

GEOCONSERVATION LEGAL STATUS AND GEOPARK ESTABLISHMENT IN GREECE

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Abstract

Under Greek (and EU) law, geo-conservation (geological conservation) is an issue not being dealt with in an organized and systematic way, in contrast with bio-conservation (nature conservation). Therefore geo-conservation approaches, as the 'geopark' concept, are not recognized under Greek legislation and elements of geological heritage can only be granted protection in isolation and in limited extension, mainly as playing a role to the biotic environment. However, to date, geoparks have been established and recognized by the European Geoparks Network (E.G.N.), in Greece. Those geoparks are protected under the Forestry Legislation, the Archeological Legislation or/and the Environmental Legislation. In view of the plans of the Institute of Geology and Mineral Exploration (I.G.M.E.) to expanding the Geoparks Network in Greece, a thorough examination of the available legal tools to protecting elements of geological importance in geoparks is required, with a view to proposing a legal protection regime that would realistically deal with the conservation of geosites and the establishment of geoparks focusing on overlapping with nature conservation areas, namely "Natura 2000 sites". In addition, building on the experience of the administration and management of national parks and Natura 2000 sites, the available management options will be examined with a view to providing the optimum management alternatives.

Key words: *geopark, geoconservation, geotourism, legislation, Natura 2000, management, administration, Greece.*

1. Introduction

Geosites are (1) the geological and geomorphological sites that mark important phases of the Earth history and environment and have been created by various natural, physical, chemical, biological, geological and geomorphological processes which left their mark on the earth's surface in the past and of an age from some billion or million years ago (volcanoes, caves, sinkholes, dolines, stromatolites, rocks, hot springs, faults and important sites of mineral or fossil interest) and (2) important metallurgical, mineral and extractive centers or remnants that combine geological, cultural and archeological interest.

Geoparks are areas in need of protection whose principal aim is geoconservation, research, education, training and contribution to the socioeconomic development of the wider region by the development of sustainable forms of tourism, namely geotourism, providing major direct and indirect economic benefits to local, regional or national economy (Frey, 2003, UNESCO, 2006a, Eder, 1999,

Brachou, 1996) through the inclusion, protection and management of a significant number of geosites representative of the area and of its geological history.

The purpose of this article is firstly to present the available legal tools of protection, conservation and management of geoparks that are available at International, European and National level. Next, the available national legislative framework, namely the environmental legislation, will be evaluated in terms of its compatibility to the establishment of geoparks and the case of overlap of potential geoparks with existing protected areas will be examined. Particular emphasis will be given to the management alternatives in case of an operation of a management authority of an already established protected area where the geopark is to be established where protection and sustainable management can only be achieved through strong local involvement and public authorities, local communities and private interests acting together (Eder, 1999), protected areas without a management authority, protected areas whose Special Environmental Study is being developed, and geoparks within Natura 2000 sites that do not have a management authority. As a conclusion, proposals will be presented to improve the legal status of geoparks at an international and national level.

2. International and European context

2.1 The UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

The only international “hard” law text that provides explicitly for the protection, conservation and management of elements of geological and physiographical/ geomorphological heritage and has been ratified by Greece is the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972 (the Convention) (L.1126/1981 (HOG. A 32). Under article 2 of the Convention as world Natural heritage is defined “geological and physiographical formations [...] of **outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation**”. The Convention provides a series of appropriate measures, as the adoption of a general policy so that functionality is given to Natural heritage within social life, the establishment of management authorities, the development of scientific and technical studies especially in relation to dealing with risks that threaten cultural and Natural heritage, to take appropriate measures (legal, technical, administrative et.c.) for its designation, the protection and management and the use of such places for the encouragement of education in the field of conservation, development and encouragement of scientific research (article 5). In addition, each State Party will submit “in so far as possible” an inventory of property suitable to be inscribed in the List (article 11). If the property meets a number of criteria, then it is inscribed in the List as “**Monument of World Heritage**”.

The protection of geosites under the above legislation is exceptional, and so since, the Convention concerns places that “**outstanding** Natural phenomena or areas of **outstanding** Natural beauty and aesthetic” and that must be “**exceptional** examples of major phases of the history of the earth, the archive of life, important in general geological processes for the development of geofeatures or important geomorphical or physiographical characteristics”. In addition, the almost 35 years of operation of the Convention system, very few places have been included primarily due to their geological and geomorphological physiographical interest. However, many places that have been included due to their biological interest present remarkable geological and elements. Anyway, the number of such places falls short of those with a cultural value. IUCN proposes the encouragement of geoscientists to participate in the relevant procedures – where architects and Natural scientists dominate, the publication of a relevant Guide focused on geological/ physiographical criteria and the encouragement of other initiatives, and in particular the Global Geoparks Network (Dingwall, et. al. 2005).

