

Model region
for sustainable
development

UNESCO Global Geopark Ries and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



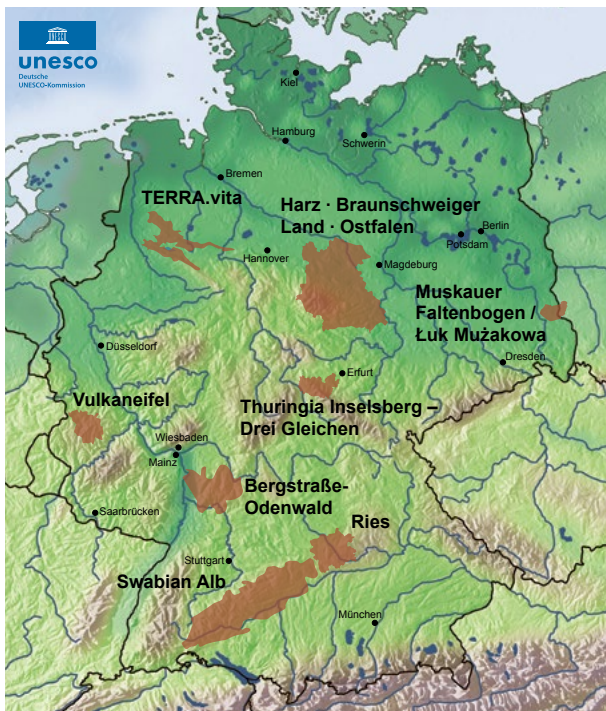
Since November 2015 a new category of UNESCO sites has existed: the UNESCO Global Geoparks. Alongside the World Heritage Sites and the Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks are now the third category of sites to be recognized by UNESCO.

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 (2023) 195 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 48 countries, eight of them are in Germany:

- Bergstraße-Odenwald
- Harz · Braunschweiger Land · Ostfalen
- Muskauer Faltenbogen / Łuk Mużakowa (deutsch-polnisch)
- Schwäbische Alb
- TERRA.vita
- Thüringen Inselsberg – Drei Gleichen
- Vulkaneifel
- Ries



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UNESCO Global Geopark Ries



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Federal states: Bavaria and
Baden-Württemberg
Area: approx. 1.750 km²

Europe's giant meteorite crater

The Ries Crater, located between the Swabian and Franconian Alb, is the best-preserved crater in Europe. Its flat, largely treeless basin with a diameter of 25 kilometers and a crater rim rising up to 150 meters high stands out distinctly from the surrounding landscape. The UNESCO Global Geopark Ries invites you to discover the Earth in an entirely new way.

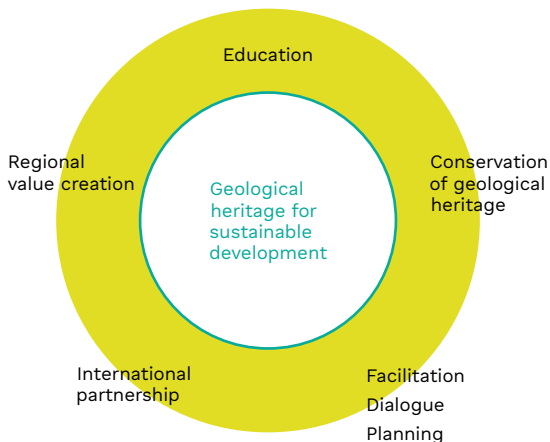


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Approximately 15 million years ago, a giant meteorite struck the Earth, creating an impressive impact crater that today forms a landscape of breathtaking beauty and geological significance. This extraordinary region not only offers a visual feast for the senses but also a rich abundance of geological, ecological, and cultural treasures.

The UNESCO Global Geopark Ries allows you to experience the impressive crater landscape up close. However, the Geopark is more than just geology. Here, the natural environment seamlessly merges with the rich cultural history of the region. Traditional villages, historic towns, and archaeological sites provide insight into the life and development of people over the centuries.

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.

