

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2022

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/ first revalidation in 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) - 2830 visitors
- Digital visitor counters in trails of 2 geosites (Zêzere glacial valley and Loriga glacial valley) - 4117 visitors

Number of Geopark events: The Estrela UGGp has promoted 68 different activities and events and has cooperated with the municipalities in approximately 10 more events.

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes: 105 indoor programmes with approximately 3000 students and teachers and 40 outdoor programs with approximately 1700 students and teachers

Number of Geopark press release: The Estrela UGGp has participated in 14 new articles and two new books about the territory. Furthermore, there have been over 50 press releases in the local, regional and national media.

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2022

- Casa Jones (Manteigas) - The “Revive Natureza” Fund, created through Decree-Law No. 161/2019, of 25th October, is aimed at the requalification and enhancement of vacant public properties, with the aim of making the conservation, recovery and safeguarding of the values in question compatible with new uses, which benefit local communities, attract new visitors and fix new residents. In close partnership with Burel Mountain Hotels (member of the Partners’ Network of Estrela Geopark), the Estrela UGGp won the funding to restructure Casa Jones building, investing in a strategy to enhance scientific tourism. This is a tourist investment aimed at socially and economically weakened areas due to their isolation, but endowed with unique resources with potential for capitalization. Aimed at both isolated travelers and groups wishing to conduct research in the area, the Estrela UGGp intends that Casa Jones becomes a reference hotel in the area, offering common working spaces and places for the exhibition of scientific content (creation of a Knowledge Room), promoting products, customs and traditions and boosting tourist and educational activities focused on the natural heritage of international relevance and the close relationship of Serra da Estrela with Science. Casa Jones aims to target a market segment that seeks the region for knowledge, research and meditation, acting as a natural extension of the mountain itself and adding value to the territory.
- “Entre Serras” - Led by the Landscape Museum (Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon), it was approved in the framework of Creative Europe, the European Union's Programme for exclusive support to the cultural and creative sectors. This project addresses art and mountain landscape as a metaphor for questioning the future and the relationship between ecology and its representations. It includes residencies, workshops, art interventions,

exhibitions, seminars and publications, in 3 countries, with 8 partners, more than 20 artists. The aim is to create environmental awareness, promote mobility and co-creation of European artists, present contemporary art to local communities and create an art network for the European mountains.

- Finalist for the National Tourism Award 2022, in the “Sustainable Tourism” category, with the project “Joint Strategy of the Portuguese UNESCO Global Geoparks”. This was an application submitted by the Network of UNESCO Global Geoparks in Portugal.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- Building Bridges - this project was funded by the EEA Grants fund for bilateral relations, and its main objective was to promote the change of experiences and knowledge among three UGGp from the countries covered by this program, namely Portugal (Estrela UGGp), Norway (Gea Norvegica UGG) and Katla (UGGp). The implementation of this project allowed the Estrela UGGp to gain new ideas and to learn from experienced geoparks in regards to interpretation, communication and local development strategies.
- SESDNet - This is a IGCP project (736) that is being implemented in a partnership with the Araripe UGGp (Brazil) and the Mixteca Alta UGGp (Mexico). It has as its main objectives to foster research in these territories on different areas of knowledge and to make the results of research projects available to local populations.
- Network of Portuguese UNESCO Geoparks - as of 2022, the Network of Portuguese UNESCO Global Geoparks was created, and there has been intense work among the Portuguese geoparks, with some examples being: creation of the Scientific Research Catalogue of the Portuguese Geoparks; the “1st Portuguese Geoparks Photography Contest”; the Portuguese Geoparks Webinar Cycle; creation of the Code of Conduct for Portuguese Geoparks; promotion of the training course “Geotourism by Geoparks”; joint promotion of these territories among social media platforms, through the creation of a communication working group; implementation of the Clean & Safe Seal (in the context of COVID-19) and the 100% Responsible Program in Geoparks; creation of the GEOfood Educational program for the schools and of GEOfood Itineraries; support to aspiring geoparks in Portugal; creation of a system of indicators to monitor tourist supply and demand in the Geoparks territories; promotion of Astro Tourism in Portuguese Geoparks. Also, through networking with the UNESCO National Commission and the Portuguese Geoparks, the Biennium for Climate Action project is being implemented. In what concerns these networking initiatives with the Portuguese UNESCO Global Geoparks, the Estrela UGGp has coordinated a set of projects, namely the creation of the educational program GEOfood, the programming and implementation of the training course “Geotourism by Geoparks” and the leadership of the Biennium for Climate Action. The Estrela UGGp is also responsible for the creation of all graphic material used by this network and, in 2023, will host the meeting of the Portuguese Geoparks Network.
- EGN Working Groups - the Estrela UGGp has integrated the EGN Communication, Geohazards and Youth Initiative working groups and has been working with the other geoparks in the groups to foster these areas at EGN.
- 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

