



## Joint report

Prepared by the Supreme Audit Office of the Republic of Poland  
and the Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic

# Providing safety of tourism and recreation in the mountains

2014





**For a tourist** the border of a state does not mean end of the excursion, therefore it is important that the institutions responsible for the provision of safety conditions on both sides of the border cooperate efficiently and effectively, providing help in case of threat for health or life. The aim of the audit carried out by NIK and NKU was to assess the performance of tasks executed by entities responsible for the provision of safety conditions in the mountains. The audit also encompassed evaluation of regulations in force in Slovakia and Poland, which concern the setting and maintaining of tourist routes, as well solutions that enable supervision over skiing areas.

The cooperation during this audit enabled to thoroughly examine safety systems of tourism and recreation in the mountains that function in Poland and Slovakia. Despite different organisational solutions and means of financing, rescue services on both sides of the border operate efficiently and effectively, providing help in case of danger for tourists visiting our common mountain areas. Audit conclusions supported by the results of an open Internet survey conducted in both countries showed that the most significant risk of mountain tourism is still connected with the awareness and the preparation of tourists to the hiking trips in the mountains.

Works of NIK and NKU resulted in the preparation of joint recommendations, the implementation of which should help to improve safety in the mountains on both sides of the border. This audit is another stage of the several-year cooperation between SAIs of our countries, which is accompanied by good atmosphere of discussion and experience exchange. We hope that in the future we will undertake further joint audit projects that will assist in improving the performance of public tasks in our countries.

Krzysztof Kwiatkowski  
President of NIK

**The cooperation** between the supreme audit institutions of Poland and Slovakia, during which we exchange experience and remarks, lasts for many years. Permanent foundations of this cooperation were established in course of several parallel audits. The bilateral cooperation of SAIs contributes to an effective use of public resources.

On the basis of the highly assessed results of previous audits, NKU together with NIK conducted a parallel audit, which aimed to evaluate the provision of safety in the mountains by the Slovak (HZS) and Polish (GOPR and TOPR) mountain rescue service units.

Each person, who is present in the mountain area in Slovakia as well as in Poland, should receive proper help in case of an accident.

The aim of the audit was to prepare joint post-audit recommendations, which are to help the relevant units and bodies in Slovakia and Poland to improve the safety conditions in the mountains, especially in the common areas – High Tatra Mountains. The audit was also conducted to secure an effective and reliable use of public resources dedicated to the mountain rescue services.

It has to be noted that the permanent cooperation strengthens the position of both SAIs in the European Union, as well as within the INTOSAI community. I look forward to our further meetings, as well joint works of auditors, which improve the quality of our cooperation and enable to prepare further joint audit projects, that are in the scope of interest of both sides.

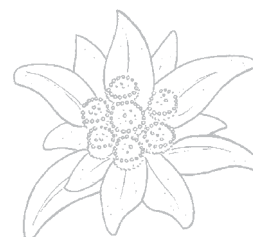
Ján Jasovský  
President of NKU SR



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” The audit was conducted due to an **increased probability of accidents** on mountain areas and ski slopes, resulting from a growing interest in mountain tourism and skiing on the POLISH as well as on the SLOVAK side of the border.



## > Introduction

**In 2013** the Supreme Audit Office of the Republic of Poland (NIK) and the Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic (NKU SR) conducted audits concerning the execution of duties by the entities responsible for the provision of safety conditions in the mountains. The audits were carried out due to an increased probability of accidents on mountain areas and ski slopes, resulting from a growing interest in mountain tourism and skiing on the Polish, as well as on the Slovak side. Therefore, securing safety of persons present in the mountains, including a proper marking of tourist routes, system of information about weather conditions, infrastructure and organising help or rescue of accident victims or persons who are prone to the danger of life or health loss, became of significant importance.

Joint activities were based on the arrangements made by the Presidents of NIK and NKU SR during the meeting of the Visegrad Group that took place in Hungary on 6-7 September 2012. The cooperation took form of parallel audits conducted independently by both supreme audit institutions, in compliance with the jointly established scope of those audits. NIK audited the Ministry of Interior (MSW), Mountain Volunteer Rescue Service (GOPR – Management Board and two regional groups –

Beskidy and Podhale), Tatra Volunteer Rescue Service (TOPR), Babia Góra National Park (BgPN), Tatra National Park (TPN) and Polish Cable Railways – in the scope of security on the organized skiing areas. NKU SR carried out audits of the Ministry of Interior (MSW) and Mountain Rescue Service (HZS). Audit studies encompassed the years 2010-2012 and the first half of the year 2013. Additionally, both SAIs published openly available surveys concerning the subject of safety of tourism and recreation in the mountains on their websites, which enabled to gather the opinions of tourists on the condition of mountain routes.

NIK's audit assessed the way in which safety is provided to persons present in the mountains in touristic and recreational purposes, including the functioning of mountain rescue system and its financing, whereas NKU conducted the audit in order to verify the compliance of the activities of audited entities with the generally applied legal regulations and internal norms, with particular focus on the international cooperation.

Both audits resulted in the preparation of two separate reports published by the two SAIs, which were basis for this joint report that contains a comparison of the adopted solutions and joint conclusions and recommendations.

