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## Timeline of the World Polonia Winter Games (1986–2016)

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## Timeline of the World Polonia Winter Games (1986–2016)

### Abstract

Keeping the chronological order, this paper presents a timeline of events of the 30-year history of the organization of the Polonia Winter Games in Poland: first their beginnings in the years 1986–1989, and then, after a long break and a change to the name, their continuation as the World Polonia Winter Games in the years 2000–2016.

Driven by the popularity of the summer Polonia Sports Games (1934–1991), and later the World Polonia Games in Poland (1997–2015), Polish diaspora organizations from different parts of the world decided to organize the 1<sup>st</sup> Polonia Winter Games in Zakopane in 1986.

In accordance with the guidelines, also accepted by the International Commission for the Games, the first three of them (1986, 1989, 1992) took place every three years. After an eight-year break, winter sports meetings of Polonia people were reactivated in the year 2000, when the next 4th Polonia Winter Games were held in the Beskid Mountains. That year, they were named the World Polonia Winter Games, a name which has remained until this day. It was agreed that they should be organized every two years.

The aim of this work is to present the second part of the timeline of events, which are related to the organization and the course of *the World Polonia Winter Games (1986–2016)*. The concept adopted by the authors stems not only from the extensive chronology, but also from the vastness of source material.

Many athletes representing various Polish diaspora communities participated in the Polonia Winter Games, and later in the World Polonia Winter Games. The program of the Games underwent gradual changes. From the beginning of the Winter Games there were no sporting performance minimums. Age categories were extended in order to enable young, middle-aged and older people to compete in the Games, thus making it possible for them to take part both in sports contests and recreational events.

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The Polonia Games gave impetus to association of Polish athletes in Polonia sports organizations abroad and contributed largely to the consolidation of Polish national life in exile. They provided an opportunity to improve the knowledge of the Polish language, learn about the country of the ancestors and its achievements in various fields of social, cultural, and sporting life.

Polonia activists together with sports activists in Poland decided to continue the World Polonia Winter Games for the sake of the whole Polish diaspora and Poles living in Poland.

**Keywords:** Polonia physical culture; World Polonia Winter Games in Poland.

## Introduction

The World Polonia Games are closely related to communities of the Polish diaspora, called Polonia, located in several dozen countries around the world. According to the data from 1934, Polish emigration amounted to 7,338,000 people, and by 1971 the numbers increased to more than 10 million people<sup>1</sup>. In the 21st century the population of the Polish diaspora surpassed 20 million people. Half of them are inhabitants of the USA. Poland's integration with the European Union structures, the opening of borders and the legal and institutional changes triggered massive waves of economic migration to Western Europe. A significant part of them are young people with a secondary or higher education. The main Polonia population concentration is now found in London, where, according to demographers' estimates, more than one million Poles are currently living. Their trips are usually seasonal. The rate of overseas migration has decreased<sup>2</sup>.

A significant contribution to research into the history of Polonia physical culture, including the World Polonia Games, has been made by physical culture historians, who presented

[...] the origins of organizations concerned with dissemination of sport by Poles in population centers of Polish emigration, participation of members of these organizations in the struggle for Poland's independence during the World War I, the integrative role of Polonia sports in strengthening ties among Poles abroad, the support of the country in strengthening the Polonia sports movement, and the help from Polish diaspora communities for athletes in Poland, e.g. on the occasion of the Olympic Games<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych, Światowy Związek Polaków z Zagranicy [Archive of New Files, the World Association of Poles from Abroad], No. 444, k. 67; Polski Rocznik Statystyczny GUS [Polish Statistical Yearbook of the Central Statistical Office], Warszawa 1971; B. Woltmann, *Cele i założenia polonijnych igrzysk sportowych. Zarys problematyki i stan badań* [Aims and objectives of Polonia sports games. An outline of the problems and the state of research], [in:] J. Chelmecki (ed.), *Sport polonijny wczoraj i dziś* [Polonia sport yesterday and today], Warszawa 2005, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Statistical data concerning the Polonia populations on individual continents come from demographers' reports and information found on the website: [www.wspolnota-polska.org.pl](http://www.wspolnota-polska.org.pl) (link is external), [accessed: 29.03.2016]; <http://niepoprawni.pl/blog/wilre/polonia-swiata-co-trzeci-polak-zyje-w-diasporze>, [accessed: 29.03.2016].

<sup>3</sup> *Od redaktora tomu* [From the volume's editor], [in:] J. Chelmecki (ed.), *Sport polonijny...* [Polonia sport...], p. 5 (all translations by autors).

The subject of Polonia Games in Poland has mainly been present at physical culture historians' symposia organized by the Faculty of Physical Culture in Gorzow Wielkopolski, a branch of the Poznan University School of Physical Education. In the years 1978–1990 it was the National Scientific Conference “Polonia Physical Culture” (5 sessions in Lubniewice and Rogi), and in the years 1997–2015 the National Scientific Conference “The recent history of physical culture in Poland”. Among the published scientific papers, there are articles on various issues concerning the World Polonia Games in Poland. Another symposium was inspired by the 12th World Polonia Games in Warsaw in 2005. The output is the publication entitled *Polonia sport yesterday and today*<sup>4</sup>, which contains 15 scientific articles devoted to the history of the World Polonia Games.

