience it has become evident that the original aim of protecting important geological sites for research and education requires us to also take on board a multitude of related topics including museum curation, mining heritage, geotourism, education and site interpretation. This book has brought together papers by leading specialists in many of these fields and clearly has the ambition of providing a definitive statement of the state of geoconservation in the early 21st century.

The opening paper gives a brief historical overview. Rather curiously it starts in 1991 with the Digne Declaration; active geoconservation obviously goes back much further but I suppose this is when it really started to develop internationally and may have been when the term geoheritage was first coined.

The rest of the book is divided into six thematic sections. The first deals with the sometimes confused and contentious concept of geodiversity. Gray explains the difference between geodiversity and geoheritage, and the importance of geodiversity for biodiversity and "ecosystem services" (incidentally, the term geodiversity was first used rather earlier than suggested by Gray, at least in the 1980s, in an attempt to get the world of biodiversity conservation to take seriously the idea of geoconservation). He also shows how the concept of geodiversity underpins site selection in geoconservation, although does not deal with the point that geoconservation is rarely about conserving geodiversity; we aim to conserve the geoheritage, which in only a very few cases (e.g. restricted mineral or fossil deposits) requires the geodiversity itself to be conserved. There then follows an account by Zwolínski et al. on modern numerical and mapping approaches for documenting geodiversity that are likely to become more important in future years. And finally in this section, Dunlop et al. discuss how Geodiversity Action Plans that have been successfully used in the UK for developing practical strategies to protect geoheritage (I suppose rather curious then that they are not called Geoheritage Action Plans!).

The remaining sections deal more specifically with geoheritage. Brilha provides a fascinating analysis of how and what sites we should be protecting – a facet of geoconservation that is often overlooked. As Brilha points out, "only the very special geodiversity elements should be protected and managed" and it is vital that we understand and can explain to others why they are special. There then follow a series of papers dealing with the specifics of particular types of geoheritage: geomorphological (Coratz & Hobléa), palaeontological (Page), museum (De Wever & Guiraud), landscape (Reynard & Giusti), "geomining" (Mata-Perello et al.) and stratigraphical (Finney & Hilario) – but interestingly nothing on mineralogical heritage. These papers all clearly demonstrate the importance of knowing exactly why we are conserving individual sites and the necessity of having the advice of relevant specialists – one strategy will not fit all types of geoheritage.

The next section covers more practical aspects of geoconservation. Prosser et al. partly cover similar ground to the earlier Brilha paper but with more focus on the practical aspects, and includes several case studies from the UK and Spain. As they point out, numerous site inventories have been compiled over recent years, but these are rarely translated into practical and effective geoconservation strategies. Gordon et al. emphasise the importance of positioning geoconservation within the broader environmental and conservation agenda: geoconservation just for the benefit of geologists is be much more difficult to sell to governments and society compared with when it is part of a wider environmental strategy. Migoń discusses the role of World Heritage Sites in geoconservation and clearly demonstrates the limitations of this designation, at least at present; rather curiously, no coverage is given of the Global Geosites Programme that was intended to provide a more rigorous basis for World Heritage Site candidature (although it is mentioned in other papers in the book). Finally, Bruschi & Coratza show how Environmental Impact Assessments can help identify potential threats to geoheritage from development of an area.

The use of geoheritage, the subject of the next section, is of course crucial – if the sites are not being used there is no reason to conserve them. Moreover, it is vital that we explain to the wider public what these uses are. Macadam gives an excellent discussion on the importance of clear communication – keep it simple, use lots of images, and "bust the jargon". He suggests that parts of his contribution might be provocative, but to me it all just makes good sense. Cayla & Martin discuss how modern digitisation technologies can provide valuable new tools for interpreting and monitoring geoheritage especially in remote areas. The potential importance of geotourism for raising awareness of geodiversity and therefore of geoheritage is discussed by Newsome & Dowling. Specialist geotourism packages are, and probably always will be, a fairly niche market attracting a limited customer base. However, many tourism areas have a significant landscape value and so it is relatively easy to promote awareness of the underlying geodiversity in such areas as part of a broader tourism package. And geotourism is also a key part of the UNESCO Global Geopark programme (Brilha) which aims to use geoheritage for the sustainable development (although it is not made clear that not all geoparks are UNESCO Global Geoparks!).

Finally, the book provides a series of case studies of geoconservation projects from around the world, in both developed and developing countries. The case studies appear rather eclectic and it is not really stated how they were chosen, but they do deal with a range of issues confronting geoconservation globally, including inventorying, site management, legislative frameworks and site use. It is difficult to see any underlying themes to this section but it nevertheless provides an interesting backdrop to some of the issues discussed in the previous sections.

In the final section, the editors brings together the various themes covered, attempting to provide a foundation on which to build a strategy for the future. If there is to be a criticism here, it is that over-emphasis is given to the international agendas. Such global and regional initiatives can undoubtedly be important in raising awareness of the issues concerned. But experience tells us that local initiatives are often more effective in producing practical geoconservation outcomes – getting local communities and administrations on board is more likely to result in long-term protection to our sites,

The very fact that there are so many authors is both a strength and a weakness of this book; although the editors have done an excellent job in trying to meld the papers stylistically, it is still very much a series discrete opinion pieces rather than an integrated account of the subject. But that is probably inevitable with a publications such as this dealing with a subject that is still very much in its infancy. There is so much of real value in this book that it is unequivocally required reading for anyone involved with the world of geoheritage and geoconservation.

