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FOREWORDS



Dear Reader,

They say that a map is like a business card for a country. It shows who you are and what opportunities you have. But people are not described perfectly by a mere introduction, and likewise, the essence of the world on the map is defined by the thoughts, plans and everyday work of the people living in it.

We Hungarians often experience that our unique language and thinking create a code unbreakable to others, but, at the same time, it is also an important driving force of our culture to present the natural values of our country and the achievements of our nation to others. For this reason, the National Atlas is not just a symbol and a scientific summary, but also an opportunity to present Hungary in a way that is comprehensible to everyone. In this volume, for example, the natural characteristics that made the success of the Hungarian economy possible and, at the same time, defined the special milieu that has shaped our way of thinking for a thousand years.

The renowned Hungarian writer, Sándor Márai said, *the homeland is not just a geographic composition, but a set of experiences*. We invite you to this safe and homely world through this Atlas, and hopefully persuade you to visit our beautiful country as you scroll through its maps.

VIKTOR ORBÁN
Prime Minister of Hungary



Almost three decades after the previous edition of the National Atlas of Hungary we now proudly present the up-to-date review of what we Hungarians cherish and respect as our homeland. These days, when a myriad of data are widely available, such a seminal work stands by itself since it is significant in its own right: exceeding the limits of a mere compilation of knowledge, it is a concise synthesis of whatever is in existence in the central part of the geographically defined Pannonian Region. It is well known that Hungarians inhabit a much larger area than the one defined by the current borders of Hungary, or conversely, contemporary Hungary is much smaller than the space populated by our nation, hence the Atlas deals with all the area where the majority of our fellow nationals live, a European space colloquially referred to as the Carpathian Basin. Despite the fact that the work is pre-eminently Hungarian in respect to its interest and in its approach to geographic and social reality, it is neither ethnicity-oriented, nor nationalist in any way. Instead, it faithfully documents the current fundamental conditions and factors for all the inhabitants and components of the Carpathian Basin. Moreover, due to the peerlessly exigent editorial work, readers can easily decipher the processes and tendencies underlying factual information, just as they are also challenged to anticipate the long-term effects of current phenomena. Having all this science at hand, the issues of the future become ever more pressing: with a good grasp of the present, an awareness of the past and the wisdom acquired during our millenary history, we, the users of the Atlas, are in charge, responsible and accountable to secure the perspective of a decent life in the Carpathian Basin and to preserve and develop whatever is more precious in its Hungarian character.

MIKLÓS KÁSLER
Minister of Human Capacities



In the history of the National Atlas of Hungary, the initiative has always been taken by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, thereby creating landmark documents of the sciences of their age, as well as an outstanding national symbol. In the same way as with the atlases of the 1960s and the 1980s, this is the case with the current Atlas.

Initiated by the present director of the Geographical Institute of the Academy, preparations for the new Atlas edition started in the Institute over a decade ago. Five years ago the Academy gave focused support to the project. As a result, we are holding in our hands the *Natural Environment* volume, which is to be followed by further additions to the series embracing social and economic issues.

Under the influence of the accelerated socio-economic and technical development of our age, we might have the impression that we are no longer dependent on our natural environment. But of course we are still embedded in our natural environment, living off the Earth, on the Earth and for the Earth. For this reason, the volumes of the new Atlas are headed by an introduction to Hungary's natural environment. This publication gives an overview of the state of the lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere in Hungary, along with synthesizing chapters about the interconnection and interaction of natural and human environments: landscapes, environment protection, nature conservation, and natural hazards.

The birth of this impressive and informative publication is due to the thorough preparations, the generous support provided by state institutions, as well as the work of numerous editors and authors from several research institutes and universities.

Thanking for the accomplishments and assistance of all contributors, I recommend the present volume to all who are interested in our country's natural environment, inside and outside Hungary's borders.

LÁSZLÓ LOVÁSZ
President
Hungarian Academy of Sciences