

ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY, ARCHIVING AND INTELLIGENCE – TWENTY STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

• A FINAL WORD FROM THE EDITOR AND CO-AUTHOR

Each person's right to information on the state of the environment and environmental care in Slovakia or other countries has existed only since recently. This right as well as the obligation of the State to publish environmental information together with causes and negative impacts on the state of the environment and its components, but also on health, age, and lifestyle of people and other organisms, have developed only after a number of catastrophes, especially after the reluctance to publish information on the impact of the accident at Chernobyl nuclear power plant of April 26, 1986. **Charter of Basic Rights and Freedoms** was adopted by the Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic as its constitutional act no. 23/1991 Coll. with article 35(2) stating: "All people are entitled to timely and complete information on the state of the environment and natural resources." This formulation was partly adopted by the **Constitution of the Slovak Republic** no. 460/1992 Coll. into its article 45 where it states: "all people are entitled to timely and complete information on the state of the environment and its causes and outcomes." Article 14 of **Act 17/1992 Coll. on the environment** provides this detailed wording of this provision: "Everyone shall be entitled to true and adequate information on the state and trend of the environment, causes and outcomes of this state, and information on planned activities that might lead to changes in the environment, and information on the measures taken by environmental protection authorities in preventing or remedying the environmental damage." While this provision was repealed by **Act 171/1998 Coll. on access to information on the environment** on May 14, 1998 with the effect as of September 1, 1998, this same legal provision follows up on the international legislation and pays more attention to the rights and obligations relative to the environmental information, archiving and intelligence. Its article 16 on the report on the state of the environment states:

- 1) Ministry shall, for each year, publish a report on the state of the environment of the Slovak Republic. To that end, pertinent central administration authorities of the Slovak Republic shall furnish background information to the Ministry.
- 2) Ministry shall publish the Report under paragraph 1 not later than by December 15 of the following year. Pertinent central authorities shall furnish the background documentation to the Ministry not later than by August 31 of the following year.
- 3) The report, under paragraph 1, shall be published at the Ministry, the Inspection, as well as at regional and district offices.

Act 171/1998 Coll. was repealed as of January 1, 2001 by **Act 211/2000 Coll. on free access to information and on amendment and supplementation of certain laws**. Act 17/1992 Coll. superseded this act on free access to information on the environment through adding article 33b that

contains an updated wording of the original provisions of article 16 of Act 171/1998 Coll. Pursuant to art. 33b of Act 17/1992 Coll., the Slovak Ministry of Environment has still been publishing **reports on the state of the environment in the Slovak Republic** for the preceding year. By doing this, the Slovak Ministry of Environment complies with the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council 2003/4/EC of January 28, 2003 on public access to environmental information and repealing Council Directive 90/313/EEC. (EU Bulletin L 041, 14.2.2003). This repealed Directive of June 7, 1990 on free access to information on the environment (Bulletin L 158, 23/06/1990) reads in art. 7 the following: "Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that public authorities organise the environmental information which is relevant to their functions and which is held by or for them, with a view to its active and systematic dissemination to the public." The Directive effective as of 2003 further states in its article 7(3) that reports are to be released at all levels, with the following wording: "Without prejudice to any specific reporting obligations laid down by Community legislation, Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that national, and, where appropriate, regional or local reports on the state of the environment are published at regular intervals not exceeding four years; such reports shall include information on the quality of, and pressures on, the environment." Structure of information about the environment also in the written form is further specified in art. 2(1) of this Directive and we try to comply with this provision by publishing our reports. Regional and also local environment reports in Slovakia have not yet been produced and published in Slovakia. Pursuant to the quoted laws, European directives, and the Aarhus Convention, Slovakia publishes only its national report. However, the report contains not only sectoral, but also regional aspects of the environmental assessment. (e.g. under the environmental regional classification within the so-called loaded areas) To provide the full picture, the mentioned EEC UN Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (adopted in the Danish Aarhus on 25/06/1998 and effective in Slovakia as of 30/10/2000 until 31/10/2005) in its article 5(4) states: "Each Party shall, at regular intervals not exceeding three or four years, publish and disseminate a national report on the state of the environment, including information on the quality of the environment and information on pressures on the environment." To do this, also the European Union publishes voluminous factographic reports (The European Environment; Environment in the European Union; Europe's Environment) currently published through the European Environment Agency (EEA) in Copenhagen. Participation of Slovakia in the EEA and the European environmental information and monitoring network is address by a special treaty between Slovakia and the EU ratified by the President on January 18, 2001 and coming into effect on August 1, 2001. (Notification of the MFA SR no. 266/2002 Coll.). Slovak Environment Agency was commissioned by the national EIONET centre to be responsible for building and operation of the Environmental information system in Slovakia. Similar reports on the environment have been published also by the UN Environmental programme in Nairobi (UNEP Global Environment Outlook; Environmental Data Report) and the OECD in Paris that publishes reports on the environmental performance of each of its member states every ten years. (in the years 2002 and 2011 also for the Slovak Republic) Partial reports addressing the environmental matters have also been published by the WHO, FAO, WMO, UNESCO, WRI, and other relevant international government and non-government organisations. (e.g.

