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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

35th meeting
Strasbourg, 1-4 December 2015

**Updated Progress Report on the Fulfilment of the Resolution of the
Committee of Ministers (2012)19 on the European Diploma to the
Poloniny National Park**

*Document prepared
by the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic*

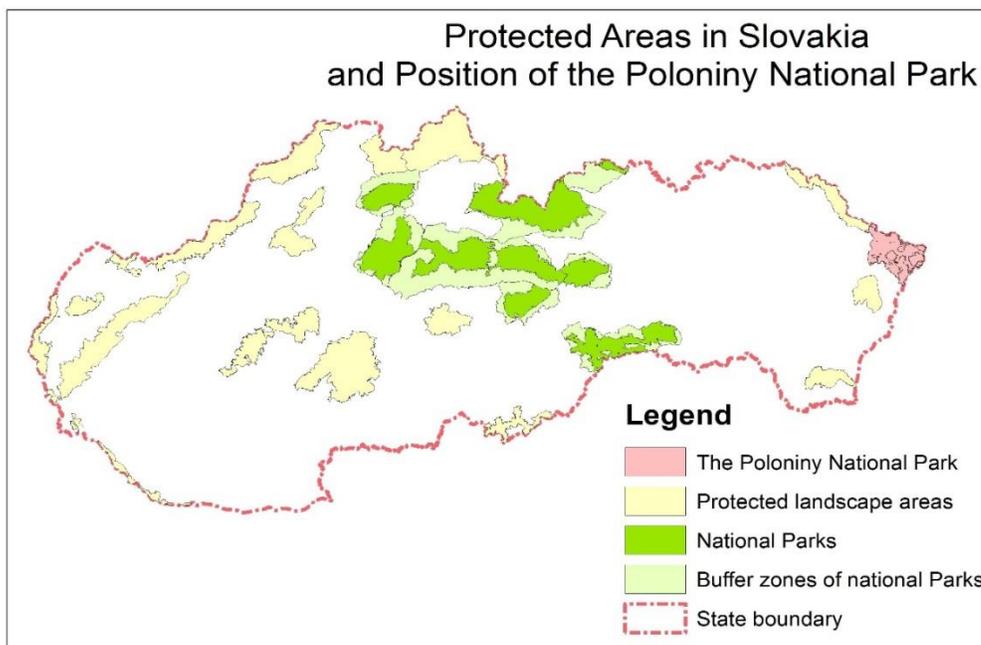
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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE UPDATED PROGRESS REPORT

This document is being submitted for the consideration of the 35th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention based on the conclusion of the Bureau Meeting¹ on September 14th - 15th, 2015 and taking into consideration comments of Mr Brunner, expert of the Council of Europe². The document replaces the progress report of September 9th - T-PVS/DE(2015)13. All the annexes are available at http://www.soprs.sk/european_diploma_poloniny/.

2. GENERALLY ABOUT THE POLONINY NATIONAL PARK

As seen from the bellow map the Poloniny National Park (hereinafter “the Poloniny NP”) is situated in the most **north-eastern part of the Slovak Republic** at the state border with Poland and with Ukraine. This unique geographic position as well as biological diversity at the boundary of Western and Eastern Carpathians were reasons why the area was in 1997 firstly proposed to candidate for the European Diploma.



Rich biodiversity may be documented by the following data: 91 species of mollusc (from 2,277 in Slovakia), 403 species of *Arachnidae* (934 within Slovakia), 1,472 species of beetles (6,478 within Slovakia); 924 of butterfly species (3,500 within Slovakia), 2,428 of *Diptera* including 9 new species (5,974 within Slovakia), 24 fish species (79 in Slovakia), 17 amphibians (from 18 species in Slovakia), 8 reptiles (from 12 from Slovakia), 211 species of nesting birds (219 in Slovakia) and 63 mammal species (90 within Slovakia). Many of them are listed in the annexes of the Bern Convention, including *Bison bonasus* that was re-introduced in 2002 to the Poloniny NP and its current population consists of 27 individuals.

„**Poloniny**“ means mountain meadows (created in the past by the Walachian colonization) that are along with the **forest complex** typical for the area. The usage of grasslands was unlike the forestry strongly influenced by the collectivization of agricultural production in the 1960ties.

3. LEGAL PROTECTION

¹ T-PVS(2015)26E;

² T-PVS/DE(2015)14;

The **first protected oak forest** with a logging ban was mentioned in the land register of Stakcín municipality **in 1660, followed in 1728** by demarcated protected fir and beech forests under Riaba skala with a logging ban. The first strict nature reserve was Stučica - Jasan created in **1908** with an area of 331.4 ha.