The authors' intention is to prepare a timeline of events related to the World Polonia Games in the years 1934–2016 in two parts. This division stems not only from the extensive chronology, but also from the vastness of material. The first part is concerned with *the Summer World Polonia Games (1934–2015)* and the second one with *the World Polonia Winter Games (1986–2016)*.

The aim of this work is to present the second part of the timeline of events related to the organization and the course of *the World Polonia Winter Games (1986–2016)*.

## 1. Polonia Winter Games

Driven by the popularity of the summer Polonia Sports Games (1934–1991), and later the World Polonia Games in Poland (1997–2015)<sup>5</sup>, Polish diaspora organizations from different parts of the world decided to organize the 1st Polonia Winter Games in Zakopane in 1986.

The preparation of the program and organizational guidelines was entrusted with prominent specialists belonging to the Sports Commission of the Head Council of the ‘Polonia’ Society, the Sports Commission of the Council of the Kraków Branch and the Ski Section of the Polish Tatra Society in Zakopane. The idea of the organization of the Games was consulted with sports activists of the Polish diaspora through 30 Polish consular offices as well as with participants of the World Festival of Polonia Choirs held in Koszalin in 1985.

According to the guidelines, the Games were to take place regularly, every three years. This idea was accepted by the International Commission for the Games.

The main objectives of the Games were defined as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> J. Chełmecki (ed.), *Sport polonijny... [Polonia sport...]*, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> See L. Nowak, M.A. Nowak, *Kalendarium letnich światowych igrzysk polonijnych (1934–2015) [Timeline of the Summer World Polonia Games (1934–2015)]*, “Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Kultura Fizyczna” [“Scientific Works of the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa. Physical Culture” 2016, vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 69–87.

- approximation of the widest possible circles of Polish diaspora to their fatherland,
- creating an opportunity for many young Poles living permanently abroad to come to Poland to take part in an attractive event,
- activation of Polonia communities originating from the region of Podkarpacie and encouraging them to cooperate with Poland,
- dissemination of the Olympic idea,
- presentation of the region from which a large part of Polish diaspora comes<sup>6</sup>.

Apart from sports competitions in 6 disciplines – giant slalom, special slalom, cross-country skiing (individual and relay), speed skating and luge – the Games program included meetings with the hosts of the Nowosądeckie Province and Olympians, as well as cultural events and visiting the most attractive places in the Tatra Mountains.

In accordance with the guidelines of the Organizing Committee, the 2nd Polonia Winter Games took place in 1989, for the second time in Zakopane. In the program of the Games, the number of competitions was increased from 6 to 8: giant slalom, special slalom, alpine skiing combined, parallel slalom, cross-country skiing individual, cross-country relays, speed skating. The program was also enriched with accompanying events. Participants were provided with better accommodation conditions and more efficient service of referees in the competitions.

The next, 3rd Polonia Winter Games were to be organized in 1992. As R. Urban writes, “[...] in accordance with the guidelines, the event was to be held regularly every three years, however, this idea was not accomplished”<sup>7</sup>. Some electronic sources referring to the history of the Winter Games do give the date and place of their organization (February 2–7, 1992 Zakopane). It was the first time (as it was written) that the competition was entered by representatives of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine, who took top places in cross-country skiing<sup>8</sup>. Another statement, dating from March 1, 1992, comes from the Polish American Sports Association and reads as follows: “At this moment we have no source materials concerning the Polonia Winter Games which took place in Zakopane in 1992. We are sorry”<sup>9</sup>. A confirmation of this thesis is a text by Krzysztof Miklas (dated March 15, 2010) entitled *The World Polonia Winter Games ZAKOPANE 2010*, in which he wrote:

The organizers had enough determination to continue in the years 1989 and 1992, when representatives of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine were able to come to the games for the

<sup>6</sup> Z. Szafkowski, *Polonijne Igrzyska Sportowe (1934–1997)* [*Polonia Sports Games (1934–1997)*], GorzówWlkp. 1997, p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> R. Urban, *Zimowe igrzyska polonijne (1986–2004)* [*Polonia winter games (1986–2004)*], [in:] J. Chelmecki (ed.), *Sport polonijny...* [*Polonia sport...*], p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.książeksport.com/polsports/2012/01/zaproszenie-na-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne> [accessed: 22.03.2016].

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.pasaus.org/zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne/> [accessed: 2.11.2016].

first time. They were rather symbolic representations, but they evidenced the great transformations that had taken place in the eastern part of Europe. Zakopane was the host town in both cases, as it was considered to be the best place for winter sports athletes' meetings [...]. After that, however, there was an eight-year break, following which the initiative was taken over by activists of 'Polish Community' from Bielsko-Biała lead by Wojciech Dębowski<sup>10</sup>.