IUCN) As of date, the Slovak Environment Agency in cooperation with other involved central government agencies and professional institutions published 20 annual reports on the state of the environment and one special quinquennial report called "Environment of the Slovak Republic in the years 2002-2006". In total, the report encompasses an impressive number of 4 996 A4 pages, not including the printed English translations from the years 1997 and 1998. (subsequent shortened English versions were published only on a CD) With them, the published volume was 31 600 copies and has been decreasing in size ever since. (the maximum number of copies was in 1997 and 1998 during the EU accession process) The first report for the years 1992-1993 (520 pages) was the most extensive one, including also the historical trend. The briefest report was for the year 1997 (156 pages). The reports have shown 4 090 tables that accompany the text (most of them published in the report from 2008, specifically 304), 3 301 charts (of these most - 264 were published in 2007), 517 maps (most of them in the first report, 62). Besides this, the reports contain also schemes and drawings. (more than 32 - in the first report), as well as different symbols and logos. As to date, forewords to the reports have been written by 7 Ministers of the Environment of the Slovak Republic. Ministry of Environment's Unit of Environmental Strategies, Law, and Organisation (SEKPO) drafted the first report. Its general director involved also the Slovak Environment Agency established in 1993 to take part in the preparation of other reports. (J. Klinda - Z. Lieskovská have been involved since the period of the years 1994-1995) Contents of the reports have been gradually revised so as to include also the majority of the environmental science sectors, along with the existing components of the environment and their causes and consequences, and physical, chemical and biological factors. From the regional perspective, each report characterised the state of the regions by the outcomes of on-going revisions to the environmental regional classification supervised by the Slovak Environment Agency's office in Košice. The reports also described the environmental situation existing in urban and rural environments on the basis of documents supplied by the SEA offices in Žilina and Banská Bystrica. Each report included also the related background documents supplied by the sections of the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Transport, construction and regional development, Ministry of Culture - especially its Monument Board, Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, as well as various professional sectoral and external institutions, that are to be thanked for a long and unselfish cooperation. Special thanks go to the SEA editor, Ing. Zuzana Lieskovská and her team, as well as to dozens of professionals from various sectors of environmental sciences. The reports built on their contributions, even if in some cases their input would be a single summary table or a single chart that was the result of hundreds of prior measurements, analyses, and other creative activities. Were it not for the outcomes of their environmental monitoring and information science, it would have been exceedingly difficult for the reports to encompass such a big volume of factual data and evaluations. This system was introduced and put in operation especially by the Strategy of Environmental Monitoring for the Slovak territory, and the Strategy of Integrated Information System on the Environment of the Slovak Republic (SR Government Resolution of 26th May 1992 no. 449), SR Government Resolution of 7th September 1993 no. 620 to the Proposal to implement the Environmental Monitoring System and the Integrated Information Environmental system of the Slovak

Republic, Strategy of completion of the comprehensive monitoring and information system in the environment (SR Government Resolution of 12th January 2000 no. 7) as well as other cross-sectional and partial documents of the State environmental strategy (e.g. Policies, principles and priorities of the State environmental strategy of 1993 and the follow-up national environmental action programmes of 1996, 1999, and 2003) summarily published in the new **Concept of Environmental Strategy for the years 2014-2020** approved on 28th March 2013) under the name Orientation, principles, priorities and major tasks of environmental conservation of the Slovak Republic for the years 2014-2020.

The gaps existing between texts, tables, charts, maps, and schemes found in each report are filled with figures that characterise sectoral and regional aspects of the environmental science. The total number of 2,443 figures (most of them - 193, published in 2009) form together a gallery that depicts the state of the environment and the environmental science from the region of Záhorie to Zemplín, from the Tatras to the Danube River, from the Gerlach peak to the bottom of the Slovak caves. It encompasses the whole spectrum of organic and inorganic nature influenced by the elements of human creation as pictured on the reports's cover pages. Besides, they also illustrate various international and national environmental events and persons (political, scientific, cultural, production, ...) positive and negative phenomena and objects within landscape, outcomes of projects, major environmental situations (floods, fires, calamities, accidents, ...), various ecosystem services and their benefits, samples of environmental books and magazines (*Životné prostredie*, *Enviromagazín*, ...), creative environmental activities of the Central Government authorities and organisations, as well as schools and non-government organisations (e.g. Grenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Bratislava-based Protection Association, *Špirála*, ...). Present are also samples of different species of invertebrates, vertebrates, plants, fungi, and lichens, primaeval forests and standalone trees in de-forested landscapes, ruined and restored cultural monuments (e.g. Krásna Hôrka castle before its burn-out), building of different facilities of the environmental infrastructure, declaration of world heritage sites, awarding the Minister of Environment's awards, Envirofilm, TOP, Village of the Year, or Enersol, with examples of renewable energy sources. All regional cities were presented together with a number of district cities and villages. Also, presented were all national parks and protected landscape areas, accessible caves and geo-parks, town reserves and a number of monument reserves of the folk architecture, along with modern and folklore features in our environment. Just like the other parts of the reports, the figures also depict trends in the environment and the environmental science in Slovakia over the last twenty years. These present also older unique photographs (e.g. the oldest photography dating back to 1913 depicts today's building of the Slovak Ministry of Environment on the Square of Ľ. Štúr in Bratislava). However, it is the Slovak Museum of Nature Conservation and Caves in Liptovský Mikuláš that can find inside the reports a plethora of material to make comparisons, analyses, assessments, and presentations of the mentioned development in Slovakia and should generally deal with this issue. The Reports represent a significant archiving document of the environmental safety, feasibility, usability, and aesthetics. Besides, it is also a tool for environmental education. Over the whole reported period, a number of universities, high schools and elementary schools, including libraries, promotion and education centres, information centres, as well as villages, companies, scientific institutes and citizens interest groups showed interest in the initiative. The

Reports became the learning tool and the documentation to be used and quoted in student, professional, and scientific papers.

They have been both, the lesson and the memento of the Slovak environment about not hiding the negatives. They thus became a mirror of our country and of the implemented good and bad actions impacting the country and its inhabitants over more than twenty years.

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