

Geosites' Evaluation Methodology As A Tool for Geoconservation

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In many countries, protection measures have been introduced for specific geological monuments and protected areas have been created that include sites of special geological - geomorphological value, but the management of these areas has not had as priority the protection of geological - geomorphological sites.

In Greece until recently the elements of the abiotic environment were referred to in Law 1650/1986 as objects of protection without being subject to management. The locations containing special geological monuments are mainly protected in the context of the archaeological or forestry legislation. As a result, there was a lack of protection of geological - geomorphological sites. Law 1650/1986 and especially law 3937/2011, which regulate the management of protected areas and biodiversity conservation include provisions on the conservation of biodiversity. In Law 3937/2011 for the first time the concept of geosites and geoparks are introduced into the Greek legal order.

The subject of this paper is the presentation of an integrated methodology and criteria for the evaluation of geosites that constitute the basic unit of the geological and geomorphological heritage and the use of this methodology for the implementation of an integrated geo-conservation policy. A special point is the incorporation of the methodology of quantitative evaluation of the geosites and its results as a basic tool for the management of the geoparks of Greece, as well as for its application in a geopark internationally.

An essential component of the research was the development and implementation of the geosites' assessment methodology that assessed the locations and structures of geological and geomorphological interest in Lesvos Island UNESCO Global Geopark in order to define the priorities for protection, promotion and management and ultimately select those sites which are exploited in the context of the different actions of the Geopark of Lesvos in the fields of awareness raising, education and tourism.

Taking advantage of the data collected, the criteria necessary for the creation of a framework for the evaluation of geosites and the definition of parameters for a system of evaluation of the geosites of Greece were defined.

In conclusion, the main results of the research carried out are:

- the proposal for an integrated methodology for the evaluation of geosites and the use of this methodology for the implementation of an integrated geo-conservation policy.
- the incorporation of the methodology of quantitative assessment of the geosites and its results as a basic tool for the management of geoparks of Greece, as well as for its application in geopark internationally.

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