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FROM HISTORICAL TREASURES TO THE IDEA OF PROTECTING POLISH WRITTEN HERITAGE



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KEYWORDS: National Library Resource. National Library. Poland.

ABSTRACT: Thesis/Purpose of the Article – The aim of this article is to present the process of developing the concept of securing and protecting the most valuable objects in Polish libraries. Its origins date back to historical times, but it was not until the second half of the 1970s that it took on a specific systemic and organizational form. The 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century brought legal solutions aimed at protecting library collections in Poland. Bibliological research, in the context of political and social phenomena, creates the opportunity for comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the various mechanisms related to the cultural significance and impact of book collections, especially historical collections, which constitute the core of the national library resources. **Methods** – The text was prepared using the bibliographic method, supported by the analysis of source materials in the form of minutes and resolutions of the National Library Resource Council held at the National Library. **Results** – The article presents the

importance of creating the National Library Resource for protecting and ensuring the continuity of the Polish cultural heritage and building a national and European identity.

INTRODUCTION

The awareness of threats and the concept of protecting cultural property date back to ancient times, as the plundering of treasure troves of various documents (e.g., libraries, archives, museums, temples) has accompanied these institutions from the very beginning. One need only consider the reign of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, who, according to inscriptions, was one of the first rulers who was literate. He spent much of his reign on military expeditions, bringing back loot that bolstered not only his treasury and palace but also the famous library/archive in Nineveh (Russell, 1999). The Library of Alexandria was also subjected to plunder and destruction. Responsibility for the destruction of this largest ancient papyri collection rested with Julius Caesar, pagans, Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The Greek jurist and church historian Socrates Scholasticus left an account of violent events during which the work of the Ptolemaic dynasty suffered significantly (El-Abadi & Fathallah 2008). According to tradition, the first Roman libraries were also spoils of war. Such actions are known from the Macedonian Wars and after the defeat of Carthage, when Scipio Africanus the Younger brought back 28 scrolls of King Mago's treaty to translate into Latin. Other examples of libraries captured as spoils of war include the book collection of the kings of Macedonia (Perseus's royal library), taken in 168 BCE; the collection of Apellicon of Teos, brought from Athens and captured by Sulla in 80 BCE; and in 67 CE, the library of Mithridates the Great, king of Pontus, brought by Lucullus after a victorious battle (Sochocka, 2011). In the Middle Ages, the Crusaders plundered the Middle East, fought against Muslims, and destroyed and looted cultural heritage. The most significant in this regard was the Fourth Crusade, which significantly enriched the papal treasury and that of Venice (Harris, 2014). For example, the famous bronze horses by the Greek sculptor Lysippos of Sicyon which adorned the façade of St. Mark's Basilica had been looted on the orders of the Venetian Doge. History has come full circle, as during Napoleon Bonaparte's conquest of Venice in 1797, the sculpture was transported to Paris and placed on the triumphal arch in 1808. After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the horses were returned to Venice, where they can now be admired in the Museo Marciano (a copy of the sculpture is on the façade of the basilica). During the Age of Discovery, at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, conquistadors brought the cross to the New World and took away galleons of antiquities and valuables. In the 17th century, the Swedes plundered everything of value in Germany, Bohemia, and Poland. From

the territories of the First Polish Republic they took, among others, the book collections of Nicolaus Copernicus, of the Jesuit College in Braniewo, and of the Cistercians from Pelplin. Libraries and archives in Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań, Toruń, Bydgoszcz, Lublin, Piotrków Trybunalski, and Vilnius also suffered significant losses. Some examples are the Wasa collections from the Royal Castle and Ujazdowski Palace, the Kraków Academy, the book collections of monasteries, congregations, and townspeople, as well as priceless archival records such as the Crown Registers and the Lithuanian Registers (Matelski, 2003; Wagner & Kowalski, 2022). In the second half of the 18th century (as a result of the three partitions) and throughout the following century, Polish collections were decimated by Russia, Prussia, and Austria (Matelski & Witek, 2006). The events of World War II also brought severe losses to Polish cultural heritage. (*Straty bibliotek w czasie II wojny światowej*, 1994; Bieńkowska, 2000).

Is it worth revisiting the losses of Polish written heritage that occurred during historical periods, especially during the Second World War? This year marks 80 years since the war ended, and the topic has a rich literature. In my opinion, it is definitely worthwhile, because decision-makers, institutional managers, and their employees do not always possess sufficient knowledge and awareness of the historical value of stored collections, the need to ensure their well-being, or the diligence to prepare and follow procedures for their evacuation. Unfortunately, we do not learn from past mistakes, for example, regarding the preparation of safe evacuation sites or the limited trust of users who engage in brazen theft. Acts (e.g. On Libraries of 1997 with subsequent amendments, On the Protection and Care of Monuments of 2003), regulations (e.g. On the National Library Resource of 1998 and 2012) and other documents and guidelines will not in themselves ensure the protection of the written heritage. Events of the past determine contemporary library policy (I refer here to the dispersion and relocation of collections, collection losses, the destruction of entire institutional or private collections, and inventory gaps). The past conditions the present, because due to unfavorable historical and political conditions, no Polish library possesses a complete, historical collection of books of exceptional value (historical, scientific, cultural, artistic) and significance for the national heritage, that is, the objects that constitute the national library resource.

THREATS TO AND PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

The first reflection on protecting cultural objects can be considered the decree of the Western Roman Emperor Majorian (Iulius Valerius Maiorianus) from 458, in which he forbade the demolition of Roman

monuments for building material (Pruszyński, 1989). The modern idea of legal protection for the products of the human spirit and mind was born in the Renaissance. Jakub Przyłuski, a Polish humanist, lawyer, political writer, poet, translator, and owner of a printing house in Szczuczyn, is considered a European pioneer in this field (Kowalczyk, 1993). He was the author of a nearly 1,000-page legal work *Leges Sev Statota Ac Privilegia Regni Poloniae: Omnia Hactenus magna ex parte uaga, consula, & sibi pugnancia: iam aute[m] in gratiam D. Sigismondi Avgvsti Regis Poloniae & in usum Reipublicae...*, self-published in 1553¹, partly in Szczuczyn, and partly "near the Kraków Castle". Przyłuski dedicated the work to King Sigismund Augustus and the Grand Marshal of the Crown, Piotr Kmita. On the reverse of the title page is a privilege from Sigismund Augustus explaining the reasons that led the monarch to issue permission for printing, with the stipulation that the courts could not use the work until it was approved by the Sejm. In the book *De re militarii seu de bello*, the author emphasized the need to strive for peace, even if it entailed certain concessions, because every war brings suffering and destruction to people. He put forward the idea of protecting works of art, scholars, and artists during wartime. In his view, the conqueror was supposed to preserve intact religious objects and literary monuments, and to spare artists and scholars (Kuran & Wichowa, 2022).

