Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses in Poland

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Work Package 1 – Overview of National Discourses on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity

1.1 Country Reports on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses

Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe (ACCEPT PLURALISM)

ACCEPT PLURALISM is a Research Project, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. The project investigates whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. In particular, the project aims to clarify: (a) how is tolerance defined conceptually, (b) how it is codified in norms, institutional arrangements, public policies and social practices, (c) how tolerance can be measured (whose tolerance, who is tolerated, and what if degrees of tolerance vary with reference to different minority groups). The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium conducts original empirical research on key issues in school life and in politics that thematise different understandings and practices of tolerance. Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM generates a State of the Art Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit where qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity, and several academic publications (books, journal articles) on Tolerance, Pluralism and Cultural Diversity in Europe. The ACCEPT PLULARISM consortium is formed by 18 partner institutions covering 15 EU countries. The project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou.

Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań is one of the largest academic centers in Poland. The University employs nearly 3,000 teaching staff and serves 50,000 students in 14 faculties offering BA, MA and PhD programmes. Students can choose from 190 majors. AMU cooperates with over 100 partner universities abroad. Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology is one of the leading anthropological institution in the region that offers specialised courses on identity, ethnicity, migration, multiculturalism and cultural critique.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The present report on diversity explores the selected ethnic and religious minorities in Poland and the attitude of the majority of the Polish society towards still relatively few immigrants. First part focuses on the process of the formation of the Polish national identity and the main cultural diversity challenges in the last two decades, while the second aims at outlining the general attitude of the majority towards the cultural minorities on the two examples of Tatars and Roma; it also examines the common understanding of the concept of tolerance, cultural diversity, and practicing/ implementing the idea of multiculturalism.

Polish understanding of multiculturalism differs significantly from that in other European countries, as it is mainly based on historical memory, referring to the period of Noble's democracy and the political practice of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania in 16th-17th century. Actions supporting cultural diversity in society which is recognized as one of the most ethnically homogeneous in the world, are based mainly on the popularization of folk performances and celebration of the exotic cultural attractions, with virtually no discussion on changes in the ethnic composition of the Polish society (arising with the waves of incoming immigrants, especially from the East) and the marginalization of ethnic/cultural minorities' presence in public space and social awareness. The growing standard of living and Polish membership in the EU makes Poland more attractive for immigrants from the so called Third Countries, which does not affect real situation of immigrants' functioning within the Polish state, even though there are many efforts made by various authorities towards legislative changes in the spirit of the guidelines imposed on Poland by the European Union.

The country, reborn after partitions and WWI, already professed an ethnic concept of nationalism. WWII strengthened the images of unavoidable ethnic conflict and communist Poland was created as a mono-ethnic society. Intricate post-war history was marked by homogenising attempts accepted by the majority of the dominant population. The democratic changes which took place after 1989 made the country tolerant in the form we call 'constitutional nationalism'. It entails the acceptance of other, provided that the titular nation sets the rules of this coexistence. The acceptance of democratic principles demanded by international institution, means that legally all standards of liberal societies are met, but it does not mean that the practice is acceptable.

Political liberalisation has prompted the 'coming out' of minorities. Before the National Census of 2002, experts estimated the total number of indigenous ethnic minorities in Poland between 2 and 4% of the total population. The Census showed that only 471 500 (1.23%) of respondents declared an ethnicity other than Polish. The low numbers are interpreted as a heritage of the reluctance of people to show their ethnic identity in the mono-ethnic state and to reinforce a sense of marginality of all matters relating to the functioning of minorities in society shared by the majority of Poles.

According to the definition introduced in the *Act of 2005*, there are nine national minorities recognised in Poland: Belarussians (48 000), Czechs (386), Lithuanians (5 846), Germans (152 897), Armenians (1 082), Russians (6 103), Slovaks (2 001), Ukrainians (30 957) and Jews (1 133). Polish law also acknowledges four ethnic minorities substantiated historically: Roma (12 855), Tatars (495), Lemkos (5 863) and Karaims (43). A special category of 'regional languages' was added and two such linguistic minorities are recognized, i.e. Kashubians (5 063) and Silesians (173 153). So far, Silesians has not been recognized by the

Polish state as an ethnic minority, while being the biggest subjectively chosen identity (170 000 people).

Estimated number of immigrants in Poland constitutes less than one percent of the total population (app. 380 000 people). The issue of immigrants is relatively new and complex problem in Poland. Since the early nineties of the twentieth century Poland, which has been a traditional 'migrant sending' country for a few generations, became a destination and transit country. The presence of foreigners, majority of whom come from the former Soviet Union, constitutes a new challenge, but also a complex dilemma for Polish policy and Poles' attitudes towards migration. Foreigners mostly choose big cities for their place of residence, especially the capital. Percentage of permanent immigrants is still low, and immigrant's legal status is relatively difficult to achieve. Illegal migrants have problems with their integration in many spheres of life, including the job market, education and health systems.

The report studies Roma and Muslims – two groups that can be described as dramatically different in Polish cultural conditions. The first, perceived as stereotypical social outcasts, has been discriminated for ages, the second has re-appeared in social consciousness under a new guise of an Islamic threat, abstract in the Polish context. These cases vividly illustrate the key features of the discourse on cultural diversity and the practices designed to cope with the diversity that has re-appeared in Poland after fifty years of absence.

Roma are a recognized ethnic minority, which had experienced violent assimilationist activities of the communist state in the post-war period and which remains the most socially marginalized minority group in Poland, despite the attempts aimed at their integration with Polish society, especially when it comes to education of Romani children and fighting negative image of the group. However, conflicts occurring in local communities inhabited by Roma show little effectiveness of integration policies and the attitude (based on perceived cultural strangeness) of Poles towards the Roma constantly remains largely negative.

Another example of diversity challenge is Muslim community in Poland. Muslims face discrimination on the grounds of xenophobia, which may be called 'phantom islamophobia'. This phenomenon derives from the same source in which some Polish contemporary anti-Semitic resentments are rooted. In Poland, both Jews and Muslims/Arabs are very few in number, yet they function as 'imagined communities' that threaten national and religious interests or nation's integrity. Despite very small population (app. 30 000 people), Muslims serve as an example of a group raising high social fear and concern, endowed with a strong negative stereotype comparable to the prejudices against Roma, arising from assumed unbridgeable differences in religion, basic values and lifestyle, perceived also as an insurmountable obstacles on the way to integration. Muslims coming to Poland in the last three decades are contrasted with Tatars – Muslim community living in Polish territory for centuries – a group considered to be familiar because of common cultural practices shared with the Polish majority, an exemplary case that illustrates the way in which acceptance can be gained, i.e. based on partial assimilation and modesty in declarations or practices, as well as "refraining from radical otherness" in the public sphere.

In 1989, the new authorities declared the will to break with the communist assimilationist policy and grant every citizen civic rights secured by international conventions. They also wanted to change Pole's attitudes towards minorities and redefine the state – minority relations, aiming both at their integration and active participation in public life. In everyday practice, though, state legislation is not always efficiently implemented at the local level, and raises conflicts over the allocation of public funds. Official statements clash with popular images and social awareness of minorities' presence and rights.

