

4th International Intensive Course on Geoparks in Lesvos, 1 - 6 October 2010

“Evaluating Earth Heritage Management”



Alongside the 9th European Geoparks Conference 2010, the 4th International Intensive Course on “Evaluating Earth Heritage Management” was organized in Lesvos, with great success, from the 1st to the 6th October 2010. The Intensive Course was held in the Geography Dept. of the University of the Aegean and the NHMLPF, with the support of UNESCO's Global Geoparks Network and the European Geoparks Network, under the auspices of UNESCO.

The seminar was attended by 29 MSc and PhD students, distinguished scientists experts in managing natural heritage, state and local government officials, university professors, researchers and Geopark staff members from 14 countries (Australia, Brazil, Chile, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and Vietnam). The purpose of the Course was the training of the participants on issues of Geopark creation and management, management and promotion of natural heritage, geoconservation, development of alternative forms of tourism, as well as on evaluation issues, so that the participants can in the future coordinate scientific research, natural heritage protection and promotion attempts in Geopark areas, in accordance with the qualitative criteria set by UNESCO's Global Geoparks Network and the European Geoparks Network.

The program of the Intensive Course included the presentations of the 9th European Geoparks Conference. Initially, 1-3 October, the participants attended lectures on:

- Geoparks - Global Geoconservation Strategy and sustainable development
- Geoconservation best practices and principles for the development of Geoparks

- Global Geoparks Network - Regional Development and International Cooperation
- Development of alternative forms of tourism
- Geoparks and World Natural Heritage
- Policies and practices of protection and conservation of natural heritage
- Methodologies for assessment of natural heritage sites and management practices
- Monitoring and evaluation of operating geoparks

Moreover, during the 9th European Geoparks Conference, the participants presented their work on assessing natural heritage and Geoparks, geoconservation, methods of attracting visitors and raising awareness, environmental education, protection, promotion and management of natural monuments.

Afterwards, from 4 to 6 October, the program of the Course was differentiated from that of the Conference; the participants of the former had the opportunity to attend special lectures by Geopark experts, to participate in workshops on geoheritage interpretation and geoheritage management in Geoparks, to be guided in field exercises and thematic visits in Lesvos.

Results

The organization of the Intensive Course contributed significantly, not only to the knowledge and experience gaining of the participants, but also to the social and cultural development of the island of Lesvos. The participants had the unique experience of an educational visit to the Lesvos Petrified Forest open parks and the NHMLPF, where they came in contact with the tools of information and awareness raising, research activities, protection and conservation methods, environmental educational programs and voluntary actions designed and materialized by the Museum.

The 4th International Intensive Course on Geoparks was completed with the announcement of the organisation of the 5th International Intensive Course on Lesvos in September 2011. The participants to the 4th course stated that they will leave Lesvos excited and fascinated by the natural beauty and cultural richness of the island, and full of knowledge and experiences. All participants expressed their intention to come back to Lesvos, which they described as an exemplary destination that uniquely combines the promotion of the Petrified Forest, the quality services and the production of quality local products.