



TRANSNATIONAL
GEOPARKS
WORKING GROUP



3819/2020

COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN TRANSNATIONAL UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARKS

Parties

This Agreement is entered into by and between

Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark located in Republic of Ireland & U.K. (Northern Ireland)
represented by **Gráinne O Connor, Manager,**

and

Novohrad-Nógrád UNESCO Global Geopark located in **Slovakia & Hungary**
represented by (authorized by Ms. Ildikó Sándor and Mr. dr. Attila Agócs co-directors) **Ms. Györgyi Zachar, special envoy with a specific mandate,**

and

Muskauer Faltenbogen / Łuk Mużakowa UNESCO Global Geopark located in **Germany & Poland**
represented by **Nancy Sauer, director of the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) Ltd. Geopark Muskau Arch,**

and

Karawanken-Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark located in **Austria & Slovenia**
represented by **Gerald Hartmann, director of the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) Ltd. Geopark Karawanken,**

and

Schelde Delta UNESCO Global Geopark located in **Belgium & the Netherlands**
represented by **Walter Jonkers, Coordinator,**

hereinafter collectively referred to as "the Parties."

PREAMBLE

The Parties acknowledge that geology, landscapes, natural and cultural heritage do not recognize artificial political borders. Nature is shaped by geological, ecological, and landscape boundaries such as rivers, mountain ranges, and ecosystems that transcend human-drawn political divisions. Transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks embody this fundamental reality and demonstrate how human communities can join forces across national boundaries to preserve shared heritage through synergized sustainable regional development. Existing transnational Geoparks have proven themselves as successful models for peacebuilding, community cohesion, and cross-border cooperation—assisting in healing historical wounds while creating common means to protect shared geological heritage and enhance the wellbeing of local populations. UNESCO actively supports the establishment of such transnational Geoparks, recognizing that scientific, cultural, developmental, and



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educational links across borders bring people closer together, enrich contemporary life, and foster territorial cooperation among stakeholders from different countries. Guided by these principles and inspired by the achievements of transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks worldwide, the Parties hereby establish this framework for sustained collaboration aimed at preserving their contiguous geological heritage, strengthening bilateral relations, and improving quality of life for communities on both sides of the border.

Article 1: Object and Purpose

1.1 Subject Matter This Agreement establishes the framework for comprehensive cooperation between the Parties regarding the joint management, promotion, and development of their contiguous or related geological heritage as a unified transboundary region.

1.2 Primary Objectives Within the framework of this Agreement and, where appropriate, in cooperation with the Transnational UNESCO Global Geopark Working Group and the wider Global Geoparks Network, the Parties shall to the best of their abilities support the following objectives:

1. **Heritage Preservation** — Joint protection and conservation of shared geological features, landscapes, and biodiversity that naturally extend across the border.
2. **Knowledge Exchange & Capacity Building** — Systematic exchange of methods, best practices, and operational models between the two Geoparks, including documentation and dissemination of successful approaches for transboundary management.
3. **Peacebuilding & Community Cohesion** — Strengthening relationships between countries through cultural and educational exchanges, contributing to reconciliation in regions with historical conflict.
4. **Sustainable Regional Development** — Joint training programmes for regional and municipal policymakers and stakeholders from all four participating countries, facilitating dialogue on coordinated sustainable development strategies and enabling the discovery of innovative cross-border solutions beyond conventional administrative approaches.
5. **Scientific Collaboration** — Developing joint methodological frameworks for cross-border research through regular scientist exchanges, shared monitoring protocols, collaborative field studies, and co-authored publications that advance understanding of transboundary geological and ecological systems.
6. **Quality of Life Improvement** — Enhancing living conditions for residents through improved infrastructure, tourism opportunities, and institutional cooperation.
7. **UN SDGs & Youth Education** — Advancing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) principles, creating youth engagement programmes, and supporting participatory processes that empower younger generations to contribute to cross-border heritage stewardship.

Article 2: Cooperation Structures

2.1 Existing Framework The Parties agree to utilise existing structures and meeting schedules of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) and European Geoparks Network (EGN) to avoid unnecessary administrative burden. This includes the Transnational UNESCO Global Geopark Working Group affiliated with the GGN, in which each Geopark has appointed one representative. Additional representatives may participate when topics or circumstances require broader involvement.

2.2 Regular Meetings The Parties shall meet at least twice annually within the framework of existing network events:



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- Once during the Coordination Committee Meeting of the European Geoparks Network (EGN)
- Once during the annual conference of the GGN (in odd-numbered years) and the EGN (in even-numbered years)

All regular cooperation meetings between the two Parties shall take place in connection with these scheduled events.

2.3 Additional Project Meetings When initiating or implementing joint projects, or when identifying matters that specifically concern both Geoparks alone, the Parties may convene additional meetings beyond the regular schedule, including online sessions, as required for effective cooperation.

2.4 Decision-Making

- Consensus-based approach for substantive decisions
- Administrative matters shall be governed by the respective statutes or agreements of each transnational Geopark; such governing decisions shall be communicated to the other Party
- All official communications and documentation shall be conducted in English

2.5 Project-Specific Bodies Additional working groups or committees shall only be established if expressly required for specific joint projects between the two Geoparks. Such project-specific bodies shall have clearly defined mandates, timeframes, and dissolve upon completion of their assigned tasks.

Article 3: Financial and Personnel Resources

3.1 Financial Responsibilities Each Party shall bear its own costs arising from the cooperation within its respective territory unless otherwise agreed. A joint budget is not required for the general cooperation under this Agreement. Financial resources specifically needed for joint projects shall be negotiated and documented in a separate project agreement.

3.2 Funding Sources for Joint Projects For specific joint projects beyond routine cooperation, the Parties may jointly pursue funding from the following sources:

- National government grants and bilateral cooperation agreements
- European Union cross-border cooperation programs (where applicable)
- UNESCO Global Geoparks Network support mechanisms
- Private foundations supporting heritage preservation and peacebuilding
- Sustainable tourism revenue sharing arrangements

3.3 Personnel Resources Each Party shall provide and finance the personnel resources necessary to fulfil its obligations under this Agreement, including staff (or nominated representative) for participation in meetings, working groups, and coordination activities. There shall be no central funding or cost-sharing for routine cooperation activities unless specified in a separate project agreement.

3.4 Financial Transparency All financial commitments undertaken by either Party shall be transparent and documented internally. For joint projects governed by separate agreements, external audits shall be conducted every three years or upon request by either Party, and financial statements shall be accessible to relevant authorities and stakeholders.

Article 4: Duration and Termination

4.1 Initial Term This Agreement enters into force upon signature by authorized representatives of both Parties and shall remain valid for an initial period of five (5) years.

4.2 Renewal

- Automatic renewal for successive five-year periods unless either Party provides written notice of termination at least twelve (12) months prior to expiration



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- Mid-term evaluation at year three to assess progress and adjust terms if necessary

4.3 Termination Conditions Either Party may terminate this Agreement under extraordinary circumstances including:

- Fundamental change in border status affecting the Geopark's continuity
- Loss of UNESCO Global Geopark designation by either Party
- Force majeure events preventing meaningful cooperation

4.4 Post-Termination Obligations Upon termination, both Parties shall continue protecting shared heritage sites and maintain data integrity for scientific purposes.

Article 5: Final Provisions

5.1 Legal Framework This Agreement does not affect sovereign rights or alter international borders. All activities shall comply with applicable national laws and international obligations of both Parties.

5.2 Duration and Termination This Agreement enters into force upon signature and remains valid for an initial period of five (5) years, automatically renewing for successive five-year periods unless either Party provides written notice of termination at least twelve (12) months prior to expiration. Either Party may terminate this Agreement for material breach or loss of UNESCO Global Geopark designation.

5.3 Amendments Modifications to this Agreement require written consent from both Parties and shall be documented as formal addenda.

5.4 Project Agreements Specific joint projects initiated under this framework shall be governed by separate agreements that define scope, budget, timeline, and deliverables. Such project agreements shall take precedence over general provisions where explicitly stipulated.

5.5 Confidentiality The Parties shall treat sensitive information exchanged during cooperation confidentially in accordance with applicable data protection regulations.

5.6 Language This Agreement shall be executed in English. In case of discrepancy between language versions, the English version shall prevail.

Signatures

for Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark



Gráinne O'Connor
Manager

for Novohrad-Nógrád UNESCO Global Geopark



Ms. Györgyi Zachar
(authorized by Ms. Ildikó Sándor and Mr. dr. Attila Agócs co-directors),
special envoy with a specific mandate,



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for Muskauer Faltenbogen / Łuk Mużakowa UNESCO Global Geopark

Joanna Malon
Chair of the Assembly

Nancy Sauer
Director

for Karawanken-Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark

Gerald Hartmann
Director

Suzana Fajmut-Strucl
President of the Scientific Board

for Schelde Delta UNESCO Global Geopark

Walter Jonkers
Coordinator

Lappeenranta, the 17th of September 2026



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Annexes (to be completed)

- *Annex A: Map delineating the transboundary Geopark area*
- *Annex B: Contact Details of Designated Liaison Officers and Technical Staff to facilitate direct exchange between technical departments and streamline operational cooperation including*

Name

Professional Responsibility/Area of Expertise

Telephone Number

Email Address