**First Deputy Voivode of the Malopolska Region, Elżbieta Achinger – biography**

She was born on June 8, 1957 in Krakow.

* **First of all, be active and socially involved**

She has been associated with Wieliczka since her birth. In 1979, she graduated in law from the Faculty of Law and Administration of the Jagiellonian University. During her studies, she was actively involved in the Student Association of Friends of the UN, co-organizing many discussion meetings devoted to the UN.

For 14 years she worked as a probation officer at the District Court for Krakow-Krowodrza. Pursuing her social activist passion, she was the chairwoman of the Workers' Council at the Provincial Court in Krakow.

*–My social involvement began at the Primary School in Wieliczka, I was active in the school government for several years. It was also time for activities in the scout team operating at the school. I was always interested in the community in which I operated, and that is why, while studying law at the Jagiellonian University, I was active in the Law Students' Library Society, and in my first place of work - the Provincial Court in Krakow - I was the chairwoman of the Staff Council. While living in Wieliczka for many years, I was a member of a Housing Estate Council, organizing activities for young people and taking care of the lighting and quality of the housing estate streets. This is my approach to life: be active, engage socially, share knowledge and experience* – says Elżbieta Achinger.

* **Focusing on entrepreneurship**

During the period of political and economic changes in the 1990s, she started her own business. She was the co-founder of Regis Sp. z o. o., a dynamically operating company in the food industry. Due to the development of quality systems (ISO, HACCP) in the industry, she was the company's management board representative for the quality management system for 20 years.

* **Blazing trails, i.e. the first University of the Third Age in Wieliczka**

She has been involved in social activities for over 30 years. She was the co-founder and president of the Camerata Choir Music Association in Wieliczka.

Since 2010, senior issues have been at the center of her interests. In 2011, she founded the first University of the Third Age in Wieliczka, it is still successfully operating today, with more than 170 students. Seeing the positive effects of activating seniors in her own town, she became involved in the creation of Universities of the Third Age in small towns and villages. With her participation, over 10 U3As have been established, including: in Kłaj, Alwernia, Lipnica Murowana, Koszyce and Drwinia. Most of them are still functioning successfully today, enabling listeners to spend their free time actively and improve their mental and physical condition.

*- The beginnings of the U3A in Wieliczka were very difficult. We had to develop a model for organizing the association's work that would combine conducting classes of various types (sports, language, art, hobby) and the organization of interesting lectures in many fields of science (history, history of art, musicology, theater studies, literary studies, religious studies, psychology, tourism , philosophy, etc.), and also reconcile it with the needs of integration of the senior environment (trips, senior marches, picnics, spartakiades and senior events). Today, looking back, I can proudly say that we managed to finalize a great project that enjoys unflagging interest among seniors –* says Elżbieta Achinger.

* **How to build community in practice**

*- I also wanted our University of the Third Age to become a joint project of the entire local community. “A college degree is not a sign that one is a finished product but an indication a person is prepared for life” - we chose the words of Edward A. Malloy as the motto of the Wieliczka academy. The goal of a U3A is not only to deepen and acquire knowledge in various fields, but also to create new initiatives and consolidate and promote the local environment. At the very beginning, when registration for the U3A was open, I appealed to people to actively participate in the University's activities. To point out people who have something interesting to tell - they are specialists in specific fields, have visited part of the world, etc. In this way, the Wieliczka University of the Third Age has become a common cause, a joint project of many involved people. And this approach was a bull's-eye* – emphasizes Elżbieta Achinger.

* **Politics and local government**

At the beginning of the 21st century, she also became involved in politics. In 2002-2006 she was a member of the City Council in Wieliczka. She has been a member of the Civic Platform since 2004. In the local elections in 2010, she was elected as a councilor of the Malopolska Regional Assembly of the 4th term.

In 2012-2015, she sat in the Sejm of the 7th term, where she continued her work, among others, for seniors. She was one of the initiators of the creation of a new permanent parliamentary committee for seniors, still active today.

She was also a member of the Justice and Human Rights Committee and the Innovation and Modern Technologies Committee.

As part of the activities of the Malopolska local government, she co-founded the first Malopolska Council for Senior Policy in the country, on which she served for three terms.

*- There is still a lot to do in the field of senior policy. Needs of older people must be at the center of attention, also at the local level. Actions are necessary to counteract the exclusion of seniors and to activate them* –adds Elżbieta Achinger.

In the 2018 local elections, she was re-elected to the Malopolska Regional Council, of which she was a councilor until January 15, 2024.

* **Influential Woman with passion for music**

In 2014, she was awarded the Influential Woman of the Malopolska Region award in the “Gazeta Krakowska” plebiscite for her activities addressed to many environments: she co-published the newspaper “Życie Wieliczki i Powiatu”, popularized the education of the youngest as part of the so-called Children's University and continued her passion for singing in the Camerata Choir.

In 2016, she was awarded the Honorary Badge of the Malopolska Region for activities for local communities, contributing to the development of civil society and thus enriching the achievements of the region.

In 2017, in recognition of her social activity in creating senior policy, for initiating numerous projects and activities on their behalf, including those strengthening intergenerational bonds and for a creative and innovative approach to education and social activation of older people, she was granted the Amicus Hominum award from the Marshal the Malopolska Region.

* **Privately**

Privately, she is married and a mother of three adult children. He relaxes with gardening, good music and interesting reading.

* **New challenge**

On January 15, Prime Minister Donald Tusk, at the request of the Voivode of the Malopolska Region, Krzysztof Jan Klęczar, appointed Elżbieta Achinger as the first deputy voivode of the Malopolska Region.

- *It is a great honor to be appointed to the position of a deputy voivode of the Malopolska Region. Thank you, Prime Minister, for your trust. I believe that together we will effectively connect and develop our beautiful Malopolska* – summarizes Elżbieta Achinger.