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## **Poland on the Move:**

.....  
Experts and Young Leaders  
on Multiculturalism,  
Transformation,  
and Activism

This publication was published as part of the project  
“Incubator of Ideas: Transformation, Democracy  
and Human Rights – Polish Good Practices.”

[www.hiapoland2014.blogspot.com](http://www.hiapoland2014.blogspot.com)

The project was co-financed  
by the Department of Public  
and Cultural Diplomacy of  
the Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
of the Republic of Poland  
within the framework of  
the Cooperation in the Field  
of the Public Diplomacy 2014  
competition.



Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs  
Republic of Poland

*This publication presents only the views of the authors  
and cannot be considered the official position of the Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.*

**Concept and subject-specific edition:**

Monika Mazur-Rafał, Magdalena Szarota

**Scientific review:**

Sławomir Łodziński, PhD hab.,  
Professor of Warsaw University

**Proofreading and linguistic edition:**

Emilia Gumna

**English proofreading:**

Soheil Rezayazdi

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Warsaw, 2014

**ISBN: 978-83-934945-8-3**

**Publisher:**

Foundation Humanity in Action Poland

**HUMANITY** IN  
**ACTION**  
POLSKA

00-216 Warsaw,  
Konwiktorska 7 Street, premises 43/7,  
Tel/fax +48 22 635 01 50,  
e-mail: [poland@humanityinaction.org](mailto:poland@humanityinaction.org)

[www.humanityinaction.org](http://www.humanityinaction.org)  
[www.uprzedzuprzedzenia.org](http://www.uprzedzuprzedzenia.org)  
[www.facebook.com/HIAPolska](https://www.facebook.com/HIAPolska)  
[#hiapl](https://twitter.com/hiapl)

**Graphic design and typesetting:**

Magda Małczyńska-Umeda, [www.malczynska.pl](http://www.malczynska.pl)  
Karol Grzywaczewski, [www.grafikadtp.com](http://www.grafikadtp.com)

**Printing:**

Drukarnia Klimiuk, [www.klimiuk.com.pl](http://www.klimiuk.com.pl)

Number of copies: 1500

First edition circulated free of charge

**HUMANITY** IN  
**ACTION**  
POLSKA

## Poland on the Move:

Experts and Young Leaders  
on Multiculturalism,  
Transformation  
and Activism

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It is hard to get bored in Poland. When you get to know Poland better, it will surprise you. It awakens emotions and sometimes controversy, but also inspires and motivates. This is confirmed by young activists who on a daily basis discover and co-create the reality of Poland. According to them, the view held around the world that Poland is mono-thematic, mono-cultural and ethnically homogeneous is largely a stereotype. Cultural anthropologists and sociologists confirm their intuition: Poland was and is multidimensional, diverse and not as it first seems. And it has never been too static—in fact, it is constantly on the move. But it is also true that it's not easy to get to know these faces of Poland—especially from abroad. That is why at first glance, when taken out of context, today's Poland may seem confusing, not very interesting or attractive.

Meanwhile, as many years of our educational experience with young activists from around the world have shown, Poland is worth paying real attention to, in order to facilitate the process of overcoming the common half-truths. When you try and overcome the stereotypes, Poland comes to life and begins to intrigue. It has even happened that for some foreign participants of our programs, Poland evolved from an interesting case study to a “home away from home.” And the keys to this transformation were the people they met in Poland. Irrespective of their country of origin, young human rights activists—maybe not right away, but over time—are able to find a common language and show greater openness and curiosity in exploring Poland—the place where their Polish peers are trying to work creatively for social change.

Being aware of this potential for changing attitudes and strengthening cooperation among young activists, we aim to provide long-term support for these processes as part of Hu-

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manity in Action Poland (HIA Poland), with the help of our educational methods. Therefore, it is vital for us to combine our initiatives in human rights education with historical education. It is also vital that the social activism of our program participants is based on informed choices, self-understanding and understanding of their environment. Thanks to this approach, the young Polish women and men with whom we work in the Humanity in Action network, who often belong to various minorities themselves, aim to learn and observe, as part of our programs, the history and traditions of multicultural Poland in a critical and self-conscious way. By asking various questions, they try to avoid mythologizing or whitewashing the past in order to really deepen their understanding of where they come from and who they consequently are as members of a nation and culture. This process often leads to dealing with facts that were previously, for a variety of reasons, pushed into oblivion, and that in recent years have been the subject of heated national debate. However, the mere fact that Poles are deciding more and more to cope with the past is a unique phenomenon when compared to other countries of the region.

It is also important for us that young activists belonging to Humanity in Action Poland often insist that their actions and interests have not come out of a vacuum. Many of them point to, for example, the phenomenon of Solidarity and the efforts that started along with the systemic transformation of 1989 to build a pluralistic civil society as one of the most important reference points. Most of them stress that their activism is possible thanks to the historical breakthrough that 25 years ago resulted in the regaining of freedom and the consequent democratization of the country. At the same time, they are not uncritical of certain events of the last 25 years and often distance themselves from what and how the generation of their parents has turned out. Therefore, they are inspired by the past, but in a selective manner, which allows them to develop their own ideas suited to the dynamic realities of the present. One of the ideas that we try to promote in the HIA network is the conviction, inspired by the experiences of the Solidarity generation, that anyone can be a leader, regardless of their profession. Therefore, in our activities we facilitate cross-sector cooperation between young activists, and we focus on projects and initiatives that unite various groups around one purpose. In addition, in accordance with our educational mission, we strive to promote the idea that civil society can have many different dimensions and should be co-created by various entities. For example, you can undertake informal, grassroots

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initiatives while also acting as part of formal non-governmental organizations. In our opinion, there is no single, right way towards social change, and it is better to be both a creative and a critical leader at the same time.

Thanks to discussing the topics mentioned above, and often as a result of asking tough questions as part of our international programs, the “made in Poland” multi-dimensionality has become less and less hidden or abstract for young activists from outside the country. At the same time, it turns out that there is no single, right answer to these difficult questions, because a single vision or interpretation of “multiculturalism,” “national identity,” “civic society” or “modern patriotism” does not exist. Young Poles are constantly looking for answers, exploring the past, experimenting in the present and designing a better future. What they all have in common is the desire to take responsibility for a democratic and pluralist society and to contribute to it. In our opinion, the dynamism of modern Poland has its origin also in the creative unrest that is generated in actions undertaken for social change. This is the face of Poland that we want to outline in *Poland on the Move: Experts and Young Leaders on Multiculturalism, Transformation, and Activism*.

With this publication, we invite you to a modern Poland as seen through the eyes of 17 young activists from Humanity in Action Poland. The activists relate who and what inspires them and discuss what is important to them, why they do what they do, what challenges they see and what solutions they are looking for. To understand contemporary Poland and Poles better, we confront these views with papers by experts (sociologists and cultural anthropologists), which outline in an accessible way the wider socio-historical context. When discussing the origins of our culture and nation, they analyze the various factors that have had the greatest impact on who we are, or who we think we are. They note historical events and cultural narratives that have shaped our national identity, as well as the key challenges of the existing multiculturalism, with which Polish society and, in particular, the activists involved in these matters, have had to deal.

So is it true that it's hard to get bored in Poland? Let's find out together!



## Introduction

Judith Goldstein, PhD,  
Humanity in Action Founder  
and Executive Director

I didn't know in the early 1990s that I was harboring some latent, deep-seated formulation about resistance, extremism, xenophobia, prejudice and discrimination—past and present. In conversation one day, someone posed an unexpected question: How do we get young people to care about resistance? What is the legacy of various historic acts of resistance for contemporary young people? As an historian with a doctoral degree and particular focus on American immigration and minority populations, I responded with an unexpected answer: ask university students from Denmark and America to understand Denmark's unique national protection of Jews during Second World War and the Holocaust. Humanity in Action's mission emerged from that specific question and answer. From that time on, our educational mission has been to connect the past to contemporary human rights issues of pluralism, diversity, minority and majority relationships, ethnic, religious and gender tensions.

Turning our mission into practice meant that our focus would be on collaborative and inclusive learning on the part of young activists from diverse backgrounds—ethnic, religious, racial and economic—pursuing a broad range of professional careers. We believed that by creating a multi-national, inter-generational network of present and emerging leaders, we were contributing to strengthening civil societies in sometimes stagnant democratic countries of the Western world.

The development of the Humanity in Action network has been gradual. We began our programs with Danish, Dutch and American university students. Over time, the programs kept growing to include participants from Germany and France. At one point, our German partner urged that we expand east to Poland. I was surprised and confounded. Although my family emigrated from Poland to America in the early 20th century, I knew little about the country. One only talked in dark tones about suffering and loss in Poland. Nothing more. But beyond the narrow boundaries of my own thoughts, I wondered how could Humanity in Action meet the challenge of expanding east? How could Poland fit in? In what ways would Polish

participation affect the existing Humanity in Action educational framework as well as the understanding of the issues we tackled as a part of our mission? What could we all learn from each other for the benefit of human rights activism?

Including Poland meant moving away from an exclusive approach to Western Europe and its transatlantic partnerships—relationships that were familiar to me. Additionally, the post-war and post-communist Warsaw that struggles to prosper was seen as less developed, comfortable or enchanting than Berlin, Amsterdam, Copenhagen or Paris. Warsaw gave the appearance of slowly moving away from the damaging effects of Second World War and the Communist regime. Even more important was the fact that post-war Poland was no longer a pluralistic society as it used to be. With a rigorous pedagogy based on exploring issues of ethnic, religious and racial tensions, what could Humanity in Action learn from Polish educational programs and Polish students? Finally, how could non-Polish students open themselves to contemporary Polish issues when the past impinged so clearly on the present—when Poland was, for example, perceived by many students (and me) not only as the site of the Holocaust but as a society in which some of its citizens contributed to the destruction of Polish Jewry?

Over several years of experimentation, the Humanity in Action program worked diligently to find the most imaginative and valuable ways to approach issues of minority/majority tensions, identity and activism. The past, particularly in regard to its Jewish history and culture but also in regard to other ethnic, national and religious minorities, was perceived as ever-present—not just in terms of loss and destruction. While many Humanity in Action participants, like I, originally came to Poland with simple sentiments of blame high on our agenda, we learned to move beyond the stereotypes and understand better the tragic complexities of Polish history and their impact on contemporary realities. We discovered aspects of diversity and pluralism within an overwhelmingly white Catholic population—issues around gender, migration and disabilities that permeate the Church and the population as a whole. We learned about the insidious reach of hate speech and prejudices, which cuts through all our societies.

The endless debates and talks with Polish people informed those from outside the country not only about Polish life, history, society and its contemporary achievements, but led the way in developing ideas for social activism that would resonate in other countries as well. We have all learned to recognize the

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vibrant and creative aspects of Polish contemporary life in meeting social, economic and political challenges. We have all worked hard in breaking boundaries of suspicion and ignorance—east to west and west to east. As a result we are currently immersed in a process of mutual inspiration, which strengthens Humanity in Action as a whole and has a truly positive impact on the network of young activists from around the world. Together, we are trying to do the right things.



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## Young Activists Here and Now

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Hi!  
My name is...

### Marta Gawinek-Dagargulia:

I was born in Poland and lived in Warsaw for 20 years. I'm a German philologist and political scientist. I have lived in Georgia for several years. My husband and I are engaged in activist work in a war-affected area. I try to undertake various initiatives targeted at different local communities so that they can cope with that conflict and want to live in peace again.



### Małgorzata Anielka Pieniążek:

I come from Warsaw and I love my city very much. I combine many different trends, worlds and perspectives (e.g., leftism with Catholic spirituality, patriotism with the outlook of a citizen of the world). I work at a non-governmental organization.



### Przemysław Iwanek:

I come from Lubartów. I work for an extremely inspiring organization that educates young leaders and activists on matters of human rights, not only through theory and meetings with subject experts, but, most importantly, through action. At university, I studied political science.



### Artur Wieczorek:

I studied cultural anthropology. For many years, I've been involved in social activist work focusing on: sustainable development, human rights, fair trade, climate change and green technologies. I work mainly with young people.



### Dariusz Dybka:

I studied to be a lawyer. At present I live in Brussels. I come from Gorzów Wielkopolski.



### Marta Kozłowska:

I live in Berlin and I'm currently working on my doctoral degree in sociology. I am also actively involved in various Polish diaspora networks. I'm interested in what's happening in Poland and I visit Poland regularly.



### Marta Sykut:

I was brought up in Lublin, but I've lived in several countries since then. In a way, each of these countries has had an effect on me and shaped me as a person. I work at a non-governmental organization. Together with teachers, we strive to ensure that schools provide instruction on important issues and foster civic attitudes. My free-time activities include work for a co-op shop of the food cooperative "Dobrze" (Good) which we set up with a group of friends recently. In addition, I campaign for climate justice within the framework of the Polish Youth Climate Network. This matter is the most important for me.



### Yuliya Gogol:

I come from Lviv (Ukraine). For the last seven years I've lived in Warsaw, where I completed a master's degree. I am involved in the work of the organizational committee of Kyiv EuroMaidan in Warsaw, which supports the democratic transformation in Ukraine. I write articles for the Ukrainian newspaper "Our Choice" in Warsaw and for the monthly magazine "International Relations".





Hi!  
My name is...

### Katarzyna Jakubowska:

I come from Nowy Sącz, where I was born and went to school. I graduated from the Departments of Middle and Far East Studies and Indology in Kraków. In the meantime, I also studied international relations in Istanbul and Hindi literature and language in New Delhi. I am a journalist, editor and a Hindi and Urdu translator. I'm interested in the Tibetan Diaspora, social movements in South Asia, contemporary Urdu poetry, migration-related themes in the songs of rappers of South Asian origin, humanitarian issues in this region and many other issues.



### Jan Kirschenbaum:

I come from Wrocław, but I have also lived in Kraków, Grodno, Israel and Berlin. I am a philologist by profession but I'm also a keen activist and a tourist guide. I am just about to complete a master's degree programme on the Holocaust at the University of Haifa. In my free time, I take part in all sorts of community projects.



### Paulina Kasprowicz:

I come from Dzierżoniów in Lower Silesia. I'm the manager of the "Kresy-Syberia" Foundation. My work is my passion. I have a master's degree in political science. I'm interested in human and animal rights.

### Joanna Średnicka:

I come from Warsaw, Masovia, Poland. I introduce chaos into the lives of other people. :) I manage a company that designs and provides workshops based on simulation games. We use games to help people, teams and organizations to become champions of cooperation. I believe that, in a way, it is our small contribution to changing the world. I am currently working on my doctoral thesis in management, which is about Polish managers. I like to combine academic and business interests—that makes it possible to create extraordinary things.



### Justyna Politańska:

I was born in Warsaw and I have spent most of my life here. For the last six months, I've been running a foundation that I set up together with a friend. We promote an entrepreneurial approach to life and we encourage people to engage in various forms of professional and social activity. I'm interested in issues associated with war and genocide, as well as in the rights of women.



### Karolina Sacha:

I was born in Białystok in Podlasie. After passing the matriculation exam I went to Berlin, where I studied English and German philology. During my studies, I was active at many non-governmental organizations engaged in the trilateral dialogue between Poles, Germans and Israelis. Today, I live in Białystok, where I run my own business. I also work as a lecturer at the University of Białystok. In the future, I want to establish my own non-governmental organization.



### Katarzyna Klimowicz:

I spent my childhood in suburban towns near Warsaw. At present, I'm a doctoral student at the Institute of Philosophy of Warsaw University and I run the 4YOUTH Foundation for Supporting Youth Initiatives, which I set up together with friends. As part of my doctoral studies, I look into new trends associated with participatory and deliberative democracy.





Hi!  
My name is...



**Sarah Grunberg:**

I was born in St. Louis, Missouri but moved to the Finger Lakes region with my Polish parents and sister. I am currently a PhD candidate at Warsaw University and the Polish Academy of Sciences, and teach as an adjunct professor at Ithaca College. I also co-own a study abroad company that helps students from the United States and Canada study in countries such as Poland, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Greece.



**David Liebers:**

I come from Albany, New York and currently live in Baltimore, Maryland, where I am a staff scientist in the Department of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University. I will soon begin an MD/PhD program studying both medicine and the history of psychiatry in inter-war Poland. I spent much of the last few years working in Warsaw on human rights issues in post-Soviet countries and am continuing this work from abroad.

I take action  
because...



**Marta Sykut:**

...if we don't do it, who will?



**Paulina Kasprowicz:**

...I believe in people.



**Katarzyna Jakubowska:**

...I feel that I must. I would not be able to sleep if I knew that I'm doing nothing to make the world at least a little better. I have a great family and friends and I feel that in return I should give something to the world and to those who are worse off than myself.



**Joanna Średnicka:**

...there is no other way to do it.



**Jan Kirschenbaum:**

...I want to leave the world in a better state than I found it. To paraphrase the Jewish sage Hillel, "If not me, then who? And if not now, when?"



**Justyna Politańska:**

...I was born with this inner need and this is my way of life.



I take action  
because...

**Karolina Sacha:**

...I have always been strongly motivated to change my environment, because I'm sensitive to unfairness and social injustice. I've felt especially strongly about it since becoming a mother.

I take action to make the world at least slightly better also for my child.



**Katarzyna Klimowicz:**

...I feel I must do it, because:

1) I want to have an effect on what is happening around me, 2) that's how I was brought up at home by my family, 3) I care about the future of my local community and all of humanity. I take action because I believe that I have a mission to fulfill as a so-

cial activist. I want to contribute to positive change in the world and I want to feel that

I have achieved something important, something that will be appreciated by future generations.

