



Kogayon Association

Activity Report for 2024



Kogayon Association is an environmental NGO founded in 2004, based in Costești-Vâlcea.

The activity areas of the Kogayon Association include the conservation of heritage (biodiversity, geodiversity, and cultural heritage), the establishment and management of protected natural areas and geoparks, natural resource management, environmental education, ecotourism, research, and sustainable development.

Kogayon Association primarily operates in Oltenia de sub Munte and Buila-Vânturarița National Park. The Association has been involved in the establishment of Văcărești Natural Park and is now working on the development of the Urban Natural Areas Network, as well as other environmental projects at the national level, such as the Green Belt of Bucharest, the Remarkable Trees Law, the Forestry Code, and more.

247115 Costești nr. 343, Vâlcea county

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www.kogayon.ro

www.discover-oltenia.ro

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- 3) Oltenia de sub Munte – model for sustainable development
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Major achievements of Kogayon Association to date:

- The Founding of Buila-Vânturarița National Park (2004)
- Co-administration of Buila-Vânturarița National Park (2006-2016), with more than 20 projects, worth more than 300.000 euro, aiming at: tourist infrastructure development, education programs (Junior Ranger), monitoring, studies and research, promotion, information and raising awareness
- Administration of the Nature Reserve Costești Museum of the Trovans (2006-2016)
- Stopping the hunting in national parks (2007) and other campaigns for nature conservation (Green Belt of Bucharest, Law of Remarkable Trees)
- The involvement in the establishment and management of the **Văcărești Natural Park** (2012-2023) and the **Urban Nature Network**
- The main project of Kogayon Association since 2019: **Oltenia de sub Munte - UNESCO aspiring Geopark**

Kogayon Association is member of the networks:

- Romanian Geoparks Network
- Urban Nature Network
- Bioregional Weaving Labs



RETEAUA GEOPARCURILOR
DIN ROMANIA
ROMANIAN
GEOPARKS NETWORK



Running period: 2023-2030

Beneficiaries: rural communities in the geoparks and urban communities in the cities of the Urban Nature Network, visitors to the geoparks and urban nature areas

Funders: BRD Groupe Société Générale, Lidl Romania and Commonland - Bioregional Weaving Labs

Partners: the Urban Nature Network, the Romanian Geoparks Network and over 150 other partners

Objectives:

1. Turning Oltenia de sunt Munte into a model for sustainable development
2. Developing the Urban Nature Network
3. Developing the Romanian Geoparks Network
4. Research hub dedicated to geoparks, urban natural areas and heritage conservation

Launching the program



REȚEAUA GEOPARCULOR
DIN ROMANIA
ROMANIAN
GEOPARKS NETWORK



1. Oltenia de sub Munte model for sustainable development



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Running period: 2019-2030

Beneficiaries: local communities, visitors of Oltenia de sub Munte

Funders: BRD Groupe Société Générale, Lidl Romania and Commonland through BWL – Bioregional Weaving Labs

Buget: 3,3 million euros 2019-2030

Parteners: >150

Goal:

To turn Oltenia de sub Munte into a model for sustainable development based on local natural and cultural heritage and community involvement



OLTENIA
NATURE



OLTENIA
CULTURE



OLTENIA
TREKKING



OLTENIA
BIKING



OLTENIA
CLIMBING

Vision:

By 2030, Oltenia de sub Munte becomes a model for regional development, based on the promotion and valorization of the local natural and cultural heritage, with the involvement of local communities and visitors to the area.

Objectives:

- 1. To triple the number of visitors** and increase the average number of days they spend in the territory
- 2. To double the value of public and private investment** for the benefit of local communities and visitors
- 3. To maintain the favorable conservation status of biodiversity** and geodiversity and the social, economic and ecological regeneration of the territory through research, monitoring and regeneration programs

There are other two milestone objectives, linked to the UNESCO International Geopark status as a development tool:

4. To obtain the status of UNESCO International Geopark
5. To administrate the UNESCO International Geopark Oltenia de sub Munte

1. Oltenia de sub Munte model for sustainable development



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NATURE



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CLIMBING

Key moments:

2024 was a year of mission validation of the Kogayon team and the development accelerated through partnerships, events and promotion.

Challenges: withdrawal of the UNESCO Application because of the opposition of Horezu Local Council

We continue with the development of the region and we keep our status as an aspiring UNESCO Geopark until we can involve the local authorities.

