

European Geoparks Network

January - May 2024

20 Years of European UNESCO Global Geoparks in the Global Geoparks Network: Best Practices in Capacity Building and Exchange Across Continents.

Azores UNESCO Global Geopark (Portugal): Connecting the Atlantic North with East Africa - our most recent example of exchange across Continents

The concept of UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGGp) and the effective networking promoted between territories catalyzes joint projects that contribute to the empowerment of communities at different levels. A very simple but outstanding activity was promoted this year between the Azores UGGp (Portugal) and the Ngorongoro Lengai UGGp (Tanzânia). For two months a group of students from primary schools (~9 years old) in these territories prepared presentations of their geosites in a multidisciplinary study that involved indoor activities, field trips, improvement of English and informatic skills, working groups, etc. The work culminated in a memorable virtual exchange between these students consolidating the idea of the uniqueness of their territories and of belonging to a global family – Global Geoparks Network. Geoparks opened this door and the two schools are now developing joint activities.



New training course for guides in the Basque Coast UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain)

The Basque Coast Geopark has carried out a new training course for guides with the aim of providing basic knowledge about the Geopark and its natural and cultural heritage.

Geoparkea is committed to maintaining a wide range of quality guided tours that allow the public to learn about the main natural and cultural values of the territory and its municipalities (Deba, Mutriku and Zumaia). We find it necessary to train guides, capable of interpreting the resources and transmitting them appropriately so that they contribute to making the Geopark a unique experience.





Massif des Bauges UNESCO Global Geopark (France): Cooperation with MGoun UNESCO Global Geopark (Morocco)

A Moroccan delegation from the MGoun Geopark and the Beni Mellal region is visiting the Massif des Bauges UGGp. The visit is part of a cooperation agreement. Exchanges cover the development of communication and education on the environment and sustainable development, exchanges of best practice and networking. They also cover the development of agricultural products (milk, aromatic and medicinal plants) and the development of sustainable tourism, particularly through outdoor activities. A cotutelle thesis is also in progress on the development of geosites and the coordination of geopartner networks.

Beigua UNESCO Global Geopark (Italy): Strengthening the community to enhance the mountain areas

Beigua Geopark was recently a partner in "Progetto Appennino", an opportunity for the socio-economic development of marginal mountainous areas. We promoted the call to select fifteen young local entrepreneurs who were offered tailor-made coaching to accelerate their business, enhance skills, and facilitate the generational transition. In addition four female entrepreneurs were helped to build a business network, establishing an association to promote the area.

This is an innovative approach to governance, which puts us in touch with the younger members of our community. These young people who choose to stay and do business in marginal areas are the model and inspiration for their own generation and the following generation.



Bergstrasse-Odenwald UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): Long-term Partnership with Hongkong UNESCO Global Geopark - Capacity building by Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Since 2011, both UNESCO Global Geoparks maintain a strong partnership across the continents. After an exchange visit from Hongkong UNESCO Global Geopark to Bergstrasse-Odenwald in 2023, both Geoparks have decided to intensify their collaboration towards ESD.

The first project implemented in March 2024 was a three hours Online Ranger training programme, conducted by three Bergstrasse-Odenwald lecturers for the Hongkong Ranger team. The training included: an introduction to the territory and the partnership, the basics of ESD, the educational Ranger programme, best practices in Ranger activities and target groups. Each lecture was followed by lively discussions. Both Geoparks consider the training as a huge success and intend to continue next year with a student exchange programme.



Cabo de Gata, Las Loras, Sierras Subbéticas and Villuercas-Ibores-Jara UNESCO Global Geoparks (Spain): Action Plan against harassment

Several Local Action Groups from Cabo de Gata, Las Loras, Sierras Subbéticas and Villuercas-Ibores-Jara UGGps are implementing the Action Plan against harassment. This plan is being developed from May 2023 to May 2026 with the aim of preventing situations involving sexual harassment and other types of discrimination in Geoparks and/or areas of high geological value, along with identifying the channels to address these situations should they occur.

In this way, this protocol provides the Geopark managers and technical staff with the tools for preventing harassment and other forms of discrimination. It also highlights the responsibility of the companies that carry out their activities in the Geoparks, and raises awareness among the citizens who use the Geoparks in to contribute to the elimination of situations of harassment and other types of discrimination.



