

ȚINUTUL BUZĂULUI

# A Sustainable Development and UNESCO Geopark initiative

BUZĂU LAND



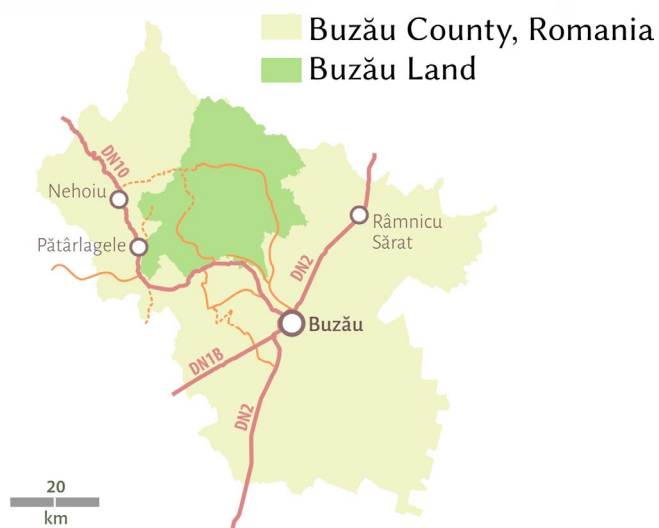
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# Buzău Land

## ȚINUTUL BUZĂULUI



Buzău Land is a rural sustainable development territory of ~ 1036 km<sup>2</sup> inhabited by approximately 40,000 people. It's comprised of 18 communes located north of Buzău valley, in a hilly and mountainous area. It stands out from the neighboring areas through its strong connection between the cultural heritage of the communities, and the rare natural phenomena concentrated in this region: mud volcanoes, eternal flames, salt diapirism, petroleum springs. It is one of the few territories in Romania to have been designated as a sustainable development location, and to have a team of professionals dedicated to the region's development.



# Our team

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We are an interdisciplinary team of specialists working in various fields: geology, cultural anthropology, non-formal education, community engagement, social entrepreneurship, communication, design, IT and, through our most recent member, documentary video production.

We work under the auspices of a non-profit, non-governmental organization which we have founded: Asociația Ținutul Buzăului (Buzău Land NGO).



# Our mission

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Our mission is to build a sustainable development model that is adaptable and replicable in other areas of the world, using the natural and cultural heritage as a primary resource. We strive to find a balance between the protection and innovative use of this resource. Our goal is to improve the quality of the environment and the cultural, social, economic and educational life of the communities, as well as the ability of local communities to decide and act.

# Our vision

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For us, the future is a place where the communities accept their role as a component of the environment. In the future that we are trying to shape, the development of the society takes place in harmony with nature. Our future is defined by a society that progresses by adding value to the natural and cultural landscape.



# What we do

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We develop, plan, assess and implement the sustainable development strategy of the territory. Our team follows a transdisciplinary approach: we work at the grassroots level, with and from within the communities. In addition to having the role of engagers, we also have the role of social integrators. This means that we bring different actors together to contribute to the development of the area: entrepreneurs, teachers, politicians, specialists, companies, civil society, etc.

Sustainable development is a holistic and diverse field. Hence, to succeed in our mission we implement projects related to: education of youth, environmental protection and management, use and conservation of natural and cultural heritage, community activation and engagement and sustainable economic development. One of our strategies is to brand the territory as an international UNESCO Geopark and to develop a framework for sustainable, ethical and responsible tourism.

# Buzău Land Geopark

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Our Geopark initiative is built around the landscape potential of the territory. It is a holistic approach to development, which brings together natural, cultural, social and human resources. The objectives are to develop the experience economy of the territory, to foster natural-cultural education and to develop the local identity of the communities, by building awareness on their landscape resources. It is an example of balancing the protection and use of local heritage, for the greater and sustainable benefit of communities and visitors, alike.

The philosophy behind the Buzău Land Geopark initiative is that people are part of the environment, similar to cogs in a greater mechanism. Any action or pressure from one component, has a cascade response from the others. We want to build awareness on this and to

help communities make the most out of their environment, but in a responsible way that does not bring a negative impact to them, or to the other components of the natural environment.