The discourse on tolerance in a modern sense of the word is relatively recent in Poland. As such, it is absent in mainstream education, and seen as redundant from the point of view of

the majority. One can associate its potential growth of importance for the ordinary people and for policy makers only in relation to the growing immigration and expanding activism of other social minorities, such as sexual minorities or physically challenged people. Cultural/ethnic minority rights in the fields of education and the cultivation of culture do not raise objections. In this respect attitudes are fully tolerant and can probably be connected to the long-lasting 'folklorisation' of diversity, and be partly congruent with multiculturalist ideas. Actual problems appear when state or EU funding for cultural activities come into play and when the issues of bilingualism in regions populated by minorities (e.g. street names), political representation and commemorations of historical events in the public are considered. Poles eagerly accept 'strangeness' and 'otherness', provided that it is practiced in the private sphere or as an exotic custom, i.e. it implies activities that do not interfere with their image of the world and do not jeopardize the idea of a homogenous community and a sense of security based on cultural familiarity.

The level of respect for the rights of minorities is improving, legal standards are increasingly congruent with both the social reality and international instruments for equality and anti-discrimination. Despite these improvements, data on insufficient state action in many areas concerning support granted to culturally distinct groups appear repeatedly, particularly in relation to immigrants. Public opinion polls indicate that the reluctance of Poles towards people of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds residing in Poland is slowly decreasing, which can be treated as one of the premises indicating that the tolerance of cultural diversity in Poland is growing. This is of great importance in the face of the influx of immigrants, from Asia to Eastern Europe, among others.

The contemporary debate on tolerance in Poland refers constantly to the mythical tolerance of the Nobles' Republic, resulting in little social conscience on the real problems of minority groups and in a reluctance to revise traditional views. This situation is reinforced by the relatively low numbers of minority and immigrant populations, together with a still overriding importance of the ethnic and cultural component in the common representation of the nation/community. As the number of culturally distinct citizens within the Polish society increases, it can be expected that changes in attitudes towards every-day contact with different cultural practices will evolve, thus changes in educational programs and public education campaigns are necessary in order to alter the social disposition towards cultural diversity.

Abbreviations:

CBOS – Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej
GUS – Główny Urząd Statystyczny
ECRI – European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance
ERRC – European Roma Rights Centre

1. Introduction

Poland is one of the less diversified societies on the globe. Walter Connor reported that in 1971 that among 138 countries taken into account only 12, i.e. 9.1 per cent could be considered 'national', Poland included (1994: 96). The historical Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania (14th to 18th centuries) was in itself diverse linguistically, ethnically and religiously, and it also welcomed various ethnic and religious minorities. In this respect, it was a very tolerant regime in a sea o mostly intolerant European countries (e.g., already in the 13th century Polish kings allowed Jews, who were expelled from western countries, to settle and practice their faith). One could say that at that time it represented a case of an 'imperial regime of tolerance' (Walzer 1999), in which various self-governed collectives were allowed to observe their religious practices, provided they did not proselytise (similarly to *millets* in the Ottoman Empire). Still, when the republic was reborn after WWI, religious and ethnic minorities comprised almost one third of the population. Only after WWII, due to the Holocaust, border changes, and 'population exchanges' with the defeated Germany and victorious Soviet Union, the country was made practically homogenous ethnically (Poles) and religiously (Roman-Catholics). Actually, having a homogenous population was an official aim of the communist authorities and it was exercised throughout their reign.

The last thirty years may be divided into three periods: the continuation of the systematically liberalized communist rule, democratic change after 1989 till the EU accession in May 2004, and the last five years, as soon after Poland's accession to the EU a new law on national, ethnic and linguistic minorities was accepted and put into practice. Although, the 1952 Communist constitution granted non-discrimination, 'nationalities' (not 'ethnic minorities') were barely mentioned in it (Łodziński 2010: 21). In practice, minorities could barely cultivate their traditions through the channels of state-controlled 'cultural associations'. Ethnic issues perceived as threatening to the state interest were downplayed and hidden from the public. 'Solidarity' was concerned with economic and political problems and the issues of minorities were raised only incidentally. In the process of post-1989 democratic changes minorities were allowed to form associations and express their opinions. Besides the internal will to democratise the political order, integration with the EU and its institutions also pushed policy makers to accept liberal laws concerning religious freedoms as well as ethnic and national minorities.

Polish *multiculturalism* is different from that of multiethnic or immigrant societies, such as Switzerland or the UK. Although lip service is paid to multicultural traditions, it is seen as a historical phenomenon. For instance, 'multicultural' festivals are organised in big cities, small towns and in borderland regions (cf. Bieniecki 2004), but virtually all of them refer to past 'multiethnic' or religiously diversified life. Multiculturalism is also mentioned in the media and some official statements. *Tolerance* is evoked as an old Polish historical tradition. Today, 'tolerance and multiculturalism' serve rather as a myth that legitimises current politics than actual administrative and political practice. But this ethnic homogenisation of the society makes issues of the acceptance of, and tolerance toward 'others' even more urgent, e.g. with respect to how, in such an ethnically uniform society, ethnic and religious minorities perceived as marginal are treated. Simultaneously, the growing standard of living and membership in the EU makes Poland more attractive for immigrants from the so called third countries. This gives an opportunity to observe reactions to these 'growing social problems', as they are often bluntly described, and to interpret them in terms of 'a culture of tolerance'.

This report on the one hand gives basic data about the national, ethnic and religious minorities in Poland in a historical perspective, as well as basic information about increasing migration. On the other hand, it describes some legal regulations regarding ethnic and religious minorities. These rules meet European Union and other international standards, but also bear traces of a local political thought which reflects the state of mind of the political elites, usually legitimized by historical and cultural circumstances.

2. National identity and state formation

The Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania (15th-18th centuries) was a noble's democracy. The nobility (*szlachta*) had many privileges similar to modern democracies. The political system entailed, among others, free election of the king by all nobles wishing to participate; sessions of the parliament, *Sejm*, held at least every other year; *pacta conventa*, agreements bargained with the king-elect; the right of insurrection against a king who violated liberties; *liberum veto*, a right of the local councils' *sejmik*s' representatives to oppose any new law accepted; and *confederation* – the right to organise rebellion through a collective political purpose.

The system granted a federative character of the Commonwealth with a great autonomy of the regions and political rights to *szlachta* that comprised 10% of the population. (In 1831 in France only 1% of the population had voting rights, and in 1867 in the United Kingdom – 3%.) All *szlachta* had equal rights, could not be arrested without court sentence, etc. The Commonwealth was called *paradiso hereticorum*. Already in 1264, the General Charter of Jewish Liberties guaranteed safety, personal liberties, freedom of religion, trade and travel to Jews in Poland, exclusive jurisdiction over Jewish matters to Jewish judges, and it also instituted a special court for settling conflicts between Jews and Christians.

This act encouraged Jews to settle in *Polin*, a historical homeland of three quarters of today's world Jewry. Another act is known as the Warsaw Confederation, in which delegates of various denominations guaranteed tolerance and reciprocal cooperation. It confirmed that people of various ethnic backgrounds (Poles, Lithuanians, Ruthenians, Germans, Tatars, Vlachs, Scots, Dutch, etc.) and ethnic denominations (Roman-Catholic, Jewish, various Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, Greco-Catholic [Uniates] and Muslim) lived together.

