

“GEA -Mother Earth”: international cooperation between Geoparks

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The Geoparks are areas of excellence for research and education in Geosciences. In this sense, UNESCO in its Scientific Programs proposes the mobilization of Science and Education for issues such as sustainable use of natural resources, reduction and mitigation of natural disasters. It is in this context that the issues related with the sustainable use of potable water and water systems at risk are of great importance to be investigated and used in educational programs of Geoparks. With this purpose, the *Portuguese National Committee for the International Program for Geosciences of UNESCO - IGCP* in partnership with the *Portuguese National Forum of Geoparks* and with the support of the *Portuguese NatCom for UNESCO*, has developed an educational program entitled “*GEA- Mother Earth*”, aiming to promote schools contests such as “*The water that unites us*”. This includes an itinerary exhibition and training courses among Geoparks and Biosphere Reserves from Portugal, and also includes an international cooperation with Araripe Global Geopark (Brazil) and the Biosphere Reserve of Príncipe Island, in S. Tomé and Príncipe (Africa).

For the school year 2013/14 the chosen theme is *desertification*. This choice aims to promote research in this area of knowledge and to promote awareness of students and teachers for a problem that is already a troubling reality in the Geopark Araripe and begins to affect significant parts of the Portuguese territory.

This educational program aims also to develop cooperation in water related issues, promoting networking and exchange of knowledge, human and institutional capacity building, educational initiatives, monitoring, North-South and South-South cooperation and to raise awareness among political decision makers and the public in general to scientific issues related with Earth Sciences, under the motto “*Geosciences in the service of Society*”.

Presented in Theme 3