For example, a great and impactful way to raise awareness on this issue is by relying on the natural-cultural connection.

The peculiar geological elements (salt, amber, gypsum, mineral waters) and rare geological phenomena (mud volcanoes, eternal flames, petroleum springs) that occur in this area have inspired the human imaginary over time. The local people have tried to find ways to use these resources in the past, sometimes to practical (salt) or to magical ends (amber).

In many cases, they tried to explain the occurrence of these elements, which gave rise to stories about dragons, ogres, spirits, giants and more. It is a simple and sharp way to show how the cultural identity of communities is built upon their natural environment. In the same time, it gives us the opportunity to explain the real reasons behind these natural phenomena to an audience that is already enthralled.





Educational workshops



Restoring schools

# Our work so far

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Our team started implementing the development strategy of Buzău Land in 2014. These are a few of the areas we worked in since then:



Creating museums about the natural-cultural connection



Creating hiking trails and thematic paths with an educational component



Writing books about nature, culture, environment and tourism



Promoting the area through documentary movies



Safeguarding the natural environment by designating protected areas



Engaging communities to act towards their development



Launching a social entrepreneurship initiative based on creative traditions

Creating a virtual infrastructure to promote the area



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Performing and publishing research related to our work



Fostering connections and long term collaboration with national and international actors

# Sponsorship and CSR opportunities

Currently, we are striving to implement 5 major projects in Buzău Land. These are related to: (1) the environmental education of youth, (2) sustainable tourism development, (3) reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, (4) social entrepreneurship and youth apprenticeship, (5) promoting the sustainable lifestyle related to the longevity of community members. More details are provided below. We are grateful to discuss sponsorship and CSR opportunities related to any of these projects, and to use our communication and marketing skills to the benefit of our sponsors.

## 1. EduSense: The Centre for Sensational Education in Science, Environment and Climate Change



We are restoring one of the oldest schools in Buzău County, active as an institution since 1784. It is located in a small village called Beșlii, in Mânzălești commune. The former school will become a non-formal Educational Centre where kids will learn about our planet, the environment and climate change. Each of the 5 classrooms will be transformed into interactive labs, with state of the art equipment that generates real time environmental data. Local schools will use the labs for their science classes, our specialists will organize afterschool non-formal educational workshops and tourists will be allowed to visit the labs when there are no classes scheduled. This is an interactive and convertible space.

## 2. Living trails

We are building a visiting infrastructure throughout Buzău Land based on hiking trails and on visiting centers with educational components. We engage the communities by planning and building the infrastructure

together. The community members are trained to use the hiking trails and visiting points to their economic advantage, by creating an experience economy: guiding, storytelling, crafting, etc.

### 3. Green villages

We aim to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by progressively converting the settlements to green villages. This is a long term goal that consists in different strategies. Among these: education and awareness raising, helping household owners install solar panels (advice on the Green House European project, feasibility studies, providing co-financing), reforesting areas around the villages, SMART agriculture and sustainable food production, waste reduction.

### 4. Creative traditions

We work with local craftsmen to integrate them in the economy of the modern market. We help them design new objects, with modern-day utility. The added value consists in crafting these objects using traditional techniques and knowledge, and sustainable local materials. We help brand and sell those objects, with the objective of creating economic opportunities for local people. The plan is to create a local circular economy based on craftsmen “exporting” goods outside the communities, and locals providing support services or craft materials.

### 5. Blue Zone documentary series

Our research indicates that >2% of the current population of Buzău Land is between 90 and 100 years old. This means that Buzău Land is a longevity Blue Zone, similar to Icaria, Sardinia and Nicoya. We are looking into the healthy lifestyle of these people, to unravel and promote habits, daily activity, food sourcing and the characteristics of the local environment. We are promoting this through our professional filming crew that is working on a documentary series about longevity, with a national and international target audience.

The first documentary movie of the series, The Year of the Hunter, will be released in early 2020. It follows the story of a 97 years old man, the oldest active hunter in Romania. We plan to continue the series over the next few years and explore other inspirational characters from Buzău Land.



# Contact

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