Other projects:

- Launching the local grants program
- Strengthening the promotion of Oltenia de sub Munte, through documentary films, events, local products
- Further development of the visitor infrastructure
- Resuming and expanding the Ranger Junior educational program



Oltenia de sub Munte
Romania, Europe

Application Dossier
for UNESCO Global Geopark Candidature

Kogayon Association

November 2023

1. Oltenia de sub Munte model for sustainable development



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The territory development

Local grants

Running period: 2024-2030

Beneficiars: local communities

Funders: BRD Groupe Soci t  G n rale and Commonland through BWL – Bioregional Weaving Labs

Budget: 200.000 euro

Goal:

To support and develop local entrepreneurial and social ideas and projects.

We initiated **the local grant program**, supported by BRD and Commonland (Bioregional Weaving Labs) where we selected the entrepreneurial ideas in the community with the highest potential. We provided funding to the first 4 projects, worth over 35.000 euro:

- The local gastronomic point **Buc t ria Elenei** (Elena's Kitchen) in Vaideeni - modern equipment, promotion and development
- The itinerant photo exhibition **V lcea Natural ** - launched at the Fireflies Festival and presented in several cities (Sibiu, Cluj, C lim neşti); this year, the exhibit will reach other cities as well
- **Buila Trail Race Marathon** - 3rd edition, with over 600 participants; we were a main sponsor
- Launching of the book **Cartea Depresiilor** (*The Depressions Book*), coordinated by the writer Marius Chivu



The territory development

Events



The Fireflies Festival

After the success of the first edition in 2023, we organized two editions in 2024. The event is an example for local development - all the products and related services (accommodation, meals, craft workshops, products) are local, and this generates a market and exposure for it.



The festival is already a sustainable event, which brings us profit to support the geopark.

The territory development *Infrastructure and products*



Local Products:

- The launch of the wines *Negru de Drăgășani* and *Crâmpoșie* under the Oltenia de sub Munte brand. These types of grapes originate from the Oltenia wine-growing region
- The launch of local promotional products: honey, plum brandy

Tourism Infrastructure:

- Refurbishment of the thematic trails *Forest Tales* and *A walk through Oltenia*
- Development of the geopark headquarters and dozens of information points, renewal of their signs
- 3D scanning for two historical monuments and preparation for 20 others
- Preparing the inauguration of *The Road of the Outlaws*, equestrian and cycle tourism trail
- Preparation of thematic trails with local partners following the model Costești village hearth
- Creation of a painted map
- Extending the discover-oltenia.ro platform with an app
- Starting the initiation school for local guides



1. Oltenia de sub Munte model for sustainable development



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The territory development *Promotion*

Charlie Ottley

DISCOVER OLTENIA

Avanpremiere: 1 iunie 2024, ora 20.30 | Horezu, Andra's House
Premiera: 6 iunie 2024, ora 19:00 | București, Cinema Muzeul Țăranului Român



Film realizat de către Charlie Ottley pentru Asociația Kogayon,
cu sprijinul BRD - Grupului Societăți Căminale, susținător al
Geoparcului aspirant UNESCO Oltenia de sub Munte.



Documentary films:

- ***Discover Oltenia***, directed by Charlie Ottley has become the region's best promotional product. It exceeded 1,000,000 views online and had two launches: a community preview and a Bucharest premiere. It was presented at various national and international festivals and events
- Oltenia de sub Munte will have a dedicated episode in ***Flavours of Romania***, season 3, coming on Netflix in 2025
- ***Oamenii Olteniei de sub Munte (The People of Oltenia de sub Munte)*** was launched internationally online in January 2025; we are also preparing the offline launch amidst the community
- ***Romania's Geoparks*** due to be launched in 2025
- **The media exposure** has been significant and is growing, **with over 85 written**, audio and video pieces appearing in leading national publications

The territory development *Local strategy*

Strategy for local development Oltenia de sub Munte

- We have continued the program of social, economic and environmental regeneration of the territory of Oltenia de sub Munte, together with partners from 10 European countries, associated with BWL (Bioregional Weaving Labs).
- Together with **Urbasofia**, we have finalized the territorial assessment phase and will continue with the involvement of the stakeholders
- The information will be used to produce guides for those who want to relocate here from the city
- We have reached the 4th online survey addressed to the inhabitants and visitors of Oltenia de sub Munte
- We continued the series of thematic meetings and debates in the local community
- We organized in Vaideeni a meeting dedicated to entrepreneurs from Oltenia de sub Munte, with the participation of guests from relevant organizations in the field of tourism
- We prepared the Oltenia Travel Forum - the event will bring together tourism experts and professionals
- We are working with tourism entrepreneurs to develop and implement a local standard for tourism services
- We organized a debate on ecotourism, moderated by Charlie Ottley
- We worked on a program to monitor and research the biodiversity of the territory using modern methods and technologies, in partnership with the Buila-Vânturarița National Park Administration