Critical remarks on the destruction of cultural property can also be found in the works of another Polish Renaissance intellectual, Stanisław Reszka SJ, a trained humanist, diplomat, royal secretary, and abbot of Jędrzejów. He criticized the plundering activities of the ancients, as well as of his contemporaries, listing many Roman monuments that suffered as a result. He also criticized the hierarchs, even popes, who destroyed ancient temples, statues, and artifacts to eradicate pagan superstitions. Stanisław Reszka claimed to have witnessed the demolition in 1588 of the Septizonium (the so-called Temple of Seven Suns, built in 203 AD in honor of Saturn, Sol, Venus, Jupiter, Luna, Mars, and Mercury), under the direction of the renowned Tuscan architect Domenico Fontana. The resulting building materials were used, among others, to renovate the Column of Marcus Aurelius, in the papal tombstones in the Basilica Papale di Santa Maria Maggiore, and in other buildings (Wrześniak, 2003).

It is worth noting that in Poland, the first legal norms regarding conduct during military campaigns were created in the 14th century and recorded in a special statute issued by King Casimir the Great. The original text has not survived, but we know its content from later confirmations by Władysław Jagiełło and subsequent rulers. The document specified the conditions

¹ The text was first published in 1548 as a draft. At that time, it was titled *Statuta Regni Poloniae methodica dispositione [...] conscripta..* and was printed by Hieronim Wieter.

for the march of troops during military expeditions. It prohibited, among other things, stopping on clerical or secular estates, and plundering and raping residents. Subsequent rulers also issued appropriate ordinances. For example, in 1557, King Sigismund Augustus promulgated the Order of Knightly Martial Laws (*Porządek praw rycerskich wojennych*), which, in addition to rules of conduct during a military expedition, camp organization, and the performance of duties, penalized a number of acts (raping women, murdering, etc.), as well as crimes against cultural property. Article 14 stipulated that anyone looting a church/temple, even in conquered territory, would be subject to the death penalty (Kutrzeba, 1937).

Later, a greater number of regulations on the principles of warfare were issued by hetmans, reflecting their growing importance in the military and public life of the state. The norms contained therein were incorporated into the so-called Military Articles, and later, the Hetman's Articles (*artykuły hetmańskie*). Hetman Florian Zebrzydowski's Military Articles of 1561 repeated the rules of King Sigismund Augustus. A document issued several years later by Grand Crown Hetman Jan Zamoyski, promulgated during the 1580 war between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy, stated that those who destroyed and plundered Catholic churches, Orthodox churches, and other places of worship in conquered territories would be subject to severe punishment (even death) (Kutrzeba, 1937). The end of the development of this form of regulation – which also regulated, to some extent, the protection of cultural property – is linked to decisions made by the Sejm in 1609. From that moment until the end of the First Polish Republic, military regulations were enacted solely by the parliament, and hetman's articles were only ad hoc in nature and promulgated for the needs of a specific military campaign, after which such regulations expired (Kutrzeba, 1937; Kowalczyk, 1993).

The codification of international rules for the protection of cultural property – including written heritage – occurred only in the 20th century and is a response to the destruction inflicted during the Second World War, although it can be traced back to the late 19th century. I am referring here to the Brussels Declaration, adopted in 1874 by 15 states (based, among other things, on the experience of the Franco-Prussian War). Article 8 of the Declaration stipulated that the property of municipalities and institutions devoted to religious ceremonies, charities, or education, as well as to the arts and sciences – even state-owned – would be treated as private property, and any seizure, destruction, or deliberate desecration of such institutions, historical monuments, works of art and science, would be prosecuted by civil authorities. To protect these objects, according to Article 17, the besieged state should mark such buildings and institutions with a clear and unmistakable symbol. The initiator of the conference was

Tsar Alexander II of Russia. In 1899, the next Russian Tsar also initiated the convening of another conference and the establishment of regulations that would govern the conduct of conflicts. This time, the meeting was initiated by Nicholas II. It was organized in The Hague to – at least initially, as it was believed – establish regulations regarding disarmament. However, during the deliberations, representatives of dozens of states focused on codifying and reforming the laws of war, as well as the law concerning the peaceful settlement of international disputes. As a result, on July 29, 1899, three documents regulating the aforementioned issues were signed. The Second Hague Convention – modeled on the Brussels Declaration – addressed several points regarding the protection of cultural property. Nine years later, in 1907, also at Russia's initiative, further international peace conferences were convened to introduce regulations regarding the laws of war, although their primary goal was to prepare regulations limiting armaments. Thirteen conventions were adopted, twelve of which entered into force. Paragraphs of two conventions regulated the protection of cultural property (the Fourth Hague Convention and its Regulations, and the Ninth Hague Convention). Both expanded on the provisions concerning the protection of cultural property contained in previously adopted documents. Of particular note are articles 23 (item G), 27, 47, and 56 of the Hague Regulations, which prohibited the destruction or seizure of enemy property and plunder. Article 5 IX of the Hague Convention had a similar meaning. It is worth noting that at that time, plunder, interpreted as an arbitrary act of violence committed by an individual on his own account, was distinguished from the law concerning spoils of war, which were not prohibited. According to Krzysztof Sałaciński, “[...] both the authors of the Brussels Declaration and the participants in the Hague conferences assumed that the subject of their work would not be the creation of new norms, which had little chance of being widely adopted and applied. Instead, it was agreed that the subject would be the existing legal awareness and practice of states. Therefore, the provisions of these acts were quickly recognized as written customary law” (Sałaciński, 2015, p. 21). It should be emphasized that the concept of cultural property was introduced into international public law quite late, only in 1954 by the Hague Convention (for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict). Chapter 1, point 1 of this international agreement stipulates that works of art, manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological importance, as well as scientific collections, book collections, archives, and buildings whose primary and practical purpose is to store or exhibit movable cultural property, such as museums, libraries and archives, are subject to legal protection (Karcz-Kaczmarek & Kaczmarek, 2014).

