

## Societas Philologa Polonorum [Ochman]

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“The aim of the Philological Association is the cultivation and advancement of classical philology, with particular regard to the needs of school instruction.” Such were the opening words of the statute of the *Societas Philologa*, founded in 1893 by a group of Polish professors of classical philology from Lwów (then under Austro-Hungarian rule, today Lviv in Ukraine). The Society brought together both university professors and school teachers, many of whom in fact held doctoral degrees and combined teaching in schools with philological research. The character of the newly formed organisation was therefore primarily academic, although questions concerning school teaching also frequently occupied its members. After Poland regained independence in 1918, the name of the Association could be supplemented with the word *Polonorum*, and it thus became the Polish Philological Association (*Societas Philologa Polonorum*, *Polskie Towarzystwo Filologiczne*, henceforth: PTF) – a name that has since become firmly established in the landscape of Polish education, scholarship, and culture. Today the PTF brings together around 500 members across Poland, mainly university scholars and graduates of classical studies, some of whom teach Latin in the very small number of secondary schools that still offer the language. The Association’s headquarters are in Wrocław, and its regional branches operate in twelve cities across the country. The PTF continues to promote the

teaching of the classical languages, to foster the study of Greek and Roman literature and culture and their reception in later periods, and to disseminate knowledge about the ancient world.

### **Activities of the Regional Branches**

The twelve regional branches of the Polish Philological Association are located in Białystok, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Opole, Poznań, Szczecin, Toruń, Warsaw, and Wrocław. They play a central role in sustaining and promoting classical studies throughout the country. Their activities include regular scholarly meetings and lecture series, often organised in cooperation with universities, libraries, schools, and cultural institutions, and addressing subjects ranging from ancient literature, language, history, art, and philosophy to the reception of antiquity in later periods. Equally important is their educational and outreach work: branches organise workshops, reading events, competitions, and public lectures for school pupils, university students, teachers, and wider audiences, while many of their members are actively involved in the regional stages of the National Latin Olympiad and in other initiatives supporting the teaching of Latin, Greek, and ancient culture. Many branches also regularly participate in the international *Festival Européen Latin Grec*, organising public readings and events devoted to classical texts. In this way, the regional branches serve not only as centres of scholarly exchange, but also as vital intermediaries between academic classical scholarship and the wider public.

### **National Congresses**

National congresses (Pol. ‘zjazd’) are among the most important regular events in the life of the Polish Philological Association. Formerly held every year, they are now organised biennially by different local branches of the Association. Each congress is accompanied by an academic conference devoted to current research on antiquity and its reception, and its programme typically includes plenary lectures, thematic panels, and a didactic session devoted to the teaching of Latin. Every four years the congress also includes the General Meeting of Delegates, the Association’s highest governing body, at which reports are presented and the Board, the Audit Committee, and the Peer Tribunal are elected. Besides fulfilling important statutory functions, they provide a significant forum for scholarly exchange and for strengthening the nationwide community of Polish classicists.

### **Cooperation with Government Institutions**

The Polish Philological Association has for many years maintained active contacts with government institutions in matters concerning the place of classical languages in the Polish educational system. In particular, the Board of the PTF has repeatedly engaged in dialogue with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, submitted formal opinions and petitions, taken part in parliamentary discussions, and responded to proposed legislative changes affecting the teaching of Latin. These efforts intensified in connection with successive educational reforms and focused above all on preserving and strengthening the position of Latin in schools, improving curricular solutions, and demonstrating the continued educational value of classical studies. The Association has also contributed expert advice to ministerial consultations, participated in the preparation of new curriculum frameworks, and cooperated with public authorities in initiatives addressed to teachers and schools. In this way, the PTF has sought not only to represent the interests of classical philology as an academic discipline, but also to advocate for the broader cultural and educational significance of Latin in contemporary Polish education.

## **The National Latin Olympiad and Other Competitions**

The National Latin Olympiad (*Olimpiada Języka Łacińskiego*), organised annually since 1982, is one of the most important educational initiatives supported by the Polish Philological Association. It brings together secondary-school pupils from across the country and provides a demanding framework for the study of Latin language, literature, and ancient culture. The Olympiad is conducted in several stages, from school-level and regional rounds to the national final. In the final stage participants translate a passage from a classical author, most often Cicero, and take part in an oral examination on ancient literature and culture. Each year the competition identifies the most outstanding young classicists in Poland. Beyond its competitive dimension, it plays a significant role in sustaining the teaching of Latin in schools, encouraging talented pupils, and building lasting links between school education and university-level classical scholarship. The Olympiad itself thus remains an important meeting point for pupils, teachers, and academic classicists. Laureates of the Olympiad represent Poland in the *Certamen Ciceronianum Arpinas*, one of the most prestigious international competitions for students of Latin, thereby helping to connect Polish students with the European community of young classicists.

