

Report to the General Assembly from the President for the years 2021 – 2022

The period 2021-2022 has been dominated by some severe problems in the world that also have affected ProGEO as well as all other organisations. The first was the Covid-19 pandemic that broke out in 2019 and spread worldwide in 2020. Fighting the virus and protecting people's health has had effects on almost all parts of organisational life in the period. We could not travel and meet as we did before, and this was not limited to international meetings and contacts. It put us also at home without possibilities of a normal work procedure for a long time. The ProGEO X Symposium that was scheduled in 2020 had to be postponed and was finally held as an electronic event in 2021. This also postponed our IX General Assembly that was held electronically at the same time. Our members and organisers in Spain struggled with the situation and by hard work the Symposium and General Assembly became a great success.

The other big international issue was the Russian attempt of a full-scale invasion in Ukraine. This aggression shocked us all and ProGEO went to the unusual step to post a statement on our website in line with what was done by other relevant organisations such as IUGS - International Union of Geological Sciences, ISC - International Science Council, IGU - International Geographical Union and IAPG - International Association for Promoting Geoethics. From our statement: *“The situation is a threat to all humans and will also threaten the open scientific cooperation needed for peaceful co-existence and sustainable development locally as well as on a global scale. But today, our thoughts go first and foremost to the Ukrainian people in solidarity with their suffering. We also include all Russian citizens who oppose the war but are met with oppression. We urge everyone to do what we can to help Ukraine and to urge the Russian Federation to end its military offensives”*.

We had hoped that this would not develop into a long-lasting war, but today we see that the situation continues. Although the tragedy primarily is about loss of lives and freedom, it also affects our ProGEO work. In Ukraine they work under very difficult conditions and our contacts and cooperation with our members in Russia has been frozen down to a minimum. We can only hope that peace will come and more a more normal situation can be reinstated. Open cooperation is needed for peaceful co-existence and for a secure future. We all depend on it.

Saying this, it is also prudent to remember war and suppression going on in other parts of the world as well. Let us hope that international cooperation like we have in organisations and associations like ProGEO can contribute to better understanding and positive developments. The globe as our ultimate geosite deserves it!

On the General Assembly linked to the ProGEO Symposium 7th - 10th June 2021 we decided to change our association from a European association to a truly international association. As a part of this we also changed our name to International Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage. The short-hand name ProGEO is of course held unchanged. In the period since representatives from Australia, Brazil and US has been integrated in the ProGEO work and regularly attended meetings in ProGEO. We also have got new members from all continents, and I hope we also soon will see regional working groups established outside Europe. Required changes in our Articles were established and it is followed up by new suggestions for the General Assembly in 2023.

The pandemic taught us to go electronical in our work to increase contact between us. Not only the successful organisation of the Xth International ProGEO Symposium, but also several other meetings, webinars and events has been arranged with success by ProGEO or supported by ProGEO. Among these I can mention the Webinar Geodiversity and Geoconservation: a new theme for PANORAMA solutions, Ten years Brazilian Symposium on Geological Heritage and the Oxford Geoheritage Virtual Conference 2022. Detailed information on these events is found in our Newsletter “ProGEO NEWS” found on our website.

ProGEO has also supported and participated in the newly established International Geodiversity Day, International Year of Caves and Karst 2021. We have also supported the IUGS initiative on IUGS Global Geoheritage sites and participated at the conference arranged by IUGS in 2021 in Zumaia, Spain. We have also been active in IUCN, supporting geoconservation to be integrated in nature conservation strategies over the world. We were represented in the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2020 and observed that The General Assembly of IUCN has adopted Resolution WCC-2020-Res-074 “Geoheritage and Protected Areas” with 97% of favourable votes. The gradual increased acceptance in IUCN for geoconservation is important to us and represent significant steps in

achieving our goals in protecting our geological heritage. ProGEO is also represented in the IUCN WCPA (World Commission on Protected Areas) Geoheritage Specialist Group that has a key role in this process. Important publications like the “Guidelines for Geoconservation in Protected and Conserved Areas” is linked to this group. The same is a systematic work that is ongoing to establish a new form of international status for geoheritage sites called “Key Geoheritage sites”, in short KGA. It will be a parallel to IUCN Key Biodiversity Sites and we hope it will increase the relevance and awareness for geoconservation within IUCN and its members.

