



UNESCO Global Geoparks

Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geopark Field Inspection Missions

Evaluations & Revalidations

(March 2020)

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidance for evaluation and revalidation missions of UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGGp) and aspiring UNESCO Global Geoparks (aUGGp), which will be conducted in line with the professional and technical principles and procedures established by UNESCO.

Evaluators as well as the Geopark areas to be evaluated/revalidated, should follow these present guidelines, in order to properly prepare, organize and carry out the field inspection visits. A practical checklist can be found in Annex 1

Arguments for the added value of evaluation/revalidation missions which may be useful for the evaluators while requesting permission to travel from their home institution, hierarchies, etc., is given in Annex 2.

2. EVALUATION / REVALIDATION

2.1. Introduction

UNESCO uses a unique procedure of field evaluation and revalidation missions to ensure that areas fulfil or keep on fulfilling the criteria of UNESCO Global Geoparks.

These assessments are carried out by two evaluators, which are chosen from the official “Roster of Evaluators”. In accordance with the Statutes of the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP) and the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, UNESCO in conjunction with the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) maintains this roster of evaluators who undertake field evaluations of new applications for aUGGps and revalidation missions of established UGGps. These evaluators have combined and proven professional experience relevant for UGGp development (geological heritage, conservation, sustainable development, tourism development and promotion, and environmental issues). Through their general familiarity with the UNESCO Global Geopark Operational Guidelines, they can bring a global perspective to the individual area. The UNESCO Secretariat and the GGN will ensure that evaluators have no conflict of interest regarding new UGGp applications or those requiring revalidation. Evaluators will therefore not conduct missions in their own country.

2.2. The Procedure

Data Assembly. The UNESCO Global Geoparks Secretariat at UNESCO HQ, Paris, checks new application dossiers for completeness. Once the Secretariat validates that the applications are complete, the dossiers are assigned and sent to two selected evaluators. This is done through electronic data files. For revalidation missions the original application dossier, previous field mission reports, and the current self-evaluation document are made available to the evaluators prior to the revalidation mission.

Field Inspection. Evaluation/revalidation missions are undertaken by two evaluators who are sent to the area to meet with the management body of the (proposed) UNESCO Global Geopark, the relevant national and local authorities as well as stakeholders and local communities. The two evaluators must ensure that they stay together for the entire duration of the field inspection.

The main objectives of assessment of the areas are to: (1) become familiar with all aspects of the area; (2) review the application, self-evaluation, and other documents of the application dossier, or, for the revalidations, progress report, progress evaluation form and other documents related to the revalidation; (3) carefully review boundaries, threats and management and; (4) to provide constructive commentary and recommendations as and where appropriate.

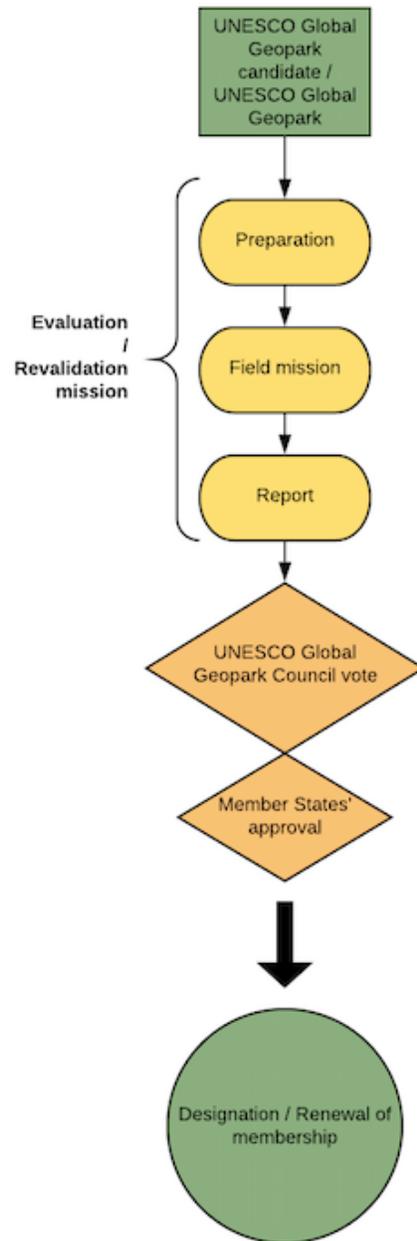
The facts stated in the application dossier are verified in-situ in cooperation with the manager(s) of the area. Sufficient time must be built into the itinerary to allow a detailed examination and verification of the content of the self-evaluation form. The evaluation/revalidation mission programme, itinerary and detailed agenda must be shared and agreed on between the area to be evaluated/revalidated, the evaluators and the UNESCO Secretariat before the mission.