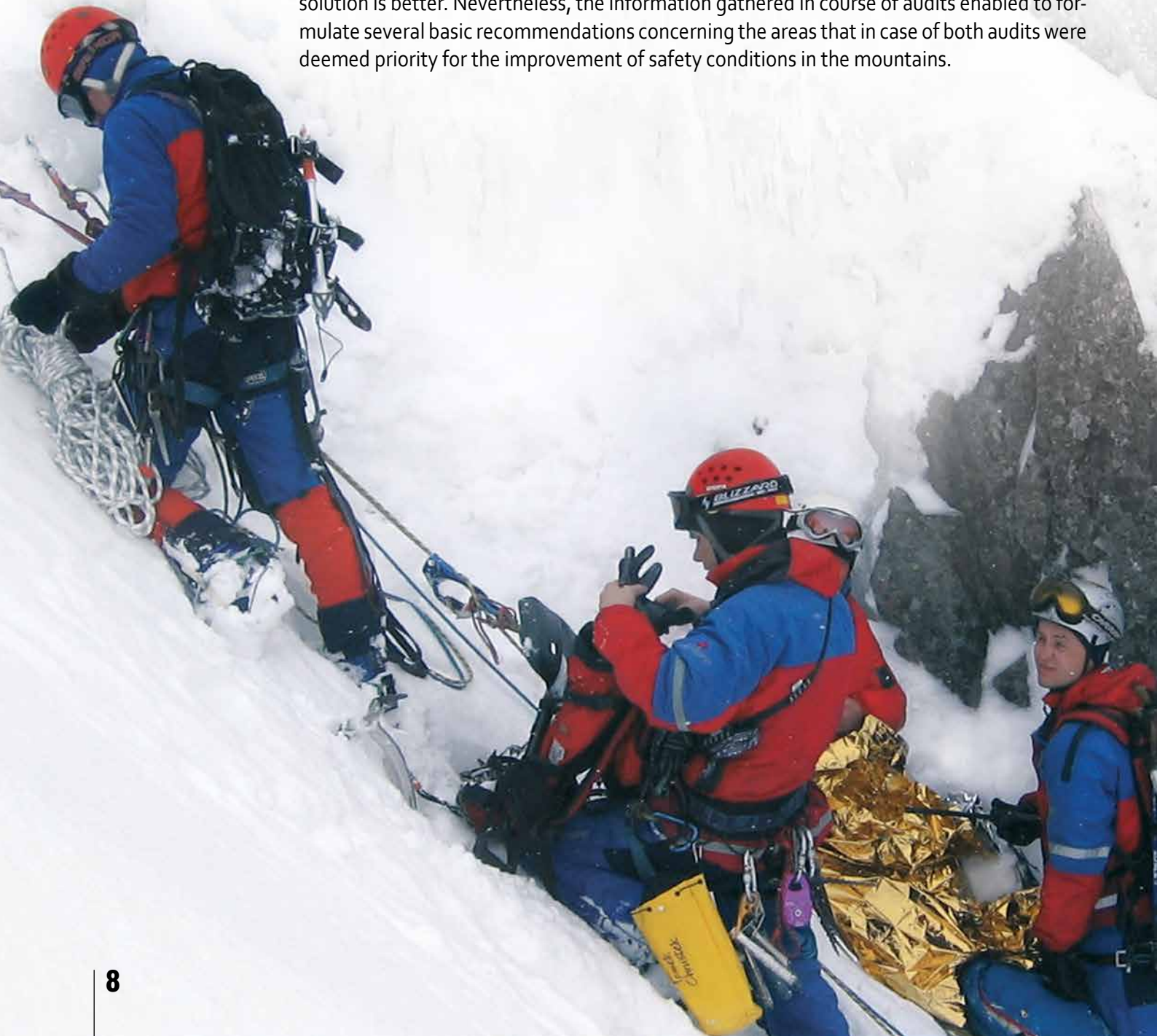




## > Joint recommendations

**Mountain tourism** contributes to the improvement of health of the people who undertake it. It is, however, an activity form that may pose a threat to life and health, which will never be fully eliminated. Therefore, activities aimed at minimising the effects of such threats should be undertaken.

The results of conducted audits show that, despite significant differences in the organisation of the safety system in the mountains on both sides of the Tatras, it functions properly and effectively. The common feature of both mountain rescue systems, similarly to most European countries, is the important role of volunteers. In spite of the discrepancies in the concepts of mountain rescue system applied in Poland and Slovakia, one cannot state which solution is better. Nevertheless, the information gathered in course of audits enabled to formulate several basic recommendations concerning the areas that in case of both audits were deemed priority for the improvement of safety conditions in the mountains.





## NIK and NKU SR jointly recommend:

### **1** To promote guidelines of safe mountain tourism by means of educational activities.

One of the main duties of the entities responsible for the provision of safety conditions in the mountains should be a permanent educational activity, the scope and form of which ought to be continually developed, in order to reach the biggest possible group of potential tourists and skiers. Audit results indicate that, despite the educational activity conducted by both entities responsible for safety in the mountains as well as other institutions, the accidents are still mainly caused by the bravado and recklessness of tourists. Improper behaviour of tourists was deemed the biggest risk connected with safety in the mountains by the participants of the panel of experts organised by NIK in December 2013.

### **2** To further develop cooperation between Poland and Slovakia in the mountain area.

In order to efficiently and effectively act so as to improve the safety in the mountains, a close and permanent cooperation between entities responsible for its provision, which perform mountain rescue in both countries, is crucial. It is especially important due to the fact that Tatra mountains, despite being located along the Polish-Slovak border, constitute one tourist area. This development will contribute to the improvement of safety conditions in the mountains.

Moreover, irrespective of the above recommendations, national information prepared by NIK and NKU SR contain similar conclusions on the necessity to define rules of audit and execution of duties by the managers of the skiing areas and need to regulate the structure of tourist routes and their maintenance rules.

Both Poland as well as Slovakia lack regulations that would empower to audit the provision of safety conditions on ski slopes. The audits showed that there are no entities to coordinate the marking and maintaining of mountain routes, what negatively influences their condition, including the quality of marking system. Tourist routes are the basic element of tourism movement in the mountains. Their maintenance is especially important for safety of tourists. The conducted audits and information obtained in their course from the not-audited units indicate, however, that the condition of mountain routes is not always proper. This results among others from the fact that both Poland and Slovakia lack institutions responsible for the maintenance of tourist routes.

**Conclusions  
and recommendations  
prepared as a result  
of audits conducted  
on both sides  
of the border  
were included into the  
national reports of  
NKU SR and NIK.**

## > Audit results

### >> Legal regulations



**In Poland** the provision of safety conditions for persons present in the mountains is the duty of minister in charge of interior, local government bodies of the region on which mountain rescue services are provided, directorate of national and landscape parks located in the mountain area, as well as natural and legal persons and organisational entities without legal personality conducting organised activity in the mountains, which is connected with sport, recreation or tourism. Mountain rescue services are provided by non-public entities (GOPR and TOPR), which have been ascribed with those tasks by the Minister of Interior. The Minister of Interior supervises the mountain rescue, may request access to documents and written explanations concerning the activity connected with mountain rescue and audit the performance of tasks of medical rescue and

spending of resources ascribed for their implementation.

Medical rescue system is financed by the state (Minister of Interior, national parks and local government units) and rescue organisations (own funds and funds obtained from sponsors), whereby the Minister and national parks, which charge entrance fee, are statutory obliged to transfer funds to mountain rescue entities, but the transfer of funds by the local government units and sponsors depends on the activities of the associations undertaken in order to obtain the resources and financial capabilities of such units. Tourists do not cover the costs of help in the mountains, irrespective of the legitimacy of such aid and responsibility for creating a threat. However, they pay fees for entrance to the selected national parks and a part of this amount (15%) is transferred to entities providing medical rescue services.



**In Slovakia** the central body of the civil protection system is the Ministry of Interior, whose Department for Crisis Management and Civil Protection executes tasks concerning the civil protection and cooperation with public authorities and communes in this scope. This department also cooperates with public and legal institutions, as well as associations acting to the benefit

of civil protection and human aid. Medical rescue tasks are executed by HZS, which is a budget entity. The Minister of Interior supervises not only mountain rescue but also HZS. All changes in the HZS internal structure require consent of the Minister, who also appoints and dismisses its director.

Activity of HZS is financed by the state budget, but tourists are obliged to cover the costs in case of their search or provision of medical rescue. This does not apply to under-aged and persons without capacity to perform acts in law. Obligation to cover the costs arises also in case a person without signs of life is found, whereby the mountain medical rescue concept until 2015 includes the necessity to change those provisions, so that the costs of action, in case a person without signs of life is found, would be covered by public resources.



**Activity of HZS is financed by the state budget, but tourists are obliged to cover the costs in case of their search or provision of medical rescue.**





## &gt;&gt; Mountain tourism



**The Polish** mountain rescue system is based to a significant extent on the work of volunteers. According to the data as of 30 June 2013 the number of TOPR volunteers increased with comparison to 2010 by 56,1% and the number of GOPR volunteers slightly decreased (by 2,3%).

The obtained data on tourism movement do not present real values but indicate

a constant increase of interest in mountain tourism. In 2012 tourism movement increased by 12,4% in TPN and by 14,5% in BgPN in comparison with the last year.

During the audit period the number of fatalities in the mountains increased from 44 in 2010 to 66 in 2012. The data obtained after the completion of the audit show, however, that in 2013 the number of fatalities in the mountain area decreased to 58.

