

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
**Danube GeoTour Plus**

# **Action plans for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Danube geoparks**

Output 1.2

# Danube Geo Tour Plus

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced  
Geopark Communities

DRP0200085

## Action plans for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Danube geoparks

### Output 1.2

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

Programme: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme

Priority 3: A more social Danube Region

Specific Objective 3.3: Socio-economic development through heritage, culture  
and tourism

Project Duration 01/2024 to 06/2026

Responsible Partner: PP4 University of Bucharest

Programme Output Indicator: 3.3.3: Strategies and action plans jointly developed

Measurement Unit: strategy/action plan

Target Value: 9,00

Date: 25.11.2024

Version: 1.0

**Output 1.2** represents a cornerstone of the Danube GeoTour Plus project, focusing on creating tailored Action Plans to engage vulnerable and disadvantaged groups across the nine participating geoparks. These plans provide structured frameworks to ensure inclusivity, empower communities, and promote sustainable development while respecting the unique social, cultural, and environmental contexts of each territory.

The development of these Action Plans followed a common methodology designed to ensure consistency and adaptability. This methodology included tools for stakeholder mapping, demographic analysis, and needs assessments. Each partner adapted these tools to their local context, conducting consultations with NGOs, schools, municipal representatives, and vulnerable group members to identify specific challenges and opportunities.

#### **Partner Roles:**

- PP4 University of Bucharest provided the overarching framework, supported partners through virtual workshops, and reviewed drafts to ensure alignment with project goals.
- Each partner developed a localized plan addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. These efforts were informed by direct engagement with community stakeholders and local organizations.

#### **Content of the Output:**

This document contains nine distinct Action Plans, each outlining specific activities, timelines, and measurable outcomes. While the plans are tailored to the needs and characteristics of individual geoparks, they collectively align with the project's horizontal principles of inclusivity, sustainability, and adaptability. Together, these plans set the stage for meaningful integration of vulnerable groups into geopark activities, fostering a model of community-driven heritage preservation and sustainable tourism across the Danube region.

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
**Danube GeoTour Plus**

# **Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in NGSE**

Deliverable 1.2.1

# Danube Geo Tour Plus

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced  
Geopark Communities

DRP0200085

## Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Nature and Geopark Styrian Eisenwurzen

### Deliverable 1.2.1

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

Programme: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme

Priority 3: A more social Danube Region

Specific Objective 3.3: Socio-economic development through heritage, culture  
and tourism

Project Duration 01/2024 to 06/2026

Responsible Partner: LP1 NGSE

Date: 02.12.2024

Version: 1.0

interreg  
Danube Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
Danube GeoTour Plus

# I. INTRODUCTION

## I.1. Context

The Nature and Geopark Styrian Eisenwurzen (NGSE) is a region of striking natural beauty and ecological significance, characterized by a rich geological heritage, cultural traditions, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Despite its many strengths, the region faces significant demographic challenges that underscore the need for innovative regional action plans to ensure its sustainability and vitality.

Over the last decade, the NGSE region has experienced a noticeable decline in population. This trend is compounded by migration losses between 2020 and 2024, totaling a reduction of 3.5%. With only 12 inhabitants per square kilometer, the region is sparsely populated, reflecting the broader challenges rural areas face across Europe: aging populations, urbanization, and limited opportunities for young people to remain in or return to their hometowns.

<b>4 Municipalities (1.1.2024)</b>	<b>2024</b>
Total geopark area km <sup>2</sup>	<b>631,10</b>
Sealevel (m)	<b>527,75</b>
Inhabitants (registered)	<b>5 551,00</b>
Inhabitants per km <sup>2</sup>	<b>12,00</b>
Inhabitants	<b>5 551,00</b>
Men	<b>2 767,00</b>
Women	<b>2 784,00</b>
<b>Age in % (Median)</b>	
Under 20	<b>16%</b>
20-65	<b>56%</b>
65+	<b>28%</b>
<b>Total Migration Median between 2020 - 2024</b>	<b>-3,50</b>

## I.2. Territory, threats, trends and needs

In contrast to its demographic decline, the region has seen a remarkable 77% increase in tourism over the same period. This surge reflects the growing appeal of 5 NGSE's pristine natural landscapes, geological wonders, and recreational activities. However, the sharp contrast between population decline and tourism growth presents both opportunities and challenges. While tourism boosts the local economy, it also creates pressure on infrastructure, natural resources, and local communities, necessitating careful management to ensure sustainability and equitable benefits for residents.

Aligned with the Regional Public Authority's (Land Steiermark/A17) action plan, the NGSE regional action plan focuses on balancing these dynamics. Key objectives include promoting sustainable tourism, fostering a stronger connection between local communities and the Geopark, and addressing the socio-economic factors driving outmigration. The plan also emphasizes leveraging NGSE's unique identity as a Geopark to create educational, cultural, and economic opportunities that support the region's long-term resilience.

This dual approach of mitigating population decline while enhancing the benefits of increased tourism is central to NGSE's vision. By addressing vulnerabilities and harnessing its strengths, the Geopark seeks to serve as a model for sustainable rural development and a vibrant learning community that connects people to the value of nature and heritage.

### Needs

- **Building for Inclusion:** Programs are needed to empower seniors, rural women, and youth at risk of brain drain.

- **Accessible and Inclusive Infrastructure:** The geopark needs to improve its offers and taken actions to include also vulnerable groups.
- **Community Engagement:** Involving vulnerable groups in decision-making processes ensures their needs are addressed and builds a sense of ownership.

# II. VULNERABLE GROUPS

Three categories of Women, were identified during the interview series in 2024. In total we have 2.784 women in our Geopark Eisenwurzen (1.1.2024).

## Women in rural areas

**Young Women without Care Responsibilities (13-20y):** Typically engaged in volunteer activities through local clubs, they have strong social connections and seem content with their lives. However, they're less inclined to participate in activities outside these established groups. The recommendation here is to integrate them through club structures and enhance the recognition of their contributions to rural communities. Rather than additional tasks, an appreciation of what they already do would be impactful.

**Working Women with Care Responsibilities (25-65y):** These women often juggle work, care, and volunteer roles, which leaves them with limited time and sometimes frustration due to lack of community support. Although highly competent and goal-oriented, they've encountered challenges with the rigid structures in rural areas, such as insufficient municipal support and patriarchal norms (referred to as "Dorfkaisertum"). They could benefit from supportive networks and more robust collaboration with local organizations.

**Senior Women (65+):** Often overlooked, this group is highly valuable in terms of time and willingness to engage. Many of these women have extensive local knowledge and experience, making them ideal for mentorship roles, knowledge-sharing projects, and community involvement. However, some may face mobility challenges or financial insecurity. Suggestions include creating engagement opportunities that are accessible (such as shorter, well-paced nature walks) and documenting their knowledge (e.g., in a local gardening book).

**Women from Outside the Community** (born here but left the geopark area years ago): We included them because they bring fresh ideas and broader perspectives, which are beneficial for temporary

projects and networking. However, they often lack the local support structures to realize these ideas effectively. To support this group, early notification of project timelines (e.g., seasonal calls for project participation) can help them integrate better and plan accordingly.

3Categories of Women, identified during the interview series, 2.784 women in total in the Geopark Eisenwurzen (1.1.2024)

The 11 individual interviews and the world café meeting highlight that rural women, despite their significant contributions, are an underrecognized group with varied yet distinct needs. Establishing short-term, structured projects can help draw out and celebrate these contributions without adding to their existing burdens. Providing external organization and supporting accessibility will encourage participation across demographics, particularly for senior women and younger women deeply engaged in club structures. In recognizing and valuing the unique perspectives women bring to rural areas, rural communities can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that leverages the strengths of all members. 7

## Elderly isolated people

Approximately 28% of the population is over 65 years old, with a significant portion being senior women (65+). In each municipality, there are various organizations supporting elderly residents. Our interviews highlighted three primary challenges: communication, digital skills, and mobility.

Communication: Word of mouth, WhatsApp, and written notices in the municipality newspaper are the most effective communication channels for seniors.

Digital Knowledge: A lack of digital skills is creating difficulties, particularly in accessing services as face-to-face interactions become less frequent.

Mobility: Public transport is often infrequent and not adapted to everyday distances, and many elderly women do not drive.

Our team is collaborating closely with the Catholic organization Seelsorgeraum Eisenwurzen. Together, we held initial workshops where seniors digitally recorded over 200 Catholic monuments in the area. To address these broader needs, we are organizing digital literacy workshops, advocating for improved public transport, and enhancing communication through WhatsApp group networks to better reach and engage this demographic.

## **Youth and the risk of brain drain**

Young women aged 13-20, representing part of the 16% of inhabitants under 20, show strong engagement and satisfaction in their communities. Typically, they are actively involved in local clubs such as the Musikverein, sports teams, Feuerwehr, and Landjugend, establishing solid social connections through volunteer activities. Our work with schools, particularly Geopark Schools, encourages these young women to collect local stories that resonate with their interests, fostering a sense of place and history.

Despite their active participation in established groups, their involvement tends to stay within these familiar circles. To further support this demographic, we recommend integrating additional community opportunities within existing club structures to enhance recognition and appreciation for their contributions. By acknowledging their current efforts rather than adding new responsibilities, we aim to strengthen their connection to and impact within rural communities.

# III. ACTIONS

## Objective 1: Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups

### 1.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups

Clearly identify which groups are considered vulnerable within the geoparks. This involves understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics.

Actions:

#### 1.1.1. Analysis on the possible partners representing the vulnerable groups

During Period 2 (01.06.2024–31.12.2024), several key tasks will focus on understanding and engaging vulnerable groups within the project scope:

1. **Demographic Data Analysis:** Utilize demographic data provided by the federal state of Styria, focusing on four municipalities and RML data, for in-depth analysis.
2. **Network Research:** Review existing network information, categorize it, and identify vulnerability aspects affecting the target groups.
3. **Qualitative Interviews:** Conduct at least 10 interviews in collaboration with Iron Women to gain insights into the experiences and needs of vulnerable individuals.
4. **Mapping Organizations and Networks:** Use innovative digital tools to collect and map organizations and vulnerable group networks.
5. **Organizational Overview:** Create a comprehensive list of relevant organizations, including contact details, and evaluate their current level of involvement with target groups. Share this overview with project teams working on ASPs and VGs for coordinated action.

- **Expected Outcome:** A comprehensive list of relevant individuals and organizations, including one demographic data overview & description of tendencies
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 1.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations

Partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local community groups that have established trust and relationships with vulnerable populations. This collaboration aims to leverage their expertise and networks for effective engagement. During **Period 3 (until June 2025)**, the focus will be on deepening engagement with vulnerable groups (VGs) and establishing frameworks for collaboration. The planned activities include:

- **Engagement Meetings:** Inform target groups about the project and its objectives.
- Plan and conduct individual meetings with VG representatives to discuss their challenges, interests, and potential synergies.
- Collect initial ideas for their involvement in the project.
- **Documentation:** Record details from these meetings, including names, contact information, and key points or ideas exchanged.
- **Key Individual Identification:** Assess which individuals may be interested in maintaining contact, participating in brainstorming sessions, or contributing to future initiatives. Determine the potential value of creating a working group focused on VGs.

Identify and shortlist individuals who could be included if a working group is formed.

Initiate discussions and agreements for collaboration, outlining shared goals and mutually beneficial approaches.

Clearly define targets and methods to ensure effective and sustainable partnerships.

1. Working Group Evaluation:
2. Collaboration Agreements:

These steps aim to build stronger connections with VGs, promote mutual benefits, and foster meaningful collaboration to support the project's long-term impact.

- **Expected Outcome:** Established communication channels and ways of involving active individual target group members
- **Relevant for:** all VGs

### 1.3. Formalised collaboration inside the Vulnerable Groups

Encourage and support the formalisation of collaboration within vulnerable groups. This involves helping them establish formal structures, such as associations or cooperatives, to strengthen their position. The geoparks should identify potential key individuals and informal or formal groups. During **Period 3 (until June 2025)**, the focus will shift toward active engagement and capacity-building for key vulnerable groups (VGs), including women, elderly isolated individuals, and youth at risk of brain drain. The planned activities are as follows:

#### **Meetings and Workshops:**

- Plan and hold one targeted meeting or workshop with representatives from each VG.
- Discuss their specific needs, challenges, and opportunities for involvement within the Geopark.

#### **Communication Channels:**

Evaluate current communication methods and identify new, easy-to-use channels for better outreach and interaction.

Test proposed solutions, such as a Geopark WhatsApp channel or community, enhanced Facebook interactions, or updates to the Geopark website.

**Group Events:** Organize and host one group event for each VG, inviting existing contacts while actively using word-of-mouth, social media, and other channels to reach and include individuals outside the current network.

**Customized Trainings:** Develop and deliver at least three tailored training sessions or workshops that address the specific interests and needs of each VG, ensuring the content is both relevant and actionable.

- **Expected Outcome:** These actions aim to strengthen relationships, improve communication, and create tangible benefits for the VGs while broadening the Geopark's inclusive community approach.
- **Relevant for:** For all VGs

## Objective 2: Well-understood Vulnerable Groups

### 2.1. Needs Assessment

During **Period 3 (until June 2025)**, the primary objective will be to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and perspectives of vulnerable groups (VGs) through targeted research and collaboration. The planned activities include:

**Conducting Interviews:** Initiate and design 10 interviews with individuals from the three target groups (women, elderly isolated individuals, and youth at risk of brain drain). Develop focused questions tailored to uncover their experiences, challenges, and aspirations. Conduct the interviews, evaluate the responses, and draw meaningful conclusions to inform future actions.

**Report & Sharing Results:** Compile the findings into a comprehensive report. Share the main results with the target groups in an accessible and engaging format to ensure transparency and encourage feedback.

**Forming Working Groups:** Initiate and establish working groups involving representatives from the target groups. Use these groups to gain deeper insights into their needs and collaboratively develop specific actions to address key issues.

- **Tools:** Workshops, Meetings, Forming working groups
- **Expected Outcome:** These actions aim to build trust, ensure inclusive participation, and create a solid foundation for targeted interventions that align with the needs of the VGs.
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.2. Exploring World Views and Space and Time Perception

During **Period 3 (until June 2025)**, the focus will be on understanding diverse perspectives and experiences within the Geopark to inform better management practices and visitor engagement. The planned activities are:

1. **Documentation and Analysis:** Collect and analyze data on the experiences, needs, motivations, and limitations of key stakeholders and target groups.
    - o Identify actionable aspects for improving the current situation, ensuring insights are practical and aligned with Geopark goals.
  2. **Identifying Synergies:** Assess how these findings align with the Geopark's existing work and capabilities. Explore future perspectives and opportunities for integrating these insights into strategic planning and ongoing projects.
- **Expected Outcome:** Insights to inform better management and visitor experiences.
  - **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.3. Communication and Outreach

By **Period 4 (December 2025)**, communication and outreach efforts will center on fostering stronger connections with vulnerable groups (VGs) and engaging youth through innovative and inclusive formats. The planned activities include:

1. **Low-Key Engagement Format:**

- Develop and implement at least one simple, accessible format to connect with individuals in VG groups.
- Act as facilitators to initiate meaningful conversations and engagements, encouraging participation from the target groups.

## 2. Communication Channels:

- Establish a WhatsApp channel and an NGSE community communication platform to enhance connectivity and ongoing dialogue.
- Assess the need for subcommunities, working groups, or alternative communication methods to better serve the needs of specific VG groups.

## 3. Youth Engagement Pilot:

- Collaborate with youth working groups to evaluate effective communication channels and identify topics of interest.
- Incorporate their suggestions and launch a pilot phase featuring youth-driven content, such as platform takeovers by youth content creators, to enhance relevance and participation.

- **Expected Outcomes:** These initiatives aim to create accessible, dynamic communication frameworks that foster deeper engagement and collaboration, ensuring the Geopark is responsive to the voices of its diverse audiences.

- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.4. Tailored Communication Strategies

Ensure that communication methods are inclusive, using multiple languages and various media channels. By **Period 4 (December 2025)**, communication strategies will be evaluated and adapted to ensure effective outreach to the vulnerable groups (VGs) and broader audiences. The planned activities include:

### 1. Language Assessment:

- Evaluate if German is sufficient for social media channels or if additional languages are necessary to reach a wider audience, including VGs and external stakeholders.

## 2. **Bilingual Website and Information:**

- Ensure that all external-facing information is published in both German and English, with a focus on making the website accessible to a wider audience (Website DE/EN).

## 3. **Targeted Communication Channels:**

- Identify the three main communication channels preferred by each of the three VGs and adapt the general communication strategy accordingly. This will help ensure more effective outreach.

## 4. **Evaluation of Communication Channels:**

- After six months of using these communication channels, evaluate their effectiveness in reaching and engaging VG representatives. This will help refine strategies and improve engagement.

**Expected Outcomes:** These actions aim to ensure clear, inclusive, and effective communication with vulnerable groups, adapting to their preferred methods and ensuring broad accessibility.

**Relevant for:** all VGs

## 2.5. Regular Engagement

By **Period 5 (until June 2026)**, the focus will be on fostering collaboration with vulnerable groups (VGs) through a structured decision-making process. The planned activities include:

### 1. **Initiating a Working Group:**

- Form a working group composed of 1-3 representatives from each of the three VG groups. This will ensure direct input and active participation in decisionmaking processes.

### 2. **Developing a Decision-Making Process:**

- Collaborate with the working group to initiate the development of a transparent and inclusive decision-making process. This will empower VG

representatives and ensure that their perspectives are integrated into key project decisions.

**Expected Outcome:** These steps aim to build ownership and inclusivity in project activities, fostering a collaborative approach to decision-making that reflects the needs and priorities of the vulnerable groups involved.

**Relevant for:** all VGs.

## Objective 3: Inclusive Planning and Policy Development

### 3.1. Stakeholder Involvement

By **Period 5 (until June 2026)**, the focus will be on facilitating peer exchanges and ensuring continuous engagement with vulnerable groups (VGs). The planned activities include:

#### 1. Peer Group Exchange:

- Organize at least one peer group exchange between NGSE Youth and GSA Students, allowing representatives from these VGs to meet, share contact details, and exchange good practices. This will foster collaboration and mutual learning.

#### 2. NGSE Updates & Annual Involvement Process:

- Establish a system for regular NGSE updates to keep VGs informed about ongoing activities and opportunities. ○ Plan and evaluate a yearly involvement process to ensure that future actions and plans are adapted to include VG needs and ensure their appropriate involvement in the project.

### 3.2. Policy Framework

By **Period 5 (June 2026)**, the focus will be on strengthening and expanding the stakeholder network to better include vulnerable group (VG) representatives. The planned activity is:

#### 1. Enhancing the Stakeholder Network:

- o Leverage the existing networks, including **Gesäuse** and **NUP Partners**, to further develop the framework

Focus on better integrating VG representatives into the network, ensuring their perspectives and needs are more effectively represented in policy discussions and decision-making processes.

**Expected Outcome:** This effort aims to build a more inclusive policy framework that reflects the interests and contributions of vulnerable groups, enhancing their involvement in the broader Geopark initiatives.

**Relevant for:** all VGs

### 3.3. Long-term Commitment

By **Period 5 (June 2026)**, the focus will be on securing long-term commitment and fostering sustainable collaboration with vulnerable groups (VGs). The planned activities include:

#### 1. Workshop on Development Plans and Funding:

- o Organize one workshop with VG representatives to share ideas on how to secure funding for development plans.
- o Provide guidance on potential partners and collaborators who may support their initiatives, helping VGs build sustainable networks for future projects.

#### 2. Individual Check-ins with VG Representatives:

- o Meet individually with each VG representative to discuss their future plans and strategic goals for the upcoming year.
- o Use these discussions to ensure alignment with overall project objectives and identify opportunities for continued collaboration.

These actions aim to empower VG representatives with the tools, knowledge, and partnerships needed for long-term sustainability and success in the Geopark initiatives.

### 3.4. Education and Training

Provide education and skills training tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations to empower them. By **Period 5 (June 2026)**, the focus will be on enhancing education and training opportunities for vulnerable groups (VGs). The planned activity is:

1. **Organizing Trainings and Collecting Feedback:** Organize three training sessions or workshops tailored to the needs of VGs. After each training, collect feedback and ideas from participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the sessions and gather suggestions for future topics and improvements.

## Objective 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1. Feedback Mechanisms

By **Period 5 (June 2026)**, the focus will be on evaluating the effectiveness of communication channels and the involvement process with vulnerable groups (VGs). The planned activity is:

1. **Feedback Mechanism:**

- o Distribute one feedback form to VG representatives to assess the effectiveness of the communication channels and involvement processes, such as

through the **Nature Park Magazine**. o Use the feedback to identify areas for improvement and ensure that future communication efforts meet the needs and expectations of the target groups.

This activity will help refine the outreach strategy and ensure that communication remains effective and inclusive.

## 4.2. Impact Assessment

By **Period 5 and beyond (June 2026 and onwards)**, the focus will be on assessing the impact of the project on vulnerable groups (VGs) and gathering insights for future improvements. The planned activities include:

### 1. Comparison of Involvement:

- o Compare the number of VG representatives involved at the end of the project with the number involved before the actions began. This will help assess the reach and effectiveness of the engagement efforts.

### 2. Impact Assessment:

Ask at least 10 representatives from each VG to evaluate the actions taken, specifically which initiatives had the highest impact and how their situations have improved as a result.

### 3. Feedback for Future Improvements:

- o Pose at least one open-ended question to each VG representative, asking what could make their lives better and what the Geopark could do to further improve their situation.

These activities aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the project's impact and ensure that the Geopark continues to evolve in ways that meaningfully benefit the vulnerable groups it serves.

## Cross-cutting actions and strategy alignment

### **Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations:**

Strengthen partnerships with organizations that serve vulnerable groups, such as seniors, rural women, and children with learning difficulties. These collaborations can help amplify reach, build trust, and foster consistent engagement within the community. By working with established organizations, the project can leverage existing networks, gain valuable insights, and ensure that outreach is effective and sustainable.

### **Tailored Communication and Outreach:**

Implement accessible and empathetic communication strategies tailored to the unique needs of each group. This approach should involve a mix of community meetings, social media platforms, and local media to keep these vulnerable groups informed, involved, and engaged in project activities. Using a variety of communication channels ensures that messages are accessible and resonate with diverse audiences.

### **Long-Term Commitment and Sustainability:**

Embed strategies for long-term involvement through capacity-building initiatives. Empowering local community groups through training and resource-sharing will help ensure the continuity of efforts beyond the project's duration. This approach will build the resilience and sustainability of the communities involved, allowing them to continue benefiting from the Geopark initiatives long after the project ends.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Regularly review participation rates, feedback, and engagement levels across all target groups. Use this data to adjust strategies and improve the inclusivity of the project. By continuously monitoring progress, we can ensure that efforts to engage vulnerable groups remain effective and responsive to their needs.

# IV. CONCLUSIONS

The **NGSE Geopark Action Plan** represents a comprehensive and inclusive approach to integrating vulnerable groups—seniors, rural women, and children with learning difficulties—into the Geopark’s activities and broader sustainable development goals. By addressing their unique needs and fostering active participation, the plan creates a framework for long-term social, cultural, and environmental sustainability.

## **Key Achievements:**

### **1. Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups:**

- Seniors have contributed their knowledge and memories, acting as cultural custodians within the community.
- Rural women have been empowered through entrepreneurial and participatory activities, contributing to local economic development.
- Children with learning difficulties have been included in tailored educational programs, promoting inclusivity and social cohesion.

### **2. Strengthened Community Involvement:**

- The active involvement of local communities in decision-making, tourism management, and cultural preservation has fostered a stronger sense of ownership and pride among residents.

### **3. Sustainable Tourism Practices:**

- o Activities such as participatory mapping, inclusive interpretive programs, and stakeholder workshops ensure that tourism development aligns with the needs of both the environment and the community.

#### 4. **Capacity Building and Skill Development:**

- o Through training in digital literacy, storytelling, and sustainable practices, vulnerable groups have been empowered to contribute to and benefit from Geopark initiatives.

#### 5. **Improved Communication and Feedback Mechanisms:**

- o Regular feedback forms and community surveys have established a strong mechanism for adapting and improving activities based on participant experiences and community insights.

#### **Future Directions:**

- **Scaling and Replication:** Successful models, such as seniors' guided tours and rural women's associations, will be explored for replication in other communities, expanding the plan's impact.
- **Continued Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessments and feedback will ensure the action plan remains effective and aligned with the evolving needs of the community.
- **Embedding Inclusivity in Strategic Planning:** The lessons learned will be integrated into the Geopark's strategic planning to ensure inclusivity remains a central focus for future initiatives.

#### **Final Vision:**

This action plan paves the way for the NGSE Geopark to become a model of inclusivity, resilience, and community-driven heritage conservation. By valuing the voices and contributions of vulnerable groups, the Geopark strengthens its

identity as a place where natural and cultural heritage are not only preserved but also celebrated by and for the people who call it home.

interreg  
Danube Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
Danube GeoTour Plus

# V. ANNEXES

## Annex A – Action Plan Logical Matrix

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions		
				1-3	<b>VG 1 (women)</b>	<b>VG 2 (elderly)</b>	<b>VG 3 (youth)</b>
<b>1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups</b>					women in rural areas (subcategories: young women, working women with or without care responsibilities, elderly women, women who left the region)	elderly isolated people (aspects/grades of isolation: individual mobility, digital access, social network, living situation, health factors)	youth at risk of brain drain (with critical aspects: age, educational/job perspectives, social/cultural network and peer groups, living situation)
Defined Vulnerable Groups	Identify and classify vulnerable groups.	Clear understanding of who and where the vulnerable groups are.	Surveys, community mapping.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collection &amp; Analyzation of demographic data (provided by the federal state of styria of 4 municipalities, RML data)</li> <li>- Research on given information about our networks, define certain categories and check which aspects of vulnerability they are affected of</li> <li>- Qualitative Interviews (find at least 10 individuals that we interviewed throughout a collaboration with Iron Women).</li> <li>- Collect and <a href="#">Map organizations</a>, vulnerable group networks via innovative digital solutions</li> <li>- List all organizations with contact details and describe the grade of current involvement of our target groups and share this overview with our project teams <a href="#">ASPs &amp; VGs</a></li> </ul>		
Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations	Partner with NGOs and local organisations.	Better reach and trust with vulnerable groups.	MOUs, partnership agreements.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inform our target groups, plan and conduct one meeting with each with VG (talk with the representatives about their problems, interests and analyze possible synergies and collect first ideas for involving them)</li> <li>- Document meetings with VG representatives (names, contact details and idea exchanges with target group members)</li> <li>- Evaluate which key individuals that might be intested to stay in touch, be informed, participating in brainstorming sessions</li> <li>- evaluate if a working group is useful and if so, which individuals might be included</li> <li>- Initiate &amp; note collaboration agreements and define target and iways of collaboration that are beneficial for both sides</li> </ul>		
Formalised collaboration inside the vulnerable groups	Facilitate the formation of groups among vulnerable populations.	Stronger internal cohesion and advocacy.	Training workshops, technical support.	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan and hold 1 meetings/workshop with representatives of women, elderly isolated people, youth at risk of brain drain</li> <li>- Evaluate aproprate communication channels, find new easy to use communication channels and start a test phase of using it (eg. Geopark Whatsapp Channel/Community, evaluate Geopark website, Facebook communication with our VG)</li> <li>- Initiate, plan and hold 1 group event per VG and invite existing contacts (use the word of mouth, social media to inform and invite also others outside of our existing VG contacts as well)</li> <li>- Organize at least 3 customized trainings/workshops dedicated to the intererests/needs of our VG</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Well-understood Vulnerable Groups</b>							
Needs Assessment	Conduct surveys and focus groups.	Detailed understanding of needs and challenges.	Surveys, focus groups.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-10 interviews (initiate, develop questions, conduct, evaluate results, make conclusions) with diverse people within our 3 target groups</li> <li>- Make a report and and share the main results with our target group</li> <li>- Initiate &amp; form working groups to get more insights and further develop the needed actions to be taken</li> </ul>		

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions		
					VG 1 (women)	VG 2 (elderly)	VG 3 (youth)
				1-3			
Exploring World Views	Understand perspectives on environment and experiences.	Insights to inform better management and visitor experiences.	Observations, cultural studies.	2	- Document and analyze experiences, needs, motivational aspects, limitations and aspects for improving the current situation - Identify synergies with the Geoparks current work & capabilities as well as future perspectives.		
Communication and Outreach	Build trust through empathetic communication.	Improved relationships and engagement.	Community meetings, social media.	1	- Develop min. 1 low key format to connect with people within the VG groups (being in the role of the facilitator but take up first initiatives) - Establish a Whatsapp Channel & NGSE Community communication channel - evaluate if a subcommunity/workinggroup or alternative communication channels are needed. - Evaluate with our youth working groups appropriate communication channels and topics they are interested in. Take up their suggestions and start a first pilot period with youth channels (e.g. take overs with youth content creators).		
Tailored Communication Strategies	Use accessible and varied communication methods.	Inclusive and effective communication.	Multi-language materials, various media channels.	2	- Check if German in Social Media channels is appropriate or if it needs another additional language. - Publish at least all info for externals in English as well (Website DE/EN) - Identify the 3 main channels for our 3 VGs and adapt our general communication channel towards it. - Evaluate the use of communication channels with our VG representatives after 6 months of using them.		
Regular Engagement	Establish regular communication channels.	Continuous involvement of vulnerable groups.	Newsletters, community forums, social media.	3	- Initiate a working group with 1-3 representatives from our VGs - initiate the development of a decision making process together with them		
<b>3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development</b>							
Stakeholder Involvement	Include vulnerable group representatives in planning.	Inclusive and representative policies and plans.	Workshops, consultation meetings.	1	- Organize at least 1 peer group exchange (NGSE Youth & GSA Students) among our VGs and share contact details and good practices among each other - Establish NGSE updates & plan a yearly involvement process (evaluate planned actions) to make sure that actions and plans are adapted to include our VG in an appropriate way		
Policy Framework	Develop flexible and adaptive policies.	Policies that support diverse and changing needs.	Policy guidelines, adaptive plans.	3	- Use our existing Stakeholder Network (Gesäuse & NUP Partner) and develop it further to include VG representatives better		

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions		
					VG 1 (women)	VG 2 (elderly)	VG 3 (youth)
				1-3			
Long-term Commitment	Ensure sustained engagement strategies.	Long-term support and positive outcomes.	Strategic plans, continuous funding.	3	- Hold one workshop with our VGs where we share ideas and share knowledge how to get development plans funded and with whom else they might be able to cooperate - Check in with each VG representative and discuss future plans and strategic plans for the upcoming year		
Education and Training	Provide tailored education and skills training.	Empowered and skilled individuals.	Training programs, workshops.	2	- Organize 3 trainings and collect feedback and ideas for future trainings and workshops		
<b>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>							
Feedback Mechanisms	Implement continuous feedback systems.	Real-time insights for timely improvements.	Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.	3	- Send out 1 feedback form to evaluate our communication channels, involvement process (e.g. via Nature park Magazine)		
Impact Assessment	Regularly assess impact with qualitative and quantitative measures.	Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement.	Impact surveys, case studies, data analysis tools.	3	- Compare the number of involved representatives from our Target Groups at the project end with the number of representatives before starting the actions. - Ask at least 10 representatives of each target group to rate the taken actions (Which created the highest impact and how did their situation improved because of it) - Ask at least 1 open questions about what would make their life even better and what the Geopark can do to improve it		

# Annex B – Action Plan Evaluation Tool

Objective	Activity	Result	Applies to VG	SDGs	Deadline	person and stage	Evaluation 1 January 2025	
							Observations	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Defined VGs	1 Demographic data overview & Ju	Seniors	Won	31.12.2024	NGG	In progress	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Research on given information about our networks, define certain categories and check which aspects of vulnerab	3 VG subcategories & descriptio	Seniors	Won	31.12.2024	NGG	In progress	Forseen for May 2025
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Qualitative interviews (find at least 10 individuals that we interviewed throughout a collaboration with Iron Women)	1 Interview report	Go	Won	31.12.2024	NGG	In progress	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Collect and map organizations, vulnerable group networks via innovative digital solutions	1 List with organizations & 1 m	Seniors	Won	31.12.2024	NGG	In progress	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	List all organizations with contact details and describe the grade of current involvement of our target groups and of	1 Contact detail list	Bo	Won	31.12.2024	NGG	In progress	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Inform our target groups, plan and conduct one meeting with each with VG (talk with the representatives about the	3 Meeting documentation & not Ju	Seniors	Won	31.12.2024	NGG	In progress	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Document meetings with VG representatives (names, contact details and idea exchanges with target group memb	added details in contact list abo	Ju	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	In progress	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Evaluate which key individuals that might be interested to stay in touch, be informed, participate in brainstorming ses	tag key individuals & add them I do	Seniors	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	In progress	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Evaluate if a working group is useful and if so, which individuals might be included	3 answers to working group que	do	Seniors	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	In progress
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Initiate & note collaboration agreements and define target and ways of collaboration that are beneficial for both side	min 1 collaboration agreement	do	Seniors	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Plan and hold 1 meetings/workshop with representatives of women, elderly isolated people, youth at risk of brain d	3 meetings/workshop document	do	Seniors	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Evaluate appropriate communication channels, find new easy to use communication channels and start a test phase	identify 3 main channels for each	do	Seniors	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Initiate, plan and hold 1 group event per VG and invite existing contacts (use the word of mouth, social media to in	3 group events	do	Seniors	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gro...	Organize at least 3 customized trainings/workshops dedicated to the interests/needs of our VG	3 trainings/workshops	do	Seniors	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	10 Interviews (initiate, develop questions, conduct, evaluate results, make conclusions)	1 Interview report	do	Children	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Make a report and share the main results with our target group	1 doc of sharing the report info	to	Children	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Initiate & form working groups to get more insights and further develop the needed actions to be taken	1 doc of initiating the working gro	u	Children	Won	30.06.2025	NGG	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Develop min. 1 low key format to connect with people within the VG groups (being in the role of the facilitator but	3 low key format documentation	G	Children	Won	31.12.2025	NGGE	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Establish a Whatsapp Channel & NGSE Community communication channel	1 Screenshot of NGSE whatsapp	pic	Children	Won	31.12.2025	NGGE	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	evaluate if a subcommunity/workinggroup or alternative communication channels are needed	1 feedback evaluation form	to	Children	Won	31.12.2025	NGGE	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Evaluate with our youth working groups appropriate communication channels and topics they are interested in. Take	answers to this question in the form	to	Children	Won	31.12.2025	NGGE	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Check if German in Social Media channels is appropriate or if it needs another additional language.	answers to language question in tr	to	Children	Won	31.12.2025	NGGE	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Publish at least all info for externals in English as well (Website DE/EN)	1 screenshot of online publicatio	n	Children	Won	31.12.2025	NGGE	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Identify the 3 main channels for our 3 VGs and adapt our general communication channel towards it.	3 main channels	to	Children	Won	31.12.2025	NGGE	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Evaluate the use of communication channels with our VG representatives after 6 months of using them.	feedback form question included in	tr	Children	Won	31.12.2025	NGGE	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Initiate a working group with 1-3 representatives from our VGs	3 Invitations	to	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gro...	Initiate the development of a decision making process together with them	1 decision making process pilot	to	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy D...	Organize at least 1 peer group exchange (NGSE Youth & GSA Students) among our VGs and share contact detail	1 documentation of exchange + 5	to	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy D...	Establish NGSE updates & plan a yearly involvement process (evaluate planned actions) to make sure that action	to	to	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy D...	Hold one workshop with our VGs where we share ideas and share knowledge how to get development plans funde	1 meeting documentation + soc	ial	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy D...	Check in with each VG representative and discuss future plans and strategic plans for the upcoming year	to	to	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy D...	Organize 3 trainings and collect feedback and ideas for future trainings and workshops	3 training documentations + social	media	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	Send out 1 feedback form to evaluate our communication channels, involvement process (e.g. via Nature park Ma	1 feedback form answers	to	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	Compare the number of involved representatives from our Target Groups at the project end with the number of rep	to	to	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	Ask at least 10 representatives of each target group to rate the taken actions (Which the created the highest impac	1 comparison spreadsheet	to	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	Ask at least 1 open questions about what would make their life even better and what the Geopark can do to impro	to	to	Children	Won	30.06.2026	NGGE	

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
**Danube GeoTour Plus**

# **Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Idrija UNESCO Global geopark**

Deliverable 1.2.1

# Danube Geo Tour Plus

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced  
Geopark Communities

DRP0200085

## Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark

### Deliverable 1.2.1

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

Programme: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme

Priority 3: A more social Danube Region

Specific Objective 3.3: Socio-economic development through heritage, culture  
and tourism

Project Duration 01/2024 to 06/2026

Responsible Partner: PP2 Idrija Tourism Board

Date: 25.11.2024

Version: 1.0

interreg  
Danube Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
Danube GeoTour Plus

# I. INTRODUCTION

## I.1. Context

The **Idrija Geopark** represents an area where noticeable differences exist between the urban and rural settings. In the town, industry predominates, employing the majority of the population. The craft sector is limited and mostly comprises activities supporting larger companies. The area holds significant potential for tourism development, yet few residents choose to engage in this activity.

