



GLOBAL GEOPARKS NETWORK

International Association on Geoparks

CELEBRATING EARTH HERITAGE – SUSTAINING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Haute Provence Geopark, Musée Promenade,
10 Montée Bernard Dellacasagrande,
BP 156, 04005 Cedex Digne les Bains – France.

www.globalgeoparksnetwork.org

Strategic Plan 2024-2025

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INTRODUCTION

The Global Geoparks Network operates as the International Association of the Global Geoparks and Global Geopark professionals, which is committed to the conservation, management and communication to society of the Earth heritage as an integral part of the world's natural and cultural heritage, tangible and intangible. Global Geoparks are tools to conserve and enhance the value of areas of geological significance in Earth history, including landscapes and geological formations, which are key witnesses to the evolution of our planet and determinants for our future, and to promote sustainable development for example through geo-tourism and education.

The Global Geoparks Network focuses its activities to support Geoparks development in areas that validate, protect and promote their Earth Heritage and other related natural and cultural heritage as a tool for sustainable local development. The Global Geoparks Network is the official partner of UNESCO for the implementation of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Programme. The Global Geoparks Network is promoting the brand UNESCO Global Geopark as a label of excellence in sustainable tourism.

The governance of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) is based on the decisions of the General Assembly, which is the legislative body of the Association. The General Assembly is open only to the participation of the nominated representative of each UNESCO Global Geopark, as well as all to the individual, cooperating, and honorary members.

The Global Geoparks Network (GGN) organized the following General Assemblies:

- in 2016 the 1st Ordinary General Assembly, which adopted the strategy for the period 2016-2018 and elected of the Executive Board for the four-year period 2016-2020;
- in 2018 the 2nd Ordinary General Assembly, which adopted the strategy for the period 2018-2020;
- in 2021 the 3rd Ordinary General Assembly, which adopted the strategy for the period 2022-2023 and elected of the second Executive Board for the four-year period 2020-2024.

Based on the decisions taken during the period 2016-2021 main steps have been made for the operation of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN), the support of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Programme, the networking, collaboration, and capacity building among Geopark' teams and Geopark professionals and the promotion of the Geopark' brand worldwide.

The period 2018-2020 was critical for the operation and development of the Network in all continents and especially in regions that are currently underrepresented.

The period after 2020 was remarkably difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This reality has changed everybody's life and daily operation in all the UNESCO Global Geoparks and has had a significant impact on networking and communication.

Three years after the beginning of the pandemic, we still cannot fully understand all its consequences. However, thinking about the world after COVID-19 pandemic we understand how our world has changed! In this sense, during 2023 the world is slowly trying to overpass the global crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic, which seems to create a huge change in the lives of billions of people affecting our social and economic activities.

In the aforementioned context, our Global Geoparks Network has been also seriously affected during the last three years. In effect, in this moment, we are facing a very critical moment for our Network's operation and development. For that reason, it is the right moment to think, to analyze and to take the necessary decisions, in order to the present and near future challenges.

Taking into consideration this background, the strategy of the Global Geoparks Network in the coming period (2023-2025) should be based on the achievements made during the previous years and integrate new tools and activities at the operational level, in order to find in order to follow the best path and make the right decisions.

In this framework, it is clear that we need new initiatives and serious changes in our operation, in order to reply to new priorities and needs, to preserve our identity and traditions, and to drive innovation.

OUR GOALS

This strategic document was prepared by the GGN Executive Board as a discussion platform for the current and new challenges we face.

The strategic plan 2024-2025 document takes into consideration the comments and opinions expressed by the GGN Advisory Committee. This also includes all contributions from national geopark networks from 46 countries, which have been discussed at various meetings over the last few years. It also includes the results of the discussion between the members of the GGN Executive Board about the strengths and weaknesses of the previous strategic plan (2022-2023), in order to better guide us in the action plan for the next two years.

