



Shilin Stone Forest, Yunnan Province. Photo: Irini Theodossiou-Drandaki

International Geoparks Conference, appointment of a new Committee

This year, in June, the first international conference on Geoparks took place in Beijing, China. The conference included both a scientific part as well as field trips. Four field trips of about one week duration were arranged, going to several Geoparks in China. The Chinese had generously invited us to visit the richness and diversity of their geological heritage and promote the sustainable way they try to use it.

I participated in this conference as member of the advisory group of UNESCO, Earth Sciences Division.

High rank politicians and officials of China and UNESCO participated in the conference. In a special ceremony the Under-secretary of UNESCO Dr. W. Erdelen and the Minister of Earth and Natural Resources of China Sun Wengsheng, delivered the representatives of the 25 Geoparks (8 Chinese and 17 European) a special plaque for their integration in the Global Geoparks Network.

A big exhibition was also organized, in which Chinese Geoparks (8 Global and 44 National) and a number of the European Geoparks, as well as some geological parks from other countries participated. The exhibition was opened by the Vice Minister of Natural Resources of China, Mrs Shou Jiahua.

The conference was a major publicity event and newspapers with wide circulation, dedicated full-page arti-



From the conference. Photo: Irimi Theodossiou-Drandaki

cles on Geoparks in the occasion of the Conference. The establishment of the World Geopark Network office in Beijing was announced officially during the conference and it was decided that the next International Geoparks meeting would be hosted in N. Ireland in 2006.

In a special meeting it was decided to form a permanent committee to act as catalyser between various bodies and initiatives in geological heritage conservation. In this meeting the president, vice president, general secretary of IUGS, the Director of Earth Sciences in UNESCO, European Geoparks representatives and representatives of Africa, Malaysia, etc. participated.

Dr Werner Janoschec will chair this new committee, UNESCO Earth Sciences Division will be represented by Dr Margarete Patzak, IUGS by Dr. Peter T. Bobrowsky, European Geoparks by Dr Patrick McKeever, World Heritage by Dr Tony Weighell, Europe by Dr N. Zouros, Africa by Prof. S. Muhongo, Oceania by Prof. I. Komoo.

ProGEO, which role was mentioned several times when referring in geoconservation in Europe, was decided to be addressed by a letter and asked to appoint a person to the committee.

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Songshan Maoun Global geopark, Henan Province. Photo: Irimi Theodossiou-Drandaki

Geological Heritage National Day and Geoconservation Award: Two new Portuguese initiatives of the ProGEO Group

The ProGEO Portuguese Group has decided to implement two new initiatives in order to raise public awareness of geoconservation and to motivate local politicians. The Geological Heritage National Day will be commemorated on the 22nd April, beginning this year. This date is already internationally known as Earth Day, constituting a good opportunity to enhance media impact and to implement some educational activities.

The Geoconservation Award is a yearly prize to be given to a municipality that distinguishes itself for the implementation of actions towards the conservation and valorisation of geological heritage. This symbolic award is a ProGEO-Portugal initiative with the strong support of the National Geographic Portugal (a very popular Portuguese version of the National Geographic Magazine is published since 2000). The collaboration between these two institutions is very important and

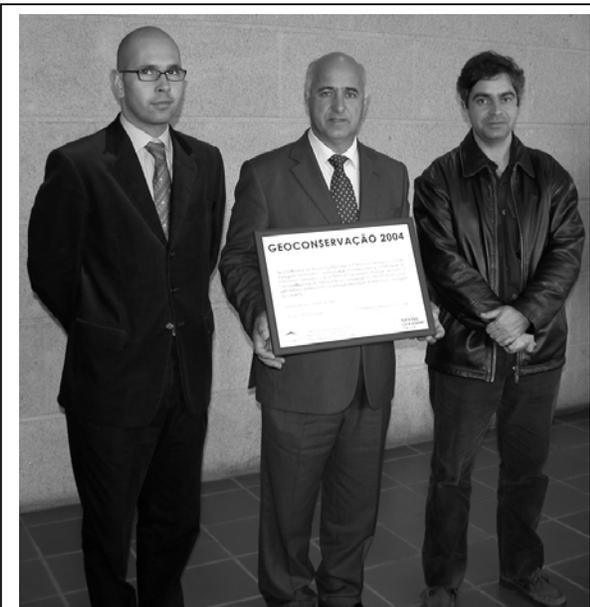


Photo 1. From left to right: Paulo Farinha (National Geographic Portugal), Álvaro Rocha (Mayor of Idanha-a-Nova municipality holding the 2004 Geoconservation Award) and José Brilha (ProGEO).