In 1970 the area was **designated as protected landscape area**³ and **in 1997** its major part was **upgraded as the national park**⁴. Due to its values of the international importance the site **was in 1992 listed in the network of biosphere reserves** (as the Eastern Carpathian Trilateral Biosphere Reserve) and **in 1998** it was awarded **by the European Diploma**⁵. **In 2004** almost the whole area of the Poloniny NP was **proposed to the Natura 2000** (the Poloniny NP overlaps by 99.9 % both with SPA – SKCHVU002 Bukovské vrchy and with 3 sites of Community importance – SCIs - SKUEV0210 Stinská, SKUEV0229 Bukovské vrchy and SKUEV0234 Ulička) mainly due to significant occurrence of the habitats⁶ and species⁷ of Community interest and of bird species⁸. Later on relevant national legal norms were adopted⁹. **In 2007 respectively in 2011**¹⁰ 3 localities (covering 3,188.40 ha¹¹) were inscribed into the **UNESCO World Heritage List**¹² as a part of the site No 1133 Primeval Beech forest of the Carpathians. Situation is visible from the *Annex 1_map Poloniny*.

The Poloniny NP covers 29,805.0514 ha and its protective zone 10,973.2893 ha, respectively. There are **7 national nature reserves** (Stučica, Havešová, Jarabá skala, Rožok, Pľaša, Stinská, Pod Ruským), **12 nature reserves** (Bahno, Borsučiny, Bzaná, Gazdoraň, Hlboké, Hrunok, Ruské, Stinská Slatina, Stružnická dolina, Šípková, Udava, Ulicská Ostrá) **and 1 nature monument** (Ulička) declared within the Poloniny NP by specific legal norms. They represent the most valuable part of the Poloniny NP and cover 7 % of its territory.

Above mentioned nature reserves and nature monument are in the most strict – 5th level (1,886.65 ha) and in the 4th level of protection (59.44 ha), while remaining part of the Poloniny NP belongs to the 3rd level of protection and its protective zone to the 2nd level of protection. Levels of protection are set in the §§ 11 – 16 of the **Act No 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection** as amended (hereinafter “Act No 543/2002 on Nature”). **Levels of protection determine activities that are prohibited and/or require approval** of the state administrative body. Complete list of these activities is in the *Annex 2a_levels of protection*, the overview within the Poloniny NP is given in the bellow Table 1 and translation of the most relevant parts of the Act No 543/2002 on Nature in the *Annex 2b_Act on Nature*.

Table 1 NP Poloniny – overview of levels of protection

Levels of protection	Area (ha)
5 th level (nature reserves)	1,886.65
4 th level (nature reserves, natural monument)	59.44
3rd level (area of the Poloniny NP except for nature reserves and natural monument)	27, 866.20

³ Ordinance of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Socialistic Republic No 70/1977 Coll on designation of the Eastern Carpathians Protected Landscape Area, https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/1977/70/vyhlasene_znenie.html

⁴ Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic No 258/1997 Coll. on designation of the Poloniny National Park, <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/1997/258/>;

⁵ Res(98)26 valid till 18th September 2002, <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=495629&Site=CM>

⁶ A wide scale of forest, grassland and water/wetland habitats of Community interest

⁷ Mammals including large carnivores, otter, beaver and bats, fish, reptiles, amphibians, non-vertebrates, plants

⁸ *Crex crex, Ciconia nigra, Aquila pomarina, Pernis apivorus, Alcedo atthis, Strix uralensis, Picus canus, Dryocopus martius, Dendrocopos leucotos, Sylvia nisoria, Ficedula parva, Ficedula albicollis, Lanius excubitor, Coturnix coturnis, Jynx torquilla, Phoenicurus phoenicurus, Caprimulgus europaeus, Bonasa bonasia*

⁹ Ordinance of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic No 25/2008 Coll on designation of the Bukovské vrchy Special Protection Area; <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2008/25/> and Decree of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic No 3/2004-5.1 of 14 July 2004 issuing the national list of sites of Community importance

¹⁰ Enlargement of the original Slovak- Ukrainian site (addition of natural forests in Germany)

¹¹ The whole Slovak part of the UNESCO site (according to the nomination project) is 5,766.40 ha

¹² <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1314>

2nd level (protective zone of the Poloniny NP)	10,966.05
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In addition to this clear determination of prohibited/conditionally approved activities there are legal provisions following the Bern Convention as well as the EU Birds and Habitats Directives with respect to the regime of species protection and in the case of the EU legislation obligations to undertake the appropriate assessment of plans and projects, surveillance and maintenance/achieving of the conservation status of habitats and species of the Community interest.

Specific protection of birds¹³ within the Poloniny NP is provided mainly by

(i) prohibiting intentional forestry from March 1st – June 30th for the specified parts of the SKCHVU002 Bukovské vrchy (3,905.04 ha) and by

(ii) prohibiting – within the whole territory - of the following activities:

- a) removal or damage of nesting trees and trees with cavity of target birds if determined by the district office;
- b) forestry near nests of *Aquila pomarina*, *Pernis apivorus*, *Strix uralensis* and *Ciconia nigra*, if determined by the district office;
- c) hunting (except for hunting guard) during nesting of and near to used nests of *Aquila pomarina*, *Pernis apivorus*, *Strix uralensis* and *Ciconia nigra* if determined by the district office;
- d) intentional regeneration felling, with less than 3 trees in the exploitable age (on natural dying) per each hectar;
- e) removal of soliters (dead trees) or broken trees on forested land, that neither are the source of negative biotic factors nor represent possible danger for safety and health protection (during work) and nor mater the technical access to forest stands,
- f) mechanized mowing and mulching from edges to the centre within the compact areas above 0.5 ha, this applies for permanent grasslands, other grasslands or temporary grasslands;
- g) mechanized mowing and mulching of nesting sites of *Crex crex* Corn Crane or *Coturnix coturnix*, if determined by the district office;
- h) recultivation or ameliorations on agricultural land;
- i) logging or any other interventions to trees growing outside the forest from March 15th to July 31st except for removing of consequences of avaria or disorders on electrical conducting.