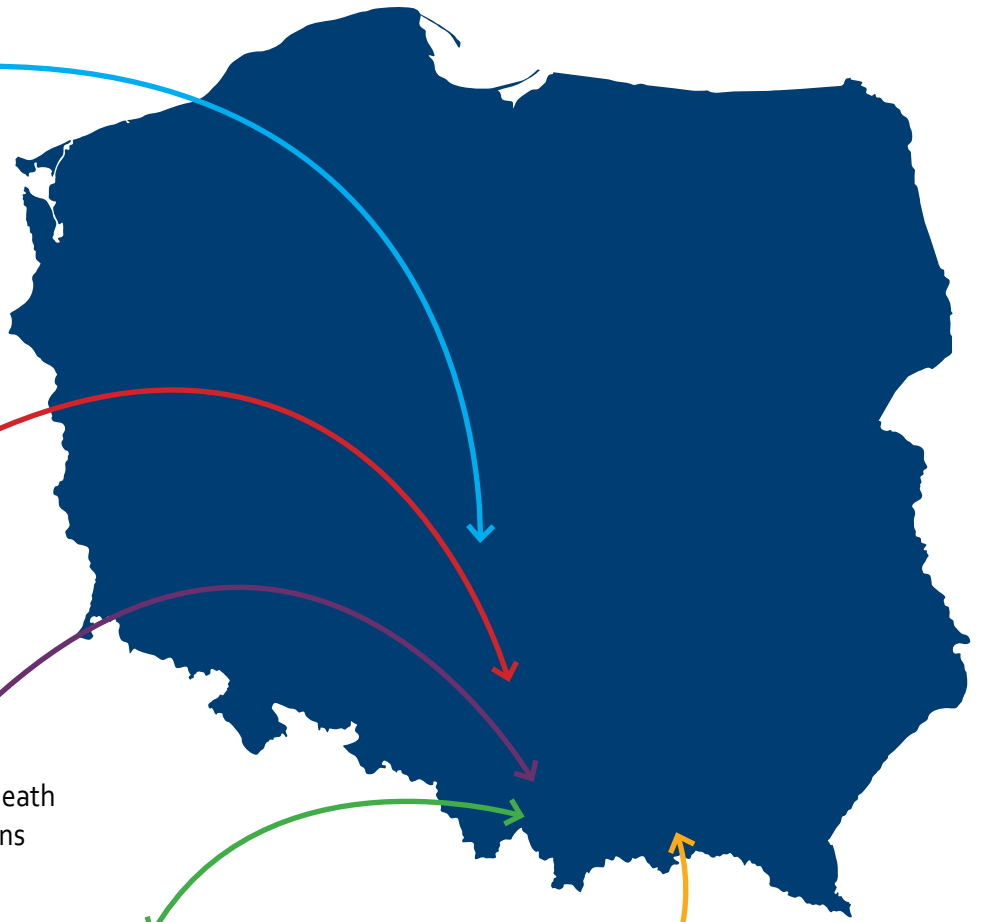
> The total length of tourist routes on areas safeguarded by GOPR and TOPR equals 9240 km

> In 2013 GOPR and TOPR conducted in total 1997 rescue actions (in 2012 – 2329)

> In 2012 66 persons suffered death in the Polish mountains

> The mountain area safeguarded by GOPR and TOPR equals 25513 km<sup>2</sup>

> The Tatra National Park is annually visited by more than 2,2 million people

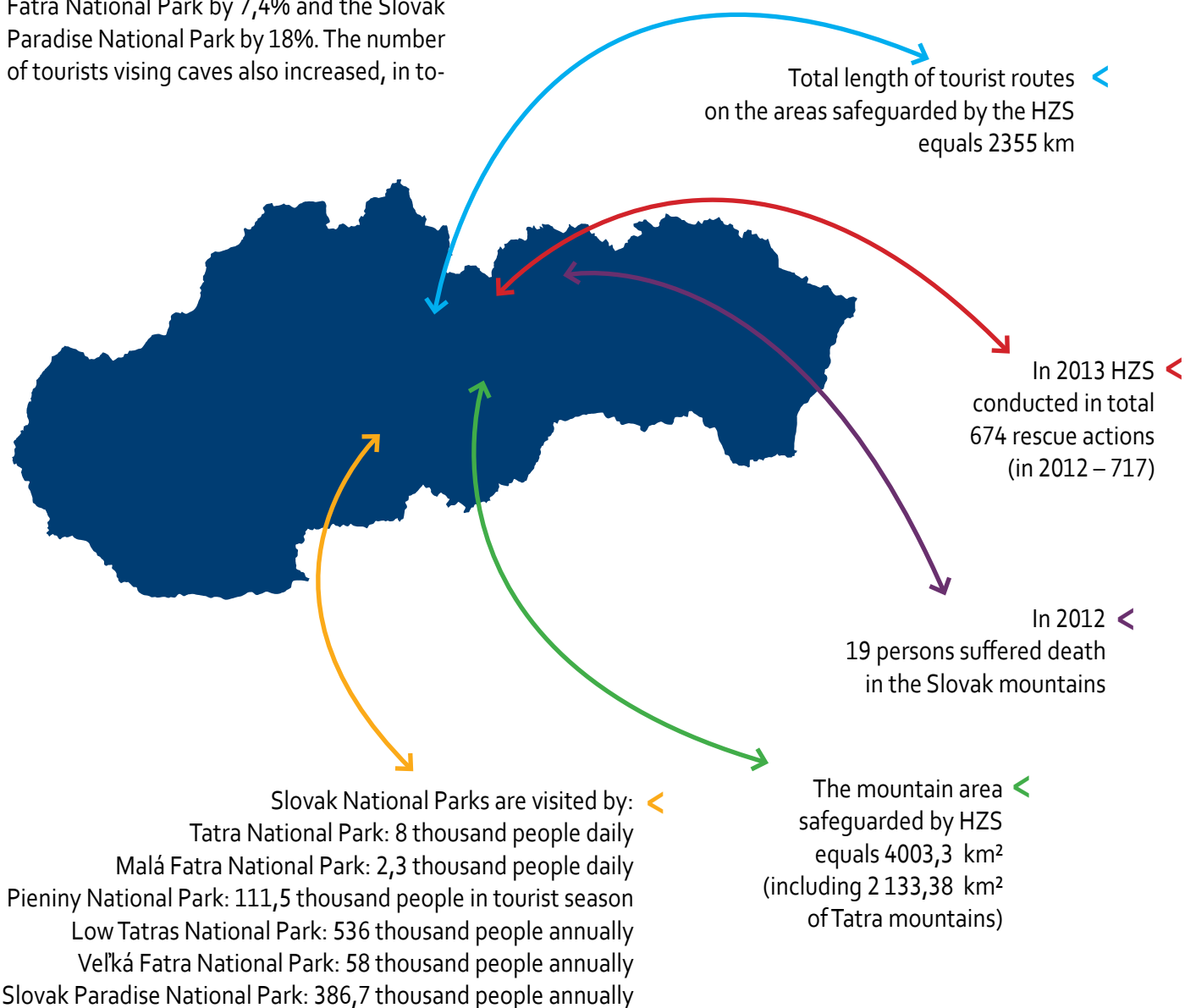


**The Slovak** mountain rescue system is to a significant extent based on the work of volunteers. According to data as of 30 June 2013 their number in HZS increased in comparison with 2010 by more than 140%.

The data concerning tourism movement also do not present real values. In 2012, in comparison to the previous year, the number of tourists visiting Low Tatras National Park increased by 21%, the Veľká Fatra National Park by 7,4% and the Slovak Paradise National Park by 18%. The number of tourists visiting caves also increased, in to-

tal by 7,5% – from 350,7 thousand in 2010 to 377,1 thousand in 2012. According to the data obtained from the National Wildlife Service the number of tourists visiting Tatra and Pieniny National Parks decreased in comparison to 2010, by which in 2013 the number of tourists visiting Tatra National Park was higher than in 2010.

