

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024¹ “POLONINY NATIONAL PARK”

State: **The Slovak Republic**
Name of the area: **POLONINY National Park (hereafter the “Poloniny NP”)**

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas:
The Resolution CM/ResDip(2018)11 on the renewal of the European Diploma of the Protected Areas awarded to the Poloniny NP (Slovakia)² /hereafter “Resolution No (2018)11”³

Central authority concerned:

Name: Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (MoE), Directorate of Nature and Biodiversity Protection, Nature Protection and State Administration of Nature and Landscape Protection Department
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Tel: (+ 421 2) 5956 2211;
e-mail: jana.durksova@enviro.gov.sk (contact person);
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Authority responsible for its management:

Name: Poloniny National Park Administration with Headquarters in Stakčín (hereafter the “Poloniny NP Administration”)
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1. Conditions:

Resolution CM/ResDip(2018)11 contains 3 conditions

Condition No. 1: By 31 December 2021, submit to the Secretariat of the Council of Europe a detailed report, covering the implementation of each of the 52 actions in the Poloniny National Park Action Plan (Appendix 6.6.17 of the Poloniny National Park Management Plan for 2017-2026)

Condition completed:

The detailed report on the implementation of the Poloniny National Park Action Plan, adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 7th July 2016 (its Appendix 6.6.17 of the Poloniny National Park Management Plan for 2017-2026), was sent in the separate document to the Bern Convention Secretariat on 18th February 2022. The Group of Experts for European Diploma discussed the issue at the meeting on 23rd- 24th February 2022⁴.

Condition No. 2: By 31 December 2023, initiate the revision of management and action plans for the Poloniny National Park so that they can be approved (by government resolution, if necessary) before they are due to be implemented on 1 January 2028;

Condition completed:

In 2022 the relevant nature protection documentation was finalized to start the official process of both zoning and management plan for the Poloniny National Park (NP). According to the **Act No 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection as amended** (“Act No 543/2002 Coll”) these processes need to be parallel and before submission to the Government of SR there are several steps to be undertaken. After consultation with the MoE, on 15th December 2022 the proposal of zoning of the Poloniny NP as well as the **draft management plan for the Poloniny NP for 2023-2032** were made available by the Prešov District Office⁵. The public announcement was sent to all concerned villages, land associations

¹ reported period 1st September 2023 – 31st August 2024

² adopted at the 1321th meeting of the Committee of Ministers on 4 July 2018, valid by 18 September 2028

³ Originally resolution No (1998)26, resolution No (2003)2, No (2008)3 and resolution No (2012)19, respectively

⁴ With reflection on pp 136-138 of the Document <https://rm.coe.int/de10e-2022-compilation-analysis-2021annual-reports/1680a59691>

⁵ <https://www.minv.sk/?okresne-urady-klientske-centra&urad=52&sekcia=uradna-tabula#popis>: - návrh programu starostlivosti o NP Poloniny a jeho OP - <https://nppoloniny.sopsr.sk/program-starostlivosti/>

and state bodies. During this official public consultation, a large number of comments was received that were subject to negotiation from April to June 2023. These negotiations were led by the Prešov District Office, while the Poloniny NP Administration and MoE actively participated. Responding to the petition of local stakeholders there was a meeting held at the MoE on 10th July 2023 the meeting was held, where it was agreed to organize additional individual meetings with municipalities. The Poloniny NP Administration undertook 11 meetings from 21st July – 26th August 2023. By December 2024 there is a 2-year preliminary protection according to § 50 of the Act No 543/2002 Coll.).

The process of completion of the Poloniny NP management plan is ongoing. All comments are being carefully considered in order to reach a consensus with the local community as much as possible. The Poloniny NP Administration is parallelly working on a draft zonation in a participatory approach with key stakeholders. These processes are time consuming - it is necessary to agree especially with non-state owners and municipalities on conservation measures that affect their land, cadastral areas and municipality budget.

Condition No. 3: Deploy adequate resources, both financial and human, in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome of the actions detailed in the Poloniny National Park Action Plan;

Condition completed:

The total amount of employees in the Poloniny NP Administration increased from 33 (in 2022) to 36 persons (2023), in 2024 the status remained the same 36 employees.

The budget of the Poloniny NP Administration is agreed by the MoE – in 2023 as **1 365 353 EUR** and in 2024 as **1 236 824, 87 EUR**. In the reference period, the income was **more diversified**: 87 344 EUR was received from the **state budget**, the contribution from the **Environmental Fund** amounted to 1 050 000 EUR and the **Poloniny NP Administration as the independent legal body also gained** 99 480, 87 EUR. On the basis of the contract, the Poloniny NP Administration was granted a support in the form of a subsidy from the Environmental Fund under the **Green Education Fund** in the amount of 7,999.00 EUR. The implementation of the project activities from this subsidy was carried out through the informal education of children and young people in order to highlight the necessity of preserving biodiversity in the landscape, in a playful, informal way to convince them of the importance of nature conservation, to strengthen their relationship to nature and to the Poloniny NP.

In addition, it is also necessary to add information that the Poloniny NP Administration also received funds through EU financial mechanisms. Within the framework of the **Operational Programme – Quality of Environment (OPQE)** by implementing 1 own project (finished in 2023) and participating in 2 other projects, the NP Administration received 140 310,97 EUR. Through the **Integrated Regional Operational Programme** there were implemented 3 projects (finished in 2023) for which the Poloniny NP Administration received 79 810,30 EUR. Altogether, thanks to the projects the Poloniny NP Administration received in 2024 totally **220 121,27 EUR**, which flowed into the account of the Poloniny NP Administration in the form of refunds.

Moreover, within the **Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan** in the frame of the “NextGenerationEU” – recovery plan for Europe, under its Component 5 "Adaptation to Climate Change" project in the amount of **130,724.30 EUR** has been realised in the Poloniny NP in the frame of the project call for proposals aimed on supporting development projects for the transformation of the regions of the Muránska Planina National Park and Poloniny National Park. From these funds, the restoration of information panels for visitors in the National Park in the form of a traditional architectural element, the so-called „oboroh“, and the reconstruction of a research station - are currently being implemented in the Poloniny NP area. After the reconstruction, the building will be used to ensure the research and monitoring of the Poloniny NP area. It will also provide facilities for new planned jobs - scientific researcher and tourist guide. The project activities will be completed in March 2026. Advance payments and reimbursements will be administered during 2025.

The state continues, via decisions of the district offices (environmental departments) to pay **compensations from the state budget⁶** with respect to (i) **financial compensations for restriction of the common land use** and (ii) **to the compensation for damages** caused by the selected protected animal species. In the reported period there were paid (i) **920,879.86 EUR** and (ii) **3,648.40 EUR**.

2. Recommendations

Resolution CM/ResDip(2018)11 contains 8 recommendations

Recommendation No. 1: By 2020, develop a prioritised plan for all land in State ownership to be reclassified as levels 3, 4 or 5; and demonstrate significant progress in reclassifying the level-3 forest as either level 4 (with exploitation by a silvicultural selection methodology) or as level 5 (no exploitation)

⁶ § 61 and §§ 97-102 of the Act No 543/200 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection as amended

Recommendation completed:

In the previous annual report, an increase of number and of coverage of protected areas with stricter level of protection within the Poloniny NP was highlighted (in September 2020 - **21 protected areas** with total area 2 432,78 ha, while in September 2021 **23 protected areas with total area of 3 425 ha, e.g. increase to is from 8.16 to 11.49 %** of the NP territory). These are at the 4th and 5th levels of protection and since April 2022 their part in the state hands (including parts of involved parcellas) were transferred to the Administration of the Poloniny NP.

As mentioned above (Condition No. 2), the Poloniny NP Administration continues process of a Poloniny NP zoning, that is relevant for reclassifying of the forest land in level 3 either to level 4 (Zone B) or level 5 (Zone A with non-intervention regime). The area of zones A, B and C, mentioned in the 2023 Annual Report is subject to ongoing negotiations. In line with the zoning proposed and publicly available in December 2022, **zones A and B should be mainly forests in the state ownership**, only very small percentage is covered by another land (mostly small meadows).

Recommendation No. 2: Encourage church, association and private landowners to reclassify their land as level 3 or 4, utilising a single-tree or group-selection silvicultural system wherever appropriate;

Recommendation in progress:

As mentioned in the previous reports **in national parks there is legal obligation to apply only close to nature forestry⁷** - e.g. special purpose silvicultural system or selection system or shelterwood system of small felling areas, where the area of one felling plot must not exceed 0,2 ha; in terrain with slopes more than 40 %, in inaccessible terrain and on poor load bearing soil it must not exceed 1,5 ha with felling plot not wider than mean height of logged forest stand. The area of the Poloniny NP belongs to **7 forest management plan units**. The new forestry management plan has to be approved by the regional government authority and comply with the Poloniny NP management plan as according to the national law⁸ (there is an obligation to respect the Poloniny NP Management plan in decisions of state bodies including decision on the forestry management plans).

In 2024 the process of renewal of the forest management plan for the Topoľa, Ulič and Zboj Forest Management Units for decade 2024-2033 was finalized. In this process the Poloniny NP Administration applied the same requirements as for the Starina and Nižná Jablonka Forest Management Units (specified in the previous reports), which have been accepted. Forest management plans are in the approval process.

Recommendation No. 3: Maintain the management of meadows outside the World Heritage Site, preferably by summer grazing by livestock or alternatively by cutting and removing the cut material from the site;

Recommendation in progress:

Maintaining of meadows by cattle grazing or maintaining the traditional livestock breeds are involved into the Poloniny NP Action Plan, implemented in the same extent as in the previous period – mainly within the **project "Care for the territory in the administration of the Poloniny National Park"**, which was approved and implemented within the OPQE (the sum which the NP Administration obtained was 525 855,68 EUR). As a part of this project, management (mowing or felling of invasive shrubs and trees) was carried out on meadows with a total area of **52, 7 ha**. In the frame of this project the **Poloniny NP Administration also bought a agricultural tractor with trailer and two adapters for mowing and tedding of hay**. Thanks to this purchase, the NP Administration is able to continue in meadow management in the present and future, the work is carried out with its own resources to the maximum extent, what should be cheaper, and thus it is possible to realize meadow management on a larger area. In the previous period, mowing and felling of shrubs was carried out by contractors.

