



Trends and challenges for geoconservation

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Geoconservation as a geosciences domain is still a recent activity. Founded on the Earth's geodiversity, geoconservation aims to assure a proper conservation, management, and sustainable use of the most important geodiversity elements (minerals, rocks, fossils, soils, landforms and their landscapes, and active geological/geomorphological processes), which are generally known as geological heritage or simply geoheritage.

During the last two decades, scientific research on geoconservation has been increasing, as it is demonstrated by the growing number of published papers, master/PhD theses and scientific events worldwide. Also at the international level, geoconservation seems to gain importance. The UNESCO officially recognizes geoheritage under two main systems (World Heritage and Global Geoparks) and IUCN is slowly accepting geoconservation as a fundamental asset for a holistic nature conservation approach.

However, the main constrains for the development of geoconservation in Europe are associated with a total absence of any geoconservation policy by European Union authorities. The EU nature conservation policy is strictly designed towards biodiversity and ecosystems, which is a major drawback for those that are struggling to set up geoconservation actions in European countries. Without geoconservation principles promoted by the EU, the possibilities to obtain funding for research and for the implementation of effective geoconservation actions in these countries are practically none. In addition, the general economic restrains during the last decade and the political tendency to shrink the public sector in European societies is contributing to weak many public institutions that are responsible for the implementation of nature conservation strategies, which has become a justification by many national administrations for not considering geoconservation a priority.

Geoconservation should play an important role in our societies. Some of the UN Sustainable Development Goals defined in the Agenda 2030 can be easily connected with geoconservation, a task that should motivate all geoconservationists to join efforts and to define common strategies at the local, national, and international levels.