

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020¹ “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)² /hereafter “Resolution No (2018)11”³

Central authority concerned:

Name: Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (MoE SR)
Division of Nature, Biodiversity and Landscape Protection
Address: Nám. L. Štúra 1; 812 35 Bratislava 1, Slovak Republic
Tel: (+ 421 2) 5956 2211;
e-mail: jana.durkosova@enviro.gov.sk (contact person);
www: www.enviro.gov.sk

Authority responsible for its management:

Name: State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (SNC SR)
Address: Tajovského 28B, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic
Tel: +421 48 472 20 26
e-mail: eva.turcerova@sopsr.sk
www: www.sopsr.sk

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)

Management Plan for the Poloniny National Park for 2017 – 2026 (hereafter „the Poloniny NP Management Plan“) adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 7th July 2016 is being implemented, namely by the monitoring of populations of the beaver, the otter, the European bison, large carnivores, amphibians, and other species; practical management of habitats (mowing of mountain meadows called “poloniny”, cut fens, cutting of *Maculinea* habitats – coordinated by SNC SR as well as additional meadow management supported from Rural Development Program – EU funds).

Since January 2020 **amendments of the Act No 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection (“Act No 543/2002 Coll”) and the Act No 326/2005 Coll. On Forests (“Act No 326/2005 Coll”)** came into force. These legal processes were aimed, among others to **streamline procedures** – namely for **sanitary logging in protected areas as well as of the appropriate assessment** of the forest management plans in light of their possible significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites. This is very relevant for the Poloniny NP that is fully overlapping with Natura 2000. Another crucial change is that from the 3rd level of protection (e.g. minimum level of protection within each NP) **only close to nature forestry is allowed**.

The above principles are the basis within negotiations of the new forestry management plans at the Poloniny NP. In July 2019, the SNC SR – Poloniny National park Administration initiated a **consulting meeting regarding forest management in the Poloniny NP for next years**. This meeting was with participation of representatives from the Ministry of Environment SR, the Ministry of Land Use and Rural Development SR.

¹ reported period 1st September 2018 – 31th August 2019

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

Internet : <http://www.coe.int/cm>

In 2020, the **process of forest management plan approval for the Forest Management Units Starina and Sobrance for decade 2020-2029 started**. This process is under supervision of the Regional Forestry Government Office in Prešov and it should be finished to the end of this year. The SNC SR – Poloniny NP Administration has submitted their requirements including the principles which are specified in the Poloniny NP Management Plan appealing on § 54 section 5 of *Act No 543/2002 Coll.*, by which all decisions approving any plans should be in accordance to management plans of protected areas. Although the approval process is not finished yet, we achieved that on the whole area of the Forest Management Unit Starina included into the Poloniny NP softer management ways will be used (only selective cutting, according to the law this manner can be single-tree selective cutting or group-selective cutting while the area of groups may be maximally 0,2 ha). Together with this measurement on every logged plot should be left minimally three trees per hectare to survive and pass away what is beneficial for the hollow-nesting birds like woodpeckers, owls, etc., and also there should be left a part (40 %) of logging residues volume (branchwood, etc.) as a dead wood what is positive for xylophilous species like mushrooms, insects etc.

The **Forest Management Unit Starina is spread approximately on the half of forested land of the Poloniny NP**, while the Forest Management Unit Sobrance intersects only with buffer zone of the Poloniny NP (2nd level of protection) where less strict requirements comparing the Forest Management Unit Starina were suggested.

SNC SR **negotiated with non-state owners and users** of the forest land in order to implement the close to nature forestry in their forest stands. Their loss due to nature protection restriction is compensated on the base of agreement between the SNC SR and these subjects via contracts in accordance to § 61d of *Act. No 543/2002 Coll.* SNC SR has signed agreements with 7 non-state subjects owning forest stands in the Poloniny NP and subsequently these subjects managed their forests in accordance to the Poloniny NP Management Plan being compensated (41 860,50 EUR for softer management of forests this year). The total area managed by these 7 subjects under these agreements is 1 395,35 ha.

