



## GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION ON INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

Todor TODOROV<sup>1</sup>, William A.P. WIMBLEDON<sup>2</sup>

*With one hand the man creates and with the other unreasonable and  
blindly destroys and treats Nature*

(Statement of anonymous Greek Philosopher made 2000 years ago)

**Abstract.** The European Association for the Conservation of the Geological Heritage (ProGEO) is an association of the European conservationists and geoscientists, involved in geology as researchers, planners, managers and educators. ProGEO acts as a focus to promote the conservation of Europe’s rich heritage of landscape, rock, fossil and mineral sites. It seeks to mobilise the expertise, enthusiasm and good will that exists among geoscientists, and to influence national and international policy makers, by initiating joint projects and schemes which demonstrate good conservation practice.

ProGEO is an association whose membership is open to all, and its council members represent all the Nations of Europe. ProGEO sees itself as an international body with the capacity to speak for those involved in geoconservation in Europe. ProGEO is working by its Regional Working Groups. ProGEO has also contributed to the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (Council of Europe), which now fully recognises the importance of geology and physical landscapes, and it has forged an alliance with the IUGS and UNESCO, for whom it is compiling a European inventory for their Geosite Project.

ProGEO aims to work towards an integrated European listing of outstanding geoscience sites, enabling full support to be given to the work of all international bodies. Members want to achieve an integrated approach to nature conservation, promoting a holistic approach to the conservation of biological and physical phenomena.

ProGEO has biannual meetings. ProGEO organises also large international symposiums on geoconservation. Due to the UNESCO support, the topics of geoconservation were included for the first time in the Programmes of the 30<sup>th</sup> International Geological Congress in Beijing, China (1996) and of the 31<sup>st</sup> IGC in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2000).

ProGEO executes various projects and activities, like GeoTrip, and Geosites, scientific and educational projects. ProGEO is spreading its knowledge by newsletters, proceedings, leaflets and a website.

Responsible for the selection and inventory of the geological heritage conservation on national and local levels are the National Groups of ProGEO.

**Key words:** ProGEO, geological heritage, geosites.

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**Abstrakt.** Europejska Asocjacja Ochrony Dziedzictwa Geologicznego (ProGEO) jest stowarzyszeniem europejskich specjalistów zajmujących się problemami ochrony środowiska, a także naukowców-geologów, planistów, menedżerów i nauczycieli.

ProGEO działa jako ośrodek promujący ochronę bogatego europejskiego dziedzictwa w zakresie krajobrazu i skał oraz stanowisk skamieniałości i minerałów. Poprzez inicjowanie wspólnych projektów, wdrażających dobre doświadczenia konserwatorskie, stara się mobilizować doświadczenie, zapał i dobrą wolę specjalistów, a także wpływać na politycznych

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<sup>1</sup> ProGEO President, 1113 Sofia, PO Box 121, Bulgaria, [uptech@ttm.bg](mailto:uptech@ttm.bg)

<sup>2</sup> ProGEO Executive Secretary, CCW, St.Mellons, Cardiff, UK, [B.Wimbledon@ccw.gov.uk](mailto:B.Wimbledon@ccw.gov.uk)

decydentów szczebla krajowego i międzynarodowego.

ProGEO jest stowarzyszeniem otwartym dla wszystkich zainteresowanych, a członkowie jej Rady reprezentują wszystkie narody europejskie. ProGEO traktuje siebie jako ciało międzynarodowe posiadające możliwość przemawiania w imieniu wszystkich zaangażowanych w ochronę stanowisk geologicznych w Europie.

ProGEO działa poprzez swoje Regionalne Grupy Robocze. ProGEO ma swój udział w opracowaniu przez Radę Europy Pan-Europejskiej Strategii Różnorodności Biologicznej oraz Krajobrazu. ProGEO nawiązało również współpracę z IUGS i UNESCO, dla których opracowuje europejską listę do włączenia w projekt Geosite.

ProGEO zamierza przygotować jednolitą listę najważniejszych europejskich stanowisk geologicznych jako wsparcie dla działań organizacji międzynarodowych. Członkowie ProGEO starają się opracować ujednoczone podejście do ochrony przyrody, promując jednocześnie całościowe ujmowanie ochrony zjawisk biologicznych i fizycznych.