Cephalonia-Ithaca UNESCO Global Geopark (Greece): Exchange, Volunteering, Learning - The "kulturweit" programme on Kefalonia

"Kulturweit" is a programme which connects young volunteers from Germany with UNESCO Global Geoparks around the world. Each September several pairs of volunteers travel to their new home for six to 12 months to engage in guiding tourists, preparing fossils, creating flyers and websites... The work is as diverse as the volunteers and Geoparks themselves.

Here in the Greek Cephalonia-Ithaca UNESCO Global Geopark, two 18-year-old girls explored the richness of the geosites. They supported the Management Body with their everyday work, public relations and documenting bird populations.

"Kulturweit" creates a cultural exchange between Germany and our Island.

El Hierro UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain): European Geoparks Corner

In El Hierro Geopark we celebrated our first "Corner", an indispensable tool to highlight our participation in the European Geoparks Network (EGN).

Using a map of Europe built with wooden logs on the floor of our Interpretation Centre, the different Geoparks are identified with a number, which allows you to search for them on an interpretive table which displays basic information about the European Geoparks.

This information, has been compiled under the supervision of the EGN Coordinator Sophie Justice, will be used to create an updated high resolution map available to all EGN members.





Educational workshop about wetlands in the crossborder Karawanken/Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark (Austria/Slovenia)

The cooperation between the Karawanken/Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark, Podzemlje Pece (Tourist Mine and Museum), and the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, with local schools and kindergartens dates back to the very beginning of the Geopark Karawanken/Karavanke. In the 13 years of active implementation of the Geopark programme called Geopark Karawanken/Karavanke Annual School Programme, 13 different geological and/or nature-conservation topics have been addressed. This year's Geopark annual school programme is linked to the current international project with the acronym I-SWAMP, which is being implemented within the framework of the INTERREG Alpine Space Programme and is entitled "Wetlands – into nature with boots". During the February educational workshop, participants visited the Geopark visitor centre Geo.Dom on Petzen/Peca Mountain, where they had the opportunity to see the special exhibition from Lesvos UNESCO Global Geopark "The Petrified Forest – Understanding Climate change". They also learned about different wetland flora- and fauna species, and in conclusion they could even take part in a snowshoe hike in a beautiful winter landscape.

Harz.Braunschweigerland.Ostfalen UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): Twenty years GGN – Geopark-Day 2024

This year, we dedicated our annual Geopark Day during the EGN-week to the 20th anniversary of the GGN and organised it in a decentralised manner. Activities and guided tours took place at several locations. Additionally we had a stand at the World Heritage town of Quedlinburg's town festival, where we provided information about the Global geoparks Network. We also celebrated the inauguration of two new geopoints with a varied supporting programme. These activities emphasise the diversity of ways in which Earth's story can be told, and show the work that every UGGp does on a daily basis.



Katla UNESCO Global Geopark (Iceland): Collaboration in Education

In the last few years Katla Geopark has increased its focus on education. During the last three years, Katla Geopark and Víkurskóli School have worked on a collaborative student research project called the 'Víkurfjara Beach Project'. This collaboration has continued to grow along with the project, and now the Geopark teaches two courses each year at Víkurskóli school.

This increased focus on education has been positive for the Geopark, and recently the Víkurfjara Beach Project received the South-Iceland Educational Award for 2023. The award is conferred by the Association of Municipalities in South Iceland and was presented by the President of Iceland, Mr. Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, during the annual meeting of the Science and Research Fund of South Iceland.

Lauhanvuori-Hämeenkanngas UNESCO Global Geopark (Finland): Interactive stone cabinet – a Finnish implementation of a Norwegian idea

Lauhanvuori – Hämeenkanngas UGGp in Finland teamed up with Gea Norwegica UGGp in Norway to implement their interactive stone cabinet, which can be seen in Gea Norwegica’s Information Centre. The design and operation of the original were discussed, and some potential improvements were identified. A new version was built using power-efficient hardware and open-source software, resulting in an easy-to-use standalone device operating very much like the original. The new version is situated in the Honkajoki Geoeducation Centre. The project was funded by the EU Agricultural Fund.



