

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018¹
“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:

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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)

After approval of the **Management Plan for the Poloniny National Park for 2017 – 2026** (hereafter „the Poloniny NP Management Plan“) by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 7th July 2016 the SNC SR started preparation on gradual implementation of its activities. There are namely: monitoring of populations of a beaver, an otter, an 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 Programu – EU funds), etc.

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 the given period.

¹ reported period 1st September 2017 – 31th August 2018

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>

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) mainly from the state budget**.

Some of activities are financed via the **Carpathians Biodiversity Conservation Foundation**. In 2018 the **Ministry of Finances of the Slovak Republic approved additional allocation** to implement international commitments (including the European Diploma for the Poloniny NP) and these resources were transferred to SNC SR.

In 2017 - 2018 **preparation of the call for application within the Operational Programme Quality of the Environment** continued, namely long-term issue of so called state aid was tackled which is a pre-condition to the implementation of many planned activities.

In addition, **compensations from the state budget⁴ were paid** (based on the decision of the relevant district offices, nature protection bodies). 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. Regarding the financial compensation there was one decision (within the reported period – **18 881 EUR**) paid for compensation of forests land of cca 60 in the Šipková Nature Reserve while for the compensation of damage caused by the wolf (*Canis lupus*) there were 8 decisions (**3 042 EUR** - in the period 1st September – 31 December 2017, data for 2018 are not completed yet) **and 2 decisions were issued and resources paid (9 926.98 EUR) for the damages caused by the European bison (*Bison bonasus*).**

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);

According to the Slovak legislation it is possible to fulfil this recommendation by **two ways**. The first is (i) to establish new small scale protected areas like natural reserves or natural monuments. The second way is (ii) to prepare a zonation of the Poloniny NP. Both ways are under serious consideration.

Actual **approach is via so called ecological-functional area No. 1b (EFA 1b)** defined within the Poloniny NP Management Plan. This includes forest stands outside existing nature reserves, which are part of the component Stučica-Bukovské vrchy of the UNESCO World Heritage Property „Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe“. These forest stands are in the level 3 of protection⁵. During the negotiations of the Poloniny NP Management Plan the land-owners and land-users gave their preliminary consent to define EFA 1b and at the same time they gave their consent with non-intervention regime under condition of compensation from the state.

In 2017 SNC SR – Poloniny NP Administration **elaborated proposals for 2 new natural reserves** which should cover the above mentioned EFA 1b, these are the Černiny Nature Reserve and the Pramenisko Cirochy Nature Reserve. They cover together 224.59 ha (44.41 ha is in the state ownership and 180.18 ha is in the non-state hands). **Negotiations continue** also in relation to the UNESCO World Heritage Property.

Further priorities are to be identified in 2019 taking into consideration option of zoning.

To complete the picture, with the Poloniny NP there are 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

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

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

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.

It is also important to mention that **since 2017 the MoE also invested in land purchase⁶** of privately owned land in the Poloniny NP and in 2018 the **MoE bought approximately 67 ha**. The long-term intention of the MoE (formulated in the draft Envirostrategy and draft amendment of the national law) is to progressively increase proportion of protected areas that are state-owned and managed by the SNC SR.

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;

Within the EFA 2 there are forest stands neighbouring the UNESCO World Heritage Property and according to the Poloniny NP Management plan a **selective silvicultural system** should be applied for EFA 2. It covers 2049,84 ha, currently in 3rd level of protection; 632,14 ha is in non-state hands. These subjects have right to be compensated if so called common use of their land is limited due to nature protection.

It is important to mention that within the **Poloniny NP all the forests are either in 3rd, 4th or 5th level of protection and that the way of forestry measure also depends on the forest management plans**. The area of the Poloniny NP belongs to 7 management-plan areas. In two of them these plans are valid till the end of 2019. 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 (only selective silvicultural system within EFA 2 should be applied) because according to the national law⁷ there is an obligation to respect in the Poloniny NP Management plan in decisions of state bodies including decision on the forestry management plans.

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

Above mentioned activities like maintaining of meadows by cattle grazing or maintaining the traditional livestock breeds are involved into the Poloniny NP Action Plan. **Mountain meadows** (5 ha) were cut in cooperation with the Carpathians Biodiversity Conservation Foundation. **Mowing of fens** (2,60 ha) was financed from budget of SNC SR.

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 organisation "**Carpathian wooden churches**" oriented at support of regional wooden churches maintenance.

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 some research activities have already started – as part of research and monitoring programmes mentioned in the Poloniny NP Management plan or Action Plan. They

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

⁷ § 54. 5 of the Act No 543/200 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection as amended

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 platform⁸
- Monitoring aimed on species of Community interest
- Research of butterflies (*Lepidoptera*)
- Research of *Coleoptera*
- Research of soil arthropods
- Research of malacofauna
- Research of *Hymenoptera*
- Short survey of *Heteroptera*
- Research of bats
- Short survey of reptiles
- Research of dragonflies (*Odonata*).

