



EUROPE OF THE CARPATHIANS

KRASICZYN 4-6 FEBRUARY 2022



The future of Europe • Ecology • Digitisation • Infrastructure
Security • Tourism • Development



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32. EUROPE OF THE CARPATHIANS CONFERENCE

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Forms of cooperation in the framework of parliamentary diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy is the international activity carried out by the Sejm and the Senate that goes beyond standard executive diplomacy.

In the 21st century, the Sejm is increasingly involved in shaping Poland's foreign policy precisely through parliamentary diplomacy. There are apparent differences in the diplomatic activities of the government and parliament. Government diplomats (ambassadors, consuls) constantly work abroad. They conclude agreements and undertake commitments on behalf of the authorities of the state concerned and are sometimes the victims of deteriorating relations between states. An example of this is the tension between the Czech Republic and Russia, which occurred after it was proven that agents of Russia's military intelligence had carried out diversions at Czech armaments plants in 2014. On the other hand, MPs also represent an institution of the state – the Sejm – and act more openly and in the so-called soft diplomacy, which consists of talks, persuasion, lobbying, and creating a positive atmosphere for cooperation. Sometimes, in discussions, they present different views on parliamentary cooperation. It is exemplified by the different approaches of the various factions in the Polish Parliament to Poland's place in the EU. Representatives of leftists and liberals are mostly in favour of strengthening the central authority of the EU by bringing about the so-called federalisation of the Union, i.e. a substantial diminishing of the role of member states. On the other hand, the right is in favour of maintaining the EU as a union of sovereign states organised on the model of a confederation, in which there are areas of public life for which only the national authority has responsibility. Therefore, it advocates strengthening the role of national parliaments of Member States.

The direct involvement of parliamentary diplomacy in states' foreign policy has increased in recent years. Here are some reasons for this process. Firstly, globalisation, faster flow of information between people, and increasing diversification of international communication (economic, cultural, and parliamentary diplomacy is developing

alongside traditional diplomacy). Secondly, in the last 30 years, critical political changes have occurred in Central Europe. After the USSR and Yugoslavia collapsed, more than 20 countries regained their independence and created sovereign structures, consolidating their freedom. In 2004 and 2008, some of these countries joined the European Union. Thirdly, in order to join the EU, the Three Seas countries voluntarily agreed to lose about 60 per cent of their powers, and, as a consequence, the parliaments of these countries reduced their sovereignty. For that reason, national parliaments are striving to strengthen their role as the representative of the sovereign, the people. A fourth factor is the unknown future of Europe and the debate that has begun on the future of the EU, triggered by the desire of the largest countries (i.e. Germany and France) to impose on others the concept of a “multi-speed Europe,” involving the introduction of the so-called “membership,” with which parliamentarians from many countries do not agree. Another factor is the imperial attitude of Putin’s Russia towards the Central European countries and the lack of a decisive response from the EU authorities to these threats. An additional argument is the grassroots efforts to develop parliamentary cooperation among Central European states, following the example of the Benelux countries or the Nordic Council, and to create a network of inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Parliamentary diplomacy became particularly significant in the Eighth Sejm, 2015–2019. Traditional forms of inter-parliamentary activity, such as bilateral groups, teams or parliamentary assemblies in the framework of multilateral cooperation, were strengthened. New formats, such as the Central and Eastern European Parliamentary Summits, were also launched, and the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference was developed.

The most important forms of parliamentary diplomacy include the following:

- bilateral (bilateral) cooperation, which is divided into two types – voluntary groups or parliamentary assemblies;
- multilateral cooperation, which also varies in nature – from standing delegations (parliamentary assemblies) to formulas such as the OSCE, NATO, the Visegrad Group, the Three Seas, and the Bucharest Nine.

Since 2011, the Sejm has been the organiser of the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference – a cyclical meeting of representatives of various institutions and organisations from Central European countries in 2016.

Among the most important forms of parliamentary diplomacy of the eighth parliamentary term (2015–2019), bilateral cooperation has taken on particular importance with three countries:

- Poland-Hungary – this cooperation was raised to the level of strategic cooperation, i.e. jointly determining international activities in Central Europe and especially at the level of the European Union;
- Poland-Lithuania – an example of successful parliamentary diplomacy was the significant improvement in Polish-Lithuanian relations;
- Poland-Georgia – in 2017, a meeting in Warsaw with the President of Georgia and the head of the Georgian Parliament was followed by the rapid signing of a strategic cooperation agreement, which resulted in convening the first Polish-Georgian Parliamentary Assembly in 2019.

Regarding multilateral cooperation, it is worth highlighting new formats or those already in a place whose role has increased: Visegrad Group, EUROWAW, Three Seas and “Europe of the Carpathians.”

The Visegrad Group (V4) – brings together Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It seeks to increase cooperation between these countries in the European political, economic, security and legislative system. Its objectives include strengthening sovereignty, democracy and freedom in the region, building parliamentary democracy and a modern market economy. The V4 countries are also keen to intensify political, economic and cultural cooperation throughout Central Europe.

EUROWAW, or the Central and Eastern European Parliamentary Summits – the idea for this format was born out of the conviction that in our part of Europe, parliamentary cooperation should not be limited solely to the European Union, i.e. the Three Seas or V4 countries. There are, after all, European countries to the east of our borders which do not have enough capacity to develop as rapidly as the EU countries. These countries are exposed to the aggression of Putin's empire and should be supported in the name of solidarity and the conviction that we all form one big European family.

The Three Seas – is a cooperation of 12 EU countries on infrastructure development, energy cooperation and digitalisation. The countries have set up the Three Seas Fund to support joint projects. The main areas of interest are communication development, energy and digitalisation. The cooperation form was established several years ago on the initiative of the presidents of Croatia and Poland as a result of the growing interest in cooperation in our part of Europe. Recently, efforts have also been made to establish a Three Seas parliamentary forum.

“Europe of the Carpathians” – is a series of international conferences organised by the Polish Sejm in cooperation with various institutions. These meetings develop the

idea of cooperation between the Carpathian countries and, for several years, the whole of Central Europe. The conferences are held in different places: annually in Przemyśl and Krasiczyn, until recently in Krynica-Zdrój and now in Karpacz, in Regietów in the Low Beskids, sometimes abroad in Truskavets in Ukraine or Sarospatak in Hungary. Participants include representatives of governments and parliaments, local authorities and scientific institutions, students, NGOs, intellectuals and artists, as well as ordinary people who want to work for the sustainable development of the Carpathians and Europe.

Participants discuss common heritage, politics, cooperation between states, economy and ideas of civilisation, social issues, and the unique richness of culture and nature of our part of Europe. Interesting ideas emerge during the discussions: a proposal to establish a Carpathian University, to compile a Carpathian encyclopaedia, or cooperation between several universities under the Collegium Carpathicum project. Meetings of politicians and scholars also resulted in efforts to establish a Carpathian Strategy, which, following the example of the Danube, Alpine or Baltic Sea Strategies, would help in the sustainable development of the Carpathians. At the 2020 conference, a group of more than 100 students from different countries (from Greece to Latvia) presented proposals for land use along the Via Carpathia expressway, connecting northern and southern Europe, as well as the idea of the Crimson Route, running from Thessaloniki to Klaipeda, among the monuments of European culture.

In the spring of 2021, during the online conference, a not insignificant highlight was the “Greetings to the World,” sent from various places in the Carpathians in the form of short recordings distributed online. They featured people from different regions: artists, mountaineers, athletes, mountain rescuers, regional bands, folk artists, environmentalists and politicians. The idea of inscribing the entire Carpathians on the UNESCO list was also born, and the promotion of the ecological slogan “Carpathians without plastic” was launched. “Europe of the Carpathians” became a popular form of parliamentary activity for all circles willing to cooperate.

We are handing over a publication containing descriptions of the discussion panels from the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference held in February 2022 in Krasiczyn, enriched with introductory texts on the issues that have accompanied the meetings for many years and which will be dealt with during future editions of the conference.



Parliamentary diplomacy

1. Parliamentary diplomacy is undoubtedly a foreign policy phenomenon. The term appeared in the 1950s and replaced the earlier concept of conference diplomacy. Today, therefore, we have parliamentary diplomacy alongside classical diplomacy. One may ask, where do the origins of parliamentary diplomacy lie? The answer is simple: it is parliament, as the highest legislative authority, that exercises control over the government, including foreign policy.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs reports annually to the Sejm on the directions and tasks of foreign policy. In addition, it is the parliament that gives its consent to the ratification of international agreements, has the competence to decide on the state of war or peace on behalf of the Republic of Poland and, by law, defines the rules for the use of the armed forces outside the country; it is in the parliament that foreign affairs committees function, which, among other things, hear candidates for ambassadors.

2. Although there is no clear definition of parliamentary diplomacy (or there are too many), parliamentary diplomacy should be understood as the role played by national parliaments or individual parliamentarians in international politics. The role of parliamentarians, e.g. within the parliamentary assemblies of international institutions or international inter-parliamentary associations, is very flexible, in contrast to classical governmental diplomacy, which is bound to state policy, diplomatic protocol or international norms. It would be logical for parliamentarians to complement their countries' foreign policy so that there is a consensus in parliament on foreign policy. Nevertheless, this is not always the case. There are also opposition MPs in parliament who have a different vision of foreign policy. Fortunately, from a formal point of view, any statements or positions of parliamentarians are not binding on their countries of origin. A high-profile example of this was the visit of French parliamentarians to

Crimea in July 2015, i.e. after the annexation of Crimea by Russia (2014). The leader of this delegation, Thierry Mariani, declared: “I am an MP, I am free, and I only submit to my consciousness.” Using this example, I would like to point out that in many countries, there are still voices criticising parliamentary diplomacy. That was also the case in Poland during the eighth term of the Sejm when parliamentary diplomacy was, in my opinion, the most developed after 1989 and played a significant role in Polish foreign policy.

3. During the eighth term of the Sejm and the ninth term of the Senate in 2015–2019, parliamentary diplomacy was implemented in various formats. Let me highlight three selected ones: The Visegrad Group, the summits of the presidents of the parliaments of Central and Eastern European countries and “Europe of the Carpathians.”

In 2015, when PiS took power, the Visegrad Group was in crisis. The previous PO and PSL government did not attach much importance to this format and, on top of that, failed to keep the joint agreements on dislocating refugees from the Middle East and Africa. The new government of Beata Szydło backed away from the decision, taken at the European Council by Ewa Kopacz, to accept the migration policy. The Polish side’s loss of trust and credibility in Budapest and Prague plunged the Visegrad Group into crisis. In this situation, the Polish government and parliament made a joint effort to rebuild the Visegrad Group. That was possible thanks to the long-standing cooperation between the Law and Justice party and Fidesz. Warsaw and Budapest, with the help of parliamentary diplomacy, thus encouraged Prague and Bratislava to make a new opening in the Visegrad Group’s relations. In this aspect, the considerable role of the Marshal of the Sejm Marek Kuchciński should be emphasised without diminishing the contribution of the government side and the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, Laszlo Kover. Today, the Visegrad Group plays a vital role in the politics of the European Union.

Arguably, it was on the foundations of the V4 that a new format grew in 2016 in the form of the Summits of Presidents of Parliaments of Central and Eastern European Countries (EUROWAW).

It is a fundamental formula, reminding us that “Europe is a broader concept than the European Union” and that “there is no security for the European Union without guaranteeing the security of Europe as a whole.” These words of Marshal Kuchciński, opening the First Summit, define the essence of this format for Central and Eastern

Europe, which freed itself from Soviet domination in 1989 and 1991. There was no Fifth Summit this year due to the pandemic, but the next ones should be awaited with hope, as they may bring the desired fruits for the region.

Finally, “Europe of the Carpathians,” Marshal Kuchciński’s original concept. It has been implemented since 1999, first as “Green Carpathians” and since 2011 as “Europe of the Carpathians”. After reading the documents of this international project, one cannot but confirm the nobility of this initiative. It encompasses not only nature in its broadest sense but also the economy, agriculture, culture, and infrastructure. In a word, everything that modern Europe of the Carpathians needs. “Europe of the Carpathians” has the opportunity to become the second project of the European Union after the Alpine strategy. Governments, parliaments and interested regions in individual countries should therefore be motivated to make a joint effort, and the Europe of the Carpathians Institute should be set up in Przemyśl, where this initiative originated. I am somewhat surprised that such an Institute does not yet exist.

I would like to state that Polish parliamentary diplomacy is proving not only useful but also creative and a good supporter of Polish foreign policy. It was exemplified in the eighth term of the Sejm and the ninth term of the Senate. The perpetrators of this diplomacy, i.e. the Marshals, are present in this Chamber.

P.S. Other achievements of parliamentary diplomacy include re-establishing the Polish-Lithuanian Parliamentary Assembly in 2019 (after 10 years of suspension) and elevating relations with Georgia to the level of the Polish-Georgian Parliamentary Assembly (2019).

Karpacz 2020



Turbacz, Gorce National Park, Poland



The social responsibility of universities

1. Modern universities function in the space: university – city – region and perform three basic tasks: education, research and cooperation with the social environment. The first two tasks are among the traditional duties of a university, albeit in reverse order. The third function, on the other hand, also defined as the university's social responsibility, has been sanctioned by law in the form of university bodies, the university councils. It is also referred to as the university's cooperation with the environment and its stakeholders, and it was derived from the corporate ideology of corporate social responsibility. So far, many Polish universities have signed the so-called declaration of social responsibility, proving proves that universities – like a business – follow the corporate path.

2. Creating foundations of university corporatism began with the creation of the slogan: education for the labour market. It emerged in the process of the massification of universities. Then, research gave way to education that was more or less linked to the labour market. The trend towards effective pro-social education took hold. In order to facilitate or rather simplify education for the labour market, two-degree courses and appropriately profiled curricula were introduced. The list of fields of study and study profiles was also expanded. Academic knowledge was reduced to the effectiveness of education (in lower schools to the student's skills). The so-called enrolment scale began to matter. Poland was even the European leader in enrolment at one point, but with a poor scientific level, as still evidenced by various international rankings. It has turned out that universities are also businesses, especially private ones, subsidised by the state and even local governments. Various academic studies proclaim the thesis that the higher the degree of massification, the greater the role of the environment and its influence on the functioning of the university.

3. The picture presented of the university, in the light of its third function, is far removed from the traditional role of the university and its duty, that of learning, multiplying the national civilisational achievement. Studying does not reflect the Latin term: *studeo*, meaning “I learn, I study.” Today, the term *studeo* has transformed into a college education. The modern university has lost its character as a “temple of knowledge.” It is building its social authority, or rather its social capital, differently. If the traditional university fulfilled and shaped its mission of social responsibility through research and scientific creativity, the multiplication of cultural goods, the modern university fulfils this mission through education linked to the labour market. If the pre-war Polish law on academic schools, consisting of a few pages, set the framework for the functioning of universities, the contemporary law, exceeding 250 pages of paragraphs, regulates even the details of academic pragmatics. It shows a growing pathology and forces the fruits of science and other duties through paragraphs. Perhaps this is why there is talk of a deficit of scholars and an excess of professors.

