

# The Three Seas Initiative – a fascinating story



Report  
and communication strategy



State of Poland



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**THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE – A FASCINATING STORY | REPORT  
AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

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**3SEAS EUROPE**

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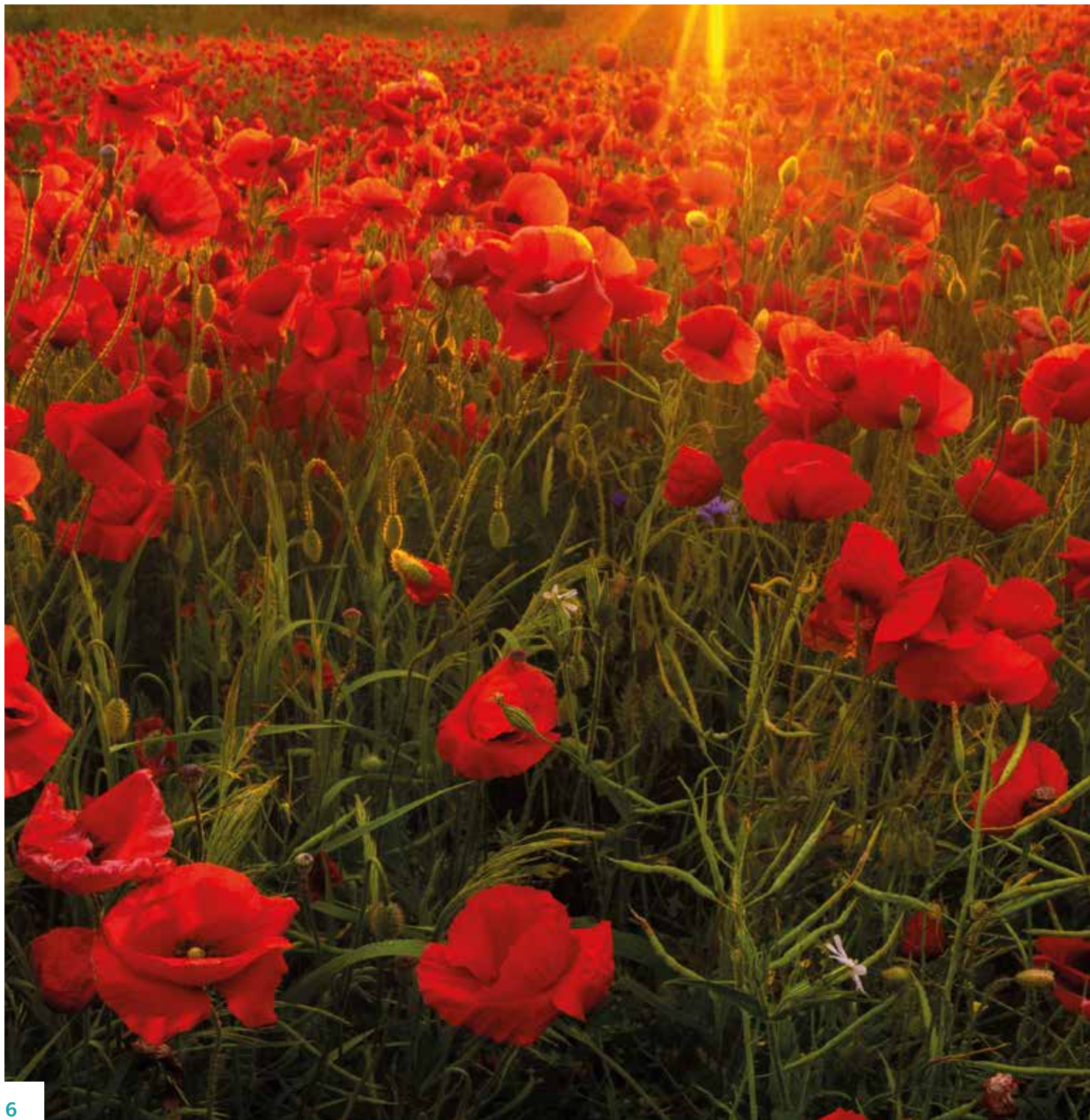
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Every great challenge begins with a dream. Over the centuries, the destinies of the nations living between the three seas – the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas – have been shaped not only by the ambitions of the millions of inhabitants of these lands, but also by a complicated history and the will of stronger neighbours.

The Austrian thinker Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn said: *Man rarely learns any lessons from history, and nations never do.* We want to change that.

The difficult experiences of wars and totalitarianisms have forever left an indelible mark on the consciousness of the inhabitants of the 12 countries in the region. They are a weight, but also a wealth of knowledge that we ought to draw from. The conditions have fortunately changed, but our dreams have remained. It's now time to fulfill them.

This is the purpose of the Three Seas Initiative – one of the most ambitious geopolitical projects of our time. Its main aim is to use the huge potential which lays dormant in the region. We want to build roads and bridges between our nations, to increase our ability to develop, to level the differences between the east and the west of the European continent and to show the world the potential of the Three Seas countries. We want to achieve all of this by using the vast social capital, the strength and creativity of the 100 million+ inhabitants of the region.

I hope this report, which is an introduction and a synthesis of the project, will show the ambition and vast potential of the initiative we have started to build. Drawing from the wisdom and wealth of the past, we are bravely looking into the future. The story of the Three Seas is only just being written – so let's write it together!

Beata Daszyńska-Muzyczka  
President of the Management Board of Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, Chairperson of  
the Supervisory Board of the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund



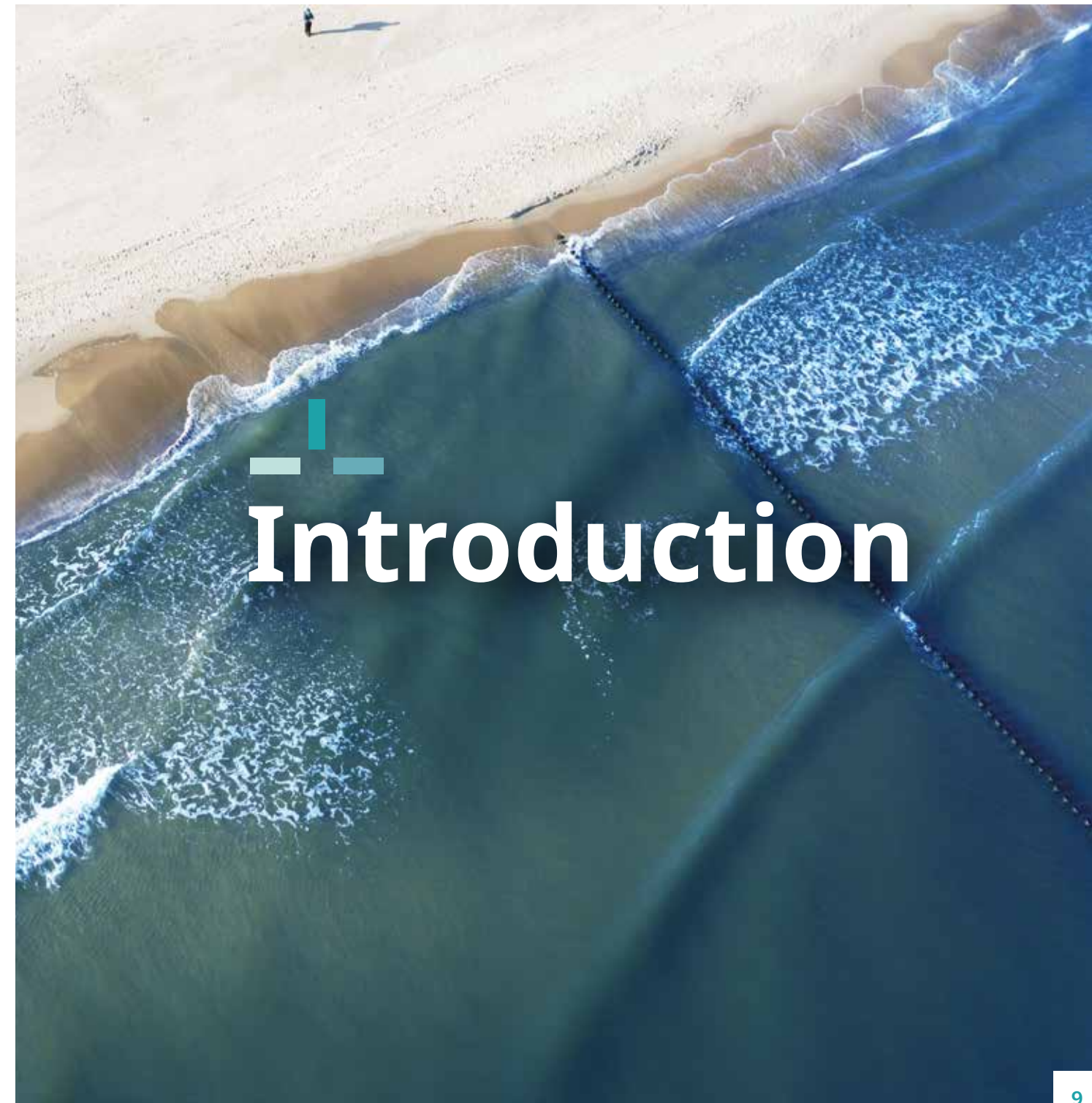




Twelve countries, three seas



**Three Seas  
Initiative**







## What is the Three Seas Initiative?

**T**he Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is a forum grouping together twelve states in Central Eastern Europe (CEE), located between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas.

The regional forum is dedicated to infrastructure projects and groups together Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. All states, with the exception of Austria, found themselves behind the Iron Curtain after the Second World War, but

took the opportunity and joined the EU following the demise of communism in the region.

**The Initiative aims to create regional dialogue on questions affecting member states, particularly within the sphere of cross-border infrastructure.**

The Initiative aims to create regional dialogue on questions affecting member states, particularly within the sphere of cross-border infrastructure. Polish President Andrzej Duda and Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic were

the driving forces behind the project and managed to convince their Central Eastern European partners of the necessity to launch a new form of regional



Polish President Andrzej Duda with Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic

cooperation. The member states met for their first summit in Croatia in 2016.

All the countries of the Three Seas Initiative, with the exception of Austria, have shared historical experiences, with all of them finding themselves under communist regimes and behind the Iron Curtain after the Second World War.

**The Three Seas Initiative was created to fix the infrastructure gap running on a north-south axis in Central Eastern Europe.**

This formidable, ideological barrier imposed on these countries by the Kremlin, severed the natural ties that they once had with the western parts of the European continent. Cultural dialogue, the exchange of ideas and the tradition for many members of the future national elite

to conduct their university studies at the classical learning centers of Western Europe, came to a near complete halt.

Just as significant was the abrupt end to the business ties and trade relations that had flourished in previous years. All the countries behind the Iron Curtain were forced to embrace the planned economy that communist doctrine demanded from them.

**The Three Seas Initiative offers our region a chance to make up for lost opportunities during the postwar economic boom.**

The near five decades of this economic model led to the stagnation of the entire Central and Eastern European region, while Western Europe raced ahead in the post-war period, with their free market economies leading to a recovery and boom that is often described as an economic miracle.

Yet another repercussion of the Iron Curtain was Stalin pressuring Central and Eastern Europe to refuse the much needed US sponsored Marshall Aid, which had successfully kickstarted the Western economies of war-torn Europe.

Additionally, the Iron Curtain raised a barrier, not just between Central and

Eastern Europe and the West, but also between today's members of the Three Seas Initiative.

As long as the Soviet Union played a major role in the region, the roads and railroads that led to Moscow were given top priority, while regional infrastructure, so necessary for the integration of the Three Seas region, remained, partly intentionally, neglected.

Rebuilding the links with each other, and Western Europe, after almost five decades behind the Iron Curtain, has been a slow process. Despite regaining sovereignty in 1989, it took another 15 years before the first countries in the region became members of the European Union. It must be remembered that it was not until very recently that the Three Seas countries were able to take full advantage of what the free internal European market has to offer.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that the Three Seas countries share the experience of foreign domination not just from the post-war era but also





in previous centuries. There was a time at the end of the 17th and through most of the 18th century that all the current member states of the Three Seas Initiative, apart from Austria, had lost their sovereignty to other powers.

The Three Seas Initiative offers our region a chance to make up for lost opportunities during the postwar economic boom. It is up to our generation to take advantage of the situation that has appeared after all our member states joined the European Union.

