

GGN - Geopark Annual Report 2024

1. GEOPARK IDENTITY

Geopark name, country, regional Network: TERRA.vita UNESCO Global Geopark, Germany; European Geoparks Network

Year of inscription / Year of the last revalidation: 2001 / 2023



The TERRA.vita team performing the TERRA.vita lettering in front of the newly designed Varusturm viewing tower during a team hiking tour (Photo: TERRA.vita).

2. GEOPARK FIGURES

Number of Geopark staffs: 12 (minijobs not included)

Number of visitors: about 3 Mio.

Number of Geopark events: 491 (including Geopark partners)

Number of school classes realize Geopark educational programs: >30 (HaiTec Center) + 148 (Experiential Pedagogical Outdoor School Barkhausen)

Number of Geopark press releases: 49

3. GEOPARK ACTIVITIES

Major achievements in 2024

- Reinforcement of the Geopark team capacities in line with the “TERRA.vita Master Plan 2024 to 2034, flagship project no. 1” (see “Management and Financial Status” for further information).
- Successful launch of the Osnabrücker Land Ecological Station (ÖSOL) in line with the “TERRA.vita Master Plan 2024 to 2034, flagship project no. 5”: Management of landscape conservation measures in EU Habitats Directive areas, inspection of nature conservation areas, biodiversity conservation and monitoring projects, Venner Moor biotope protection, PAN – Citizen Science Project, heath- and peatland development, neophyte management among other tasks and goals.
- Successful launch of the first TERRA.kita, the Ev.-luth. Paulus-Kita Melle in line with the “TERRA.vita Master Plan 2024 to 2034, flagship project no. 7”. “Kitas” are a German organizational type of day cares.

Contribution towards GGN - Networking and participation

- The new managing director of TERRA.vita, Dr. Detlef Wilcke, has become the new first official EGN CC representative.
- The former managing director of TERRA.vita, Hartmut Escher, has become GGN individual member.
- The second official EGN CC representative, Dr. Tobias Fischer, is catalyst for the Fossil Record & Evolution working group.
- Invitation by the UNESCO as a guest speaker to present TERRA.vitas projects on soil on the UNESCO Soil Conference “Rooted in Resilience: Unearthing the importance of soil in Sustainable Development” in the course of the MAB conference in Agadir, July 2024. Afterwards, collaboration in the development of the UNESCO Soil Initiative concept note.
- TERRA.vita participated in the EGN Springmeeting in Kula-Salhili UGGp as well as in the EGN Conference in Reykjanes UGGp with an oral presentation. Contributions were made to the EGN Magazine, the EGN newsletter as well as to the textbook “Geohazards in European Geoparks” by the EGN Geohazard working group.
- German-Dutch exchange activities: excursions for and network exchange with the management board of UNESCO Global Geopark De Hundsrug and Hunebedcenter Borger as well as for the team and management board of UNESCO Global Geopark Schelde Delta (Dutch-Belgian cross-border Geopark).

Management and Financial Status

- Re-modelling of the former “Project management” position to the new position “Finances & Organisation”, holding the position of the deputy management at the same time.
- Creation of the new position “Assistant to the management”.

- Creation of the new position “Project management and public relations”.
- Two new minijob equivalent staff members (six in total) to maintain the TERRA.vita infrastructure in the field.
- One new TERRA.ranger, employed by Osnabrück County on minijob basis (five in total), to inform mountain bikers and hikers at Dörenberg and Hüggel mountains.
- Evaluation, prioritization, and optimization of the project planning of the staff members according to “TERRA.vita Master Plan 2024 to 2034, flagship project no. 1”.
- The increase of the membership fees to 133.330,00 €/a in total mainly counting for the Geopark’s counties, cities and communities, decided in 2023, has been realized for 2024’s fees. Funding by the Economical and Environmental Ministries of Lower Saxony, additional funding by the Osnabrück County, the State of North-Rhenish Westphalia (FöNa), and the LWL have remained equal to the years before.
- Authorization of the VOBS grant for the ÖSOL from 2025 to 2027.
- ESD methods workshop for the TERRA.vita team and the team of teachers at the Barkhausen experiential education school.
- The TERRA.vita headquarter moved to a new county building due to refurbishment work in the County Hall of Osnabrück County.

Geoconservation

- First results and outcomes of the geoscientific-cultural project “Erratics & Humans” by the retired director of the Archaeology of the City and County of Osnabrück, Bodo Zehm: (1) internal scientific report of the cleaning-up of erratics in the region of Belm over the past five millennia, (2) “symposium of erratics” with about 30 scientists, experts and actors in the field of archaeology, geology, cultural history, education, and geotourism in Belm (field trip and series of talks) with the goal to improve the conservation of erratic blocks as well as geoeducational and geotouristic activities in the area of Belm. (3) evening lecture with 70 participants and overbooked guided tours for the 100 year anniversary of the nature conservation area “Steinernes Meer” erratic field.
- Neophyte management of the ÖSOL that includes geosites: publication of the TERRA.info brochure “Nephyte management in the northern Osnabrück County with focus on EU Habitats Directive areas from 2017 to 2023”, new TERRA.info brochure on habitat trees, and new edition of the brochure “TERRA.info – Dealing with invading neophytes” (both in German only).
- Dr. Tobias Fischer, TERRA.vita’s geologist, has become the scientific consultant member for geology in the newly founded Community of Interest Gertrudenberger Loch (IG Gertrudenberger Loch e.V.) that plans geoconservational and geotouristic measures in the historic mining tunnel Gertrudenberger Loch in Osnabrück in the upcoming years. Further

scientific consultant members are represented by other local partners in the field of archaeology and cultural history.