Within the reported period SNC SR was preparing a new **project “Realisation of selected activities from the Poloniny NP Management Plan”** to be submitted within the Operational programme Quality of Environment in the frame of European Structural and Investments Funds. Activities include management of selected meadow habitats, planting of orchard from traditional local cultivars of fruit species, monitoring of selected species (European bison); one activity is aimed on forests (compensation for leaving old trees uncut),

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;

The **revision of the Poloniny NP Management and Action Plans** will be initiated in a due period. Implementation of this Plan is evaluated as part of the annual plan of SNC SR. Based on its results for the first 5 years, the new draft plan would be prepared by 2022.

SNC SR started a project **“Elaboration of management plan for area of international importance - Carpathian Beech Primeval Forests and for Protected Landscape Area Vihorlat”** financed from EU Structural Funds - Operational programme Quality of Environment. In the Poloniny NP there are three of four present Slovak components included into this World Heritage Property of UNESCO therefore this project includes activities to elaborate a comprehensive management plan covering all mutually intersecting protected areas (the Poloniny NP, 3 Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protected Area Bukovské vrchy in the frame NATURA 2000 network, World Heritage Property) which should substitute the current Management Plan of the Poloniny NP.

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;

Since 2017 the Administration of the Poloniny NP has **15 employees** (comparing to 12 persons in 2014) and its activities are implemented based on the **annual plan (financed centrally) from the state budget as well as EU funds**. This year the number of employees decreased from **to 13 persons**.

In February 2019 a new Envirostrategy 2030 was adopted by the Government of the SR containing 4 targets for the effective nature and landscape protection. One of them is to “revise state nature protection

institutions". **Increased competencies of SNC SR (mainly regarding the sanitary logging)** were subject to above mentioned amendment of the *Act No 543/2002 Coll.*

After parliamentary elections in March 2020 the new government in its Government Programme proclaimed the commitment of identical administration of the protected areas under MoE and that it considered to assign the position of legal body to all national park authorities. By this step the status of the Poloniny NP Administration would increase and strengthen.

In additions to the contracts mentioned above the relevant district offices (nature protection bodies) also approved requests for **compensations from the state budget**⁴. These relate (i) to 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 29 597,62 EUR to 2 subjects and (ii) 13 424,37 EUR to 11 subjects.**

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);

By September 2020 within the Poloniny NP there were **21 small scale protected areas** (with total area 2 432,78 ha, e.g. **8,16 % of the NP territory**). 14 natural reserves (with total area 2 373,34 ha, e.g. **7,96 % of the NP territory**) are in the **5th level of protection** and majority (2 001,24 ha) is in the state ownership, remaining part (372,09 ha) is in non-state hands. Remaining **7 small scale protected areas (59,44 ha, e.g. 0.2 % of the NP territory)** are in the **4th level** of protection and smaller part (4.60 ha) is in state ownership and majority (54.84 ha) is in non-state hands.

According to the amended *Act No 543/2002 Coll.*, the **regime within these 2 levels of protection is changed in favour of nature protection.**

Since 2017 the MoE also invested in land purchase⁵ of privately owned land in the Poloniny NP and in 2018 the **MoE bought approximately 67 ha (184 885 EUR from the state budget)**. Further purchase depends on offers from the private owners and on available financial resources

In 2019 the SNC SR and MoE SR continued in negotiations with land owners and users regarding to the **UNESCO World Heritage (WH) Property** and a proposal for UNESCO WH property boundary modification was prepared on 14th October 2019 adopted by the Government of SR (resolution No. 508/2019). SNC SR subsequently elaborated a nomination project (together with 9 other countries which wish to access to this multilateral international property or to add new components - Italy). The nomination dossier was submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in February 2020. According to this proposal this UNESCO WH property would include 108 (currently 78) components that are situated in the whole Europe from Spain on the west to Ukraine on the east and from Italy on the south to German isle Rügen on the north. In Slovakia after approval there should be 6 components from which 4 are in the Poloniny NP.