2.2 The Barcelona Convention

Geosites that lie in the seabed, or coastal areas of the Mediterranean Sea can also be protected by the 1995 Barcelona Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean of the 1976 Barcelona Convention on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea (L. 1634/86 HOG 104 A). Under article 4d, in addition to sites of biological importance, the Protocol provides for “**sites of particular importance because of their scientific, aesthetic, cultural or educational interest.**” The Protocol stipulates that the Parties develop guidelines for establishing and managing protected areas and lists a certain number of appropriate measures, which the Parties must adopt in order to ensure the identified areas are protected. These measures include: prohibiting the discharge or unloading of waste, regulating shipping operations, etc. The Petrified Forest of Lesvos, one of the two recognized Greek Geoparks, is listed as a Specially Protected Area of the Protocol.

2.3 The Global Geoparks Network of UNESCO

The Geoparks Initiative of UNESCO is based philosophically on the Declaration of *Digne-les-Bains* of 1991 “for the rights of the Memory of Earth” that was adopted by the 1st International Symposium for the Conservation of our Geological Heritage. (Digne, France 1991) Whilst such geoparks are not included in an adopted programme of UNESCO, they are in line with the objectives of the Biosphere Reserves, of the Programme “Man and the Biosphere” of UNESCO. Geoparks are treated by UNESCO as complementary to the World Heritage List in order for an appropriate mechanism to exist in such a way for the recognition of internationally important places that are recognized in national and international geological charts.

The directions for geoparks highlight their role and the objectives of their designation and management. Six principles have been adopted for the recognition of geoparks in relation to their volume, their composition, the socio-economic objectives, the conservation objectives, the education and research objectives, the legal status and their contribution to the international network. In particular in relation to the legal status, UNESCO leaves entirely the choice of appropriate protection means depending on local traditions and choices, but notes that there must be a minimum protection of the elements of geological interest, a management authority and the absence of trading of minerals generally geological elements except exceptional and justified cases. Their success is guaranteed through strong local involvement (Eder, 1999).

The role and the aim of the protection of geosites that is materialized through the geoparks initiative is different than that of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The reason is that taking into account that it is practically impossible to include more than 150 places of geological and geomorphological interest in the World Heritage List the system of the Convention is inadequate to represent the totality of the internationally important places of geological interest (Dingwall et. al, 2005). The initiative is developing at a fast pace in different areas of the earth. Despite the fact that the Initiative recognizes the value of legal protection of the area, does not consider its previous designation, or its proclamation as “protected area”, the prohibition of particular activities or the official establishment of a management authority as a precondition for recognition of a geopark (UNESCO, 2008).

2.4 The European Geoparks Network

The European Geoparks Network was established in 2000 and aims at the protection of geodiversity, the promotion of geological heritage to the public and the support of sustainable development

in the areas of the geoparks in particular through the development of geotourism in Europe. (Zouros, 2004) The Network has brought close areas from all over Europe that share those objectives and are working together to achieve them. In 2001 the Network signed an official agreement with the Directorate of Earth Sciences of UNESCO with which UNESCO expressed its support. (UNESCO, 2006b) With another agreement with UNESCO in 2004 (the declaration of *Madonie*) the Network assumed responsibility for the management of issues that concern the inclusion of areas in the International Geoparks Network in Europe. (Madonie, Italy, 2004) In accordance with the Charter of the European Geoparks Network “The sites [...] must benefit from protection and management measures. No loss or destruction, directly or via sale, of the geological values of a European Geopark may be tolerated. The European Geopark must be managed by a clearly defined structure able to enforce protection, enhancement and sustainable development policies within its territory.” (European Geoparks Network Charter, 2000) In addition, in the dossier that the applicants must provide for inclusion in the network are “C.3 Policies for the protection, enhancement and economic development of the geological heritage present in the territory. Existing policies and those under preparation, existing and future actions” and “D.2 The provisions for the protection of the territory” (www.europeangeoparks.org).