The bodies responsible for nature and landscape protection are mainly: **the Ministry of the Environment** of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter “MoE”) – directorate for nature protection and landscape development and the regional/district offices - department for environment. Their decisions are based on the opinion of the expert body – the **State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic** (hereinafter “SNC”). SNC is an umbrella institution for nature protection in Slovakia. It consists of 25 units (**Administration of the Poloniny NP** is one of them) with competencies for nature protection issues within their area. SNC has its headquarters in central Slovakia (Banská Bystrica) while the Administration of the Poloniny NP is in the east (Stakčín).

As described below activities in the Poloniny NP are subject to other legal norms. These are namely forestry, hunting, territorial planning and EIA/SEA that are under responsibility of other ministries.

4. FORESTRY, HUNTING AND LAND OWNERSHIP

Forests cover more than 90 % of the territory of the Poloniny NP. 64 % of this area is state-owned/used, 29 % is owned by compossessorates, 6 % is owned by private identities and less than 1 % is owned by the church.

¹³To comply mostly the EU Bird Directive

As far as the **classification of the forests** is concerned (according to their usage and management) 64.6 % of all forests are in the category of the commercial forests, 7.4 % belong to the protective forests and 28 % is listed in the category of particular purpose forests. Details are given in the Table 2.

Table 2 Poloniny NP - division of forests according to the forest categories in 2014 - 2015

Forest category	Area until 2014 (in %)	Area after the renewal in 2014 (in %)	Area after the creation of Natural Reserve "Borsukov Vrch" (in %)
Commercial forests	17,751.68 ha (65.23 %)	17,599.04 ha (64.59 %)	17,527.20 ha (64.32 %)
Special purpose forests	7,330.16 ha (26.94 %)	7,630.43 ha (28.00 %)	7,702.27 ha (28.27 %)
Protective forests	2,131.17 ha (7.83 %)	2,018.22 ha (7.41 %)	2,018.22 ha (7.41 %)
Total:	27,213.01 ha (100 %)	27,247.69 ha (100 %)	27,247.69 ha (100 %)

Forest classification is approved within **forest maintenance plans** (valid for 10 year period) along with the prescribed measures, methods and models. In July 2015 the SNC commissioned the creation of **management model proposals for selected areas of the Poloniny NP**, where nature-friendly management forms shall be applied. These forestry measures will be reflected in the proposed Poloniny NP Management Plan and they are eligible for the financial support in the frame of the Rural Development Program. According to data provided by MoA there is a significant **difference between the planned annual lodging and the annual growth**: within 14 forest units (fully or partially overlapping with the Poloniny NP): 112, 042 m³ are planned to be cut comparing to 192, 924 m³ gained, e.g. annual harvesting will be only 58 % of the increment.

Forestry is determined by restrictions given by the levels of protection and mainly by **the Act No 326/2005 Coll.** on Forests as amended¹⁴ (hereinafter "Act No 326/2005 on Forests"). For instance according to its §18.2 **clear-cuts are not allowed in the Poloniny NP**. In general (§19.3 of the Act No 326/2005 on Forests) clear cutting is eligible only in a limited scale and under specifically listed conditions, namely: in pine, poplar, willow and robinia forest stands; plantages for energetic purposes and in the process of forest reconstruction.

According to the Act No **274/2009 Coll. on Hunting** and on the amendment of certain acts as amended¹⁵ (hereinafter "Act No 274/2009 on Hunting") the whole Slovak Republic is divided to so called **hunting areas** for management of specific game (with set minimum coverage). Hunting areas have been designated mainly on the bases of orographic units and they are further divided to **hunting grounds**. The Poloniny NP is located in the **Poloninské Karpaty Hunting Area covering 93, 033 ha** and also partially in the **Vihorlat Hunting Area** and it overlaps completely or partially with 19 hunting grounds. **The average size of 19 hunting areas is 3,312 ha**. According to the Act No 274/2009 on Hunting so called **large-scale game management (coordinated planning) is obligatory for each particular hunting area** (e.g. for 93,033 ha in the case of the Poloninské Karpaty Hunting Area). Coordination is via the state authority (i.e. the respective regional/district offices – department on land and forestry grounds) and the **hunting board** which consists of representatives of all hunting grounds, organizations and authorities, including the Poloniny NP Administration. The hunting board evaluates annual hunting plans and sets criteria for next year. The type of management is subject to the § 18 of the Act No 274/2009 on Hunting (translation of relevant parts is in the *Annex 2c Act on Hunting*),

Similar boards are established at the level of hunting grounds. Proposed annual plans are approved by the state authority - relevant district office and become binding – hunters may hunt only game specified in the permit and they are obliged to report on hunt individuals (hunting without permission is considered as criminal act). Forestry and hunting are under responsibility of the **Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development** of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter "MoA"), therefore cooperation of 2 sectors is crucial at the national as well as at regional and district levels.