1. Oltenia de sub Munte model for sustainable development



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Education

Ranger Junior

Running period: 2024-2025

Beneficiars: pupils and professors

Funders: AFM (The Environmental Fund Administration)

Budget: 100.000 euro

Parteners: 5 schools in OdsM

Goal:

- Outdoor educational activities; classes, hikes, camps, excursions
- Setting up a natural science laboratory

- We resumed the Junior Ranger program, which will be implemented during 2024 and 2025, in collaboration with two high schools, one special school and two secondary schools in Oltenia de sub Munte
- We have begun setting up a laboratory for natural sciences in Horezu High School and have organized lessons and hikes with students
- The team dedicated to this project is working on transforming the educational program into a self-sustainable activity by introducing a commercial component to generate profit for the continuation of *pro bono* activities
- We have strengthened the *Geoclubs in Schools* program with plans to expand it to every school in the geopark
- For the Horezu Geoclub, we rented and set up a meeting space for members, students and teachers
- We carried out educational activities in the framework of the *Green School program* and the *Different Week (Săptămâna Altfel)*, and we are working on strengthening a permanent educational offer for these initiatives



Restaurare ecologică, rețele trofice, protecția polenizatorilor... Par cuvinte complicate, dar ele ne ajută să înțelegem importanța tuturor insectelor în lumea de ieri, în cea de azi și (mai ales) în lumea de mâine. Vă aștept eu drag, Silviu

online, prin
miercuri, 13 martie 2024, ora 18.00

drd. Silviu Țicu
entomolog, Secția de Istorie Naturală
Muzeul Național Bruckenthal, Sibiu

1. Oltenia de sub Munte model for sustainable development



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Management

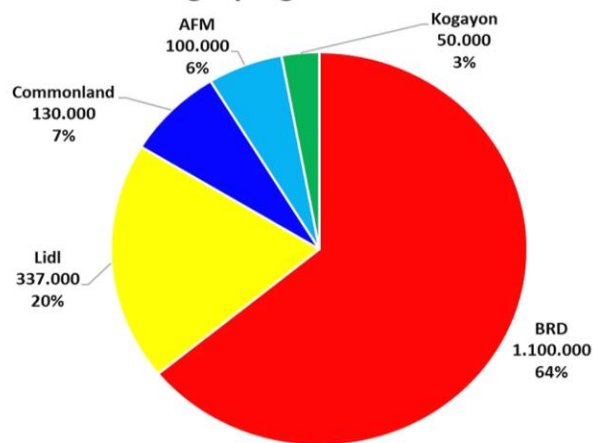
Financial and human resources



Financial and human resources

- The year 2024 marked a pivotal moment for our organization: we made the transition from a volunteer-based model to a professionalized one
- Before 2023 we had one employee, a Project Coordinator
- The Activities and projects were supported for 20 years exclusively on a voluntary basis
- In 2004 the team grew to 13 employees: program manager, tourism expert, 2 financial managers, communication specialist, education and research manager, local communities manager, 2 education, research and tourism specialists. In addition, we financially support 5 employees from RNU organizations, one employee in Carpaterra Geopark and one Research Hub coordinator.

Total buget program: 1.717.000 euro



2. The development of the Urban Nature Network



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GEOPARC ASPIRANT UNESCO

www.discover-oltenia.ro

Running period: 2023-2030

Beneficiars: urban communities

Funders: BRD Groupe Société Générale

Budget: 230.000 euro

Parteners: 15 organizations in 10 municipalities, The Association of Romanian Municipalities

Goal:

To develop the Urban Nature Network through partnerships, studies, research, advocacy and community engagement



Vision:

By 2030, we want at least one urban natural area established in every county in Romania.

Based on the experience of the Văcărești N.P. Association, in January 2024 the **Urban Nature Network (RNU)** was established, consisting of 15 organizations from 10 large cities, which aim to protect 23 urban natural areas.

A total of 8 grants, worth €86,000, have been allocated for the development of the network's projects:

- **Design and** installation of thematic trails in Arad, Bistrița, Iași and Satu Mare
- **Advocacy**
 - Discussions continue with the Environment Ministry and Parliament on the regulation of urban natural areas
 - Amendments were proposed to two draft HGs for the Green Week and Junior Ranger programs
 - In Cluj, the Metropolitan Green Ring project was initiated
- **Events, education**
 - 42 events in the 10 cities with over 600 participants
 - 4th edition of the Environmental School for Journalists in Costești - Nov 24
 - Forest Day: images from geoparks and urban natural areas displayed on monitors in Bucharest

3. The development of the Romanian Geoparks Network



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Running period: 2023-2030

Beneficiaries: local communities in geopark territories and visitors

Funders: BRD Groupe Société Générale

Budget: 88.000 euros

Goal:

Developing the Romanian Geoparks Network through partnerships, joint projects, studies, research, advocacy and community involvement



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GEOPARKS NETWORK



The Network Structure - includes 2 UNESCO geoparks (Țara Hațegului and Ținutul Buzăului), one aspiring geopark (Oltenia de sub Munte), one geopark that is about to submit its application (Carpaterra) and 2 other projects in development (Dobrogea Chimerică and Gutâi).