This law expressed the noble's will to avoid religious conflicts such as the Thirty Years War in Europe. In result, the country's peaceful religious life was something exceptional. The Commonwealth became a place where even extreme religious groups like the Mennonites, Moravians and Arians found refuge (cf. Davies 1982, I). These historical traditions are evoked in discourses on tolerance today. For some, this supposedly makes Poland a naturally tolerant country.

The nobility described itself as a 'nation' that was 'racially' different from burghers, Jews and peasants (cf. Hertz 1988). Nevertheless, this noble's notion of nation gave rise to its more modern concept. According to Andrzej Walicki (1994), before the three consequent partitions of the country in 1772, 1793 and 1795, the Commonwealth's society was on the way to a civic form of nationalism, similar to the French model. Enlightenment intellectuals explicitly advocated Polish citizenship, regardless of language, religion or class origin. The

'polonisation' of elites was also a spontaneous process that was lasted for centuries. It is best illustrated by the first words of the national Polish epos from the beginning of the 19th century, *Pan Thaddues*, written in Polish by Adam Mickiewicz (himself born to a petite noble family, but whose mother came from a converted Jewish family, in Nowogródek, then Lithuania, now Belarus): "Lithuania, my homeland…"

The interruption of state existence, the rise of ethnic nationalism in (Central) Europe, and the nationalising policies of Prussia and Russia all caused the transformation of Polish nationalism from civic to ethnic In the second part of the 19th century the issue of class composition of a nation understood in terms of ethnicity became urgent, especially that peasants did not always sympathise with the subsequent noble's uprisings. The task of intellectuals was to get the peasantry involved in the national cause (cf. Stauter-Halstead 2001), nation being defined ethnically. This is why the concept of a state of three major autonomous groups (Poles, Ukrainians and Belarussians) advocated by fighter for sovereignty, Marshall Józef Piłsudski, failed and the nationalist idea of Roman Dmowski took an upper hand after WWI.

After regaining independence in 1918 the country was designed as a democratic republic in which all citizens were equal under law, independently of religious, class or ethnic affiliation. The Wilsonian plan of building a nation state securing minority rights was accepted, but not really implemented. In the interwar nationalist milieu, Polish authorities carried out a nationalizing policy. The Nazi Germany invasion on September 1, 1939, motivated by racial-nationalist concepts, exacerbated chauvinistic feelings also in the oppressed populations. Post-WWII communist authorities embraced nationalist ideology and opted for an ethnically homogenous state-model. In the former German territories, which were a partial compensation for the territorial loss to the Soviet Union, Germans were expelled and Poles replaced them. After the Potsdam agreement, 3.2 million Germans were driven out of the new Polish territories (Sakson 2010: 11).

Processes of de-germanisation and re-polonisation were carried out in the second half of the 1940s (Kulczycki 2001; Linek 2001). According to some estimations, ca. 2 million 'autochthons' were 'rehabilitated and 'incarcerated' in Poland (Kamusella 2003: 18). Ukrainian military resistance in south-eastern Poland (1945-47) was suppressed and led to the eviction of ca. 100 000 Ukrainians and Lemkos (an ethnic minority, mostly Orthodox) from regions on the border with Ukraine and Slovakia, and their dispersion across Poland, especially in the former German territories (cf. Hann 1996).

The model of a monolithic ethnic state was supported by Poles who experienced German persecutions and were convinced that ethno-religious uniformity secures peace. In the 1947 referendum (even though carried out in the atmosphere of fear), virtually all political forces, (Kersten 1989: 462) opted for the acquisition of German lands. As Krystyna Kersten summarizes: "War, by sharpening and drawing out national divisions, shaped a specifically Polish national consciousness. In a situation of danger, the nation emerged as a dominant category and major subject of actions... [N]ational divisions and distinctions that partly resulted from self-identification, but mostly imposed from the outside, above all by Germans, instead of disappearing after the war, had been strengthened" (1993: 11).

The consolidation of power by the communists enabled them to launch a formally tolerant policy towards nearly non-existent national minorities; this course of action, despite

fluctuating periods of tightening and loosening of the policy[1], was exercised for the next four decades. Ethnic and religious minorities were recognised and had their cultural associations. However, the state presented itself as an ideological, social and cultural monolith. Individual freedoms were granted in the constitution passed in 1952, but minorities could barely cultivate their traditions through the channels of cultural associations controlled by the state.

State sponsored and organised 'multiculturalism' can be described as 'folklorist'. Any serious ethnic issues, perceived as threatening to the state's interest, e.g. the existence of the German minority and the waves of migration to Western Germany (1945-8, 1956, 1970s, 1980s), were concealed, and problems were only incidentally made known to the public – usually when a group was blamed by propaganda for some wrongdoings.

In this period of 'normalisation' authorities started to 'solve' the Gypsy issue. A paternalistic and assimilationist decree from 1952 as well as an oppressive policy between 1960 and 1964 obliged them to stop nomadism and to have a job (unemployment was not tolerated under communism and the jobless were called "blue birds"). The Roma had to convert from an unproductive 'waste' to a 'productive force' (Mirga 1998: 125-140; Bartosz 1994). This regulation found full support of the population, who considered the Roma people parasites.

In 1968, the communists launched an anti-Semitic campaign. 300 000 Jews had survived the Holocaust, and many of them left Poland later, especially frightened by the pogrom in Kielce in 1946 (Nowak-Małolepsza 2010: 215). Internal Party struggles, anti-Israeli politics of the Soviet Union and students' protests incited the anti-Zionist campaign and the cleansing of Jews from top ranks in the state apparatus and higher education. This operation was based on anti-Semitic sentiments and it received partial support of the population. It drove ca. fifteen thousand Polish Jews and their in-laws out of the country, many of them top intellectuals (cf. Eisler 2006). Today, no more than 10 000 Jews live in Poland.

The 'Solidarity' movement of 1980-81 was concerned above all with the liberalisation of the system and economic issues (the first goal was partly fulfilled by the radio broadcasting of a Catholic Sunday Mass was in fact the only promise in the agreement between the protesting workers and the authorities from August 1980 that the communist kept after crushing the movement till the end of their rule in 1989) and the question of minority rights was not really raised by it (Szczepański 2008). Poland entered the 1990s as a country homogenised ethnically and religiously with minority issues barely existent due to their size and the communists' tactics of sweeping most problems under the carpet and playing the ethnic card only in order to stir hatred that served their own political purposes. Minorities were hardly perceptible in everyday life.

