

FEDERATION SPELEOLOGIQUE EUROPEENNE

European Cave Protection Commission



Luxembourg, 1st October 2024

The European Speleological Federation, through its commission "European Cave Protection Commission" is objecting to the idea as indicated in the coalition agreement of the state government of Saxony-Anhalt, that the responsible district of Mansfeld-Südharz plans to approve an application by a leading gypsum company to drill eight exploratory boreholes to explore the local gypsum deposits in the middle of the Natura 2000 area "**Buntsandstein- und Gipskarstlandschaft near Questenberg in the southern Harz**" region (EU code DE 4432-301, national code FFH0101). The government of Saxony-Anhalt has reportedly indicated that it would accept quarries if gypsum mining were to be carried out here.

Only in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt is the gypsum karst still completely intact. This area has therefore been designated as the "**Südharz Karst Landscape Biosphere Reserve**" by the German federal state Saxony-Anhalt – **so far it is the only biosphere reserve in the world in a sulphate karst!**

Caves, springs and underground flow paths as well as gypsum biocoenosis would be destroyed here forever as it is impossible to restore destroyed gypsum karst areas.

The European Speleological Federation, through its commission "European Cave Protection Commission" is therefore strongly supporting the "Verband deutscher Höhlen- und Karstforscher" (VdHK) in its quest for the protection of the gypsum karst landscape of the southern Harz.

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