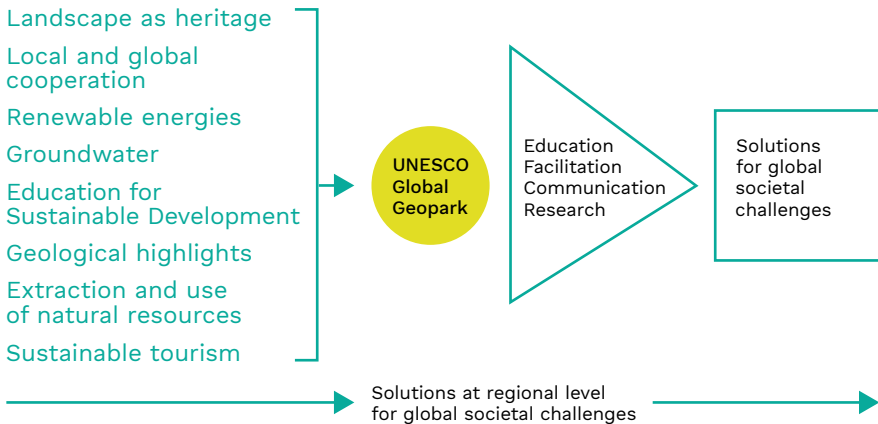
To this end, the Geopark teams develop a holistic concept together with local actors – political decision-makers, the business community and environmental associations as well as all citizens. In this manner, they respond to the needs, opportunities and challenges of their respective regions.

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.





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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.

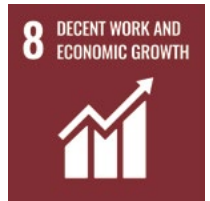
A valuable addition to and support for the work of the National Committee comes from the cooperation between the German UNESCO Global Geoparks, which occurs on a national scale in the form of regular consultations within the “German UNESCO Global Geoparks Forum”.

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.



2030 Agenda – Reference framework for UNESCO Global Geoparks



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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



Agenda 2030 – Good practices from the Ries UNESCO Global Geopark



SDG 4 Quality education

The geopark makes a valuable contribution to education for sustainable development (ESD). Environmental education and ESD also play a major role in the teacher-training courses organised by UGGp Ries. Cooperation with “Geopark Ries schools” and extensive teaching and learning materials bring education for sustainable development closer to the people. The adventure geotopes with nature trails are available for use as “green classrooms”.



SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure

The appeal of the Ries Crater has been increasingly strengthened, especially against the background of soft tourism, through the development, improvement and maintenance of the now eight adventure geotopes with nature trails as well as the Geopark themed hiking and cycling trails. Three Info-Centres and Info-Points distributed over the entire area of the UGGp Ries also contribute to this positive trend.



SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production

A showcase project is the regional and marketing initiative “Culinary Geopark Ries”. In cooperation with restaurateurs, producers and refiners, the programme aims to preserve typical regional delights and stands for a return to the region’s very own cuisine and local products. All members are committed to a code that obliges them to use regional ingredients.

2030 Agenda – Good practices from other German UNESCO Global Geoparks

Thuringia Inselsberg – Drei Gleichen UNESCO Global Geopark



Sustainable tourism to make you smile – geology meets enjoyment with a little tongue-in-cheek humour along the geology and pleasure trail “From Beer to Bratwurst”. Large-scale sculptures by Arnstadt artist Christoph Hodgson illustrate the close connection between the natural environment, such as the development of the local soils, and the culinary traditions of the region.

Bergstraße-Odenwald UNESCO Global Geopark



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.

Vulkaneifel UNESCO Global Geopark



On 30 March 2017, the EU Project “LIFE IP ZENAPA” commenced. Over the course of eight years, eleven partners from eight federal states – including the Vulkaneifel UNESCO Global Geopark – and also from Luxembourg will take on the challenge of triggering the switch to alternative energies in line with the varying requirements related to the protection of the climate, the natural environment and species.

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.

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View into the Ries carter
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