Local partners of the Basque Coast UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain) receive recognition at the VI Euskadi Ecotourism Forum

Local partners of the Basque Coast UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain) have received recognition at the VI Euskadi Ecotourism Forum. During the event organized by the Department of Tourism, Trade and Consumption of the Basque Government, Leire Barriuso — coordinator of the Geopark of the Basque Coast— participated in a round table discussion in which she presented the projects that are included in the Destination Sustainability Plan for Tourism 2022. Ecotourism promotes responsible tourism, respect for the environment and the development of the local economy, and Geoparkea has been working on the same objective for years.

Azores UNESCO Global Geopark (Portugal): A Multi-Internationally Designated Area

The oceanic volcanic setting of the Azores is a stage for a unique biodiversity that became attractive for settlers and led to a singular insular culture. These values are recognized internationally with a UNESCO Global Geopark' four Biosphere Reserves' and two World Heritage Sites. These UNESCO designations overlap in six islands of the Geopark's territory. Cooperation created the opportunity for these designations to become real tools for sustainable development. Common activities have been developed with the Biosphere Reserve of Graciosa Island, including the participation of the Geopark in the Advisory Council, a joint corner in the Geopark's Interpretive Centre and several activities in geosites.

The Adamello Brenta UNESCO Global Geopark (Italy) renews its dedication to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST)

At the end of 2022 the new Action Plan 2023/2027 of the Adamello Brenta UGGp for the renewal of the ECST phase I, appointed by Europarc Federation, the European network of protected areas was realized. The new Action Plan was signed by all the local leading stakeholders who contributed to its fulfillment, which also included the Autonomous Province of Trento and the UNESCO Dolomites Foundation. The three the main paths of the Plan include: “awareness path”, which contains actions in the field of education and training; “senses path”, aimed at fostering a certain type of tourism, emotional, authentic and attentive; “quality path”, aimed at promoting the quality of the territory and the local businesses.
De Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark (Netherlands): The Hamerlanden trail
The Hondsrug is best appreciated when viewed from a distance. The perception of height and depth vanishes as one gets nearer to its friendly undulations. Except where people have dug ditches and holes within the Hondsrug. You can view this beautifully on the Hamerlanden trail near Gasselte in Drenthe. As an illustration, the “Ravijn” or canyon is part of this trail. It is a unique location because a railway was excavated right through the Hondsrug by hand more than 100 years ago. Otherwise, the railroad locomotive could not cope with the “steep” slope of the Hondsrug. The Hondsrug's geological history can be seen in the soil profile in the “Ravijn” that had to be excavated. This initiative received support from up to four organizations, including the local village association and the De Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark.

Bergstrasse-Odenwald UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): Soil – the hidden treasure as base for biodiversity on Earth
Funded by the State of Baden-Württemberg, the Geopark has installed, in cooperation with the local authorities and the federal government, two soil profile steles, which show the connection between the territory's original typical soil profiles and their underlying rocks. Integrated information panels provide an overview on the soil development related to the regional Earth history as well as to the importance of the connection between soil as a CO2 sink and climate, biodiversity and nutrition. A specially designed information link for children also offers visual discoveries into the world of soil. The project, which was officially inaugurated together with the Minister for Nutrition, Rural Areas, and Customer Protection, which supports SDGs 4 and 15 of Agenda 2030 in the wider sense, will be continued with 3 additional soil profile steles at representative sites in the Geopark.

The 'spirit of the Black Country' UNESCO Global Geopark (UK) 2023 Calendar photography competition and exhibition
In the summer of 2022 the Black Country UGGp team invited local people to be creative with their cameras and mobile phones to take pictures that they felt truly capture the "heart and soul" of the Geopark. This was timed to coincide with the school holidays in England so that families could be involved. More than 200 photographs were received and winners were selected by the four mayors of the Black Country municipalities. They were announced on International Geodiversity Day and have been used to create a 2023 Geopark Calendar. In February 2023 photos from the calendar were used to create a small exhibition at the Geopark's headquarters at Dudley Museum at the Archives. You can download a PDF copy of the calendar from the webpage in the link below.

