

Model region  
for sustainable  
development

# Bergstraße- Odenwald UNESCO Global Geopark and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

German Commission  
for UNESCO

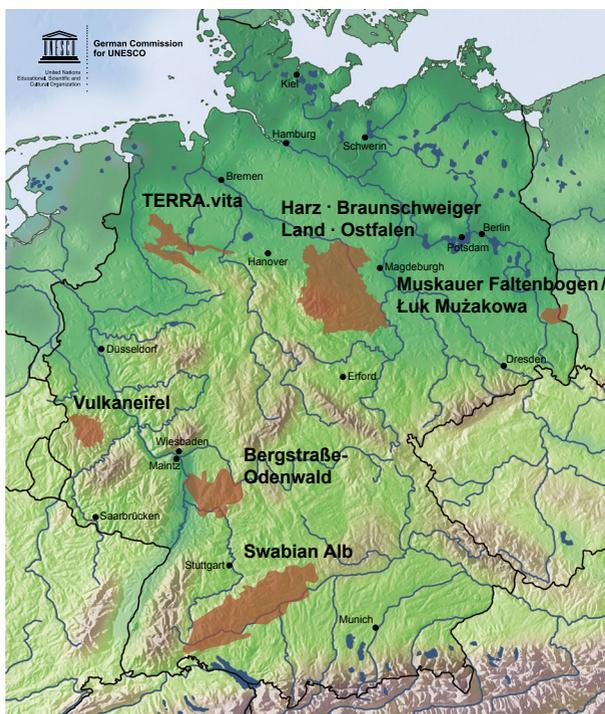
Since November 2015 a new category of UNESCO sites has existed: the UNESCO Global Geoparks. Alongside the World Heritage Sites and the Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks are now the third category of sites to be recognized by UNESCO.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are areas with geological sites and landscapes of international geoscientific significance. The UNESCO Global Geoparks make this significance tangible for the population as well as for visitors through a holistic concept of education, conservation and sustainable development. UNESCO Global Geoparks promote identification with the region, tourism and regional value creation. They address the challenges of global change in the region – always with reference to the special geological heritage in connection with the respective cultural and natural heritage.

## UNESCO Global Geoparks in Germany

There are currently over 160 UNESCO Global Geoparks in more than 40 countries, six of them are in Germany:

- Bergstraße-Odenwald
- Harz · Braunschweiger Land · Ostfalen
- Muskauer Faltenbogen/ Łuk Mużakowa (German-Polish)
- Swabian Alb
- TERRA.vita
- Vulkaneifel



# Bergstraße- Odenwald UNESCO Global Geopark



Federal states: Hesse, Bavaria  
and Baden-Württemberg  
Area: approx. 3,780 km<sup>2</sup>

# Experience Earth's history, nature, people and culture

Under the motto “Between granite and sandstone – continents on the move”, the UNESCO Global Geopark and Nature Park showcases a charming landscape where over 500 million years of Earth's eventful history, diverse natural spaces and thousands of years of ancient history come alive and are tangible.

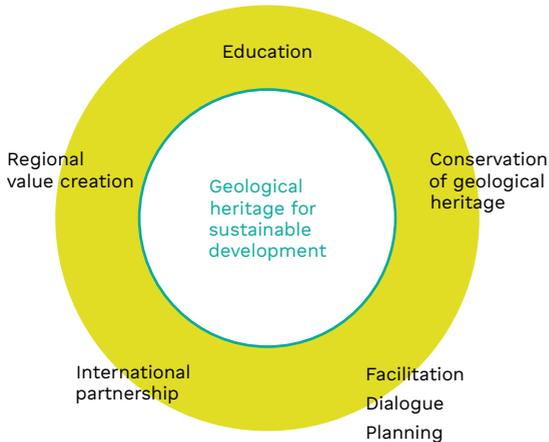
In the West, the flat Upper Rhine Rift Valley characterizes the area and provides a contrast to the hill ranges of the Crystalline Odenwald. This was formed from Paleozoic plutonic rocks that

emerged around 340 million years ago as a result of the collision of two continents. The open, gently rolling landscape turns eastward across a plateau made of Bunter sandstone with large forests and striking valleys. The Southeast is characterized by the transition to building land – a shell limestone landscape with karst caves and sinkholes.

In addition to the “Felsenmeer” (or “sea of rocks”) in Lautertal and the European Nature Reserve Kühkopf-Knoblochsaue, other special attractions are the stalactite cave in Buchen-Eberstadt as well as the Messel Pit and Lorsch Abbey, which are both UNESCO World Heritage sites. A rich infrastructure as well as guided tours by the Geopark rangers and Geopark onsite guides are available to visitors.