 In the process of democratic change they were allowed to form associations and express their opinions. The 1991 Treaty with Germany gave political rights to Germans who have self-organised in various associations, membership in which had risen to hundreds of thousands (it is estimated between one to three hundred thousand). Moreover, this minority, thanks to a special election law, has since then had representatives in the parliament. Besides, the will to

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[1]   Sławomir Łodziński distinguishes five such periods: 1) verification of nationalities (1945-470; 2) gradual recognition of some minorities (1948-55); 3) emigration of Germans and improvement of relations between the State and minorities (1956-1968); 4) anti-Semitic campaign in 1968 followed by the policy of 'moral-political unity of the Polish nation' (1968-1980); 5) period of intensified minorities' activity initiated by 'Solidarity' and relaxation of the authorities' attitude towards them (2010: 18-20).

democratise the political order after decades of authoritarianism as well as the integration of the country with EU institutions has encouraged the acceptance of liberal laws concerning the freedoms of religious and ethnic minorities.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Church had emerged from the communist era as a chaperon of the nation's interest. Persecuted in the 1950s and 1960s, it assumed the role of the nation's representative before the authorities in the 1970s and 1980s. The Church facilitated the Round Table talks in 1989 which led to the first semi-free elections, which in turn sparked the democratisation of Eastern Europe. Empowered, the episcopate bargained for privileges. Today, for instance, the state supports religious education in public schools for those who wish to attend – in practice, due to social pressure, virtually all. The Church has also become a beneficiary of property restitution which was not granted to most other groups. It also engaged in discussions about the new constitution of the state. The Basic Law accepted in 1997 aptly epitomises the legal order of the state and a nuanced nature of the 'Polish state of the mind' pertinent for tolerance.

The preamble to the Constitution also states the following:

"Having regard for the existence and future of our Homeland,
Which recovered, in 1989, the possibility of a sovereign and democratic determination of its fate,
We, *the Polish Nation – all citizens* of the Republic,
Both those who *believe in God* as the source of truth, justice, good and beauty,
As well as *those not sharing such faith* but respecting those universal values as arising from other sources,
Equal in rights and obligations towards *the common good* – Poland..." (emphases added).

The Constitution is a compromise between the advocates of the ethnic and the civil concepts of the nation (Zubrzycki 2001; Brier 2006). In that sense, we are back at a discussion between the 'French' and 'German' models. The last sentence cited grants the equality of all citizens. However, the Polish nation and believers in god function as a non-marked category in relation to which others, i.e. non-Poles and non-believers, are presented as a supplementary category. After Robert Hayden (2001: 15), and contrary to most Polish scholars (cf. Łodziński 2010: 27), we call this kind of arrangement which introduces inequality between people 'constitutional nationalism'. The titular nation and its collective rights as well as dominant world view holders are given precedence over other citizens. This Herderian heritage is prevalent in the whole region and Poland is not unique in this respect (cf. Buchowski 2008: 32-35). By analogy we can also call this arrangement 'constitutional monotheism' (implicitly: 'Christianity / Catholicism').

The special treatment of Poles living abroad, which is secured by the so-called 'Polish card', similar to the Hungarian one, proves how significant *ius sanguinis* remains. Recently, a public initiative aimed at the facilitation of the 'repatriation' of Poles from the former Soviet Union and signed by 215 thousands persons, was submitted to the parliament[2]. The existing constitutional solution should be seen as an expression of a nationalistically-minded population that had to meet the liberal standards of European democracies.

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[2] http://www.repatriacja.org.pl/

Integration with the EU has intensified two contradictory discourses: 1) Europe as a chance for modernisation and pluralisation of the nation, and 2) European integration as a threat to the national and moral integrity of the nation.

All discussions about tolerance in contemporary Poland seem to revolve around the issue of who is the real *host* and who is the *tolerated minority* or *migrant* in the country of the Polish nation, and the slogan *Poland for Poles,* used by extremist nationalists is not that unpopular.

3. Main cultural diversity challenges in Poland

3.1. Minorities in the post-1989 period

As mentioned above, interwar Poland was a multiethnic state. According to the 1931 census, in a total population of 32.107 million people, 69% were ethnic Poles, 14% were Ukrainians, 9% were Jews, 5% were Belarussians , 2% were Germans , and 1% were other ethnic minorities (Tartars, Karaims, Russians, etc.) (Tomaszewski 1985: 50). The country was also divided religiously: Roman Catholics – 64.8%, Greek-Catholics (Uniates) – 10.5%, Orthodox – 11.8%, Protestants – 2.6%, Jews – 9.8% and others – 0.5%. In result of the processes described above, the public embraced the policy of a national state exercised by the communist authority. In result, in the 2002 census, out of 38 230 88 people, 36 983 720 declared Polish nationality (96.74%).

After 1989, the Polish democratic government recognised the distinct ethnic and cultural groups. The state protects individual citizens independently of their national identification which is a matter of personal choice (Łodziński 2005: 160-168). The current Constitution has several articles which are relevant to ethnic and national minorities: (1) article 13 is a commitment to political pluralism, and forbids parties that endorse race or national hatred; (2) article 32 bans any form of discrimination and declares the equality of any individual before the law; (3) article 35 affirms the right of members of national minorities to preserve and develop their culture, traditions, religion and language, and to found institutions to realise this right; (4) article 53 guarantees the freedom of religion to all and allows religion to be taught in schools provided that the freedom of religion of others is not endangered; (5) article 25 affirms the equality of churches and religious organisations (Fleming 2002: 534-535). However, 'tolerance' as an idea cannot be found in the basic law (Pawełkowski 2009: 199).

Political liberalisation has prompted the 'coming out' of minorities. Before the National Census of 2002, experts estimated the total number of indigenous ethnic minorities in Poland between 800 000 and 1 600 000, i.e. between 2 and 4% of the total population. To the bewilderment of the scholars and minority activists, the Census showed that only 471 500 (1.23%) of respondents declared an ethnicity other than Polish. The low numbers are interpreted as a heritage of the reluctance of people to show their ethnic identity in the mono-ethnic state (cf. Cordell & Dybczyński 2005: 80-82) or as manipulations of interviewers who refused listing nationalities other than Polish (cf. Dolińska 2010: 350-52). Moreover, 774 855 persons (2.03%) did not declare any nationality, and 4 277 are listed under the category of 'Polish-undetermined', *polska-nieustalona* (GUS 2002).

The *Act on Minorities* which was accepted in 2005 makes a distinction between ethnic minorities and national minorities. A *national minority* is a group: a) less numerous than the

rest of the state's inhabitants; b) differentiated by language, culture or tradition and aiming to maintain the differentiation; c) possessing consciousness of historical national community; d) inhabiting Polish territory for at least 100 years; e) identifying with the nation organized in a state. An *ethnic minority* shares with the national minority all of its features, except for the identification with a nation different than Polish and possessing its own state. This division raises disgruntlement and the Polish Tatar Association and Federation of Roma in Poland perceive it as deprivation.

According to this definition, there are nine national minorities recognised in Poland (numbers in brackets show population declared in the 2002 Census): Belarussians (48 000), Czechs (386), Lithuanians (5 846), Germans (152 897), Armenians (1 082), Russians (6 103), Slovaks (2 001), Ukrainians (30 957) and Jews (1 133). Polish law, therefore, acknowledges four ethnic minorities substantiated historically: Roma (12 855), Tatars (495), Lemkos (5 863) and Karaims (43) (GUS 2002). It should be added that according to the law regulating these issues, a special category of 'regional languages' was added and two such linguistic minorities are recognized, i.e. Kashubians (5 063) and Silesians (173 153).