Besides mowing of meadows by tractor, the **mowing of fens** as well as **cutting of mesophilic and humid meadows** was realised by manual mechanization. Own personal capacities and finances of the Poloniny NP Administration were used.

At the large scale maintaining of grassland was supported in the frame of **Strategic Plan of Common Agricultural Policy of Slovak Republic 2023 – 2027**, the precise data (coverage) are not available. This programme is co-financed from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

Recommendation No. 4: Liaise with appropriate stakeholders, especially those involved with sustainable tourism, to prepare an inventory of objects of cultural significance within the national park and support a prioritised programme of restoration of these culturally significant objects;

Recommendation in progress:

⁷ In accordance to § 18.4 of Act. No 326/2005 Coll. on Forests as amended

⁸ § 54. 5 of the Act No 543/200 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection as amended

The inventory of 51 significant cultural sites/objects in the area of the Poloniny NP is available in the chapter 2.2.9 “Cultural Heritage and Religious Activities” of the Poloniny NP Management Plan. The **cooperation exists with the “Club of the Military History Beskydy”** which restored several military cemeteries in the area of the Poloniny NP as well as with a non-profit organization **“Carpathian wooden churches”** oriented at support of regional wooden churches maintenance. This cooperation continued also in the reported period.

The Poloniny NP is a project partner in the **EU Programme Interreg Central Europe 2021–2027 “Multi-dimensional and cross-territorial governance model for activation of the WW1 heritage to foster sustainable socio-economic development of remote territories of Central Europe (acronym: GOV4PeACE)”**. The duration of the project is 30 months (May 2024 – October 2026). The overall project budget is 1,699,120.24 EUR, the budget of the Poloniny NP in the project is 181,439.65 EUR. The GOV4PeACE project aims to overcome complex territorial and sectoral barriers in World War I (WW1) heritage governance which hinder its socio-economic activation for integrated development of the remote Central Europe territories where major WW1 frontlines took place and its heritage remains untapped. Central Europe has a vast cultural heritage related to WW1 with a significant potential to accelerate socio-economic development in rural areas. However, the common management of this heritage remains challenging as it is dispersed across various countries and there is a lack a cohesive strategy for preservation and utilisation. The GOV4PeACE project establishes a joint vision for managing the war-related cultural heritage across borders and sectors. The project tests innovative approaches to museum concepts, cross-border heritage routes, and intersectoral cooperation to make better use of the past heritage for future development. More information about the project can be found on the websites: <https://www.nppoloniny.sk/gov4peace-multidimenzionalny-a-medziteritorialny-model-riadenia-na-aktivaciu-dedicstva-prvej-svetovej-vojny-na-podporu-trvalo-udrzatelneho-socialno-ekonomického-rozvoja-vzdialenych-uzemi-strednej-eu/> and <https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/gov4peace/>.

These activities are eligible from the **Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan, too**. Within the Call for Applicants of Development Projects for the Transformation of the Poloniny National Park (Component 5 Adaptation to Climate Change), the project of the Municipality of Stakčín for the reconstruction of the building of the rock manor from the second half of the 19th century into the Museum of the Ruthenian Culture was also supported with the budget of 1,828,266.89 EUR. The manor house in Stakčín consists of two parts. The older Baroque part dates back to the end of the 18th century. The newer part dates from the second half of the 19th century and it was built by Baron Fröhling. The whole reconstruction consists in the fact that after inappropriate interventions, when the building was adapted for the needs of the cinema, the manor house will return to the 19th century in its external appearance.⁹

Recommendation No. 5: Develop effective research and monitoring programmes which provide data helpful to the management of the national park’s resources;

Recommendation in progress:

Many ongoing research activities are part of the research and monitoring programmes mentioned in the Poloniny NP Management plan or its Action Plan. They are **either carried out by the staff of the Poloniny NP Administration** (monitoring of beaver, otter, amphibians, etc.) **or by external researchers** (who finance their activities by themselves). During the reported period the **following research and monitoring activities** in the Poloniny NP were undertaken:

- Research projects and monitoring of non-native fish species (fish and lamprey research) and their impact on communities of native and protected Cyclostomata and fish species (University of Prešov)
- Research on blood parasites (University of Žilina)
 - Determination and prevalence of ectoparasites (feather mites, bird lice - *Mallophaga*) and blood parasites from genus *Haemoorotus*, *Leucocvtozoon*, *Trvoanosoma* on vectors and host species *Prunella modularis* and also on another species of order Passeriformes living in subalpine zone.
 - Fyziological adaptation of midget soil mammals (*Chionomys nivalis*, *Myodes olareolus*, *Microtus* sp., *Apodemus* sp.) to the mountainous environment, research of parasites and ekotoxicological research of fauna.
 - Variability of ventral maculation and populational genetics of yellow-bellied toad (*Bombina variegata*)
- Research “Diversity and distribution of botanical species and associations in changing environment conditions (Institute of Landscape Ecology, The Slovak Academy of Science)
- Research of ticks (The University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice)
- Research of beetles and spiders (Institute of Landscape Ecology, Slovak Academy of Sciences)
- Research of dragonflies (*Odonata*) – from 13th to 16th June 2024 - Slovak Dragonfly Meeting took place in the Poloniny NP with the support of Slovak Zoological Society, Slovak Academy of Sciences
- Spatial components of taxonomic, functional and phylogenetic diversity of orthopteroid insects in relation to ecological and evolutionary factors (Institute of Forest Ecology, Slovak Academy of Sciences)

⁹ <https://www.pamiatkynaslovensku.sk/stakcin>

- Research on soil and debris invertebrates, mainly gastropods (*Gastropoda*) and arthropods: arachnids (*Arachnida*), crustaceans (*Crustacea*), polychaetes (*Myriapoda*), several groups of soil insects (*Hexapoda*), in particular tailhoppers (*Collembola*), fork beetles (*Diplura*), ants (*Formicoidea*) and beetles (*Coleoptera*) (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice)
- Long-term Ecosystem Research carried out within LTER-Europe platform¹⁰
- Monitoring aimed on species of Community interest
- Monitoring of seminatural meadows species composition under the impact of different ways of management on permanent plots in the Poloniny NP
- Long-term Air Quality Monitoring in the frame of The European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (EMEP) – station located in Starina
- Evaluation of bear abundance in the Poloniny NP based on the non-invasive collecting of fur samples.
- Research of significant tectonic dislocations of the Earth's crust (Institute of Earth Sciences, Slovak Academy of Sciences)
- Migration survey of amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals for the construction of I/74 Snina - Kolonica, road relocation, section Snina - Stakčín. The result was the creation of a map of the expected migration routes of animals, including potential habitats of amphibians and the proposal of measures to prevent migration barriers in the form of road construction.
- Year-round systematic (opportunistic and deterministic) monitoring of the lynx during the years 2024 - 2025 in the territory of the Poloniny National Park in the framework of Interreg Central Europe project „Supporting the coexistence and conservation of Carpathian Large Carnivores (acronym: LECA)“.

In the reported period the **following new scientific articles** were published:

- Langraf, Vladimír & Gajdoš, Peter & Purgat, Pavol & Štofík, Jozef & Šestáková, Anna & Petrovičová, Kornélia. (2024). Epigeic spider and ground beetles (Carabid) communities of semi-natural and natural habitats in agricultural landscape in Slovakia. *Folia Oecologica*. 51. 221-237. 10.2478/foecol-2024-0021. (see at <http://dx.doi.org/10.2478/foecol-2024-0021>)
- Papp, Beata & Sirka, Pavel. (2023). Contributions to the bryophyte flora of the Poloniny National Park, Eastern Slovakia. *Studia botanica hungarica*. 54. 125-142. 10.17110/StudBot.2023.54.2.125. (see at <https://doi.org/10.17110/StudBot.2023.54.2.125>)
- Baráčková, Katarína. (2024). Lokálny aktivizmus v regióne Poloniny: zachovanie alebo obnova „tradičného“?. *Slovenský národopis / Slovak Ethnology*. 72. 59-80. 10.31577/SN.2024.1.04. (see at <https://doi.org/10.31577/SN.2024.1.04>)
- Zawilińska, Bernadetta & Nestorová Dická, Janetta & Matei, Elena & Švajda, Juraj & Lapczynski, Mariusz & Majewski, Karol & Megyeri, Balázs & Calin, Alexandru & Gessert, Alena. (2023). Applying Q-methodology to investigate the perception of the social and economic role of the national park by local stakeholders. Cases of national parks in the Carpathians. *Journal for Nature Conservation*. 75. 126459. 10.1016/j.jnc.2023.126459. (see at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2023.126459>)
- Kubala, Jakub & Guimarães, Nuno & Cherepanyn, Roman & T., Didirka & L., Diószegi-Jelinek & P., Dregubiak & Duľa, Martin & Gombkötő, Péter & Koval, Nelya & Kropil, Rudolf & Kutal, Miroslav & R., Rzepkowski & Sütő, David & A., Szabó & Tám, Branislav & R., Uhrinová & Yamelynets, Taras & Zwijacz-Kozica, Tomasz. (2023). Status report on existing large carnivore population data and information in pilot areas. Setting the scene in large carnivore conservation and management in the Carpathians. 10.13140/RG.2.2.25081.07526. (see at <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25081.07526>)

Recommendation No. 6: Devise and implement with local stakeholders a tourism development strategy and a prioritised action plan so that the infrastructure facilities can be developed for the benefit of both the national park and the economic well-being of the people who live in the area;

