

# **WORKING MEETING BETWEEN VIKOS-AOOS GEOPARK AND SAUERLAND- ROTHARGEIRGE NATURAL PARK OF WESTFALIA**

PRESS RELEASE

Meeting between Vikos-Aoos Geopark and Sauerland-Rothaargebirge Natural Park of Westphalia.

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14-17 October 2019, a working meeting was held between representatives of the management body of the Sauerland-Rothaargebirge Natural Park of Westphalia and EPIRUS SA, as the management body of the Vikos Aoos Geopark. The purpose of the meeting was the final definition of the framework of cooperation between the bodies of the two areas (Geopark – Natural Park) according to a defined agenda of issues and specific financial tools.

The arrival of the representatives of the Natural Park and the consequent meeting comes as a follow-up to previous working visits, which took place during June 2018 and June 2019 in Greece and Germany respectively.

The meeting was attended by the director and deputy director of the Sauerland-Rothaargebirge Natural Park, Mr. Detlef Lins and Georg Schmitz, and the director of the LEADER LAG of the Sorpesee area, Mr. Morgenbrod Lars. From the Greek side, the director and executives of EPIRUS SA participated: Mr. Gerasimos Papailias, director, Mr. Charitakis Papaioannou, Head of the Vikos-Aoos Geopark, Mr. Aristotelis Stagikas and Mrs. Georgia Kitsaki scientific staff of Vikos-Aoos Geopark / European Programs Team and Elias Mokos CLLD LEADER Program

Coordinator. The meeting was also attended by Ms. Gabriela Scheiner on behalf of the Hellenic-German Assembly, who encourages and supports from the beginning this cooperation.

During the meeting between the two areas, cooperation issues were discussed in terms of the management structure of the two areas as a natural park / geopark, the further development of alternative tourism, the optimization of services and information to visitors (eg, Information Centers, routes, etc.), the implementation of visitor counting systems, the promotion of local products, the operation and implementation of the LEADER program in the two areas, etc.

In particular, it was decided to submit proposals in transnational programs and specifically in CLLD LEADER on the subject of cycling and hiking tourism in the two areas and ERASMUS on the exchange of experts, such as professionals in the field of alternative tourism (eg eco-guides) as well as young people (eg students) from both countries in order to improve their knowledge and skills. It was also decided to further explore the possibility of submitting proposals in other European funding programmes, in addition to the two mentioned above.

At the same time, with the participation of Ms. Sofia Fouki, Head of the Tourism Department of the Epirus Region, the promotion of local products of the Geopark to the Municipalities of the Sauerland-Rothaargebirge Natural Park was discussed through a well-known chain of department stores in Germany (super markets) with which the Natural Park maintains excellent cooperation.

The guests, accompanied by executives of EPIRUS SA / Geopark Vikos-Aoos visited the two Municipalities of the Geopark, Zagori and Konitsa and met with the Mayors and members of the Boards of Municipalities as well as with producers of local products.

The working meeting took place in the framework of the development strategy of cooperation of the Vikos-Aoos Geopark with other areas with similar characteristics in Europe.





