During the examined period the number of fatal accidents in Slovakia decreased by more than 36%.



## >> Resources and rescue activities on mountain areas



NUMBER OF RESCUERS
<p>According to the data as of 30 June 2013 mountain rescue services were provided by 1795 persons, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 135 staff rescuers</li> <li>▪ 1445 volunteers</li> <li>▪ 215 candidates for rescuers</li> </ul>
RESCUE STATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ GOPR: 54 rescue stations and 51 rescue points</li> <li>▪ TOPR: 8 rescue stations</li> </ul>
MEANS OF TRANSPORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ GOPR: in total 145 vehicles, including 32 off-road vehicles, 19 passenger cars, 47 four-wheeled vehicles TRX and 47 snow scooters</li> <li>▪ TOPR: 31 means of transport, including one helicopter and six off-road vehicles, Seven passenger cars, three four-wheeled vehicles TRX, 13 snow scooters and one pontoon</li> </ul>
NUMBER OF RESCUE ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2010 – 2 280</li> <li>▪ 2011 – 2 563</li> <li>▪ 2012 – 2 329</li> <li>▪ 2013 – 1 997 (914 in first half of the year)</li> </ul>
NUMBER OF FATALITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2010 – 44</li> <li>▪ 2011 – 46</li> <li>▪ 2012 – 66</li> <li>▪ 2013 – 58 (33 in first half of the year)</li> </ul>

**Audit results** show that even though the entities providing mountain rescue services did not define employment limits and specification of equipment necessary for a proper execution of ascribed tasks, the number and type of equipment currently held enables GOPR and TOPR to conduct rescue actions. Number of fatal accidents in Poland in 2012 constituted 2,8% of all interventions.

During the examined period the number of conducted rescue actions decreased. However the number of actions with the use of a helicopter increased. In 2012 the helicopter was used (despite GOPR not having its own helicopter) in case of more than 10% rescue actions conducted by GOPR. Two years earlier the helicopter was used only in 4% of the rescue actions conducted by GOPR. An increase in the number of actions conducted with the use of a helicopter is a sign of a good cooperation between TOPR and Medical Air Rescue.





NUMBER OF RESCUERS
<p>According to data as of 30 June 2013 mountain rescue services in Slovakia were provided by 326 people, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 102 staff rescuers</li> <li>▪ 224 volunteers</li> </ul>
RESCUE STATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nine centres, including six operating in the mountains and three specialised ones (training centre, avalanche prevention centre and communications centre)</li> </ul>
MEANS OF TRANSPORT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 42 vehicles</li> <li>▪ 34 motorcycles</li> <li>▪ 16 industrial trucks</li> </ul>
NUMBER OF RESCUE ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2010 – 543</li> <li>▪ 2011 – 588</li> <li>▪ 2012 – 717</li> <li>▪ 2013 – 647 (205 in the first half of the year)</li> </ul>
NUMBER OF FATALITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2010 – 30</li> <li>▪ 2011 – 28</li> <li>▪ 2012 – 19</li> <li>▪ 2013 – 21 (16 in the first half of the year)</li> </ul>

**The required** amount of HZS means of transport is defined by the MSW standard concerning the personal equipment of rescuers and rescue materials. Audit results show that despite slight discrepancies with the set limits, the number and type of held equipment enabled HZS to conduct rescue actions.

In Slovakia during the examined period the number of rescue actions, which in 2012 was by more than 32% higher than the number of actions in 2010, increased. During the same period the number of fatalities decreased by more than 36%. However the number of accidents on the area of lower mountain ranges, which are safeguarded by HZS, increased.

The main cause of accidents in the mountains both in Poland and Slovakia is lack of responsibility of tourists manifested by improper behaviour on mountain area. This is confirmed by the results of surveys conducted among tourists, presented in point 2.9 of this joint report.

## &gt;&gt; Safety on ski slopes



## The regulations

of Act on Safety separate mountain rescue from aid for people who had an accident on organised skiing areas. This distinction means that the state does not finance skiing rescue. The manager of the skiing area organizes and finances rescue activities undertaken within the scope of skiing rescue on the managed area. The manager may by means of an agreement commission the performance of skiing rescue to an entity authorised to provide mountain rescue services or other person entitled to perform skiing rescue. However, it has to be noted that despite a

ions are issued at request of the manager of the organized skiing area and recommendations are made only in case an extraordinary threat has been found, so such threats that are not connected with the regular functioning of skiing stations. Additionally, it has to be noted that such entities are not authorized to enter and control skiing areas.

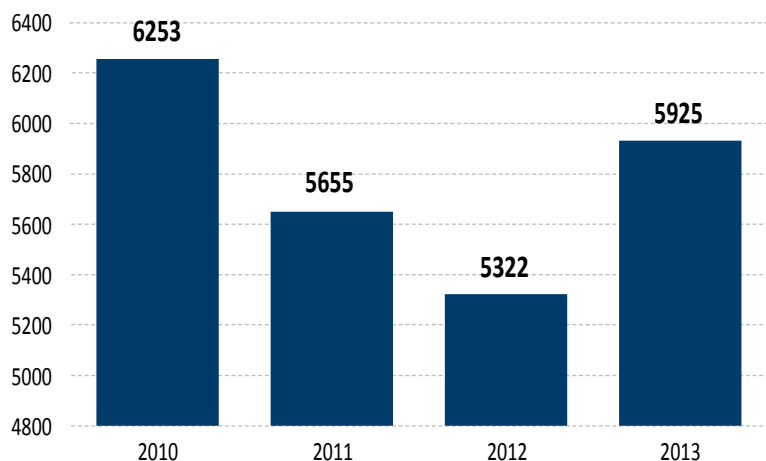
The data that MSW disposes of do not enable to clearly determine the number of organised skiing areas in Poland.

Despite the fact that the total number of GOPR and TOPR interventions on ski slopes decreased from 6253 in 2010 to 5322 in 2012, it resulted above all from the decrease of the skiing areas safeguarded by those associations from 128 in 2010 to 98 in 2012. The global data concerning the accident rate on skiing areas cannot be established, because (despite the statutory obligation) the managers of organised skiing areas do not provide the entities performing skiing rescue with data concerning the number of accidents and type of occurred injuries. Still, the statistics concerning the number of interventions and Police admonitions show, that the threat on the ski slopes significantly grew in the examined period. In 2012 on the ski slope located in Lesser Poland Voivodeship the Police admonished skiers more than 1700 times and intervened over hundred times. In 2010 the number of admonishments was by 1000 lower and the number of interventions by 30. In the first half of 2013 the Police conducted in total 64 interventions on organized skiing areas in Lesser Poland Voivodeship, issuing 1800 admonishments to people using the slope. Most of the admonishments were issued due to noncompliance with the safety regulations defined by the International Ski Federation.

Chart no. 1

Number of rescue actions conducted by GOPR and TOPR on skiing areas

Source:  
Data gathered during NIK's audit



number of duties that have to be fulfilled by the manager of the organised skiing area, there are no legal possibilities to control their implementation and no possibility to fine entities that do not comply with them. The entities that perform skiing rescue may issue opinions and recommendations concerning the safety on organized ski slopes but only in strictly defined cases. The opin-

**In Slovakia** the duty to secure the skiing routes should also be fulfilled by the managers of such areas. A rapid development of skiing centres after 2000 caused a more professional provision of rescue services and improvement of safety, but also many negative occurrences. Despite a better preparation of skiing routes, bigger capacity of cable-railway and the equipment of skiers, the number of injuries and accidents on skiing routes increased. NKU SR noted that 12% of all accidents concern head injuries, which usually have serious consequences. In order to decrease the number of head injuries the duty to wear helmet by skiers – especially children and teenagers up to 15 years old – should be introduced.