Photo 2 - Example of ichnofossils from Idanha-a-Nova protected by the municipality.

assures a stronger impact in the media and in the public. The 2004 Geoconservation Award was granted to the Idanha-a-Nova Municipality due to some projects already executed and some others to be implemented shortly. Some geosites have already been protected under local legislation, namely some outcrops with very well preserved paleozoic ichnofossils.

A geologist is working with the City Council in order to make the complete inventory and characterization of the geological heritage of the region. Proposals for classification as Natural Monuments are in preparation. By the end of this year, the first Portuguese proposal will be submitted to the European Geoparks Network.

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Competition

An international competition about the Conservation and Enhancement of the Landscape, Geological, and Environmental Heritage of Parco Naturale Regionale di Piana Crixia, with particular attention to the area of the "Stone Mushroom" is announced.

Information:

<http://www.parks.it/parco.piana.crixia/index.html>

Deadline: 30th october 2004.

For further information please email:

geositi@arch.unige.it

Protection of Norwegian River Systems

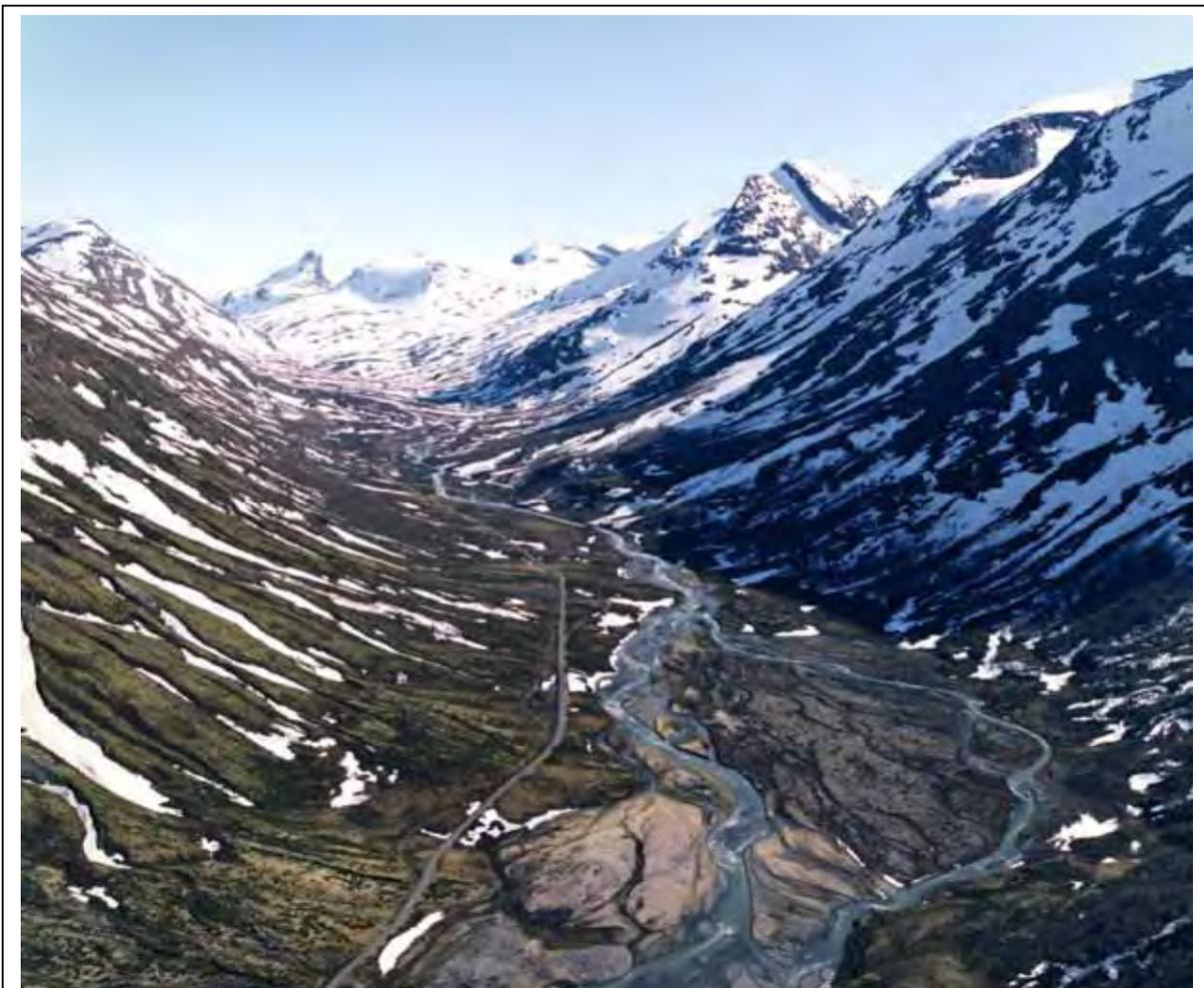
In Norway hydropower is the dominant energy form for domestic consumption. The electric potential of the rivers represent one of the most valuable economic resources of the nation. Traditional it has been a key factor to Norwegian industrial society.

