

TERRA.vita - 13 years of experience as a European Geopark

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Today's Nature and Geopark TERRA.vita, located in northwestern Germany, started as "Naturpark Nördlicher Teutoburger Wald, Wiehengebirge" in 1962. In 1998 a new management was implemented and organized a complete relaunch. Recalling that the naturepark was one among almost 100 other parks in Germany, it was obvious that the region needed a USP to be special. Supported by a professional consultant, the park's significant geological heritage was easily identified as its outstanding feature. As discussions progressed, the invitation to the first European Geoparks Conference in the year 2000 in Spain was circulated. Two naturepark representatives joined the meeting and identified the new Geopark concept as a perfect fit. One year later an application was sent to the newly founded European Geopark Network and was accepted for three years. Another year later the USP was integrated in the park's daily work, based on a very basic strategic plan and new CD/CI manual. TERRA.vita Geopark was born.

Meanwhile, TERRA.vita has successfully passed three international revalidations as a European Geopark and was awarded three so-called "green cards" in a row. As we have learned, a continuous improvement process and a participation in common Geopark projects are crucial to pass geopark audits, which are conducted now every fourth year. The presentation delivers a deep insight into TERRA.vita's daily work as a Geopark, focusing on project development processes, the monitoring of the park's success, the promotion of geological heritage and Geoparks in general, supporting a regional sustainable development, installation and improvement of geotouristic infrastructure, environmental education activities, the active role in the European Geopark Network. All these efforts are achieved with limited resources and are possible as the Geopark exploits its great potential as a networker in the Geopark territory.

Presented in Theme 5