The manager of the skiing area is obliged to, should the provision of help be necessary, immediately transport HZS rescuers, other rescue services and injured persons free of charge. HZS safeguards 13 (6,8%) skiing centres. In the remaining 178 centres the routes are secured by associations, legal persons, natural persons, including the employees of such centres. Accord-

ing to NKU SR assessment the established obligations concerning professional competences entitling to provide help are not sufficient.

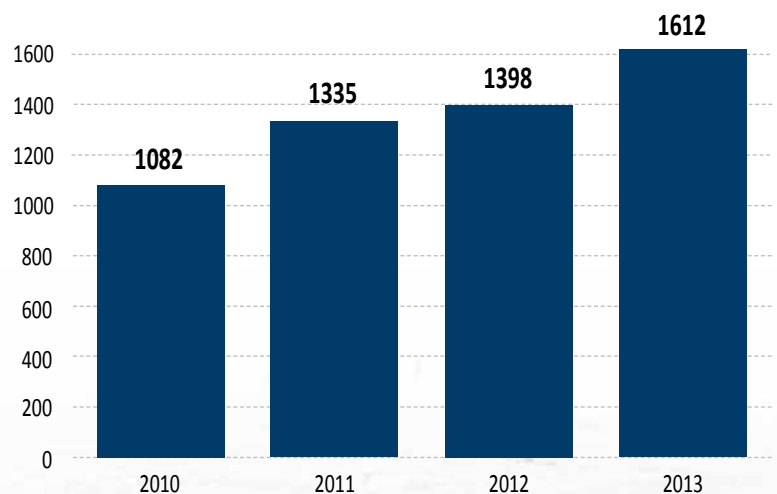
Supervision over the execution of duties to provide safety in skiing centres is executed by the poviat office and to a restricted extent also by the HZS, whereby the employees of the office do not dispose of proper abilities, as well as necessary resources and equipment needed for an effective supervision. The results of NKU SR audits show that in Slovakia as well as in Poland the supervision over the execution of duties of skiing routes' managers is not sufficient.



**Chart no. 2**

**Number of rescue actions conducted by HZS on skiing areas**

*Source:  
Data gathered during NIK's audit*





## >> Concepts of rescue systems in Poland and in Slovakia

**The systems** of mountain safety in Poland and Slovakia differ considerably, particularly in the scope of organisation of rescue services and financing of rescue actions. However, the basic tasks executed by rescue services in Poland and Slovakia are similar. The main task is to conduct rescue actions. Rescue Services also train mountain rescuers and volunteers, conduct educational activity in the scope of safety in the mountains and make accessible information on weather conditions and avalanche reports. Both GOPR, TOPR as well as HZS also provide other services, which are not financed by the state budget. This is mainly the safeguarding of skiing routes and events organized in the mountains.

In both countries restrictions in the access to mountains are applied. Each year between 1 November and 15 June in Slovak Tatra and Pieniny, due to environmental protection and safety of tourists, routes above the upper forest boarder and tourist shelters are closed. During the winter period tourists may access routes that lead to high-mountain shelters with the exclusion of Chata pod Rysmi shelter. On the Polish side of Tatras, in Tatra National Park, from 1 April till 30 November all tourist routes, bicycle routes and skiing routes and trails are closed for the nights (this does not concern the nightly training hikes). Selected sections of routes are also temporarily closed due to environmental protection or safety of tourists.

Both in Poland and Slovakia public bodies undertake activities in order to guarantee a proper execution of rescue tasks.





## The strategy

“Efficient Country 2020” adopted in February 2013 assumes that the multiannual Programmes of Rescue and Civil Protection will be executed, which guarantee annual state budget resources dedicated to the execution of basic rescue and humanitarian tasks in the scope of civil protection and to the financing of technical development of social rescue organisations, as well as their maintenance, including the financing of the TOPR rescue helicopter. In March 2013 the Minister of Interior approved the helicopter maintenance programme for the years 2013-2017, which is to provide a fluent financing of the rescue helicopter Falcon and use of other helicopter resources (parts, components) being at the disposal of other entities. The programme assumes cooperation between MSW and TOPR concerning the search for spare parts to the helicopter in case of a damage, but also in case of the necessity to replace them in compliance with the regulations.



In 2011 the “Concept of Rescue on Mountain Areas in Perspective to the Year 2015” was prepared. The aim of the concept was to shorten the time of professional training of the rescuers, improve quality of undertaken actions (interventions) and increase safety of rescuers taking part in the actions. It assumes creating better conditions for aid provision in the mountains, increase of information level on weather conditions, increase of safety and quality of skiing routes, increase of safety of tourist routes and conservation of technical devices. The “Concept” presents nine tasks that need to be executed in order to improve the functioning of mountain rescue, of which two were executed in a timely manner<sup>1</sup>, three were being executed in the course of NKU SR audit<sup>2</sup> and two have not been executed<sup>3</sup>. One motion is to be implemented in 2014<sup>4</sup> and another has been partly implemented<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>To analyse the employment state of HZS rescuers and ancillary workers and update the norms of individual equipment of rescuers, rescue materials, technical devices and means of transport.

<sup>2</sup>To propose, in compliance with the results of the employment state analysis, a decrease or increase of HZS employees' number, set unified assessment criteria for guide dogs and dogs at the disposal of HZS and prepare the rules concerning the acquisition of rescue dogs, as well as to secure their feeding, secure the purchase of individual equipment for rescuers, rescue materials, technical devices and means of transport basing on the updated norms.

<sup>3</sup>To increase the quality of rescue activities in skiing centres, initiate talks with the secretaries of the state of the particular ministries and propose legal solutions in order to improve the marking of tourist routes.

<sup>4</sup>To create an internal audit position in HZS, the task of which would be to audit and assess the activity with regard to the provision of the highest possible safety level in the mountains.

<sup>5</sup>To extend the functions of the Integrated Rescue System, prepare complex tools enabling the update of data and maps, prepare system channels for data transmission, replace the analogue communications network with a digital one.

” In July 2013 **GOPR, TOPR, HZS, Asociacia Horskych Zachranorov** and the **Czech Horská služba** signed a **MEMORANDUM** of cooperation.





## >> Cooperation concerning the provision of safety in the mountains

**HZS**, GOPR and TOPR often cooperate during conducted rescue actions. In the years 2010-2013 these entities carried out several dozen rescue actions, during which the rule was applied, that the rescue action is lead by the leader of the unit, on which territory the intervention is taking place. Rules of cooperation were regulated by contracts and agreements concluded between those organisations. In 2004 TOPR and HZS concluded an agreement for an indefinite time, regulating the terms of cooperation by rescue actions and preventive activities, as well as joint trainings. In the same year a similar agreement was signed with Beskidy Group of GOPR and a year later HZS and GOPR signed a memorandum of understanding, in which they declared will to cooperate and mutually help each other during rescue actions and conducted trainings, as well as mutual technical assistance, should such a need arise. Audit results confirm that the provisions of the agreements are executed and positively influence the effectiveness and efficiency of the conducted actions. In 2010 cooperation between HZS and TOPR resulted in the creation of a draft Geographic Information System, which was the first stage of the cross-border cooperation between Poland and Slovakia in the years 2007-2012. Further implementation of the project, due to lack of resources, has not yet been carried out.