Up to about 1960 exploitation of rivers for energy was hardly questioned. Economic impact was enormous in many small places where other employment was hard to find. The negative part of this was that large river systems were regulated and large dams and power stations were build without too much respect to nature conservation interests.

A general opposition to this development started in the late 1960's and resulted in a strong demand for protec-

tive measures. In Norway it is the Parliament that gives concession for hydroelectric exploitation of rivers and it was asked for a documentation of values affected by hydroelectric development, to form a basis for protection plans. The aim of such a plan was to protect a representative section of river systems and scenery of Norway. A holistic evaluation of catchments including natural values, landscape values, cultural heritage, recreation and other land use has been the basis for selection.

Within the natural sciences it was concentrated on the fields of earth science, botany, birds and freshwater science. The investigation was carried out over whole catchments and published in separate report series. Reports have been published concerning bedrock geology, hydrology, quaternary geology and fluvial geomorphology, with special priority to the last two of these. The main earth science contribution to this process was therefore within the fields of quaternary



The river Leira, in the protected Bøvra watercourse, Jotunheimen, South Norway. The river is fed by glaciers and dominated by active fluvial processes. Photo: FOTONOR.



The Vetti waterfall in the protected Ulla watercourse represent the high waterfalls that originally was highly evaluated for hydroelectric development. Vetti is now the highest unregulated waterfall in Norway. Photo: Lars Erikstad.

deposits and geomorphologic processes and landforms connected to the rivers.

The registrations have therefore been a long process with changing economy and many different people involved. This has resulted in some variation of registration quality and also registration content between different watercourses.

The plan has been adopted by the Parliament in successive steps over a period of 30 years, and the result is an extensive national plan for the conservation of natural watercourses. The plan includes 341 rivers and represents a total energy resource of 36,5 TWh/yr. It is directed towards power production by banning concession for any project within the specified catchments.

As a significant part of potential encroachments in the river systems will link to power production, the plan is a major national effort in nature conservation. A new legislation (the Law of Water Resources Act, revised 2002), improves the legal obligation of the plan by public for engagement and linking new development plans to the different values of the river. This involves an assessment of values of both the entire river system as well as local river segments. The wildness of the

river and the river scenery is important for this assessment.

The river protection plan is important for Earth Science Conservation. It has special relevance in conserving present fluvial processes, especially erosion in surficial deposits and sedimentation in rivers. It also has a conservational impact on important earth science sites along the river course even if the legal effect of the plan is limited. Several areas with important quaternary deposits and other earth science interests are protected from being dammed or used in the construction work for hydropower installations.

The plan is directed only towards hydropower production, and it may be thought a weakness with the system that it does not cover other encroachments along the river. The plan may, however, be regarded as a supplementary system to other conservation efforts directed towards a single treat to nature. The plan is also partly overlapping the National Park system which gives protection on a more fundamental level.

This summer the Norwegian Government proposed an adjustment of the plan with a supplement of 52 new catchments. The selection criteria have been focused on intactness and pristinity.

It is also proposed to allow small hydroelectric plants up to the size of 1 MW as long as these do not compromise the justification of the protection.

The proposal will be discussed in the Parliament within the nearest future and show a continuous development of the plan according to nature conservation needs and energy policy and market developments.