4. Conclusions. After Poland regained its independence in 1918, when the legal system of the resurrected state was being established, there was a preponderance of opinions

Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic





Tarnica, Bieszczady Mountains, Poland

in the field of education about democratising education and making it more widely available. However, there was no shortage of opinions in this debate that the state, which finances education, also needs an elite capable of governing and building the nation's and the state's prosperity. These two philosophies of thought were later reconciled in the Jędrzejewicz Acts of 1932 and 1933. At the time, these laws were counted among the best education reforms in Europe, although they are still criticised by many today. I will therefore dedicate the words of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, spoken at the University of Warsaw in 1921, to the contemporary reformers of higher education. He spoke of the dual task of the university: to provide the nation and the state with professionals and of anti-utilitarian science as pure science, creating "higher values of the human spirit." Nevertheless, without creating "higher values of the human spirit," the first task, that of educating professionals, cannot be fulfilled. Perhaps the social responsibility of the university should be contained in these words of the Marshal.

Krasiczyn, 6 February 2022



Bojnice Castle, Slovakia



European hiking routes and the Crimson Route

The text aims to present the most important hiking routes in Europe grouped in the federation of the European Ramblers Association (1969) and – against their background – the Crimson Route Klaipeda–Thessaloniki (2019).

Introduction

“Europe of the Carpathians” is probably the only European – possibly also global – conference to include hiking trails in its programme (from October 2019 and February 2020). Tourism – mainly hiking, accessible to everyone – has become firmly embedded in the thinking of Europe. The main objectives are the promotion of health (Health) and the integration of the protection and promotion of hiking routes (Tourism) into European strategies, with the intermediate objective of protecting unique natural and historic complexes (Heritage). In this way, the conference programme seems to have reached an optimal shape, consisting of security of the Union area, sustainable economy – sustainable society – sustainable development, public health and green order, education, science, basic research, culture, technology, Internet, communication and active tourism.

The conference organisers suggested the theme “Hiking Routes of Europe,” I added, “and the Crimson Route.” What do Europe’s hiking trails look like (the big picture), and how does the Crimson Route compare to them? Having already written the text, I can say that both the organisers and I had a good intuition: the hiking trails of Europe look impressive, the most important of them are federated. And the Crimson Route turned out to be an original project against their background.

1. The Federation and its philosophy

The motto of the federation, called the European Association of Hiking, is: “E-pathways bring people together and are pathways to peace, understanding and unity.”

1.1. E1-E12 – European long paths (over 1000 km)

The main trails are organised into the European Ramblers Association (ERA). They are structured into 12 certified long-distance routes marked with signatures E1 to E12. Ramblers have been active since 1969 with its headquarters in Kassel. The Polish entity in the federation is the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society.

- Maps of routes E1-E12 with descriptions are available on the Association's website: <https://www.era-ewv-ferp.org/e-paths/>

1.2. European “middle path” hiking routes (less than 500 km)

From the guides, maps and descriptions available on the internet, it is worth recommending the Rota Vicentina, the difficult Corsican GR20, the five variants of the Via Alpina or the car/motorbike Scottish coastal route North Coast 500. From the web, a sample map and descriptions:

- Łukasz Supergan presents 10 mid-distance trails <https://8a.pl/8academy/sredniodystansowe-szlaki-turystyczne/>

2. The Crimson Route and its philosophy

The trail is suitable for the average tourist, in some sections for mothers with children and seniors, for motorcyclists and car drivers. On its route, there are Renaissance architectural monuments and UNESCO-listed natural and cultural sites, historical monuments, national parks, nature reserves and hiking trails. It runs in a straight line close to the Via Carpatia international route (running from Klaipeda in Lithuania to Thessaloniki in Greece). It starts at the Curonian Spit – a UNESCO site – and ends at the monument to Alexander of Macedonia against the backdrop of Mount Olympus in Thessaloniki. The planned length of the route is approximately 3,500 km. For the convenience of tourists, it is divided into segments – groupings of historical and natural sites – which can be visited independently of the entire trail. An essential stipulation



The route of Via Carpathia

for site qualification is the proximity to 24-hour general and dental outpatient clinics. The colour of the trail is crimson; hence, the English name Crimson Route.

3. Analysis of the “long path” and “middle path” maps and the Crimson Route

A preliminary analysis of the E1-E12 and other routes allows a cautious thesis that the Crimson Route is the only European route leading purposefully along Renaissance sites, historical monuments, national parks, landscape parks, nature reserves and UNESCO sites. There is a clear gap on the map of Europe between Suwałki and Dukla – from the north to the south of Poland. No trail runs through that area. Similarly, there is no route running in a clear straight line from north to south in Europe. Only the E6

Stockholm–Alexandroupolis and the E10 Potsdam–Bolzano are similar. This is evident on the ERA maps and on Waymarked Trails – Hiking and Traildino (traildino.com/trace/continents-Europe/countries-European_Trails).

Conclusions

The key benefits of the Crimson Route:

- 1) allows visitors to experience the beauty of nature and outstanding monuments of European culture, mainly Renaissance;
- 2) *easy for hikers* – easy for everyone, designed for the average tourist as well as motorcyclists, in some sections complementary to the Green Velo cycle trail, easy to follow (can be travelled by the cheapest means of transport), not posing a problem for tourists cars;
- 3) not of an exploratory nature involving great difficulty, but of a cognitive, health-oriented nature, uniting the images on the route into one original European *oikos*, all the way back to the beginning of European culture – the Hellenistic *oikos*, combining natural and cultural values;
- 4) has been designed in such a way that it can be visited in segments over several or several years.

Summary

As I was editing the text for publication, I was cheering on Facebook for the well-known Polish poet Małgorzata Lebda, who ran a solo ultramarathon of more than 1,100 km along Poland's longest river, the Vistula. She ran every day throughout September. In this way, another new original route was created, i.e. a new trail of an exploratory, sporting nature in the south–north direction of Poland. If this route, under the name “Reading the Vistula.” were opened to other ultramarathoners in future years, the Crimson Route – a route for the average walker – would have a great “companion” on the Polish section. Małgorzata Lebda announces further runs along rivers not only in Poland but also in Europe. It is indeed a new form of ecological struggle for Europe's rivers and a new form of environmental education. The source of the Vistula is located on the slope of Barania Góra in the Silesian Beskids in the Western Carpathians.



Route to Babia Góra, Beskid Żywiecki, Poland

Links

European routes

- C&A presents three European routes of varying difficulty for women
<https://www.c-and-a.com/pl/pl/shop/europejskie-szlaki-turystyczne>
- Olga Zmarzły presents 10 European routes
<https://flipohity.pl/szlaki-turystyczne-w-europie/>

The Crimson Route

- First version of the map of Lithuania–Poland and Klaipėda–Dukla sections
<https://www.salon24.pl/u/prognozy2030/1114654,karmazynowy-szlak-klajpe-da-sa-loniki-od-odcinek-polski-versja-i>
- Crimson Route, project 2019–2024, technical side
<https://www.salon24.pl/u/prognozy2030/1037144,crimson-route-w-planach-euro-py-karpat-2021-2024-dyskusja>



Winter on Turbacz, Gorce National Park, Poland



Biodiversity in the Carpathians. Some problems of its conservation

The Carpathians are an arch-shaped mountain chain lying within the borders of eight countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The modern landscape of the Carpathians has been shaped since time immemorial by the different traditions and cultures of the ethnic groups inhabiting the area. However, the distinctly peculiar nature of the individual mountain ranges of the Carpathians is largely due to their complex geomorphology and numerous enclaves with negligible anthropoppression. The biological uniqueness of the Carpathians manifests itself in the richness of species, the diversity of ecosystems as well as in the presence of endemics.

The Polish Carpathians cover the southern and south-eastern edges of the country and account for about 6 per cent of its area. In the physical-geographical regionalisation of Poland, the site is divided into the Western Carpathians and the Eastern Carpathians. The oldest, high granite massif of the Tatra Mountains is included in the Central Western Carpathians. The Outer Western Carpathians include the Carpathian Foothills with dominant low hills with gentle slopes and flattened tops. The Outer Eastern Carpathians include the Sanocko-Turczańskie Mountains north and the Western Bieszczady mountains south. The Outer Western and Eastern Carpathians are closed to the north by a distinctly depressed area – the Northern Subcarpathian Mountains.

Six national parks have been established in the Carpathians because of the country's extraordinary landscapes, diverse ecosystems, unique flora and fauna and the need to preserve them.

The Tatra National Park, located in the Central Western Carpathians, is home to Poland's highest peak, Rysy, at 2499 m. The Tatras and Babia Góra are the only alpine mountain massifs in the Carpathians. The Tatras are home to the endemic Tatra chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra tatrica*) and Tatra marmots (*Marmota marmota latirostris*), a glacial relict – the marsh gill beetle (*Branchinecta paludosa*) or the Tatra gorgonian

beetle (*Carpathobyrrhulus tatricus*). From the unique plants it is necessary to mention e.g. Plio-Pleistocene palaeoenvironments – Tatra pinks (*Delphinium oxysepalum*), Tatra rockrose (*Saxifraga wahlenbergii*), shining carnation (*Dianthus nitidus*) and later relicts and endemics of the Tatra Mountains: Eightpetal mountain-avens (*Dryas octopetala*), veined willow (*Salix reticulata*), herbaceous willow (*Salix herbacea*), Tatra willow (*Cochlearia tatrae*), granite meadowgrass (*Poa granitica*) or noble meadowgrass (*Poa nobilis*). The flora of the Tatra Mountains counts about 1300 species of vascular plants, 400 of which are mountain species (in the Polish part of the Tatra Mountains about 200 species). Forests and dwarf mountain pasture cover about 70 per cent of the park's total area, and about 30 per cent is occupied by alpine grasslands. The Tatra National Park has been incorporated in its entirety into the international Tatra Transboundary Biosphere Reserve.

The Pieniny National Park was established to preserve the unique landscape and biodiversity of the limestone rocks of the central part of the Pieniny Rock Belt. The area of the park stretches for about 35 km in length and 5 km in width. The area is located, like the Tatra Mountains, in the Central Western Carpathians and is highly varied in terms of geology, topography and microclimate (easily weathered limestone, hornblende limestone, non-erodible limestone, rocks of volcanic origin, large differences in altitude, exposure and humidity). These factors have directly influenced the formation of a complex mosaic of plant communities and a richly represented flora and fauna. Among others, mountain relict pine forests, sycamore forests, maple-leaved forests, thermophilous and fertile beech forests have developed here, and among non-forest ecosystems, alpine calcareous grasslands, xerothermic grasslands, mountain meadows and mosslands. In the Pieniny, there are about 1100 species of vascular plants [out of the peculiar plant species it is necessary to mention the Pieniny dandelion (*Taraxacum pienicum*) – the only representative of the section *Erythrocarpa* in Poland, *Juniperus sabina* or Zawadzki's goldenrod (*Dendranthema zawadskii*), 400 species of algae, 320 bryophytes (including liverworts), 470 lichens and 1200 fungi. A distinctive feature of the once extensive farming in the area is the floral meadows, which are extremely rich in species. Thanks to their presence, the site has diverse entomofauna (butterflies – 1,555 species, beetles – 1,507, hymenoptera – 911) and many other invertebrates. The Pieniny is home to 17 species of fish, 10 amphibians, 6 reptiles, 61 mammals and 188 birds.

The Babia Góra National Park covers a clearly distinguishable range in the Western Beskids, stretching latitudinally for about 10 km, with the highest (after the peaks of



Eightpetal mountain-avens

the Tatra Mountains) upland – Babia Góra. The climatic variation resulting from the differences in altitude allowed distinct vegetation tiers to form on Babia Góra. In the lower montane zone, remnants of the former Carpathian primaeval forest have been preserved – mainly beech forests (fertile Carpathian beech and, to a much lesser extent, acidic mountain beech). The upper montane zone is covered with spruce forests. The subalpine floor is formed by thickets of dwarf pine, a species under strict protection. The alpine (mountain) level is of great natural and landscape value. Of the 650 vascular plant species found, 125 are mountain plants. Among them are 67 protected species and 4 precious ones, included in the *Polish Red Book of Plants*: Strong Moravian Aconitum (*Aconitum firmum* subsp. *moravicum*), Alpine Hornwort (*Cerastium alpinum*), Deer's-foot Trefoil (*Laserpitium archangelica*) and Hacquet's Knapweed (*Pedicularis hacquetii*). Among the many alpine plant communities, two endemic ones, found only on Babia Góra, should be mentioned: *Junco trifidi-Festucetum airoidis* and *Saxifraga-Festucetum versicoloris*. There are also about 1000 species of fungi and 329 lichens. The animal world has about 4,500 species. Invertebrates dominate (about 4,000), with 1,500 species of



Magurski National Park, Kiczera Żydowska – View from Wysokie, Poland

beetles and 700 butterflies. Among the 188 vertebrates, birds are the most numerous (127 species). The park is home to 2 species of fish, 11 amphibians, 5 reptiles and about 50 mammals. Among the large mammals, the brown bear (*Ursus arctos arctos*), the lynx (*Lynx lynx*) and the wolf (*Canis lupus*) should be mentioned.

The Gorce National Park (Outer Western Carpathians) encompasses within its borders predominantly the lower subalpine floor, as well as the upper subalpine floor and, in a much smaller part, the foothills floor. The Park's landscape is made up of hills covered in 95 per cent by forest communities, such as fertile Carpathian beech, acid mountain beech, fertile fir, Carpathian alder, swamp alder, spruce-fir forest or upper alder spruce forest. On about 5 per cent of the Park's area, unique landscape and floristically rich alpine glades have been formed, resulting from pastoral and hay management. More than 900 vascular plants (850 species in the park), 250 mosses, 116 liverworts, about 320 fungi and 600 lichens were found in the Gorce area. 113 species are under legal protection, including 57 species of lichens and 8 fungi. Invertebrates (around 1,000 species) are also abundant in the park, of which 23 are Carpathian and Carpathian-Sudetic endemics. The vertebrate animal group counts 214 species, including

4 fish, 8 amphibians, 5 reptiles, 56 mammals and 140 birds (including 21 species from the *Polish Red Book of Animals*). The remnants of the Carpathian primaeval forest are a refuge for the populations of capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), Ural owl (*Strix uralensis*), owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*), black stork (*Ciconia nigra*), as well as large carnivorous mammals – lynx, wolf and the recently emerging bear.