In course of rescue actions entities performing mountain rescue effectively cooperated also among others with the Police, State Fire Service, Border Guard, Medical Air Rescue and directors of national and landscape parks. The cooper-

ation included mutual help during rescue actions and exchange of information, what had influence on efficient and effective conduct of rescue and search actions. Moreover, GOPR, TOPR and HZS cooperated with international mountain rescue organisations and entities carrying out rescue activities in other countries. The cooperation included help during rescue actions, as well as exchange of views and experiences in order to improve the quality of mountain rescue.

In December 2008 HZS, GOPR, TOPR and Italian Guardia di Finanza signed a cooperation agreement in order to improve skills, conducted joint trainings and worked on concepts connected with such themes as rescuing, high-mountain tourism and rock-alpinism.

In July 2013 GOPR, TOPR, HZS, Asociacia Horskych Zachranorov and Czech Horská Služba signed a Memorandum of Understanding in which its signatories committed, among others, to actively seek the most favourable means of cooperation, promotion and execution of activities connected with the improvement of mountain rescue quality. This cooperation consists in mutual help during difficult rescue actions, rescue and search quests, joint practices and trainings and exchange of experience and information on threats.

GOPR, TOPR and HZS are members of IKAR-CISA, an international association cooperating with mountain rescue organisations that operate in several dozen countries. The aim of IKAR-CISA is to exchange knowledge and experience concerning mountain rescue. The works of the association result in among others recommendations concerning rescue actions.





## &gt;&gt; Financial management



## GOPR and TOPR

are associations that perform rescue tasks on the basis of an agreement concluded with the Ministry of Interior. Medical rescue in Poland is mainly financed by the subsidies of Ministry of Interior, which in the years 2010-2012 constituted from 42,9% in 2011 to 47% in 2012 of GOPR's expenditure and from 43,5% in 2010 to 53,4% in 2012 of TOPR's expenditure. During this period in total PLN 31,5 million of subsidies were transferred to entities authorized to perform mountain rescue. In 2012 the amount of subsidies transferred by the Ministry of Interior was increased by 19,9%, whereby the amount of subsidies transferred to TOPR by 24,4% and the amount of subsidies transferred to GOPR by 17,3%. Additionally, the introduction of Act on Safety narrowed the scope of tasks commissioned and co-financed by the Ministry of Interior. From 2012 the Ministry does not finance skiing rescue and rescue on the premises of settling units and public roads.

Another important financing source, particularly for TOPR, are funds transferred

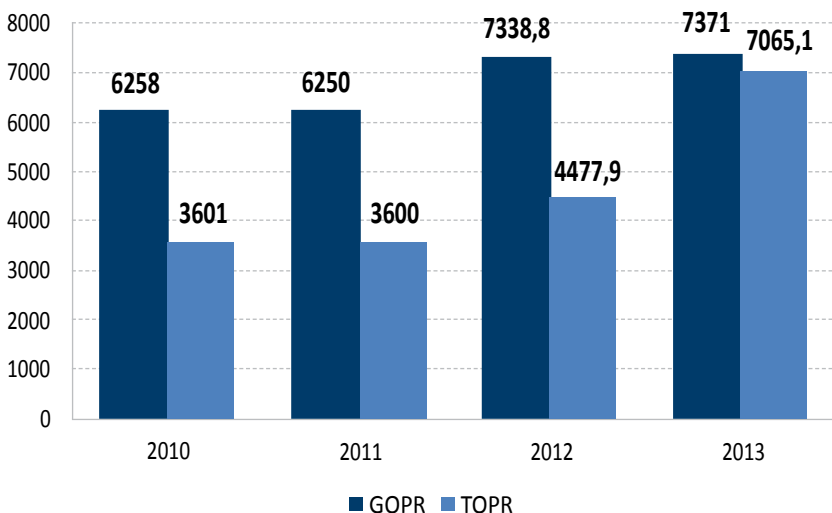
by the national parks. In the years 2010-2013 (first half) Tatra National Park transferred in total PLN 2968 thousand to TOPR and Babia Góra National Park in total PLN 68,4 thousand to GOPR. Those funds were used by mountain rescue organisations in particular to purchase specialized rescue and communication equipment.

The rescue activities are also co-financed by local governments, on the premises of which the activities are carried out, and sponsors. However, GOPR and TOPR receive funds from such entities depending on the effectiveness of the actions undertaken in order to acquire such resources and financial capabilities of the financing entities.

### Chart no. 3

Amounts of subsidies transferred by the Ministry of Interior in the years 2010-2013 (data in PLN thousand)

Source:  
Data gathered during NIK audit



### In Poland

**tourists do not bear costs of the conducted rescue actions.**

**There is no obligation to buy accident insurance and tourists do not have to cover the costs of conducted rescue actions, even if they were caused by their irresponsible behaviour.**

**HZS** is a budget entity established to execute rescue tasks. The activity of HZS is financed by the state budget, whereby it can receive funds from other sources. In 2012 total expenditure of HZS

30 June 2013) and was by 42,7% lower than in 2010. Technical aspects of the rescue action have to be paid for, including the arrival of rescuers to the place of accident, use of snow scooter, car or a helicopter.



Lp.	INCOME SOURCES	2010	2011	2012	2013	5:3 (%)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Rescue actions (without the use of a helicopter)	100 637	82 347	135 955	35 413	135,1
2.	Rescue actions (with the use of a helicopter)	37 817	2 657	7 229	0	19,1
3.	Triggering controlled avalanches in skiing centres	70 127	85 089	94 302	110 296	134,5
4.	<b>In total</b>	<b>208 581</b>	<b>170 093</b>	<b>237 486</b>	<b>145 709</b>	<b>113,9</b>

Data in euro

Source: Data gathered during NKU SR's audit

amounted to EUR 3177,1 thousand and was by 5,3% higher than in 2010 (EUR 3017 thousand). In the years 2010-2012 HZS resources out of the state budget increased by 23,3%, from EUR 200,9 thousand to EUR 247,7 thousand, whereby they constituted only from 6,7% in 2010 to 7,8% in 2012 of all the costs in those years. In the years 2010-2013 (first half) HZS issued 810 invoices (39,5% conducted interventions), including 16 (about 2% of all invoices) for the use of a helicopter. Foreigners also have to cover the costs of interventions. In case the amount indicated in the invoice is not settled, HZS undertakes steps in order to collect it in course of an enforcement proceeding. According to data as of 30 June 2013 HZS disposed of 32 final and binding sentences authorising to collect liabilities.