In scholarly works the last two are sometimes treated as 'postulated' or 'claimed' minorities. In the 1990s, a group of activists declared the existence of a 'Silesian nation'. It has not been recognised by Polish authorities and the Polish Supreme court as well as the European Court in Strasbourg denied the group the right to 'existence' , the lack of a national historical tradition being the main objection. One has to admit that it denies the principle of self-identification as a decisive factor in questions of national or ethnic belonging. The public was shocked when, despite official denial, over 170 thousand persons declared that they are Silesians, more than any other minority. It creates a conundrum for scholars on how to explain such phenomenon of a nation without history , and various historically grounded interpretations have been given (cf. Dolińska 2010: 343-44). However, it also creates a schizophrenic situation in which the biggest subjectively chosen national identity is not objectively recognised by the state.

The case of the Silesians serves as an example of an existent, but unrecognised minority. It contrasts with the 'neighbouring' and historically related national minority of Germans, who have always been recognised, even by Communists, and immediately granted some privileges after 1991. No doubt, a powerful state standing behind them helped the latter to get rights . Still, the Movement for Silesia's Autonomy is tolerated, and thanks to electoral success in the local elections this year it joined the ruling coalition in the local parliament. It is deemed by central authorities as a threat for the state integrity[3]

Altogether, people have declared 72 various national or ethnic identities. Besides the ones listed above, let us mention only those comprising more than one thousand members: Vietnamese (1 808), French (1 633), American (1 541), Greek (1404), Italian (1 367), and Bulgarian (1 112) (GUS 2002).

This is 'merely' statistical data from 2002 and since then the situation has changed. The

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[3] Polish President's adviser Tomasz Nałęcz expressed this view in his interview in *Polska The Times* on 9 December 2010 (see; 'Tomasz Nałęcz: Koalicja PO z RAŚ jest niebezpieczna'

http://www.polskatimes.pl/opinie/343551,tomasz-nalecz-koalicja-po-z-ras-jest-niebezpieczna,id,t.html#material_1

difference in status between citizens and 'not-citizens' may be confusing, especially the differentiation between residents and migrants. Some 'historical groups, such as the post-1948 expellees from the domestic-war-torn Greece are not considered a national minority. Armenians are classified as a national minority while they perceive themselves as an ethnic one (Łodziński 2006: 305) The numbers for minorities and minority activists given by some scholars can be two to ten times bigger than those found in the Census.

3.2. Immigrants

Officially there are relatively few migrants coming to Poland each year:

International migration for permanent residence (GUS 2010: 129)*:*

2001-2005………..   39 119
2005………………   9 364
2008………………   15 275
2009………………   17 424

However, both immigration to Poland and the emigration of Poles abroad have become common phenomena. The Central Statistical Office estimates that immigrants in Poland constitute less than one percent of the total population of inhabitants of Poland (i.e. app. 380,000 people). In a country report on Poland in the electronic journal "Focus Migration" one can read the following: "It is extremely difficult to quantify Poland's foreign population as there is hardly any official data concerning the 'stocks', in other words, the total number of foreigners in Poland". One of the few sources is the 2002 census, which estimates the number of foreigners living in Poland at just 49,221 people. This would correspond to just 0.1% of the total population. According to the census, the most widely represented nationalities in 2002 were Ukrainians (9,881; 20%), Russians (4,325; 8.8%), Germans (3,711; 7.5%), Belarusians (2,852; 5.8%), and Vietnamese (2,093; 4.3%). Overall, citizens of southeast European countries and the states of the former Soviet Union (excluding the Baltic countries) accounted for at least 44% of the foreign population in Poland... In general, however, independent experts consider the census numbers, as well as the government population statistics for foreigners, to be too low.

By contrast, the International Migration Report 2006 produced by the UN Population Division estimates the number of foreigners living in Poland to be 703,000 (2005), corresponding to 1.8% of the total population. Despite the low numbers, the issue of immigrants is relatively new and complex problem in Poland. Since the early nineties of the twentieth century Poland which has been a traditional 'migrant sending' country for   few generations, became a destination and transit country. The presence of foreigners, majority of whom come from the former Soviet Union, constitutes a new challenge, but also a complex dilemma for Polish policy and Poles' attitudes towards migration (Alscher 2008: 3-4; cf. Also Fihel 2008: 33-51). This diagnosis, based on various studies on migrants in Poland seems to be adequate and we share it.

In view of the relative homogeneity of the Polish society, new migration poses a challenge. Besides the settling of newcomers from the 'East' and transit migrants (Iglicka 2001), Poland is undergoing an inflow of refugees from Chechnya, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Also, an increasing number of EU citizens are settling in Poland. However, the percentage of

permanent immigrants is still low. Foreigners mostly choose big cities for their place of residence, especially the capital. Illegal migrants have problems with their integration in many spheres of life, including the job market, education and health (cf. Bloch and Goździak 2010).

3.3. Religious minorities

Statistics show that almost 37 million people in Poland have been baptized in the Roman-Catholic Church. Other denominations are small and barely visible in the public space. A Treaty (Concordate) with the Vatican was quickly signed after the fall of communism and the Catholic Church enjoys many privileges. Already in 1989, the parliament "accepted a bill thanks to which the Church was granted back confiscated rural lands" (Buchowski 2009: 71). A reprivatisation bill for individuals has not been passed.

Next to the State, the Catholic Church is the largest property owner in the country, with up to 200 thousand hectares in its hands. Public discourses are permeated with religious authorities' opinions. The presence of crosses in public places like hospitals, schools and Parliament is obviously unquestionable. Abortion law is one of the strictest in Europe. Disputes over moral issues (e.g. in vitro) and the presence of religion in the public sphere have no end. Smaller 'brothers in faith' are treated paternalistically. A conflict between Catholics and Greco-Catholics over the issue of who should own the major basilica, a former cathedral of the Uniates, in Przemyśl, in south-eastern Poland illustrates the case in point. Despite the appeal of Pope John Paul II, it was taken over by the Catholics who changed its style from 'eastern', with a cupola, to 'western-like', with a spiral tower (Hann 1998; 2001; 2006: 184-187). Religious classes in public schools are treated as given, but are secured basically only for Catholic students; alternative classes in ethics, granted by law are taught only in 2.5% of schools. Meanwhile, the society shows many characteristics of western-like secularisation – concubines are common, the proportion of children born out of wedlock is systematically increasing (ca. 15%), and the divorce rate is high (30%) (cf. Buchowski 2010).

3.4. Case studies

In order to show the challenges of multiculturalism in Poland over the past 30 years, we have to choose from several cases that illustrate the point. Anti-Semitism, which is present in Polish folk culture (cf. Cała 2005), in daily life and politics (Krzemiński 1993; 2001) could be the case in point, but today "in Poland, there is no 'Jewish question.' There is a problem of anti-Semitism, the persistence of which bears out accepted wisdom: anti-Semitism is a problem of anti-Semites" (Borodziej 2001: 67).

Ambiguous attitudes towards the German minority have its roots in 19th century nationalism and the politics of Germanisation that took a genocide form during WWII. It was constantly utilised by communist authorities in raising fears and animosities (Madajczyk 1998). Post-1989 politics can also, from time to time, evoke ghosts (Kurcz 1997), as is expressed in the access negotiations with the EU, the possibility of purchasing land in the Polish western territories (cf. Buchowski 2010a: 334). However, these topics are exploited in the literature and are currently not hotly discussed public issues. We have decided to study two groups – the Roma and Muslims. The first has been perceived as stereotypical social outcasts and discriminated for ages; the second has re-appeared in social consciousness under a new guise of an Islamic threat, which is abstract in the Polish context. We think that these cases will

allow us to identify the key features of the discourse on cultural diversity and the practices designed to cope with the diversity that has re-appeared in Poland after fifty years of absence.

