

# *The IV International Symposium ProGEO on the Conservation of the Geological Heritage*

*Braga, Portugal, September 13–16, 2005*

The IV International Symposium ProGEO on the Conservation of the Geological Heritage was held between 13–16 September 2005 at Braga organised by ProGEO (European Association for the Conservation of the Geological Heritage) and by the Earth Sciences Department of the University of Minho. The Braga symposium builds on the earlier International Symposia, at Digne (1991), Roma (1996), and Madrid (1999), and at ProGEO conferences hosted in countries and regions, too numerous to list—as well as workshops at the Beijing and Firenze International Geological Congresses. These meetings have set the agenda for geoheritage (geosite, geo(morph)ological site) protection in the last ten years and introduced the ideas of comparative geosite inventories for countries and regions, of National Geoparks (with nested, protected geosite groups), promoted the integration of geoconservation in strong national nature conservation, as well as links to landscape (Dublin 2002 conference) and geoarchaeological conservation.

The IV International Symposium, which received the sponsorship of the IUGS

and the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, and the support of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, had an organising committee of José Brilha, Diamantino Pereira, Maria Isabel C. Alves, Mário Cachão, Miguel Ramalho, Paulo Pereira and Renato Henriques. They created, supported by a scientific committee chaired by Francesco Zarlenga and Graciete Dias, the best surroundings and atmosphere for a creative (and sometimes energetic) exchange of views, for sharing of experience and initiating collaborations: and many congratulations came from the participants.

Nationals of more than thirty countries from four continents contributed to the symposium's activity and products. Several international and national institutions were represented at the Opening Ceremony, namely: the IUGS (Prof. A. Brambati), the IUCN—The World Conservation Union (T. Badman), the European Federation of Geologists (Fernando Noronha), the Portuguese Nature Conservation Institute (Luis Macedo), the National Institute of Engineering, Technology and Innovation—Por-

tuguese Geological Survey (Teresa Ponce de Leão), the National Natural History Museum (Fernando Barriga), the Portuguese Geologists Association (Fernando Noronha), the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (Joaquim Barreto), and the School of Science of the University of Minho (João Ferreira), as well as the many national committees, national agencies, geological surveys, and institutes, NGOs and academies of science which make up the ProGEO network.

One hundred and sixty participants presented about one hundred and fifty oral and poster contributions, in these themes: 1) Methodologies to characterise geological heritage; 2) Management of geological heritage; 3) Integrating geoconservation in nature conservation policies; 4) Geoconservation and education for sustainable development; and 5) Portuguese frameworks of international relevance. An Abstracts Volume was published and the Proceedings Volume is in preparation.

The programme included three Plenary Lectures. Common approaches to geoconservation in Europe, and the considerable differences by W.A.P. Wimbledon presented a survey of the state of the art of geoconservation in Europe (a full compilation of information on geoconservation in Europe by ProGEO is to be published in book form in 2006, with reports from 35 European countries). A general overview of Geoconservation in Portugal by J. Brilha gave to all participants a summary of the beginnings of geoconservation in Portugal as the host



*IV Symposium at the University of Minho.*

country of this Symposium and a general idea of the initiatives undergone during the last decade. This formed an exemplar of a country with young and growing structures in the geoconservation field. Finally, the lecture Geological heritage in Germany—geotopes and National Geoparks presented by K. Goth (Saxonian State Authority for Environment and Geology, Germany) showed the German example of how geoconservation has been included in Nature Conservation policies.

About fifty participants joined the four field trips organised to see some of the Portuguese geodiversity and also examples of Geoconservation: The Meso-Cenozoic of Algarve (Southern Portugal). A raw geoheritage diamond encrusted on a tourist orientated region (Leaders: Mário Cachão and Pedro Terrinha); Geology as background for a top-class geological and cultural heritage in the Douro region (Northern Portugal) (Leaders: Diamantino Pereira, Graciete Dias, Helena Couto, Isabel C. Alves, Narciso Ferreira, Paulo Castro, Paulo Pereira); Jurassic Heritage and Geoconservation in Portugal: selected sites (Leaders: Helena Henriques, Ana Azerêdo, Luis Duarte, Miguel Ramalho); and The volcanoes of Azores Islands: a world-class heritage—examples from Terceira, Faial and Pico islands (Leader: José Madeira). A Guide



*Douro region field trip B during a stop in the Côa Valley Archaeological Park (UNESCO World Heritage Site).*

Book has been published for each field trip.

The symposium at its final plenary was in complete agreement on all topics. It heartily endorsed efforts at improved geoconservation in Iberia, and, perhaps most importantly, all work to change curricula to incorporate appreciation of geoheritage. Much discussion went into the three main challenges that remain: making protection truly effective in those countries where legislation

already exists to identify and protect geosites (because of inactive agencies, or lack of political will, or an ineffective town and country planning system); putting geosites protection on the agenda and statute book in those countries where it is lacking or a 'poor relation': and thirdly putting geoconservation into curricula (because it has suffered through the failure of the leaders of geological science to promote geology) and promoting it through educative and popularisation mechanisms (literature, trails, internet, geoparks). In this context, excellent examples of community and municipality initiatives had been shown during the meeting.

Additionally, and in the particular, the symposium endorsed work on the creation of National Geoparks, as a means of achieving the original UNESCO aims of the conservation and sustainable use of the key geosites within. In this connection, ProGEO was asked to take forward the coordination of communications between those creating geoparks in the countries, and this was agreed. Key conference papers (by Goth et al. and Reynard et al.) excellently laid out key steps to be followed inside countries, if one wishes to have a coherent approach to choosing National Geoparks. Once this sustainable end is achieved, then national geoparks might be placed under the UNESCO umbrella.

During the Closing Ceremony, a *Final Declaration* was approved, and its seven points summarise the most significant remarks of the Symposium and its agreement on future collaboration.

#### **Final Declaration**

We congratulate the organizing committee on achieving the presence of participants from more than thirty countries, from different continents, and in their promotion of the sharing of experiences and good practice, allowing us to learn from each other;

We urge, as at the last International Geoconservation Symposium,

that, due to the fact that many geosites of paramount importance continue to be at risk in numerous countries, national authorities should pursue strategies in order to implement Recommendation Rec(2004)3 on Conservation of the Geological Heritage and Areas of Special Geological Interest of the Council of Europe;

We stress the importance of the integration of geoconservation issues in school curricula, as a contribution for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014);

We endorse all local, national and wider development of Geoparks, which must be based on sound and sustainable protection of the geosite resource;

We fully endorse and support the recent developments undertaken in Portugal by the national ProGEO Group with the collaboration of other national institutions, those efforts resulting in the definition of geological frameworks of international and national relevance;

We recommend that both Portuguese and Spanish specialists should renew efforts to achieve the definition of geosite frameworks of Iberian relevance; ultimately linking this work with that in other south European countries;

We recommend the Portuguese Official Authorities, namely the Nature Conservation Institute, to urgently integrate geoconservation into national strategies. Also it is an essential requisite that this Institute increases the geological expertise of its technical staff, in order to better assure the conservation of the Portuguese geological heritage inside and outside protected areas.

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