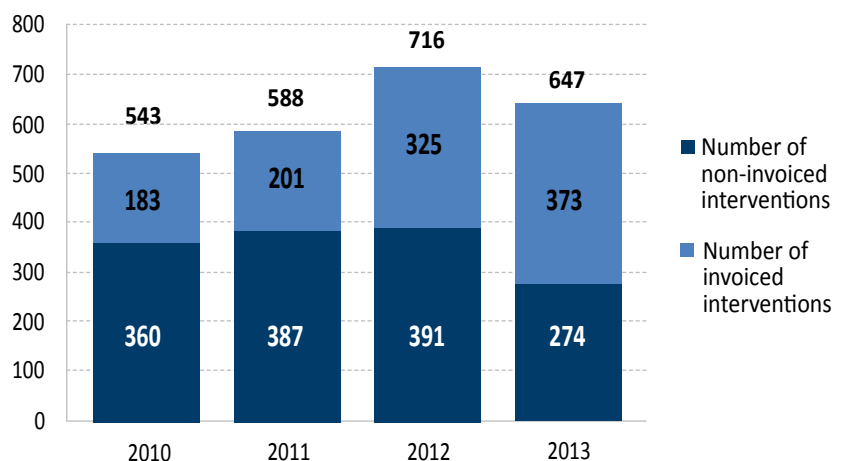
The total amount of invoices issued in the years 2010-2013 (first half) equalled EUR 761,9 thousand. The average cost of an intervention as of 30 June 2013 amounted to EUR 350,6 and was by 39,4% lower than in 2010. In case of interventions with the use of a helicopter the average cost of an intervention amounted to EUR 2409,6 (as of

**In Slovakia  
the citizens are not obliged  
to purchase accident insurance,  
however the tourist cover the costs  
of the conducted rescue action  
regardless of its cause,  
even if it is not connected  
with their behaviour.**

Chart no. 4

Number of HZS interventions in the mountains in the years 2010-2013

Source: Data gathered during NKU SR's audit



## >> Tourist routes



**Audits** conducted in Tatra and Babia Góra National Parks showed that the mountain routes on the premises of those parks guaranteed safety of the tourists. The routes were in proper condition, properly and noticeably marked and there were no obstacles present that would hinder movement on the routes or force tourists to go outside them. The tourist infrastructure (observation decks, protective barriers, tourist shelters, bridges and foot-bridges) was also in proper condition. A proper condition of mountain routes was confirmed by the results of surveys conducted among tourists, in which more than 98% assessed their condition as good or very good.

However the inspections conducted by the Polish Tourist and Landscape Association in 2013 of routes located outside national parks showed various obstacles and difficulties in their use, which may threaten the safety of tourists. The often occurring lack of marking, caused among others by cutting down trees, vanishing of not-renewed mark-

ings and devastations of tourist signs may cause tourists to leave the marked routes and lose way in dangerous areas. Safety of tourists is also influenced by natural phenomena, such as landslides or fallen trees, as well as the use of routes by cyclists, motorcyclists and owners of quads.

The inspections show that, due to their condition, mountain routes located outside national parks may not be possible to use by the tourists, as well as pose a threat to their safety. This results among others from lack of the institution responsible for the maintenance of route network, what is mainly done by PTTK, whereby the association is not legally authorised to coordinate such works. In Poland new routes are created and financed by entities other than PTTK, which do not later maintain them, what causes deterioration of their technical condition and their vanishing.

Maintenance of mountain routes is also hindered by their unregulated legal status and claims issued by the owners of areas on which the routes are located.



**In Slovakia** some of the routes, due to their condition, are unavailable to the tourists. In addition, the marking of tourist routes is not unified, what lowers the quality of marking system of those routes. In the last years the number of search actions conducted in order to find tourists, who lost their way due to, among others, bad marking of tourist routes, increased.

In High Tatras, West Tatras and Bielskí Tatras the marking of tourist routes is conducted by the State Forests, Tatra National Park and this marking is done properly. Summer marking of routes outside Tatra National Park is done by the members of Slovak Tourist and Ski Club and local tourism organisations. The marking of routes depends on the interest and willingness of their members and financial resources. Winter marking of tourist routes is conducted by the HZS.

In all national parks and mountains in Slovakia there are dangerous zones that may be passed through using facilities such

as chains, clamps, bridges, ladders and balustrades. The biggest number of such spots is located on fairly small area of Slovak Paradise and Malá Fatra national parks, where passage would be impossible without such facilities. Climate conditions and intensive tourism movement cause necessity for their often conservation and replacement. Managers of such devices, which are mostly local government entities, are responsible for their technical state. Unfavourable financial situation of local governments results in bad shape of those devices, what was in the past noticed by the HZS.



**In the last years**

**the number of search actions**

**conducted in order to find tourists,**

**who lost their way**

**due to among others bad marking**

**of tourist routes, increased.**





## >> Survey results

**In order** to gather tourist opinion on the condition of tourist routes, in the late 2013, early 2014 NIK and NKU SR published on their websites a survey available to general public. In case of NIK it was the first ever survey available to general public conducted via the Internet. In total over 5000 surveys have been filled in. The results show that the marking of tourist routes is positively assessed by 87,7% of the Polish respondents and 91,9% of the Slovaks.

The number of facilities enabling the movement on hardly accessible spots (bridges, ladders, chains, balustrades etc.)

was also evaluated as sufficient by the most of survey participants (81,2% in Poland and 81,1% in Slovakia). The condition of such devices in Slovakia was positively assessed by 91,9% of the respondents. The density of markings was positively assessed by 62,2% of Slovak respondents, 29,7% were rather pleased and 8,1% not pleased.

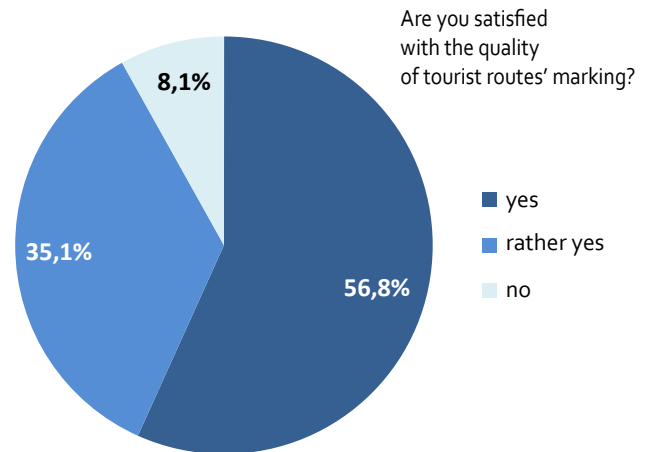
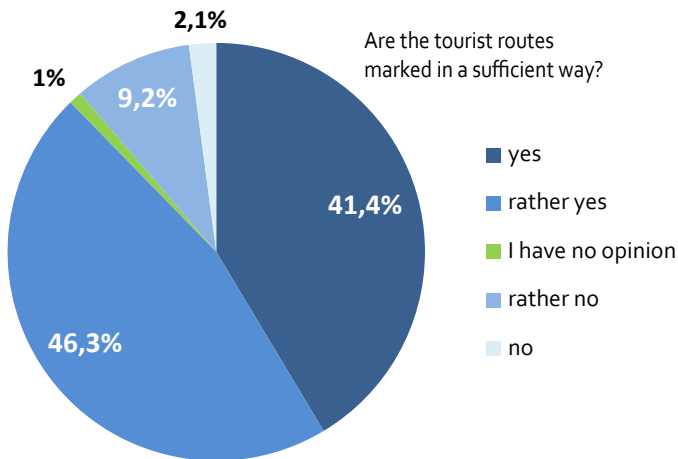
Moreover, it has to be noted that even though 87,8% of NIK's survey participants assessed the marking as sufficient, more than 62% admitted that they lost their way on tourist routes resulting from incorrect or not full marking (29%), obstacles on the route (8%) or due to inattention (25,5%).