Selecting these groups was, on the one hand motivated by their dissimilarity, which might be perceived as more radical than in the case of less culturally and/or religiously detached groups. Also, Poles show strong attitudes towards these groups. In the research on social distance and hostility of Poles towards foreign ethnic groups, Roma and Muslims[4] are disliked most (CBOS 2007: 2-3; Nowicka 1997: 60-63). In a number of polls carried out in the last fifteen years, Roma, and since 2001 Arabs, have been the least accepted minorities. More than fifty per-cent of the people asked dislike them.

Recently, reluctance towards Roma has decreased to 15% – a significant change from the three quarters in the mid-1990s. Aversion to Arabs is unchangeably high, and increases in the periods of media debates on terrorist attacks (CBOS 2007: 5; CBOS 2010: 4).

3.4.1. Roma in Poland

The estimates provided in 2002 by the local authorities, based on information submitted by local government units, imply that there are 20 000 Roma in Poland[5]. Roma NGOs give numbers ranging between 20 and 30 thousand. Roma are divided along caste-like lines as well as territorial lines, which today can be related to the competition in running projects realised by Roma activists. They are also divided according to socio-economic distinctions, e.g. between town and countryside dwellers and ones related to tribe/caste/class (cf. Mirga 1998: 116-117).

In the 2005 Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language, Roma are recognized as an ethnic minority, as they have resided in Poland for more than a century (Talewicz-Kwiatkowska 2010: 114). They are a heterogeneous and internally divided minority, which impedes attempts at establishing a strategy for life improvement and cooperation in this community.

3.4.1.1. Changes in the course of history

Roma started arriving on Polish lands in the 14th century; by the 16th century, concerns with their isolation, nomadic life and economic activity began to grow and the first legislations restricting their freedom of movement[6] and expelling them had been issued. The policy of 'oppressive tolerance' lasted for centuries. During WWII, Roma became victims of drastic Nazi exterminations, being placed in ghettos and sent to concentration camps. For instance, there existed a special *Zigeunerlager* in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Altogether, about 500 000 Roma lost their lives in *Porrajmos*, the Roma Holocaust in Europe. Its memory has not been cultivated for decades, and only in recent years, the Romani elites have started to try to restore it and use it in building a common identity.

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[4] Tatars (see below) are treated as a colourful ethnographic group and not taken into account in studies on acceptance of diversity.

[5] Ministry's of Internal Affairs and Administration: http://www.mswia.gov.pl/portal/pl/185/2982/Tresc_Programu.html (viewed on 30.09.2010)

[6] First Polish edict of this nature was passed in 1558 (Talewicz-Kwiatkowska 2010: 116).

After WWII, Roma's status was extremely low. The majority were illiterate, and they did not receive state benefits and allowances. They were forcefully assimilated (see above). A State Council resolution from 1960 forced nomadic groups (and in the 1950s still half of Roma led a nomadic life) to settle and work in the industry or agriculture. The lack of understanding of cultural otherness by the patronising authorities motivated by assimilationist ideology, permeated by ingrained prejudices against Gypsies, was striking (Puckett 2005: 622). Multiculturalism and tolerance were alien to communists. This resulted in multiple repressions and police surveillance, as well as the exacerbation of social stereotypes concerning Roma (Mirga 1998). Simultaneously, forced settlement resulted in a gradual shift from traditional activities, which was not accompanied by replacing them with new forms of earning the living. This contributed to a significant deterioration in the economic situation of the Roma community, which in many cases remains unchanged until today (Talewicz-Kwiatkowska 2010: 118).

Since 1989, improvements in the social status of Roma have been more a result of international pressure having its origin in the need for alignment with European standards, than the efforts of successive Polish governments (Puckett 2005: 625). It began changing at the end of the 1990s, when a growing number of violent incidents against Roma together with the high costs of post-socialist transition led the Romani people to establish their own representation. This enabled the formation of non-governmental organizations which struggle for the preservation of Roma cultural identity and the use of governmental funding, and participation in European and state programs supporting the minority.

One of the reasons for the 'othering' of Roma in Poland is their racial (darker skin) and cultural difference. They form a basis for creating stereotypes about 'Gypsies': laziness, isolationism, unpleasant smell, untidiness, disorder, demanding attitude, hooliganism, etc. (Nowicka 1997: 207-212). These images are combined with differences in customs and group endogamy, both in terms of kinship and socialising. Together these perceptions ensue in the lack of acceptance (Nowicka 1999a: 9). Difficulties in cooperation between Roma and the authorities are based on a poor understanding of group specificity and cultural distinctiveness (language taboo, compliance with group rules, and absolute loyalty to of the family) on the one hand, and the reluctance of the Roma to meet requirements of the dominant society, on the other.

One of the reasons for the persisting low socio-economic status and the social exclusion of Roma in Poland is the lack of cooperation between the *Bergitka* Roma and the *Polish* Roma. The main issue in this inner-group conflict relates to the alleged lack of ritual purity of the *Bergitka* Roma. Relatively long-lasting settlement in the Carpathian region made this group relatively more assimilated to the surrounding communities. Still, even there, the divisions are still striking (Nowicka1997). Pilot programs of school education for children and transformed strategies of social work were addressed solely to Roma in this region and due to a lack of communication, hardly transposed to other groups.

3.4.1.2 Education of Romani children – a means of overcoming isolation?

The situation of Roma in the era of political and economic transformation in the early 1990's made it clear to leaders that education is a prerequisite for full participation in the socio-

economic world. The slowly developing Roma elites realised that poor education is the major reason for the low status of Roma. In the mid-1990's efforts were made[7] to eliminate illiteracy among Roma and to create opportunities for the younger generations. However, the cultural specificity of Roma was not properly diagnosed, which resulted in inefficiencies in the educational programs[8] introduced.

In addition to internal divisions of Roma in Poland based on ideological grounds, a key factor in disabling the social functioning of this group is the related low percentage of educated people, which obviously reduces Roma participation in society, especially in view of the fact that modern economy requires skilled professionals (Majewicz 1999: 128).

According to some estimations (the 2002 Census did not provide adequate data on Roma; experts hope that the National Census of 2011 will provide more reliable data), only 70% of Roma children participate in formal education[9], and there is widespread illiteracy among the elders. In some local communities hardly any children attend schools regularly, because they are engaged in their families' economic activities, including periods of travelling, which means school absence. The fact is that 'truancy from school by Gypsy children, which was an ongoing problem for decades, was not only tolerated but often encouraged, and was eventually accepted by the authorities: the resistance to attendance was on the part of both children and their parents' (*ibidem*).

Another issue connected to educational problems is the practice of the ritual of kidnapping girls between 13 and 16 years of age for marital purposes, which is one of the reasons why Roma send girls to school unwillingly. Also, disrespect to *Romanipen* rules (e.g. restrictions concerning the dress code) shown by teachers and headmasters, present an obstacle in overcoming difficulties in Roma education (see: GW 2010/ 210). Negative attitudes of other children towards Roma pupils are also of great significance[10].