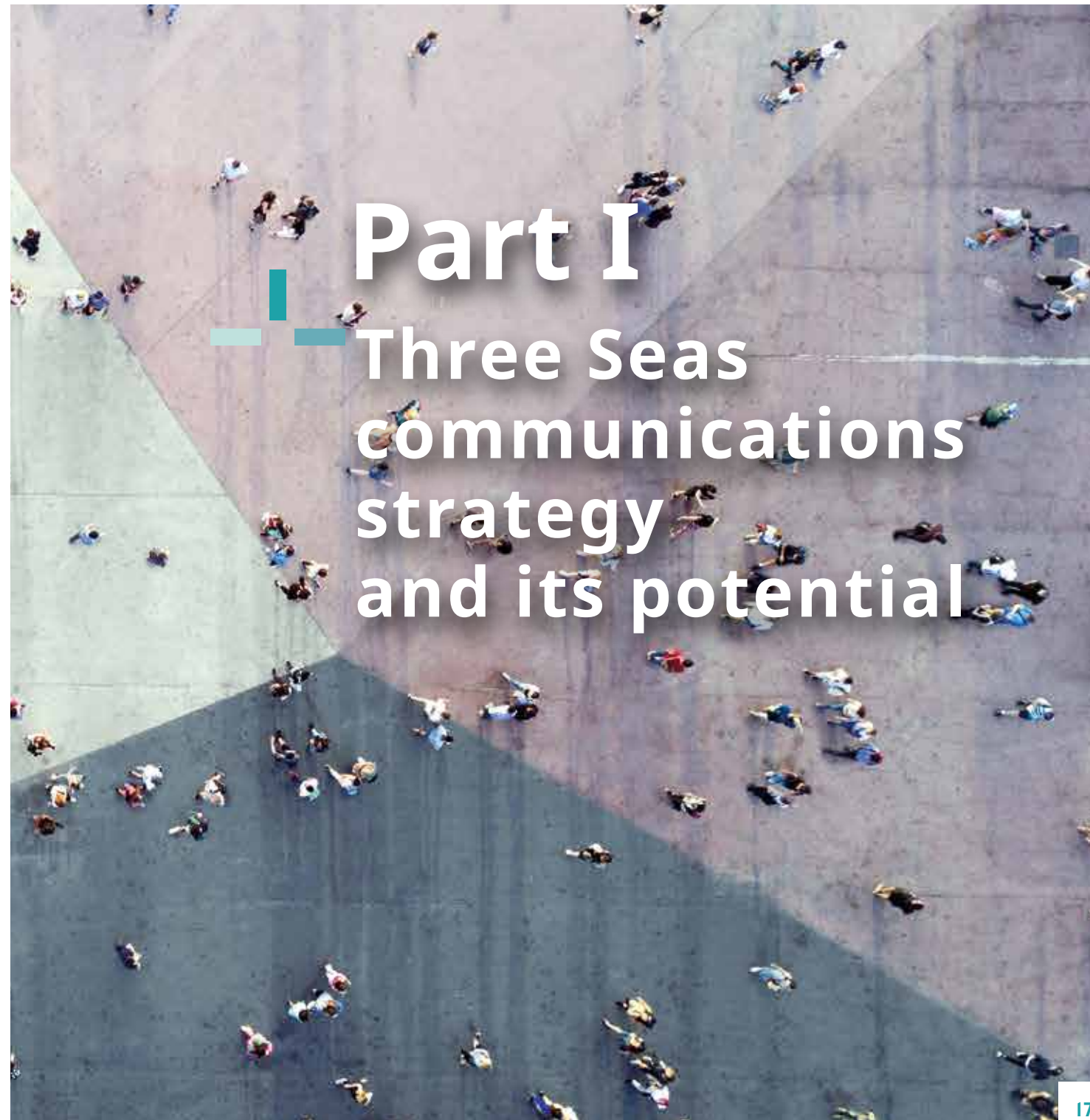
After the political transformation of 1989, all the countries in the region started building roads leading to Germany, Italy and Western Europe in general, which was an economically sensible decision in those years. Much of what needed to be built in the east-west direction has since been

achieved, but infrastructure running in a north-south axis in this part of Europe is still lacking.

As a result, people and goods move much slower within the 3SI region than to Western Europe. Such a state of affairs drastically reduces the incentives for intra-regional trade in CEE but also creates barriers that make it more difficult for nations in our region to cooperate more closely politically, culturally and even socially.

The Three Seas Initiative was established to overcome this “infrastructural gap” as well as to create better conditions to improve trade relations, and to increase energy security in the region. Since its foundation, additional topics for cooperation have been added to the agenda, which we will explore further in this brief.









# 01.

## Promoting the Three Seas: A fascinating history

### Communication to date – challenges and threats

In a survey conducted by the State of Poland Foundation, on a representative sample of 1,214 respondents from 6 Three Seas countries, only 14–23% of respondents (depending on the country studied) showed any interest in political or economic topics – they read, listened or watched political or economic news and could correctly match the surnames of the people carrying out the following functions: the Secretary-General of the United

Nations, the Secretary General of NATO, the President of the European Commission (table 1).

Despite the variance of interest in the aforementioned subjects probably not diverging from a society's interest in architecture for instance, it is significant that so few show interest in subjects which impact a society's shape, quality and living standards, and that stem from the political-economic decisions and projects carried out in the Three Seas region.

TABLE 1

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Czech Republic	Slovenia	Hungary	Poland
% of population aged 18+ who declare that they read, listen or watch to political or economic news at least once a week and who can correctly match surnames to the function they carry out (the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary General of NATO, the President of the European Commission*)	23%	14%	17%	18%	19%	22%

\* this group will henceforth be described in the report as the “sample of people interested in politics and economy”

TABLE 2

Please mark all the initiatives and international organizations which you know, or have heard of	Sample representative of the Three Seas Initiative	Bulgaria	Estonia	Czech Republic	Slovenia	Hungary	Poland
Three Seas Initiative	25%	42%+	18%	13%-	19%	11%-	46%+
N =	605	99	100	102	104	101	99

+/-: statistically significant differences at a confidence level of 95%

As shown by the studies carried out by the State of Poland Foundation, assisted awareness of the Three Seas Initiative project oscillates between 11% and 46% Only in Bulgaria and Poland did more than 1 in 5 respondents state that they know, or have heard about the 3SI (table 2).

The Three Seas infrastructure projects will be of great future benefit to society and venture investments. Motorways, pipelines and high-speed railway lines will significantly raise the standard of living and make it easier to do business in the region.



Vilnius street, Lithuania

Photo: Danuta Nierada





The Merry Cemetery  
in Maramureş, Romania

Photo: Danuta Nierada

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO BETTER  
ESTABLISH THE THREE SEAS INITI-  
ATIVE IN PEOPLE’S CONSCIOUSNESS?

The Three Seas Initiative needs to be firmly established in the consciousness of the region’s residents. At the moment the Initiative is a geopolitical project, for which state governments are responsible for, and therefore communication strategies about the Initiative have been tailor made for government representatives as the message’s intended recipients. However, in order for the project to accelerate

and gain traction, the groundwork needs to be laid for broader communication efforts aimed at businessmen and regular people living in the region. Currently, only 16% of people living in the Three Seas region are aware of the fact that their country belongs to the Three Seas Initiative (table 3).  
Amidst the range of answers defining the Three Seas Initiative, the most commonly chosen one was “An initiative aimed at rebuilding the biological diversity of the waters of the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas” (table 4).

TABLE 3

Select all the initiatives and international organisations that you know of, or have heard of	Sample representative of the Three Seas Initiative	Bulgaria	Estonia	Czech Republic	Slovenia	Hungary	Poland
Three Seas Initiative	16%	29%+	14%	4%-	9%-	5%-	36%+
N =	605	99	100	102	104	101	99

36%

+/-: statistically significant differences at a confidence level of 95%

TABLE 4

Select all the answers from the list below that define the Three Seas Initiative	Sample representative of the Three Seas Initiative	
An economic and political initiative	30%	
A military alliance	9%	
The name of a student exchange program	4%	
An initiative linking 12 countries that are all members of the EU	25%	
An initiative aimed at rebuilding the biological diversity of the waters of the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas	38%	
An initiative to coordinate the construction of trans-regional infrastructure	16%	
Do not know	32%	
N =	605	38%

Building awareness

**A**WARENESS SHOULD BE BUILT ON A CLEAR CONCEPT, USING A MIX OF RATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL ARGUMENTS BASED ON TRUE INSIGHTS, WHILE ALSO SOLVING REAL PROBLEMS.

The Three Seas Initiative is backed by plenty of rational arguments. However, even rational arguments must be communicated by pointing to the benefits they will bring to people, and not just on dry facts alone. The transregional infrastructure projects in the Three Seas Initiative will bring many benefits, but for the time being their technical, hermetic

nature and distant implementation plans serve as a difficult basis for captivating communication.

When respondents of the survey were asked to rank the Three Seas Initiative topics according to those that would interest them the most, that they could imagine themselves actively researching or would gladly listen listen and read about, most respondents chose topics related to building social, historial or cultural identity. Topics related to transport or energy security generated the least interest and attention (table 5).

TABLE 5

Rank the Three Seas Initiative topics listed below, starting from those that interest you the most (you want to find out more about this, you would like to read up about it, you would gladly watch a program on this topic, or take part in an event regarding this) to those you find the least interesting (of no interest to you, boring)	Average	
Transport projects that will allow the Three Seas Initiative States to catch up with Western Europe. New highways and high-speed railways integrating the region	3,18	
Cheap and secure energy. New energy infrastructure projects linking the Three Seas Initiative and ridding it of dependency on any single supplier	4,23	
The most interesting tourist destinations in the Three Seas region	4,39	
Discover the architectural gems of the Three Seas Initiative, Prague, Budapest, Dubrovnik, Riga, Krakow etc.	4,48	
Similarities and differences between Three Seas Initiative cuisines. Best Three Seas dishes and drinks	4,58	
Intangible cultural heritage in Three Seas Initiative states. Hungarian horseback riding-skills on the Pannonian plain, traditional river rafting using wooden rafts on the Dunajec river in Poland/Slovakia, Nestinarstvo – ancient fire dancing in Bulgaria etc.	4,7	
The greatest artists, painters, authors, musicians etc that the Three Seas Initiative have gifted the world	5,22	
All of us behind the Iron Curtain – A comparison of the everyday problems associated with living under communism in the Eastern Bloc	5,24	
Sample representative of the Three Seas Initiative, N =	605	5,24







## 02.

### The Three Seas concept

**T**he Three Seas concept needs to be clearly defined. Phenomena exist in people's consciousness only when they are defined, integrated in their essence and, if possible, visualized. To put it more simply: If we want a phenomenon to appear, we must name it. If we want it to enter permanently into consciousness, we must turn it into a vision.

Although the Three Seas Initiative stands on a strictly business-oriented premise, the implementation of business projects is not enough to fill the concept with a necessary, deeper meaning. Building motorways and gas pipelines connecting the region is a specific technical topic,

difficult to absorb for a wider audience due to its hermetic nature, as well as the distant prospect of realization.

The Three Seas Initiative has enormous potential but people's awareness about it must be consistently built upon.

The Three Seas needs a story which awakens positive emotions and gives the project the essence that makes the intended audience identify with its idea. The general public and decision-makers alike need to identify with the Initiative in order to support and commit to the project. Without that, there will be limited possibilities to obtain the funding and intangible resources that the project needs.

**If we want  
a phenomenon to  
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turn it into a vision.**





## Why is it so important to promote the Three Seas Initiative?

**T**he Three Seas Initiative is more than just a declarative, spiritual union of twelve countries.

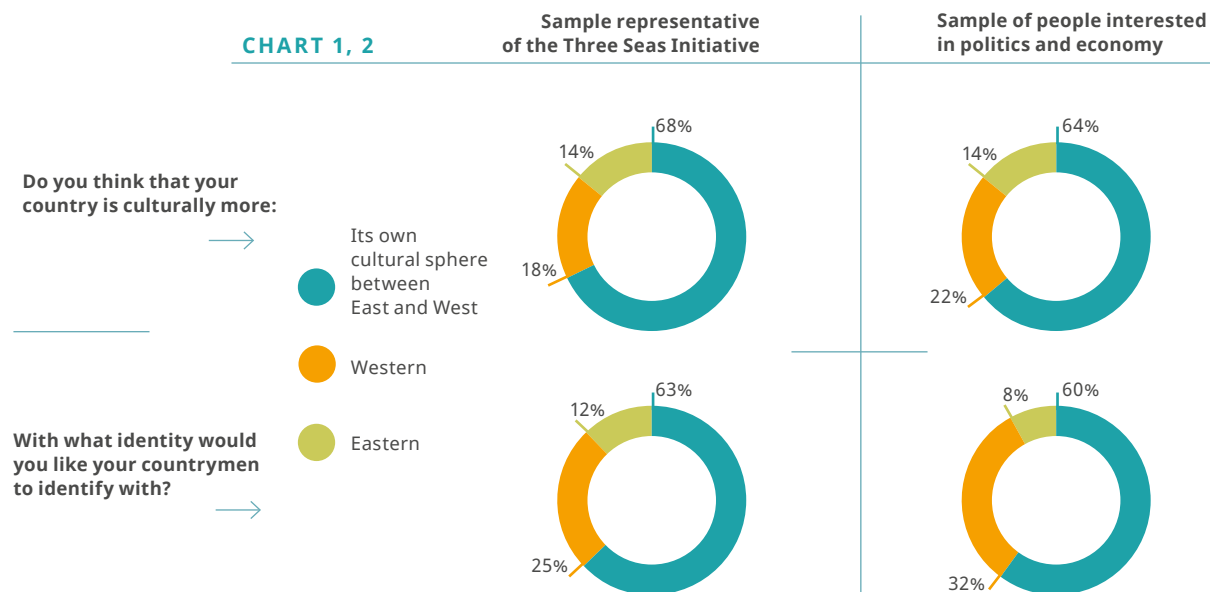
The Three Seas Initiative consists of 112 million people living in a region with a total area of more than 1 million square kilometers. Here lies the potential that can be used to show the people of the region that they don't have to be the "East of the West", nor "the West of the East", but can be the vibrant heart of Europe.