After regaining independence in 1918, Poland had to redress the differences between the individual lands previously incorporated into the three partitioning powers, repolonizing public institutions and creating favorable conditions for the reconstruction and development of economic, political, legal, educational, and cultural structures. Cultural institutions, including libraries, required processes that would standardize the principles of their operation, collection, processing, preservation, and access to collections. A crucial task was the establishment of a central library—the National Library—whose primary responsibility would be to collect, preserve, protect, and record Polish written heritage, including Polonica. The idea of establishing such an institution is clearly visible in the culture of the Polish Enlightenment. The Enlightenment cult of reason and a modern understanding of the role of books and libraries in the service of science and education were revealed in the initiative of brothers Andrzej Stanisław and Józef Andrzej Załuski, who in 1747 opened private collections accumulated over years in Poland and abroad to the public. The Załuski Library quickly became a symbol of national culture, an intellectual center, and a repository of Polish written heritage. It is worth mentioning the unrealized idea of Michał Jerzy Wandalin Mniszech, who in 1775 published “Thoughts on the Founding of a Musaeum Polonicum” in *Zabawne Przyjemne i Pożyteczne* (Pleasant and Useful Entertainments) (the first Polish literary journal). Mniszech’s project was closely linked to Józef Andrzej Załuski’s concept of establishing a scientific workshop (library and museum) and, in the future, an academy of sciences. In his opinion, library and museum collections should support educational and scientific processes, as well as protect and popularize national cultural heritage (Hapanowicz, 2021). In the interwar period, discussion on this topic was initiated by Stefan Demby (initiator and first director of the National Library), Ludwik Bernacki (director of the Ossolineum in Lviv from 1918 to 1939), and continued by Stefan Rygiel (director of university libraries in Warsaw and later in Vilnius), Edward Kuntze (director of the university library in Poznań and later in Kraków), and Aleksander Birkenmajer (expert on manuscripts and early printed books at the Jagiellonian Library, later director of the University Library in Poznań) (Bernacki, 1921; Birkenmajer, 1927; Demby, 1928). It is worth noting that the aforementioned librarians, apart from Stefan Demby, had extensive experience in restitution work carried out under the terms of the 1921 Treaty of Riga (Pietrzekiewicz, 2019).

In the changed geopolitical circumstances following the First World War, Polish libraries, archives, and museums began preparing repossession applications and registering collections in the Second Polish Republic. The Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education sponsored the inventorying of cultural institutions. A census was conducted based on

distributed surveys. From mid-1925 to early 1927, the editorial staff of the journal *Nauka Polska: Jej Potrzeby, Organizacja i Rozwoju* (Polish Science: Its Needs, Organization, and Development) also collected data on the collections of various institutions and scholarly societies, devoting entire volumes—7 and 12 (with supplements)—to this topic. Stefan Demby wrote that this period was a breakthrough in the development of Polish librarianship, because the Department of State Libraries, established on August 15, 1919, centralized libraries under its management, providing appropriate care and security for their collections. This was the first such initiative since the 18th-century Commission of National Education which supervised and supported the functioning of libraries (Demby, 1927).

In the first years of independence, the most important Polish libraries included the Jagiellonian Library, the University of Lviv Library, the University of Warsaw Library, the Vilnius University Library, the University Library in Poznań, the newly established Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, as well as specialized libraries at universities, such as the polytechnics in Warsaw and Lviv, and the Library of the Warsaw School of Economics. Their staffs then developed key ideas for modern management, shaping Polish librarianship, and preserving collections. Equally important were family and foundation libraries, including the Library of the National Ossoliński Institute in Lviv, the Kórnik Library, three Warsaw libraries—the Zamoyski Family Library, the Krasieński Family Library, and the Przezdziecki Family Library—the Czartoryski Family Library, the Raczyński Family Library, libraries of scholarly societies (e.g., in Poznań and Płock), and the Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków. Andrzej Mężyński calculated that in August 1939, libraries in Warsaw alone held nearly 6,000,000 inventory units, distributed across over 800 locations (Mężyński, 2010). Among these, the Józef Piłsudski National Library, established in 1928 and opened to the public two years later, held a crucial place. Although it had no headquarters and its individual branches were located in three locations (at the Warsaw School of Economics Library, the Central Military Library, and the Tyszkiewicz-Potocki Palace), it had a modern organizational structure, employed specialists, and carried out key tasks. Among other things, it ran the Office for International Publication Exchange, and within its framework operated the Bibliographic Institute, which published a list of all printed works published in the Republic of Poland as well as *Polonica*. The Piłsudski National Library initiated the registration of foreign-language literature in Polish libraries, including incunabula, in the form of a central catalog. It also prepared scholarly studies of its own collections. The library's holdings steadily expanded, reaching 804,890 volumes by the outbreak of the Second World War. This number included an impressive collection of manuscripts and early printed works – mostly

recovered through reclamation efforts – various deposits, gifts, acquisitions (e.g., from Wilanów and Horyniec), and Polish collections brought from abroad (e.g., the Polish Museum in Rapperswil, the school in Batignolles, the Polish Democratic Society). The manuscripts and early printed works recovered under the Treaty of Riga constituted the core of the National Library. The repossessions comprised over 14,000 manuscripts, including over 11,000 from the Załuski Library and approximately 1,000 items formerly belonging to the University of Warsaw. Of the nearly 75,500 early printed works (as of December 31, 1939), repossessions accounted for approximately 60%. Processing them was a task requiring thorough technical training and knowledge of the history and provenance of the dispersed and relocated book collections. A significant challenge was the uncertainty posed by the National Library management's concerns as to whether these items would be returned to their original owners or their heirs. The National Library overcame these difficulties thanks to the excellent staff of its special collections and subsequent decisions by the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education, which left most of the repossessed items within its structure (Pietrzekiewicz, 2019).