**Sarah Grunberg:**

...I am never satisfied with the notion "that's just the way things are." I am constantly trying to answer the question "why" in order to gain a deeper understanding of my surroundings. I am a strong believer in the need for empathy in order to fully understand life processes. As a sociologist, I am not satisfied with simply understanding and feel a need to come up with solutions to many of the problems that individuals in society face today. I believe that teaching empathy is the first step in doing this.



For me, activists  
are people who...



**Yuliya Gogol:**

...are not indifferent.



**Marta Sykut:**

...are audacious enough to say that they don't like something and are self-confident enough to modify it in their own way.



**Katarzyna Jakubowska:**

...do not think only about themselves and their needs, and who can see beyond the end of their nose. These are people who care.



**Paulina Kasprowicz:**

...are fighting for a better tomorrow for the world.

**Justyna Politańska:**

...constantly want to improve something; who make things better and strive to restore balance or justice. They are open towards other people but persevere to achieve their goals. For me, they are the people who want to affect changes in an area important for themselves or for their surroundings.



**Joanna Średnicka:**

...believe and act.





For me, activists  
are people who...

**Karolina Sacha:**

...have an active approach towards life. These are the people who oppose injustice in the world and who believe that their involvement can bring about change. Some people claim that we don't have much impact on our surroundings and that it would be naive to believe that we can change something as individuals. If the sceptics were right, the movements of activists, such as Solidarity, would have never emerged and overthrown communism. In my opinion, the activists of the Solidarity Movement served the noblest ideals of freedom; they were ready to act in their own name or even sacrifice their lives for them.



**David Liebers:**

...have merged their social and political goals with their vocation. As this definition suggests, there is very wide range of people in an expansive set of professions who can genuinely call themselves activists.



**Sarah Grunberg:**

...who open the minds of others. Activists are those who spread messages as well as those who actively fight for equal rights and opportunities for all beings.



**This is the power!  
I take action  
because I like to.  
I take action  
because I feel it  
makes sense...**

Opinions of activists on multiculturalism, modern patriotism and action for change.

**Ewa Tomaszewicz**

**They are 20-something to just over 30 years old. They come from large cities and small villages; they have graduated from different fields of study and have different dreams and aspirations. Some of them live abroad, but maintain contacts with Poland. They have one thing in common: they have never been indifferent to reality. For many years, or since they were old enough to remember, they have been interested in what is happening around them. When they think that something should be done or changed, they do not wait until someone does it for them, but set to work themselves. They believe that even people with very different views or coming from completely different backgrounds can reach agreement and do something together. They are certain that diversity and multiculturalism are a source of strength and inspiration, and that one can be an everyday patriot and make full use of history and traditions at the same time. They are convinced that even individuals can make change happen and they prove it with their own lives.**

The wish to help others has taken Marta Gawinek-Dagarulia to a village in Georgia near the border with Abkhazia, in an area which until recently was the scene of military conflict. She believes that real freedom, goodness and the changing of reality begin with changes in people and in herself, and that is most of all what she wants to show the people whom she's helping to learn to live again in peacetime. Activist interests have taken Przemysław Iwanek to a completely different world. Several years ago, he took part in an internship program in the US Congress. Today, he is involved in activist pursuits in Poland, in the Foundation Humanity in Action Poland. HIA Poland "is



passionately involved in helping others and building an open society,” he says. And he adds that he considers work for an organization that sets such goals to be his greatest achievement so far.

“I’m lucky to have been engaged in important matters so quickly after finishing my studies,” says Dariusz Dybka. His insatiable curiosity of the world and people has made it impossible for him to live in one place for long, even though he always returns in his thoughts to Warsaw and his native Gorzów Wielkopolski. For several years, he has lived in Brussels, where he has witnessed a number of events of historical significance, including the Polish Presidency in the EU Council. He admits that, until recently, he blamed the older generation for not having told young people what their lives would be like. Now he knows that reality has surpassed their expectations and that he himself has an effect on its shape. The activities of Artur Wieczorek have a wider than local scope. As a trainer specializing in developmental education, climate change and issues of sustainable development, he travels all over the world. In particular, he likes to train groups of young people. In his opinion, young people have tremendous potential and he finds it very rewarding to work with them. Małgorzata Anielka Pieniążek also works in an international context. She says that, in her life and in herself, she combines many different trends, worlds and perspectives—leftism with Catholic spirituality and patriotism with the attitudes of a citizen of the world. At present, she is coordinating an international project concerning global and media-related education. In the future, she would like to work with the United Nations.

Marta Kozłowska is not only an activist, but also an academic. For five years, she has been engaged in scientific research in Berlin, having graduated from several fields of study. Currently, she is working on her doctoral degree. She has always been involved in activist projects and intends to continue to do so in the future, although she prefers not to be associated with specific organizations. She engages in activist pursuits because she wants to help others. She believes that she owes her success to people who lent her a helping hand at the right time. Now she is trying to support others so that everyone can have a chance to live in a somewhat better society.



Dariusz Dybka, Przemysław Iwanek, Marta Kozłowska, Marta Gawinek-Dagargulia, Artur Wieczorek and Małgorzata Anielka Pieniążek have all taken part in various editions of the Academy of Human Rights and Active Citizenship—a program of the Foundation Humanity in Action Poland—and they have all been engaged in the network of its alumni—the Senior Fellow network, a non-formal group of human rights activists and leaders who take joint action under the auspices of HIA Poland. They are not only engaged in the network’s activities, but they have also been its leaders. Each of them has been responsible for the vision of its development and activities for at least one year. Their participation in the HIA Academy of Human Rights was not a one-time activist episode. They have been involved in social activity for years, working in the Humanity in Action network of activists and leaders as well as elsewhere.

### Long-term social activists

What made them decide to change reality instead of flowing with the current and only criticizing the existing state of affairs? Was it the environment in which they grew up, or a breakthrough event which they witnessed and which made them realize that even the most difficult change was possible? And how do they understand activism? Is it involvement in organizations, completion of projects or simply helping others?

Marta Gawinek-Dagargulia remembers two formative moments: scouting, where she absorbed the ideas of joyful exploration of the world, active involvement and service for other people, and a Theodor-Heuss-Kolleg program—a school of active citizenship for people from all over Europe, in which she took part when she was a student. For the first time in her life, she got to know people from different cultures: a Serb, an Uzbek, a German, a Georgian and an Armenian and became fascinated in that diversity. It was also where she learnt to carry out small-scale, change-oriented projects in her local community. Małgorzata Anielka Pieniążek has had different experiences. “I can’t say that I became involved in social activity because of a specific event. I come from a large family so it was a natural thing for us that we had to support one another, as well as others,” she says. She thinks, however, that her curiosity and involvement in multicultural and immigrant issues may have resulted from her life experiences. When she was 11 years old, she went to an American school, where she attended integration classes together with pupils of Latin American origin, because the teachers there did not know what to do with just one immigrant from Poland. She did not really understand then what these classes





were for, but they may have had an impact on her future interests and choices. Marta Kozłowska, too, has been engaged in social work ever since she can remember. Like Małgorzata, she emphasizes the role of her family, who encouraged her to take action for the benefit of others. Her mother made sure that her daughter, a good student, helped others with their schoolwork. She enjoyed doing it, and this taught her to be responsible for others. In primary school, she was involved in the pupils' self-government and in secondary school she co-edited the school newspaper. She was also a girl guide. As an undergraduate, she joined the European Students' Forum, Amnesty International and Humanity in Action both in Poland and in Germany.

Dariusz Dybka has been engaged in working for others from an early age, and he describes activism as an addiction that he developed very early in his life. At school, no extra-curricular activities could take place without him. He prepared school newspapers and worked in the Youth City Council. Later, he took part in social academies and non-governmental organizations, including the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. Finally, he opted for the career of a public official, because, as he says, it enables him to draw on his previous experience. Dariusz says that his work at the ministry or in a Polish representation abroad is inextricably linked with his mission of improving the world, especially because his chosen area of interests—the environment—is conducive to involvement.

Unlike other leaders of the HIA network, Przemysław Iwanek points to historical events as a turning point in his life: the collapse of communism in Poland and the first free elections. "I recall it as a day of celebration. I remember the enormous excitement connected with the voting. I could subconsciously feel the great energy and joy of the voters who could for the first time express their views and who had been given a chance to change the system. I knew that something important was happening but I had to wait several more years before I could understand the entire context and the breakthrough character of those events. Since then, I've always believed that every change is possible if you are motivated and put a lot of work into it."

**The network of activists: you are who you meet and what you create together**

Their participation in the Academy of Human Rights organized by Humanity in Action Poland was a natural consequence of their previous interest in social and activist pursuits. "As soon as I'd read some information about the objectives of

the HIA's program and about its mission and activities within the framework of an international network, I knew that it was a project for me. It was interesting in terms of its educational content, because it combined issues such as multiculturalism, human rights, history and the protection of minorities—and it placed a strong emphasis on the development of pro-social and leadership skills, and all this in the company of young people and in an international environment," says Małgorzata Anielka Pieniążek. Przemysław Iwanek points out that HIA programs take into account multiple visions and perspectives. "It offers a unique chance to get to know many current issues connected with human rights from the point of view of people coming from many different social and cultural contexts. It's an experience which inspires and enables people to open up," he believes.

Importantly, in the case of HIA this experience does not end with the completion of the Academy of Human Rights. The participants of all its editions keep in touch through the network of alumni, which provides them with a unique opportunity to get to know one another, to find a common language and to take joint action with many people. As emphasized by Artur Wieczorek:

"Apart from knowledge and skills, the third most important feature which defines a human being are the people whom he or she knows or has met on his or her path. Whether we want it or not, the people we know determine our perceptions of the world, our views, career choices or our ability to influence changes in the world," he claims.

And he adds: "The knowledge acquired during seminars of this type fades after several years, but we continue to keep in touch. Unlike most other Polish foundations, the HIA Poland Foundation provides activists with a rare opportunity to meet exceptional people not only from Poland but also from the other side of the Atlantic. For me, it was an extraordinary and very stimulating experience."

Although it seems at a first glance that they have so much in common, the activists from the Senior Fellow network form a community of people with very different backgrounds, political views, origins, social status, attitudes to faith and religion and passions. Not speaking with one voice on so many issues, they nonetheless learn to work together to find a common language and "unity in diversity."



“During my six-year membership in the organization, I’ve met an incredible number of wonderful, interesting and intelligent people who want a better world and who are keen to do something to this end,” says Marta Kozłowska. “And these are not *sweet* acquaintances. We often talk about difficult and painful matters and we argue a lot. It’s a very enriching experience, because it teaches you that my truth perhaps is *more mine*, but it doesn’t necessarily have to be true,” she adds.

What unites them and enables them to learn from one another and do something together, despite all the differences between them, is the conviction that one should not be indifferent to social problems or violations of human rights. “We are united by a kind of social sensitivity and mutual understanding established during Humanity in Action programs. The interesting thing is that when I meet complete strangers who have taken part in a HIA program, sometimes even in a different country, I find it very easy to find a common language with them. Sometimes we can understand each other without words,” observes Przemysław Iwanek.

### Poland: seemingly mono-cultural

Even though Poland seems to be mono-cultural and ethnically homogenous, for people from the Senior Fellows network it is as rich and diverse as the people they have met during activist projects. Support for multiculturalism, however understood, is an essential aspect of their activities. Apart from traditional determinants of multiculturalism—multi-nationality, multi-ethnicity and plurality of denominations, which were

characteristic of Poland from the Middle Ages to the Second World War—they also notice other varieties of pluralism that are typical of contemporary times. However, they differ in their opinions about their significance.

For Artur Wieczorek, multiculturalism manifests itself mainly in social disparities and in different approaches to religion. “The view that Poland is a mono-cultural society is a stereotype. It’s true that nearly all of us have the same skin color and the same religion, so differences are not visible at first glance, but underneath there are divisions into Poland A and Poland B, educated young people and the religious elderly, the poor and the rich. Intolerance and exclusion may take different forms and they sometimes exist without anyone being aware of them,” he explains.

According to Marta Kozłowska, multiculturalism mostly consists of different ways of thinking, values, convictions, lifestyles and life choices. “People who choose an *unconventional* lifestyle often need to have a thick skin, irrespective of whether they want to leave the Church, are homosexual, don’t want to have children, keep pet snakes, have green hair, don’t shave their legs or love tattoos. Because there are fewer of them in Poland,” she says. Dariusz Dybka is of a similar opinion. He thinks that multiculturalism is synonymous with being free to express one’s views, non-discrimination and equality in life.

The leaders from the HIA Senior Fellows network also point to less obvious aspects of “traditional” multiculturalism, such as differences between regions.

“In the Polish context, multiculturalism consists not only of the rich multicultural past, but also of numerous regional nuances. It means living in an area permeated by other cultures,” emphasizes Przemysław Iwanek.

“In my opinion, it’s very important to draw inspiration and models of openness towards so-called ‘others’ from the multiculturalism, which is close at hand, existing in local contexts. It teaches tolerance and openness to new perspectives and ideas,” he says. Importantly, the emergence of a “new cultural pluralism” does not necessarily imply the disappearance of ethnic, national or denominational differences. The challenges arising from these still exist and have to be addressed irrespective of their scale. “I have the impression that after 1989 multiculturalism began to reemerge slowly and that nowadays it’s connected both with historical, ethnic and national minorities and with the influx of new







communities, not only from the European Union, but also those who seek asylum or refugee status in Poland. And although immigration is not a large-scale phenomenon, it does take place—and it's not about statistics, but about specific people and communities who live in Poland and who are not always welcome here," says Małgorzata Anielka Pieniążek.

The issue of multiculturalism is approached in various ways, which can be seen in projects carried out by activists within the framework of Humanity in Action. Marta Gawinek-Dagargulia has engaged herself in the culture of the deaf. In her project, hearing and deaf children prepared a performance together, which made it possible for them to get to know





each other, find a common language and gain a better understanding of each other's worlds. Initially, she wanted to integrate deaf children with the hearing. After the completion of the project, however, she came to the conclusion that it should be the other way round and that the culture of the deaf was worth knowing and caring for.

Przemysław Iwanek carried out a project in the form of a workshop on the evolution of the human rights system and its hierarchy of values, attended by young people from Germany, Poland and Ukraine. It took place in the museum of the former Nazi concentration camp of Majdanek in Lublin. In this context, Majdanek is a particularly poignant symbol of what can happen when there is no respect for basic values and the right to life, and when this incomprehensible hatred of multiculturalism is allowed to flourish. Artur Wieczorek organized a festival of documentary films about global issues, supplemented by lectures and panel discussions. The aim of the festival was to portray global interdependencies to the inhabitants of Kraków and to make them more sensitive to the problems of the so-called Global South. Dariusz Dybka focused on the history of resettlement, also in the context of post-war Germany.

### Solidarity with neighbours and... with the whole world

Feeling responsible for others and convinced that an individual can contribute to changes, the leaders of the activist network of HIA Poland follow in their own lives a model of modern patriotism. Just as in the case of multiculturalism, however, they understand this term in very different ways: 1) as cultivating and taking pride in the Polish character, tradition and history, but also as learning from these; 2) in a progressive sense, as working and living for one's country; 3) globally, as solidarity with the whole world.

Marta Gawinek-Dagargulia defines patriotism in simple terms: as being a good person, having an open mind, learning constantly, diligence, innovativeness, creativity, openness towards other people and involvement. For Marta Kozłowska, modern patriotism is synonymous with paying taxes, voting in elections, respecting the law and caring about the common good. In her opinion, it also includes simple gestures of kindness, such as allowing someone to jump the queue, which she says are hard to come by in Poland. Przemysław Iwanek extends this term to include sensitivity to all manifestations of injustice, even slight. "Modern patriotism does not assess, segregate or exclude any-

one. It does not imply superiority or inferiority to others. It respects one's roots, history and culture, it is a feeling of joy and pride in the past and present, in the achievements of the state and in the inhabitants of Poland and all those who feel attached to Poland," says Małgorzata Anielka Pieniążek. "In addition, modern patriotism has a global dimension, because it requires one to understand the interdependencies and mutual permeation of different cultural, environ-

mental, economic, social, political and technological systems in the world. And it is also the awareness that our choices concerning these aspects have a tremendous effect on the lives of people living in different parts of the world," she adds. Artur Wieczorek goes further, stating that: "A modern patriot is someone who understands that he or she needs to act in solidarity with people from all over the world, simply because he or she cannot escape being affected, in one way or another, by the problems of people living on the other side of the world. Because he or she feels solidarity with all humanity, just as he or she feels solidarity with the citizens of his or her country. A modern patriot is someone who understands that if the entire globe becomes a better place to live, it will have a positive effect on his or her own homeland too. A modern patriot acts in accordance with this principle and not with the principle of competition between states."

Modern patriotism does not allow one to forget the past. "My patriotism has a local dimension. Last year, we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It was also a celebration of my city and myself," remembers Małgorzata Anielka Pieniążek. "I celebrated it by wearing beautiful yellow paper daffodils, taking part in various social campaigns, including the Chain of Remembrance, during which we built a human chain in a place where a border wall stood separating the Warsaw ghetto. We were carrying lit candles, memory lights and flowers as a sign of remembrance of its victims. This year,







we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. Apart from holding a minute of silence at 'W' hour and visiting the Powązki Cemetery, my friends and I took part in a picnic during which we all sang *(un)forbidden songs* in Pilsudski Square. After the joint concert, a group of people started to sing the Polish anthem, not wanting to end the time spent together. It was a beautiful moment. The Choir of the Warsaw Chamber Orchestra and other people present in the square joined in immediately. It suddenly became very quiet and solemn, everybody stopped and sang three stanzas of the anthem and then began to clap."

