



EduGeoPark: international students exchanges for promoting Earth Science knowledge and Geoheritage awareness

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Geoparks are the ideal destination for international study tours based on the sustainable tourism concept, in which the travel is conceived as an opportunity for sharing both scientific knowledge and intangible and tangible culture. Equally, they are the appropriate places for testing and practicing innovative educational strategies, shareable in an international context. The innovative idea of EduGeoPark project is to involve students and teachers in research activities in Geoparks, including sampling and digital mapping: practical field and laboratory activities for stimulating the geological interpretation of an unknown territory. An approach devoted to improve teamwork and problem solving competences.

By means of a partnerships between the Rokua (Finland) and the Sesia-Val Grande (Italy) Geoparks, an exchange program for Secondary School's students started during 2014 (Vaala High School; I.I.S. Luigi Cobiانchi High School in Verbania). The study and the visit of both territories was an opportunity for students to observe some relevant geological elements and processes that do not exist in their own country. Moreover, the hosting in families allowed them to feel the culture of the area. Teachers and staff of the Geoparks led field trips to the main geological and cultural attractions of both areas. During the activities, students used mobile devices (smartphone and tablet) and GPS to track field trips, to catch and gather georeferenced data and pictures. They acted as researchers, by using both digital and traditional tools: they observed, asked questions, gathered data, and made hypothesis. By sharing ideas, together with the local guides, they reconstructed the cultural and geological history of the area. Students appreciated the experience: not only they had the opportunity of visiting a different country, but also of deepening the geological awareness on their own territory. EduGeoPark project is opening the participation to other Geoparks, in order to enlarge the partnerships and to share good practices in Geoscience education and geological heritage.