With regard to the execution of the activities predicted in the Activities Plan and Budget of 2022, the

vast majority were executed during this year. Some of them, although still in execution in 2023, were started during the year in question. In the general overview, of all the activities planned in the Activity Plan and Budget of 2022, 85% were fully executed or are still in execution, although started in the year in question, leaving a small part not executed or postponed to 2023. By strategic area, the following execution rates were recorded:

- Geoconservation, Geological Heritage and Environment - 58%;
- Science and Investigation - 50%;
- Education and Training - 75%;
- Tourism and Sustainable Development - 59%;
- Communication, Promotion and Disclosure - 73%.

It should be noted that, although Estrela UGGp sets its own agenda, there are always actions and activities that arise during the year, requested by the municipalities, higher education institutions, members of the Partner Network and other entities, which are not foreseen when the Activities Plan and Budget is approved. Given the need to allocate members of the technical team to all accepted requests, this can explain the non-execution or postponement of activities to the following year.

With regard to the budget implementation, 32% of the total estimated revenue was executed. The volume of revenue is sustained, in a very significant way, by the contribution of the municipalities, whose amounts are provided for in the Memorandum of Understanding and in the Activities Plan and Budget for 2022, approved by the General Assembly. Similarly to the revenues, only part of the planned expenses were executed, at a rate of 44%. The value of these depends on the quantity of activities promoted by the Estrela Geopark Association or with its participation. It is visible the great weight of the costs with Human Resources, which sustain all the activity and work dynamics of the association, something without which it is impossible to maintain a UNESCO classification. Despite having fallen short of the forecast values, both in terms of revenue and expenditure, it was quite balanced. The value of actual revenue, to which is added that of invoices issued but not paid in 2022, was very close to that of expenditure.

Geoconservation

- Project “Covilhã Viewpoints Network” - this project implemented a series of interventions that improved the accessibility and viewer experience, providing tourists with better interpretation and attractive features that encourage them to stop and enjoy a unique landscape over Covilhã and Cova da Beira. Framed within the plan of Conservation, Protection and Development of the Natural and Cultural Heritage, through the Investment Priority 6.3 of the CIMBSE - Intermunicipal Community of Beiras and Serra da Estrela pact. The project intervened 4 geosites: Varanda dos Carqueijais viewpoint; Covão viewpoint; Alto dos Livros viewpoint; Piornos viewpoint.
- Seia river Walkways - in the municipality of Seia, the implementation of Seia river walkways helped promote the touristic and educational value of the Vila Verde granite landforms geosite.
- Mondego Walkways - in the municipality of Guarda, other important project in the last stages of implementation is the construction of the Mondego Walkways, which will proved better accessibility and interpretation to the geosites located along a sector on the headwaters of the Mondego river, namely: Mocho Real viewpoint; Giant fluvial kettles of Vila Soeiro; Alto Mondego heaps and scree; Meandres of the Alto Mondego; Trinta lithological contact; Metasediments of Videmonte. The construction of these walkways will also boost the touristic and educational value of these geosites significantly, which will enlarge the offer of the Estrela UGGp in what concerns touristic programs (for the Geopark partners) and educational programs.
- Visitor counters - as part of a research project, 2 digital visitor counters were installed in

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- Great Route of the Estrela Geopark - this route 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 an activity that has a slightly different focus: the local populations, and is more than just a pedestrian route. It was created to follow some of the trails that already existed in Serra da Estrela and from them, to start discovering its geological, natural and cultural heritage. So, it combines physical exercise, the enjoyment of nature and deepening the knowledge of the mountain's heritage.
- "Cycling with Science" comes at a later stage and with the help of the Partners Network, more precisely with Estrela Ebike, who challenged us to interpret the territory in a different way. Cycling through a mountainous territory may not be an easy task, but it is one of the most sustainable activities. Therefore, combining knowledge and sustainability, the possibility to ride an electric bike through this territory was created, promoting a unique and differentiating experience, and suitable for all age groups.
- "TRILHAR - Sustainability Paths" is one of the most recent activities fostered by the Estrela UGGp, in partnership with the Municipality of Manteigas. It consists of a set of walks that will have the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as their main theme, with interpretation provided not only by the staff of the Estrela UGGp, but also by researchers and experts in the SDGs.
- 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 (and one of the three that have international relevance). At the reception of this interpretive centre, there's a section dedicated to the exhibition and sale of GEOfood products from the Estrela UGGp, where 24 products from 8 different producers are currently promoted and sold.

