

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2022<sup>1</sup>**  
**“POLONINY NATIONAL PARK”**

State: **The Slovak Republic**

Name of the area: **National Park POLONINY (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)<sup>2</sup> /hereafter “Resolution No (2018)11”<sup>3</sup>**

**Central authority concerned:**

Name: Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic

Department for Nature Protection

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**Authority responsible for its management:**

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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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> February 2022. The Group of Experts for European Diploma discussed the issue at the meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup>- 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022<sup>4</sup>.

Within this condition it is important to mention **reform of national parks in Slovakia** based on changed legal framework (**amendment of the Act No 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landcape Protection (“Act No 543/2002 Coll”) in force since 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022. As from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, the Administration of the Poloniny NP (as well as other 8 national parks in Slovakia) was separated from the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic and became the standalone legal entity directly under the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (MoE). At the same time all state land plots/parcels overlapping with protected areas in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> levels, which to the date were managed by state forest enterprises, were**

<sup>1</sup> reported period 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 – 31<sup>th</sup> August 2022

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

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

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

**transferred under the management of Administration of the Poloniny NP** – concretely 8,378 hectares (cca 28 % of the whole area of the Poloniny NP territory).

In 2023, under condition of zoning of the NP, all the remaining state land will be transferred from the state forest enterprises to the Administration of the Poloniny NP. **The draft zoning along with the draft of new management plan 2023-2032 for the Poloniny NP was elaborated**, to be further discussed with the MoE and made available for the public consultation by the end of 2022. Details would be provided in the next annual report.

***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 in progress:** In addition to the information on the draft Management Plan for the Poloniny National Park 2023 – 2032, the Administration of the Poloniny NP within reported period prepared the **Integrated Management Plan for the Slovak part of the “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” World Heritage Property** (hereafter the “UNESCO Property”). This work was finished in the last quarter of 2021 and will be revised/streamlined with the NP management plan, thus taking into consideration the zoning.

Management plans for NP are approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic. The legal procedures of course require due negotiations with owners/users of land, municipalities as well as with sectors and other stakeholders.

***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:** As mentioned above, after parliamentary elections in March 2020 the new government set goal to reform national parks - to create independent legal body for each NP under jurisdiction of MoE and to transfer administration of state land to these bodies).

The Administration of the Poloniny NP **gained, along with administration of 28 % of this NP territory, several buildings into tenure**. Also, since April 2022, several employees of state forestry enterprises were transferred to the Administration of the Poloniny NP. **Thus total amount of employees in the Administration of the Poloniny NP increased in the reported period from 12 to 33 persons**. The budget of Administration of the Poloniny on this year was agreed by the MoE as 1 404 000 EUR.

The state continues, via decisions of the district offices (environmental departments) to pay **compensations from the state budget<sup>5</sup>** 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) **totally 116 717,963 EUR to 3 decisions/2 subjects and (ii) 14 497 EUR within 41 decisions**.

In connection with financing it is necessary to stress a **Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan** to be financed in the frame of “NextGenerationEU” – recovery plan for Europe. Aim of this EU financial instrument is to support the economy recovery after the recession caused by Covid-19 virus and at the same time strengthen the resilience of the economy to fluctuations and support the transformation toward to new progressive economic activities, also with regard to digitization, ecology and climate change. Under its Component 5 “Adaptation to Climate Change” there are **2 beneficiary national parks (Poloniny NP and Muránska planina NP) selected with allocation of 16,8 million EUR mainly for soft tourism activities**. In April 2022 the MoE published a call for applicants to submit development projects for the **transformation of the Poloniny National Park region**, with the deadline in 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022 prolonged by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022. On the base of this call there were 36 projects submitted. The applicants were primarily municipalities, civic associations, local development agencies, land share associations and also the

<sup>5</sup> § 61 and §§ 97-102 of the Act No 543/200 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection as amended

Administration of the Poloniny NP. MoE selected the project in autumn, details would be given in the next reported period. More details (in Slovak language) are on webpage <https://www.minzp.sk/poo/np-muranska-poloniny/>. The realisation of selected projects should start next year and bring also job opportunities, mainly in the field of soft tourism. More details (in Slovak language) are on webpage <https://www.minzp.sk/poo/np-muranska-poloniny/>.

## 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)***

**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 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 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, the Administration of the Poloniny NP elaborated documentation for the Poloniny NP zoning, according to which it was suggested:

Zone A with 5<sup>th</sup> level of protection: 14 095,6368 ha (what will be 46,14 % of the Poloniny NP area)

Zone B with 4<sup>th</sup> level of protection: 3 077,2400 ha (10,07 %)

Zone C with 3<sup>rd</sup> level of protection: 13 376,0634 ha (43,79 %).