The Magura National Park was established in the area of the Beskid Niski, in the transition zone between the Western and Eastern Carpathians. Its unique character stems from the mutual interpenetration of elements typical of these two regions. Approximately 90 per cent of the park's area is covered by forests growing mainly in the lower subalpine forest floor, where the natural character of the forest typical of the primeval forest has been preserved in places. Beech forests with admixtures of fir and, less frequently, sycamore predominate. About 800 species of vascular plants have been found in the Park area, 64 of which are under legal protection in Poland, and 16 are listed in the *Polish Red Book of Plants*. There are 675 species of fungi (about 25 per cent are protected and included in the Red Lists), 145 species of lichens (25 species are under strict protection), about 210 taxa of mosses (58 protected) and 57 liverworts. The park is home to 55 species of mammals (including lynx and wildcat), 160 birds, 12 fish, 9 amphibians and 5 reptiles. In addition, one of the highest densities of lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*) and buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) in Poland is found here.

The nature of a small fragment of the Eastern Carpathians is protected by the Bieszczady National Park, which has formed the International Biosphere Reserve "Eastern Carpathians" together with the parks of Slovakia and Ukraine since 1992. In 2021, 11 per cent of the Park's beech forest area was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In the Park, the lower regale forests and the nature of the highlands are protected. There are 780 vascular plants found here, 25% of which are mountain species. In the flora of the Bieszczady, one can find about 30 taxons testifying that the area belongs to the Eastern Carpathians; 6 of them are East Carpathian endemics, e.g. white scabious (*Melampyrum saxosum*), bucovinense (*Aconitum bucovinense*) or East Carpathian toad (*Aconitum lasiocarpum*). In the High Bieszczady Mountains there are about 440 species of lichens and about 1,000 species of fungi (it is assumed there will be at least 2,000 when the mycobiota is fully explored). Among 231 species of vertebrates living in the Bieszczady National Park are 1 Tatra chamois, 10 fish, 11 amphibians, 7 reptiles, 144 birds and 58 species of mammals. In the Park, there are exceptionally numerous populations of brown bears, lynxes and wolves compared to other regions in Poland.



Tatra chamois

Among birds, there are numerous endangered predators: lesser spotted eagle (*Clanga pomarina*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), as well as species from the order of owls (*Strigiformes*).

The Przemyskie Foothills are particularly valuable for the Subcarpathian region in terms of nature. The region's high biodiversity results from its location at the junction of the Western Carpathians, the Eastern Carpathians, the lowlands and its proximity to the Steppic Forest Division of the Puntia-Pannonian Province. So far, about 1160 species of vascular plants have been found in the Przemyskie Foothills, of which more than 60 are under legal protection. A floristic peculiarity of this region is the Transylvanian thistle (*Cirsium decussatum*). It is difficult to overestimate the beauty of the cultural landscape of the Wiar river valley, with its natural exposures of the Carpathian flysch and picturesque relief, numerous xerothermic grasslands and localities of rare plants and animals. The Park 2000 habitat protection area (Ostoja Przemyska PLH 180012) and a unique bird protection area (Pogórze Przemyskie PLB 180001) were established to ensure the protection of valuable elements of landscape and nature of the Przemyskie Foothills. In the Landscape Park of Przemyskie Foothills there are 3 protected fish

species, 16 herpetofauna species, 30 mammals and 134 birds, of which 29 are included in the annex of the so-called Birds Directive of the Special Bird Protection Area in the Natura 2000 programme.

So what can be done to preserve this state of Carpathian nature in the future?

The development of industry, road infrastructure, the intensification of agriculture, the expansion of towns and villages, the pressure to realise the infrastructure of modern forms of recreation and tourism and many other activities that force more and more space to be subordinated to these purposes are a real threat to the natural and cultural environment. In practice, it is impossible to reconcile such contradictory activities as keeping the landscape and nature intact and simultaneously subjecting them to strong anthropopression.

For years, nature conservation in our country has been facing a huge crisis of power, involving state offices at various levels responsible for its management. It seems that severe problems observed nowadays, including under-financing of activities for nature protection, failure to follow the principle of preventing the loss of natural riches, which are biotopes (water, soil, air) and biocoenoses (living organisms), helplessness in enforcing the law, blocking the coverage of environmentally valuable areas with adequate forms of protection, treating nature protection as an impediment to the implementation of economically “more important” undertakings, rather lead to the loss of valuable species and their habitats.

As a first step, steps should be taken to address the issues listed below.

Absolute application and enforcement of the law – the Nature Conservation Act. It seems that consistent adherence to the nature conservation law would help in resolving contentious issues. The priority of activities in protected areas should be to preserve the protected elements in the least altered state possible.

The decisive role of the park management, the services of the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection in the management of protected areas. It should be recognised that the authority and knowledge of the directors, members of the scientific councils and scientists from many research institutions guarantee for making the right decisions and provide a solid basis for resisting external pressure. Planned changes concerning, for example, the rules for the appointment and dismissal

of national park directors by the Minister of Environmental Protection or the rules for the selection of officials of regional environmental protection directorates make one doubt the impartiality of the decisions taken. The tried and tested method of competition for the post of director gave the possibility to verify the candidate's competence and made them more independent from superior bodies.

Subsidising park activities. Some of the parks' conservation tasks cannot be carried out due to lack of funding. Experts propose the creation of a special-purpose fund.

Establishing new conservation areas and enabling the expansion of the area of existing conservation areas – above all national parks. An effective way to protect valuable natural areas is to create national parks. In Poland, only 1 per cent of the territory is covered by this form of protection (very little compared to other European countries), yet no new park has been established for years (the last one was created in 2001 – the Warta Mouth National Park). There are many more unique areas in need of priority protection that have been studied and described by naturalists, such as the long-awaited Turnicki National Park project.

The legislation currently being prepared for national parks has been criticised and strongly disagreed among naturalists. Instead of strengthening the cause towards conservation, they weaken it, among other things, by introducing legal paths that make it possible to issue permits for activities unrelated to the objectives of the national parks. The establishment of national parks is also a major social problem. In order to solve it, the landowners' needs (the issue of compensation) and the need for nature conservation (protection of national values) would have to be taken into account.

Caring for the landscape. A necessary problem to be solved is the ordering of spatial planning regulations. Allowing development on the basis of "I build where I want" leads to disharmony in the cultural landscape – so important for the Podkarpackie region, which aspires to remain a significant tourist region. With building development spreading haphazardly, more and more new areas require the construction of costly infrastructure. The landscape is being irretrievably destroyed, anthropopressure is encroaching on new locations, and regions inhabited by valuable flora and fauna are shrinking.

Undertaking, facilitating the implementation and promotion of local projects to conserve diverse habitats. Climate warming and lowering groundwater levels are already causing water shortages in the Carpathian foothills and uplands. Attention should be paid to creating small-scale retention facilities that do not require



Pieniny National Park, Slovakia

significant financial outlay but allow local water retention. If only so that some of the organisms typical of threatened and disappearing wetland and marshland habitats can survive in substitute habitats by creating and maintaining, e.g. ponds or partial water retention in ditches.

A critical role in preserving the diversity of the Carpathian agricultural landscape is currently played by small fragments of uncultivated land – baulks, bushes and mid-field shelterbelts.

Protection of riverbeds. Intense pressure from, among other things, road construction has led to an increase in the extraction of gravel and stone from Carpathian rivers and streams. In view of the trend towards lowering the groundwater table and increased warming, these activities appear to be very dangerous, as they may lead to localised restrictions on groundwater availability.

The haphazard development of river valleys and river banks, e.g. for housing, recreation and business purposes, without leaving a buffer zone, is also continuing. The intensive felling of trees also carried out next to watercourses, which until recently was not allowed in stream catchments, destroys the sites of susceptible organisms

associated with wet and watery environments, reduces the retention capacity of the environment, which, with the strong, violent storms threatening us precipitation will result in flooding.

Stopping excessive tree felling. Intensive felling of trees, including old-growth trees, is currently taking place in the Carpathian forests, including in parks and their buffer zones. Older trees of an appropriate size are protected and should be recognised as nature monuments.

For years, conservation services and scientists have been pointing out measures that should be taken to preserve a rich and diverse environment. We should remember that our and future generations' health depends on it. The destruction of one species usually entails the loss of many others, and we thereby lose forever the potential that could be used, for example, in medicine or agriculture.



International Clubs of Europe of the Carpathians

Declaration

Aware of the responsibilities and moral obligations towards the countries and the nations of our region – Europe – in the context of the current and the approaching challenges,

- *remembering the Christian roots of Europe, respecting values such as: family, democracy, human dignity, unlimited and legally protected freedom of opinions and speech, and the meaning of social and international dialogue,*
- *expressing our gratitude to the initiators, organisers and persons who have participated in the “Europe of the Carpathians” project for numerous years,*

we express our belief about the need to continue and intensify the cooperation within the area of the countries and nations of the Europe of the Carpathians and the will to cooperate in favour of the free, democratic, safe, strong and just Central Europe.

For this purpose, we the undersigned, as the so-called initiation group, declare what follows:

- *we establish the International Carpathian Europa Clubs (ICEC) which shall serve the objective diagnosis of the issues, defining the needs and their optimum implementation in accordance with the vincere – vincere ad omnes principle;*
- *we shall formulate the contents of the statute of the ICEC in the spirit of openness to cooperation with persons and institutions which identify themselves with the idea of Europe of the Carpathians – establishing a network of contacts, a capital of knowledge and the potential of mutual measures;*
- *we shall establish effective mechanisms of adapting the ICEC initiatives to the public life of the countries, nations and groups involved in the idea of Europe of the Carpathians in the name of the current and timeless benefits gained through good cooperation.*

Krasiczyn, 5 February 2022



Initiating meeting of the International Club of Europe of the Carpathians, Krasiczyn, 4 February 2022

Mission of the Europe of the Carpathians Clubs

Europe of the 21st century – a time of the triumph of democracy and a free-market economy. It is in the meantime a period of a growing role of social engineering, of constraining of individual freedoms, in which both state and supranational forms of activity become less and less understandable for the citizen. Culture and economy broadly understood seem to be increasingly distant from human experiences and language.

In this world, the countries and peoples of Europe of the Carpathians are distinguished by their positive attitude towards Christian values and natural law, their attachment to the inherent dignity of man, principles of democracy, freedom to express views and opinions, and the importance of international dialogue in a spirit of partnership. We are characterised by the belief that it is precisely in the conditions of globalisation and international competition that more opportunities and opportunities await those who base their activities on national cultures and communities. It is those unmeasurable but powerful sources comparable to mountains that constitute a key motivating factor for action and going further, one step higher.

From a conceptual point of view, the word “club” is associated with a place where hunger and thirst can be quenched; a meeting point; a confraternity of people looking

in the same direction, but not necessarily sharing the same views. A club is also a place for exchanging arguments and discussions leading to a common position or helping to identify existing divergences in order to build a way to reconcile differences of interests.

Nevertheless, it is important that real discussion clubs are governed by rules known from the most ancient times, such as the *petitio principii* – do not take as a premise what is yet to be proven, or the *ad populum* – do not claim that since a thesis is universally accepted it must be true. “Above all, one needs to know what he is talking about, or the whole discussion serves no purpose” Plato had already noted – and this is yet another principle of the “Europe of the Carpathians” conferences which have now been organised for two decades, and whose creative development led to the establishment of the Europe of the Carpathians Club.

If the claim that Western culture has a chance of surviving in today’s world under the condition of putting its arrogance aside (by gaining self-confidence in the meantime), the Europe of the Carpathians Club has been created to play the role of the salt of the earth and the dust of wisdom on the Vistula, Vltava, Dnieper, Danube and, in every place where people in touch with these landscapes, nature, and culture, the beauty of which is difficult to describe in words happen to live.

International Europe of the Carpathians Clubs

On February 4, 2022, the meeting initiating the activity of the International Europe of the Carpathians Clubs took place.

The most important postulates of the IECC are:

- a proposal to organise conferences in Lviv, Mikulichyn, Yaremche, Budapest, Tokaj, Suceava, Presov;
- the preparation of an anthology of the literature of the Carpathians, the publication of a Europe of the Carpathians atlas;
- the presentation of an exhibition on the biodiversity of the Carpathians at the UN headquarters in New York;
- the organisation of the Carpathian Business Forum, where clubs could be used to exchange experiences regarding support for the sector of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Carpathian countries;
- a proposal for the functioning of the Club as a secretariat that informs members about important events, plans, and activities;



Marek Kuchciński – Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Sejm

- the development of a joint index of scientific journals and the creation of a library for this part of Europe.

Attention was drawn to the unique cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity of the region, and at the same time, its great economic results in recent years. The need for intensifying cooperation within the “Europe of the Carpathians” in times of extreme geopolitical instability has also been underlined. The common cultural heritage was pointed out, with the simultaneous lack of mutual knowledge between neighbouring cultures. The information that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe receive usually comes from the West or from Russia.

Four areas that should be dealt with in international cooperation have been identified: culture, economy, politics, and nature (biodiversity). Each of these areas should be considered on various levels: mutual, European, and global. In this context, it was proposed to consider the organisation of industry conferences, the fruit of which could be publications or magazines with a focus on tourism. The economic aspect of regional cooperation was underlined. The latter could lead to the implementation of business clubs – serving the exchange of experiences regarding support for the sector of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Carpathian countries. It was suggested

to organise the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in various cities in Poland, but also abroad. It was indicated that the Europe of the Carpathians Club could serve as a reflection on what other activities should be undertaken to raise the standard of living in the region, not forgetting the concern for cultural and natural heritage. It was emphasised that the creation of clubs should take not only the Carpathian perspective into account, but that the latter should ultimately be wider, covering the whole of Central and Eastern Europe.

In order to formalise the “Europe of the Carpathians” cooperation, the International Europe of the Carpathians Club has been proposed. The founding meeting took place on April 5, 2022, during which resolutions have unanimously adopted the Regulations of the “Europe of the Carpathians” Club association and the election of the association’s board – which is presided by Alexandra Ochmańska. The Program Council of the Europe of the Carpathians Clubs was also established.

