

# Polish Science on the Danube

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## **The nexus for promoting Polish science in Austria and the entire Danube region is the Vienna Scientific Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences**

It was precisely 100 years ago that the residence at Boerhaavegasse 25 in Vienna's third district became a center of Polish life in the Austro-Hungarian capital. The Polish Folk School Society in Vienna purchased the building in 1908, intending for it to serve as a "Polish House" for the Polish community in Vienna. In 1970, the society was transformed into the Polish House Foundation, headed *ex officio* by the Polish ambassador throughout the interwar years, until WWII. Later, financial difficulties led in 1980 to a decision to dissolve the foundation and transfer its assets to the Polish Academy of Sciences, which resolved to use the building to establish a foreign scientific center. The activity of the Vienna center was launched in January 1991, after the building annex had been thoroughly renovated. Work on the main building itself was completed in 1997, when the Vienna Scientific Center began operating at full steam.

### **Promoting science**

The Vienna Scientific Center has since offered an optimal channel for furthering Polish-Austrian research cooperation, which has a tradition stretching back into the Middle Ages. Over the past two centuries, such links to Vienna have been evident in such outstanding figures as Samuel Bogumił Linde, Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński, Aleksander Brückner, Marian Smoluchowski, and Kazimierz Twardowski.

The Vienna Scientific Center is chiefly tasked with promoting Polish science and research cooperation between Poland and Austria. Over the years, the post of director has been filled by Prof. Leszek Kasprzyk (1991–1993), Prof. Roman Taborski (1993–1997), Prof. Franciszek Grucza (1998–2000), Prof. Marian A. Herman (2000–2006), and Prof. Bogusław Dybaś (since May 2007). The center draws intellectual support from the Professors Club founded in 2004, drawing together intel-

lectuals and artists of mainly Polish origin whose work is related to Vienna. The club's chairman is currently Prof. Jan Zazgornik, its deputy chair Prof. Józefa Gądek-Węsierski, a foreign member of the Academy.

The Vienna Scientific Center works together with the institutions of the Austrian Academy of Science, fostering closer collaboration between the Polish Academy of Sciences and its Austrian counterpart. An excellent



Archive of the Scientific Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Vienna

The façade of the main building Scientific Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Vienna at Boerhaavegasse 25, thoroughly remodeled in the 1990s



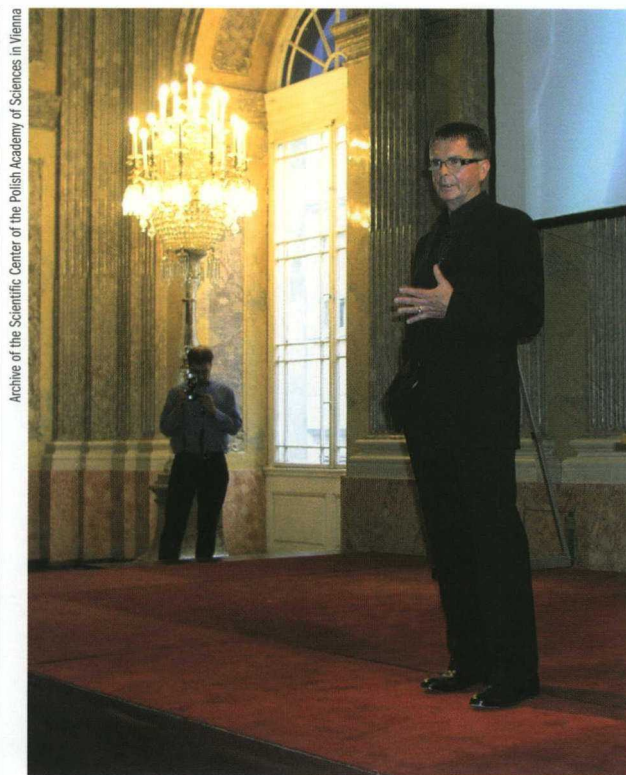
example of such cooperation can be found in the lecture delivered by outstanding Polish astronomer Prof. Aleksander Wolszczan on 5 June 2008 at the Formal Hall of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, inaugurating a series of lectures by prominent Polish researchers. The Scientific Center building, too, has played host to numerous lectures by Polish scientists presenting advances in Polish science, including a lecture by archeologist Prof. Andrzej Kola about archeological and exhumation work at the cemeteries of Polish officers murdered in the former Soviet Union. The center also organizes numerous symposiums and conferences, most frequently in cooperation with Austrian as well as Polish research bodies. Noteworthy among such events held in 2008 are a symposium about the Europeanization of administrative law jointly organized by the University of Graz and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, a conference on the literary work of Andrzej Kuśniewicz organized with the University of Vienna, and a conference about the reformation in Central Europe organized jointly with the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the Slovenian Research Institute in Vienna, and Collegium Hungaricum.

Since its inception, an important part of the center's mission has been to document its research activity in the form of publications, above all printing post-conference materials, cycles of lecturers, and since 2008 also the *Yearbook of the Scientific Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Vienna*. A full list of publications is available on the center's website. The center has endeavored to utilize its potential for two important projects in the humanities: continuing registration of Polish-related materials held in Austrian archives in cooperation with the Head Office of the State Archives, and to initiate work on preparing the so-called von Mieg maps (cartographic pictures of Galicia from the latter 18th century) for publication, in cooperation with the Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences.

### ***Wien, Wien, nur du allein...***

The Scientific Center in Vienna has ample facilities for a varied range of activity to promote Polish science and Polish-Austrian research cooperation and for supporting Polish scientists working in Vienna and Austria. Two conference rooms available: the Jan III Sobieski Hall, which can seat more than 100 and is outfitted with sound equipment, multimedia gear, and logistical facilities, and the Nicolaus Copernicus Hall, seating 30 and suitable for smaller symposiums and workshops.

The Vienna Center also has guest rooms able to accommodate up to 40 individuals. Rooms are available to Polish scholars, doctorate students, and undergraduates coming to Vienna for research purposes, and are also used by participants of the conferences and other research-related events organized by the Center. The



Archive of the Scientific Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Vienna

**Professor Aleksander Wolszczan giving a lecture entitled "Children of the Universe" at the Formal Hall of the Austrian Academy of Sciences on 5 June 2008**

rooms offer comfortable accommodation (including wireless Internet) and are attractively located within Vienna. Through cooperative links with the Lanckoroński Foundation, its scholarship winners are able to live and present their projects at the center.

The center's library is currently in a state of intense renovation. The library comprises the center's own book collection as well as the Otto Forst-Battaglia Collection. The latter consists of Polish-related materials from the library of Otto Forst-Battaglia (1889-1965), a preeminent Austrian historian, Polish studies expert, and the author of works including a biography of King Jan III Sobieski, which were perpetually bequeathed to the library of the Ossoliński National Institute with the stipulation that they be kept at the Scientific Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Vienna. The two collections of nearly 5,000 items in total, once fully prepared and cataloged, will together form the basis for a valuable library and workplace for Polish scholars coming to Vienna, mainly historians and literary historians, as well as for Austrian researchers dealing with Polish-related issues.

In sum, the available accommodation/conference facilities and the expanding library enable the Scientific Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences to act as a dynamic focal point for Polish science in Vienna, radiating out to Austria as a whole and throughout the wider Danube region. ■