If finally adopted, it would mean a more than quadruple increase of proportion of strictly protected areas. Within **proposed zones A and B there are mainly forests in state ownership**, only very small percentage is covered by another land (most of the 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 report, the crucial change is legal obligation to apply in national parks only close to nature forestry – similar to the selective silvicultural system. In accordance to § 18 section 4 of Act. No 326/2005 Coll. on Forests in the frame of close to nature forestry can be applied 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 law<sup>6</sup> (there is an obligation to respect the Poloniny NP Management plan in decisions of state bodies including decision on the forestry management plans).

**In 2021 the process of renewal of the forest management plan for the Nižná Jablonka Forest Management Unit for decade 2022-2031 begun.** In this case the SNC SR – Poloniny NP Administration applied the same requirements as for the Forest Management Unit Starina (specified in the previous report). This forest management plan has not been adopted yet.

***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;***

<sup>6</sup> § 54. 5 of the Act No 543/200 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection as amended

**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 “Realisation of selected activities from the Poloniny NP Management Plan”** - cutting of natural self-sowing young shrubs and trees on selected meadows and subsequently mowing on the area by 2 owners, in addition to the mowing of fens done by the **mowing of fens** as well as **cutting of mesophilic and humid meadows** financed from budget of the Administration of the Poloniny NP.

At the large scale maintaining of grassland was supported in the frame of **Rural Development Programme 2014-2020**, the precise data (coverage) are not available. This programme is co-financed from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. In the reported period the Strategic Plan of Common Agricultural Policy of Slovak Republic 2013 – 2027 was finalized and sent to the European Commission. If adopted, measures for meadows would continue to be supported. These activities are eligible from the **Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan, too**.

***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:** 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.

These activities are eligible from the **Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan, too**.

***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 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** (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:

- Geological survey in the frame of elaborating PhD. thesis “Features of sediment density flows, their influence on reservoir properties of Cergowa Beds (Oligocene of the Dukla Tectonic Unit, Polish Outer Carpathians)
- Long-term Air Quality Monitoring in the frame of The European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (EMEP) – station located in Starina
- Long-term Ecosystem Research carried out within LTER-Europe platform<sup>7</sup>
- 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
- Research of *Coleoptera*
- Research of soil arthropods
- Research of malacofauna
- Research of dragonflies (*Odonata*)
- Research of water invertebrates
- Research of arachnids
- Research “Diversity and distribution of botanical species and associations in changing environment conditions

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.lter-europe.net/projects/eLTER>

- Research "Silvopastoral ecosystems of Slovakia"
- Speleology survey and research in Cadastral Area Ruske
- Hydrogeological survey in Villages of Nová Sedlica, Uličské Krivé, Brezovec, Jalová, Kalná Roztoka, Klenová, Kolbasov, Osadné, Parihuzovce, Pčoliné, Príslop, Ruská Volová, Ruský Potok, and Topoľa which cadastral areas are fully or partly included into the Poloniny NP
- Research of insects and wasps parasitizing on spiders
- Research of traditional regional cultivars of fruit trees
- Evaluation of bear abundance in the Poloniny NP based on the non-invasive collecting of fur samples.

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

Zaitseva, Elena, et al. "Assessment of the Risk of Disturbance Impact on Primeval and Managed Forests Based on Earth Observation Data Using the Example of Slovak Eastern Carpathians." IEEE Access 9 (2021): 162847-162856 (see at <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/9645551/authors#authors>).

GAJDOŠ, Peter, et al. "Habitat of *Carabus zawadzki* (Coleoptera: Carabidae) in the Eastern Carpathians." EJE 119.1 (2022): 285-299. (see at <https://www.proquest.com/openview/a84b773315adba3030d861d3bdbc293c/1?pg-origsite=gscholar&cbl=28135>)

Guimarães, N. F., Álvares, F., Ďurová, J., Urban, P., Bučko, J., Il'ko, T. & Smolko, P. (2022). What drives wolf preference towards wild ungulates? Insights from a multi-prey system in the Slovak Carpathians. bioRxiv. (see at <https://europepmc.org/article/ppr/ppr463963>)

Bozáňová, J., Čiampor Jr, F., Mamos, T., Grabowski, M., & Čiamporová-Zat'ovičová, Z. (2021). East Meets West in the Western Carpathians: Contact Zone Between Alpine and Carpathian Caddisfly Lineages Evidenced by COI Barcodes. (see at <https://europepmc.org/article/ppr/ppr430189>)

Bezáková, M., & Bezák, P. (2022). Which sustainability objectives are difficult to achieve? The mid-term evaluation of predicted scenarios in remote mountain agricultural landscapes in Slovakia. Land Use Policy, 115, 106020. (see at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264837722000473>).