Dunajec River Gorge in the Pieniny Mountains, Poland-Slovakia





Orthodox church of St James the Younger Apostle, Powroźnik, Poland

Meeting of the International Club of Europe of the Carpathians, Krasiczyn, 4 February 2022

1. **Marek Kuchciński**, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Sejm, author of the “Europe of the Carpathians” initiative
2. **Ryszard Terlecki**, Deputy Marshal of the Polish Parliament
3. **Andrzej Adamczyk**, Minister of Infrastructure
4. **Małgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak**, State Secretary, Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy
5. **Włodzimierz Bernacki**, State Secretary, Government Plenipotentiary for Monitoring the Implementation of Higher Education and Science Reform
6. **Krzysztof Szczerski**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the UN
7. **Mykola Kniazhytski**, Co-Chairman of the Parliamentary Group for Interparliamentary Relations with the Republic of Poland
8. **Włodzimierz Ortyl**, Marshal of the Podkarpackie Region
9. **Piotr Pilch**, Deputy Marshal of the Podkarpackie Region
10. **Andrzej Zybertowicz**, Advisor to the President of the Republic of Poland
11. **Bogusław Sonik**, Vice-President of the Carpathian Parliamentary Group
12. **Piotr Babinetz**, Member of the Polish Parliament, Chairman of the Committee on Culture and Media
13. **Bogdan Rzońca**, Member of the European Parliament
14. **Jerzy Kwieciński**, Vice-President of the Management Board of Bank Pekao S.A.
15. **Ján Hudácky**, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in Prešov, former Member of the National Council
16. **Jan Malicki**, Director of the Centre for East European Studies, University of Warsaw
17. **Igor Cependa**, Rector of the Carpathian National University
18. **Ștefan Purici**, Vice-Chancellor for International Relations, Ștefan Universitet Suceava
19. **Maciej Szymanowski**, Director of the Wacław Felczak Institute for Polish-Hungarian Cooperation
20. **Zygmunt Berdychowski**, Chairman of the Programme Council of the Economic Forum
21. **Dawid Lasek**, Vice-President of the Association of Carpathian Euroregion
22. **Markiyan Malskyy**, University of Lviv, former Ambassador of Ukraine to Poland

23. **Jan Draus**, University of Rzeszów, President of the College of the Institute of National Remembrance
24. **Ákos Engelmayer**, former Ambassador of Hungary to Poland, President of the Hungarian Community in Poland
25. **Csaba G. Kiss**, Loránd Eötvös University
26. **Márian Šuplata**, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica



27. **Andrzej Paniw**, Przemyśl Cultural Association
28. **Waldemar Wiglusz**, President of the Society of Friends of Science in Przemyśl
29. **Anna Pragłowska**, Przemyśl Cultural Association
30. **Jan Jarosz**, Director of the National Museum of the Przemysl Region
31. **Janusz Czarski**, Director of the Cultural Centre in Przemyśl
32. **Janusz Fudała**, President of ORLEN Oil in Krakow





The Transfagarasan Highway, Romania



Awards for artists and people of culture during the International Triennial of Painting of the Carpathian Region – Silver Quadrangle 2021

A preview exhibition of the International Triennial of Painting of the Carpathian Region – Silver Quadrangle 2021 was held at the castle in Krasiczyn as part of the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference.

Deputy Minister of Culture and National Heritage Jarosław Sellin stressed the importance of the event: *This is a crucial cultural initiative – regional, but with a prominent international character. Thanks to this event, we can familiarise ourselves with current trends in*

Jarosław Sellin – Deputy Minister of Culture and National Heritage, General Conservator of Historical Monuments





From left: Akos Engelmayer, Janusz Kopecki, Marek Kuchciński, Krzysztof Skowroński

contemporary art (in this case, painting) and promote them. The international aspect confirms this, as we can admire works by artists living in the border areas of Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and Hungary. The Deputy Head of the Ministry of Culture congratulated the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Przemyśl, which has been organising successive exhibition editions for many years with increasing success, thus contributing to strengthening cultural ties in the Carpathian region. He added: I am delighted that in the sphere of painting, national borders are blurring and that thanks to the Triennale, we can talk about shared values, tendencies and artistic models.

The preview tour of the Silver Quadrilateral 2021 exhibition was preceded by a ceremony to present medals and departmental decorations to individuals who have been particularly outstanding in the field of artistic creation.

Silver Medal for Merit to Culture – Gloria Artis

The silver medal for “Meritorious Service to Culture Gloria Artis” from the hands of Deputy Minister Jarosław Sellin was received by **Narcyz Piórecki**, who coordinated and led educational and artistic projects, including the Garden Festival at the Arboretum in Bolestraszyce.

Bronze Medal for Merit to Culture – Gloria Artis

The bronze medal was awarded to 12 people:

Janusz Cywicki – has been associated with the Contemporary Art Gallery in Przemyśl for over 40 years. His active creative and scientific activity is reflected in numerous exhibitions and artistic events of international scope – above all, the International Carpathian Painting Triennial – Silver Quadrilateral.

Jan Ferenc – curator of international open-air painting workshops in Slonim, initiator and organiser of the International Art Forum “On Paper Without Borders” in Lublin and the International Triennial of Contemporary Drawing in Nałęczów. He has taken part in over 270 collective exhibitions, both national and international.

Marek Mikrut – author of more than 120 book covers and 250 posters and founder of the Society of Fine Arts in Przemyśl.

Grażyna Niezgoda is a photographer with impressive artistic output, winner of many awards and prizes. She is also an expert of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage in the field of art and a cultural animator.

Helena Wodnicka – an artist active in painting, drawing, and pastel fields. Graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, a teacher at the Secondary Art School in Jarosław. Awarded many times for her works, she has had numerous individual and collective exhibitions.

Monika Brewczak – cultural animator in the district of Sanok and the Subcarpathian Voivodeship, musician, and composer. Founder of the vocal group Soul, in which she serves as conductor, president, and caretaker of the mixed choir Sonores.

Janusz Czarski – Director of the Cultural Centre in Przemyśl, involved in discovering, cultivating and promoting borderland culture in the Podkarpacie region.

Janusz Polaczek – historian disseminating knowledge about national heroes, particularly Tadeusz Kościuszko and Prince Józef Poniatowski. His area of interest also includes borderland subjects, the Polish-French brotherhood of arms and artistic links between these nations.

Barbara Torba – teacher and artist, for many years associated with the Youth Cultural Centre in Przemyśl. She has devoted her life to working with artistically gifted (both artistically and in acting) young people.

Jan Musiał – journalist, author and publisher, organiser of cultural events and lecturer on the Polish language at seminars in Przemyśl and Lviv. He served as editor of, among others, the strike newspaper “Trwamy,” the monthly “Z Dołu” or the



Ceremony for awarding medals and decorations to distinguished artists and people of culture, Krasieczyn, 5 February 2022

publications “Busola” and “Strych Kulturalny.” He was also a columnist for the annuals “Dialog Dwóch Kultur” and “Studia Leopoliensia.”

Marek Zazula – cello teacher leading chamber ensembles at the Artur Malawski State Music School Complex in Przemyśl. Organiser, artistic director, conductor and cellist of the chamber orchestra and madrigal choir Capella Premisliensis. A respected community worker and cultural animator.

Father Marek Wojnarowski – Director of the Archdiocesan Museum in Przemyśl, has been acting as a diocesan conservator since 2007 and, as part of this work, takes care of the monuments of the archdiocese.

Honorary Award “Meritorious for Polish Culture”

Deputy Minister Jarosław Sellin also handed out honorary badges of “Merit for Polish Culture,” awarded by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Prof. Piotr Gliński, to individuals who have distinguished themselves in the creation, dissemination and protection of culture.

The badge of special significance was awarded to Akos Engelmayer, the former Hungarian ambassador to Poland, who had been associated with Poland since the 1960s. In Budapest in 1956, he was a participant in the uprising of Hungarian society against Soviet interference and domination. In Poland, he studied at the University of Warsaw and then worked as a journalist. He was a courier and intermediary in contacts between the Polish and Hungarian opposition. He also became a member of the Solidarity Trade Union. Between 1990 and 1995, he was the Hungarian ambassador to Poland, and since 2002 he has been the President of the Hungarian Community in Poland. Throughout this period, he was heavily involved in culture. On his initiative, a plaque dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian uprising was unveiled in 1986 in Podkowa Leśna, near Warsaw. In the 1990s and at the beginning of the present century, there was no significant project in the Polish-Hungarian relations and cultural links in Poland in which he did not participate. He was the initiator or co-author of many publications, exhibitions and debates that significantly contributed to strengthening the Polish-Hungarian cultural exchange.

The decorations were also awarded to Zofia Bator – co-founder and president of the Society of Lovers of Sacred Art in Przemyśl, Andrzej Cieszyński – an artist whose multifaceted work includes interesting figurative compositions, portraits and drawing works, and Waldemar Wiglusz, a Solidarity activist who after martial law was involved in independent culture, the distribution of the underground press and the pastoral care of working people in Przemyśl.

Decorations for museum professionals

Among the honoured were also museum workers – retired and current employees of the National Museum of the Przemyśl Region, whose daily and arduous work, as well as non-professional involvement, translate into the promotion of culture and strengthening of national identity.

The badge of honour “Distinguished for Polish Culture” was awarded to Iwona Bobko, Małgorzata Dziura, Jan Jarosz, Karol Kicman, Katarzyna Trojanowska and Maria Wołk. The “For Care of Monuments” badge was awarded to Brygida Busz. The Diploma of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage was awarded to Andrzej Koperski and Dorota Zahel.

Source: Ministry of Culture and National Heritage



Rusinowa Polana, Tatra Mountains, Poland



Parliamentary diplomacy must be intensified – for the sake of Europe’s security

Professor Maciej Szymanowski, Director of the Wacław Felczak Institute for Polish-Hungarian Cooperation and moderator of the first panel of the 32nd “Europe of the Carpathians” conference, said:

Winston Churchill used to say that no one can be sure of life, property and honour when parliament is in session. However, we live in a time when it is absolutely the opposite. In those countries with strong national parliaments, citizens can be sure that their rights will be respected even in the clash with the significant pseudo-liberal concerns that talk a lot about freedom but use preventive censorship.

Professor Szymanowski noted that these days we see attempts to “rewrite history and change the balance of power in our part of Europe”. He, therefore, asked what role parliamentarians could play here. Rozalia-Ibolya Biró, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, said: – *Europe is facing many challenges and the European Union wants to play an increasingly important role in world politics and economy. To achieve these goals, developing, diversifying, and strengthening bilateral and regional relations is necessary. Parliamentary diplomacy must be intensified. We also need to start discussing as many areas as possible where we share common interests.* President Biró drew attention to the positive example of the Visegrad Group format: – *It is very good because, thanks to the common strategy of representing their own interests, the voice of the individual countries that make up the V4 Group has become stronger and more audible.*

Richárd Hörcsik, Chairman of the EU Affairs Committee of the Hungarian National Assembly, thanked for the initiative to establish the International Club of Europe of the Carpathians, which can help to make appropriate use of “this wonderful region with enormous potential.” The President pointed out that parliamentary diplomacy could work effectively if only in the field of security: – *As parliamentarians, we play a critical role as we are called upon to ensure peace in our Carpathian region.* Richárd



Maciej Szymanowski – Director of the Institute for Polish-Hungarian Cooperation

Hörcsik stressed that Europe had not been short of crises of various kinds in recent years: from economic crises to migration crises (not only on the Hungarian borders but also on the Polish-Belarusian border) to the growing threat from Russia. – *The European Union did not prevent these crises on the continent but reacted to them reactively.* The President assessed that “someone is keen to weaken the European Union and its constituent Member States.” – *In terms of security, Hungary has responded to the migration crisis. We have introduced solutions of a technical nature that have allowed us to control migration better and better protect Europe (...). We should take joint action for the Carpathian region. This conference enables us to look to the future with optimism and to believe that together we can deal with the challenges facing our region.* Hörcsik pointed out that the last Hungarian section of the Via Carpathia international route, linking northern and southern Europe, was already opened last October.

Mykola Kniazhytski, Co-Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Group for Inter-Parliamentary Relations with the Republic of Poland, drew attention to

disturbing reports in the Western media regarding the planned Russian aggression against Ukraine, which, according to these media, is expected to take place as early as February or March. – *Reading such reports, thinking of a good common European future is uneasy. We are not the only ones threatened by this aggressor. Poland has fallen victim to a hybrid war on the part of Belarus with Russian support.* Mykola Kniazhytski warned that “if Ukraine falls under the influence of Russia, the next aggression will be against the Baltic States and Poland”. – *The unity of the Carpathian countries is fundamental in this context, as is their readiness, in the event of Russian aggression – which is, in fact, already very real – to welcome people who have been victims of it and who will want to find refuge and peace precisely in the region's countries.* The Co-President drew attention to how many refugees there would be in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary if there was aggression from Russia. – *I would like to ask each of the representatives of the parliaments of the countries of the region present here to support parliamentary diplomacy. Everyone can speak out in the media and their societies. This voice of solidarity is extremely important for Ukrainians.* Mykola Kniazhytski recalled that Carpathian associations exist in Ukrainian and Polish parliaments. He expressed the hope that similar groups would also be established in other parliaments of the region.

Professor Maciej Szymanowski inquired: – *Could such a Carpathian group be established in the European Parliament?*

MEP Zdzisław Krasnodębski, in response to this question, said: – *Yes. It is imperative that we also work together regionally in the European Parliament. Some issues unite us, such as the issue of posted workers, but we should create the possibility for permanent contact across factional divides in the European Parliament. Sometimes, it is the case that our factions are so tight-knit that it is challenging to find formats in which we can talk to each other.* As the MEP noted, parliamentary diplomacy is important for several reasons: – *The first reason stems from the fact that foreign policy has changed. It is no longer a policy only between states, ministers or presidents, but it also takes place on a societal and parliamentary level. Secondly, it is significant that the European integration processes have meant that, in a sense, our European policy is no longer just foreign but also partly internal. There is also the question of the future role of national parliaments. I believe that we should reform the Union so that the role of the national parliaments is strengthened and the Union is rooted in our democracies at the level of the nation states. Unfortunately, there is also a tendency to the contrary. In order to shape Europe as a whole in the Union, we need the powerful voice of the national parliaments in our region and cooperation across political divides. We have common interests and often share the same values.*



From left: Maciej Szymanowski, Włodzimierz Bernacki, Ryszard Terlecki, Markiyan Malsky, Mykola Kniashytski, Bjorn Soder

Markiyan Malsky, Dean of the Faculty of International Relations at Lviv University and former Ukrainian ambassador to Poland, noted: – *Classical diplomacy is relatively closed; it has its own objectives and is shaped according to the instructions diplomats get from headquarters. However, the world is becoming more open, so other forms of diplomacy, including parliamentary diplomacy, are growing in importance.* Dean stressed that both Ukrainian diplomats and parliamentarians are pushing for their country’s admission to the EU and NATO, as well as for the creation of an international coalition to support Ukraine in the event of Russian aggression. Markiyan Malsky also identified three areas in which parliamentary diplomacy is very active. The first is international organisations; the second is standing committees in various organisations; the third and most important is inter-parliamentary diplomacy, i.e. cooperation with parliamentarians from Poland and the Baltic states. – *We also put forward an interesting proposal for the parliaments of many countries – the proposal to create a Ukrainian platform for world parliaments so that they can join in solving the problems of Crimea and Donbass.* Markiyan Malsky pointed out that the “Europe of the Carpathians”, the so-called “Lublin Triangle”, as well as parliamentary youth groups are proven platforms for cooperation.

Žygimantas Pavilionis, Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian Seimas, said: – *The Lithuanian Parliament has always fought for freedom and democracy. These values need to be defended. So we should be united. And when it comes to regional cooperation formats, we should be creative and react quickly to the latest developments.* Pavilionis called for solidarity with Ukrainians and for them to fight for every square inch of an independent Ukraine. He encouraged people to also stand up for the Ukrainian state in the West – in talks in Washington, London, Berlin and Paris. The politician further pointed out that there are already 30,000 Russian soldiers on Belarusian territory, which could mean the end of the dream of a free Belarus.

