



From Planet Earth to Society: a new dynamics in Portugal about Geosciences Education and Outreach

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Since the United Nations General Assembly declared the year 2008 as the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE), during the triennium 2007-2009, under the motto Earth Sciences for Society, many impacts and changes were generated among the Portuguese society. Today is possible to say that those were due to the work of the Portuguese National Committee for the IYPE. After 2009, the Portuguese National Commission for UNESCO created the Portuguese National Committee for the International Programme of Geosciences (IGCP) with the main goal to continue the work done during the IYPE. Among those activities, a Workshop entitled “InFormation in Context” was organized by the UNESCO NatCom – Portugal, in collaboration with the IGCP National Committee and the National Public Television (RTP). This activity was created to reach specially journalists, aiming to give them more information in context, related to Earth matters, mainly related to natural hazards and Climate Change. It is essential that society knows its degree of vulnerability to the occurrence of extreme natural phenomena, which are the basis of natural catastrophes, with serious social and economic consequences. Thus, it is crucial the development of a culture of prevention and precaution, which hinges on a correct information, based in scientific knowledge on causes and consequences of extreme natural phenomena. At the same time, it is necessary the implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures, based on the analysis and cartography of risks, and in an effective monitoring process. During these workshops particular emphasis was given to the need to inform and educate the society in general, and students in particular, to the reality of living in a dynamic planet. Particular importance was given to natural hazards, such as those resulting from earthquakes landslides, floods, droughts, heat and cold waves and storms, which are those with the greatest potential danger in Portugal. An informed society is a society which, based on its intrinsic resilience, can live and deal with the inherent risk of occurring natural disasters.

Because education about our dynamic planet is a key process to contribute for the awareness of our society, the Portuguese National Committee for IGCP is developing a new Educational Program, to be implemented nationwide in the 2013/14 scholar year, named “GEA – Mother Earth”. This will allow the publishing of an Annual Report with the main results obtained with the work carried out by teachers and students. Simultaneously, the narrow cooperation with the Portuguese National Forum of Geoparks allows the National Committee for IGCP to develop other strategies and initiatives about education and outreach in Geosciences. In this sense, the colloquium “Geoparks: a reality of sustainable development” carried out within the framework of the Portuguese Geoparks Exhibition, that was held during an entire week, in the Portuguese Parliament, was a great step forward in order to raise the importance of these issues for decision makers. This new reality shows that a new socio-political reality about the importance of the Geosciences and the role of Geoscientists is now in progress in Portugal.