⋮ Modern patriotism also requires one to reflect on the past.

"Too often in our history, the only purpose of Polishness was to die beautifully. Even today, this theme is attractive for many people who, for example, reverently remember the Warsaw Uprising or who nurture hatred towards Russians or Germans. I believe that it's more worthwhile to live, even though it's also more difficult," says Marta Kozłowska. "I disagree with the opinion that homeland is synonymous with humanity. The homeland should be for humanity and humanity does not need wars, but people who are educated, involved, hard-working and open-minded. I don't want my children to die for Poland. I want them to live for Poland or for any other country in which they choose to live," adds Marta Gawinek-Dagargulia.

### One can change the world every day

In their opinion, what does Poland lack the most? What are they concerned with? What would they like to change or nurture in Poland? And do they believe that they can succeed?

Marta Gawinek-Dagargulia says that:

⋮ what bothers me the most is the lack of a joyful attitude towards diversity and the lack of openness towards refugees and equality issues. In addition, there is no sense that one has responsibility not only for one's flat and family, but also for one's courtyard, neighbours, district, village or city. There is no involvement in matters of the local community and no interest in the lives of people around us.

Activists themselves lack openness towards groups for whose benefit they act and do not talk about their problems or create anything together with these groups; they just carry out projects. Małgorzata Anielka Pieniążek is concerned with the

attitudes of her peers. "My generation is sometimes referred to as the Millennium generation—a generation of educated people who have access to modern technologies but who are at the same time very passive and comfort-loving, going about their own business and not caring about the common good, unwilling to overthrow systems. In certain respects, this is due to the fact that some of us have been programmed to think that it does not make sense to get involved, either because there is no alternative to the existing state of affairs or because our actions will not change anything anyway. Individuals have no confidence in their possibilities or doubt their potential to effect change," she thinks.

Artur Wieczorek is of a different opinion. "If a butterfly, flapping its wings somewhere in China can contribute to a storm in Europe, then a man who has 'flapped his wings' for a sufficiently long time must be able to have an impact on the fate of the world too. Every action that we take (or do not take) and every conversation has an effect on our reality," he observes. And he advises how things can be changed:

⋮ "Sometimes it's enough to use slightly different language in order to change the reality, because our words have an impact on other people. If change is so simple, nothing can prevent us from changing the world every day."

And he goes even further. In fact, he would like to see a complete transformation of social relations and a generational replacement, especially in politics. "Poland is currently governed by the 'Round Table' generation, which has already fulfilled its glorious role. It has completed its mission, bringing a stage of history to its end," he says. "We need new people who think in completely different categories, who recognize global problems and who are also able to act locally. Poland and the whole world need to move away from liberalism, accumulation of capital and deadly global competition, towards the creation of more sustainable, safer and more innovative societies. Because only such societies will be able to face the challenges of the 21st century," he continues.

Will we become a society that is ready for these challenges, and when will that happen? Marta Gawinek-Dagargulia and Przemysław Iwanek think that we are currently in a transitional stage. On the one hand, this manifests itself as a sort of stagnation and hibernation; on the other hand, it has given rise to phenomena that threaten democracy—extremist social movements or reliance on the worst traditions of the past century. "We still need to create a large number of new structures, types of behavior and standards so that it becomes easier for us to

**This is the power! I take action because I like to. I take action because I feel it makes sense..., Ewa Tomaszewicz**

organize ourselves and communicate in situations other than exceptional circumstances which require heroism,” thinks Przemysław Iwanek. When will we be build them? Artur Wiczorek thinks that it is a matter of several dozen years: “In the last 25 years, we’ve been repeatedly told that in capitalism everyone is responsible for themselves, that a man is a wolf to his fellow man, and that the best thing that the state can do is not to interfere with our individual development. This has led to the affirmation of extreme individualism, manifesting itself as mass support for neo-liberal, extremist politicians among young people. I think that the prospects for the coming years are bleak and that we’ll have to wait two decades for a generation of activists to appear—the generation of our children.” Dariusz Dybka is more optimistic: “The new generation, just a few years younger than myself, is not afraid of asking questions and challenging the current state of affairs. We need just such an attitude in order to make changes happen,” he claims.

⋮ All of them believe in the special role of young people, in  
⋮ dialogue with them and in the power of education.

They also believe that the education system can be changed in a way that promotes initiatives for the benefit of one’s community, and which encourages young people to take collective action and supports them in their attempts to explore and change the world.

⋮ The network of alumni of Humanity in Action Poland constitutes just such a community. It is based on dialogue,  
⋮ mutual education and the seeking of opportunities to take  
⋮ joint action, in spite of differences. It makes them aware  
⋮ of their strength and shows them that even small-scale  
⋮ activities that are done to improve relations between the  
⋮ majority and minorities, or the exploration of different  
⋮ multicultural aspects, can bring a lot of good.

“We must educate ourselves before we can become a society or, perhaps, even a community. I believe that we’ll gradually achieve this goal,” concludes Marta Kozłowska.

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**AUTHOR:**

**Ewa Tomaszewicz,**

journalist, editor, blogger, social activist. She is interested in the use of new technologies in education, and prepares and conducts training and workshops on use of the Internet, including social media, for personal and professional purposes.



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## Identity

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## Who are you? Where are you from?

When someone from outside Poland asks you about your sense of identity, what do you usually say?

### Marta Sykut:

I hate to be asked where I come from. It's because I know that I myself ask this question to get to know someone more quickly. I form an opinion on the basis of this simple piece of information. However, I feel more attached to the place where I live and not necessarily to the place I come from. If someone asked me today where I come from, I would simply say that I live in Warsaw. But I would prefer to be asked about my favorite book.



### Yuliya Gogol:

I am Ukrainian. For one year I've had Polish citizenship, but it hasn't had any effect on my identity or self-identification.



### Paulina Kasprowicz:

When someone asks me about my sense of identity, I proudly answer that I'm a true-born Pole. I've travelled around the world a lot since I was a child. I'm fascinated with other cultures, new places. I love to travel to other countries, but I feel at home only in Poland.



### Katarzyna Jakubowska:

I have spent a lot of time in South Asia, and if someone there asked me where I came from, I used to say, in the first place, that I came from Europe and only then that I came from Poland. In other cases, I say right away that I come from Poland. Polish is my mother tongue and this is where my family lives and where I've spent most of my life so far.



### Jan Kirschenbaum:

I am a citizen of Poland, but recently I became a citizen of Israel too. I come from Wrocław in Lower Silesia. I'm a guy from the Old Town and Central District of Wrocław. I am a European, Pole, Jew and a gay. I'm a twin with leftist views. I have a lot of identities, depending on who asks and what for. I can't see any contradictions in that.



### Joanna Średnicka:

I am an entrepreneur, and sometimes I'm also a scientist. From Warsaw, Poland. I am strongly attached to Warsaw—it is my native city and my family has lived here for several generations. I can feel its soul; I love its chaotic ugliness, which I prefer to describe as unobvious beauty.

I have a strongly gender-oriented identity. Three of the four co-owners of our company are women.



### Justyna Politańska:

In recent years, I've had many opportunities

to travel abroad—studying, working, travelling and taking part in training sessions. Basically, people are the same everywhere. What distinguishes them is the country they come from, as well as its traditions, customs, language and the way of life. It is this combination which we usually find the most interesting in other people and it distinguishes us from them as well. When someone asks "who are you?" I answer—a Polish woman. I have a fairly strong feeling that our country is exceptional due to its history, geopolitical factors and even extreme weather :). This is why it's difficult to treat Poland or Poles with indifference.



### Karolina Sacha:

I live in Poland, I was born and brought up here and my family lives here too. This is where I work and strive for self-fulfillment and where I feel happy.

Who are you?  
Where are you  
from?

**Katarzyna Klimowicz:**



I personally think that it is less important where one comes from than what sort of person he or she is and how he or she behaves. I respond differently to questions of this type, depending on the situation. In formal situations, I usually say that "I come from Milanówek near Warsaw" or that "I come from an area near Warsaw," because I identify myself most of all with the place where I was brought up rather than with the whole country. Sometimes, in informal situations, I invent the name of a country or I answer with a question: "and where do you think I come from?" The people I'm talking to come up with different answers, which I find amusing. Sometimes I also say that "I come from Poland" and during the conversation I try to overcome negative stereotypes concerning Poland and Poles.



**David Liebers:**

I am an American. There isn't any other way to slice it. However, if anyone cares to dig a little bit deeper—I am quite proud to report that on my mother's side I have

Polish roots, tracing to Galicia (primarily Tarnów and Tarnopol), and on my father's side I have Jewish roots originating in Pińsk, famous as Chaim Weizmann's hometown. This mixed Eastern European heritage was rather peripheral to me until I spent time in Poland. Since

I have developed a historical interest in this region, I feel closer to this history, but try not to get hung up on identity issues.



**Sarah Grunberg:**

When someone from Poland asks me about my identity, it is usually because

they assume that I have Jewish roots—based on my physical appearance, name and so on. I usually reply that I am Polish-American, and that although I do have Jewish ancestry, culturally I consider myself Polish and American with Jewish roots.



## A Handful of Stereotypes

Which stereotype concerning Poles/Poland do you find the most unfair?



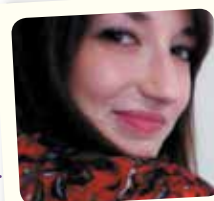
**Marta Sykut:**

Personally, I'm increasingly convinced that all stereotypes are unfair. I take care to avoid stereotypes, even those "positive ones." I don't like it when all Polish women or all Polish men, or even all women and men from Warsaw, are thrown into one sack. I try to prove with my own example that every group which I identify myself with is very diverse.



**Katarzyna Jakubowska:**

I have frequently come across the opinion that Poles are sad and drink a lot of alcohol. But I always smile a lot and I don't drink alcohol. Hopefully, it will contribute to overcoming that stereotype about Poles. :)



**Paulina Kasprowicz:**

In my opinion, none of the stereotypes about Poles and Poland can really hurt the dignity of the inhabitants of our beautiful country. I am a member of a society with an extremely rich history, and theories about Poles and Poland make no impression on me. On the contrary—our past and Poland's contemporary history are the best proof that nobody and nothing has the power to destroy us.





## Which stereotype concerning Poles/Poland do you find the most unfair?



### Jan Kirschenbaum:

The most unfair stereotype about Poles is that they are xenophobes and anti-Semites who are also lazy and cannot cooperate with one another. It's utter nonsense, because Poles are in fact very open-minded. They are simply not accustomed to diversity. What's more, Poles are incredibly hardworking and creative!



### Joanna Średnicka:

For me personally, the most disturbing thing is that we are all thought to be manual workers. And so are people from other countries of our region. I am engaged in innovation and knowledge business, and I often encounter barriers caused by such perceptions of Poland. They seldom take into account our creativity and achievements. I understand the mechanism and source of these perceptions, but they are sometimes difficult to overcome. :)



### Justyna Politańska:

A stereotype can be described as maximum simplification. It is for those who are too lazy to think or to learn how things really are. Most of all, I disagree with the view that we are a so-called Catholic country. Studies and statistics show that Poles differ very much in this respect and that Catholics demonstrate a specifically "Polish" attitude to Catholicism, choosing only those elements of the religion that they agree with. I also disagree with the stereotype that we are simpletons and thieves. In the vast majority of cases, it's simply not true.



### Karolina Sacha:

Many foreigners view Poland as a poor communist state, a land of permanent frost where polar bears wander the streets. Stereotypes about Poland and Poles stem from ignorance about us and our country. A stereotype is a shortcut in one's thinking.



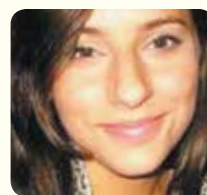
### Katarzyna Klimowicz:

It sometimes seems to me that the most unfair stereotypes are spread by Poles themselves. For example, it is often said in Poland that Poles still have an inferiority complex when comparing themselves with Western Europe and the United States. My peers, however, do not feel inferior to others simply because they're Polish. Other common stereotypes include: Pole-thief, Pole-drunkard and Pole-bigoted Catholic. I disagree with all of them.



### David Liebers:

I am not aware of any stereotypes that are pervasive enough to warrant a response. Modern Poland is generally a welcoming place for foreigners. It is rich with natural beauty, boasts good food and drink and is taking a mature approach to examining its own past, both the darker moments and the many episodes of intense courage and bravery. For me, it is a home away from home.



### Sarah Grunberg:

The most hurtful stereotype about Polish people is that all Poles are racist and/or homophobic/anti-Semitic. This idea that Poland is a country full of intolerance can be very stigmatizing. I believe that intolerance and xenophobia exists in every society at a certain level, however I see that in many different aspects of Polish society, there is an openness that exists that is beyond that of other surrounding countries.



## The Polish National Identity

Professor Zdzisław Mach,  
PhD hab.

Despite its 10-year membership in the European Union, Poland is still one of the lesser-known European countries, while the knowledge of people who comment on Polish affairs from abroad does not go beyond conventional stereotypes. Popular perceptions are not always wrong, but they lack depth and are not supported by adequate reflection based on thorough historical knowledge, especially when it comes to social issues. Due to such popular opinions, Poland is perceived as a culturally homogenous country, consisting of traditionally-minded and conservative Catholics, who are intolerant towards “otherness” and continue to express anti-Semitic sentiments. From that point of view, Polish society emerges as backward in comparison with Europe and the Western world in general, hostile towards “outsiders” and at odds with mainstream European standards. On the other hand, Poles themselves, when criticized for their xenophobic attitudes towards people representing other cultures, religions or customs, refer to the Jagiellonian times, when Poland was indeed a culturally pluralistic society, extending far to the east and south of its current borders. As late as in the interwar period (i.e., in the 1920s and 1930s), ethnic Poles accounted for only two-thirds of the population of the Polish state. Historically in Poland, people of other ethnic origins were less likely to be discriminated against than in many other European countries, and there were no religious wars. For Jews, it was a country where they found refuge and opportunities for development. This may have been due to the culture of tolerance that existed among Poles then, or perhaps the Polish state did not have enough strength and determination to push forward the interests of ethnic Poles at the expense of other social groups. It should be remembered that the co-existence of different ethnic groups in Poland’s traditional society of the past was a completely different phenomenon than the complicated multi-cultural relations of modern and postmodern societies, mobile and highly individualized, in which cultural identity is increasingly becoming a matter of individual choice and social negotiations rather than being a matter of inheritance.

### Inheriting the past

A very important factor that shaped the Polish national identity in its classical 19th century form was the fact that Poland did not then exist as an independent state.

Even though the partitions of Poland are commonly known in the world, they are seldom considered to be of significance in the nation-building process. However, the lack of its own state was tremendously significant as a factor determining the creation of the modern nation.

In the context of reflections on multiculturalism, it is above all worth mentioning that when there was not a Polish citizenship to distinguish between “our folks” and “outsiders,” it was culture that came to fulfill such a role. Cultural background distinguished Poles from non-Poles—from neighbours who spoke a different language or who were of a different religious denomination.

Of course, in every nation, some elements of culture which emerge in the long-term historical process are considered to be of special significance. As usual, what is particularly significant in the evolution of social identity is the way in which our society distinguishes itself from “significant others,” from partners of social interactions who are especially important for us and our image. In the case of Poland, the “significant others” were mostly Germans and Russians. We have defined ourselves as a nation by contrasting ourselves with them, and we have formed our own ideas concerning who we are and who we are not in reference to them. It was because of these significant others that the Polish language and the Roman Catholic religion emerged as the most important elements of culture defining Polishness. People who did not speak Polish or who practiced other religions were considered distinct nationality groups. If there had been a Polish state building a national community, it would have included all citizens, regardless of their ethnic identity. Perceptions of the nation would have been quite different in Poland then. However, this was not the case, and both in the 19th century and in the interwar period, to some extent even today, a Pole is understood as a Roman Catholic speaker of Polish. People such as Ukrainians, Germans, Lithuanians and Jews were not Poles. This state of affairs had a very negative impact on the political climate in inter-war Poland, when citizens of the reborn Poland were denied the right to Polishness

by Polish nationalists, unless they satisfied the above-mentioned cultural criteria. One of the consequences of the ensuing conflict was the assassination of the first President of the Republic of Poland—Gabriel Narutowicz.

Another important legacy of the 19th century history of Poland in the context of the collective identity of Poles is the prevalent sense of being a victim. Poles built their image in a way which enabled them to use numerous defeats to strengthen the cohesion of the nation and highlight its moral greatness. The national martyrdom and Polish messianism made it possible for Poles to boost their self-esteem and to feel morally superior to their historical rivals or enemies who were the cause of their suffering. The history of the nation became a story of ennobling suffering. At the same time, the image of a victim could provide, and subsequently did provide, Poles with a rationale to put forward claims against other, happier nations. According to this interpretation, Poles fought for the cause and suffered and should receive compensation for that. This found its reflection, for example, during the EU pre-accession period, when Poland argued that it should be offered advantageous membership conditions because of its historical merits and because it had been betrayed by its allies, including European countries, in the past.