Nikoloz Samkharadze, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Georgian Parliament, suggested organising a “Europe of the Caucasus” alongside the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference. He also pointed out that the Russians were strengthening their forces in the occupied territories. – *In 2008, Russia attacked Georgia, and in 2014 Ukraine. The Russians violate their neighbours’ sovereignty and territorial integrity and get away with it every time. If we do not represent a common position, we are in danger of returning to the Cold War, a divided Europe, and a large-scale war threat. (...) We must meet more often because our unity is the only way to deter Russia and increase our security.*

Björn Söder, Member of the Swedish Riksdag, pointed out that Russia is increasingly trying to rearrange security in Europe and poses a threat to the entire region. He also congratulated the governments in Poland and Lithuania, which have taken effective action against hybrid activities on their borders. – *Despite military threats, we should continue to develop diplomatic efforts, including parliamentary diplomacy.*

Professor Włodzimierz Bernacki, Senator, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Education and Science, said: – *MPs and senators are representatives of nations and bodies that last and are least exposed to sudden changes.* According to the Deputy Minister, parliamentarians can effectively represent the interests of their nations. – *Our world has been hit by the most severe crisis of political elites. I do not recall a similar crisis in the history of parliamentarism. As parliamentarians, we should remember that political correctness does not apply to us, and it is our duty to reach back to what is fundamental to the existence of our peoples; we do not have the right to adapt our languages and speech to changing realities. This imperative should finally resound and our speech as parliamentarians should be: yes-yes, no-no.*



Danube Bend, Hungary

Ryszard Terlecki, Deputy Marshal of the Polish Sejm, said: – *This is a critical moment because there is a discussion in the Union about the organisation's future. And although it is essentially a discussion on the sidelines, it is important to take part in it.* The Deputy Marshal also regretted that there is still no strong cooperation in our region, and in particular, for two and a half years, it has not been possible to establish a Central Europe group either in the European Parliament or in the Council of Europe.



From the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and Aegean Sea through the Carpathians? New connections within the TEN-T network as an opportunity for the region

Panel II was moderated by **Bogdan Rzońca, Member of the European Parliament**, who began by reporting on recent news from Brussels. The moderator explained that he and 80 other MEPs had written letters to Frans Timmermans and Ursula von der Leyen, among others, on the recognition of EU funding for gas investments. That is because until now, the official view was that gas – like nuclear – is a harmful energy source. After numerous interventions, Commissioner von der Leyen announced that gas and nuclear could be financed from the EU budget. Mr Rzonca then asked the guests for their opinions on creating a new road corridor from the Baltic to the Black Sea and the Aegean.

Tālis Linkaits, Minister of Transport of Latvia, at the beginning of his speech, referred to the meeting he recently had with Andrzej Adamczyk, Minister of Infrastructure of Poland. Their talks concerned the progress of Polish-Latvian cooperation in transport and logistics. Minister Linkaits said that each new corridor and each new branch within the TEN-T network would contribute to the development of a common European transport network. He added that this could be done based on national or regional networks.

It is imperative to assess the new TEN-T proposals carefully, for we know that thanks to these corridors, we can increase the competitiveness of our regions and countries. We should talk about the development of transport corridors in the context of the Three Seas Initiative, which is an answer to the urgent need to improve transport links in the least developed, eastern part of the European Union, on the north–south axis. In this region, strengthening transport corridors will not only improve the quality of life of hundreds of millions of people, but will also contribute to socio-economic development.

The Minister said that the railway link project between the Baltic States and Central Europe would increase the efficiency of rail, passenger and freight transport in the area. He stressed that this would bring great benefits to the Baltic States, Poland, the Carpathian region and the European Union as a whole. He went on to add that the development of transport links should not be limited to transport infrastructure alone. Indeed, it should be borne in mind that a new chain of logistic connections is being created between the Black, Baltic, Aegean and Adriatic Seas.

Oleksandr Kubrakov, Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine, announced the lifting of the ban (introduced on 30 November 2021) on rail transit through Ukraine to Poland by 10 February this year, which was agreed upon during a meeting with Minister Adamczyk and the President of Ukrainian Railways and the Presidents of PKP Group companies (held the same day in Krasiczyn). He also raised the subject of border crossings and the regulation of the work of Polish and Ukrainian border services. He reported that line 102 would be renewed by the end of this year and that ministers from Poland and Ukraine had discussed a plan to connect their capitals by high-speed rail. Finally, he expressed his hope for EU support in connecting Ukraine to the great transport corridor.

Mustafa-Masi Nayyem, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine, continued the themes raised by his predecessor. He informed that in Ukraine, the modernisation of many kilometres of railway traction was planned for this year, and the electrification of almost 500 kilometres of railway lines was planned for next year. The Deputy Minister also referred to cooperation with Poland. He spoke of the long-standing modernisation of the Korzec–Jagodzin road (leading to the Polish border) and expressed the hope that this work would be completed soon. He also reported on the modernisation of the railway section from Kowel to the Polish border and added that 43 km of this section had been repaired last year. In addition, the Deputy Minister spoke about the planned renovation of the largest border crossing – in Jahodyn, through which 40 per cent of transport to the west takes place. Finally, the speaker added that approach roads to all border crossings are also being built.

Jan Sechter, Deputy Minister of Transport of the Czech Republic, emphasised the importance of regional cooperation, which effectively translates into the defence of the interests and position of the countries of the Carpathian region in the EU. He



Andrzej Adamczyk – Minister of Infrastructure of the Republic of Poland

pointed out that the Czech Republic would take over the presidency of the Council of the EU in July and would be finalising the TEN-T network in the field of transport. The Deputy Minister also spoke about the need for talks with Ukraine on the issue of connections to the TEN-T network, so that harmonisation of plans would be the link in the strategic dimension. He added that the Eastern Partnership should translate into concrete infrastructure programmes.

Andrzej Adamczyk, Minister of Infrastructure of the Republic of Poland, announced that he had come up with the initiative to create the Rail Carpatia corridor at the 2021 summit of the Three Seas countries. He added that such a rail corridor for the Three Seas countries is absolutely essential. In addition, the Minister referred to the statement of Commissioner Adina Valean, who said that her idea was to realise a rail link in the Rail Carpatia corridor.

There is no rail transport problem from the Aegean, Black Sea to southern Hungary. It exists from South Hungary to Rail Baltica. The connection to this rail route will have a positive impact on the connectivity of the Central and Eastern European countries, the speaker emphasised.

Minister Adamczyk also said that the European Commission has just proposed a new transport corridor within Via Carpatia. It is to lead from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea. The Minister added that the realisation of this investment is the result of efforts made since 2016 with the enormous participation of Tomasz Poręba, who has been active in the European Commission on this issue for years.

Rafał Weber, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Infrastructure, talked about the practical side of the Via Carpatia project. He said that of the 717 kilometres intended to run through Polish territory, 30 per cent had been made available. Just over 50 per cent of the route is under construction, and 20 per cent is in the preparatory phase.

I am doing my best to ensure that Via Carpatia, which has passed from the zone of dreams, from the zone of various meetings to implementation, is a project brought to completion. (...) Historically, we know that it was not easy (...) to make Western European countries realise how important Via Carpatia is.

The Undersecretary of State added that obtaining funding for the project was challenging. The breakthrough came in 2016 when the national road construction programme was amended. Rafał Weber also informed that the value of the realisation of the Via Carpatia section on the Polish side was PLN 30 billion.

Peter Hrapko, Director of the Department of Transport Strategy at the Ministry of Transport and Construction of Slovakia, began by thanking the Polish side for the fact that, thanks to joint efforts, the construction of the TEN-T North–South corridor network had been achieved. He said that although this corridor was not part of the core network, it was included in the extended TEN-T network and is of great importance for implementing further projects of this kind. The Director then reported that the road from Prešov to the Hungarian border had been completed in Slovakia. He added that the section of the road from Prešov to the Polish border was in inferior condition, but it was planned to be reconstructed by 2030. The Director also expressed his satisfaction that the corridor under construction had been approved as multimodal, i.e. both road and rail.

It is of great importance because in the north it will connect with Rail Baltica and further this route will go to Hungary, to Bulgaria, so this connection of the Baltic Sea with the Aegean would be very significant. (...) To conclude, I will say what our Minister always says – that investments



From left: Bogdan Rzońca, Oleksandr Kubrakov, Mustafa-Masi Nayyem, Andrzej Adamczyk, Rafał Weber

in transport infrastructure bring many benefits to the state because they translate into more work and thus into regional development and more opportunities for cooperation with neighbouring countries and, of course, within the EU as a whole.

Péter Tóth, Hungary's Deputy State Secretary for Transport, addressed the question of what is the Hungarian government's attitude to the possibility of submitting joint projects with other European countries and whether there is a chance to fight for these projects in the European Union arena.

In my opinion, when we talk about doing joint projects, about lobbying together, we are actually knocking on an open door because, in the case of both roads and railways, we are working together with our colleagues from neighbouring countries.

The Secretary of State cited the high-speed railway linking the Visegrad countries as an example of inter-state cooperation. He added that the projects related to this railway, although officially separate, are fully coordinated. Peter Tóth pointed to the amber route as a second example of cooperation.

Vladimir Varbanov, Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications of Bulgaria, stressed that it was vital to construct the transport corridor in a coordinated way. He added that the Visegrad Group is introducing higher standards in the TEN-T network.

I would like to stress that the TEN-T networks are an excellent opportunity for the development of our region, and we will identify our needs, set priorities and create an appropriate project plan to improve access to all European Union areas.

The Deputy Minister said that the high-quality transport network under construction would ensure Bulgaria's connection to the EU and sustainable development. He pointed out plans to develop the railway infrastructure and build a new bridge between Bulgaria and Romania. He concluded by adding that Bulgaria wanted to build a solid transport corridor on the north–south line.

At the beginning of his speech, **Julius Skačkauskas, Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications of Lithuania**, thanked Minister Adamczyk for his outstanding contribution to creating international transport corridors, which, he added, would allow the development of the North–South intermodal transport corridor.

Rail Baltica is one of the main routes of the transport corridor in the north. This project is primarily aimed at the Baltic countries, giving them opportunities for better connectivity and trade with the rest of Europe.

Speaking about the work on creating this maritime corridor, the speaker referred to the need for cooperation with Poland playing a major role in connecting Rail Baltica with the rest of the corridor. The Deputy Minister also pointed out that the Lithuanian side, together with its Polish partner PKP Cargo, has been carrying out intermodal transport to Benelux countries and northern Germany since last year, intending to find potential European markets in north Italy and the Czech Republic.



Green Deal in Europe of the Carpathians – organic farming as an opportunity for small and medium-sized farms, carbon farming, Biodiversity Strategy 2030, Forestry Strategy

Panel III was moderated by **Teresa Pamuła, MP**, a member of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development. The discussion revolved around the question of measures that should be taken by the European Union countries, particularly by the Carpathian region countries, to bring their economies and agriculture into line with the strategies prepared by the European Commission.

Janusz Wojciechowski, EU Commissioner for Agriculture, began his speech by discussing the phenomenon of farms in the Podkarpacie region, which have an average size of 5 ha (in Poland, the average farm size is 11 ha, in Europe – 16) and yet their production results are surprisingly good. The Commissioner pointed out that the Podkarpacie voivodship had the lowest level of mineral fertiliser use of all regions in Poland and higher yields than regions with better-quality land, so better productivity was not necessarily linked to the intensification of production or use of large quantities of chemicals or pesticides.

Janusz Wojciechowski then returned to the main topic of discussion. He talked about the Green Deal, which is covered by two strategies – a farm-to-table strategy and a biodiversity conservation strategy. The first is to supply local processing to the local market. The second is to reduce the use of pesticides (plant protection products by 50 per cent, chemical fertilisers by 20 per cent) and encourage the establishment of organic farms.

Organic farming is today a great opportunity for regions such as precisely the mountainous regions, like the Podkarpacie region, like the regions on both sides of the Carpathians. It is an excellent option for agriculture, which has little chance of competing with the massive, sometimes intensive, industrial agriculture we see in Europe. But with adequately targeted support with funds from the EU, which are very large for this purpose, such regions can benefit from this transformation.

Viorel Gherciu, Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova, pointed out that agriculture played an important role in Moldova's economy – together with the processing industry, it accounted for more than 20 per cent of GDP. The Minister referred to the national strategy for developing agriculture and the rural environment, which aimed to establish organic farms and allocated about 20–25 per cent of cultivated land to organic farming.

We will give the necessary support to farmers who implement practices and technologies that sustainably ensure this sector's development. We will want to develop organic farming by providing subsidies not only for the transition period but also afterwards. The Republic of Moldova is interested in developing this direction. We want to cooperate as closely as possible with our colleagues from the European Union.

As Viorel Gherciu stressed, this direction was supported by the Moldovan government for a number of reasons – from reduced environmental impact and offering healthy products to consumers to neutralising carbon emissions.

Petr Jílek, Deputy Minister responsible for the Organic Agriculture Section and Research and Development at the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, in response to a question on how to encourage Czech farmers to convert their farms to organic, said that the potential for growth of such farms in the country depended on consumer preferences in the market and the level of the government's support.

Organic farming is an integral part of our agriculture. We currently have roughly 5,000 such farms, which manage 15 per cent of the land. And there is great potential for growth here (...). Organic farming is positive for biodiversity, as it does not negatively affect animal and plant populations (...). I feel that research will significantly impact the development of organic farming – it brings new knowledge, new technologies to farming practices and makes it possible to increase productivity.

Zsolt Feldman, Secretary of State at the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture, referred to the Green Deal's target of increasing the area under organic farming to 25 per cent and reported that in Hungary, last year this figure stood at 6.1 per cent. – Thus, it has been possible to double the organic area in five years (previously, the rate was 3 per cent). Zsolt Feldman pointed out that Hungary wants to maintain sustainable development and double these areas again by 2030. The goal is feasible, but it is



Janusz Wojciechowski – European Commissioner for Agriculture

necessary to create the right conditions. The most important thing is knowledge, which will help in rational ecological management.

You have to know perfectly well what inputs to use, how to maintain sustainability and get the right amount of yield – in other words, it requires a great deal of agricultural knowledge. There has to be a network that provides this knowledge that helps these people to farm rationally in an ecological style. And we need to strengthen these elements and give all the support to the eco-farms. That is why we are launching a three-year programme, devoting €115 million to this, and we hope that these 5,000 farmers, out of a group of 165,000 farmers who have crops at a high level, will get the right help.

Anna Gembicka, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Poland, responded to a question on how farmers are prepared for implementing the new financial perspective and on the planned solutions in the sphere of agriculture. The Secretary of State indicated that at the preparatory stage of the National Strategic Plan, extensive consultations with farmers, the agri-food sector, sectoral organisations and farmers’ trade unions were relied upon.

Training and information counselling, as well as individual counselling for farmers, was implemented.

We know that in connection with these eco-schemes and the need to apply specific new methods, as well as the use of modern technologies in the field of fertilisation or irrigation, it will be necessary to pass on, comprehensively, this knowledge to farmers (...). I think an essential component is precisely the issue of applying precision agriculture – modern technologies – so that we are able to respond to environmental challenges.

