

Paper Number: 4532

## **UNESCO Chair “Geoparks, Regional Sustainable Development and Healthy Lifestyles”:** an innovative tool for capacity building in geoparks

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In the framework of the new International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP), on February 2016, the UNESCO Chair “Geoparks, Regional Sustainable Development and Healthy Lifestyles”, established by the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (Portugal) was approved by UNESCO. The proposed domains of this UNESCO Chair, particularly those that support the theme - Geoparks, sustainable regional development and healthy lifestyles - comply with multiple national and international priorities. In this sense, they are in line with UNESCO's priorities, in particular with the Earth Sciences Programmes and its motto "Geosciences in the Service of Society". Also, the new "UNESCO Global Geoparks" Programme attests the importance and timeliness of this Chair. Moreover, the holistic approach, whose current implementation is a requirement of the management entities of the territories classified as geoparks, implies approaches able to address the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development [1], reaffirming the founding principles of UNESCO.

More specifically, the focus of this Chair, in cooperation with higher education institutions of Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP) and of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), will contribute to the creation of an academic and scientific cooperation platform capable of strengthening a worldwide dialogue, stimulating cooperation and partnerships, with particular emphasis on capacity building for the establishment and effective implementation of new geoparks in these continents. In this context, this UNESCO Chair aims to: *i*) provide training and access to scientific resources by promoting the exchange of students and researchers between partner institutions; *ii*) improve scientific knowledge concerning the creation and management of new geoparks; *iii*) make use of digital tools for faster and more effective knowledge-transfer; *iv*) implement actions that include training, exchange of human resources, research and development initiatives, as well as the achievement of sustainable development projects, annual scientific meetings, and publications.

In conclusion, this innovative UNESCO Chair provides an opportunity to build the capacity of its participants and beneficiaries, playing a crucial role in stimulating scientific collaboration and networking within PALOP and LAC countries and the international community involved in the creation and implementation of geoparks worldwide.

*References:*

[1] <http://www.unesco.org>

