

Operational Guidelines for transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks

Because nature is shaped by geological, ecological and landscape boundaries, rivers, mountain ranges, oceans and deserts, the borders of transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks do not follow the ones artificially drawn by people. Currently four* transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks naturally cross those national borders, connecting people of different countries, and open up multiple possibilities for promoting connections between the partner countries through strong cross-border cooperation encouraging connections and activities. UNESCO actively supports the creation of transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks – especially in regions of the world where there are none yet.

Transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks strengthen the relationship between countries and contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the true spirit of the UNESCO mandate. Active scientific, cultural, developmental, and educational cross-border links play an important part in this, making people closer, enable exchanges between different cultures and enrich the lives of modern-day people. The cooperation among the region's municipalities and institutions aims to improve the quality of life for the people living on both sides of the border. Transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks are about territorial cooperation and association of stakeholders across borders, bringing the advantage to open new opportunities for cross-border cooperation and exchange, while potentially boosting the region's development.

In 2008, the Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark expanded from Northern Ireland across the border into the Republic of Ireland, becoming the world's first transnational UNESCO Global Geopark. Situated in a former conflict area, this UNESCO Global Geopark is now seen as a global model for peacebuilding and community cohesion. The transnational Novohrad-Nógrád UNESCO Global Geopark was established in 2010 between Hungary and Slovakia, in a region, that was broken into two halves during the last century, artificially separating communities and dividing landscapes by a political border. The Geopark movement has inspired enthusiastic locals on both sides of the frontier, who constructed the transnational Geopark, building on the rich geological, cultural and biological heritage of the area.

FAQs for Transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks:

What is the Application Procedure for a transnational UNESCO Global Geopark?

The application procedure for a Transnational UNESCO Global Geopark is the same as for a national UNESCO Global Geopark, described in Section 5 of the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geopark. However, the additional challenge is that both areas have to be equally represented.

The only difference for a transnational application is that more than one UNESCO Member States are involved in the Geopark development, preparation and proposal submission process. The expression of interest and the application dossier including supporting material to demonstrate that the area has already been functioning as a de facto Global Geopark for at least one year, must be jointly prepared by the management bodies of the aspiring transnational UNESCO Global Geopark in the different countries constituting the application area. It must be submitted by the National Commissions for UNESCO, or the government bodies in charge of relations with UNESCO of the concerned Member States, involving, if applicable, their National Geoparks Committees.

This jointly prepared application file should be accompanied by an explicit endorsement of any relevant local and regional authorities and a letter of support from the National Commissions for UNESCO or the government bodies in charge of relations with UNESCO of the involved Member States.

As per the Statutes and Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, the number of "active" applications is limited to two per Member State. An application for a Transnational UNESCO Global Geopark counts as 1 active application for each involved Member State. An application is considered "active" upon receipt of the dossier by the UNESCO Secretariat and ceases to be active once a final decision is made regarding its designation as a UNESCO Global Geopark, or if the application is suspended. Only applications from UNESCO Member States will be considered for designation as a transnational UNESCO Global Geopark.

During all steps of the application process, like the findings of the field evaluation mission, the outcome of the decisions of the Council, and the endorsement by the UNESCO Executive Board, the UNESCO Secretariat will involve the main national contact points in all communications with the aspiring transnational UNESCO Global Geopark.

What are the application criteria for a transnational UNESCO Global Geopark?

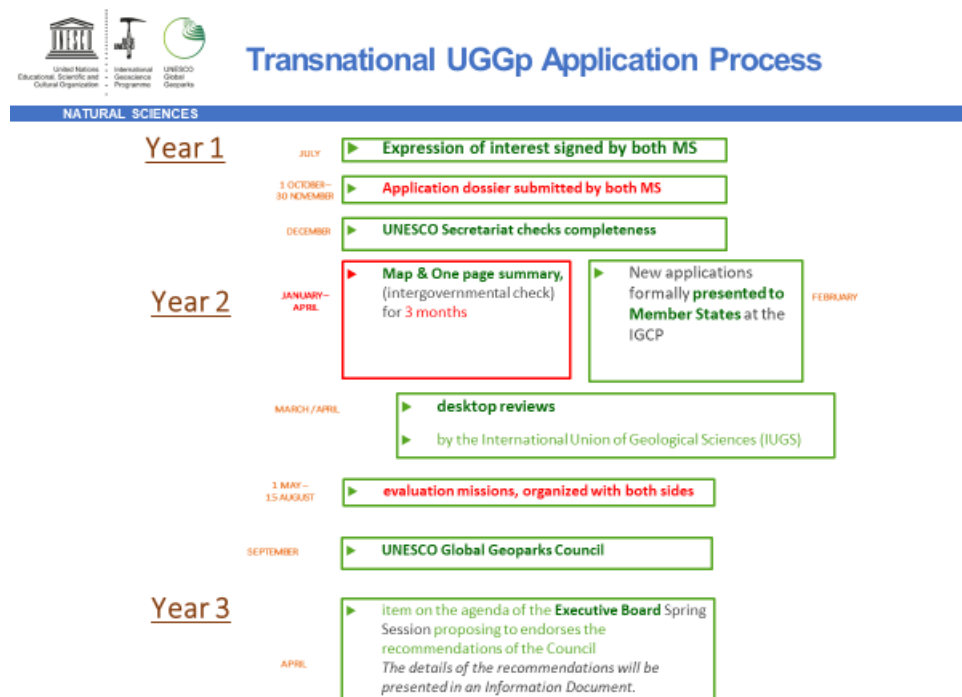
A transnational UNESCO Global Geopark must respond to the same criteria as for any UNESCO Global Geopark, as described in Section 3 of the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, introducing the brand UNESCO Global Geopark as a label of excellence for areas that meet the criteria set by the above mentioned guidelines and that the different national areas involved must present a balanced distribution in important features.