Maestrazgo UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain): Geoland experience 360°

The Maestrazgo Cultural Park UGGp, launched the Geoland Experience 360° project at the International Tourism Trade Fair FITUR 2024. This project is a commitment to accessibility, which aims to bring the landscapes and geology of the territory to all visitors, relying on 360° technology and the use of drone images. The Geopark offers the possibility to take virtual tours of different geosites. The project is available through two web pages: a catalogue with information on all the sites in a book with explanations and audios available in Spanish and English. A second link offers bird`s eye view virtual flights through the Maestrazgo UGGp.

Mëllerdall UNESCO Global Geopark (Luxembourg): A short animated film as a joint LEADER Project

Several UNESCO Global Geoparks are located relatively close to each other in the BeNeLux region and its neighbouring areas. Team members of the Mëllerdall UNESCO Global Geopark in Luxembourg meet regularly with colleagues from these neighbouring geoparks in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany to develop ideas on joint projects. For example, as the result of a collaborative project, funded by the European LEADER Programme, a short animated film about the geoparks and the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network was produced together with the UNESCO Global Geoparks De Hondsrug (The Netherlands), Famenne-Ardenne (Belgium), TERRA.Vita and Vulkaneifel (Germany). It can be viewed using the QR code (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjtsoZOWFW4>).



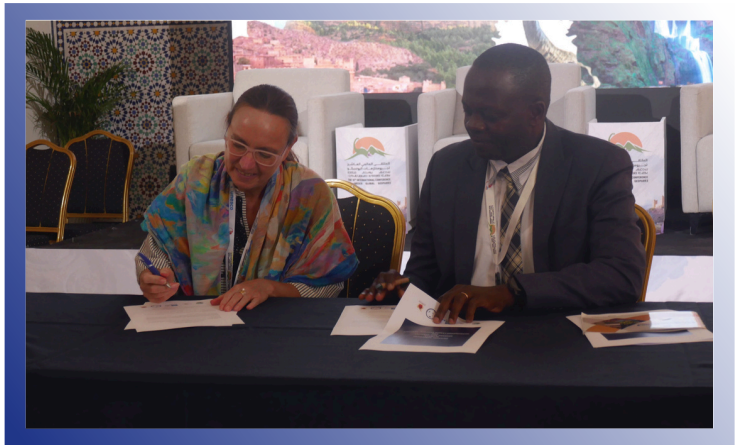


Ore of the Alps UNESCO Global Geopark (Austria): The Ore Trail

The official opening of the Ore Trail in the Ore of the Alps UGGp took place on 26 May 24. The approximately 60 km long hiking trail connects the four Geopark communities of Bischofshofen, Hüttau, Mühlbach and St. Veit. It is the backbone of the Geopark with many sites involving geology, landscape development, mining and cultural geology. The entire hike takes five days with overnight stays in high-altitude huts. Around 100 geosites are described on panels along the way. In addition to magnificent panoramic views, the Erzweg also features show mines, museums and the Geopark's Visitor Centre in the Bischofshofen ski jump area (<https://geopark-erzderalpen.at/en/erzweg/>). Enjoy the walk!

Ries UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): Two UNESCO Global Geoparks with Craters pursue a partnership agreement

The UGGp Ries in Germany and the UGGp Ngorongoro-Lengai in Tanzania have signed a joint declaration of intent for a partnership and are discussing the partnership agreement in video conferences. Both UNESCO Geoparks have craters. The Ries Crater is an impact crater about 15 million years old; the Ngorongoro Crater is a volcanic caldera two to three million years old. The Ngorongoro-Lengai UGGp is also well known for the Olduvai Gorge prehistoric site and its breathtaking landscapes and wildlife. Talks have also been held with the Gea Norvegica UGGp Norvegica about developing a tri-national partnership with the Ngorongoro-Lengai UGGp.



Terras de Cavaleiros UNESCO Global Geopark (Portugal): The "Junto à Terra" project

From April 14 to 19, Geopark Terras de Cavaleiros once again took part in the "Junto à Terra" project.

The eight Field Workshops of the "Junto à Terra" project took place in the municipalities of Torre de Moncorvo, Alfândega da Fé, Mogadouro and Macedo de Cavaleiros, with the participation of more than 300 eighth grade students.

The "Junto à Terra" Project is an initiative that occurs as part of the compensatory measures for the Baixo Sabor Hydroelectric Improvement (Awareness and Dissemination Programme and the Baixo Sabor Natural Heritage), and is essentially aimed at communication, involvement and appreciation of the natural heritage (biodiversity) as factors in the development of the territory. The Terras de Cavaleiros UNESCO Global Geopark organised the workshop "Minerals and Biodiversity" as the Geopark's contribution to the "Junto à Terra" project.