THE IDEA OF PROTECTING THE WRITTEN HERITAGE COLLECTED IN POLISH LIBRARIES

Referencing several historical facts in the first part of this article demonstrates that libraries (especially the National Library and research libraries) preserve tradition and ensure the continuity necessary for the existence of the nation and state, its identity, and its culture. Over the years, their activities have changed, their offerings and technological capabilities have expanded, but they have consistently maintained their patrimony.² After the unimaginable losses suffered during the Second World War, libraries, primarily those in Warsaw, once again began the process of consolidating and registering the surviving national book collection.

The idea of securing and protecting the most valuable objects in Polish libraries arose – as I have already mentioned – during the Age of Enlightenment. But it was not until the second half of the 1970s that it took concrete programmatic and organizational form. In January 1977, the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library reached an agreement on the implementation of a plan for specializing library materials in the field of

² A continuation of the major joint project of the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library, initiated in 2017. Its third phase has been underway since May 2025. Its goal is to provide access to digital versions of library collections constituting valuable and unique Polish cultural heritage. All items selected for the project are in the public domain and have been made available on the Polona portal and the Jagiellonian Digital Library portal. This provides unlimited access to the national library resource.

Polish national culture (principles of specialization for library collections were introduced in 1973 by a relevant regulation). At that time, the term "National Library Resource" was also coined to describe the tasks carried out as part of the joint project. The Ossoliński National Institute was invited to collaborate. A working group – composed of representatives from these three libraries – developed the document "National Library Resource. General program and organizational assumptions". In September, this initiative received a positive judgement from the Ministry of Culture and Art (Department of Libraries, Cultural Centers, and Socio-Cultural Activities) and the Center for Scientific, Technical, and Economic Information, and in October it was approved and implemented. In May 1978, a national meeting of library directors interested in participating in the project was held in Warsaw; 50 libraries signed up. Members of the National Library Resource Council were elected. These were the directors of the following libraries: the National Library, the Jagiellonian Library, the Ossoliński National Institute, the University of Warsaw, the Catholic University of Lublin, the Stanisław Staszic Pomeranian Library in Szczecin, the Silesian Library in Katowice, the Central Military Library, and a representative of the Center for Scientific, Technical, and Economic Information. To coordinate the work, the National Library established a secretariat for the National Library Resource (Marszałek, 1978).

The concept of creating a National Library Resource was an original Polish idea, shaped by the historical experiences I mentioned in the first part of this article. Some solutions – for example, identifying rare and valuable collections, processing and cataloging them, and preparing copies – were implemented in national libraries around the world, such as those in Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Great Britain, and the United States. It should be emphasized, however, that the creation of a National Library Resource had historical roots, based on experiences of plundering, dispersal, and destruction of Poland's national written heritage over the centuries. The primary goals of identifying items within the National Library Resource were: 1) creating optimal conditions for collecting, storing, and preserving a complete set of printed and handwritten documents created in Poland throughout its history, as well as those created outside Poland but related to it in content or form (i.e., Polonica); 2) developing scientific documentation of these collections; 3) developing an optimal information model for these collections; 4) preparing their reproductions; 5) streamlining their accessibility processes; 6) popularization. It is worth noting that the National Library Resource comprised objects stored in libraries, including written documents (manuscripts and prints), iconography, cartography, musical materials, audio documents, secondary documents (e.g., copies and reproductions), and derivative documents (e.g., catalogs and files). The National Library Resource was a comprehensive collection consisting

of entire or selected collections belonging to various libraries. An integral part of this collection was the cataloging and information system for the individual libraries' collections, as well as shared derivative information sources, successively developed as it developed. The project was to continue work on developing a current national bibliography, a central inventory of manuscript collections, a central catalog of incunabula and early printed books, a central catalog of cartographic collections, and the preparation of copies of the most valuable and rare items. It was assumed that financing work within the National Library Resource would burden the budgets of the libraries participating in this project (Marszałek, 1978).

Legal regulations governing the National Library Resource emerged in the 1990s. This was driven by, among other things, the political transformation and the functioning of libraries in the new economic environment, the establishment of the Memory of the World International Register program under the patronage of UNESCO and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, and the dissemination of research findings on the biodegradability of acidic paper used in 19th- and 20th-century printed materials (this included the publication of works by Professor Bronisław Zyska, a distinguished specialist in mycology, microbiology, and the preservation of library collections). International library and archival organizations addressed the issue of saving acidified documents, and in Poland the Association for the Preservation of Archival and Library Resources was established in 1995. Based on surveys distributed in 1994, 1998, and 1999, the National Library also developed an assessment of the state of preservation of collections in Polish libraries, their storage conditions, and conservation, bookbinding, and reprographic capabilities (Memoriał, 1998; Stachowska-Musiał, 2007).

In 1996, the Legal Deposit Act was promulgated (15 libraries gained the right to perpetual storage of certain publications). The following year, the text of the Act on Libraries, still in force today (with subsequent amendments), was promulgated. Articles 6 and 6a of this Act defined the National Library Resource for the first time as collections of exceptional value and significance to the national heritage (in their entirety, in their individual parts, or even individual copies). The Act imposes on libraries the obligation to protect the items constituting the National Library Resource. It defines the competencies of the National Library Resource Council and establishes its composition, which includes representatives of key institutions related to cultural heritage. A later amendment also clarifies the conditions for exporting library materials abroad (in accordance with the 2003 Act on the Protection of Monuments). In November 1998, the Ministry of Culture and Art issued a regulation establishing a list of libraries whose collections constitute the National Library Resource, defining its organization and establishing principles of protection. The

list included 55 libraries (primarily academic) whose collections, in part or in full, constituted the national patrimony. Unfortunately, this list did not include church libraries of various denominations, libraries of non-governmental institutions, or private institutions. The above-described normative acts – unlike the 1977 draft – did not specify principles of cooperation between individual libraries or standards for the protection of collections (Act, 1997; Regulation, 1998; Stachowska-Musiał, 2008; Gomułka, 2017).

In the second half of 2000 (from August to December), on the initiative of the Supreme Audit Office, an audit was carried out in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and in 29 libraries³ engaged in the National Library Resource (according to the 1998 list). Its findings indicated that the National Library Resource had technically not been established and did not function as a specific collection of materials of exceptional significance to the national heritage. Of the institutions audited, only two – the Central Military Library and the Central Agricultural Library – were found to be in advanced stages of selecting collections eligible for the National Library Resource, while six had taken preliminary steps in this direction. In the remaining libraries, no steps had been taken to identify and then protect the most valuable collections. Unfortunately, as many as 18 libraries demonstrated serious negligence in securing and protecting their collections, particularly against theft. Valuable collections were stored in unsuitable rooms (e.g., not secured with bars or certified locks, often in poor housing conditions that fostered biological threats). While electronic anti-theft systems were installed in 22 institutions, they were defective in as many as 15. For example, the anti-theft system at the Warsaw Public Library was completely inoperable. Only three libraries had security plans in place, coordinated with authorities (e.g., the police and fire department). Only three libraries, housing the most valuable collections that were intended to form the foundation of the National Library Resource – the National Library, the Jagiellonian Library, and the

³ The following institutions were inspected: the National Library, the Jagiellonian Library, the Ossoliński National Institute Library, the Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, the University Library in Łódź, the University Library in Poznań, the University Library in Warsaw, the University Library in Wrocław, the Library of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, the University Library of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, the Main Library of the AGH University of Science and Technology, Stanisław Staszic Library in Krakow, Main Library of the Warsaw University of Technology, Main Library of the Warsaw School of Economics, Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Library of the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Kórnik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow, Library of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Central Agricultural Library in Warsaw, Central Military Library in Warsaw, the Czartoryski Library at the National Museum in Krakow, Departments of Manuscripts, Old Prints and Cartography of the National Museum in Krakow, the Raczyński Library in Poznań, Warsaw Public Library, Voivodeship and Municipal Public Library in Bydgoszcz, H. Łopaciński Voivodeship Public Library in Białystok.

Ossoliński National Institute Library in Wrocław – had adequate technical security measures with the required certifications. Furthermore, the audit revealed that in many libraries the storage conditions for collections significantly deviated from accepted standards, and in 13 of them climatic conditions (temperature and humidity) were not monitored at all. Collections were sometimes stored in moldy rooms, or in basements with worn-out electrical or plumbing systems. The Supreme Audit Office also noted that the vast majority of libraries lacked sufficient financial resources to implement changes in the storage and protection of collections, and above all, in their conservation (Report on the Activities of the Supreme Audit Office, 2002). In my opinion, the audit conducted by the Supreme Audit Office was significantly influenced by, among other things, the catastrophic great flood in July-August 1997, as well as the thefts, revealed later, of old printed materials (including incunabula) in Kraków from the collections of the Jagiellonian Library and the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

The regulation on establishing a list of libraries whose collections constitute the National Library Resource was repealed on July 2, 2012, pursuant to the Act of August 31, 2011, amending the Act on Organizing and Conducting Cultural Activities. This amendment addressed the issue of defining the criteria for including the collections of individual libraries in the national resource. The text of the Act on Libraries was also amended, granting the minister responsible for culture and national heritage the authority to define these criteria, taking into account the history of the collections and the educational character of the libraries included in the list. On July 4, 2012, a new regulation on the National Library Resource was published, which is still in force today, with subsequent amendments (including in 2016, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025). According to the regulation, national resources⁴ may include library materials of exceptional value and significance to the national heritage, which are unique and meet at least one of the enumerated criteria, i.e., they possess: 1) historical value; 2) scientific value; 3) cultural value; 4) artistic value. If only a portion of a given library's collection has been designated a national resource, it

⁴ Such as:

1) drawings made using any technique and on any material, the value of which is: a) PLN 12,000 or more, b) less than PLN 12,000;

2) graphics and matrices for them, and posters, the value of which is: a) PLN 16,000 or more, b) less than PLN 16,000;

3) photographs, films, and their negatives, the value of which is: a) PLN 6,000 or more, b) less than PLN 6,000;

4) manuscripts, the value of which is: a) PLN 4,000 or more, b) less than PLN 4,000;

5) publications, the value of which is: a) PLN 6,000 or more, b) less than PLN 6,000;

6) library collections valued at: a) PLN 16,000 or more, b) less than PLN 16,000;

7) other library materials not listed above valued at: a) PLN 16,000 or more, b) less than PLN 16,000.

should be separated from the library's overall collection (Regulation, 2012).

An institution whose book collection has been designated – in whole or in part – as a national resource is obligated to record it in an electronic register. This register must be maintained in accordance with the regulations concerning detailed and summary records of receipts and detailed and summary records of losses (Regulation, 2008). The creation of an electronic register aims to identify individual items, quantitatively and qualitatively record their condition, and monitor changes occurring within the structure of the National Resource. The register serves as an informational tool to monitor its condition. Polish patrimonial collections are collections of unquestionable importance and value, and therefore must be subject to special protection. The regulation specifies in detail the requirements for their protection plan. First, such a plan should identify potential threats and assess the risk of their occurrence, as well as the responsibilities of the individuals responsible for protecting the collections within the given institution. Secondly, the plan should standardize the organization of protection against threats specific to a given Polish region (e.g., floods, landslides) and hazards specific to the buildings/rooms where collections are stored (e.g., fire, flooding). The plan should include actions to be taken in the event of these threats or other emergencies (e.g., evacuation in the event of war). Thirdly, the plan should describe procedures for cooperation and communication between entities performing tasks related to the protection of the resource, in particular the organization of the threat monitoring system, warning and alarm systems, and the evacuation of people and collections. To ensure the plan's effectiveness, the institution must attach a list of agreements and arrangements related to the implementation of tasks and activities specified in the plan for the protection of collections included in the National Resource; this list is to be updated annually (Regulation, 2012). The document in question (compared to the 1998 regulation) radically reduced the number of institutions holding national library resources to two – the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library. I believe that the assessment of the state of national resources conducted by the Supreme Audit Office in 2000 was not without significance in this regard. On June 2, 2012, during the inaugural meeting of the National Library Resource Council – in the new term of office 2012–2015⁵ – Zina Jarmoszuk