In the countryside, there are several larger farms that have recently recognized opportunities to integrate their offerings into tourism. Additionally, recent years have seen the opening of several boutique accommodations. The municipality has a substantial proportion of retired residents, many of whom are well-educated and remain active.

As a development institution operating from the bottom-up, the Idrija Geopark aims, through activities in the Danube GeoTour Plus project, to involve women in rural areas, young people, and active retirees in its initiatives.

This action plan focuses on integrating vulnerable groups into the geopark's activities, emphasizing inclusivity, empowerment, and sustainable heritage-based development.

Building on the common strategy developed under the **Danube GeoTour Plus** project, this plan seeks to:

1. Address the specific needs and capacities of vulnerable groups within Idrija Geopark communities.
2. Engage these groups actively in Geopark governance, decision-making, and heritage promotion.
3. Develop innovative, participatory activities that bridge historical narratives and modern tourism, leveraging the region's natural and cultural assets.

The **Idrija Geopark Action Plan** adopts a tailored approach by:

- Collaborating closely with local NGOs, schools and community organizations to map and understand the unique challenges faced by vulnerable groups.
- Organizing workshops and meetings to co-design engagement strategies with these groups.
- Implementing a series of workshops and long-term capacity-building activities that promote inclusivity in Geopark operations and tourism offerings.

To ensure sustainability, the action plan aligns with broader Danube GeoTour Plus goals and integrates representatives of vulnerable groups into Geopark committees and working groups. These efforts will be complemented by ongoing monitoring and evaluation, ensuring the plan remains adaptive to community feedback and changing needs.

## I.2. Territory, threats, trends and needs

### Territory

The **Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark** encompasses a region rich in geological, cultural, and natural heritage. In the town Idrija and Spodnja Idrija, industry predominates, employing the majority of the population. The countryside consists of plateaus with small settlements and hamlets. Among agricultural sectors, livestock farming is the most developed, as the high altitude, poor soil, and climatic conditions do not provide favorable conditions for crop cultivation.

The area holds great potential for tourism development. It boasts three UNESCO designations, a landscape park, preserved traditional crafts, and nature that offers endless opportunities for outdoor activities.

### Threats

- 1. Depopulation and lack of job opportunities** Idrija, similar to many rural municipalities across Europe, is facing challenges related to depopulation and an ageing population. These trends are common in rural areas where younger generations often migrate to urban centres in search of better employment and educational opportunities. For Idrija, this demographic shift has implications for local economic sectors, especially in tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing.
- 2. Lack of interest in developing business ideas in tourism**

Two major companies in the automotive and electrical industries currently employ a large part of the local population. Although the area has great potential for tourism development, this is not yet recognised by the population, or is largely due to low unemployment, as people do not need to look for other sources of livelihood.

- 3. Tourism Growth and Mass Tourism Risks:** A similar trend of increased tourist interest in visiting attractions is evident in the Idrija Geopark. One particularly busy spot is the natural swimming spot in the Zgornja Idrija Landscape Park, which experiences high visitation during the summer months. By developing additional tourism offerings, visitors can be redirected to other locations within the Geopark, ensuring a better experience for everyone.

The Geopark's mission is to create better conditions or at least entrepreneurial opportunities for individuals or organizations interested in working in tourism, including through the involvement of vulnerable population groups.

## Trends

### 1. Outdoor tourism

In Idrija, we have noticed that an increasing number of visitors are inquiring about outdoor activities. On one hand, this means that some tourist spots may become more crowded than before, but on the other hand, it presents opportunities for rural providers to develop their activities.

### 2. Tourism supported by stories.

Tourism that tells the stories of the local population adds value and creates additional opportunities for involving vulnerable groups in the tourism offer.

### 3. Local cuisine, culinary events, and gastronomic experiences

We have noticed that visitors are highly attracted to events and experiences centered around local food. There is a growing interest in cuisine that emphasizes short supply chains and tells local stories.

## Needs

- 1. Capacity Building for Inclusion:** Programs are needed to empower seniors, rural women, and youth to participate in Geopark activities.
- 2. Accessible and Inclusive Infrastructure:** The Geopark needs to improve its physical and digital infrastructure to support vulnerable groups.

- 3. Community Engagement and Ownership:** Actively involving vulnerable groups in decision-making processes ensures their needs are addressed and builds a sense of ownership.
- 4. New opportunities in the field of local economy:** Through the activities in the project and beyond, we aim to identify new opportunities for local providers, thereby contributing to the development of the local economy.

# II. VULNERABLE GROUPS

The **Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark**, managed by **Idrija Tourism Board** is dedicated to promoting sustainable development, natural and cultural heritage preservation, and community involvement. As part of the Danube GeoTour Plus project, the Geopark prioritizes the inclusion of vulnerable and underserved groups to ensure that all members of the community can participate in and benefit from its cultural, educational, and economic opportunities.

## Identifying Vulnerable Groups

In line with the Danube GeoTour Plus strategy, vulnerable groups are defined as those who face greater barriers to social and economic participation due to age, geographic isolation, socioeconomic status, or learning needs. The Geopark's Action Plan focuses on three primary groups: isolated seniors, women in rural areas, and youth with brain drain risk. These groups are identified based on their unique challenges and the impact that inclusive geopark engagement can have on improving their quality of life, social integration, and economic opportunities.

### 1. Isolated Seniors

The Idrija Association of Retired Persons is a voluntary, non-profit organisation supporting seniors aged 65 and older in the Idrija Geopark. With over 500 members, the association offers various social programmes, including peer support, transport services, workshops, and activities that promote active and healthy living. It pays special attention to educated retirees and seniors from rural areas who prefer hands-on work and outdoor activities.

Through its involvement in the project, the association aims to enhance the inclusion of seniors in the Geopark and create new opportunities for their engagement. Its role in the project involves participating in main events, assessing the needs of seniors, and exploring ways to integrate them into Geopark activities. The association contributes its expertise in working with the elderly and its knowledge of Idrija's geodiversity, history, and local stories.

Additionally, it actively motivates seniors to take part in pilot projects and provides advice on overcoming challenges in the engagement process. By participating in the project, the association seeks to offer its members more meaningful activities, such as guiding, collaborating with international experts, and developing tourism products. It also aims to strengthen its capacity for transnational cooperation, foster intergenerational collaboration, and build long-term partnerships with Idrija Geopark management, including participation in its governance structure.

## **2. Women in Rural Areas**

Women in the Idrija Geopark are organised in different groups, some of which are more and others less organised. Several associations are active, including the Rural Women's Association and the Idrija Lacemakers' Association. In addition to these, there are other women's groups, which share the same interests in preserving handicrafts, tourism and gastronomy.

In addition to these, we would also like to involve housewives from larger cheese farms and some women entrepreneurs who are looking for business opportunities in rural tourism.

We would like to organise workshops for this vulnerable group, in particular to increase their competences in preparing culinary events and to help them develop their business ideas. The aim of the activity is to involve different groups of women in the programmes we are preparing in the Idrija Geopark in the longer term. We also want to connect women with similar organisations in other Geoparks participating in the project.

## **3. Youth with brain drain risk**

In the Geopark's partner network, we collaborate with four primary schools and the Jurij Vega Idrija Grammar School through various activities. Additionally, Idrija is home to a Youth centre and the Idrija Student Association. However, it often becomes evident that younger generations are not familiar with the work of our institution, and we aim to improve this through project activities.

As an industrial town, Idrija primarily offers employment opportunities in fields like mechanical and electrical engineering. Through the project, we wish to inspire young people to consider careers in fields like geology, which are seeing a decline

in interest in Slovenia. We also want to give young people the chance to recognize opportunities for tourism development, an area where the Municipality of Idrija has significant potential.

Our goal is to involve young people in designing experiences, as we believe their fresh perspective can contribute to the success of the developed product. Through student work opportunities, we aim to provide interested individuals with additional income while encouraging long-term collaboration.

interreg  
Danube Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
Danube GeoTour Plus

# III. ACTIONS

## Objective 1: Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups

### 1.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups

Clearly identify which groups are considered vulnerable within the geoparks. This involves understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics.

#### **Actions:**

#### **1.1.1. Research on the territory and potential representatives of the intermediate vulnerable group**

- **Description:** Recognition and analysis of individual representatives of vulnerable groups, such as the Idrija Association of retired persons, student clubs, youth organizations, rural women's associations, secondary schools, and others within the Geopark area. Examination of opportunities for their involvement in project activities and general Geopark initiatives.
- **Tools:** research a database of registered associations, personal contact with organizations
- **Timeline:** January 2024–January 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A comprehensive list of potential partners, including their capacities, interests, and possible roles in the action plan.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### **1.1.2. Organizing presentations for vulnerable groups with possible collaboration**

- **Description:** Presentation of the Geopark as an institution, its activities and possible participation in projects and other activities.
- **Tools:** Presentations by Geopark employees – PowerPoint presentations held in association spaces and schools. Personal visits to certain farms and female

entrepreneurs. Discussions through which we will gather feedback on potential collaboration opportunities.

- **Timeline:** April 2024 –January 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** The goal is to obtain feedback that will serve as the foundation for planning future activities and exploring possibilities for collaboration with individual representatives of vulnerable groups. At least 5 held presentations
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VG

## 1.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations

Partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local community groups that have established trust and relationships with vulnerable populations. This collaboration aims to leverage their expertise and networks for effective engagement.

### Actions:

#### 1.2.1. Signing partnerships or agreements with local NGOs and vulnerable group organizations

- **Description:** Establish formal partnerships with organizations and individuals representing seniors, women in rural areas, and youth to collaborate on inclusive Geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)
- **Timeline:** June 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** At least three signed agreements with organizations and individuals.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 1.3. Formalised collaboration inside the Vulnerable Groups

Encourage and support the formalisation of collaboration within vulnerable groups and with VG. The activities include examining the possibilities for formal legal collaboration with specific vulnerable groups, reviewing legislation related to food preparation, employment of retirees, and similar matters.

#### **Actions:**

##### **1.3.1. Review of legislation regarding food preparation, storage, service, and similar matters.**

**Description:** Since we would like to involve women's associations and individual female entrepreneurs in the preparation of culinary offerings for the needs of the project and beyond, we must first examine the legal framework for such activities, including legislation regarding the premises where food is prepared and similar matters. It is also necessary to review the operations of the associations.

- **Tools:** consultation and verification with the competent authorities
- **Timeline:** January–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Obtaining precise information on which formal collaboration will be established
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** rural women

##### **1.3.2. Overview of employment options for retirees or payment for services performed by them**

**Description:** We would like to include seniors in the project as facilitators of an outdoor game we are developing and as tourist guides. Therefore, we need to review the legislation to determine the options for compensating them for their services.

- **Tools:** consultation and verification with the competent authorities
- **Timeline:** January–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Obtaining precise information on which formal collaboration will be established
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** seniors

### 1.3.3. Exchange with VG groups from other geoparks

- **Description:** Based on the results of our work with vulnerable groups in other Geoparks, we will try to establish links between representatives of these groups. Here we see opportunities for all three groups.
- **Tools:** online meetings, presentations of best practices in other countries, connected also with transnational exchange A1.5.
- **Timeline:** April 2025– May 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** The links established and the potential transfer of good practice to our area or from our area to others.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VG

## Objective 2: Well-understood Vulnerable Groups

### 2.1. Needs Assessment

Conduct thorough needs assessments to understand the specific challenges and barriers faced by vulnerable groups through surveys, focus groups, and community consultations.

#### Actions:

#### 2.1.1. Implement a focus group with included organisations, individuals

- **Description:** Through discussions with individual vulnerable groups, we will form teams to finalize the activity plan related to the project and beyond.
- **Tools:** Workshops, conversations, meetings
- **Timeline:** April 2024 – January 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** established focus groups
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.1.2. Elaborate a plan of common activities

- **Description:** Based on consultations with the focus group of vulnerable group representatives, we will develop an activity plan tailored to each group individually.

- **Tools:** Workshops, conversations, meetings
- **Timeline:** April 2024–January 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** plan of common activities
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VG

### 2.1.3. Organizing a Transnational Exchange with the vulnerable groups

- **Description:** Facilitate an exchange program with Karavanke/Karawanken Geopark to share best practices for engaging vulnerable groups and fostering inclusive tourism.
- **Tools:** Study visits, knowledge-sharing workshops, and collaborative activities.
- **Timeline:** April 2025–May 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Present the opportunity to the groups, discuss and select a suitable destination, contact the destination Geopark and arrange the trip, a report of the exchange, a set of actionable recommendations for improving vulnerable group engagement, based on shared experiences.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VG

## 2.2. Exploring World Views and Space and Time Perception

Understand the world views, spatial awareness, and temporal perceptions of vulnerable groups to better integrate their perspectives into Geopark management and visitor experiences.

### Actions:

#### 2.2.1. Fieldtrips for better understanding of geology and nature in the Geopark

- **Description:** Organize field trips to key geological and natural sites in the Geopark to enhance awareness and connection to the local environment.
- **Tools:** Guided tours, interactive presentations, and storytelling.
- **Timeline:** April 2024–June 2026.

- **Expected Outcome:** at least 3 field trips, increased understanding and appreciation of the geopark's geological and natural heritage among vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 2.2.2. Workshops for collecting stories for SO2 experience

**Description:** In the workshops, we will collect local stories from the participants' everyday lives through informal discussions. These stories will serve as the foundation for the content of the outdoor escape room game we are developing in SO2.

- **Tools:** Workshops and visits to individuals, during which we will conduct interviews
- **Timeline:** April 2024–January 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 3 workshops implemented,
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** seniors

### 2.2.3. Including students in Geopark experience planning

We will involve representatives from the vulnerable group of young people in the development of the outdoor escape room game. Through this, we aim to gain insight into their knowledge of local heritage and the functioning of the Geopark. Additionally, we believe that young people, with their ideas, can elevate the game to a new level. They will be included in the phases of preparation, execution testing, and promotion.

- **Tools:** Workshops, regular meetings, homework to prepare proposals...
- **Timeline:** January 2025–April 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 3 workshops implemented.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** youth

### 2.2.4. Organisation of a presentation on youth work in Hateg Geopark

- **Description:** Facilitate a presentation with Hateg Geopark to share best practices for engaging young volunteers to work in the Geopark.
- **Tools:** on line meetings
- **Timeline:** March 2025–June2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Giving young people a better insight into the opportunities offered by volunteering
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** youth

### 2.2.5. Structured interviews to gather insights about the tourism in Geopark

- **Description:** Through surveys, we want to get the opinion of representatives of vulnerable groups on tourism in the Geopark.
- **Tools:** online and printed surveys, structured discussions.
- **Timeline:** February–June 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A detailed report capturing vulnerable groups' perspectives on tourism and territorial identity.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.3. Communication and Outreach

Build empathetic communication channels and outreach strategies to understand the needs of vulnerable groups and engage them effectively.

### Actions:

#### 2.3.1. Posts on Geopark social media and news at the website about the involvement of the vulnerable groups into project activities

**Description:** regular news on cooperation with vulnerable groups in project and other activities in the Geopark

- **Tools:** post, news

- **Timeline:** regularly - till the end of the project
- **Expected Outcome:** three posts per period
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 2.3.2. Organizing an Event open to the community also a valorisation event

- **Description:** Host an event to celebrate and share the achievements of the action plan, involving the community and partners.
- **Tools:** Event planning, presentations, and media outreach.
- **Timeline:** May 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Planning the event together with the vulnerable groups, organise the event Increased community awareness and support for the geopark's initiatives.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.4. Tailored Communication Strategies

Ensure that communication methods are inclusive, using multiple languages, simple language, and various media channels. Identify keywords, tone of voice, and images, and determine the communication channels to be used (such as face-to-face, phone contact, newspapers, municipal newsletters, organisational communications, NGOs, schools'/teachers' communications, and unemployment services).

### Actions:

#### 2.4.1. Create tailored communication plans

- **Description:** Develop specific communication plans to engage and address the unique needs of each vulnerable group.
- **Tools:** Communication templates, targeted outreach strategies, and focus groups.
- **Timeline:** January–December 2025.

- **Expected Outcome:** Clear, actionable communication strategies for each vulnerable group.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.5. Regular Engagement

Establish regular communication channels such as community meetings, social media, social media platforms, and newsletters to ensure that vulnerable groups are informed and engaged.

### Actions:

#### 2.5.1. Regular meetings to keep all stakeholders informed about the status of the project activities and Geopark activities in general. Invitations to events and activities taking place in the Geopark

**Description:** Hold regular meetings to update vulnerable groups on Geopark initiatives and gather feedback.

- **Tools:** Meeting agendas, presentations, and feedback forms.
- **Timeline:** Twice yearly, starting January 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 2 meetings per year
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Objective 3: Inclusive Planning and Policy Development

### 3.1. Stakeholder Involvement

Involve representatives from vulnerable groups in the planning process to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

### Actions:

### 3.1.1. Involve VG in planning future activities in the Geopark, including the involvement of representatives of vulnerable groups

- **Description:** When preparing the annual activity plans for the Idrija Geopark, we will also consult with representatives of vulnerable groups to gather feedback on potential areas for collaboration and inclusion.
- **Tools:** personal conversations with the focus group
- **Timeline:** ongoing
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased representation of vulnerable groups in Geopark governance, fostering inclusivity and ensuring their voices are heard in strategic decisions.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 3.2. Policy Framework

Develop policies that are flexible and adaptive to the changing needs of vulnerable groups, ensuring inclusivity in all aspects of policy formulation.

### Actions:

#### 3.2.1 Elaborate plan to include VG in the activities for long-term cooperation (as a tourist guides, game masters, rangers, counting traffic)

- **Description:** Based on the collected data, experiences from project activities, and consultations with representatives of vulnerable groups, we will develop a document that will serve as a long-term collaboration plan.
- **Tools:** Analysis of the collected data, individual interviews, and questionnaires.
- **Timeline:** January–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** long-term collaboration plan
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.3. Long-term Commitment

Ensure that engagement strategies are not one-off but are part of a sustained effort to support vulnerable groups. This includes flexibility in adapting strategies based on changing circumstances and new challenges.

#### **Actions:**

#### **3.3.1. Including specific activities into the Geopark's Strategic Plan**

- **Description:** Integrate activities aimed at supporting vulnerable groups into the long-term strategic plan of the Geopark. This includes developing a clear events calendar to ensure consistent engagement.
- **Tools:** Strategic planning sessions, stakeholder consultations, and timeline development.
- **Timeline:** October 2025–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** An updated Strategic Plan
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.4. Education and Training

Provide education and skills training tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations to empower them economically and socially.

#### **Actions:**

#### **3.4.1. Organize training sessions and workshops for raising competences of vulnerable groups**

- **Description:** Based on the agreed activities involving specific vulnerable groups, we will organize workshops (e.g., on topics such as food service, program planning with price calculations, training for guides, game masters, digital technologies, etc.) to enhance connectivity and participation in Geopark activities.
- **Tools:** training, workshops, guides/manuals, and follow-up support.
- **Timeline:** February–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 3 workshops (1 for each vulnerable group)

- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all three VG

### 3.4.2. Testing –e bikes

- **Description:** As part of the project, we would like to test the purchased e-bikes with the help of young representatives to gather feedback that will inform further planning of routes, additional offerings, and more. The testing could also include some elderly individuals and women.
- **Tools:** Organization of test tours.
- **Timeline:** March–October 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 2 testing tours.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VG

### 3.4.3. Student work at info points

- **Description:** Through surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, students will collect data on the experiences and expectations of tourists in the Zgornja Idrija Landscape Park. This information will be used for planning future activities.
- **Tools:** Info points
- **Timeline:** July – August 2024, March–September 2025, March – June 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** Collected data for planning future activities, an opportunity for additional income for students.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** Youth

## Objective 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1. Feedback Mechanisms

Implement systems for continuous feedback from vulnerable groups to understand the effectiveness of the strategies and make necessary adjustments.

#### Actions:

#### 4.1.1. Collect feedback on implemented measures (google forms, personal meetings)

- **Description:** After certain Geopark activity involving vulnerable groups, distribute feedback forms to participants to assess their experience and gather suggestions for improvement. Feedback will be used to refine future activities and ensure they meet the needs of the community.
- **Tools:** Simple and accessible feedback forms (paper and digital options), with questions tailored to the specific activity and target group.
- **Timeline:** After certain activity, starting January 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A continuous improvement process based on participant feedback, ensuring that future activities are more inclusive, effective, and aligned with the expectations of vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 4.2. Impact Assessment

Regularly assess the impact of engagement strategies through qualitative and quantitative measures to ensure they are meeting the desired outcomes.

### Actions:

#### 4.2.1. Impact assessment document

- **Description:** Towards the end of the project, we will conduct an analysis of the effectiveness of the project activities on individual vulnerable groups.
- **Tools:** Comparison of the number of representatives from vulnerable groups involved before and after the project, surveys on the satisfaction of those involved and their suggestions for improvements in various areas.
- **Timeline:** April – June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Impact assessment document
- **Responsible person:** Urška Bajec Rupnik (ITB)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VG

# Cross-cutting actions and strategy alignment

## **Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations:**

Strengthen partnerships with organizations that serve seniors, rural women, and children with learning difficulties. These collaborations can amplify reach, build trust, and foster consistent community engagement.

## **Tailored Communication and Outreach:**

Use accessible, empathetic communication approaches tailored to each group, employing community meetings, social media, and local media to keep these groups informed and involved.

## **Long-Term Commitment and Sustainability:**

Embed strategies for sustained involvement through capacity-building initiatives that empower local community groups, ensuring continuity beyond the project duration.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Regularly review participation rates, feedback, and engagement levels across all groups. Adjust strategies based on collected data to ensure continuous improvement in inclusion efforts.

# IV. CONCLUSIONS

The **Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark Action Plan** represents a comprehensive and inclusive approach to integrating vulnerable groups—seniors, rural women, and youth with brain drain into the geopark’s activities and broader sustainable development goals. By addressing their unique needs and fostering active participation, the plan creates a framework for long-term social, cultural, and environmental sustainability.

## Key Achievements

### 1. Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups:

Seniors have been engaged as storytellers, serving as the foundation for creating a new experience in the Geopark, and also as guides.

Rural women have been supported in entrepreneurial and participatory activities, showcasing their skills and contributing to local economic development.

Young people were engaged through workshops, excursions and programmes designed to strengthen their connection to the region and highlight opportunities within their local community.

### 2. Strengthened Community Involvement:

By actively involving local communities in decision-making, tourism management, and cultural preservation, the geopark has fostered a stronger sense of ownership and pride among its residents.

### 3. Sustainable Tourism Practices:

Activities such as participatory mapping, inclusive interpretive programs, and stakeholder workshops have ensured that tourism development remains aligned with the needs of the environment and the community.

### 4. Capacity Building and Skill Development:

Through trainings in digital literacy, storytelling, and sustainable practices, vulnerable groups have been empowered to actively contribute to and benefit from Geopark initiatives.

## 5. Improved Communication and Feedback Mechanisms:

Regular feedback forms and community surveys have established a robust mechanism for adapting and improving activities based on participant experiences and community insights.

### Future Directions

**Establishing long-term collaboration.** Vulnerable groups will be included in future activities, particularly in the areas of culinary offerings, guiding services, student work, and programs for school groups.

**Continued Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessments, feedback, and adjustments will ensure that the action plan remains effective and aligned with the evolving needs of the community.

**Embedding Inclusivity in Strategic Planning:** The lessons learned from this action plan will be integrated into the geopark's strategic planning to ensure inclusivity remains a central focus for future initiatives.

### Final Vision

This action plan paves the way for Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark to become a model of inclusivity, resilience, and community-driven heritage conservation within the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. By valuing the voices and contributions of vulnerable groups, the Geopark strengthens its identity as a place where natural and cultural heritage are not only preserved but also celebrated by and for the people who call it home.

# V. ANNEXES

Annex A – Action Plan Logical Matrix

Annex B – Action Plan Evaluation Tool

ANNEX A: Logical matrix												
Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions			1.4. Engagement campaign budget	1.5. Transnational exchanges budget	Time frame	Connection to SO2 (especially 2.3.)	Connection to SO3
					VG 1	VG 2	VG 3					
<b>1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups</b>												
Defined Vulnerable Groups	Identify and classify vulnerable groups.	Clear understanding of who and where the vulnerable groups are.	Surveys, community mapping.	High	ISOLATED ELDERLY	YOUTH - BRAIN DRAIN	RURAL WOMAN			01/2024 - 01/2025	searching for organisations/NGOs, suitable for involvement into the creating the Geopark Experience, as well as implementation of Geopark experience for visitors	searching for organisations/NGOs, suitable for involvement into the management of visitors as well as implementation of Geopark experience for visitors
					research the associations of elderly people, youth and rural women in Geopark establishing a list of associations, NGOs, and contact lists contact associations, NGOs with collaboration proposals organise meetings and presentation of Geopark, activities and possibilities of collaboration			travel- 500,00€	/			
					sign action plan/management - communication activities and informing NGOs and community Organizations about the project progress and its activities (social elderly, persons communication, post communication and via organisations of youth, via social media, educational institutions, organisations of young people rural women, phone communication, persons, post letters, social media in some cases)			travel- 500,00€	/			
Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations	Partner with NGOs and local organisations.	Better reach and trust with vulnerable groups.	MOUs, partnership agreements.	High	Review of legislation regarding food preparation, storage, service, and similar matters, review of employment options for retirees or payment for services performed by them. Exchange with VG groups from other Geoparks					6/2024 - 12/2025	raising competence on a knowledge about the nature and cultural heritage in Geopark as a possible training of tourist guides	raising competence in knowledge about the management of visitors and infrastructure protection
Formalised collaboration inside the vulnerable groups	Facilitate the formation of groups among vulnerable populations.	Stronger internal cohesion and advocacy.	Training workshops, technical support.	High						12/2025	involving VG in the creation of Geopark Experience	involving VG in the plan of visitors dispersion
<b>2. Well-understood Vulnerable Groups</b>												
Needs Assessment	Conduct surveys and focus groups.	Detailed understanding of needs and challenges.	Surveys, focus groups.	High	implement focus group with elderly people/organisations, elaborate a plan of common activities (short guided visits of nature attractions in Geopark (PISA, study tour to Geopark Karavans/Karavankeni), transnational exchange	implement focus groups with youth organisations, schools, elaborate a plan of common activities (creation of promotional tools for Geopark Experience), establish group of volunteers, working on the activities, transnational exchange	implement focus groups with rural women organisations in the area, elaborate a plan of common activities (short guided visits of nature attractions in Geopark (PISA) in connection with isolated elderly), workshops for preparing meal (picnic), inspirational exchange			6/2025	research their needs and try to involve them in the SO2 activities (Geopark Experience creation and implementation)	research their needs and try to involve them in the SO3 activities (visitor management)
Exploring World Views	Understand perspectives on environment and experiences.	Insights to inform better management and visitor experiences.	Observations, cultural studies.	High	Fieldtrips for better understanding of geology and nature in the Geopark, workshops for collecting stories for SO2 experience/structured interviews to gather insights about the tourism in Geopark	Structured interviews to gather insights about the tourism in Geopark, including students in experience planning, Organisation of a presentation on youth work in Halyk Geopark	Structured interviews to gather insights about the tourism in Geopark, Fieldtrips for better understanding of geology and nature in the Geopark			und 6/2025	collecting stories for Geopark Experience	collecting proposals for concrete measures for dispersion of visitors
Communication and Outreach	Build trust through empathetic communication.	Improved relationships and engagement.	Community meetings, social media.	High	communication via emails, personal communication, social media posts, final event	communication via emails, personal communication, social media posts, final event	communication via emails, personal communication, social media posts, final event			permanent	promotion of their involvement into SO2 activities	promotion of their involvement into SO3 activities
Tailored Communication Strategies	Use accessible and varied communication methods.	Inclusive and effective communication.	Multi-language materials, various media channels.	High	preparation of letters, short presentation of nature attractions, initiatives with plan of study tours, etc., create tailored communication plan communicating through email, using list, newsletters, regular working meetings	preparation of creative posts on social media, create tailored communication plan communicating through mail group or even something that youth use (e.g. Snapchat), newsletters	preparation of creative posts on social media, create tailored communication plan communicating through post communication, phone communication, mail communication, regular working meetings	1.000,00€ - external - 5 posts, 1		12/2025		
Regular Engagement	Establish regular communication channels.	Continuous involvement of vulnerable groups.	Newsletters, community forums, social media.	High						permanent	organising workshops on creating experiences process for VG	
<b>3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development</b>												
Stakeholder Involvement	Include vulnerable group representatives in planning.	Inclusive and representative policies and plans.	Workshops, consultation meetings.	High	involve VG in planning future activities in the Geopark, including the involvement of representatives of vulnerable groups	involve VG in planning future activities in the Geopark, including the involvement of representatives of vulnerable groups	involve VG in planning future activities in the Geopark, including the involvement of representatives of vulnerable groups			permanent		
Policy Framework	Develop flexible and adaptive policies.	Policies that support diverse and changing needs.	Policy guidelines, adaptive plans.	High	Elaborate plan to include VG in the activities for long-term cooperation, elderly (as a tourist guides, game masters, rangers, counting traffic)	Elaborate plan to include VG in the activities for long-term cooperation (as a tourist guides, game masters, rangers, counting traffic)	Elaborate plan to include VG in the activities for long-term cooperation (as a tourist guides, game masters, rangers, counting traffic)			6/2025	agreement with VG to include them in the implementation of Geopark Experience (as game masters, tourist guides, and picnic providers)	agreement with VG to include them in the implementation of Geopark Experience (as game masters, tourist guides, and picnic providers)
Long-term Commitment	Ensure sustained engagement strategies.	Long-term support and positive outcomes.	Strategic plans, continuous funding.	High	integrate activities aimed at supporting vulnerable groups into the long-term strategic plan of the Geopark. This includes developing a clear events calendar to ensure consistent engagement.	integrate activities aimed at supporting vulnerable groups into the long-term strategic plan of the Geopark. This includes developing a clear events calendar to ensure consistent engagement.	integrate activities aimed at supporting vulnerable groups into the long-term strategic plan of the Geopark. This includes developing a clear events calendar to ensure consistent engagement.			6/2025	agreement with VG to include them in the implementation of Geopark Experience (as game masters, tourist guides, and picnic providers)	agreement with VG to include them in the implementation of Geopark Experience (as game masters, tourist guides, and picnic providers)
Education and Training	Provide tailored education and skills training.	Empowered and skilled individuals.	Training programs, workshops.	High	study tours on the nature attractions are the training for tourist guides, encourage them to take a training organised by VR and become tourist guide, various workshops with different topics (collecting stories...), study tour to Geopark Karavans/Karavankeni)	organise creative workshops for youth to include them in the presentation and promotion of Geopark Experience within the group of volunteers organise listings of the Geopark Experience and get their opinions and ideas to improve the experience, listing entries, study tour to Geopark Karavans/Karavankeni)	organise several education workshops on preparing meals for picnic, study tours to nature attractions, regular communication, study tour to Geopark Karavans/Karavankeni)			10/2024 - 6/2025	provide trainings for tourist guides (organise training and training for game masters, study tour to Geopark Experience	provide trainings for tourist guides (organise training and training for game masters, study tour to Geopark Experience
<b>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>												
Feedback Mechanisms	Implement continuous feedback systems.	Real-time insights for timely improvements.	Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.	High	collect feedback on implemented measures (google forms, personal meetings)	collect feedback on implemented measures (google forms, personal meetings)	collect feedback on implemented measures (google forms, personal meetings)			4/2025 - 6/2025	involving VG into pilot testing, (collect feedback information (person communication)	collect feedback on implemented measures (google forms, personal meetings)
Impact Assessment	Regularly assess impact with qualitative and quantitative measures.	Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement.	Impact surveys, case studies, data analysis tools.	High	impact assessment document	impact assessment document	impact assessment document			6/4/2025	personal evaluation	personal evaluation

ANNEX B EVALUATION TOOL														
Objective	Activity	Result	Applies to VG	SDGs	Horizontal Principles	Deadline	Responsible person and organization	Stage	Evaluation 1 January 2025	Evaluation 2 June 2025	Evaluation 3 January 2026	Evaluation 4 June 2026		
									Stage	Observations	Stage	Observations	Stage	Observations
1. Clearly Mapped Value chain/strategic sub-theme group	1.1.1. Research on the territory and potential representatives of the sub-theme group	A comprehensive list of potential partners, including their expertise, interests, and needs in the action plan.	Seniors, Women, Youth			1.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						SDG
1. Clearly Mapped Value 1.1.2. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	1.1.2.1. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	1 presentation - event	Seniors			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						horizontal processes
1. Clearly Mapped Value 1.1.2. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	1.1.2.2. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	1 presentation - event	Youth			10.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
1. Clearly Mapped Value 1.1.2. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	1.1.2.3. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	1 presentation - event	Youth			10.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
1. Clearly Mapped Value 1.1.2. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	1.1.2.4. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	3 presentations - events	Women			1.2025	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
1. Clearly Mapped Value 1.1.2. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	1.1.2.5. Presentations of research activities to sub-theme groups	3 presentations - events	Women			1.2025	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
1. Clearly Mapped Value 1.2.1. Signing partnerships or agreements with local NGOs and other stakeholders	1.2.1.1. Signing partnerships or agreements with local NGOs and other stakeholders	Agreed action development in obtaining precise information on which formal collaboration will be established	Seniors, Women, Youth			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
1. Clearly Mapped Value 1.2.1. Signing partnerships or agreements with local NGOs and other stakeholders	1.2.1.2. Review of legislation regarding food preparation, storage, and other matters	Obtaining precise information on which formal collaboration will be established	Women			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
1. Clearly Mapped Value 1.2.1. Signing partnerships or agreements with local NGOs and other stakeholders	1.2.1.3. Overview of equipment options for delivery or payment	Obtaining precise information on which formal collaboration will be established	Seniors			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
1. Clearly Mapped Value 1.2.1. Signing partnerships or agreements with local NGOs and other stakeholders	1.2.1.4. Overview of equipment options for delivery or payment	The site established and the practical transfer of good practice to our area or from our area to others	Seniors, Women, Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value individuals	2.1.1. Implement a focus group with included organizations	Implemented focus group	Seniors			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value individuals	2.1.2. Implement a focus group with included organizations	Implemented focus group	Seniors			1.2025	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value individuals	2.1.3. Implement a focus group with included organizations	Implemented focus group	Youth			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.1.2. Elaborate a plan of common activities	2.1.2.1. Elaborate a plan of common activities	plan of common activities	Seniors			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.1.2. Elaborate a plan of common activities	2.1.2.2. Elaborate a plan of common activities	plan of common activities	Women			1.2025	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.1.2. Elaborate a plan of common activities	2.1.2.3. Elaborate a plan of common activities	plan of common activities	Youth			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.1.3. Organizing a Thematic Exchange with the sub-theme group	2.1.3.1. Organizing a Thematic Exchange with the sub-theme group	Present the opportunity to the groups, discuss and select a suitable destination, contact the destination, discuss and arrange the trip, a report of the exchange, a set of actionable recommendations for improving sub-theme group engagement, based on shared experiences	Seniors, Women, Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.2.1. Facilitate for better understanding of geology and nature in the Decapods	2.2.1.1. Facilitate for better understanding of geology and nature in the Decapods	at least 3 field trips	Seniors, Women			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.2.2. Workshops for collecting stories for SDG experience	2.2.2.1. Workshops for collecting stories for SDG experience	at least 3 workshops	Seniors			1.2025	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.2.3. Including students in experience planning	2.2.3.1. Including students in experience planning	at least 3 meetings, workshops	Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.2.4. Organizing a presentation on youth work in Viking Decapods	2.2.4.1. Organizing a presentation on youth work in Viking Decapods	Doing young people a better insight into the opportunities offered by volunteering	Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.2.4. Organizing a presentation on youth work in Viking Decapods	2.2.4.2. Organizing a presentation on youth work in Viking Decapods	Report on comprehensive insights into youth's local impact	Youth, Seniors, Women			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.3.1. Focus on Decapod's social media and news of the website about the involvement of the sub-theme groups into project activities	2.3.1.1. Focus on Decapod's social media and news of the website about the involvement of the sub-theme groups into project activities	three posts per period	Seniors, Women, Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.3.1. Focus on Decapod's social media and news of the website about the involvement of the sub-theme groups into project activities	2.3.1.2. Focus on Decapod's social media and news of the website about the involvement of the sub-theme groups into project activities	three posts per period	Seniors, Women, Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.3.2. Organizing an Event open to the community also a	2.3.2.1. Organizing an Event open to the community also a	event	Seniors, Women, Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.4.1. Create internal communication plans	2.4.1.1. Create internal communication plans	communication plan	Seniors, Women, Youth			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
2. Wellunderstood Value 2.5.1. Regular working meetings	2.5.1.1. Regular working meetings	2 meetings per period	Seniors, Women, Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
3. Inclusive Planning and including the involvement of representatives of sub-theme groups	3.1.1. Involve VG in planning future activities in the Decapods	Increased representation of sub-theme groups in Decapod governance, fostering inclusivity and ensuring their voices are heard in strategic decisions.	Seniors, Women, Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
3. Inclusive Planning and including the involvement of representatives of sub-theme groups	3.2.1. Elaboration plan to include VG in the activities for long-term cooperation, which can be mutual projects, game meetings, meetings	long-term collaboration plan	Seniors, Women, Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
3. Inclusive Planning and including the involvement of representatives of sub-theme groups	3.3.1. Including specific activities into the Decapod's Strategy Plan	An updated Strategy Plan	Youth, Women, Seniors			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
3. Inclusive Planning and including the involvement of representatives of sub-theme groups	3.4.1. Organize training sessions and workshops for meeting	at least 3 workshops	Women, Seniors, Youth			12.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
3. Inclusive Planning and including the involvement of representatives of sub-theme groups	3.4.2. Setting up blogs	2 events	Youth			11.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
3. Inclusive Planning and including the involvement of representatives of sub-theme groups	3.4.3. Student work at site points	student work during the summertime	Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
4. Monitoring and Evaluation assessment meetings	4.1.1. Monitoring and Evaluation assessment meetings	always	Seniors, Women, Youth			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						
4. Monitoring and Evaluation assessment meetings	4.1.2. Monitoring and Evaluation assessment meetings	document	Youth, Seniors, Women			8.2024	Ulrika B. Ripard	In progress						

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
**Danube GeoTour Plus**

# **Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Karawanken- Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark**

Deliverable 1.2.1

# Danube Geo Tour Plus

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced Geopark Communities

DRP0200085

## Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Geopark Karawanken–Karavanke Deliverable 1.2.1

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

**Programme:** Interreg Danube Transnational Programme

**Priority 3:** A more social Danube Region

**Specific Objective 3.3:** Socio-economic development through heritage, culture and tourism

**Project Duration:** 01/2024 to 06/2026

**Responsible Partner:** PP3 – EGTC Geopark Karawanken/Karavanke

Date: 30.11.2024

Version: 1.0.1.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Context

The **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** spans a remarkable cross-border region where Slovenia and Austria's natural and cultural landscapes meet. This region is home to diverse communities, facing different social and economic challenges. The action plan emphasises engaging these communities, especially vulnerable groups, to foster empowerment, equity, and sustainable use of the Geopark's resources.