Edward Siarka, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Climate and Environment of the Republic of Poland, responded to a question relating to the recent assumptions made in a European Parliament regulation concerning the making available on the EU market of certain goods and products linked to deforestation or forest degradation. The Secretary of State pointed out that what is important in the said regulation is that the European Commission wants to subordinate all forest policy to climate policy objectives.

This direction is debatable for us insofar as it means, under Polish conditions, a departure from what we call sustainable forest management. The subordination of forestry policy, but also in some ways of agricultural policy (...) raises severe risks for us (...), leading de facto to many restrictions (...). There an excellent opportunity for all of us in organic farming. However, in agricultural and forestry management, all the bureaucratic burdens (which appear in all these documents) and the piloting of these matters from the Brussels bureaucrats' level may cause additional administrative duties and may also lead to the result that many European products, today already produced in a sustainable way, may fall out of the market, as they will cease to be competitive.

Anna Paluch, Vice-Chairwoman of the Sejm's Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Forestry, drew attention to the lack of consistency in the understanding of the term "strict protection" in EU countries and stressed that if the provisions and definitions included in the Biodiversity Strategy were not comparable in all EU countries, difficulties might arise in the proper implementation of this protection.

There is a demand that 30 per cent of the land should be protected, of which one-third, or 10 per cent of the country's area, should be under strict protection. In Poland, which cares about nature protection and has 23 national parks and countless reserves, about 1 per cent of the area (...) is covered by national parks, but strict protection does not apply everywhere because in many reserves



From left: Teresa Pamuła, Janusz Wojciechowski, Anna Paluch, Jan Tabor

active protection is carried out (...). The other thing is that in our country there is 1 per cent of the reserves, in Slovakia the areas of national parks are more, but the rigours are completely different, as the Law defines this on Nature Protection.

According to **Martin Kováč, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic**, Slovakia identifies with the view that the European Green Deal harbours the potential to foster sustainable economic development and environmental protection, such as reducing the risk of climate change. In this context, natural resources such as soil or water become not only tools for cultivation but also significant regulators of biological processes – and therefore require special attention.

By 2023, we need to reduce heavy metals in water, develop new farming methods, reduce erosion and take care of water resources and good soil structure. To talk about sustainable agricultural cycles, we must have balanced resources. Every square kilometre of land is important and determines the hydrological processes. (...) Currently, the soil is a “bank” that collects pollutants.

Sorin Moisă, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Agriculture of Romania, referred to Romania's strategic plan. He pointed out the need to support farmers and the agricultural environment and stressed the importance of using the soil properly, reducing the use of chemicals, controlling sources of pollution and ensuring the food supply for citizens. Sorin Moisă also pointed out that an essential place in Romania's farming policy was given to generations of farmers up to the age of 40.

Romania needs more young farmers – which is a problem that the whole EU faces. We want a new generation of farmers to switch to organic farming and create future-proof agriculture. We also want to include the young generation of farmers in a new programme where we will provide significant funds to kick-start organic agriculture.

Jan Tabor, Acting Deputy Director General of the State Forests for Forest Management, addressed the issue of biodiversity and forestry. He stressed that many of the actions initiated under the Green Deal were valuable and needed – increasing forest cover was the most effective way to fix carbon, and protecting water resources was now crucial from both a management and environmental perspective.

The higher the temperatures, the greater the evaporation, the greater the deficit, and the greater the drought problem. Forests have unique properties for retaining water in the ecosystem, which is why we have already written in the Horizon programme as if, in advance, we will keep moisture in the forest. And we are not just talking about small retention measures (...), but also about retaining water in wetland habitats. Firstly, this water stays, percolates into the ecosystem and feeds the groundwater. Secondly, the irrigated soil does not decompose and does not emit carbon dioxide. So we have two elements in one action.



Recovery of the Carpathian region in the aftermath of the economic crisis

Panel IV was moderated by **Vice President of the Management Board of Bank Polski S.A. Jerzy Kwieciński**, who, in his introduction, referred to the current pandemic situation in the world. As the moderator emphasised, on the one hand we were witnessing the biggest pandemic in 100 years (i.e. since the Spanish flu swept through the world), and on the other hand, we had been witnessing the most significant economic crisis since World War II.

Before Jerzy Kwieciński gave the floor to the guests, a message was heard from **Elisa Ferreira, EU Commissioner for Cohesion and Reform**, who spoke about cohesion policy in her speech.

Through cohesion policy, we have always (...) encouraged on-going cooperation between the Carpathian regions, local governments and civil society. Through cohesion policy, we can make sure that no part is left behind after the COVID period.

The Commissioner added that €23 billion in emergency funds had been earmarked for purchasing medical equipment and ensuring business continuity and employment through special grants. She also announced the launch of new programmes that will support investment in regions across Europe. Commissioner Ferreira then addressed the people of the Carpathians to make three types of investment in particular: in business and entrepreneurship, public infrastructure and nature conservation.

Piotr Arak, Director of the Polish Economic Institute, reported that the Polish economy had recovered and returned to pre-pandemic levels in the second quarter of last year. The Director added that Poland's economy had shrunk by 2 per cent since 2020, and last year our country had the lowest recession (next to Sweden and Denmark). Director Arak stressed that in Poland, aid measures were non-refundable. He



From left: Jerzy Kwieciński, Piotr Arak, Ján Hudácky

also stated that the consequence of the relatively rapid recovery of the economy was the so-called bottlenecks in the global economy.

All the economies, both in Western Europe and in us in Central Europe, were growing so fast (...) that the planned production capacity for some goods was insufficient. No one foresaw that these economies would emerge from this crisis so quickly, which was the biggest since the Second World War, and consumers would go to the shops and start spending money so rapidly.

Waldemar Buda, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy of the Republic of Poland, answered questions about the government's activities within the framework of the Polish Ladenburg Strategy and European Funds programmes, as well as the work on the preparation and adoption of the Carpathian Strategy at European Union level. At the outset, he mentioned the "test" Poland passed while dealing with the unstable employment market. The Polish state introduced a financial shield, social security exemptions, and stoppages. The Secretary of State stressed that these elements made it possible to maintain jobs. He added that although we struggled with inflation these days, unemployment levels were minimal.

Both national and European funds have been allocated for this purpose. Waldemar Buda also spoke about the start of work on preparing a macro-regional strategy for the Carpathians. Stressing its exceptional importance, he referred to the cooperation between the Carpathian regions, which, he said, was natural and unforced, and its common denominator was the Carpathians.

Jan Sarnowski, former Deputy Minister of Finance of the Republic of Poland, addressed the problem of inflation. He stated that it was a global phenomenon.

In October last year, the first European Union countries began to implement programmes aimed at limiting the losses that would be incurred by those most vulnerable to price increases, especially the lowest earners, pensioners, and recipients of disability benefits. (...) In parallel to the implementation of programmes in other countries of the European Union and our region (...), the Polish government has been implementing its own projects in this area.

Jan Sarnowski highlighted that VAT on natural gas, electricity, system heat, and excise duties on key energy raw materials had been reduced in Poland. A zero VAT rate was also introduced on food and fertilisers, and VAT on fuel was reduced.

When asked about Slovakia's exit from the 2020 economic crisis, **Ján Hudacký, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in Prešov**, stated that his country's economy was saved by big industry, big companies that were not affected by government regulations. He also stressed that the unemployment level during this crisis had only increased by 1 per cent. He acknowledged that given that Slovakia had never experienced such an enormous crisis, this was a good result. The worst situation was in tourism and catering, against which the government's restrictions were very restrictive, but, as the consul emphasised, thanks to social contributions, businesses in these industries managed to be saved. The Consul also pointed out that the automobile industry and mechanical engineering were generating revenues that enabled to see economic growth in 2021. Ján Hudacký also spoke about the current high inflation rate. He added that energy prices influenced it.

Energy prices were caused not only by Russia's gas supply policy (...) but also by the European Commission's nonsensical, high-ambition energy policy.

The Consul concluded by pointing out that a good option would be to reduce VAT on specific goods, as Poland was doing, to reduce the inflation level in the country.



From right: Zygmunt Berdychowski, Ján Hudacký, Piotr Arak, Jerzy Kwieciński

Zygmunt Berdychowski, Chairman of the Programme Council of the Economic Forum, answered the question of how companies cope during the crisis. According to the Chairman, the biggest challenge for entrepreneurs is not economic growth but, above all, security.

We are witnessing the departure into the history of the geo-strategic paradigm, in place for many hundreds of years, under which the one who has the technologies, in fact, consumes the surplus (...). Above all, this applies to the Western world because it was mainly here that the technologies that pushed us forward were created.

The President outlined the situation of countries with raw materials, such as China and Russia; they were aware of the importance of these raw materials and, therefore, wanted to share in the benefits.

These countries will not accept the deal we have had so far, the Western world's deal – that we take the whole pot from technology. We need to sit down at the table and talk to them.

Mihaly Khariy, Director of the Centre for Transformation, spoke on the economic situation in Ukraine. At the beginning of his speech, he stressed that the region's

economic development was dependent on the outbreak of war with Russia. At the same time, he added that Ukraine had already been in a *de facto* state of war since 2014.

Ukraine is the centre of a global conflict between Western democracies and an aggressive Russian regime. Ukraine's success is fundamental to maintaining democracy and stability in the world.

The Director reported on the US-led coalition of Western countries supporting Ukraine. He also mentioned the “Big Seven” countries, which supported Ukraine, helped it economically, provided it with weapons and were considering imposing additional sanctions on Russia. He also spoke about visits to Ukraine by leaders of partner countries. He stressed that the government could focus on a shared vision of transformation with geopolitical support.

Władysław Ortyl, Marshal of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, referred to the economic situation in the Carpathians and the Carpathian Strategy being developed.

The Carpathian Strategy can become an instrument to rebuild the economy in the Carpathians (...) to develop the Carpathian economy, especially in the area of tourism.

The Marshal spoke about the existing anti-crisis shield in Podkarpacie, fuelled by EU funds. He mentioned that the region received funds from the National Reconstruction Plan and the European Funds for the Podkarpackie programme.

Professor Marcin Szewczak – from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin – also spoke about the phenomenon of the depreciation of the Euroregion.

Euroregions, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, do not function to the extent they can, and this potential is not fully exploited. It is followed by the demand that these Euroregions should have a common mechanism to trigger civil society or all that can strengthen the economy in the Carpathian region in the post-pandemic rebound.

The Professor went on to talk about micro-projects, which would allow the Euroregions to be the very instruments that manage the relevant funds.



Section of the Transfagarasan Highway, Romania



Young champions – creators of the future of Central Europe: innovation, creativity, inventions

Panel V was moderated by **Robert Gönczi, research assistant at the Migration Research Institute in Budapest.**

Patryk Pijanowski, founder of Nebucode and creator of the TherapyCave app, talked about his path to success in 3D printing technology and the first conferences he organised on the subject. As a result, at the age of 18, he has two companies that can operate worldwide. He also pointed to his TherapyCave project, which made it easier to contact mental health professionals during a pandemic. Patryk Pijanowski emphasised that Poland had business potential, and that bold visions and creativity characterised Poles.

I think that's the most important thing. We also have great developers – from all of Eastern Europe. (...) This is a big plus, allowing us to grow and expand faster.

Michał Styczyński, a doctoral student at the Faculty of Biology at the University of Warsaw, talked about his scientific interests, which he was developing as part of his PhD. These are the study of Antarctic bacteria, which can be used practically in the environment and in various industries. Michał Styczyński said that, among other things, he managed to isolate a compound that can protect corals. The doctoral student assessed that Poland could be an inspiration for countries in the region in terms of scientific potential. However, the problem is that young people cannot write scientific projects or obtain funds for research.

It is a challenge to train young people in universities how to get money. Research money is available and people often don't know how to get it.



From left: Maciej Szymanowski, Robert Gonczy, Patryk Pijanowski, Michał Styczyński, Alicja Filiacz, Maksymilian Paczyński, Maciej Trojnar

Alicja Filiacz, winner of the 1st competition for a digital comic book on legends of the Podkarpackie region, talked about her idea for the competition entry – these were elements of Slavic mythology, which she reinterpreted. The winner said that Polish fairy tales and legends could become an inspiration for other countries.

Searching through all these legends and fairy tales, I came across many wonderful stories. Since I'm interested in fairy tales, animation and illustration, I would say that many countries can get curious and inspired by culture through fairy tales. It can be something that will interest other countries in the art industry.

Maksymilian Paczyński, winner of the international competition Impact Creators, organised by Intel (which involves creating a project based on artificial intelligence), talked about his work in the competition. He started a project that prevents falling asleep at the wheel – it detects the microsleep phase in the person driving and alerts them utilizing sound. The laureate said that young, talented scientists from Poland were not being talked about, and better ones were being sought abroad.

We have a lot of great people, a lot of great “brains” (...) that are open to the east, west, south, and north, but we need to change the mentality.

According to Maksymilian Paczyński, it is particularly important to develop creativity in children.

Maciej Trojnar, a three-time winner of the Geography Olympiad and captain of the Polish team at the National Geographic World Championships, talked about his inspiration for supporting young people. He co-founded a scholarship programme that allows students to meet at workshops led by experienced people representing particular fields of science. In addition to providing opportunities to develop passions and direct contact with mentors, the aim of the programme is to spot talented individuals and support them in developing their interests. Maciej Trojnar said that tools should be created to ensure that young people gaining knowledge abroad return to Poland and contribute to Polish success.

Maciej Trojnar – three-time winner of the Geography Olympiad, captain of the Polish team at the National Geographic World Championships





Church of St Michael the Archangel, Dębno Podhalańskie, Poland

Others can learn from us in terms of ingenuity and flexibility, and we can and should learn from others in terms of building structures and following procedures. I think this is our greatest asset on the one hand and our greatest weakness on the other. You could say that it is impossible to combine these things, but it is precisely our task to combine this “fire with water” – orderliness with creativity – to combine.



Universities and their social environment

Panel VI was chaired by **Jan Draus, President of the College of the Institute of National Remembrance**, who, in his introduction to the discussion, drew attention to the social responsibility of universities not only within a region or country, but also internationally.

Ștefan Purici, Vice-Chancellor for International Relations of the Ștefan cel Mare University in Suceava, confirmed the thesis that the COVID-19 pandemic generated new challenges for universities – it increased their social responsibility and challenged them to implement practical solutions. He also indicated the concrete actions that the university he represented had taken among the local community and with the help of institutions coordinating the fight against the pandemic.

The Ștefan cel Mare (Stefan the Great) University in Suceava was the only Romanian university to run a project on SARS-CoV-2 genome sequencing, despite the lack of a medical faculty. It is a university that has developed software for the health service in Romania that records COVID-19 patients by using scientific research on the spread of the disease. This was also linked to the creation of disinfection equipment for a local hospital. Bold answers are needed in complex situations (...). Universities too (...), when faced with various social and health challenges, need to respond very hard and boldly.