¹⁴ <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2005/326/>

¹⁵ <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2009/274/>

The issue of wolf hunting was concluded in 2013 when it was agreed to amend legislation to give the species the full protection in the Poloniny NP. According to the official hunting statistic **since 2013 no wolf was hunt in the Poloninské Karpaty Hunting Area.**

Situation with respect to hunting in the Poloniny NP was subject to the meeting of representatives of MoA, MoE, the Slovak Hunting Chamber, 2 state forestry institutions (main managers of the state land) and the SNC on August 21st, 2015. Participants agreed that **hunting management is in compliance with national legislation** and that the **Statute of the Poloninské Karpaty Hunting Area** (lastly updated in 2010) will be amended to more consider objectives of the Poloniny NP and to apply experience from the Poľana Protecting Hunting Area. **Updated draft will be submitted to the coming meeting of the hunting board scheduled in April 2016.**

The issue of **land ownership** is very sensitive due to process of confiscation of land by the state (in 1950-ties), designation of protected areas without negotiating (during the socialistic time) and later on due to lengthy process of compensation of state for restrictions of land owners. Displacement of 7 villages due to building of drinking water reservoir Starina (in 1981-1987 with a total volume of 59.8 mil. m³ of water) and high rate of unemployment (17.49 %) in the Snina District) were additional reasons for **long-term non-compliance of land owners, users and of local citizens with initiatives of the state institutions.**

5. SUMMARY OF THE COMPETENCIES

As already mentioned, competencies for the management of protected areas are divided among different ministries. This division is set in the Act No 575/2001¹⁶ **Coll. on Organization of the Government** and Central State Administration Bodies as amended. Such a model is commonly used also in other countries which are members of the Council of Europe. Tasks are **divided to the administration bodies (ministries, regional/district offices) and other institutions (such as the SNC).**

The Administration of the Poloniny NP is one part of this institutional framework and its competencies as well cooperation with the other bodies is determined by the legislation. Capacities of SNC were significantly strengthened mainly via the project "Development of Nature Conservancy and Protected Areas in the Slovak Carpathians" supported from the Swiss financial mechanism (hereinafter the "**Swiss project**").

Apart for the professional employees there is a network of **voluntary guards** – rangers (specifically for nature, forestry, hunting, fishing) appointed according to the respective legal acts (conditions, rights and responsibilities, training, period etc.). In the Poloniny NP there are 7 voluntary nature guards. According to the Act No 274/2009 on Hunting there is an obligation of one person of the **hunting guard for each 500 ha of the hunting district.**

6. PROGRESS IN 2014 – 2015

In 2014 **the Government of the Slovak Republic (itself or via respective ministries) undertook the following steps:**

- Amendment of the Act No 543/2002 on Nature **along with 2 other legal norms** with the aim
 - **to enlarge economic instruments** (addition the **lease** of the land, **exchange** of land and **contractual measures** to complete the existing tools – purchase of land and financial compensation), details are provided in the §§ 60 and 61 of the Act No 543/2002 on Nature related to the financial contribution (*Annex 2b_Act on Nature*) and
 - **to optimize the process of designation of protected areas** (preliminary negotiations on the preferable economic instruments with land owners/users, looking for consensus via the written agreements, more detail analysis of financial and social impacts of initiatives of nature protection bodies; specification of details of the compulsory nature documentation; approval of all proposals by the government, etc.).

¹⁶ <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2001/575/20150901>

- Amendment to the Act No. 543/2002 on Nature **to delegate new rights and obligations of the SNC¹⁷**; the most important ones are listed in the § 65a of the Act No 543/2002 on Nature (e.g. **signed agreements with the land-owners**, comments the process of preparation of **forestry management plans** and providing data for their preparation).
- Amendment of both nature protection and hunting legal norms (e.g. the Ordinance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic No. 344/2009 Coll. executing the Hunting Act as amended and the Ordinance of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic No 24/2003 Coll. implementing the Act No 543/2002 Coll. as amended) **to fully protect the wolf¹⁸ – since 2014 - in the whole area of the Poloniny NP, its protective zone as well as in the adjacent Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area.**
- Adoption of **Operational program Quality of the Environment 2014 - 2020** with 3 triple allocation for biodiversity protection (comparing 2007 – 2013) and precise targeting of priorities and indicators; support for the natural and cultural heritage is eligible from several other sources, including cross-border program (Slovak - Polish, ENPI).
- Making **nature protection activities eligible from the Swiss financial mechanism and from the Norwegian financial mechanism.**
- Acceleration of **communication at both national level**, namely
 - written **inter-ministerial agreement between the MoE and the MoA** signed in February 2015 aimed at the fulfilment of obligations concerning the UNESCO convention and the European Diploma (*Annex 3a_sector agreement_original and Annex 3b_sector agreement_English*).
 - communication at **the regional and local levels** significantly improved thanks to several projects, concrete results are raising of public awareness, local initiatives oriented to nature and cultural heritage and sustainable use of the Poloniny NP and to development of the documents for the nature-close forestry around the core zone. In the process of communication between the nature protection bodies with stakeholders (villages, associations of owners, non-state as well as state managers of the land) it was proved, that **none of stakeholders claimed disagreement** with need to protect nature and they were open to further communication and possible cooperation. Altogether there were cca 30 meetings and consultations organized (*Annex 3c_meetings*):
 - issuing of 10 EUR silver¹⁹ and 100 EUR gold²⁰ **commemorative coins on the UNESCO site;**
 - **film Carpathian Beech Forests** (DVD in English, Slovak);
 - **leaflet and brochure Carpathian Beech Forests** (English, Slovak);
 - **brochure Poloniny;**
 - **leaflets on 3 nature trails - Rožok, Ruské, Havešová** (English, Slovak).