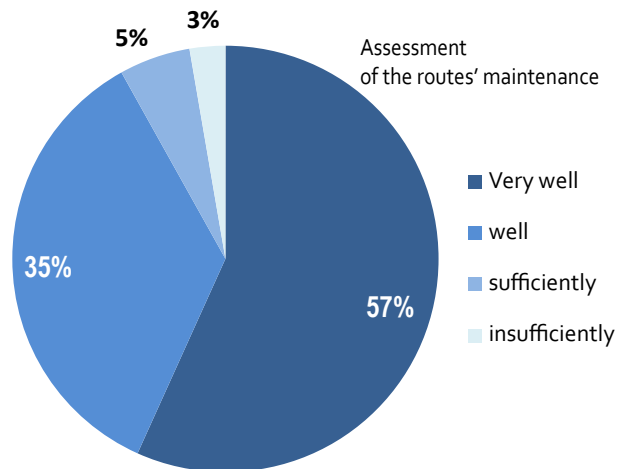
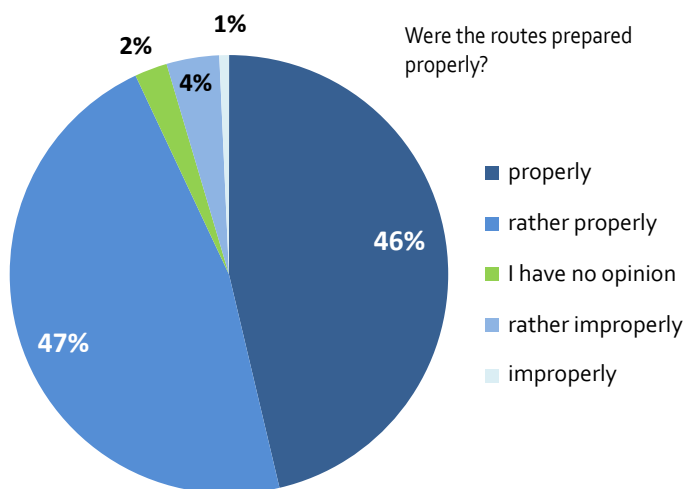
Detailed results of the survey concerning the assessment of how the tourist routes are prepared, including their marking and applied facilities, are illustrated by the diagrams below:



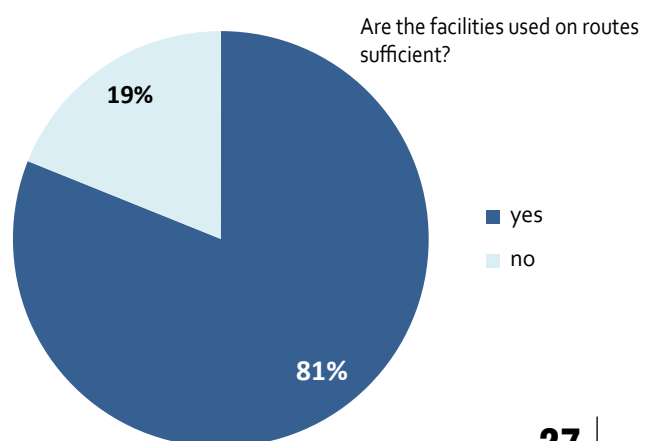
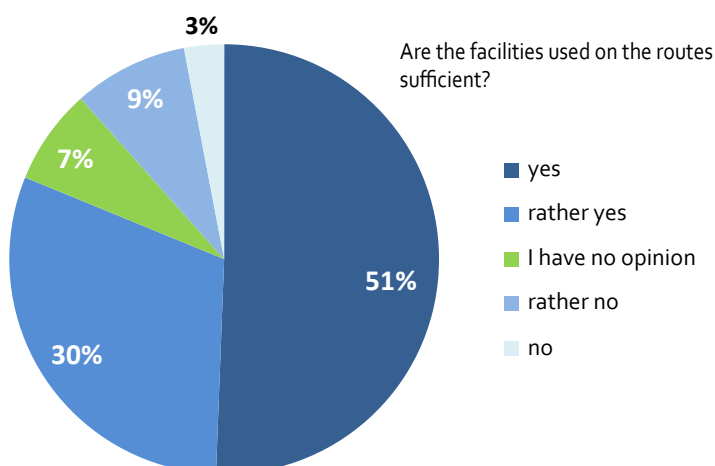
### Marking of tourist routes



### Assessment of the maintenance/preparation of tourist routes



### Are the facilities (for instance clamps, chains, ladders etc.) used on the routes sufficient?



## >> Educational and preventive activity

**In order** to secure safety conditions in the mountains, tourists have to be informed about the proper planning before mountain trips and about behaviour in their course. Tourists have to be aware of the threats resulting from the undertaken activity and possible consequences of their decisions. Therefore, education and prevention are so important.

Both Poland and Slovakia conduct preventive and educational activity concerning safety in the mountains, in which entities performing mountain rescue also take part. Despite the conducted education the number of accidents in the mountains and on ski slopes increases. Often the accidents are caused by improper behaviour of the tourists.

This is confirmed by the results of surveys conducted by NIK's auditors during the inspection of selected mountain routes. Over 20% of the survey participants in case of Tatra National Park and over 41% in case of Babia Góra National Park did not familiarise the regulations in force before entering the parks and half of the respondents witnessed dangerous behaviour.

It is necessary to seek a joint way to reach tourists with educational and preventive actions. Tourists should be aware of the risk connected with tourism, of threats that they may encounter in the mountains and how they should behave in case they occur. This requires constant education not only by entities responsible for the provision of safety conditions in the mountains.





” Tourists must be aware of the threats resulting from the activity they undertake and possible consequences of their decisions.



## >> Conclusions of the audit of the Integrated Rescue System

**The Integrated** Rescue System was prepared to integrate all rescue entities and coordinate the activities of units responsible for the preparation and execution of tasks connected with the provision of help to the victims. The aim of the system is to undertake immediate action and provide professional help.



## The implementation

of the National Medical Rescue system began in Poland in 1999. The aim of the system is to provide aid to each person in situation of a sudden health threat. NIK has audited its implementation and functioning several times.

In 2011 NIK conducted an audit aimed to assess the medical rescue system in Poland. During this audit the functioning of the emergency call systems in eight voivodeships has been verified. NIK revealed that none of the systems functioned according to the regulations in force, because the tasks of the emergency call centres were executed by the Police and State Fire Service units. One integrated emergency call system has not been created.

As part of the audit of safety of tourism and recreation in the mountains in the first half of 2013 NIK's Regional Branch in Kraków audited Polish Cable Railways. During the audit studies the auditors tried to connect with the emergency numbers and found out that on the premises of organised skiing areas, which do not have a signed agreement with GOPR or TOPR for the provision of skiing rescue, there is no possibility to connect with a skiing rescuer via the number 112 or the mountain rescue emergency number (985 or 601 100 300).

In case of an accident on such a secured slope the victim, in order to call for help, has to know the direct phone number to the rescuer who is on duty on this slope. In NIK's opinion such solution is not favourable for the safety of skiers.



**In 2012** the Act on the Integrated Rescue System came into force that defined organisation and functioning of the system and introduced the European emergency number 112. The Integrated Emergency System includes inter alia the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Voivodeship Offices, rescue services and other units that are occupied with the provision of aid or humanitarian activity.

The results of audit conducted by NKU SR show that during the audited period a unified communications platform has not been launched and not all of the units constituting the Integrated Rescue System have been connected to it, what influenced the effectiveness of the exchange and processing of information connected with the accidents between rescue units. Moreover, it has been stated that the development of the Geographic Information System in the Coordination Centre of the Integrated Rescue System was not secured. No communication technique was implemented that would enable communication with the wounded victims and no emergency number was established in the Voivodeship Office.



- > The report includes photographs obtained thanks to GOPR, PTTK Centre of Mountain Tourism and HZS.
  
- > National information is also available on NIK and NKU SR websites:  
[www.nik.gov.pl](http://www.nik.gov.pl)  
[www.nku.gov.sk](http://www.nku.gov.sk)