Pro-rector Purici went on to say that the University of Stefan the Great on the ground of cooperation between the Carpathian regions had participated in the Collegium Carpathicum project, funded by the Polish Parliament, in which academics from the Carpathian area shared their experiences with students from Romania. The Vice-Chancellor also mentioned that his university was involved in cross-border cooperation together with universities from Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine.



From left: Piotr Pilch, Ștefan Purici

Igor Tsependa, Rector of Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University, responded to the moderator's statement about establishing a Carpathian University.

The Collegium Carpathicum (...) initiative is a good start, not least because we have been able to bring together universities from the Visegrad Group countries, Ukraine, and Romania, which allows us to establish relationships between researchers and students. The first attempts at activities we could undertake even before the pandemic (which did not allow us to implement them fully) show that we are indeed on a perfect path.

Concerning the social responsibility of universities, Rector Tsependa cited a Polish-Ukrainian project – to be finalised this year as part of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Programme – aimed at adapting the former research observatory on Mount Pop Ivan to the needs of a mountain rescue centre.

Jan Malicki, Director of Eastern European Studies at the University of Warsaw, continued the theme taken up by his predecessor and recalled that the reconstruction of the observatory on Mount Pop Ivan began in 2012.

When the first actions were taken (and also in the following years), Malicki and Tsepeda were considered mad people in the sincerest sense. Fortunately, it was recognised that we were noble

lunatics. And lo and behold, the project succeeded in reaching its conclusion. Little, together with Rector Tsependa, we trust that as early as 2024, the International Scientific Centre “Observatory” (up there in the edifice) will begin to operate and that (...) it will begin to function as a scientific station as well as the aforementioned mountain rescue station and the Polish-Ukrainian School of Mountain Rescue.

Oleh Skrynyk, Head of the research project at the Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies at the University of Warsaw, a scholarship holder of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning of the Polish Academy of Sciences, talked about the equipment to install at the International Scientific Centre “Observatory”, including the planned meteo station.

The station is to have a GPS transmitter, solar panels and batteries and, in the longer term, it is to be integrated into the WMO network and have wind sensors installed on a 10 m high mast. From the basic meteorological parameters, the station will measure air pressure, wind speed and direction, air temperature and humidity, precipitation, snow cover thickness and soil temperature. Of the more advanced stuff, a balance meter will be installed to measure the balance of solar radiation. In Poland, only 17 stations measure solar radiation.

Piotr Pilch, Deputy Marshal of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, in the first part of his speech, informed about four projects implemented on the initiative of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship Self-Government, whose leading foreign partner was the State Emergency Service of Ukraine in the Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast.

In these four projects, which we submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Polish Development Aid programme, we managed to obtain more than PLN 1 million 100 thousand – huge funds, which in more than half (because about 600 thousand) were directed to investment needs (...). The remaining funds, it is worth saying, were allocated for joint training of our GOPR rescue services and the Ukrainian side GOPR services. And these were fundamental pieces of training (...) on mapping, first aid, and rescue in general (...). It should also be said that very important specialised equipment was purchased.

In the second part of his speech, Deputy Marshall Pilch spoke about the support for Podkarpackie universities, which was implemented at several levels. First and foremost, students from the Podkarpackie region who had decided to continue their studies at universities in the region were being promoted. There are also plans to set up a university hospital so that medical students are adequately trained.



Jan Draus – President of the College of the Institute of National Remembrance

At the end of the panel, **Dawid Lasek, Vice President of the Carpathian Euroregion Association**, asked for the floor, emphasising the huge role of universities in the development of the Carpathian region. He pointed out that appropriate forms of cooperation with the academic world should be sought, as well as a kind of cooperation solutions for existing institutions, which would enable the use of scientific knowledge in the development of the Carpathians.

The Euroregion of the future is a Euroregion built on knowledge (...). That is why the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion will make many efforts to construct structures in the following years of its operation. And we cannot imagine doing this without a university (...). The topic of Central Europe is inalienable today. In the discussion about Poland, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. We cannot allow ourselves to be excluded or pushed into the role of an intermediary between the West and the East (...). Therefore, we must seek solutions, using enthusiasm, political support and our personal contacts. Everyone has a role to play here.

Special event



Presentation of investment opportunities in the framework of the Three Seas Fund and the Strategic Investment Programme of the Polish Government

One of the final points of the conference was a presentation on investment opportunities within the framework of the Three Seas Fund and the Strategic Investment Programme Poland's Deal, given by Grzegorz Łyczko – Director for Social Relationship Development at Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, Piotr Olszówka – Director for Social Relationship Development at BGK and Piotr Karnkowski – Managing Director of the Financial and Capital Markets Division at BGK. Dawid Lasek – Vice President of the Carpathian Euroregion Association also spoke.

From left: Piotr Pilch, Grzegorz Łyczko, Piotr Olszówka, Dawid Lasek



First of all, the first edition of the pilot Strategic Investment Programme Poland's Deal under the Government Poland's Deal Fund, implemented through investment promises granted by BGK, was summarised. This programme is aimed at local government units. It is to provide non-refundable co-financing for public investments implemented by municipalities, districts, cities and voivodeships throughout Poland and to implement priority transactional directions that increase the productivity, economic efficiency and attractiveness of JST undertakings. The planned effect of the programme is to stimulate investment activity of territorial self-government units, development of local entrepreneurship, improvement of living conditions of citizens, creation of new jobs, support for sustainable development, and effective involvement of the financial sector. PLN 24 billion was allocated in the first edition. Analysis of the applications shows that most needs are in road infrastructure. In second place was water and sewage infrastructure, and in third place was social infrastructure related to education, sport and tourism. The great interest in the programme's first edition contributed to its continuation. Editions II – PLN 20 billion and III – PLN 2.5 billion – are currently being implemented.

The Three Seas Fund, whose originator, co-founder and investor is BGK, was discussed in the second programme. As emphasised by Piotr Karnkowski, it was an internationally run programme spanning 3 seas, 12 countries with one common goal – to accelerate economic development by providing modern infrastructure and improving connectivity and cooperation across the North–South region, focusing on *greenfield* investment, supporting investment in long-term assets of crucial importance to supply chains. The target sectors for the Fund are energy, transport, and digital infrastructure. Potential investors may include institutions of the Three Seas countries, international financial institutions and private investors. The target size of the Fund is EUR 3–5 billion.

The last to speak was David Lasek, who introduced the topic of raising funds from the Three Seas Border Cooperation Programme. The Vice President said:

Today, no single instrument supports and such soft, institutional, interpersonal, organisational cooperation in the Three Seas area. And this determines and will determine the building of awareness and co-responsibility for the challenges that face this area.

Dawid Lasek spoke about the Interreg programme, intended for border areas with similar problems (depopulation, lack of infrastructure, lack of ideas for development) but lacking common solutions. The Vice-President recalled that there were



Dawid Lasek – Vice-President of the Carpathian Euroregion Association

currently several dozen regions and Euroregions in the Three Seas area, and, he added, they needed “resuscitation,” so universal solutions are being prepared. Dawid Lasek also mentioned cross-border functional areas supported by the European Commission, which offered assistance to border regions. The Vice-President drew attention to the enormous tourism potential of those areas. At the end of his speech, he mentioned the funds for Polish-Slovak cooperation in the field of tourism available to the Carpathian Euroregion Association (it would be possible to apply for micro-projects of up to EUR 80,000), and the steps taken to return the Polish-Ukrainian Cohesion Fund to the Subcarpathian region.



Synevyr Pass, Carpathian Mountains, Ukraine

Special event

Announcement of the results of the “Legends of Podkarpacie” comic book competition

Digital Europe of the Carpathians is an initiative implemented by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland and the GovTech Centre in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. It aims to raise the profile and attractiveness of the Carpathian region, build regional awareness among local communities and tourists, and draw attention to the Europe of the Carpathians.

Digitalisation is one of the fundamental branches of the modern economy. With its support, we can boldly think and act on a large scale without having to stick to rigidly

Winners of the comic book competition “Legends of Podkarpacie”



defined boundaries on the world map. Technological solutions improve the quality of communication and activities, giving them momentum and speed.

The Europe of the Carpathians area is also increasing its importance through activities closely linked to technology and digitalisation. It is impossible to speak of a strong region without emphasising sustainable development in digitalisation.

The format of Digital Europe of the Carpathians has allowed us to create a virtual model of the Carpathians (<https://digitalcarpathians.com/>) and organise a national and international comic competition on the theme of tales and legends of the Subcarpathian and Europe of the Carpathians. At the same time, we are preparing to create a tourist application and hold a regional geocaching and tourist marathon.

The cartoon competition was organised by the GovTech Centre at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister in cooperation with the Polish Parliament as part of the “Legends of the Podkarpacie” project, which is part of the Digital Europe of the Carpathians venture. The strategic aim of this project is to deepen knowledge of the legends of the Podkarpacie region and to develop computer graphics skills among young people.

The competition task was for secondary school students to create a digital comic strip depicting a legend associated with the Podkarpackie region. Most works were submitted by students from schools in Przemyśl, Dębica, Wieluń and Bydgoszcz. As many as 56 of the 160 raised comic strips were sent by students from the Juliusz Słowacki Secondary School No. 1 in Przemyśl. The jury did not have an easy task. The level of competition was high, and each work was unique and carefully produced.

The 32nd edition of the Europe of the Carpathians conference proved to be the ideal venue to announce the winners and be able to present them with cash prizes. The results were told by the Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, Marek Kuchciński, and the Prime Minister’s Plenipotentiary for GovTech, Justyna Orłowska. The personal participation of the award winners proved to reinforce the whole event and showed that nothing brings people together like art.

The winners could count on monetary prizes: PLN 7,000 for first place, PLN 6,000 for second place and PLN 5,000 for third place. It was decided to award two additional works. The event also featured free local online workshops on graphic design programmes, which were open to secondary school students.

The innovative formula of the competition allowed the talent of young Poles to be recognised and showed that the complex topic of digitalisation of the region could be presented in a light and attractive way.



Announcement of the results of the “Legends of Podkarpacie” competition, Krasiczyn, 6 February 2022

List of winners:

1st place (prize worth PLN 7,000) – Alicja Filiacz, work entitled “Legend from the Green Land;”

2nd place (prize of PLN 6000) – Nel Kowalska, work entitled “Bies and Czady;”

3rd place (prize PLN 5,000) – Marta Kos, work entitled “Goddess of the Forest.”

Special prizes (PLN 2,000) were awarded to Natalia Kowalczyk for her comic strip entitled “Legend of the virgin mountain church” and Konrad Kaczmarek for his work entitled “Srogów.”

The success of the national edition of the competition led to the announcement of an international version on the same day, targeting nine countries belonging to the Europe of the Carpathians region.



The winning entries



“Europe of the Carpathians” Documents

1. Carpathian Memorandum, 8 September 2011
2. Conclusions adopted at the conference “Europe of the Carpathians” on 4–6 September 2012
3. Krasiczyn Declaration, 23 February 2013
4. Krynica Memorandum, 8 September 2013
5. Krynica Declaration, 3 September 2014
6. Przemyśl Declaration, 29 January 2017

Carpathian Memorandum, 8 September 2011

The Carpathians constitute an important part of Europe’s regional heritage. It is an area of substantial social, cultural and natural resources, but at the same time one of the poorest and least recognized regions which requires coordinated support under European policy. The Carpathians are characterized by several important assets:

First, they connect, beyond the present European Union borders, the territories of strategic importance – from the very core of Central Europe: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, through Ukraine, to the Balkans including Romania and Serbia. Second, they are a unique treasure of the natural environment, being a “green backbone” of Central and Eastern Europe. Third, it is a region of cultural and social importance, inhabited by 20 million people. The Carpathians are also a region fraught with problems.

Its major weaknesses are as follows: gaps in infrastructure with regard to transport as well as environmental safety, lack of due care of sustainable development, social problems, including areas characterized by high unemployment. If we do not

take coordinated development-oriented measures, social and economic problems of the Carpathian region will increase. Therefore, we are of the opinion that efforts of the states, the European Union and regional authorities should be combined in order to work out a joint strategy for the Carpathians, which would enable to overcome the weaknesses of the region, while making use of its assets.

Such strategy, following the Baltic Sea Strategy and the Danube Strategy, should be primarily based on synergy between the existing initiatives and measures taken in this region, thereby constituting value added, without leading to the establishment of new structures, regulations or institutions.

We want to seek financing for measures in the Carpathians area in a coordinated manner so that funds, in particular those obtained from the Community budget, are not dispersed but strategically targeted at joint Carpathian projects. The mechanism for financing joint measures aimed at Carpathian development might be created based on the models provided by the present EU macro-regional development strategies as well as such initiatives as the European Programme “Alpine Space”.

The number of the existing good practices and initiatives in the Carpathian region makes us confident that, provided there is an appropriately drawn-up strategy, we may in a relatively short time bring about the desired, specific effects of the new initiative, be it with regard to academic (“Carpathian University”), environmental, or infrastructural cooperation or in an inter-regional project “Carpathian Horizon”.

Such cooperation will, in particular, lead to closer links between EU member states and Ukraine, thereby contributing to faster integration of the country into European structures. The first step that might symbolically, but also practically prove the involvement of the European policy in the Carpathian region, would be accession of the European Union, as a party, to the Carpathian Convention whose signatories are at present individual states. Having acquired such capacity pursuant to the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union should make use of it in such initiatives.

Our common objective is to draw up a new macro-regional development strategy as early as in the next financing framework 2014–2020. This is possible, if support is provided by major European policy actors at the level of subsequent presidencies as well as the European Commission and the European Parliament.

We appeal for such involvement. The Carpathians are worthy of the European strategy.

Conclusions adopted at the conference “Europe of the Carpathians” on 4–6 September 2012

1. The Carpathian region is important for the whole Europe. Supporting development actions within the Carpathians can provide an impulse for growth to the entire EU

On the eve of the day of conclusive decisions regarding the upcoming 2014–2020 EU financial perspective, it is important to stress the significance that the cohesion policy has for the implementation of one of the most important community goals – the harmonious socio-economic growth of the entire Union. Financial support for development actions within the Carpathian region will not only contribute to the EU’s economic growth, and help combat unemployment and social exclusion, but should also play an important part in the search for a new potential to regain growth dynamic.

We cannot afford to watch Europe not making full use of the resources located in the Carpathian region. Today, it is more problematic because of infrastructural barriers, the lack of appropriate dedicated programmes supporting regional cooperation, and border difficulties.

That is why we should strive to overcome these obstacles and to activate special cooperation programmes on local and regional levels adopted within the framework of the 2014–2020 financial perspective.

We encourage the governments and local governments of the Carpathian states to pursue such initiatives. They could be considered “pilot projects” for the future macro-regional Carpathian Strategy of the European Union.

