

Framework of European geosites in Poland

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Abstract

The main objective of the GEOSITES project is to set up a network of selected objects, which represent and document the diversity of the Europe's geological structure and formations, in short geodiversity. For the purpose of accomplishing it, working groups were established by the European Association for the Conservation of the Geological Heritage (ProGEO). Their key target is to work out national databases of geosites, but current progress in preparing and developing those databases differs in individual countries. The Polish database was compiled by author according to material prepared in the Institute of Nature Conservation, Polish Academy of Sciences with the collaboration of some universities and other institutes. This databank appears to be first one of that kind in Europe. It has been drawn up strictly according to the computer-aided scheme of recording information as suggested by ProGEO. Based on the valorisation criteria properly applied to the selection stages, 175 sites have been classified for the entry into the European network; 96 geosites thereof are protected by the law in force of a given country, and 79 are suggested as objects to be protected. Mainly, there are individual sites (142) of small areas, however, some of them (33) cover large areas with complexes of objects present, in general, within the national and landscape parks. The most abundant are the sites comprising stratigraphical sequences and objects showing geomorphologic qualities. Their layout has been analyzed with regard to the geodiversity of particular regions. Basic instructions regarding the further development of the GEOSITES programme have been formulated. They comprise a postulate to compile national databases, and to unite them in order to facilitate the selection of geosites regarded as the most representative of Europe. While undertaking the project, it is an important task to formally approve the European network of geosites. Such a formal approval will be conducive to drawing up, concluding, and enforcing a convention on the conservation of the geological heritage.

Key words

European GEOSITES project, framework, criteria for valorisation, Polish geosite database, synthesis.