The legal protection of the area of the European Geopark or /and the presence of a management authority with decisive competences is simply one of the dimensions to be evaluated for inclusion of the particular Geopark in the Network. Therefore, geoparks of the network could be both areas that are under a strict protection regime and areas whose protection regime is being designed, or even areas without established or under establishment legal protection framework. In any case, however, in comparison with the prerequisites for inclusion in the Global Geoparks Network of UNESCO, the specifications of inclusion in the European Geoparks Network explicitly stress, *inter alia*, the need of existence of a local, regional or national legal framework, the lack of which, however, is not necessarily a hindrance to the inclusion of an geopark in the network.

3. National Framework

3.1 Protected areas under L. 1650/86

Law 1650/86 (HOG A 160) “for the protection of the environment” is the principal legal tool for nature protection and conservation. It provides for the procedures and the means of categorization and designation of protected areas. In accordance with article 18 of L. 1650/86, nature and landscape are protected and are conserved so that Natural processes, the Natural resources’ production, balance and evolution of ecosystems in addition to their uniqueness, diversity and individuality are maintained. Both land and marine areas or particular elements or group of elements of nature or landscape can be objects of protection and conservation due to their ecological, geomorphological, biological, scientific or aesthetic value. It should be noted that the law does not explicitly provide for designation of areas with geological, mineral, extractive or metalourgical interest, but only areas with important geomorphological elements.

Out of the categories of designation provided under article 19 of L. 1650/86 (nature reserves, nature protection areas, national parks, protected Natural formations, protected landscapes and landscape elements, and eco-development areas) only national parks and protected Natural formations include a geoconservation dimension, as national parks may be designated if a considerable number of geomorphological elements is present and in the indicative list of potential protected Natural formations are listed including formations of interest for geoconservation as gorges, caves, rocks, petrified forests, paleontological findings, geomorphological formations. If the above are of a monumental

character they are designated as “conservable monuments of nature”.

Under article 21 of L. 1650/1986 the designation of protected areas takes place through the issue of a Presidential Decree following a Special Environmental Study that will document the elements under protection and the purpose of the proposed protection measures. It should be noted that a special legal tool (a Ministerial Decision) is needed to determine the specifications for the elaboration of studies for geoparks either by expert offices or agencies. The above Presidential Decree provides for the necessary terms, prohibitions, and limitations to land use, to construction and the establishment and performance of operations and works. With the same Presidential Decree a Management Authority may be established under the terms and conditions of article 15 of L. 2742/1999 “Planning and Sustainable Development and other provisions” (HOG A’207) that is a Legal Person of Private Law with a series of scientific, coordinating and consultative competences relevant to the management of the protected area.

3.2 Geo-conservation interest in caves and constructions

In the special case that in the potential geopark there is mineral, extractive or metallurgical interest in **caves**, Natural or artificial, the protection status is described by the combined application of article 2 aa of L. 3028/2002 “on the protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in general” (HOG A 153) and M.D. 34593/1108 (Culture) of 23.6/8.7.83 «Protection of Caves» (HOG B` 398). In particular, the caves, either Natural or artificial, are considered Monuments (no other designation is required) and every activity in them is forbidden. Competent authority for the protection, research, excavation and study of caves that are interesting from a Natural archeological view and the guarding, presentation and exhibition of any kind of findings that come from caves is a competence and duty of the State and especially the Ministry of Culture through its special unit i.e. the Paleoanthropology - Speleology Units. However, any activity (intervention, exploration, exploitation, utilization) that is relevant to caves is forbidden, except if there is a prior approval of the above Units. This protection system, even if it was not established for the protection of caves (natural or artificial) from the point of view of their geological value, is compatible with the designation of a geopark that includes caves.

In relation to **constructions** that have extractive, metallurgical or historical interest, both from the point of view of industrial archeology and from the point of view of charting the continuity of the art of extraction (i.e. ancient laundries, air shafts, industrial buildings et.c.), their protection is guaranteed through their declaration as archeological sites, historical monuments, conservable monuments et.c. in accordance with L. 3028/2002 “for the protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in general” (HOG A 153).

3.3 Protection of geoparks through town and country planning law tools

In accordance with article 7 of L. 2742/1999 “Planning and Sustainable Development and other provisions” (HOG A’ 207) is established the possibility of issuing Special and Sustainable Development Plans that are a series of texts and diagrams with which the guidelines of the General Sustainable Development Plan that deal with the development and organization of the national space are specified, *inter alia*, on issues of special planning of some sectors or branches of production activities of national interest. In the General Sustainable Development Plan of 2009 (HOG A 128) it is mentioned that the basic aspects of tourism, that have been developed until today in Greece have exploited only part of the diversity of the available tourist resources. However, the Special Plan for Tourism of 2009 (HOG B 1138) provides an explicit reference to geotourism (article 6 par. H), that it is expected to encourage the designation of geoparks that would be the destination of such tourists

in Greece. At a town and country planning level, the legislation gives the possibility of indirect protection of geosites with the framework of approval of the General Town and Country Plans (GTCP) and the Open City Town and Country Plans (OCTCP) in accordance with L. 2508/1997 “Sustainable housing development and other provisions (HOG A 124).