***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:** Activities related to this recommendation undertaken by the municipalities, local companies and NGOs were supported in the past from the **Swiss financial mechanism** mainly via small grant program and also in the frame of the **Norwegian financial mechanism**.

Additional activities related to tourism development are being carried out by local NGOs, for instance 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 unrealy real**). It efforts to encourage local inhabitants to perform and provide any services for tourists like accommodation, accompaniment services, production and selling of local products (e. g. souvenirs), gastronomic services, and so on. This NGO offers to these providers of services that if they fulfil some conditions (rules) and criteria for quality they can use the possibility to promote their services using a trademark "**Poloniny neskutočne skutočné**" also across NGO 's webpage <https://regionpoloniny.sk/> where you can find more information. Very similar activities are developed by NGO "**Take naše**" ("So ours"). Together in cooperation with Administration of the Poloniny NP and with 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 19<sup>th</sup> till 21<sup>st</sup> August 2022 tourists could choose to take a part on 28 activities like observing of night sky with lectures of astronomers, course of traditional three-part folk singing, etc. 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 the frame of 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 SNC SR – 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>. The proposed activities should be supported in the frame of ENPI Cross Border Cooperation Programme in next years. The PSGR continued with realization of the **project of two cycle trails**: one is from Snina to Jalova's crossroads, the second trail leads from village Ulič to Uličské Krivé. Both cycle trails should be built outside of existing roads so tourists can enjoy the safety and serene biking. The project dossier is in rather high level of elaboration. The PSGR also started to work on a new **project of 14,2 km long cycle trail** from Jalova's crossroad to crossroad called “Pod Hrabom” in the former Village of Ruské displaced during the construction of Water Reservoir Starina. There were also started preparatory works on the next cycle trail from Jalova's crossroads to the former village Ruské.

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.

***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 and also in neighbouring countries, that was unfortunately during the last years limited mainly due to coronavirus restrictions. There is an excellent cooperation in the frame of the **UNESCO WH Property “with neighbouring Vihorlat Protected Landscape Area (PLA) and also with Východné Karpaty PLA.**

The Poloniny NP Administration has also contacts with **foreign partners.**

Representatives of –the Poloniny NP Administration participated in some videoconference meetings regarding the UNESCO WH Heritage site and they also personally took a part on the **Joint Management Committee meeting for the World Heritage Property which was organised this year from 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022 by German partners in Bad Wildungen/Hessen (Germany) close to the component part Nationalpark Kellerwald-Edersee.**

The Administration of the Poloniny NP has also a long term cooperation with partners within the **East Carpathians Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Slovakia/Poland/Ukraine). The trilateral agreement** concluded on 15<sup>th</sup> 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. In the reported period an annual meeting of the Steering Council was planned to hold in Poland in spring this year, but it was canceled because of covid restrictions.

During the reported period the Administration of the Poloniny NP cooperated **with Polish partner – the Bieszczady National Park on the ending microproject “At the Rivers Headwaters of Polish-Slovak Borderland – Man, Nature and Culture” (2021-2022) implemented in the frame of the Transboundary Cooperation Program Interreg Poland-Slovakia (V-A PL-SK 2014-2020).**

***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 Administration of the Poloniny NP and local communities **runs permanently**. There is a good cooperation with some **local communities**, for example with municipalities **and local schools**. In this respect projects financed from **Swiss financial mechanism** and also **Norwegian financial mechanism** were very usefull. 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 the future cooperation regarding the preparation and subsequent implementation of the Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan as well as proposed zoning.

The above mentioed significant amendment of Act No. 543/2002 Col. 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** – its 15 members represent regional municipalities, NGO-s, land owners, mountain rescue service, scientific institutions, directors of neighbouring national park in Poland and Ukraine and other stakeholders (tourism associations). This council will be one of the tools which should improve relations between the Administration of the Poloniny NP and local communities.

### **Site Management:**

According to the previous amendment of the Act No 543/200 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 important changes are mentioned under individual conditions and recommendations.

### **3. Boundaries:**

No change of the NP boundaries.

### **4. Other information:**

. Visibility of the newly established Administration of the Poloniny NP improved – see <https://www.nppoloniny.sopsr.sk> as well as <https://www.facebook.com/NarodnyParkPoloniny>). The logo of the European Diploma is promoted in all the relevant occassions.

December 2022, prepared by the Administration of the Poloniny National Park (Marián Gič), State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (Michaela Mrázová) and the Department of Nature Protection of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (Jana Durkošová)