⁵ Members: Dr. Mariusz Dworsatschek – Ossoliński National Institute, Dr. Zina Jarmoszuk – Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Dr. Jan Kozłowski – Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Dr. Tomasz Makowski – National Library – Chairman, Prof. Dr. hab. Jan Malicki – National Library Council, Silesian Library, Beata Pawłowska – Ministry of National Education, Dr. Ewa Perłakowska – Head Office of the State Archives, Prof. Dr. hab. Zdzisław Pietrzyk – Jagiellonian Library, Ewa Potrzebnicka – National Library, Dr. Zofia Tylewska-Ostrowska – Polish Academy of Sciences, Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

announced that work on the regulation was nearing completion, but had been complex and lengthy. She noted that the greatest challenges lay in establishing the criteria for including collections in the National Library Resource, as well as the principles for their accessibility and protection. She announced that all libraries would be able to apply for inclusion in the list at any time, provided they met all the requirements set forth in the document. The discussion raised the issue of including private and church collections in the national collection. Zdzisław Pietrzyk emphasized that private owners had no interest in submitting their collections if the process was not linked to financial resources (Protokół, 2012). On October 18th – more than three months after the new regulation came into effect – at the second meeting of the National Library Resource Council, Zina Jarmoszuk announced new concepts for financing the national patrimony, which could positively impact the budgets of institutions participating in the program. She asked the audience, and especially the National Library staff, to disseminate information about the changes in regulations and their consequences within the librarian community. Ewa Perłakowska proposed that the Council develop a standard application form to facilitate the application process. A team was appointed for this purpose, chaired by Mariusz Dworsatschek (Protokół, 2012a).

The Council met twice in 2013. Its primary focus was on potential grants for the conservation of objects included in the National Library Resource, participation in the church library program, and procedural issues related to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage's support for libraries subordinate to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. A form and description of application procedures were also developed. Recommendations covered the individual stages of applying for participation in the project. These included: 1) preparation of an application to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage; 2) development of an application for review by the National Library Resource Council; 3) preparation by the Council's Chairperson of the draft composition of the working group to prepare the draft opinion, in accordance with Article 6, Section 2a of the Library Act, composed of Council members and experts relevant to the specifics of the applying library; 4) consultation during a Council meeting of the team's composition; 5) appointment a working group (referred to in points 3 and 4) by the Council's Chairperson; 6) review by the working group of the application, potentially asking the applicant additional questions and requesting clarification, and, if necessary, a visit by the entire team or selected members to the applicant's library. If this is not specified in the application, the team should at this stage request the reference numbers for the collections selected for inclusion in the National Resource; 7) presentation of the working group's opinion at the Council meeting indicating the reference numbers of the items; 8) adoption of

a resolution regarding the working group's opinion; 9) submission of the Council's resolution to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (Protocol, 2013; Protocol 2013a).

The following year, the Council considered applications from the Ossoliński National Institute, as well as the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków. The Ossolineum selected its entire collection of 16th-century manuscripts, incunabula, and printed materials, as well as the cartographic collection of Jan Gwalbert Pawlikowski and Tomasz Niewodniczański. Additionally, it selected prints in royal and imperial bindings, prints particularly valuable due to the individual characteristics of the item (e.g., provenance marks), and the so-called "Lviv collection". The working group suggested that in the future the application be supplemented with prints from the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as selected iconographic collections. Zdzisław Pietrzyk emphasized that such an expansion was crucial, as, by already being partially part of the program, the Ossolineum would be able to apply for additional grants to catalog additional objects. Mariusz Dworsatschek explained that there were formal barriers to incorporating the iconographic collection into the National Library Resource. The Ossoliński National Institute had been transforming its structure for several years, so the collections that were once (from a formal perspective) library collections and belonged to the Ossolineum Library had been divided. Within the Institute's structure, the Princes Lubomirski Museum had been established, reminiscent of the Lubomirski Museum, which operated within the institution before World War II. Therefore, the iconographic collections, then owned by the Graphics Cabinet, and the collections of the Numismatics and Sphragistics Cabinet formally belonged to the Princes Lubomirski Museum. Ultimately, they were intended to become museum collections, and therefore were not included in the application. Council Chairman Tomasz Makowski explained that library collections held in museums could be incorporated into the National Library Resource. In the 1998 regulations, museums were represented by the National Museum in Warsaw and in Kraków. The Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences was unable to fully specify which collections it would have liked to submit. Therefore, the working group proposed accepting its three most valuable collections in their entirety: 1) drawings, engravings, and bookplates (one of the most valuable collections of its kind in Poland); 2) manuscripts; and 3) incunabula and early printed books. The remaining collections were to be deferred for further processing. It is worth emphasizing that during the application process, the institution's building underwent a thorough renovation and a conservation plan was prepared, ensuring that the collections had appropriate storage conditions and security. The

Council granted both institutions five years to implement the program's requirements. Moreover, Zdzisław Pietrzyk submitted a request to prepare a recommendation for the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage to release funds for securing the National Resource, in particular in the field of mass deacidification (Protokół, 2014; Protokół 2014a).

In 2015, the Council met three times, primarily to consider applications from the Płock Scientific Society, the Cyprian Norwid Elbląg Library, and the Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań, as well as reviewing the draft regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage regarding the detailed procedure for maintaining a national register of lost cultural property. The Płock Scientific Society's book collection is extremely valuable. It consists of incunabula, a large collection of 16th-century prints, the manuscript collection of Władysław Smoleński (a historian, representative of the so-called Warsaw School, and member of the Historical Society in Lviv), and unique iconographic materials (e.g., a series of 80 copperplate engravings by Francisco Goya entitled *Caprices*). In the case of the Elbląg Library, the Council approved the acceptance of its entire collection, as the holdings and history of the Elbląg Gymnasium (a Protestant humanist school for boys operating from 1535 to 1772) are of exceptional value to Polish cultural heritage. The collection is a closed, historical one, and is a testament to the multinationality, multiculturalism, and multilingualism of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth throughout its historical development. The application from the Adam Mickiewicz University Library was reviewed and deemed indifferent and modest, as it concerned 45 manuscripts from the 13th to 16th centuries, representing 0.0015% of the library's total holdings. The Council expressed the view that the library should expand its contribution to the National Resource and select more unique items in the future (Protocol, 2015; Protocol, 2015a; Protocol, 2015b).

During the review of the Płock Scientific Society's application, a discussion arose as to whether the National Library Resource should include entire collections of early printed works or only those with unique characteristics. Director Tomasz Makowski noted that many prints – primarily from the 17th century – are repetitive. He posed the question of whether inclusion in the National Library Resource should be limited to Polonica and entire collections of 16th-century prints, with only selected copies of 17th-century prints included. He further noted that including entire legacies is problematic. Among those who contributed to the discussion was Zdzisław Pietrzyk, who argued that the criteria for selecting whose legacy to include and whose not to are very complex, especially in the case of local writers, historians, artists, etc. He emphasized that not all materials belonging to a given person are of exceptional value. Mariusz Dworsatschek noted certain difficulties in selecting individual

materials from the legacy, such as separating them from a given collection and storing them in separate storage facilities. Jan Malicki, on the other hand, stated that library regulations should clearly define how collections belonging to the National Library Resource will be segregated (Protokół, 2015).

The year 2016 brought the first amendment to the regulation on the National Library Resource from 2012, as well as a new term of office of the Council for the years 2016–2020.⁶ The collection of the most valuable items of Polish written heritage – in addition to those of the National Library and the Jagiellonian Library – was expanded by the Cyprian Norwid Elbląg Library, the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań, the Ossoliński National Institute Library in Wrocław, and the Witold Gombrowicz Voivodeship Public Library in Kielce. Each of these institutions received a specific date by which they must implement the required procedures (Rozporządzenie [Regulations], 2016). The Council, of course, prepared recommendations for amending the 2012 regulations. The main discussion focused on the issue of standardizing deadlines for libraries to meet the requirements set out in the regulations. The Council reached a position that this deadline should be set individually by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, after consulting with the Council on the matter. The time between the collection's inclusion in the national patrimony and the date when the criteria are met – determined individually for each library – guarantees its immediate special protection. However, introducing a strict deadline may result in some institutions – despite possessing valuable collections – withdrawing from the project. Implementation is time-consuming and costly (Protokół [Protocol], 2016a). This year, the Council reviewed the application from the Silesian Library and prepared recommendations for the implementation of a long-term cataloging program for manuscripts stored in Poland (Protokół, 2016).

The following year, the Council approved the Silesian Library's application to include in the National Resource the unique manuscript collection of the Lviv Theater Library (3,827 manuscripts and typescripts from 1799–1939) and 721 sixteenth-century printed works from the "Polonica et Silesia" collection. The M. Oczapowski Central Agricultural Library also received a positive recommendation for the inclusion of 824 old printed works (from the 16th–18th centuries), Polonica from 1801–

⁶ Members: Dr. Mariusz Dworsatschek – National Ossoliński Institute; Dr. Zina Jarmoszuk – Ministry of Culture and National Heritage; Dr. Jan Kozłowski – Ministry of Science and Higher Education; Dr. Tomasz Makowski – National Library – chairman; prof. dr hab. Jan Malicki – National Library Council, Silesian Library; Beata Pawłowska – Ministry of National Education; Dr. Ewa Perlakowska – Head Office of the State Archives; prof. dr hab. Zdzisław Pietrzyk – Jagiellonian Library; Ewa Potrzebicka – National Library; Dr. Zofia Tylewska-Ostrowska – Polish Academy of Sciences, Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

1900, the so-called Warsaw collection (2,173 volumes of monographs and 681 serials; 96 periodicals), and the so-called Puławy collection (6,291 volumes of monographs and 2,013 volumes of serials; 196 periodicals). Furthermore, a list of objects that should be prioritized for inclusion in the program was discussed. The National Library has prepared a list of 50 institutions whose collections should be included in the National Library Resource due to their importance to Polish culture and science. For historical reasons, institutions associated with Kraków and Warsaw were overrepresented on the list. Tomasz Makowski expressed the view that institutions possessing even a single highly valuable item (e.g., the manuscript *Diary of Sister Faustyna*, located in Łagiewniki), should be included. Zdzisław Pietrzyk added that it is worth considering, among others, the manuscripts of Adam Mickiewicz and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz located at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, as well as other collections from Wawel and Łańcut. He also emphasized the need to protect collections in private hands (Protokół, 2017; Protokół, 2017a; Protokół, 2017b; Protokół, 2017c).

On October 12, 2017, the National Library hosted a conference entitled “Creating a National Library Resource”, attended by representatives of all libraries participating in the project. The meeting allowed for a presentation of achievements and an exchange of experiences, and contributed to clarifying numerous issues, primarily those related to the criteria for selecting collections for inclusion in the resource.

During the anniversary year of Poland’s regained independence, the Council met twice. Working groups were established to evaluate the applications of the University Library in Toruń and the Hieronim Łopaciński Voivodeship Public Library in Lublin. Considerable attention was paid to the issue of financial support for the institutions participating in the project (Protokół, 2018; Protokół 2018). The following year, the applications of the aforementioned libraries were approved. Twenty-three medieval manuscripts from the libraries of the Teutonic Order were included in the national patrimony, while a recommendation was prepared for the University Library in Toruń to include the entire Teutonic collection and other unique items in the future. In the case of the Lublin library, its special collections were included in the program (Protokół, 2019). Furthermore, the application of the Provincial Public Library – Copernican Library in Toruń, which selected 6,092 inventory units (representing 0.75% of its holdings), as well as the University Library of the Catholic University of Lublin, which selected 1,247 inventory units in 808 volumes (Protokół, 2019b), was approved. Worth noting was Ewa Potrzebnicka’s presentation at the January Council meeting on the preliminary results of the report on the state of preservation of 19th and 20th century collections in Polish libraries (Potrzebnicka, 2019).