Building on the common strategy developed under the **Danube GeoTour Plus project**, this plan seeks to:

1. Address the specific needs and enhance collaboration with vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities, Elderly, and youth in the Geopark communities.
2. Actively engage these groups in the Geopark's activities, educational programs, and cultural heritage initiatives.
3. Create engaging and innovative activities that combine the Geopark's geological features with historical stories and a contemporary approach to tourism that is accessible to everyone.

The **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke Action Plan adopts a tailored strategy that emphasizes:**

- Enhance collaboration and establish new partnerships with local stakeholders, NGOs, educational institutions, and communities to identify and comprehend the unique challenges faced by vulnerable groups.
- Co-creating initiatives through workshops and collaborative events to ensure community-driven solutions.
- Implementing focused actions that improve short-term inclusion and long-term capacity building in the Geopark.

The action plan promotes sustainability by aligning with the comprehensive **Danube GeoTour Plus strategy**. This includes incorporating members of vulnerable groups into Geopark communities, allowing them to play an active role in developing tourism and cultural heritage experiences, thereby contributing to the Geopark's dynamic identity.

These efforts will be supported by continuous monitoring and evaluation, ensuring the plan adapts to community feedback and evolving needs.

This strategy highlights the dedication of **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** to function as a dynamic, inclusive, and sustainable centre for its communities and visitors alike.

## 1.2. Territory, threats, trends and needs

### Territory

The **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** stretches across a distinctive cross-border area between Slovenia and Austria, encompassing five municipalities in Slovenia and nine in Austria. Six out of nine municipalities in Austria are bilingual, which enhances the value of the cross-border region and supports the minority living in these areas. The Geopark promotes the use of both German and Slovenian throughout its entire area—this includes presentations, communications, events, information boards, guiding, and more. This approach helps strengthen the connection between the communities and supports the minority populations residing outside the bilingual municipalities.

This region is home to varied geological structures, including the Periadriatic Lineament, and boasts a wealth of cultural landscapes.

Settlements are clustered in the valley regions, whereas the mountainous zones are lightly populated. In the past, the local economy primarily relied on mining coal, lead, and zinc, alongside steel production.

The Geopark acts as a hub for sustainable tourism, educational initiatives, cross-border collaboration, and regional growth.

### Threats

- **Depopulation and Isolation:**

The **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** experiences a negative population trend mainly due to an aging population and a high outward migration rate.

Communities within the Geopark are witnessing a significant out-migration of young people in search of job opportunities. This trend results in population decline and increased isolation among Elderly. Such changes disrupt community vitality and have a particularly profound impact on Carinthian Slovenes, whose cultural heritage risks becoming marginalised. Furthermore, the limited social and economic opportunities available hinder these groups' ability to integrate into Geopark activities.

- **Economic Inequality:**

Today, there is a lack of employment opportunities, apart from the manufacturing sector (e.g., Mahle-Filterbetrieb, Bosch Mahle Turbo Systems, Metal Ravne d.o.o., Tab d.o.o.) and the tourist sector. The major employment centers are in St. Michael ob Bleiburg/Šmihel pri Pliberku, Bleiburg/Pliberk, Feistritz ob Bleiburg/ Bistrica nad Pliberkom, Ravne na Koroškem, Mežica, Žerjav and Črna na Koroškem.

**Ethnic minorities, youth, and Elderly** in our region face certain socio-economic disparities. The region represents the struggle with limited access to employment opportunities, which excluded them from tourism and Geopark initiatives. Elderly often face mobility challenges and have limited resources, making it difficult for them to engage in community or tourism activities. The unemployment rate in the region is around 8%, and more than half are over 50 years old.

**The Carinthian Slovenes** and other vulnerable groups, which work to preserve their traditions and history face challenges such as isolation and demographic changes.

- **Underutilization of Community Knowledge:**

Vulnerable groups, such as **Elderly** and **minorities**, possess valuable cultural and historical knowledge. However, the absence of structured opportunities has hindered their involvement in storytelling, guided tours, and heritage preservation. This limitation restricts the Geopark's ability to provide enriched experiences for visitors.

**Young people** could have the opportunity to gain experience based on the principle of educational experience in the field and in the Geopark facilities. In this way, individuals could take the initiative to actively participate in the Geopark processes.

All of these possibilities strengthen the starting points for exploring opportunities and strengthening cooperation between the Geopark and vulnerable groups.

## Trends

- **Tourism Growth and Infrastructure Strain:**

The **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** has gained greater interest from visitors due to its geological, natural and cultural heritage. However, the current infrastructure is underprepared for sustained growth, leading to overcrowding and environmental strain. This growth also presents untapped opportunities to involve vulnerable groups, such as integrating Elderly as cultural ambassadors or creating youth-driven tourism projects.

- **Innovation in Tourism through Technology:**

The Geopark is exploring innovative methods to make its geological, natural, and cultural assets more accessible. This includes using **virtual reality (VR)** for guided tours and creating **interactive mobile exhibitions**. These tools provide new ways to engage vulnerable groups, such as youth and Elderly, by encouraging their participation in content creation and tourism activities.

## Needs

- **Capacity Building for Vulnerable Groups:**

Targeted initiatives are needed to empower groups like **ethnic minorities, Elderly, and youth**. For example, training programs can help these groups develop skills in digital storytelling, tourism, and cultural preservation, as well as learning and ensuring their active engagement in Geopark activities.

- **Enhanced Accessibility and Infrastructure:**

Improving physical and digital accessibility is essential. **VR** and **mobile exhibition** tools can make the Geopark's assets more inclusive.

- **Collaborative Engagement and Inclusion:**

Building and strengthening collaborations with NGOs, local organizations, and community leaders is vital for engaging vulnerable populations. Organized activities such as participatory mapping, workshops, and joint forums play a role in integrating

their perspectives into Geopark initiatives. This approach ensures that their concerns are recognized, addressed, and resolved, ultimately fostering a sense of belonging.

## 2. VULNERABLE GROUPS

The **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** operates as a cross-border UNESCO Global Geopark (formal structure: **EGTC Geopark Karawanken/Karavanke** – European Grouping for territorial cooperation), fostering sustainable development, cultural heritage preservation, and community inclusion across Slovenia and Austria. As a key partner in the INTERREG Danube Region project **Danube GeoTour Plus**, Geopark is committed to integrating vulnerable groups into its activities, ensuring equitable access to its cultural, educational, and economic opportunities.

### Identifying Vulnerable Groups

Aligned with the goals of the INTERREG Danube Region project **Danube GeoTour Plus**, Geopark recognizes vulnerable groups as those facing significant barriers to participation in social, cultural, and economic life due to geographic, social, or economic challenges. The action plan prioritizes three key groups: **ethnic minorities**, **Elderly**, and **youth**. These groups are identified based on their specific needs and their potential contributions to Geopark's mission of inclusive growth and heritage promotion.

### 2.1. Ethnic Minorities

#### Ethnic minorities – Carinthian Slovenes

One of our main Associated Strategic Partners (ASP) and a vulnerable group within the framework of the INTERREG Danube Region project **Danube GeoTour Plus** is the **Community of Carinthian Slovenes (SKS)**, an ethnic minority association involved in our activities.

The Community of Carinthian Slovenes (SKS) was founded on 25.6.2003 and has been a member of FUEN (Federal Union of European Nationalities) since 2012. It is a non-partisan representative organization dedicated to advocating for the interests of the Slovenian ethnic and minority group in Carinthia. The SKS is one of three official representative organizations of the Slovene minority in Carinthia.

The community engages in projects focused on language preservation, education, economic empowerment, social responsibility, and fostering societal tolerance. Particular attention is given to the older generation of the Slovenian national community. The organization also prioritizes strengthening cross-border relations between Austria and Slovenia, which serve as a vital foundation for preserving and promoting Slovenian culture and language in Carinthia.

Currently, the SKS has more than 1,300 members, including elderly individuals, from 36 municipalities within the bilingual area of Carinthia.

## 2.2. Elderly in Rural and Remote Areas

### Elderly

Within the Geopark, often experience isolation, reduced mobility, and limited access to services and social activities. These challenges can diminish their quality of life and prevent them from actively participating in community activities. However, Elderly possess invaluable knowledge of local traditions, environmental practices, and historical events. By engaging them in storytelling the Geopark not only combats isolation but also preserves its intangible heritage while promoting intergenerational knowledge exchange. Key partners in these efforts include associations of pensioners, seniors, and volunteers within the Geopark area.

## 2.3. Youth

### Youth

Because of the risk of the so-called brain drain among young people, especially on the Slovenian side of the Geopark, several organizations have been established in the cross-border Geopark area to address this issue and to support and encourage young individuals to stay in the region. One such organization is KOR-NET (Network of Supportive Environments for Youth), which has offices in Geopark municipalities on the Slovenian side, with KOMPLEKS (Koroška Youth Cultural Centre) and ALP Peca as partners. This network, through its info points, workstations, and virtual youth incubators, creates the conditions for improving the quality of life (fostering active participation of young people, developing life and career skills, etc.) with the aim of reducing brain drain and building a better future for young people in the Koroška region.

Additionally, the Geopark addresses this vulnerable group by integrating the Geopark network of schools into its annual school topic.

# 3. ACTIONS

## OBJECTIVE 1: CLEARLY MAPPED VULNERABLE GROUPS

### 3.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups

To integrate vulnerable groups effectively into its activities, the **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** focuses on identifying, analysing, and engaging these communities. This involves understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics. This step ensures an inclusive approach where their needs, contributions, and potential are recognized and supported through targeted actions.

#### Planned Actions

##### 3.1.1. Stakeholder Analysis

- **Description:** Identify and evaluate local stakeholders such as Elderly' clubs, minority associations, and youth organizations. These groups will act as key partners in engaging vulnerable populations and integrating them into Geopark initiatives.
- **Methods:** Conduct stakeholder mapping, structured interviews, and community meetings to understand their capacities, interests, and roles.
- **Timeline:** January–December 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - A detailed map of stakeholders, including their capabilities and potential roles in supporting vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

##### 3.1.2. Integration of NGOs and Organizations

- **Description:** Develop and strengthen formal partnerships with NGOs and local organizations already working with vulnerable groups. These partnerships will help leverage expertise, trust, and resources for effective engagement.
- **Methods:** Focus group discussions, further joint planning sessions, and co-design Geopark activities in the frame of the project. Feedback forms for members of vulnerable groups.
- **Timeline:** May 2024 – December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:**

- Formalized collaborations with organizations, with clear plans for joint activities.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej, Gerald Hartmann
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.1.3. Networking and Capacity Building

- **Description:** Organize networking events and capacity-building workshops for vulnerable groups, enabling them to engage actively in initiatives through EGTC Geopark Karawanken/Karavanke structures such as working groups, etc.
- **Methods:** Organize and invite representatives of the initiatives involved in the project through EGTC Geopark Karawanken/Karavanke structures such as working groups, etc.
- **Timeline:** Ongoing.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Empowered vulnerable groups with skills and networks to participate in Geopark programs and activities.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej, Gerald Hartmann

### 3.1.4. Evaluation

- **Description:** Conduct an evaluation campaign with Geopark team members in partnership with the representatives of vulnerable groups.
- **Methods:** Standardized evaluation tools, such as surveys, and focus groups involving participants from vulnerable groups.
- **Timeline:** September 2024 – June 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Creating a profile of each vulnerable group as a "character", by understanding their average needs, activities, struggles, status, positive and negative traits and behaviour patterns (Monitoring).
- **Responsible person:** Urosh Grabner, Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 3.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations

Collaboration with NGOs and local community groups is essential for ensuring effective engagement with vulnerable populations within the **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke**. These organizations often have established trust and direct connections with groups such as ethnic

minorities, Elderly, and youth. Leveraging their expertise and networks strengthens the Geopark's capacity to design and implement inclusive activities tailored to community needs.

## Planned Actions

### 3.2.1. Establishing Partnerships with Key Organizations

- **Description:** Develop and strengthen agreements with NGOs and community organizations that work closely with vulnerable groups, such as Carinthian Slovene minority associations - SKS, Elderly' clubs, and youth organizations. These partnerships will focus on co-developing programs that integrate vulnerable groups into Geopark initiatives, including tourism development and cultural heritage preservation.
- **Methods:** Use tools like memorandums of understanding to formalize collaborations and define roles and responsibilities.
- **Timeline:** May 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Formalized agreements with NGOs or community organizations, supported by a clear schedule of joint activities to enhance inclusivity in Geopark operations.
- **Responsible person:** Gerald Hartmann, Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.2.2. Co-Organizing Inclusive Community Events

- **Description:** Partner with NGOs to co-host events that bring together vulnerable groups and broader community members. These events will focus on building awareness, fostering social inclusion, and promoting active participation in Geopark activities. We will seek common interests in organising the event by communicating regularly with representatives of vulnerable groups.
- **Methods:** Focus group discussions, collaborative planning meetings, event management workshops.
- **Timeline:** Ongoing throughout 2024–2025.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - At least one large-scale community events co-organized with NGOs, with active participation from vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej, Sarah Shrestha
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.2.3. Enhancing Outreach Through NGO Networks

- **Description:** Utilize the existing communication channels and networks of partner organizations to improve outreach to vulnerable groups. This includes promoting Geopark programs, gathering feedback, and ensuring regular engagement with marginalized communities.
- **Methods:** Joint development of social media campaigns and website news to reach wider audiences.
- **Timeline:** From May 2024 onward.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Increased awareness and participation of vulnerable groups in Geopark activities, facilitated by NGO partnerships.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej, Urosh Grabner
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.3. Formalised collaboration inside the Vulnerable Groups

The Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke is committed to fostering internal cohesion and advocacy among vulnerable groups by encouraging formalized collaboration. This involves leveraging existing networks within the Geopark's structures and committees to enable these groups to play an active and sustainable role in Geopark activities.

## OBJECTIVE 2: WELL-UNDERSTOOD VULNERABLE GROUPS

### 3.4. Needs Assessment

The Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke recognizes the importance of conducting thorough needs assessments to better understand the specific challenges, expectations, and barriers faced by vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities, elderly, and youth. This process involves engaging directly with these groups and leveraging existing studies, such as those from municipalities, NGOs, and prior projects, to inform inclusive Geopark initiatives.

#### Planned Actions

#### 3.4.1. Facilitating Open Discussions Between Staff, Vulnerable Groups, and Key Stakeholders

- **Description:** Organize structured discussions to gather insights into the needs and expectations of vulnerable groups, such as Carinthian Slovenes, Elderly, and youth, for participation in Geopark activities. These sessions will focus on understanding barriers to inclusion, potential contributions, and desired support mechanisms.
- **Methods:** Workshops, focus groups, and surveys.
- **Timeline:** January - December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - A comprehensive communication network established with relevant stakeholders.
  - A detailed needs assessment report summarizing the specific challenges and opportunities for vulnerable group engagement.
  - A list of contacts and ongoing communication channels for continued collaboration.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej, Sarah Shrestha
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.4.2. Organizing Transnational Knowledge Exchange Program

- **Description:** The transnational exchange program, in collaboration with **a partner from the Danube GeoTour Plus project** (location yet to be decided), aims to exchange best practices for engaging vulnerable groups and promoting inclusive tourism. This includes collaborative workshops and joint activities between the Geoparks and these groups.
- **Methods:**
  - Facilitate knowledge-sharing workshops and site visits with a focus on sustainable engagement strategies with representatives of all three vulnerable groups accompanied by Geopark Project team members.
  - Focus group discussions with through the transfer of good practice and community involvement.
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - A report of the exchange, recommendations for improving vulnerable group engagement, based on shared experiences.
  - Presentation of selected Danube GeoTour Plus partners exchange programs.
  - Strengthened collaboration between Geoparks and local communities with a focus on vulnerable groups, enhancing mutual understanding and shared strategies.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Urosh Grabner
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 3.5. Exploring World Views and Space and Time Perception

The Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke is committed to understanding the perspectives and experiences of vulnerable groups. This understanding will help shape inclusive Geopark management practices, innovative visitor experiences, and community-focused tourism development.

### Planned Actions

#### 3.5.1. Organized Field Trips to Key Geopark Locations

- **Description:** Conduct a field trip to significant geological, natural, and cultural sites within the Geopark. These trips aim to deepen participants' connection to their environment while promoting understanding of the Geopark's geological and cultural significance.
- **Methods:** Guided hikes adapted to the individual vulnerable group or individuals, educational presentations, and interactive activities tailored to the needs of participants.
- **Timeline:** March 2025 – December 2025.
- **Participants:** Ethnic minorities, Elderly, and youth groups, including local schools and educational institutions, and members of community organizations.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - At least one field trip in the frame of the project conducted with active participation from vulnerable groups.
  - Increased awareness and appreciation of Geopark heritage among participants.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej, Urosh Grabner
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 3.5.2. Test Tours for the New VR Geopark Experience

- **Description:** Organize guided and self-guided tours using the **VR Geopark experience**. Feedback from participants will be used to refine the VR technology and storytelling content, ensuring it is accessible and engaging for all vulnerable groups.
- **Methods:** Conduct test tours at the **Geo.Dom Visitor Centre** and along designated trails, gathering participant feedback for improvements.
- **Timeline:** April–December 2025.
- **Participants:** Elderly, youth groups (e.g., members of the KOR-NET youth network), and ethnic minorities.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - VR tours tested and improved based on participant feedback.
  - Enhanced accessibility and relevance of VR content for diverse audiences.

- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.5.3. Participatory Workshops on Perceptions of Tourism and Identity

- **Description:** Facilitate workshops to explore vulnerable groups' views on tourism development and their connection to the Geopark's territorial identity. These workshops will inform the Geopark's strategies for sustainable and inclusive tourism.
- **Methods:** Focus groups, structured discussions, and collaborative exercises with participants.
- **Timeline:** January – July 2025.
- **Participants:** Ethnic minorities, elderly, and youth.
- **Expected Outcome:** Actionable recommendations for incorporating these perspectives into Geopark activities.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej, Gerald Hartmann
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 3.6. Communication and Outreach

The Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke emphasizes empathetic communication and outreach to ensure that vulnerable groups are effectively engaged in their activities. By building inclusive channels, the Geopark strengthens relationships, fosters mutual understanding, and highlights the contributions of vulnerable groups to the region's heritage and identity.

### Planned Actions

#### 3.6.1. Sharing Content on the Geopark's Social Media

- **Description:** Regularly share content, such as photos, stories, and updates, from vulnerable groups on the Geopark's social media channels. This action highlights the participation of Elderly, youth, and ethnic minorities in Geopark activities, creating a platform for broader representation.
- **Methods:** Use a content calendar, collect visuals and stories from vulnerable groups, and produce engaging social media posts.
- **Timeline:** Ongoing from May 2025.
- **Participants:** Ethnic minorities, elderly, youth and Geopark staff members.
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased online visibility and representation of vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Urosh Grabner
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Relevance to Vulnerable Groups (VGs):

- **VG1: Ethnic Minorities**

Communication and outreach initiatives provide ethnic minorities with opportunities to share their cultural heritage, stories, and perspectives, fostering stronger ties with the community.

- **VG2: Elderly**

Outreach actions empower Elderly by increasing their visibility, providing platforms to share their knowledge, and engaging them in intergenerational activities and Geopark initiatives.

- **VG3: Youth**

Youth benefit through active participation in storytelling, workshops, and social media campaigns, enabling them to connect with other generations and contribute to Geopark programs.

## 3.7. Regular Engagement

Establish regular communication channels such as community meetings, social media, and social media platforms to ensure that vulnerable groups are informed and engaged.

### Planned Actions:

#### 3.7.1. Annual meetings to inform vulnerable groups about Geopark activities

- **Description:** Hold regular meetings to update vulnerable groups on Geopark initiatives and gather feedback – Geopark workgroups.
- **Tools:** Meeting agendas, presentations, and feedback forms.
- **Timeline:** Once per year.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least one meeting per year.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

# OBJECTIVE 3: INCLUSIVE PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** actively involves representatives of vulnerable groups in the EGTC Geopark structures, such as working groups, ensuring their voices shape inclusive policies. Through education and training programs, the Geopark builds capacity among these populations while integrating their needs and contributions into its Strategy Cross border Active to promote sustained engagement and empowerment.

## 3.8. Stakeholder Involvement

The **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** prioritizes the active involvement of vulnerable groups to create inclusive and sustainable policies. Through participatory approaches, the Geopark ensures that the perspectives of ethnic minorities, Elderly, and youth are embedded in its strategic initiatives.

### Planned Actions

#### 3.8.1. Organizing Community Workshops on Tourism Impacts

- **Description:** Host workshops to facilitate discussions on how tourism affects vulnerable communities. These forums will create opportunities for Elderly and rural women to propose solutions and collaborate with tourism planners on strategies to minimize negative impacts and enhance benefits.
- **Methods:** Conduct structured workshops with experienced facilitators, using feedback mechanisms to collect actionable recommendations.
- **Timeline:** June 2025.
- **Participants:** Elderly, and representatives of local community organizations and tourism operators.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - At least one workshop per year.
  - A set of community-driven recommendations addressing tourism challenges and enhancing local involvement.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej, Sarah Shrestha
- **Relevant for:** VG2

## 3.9. Policy Framework

**The Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** prioritizes creating flexible and adaptive policies that incorporate the perspectives of vulnerable groups. By integrating their narratives and contributions, the Geopark aims to ensure inclusivity across its interpretation strategies and its activities.

## Planned Actions

### 3.9.1. Incorporating Inclusivity into Geopark Interpretation

- **Description:** Enhance the interpretation of the **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** heritage by integrating the cultural, historical, and personal narratives of vulnerable groups. This includes collecting stories from ethnic minorities and elderly and embedding them in interpretive materials such as guides and VR experiences.
- **Methods:**
  - Gather oral stories and traditions from elderly and ethnic minorities through interviews and storytelling sessions.
  - Engage youth in co-creating innovative digital and visual content for Geopark interpretation.
  - Conduct training sessions for Geopark guides to present inclusive and representative narratives.
- **Timeline:** January-June 2025.
- **Participants:** Ethnic minorities, elderly, youth, Geopark staff, and trained guides.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Inclusive interpretive materials, such as multilingual content, and VR-enhanced storytelling exhibits.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 3.10. Long-term Commitment

**The Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** is dedicated to embedding inclusivity into its long-term strategies. By integrating specific activities into its Crossborder Active Strategy, the Geopark aims to ensure consistent and meaningful engagement with vulnerable groups, adapting its approach to meet evolving needs.

## Planned Actions

### 3.10.1. Including Specific Activities for Vulnerable Groups in the Crossborder Active Strategy

By embedding activities for vulnerable groups into its Crossborder Active Strategy, **the Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** reinforces its long-term commitment to inclusivity and community engagement. This approach creates a sustainable framework for fostering equity, cultural preservation, and active participation from all community members.

### 3.10.2. Empowering Youth Through Geopark Opportunities

- **Description:** Creating jobs by hiring students, to help implement the Geopark Experience on tours, as well as in the Geopark visitor centres, enhancing experiences while reducing brain drain.
- **Methods:**
  - Seasonal employment through summer.
- **Timeline:** Permanent, seasonally.
- **Participants:** Youth
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Increased youth employment while enhancing Geopark visitor experiences.
- **Responsible person:** Gerald Hartmann, Lara Piko
- **Relevant for:** VG 3

## 3.11. Education and Training

The **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** recognizes the importance of tailored education and training programs to empower vulnerable groups. By building capacity and fostering skills, these programs strengthen the connection between vulnerable groups and Geopark activities, ensuring their active participation and long-term engagement. As part of the project, the Geopark will develop a mobile exhibition that will enable its staff to educate and train both children and teachers in geological, cultural and natural heritage.

### Planned Actions

#### 3.11.1. Interactive Training for Teachers and Youth

- **Description:** Host interactive workshop sessions in the frame of the Geopark annual school topic designed to engage teachers and children. These sessions will use creative methods.
- **Timeline:** Until June 2026.
- **Participants:** Teachers and children.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Improved educational settings connected to the Geopark.

- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej
- **Relevant for:** teachers and children

### 3.11.2. Geopark Mobile Exhibition

- **Description:** Setting up the Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke mobile exhibition is part of the Geopark experience aimed at motivating young people to engage with Geopark topics and raising awareness. The exhibition will be designed in a playful and interactive way, allowing children to learn about the Geopark in an engaging and exploratory manner. Schools from the Geopark area will be actively involved in the testing phase, as well as through the Geopark's annual school theme.
- **Timeline:** Constant.
- **Participants:** Teachers, youth and children.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Increased awareness about geological, cultural and natural topics.
- **Responsible person:** Sarah Shrestha, Lara Piko
- **Relevant for:** VG3

### 3.11.3. Geopark training programmes

- **Description:** Training programs for guides to enhance skills and knowledge in heritage interpretation.
- **Timeline:** Until the end of project.
- **Participants:** Elderly, youth, and Geopark staff
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Enhanced skills and knowledge among guides, leading to higher-quality tours and more engaging visitor experiences, while fostering professional development.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Sarah Shrestha
- **Relevant for:** VG2 and VG3

## OBJECTIVE 4: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To enhance the visitor experience, **the Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke** we will establish a network of three types of "visitor counters" in key locations (simple visitor counter (only counting hikers), visitor counters A-B (counting hikers with establishing direction of approach), and complex triple visitor counters (counting and distinguishing between vehicles, bikers and hikers with establishing direction of approach). This initiative will include eight new devices from the INTERREG Danube Region project **Danube GeoTour Plus**, strategically located to gather data, combined with five devices from the INTERREG SI-AT project **GreenTour** and nine from the INTERREG Central Europe project **HUMANITA**. All data collection will be done automatically (download from the distance to the dedicated web page for automatic analyses and data storage).

Due to the chosen coordinated method for monitoring (visitor flow) there are **no direct possibilities for engaging the community or vulnerable groups**. Except for the possibility of using the collected data for target groups involving in planning the infrastructure in the region, and the need to understand visitor flow, review, education and maintenance needs (has to be established yet).

However, the monitoring type may encompass actions similar to those in section 3.1.4, aimed at establishing a profile for the character of vulnerable groups with **a targeted survey**. This profile can be updated annually to set forth the principles of behaviour patterns, aligning with activities that finalize the monitoring outcomes.

### Planned Actions

#### 3.11.4. Evaluation Campaign: Targeted Survey Collaboration with Geopark Team and Vulnerable Groups

- **Description:** Conduct an evaluation campaign through a targeted survey with Geopark team members in partnership with the representatives of vulnerable groups.
- **Methods:** Targeted survey – focus groups involving participants from vulnerable groups.
- **Timeline:** September 2024 – June 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Creating a "character" profile, defining their average needs, activities, struggles, status, positive and negative traits, habits, hobbies and behaviour patterns. Divided into gender, age group and vulnerable group. Average "Joe" and "Jane" of individual target VG!
- **Responsible person:** Urosh Grabner, Lara Piko (backup)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.12. Feedback Mechanisms

**The Geopark Karawanken–Karavanke** prioritizes establishing robust feedback mechanisms to evaluate and improve its activities, ensuring they address the needs of vulnerable groups and align with the community's expectations. By systematically gathering feedback, the Geopark can refine its initiatives to foster greater inclusivity and engagement.

## Planned Actions

### 3.12.1. Implementing Feedback Systems for Continuous Improvement

- **Description:** After every Geopark activity involving vulnerable groups, implement a feedback process to assess participant satisfaction, identify areas for improvement, and gather suggestions for future initiatives. These feedback systems will be accessible and tailored to the specific characteristics of each vulnerable group.
- **Methods:**
  - Distribute feedback forms (both paper and digital formats) at the end of each activity.
  - Include multilingual options (German, Slovenian, English) to ensure inclusivity.
- **Timeline:** After each activity, beginning January 2025.
- **Participants:** Vulnerable groups involved in the project.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - A structured feedback process ensuring continuous improvement of Geopark initiatives.
  - Activities better aligned with the expectations and preferences of vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Broader Impact

By implementing structured feedback systems, the **Geopark Karawanken–Karavanke** ensures that its initiatives remain adaptable, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of vulnerable groups. This approach fosters trust, strengthens engagement, and enhances the overall impact of Geopark activities on the community.

## 3.13. Impact Assessment

**The Geopark Karawanken–Karavanke** is dedicated to systematically evaluating its initiatives to ensure they effectively address the needs of vulnerable groups. By implementing tailored impact assessment tools, the Geopark will gather actionable insights that inform continuous improvement.

## Planned Actions

### 3.13.1. Conducting Annual Surveys to Evaluate Impact

- **Description:** Implement community-wide surveys to measure the effectiveness of Geopark activities and their impact on vulnerable groups. These surveys will gather data on perceptions of inclusivity, tourism impacts, and recommendations for future initiatives, ensuring the Geopark's programs remain relevant and responsive.
- **Methods:**
  - Develop multilingual survey templates addressing key topics:
    - Perceptions of the Geopark's inclusivity and relevance to local life.
    - Tourism's economic, environmental, and social impact on the community.
    - Suggestions for new programs or improvements to existing ones.
  - Utilize various distribution methods:
    - Online surveys for broader reach.
    - In-person surveys during community events or meetings.
    - Door-to-door outreach in collaboration with local organizations.
- **Timeline:** Annually, starting February 2025.
- **Participants:** Vulnerable groups involved in the project.
- **Expected Outcome:**
  - Comprehensive survey results offering insights into the impact of Geopark activities.
  - Identification of areas for improvement and development.
- **Responsible person:** Lara Piko, Danijela Modrej
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### Broader Impact

The Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke's systematic approach to impact assessment ensures that its strategies remain adaptive, inclusive, and community-driven. By prioritizing feedback from vulnerable groups, the Geopark strengthens its connection to the community and enhances the sustainability of its programs.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

This action plan serves as a roadmap for integrating vulnerable groups into the **Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke**'s activities and initiatives. By addressing the unique challenges of ethnic minorities, Elderly, and youth, the Geopark fosters inclusivity, sustainability, and cultural preservation.

### **Key achievements include:**

- Empowering vulnerable groups to actively participate in Geopark initiatives.
- Strengthening community ties through collaborative planning and engagement.
- Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Geopark by integrating inclusivity into its strategic vision.

Future directions include scaling successful models, regular monitoring, and embedding inclusivity in all Geopark operations.

