

Verband der deutschen

Höhlen- und Karstforscher e.V.

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International Union of Speleology
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UNESCO Day of Caves and Karst

Dear Nadja,
dear friends of caves, karst, and speleology,

the Verband der deutschen Höhlen- und Karstforscher e. V. / German Speleological Federation (VdHK) supports the proposal of our world federation, the International Union of Speleology (UIS), to establish an international 'UNESCO Day of Caves and Karst'.
The VdHK fully supports the objectives set out in the UIS proposal paper.

In the view of the VdHK, the application will create an outstanding recurring event that can be used to draw attention to the special features of karst landscapes for the protection of resources, especially groundwater. Caves and karst landscapes represent a special biological and geological hotspot of diversity.

Karst landscapes are complex ecosystems and are particularly at risk due to their often highly dynamic landscape change. Land consumption or even the depletion of entire karst aquifers, for example through open-cast mining, can irreparably destroy karst landscapes together with its geo- and biodiversity and water regime.

Geotopes in karst areas that have been developed for tourism, but in particular the more than 50 show caves in Germany, offer the opportunity to organize high-quality environmental education in a sustainable way.

Speleological research worldwide is largely structured on a voluntary basis. With geological-speleological mapping, long-term karst hydrological monitoring, the systematic recording of cave fauna or the support of archaeological excavations, knowledge is systematically collected that would otherwise not be available to science without the expertise and specific methods of speleology.

The findings and methods of cave research contribute significantly to our understanding of karstified ground. The planning, construction and operation of transport infrastructure that passes through karst landscapes is extremely risky without specialised knowledge of karst engineering. Similar considerations apply to mining in karst.



The sustainable protection of karst landscapes requires effective protective mechanisms at the administrative level. The instruments for the protection of caves, karst landscapes and other karst phenomena are often not targeted enough and insufficient.

As mentioned above, speleologists are largely volunteers. Nevertheless, they often work persistently, innovatively and at a high professional level, partnering with scientific institutions, universities, local and environmental authorities. Exemplary cooperation should set a precedent.

A high-profile 'UNESCO Day' which presents our research topic in an outstanding light can contribute to this.

With best regards and Glück tief

Sven Bauer
Deputy Executive Secretary VdHK

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President VdHK