ProGEO odbywa plenarne posiedzenia co dwa lata. ProGEO organizuje ponadto duże sympozja międzynarodowe na temat geokonservacji. Dzięki wsparciu UNESCO problematyka geokonservacji po raz pierwszy została włączona do programu 30-tego Międzynarodowego Kongresu Geologicznego w Pekinie, w Chinach (1996) oraz 31-szego MKG w Rio de Janeiro w Brazylii (2000).

ProGEO prowadzi rozmaite projekty, jak np. GeoTrip i Geosites. Poza tym ProGEO szerzy swoją wiedzę przez informatory, materiały pokonferencyjne, ulotki i strony internetowe.

Za wybór stanowisk do ochrony dziedzictwa geologicznego na narodowym i lokalnym poziomie odpowiedzialne są Narodowe Grupy ProGEO.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ProGEO, dziedzictwo geologiczne, geostanowiska.

## WHAT IS ProGEO

The European Association for the Conservation of the Geological Heritage (ProGEO) is an association of the European conservationists and geoscientists, involved in geology as researchers, planners, managers and educators.

ProGEO is an association whose membership is open to all, and its council members represent all the Nations of Europe. ProGEO has a well developed network practically in every European country. Contacts with interested, in the problems and activities of geological heritage and its conservation, people from the countries outside Europe have also been already established. ProGEO sees itself as an international body with the capacity to speak for those involved in geoconservation in Europe.

### MAIN ProGEO OBJECTIVES

ProGEO acts as a focus to promote the conservation of Europe's rich heritage of landscape, rock, fossil and mineral sites. It seeks to mobilise the expertise, enthusiasm and goodwill that exists among geoscientists, and to influence national and international policy makers, by initiating joint projects and schemes which demonstrate good conservation practice.

ProGEO aims to work towards an integrated European listing of outstanding geoscience sites, enabling full support to be given to the work of all international bodies. Members want to achieve an integrated approach to nature conservation, promoting a holistic approach to the conservation of biological and physical phenomena.

### MILESTONES IN ProGEO HISTORY

ProGEO had its beginnings in 1988 in the Netherlands and has since then arranged annual meetings and international symposiums in Austria, Norway, France, Wales–England, Germany, Hungary, Finland–Sweden, Italy, Estonia, Bulgaria, Spain, Czech Republic, 2002 in the Ireland. By 1993 the Association exists as European Working Group on Earth Science Conservation. In Weymouth, England, 1992 it was established that ProGEO is an association open to all. The General Assembly in Germany in 1993 approved its status. The first ProGEO Working Group for South-Eastern European countries was established in Bulgaria in 1995. Some time later, the second and the third ProGEO Working Groups for Central and Eastern European and Northern European countries were established as well. 1999 marked development in the South of Europe, too.

ProGEO's General Assembly organises meetings every second year, its Executive Committee about twice a year. The Assembly elects a President of ProGEO for a two-year period. The Council elects the Executive Committee members. The most recent elections were made on September 2002 in Dublin, Ireland.

### ALLIANCES

ProGEO is working by its Regional Working Groups. ProGEO has also contributed to the Council of Europe's Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, which now fully recognises the importance of geology and physical

landscapes, and it has forged an alliance with the IUGS and UNESCO, for whom it is compiling an European inventory for their Geosite Project.

I would especially like to draw your attention to a new initiative of the Earth Sciences Division at UNESCO, namely the so-called Geoparks Programme. The geoparks are larger areas than the geosites, which can also include other assets of archaeological, ecological, historical or cultural values and can trigger economical development. It is a very large, important and useful UNESCO Programme in the field of Nature conservation on world scale. Unfortunately, this Programme was not passed by UNESCO Headquarters in Paris as an official UNESCO Document but it is also of great interest in the variant accepted and will play significant role in Geoconservation. Its development is and will be closely related to the wide involvement of ProGEO and ProGEO members.

#### MEETINGS, SYMPOSIUMS, PUBLICATIONS...

Until 1998 the practice of ProGEO was to hold its meetings every year. Since 1998 the meetings have been organised on bi-annual basis. ProGEO has also organised large international symposiums on geoconservation. Due to UNESCO support, the topics of geoconservation were included for the first time in the Programmes of the 30th International Geological Congress in Beijing, China (1996) and of the 31st IGC in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2000). Some of them will be subjects of discussions during the 32nd IGC in Florence (Italy) in 2004 also. Some understanding of the geological heritage problems was shown by regional organisations such as CBGA at its congress in Vienna in 1998 and Bratislava in 2002.

