

International Geographical Union--Union Géographique Internationale

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Paris, 1 October 2024

The International Geographical Union (IGU) notes with great concern the plans to eliminate Geography from the primary school curriculum in Poland. We were alerted to this situation by our newly elected Vice-President, Professor Marek Wieckowski from Poland who took office at the conclusion of our 35th International Geographical Congress in Dublin, the largest international gathering of global geographers with more than 2600 delegates. His election highlights the value of geography in Poland to the international community of geographers. At the Opening Ceremony of same Congress, young Polish geographers were awarded medals of the International Geographical Olympiad, which bears testimony to the interest and strength of the discipline on the country. This accolade reflects the success of Polish geographers in general: teachers in schools, the Geographical Society of Poland (which has been supporting the development of geography in the country with all its strength for 106 years), the Geography Olympiad (one of the oldest in Poland), as well as research scientists and university academics. This success is founded on the basis of education in the discipline of geography in your primary schools.

Can we imagine a world without geography? The lack of geographical knowledge in primary school will lead to a lack of understanding of the world, the dependencies, conditions and consequences of human actions. Geography is the discipline at the heart of understanding the complex set of relationships that connect our planet with its inhabitants - whatever the species. It is therefore essential if we are to understand the challenges of our century - the climate crisis, migration, the imperative of sustainable development and, more broadly, globalization. Beyond the issues themselves, geography provides an understanding of the consequences of these changes, making it possible to plan, manage and act appropriately. Geography is also a subject necessary to forging a fundamental understanding one's own homeland.

I therefore appeal to the Ministry of National Education not to remove or replace Geography as a basic element of National Education. Geography is one of the oldest branches of knowledge in the world, the development of which began in ancient Greece and which has evolved into a highly dynamic and continually developing modern science. We cannot understand the modern world without geography and, in its absence, future generations will become spatially illiterate at great cost to both society and the environment.

Professor Nathalie Lemarchand
President of the International Geographical Union: 2024-28

International Geographical Union Executive Committee, 2024-26

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