

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2023

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: Estrela UNESCO Global Geopark, Portugal, European Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2020 / 2023

Representative photo with caption (from the most important event this year)

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 9 staffs including 4 geoscientist(s)

Number of visitors: It is difficult to determine the number of visitors in the totality of the area of the Geopark. However, the following data is available:

- CIVGLAZ (interpretation centre managed by the geopark) - 6990 visitors
- Digital visitor counters in trails of 2 geosites (Zêzere glacial valley and Loriga glacial valley) - 9040 visitors

Number of Geopark events: The Estrela UGGp has promoted 60 different activities and events and has cooperated with the municipalities and other local stakeholders in approximately 30 more events

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 186 indoor programmes with approximately 4 000 students and teachers and 72 outdoor programs with approximately 3 500 students and teachers

Number of Geopark press release: The Estrela UGGp has participated in 24 new articles. Furthermore, there have been over 100 press releases in the local, regional and national media.

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2023

- Meeting of the Portuguese Network of UNESCO Global Geoparks – the Estrela UGGp welcomed the annual meeting of the Portuguese UNESCO Global Geoparks, where the UNESCO designated territories and the aspiring ones were present do discuss strategies and ideas to enhance these territories;
- 14th Meeting of the Itinerary of Mines and Geological and Mining Points of Interest of Portugal – annual meeting of the partners where during two days the participants had the opportunity to showcase the best practices in regards to the conservation and promotion of geological

heritage.

- ObservaEstrela - this event aimed to promote the relationship between tourism and science in an integrated way, reinforcing the role of sustainability in the valorisation of these territories.
- Remonstar - This project aims to establish a climatic and ecological monitoring network in the Serra da Estrela that will make it possible to understand the spatial heterogeneity of climatic conditions, biodiversity and the functioning and regeneration of ecosystems. It is implemented on the upper plateau, which has unique conditions in mainland Portugal, and in the Zêzere valley, the largest and most important glacial valley in Estrela, which was greatly affected by the fires of 2022. The proposed study is fundamental to understand the effect of global change on this territory and can contribute to better management of protected areas.
- Estrela Green Hub - The Estrela Green Hub project aims to construct a new tourism approach for the Serra da Estrela mountain range, by valuing the territory's natural heritage, its forest and its environment. This will be much more than a tourism project. It is a real strategy for preserving and enhancing the territory, based on the ecosystem services that a protected area can provide, making it more resilient and enabling it to be actively managed.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- EGN Working Groups - the Estrela UGGp is now the catalyst for the EGN Communication WG;
- EGN and GGN meetings - the Estrela UGGp has participated in all of the international meetings promoted by these networks, presenting several posters and oral presentations that aimed at contributing to the share of good practices in several fields of work;
- Newsletters and Magazines - the Estrela UGGp has regularly contributed to these media.

Management and Financial Status

A global analysis of the Activities Plan and Budget of 2023 indicates that 50% of them were fully executed. However, 38% were delayed for 2024, due to the financial constraints registered for this year. Many of these delayed activities are already being implemented, with just 12% not being implemented in its entirety. By strategic area, the following execution rates were recorded:

- Education and Science - 55%;
- Tourism and Culture - 48%;
- Communication - 38%;
- Transversal activities – 75%