Having legal and financial frame the Administration of the Poloniny NP commissioned/prepared in 2015 the following documents:

- **The proposal of declaring the Borsukov Vrch Nature Reserve²¹** with the most strict (5th) level of protection covering 146.79 ha and situating at the border with Poland thus completing stripe of non-intervention area. Situation is visible from the map (*Annex 1_map*). The proposed Regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic on designation of the Borsukov vrch Nature Reserve was (from 21st October by November 10th 2015) subject to obligatory cross-sector consultation; with expected

¹⁷ *Recommendation No. 3: pursue efforts to upgrade human resources, in particular by taking on more technical staff and wardens, and very substantially step-up funding, at least doubling the annual ratio per hectare for the period of validity of the diploma;*

¹⁸ *Recommendation No. 4: give full protection to wolves and ban shooting them throughout the area of the national park;*

¹⁹ <http://www.nbs.sk/en/banknotes-and-coins/euro-coins/collector-coins>

²⁰ <http://www.nbs.sk/en/banknotes-and-coins/euro-coins/news/new-coin-to-be-issued>

²¹ *Condition No. 3: create a functional network of protected areas during the next period of validity, meeting international standards in this area and complying with the national Law on Nature and Landscape Protection*

submission for the approval of the Government of the Slovak Republic by December 2015 and expected validity from 31st December 2015²². **After this approval, the concerned forest currently classified as commercial one will be reclassified as particular purpose forests**, in accordance with the § 14. 2 e) of the Act No 326/2005 on Forests (Table 2).

- Plans for more protected areas²³ to be designated, namely "Černiny" and "Pramenisko Cirochy" with proposed 5th level of protection; negotiations with land owners are ongoing.
- **Study on forest spatial distribution units** that are included in the proposed and/or existing nature reserves and at the same time used by non-state bodies.
- **Compilation of the list of lands appropriate for land exchange/lease/purchase and contractual measures**²³ (the new obligation by 30th June each year according to § 61.3 of the Act No 543/2002 on Nature) - *Annex 3d_forestry units*.
- **Study**²⁴ **on calculation of all the financial implications** of the proposed or existing 5th level of protection in the non-state ownership (study was elaborated by the authorized person in June 2015 and it is available in Slovak).
- **Identification of all the actual land owners/users in the forest units, communicating possible ways of compensation** (based on the above calculation) for nature protection restrictions with the main stakeholders and **calculation for lease** – *Annex 3d_forestry units*.
- **Mapping the area around the core zone** (4,044.60 ha, e. g. 13.57 % of the Poloniny NP) **at the scale of forest units and proposal of forest management measures**²⁵ **for the buffer zone of the Carpathian Beech Forests** in the Poloniny NP (2,086.14 ha, e.g. 7 % of the Poloniny NP). The proposal of these **forest management measures** prepared by the qualified body was delivered in August 2015; it is based on the valid forest management documentation (Directive No 1/2014 of the Slovak National Forest Centre - Forest management planning Institute entitled "Work Procedure for the Creation and Design of Multi-Stratum Vegetation Management Measures in Forest Management Plans"). The proposal consists of general proposals (made according to the tree age classes) and specific proposals for totally 9 forest units in the Poloniny NP. Outputs have been considered in the management plan for the Poloniny NP.
- **The draft management program for the Poloniny NP for 2016 – 2025**²⁶ and consultations with stakeholders. The process according to the national legislation is described at the *Annex 4a road map*. Consultations were undertaken on September – October 2015 with the following results: need to make the management plan more “user-friendly” for the stakeholders - to clarify division of tasks and responsibilities, to define measures that are eligible for support within the Operational Program Quality of the Environment 2014 – 2020 (call shall be open in January 2016). The document was also revised according to advices the Council of Europe expert (measures are more specific now). The **updated draft management plan** is available in Slovak - see *Annex 4b management plan*.
- Preparation of the **draft management plan for SKCHVU002 Bukovské vrchy** for period 2016 - 2045; this is the documentation according to the Act No 543/2002 on Nature with aim to protect target species of birds by setting strategic objectives and measures; the document is being finalized

²²<https://lt.justice.gov.sk/Document/DocumentDetails.aspx?instEID=-1&matEID=8666&docEID=451103&docFormEID=-1&docTypeEID=1&langEID=1>

²³ *Condition No. 4: pursue the steps taken to purchase private forests and draw up a future purchasing plan with specific objectives, indicating the funding to be assigned to this purpose each year;*

²⁴ Ing. Lubomír Valach, 2015: Výpočet nájmu pre územie existujúcich a navrhovaných území s piatym stupňom ochrany prírody na území NP Poloniny a CHKO Vihorlat

²⁵ *Recommendation No. 7: start experimenting with the selective felling of beech forest in a state-owned woodland unit; the national authorities shall inform the Group of Specialists on the Diploma each year of the progress made.*

²⁶ *Condition No. 1: finalise and adopt the management plan for the park within two years of the renewal).*

along with the other 33 sites within the SNC project “Elaboration of management plans for selected protected bird areas – 2nd stage”, deadline is December 2015.