Today, 2/3 of Three Seas residents believe that they belong to a cultural community located between the West and the East (Charts 1 and 2). This

cultural self-identification is accompanied by a desire for one's compatriots to also identify with that unique cultural and civilizational sphere. It is only through close cooperation that the Three Seas societies will be able to take full advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead of us, our countries and our economies.

The combined capabilities of all the countries in the region give it the capacity to achieve much more than through the acts of individual states. Joint lobbying efforts by the 12 countries will allow for national and regional interests to be taken





\* A survey performed by the Warsaw Enterprise Institute among companies from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia on the issue of protectionism within the EU

into account, but are only possible if the importance of being an integral part of a larger whole is fully understood. According to studies, nearly 40% of companies surveyed state that they themselves, or their business partners, have encountered protectionist practices in the European Union.\*

The people of the Three Seas Initiative were given a chance to be part of a larger whole through their membership in

the European Union. However, they still lack the conviction that they provide the Union with significant contributions, while also being insufficiently aware about just how much they have to offer the world. Raising the level of awareness about it will make it possible for them to regain the identity and dignity of which they were deprived of during communism and the centuries-long treatment of their homelands as a crossroads or battlefield of foreign powers.







A high level of awareness regarding the initiative and broad support of the population for the project are important to gain the support of the political elite. As already mentioned, without it it will be difficult to obtain the resources necessary for the success of the Initiative. Increased cooperation in the region, especially through increased investments into cross-border infrastructure, will be one of the main factors in accelerating economic growth, helping Central Eastern Europe to catch up with Western Europe.

Inhabitants of Three Seas states rate the potential for cooperation within the Initiative for most of the ongoing or planned projects very positively (table 6).

The largest amount of “promoters” (people, who rated cooperation within the Three Seas a 9 or 10 on a scale of 1–10, where 1 means completely unimportant

and 10 means very important) were gained by: improving the transport infrastructure (roads, rail) between member states, improving the ecology of the region, including air quality, accelerating economic and technological growth of the Initiative’s member states (table 6).

The Three Seas Initiative is a key project for increasing energy security, improvement of road and rail infrastructure, increasing trade volumes, digitization and closer business relations. These are important and rational goals. However, the following question remains: how to best stimulate interest for the Initiative among the general public?

When asked about the North-South Gas Corridor, the 3 Seas Digital Highway, Smart Connectivity, the Visegrad High-Speed Railway Line, the Digital Platform on Monitoring Hydrographic Bases in the 3SI

**The total capitalization of the region’s stock exchanges amounted to EUR 347 billion in 2018, and the value of transport, energy and digital projects implemented by them between 2014–2020 – EUR 80 billion.\***

\* According to a report by the Polish Economic Institute

region or the Via Carpatia Highway Network, every third Three Seas resident considers them absolutely crucial for the region.

TABLE 6

	Sample representative for the Three Seas Initiative			Sample of people interested in politics and economy		
On a scale of 1 to 10, (in which 1 signifies “of very little importance”, while 10 means “crucial project for the region”) how important do you think cooperation within the Three Seas Initiative will be for:	% Critics (answering 1-6 on the scale)	% Indifferent (answering 7-8 on the scale)	% Promoters (answering 9-10 on the scale)	% Critics (answering 1-6 on the scale)	% Indifferent (answering 7-8 on the scale)	% Promoters (answering 9-10 on the scale)
Improving the transport infrastructure (roads, rail) between member states	35%	33%	32%	12%	25%	63%
Improving the ecology of the region, including air quality	31%	35%	34%	20%	27%	53%
Accelerating economic and technological growth of the group	30%	31%	39%	12%	30%	58%
Promoting tourism to and the cuisines of Three Seas countries, within the region itself as well as beyond	29%	32%	39%	25%	32%	43%
Softening historical animosities that used to hinder cooperation within the region	23%	29%	48%	24%	32%	44%
Getting to know the history and culture of the countries in the Three Seas and of the region as a whole	24%	27%	49%	24%	39%	37%
Increasing the feeling of belonging and community amongst the inhabitants of Three Seas countries	20%	27%	53%	31%	35%	34%

Interestingly, all the mentioned initiatives are considered equally important (Table 7) and are particularly highly valued by the Baby Boomer generation.

TABLE 7

	Sample representative for the Three Seas Initiative			Sample of people interested in politics and economy		
Which infrastructure projects do you think will have the most positive effect on the region? Rate them on a scale of 1 to 10 (in which 1 signifies “where little positive effect” and 10 means “crucial project for the region”)	% Critics (answering 1-6 on the scale)	% Indifferent (answering 7-8 on the scale)	% Promoters (answering 9-10 on the scale)	% Critics (answering 1-6 on the scale)	% Indifferent (answering 7-8 on the scale)	% Promoters (answering 9-10 on the scale)
The North-South Gas Corridor	34%	32%	34%	26%	32%	42%
The 3 Seas Digital Highway	37%	33%	30%	26%	37%	37%
Smart Connectivity, (digitization of transport and energy)	38%	32%	30%	26%	34%	40%
Visegrad high-speed railway line	37%	35%	28%	27%	34%	39%
The Via Carpatia transport corridor	37%	35%	28%	26%	33%	41%
Digital Platform on monitoring hydrographic bases in the 3SI region	39%	34%	27%	30%	35%	35%





# 04.

## Communication through Benefits

### What's in it for me?

The most effective way to reach a wide audience is to build your

communication on what is beneficial, that is, through the issues that people are most interested in. These are: personal welfare, and in a broader context – the welfare of one's family, community and country.

Benefits are not just limited to practical, utilitarian, material things, but also, and perhaps most importantly, emotional and uplifting benefits that inspire people to join the cause.

**Benefits are not just limited to practical, utilitarian, material things, but also, and perhaps most importantly, emotional and uplifting benefits that inspire people to join the cause.**

Communication through benefits is the most effective promotional

means because it ignites spontaneous interest and has a low-threshold for information absorption by recipients. Emotional benefits are used to achieve success by some of the world's best brands, known in the advertising world as

“Love Brands”.

Benefits resonate best in people's minds when they are based on real insights and well-defined issues



that provide a strong foundation for a well-constructed message.

How does the Three Seas Initiative help ordinary people in their everyday lives and how does it enrich them? To put things

differently, how does the Three Seas benefit the region's citizens, how does it help accelerate the region's development, how does it help Central and Eastern Europe catch up with Western Europe?

## — Emotional benefits

One of the most important aspects of the project is to show the people the potential that their country and the region as a whole have. Decades of communism greatly decreased their sense of self-confidence and identity. The planned economies slowed down economic growth and eroded trust in state institutions. Rebuilding the self-confidence of people living in the Three Seas and convincing them of the need to set ambitious goals for their countries will be crucial for the region's future.

An important aspect of the project is also to show the people of the region that we do not have to be at the periphery of major powers, we do not have to

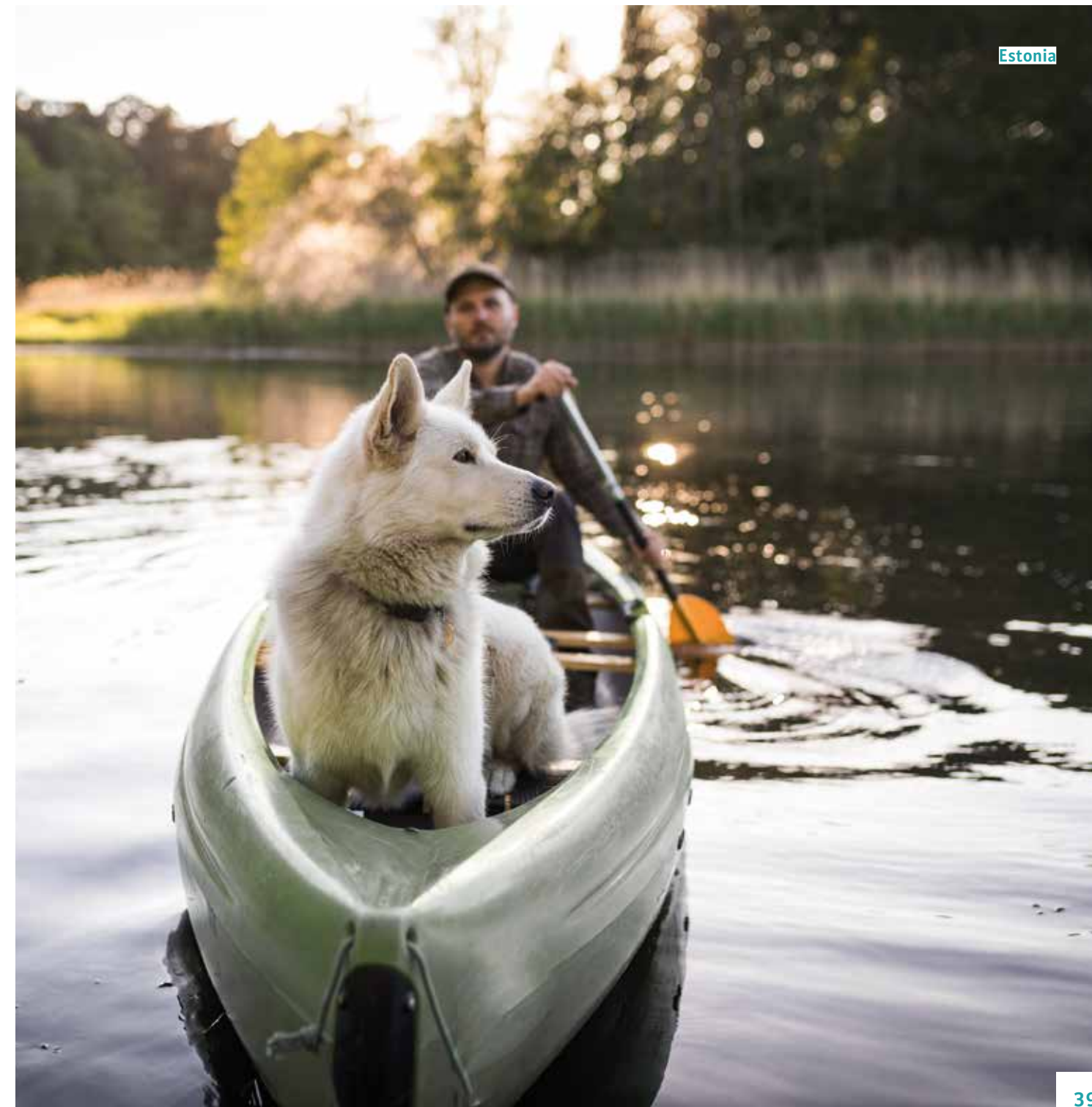
be “the East of the West” or “the West of the East”. Instead, we can take our rightful role as the Heart of Europe and be masters of our own destiny.

This is confirmed by the survey results (Table 8), according to which nearly 40% of Three Seas residents believe that the political power with which the Three Seas Initiative should have the closest relationship is the Initiative itself and that it should focus on internal cooperation within the Initiative.

We must stop blindly imitating those we consider better than ourselves.

We should draw more from our own past, experiences, failures, successes and unique identity.

**We should draw more from our own past, experiences, failures, successes and unique identity.**



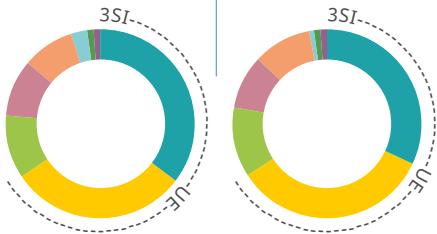


Up To Date Festival 2020,  
Poland

Photo: Krzysztof Karpiński

TABLE 8

With which world power do you think the Three Seas should cooperate closest with?	Sample represent- ative for the Three Seas Initiative	Sample of people interested in politics and economy
	N = 605	N = 609
Treat all the world powers similarly and focus on cooperation within the Three Seas Initiative region	36%	32%
The European Union	31%	34%
Germany	11%	12%
Russia	10%	9%
USA	9%	10%
China	3%	1%
Japan	1%	1%
Turkey	1%	1%



Rational benefits

The Three Seas Initiative is a project that will truly help people by making the region more developed,

better connected, more technological-ly advanced, more sovereign and, most importantly, richer.





## — National pride and Three Seas identity

National pride, Three Seas pride can be partly derived from the history of previous regional powers such as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Přemyslid dynasty, the Jagiellonian dynasty or the Bulgarian Empire of Simon the Great.

Let us say: **MY COUNTRY IS TOO SMALL TO HAVE MUCH INFLUENCE ON THE EU, BUT THANKS TO THREE SEAS COOPERATION WE CAN DEAL WITH FORCES TOO BIG TO HANDLE FOR ANY SINGLE COUNTRY IN THE REGION.**

We can draw inspiration and models from countries that have developed and created a strong cultural identity and pride, especially countries such as the USA, Great Britain or France. We

can be inspired by the beginnings of the European Union, which at its inception was a purely economic project.

The Three Seas Initiative can thrive not as a rival to the EU, but rather by serving as its eastern reinforcement.

**The Three Seas Initiative can thrive not as a rival to the EU, but rather by serving as its eastern reinforcement.**

Using the Three Seas brand, combined resources and synergic effects, we can promote the whole region and individual countries to audiences far beyond

the Three Seas Initiative itself.

This aspect of the communication strategy is particularly important to attract not only tourists but above all Foreign Direct Investment from North America, Western Europe and East Asia.