Geoconservation

- “Improving Visitation of the Geological Heritage Classified by UNESCO” which : a) Intervene directly geosites, in order to promote the sustainable use of the natural heritage, also contributing to the improvement of the of conservation and impacts inherent to visitation; b) provide the selected geosites with interpretative infrastructures that promote heritage valorisation and environmental awareness, with a view to its preservation; c) Develop measures to ensure the enhancement and conservation of natural assets of the PNSE area, following the strategy associated to the co-management process of this protected area and the international designation conferred by UNESCO; d) implement visitation monitoring systems for the identified sites, as an integrated and strategy for the integrated and sustainable management of the area’s heritage;
- There has been a significant increase in the promotion of natural heritage from the municipalities through the implementation of new pedestrian routes, namely in Belmonte, Covilhã and Guarda. These have also contributed to the improvement of accessibility to the geosites. This has been a continuous work and the Estrela UGGp has been working with all the municipalities to increase this number.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- Great Route of the Estrela Geopark – this has been that is in its final stages of implementation and that aims at becoming a product of great value and attractiveness for this territory, allowing lovers of hiking and biking to go through the nine municipalities. This project was planned from the user’s perspective, as it was structured according to their needs. It has easy access to public transportation, to the municipal headquarters, to touristic infrastructure (accommodation, restaurants and others) and stimulates the visitation to most of the geosites of the Estrela Geopark;
- “Walking with Science” is one of the most important activities of the Estrela UGGp. It was created to follow some of the trails that already existed in the Serra da Estrela and from them, to start discovering its geological, natural and cultural heritage. It combines physical exercise, the enjoyment of nature and deepening the knowledge of the mountain’s heritage;
- ObservaEstrela – this event aimed to promote the relationship between tourism and science in an integrated way, reinforcing the role of sustainability in the valorisation of these territories;
- Mountain Festival - The Mountain Festival is an event that celebrates nature, the grandeur of the mountains and the vibrant culture associated with these magnificent landscapes. On land, on water and in the skies, this festival had music, sport, cinema, knowledge sharing, meetings and gastronomy. It were days of celebration in which everyone who respects nature and the mountains was welcomed;

- Glaciers Route – this the Estrela Geopark's new cycle of walks. Each walk will follow the retreating movement of the glaciers that covered the Estrela landscape 30,000 years ago. On each Route we climb one of the 7 glacial valleys of this Mountain, between the base of the valley and the Torre, in a geographical and knowledge ascension.
- CIVGLAZ - Promotion of the Zêzere Glacial Valley interpretive Center, in the Municipality of Manteigas, dedicated to the interpretation of one of the most iconic geosites in the territory. Beyond the permanent exhibition, there's a section dedicated to the exhibition and sale of GEOfood products from the Estrela UGGp, as well has an exhibition about the rocks of the Estrela UGGp.

New education programmes on geoconservation, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction

- Geohazards in the Portuguese UNESCO Global Geoparks – with the aim of promoting awareness among the school communities, the Portuguese UGGP created a joint educational program focused on the challenges that each territory faces and common strategies to mitigate the effects of geohazards and climate change.
- Mondego Walkways Educational Programs – with the implementation of this new infrastructure, the Estrela UGGp created an education offer centered on the natural and cultural heritage that can be visited using these walkways, thus creating a new resource to understand and value the heritage of the territory;
- Holidays in the Geopark – as a means to create a new offer for students outside the classes, for the holidays, the Estrela UGGp created a new offer which aims at, through a more relaxed approach, foster the connection of the students with the territory.

Strategic partnership

- Reinforcement of the partnerships with the municipalities, through the participation in fairs and events promoted by the municipalities, interpreted walks to promote the natural and cultural heritage and creation of new interpretative panels;
- Formalization of the co-management of the Serra da Estrela Natural Park, with the Estrela UGGp being appointed as the official manager. This strategy, helps promote its heritage and create new strategies for its resilience.

Promotional activities

Information about the Estrela UGGp can be found on the following supports:

- Leaflets about the Estrela UGGp;
- Geoheritage map of the Estrela UGGp;

- Leaflets from several activities promoted by the Estrela UGGp (fairs, conferences, seminars);
- Documents about the Educational programs available on the Estrela UGGp website;
- Documents regarding the touristic programs available on the Estrela UGGp website;
- The Estrela UGGp Reforest Card;
- Leaflets from the Portuguese Network of Portuguese Geoparks.
- Photography exhibitions, namely the “9 Olhares” (“9 Looks”) and the “Geosites of the Estrela Geopark” exhibitions.

On Social media the Estrela UGGp has:

- An official website (<https://www.geoparkestrela.pt/>),
- Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/EstrelaGeopark>),
- Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/estrelageopark>),
- Twitter (<https://twitter.com/estrelageopark>),
- LinkedIn (<https://pt.linkedin.com/company/estrelageopark>)
- Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/c/EstrelaGeopark>).

In collaboration with the Portuguese UNESCO Global Geoparks, there is also a joint account to promote these territories.

4. CONTACTS

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