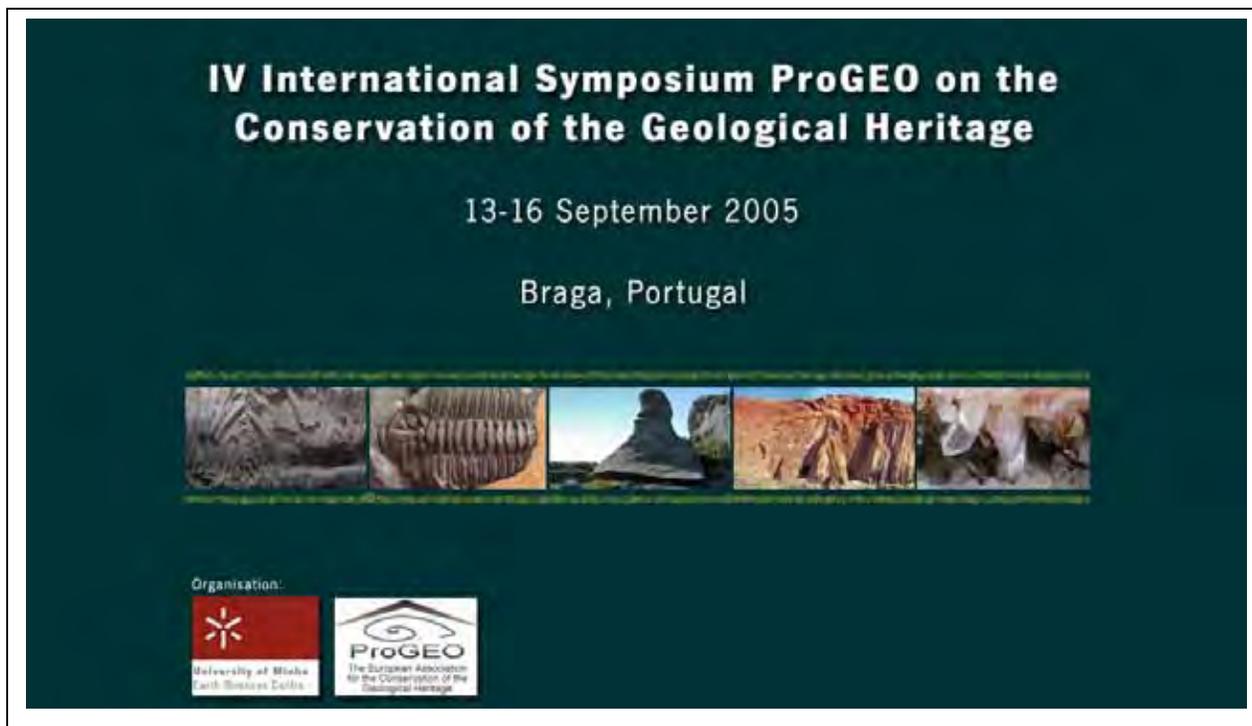
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WEB site

Remember the ProGEO web site

www.progeo.se

There you will find information about ProGEO, its working groups and old issues of ProGEO NEWS!



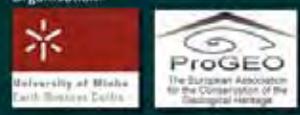
IV International Symposium ProGEO on the Conservation of the Geological Heritage

13-16 September 2005

Braga, Portugal



Organisation:



University of Minho
Earth Sciences Centre

ProGEO
The European Association
for the Conservation of the
Geological Heritage

ProGEO symposium 2005

The IV International Symposium ProGEO on the

Conservation of the Geological Heritage

will be held in Braga (Portugal), 13-16 September 2005, organised by the Earth Sciences Centre of the University of Minho (Portugal) and ProGEO.

Following the previous three events in France (1991), Italy (1996) and Spain (1999), we hope that this Symposium will constitute a key-event of our organisation.

The web site for this Symposium is available at

<http://www.dct.uminho.pt/cct/progeo2005/>

For the moment, all the necessary information is on-line including the download of the 1st Circular and the pre-registration form.

We hope to see you ALL in Braga next year!

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ProGEO NEWS

ProGEO NEWS is issued four times a year. It functions as a link between the ProGEO members and as an information channel for ProGEO towards the outside world.

The newsletter is dependent of contributions from you, and offers a simple way for you to present areas, activities and ideas to the geoconservation community.

In a world with increasing lack of time resources, it is constantly difficult to collect contributions to the newsletter, although everybody seems to appreciate its existence.

Therefore this reminder: Write your contributions to ProGEO NEWS regularly! Make it simple, but send in your information and ideas – text and photos, and make the information tools of ProGEO vital and living. Use the editors e-mail address:

lars.erikstad@nina.no

ProGEO NEWS is spread out to all ProGEO members and is also included in full on our web-site!

