

Professor Aleksander Jan Guterch
16 February 1936 – 28 December 2023



Aleksander Guterch, a professor at the Institute of Geophysics of the Polish Academy of Sciences, was a prominent geophysicist, dealing with the structure of the Earth's crust and upper mantle, the “father” of seismic studies of the lithosphere in Poland.

He was born in Sękowa near Gorlice in the Podkarpacie region, in a family with strong petroleum traditions. He attended primary and secondary schools there. Next, he studied at the Faculty of Physics of the University of Warsaw, where in 1961, under the supervision of Professor Tadeusz Olczak, he received a master's degree in geophysics specialization and took up

a job as a research assistant. In 1963, he moved to the Institute of Geophysics of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IG PAS; in Polish: IGF PAN), with which he bound his professional life for 60 years. In 1969, after defending his PhD, he headed the Deep Seismic Sounding Laboratory and then the Department of Seismic Lithospheric Research of IG PAS until 2012. He was an educator and mentor to many young employees, and promoted five PhD students. He built a strong research team around him, with which, starting in the 1970s, he took up the challenge of identifying the deep structure of the Earth's crust and upper mantle in Poland by seismic methods. The Trans-European Suture Zone (TESZ), which runs through the centre of Poland and is one of Europe's most prominent tectonic units, was of his particular interest. In scientific activities, the research team established strong cooperation with the Department of Physics of the Lithosphere of the Institute of Geophysics, the Faculty of Physics of the University of Warsaw, headed by Professor Marek Grad.

From 1997 to 2003, Aleksander Guterch initiated and organized or co-organized large-scale seismic research projects of deep crustal and lower lithosphere structures in Central Europe, from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic. Smaller-scale surveys were also conducted in several East European countries and Finland. He also pioneered this type of research in the Arctic and Antarctic, organizing ten marine refraction seismic expeditions. The Professor also headed many scientific projects and programs in Poland.

Professor Aleksander Guterch was a full member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a correspondent member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (Polska Akademia Umiejętności, PAU), an ordinary member of the Warsaw Scientific Society, the Polish Geophysical Society, an honorary member of the Hungarian Society of Geophysicists, and a member of many national and international Scientific Committees, Associations and Specialized Groups. He was also the recipient of many awards and honours, and the holder of several national decorations. The results of Prof. Guterch's scientific activities have been presented in more than 250 publications, mainly in international journals and monographs, as well as national ones. These works are highly valued by the scientific community dealing with the "hard Earth", as evidenced by the high number of citations.

In addition to his achievements in science, Aleksander Guterch also had significant achievements in the field of promoting and preserving the traditions of Polish colors and weapons. He was a long-time president and then a honorary member of the Association of Lovers of Old Arms and Uniforms. He also held the title of Honorary Citizen of the Sękowa Commune.

In the person of the Professor, we lose not only a great scientist but also a mentor to many generations of geophysicists and a very remarkable colleague and friend.

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