Mediterranean trout conservation actions in Beigua UNESCO Global Geopark (Italy)
The exceptional rarity and the extraordinary scientific value of the Mediterranean trout (Salmo ghigii), a native species of fish that inhabits a mountain stream within the Beigua Geopark, has made it necessary to undertake protection and conservation on a local scale to ensure the preservation and increase of the population, eliminating all forms of threat and habitat degradation. When the analyses and genotypic characterisation of the salmonids in progress in the basin is completed, we will have useful information to consider the reopening of a local hatchery in which breeding fry and trout will preserve the environmental value and improve biodiversity.
The crossborder Karawanken/Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark is enriched with a brand new Visitor Centre called Geo.Dom, which is located on the Petzen/Peca Mountain, near the mountain station of the cable car, at an altitude of 1708 m. Geo.Dom is a multifunctional building for knowledge transfer, information, entertainment and even gastronomy, as the restaurant named “oben” is located upstairs. During the opening the first guest exhibition was presented by Prof. Dr Nikolaos Zouros, i.e. The petrified forest of Lesbos - Understanding Climate Change, Exploring the consequences in the geological record, Cenozoic ecosystems and the current threat, showing us, how we can learn for our own future from the processes that have changed our planet over millions of years. As a part of the opening event a Geopark Partnership Agreement Between LESVOS ISLAND UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK (Greece) and KARAWANKEN/KARAVANKE UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK (Austria-Slovenia) was signed.

In July 2021 the Famenne-Ardenne UGGp experienced terrible floods that affected thousands of families. In partnership with the Polytechnich University of Turin and DeepBlue, we participated in the development of a proposal for the Horizon Europe call. This call aims at a better understanding of the behavioural and psychological reactions of citizens in the event of a natural disaster or crisis. We have been selected to join the socio-economic study laboratory of the call in direct partnership with Psiloritis UGGp and Naturtejo UGGp. Europe’s decision on the financing of the project will be known in a few months.

Cycling events guided by Lauhanvuori - Hämeenkangas UNESCO Global Geopark’s experts have been organized on the new Geopark-wide Two Billion Year Tours (TBYT) cycling route in collaboration with local municipalities, businesses, and associations. On the TBYT route the geological story of the Geopark, “From Mountains to Mires”, can be experienced by bike. The aim of the cycling events is to enhance the recognition of the route network and to spread the knowledge about the Geopark and its values. The events have drawn participants of different ages from all over Southwest Finland.

Representatives of most of the Spanish Geoparks arrived in El Hierro to participate in the congress organized by El Hierro UNESCO Global Geopark, where four scientists who worked in the last two eruptions in the Canary Islands talked about their experiences in both eruptions. During the morning, it was time to listen to these four scientists. In the afternoons, the participants had the opportunity to learn a little bit about El Hierro’s geology on land and beneath the sea. Of course, gastronomy was also an essential component, providing a way to discover how volcanic soil can change the taste of local products.

The last two eruptions in the Canary Islands became the topic of the two day congress “Last Eruptions In The Canary Islands: El Hierro 2011 – La Palma 2019 “, organized by El Hierro Unesco Global Geopark (Spain)
Maestrazgo UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain): The art of dry-stone walling
The Geopark has organized the first training course for the enhancement and promotion of the art and technique of dry-stone walling in Mirambel and Mosqueruela, municipalities which have superb examples of these structures. The art of dry-stone walling concerns the knowhow related to making stone constructions by stacking stones on each other, without using any other materials except sometimes dry soil (specially Maestrazgo's Upper Cretaceous limestones). Dry-stone structures are spread across most rural areas of the Maestrazgo UGGp and other Mediterranean countries both within and outside inhabited spaces. The Art of dry stone walling, knowledge and techniques was inscribed in 2018 (13.COM) on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Las Loras UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain): Leadership in Geological Heritage Conservation
Last December we had the opportunity to participate in the Intensive course: Leadership in Geological Heritage Conservation - Arab Region Regional Edition I - Cairo 2022, within the International Geosciences and Geoparks Programme of UNESCO. We presented the Las Loras Geopark, our management model, working practices and the different actions and projects on education, research, and agro-ecology, etc. It was a very enriching experience to be able to share our trajectory with representatives from more than 10 Arab countries that host a unique geological heritage and see the role of Geoparks as a means of preserving this and, also promote the sustainable development of their territories.

New Educational and Informational Programme in Lanzarote and Chinijo Islands UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain): The Geo-Community
The programme "La GeoComunidad" is an initiative to sensitize and educate primary and secondary level students about respect for the geological heritage. The project is based on carrying out various activities in topics such as citizen science, geoconservation and the flora and fauna of the Geopark. In addition to raising awareness and education about the geological heritage, the aim is to publicize the role of the Geopark, familiarize students with it and its work, encourage curiosity about their environment and transmit learning, through dynamic activities.