The main goals of the GGN operation are:

- Continuous networking and communication between all UNESCO Global Geoparks and re-connection between these territories and their communities to support the social understanding on the Geopark values.
- Effective operation of the Global Geoparks Network and support of Geopark activities at the Global, Regional and National levels.
- Strengthening the operation of the GGN bodies (GGN Executive Board, GGN Advisory Committee, GGN Working groups), as well as the administrative mechanism to support the effective functioning of the Global Geoparks Network.
- Support the activities of the National Geoparks Networks and use the local language to spread the Geoparks' message. Promote best practices to support the Global Geoparks Network brand and visibility to the broader public. Promote the Global Geoparks Network at the national level as the mechanism to achieve global visibility.
- Support UNESCO Global Geoparks Programme through initiatives to support expansion in less represented geographical areas and through capacity building activities, particularly for Geopark staff and Geopark evaluators.
- Enforce the engagement of youth in all Geopark activities! Promote the creation of a Geopark Youth Forum with the participation of young volunteers in every UNESCO Global Geopark. Promote also a National Geopark Youth Forum with representatives of all Geoparks in each country, in order to support the role of young people for the Geopark operation and activities
- Support Geoparks to enforce their role in the SDGs implementation at local level, enhancing inclusive stakeholder engagement. At the same time, it is important to identify challenges and opportunities for mobilizing means of implementation at the local level, and help local authorities in ensuring that no one is being left behind in this process. Create a Geopark SDGs Platform, to support the promotion and diffusion of best practices in local-level actions that contributes for the indicators of the SDGs. Special attention will be given to the participation of the indigenous communities.
- Promote the role of Geoparks to support local communities to prevent natural hazards and the consequences of the climate change. Through awareness raising and educational activities, Geoparks support the

popularization of scientific knowledge and contribute to the strengthening of local action plans and policies. Geopark communication with and within communities must be improved to act as an effective bridge between knowledge and the action in the territory. Geoparks should support local communities to have easy access to information on natural hazards, climate change risks and associated impacts, and the cost of inaction, in order to better assess the impact of their actions.

- Promote UNESCO Global Geoparks as a quality label for sustainable tourism, as safe and sustainable territories where the Earth's heritage is protected and properly managed, supporting the sustainable development of local communities.
- Adjust the GGN Communication and Marketing Strategy to the UNESCO logo guidelines, in order to provide visibility and elevate global awareness of UNESCO Global Geoparks and the Global Geoparks Network family, focusing on the value, mandates, and benefits they bring or can bring to these territories and their communities.

OUR PLANS

The GGN plans to initiate and incorporate the actions for 2022-2023 are the following:

1. Strengthening GGN Structure, Functioning and Communication with GGN members
 - GGN General Assembly
 - GGN Advisory Committee
 - GGN Working Groups
 - International Geoparks Conference
2. Global Geoparks Network and UNESCO Global Geoparks
3. GGN Regional Networks
4. National Networks
5. GGN Members
 - 5.1. GGN Institutional members
 - 5.2. GGN Individual and Cooperating Members
6. GGN Initiatives
 - 6.1. GGN Awards
 - 6.2. GGN Film Festival
 - 6.3. Youth Forum
7. Geoparks and SDG's
8. Financial stability
9. Capacity building activities
10. Geoparks Marketing and Promotion
 - 10.1. Communication Strategy
 - 10.2. Promotion of the Geopark Brand
11. GGN and International Networking.

STRATEGIC ACTION 1

GGN operation

1.1. Strengthening GGN Structure, Functioning and Communication with GGN members

The GGN should make efforts to the effective operation of the Global Geoparks Network bodies and support the Geoparks activities at the Global, Regional and National levels.

The GGN will continue to enhance the good practices of the period 2022-2023 and will focus on GGN operation and networking, information distribution and communication between members, implementation of the various new initiatives, the establishment of new activities, coordination of the Global Geoparks meetings, capacity building activities, and events.

To achieve the above, the following actions are recommended:

- Encourage the participation of all members in the GGN General Assembly. Improving their preparation in order to achieve effective participation;
- Strengthen the operation of the GGN Advisory Committee;
- Strengthen the operation of the National Geoparks Networks;
- Strengthening the operation of the administrative mechanism of the GGN bodies to support the effective functioning of the Global Geoparks Network;
- Strengthening the operation of the GGN Secretariat;
 1. The GGN Headquarter, as well as the financial operation of the Association (GGN Bank Accounts, GGN External Accountant) is operated by Haute-Provence UNESCO Global Geopark (France);
 2. The GGN will strengthen the functioning of the GGN Operational Secretariat;
- Support the visibility of the Global Geoparks Network by establishing a new strategy for the protection and the use of the GGN Logo. Improve the coherence and combination in the use of the GGN logos in Geopark activities, services, and products. Create a marketing toolkit for the GGN logos;
- Foster networking and continuous communication among all UNESCO Global Geoparks;
- Encourage Geopark activities aiming at the re-connection between these territories and their communities to support the social understanding of the Geopark values;
- Implementation of a strategy for legal protection and security for the protection of the members of GGN in their duties in the Network.