# UNESCO Global Geoparks – A quality label with high standards



UNESCO World Heritage and the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves have been world-renowned designations for years and are well known among the general public and tourists. Geoparks, the third category of UNESCO sites, are on par with the established UNESCO designations. The granting of UNESCO status is accompanied by high expectations of a Geopark by UNESCO, but also residents and visitors.

UNESCO Global Geoparks aim to make important contributions to the goals of UNESCO and the United Nations: international understanding, peace and sustainable development. UNESCO Global Geoparks not only make their geological and regional heritage tangible, they also use it to nurture and facilitate sustainable development in the region.

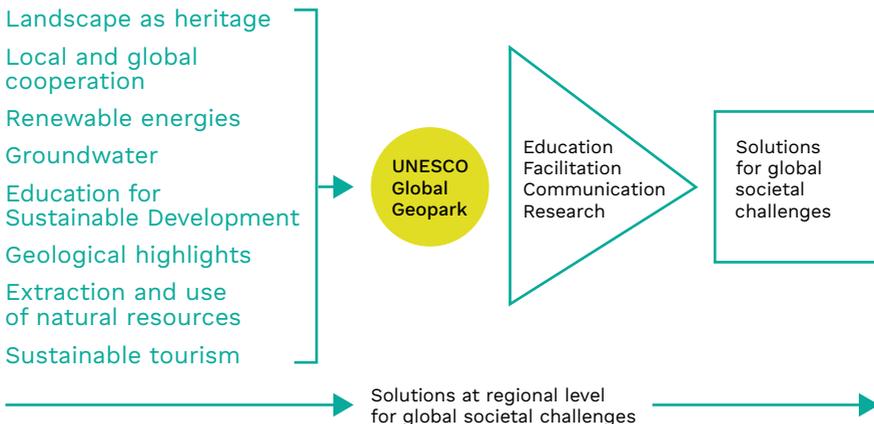
To this end, the Geopark teams develop a holistic concept together with local actors – political decision-makers, the business community and environmental associations as well as all citizens. In this manner, they respond to the needs, opportunities and challenges of their respective regions.

# Regional solutions for global challenges

The UNESCO Global Geoparks devise strategies that address matters of local relevance, such as the collective design of a sustainable future, or the promotion of sustainable local tourism.

The Geopark regions take up these issues and translate them, for example, into their educational work, which imparts knowledge and skills. They shed light on the heritage of the region for residents and visitors and create awareness of the broader contexts and processes. They support problem-oriented research and to that end, work with universities, non-university research institutes, museums and UNESCO associated schools.

At the same time UNESCO Global Geoparks not only address regional issues, but also global societal challenges, such as the finiteness of natural (above all geological) resources and climate change. In this regard, the UNESCO Global Geoparks are well-positioned to tackle urgent sustainability issues. Integrated into networks from the local to the international level, they form an important interface and enable a comprehensive discussion of questions that relate to a sustainable future.





## International model regions

The UNESCO Global Geoparks aim to become internationally exemplary and globally visible model regions for sustainable development that create real value – especially for the respective region and its inhabitants. UNESCO Global Geoparks are attractive regions for tourists, and job-seekers, and ideal locations for those who wish to live well.

Since April 2016, a National Committee, set up by the Federal Foreign Office has been supporting the UNESCO Global Geoparks in Germany. It advises the Geoparks on how they can fulfill the qualitative requirements of the UNESCO distinction. UNESCO and the National Committee have raised the bar steadily over time, thereby enabling continuous quality development.

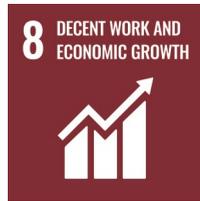
A valuable addition to and support for the work of the National Committee comes from the cooperation between the German UNESCO Global Geoparks, which occurs on a national scale in the form of regular consultations within the “German UNESCO Global Geoparks Forum”.

# The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Implementation in Germany

In September 2015, the world community adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 17 goals constitute an all-encompassing aspiration to eradicate poverty and hunger worldwide, make high-quality education accessible to all, promote climate protection and peace, and reduce global inequality. The 2030 Agenda is historically unique; its ambitious goals apply to all countries and are intended to harmonise the economic, ecological and social interests of present and future generations in the long term through specific measures, the success of which will be continuously monitored.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the guiding principle for policies in Germany. The new German sustainability strategy adopted in January 2017 is just one example. The federal, state and local governments are developing policies at all levels for the 2030 Agenda. The political parties have also embedded key elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in their basic programmes.