# 5. ANNEXES

## Annex A – Action Plan Logical Matrix

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions			1.4. Engagement campaigns budget	1.5. Transnational exchanges budget	Time frame	Connection to SO2 (especially 2.3.)	Connection to SO3
					VG 1	VG 2	VG 3					
Defined Vulnerable Groups	Identify and classify vulnerable groups.	Clear understanding of who and where the vulnerable groups are.	Surveys, community mapping.		2.000€	2.000€	Seasonally	Inclusion of youth and elderly in testing phase of geoexperiences and content creation. Collecting stories from elderly for purpose of storytelling. Inclusion of the Geopark network of schools (primary schools & gymnasiums) in the frame of Geopark annual topic – VR and interactive mobile Geopark experience exhibition.	Engagement of approx. 2 workers from the Employment Service in Austria to assist with the monitoring activities (installing devices...)			
					2.000€	2.000€	Seasonally					
Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations	Partner with NGOs and local organisations.	Better reach and trust with vulnerable groups.	MOUs, partnership agreements.		First meeting was already held (June 24), also through emails, phone, personal. Regular communication and networking within Geopark committees, working groups.	Personal and email communication with associations of pensioners, seniors - guided hikes and project presentations and conversations in our Visitor centre Geo Dom on Mt. Pezzen/Peca already held (June & July 24).	Personal and email communication with youth associations included in KOR-NET Network of Supportive Environment for Youth - conversation with agreement on the involvement of youth from the Geopark area in the frame of an event in Municipality of Ravne (April 24), project and activities presentation in our Visitor centre Geo Dom on Mt. Pezzen/Peca already held (May 24). The associations included in this network are also important representatives of NGOs (LZ Dravil, Regional association of handcraft, Alp Peca, Komplex).	04.-12.2024	Inclusion of associations of pensioners, seniors from the region in testing phase of Geopark experience. Inclusion of representatives of associations which are NGOs in testing phase.	Available data for internal use and assistance in managing hiking trails. The possibility of establishing a system for protecting vulnerable natural resources.		
					Collaboration within Geopark structures such as working groups of the EGTC Geopark Karawanken/Karavanke.							
Formalised collaboration inside the vulnerable groups	Facilitate the formation of groups among vulnerable populations.	Stronger internal cohesion and advocacy.	Training workshops, technical support.									
<b>2. Well-understood Vulnerable Groups</b>												

<b>Needs Assessment</b>	Conduct surveys and focus groups.	Detailed understanding of needs and challenges.	Surveys, focus groups.		Involvement within the working groups of EGTCS, Geopark meetings personal discussion about engagement actions and needs.	Involvement within the working groups of EGTCS, Geopark meetings personal discussion about engagement actions and needs. Guided tours and hikes.	Involvement within the working groups of EGTCS, Geopark meetings personal discussion about engagement actions and needs. Guided tours and hikes. Events, seminars for teachers, Workshops for school kids students in the frame of the Geopark annual topic.							Beginning of the year 2025	After collecting their needs and ideas we will collect stories and feedback and potentially try to integrate them in our Geopark experience Karawanke- Karawanke Trail with Real and Virtual Reality on guided and self-guided tours and interactive mobile Geopark experience exhibition.	
<b>Exploring World Views</b>	Understand perspectives on environment and experiences.	Insights to inform better management and visitor experiences.	Observations, cultural studies.		In the frame of organized guided tours and hikes for vulnerable groups we will highlight important aspects of nature preservation and behaviour in nature (raising awareness).	The communication is done in person, by phone, emails. Our vulnerable groups are already strongly involved in Geopark Karawanke structures, committee and working groups of the EGTCS Geopark Karawanke/Karawanke and we aim to further engage them through Danube GeoTour Plus activities.								Until December 2025	With gained knowledge the involved VCS will be able to forward it to the users of the Geopark Experience.	
<b>Communication and Outreach</b>	Build trust through empathetic communication.	Improved relationships and engagement.	Community meetings, social media.													
<b>Tailored Communication Strategies</b>	Use accessible and varied communication methods.	Inclusive and effective communication.	Multilingual materials, various media channels.		Preparation of presentations, Geopark experience information content in 3 languages (DE, SI, EN), homepage news.	Preparation of presentations, Geopark experience information content in 3 languages (DE, SI, EN), homepage news, social media posts.	Preparation of presentations, Geopark experience information content in 3 languages (DE, SI, EN), homepage news, social media posts.							2025 - 2026	Communication methods will be adapted to effectively engage the target audience.	Communication methods will be tailored to effectively promote awareness and encourage responsible behavior in nature.
<b>Regular Engagement</b>	Establish regular communication channels.	Continuous involvement of vulnerable groups.	Newsletters, community forums, social media.		Locals, municipality newsletters, personal communication, email and phone communication.	Locals, municipality newsletters, personal communication, email and phone communication.	Locals, municipality newsletters, personal communication, email and phone communication.							permanent	Ensuring continuous and recurring communication between GP and VCS	Ensuring continuous and recurring communication between GP and VCS
<b>3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development</b>																
<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>	Include vulnerable group representatives in planning.	Inclusive and representative policies and plans.	Workshops, consultation meetings.		Through EGTCS Geopark structures such as Working groups, meetings: Inclusion in testing phase of Geopark experience	Testing VR guided tours and guided hikes, collecting and planning of storytelling: Inclusion in test phase of Geopark experience	Testing VR Geopark experience in guided tours and guided hikes: Inclusion in the test phase of Geopark experience and interactive mobile Geopark experience exhibition.							April-December 2025	Stakeholders will contribute to the collection and planning of storytelling elements, which are integral to the Geopark Experience.	
<b>Policy Framework</b>	Develop flexible and adaptive policies.	Policies that support diverse needs.	Policy guidelines, adaptive plans.		This includes collecting stories from ethnic minorities and elderly and embedding them in interpretive materials such as guides and VR experiences.											
<b>Long-term Commitment</b>	Ensure sustained engagement strategies.	Long-term support and positive outcomes.	Strategic plans, continuous funding.		EGTCS Geopark Karawanke/Karawanke structures such as working groups.	Annually engagement workers from the Employment Service in Austria, engagement and involvement of volunteers as Geopark guides Assistants.	Creation of new jobs by funding/hiring young people (students) to help implement on tours, as well as in the Geopark visitor centre Geo Dam (Geopark guides Assistants) - Contribution to reducing brain drain.							permanent	GPk will actively engage local youth in delivering its Geopark Experience. They will play a key role as facilitators, providing interactive and educational experiences for visitors at the Geo Dom on the Peca Mountain.	

<b>Education and Training</b>	provide tailored education and skills training.	Empowered and skilled individuals.	Training programs, workshops.							2025 - 2026	We will provide appropriate training and education tailored to needs.	We will provide appropriate training and education tailored to needs.
<b>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>												
<b>Feedback Mechanisms</b>	Implement continuous feedback systems.	Real-time insights for timely improvements.	Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.							After each activity, beginning January 2025.	We will gather feedback from the participating vulnerable groups about the Geopark Experience and incorporate their input into our planning and improvements.	Based on previous experiences and results, we will identify best practices, strengthen and enhance cooperation between groups. Measures will be implemented based on the results of surveys conducted among vulnerable groups.
<b>Impact Assessment</b>	Regularly assess impact with quantitative and qualitative measures.	Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement.	Impact surveys, case studies, data analysis tools.							permanent	Collect insights from all vulnerable groups to assess the effectiveness and identify areas of improvement in our partnerships.	

# Annex B – Action Plan Evaluation Tool

Objective	Activity	Result	Applies to VG	SD goal	Priority	Deadline	Responsible person and organisation	Stage	Evaluation 1 January 2025	Observations	Stage	Evaluation 2 June 2025	Observations	Stage	Evaluation 3 January 2026	Observations	Stage	Evaluation 4 June 2026	Observations
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gr 3.1.1. Stakeholder Analysis	1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gr 3.1.2. Integration of NIOOs and Organizations	A detailed map of stakeholders, including the Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				1.12.2024													
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gr 3.1.2. Networking and Capacity Building	1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gr 3.1.4. Evaluation	Formalized collaborations with organizations, Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				June 2026													
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gr 3.2.1. Establishing Partnerships with Key Organizations	1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gr 3.2.2. Co-Organizing Inclusive Community Events	Created a profile of each vulnerable group a Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				December 2025													
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gr 3.2.3. Enhancing Outreach Through NGO Networks	1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Gr 3.4.1. Facilitating Open Discussions Between Staff, Vulnerable Gr	At least one large-scale community events of Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				June 2026													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.4.1. Facilitating Open Discussions Between Staff, Vulnerable Gr	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.4.2. Organizing Traditional Knowledge Exchange Program	Increased awareness and participation of vul Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				December 2025													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.4.2. Organizing Traditional Knowledge Exchange Program	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.4.3. Organizing Field Trips to Key Geopark Locations	A comprehensive communication network of Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				December 2025													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.4.3. Organizing Field Trips to Key Geopark Locations	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.5.1. Organized Field Trips to Key Geopark Locations	A detailed needs assessment report submit Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				December 2025													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.5.2. Test Tours for the New VR Geopark Experience	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.5.3. Participatory Workshops on Perceptions of Tourism and Deaf	Facilitated accessibility and relevance of VR Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				December 2025													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.5.3. Participatory Workshops on Perceptions of Tourism and Deaf	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.6.1. Sharing Content on the Geopark's Social Media	Facilitate workshops to explore vulnerable gr Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				July 2025													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.6.1. Sharing Content on the Geopark's Social Media	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.7.1. Annual meetings to inform vulnerable groups about Geopark	Increased online visibility and representation Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				June 2026													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.7.1. Annual meetings to inform vulnerable groups about Geopark	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.8.1. Organizing Community Workshops on Tourism Impacts	Hold regular meetings to update vulnerable g Ethnic minority, Seniors, Youth				Once per year													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.8.1. Organizing Community Workshops on Tourism Impacts	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.8.2. Organizing Community Workshops on Tourism Impacts	At least one workshop per year				June 2025													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.8.2. Organizing Community Workshops on Tourism Impacts	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.9.1. Incorporating Industry into Geopark Interpretation	A set of community-driven recommendations Elderly				June 2025													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.9.1. Incorporating Industry into Geopark Interpretation	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.10.1. Including Specific Activities for Vulnerable Groups within Geopark Opportunities	Inclusive interpretive materials, such as mult Ethnic minority, Elderly, Youth				June 2026													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.10.1. Including Specific Activities for Vulnerable Groups within Geopark Opportunities	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.10.2. Engaging Youth Through Geopark Opportunities	Increased youth employment within a ethnic Youth				June 2025													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.10.2. Engaging Youth Through Geopark Opportunities	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.11.1. Interactive Training for Teachers and Youth	Improved educational settings connected to 1 Youth				June 2026													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.11.1. Interactive Training for Teachers and Youth	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.11.2. Geopark Mobile Exhibition	Enhanced awareness about geological, cultural Youth				June 2026													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.11.2. Geopark Mobile Exhibition	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.12.1. Implementing Feedback Systems for Continuous Improvement	Enhanced skills and knowledge among guide Elderly, Youth				June 2026													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.12.1. Implementing Feedback Systems for Continuous Improvement	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.13.1. Conducting Annual Surveys to Evaluate Impact	Advised youth employment within the operations Ethnic minority, Elderly, Youth				June 2026													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.13.1. Conducting Annual Surveys to Evaluate Impact	2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.14.1. Evaluation Campaign Targeted Survey Collaboration with 'characters' profile defining their a Ethnic minority, Elderly, Youth	Comprehensive survey results offering insight Ethnic minority, Elderly, Youth				Permanent													
2. Well-understood Vulnerable Gr 3.14.1. Evaluation Campaign Targeted Survey Collaboration with 'characters' profile defining their a Ethnic minority, Elderly, Youth		Identification of areas for improvement, and of Ethnic minority, Elderly, Youth				Permanent													
						June 2025													

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
**Danube GeoTour Plus**

# **Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Hațeg Country Geopark**

Deliverable 1.2.1

# Danube Geo Tour Plus

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced  
Geopark Communities

DRP0200085

## Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Hațeg Country Geopark

### Deliverable 1.2.1

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

Programme: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme

Priority 3: A more social Danube Region

Specific Objective 3.3: Socio-economic development through heritage, culture  
and tourism

Project Duration 01/2024 to 06/2026

Responsible Partner: PP4 University of Bucharest

Date: 25.11.2024

Version: 1.0

# I. INTRODUCTION

## I.1. Context

The **Hațeg Country UNESCO Global Geopark** operates within a culturally and geographically diverse area, characterized by rural communities with distinct traditions and challenges. This action plan focuses on integrating vulnerable groups into the geopark's activities, emphasizing inclusivity, empowerment, and sustainable heritage-based development.

Building on the common strategy developed under the **Danube GeoTour Plus** project, this plan seeks to:

1. Address the specific needs and capacities of vulnerable groups within Hațeg Geopark's communities.
2. Engage these groups actively in geopark governance, decision-making, and cultural heritage promotion.
3. Develop innovative, participatory activities that bridge historical narratives and modern tourism, leveraging the region's natural and cultural assets.

The **Hațeg Geopark Action Plan** adopts a tailored approach by:

- Collaborating closely with local NGOs, schools, and community organizations to map and understand the unique challenges faced by vulnerable groups.
- Organizing workshops and participatory forums to co-design engagement strategies with these groups.
- Implementing a series of short-term initiatives and long-term capacity-building activities that promote inclusivity in geopark operations and tourism offerings.

To ensure sustainability, the action plan aligns with broader Danube GeoTour Plus goals and integrates representatives of vulnerable groups into geopark committees and working groups. These efforts will be complemented by ongoing monitoring and evaluation, ensuring the plan remains adaptive to community feedback and changing needs.

## I.2. Territory, threats, trends and needs

## Territory

The **Hațeg Country UNESCO Global Geopark** encompasses a region rich in geological, cultural, and natural heritage. It includes rural communities where traditional lifestyles blend with the unique geological history of the area. The geopark covers villages with declining populations, primarily in mountainous and remote areas, and serves as a focal point for sustainable tourism and education.

## Threats

1. **Depopulation, Isolation, and Marginalization:** Hațeg Geopark faces significant demographic challenges, with rural areas experiencing out-migration of youth and increasing isolation of seniors. The lack of opportunities drives a "brain drain," leaving behind aging populations and marginalizing vulnerable groups such as rural women, who often lack access to employment or education, and children with learning disabilities, who face barriers to inclusion in education and community life. These trends threaten the sustainability of local traditions and community cohesion.
2. **Socio-Economic Disparities:** High levels of socio-economic inequality in rural areas disproportionately affect women and children with disabilities. Limited access to healthcare, education, and job opportunities exacerbates their marginalization. For seniors, the lack of resources and isolation in remote areas adds to their vulnerability, making it difficult for them to engage actively in geopark activities.

## Trends

1. **Tourism Growth and Mass Tourism Risks:** While the Hațeg Geopark sees growing interest in its unique cultural and geological heritage, the management of this interest is still at an early stage. Increased visitor numbers, particularly in peak seasons, risk overwhelming existing infrastructure, leading to overcrowding, littering, and negative visitor experiences. These challenges also create missed opportunities to involve vulnerable groups, such as rural women in tourism-related enterprises or seniors as cultural storytellers.
2. **Digital Transformation Opportunities:** Digital technologies present new opportunities for Hațeg Geopark to engage vulnerable groups. Interactive apps, online learning platforms, and virtual storytelling sessions can involve seniors in sharing their life stories, provide rural women with access to skills training, and support children with learning disabilities in accessing educational content tailored to their needs.

## Needs

1. **Capacity Building for Inclusion:** Programs are needed to empower seniors, rural women, and children with disabilities to participate in geopark activities.
2. **Accessible and Inclusive Infrastructure:** The geopark needs to improve its physical and digital infrastructure to support vulnerable groups.
3. **Community Engagement and Ownership:** Actively involving vulnerable groups in decision-making processes ensures their needs are addressed and builds a sense of ownership.

# II. VULNERABLE GROUPS

The Hațeg Country UNESCO Global Geopark, managed by the University of Bucharest, is dedicated to promoting sustainable development, cultural heritage preservation, and community involvement. As part of the Danube GeoTour Plus project, the Geopark prioritizes the inclusion of vulnerable and underserved groups to ensure that all members of the community can participate in and benefit from its cultural, educational, and economic opportunities.

## Identifying Vulnerable Groups

In line with the Danube GeoTour Plus strategy, vulnerable groups are defined as those who face greater barriers to social and economic participation due to age, geographic isolation, socioeconomic status, or learning needs. The Geopark's Action Plan focuses on three primary groups: isolated seniors, women in rural areas, and children with learning problems. These groups are identified based on their unique challenges and the impact that inclusive geopark engagement can have on improving their quality of life, social integration, and economic opportunities.

### 1. Isolated Seniors

The senior population in Hațeg County is experiencing increasing isolation due to geographic dispersion, declining mobility, and limited access to social services. Many elderly residents, particularly those in remote areas, face challenges in participating in social and cultural activities, which can lead to loneliness and diminished well-being. However, these seniors possess valuable knowledge of local history, cultural traditions, and ecological practices, making them key resources for cultural preservation and intergenerational knowledge exchange.

### 2. Women in Rural Areas

Women in rural areas of Hațeg County often encounter economic and social challenges, including limited employment opportunities, restricted access to professional training, and social expectations that can prevent active engagement in community development. Empowering these women through skills development and entrepreneurial support can promote their economic independence, enrich local tourism offerings, and encourage sustainable community growth. By providing platforms for involvement, the Geopark aims to enhance the socio-economic roles of rural women and harness their potential as cultural ambassadors and small business leaders.

### 3. Children with Learning Problems

Children with learning difficulties in Hațeg County face barriers to equal educational opportunities, particularly in traditional classroom settings. These children often require specialized learning support, hands-on educational activities, and flexible learning environments to reach their potential. The Geopark's natural and cultural landscape offers a

unique, interactive educational setting that can help overcome these barriers by integrating experiential learning methods tailored to their needs. By fostering an inclusive learning environment, the Geopark seeks to support these children's social and cognitive development, while also engaging families and schools in community-based education.

interreg  
Danube Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
Danube GeoTour Plus

# III. ACTIONS

## Objective 1: Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups

### 1.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups

Clearly identify which groups are considered vulnerable within the geoparks. This involves understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics.

Actions:

#### 1.1.1. Analysis on the possible partners representing the vulnerable groups

- **Description:** Identify and analyze potential partners, such as local seniors' clubs, community leaders, or organizations already working with vulnerable groups, to involve them in geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Stakeholder mapping, local outreach meetings, and structured interviews with representatives from existing seniors' groups.
- **Timeline:** January–December 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:** A comprehensive list of potential partners, including their capacities, interests, and possible roles in the action plan.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 1.1.2. Discussions with local schools and parents

- **Description:** Facilitate discussions with schools and parents to explore how children, especially those with learning disabilities, can be involved in geopark activities, fostering inclusivity and environmental education.
- **Tools:** Focus group discussions, school meetings, and distribution of feedback forms for parents and educators.
- **Timeline:** February–September 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:** Established communication channels with schools and parents, along with a report on potential collaboration opportunities.

- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** children with learning difficulties

### 1.1.3. Evaluation campaign in local schools made by specialists from the faculty of psychology and educational sciences

- **Description:** Conduct an evaluation campaign in partnership with the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences to assess the needs and preferences of children with learning disabilities for participation in geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Standardized evaluation tools (e.g., observation checklists, surveys), focus groups with teachers and specialists.
- **Timeline:** September 2024–June 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A detailed report with recommendations for creating tailored educational and engagement programs for children with learning disabilities.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** children with learning difficulties

## 1.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations

Partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local community groups that have established trust and relationships with vulnerable populations. This collaboration aims to leverage their expertise and networks for effective engagement.

### Actions:

#### 1.2.1. Signing partnerships or agreements with local NGOs and vulnerable group organizations

- **Description:** Establish formal partnerships with NGOs and organizations representing seniors, women in rural areas, and children with disabilities to collaborate on inclusive geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), joint activity planning workshops.
- **Timeline:** May 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** At least three signed agreements with NGOs or community organizations and a schedule of collaborative activities.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)

- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 1.3. Formalised collaboration inside the Vulnerable Groups

Encourage and support the formalisation of collaboration within vulnerable groups. This involves helping them establish formal structures, such as associations or cooperatives, to strengthen their collective voice and capacity. The geoparks should identify potential key persons and informal groups, around whom the formalisation could be achieved.

#### **Actions:**

#### **1.3.1. Investigate the possibility that the seniors club could become an NGO**

- **Description:** Explore the feasibility of transforming the Seniors Club into a registered NGO to formalize its involvement in geopark activities and improve access to funding and resources.
- **Tools:** Feasibility study, consultations with legal and organizational development experts.
- **Timeline:** January–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A feasibility report outlining steps, benefits, and challenges of transforming the Seniors Club into an NGO.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** seniors

#### **1.3.2. Investigate the possibility that the model of the Santamaria Orlea Women Association could be replicated in other communities**

- **Description:** Assess how the successful model of the Santamaria Orlea Women Association can be replicated in other local communities, focusing on empowering rural women through collective action and sustainable practices.
- **Tools:** Case study analysis, community workshops, and stakeholder consultations in neighboring villages.
- **Timeline:** July–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A blueprint for replicating the Santamaria Orlea model, identifying at least two communities interested in adopting the model.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)

- **Relevant for:** women in rural areas

## Objective 2: Well-understood Vulnerable Groups

### 2.1. Needs Assessment

Conduct thorough needs assessments to understand the specific challenges and barriers faced by vulnerable groups through surveys, focus groups, and community consultations. Research existing knowledge (studies of municipalities, NGOs and previous projects) about the groups.

#### **Actions:**

#### **2.1.1. Open Discussions Between Staff/Volunteers, Vulnerable Groups, and Teachers for Needs Assessment**

- **Description:** Facilitate open discussions to understand the specific needs and expectations of vulnerable groups, such as seniors, rural women, and children with learning disabilities, for geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Workshops, focus groups, and surveys.
- **Timeline:** January–March 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A list of contacts to be used in discussions, Communication flow with the relevant persons, A comprehensive needs assessment report highlighting the specific requirements and preferences of vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### **2.1.2. Organizing a Transnational Exchange with the vulnerable groups**

- **Description:** Facilitate an exchange program with Idrija Geopark to share best practices for engaging vulnerable groups and fostering inclusive tourism.
- **Tools:** Study visits, knowledge-sharing workshops, and collaborative activities.
- **Timeline:** April 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Present the opportunity to the groups, Discuss and select a suitable destination, Contact the destination Geopark and arrange the trip, A report of the exchange, A set of actionable recommendations for improving vulnerable group engagement, based on shared experiences.

- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** seniors and rural women

## 2.2. Exploring World Views and Space and Time Perception

Understand the world views, spatial awareness, and temporal perceptions of vulnerable groups to better integrate their perspectives into geopark management and visitor experiences.

### Actions:

#### 2.2.1. Fieldtrips for better understanding of geology and nature in the Geopark

- **Description:** Organize field trips to key geological and natural sites in the geopark to enhance awareness and connection to the local environment.
- **Tools:** Guided tours, interactive presentations, and storytelling.
- **Timeline:** March–May 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 2 field trips, Increased understanding and appreciation of the geopark's geological and natural heritage among vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.2.2. Report on tourism perceptions and territorial identity

- **Description:** Conduct a participatory exercise where vulnerable groups share their views on tourism and the identity of the geopark.
- **Tools:** Workshops, focus groups, and structured discussions.
- **Timeline:** May–July 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A detailed report capturing vulnerable groups' perspectives on tourism and territorial identity.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.2.3. Capturing memories and recording statements

- **Description:** Collect oral histories from seniors on topics like life in old factories, how the town looked 50 years ago, and local traditions.
- **Tools:** Interviews, audio/video recording equipment, and transcription tools.
- **Timeline:** January–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A repository of recorded memories and stories for future cultural preservation and education.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** seniors and rural women

#### 2.2.4. Digitalizing old photos and displaying in an exhibition

- **Description:** Collect, digitize, and exhibit old photos of Hațeg’s landmarks, showcasing its historical and cultural evolution.
- **Tools:** Scanners, digital editing software, and exhibition planning resources.
- **Timeline:** January 2025–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** A public exhibition and digital archive of historical photos, accessible to the community.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** seniors and rural women

#### 2.2.5. Develop new guided tours with the help of seniors

- **Description:** Create guided tours designed and led by seniors, incorporating their personal stories and historical knowledge.
- **Tools:** Training sessions for seniors, route planning, and promotional materials.
- **Timeline:** August 2025–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** At least one new guided tour enriched with personal narratives and historical insights.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** seniors

## 2.3. Communication and Outreach

Build empathetic communication channels and outreach strategies to understand the needs of vulnerable groups and engage them effectively.

**Actions:**

**2.3.1. Annual meetings between vulnerable groups and youth related to special events**

- **Description:** Facilitate intergenerational meetings to foster connections and shared learning experiences between vulnerable groups and the youth.
- **Tools:** Event planning, storytelling workshops, and collaborative activities.
- **Timeline:** Annually, beginning December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least one yearly meeting, Strengthened relationships and mutual understanding between generations.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

**2.3.2. Organizing a Valorization Event open to the community**

- **Description:** Host an event to celebrate and share the achievements of the action plan, involving the community and partners.
- **Tools:** Event planning, presentations, and media outreach.
- **Timeline:** May 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Planning the event together with the vulnerable groups, organise the event with at least 100 participants, Increased community awareness and support for the geopark's initiatives.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

**2.3.3. Create a social media page for the Seniors' Club**

- **Description:** Establish a dedicated social media page for the Seniors' Club to promote activities, connect with other organizations, and share content.
- **Tools:** Social media platforms, content creation tools, and training for seniors.
- **Timeline:** February–April 2025.

- **Expected Outcome:** An active social media presence for the Seniors' Club, improving visibility and networking.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.3.4. Sharing content on the geopark's social media

- **Description:** Regularly feature stories, photos, and updates from vulnerable groups on the geopark's social media channels.
- **Tools:** Content calendars, photography, and storytelling posts.
- **Timeline:** Ongoing from May 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least one post per month shared from the vulnerable groups' pages, Broader engagement and representation of vulnerable groups in geopark narratives.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.4. Tailored Communication Strategies

Ensure that communication methods are inclusive, using multiple languages, simple language, and various media channels. Identify keywords, tone of voice, and images, and determine the communication channels to be used (such as face-to-face, phone contact, newspapers, municipal newsletters, organisational communications, NGOs, schools'/teachers' communications, and unemployment services).

### Actions:

#### 2.4.1. Create tailored communication plans

- **Description:** Develop specific communication plans to engage and address the unique needs of each vulnerable group.
- **Tools:** Communication templates, targeted outreach strategies, and focus groups.
- **Timeline:** January–december 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Clear, actionable communication strategies for each vulnerable group.

- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.4.2. Including vulnerable groups in geopark promotional materials

- **Description:** Feature vulnerable groups and their contributions in brochures, videos, and other promotional materials.
- **Tools:** Graphic design, video production, and storytelling.
- **Timeline:** April–June 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 2 promotional materials mentioning the vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.5. Regular Engagement

Establish regular communication channels such as community meetings, social media, social media platforms, and newsletters to ensure that vulnerable groups are informed and engaged.

### Actions:

#### 2.5.1. Bi-annual meetings to inform vulnerable groups about geopark activities

- **Description:** Hold regular meetings to update vulnerable groups on geopark initiatives and gather feedback.
- **Tools:** Meeting agendas, presentations, and feedback forms.
- **Timeline:** Twice yearly, starting December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 2 meetings per year
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.5.2. Structured annual interviews to gather insights

- **Description:** Conduct structured interviews with vulnerable groups to evaluate the impacts of tourism on their lives and the environment.
- **Tools:** Survey questionnaires, interview guides, and data analysis tools.

- **Timeline:** Annually, beginning December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Annual Report on comprehensive insights into tourism's local impact, guiding future actions.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.5.3. Establish a contact person from the geopark for each vulnerable group

- **Description:** Designate a geopark staff member to liaise with representatives of each vulnerable group, ensuring consistent communication and support.
- **Tools:** Role assignment, training, and communication plans.
- **Timeline:** March 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Three appointed persons.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.5.4. Sending a newsletter to vulnerable group partners

- **Description:** Create and distribute a newsletter to keep vulnerable groups informed about geopark updates and opportunities.
- **Tools:** Email platforms, newsletter templates, and mailing lists.
- **Timeline:** Every semester, beginning December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Semestrial newsletter
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Objective 3: Inclusive Planning and Policy Development

### 3.1. Stakeholder Involvement

Involve representatives from vulnerable groups in the planning process to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

Actions:

### 3.1.1. Proposing a representative to join the geopark's advisory board

- **Description:** Identify and appoint a representative from vulnerable groups (seniors, rural women, or children with disabilities) to actively participate in the Geopark's Advisory Board and contribute to decision-making.
- **Tools:** Selection criteria, nomination process, and orientation materials for the representative.
- **Timeline:** February–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased representation of vulnerable groups in geopark governance, fostering inclusivity and ensuring their voices are heard in strategic decisions.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.1.2. Participatory Mapping

- **Description:** Engage community members, including vulnerable groups, in identifying culturally significant areas or spots prone to environmental degradation to inform conservation and visitor management efforts.
- **Tools:** GIS software, community workshops, and facilitated mapping sessions.
- **Timeline:** April 2025-June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** A participatory map highlighting key areas for conservation and visitor management, ensuring policies are informed by local knowledge and priorities.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** seniors and rural women

### 3.1.3. Community Workshops

- **Description:** Organize open forums for vulnerable groups to discuss tourism's impact on their communities and propose solutions. Workshops will encourage dialogue between community members and tourism planners.
- **Tools:** Structured workshop agendas, facilitators, and feedback mechanisms.
- **Timeline:** June 2025

- **Expected Outcome:** At least one workshop per year, A set of community-driven recommendations for addressing tourism challenges and enhancing local involvement in decision-making.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** seniors and rural women

## 3.2. Policy Framework

Develop policies that are flexible and adaptive to the changing needs of vulnerable groups, ensuring inclusivity in all aspects of policy formulation.

### Actions:

#### 3.2.1. Include inclusivity elements into interpretation of the Geopark

- **Description:** Incorporate narratives and contributions from vulnerable groups into the interpretation of the geopark's heritage to reflect their cultural and social significance.
- **Tools:** Story collection, interpretive training for guides, and content development.
- **Timeline:** January–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Updated Interpretation Strategy and interpretive materials.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 3.3. Long-term Commitment

Ensure that engagement strategies are not one-off but are part of a sustained effort to support vulnerable groups. This includes flexibility in adapting strategies based on changing circumstances and new challenges.

### Actions:

#### 3.3.1. Including specific activities into the Geopark's Strategic Plan

- **Description:** Integrate activities aimed at supporting vulnerable groups into the long-term strategic plan of the geopark. This includes developing a clear events calendar to ensure consistent engagement.

- **Tools:** Strategic planning sessions, stakeholder consultations, and timeline development.
- **Timeline:** October 2025–June 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** An updated Strategic Plan
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 3.4. Education and Training

Provide education and skills training tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations to empower them economically and socially.

### Actions:

#### 3.4.1. Organize training sessions for learning and developing skills in new technologies

- **Description:** Provide training sessions to seniors and rural women on using communication technologies (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram) to enhance connectivity and participation in geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Hands-on training workshops, guides/manuals, and follow-up support.
- **Timeline:** February–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 2 training sessions organised, attended by at least 10 persons.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** seniors and rural women

#### 3.4.2. Trainings with children and teachers (Forum Theater, Support Teachers)

- **Description:** Conduct training sessions for children with disabilities and their teachers using interactive methods such as Forum Theater to promote inclusion and support teachers in engaging these students effectively.
- **Tools:** Forum Theater facilitators, role-play scenarios, and educational resources.
- **Timeline:** March–September 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 2 training sessions.

- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** children with learning difficulties

## Objective 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1. Feedback Mechanisms

Implement systems for continuous feedback from vulnerable groups to understand the effectiveness of the strategies and make necessary adjustments.

#### Actions:

##### 4.1.1. Applying feedback forms after every activity

- **Description:** After each geopark activity involving vulnerable groups, distribute feedback forms to participants to assess their experience and gather suggestions for improvement. Feedback will be used to refine future activities and ensure they meet the needs of the community.
- **Tools:** Simple and accessible feedback forms (paper and digital options), with questions tailored to the specific activity and target group.
  - Example questions:
    - "What did you enjoy most about today's activity?"
    - "What can we do better next time?"
    - "Do you have any suggestions for future activities?"
- **Timeline:** After every activity, starting January 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A continuous improvement process based on participant feedback, ensuring that future activities are more inclusive, effective, and aligned with the expectations of vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 4.2. Impact Assessment

Regularly assess the impact of engagement strategies through qualitative and quantitative measures to ensure they are meeting the desired outcomes.

## Actions:

### 4.2.1. Applying surveys in the community

- **Description:** Conduct periodic surveys within the community to gather broader insights into the impact of geopark activities, community perceptions of tourism, and suggestions for improvement. These surveys will help assess long-term engagement and identify areas for enhancement.
- **Tools:**
  - Survey templates with questions focusing on:
    - Perceptions of the geopark's inclusivity and relevance to local life.
    - Tourism's impact on the community, environment, and economy.
    - Suggestions for new initiatives or changes to existing ones.
  - Distribution methods: Online surveys (Google Forms), in-person surveys during community meetings, or door-to-door outreach.
- **Timeline:** Annually, starting February 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Annual survey results.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** rural women and seniors

## Cross-cutting actions and strategy alignment

### Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations:

Strengthen partnerships with organizations that serve seniors, rural women, and children with learning difficulties. These collaborations can amplify reach, build trust, and foster consistent community engagement.

### Tailored Communication and Outreach:

Use accessible, empathetic communication approaches tailored to each group, employing community meetings, social media, and local media to keep these groups informed and involved.

### Long-Term Commitment and Sustainability:

Embed strategies for sustained involvement through capacity-building initiatives that empower local community groups, ensuring continuity beyond the project duration.

### Monitoring and Evaluation:

Regularly review participation rates, feedback, and engagement levels across all groups. Adjust strategies based on collected data to ensure continuous improvement in inclusion efforts.

interreg  
Danube Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
Danube GeoTour Plus

# IV. CONCLUSIONS

The **Hațeg Geopark Action Plan** represents a comprehensive and inclusive approach to integrating vulnerable groups—seniors, rural women, and children with disabilities—into the geopark’s activities and broader sustainable development goals. By addressing their unique needs and fostering active participation, the plan creates a framework for long-term social, cultural, and environmental sustainability.

## Key Achievements

### 1. Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups:

Seniors have been engaged as cultural custodians, sharing valuable memories and knowledge.

Rural women have been supported in entrepreneurial and participatory activities, showcasing their skills and contributing to local economic development.

Children with disabilities have been included through tailored educational programs and creative activities, promoting inclusivity and social cohesion.

### 2. Strengthened Community Involvement:

By actively involving local communities in decision-making, tourism management, and cultural preservation, the geopark has fostered a stronger sense of ownership and pride among its residents.

### 3. Sustainable Tourism Practices:

Activities such as participatory mapping, inclusive interpretive programs, and stakeholder workshops have ensured that tourism development remains aligned with the needs of the environment and the community.

### 4. Capacity Building and Skill Development:

Through trainings in digital literacy, storytelling, and sustainable practices, vulnerable groups have been empowered to actively contribute to and benefit from geopark initiatives.

### 5. Improved Communication and Feedback Mechanisms:

Regular feedback forms and community surveys have established a robust mechanism for adapting and improving activities based on participant experiences and community insights.

## Future Directions

**Scaling and Replication:** Successful models, such as the Santamaria Orlea Women Association and seniors' guided tours, will be explored for replication in other communities, expanding the impact of the plan.

**Continued Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessments, feedback, and adjustments will ensure that the action plan remains effective and aligned with the evolving needs of the community.

**Embedding Inclusivity in Strategic Planning:** The lessons learned from this action plan will be integrated into the geopark's strategic planning to ensure inclusivity remains a central focus for future initiatives.

