

# The Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark Annual Report 2022

## 1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

**Geopark name, De Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark, (Netherlands, European Geoparks Network)**

**Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2013 / 2021**

## 2. GEOPARK FIGURES

**Number of Geopark staffs: 2,8 staff including 1 geoscientist**

**Number of visitors: Approximately 1.5 million people visited the Hondsrug region.**

**Number of Geopark events: 30**

**Number of school classes realized 50**

**Number of Geopark press releases: 16**

## 3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

### Major achievements in 2022

- **Congress 'Het landschap als uitgangspunt' (Starting Point Landscape)**

The fifth Schuiling Congress was organized on Wednesday 22 June. Special about this edition was the close collaboration of the with De Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark. Other partners were: Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, the University of Groningen and the Annen Historical Association.

The theme of the congress was 'The landscape as starting point'. Dr. Berno Strootman (director of Strootman Landscape Architects and former Government Advisor for the Physical Environment) was the keynote speaker during this conference.

- **Hondsrugatlas Landscape and Climate**

We presented the Hondsrug Atlas at the Schuiling Congress. It is a digital atlas for everyone who wants to know more about the unique landscape of the Hondsrug region. The atlas provides information about the origin of the Hondsrug and how the landscape has changed in the course of history. In addition, this atlas provides information about the effects of climate change and the opportunities to make the area more climate-proof. The atlas is also a building block for the 'landscape vision' (a guide line for future developments in the area) to be developed.

- **Hünenweg Long-distance walking trail won an important award**

We won the prize! The Hondsrugpad/Hünenweg has been named 'walking route of the year' by the Fiets en Wandelbeurs (Biking and hiking exhibition). In 2022 we can call the Hondsrugpad the most beautiful walking route in the Benelux. And we are proud of that! The Hondsrugpad/Hünenweg (166 km) is the Dutch part of the INTERREG project Hondsrugpad-

Hünenweg (325 km) that includes the Geoparks De Hondsrug and TERRA.vita (Germany).

### **Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation**

- **EGN Spring meeting 2022**

The spring meeting of the European Geopark Network EGN took place in 2022 in the Hondsrug area. The event lasted from April 27 to April 30. The organization of both the contents, presentation and the course program demanded a huge commitment from the team. Preparations had already started in 2021. The program has been compiled in consultation with our German partners of Geopark TERRA.vita. More than 160 representatives attended the meeting. They enjoyed the diverse range of trips, food and inspirational sessions. In addition to the regular items on the agenda, we also presented the results of our INTERREG project, such as the video of the Hünenweg hiking path.

### **Management and Financial Status**

- The financial situation is stable.

### **Geoconservation**

- The yearly monitoring off the hotspots has been done.

### **Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)**

- **Ambassadors course**

We can look back with satisfaction on a successful edition of the ambassador course in 2022. During three meetings, the participants learned everything about the Hondsrug region: from geology, archeology and history to tourism, marketing and hospitality. Various guest speakers shared their expertise with the group.

### **Rocks of the Hondsrug**

Together with the Hondsrug Drenthe team, we also awarded the 'Keien van de Hondsrug' awards this year. We have been doing this for about 5 years now. The 'Kei' ('The Rock') is a prize for entrepreneurs who dare and make clear choices in their business operations. This year we awarded the 'Groene Kei' (Green Rock) for the first time, a prize for the sustainable entrepreneur.

### **New education programmes on geo-conservation, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction**

- **Education for schools**

- Until the summer of 2022, we provided a guest lesson once a week at a school in the municipality of Borger-Odoorn or Coevorden. Primary school 'De Westerburcht' in the municipality of Tynaarlo and primary school 'De Dobbe' in the municipality of Aa en Hunze also received a guest lesson. Both students and teachers find this lesson instructive,

stimulating and entertaining.

- Since our office moved to the Hunebed Center in the summer of 2022, we have been working to better intertwine the education of both organizations in terms of content, communication and the use of each other's facilities and networks. This is process that doesn't take a week to complete. This will be done step by step. These steps will become more concrete in 2023.

### **Strategic partnership**

- **Signing of the letter of intent for the updated masterplan for De Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark**

The first version of the master plan was published in 2017 on the recommendation of the Global Geoparks Network. Now five years later, this plan has been evaluated and refined for the future. The aim is to strengthen the development and qualities of the Hondsrug region, based on the strong regional identity and international image that this status entails.

In addition to protection and education, further development is one of the most important criteria that UNESCO attaches to the status of Geopark. Together we want to work on a plan to better protect the landscape of the Hondsrug. We want to draw attention to the consequences of climate change. The realization of a central visitor centre for the UNESCO Geopark is also one of the action points in the master plan.

The updated master plan highlights how the area identity could be strengthened during the remaining five years of the program period. The province of Drenthe, foundation Drents Landscape and the municipalities of Aa and Hunze, Tynaarlo, Borger-Odoorn, Coevorden and Emmen signed a letter of intent on Friday, July 8, 2022. Together with the Geopark de Hondsrug Foundation, they will cooperate to enable the implementation of the plans as set out in the master plan to achieve the goals for the area and to maintain the UNESCO Global Geopark status in the future.

- Placeholder text

### **Promotional activities**

- The Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark appeared in the media several times in 2022. In particular within the media in the Hondsrug area (RTV Drenthe, ZO!34, RTV Noord, RTV1).
- De Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark also regularly publishes texts and advertisements in Hondsrug Magazine and newspapers from the Tourist Information Points offices, among others. The Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark is active online, also in terms of promoting activities. An example is Mystery of the Sleenerzand that was organized in 2022.
- The Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark writes its own press releases, has a website ([www.dehondsrug.nl](http://www.dehondsrug.nl)), a newsletter and several social media channels: Facebook, Twitter,

Instagram and LinkedIn. In 2023, De Hondsrug UNESCO Global Geopark will stop using Twitter and shift its focus to Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. LinkedIn will also be actively used again.

- Situation op 31 December 2022
- Instagram: 858 followers
- Facebook: 4131 followers
- Twitter: 2150 followers
- LinkedIn: 68 followers
- Website: 168.000 sessions, 122.000 visitors, 330.000 page views

#### **4. CONTACTS**

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