The above problems are secondary in relation to the main obstacle, i.e. cultural rules underlying the use of non-Roma language. This calls into question the effectiveness of education regarding the Roma in general, since there are at least two reasons for Roma to reject the educational offer: (1) Polish is a foreign language to most of Romani children which causes learning difficulties at the very beginning of school, and[11] (2) integrational classes are unattractive or even deterrent to some Roma parents because of the high expectations with respect to the integration of children coming from various cultural backgrounds. Thus, the solution would be to create a motivational program for the Roma communities, which would

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[7] Catholic priest Stanisław Opocki introduced classes for Roma children in Nowy Sącz region in 1993 (Majewicz 1999: 128).

[8] See Ministry's of Internal Affairs and Administration report on Pilot Programme:
http://www.mswia.gov.pl/portal/pl/185/2982/Tresc_Programu.html

[9] Ministry's of Internal Affairs and Administration data downloaded at:
http://www.mswia.gov.pl/portal/pl/185/2982/Tresc_Programu.html

[10] According to the CBOS survey of 2002, 30% of school children asked whom do not they wish to share the bench with responded that a Romani child would be least welcome. Only homosexuals and mentally ill were perceived as less desirable (Talewicz-Kwiatkowska 2010: 124).

[11] Teaching Roma in Romani language is a recommendation for the Polish Government made by the EU, but there have been no claims from the community in question (ECRI 2010: 19; see also:
http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,5912003,Szkola_bez_segregacji__szkola_bez_Romow_.html)

raise awareness in the field of the educational needs of children[12], which permanently alter the deep resentment to social inclusion (Różycka 2009: 29). So far, government agents responsible for the preparation of educational programs for Roma are unable to cope with this task[13].

Despite difficulties, some affirmative changes ought to be mentioned. One of them is the introduction of Roma education assistants into schools, together with hiring assistant teachers who should help parents, children and teachers to coordinate education in the community. The educational assistant comes from the Roma community, knows the local dialect and has at least primary education. S/he is usually a member of the local community and, thus, has a good knowledge of the families' situation. Practice shows, however, that this initiative raises a lot of accusations and grievances on both sides. In one of the provinces in Silesia, all 16 permanent posts created for Roma education assistants in schools stirred up conflicts between schools' authorities and the Roma leaders who questioned the merits of such decisions. Roma communities prefer receiving increased allowances from the state over the long-term benefits of education. On the other hand, Polish teachers protested against favouring minority members[14] over ethnic Poles (education assistants receive a salary similar to that of Polish teachers who need to have a higher education and constantly improve their qualifications).

Pro-Roma activists also speak about the reluctance of local governments to make the required effort to diagnose the situation of Polish-Romani conflicts in the area and to seek effective solutions (Różycka 2009: 27).

The situation in Romani education in Poland outlined above results in constant EU recommendations, published repeatedly since the end of 1990's. Their main points focus on: 1) the abolition of separate Roma classes in schools[15]; 2) making efforts to persuade Roma parents about the advantages of education for their children; 3) preparing the possibilities of pre-schooling for Roma children in order to overcome the difficulties related to the lack of the knowledge of the Polish language[16] (ECRI 2010: 18-20). Although some improvements have been made, there is still an unsatisfactory level of Roma children's engagement in school education and the state's attention to ensuring basic minority rights.

In addition to educational issues which require a strong reaction of the state in dialogue with the Roma community, there is the problem of Roma unemployment, and, in fact, an increasingly widening gap between the demands of the labour market and the opportunities for Roma to actively participate in it. Data from Romani NGOs indicate that they are unable to keep jobs for extended periods of time and face discrimination based on their ethnic distinctions from both employers and co-workers. These two issues are strongly co-related

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[12] Polish law provides means against parents who discourage their children's education, but it is usually not enforced by authorities in the case of Roma (ECRI 2010: 19).

[13] Which is a part of a wider problem of poor cooperation between policy makers and researchers specialising in studying minorities in Poland.

[14] This argument about favouring Roma to Poles appears in situations of conflict between the Poles and Roma due to the belief about the great riches of the Roma gained illegally channels.

[15] Ministry's of Education data indicate that in the face of creating integration classes for Roma children, over 50% of the pupils did not show up at school. The Ministry has not prepared any strategies addressed to the parents because they cannot find professionals able to advise them (http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,5912003,Szkola_bez_segregacji__szkola_bez_Romow_.html).

[16] Which seems very unrealistic in the face of shortage of places in pre-school facilities in Poland.

and must be addressed simultaneously if any improvement in Roma's situation is to be made (Puckett 2005: 628).

3.4.1.3. Violent incidents

In the early 1990s, Roma were often the target of attacks carried out by racist groups (individuals or groups of individuals and households were raided by young sympathisers of neo-Nazism). In addition, a recurrent problem was the slowness of the police and the courts in solving matters of this type of violence and the denial of justice for Romani victims of crimes motivated racially, as well as cases of police abuse (ERRC 2002: 6-8). Including numerous cases of discrimination related to access to housing, medical care and social welfare, the situation of Roma in Poland has raised many concerns,[17] as Roma started receiving greater attention because of 'the notion that the treatment of minorities is an extremely important indicator of democracy' (Puckett 2005: 622).

Minor attacks occur spontaneously, bigger *pogroms* are usually sparked by some acts of Roma which are perceived as unacceptable. Such a situation occurred in Mława in 1991, when 200 people had been attacking Roma buildings for two days, inflicting destruction in their possessions, and destroying twenty houses. Authorities introduced a curfew. Most Roma managed to escape the city before the riots erupted (ERRC 2002: 1931-1932; Majewicz 1999: 132). Fortunately there were no fatalities. *Ex post facto* analysis has shown the importance of both ethnic and non-ethnic factors in this event (Giza-Poleszczuk and Poleszczuk 2001: 234-44). The court classified the perpetrators' acts as crimes committed on ethnic grounds. Similar incidents, although of a smaller scale, occur from time to time in some Romani settlements.

The most recent event occurred in Limanowa in July 2010. A mob of over a hundred people armed with stones and bottles of petrol attacked a Roma family living in a block of flats, shouting 'let us finish with Roma'. Authorities responded by calling special police units from Cracow; after a few hours, the crowd scattered causing no damage[18]. The issue was addressed by the ombudsman and local mediators brokered the talks between the parties.

Instances of violence against members of Romani communities, anti-Roma graffiti, and newspaper articles, all confirm the presence of a negative stereotype of Roma in Poland. Despite educational and developmental programs and a growing scholarly interest in Roma, they remain the group with the lowest status among the cultural and ethnic minorities in Poland.

3.4.2 Polish Muslims and Muslims in Poland

In a Catholic and homogeneous country like Poland, significant cultural distinction comparable to the one represented by Roma, which might be classified as 'racial-cum-cultural', is relatively rare. Muslims who live in Poland, and whose distinctiveness is based, first of all, on religious difference, comprise another group. The followers of Islam in Poland may be divided into three, not entirely congruent groups:

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[17] The UN International Committee in the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (1997) and US State Department (2000) are two examples (Puckett 2005: 622).