**Fig. 1.** The 1st Polonia Winter Games. Zakopane 1986



**Fig. 2.** The 2nd Polonia Winter Games. Zakopane 1989



**Fig. 3.** The 3rd Polonia Winter Games. Zakopane 1992

Source: <http://www.pasaus.org/zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne/> [accessed: 2.11.2016].

## 2. World Polonia Winter Games

After a several-year break – due to the commitment of the President of the Bielsko-Biała Branch of the Association 'Polish Community' Wojciech Dębowski, the chairperson of the Sports Events Organizing Committee in Szczyrk Tadeusz Pilarz, and the late Stefan Zuber, an activist of 'Polish Com-

<sup>10</sup> [http://wiadomosci.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/blog\\_imprez/17/wiatowe-Zimowe-Igrzyska-Polonijne-ZAKOPANE-2010](http://wiadomosci.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/blog_imprez/17/wiatowe-Zimowe-Igrzyska-Polonijne-ZAKOPANE-2010); <http://www.pasaus.org/zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne/>; <http://dziennikzwiazkowy.com/sprawy-polonijne/zaproszenie-na-x-wiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne/> [accessed: 2.11.2016].

munity', coach and sports propagator in the Beskidy – inter sports meetings of Polonia people were reactivated in the year 2000, when the next, the 4th Polonia Winter Games were held in the Beskidy Mountains, between February 28 and March 5. That year, they were named the World Polonia Winter Games (hereinafter: WPWG), a name which has remained to this day. It was agreed that they should be organized every two years. 220 Polonia athletes participated in the Games. They came to Szczyrk and Wisła from different parts of the world to contend for medals in four winter sports disciplines: cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, snowboarding and luge. The Games events were carried out in three Beskidy towns: Szczyrk, Wisła and Bielsko-Biała<sup>11</sup>.

The World Polonia Winter Games 'Beskids 2000' smoothed the way for the organization of subsequent Polonia sports meetings, which was due to the Bielsko-Biała Branch of 'Polish Community'. The next four winter games, carried out in the new formula, were again held in the Beskidy and Silesia<sup>12</sup>.



**Fig. 4, 5.** Front pages of bulletins of the 4th and 5th World Polonia Winter Games

Source: private collection of the authors.

The organization of the next, the 5th World Polonia Winter Games in the Beskidy – which took place from March 1 to March 6, 2002, under the honorary patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland Aleksander Kwasniewski – was for the second time taken on by the Bielsko-Biała Branch of the Association 'Polish Community'. On behalf of the authorities of the towns of Szczyrk,

<sup>11</sup> Biuletyn Polonijne Igrzyska Zimowe – 28.02–5.03.2000. Beskidy 2000. Bielsko-Biała, Szczyrk, Wisła. Urząd Kultury Fizycznej i Sportu, Urząd Marszałkowski w Katowicach, Starostwo Bielskie i Cieszyńskie, Urząd Miejski w Bielsku Białej, Wiśle [Bulletin of the Polonia Winter Games – Feb 28 – Mar 5, 2000. Beskids 2000. Bielsko-Biała, Szczyrk, Wisła. Office of Physical Culture and Sport, Marshal's Office in Katowice, Starost's Offices of Bielsko-Biała and Cieszyn, City Offices in Bielsko-Biała, Wisła], Szczyrk. 2000.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.pasaus.org/swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-szczyrk-2000/> [accessed: 13.01.2017].

Wisła, Cieszyn and Bielsko-Biała, it received more than 550 athletes from 20 countries competing in 6 disciplines (carving, Nordic skiing, snowboarding, ice skating, luge, alpine skiing)<sup>13</sup>. The most numerous teams came from Lithuania, Ukraine and Sweden. The representatives of the Polish diaspora in the Czech Republic triumphed in the final points classification of the Games having scored 386 points. Behind them were Poles from Lithuania, 275 points, and the Polonia athletes from Belarus were third, with 201 points<sup>14</sup>.

In a letter addressed to the Polonia athletes, the President of the Republic of Poland wrote:

[...] I am confident that the organizers – the Association ‘Polish Community’ and the winter sports associations – will make every effort to ensure that the Polonia athletes feel at home in the ‘old country’, that they are surrounded with a cordial, family atmosphere, and experience positive emotions not only connected with rivalry in the sports arena, but also with discovering their roots in the Polish culture, language and landscape<sup>15</sup>.



**Fig. 6.** 4th World Polonia Winter Games. Szczyrk 2000.



**Fig. 7.** 5th World Polonia Winter Games. Szczyrk 2002.

Source: <http://www.pasaus.org/zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne/> [accessed: 3.11.2016].

The 6th World Polonia Winter Games in the Beskidy were organized between February 28 and March 3, 2004, in Bielsko-Biała, Cieszyn, Szczyrk and

<sup>13</sup> Biuletyn Polonijne Igrzyska Zimowe – 1.03–6.03.2002 [Bulletin of the Polonia Winter Games – Mar 1 – Mar 6, 2002. Beskidy 2002]. Szczyrk, Wisła, Cieszyn, Bielsko-Biała 2002.