This way of thinking, in which Poland is looked upon as a noble country fighting for the highest of values and suffering for mankind, has always made it difficult for Poles to acknowledge the fact that they themselves may bear the blame

for the suffering of others. The martyrdom and national messianism which, in their most extreme form, compare Poland to the “Christ of nations,” reject any blame for their own guilt towards others. Christ cannot be blamed for any fault, he must be a lamb, an absolutely innocent victim; otherwise this entire concept of the victim and salvation through suffering would have no sense. As a result, the Polish national identity lacks a sense of responsibility for the misfortunes of others, inflicted by Poles in the past. This is why Poles seem to be so unresponsive when blamed for any wrongdoings against other nations. There is also one issue which has its origin in the period of partitions in the 19th century. According to its own collective identity, Poland is looked upon as a country constantly being attacked by stronger enemies. This way of thinking about relations with other nations became permanently embedded in how Poles viewed themselves. The fact that others may suspect Poles of wanting to dominate or even having imperialistic ambitions with respect to their neighbours, especially in the East, is overlooked. Poles react with amazement to such suggestions or prejudices articulated by Ukrainians or Lithuanians, and this is perhaps why contemporary relations with, for example, Lithuania are worse and more difficult than could be expected. In this identity structure, cooperation with others is not seen as a useful and advisable way of achieving common goals, while potential partners are often treated as a source of danger.

### The issue of Polish-Jewish relations

Of the many nations and ethnic groups with whom Poles have had to interact in their country, Jews occupied a special place. In accordance with the aforementioned manner of building collective identity on the basis of cultural boundaries, Jews were a perfect “significant other” for ethnic Poles. Practically everywhere on Polish lands, Poles lived side by side with Jews, whose religious identity and language were significantly different. In addition, the Polish Catholic Church tended to treat Jews as enemies of the only true Christian religion and as natural competitors of Poles. It should be remembered that in 19th century Poland, the Catholic Church was in fact the only institution that operated officially and was present everywhere. For this reason, it was treated as a national institution and as the mainstay of Polishness. This is again attributable to the fact that Poles had no state of their own. In this situation, representatives of national elites, mostly of the intelligentsia and the clergy, as well as the nobility, representing the common national values, had to take on the role of creators of culture and



builders of the national identity, especially since the Polish bourgeoisie was deprived of major significance and strength due to low urbanization rates. The Catholic Church became the main creator of national values and of the Polish national identity. In this way, Polishness came to be associated with Catholicism. For many Poles, it became a basic principle on which their national identity was based, with Jews viewed as being on the opposite side of the barrier. It should be added that in the modernization period, Jews became actively involved in the process of social mobility and were much more successful than the Polish peasant class (among other reasons, because Jews valued education and had a better knowledge of the principles of the market economy). It is hardly surprising therefore that they were treated as competitors of the Polish nation. Poles often accused and still accuse Jews of being disloyal to Poles and their aspirations for independence, and criticized them for having collaborated with the enemies of Poland. This disloyalty is easier to understand when we realize that Jews, who constituted a minority in a multi-ethnic society, especially in the relatively tolerant Austro-Hungarian Empire of the Habsburg Dynasty, had no reasons to look forward to the replacement of that multicultural monarchy with ethnic nation-states, in which they would constitute a minority subordinated to the interests of the dominant group that treated the state as its own. Therefore, many Jews thought that it would be against their interests to support Polish aspirations to regain independence. On the other hand, there were also Jews, especially those assimilated, who actively worked for the benefit of Polish modernization and Polish independence. In spite of this, many (or perhaps most) Poles viewed Jews mainly as competitors who were not to be trusted.

### Two versions of national identity

In the interwar period, there were two conflicting political options in Poland. One of them, nationalistic and represented by "National Democracy," aimed to build Poland within its ethnic boundaries and to make it as culturally homogeneous as possible. The aim of the second option, represented mostly by Józef Piłsudski and his party with moderately socialist roots, was to create a Republic of Poland in the form of a federation consisting not only of ethnic Poles, but also of other ethnic nations, united in one state. This concept, addressed mainly to the nations bordering ethnic Poland from the east, was not fully realized due to geopolitical realities and because the neighbouring nations preferred to function as independent sovereign states. Just like the national identity of neighbouring



countries, the Polish national identity had traditionally been shaped according to ethnic principles. Among elites, especially those Polish and Jewish, a civic, political concept of the nation was beginning to emerge, but its development was cut short with the rise of extreme German nationalism. Most of the Jewish population also adhered to its traditional ethnic identity, in particular in the provinces, in small towns and next to traditional Polish and Ukrainian communities.

It is worth noting, however, that the educated section of the Jewish population, well integrated with Polish society, developed an alternative national identity of a civic type, expressed for example with the well-known phrase "Jews and other Poles." Such a phrase conflicts with the ethnic interpretation of the national identity and shows that even then it was possible to build a political, multicultural Polish state, based on the concept of citizenship, and not on ethnic culture and origin. However, this process was tragically cut short by the Holocaust.

### The difficult legacy of the Holocaust

The extermination of Jews is a difficult problem for Poles. Jews constituted the "significant other" and Poles contrasted themselves with them to build their own different identity, at the same time competing with them in the modernization process. In the interwar period, these relations acquired an anti-Semitic tinge. The Holocaust took place on Polish lands, sometimes with the active involvement of Polish collaborators,

with the passive indifference of the majority of the Polish population, and despite the heroism of those numerous Poles who tried to help Jews, often at the price of their own lives and the lives of their families. The indifference of the majority might have been caused by the exceptional terror inflicted by the Nazis or by the general demoralization of society during the German occupation. To some extent, however, it was also caused by traditional Polish ethnic nationalism, according to which Jews were culturally and nationally alien and were not treated as a part of Polish society, as “our folks.” Poles have found it difficult to be confronted with memories of the Holocaust. On the one hand, it was not easy for them to get used to the thought that three million of their fellow citizens had been murdered. After the extermination of Jews, Poles had to understand that they could no longer consider themselves as the most suffering nation. As mentioned above, the perception of being a suffering, innocent victim had been a central element of the Polish national identity. Now Poles had to admit that others had suffered more and what was worse, the suffering of some Jews had been caused by anti-Semitic Poles who collaborated with the Nazis.

The end of the Second World War also brought an end to cultural pluralism in Poland. The borders of the Polish state were moved in such a way that Polish society became almost completely homogenous in ethnic terms. Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Belarusians remained outside the borders of Poland. Others were deported. Jews had fallen victim to the Holocaust. Germans were resettled under the Potsdam Agreement. The new Soviet-installed communist authorities of Poland propagated a model of ethnic Poland, building a new, wonderful, socialist world. Any signs of diversity in Polish society, be it cultural, ethnic or regional, were concealed or marginalized, and all the focus was shifted to class divisions. The subject of cultural diversity became taboo.

This trend intensified after 1968, when the Polish communist authorities unleashed an anti-Semitic campaign because of its officially hostile policy towards Israel, and because they needed a scapegoat whom they could blame for internal problems. As a result, the few Jews who had survived the Holocaust were forced to emigrate. After 1968, the Polish educational system, media and publications ceased to provide any information about Jews and their role in the history and culture of Poland.

### The post-communist contemporary period

After 1989, Poland began to move away from the image of a culturally homogenous society. With the end of communist rule, there was no longer any pressure to maintain the image of a culturally homogenous Poland. Poles, especially the young, began to seek out the forgotten and deliberately hidden elements of their own history, realizing that the Polish identity propagated by the communist authorities had been based on false assumptions, concealment and lies.

Looking for their own identity, Poles have had to rethink their relations with the “significant others” and to give them a new meaning. At the same time, long forgotten and deliberately concealed differences within Polish society have resurfaced again. This regards in particular regional differences and the existence of different types of minorities. Regions, especially those with a strong traditional identity (such as Silesia), began to press for recognition of their distinct character. National and ethnic minorities, especially Germans and Ukrainians, began to put forward demands for greater autonomy. Ethnic minorities, previously ignored in the monolithic concept of socialist society, have become more visible. The exclusion and discrimination of certain minorities is increasingly the subject of public debate and criticism. One such publicly debated issue is the situation of the Polish Roma who were and still are, to a considerable extent, prejudiced against and excluded from Polish society. In the socialist state, they were subjected to compulsory assimilation, which they opposed. The democratic transformation enabled them to fight for their own way of life, which does not mean that they no longer fall victim to prejudice. A number of other divisions have gradually revealed themselves, including those regarding non-ethnic factors. All this coincided with the start of public debate on gender relations, on the real meaning of Polish Catholicism and on the status of sexual minorities. In its own eyes, Polish society has ceased to be a monolith, and the formerly forgotten and officially negated pluralism has been recognized as the natural state of affairs.

Of course, this process has not run smoothly or without conflicts. Many Poles, especially those conservative-minded, have been unable to accept that the vision of the Polish national identity as a cultural monolith was being challenged. Polish conservatives, dreaming of a Catholic state and nation, wanted

this monolith to be Catholic, so as to replace the communist monopoly in the public sphere with one that is Catholic. However, the emerging civic society refused to accept any monopolies and rejected the idea of a Catholic Poland, without disputing the tremendous merits of the Catholic Church in the Polish struggle for independence.

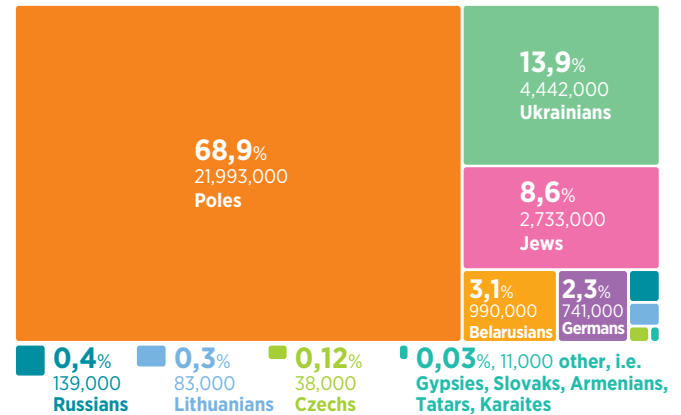
Even though most Poles still declare their affiliation with Catholicism, in practice this only means that nearly all Poles have been baptized as Catholics. In reality, Polish Catholics have increasingly different attitudes to religion—from complete indifference to zealous practice, deep faith and adherence to the commandments of the Church.

Even today, the processes taking place in nominally Catholic Polish society are among the most important ones, determining its identity. They are also the subject of different controversies which of course involve the Catholic Church, fighting not only for its followers, but also for the image of a Polish nation that is consistent with the traditional 19th century vision of a Catholic Pole.

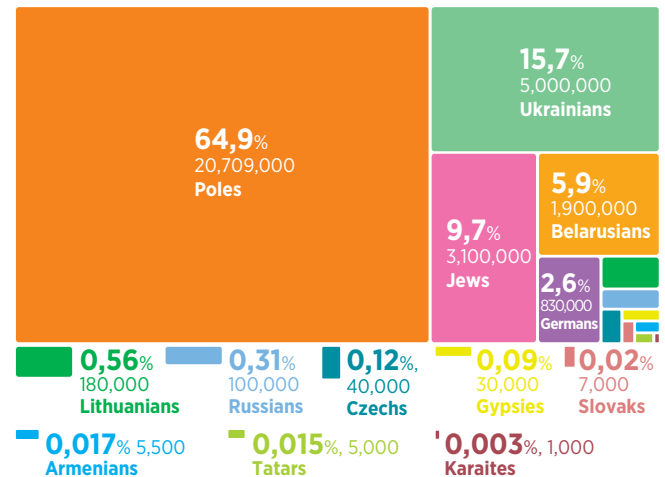
The process of gradually moving towards membership in European structures (and the first years of membership) has also had its cultural and identity-related dimension. In the context of building new relations with European countries and nations, it has been necessary to rethink the concept of the “significant other,” especially with respect to Germans. In addition, Poles have had to learn to pay attention to what others thought of them, to enter into a dialogue with them and had to look at themselves from a wider European perspective. The idea of the suffering Christ of nations did not apply any longer and neither did the concept of a country constantly attacked by enemies. In addition, Poles had to understand the concept of pluralism, openness and tolerance towards “otherness.” It was not easy for the generations of Poles who had been brought up in a cultural monolith, without any models of how to interact with people different from themselves.

However, as a society Poles are slowly becoming better and better prepared to live in an integrated and pluralistic Europe. The society is becoming more and more individualistic and Poles are now very mobile. This in turn has an effect on their perceptions of how society should be organized.

## The Second General Population Census of 1931 (31,916,000 inhabitants)



## Poland's population and its structure (1931) according to Henryk Chałupczak and Tomasz Browarek



**References:** Chałupczak H., Browarek T., *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce* (National Minorities in Poland): 1918-1995, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej (Publishing House of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, 1998, pp. 20-29).

**Note:** The figures of the Second General Population Census of 1931 are thought to be underestimated because they excluded a large part of the army quartered in barracks. Secondly, the questionnaire did not ask a direct question about nationality, which could have had an impact on the results of the Second General Census. The actual number of inhabitants of Poland totaled 32,107,000 (including 191,500 soldiers quartered in barracks). For comparison, we present the estimates of Henryk Chałupczak and Tomasz Browarek, from the Department of Ethnic Studies of Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin, who have taken into account more categories of minorities in Poland than the Second General Census.



Poles' own identities are also becoming varied and open to different interpretations. It is now more a matter of individual choice, rather than something inherited and imposed by the community. Asking the question "What does it mean to be

a Pole?" no longer means challenging a sacred tradition, but taking part in a normal discussion about one's past, present and, most of all, about one's future.

Contemporary Poles, especially the young, are shaping a new national identity

—an identity that is more critical, more open towards different cultures and traditions and which accommodates cultural minorities and their heritage. Patriotism is also taking on a different meaning; this term is no longer understood as readiness to die for one's homeland and to fight against a foreign occupier but, to an increasing extent, as adherence to civic virtues and loyalty towards one's own democratic state.

Of course, not all Poles participate in this process. There is also a section of society, not very numerous but loud, who prefer a completely different type of national identity—a traditional, conservative identity in the form of xenophobic nationalism. Freedom and democracy also create conditions for the activity of individuals with extreme views.

All in all though, it seems that mainstream changes are oriented towards openness, inclusiveness and towards an identity based on the idea of a multicultural, civic society. Such a process of building the national identity is conducive to the development of society, because it promotes civic attitudes, pro-social activity and readiness to take collective action based not on ideology, but on the readiness to negotiate and compromise.

**AUTHOR:**

**Professor Zdzisław Mach, PhD hab.,**  
sociologist and social anthropologist,  
Institute of European Studies, Jagiellonian  
University



## Multiculturalism

I understand multiculturalism in the Polish context as...



**Paulina Kasprovicz:**

...a process which is constantly moving forward.



**Marta Sykut:**

...only a state of mind and still not the reality.



**Katarzyna Jakubowska:**

...memory of the multicultural past of Poland—when many ethnic and religious groups lived side by side. It is also awareness and openness for changes that are taking place in Polish society—the influx of immigrants coming from all over the world due to economic or political reasons.



**Joanna Średnicka:**

...it's how we imagine the past—an image of multicultural Warsaw before the war: a synagogue that is no longer there, whole districts which disappeared under rubble. Today, cultural pluralism is a luxurious rarity. This is why I love the eastern part of Poland. Its distinctive townscapes include not only Catholic, but also Orthodox churches. Holidays follow their own rhythm and people speak with a strong accent.



**Jan Kirschenbaum:**

...an attempt to look back at the many years of Polish history which vanished after the war. That history has to be recreated now!



**David Liebers:**

...everything and nothing. Multiculturalism is a modern term, only coming into existence

in the 1970s, so for me it does not fully capture the ethnic, cultural and religious richness of pre-war Poland—the political challenges it presented, but also the enormous opportunity for cooperation that it created. I am inspired by Poland's more recent embrace of rising diversity in cities like Warsaw, Kraków and Wrocław, in particular the reemergence of Jewish life.



**Karolina Sacha:**

...it is something that determined the development of Poland's culture, at the same time constituting its national heritage.



**Justyna Politańska:**

...it is a moment in which I can see people of different nationalities, sexual orientations, religions and skin colours who feel comfortable and at ease, and nobody pays much attention to their being different. I'm happy to see that the inhabitants of Warsaw treat such differences, more and more often, as the most normal thing in the world—at work, at school or at a bar. We only highlight these differences as a kind of "celebration" (e.g., during a theatre festival, film festival, discussion or when cooking together). Poland's multiculturalism increasingly manifests itself as being more and more open towards others, who are at first looked upon with a friendly curiosity and then—with neutrality.



**Katarzyna Klimowicz:**

...intercultural projects, theatrical workshops, festivals and volunteer camps organized by non-governmental organizations.



## Less Well-known Aspects of Polish Culture

### Katarzyna Jakubowska:

I would recommend a trip to Podlasie or to southeastern Poland, where multiculturalism is evident everywhere—mosques and Catholic and Orthodox churches stand next to one another. I would also recommend several blogs of children of mixed nationality couples, where only one parent is Polish, as well as contemporary Polish documentaries.



### Paulina Kasprowicz:

Most of all, I recommend taking a trip to Poland and discovering all the interesting places in person!