1.2. GGN Working Groups

Strengthen the operation of the GGN Working Groups.

Encourage GGN Working Groups to work even more efficiently and professionally, and to generate concrete results.

- Encourage the coordination of thematic activities in synergy with the Regional Working Groups and enhance collaboration between GGN members;
- Encourage common realizations among the Global Geoparks Network members, such as the Intangible Heritage common exhibition.

1.3. GGN Communication mechanism

- Maintain frequent communication among members through the updated GGN Mailing List, GGN website, GGN social media, and the GGN Newsfeed, which is the monthly communication tool for the GGN members;
- Frequently update the GGN calendar of events on the GGN website and avoid overlapping and duplications of Geopark events;
- Maintain continuous distribution of information through GGN Website to all GGN Members, and ask GGN Members to inform regularly the GGN regarding their activities on conferences, workshops, and other events, which will have broader interests for the Geoparks community;
- Improve digital communication of the members through GGN digital communication platforms;
- Improve the presence of GGN in the internet through GGN websites and GGN social media;
- Production of GGN corporative videos for use and promotion of GGN activities in GGN Events, Press Conferences, Communication events, International Tourism Fairs, etc.;
- Production of Geopark common publications, brochures, maps, banners, posters and other promotional materials.

STRATEGIC ACTION 2

Global Geoparks Network and UNESCO Global Geoparks

- Continue to strengthen the collaboration with UNESCO for the operation of the UNESCO Global Geoparks;
- Support the development of territories in regions that are currently underrepresented in the Global Geoparks family, like Africa, Arab states, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through initiatives such as the UNESCO and the GGN Grand for Africa and Arab States and for Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
- Implement and support capacity-building activities on UNESCO Global Geoparks such as the International Geopark Courses, Seminars and Thematic Workshops;
- Ensure the current operation, quality control and maintenance of the Roster of Geopark Evaluators Data Base and organization of Evaluator's capacity building activities (Evaluator's Training Course);
- Support of the implementation of the Geopark Evaluation and Revalidation Missions.

STRATEGIC ACTION 3

GGN Regional Networks

- Encourage the existing regional branches of GGN (EGN, APGN, GEOLAC and AUGGN) to work even more efficiently and professionally, and support them to find solutions to any current challenges;
- Support the organization of the Regional Geopark Conferences.

STRATEGIC ACTION 4

GGN National Bodies

4.1. Operation of National Fora/ Committees, National Geopark Networks

Strengthening the operation of the GGN National Bodies including National Representatives in countries with only one Geopark, National Fora or Committees. Creation of National Geoparks Networks in countries with more than three UNESCO Global Geoparks.

4.2. Creation of National Geoparks Networks

The GGN National Geoparks Networks are made up of all UNESCO Global Geoparks and all the GGN members (individual, honorary and cooperating) existing in the country.

The GGN will support the activities of the National Geoparks Networks, which will communicate the Geopark values and message to the local communities, as well as to national authorities and institutions using national and local languages.

Create a Guide on best practices to support the National Geoparks Networks to rise Geoparks brand visibility to the broader public at the national level. This includes the organization of various activities (i.e. National Geoparks Conference, participation in tourist fairs with a stand, organization of a Geopark Day, open to the public national events, Exhibitions, Publications, and Volunteers Programs).

Promote the Global Geoparks Network at the national level as the mechanism to achieve global visibility for the UNESCO Global Geoparks and their activities and products.

- Update the framework of the National Geopark bodies and provide an action plan model for the National Geoparks Networks;
- Support the organization of National Geopark Conferences and open to the public as many as possible activities to raise the visibility of the Geopark concept and results.

STRATEGIC ACTION 5

GGN Members

5.1. GGN Institutional members

- Encourage all institutional members to work consistently throughout each four years period to constantly improve their quality and service;
- Provide a good practice guide for Geopark partners and a frame for the use of the GGN logo by Geopark partners;
- Encourage all institutional members to participate in GGN working groups (and Regional Networks Working groups) and contribute to the initiatives developed by working groups more actively;
- Publicize the GGN philosophy, emphasize active participation and involvement of local residents and stakeholders, especially in the territories where local residents are poorly informed about the knowledge of UNESCO Global Geoparks or even neglected by local governments;
- Encourage the GGN institutional members to continue to produce new outstanding and good practices, which can be shared by other Geoparks and can result in positive influences, benefitting all and contributing to the creation of a more cooperative and peaceful future for all.