<sup>14</sup> <http://wiadomosci.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/impreza/9/Zimowe-Igrzyska-Polonijne> [accessed: 29.03.2016].

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.pasaus.org/swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-szczyrk-2000/> [accessed: 13.01.2017].

Wisła. The opening ceremony of the Games took place in Szczyrk, the winter capital of the Beskidy. In his opening speech, the Speaker of the Senate, professor Longin Pastusiak drew attention to the important role played by Polonia in the shaping of the image of their fatherland in their countries of residence. Citizens of twenty countries arrived at the invitation of the organizers and about 600 participants, who competed in seven events: cross country skiing mass start 3 km (women) and 5 km (men), slalom carving, snowboarding (excellent performance by 67-year-old Henryk Ziemek from Helsinki), alpine skiing, skating, and for the first time in the history of the Games, archery biathlon<sup>16</sup>. The largest Polonia representations came from Ukraine (69 people), Lithuania (68) and Sweden (61). In turn, Australia (1 person), Switzerland (1) and Finland (2) were modestly represented. The most ‘exotic’ was a six-member team from the Republic of Altai. The Winter Games ‘Beskidy 2004’ were once again won by Polonia from the Czech Republic, the second place went to Lithuania, and Belarus took third place. Canada was fourth and the United States were ninth. Australia finished in the twentieth place, having been represented by only one athlete, 73-year-old Stefan Lindert, three times a participant of the Polonia Games, born in the Podbeskidzie region, for more than half a century an inhabitant of Queensland.

Elżbieta Kwiatkowska from the Polish Olympic Committee concluded that

the rivalry was very diverse in terms of the sporting level. There is a group of amateurs and there are young professionals who regularly train in clubs and take part in competitions. But winning medals is not the most important thing here, but the opportunity for a large group of our compatriots to meet again<sup>17</sup>.

Coming from all corners of the world, the contestants were joined by other people of Polish origin and the intent to compete in winter sports.

The 7th World Polonia Winter Games “Silesia-Beskidy” took place from February 24 to March 2, 2006 on the routes and at sports facilities of Szczyrk, Wisła, Cieszyn, Tychy and Bielsko-Biała. The Games were attended by 664 participants from 24 countries, including: Germany 62; Sweden 91; the USA 50; Ukraine 77; Lithuania 97; Russia 65; the Czech Republic 52; Canada 84; Belarus 27; Latvia 4; Hungary 21; Finland 2; Bulgaria 15; Australia 4; Greece 1; Denmark 1; Austria 4; England 1; France 1; Armenia 1; Croatia 1; Ecuador 1; Romania 1; Turkmenistan 1. They competed in 7 disciplines (alpine skiing, Nordic skiing – cross-country, snowboarding, carving, carling, allround skating, luge) and 4 age categories (junior: birth year 1986 or younger, senior: born from 1985 to 1967, master: 1968–1953, old boy: birth year 1952 or older). The teams from the Czech Republic, Canada and Sweden triumphed in both the medal and points classifications. The honorary patronage over the Games – organized by the Bielsko-Biała Branch of the Association ‘Polish Community’ and sports ac-

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.pasaus.org/swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-szczyrk-2004/> [accessed: 14.01.2017].

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.pasaus.org/swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-szczyrk-2004/> [accessed: 14.01.2017].

tivists representing regional and national associations of winter sports – was assumed by the President of the Republic of Poland Lech Kaczyński<sup>18</sup>.

The event, which was broadcast live by TVP Polonia, attracted many guests from the world of culture and politics. The opening ceremony of the Games was attended by, among others, the Deputy Speaker of the Senate M. Płażyński and the President of the Association ‘Polish Community’ A. Stelmachowski. Maciej Płażyński thanked the participants for coming to Poland and for strengthening the ties with their fatherland. Andrzej Stelmachowski, who read the message from the President of Poland Lech Kaczyński, was delighted with the increasing number of participants of the Games<sup>19</sup>.



**Fig. 8.** 6th World Polonia Winter Games. Szczyrk 2004.



**Fig. 9.** 7th World Polonia Winter Games. Szczyrk 2006.

Source: <http://www.pasaus.org/zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne/> [accessed: 3.11.2016].

The next, 8<sup>th</sup> World Polonia Winter Games ‘Silesia-Beskidy 2008’ took place from February 29 to March 5, 2008 on the routes and at sports facilities of (like the previous ones) Szczyrk, Wisła, Cieszyn, ČeskýTěšín, Ustroń, Tychy and Bielsko-Biała. The honorary patronage over the Games was assumed by the Speaker of the Polish Senate, Bogdan Borusewicz. Despite spring weather, the organizers managed to carry out all scheduled events. The competition was entered by over 500 Polonia athletes. The most from Ukraine (135 people), Canada (78), Russia (49) and Sweden (46). The team from Canada won the medal classi-

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.bielsko-biala.pl/aktualnosc-269-x\\_swiatowe\\_zimowe\\_igrzyska\\_polonijne](http://www.bielsko-biala.pl/aktualnosc-269-x_swiatowe_zimowe_igrzyska_polonijne) [accessed: 29.03.2016].