**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**  
17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

# 2030 Agenda – Reference framework for UNESCO Global Geoparks



UNESCO Global Geoparks promote awareness of the most important societal challenges of our rapidly changing planet. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the key reference framework. It covers all the global challenges and all policy fields – from business to social development and education, all the way to nature conservation. Only by creating cross-sectoral policies and integrative answers can we succeed in managing the great challenges of our time.

It is therefore important to adapt the 2030 Agenda to the local conditions of the UNESCO Global Geoparks. Which key issues will be important locally in the short and long term? What options for the future can a Geopark reveal? Which ongoing projects can be linked to specific goals of the 2030 Agenda?

With their contributions to the 2030 Agenda, the UNESCO Global Geoparks likewise always make important contributions at local and state levels.

The German UNESCO Global Geoparks have been engaging with the 2030 Agenda since 2016.

In November 2016, they formulated their strategy together with experts, the German Commission for UNESCO and the Federal Foreign Office.

Together they have identified a number of goals from the 2030 Agenda that are pivotal to the work of the UNESCO Global Geoparks in Germany. Almost all of them already play a role in the work of the UNESCO Global Geoparks.

# Most important goals of the 2030 Agenda for UNESCO Global Geoparks in Germany



# 2030 Agenda – Good practices from the Bergstraße-Odenwald UNESCO Global Geopark



## SDG 12 Sustainable consumption and production

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In cooperation with the UNESCO Global Geopark, the “Glückshonig” beekeeping company produces high-quality honey exclusively in the region. It has placed its bee colonies by the information facilities of the UNESCO Global Geopark. As a contribution to sustainability, the UNESCO Global Geopark receives 10 cents from the beekeeper for every jar of blossom honey. In return it plants trees and bee-friendly flowers.



## SDG 4 Education for Sustainable Development

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“Geopark on-site” is a training programme for locals to become experts on their home turf. Over multiple weekend seminars, future guides learn how to communicate the special features of the landscape. In this manner, passive knowledge is reactivated, and regional identity strengthened.



## SDG 17 International partnership and knowledge transfer

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The Bergstraße-Odenwald UNESCO Global Geopark has already collaborated closely with the Chinese Mt. Lushan UNESCO Global Geopark since 2007. The cooperation between the Geoparks is enhanced by joint workshops on management and finance, scientific exchange, and intercultural projects.

# 2030 Agenda – Good practices from other German UNESCO Global Geoparks

## Swabian Alb UNESCO Global Geopark

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In the “Groundwater Adventure World” exhibition at the Langenau waterworks, visitors can find comprehensive information about the basic element of life – drinking water. The exhibition is an information point at the UNESCO Global Geopark and provides a closer look at the connection between the topics of water and geology. Joint campaigns for UNESCO’s World Water Day are planned.

## Muskauer Faltenbogen/Łuk Mużakowa UNESCO Global Geopark

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A well-developed, (supra) regional network of cycling paths has been created that invites visitors to go on cross-border excursions. Special highlights include themed tours on “Glass”, “Geology”, “Abandoned Mines” and “Jerischker Terminal Moraine”, which reveal the arched landscape in an illustrative and detailed manner through numerous information boards.

## Harz · Braunschweiger Land · Ostfalen UNESCO Global Geopark

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Under the motto “Learning to read the landscape”, the UNESCO Global Geopark and its network partners also ensure that the geosites are properly maintained. Upkeep through use is prioritised. Geosite care is also biotope care. It prevents the disappearance of endangered animal and plant species and, at the same time, ensures the landscape can be experienced authentically.

# Executive summary

UNESCO Global Geoparks promote awareness of the most pressing global challenges of our time. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development serves as the reference framework. It calls for cross-sectoral, integrative answers.

UNESCO Global Geoparks deal with locally relevant issues such as demographic change and economic development. In addition, they concern themselves with global issues that the UNESCO Global Geoparks can help solve. Examples of this are the finiteness of geological resources and climate change.

The UNESCO Global Geoparks adapt the 2030 Agenda to local conditions and, at the same time, contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to local and state politics.

# Imprint

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Further information

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Criteria and procedure:  
[www.unesco.de/geoparks](http://www.unesco.de/geoparks)

Sustainable Development Goals:  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

German sustainability strategy:  
[www.bundesregierung.de](http://www.bundesregierung.de)

Contact

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