# 05.

## Three Seas – Let's get to know each other!

Central Eastern Europe and the Three Seas is a beautiful region full of magical places, unique nature, great cuisine, interesting cities, robust culture and extraordinary monuments. There is great potential to build intra-regional curiosity, promote tourism and youth exchange, and promote the region internationally within these important fields.

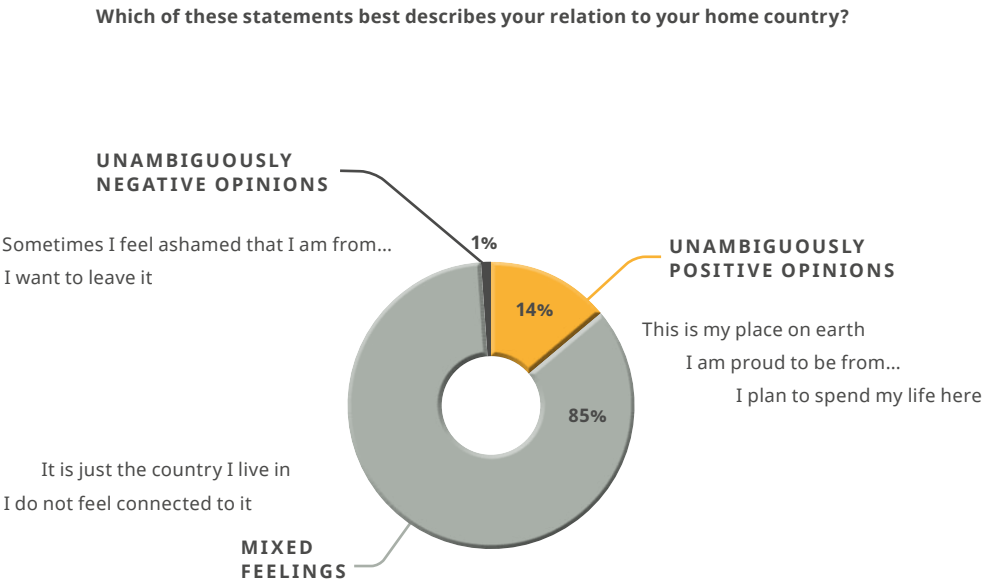
### **Appetite for the Three Seas**

For that to happen, we need to get to know each other even better,

and to do so from our best sides. As the survey shows (Chart 3), residents of Three Seas states are critical of the countries they live in, though only 1% of respondents have unambiguously negative opinions of their country, as many as 85% express mixed feelings. Often, answers indicating a sense of civic pride, plans to spend their lives in their country and statements confirming that their country is “their place on earth” are accompanied by answers that also signal



CHART 3



a sense of shame, lack of attachment and willingness to leave the country.

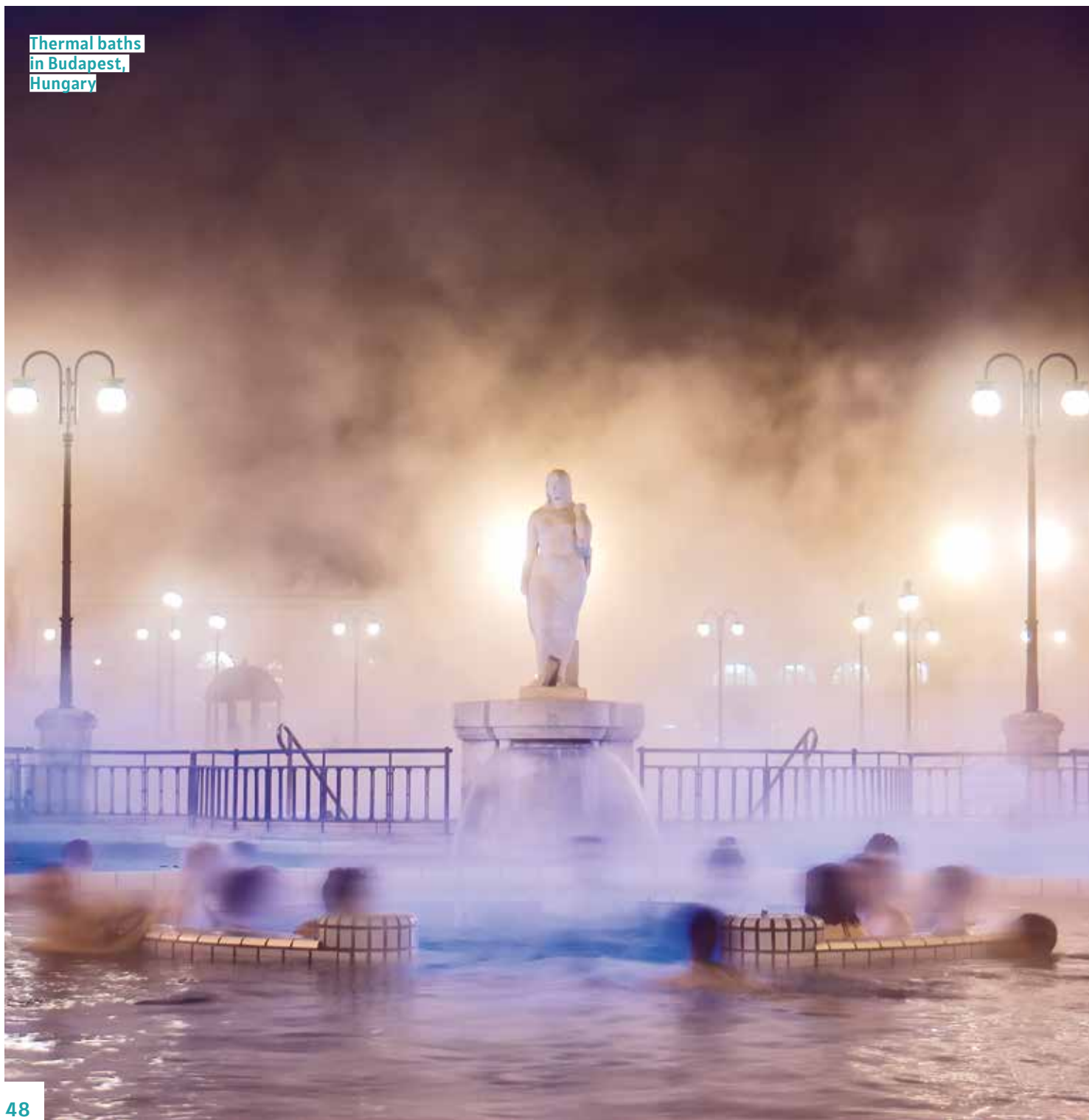
The following table (Table 9) shows which problems residents of the region, and its specific states, perceive as affecting their country.

The first step to remedy the situation is to identify the topics and areas that will present the region in the most beneficial way and trigger the so-called “Appetite for the Three Seas”.

TABLE 9

According to you, which of the below problems concerns your country:	Bulgaria	Estonia	Czech Republic	Slovenia	Hungary	Poland
Corruption	74%+	41%-	63%	61%	68%	57%
High numbers of young people leaving the country	80%+	65%+	20%-	46%-	71%+	54%
Lack of funds to conduct development research to propel the economy forward	45%	59%+	52%	31%-	45%	55%
Compared to Europe, a relatively low level of transport infrastructure (roads, trains)	57%+	40%	37%	50%	44%	47%
Low level of competitiveness of national firms on the international arena	53%+	46%	33%-	40%	38%	37%
Comparatively to Europe, relatively low levels of transport infrastructure (roads, rail) leading from your country to neighbouring countries in Central and Eastern Europe	39%	41%	36%	38%	35%	41%
Lack of knowledge in the West about my country's history and culture	47%+	45%+	38%	15%-	32%	43%
High levels of smog, pollution and environmental contamination	47%+	17%-	30%	12%-	32%	64%+
Low level of awareness about tourism opportunities in your country from an international audience	37%+	28%	24%	21%	18%-	29%
Relatively low level of digitisation	25%	8%-	38%+	10%-	15%	21%
None of the above	1%-	1%-	6%	11%+	4%	6%
Sample representative for the Three Seas Initiative, N =	99	100	102	104	101	99

+/-: statistically significant differences at a confidence level of 95%



Thermal baths  
in Budapest,  
Hungary



## The Three Seas – a fascinating story

**A**s it is widely known, everyone likes to talk and listen about... themselves. This is not only the best way to interest the interlocutor, but also a way to ensure that people join a project and expand its scope. None of the individual countries can carry the Three Seas communication plan alone. Just as the very idea of the Three Seas is based on voluntary participation, the communication plan should attract partners to link up out of

**Good storytelling, fascinating stories told with zest, arousing interest and desire for more will bring the expected result.**

their own free will. This is only possible when everyone sees their own benefit in the context of expanding the Three Seas project, i.e., when they can tell their own story by participating in building an interesting and attractive concept. The historical experiences, shared values, and similar mindsets that unite the Three Seas states provide the invaluable foundation on which a joint and unifying narrative can be built. (Table 10).



The success of a communication campaign is based not only on what we say, but also how we say it. Good storytelling, fascinating stories told with zest, arousing interest and desire for more will bring the expected result.

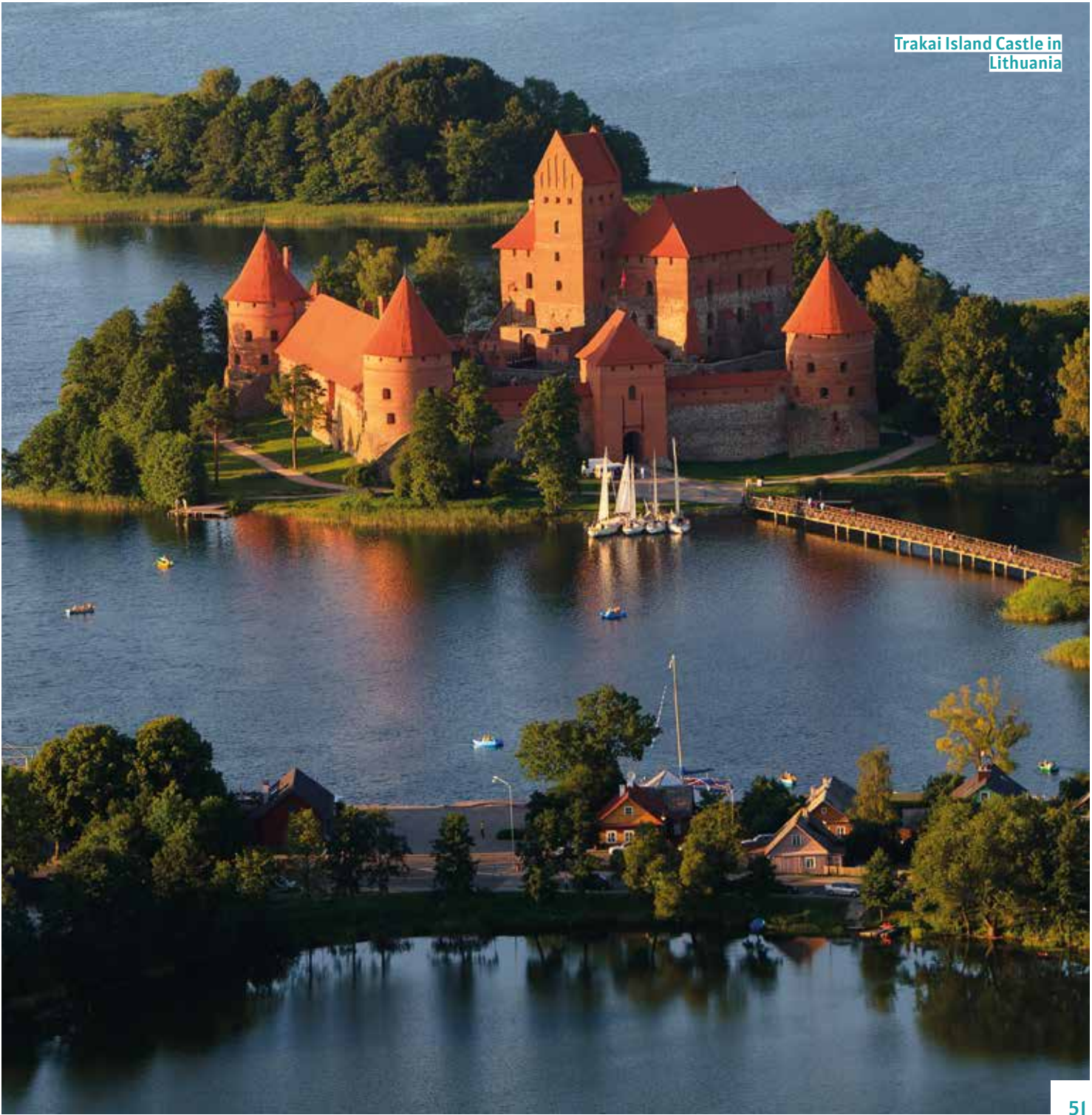
We will not bore you – things will be interesting!

Will it be possible to “tell the story” of our countries in this way?