In 2020, the National Library Resource was expanded with items from the Stanisław Staszic Pomeranian Library in Szczecin (selected manuscripts, early printed books, musical items, and cartographic collections). The institution was granted two years to implement the required standards and procedures. At Council meetings, issues related to additional funding for the conservation and preservation of collections for institutions participating in the project were again discussed. A representative of the Head Office of State Archives encouraged submission of additional cultural treasures for inclusion on the UNESCO National List (Protokół, 2020; Protokół, 2020a). This year, the Council began operating with a new composition (Protokół, 2020b).⁷

The following year, the Council received an application from the Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań to expand the collections belonging to the national patrimony with 19 old prints and two incunabula (the so-called dictionary of Bartholomew of Bydgoszcz⁸ and the *Almanach Cracoviense ad a. 1500* published in Leipzig⁹). It received a positive recommendation. Furthermore, the Council meeting on March 4th addressed the Hungarian government's proposal to donate the inventory of the Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus's collection (*De laudibus Bibliothecae Budensis epistola ad Matthium Corvinum Pannoniae regnum*). Chairman Tomasz Makowski noted that the manuscript is a monument of Hungarian culture, but has been in Polish territory for centuries and forms a part of Polish culture. Council members expressed a negative opinion to this proposal, and the manuscript remained at the Copernican Library in Toruń (Protokół, 2021a).

⁷ Members: Mateusz Adamkowski – Director of the Department of State Patronage, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage; dr hab. Lucyna Harc – Deputy General Director of the State Archives; dr Tomasz Makowski – Director of the National Library – Chairman of the Council; dr Iwona Nowicka – Counselor to the Minister in the Department of Innovation and Development, Ministry of Science and Higher Education; Jacek Nowiński – representative of the National Library Council, Director of the Cyprian Norwid Elbląg Library in Elbląg; Ewa Potrzebicka – Plenipotentiary of the Director of the National Library for National Library Resources; dr hab. Remigiusz Sapa, prof. UJ – Deputy Director for Scientific Affairs, Jagiellonian Library; dr Dorota Sidorowicz-Mulak – Deputy Director for the Ossolineum Library; Rokszana Tołwińska – Director of the Department of Textbooks, Curricula and Innovation, Ministry of National Education; Dr. Anna Walczak – Director of the Gdańsk Library, Polish Academy of Sciences.

⁸ The margins of this Latin dictionary, printed in Strasbourg, feature Polish-language equivalents added in 1544 by Bernardine monk Bartholomew of Bydgoszcz. The dictionary contains over 11,000 Polish entries covering medicine, philosophy, theology, botany, and nautical subjects. It is the most comprehensive dictionary of its kind from the first half of the 16th century.

⁹ This is the upper part of a unique wall calendar for the year 1500, composed by an anonymous Kraków astrologer. The print is not listed in Karol Estreicher's *Polish Bibliography*. Instead, it is a testament to the popularity of the community of mathematicians and astrologers gathered around the Kraków Academy, whose works were readily reprinted throughout Europe at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. The calendar was discovered in 1998 and is now the only remnant of this print in the world.

In the year of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, the Council, in addition to applications and requests for expansion to include new facilities (the Adam Mickiewicz University Library in Poznań, the Voivodeship Public Library – Copernican Library in Toruń and the Polish Academy of Sciences Library in Gdańsk¹⁰) also addressed the issue of preparations for a possible evacuation of collections. Chairman Tomasz Makowski announced that the National Library was purchasing boxes available on the market. Some orders had already been fulfilled, while others were waiting. He pointed out that Polish libraries do not have the financial resources to purchase evacuation boxes, as well as the fact that there is a limited number of them on the market. He suggested that, if necessary, they borrow boxes from the National Library. He assured Council members that he had asked libraries in western Poland to prepare storage space in case of the need to evacuate collections from eastern Poland. He reminded them that each library with a National Library Resource is obliged to prepare a collection protection plan, which should be updated annually by March 31. He thanked the Ossoliński National Institute Library in Wrocław for its assistance to libraries in Lviv. He reported that a week before the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine, aid had been distributed – the National Library supported the Ukrainian National Library in Kyiv, and the Ossolineum in Lviv (Protokół, 2022).

In 2023, the Council unanimously approved a proposal from the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Gdańsk Library (Protokół, 2023) and the Raczyński Library. The Raczyński Library nominated its collection of incunabula and co-bound prints for the National Resource. The collection includes 251 incunabula and 52 prints from the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as a historic cartographic collection. During the November meeting, the distressing case of the brazen theft of 19th-century prints from the University of Warsaw Library was raised. Due to the ongoing proceedings, I will not discuss this matter in more detail (Protokół, 2023a).

In 2024, the Council expressed a positive opinion regarding the inclusion of selected collections from the Wrocław University Library (Protokół, 2024a). This is a unique collection of 3,156 incunabula, 5,309 volumes from the former library of the Dukes of Legnica-Brzeg, as well as the world's only surviving original map of the entire Russian Empire by Anthony Jenkinson (a traveler, one of the first Englishmen to visit Moscow meeting Ivan the Terrible several times) from 1562. Furthermore, during the meetings, the Ministry of Regional Development discussed the inclusion of libraries with national collections in the European Union funding program. Chairman Tomasz Makowski also stated that,

¹⁰ 431 old prints and 6 manuscripts donated to the Gdańsk City Council by the Italian humanist and bibliophile Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio in 1591.

following the organized thefts at the University Library in Warsaw and other European libraries, and the ongoing war in Ukraine, work should begin on a government program for financing collections belonging to the National Library Resource, particularly regarding the conditions for their storage, protection, preservation, and digitization (Protokół, 2024). It is worth noting that in 2023 a draft law on population protection and natural disasters was advanced, but the legislative process has not been completed. Since December 8, 2024, the Act on population protection and civil defense has been in force, addressing the protection of cultural property during wartime.

The idea of collecting, developing, preserving, and promoting written heritage is absolutely right and necessary in the cultural policy of every country, especially one as historically afflicted as Poland. Unfortunately, the documents of the National Library Resource Council, analyzed since 2012, leave me with a sad conclusion. In accordance with the regulation of April 28, 2025, only 17 Polish libraries have joined the program. Are many libraries lacking in awareness and knowledge about their national written heritage? Are their administrators and management staff afraid of the responsibilities that come with owning a National Library Resource? Yet the idea of a National Library Resource is an implementation of Title XIII, "Culture", of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Pursuant to Article 167 thereof, the European Union shall contribute to the flourishing of the cultures of its Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity, while emphasizing the importance of the common cultural heritage. Furthermore, the European Union's activities are directed, among other things, at: supporting activities aimed at deepening knowledge and disseminating the culture and history of European nations, as well as preserving and protecting cultural heritage of European significance.

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