Recommendation in progress:

Additional activities related to tourism development are being carried out by local NGOs first as a part of the project “**Concept of development of the Snina district**” which was elaborated by Aevis Foundation in 2018. This NGO gave to register a trademark “**Poloniny neskutočne skutočné**” (“**Poloniny unreally real**”) aimed to encourage local inhabitants to perform and provide any services for tourists like accommodation and related services, production and selling of local products (e. g. souvenirs), gastronomic services, and so on. This NGO offers to these providers of services (if they fulfil set conditions/rules and criteria for quality) they can promote their services using a trademark “Poloniny neskutočne skutočné” also webpage <https://regionpoloniny.sk/> where it is possible to find more information. The Poloniny

¹⁰ <http://www.lter-europe.net/projects/eLTER>

NP is a member of the expert commission for the award of the “*Poloniny unreally real*” brand certificate. The mission of the Poloniny brand system is to contribute to the sustainable development of the region by marketing the potential of the territory and its product (attractions, services and quality regional products), including the promotion of their sales and the linking of production systems in the region. The system networks entities in the territory of the Snina District that directly or indirectly contribute to the development of the unique potential of the Poloniny destination by contributing to the development of natural, cultural and rural tourism. The system uses the Poloniny brand as its main tool. The brand presents the Poloniny destination, its values, attractions and the destination product. At the same time, it enables the consumer (including the destination visitor) to identify regional products and distinguish them from other goods.

Second, very similar activities are developed by NGO “**Take naše**” (“**So ours**”). Together in cooperation with the Poloniny NP Administration and with the Prešov Self-Governing Region they organized one event - Weekend of beautiful experiences called “**Objavte Poloniny**” (“**Discover Poloniny**”) in our area. They also encouraged local producers and providers of services. This NGO promoted their products by web page. During that weekend “Objavte Poloniny” tourists could attend on many partial events like e. g. school of local dishes cooking, manufacture of wicker baskets, a course in forage and using of healing herbs, and many others. This event was very successful and interest of tourists was rather high. More information you can find on webpage <https://www.objavtepoloniny.sk/>. This NGO repeated the same event also this year. During the weekend from 9th till 11st August 2024 tourists could choose to take a part on 24 activities. The full list of activities you can find on web <https://www.objavtepoloniny.sk/preskumaj-vsetky-zazitky/>.

As mentioned in the previous reports, the Prešov Self-Governing Region (PSGR) was involved as a **pilot region from Slovakia into the “Catching-up Regions Initiative”** It is a co-operative programme of the EU and the World Bank for supporting of regions in the EU with lower level of development. The goal of this initiative in the PSGR is to support sufficient development and creation of working positions through the Action Plan for Development and Employment PSGR. Within this initiative the experts of the World Bank elaborated a study report “**Unlocking the Endogenous Tourism Potential of Poloniny National Park and the Snina District**” on which cooperated also the Poloniny NP Administration. This study analyses current situation in tourism development and it proposes measurements to stimulate tourism in this region. See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/slovakia-catching-up-regions>. In the referred period the 14.35 km long **cyclo-trail Starina - former Village of Ruské** was completed. The newly opened special-purpose road (part of the Zubor route) runs alongside the Starina water reservoir and passes up to the former Village of Ruské. Afterwards it connects the cycle route built by the state forests to the Polish side to Ruské Sedlo. More than 14 km long cycle route, worth 7.4 million EUR, is part of the planned Poloniny Trail cycle route, which is to cover a total of 96 km with connections to the Polish and Ukrainian sides. The Prešov Self-Governing Region (PSGR) gave 1.7 million EUR for the completed section, the remaining 5.7 million EUR was provided by Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization SR through the Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP Programme). Thanks to the construction of these sections of trails and their commissioning, the increasing number of cyclists in the area is registered and the increasing promotion of the area itself, as well. This project is bringing real results, bicycle counters have been installed in the Poloniny NP. The sensor placed in the section Starina - former Village Ruské confirmed a clear year-on-year increase in the number of bicycles. For example, while in 2023 there were 1,153 cyclists, in the first half of the current year there were already 5,321 cyclists on the upgraded cycle paths, and by the beginning of August 2024 there were even 8,363 cyclists, which is 7 times more.

PSGR participated in the call of the Ministry of Economy of SR aimed at supporting accommodation facilities, thanks to which **at least 300 accommodation beds** were created in the district of Snina, of which more than 140 are directly located in the Poloniny NP.