It is mandatory that the evaluators, during a final closing meeting, go through the self-evaluation form together with the Geopark team, discuss each point and give advice for improvement. This discussion is extremely important as it gives the evaluators the possibility to present their observations and allows the Geopark management team to ask questions, seek clarification to understand the evaluators' position and judgement. Evaluators must be very clear about their observations. Through an open and transparent discussion, the area can reply, justify, and eventually avoid/eliminate misunderstandings right at this moment of the evaluation/revalidation chain. It is at the same time understood that the evaluators are not having the final word to accept, defer or reject an aUGGp but will express their recommendation in their report to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council. The UGGp Council is held in September each year, and will submit their decision to the UNESCO Executive Board (the following spring) for endorsement.

For revalidation missions, the procedure is similar. The evaluators verify the details given in the revalidation reports (and progress evaluation form), which consist of a comprehensive report highlighting special progress, advancements and success stories of the UGGp. For the revalidated areas, the results will be communicated through the UGGp Council Report right after its meeting.

Evaluation/Revalidation Report. The report of the field assessment is an important part of the technical evaluation. Both evaluators must share the job of preparing the report equally. It must be clear, relevant and complete, written in English and follow the template distributed by the UNESCO Global Geoparks Secretariat. It has to be sent to the UNESCO Secretariat and will be made available to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council for review.

The report must always contain recommendations for the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council as well as practical advice for the area, while keeping in mind the criteria of a UNESCO Global Geopark as stated in the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks.



2.3. Logistics

Logistical arrangements for the evaluation'/revalidation visits are done by the UGGp/aUGGp which will be asked to prepare an itinerary in close consultation with both evaluators and make international and local travel arrangements. These will be communicated to the evaluators and the UNESCO Secretariat at least at least 4 weeks before the mission takes place. The UGGp/aUGGp covers costs of a field mission for both experts. This includes travel to and from and within the area, , all accommodation and food associated with the mission and any further costs incurred by the evaluators such as visa, airport hotel costs, parking, etc.. The Geopark must ensure all the logistic conditions including the issue of flight tickets, to prevent unpleasant situations for the evaluators such as delay in reimbursement and only in exceptional situations and under agreement of all parties evaluators are allowed to purchase their own flight tickets and/or accommodation. No professional fee is payable to the evaluators and none must be accepted.

Visa and insurance. The evaluators are responsible for obtaining any visa if needed for travelling and the purchase of travel insurance, which will be necessary in case of accident or illness. At the time of the acceptance of the mission, a valid proof of the insurance will be required by UNESCO to certify that the evaluators are fully covered for sickness and accidents throughout the duration of the mission. UNESCO cannot, under any circumstance be held responsible for, or reimburse any costs associated with, any sickness or accidents that may occur during the mission.

3. NOTES ON ETHICS AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Gifts. As a matter of principle, evaluators should not be given gifts from the UGGp/aUGGp they are assessing. However giving a gift or small token of appreciation is a common practice in many cultures and can be accepted if the gift is not of significant value and when it is clear that there is no attempt to influence the assessment process and outcome.