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.pasaus.org/swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-szczyrk-2006> [accessed: 15.01.2017].

fication with a total of 42 medals, the Polonia athletes from Russia took the second place with 30 medals, and the third place went to the Swedish Polonia representatives, who won 26 medals<sup>20</sup>.



**Fig. 10.** Opening ceremony of the 8th World Polonia Winter Games. Szczyrk 2008.

Source: [http://wiadomosci.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/blog\\_imprez/19/wiatowe-Zimowe-Igrzyska-Polonijne-LSK-BESKIDY-2008](http://wiadomosci.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/blog_imprez/19/wiatowe-Zimowe-Igrzyska-Polonijne-LSK-BESKIDY-2008) [accessed: 3.11.2016].



**Fig. 11.** The badge of the 9th World Polonia Winter Games. Zakopane 2010.

Source: [http://www.archiwum.zakopane.eu/index.php?option=16&cat\\_id=8&limitstart=2595](http://www.archiwum.zakopane.eu/index.php?option=16&cat_id=8&limitstart=2595) [accessed: 18.01.2017].

On March 6-14, 2010 Polonia athletes met in Zakopane at the 9th World Polonia Winter Games. The opening ceremony was attended by the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Kaczyński. In his speech, he underlined that

over the centuries millions of Poles have found themselves outside the borders of their country against their will. Polonia should maintain their connection with their homeland, they should emphasize this connection. [...] These games are to emphasize and do emphasize relationships which members of the Polish communities abroad have with their fatherland, with Poland<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> <http://gazetapetersburska.org/wp/language/pl/viii-swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-zakopane-2010> [accessed: 15.01.2017].

After eighteen years the Winter Games returned to the Tatra Mountains. They were attended by 730 athletes from 22 countries of the world, who competed in 14 events<sup>22</sup>. The first place in the medal standings was taken by the Czech Republic with a total of 104 medals, including 40 gold, 37 silver and 27 bronze medals. The second place went to Lithuania: 74 medals (30 gold, 22 silver, 22 bronze). The team from Canada was third with 73 medals (29 gold, 20 silver, 24 bronze). Polonia from the USA took the fourth place<sup>23</sup>.



**Fig. 12, 13.** Opening ceremony of the 9th World Polonia Winter Games in Zakopane (2010), attended by the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Kaczyński

Source: [http://wiadomosci.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/blog\\_impresz/17/swiatowe-Zimowe-Igrzyska-Polonijne-ZAKOPANE-2010](http://wiadomosci.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/blog_impresz/17/swiatowe-Zimowe-Igrzyska-Polonijne-ZAKOPANE-2010) [accessed: 3.11.2016].

In 2012, the 10th jubilee World Polonia Winter Games were once again hosted by the regions of Silesia and Beskidy. They took place from February 25 to March 3, 2012 on routes and at sports facilities of Bielsko-Biała, Cieszyn,

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.archiwum.zakopane.eu/index.php?option=16&action=news\\_show&news\\_id=3055](http://www.archiwum.zakopane.eu/index.php?option=16&action=news_show&news_id=3055), Z. Kiełpińska, Z. Chmiel, *VIII Światowe Zimowe Igrzyska Polonijne w Zakopanem* [accessed: 18.01.2017].

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Szczyrk, Tychy and Wisła<sup>24</sup>. The Games were attended by 600 people living in different parts of the world. Polonia athletes from 23 countries (Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the USA) contended for medals in 10 winter disciplines (allround speed skating, alpine skiing, biathlon, carving, cross-country skiing, ice hockey, luge, Nordic walking, Polish Olympians slalom, short-track, snowboarding). Alpine skiing, snowboarding and carving events were held on the FIS Skrzyczne route in Szczyrk, cross-country skiers and biathletes competed on the Kubalonka route lying on the border of Wisła and Istebna, and lugers on a special track prepared in a section of a cross-country ski route in Górný Szczyrk. The ice hockey tournament took place in a hall in Tychy, the allround speed skating competition in the Sports and Entertainment Hall in Bielsko-Biała, and short-track in a sports hall in Cieszyn. For Nordic walking, beautiful areas in the vicinity of Dębowiec in Bielsko-Biała were prepared. The Games' largest delegations of Polonia athletes came from Lithuania (82), Russia (75), Ukraine (70) and Canada (69)<sup>25</sup>.

From February 23 to March 1, 2014 in the Karkonosze, the next, 11th World Polonia Winter Games 'Karkonosze 2014' took place at venues of (depending on the sports discipline): Jelenia Góra, Karpacz, Szklarska Poręba and the Czech Republic<sup>26</sup>. The honorary patron of the Games was the President of the Republic of Poland Bronisław Komorowski, and the whole event was impressively successful despite enormous difficulties with the weather. The lighting of the flame, the Olympic oath, a splendid laser light show and concerts of famous performers were all at the highest level. The flame was lit by Lower Silesia Olympians: biathlete Anna Stera and luger Andrzej Żyła. The competition was entered by more than 600 Polonia athletes from 23 countries and featured ten Olympic events. They were carried out in Jelenia Góra, Karpacz, Szklarska Poręba and Sobieszów, and the ice hockey tournament took place in the Czech town of Jablonec. The Olympic Village was located in the Spa Park in Jelenia Góra-Cieplice. A traditional Polonia Forum was held as part of the Games.