In addition to the actual construction of cycle paths and the support of accommodation facilities, **over 40 jobs** have also been created in the district, as well as a number of associated activities, such as e-bike rentals and small wellness services directly at the accommodation facilities. The municipalities in the Snina district have also embarked on their own investment projects. These include plans to revitalise parks, sports grounds and recreation areas. It is worth mentioning, for example, the planned construction of an ecomuseum in the Villages of Nová Sedlica and Topola or a sports and recreation zone in the Village of Ulič. In the Village of Zboj, the public can already visit a new observation tower and school museum, and in the Village of Runina, they can use new interactive kiosks. The Poloniny NP itself has also launched activities. An example is the cooperation with the Bieszczady National Park on the Interreg PL – Sk project “Natural and cultural treasures of the Eastern Carpathians - know, love and protect!”, within the framework of which the edition of a **map with an informative guide in three languages** and will be made a Polish-Slovak PWA application in the form of a field game for the Bieszczady NP and Poloniny NP called The Explorer of the Eastern Carpathian Mountains for tourists. Thanks to the above-mentioned activities and initiatives, the naturally and culturally rich region of Snina with the Poloniny NP has a significant potential to become an important destination for nature and slow-tourism.

The Poloniny NP belongs to the region called **Upper Zemplín**. In the reported period a deeper cooperation continued with The Regional Tourism Organization Upper Zemplín and Upper Šariš (neighbouring region). They are regional organizations based by local municipalities (towns, villages) and other subjects (e.g. some hotels) interested in tourism aimed at the support and promotion of tourism in this region and on creation of better conditions for the

development of tourism in the territory with the aim of sustainable development of tourism. The Poloniny NP participated in some events arranged by this organization.

It is necessary to emphasize the importance of local projects financed from the **Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan**. Most of proposed projects were oriented to increase an attractiveness of this region for tourists.

The NP Poloniny Administration cooperated on and organised many **activities in the field of environmental education**. The list of those events is in the Annex to this report.

Recommendation No. 7: Maintain co-operation with the other nations which incorporate parts of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe World Heritage Site, as well as with Bieszczady National Park in Poland, the East Carpathian Biosphere Reserve and the two neighbouring Landscape Protected Areas – Východné Karpaty and Vihorlat;

Recommendation in progress:

The Poloniny NP Administration has good **contacts with neighbouring protected areas** in Slovakia (**Vihorlat Protected Landscape Area (PLA) and also with Východné Karpaty PLA**). There is an excellent cooperation in the frame of the **UNESCO WH Property**.

In 2024 Slovakia established a **national steering group** which follows the structure of the Integrated Site Management System, in which the Poloniny NP is a member, together with the Administration of the Vihorlat Landscape Protected Area. This year Slovakia as the presidency country was honoured to host **Joint Committee Meeting for the World Heritage Property**. The Poloniny NP Administration participated in preparation and organisation of Joint Management Committee meeting which took place **from 17th to 18th September 2024 in Humenné**. The event was attended by representatives of the Bieszczady NP, too.

The Poloniny NP Administration has also contacts with **foreign partners**, for instance a long term cooperation with partners within the **East Carpathians Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Slovakia/Poland/Ukraine)**. The **trilateral agreement** concluded on 15th November 2013 is being implemented. The Steering Council of this biosphere reserve consists of administrations of the relevant national parks and protected landscape areas from Slovakia, Poland and Ukraine. Its role is to jointly manage and coordinate cross-border activities. The representatives of the NP Administration took part in a conference organized by Polish partners on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Bieszczady NP (29th to 30th September 2024). There were organized also **several mutual bilateral meetings** with Polish or Ukrainian colleagues aimed at future cooperation and the preparation of new projects which should be implemented in the following years.

Recommendation No. 8: Continue the dialogue with local communities in order to build confidence and foster involvement in the diploma-holding area.

Recommendation in progress:

A dialogue between the Poloniny NP Administration and local communities **runs permanently**. There is a good cooperation with some **local communities**, for example with municipalities **and local schools**. As mentioned under recommendation No. 6 we cooperated also with PSGR in the frame of **“Catching-Up Regions Initiative”** during the reported period.

During the reported period several meetings with stakeholders were organized regarding mainly the proposed zoning.

The amendment of Act No. 543/2002 Coll. also anchored in our legislation that administrations of all national parks in Slovakia have an council (committee, panel, board) of national park, which should serve as advisory, consultative or expert body. The **Council of the Poloniny National Park was established** in 2022 – it had 15 members at that time. The Council consists of represents of regional municipalities, NGOs, land owners, scientific institutions, directors of neighbouring national parks in Poland and Ukraine and other stakeholders (tourism associations). This Council will be one of the tools which should improve relations between the Poloniny NP Administration and local communities. The number of council members has been increased to 19 in 2023 and to the current **22 in 2024**. The Council had two meetings in the reported period. The minutes (only in Slovak language) of those meetings are displayed on websites: <https://www.nppoloniny.sk/4-zasadnutie-rady-np/> and <https://www.nppoloniny.sk/5-zasadnutie-rady-np/>.

3. Site Management:

According to the amendment of the Act No 543/2002 Coll, valid since January 2020, sites of international importance were defined. The list and fundamental data on their list (including the European Diploma holders) is available at the <https://www.minzp.sk/ochrana-prirody/medzinarodne-dohovory/uzemia-medzinarodneho-vyznamu/>. Other changes are mentioned under individual conditions and recommendations.

4. Boundaries:

No change of the NP boundaries.