- Concluding of the **trilateral agreement**²⁷ (*Annex 3e_trilateral agreement*) on 15th November 2013, as part of the Eastern Carpathian Biosphere Reserve setting the Steering Council that includes the administrations of the relevant national parks and protected landscape areas; these jointly manage and coordinate cross-border activities within the scope of the Steering Council in the annual meetings.
- within the management of trilateral international protected area of UNESCO World Heritage site “Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathian and Ancient Forests of Germany” the trilateral co-operation continued especially with interchange of information and experience at the **Joint Management Committee** session held on 14th May 2014 in Bonn, Germany. The representatives of the competent ministries of Slovakia, Ukraine and Germany signed the **Joint Declaration of Intent between the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic concerning the Cooperation on the Protection and Management of the Joint World Heritage property “Primeval Beech forests of the Carpathians (Slovak Republic and Ukraine) and the Ancient Beech forests of Germany (Germany)”**. In this document (*Annex 3f_joint declaration*) the participants expressed their will to provide mutual support and cooperation concerning the protection, conservation, presentation and transmission of the Joint World Heritage property to future generations. During the meeting on 26th – 27th October 2015 in the Poloniny NP the progress in the Slovak part was presented as well as the road map for next steps discussed.

SNC continued in several project and surveys, the list of relevant projects of various institutions and research studies is in the *Annex 4c research*. The most relevant results came from the **project aimed at large carnivores** - *Annex 4d_large carnivores* as well as from the **Swiss project**. They are the following:

- **management plan at national level for wolf** - completed in close cooperation of the MoA, the National Forestry Centre, the Technical University in Zvolen, University of the Veterinary Medicine Košice, relevant NGOs and experts; the document was delivered on October 30th, 2015 for the approval of the MoE (by 15th December 2015);
- **management plan for brown bear, lynx and wild cat** are in the final stage of preparation (by end of 2015) to complete already existing procedure – guidance for regulatory hunting brown bear;
- study of complex identification of the population of large carnivores and a wild cat in Slovakia already was completed that resulted in preliminary quantity/quality data on above species;
- for brown bear following studies were undertaken: study on ethology, study on evaluation of the size of the brown bear, study on healthy conditions of the brown bear population; it is also necessary that brown bear was not hunt for long period (no permission issued);
- the above mentioned studies were elaborated at the national level but apply to the Poloniny NP – especially for this site the draft scientific protocol was elaborated - *4e scientific protocol*;
- the elaboration of the **Study on Sustainable Development of the Poloniny National Park** (2014, available also in English²⁸) and issuing above mentioned promotion materials;
- implementing the other important activities from the Swiss projects namely **micro-grant programme** for municipalities, local companies and NGOs (tourist, culture and nature heritage)²⁹;

²⁷ *Recommendation No. 2: consider the signature of a simplified agreement between the bodies directly responsible for managing the protected areas on the borders of the three neighbouring countries (Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine), based on the programming of joint activities;*

²⁸ http://www.sopsr.sk/dokumenty/pol_2014.pdf;

²⁹ *Recommendation No. 6: pursue the efforts to restore buildings in the traditional regional style; the park might devise a charter of architectural rules for local authorities;*

similar support is planned also as part of the new Norwegian project as well as **excursion** organized in October 2014 to the Switzerland to support the feeling of these responsible stakeholders how to promote their area and commonly support rural development;

- motivation of municipalities to increase their involvement in the **village renewal programme**²⁹ (traditional instrument supported annually from the state budget – in 2015 there were totally 14 applications from the Poloniny villages) and set of presentations **to inform local stakeholders on the newly approved operational programs to use EU funds (2014-2020)**, namely the Rural Development Programme, the Operational programme Quality of the Environment and Polish - Slovak Cross-Border Cooperation Programme. This already resulted in submission of more application for financial support.
- strengthening of the SNC capacities¹⁷: since **September 2015 there are 3 new positions** within SNC, including the Poloniny NP Administration; **another seasonal work position was established** at the information Centre of the Poloniny NP in Nová Sedlica; in addition agenda of the Poloniny NP and its international commitments is tackled by 2 experts implementing the Swiss project as well as 2 coordinators of international cooperation.