Lars Erikstad
President

Report to the General Assembly from the Executive Secretary for the years 2021 – 2022

The General Assembly held during the X International ProGEO Symposium in Madrid–Segovia (Spain) in 2021 voted on the new composition of the Executive Committee. The functions of Executive Secretary were assumed by Ewa Główniak (University of Warsaw, Poland). In 2021 - 2022, the Board, under the leadership of the Executive Secretary, initiated and/or coordinated the following ProGEO activities:

I. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DAILY OPERATIONS:

ProGEO Executive Committee meetings:

- Board meetings were convened by the Executive Secretary on a regular basis, on average every 1.5 months: 11 board meetings were held from August 2021 to December 2022.

ProGEO has become international:

- ProGEO officers have carried out updates to the name of ProGEO as the International Association on all websites of ProGEO-related organizations and institutions, including in the Geoheritage magazine, Swedish Tax Authority, IUGS and IUCN websites.
- Article amendments were proposed to comply with the new international (non-European) status of ProGEO (submitted to the General Assembly 2023 for a vote).

II. ProGEO INTERACTION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PROJECTS:

Cooperation with IUGS:

ProGEO is a member of International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) and tightly collaborates with IUGS International Commission on the Geoheritage.

ProGEO has acted in 2021-22 as a scientific partner of the UNESCO IGCP 731 Project "IUGS Geological Heritage Sites" led by IUGS International Commission on the Geoheritage. The Project was aimed in the scientific recognition of geological heritage sites worldwide. ProGEO took the initiative to ensure that the Project activities were carried out with respect to the geoheritage goals and activities set forth in the IUCN Resolution 74 "Geological heritage and protected areas", which the Association authorizes. This was taken into account by the Project leaders. ProGEO participated in the definition of standards and the selection of candidates for the book "The First 100 IUGS Geological Heritage Sites", and had their representatives in an elite group of 33-person international experts for establishing criteria and selecting sites for this publication. The culmination of the Project was the edition of "The first 100 Global Geoheritage Sites" Guidebook in October 2022. ProGEO actively participated in the ceremony dedicated to the Project, at Basque Coast UNESCO Global Geopark, Spain, in October 2022. President of ProGEO, Lars Erikstad, gave a keynote lecture "Past, present and global challenges for geoconservation". In 2023, ProGEO embarked on the second part of the Project "The second 100".

Participation in IUGS 77th Executive Committee Meeting, 16-18 March 2022, Paris, France (ProGEO was represented by Executive Secretary, virtually).

ProGEO members and officials are involved in the IUGS International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) to define GSSPs, which are more broadly part of the Geoheritage.

Cooperation with IUCN:

ProGEO is the international, non-governmental member of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). We actively collaborate with the Geoheritage Specialist Group of IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). ProGEO is one of three organisations authorizing the Resolution 74 ratified by IUCN in 2020, on the management and protection policies of geoheritage, protected areas, key geoheritage areas and caves.

ProGEO was represented at the 7th IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC), September 2021, Marseille (France) by Manu Monge Ganuzas (Spain, SW Europe Regional Group Coordinator and one of the coordinators of the proposals for Resolution 74) who co-authored the talk: “Geological heritage and protected areas” closely related to the Resolution 74.

Popularization of ProGEO objectives through publications in the new IUCN journal "Unite for Nature" (<https://www.iucn.org/our-union/members/welcome-unite-nature>).

Cooperation with EuroGeoSurveys (EGS):

ProGEO has a formalized cooperation (Memorandum of Understanding) with EuroGeoSurveys (EGS) – the European Geological Surveys organization, and actively participates in the Geoheritage Expert Group (GhEG) programme of providing information on the geosites of international importance (a formal requirement for UNESCO Global Geopark proposals and for UNESCO World Heritage Site status).

Throughout 2022 ProGEO was active in the work on documenting important geoheritage sites of the EGS member countries.

ProGEO was represented at 50th Anniversary Meeting of EuroGeoSurveys, Brussels, November 2022 (Lesley Dunlop, UK, Executive Committee officer).

Cooperation with other organisations:

Participation in the Webinar organized by the The Association of Iberoamerican Geological and Mining Surveys (ASGMI), Brazil, entitled “Geological Heritage, Geodiversity and Geoparks” (November 2021, Lars Erikstad - talk).

Preliminary agreement on cooperation with Tian-Shan Geological Society (Kyrgyzstan) — a member of IUGS, in the field of geological heritage. Cooperation initiated through the active participation of ProGEO officials at the conference "International Forum 3 GEO for the creation of UNESCO Geoparks" (October 14th-16th, 2022, Osh, Kyrgyzstan) co-organised by the Tian Shan Geological Society (Manu Monge Ganuzas - talk, Ewa Główniak and Anette Petersen - participants in the discussion).

III. CHIEF ProGEO ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2021–2022 AND PLANS FOR 2023–2024:

- 2020-2021: ProGEO Executive committee took an active part in the preparation of the X ProGEO Symposium (virtual), Madrid—Segovia, Spain, 7-10th June 2021.
- 2021-2022. ProGEO Executive committee took an active part in the preparation of the XI ProGEO Symposium, Loughborough, UK, October 2023.
- 2022. ProGEO submitted proposals for scientific sessions and workshops for the 37th International Geological Congress, 25-31 August 2024, Busan, Republic of Korea.
- 2023. ProGEO embarked on the second part of the Project “The second 100”.

IV. CHIEF PRODUCTS 2021–2022:

- The quarterly scientific journal Geoh heritage (<https://www.springer.com/journal/12371>)
- The quarterly newsletter ProGEO News (<http://www.progeo.ngo/publications.html>)
- Books:
 - Ivanov A.V., Yashkov I.A., Zakharov E.E. (2021). Expeditions to the Volga and Pricaspian Regions. Etudes of the Half-Millennium. From the First Travelers to the “Flotilla of Floating Universities”. Moscow: Russian World publishing house. 264 p. (in Russian with a summary in English);
 - Nekouie-Sadry, B. (Ed.) 2021: The Geotourism Industry in the 21st Century, The Origin, Principles, and Futuristic Approach, 596 pp. Apple Academic Press, Florida.
- Several webpages, including the main one (<http://www.progeo.ngo/>) and some of its national groups (Portugal: <http://www.progeo.pt/>).

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/progeo.geoheritage>

V. INITIATIVES AND/OR COMMENTS ON SELECTED MODES OF COMMUNICATION BY ProGEO

ProGEO Website:

The Executive Committee discussed the large potential role the website should play in recruiting new members. In 2022 we took action to create a new ProGEO website. Its goal is to increase the efficiency of information transfer, increase website security and bring the visuals up to modern standards. ProGEO members in all countries were invited to submit images of flagship geosites in their countries. The image bank currently numbers several hundred images from various countries. Work on the development of the new site is well advanced. We expect them to be completed soon.

ProGEO News:

The following parts have been issued: 2021 (issues 1, 2, 3-4); 2022 (issues 1, 2, 3-4).

VI. PROGEO REGIONAL AND NATIONAL GROUPS ACTIVITY:

Meetings, Projects and other events:

In 2022, ProGEO supported organizing, or run scientific sessions, or actively participated, in total of 34 conferences or workshops, both national and international, focused on ProGEO statutory objectives. In particular these were the following activities:

- **SE Europe Regional Group** (13 countries involved), applied for a UNESCO project under the special theme "Geoheritage for Sustainable Development". The Project "Smart Geology for Better Community – Integrating geological heritage of the Southeast European countries into sustainable development strategies" was accepted for UNESCO financial support in 2020-2021. The Project has been conducted in course of 2022-2023, with the hope of an extension to the full five years as planned. The main activity led under the Project was the 1st International Symposium GEOPARK & SCIENCES – From research to geotourism held in Rab town, Croatia, in 2022 (<https://progeocroatia.wixsite.com/geopark-and-sciences>).
- Turkish group of International GeoScience Organisation (IGEO), with the support of ProGEO and several other organisations, organised a virtual international workshop "Earth science for Society; Future Earth and Preparing Life", March 28th -29th, 2022.
- Jemirko - the Turkish branch of ProGEO, chaired the conference session "Geological Heritage and Cultural" "Geology" held during 74th Geological Congress of Turkey, Ankara, 11th-16th May 2022.
- **SW Europe Regional Group** four countries (Portugal, Spain, Italy and France) organised the Virtual Conference on Geoconservation, 30th–31st March 2022, <http://www.progeo.pt/SW-Conference>. The main aim of this conference was to provide geoconservationists with the opportunity to share their work and research activities with other members of the community, and to strengthen collaborations between researchers and activists operating in the countries of SW Europe Regional Group.
- XIV Meeting of the Geological Heritage Commission of the Spanish Geological Society of Spain (CPG-SGE) took place on July 4th–8th 2022 in the Mountains do Courel UNESCO Global Geopark, in Galicia (Spain), <https://www.reunioncpg2022.courelmountains.es/>. The CPG-SGE's primary objective is to promote research, conservation, use, management, and dissemination of Geodiversity and Geoheritage. Currently, the CPG-SGE represents the Spanish Geological Society in ProGEO and in the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature). The Spanish Geological Society is a member of both associations.
- XIXth International Congress on Geological and Mining Heritage, XXIII scientific session was organised by the Sociedad Española para la Defensa del Patrimonio Geológico y Minero (SDPGYM) "Geology and mining in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: landscapes, history and heritage", 29th September - 2nd October 2022, Cuevas del Almanzora (Almeria, Spain).

- **Eastern Europe Regional Group:** The nomination dossier of the Kapova Cave (also known as the Shulgan-Tash Cave) for its inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List was elaborated in 2021 by scientists, including ProGEO members as the main executor.
- The desk-top scientific assessment of the Toratau Applicant UNESCO Global Geopark (Republic of Bashkortostan) was done by a ProGEO member.
- The annual educational project the “Flotilla of Floating Universities” was carried on in 2021 in the Volga and Caspian regions. The annual work of this expedition harmoniously combines learning through research and education of schoolchildren, students and residents of settlements along the routes. The excellent exposure of sections of all stratigraphic units from the Late Paleozoic to the Holocene inclusive, the diversity of fossils, rocks and minerals, the pronounced traces of neotectonic and current exogenous processes make it possible to organize effective teaching a wide range of geological disciplines there. This fact has served as a basis for the systematic conduction of various geological events for more than 100 years - from student field practices to field trips of international geological conferences, including in terms of the "floating university" The results of the expeditions’ work are presented in scientific and popular publications and films, a series of various events - from scientific conferences during the expeditions to the theatre field performances, as well as special "Days of the Flotilla of Floating Universities" in different cities.
- Participation of ProGEO members in the national scientific-practical Conference "Geological Monuments of Nature: Characteristic, Status and Use”.
- **Latin America and Carribean Working Group** (in the process of formation) co-organised the VI Simpósio Brasileiro de Patrimônio Geológico, 20-27th August 2022, Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- **ProGEO Albania:** 21st Dardanfest Film Festival took place on 28th October 2021, Artistic High School in Tirana, Albania. Documentary movie presented by ProGEO group "Afat Serjani, outstanding employee of science and technology" directed by Francesco Forino and screenplay by Merita Dollma, was selected among the best documentary films. The presentation of the film was attended by approximately 100 people including members of ProGEO Albania and ProGEO Kosova. Prof. Afat Serjani is the founder and leader of ProGEO Albania as well as the initiator for the creation of ProGEO Kosova. He was honoured with several national awards.
- ProGEO tour 2021 took place 2nd-3rd of July 2021, in the area of Kolonjë –Përmet, Albania (see the description in the section ProGEO Kosova). With the contribution of the members participating in this tour, a video “ProGEO tour 2021” (<https://youtu.be/DnXEosBvaF0>) was realized.
- The ProGEO Albania members took part in the X ProGEO Symposium in Segovia, Spain, 2021. Prof. Adil Neziraj, from ProGEO Albania, was elected member of the ProGEO executive committee thanks to the support of ProGEO Albania and ProGEO Kosova members. Albania, although a small country, turned out to have the largest number of members in ProGEO. Ten members of ProGEO Albania presented the talks or posters during the symposium. The X ProGEO 2021 Symposium was a success and a strong motivation for new members.
- Scientific Conference «Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainable Tourism Development» was co-organised by ProGEO Albania on 27th May 2021, in Tirana, Albania. The interest was focused on the impact of the natural and cultural heritage of Albania to the sustainable geotourism.
- **ProGEO Kosova:** In 2021, some new members joined the association ProGEO-Kosova with great will to work in the protection and conservation of Geoheritage. ProGEO-Kosova continued its activity in identifying and completing the list of geoheritage sites, mainly of geomorphological and hydrological character. Several caves were visited and explored (Kishnareka Cave, Bali Aga Cave, Inhabited Cave), karst springs (Drini i Bardhë Spring, Istog Spring) and Mirusha River Canyon. ProGEO-Kosova in cooperation with ProGEO-Albania and the Department of Geography of the University of Tirana, realized ProGEO tour 2021 through the area of Kolonje-Përmet in Albania, where a large number of geomonuments of national and international character were visited. During two-day trip various natural and historical places were explored: Pogradec, Korca, Boboshtica, Erseka, the Museum of Kolonja, Rehova, Gramoz mountain, Germenji protected reserve and many others.

- **ProGEO Hungary:** Virtual scientific session organised by the Hungarian ProGEO group, on 10 March 2021, with the participation of 40 people representing multiple earth science disciplines. Geotope Day 2021 was organised in 19 venues across the country, with a total of 1.268 participants. This event is held in a tight cooperation with scientific institutes, universities, research groups, national parks, protection management bodies, and the Hungarian ProGEO group. The hybrid ProGEO meeting (in person and virtual) was held on 19th November 2021. Due to the election the new officers of the Hungarian ProGEO group were elected. The opening words of the newly elected Chair János Szepesi and the presentation of the newly elected officers were followed by the presentation of Honorary Chair Gergely Horváth: "Experiences of a study tour in Chinese geoparks". The total number of participants was 12.

Celebrating the UNESCO 1st International Geodiversity Day (October 6th, 2022):

- Turkish ProGEO Group (led by Nizamettin Kazancı) has taken the initiative to organize a virtual panel discussion in honour of the upcoming International Geodiversity Day. The event took place on October 6th, 2021. Title: Geodiversity —Local, National and International Significance for Societies.
- Luxembourg 2021. The event has been organized by the Minett Unesco Biosphere, the Nature- and Geoparc Mëllerdall and the National Museum of Natural History under the coordination of Robert Weis, (<https://minett-biosphere.com/en/projects/geoh heritage-days-2/>).
- ProGEO members acted as invited speakers at the Geodiversity Workshops organised by The Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong (AGHK) to celebrate the International Geodiversity Day. This workshop was aimed to raise awareness of geodiversity and critical linkages with biodiversity. The inaugural session took place on the 26th January 2022 with presentations by Murray Gray (UK), and other experts.
- Several other events were organized in Turkey (for example, 3-6th September 2022 by Turkish ProGEO branch - www.jemirko.org), and also in Slovenia, Hungary, Norway, Sweden and in other countries.

Ewa Główniak
Executive secretary

Report to the General Assembly on economy and membership development 2021–2022

The regular work of regional working groups, national groups and active ProGEO members is our cornerstone and has secured many old and new members. ProGEO entered the fiscal period being a European association and was restructured as an international association by the end of it. The conversion of ProGEO to act as an international organisation has resulted in a moderate emergence of members from new countries, although we have had members on most continents for some years. A handful of new countries are included in our family since 2020, e.g., Andorra, India, Malta and Uruguay. Additionally, persons from a few more new countries have expressed interest to join. It is worth mentioning that individuals' ability to do international payments is still a challenge in several countries.