### Marta Sykut:

Some time ago, I was enchanted with

Polish inter-war film productions in Yiddish. “Dybuk”, directed by Michał Waszyński, has been one of my favourite films ever since. It’s really an example of first-class cinematography, full of emotion, passion and mysticism. Few people today are aware of the high level of Polish cinematography in Yiddish before the Second World War. Luckily, these films are shown during festivals of Jewish culture.



### Joanna Średnicka:

I would recommend a visit to Poland—I would organize a trip around Warsaw, and then we would go to Podlasie. Afterwards, we would think what books we should read to intellectualize what we’ve seen. Because in Poland—and it is wonderful!—most things either belong to the past (multicultural Warsaw, German Wrocław and East Prussia, Polish Vilnius) or are just being created (motorways, metro lines). It’s a fascinating place simply because we are creating history. :)



### David Liebers:

I’d point them to the publication that Daniel Jezierski and I put together, “Voices from Poland.” Some bits from this print publication are available at <http://voicesfrompoland.wordpress.com>. There is a massive amount of literature on Jewish life in pre-war Poland, most notably that of Antony Polonsky. The first chapters of Tony Judt’s *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* provide a great account of the homogenization of Poland in the late 1940s.



### Justyna Politańska:

I would show them the potential of young Poles. I would tell them about the activities of young Polish scientists and entrepreneurs. I’d give them examples of young people who have confidence in themselves and who are successful both in Poland and abroad. I would tell them about the growing number of start-up businesses in our country. I’d show them how Warsaw changes with every day—becoming a modern, open and “cultural” city.

## Definitions of Multiculturalism

**Multiculturalism**—a term of English origin, comprising three meanings:

- 1) on a descriptive level, it simply means a multitude of cultures; multiculturalism is thus a statement of an objective fact that a given society is culturally diversified or—in broader terms—that there are different ethnic cultures, religious groups, subcultures, etc. in the world;
- 2) it also means a governmental policy intended to reduce social tensions connected with multiculturalism in a given population;
- 3) it is also the name of a certain doctrine, movement or even philosophy.

In this last case, multiculturalism is understood as actions taken by minority communities to promote their emancipation and to ensure their greater participation in the social, political and cultural life of the country.

*Definition sourced from the PWN Online Encyclopedia.*

**Multiculturalism** does not have to be synonymous with multi-ethnicity. Multiculturalism means a multitude of accepted systems of normative and directive judgments, clashing with one another—which may have both positive and negative consequences. Thus understood, multiculturalism is detached (sometimes completely) from its ethnic and territorial dimension. To get to know other cultures, one must get to know their systems of norms and recommendations that determine the forms of their expression. In this way, the term multiculturalism has a much wider scope, compared with its original meaning.

Hanna Mamzer, *Wielokulturowość- czy wyzwolenie z więzów etnocentryzmu? – Multiculturalism or liberation from the shackles of ethnocentrism?* – [in:] “Przegląd Bydgoski” No. XII/2001, pp.33-43.

**Multiculturalism** is always connected with several situations that make up the definition of this phenomenon:

- 1) with territorial proximity of culturally different communities;
- 2) with social perceptions of communities being in contact with each other as differing significantly in terms of their culture;
- 3) with a form, even the weakest, of contact between individuals belonging to culturally different communities;
- 4) with a certain degree and method of isolation or separation of these groups.

The core concept of thus understood multiculturalism needs to be clarified for each of the four situational components described above.

Ewa Nowicka, *Czy możliwe jest społeczeństwo wielokulturowe? Doświadczenia antropologa – Is multicultural society possible? Experiences of an anthropologist*, [in:] *Studia nad wielokulturowością – Studies on Multiculturalism*, Dorota Pietrzyk-Reeves, Małgorzata Kułakowska [editors], Księgarnia Akademicka, Krakow 2010, p. 326.







## Newly Discovered Multiculturalism: Minorities and Immigrants in Post-Communist Poland

Małgorzata  
Głowacka-Grajper, PhD

The ethnic, national and regional composition of the Polish state has changed considerably throughout its history. Before the Second World War, national and ethnic minorities constituted over one-third of Polish society. However, after the war the situation changed radically. As a result of the Holocaust, the shifting of borders and the subsequent assimilation policy with respect to the few remaining minorities, Poland turned into an almost completely homogeneous state in terms of its national and ethnic composition. It was not until the start of the political and social transformations in 1989 that members of particular minorities and regional groups could at last speak openly about their different cultural backgrounds and assert the rights to which minorities are entitled in many democratic states. In the political and legal sphere, the start of the democratization process and the disappearance of the one-party system brought a broader range of civil liberties, such as freedom of association—a freedom which is often exercised by these minorities. The process of new “institutionalization” of minorities also began then (cf. Bojar, 2000). The old state-controlled organizations were dissolved or underwent significant transformations. This was followed by the emergence of numerous local associations and organizations with a specific function (e.g., educational, cultural, economic etc.). At the beginning of the 1990s, a new type of social diversity also emerged when immigrants began to arrive in Poland. Some of them came from countries with relatively similar cultures (e.g., from Ukraine and Belarus), while others came from very different cultures, for example immigrants from Vietnam and China, or refugees from Chechnya or African and Arab states.

In the contemporary Polish state, members of national and ethnic minorities constitute (according to various statistics) between 1 and 3% of society (cf. *Drugi raport dotyczący sytuacji... – Second Report Concerning the Situation of... 2009*).

This means that Poland is one of the EU countries (apart from Austria, Portugal and Denmark) whose national and ethnic compositions are, in relative terms, the least diversified. However, Poland acknowledges the existence of national and ethnic minorities in its territory and enables them to enjoy specific rights so that they can preserve their distinct cultural identity.

Poland is also a country with a fairly small number of immigrants from other countries. When it comes to the percentage of foreign non-citizens in the society, Poland ranks second to last (after Romania) in the European Union. People with non-Polish citizenship account for only 0.2% of the inhabitants of Poland (cf. Eurostat 2009, Statistical Yearbook 2010). Moreover, most immigrants arriving in Poland, such as Ukrainians, Belarusians or Russians, come from similar cultures. Therefore, Poland does not have problems connected with the presence of a large number of people with very different cultural and religious backgrounds forming their own communities and resisting assimilation with the majority community.

### National and ethnic diversity within the Polish state

Particular regions of the country differ in terms of their national and ethnic diversity. The northeast and southwest parts of the country are the most diversified, while the central and northwest regions are the least diversified. After 1989, diversity was on the rise in new places—the large cities; it is there that most immigrants arrive from different parts of the world. In social terms, it is a new type of diversity—without any roots in the history of mutual contacts—as immigrants arrive as strangers and it is not clear what may be expected of them. On the other hand, they are not burdened by any historically rooted tensions. To understand the relations between different national and ethnic groups within a nation-state, one has to distinguish minority groups from migrant groups. This is because to some extent immigrants are always perceived as “guests,” no matter how long they have lived in Poland. They cannot claim any rights to places in the territory of Poland,

unlike minority groups (and regional groups) who have lived in a specific territory for a long time, and on this basis may build their identity and put forward claims for minority rights.

### Democratization and the rights of minorities

Democratization was also associated with the absorption of ideas originating in Western societies, such as: pluralism, multiculturalism or the protection of minorities, which also slowly became embedded in the legal system. In 1989, the National and Ethnic Minorities Commission was set up in the Lower House of the Polish Parliament (Sejm). The issues of minority organizations (concerning, for example, the provision of funding for their activities) were transferred from the remit of the Ministry of the Interior to the remit of the Ministry of Culture and Art, where a Team for National Minorities was established in 1990. In 1992 its status was changed and since then it has operated as a bureau.



Polish legislation also changed in the process of harmonization with EU law. In 1995, Poland signed the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and ratified it five years later in 2000. In addition, Poland has signed bilateral treaties with all its neighbours, guaranteeing language-related rights for minority members (however, these rights differ depending on the country—the treaties with Germany and Lithuania provide for the most ex-

tensive rights). Under Article 35 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Poland*, adopted in 1997, minorities are free and have the right to develop their own language, customs and culture and are guaranteed the support of the State in this regard. Work on the *Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages* began soon after Poland's "Third Republic" had come into being. It was finally adopted on 6 January, 2005. (Journal of Laws 05.17.141 of 31 January, 2005).

The inhabitants of Poland include representatives of nine national minorities and four ethnic minorities officially recognized by the Polish state. This means that they are mentioned in the *Act of 6 January 2005 on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language* and as such are entitled to various collective rights associated with the preservation of their distinct cultural identity.

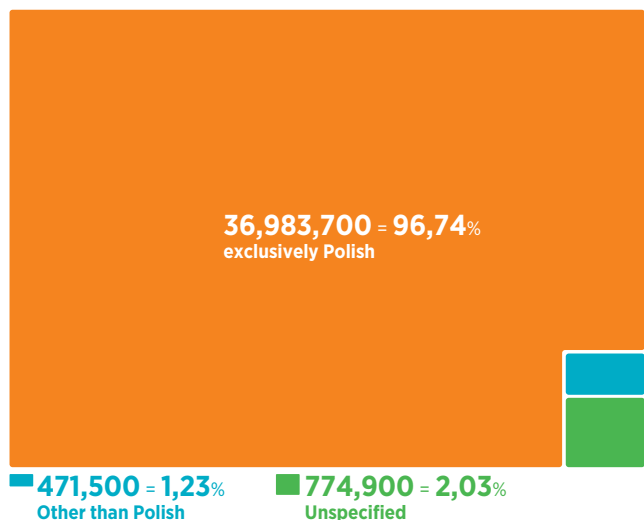
The above-mentioned Act defines a minority as a group of Polish citizens which collectively satisfies several conditions. Above all, its members differ from other citizens in their language, culture or traditions, and seek to preserve them, while their ancestors have lived in the present territory of the Republic of Poland for at least 100 years.

National groups are defined as groups who have their own nation-state, whereas ethnic minorities are defined as groups that do not have their own state anywhere in the world.

### Problems with establishing the number of members of minority groups

Several methods are used to establish the number of members of particular minority groups. One of them is based on estimates of minority organizations. Another method is that of asking every Polish citizen a question about his or her nationality during a general population census. In contemporary Poland, such a census has been carried out twice—in 2002 and in 2011. Even though the census method seems to be more objective and accurate than the estimates of minority organizations, it has several disadvantages. These are mostly associated with the fact that some people are unwilling to reveal their nationality to the census taker, either because they are afraid of negative attitudes towards a given minority or because they find it difficult to relate their identity to the pre-defined and rigid statistical categories. This is why the results of general censuses are often disputed (cf. Adamczuk, Łodziński 2006), even though they serve as an important starting point for studies concerning minority groups.

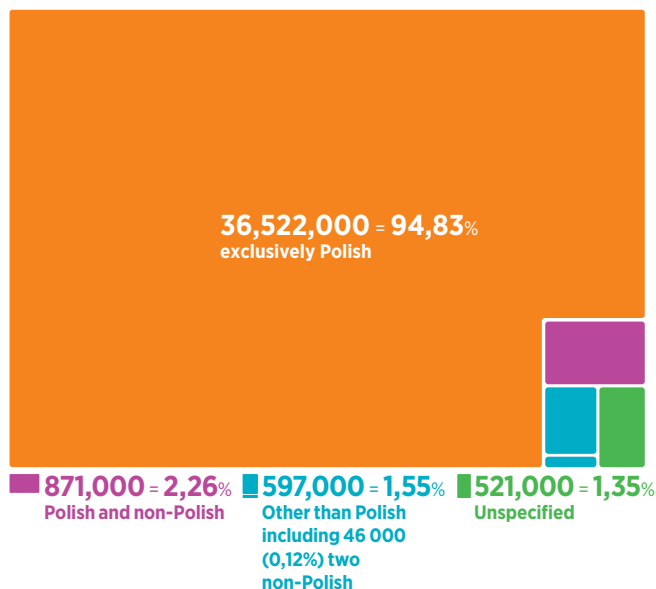
National and ethnic origin of the population on the basis of the results of the 2002 general census of the population and housing.



The 2011 population census was the first in the history of Polish general censuses which provided residents of Poland with an opportunity to declare complex national and ethnic identities. The flexible formula of the question about national and ethnic origin made it possible to declare affiliation with one or two ethnic categories, by marking specific answers under the question or choosing items from an extensive dictionary of ethnonyms, or by means of an open-ended answer in which respondents could declare their national and ethnic origin in a text field. In this way, a large number (over 200) of different types of identifications were obtained. They included declarations of membership not only in national and ethnic groups, but also in ethnic-regional, regional or even local groups. Source: <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/narodowy-spis-powszechny-ludnosci-i-mieszkan-2011/przynaleznosc-narodowo-etniczna-ludnosci-nsp-2011,16,1.html>

Out of the nine minority groups, Germans constitute the most numerous group (according to the last general census, there are 126,000 Germans), followed by representatives of other nations whose states border on Poland—Ukrainians (49,000) and Belarusians (46,000). National minority rights are also enjoyed by Russians, Jews, Lithuanians, Slovaks, Armenians and Czechs. Among ethnic minorities, Roma and Lemkos constitute the largest groups (16,000 and 10,000, respectively, as confirmed by the 2011 census). In addition, the inhabitants of Poland also include Tatars and Karaites (according to the 2002 census, there were only 45 of them).

National and ethnic origin of the population on the basis of the results of the 2011 general census of the population and housing.



### “Old” and “new” diversity in contemporary Poland—regional and migrant groups

Under the Act of 2005, minority rights were also acquired by one regional group—Kashubians. However, they have not been classified as a “minority” (since representatives of Kashubian organizations refused to be called a minority), but as a “group using a regional language.” According to Kashubian organizations and researchers engaged in Kashubian-related studies, the number of Kashubians in Poland may be estimated at 350,000-500,000. In the 2002 general census, only 5,053 people declared Kashubian nationality. Nonetheless, 52,600 people stated that they spoke the Kashubian language at home. During the census of 2011, as many as 229,000 Polish citizens defined themselves as Kashubian. At the same time, 93% of them stated that they felt both Kashubian and Polish. This means that a decisive majority of people cultivating the Kashubian tradition does not view their identity in national terms—hence, they find it difficult to define themselves as persons of “Kashubian nationality” even though they do not hesitate to define themselves as “Kashubians.”



Not all groups who regard themselves as culturally distinct from most members of Polish society have been granted the official minority status. Some of them have never tried to obtain such a status. Such groups include, for example, Highlanders from the Podhale region, Kurpie or Masurians. On the other hand, there is also a group that has not been granted minority status, although it has been campaigning for such a status for many years. These are the Silesians who, according to census figures, constitute the largest minority group in Poland. In 2002, 172,682 people declared Silesian nationality and 56,600 stated that they spoke the Silesian language at home. During the 2011 census, as many as 817,000 people defined themselves as “Silesians.” Since the beginning of Poland’s democratic transformation, Silesians (unlike Kashubians) have demanded not only the right to cultivate and protect their own language and tradition, but also political and economic autonomy (similar to that existing before the Second World War). For this reason, they were regarded as a group which may threaten the integrity of the Polish state and no specific rights were granted to them in the Act of 2005.

By definition, immigrant groups cannot be considered a minority, though at present they constitute a permanent element of the Polish social landscape, despite their small numbers. The

most well-known and visible group of immigrants are Vietnamese. It is estimated that there are 40,000 of them in Poland (cf. Halik 2006). Immigrant groups in Poland also include people from China, citizens of different Arab and African countries and Turks. Most immigrants, however, come from the countries of the former USSR—mainly from Russia, Armenia, Belarus and Ukraine. It is the citizens of this last country who constitute the largest group of immigrants in Poland—organizations of the Ukrainian minority estimate that there may be as many as one million Ukrainian citizens with permanent or temporary residence in Poland (some of whom are of Polish ancestry). In the last 20 years, a new phenomenon in Poland has been the presence of refugees, with Chechens constituting the largest—and the best known by society (cf. Łodziński, Ząbek 2009).

#### Action for the preservation of minority cultures

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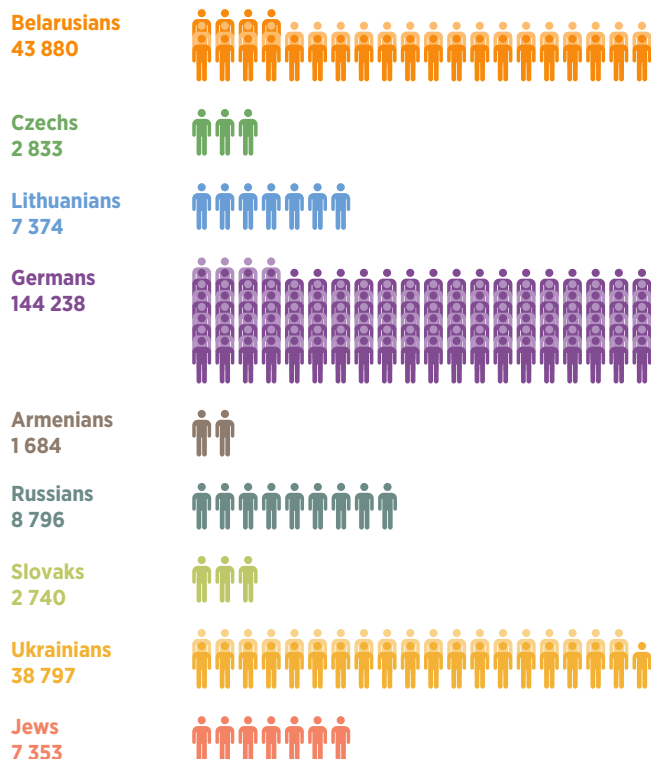
Poland is one of the countries where the preservation of ancestral traditions and culture is not treated as an individual and private matter of each citizen, but as a collective mission that requires the support of the state. In other words, minority





Infographic presenting quantitative data on the national-ethnic composition of Poland.