Alongside the National Latin Olympiad, members of the Polish Philological Association are actively involved in organising a variety of other competitions aimed at school pupils interested in classical languages and ancient culture. Local branches regularly cooperate with schools and educational institutions in preparing regional and nationwide contests devoted to antiquity. Among these initiatives are the *Konkurs Wiedzy o Antyku* organised in Poznań for secondary-school pupils, the *Konkurs Kultury Klasycznej* held in Warsaw for primary-school students, and the *Ogólnopolski Konkurs Języka Łacińskiego*, organised in Łódź for pupils beginning their study of Latin. Through such initiatives the Association helps introduce younger audiences to the literature, history, mythology, and cultural legacy of the ancient world, while at the same time strengthening cooperation between schools and university departments of classical philology.

## **The *Traditio Europae* Foundation**

The picture presented in this article would not be complete without mentioning the foundation *Traditio Europae*, an organisation established in Toruń in 2007 on the initiative of local classicists from Nicolaus Copernicus University. The founder of *Traditio Europae* was Professor Marian Szarmach, Honorary President of the PTF. Although legally independent, the foundation has long cooperated with the PTF and supports a range of scholarly, educational, and outreach activities devoted to the classical tradition.

Among its best-known initiatives is the *Liga Starożytnicza* (“Antiquity League”), a long-running educational programme and competition designed to popularise knowledge of the ancient world among school pupils. The foundation also organises the *Toruńskie Warsztaty Numizmatyki Antycznej* (“Toruń Workshops in Ancient Numismatics”) and collaborates in workshops and educational programmes for gifted students interested in antiquity. For many years an important element of its activity was the *Optimus Magister / Optima Magistra* prize, awarded to outstanding teachers of Latin and intended to recognise the crucial role of school education in sustaining classical studies.

## **Latin Workshops: *Scholae Wratislavienses***

A particularly important role in recent years has been played by the Latin workshops known as *Scholae Wratislavienses*, organised by the Wrocław branch of the PTF and rooted in the broader revival of communicative approaches to the teaching of classical languages in Poland. They continue the tradition of the earlier *Scholae Aestivae Posnanienses*, long organised at the Adam Mickiewicz

University in Poznań. The Wrocław workshops develop this tradition within new institutional settings of the University of Wrocław and the Pontifical Faculty of Theology. Their intellectual background lies in the gradual return of more active and immersive methods of teaching Latin, especially at the Institute of Classical, Mediterranean and Oriental Studies, where Hans Ørberg's *Lingua Latina per se illustrata* was introduced into the curriculum in 2009 and helped form a new generation of teachers interested in communicative pedagogy. The workshops offer immersive courses in which Latin is used not only as the object of study, but also as the medium of communication, combining reading, listening, discussion, and a wide range of interactive exercises with direct contact with original texts. Depending on the edition, they gather roughly 50 to 130 participants, with attendees coming not only from Poland and across Europe, but also from countries as distant as Mexico and South Korea. In this way, *Scholae Wratislavienses* contribute both to the training of new teachers and to the wider renewal of Latin pedagogy in Poland.

### **The 17<sup>th</sup> FIEC Congress in Wrocław**

The international profile of the Polish Philological Association was particularly visible on the occasion of the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress of the *Fédération Internationale des Associations d'Études Classiques* (FIEC), which was hosted from 7–11 July 2025 at the University of Wrocław. Although the Polish Philological Association has been one of the founding members of FIEC since 1950, no FIEC congress had previously been held in Poland. The event brought together more than four hundred scholars from thirty-eight countries across Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, making it one of the largest recent gatherings of specialists in classical studies. Over five days the programme featured four plenary lectures, ninety-six thematic panels organised in ten parallel streams, and a poster session, with a total of 294 papers presenting new research across the full spectrum of the discipline – from philology, history, and archaeology to reception studies and digital humanities. Alongside the academic programme, the congress offered a rich cultural and social agenda, including guided tours of Wrocław, concerts, special presentations of rare Greek and Latin manuscripts from the collections of the University Library in Wrocław, and an exhibition at the Ossolineum National Institute showcasing early printed editions of classical authors.