## Final Vision

This action plan paves the way for Hațeg Geopark to become a model of inclusivity, resilience, and community-driven heritage conservation within the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. By valuing the voices and contributions of vulnerable groups, the geopark strengthens its identity as a place where natural and cultural heritage are not only preserved but also celebrated by and for the people who call it home.

# V. ANNEXES

## Annex A – Action Plan Logical Matrix

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions			
					VG 1	VG 2	VG 3	
<b>1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups</b>						Seniors	Women in rural areas	Children with learning difficulties
Defined Vulnerable Groups	Identify and classify vulnerable groups.	Clear understanding of who and where the vulnerable groups are.	Surveys, community mapping.		Analysis on the possible partners representing the seniors	AFSMO is already a strategic partner of the geopark and an ASP in this project	Difficult and sensible to have demographic data. Discussions with local schools and parents.	
					At least 3 meetings organised together with the seniors and rural women representatives		Evaluation campaign in local schools made by specialist from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences	
Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations	Partner with NGOs and local organisations.	Better reach and trust with vulnerable groups.	MOUs, partnership agreements.		Signing partnerships or agreements and involvement in common activities with local NGOs and with vulnerable group organisations.			
					Seniors Club Hațeg	no need	Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences	
Formalised collaboration inside the vulnerable groups	Facilitate the formation of groups among vulnerable populations.	Stronger internal cohesion and advocacy.	Training workshops, technical support.		Investigate the possibility that the Seniors Club could become an NGO	Investigate the possibility that the model of the Santamaria Orlea Women Association could be replicated in other communities	-	
<b>2. Well-understood Vulnerable Groups</b>								
Needs Assessment	Conduct surveys and focus groups.	Detailed understanding of needs and challenges.	Surveys, focus groups.		Open discussions between the staff/volunteers and vulnerable groups.	Open discussions between the staff/volunteers and vulnerable groups.	Open discussions between the staff/volunteers and teachers	
Exploring World Views	Understand perspectives on environment and experiences.	Insights to inform better management and visitor experiences.	Observations, cultural studies.		Transnational exchange with Idrja			
					Fieldtrips for a better understanding of the geology and nature in general in the Geopark. Interviews and focus groups targeted at learning the target groups' world views and identities	Fieldtrips for a better understanding of the geology and nature in general in the Geopark. Interviews and focus groups targeted at learning the target groups' world views and identities.		
					Report on the way they see tourism and what the territory needs to express its identity			
					Capturing the memory on specific topics (how was life in old factories, how the town looked 50 years ago) and recording the statements.			
					Digitalize old photos of famous places from Hațeg and display them in an exhibition.			

					Develop new guided tours with the help of seniors.	
<b>Communication and Outreach</b>	Build trust through empathetic communication.	Improved relationships and engagement.	Community meetings, social media.		at least 2 annual meetings between VGs and young generation related to special events.	
					Organising a valorisation event open to the community and partners for the celebration of the results	
					Create a social media page for the Seniors' Club and help them contact other organisations through it.	
					Sharing the content on the Geopark's social media accounts	
<b>Tailored Communication Strategies</b>	Use accessible and varied communication methods.	Inclusive and effective communication.	Multi-language materials, various media channels.		Create tailored communication plans.	
					Including the vulnerable groups in geoparks promoting materials.	
<b>Regular Engagement</b>	Establish regular communication channels.	Continuous involvement of vulnerable groups.	Newsletters, community forums, social media.		Bi-annual meetings to inform the vulnerable groups about the geopark activities.	
					Structured interviews conducted annually to allow the VGs to share firsthand insights into the impacts of tourism on their daily lives, local economy, and natural resources. These surveys often focus on perceptions of crowding, environmental changes, and cultural impacts, which can be analysed over time to assess tourism's evolving influence.	
					Establish a contact person from the geopark to work all the time with contact person from each vulnerable group.	
					Sending a newsletter to all partners from the vulnerable groups.	
<b>3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development</b>						
<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>	Include vulnerable group representatives in planning.	Inclusive and representative policies and plans.	Workshops, consultation meetings.		A representative will be proposed to join the Geopark's Advisory Board	
					Participatory mapping, or collaborative GIS, involves residents in identifying critical tourism sites, such as culturally significant areas or spots prone to environmental degradation. This visual tool empowers communities by allowing them to highlight areas requiring conservation efforts or visitor management, helping policymakers make spatially informed decisions.	
					Community Workshops as open forums where VGs discuss tourism's impact on their community and share potential solutions. These sessions encourage a collaborative approach to monitoring and problem-solving, allowing community members to voice concerns, share observations, and suggest improvements directly to tourism planners.	
<b>Policy Framework</b>	Develop flexible and adaptive policies.	Policies that support diverse and changing needs.	Policy guidelines, adaptive plans.		Creating a flexible guideline that can be easily modified according to the target group needs. Permanent adaptation of our action plans and activities according to the target group needs.	
<b>Long-term Commitment</b>	Ensure sustained engagement strategies.	Long-term support and positive outcomes.	Strategic plans, continuous funding.		Include specific activities into the Geopark's Strategic Plan. Finding the common and specific activities that can ensure development on a long period of time. Establish a clear events calendar.	

							Include inclusivity elements into interpretation of the geopark
<b>Education and Training</b>	Provide tailored education and skills training.	Empowered and skilled individuals.	Training programs, workshops.		Organize training session for learning and developing skills regarding new technologies and applications (whatsapp, facebook, instagram, etc.).		Trainings with the children and teachers (Forum Theater, support teachers)
<b>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>							
<b>Feedback Mechanisms</b>	Implement continuous feedback systems.	Real-time insights for timely improvements.	Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.		After every activity apply a feedback form with suggestion request.		
<b>Impact Assessment</b>	Regularly assess impact with qualitative and quantitative measures.	Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement.	Impact surveys, case studies, data analysis tools.		Applying surveys in the community.		

# Annex B – Action Plan Evaluation Tool

Objective	Activity	Impact	Applies to VG	SDGs	Horizontal Principles	Deadline and organisation	Responsible person	Stage	Evaluation 1 January 2025	Observations
1. Clearly ...	1.1.1. Analysis on the possible partners representing the vulnerable groups	A comprehensive list of potential partners	Seniors Women Children			12.2024 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak		Completed		
1. Clearly ...	1.1.2. Discussions with local schools and parents	Established communication channels with schools and parents	Children			9.2024 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak		Completed		
1. Clearly ...	1.1.2. Discussions with local schools and parents	A report on potential collaboration opportunities	Children			9.2024 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak		Completed		
1. Clearly ...	1.1.3. Evaluation campaign in local schools	A detailed report with recommendations	Children			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak		In progress		
1. Clearly ...	1.2.1. Signing partnerships or agreements with local NGOs and vulnerable group organizations	At least 3 signed agreements	Seniors Women Children			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
1. Clearly ...	1.3.1. Investigate the possibility that the seniors club could become an NGO	Identifying at least two communities interested	Women			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
1. Clearly ...	1.3.2. Investigate the possibility that the model of the SOVA could be replicated	A list of contacts to be used in discussions	Seniors Women Children			9.2024 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak		Completed		
2. Well-und ...	2.1.1. Open Discussions Between Staff/Volunteers, Vulnerable Groups, and Teachers for Needs Assessment	Communication flow with the relevant persons	Children Women Seniors			3.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.1.1. Open Discussions Between Staff/Volunteers, Vulnerable Groups, and Teachers for Needs Assessment	A needs assessment report	Children Women Seniors			3.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.1.2. Organizing a Transnational Exchange with the vulnerable groups	Present the opportunity to the groups	Women Seniors			12.2024 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak		Completed		
2. Well-und ...	2.1.2. Organizing a Transnational Exchange with the vulnerable groups	Discuss and select a suitable destination	Women Seniors			3.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.1.2. Organizing a Transnational Exchange with the vulnerable groups	Contact the destination Geopark and arrange the trip	Women Seniors			5.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.1.2. Organizing a Transnational Exchange with the vulnerable groups	A report of the exchange	Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.1.2. Organizing a Transnational Exchange with the vulnerable groups	A set of actionable recommendations for improving vulnerable group engagement	Children Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.1.1. Fieldtrips for better understanding of geology and nature in the Geopark	Increased understanding and appreciation of the geopark's geological and natural	Children Women Seniors			5.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.2.1. Fieldtrips for better understanding of geology and nature in the Geopark	A detailed report capturing vulnerable groups' perspectives on tourism and tourism	Children Women Seniors			7.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.2.2. Report on tourism perceptions and territorial identity	A repository of recorded memories and stories for future cultural preservation and	Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.2.3. Capturing Memories and Recording Statements	A public exhibition and digital archive of historical photos, accessible to the commu	Women Seniors			6.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.2.4. Digitizing old photos and displaying in an exhibition	At least one new guided tour enriched with personal narratives and historical insig	Children Women Seniors			6.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.3.1. Annual meetings between vulnerable groups and youth related to special events	Strengthened relationships and mutual understanding between generations	Children Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.3.1. Annual meetings between vulnerable groups and youth related to special events	Plan the event together with the vulnerable groups	Children Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.3.2. Organizing a Valorization Event open to the community	Organise the event with at least 100 participants	Children Women Seniors			4.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.3.2. Organizing a Valorization Event open to the community	Increased community awareness and support for the geopark's initiatives	Children Women Seniors			9.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.3.2. Organizing a Valorization Event open to the community	An active social media presence for the Seniors' Club	Children Women Seniors			4.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.3.3. Create a social media page for the Seniors' Club	At least one post per month shared from the vulnerable groups' pages	Seniors			engaging UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.3.4. Create shared communication plans	Clear, actionable communication strategies for each vulnerable group	Children Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.5.1. Including vulnerable groups in geopark promotional materials	At least 2 promotional materials mentioning the vulnerable groups	Children Women Seniors			6.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.5.2. Structured request session with the groups	Annual Report incorporating insights into tourism's local impact	Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.5.3. Establish a newsletter for the geopark for each vulnerable group	Three approved posters	Children Women Seniors			3.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
2. Well-und ...	2.5.4. Sending a representative to vulnerable group partners	Increased participation	Children Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
3. Inclusive ...	3.1.1. Participatory Mapping	A participatory map highlighting key areas for conservation and visitor management	Children Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
3. Inclusive ...	3.1.2. Community Mapping	A set of community-driven recommendations for addressing tourism challenges	Women Seniors			6.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
3. Inclusive ...	3.1.3. Community Workshops	At least one workshop per year	Women Seniors			6.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
3. Inclusive ...	3.2.1. Include inclusivity elements into interpretation of the Geopark	Updated Interpretation Strategy and interpretive materials	Women Seniors Children			6.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
3. Inclusive ...	3.3.1. Including specific activities into the Geopark's Strategic Plan	An updated Strategic Plan	Women Seniors Children			6.2026 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
3. Inclusive ...	3.4.1. Organize training sessions for learning and developing skills in new technologies	At least 2 training sessions organised, attended by at least 10 persons.	Women Seniors			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
3. Inclusive ...	3.4.2. Trainings with children and teachers (Forum Theater, Support Teachers)	At least 2 training sessions.	Children Seniors			9.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
4. Monitor ...	4.1.1. Applying feedback forms after every activity	A continuous improvement process based on participant feedback.	Women Seniors Children			engaging UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				
4. Monitor ...	4.2.1. Applying surveys in the community	Annual survey results	Seniors Women			12.2025 UB-GUHT Tbi Bocak				

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
**Danube GeoTour Plus**

# **Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Iron Mountains National Geopark**

Deliverable 1.2.1

# Danube Geo Tour Plus

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced  
Geopark Communities

DRP0200085

## Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Iron Mountains National Geopark

### Deliverable 1.2.1

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

Programme: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme

Priority 3: A more social Danube Region

Specific Objective 3.3: Socio-economic development through heritage, culture  
and tourism

Project Duration 01/2024 to 06/2026

Date: 25.11.2024

Version: 1.0

# Document Content

<b>I. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
I.1. Context .....	3
I.2. Territory, threats, trends and needs .....	4
<b>II. VULNERABLE GROUPS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III. ACTIONS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Objective 1: Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups.....	8
1.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups .....	8
1.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations.....	9
1.3. Formalised collaboration inside the Vulnerable Groups.....	9
Objective 2: Well-understood Vulnerable Groups.....	10
2.1. Needs Assessment.....	10
2.2. Exploring World Views and Space and Time Perception.....	11
2.3. Communication and Outreach .....	12
2.4. Tailored Communication Strategies .....	13
2.5. Regular Engagement .....	13
Objective 3: Inclusive Planning and Policy Development .....	14
3.1. Stakeholder Involvement .....	14
3.2. Policy Framework .....	15
3.3. Long-term Commitment.....	16
3.4. Education and Training.....	16
Objective 4: Monitoring and Evaluation .....	17
4.1. Feedback Mechanisms .....	17
4.2. Impact Assessment.....	17
Cross-cutting actions and strategy alignment.....	18
<b>IV. CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>V. ANNEXES.....</b>	<b>20</b>
Annex A – Action Plan Logical Matrix.....	20
Annex B – Action Plan Evaluation Tool.....	20

# I. INTRODUCTION

## I.1. Context

The **Iron Mountains National Geopark** operates within a culturally and geographically diverse area, characterized by rural communities with distinct traditions and challenges. This action plan focuses on integrating vulnerable groups into the geopark's activities, emphasizing inclusivity, empowerment, and sustainable heritage-based development.

Building on the common strategy developed under the **Danube GeoTour Plus** project, this plan seeks to:

1. Address the specific needs and capacities of vulnerable groups within **Iron Mountains National Geopark's** communities.
2. Engage these groups actively in geopark governance, decision-making, and cultural heritage promotion.
3. Develop innovative, participatory activities that bridge historical narratives and modern tourism, leveraging the region's natural and cultural assets.

The Action Plan of the Iron Mountains National Geopark applies an individual approach:

- It works closely with local NGOs, schools and community organizations to map and understand the unique challenges faced by vulnerable groups.
- Organizing workshops and public events to co-create strategies to engage these groups.
- Implementing a range of short-term initiatives and long-term capacity building activities that promote inclusivity in the operation of the geopark and in the tourism offerings within the geopark.

To ensure sustainability, the action plan is aligned with the broader objectives of the Danube GeoTour Plus programme and includes representatives of vulnerable groups in the geopark committees and working groups. These efforts will be complemented by ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the plan continues to adapt to community feedback and changing needs.

## I.2. Territory, threats, trends and needs

### Territory

The Iron Mountains Geopark covers an area of 777 km<sup>2</sup>. Approximately one-third of the area is covered by the Iron Mountains Protected Landscape Area; outside this area there are a number of other small protected areas. In addition to natural riches, there are also many cultural and historical treasures, unique museums, and numerous sports and recreational facilities.

### Threats

The Iron Mountains National Geopark faces significant demographic challenges as rural areas experience increasing isolation of the elderly.

1. Many villages in the Geopark are remote from larger towns and centres with accessible services. As a result, older people often do not have easy access to leisure activities, social events, or support services. Many seniors are not accustomed to modern technology and digital communication, which limits their access to information about opportunities to engage in community activities. In rural areas, the traditional roles of older people tend to be associated with household and family care rather than personal development or involvement in public life. Lack of social habits to integrate older generations can lead to their isolation. These trends threaten the sustainability of local traditions and community cohesion.
2. **Socio-Economic Disparities:** In many rural areas, including the Iron Mountains Geopark, young people often lack well-functioning communities that allow them to meet their peers, share interests together and actively participate in social life. This leads to their isolation, disinterest in regional activities and, ultimately, to their leaving for larger cities.

### Trends

1. **Involvement of target groups through electronic activities:**

There is a growing interest in linking geo-location and geo-cognition with online environments and applications. Many people perceive geology as uninteresting and therefore do not routinely include it in their leisure activities. It is the growing popularity of online applications and geocaching games that can be a way to engage disadvantaged groups in active life and to offer them an alternative way of spending their leisure time.

## **2. Involvement of educational infrastructure**

The geo-localities of the Iron Mountains Geopark have a huge educational potential that can be used for schools, local communities and tourists. Educational programmes in the field allow learning about unique geological phenomena, the history of the landscape and the ecological context. Establishing nature trails, interactive panels, or outdoor classrooms at selected sites promotes active outdoor education.

## **3. Needs**

1. Increasing awareness of the possibilities of exploring geo-locations, information on their availability according to the limited needs of specific target groups
2. Creating online content and linking it to other Geopark activities
3. Set up and emphasize close cooperation with non-profit organizations, schools and special interest clubs that include members of vulnerable groups

# II. VULNERABLE GROUPS

The Iron Mountains National Geopark, operated by Vodní zdroje Chrudim, s r.o., has long been dedicated to promoting sustainable development, preserving cultural heritage and engaging communities. As part of the Danube GeoTour Plus project, the geopark's priority is to engage vulnerable and socially disadvantaged groups so that all members of the community can participate in and benefit from its cultural, educational and economic opportunities.

## Identifying Vulnerable Groups

In line with the Danube GeoTour Plus strategy, vulnerable groups are defined as those facing greater barriers to social and economic participation due to age, geographical isolation, socio-economic status or educational needs. The Geopark Action Plan focuses on three main groups: seniors, youth and people with disabilities. These groups are identified based on their unique challenges and the impact that engaging in an inclusive geopark can have on improving their quality of life, social integration and economic opportunities.

### 1. Seniors

The elderly population in the geopark area is experiencing increasing isolation due to geographical dispersion, decreasing mobility and limited access to social services. Many older people, especially in remote areas, face difficulties in participating in social and cultural activities, which can lead to loneliness and reduced well-being. However, these seniors have valuable knowledge of local history, cultural traditions and ecological practices, making them key resources for cultural preservation and intergenerational knowledge exchange.

### 2. Youth

Young people may face various forms of disadvantage that affect their participation in society. Social disadvantages, such as dysfunctional family backgrounds or isolation in remote communities, can limit their access to education and leisure activities. Economic barriers, such as lack of funding for clubs or transport, further exacerbate the situation. This can be compounded by health or mental health problems that reduce their ability to participate fully in school or community activities. These factors often lead to feelings of isolation and limited opportunities for personal development.

### 3. **People with disabilities**

People with disabilities often face various forms of disadvantage that affect their participation in society. Physical barriers, such as inadequate barrier-free infrastructure, limit their movement and access to education, work and leisure activities. Social barriers, such as prejudice or lack of understanding from others, can lead to feelings of isolation. Economic challenges, such as the higher cost of compensatory aids or assistance, also add to this. Together, these factors reduce opportunities for self-realisation and full participation in community life.

# III. ACTIONS

## Objective 1: Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups

### 1.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups

Clearly identify which groups are considered vulnerable within the geoparks. This includes understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics. analysis of potential partners representing vulnerable groups.

#### 1.1.1. Analysis on the possible partners representing the vulnerable groups

- **Description:** Identify and analyse potential partners such as local senior clubs, community leaders or organisations already working with vulnerable groups to engage them in geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Stakeholder mapping, local information sessions and structured interviews with representatives of existing senior groups.
- **Timeline:** January–December 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:** A comprehensive list of potential partners, including their capacities, interests, and possible roles in the action plan.
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 1.1.2. Discussions with local schools and parents

- **Description:** The aim is to create attractive programmes and activities that will attract young people and provide them with a space for personal development, cooperation and strengthening their relationship with the geopark region. Involvement should be based on a participatory approach, where young people not only use the opportunities offered, but are involved in their creation and implementation.
- **Tools:** Surveys, workshops and meetings aimed at identifying young people's interests. Mapping of existing initiatives where they could find their place.
- **Timeline:** February–September 2024.

- **Expected Outcome:** Active participation of young people in Geopark programmes and increasing their awareness of local natural and cultural assets.
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** youth

## 1.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations

Partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local community groups that have established trust and relationships with vulnerable populations. This collaboration aims to leverage their expertise and networks for effective engagement.

### Actions:

#### 1.2.1. Hand-shaking partnerships or agreements with local NGOs and vulnerable group organizations

- **Description:** Establish formal partnerships with NGOs and organizations representing seniors, youth, and people with disabilities to collaborate on inclusive geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Joint activity planning workshops.
- **Timeline:** May 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Cooperation agreements
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 1.3. Formalised collaboration inside the Vulnerable Groups

Encourage and support the formalisation of collaboration within vulnerable groups. This involves helping them establish formal structures, such as associations or cooperatives, to strengthen their collective voice and capacity. The geoparks should identify potential key persons and informal groups, around whom the formalisation could be achieved.

## Actions:

### 1.3.1. Explore the possibilities of linking themes for disadvantaged groups and their use in a central location, including their cross-mediation

- **Description:** Assess how the successful model can be replicated for all target groups in one location, with a focus on community empowerment through joint activities and sustainable practices.
- **Tools:** Analysis of case studies, community workshops and consultations with stakeholders
- **Timeline:** July–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Validation of the proposed method of implementation of the objectives
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all groups

## Objective 2: Well-understood Vulnerable Groups

### 2.1. Needs Assessment

Conduct thorough needs assessments to understand the specific challenges and barriers faced by vulnerable groups through surveys, focus groups, and community consultations. Research existing knowledge (studies of municipalities, NGOs and previous projects) about the groups.

## Actions:

### 2.1.1. Open Discussions Between Staff/Volunteers, Vulnerable Groups, and Teachers for Needs Assessment

- **Description:** Facilitate open discussions to understand the specific needs and expectations of vulnerable groups, such as seniors, youth, and people with disabilities.
- **Tools:** Workshops, focus groups, and surveys.
- **Timeline:** January–March 2025.

- **Expected Outcome:** A list of contacts to be used in discussions, Communication flow with the relevant persons, A comprehensive needs assessment report highlighting the specific requirements and preferences of vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.2. Exploring World Views and Space and Time Perception

Understand the world views, spatial awareness, and temporal perceptions of vulnerable groups to better integrate their perspectives into geopark management and visitor experiences.

### Actions:

#### 2.2.1. Recommended locations in the geopark with regard to the limited needs of the specific target group

**Description:** Create a special landing page that includes tips for spending your free time. Each group will have its own list of recommended places.

- **Tools:** landing page
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** 30 trips for 3 vulnerable groups
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.2.2. Creating a social media campaign

- **Description:** Create a social media campaign. The needs of the target groups will be taken into account in the communication and the appropriate communication method and visuals will be used accordingly.
- **Tools:** Communication with the target group about their needs
- **Timeline:** January 2025–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** 3 campaigns on the social media
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.3. Communication and Outreach

Build empathetic communication channels and outreach strategies to understand the needs of vulnerable groups and engage them effectively.

### Actions:

#### 2.3.1. Preparatory phase - identifying the needs of the target group

- **Description:** In close cooperation with the project partner organizations that care for the target groups, find appropriate topics and communication methods to reach them.
- **Tools:** workshops, discussion
- **Timeline:** January 2025 - December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** strategies for communication
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.3.2. Creating a landing page

- **Description:** A landing page will be created with 3 types of recommended trips for all 3 relevant target groups
- **Tools:** WordPress online system
- **Timeline:** January 2025–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Active landing page pro seniors, youth and people with disabilities
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.3.3. Sharing content on landing page

- **Description:** Connection between technically prepared landing page including recommended trips and social media campaign
- **Tools:** social media platform, and opensource WordPress system

- **Timeline:** January 2025 – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** The impact of the campaign will be measured through page views and social media statistics
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.4. Tailored Communication Strategies

Ensure that communication methods are inclusive, using multiple languages, simple language, and various media channels. Identify keywords, tone of voice, and images, and determine the communication channels to be used (such as face-to-face, phone contact, newspapers, municipal newsletters, organisational communications, NGOs, schools'/teachers' communications, and unemployment services).

### Actions:

#### 2.4.1. Create tailored communication plans

- **Description:** Develop specific communication plans to engage and address the unique needs of each vulnerable group.
- **Tools:** Communication templates, targeted outreach strategies, and focus groups.
- **Timeline:** January–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Clear, actionable communication strategies for each vulnerable group.
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.5. Regular Engagement

Establish regular communication channels such as community meetings, social media, social media platforms, and newsletters to ensure that vulnerable groups are informed and engaged.

### Actions:

#### 2.5.1. Regular information to target groups

- **Description:** regularly inform target groups about new developments in the Geopark through the Geopark's communication channels
- **Tools:** online communication channels
- **Timetable:** January 2025 - December 2025
- **Expected result:** At least 12 outputs per year
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 2.5.2. Sending a newsletter to vulnerable group partners

- **Description:** Create and distribute a newsletter to keep vulnerable groups informed about geopark updates and opportunities.
- **Tools:** Email platforms, newsletter templates, and mailing lists.
- **Timeline:** Every semester, beginning December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Semestrial newsletter
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Objective 3: Inclusive Planning and Policy Development

### 3.1. Stakeholder Involvement

Involve representatives from vulnerable groups in the planning process to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

Actions:

#### 3.1.1. Consultation of intentions with target group representatives

- **Description:** With the help of partner organizations involved in the project, we will select representatives of vulnerable groups (seniors, youth or people with disabilities) to actively participate in the preparation of geopark activities and contribute to decision-making.

- • **Tools:** Selection criteria, nomination process and orientation materials for representatives.
- • **Timeline:** January–December 2025.
- • **Expected result:** Promoting inclusivity and ensuring that their voices are heard in strategic decisions.
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.1.2. Participatory Mapping

- **Description:** Involve community members, including vulnerable groups, in determining appropriate landing page content for target groups.
- • **Tools:** Workshop
- • **Timeline:** January 2025–June 2026
- • **Expected result:** List of recommended leisure time tips on landing page
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 3.2. Policy Framework

Develop policies that are flexible and adaptive to the changing needs of vulnerable groups, ensuring inclusivity in all aspects of policy formulation.

### Actions:

#### 3.2.1. Include inclusivity elements into interpretation of the Geopark

- **Description:** Incorporate recommendations and contributions from vulnerable groups into the interpretation of the geopark area to reflect its cultural and social significance.
- • **Tools:** Discussion with the target group
- • **Timeline:** January–June 2026.
- • **Expected result:** Interpretive materials
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek

- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.3. Long-term Commitment

Ensure that engagement strategies are not one-off but are part of a sustained effort to support vulnerable groups. This includes flexibility in adapting strategies based on changing circumstances and new challenges.

#### Actions:

#### 3.3.1. Including specific activities into the Geopark's Strategic Plan

- **Description:** Integrate activities aimed at supporting vulnerable groups into the long-term strategic plan of the geopark.
- **Tools:** Strategic planning sessions, stakeholder consultations.
- **Timeline:** October 2025–June 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** An updated Strategic Plan
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.4. Education and Training

Provide education and skills training tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations to empower them economically and socially.

#### Actions:

#### 3.4.1. Educational Excursions

- **Description:** Organize excursions for students and youth and their teachers using interactive methods, with the aim of promoting inclusion and supporting teachers in effectively engaging these students.
- **Tools:** educational resources
- **Timeline:** March–September 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 2 training sessions.

- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** youth

## Objective 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1. Feedback Mechanisms

Implement systems for continuous feedback from vulnerable groups to understand the effectiveness of the strategies and make necessary adjustments.

#### Actions:

##### 4.1.1. Applying feedback forms after every activity

- **Description:** After each geopark activity involving vulnerable groups, guided discussions will be held with representatives of the target group and partner organizations to evaluate their experiences and gather suggestions for improvement. The feedback will be used to refine future activities and ensure they meet the needs of the community.
- **Tools:** guided discussion
- **Timeline:** After every activity, starting January 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A continuous improvement process based on participant feedback, ensuring that future activities are more inclusive, effective, and aligned with the expectations of vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 4.2. Impact Assessment

Regularly assess the impact of engagement strategies through qualitative and quantitative measures to ensure they are meeting the desired outcomes.

#### Actions:

##### 4.2.1. Applying surveys in the community

- **Description:** Conduct periodic surveys within the community to gather broader insights into the impact of geopark activities, community perceptions of tourism, and

suggestions for improvement. These surveys will help assess long-term engagement and identify areas for enhancement.

- **Tools:** online and offline surveys
- **Timeline:** starting February 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Annual survey results
- **Responsible person:** Mgr. Jan Doucek
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Cross-cutting actions and strategy alignment

### **Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations:**

Strengthen partnerships with organizations that serve seniors, rural women, and children with learning difficulties. These collaborations can amplify reach, build trust, and foster consistent community engagement.

### **Tailored Communication and Outreach:**

Use accessible, empathetic communication approaches tailored to each group, employing community meetings, social media, and local media to keep these groups informed and involved.

### **Long-Term Commitment and Sustainability:**

Embed strategies for sustained involvement through capacity-building initiatives that empower local community groups, ensuring continuity beyond the project duration.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Regularly review participation rates, feedback, and engagement levels across all groups. Adjust strategies based on collected data to ensure continuous improvement in inclusion efforts.

# IV. CONCLUSIONS

The **National geopark Iron Mountains Action Plan** represents a comprehensive and inclusive approach to integrating vulnerable groups—seniors, rural women, and children with disabilities—into the geopark’s activities and broader sustainable development goals. By addressing their unique needs and fostering active participation, the plan creates a framework for long-term social, cultural, and environmental sustainability.

## Key Achievements

### 1. Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups:

Children All 3 vulnerable groups were involved in active life through project activities.

### 2. Strengthened Community Involvement:

By actively involving local communities in decision-making, tourism management, and cultural preservation, the geopark has fostered a stronger sense of ownership and pride among its residents.

### 3. Sustainable Tourism Practices:

Activities such as participatory mapping, inclusive interpretive programs, and stakeholder workshops have ensured that tourism development remains aligned with the needs of the environment and the community.

### 4. Capacity Building and Skill Development:

Through the project activities, vulnerable groups were empowered to actively contribute to and benefit from geopark initiatives.

### 5. Improved Communication and Feedback Mechanisms:

Regular feedback monitoring and community surveys created a robust mechanism for adapting and improving activities based on participant experiences and community insights.

## Future Directions

**Scaling and Replication:** Successful models, such as collaboration with non-profit organizations, will be explored for replication in other communities, expanding the impact of the plan.

**Continued Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessments, feedback, and adjustments will ensure that the action plan remains effective and aligned with the evolving needs of the community.

**Embedding Inclusivity in Strategic Planning:** The lessons learned from this action plan will be integrated into the geopark’s strategic planning to ensure inclusivity remains a central focus for future initiatives.

### **Final Vision**

This action plan paves the way for the Iron Mountains National Geopark to become a model of inclusiveness, resilience, and community-based conservation of geological heritage within the national geopark network. By valuing the voices and contributions of vulnerable groups, the geopark strengthens its identity as a place where natural and cultural heritage is not only preserved but also celebrated by and for the people who call it home.

## **V. ANNEXES**

Annex A – Action Plan Logical Matrix

Annex B – Action Plan Evaluation Tool

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions			1.4. Engagement campaigns budget	1.5. Transnational exchanges budget	Time frame	Connection to SO2 (especially 2.3.)	Connection to SO3
					VG 1	VG 2	VG 3					
<b>1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups</b>												
Defined Vulnerable Groups	Identify and classify vulnerable groups.	Clear understanding of who and where the vulnerable groups are.	Surveys, community mapping.		isolated children and youth with brain drain risk	people with disabilities	isolated elderly					
Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations	Partner with NGOs and local organisations.	Better reach and trust with vulnerable groups.	MOUs, partnership agreements.		We work with all target groups through our partners, with whom we have established long-term cooperation - e.g. Local Action Groups, NGOs, etc. These groups normally participate in Geopark events, there are no specialised NGOs operating in the Geopark territory that would focus on one specific target group. Close cooperation takes place at the level of communication with representatives of organisations that focus on the above-mentioned groups, among others - the parent club, the Hurá na výlet association, the Local Action Group Chrudimsko. We have already mapped the target groups from previous activities and we know their needs. All our follow-up activities naturally count on the involvement of these groups. Přednášky, ÚJV Hlinsko, Vystava TO Chrudimsko Hlinekoc, DOD, soutěž pro děti, Noc muzeí							
Formalised collaboration inside the vulnerable groups	Facilitate the formation of groups among vulnerable populations.	Stronger internal cohesion and advocacy.	Training workshops, technical support.		The standard communication tool with these organisations is e-mail, personal conversations and meetings. Komunikace není založena na oslovování jednotlivců, ale zástupců cílových skupin, případně zástupců organizací, které se s těmito skupinami setkávají, případně s nimi spolupracují. Management geoparku se aktivně podílí i na řízení těchto organizací (LAG Chrudimsko, TO Chrudimsko HLinecko,...). Zástupci geoparku use pravidelně účastní setkání zástupců těchto organizací (valné hromady, pracovní setkání, setkání zástupců IC,...).							
<b>2. Well-understood Vulnerable Groups</b>												
Needs Assessment	Conduct surveys and focus groups.	Detailed understanding of needs and challenges.	Surveys, focus groups.		Prepare an implementation plan for the target groups and develop a list of activities.							
Exploring World Views	Understand perspectives on environment and experiences.	Insights to inform better management and visitor experiences.	Observations, cultural studies.		The detailed needs of the target groups will be determined on the basis of long-term communication during the organisation of geopark activities.							
Communication and Outreach	Build trust through empathetic communication.	Improved relationships and engagement.	Community meetings, social media.		Communication takes place in person, by phone, by e-mail. Our socially disadvantaged groups are already strongly involved in the geopark activities, and we aim to further involve them through the Danube GeoTour Plus activities.							
Tailored Communication Strategies	Use accessible and varied communication methods.	Inclusive and effective communication.	Multi-language materials, various media channels.		We are intensively preparing a campaign to reach target groups on social networks. We determine the most appropriate forms of communication, tone of voice, prepare effective graphic visuals and the entire implementation strategy. Kampaň na fb a landing page, vizuály.							
Regular Engagement	Establish regular communication channels.	Continuous involvement of vulnerable groups.	Newsletters, community forums, social media.		The target groups will be involved in the project through the usual communication channels. In the preparatory phase of the outreach, the most appropriate forms of communication with the target group will be identified, as well as the method of outreach. For all our target groups, the best form of outreach is through online media - social networks and a dedicated landing page.			7/2024 - end				
<b>3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development</b>												
Stakeholder Involvement	Include vulnerable group representatives in planning.	Inclusive and representative policies and plans.	Workshops, consultation meetings.					permanent				
Policy Framework	Develop flexible and adaptive policies.	Policies that support diverse and changing needs.	Policy guidelines, adaptive plans.		Campaign on social media, for each target group separately. A dedicated landing page will be created where each target group will find information targeted specifically for them. Descriptions of leisure activities for young people, tips for routes for disabled citizens, and advice for seniors on where and how to go in the geopark for culture and knowledge.							
Long-term Commitment	Ensure sustained engagement strategies.	Long-term support and positive outcomes.	Strategic plans, continuous funding.		The project activities are designed to ensure a natural continuity of involvement of the target groups in the geopark activities. We want all target groups to remain active after the end of the direct support of the project and to create activities for their surroundings.			permanent				
Education and Training	Provide tailored education and skills training.	Empowered and skilled individuals.	Training programs, workshops.		The target group engagement programme does not directly involve education, but the activities are set up so that they themselves lead to a deepening of knowledge and skills and awareness of the geopark area.							
<b>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>												
Feedback Mechanisms	Implement continuous feedback systems.	Real-time insights for timely improvements.	Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.		Social media reach and landing page traffic data will be used to monitor the success of the social media campaign project. We will evaluate participant satisfaction during face-to-face interviews with representatives of the target group. Of course, everyone will have the opportunity to express their opinion in the comments below the posts.			permanent				
Impact Assessment	Regularly assess impact with qualitative and quantitative measures.	Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement.	Impact surveys, case studies, data analysis tools.		Data tracking and analysis tools are based on the nature of the method of outreach - social media statistics			permanent				



**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
**Danube GeoTour Plus**

# **ACTION PLAN FOR ENGAGEMENT OF VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGE GROUPS IN THE PAPUK UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK**

**Deliverable 1.2.1**

## **Danube Geo Tour Plus**

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced Geopark Communities

DRP0200085

## **Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Papuk UNESCO Global Geopark**

### **Deliverable 1.2.1**

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

Programme: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme Priority 3: A more social Danube Region

Specific Objective 3.3: Socio-economic development through heritage, culture and tourism

Project Duration 01/2024 to 06/2026

Responsible Partner: PP6 Public Institution “Nature Park Papuk”

Date: 28.11.2024

Version: 1.0

# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Context

Papuk UGGp (UNESCO Global Geopark) plays an active role in the economic development of its area by enhancing the general perception of geological heritage and fostering geotourism development. Its goal is to raise awareness among residents about the value of the region's heritage and to actively involve them in the cultural revitalization of the area as a whole.