2. The cooperation of national parliaments under the “Carpathian Network of Parliamentary Cooperation” should constitute an important element of Carpathian cooperation

The cooperation within the Carpathian region should not only limit itself to contacts on the governmental level and cooperation between local governments. Lively contacts of national parliaments should be an important element of that cooperation. Those parliamentary contacts could be an important platform for the exchange of experiences, joint ventures of an international character, and could be used to coordinate policy within the Carpathian region.

These needs gave rise to the initiative to establish “Carpathian Parliamentary Groups” in all the participating states’ parliaments (either Carpathian Groups or Carpathian Clubs, depending on the naming conventions of a given country). These



Gorgany mountain range, Beskid Mountains, Ukraine

groups would be constituted by parliamentarians from various parties and with different areas of expertise, brought together by the idea of Carpathian cooperation. Such groups, working jointly, would create a neutral “Carpathian Network of Parliamentary Cooperation” and would therefore become a foundation of an authentic cooperation in the fields of detailed issues from the domains of infrastructure, environment, economy, or culture.

3. Local entrepreneurship connected to common good should have a priority over transnational investors

The Carpathian area is a special economic region in which investments and development must harmoniously co-exist with an environment rich in natural resources that are the treasure of the Carpathian states. Therefore, supporting tourism and all the different services connected to it, the attention should be drawn to guarantee the national possession of natural goods, natural parks in particular. Local communities should be supported in such a way as to be able to cope with the competition coming from transnational investors.



4. The natural environment of the Carpathians is an element of European cultural heritage. In order to better protect it, European Union should become a party to the Carpathian Convention

Nature in the Carpathians is a unique natural resource on a European scale. Therefore, it requires constant protection and creation of such development models for the area which will not violate the natural harmony of man and the ecosystem. The Carpathians should not be an open-air ethnographic museum for the rest of Europe. They need to develop and enrich themselves, but not at the cost of their natural environment. Therefore, it is especially important for the European Union, acting as an international organisation and within the boundaries of the Lisbon Treaty, to become a party to the Carpathian Convention that guarantees a sustainable growth for this region.

Krasiczyn Declaration, 23 February 2013

We, the participants of the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Krasiczyn, share the belief that the Carpathians are an important part of the European regional heritage.

With its unique features, the Carpathians are today one of the two major mountain regions of Europe. After the recent enlargement of the European Union, they also form its eastern border, which significantly raises the importance of the area in ensuring sustainable development and cohesion of the EU.

Nowadays, the inhabitants of the Carpathian macro-region must face a number of difficulties. Without specific developmental measures, the situation of the Carpathian population will continue to deteriorate due to the absence of transport infrastructure and visible social gaps, including a high rate of structural unemployment. Action for the modernisation and development of the Carpathian macro-region is essential not only from the point of view of selected Member States, but the entire European Union, particularly in the context of its future enlargement to the east, which is why we want to support Ukraine's European aspirations.

We believe it is necessary to coordinate actions for the Carpathians in many areas. The essence of these actions should be to consolidate international, regional and cross-border cooperation in the economic, social and cultural dimensions, so that the macro-region can present a coherent development vision in the European Union. Only a joint effort of societies, parliaments, governments and local authorities of the Carpathian countries will offer opportunities for effective promotion of Carpathian interests on the European forum.

National parliaments could play an important role here by creating the Carpathian Network of Parliamentary Cooperation. Such a network should enable regular contacts between parliamentarians from the Carpathian countries in all areas of their interest. An important step towards the creation of such a network will be the establishment of Carpathian parliamentary groups in individual national parliaments and in the European Parliament and, in the future, considering the establishment of a Carpathian parliamentary assembly.

We would like to emphasise the importance of the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion as an institution coordinating and stimulating activity for the development of this region. We support the call for the creation of a trans-national operational programme of European Territorial Cooperation for the Carpathian Euroregion for 2014–2020 under the name “Carpathian Horizon 2020”. Such a solution would contribute to improving the coordination and enhancing the effectiveness of the existing EU financial instruments supporting multilateral territorial cooperation. This programme should cover all territories which decide to join it.

At the same time, we call upon the European Union to more actively support the objectives laid down in the Carpathian Convention, signed in Kiev on 23 May 2003, and to expedite activities aimed at formal accession of the EU to that convention as a party. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation with respect to water and forest management. We also recognise the importance of completing the tasks specified in the Protocol on sustainable tourism to the Carpathian Convention.

We welcome numerous examples of cross-border cooperation of partners from the Carpathian countries. We consider starting work on publishing the Carpathian Encyclopaedia is an extremely valuable initiative. To this end, we are establishing a working group of representatives of several universities interested in Carpathian-related issues.

We are attentively tracking the progress of the renovation of the former Astronomical Observatory on the peak of Pop Ivan in the Chornohora range and the construction of an academic cooperation centre in Mykulychyn. Both initiatives are operated jointly by the University of Warsaw and the Precarpathian National University in Ivano-Frankivsk.

We note the common shepherd traditions, which have belonged to the basic activities of the Carpathian highlanders for many centuries. In this respect, an initiative worth spreading is this year’s international Carpathian Sheep Transhumance 2013 as a traditional sheep migration starting from Romania, and passing through Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Further expansion of border infrastructure will greatly facilitate the development of cooperation between the Carpathian countries belonging to the European Union and Ukraine. This is why we are strongly in favour of increasing the number of border crossings on Ukraine’s eastern border.

Moreover, responding to unanimous demands and opinions of circles and institutions connected with the sector of public and private media operating in the Carpathian region, we declare our support for the initiative of creating an international platform for the cooperation of Carpathian media in order to promote, develop and implement effective information exchange systems.

We would also like to emphasise that the main objective of all actions should be creating a European macro-regional development strategy for the Carpathians, with the involvement of all interested countries and regions, as well as European institutions. Drafting the strategy would be crucial for territorial cohesion and consolidating cooperation not only between the Carpathian countries and regions, but also between the European Union and its eastern partners. The main focus of the Macro-regional

Carpathian Strategy (“Carpathia 2020” – CEEC – Co-operation, Economy, Environment, Culture) should be cooperation, including economic growth, environmental protection and culture. The inclusion of the Via Carpathia road in the trans-European transport networks TEN-T should be part of this strategy. The road, which runs through the eastern areas of the EU, should become a core around which sustainable development of the entire Carpathian macro-region would be wrapped.

Krynica Memorandum, 8 September 2013

The participants in the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference have resolved as follows:

1. To suggest to national parliaments that Carpathian parliamentary groups be formed. The next step might involve taking action to establish Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Central and Eastern Europe. The Assembly should become a forum of permanent cooperation between parliamentarians from the countries of the region. Its objective ought to be action for self-reliant development of Central and Eastern Europe. Due to their parliamentary nature, measures taken by the Assembly will unite politicians from different political divisions, thereby guaranteeing the stability of collaboration regardless of government changes.
2. To take action to set up inter-groups in the European Parliament that would be engaged in Carpathian cooperation.
3. To act on the European Union level and vis-a-vis Carpathian states’ governments, in order to promote and implement the concept of the EU macro-regional strategy for the Carpathian area. By combining development-oriented efforts of the EU, states and regions, the strategy should become a strong impulse for sustainable and dynamic growth of this part of Europe. We consider as particularly important the development of traditional sectors of the economy, agriculture, tourism, actions in favour of national culture and extension of the infrastructure connecting our countries. These priorities should be appropriately included in the operational programmes aimed at spending UE funds under financial perspective 2014–2020.
4. To support the idea of protecting the cultural and natural heritage and environment of the Carpathians through the Carpathian Convention, in particular to expand the impact of this initiative on other countries of the region and international organisations.
5. To act with the view to initiate regular meetings of intellectuals from Central and Eastern Europe whose goal would be to reflect on the European identity and to work on expanding

and promoting the knowledge of our region. This initiative involves the idea of establishing the Carpathian University whose objective is to conduct research aimed at comprehensive development and to popularise it among academic and educational communities.

Krynica Declaration, 3 September 2014

The war in Ukraine is the greatest threat to security in Europe since the end of the cold war.

The threat is due to the fact that once again, after the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, Russian aggression changes the borders using force and aims at recognizing it as a permanent status.

Crimea annexation and occupation and entry of Russian troops in the territory of Eastern Ukraine are a violation of fundamental rules of international law, undermining the principle of territorial integrity and state sovereignty, which are the foundations of a state of peace in relations between countries.

In this situation, not only peace in Ukraine but also security in Europe and maintenance of the rule of law and universal values on the continent depend, to a large extent, on the reaction of individual states, the entire Central and Eastern European region, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union.

Being passive about these facts is not a choice at all. Even today appeasement policy may lead to a catastrophe that once Europe went through 75 years ago.

Therefore, the participants in the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference gathered in Krynica on 3 September 2014 definitely condemn Russian aggression policy, which destabilises Eastern Europe, and call upon the Trans-Atlantic community states to react consistently and adequately to this threat, inter alia, by expanding defence capacity of the allied states in Central and Eastern Europe.

Today Ukraine is entitled to full support in any possible form it will request, whereas the joint Trans-Atlantic response to Russia should be strong enough to hold off its further aggression and to restore Ukraine’s territorial integrity, including Crimea.

We appeal to the individual states in our region to find the way to a joint reaction characterized by solidarity to the war on Ukraine. We express our solidarity with all victims of the Crimea’s occupation and the war on Ukraine, in particular with families of the fallen soldiers.

Przemysł Declaration, 29 January 2017

Towards Responsible Development – the Basis for the EU Macro-Regional Strategy for the Carpathian Region

For many years now the Carpathian region has been an area of cooperation of sovereign nation states of Central and Eastern Europe at presidential, governmental, parliamentary and local-government levels. We have developed interstate and cross-border cooperation in the form of the “Europe of the Carpathians” initiative, with the Visegrad Group as its institutional basis. Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic jointly represent the interests of our region in the European Union in collaboration with the other Carpathian countries, cope with the challenges confronting Europe and seek to renew the Union, overcome the crisis and cope with the challenges confronting Europe. We advocate European Union’s return to its fundamental values, including Christianity, as the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity stem from these very values.

Recognising the uniqueness of the Carpathian region, whose potential stems from its cultural, economic and social diversity as well as recognising the will of cooperation between the states and societies, we believe that it is necessary for the European Union to adopt a macro-regional development strategy for the Carpathian Region. The Strategy for the Carpathian Region should play a special role as a mechanism of cooperation and joint projects. Thus, the Strategy will significantly reduce the peripheral character of our region, increase security and reinforce public support for the European Union.

European unity understood as cooperation of sovereign nation states should be based on a model of responsible development. In the coming years, the objective of the Carpathian cooperation is to develop the North–South axis, which is indispensable for increasing economic coherence in the region and improving its accessibility by transport services. In this context, the following investment projects are of strategic economic significance: Via Carpathia together with road S19, Podłęże–Piekietko railway line, Oder–Danube canal. We also support other regional responsible development initiatives, such as: INTERREG Central Europe transnational cooperation programme, Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland–Belarus–Ukraine 2014–2020, cooperation in the area of youth exchange, the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, the Carpathian Institute, the Beskids Skiing Centre. We will act in favour of propagating tourism which fosters



Malá Fatra Mountain, Slovakia

intercultural communication and strong ties between local communities. Therefore, we consider it is essential to develop existing border crossings and to set up new ones. We advocate placing cross-border Austro-Hungarian forts, including the Przemysl fortress, on the UNESCO World Heritage list. In order to strengthen cooperation in the region, we advocate organising conferences of Carpathian parliamentary groups and of the Carpathian economic forum.

We believe that a macro-regional strategy for the Carpathian region based on responsible development will deliver expected social effects for economy, infrastructure, education, environment and culture. By increasing innovativeness and creating room for entrepreneurship, the Strategy will increase the competitiveness and efficiency of the Carpathian region economies. The Strategy will also contribute to the protection of multicultural heritage, diversity of natural environment and tourist assets in Central and Eastern Europe.

Calendar of the International Conference “Europe of the Carpathians”

1999

The then Deputy Governor of the Podkarpackie voivodeship, Marek Kuchciński, launched the „Green Carpathians” project, the aim of which was to develop Polish-Slovak-Ukrainian cooperation

22 V 2003

Adoption in Kiev of the Framework Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (the so-called Carpathian Convention)

27 II 2006

Signing of the the Carpathian Convention by the President of the Republic of Poland Lech Kaczyński

19 VI 2006

Poland ratifies the Carpathian Convention

30 XI 2007

1st parliamentary meeting of the Carpathian states. initiated by the chairman of the Commission for Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and the Forestry Department of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, Marek Kuchciński, MP

26 II 2011

2nd “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Przemyśl

25 VI 2011

3rd International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Nowy Targ under the slogan: “Europe rich of the Carpathians”

7–8 IX 2011

4th International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference at the Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój. Adoption of the Carpathian memorandum.

25 II 2012

5th “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Krasiczyn, near Przemyśl

6–9 VII 2012

6th meeting on the topic of the development of Carpathian cooperation in Yaremcha, in Ukraine.

6 IX 2012

7th International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference at the Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój.

23 II 2013

8th International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Krasiczyn, near Przemyśl, adoption of the Krasiczyn Convention

8 IX 2013

9th International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference at the Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój, adoption of the Krinica memorandum

29–30 XI 2013

Meeting on the development of Carpathian cooperation in Sárospatak, Hungary

3 IX 2014

11th International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference at the Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój, adoption of the Krynica Declaration

27–28 II 2015

12th International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Krasiczyn, near Przemyśl

25 VII 2015

13th International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Smerek, near Wetlina

9 IX 2015

14th International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference at the Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój

27 II | **2016**
15th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Przemyśl

6–8 IX | **2016**
16th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference at the Economic Forum of Krynica-Zdrój

29 I | **2017**
17th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Przemyśl, adoption of the Przemyśl Declaration

23–25 VI | **2017**
18th session of the "Europe of the Carpathians" series as part of the 2nd Forum on Local development in Truskavets, Ukraine

5–7 IX | **2017**
19th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference at the Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój
Konferencja "Europa Karpat"

17 II | **2018**
20th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Przemyśl

16 VI | **2018**
21st International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Regietów

5–6 IX | **2018**
22nd International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference at the Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój

16–17 II | **2019**
23rd International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Krasiczyn

15 VI | **2019**
24th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Regietów

4–5 IX | **2019**
25th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference at the Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój

21–23 II | **2020**
26th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Krasiczyn

8–9 IX | **2020**
27th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Karpacz

27–28 II | **2021**
28th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Przemyśl

19 VI | **2021**
29th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Regietów

7–9 IX | **2021**
30th International "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Karpacz

27 XI | **2021**
XXXI International Conference "Europe of the Carpathians" in Węgierska Górka

5–6 II | **2022**
XXXII International Conference "Europe of the Carpathians" in Przemyśl/Krasiczyn, signing of the Declaration of the International Club of Europe of the Carpathians

5 IV | **2022**
Establishment of the Association "Clubs of Europe of the Carpathians"



Dolina Pięciu Stawów, Tatra Mountains, Poland

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