### ***Eos. Commentarii Societatis Philologiae Polonorum***

The official periodical of the PTF is *Eos. Commentarii Societatis Philologiae Polonorum*, a leading scholarly journal in the field of classical studies in Poland. Founded in 1894, *Eos* is one of the oldest continuously published scholarly journals in the world and has served for more than a century as an important forum for research on the languages, literature, history, and culture of the ancient world. The journal publishes articles, critical notes, and reviews covering a wide range of topics in classical philology and related disciplines, and it brings together contributions from both Polish and international scholars. Most material is published in English, although readers may also encounter occasional articles in Latin, German, French, Italian, or Spanish (Polish is reserved for reports and minutes concerning the local activities of the PTF). Through *Eos*, the Association continues its long-standing commitment to supporting and disseminating high-level research in classical studies.

The reader may be interested to know that the first editor-in-chief of *Eos* was Professor Ludwik Ćwikliński, the founding father and first president of the PTF. The title *Eos* was chosen deliberately: in Greek mythology the goddess of dawn rises in the East, and the journal was conceived as the first scholarly periodical devoted to classical studies in Eastern Europe. More than a century later, this symbol has acquired renewed significance. In a recent effort to modernise the Association's visual identity, the Board of the PTF adopted the figure of Eos as the central motif not only of the journal but of the organisation as a whole. The image of the goddess of dawn – traditionally associated with light, morning dew, freshness, and youthfulness – has thus come to represent the Association's hope

that the study of classical languages and cultures may yet witness a new “sunrise” in the twenty-first century.

## Conclusion

Classical studies are often described as a field in decline, yet the experience of the Polish Philological Association suggests a more complex picture. Over the course of more than 130 years the Association has survived two world wars, the decades of the communist regime, and the turbulent years of political transformation. Paradoxically, it is in the period of democracy that classical languages have faced their most serious challenges within the Polish educational system. Over the past forty years the teaching of Ancient Greek in secondary schools has disappeared completely, while the proportion of secondary school students learning Latin has fallen from roughly thirty per cent to less than two. Those few who still learn Latin usually receive only one hour of instruction per week for one or two years. Even the so-called “extended” programme offers as little as two hours per week over four years and is available in only a handful of schools nationwide. Pupils younger than fourteen have virtually no opportunity to learn Latin other than through private tuition outside school.

As a consequence, university classical programmes have since the early 2000s regularly had to admit students with no prior knowledge of Latin, which makes the training of new generations of proficient classicists considerably more difficult. At the same time, the opportunities for students of classical philology to obtain teaching qualifications have become increasingly limited. Because so few schools still offer Latin, it is often difficult for students to complete the required teaching internships, and in the case of Ancient Greek such placements are virtually impossible to obtain. Moreover, relatively few students complete full classical philology programmes at all. Although recent years have seen a noticeable increase in interest in studying classics at university level, this has been accompanied by a high rate of dropouts during the course of study. At the same time, a small but active private educational sphere has developed, in which students learn Latin with tutors outside formal institutions, sometimes with instructors who lack official teaching credentials but nevertheless possess considerable competence.

The activities described in this article – lectures, competitions, workshops, conferences, publications, and international collaboration – may appear modest when considered individually. Taken together, however, they form a network through which the study of the ancient world continues to be transmitted to new generations. The history of the Association suggests that classical studies do not survive through institutions alone, but through communities of scholars, teachers, and students willing to read, teach, and discuss ancient texts across generations. Wherever such communities exist, the ancient world continues to find new audiences. In this sense, the symbol of Eos adopted by the Association is more than a visual motif: it expresses the hope that the study of classical languages and cultures may yet experience a new dawn in the twenty-first century.

### Websites:

Polish Philological Association: [ptf.edu.pl](http://ptf.edu.pl)

*Eos. Commentarii Societatis Philologiae Polonorum*: [eos.ptf.edu.pl](http://eos.ptf.edu.pl)

*Scholae Wratislavienses*: [wratislavia.ptf.edu.pl](http://wratislavia.ptf.edu.pl)

National Latin Olympiad (*Olimpiada Języka Łacińskiego*): [olimpiada.ptf.edu.pl](http://olimpiada.ptf.edu.pl)

### Social media:

[www.facebook.com/societas.philologa](https://www.facebook.com/societas.philologa)

[instagram.com/socphilpol](https://www.instagram.com/socphilpol)

[tiktok.com/@socphilpol](https://www.tiktok.com/@socphilpol)

[x.com/socphilpol](https://www.x.com/socphilpol)