The editor

Florence 2004

The 32nd International Geological Congress, called "The Renaissance of Geology," was arranged in Florence, Italy in August this year. This was a major event with thousands of participants and more than 300 sessions and a large number of posters shifting every day during the conference week. Detailed information is found on

<http://www.32igc.org/>

Two sessions was of particular interest for ProGEO members: This was

- Geology - maker of cultural and geological heritage: geosites under threat
- Geological heritage and tourism

Other sessions did also touch into issues linked to geoconservation such as "Geomorphological sites in a cultural integrated landscape".

Both the sessions were well visited, and a lot of papers and posters were presented to a large public. It is important that the field of geoconservation now seems to get higher interest for a wider public than we observed few years ago.

It could however be noted that it was less overlap between the public in the sessions than perhaps should be expected. I do not hope that this reflects a growing division within the geoconservation community.



A lot of participants on both sessions. Photo: Vladimir Makarikhin.

It is an important task to link the communities of geoconservation to the one concerned with geotourism. The use of geosites for tourism should be based on sustainability and conservation of sites and landscapes is therefore important for these activities. It is also true that the geoconservation community must focus on information and use of the conserved sites to secure interest and support in protecting the geological heritage and manage the geodiversity of nature.

We have mutual interests in working close together, and the two sessions within the same conference did contribute significantly to this.

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Fortezza da Basso, the site of the conference was both a historic place and an efficient conference site. Photo: Vladimir Makarikhin.



ProGEO members at the poster hall. Photo: Vladimir Makarikhin.

Earth Heritage: World Heritage Geological and geomorphological conservation in a national and global context

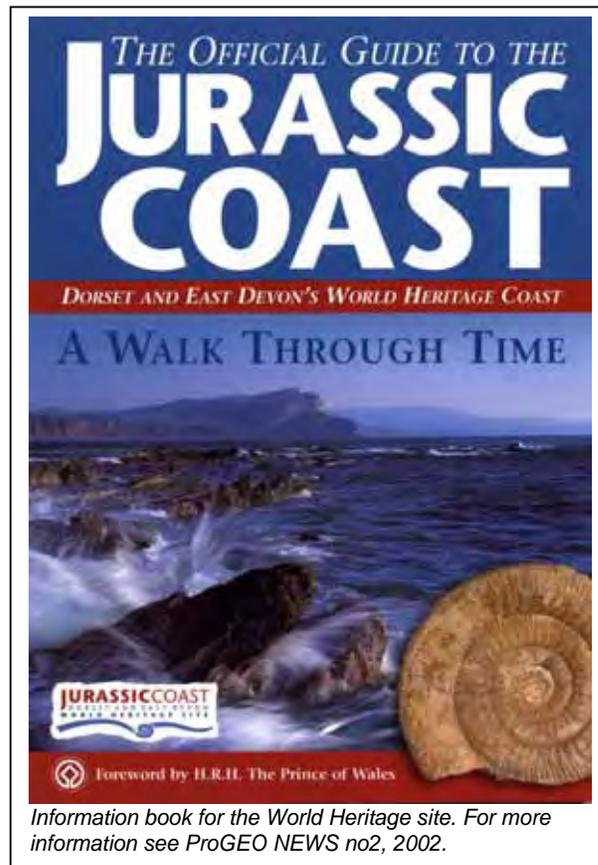
The Earth Heritage/World Heritage conference was organised by the United Kingdom's Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Dorset and Devon World Heritage Team and English Nature. It was held in September in Dorset, UK.

The localisation of the conference was interesting as this is one of the new and important World Heritage sites based on geological criteria.

Among the many features, values and management issues presented, it was striking to observe the local enthusiasm for the coastline and its geological heritage. Ammonites as logo found on public transport and schools, as well as the existence of several local museums and fossil shops was among the elements showing this. Especially the management philosophy linked to commercial collecting and sale of geological material is an important issue that was discussed. Looking at the Dorset coast World Heritage site and comparing with the charter of the European Geoparks that do not accept this sort of activities gave an interesting perspective to this important managing issue.

The link between conservation strategies (GEOSITES/GEOPARKS/World Heritage and others) had a prominent and constructive part in the conference, which gave strong signals of increased priority to geoconservation and towards a greater integration of geoconservation within general nature conservation, management tourism and recreation.

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Information book for the World Heritage site. For more information see ProGEO NEWS no2, 2002.

Deadline for the next issue of ProGEO NEWS: 01.12.2004

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