7. SUMMARY OF FULFILLING 5 CONDITIONS AND 7 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESOLUTION 2012(19)

Resolution of the Committee of Minister (2012)¹⁹ includes 5 conditions and 7 recommendations. They may be divided to those 3 groups:

- (i) already completed,
 - (ii) with a documented progress ,
 - (iii) with clarified situation (and in line with national legislation and practice in the countries).
- (i) 2 conditions and 2 recommendations were fully completed:
 - Condition No. 4: pursue the steps taken to purchase private forests and draw up a future purchasing plan with specific objectives, indicating the funding to be assigned to this purpose each year;*
 - Condition No. 5: set up a scientific programme inventorying and monitoring the large carnivore populations in the diploma-holding area; the national authorities shall submit the scientific protocol for that programme for opinion to the Group of Specialists on the Diploma within one year of the renewal;*
 - Recommendation No. 2: consider the signature of a simplified agreement between the bodies directly responsible for managing the protected areas on the borders of the three neighbouring countries (Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine), based on the programming of joint activities;*
 - Recommendation No. 4: give full protection to wolves and ban shooting them throughout the area of the national park.*
 - (ii) For 2 conditions and 3 recommendations a measurable progress was made
 - Condition No. 1: finalise and adopt the management plan for the park within two years of the renewal).*
 - Condition No. 3: create a functional network of protected areas during the next period of validity, meeting international standards in this area and complying with the national Law on Nature and Landscape Protection*
 - Recommendation No. 3: pursue efforts to upgrade human resources, in particular by taking on more technical staff and wardens, and very substantially step-up funding, at least doubling the annual ratio per hectare for the period of validity of the diploma*
 - Recommendation No. 6: pursue the efforts to restore buildings in the traditional regional style; the park might devise a charter of architectural rules for local authorities;*
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Recommendation No. 7: start experimenting with the selective felling of beech forest in a state-owned woodland unit; the national authorities shall inform the Group of Specialists on the Diploma each year of the progress made.

(iii) For 1 condition and 2 recommendations situation was clarified

Condition No. 2: start work on devising a new blueprint for forestry and hunting management in the diploma-holding area, taking greater account of the biological imperatives dictated by its European significance, within one year of the renewal. The national authorities shall supply a strategic plan for the sustainable development of the woodland during the next period of validity of the diploma and inform the Group of Specialists on the Diploma each year of the progress made. This blueprint shall include revision of the current hunting allocation in the diploma-holding area, ensuring that the functional units each cover a surface area of 3 000 to 4 000 hectares, consistent with the biology of large herbivores;

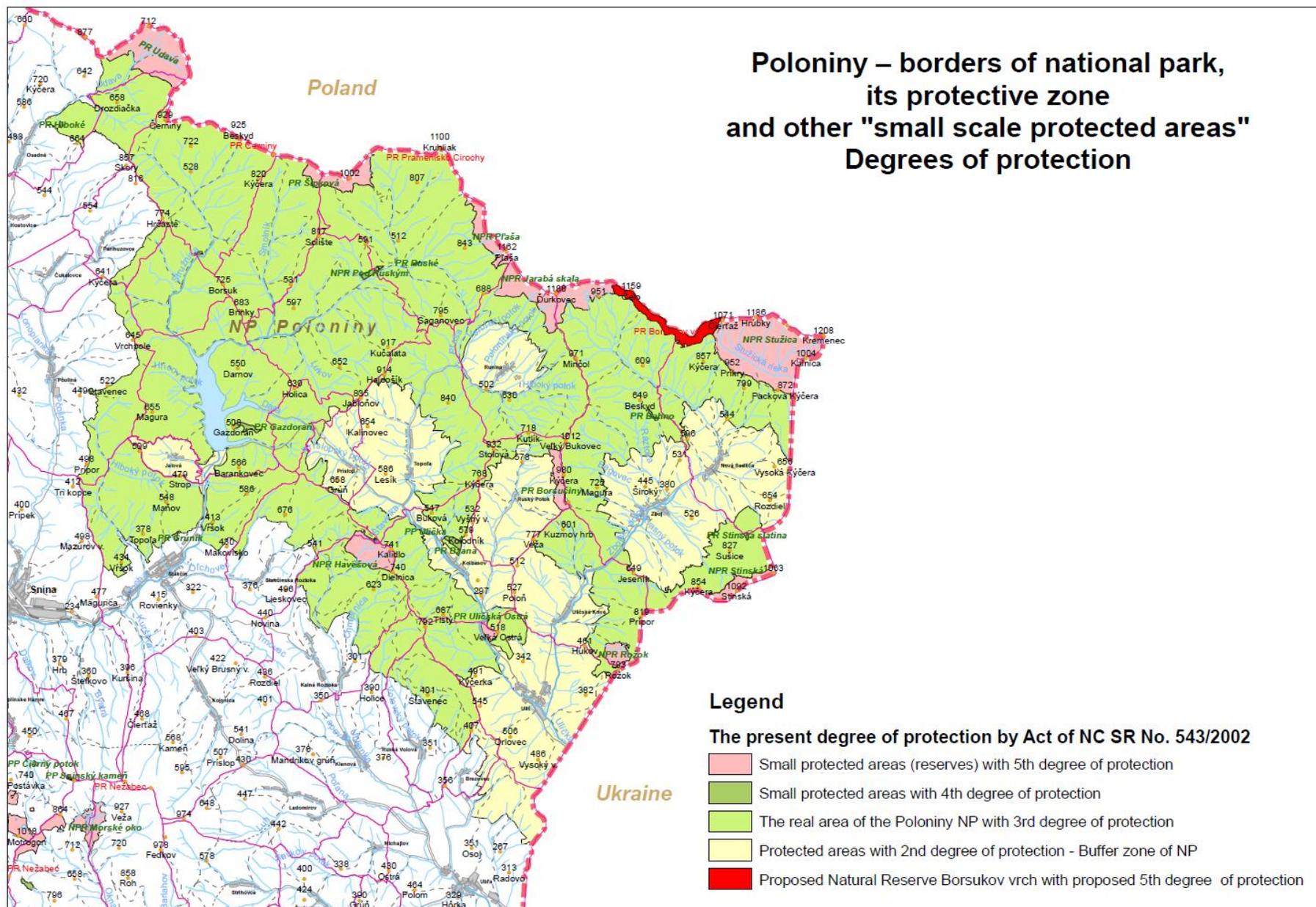
Recommendation No. 1: give the management of the diploma-holding area greater responsibility for forestry and hunting matters and involve it in the corresponding decision-making process;

