

Ten years of exchange: Messel Pit WHS and Geo-Naturpark Bergstraße-Odenwald, Germany

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A close collaboration with the Global Geopark Bergstraße-Odenwald has been developed, in exchange to implement guided tours, the training of Geopark Rangers, and a wide range of public relations and geo-educational tools. The WHS integrated his partner in the development and implementation of a visitor centre based on a holistic Geopark concept of connecting geological, natural and cultural heritage to strengthen the “Geo-identity” of the people.

Both partners integrate each other in their annual magazines and publications as well as into regular activities and events like the European Geoparks week. This annual event acts as a huge platform to communicate the regional geological, natural and cultural heritage to the public. Too it promotes other Global Geopark partners in Europe. Messel Pit acts as northern entrance gate to the Geopark with information about the territory and other European and Global Geoparks. Related to public events like the Germanwide “Day of the Geotopes”, Messel Pit was awarded as “Geotope of the year” from the Global Geopark Bergstrasse-Odenwald.

In the field of geo-education, both partners have developed programs as well as corresponding tools. The “Geoworkshops for kids with the Geopark rangers”, follow e.g., geo-scientific themes of the Messel Pit, which are “rain forest”, “fossils”, “volcanoes”, and “below the surface”. The young participants also receive the Geopark and Messel quartet – playing cards which reflect the territory in a holistic overview with nice photos and short phrases to be read to all, thus training oral communication. The Messel Pit has also developed promotional collaboration with the regional tourism organization “Odenwald-Tourismus” with the WHS as a lighthouse for the tourism destination. Funded by the German Federal Government and the State of Hesse this collaboration also promotes awareness of the Global Geopark. All these activities have led to a mutual benefit for both partners and also to economic development of the territory as the visitor numbers from the Messel Pit prove this.

Presented in Theme 3