In accordance with article 4 par. 4 of that law “ through the GTCP are established **areas of special protection (ASP)** that are not destined for housing development in contact or not with already developed or areas to be developed, as **in particular** archeological sites, of architectural, historical, folkloric interest, zones next to the sea or to rivers, biotopes and places of outstanding Natural beauty, forests of forest areas. In addition through the GTCP areas around cities and settlements are designated where control of housing expansion is required. For the areas of the present paragraph the GTCP may determine the allowed land use, the maximum surface under which the fragmentation of property is not allowed and other measures of special protection.” The above provision is applied accordingly to OCTCPs (see article 5 par. 2). The citation of special areas that may be designated as ASPs from the relevant studies and then approved is indicative and therefore it is possible in line with the town and country planning legislation to award protection status to areas that have the characteristics of a geopark within the framework of elaboration and approval of GTCPs and OCTCPs.

In addition, to this end, it is a positive coincidence the fact that within the elaboration of the above plans a general geological survey is the whole area of the study area takes place, aiming at the exploration of the in principle suitability of every kind of development that requires construction, and the protection of the area from catastrophes and disasters”. [see article A.I.A.3.4. of Decision 9572/1845/00 «Technical specifications of GTCP and OCTCP studies and engineers’ revenues for the elaboration of such studies” (HOG D’ 209)]. This study, even though its aim is not the identification of geosites, **can contribute with its findings to the location of geosites suitable for protection within geoparks that could be designated as areas of special protection** (see Theodosiou, 2004).

3.4 Evaluation of the national legal framework in relation to the protection and management of geoparks.

3.4.1 General evaluation of the legal framework

In Greece there is no special regulatory framework for the legal recognition of geoparks as an independent legally recognized designation. Ideally, with an appropriate amendment of article 19 par. 3 of L. 1650/1986 the criteria for the designation of “National Parks” could be expanded to include geological, metallurgical, extractive and mineral elements, in addition to geomorphological, that are already mentioned. In addition, as with “marine park” and “national forest parks” to include the term “geopark” in the law. In order for a geopark to be designated as “national park” the relevant article must be amended as follows: «3. As national park are designated extended land, marine or areas of a mixed nature that are left intact or are barely influenced by human activities and in which a large number and a variety of exceptional biological, ecological, **geological, metallurgical, extractive, mineral**, geomorphological and aesthetic elements. When the national park, or a large part of it is covered by a marine area or forest or extensive areas of **geological, metalourgical, extractive, mineral** or geomorphological interest it can be more specifically be named a marine park, a forest park or a **geopark** accordingly.”

However, today, it is possible only to use selectively the legislation in vigor in order to protect geological, geomorphological, metallurgical, extractive and mineral elements that will be integrated into geoparks using piecemeal legislative provisions i.e Areas with many elements of **geomorpho-**

logical value can be designated as ‘national parks’. Geosites with elements of **particular paleontological and geomorphological value** can be designated as “**conservable monuments of nature**” in accordance with the forestry legislation (e.g. petrified forest of Lesvos). Single Natural creations that have particular scientific value as gorges, caves, rocks, petrified forests and geomorphological creations can be protected by the environmental legislation and be designated as “**protected Natural formations**”. Protected Natural formations that have monumental character are designated as “conservable monuments of nature”. The fact that the list is indicative gives the opportunity for more elements of geointerest to be designated. **Elements in caves** are protected without further designation, and any positive management actions are subject to the approval of the Paleoanthropology – Speleology Units of the Ministry of Culture. **Constructions** of geointerest are protected through their declaration as archeological sites, historical monuments, conservable monuments et.c. in accordance with the archeological conservation legislation. Indirectly the designation of geoparks could be promoted with the provision of **geotourism in the Special Plan for Tourism 2009**. Geoparks could be designated as areas of special protection (ASP) within the GTCs and OCTCPs, while the documentation could be supported by the envisaged **general geological survey**. In this way there could be imposed measures of special protection to geosites that do not meet the requirements under the forestry or environmental legislation.