TERRA.vita UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): The new exhibition "Travel through time" in TERRA.vita's main Information Centre

The "Museum am Schölerberg" natural history museum in Osnabrück has presented the TERRA.vita Geopark through the TERRA.vision exhibition since 2008. The museum's completely redesigned permanent exhibition, traces the origin of the Earth and 300 million years of regional geological history on an 1,800 m² exhibit. Dubbed "Saturdays at the museum, Sundays outside in the Geopark," it explains geological processes and ecological phenomena theoretically and links them to real-life geological sites in the Geopark for visitors to explore. A highlight includes the reconstruction of a Carboniferous swamp forest with life-sized trees and giant insects based on finds in the TERRA.vita Geopark. The Geopark's map is presented on a large wall. Interactive displays feature the De Hondsrug partner Geopark and the Global Geoparks Network. The exhibition boasts digital innovations including a planetarium, holograms, AR screens, VR headsets, and a 180° cinema screen for immersive learning.



Thuringia Inselsberg Drei Gleichen UNESCO Global Geopark: The Fossil of the Year 2024

To celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Global Geoparks Network Thuringia Inselsberg - Drei Gleichen UGGp held a ceremonial presentation of the "Fossil of the Year 2024 in Germany" on 22 April 2024 on the occasion of the International Mother Earth Day. This event in Ehrenstein Castle Ohrdruf (GeoMuseum of the Geopark) was organised together with the Palaeontological Society Germany and the Friedrich Schiller University Jena. Every year, the Palaeontological Society Germany honours a very special fossil with the title "Fossil of the Year". In 2024, a trace fossil was selected for the first time. *Tambia spiralis*, is a famous Permian trace fossil from the Thuringian Forest, which was found at the tetrapod fossil site Bromacker in our UGGp.

Transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks - Crossing borders together

Geological heritage knows no borders. With this in mind, people on both sides of physical boundaries such as rivers, lakes, valleys and mountains have been working together for decades to overcome divisive administrative borders for the joint development of their shared territories. A forum for cooperation between these transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGGp) has existed since 2019 with the most recent member joining in 2024. **In addition to Cuilcagh Lakelands UGGp (UK/Ireland), Karawanke-Karavanke UGGp (Slovenia/Austria), Muskauer Faltenbogen / Luk Muzakowa UGGp (Germany/Poland) and Novohrad-Nógrád UGGp (Hungary/Slovakia),** two more countries have joined with the inclusion of the **Schelde Delta UGGp (Belgium/Netherlands)**. The forum has now evolved into a European Geoparks Network Working Group with plans to expand into the Global Geoparks Network and is available to advise partners beyond Europe with its wealth of experience!





Troodos UNESCO Global Geopark (Cyprus): Recent milestones in the Geopark's development

We're excited to share recent advancements at Troodos Geopark! We have trained 10 geopark guides about our stunning trails. Our Visitor Centre now features cooperation with the Deputy Ministry of Tourism and an interactive screen for an enhanced educational experience. The Observatory Centre, provides breathtaking views and insights. In the area for stargazing, there is a telescope for both night and day. Additionally, there are virtual reality games in the Geopark. We actively promoted the Geopark through festivals and events, and in International Museum Day, we engaged with schools to teach students about the geology of Cyprus. Join us in celebrating these milestones!

Vulkaneifel UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): Presenting Ten Years of the Nature and Geopark School and Kindergartens

The "Nature and Geopark Schools and Kindergartens" project started in 2013 in the Vulkaneifel together with the Association of German Nature Parks (VDN). In 2014, locals primary and secondary schools, along with local kindergartens, were certified as partners of the Nature and Geopark Vulkaneifel. The collaboration paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic but resumed in 2022. This year, we are celebrating ten years of collaboration in the education of young people.

Students and kindergarteners have participated in project weeks, environmental education, and excursions, focusing on volcanism, Earth history, flora, and fauna. These activities promote sustainable living in line with the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2030. The Vulkaneifel UGGp currently cooperates with 15 institutions: nine kindergartens and six schools.

A digital student exchange with the UNESCO Global Geopark Orígens in Spain is underway, where seventh graders share knowledge about their respective geoparks and practice English as a second language.



EGN - European Geoparks Network

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