A major problem for the organizers of the Karkonosze Games was an almost complete lack of snow. The Bieg Piastów race was shortened from 50 to 10 km. For the Polonia athletes, this race was special and closed the week of rivalry. The most numerous Polonia delegations were those from Russia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic. The representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora received a particularly warm welcome. Large teams came also from Germany, Austria,

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.ksiazeksport.com/polSports/2012/01/zaproszenie-na-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne/> [accessed: 30.03.2016].

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.bielsko-biala.pl/aktualnosc-2269-x\\_swiatowe\\_zimowe\\_igrzyska\\_polonijne](http://www.bielsko-biala.pl/aktualnosc-2269-x_swiatowe_zimowe_igrzyska_polonijne) [accessed: 7.04.2016].

<sup>26</sup> [www.igrzyskapolonijne.dips.pl](http://www.igrzyskapolonijne.dips.pl) [accessed: 7.04.2016].

Canada and Sweden. Some of them presented themselves in colorful national costumes<sup>27</sup>. The Games were won by the athletes from Lithuania. The team numbering about 150 athletes (mostly young people actively involved in sport) dominated the competition in several events and won 160 medals, including 62 gold. They were followed by the Polonia teams from the Czech Republic and Russia. The representatives of the American Polonia picked up seven medals, including four gold. Commenting on their medal achievements, they concluded that it was

modest, because we sent to battle [...] three senior athletes: Krystyna Kacperczyk, Andrzej Krygowski and Wojciech Putz, who saved the honor of the American Polonia<sup>28</sup>.



**Fig. 14.** Poster of the 10th Jubilee World Polonia Winter Games

Source: <http://www.pasaus.org/zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne/> [accessed: 4.11.2016].

From February 29 to March 4, 2016, the 12th World Polonia Winter Games were held in Ustrzyki Dolne, Sanok and Przemyśl. The competition was entered by more than 500 participants from 16 countries (Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria,

<sup>27</sup> Ibid; Sławomir Sobczak, See more at: <http://www.meritum.us/2014/03/02/xi-swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne> [accessed: 11.04.2016].

<sup>28</sup> „To find confirmation for his words it is enough to have look at the latest WPWG held in the capital of the Polish Tatra Mountains. Four years ago, the US team won 41 medals and 23 of them were gold. Two years ago, in Szczyrk it was already much worse: nine medals, including six of the most precious metal. It is the ruthless law of the market: when our highlanders can go on vacation and enter a competition while being there, they are glad to do that. If they can choose games in the US, like the Polonia championships in Colorado, they are not willing to go to the Old Country. Similarly, Canadians, and I think something needs to be done about it. Promotion of other resorts than Zakopane lies in the interest of the Polish authorities, but the resistance from the Podhale region to organizing a big event like the Games is incomprehensible to me. Gratitude towards the organizers emanates from conversations with participants of the WPWG. Despite spring weather in the Karkonosze this winter, they overcame the difficulties and did a really great job in order that the event might be an unforgettable experience. The professionalism of the actions of the team of the President of the Lower Silesia Sports Federation Arkadiusz Zagrodnik was particularly emphasized”. Sławomir Sobczak, see more at: <http://www.meritum.us/2014/03/02/xi-swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne> [accessed: 11.04.2016].

Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, the United States of America). They contended in 8 disciplines: biathlon (cross-country individual and sprint), alpine skiing (slalom, giant slalom, parallel slalom), cross-country skiing (5 km C, 6.5 km C, 15 km C, 50 km C, 1.5 km F), snowboarding (slalom), short-track, allround speed skating, Nordic walking (FUN category for amateurs and PROFI for professionals), as well as a playful form of retro games<sup>29</sup>. The contestants were divided into several age groups, starting with the up to 12 category, and ending in the over 60 category. The youngest participant of the Games, Natalia Stefańska, was 5 years old and came from Germany, while the oldest athlete of the Games, Zygmunt Brzeziński, was 90 years old and came from Austria<sup>30</sup>.



**Fig. 15.** Poster of the 11th World Polonia Winter Games

Source: <http://linktopoland.com/pl/relacja-xi-swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-karkonosze-2014/> [accessed: 4.11.2016].

The Lithuanian Polonia athletes finished top of the medal classification: 109 medals, including 42 golds, 33 silvers and 34 bronzes. The second place went to Polonia from the Czech Republic: 81 medals, including 32 golds, 26 silvers and 23 bronzes, and the team from Belarus took the third place with: 40 medals, including 10 golds, 15 silvers and 15 bronzes. The remaining places were taken in the following order by Polonia teams from: Russia, Canada, Sweden, the United States, Austria, Luxembourg, Norway, Hungary, Germany, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria and Spain<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> podkarpackie 2016 | polonia sport – internetowy serwis informacyjny sportowej polonii [accessed: 7.04.2016].