Katla & Reykjanes UNESCO Global Geoparks (Iceland): International exchange
The two Icelandic UNESCO Global Geoparks, Katla and Reykjanes, are active in the Iceland National Committee of UNESCO Global Geoparks. In two recent committee meetings we received input from colleagues in Europe via Zoom, making excellent use of that kind of networking. In 2021 Kirstin Lemon from the British Geological Survey gave a presentation about the role of National UNESCO Global Geopark Committees. As an example from the UK, in 2022 we had a presentation on Scotland’s UNESCO Trail by Natasha Hutchinson from Wester Ross UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. These presentations were well received and gave us inspiration for our work.
Heritage School Project in Magma UNESCO Global Geopark (Norway)
The HHS project, supported by the EEA Grant Fund, under the leadership of the Organization of Heritage Town of Slovenia, includes Magma Geopark (MG) as a partner. The main goal is the establishment inter-institutional environment and learning practices for better planned education on cultural heritage and its renewal for youth at the primary school level. Thanks to the innovative platform developed by the Strobilo Company, neurosciences and machine learning approaches will apply to case studies in MG and other geoparks for testing the students cognitive response indoors and outdoors. The project aims to measure the effective contribution from exposure to nature for the improvement of cognitive responses. In fact, through the project we aim to demonstrate scientifically, the importance of outdoor settings for human health. The next workshop will occur in the MG in March where experts will test the performances of children from Sokndal Primary school. Geoparks are all invited to contact us for more information on this project.

Molina Alto Tajo UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain): Workshop on Geoparks for Environmental Agencies:
Among the actions organized by the Molina Alto Tajo UGGp, targeted on education and conservation, one of the most remarkable provides training on the concept of UNESCO Global Geoparks and on the Molina Alto Tajo Geopark's heritage to a group of environmental agencies responsible for conservation and the implementation of best practices in conservation. Environmental Agencies are the representatives of the law in charge of ensuring agreement in accordance with environmental regulations. At the same time, they maintain close contacts with the inhabitants and communities, especially in the most rural areas. They also provide training and advice for farmers, cattle ranchers, and other professionals about conservation and the use of the geological heritage. So, these workshops represent an effective tool for the conservation of geological heritage.

Muskau Arch UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany/Poland) Meeting of Polish (aspiring) UNESCO Global Geoparks
The representatives of the Polish Geoparks, i.e. UNESCO Global Geoparks Muskau Arch, The Holy Cross Mountains, and Land of Extinct Volcanoes (aspiring UGGp) have come together for a joint meeting on February 1st and 2nd in Łęknica (Poland) and Klein Kölig (Germany). The exchange aimed to promote mutual cooperation and develop common initiatives for the future development and educational activities of geoparks in Poland. A follow-up meeting is envisaged in summer 2023.

North Pennines UNESCO Global Geopark (UK): School Videos across Europe
From January to March 2023, schools in UNESCO Global Geoparks across Europe have been making videos about their Geopark and local area to share with each other. This initiative began in the North Pennines UGGp and members of the EGN education working group invited schools in their Geoparks to get involved. Schools are participating from nine different countries and they will be able to watch the videos and write to each other from April 2023. This has been a fun project and aims to create greater pride in the children's own areas and build international friendships.
UNESCO Global Geopark Ries (Germany): Impact crater named ESA training site

The European Space Agencies PANGAEA recently released a paper on the best possible geological training for the next astronauts to walk on the surface of the Moon. The paper names the Ries impact crater as one of four sites with geology similar to that of the Moon and Mars. Following in the footsteps of Apollo astronauts who trained there in 1970, ESA and NASA astronauts have trained in the Nördlinger Ries for the past five years. ESA astronaut Alexander Gerst and NASA astronaut Stephanie Wilson, considered as likely participants on the next Moon mission, attended the most recent training in the Ries. On site, some staff of the UGG Ries and the city of Nördlingen oversaw the training which involved the international collaboration with partners of space missions, like ESA (European Space Agency).

Orígens UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain) is working on a networking-based research project to develop an open virtual reality Museum in the Pyrenees (VIGEOCULT).

Orígens UNESCO Global Geopark in partnership with the Geomodels research group from the Universitat de Barcelona (UB), the Institut Català de Paleontologia Miquel Crusafont (ICP) and the virtual reality enterprise Digivision aims to develop an open natural museum using virtual and augmented reality methods. The aim is to provide an emotional experience for the understanding of geological and palaeoecological systems, as well as their impact on the landscape and human activity, both at university and lay levels. The project envisages attracting visitors to the territory and positioning the Geopark heritage as a tool for its sustainable development. The VIGEOCULT Project (PLEC2021-00793) is funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and the European Union NextGenerationEU/PRTR.

Psiloritis and Sitia UNESCO Global Geoparks (Crete, Greece) team up with the Cretan UNESCO Biosphere Reserves

A new project for the promotion of the four UNESCO-designated sites in Crete (Psiloritis UGGp, Sitia UGGp and the Biosphere Reserves of Samaria Gorge and Asterousia Mountains) is implemented through the Regional Development Fund of Crete, in an endeavor to promote the island’s unique natural beauty and culture. The project “UNESCO sites in Crete” already has its own promotional material, while outreach and networking activities are also being implemented (articles and features in printed and e-magazines such as National Geographic, video-spots, participation in international fairs etc.). The project can be viewed on its official website at: https://www.unescositesincrete.gr/en/, where each area’s landscapes and cultural heritage are highlighted, along with the different activities and “adventures” that visitors can enjoy if they want to experience the natural wealth, the history and traditions that characterize the territory and its people.