There was **one new scientific article published** within the reported period:

Halada and col.: Changes in grassland management and plant diversity in a marginal region of the Carpathian Mts. in 1999–2015, *The Science of the total environment*, 2017 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318997160_Changes_in_grassland_management_and_plant_diversity_in_a_marginal_region_of_the_Carpathian_Mts_in_1999-2015).

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 programme and also in the frame of the **Norwegian financial mechanism**.

In 2017, the Slovak Environmental Agency motivated municipalities to increase their involvement in the **Village renewal programme** (traditional instrument supported annually from the state budget). Some villages situated in the buffer zone of the Poloniny NP or in the neighbouring area applied for financial support from this programme and afterwards successfully realized these projects:

- Village of Hostovice – Wells for Tourists in the Village of Hostovice
- Village of Kolbasov – Rain garden in the Village of Kolbasov
- Village of Nová Sedlica – Water well for tourists in the Village of Nová Sedlica
- Village of Pčoliné – Restoration of a water source “Kvasná voda”
- Village of Stakčínska Roztoka -Reconstruction of the willage well near the circle
- Village of Topoľa - Water well for visitors of the Village of Topoľa.

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.

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 Bieszczadi National Park in Poland, the East Carpathian Biosphere Reserve and the two neighbouring Landscape Protected Areas – Východné Karpaty and Vihorlat;

⁸ <http://www.lter-europe.net/projects/eLTER>

The SNC SR - Poloniny NP Administration has good contacts with neighbouring protected areas in Slovakia and also in neighbouring countries.

Regarding co-operation 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**. Issues of the both protected areas are very similar and they both work together to solve them. It is necessary to emphasize an active attendance of two representatives of the SNC SR – Administration of the Východné Karpaty Protected Landscape Area on the XLII. **East Slovakian Camp of Nature Conservationists** (see hereafter in Rec. No.8) who led the children’s section.

The SNC SR - Poloniny NP Administration has also contacts with foreign partners. One member of the staff took a part in the **International Scientific Conference** “The 10th anniversary since the inscription of the UNESCO World Heritage Property “Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and the Ancient Beech Forests of Germany”: History, status and problems of the integrated management system” in September 2017. It was organised by the **Ukrainian partner – Carpathian Biosphere Reserve** in the Town of Rakhiv.

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”. It was organised in Croatian **Paklenica National Park** in April 2018.

Austrian partner – E.C.O. Institute of Ecology, Klagenfurt together with the European Parks Academy (E.P.A.) organised the **Conference & International Meeting** „Coordination and management of World Heritage Sites – The Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe“ held in Vienna on 23rd of July 2018 with participation of the Slovak Republic.

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 there was **an annual meeting of the Steering Council in the Poloniny National Park, Slovakia on 8th December 2017**.

Members of the staff of the SNC SR – Administration of the Poloniny NP participated in the **XXVI. International Conference “Natural Processes and Nature Conservation”** organised by the Bieszczady National Park Administration in the Town of **Ustrzyki Dolne (Poland)** from 19th to 21st October 2017.

During the reported period the SNC SR - Poloniny NP Administration cooperated **with Polish partner – the Bieszczady National Park on the microproject “To visit Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Eastern Carpathians – to know it better, to protect it more”** implemented in the frame of the Transboundary Cooperation Programme Interreg Poland-Slovakia (V-A PL-SK 2014-2020). There were realised several activities within this microproject like common meetings of teachers, pupils or rangers aimed on environmental education, **publishing of tourism map, creation of mobile application** “Bieszczady & TBR Eastern Carpathians” suitable for Android, and so on. Meetings were organized on both, Slovak and Polish sides.

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.

Another very good example of cooperation with municipalities was an event – already mentioned **XLII. East Slovakian Camp of Nature Conservationists** which was organised in July 2018 in the Village of Zboj in cooperation with this village. It is necessary to mention that this event was also supported (mainly financially) by local private companies. This camp is held every year and always in a different part of the Eastern Slovakia, in 2018 it was in the Poloniny NP. It is aimed at environmental education, awareness on local nature and acquaintance with bases of a scientific

work. **More than 300 participants** took part there – professionals and also amateurs (including children). This event lasted one week and there were several working groups like for example botanical, herpetological, ornithological, children's sections etc.

3. Site Management:

No changes of the environment since the last annual report. There were also no changes regarding to staff/finances.

4. Boundaries:

No change of the boundaries.

5. Other information:

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

12 December 2018

Prepared by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the Department of Nature Protection of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic