

# GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

## 1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

**Geopark name, country, regional Network:** Geopark Schelde Delta, UNESCO Global Geopark, Belgium and Netherlands, European Geoparks Network)

**Year of inscription:** 2024



| GEOPARK  
**SCHELDE  
DELTA**



Official  
announcement  
membership  
Unesco Global  
Geopark Network  
22 april 2024

## 2. GEOPARK FIGURES

**Number of Geopark staffs:** 7 staffs including 1 geoscientist

**Number of visitors:** Only the reception centers are included here. Geosites and the entire area are freely accessible. We know from the tourist knowledge partners that the number of tourists from outside the Geopark in this area is approximately 5 million per year.

- Zwin Visitor Center: 89.085
- Watersnoodmuseum: 100.000
- Markiezenhof: 32.000
- Terra Maris: 40.000
- Onthaalpoort Donkmeer: 4.600

- Drongengoed farm: 12.850
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**Number of Geopark events:** 60 in total. Major events by management body:

- 17/04/25, 8/5/24 and 10/6/25: guide training Brabantse Wal
- 22/04/24: Official announcement membership Unesco Global Geopark
- 5/05/24: 5<sup>th</sup> Geopark Community meeting in Damme
- 13-24/5/24: GeoWeek
- 24-26/5/24: Archaeology Days
- 24/7/24: Guide training Meetjesland – Zeeuws Vlaanderen
- 31/8/20 - 19/10/25: Landscape reading course
- 7-13/9/24: Eastern Scheldt Week
- 24/11/24 Day of Science: Geopark Academy at Shipyard Baasrode
- 27/11/24: 6<sup>th</sup> Geopark Community meeting in Bornem

**Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programmes:** 14

**Number of Geopark press release:** 19

### 3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

#### Major achievements in 2024

- 22/04/24: Official announcement membership Unesco Global Geopark at Deltapark Neeltje Jans (Province of Zeeland, the Netherlands). More than 200 partners and ambassadors were present to celebrate the membership on the Day of the Earth. Five excursions were organized, including one sailing trip on the Eastern Scheldt.
- 27/11/24: 6<sup>th</sup> Geopark Community meeting in Bornem: official signing of the new legal form (cf. infra).

#### Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- 2-3/4/24: management visit UGGp Terra Vita (Germany)
- 22-23/4/24: Benelux Geoparks Meeting at Schelde Delta (UGGp Hondsrug, Fammene Ardennes, Mellerdall, Schelde Delta)
- 27/5/24 - 4/6/24: participation with 2 management members Intensive Course on Global Geoparks, Lesbos (Greece)
- 18-19/09/24: digital EGN meeting
- 2-4/10/24: 17<sup>th</sup> European Geoparks Conference in Iceland:
  - ♦ signing of the cooperation agreement of the Benelux Geoparks

- ◆ Scientific presentation Geopark Schelde Delta by geologist Patrick Kiden
- ◆ Benelux Geoparks joined info stand at the Geofair
- 13/11/24: management visit UGGp Platabergens (Sweden)
- 27/12/24: digital End of the Year meeting of the participants of the Lesbos Intensive Course 2025

## **Management and Financial Status**

- The UGGp Schelde Delta consisted of a collaboration between the six initiating partners, namely the Dutch provinces of Zeeland and North Brabant, the Belgian provinces of Antwerp, East and West Flanders and the cross-border entity EGTC Linieland van Waas en Hulst. In 2024 the transition procedure from an 'EGTC' to a 'BGTC' was initiated and completed. A 'BGTC' stands for 'Benelux Grouping for Territorial Cooperation'. Only the five provinces are present in this legal form and the registered office is situated in Zeeland
- The financial status of the UGGp Schelde Delta is stable because it receives permanent financial support from the provincial authorities.

## **Geoconservation**

- Special attention in UGGp Schelde Delta is given to the geoconservation of the former quarries and their valuable outcrops. Because these are soft sediments, erosion is a constant threat. To gain inspiration for the conservation of these walls, a visit was made to a protected outcrop in UGGp Terra Vita. Work is currently underway to protect a Pliocene coastal deposit in a quarry wall in Nieuw-Namen. This wall is under great pressure and work is being done to protect it from the weather in combination with providing good information. The entire project must be realized in a sustainable and circular manner.
- In the Kop van Schouwen geosite, a coastal dune area, a trial is being conducted together with the organization that manages the site to reactivate drifting sands by making new notches in the sea dike. This will reactivate the processes of dune formation and drifting sands, which will also have a positive effect on biodiversity.

## **Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)**

- The Interreg (Be)Leefbare Schelde project focuses on sustainable tourism in the UGGp

Schelde Delta. Running from August 15, 2023, to August 14, 2026, its main goal is to enhance tourism as a driver for sustainable, social, and cultural development in the UGGp with special attention on climate change. The project is supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a subsidy of € 4,8 million and has a total budget of € 9,6 million.

### **New education programmes on geoconservation, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction**

- The current focus is on educational programs for existing guides in the area to train them in geology, having an eye for geoconservation and the value of geodiversity and vulnerability to climate change.
- In addition, the “Reading the Landscape” course was given to draw attention to geodiversity and its protection.
- In 2024, an educational section was set up in our entrance point, the Flood Disaster Museum, where children and adults can learn about the landscape of the Scheldt Delta and the protective measures that are taken against the risk of flooding through an interactive game.

### **Strategic partnership**

- Signing of the cooperation agreement of the Benelux Geoparks at the 17<sup>th</sup> European Geoparks Conference in Iceland. By signing this agreement the UGGp Famenne Ardenne (Belgium), De Hondsrug (the Netherlands), Möllerdal (Luxembourg) and Schelde Delta formalized the cooperation and have the intention to work together.

### **Promotional activities**

- The UGGp Schelde Delta appeared in the media several times in 2024. In particular after the official announcement of membership of the Unesco Global Geopark Network. This news was presented in national papers, multiple websites and broadcasted on regional and national television at prime time.
- The ‘Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR)’, a regional broadcaster in Germany, made a documentary with the UGGp Schelde Delta as a main theme: Antwerpen und die Schelde – Unterwegs zwischen Metropole und Meer (Laura Lange).
- Our travelling Geopark exhibition continued travelling during 2024. Some of the locations are: church of Damme, Drongengoed Farm, tide mill of Rupelmonde and the library of Destelbergen.
- Promotional activities are concentrated on social media by management body and partner

organizations. Situation on 31 December 2024:

- ❖ Facebook: 956 followers
- ❖ LinkedIn: 2161 followers
- ❖ Website: 17.107 page views

#### 4. CONTACTS

**Coordinators:** Gitte de Vries, [gitte.devries@provincieantwerpen.be](mailto:gitte.devries@provincieantwerpen.be) (networking and (international)cooperations)

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