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

- "GEOfood: Healthy diet in Portuguese UNESCO Global Geoparks" - the 5 Portuguese UGGp jointly created an educational program for the 1st and 2nd cycle of elementary school (children from 6 to 12 years old) related to the GEOfood label, to make children aware of the relation between geology, climate and local products. This program also promotes awareness for the importance of implementing environmentally friendly agriculture and also about local production and local consumption, regarding a healthy lifestyle and contributing to climate change mitigation.
- Biennium for Climate Action in the Portuguese Geoparks, which resulted from the joint effort of the 5 Portuguese UGGp, which aims at identifying and mitigating the main problems associated with climate change, through workshops, intergenerational exchange and fostering of the connection between research and the communities, thus enhancing the implementation of good adaptation practices, contributing locally to the achievement of SDG 13.

Strategic partnership

- Reinforcement of the partnerships with the municipalities, which reflects projects such as the Viewpoints Network in the Municipality of Covilhã, the presence and dynamization of activities in festivities in the Municipality of Manteigas, the recognition and application for approval of walking trails in the Municipality of Belmonte or the creation of interpretative information for the Mondego Walkways in the Municipality of Guarda.

- Establishment of the Network of Portuguese UNESCO Global Geoparks, reinforcing UNESCO Geoparks brand through the presence in international tourism fairs, the promotion of training courses on the subject of geoparks and sustainable development and through the contribution to governmental policies, as is the case of the Plano Turismo + Sustentável 20-23.
- The “Reforest Card” presents an important asset towards environmental restoration and in cementing the local economy through the promotion of local partners. It fosters a more sustainable tourism approach, seeking to develop products and strategies that take into account environmental, social and economic concerns.
- Since 2022, the Serra da Estrela Natural Park, as with other protected areas, is under a new co-management that includes not only the ICNF, but also the local municipalities and other entities. The Estrela UGGp is also part of the co-management of this natural park, helping 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.

Beyond these, the communication implemented by the municipalities and the tourism agencies also contains some information of the territory of the Estrela UGGp, thus contributing to the overall promotion of the territory. Also regular publications in the local newspapers are also a means to communicate the Estrela UGGp, with the goal of reaching out to the local populations and to disseminate the work promoted by the geopark in what concerns fields such as science, education and tourism, there has been a continuous work with the local newspapers. This means of communication allows it to reach a larger proportion of the population, since the older generations are less prone to use social media, but still use newspapers. Furthermore, this fulfills the objective of reaching out to the local populations through every available platform. Publications on the National Geographic Portugal magazine have also been a fixture, helping promote the territory and improve its attractiveness using one of the most renowned magazines.

The photography exhibitions promoted by the Estrela UGGp have also been an important asset in the promotion of the territory and its heritage, namely the “9 Olhares” (“9 Looks”) and the “Geosites of the Estrela Geopark” exhibitions.

Regarding monthly publications, the Estrela UGGp has been working with several media from the territory, creating this way a monthly collaboration with newspapers and radios from the 9 municipalities. Throughout the last months, this Geopark prepares and elaborates monthly publications about its work, focusing on the most diverse areas of study of this Geopark, from Geoconservation, Science, Education, Tourism and Communication.

At the same time, social media is one of the strongest promotional engines of the moment and in this sense the Estrela UGGp has been increasingly betting on its communication through this way, fostering the sense of belonging of the local populations and arousing the curiosity of its possible visitors/tourists. At this moment, the Estrela UGGp has a 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>) and Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/c/EstrelaGeopark>). In collaboration with the other UNESCO Global Geoparks in Portugal, social networks were created for the five UNESCO classified territories in Portugal, in order to strengthen the Geopark brand by reaching a wider audience.

The Estrela UGGp also continued to improve the contents of its mobile application dedicated to the

promotion of tourism and the valorisation of its tangible and intangible heritage: G.U.I.A.
(<https://www.guia-geoparkestrela.pt/>).

4. CONTACTS

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