Travel. The evaluators are voluntarily performing a professional duty and thus should not be accompanied by any other person than UNESCO Global Geopark evaluators or approved observers, during the field mission.

Be Prepared. It is important that all parties prepare the visit carefully. The evaluators should have studied the application or revalidation documents and be supplied with basic references and promotional documents before traveling to the concerning area. During the field visit the evaluators have to make sure to bring all materials needed, for example, a notebook and pen, adequate field clothes, camera equipment, rainwear, and first aid essentials. The UGGps/aUGGps make sure they provide the evaluators access to any documents, publications, etc. they consider important.

Be Diplomatic. The final decision on the evaluation of the area is done by the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council and the UNESCO Executive Board. It is therefore requested that the evaluators are not put under pressure by any Geopark stakeholder (or by the press) and do not get involved in the politics of the area. Evaluators serve in their personal capacity, not as representatives of their respective States or any other affiliated entities. Evaluators can therefore not seek or accept instructions from governments or other authorities.

Be Professional. The most important role of an evaluator is to give advice, not only to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council and UNESCO Executive Board but also to the UGGp/aUGGp itself. Evaluators are of great assistance to the area by sharing experiences and including concrete recommendations in the evaluation/revalidation report. It is therefore very important that the evaluators arrive with an open mind and without preconceived judgements about the area. At the end of the visit, the evaluators must have received views from all sectors and sides to make sure a balanced judgement can be made. If the evaluators determine that this overall view cannot be achieved by the current itinerary or agenda, they can insist to see other, not planned sites.

Be Global. While evaluating the area, it is important for the evaluators to not only look in a national scale but also see the global picture, especially on networking perspective.

Beware. The field review has an important and often high profile with media attention and meetings with high-level officials. UGGps/aUGGps are requested to arrange a reasonable amount of media visibility during the field visit but the evaluators as well as the inviting area needs to be guarded in any public pronouncements. Interviews can only be allowed in clear agreement with the Geopark management and only general feedback of the evaluated/revalidated area and the general UGGp concept can be provided. Evaluators must therefore be knowledgeable and able to articulate clearly a basic description about UNESCO Global Geoparks concept, and the overall relevant governance and institutional arrangements.

Be alert. It is also important for the evaluators to pulse the motivation for an area applying for becoming a UNESCO Global Geopark. In some cases, "getting the label", promotion of tourism, or political reasons may be the primary motivation. In others, the motivation may be used inappropriately to help prevent a development threat to a geological heritage site of local importance. Unless the aUGGp clearly meets the criteria, such cases should be closely scrutinized.

Be careful. The inviting Geopark must organize missions while guaranteeing a maximum of safety by protecting participants against hazards (unintentional accidents) as well as providing maximum security against any state of deliberate and intentional threats. Evaluators must not accept dangerous or hazardous tasks or itineraries beyond a reasonable level. Safe itineraries can already be planned and agreed upon well in advance of the visit. There is no obligation to accept transport like riding a horse, helicopter or para-glider, if the evaluator does not feel safe.

Regarding the general security conditions in a given country, the UN Department of Safety and Security provides guidance related to the security management for travels. The UN employs five specific phases to describe those security measures to be implemented based on the prevailing security conditions in a given country. The UNESCO Secretariat will verify the security phase prior to missions and, in the case of a security phase in place, discuss with the evaluators and the UGGp/aUGGp about the next steps to take.

4. UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARKS CODE OF ETHICS FOR UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

In the UNESCO Global Geoparks spirit of peace, prosperity, inclusion, sustainability, learning and empowerment, the UNESCO Global Geoparks aim to enable every child, woman and man to live in dignity and personal integrity, and to promote a set of basic principles that form the ethical and philosophical underpinnings of every society. These guiding principles are integrity,

loyalty, accountability, transparency, independence, impartiality, tolerance, understanding, freedom from discrimination, gender equality, dignity and respect for different customs and cultures.