The goal of the Papuk Geopark Action Plan, developed under the Danube GeoTour Plus project, is to enhance inclusivity and engagement of vulnerable groups through geotourism. It focuses on:

- Promoting cultural heritage through interpretation, guided tours, and festivals.
- Empowering rural women by supporting their participation in organic farming, local cuisine, and geotourism activities.
- Skills training for vulnerable groups, including youth, in tourism and heritage preservation.
- Facilitating workshops, participatory forums, and capacity-building activities to strengthen connections between communities and the geopark.
- Collaborating with local NGOs, schools, and associations to co-design and implement strategies for inclusivity.

This plan aims to foster cultural exchange, economic empowerment, and sustainable community involvement in geopark operations.

## 1.2. Territory, threats, trends, and needs in Papuk UNESCO Global Geopark

### Territory

Papuk UNESCO Global Geopark (UGGp) is located in eastern Croatia, spanning 524 km<sup>2</sup> across two counties: Požeško-slavonska and Virovitičko-podravska.

It includes municipalities like Kaptol, Velika, Brestovac, Voćin, Čačinci, and the towns of Kutjevo and Orahovica. The geopark also encompasses several rural villages, many experiencing depopulation. The area is rich in natural and geological heritage, including forests, hiking trails, and archaeological sites. The Jankovac Forest Park is particularly notable for its high visitor traffic.

### Threats

1. Depopulation:
  - The outmigration of residents, particularly youth, poses a major challenge for sustaining local communities.
  - Brain drain affects the economic and cultural vitality of the region.
2. Environmental Stress:
  - High visitor numbers, particularly at Jankovac, create challenges in managing waste, maintaining trails, and preserving ecosystems.
  - Limited resources for comprehensive visitor monitoring exacerbate the risk of ecological degradation.
3. Economic Challenges:
  - Dependence on traditional, small-scale agriculture limits economic diversification.
  - Vulnerable groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, rural women) face barriers to fully participating in geotourism and other income-generating activities.
4. Lack of Awareness:
  - Insufficient community awareness of the importance of geological and cultural heritage limits local engagement in preservation and promotion efforts.

## Trends

1. Tourism Growth:
  - Increasing numbers of visitors to the geopark, drawn by its geological and cultural significance, present both opportunities and challenges.
2. Cultural Revitalization:
  - Efforts like the involvement of ethnic minorities and rural women in geotourism are fostering cultural awareness and community participation.
3. Environmental Awareness:
  - Growing recognition of the need for sustainable visitor management, with initiatives such as visitor counters and data collection becoming priorities.
4. Collaboration Opportunities:
  - Partnerships with schools, NGOs, and cultural associations (e.g., Češka beseda, Čašca) are emerging as effective ways to engage local populations and vulnerable groups.

## Needs

1. Visitor Management:
  - Systems for monitoring and managing visitor numbers, particularly in high-traffic areas like Jankovac, to protect natural resources.
2. Economic Opportunities:
  - Support for local producers, including markets for organic and traditional products.
3. Community Engagement:
  - Greater involvement of local communities in the geopark's activities, particularly through education and participatory planning.
4. Preservation of Heritage:
  - Initiatives to document and promote cultural practices and languages, particularly among ethnic minorities.

Papuk UGGp's strategies must address these threats and trends while leveraging its unique natural and cultural assets to ensure sustainable development and community well-being.

## II. VULNERABLE GROUPS

Danube GeoTour Plus aims to engage different vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of residents for active participation in geopark services and structures, particularly in providing high-value experiences and supporting visitor monitoring in geoparks

In line with the *Common Strategy for Engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Danube Geoparks*, an Action Plan has been developed for the Papuk UNESCO Global Geopark to engage vulnerable groups within the Geopark's territory. This action plan will focus on three vulnerable groups: **ethnic minorities, rural women, and youth at risk of brain drain.**

### 1. ETHNIC MINORITY

#### "ČEŠKA BESEDA" CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF THE CZECH MINORITY

The Czech ethnic minority is recognized as part of the cultural diversity in the region. The Czech community in Croatia has a longstanding history, with Czech settlers arriving primarily in the 19th century. In Kaptol (Papuk UGGp), as in other parts of Croatia where they reside, the Czech minority maintains cultural traditions, language, and community activities that enrich the local cultural landscape. "*Češka beseda*" is a cultural association representing the Czech minority in Croatia. These associations work to preserve and promote Czech language, culture, and traditions. They often organize events, language courses, folklore activities, and other cultural initiatives that bring together the Czech community and foster intercultural connections. In regions like Kaptol (Papuk UGGp), associations like *Češka beseda* play an essential role in preserving the Czech heritage and strengthening ties with the local community. *Češka beseda* has around 300 members on geopark territory.

### 2. RURAL WOMAN

In the Papuk Geopark area, this vulnerable group includes rural women who work on local family farms. These women will be encouraged to share their traditional knowledge of producing organic local products and preparing regional dishes, thereby helping to preserve and promote cultural heritage. Currently, there are no associations of rural women in the Papuk Geopark area. However, we can reach them through NGOs, local stakeholders, and community associations

### **3. YOUTH IN RISK OF BRAIN DRAIN „ČAŠČA“ YOUTH ASSOCIATION AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS ON THE AREA OF PAPUK GEOPARK**

The youth in Papuk Geopark area are at risk of brain drain, a phenomenon where young people leave their local communities, often due to a lack of opportunities for higher education or employment. Associations like \*Čašča\* in Kaptol can play a significant role in mitigating this issue by engaging young people in local initiatives, cultural activities, and community development projects. Through events, skill-building workshops, and heritage preservation activities, \*Čašča\* can help strengthen the young population's connection to their roots, encouraging them to stay and contribute to their community's future. Primary schools in the Papuk Geopark area serve as important institutions for engaging youth in regional development and conservation efforts by involving students in educational and cultural activities tied to the geopark's unique natural and cultural heritage. Primary schools located in the Papuk Geopark area include primary schools in Velika, Kutjevo, Kaptol, Voćin I Orahovica.

## III. ACTIONS

### Objective 1: Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups

#### 1.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups

Clearly identify which groups are considered vulnerable within the geoparks. This involves understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics.

#### ACTIONS:

##### 1.1.1. Collect data and contacts of vulnerable groups

- **Description:** The database will contain detailed information on each vulnerable group, including the location of individuals and associations, key contacts, and organization representatives.
- **Tools:** Microsoft Excel
- **Timeline:** January 2024 – June 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** One database in table format, which organizes and records information on vulnerable groups.
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Ivana Bulić Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

##### 1.1.2. Identify local stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community associations

- **Description:** Identify local stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community associations that engage with or support rural womans
- **Tools:** Microsoft Excel, istraživanje
- **Timeline:** January 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** One Database of stakeholders/geopark partners (100% Papuk brand) that engage rural woman
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Ivana Bulić - Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** rural woman

## 1.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations

Partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local community groups that have established trust and relationships with vulnerable populations. This collaboration aims to leverage their expertise and networks for effective engagement.

### ACTIONS

#### 1.2.1. Organize meetings with members of vulnerable, local stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community associations that engage with or support VGs

- **Description:** Organize meetings with members of vulnerable groups to inform them about geopark and project activities, their potential involvement and benefit of the project.
- **Tools:** meetings, reports
- **Timeline:** start from January 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** At least 1 meeting held per year
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Ivana Bulić - Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Objective 2: Well-understood Vulnerable Groups

### 2.1. Needs Assessment

Conduct thorough needs assessments to understand the specific challenges and barriers faced by vulnerable groups through surveys, focus groups, and community consultations. Research existing knowledge (studies of municipalities, NGOs and previous projects) about the groups.

### ACTIONS:

#### 2.1.1. Open discussions with members of vulnerable groups and local organizations

- **Description:** Discussions to understand the specific needs and expectations of VGs, and encourage their participation in the project
- **Tools:** meetings, focus groups

- **Timeline:** January–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** A list of contacts to be used in discussions, report
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Ivana Bulić - Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 2.1.2. Organize a transnational exchange with the vulnerable groups

- **Description:** Exchange visit of Czech minority from Papuk geopark with Iron Mountain geopark in Czech (ref. to A 1.5)
- **Tools:** study visit, knowledge- experience sharing workshops,
- **Timeline:** January 2025 – March 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** present the plan of visit to VG, select destination, contact destination geopark and arrange a trip, make a report with conclusions of the exchange visit
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Ivana Bulić - Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs, especially ethnic minority

## 2.2. Communication and Outreach

Build empathetic communication channels and outreach strategies to understand the needs of vulnerable groups and engage them effectively.

### ACTIONS:

#### 2.2.1. Communication

- **Description:** Establish regular communication through emailing list, in person
- **Tools:** emailing list, meetings, phones
- **Timeline:** January 2024–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** established regular communication
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić - Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 2.2.2. Organize a participation of vulnerable groups in the annual Hallstatt Days event in Kaptol

- **Description:** Participation of vulnerable groups in the annual Hallstatt Days event, presentation of geoExperience, workshops with students, kids on theme of cultural heritage. Rural woman who work in local family farms will be invited to contribute their knowledge of producing local organic products and preparing a local food ect. (ref. to A 1.4 and A 2.3)
- **Tools:** event planning
- **Timeline:** June 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** report from event, pictures
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Ivana Bulić, Goran Radonić - Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 2.3. Tailored Communication Strategies

Ensure that communication methods are inclusive, using multiple languages, simple language, and various media channels. Identify keywords, tone of voice, and images, and determine the communication channels to be used.

#### ACTIONS:

#### 2.3.1. Include vulnerable groups in creation of new promotional Leaflets

- **Description:** Create multi -language promotional leaflets for new geoExperience with help of ethnic minority (Croatian-Czech-English) (ref. to A 2.3)
  - **Tools:** concept development,
  - **Timeline:** May - December 2025
  - **Expected Outcome:** 1 new multi-language leaflet
  - **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Goran Radonić - Papuk UGGp
- Relevant for:** all 3 VGs, especially ethnic minority

## 2.4. Regular Engagement

Establish regular communication channels such as community meetings, social media, social media platforms, and newsletters to ensure that vulnerable groups are informed and engaged.

### **ACTIONS:**

#### **2.4.1. Regularly inform vulnerable groups about geopark activities**

- **Description:** To regularly inform vulnerable groups about geopark activities through social media, web pages, and email lists
- **Tools:** social media (Facebook, Instagram), web page of Papuk Geopark, emailing list
- **Timeline:** January 2024 – June 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** Share activities, event updates, educational content; VGs informed
- **Responsible person:** Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Objective 3: Inclusive Planning and Policy Development

### 3.1. Stakeholder Involvement

Involve representatives from vulnerable groups in the planning process to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

#### ACTIONS :

##### 3.1.1. Organize open education event

- **Description:** Education event organized by the geopark, with direct participation from vulnerable groups, NGOs, sectoral agencies ect. Topics may include geological, cultural heritage preservation, visitor interaction, sustainable practices, presentation of new geoExperience and presentation of family farms and their products (ref. to rural woman and A 2.3)
- **Tools:** structured event agenda
- **Timeline:** May 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 1 event organised, report from event
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Goran Radonić - Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.2. Education and Training

Provide education and skills training tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations to empower them economically and socially.

##### 3.2.1. Encourage vulnerable groups Involvement by Presenting New Opportunities

- **Description:** Organize workshops and meetings to present the benefits and new opportunities created through the Danube GeoTour Plus project. This include

presentation of possibilities such as involving ethnic minority groups in providing services such as guided tours and cultural interpretation for visitors as part of the geoExperience, possible job opportunities for youth, such as serving as guides or interpreters at archaeological sites and participating in archaeological research, encourage rural women to participate by sharing their expertise in producing local products and preparing traditional food. This can involve setting up workshops, tastings, or markets where these women can interact directly with visitors, sharing knowledge and promoting local gastronomy (ref. to A 2.3)

- **Tools:** meetings, workshops
- **Timeline:** November 2025 – March 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** At least 1 workshop/meeting held by the end of project
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Goran Radonić - Papuk UGGp

**Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

### 3.2.2. Engage youth in Visitor Management

- **Description:** Try to engage youth in visitor management through data collection, conducting surveys, and analyzing data can be both educational and impactful (ref. to SO3). These roles can enhance their practical experience and develop their skills in technology, data handling, and visitor interaction. Youth participation in this way also helps foster a sense of responsibility and connection to conservation efforts
- **Tools:** meetings, discussions, surveys, data collection from visitor centers
- **Timeline:** September 2025 - June 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** at least 2 people (youth) engage in visitor management
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić- Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** YRBD

## Objective 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1. Feedback Mechanisms

Implement systems for continuous feedback from vulnerable groups to understand the effectiveness of the strategies and make necessary adjustments.

#### **ACTION:**

##### **4.1.1. Conduct Surveys as Feedback Mechanism**

- **Description:** Surveys will serve as a primary tool for gathering feedback from vulnerable group participants and other stakeholders involved in the project
- **Tools:** simple and accessible feedback forms (paper and digital option)
- **Timeline:** January- December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** At least 1 survey conducted
- **Responsible person:** Goran Pavić, Goran Radonić - Papuk UGGp
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Cross-Cutting Actions in the Action Plan

### **Data Collection**

Build a comprehensive understanding of vulnerable groups and their needs.

### **Workshops and Capacity Building**

Develop skills and provide opportunities for vulnerable groups to contribute to geotourism and heritage preservation. Enhances the capacity of all groups to participate actively in geopark activities and economic opportunities. Empowered individuals contributing to local heritage, tourism, and sustainable practices.

### **Community Events (e.g., Hallstatt Days)**

Foster cultural exchange and increase visibility of vulnerable groups. Involves all groups, promoting inclusivity and shared cultural pride. Strengthened community ties and enhanced visitor experience.

## **Communication and Promotion**

Ensure ongoing engagement through regular communication via digital platforms, promotional materials, and outreach. Encourages collaboration and consistent involvement across groups.

## **Monitoring and Feedback**

Evaluate the effectiveness of actions and make iterative improvements. Applies to all actions and ensures adaptability to the needs of vulnerable groups. Data-driven improvements and sustained engagement.

# **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

The key achievements of the Papuk UNESCO Global Geopark Action Plan for Engagement of Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Groups, as outlined in the document, can be summarized as follows:

## **1. Enhanced Inclusivity and Engagement**

- Establishment of structured databases and partnerships with local groups such as the Czech minority ("Češka Beseda") and youth organizations (e.g., Čašca Youth Association).
- Active involvement of rural women, youth, and ethnic minorities in geotourism, fostering social inclusion and creating economic opportunities.

## **2. Capacity Building and Economic Empowerment**

- Workshops, meetings, and transnational exchanges provided training and platforms for vulnerable groups to share cultural heritage, develop skills, and participate in sustainable geotourism.
- Opportunities for rural women to showcase and sell local products and traditional cuisine, promoting entrepreneurship and preserving cultural heritage.

## **3. Sustainable Tourism Development**

- Youth involvement in visitor management, including roles in data collection and monitoring visitor interactions, enhancing skills and promoting engagement with local conservation efforts.

- Introduction of geotourism activities like guided tours, cultural interpretation, and workshops aligned with sustainable practices, leveraging the unique natural and cultural assets of Papuk Geopark.

#### 4. Cultural and Community Revitalization

- Promotion of cultural heritage through multi-language promotional materials, events such as Hallstatt Days, and workshops to connect vulnerable groups with visitors and local stakeholders.
- Strengthened collaboration with local schools, NGOs, and cultural associations, fostering a sense of pride and shared responsibility for regional heritage.

#### 5. Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms

- Implementation of surveys and feedback forms to evaluate the participation and impact of initiatives on vulnerable groups, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with community needs.

#### Overall Impact:

The plan promotes **social cohesion, cultural exchange, and economic sustainability** within Papuk Geopark by integrating vulnerable groups into its development strategies, addressing key challenges like depopulation, economic stagnation, and lack of awareness about regional heritage. It also serves as a model for inclusivity and sustainable tourism in geoparks globally.

## V. ANNEXES

### Annex A- Action plan Logical Matrix

### Annex B- Action Plan Evaluation Tool

# Annex A- Action plan Logical Matrix

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions			1.4. Engagement campaigns budget	1.5. Transnational exchanges budget	Time frame	Connection to SO2 (especially 2.3.)	Connection to SO3
					VG 1	VG 2	VG 3					
<b>1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups</b>												
Defined Vulnerable Groups	Identify and classify vulnerable groups.	Clear understanding of who and where the vulnerable groups are.	Surveys, community mapping.	High	Ethnic minority Collect data and contacts ; Ethnic minority of Czechs, the association "Češka beseda," is an ASP on	Rural women Collect data and contacts	Youth in risk of brain drain Collect data and contacts			Jan 2024-Jan 2025		Raising competences in understanding the importance and connection between visitor management and nature protection is essential for sustainable development (natural resources and ecosystems are preserved while still providing positive visitor experiences)
	Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations	Partner with NGOs and local organisations.	Better reach and trust with vulnerable groups.		MOUs, partnership agreements.		Identify local stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community associations that engage with or support rural women			Jan 2024-Jun 2025		
	Formalised collaboration inside the vulnerable groups	Facilitate the formation of groups among vulnerable populations.	Stronger internal cohesion and advocacy.		Training workshops, technical support.		Organize meetings with members of vulnerable, local stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community associations that engage with or support VGs			start from Jan 2025		
<b>2. Well-understood Vulnerable Groups</b>												
Needs Assessment	Conduct surveys and focus groups.	Detailed understanding of needs and challenges.	Surveys, focus groups.	High	Open discussions with members of vulnerable groups and local organizations Organize a transnational exchange with the vulnerable groups to Iron Mountain Geopark	Open discussions with members of vulnerable groups and local organizations	Open discussions with members of vulnerable groups and local organizations		2.000 EUR	Jan 2025- Dec 2025		
Exploring World Views	Understand perspectives on environment and experiences.	Insights to inform better management and visitor experiences.	Observations, cultural studies.	Medium								
Communication and Outreach	Build trust through empathetic communication.	Improved relationships and engagement.	Community meetings, social media.	Medium		communication in person, through emails, phones				Jan 2024-Jun 2026		
Tailored Communication Strategies	Use accessible and varied communication methods.	Inclusive and effective communication.	Multi-language materials, various media channels.	Medium		Organize a participation of vulnerable groups in the annual Halstatt Days event in Kaptol		1.500 EUR		Jun 2025		
Regular Engagement	Establish regular communication channels.	Continuous involvement of vulnerable groups.	Newsletters, community forums, social media.	Medium		Regularly inform vulnerable groups about geopark activities				May - Dec 2025		
<b>3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development</b>												
Stakeholder Involvement	Include vulnerable group representatives in planning.	Inclusive and representative policies and plans.	Workshops, consultation meetings.	High		Organize open education event				May 2025		o active ethnic minority of Czechs with around 300 members, expressing high interest in the revival of heritage and participating in providing guiding, interpretation and similar services. It is also important to connect the Czech minority with their homeland because in the Czech PP Iron Mountain Geopark ,
Policy Framework	Develop flexible and adaptive policies.	Policies that support diverse and changing needs.	Policy guidelines, adaptive plans.	Medium								
Long-term Commitment	Ensure sustained engagement strategies.	Long-term support and positive outcomes.	Strategic plans, continuous funding.	Medium		This project, like all other Papuk Geopark projects, are focused on creating a new opportunities, new offers, and improving living conditions for all residents of				permanent		
Education and Training	Provide tailored education and skills training.	Empowered and skilled individuals.	Training programs, workshops.	High	Encourage vulnerable groups involvement by Presenting New Opportunities EM-engaged in the co-creation of the geoExperience within the Project (revival of heritage and participating in providing guiding interpretation and similar services)	RW-engaged in the co-creation of the geoExperience within the Project (knowledge of producing local organic products and preparing local food)	YBD-engaged in the co-creation of the geoExperience and Visitor management (testing period of geo Experience, job opportunities interpretation, archaeological site research, digitisation of heritage, collect data from visitor counters, conduct surveys)			Nov 2025-Jun 2026		o Rural women who work in local family farms and will be invited to contribute their traditional knowledge of producing local organic products and preparing local food, as well as dishes from the so-called Halstatt cuisine. Some experience can be capitalised form once a year, the event "Halstatt Days in Kaptol" where workshops with rural families and kids on Iron Age are organised. o Youth in risk of brain drain: due to lack of diverse opportunities students are leaving the territory however new and innovative services such as geoExperiences and areological sites can in long run provide job opportunities outside agriculture – in interpretation, archaeological site research, digitisation of heritage.
<b>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>												
Feedback Mechanisms	Implement continuous feedback systems.	Real-time insights for timely improvements.	Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.	Medium		Conduct Surveys as Feedback Mechanism				Jan-Dec 2025		
Impact Assessment	Regularly assess impact with qualitative and quantitative measures.	Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement.	Data studies, data analysis tools.	Medium						permanent		

## Annex B- Action Plan Evaluation Tool

Objective	Activity	Result	Applies to VG	SDGs	Horizontal Principles	Deadline	Responsible person and	Stage	Evaluation 1 Observations	Evaluation 2 Stage Observation	Evaluation 3 Stage Observation	Evaluation 4 Stage Observation
1. Clearly Mapped	Collect data and contacts vulnera	One database in table format, which organizes an	Women, YRBD, Ethnic minority			January 2025	Papuk Geopark	In progress	.	.	.	.
1. Clearly Mapped	Identify local stakeholders, includ	One Database of stakeholders/geopark partners	Women			January 2025	Papuk Geopark	In progress	.	.	.	.
1. Clearly Mapped	Organize meetings with members	At least 1 meeting held per year	Women, YRBD, Ethnic minority				Papuk Geopark	.	.	.	.	.
2. Well-understood	Open discussions with members	A list of contacts to be used in discussions, repor	Women, YRBD, Ethnic minority					.	.	.	.	.
2. Well-understood	Organize a transnational exchange	Present the plan of visiti to VG, select destination,	Ethnic minority			March 2026	Papuk Geopark	.	.	.	.	.
2. Well-understood	Establish regular communication	established regular communication	Women, YRBD, Ethnic minority			January 2024-	Papuk Geopark	In progress	.	.	.	.
2. Well-understood	Organize a participation of vulner	Report from event, pictures	Women, YRBD, Ethnic minority			June 2025	Papuk Geopark	.	.	.	.	.
2. Well-understood	Include vulnerable groups in crea	1 new multi-language leaflet	Ethnic minority			December 202	Papuk Geopark	.	.	.	.	.
3. Inclusive Plannin	Organize open education event (r	At least 1 event organised, event report	Women, YRBD, Ethnic minority			May 2025	Papuk Geopark	.	.	.	.	.
3. Inclusive Plannin	Encourage vulnerable groups Inv	At least 1 workshop/meeting held by the end of pr	Women, YRBD, Ethnic minority			March 20026	Papuk Geopark	.	.	.	.	.
2. Well-understood	Regularly inform vulnerable group	Share activities,event updates, educational conten	Women, YRBD, Ethnic minority			June 2026	Papuk Geopark	In progress	.	.	.	.
4. Monitoring and E	Conduct Surveys as Feedback M	At least 1 survey conducted	Women, YRBD, Ethnic minority			December 202	Papuk Geopark	.	.	.	.	.
3. Inclusive Plannin	Try to engage youth in visitor mar	at least 2 people (youth) engage in visitor manage	YRBD			June 2026	Papuk Geopark	.	.	.	.	.
drop-down list								.	.	.	.	.

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
**Danube GeoTour Plus**

# **Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Swabian Alb Geopark**

Deliverable 1.2.1

# Danube Geo Tour Plus

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced  
Geopark Communities

DRP0200085

## Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Swabian Alb Geopark

### Deliverable 1.2.1

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

Programme: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme

Priority 3: A more social Danube Region

Specific Objective 3.3: Socio-economic development through heritage, culture  
and tourism

Project Duration 01/2024 to 06/2026

Responsible Partner: PP4 University of Bucharest

Date: 25.11.2024

Version: 1.0

interreg  
Danube Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

  
Danube GeoTour Plus

# I. INTRODUCTION

## I.1. Context

The **Swabian Alb UNESCO Global Geopark** operates within a culturally and geographically diverse area, characterized by distinct traditions and but also challenges regarding for example brain drain or lack of inclusivity. This action plan focuses on integrating vulnerable groups into the geopark's activities, emphasizing inclusivity, empowerment, and sustainable heritage-based development.

Building on the common strategy developed under the **Danube GeoTour Plus** project, this plan seeks to:

1. Address the specific needs and capacities of vulnerable groups within Swabian Albs Geopark's communities.
2. Engage these groups actively in geopark governance, decision-making, and cultural heritage promotion.
3. Develop innovative, participatory activities that bridge historical narratives and modern tourism, leveraging the region's natural and cultural assets.

The **Swabian Alb Geopark Action Plan** adopts a tailored approach by:

- Collaborating closely with local NGOs, schools, and community organizations to map and understand the unique challenges faced by vulnerable groups.
- Organizing workshops and participatory forums to co-design engagement strategies with these groups.
- Implementing a series of short-term initiatives and long-term capacity-building activities that promote inclusivity in geopark operations and tourism offerings.

To ensure sustainability, the action plan aligns with broader Danube GeoTour Plus goals and integrates representatives of vulnerable groups into geopark working groups. These efforts will be complemented by ongoing monitoring and evaluation, ensuring the plan remains adaptive to community feedback and changing needs.

## I.2. Territory, threats, trends and needs

### Territory

The **Swabian Alb UNESCO Global Geopark** spans a region of exceptional geological, cultural, and natural significance. Its landscape is marked by striking karst formations, vibrant ecosystems, and a rich tapestry of historical and cultural sites. The Geopark covers a vast area that encompasses diverse spatial categories, ranging from urbanized regions to remote, secluded rural communities. The region is internationally renowned for its extraordinary archaeological finds from the Paleolithic era, including some of the oldest evidence of human art and cultural expression. Additionally, the Geopark is home to an abundance of fossils, particularly ammonites, which vividly illustrate its geological history. These natural and cultural treasures make the Swabian Alb an invaluable resource for education, tourism, and scientific research.

### Threats

1. **Depopulation and Brain Drain:** The Geopark faces depopulation in rural areas, with many young residents moving to urban centers. This "brain drain" leaves behind an aging population and creates challenges for preserving cultural and natural heritage. The declining population also leads to a reduction in local economic value creation, as fewer residents are available to sustain small businesses, traditional crafts, and agricultural activities that are integral to the region's identity and economy.
2. **Socio-Economic Disparities:** Rural communities often experience disparities in access to education, employment, and healthcare, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups such as low-income families and individuals with disabilities.

### Trends

1. **Sustainable Tourism Opportunities:** The growing interest in eco-tourism and heritage-based travel offers the Geopark a chance to attract visitors in a way that supports local communities and protects the environment. Initiatives such as guided tours and educational programs can involve local stakeholders, including vulnerable groups, as active participants.
2. **Digital Transformation Opportunities:** Technologies such as interactive apps, virtual reality experiences, and digital storytelling present new ways to engage visitors and support community inclusion. These tools can also enhance accessibility for seniors or individuals with disabilities.

## Needs

1. **Capacity Building for Inclusion:** Programs are needed to empower poor, people with disabilities, and youth in danger of brain drain to participate in geopark activities.
2. **Accessible and Inclusive Infrastructure:** Investments in both physical (e.g., trails, facilities) and digital infrastructure are necessary to enhance accessibility and visitor experience while mitigating environmental impacts.
3. **Community Engagement:** Actively involving vulnerable groups in decision-making processes ensures their needs are addressed.

# II. VULNERABLE GROUPS

The Swabian Alb UNESCO Global Geopark, managed collaboratively by regional stakeholders, is dedicated to promoting sustainable development, preserving geological and cultural heritage, and fostering community involvement. As part of the Danube GeoTour Plus project, the Geopark emphasizes the inclusion of vulnerable and underserved groups to ensure that all members of the community can participate in and benefit from its cultural, educational, and economic opportunities.

## Identifying Vulnerable Groups

In line with the Danube GeoTour Plus strategy, vulnerable groups are defined as those who face greater barriers to social and economic participation due to factors such as age, geographic isolation, socioeconomic challenges, or disabilities. The Geopark's Action Plan focuses on three primary groups: youth at risk of brain drain, low-income families, and people with disabilities. These groups are identified based on their unique challenges and the potential positive impact that inclusive Geopark engagement can have on their quality of life, social integration, and economic opportunities.

### 1. Youth at Risk of Brain Drain

Young people in the Swabian Alb often face limited educational and career opportunities, which drives many to leave the region for urban centers or other countries. This brain drain not only reduces the region's demographic vitality but also deprives the local community of future leaders and innovators. The Geopark aims to counteract this trend by creating engaging educational programs, skill-building workshops.

### 2. Low-Income Families

Economic challenges faced by low-income families in the region limit their access to cultural, educational, and recreational activities. These barriers can hinder social integration and opportunities for upward mobility. The Geopark addresses this by offering free access to educational programs, cultural events, and nature-based activities. These offerings are designed to enable low-income families to participate in the cultural and social life of the Geopark without financial constraints.

### 3. People with Disabilities

People with physical or cognitive disabilities often encounter significant obstacles in accessing public spaces, educational resources, and cultural experiences. The Geopark is committed to inclusivity by improving infrastructure, such as accessible trails and learning spaces, and designing free programs that cater to their specific needs. By creating more accessible experiences and fostering a greater sense of inclusion, the Geopark helps people with disabilities engage fully in its activities and become active participants in their communities.

# III. ACTIONS

## Objective 1: Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups

### 1.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups

Clearly identify which groups are considered vulnerable within the geoparks. This involves understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics.

Actions:

#### 1.1.1. Analysis of potential partners together with Bruderhausdiakonie

- **Description:** Identify and analyze potential partners or organizations already working with vulnerable groups, to involve them in geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Stakeholder mapping, local outreach meetings, and interviews with representatives from NGOs, Universities and Schools.
- **Timeline:** January–May 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:** A list of contact persons of NGOs and groups which could be integrated into the project.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 1.1.2. Expanding the network to include other important organizations and individuals

- **Description:** Identifying further potential project partners and therefor expanding the network of already involved groups as Bruderhausdiakonie or University of applied forest science.
- **Tools:** Stakeholder mapping, meetings.
- **Timeline:** May–August 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:** Inclusion of at least one other organizations identified in the analysis in the project.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)

- **Relevant for:** Persons with disabilities

### 1.1.3. Inquiry at various offices and research in order to be able to map the VGs statistically

- **Description:** Getting in contact with offices like Statistisches Bundesamt or Major office to acquire numbers about the vulnerable groups at Swabian Alb.
- **Tools:** Online recherche, Excel charts, diagrams
- **Timeline:** December 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:** Contact at least two offices with the request for data information. Document with an overview of all important statistical data on the VGs in the Geopark
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 1.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations

Partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local community groups that have established trust and relationships with vulnerable populations. This collaboration aims to leverage their expertise and networks for effective engagement.

### Actions:

#### 1.2.1. Get in touch with multipliers and representatives of the VGs

- **Description:** Establish formal partnerships with NGOs and organizations representing Low income, youth in danger of brain drain, and person with disabilities to collaborate on inclusive geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Partnership agreement.
- **Timeline:** January 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:** Draw up a partnership agreement. Signed partnership agreement with ASPs.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 1.2.2. Presentation of the project and the participation concepts with open discussion

- **Description:** Convince the partners about the benefits of the project and the collaboration
- **Tools:** Meetings, Information Documents, Presentations
- **Timeline:** January – May 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:** Arrangement of appointments for meetings. Conception of a short description of the project and the participation concepts as a PDF document. Conception of a short presentation of the project and the participation concepts as a PowerPoint presentation. Presentation of the project and the participation concepts with open discussion.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 1.2.3. Joint drafting and signing of an MOU

- **Description:** Agreeing on Memorandum of Understanding
- **Tools:** Memorandum of Understanding
- **Timeline:** December 2024 – December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Joint design of an MOU as part of the joint face-to-face events. At least 3 signings of MOU via all involved Organisations and Persons. Media coverage of the event with publication on Geopar's social channels.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 1.3. Formalised collaboration inside the Vulnerable Groups

Encourage and support the formalisation of collaboration within vulnerable groups. This involves helping them establish formal structures, such as associations or cooperatives, to strengthen their collective voice and capacity. The geoparks should identify potential key persons and informal groups, around whom the formalisation could be achieved.

### Actions:

#### 1.3.1. Create concepts and examine possibilities for creating a social media presence for the VGs

- **Description:** Explore the feasibility of creating a social media account or format for a better presence of VGs in the Geopark territory.
- **Tools:** Meetings, Workshops, Idea workshops, social media
- **Timeline:** January–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Joint design of social media concepts as part of the joint face-to-face events. Collection of ideas, concepts and formats for the use of social media.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 1.3.2. Offer a platform for an annual interest forum

- **Description:** If desired, the Geopark can handle the planning, implementation and provision of the necessary infrastructure for annual meetings of the VGs.
- **Tools:** Meetings
- **Timeline:** July–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Submit a proposal to establish a regular meeting at which all relevant representatives of the VG in the Geopark can come together and informally exchange ideas or discuss current issues and share existing problems, challenges and wishes.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 1.3.3. Linking with VG groups from other geoparks

- **Description:** Help the VGs to link up with VGs from another geopark by moderating the communication.
- **Tools:** Meetings, Mailing lists, phone calls
- **Timeline:** December 2024–May 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Provide the contact details of the VG from the other Geopark as a list.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** Youth in danger of brain drain

#### 1.3.4. Exchange with VG groups from other geoparks

- **Description:** Establish exchange of people from the VGs with other VG groups from other geoparks.
- **Tools:** Meetings, Mailing lists, phone calls, Agendas, Visits, Social media
- **Timeline:** December 2024–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Requests for an exchange with another geopark. Document with organization of the exchange (arrival and departure, accommodation, meals, etc.). Conception of the content and program of the exchange as an agenda. Joint visit to the geopark. Media coverage of the event with publication on the Geopark's social channels.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** Youth in danger of brain drain

## Objective 2: Well-understood Vulnerable Groups

### 2.1. Needs Assessment

Conduct thorough needs assessments to understand the specific challenges and barriers faced by vulnerable groups through surveys, focus groups, and community consultations. Research existing knowledge (studies of municipalities, NGOs and previous projects) about the groups.

#### Actions:

##### 2.1.1. Meeting with the representatives of the VGs to identify the needs of the VGs and to adapt and concretize the actions and the joint project plan for SO2 on this basis.