.....  = 1 000 persons  
**Poland is inhabited by representatives of 9 national minorities:**



.....  
**Poland is inhabited by representatives of 4 ethnic minorities:**



.....  
**One group which uses a regional language:**



members find themselves in a more difficult situation than other citizens—everywhere (in public offices, at school, in the street, on television) they are surrounded by a non-native culture and language. Inevitably, the Polish language and culture begin to dominate in their lives. To preserve their own culture, they need support, and this is why they demand specific rights.

Due to their small numbers and, in some cases (e.g., Ukrainians) due to being scattered around the territory of Poland, minorities do not have their own representatives in the Polish Parliament. The only exception is the German minority, which is entitled to two seats in the Lower House of the Polish Parliament (Sejm). Candidates representing other minorities compete in elections on the lists of particular electoral committees.

These national and ethnic minorities have the right to arrange instruction in their own language within the system of public education and to obtain support for their own cultural activities, such as the organization of different types of events, publication of newspapers or radio and television broadcasts in their own language. In municipalities where minority members account for at least 20% of all residents, bilingual signs may also be used (e.g., place names, street names or names of public offices).

### Problems of minority groups in contemporary Poland

The most important problem facing national and ethnic minorities in Poland is the risk of assimilation. The passing on of the language and culture to the next generations has thus become a major challenge. For this reason, the elites of minority groups strive to develop education and to create places where it is useful to know the language and traditions. They aim to show that the preservation of traditions is not only a matter of duty; it is an asset that can be useful in life and that can help a given culture to survive. The advantages (including economic) of being able to speak two languages are also emphasized. Culture is also increasingly referred to as “tourist value.” It is especially significant in the case of regional groups such as Kashubians, Kurpies or Highlanders—on one hand, the attractiveness of their culture to tourists guarantees their survival; on the other hand, there is a risk that their culture will be trivialized into a stereotypical tourist product.

Another problem is associated with the fact that the attitudes of the majority society towards minority groups are not always positive. Negative attitudes, which manifest themselves

in non-acceptance, contempt and discrimination, are a very complicated issue. These attitudes may stem from conflicts in the past or present with the “foreign homeland” of a given group, due to which minority members may become hostage to the political relations between the two countries concerned. Even though the Polish state does not apply the principle of mutuality and does not make its legal solutions conditional on the principles adopted in neighbouring countries, the very emergence of such voices in public discourse may be intimidating for minority groups.

Polish society cannot be described as having one prevalent attitude towards minority groups (national, ethnic or regional), and it does not respond to different cultures in the same way. Reactions are varied, depending on the region of Poland and the type of minority group concerned.

Consequently, Poles may find it easier to accept Vietnamese immigrants, who come from a completely different culture and who have lived in Poland for a relatively short time, than Roma/Gypsies who have been present in Poland for centuries. Aversion and fear towards Germans may have roots in history. At the same time, their culture is looked upon as equal or superior to Polish culture. In contrast, Poles may be more sympathetic towards Belarusians because of the difficult situation in their country, although Belarusian culture will be looked upon as inferior to Polish culture. Moreover, minority members may feel liked in large cities, where there are very few of them, and disliked in communities where they have lived for years. There are also groups which exist even though a vast majority of the society is completely unaware of their existence, functioning only in the consciousness of the local community. In the social sphere, intolerant attitudes and aversion to strangers, manifesting themselves as discrimination, hostility or so-called hate speech, are mostly directed against Roma/Gypsies nowadays. This may also be experienced by representatives of immigrant groups who come from culturally different countries, and by representatives of nations with whom Poland was in conflict in the past (e.g., Jews, Ukrainians, Russians or—to a lesser extent now—Germans).

The social situation of each of these groups is completely different and may not be understood without knowing the specific culture, social position and history of each of them. Without a doubt, the challenge for all minorities is to survive in Polish society as culturally distinct entities, passing on their

culture to the next generations. According to the data obtained in general censuses, all minority groups in Poland (with the exception of Roma/Gypsies) are aging very rapidly—fewer and fewer young people declare affiliation with the nationality or ethnicity of their ancestors.

Another problem is associated with the complexity of identification in a minority situation. Many representatives of minorities say that they find it hard to explain to people who identify themselves with only one nation and one state, what it means to be a Polish citizen who also feels Ukrainian or what it means to be a Polish Ukrainian, or—in the case of children of mixed nationality couples—what it means to be Polish and Ukrainian at the same time. The same problem affects people whose identity is multi-layered—they feel Polish at the national level and Kashubian at the regional level.

Unfortunately, most of our society is accustomed to the dichotomous distinction between “Pole and non-Pole.” For members of minorities, identity is a complicated issue because they find it difficult to explain it to others and to obtain acceptance. They may also have problems with self-identification—not everyone can and wants to decide who he or she really is in national and ethnic terms.

### Challenges and opportunities associated with multiculturalism

Since the start of Poland’s transformation in 1989, representatives of its national and ethnic minorities and regional groups have acquired more rights than they had in the previous period, gaining new opportunities to take action for the preservation of their own culture. However, this culture is still considered to be at risk, because the younger generations are increasingly moving to large cities or choosing to live abroad, looking for educational or career-related opportunities—and leaving the local rural and small-town communities which are the mainstay of minority and regional cultures.

In Poland, interest in cultural diversity began to develop on a larger scale after 1989. It has led to the awareness that ethnic or regional otherness may become a valuable asset that can be useful in everyday life, also in the economic sphere.

Hopefully, this will stop or slow down the assimilation processes taking place in minority groups.

Some members of the younger generation—both from minority groups and from the majority community—are currently involved in seeking out ethnic and national identity and cultural diversity.

The discovery of the ethnic, national and regional diversity of Poland (in different areas—from music to cooking) and its preservation are becoming an important element of the development of local communities. It also serves as a starting point for the activities of many non-governmental organizations who seek to raise the awareness and sensitivity of Polish society towards cultural diversity.

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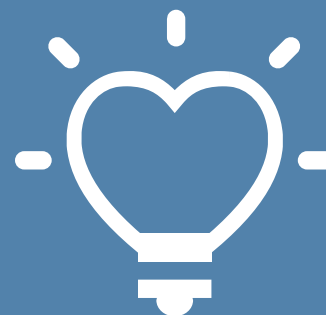
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#### AUTHOR:

Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper, PhD,  
sociologist, Institute of Sociology,  
University of Warsaw

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## Inspirations and Challenges

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## Poland: Inspirations

Where do you think lies the strength of Poland and Poles, and what makes them unique? What inspires you to take positive action?



**Marta Sykut:**

I am inspired by major social transformations which I can see around me. In Poland, one can see the growing popularity of initiatives which have long been present in the public sphere in other parts of the world. It makes me very happy and I benefit from it a lot, being involved in a food co-operative, community gardens and public happenings. In my opinion, this strength lies in the collective need for change and having control over one's social activities.



**Paulina Kasprowicz:**

The strength and uniqueness of Poles is associated with the fact that they are always keen to take action, and this leads to positive changes. Poland has changed tremendously for the better and, according to forecasts for the future, it will continue to develop in every area. What inspires me to act is history, which shows us how important it is to persevere, as well as the love of my family.



**Justyna Politańska:**  
What inspires me to act?

I draw my inspiration by observing others, by looking at the differences between us and others and by comparing the state "as is" with the state "as I would like it to be."



**Katarzyna Jakubowska:**

Tibetan refugees with whom I worked in India and in Poland often emphasized that Poland was a model for them, because we had disappeared from the map of the world for 123 years, but in spite of that we had not forgotten our mother tongue or culture and we'd become an important country in the region. Their comments made me realize that many Poles are characterized by perseverance and tenacity.



**Joanna Średnicka:**

With age, I'm beginning to discover that what I'd previously considered to be our burden and a civilizational flaw (the whole package of romantic sensitivity and spirituality, and myths of an insurgent, conspirator and messiah, but also of the entrepreneur Wokulski) is perhaps our greatest national treasure. It manifests itself as a struggle for meaning in everything we do, impatient greed for achievements, catching up with the West, combined with a kind of a nostalgic nature demanding justice, honesty and peaceful localism.



**David Liebers:**

I always try to avoid the trap of discussing Poland in purely symbolic terms, but it is hard to avoid. I think Poland will continue to be a symbol for freedom, but has serious work to do to be deserving of this mantle. I also believe the forward-looking mentality of the young people in Poland indicates that it can become a hub for innovation.



Where do you think lies the strength of Poland and Poles, and what makes them unique? What inspires you to take positive action?



**Sarah Grunberg:**

Poland is unique because historically Polish people know what it means and what it feels like to be oppressed. This is all part of being able to empathize with other oppressed groups of people. The first step to understanding empathy is to step out of your own shoes and into the shoes of somebody else. This connection in the not too distant past may inspire Poles today to help others who are in need.



**Katarzyna Klimowicz:**

I don't think that Poles are a particularly special nation or that Poland is a very exceptional country. I think that every country and nation is exceptional and strong in its own way (otherwise it would not have become a nation). Like any other nation, we have a lot of reasons to be proud and a lot of reasons to be highly critical. I draw my inspirations for positive actions from my trips and the history of my own family and friends—not only Poles.



## Poland: Challenges Hate Speech as a Case Study<sup>1</sup>

Anna Stefaniak,  
Michał Bilewicz, PhD

Throughout most of its history, Poland was very diversified in terms of its culture and ethnicity. Just before the Second World War, ethnic Poles accounted for only about 65% of the population of Poland; Ukrainians constituted about 11%, Belarusians 5.5% and the Jewish minority nearly 10% of the Polish population (Cała, Węgrzynek, Zalewska 2005). The War, the Holocaust and over 40 years of real socialism put an end to multiculturalism on the Vistula River. Contemporary Poland is one of the most ethnically homogenous countries in Europe. The results of the National General Census (GUS 2013) show that nearly 97% of the population define themselves as Poles and less than 1.6% of the inhabitants declare exclusively non-Polish ethnic origin. The latter can be divided into three subgroups: national minorities (e.g., German, Jewish or Ukrainian), ethnic minorities (e.g., Roma or Tatars) and foreign nationals staying in Poland.

As a result, Poles have very few contacts with representatives of minorities. According to the Polish Prejudice Survey (Stefaniak, Witkowska 2014), most Poles do not personally know a Jew, Roma or a person belonging to the German minority. The lack of intergroup contacts may contribute to the perpetuation of negative attitudes (Wagner et al, 2006). This in turn may increase the incidence of hate speech. At the same time, due to the relatively good economic situation of Poland and its stable position in Europe, more and more immigrants will treat Poland not as a transit country but as a country of destination. Therefore, the ethnic diversity of Poland is more likely to increase rather than be reduced.

In this paper, we will treat the situation of Poland as a case study, and we will look into the determinants of hate speech and methods of combating it. We will consider the causes and effects of hate speech from the point of view of social psychology. We will take into account the results of psychological

<sup>1</sup> This publication has been partly funded by the National Science Center (based on the decision no. DES-2012/05/D/HS6/03431)

studies and surveys carried out in Poland and Europe. In the final part, we will provide examples of actions taken by Polish organizations, and we will present a number of recommendations formulated on their basis.

### What is hate speech and what are its effects?

One of the first problems confronting researchers who try to understand the causes and consequences of hate speech and who look for effective methods of dealing with this phenomenon is that there is no good definition of “hate speech.” As it is difficult to find a clear-cut definition of hate speech, none of the previously formulated definitions is commonly accepted or used. At the same time, hate speech is quite often understood as: “expression that spreads, incites, promotes or justifies racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance which threaten democratic stability, cultural cohesion and pluralism,” in accordance with the definition of the Council of Europe. Definitional issues are particularly important for the introduction of legal regulations concerning this phenomenon (i.e., what constitutes hate speech and what forms of hate speech should be punishable by law) and for the actions taken to reduce its incidence.

The definition of hate speech as proposed by the Council of Europe ignores an aspect that is fundamental from the point of view of hate speech victims (i.e., their feelings). Therefore, when we undertook extensive research on hate speech in Poland in 2014 (Bilewicz et al, 2014), we decided to focus on this aspect, and we adopted a different definition.

⋮ We defined hate speech as including all expressions which  
⋮ are considered offensive and the most hurtful by members  
⋮ of minorities and groups vulnerable to discrimination. As  
⋮ psychologists, we also understand hate speech as “action  
⋮ with words,” and we are interested in its impact not only  
⋮ on its targets, but also on its users or witnesses.

The studies of Mullen and Smyth (2004) showed that the suicide rate was the highest in minority groups exposed to the most offensive forms of hate speech expressed by the majority. Hate speech causes mental problems among members of minority groups and, in general, leads to exclusion of the minority by the majority. As demonstrated by the studies of Leader and his colleagues (Leader, Mullen, Rice 2009):

⋮ the more hate speech simplified the image of a minority,  
⋮ the less willing were representatives of the majority group  
⋮ to accept members of a given minority in their social environment.

### Polish research on hate speech

As a starting point, we assumed that hate speech was what was considered to be hate speech by members of groups who were its targets. We began the 2014 study by presenting examples of hate speech to members of minorities and discriminated groups in Poland (Ukrainians, Roma, Polish Jews and homosexuals). We had sourced these examples from a base of offensive expressions circulating in the Internet and compiled by the “Local Knowledge” Foundation. We had supplemented them with hateful statements of Polish politicians and celebrities and song lyrics from the mass media. As it turned out, minority members were equally outraged by each of these types of expressions—they said that all of them were equally offensive and demanded that they be banned from the public space.

From the list of expressions assessed by minority members, we selected those that they considered to be the most offensive, and we presented them to adult Poles (sample of 1,007 people, representative for the whole of Poland) and to pupils of secondary schools aged 16-18 years (a sample of 653 people, representative for the whole of Poland).

⋮ To our amazement, the hateful expressions which minority  
⋮ members considered to be highly unfair produced  
⋮ quite different reactions among majority members, many  
⋮ of whom did not find them offensive at all.

19% of adults and 21% of young people decided that the statement “Jews must understand that Poles hate them for their treachery and crimes. Today, they are trying to hide their faults and put the blame on us” is acceptable. 16% of young Poles and the same percentage of adults decided that there is nothing wrong with using expressions such as “A Gypsy is, and always will be, a thief” in the public space and one in ten Poles did not consider it offensive. The most offensive statement included in the survey, which concerned homosexuals (“I loathe queers, they are a perverted version of a human being and they should be given treatment”), was thought to be acceptable by 22% of adult Poles and 20% of secondary school pupils. Only 59% of adults decided that expressions of this type should be banned.

Our research showed that some minority groups are much better protected than others due to reasons of political correctness. It is considered highly improper to offend Ukrainians and black people, but much more socially acceptable to offend Roma or homosexuals.

This finds reflection in the results of studies concerning the attitudes of Poles towards minorities. They show that it is these two groups that are the most disliked in today's Poland.

What contributes to this widespread acceptance of hate speech among Poles? The acceptance of hate speech among young people is connected with a specific outlook on life that psychologists refer to as "social dominance orientation" (Sidanius, Pratto 1999). People with a high level of social dominance orientation believe that all hierarchies existing in the world are fair—they think that well-to-do people are superior to poor people and that strong individuals should dominate over the weak ones. Such persons disagree with the opinion that the weak should be cared for and compare the world to a jungle in which the winner takes everything, while the loser must always obey those stronger than himself. People with such an outlook on life are more likely to treat hate speech as acceptable. At the same time, they oppose hate speech bans as unjustified censorship. In their opinion, protection of the weak would constitute a violation of the rules governing the world. It is not surprising therefore that the acceptance of hate speech is especially widespread among young people with right-wing political views.

During our research, we also noticed another interesting regularity: people who are often exposed to hate speech lose their sensitivity, and even the most brutal manifestations of hate speech no longer make any impression on them. Moreover, they change their attitude towards minorities and begin to avoid contacts with them in their community. Hate speech thus comes with a high price.

This finding is similar to the findings of researchers from Italy (Carnaghi and Maass, 2007), who discovered that people who hear homophobic hate speech begin to associate homosexuals with unpleasant stimuli, which leads to an automatic aversion to gays and lesbians. Previous studies demonstrated that it had a similar impact on black people: even tolerant white students became more prejudiced against African Americans after hearing offensive language (Kirkland et al, 1987). All these effects take place mostly subconsciously; they lead to subtle changes in the attitudes of people exposed to hate speech, in a way uncontrolled by them, which makes hate speech even more dangerous.

Participants of the 2014 study declared that they were exposed to hate speech very often. 66% of Poles say that they come across anti-Roma hate speech on the Internet, 70% encounter racist comments about black people and 77% are confronted with homophobic hate speech; 43% of adult Poles hear homophobic language in their direct environment and 49% of adults have heard their friends make insulting comments about Roma. In 2012, the Council of Europe commissioned a study among French and British youth. Its results were similar—78% of respondents declared that they came across hate speech in its online expression. At the same time, 6% claimed that they encountered hate speech each time they surfed the net, 37% that they encountered it regularly and only 12% informed that they rarely came across hate speech (Council of Europe 2012/13).

### Action against hate speech in Poland

The research referred to above shows that hate speech is associated with a higher suicide rate among minorities. It makes dominant groups less willing to have contact with representatives of minorities and has a negative effect on their perceptions of people who are the targets of hate speech.