3.4.2 Management Authority

Management of geoparks that are designated as “protected Natural formations” or “conservable monuments of nature” can be assigned [in accordance with article 15 of L.2742/1999 “Planning and Sustainable Development and other provisions” (HOG A‘207)] to **management authorities established to that end** (that will be incorporated in the P.D. of designation) or (in the absence of a management authority) to existing public authorities that are established for this purpose, to local authorities of both degrees, to Universities and public research centers or other not for profit legal persons of public or private law of the wider public sector that have been distinguished for their work in the area of nature protection or generally that have the necessary technical and scientific capacity, and proven experience for the materialization of relevant projects. Caves lacking any designation in principle enjoy general negative protection. However, if an organization wishes to take management measures for the promotion of the cave for its geological/mineral value (i.e. access, lighting et.c.) this is possible following an approval of the Paleoanthropology – Speleology Units of the Ministry of Culture. Finally, the management of Geoparks – ASP, in accordance with the town and country planning legislation, can be performed by the municipalities in whose areas they lie. Such management can be performed by the Municipal Development S.A.s if existing, or a Multi-Municipal Development S.A. in case of smaller municipalities sharing a wider geopark area. The latter is taking place in the case of the Psiloritis Geopark, the second recognized Greek Geopark (www.psiloritis-natural-park.gr).

Therefore, it is possible to perform managerial interventions and without the necessity of amending the legislation, it is possible to have adequate recognition and management of geoparks, in accordance with the standards for their international recognition. So, in case **there is no other parallel/conflicting uses and designation (i.e. Natura 2000 areas)** the following actions should take place:

- For the already listed areas to encourage their designation as “protected Natural formations” and if they have a monumental character to “conservable monuments of nature” (in accordance with articles 19, 20 and 21 of L. 1650/1986 & article 15 of L. 2742/1999) with the issue of a relevant Presidential Decree.
- The geoscientific community should be informed that within the general geological survey

in view of the issue of the GTCs and OCTCs areas that have an interest and could potentially be included in a geoparks' network could be proposed as ASPs and if they meet the characteristics of the law to be designated as protected Natural formations" and if they have a monumental character to "conservable monuments of nature".

3.5 The case of overlap of potential geoparks with existing protected areas.

The establishment of geoparks, in practice, is highly possible – if not certain – that will take place in areas that already enjoy protection either as National Parks, Forest Parks, Natura 2000 sites etc. It is therefore worth examining the role of the provisions that govern the existing protected areas having elements of geoconservation. The designated protected area will be either (a) designated under the forestry legislation, or (b) environmental legislation (L. 1650/86) that includes Natura 2000 sites or both (i.e. Natura 2000 sites may also be Forest Parks). In addition, in relation to Natura 2000 sites' management, the Special Environmental Study will either be assigned, in the process of completion, or completed. Finally, the protected area will either have a Management Authority or not. The different options are examined below.

3.5.1 Operation of a Management Authority (Protected area & Geopark)

The presence, operation and activity of a Management Authority (the 25 protected areas that have a Management Authority are provided in article 13 of L. 3044/2002 (HOG A 197) while management authorities have also the National Park Schinias-Marathon and the National Park of Zakynthos, i.e. in total 27) may create conflicts as the Management Authority has as a mission the management of the area focusing on the conservation of biodiversity and habitats, while the Geopark's Management Authority's mission is the conservation of geodiversity of the Geopark. It is therefore possible, if there is no coordination between those two bodies either to have conflicting decisions that will affect either biodiversity or geodiversity or repetition of the same activities (i.e. construction of footpaths) by both authorities. The assumption for the existence of two different management authorities responsible for the same area is not sustainable. Such a proposal is also in contradiction with the provisions of the European Geoparks Charter. Geoparks promote a holistic approach in nature conservation. The separation of responsibilities may raise danger and create conflicts.

The proposed solution is the participation in both authorities in decision-making.

- The management authority of the National Park/ Forest Park /Natura 2000 must have as a member in the Board one geologist that will observe the impacts of the authorities' decisions on the geopark and will intervene on issues relevant to geoconservation, and
- The decisions that involve active management of the geopark should have the **previous approval** of the management authority of the protected area.

Both proposals do not require any amendment to legislation, as members of the Board of the Management Authority are appointed by the Minister of Environment and the participation of a geoscientist is not excluded, and the condition of a previous approval may be put as a term in the Presidential Decree establishing the geosite.