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/sport/4448-zakonczyly-sie-xii-swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-podkarpackie-2016> [accessed: 26.04.2017].

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.pozn.eu/p-o-z-n/39-XII-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-2016-ustrzyki-dolne-sanok-aramow-29-02-4-03-2016> [accessed: 7.04.2016]; <http://www.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/sport/4448-zakonczyly-sie-xii-swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-podkarpackie-2016> [accessed: 26.04.2017].

During the Games, a new Polonia initiative was born. The World Federation of Polonia Sports was established, based in Vienna. The President of the Federation said:

During the Games, a working meeting was held which made everyone realize that coordination of certain activities in the field of Polonia sports is needed. We have all come to the conclusion that there is a need for technical documentation, the creation of universal rules so that future hosts of Polonia games have ready regulations, rules of competition, set age ranges, the method of recruiting competitors, and, above all, that the organizers inform the athletes about the next games in advance earlier than before, so that it's from the games – to the games<sup>32</sup>.

The closing ceremony of the Games was attended by the President of the Association 'Polish Community', Longin Komołowski, who, thanking the participants for their performance, said:

These Games were exceptional for us because the accommodation conditions allowed all of us to stay in one place, which fostered better integration of Poles. [...] <sup>33</sup>.

**Table 1.** Framework Program of the 12th World Polonia Winter Games. Podkarpackie 2016

Event, discipline	Place	Feb 27	Feb 28	Feb 29	Mar 1	Mar 2	Mar 3	Mar 4	Mar 5	Mar 6
		Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Arrival, accommodation	Arlamów	10:00–16:00								
Opening ceremony	Arlamów	Gala evening								
Trip to Lvov, for those interested	Lwów		Whole day							
Biathlon	Ustrzyki Dolne			10:00–15:00	10:00–15:00					
Alpine skiing	Ustrzyki Dolne				09:00–14:00	09:00–14:00	09:00–14:00			
Cross-country skiing	Ustrzyki Dolne						10:00–13:00	10:00–13:00		
Snowboard	Ustrzyki Dolne			10:00–13:00						
Nordic Walking	Ustrzyki Dolne			10:00–15:00	10:00–15:00					
Ice hockey	Sanok				09:00–14:00					
Short-Track	Sanok			10:00–15:00						

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/sport/4448-zakonczyly-sie-xii-swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-podkarpackie-2016> [accessed: 26.04.2017].

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

**Table 1.** Framework Program... (cd.)

Event, discipline	Place	Feb 27	Feb 28	Feb 29	Mar 1	Mar 2	Mar 3	Mar 4	Mar 5	Mar 6
		Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Allround speed skating	Sanok					10:00–14:00				
Retro games	Przemyśl							10:00–13:00		
Closing ceremony	Arlamów								Gala evening	
Departure of participants	Arlamów									Until 10:00

Source: <http://poloniasport.com/?p=2789> [accessed: 4.11.2016].

**Fig. 16, 17.** Opening ceremony of the 12th World Polonia Winter Games in Arłamów

Source: <http://wiadomosci.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/impreza/9/Zimowe-Igrzyska-Polonijne>; <http://igrzyska-zimowe.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/aktualnosci/50/Otwarcie-Igrzysk-galeria> [accessed: 4.11.2016].

**Table 2.** Numerical characteristics of the Polonia Winter Games in the years 1986–2016

<b>Polonia Winter Games in the years 1986–1989–1992</b>				
Consecutive number of the Games	Year and place of the Games	Number of the diaspora countries	Number of disciplines and events	Number of participants
1st	<b>1986</b> Zakopane	10	5/6	200
2nd	<b>1989</b> Zakopane	17	4/8	146
3rd	<b>1992</b> Zakopane	No data available		
<b>World Polonia Winter Games in the years 2000–2016</b>				
4th	<b>2000</b> Beskids (Bielsko-Biała, Szczyrk, Wisła)	17	3/4	215
5th	<b>2002</b> Beskids (Bielsko-Biała, Cieszyn, Szczyrk, Wisła)	20	6/0	550
6th	<b>2004</b> Beskids (Bielsko-Biała, Cieszyn, Szczyrk, Wisła)	23	7/7	625
7th	<b>2006</b> Beskids (Bielsko-Biała, Cieszyn, Szczyrk, Tychy, Wisła)	24	7/0	664
8th	<b>2008</b> Silesia-Beskids (Szczyrk, Wisła, Cieszyn, ČeskýTěšín, Ustronie, Tychy, Bielsko-Biała)	20	5/0	500
9th	<b>2010</b> Zakopane	25	10/14	730
10th	<b>2012</b> Silesia-Beskids (Szczyrk, Wisła, Cieszyn, Tychy, Bielsko-Biała)	23	10	600
11th	<b>2014</b> Karkonosze (Jelenia Góra, Szklarska Poręba, Sobieszów, Jablonec in Czech Republic)	23	10	600
12th	<b>2016</b> (Ustrzyki Dolne, Sanok, Przemyśl)	16	8/16	500

Source: the authors' own elaboration.