Therefore, it is extremely important to prevent hate speech in an effective way and also, if it occurs, to put in place effective mechanisms for responding to hate speech, reducing its impact and punishing its users.

Polish law does not define hate speech in a precise way, and there are no regulations specifically dealing with this phenomenon. Nonetheless, it is punishable by law to incite hatred or to insult any groups or people on grounds of their nationality, ethnic origin, race, denomination or the absence of religious belief. Just as in the case of hate crimes, offences of this type are very seldom reported and even less seldom punished (Mikulska, 2010).

Recognizing the negative consequences of the spread of hate speech in its online expression, the Council of Europe initiated a project, "Young People Combating Hate Speech Online," to be run between 2012 and 2014. The project is intended to equip young activists with the competence and tools that are necessary to carry out online campaigns against hate speech and to take active steps against this phenomenon.



As part of this project, a coalition of non-governmental organizations and activists—the No Hate Speech Movement—was set up in March 2013. It is coordinated by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. Poland joined the Campaign in September 2013. The anti-hate speech coalition in Poland is coordinated by the “Polis” Young Journalists’ Association and it currently consists of 55 non-governmental organizations and institutions.

The “No Hate Speech Movement” mostly enables young activists to share their materials and ideas via the online platform—[www.nohatespeechmovement.org](http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org)—and it also makes it possible to monitor hate speech on the Internet via a database accessible at the address: [www.hatespeechwatch.org](http://www.hatespeechwatch.org). Participants of the “No Hate Speech Movement” have access to a wide range of educational tools, and they also provide access to a wide range of such tools themselves (available for downloading by the general public on the Movement’s website: [www.beznieawisci.pl](http://www.beznieawisci.pl)).





### Assessment of actions against hate speech and examples of good practices

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of anti-discrimination measures, mainly because they are seldom evaluated in a thorough manner (Levy Paluck, Green; 2009). The same problem applies to Polish anti-discrimination measures. This is mostly due to financial constraints faced by non-governmental organizations and to the ways in which funding is provided by funders. To learn more about the methods used by Polish non-governmental organizations to combat hate speech and to evaluate their results, we invited the participants of the No Hate Speech Movement to take part in a questionnaire. Out of 55 participating organizations, 29 declared that they were actively involved in combating hate speech.

Eighteen organizations provided us with a more or less detailed description of the actions that they took to counteract hate speech. Below, we present examples of the methods used by these organizations to tackle hate speech, broken down into five main categories identified in the study. It should be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive (i.e., a given activity may concentrate on the monitoring of hate speech and be addressed to young people) and that many organizations take actions of several or all categories.

#### Actions targeted at the majority group

A decisive majority (17 out of 18) of organizations concentrate their efforts on the majority group. They conduct public awareness campaigns and anti-discrimination workshops and engage in different forms of education. Their educational activities include traditional training sessions, lectures and seminars as well as more active forms of learning—workshops, project work or e-learning platforms. For example, Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej (The Center for Citizenship Education) is currently carrying out a program entitled “Nienawiść – jestem przeciw!” (Hatred – I am Against) addressed to pupils of lower and upper secondary schools, in which it uses workshop methods and online courses. The task of the young people who take part in the program is to prepare social campaigns against hate speech and present them in the virtual environment and in their local communities.

#### Actions targeted at minorities

Three of the organizations take action to help victims of hate speech or to make them more aware of their own rights. Their actions mainly involve providing legal assistance to hate speech victims or facilitating access to such assistance. In the

case of victims who seek justice in court, the above-mentioned organizations monitor how the case is handled by the court and provide the victims with extensive support. Fabryka Równości (The Factory of Equality) an association from Łódź that works among and for the benefit of LGBTQ persons—is currently carrying out a plebiscite “Szkoła bez nienawiści” (School Without Hatred) and “Nauczyciel bez nienawiści” (Teacher Without Hatred). The aim of the plebiscite is to demonstrate, reward and promote good practices in building tolerance and acceptance for social diversity at school.

#### Using the existing legal framework and attempting to change it

Four organizations take action in which they try to make use of the legal provisions which are in force in Poland. For example, they inform the relevant services of manifestations of hate speech in the public domain or in the media. At the same time, they strive to make these services more aware of the gravity of the problem. The organizations try to encourage victims to report hate speech offences to the police themselves and support them in doing so. In addition, representatives of NGOs promote legal changes that would make it possible to provide protection against hate speech for currently unprotected groups too (e.g., non-heterosexuals). These NGOs include: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Association Pracownia Różnorodności (Diversity Workshop).



### Monitoring of the media and of the public space

Seven organizations focus on combating hate speech in its online expression, and two organizations are also involved in activities in the public sphere. One organization deals with media other than the Internet. Among other things, they report cases of hate speech to the relevant services or to website administrators and campaign against hate speech in virtual space. In 2014, Humanity in Action Poland carried out a project concentrating specifically on virtual space entitled: "Incubator of Ideas: Transformation, Democracy and Human Rights." Its participants (young activists from Germany, Poland, Ukraine and the USA) created Internet campaigns designed to combat hate speech. Interesting examples of activities in the public sphere include: a campaign whose participants paint over hateful graffiti, carried out within the framework of the "Hejt-stop" project, and a similar project of the Fundacja KLAMRA (Foundation BRACE) – "Mow@ Miłości" (The Speech of Love). The organizers of these campaigns try to ensure active involvement of the users of buildings vandalized with hateful graffiti. In this way, they make the public more sensitive and more active in expressing their disapproval for the presence of such graffiti in the public space.

### Actions among young people and adults

Eight organizations address their activities to young people and five to adults. The activities targeted at young people mostly consist of all forms of anti-discrimination education. They provide young people with an opportunity to learn, among other things, to work with modern media or to use social networking as a tool for social activism. Examples of successful programs include the workshops „Zło może urosnąć – przeciw nienawiści” (The Evil Can Grow—An Anti-Hatred Campaign) organized by Stowarzyszenie Otwarta Rzeczpospolita (The Open Republic Association), with the aim of introducing the issue of hate speech into teacher training. This is because teachers are the adult group to whom most anti-discrimination programs are addressed. Working with young people on a daily basis, they can play an important role in spreading and promoting the ideas of tolerance.

### Evaluation of activities

Out of 15 organizations that answered the question concerning the evaluation of activities, only six answered in the negative (two of them explained that it was because their activity was still in its initial stage). Polish organizations most often evaluate their activities by means of questionnaires (five organizations mentioned using them). Two organizations seek the opinion of representatives of minority groups when evalu-

ating their activities, and one organization uses external evaluation. Few Polish organizations carry out systematic evaluations, which does not mean, however, that their activities are ineffective. It can be assumed with a high degree of certainty that hate speech is talked about in public settings, and that in itself is sufficient to lead to changes in social norms (i.e., it helps to strengthen social perceptions of hate speech as something that should not occur at all) and fosters an active approach to this phenomenon.

In the opinion of the organizations participating in the No Hate Speech Movement, the following activities had the most effective impact: initiatives conducted among young people, enforcement of the law (i.e., by exerting pressure on the authorities or reporting hate speech incidents to the police), supervision of the public sphere and elimination of hateful language from public spaces.

### Psychological determinants of the fight with hate speech

As evidenced by the results of psychological research, there are factors that contribute to greater acceptance of hate speech, which makes it possible to formulate recommendations for people and organizations who want to say NO to this phenomenon. If actions are taken with a specific focus on these factors, it should help to reduce social acceptance of hate speech. Research has shown that, on the one hand, this acceptance is connected with a specific outlook on life and, on the other hand, with attitudes to minority groups.

People who prefer to view social groups from a hierarchical perspective (i.e., they are strongly oriented towards social dominance) are more likely to think that hate speech is acceptable. Such views can be changed in two ways. On the one hand, structural action should be taken to equalize the status of the majority and the minorities. On the other hand, it can be done through education, by fostering respect for the law (which forbids discrimination and hatred) and by making the public aware of the negative consequences of hate speech for the society at large.

This excessive attachment to hierarchical perceptions among members of high-status groups can be reduced by intergroup contact with members of minority groups. As demonstrated by the studies conducted by Dhont, Van Hiel and Hewston (2014), contact with members of minority groups

helps to reduce the social dominance orientation among both young people and adults from the majority group.

· The effectiveness of intergroup contact as a method of overcoming prejudices has been confirmed by hundreds of psychological studies (Pettigrew, Tropp, 2006). Therefore, it can be assumed that such contact should be effective as a tool for limiting hate speech, because it helps to build more positive attitudes towards minorities.

Unfortunately, in Poland this method cannot be used on a large scale because of the very low percentage of minorities and immigrants in the Polish society. This lack of intergroup contact may in turn contribute to the perpetuation of negative attitudes.

An interesting and effective method of promoting positive intergroup attitudes among Polish youth, despite the lack of contact with minority groups, has been proposed by Forum Dialogu (Foundation “The Forum for Dialogue Among Nations”). Since 2008, it has been running a program “Szkoła Dialogu” (The School of Dialogue). The aim of the program is to combat anti-Semitism, which is still quite common both among adults (Bilewicz, Winiewski, Soral; 2014) and among young Poles (Bilewicz, Wójcik; 2009).

Under this program, school pupils take part in a series of four workshops on the history and culture of Polish Jews. The workshops, based on a non-formal education model, are held in places where large Jewish communities lived before the Second World War. The participants discover the local Jewish heritage and learn about their rich but often forgotten history. In addition, they prepare projects to revive memories of the multicultural past of their place of residence. “The School of Dialogue” is a very effective anti-discrimination program. The evaluation of the program, conducted since 2012 (Stefaniak, 2014; Stefaniak, Bilewicz, 2013), has shown that its participants develop more positive attitudes to Jews and have a greater sense of being close and similar to that group. Moreover, the workshops address the issue of prejudices against Roma, who are traditionally very disliked in the Polish society. The program makes young people more attached to their place of residence and more interested in its history, encouraging them to become involved in activities for its benefit. In our opinion, this last finding is proof of the social capital accumulated by those young people.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Hate speech continues to be a considerable problem in Poland and in Europe. It spreads particularly easily in virtual space. At the same time, it is quite difficult to combat hate speech in virtual space because of the anonymity of hate speech users, reduced social control or a sense of impunity among Internet users. However, there is currently a lot of interest in this issue at the European and national level—among the authorities and non-governmental organizations alike—which makes it possible to look into the future with optimism.

In the public sphere, hostile language and openly expressed prejudices are more and more often condemned. This in turn is leading to changes in social norms and finds its reflection in the polls of the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS). According to these polls, the number of nationality groups who are openly disliked by Poles has been falling steadily (CBOS 2011).

Both Polish and European activists place a special emphasis on educating young people. It is because the Internet—the basic medium of hate speech—is used to the largest extent by young people, and their opposition to hate speech can potentially be the most effective. In addition, educational activities are most effective among young people, who are also more willing to engage in pro-social activities, if only they are encouraged to do so in an appropriate way.

Polish non-governmental organizations conduct a lot of interesting, innovative and potentially effective activities. At the same time, not enough emphasis is placed on evaluating their outcomes, which makes it difficult to assess if they really help to reduce the incidence of hate speech and limit its acceptance by the society. It seems fairly easy to evaluate the effects of anti-discrimination workshops (evaluation questionnaires are perfect for this purpose), but there are many more problems with evaluating the effectiveness of social campaigns, online and offline alike—one reason being that it is hard to pinpoint their success or to measure their effects. However difficult, these questions should not remain unanswered, and non-governmental organizations and public institutions should endeavor to find an answer to them.

Summarizing the good practices used in Poland, it is important to emphasize the significance of:

- early intervention (i.e., striving to change the attitudes and behaviour of people who are relatively young);
- building a social base for anti-discrimination activities as well as a network of activists, especially among young people;
- building a sense of affinity by looking for common elements in the experience of members of the majority and in the experience of minority groups, and
- using the historical multiculturalism of Poland to build contemporary openness to social diversity.

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#### AUTHORS:

**Michał Bilewicz, PhD,**

social psychologist from the Center for Research on Prejudice – Department of Psychology of Intergroup Relations, Faculty of Psychology of the University of Warsaw, the Robert Zajonc Institute of Social Studies

**Anna Stefaniak,**

social psychologist from the Center for Research on Prejudice – Department of Psychology of Intergroup Relations and the Chair of Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology of the University of Warsaw, Humanity in Action Senior Fellow



# Modern Patriotism



How do you understand modern patriotism in democratic Poland under transformation?

**Marta Sykut:**

I sometimes think the decision about returning to Poland required more courage on my part than the decision to go abroad. I understand modern patriotism as the daily struggle to live in the country in which one would like to live, and not in a country where one is forced to live.



**Yuliya Gogol:**

For me, contemporary patriotism is a global phenomenon, rather than a local one. In the first place, I am a European and only then an inhabitant of Warsaw.



**Paulina Kasproicz:**

I understand it as pride in being a Pole, but also as openness and tolerance towards others. Any activities which take into account the promotion of history and culture contribute to the development of a more open Poland in the future.



**Katarzyna Jakubowska:**

It mainly consists of being a good person, always and everywhere, in Poland or abroad, and contributing to a good image of Poland with one's behaviour. Modern patriotism can manifest itself in different ways—from speaking Polish correctly to providing foreign friends with information about Polish culture and history or engaging in local activity.



**Jan Kirschenbaum:**

It's paying taxes, punching one's tram tickets or cleaning up after one's dog. It's knowing the his- and her-story of one's family. It's being curious about the traditions of one's region and their continuation. It can also be described as involvement in activities intended to make one's surroundings better and friendlier.



**Justyna Politańska:**

Taking action for the benefit of one's community, representing Poland in an appropriate way and caring about its reputation abroad. Self-development, taking advantage of one's potential and using it in such a way that at least a tiny fragment of the Polish reality changes for the better.



**Joanna Średnicka:**

To be honest, I find it difficult to come up with a new definition of patriotism. It seems to me that the meaning of the word patriotism is—at least in our context—so unambiguous and so strongly embedded in the 19th and 20th century culture and history—years of fighting and the struggle for freedom—that I would prefer to leave it in that context, with all its baggage of meanings derived from those times, and I would only supplement it with concepts that are closer to the challenges of the 21st century. Solidarity and Baumanian responsibility? For me, those are the key words.

How do you understand modern patriotism in democratic Poland under transformation?



**Karolina Sacha:**

It is an awareness of the cultural and social heritage of Poland, as well as respect for one's country and its citizens.

**Katarzyna Klimowicz:**

Most of all, it is caring about one's immediate surroundings, local and national, involvement in public affairs, taking interest in cultural life and promotion of a positive image of Poland as an interesting country which is worth visiting. At the same time, it is also a critical and conscious approach to history and current political affairs.



**David Liebers:**

I get the sense that some young Poles are now excited to find that their family histories are somewhat more ethnically complicated than they had imagined. A few decades ago, these "family secrets" might well have been hidden for political reasons. I think this trend is positive.

## Let's Do Our Own Thing: Examples of Social Activities

For years, the activists belonging to Humanity in Action Poland have been involved in social and human rights activities designed to explore topics related to the challenges of multiculturalism and the fight with discrimination and prejudice. In this section, we present a few selected projects whose purpose was to pave the way for activists in this field.

More examples of social activities carried out by the members of Humanity in Action:  
[www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase](http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase).





## Podlaskie – Multicultural Melting Pot: We Have Lived Here Together for Centuries

Karolina Sacha



### Key words:

**multiculturalism, religious diversity, identity, local communities, Podlasie, religious minorities, national and ethnic minorities, cultural and historical heritage, Tatars, Jews, non-formal education, prevention of discrimination and hate speech.**



### Summary:

In 2010, Carolina, fascinated by the multicultural history and tradition of the region where she was born and lives (Podlasie), developed a project for teachers from all over Poland, to inspire them to generate new ideas for educational activities addressed to young people, covering the said theme. For a couple of days, teachers took part in a workshop in Podlasie, during which they had a chance to meet representatives of minorities who still adhere to their traditions, visit important historical and cultural sites and see for themselves how unique is the region which has become somewhat of a symbol of the former multicultural Poland. Classroom scenarios developed jointly by the teachers were then tested, and their authors have created an informal group of educators who disseminate knowledge about multiculturalism not only with regard to history, but also to contemporary times. Thanks to this, action against stereotypes and prejudices against various minority groups may be more effective and interesting.



### Target groups (direct and indirect):

teachers taking part in the project and those who use lessons developed in the lesson scenario project, students and activists—including members of Humanity in Action Poland.



### Forms of activity:

workshops, study visits, field visits, development of lesson scenarios.



### Film about the project:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uo3BDlss7xE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uo3BDlss7xE)



## 8 Stories That Have Not Changed the World

Jan Śpiewak



### Key words:

**multiculturalism, identity, religious minorities, national and ethnic minorities, Jews, the Holocaust, Second World War, oral history, intergenerational projects, prevention of discrimination and hate speech, non-formal education.**



### Summary:

“8 stories that have not changed the world” is an innovative and creative approach to the subject of Polish-Jewish relations, history and anti-Semitism. The project has been initiated by a group of young Polish Jews. Janek and his friends wanted to meet representatives of the oldest Jewish generation and talk with them about their youth and life before the Second World War, so as to get to know them as the people they were then, unburdened by the Shoah stigma. To film these meetings and conversations, they set out on a journey across Poland. As a result, an unusual film came into being, which in the touching but funny stories of its characters clearly shows how diverse and colourful pre-war Poland was. Since its inception—that is, since 2010—the film has conquered the hearts of the general public, at the same time winning awards at home and abroad. It is also very valuable educational material for anti-discrimination workshops.



