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How to protect loess-palaeosol sequences? - Proposal of Loess Geopark in Vojvodina Province (North Serbia)

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Loess-palaeosol sequences preserve the most important continental record of climatic and environmental changes during the Quaternary. As loess deposits in the Vojvodina region (North Serbia) could be regarded as one of the most important European terrestrial records of climatic and environmental changes during the last million years that makes them valuable scientific resource. Unfortunately, these sites, due to their economic (e.g. agriculture and brickyards) and functional (e.g. remote sections as waste disposals) values, are constantly endangered by numerous causes and could be degraded or exploited permanently.

This study will give proposal of establishing loess geopark as protected area that would include the most significant loess sections in the investigated area. The study is based on analytical, theoretical and practical suggestions and rules according to the general Guidelines and Criteria for National Geoparks seeking UNESCO's assistance to join the Global Geoparks Network. Loess and loess like sediments cover more than 60 % of the area and are preserved in six separate loess plateaus: Bačka, Srem, Tamiš, Banat, south-east Banat, and Titel Loess Plateau, which make it a surface large enough to serve local economic and cultural development. As the dissemination of loess in Vojvodina has a dispersed character, the potential Geopark should also have a certain number of separate locations. A fragmented approach should require less effort during the geoconservation practice, with separate processes, but identical aim. Therefore, one the initial steps of protection and recognition of (loess) geosites should be first achieved by national or provincial legislation and/or by management policies before inscription on the World Heritage List of recognition as a Global Geopark because these organisations by themselves do not provide any protection.

As unique protected area of this kind in Europe and wider, role model for this loess geopark could be China, the region with one of the most important Quaternary continental records in the world, where key loess sections are profoundly protected and promoted via Geoparks (e.g. Luochuan, Huoshi Chai, Kungdongshan, Jingtai, Yellow River).