Recommendation No. 5: strongly consider the designation of a hunting district within the park as a strict cynegetic reserve.;

8. FINAL COMMENTS

- The Slovak Republic considers the European Diploma as prestigious award and high priority;
- Therefore the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic (together with its institutions) undertook in 2014 – 2015 several steps to make a significant progress;
- It is very important to stress that progress is based on the long-term measures (changes of legislation, creating of the financial framework needed to overcome challenges of communication)
- The improved cooperation and discussion with local stakeholders resulted in understanding of the nature values as well as local needs in the region and the willingness to cooperate on securing these values for future.
- To continue in this direction the Slovak Republic communicates with the independent experts – Mr Pierre Galland and Mr Hans Knapp (recommendation from the UNESCO WHC / IUCN) and appreciates joining Mr Robert Brunner as an independent expert of the Council of Europe. Outcomes of their visits were used as guidance for further steps.
- MoE would appreciate giving the opportunity to present the actual situation to the 35th Standing Committee of the Bern Convention and to provide further details to the coming group of experts in February 2016.

Bratislava, 10th November 2015



ANNEXES

Progress report from 9th September for the Bureau meeting

- [1a – Management plan of Poloniny National Park](#)
- [1b – List of stakeholders to discuss the draft of Poloniny NP Management Plan](#)
- [1c – Time frame of meetings with stakeholders](#)
- [1d - Roadmap for the next steps](#)
- [2a – Act No 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection as amended](#)
- [3a – List of forest spatial distribution units](#)
- [3b – Study of calculation of loan in protected areas](#)
- [3c – Amount of resources to lease the area with the proposed or existing 5th degree of protection in the non-state ownership](#)
- [4 – Relevant part of Act no. 274/2009 Coll. on Hunting and on the amendment of certain acts, as amended](#)
- [5a – Final version of the Project of Protection of the proposed Borsukov Vrch Nature Reserve](#)
- [5b - Complementary report and the general and specific explanatory reports Borsukov Vrch Nature Reserve designation](#)
- [5c – Roadmap do designate Borsukov Vrch Nature Reserve](#)
- [6 – Map of NP Poloniny and network of protected areas in the region](#)
- [7 - Large carnivores](#)
- [8 – List of relevant projects, research studies and publication](#)
- [9a – Inter-ministerial agreement between the MoE and the MoA – original in Slovak language](#)
- [9b - Inter-ministerial agreement between the MoE and the MoA – translation into English](#)
- [10a – Trilateral agreement on Eastern Carpathian Biosphere Reserve](#)
- [10b - Joint Management Committee on UNESCO – Ukraine, Germany, Slovakia](#)
- [11 – List of main meetings](#)

Progress report from 10th November for Standing Committee Meeting

- [1 - map Poloniny](#)
- [2a - levels of protection](#)
- [2b - Act on Nature](#)
- [2c - Act on Hunting](#)
- [3a - sector agreement original](#)
- [3b - sector agreement English](#)
- [3c - meetings](#)
- [3d - forestry units](#)
- [3e - trilateral agreement](#)
- [3f - joint declaration](#)
- [4a - road map](#)
- [4b - draft management plan](#)
- [4b - measures Poloniny NP](#)
- [4c - research](#)
- [4d - large carnivores](#)
- [4e - scientific protocol](#)
- [Map Types of forest stands within the Poloniny NP_EN.pdf](#)
- [Map Touristic trails in the Poloniny National Park_EN.pdf](#)
- [Map Subject of the protection in the Poloniny NP_EN.pdf](#)
- [Map Ownership \(use\) of forest stands within the Poloniny NP_EN.pdf](#)
- [Map of land use within the Poloniny NP_EN.pdf](#)

- [Map Main kind of management in the forest stands within the Poloniny N EN.pdf](#)
- [Map Growth stages of forest within the Poloniny NP EN.pdf](#)
- [Map Eco-functional units in the Poloniny NP EN.pdf](#)
- [Map Biking trails in the Poloniny NP EN.pdf](#)
- [Map Areas within the Poloniny National Park eligible for support from the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 EN.pdf](#)