



Fot. PAP/Wojtek Jargiło

### **„Bearded men” from Sławatycze on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage**

The village of Sławatycze has a population of just over 1,000 inhabitants and sits just a few kilometres from the border with Belarus in the Podlasie voivodeship.

In the last three days of the year men dress up in carefully prepared costumes and long beards chase children and young women with sticks around the village. The purpose of the tradition is to bid farewell to the old year, rid the village of bad spirits and at the same time to welcome a new, better year. Therefore, the frightened children, shout a lot, run, and make a lot of noise to ward off everything that was bad in the old year. The legend also says that any unmarried woman who is lifted and thrown in the air by one of the bearded men will improve her chances of finding a husband in the coming year.

The men prepare their impressive, crafted costumes by themselves. Going from the bottom to the top, they wrap their legs in straw, then turn a sheepskin coat inside, which symbolises old age, longevity, and wisdom. They cover their faces in a painted leather mask. The beard is made from long linen fibre which indicates old age, long life, and experience. The hat is an 80-centimetre high made from flowers and crepe paper ribbons.



The men devote much time to preparing their impressive costumes. Going from bottom to top, they wrap their legs in straw, then turn a sheepskin coat inside, which symbolises old age, longevity and wisdom.

*Wojciech Pacewicz/PAP*



The ensemble is topped off with an 80-centimetre-high conical hat made from 100-120 colourful flowers of tissue or crepe paper. Ribbons are attached to the hat.

*Wojciech Pacewicz/PAP*



The most important part of the costume is the beard, which is made in the village from long strands of linen fibre. It is supposed to indicate old age, long life and experience.

*Wojciech Pacewicz/PAP*



According to legend, any unmarried woman who is lifted up and thrown in the air by one of the bearded men will improve her chances of finding a husband in the coming year.

*Wojciech Pacewicz/PAP*



The men cover their faces in a painted leather mask.

*Wojciech Pacewicz/PAP*

Entry on the national list opens the way for a full entry onto prestigious UNESCO list.

Danuta Piotrowska

**Źródła:**

*Brodacze ze Sławatycz.* Wyjątkowa tradycja w lubelskiej wsi. <https://www.nationalgeographic.pl>

*Jedyna taka tradycja w Polsce jest w lubelskim. Brodacze wyszli na ulice.* <https://www.dziennikwschodni.pl>