3.5.2 Designated Area without management authority

In the absence of a management authority of the protected area there is no issue of coordination and the management authority of the potential geopark is limited only by provisions relevant to passive management (protection), if existent, until the management authority is in operation. That case is ap-

plicable in the case of the Forest Park of Sounion, the only Forest Park/Natura 2000 site, without a management authority. It is the case where a geopark is designated and has a management authority while for the (wider) protected area exists only a Presidential Decree or a Ministerial Decision providing designation and terms.

3.5.3 Special Environmental Study

If the protected area is at a stage of pre-designation, i.e. the Special Environmental Study has been assigned and it is being developed, or it has been completed but the necessary Presidential Decree of designation has not been issued, and in the meantime the Presidential Decree of the designation of the geopark is issued, the study group must be contacted in order for the elements of the study to be updated, include the geopark and the description of the elements of geological, geomorphological, mineral, extractive or metallurgical value that are met in the area. In case that the study is finished, then a relative annex must be issued. If the study has not yet been assigned, the future study group must be contacted and made aware that a geopark is in place, the relative Presidential Decree of designation and the elements to be conserved. It is without saying that during the compilation of the Special Environmental Study for the Geopark the elements of biodiversity that are worth conserving must be taken into account.

3.5.4 Geopark in a Natura 2000 site that has only been included in the network (no Special Environmental Study has been carried, does not have a management authority and no other special designation or terms)

In this quite probable scenario (Natura 2000 sites are about 18% of the country) then the management of the geopark is limited by articles 6, 11 and 12 of the Joint Ministerial Decision 33318/30281 (HOG B' 1289) "Determination of measures and procedures for the conservation of Natural habitats and wild fauna and flora". Therefore (a) there is an obligation of carrying an Environmental Impact Assessment for every plan or activity not included in Category A of article 3 of L. 1650/86 (article 21 par. 2 line 2) and is not connected directly or is necessary for the management of the particular Natura site, provided it affects severely alone or in combination with other plans or activities the Natura site (b) the killing, collection, disturbance of the species and destruction of the habitats is forbidden (c) collection, uprooting destruction of flora protected under the above Decision and Directive 92/43 is forbidden. The plans that the management authority of the geopark are considered necessary for the promotion of the geopark, since they refer to the geodiversity of the site, that is not under protection by the above Decision nor the Directive 92/43 must be submitted to the above (a) procedure.

4. Conclusion - Proposals

4.1 At an international level

- Areas that fulfill the terms of inclusion on the European and International Geoparks Network to be proposed for inclusion in such networks.
- In view of the adoption of the EU Framework Directive on Soil, the issues of protection, conservation and management of geodiversity to be put anew, in accordance with the European Manifesto 2005, to the Parliament and the Council.

4.2 At a national level

- In accordance with the guidelines of the European Geoparks Network, a National Geoparks

Network to be established. Criteria to be established for local, regional and national significance of geoparks. Documentation is already available for the islands of the Aegean Sea (Ministry of Aegean, 2003).

- Greece to comply with Recommendation 2004(3) of the Council Of Europe and take advantage of the existing legal tools towards protecting, conserving and managing geodiversity.
- Greece to ratify the European Landscape Convention (Florence 2000).
- The existing environmental legislation to be used for the designation of geoparks or/and geosites within them as “protective Natural formations” or “conservable monuments of nature”, with the issue of the relevant presidential decrees. The Ministry of the Environment to issue a circular for article 19 par. 4 of L. 1650/86 that will clarify that geosites can be designated, according to their importance as “protected Natural formations” or “conservable monuments of nature”.
- Article 19 par. 3 of L. 1650/86 to be amended to include a provision on geodiversity and an explicit designation of «geopark».
- A special legal tool (a Ministerial Decision) to be issued to identify the specifications for the elaboration of studies for geoparks either by expert offices or agencies.
- All geoparks should have a management authority.
- Geoparks with interest only in caves do not need further designation, but approval by the competent regional Paleontology – Speleology Units of the Ministry of Culture.
- Geoparks to be designated as Areas of Special Protection in the GTCs and OCTCs.
- The geoscientific community to locate important geosites during the general geological survey.
- The Board of the Management Authorities of the protected areas where a geopark exists should have one member that is a geologist / geoscientist.
- Geoparks within protected areas that have a management authority should operate having the previous approval of the management authority for management actions within the park.
- Those elaborating the Special Environmental Studies should take into account the conservation of biodiversity and geodiversity accordingly.

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