TABLE 10

Select all the statements that according to you link the countries belonging to the Three Seas Initiative, aside from belonging to the initiative itself	Sample representative for the Three Seas Initiative, N =	Bulgaria	Estonia	Czech Republic	Slovenia	Hungary	Poland
Historical experiences behind the Iron Curtain (except for Austria)	47%	43%	60%+	56%	37%-	44%	45%
All the countries (except for Austria) are relatively less developed economically compared to Western Europe	44%	51%	38%	46%	38%	49%	43%
Similar values, similar way of thinking	37%	33%	47%+	29%	41%	39%	34%
N =	605	99	100	102	104	101	99

+/-: statistically significant differences at a confidence level of 95%



Trakai Island Castle in Lithuania





# 07.

## How to speak so to be heard

**T**he Three Seas communication strategy needs to operate on two levels: on the one hand, it should inform at the political, expert, institutional, and academic levels; on the other hand, it should be based on a more popular and easily digestible approach to informing and shape public opinion.

Communication within the Initiative is complex. Both because of the vastness of the project itself, which includes infrastructure, energy, and digitization initiatives, and the size of the region itself, which encompasses many languages, cultures, and histories.

This “vastness” is both a difficulty and an opportunity, as it allows

the initiative to be promoted through popular culture in multiple ways.

Numerous studies and consultations allowed the State of Poland Foundation to determine the range of topics that are of most interest to Three Seas residents.

We identified 5 main topics:

- TOURISM**
- CUISINE**
- CULTURE**
- HISTORY**
- EDUCATION**

These topics were chosen because they are broad and attractive to the audience. The strategy built around them will allow us to reach the maximum number of



The Prague  
Astronomical Clock  
in the Czech Republic



people in the region and beyond, as well as engaging a large group of regular people

that will reproduce our message, creating organic reach.

## Tourism

The Three Seas countries are not inferior to other European countries in terms of beauty and attractiveness. However, for the most part they remain not as well known as their western counterparts. It is time to change that and start promoting the most interesting places our region has to offer. We should show the beauty of our countries, landscapes, forests, lakes, seas, mountains and cities. The process to build bridges between Three Seas countries can be accelerated by encouraging locals to discover benefits of intra-regional tourism. It is said that: Travel is the only thing you pay for that makes you richer. It gives you a better understanding not only of the place you travelled to and the people living there, but also puts your own country and nation into perspective.

**Travel is the only thing  
you pay for that makes  
you richer.**

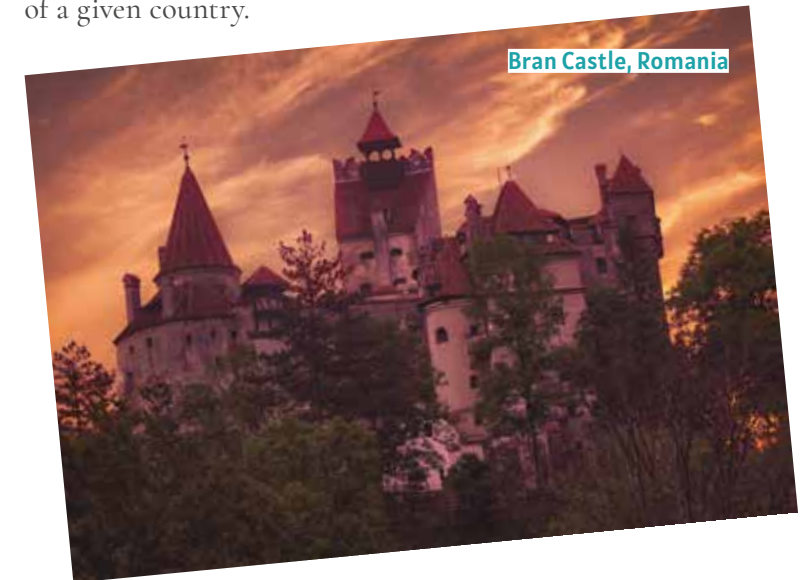
A broader, more global promotion campaign of the region will also be advantageous from both an economic and regional identity-building perspective.

Tourist communication does not necessarily have to be solely focused on actual travels, in a broader sense

it can be used to gather aesthetic photos and interesting content resources that can be used

to create a more attractive perception of a given country.

Bran Castle, Romania







Lake Bled,  
Slovenia



Castle Square  
in Warsaw, Poland

## Cuisine

Hippocrates said – “You are what you eat”. The fact that food is an integral part of a nation’s culture gives this saying a double meaning. The ability to cook and feast is a common characteristic of us Europeans. After the communist times of poverty, we are able to appreciate a good meal and drink, and pleasant company. We have retained the ability to cook, as well as good housekeeping. The region’s cuisine often remains close to an ecological way of

thinking, as hard times have taught people the ability to organize food on their own and to make optimal use of what is available in our local area. We use what nature has to offer and know how to conjure up delicious dishes under almost any conditions.

We can talk about food – it is a topic that never ends, is always current, and surprisingly, arouses a lot of emotion.

The cuisines of Central and Eastern Europe are carriers of many shared

values, such as openness, hospitality, thriftiness and tradition.

The relatively similar culinary culture of our region allows us to boldly try new things and does not intimidate like many exotic cuisines can. The cuisine of Central and Eastern Europe is still largely undiscovered by the world, yet it is a carrier of many common values – such as openness, hospitality, thrift, and tradition.

We gather around the table not only to eat. For us, it is a family and social event. The people of the Three Seas are hospitable and welcoming.

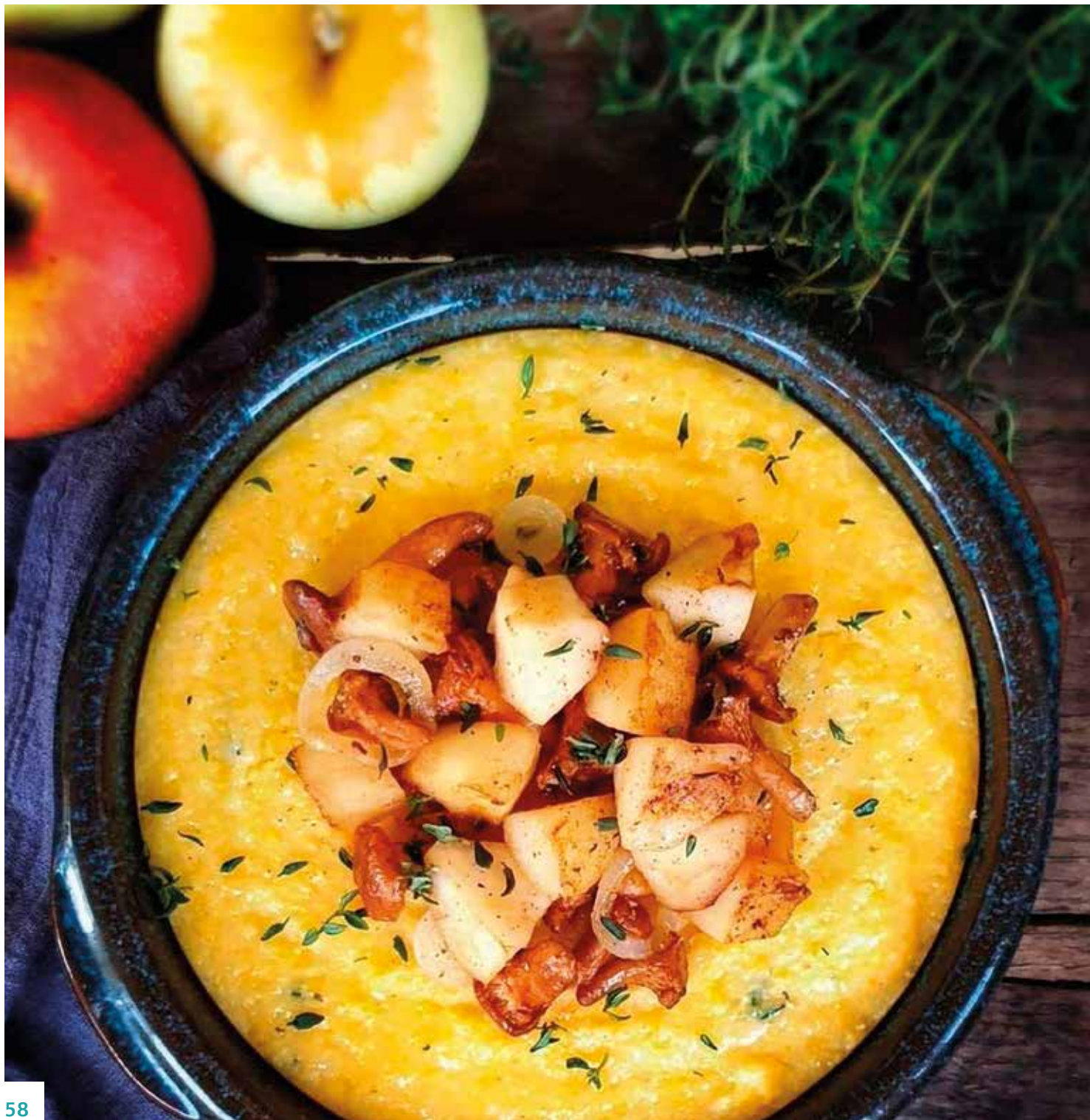
**The cuisines of Central and Eastern Europe are carriers of many shared values, such as openness, hospitality, thriftiness and tradition.**

We must not underestimate the importance of the fact that practically every country in our region specializes in various kinds of alcoholic beverages. Polish vodka, Czech beer, Hungarian Tokaji wines are true national and regional treasures.

Telling our history through culinary and feast culture has the power to bring people together and unite them through common interests and shared values.







## Culture

Culture is the totality of history, tradition, and civilizational development of a country or region. Central and Eastern Europe still remains unknown, not only to the global public, but even to the people who constitute its components. We are used to learning about Western European history, while knowing little about our neighbors. The Three Seas Initiative will make it possible to build bridges between our

**We are used to learning about Western European history, while knowing little about our neighbors.**

past and our present by creating a sense of rootedness, relevance, and most of all, identity. Practically every country can boast of outstanding personalities who have made a mark in the history of science, art, sports and civilization. However, very often, as a result of communist rewriting of history and the breaking up of cultural continuity, these great figures have been forgotten to such an extent that they are difficult to find.

## History

History is a topic that unites us all – and the Three Seas have deep past and present ties with each other. Most of the pages of our common history are unknown to the public or have been erased from the collective memory by communist

**There is a saying that history is written by the victors. Regaining independence is undoubtedly a victory, so it is time to tell our story.**

propaganda. There is a saying that history is written by the victors. Regaining independence is undoubtedly a victory, so it is time to tell our story. In addition, modern marketing greatly appreciates the power of skillful storytelling.



## Education

Education is key in shaping the minds of future generations, especially at a high school and university level. It is essential for a well functioning and prospering society. The integration of the region, the building of future elites and the creation of a regional identity all rests on education. The success of

**The integration of the region, the building of future elites and the creation of a regional identity all rests on education.**

the Erasmus program in forging an EU identity is an example to follow and one to be inspired by. The ideal way to promote the region would be university exchanges, which would allow young people to experience the Three Seas under optimal conditions, namely on the spot.





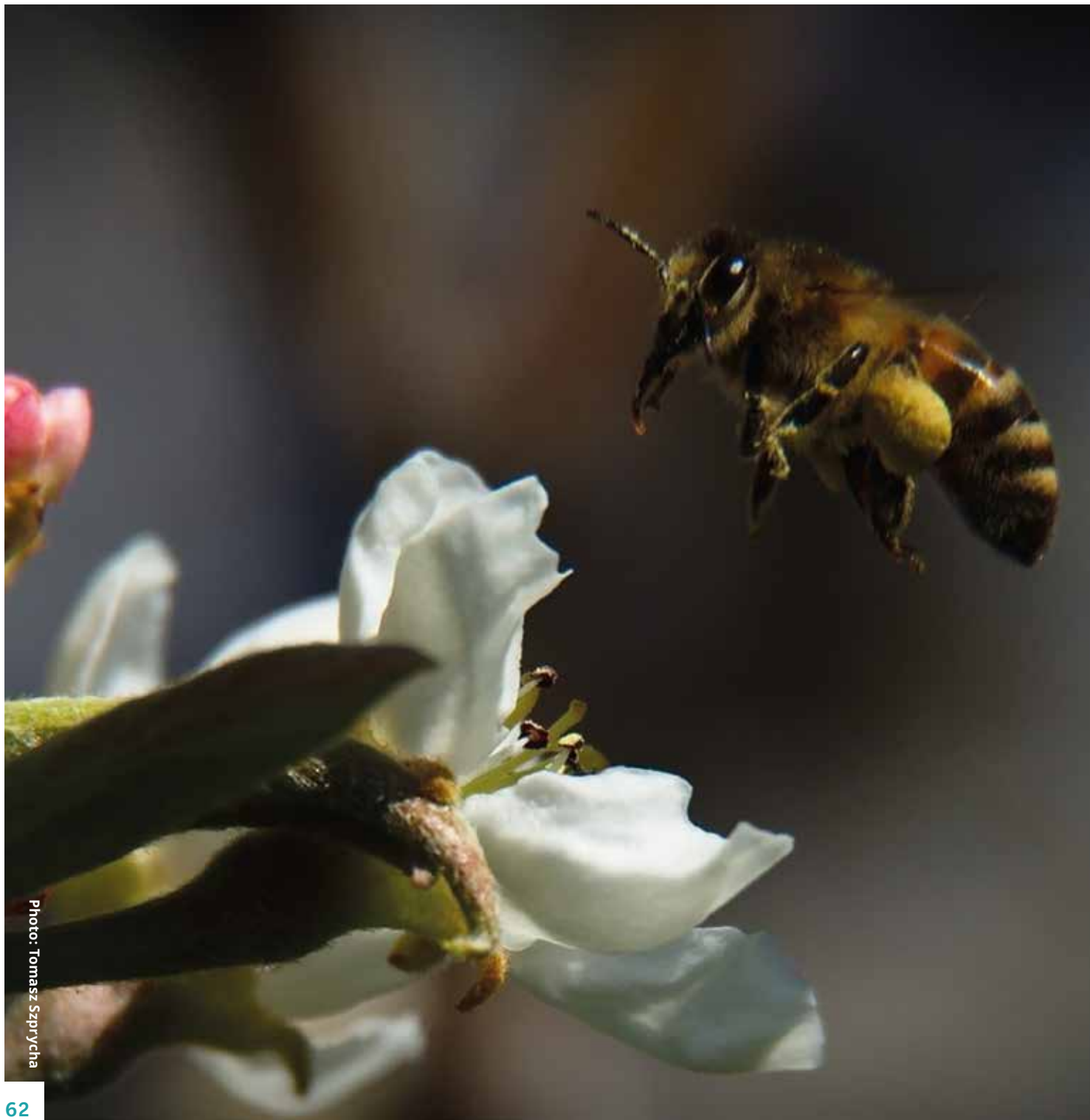


Photo: Tomasz Szprycha

# 08.



## Message dissemination strategy

**C**reating attractive content is only half a victory. Only skilful distribution will make it a complete success. There are many forms of paid

promotion, but the most desirable way is to “infect” the audience by the snowballing effect of organic reach.