- **Description:** Organization and implementation of meetings, discussions and open interviews.
- **Tools:** Workshops, Meetings, Project Plan
- **Timeline:** December–March 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Organization and implementation of a joint meeting. Creation of a concretized and adapted project plan.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 2.1.2. Workshop/idea workshop with the VGs to work on the target group orientation and inclusivity as well as the concept of the geopark product from SO2

- **Description:** Hosting and providing rooms and infrastructure for workshops and meetings.
- **Tools:** Workshops, idea workshops, meetings
- **Timeline:** December 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Organization and implementation of a joint meeting. Preparation of a summary document with the main aspects identified from the workshops. Media coverage of the event with publication on the Geopark's social channels.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.2. Exploring World Views and Space and Time Perception

Understand the world views, spatial awareness, and temporal perceptions of vulnerable groups to better integrate their perspectives into geopark management and visitor experiences.

### Actions:

#### 2.2.1. Workshop/idea workshop with the VGs to identify needs, problems, potential, challenges and strengths and to explore their world view

- **Description:** Hosting and providing rooms and infrastructure for workshops and meetings.
- **Tools:** Workshops, idea workshops, meetings
- **Timeline:** December 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Organization and implementation of a joint meeting. Preparation of a summary document with the main aspects identified from the workshops. Media coverage of the event with publication on the Geopark's social channels.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 2.2.2. Evaluation of the inclusivity and target group suitability of the geopark product from SO2

- **Description:** People from VGs test the geopark product designed in SO2 and assess it in terms of target group orientation and inclusivity.
- **Tools:** field trips, feedback forms, interviews, evaluations, social media
- **Timeline:** December 2024–March 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Organization and implementation of evaluation field trip. Preparation of a summary document with the main aspects identified from the evaluation. Media coverage of the event with publication on the Geopark's social channels.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brain drain

## 2.3. Communication and Outreach

Build empathetic communication channels and outreach strategies to understand the needs of vulnerable groups and engage them effectively.

### Actions:

#### 2.3.1. Participation in forums and events

- **Description:** Geopark representatives attend various events to promote the project, raise awareness of the VGs and network.
- **Tools:** Forums, events, Meetings
- **Timeline:** - January-November 2024.
- **Expected Outcome:** Participation in at least 2 forums and events to present the project and network with others.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 2.4. Tailored Communication Strategies

Ensure that communication methods are inclusive, using multiple languages, simple language, and various media channels. Identify keywords, tone of voice, and images, and determine the communication channels to be used (such as face-to-face, phone contact, newspapers,

municipal newsletters, organisational communications, NGOs, schools'/teachers' communications, and unemployment services).

**Actions:**

**2.4.1. Providing materials multilingual and in plain language**

- **Description:** All materials and publications are provided multilingual and in plain language where applicable.
- **Tools:** Translations, multiple Versions of Documents
- **Timeline:** December 2024–March 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Provision of a translation of the materials of the geopark product from SO2 in English and in plain language.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** persons with disabilities

**2.4.2. Geopark mascot to better address target group**

- **Description:** A child-friendly mascot is to be used to convey knowledge and information to the target groups.
- **Tools:** Graphic design, story telling, print products, social media
- **Timeline:** December 2024–March 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Design of a geopark mascot. Implementation of a geopark mascot in print products and on the website. Implementation of a Geopark mascot in materials and storytelling of Geopark product made from SO2.
- **Responsible person:** Tiberiu Bociat (UB-HCUGG)
- **Relevant for:** Youth in danger of brain drain

## 2.5. Regular Engagement

Establish regular communication channels such as community meetings, social media, social media platforms, and newsletters to ensure that vulnerable groups are informed and engaged.

**Actions:**

**2.5.1. Establishment of joint communication channels**

- **Description:** All ASPs and VGs should be informed of relevant topics by means of a newsletter/ mailing list and kept up to date.
- **Tools:** Newsletters, Mailing list
- **Timeline:** December 2024
- **Expected Outcome:** Creation of an expandable mailing list with all important and involved organizations and persons
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## Objective 3: Inclusive Planning and Policy Development

### 3.1. Stakeholder Involvement

Involve representatives from vulnerable groups in the planning process to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

Actions:

#### 3.1.1. Conception of possible internships and work experience days

- **Description:** People from the VGs should be able to gain an insight into the head office in the form of trial internships and trial working days and play an active role in shaping it.
- **Tools:** trial internships, trial working days
- **Timeline:** December 2024–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Creation of concepts for short time internships that can be offered as part of the “Mitmachen Ehrensache” initiative (<https://mitmachen-ehrensache.de/>).
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** Youth in danger of brain drain

### 3.2. Policy Framework

Develop policies that are flexible and adaptive to the changing needs of vulnerable groups, ensuring inclusivity in all aspects of policy formulation.

**Actions:**

**3.2.1. Agree on communication rules and a joint policy as part of the MOU**

- **Description:** As part of the MOU, a chapter should be added that defines communication rules and standards that everyone feels comfortable with.
- **Tools:** MOU, Communication rules
- **Timeline:** December 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** paragraph in the MOU, which sets out the rules for adequate communication and joint policy
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 3.3. Long-term Commitment

Ensure that engagement strategies are not one-off but are part of a sustained effort to support vulnerable groups. This includes flexibility in adapting strategies based on changing circumstances and new challenges.

**Actions:**

**3.3.1. Concepts for long-term projects**

- **Description:** Options for long-term projects are to be examined and developed in joint discussion rounds.
- **Tools:** Strategy documents, workshops, meetings
- **Timeline:** December 2024–December 2025.
- **Expected Outcome:** Joint brainstorming and concept development for long-term projects and sustainable participation
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

## 3.4. Education and Training

Provide education and skills training tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations to empower them economically and socially.

### Actions:

#### 3.4.1. Education be offered by and/or for the VGs

- **Description:** New educational offers should not only be created that can be used by VGs, but also educational offers that are provided by people from the VGs.
- **Tools:** workshops, concept plans
- **Timeline:** December–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Designing new educational programs that could be offered by and/or for the VGs as part of the ESD Compass (<https://www.bne-kompass.de/>). Designing further training or providing information materials for landscape guides in order to expand their offerings to include inclusive and target group-specific events and to sensitize them in dealing with VGs. Development of free educational programs to impart knowledge about earth sciences. Implementation of free further training courses to impart knowledge of geoscientific issues. Media coverage of the event with publication on the Geopark's social channels. Conception of a new geopark product in SO2 as a free leisure and educational offer for the VGs. Implementation of a new geopark product in SO2 as a free leisure and educational offer for the VGs.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

#### 3.4.2. Knowledge transfer and exchange between the VGs as part of the exchange with another geopark

- **Description:** Knowledge is to be exchanged in the form of discussions or presentations as part of the exchange format.
- **Tools:** Visits, Meetings, talks, presentations
- **Timeline:** December–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Document with the most important findings of the discussions between the VGs.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)

- **Relevant for:** youth in danger of brain drain

## Objective 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1. Feedback Mechanisms

Implement systems for continuous feedback from vulnerable groups to understand the effectiveness of the strategies and make necessary adjustments.

#### **Actions:**

##### **4.1.1. Feedback system for Geopark website**

- **Description:** As part of the redesign of the Geopark website, a feedback system is to be integrated for general feedback, but also a form to be filled out in order to obtain standardized information.
- **Tools:** Website, Forms, Mail
- **Timeline:** December 2024- June 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** Conception of a feedback form for implementation on the website. Implementation of a feedback form for implementation on the website. Design of a standardized questionnaire that can be integrated into the website as part of the feedback system in order to also collect general data such as origin, age, gender, etc.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** all 3 VGs

### 4.2. Impact Assessment

Regularly assess the impact of engagement strategies through qualitative and quantitative measures to ensure they are meeting the desired outcomes.

#### **Actions:**

##### **4.2.1. Regular investigations and scientific researches**

- **Description:** Conduct periodic surveys within the community to gather broader insights into the impact of geopark activities, community perceptions of tourism, and suggestions for improvement. These surveys will help assess long-term engagement and identify areas for enhancement.

- **Tools:** Surveys, scientific projects with university, meetings
- **Timeline:** July 2024- December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Conception of visitor surveys on geopark offers as part of a student project. Conducting visitor surveys on geopark offers as part of a student project. Presentation of the results of the visitor surveys to the operators of the geopark offers in order to make offers more target group-oriented and inclusive and to increase the quality of the offers. Joint brainstorming and collection of ideas for further concepts for research and monitoring projects together with the Rottenburg University of Applied Forest Sciences, for example in the form of projects or final theses, in order to expand the pool of information from SO3.
- **Responsible person:** Julian Stolz (UGGp SA)
- **Relevant for:** youth in danger of brain drain, low income

## Cross-cutting actions and strategy alignment

### **Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations:**

Strengthen partnerships with organizations that persons with disabilities, low incomes and youth in danger of brain drain. These collaborations can amplify reach, build trust, and foster consistent community engagement.

### **Tailored Communication and Outreach:**

Use accessible, empathetic communication approaches tailored to each group, employing community meetings, social media, and local media to keep these groups informed and involved.

### **Long-Term Commitment and Sustainability:**

Embed strategies for sustained involvement through capacity-building initiatives that empower local community groups, ensuring continuity beyond the project duration.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Regularly review participation rates, feedback, and engagement levels across all groups. Adjust strategies based on collected data to ensure continuous improvement in inclusion efforts.

# IV. CONCLUSIONS

The **Swabian Alb Geopark Action Plan** represents a comprehensive and inclusive approach to integrating vulnerable groups—persons with disabilities, low incomes and youth in danger of brain drain—into the geopark’s activities and broader sustainable development goals. By addressing their unique needs and fostering active participation, the plan creates a framework for long-term social, cultural, and environmental sustainability.

## Key Achievements

### 1. Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups:

Young people were engaged through free educational programs, workshops, and excursions designed to strengthen their connection to the region and highlight opportunities within their local community.

Economically disadvantaged families benefited from free access to cultural and educational activities, fostering their participation in the social and cultural life of the Geopark.

Tailored educational programs and accessible activities allowed people with disabilities to fully engage with the Geopark, promoting inclusivity and enhancing social cohesion.

### 2. Strengthened Community Involvement:

By actively involving local communities in decision-making, tourism management, and cultural preservation, the geopark has fostered a stronger sense of ownership and pride among its residents.

### 3. Sustainable Tourism Practices:

Activities such as participatory mapping, inclusive interpretive programs, and stakeholder workshops have ensured that tourism development remains aligned with the needs of the environment and the community.

### 4. Capacity Building and Skill Development:

Vulnerable groups were empowered through training sessions and activities that enhanced their ability to participate in Geopark initiatives. These programs focused on skills such as environmental education and cultural storytelling, helping participants contribute meaningfully to the region’s heritage.

## 5. Improved Communication and Feedback Mechanisms:

Regular feedback forms and community surveys have established a robust mechanism for adapting and improving activities based on participant experiences and community insights.

### Future Directions

**Scaling and Replication:** Successful programs, such as youth workshops and tailored programs for low-income families, will be evaluated and expanded to other areas within the Geopark, increasing the impact of the action plan.

**Continued Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessments, feedback, and adjustments will ensure that the action plan remains effective and aligned with the evolving needs of the community.

**Embedding Inclusivity in Strategic Planning:** The lessons learned from this action plan will be integrated into the geopark's strategic planning to ensure inclusivity remains a central focus for future initiatives.

### Final Vision

This action plan establishes the Swabian Alb UNESCO Global Geopark as a model of inclusivity, resilience, and community-driven heritage conservation within the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. By valuing the voices and contributions of vulnerable groups, the Geopark strengthens its identity as a place where natural and cultural heritage are not only preserved but actively celebrated by and for the people who call it home.

# V. ANNEXES

Annex A – Action Plan Logical Matrix

Annex B – Action Plan Evaluation Tool

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions	H.4. Engagement budget	L5. Transnational exchanges budget	Time frame	Connection to SO2 (especially 2.3.)	Connection to SO3
<b>1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups</b>										
Defined Vulnerable Groups	Identify and classify vulnerable groups.	Clear understanding of who and where the vulnerable groups are.	Surveys, community mapping	High	<p>disabilities, income, youth.</p> <p>The partner Budweislandale already has an extensive network and in-depth understanding of vulnerable groups and their needs. They know where the respective VGI can be found in the Suburbia and also how to communicate with them. In detailed discussions and interviews, we told our ASP Budweislandale what we hoped to achieve and what our goals were. In return, Budweislandale was able to provide us with several contacts for all VGs. As experts in dealing with VGs, they also provide advice, knowledge about the VGs and support and moderate the participation processes. In addition, research will be carried out to generate statistics on the VGs in the Geopark.</p> <p>We already took contacts with Budweislandale. Thanks to that extensive contact, our network has already been expanded to include other valuable partners such as Offine Hilen-Emslau (PDI) in addition, the District RB Geopark (not directly with the University of Applied Forest Sciences in Rottenburg/YBO). The Geopark School Network also offers further partners and visitors. The open rather than commercial relationship of trust but also a MOU.</p>			5.2024 - 2025	Contract was established with "Offine Hilen-Emslau" (VG PDI) via Budweislandale. These people already have experience in assessing the degree of inclusion in outdoor products. Their active involvement in the creation and testing process of the Geopark product should ensure that the product is designed to be as inclusive as possible. The VGI YBO and will also be included in the creator process during workshops, ideas workshop and	Some of the partners, such as the Rottenburg University of Applied Forest Sciences, also support us in other things project objectives such as SO3. As part of an integrative project, students have carried out valuable outdoor courses in the Geopark area, which will complement the findings in SO3.
	Partner with NGOs and local organizations	Better reach and trust with vulnerable groups.	MOU, partnership agreements.	High	<p>As part of SO3, the possibility of using the Geopark's social media as an announcement for people from the VGs will be explored. This would allow the VGs to potentially create their own contributions, enabling them to reach a broad public audience. Such contributions could draw attention to relevant topics while also offering others from the VGs, who may become aware of the social media presence, the opportunity to network with the project and groups. The decision on whether to create their own formats or projects would remain with the people from the VGs, leaving creative freedom in their hands.</p> <p>Additionally, the feasibility of establishing an annual online forum will be assessed. The forum could provide people from the VGs with a space to network, share information about new related to inclusion and the Geopark, and exchange ideas. New networks can form as part of an</p>			5.2024 - Ongoing	They can also report on their experiences during the workshops and excursion on social media.	
Formalized collaboration inside the vulnerable group	Facilitate the formation of groups among vulnerable populations.	Stronger internal cohesion and advocacy.	Training workshops, technical support.	High				2025 - permanent		
<b>2. Well understood Vulnerable Groups</b>										
Needs Assessment	Conduct surveys and focus groups.	Detailed understanding of needs and challenges.	Surveys, focus groups.	High	<p>Workshops and idea workshops with the VGs to identify needs, problems, opportunities and strengths in the Geopark. Discussions with the ASPs to experts who understand the needs of the Workshops and idea workshops with the VGs for exploring their world view.</p>			2025	The results and findings of the campaign flow directly into the design of SO2.	
Exploring World Views	Understand perspectives on environment and experiences.	Observations, visitor experiences.	Observations, cultural studies.	High				2025	The results and findings of the campaign flow directly into the design of SO2.	
Communication and Outreach	Build trust through empathetic communication.	Improved relationships and engagement.	Community meetings, social media.	High	<p>Adequate communication is a key level fundamental to the success of the project. External moderators from Budweislandale, who specialize in this, therefore accompany the communication. The project is also documented and published on social media to ensure that people from the VGs are heard. Whenever possible, all events should include promotional material and information on digital and physical communication in which the proposition of equalities is balanced and everyone has their say. The results of project milestones and important events should be published in a media-oriented manner. Participation in all last and conferences to present the project and network with other organizations and their VGs.</p> <p>Project documents, prepared materials and panels from SO2 are provided in plain language and, if necessary, in another foreign language. Creation of a new group material to appeal specifically to young people.</p>			2025 - ongoing	SO2 print materials and boards as well as social media posts are also communicated and advertised in the newly created structures.	
Tailored Communication Strategies	Use accessible and varied communication methods.	Inclusive and effective communication.	Multi-language materials, various media.	High				04.2024 - 2025	Progress in SO2 is also communicated and advertised in the newly created structures.	Learning and possibly geographically prepared results from SO3 and follow up projects are also communicated via the channels.
Regular Engagement	Establish regular communication channels.	Continuous involvement of vulnerable groups.	Newsletters, community forums, social media.	High				permanent		
<b>3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development</b>										
Stakeholder Involvement	Include vulnerable group representatives in planning.	Inclusive and representative policies and plans.	Workshops, consultation meetings.	High	<p>The establishment of regular meetings/forums (FORUM) in which all partners participate is being considered. In terms of content, the focus is on current topics relating to future orientation and inclusion in the Geopark.</p>			2025	The ASP, VGs and partners offer expertise, experience and support in the creation of the Geopark product and actively help shape it in the form of workshops and idea workshops.	Findings from SO3 in combination with the expertise of our ASPs and VGs should form the basis for future strategic decisions in the Geopark.
Feedback Mechanisms	Implement continuous feedback systems.	Real-time insights for timely improvements.	Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.	High	<p>Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.</p>			2025 - permanent		
Impact Assessment	Regularly assess impact with qualitative and quantitative measures.	Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement.	Impact surveys, case studies, data analysis.	High	<p>The feedback button not only accepts general feedback, but also standardized completion forms to generate further ideas for the impact assessment. Regular investigations as part of research projects for students at the ASP Rottenburg University of Applied Forest Sciences.</p>			2025 - permanent		

Objective	Activity	Result	Applies to VG	SDG	Horizontal Principles	Deadline	Responsible person and organization	Evaluation 1	Evaluation 2	Evaluation 3	Evaluation 4
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.11 Analysis of potential partners together with Budweislandale	Joint discussion to identify potential multipliers and other relevant persons to get a list of contacts	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			5.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.12 Expanding the network to include other important organizations and individuals	Inclusion of other organizations identified in the analysis in the project	Persons with disabilities			6.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.13 Inquire at various offices and research in order to be able to map the VGs statistically.	Contact at least two offices with the request for data information	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			10.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.17 Inquire at various offices and research in order to be able to map the VGs statistically.	Document with an overview of all important statistical data on the VGs in the Geopark.	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			6.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.21 Get in touch with multipliers and representatives of the VGs	Contact multipliers and representatives of VGs USQp SA	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			5.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.21 Get in touch with multipliers and representatives of the VGs	Draw up a partnership agreement	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			5.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.21 Get in touch with multipliers and representatives of the VGs	Signed partnership agreement with ASPs	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			5.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.22 Presentation of the project and the participation concepts with open discussion	Arrangement of appointments for meetings	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			6.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.22 Presentation of the project and the participation concepts with open discussion	Conception of a short description of the project and the participation concepts as a PDF document	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			5.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.22 Presentation of the project and the participation concepts with open discussion	Conception of a joint presentation of the project and the participation concepts as a PowerPoint presentation	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			5.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.22 Presentation of the project and the participation concepts with open discussion	Presentation of the project and the participation concepts with open discussion	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			6.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.23 Joint drafting and signing of an MOU	Joint design of an MOU as part of the joint face-to-face events	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			10.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.23 Joint drafting and signing of an MOU	At least 3 signatories of MOU via involved Organizations and Persons	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			10.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.23 Joint drafting and signing of an MOU	Media coverage of the event with publication on Geopark's social channels	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			10.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.31 Create concepts and examine possibilities for creating a social media presence for the VGs	Joint discussion on the feasibility of a social media channel or format that offers the VGs a (multilingual and/or) multilingual forum	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			10.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.32 Offer a platform for an annual interest forum	Collection of ideas, concepts and formats for the use of social media	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			10.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.33 Linking with VG groups from other Geoparks	Submit a proposal to establish a regular meeting in which all relevant representatives of the VGs in the Geopark can come together and informally exchange views or discuss current issues and share existing problems, challenges and wishes	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			10.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.34 Exchange with VG groups from other Geoparks	Request for the contact details of the VGs from the other Geopark, at least	Youth in danger of brainfall			5.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.34 Exchange with VG groups from other Geoparks	Requests for an exchange with another Geopark	Youth in danger of brainfall			10.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.34 Exchange with VG groups from other Geoparks	Documentation of the organization of the exchange (arrival and departure, accommodation, media, etc.)	Youth in danger of brainfall			6.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.34 Exchange with VG groups from other Geoparks	Conception of the content and program of the exchange as an agenda	Youth in danger of brainfall			6.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.34 Exchange with VG groups from other Geoparks	Joint visit to the Geopark	Youth in danger of brainfall			6.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups	1.34 Exchange with VG groups from other Geoparks	Media coverage of the event with publication on the Geopark's social channels	Youth in danger of brainfall			6.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
2. Well understood Vulnerable Groups	2.11 Meeting with the representatives of the VGs to identify the needs of the VGs and to adapt and concretize the actions and	Participation in at least 2 hours and events to present the project and network with other	Persons with disabilities, Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			11.24	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
2. Well understood Vulnerable Groups	2.41 Provide materials multilingual and in plain language	Provision of a translation of the materials of the Geopark, product from SO2 in English and in plain language	Persons with disabilities			7.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
Planning and Development 3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development	3.41 Education is offered by and/or for the VGs	Implementation of a new Geopark product in SO2 as a free leisure and educational offer for the VGs	Low income, Youth in danger of brainfall, Persons with disabilities			6.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
Planning and Development 3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development	3.41 Education is offered by and/or for the VGs	Media coverage of the event with publication on the Geopark's social channels	Low income, Youth in danger of brainfall, Persons with disabilities			6.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	4.21 Regular investigations and scientific researches	Presentation of the results of the visitor survey to the operators of the Geopark offers in order to make other more target group-oriented and indicate and increase the quality of the offer	Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			10.2024	USQp SA, Julian Strot	Complete			
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	4.21 Regular investigations and scientific researches	Joint brainstorming and collection of ideas for further concepts for research and monitoring projects together with the Rottenburg University of Applied Forest Sciences, for example in the form of projects or final theses, in order to expand the pool of information from SO3	Youth in danger of brainfall, Low income			10.2025	USQp SA, Julian Strot	In progress			



# **Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark**

Deliverable 1.2.1

# Danube Geo Tour Plus

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced Geopark  
Communities

DRP0200085

## Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark

### Deliverable 1.2.1

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

Programme: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme

Priority 3: A more social Danube Region

Specific Objective 3.3: Socio-economic development through heritage, culture and  
tourism

Project Duration 01/2024 to 06/2026

Responsible Partner: PP8 Djerdap National park

Date: 17.12.2024

Version: 1.0



# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Context

The Public Enterprise Djerdap National park as the management authority of the Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark operates in a diverse fields covering forestry, tourism, fishing and other types of local development with the focus on nature conservation, including geological aspects. This action plan focuses on the integration of vulnerable groups into the geopark's activities, emphasizing the development of the awareness of the geopark among vulnerable groups and in parallel sustainable heritage-based development in cooperation and partnership with relevant institution and organizations.

The goal of the Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark Action Plan, developed under the Danube GeoTour Plus project, is to enhance inclusivity and engagement of vulnerable groups. It focuses on:

- Within the area of Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark, the plan intends to tackle the specific needs and capacities of the vulnerable groups.
- Capacity Building Programs: the need to empower vulnerable groups, in line with developed Needs assessment.
- Collaborating with local NGOs, schools, and associations to co-design and implement future steps for inclusivity.

This plan aims to promote cultural exchange, support economic empowerment, and encourage sustainable community participation in geopark operations.

To ensure sustainability, the action plan aligns with broader Danube GeoTour Plus goals. These efforts will be complemented by ongoing monitoring and evaluation ensuring the plan remains adaptive to community feedback and changing needs.

# 1.2 Territory, threats, trends and needs

## Territory

Djerdap is recognized internationally for its geological, but also other natural and cultural values. Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark covers the territory of 1.330 km<sup>2</sup>, including area of Djerdap National Park. The most significant natural phenomenon in the area of Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark is Djerdap Gorge, along which there are numerous geoheritage objects from almost all periods of geological history.

The main features of Djerdap are preserved environment, the marked geodiversity, diversity of flora and fauna, and the richness of cultural heritage. Therefore, Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark has the potential to become a unique open-air laboratory, in which geological, ecological and civilizational history will be presented.

Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark is spreading along territories of four municipalities: Negotin, Kladovo, Majdapek and Golubac. There are not big towns and Negotin and Kladovo could be considered as most important in the area. In the nearby vicinity there are ongoing mining activities. Mining and geology have existed inseparably almost as long as the human species, making in this area the foundation of economic, cultural, scientific, technical-technological and general social development both in the past and the present. In the last years, tourism is having the great development in the region, due to outstanding natural values, recognised worldwide.

## Threats

### 1. Depopulation

- The outmigration of residents, particularly youth, poses a significant challenge to sustaining local communities.
- Brain drain reduces the economic and cultural vitality of the region.

### 2. Environmental Stress

- High visitor numbers create challenges in waste management, trail maintenance, and ecosystem preservation.
- Limited resources for comprehensive visitor monitoring exacerbate the risk of ecological degradation.

### 3. Economic Challenges

- Dependence on traditional, small-scale agriculture restricts economic diversification and small and micro scale tourism services.
- Vulnerable groups, such as low-income residents and rural women, face barriers to fully participating in geotourism and other income-generating activities.

### 4. Lack of Awareness

- Insufficient community awareness of the importance of geological and cultural heritage hinders local involvement in preservation and promotion efforts.

## Trends

### 1. Tourism Growth

- Increasing visitor numbers, drawn by the geopark's geological and cultural significance, create both opportunities and challenges.

### 2. Environmental Awareness

- There is growing recognition of the need for sustainable visitor management, with initiatives like visitor counters and data collection becoming priorities.

### 3. Collaboration Opportunities

- Partnerships with schools, NGOs, and cultural associations are emerging as effective strategies for engaging local populations and vulnerable groups.

## Needs

### 1. Visitor Management

- Implementation of systems to monitor and manage visitor numbers, particularly in high-traffic areas, to protect natural resources.

### 2. Economic Opportunities

- Support for local producers, including creating markets for organic and traditional products.

### 3. Community Engagement

- Enhanced involvement of local communities in geopark activities through education and participatory planning.

### 4. Preservation of Heritage

- Initiatives to document and promote cultural practices, traditions, and languages, particularly among ethnic minorities.

# VULNERABLE GROUPS

Within the framework of the *Danube GeoTour Plus* project, special attention is given to the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups in the Djerdap Geopark. These identified groups include rural women, isolated elderly individuals, and low-income residents, who face significant challenges but also hold untapped potential for contributing to sustainable community development.

## 1. Rural Women

- Rural women play a vital role in preserving local traditions, crafts, and culinary heritage.
- The project focuses on supporting rural women by creating opportunities to participate in geotourism initiatives, such as showcasing traditional products, crafts, and authentic culinary experiences.
- Providing capacity-building workshops and access to local markets enables rural women to enhance their economic independence and visibility within the community.

## 2. Isolated Elderly

- The isolated elderly population often faces social exclusion and limited access to economic opportunities.
- The project aims to engage this group by incorporating their knowledge of local history, traditions, and stories into geopark activities, such as guided tours, cultural events, and storytelling initiatives.
- Strengthening intergenerational connections allows the younger population to learn from the elderly while promoting cultural revitalization and inclusion.

## 3. Low-Income Residents

- Economic barriers prevent many low-income residents from fully benefiting from opportunities within the geopark.
- The project seeks to create income-generating opportunities by supporting small-scale, sustainable businesses, such as local food production, handicrafts, and eco-tourism services.
- Additionally, efforts will focus on providing training, capacity-building programs, and improving access to local and regional markets to foster economic empowerment.

By addressing the needs of these vulnerable groups, the *Danube GeoTour Plus* project in Djerdap aims to foster greater social inclusion, economic empowerment, and cultural preservation while strengthening the connection between local communities and the geopark.

# ACTIONS

## Objective 1: Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups

This chapter is dealing the instruments how the action plan goals will be achieved. It sets up the structure of needed actions towards better visibility and involvement of vulnerable groups in the geopark area.

### 1.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups

Clearly identify which groups are considered vulnerable within the geoparks. This involves understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics.

#### Actions:

#### 1.1.1. Demographic and geographic (location) data analysis

- **Description:** Summarize and adopt upon direct needs the available data about demographic trends and locations. The municipal level will be addressed and demographic data will be available, focusing on the municipal level to analyse the demographic disposition and spatial inequalities of the geopark area.
- **Tools:** official websites, Microsoft Excel, online mapping tools
- **Timeline:** January – June 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** A comprehensive database with relevant geographical and demographic data
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** all VGs

#### 1.1.2. Analysis of the possible partners representing the vulnerable groups

- **Description:** Identify and collect potential partners, such as local senior clubs, women cooperatives, schools etc. already working with vulnerable groups, to involve them in geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Stakeholder mapping, semi-structured interviews with representatives from existing senior groups.

- **Timeline:** January – June 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** A comprehensive list of potential partners, including their capacities, interests and possible roles.
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** all VGs

## 1.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organisations

Partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local community groups that have established trust and relationships with vulnerable populations. This collaboration aims to leverage their expertise and networks for effective engagement.

### Actions:

#### 1.2.1. Engagement meetings with identified stakeholder organisations

- **Description:** Organise meetings with identified stakeholder organisations, who work with VGs to inform them, and discuss with them about the geopark and other project activities, their potential involvement and benefit of the project.
- **Tools:** meetings
- **Timeline:** June – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased knowledge of local relevant organisations about the geopark, better involvement of stakeholder organisations into geopark activities, attendance lists, event report.
- **Responsible person:** Tamara Jankovic (NPD), Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## Objective 2: Well-understood Vulnerable Groups

### 2.1. Needs Assessment

Conduct thorough needs assessments to understand the specific challenges and barriers faced by vulnerable groups through surveys, focus groups, and community consultations. Research existing knowledge (studies of municipalities, NGOs and previous projects) about the groups.

**Actions:**

### 2.1.1. Development a document: Needs assessment for vulnerable groups in Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark

- **Description:** Preparing a needs assessment for the target groups and develop a list of activities. Discussions to understand the needs, potentials and expectations of vulnerable groups and local organisations.
- **Tools:** consultations.
- **Timeline:** March – September 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Comprehensive guiding document
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 2.2. Exploring Word Views

Understand the world views, the good stories and best practices in order to enrich the knowledge of the vulnerable groups is important task towards involvement of these groups into geopark activities.

**Actions:**

### 2.2.1. Collection of good practices

- **Description:** Research for good practices of involvement of vulnerable groups into geopark activities
- **Tools:** Relevant websites
- **Timeline:** March – September 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Better understanding of possibilities of involvement of vulnerable groups
- **Responsible person:** Nenar Radakovic (NPD), Sasa Nestotovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 2.3. Communication and Outreach

Build empathetic communication channels and outreach strategies to understand the needs of vulnerable groups and engage them effectively.

### Actions:

#### 2.3.1. Promotion of the project activities and the geopark in schools

- **Description:** In the field presentation of geopark activities, inviting school representatives with scholars.
- **Tools:** school visits
- **Timeline:** March – October 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased awareness of scholars about the geopark and their potential collaborative activities with the geopark.
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

#### 2.3.2. Sharing content on the geopark's social media

- **Description:** Regularly post updates from vulnerable groups on the social media channels of the geopark.
- **Tools:** Social media content, website posts
- **Timeline:** June 2025 – June 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** Broader representation of vulnerable groups, in the geoparks social media channels
- **Responsible person:** Tamara Jankovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 2.4. Tailored Communication Strategies

Ensure that communication methods are inclusive, using multiple languages, simple language, and various media channels. Identify keywords, tone of voice, and images, and determine the communication channels to be used (such as face-to-face, phone contact, newspapers, municipal newsletters, organisational communications, NGOs, schools/teachers communications, and unemployment services).

**Actions:**

### 2.4.1. Develop Communication plan

- **Description:** Develop a document with specific focus on communication in order to engage the vulnerable groups.
- **Tools:** research, defined methodology
- **Timeline:** March – June 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Document developed and ready to use.
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 2.5. Regular Engagement

Establish regular communication channels such as community meetings, social media, social media platforms, and newsletters to ensure that vulnerable groups are informed and engaged.

**Actions:**

### 2.5.1. Annual Community meetings about geopark activities

- **Description:** Hold annual meetings to update vulnerable groups on geopark initiatives and gather feedback.
- **Tools:** meetings
- **Timeline:** Annually, starting from 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** 1 meeting per year organized
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD), Sasa Nestorovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

# Objective 3. Inclusive Planning and Policy

## Development

### 3.1. Stakeholder Involvement

Involve representatives from vulnerable groups in the planning process to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

#### Actions:

### 3.1.1. Transnational visit with members of the VGs to project partner

- **Description:** Facilitate an exchange program with Hateg Country Geopark to share best practices for engaging and working together with vulnerable groups
- **Tools:** Study visit, collaborative activities, common workshops
- **Timeline:** Autumn 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** Study visit organized with min. 6 persons representing the vulnerable groups
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 3.2. Policy Framework

Develop policies that are flexible and adaptive to the changing needs of vulnerable groups, ensuring inclusivity in all aspects of policy formulation.

#### Actions:

### 3.2.1. Enhancing existing “Friends of the Djerdap geopark” initiative

- **Description:** Enhance the networks of the “Friends of the Djerdap geopark” by communication, involvement and presentation
- **Tools:** Consultation meetings, presentations
- **Timeline:** June 2025 - June 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** At least three new members
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 3.3. Long-term Commitment

Ensure that engagement strategies are not one-off but are part of a sustained effort to support vulnerable groups. This includes flexibility in adapting strategies based on changing circumstances and new challenges.

**Actions:**

### 3.3.1. Including specific activities into the Geopark's Strategic Plan

- **Description:** Integrate activities aimed at supporting vulnerable groups into the long-term strategic planning of the geopark. Ensure the presence of vulnerable group relevant activities in strategies to be developed in future
- **Tools:** Meetings, comments of the strategies to be developed in future
- **Timeline:** July 2025–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** new strategic plan
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD), Sasa Nestorovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 3.4. Education and Training

Provide education and skills training tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations to empower them economically and socially.

**Actions:**

### 3.4.1. Geopark training program

- **Description:** Provide training and consultation sessions for vulnerable group members about topic previously defined.
- **Tools:** Training workshops, field visits
- **Timeline:** June 2025 – June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Vulnerable group members empowered about defined topic
- **Responsible person:** Tamara Jankovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## Objective 4. Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1. Feedback Mechanisms

Implement systems for continuous feedback from vulnerable groups to understand the effectiveness of the strategies and make necessary adjustments.

**Actions:**

#### 4.1.1. Feedback forms

- **Description:** During the annual meetings and face-to-face meetings with the vulnerable group members, we will ask the participant to fill out the prepared feedback forms.
- **Tools:** Easy to use feedback forms
- **Timeline:** Annually
- **Expected Outcome:** Better information for better planning
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 4.2. Impact Assessment

Regularly assess the impact of engagement strategies through qualitative and quantitative measures to ensure they are meeting the desired outcomes.

**Actions:**

### 4.2.1 Impact assessment surveys

- **Description:** We will conduct regular community surveys to assess the impact of geopark activities, gather perceptions on tourism, and collect suggestions for improvement. This feedback will help ensure the geopark delivers tangible benefits to the community and highlights areas for further enhancement.
- **Tools:** Surveys
- **Timeline:** Annually starting from December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Survey results, new insights
- **Responsible person:** Nenad Radakovic (NPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGS

## 4.3 Cross-cutting actions and strategy alignment

### Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations

It is important to strengthen partnerships with NGOs and community organizations that support vulnerable groups, including isolated seniors, rural women, and low-income residents. By collaborating with representatives, we can amplify our reach, foster trust, and encourage sustained engagement within the community. These partnerships will allow the project to tap into existing networks, gain valuable local insights, and ensure that our outreach efforts are both effective and long-lasting.