ProGEO executes various projects and activities, like GeoTrip, and Geosites, scientific and educational projects (GRECEL, etc.). It is necessary to mention especially the recent very important ProGEO Project entitled *Conservation of the Geological Heritage in Europe*. By this we might produce a State of the Art of Geoconservation in every European country. Our Association was convinced that the production of such a volume on Geoconservation will be very important for the improvement of the national status of geoconservation. Such an overview would also provide a starting point for future discussions in international nature conservation organisations on the integration of (geo)morphological and pedological values within nature conservation, and for the development of a European policy on geoconservation. Our manual could also help the negotiations of ProGEO with many European Institutions and Organisations and as a result, geoconservation will be recognised as an important element of nature conservation. It determinably will give much more hopes for money to be made available for geoconservation projects. And in the end, the manual was seen as not just being of advantage in Europe, but also to conservationists in every country. ProGEO is spreading its knowledge by newsletters, proceedings, leaflets and a website.

#### REGIONAL LEVEL OF GEOCONSERVATION

This level of ProGEO activities is carried out by its Working Groups. As it was already mentioned, three ProGEO Working Groups were established after 1995, the creation of the fourth Working Group is in progress. The first ProGEO Working Group was created during the First Subregional Meeting on conservation of geological heritage held in Bulgaria in 1995. Practically this Meeting was attended by all South-Eastern European countries with the only exception of Turkey but now she is already involved also. It is possible to state that in 1995 the collaboration among the countries of this region of Europe with respect to geological heritage conservation began. The next Meetings were organised by the Bulgarian National ProGEO Group again (1996) and by the Colleagues from Greece (2001), Turkey (2002) and Romania (2003). The first results of the mentioned Meetings were:

- Presentation and exchange of information on the National geological geosite and framework lists and national policies for conservation of geological heritage.
- Creation of the First Framework list of geological heritage for the region of the South-Eastern European countries as a whole.
- Further development of bi- and multi-lateral contacts between the Balkan Peninsula countries.

Here I would also like to mention the very hard work of the Northern European ProGEO Working Group. Unfortunately, not so active is Central European ProGEO Working Group as well as the creation of the ProGEO Working Group of Southern European countries is continuing for a very long time. But in my opinion, ProGEO has found the most suitable way for further activity on regional level.

#### NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS IN GEOCONSERVATION

Responsible for the selection and inventory of the geological heritage and its conservation on national and local levels are the National Groups of ProGEO. Similar groups were created and exist in practically all European countries. I would especially like to mention the very serious activity of the relatively new formed National Working Groups of Turkey and Portugal which can feel as full members of ProGEO family.

In general: the national groups are practically formed in all the European countries, the necessary contacts between them on regional and international levels have already been established and I see good perspectives for the involvement of ProGEO as a whole in many National, Regional and European projects, programmes, etc. activities in the near future.

### MILESTONES IN ProGEO HISTORY

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| 1988 | Netherlands Establishment of a European Working Group<br>First meeting on Earth Science Conservation               | ProGEO alliance with IUGS (and UNESCO) on Geosites  |
| 1989 | Austria meeting  | 1996 Italy Second International ProGEO Symposium. Rome Declaration  |
| 1990 | Norway meeting   | 1997 Estonia General Assembly. First Workshop on Geosite data bases. ProGEO alliance with IUGS and UNESCO: European inventory for the Global Geosites project |
| 1991 | France First International Symposium. Declaration made to the World as philosophical basis for real practicalities | 1998 Bulgaria Meeting. A First Attempt at a Geosites Framework for Europe   |
| 1992 | England Establishment of ProGEO statutes drafted as an open organisation   | 1999 Spain Third International ProGEO Symposium. Madrid Declaration   |
| 1993 | Germany General Assembly. ProGEO statutes ratified   | 2000 The Czech Republic General Assembly Meeting  |
| 1994 | Hungary Meeting  | 2002 Ireland General Assembly Meeting   |
| 1995 | Finland–Sweden General Assembly — Formation of its Regional working groups as focus for collaboration.             |   |