The UNESCO Global Geoparks promote a safe, inclusive, productive and supportive environment. All individuals involved in the UNESCO Global Geoparks, the host areas as well as the evaluators are expected to abide a strict code of conduct. Individuals who experience inappropriate behaviour are encouraged to make a formal complaint to the UNESCO Geoparks Secretariat.

Examples of **inappropriate behavior** are: bullying; emotional, psychological or physical violence or abuse; discrimination; coercion; aggressive/abusive behavior; abuse of power; unreasonable demands and undue persistence; harassment (including sexual harassment); victimization; vilification; and permitting, assisting or encouraging others to bully, discriminate, harass, victimize or vilify.

Annex 1: Checklist for evaluators and inviting Geopark areas

<p>Geoparks and evaluators</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree on a <u>date</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree on the <u>agenda</u> which must be approved by the UNESCO Secretariat and must include these mandatory items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D0 arrival in the Geopark territory and hotel; 1 hour opening meeting where the area briefly introduces/presents itself to the evaluators • D1 field visit • D2 field visit • D3 field visit; de-briefing at the end of the day between the two co-evaluators + preparation of the presentation/discussion at the closing meeting about your observations of Geopark accomplishments and recommendations • D4 closing meeting (1h30 max.): co-evaluators present their observations and discuss their recommendations, go through all material the area has prepared as well as forms A/B, this closing meeting is only for the main people involved in the Geopark, departure <p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree on <u>suitable flight(s)</u> for the experts (UNESCO rules, economy class and reasonable travel time)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Check about <u>visa</u> procedure (Geopark pays), provide invitation letter if needed (Geopark)</p>	
<p>Evaluators</p> <p>PREPARATIONS, HEALTH AND SAFETY:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Send a proof of your valid travel insurance to UNESCO</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Check you have a valid passport (at least 3 month before expiring!)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Check if you need a visa to realise the mission</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Check that your vaccinations are up to date</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do the UN security (bsafe) test (https://trip.dss.un.org/dssweb/bsafe.aspx)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Carry a first aid kit with you (attention: certain items may not be permitted in all countries) and your usual medication</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Make yourself aware of possible hazards in a country</p> <p>Never (NEVER!) accept hazardous tasks or itineraries beyond a reasonable normal family tourist level</p>	<p>Geoparks</p> <p>ORGANIZATION AND LOGISTICS:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prepare time table and mission programme, discussing with experts, get approval of the UNESCO Secretariat (at least one month before the mission)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Send e-ticket (Geoparks must ensure all the logistic conditions including the issue of flight tickets, to prevent unpleasant situations for the evaluators such as delay in reimbursement of flight tickets and only exceptional situations and under agreement of all parties should be accepted that evaluators purchase their flight tickets and/or accommodation)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Inform experts about area, climatic and other important things to know (also cultural)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Arrange all necessary logistics of the visit like local transport, hotel, stakeholders meetings</p>

<p>Evaluators (continued) EVALUATION PROCESS before departure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Study again the Statutes and Operational Guidelines to be familiar with the UNESCO Global Geoparks philosophy, designation process and criteria <input type="checkbox"/> Study carefully the application dossier/progress report and other relevant documents taking into consideration existing UGGps nearby and their connections with the new application <input type="checkbox"/> Have a look at the Geopark’s website for a fist and unmistakable impression on the area’s quality <input type="checkbox"/> Ask the UNESCO Secretariat if you have any questions about the dossier/progress report , the evaluation/revalidation process, or anything else concerning the mission <input type="checkbox"/> Contact your co-evaluator via e-mail/phone to exchange ideas and discuss about your mission <p>During and after your visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bring background documents with you <input type="checkbox"/> Bring a note book (also on paper and a pen!) to take notes during the mission <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize the report within 2 weeks after the mission (your memory will be fresh) jointly with your co-evaluator 	<p>Geoparks (continued) Without hampering the privacy of the work of the experts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange a reasonable (!) amount of media visibility while realizing that the evaluators can under no circumstances communicate about the quality of the findings and judgement during the mission to the press and that the decision on the area (accept, defer, reject/green or yellow card) will be taken solely by the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that all relevant official entities and relevant actors (local and national) are aware and informed of the mission
<p>UNESCO Secretariat Oversee the process, communicate with the Geoparks and evaluators before and after the field mission</p> <p>Ensure that all relevant stakeholders (local and national) are being informed about the mission and are aware of their role, dates and responsibilities, including financial and logistics</p> <p>Endorse the mission agenda and activities</p> <p>UNESCO will oversee that a strict code of ethics is respected during the mission by all stakeholders and will report any unacceptable behaviour</p>	

