

Output Factsheet

Output title: 6.1 Danube GeoTour Itineraries

Summary of the output (max. 2500 characters)

The 8 participating Geoparks are rich in geo-heritage and represent unique areas in the Danube region. The project partners have developed various geotourism products in line with the main aim of the project, utilising the treasures of the geoparks, including geological and geo-historical phenomena, areas of natural beauty, landscapes excellent for various outdoor leisure activities, cultural heritage and local products for sustainable tourism development. The recommended itineraries arranged along a common theme will incorporate these treasures in different combinations within and between participating geoparks that will attract international visitors.

The development of the proposed GeoTour Itineraries is primarily based on the itineraries recommended by the individual geoparks, the geo-products, and the GeoApp devised during the project. Additional information from the websites of the geoparks, related national parks, service providers, tourism destination management organisations and other tourism websites were also incorporated into the itineraries.

The proposed itineraries were designed along two aspects: the geographical proximity of the geoparks (creating territorial itineraries) and a common theme connecting the geoparks (thematic routes). Among the proposed itineraries there are four territorial ones and six types of thematic routes which cover the areas of geoculture, geocycling, geohiking, georrafting, geological and natural heritage.

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

The developed geotour itineraries contribute to the key objective of the project “Present geodiversity in a comprehensive, understandable and attractive way” as they are designed to present the geoparks’ natural and cultural assets in an attractive way, in line with the current consumer trends.

The itineraries build on the new sustainable geoproducts developed by the local communities and local businesses, utilizing the potential in natural and cultural values that characterise the geoparks.

By linking the geoparks either on a territorial basis or focusing on a specific topic, the itineraries enhance the geoparks’ visibility on an international level. The territorial linkage can raise the attention of the general public (leisure tourists), whereas the thematic itineraries can target professional organisations, including environmental agencies, sport enthusiasts and associations, academic institutions, and specialized travel agents as well.

Indirectly, the geotour itineraries contribute to the specific objective of the project "To strengthen transnational partnerships and establish joint marketing through the creation of joint Danube GeoTour using innovative digital concepts, creative marketing and collaboration tools". The itineraries linking the geoparks, advertised on the websites of the individual geoparks and on the Danube GeoTour website are subject to joint marketing and linkages are fostering collaboration as well among them.

Transnational impact (max. 1500 characters)

The objective of the WP6 is to ensure that Danube GeoTour and Danube Geoparks are visible, appreciated and recognized internationally – within the Danube programme region as well as within our own countries.

The GeoTour itineraries developed in the framework of the project have clear transnational impacts as they are designed to link the geoparks in the different countries. As the project proposal outlines, the participating geoparks are rather new but highly dedicated and open entities of the Danube territory. Each of them acts rather isolated in its emphasis for the promotion of geoheritage. The thematic itineraries are aiming to enhance their visibility through creating a focus that can be attractive to specific target groups which can potentially be reached easier than the general public, and fighting their isolation.

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

Output 6.1 contributes primarily to Priority Area 3 "To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts". Although the itineraries are not tourism products in the classical sense, the recommended sights and activities that they incorporate can clearly be considered as "green tourist products developed along the Danube Region". Furthermore, the various geoproducts were also developed by the project partners with the aim of contributing to the development of sustainable tourism destinations in the geoparks.

The itineraries were designed to "ensure the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage and natural values by developing relevant clusters, and networks of museums, interpretation and visitors centres within the Danube Region". The individual geoparks have developed products (tangible products as well as service products) with the aim of raising awareness of the rich cultural and natural heritage, whereas the itineraries help to strengthen the links among the geoparks, and foster networking among the tourism and other service providers within the Danube region.

Performed testing, if applicable (max. 1000 characters)

Not applicable during the project period

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

The proposed geotour itineraries can be aimed at the following target groups:

General public: the territorial and most of the themed itineraries were designed with the regional and international general public in mind, therefore they incorporate sites and activities of the geoparks that are perfect attractions for leisure tourists and day visitors. They can learn about these itineraries from the publications and websites of the geoparks and the nearby DMOs.

Local and regional destination management organisations (DMO): they can use the itineraries in attracting specific target groups and promoting geoparks as comprehensive and unique sustainable tourism destinations of the Danube region.

Local small and medium size enterprises: the themed itineraries shall bring into the region new visitors and specific target groups, therefore these may create a new demand and market for the products and services offered by the SMEs in and around the geoparks.

Academic institutions, and (mostly secondary) schools: the itineraries will help to raise awareness of the geo heritage in the Danube region, the shorter ones or sections of the longer itineraries (e.g. Historic Time Travel) may provide the basis for school trips and summer camps. Academic institutions can also incorporate the itineraries into their curricula; using the local heritage, geo heritage and sustainable product and destination development examples to support theory.

Professional organisations: some of the themed itineraries are designed to raise the interest of specific groups (Geo Culture, Historic Time Travel, Digging Deep). They organisations can use the itineraries for field trips focusing on a specific topic that fits with the theme of the itinerary.

