

Naturtejo Geopark initiatives for climate change consciousness

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The Naturtejo Geopark management and partners are together developing two different approaches concerning raising awareness about the present and future impacts of climate change, at the territory level for a global scope. The first approach embraces collective education for environmental sustainability. This work is being done through the interpretation of the long-changed landscape and the increase of human pressure on natural resources, by using both ecotourism activities and Geopark educational programmes. Examples of initiatives developed are the educational off-road TTransgeopark or the school contest "Climate change and Biodiversity", with the support of the International Year of Biodiversity National Committee and Arouca Geopark, for the Geopark schools. However the most effective event is the Boom Festival. This international dance music and art summer festival, where Earth is the central stage, was recognized by the United Nations as one of the 10 most important environmental-related music festivals and a leader in sustainable solutions for mass events in the world. The Naturtejo Geopark has a deep commitment to local environment-related NGOs and citizen movements supporting initiatives for a sustainable management of river waters (ProTejo) or against the use of non-renewable nuclear energy in Portugal by developing the uranium mining industry at the Geopark (MUNN, AZU, Quercurs). Taking part in the initiative "Cleaning Portugal" on March 20th, 550 volunteers all over the Geopark reported illegal garbage dumps and cleaned 83 tons of waste with municipal support.

The second approach is focused on the regional and municipal co-management of the Geopark's territory, contributing to the mitigation of the carbon footprint but also to balance the environmental impact of energy industries. 1100 GWh/year are produced in the territory through renewable sources of energy (reservoirs, wind and biomass power plants) providing electricity for 750000 inhabitants (90000 living in the territory) and decreasing in 600 thousand tons the emissions of CO₂. Idanha-a-Nova, the municipality with the best ecology in 2010, is supporting the development of sugar cane crops for biofuels, replacing tobacco crops and giving a new breath to local agriculture, which is producing again "traditional" crops such as watermelon and organic food. Since 2004, The Proença-a-Nova municipality has been developing a pioneer project in Portugal on volunteer carbon market by creating a positive balance of 36167 tons of CO₂ stored in the local forest. Credits sold can finance the management of increasing forest activities and energetic efficiency policies in public projects, such as public buildings and street lights. Castelo Branco city is also a pioneer in the development of the MOBI.E national network of electric vehicles charging stations, with slow charging points that will use the excess of electricity produced by local wind power plants during the night.



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