

Perspective of the geoconservation development in European Communities

The Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP) appointed the Working Group on the Geological Heritage at 2002. The first document is the Draft Recommendation No 1 (2003) on conservation of the geological heritage and areas of special geological interest in Europe, established by the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage. This document is addressed to Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Recommendation begins with recall to mind that geological heritage constitutes a natural heritage and should be preserved in respect of individual values and for maintaining the character of many European landscapes. The referred document composes with six appendixes. One of them, app. 2 – Criteria for selecting areas of special geological interest and existing geoconservation programmes, is particularly important.

The promotion and development of the geoconservation in Europe base mostly on: IUGS Geosites project, European Geoparks programme, European Landscape Convention (not distinguished in Draft Recommendation), European Diploma of Protected Areas and World Heritage Convention. Member States may work with each of these programmes to identify sites/areas of special significance and support ones most appropriates in particularly. Governments of Member States may support the activity of the Association ProGEO in witch working groups realise Geosites project to develop scientifically based pan-European site inventories with databases and monitoring programmes. They should be helpful in the formation of European Geoparks network.

In Poland some tasks recommended by EU are ahead in relation to many countries. About 150 most valuable and representative geosites or set-geosites (areas) were selected according to the methodology of the IUGS Geosites project (Alexandrowicz – ed. 1999, Wimbledon et al. 1999, Alexandrowicz 2003). Subsequently the database of geosites is prepared in English by the team of geoscientists in special format of global inventory and scientific valorisation (Miśkiewicz 2004).

Protected landscape parks in Poland are most adequate to the European Geoparks programme. In the preliminary list of geoparks seven areas from Southern Poland are indicated and suggested (Alexandrowicz, Alexandrowicz 2004, Gawlikowska et al. 2004, Urban, Wróblewski 2004).

The referred EU document proposes also the supplementation and verification of the UNESCO list of World Heritage (WH) in respect to different values. Poland is represented on the WH list with one exception (Białowieża National Park) only by objects classified as cultural monuments. The Salt Mine Wieliczka introduced on the first WH list (1978) should be distinguished as the unique saliferous formation of Middle Miocene age, situated at the Carpathians thrust front too.