Special interest groups: some of the itineraries are about setting challenges for specific audiences. Geo Triathlon, Tour de Geoparks and Into the Woods itineraries are designed to attract tourists keen on outdoor and nature activities, who can practice their favourite activities in the unique settings of the Danube Geoparks.

Geographical coverage and transferability (max. 1500 characters)

The Output 6.1 covers all the geoparks participating in the project. All the itineraries link at least two geoparks, in the case of the territorial ones the itineraries always connect two geopark and two countries, whereas the thematic itineraries may connect three (Geo Triathlon, Tour de Geoparks, Digging Deep) or even four geoparks (Historic Time Travel).

All the geoparks are incorporated into at least two itineraries.

The Output 6.1 is easily transferable to other geoparks, macro territories (e.g. Scandinavia, Alps) and potentially other rural destinations where there is rich natural and cultural heritage and where tourism services (attractions, (hiking and cycling) trails, visitor centres, tourist information centres as well as accommodation and catering services) are available. The itineraries were designed with touristic and special interests in focus, which may also motivate other areas to create linkages along a similar approach.

Durability (max. 1500 characters)

As outlined in the project proposal, the "Danube GeoTour is designed so that itineraries as

well as all promotional tools are independent of any new future institution or common management. Danube GeoTour provides only hints and positive images of Danube geoparks for those who visit individual Geopark websites. This can last for several years and be run by each Geopark independently. All Danube Geopark contact points already exist in Geopark Managements and info centres.”

The itineraries comprise sites that have already been functioning as tourist attractions, cycling and hiking trails that have already been designated and used by tourists, and some activities that have already been on offer in the various geoparks. Therefore these elements do not rely on a partnership which lasts only for the duration of the project. The geoproducts developed by the project partners have also been incorporated into the itineraries, which were developed with a long term vision and with sustainability in mind. The tangible products (e.g. Idrija Lace) can be used to widen the range of local products (and souvenirs) offered in local stores, tourist information centres, visitors centres and at events that takes place in the geoparks.

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

The Output 6.1. has already built on synergies with other projects, policies and initiatives.

- The geoproducts and itineraries of individual geoparks comply with the individual tourism destination strategies or plans. As such can be integrated also in current destination and national promotional campaigns and take advantage of marketing synergies.
- For example, in Slovenia Idrija and Karavanke UNESCO Geopark products comply with the Slovenia Green Destination concept. Similarly, Austrian geoparks support the sustainable tourism goals at country as well a county level. The development of product “GeoArt” was connected with activities of the past project »Stories of Hands and Villages« managed by the Development centre of the Heart of Slovenia, and co- financed by European Regional Development Fund, with purpose to create a more favourable environment for the preservation and development of handicrafts in Slovenia. Geoproduct development in the Papuk UNESCO Global Geopark supports the implementation of the national tourism development in Croatia “The strategy for development of tourism of the Republic of Croatia until 2020”.
- Furthermore, the proposed itineraries promote products and services not only developed and funded within the DanubeGeoTour project but also within other programmes such as LEADER CLLD programmes, cross-border programmes or European cohesion policy 2014-2020 programmes.
- All in all, the proposed itineraries as a final joint transnational product aim to enhance the competitiveness of EU tourism sector and complement actions of the Member States which is an overall objective of the EU tourism policy. In particular the itineraries reflect the priorities: Sustainable and responsible tourism and internationalisation/ Global Competition (promote Destination Europe).

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

Political framework: Not relevant.

Economic framework: The geoproducts developed by the project partners have been incorporated into the itineraries, which were developed with economic sustainability in mind. The tangible products (e.g. Idrija Lace) can be used to widen the range of local products (and souvenirs) offered in local stores, tourist information centres, visitors centres and at events that takes place in the geoparks. All these products were designed in line with the local/national economic regulatory framework.

The themed itineraries can reach specific new target groups, therefore these may create a new market for the products and services offered by the SMEs in and around the geoparks, therefore may act as tools of economic and regional development.

Social framework: The geoproducts and geoservices that provide the bases of the itineraries shall respect different potential users in particular pay attention to groups with special needs. The products and services were designed with the involvement of, or individually by local SMEs, service providers, which contributes to social sustainability.

Technological framework: The GeoApp developed by the project partners is a great supporting tool for the itineraries. The application based on the gamification tool enables users to explore the area of geoparks and discover their unique natural and cultural heritage.

Environmental framework: Environmental frameworks and preservation aims serve as overall objective of any geoproduct development, which for the basis of the itineraries. Each geoproduct derives from geology but at the same time they preserve the environment. Since all partner's geoparks are UNESCO designated territories and Natura 2000 sites, the geoproducts of Output 4.1, on which the itineraries build, consider 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.

Legal framework: The tangible geoproducts (e.g. geofood, geoart) and geoservices incorporated into the itineraries were developed in line with the health and safety requirements, regulatory framework.