UNESCO together with the GGN has developed a checklist for aspiring areas available online (very soon), which is also valid for transnational candidates. It is a quick and clear-cut self-evaluation check on a traffic light color-code scoring on which aspiring transnational UGGPs can check whether it fulfills the quality criteria for UNESCO Global Geopark candidates as set out in the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks (Section 3 viii).

A transnational UNESCO Global Geopark must fulfill the criteria in more than one country in order to be accepted. Such criteria are for example to feature a single unified territory and that they can demonstrate that the area has already been functioning as a de facto Global Geopark for at least one year (Section 3 and 5.2 of the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks). It is also important that the management bodies of the different national parts work together on a joint visibility strategy, based on a common Geopark identity and common Geopark work and actions. There is need to establish infrastructure for the entire territory to allow for geotourism activities, including free passage of visitors, and possibilities for cross-border sustainable development. In addition to these common actions and measures, each national partner could develop national focused activities in parallel.

What is the time-line for an application?

There are no separate rules for transnational UNESCO Global Geopark applications in the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks. The same rules apply as for a national UNESCO Global Geoparks. This means that the Secretariat must receive a letter of intent prior to receiving the application file. In this case, both documents have to be submitted jointly by the concerned Member States. The application file has to be received between 1 October and 30 November of any given year. It will be put up for intergovernmental check for a grace period of 3 months in spring of the next year. If no objections are received, it will be evaluated and considered by the UGGP Council in the same year.



Example for a transnational UNESCO Global Geopark between two countries.

Are there specific conditions for the management of a transnational UNESCO Global Geopark?

A Transnational UNESCO Global Geopark can have two (in case of two involved Member States) different management bodies or one single management body. There is no preference, the only requirement is that the management body(ies) “having legal existence recognized under national legislation. The management bodies should be appropriately equipped to adequately address the area of the UNESCO Global Geopark in its entirety.” (cf. Statutes and Operational Guidelines of the IGGP). This means that for each Transboundary UGGp there is a common structure where the two Management structures meet on a regular basis to discuss a common strategy, set up joint activities, design one website in the respective languages if applicable, and set up a joint branding and promotion campaign.

In some cases, a single management structure is possible. For example, in Europe, some Transnational UGGp are exploring the option of a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation modality ([EGTC](#)).

The management has to promote cross-border co-operations in the fields of logistics, research & development, tourism – and other economic activities, and to assure proper infrastructure, especially along the transit corridors. An integrated promotion is necessary to guarantee sustainable territorial development, social and environmental activities through joint strategies, strengthening transnational co-operations, promoting interregional work and exchange of experience. The main impacts expected include improved cross-border connections, enhanced joint management of public services and resources, more business start-ups and tourism products, and motivation of local communities to engage in cross-border cooperation to improve the attractiveness of the region.

Can existing UNESCO Global Geoparks change into a bigger or a transnational UNESCO Global Geopark?

Yes, in that case the same rules apply as for extensions to more than 10%, as described in the Operational Guidelines Section 5.6 (xii): “Should an existing UNESCO Global Geopark wish to change its size, but the proposed change amounts to more than 10% of the existing area, a new application must be made following the procedure described above”.

As per Section 5.6 (xii): the application for the existing UGGp is exempt from the restriction on the number of “active” applications per Member State at any one time. For the Member State at the other side of the border, the application would count however as one of the two allowed active applications.

(xiii): “All extensions are subject to the intergovernmental check as described in Section 5.4.”

Can two existing UNESCO Global Geoparks join into a transnational UNESCO Global Geopark?

Yes they can. The same rules apply as for extensions to more than 10%, as described in the Operational Guidelines Section 5.6. See above. Both UNESCO Global Geoparks would have to submit one new joint application as per the regular procedure.

The difference is that as per Section 5.6 (xii): the application for both the existing UGGps is exempt from the restriction on the number of “active” applications per Member State at any one time. So in addition to the transnational UNESCO Global Geopark, both involved MS could submit maximum two more active applications in the same year.

Transnational UNESCO Global Geoparks:

- [Karawanken / Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark, Austria & Slovenia](#)
- [Muscau Arch / Łuk Mużakowa UNESCO Global Geopark, Germany & Poland](#)
- [Novohrad-Nógrád UNESCO Global Geopark, Hungary & Slovakia](#)
- [Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark, Ireland & United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#)