GGN Executive Board has to:

- Encourage all institutional members to participate in conferences in other continental networks;
- Encourage all institutional members to develop partnerships and exchange projects with partners on Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 of UN.

5.2. GGN Individual and Cooperating Members

- Work to improve further the collaboration between Institutional and Individual Members;
- Encourage GGN Individual Members to support GGN activities;
- Introduce GGN Cooperating Members to support GGN activities.

The GGN Executive Board should provide support engaging GGN members with recognized experience on specific issues;

The GGN Executive Board should create a strategy for the encouragement of new Cooperating members to join GGN.

STRATEGIC ACTION 6

GGN Initiatives

6.1. GGN Awards

The GGN will continue the initiative of the GGN Awards also for the period 2024-2025.

This process will be promoted through the improvement of the procedures for the attribution of the GGN Awards. In this sense, will be identified the best practices in Geopark operation and services with the active involvement of the Geopark Managers and the Geopark Evaluators.

For the improvement of the system of the GGN Awards the following actions will be implemented:

- Every year, UNESCO Global Geoparks will be invited to submit their application for the GGN best practice awards;
- An application and an explanatory note will be prepared to support Geoparks for their application;
- The applications will be presented in a poster session every two years, during the International Geoparks Conference. A poster model will be prepared by the GGN which will be used by the Geoparks for their presentation;
- The selection of the best practice awards will be through electronic voting of the GGN members. One vote per Geopark and individual member will be allowed for the selection for the best practice awards;
- There will be the following nine categories for the best practice awards:
 1. Geoconservation,
 2. Interpretation,
 3. Education,
 4. Communication and collaboration,
 5. Visibility,
 6. Sustainable Development,
 7. Tourism,
 8. Community Engagement,
 9. Innovation

6.2. GGN Film Festival

Continuation of the Geoparks Film Festival every two years and use of the Geopark Film Festival website <https://filmfest.globalgeoparksnetwork.org> for the promotion of the UNESCO Global Geoparks.

The selection of the GGN Film Festival awards will be done through electronic voting.

Awards and prizes of the Film Festival competition

A trophy and a financial award will be delivered:

Winner: trophy + 3.000,00 €;

The second & third winners: trophy + 2.000,00 € (for each one).

6.3. Geopark Youth Forum

Enforce the engagement of youth in all Geopark activities.

Promote the creation of a **Geopark Youth Forum** with the participation of young volunteers in every UNESCO Global Geopark;

The representatives of the **Geopark Youth Forum** in each Geopark will form the National Geopark Youth Forum, with the representatives of all Geoparks in each country, to support the role of young people to Geopark operation and activities;

The elected representatives from each National Geoparks Forum will represent the Country at the Regional and Global Youth Fora;

For the implementation of the initiative, the following procedure must be adopted:

- The age of the youth forum members will be from 16 until 29 years old;
- The GGN will support the operation of the National Geopark Youth Fora with the representatives of all UNESCO Global Geoparks in each country;
- The GGN will support the role of young people to Geopark operation and activities.

6.4. Exhibition of the GGN National Fora/Committees during the international conferences on UNESCO Global Geoparks

The GGN will support the organization of exhibitions by the GGN National bodies during the international conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks (this action will be part of the GGN national strategy).

There will be one stand for each country that has up to ten UNESCO Global Geoparks. Countries with more than 10 Geoparks will have double space.

STRATEGIC ACTION 7

Geopark activities on SDGs

Support Geoparks to enforce their role in SDGs implementation at the local level, enhancing inclusive stakeholder engagement, identifying challenges and opportunities for mobilizing means of implementation at the local level, and helping local authorities in ensuring that no one is being left behind in this process.

Create a Geopark SDGs Platform, to support the promotion and diffusion of best practices in local-level actions aimed at achieving the SDGs.

Promote the role of Geoparks to support local communities to prevent natural hazards and climate change consequences. In this sense, the Geoparks support the dissemination of knowledge and scientific evidence to strengthen local plans and policies, through awareness-raising and education activities. Geopark communication with and within communities should be enhanced to act as an effective bridge between knowledge and behaviour. Geoparks should support local communities to have easy access to information on natural hazards, climate change risks, associated impacts, and the cost of inaction, to better appreciate the impact of their actions.

STRATEGIC ACTION 8

Financial stability

The GGN seeks financial stability, and is prepared to support big promotional activities, which will support the image of Geoparks as territories of excellence in tourism and education.

