

Output Factsheet

Output title:

4.1 Guideline for development of innovative GeoProducts

Summary of the output (max. 2500 characters)

The Output 4.1 Guideline for development of innovative geoProducts, being part of WP4, defines the geoproduct concept, explains its philosophy and shows how a geoproduct can be constructed. The geoproducts exemplified with some best practice geoproducts from the project partners and from other EGN member Geoparks.

The concept of geoproduct is a key element in the geopark's system, often associated with the Geopark's mission of socioeconomic development. The literature shows many examples and approaches of geoproducts, sometimes defined only as geological objectives. The need for setting some guidelines for defining a geoproduct is extended from this project to the European (EGN) and Global Geoparks Network (GGN) itself.

To better understand the definition, it was required to set the philosophical framework. The place of the geoproduct is at the intersection between the identity and the management axis, where local identity, local geodiversity, heritage management and marketing development meet. The 14 selected examples, suggested by the project partners, illustrate geoproducts in several stages of development. They range from interpretation centres and trails to food products and tourism activities.

The document is a result of inputs from partners with Geopark and is representing the base and a valuable tool for the creation of geoproducts in partner's geoparks within the Activity 4.1 for the D4.1.1 Practical guideline for innovative geoproducts including best practices. The conceptual partner discussion during the drafting of the guideline helped partners unify the common understanding of geoproducts and approach in further developing innovative products and services based on natural and cultural heritage.

Contribution to the project and Programme objectives (max. 1500 characters)

The Output 4.1. contributes to the 2nd Specific Programme Objective in Priority 2: Foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources as:

- It gives basis and guidelines for development of new innovative local products and services deriving from the sustainable use of specific natural and cultural heritage of participating geoparks as planned within WP4;
- It sets geological (Natural) and cultural elements in the centre of different geoproducts in order to strengthen the identity and added value of the geopark's local economy.
- It inspires and helps geopark managers to work with local residents and small businesses in developing new, sustainable and innovative geoproducts along the defined

Danube GeoTour“. In this way the concept of preservation and smart and sustainable use of natural and cultural values is spread across target groups of the geopark territories; The guideline was designed in close cooperation with geoparks professionals who in this way had the opportunity to learn and increase the skills in creating unique sustainable tourism products and services based on a Geopark’s specific heritage;

- The Guideline is in line with the draft strategy on management tourism pressures and the carrying capacity of each individual geopark territories. The geoproduct development shall also take in consideration the limits of the environment and heritage usage and the respective legislation.

Transnational impact (max. 1500 characters)

Output 4.1 has a significant direct and indirect transnational impact from several reasons:

- It provides uniform understanding and approach to creation of geoproducts within all participating partner geoparks. This shall lead to a certain level of unified offer in the Danube geoparks which in the future implies better visibility, co-branding of Danube geoparks as well as contributes to sustainable economic regional development across the Danube territories.
- The individual geoproducts and geoservices will consist the overall transnational tourism product Danube GeoTour which will be promoted transnationally.
- The guideline is available in English and will be freely accessible on the project website.

The need for setting similar guidelines for defining a geoproduct was extended and promoted from this project to the Global geoparks network (GGN).

Contribution to EUSDR actions and/or targets (max. 1500 characters)

The Output 4.1 contributes to the following EUSDR actions and targets:

PA3 “To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts”: by the definition geoproduct must have clearly defined identity and marketing axis. The guideline introduces a basic requirements that each geoproduct shall proof direct link to geology. Cultural identity is usually strongly connected to the geological assets therefore cultural heritage remains one of key sources of geoproducts in arts and crafts. (e.g. ceramics). On the other hand, geoproducts economic viability strongly relies on tourism marketing possibilities (geo-tourism).

PA6 “To preserve biodiversity, landscape and quality of air and soils”: through creation of geoproducts, partners indirectly preserve natural values, biodiversity and landscape by rising awareness of its heritage and giving it the added value. The guideline strictly emphasises the basic rule that it is strictly forbidden to sell minerals and fossils of/in geoparks.

PA10 “To step up institutional capacity and cooperation”: by learning together partners uniformed understanding of geoproduct which is also a precondition for the quality of the final Danube GeoTour. Furthermore, through creative process new ideas were born giving us completely different perspective in to geoproducts creation. And most important, the output gives a guideline and definition of a geo-product, that hasn’t been elaborated so far within the Danube geopark community.

Performed testing, if applicable (max. 1000 characters)

The draft guidelines for development of innovative geoproducts and definition of the geoproducts were presented and the proposed concepts and definitions discussed at the SCOM2 in Austria. Each PP with Geopark orally presented (in their opinion) existing examples of geoproducts. Each example was tested of having all components of the geoproduct against the proposed definition. In this way the definition was verified and better understood by participating partners.

In the coming periods, partners will in real environment initiate creative process following the set definition and other recommendations of the Output 4.1. Each of the project partners will demonstrate creation of at least one innovative geoproduct/geoservice from the set two overall areas: geoCulture and/or geoOutdoor. See also WP4, the Activity 4.4 Pilot actions: Demonstration of innovative geoproduct development as part of Danube GeoTour.