- Contribution to the publication of the first palaeontologic results of the “The Megalodon excavation project” from 2019, a joint excavation of the Museum am Schölerberg and TERRA.vita, presented on the Annual Conference of the Paleontologic Society and to the first U-Pb zircon age of a Late Cretaceous tuff horizon from Lengerich.

Sustainable tourism (Geotourism)

- New geologic and ecologic graffiti art at the about 20 m large Varusturm viewing tower, the sister tower of the already geologic painted Hermannsturm observation tower in cooperation with the city of Georgsmarienhütte. On the Hermannsturm, the artist and his colleagues sprayed TERRA.vita's main rock layers, extending from the Carboniferous to the Quaternary, and the most important fossils found in these rock layers. As a counterpart to the Hermannsturm, they painted the palaeo-environments reconstructed from the rocks as well as the plants and animals reconstructed from the fossil remains on the Varusturm.
- New geotouristic map “TERRA.map – Erdgeschichte erleben” (“Experience geological history”, in German only).
- After re-modelling the EarthAgeCenter exhibiton in Borgholzhausen in 2022, the GeoGarden outdoor area at the museum has been modernized by the Borgholzhausen home association in collaboration with TERRA.vita, including new TERRA.vita panels. The 20th anniversary of the small geological museum was celebrated with a family event as part of the EGN Week in May 2024, including a geologic talk by TERRA.vita.
- New sandarium and wildflower meadow including TERRA.vita information panels to enhance the Dyckerhoff Nature and Geopath in cooperation with the Dyckerhoff company and the city of Lengerich.
- New information station on the “Kiepenkerl and ginger bread” cultural heritage of Borgholzhausen including a life-sized model of a “Kiepenkerl” historical bakery tradesman and a TERRA.vita information panel, in cooperation with the city of Borgholzhausen.
- New information panel at the historical Hüggel mining cable car station at Große Heide in collaboration with the Hagen a.T.W. home association and the community of Hagen a.T.W.
- Large-scale maintenance measures for the TERRA.track hiking network and its infrastructure, introduced in 2019.
- Re-opening of the modernized nbz-Alfsee nature protection and education center, an educational partner of TERRA.vita.
- TERRA.vita is included in the textbook “Global Geographical Heritage, Geoparks and Geotourism” and in the geotouristic book “UrZeitReise Deutschland”.
- Participation in the Niedersachsencamp Conference with the focus on sustainable tourism.

- New edition of the TERRA.vita calendar of events and selected TERRA.tipps.

New education programs on geoconservation, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction

- Informational events and infrastructural equipment for the first TERRA.kita, the Ev.-luth. Paulus-Kita Melle: TERRA.vita workshop for the day care's educators, TERRA.kita parents' evenings, "discovery waistcoasts" for the children, TERRA.kita whiteboard, TERRA.vita flyer stand, stand at the day care's summer fest sponsor run.
- TERRA.vita ESD network meeting between extracurricular learning centres and ESD representatives from schools in the TERRA.vita region in cooperation with the "Bildungsregion Landkreis Osnabrück"
- New finder for educational centers on TERRA.vita's website.
- Sign language translation for selected guided tours of the TERRA.guides.
- Re-modelling of the TERRA.guide supervision to improve the networking and support of the volunteering nature and landscape guides resulting in an increased number of network meetings (four in total per year) and in the creation of the "TERRA.guide Hüggel guided tours" working group.
- New climate talk program "PastPresentFuture – Will the Dörenthe Cliffs soon be by the sea again?" firstly presented in the course of the cultural project "Hockendes Weib in déjà vu" in Ibbenbüren-Dörenthe.
- New field trip program for geography students of the Osnabrück University to the Kuhlhoff HaiTec Center and on the TERRA.track Ice Age Explorer Trail.
- New geologic student excursion "Osnabrücker Land" of the University of Bremen (WG Prof. Dr. Gerhard Bohrmann).

Strategic partnership

- Joint work with Lower Saxony's nature parks, the Environmental Ministry of Lower Saxony and NBank state bank on new state funding guidelines for 2026.
- Ongoing networking and collaboration with North-Rhenish Westphalian nature parks with the goal to get a Nature and Geopark funding from the state of North-Rhenish Westphalia as well as permanent networking with the Association of German Nature Parks (VDN), National Nature Landscapes (NNL), National Forum of German UNESCO Global Geoparks, Working Group of German Geoparks (AdG), local NGOs from the field of tourism, nature protection, forestry, and agriculture.
- Establishment of an exchange with the slowfood-Convinium Osnabrück with the goal to promote regional and sustainable products.

Promotional activities

- Field trip to geological highlights in the TERRA.vita area and guest lecture on TERRA.vita's

geology for the Annual Conference of the Upper Rhine Geological Society in Münster ("OGV-Jahrestagung") attended by institutional geoscientists and geologists from geologic state surveys.

- Activities on fairs and local events: Reise & Freizeit fair at FMO airport, Niedersächsischer Mühlentag, Schaftag Lengerich, Cittaslow Landmarkt Bad Essen, "Day of Geotopes" and Family Day at the Dinosaur Tracksite Barkhausen including a new "Dinosaur Expert Rally" (fully organized by TERRA.vita, >500 participants), Hockendes Weib im Déjà-vu cultural projects (field trip and climate talk)
- Social media campaigns on ESD, nature conservation, TERRA.vita events, geosites, Earth's history, recreation among others
- New image movies for the TERRA.track hiking network.
- Improved cooperation with UNESCO project schools within the TERRA.vita area.

4. CONTACTS

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