Another way in which ProGEO's international growth is noticeable, is how new members have come in contact with ProGEO. Today, the name ProGEO is more spread, more integrated in academia, more visible in geology and conservation circles, and new members have often followed our activities for some time and are aware of our role. Personal introduction to ProGEO is still common, but the trend of approaching ProGEO on one's own initiative is growing.

ProGEO activities in different countries are performed at different levels, so it is of highest value that some countries are able to build member networks. The effects of the global, economic crisis in 2008 were reported last period to be less visible, but the past years' pandemic and political instability have certainly added a new layer of structural setbacks. As many members are dependent on the ability to pay cash at our conferences, the on-line ProGEO Symposium in 2021 led to a reduction of individual membership payments. Still, the member situation is generally stable, and most members still find their way to ProGEO.

During the past fiscal period, around 240 Individual membership payments have been registered each year. Additionally, there are about 100 members whose membership status over time is settled irregularly. The number of Institutional Members has increased during the fiscal period, now being more than 30. About 50 countries are represented within our group of fully paid-up members (10 more than previous period), although about 65 countries in total have been active (also about 10 more than previous period).

In the past fiscal period, ProGEO has had strong global visibility thanks to the 2021 ProGEO web-based International Symposium, run and managed from IGME in Madrid in Spain, and to our journal *Geoheritage*, our newsletter, the web site, Facebook, and engagements in various ways in IUCN and IUGS. We are taking part in the EuroGeoSurveys Geoheritage Expert Group as well. ProGEO members have furthermore been involved in events like the International Geodiversity Day and the 2022 IUGS 60th Anniversary meeting and publication *The First 100 IUGS Geological Heritage Sites*. Many on-line workshops and seminars have also been supported by ProGEO, e.g. the Oxford Geoheritage Virtual Conference 2022 and the VI Brazilian Symposium on Geological Heritage. All these platforms combined have jointly strengthened ProGEO's role in the field of geoconservation.

The incomes and balance of ProGEO depend to a large extent on the proportion between Individual and Institutional memberships and on how many members having reduced fees. The members' ability to pay is also dependent on the arrangements of ProGEO conferences, where many use the opportunity to pay cash. However, membership fees are not the only income of the association. In addition, there is a yearly refund from Springer Verlag resulting from the external subscriptions to *Geoheritage* (libraries, institutes), and as the external subscriptions increase, the yearly refund increases. The selling of ProGEO's book *Geoheritage in Europe and its conservation* is now a small entry in our incomes.

Our increased engagements during the past fiscal period are rather more clearly reflected in our expenses. ProGEO's support to our conference arrangements is a cost that is dependent on how and how often we arrange international meetings. In 2021, the Xth International Symposium on the Conservation of the Geological Heritage was held as an on-line conference, where only a small amount of ProGEO funds were needed for organisation costs. Contrarily, the planning of the XIth ProGEO Symposium in Loughborough started early and thanks to our accumulated funds, ProGEO has been able to grant substantial organisation support for the arrangement.

Travel support to individual members has also been granted for the 16th EGN conference in Verbania, Italy, the 50th Anniversary of EuroGeoSurveys meeting in Brussels, Belgium, and the ISJS 11th International Congress on the Jurassic System in Budapest, Hungary.

Considering the running costs, regular expenses are related to our standing cost for the journal *Geoheritage*, administration, membership in IUCN, web services, bank services and exchange rate loss in transactions.

Future costs will include development of our web site, possible external administration support, more conscious support efforts in connection with coming conferences, becoming an international organisation, engaging in more international groups and external meetings. Publications and project funding are also possible areas of expenses.

All in all, I am happy to see that our conscious work to build up ProGEO funds, has indeed allowed us to invest in the above-mentioned undertakings. Thanks to all our members, we make a difference!

A full report presenting numbers and figures will be available at the General Assembly meeting.

Sven Lundqvist
Treasurer