### — Pathways to popularize the Three Seas concept

» Cultural diplomacy on a Three Seas level – based on historical events, which unite the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, shared architecture, development of infrastructure (for example railways built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), showing the story

of what has been done and what still needs to be achieved.

» Organising film festivals highlighting films from the region, combining them with food and drink from respective Three Seas countries

- » creating TV and film productions, both to promote tourism, history, issues connecting the region's countries, and product placement (all categories)
- » Organising national, regional and international debates, discussions and panels on the Three Seas and various aspects within the Initiative
- » Promoting various historical figures, especially those that played an important role in multiple countries across the region
- » Highlighting examples of past co-operation between nations within the region
- » Cooperating with and between student associations in the region, in order to integrate the youth and future leaders from the region amongst themselves
- » Mapping and using the power of the Three Seas diaspora – for promotional use, for PR, but also for lobbying
- » Branding the “economic miracle” taking place in the Three Seas region since 1989 (3 Seas Tigers?)
- » Creating network of experts and ambassadors promoting the Three Seas Initiative
- » Creating an atlas of mutual positive stereotypes
- » Organizing online competitions and rankings; for example, online national voting to nominate the best wine a country has to offer, or its tastiest national dish. The content can be promoted and pushed using social media
- » Promoting intra-regional tourism through cultural values and landscapes. Showcasing historical monuments, the beauty of nature, including various animals and breeds characteristic for the region that can be pushed as symbols of given countries (e.g. European bison in Poland or the Croatian Black Slavonian pig)

Distilled  
geography:  
Europe's  
“alcohol belts”



## Distribution channels

### — Social media and the internet

**A**n internet page serving as a platform for Three Seas news will play the crucial role in all communication efforts. The page will be a place where we can get to know each other on an intra-regional level. The page will be run by representatives from various Three Seas countries, with the emphasis placed on topics associated with tourism, cuisine, culture, events and economy.

The platform will also be used to aggregate and promote current cultural

and entertainment events taking place in the Three Seas region on a continuously updated event map.

**The news portal will enable the inhabitants of the Three Seas region to share their experiences and present their different points of view.**

The new hub for Three Seas news will provide content mainly in English and will be run by journalists, influencers and experts from individual countries. It will set a new standard of quality in terms of promoting content from the Three Seas, which until now has often been hermetically sealed in the native languages of the region.



The platform will allow people from this part of Europe to share their experiences and express their unique points of view. It will be a place for information on the Three Seas Initiative, the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund and various regional projects bringing people closer to each other through improved infrastructure and economic initiatives. The Three Seas page will also serve as a meeting place for businesses, both large and small.

Ultimately, the portal should have editorial offices in all Three Seas member states, with the offices constituting the nucleus of national Three Seas clubs that will coordinate the distribution of

content, but also maintain and work on expanding a network of NGOs, think tanks, influencers, businessmen and politicians who are active in Three Seas Initiative-related affairs.

The website will also be helpful in organizing cyclical Three Seas fairs taking place in successive countries of the region. The fairs will be dedicated mainly to economic affairs, bringing together financial organizations, small and medium-sized enterprises with exhibition spaces where conferences and debates are to be held on important issues such as the establishment of common legislation, networks of cooperation, and tools for overcoming obstacles to cooperative action.

## — Social media accounts

- » Three Seas accounts in all languages of the region, as well as an English language account.
- » Platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube

## — Traditional media

- » Articles in mainstream press
- » Television presence
- » Film







Photo: @tanczaca\_z\_aparatem

## — Three Seas Ambassadors

**R**epresentatives from five groups, all of whom are influential in their country, should be sought out and convinced to participate in promoting websites and social media accounts that focus on spreading information about the Three Seas Initiative

**EXPERTS** – A group of experts in various fields: art, history, tourism, sociology, ethnology, tourism, cuisine, politics, energy security, international relations and economics should be assembled. Integrate them with each other in a environment centered on the Three Seas Initiative.

**JOURNALISTS** – Identity a group of journalists writing on geopolitics, economy, and narrow topics such as transportation, energy markets and digitization. Pursue a relationship with them based on keeping them informed on Three Seas news pertaining to their fields of specialisation. In

this regard, a Three Seas news site and associated social media accounts can be presented as a good source of inspiration for future articles and news.

**POLITICIANS** – An analysis should be carried out to pinpoint the most Three Seas-friendly politicians in each member state, at regional, national and EU levels. The politicians can then be introduced to the intellectual and strategic resources of the State of Poland Foundation, as well as our offer of assistance to network with other politicians who support the Initiative.

As Markus Prior writes in his book “Hooked: How Politics Captures People's Interest”, “Some people cast their vote only occasionally, with little information guiding their final decision. Others may not even vote, but they gather and share information that influences those who do. Some people study politics exhaustively, just to make the best decision. Others spend



a lot of time and effort on building coalitions and organizing joint actions. Together, through their political decisions and actions, they determine how a country handles challenges and moves forward.” Thus, it is crucial for the Three Seas Initiative and its projects, which are long-term by design, for broad segments of the population to be systematically involved in building the Initiative.

**COMMENTATORS AND INFLUENCERS** – This category can be most useful in reaching a large audience. People who already have a large reach and many followers online can be engaged to record and publish content related to the Three Seas Initiative. Our goal should be to encourage them to purvey

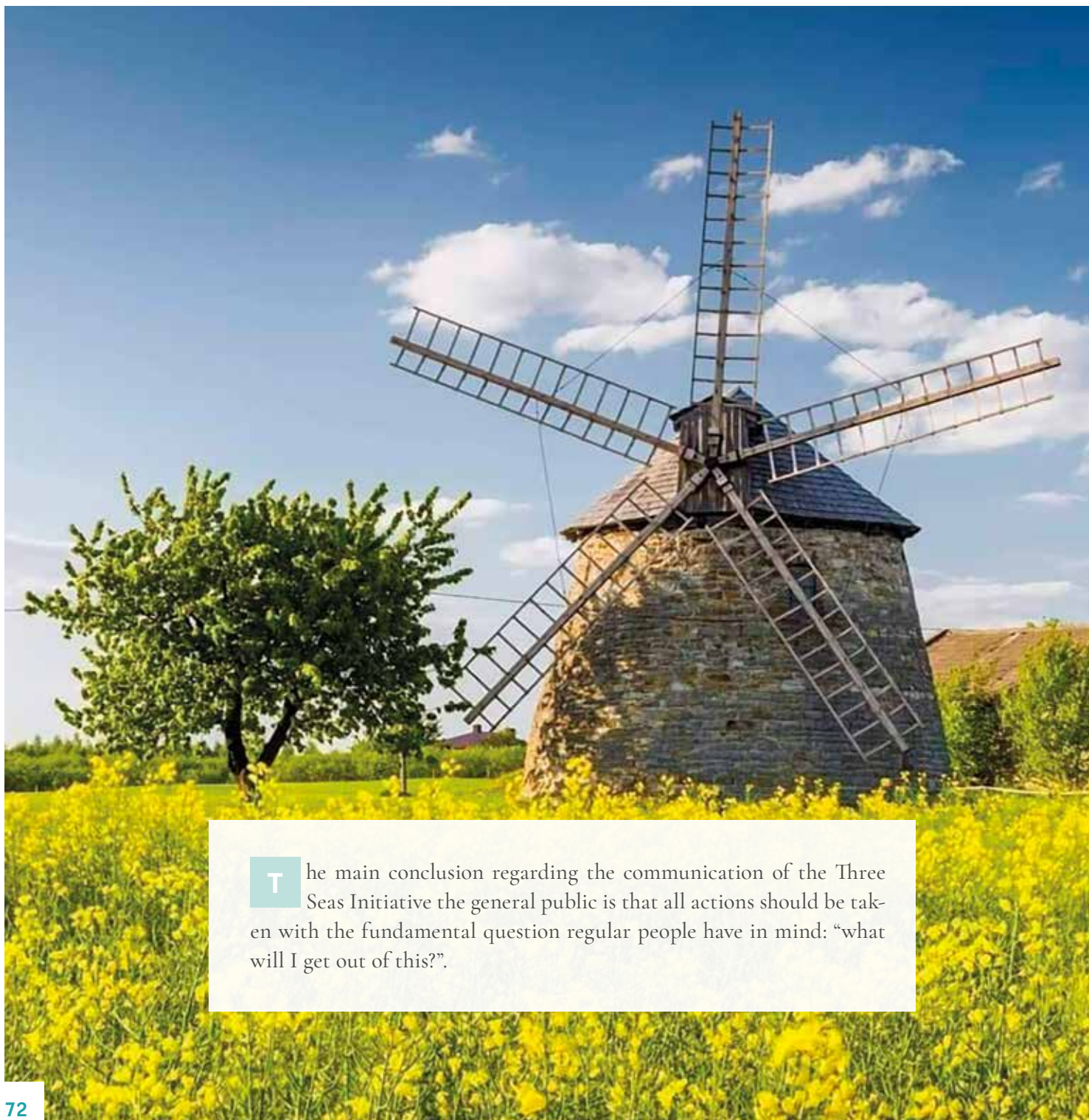
the most accurate and truthful news from their country.

**STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND NGOS** – Students and those involved in NGOs should be convinced that the Three Seas Initiative is aligned with their views and goals. Since the 2018 Bucharest Summit, the Initiative has increasingly focused on issues such as ecology and research and development (R&D). Smog and air pollution are a major concern in many Three Seas countries. The strategy of aligning with the narrative pushed by NGOs concerned with environmental issues and climate change can be used to promote the Three Seas project within groups that have either not heard about the initiative or have so far been reluctant to embrace the concept.



Vienna, Austria





**T**he main conclusion regarding the communication of the Three Seas Initiative the general public is that all actions should be taken with the fundamental question regular people have in mind: “what will I get out of this?”.



# 10.

## Conclusions

**U**ltimately, in order to generate support among the public for this multi-billion Euro, international, intra-regional, and multi-sector initiative, communication efforts spreading knowledge about the project must clearly inform people of what good will come of it.

Every aspect of communication should end with an answer to the questions, “How will the Three Seas Initiative and its success affect the lives of ordinary citizens?” “In what ways will it enrich them?” Consequently, it will be possible to generate support for the initiative as a whole even though its broader goals, while important, are still relatively unknown to the general public.

It is important not to lose sight of what the Three Seas Initiative ultimately is – a multi-sector project to improve infrastructure between 12 countries in Central and Eastern Europe. This must also be reflected in the communication with the respondents – even though highways, pipelines or fiber-optic communication

cables are not the most thrilling topics and they hardly fire up people’s emotions. Instead of talking about the projects themselves, we need to demonstrate the rational benefits that will be appreciated and enjoyed when the projects are finished and in place.

The Soft Power approach based on leveraging topics that may seem unrelated to the larger economy, such as tourism, cuisine, history, culture and education, is underutilised in the Three Seas. Our region has much to offer the world. This “soft” type of communication is also useful as it is an excellent tool for promoting our values on the world stage. This type of “soft communication” makes it possible for us to send a message to the world that is much stronger than just the formal concept which is the Three Seas Initiative. The key to effective regional communication is for all states to work together to broadcast a joint message and build the foundation for a powerful, collective market brand.





— — **Part II**  
— — **Get to know  
the Three Seas —**  
*the most ambitious  
geopolitical project  
of our time*





# 01.

## The Historical Background

**I**n Polish political thought, regional alliances were often formed to oppose larger actors who could threaten our sovereignty. It was in 1385, with the Union of Krewo, that Poland took the first step to unite with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania against the Teutonic Knights.

Dynastic ties were important in medieval foreign policy. By the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Jagiellonian Royal House ruled an area stretching from modern day Latvia in the North all the way

to the Dalmatian coast in the South. King Casimir IV Jagiellon ruled over the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland while his son Vladislaus II sat on the thrones of Bohemia, Hungary and Croatia.

