



**Karst and Cave Protection Commission**  
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UIS-Protection Commission – 12/2024

Everberg, October 3, 2024

**VOGEL Bärbel**

President of German Speleological Federation

Concern: Letter of support - Gypsum karst of the southern Harz  
By email to: [b.w.vogel@gmx.de](mailto:b.w.vogel@gmx.de)

To whom it may concern,

The Commission for the Protection of Caves and Karsts of the International Union of Speleology (UIS), of which I am the president, publicly expresses its total opposition to the irresponsible idea of approval, by the political and administrative authorities concerned, of the application of the company KNAUF to carry out eight exploratory drillings in the gypsum karst of the southern Harz with a view to its exploitation.

Taking responsibility for such an authorization is a demonstration of a total lack of knowledge - of the protection statuses that have already been published because officially attributed to the gypsum karst area of the southern Harz and in particular by virtue of the Natura 2000 directives of the European Union. I would like to point out, however, that the southern Harz karst has even been designated by the German state of Saxony-Anhalt as a "landscape biosphere reserve" which is, to date, the only biosphere reserve in the world located in sulphate karsts;

- its irreversible consequences on this unique local ecosystem and the definitive loss of its very rich faunal and botanical biodiversity;
- irreparable damage to this geological heritage which, scientifically speaking, is home to one of the most remarkable and invaluable karst systems on our planet;
- the terrible impact of the precedent that such an authorization could have on the exploitation decisions to be taken for other protected areas not only in Germany but also in the European Union or other continents;
- the challenges of environmental protection for future generations which, although everyone's responsibility, must be highlighted by our decision-makers.

As spokesperson for the members of the International Union of Speleology's Commission for the Protection of Caves and Karsts, I join the international community in calling on and encouraging the political and administrative authorities of the Land of Saxony-Anhalt to fully respect the protection status attributed and recognized to the gypsum karst of the southern Harz by firmly refusing the application for authorization for exploratory drilling for its exploitation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'B. Vogel', written in a cursive style.