UNESCO Global Geopark Ore of the Alps (Austria): Cooperation with the Geological Survey of Salzburg

Every year in the 1st half of March the event „Geodays” take place in Bischofshofen. The event is the product of the cooperation between the Geological Survey of Salzburg and the Ore of the Alps UNESCO Global Geopark. The event, which is open to all interested parties and held in the Geopark’s Visitor Centre at the Bischofshofen ski jump site, focuses on different key topics. In 2023, the topics are spatial planning and natural hazards in the Alpine region. Spatial planners, engineering geologists, scientists and application-oriented experts will report on their experiences followed by a discussion. The second day of the „Geodays” is a cross-country on skis day to deepen the understanding of the subject matter.
Sobrarbe-Pyrenees UNESCO Global Geopark (Spain): In cooperation with Geoparks with megalithic monuments

In November 2022, the UNESCO Global Geoparks of Causses du Quercy (France), Famenne Ardenne (Belgium) and Sobrarbe-Pyrenees (Spain) created a working group to collaborate on cooperation projects focusing on their megalithic heritage. This collaboration is the result of an exchange of knowledge, reflections and expectations that took place in the framework of the 16th European Conference and the 46th EGN Coordination Committee Meeting in Verbania with the motto “Nature, culture and sustainability in the face of climate and environmental change”. The three geoparks have an important set of megalithic monuments in their territory and are eager to develop this common work around the prehistoric cultural heritage in which rocks are also protagonists.

Swabian Alb UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): Meeting of the Geopark Cave Network

After a two-year break, the representatives of the twelve show caves of the Swabian Alb UGGp met again in February for a face to face meeting. These meetings provide an opportunity for the show caves to exchange information on topics as diverse as the development of visitor numbers, new booking systems, the success of the children's map developed with the Geopark, cave rescue training, determining bat numbers, and current research projects. The participants were pleased to discover many approaches for further joint projects.

TERRA.vita UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): TERRA.info brochure on soil, soil erosion, and protection of soils

The new TERRA.info brochure on “Soil, soil erosion, and protection of soils” is about the high diversity of soils in the Nature and UNESCO Global Geopark TERRA.vita and how they are threatened by soil erosion. This type of geohazard is of particular social significance when the fertile soil of the agricultural land is damaged by large-scale soil erosion. In the TERRA.vita UNESCO Global Geopark, areas that are located on steep loess slopes are exposed to the increased risk of soil erosion. Therefore, protective measures applied to these areas are described in this brochure. The publication is available free of charge in German and English.


The district of Helgeland in Norway has a high density of parks and UNESCO designated areas. Trollfjell UGGp has both partnerships and shares overlapping areas with Vega World Heritage and Lomsdal-Visten National Park (see photo). With great support from our 11 mayors, we have established the network Parkforum Across Helgeland which consists of two national parks, two regional parks and two UNESCO designated areas. Our common ground is that all partners aim to build strong, sustainable communities based on the natural and cultural heritage. In this network we share knowledge and promote sustainable tourism in the whole region.
Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark (Greece): The LiMnADs Project

Last fall, a team of eight young scientists supported by the Vikos-Aoos UNESCO Global Geopark, ascended to the Dragonlake of Tymfi Mountain as part of the LiMnADs Project in order to install instruments that measure atmospheric and hydrological conditions. This winter, the instruments installed on site provided the team with a unique insight into the extremes exhibited by a storm like “Barbara”, which on February brought high winds and heavy snow to Tymfi. Monitoring the condition at higher elevations is key to understanding the extremes of the Greek Alpine Zone, and the impacts of climate change on the fragile mountainous environments of cultural heritage in which rocks are also protagonists.

Vulkaneifel UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany): Sous nos pieds – under our feet:

The draft project with 15 partners, mainly from nature parks and geoparks in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany, including the UNESCO Global Geoparks Mëllerdall and Vulkaneifel passed the first hurdle in the Interreg VI A Grande Région project. The subsoil in the Grande Région is rich in treasures and hosts an exceptional geodiversity. The natural resources were used from very early times; some are still exploited nowadays. Over time, the quarries, mines, forges etc. became symbolic markers in the landscapes of this cross-border territory. The aim of the project is to deepen and valorize the knowledge of the natural, cultural geological and industrial heritage, and then to communicate this knowledge to the widest possible audience. Special emphasis is placed on the use of innovative digital tourist tools and through a joint public relations campaign.