Simultaneously SNR and the MoE started process to designate three **new nature reserves (NR)** – two of them in the Poloniny NP. These are: the **Veľký Bukovec NR** with area 677,5299 ha (270,7811 ha in zone A with 5th level of protection and 406,7488 ha in zone B with 4th level of protection) and the **Rydošová NR** with area 88,1881 ha (56,1819 ha in zone A with 5th level of protection and 32,0062 ha in zone B with 4th level of protection). The area of the NR Rydošová partly belongs to the Poloniny NP and partly to the neighbouring the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area. The governmental ordinance No. 234/2020 Coll. declaring NR Rydošová was **adopted on 19th August 2020** (valid since 15st September 2020), while the legislation process for the Veľký Bukovec NR would be finalized in the first half of the next year.

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;

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

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

The crucial change is the already mentioned 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.* 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**. In two of them, forest management plans are valid till the end of 2019 and renewal started. The new forestry management plan has to be approved by the regional government authority and has to be in accordance with the Poloniny NP management plan as according to the national law⁶ there is an obligation to respect in the Poloniny NP Management plan in decisions of state bodies including decision on the forestry management plans.

Details on the **process of forest management plan approval started in 2020 for two Forest Management Units** are under the condition No. 1. Rather big part of the Poloniny NP has slopes steeper than 40 % where is allowed by our legislation to fell forests on plots with area up to 1,5 ha. We achieved during this approval process that in the forest management plan on the whole area of the Forest Management Unit Starina included into the Poloniny NP the upper limit of felling area will be 0,2 ha what is much more softer management than with limit 1,5 ha allowable by legislation (limits included into the forest management plan are obligatory; if any forest manager wants to exceed this limit he has to apply for permission from regional governmental office.) There should be applied only selective system. By our legislation this manner can be single-tree selective system or group-selective system while the area of felled groups may be maximally 0,2 ha. Single-tree selective system is more usable for coniferous stands. In broadleaves stands which dominate in the Poloniny NP the more applicable manner is group-selective system. Together with this measurement on every logged plot should be left minimally three trees per hectare to survive and pass away, what is beneficial for the hollow-nesting birds like woodpeckers, owls, etc. After felling of forest stands it is usual also to process the logging residues (branchwood, etc.) for production of wood chips. We achieved that in felled stands should be left a part (40 %) of logging residues volume as a dead wood what is positive for xylophilous species like mushrooms, insects and so on.

As mentioned under the condition No.1 the SNC SR continued negotiations with non-state owners and users of the forest land with expected signature of contracts.

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;

The above mentioned activities like maintaining of meadows by cattle grazing or maintaining the traditional livestock breeds are involved into the Poloniny NP Action Plan. **Mowing of fens (2,60 ha)** was financed from budget of the SNC SR as well as **cutting of mesophilic and humid meadows on area 13 ha**.

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 at this moment. 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;

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.

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

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

As already mentioned, many research activities have already started – as 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 platform⁷
- 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
- Research “Silvopastoral ecosystems of Slovakia”
- Speleology survey and research in Cadastral Area Ruske
- Hydrogeological survey in Nová Sedlica and Uličské Krivé.

The following **new scientific articles** were published within the reported period:

Jarošová, J., Antolová, D., Šnábel, V., Guimarães, N., Štofík, J., Urban, P., ... & Miterpáková, M. (2020). The fox tapeworm, *Echinococcus multilocularis*, in grey wolves and dogs in Slovakia: epidemiology and genetic analysis. *Journal of Helminthology*, 94.

Štofík, Bartušová 2020: Analysis of changes in distribution of eurasian beaver *Castor fiber* families based on evaluation of beaver activity signs in north-eastern Slovakia (2018/2019). *ROCZNIKI BIESZCZADZKIE* 28 (2020) str. 121–135

Štofík, Perinajová, Perinaj. 2019: Analýza úbytku raticovej zveri a efekt legislatívnych aspektov ochrany prírody na hospodárske využitie poľovných revírov v národnom parku poloniny. *Ochrana prírody, Banská Bystrica*, 34: 21–36, 2019 (Analysis of ungulate game decrement and effect of legislative aspects of nature conservation on game-management using of hunting districts in the Poloniny NP).

Štofík, J., Bučko.J.2019: Zmeny v poľovníckom manažmente najvýznamnejších druhov raticovej zveri na Slovensku po II. svetovej vojne (1949–2015). *Acta Facultatis Forestalis Zvolen* 61/2 (Changes in game-management of the most important species of ungulate game in Slovakia after 2nd World War)

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;

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**. Their results were used in the reported period, too.