GGN need to strengthen further financial resources through

- Qualified sponsors;
- Supporting Members.

STRATEGIC ACTION 9

Capacity building activities

GGN will continue to organize capacity-building activities in close collaboration with UNESCO, which may include

- Intensive Courses on Geoparks;
- Seminars of Geopark Evaluators;
- Geopark Workshops;
- Geopark Seminars in regions with no or few Geoparks;
- Close and active collaboration with other UNESCO designations.

More specifically, for the 2024-2025 time frame will be implemented the following actions:

- Two levels of capacity-building activities will be implemented:
 - a) At international level will be implemented the two already existing Geopark capacity-building activities (in Lesvos and Beijing). The GGN will provide support to other international capacity-building activities on Geoparks organized in collaboration with other UNESCO bodies;
 - b) Capacity-building activities will also be organized at a national level with the collaboration of the GGN.
- The main UNESCO/GGN course on UNESCO Global Geoparks, with physical presence, which is organized by Lesvos Island UNESCO Global Geopark (Greece), with the scientific supervision of the University of the Aegean, will continue to be implemented
- The Beijing course on UNESCO Global Geoparks will continue its implementation – The course will take place the second semester of each year organized by China University of Geosciences (Beijing), associated with Chinese Geoparks Network, and hosted by an each year selected UNESCO Global Geopark in China;
- A calendar with all the capacity buildings of each year will be prepared and will be announced at the beginning of each year. All national capacity building activities should be published in the calendar of the capacity-building activities of the Network to avoid overlapping of formative offers;
- The Evaluators course will be proposed to UNESCO to be organized at the end of January of each year;
- A video database with lessons by the GGN experts will be prepared and made public.

STRATEGIC ACTION 10

Marketing and Promotion

Adjust the GGN Communication and Marketing Strategy to the UNESCO logo guidelines to provide visibility and raise global awareness of UNESCO Global Geoparks and the Global Geoparks Network.

10.1. Communication Strategy

The GGN should work on the implementation of the Communication and Marketing Strategy to rise global awareness of UNESCO Global Geoparks and the Global Geoparks Network family, focusing on the value and mandates, and benefits they bring or can bring to the territories.

The GGN Executive Board should urgently and after the COVID-19 pandemic to review the outcomes and select priorities for the successful realization of the GGN Marketing and Communication Strategy through specific actions.

The implementation of the strategic plan on the GGN Marketing and Communication is crucial for the success of the Global Geoparks Network.

10.2. Promotion of the Geopark Brand

The GGN has special responsibility for the promotion of the Geopark brand worldwide, especially in the places where Geoparks are not well known for Government officials, international and national organizations dealing with environmental protection and management, International and national Tourism organizations, International and national educational organizations.

- The GGN will develop special activities in collaboration with the Regional Networks, the National Geoparks Networks, and GGN Individual Members to raise the profile of Geoparks and generate new Geopark initiatives;
- The GGN will develop special activities on International Days to raise the profile of Geoparks. Special emphasis should be given on International Geodiversity Day on October 6th and Earth Day on April 22nd.
- The GGN will initiate campaigns through social media to engage more individuals in its activities and initiatives and raise the profile of the UNESCO Global Geoparks;
- The GGN will develop special initiative for the promotion of the Geopark Gastronomy and local products using the GGN brand;
- The GGN will develop GGN souvenirs, with the logo of the GGN, in collaboration with the members;
- The GGN will continue the coordination of the Geopark presence in International Tourism fairs, International Press Conferences and other promotional activities.

10.3. Celebration of the GGN 20th anniversary in 2024

- The GGN in 2024 will celebrate its 20th anniversary. For the promotion of the GGN and its member will be implemented the following:
- Preparation of a special logo for the celebration;
- Celebration on social media – each Geopark promotion during one day;
- Common celebration of all Geoparks during the Earth Day;

- Geoparks will organize events all around the year (in parallel with their already arranged activities);
- Special events will be organized during the conferences of the Regional Geoparks Networks;
- Production of a promotional video;
- Publication of a book presenting the history of the GGN;
- Preparation of a special poster;
- Preparation of Geoparks map.

STRATEGIC ACTION 11

GGN and International Networking

GGN is partner with UNESCO for the implementation of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Programme. GGN attaches great importance to International networking and the collaboration of the GGN with IUCN and IUGS, as well as the presence in International Conferences i.e. IGC, IGU Conference, IAG, etc.