### Target groups (direct and indirect):

the young generation of Polish Jews who are members of the Polish Jewish Youth Organization (ZOOM), representatives of the oldest pre-war generation of Polish Jews, upper secondary school students, human rights educators, teachers, the so-called wide audience (film festivals, film screenings) and activists—including members of Humanity in Action Poland.



### Forms of activity:

creation of documentaries, workshops with young people with use of a documentary film, wide distribution of the film in Poland and abroad.

**Documentary:**[www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zEiktLM00Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zEiktLM00Y)**Project blog:**[www.8historii.blogspot.com](http://www.8historii.blogspot.com)**When I Fall Silent, Silent Falls the World**

Johanne Hoppstock, Agnieszka Skoneczna, Marta Sykut, Katarzyna Wrzesińska

**Key words:**

**multiculturalism, religious diversity, identity, national minorities and ethnic minorities, Roma, Romani, race, non-formal education, prevention of discrimination and hate speech.**

**The author about the project:**

"The goal of the project was to spread knowledge about the situation Roma people found themselves in as a result of the armed conflict in Kosovo. We wanted discussion about the situation of the Roma minority in Europe to lead to reflection on the situation of the Roma people in Poland and on how, through the dissemination of knowledge, we can build mutual understanding and cause an improvement in the status quo. *When I fall silent—silent falls the world* is a snippet of the song commonly known as *We Gypsies* or *Ore, ore*. The song is catchy and for years it's been a hit by numerous campfires, and it tells the story of... Gypsies, or rather Romani people. There are nearly 16,000 people in Poland who declare Roma ethnicity. It may seem not many—too

few for everyone to have a chance to personally get to know even one representative of this group. Still, almost everyone can easily describe *the average* Roma. Often it'll be a description full of negative stereotypes, sometimes closer to the colourful, magical characters from the song *We Gypsies*. Through the project we wanted to see what the Roma people in Poland are really like. Is it really that easy to pigeonhole them all? As part of the project, film screenings were organized, combined with discussions and exhibitions of photography in Warsaw, Poznań, Łódź, Wrocław and Lublin. In addition, a nationwide competition was organised, entitled *A Roma, or who? Think again*, aimed at debunking stereotypes about the Roma people, resulting from ignorance, prejudice or racism, through the promotion of an open and tolerant attitude to *otherness*."

**Target groups (direct and indirect):**

a wide audience, in particular youth from all over Poland, educators and activists—including members of Humanity in Action Poland.

**Forms of activity:**

workshops, film screenings, presentations, a photo exhibition and photo contest for youth *A Roma, or who? Think again*, circulating across Poland.

**Publication:**

<http://www.humanityinaction.org/files/381-KiedyMilkneMilknieSwiat.pdf>

**Project blog:**

<http://kiedymilknemilczyswiat.wordpress.com>

**Film about the project:**

<http://vimeo.com/47243688>

**The winning works of the contest****"A Roma, or who? Think again"**

[www.kiedymilknemilczyswiat.wordpress.com/konkurs/nagrodzeni](http://www.kiedymilknemilczyswiat.wordpress.com/konkurs/nagrodzeni)

**More about the project:**

[www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/389-when-i-fall-silent-silent-falls-the-world](http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/389-when-i-fall-silent-silent-falls-the-world)





## Voices from Poland

Daniel Jezierski, David Liebers



### Key words:

**multiculturalism, religious diversity, identity, local communities, religious minorities, ethnic and national minorities, cultural and historical heritage, activist action, oral history.**



### David about the project:

"Daniel Jezierski and I undertook a research project on the tapestry of minority groups that survived the historical trauma of the Second World War, and then Stalinism, and continue to live in their own communities in Poland. We visited the Tatars in Kruszyniany, the Lemko communities along the Slovak border, Lithuanians in Punszk, Czechs, Ukrainians, Russians, and others who trace back their ancestry in these places many generations. We published their stories as "Voices from Poland." Polish friends of mine came to me, amazed to learn that there are towns in Poland where the Lemko language is used on road signs, and that there are 300 year old Mosques near Białystok. Their minds were blown and it was rather satisfying."



### Target groups (direct and indirect):

representatives of minorities, educators, trainers, teachers and activists—including members of Humanity in Action Poland, and a wide audience.



### Forms of activity:

oral history, study visits, field visits.



### Publication:

[www.humanityinaction.org/files/268-Publikacja\\_GlosyzPolski\\_Final.pdf](http://www.humanityinaction.org/files/268-Publikacja_GlosyzPolski_Final.pdf)



### Project blog:

[www.voicesfrompoland.wordpress.com](http://www.voicesfrompoland.wordpress.com)



### Podcasts:

interviews with members of minorities on the webpage: [www.voicesfrompoland.wordpress.com/audio/](http://www.voicesfrompoland.wordpress.com/audio/)



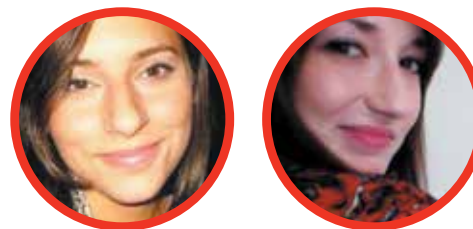
### Film about the project:

[www.vimeo.com/68546077](http://www.vimeo.com/68546077)



### More about the project:

[www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/424-voices-from-poland-the-polish-minority-perspective](http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/424-voices-from-poland-the-polish-minority-perspective)



## Poland for All

Sarah Grunberg, Paulina Kasprowicz



### Key words:

**multiculturalism, religious diversity, identity, national and ethnic minorities, race.**



### Paulina about the project:

"Poland is seen as a homogenous country in ethnical, cultural and religious terms. However, various global phenomena are making Poland more and more multicultural. Since 1989, Poland has become more open as it's been subject to the effects of globalization, but the reason why some people are not yet fully aware of the changes in our society is the past of our country. A short film, which I've made in collaboration with Sarah, shows the youngest Poles of different origin. Film is the best medium to communicate the positive changes in society as a whole. Poland is caught in a vortex of globalisation that continues unabated, and many foreigners reside in Poland. Our country is changing and opening to all peoples and cultures."



#### Sarah about the project:

"In Poland, my activism was rooted in challenging the ideas of people around me. While trying to learn and fully understand Polish culture, I was also trying to help Poles understand their own perspectives. When I began to interview members of the Polish-African community in Warsaw, I began to understand the problematic definitions of "Polishness" that excluded many members of the Polish community. I believe that my research is the start of something that may open the eyes of many individuals in the Poland to the diversity that exists and the changing definitions of "Polishness" that will eventually come to be. My project with Paulina Kasprowicz entitled, "Poland for All" also expressed this changing definition through interviews with children of mixed Polish backgrounds."



#### Target groups (direct and indirect):

representatives of minorities, wide audience.



#### Forms of activity:

creation of a short film.



#### Documentary:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=z\\_WVcFWEomk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_WVcFWEomk)



#### More about the project:

[www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/418-little-polish-ambassador-s-day](http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/418-little-polish-ambassador-s-day)

## HUMANITY IN ACTION POLSKA

#### About Foundation

**We take action because...? Nothing will change on its own!**

We advocate **human rights** and take action to support **democracy, civic society and multiculturalism**. We **cooperate** with young enthusiasts who want to use their creativity for the benefit of people/groups affected by discrimination and who are interested in pro-social issues. We **help** them to develop the knowledge and skills which are required to counteract prejudices in a reasonable and effective way and to adequately respond to hateful attitudes and behaviour. We **provide** them **with opportunities** to learn from experienced activists and experts of different generations and from different countries. We **motivate** them to come up with their own ideas for activist initiatives. We **advise** them on how these ideas can be improved and put into effect. We **promote** the work and achievements of the alumni of our programs. We inspire them to engage in long-term cooperation within the framework of an international network of leaders. We **encourage** them to share their skills and experience with younger activists. We also **enable** them to confront their ideas with the realities of everyday work for human rights during internship programs. We know from experience that every person may become a leader of change and take effective action for the benefit of human rights in different environments and areas of life, irrespective of his or her background, material status, field of study or chosen career path.

**We believe that "where there's a will, there's a way"—in other words:  
Humanity in Action Poland!**

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## HIA Poland in a nutshell

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Since 2005, we have been a part of the transatlantic organization (HIA) operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, France, Holland, Germany and the USA. At present, the HIA network consists of over 1,500 activists and their number is constantly increasing. The HIA Poland Foundation has existed since 2008. We are passionately involved in the creation of educational projects and initiatives that combine the issue of human rights with historical education and lead to specific activities—we have co-authored the first Polish manifesto, “Give Testimony & Act! Attempts to combine historical education with education on/for the benefit of human rights.” We (co)organize workshops, seminars and conferences and prepare publications and action strategies to address these issues and challenges. We believe that in order to change something for the better, theory must go in hand with practice. For us, the most important reference point is POLAND—and we always start with Poland before we look further at other parts of the world. We focus on relations between minorities and the majority in Poland and in other democratic states, and we take action to improve these relations. As a key element of our mission, we reach out to people with our initiatives and ideas developed together with young activists, inspiring people in different ways to act together and stop prejudices before they take root!



## We like to have a long-term impact!

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In 2006, we initiated the annual international Academy of Human Rights and Active Citizenship in Poland. The one-month fellowship program has so far been completed by over 200

activists from all over the world. The Academy treats Poland as a case study, presenting a diagnosis of the current situation and examining the past to show its genesis and draw attention to certain phenomena. The future, however, is presented as a challenge for young people in the context of prevention of human rights violations. Participants improve their knowledge on human rights, civic society and democracy and learn by carrying out specific tasks. In this way, they develop a number of skills which they will find useful in their activist pursuits. Under the watchful eye of specialists and experts in a given field, they work in international teams, using specific examples and looking for creative forms of anti-discrimination activities, addressed mainly to young people. All this has led to the creation of specially tailored educational games, scenarios for workshops and classroom activities and social campaigns that were subsequently put to practical use. In the year following the completion of the Academy, its participants implement their action projects, drawing on inspirations from the fellowship program. For a significant number of alumni it has been an important experience which has had an effect on their life choices concerning their studies or career paths. Some of them have even decided to set up their own non-governmental organizations.

Since 2010, we have co-organized annual international Humanity in Action conferences. So far, they have been attended by over 1,000 participants engaged in issues of human rights and civic society. During the conferences in Amsterdam, Berlin, Sarajevo, Warsaw and Sønderborg, we shared the best activist practices from Poland, we conducted self-authored workshops, took part in debates and presented voices from Poland on the impact of the Second World War and the Holocaust on the situation of minorities in contemporary Europe. As part of the international HIA network, we also offer internship opportunities for alumni of our educational programs, including internship places in the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress.

From the very beginning of our activities (i.e., since 2006), the alumni of HIA Poland programs have been actively involved in our Senior Fellows network and its branches in Poland and Ukraine. The aim of the network is to develop leadership and activist skills and to enable its participants to keep in touch with one another.

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## We like to experiment!

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We are trying to find a new approach to existing social challenges, and we strive to make both the content and form of our projects as valuable and inspiring as possible. Between 2010 and 2012, we completed a pilot project “Preempt Prejudice” (*“Uprzedź Uprzedzenia”*). It was the first project of this type that integrated disabled and nondisabled activists and showed them the connection between the law and the stereotypical perception of people with disabilities, as well as its implications for the quality of their lives and social participation. Within the framework of that project, we translated, among other things, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into the language of young people, and we presented the viewpoint of young activists concerning that Convention. For this purpose, we organized a conference at the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights and a happening on the streets of Warsaw.

Our initiatives are also addressed to other minority groups (e.g., ethnic, national, religious and immigrant minorities) — our anti-discrimination projects have led to the creation of: social campaigns, theater performances, films, photo exhibitions, workshops, happenings, location-based and educational games,

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publications for educators, blogs, podcasts, discussion clubs, and manifestoes.

In 2014, we began a series of country-wide educational initiatives for young activists who were mostly involved in looking for creative solutions to the problem of hate speech against different minority groups—especially on the Internet. Our projects include “The Antivirus Program: We Say No to Hate Speech on the Internet” and “Start up! Laboratories of Action and Ideas Against Hate Speech,” with sub-programs and initiatives such as “Incubator of Ideas,” the Congress “Inter@ction Zone” or the competition “Anti-Hate Images and Words.” Within the framework of these interactive initiatives, we work with activists and experts, looking for creative solutions to the problem of hate speech and working out how to deal with already existing manifestations of hate speech. On the web-portal [www.uprzedzuprzedzenia.org](http://www.uprzedzuprzedzenia.org), we share our ideas and best practices. If you are looking for inspiration concerning anti-discrimination and “anti-hate” activities, and/or if you have an idea that you would like to propagate among our network of activists—please visit our portal!

## Together we can stop prejudices before they take root!







**Monika Mazur-Rafal**  
President of the Managing Board,  
Foundation Humanity in Action  
Poland

Work is her passion. She is constantly trying to open new trails. She loves the cross-sectoral and cross-generational

action in favour of human rights and to work with people who “want to want.” A supporter of the combination of education on human rights with historical education—and experience shows that this approach works—she wants to see the theory translated into concrete actions. Since 2005, she has been involved in the development of the international network of Humanity in Action, and she helped to create the Humanity in Action Poland Foundation, which she now heads as its President and Director. She initiates, creates and helps to carry out educational and activist projects as part of the Foundation. She has many years of experience as a trainer, tutor and mentor in Poland and abroad. The possibility of substantive support for the activists in their social actions and motivating them to take on further challenges in favour of social change gives her much satisfaction. She is an author of publications and action strategies relating to the field at the crossroads of human rights and history. A graduate of the Institute of International Relations at the University of Warsaw, with a master’s degree in European integration as part of a joint programme of the Warsaw School of Economics and Sciences Politiques Paris. She was a scholar at the Free University, Berlin, and Humboldt University in Berlin, and had an internship in the Bundestag. An expert to the European Centre for International Relations and a Secretary of the German-Polish Forum, she also created a migration programme at the Centre for International Relations. At the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Office in Warsaw, she has been engaged in a project on the prevention of human trafficking, and as part of the IOM research unit—the Central European Forum for Migration and Population Research—she dealt with the migration policy of Poland and West Germany and Poland’s anti-discrimination policy. In 2005-2007, she studied Polish politics in terms of compliance with EU directives in the field of prevention of discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability, sexual orientation, while at the same time being a national expert of the European network in the field of anti-discrimination, funded by the European Commission.



**Magdalena Szarota**  
Member of the Managing Board,  
Foundation Humanity in Action  
Poland

She likes creating something out of nothing. She is a co-founder and member of the Management Board of

the Association of Disabled Women ONE.pl, the first organization in Poland to deal with the issue of double discrimination on grounds of sex and disability. She was also a co-creator of the first edition of the Ashoka Foundation Academy of Innovators for the Public in Nepal. Interdisciplinary and intercultural activities are her passion, especially when they offer an opportunity to combine activism, art and science. Hence her involvement in Humanity in Action. Since 2006, she has participated in forming this organisation in Poland; currently she serves as a member of the Management Board and Communications Director. She initiates and contributes to educational and activist projects as part of the Foundation. A supporter of the work of activists as part of Humanity in Action, she has many years of experience as a trainer and tutor, in Poland and abroad. An author of various publications on human rights and a certified trainer of Polish Humanitarian Action, a graduate of the Ashoka Foundation Academy of Innovators for the Public and an activist involved with the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. She studied at the Faculty of Philology, Jagiellonian University, the Faculty of Americas and Europe at the University of Warsaw, Intercultural Relations College at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw and at the Academy of Philosophy, Collegium Civitas. She attended courses on photography at the European School of Photography. Currently, she is a PhD student at the Graduate School for Social Research, the Polish Academy of Sciences and at Lancaster University in the UK. Recipient of scholarships from: Yale University, the Kościuszko Foundation, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the University of Warsaw, the American Embassy in Poland and the Ashoka Foundation. She is a winner of the of the Servas International prize for young activists.



The publication entitled “Poland on the Move: Experts and Young Leaders on Multiculturalism, Transformation, and Activism” is not just another typical work concerning various phenomena connected with “multiculturalism” in Poland, its discovery or sentimental returns to it. It is a contemporary, lively and dynamic study, concise in its subject as well as personal, based on the individual experiences of the people involved: the activists of Humanity In Action (17 persons in total). (...) As the editors emphasize, a key task for them (and for everyone involved in activities of the Foundation Humanity in Action Poland) has been to combine in their work knowledge on human rights with a desire to understand the social environment and its history. In their view, young Poles, working within the Foundation’s network (and often belonging to various minorities), have tried in their actions to consciously and critically look at the multicultural Polish tradition. For all of them, modern patriotism meant no disrespect for the past. (...) In conclusion, I believe that the publication is well designed, consistently structured, clearly written and flawlessly edited, and it is really good reading. It may be interesting for a non-Polish reader, because – as the authors, Monika Mazur-Rafał and Magdalena Szarota, write in the introduction – “It is hard to get bored in Poland. When you get to know Poland better, it will surprise you.”

Sławomir Łodziński, PhD hab.,  
Professor of Warsaw University  
Institute of Sociology  
The University of Warsaw