**Fig. 18.** Poster of the 12th WPWG. Podkarpackie 2016

Source: <http://www.pozn.eu/p-o-z-n/39-XII-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-2016-ustrzyki-dolne-sanok-aramow-29-02-4-03-2016> [accessed: 30.03.2016].

Summing up the organization and course of the World Polonia Winter Games, it should be noted that their intended goal was achieved. They gave impetus to association of Polish athletes in Polish sports organizations abroad and contributed largely to the consolidation of the Polish national life in exile.

They were also the source of many added values, as they provided an opportunity to improve the knowledge of the Polish language, learn about the country of the ancestors and its achievements in various fields of social, cultural, and sports life.

A confirmation of the above is also a reminiscence of Janusz Pauli, one of the participants of the World Polonia Winter Games in 2012, who said that

[...] it was not the sports results that were the most important here, but the opportunity to meet and integrate Polonia from around the world. We rediscovered our fatherland and explored the charms and values of the beautiful Jelenia Góra Valley. We will return here someday again, following the footsteps of our memories and the moments spent together [...] <sup>34</sup>.



**Fig. 19.** Author: Janusz Pauli – coordinator and regional representative of the Association ‘World Polonia Games – Polonia Austria’, supporting and popularizing Polonia Games in Austria. For many years a winter sports coach and athlete. Privately, father of Arthur Pauli, a ski jumper in the Austrian national team.

Source: <http://linktopoland.com/pl/relacja-xi-swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-karkonosze-2014/> [accessed: 4.11.2016].

<sup>34</sup> <http://linktopoland.com/pl/relacja-xi-swiatowe-zimowe-igrzyska-polonijne-karkonosze-2014/> [accessed: 4.11.2016].

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## Kalendarium Światowych Zimowych Igrzysk Polonijnych (1986–2016)

### Streszczenie

W niniejszym opracowaniu, zachowując układ chronologiczny, przedstawiono kalendarium wydarzeń 30 lat organizacji Polonijnych Igrzysk Zimowych w Polsce (w latach 1986–1989), które – po długiej przerwie i zmianie ich nazwy – kontynuowano jako Światowe Zimowe Igrzyska Polonijne (w latach 2000–2016).

Organizacje polonijne na świecie, kierując się popularnością letnich Polonijnych Igrzysk Sportowych (1934–1991), a później letnich Światowych Igrzysk Polonijnych w Polsce (1997–2015), postanowiły w roku 1986 zorganizować I Polonijne Igrzyska Zimowe w Zakopanem.

Zgodnie z założeniami, zaakceptowanymi również przez Międzynarodową Komisję ds. Igrzysk, trzy pierwsze imprezy (1986, 1989, 1992) odbyły się co trzy lata. Po ośmiu latach przerwy, w 2000 r. reaktywowano sportowe zimowe spotkania „Polonusów”, organizując w Beskidach kolejne, IV Polonijne Igrzyska Zimowe. W tym roku nadano im obowiązującą do dzisiaj nazwę Światowych Zimowych Igrzysk Polonijnych, które przyjęto organizować co dwa lata.

Celem opracowania jest przedstawienie drugiej części kalendarium wydarzeń związanych z organizacją i przebiegiem Światowych Zimowych Igrzysk Polonijnych (1986–2016). Przyjęta przez Autorów koncepcja wynika nie tylko z rozległej chronologii, ale też z obszerności materiału źródłowego.

W Polonijnych Igrzyskach Zimowych, a następnie Światowych Zimowych Igrzyskach Polonijnych, uczestniczyło wielu sportowców reprezentujących różne środowiska polonijne. Program igrzysk ulegał stopniowym przemianom. Od początku zimowych igrzysk nie obowiązywały minima kwalifikacyjne. Rozszerzono kategorie wiekowe pozwalające na start w igrzyskach osobom młodym, w średnim i starszym wieku, umożliwiając im tym samym udział w zawodach sportowych i w imprezach rekreacyjnych.

Igrzyska Polonijne dały impuls do zrzeszania się polskich sportowców w polonijnych organizacjach sportowych za granicą i przyczyniły się w dużym stopniu do konsolidacji polskiego życia narodowego na obczyźnie. Stworzyły okazję do pogłębiania znajomości języka polskiego, poznawania kraju przodków i jego dokonań w różnych dziedzinach życia społecznego, kulturalnego i sportowego.

Działacze polonijni, wspólnie z działaczami sportowymi w kraju, postanowili kontynuować Światowe Zimowe Igrzyska Polonijne dla dobra całej polonijnej społeczności i Polaków mieszkających w Polsce.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polonijna kultura fizyczna; światowe zimowe igrzyska polonijne w Polsce.