5. Other information:

Visibility of the newly established Poloniny NP Administration as a legal entity has been improved – see the official web site <https://www.nppoloniny.sk/> as well as the Facebook profile <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny>. Information from the Facebook profile are quite often used by the media as a source of information on activities realized by the Poloniny NP Administration.

The SME daily newspaper frequently covers topics related to the Poloniny NP through its regional „The Daily Korzár Horný Zemplín newspaper“ <https://hornyzemplin.korzar.sme.sk/search?q=Poloniny&period=all&order=date>.

The European Diploma award and also logo of the European Diploma are promoted in all the relevant occasions.

December 2024

Prepared by the Administration of the Poloniny National Park (Zuzana Bartušová) with additional information provided by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (Michaela Mrázová) and the Directorate for Nature and Biodiversity Protection of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (Jana Durkošová)

Annex: overview of the environmental awareness activities

September 2023:

- The Poloniny NP Administration took part in the programme on the occasion of St. Hubert's Day in the courtyard of the Snina manor house on 10.9.2023. The children were involved in playful educational activities and the mascot, the Wolf Snuffle, was also part of the programme. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/697308032432541>
- The Poloniny NP Administration took part in a long-distance stage hike along the ridge of the Poloniny Carpathians, organised by the Slovak Tourist Club TK LOKO Humenné on 14-17 September 2023. Gallery available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/701237205372957>
- The second year of the event "UNES with UNESCO" - experiential tourism for the public. The event was attended by 30 people. The programme included a guided tour in the Udava forest, tasting of local cheese and a visit to the crypt of soldiers from World War I in Osadné. The event was organized by the Regional Tourism Organization Horný Zemplín in cooperation with the Aevis Foundation and the Poloniny National Park Administration on 15 September 2023. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/701560228673988>

October 2023:

- Eco-educational programme "The colourful world of Poloniny" for pupils of the Kukučín kindergarten in Snina organized on 18.10.2023. 80 people participated in total. Gallery available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/722130983283579>
- The event "Povestné Poloniny" - learning about the stories related to the Poloniny NP and the cultural, historical and natural peculiarities of the area (Grandfather Večerniček's house in Nová Sedlica, the School Museum in Zboj, the wooden church in Uličskom Krivo, Ignatius Čokina's skit in Uličské Krivé, the locality of the Three Wells in Runina, the Runina Waterfall). The event was intended for the general public and was organized by the Regional Tourism Organization Horný Zemplín in cooperation with the Aevis Foundation and the Poloniny National Park Administration on 29.10.2023. 38 people participated in the event in total. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/724675759695768>

November 2023:

- Meeting of the Slovak Committee of the International Programme "Man and the Biosphere". Part of the program was also an excursion on 3.11.2023 with expert commentary on the hiking trail to Gazdoran. with stops at the geological site of Dara, the Orthodox cross on the route of the hiking trail, and the Beskydy Pantheon. The excursion was attended by 13 people. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/726984836131527>
- Eco-educational programme "Get to know Poloniny" for pupils of the Primary School in Stakčín organized on 24.11.2023. 22 persons participated in total. Gallery available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/738958281600849>
- Eco-educational programme "The World of Animals in Winter" for pupils of Topolovka Primary School with kindergarten organized on 30.11.2023. 35 persons participated in the programme. Gallery available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/749039520592725>

December 2023:

- Voting "Looking for the Seven Wonders of Poloniny" - Seven most beautiful and interesting places, sites, features in the territory of the Poloniny National Park. The voting and the competition was held on the social network Facebook and was announced by the Administration of the Poloniny National Park. The voters could win interesting prizes by drawing lots. The voting was held from 4.12.2023 to 31.12.2023. More information and gallery can be found at: <https://www.nppoloniny.sk/hladame-sedem-divov-polonin-hlasovanie/> and <https://www.nppoloniny.sk/hladame-sedem-divov-polonin-vysledky-hlasovania/>
- The event "Poloniny under the tree" is intended for the general public. The programme was co-organised by the Poloniny National Park Administration. Our mascot Snout the Wolf was also part of the event. The event was organized on 10.12.2023 at the Poloniny Tourist Information Centre at Snina Ponds. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=290368580645848>

January 2024:

- Eco-educational programme "Tracking forest animals" for pupils of the Church United School in Snina organized on 24.1.2024. 20 people participated in total.