Annex 2: Added value of field inspection missions of UNESCO Global Geoparks



UNESCO Global Geoparks are **unified geographical areas** where **sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education, research and sustainable development**. To ensure the high quality of a UNESCO Global Geopark, a procedure of field evaluation and revalidation missions using experienced evaluators was introduced which is unique among the three UNESCO site designation schemes (World Heritage, Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks). Given this approach, the **evaluation missions are extremely important** to the designation process for UNESCO Global Geoparks and the programme as a whole.

What is an evaluation/revalidation mission?

During the initial application and the so-called revalidation (every four-years), **independent experts carry out missions to regions** to undertake local Geopark evaluations. At the end of the evaluation/revalidation mission, the evaluators present a report, which will be taken into consideration at the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council. UNESCO strictly oversees and co-ordination and planning of all missions. With mission arrangements being agreed between the Geopark management team and the team of two evaluators, ensuring that all logistics and scheduling is effective. The evaluation work carried out by the experts is part of the official UNESCO statutory process and **is a dedicated workload and is (not a holiday experience) or (should be seen as a critical work activity)**.

How are the evaluators selected?

Evaluators are **chosen from the official “Roster of Evaluators”**, maintained by UNESCO in conjunction with the Global Geoparks Network (GGN).

Evaluators have **considerable professional experience** relevant to UNESCO Global Geoparks development (geological heritage, conservation, sustainable development, tourism development and promotion, as well as environmental issues), have a general understand of the UNESCO Global Geoparks’ Operational Guidelines and use their knowledge to evaluate the quality, as well as progress of an area using a global perspective.

How to become an evaluator?

The selection process is extremely strict with most of the evaluators coming from established UNESCO Global Geoparks from all over the world.

UNESCO greatly appreciates the work that the evaluators deliver. The evaluators work **for free** (unpaid) and the time and dedication they contribute to this process is widely appreciated. UNESCO relies on their commitment and availability, often at short notice, to travel to an assigned Geopark, located anywhere across the world. UNESCO also **values the contribution of the employing organization/institution** that facilitates the release of staff to undertake this important operational process. Evaluators are **ambassadors** for UNESCO Global Geoparks and respective organizations and through their evaluation work, are personally enriched, benefiting their institutions.

What is their role?

- **Evaluate** applications, extensions and revalidations based on strict UNESCO guidelines;
- **Prepare a report** for the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council on applications, extensions and revalidations;
- **Attend training** and technical workshops;
- **Ensure general standard setting** on UNESCO Global Geopark management and development.

What work do evaluators undertake during evaluation/revalidation missions?

Evaluators have to confirm that the UNESCO Global Geopark fulfils or continues to fulfil the criteria of a UNESCO Global Geopark.

Evaluators should be conversant with the Statutes and Operational Guidelines and are also familiar with the UNESCO Global Geoparks philosophy and criteria, the application dossier of candidates and, in case of revalidations, the progress report together with other relevant documents taking into consideration former evaluations and reports.

During the mission, evaluators are required to consult with all relevant stakeholders and sometimes the local media.

Evaluators are **requested to finalize their report within two weeks of completing a mission.**