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

Also in the reported period the Slovak Environmental Agency motivated municipalities to increase their involvement in the **Village renewal programme** (traditional instrument supported annually from the state budget). In 2020 **two projects were supported** in the frame of the Village renewal programme:

- Village of Topoľa – Ecoschoolroom of relaxation and cognition, Second stage
- Village of Zboj – Addition to Ecoschoolroom in locality Kvasná voda Obec Zboj Doplňenie ekoučebne na lokalite Kvasná voda.

Additional activities related to tourism development were carried out by local NGOs, for instance as a part of the project **“Concept of development of the Snina district”** which was elaborated by Aegis Foundation in 2018. This NGO gave to register a trademark **“Poloniny neskutočne skutočné” (Poloniny unreal 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. NGO “Take naše” wants to organize similar weekends also in next years. More information you can find on webpage <https://www.objavtepoloniny.sk/>.

As mentioned in the previous report 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 European Union (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 in 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 National Park 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. During the reported period there were done the first steps.

The PSGR started to work on 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.

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;

The SNC SR - Poloniny NP Administration has good **contacts with neighbouring protected areas** in Slovakia and also in neighbouring countries. But the last year cooperation was limited mainly due to coronavirus pandemic

In the frame of the **UNESCO World Heritage Property** “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” **there is a very close cooperation with neighbouring Vihorlat Protected Landscape Area (PLA) and also with Východné Karpaty PLA, because into the proposal of boundary modification there was included also the area of Rydošová NR** (which partly belongs to this PLA). We also cooperated with Vihorlat PLA on proposal of Vihorlatský prales NR, helping them with GIS analysis and with creation of maps. Issues of the all three protected areas are very similar and they all work together to solve them.

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

Representative of the SNC SR - Poloniny NP Administration participated in the **Joint Management Committee meeting for the World Heritage Property** “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” organized by Austrian partners in Vienna in January 2020. He attended also on one videoconference session of this committee.

SNC SR – the Poloniny NP Administration has also 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. 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 pandemic.

During the reported period the SNC SR - Poloniny NP Administration cooperated **with Polish partner – the Bieszczady National Park on the microproject “The Nature in Neighbourhood – Polish-Slovak Cooperation in the Field of Education, Promotion and Protection of Eastern Carpathians Nature”** implemented within the frame of the Transboundary Cooperation Program Interreg Poland-Slovakia (V-A PL-SK 2014-2020) and we also began to cooperate on one new Interreg microproject “At the Rivers Headwaters of Polish-Slovak Borderland – Man, Nature and Culture”.

Colleagues from Polish Bieszczady NP also actively attended the event - Weekend of beautiful experiences called “Objavte Poloniny” (“Discover Poloniny”) in our area.

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

A dialogue between the SNC SR - Poloniny NP Administration and local communities **runs permanently**. There is a good cooperation with some **local communities**, for example with municipalities **and local schools**. Good examples of the cooperation with local municipalities are projects financed from **Swiss financial mechanism** and also **Norwegian financial mechanism**. Both projects were finished in the year 2017, local municipalities were involved as partners in both these projects.

Also the cooperation with some forest managers improved thanks to contracts mentioned under condition No. 1.

As mentioned under recommendation No. 6 we cooperated also with PSGR in the frame of “Catching-Up Regions Initiative” during the reported period.

Site Management:

Designation of the NR Rydošová by governmental ordinance No. 234/2020 Coll.

Amendment *Act No 543/200 Coll.* Within this amendment there area also new provisions for the site on international importance. The list and fundamental data on their list was made available at the <https://www.minzp.sk/ochrana-prirody/medzinarodne-dohovory/uzemia-medzinarodneho-vyznamu/>.

2. Boundaries:

No change of the boundaries.

3. Other information:

Except for already mentioned information, there was no change in nature and culture heritage, education and scientific interests.

December 2020, prepared by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (Marián Gič, Michaela Mrázová) in cooperation with the Department of Nature Protection of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic (Jana Durkošová)