February 2024:

- The Poloniny NP administration celebrated the "World Wetlands Day" together with the pupils of the Church School in Snina, who also attended an eco-educational programme. A total of 20 people participated on 2.2.2024. Gallery available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/783383020491708>

March 2024:

- The Poloniny NP administration celebrated the "World Water Day" on 22.3.2024 together with the pupils of the Comenius Primary School in Snina and the pupils of the Primary School with kindergarten in Dlh nad Cirochou. The pupils also attended an eco-educational programme "Water". A total of 80 people took part. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/814048964091780>

April 2024:

- On 11.4.2024, the Poloniny NP Administration organized an excursion with expert commentary, eco-educational activities related to waste collection in PR Grúnik. The excursion was attended by a total of 25 people from the primary school in Stakčín. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/827592476070762>
- Eco-educational programme "Fauna of Poloniny" for kindergarteners from the Primary School Udavské organized on 16.4.2024. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/830972939066049>
- The Poloniny National Park Administration in cooperation with the Leisure Time Centre in Snina organized the 17th competition entitled "Poloniny National Park in 101 questions and answers". On 19.4.2024, pupils of 5th and 6th grades from nine elementary schools from the Snina district met in the area of the Information Centre Nová Sedlica to test their knowledge of nature, history and culture of the region below Poloniny. The gallery is available at: <https://www.nppoloniny.sk/vedomostna-sutaz-np-poloniny-v-101-otazkach-a-odpovediach-pozna-svojich-vitazov/> and <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/834050215424988>
- On 23.4.2024, the Poloniny NP Administration also participated in the Earth Day. The event for the youngest children was organized in the courtyard of the Manor House in Snina in cooperation with the Municipal Cultural and Education Centre in Snina, attended by about 200 children from kindergartens from Snina and the surrounding area. The children were involved in educational activities (e.g. making and recognizing footprints in the sand, recognizing forest animals and their sounds). The attraction of the event was the wolf mascot Nufacek living in the Poloniny Mountains. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/sninakastiel/posts/954021960059184>
- The Poloniny NP Administration took part in the Earth Day in the cinema hall of the Snina House of Culture - a cultural and educational programme in cooperation with the Municipal Cultural and Educational Centre in Snina and the ZUŠ in Snina on 25-26 April 2024. Gallery available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/836725075157502>

May 2024:

- Educational programme and creative workshops "Sensational world of storks" in the premises of the Small Manor in Snina on 16-17 May 2024. It was attended by pupils from primary schools of the Snina district, from the Budovateľská Primary School, the Studentská Primary School, the P.O.Hviezdoslava Primary School and the Combined Boarding School in Snina. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/854694026693940> and <https://www.nppoloniny.sk/senzacny-svet-bocianov/>
- Filming of a series for an environmental magazine called "At the Green Address" in the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site of the Havešová National Nature Reserve. The series was broadcast on 18.5.2024. The series is available at: <https://www.rtv.slovakia.sk/televizia/archiv/20348/466358#49>
- Poloniny NP Administration celebrated the "International Day of Biodiversity" with kindergarten children from Stakčín Kindergarten. The eco-educational program was implemented in the aréal of Stakčín Kindergarten on 22.5.2024 and 40 people participated. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/862585779238098>

June 2024:

- On 1.6.2024, the Poloniny NP Administration participated in the Weekend of Open Parks and Gardens. The event for children was organized in the courtyard of the Manor House by the Municipal Cultural and Educational Centre in Snina and the programme also included eco-educational activities for children, which were implemented by the Poloniny NP Administration. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/863276759169000>
- The eco-educational programme "Beautiful Wings of Nature" was held on 11 June 2024 by pupils from the Železiarska Primary School in Košice in the recreational and educational complex Dvere do Poloniny in Ulič. They learned about the way of life of dragonflies. A total of 35 people took part in it. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/882684153894927>
- The excursion and educational programme in the Poloniny NP was attended by pupils from the Staničná Primary School in Košice. A total of 30 people took part in the excursion on 11.6.2024.
- Educational program in Poloniny and on the Educational Trail Under the Dark Sky was attended on 12.6.2024 by pupils of Pugačevova Primary School in Humenne. The program included an excursion to the lookout over the Starina water reservoir, interesting places in the village of Ulič and Nová Sedlica. In total, 45 people took part in the programme. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/869655625197780>
- Presentation of the Poloniny National Park at the event called "Eco Days" in the Vihorlat Museum in Humenne. On 13.6.2024 30 people attended the presentation. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/muzeumhumenne/posts/1020197583447471>
- Excursion to Jaraba Rock. It was attended by the pupils of Stakčín Primary School on 18.6.2024. 38 people took part in the excursion. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/876453261184683>
- The Poloniny NP Administration took part in the event "Swap blue Santorini for green Poloniny" - cycling on the territory of the Poloniny NP. The event was organized by the Regional Tourism Organization Horný Zemplín in cooperation with the Aevis Foundation and the Poloniny NP Administration on 23.6.2024. A total of 35 people took part in it. Gallery available at: <https://www.facebook.com/hornyzemplin/posts/767684812242920> and <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/876364201193589>

July 2024:

- Excursion with accompanying programme for participants of the summer camp organised by the Leisure Time Centre in Snina on 2.7.2024. 15 people participated in total. The gallery is available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/887860776710598>

- Collaboration on "Legendarium" - a summer education project for children, see <https://www.legendarium.info/>.
- Guided tour to Hodošik - the highest World War I cemetery in Slovakia. It was attended by 40 people on 24.7.2024.

August 2024:

- Cooperation on "Discover Poloniny" - an experiential festival for the general public organized 9.-11.8.2024. The gallery is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny/posts/910465697783439> and <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=945633317318443>