**The Battle of Varna proved that the nations of Central Eastern Europe can successfully join forces in the face of external threats.**

In the previous years, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had expanded its territory all the way to the Black Sea, creating an area ruled by the same House stretching from the Baltic, to the Black and Adriatic





Seas, or the three seas which centuries later would give their name to the 3SI.

In 1444, around a dozen Central Eastern European nations, with the help of Venice and the Papacy, formed a military alliance and set off on a crusade in the Southern Balkans against the quickly expanding Ottoman Empire. It ended tragically with King Wladyslaw III Jagiello's death on the battlefield near Varna in south-eastern Bulgaria, but showed that the nations of the region could join forces when threatened by external forces.

During the Second World War, the Governments-in-Exile of Poland and Czechoslovakia discussed the possibility of forming a confederation after the end of the war, with similar talks taking place between Yugoslavia and Greece. The idea was for these two confederations to cooperate closely and potentially even form one large confederation.

**The current international order has given Central Eastern Europe an opportunity at unity and regional cooperation which has not been seen for nearly 500 years.**

In 1991, the Visegrad Group was formed. Its main objective was to pave the way for EU membership for Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia but it has since become the most advanced form of regional cooperation in CEE.

Historically, the obstacles which have stopped regional cooperation can be divided into two categories.

» The emergence of nationalism as an ideology in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, combined with the very mixed ethnic composition of populations in CEE, made conflict for territory common between neighboring nations.

» Secondly, most, if not all states, were occupied by foreign powers, whether the Ottoman, Prussian, Russian and Austrian Empires in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and up to the German Nazis and Soviets during much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Regional cooperation has only been possible during two short windows of opportunity in recent centuries, namely:

- » the Interwar era between 1918–1939
- » since 1989

The effort at regional cooperation between the two world wars collapsed due to historical conflicts over territory and

identity. It is important for those who want to promote the Three Seas Initiative that they manage to convey the message to leaders and regular people in the region that the current international order has given them an opportunity at unity and regional cooperation which has not been seen for nearly 500 years.

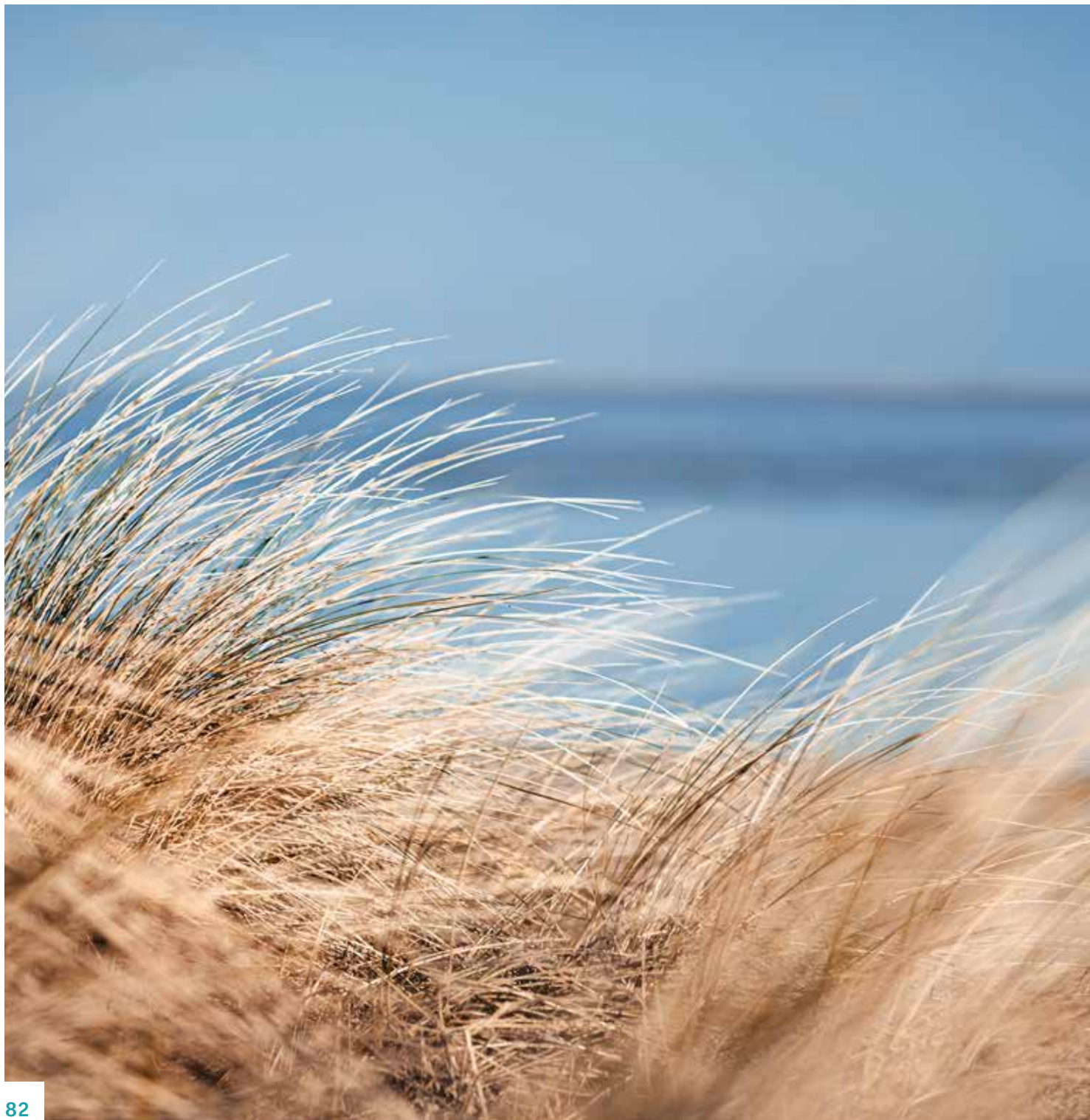
King Wladyslaw III Jagiello fell in battle against the Ottomans at the Battle of Varna in 1444



House of the Blackheads in Riga, Latvia







## 02.

### Current State of Affairs of the Three Seas Initiative

**A**s discussions on the need for a new form of regional cooperation intensified in 2015 and the first half of 2016, some states were still hesitant, worried that such a project might discourage interest and support from other powers. Uncertainty about whether a new regional forum would be perceived as an attempt at breaking up the unity of the European Union caused consternation among some future 3SI states.

**At the group's first summit in Dubrovnik, the 12 Three Seas Initiative states declared the need to deepen the existing cooperation in energy, transportation, digital communication and economic sectors.**

After assurances that the project would focus on economic aspects, and the construction of cross-border infrastructure in particular, opposition to the 3SI was dropped and the 12 states signed the Dubrovnik Statement during their first summit in Dubrovnik, Croatia in 2016.

The statement emphasized that the 12 states see a need to deepen the existing cooperation in energy, transportation,



digital communication and economic sectors.

An important detail of the statement is that it mentions that the comprehensive cooperation in the

Adriatic–Baltic–Black Sea triangle, will take place both within the European Union and across the broader transatlantic space, opening the door for US involvement in the project.

## Warsaw Summit in 2017

The American role became clear when US President Donald Trump took part in the second 3SI Summit in Warsaw, Poland in 2017. US support for increasing the region's access to Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) was deemed a vital component in strengthening the energy security of CEE, which currently is still highly dependent on energy delivered through Russian pipelines.

At the Warsaw Summit, it was also decided that the flexible Presidential Forum formula would be expanded to include a larger role played by governments and business entities.

**A DECISION WAS TAKEN TO CREATE A 3 SEAS BUSINESS FORUM**, dedicated to representatives of large economic entities determined to expand economic bonds within the region.

## Bucharest Summit in 2018

The 2018 Summit in Bucharest was significant for three reasons:

**FIRSTLY**, the participation of the President of the European Commission,



U.S. President Donald Trump presented a new LNG strategy for the Three Seas Initiative at the 3SI Summit in Warsaw in 2017

Jean-Claude Juncker, and German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, gave a clear signal that Brussels and Berlin had embraced the 3SI project.

**SECONDLY**, the joint statement of the summit underlined the importance of the 3SI for contributing to the substantiation of EU policies directed

to Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries, including the effort to bring these regions closer to the EU through increased interconnectivity. The decision made it clear that the scope of interest for the 3SI will grow to include neighboring non-EU regions.



**THIRDLY**, at the 1st edition of the 3SI Business Forum, which gathered 600 officials and business representatives from the participating States, other

EU member states, the US, South-East Europe and Eastern Europe, it was decided to create a 3SI Network of Chambers of Commerce.

Germany and the European Commission decided to support the Three Seas Initiative at the 3SI Summit in Bucharest



## — Ljubljana Summit in 2019

**T**he Ljubljana Summit was primarily an effort for consolidation of the previously staked out path forward. It was also the start of more focus being placed on cooperation within the fields of digitalisation and innovation.

**THE MAIN DEVELOPMENT OF 2019 WAS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE INVESTMENT FUND (3SIIF) BY THE POLISH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANK (BGK) AND ROMANIAN EXIM BANK, WITH THE AIM OF RAISING EUR 3-5 BN FOR PROJECTS IN THE THREE SEAS REGION.**

## — Tallinn Summit in 2020

**T**he global coronavirus pandemic required the 2020 summit to be organized in digital form, which unfortunately put a stop to the backroom discussions and informal contacts made during the Business Forums of previous years.

Nevertheless, Estonia lived up to its reputation as a leading E-nation and presented its plan for Smart Connectivity, a vision to unlock the digital potential of the Three Seas Initiative by upgrading energy and transport

infrastructures with digital components that will allow for higher efficiency.

The COVID-19 pandemic also made the 3SI states underline the importance of regional economic ties and well-developed cross-border infrastructure to stimulate economic recovery after the pandemic. It can also be perceived as a hint of coming ambitions to capitalize on the global trend of shortening supply chains from China in favor of more industrial production in the West, where 3SI states are particularly competitive



due to comparatively low labor costs and a highly skilled and educated workforce.

THAT SAME YEAR, ESTONIA, LATVIA, HUNGARY, BULGARIA, LITHUANIA,

SLOVENIA AND CROATIA ALL JOINED POLAND AND ROMANIA AS INVESTORS IN THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE INVESTMENT FUND.

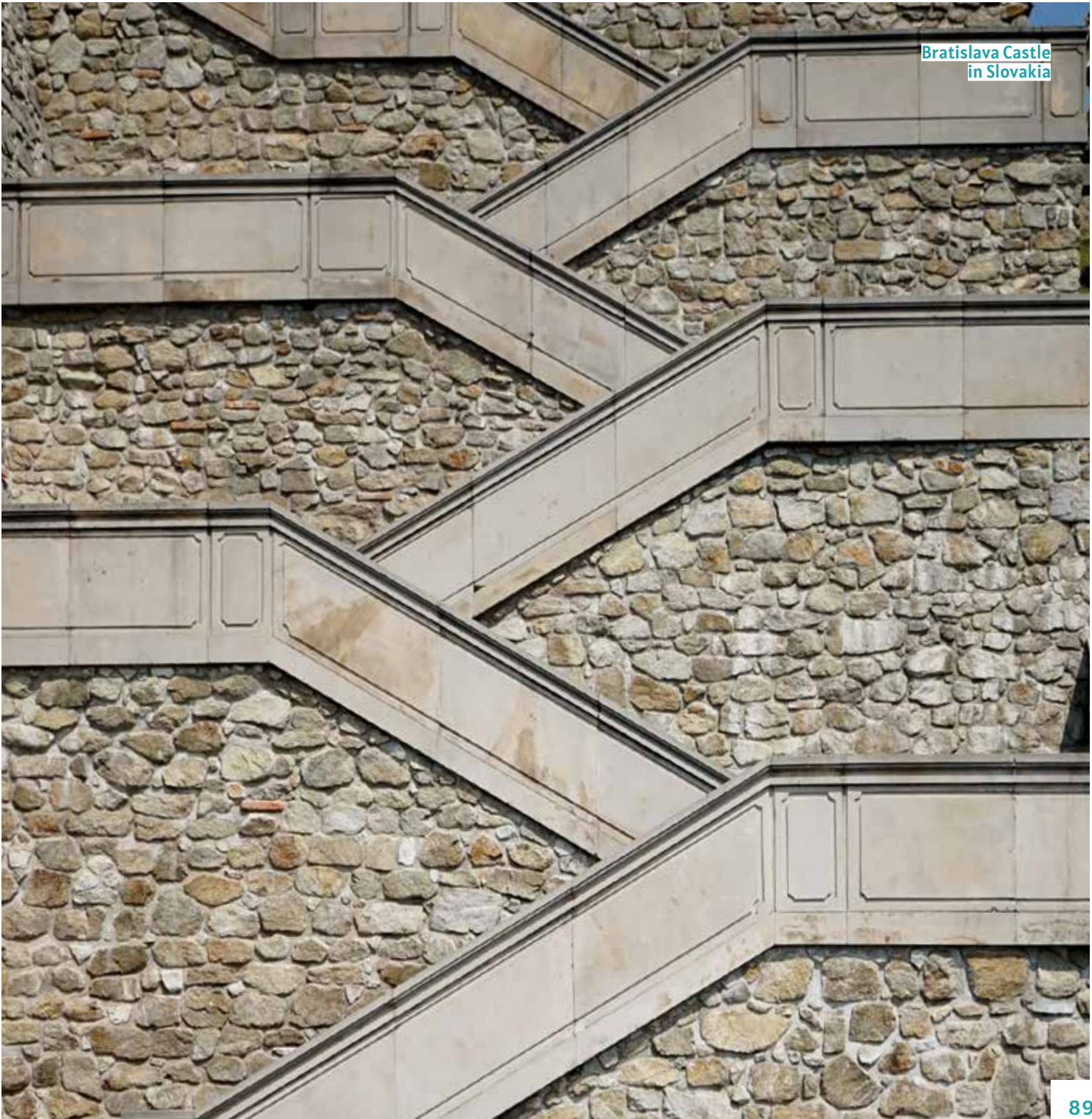
Sofia Summit in 2021

Bulgaria has announced its intentions for the 2021 summit, signalling that it will want to tie Greece and Cyprus more closely to the 3SI project. The two states could become important for increasing the energy security of the 3SI as the proposed EastMed Gas Pipeline would bring natural gas from Israel and Cyprus

through Greece and Bulgaria to the wider 3SI region.

SOFIA HAS ALSO SIGNALLED THAT IT WILL WANT TO LEAD THE 3SI IN A DIRECTION WHERE MORE IMPORTANCE IS PUT ON COOPERATION IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D) AND HIGHER EDUCATION.

At the 3SI summit in Sofia in 2021, Bulgaria will champion closer cooperation between the Three Seas Initiative, Greece and Cyprus. The map shows the planned EastMed natural gas pipeline, with one offshoot that will let the gas flow to the Three Seas Initiative







# 03.

## Infrastructure and economy

Cross-border infrastructure and the economic growth it facilitates are at the heart of the Three Seas Initiative.

A list of Priority Interconnection Projects has been compiled at every Three Seas Initiative Summit since 2018. At the Tallinn Summit in 2020, 22 new projects were added, bringing the total number of projects up to 77.

The projects are grouped into the following three categories: transport (51%), energy (32%) and digital (17%).

Once implemented, the projects will provide a substantial contribution to the overall objective of the Three Seas Initiative by stimulating economic growth, developing a north-south infrastructure corridor, level regional disparities within the EU and boost European cohesion.

Two of the projects, the North-South Gas Corridor and Via Carpatia, are informal flagship projects, as they involve and impact every single country in the region.

Two of the projects, the North-South Gas Corridor and Via Carpatia, are informal flagship projects, as they involve and impact every single country in the region.



The North-South Gas Corridor, stretching from the Baltic Coast in northern Poland to the island of Krk in Croatia will connect gas pipelines across CEE while also providing new energy sources through the LNG terminals in Świnoujście and Krk as well as Baltic Pipe, which will allow for natural gas to start flowing to the Three Seas region from deposits on the Norwegian shelf.

Via Carpatia, a transportation corridor consisting of motorways and expressways stretching from Klaipėda in Lithuania to Thessaloniki in Greece, will provide the region a much needed north-south transport corridor in its eastern part. Currently, the travel time for people and goods in this part of Europe is among the slowest on the continent. The motorway will serve as the backbone of the transport system from the Baltic to the Black Sea and will connect ports in Romania with ports in Poland and Lithuania.

The improved infrastructure will make intraregional trade more profitable and result in larger trade volumes between member states.

The improved infrastructure will make intraregional trade more profitable and result in larger trade volumes between member states. The Three Seas Initiative is also active in improving business connections in CEE through organizing a Three Seas Business Forum as well as a new network of Chambers of Commerce.

The target for the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund has been set at up to USD 3–5 billion. The fund will finance some of the necessary investments in the region while the Warsaw Stock Exchange was tasked with publishing the CEEplus Index. The portfolio covers more than 100 of the most liquid stocks traded at stock exchanges in the region.

Better infrastructure in the region will bring people closer together and provide greater opportunities for striking up new business partnerships. The Three Seas Initiative intends to play an important role in fostering better business opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe.

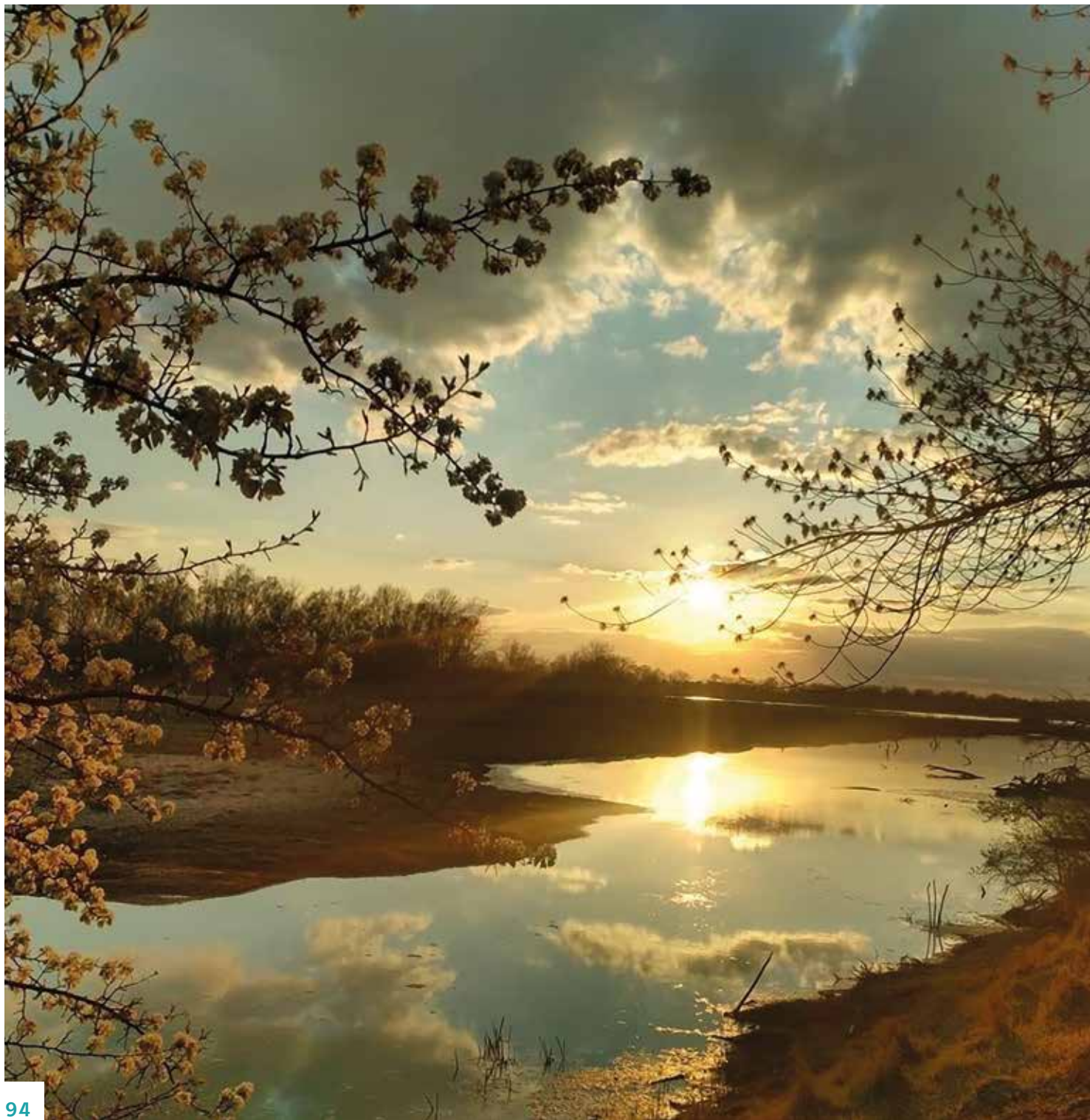


The North-South Gas Corridor will increase improve energy security in Central Eastern Europe



Via Carpatia will cut travel time for people and goods moving in the eastern parts of the 3SI





## What is still lacking?

Five years after its creation, the Three Seas Initiative is still relatively unknown, both amongst the general public and with decision makers in the region.

As a result, the Initiative is still in a fragile state as its low visibility means that there can't be any broad bottom-up support from the people, and more importantly, the voters of the region. Political changes in various countries could destabilize the entire project.

**Central and Eastern Europe's economic success following the 1989 political and economic transformations has not been communicated well enough to the world.**

It's therefore imperative to anchor support for the project through a strategy of "winning hearts and minds" of both the average citizen and the region's elite.

People are generally not aware of the existing historical links, similar traits, common problems and opportunities that exist in the region. An example of a problem that all the countries in the region share is the lack of accumulated wealth, resulting in lack of





Warszawa,  
Poland

Poland's GDP grew on average by 4.2% per year between 1992–2019, reflecting the economic miracle taking place across CEE

funds for much needed infrastructure. Another problem is insufficient Foreign Direct Investment to the private sector of the 3SI's economies, partially because the region's economic success following the 1989 political and

economic transformations has not been communicated well enough to financial centers from New York, London to Tokyo.

The societies of the region could in many cases benefit from more

self-confidence, which is essential for a country to successfully communicate its achievements and to building *Soft Power* – a state resource based on a country's well-developing economic system, vital civil society and the attractiveness and influence of its ideology and culture. The concept was popularized by the political scientist Joseph Nye.

**Having Soft Power makes it possible to set the agenda and attract others to want the outcomes that you want.**

With Soft Power, it is possible for a state or organization to obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspire to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it. Having Soft Power makes it possible to set the agenda and attract others to want the outcomes that you want.





05.

## Three Seas Generation Freedom Conferences

In order to build a community of Three Seas Ambassadors, it is necessary for representatives of the five groups identified on the previous page to regularly meet in person. Facilitating opportunities for interpersonal contacts is particularly important in Central Eastern Europe, where due to travel restrictions and comparative poverty, people from neighbouring states saw little

cultural interaction and face-to-face meetings while living behind the Iron Curtain.

This is why the State of Poland Foundation decided to launch a series of Three Seas youth conferences under the name **Three Seas Generation Freedom (Gen Free)**.

The first edition of the conference was held in Warsaw on September 17–18 2021.



## — Bringing Three Seas youth and experts together

**T**he aim is for the Gen Free conferences to be cyclical and rotational in character, taking place in a different Three Seas state every year. The two constant guiding themes are the Three Seas Initiative and the young people from “Generation Freedom,” those born after the fall of communism and the dismantlement of the Iron Curtain.

Each year, a third, specific topic will be chosen for deeper analysis. At Gen Free Warsaw, the participants discussed the geopolitical and technological trends bound to shape the lives of people in the Three Seas region by the year 2050.

Ahead of the conference, a competition was organised for university

students across the region. In order to find some of the most talented young minds of the region, we asked them to write an article about their home country. The authors of the 20 best contributions were invited to Warsaw, where they partook in workshops organized the day before the conference by International Relations specialists and media experts, training the students for their roles as future Three Seas Ambassadors.

At the Gen Free conference, they met with talented youth from the host country, as well as the region’s leading politicians, journalists, business representatives and experts on International Relations and geopolitics.

## — Expert insights on the future of the Three Seas Initiative

**S**ome of the experts presented the students with TEDx-style talks related to the future trends that will shape the development of the 3Si for decades to come. These experts included:

**Beata Daszyńska-Muzyczka**, President of the Management Board of the Polish State Development Bank, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund.

**Paweł Jabłoński**, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister of Poland and the Polish Government’s Plenipotentiary for the Three Seas Initiative

**Ian Brzezinski**, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, Former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy.

**Edward Lucas**, Security specialist and former Senior Editor at the Economist

**Dr. Solomon Passy**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Founder and President of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria.

**Velina Tchakarova**, Director of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy. Austrian geopolitical and security policy expert.

## — A chance at political and public diplomacy

**O**n the sidelines of the conference, a meeting was also held between the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Polish State Development Bank, the State of Poland Foundation, Government Plenipotentiaries for the Three Seas Initiative from Estonia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic, as well as Ambassadors and representatives from the Embassies of the Three Seas states to Warsaw. The sides discussed joint actions that can be taken to promote the activities of the Three Seas Initiative to the region’s inhabitants.

The State of Poland Foundation invited renowned journalists from across the Three Seas region to the conference. The journalists were given an opportunity to conduct 1-on-1 interviews with the politicians, diplomats and experts present at Gen Free Warsaw, resulting in a number of articles published in the established press from Latvia in the north to Bulgaria in the south.

Evening events were held on both days of Gen Free Warsaw, giving an additional opportunity for integration and networking among the conference’s participants.



## — Engaging Generation Freedom

**A**fter returning home, the students were tasked with evaluating the conference by participating in a survey that will help to improve the organization of future Gen Free conferences. The students were also approached with the offer to remain engaged in Gen Free activities by taking on the role of Three Seas Ambassadors in their home countries.

To aid them in their new roles, the students will receive support of the State of Poland Foundation as well as from the politicians, journalists, diplomats and business representatives whom they got to know personally during Gen Free Warsaw.

The students also declared their willingness to participate in the next editions of the Gen Free conference, which will be centered on topics such as the role Three Seas youth can play in the emergence of unicorn startups and the long-term project of increasing awareness in the region about the importance of creating ecological and sustainable societies.

We are convinced that the Gen Free conferences will play an important part in providing the region's youth the tools they need to keep propelling development in the Three Seas region forward. We all know that the youth is our future.



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