Financial Support

We offer funding for human resources in Carpaterra Geopark to prepare the UNESCO 2025 application

Organizational activities: We organized the Romanian Geoparks Forum and 3 network meetings.

Educational Projects:

- Expansion of the *Young Geopark Ambassadors* program and the establishment of the *Geopark Youth Forum*
- Researchers' Night Project - online and offline educational activities in 4 territories

Events and Programs:

- We supported events such as the *Oak Day* and the *Researchers' Night in Geoparks*
- We are producing a film and photo album dedicated to the 4 geoparks

Plans for 2025:

Finalizing the network strategy, organizing joint events and developing the infrastructure for visitors.

4. Research hub dedicated to geoparks and natural areas



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Running period: 2024-2030

Beneficiars: geoparks, urban natural areas, protected natural areas

Funders: BRD Groupe Société Générale

Budget: 125.000 euro

Partener: The Association for the Conservation of Biological Diversity (ACBD)

Goal:

- Facilitating the collaboration between the scientific community and the research beneficiaries
- Providing fellowships and grants for multidisciplinary research
- Creating a structure that can access dedicated international research funding

Vision:

By 2030, the Hub becomes the most relevant private organization in Romania for research projects and contracts dedicated to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage and sustainable development based on it.

Status of the project

- Questionnaires developed and analyzed for networks (geoparks, urban natural areas, protected natural areas)
- Questionnaires developed and analyzed for the scientific community
- Organization of a meeting with researchers
- Preparation of guidelines for the scholarships
- Preparation of guidelines for research grants.





GLOBAL
GEOPARKS
NETWORK

RETEAUA GEOPARCURILOR
DIN ROMANIA
ROMANIAN
GEOPARKS NETWORK

We are part of the Romanian Geoparks Network

which aims to sustainably develop local communities based on local natural and cultural heritage through research, education and local partnerships



We are founders of the Urban Nature Network

which aims to conserve urban biodiversity, to create a national network of urban natural areas by engaging communities for the benefit of their health



COMMONLAND
4 RETURNS FROM LANDSCAPE RESTORATION



We are part of the European network Bioregion Weaving Labs

which aims to ecologically, socially and economically regenerate 1,000,000 ha of land by 2030

Codul Silvic

We contributed to the adoption of the Forest Code Law

we participated in drafting the legislative initiative and supporting the process leading to its approval. We have based, supported and obtained the regulation of the concept of green belts at the national level, the protection of remarkable trees, free access by foot and bicycle in forests



centura
VERDE

We are part of the civic platform *Together for the Green Belt*

which aims to protect forests in Bucharest and Ilfov and nationwide, for their social and environmental role

Kogayon Association



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We thank all those who have contributed to support our activities by directing 3.5% of the income tax due to the state to the Kogayon Association.

NGO's Name: KOGAYON ASSOCIATION
Tax identification code: 16132059
Bank account (IBAN): RO51 RNCB 0265 0061 3421 0001



How can you continue to support us?

- * by participating in the 3.5% campaign - details on www.kogayon.ro or with other donations;
- * by supporting our projects through partnerships, sponsorships, collaborations;
- * joining the team with enthusiasm and good will 😊
- * by applying the principle: Respect for Nature and People!

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Funders and sponsors:



BRD



ASHOKA



GRUPE SOCIETE GENERALE



COMMONLAND

4 RETURNS FROM LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

ICS Business International,
Dirac, Geo ID Events

Partners and collaborators

The Romanian Geoparks Network, the Urban Nature Network, the European Bioregion Weaving Lab Network, the National Geoparks Forum of Romania, the Romanian National Commission for UNESCO, the University of Bucharest, Globe 365 Travel Agency, GRF+, and over 150 entrepreneurs, craftsmen, artisans, authorities, schools and non-governmental organizations from Oltenia de sub Munte **Ambassadors** of the Oltenia de sub Munte aspiring UNESCO Geopark: **Charlie Ottley, Cristian Lascu, Marius Chivu, Alex Găvan, Radu Păltineanu, Dan Dinu, Cătălin Georgescu, Cristian China Birta**



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