### Tailored Communication and Outreach

We will implement communication strategies that are both accessible and empathetic, designed to meet the unique needs of each vulnerable group. This will involve a blend of community meetings, social media campaigns, and local media outreach to ensure that these groups are informed, involved, and actively participating in project activities. A diverse array of communication channels will help ensure that our messages resonate with different audiences and are accessible to all.

### **Communication and Promotion**

Ensure ongoing engagement by maintaining regular communication through a variety of channels, including digital platforms, printed promotional materials, and targeted outreach efforts. This multi-faceted approach will help keep stakeholders informed, motivated, and connected to project activities. By fostering open dialogue and sharing updates, we encourage collaboration, build trust, and promote consistent involvement across all community groups. Additionally, tailored messaging and interactive communication methods will ensure inclusivity, keeping diverse audiences actively engaged and invested in the long-term success of the initiative.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

We will regularly monitor participation rates, gather feedback, and assess engagement levels across all target groups. This ongoing evaluation will allow us to adjust our strategies and enhance the inclusivity of the project. By continuously reviewing progress, we can ensure that our efforts to engage vulnerable groups remain effective, responsive, and aligned with their needs.

# CONCLUSIONS

The Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark Action Plan has been thoughtfully developed to promote inclusivity and address the specific needs and challenges faced by vulnerable groups within the geopark's territory. By prioritizing three key groups—low-income residents, isolated elderly, and rural women—the plan aims to build a more equitable, accessible, and supportive environment for all residents. Through a strategic combination of capacity building, tailored communication, and community engagement, the plan empowers these groups, ensuring their active involvement in the geopark's development and activities.

## Key Goals and Achievements

- **Identification and Mapping:** Accurately identify and map vulnerable groups, analyzing their demographic and geographic characteristics to better understand their distribution and needs.
- **Needs Assessment:** Develop a thorough understanding of the challenges, needs, and perspectives of each group through participatory research and community assessments.
- **Tailored Communication:** Create inclusive communication strategies that effectively reach and engage each group, ensuring accessibility and fostering meaningful participation.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Actively involve representatives from vulnerable groups in planning and decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and their perspectives are integrated.
- **Flexible Policy Framework:** Develop adaptable policies that respond to the evolving needs of vulnerable groups, promoting long-term inclusivity and equity.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide education, skills training, and resources tailored to vulnerable populations, empowering them both socially and economically.
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Implement mechanisms for ongoing feedback and impact assessment to ensure strategies remain effective, responsive, and sustainable.

## Future Directions

- **Strengthening Partnerships:** Expand collaborations with local NGOs, community organizations, and stakeholders to leverage their expertise, networks, and resources for greater outreach and impact.
- **Inclusive Services and Infrastructure:** Design and implement geopark services, programs, and infrastructure that are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all vulnerable groups.
- **Promoting Inclusivity:** Position Djerdap Geopark as a model of inclusivity and accessibility, highlighting its commitment to empowering vulnerable groups and fostering a strong sense of belonging for all community members.
- **Adaptive Planning:** Continuously evaluate and refine the action plan based on community feedback, emerging challenges, and changing needs to ensure its relevance and long-term success.

## Overall Impact

The Djerdap UNESCO Global Geopark Action Plan serves as a catalyst for social cohesion, cultural exchange, and economic sustainability by integrating vulnerable groups into its core development strategies. By addressing key challenges such as depopulation, economic stagnation, and limited awareness of regional heritage, the plan strengthens community resilience and fosters a shared sense of identity. Furthermore, it positions Djerdap Geopark as a model for inclusive, sustainable tourism, showcasing how geoparks can empower local communities while preserving natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

# Annexes

Annex A – Action Plan Logical Matrix

Annex B – Action Plan Evaluation Tool

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions			1.4. Engagement campaigns budget	1.5. Transnational exchanges budget	Time frame	Connection to SO2 (especially 2.3.)	Connection to SO3
					VG 1	VG 2	VG 3					
<b>1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups</b>												
<b>Defined Vulnerable Groups</b>	Identify and classify vulnerable groups.	Clear understanding of who and where the vulnerable groups are.	Surveys, community mapping.		Rural women	low-income residents	isolated elderly			01/2025 - 12/2025		-
<b>Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations</b>	Partner with NGOs and local organisations.	Better reach and trust with vulnerable groups.	MOUs, partnership agreements.		We are having our cooperation with NGOs who is dealing with these groups. Most active is women association, other two VG are represented by wider focus of interest of local and regional NGOs. We plan to confirm their needs and design follow-up activities. Providing regular information about funding and development opportunities for VGs by informing them about actual calls, project involvement, support programmes. Result: more than 5 applying VGs per year for financial support to NGOs; Prepare text of cooperation agreement for local organizations dealing with VGs and offering for signing. Result: text defined and 3 agreements signed						low-income residents will be included in SO2's GeoExperience	
<b>Formalised collaboration inside the vulnerable groups</b>	Facilitate the formation of groups among vulnerable populations.	Stronger internal cohesion and advocacy.	Training workshops, technical support.		We have standard communication e.g. e-mail, social media and live talk and we plan to enhance it							
<b>2. Well-understood Vulnerable Groups</b>												
<b>Needs Assessment</b>	Conduct surveys and focus groups.	Detailed understanding of needs and challenges.	Surveys, focus groups.		Prepare a needs assessment for the target groups and develop a list of activities.					01/2025 - 12/2025		
<b>Exploring World Views</b>	Understand perspectives on environment and experiences.	Insights to inform better management and visitor experiences.	Observations, cultural studies.		The perspectives and points of view of the target groups will be determined							
<b>Communication and Outreach</b>	Build trust through empathetic communication.	Improved relationships and engagement.	Community meetings, social media.		Communication takes place in person, by phone, by e-mail. We plan to make a communication plan based on needs assessment's results.							
<b>Tailored Communication Strategies</b>	Use accessible and varied communication methods.	Inclusive and effective communication.	Multi-language materials, various media channels.		After the communication plan, we intend to have a steps towards implementation of some of the activities under the communication plan and within the project duration.							
<b>Regular Engagement</b>	Establish regular communication channels.	Continuous involvement of vulnerable groups.	Newsletters, community forums, social media.		The most appropriate forms of communication with the target group will be identified, as well as the method of outreach.					permanent		
<b>3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development</b>												
<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>	Include vulnerable group representatives in planning.	Inclusive and representative policies and plans.	Workshops, consultation meetings.		During the meetings of the geopark bodies, representatives of the target groups will be invited.							
<b>Policy Framework</b>	Develop flexible and adaptive policies.	Policies that support diverse and changing needs.	Policy guidelines, adaptive plans.		We plan to include recommendations developed under needs assessment and discussed with TG representatives during the geopark meetings							
<b>Long-term Commitment</b>	Ensure sustained engagement strategies.	Long-term support and positive outcomes.	Strategic plans, continuous funding.		The project activities are designed to ensure a natural continuity of involvement of the target groups in the geopark activities and this will be included in the documents we will develop					permanent		
<b>Education and Training</b>	Provide tailored education and skills training.	Empowered and skilled individuals.	Training programs, workshops.		Upon the needs assessment, it will be not difficult to develop training programme which could have their implementation within the project duration.							
<b>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>												
<b>Feedback Mechanisms</b>	Implement continuous feedback systems.	Real-time insights for timely improvements.	Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.		We plan to evaluate participant satisfaction during face-to-face interviews with representatives of the target group.					permanent		
<b>Impact Assessment</b>	Regularly assess impact with qualitative and quantitative measures.	Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement.	Impact surveys, case studies, data analysis tools.		Data tracking and analysis tools are based on the nature of the method of outreach - social media statistics					permanent		



# **Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Bükk Region Geopark**

Deliverable 1.2.1

# Danube Geo Tour Plus

Boosting opportunities for more inclusive, valuable and balanced  
Geopark Communities

DRP0200085

## Action plan for engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Bükk Region Geopark

### Deliverable 1.2.1

“Project co-funded by the European Union”

Programme: Interreg Danube Transnational Programme

Priority 3: A more social Danube Region

Specific Objective 3.3: Socio-economic development through heritage, culture and  
tourism

Project Duration 01/2024 to 06/2026

Responsible Partner: PP9 Bükk National Park Directorate (Bükk Region Geopark)

Date: 02.12.2024

Version: 1.0

Interreg  
Danube Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

Project Title

# I. INTRODUCTION

## I.i. Context

The **Bükk National Park Directorate** as the management organisation of the **Bükk Region UNESCO Global Geopark** operates in a geologically, geographically, culturally and developmentally diverse area, characterized by rural communities, post industrial and deindustrialized areas. This action plan focuses on the integration of vulnerable groups into the geopark's activities, emphasizing the development of the local visibility of the geopark, local identity development and sustainable heritage-based development.

Building on the common strategy developed under the **Danube Geotour Plus** project, this plan seeks to:

- Address the specific needs and capacities of the vulnerable groups within the Bükk Region Geopark's communities.
- Improve the territorial identity of the region, aiming to enhance its population retention ability.
- Capacity Building for Inclusion: Programs are needed to empower seniors, rural women, and youth at risk of brain drain.
- Accessible and Inclusive Infrastructure: The geopark needs to improve its offers and taken actions to include also vulnerable groups.

**The Bükk Region Geopark Action Plan** adopts a tailored approach by:

- Collaborating with local NGOs, schools and community groups to improve the visibility of the geopark and to accurately access the needs and capacities of the region's vulnerable groups.
- Organizing workshops and participatory forums to co-design engagement strategies with these groups.
- Implementing a series of short-term initiatives and long-term capacity-building activities that promote inclusivity in geopark operations and tourism offerings.

To ensure sustainability, the action plan aligns with broader **Danube GeoTour Plus** goals. These efforts will be complemented by ongoing monitoring and evaluation ensuring the plan remains adaptive to community feedback and changing needs.

## I.ii. Territory, threats, trends and needs

### Territory

The 2817 km<sup>2</sup> territory of the Bükk Region Geopark encompasses the Bükk Mts, the Bükk Foothills, the Bükk Foreland and Uppony Mts., The Egercsehi-Ózd Basins and the Vajdavár Region. The area has diverse geological, geomorphological, biological, landscape and cultural heritage. Within its territory lies 109 settlements, ranging from major regional centres to peripheral, small villages with a total population of 417.864 in 2023.

The settlements are found in 2 counties (Heves and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén) and 9 districts, although only one lies fully within the geopark area. Major regional centres, Miskolc and Eger, are part of the area, where almost half the geopark population lives (198.392 in 2023). Until the 1990s, the Bükk Foreland was part of the catchment area of the heavy industry and mining of Miskolc and Ózd. After the closure of these industries, the active population are employed by the service sector and local businesses. Several small villages have high unemployment rates. Agricultural activities like grape and fruit production and tourism are developed and significant.

### Threats

1. **Depopulation, Isolation and Marginalization:** The area of the Bükk Reion Geopark faces significant challenges. Situated in north-eastern Hungary with predominantly rural villages, migration of youth first from the villages to regional centres, like Eger and Miskolc, then further outward migration to mayor centres like Debrecen or Budapest in the pursuit of higher education or searching for suitable job opportunities is a major problem. The lack of local opportunities drives a "brain drain," leaving behind aging populations and marginalizing vulnerable groups such as rural women, who often lack access to employment or education, and seniors with the major threat of isolation from local communities, their families and necessary social and health services. These trends threaten the sustainability of local traditions and community cohesion.
2. **Socio-Economic Disparities:** Rural communities often experience disparities in access to education, employment, and healthcare, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups such as low-income families and individuals with disabilities.

### Trends

1. Tourism demand:
2. Digital Transformation:

### Needs

1. **Capacity Building for Inclusion:** Programs are needed to empower and engage seniors, rural women and the rural youth to strengthen their connection to the local identity and to include them in geopark activities.

2. **Infrastructure Development:** The geopark needs to improve its services, physical and digital infrastructure to support and engage its vulnerable groups.
3. **Community Engagement:** Actively involving vulnerable groups in decision-making processes ensures their needs are addressed.



# II. VULNERABLE GROUPS

The Danube GeoTour Plus project aims to engage different vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of residents for active participation in geopark services and structures, particularly in providing high-value experiences and supporting visitor monitoring in geoparks.

In line with the *Common Strategy for Engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Danube Geoparks*, an Action Plan has been developed for the Bükk Region UNESCO Global Geopark to engage vulnerable groups within the Geopark's territory. This action plan will focus on three vulnerable groups: **youth at risk of brain drain, isolated elderly and rural women.**

## 1. Youth in Risk of Brain Drain

Rural youth in the Bükk region often face limited local job opportunities, prompting them to seek work in larger cities like Budapest after completing their secondary education, which may require commuting longer distances as schools consolidate due to funding constraints. The region's aging population contributes to fewer same-age peers and cultural opportunities, further pushing young people towards urban centers. This brain drain is exacerbated by schools having less capacity to offer robust science education and enriching experiences like class trips, hindering the development of skills needed for local employment.

## 2. Isolated Seniors

Isolated elderly people in the Bükk region face a complex set of challenges. As younger generations leave for better opportunities, many older residents are left behind, experiencing a lack of social connection and support. This isolation is compounded by limited access to healthcare and social services, particularly in remote villages. The decline of community programs and social clubs further restricts their opportunities for engagement and activity, contributing to a sense of loneliness and exclusion.

## 3. Rural Women

Rural women in the Bükk region face limited local job opportunities, often forcing them to choose between long commutes or low-paying, insecure work. Geographic isolation can contribute to social isolation, further compounded by traditional expectations of childcare and household management. This creates a multifaceted burden, requiring them to balance family responsibilities with limited resources and support, while navigating a lack of personal and professional development opportunities.

# III. ACTIONS

## III.i. Objective 1: Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups

### 1.1. Clearly defined Vulnerable Groups

Clearly identify which groups are considered vulnerable within the geoparks. This involves understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics.

#### Actions:

#### 1.1.1. Demographic Data analysis of the Bükk Region Geopark

- **Description:** Utilize demographic data available on the TEIR system (National Spatial Development and Planning Information System or in Hungarian: *“Országos Területfejlesztési és Területrendezési Információs Rendszer”*), focusing on the municipal level to analyse the demographic disposition and spatial inequalities of the geopark area.
- **Tools:** TEIR website, Microsoft Excel, QGIS
- **Timeline:** January – June 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** A comprehensive database with geographical representation of spatial inequalities within the geopark, highlighting municipalities with ageing population and at risk of brain drain.
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD), Balázs Megyeri (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** all VGs

#### 1.1.2. Analysis of the possible partners representing the vulnerable groups

- **Description:** Identify and collect potential partners, such as local senior clubs, scout organisations, women cooperatives, schools etc. already working with vulnerable groups, to involve them in geopark activities.
- **Tools:** Stakeholder mapping, semi-structured interviews with representatives from existing senior groups.
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025

- **Expected Outcome:** A comprehensive list of potential partners, including their capacities, interests and possible roles.
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD), Balázs Megyeri (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** all VGs

## 1.2. Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organisations

Partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local community groups that have established trust and relationships with vulnerable populations. This collaboration aims to leverage their expertise and networks for effective engagement.

### Actions:

#### 1.2.1. Organise thematic information days with the municipalities of the geopark

- **Description:** Organise several thematic information days, where the mayors and other municipal officials are invited to inform them about the geopark and the project activities
- **Tools:** Meetings
- **Timeline:** November 2024 – June 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased visibility of the geopark amongst local municipalities, attendance lists, report
- **Responsible person:** Balázs Megyeri (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

#### 1.2.2. Engagement meetings with identified stakeholder organisations

- **Description:** Organise meetings with identified stakeholder organisations, who work with VGs to inform them, and discuss with them about the geopark and other project activities, their potential involvement and benefit of the project.
- **Tools:** meetings
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased knowledge of local relevant organisations about the geopark, better involvement of stakeholder organisations into geopark activities, attendance lists, event report.
- **Responsible person:** Balázs Megyeri (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD), Judit Kovács (BNPD)

- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## III.ii. Objective 2: Well-understood Vulnerable Groups

### 2.1. Needs Assessment

Conduct thorough needs assessments to understand the specific challenges and barriers faced by vulnerable groups through surveys, focus groups, and community consultations. Research existing knowledge (studies of municipalities, NGOs and previous projects) about the groups.

#### Actions:

#### 2.1.1. Community consultations with members of vulnerable groups and local organisations

- **Description:** Discussions to understand the needs, potentials and expectations of vulnerable groups and local organisations.
- **Tools:** community consultations, exit surveys at the end of the consultations.
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Better understanding of the position of VGs, list of contacts, report
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD), Balázs Megyeri (BNPD),
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

### 2.2. Exploring Word Views, Space and Time Perception

Understand the world views, spatial awareness, and temporal perceptions of vulnerable groups to better integrate their perspectives into geopark management and visitor experiences.

#### Actions:

#### 2.2.1. Geotours with locals for the understanding of geological, natural and cultural values of the geopark

- **Description:** Organise guided walks to local geotopes to enhance awareness and connection to the local environment.
- **Tools:** Guided tours, storytelling
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased understanding of local geo-, natural- and cultural heritage amongst the VGs.
- **Responsible person:** Balázs Megyeri (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

### 2.2.2. Geopark identity and tourism perceptions report

- **Description:** Participatory systems mapping of the geopark and territorial identity and tourism perceptions within the geopark with members of all 3 VGs
- **Tools:** Focus groups
- **Timeline:** May – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Detailed report on the geopark and territorial identity as well as the perceptions of VGs on tourism potential and threats.
- **Responsible person:** Balázs Megyeri (BNPD),
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

### 2.2.3. Capturing the memories in the geopark

- **Description:** Collection of oral history, legends, local traditions, how places looked like in the past.
- **Tools:** Interviews, audio/video recordings
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Repository of collected memories and stories for cultural preservation and education.
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD) Erika Kereskényi (BNPD),
- **Relevant for:** Rural women, isolated elderly

## 2.3. Communication and Outreach

Build empathetic communication channels and outreach strategies to understand the needs of vulnerable groups and engage them effectively.

## Actions:

### 2.3.1. Annual meetings between vulnerable groups

- **Description:** Facilitation of intergenerational meetings to foster connection and learning opportunities between vulnerable groups
- **Tools:** Event planning, workshops
- **Timeline:** Annually beginning in late 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Yearly meetings to strengthen relationships between VGs.
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD), Balázs Megyeri (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

### 2.3.2. Promotion of the project activities and the geopark in local schools with volunteers

- **Description:** Presentation in schools conducted by our Kulturweit volunteers about the geopark and the project activities
- **Tools:** PPT presentations, school visits
- **Timeline:** January – July 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased awareness of local youth about the geopark and their potential collaborative activities with the geopark.
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** Youth at risk of brain drain

### 2.3.3. Sharing content on the geopark's social media

- **Description:** Regularly feature stories, news, updates from vulnerable groups on the social media channels of the geopark.
- **Tools:** Social media content, website posts
- **Timeline:** Ongoing from April 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Broader representation of vulnerable groups, legends, stories in the geoparks social media channels
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD), Eszter Csilla Molnár (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 2.4. Tailored Communication Strategies

Ensure that communication methods are inclusive, using multiple languages, simple language, and various media channels. Identify keywords, tone of voice, and images, and determine the communication channels to be used (such as face-to-face, phone contact, newspapers, municipal newsletters, organisational communications, NGOs, schools/teachers communications, and unemployment services).

### Actions:

#### 2.4.1. Multichannel communication plans

- **Description:** Develop specific communication plans to engage the VGs, keeping in mind their varied needs and preferences.
- **Tools:** Communication strategy development
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Clear communication strategies to effectively reach each VG group.
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD), Eszter Csilla Molnár (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs
- 

#### 2.4.2. Geopark promotional materials focused on the engagement of VGs

- **Description:** Develop promotional materials to engage the VGs.
- **Tools:** Graphic design, video production, and storytelling.
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** At least 2 promotional materials focusing on the engagement of VGs.
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD), Eszter Csilla Molnár (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 2.5. Regular Engagement

Establish regular communication channels such as community meetings, social media, social media platforms, and newsletters to ensure that vulnerable groups are informed and engaged.

### Actions:

#### 2.5.1. Annual Community meetings about geopark activities

- **Description:** Hold annual meetings to update vulnerable groups on geopark initiatives and gather feedback.
- **Tools:** community forums
- **Timeline:** Annually, starting from December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** 1 meeting per year.
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD), Balázs Megyeri (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## III.iii. Objective 3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development

### 3.1. Stakeholder Involvement

Involve representatives from vulnerable groups in the planning process to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

#### Actions:

#### 3.1.1. Transnational visit with members of the VGs to project partner

- **Description:** Facilitate an exchange program with Hateg Country Geopark to share best practices for engaging and working together with vulnerable groups
- **Tools:** Study visit, collaborative activities, common workshops
- **Timeline:** April 2025– June 2026
- **Expected Outcome:** Present the study visit to the vulnerable groups, discuss and select the travelling group disposition and tasks. Contact the destination Geopark and arrange the trip and shared activities. Report on the study visit.
- **Responsible person:** Balázs Megyeri (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD), Judit Kovács (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

#### 3.1.2. Exhibition vehicle workshop

- **Description:** Facilitating a workshop where VGs will be asked to provide feedback on the educational modules being developed for the Mobile Exhibition Vehicle, and to outline their possible involvement in the design of specific educational equipment.
- **Tools:** workshop
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Detailed feedback on the marketability of our educational module ideas, plans to involve youth in the design of the vehicle's modules.
- **Responsible person:** Balázs Megyeri (BNPD), Attila Kozma (BNPD),
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 3.2. Policy Framework

Develop policies that are flexible and adaptive to the changing needs of vulnerable groups, ensuring inclusivity in all aspects of policy formulation.

### Actions:

#### 3.2.1. Enhancing existing volunteer networks of the BNPD

- **Description:** Enhance the volunteer networks of the BNPD by the development of dedicated tasks in the geopark for youth and elderly volunteers.
- **Tools:** Consultation with partners and VGs, volunteer involvement strategies
- **Timeline:** January – December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Dedicated and clear volunteer tasks for the geopark, where youth and elderly can be involved.
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 3.3. Long-term Commitment

Ensure that engagement strategies are not one-off but are part of a sustained effort to support vulnerable groups. This includes flexibility in adapting strategies based on changing circumstances and new challenges.

### Actions:

#### 3.3.1. Including specific activities into the Geopark's Strategic Plan

- **Description:** Integrate activities aimed at supporting vulnerable groups into the long-term strategic plan of the geopark. This includes developing a clear events calendar to ensure consistent engagement.
- **Tools:** Strategic planning sessions, stakeholder consultations, and timeline development.
- **Timeline:** July 2025–June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** Updated Strategic Plan
- **Responsible person:** Balázs Megyeri (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 3.4. Education and Training

Provide education and skills training tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations to empower them economically and socially.

### Actions:

#### 3.4.1. Geopark in my neighbourhood training program

- **Description:** Provide training and consultation sessions in local municipalities to VG members who would like to develop geotours in their local area.
- **Tools:** Hands-on training workshops, field visits
- **Timeline:** July 2025 – June 2026.
- **Expected Outcome:** New guided tours and tour guides enriched with the essence of the geopark, as well as local legends, stories
- **Responsible person:** Balázs Megyeri (BNPD), Erika Kereskényi (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## III.iv. Objective 4. Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1. Feedback Mechanisms

Implement systems for continuous feedback from vulnerable groups to understand the effectiveness of the strategies and make necessary adjustments.

### Actions:

### 4.1.1. Feedback forms

- **Description:** During the annual meetings with the VGs we will ask the participant to fill out the prepared feedback forms.
- **Tools:** Easy to use feedback forms (both on paper and digitally)
- **Timeline:**
- **Expected Outcome:** Continuous improvement based on participant feedback
- **Responsible person:** Judit Kovács (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGs

## 4.2. Impact Assessment

Regularly assess the impact of engagement strategies through qualitative and quantitative measures to ensure they are meeting the desired outcomes.

### Actions:

#### 4.2.1 Impact assessment surveys

- **Description:** We'll regularly survey the community to understand the impact of geopark activities, perceptions of tourism, and gather suggestions for improvement. This feedback will help ensure the geopark benefits the community and identify areas for enhancement.
- **Tools:** Surveys
- **Timeline:** Annually starting from December 2025
- **Expected Outcome:** Survey results, new insights
- **Responsible person:** Balázs Megyeri (BNPD)
- **Relevant for:** All 3 VGS

## Cross-cutting actions and strategy alignment

### Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organisations

Strengthen partnerships with organizations that serve vulnerable groups, such as seniors, rural women, and children with learning difficulties. These collaborations can help amplify reach, build trust, and foster consistent engagement within the community. By working with established organizations, the project can leverage existing networks, gain valuable insights, and ensure that outreach is effective and sustainable.

### Tailored Communication and Outreach

Implement accessible and empathetic communication strategies tailored to the unique needs of each group. This approach should involve a mix of community meetings, social media platforms,

and local media to keep these vulnerable groups informed, involved, and engaged in project activities. Using a variety of communication channels ensures that messages are accessible and resonate with diverse audiences.

### **Log-term Commitment and Sustainability**

Embed strategies for long-term involvement through capacity-building initiatives. Empowering local community groups through training and resource-sharing will help ensure the continuity of efforts beyond the project's duration. This approach will build the resilience and sustainability of the communities involved, allowing them to continue benefiting from the Geopark initiatives long after the project ends.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Regularly review participation rates, feedback, and engagement levels across all target groups. Use this data to adjust strategies and improve the inclusivity of the project. By continuously monitoring progress, we can ensure that efforts to engage vulnerable groups remain effective and responsive to their needs.

# IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Bükk Region Geopark Action Plan has been meticulously crafted to foster inclusivity and directly address the unique needs and challenges faced by vulnerable groups within the geopark's territory. By focusing on three specific groups - youth at risk of brain drain, isolated elderly, and rural women - the plan aims to create a more equitable and accessible environment for all residents. Through a combination of capacity building, infrastructure development, and community engagement, the action plan seeks to empower these groups and ensure their active participation in the geopark's activities and offerings.

## Key Goals and Achievements:

- Clearly identify and map vulnerable groups within the geopark's territory, understanding their demographic and geographic characteristics.
- Establish a deep understanding of the challenges, needs, and perspectives of each vulnerable group through thorough assessments and participatory research.
- Develop tailored communication strategies to effectively reach and engage each group, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.
- Involve representatives from vulnerable groups in the planning and decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met.
- Create a policy framework that is flexible and adaptive to the changing needs of vulnerable groups, promoting inclusivity in all aspects.
- Provide education and skills training opportunities tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations, empowering them economically and socially.
- Establish mechanisms for continuous feedback and impact assessment to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the implemented strategies.

## Future Directions:

- Continue to strengthen partnerships with local NGOs, community organizations, and other stakeholders to leverage their expertise and networks for broader outreach and impact.
- Develop and implement accessible and inclusive geopark services, programs, and infrastructure that cater to the diverse needs of all vulnerable groups.
- Promote the geopark as a model of inclusivity and accessibility, showcasing its commitment to empowering vulnerable groups and fostering a sense of belonging for all residents.
- Regularly evaluate and adapt the action plan based on community feedback, changing needs, and emerging challenges to ensure its long-term relevance and effectiveness.

# V. Annexes

## Annex A – Action Plan Logical Matrix

Objective	Activity	Expected Result	Tools	Priority	Geopark Actions			1.4. Engagement capaigns budget	1.5. Transnational exchanges budget	Time frame	Connection to SO2 (especially 2.3.)	Connection to SO3
					VG 1	VG 2	VG 3					
<b>1. Clearly Mapped Vulnerable Groups</b>												
Defined Vulnerable Groups	Identify and classify vulnerable groups.	Clear understanding of who and where the vulnerable groups are.	Surveys, community mapping.	High	1.1.1. Utilize demographic data available on the TEIR system (National Spatial Development and Planning Information System)	1.1.2. Identify and collect potential partners, such as local senior clubs, local organisations, women cooperatives, schools				January – June 2025	research on organisations /NGOs/individuals that we can include in the development process of our Geopark Experience	
Collaboration with NGOs and Community Organizations	Partner with NGOs and local organisations.	Better reach and trust with vulnerable groups.	MOUs, partnership agreements.	High	1.2.1. Organise several thematic information days, where the mayors and other	1.2.2. Organise meetings with identified stakeholder organisations, who work with VGs to inform them, and discuss				January – December 2025		
Formalised collaboration inside the vulnerable groups among vulnerable populations	Facilitate the formation of groups among vulnerable populations	stronger internal cohesion and advocacy.	Training workshops, technical support.	High	1.2.3. Volunteer groups. Help them make associations, clubs, if they do not have one already. Mentor program between the VG's					January – December 2025		
<b>2. Well-understood Vulnerable Groups</b>												
Needs Assessment	Conduct surveys and focus groups.	Detailed understanding of needs and challenges.	Surveys, focus groups.	High	2.1.1. Discussions to understand the needs, potentials and expectations of vulnerable groups and local organisations.					January – December 2025		
Exploring World Views	Understand perspectives on environment and experiences.	Insights to inform better management and visitor experiences.	Observations, cultural studies.	High	2.2.1. Organise guided walks to local geotopes to enhance awareness and connection to the local environment.	2.2.2. Participatory systems mapping of the geopark and territorial identity and tourism perceptions within the geopark				January – December 2025 May – December 2025		
Communication and Outreach	Build trust through empathetic communication.	Improved relationships and engagement.	Community meetings, social media.	High	2.2.3. Collection of oral history, legends, local traditions, how places looked	2.3.1. Facilitation of intergenerational meetings to foster connection and learning opportunities between vulnerable				January – December 2025	Gathering oral history and information from women and elderly	
Tailored Communication Strategies	Use accessible and varied communication methods.	Inclusive and effective communication.	Multi-language materials, various media channels.	High	2.3.2. Presentation in schools conducted by our Kulturweit volunteers about the geopark and the project activities	2.3.3. Regularly feature stories, news, updates from vulnerable groups on the social media channels of the geopark.				January – July 2025		
Regular Engagement	Establish regular communication channels.	Continuous involvement of vulnerable groups.	Newsletters, community forums, social media.	High	2.4.1. Develop specific communication plans to engage the VGs, keeping in	2.4.2. Develop promotional materials to engage the VGs				January – December 2025		
<b>3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development</b>												
Stakeholder Involvement	Include vulnerable group representatives in planning.	Inclusive and representative policies and plans.	Workshops, consultation meetings.	High	3.1.1. Facilitate an exchange program with Hateg Country Geopark to share best practices for engaging and working together with vulnerable groups	3.1.2. Facilitating a workshop where VGs will be asked to provide feedback on the educational modules being developed for the Mobile		5000 EUR		April 2025 – June 2026	Exchange programme with Hateg Country Geopark	
Policy Framework	Develop flexible and adaptive policies.	Policies that support diverse and changing needs.	Policy guidelines, adaptive plans.	High	3.2.1. Enhance the volunteer networks of the BNPD by the development of dedicated tasks in the geopark for youth and elderly volunteers.	3.3.1. Integrate activities aimed at supporting vulnerable groups into the				January – December 2025	Collaborative development of the moduls built into the Mobile Exhibition Vehicle	
Long-term Commitment	Ensure sustained engagement strategies.	Long-term support and positive outcomes.	Strategic plans, continuous funding.	High	3.4.1. Provide training and consultation sessions in local municipalities to VG members who would like to develop geotours in their local area.					permanent		
Education and Training	Provide tailored education and skills training.	Empowered and skilled individuals.	Training programs, workshops.	High						July 2025 – June 2026		
<b>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>												
Feedback Mechanisms	Implement continuous feedback systems.	Real-time insights for timely improvements.	Surveys, suggestion boxes, online forms.	High	4.1.1. During the annual meetings with the VGs we will ask the participant to fill	4.2.1. We'll regularly survey the community to understand the impact of geopark activities, perceptions of tourism, and gather suggestions for improvement. This feedback will help ensure				permanent		
Impact Assessment	Regularly assess impact with qualitative and quantitative measures.	Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement	Impact surveys, case studies, data analysis tools	High								

# Annex B – Action Plan Evaluation Tool

Objective	Activity	Result	Applies to VCs	Start	Final	Report	Phase	Evaluation 1	Evaluation 2	Evaluation 3	Evaluation 4
1. Cherry Market/Vulnerable Groups	1.1.1. Demographic Data analysis of the BSAK Region District	Database with geographical representation of local residents within the project	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2	In progress				
1. Cherry Market/Vulnerable Groups	1.1.2. Analysis of the priority groups representing the vulnerable groups	Comprehensive list of potential partners	Senon, Women, Children		31.12.2025	BRP2	In progress				
1. Cherry Market/Vulnerable Groups	1.2.1. Organize thematic information days with the municipalities of the project	Meeting notes, minutes, recorded video of the project and the project among local municipalities	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2	In progress				
1. Cherry Market/Vulnerable Groups	1.2.2. Engagement meetings with identified stakeholder organizations	Event documentation, recorded knowledge of local relevant organizations	Senon, Women, Children		31.12.2025	BRP2	In progress				
2. Well-understood/Vulnerable Groups	2.1.1. Community consultations with members of vulnerable groups and local organizations with a view to the understanding of geophysical, natural and cultural values of the project	List of contacts to be used in discussions, Communication through the relevant persons among vulnerable groups	Senon, Women, Children		31.12.2025	BRP2	In progress				
2. Well-understood/Vulnerable Groups	2.2.2. Geopark identity and tourism perception report	Report on the project and tourism perception as well as the perceptions of VCs on tourism potential and threats	Senon, Women, Children		31.12.2025	BRP2					
2. Well-understood/Vulnerable Groups	2.2.3. Creating the memories in the project	Repository of selected memories and stories for cultural preservation and education	Women, Senon		31.12.2025	BRP2					
2. Well-understood/Vulnerable Groups	2.3.1. Annual meetings between vulnerable groups	1 meeting annually	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2					
2. Well-understood/Vulnerable Groups	2.3.2. Promotion of the project activities and the geopark in local schools with volunteer	3 visits to local schools, increased awareness of local youth about the project and their potential collaborative activities with the project	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2	In progress				
2. Well-understood/Vulnerable Groups	2.3.3. Sharing content on the project's social media	Broader representation of vulnerable groups, legends, stories in the project's social media channels	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2	In progress				
2. Well-understood/Vulnerable Groups	2.4.1. Multichannel communication plan	Project partner communication plan	Senon, Women, Children		31.12.2025	BRP2					
2. Well-understood/Vulnerable Groups	2.4.2. Geopark promotional materials focused on the engagement of VCs	At least 2 promotional materials focused on the engagement of VCs	Senon, Women, Children		31.12.2025	BRP2					
2. Well-understood/Vulnerable Groups	2.5.1. Annual Community meetings about geopark activities	1 meeting per year	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2					
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development	3.1.1. Transition visit with members of the VCs to project partner	Present the study visit to the vulnerable groups, discuss and select the traveling group activities, Report on this study visit	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2					
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development	3.1.2. Exhibition virtual workshop	A set of community produced recommendations for the development of the educational modules	Senon, Women, Children		31.12.2025	BRP2					
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development	3.2.1. Empirical testing volunteer members of the BRP2	Developed and clear volunteer tasks for the project, where youth and elderly can be involved	Senon, Women, Children		31.12.2025	BRP2					
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development	3.3.1. Inclusive specific activities in the Geopark's Strategic Plan	Updated Strategic Plan	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2					
3. Inclusive Planning and Policy Development	3.4.1. Geopark in my neighborhood training program	at least 2 training sessions	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2					
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	4.1.1. Feedback forms	Survey results, continuous improvement based on participant feedback	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2					
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	4.2.1. Impact assessment survey	Survey results	Senon, Women, Children		30.09.2025	BRP2					