

# EUROPE OF THE CARPATHIANS

KARPACZ 7-9 SEPTEMBER 2021

**30** EUROPE OF THE CARPATHIANS  
CONFERENCE



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

WYDAWNICTWO SEJMOWE



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

## Foreword

Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Europe of the Carpathians” has functioned for two decades as a permanent series of conferences during which the most critical problems concerning Poland, Central Europe, Europe and the world are discussed. What is the phenomenon of “Europe of the Carpathians” and how has it managed to bring together people and personalities from so many different countries, representing so many different fields of education and professional activity – as the names of panellists of the conference successive editions keep convincing us?

For reasons that seem quite independent but noticed by the conference initiators and organisers, the inhabitants of Central Europe, often oppressed by great empires from the East and the West very brutally, developed specific qualities in response to the violence and the aggressor's sophisticated intrigues: a kind of genius. The wisdom can be felt both at the so-called popular level and among national intellectual elites. The European Union political centres accept with incredulity and even growing impatience this attitude – which is characteristic not only of Poles – that we do not want to imitate and copy blindly.

The countries and peoples of Europe of the Carpathians approach life without much illusion and even with a certain degree of scepticism. We have an above-average ability to turn failures into a joke. We still strongly remember what life was like when the authorities promised to build a paradise on earth; when the promise of prosperity becomes hell for everyone. This is not just a memory of the Communist era. Europe of the Carpathians is the space of a small part of human history. Time has never stopped here. Questions about one's roots, sources, and identity have always been alive. So has respect for one's work and, at the same time, openness to the ideas and inventions of others. The model of the good farmer, the "golden hands", the man of honour, the virtues of chivalry, the belief that there is faith, so there is God do not so much remain a distinctive feature of this region of the world but rather a space of condensed human history and its future.

Whether we read about Europe of the Carpathians, the Three Seas Initiative, the New Europe or the Visegrad Group, all analyses confirm that our part of Europe has been one of the fastest economically growing areas of the world in the last two decades. Instead of sinking into ethnic conflicts, as proponents of the thesis that communism was a kind of "conflict freezer" once predicted, Central European nations are cooperating more and more effectively. Who knows if Europe of the Carpathians, unfortunately, plunged into successive severe crises in the European Union, will not soon assume the role of Piedmont? It means a centre of spiritual and rational forces and values on which European order, peace and cooperation for generations to come can be created.

"Europe of the Carpathians", organised within the framework of the jubilee 30<sup>th</sup> Economic Forum in Karpacz, consisted of sixteen panel discussions and countless meetings and talks, during which diagnoses were made, and recipes for solutions to the usually complex problems were drawn up. A capital of knowledge and interpersonal contacts was built.



Lake Morskie Oko, the Tatra Mountains, Poland

Although it undoubtedly constitutes only a trace of the discussions held and works done, this publication is significant. Nothing can replace personal participation in the Conference “Europe of the Carpathians”, which was also proved by the very high attendance of the public at the 30<sup>th</sup> edition in Karpacz.

The report on the 30<sup>th</sup> Conference is preceded by three texts raising key issues that we will probably be dealing with for many years to come: the future of civilisation, the importance of communication and the ecology and wealth derived from a healthy natural environment, which the inhabitants of Central Europe have enjoyed for centuries.

Thus, today, I invite you to participate personally and actively in the following “Europe of the Carpathians” conferences. See you there!

/-/ Marek Kuchciński



Participants of the 30<sup>th</sup> "Europe of the Carpathians" Conference in Karpacz, 7 September 2021







The Transfăgărășan, The Făgăraș Mountains, Romania



## The cultural identity of Europe – faith, values or traditions

The Polish philosopher and pedagogue Bogdan Nawroczyński gave us the following thesis: The identity of a person, a group or a community is known through the world of values. Moreover, the world of values is culture. There is no culture without values. Culture is a world of values. On the other hand, defining Europe is more challenging as it is geographically challenging to specify the eastern part of the European continent. That is why the demarcation lines of Europe are most often drawn by a cultural criterion, which in turn is based on the heritage of Greek philosophy and political thought, the Roman system of law and the universalistic dimension of Christianity, which integrated the European community around the unity of faith, rites and customs. That is how Christianitas, a community signifying axiological unity, complemented by a political, legal and economic framework, came into being.

Europe's turbulent history, the effects of numerous wars, revolutions and cultural currents show that we have received a significant civilisational heritage. In terms of axiology, we can make some comparisons in the sphere of both community and personal values. After the advent of Christianity, Plato's triad of truth, goodness and beauty was enriched by the notion of God since, according to Platonic and Christian thought, truth, goodness, and beauty can be achieved through love. Regardless of the fate of history, the following axiological canon of community values has emerged: family, national community (ethnic, local or other) and religion. On the other hand, three terms: life, freedom and dignity, predominate regarding personal values. These two canons, the communal and the personal, have survived despite many attempts at revaluation. They have proved more robust than any revolution or ideology. Not even Communism, which grew out of Marxism, was able to eradicate them from the consciousness of the nations that experienced this type of totalitarianism.

Contemporary Europe and the world are facing yet another attempt to undermine the axiology developed over centuries under the banner of the cultural revolution. We are experiencing relativism everywhere. Benedict XVI wrote that we were dealing with the dictatorship of relativism. Before our eyes, we are witnessing the destruction of authorities, traditional values, the family, faith, customs and all social norms, even the mother tongue, and the undermining of objective truth. The thesis that this axiology restricts human freedom is being promoted. Under this banner grew, for example, genderism, which claims that human sex is determined not by nature but by culture. These revolutionaries do not want to be slaves of history, which is why Fukuyama even proclaimed the “end of history”, and European supporters of liberalism understood in this way are increasingly boldly undermining the foundations of nation-states in the name of the slogan “Citizen of Europe”. Moreover, what does the cultural revolution propose in terms of axiology? It proposes pluralism instead of family, democracy instead of the national community, and tolerance instead of religion regarding community values. Life is replaced by health, freedom by success, and dignity by pleasure in personal values. Perhaps that is why we are witnessing a crisis of Western civilisation. The cultural revolution is thus breaking with tradition and its values. In political terms, conservatives adhere to tradition, while liberals and the many left-wing or left-wing groups that have grown up around this ideology abandon tradition since it is a burden and an obstacle to building a federal concept of Europe for them. Liberals know that to do this, it is first necessary to bring up a generation in the spirit of the values proposed by the cultural revolution, that is, without family, community and religion. The priorities are health, success and pleasure. If they achieve this, nation-states will cease to matter, and national identity will disappear. The dominant terms will be Europe and European. For the time being, relativism is omnipresent. It is precisely relativism that is destroying the legacy of the past to build a new man and a new Europe on the ruins of history.



## A model presentation of Europe of the Carpathians

The history of *Via Carpatia* shows how difficult it is for the post-Soviet countries to get their arguments (and interests) across in the salons of Brussels. However, the Visegrad Group's history is a good argument in the discussion about the effectiveness of regional agreements, both those built on the foundation of a political community and those created on a regional basis. The political effectiveness of the agreements largely depends on the results of democratic elections in the agreeing countries. The history of regional agreements that arose around cultural interests varies from regional agreements based on civilisational or economic interests. The latter group includes both the Three Seas and Europe of the Carpathians. This analysis is devoted to the latter agreement.

When looking at the TEN-T<sup>1</sup> network, it is easily seen that it has been designed from behind a desk. Although its shape results from individual countries' efforts, it is challenging to find what in spatial planning is called the building of a theoretical model and its adaptation to specific geographical and demographic conditions. In European history, we have in this field both Christaller's analysis<sup>2</sup> and Tadeusz Zipsier's triangle-chain structure.<sup>3</sup>

The oval shape of the Carpathians, also called the Carpathian Arc, surrounds what the Hungarians rightly call the Carpathian Basin. Irrespective of the current political borders, the Basin and the Arc are one and must be seen as such. Otherwise, we end

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- 1 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-European\\_Transport\\_Network#/media/File:Trans-European\\_Transport\\_Network.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-European_Transport_Network#/media/File:Trans-European_Transport_Network.svg) [accessed: 05/01/2022; the same date applies to all other online sources]; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-European\\_corridors#/media/File:Pan-European\\_corridors.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-European_corridors#/media/File:Pan-European_corridors.svg).
  - 2 [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter\\_Christaller#/media/Datei:Christaller's\\_central\\_place\\_theory\\_animation.gif](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Christaller#/media/Datei:Christaller's_central_place_theory_animation.gif).
  - 3 <http://mareknatusiewicz.pl/jak-to-z-tymi-carrefourami-niegdys-bywalo-2/>.

up with a situation like in Lower Silesia, where people living on both sides of the small Sudeten Mountains do not know much about each other; what is more, they do not feel the need to get to know each other and understand the other's point of view.

Nothing serves neighbourly relations better than a personal meeting. Polish and Czech oppositionists met in the Sudetenland in the days of the righteous past, where they climbed strenuously along winding paths. Today, apart from personal meetings, shared interests are equally important, and these, as we know, have their designations, which are quantity and speed, while intensity depends on good communication. Above all, we are talking about *door-to-door* communication, not the movement of masses of goods. The former is via the road network, the latter via the rail network. We are therefore interested in the roads.

Analysis of the model has shown the existence of two external pan-European transport channels for each direction on east-west and north-south lines. In the latitudinal system, the channel connecting Italian Venice with Romanian Constanta was reinforced in this respect, and the meridional system, the channel connecting Turkish Istanbul with the eastern areas of Ukraine and Belarus. Although today these two latter countries are not the European Union members, their territories are not "blank spots" on transport maps; the same is true of the territories of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina or North Macedonia.

**The first** most crucial element of the Carpathian Basin and the Carpathian Arc model, and thus also Europe of the Carpathians, is the clearly outlined **double-cross of two meridian transport channels**: *Via Carpatia* in the east (running as if in the shape of the diameter of the Carpathian circle) and *Via Moravia* in the west (resembling in its shape a western chord, crossing the ends of the arc). The latitudinal system has the transport canal connecting Munich with Odessa (running through Vienna, Budapest, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Chisinau and Odessa).

**A second** important model element is the **pan-European transport channels** adjacent to the Carpathian Basin and the Carpathian Arc: the **TEN-T6** in the west, the **TEN-T3** in the north, the updated **TEN-T9** in the east (connecting Tallinn to Istanbul), and the updated **TEN-T7** in the south (connecting Venice to Constanța). Thanks to these channels, it will be possible to reduce the transport of "external" goods from the internal Europe of the Carpathians area.

**The three Carpathian transport routes** at the foot of the mountains are essential for the proper movement of people and goods within the area: 1) **East Slovak** (TWS),

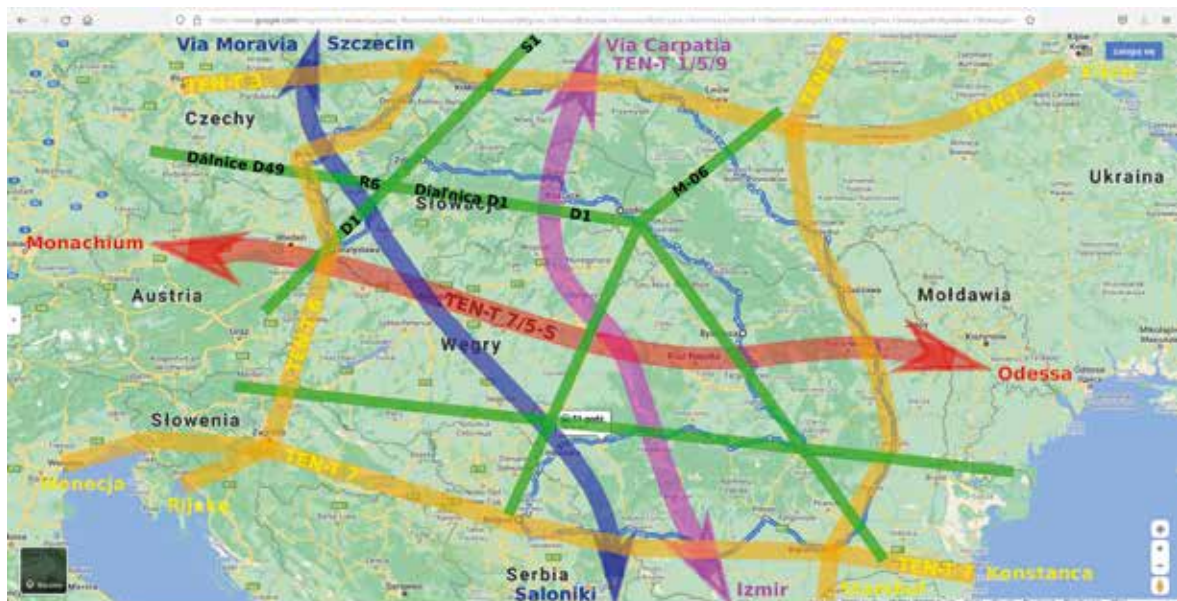


Fig. 1. Functional model. Source: [https://natusiewicz.pl/134/index.php?title=Europa\\_Karpat\\_-\\_model\\_TEN-T](https://natusiewicz.pl/134/index.php?title=Europa_Karpat_-_model_TEN-T)

2) **Slovak** – transitioning into Marmara-Transylvanian (TSM-T) and 3) **Banat-Transylvanian** (TBT), complemented by the “diametric” **Marmara-Banat** (TMB) route.

Theoretical functional models are only correct if their elements can be found in reality.

Thus, the **TMB** is nothing but the Slovak motorways: D1 (from Bratislava to Žilina) and D3 (from Žilina to the Polish border) and the Polish S1 (from the Slovak border to Bielsko-Biała) and S52 (from Bielsko-Biała to Kraków, the so-called Beskids Integration Route<sup>4</sup>).

In turn, **TSM-T** is nothing but the Czech D49 motorway (from Hulin to the Horní Lideč border crossing), Slovak: the R6 expressway and the D1 motorway (from Beluša to Prešov) and the I/19 national road (from Prešov to the Vyšné Nemecké border crossing), Ukrainian roads: the M-08 and M-06 international (from the Slovak border to Mukachevo) and the H-09 national (from Mukachevo to the Solotvyn border crossing), and the Romanian national roads: DN18 (from Sighet Marmației to Moisei), DN17C (from Moisei to Bistrița), DN17 and DN15A (from Bistrița to Reghin), DN15 (from Reghin to Toplița), DN12 (from Toplița to Cozmeni), DN11B (from Cozmeni to Târgu Secuiesc), DN11 (Târgu Secuiesc to Brașov) and DN73 (from Brașov to Pitești).

4 <https://www.archiwum.gddkia.gov.pl/pl/2143/Beskidzka-Droga-Integracyjna>.

On the other hand, **TB-T** is nothing more than the Romania's DN59A (from Jimboalia to Timișoara), the A1 motorway (from Timișoara to Veștem near Sibiu), DN1 (from Veștem to Brașov), DN11 (from Brașov to Târgu Secuiesc) and DN2D (from Târgu Secuiesc to Focșani).

**The Marmara-Banat route**, which runs through the Western Carpathian Massif, starts in Mukachevo (via the M25 and P55 roads) and passes through the towns: Satu Mare (DN1C and DN19), Zalău (DN19A and DN1F), Huedin (DN1F and DN1G), Poiana Horea (Cluj) (DN1R), Câmpeni (DN75), Brad (DN74A and DN74), Gurahonț (Arad) (DN76 and DN79A), Slatina de Mureș (Arad) (DN708), Vărădia de Mureș (Arad) (DN707C), Săvârșin (Arad) (DN7), Făget (DN707A and DN707B and DN682), Caransebeș (DN601A and E673), Reșița (DN6 and DN58), Steierdorf (DN58), Oravița (DN57). This route leads to the Serbian town of Kovin<sup>5</sup> on the Danube (about 765 km long<sup>6</sup>).

The detailed route of the **Carpathian Loop** is as follows: it starts in Bratislava from the D2 motorway section (to the Kúty junction), then follows the Slovak road I/2 (to the Sodoměřice border crossing); then the Czech: the D55 motorway (to Hulín), I432 (to Holešov), I438 (to Cieplice nad Bečzwą) and I47 and I48 (to the border crossing at Český Těšín); then the Polish: S52 (to Kraków) and A4 (to the border crossing at Korczowa); then Ukrainian: M-10 and M-09 (to Ternopil), M-19 (past Chernivtsi) to the Porubne border crossing; then Romanian: DN2 (to Bucharest), the A1 motorway (to Pitești), DN65A (to Craiova), DN6 (to Orșova), DN57 and DN59 (to Timișoara). The Loop then

5 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kovin\\_Bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kovin_Bridge).

6 [14](https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Mukaczewo,+Obw%C3%B3d+zakarpacki,+Ukraina,+89600/Zal%C4%83u,+Rumunia/Huedin,+Rumunia/Poiana+Horea,+407081,+Rumunia/Brad,+Rumunia/Gurahon%C8%9B,+Rumunia/V%C4%83r%C4%83dia+de+Mure%C8%99,+Rumunia/F%C4%83get,+Rumunia/Re%C8%99i%C8%9Ba,+Rumunia/Kovin,+Serbia/@46.6029143,22.1831352,8z/data=!4m6!4m6!1m5!1m1!1sox4739ac78bafa8c3f:ox2daood5a-792c2aa!2m2!1d22.7117106!2d48.4493055!1m5!1m1!1sox474842a15ce95f31:ox56c28ode3735b817!2m2!1d23.0573324!2d47.1854562!1m5!1m1!1sox4748fo71446a3bad:ox95342803oc9459aa!2m2!1d23.0218215!2d46.8623427!1m5!1m1!1sox4748da2ccfe8bodd:oxe10818oc3d79ob91!2m2!1d22.9128978!2d46.5905646!1m5!1m1!1sox474edeai1fd48of:ox1f2ade96021af556!2m2!1d22.7884234!2d46.1335267!1m5!1m1!1sox474f38c2f2f75edb:oxe936313de3c3a7b8!2m2!1d22.3410698!2d46.2729212!1m5!1m1!1sox474fodadof80364d:ox34384obfc5c5fe97!2m2!1d22.1584206!2d46.0105155!1m5!1m1!1sox474fa6656dffad75:ox2d1b1e1e32cd8945!2m2!1d22.1729057!2d45.8527957!1m5!1m1!1sox47502a14d6a718d9:oxb62b9e8261fdbec8!2m2!1d21.8821033!2d45.3049703!1m5!1m1!1sox47508c2fb256cb39:oxc8eb91fa148bf594!2m2!1d20.9778466!2d44.7395711!3eo.</a></p>
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Fig. 2. Spatial model. Source: [https://natusiewicz.pl/134/index.php?title=Plik:P%C4%99tla\\_Karpacka.png](https://natusiewicz.pl/134/index.php?title=Plik:P%C4%99tla_Karpacka.png)

uses parts of the Carpathian routes: the TBT (from Timișoara to Brasov), the TSMT (reversed route from Brasov – via Mukachevo – to Žilina) and the TWS (reversed route from Žilina to Bratislava).

**The Carpathian Loop** must be supplemented with connectors, i.e. roads crossing the main Carpathian chain. Thus, for the TWS, it is the **Border Pass**<sup>7</sup> (755 m), for the TSM-T, it is **Lyský priesmyk**<sup>8</sup> (456 m) at the western end, and **Pasul Buzău**<sup>9</sup> (670 m) at

7 [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prze%C5%82%C4%99cz\\_Graniczne](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prze%C5%82%C4%99cz_Graniczne).

8 [https://sk-m-wikipedia-org.translate.google/wiki/Lysk%C3%BD\\_priesmyk?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=sk&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=pl&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=pl](https://sk-m-wikipedia-org.translate.google/wiki/Lysk%C3%BD_priesmyk?_x_tr_sl=sk&_x_tr_tl=pl&_x_tr_hl=pl).

9 [https://ro-m-wikipedia-org.translate.google/wiki/Pasul\\_Buz%C4%83u?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=ro&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=pl&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=pl](https://ro-m-wikipedia-org.translate.google/wiki/Pasul_Buz%C4%83u?_x_tr_sl=ro&_x_tr_tl=pl&_x_tr_hl=pl).

the eastern end, for the TB-T it is the crossing<sup>10</sup> of the **Munții Vrancei** depression at an altitude of about 1000 m, between the peaks of Inzapezitu Mic (1359 m) and Oituz Izvor (1149 m).

The entire road system is completed by other connectors. These are roads connecting the following towns: in the Czech-Slovak section – 1) Hranice and Bytča and 2) Čadča and Cieszyn, in the Polish-Slovak section – 3) Żywiec and Oravský Podzámok, 4) Rabka and Poprad, 5) Brzesko and Poprad and 6) Brzesko and Prešov. In the Polish-Ukrainian section it is the road connecting 7) Uzhhorod with Przemyśl, and in Ukraine – the roads connecting 8) Chust and Dolina and 9) Solotvino and Kolomyia.

On Romanian territory, the connecting roads include 10) Săcel with Siret and 11) with Suceava; 12) Bistrița with Suceava and 13) with Roman; 14) Gheorgheni with Roman; 15) Onești with Miercurea-Ciuc and 16) with Târgu Secuiesc; 17) Brașov with Buzău and 18) with Ploști; 19) Cârțișoara with Pitești; 20) Colonia Tâlmaciu with Slatina; and 21) Tâmpa with Filiași.

Only a road network formed in this way is the backdrop against which Europe of the Carpathians has a chance to emerge as a serious player in the European game.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2ubvoYGhts>.



## Health and ecology. Back to the sources. We are going to the baths!

### The fashion for spas, “going to the baths”

In European literature of the 19<sup>th</sup>, late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, several categories appear fashionable: life in cultural metropolises, the golden age and life in spas. The latter often referred to as “going to the baths”, was not only a modern form of treatment for many ailments in a world unfamiliar with antibiotics or modern computer diagnostics. It was also often a lifestyle typical of the middle classes and aristocracy, combined with culinary pleasures, gambling and exploring the world: collecting works of art, natural specimens, diary writing, compiling tourist guides or thematic lexicons.

Related to the above was the fashion for nature conservation. In the same period, a large and influential movement for nature protection arose, creating national parks, botanical gardens and reserves.

The fashion for spa treatments, the establishment of botanical gardens, reserves and national parks was a substantial development vehicle for many cities, towns and villages, thus becoming an alternative to the centres. They also changed the world’s image by creating new popular forms of treatment based on natural science and by drawing up laws in which the state took priceless natural resources under its protection.

In 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Poland, Zakopane, situated in the western part of the Carpathian Mountains, was an example of such a career. The development of sanatorium treatment, mainly for lung diseases, created a fashion for this then small Podhale settlement, which later became the capital of Polish culture. The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries of Polish culture cannot be imagined without Zakopane.

In each of the countries of Europe of the Carpathians, one can point to several or a dozen localities that play a unique role in spa medicine, primary research and, at the same time, fulfil the requirements of alternative centres of civilisation and environments for the development of culture: literature, classical music, drama, poetry, theatre,

festival and artistic experimentation, as well as folklore studies, natural and ethnographic museums and tourism. They all grew out of the 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century fashion for nature conservation, balneological treatment, and elite and then mass tourism.

As far as the discussed area of the Carpathians is concerned, it should also be noted that after 1945, following the political change to real socialism (state capitalism), spas were taken over by the states and made available to everyone based on compulsory health insurance.

### One hundred years later: polluted spas, tired population

In December 2021, a report on atmospheric air pollution relating to the discussed area of the Polish Carpathians was published. It illustrates brilliantly the changes that have taken place in this region.

The Polish Smog Alarm reported that the most polluted city in Poland is Nowy Targ in Podhale. In the area of Beskid Śląski, Beskid Wysoki, Beskidy Zachodnie, Podhale, Tatry, Beskid Makowski, Beskid Wyspowy, Pogórze Karpackie, Beskid Żywiecki, Żywiec, Sucha Beskidzka, Nowy Sącz, Zakopane and health resorts Goczałkowice-Zdrój and Rabka-Zdrój are polluted.<sup>1</sup> These areas are adjacent to the Babia Góra and Tatra Mountains National Parks.

At the same time, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions reported that in 2020, Poles were the longest working nation in the EU. A Pole worked 1848 hours per year, while the EU average was 1703 hours.<sup>2</sup> Poles are overworked.

Weak health care indicators and the poor health of the Polish population, resulting from several decades of neglect, are outlined in a report by the OECD and the European Commission.<sup>3</sup> It shows that the population in Poland is stressed and overworked (also due to the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic), and there are poor health service indicators and air polluted with ana(a)pyrene, also in spas and tourist resorts.

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1 See the link to the map of the most polluted Polish cities at the end of the article.

2 Eurofound, Working time in 2019–2020, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 21, Fig. 2.

3 J. Kapiszewski, K. Klinger, *Polska przegrała wojnę z COVID-19. Wirus obnażył lata zaniedbań* [Poland Lost the War Against COVID-19. The Virus Exposed Years of Neglect], 14/12/2021, <https://gazetaprawna.pl> [accessed: 04/01/2022].



Zdrojowa Street, Polańczyk, Poland

## Changes in environmental quality, spas and population health. What to do in the perspective of the UN 2030 Agenda?

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Spa policy is best defined in terms of time frames: up to 1990 and after 1990.

**1989–2021:** since mid-1989, Central and Eastern Europe countries have undergone systemic changes related to the commercialisation of services. As far as Poland is concerned, the principle enshrined in the first half of 1989 in the so-called Round Table Agreements regulating development as a “social market economy” was abandoned. Since 1990, there has been unsustainable development, best described by unemployment rates. In the first half of the 1990s, there were also problems with adopting and implementing the Act on spatial planning. Some spas were subjected to the privatisation process.

**1945–1989:** the described political changes after 1945, thanks to which spa treatment became a solid and mass segment of medicine and balneology, at the same time contributed, through excessive industrialisation, to the gradual degradation of many areas of Poland. A report on this issue was presented in 1979–1980 by Stefan Kozłowski

in the 123<sup>rd</sup> issue of the “Biuletyn Komitetu Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju PAN” [Bulletin of the Committee for National Spatial Planning of the Polish Academy of Sciences]. In 1982 the State Council for Environmental Protection established 27 areas of ecological threat (Polish abbrev. OEZ).

**2005:** a report by the Polish Psychiatric Association was presented in Poland, which correctly defined the environmental, mental health conditions of the Polish population, including those related to environmental stress.

**2021:** A report by the Centre for Social Opinion Research stated that 71% of Poles consider the living conditions in Poland, mainly in big cities, as harmful.

### Current condition of health resorts in Poland

The claim that only two of Poland’s spas – Gołdap and Ustroń – meet the standards is popular in the press. Only selective and test data from the Western Carpathian and the Beskid Mountains, concerning tourist destinations such as Zakopane and Szczyrk and two health resorts, indisputably place them outside the norms.

A similar change concerning spas occurred in all Central and Eastern European countries after 1989. I think a careful search would be possible in the framework of future conferences.

In general, once we see changes for the better, once for the worse. Some spas are in areas that have been ecologically degraded. On their premises stand modern architectural blocks where balneological and physical therapy treatments are provided, but in many cases, they are only an addition to massively extended car parks. Such spas can be described as “façade” (paper) ones.

Under classical assumptions, every health resort had to have an appropriate microclimate conducive to treatment, rehabilitation, convalescence and recovery. That was imperative in the treating coronary (cardiovascular) or metabolic diseases, as well as respiratory ones.

### Health resorts in Poland in the 2030 perspective and beyond: microclimate, healthy landscape, clean air

Let us structure health resorts into a convenient scheme and divide them into three groups:

- I. Health resort – treatments are provided but there is no microclimate.
- II. Health resort – microclimate; treatments are provided and there is a microclimate.
- III. Health resort – microclimate – landscape; treatments are provided, there is a microclimate and it is situated in areas with attractive landscape.

### Description of a definition

A health resort situated, e.g. near a chemical plant (or other emission plants) or expressways, motorways, and so forth, is not a health resort. It may be a curative facility or a spa with balneology and physical therapy. However, it lacks microclimates or, even worse, clean air.

That is the state of affairs. Some spas used to be like that 50 or 100 years ago but ceased to be such after industrial investments were made in their vicinity during the communist period. Such spas can also be described as “façade” or “paper” ones.

### Back to the springs. Waters and microclimate.

#### A new contemporary type of spas: intimate and ecological

Here are some conclusions that, in my opinion, logically flow from the considerations so far. I treat them as one possible picture of the future of Polish health resorts.

1) The existing – “formal” – health resorts should be restored to a state of maximum ecological purity.

2) Health resorts located 50, 100 (or more) years ago and now having in their vicinity burdensome industrial plants (chemical factories and other emission factories), transit roads, and motorways should be deleted from the register. They can be left as balneological treatment units, rehabilitation treatment centres, physical therapy, etc. Some of these places received the status of a health resort due to the presence of therapeutic waters or microclimates that are no longer there today. Such places may be referred to as “historic spas.”

That preserves all the classic and correct definitions. It should be emphasised that the problem I am writing about is not exclusively Polish. In 2017, almost all federal states in Germany found that their climatic (spa) localities had not renewed their licence, which is mandatory under those legal conditions every ten years. In Hesse alone, as many as 32 licence rulings were revoked between 2000 and 2016. The publicist

of the weekly magazine Der Spiegel, Alex Bojanowski, wrote that “Germany is experiencing the climatic death of the spa.”

3) The establishment of new and modern spas based on the classic formula: healthy microclimate and intimate size should be allowed. What is meant here is an unobtrusive size. These are not to be “health combines”, also problematic in terms of municipal infrastructure (sewage treatment plants, waste management, transport of people, supply logistics), with the anthropo-pressure opposite to the purpose of treatment.

Health resorts can be places with healthy microclimate and attractive landscapes based on modern methods such as climate treatment, landscape treatment, clean air and hiking tourism (visiting nature reserves, landscape parks, national parks).

Deleting “formal” spas costs nothing but restores the actual state. After verification in the material base of treatment, a place is created for new spas. Speaking in the language of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, contaminated or near-contaminated “properties” are deleted from the list of spas, and the definitive balance is restored.

## Links

Map of the 20 most polluted Polish cities (the ranking for 2020): <https://polski.alarmsmogowy.pl/2021/12/gdzie-truja-najmocniej-smogowy-ranking-roku-2020/>

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (70<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Assembly, New York, 2015): <https://www.unesco.pl/662/>

UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibility of Present Generations towards Future Generations, 1997: [https://www.unesco.pl/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/Deklaracja\\_UNESCO\\_o\\_Odpowiedzialnosci\\_\\_Pokolen.pdf](https://www.unesco.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Deklaracja_UNESCO_o_Odpowiedzialnosci__Pokolen.pdf)





## Young people/youth (of Central Europe) on the future of Europe

The panel stressed the need to create new cooperation institutions to further strengthen relations between young Europeans from Central Europe and the younger generation's involvement in decision-making processes. The panellists agreed that our cultural and civilisational heritage based on Christianity should be protected, and a reform of the European Union is necessary. Therefore, we need to activate young people in this regard to become conscious citizens.

Zsófia Rácz, Hungarian Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Human Resources, recalled the 2021 Krasieczyn Declaration: "It is about remembering and recognising our Christian roots in Europe. (...) The Declaration was signed by people full of enthusiasm and energy who have a conscious responsibility concerning the future of Europe". The Undersecretary drew attention to the need for the European Union's comprehensive reform in the face of attacks on the fundamental values of the founding fathers of the community.

The Government Plenipotentiary for Youth Policy Piotr Mazurek mentioned the establishment of the Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation. In this new body, representatives of the President, Prime Minister and ministers meet regularly with representatives of youth communities, non-governmental organisations, youth local government councils, the Polish Students' Parliament and several other communities. The Plenipotentiary drew attention to the government's activity at the level of international dialogue, for example, through participation in the programme of youth delegates to the United Nations. He recalled the IGF World Internet Governance Forum to be held in December 2021 in Katowice, Poland. He explained: "We are present in these international discussions because the Polish government has created certain institutions that engage and support youth". Moreover, Piotr Mazurek stressed that the government is creating institutions of strong youth councils at all levels of local government.



Zsófia Rácz – Hungarian Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Human Resources

Maxim Rust, a lecturer at the Study of Eastern Europe and editor of the magazine “New Eastern Europe”, said that the European Union and Europe remain symbols of value and prosperity for Belarusian youth. He added that pro-European and pro-Polish moods are growing in Belarus. He pointed out that after the 2020 presidential elections, Poland and the European Union, in general, understood as Europe, became for the Belarusian youth an indicator of places where one can go and where one can live peacefully and conduct one’s business or study. He stressed the critical role played by governmental youth scholarship programmes and institutionalised forms of youth exchange.

Polish-British journalist, columnist and YouTuber Stefan Tompson addressed his feeling about Central Europe more broadly: “I have never been more hopeful about the future of this region than I am now. I have never been so optimistic, given what your generation has achieved during the transition. Twenty-seven years of economic growth in Poland, over 4.5 per cent ... Estonia recently announced that it has a higher GDP per capita than Spain. I have never been so optimistic because I realise that people who become leaders in the region are building on what has already been achieved.

(...) I fear a lack of certainty and that Central and Eastern Europe still has a kind of inferiority complex. We do not learn enough from the mistakes of Western Europe.



From left: Yegor Stadny, Piotr Mazurek, Maxim Rust, Marek Kuchciński, Sébastien Meuwissen, Zsófia Rácz, Ferenc Almássy, Stefan Tompson

I think that we should first define who we are. We are not the East of the West or the West of the East. We are at the centre of Europe. It is our time, and we must make the most of the opportunities we have now.”

Ferenc Almássy, a French-Hungarian journalist and editor-in-chief of the Visegrad Post portal, warned our region against the mistakes made in the western part of Europe: “What led to the current situation in France is also happening here in Central Europe, especially since 2015, since the Visegrad Group’s opposition to uncontrolled migration. That was a wake-up call moment for many Central Europeans who understood that we did not have to follow Western Europe in everything. We have our own choices. We can make them. We are just as European as the others, and we have the same right to discuss the future of Europe. It is something we must always remember.”

Yegor Stadny, a former Deputy Minister of Science and Education of Ukraine, said what he interpreted as no education for responsibility in Ukraine. He lamented the lack of involvement of young Ukrainians in political life and the Homo Sovieticus mentality inherited from communism. He drew attention to the fruitfulness of youth exchanges



From left: Yegor Stadny, Piotr Mazurek, Zsófia Rác, Maxim Rust, Stefan Tomson, Sebastien Meuwissen

abroad and encouraged the development of such initiatives, which, he stressed, should be “mutual and symmetrical.”

Sviatoslav Yurash, a Member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, mentioned the recently established Conservative Youth Club, which refers to values such as nation, democracy, dignity and family. He also recalled the existence of the Intermarium club, whose activities include initiatives such as Three Seas and the Lublin Triangle. The MP assured that through these clubs, the Ukrainian side will “shape the conditions for the parliaments’ participation in these debates and take all possible steps that will lead to our mutual rapprochement.”

## Panel 2

# New challenges in international politics: the USA – Europe – Russia – China

The discussion between the foreign ministers of Poland and Hungary in Panel 2 took place in the face of changes in the international arena: a rising China, the United States reducing its involvement in the Middle East and Europe, neo-imperial Russian expansionism manifested by aggression in Georgia and recently in Ukraine. It was also the crisis of the European Union, affected for the third time in a row by a significant

From left: Péter Szijjártó – Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Zbigniew Rau – Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski – Permanent Advisor to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Sejm





From left: Lőrinc Nacsa, Attila Fülöp, Zsolt Németh, Péter Szijjártó, Zbigniew Rau, Richárd Hörcsik, Marek Kuchciński

crisis – not counting minor ones such as Brexit – and increasingly dominated by Germany.

During the conversation, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Péter Szijjártó, stressed that Europe's major problem is the lack of a real democratic debate, in which there would also be room for non-mainstream views. He pointed out that the migration crisis resulted from the countries' mistakes that allowed the migration in 2015. He also stated that the EU's share of global GDP had fallen over the years.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zbigniew Rau, assessed saving the European integration project as the key challenge facing Europe. He pointed out that when Poland joined the European Union in 2004 along with other countries, it was joining a different Union than the one that exists today. The primary motivation of the Polish government was the free market, based on four pillars: the freedom of movement of people, capital, workers and services, and the community of law. The Minister negatively evaluated protectionist tendencies in the EU and the expansion of competences by EU institutions in a non-treaty manner. He referred to the idea of the draft European constitution, which was lost in three referendums but which was followed by attempts to introduce a substitute form of unification of governments.

Minister Zbigniew Rau drew attention to the necessity of further enlargement of the EU to include countries waiting for accession for 19–20 years and reminded us of the revolution of dignity in Ukraine and the imperative written into its constitution to strive for accession to the EU and NATO. He also referred to the issue of the Western Balkans, warning that if the European community did not enable the countries of that region to join the EU and the Eastern Partnership, it would risk losing these societies to other actors.

Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, a permanent advisor to the Polish Sejm's Committee for Foreign Affairs, who moderated the discussion, posed the question of what kind of Union we all wanted and should strive to achieve. In response, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Péter Szijjártó, emphasised that Hungary was interested in a strong European Union, but one based on the powerful Member States allowed to maintain their national identity and refer to their heritage, culture, religion and past. He added that Hungary ultimately rejected the extremist position of the federalists calling for the creation of a United States of Europe. The Minister stressed that Hungary did not want to transfer any additional competences to Brussels.

Responding to the same question, Minister Rau replied that we expected a kind of Europe or European Union that did not hinder or harm our economic development. He added that it was important not to try to exploit the European integration project but rather reduce it and adapt it to the needs of ideologisation. He opposed the plans to abandon unanimity in the EU foreign policy and introduce majority voting, stressing that in practice, this would mean abandoning the democratic dimension of foreign policy and a systematic imposition of EU foreign policy by the largest, i.e. alienating the expectations and interests of all those who do not belong to that majority. He pointed to the alienation of an increasing proportion of the population as a consequence of this process.

Minister Rau highlighted that Germany's exports to the Visegrad Group countries were more remarkable than to the United States, China or France and considerably more significant than to Russia. In the case of Poland, exports to the Czech Republic or Hungary are several times greater than to Russia, which according to the Minister, should also be emphasised in talks with EU partners.



The Bieszczady Mountains, Poland





## Parliamentary Diplomacy of the Three Seas

Grzegorz Górny, President of the Board of the Three Seas Association, at the beginning of the panel underlined that the Three Seas Initiative did not have its secretariat, which made it difficult to act on the level of parliaments, governments or other institutions that would integrate our region. The President asked what the mission of the MPs was in cooperation in the Three Seas region, how they saw the cooperation at the parliamentary level and what the role of the MPs could be. Rozália-Ibolya Biró, Chairwoman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, underlined that parliamentary activity must reflect the community of goals, which should be given attention and commitment. Since its inception, the Three Seas Initiative has been a lively format, evolving from year to year, and its participants have had the opportunity to observe the political and economic commitment and potential of parliamentary cooperation. The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian National Assembly, Zsolt Németh, said that the Three Seas was an extensive and vital political project and its mission was to rebuild Central Europe, a part of Europe that was destroyed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: during World War I, World War II and under communism. The turning point in the Three Seas' history was the creation of an investment fund in most of the countries of the Initiative. Last summer, effective meetings were organised at the parliamentary level. The next ones will involve foreign affairs committees that could deal with the Three Seas Initiative.

The Three Seas Initiative is focused on building north-south infrastructure to develop cooperation in Central Europe. For decades, roads mainly led from east to west through the region's countries. The armies of East and West, Russia and Germany, marched through it. President Németh said it was high time to build infrastructure and cooperation on the north-south axis, cooperation that was as broad as possible in terms of road infrastructure but also energy and IT infrastructure.



From left: Rozália-Ibolya Biró, Zsolt Németh, Rihards Kols, Marek Kuchciński, Grzegorz Górný

The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm, Marek Kuchciński, said that 30 years of free nations and free states in Central Europe was when enormous progress had been made. Nevertheless, deepening cooperation and mutual understanding remains one of the most critical challenges. The President assessed that for the countries of the region and the parliaments, one of the fundamental goals is to ensure conditions for developing societies, families, whole nations and cooperation with neighbours. He said:

Given the experience of several hundred years or even almost 1000 years of various forms of cooperation, we can state very clearly: we know each other well, because of history we draw conclusions from various events, several hundred years of experience, at least since the first Visegrad, since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the Three Seas area, the presidents and our governments have taken the initiative to meet or make the essential move of strengthening the infrastructure because without infrastructure, without communication, we will again be living at a distance, between barriers.

Furthermore, Marek Kuchciński stressed that parliamentary diplomacy with the character of a dense network of ties created through bilateral and trilateral contacts, parliamentary assemblies, using the experience of the Visegrad Group, is necessary to complete cooperation.

A member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Croatian Assembly, Davor Ivo Stier, expressed his satisfaction with creating the Three Seas Initiative. He recalled that Croatia had been involved in that project from the very beginning. The agreement was signed in Dubrovnik, and although the Initiative started at the level of presidents, governments and parliaments were becoming more and more engaged in it. He added that a huge step forward was the creation of a joint investment fund. He pointed out the need to inform citizens about the activities of the Three Seas Initiative, as well as the need to involve representatives of society, namely parliamentarians. He stressed that the Three Seas region generates a larger GDP than Russia or Canada. He indicated the considerable infrastructure gap between the Three Seas region and Western Europe. He further assessed that due to the nature of the Three Seas Initiative, a formal structure was not necessary yet, but structured meetings were needed.

The Chairman of the Saeima Foreign Affairs Committee Rihards Kols said that parliaments have the last word on budgetary arrangements. He stressed that it was important that all 12 countries in the Trilateral Initiative had 110 million citizens. Together with Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans, the number would rise to 160 million. The necessity of cooperation should therefore be explained to voters. The President announced that Latvia would host the 2022 summer summit of the Three Seas in Riga. In addition to heads of government and heads of state, NGOs and the private sector, the summit will be attended by parliamentarians.

The former Minister for Development and Economic and Social Reforms of Slovenia, Žiga Turk, recounted that he implemented the initiative to digitalise Central and Eastern Europe over two years. He stressed that countries in the region could not compete with American giants. He pointed out that a report was prepared on how to coordinate the region's policies and cooperate in digitisation. It is also thanks to digitisation that economic growth rates in the region's countries are above the average in the European Union. The report proposes the creation of a digitisation budget in each country to establish a mechanism for coordination and joint use of the remaining funds.

The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian National Assembly, Zsolt Németh, said that Hungary is still open and ready to be the seat of



From left: Rozália-Ibolya Biró, Zsolt Németh, Marek Kuchciński, Grzegorz Górný

the Secretariat of the Three Seas Initiative. He stressed that *Via Carpatia*, a motorway project from the Baltic States to the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea coast, is the most fundamental element of the Three Seas Initiative region. The last section of the Hungarian *Via Carpatia* is between Miskolc and Kosice, which the President assured would be completed that year. Zsolt Németh said that there should be serious thought about a high-speed railway to connect the Visegrad capitals in the long term. The President considered 2021 to be crucial because of the completion of the Slovak and Polish interconnectors, through which gas will reach countries far from the sea – Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Latvian Saeima, Rihards Kols, drew attention to the need to inform parliamentarians about the Three Seas Initiative because, for example, there is little knowledge about it in Latvia. He stressed that *Via Baltica* is not only a high-speed train but also a 5G network – which Latvia, among others, is developing in the region – and thus a step towards creating a new infrastructure for business. The President further pointed out that still, not all members of the Three Seas are members of the Initiative’s investment fund.



The Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is a very unformed structure, without even a permanent office and secretary. Therefore, there are demands to create a parliamentary dimension to this Initiative – and they are well founded since cross-border cooperation is essential for achieving the 3SI objectives. Strengthening the north-south axis could boost economic growth in the region to the benefit of the whole EU. Cooperation on parliamentary level will help provide political support for more effective cooperation

Rihards Kols – Chairman of the Saeima Foreign Affairs Committee





Maramureș, Romania

among governments, businesses and non-governmental organisations that are interested in strengthening regional ties.

Parliamentarism has been established all over the world as a widespread accepted way to legitimise political decisions. Establishing formal and informal cross-parliamentary networks can strengthen national parliaments by supplying them with information otherwise not being easily available. The extent of parliamentary representation in transnational assemblies can serve as an indicator for a country's level of involvement in projects of regional cooperation. 3SI could become a place to discuss strategic issues for the entire region that will help counter external pressures. While diplomats largely drive a nation's foreign policy, elected members of national parliaments also play a crucial role in influencing policy priorities, holding governments accountable, and providing a firmer democratic foundation to the advancement of peace, cooperation, and human rights across the globe. Through the parliamentary assemblies of organizations that play a critical role in international peace and security parliamentarians can advance national interests on the international stage.



In Central and Eastern Europe, there are many geographical and historical, cultural, economic, and political grounds for closer cooperation. The European Union should be open to forms of regional cooperation that form another layer of a multi-level system of governance that includes an “EU Brussels”, regional groups of the Member States, regions within the Member States themselves, towns and villages. However, such cooperation must be precise and cover concrete activities and issues, not abstract and empty structures.

Žiga Turk – Former Minister for Development and Economic and Social Reforms of Slovenia





The Za Mnichem Valley, the Tatra Mountains, Polska

Digitisation is one topic of genuine common interest, considerable synergies, and untapped opportunities. The Central and Eastern Europe countries are making a developmental leap in this area by building infrastructure unencumbered by legacy systems. As there are not always technological giants there, they are open to developing with the most modern global solutions, without jealousy of other countries' leading roles and without the ambition that their local proposals are the ones to provide universal solutions. They may be interested in a more liberal and free-market approach to regulating digital services. The think-tank Atlantic Council recently set up a task force of local experts that made many recommendations in a paper entitled "Digitisation in Central and Eastern Europe: Building Regional Cooperation". Recommendations include setting aside funds from the EU Reconstruction Fund to initiate regional coordination in this area, setting up a roundtable of ministers from relevant ministries, infrastructure cooperation, support for startups, education, etc. Digital cooperation can serve as an example for many other policy areas.





## 30 years of free Central European states and building regional cooperation

In Panel 4, the Deputy Marshal of the Sejm, Ryszard Terlecki, highlighted the problems concerning the region, including the lack of EU enlargement to include countries that aspire to membership. He stressed that the EU had set out specific criteria for such countries but then added further requirements which were not easy to meet. He pointed out that most countries striving to join the EU have strong social support in this respect, which may start to decrease if no progress is made. He gave the example of Turkey, which has been trying to join the former community and present Union since the 1960s.

Moreover, the Deputy Marshal of the Sejm said that a project of a much more far-reaching integration – building a single state, connected with the two- or even three-speed Union project (against which Poland, among others, has protested) – has matured and is taking shape in the European Union. Ryszard Terlecki assessed that the new EU members would help protest against the two-speed project. He added that Brexit was the result of the British people's opposition to the dictatorship of the Brussels bureaucracy. He further stressed that a significant threat at the moment is illegal migration, which could increase after the changes in Afghanistan.

The Deputy Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament, Mihail Popșoi, expressed his satisfaction in representing Moldova at the Europe of the Carpathians conference and said that his country is keen to participate in various forms of cooperation in the region, not only in the European Union. He stated that Moldova is again on the road to democracy and European integration. He stressed that parliamentary elections had been held a few months earlier, which his option had won with an absolute majority.

Deputy Speaker Popșoi also said that several reforms, including the judiciary to help combat corruption, are currently underway in Moldova. He stressed that 70 per cent of Moldova's exports go to the European Union and that the **Transnistrian Republic of Moldova** exports more to the EU than to Russia.



From left: Maciej Szymanowski, Jan Draus, Mihail Popșoi, Ryszard Terlecki, Richárd Hörcsik, Martin Fronc

The Deputy Speaker welcomed the visit of the Polish President to Moldova, who – a few days before the conference in Karpacz – together with the Romanian and Ukrainian Presidents, attended celebrations commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Moldova’s independence. Mihail Popșoi emphasised that Poland was vital to Moldova in 2008 and 2009 when the Eastern Partnership was launched and stressed that the partnership should continue to develop.

During the panel, **Maciej Szymanowski, Director of the Waclaw Felczak Institute for Polish-Hungarian Cooperation**, recalled that this day, 8 September, is the anniversary of the tragic death of Ryszard Siwiec, who committed an act of self-immolation in protest against the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. It was the voice of a simple citizen from Przemyśl, which still resonates so strongly today.

Richárd Hörcsik, Chairman of the EU Committee of the Hungarian National Assembly, pointed out that he had submitted a report on Moldova’s admission between 1993 and 1994 when he was a member of the European Council to the European Union. He expressed pride that Hungary and he, as the representative of Hungary, could do



Participants of the panel *30 years of free Central European states and building regional cooperation*, Karpacz, 8 September 2021

something for the integration of Moldova. He called Europe of the Carpathians the “younger sister” of the Visegrad Group. He recalled that for 38 years, Carpathian countries were locked in the communist bloc and forced to cooperate. Today, however, it is becoming apparent what value cooperation based on mutual interests can bring. The President recalled the words of Ivan Korčok, Slovak Foreign Minister, who said that Slovakia could not be successful without the Visegrad Four. Richárd Hörcsik also drew attention to the democratic deficit in the EU structure, where elites are far removed from citizens. He said:

In the case of Europe of the Carpathians, it is precisely the opposite because in the Visegrad Four, in the framework of Europe of the Carpathians initiative, our ministers sit at the same table, either in Krasieczyn, or in Przemyśl, or Sárospatak.

The Chairman also stressed the need to work on infrastructure development and praised the result of the countries’ talks, namely the construction of *Via Carpatia*. He

then recalled the words of Péter Szijjártó, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who the previous day, during the Economic Forum in Karpacz, said that without cooperation within the V4, there would be compulsory relocation quotas.

**The former Slovak Minister of Education and Science, Martin Fronc**, emphasised that the European Union's project, also in terms of the Lisbon Treaty, was to respect sovereignty in cultural and ethical issues. In recent years, however, Brussels has been trying to promote a culture contrary to the tradition with Judeo-Christian roots through the European Commission and institutions close to it.

**Jan Draus, a member of the IPN Collegium**, reminded that in 1989, in the framework of the Autumn of Nations, Poles and Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks gained independence. He suggested that the nations were divided in the conditions of sovereignty, but in the conditions of the fight for sovereignty, they had a lot in common. He recalled the facts of mutual solidarity: Polish support for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 or the self-immolation of Ryszard Siwiec in Warsaw, Jan Palach in Prague and Sándor Bauer in Budapest, already mentioned as symbols of protest against the Warsaw Pact troops' invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. He also mentioned the "Message to the People of Eastern Europe" adopted at the first Solidarity congress and the cooperation of Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian oppositionists after the signing of the CSCE agreement in Helsinki, which created Polish-Czechoslovak solidarity and later Polish-Hungarian solidarity.

Maciej Szymanowski



Europe of the Carpathians is the place with the highest density of states, nations and religions in entire Europe, where around 100 Nobel Prize winners come from, and the place which gave Europe the Conference currently taking place. We are in that part of the continent which is developing most rapidly, not only in Europe but also in the world. Many things have been achieved, many others are being realised in our countries, but, according to some, the clock of history has stopped pointing in Central

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





The Niedzica Castle, Poland

Europe's favour, and according to others, the hands of the clock have even started turning in the opposite direction.

The future of our freedoms, so recently regained, civic and national, seems to be threatened in many respects. So, what to do? How to respond to these challenges? How to defend ourselves effectively against the divide et impera policy? How to go on the offensive corresponding to the historical heritage and position of Central Europe's states and nations in 2021?

These were the questions that the individual panellists answered.



I would like to express my hope that the new venue of the Economic Forum will enrich our long-lasting friendship and that the cooperation within the framework of the Visegrad Group and Europe of the Carpathians (which can be called the “younger sister” of the V4) will become increasingly intense.

I acknowledge the critical role played by Marshal Marek Kuchciński, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Sejm, in initiating the “Europe of the Carpathians” conference series.

Richárd Hörcsik – Chairman of the EU Affairs Committee of the Hungarian National Assembly (PRH)



Central European cooperation was built on shared interests, values and historical experiences. Some actions of the EU institutions in Brussels can be characterised as a covert circumvention of the founding treaties. For that reason, the Visegrad Group should act as the guardian of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Given the current events, I call for closer regional cooperation. I would like to remind you that cooperation between the V4 countries has not always been as close as today. After our region acceded to the EU, ways and techniques of cooperation had to be adapted, proving successful. In the past, one of the main achievements of V4 cooperation was the adoption of a shared position on the rejection of a compulsory migrant relocation scheme. The fight against the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated our readiness to care for each other in a spirit of solidarity. In the past decade, V4 has become an engine for economic growth in the EU. As for further cooperation within the Visegrad Group, there is a need to jointly counteract the application of double standards in the EU and fight extremist ideologies. I believe that all Member States should be treated equally. Otherwise, the functioning and unity of the EU will be jeopardised.

Moreover, it appears necessary to add a local dimension to Europe of the Carpathians by creating joint projects and programmes in border regions. I am committed to actions that bring the least developed regions of our countries closer to each other so that local stakeholders can be heard more clearly. Such actions will realise the principle of subsidiarity and can be redirected from the capitals to the regional centres.

Within the framework of regional cooperation in Central Europe, a section of motorway is being built between Miskolc and Tornósnémeti, i.e. the border crossing between Hungary and Slovakia. It will be finished in October 2021, thus completing the 230-kilometre Hungarian section of Via Carpatia.



Jan Draus



Since the title of our panel refers to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Central Europe, attention should be focused on the Visegrad Group and the nation-states that comprised it and gained independence in 1989. Poles, Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks create their national paths of history, but they also share history. It can be argued that our nations did not have much in common under conditions of sovereignty but a lot during the struggle for sovereignty.

Jan Draus – Member of the IPN Collegium



Friends are made in times of crisis. On the example of freeing ourselves from the shackles of communism, I will mention only four facts confirming the mutual solidarity of our nations: Polish support for the Hungarian revolution of 1956, self-immolation of Ryszard Siwiec in Warsaw, Jan Palach in Prague and Sándor Bauer in Budapest as symbols of protest against the aggression of the Warsaw Pact countries against Czechoslovakia in 1968, which led to the suppression of the Prague Spring, the “Message to working people of Eastern Europe” adopted at the first congress of the Solidarity Trade Union in Gdansk, and the cooperation of Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian oppositionists after the signing of the CSCE Act in Helsinki, which was the basis for the birth of first Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity and then Polish-Hungarian Solidarity. Suppose we supplement these political facts with the works of writers such as Milan Kundera (with his famous essay *The West Hijacked* or *The Tragedy of Central Europe*) or Czesław Miłosz (*The other Europe*) and the Hungarian historian Jenő Szűcs giving us historical legitimacy for the independent existence of our region, the essays of Václav Havel, who described the region as a spiritual, cultural and mental phenomenon, or the writings of the lawyer and politician Prof. István Bibó and the Polish historians Oskar Halecki and Jerzy Kłoczowski (author of *Younger Europe*) the historical and cultural phenomenon of Central Europe emerges. Inspired by Václav Havel, this heritage was transformed into a political phenomenon, first in the form of the Visegrad Triangle and, after the formation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, into the Visegrad Group. Therefore, the creators of this historical, cultural and political phenomenon drew correct conclusions from the past and, above all, showed us the future way.

The existing literature on Central Europe clearly shows the dynamic formation of the identity of this region, which distinguishes it positively from the East and West of Europe. In our countries' cultures, we are attached to traditional values and, above all, the idea of a nation-state. For this reason, our regional identity, stemming from our experience of the past and of the struggle for sovereignty, is defined in the West in terms of ‘otherness’. It makes Central Europe less understood by the West, which has not experienced such a tragedy in the past, especially Communist enslavement, as Central Europe did. Who knows if Central Europe has not been assigned the role of defending Europe from civilisational collapse and the federalisation of the continent.

For 30 years, Central Europe has developed many instruments of cooperation. One can think of Euro-regions or European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), with Hungary leading the way. With its joint infrastructure fund and the International

Visegrad Fund, established earlier in 2000, the Three Seas Initiative also plays a positive role. Nonetheless, an exceptionally noble sub-regional initiative is Europe of the Carpathians, whose originator was Marshal Marek Kuchciński. After all, the Carpathians are one of Europe's most crucial environmental resources, with an extraordinary natural wealth exerting an enormous influence on climate and water relations and has landscape and spa values. The success of this initiative depends not only on the political support of individual states but also on the support of local authorities and professional or non-governmental organisations. It is to be hoped that it will take the form of a detailed strategy and become the second European mountain area after the Alpine region. At this point, let me call for the establishment of the Institute of Europe of the Carpathians in Przemyśl and, bearing in mind the Visegrad Group, for the creation of Polish-Slovakian and Polish-Czech institutes. The Institute for Polish-Hungarian Cooperation is already operational and has its counterpart in Budapest. These institutes could form a network of Visegrad institutes and multiply cultural output. The establishment of a Visegrad parliamentary assembly should also be considered.

The old gate leading to the Palace Park, Krasiczyn, Poland





Hungarian National Assembly building, Budapest



## The European Neighbourhood Policy

At the beginning of the panel, **Arkadiusz Mularczyk, Chairman of the Sejm and Senate Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**, stressed that the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan had led to a new wave of migration. He said that the strategy created and implemented by Alexander Lukashenko was to use migrants from Asia and the Middle East as political weapons.

The Chairman also referred to the Europe 2050 strategy, which aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by introducing a tax on these emissions. He asked whether the region of Central and Eastern Europe should pay the price.

**Małgorzata Gosiewska, Deputy Marshal of the Sejm**, assessed that Belarus had triggered a hybrid war through the wave of migrants and stressed that Poland was also home to economic migrants from Ukraine, culturally close to Poles, who came here to work and did not cause problems. She pointed out that Poland needed migrants from Ukraine in many sectors of the economy, as they complemented it very well.

The Deputy Marshal recalled a conversation with the Deputy Chairman of the Seimas, the Lithuanian Parliament, Paulius Saudargas. He spoke about the enormous problems with migrants, who had entered the Lithuanian side in the initial phase of the hybrid conflict before the problem was noticed. According to the Seimas Deputy Chairman, many migrants who spoke Russian and had spent the last few years in Russia were not migrants directly from the Middle East.

**The Chairperson of the EU Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, Maka Bochorishvili**, stressed that three years earlier Georgia had celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Eastern Partnership, which was brought about by the 2009 initiative of Poland and Sweden. The President pointed out that the initiative was a response to the occupation of part of Georgia:

Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine had engaged in a political association process, but after the occupation of Crimea, after the occupation of eastern Ukraine, after the start of this hybrid war, the situation changed.

The Georgian government has decided to apply for membership in the European Union by 2024.

**Maka Bochorishvili** reminded us that recently the foreign ministers signed a memorandum in Kyiv, which created the Associated Trio (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). She said that the future of Central Europe could not be considered in isolation from the future of Europe as a whole. The themes of this region should be inscribed in and enrich the strategy of the European Union.

**Björn Söder, Member of the Riksdag Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and NATO** stressed that the migration crisis that had reached Europe had completely changed Sweden and its society. Indeed, Sweden has encountered a completely different culture and is now among the countries with the highest level of gun crime. The speaker pointed out that from January to August 2021, 35 homicides with firearms (committed by organised crime groups) were recorded in the country. He expressed his gratitude to Poland for its apparent position on defending the borders of the European Union and stressed that the migration crisis was a challenge for all Member States. Björn Söder also referred to the current situation in Afghanistan and pointed out that migration flows to Europe are likely to continue. He also referred to the threat of hybrid warfare from Russia or Belarus. He assessed that the Lukashenko regime was tightening its control over society. Returning to the issue of migration, he said that Sweden had made a mistake in the 1970s when the parliament decided to change its migration policy and encourage migrants to maintain their own culture. Björn Söder said that the project had ended in disaster for Sweden because minorities kept demanding more rights, friction started, and there were minor and major conflicts, including ones involving the use of weapons.

About the pandemic issue, a **Romanian Parliament's Committee for European Affairs member, George-Cristian Tuță**, stated that Romania had decided to donate more than one million doses of its vaccines to Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia as a sign of solidarity. He also said that Romania hoped for a better future for the Eastern Partnership after 2020.



From left: Björn Söder, Paweł Łatuszka, George-Cristian Tuță, Małgorzata Gosiewska, Arkadiusz Mularczyk

**Paweł Łatuszka from the Coordinating Council for the Transfer of Power in Belarus** reminded that Alexander Lukashenko started killing people back in the 1990s, which he mentioned publicly in the mass media:

The dictator, the so-called president, told the whole of Europe: I killed people in the 1990s on the roads of Belarus. He murdered many opposition activists. Viktor Gonchar, whom I had the honour of knowing when he was still a young diplomat, attaché to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former Deputy Prime Minister, head of the Central Electoral Commission, was murdered. The former Minister of the Interior, Zacharenko, was murdered, as were many business people and journalists. Now he [Lukashenko—ed.] started to kill openly in the streets, shoot people, giving the order: shoot, murder, kill in prisons. Furthermore, what to do about it? It is a challenge, and it tests entire Europe's stamina. Does Europe really have the (...) strength to meet this challenge or not?

Paweł Łatuszka said that a political decision must be taken on Belarus and for this to happen, the will of the European Union, the United States, Canada and Great Britain is needed. He recalled that although the adopted UN Convention against Torture, over 4,000 cases of torture had been registered in Belarus. Under universal jurisdiction, cases had been opened in Poland, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Germany and Lithuania.

**Deputy Marshal of the Sejm, Małgorzata Gosiewska**, recalled that many strong words were spoken on the previous day of the conference about the more than seven-year war in Ukraine in Donbas and the situation of the population on that territory, people kidnapped, tortured. The Deputy Marshal informed about the report she had submitted five years before to the International Criminal Court in The Hague:

Evidence of war crimes committed by the Russian Federation was submitted. Ladies and gentlemen, what is happening with this? Nothing, so far. It is a good report, very well evaluated by the prosecutors at the International Criminal Court, but there is no investigation. Unfortunately, what I am saying, what we have heard about the situation in Belarus and what is happening in the Donbas, shows the inertia of institutions and international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, for example, the institutions of the OSCE and the so-called observation missions.



Björn Söder



Ladies and gentlemen,

I am thankful to be a participant on a discussion on European Neighbourhood Policy. From a Swedish perspective we have been greatly affected by the flows of migrants to Europe. The migration crisis has changed Sweden fundamentally and there's been severe impacts on Swedish society.

Björn Söder – Member of the Riksdag Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and NATO



Today we are ranked the country in EU with the highest rate of gun violence. Reports has also confirmed the link between high crime rate and high migration from countries that have a vastly different culture and set of values than the values prevalent in Sweden. The party that I represent, the Sweden democrats has since we entered parliament warned for this development. Therefore I am thankful to see that Poland and other countries on the EU boarder has taken a firm stance against the influx of illegal migrants through EU:s outer boarders.

The migrant crises are a clear common challenge for all of the EU states and the challenge is emerging as we speak. The take over of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the use of the Belarusian regime of migrants as a weapon are two new aspects of these crises. Aspects that have to be addressed promptly and decisively. I hope for continued decisive action to handle these new threats and I don't think there's any chance that these problems will diminish in the near future.

When speaking about the migrant crises I believe on the other hand that we must be prepared for the future and for more challenges ahead in the case of new migrant flows. The latest developments in Afghanistan is for certain nothing new in that part of the world. The violent wars and changes of power in countries in middle east and central Asia is something that has happened numerus times and will most probably continue in the foreseeable future.

Therefore, we must be prepared and we must continue to talk and discuss the consequences of migrant flows and how we best prepare for them. In Sweden the Social democrats always say in hindsight that they were naive and could not foresee migrant flows and the rising level of violent crime. In Sweden we every day can see the result of this naivety. It is time to start preparing for a future with continues challenges and its always better to in time act decisively and prepare for different threats then to handle them afterwards.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The threat from migration flows is not the only threat in this part of Europe. There is also the military, hybrid and political threat from the Belarusian and Russian regimes. Today this threat is not as imminent as the migrant crisis, but it is and continues to be an existential threat to our countries and must be treated as such.

The developments the last year in Belarus has unfortunately clearly shown that we cannot hope for a developing democracy in the nearest future. Mr Lukashenka and his

regime are tightening their grip on power and the repressions instigated in the country is becoming tougher. Even forcing down civilian aircraft in the airspace above Belarus is now part of Mr Lukashenka's toolbox against his opponents.

Behind the developments in Belarus is of course Mr Putin and the Russian regime that has tightened their grip on the country. It is clear that nothing happens in Belarus without the approval of Mr Putin.

Keeping in mind what has been evolving in Belarus and Russia the latest year the upcoming joint Zapad exercises between the countries are a subject of worry. According to official information from Russia it seems that the exercises will be record in the number of participants. They will clearly be used as a show of force against the EU and for an internal audience in Russia and Belarus. There's also the question that China could participate in the exercise.

When talking about the Zapad 2021 exercise I think we should keep in mind how the Soviet regime used this exercise in 1981 as a pressure against Poland and the emerging oppositional movement. As a consequence of the military pressure from the Soviets, Poland's aspiring opposition was crushed and a military dictatorship was imposed on the country that lasted through the 1980s.

Keeping this in mind there could be similar consequences of the now upcoming Zapad exercises. Will this finally be the military pressure that forces Belarus in to merging totally with Russia? Will this then be the final end to hopes for a democratic and pluralistic Belarus? And will the exercise mean the first serious introduction of Chinese military power on our common borders?

The threats are real, we have felt the impacts and now is the time to act to prevent them from evolving. As a Swede I have seen and see every day the consequences of a naive policy both regarding migration and security. My message is clear don't be naive and we must together prepare for a future that looks grim. It is always better to be prepared than to handle a crisis afterwards.

Thank you for listening!



The Tatra Mountains, Poland



## The impact of the Green Deal on transport policy in Central Europe

**Włodzimierz Zientarski, an automotive journalist, the President of the Kierowca.pl Association, and a moderator of the panel, said:**

Europe, which is also developing here, in this part we are talking about – in Europe of the Carpathians, will bring an insanely large amount of dynamism to transport. The transport will develop because we want Europe to breathe freely also economically. Concerning this, there will be trains, probably more than there have been to date, and there will be new railway lines, but modes of transport that are not the cleanest will also be in operation. We want to balance all this and move in this direction, if only in matters of the railways, so that the air over Europe of the Carpathians and entire Europe is clean, green and healthy. That is what we are going to talk about.

**The Minister of Infrastructure, Andrzej Adamczyk,** stressed that the development of any country, be it in Europe or on any other continent, was impossible without adequate infrastructure. He also pointed out that the Polish government was implementing measures to increase communication efficiency, especially on roads. He added that funds had been secured for the *Via Carpatia* road that he described as the European road of life. Andrzej Adamczyk noted that at the recent Thre Seas summit in Sofia, Greek President Ekaterini Sakielaropulu, President Andrzej Duda, and presidents and prime ministers had spoken about it in this way.

The process of revising the TEN-T core network, which is underway today, was an imperative that convinced not only Poland, the Polish government, but also our partners and our neighbours to jointly apply to the European Parliament and the European Commission for *Via Carpatia* to be included in the TEN-T core network.



From left: Andrzej Adamczyk, Andrej Doležal, Julius Skačkauskas, Jan Sechter

Minister Adamczyk said that the biggest challenge was to reduce the negative impact of transport on the climate and the environment. He highlighted that transport emissions accounted for 25% of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions and that this level, in contrast to emissions from other sectors, was not changing. The European transport sector employs more than 10 million workers, and its contribution to the EU's GDP is about 5%. The minister assessed that all measures should be in line with the European Union's plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050. He pointed out that it is necessary to take care of sustainable transport, including strengthening railway transport.

**Slovenian Infrastructure Minister Jernej Vrtovec** said that transport was one of the sectors affected by the pandemic, so it was necessary to rebuild it. Fit for 55 is a package published in June by the European Commission. It contains significant ideas for transport, among which electromobility is one of the essential priorities.

Minister Vrtovec called 2021 the year of trains and assessed that railways should be the most popular solution in Europe in the future. He expressed the hope of creating a train network that would connect European capitals.

**The Slovak Minister of Transport and Construction, Andrej Doležal**, stressed that even road infrastructure could positively impact the environment if Via Carpatia is built in east Slovakia, translating into fewer traffic jams, less noise and less pollution in other parts of the country.

**The Deputy Minister of Transport of the Czech Republic, Jan Sechter**, assessed that the Visegrad Group members agree on expanding infrastructure. In discussions with the Union, there are conflicts on this issue. As an example, he gave the joint fight of Poland and the Czech Republic for the shipping on the Odra River to be in 10 years complementary to the railways and for the Odra River – here, in the Czech-Polish dimension – to become a trunk line for the green mode of transport. The Deputy Minister said that it is opposed by some non-governmental circles, which are concerned about the pollution of the river.

**The Deputy Minister of Transport of Ukraine, Mustafa Nayyem**, said that Ukraine was trying to promote clean and efficient means of transport, and in this connection, a draft law on decarbonisation and reduction of emissions of harmful substances through transport was being developed. The Deputy Minister informed that some solutions were being prepared for that purpose in cooperation with the Automobile Association of Ukraine. A ban on using certain types of internal combustion engines in public transport is also being gradually introduced.

Deputy Minister Nayyem reminded that the state railways were one of the largest companies in Ukraine, and Minister Kubrakov was involved in measures to improve the functioning of the Ukrainian state railways, as he was responsible for that as a minister. The Deputy Minister announced that Ukraine would undertake a project to renovate 100 railway stations by the end of that year. The country has created a special fund to allow investment in road infrastructure, especially railways, in the context of the Green Deal.

The Deputy Minister added that the European Commission had also provided Ukraine with money (in the form of a grant), which would allow it to initially develop and carry out a feasibility study for the development of railway connections, as well as implement another electrification of railway lines, namely about 1,500 km of railway connections between Ukraine and Poland.

**The Lithuanian Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications, Julius Skačkauskas**, stated that it was vital to recall *Via Baltica* as the largest infrastructure project, where high-speed rail connections between Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius and



Participants of the panel *The impact of the Green Deal on transport policy in Central Europe*, Karpacz, 8 September 2021

Warsaw were being built was to be implemented in the Baltic States. The Deputy Minister expressed satisfaction that such a project was also being implemented in the Visegrad Group countries – Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. He said that *Via Baltica* would be completed in 2026. He added that road infrastructure was currently carried out the most freight transport in the region, which was unacceptable. Moreover, Deputy Minister Skačkauskas pointed out that rail infrastructure was costly, and if it was not used, it became economically unviable.





## Future Europe – open or closed

**Dominik Mierzejewski, an expert on China from the University of Łódź**, stated that countries such as France, Great Britain and Germany, to some extent, used their colonial past to open economically to third parties and continue their economic opening to East Asia. He added that when Poland, which had no such past, joined the ranks, it had to make up for it. He drew attention to the past, continuation and historical continuity of the post-colonial identity of European players in non-European markets. He said that Central and Eastern Europe, as an integrated organism, had taken steps to open to China within the framework of the 16+1 platform. He admitted that the platform was going through various turbulences, but it should nevertheless be perceived as an element that should make Central and Eastern Europe more open to Asia.

**Aleksander Milinkiewicz, a representative of the “Free Belarusian University”**, in response to the question of the panel moderator, **Jan Malicki, the Director of the Eastern European Studies at the University of Warsaw**:

What, in your opinion, should the future Europe be like? Open or closed?

answered that everyone dreamt of an open Europe. He defined openness as independence, because in a closed Europe Belarus would have no chance to preserve its sovereignty.

In this sense, it is crucial for us that today, in Brussels and other European capitals, they are no longer wondering as before: whether the Belarusian nation is a separate nation, whether the Belarusian state is artificial or real. Fortunately, there are no such topics now. I would also like to say that in addition to Europe opening to countries which are



From left: Aleksander Milinkiewicz, Ben-Oni Ardelean, Ivan Brajović, Barbara Bartuś, Tibor Navracsics, Jan Malicki

prepared, it is imperative for us to be prepared and want to join Europe, if only under European values and standards.

Aleksander Milinkiewicz stressed that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the citizens of Belarus voted in a referendum to maintain the USSR. He gave the denationalisation and destruction of Belarusian culture and language over centuries as a reason. He said that voices were saying that the country should be neutral in Belarus, following the example of Switzerland or Finland.

**The Vice President of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, Ben-Oni Ardelean**, said that 15 years earlier when the revolution took place in Romania, the country entered the path of democracy. He considered Romania's admission to NATO and the European Union an important moment. He stressed that Romanians were still very pro-European, more so than neighbouring countries.

The Vice President spoke in favour of the enlargement of the European Union. He assessed the need to continue the integration process with Moldova and Ukraine.

**Tibor Navracsics, the former European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport**, quoted Robert Schuman's words from the early 1950s:

before Europe can become a great power militarily or economically, it must first become a true cultural community.

He added that there were substantial cultural differences between East and West, North and South. He assessed that this problem could not be solved by introducing domination within the Union and pushing against other cultures.

**The Member of the Committee for Security and Defence, Ivan Brajović (Montenegro)**, said that Brexit was the first warning signal and public opposition and pointed out that Montenegro, which was outside the European Union, favoured integration processes and was the most advanced among countries aspiring to accession.

**The Chairwoman of the Sejm and Senate Delegation to the PA OSCE, Barbara Bartuś**, said that Poland had always supported cooperation as a member of the EU since 2004. She stressed that, when speaking of integration and support for the accession of other states to the EU, she had particularly in mind the Western Balkans countries. She also drew attention to the need to answer what future Europe should be like. Barbara Bartuś cited the CJEU ruling as an example of interference in Polish statehood. She stressed that Poland also cared about starting the accession process for Macedonia and Albania.

**The Chairman of the Committee for European Affairs, Domagoj Hajduković (Croatia)**, said that the European project was open from the beginning, and he assessed that it was still so. According to Croatia, the Western Balkans are very important for security and quality of life in Europe and for completing the integration process. The President stressed that Croatia was and would be one of the biggest supporters of the inclusion of both Montenegro and other countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina – the only country in the region that did not yet have any formal status vis-à-vis the European Union.

**Member of the Committee for European Integration David Usupashvili (Georgia)** said he spoke on behalf of many Georgians who lived in Georgia but felt European. Moreover, although Georgia is not in the European Union, it identifies with it and shares its values.



Participants of the panel *Future Europe – open or closed*, Karpacz, 8 September 2021.

In his opinion, most Georgians believe that Europe should remain open. He stressed that he would like even Euro-sceptics to look optimistically at the future of the European Union. He expressed concern over Russia's action and hoped that European countries would not forget about countries like Georgia, which had been in Europe for centuries.

**The President of the Transformation Centre for Ukraine, Mykhailo Khariy**, said that the President of Ukraine visited the USA a week earlier, where a joint statement on strategic partnership was signed. The President said that Ukraine wanted to become a democratic state and live within the framework of the transatlantic world and that it would use the American, as well as Polish, experience when it came to systemic transformation.

**The Member of the Committee for Security and Defence, Ivan Brajović (Montenegro)**, stated that the European Union had to remain open for the years to come. He assessed that Montenegro would be the first new member of the European Union. He admitted that until the parliamentary elections, he was optimistic and thought

that Montenegro would join the European Union by 2025, but then he thought it would happen in 2026/2027, at the latest in 2028.

**Jan Malicki, the Director of the Centre for East European Studies at Warsaw University**, summarised the panel as follows:

Europe, as we understand it is not only the European Union. Even here, Europe is not only defined by strict geographical borders. In our understanding, Europe is more of an approach, an understanding, a civilisation and a dream (...). And if we are talking about a dream, then to paraphrase a recent statement by Aleksander Milinkiewicz, I would say this: *We have a dream, a European dream for wider Europe.*

The Astronomical-Meteorological Observatory on Mount Pop Ivan, Chornohora, Ukraine





The Krasiczyn Castle, Poland



## The European Conservative Alliance – joint declaration

**Zdzisław Krasnodębski, the Member of the European Parliament and Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)**, moderator of the panel, began by saying that the European Union was at a crossroads and the centre-right forces, the traditional ones, were getting weaker. Radical tendencies are winning out, whether about climate policy, industrial policy, ethical issues, and many other aspects being vigorously debated in the European Parliament. The moderator asked the question about the direction the EU was developing – whether it would turn into a federal state or a quasi-federal state or remain a community of nation-states. Furthermore, he pointed out that in Poland, there were negative assessments about cooperation with Euro-sceptic parties or the pro-Russian Rassemblement national party.

**The Vice President of the Identity and Democracy Group in the European Parliament, Nicolas Bay (France)**, said that the shared history also included difficult moments between individual countries and nations on our continent, but we have a shared foundation. All highly value this shared cultural foundation. He gave Greek philosophy and Christianity as examples.

The Vice-President said that Brussels and individual countries were under the dictatorship of the LGBT community. He quoted Zdzisław Krasnodębski's words about a joint declaration between 14 or 15 political parties in Europe and said that it would be a solid foundation for cooperation because of the shared European civilisation and the common desire for the peoples of Europe to radiate around the world again, as they did in the past. The Vice-President stressed that the European Union had raised many hopes in the past but that today it aroused anxiety and a sense of bitterness because politicians in Brussels would like to dictate their policies to Poland, Hungary or Slovakia while they should respect the sovereignty of these countries and their governments elected in a democratic process and having the fullest possible legitimacy.

**The Board Member of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology  
Ján Figel' (Slovakia) said:**

In ancient China, they used to say that when words change their meaning, our freedom is threatened. And this is the reality in our countries in Europe, which means that we have to understand each other well; otherwise, we will get lost somewhere, we will fall into this Tower of Babel.

Ján Figel' stressed that although conservatism and liberalism existed in Europe, European countries differed in their languages and dialects, so it was vital for them to understand their roots, identity, and traditions. Moreover, he pointed out that Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer were Christian democrats, good patriots in their countries, although L'Humanité treated Schuman as a traitor. He said that in Schumann's dream, Europe was to be like a mosaic, undivided into east and west, with many essential pieces: French, German, Polish, and Slovakian

It is precious, and that is why we have spoken here of unity in diversity: unità non è uniformità in Italian. Otherwise, it is communism.

Ján Figel' stressed four values: human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity. In his opinion, a strong Europe is a just Europe, a Europe of law, which plays fair with its neighbours, does not organise senseless missions, does not attack anyone, and organises aid, for example, to the Middle East. Justice is the priority of politics, whether global, regional or local. Such justice is lacking in Europe.

**MEP Jorge Buxadé Villalba (Spain) said:**

Who among you would have thought that after the signing of the Treaty of Rome – and it is no coincidence that it was signed in Rome – that abortion would be recognised, that abortion would be authorised, that ideological activist activity in schools deforming our children's ideas about sex would be authorised? Who would have imagined then that migration policy, that criteria which might be applied in Belgium or the Netherlands would also be applied in Italy, Greece or Spain, where 30 000–40 000 illegal immigrants arrive each year, or that environmental policy in each of the Member





From left: David Engels, panel moderator Zdzisław Krasnodębski

States would be determined by Greta Thunberg and the 2030 Agenda pursued by the Brussels elite? I don't think anyone imagined such a turn of events.

Jorge Buxadé Villalba emphasised that Christian democracy requires taking sides. **MEP George Simion (Romania)** said he had read a book about anti-communist protests, about people who had given their lives in the fight against the scourge of Marxism and communism:

Ryszard Siwiec, Jan Palach, Sándor Bauer, Jan Zajíc, Márton Moyses – they all fought for freedom. Márton Moyses was an ethnic Hungarian who lived in Romania and was a Romanian citizen. He burnt himself in Braşov, Romania. He did it in defence of freedom. Today, 46 years after that demonstration, we are again in a situation where we have to fight. This time we must fight against neo-Marxism, Bolshevism, and the idea that we should all be the same.



From left: George Simion, Nicolas Bay, Ján Figel', Francesco Giubilei, Jorge Buxadé Villalba, David Engels, Zdzisław Krasnodębski

Mr Simion said that his generation had hoped for a common Europe, a Europe of diversity, but had unfortunately been disappointed. Furthermore, he pointed out that no conservatives have governed in Romania since 2000, when the Christian Democrats lost power. He added that the liberal media calls his party extremist, neo-Nazi, pro-Russian. He stressed that these are fake news and that the party cannot be pro-Russian because of history – for what Russia, the USSR, the Russian Federation did to Romanians.

**The founder of the Nazione Futura movement Francesco Giubilei (Italy)** said that there were many types of conservatism. He cited the example of the Italian writer Giuseppe Prezzolini:

In his book, he wrote that we are talking about many types of conservatism when we talk about conservatism. Firstly, when we speak about European conservatism, we must remember that it will differ from American conservatism; these types of conservatism will differ. When we mention European conservatism, we must also remember

the different ideas of conservatism in different countries. For example, we have Latin conservatism, Romanesque conservatism, but there is also German conservatism, Central European conservatism, Hungarian conservatism and Polish conservatism.

Francesco Giubilei emphasised that when he lived in Hungary for three months, he realised that in the Visegrad region, people thought a little differently, something different was happening and that Western Europe did not understand what was happening in Eastern Europe. The speaker said that one should first respect all democratically elected governments to talk about uniting conservative ideas. He referred, among other things, to the discussions surrounding the Polish and Hungarian governments.

Francesco Giubilei recalled that the Treaties of Rome had been the idea of Gasperi, Schuman and Adenauer. They were all Christians and understood the importance of Christian roots. He also said that Roger Scruton, in his book on green conservatism, showed how to approach environmental issues from a conservative point of view.

**The Western Institute Chief Analyst, David Engels (Belgium)** agreed that a united conservative front is needed in Europe to face the current challenges. He said that the conservatives who created the joint declaration share values, love Western tradition, and have a common approach to family, patriotism and LGBT issues.

He asked how and why we want to fight Islamic civilisation:

Do we want to fight it because of some Western values, because of LGBT rights, for example, or do we want to fight it because of our common Christian traditions? And this problem also needs to be resolved. I know that in Germany, for example, there are also parties that want to defend Western values against the attack of Muslim values. And sometimes it seems to me that some Muslims have much more common values with conservative Christians than left-wing Europeans.

David Engels stressed that Christian and Islamic identity could also be the key to integration. He further pointed out that it was necessary to stop migration but stressed that we would never be able to stop it completely.



The Visegrad Castle ruins, Hungary

Francesco Giubilei



When we talk about conservatism we cannot refer to a single conservatism but to many conservatisms, the first distinction is between American and European conservatives.

The second distinction is between national contexts, there are important differences between nation and nation. We can, for example, speak of a Latin conservatism.

At the basis of an alliance between conservatives there must be respect for each other's traditions and national contexts. I spent three months in Hungary and I realized

Francesco Giubilei – a founder of the Nazione Futura movement





The Charles Bridge in Prague, the Czech Republic

how much we Western Europeans do not understand what is happening in Hungary and Poland and judge by pointing the finger at democratically elected governments. If we do not assume that central and eastern Europe was ruled by a communist dictatorship until a few decades ago, we will never be able to understand what is happening there.

The differences between individual European nations are part of our history and identity and are positive, which is why the European Union should go in the direction of a Europe of peoples and nations and not of the United States of Europe which favors a harmful centralization for the needs of people.

The objective should create greater cohesion between the peoples of Europe, to do so it is necessary to create, even before political and economic integration, a cultural glue. It is not a question of inventing anything new nor of having to build a fake identity at the table since there is already a common European identity based above all on



shared traditions, customs and habits that characterize our lifestyle. European identity is represented by Dante, Goethe, Cervantes, Stephen of Hungary, Jan Palach, Joan of Arc, St. Benedict and it is the task of the community institutions not only to preserve it but to remember and celebrate it through the principle that the philosopher Roger Scruton defines oikophilia, love for one's home.

If it is important to underline the existence of a common European identity, at the same time denying individual local and national identities would not only be wrong but unfair. We cannot forget the differences between European nations, just as we cannot imagine imposing a homologating and standardizing vision without respecting individual communities. The strength and beauty of Europe is constituted precisely by the existence of different traditions but united by some shared values that can represent the glue for conservatives:

### 1) Policies in support of persecuted Christians

In 2004 Pope John Paul II urged the UN to include in official documents references to phobic manifestations against Christians, in the world phenomena of Christianophobia are unfortunately very widespread and also in Europe episodes of vandalism against Christian religious symbols are growing. and phenomena of intolerance towards men and women of the church.

### 2) Policies to regulate migratory flows

Immigration represents one of the main challenges of our time, it is necessary to promote policies that regulate migratory flows, avoiding irregular immigration while respecting national and community borders.

### 3) Policies to support the birth rate with a European allowance for new children and family support

The demographic winter is a serious problem for Europe, the birth rate in the countries of the European Union is far below the replacement rate and Italy, with 1.24 children per woman in 2019, has one of the lowest rates. bass in the world. According to Istat, there has been a 30% decline in new births in twelve years, a real emergency that is accompanied by the decline in marriages. Community policies are therefore needed to support the birth rate and the family not only from an economic point of view but with a new cultural approach.

### 4) Environmental policies that start from local communities by helping European farmers and small and medium-sized entrepreneurs

Safeguarding the environment is a deeply felt theme for the future of the EU, yet it is necessary to combine the ecological transition with the economy and territorial identities by favoring an approach that starts from the local even before the global one and which takes into consideration both the needs of European entrepreneurs and farmers and those of the weaker classes.





The Corvin Castle, Hunedoara, Romania

## 5) Promote the accession of Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia to the European Union

Historically, the Western Balkans are an important part of Europe and represent an area in which Italy plays an important role from an economic, geopolitical and cultural point of view. Facilitating the entry into the European Union of Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia would lead to mutual benefits from many points of view both for the new members and for the nations that are already part of the EU.



The Biertan fortified church, Romania

David Engels



The struggle for an alternative European Union is one of the most critical political imperatives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Without close cooperation between European nations and their joint struggle against the West's many internal and external enemies, our civilisation will be doomed to collapse. The first important step in the fight for an alternative EU was the joint declaration by 16 conservative European parties, which will hopefully also pave the way for joint political action.

David Engels – Senior Analyst at the Western Institute



The intentions and common points outlined therein point to the need to cherish our historical identities and autonomies with pride and, at the same time, speak of the duty of close European cooperation to protect these identities from all internal and external threats. It is particularly pleasing that the nationalistic sovereigntism hitherto ascribed, rightly or wrongly, to all the so-called right-wing conservatives has been restrained and that the declaration itself does not speak of dissolving the EU and returning to a patchwork of 40 medium-sized and small states but somewhat of creatively reshaping the European institutions. The assumption gives rise to multiple perspectives, which require in-depth analysis to become a reality. I see a particular need for action in the following areas.

The first, and the central issue, concerns the moral foundations of the society we want to create. Two possibilities emerge here, which have their extreme supporters in, for example, the French and Polish positions, i.e. those representing republican laicism and the idea of Christian civilisation. At first sight, they seem to be irreconcilable, but I think one can find a convergence between them for various reasons. On the one hand, the total failure of French efforts to integrate parallel Muslim societies shows that the neutrality of the state in the sphere of values serves not so much to strengthen our own European identity as a foreign one and that it weakens centuries-old indigenous traditions while elevating allochthonous groups to a status to which they have no historical right. On the other hand, it clarifies that everything about republican “values” that carry real meaning and purpose is ultimately grounded in pre-revolutionary and Christian traditions. As Chesterton has pointed out, modern values are nothing more than “feral” Christian ones that lack proportion and moderation. Proper pruning of this wild “offshoot” could produce a new harmony and put the modern state back on solid, Christian and transcendental foundations.

The second point, of course, concerns the direction of European foreign policy. At first glance, a fundamental difference between the American orientation toward the West and the Russian or even Eurasian one toward the East is also here. These differences cannot be downplayed, but it must be remembered that liberalism, sometimes so naively glorified in the US, is going through a self-destruction phase, while Russia’s sham traditionalism is often just a pretty facade for a far less appetising oligarchic power struggle. In my view, this very conflict is first and foremost a dispute about the soul of Europe itself, which, before a foreign power gets involved, should be resolved internally: Europe’s overriding goal should be to shape its power politics freely and

autonomously, without relying on its neighbours. The key to overcoming the contradictions between East and West is to return to Europe as a world power, not a satellite.

Another point for discussion is the attitude towards Islam. The Islamisation of many large and medium-sized cities in Western Europe is not a conspiracy theory but an everyday reality, as is the unsubscribing of these very parallel societies from the universal framework of Western civilisation. It would be a mistake to see this phenomenon solely in terms of differences between the West and Islam. The real problem in migration is with those political forces that have promoted Muslims' mass immigration and thwarted their integration, either through calculation or misguided tolerance. We should also remember that many Muslims have more in common with traditional Christians than with many "awakened" citizens in terms of values. Therefore, as many supposedly conservative Western Europeans demand, it would be a mistake to fight Islam in the name of some ultra-liberal Western "value system", which is the greatest enemy of real Europe. It appears necessary to limit migration as much as possible and at the same time to strive for integration by reinforcing our centuries-old European and Christian tradition as a new guiding culture instead of, for example, an utterly content-free secularism.

The above brings us to my fourth point, i.e. the fundamental difference between the political-cultural constellations of Eastern Europe and Western Europe. In both cases, a different tactical approach must be adopted. Conservatism is prevalent in the East. It was possible there to preserve traditional and patriotic principles of life. Now they must be protected and transformed into a strategic bridgehead for taking back the West, which is in an impoverished state. East and West must work together: conservatives in the East must support the West politically; conservatives in the West must be prepared to incorporate ideas prevalent in the East into their political programme to build a solid and coherent pan-European conservative movement. For the East to have the strength to confront growing pressure from the EU, the Visegrad alliance must transform into a Three Seas alliance, creating an alternative to the Brussels coercive corset, capable of opposing the Berlin–Paris axis.

The penultimate issue I would like to mention concerns the social sphere. Quite often, it seems that cultural conservatism and economic liberalism are inseparable. Liberalism, however, has borne the fruits of its radicalisation and decay, while the political left has come to terms perfectly with the ultraliberal economic system, as evidenced by the great interplay between socialist demands and the actions of big business. In the

face of the growing gap between rich and poor and the de facto strengthening of a new class of super-rich, it is precisely social engagement that should become a fundamental component of conservative thought, replacing liberalism with Christian social teaching and a corporatist approach, thus providing the only credible framework for a future conservative economic order capable of fighting the socialism of the new billionaires.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the role of Germany. No German party has signed a joint declaration, which is a sensitive gap in the European political fabric. The reasons for that are manifold: first, the ideological instability of the German AfD, then the somewhat simplistic narrative that Germany, as a “net contributor”, is being exploited by its EU neighbours, the surprising demand of German conservatives for Germany’s exit from the EU, and finally their obvious Russophilia, which, together with an often-debatable interpretation of their history, causes several frictions with Germany’s eastern neighbours. Nevertheless, just as it is difficult to imagine a Europe without Germany, European conservatism must also show solidarity. Thus, it is hoped that in the medium to long term, frequent talks and discussions will lead to some political stabilisation of a movement that a lack of predictability has so far characterised, as well as to an ideological rapprochement between German conservatives and their neighbours.

As can be seen, the joint declaration should be considered a starting point in the joint struggle for a coherent ideological line rather than its outcome. It would be a mistake now to rest on one’s laurels and be content with simply adopting the document. More than ever, what is needed is a swift action and a willingness to compromise and mutual understanding. Only in this way will blackmail from Brussels not trigger an electoral coup in the East or crush the last bastions of conservative rule in Europe.



## Digital Carpathian Europe. The security and economic leap, or why do we need new technologies?

**Andrzej Zybortowicz, an advisor to the President of Poland**, moderated the panel. The topics of digitisation, regulation, technological interstate cooperation and the establishment of a technology centre in the EU emerged in the discussion.

**Aleksandra Przegalińska, Vice-Rector at Kozminski University**, indicated that she had been dealing with artificial intelligence for a long time. The technology promises many benefits, but it is also associated with challenges, including geopolitical ones. In response to Andrzej Zybortowicz's question about developing a polycentric model within the EU, the Vice-Rector pointed out that the EU was characterised by great pluralism, and she disagreed with the statement that it is monocentric. The Vice-Rector emphasised that the EU could benefit from its pluralism and allow different initiatives to develop so that its technological landscape was more visible and competitive with the US and China. She added that there was, unfortunately, no joint EU strategy on artificial intelligence. Regarding EU regulations, Aleksandra Przegalińska said that they could be an opportunity for EU technological development:

I spent more than seven years in the United States and know how American regulations work. I have been involved at least a few times in discussions about Europe being over-regulated – RODO, deep learning etc., artificial intelligence. On the other hand, I think this is an opportunity. (...) We can be a leader because we are united and consistent in Europe, and perhaps, who knows, we will be able to promote highly innovative solutions, so I say “yes” to this direction. That can set us apart from others. We do not need to copy anyone. Geopolitically speaking, being between the US and China could be a bit Machiavellian opportunity. It may be an opportunity to create an atmosphere for dialogue, to create standards.

**Reinis Znotiņš, the Chairman of the Subcommittee for IT and Innovative Entrepreneurship of the Sustainable Development Committee of the Saeima of Latvia**, expressed his belief that every country in the region could create some great technological innovation that would change the technological landscape. He agreed with Vice-Rector Przegalińska that regulations on artificial intelligence should be set collectively within the EU. It would allow the technology to grow and fulfil its potential and promote innovation. In addition, standard regulations are needed to define what cannot be allowed clearly. The Chairman pointed out that to increase the region's competitiveness, politicians should introduce tools for entrepreneurs to facilitate the development of innovation instead of undermining this development with regulations. Another issue is education:

We must also (...) invest very heavily in educating society, in lifelong learning. That is probably the most important and the most valuable tool when it comes to innovation. Over 50 per cent of people living in Western countries will undergo re-education or additional education. (...) There is no need for a Silicon Valley since Silicon Valley is about people, talent and money. If we give money, space and room for innovation and add education, the modern education for the whole of society, then the innovations and exciting solutions that we want will emerge.

**Vadym Melnyk, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Dronehub**, pointed out that mono-centrism in management was never good. From the example of many organisations, we can see that a bottom-up approach, meaning the introduction of innovations originated by employees, solves real problems. From its point of view, management frequently does not see the real problems and thinks it is solving something when it is not. Like the CEO of a decent company, what the European Union should be doing is setting the direction. The CEO cited an example from the drone industry:

In the European Union, regulations called the unified EU sky came into force in January this year, which allow drones to be flown under the same rules in Poland, Germany and Austria. This was not possible before. In the United States, however, the FAA still issues general regulations, and each state defines how these drones should fly in a given region.





From left: Pavel Popescu, Reinis Znotiņš, Andrzej Zybertowicz, Vadim Melnyk, Robert Gontarz

Director Melnyk underlined that in the drone industry, the privacy by design approach required by the regulations was standard, and when recording video and taking photos, the relevant institutions should be informed of how this data is processed. Privacy by design should be used in all industries because they will not do it if you do not impose something on businesses. Examples of companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Apple show this perfectly.

**Pavel Popescu, a member of the parliamentary delegation to the PA of NATO of the Chamber of Deputies of Romania**, stated that there was no future for any regional or national projects without a future in the European Union. Elements such as geopolitics, private interests, and business should be considered. Politicians should keep up with the changing reality, but unfortunately, they often lack the necessary knowledge.

We have failed to create this joint Silicon Valley, whether in Bucharest, Warsaw or elsewhere. We have failed to put our human resources and economies to work to make the most of this polycentric approach in our countries. I cannot accept that China,



In the foreground Robert Gontarz – Member of the Committee for Digitisation, Innovation and New Technologies

whatever its population and resources, can overtake us to such an extent – especially us, the Americans a little less – if we have so much talent in Europe. One person can change the world. All it takes is one exceptional project. (...) From this perspective, I would say that the European Union needs to wake up as soon as possible.

Mr Popescu suggested that EU countries should set up a fund together with the United States, with which we shared democratic values, to be able to counter disinformation and hybrid warfare waged by authoritarian Russia and China. It is necessary to take sides in the technological world, whether financial interests or ideology.

**Robert Gontarz, a member of the Committee for Digitisation, Innovation and New Technologies**, said that mono-centrism in digitalisation was not a good solution because it was always combined with bureaucracy. Bottom-up initiatives are more effective. The MP pointed out that delays in digitisation activities could result in elimination from the market, a great example of which is the fiasco of such once-popular companies as Nokia and Siemens. MEP Gontarz referred to creating a central

digitalisation centre in the EU on the model of Silicon Valley and said that Europe would fail in this, as only one country would benefit from the tax revenues from such a place. The MEP also highlighted the opportunities of Central and Eastern Europe in the field of technology:

Digitisation shows that even the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – we are not considered a mainly developed area when it comes to the digital industry, we do not conquer the world with our applications – are an area that can develop most (...). A lot can happen here, really a lot. I think that we must strongly support the people who work at the bottom so that they can improve as dynamically as possible, and support them – as the previous speakers have said – with grants.

The parish church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Średnia Wieś on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska, Poland





A view from the clock tower on the Old Town  
in Przemyśl, Poland



## Presentation of the Green Deal for Central Europe

The panel was moderated by **Bogdan Rzońca, the Member of the European Parliament**. The main topics of the discussion were the implementation of the European Green Deal (EGD) in Poland and the opportunities and threats arising from it.

**Teresa Pamuła, a member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development**, shared her observations from the perspective of a person who was involved in preparing Polish agriculture for EU accession. In her opinion, large farms have been strengthened, as they currently absorb almost 80 per cent of all EU funds. However, small and medium farms also managed to maintain their position thanks to the support. Teresa Pamuła pointed out that, in the Podkarpacie region, about 80 per cent of farms were small and medium-sized ones. Among threats, she mentioned administrative problems, i.e. adjustment of EU regulations to our needs, which, in her opinion, would require appropriate government support for small and medium farms. The MP highlighted one more aspect:

(...) it is crucial for us – me, first of all, and it was with such a mission that I entered first the local government assembly and then the Parliament – to maintain jobs, maintain inhabitants, young people in rural areas. There are excellent living conditions in the countryside, but all of us sitting here, together with the government, must prepare the joint agricultural policy, (...) appropriate strategies so that young people genuinely want to stay in the beautiful Polish countryside.

**Janusz Wojciechowski, the EU Commissioner for Agriculture**, indicated that the EGD in agriculture was an excellent opportunity for small and medium-sized family farms. In his opinion, if this chance is used, we can have robust agriculture – based



Participants of the panel *Presentation of the Green Deal for Central Europe*, Karpacz, 9 September 2021

on the system of small and medium family farms – and regain what was lost in a few years or so.

In the decade following the 2004 enlargement, 10 million farms out of 14 million were left in the European Union. That loss mainly affected Central and Eastern Europe, then the new Member States. The Commissioner stressed that small and medium-sized farms made up the majority of farms in Poland, and assistance for them is crucial for food security. He also pointed out that there were two strategies within the framework of the EGD: biodiversity and “from field to table”, i.e. the shortening of supply chains. Moreover, it is essential to strengthening local links. The Commissioner recalled no compulsions in the EGD programme, as it included voluntary instruments.

**The Secretary of State at the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, Waldemar Buda**, agreed that the agricultural EGD was an excellent opportunity for Polish agriculture. In other aspects and discussions with the European Commission, we should show that all decisions must include funds for climate, transformation and EGD to achieve the objectives set. The Minister also pointed out that, contrary to some information, there was no possibility that funds from the NIP would not be paid to Poland:

I cannot imagine any other situation. If not, how are we to move toward a zero-emission climate policy if 37% of the funds there are to go towards it? It is a double-edged weapon. It means that the more efficiently we spend the funds, the more we have, the closer we will get to the Sustainable Development Fund's goals for us by 2050 (...) So let us be optimistic here (...), let us build a strategy based precisely on such macro-regions, let us show our specificity – as talking about a narrower area than Poland shows us a particular specificity (...) Let us treat the Green Deal in agriculture as an absolute opportunity and hope that we are going in the right direction.

**Grzegorz Puda, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development**, said that the pandemic showed that small and medium-sized farms performed (or could perform) better than large farms under challenging situations if only to ensure the security of supply. Europe of the Carpathians area could be an indicator in this respect. The Minister pointed out that large farms were also needed, but they could not be expanded indefinitely. The product quality is undoubtedly a more excellent value than its quantity now. The European Commission can see that Poland, which consists of many small farms, has come through the COVID-19 pandemic quite calmly and that the direction of development presented by Commissioner Wojciechowski and Minister Buda is a better one that can work. Minister Puda also said a law was being planned within the EGD to strengthen mountain areas and allow farmers to sell their produce. He then addressed concerns about the EGD:

(...) The Podkarpackie Voivodeship, the southern part of the Małopolskie Voivodeship, and the southern part of the Śląskie Voivodeship are pretty similar and somewhat pioneers that we could now show as examples of what should be introduced to give a sense of implementation of biodiversity or diversity. Organic farming or sustainable agriculture is practised in these regions daily. It's something you shouldn't be afraid of because it works all the time.

**Jarosław Sachajko, the Vice-President of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development**, said the EGD was a very ambitious challenge. It is vital that the European Union not try to implement ambitious climate challenges at the expense of European, including Polish, farmers. The Vice-President also talked about the draft laws submitted by PSL, which align with the EGD assumptions. They are to allow farmers to carry out any activity in their habitats, remove barriers for farmers wishing to sell



From left: Jarosław Sachajko, Waldemar Buda, Janusz Wojciechowski, Marek Kuchciński, Teresa Pamuta, Grzegorz Puda, Robert Telus, Bogdan Rzońca

their produce in towns, and remove restrictions on hemp cultivation. Vice-President Sachajko emphasised another element:

(...) we need to keep an eye on the EU's borders so that it does not turn out that we, here in the European Union, are going to take care of the climate of the whole world without remembering that the globe is round and if others do not meet the requirements that we, as Europeans, set for ourselves, then they should bear the costs on the borders of the European Union. Because caring for the environment is, of course, important. Farmers here do not produce for themselves; they produce for consumers. And since consumers are currently demanding high-quality food (...), let us not allow corporations to continue – I think it should be said – to rob farmers of their hard work.

**Robert Telus, the President of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development**, agreed with previous speakers that the EGD was an excellent opportunity for



## Panel 10

Polish agriculture and mentioned concerns. According to him, it is necessary to ensure EU regulations that protect the EU against a flood of sub-standard goods from outside the Union. The second issue concerns the amount of pesticides used; in Poland, the so-called chemicals are currently used half as much as in many other EU countries, and their additional reduction could adversely affect the work of Polish farmers. President Telus also drew attention to the positive elements of the EGD:

The trend in Europe and the world is that people are already reaching for good quality food, of the best quality. And we, Poland, have an outstanding brand in Europe.

St. Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice, Slovakia





The Church in Lutowiska, the Bieszczady Mountains, Poland

Janusz Wojciechowski



The Green Deal for agriculture is an opportunity for small and medium-sized family farms. If we take advantage of this opportunity, then in a few years, we can have robust agriculture based on a system of small and medium-sized family farms and regain what has been lost. During the decade following enlargement (2005–2015), in the European Union, 10 million farms were lost from 14 million. This loss mainly affected Central and Eastern Europe, then new member states.

Janusz Wojciechowski – EU Commissioner for Agriculture



Small farms were either unable to function or functioned but were virtually eliminated from the market, from the competition.

Are small farms able to compete with strong agriculture, much of it already industrialised? The fact is that some agriculture sectors in Europe have turned into an industry. 80% of egg production in Poland is currently concentrated, and according to EU data, there are 469 hen farms. However, how many farms do not even have complete data because some large farms have entire complexes of such facilities? The question is how many hundreds of thousands of farms have fallen out of production and lost the opportunity to operate. Unfortunately, similar phenomena are observed in other sectors, such as pork production and pig breeding. African swine fever (ASF) is a dramatic new problem, but between 2010 and 2016, before it appeared, out of 316 000 Polish pig holdings, 140 000 remained. Even despite ASF, the decline is slower, although it is still visible.

Aid for small and medium-sized farms is crucial to food security. We talked about this in the previous panel. In the Podkarpacie region, as you said, in mountainous regions in general, in Małopolska, and to a large extent in Silesia – in most regions of Poland, most farms are small ones. In Poland, of the 1 350 000 farms, almost 1 million are up to 10 hectares, around 200 000 up to 20 hectares, seventy-some thousand up to 50 hectares, and only 34 000 farms are over 50 hectares. These data should be taken into account when establishing the agricultural policy programme.

There was much concern about the situation of small farms, about the bureaucracy that would affect them. I kept a very close eye on this in the negotiations. Farms up to 10 ha are exempt from a whole range of administrative burdens. Minister Puda raised the issue, for which I am grateful because he proposed at the Council meeting that such farms should be exempt from administrative burdens.

The Green Deal is not even an official name because we have the Green Deal as a significant priority of European policy, and we have an agricultural component to it. There are two strategies: a biodiversity strategy and, most importantly, the “farm-to-fork” strategy, in short, a short supply chain from field to table. Poland is among the countries (in fact, all the countries in the Carpathian region are in a similar situation) whose agricultural production is smaller than the market. I sometimes hear the myth spread in Poland that our country has a gigantic agricultural production, with which there is nothing to do, and that is why we need exports.

Undoubtedly, exports in some sectors are necessary, and we are developing them. They are increasing in Poland, which is the entire sector’s great success. Exports are

rising steadily throughout the Union, even during pandemics, which is very good. However, we need to strengthen local ties. Poland has 8.5% of EU citizens and consumers, and its share of EU agricultural production is around 6%. Therefore, the market is – and I have repeated that many times – right on our doorstep; we need to create a way of reaching it, which requires reconstruction of processing – for which there are funds. Also, it requires support for the local market – for which there are funds in the reconstruction plan, in the cohesion policy, and not only in the joint agricultural policy. Poland is allocated EUR 34.5 billion – PLN 150 billion – in EU funds for agriculture. It is the first time such large amounts have been allocated. I am talking about funds for the joint agricultural policy and the part in the plan for reconstruction which would otherwise have to be financed from agricultural funds. I am thinking here of processing. Here, too, a great deal of credit is due to Minister Puda and Minister Buda, as I know, they both were firmly committed to ensuring that the agricultural part was included in the reconstruction plan. That is highly significant. We could not get small and medium-sized farms back on their feet without funding to rebuild processing. Other problems appear, but I firmly believe that they will be overcome and that these funds will reach the Polish countryside, and small and medium-sized farms will feel the very positive effects of the Green Deal. Before it appeared in Brussels, the phrase “green agriculture” was first in the 2019 Law and Justice programme. Minister Ardanowski, whom I thank, is in the room because this programme was also his work. Green agriculture and organic farming are great opportunities, especially for mountainous areas. It works very well in Austria. Farms there would not exist at all but operate since they are ecological and receive considerable support. Why should this not be the case in Poland? Why should these minor holdings not return to the market, precisely as organic holdings, and make excellent use of that in conjunction with agritourism and other activities? I know that this is even included in the “Podkarpackie Voivodeship Development Strategy” document. I applaud it because it contains outstanding proposals. We are going in the same direction.

The agricultural Green Deal somehow differs from the industrial Green Deal. Indeed, the Central European countries, especially Poland, are under pressure in the latter. A coal-based economy will be forced into costly reforms. In agriculture, however, this part of Europe is – in fact, in all the relevant indicators: carbon dioxide emissions, use of pesticides, use of fertilisers, all the chemicals – well below the EU average. It is the countries of the West that have a challenge with how to adapt to the Green Deal

because, for example, their carbon dioxide emissions per hectare are as follows (with an EU average of 2.5 tonnes; in Poland, about 2 tonnes): in Germany over 4 tonnes; in Belgium over 7 tonnes; and in the Netherlands over 10 tonnes. Hence, the danger map is the opposite of that of the industry.

That is a great opportunity that must be used wisely. The strategic plan and the government's work will be crucial, but public consultations will also prove essential. I firmly believe that the changes to the joint agricultural policy currently being made will be very beneficial to small and medium-sized family farms. They will also contribute to the reconstruction of agriculture in many regions, particularly the Podkarpacie region and, more broadly, mountain regions, as well as all other regions where small and medium-sized family farms still form the basis of agriculture.

And one more thought. When evaluating the Green Deal, it is imperative to remember – and I see many misunderstandings – that there are virtually no compulsions in it; it includes voluntary instruments. No one is forcing farmers to be ecological, green, or use animal welfare programmes. These are incentives, resources made available, and this is an offer for farmers, which I am convinced is good and profitable.

Finally, there is the environmental direction – I would say agriculture that is more environmentally friendly, climate-friendly, and animal welfare-friendly. I will refer here to the words (not at all left-wing, though sometimes a concern for more excellent protection of the environment is associated with a left-wing attitude) St. John Paul II. He said to the Italian organisation Coldiretti farmers that man could not yield to the temptation of profit at any price, at the expense of nature, since nature would sooner or later rebel against man. We already have symptoms of such a rebellion of nature in some areas of agriculture. Support for small and medium-sized family farms is therefore also a step in line with the message that St. John Paul II left us.



## Climate neutrality

Action to achieve EU climate neutrality was initiated with a draft long-term EU low-carbon strategy to 2050, entitled “Clean Planet for All”, published by the EC in November 2018. The document presents a cross-cutting approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to achieve climate neutrality, i.e. a balance between greenhouse gas emissions and removals. Achieving climate neutrality is a considerable challenge for civilisation, which will require, first and foremost, a shift away from the use of

Grzegorz Puda – Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development



fossil fuels for energy production and thus a radical change in the current operating model of the energy sector.

Besides, it will prove necessary to change the consumption patterns of societies and implement new, as yet undeveloped technologies. The changes would cover all sectors of the economy, including, among others, energy, agriculture, transport, municipal and household sectors, waste management, and others.

Since the beginning of the discussion on climate neutrality, the Polish government has emphasised that although the evolution of the economy and energy sector is in our interest, it must take place in a way safe for citizens, the economy and the state. Raising the EU's reduction commitments must entail a detailed definition of the distribution of the reduction burden between the Member States and the economic sectors. Moreover, it also requires a detailed description of compensation instruments for the most vulnerable industries, regions and countries, as well as the identification of appropriate tools for achieving the targets

## Biodiversity

Environmental concerns, including those related to biodiversity conservation, will be addressed in the designed future Joint Agricultural Policy. A new green architecture system is proposed, consisting of mutually complementary mandatory requirements and additional incentives for environmentally (including biodiversity) and climate-friendly farming practices. The first element of the green architecture will be the obligatory system of conditionality, the next one – voluntary systems for climate and environment for farmers, the so-called eco-schemes, and the next, most ambitious element will be pro-environmental support instruments – multiannual pro-environmental obligations implemented under pillar II.

The integration of environmental measures allows for achieving environmental and climate objectives effectively. Family farms, for which the implementation of long-term objectives is as important as short-term ones, care about the quality of the environment, which is, after all, their agricultural production space. The implemented strategy may positively impact the agricultural sector, particularly family holdings, influencing, among others, more rational and optimised use of fertilisers and plant protection products, creation or strengthening of local markets for products and services in the



agricultural sector (organic farming products, products and services related to restoration of habitats and species), or implementation of innovative solutions.

### Discussion on forest management

Increasing environmental ambitions, including requirements and restrictions set by the EU, e.g. in the European Green Deal, mean that economic objectives in forests are pursued less than the productive capacity of forest ecosystems allows.

It is vital to maintain the current model of forest use in the region, which is already being implemented under nature conservation based on the idea of sustainable development, to reconcile environmental and economic objectives.

The joint agricultural policy and other funds, both national and EU, should provide an opportunity to obtain funding for pro-environmental, protective and educational measures in forests without simultaneously restricting sustainable forest management. Sustainable forest management contributes to reversing unfavourable climate change, which is why the current forestry model should remain unchanged because only the continuation by individual countries in the region of their own multifunctional and sustainably managed forests is a guarantee of maintaining the natural wealth of forests while using their resources to meet social and economic needs.

### Energy transformation and its impact on agricultural production

Energy transformation in its broadest sense is closely linked to rural areas. On the one hand, it is here that the tremendous potential of renewable sources (water, biomass, wind, sun) exists; on the other hand, these areas are most at risk of energy poverty. Therefore, in using renewable energy sources, we see an excellent opportunity to improve living conditions in the countryside and new development possibilities for agriculture. In agriculture, the potential for energy generation is matched by demand, which is in line with the rhythm of energy generation. The Green Deal brings many challenges, mainly in the environment and maintaining the competitiveness of agricultural production and processing, which will be challenging to meet without ensuring a stable energy supply, the possibility of reducing emissions and managing waste and residues from agriculture and the agri-food industry.

From the agricultural point of view, the most crucial RES installations, apart from energy production, directly support agriculture in achieving climate and environmental objectives. During the energy transition, a focus should therefore be on the role of hydropower and agricultural biogas plants, which are still underestimated. It should be remembered that thanks to these solutions, we can reduce the impact of agricultural activity on the environment, including improving the quality of water, soil and air.

Small hydropower plants make it possible to increase water retention, which is very important for maintaining adequate soil moisture. Proper soil moisture results in increased crop production with less fertiliser, primarily chemical, and thus increased carbon sequestration in the soil, which will contribute to better use of fertiliser and reduce its run-off into water.

Agricultural biogas plants manage by-products and residues from agriculture and agri-food processing, thus reducing gas and odour emissions associated with their storage. It is worth noting that the processing of animal waste in agricultural biogas plants, especially in areas with an excessive concentration of farm livestock, contributes to improving the quality of the environment. The resulting digestate forms components that are assimilable by plants, making it possible to use it as a raw material to produce various types of fertilisers.

Furthermore, each agricultural biogas installation and generating electricity enable the production of heat, cold or gaseous fuel, which can significantly improve the energy comfort of rural residents and reduce energy costs. Both hydropower and agricultural biogas plants enable energy production in a predictable, controllable and weather-independent manner, essential for improving energy security in rural areas.

We are aware that renewable energy sources will not replace system, large-scale power generation, but in rural areas, they can significantly support the operation of the national power system. We are particularly interested in solutions that will enable the sustainable development of both agriculture and other activities in rural areas. We are working to develop prosumer energy in the form of energy cooperatives. We believe that local energy production for one's own needs is a good direction for the development, especially in rural areas, in family agriculture, to effectively use all existing resources (water, biomass, wind, sun) and meet the Green Deal objectives.



## A reconstruction plan for Europe. The National Recovery Plan. The Carpathian Strategy

The panel was moderated by **Jerzy Kwieciński, the Vice-President of the Bank Pekao S.A. Management Board, former Minister of Finance and Minister of Investment and Development**, suggested focusing the debate on how the EU funds, be available as part of the new financial perspective, could be used for the development of the Carpathians.

**Konrad Szymański, the Minister for European Union Affairs**, spoke about the negotiations within the framework of the Recovery Plan for Europe. He highlighted two tensions that accompanied the talks about Europe of the Carpathians. One was the tension between the investment needs of Central Europe – and thus of Europe of the Carpathians – and the objectives of new European Union policies, such as climate policy. The second point of contention was that the fund and its distribution algorithms should not be concentrated solely on reconstruction. During the pandemic, the Central European countries had excellent macroeconomic indicators and thus risked being left out of the distribution. The Minister also expressed the view that Western Europe was wrong to assume that investing in infrastructure was an outdated approach:

Western and Northern Europe, particularly the so-called “thrifty” countries, are wrong when they say that investment in ‘hard’ infrastructure is outdated, unfashionable, and unnecessary. Therefore, we must concentrate solely on issues such as digitisation and climate. These countries do not appreciate the significance of such investments for their economic interests, nor the importance of trade integration, which is accelerating precisely because the infrastructure in Central Europe is developing at an accelerated pace thanks to EU support.

The Minister pointed out that the EU membership reduced in the discussions to the amount of the contribution paid by the countries is a mistake because the profits from the trade integration are many times higher than the contributions.

**Małgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak, the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy**, pointed out that the Carpathian Strategy is a document completed in 2018. It contains information on how the Carpathian area should develop, and it was already implementing some environmental goals before the European Green Deal came into being. It is currently being updated to determine whether the priorities it identifies meet the challenges we face today. Regarding the National Recovery Plan, the Minister recalled that at least 30% of the EUR 56 billion was to be allocated to climate objectives. She stressed the importance of measures to bring us closer to climate neutrality and measures to stimulate entrepreneurship and competitiveness. A stimulus is also needed to create a Carpathian brand to enable using the region's potential for business development.

The most important thing is to awaken the dormant natural potential in the Carpathians. When developing environmentally friendly solutions and creating new instruments for generating energy, we must also remember to preserve the natural character of the Carpathians and their potential. Therefore, when creating the Carpathian Strategy, looking for projects, striving for modernity, we also bear in mind to preserve what is most beautiful in the Carpathians.

**Teresa Czerwińska, the Vice-President of the European Investment Bank**, pointed out that the European Investment Fund supports typically economic goals and the environment, society, including communities in small and medium-sized cities. The Vice-President pointed out that energy transformation and digitisation of the economy are two primary development goals. In this context, it is vital to create new jobs to replace those that will be lost.

(...) Looking for new paths for growth, one cannot help but notice that these new paths for growth lie precisely in exploiting the potential of new technologies. It is not only about the energy sector but also about other sectors and other industries, as energy is used in virtually every area of the economy (...).

Therefore, when we look at supporting a low-carbon economy to achieve climate goals, we look at the economy as a whole. It is a system of interconnected vessels.



Participants in the panel *A reconstruction plan for Europe. The National Recovery Plan. The Carpathian Strategy*, Karpacz, 9 September 2021

Vice-President Czerwińska pointed out that the European Investment Bank has invested EUR 70 billion in the Central European region,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of which in the last five years. However, the scale of needs is still immense, including the Fit for 55 targets.

**Piotr Arak, the Director of the Polish Economic Institute**, pointed out that the Carpathian Europe area has the most significant number of regions with less than 50% of the average European GDP per capita in purchasing power parity. Therefore, it is the poorest part of the European Union, which requires the most significant support from the cohesion policy. The National Recovery Plan alone, excluding the cohesion policy programmes, will raise GDP in our region by between 0.4 and even, in some years, 1.7 or 2 percentage points.

In fact, over the next few years, thanks to the inflow of funds, we have a chance, first, to close the gaps in the level of economic development. By 2023, Poland can reach an average of 80 per cent of GDP per capita in purchasing power parity (...); this refers to the EU average. And in subsequent years faster. Individual countries in our region are already ahead of Spain, Italy in terms of GDP per capita.

The Director added that even before the pandemic, there was a high risk of having less money and thus less investment, including public one, in the following decade. However, it turned out that we have slightly more money than we could have expected due to the pandemic. It will also result in higher economic growth figures.

**Ján Hudacký, the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in Prešov, former deputy of the National Council**, negatively assessed the pandemic's impact on the economy, the social zone, and the level of employment in Slovakia. The overall expenditure of his country's budget in 2020 increased by almost EUR 7.7 billion because of the pandemic, of which spending on health care alone increased by more than EUR 100 million. The Consul pointed out that Slovakia responded positively to the initiative to create a recovery plan and the Next Generation EU instrument, although they are too ambitious financially.

We should consider that the European Commission has earmarked more than EUR 800 billion for this purpose, but we must also realise that these are not the Commission's or the Union's sources. These are funds borrowed via bonds; in other words, we are indebting individual countries, and we do not know the outcome. I am a bit afraid that we will not exceed this reasonable limit of investments or sources which are not even our own, which are not our own. We should look for a more optimal mode.

**Peter Kremšký, the Chairman of the Committee for Economic Affairs of the Slovak National Council**, said that the National Reconstruction Plan is a huge opportunity to move forward in our part of Europe, although it is not free money. It is a great opportunity but also a huge commitment. The President pointed out that in Slovakia in the past, it was often the case that EU funds were not fully utilised. The Slovak National Recovery Plan is to focus on the green economy, including green transport links, i.e. railways. It also includes investments related to environmental protection and reduction of emissions. The President expressed his belief that the Reconstruction Fund was an excellent opportunity for the Central European region.

We are becoming a powerful place in the automotive industry, the steel industry and the electrical industry. If we want to be successful in the future in Europe, or the European Union, and the global arena, our industry needs to be competitive. It cannot be based only on cheap labour and dirty technology. It must be mature technology. We must show that we can cooperate and help each other.



Looking from the most horizontal perspective – the macro one – at the needs of Europe of the Carpathians that can be met with EU funds, I would draw attention to two tensions that have accompanied negotiations on the Recovery Fund from the very beginning.

The first, familiar from all previous negotiations, was the classic and natural tension between the investment needs of Central Europe – and thus of Europe of the

Konrad Szymański – Minister for European Union Affairs



Carpathians – and the objectives of new European Union policies, such as climate policy.

The second critical tension, the presence of which did not resound loudly enough in public opinion, though its overcoming was a fundamental condition for the existence of this innovative budgetary element, i.e. the Recovery Fund, was the argument that the Fund and the algorithms for its distribution should not be focused solely on reconstruction. Let us not forget that, while the European economy was in the most profound crisis caused by a pandemic, the Central European region recorded excellent macroeconomic indicators – very low public debt, low budget deficit and deficient unemployment. It stung the eyes of those most affected by the crisis. Therefore, when the idea of a Recovery Fund was mooted, there was a significant risk for those Central European countries. It had obvious reasons to be beneficiaries of any European funding, might be overlooked because their adverse economic effects were not visible in the short term. It was argued at the time that the Fund would not be earmarked for Central European countries because rebuilding economies from ruin must be done in Spain, Italy or France, but not in Central Europe, which is at the top of all the basic rankings of macroeconomic indicators.

That was a sombre moment in which we had to explain that, since the Fund is calculated over many years and expected to be paid back over an even longer timeframe, it cannot be limited to recovery in the narrow sense. It should be aimed at building the resilience of the entire Union for the future because a pandemic crisis need not be the last one we experience. Ultimately, our arguments worked and resulted in Poland, together with the countries of Europe of the Carpathians, becoming one of the key beneficiaries of the Reconstruction Fund.

Returning to the first of these tensions, concerning the different investment priorities of the countries of Europe of the Carpathians concerning the objectives of the Union's climate policy, it should be recalled that grappling with climate markers in the Union's budget is not a new thing. We did not want these markers to be too narrow or reach too high. That is because it would be at the expense of basic needs resulting from the still observable post-war backwardness of Central Europe, which has not been eliminated even despite the enormous leap in development in recent years. The dispute over markers ultimately ended in a kind of compromise, built on the arguments used by the Polish government, which I would like to repeat here to add something new to their background.



We should start from the fact that Western and Northern Europe, and the so-called “frugal” countries, are wrong when they say that investment in “hard” infrastructure is an outdated, unfashionable and unnecessary idea and, therefore, we must concentrate solely on digitisation and climate. These countries underestimate the importance of such investment for their economic interests and trade integration, which is accelerating precisely because the infrastructure in Central Europe is developing at an accelerated pace thanks to EU support. The argument of the “net contributors” about the need to economise is reducing the European Union membership to the level of a budget contribution and is an example of budgetary populism. Even pro-European politicians in the West, mainly in northern European countries, are succumbing to this argument. I have the impression that it is slowly becoming a problem for us in Poland. We must face this argument, and it is incredibly shallow and weak. If we really looked at integration in this way, it would be a relatively flat, zero-sum game with no added value – which it is not. The gains from trade integration, from the actual integration of our economies, are many times – seven or ten times, depending on the study – higher than those unfortunate contributions that are so visible in budgets and that concentrate the attention of anti-European politicians across the continent.

It is a perfect moment to throw a stone into our garden. It is related to the first tension I tried to discuss here. The fact that we are arguing for relatively fewer new EU climate-related progressive targets, not too many, since it is at the expense of the most basic needs of our region, must not mean that we now decide that we must turn our backs on these targets. We cannot continue the path we have been on for the last 15 years, namely, focusing solely on infrastructure. Such thinking has led us to massive backwardness in this part of Europe’s energy and climate transformation, including Poland. It has resulted in the costs of the transformation becoming proportionately higher. It was a mistake of the last 15 years that we played for time too much and did not take advantage of opportunities more offensively.

These costs are higher today than they were a few or a dozen years ago. Thus, we must end postponing the transformation because if we continue with this policy – I am thinking of the whole of Europe of the Carpathians – the costs of the transformation will continue to rise. Postponing the energy transition is not a policy that brings any success, any economic gain, even in the short term. Failure to make the transition will have a higher cost than one we are being frightened of, encouraging further delay.



The Rusinowa Glade, the Carpathian Mountains, Poland

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that the new opening and the new financial perspective should also bring a new perspective on European resources. The funds earmarked for the climate (which we, Poland, have reservations about) and digitisation (which is not controversial) should be treated not as a problem but as an opportunity for this budget because of our enormous needs in this area. If we do not meet them quickly, they will become even more remarkable. It will seriously impact the competitiveness of the economies of this part of Europe, which is doing very well today. However, we must not forget that the success of these economies is precisely due to the competitiveness that is under threat today, which has made it possible to reap huge profits from the Community market. If we do not quickly meet the digital and climate needs of our economies, we may lose our greatest asset and get stuck in a severe systemic problem.

Małgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak



The Polish government takes advantage of opportunities for cooperation in the region created by the Carpathian Convention, in which Poland currently holds a three-year presidency. It is also actively co-creating the Three Seas Initiative, which is more concerned with security issues, infrastructure development and digitalisation. We continue to convince our partners in Europe to cooperate in the Carpathian Strategy project. It is crucial to get the support of the remaining Carpathian countries.

Małgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak – State Secretary at the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy



Only unanimity at the Council of the European Union level will make it possible to formally launch the process of adopting the fifth EU macro-regional strategy.

Sceptics of the creation of the Carpathian Strategy frequently refer to the potential overlap of its support region with areas supported under the Danube Strategy. The results of the updated diagnosis, which we prepared for the needs of the new financial perspective of the European Union, show that the Carpathian regions – even though the Danube Strategy has been in place for a decade – are still the poorest in the EU. They are still struggling with depopulation and low productivity, which is why actions targeted at the entire macro-region are important.

### The Carpathian Strategy is consistent with the European Green Deal

How to help the Carpathian macro-region, which already had numerous problems hindering its development? Although the work on the draft Carpathian Strategy was finalised in mid-2018, its objectives are still valid: to strengthen the region's competitiveness and attractiveness and reduce the outflow of inhabitants by improving their quality of life. These objectives are also valid in light of the new development paradigm in Europe. That was confirmed by an expert study, part of which was a comparison of the draft Carpathian Strategy and the EU's New Green Deal. By 2050, the EU has the ambition to become a climate-neutral space. The means to this end is to prepare regulations at the European level to turn this commitment into common law. The most crucial document that programmes the process of preparation in this regard is precisely the strategy of the European Green Deal.

The comparative analysis shows the compatibility of the provisions of the Carpathian Strategy at the general level with the priority policy areas of European importance. It applies primarily to issues related to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, green transformation and digital transformation.

Among the basic objectives of the Carpathian Strategy project is the one dedicated to the "Green Carpathians", which aims to use their ecological potential while preserving biodiversity. The environmental values of the Carpathians are an integral part of the development of the macro-region. Improving cooperation in this field is expected to improve the quality of the environment in the region, and coordinating activities across the whole of the Carpathians will allow economies of scale to be achieved according to the principle of sustainable development, which is in line with the European Green Deal.

The pressures on the environment are often transboundary, so the Strategy provides for actions concerning the protection and rational management of natural resources. We identify the need for institutional cooperation within the framework of the Carpathian Convention to protect species and create transboundary ecological corridors for wildlife. Moreover, we want to counteract air and soil pollution and reduce the negative impact of tourism on nature.

### A strategy for joint action

We used the time of the pandemic, which hampered the regular international and inter-regional cooperation that usually takes place at meetings on-site, to carry out analyses based on which we will take further action in line with evidence-based policy principles. We already have the results of an international study on the need for joint activities in the Carpathians. The Regional Studies Association – Polish Section performed the work for us in May and June. A total of 310 respondents took part in the survey regarding the needs and preferences of stakeholders in the Carpathian macro-region, representing ones from Romania, Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia and, to a lesser extent, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Moldova and Serbia.

The survey indicates that the priorities of the Strategy are up to date. Conservation of natural resources (the “Green Carpathians” objective) ranked first, followed by sustainable tourism (the “Competitive Carpathians” objective), which was slightly ahead of the development of modern, clean and green industries (the “Competitive Carpathians” objective). The second of these activities may make effective use of local natural resources, while the third is intended to minimise the environmental impact of economic activities.

The already mentioned compatibility of the types of projects planned under the Carpathian Strategy with the European Green Deal and EU digital objectives allows for expecting relatively high ease in obtaining EU funds for their financing in the Carpathian macro-region.

There is still a need for joint activities in the Carpathians. Moreover, the survey results give grounds to state that the necessity of joint projects is seen not only by the Carpathian Declaration signatories but also by representatives of institutions in other countries.



The Old Town in Bucharest, Romania

We are pleased that representatives of various sectors and levels of governance have expressed similar interests. I hope that that gives us a reasonable basis for preparing joint pilot projects and implementing them.

Furthermore, it is an argument for gaining support for the Carpathian Strategy project and formally launching the process of adopting the fifth EU macro-regional strategy.

Ján Hudacký



## Introduction

More than a year and a half after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can say that, in addition to causing serious and deadly health effects on the human population, it has also negatively affected the economy and the social sphere worldwide. It is therefore natural that the European Commission (EC), in cooperation with the EU

Ján Hudacký – Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in Prešov



Member States (MS), has come up with an initiative to revive the economy, employment and the social sphere.

### The impact of the pandemic on Slovakia

Slovakia recorded a fall in GDP of 6.7% last year, which has a negative impact on the social sphere and employment. Due to the pandemic, total state budget expenditure increased by more than EUR 7.7 billion, including expenditure by the Ministry of Health by more than EUR 100 million.

### A solution at the EU level

Therefore, it was important for the EC, together with the Member States, to find solutions that would help revive the EU economy while introducing a systemic model to prevent the spread of pandemic diseases in the future.

The result of that joint initiative is the Next Generation EU instrument, which is more than just a recovery plan. According to the EC, it is an opportunity to emerge stronger from the pandemic, transform our economies, and create opportunities and jobs. The Commission says it is time to make Europe greener, more digital and more resilient.

### Will the EU really become more competitive when these instruments are implemented?

The EU's long-term budget – alongside the temporary Next Generation EU (NGEU) instrument to support recovery – is the most extensive stimulus package ever funded in Europe. According to the Commission, after the COVID-19 pandemic, Europe will be rebuilt with EUR 2.018 trillion in current prices.

The Next Generation EU tool alone represents a volume of resources of more than EUR 800 billion. Its key element is the Recovery and Resilience Instrument, which will provide EUR 723.8 billion to support reforms and investments by EU countries. The aim is to mitigate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient, and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of green and digital transformation.



## Risks and threats

I fear that many of the upcoming EC measures I have mentioned are on an unstable footing and do not respect the environment or developments outside the EU. The so-called Green Transformation may impose a significant additional burden on European companies and reduce their competitiveness.

Furthermore, I believe that the EC's Next Generation EU initiative is too ambitious in financial terms and, thus, carries a significant risk of high obligations that the EU Member States themselves are de facto assumed. The European Commission does not have enough own resources. Therefore, the financial coverage of the Next Generation EU instrument will be secured only by the proceeds from the sale of bonds. In addition, the Member States will receive funding for their recovery plan in the form of a grant of only 50%. The remaining 50% will be given to them as a loan.

In this context, the EC makes no secret of its intention to look for ways to increase revenues for the EU budget (currently, EU revenues consist of customs duties, Member States' VAT contributions, Member States' contributions as a share of GNP).

I think that most of these new resources will be generated at the expense of the development of Member States' economies, especially the economically weaker ones. Paradoxically, the European Commission is creating financial instruments which, on the one hand, are supposed to neutralise the effects of the pandemic (mainly economic). At the same time, on the other hand, inadequate support for green projects and higher tax burdens on companies will cause worsening their competitiveness in world markets and contribute to a rise in the prices of certain products, including energy. It can therefore be expected that these interventions will not significantly improve the economic and social situation in the individual Member States.

## New EU revenues

The Commission is expected to make proposals this year on new sources of revenue related to:

- reducing non-recyclable plastic waste,
- a carbon offsetting mechanism at the EU's borders,
- a digital tax,
- EU emissions trading scheme.



The Carpathians, Slovakia

The Commission is to propose new sources of revenue by 2024, including:

- a financial transaction tax,
- a financial contribution linked to the corporate sector,
- a new joint corporate tax base.

Surprisingly, despite these existing or planned interventions in the Member States' tax policies, the Commission claims to respect their national fiscal sovereignty fully.

### Slovakia's plan for recovery and increasing resilience

Let me briefly mention the Slovak recovery and resilience plan. It is basically based on the framework proposed by the EC. I do not want to assess its challenges or objectives. At first glance, it seems to capture the country's current problems and needs regarding pandemic elimination and economic recovery. The proposed plan completely ignores support for agriculture, especially small farms. But the fact remains that more than 800 trucks import food into Slovakia every day.

In addition, the challenges and goals set are too broad and too ambitious about the resources allocated.



I also see another problem in the plan implementation. As one of the few EU Member States, Slovakia has been implementing European measures from the national level since 2006, which completely ignores the principle of subsidiarity. It results in low transparency, corruption, and poor efficiency and flexibility, which only confirms that we have not been able to reduce regional disparities in the long term.

In this context, we also have a severe problem with using European funds allocated. The disbursement at the national level of the total allocation of European structural and investment funds for the 2014 – 2020 programming period (EUR 15.34 billion) amounts to EUR 7.07 billion, representing 46.07 per cent of the total allocation as of 31 May 2021.

Suppose we add to this unused financial source the funds for the new programming period 2021–2027 amounting to EUR 12 billion and the funds for the execution of the reconstruction plan amounting to EUR 6.7 billion. In that case, it becomes clear that implementing the funds totalling almost EUR 27 billion is seriously threatened.



A railway viaduct in Vorokhta, Ukraine



## The state and perspectives of partnership between Poland and Ukraine

Presentation of the report by the Institute of Political Science and Administration, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, the Central Europe Institute in Lublin and the T. Shevchenko Institute of International Relations in Kyiv

The panel was chaired by **Waldemar Paruch, the Head of the Department of Theory and Methodology of Political Science and Administration at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (UMCS)**. The professor indicated the parts into which the report was divided. The first is shared historical memory and cultural heritage, the second is bilateral relations and international security, the third is economic, social and cross-border cooperation, the fourth is public diplomacy and strategic communication in both our countries and the fifth – Polish-Ukrainian relations and international relations in Central Europe and Eastern Europe.

**The Director of the Institute of Political Science and Administration at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Marek Pietraś**, stressed that in the strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine it was necessary to consider the global context and related threads of the current international order, forms of power projection implemented by world powers, and the importance of international institutions and collective security systems. The professor stressed that the question of the polarity of the international system remains highly topical today; while during the Cold War, there were two centres of power, in later years, there were difficulties in defining the shape of the international environment:

Is it unipolar, with the unique position of the United States, or – as some have argued – multipolar, or perhaps zero-polar order? Today's thesis (...) is that (...) it is a new tendency toward the so-called duopoly, with a particular position of the United States and China. It is also a question about the consequences of these changes on the formation of Polish – Ukrainian relations.

Forms of power projection implemented by world powers play an essential role in the above issue. As Professor Pietraś pointed out, the Russian Federation had adopted a strategy of resorting to military instruments but combined with hybrid instruments. On the other hand, China has opted for a strategy of economic penetration and creating alternative, controlled structures in the international environment. In this context, the style adopted by the United States remains a fundamental question for the security of the Central and Eastern European region. According to the professor, another significant tendency, which should be considered while designing a strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine, is the weakening of multilateralism and guarantees of collective security systems.

**Hryhoriy Perepelytsya from the T. Shevchenko Institute of International Relations of the Ukrainian National University** stated that his political reflections were in line with the previous speaker's position. He assessed that the Polish-Ukrainian partnership depended on global trends and the totality of international relations. All these factors work simultaneously. Therefore, it is not easy to assess the future of the Polish-Ukrainian partnership, especially in the context of China and Russia. Another issue is the retrospective perspective. The professor stressed that the post-Cold War period was very productive for Polish-Ukrainian relations.

Hryhoriy Perepelytsya emphasised that Poland, like no other country, made efforts to consolidate Ukrainian independence and Ukrainian course towards Euro-Atlantic and European integration. Therefore, the Polish contribution to Ukrainian development should be valued.

The professor pointed out that remarkable symmetry in mutual relations characterised the declarations on the level of the strategic partnership signed in the 1990s. Moreover, Poland very often promoted Ukrainian interests in the Euro-Atlantic integration at that time. Currently, Poland plays a vital role in the EU and NATO, and Ukraine has found itself in a security vacuum and has become a victim of Russian military aggression. The professor also indicated the mistakes made by NATO: the first one was the failure to extend its influence further east and to take on global tasks such as Afghanistan.

**Mykola Doroshko from the T. Shevchenko Institute for International Relations of the Ukrainian National University** presented the results of the Ukrainian side's work on historical policy. The main conclusion was how we could regulate specific problematic issues resulting from history, which has often influenced Polish-Ukrainian

relations. The professor stressed that in historical policy, one should not allow interference in certain principles, looking for opportunities for confrontation, but should search for chances for an agreement. Good examples of reaching a compromise are the Franco-German and Polish-German agreements. The professor also stated that Ukraine, 30 years after regaining independence, still had not fully formed its historical policy, including, among others, the pantheon of national heroes. As far as bilateral relations are concerned, it would be essential to emphasise moments of cooperation from the past.

One hundred years ago, we had a good military partnership between both countries, (...) the so-called Miracle on the Vistula was the result of cooperation between the Polish Army and the Ukrainians, as the Polish Army was supported by the UNR and (...) by the forces of General Marko Bezruchko. That way (...) it was possible to stop the communists' attack on Europe. So, we should remember that Poles and Ukrainians stopped the export of the communist revolution at that time. It happened in 1920. Europeans should also be reminded of that.

It is equally important to disseminate knowledge about the figures uniting the two countries. Referring to cooperation is the only way to develop a strategic partnership.

**Walenty Baluk, the Director of the Centre for Eastern Europe at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University**, pointed out that the Polish-Ukrainian relations had the status of a strategic partnership in the formal dimension. Nonetheless, Poland and Ukraine still had much work ahead of them to achieve such status in its material dimension. Intensified activities are desirable above all in the economic area. In connection with the approaching 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Polish-Ukrainian Treaty of Good Neighbourhood and Cooperation and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the issue of the Declaration of Presidents, the professor suggested adopting a memorandum on strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine. He assessed that although there were institutions at the presidential, governmental, ministerial and self-governmental levels which made it possible to implement the idea of a strategic partnership, the frequency of meetings was unsatisfactory. Another recommendation from the report is to establish an intergovernmental centre for strategic Polish – Ukrainian partnership, headed by coordinators or prime ministers' plenipotentiaries, to revive Polish-Ukrainian relations. The following proposal is to delineate critical areas of the partnership.



Participants of the panel *The state and perspectives of partnership between Poland and Ukraine*, Karpacz, 9 September 2021

Such areas in Polish-Ukrainian relations could include the following sectors: fuel and energy, the arms industry, infrastructure and transport, and IT. So it is in these areas that what we call the materialisation of a strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine could be made.

Professor Baluk also proposed adopting a partnership strategy with defined objectives and developing a road map as an operational and tactical document.

**Beata Surmacz, the Director of the Central Europe Institute in Lublin**, stated that a negative image of strategic communication between Poland and Ukraine emerged from the report. The professor defined strategic communication as a message which unambiguously shaped the desired image of states and relations between states. Such a message requires political will and decision. The professor pointed out that Polish-Ukrainian relations lack a measurable goal and strategic interest, which would be a starting point for such a decision. There is also a lack of constant information, which



is why information about our mutual relations is fragmentary and often appears in the context of adverse events.

We do not sufficiently emphasise the elements which unite us, but as far as the differentiating elements are concerned, please remember that they are very readily used for political purposes, including by other entities – here, see above all Russia. I would say that the Vilnius Declaration, which emphasises the issue of shared identity, is an excellent example of that. Please note how Russia emphasises this issue in its relations with Ukraine and how consistently it builds a message here about community, about this common Russian-Ukrainian identity. We should do the same.

Professor Surmacz noted that Poland's role as Ukraine's advocate in Euro-Atlantic integration was no longer up to date, and no adequate efforts had been made to change the state of affairs. It would also be necessary to make up for the deficiencies in strategic communication, as the information about, e.g. the resolution of the Polish Sejm concerning Nord Stream 2 or the assistance in the fight against COVID-19 provided to the Ukrainian side by the Polish government was not heard in Ukraine. The lack of expert background in Ukraine and the lack of Ukrainian correspondents in Poland are also problematic. The way to solve these problems would be to tighten cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian analytical centres, following the example of Think Visegrad, an expert and analytical platform for V4 countries.

**Paweł Kowal, the Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee and professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences**, said about the presented report that he had the impression that scientists were limiting themselves when it came to shaping recommendations. He stressed that a fundamental issue in common relations was agriculture since Ukraine's membership in the EU could enter a collision course in that area. An equally important issue is energy. The Vice-President stressed that all participants in this panel should strongly oppose the construction of a nuclear power plant in Königsberg. An alternative to the project would be to build a nuclear power plant together with Ukraine:

If we are going to have this nuclear power plant, then, by all means, go ahead and build it with Ukraine. If we do it with Russia in Königsberg (...), then there is simply nothing to talk about because it has been such a robust strategic bond for several dozen years.

According to the Vice-President, it would be a good step to sign a defence alliance with Ukraine. Professor Kniazhytsky also pointed out that politicians are looking for an idea to institutionalise cooperation, drawing from the German-French models. The key is the political courage to create new entities.

**Mykola Kniazhytsky, the Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Group for Inter-Parliamentary Contacts with the Republic of Poland**, said that the day of forced deportation of Ukrainians – 1.5 million people in total – from the Republic of Poland (after its borders were changed) to Ukraine was celebrated in Ukraine. The Vice-President disagreed with the thesis that Poland's role as an advocate for Ukraine has ended, as Polish assistance is still needed. He gave Nord Stream 2 as an example of the shared problem of both countries. He stressed that there was no free Poland without free Ukraine. He appealed to focus on a shared future. Then he also referred to historical issues:

A publishers' forum is opening in Lviv. The Ukrainian Catholic University will present an interesting research work there. Researchers have recorded all the victims from the time of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in the Chelm region. As for conflicts and heroes – Bishop Gudziak said that we should remember not only heroes, but also ordinary people, we should know them and (...) pray for them. In 20 years, our countries have not compiled a list of victims of our conflict, and we should do it so that it does not happen again. We should pray together, develop together, looking to the future, because there is no alternative to our cooperation.

**Tadeusz Chrzan, a member of the Polish-Ukrainian Parliamentary Group**, said that Poland accepted Ukraine's independence in 1991 with great hope. Joint institutions, a joint complementary economy and cooperation of our military forces are necessary because there is a lack of strategic cooperation:

(...) Most panellists do not entirely give credence to the term that these relations are strategic. I completely agree with this. The relations between Poland and Ukraine are on an outstanding level, but there is still much work ahead of us before we can use the term "strategic."



## New climate policy in the Carpathians – how to effectively protect the natural heritage in the Carpathians. Potential of national parks

The panel was moderated by **Dawid Lasek, the Vice-President of the Carpathian Euroregion Association**. He asked the panellists to focus on their statements on both global and local issues related to climate change and to refer to their personal experiences.

**Anna Paluch, the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment, Natural Resources and Forestry**, noted that environmental education, which was one of the tasks of national parks, had a remarkable impact on society, bringing it closer to the idea of nature conservation. The parks also influence tourist traffic. The number of tourists visiting national parks is growing from year to year; data for 2020 speaks of over 20 million.

So, if the inhabitants of such local communities (...) earn from this tourist traffic, they have a source of funding for all ecological innovations (...). If there is tourist traffic, the guesthouse brings in revenue. It can be equipped with all modern means, i.e. photovoltaic panels or other ecological heating sources, and it can be modernised, i.e. it can go into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with technological solutions. On the other hand, these newcomers require such investments from the local community because they want to come to clean air (...) So, we have a feedback loop here: you make money on tourism, but you also need to invest in it.

MEP Paluch also talked about the Clean Air programme, implemented by the government in 2018, which contributed to spreading eco-friendly innovations and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The MP considered it necessary to exchange experiences in nature protection between neighbouring countries and give local governments rights that would help them defend the landscape and nature against the developers' pressure.

**Małgorzata Golińska, the Secretary of State and the Chief Nature Conservation Officer**, drew attention to the problems and challenges related to climate change, such as declining groundwater resources in the Carpathians. It translates into weakening tree stands, developer pressure on intensive development in natural areas, and international expectations expressed in various documents. Currently, the biggest challenge is the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, published by the European Commission in May 2020, and the related Forest Strategy, published in 2021. The Secretary stressed that many of the solutions contained in these strategies would have positive effects once implemented. However, there are also problematic elements, such as the fact that 10% of the land in the European Union has been placed under strict protection without it being specified what the protection is.

According to the Secretary, when discussing positive targets and biodiversity conservation, it is worthwhile to point out that some decisions can be counterproductive. Moreover, it is worth being sensible about combining these topics and how to implement them.

Małgorzata Golińska also talked about changes to the financing of national parks, as nearly 45–50% of the parks' current needs will be financed from the state budget. The subsidy, to which the new Act on National Parks is linked, is to increase staff salaries and investments. The Secretary pointed out that some national parks in Poland had existed for more than a hundred years, which translated into a wealth of experience for our country, placing it among countries from which we could learn how to protect nature and biodiversity.

**Michal Kiča, the State Secretary at the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic**, mentioned Slovakia's problems. One of them is the management of national parks; the national park authority in Slovakia does not manage the park area, as the area belongs to the state. Currently, the Slovak authorities are trying to remove this dichotomy. The Secretary drew attention to an exciting aspect concerning the implementation of environmental protection solutions:

You cannot protect nature before people. You can but only together with people. That is why our Ministry presents such a reform in using structural funds. We will apply ones that will favour the inclusion of local people in these activities so that they provide support for biodiversity in the case of agricultural activities that are performed in an environmentally friendly manner.



Participants of the panel *New climate policy in the Carpathians – how to effectively protect the natural heritage in the Carpathians. Potential of national parks*, Karpacz, 9 September 2021

There is a requirement to have forests in which we do not interfere – yes, I will agree with that – but it is necessary to conduct activities, forest management in a way that is compatible with the requirements of nature and with the interests of the local population and foresters.

Michal Kiča also stressed the need to implement preventive measures related to water scarcity, also given the Fit for 55 legislative processes. He also pointed out that ensuring unified management of national parks and involving local people in nature conservation was the key to success in the fight against climate change.

**Sándor Köles, the President of the Carpathian Foundation**, listed Hungary's priority actions in the field of the European Green Deal (EGD). These are primarily waste management, conservation and protection of natural resources, and soil erosion. Due to Hungary's location in the Danube basin, the country also emphasises river cleanliness. Another priority is clean air, which Hungary plans to achieve by reducing emissions from industrial sources, mainly coal, reducing the use of chemicals,

especially in agriculture, and sustainable urban development. The President stressed the necessity for cooperation at the EU and regional levels, especially in the Carpathian region. It is also essential to support Ukraine, which is not an EU member but is a Carpathian country. In conclusion, the President highlighted the importance of the EGD and cooperation with citizens:

There is no ideology here; climate change is a fact. Some critics believe that the Green Deal, climate change or climate change-related measures are structured so that they obstruct, in fact destroy, the basis for economic growth. That is not true. Not true, because we have a whole sphere of eco-innovation, of eco-technology. It is about what was mentioned – that the citizens themselves should become involved and discover their potential in organic farming or the use of local, clean energy sources. It is worth cooperating with citizens, with civil society.

At the beginning of her speech, **Patrycja Adamska, the Programme Director of the UNEP/GRID-Warsaw Centre**, referred to this year's IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report. Over 200 scientists from all over the world analysed several thousand papers – they unquestionably stated the anthropogenic character of climate change. In turn, the local report on the Carpathians, prepared within the framework of the “We Care for Water” coalition, in the most pessimistic variant, indicates that the climate in the Żywiec Beskids – without taking rapid steps to stop climate change – will resemble that of northern Italy by 2100, with an average annual temperature of 13–14 degrees Celsius, and this will be associated with frequent natural disasters such as floods and droughts.

Scientists confirm that this is a crucial decade for the Earth. The next ten years will be crucial to preserving plant and animal species that we may lose irretrievably. We are talking here about ecosystems that are natural and semi-natural, so we are talking about agriculture and cities. In fact, the whole of what surrounds us is an ecosystem which we have to take care of. And this is hugely important when it comes to climate change.

The Director said that UNEP/GRID-Warsaw's response to the challenges of the current decade is the Re:Generation programme to support ecosystems.



From left: Dawid Lasek, Michal Kiča, Małgorzata Golińska, Anna Paluch, Sándor Köles, Patrycja Adamska, Andrzej Raj, Ryszard Prędko

**Ryszard Prędko, the Director of the Bieszczady National Park (BNP)**, stressed that this national park provided more than 20,000 ha of forests and forest complexes, and the midlands are conservative protection. In the new law on national parks, this protection will have a more appropriate name: protection of natural processes. These are processes related to the forest and the soil cover, which is extremely valuable due to their water retention function. The Director talked about the work done in recent years in the BNP, such as implementing protective measures in reclaimed peat bogs and mires or repairs to trails. At the same time, the BNP carries out educational activities in ecology on two levels: for tourists and the local community. The Director also mentioned international awards that BNP can be proud of:

The first one is the qualification of the conservancy area as a world biosphere reserve. It is a diploma of the Council of Europe for the area, which is representative in biogeographical terms for a given physical-geographical unit, in this case – the Eastern Carpathians. It is the only area in Poland so honoured by the Council of Europe if we

consider national parks and nature reserves. In terms of world heritage, we recently received a distinction for four inaccessible forest complexes located in spring zones. It is 3 thousand hectares, about 1 per cent of the geographical area of the Bieszczady Mountains.

**Andrzej Raj, the Director of the Karkonosze National Park**, pointed out that national parks, especially mountain parks, were irreplaceable natural laboratories where we could observe the direction in which climate change was taking place. He stressed that this was a value that should be used, above all, for scientific purposes. The Director paid particular attention to the systemically elevated status of national parks in Poland, Slovakia and other Central European countries. He also stressed the vital aspect of cooperation in this field:

I have an appeal to look at it in a transboundary system, because nature knows no borders (...), because birds, plants do not have passports, they do not have any restrictions on migration.

Director Raj emphasised that the Karkonosze National Park had been certified as a transboundary park. Within the European federation of national parks, it cooperates with parks in Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. The cooperation results in a massive contribution to the knowledge of what is most valuable in our region.



Michal Kiča



When it comes to Slovakia's adaptation to climate change, the most effective approach remains to focus on protecting national parks and on ecosystem services, which in turn will prevent further loss of biodiversity, as well as on the energy sector, increasing energy efficiency, preventing waste and promoting a closed-loop economy.

The Recovery and Resilience Plan is a reliable tool to support these activities in Slovakia.

Michal Kiča – State Secretary at the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic



The reform concerning Slovak national parks is the number one priority within the systemic changes of nature conservation. Compared to other EU countries, Slovakia's national parks cover an above-average large area concerning the country's total area. However, the areas under the strictest five-level protection (prohibition of interference) are extraordinarily fragmented and represent only 20% of the current nine national parks. Under the Environmental Strategy 2030, the area of non-interference areas should increase to 50 per cent of the total area of national parks by 2025 and 75 per cent by 2030 [according to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria].

The complexity of the protection system remains a problem in protected areas, with overlapping national, European and international networks of protected areas with different specificities and needs. National parks are still not zoned, and, as a result, long-term principles and actions in their different parts are not defined. In the Environmental Strategy 2030, the Law on Nature and Landscape Protection and other government documents, the state have committed to carrying out national parks' zoning by 2024.

The reform of the property settlement system will allow new areas to be included in the prohibition of encroachment and the highest level of protection, increasing ecosystems' resilience. Transfer of land under the authority of the environment ministry should ensure consistent management of protected areas. Land located in state national parks would be managed by the national parks (decentralisation, modernisation). Currently, state forestry companies and business-like entities manage forests and land in national parks.

An inevitable step is to recognise the forests under the interference ban as essential carbon sinks. The Carpathian forests comprise the most extensive forest complex in Europe, which remains a high-value habitat for many endangered species. Strict protection of forests and responsible non-interference in their structure are important tools for combating climate change. Natural forest and wetland ecosystems and old-growth forests are effective carbon sinks. Strengthening the capacity to investigate illegal logging is also an important instrument.

It is crucial to reform the nature conservation system and change the country's agricultural policy. The Ministry of Environment considers it essential to link the new EU Climate Change Adaptation Strategy with the EU Common Agricultural Policy. Similarly to the changes in the system of functioning of national parks, Slovakia also needs modern agriculture, necessary to create space for biodiversity, support extensive grazing in protected areas, more frequent rotation of proper crops and reduction of monocultures.



## Central Europe – heritage, people and future

In Panel 14, the invited speakers addressed several topics proposed by the moderator **Matyáš Zrno, the Programme Director from the Czech Civic Institute (Občanský Institute)**. First, they focused on the definition of Central Europe.

**Włodzimierz Bernacki, the Secretary of State, Government Plenipotentiary for Monitoring the Implementation of Higher Education and Science Reform**, highlighted the fundamental difference between the definition of the area by intellectuals from Western Europe and those from the centre of Europe. According to the Secretary of State, when we talk about the nations or states of Central Europe, we should look first and foremost from the perspective of facts, because knowledge about the reality specific to our space is only scarcely present in Western European literature. He then listed the factors that unite the states and nations of Central Europe:

We are, in most cases, nations (...) going back to the Renaissance, that is, to the 16<sup>th</sup> century; they were nations that at some time lost their independence, lost their state existence. Therefore, our sensitivity relates not only to thinking about tradition, history and nation, but also to a state, and thus one as a sovereign state, an independent state. It is, of course, connected with respect for history. It is also respect for the national language. It is also a shared fate in terms of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century phase when the Western European nations were building their modernity and wealth.

Włodzimierz Bernacki also included 20<sup>th</sup>-century history among the factors uniting the states and nations of Central Europe. He meant the time of Soviet occupation and the road from the early 1980s to 1989–1991.

**Piotr Babinetz, the Chairman of the Culture and Media Committee of the Polish Sejm**, said that people from Central Europe were a crucial factor uniting Central

Europe, with almost 100 Nobel Prizes winners among them. He named several prominent figures from the Central European region and briefly outlined their achievements. They included Stefan Banach, an eminent mathematician from Lemberg, General František Kraliczek, Kazimierz Wierzyński, a Polish poet from Drohobych, and the engineer Marian Wieleżyński, who built the first pipeline in the Carpathians. These people did not have easy national identities because of their diverse roots. The President also mentioned figures who were interesting in the context of cooperation between the peoples of Central Europe:

Slovak Karol Sidor, born in Ružomberok, a leader of the pro-Polish community in Slovakia since the 1930s, was removed from the Slovak Government for protesting against Germany. He was ambassador to the Vatican, the Holy See, collaborating with the Polish ambassador. He wanted a federation of Slovaks, Czechs and Poles. He thought of the idea of close cooperation between Slovakia and Catholic Poland as a counterbalance to the atheistic, communist Soviet Union. Figures such as the regent of the Kingdom of Hungary, Admiral Miklós Horthy, who liberated Hungary from the yoke of the Bolsheviks, helped the Poles, and for various reasons is mostly overlooked, as well as the ataman Symon Petlura, who fought against the Bolsheviks together with the Poles. A Soviet agent murdered him. The generals, brothers Stanisław and Józef Bulak-Balachowicz, also fought for an independent Belarus on the Polish side against the Bolsheviks. Józef was killed by a Soviet agent, the Germans later killed Stanisław.

**Bartłomiej Zdaniuk, the Polish Ambassador to Moldova**, emphasised that it was necessary to reflect on the attitude to the past – historical heritage and its knowledge and popularisation (historical narration). He pointed out that although there was a considerable scientific output in this respect, it did not translate into the general knowledge of the society. Therefore, the popularisation of historical knowledge is very important.

Our partner from the eastern part of the European continent does not give up its own narrative if we have any doubt. The most visible symbol of this narrative is the St George ribbon. It raises the question of how we approach this narrative, which can also be called something else – historical politics.



From left: Matyáš Zrno, Włodzimierz Bernacki, Piotr Babinetz, Bartłomiej Zdaniuk, Jan Malicki, Igor Cependa, Pavol Mačala, Janusz Kapusta

The heritage, and what it is like, is one thing; the other is how we publicise this heritage, whether we pay enough attention to it and whether this heritage is coherent.

The Ambassador also spoke about the projects of the Polish Embassy in Moldova aimed at preserving historical memory, including restoring the graves of Poles who lived there, the celebrations commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Cecora, and the anniversary of the death of the great Hetman Stanisław Żółkiewski.

From the perspective of his experience, **Jan Malicki, the Director of the Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw**, said that if we wanted to think about building unity of thought, unity of outlook and bringing people together in our part of Europe, then scholarships and academic exchanges were the best way to do so. He mentioned the scholarships implemented by the Centre for East European Studies, such as the Scholarship Programme for Young Scholars. The Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme for Young Scientists for people from the former Soviet Union and the Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme, which has

provided 1000 scholarships since 2020, mainly for students from Belarus. Director Malicki pointed out that scholarship programmes are profitable for both sides:

Why is Poland doing this, why is Poland, which is by no means the richest country in the European Union, spending this money? (...) Of course, it is in the interest of young people from those countries, but contrary to appearances, it is also in the interest of Poland, because the 20<sup>th</sup> century clearly shows that if you do not influence the education and awareness of young elites, the results are always negative.

**Igor Cependa, the Rector of the Transcarpathian National University**, was asked whether Ukraine considered itself part of Central Europe. He assessed that Ukraine had always considered itself to be a European country.

If we look at the roots of Ukraine, we can see that we are still connected to Europe and, most importantly, we take energy from Europe, we give this energy and we create a whole.

The Rector mentioned the Collegium Carpathicum, which included universities of the Visegrad Group, Romania and Ukraine, and noted that it is an initiative that unites Central European values and spreads them throughout Europe. Another initiative is the Academic Youth Meeting Centre of Poland and Ukraine in Mikuliczyn, which will link countries of both Europe and the post-Soviet space.

**Markijan Malsky from the University of Lviv, former Ambassador of Ukraine in Poland**, at the beginning of his speech, emphasised that the concept of Europe of the Carpathians is not only economic or cultural but also a geopolitical one – on the level of the Three Seas Initiative or the Eastern Partnership project. The Ambassador pointed out that it would be necessary to start work on the institutionalisation of Europe of the Carpathians, its financing and the training of personnel and professionals for the region. In this context, Markijan Malsky stated:

We talked about a virtual university, a Carpathian university. In my opinion, under today's conditions, with today's online life, such an idea has an increasing chance of success. On the other hand, we are talking about making practical steps to have young people prepared for social, economic, political, democratic life in our region.



Participants of the panel *Central Europe – heritage, people and future*, Karpacz, 9 September 2021

The Ambassador added that a new master's degree course had been opened at Lviv University – regional Baltic-Black Sea studies.

When asked about the region's future, **Pavol Mačala from the Scientific Association of Personalism** replied that, first, it was necessary to start living in the truth and require political leaders to find a way to transition from chaos to harmony of creation. In this sense:

The future belongs to those who will be able to formulate new doctrines of politics based on the ideas of normative ethics, on freedom based on objective truth and normative ethics.

Pavol Mačala stressed that no one in Western Europe could formulate such principles. Therefore, this is a great challenge for Central Europe, for nations with Christian traditions, especially for the Polish environment and personalistic thought.

**Janusz Kapusta, a draughtsman, painter, stage designer and inventor of the eleven-sided K-DRON solid**, spoke about the region's future from an artist's point of



The Bieszczady Mountains, Poland

view. He stated that ideas and imagination were the most important, as they helped people to influence the reality.

The future remains the only option. What is responsible for it? Just as memory is responsible for the past and our senses are responsible for the present – we see ourselves, we hear ourselves, we are human – so what is responsible for the future? I called it imagination and decided to exercise it.

Quoting Witold Gombrowicz, Janusz Kapusta also expressed his belief that Poles should not be inspired by other countries but should follow their own path and thus prove what they were capable of.



Markiyan Malskyy



In October 1930, the Faculty of Law at Lviv University initiated a unique three-year master's programme – the Diplomatic Studies – which contributed to the education of a whole generation of diplomats and outstanding specialists in international relations. At that time, it had no counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe and was the only school of diplomacy with a comprehensive character, as future specialists were

Markiyan Malskyy – the former Ukrainian Ambassador to Poland, Krynica-Zdrój, 7 September 2016



trained not only for the diplomatic and consular services but also for work in the fields of journalism or law, in the banking sector or government bodies.

At that time, only at the University of Lviv did graduates of the Diplomatic Study receive diplomas with the academic degree of Master of Diplomacy.

The Diplomatic College was created and directed by the prominent professor of international law, head of the Department of International and Political Law, and ad hoc judge at the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague, Ludwig Ehrlich.

The programme of study included subjects that were an analysis of current problems of international law and diplomacy and the international relations of the time, and the history of diplomacy. An essential element of the studies was the teaching of foreign languages, especially – in order to train specialists for diplomatic representations in the Middle East and in connection with the expansion of trade contacts with that region – Persian and Turkish.

The study programme was well structured, organically combining theory and practice: students completed internships in diplomatic missions abroad and central state authorities. Some of the classes were taught by experienced lecturers-practitioners, including active diplomats and senior officials of central state authorities.

18 October 2020 marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Diplomatic Studies at Lviv University. The celebration of this event highlights the prominent place of the diplomatic school of Lviv University in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century history, as well as the heredity and succession of its main traditions – the institution was reborn in 1992 as the Department of International Relations.

In 2016, Philippe Sands wrote in his book *East West Street* that “It seemed more than a mere coincidence that two men [Hersch Lauterpacht and Raphael Lemkin – author’s note] who did more than any other to create the modern system of international justice came from the same city.”<sup>1</sup>

Adam Redzik in his book on the history of Lviv University *Academia Militans...* quotes the words of prominent scholars about the educational environment in Lviv: “Why do people who are creative and open to innovation, with extraordinary abilities to generate information, choose certain geographical regions and avoid others? Why do

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1 Ph. Sands, *East West Street: On the Origins of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*, London 2016, p. XXIX.

they prefer certain places during the period of free movement? Lviv, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and in the interwar period, was one of the creative regions of Europe (...). There was a good interpersonal atmosphere in this place [Lviv – author's note] in which the spirit of tolerance prevailed. The great wealth of any culture is its multinationality.”<sup>2</sup>

Prof. Ivan Vakarchuk, Rector of the University, noted: “The history of the University of Lviv – is a century-old intertwining of the creative restlessness of Man, the world of his bright intellectual ideas, scientific aspirations and aspirations for perfection; it is a place of maturity and youth of spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

The phenomenon of the Diplomatic Studies proves that the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, with its long and complex Polish-Austrian-Ukrainian history, still plays a vital role in building and continuing international dialogue on the shared historical past and mutual traditions of diplomatic schools.

The academic past, rich in traditions, ideas, concepts, schools, and dynamics, and the innovative present of the University show that the study of international relations is once again booming. It is evidenced by the pace and level of development of the Department of International Relations, the graduates' professional success and the continuing interest in this field of knowledge among students. Just as 90 years ago, diplomatic science forms an inseparable duo with the science of international law, combining the two ancient philosophical meanings of the Faculty's logo: *Concordia inter populos* (*Harmony between nations*) and *Pacta sunt servanda* (*Contracts must be kept*).

Today the Lviv diplomatic school is an independent and autonomous institution that continues to educate modern international lawyers and classical diplomats, international relations specialists and international economists.

However, the future of diplomatic and international legal sciences is still relevant. From the point of view of the rational narrative of modern science, it raises no doubt that the future cannot be accurately predicted and is very difficult to forecast. Some scholars believe that we are currently going through a period of crisis in the development of international law and international relations.<sup>4</sup> However, at the same time, they

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2 A. Redzik (ed.), *Academia Militans. Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv*, Kraków 2017, pp. 30, 31.

3 *Encyklopedia*. Львівський національний університет імені Івана Франка: [В 2 т.], Т. 1: А–К, Львів 2011, с. 11.

4 H. Krieger, G. Nolte, *The International Rule of Law – Rise or Decline? – Approaching Current Foundational Challenges*, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 3, 4.



The Széchenyi Chain Bridge in Budapest, Hungary

emphasise the hope that, very often, such a crisis becomes a powerful instrument of development. The fundamental issue today is the deep penetration of international law into all spheres of international life, where it has taken the lead as the warp of the modern international system.

Concerning whether today's world needs new rules and whether we will have a world without rules, Henry Kissinger made a crucial point in his monograph *The World Order*. The world order should be constructed, cannot be imposed and should be based on two elements: a set of generally recognised rules that define the limits of permissible actions and a balance of power that limits the ability of one international actor to subjugate – by violating these limits – all other international actors!<sup>5</sup>

International law and diplomacy are becoming inseparable elements of the global political process, and as spheres of professional activity, they are undergoing radical transformation, changing their forms. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba

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5 H. Kissinger, *Porządek światowy* [The World Order], Volovec 2016, p. 16.



talks about the technological revolution of diplomacy based on three driving forces: artificial intellect, cyberspace, and the smartphone generation.<sup>6</sup>

Advocates of technological progress in the sphere of communication are confident that it will promote democratisation, increase the demand for global social goods and other benefits that can be provided by international law.<sup>7</sup>

Digital diplomacy, Facebook and Twitter diplomacy, electronic diplomacy and many other types of diplomacy today use information and communication technologies to achieve the old classical objectives of foreign policy – protecting the national interests of the state, providing international guarantees of national security and territorial integrity, forming a positive image and an active role in the modern international system. It is becoming evident that solving thorny crisis issues of modern development

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6 Д. Кулеба, *Дипломатія майбутнього*. Українська правда, 22/12/2017, <https://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/kuleba/5a3cc08726814/> [accessed: 06/10/2020].

7 J.P. Trachtman, *The Future of International Law: Global Government*, Cambridge 2013, p. 83, 84.



The Memorial to István Dobó – Defender of the Eger Castle, Hungary

and numerous hot conflicts is possible only through active diplomacy. At this point, it is essential to mention the very timely call by Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, the Head of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security, as a joint project “Back to Diplomacy”, to return “to diplomacy; a robust diplomatic process aimed at replacing mutual recriminations with the restoration of trust: not by military action, not by propaganda, not by rhetoric – but by a process that examines our common problems in a careful, confidential and systematic way.”<sup>8</sup>

Diplomacy is about to undergo rapid and irreversible changes, but the art of peaceful resolution of interstate, regional and global conflicts will always be in demand. Therefore, it is inevitable that the slogan “Back to Diplomacy” will have a *raison d’être* for a long time to come, because the quality of its diplomacy determines the importance of a state.

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8 Back to Diplomacy. Final report and recommendations of the panel of eminent persons on European security as a common project, November 2015, p. 3, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/5/205846.pdf> [accessed: 06/10/2020].



The former Greek Catholic church (now Roman Catholic church) in Kwiatów – an object on the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska, Poland

# Calendar of the Europe of the Carpathians Conference

**1999**

The then Deputy Governor of the Podkarpatie voivodship, 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**

1<sup>st</sup> 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**

2<sup>nd</sup> “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Przemyśl

**25 VI 2011**

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

**7–8 IX 2011**

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

**25 II 2012**

5<sup>th</sup> “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Krasiczyn, near Przemyśl

**6–9 VII 2012**

6<sup>th</sup> meeting on the topic of the development of Carpathian cooperation in Yaremcha, in Ukraine.

**6 IX 2012**

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

**23 II 2013**

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

**8 IX 2013**

9<sup>th</sup> 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**

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

**27–28 II 2015**

12<sup>th</sup> International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Krasiczyn, near Przemyśl

**25 VII 2015**

13<sup>th</sup> International “Europe of the Carpathians” conference in Smerek, near Wetlina

**9 IX 2015**

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Lake Bălea in the Făgăraș Mountains, Romania



The Carpathian Mountains, Slovakia

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