



## UNESCO Global Geoparks

### Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geopark Field Inspection Missions Evaluations & Revalidations

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidance for evaluation and revalidation missions on behalf of UNESCO for UNESCO Global Geoparks for the evaluators as well as for the inviting areas. The evaluation activities will be conducted in line with the principles and procedures established by UNESCO for professional and technical performance, which should be acknowledged by the evaluators.

These guidelines follow the experience provided by the several similar evaluation processes within the existing UNESCO programmes, and other relevant initiatives such as the IUCN 'Suggestions for conduct for field inspections' for the World Heritage Natural sites and previous experience within the UNESCO Global Geoparks, and the Global Geoparks Network (GGN).

Field evaluators as well as the areas to be evaluated/revalidated, respectively invited should follow the present guidelines, in order to properly prepare, organize and carry out the field inspection visits and permit evaluators to carry out missions in a safe and efficient manner.

## 2. EVALUATION / REVALIDATION

### 2.1. The Procedure

**Data Assembly.** The UNESCO Global Geoparks Secretariat at UNESCO HQ, Paris, checks new application dossiers for completeness. Once the Secretariat validates that applications are complete, the dossiers are assigned and sent to two selected evaluators. This is done through electronic data files. For revalidation missions the original application dossier, previous field mission reports, and the current self-evaluation document will be made available to the field evaluators prior to the revalidation mission for easy reference.

**Field Inspection.** Evaluation/revalidation missions should be undertaken by two evaluators who are sent to the area and meet with the management body of the (proposed) UNESCO Global Geopark and the relevant national and local authorities as well as stakeholders and local communities.

The facts stated in the application dossier are verified in-situ in cooperation with the manager(s) of the applicant or the UNESCO Global Geopark. Sufficient time must be built into the itinerary to allow for a detailed examination and verification of the content of the self-evaluation form. The evaluation/revalidation mission programme, itinerary and detailed agenda must be shared and agreed between the area to be evaluated/revalidated, the evaluators and the UNESCO Secretariat at least four weeks before the mission. During the mission, it is mandatory that the evaluators go through the self-evaluation form together with the local personnel and discuss each point. The evaluators give advice for improvement etc. **but do not give any indication on the decision of the mission.** For revalidation missions, the procedure is similar. The mission evaluators verify the details given in the Revalidation Reports which consist of a comprehensive report highlighting special progress, advancements and success stories of the UNESCO Global Geopark, Document B (self-evaluation progress document) well as Document A (corresponds to the original self-evaluation).

The two evaluators must ensure that they are present together for the entire duration of the field inspection. It is not acceptable that one evaluator is left alone for any part of the mission because the other evaluator has to rush off somewhere else. Further to this, both evaluators **MUST** share the job of preparing the report equally! The report must be prepared in English or French and follow the template distributed by the UNESCO Global Geoparks Secretariat.

It should be understood by those who conduct field evaluation missions and the applying/revalidating area that decisions are not taken at the time of the mission. Under **no circumstances** can the field evaluation team give any indication to the inviting area on the probable outcome of the mission. The field evaluation reports will be discussed by the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council (September each year) and a final endorsement of the decisions of the Council for new applications will be done only by the UNESCO Executive Board (each following Spring session).

**Visa and insurance.** The evaluators are responsible for obtaining any visa if needed for travelling and the purchase of travel insurance, which will be necessary in case of

accident or illness. At the time of the acceptance of the mission, a valid proof of the insurance will be required by UNESCO to certify that the evaluators are fully covered for sickness and accidents throughout the duration of the mission. UNESCO cannot, under any circumstance be held responsible for, or reimburse any costs associated with, any sickness or accidents that may occur during the mission.

## **2.2. The Field Assessment**

The report of the field assessment is one part of the final technical evaluation. The field evaluation report will be sent to UNESCO Secretariat and made available to the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council for review. The report should always contain recommendations for the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council as well as practical advice for the applicant/revalidating UNESCO Global Geopark. Even 'green-card' UNESCO Global Geoparks have room for improvement. In determining the relative importance of UNESCO Global Geopark sites, the **criteria** of a UNESCO Global Geopark as stated in the operational guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks should be kept in mind.

## **2.3. The Role of the Evaluators**

UNESCO Global Geopark assessments are carried out by two evaluators. Evaluators are chosen from the official "Roster of Evaluators". In accordance with the Statutes of the International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP) and the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, UNESCO in conjunction with the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) maintains this roster of evaluators who undertake field evaluations of new applications for aspiring UNESCO Global Geoparks and revalidation missions of established UNESCO Global Geoparks. These evaluators have combined and proven professional experience relevant for UNESCO Global Geoparks development (geological heritage, conservation, sustainable development, tourism development and promotion, and environmental issues), their general familiarity with the UNESCO Global Geoparks' Operational Guidelines and for the global perspective they can bring to bear on the individual area. Evaluators serve in their personal capacity, not as representatives of their respective States or any other affiliated entities. The UNESCO Secretariat and the GGN will ensure that evaluators have no conflict of interest regarding new UNESCO Global Geopark applications or those requiring revalidation. Evaluators will not seek or accept instructions from governments or other authorities and will not conduct missions in their own country.

The role of the evaluators is to provide technical and advisory services on:

- ◆ Evaluation of new applications;
- ◆ Monitoring and revalidating the status of existing UNESCO Global Geoparks;
- ◆ Participation in training and technical workshops;
- ◆ Management of information;
- ◆ Communication and promotion activities;
- ◆ Advice on international assistance; and
- ◆ General standard setting on UNESCO Global Geopark management and development.

The field review is one component of the evaluation process but has an important and often a high profile with media attention and meetings with high-level officials. Consequently, there is a need to be knowledgeable and able to articulate clearly a basic description about UNESCO Global Geoparks concept, and the overall relevant governance and institutional arrangements.

The main objectives of assessment of aspiring areas or existing UNESCO Global Geopark are to: (1) become familiar with all aspects of the area; (2) review the application, self-evaluation, and other documents of the application dossier, or, for the revalidations, progress report, progress evaluation form and other documents related to the revalidation; (3) carefully review boundaries, threats and management and; (4) to provide constructive commentary and recommendations as and where appropriate.

It is important that the evaluators acknowledge that he/she is there in an independent advisory capacity only. Decisions on the suitability of the area for the UNESCO Global Geopark designation **are not made during the field visit** and the report of the field mission is only submitted to the UNESCO Secretariat to be distributed to UNESCO Global Geoparks Council. The need to be impartial should not be compromised. The evaluators should be aware of the appropriate ethical and cultural considerations that protocol demands.

## **2.4. Logistics**

Logistical arrangements for field visits are done directly through the applying/revalidating UNESCO Global Geopark. The host will be asked to prepare an itinerary in close consultation with both evaluators and make local travel arrangements and communicate those to the UNESCO (as appropriate) and the evaluators in advance (at least 4 weeks before the mission takes place). The applying/revalidating area covers costs of a field mission for both experts. This includes travel to and from the candidate or UNESCO Global Geopark area, travel within the UNESCO Global Geopark area, all accommodation and food associated with the mission and any further costs incurred by the evaluators such as visa, airport hotel costs, parking, etc. No professional fee is payable to the evaluators and none must be accepted.

The evaluators should be adequately equipped for the trip and will have studied in advance the application or revalidation documents and be supplied with basic references and promotional documents on the area concerned.

The evaluators are voluntarily performing a professional duty and thus should not be accompanied by any other person than UNESCO Global Geopark Evaluators or approved observers, during the field mission.

### 3. NOTES ON ETHICS AND CODE OF CONDUCT

The following is a short, random checklist of tips collected from past experience in conducting evaluations.

**Gifts.** It is good for public relations that the evaluators bring along small tokens of appreciation, and, if applicable, something from their own UNESCO Global Geopark. A thank-you letter at the end of the mission is also a customary gesture.

It is also customary that some host territories present small gifts or tokens of welcome and appreciation to the evaluators. It is understood that evaluators must not be covered in expensive gifts and that these gifts should not have any significant value. No payment must be accepted while on mission for UNESCO.

**Family.** While evaluation/revalidation missions may appear to provide an opportunity to bring family members on an overseas trip, please note that such mission is an important piece of professional work and that no one other than approved evaluators and observers should be on these missions. Family members may join an evaluator after the mission is completed but all costs must be borne by the evaluator and not the host area. **Under no circumstances can any extra costs whatsoever be borne by the host area .**

**Be Prepared.** Have adequate field clothes, camera equipment, (rainwear, and first aid essentials.

**Be Tough.** UNESCO Global Geopark evaluators are not going to a “Rotary Club meeting” and are not there to win a popularity contest. Let it be known that in order to keep high level of quality, missions require evaluators to be "strict." Insist to see sites, which seem important to them and may not be on the visiting plan.

**Be Diplomatic.** The role of evaluators is advisory only – it is the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council and the UNESCO Executive Board that deliberate on membership. The "politics" of the case should be left up to them.

**Be Open.** There are always more than two sides to a story and two opinions on a site. Arrive with an open mind and without reconceived judgements. Evaluators must receive views from all sectors and sides in forming a balanced judgement in the end.

**Be Constructive.** Every territory has its warts and its problems. Every manager is open to advice. Evaluators can often be of great assistance to the area by sharing with them experiences and by including concrete recommendations in the evaluation/revalidation report. Indeed, no report is complete without making constructive observations.

**Be Global.** Looking at an aspiring area or a UNESCO Global Geopark in isolation will usually lead to a positive recommendation. Evaluators must take a global view and their perspective must extend beyond the national scale, including the view on networking perspective.

**Beware.** There are hazards to watch out for. A serious warning is needed on the media who can be canny in soliciting statements that can then show up the next day in embarrassing headlines. Although it is appropriate to respond to media enquiries, the assessment team as well as the inviting area needs to be guarded in any public pronouncements. Evaluators can sometimes receive strong pressure from media (TV, radio, newspapers) requesting interviews and your 'feelings'. Give interviews to any media only provided evaluators have clear agreement with the Geopark management and provide only general feedback of the evaluated/revalidated area and don't make any comment concerning the decision which may be taken by the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council.

It is also useful to feel the pulse on the motivation for an area applying for becoming a UNESCO Global Geopark. In some cases, "getting the label" and promotion of tourism is the primary motivation. In others, the motivation may be used inappropriately to help prevent a development threat to a geological heritage site of local importance. Unless the applying UNESCO Global Geopark clearly meets the criteria, such cases should be closely scrutinised.

**Be careful.** Missions must be organized and carried out guaranteeing maximum of safety by protecting participants against hazards (unintentional accidents) as well as providing maximum security against any state of deliberate and intentional threats. Evaluators must not accept dangerous or hazardous tasks or itineraries beyond a reasonable level a "normal" family-geotourist would take. Field inspections must not take the form of survival training and the hosting Geopark must make sure nobody is taking unnecessary risk. (In case of UNESCO staff travelling, the UN Department of Safety and Security provides guidance related to the security management for travels. The UN employs five specific phases to describe those security measures to be implemented based on the prevailing security conditions in a given country. All UN staff must obtain security clearance prior to missions and, in the case of a security phase in place, the host governmental focal points for safety and security will cooperate on security matters with the UN staff travelers as well as the inviting host areas.)

#### **4. UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARKS CODE OF ETHICS FOR UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR**

In the UNESCO Global Geoparks spirit of peace, prosperity, inclusion, sustainability, learning and empowerment, the UNESCO Global Geoparks aim to enable every man, woman and child to live in dignity and personal integrity, and to promote a set of basic principles that form the ethical and philosophical underpinnings of every society. These guiding principles are integrity, loyalty, accountability, transparency, independence, impartiality, tolerance, understanding, freedom from discrimination, gender equality, dignity and respect for different customs and cultures.

The UNESCO Global Geoparks promote a safe, inclusive, productive and supportive environment. All individuals involved in the UNESCO Global Geoparks, the host areas as well as the experts are expected to abide a strict code of conduct. Individuals who

experience inappropriate behaviour are encouraged to make a formal complaint to the UNESCO Geoparks Secretariat.

**Unacceptable Behaviour:** is behaviour that has created or has the potential to create a risk to the health and safety of individuals covered by this procedure. Unacceptable behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- bullying;
- emotional, psychological or physical violence or abuse;
- discrimination;
- coercion;
- aggressive/abusive behaviour;
- abuse of power;
- unreasonable demands and undue persistence;
- harassment (including sexual harassment);
- victimisation;
- vilification; and
- permitting, assisting or encouraging others to bully, discriminate, harass, victimise or vilify.