Integration and use of the output by the target group (max. 2000 characters)

At the moment, the output/guideline was exchanged within the partnership and is already in use of geopark staff for the presentation of the geoproduct concept to the potential target groups interested in creation of geoproducts. However, when published on the website, promoted in local geoparks as well as applied in daily operation, the Output document will be directly and also indirectly used by different target groups, as stated in the AF:

- 1) Local public Authorities might use the guidelines also for development of similar branded products in tourism or rural areas.
- 2) Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) shall use the conceptual recommendations while inventing and designing their geoproducts to be distinguished from other and competitive on the market.
- 3) Education/Training Centre and School, in particular vocational tourism and business schools can add the guideline as one of the learning materials in the marketing subjects.
- 4) General public will have free access to the results, however they will learn on geoproducts indirectly through communication and marketing activities of the concrete Products.
- 5) Interest Groups including NGOs, same as general public, will have free access to the guideline. The results might be in use for specialised interest groups dealing with geographical protection of agriculture products or similar associations gathered around of different typical traditional products or events.

Geographical coverage and transferability (max. 1500 characters)

The Output 4.1 geographically covers 6 countries in the Danube region. These represent territories of project partners with geoparks which also contributed 10 (out of 14) selected examples illustrating geoproducts which are found in levels of quality and of development. Additionally, the output brings in relevant cases from a Portugal ASP, EU wide leading geopark in geoproduct creation and marketing. The document includes also examples of geoproducts from United Kingdom and France.

Transferability of the Output 4.1. is possible to different organisations and providers, that are developing any kind of specific branded products, based on local geology, natural and cultural values, local tradition (identity) or specific territory, such as nature parks, historical sites, museums, tourist visitor centres, small interpretational sites, culinary providers, etc.

Through activities promoted by the guideline the Danube geoparks will practice a common approach which can be transferred to all EU geoparks. We should mention here again that membership of participating geoparks in the European and Global Geoparks Network, gives the partners the opportunity and obligation to share and disseminate the findings and guidelines on geoproduct creation to all members. The Global Geopark Network is part of the official UNESCO programme, namely International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme, which sets high standards for the quality of activities and also products and services in the geoparks.

Durability (max. 1500 characters)

The durability of the concepts, guidelines and conclusions compiled in the output 4.1. is assured through:

- The guideline document will be in use internally within individual geopark organisation in the process of geoproduct and geoservices design. With the definition and standardised approaches the disparities in specialised tourism offer between individual geopark within the Danube region and beyond can be reduced.
- The guidelines will be transferred to all organisations, dealing with creation of tourism or other territorial branded products (handicrafts, services, etc....).
- Our approach to geoproduct has already been shared with the European and Global Geoparks Network which is in the need of unifying the definition of geoproduct in general.
- The guidelines give the base for creation of products to be sold in the geoparks and as such can help SMEs to reach new target group and markets and assure economical durability. Set of diverse geoproduct and services will contribute to competitiveness and diversification of geoparks local economies.
- Integration of the new concepts in the implementing pilot actions. Newly developed innovative geoproduct development will form a final Danube GeoTour promoted also after the project by partners with geoparks.

Synergies with other projects/ initiatives and / or alignment with current EU policies/ directives/ regulations, if applicable (max. 1500 characters)

The Output 4.1. (the guideline for geoproduct development) has already build on synergies with other projects, policies and initiatives.

- Some partners in EU member countries established linkages with Local Action Groups for rural development in their territories in order to identify potential SMEs or search for best practices in product development and branding. On the other hand LAGs are potential funding source for future upgrading of geoproducts;

- Experiences and best practices were taken also from various projects supported by different EU funds nationally, such as Slovenian programme for Innovative tourism products and services promotion of SMEs;
- Geoproduct development in geoparks supports implementation of tourism strategies in our countries. For example, Slovenia is focusing its strategy on green, active and boutique products with more demanding visitors.
- The project partnership is considering possibilities of individual geoparks or Danube grouping as whole to apply to EC as EDEN (European Destination of Excellence). Further dialog will be necessary also with national tourism boards.
- The output results and, in particular its demonstration actions, will directly contribute to the objectives of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. Danube GeoTour project has been labelled as relevant project on culture for EYCH 2018 by the Programme, because it contributes to achieve objectives of the EYCH.

Output integration in the current political/ economic/ social/ technological/ environmental/ legal/ regulatory framework (max. 2000 characters)

Geoproduct development as presented in Output 4.1. is a creative process and thus as such it is not regulated. Nevertheless, the guideline emphasises consideration of certain regulations frameworks:

- Economic and technological frameworks: geoproducts shall be in line with general standards regulating individual type of product (e.g. geofood shall follow minimal hygienic and health requirements);
- Social frameworks: geoproducts and geoservices shall respect different potential users in particular pay attention to groups with special needs (e.g. geotours could be targeted to disabled people);
- Environmental frameworks and preservation aims serve as overall objective of any geoproduct development. Each geoproduct has to derive from geology but at the same time presser environment. Since all partner's geoparks are UNESCO designated territories and Natura 2000 sites, the Output 4.1 considers the UN Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the EU FFH- and Birds-Directive, the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and the Regional Programme on Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe.