

**MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Wawelska St. 52/54, 00-922 Warsaw**

**POLAND**

**NATIONAL REPORT  
ON PROTECTED AREAS**

**MAY 2003**

*Please provide the following details on the origin of this report.*

<b>NATIONAL REPORT ON PROTECTED AREAS</b>	
Contracting Party	<b>Poland</b>
<b>National Focal Point</b>	
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Date of submission:	<b>May 2003</b>

*Please provide summary information on the process by which this report has been prepared, including information on the types of stakeholders who have been actively involved in its preparation and on material which was used as a basis for the report*

The report has been prepared in the Department of Nature Protection, Ministry of the Environment.

### ***System of protected areas***

1. What is the relative priority afforded to development and implementation of a national system of protected areas in the context of other obligations arising from the Convention and COP decisions?					
a) High	X	b) Medium		c) Low	
2. Is there a systematic planning process for development and implementation of a national system of protected areas?					
a) no					
b) in early stages of development					
c) in advanced stages of development					
d) yes (please provide copies of relevant documents describing the process)					X
3. Is there an assessment of the extent to which the existing network of protected areas covers all areas that are identified as being important for the conservation of biological diversity?					
a) no					
b) an assessment is being planned for					
c) an assessment is being undertaken					
d) yes (please provide copies of the assessments made)					X

### ***Regulatory framework***

4. Is there a policy framework and/or enabling legislation in place for the establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) in early stages of development	
c) in advanced stages of development	
d) yes (please provide copies of relevant documents)	X
5. Have guidelines, criteria and targets been adopted to support selection, establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) in early stages of development	
c) in advanced stages of development	
d) yes (please provide copies of guidelines, criteria and targets)	X
6. Does the management of protected areas involve the use of incentive measures, for instance, of entrance fees for park visitors, or of benefit-sharing arrangements with adjacent communities and other relevant stakeholders?	
a) no	
b) yes, incentive measures implemented for some protected areas (please provide some examples)	X
c) yes, incentive measures implemented for all protected areas (please provide some examples)	

**Management approach**

7. Have the principal threats to protected areas and the biodiversity that they contain been assessed, so that programmes can be put in place to deal with the threats, their effects and to influence the key drivers?	
a) no	
b) an assessment is being planned for	
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been completed	
e) programmes and policies to deal with threats are in place (please provide basic information on threats and actions taken)	X
8. Are protected areas established and managed in the context of the wider region in which they are located, taking account of and contributing to other sectoral strategies?	
a) no	
b) yes, in some areas	X
c) yes, in all areas (please provide details)	
9. Do protected areas vary in their nature, meeting a range of different management objectives and/or being operated through differing management regimes?	
a) no, most areas are established for similar objectives and are under similar management regimes	
b) many areas have similar objectives/management regimes, but there are also some exceptions	
c) yes, protected areas vary in nature (please provide details)	X
10. Is there wide stakeholder involvement in the establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) with some, but not all protected areas	
c) yes, always (please provide details of experience)	X
11. Do protected areas established and managed by non-government bodies, citizen groups, private sector and individuals exist in your country, and are they recognized in any formal manner?	
a) no, they do not exist	
b) yes, they exist, however are not formally recognized	X
c) yes, they exist and are formally recognized (please provide further information)	

**Available resources**

12. Are the human, institutional and financial resources available adequate for full implementation of the protected areas network, including for management of individual protected areas?	
a) no, they are severely limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
b) no, they are limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	X
c) Available resources are adequate (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
d) yes, good resources are available	

13. Has your country requested/received financial assistance from the Global Environment Facility or other international sources for establishment/management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) funding has been requested, but not received	
c) funding is currently being requested	
d) yes, funding has been received (please provide copies of appropriate documents)	X

**Assessment**

14. Have constraints to implementation and management of an adequate system of protected areas been assessed, so that actions can be initiated to deal with these constraints?	
a) no	
b) yes, constraints have been assessed (please provide further information)	X
c) yes, actions to deal with constraints are in place (please provide further information)	
15. Is a programme in place or in development to regularly assess the effectiveness of protected areas management and to act on this information?	
a) no	
b) yes, a programme is under development (please provide further information)	
c) yes, a programme is in place (please provide further information)	X
16. Has any assessment been made of the value of the material and non-material benefits and services that protected areas provide?	
a) no	X
b) an assessment is planned	
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been made (please provide further information)	

**Regional and international cooperation**

17. Is your country collaborating/communicating with neighbouring countries in the establishment and/or management of transboundary protected areas?	
a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	X
18. Are key protected areas professionals in your country members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, thereby helping to foster the sharing of information and experience?	
a) no	
b) yes	X
c) information is not available	
19. Has your country provided information on its protected areas to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in order to allow for a scientific assessment of the status of the world's protected areas?	
a) no	
b) yes	X

20. If your country has protected areas or other sites recognised or designated under an international convention or programme (including regional conventions and programmes), please provide copies of reports submitted to those programmes or summaries of them.	
a) no	
b) yes	X
21. Do you think that there are some activities on protected areas that your country has significant experience that will be of direct value to other Contracting Parties?	
a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	X

***Further comments***

***System of protected areas***

Ad. 1

The establishment of a system of protected areas with the aim of the conservation of biological diversity is one of the priority directions of action in Poland's nature conservation.

The present form of the national system of protected areas is the result of long-term activities which were taken at different times with varied rationale. The breakthrough event was the publication of the document entitled *The Draft Concept of Landscape Conservation in Poland* in 1971 by the then Minister of Forestry and Wood Industry. That document initiated the integration of nature conservation with spatial planning. Its effect was the development of the concept of the *Large-space System of Protected Areas (LSPA)*.

In recent years, many draft concepts of the improvement of the system of protected areas were developed. The main idea of these concepts was working towards the establishment of a system of protected areas which would be diversified in terms of their natural and physiographic character, and constitute a hierarchy based on their natural and economic rank and their conservation regime as well as a system which would be spatially coherent and targeted on the implementation of a specific spatial policy.

The national system of protected areas now existing in Poland is a spatial system of mutually complementing forms of nature conservation. Pursuant to the Nature Conservation Act, this system consists of national parks, nature reserves, landscape parks and protected landscape areas. The national system of protected areas is complete with ecological features, nature and landscape complexes and documentation stands.

In addition, in order to conserve particularly valuable and endangered components of the biological diversity of the European Continent, the European Ecological Network NATURA 2000 is being established in Poland's territory. In accordance with the draft of the new Nature Conservation Act, the national system of protected areas will be expanded with this Network.

Ad. 2

The issues of the spatial development of the country, including the issues related to the systematic implementation of the national system of protected areas, are regulated by the Spatial Planning Act. This Act provides that the activities in the scope of spatial planning are based on sustainable development and that the issues which need to be taken into account include the requirements of the natural environment. This Act also provides that the spatial policy of the local government is defined in the study on the factors and directions of spatial development. The study also indicates the local values of the natural environment and the threats to this environment.

The boundaries and the principles of the development of areas or sites subject to conservation are determined in the local plan for the spatial development of the County ("Gmina" - the local administration unit).

At Provincial level, the strategy for the development of the Province ("Województwo") is adopted. The strategy lays down the factors, objectives and directions of its development. In addition, the Provincial development plan is adopted. These documents set e.g. the requirements relating to the conservation of the natural environment, taking into account the areas subject to special conservation. At national level, the concept of the national spatial development policy is developed. The concept defines the natural, cultural, social and economic factors as well as the objectives and directions of this policy.

Ad. 3.

Last year the draft of the target network of the national system of protected areas was developed, taking into account the ecological corridors connecting them and adapting it to the principles of sustainable economic and social development of the country. In the framework of this draft, the national system of protected areas (NSPA) was analysed. Proposals for connecting the protected areas with ecological corridors were made and so were proposals for optimising the NSPA on the basis of the European ecological programmes (including NATURA 2000). The criteria were developed for the verification of the protected areas and the procedures for an expansion of the NSPA were proposed.

## ***Regulatory frameworks***

Ad. 4.

In Poland, protected areas are established and managed pursuant to the entire system of national legislation, beginning with the fundamental legal document which is the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, providing that “The Republic of Poland ... shall ensure the protection of the environment, following the principle of sustainable development”. *The Second National Environmental Policy* sets the directions and objectives of the sustainable development of the country, integrating good management practices and environmental management systems into all the sectoral policies (industry and energy, transport, agriculture, forestry, construction and municipal economy, spatial development, tourism, health care, trade and national defence). It also provides e.g. for the national biological diversity to be maintained at an adequate level and for the surface area of the protected areas to be expanded to one third of the territory of the country.

In addition, the Government has adopted the following strategic documents setting the directions of policies and their implementation programmes:

- Poland 2025 – The Long-term Strategy for Sustained and Sustainable Development (adopted by the Council of Ministers on 26 July 2000)
- The National Strategy for Environmental Protection (adopted by the Committee on Regional Policy and Sustainable Development of the Council of Ministers on 27 July 2000)
- The National Strategy for Regional Development in 2001-2006 (Annex to the Resolution No. 105 of the Council of Ministers of 28 December 2000 Concerning the Adoption of the National Strategy for Regional Development in 2001-2006 – Monitor Polski [Government Journal] No. 43, Item 851)
- The Concept of the National Spatial Development Policy (Communication of the Prime Minister on the Announcement of the Concept of the National Spatial Development Policy – Monitor Polski [Government Journal] No. 26, Item 432)
- The National Forest Policy (adopted by the Council of Ministers on 22 April 1997, amended in 2002)
- The National Strategy for the Development of Rural Areas and Agriculture (A Coherent Structural Policy for the Development of Rural Areas and Agriculture – adopted by the Council of Ministers on 13 July 1999)
- The National Strategy for the Conservation and Reasonable Use of Biological Diversity, along with its Implementation Programme (adopted by the Council of Ministers on 23



February 2003)

The issues related to the establishment and management of protected areas are regulated at national level by the Nature Conservation Act. Pursuant to this Act, nature conservation is introduced e.g. by establishing national parks, designating specific areas as nature reserves, establishing landscape parks and delineating protected landscape areas.

A national park is established by a Regulation of the Council of Ministers. A landscape park is established by a Regulation of the Governor of the Province, after agreement has been reached with the local government authorities having jurisdiction over the area. A nature reserve is established by a Regulation of the Governor of the Province; when the obligation to establish a nature reserve follows from international commitments and the Governor of the Province has failed to designate such a reserve, the Minister responsible for the environment may designate such a reserve. A protected landscape area is established by a Regulation of the Governor of the Province; when the Governor of the Province has failed to do so, it may be established by the local council.

In order to ensure the correct management of protected areas, the Act also lays down the principles of the development and implementation of 20-year conservation plans for national parks, landscape parks and nature reserves.

Ad. 5.

The basic principles of selection and establishment of protected areas primarily result from the identification of particular natural, landscape, cultural and historic values of such areas, while the principles of management of protected areas are governed by effective legislation and strategic documents.

The principles of management of protected areas are primarily based on the principle of sustainable development. The essence of this principle is the equal treatment of social, economic and environmental considerations as well as the integration of environmental policy with the policies of individual sectors of the economy. In practice, the sectoral policies are greened by using so-called good management practices which allow for economic effects to be combined with environmental effects. The principle of public participation is a condition for the success of the establishment of protected areas. To a sufficient degree, Polish legislation ensures the participation of citizens, social groups and non-governmental organisations in the process of shaping the principles of sustainable development of protected areas. The involvement of land owners and users in the process of making decisions which have above all the effect of

restrictions on the free use of one's own property is an expression of the care to ensure that the constitutional principle of respect for ownership is observed. All activities within protected areas, including the rules of their use, must be subject to consultations with land owners or users.

The principle of regionalisation is applied, indicating the need for drawing up regional strategies and programmes for the economic use of natural resources and designating the authorities responsible for their co-ordination and implementation.

These principles were reflected in the Regulations laying down the detailed principles of development of conservation plans for national parks, landscape parks and nature reserves. It should be emphasised that they introduced the mandatory reflection of the provisions of conservation plans in local spatial development plans.

Ad. 6.

The introduction of relevant fees is regulated by the Nature Conservation Act which allows the manager of a given protected area to introduce them.

Fees may be collected for entrance or the use of the values of a national park, its facilities and sites. The rates of fees are set by the director of a national park. Fees are allocated to the maintenance of tourist and education infrastructure in the national park and other tasks in the scope of nature conservation.

By a Regulation, the Governor of the Province may also introduce fees for entrance into a nature reserve or for the use of its natural values, in order to meet the need for the maintenance of tourist and education infrastructure in a given nature reserve.

On the basis of relevant provisions in the conservation plan for a given area, e.g. through civil-law contracts between the manager and the interested party, it is possible to share benefits from the functioning of the area; an example of this may be cattle grazing in the "Warta River Mouth" National Park.

Of 23 Polish National Parks, 10 collect small fees for entrance into the park (Babiogórski National Park, Biebrzański National Park, Bieszczadzki National Park, Góry Stołowe [Table Mountains] National Park, Narwiański National Park, Pieniński National Park, Roztoczański National Park, Słowiński National Park, Świętokrzyski National Park and Wigierski National Park), while 7 Parks collect fees for entrance into the museum (Babiogórski National Park, Bieszczadzki National Park, Ojcowski National Park, Roztoczański National Park, Słowiński National Park, Świętokrzyski National Park and Wielkopolski National Park).

## ***Management***

Ad. 7.

The main function of protected areas is to protect natural resources against their degradation caused by their incorrect use as well as to create the appropriate conditions for the individual valuable wild species of animals and plants and their communities. Another ecological function of protected areas is also to compensate in these areas for the losses of biological diversity suffered by nature on other sites.

Pursuant to the Nature Conservation Act, conservation plans are drawn up for national parks, landscape parks and nature reserves. The conservation plans contain an assessment of the state of nature and identify and assess internal and external threats to individual sites. In State Forests, management plans are developed for Forest Districts, including nature conservation plans.

In general, the most serious threats to protected areas and biological diversity are as follows:

- infrastructural projects which may pose a threat to natural areas, e.g. the plans of several years ago to drain Biebrza Marshes and other wetlands and the programme for the regulation of the Vistula and Warta Rivers. The more recent infrastructural threats are related to the proposed motorway system or the construction of hydro-power plants on the Lower Vistula;
- changes in the land ownership structure and use have brought the “urbanisation of rural areas”, entailing the emergence of chaotic summer building within protected areas or their protective zones. This causes e.g. degradation of the landscape of protected areas and uncontrolled wastewater discharges;
- excessive tourist traffic. In particular, this applies to sites situated in mass-scale recreation areas or those that are the destinations of mass-scale excursions. As a rule, these threats are related to insufficient tourist infrastructure or to exceedances of the permissible daily tourist load;
- the present farming poses little threat. The small private farms now existing in Poland mostly use traditional methods and relatively low amounts of chemical agents. In recent years there was a substantial decline in farming, thus bringing a decrease in the environmental impact of agriculture. The present lack of profitability of small farms has led to the process of their abandonment and, hence, the use of farmland has stopped. In turn, this allows for succession which is, as a rule, unfavourable for biological diversity. In particular, this is the case with wetlands which are the habitats of rare plants, flora communities and birds.

Ad. 8.

Most protected areas are established and managed in the context of the larger region in which they are located. The most important sectors which address protected areas in their strategies are as follows:

- agriculture, which supports those forms and modes of development of the agricultural production space that favour the preservation and growth of biological diversity. In addition, it introduces mechanisms which encourage the afforestation of farmland with poor soils, land susceptible to erosion and land located in the vicinity of watercourses and water reservoirs,
- forestry, which promotes the forest cover increase in the country and the expansion of the extent of renaturalisation of forestland, including the renaturalisation of wetlands and other sites with natural values which are located in forestland,
- tourism, which proposes a reduction in tourist traffic in localities and sites visited on the largest scale and the creation of buffer zones round sensitive areas as well as support for diversified forms of tourism, such as tourism for natural education purposes,
- spatial development introduces spatial schemes of settlement and different activities which are beneficial for the environment. It also secures the conservation of natural, landscape and cultural values as well as the ecological functions of individual areas by taking into account the conditions for their preservation in the spatial development plans and the decisions, programmes, assessments, studies and expert analyses related to such plans,
- construction and municipal economy which take into account the issues of landscape conservation in planning areas for construction.

The so-called Green Lungs of Poland, extending in the north-eastern part of the country, are an example of the promotion of an area where the most crucial sectors are agriculture, forestry and tourism based on its special natural values.

Ad. 9.

Protected areas in Poland are operated through differing management regimes. The Nature Conservation Act lays down the objectives of establishment and the principles of management in the particular forms of nature conservation.

A national park consists of a protected area which is distinguished by its special scientific, natural, social, cultural and educational values, with a surface area of at least 1000 ha, where the entire nature and specific landscape features are protected. All activities within a national park

are subordinated to nature conservation and have priority over any other activities. The overriding objective of a national park is to identify and preserve the entire natural systems in a given area, along with the conditions for their functioning, and to restore the components of indigenous nature which have been distorted or vanished.

A nature reserve is an area containing ecosystems which are preserved in a natural or semi-natural condition, including natural habitats, specific plant and animal species as well as elements of inanimate nature of significant importance in scientific, natural, cultural or landscape terms.

A landscape park is an area protected in the light of its natural, historic and cultural values. It is established for the purpose of preserving, popularising and disseminating these values under the conditions of sustainable development. Farmland, forestland and other land situated within the limits of a landscape park continue to be utilised for economic purposes.

A protected landscape area is an area protected in the light of the existence of sites with distinct landscapes, which contain diversified ecosystems and are valuable in particular in view of its capacity to satisfy the needs relating to mass-scale tourism and recreation, or in view of the existing ecological corridors or those being restored. The purpose of the establishment of protected landscape areas may be in particular to ensure the connection of areas subject to conservation into a system of protected areas.

The designation of ecological features ensures the conservation of areas which perform an ecological function. They can include e.g. marshes, old river-beds, dunes and the sites of protected plant and animal species. Nature and landscape complexes are established for the purpose of protecting particularly valuable sections of natural and cultural landscapes. In order to protect inanimate nature, conservation is extended e.g. to the sites of geological formations, accumulations of fossils or mineral formations of importance in scientific or educational terms. Such sites are also called documentation stands of inanimate nature.

In practice, each form of nature conservation has a specific objective and conservation regime, as defined in the establishing act. Individual national parks, landscape parks and nature reserves, for which conservation plans have been drawn up, are operated through a strictly specified conservation regime as provided for in such plans.

Ad. 10.

In practice, the effectiveness of measures related to the process of establishment and management of protected areas depends on whether the public understands that it is purposeful and often necessary to take such measures.

The Nature Conservation Act is the basic legal act to regulate the manner and procedure of establishing the legal protection of an area, including the scope of co-operation between the public authorities at different levels.

A national park can be established, expanded, reduced or dissolved only after agreement has been reached with the interested local government authorities having jurisdiction over the area where such changes are proposed.

A landscape park is established by a Regulation of the Governor of the Province after agreement has been reached with the interested local government authorities. A landscape park is dissolved or its surface area is reduced by a Regulation of the Governor of the Province when the values to protect which the park was established are lost, after the Provincial Commission on Nature Conservation and the interested local government authorities having jurisdiction over the area have given their opinions.

Areas that are real estates which are not the property of the State Treasury are covered by conservation through the establishment of national parks or the designation of nature reserves with consent of the owner or, when the owner declines to consent, through expropriation for compensation.

State Forests is an important partner in the talks on the establishment of protected areas. Practically, it is not difficult to obtain its approval of the idea of establishing a landscape park or a protected landscape area since the farmland within the limits of a landscape park continues to be utilised for specific economic use and, in addition, in the area managed by State Forests and located within the limits of the landscape park, conservation tasks are carried out by the head of the local Forest District himself/herself, in accordance with the provisions of the conservation plan for the landscape park as contained in the forest management plan.

Environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may be allies of the administration in establishing all forms of nature conservation. The high substantive level, dynamic activity and management capacity of strong NGOs may, on the one hand, help correct the activities of the administration and, on the other, initiate, mobilise and gather wide public circles round the initiatives which they launch.

Ad. 11.

In Poland, there have been cases of the informal establishment and management of protected areas by non-governmental organisations.

E.g., in order to protect wild birds and their habitats, the Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP) established the Kwasiborska Kępa Reserve, an Important Bird Area of European

importance, located in a part of the Świna River delta. OTOP bought 163 ha of the land and leased the remaining part (20 ha) from the City of Świnoujście.

Another example is the activity of the Northern Podlasie Society for the Protection of Birds (PTOP), which has created the conditions for the conservation of many valuable wetland habitats and birds by buying and leasing uncultivated land. PTOP is the owner of several nature reserves, e.g.:

- in the Upper Narew River valley: “Wizna” (24 ha) and “Rudnia” (120 ha),
- in the northern part of Biebrza Marshes: “Wodniczka” (14.5 ha),
- in Gródecka-Michałowska Basin: “Gródek” (48.5 ha),
- on the outskirts of Białowieża Forest: “Górniańskie Łąki” (26.0).

### ***Available resources***

Ad. 12.

At present, the human, institutional and financial resources available are not adequate for full implementation of the protected areas network. In 2002, a total of 1145 persons were employed in Polish national parks and about 600 persons in landscape parks. In addition, in landscape parks located in forestland, the local forest services perform the functions of landscape park services.

At present, the NATURA 2000 Network is being established. The Network partly overlaps with the existing national system of protected areas. It should be expected that certain areas incorporated into the Network will also require staffing. At present, it is impossible to define the needs and capacity in this respect.

Given the limited financial capacity, the resources described are not adequate for full implementation of the protected areas network and for its operation. The European Protected Areas Network NATURA 2000 needs both financial and organisational support for its operation in the future.

Ad. 13.

Poland has submitted requests for co-financing of several projects related to protected areas to GEF and other international institutions and organisations. Several projects have been approved and supported financially, e.g.

- the project on tourist infrastructure in Pieniński National Park “Strengthening of nature protection and developing of a sustainable tourism in the Pieniny area, Southern Poland”; The Czorsztyn Lake Region Development Foundation – County of Fuen, Nature Management and

Regional Planning Division, cost 3,7 mln DKK,

- the project on biological diversity in Białowieża Forest “Training modules in NATURA 2000 based on Nature Management in Bialowieza Forest”, Ministry of the Environment – DANCEE, COWI/Danish Forestry Extension, cost 1,5 mln DKK and “Protection, Public Awareness, Sustainable Management and Income Generation in the Bialowieza Forest, Poland”, The Ministry for Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry – Danish Environmental Protection Agency, Danish Co-operation for the Environment in Eastern Europe (DANCEE), cost 1,2 mln DKK,

- the project on the conservation of Biebrza Marshes “Man and Nature at Biebrza”, Biebrza National Park – Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, cost 500 000 NLG.

Additionally, about 20 small grant projects on the establishment or management of protected areas were financed by GEF in the years 1995-2003.

The relevant documentation on this issue is available in the centres which applied for co-financing.

### ***Assessment***

Ad. 14.

Such constraints are covered in the Environmental Protection Act and the Nature Conservation Act. The main constraints to the implementation and management of protected areas are related to the limited financial resources. To a large extent, their shortage hampers a number of important measures, including above all the purchase of land where protected areas are located, the performance of work to prevent succession and the compensation for damage resulting from conservation measures, e.g. damage done by beavers, bears and wolves.

Ad. 15.

The measure of the effectiveness of protected areas management is the nature monitoring system which has been developed and implemented. In the protected areas, the system mainly monitors quantitative and qualitative changes in plant and animal species, their habitats and threats to them in relation to unfavourable abiotic factors which directly impact these protected areas.

In addition, periodic assessments of the condition of nature are performed for nature reserves. Nature reserves are monitored in the course of the development of nature conservation plans for landscape parks in the framework of periodic reports of Landscape Park Services and



when conservation plans are drawn up. Ad hoc assessments are also performed by nature conservation authorities.

Ad. 16.

No assessment of this type has been conducted to date.

### ***Regional and international co-operation***

Ad. 17.

Poland collaborates with the neighbouring countries in the framework of transboundary co-operation. Above all, this relates to Transboundary Biosphere Reserves, e.g. with Slovakia (“Babia Góra” and Tatra Biosphere Reserves), with Ukraine (“Eastern Carpathians” and “Western Polesie” Biosphere Reserves), with the Czech Republic (Karkonosze Biosphere Reserve) and with Belarus (Białowieża Biosphere Reserve).

Poland conducts co-operation with the neighbouring countries under agreements on co-operation in the field of the environment. All these agreements include co-operation in the scope of nature conservation and protected areas, especially transboundary ones, are treated as a priority. In the framework of the co-operation relating to transboundary protected areas, among other things, consultations are conducted on the principles of conservation, which are reflected in conservation (management) plans, and, in addition, joint meetings of the scientific councils of transboundary national parks are held to exchange information.

Over the last two years, several cross-border meetings were held on the establishment of the European Ecological Network NATURA 2000, primarily on the delineation of transboundary areas.

In the Polish border area, there are 5 Biosphere Reserves which have their counterparts across the border. In addition, the Polish –German Lower Odra Park has been established.

Ad. 18.

Professionals involved in the process of management of protected areas are members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas. They come from both governmental and non-governmental organisations and institutions, which are represented by: the State Council on Nature Conservation, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Poland, the Northern Podlasie Society for the Protection of Birds etc.

Ad. 19.

On a periodical basis, the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre asks the Ministry of the Environment to prepare current information on protected areas, which is made available and then published by WCMC.

The list of all protected areas (national parks, nature reserves, landscape parks and protected landscape areas), along with their surface areas, has been sent to the headquarters of the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

Ad. 20.

Poland has a number of areas designated under international conventions or programmes, e.g. under the UNESCO World Programme "Man and Biosphere" (9 areas are Biosphere Reserves): "Babia Góra" Biosphere Reserve, Białowieża Biosphere Reserve, Słowiński Biosphere Reserve, "Lake Łukajno" Biosphere Reserve, "Eastern Carpathians" Biosphere Reserve, the Tatran Biosphere Reserve, Karkonosze Biosphere Reserve, "Kampinos Forest" Biosphere Reserve and "Western Polesie" Biosphere Reserve.

Under the Ramsar Convention, 13 wetland areas have been proposed: Biebrzański National Park, Lake Oświn (the Reserve of the Lake of Seven Islands), Narwiański National Park, Poleski National Park, Lake Družno Reserve, Lake Karaś Reserve, Lake Łukajno Reserve, Słoński Reserve, Milickie Ponds Reserve, Świdwie Reserve, Słowiński National Park, the subalpine peat-bogs in Karkonoski National Park and Wigierski National Park.

In addition, one area (Białowieski National Park) has been entered onto the list of the UNESCO World Heritage.

Two sites have been awarded a Diploma of the Council of Europe (Białowieski National Park and Bieszczadzki National Park).

Ad. 21.

It is important to emphasise that protected areas, including national parks, have been established in all the geographical regions of Poland, covering with their range all the major natural habitats. The system of protected areas occupies one third of the territory of the country. Area conservation in Poland has a more than 100 years old tradition, with the first national parks established as early as the 1930s. For more than 70 years Poland has very successfully conducted a programme to maintain the European bison (mainly in Białowieski National Park). Poland also manages the world pedigree book of the European bison. It also enjoys successes in the scope of restitution and reintroduction of other endangered animal species, e.g. apollo butterfly in

Pieniński National Park, salmon in Drawieński National Park, powan in Słowiński National Park, mud turtle and black grouse in Poleski National Park and lynx in Kampinos National Park.

Białowiecki National Park, indeed the whole area of Białowieża Forest, has unique values. Given the exceptional remnants of primeval forests on the European Lowland and the richness of the forms of its life and nature, this area is subject to special conservation. At present, the area of the National Park covers only part of Białowieża Forest. Attempts were taken to extend conservation to the whole of the Forest in the form of a national park, but the local population was opposed to it because of socio-economic factors. Still, measures were taken so ensure that at least the sections of the Forest which retain their primeval character are covered by conservation in the form of a nature reserve, while, at the same time, developing educational projects addressed to the local population so that it would be possible in the future to extend the area of the Park to the whole Forest, with full approval of the population.

Biebrzański National Park is a good example of co-operation between a national park and the local communities. Within this Park, covering the area of Biebrza Marshes, which is particularly well known and unique at European and world levels, given its rich flora and fauna, as well as a Ramsar Site, the local population is involved in nature conservation measures by periodically cutting hay in overgrowing meadows on commission from the Park and receiving some money for it. Given the high unemployment rate in this region, this provides, at the same time, significant financial assistance for the local farmers. Under the agreement between the Park and the local governments, work is underway to implement a programme to develop energy generation based on biomass which is acquired from protective measures taken within the Park.