

**European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC)
Fédération Spéléologique de l'Union Européenne**

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Construction Projects in Karst Areas - “Bleßberg” in Thuringia, Germany

As member of the German Speleological Federation I was very sad to hear about this case in Thuringia, especially since this was a very special discovery for this region. This actual case in Germany shows very clearly the gaps on national level in law and between the different laws and regulations, which leads to the fact that the existing mechanism did not work out. But as somebody, who works on this issues also on a European level, it shows me something more, that the worth of caves and karst phenomena are still underestimated in Germany and in many other countries. Furthermore caves and karst represent an important part of our European heritage and for the today’s scientists a fundamental study site.

Even if it is not possible to protect a cave completely, it is absolutely essential at minimum to enable the study of these caves during such construction planning for specialists like the speleologists are. Financially and from the point of view of nature protection and danger defence, the European Cave Protection Commission consider the co-operation with speleology in the building projects in karst areas as absolutely necessary, nobody else can provide the data about cave and karst that speleologists can provide. The filling up of caves with concrete like in this case can be regarded as a dangerous method because of the complexity of the karst and karst water system.

Unfortunately on a European level speleologists from many other countries have to face the same problems. For this reason you count on the European Cave Protection Commission of the FSUE, we will support all national activities of the VdHK to help to improve the situation in Germany. And moreover, as the FSUE represents more than 50,000 speleologists in Europe and the ECPC consists of more than 16 European member countries, our commission members will integrate a call for legal European regulations concerning building projects in karst areas in our activities at the European Parliament, too. It would be a small step for the planner of such building projects to co-operate with the speleologists and bring basic advantages for both sides. But for speleology in Europe it would be a big step in the right direction. We hope that in future cases like this can be prevent.

Christiane Grebe
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More information: www.fsue.org/commission/protection/index_commission.htm .