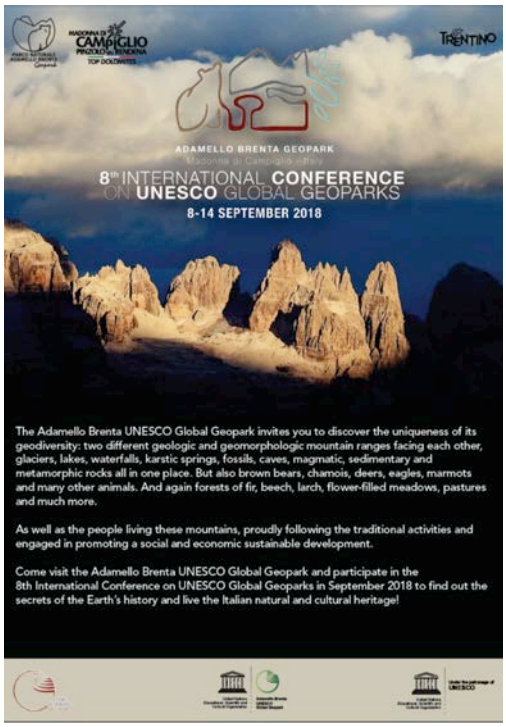
8th International Geoparks Conference

8-14 September 2018 - Adamello Brenta UGG, Trentino, Italy

by:
ProGEO [progeo@progeo.ngo]

The Adamello Brenta UNESCO Global Geopark will host the 8th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks, from 11st to 14th September 2018. The Conference will be held in Madonna di Campiglio, a small village at the heart of the Geopark, located in the west part of Trentino, north of Italy.

The Adamello Brenta Geopark territory represents an area of extraordinary geological-environmental interest and value, that the Geopark aims to promote and protect through the development of suitable geotourism and activities of sustainable development.



The main topic of the conference is: Geoparks and sustainable development.

With sub-topics:

- Geoparks, sustainable tourism and sustainable local development
- Conservation, science and research
- Education, public awareness and communication
- Geoparks, climate change and geo-hazards
- Regional and International UNESCO collaborations
- Aspiring Geoparks

The abstracts' submission for the 8th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks is pen. The deadline for the regular registration is the 20th July 2018.

In addition to the Conference sessions, special workshops will be organized in collaboration with the relevant GGN Working groups. One day is dedicated to the mid-conference field trip: participants will have the opportunity to choose among six available options, in order to know and experience the geological, natural and cultural peculiarities of the Adamello Brenta UNESCO Global Geopark.

Pre and Post Conference Tour are organised together with the Italian Geoparks, where it will be possible to visit and admire the geological, natural and cultural heritage of Italy and its main cities.

Follow latest news:

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European Geosciences Union 2018

Report from the meeting

by:

Lesley Dunlop [lesley.dunlop@northumbria.ac.uk]

The European Geosciences Union (EGU) annual meeting is one of the two major geoscience assemblies which, each year, gather thousands of scientists. This year it attracted 4,776 oral, 11,128 poster, and 1,419 PICO presentations that were attended by 15,075 scientists from 106 countries. One aspect of EGU is that it has developed a well-attended geoheritage session. This year there were two main sessions 1) Geodiversity and Geoheritage: standards and policies at an international level (a splinter session)and 2) Geodiversity and Geoheritage: Pending and emerging issues and challenges (oral and poster).

1)Geodiversity and Geoheritage: standards and policies at an international level (a splinter session) Convener Marco Giardino

During this session there were short presentations outlining the background to geoheritage and geodiversity concepts and the different bodies involved along with their roles. The glossary leaflet available on the ProGEO website was given as an easily understood explanation of terms. During the discussion session that followed the group considered many points such as how standards and methods which apply in a heritage context may be applicable for geoheritage and are they adequate. Also how to reinforce the links and dialog between geological organizations and the heritage and nature conservation bodies. Thought was given to setting-up of joint sessions in both scientific or heritage policy meetings and the implementation of those standards and methods in thematic studies and assessment guidelines including peer-review of evaluations and the greater presence of geological organizations in decision-making bodies. An interesting and wide-ranging discussion that served to explain the various interests of different organisations and also integration of geoheritage.

2)Geodiversity and Geoheritage: Pending and emerging issues and challenges (oral and poster). Convenor Fabien Hobléa

During this session there were 13 oral presentations and many posters covering all aspects of geodiversity and geoheritage. As with previous years the session was well attended and was an opportunity to see how these matters are looked at worldwide. Presentations ranged from local to national scale aspects with some experimental, such as how weathering by tourists of sensitive outcrops can be minimised and others exploring links between culture and geological hazards and events.

It was good to see the wide range of international input and this seems to grow year upon year. Hopefully next year will continue this trend.

Deadline next issue of ProGEO NEWS

June 28th, 2018

Please send contributions to ProGEO NEWS.
Members are interested in things that happen all over the world, your experiences, activities, science, geosites, geoconservation and geotourism efforts!

june
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ProGEO NEWS are available in the ProGEO site (under publications) www.progeo.ngo

ProGEO NEWS issued 4 times a year with information about ProGEO and its activities.
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Please send your contributions (unformatted word file). 500 – 2000 words with photographs, maps and figures clearly marked as ProGEO NEWS.
If longer texts are needed, please contact the editor.

ProGEO: European Association for the Conservation of the Geological Heritage.
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