[18] http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,8176184,Pozwolcie_nam_skonczyc_z_Romami.html

(1) Tatar Poles who have been living in Poland for several centuries; (2) immigrants from Arab countries who came to Poland in the 1970's mainly as students – they often contracted mixed marriages with Poles and have permanent residence permissions; and (3) new Muslim immigrants, such as (a) refugees from Bosnia (Marciniak 2004), (b) political asylum seekers from Chechnya and some other Muslim countries like Pakistan or Afghanistan. In our analysis, we have divided them simply into 'historical' Muslim community and 'newcomers.'

Polish Tatars are Muslims, but are at the same time treated as a familiar component of the Polish cultural landscape and, in some ways, a legacy of Poland's multicultural past. New Muslim immigrants have started coming to Poland in the 1970's – they are relatively few, although more numerous than Tartars. This group is constantly growing, especially because of incoming students and professionals from Arab countries. The number of all Muslims living in Poland does not exceed 30 000 people (Włoch 2009: 60).

The situation of these two groups is totally different and the analysis of their status and perception serves as an indicator of accepted patterns for assimilation and forbearance towards strangers and otherness in Polish society. It should enable us to assess the potential of tolerance for immigrants coming to Poland.

3.4.2.1 Tatars

Tatars are part of a Turkic ethnic group numbering 10 million in the late 20th century, most of whom live in Russia (app. 5 500 000 people). Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan – each have Tatar populations greater than 30 000.

Polish Tatars, called the *Lipka* Tatars (the Turkish name of Lithuania, which they originally inhabited), are descendants of Muslim settlers in the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania[19] from the 14th century. From the battle of Grunwald onwards, the Tatar light cavalry regiments took part in military campaigns of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania and benefited from their military service by receiving titles and land. Their rights to personal and religious freedom had practically never been questioned. Many integrated into Polish gentry or local communities in the north-eastern part of the Commonwealth by intergroup marriages. Tatars assimilated as they gradually lost their language and began to use Polish and Belarusian instead. They accepted local habits and cultural features of the surrounding Christian and Slavic population. Polygamy became a virtually banned practice, vodka, which is prohibited by the Koran has become an acceptable product; and religious manuscripts started to be written in a mixed idiom of Polish, Belarusian and Russian.

Religion was an integral part of their identity and many clung to it invariantly. Over time, modified Islam was preserved as the only real distinctive factor of Tatars and the core of their ethnic and/or cultural identity. At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, anti-Islamic expressions were virtually non-existent in Poland (Włoch 2009: 59) and Tatars had generally not experienced major forms of discrimination because of their religious difference (Warmińska 1997: 233). Their presence has been accepted for the last six centuries.

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[19] This area comprises present day Lithuania, Belarus and Poland.

The name 'Polish Tatars' was popularised in the interwar period, when the resurrected Polish state was redefining the inter-ethnic relations within the new boundaries. Before 1914, Tatars lived mainly in the Lithuanian part of the Commonwealth and were called 'Lithuanian Tatars'. After WWI, forced migrations affected also the Tatars and they crystallised their ethnic identity under the auspices of the Polish State. The new name was accepted as synonymous with the ethnic group. The community strengthened internal ties and its visibility in the new context. The Muslim Religious Association (founded in 1925) and the Association of Cultural and Educational Tatars of Poland were established with the aim to consolidate Islam believers.

In the interwar period, Tatar culture was thriving, they had a right to pastoral care in the army, religious education was developed, they were fully recognised by the authorities and perceived as faithful and devoted members of the new Republic. Tatars even redirected money collected by the community for the initial purpose of building a mosque in Warsaw to the National Defence Fund before WWII (Włoch 2009: 59).

WWII profoundly changed their situation. Numerous settlements and mosques are now located beyond the eastern Polish border. In 1945, returnee-Tatars settled in the newly acquired Polish western territories. It led to several local conflicts over their religious (and ethnic) distinction. The socialist nation's ideology excluded difference. In result, part of the community returned to its places of origin in the 1960's. Many moved closer to the old Tatar settlements near Białystok, in the north-east of Poland, i.e. the Podlasie region, where they live to this day.

Cultural and religious life did not flourish as vigorously as before WWI. Tatar intellectuals were killed or they migrated to the West. Contact with the outside Muslim world was almost impossible. Assimilation, which lasted for ages, made the community almost invisible. Today, Tatars live mostly in big cities, and they have merged with the Polish society. They continue contracting marriages with Christians, and some have stopped practicing Islam (Warmińska 1997: 234).

3.4.2.2 Current status

Between the 14th and 18th centuries there were app. 4 000 Tatars living in the Commonwealth. In the interwar period 5 500 Tatars inhabited the new Republic. After WWII, the estimated Tatar population oscillated around 3 000 people. Thus, they constitute a very small proportion of a country with more than 38 million citizens.

Tatars participate in Polish culture, but at the same time reproduce their ethnic distinctiveness on the basis of religion. As mentioned, they are recognised as an ethnic minority. Polish Tatars speak Polish, have a deep sense of belonging to their Polish homeland, and do not identify themselves with any other country. This differentiates them from some other minorities in Poland, which often identify themselves with neighbouring or distant states, which is interpreted by some Poles as an anti-Polish attitude (Warmińska 1997: 243). One can say that the Tatar identity in Poland is engendered by their religious identity, a mythical attachment to the historical community of origin and multiple elements shared with Polish culture. Despite apparent contradictions between Islam and the image of Polish culture, as impregnated by Catholic Christianity, the identity of the Polish Tatars combines these two threads (Warmińska 1997: 244).

One can also read that due to the lack of their own theological schools, ignorance of the Arabic language, and location far from the centres of Muslim culture and liturgical life, Polish Tatars have merely superficial knowledge of Islam, which contains many elements which are foreign to them. However, as some scholars claim, this may give a local character to their beliefs, but does not contradict the main tenets of Islam (Droździkowska 2006: 97).

After 1989, in the upsurge of ethnic movements and the re-emerging of minority communities of all kinds, Tatars began efforts to rebuild and revive their ethnic identity. The revival resulted in the creation of periodic cultural and educational events (festivals, workshops and summer schools)[20], the establishment of Tatar press and other media that are meant to reinforce awareness of Tatar presence in the Polish cultural landscape, the dissemination of knowledge about the community's distinctiveness, and help in rebuilding inter-group identity, which was partly lost in the course of history (Warmińska 2009: 37).

In the National Census of 2002, less than five hundred people declared Tatar nationality, six times less than it is estimated. It indirectly shows that Tatars, a totem of the exotic past and the *mythical* Polish tolerance of diversity, proved to be almost completely assimilated (Warmińska 209: 36). This is probably why they are so easily accepted as 'us', or, as Gerd Bauman would claim, 'encompassed' as a part of 'us' (2006: 25-27). They serve as a proof of the centuries-old Polish tolerance and as an evidence, used by politicians, that in the last decades the country has not had problems with ethnic, cultural and religious diversity – provided that the others 'behave' and are peaceful and tamed.

3.4.2.2 Non-Tatar Muslims

Apart from Tatars, the population of Polish Muslims comprises people of Arab extraction who arrived in Poland in the 1970's and 1980's as students, and later as professionals, such as businessmen, engineers or diplomats, as well as refugees and asylum seekers from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Recently, more Muslims have arrived in Poland, some of them entrepreneurs or well-paid employees. Nonetheless, these new Muslims do not comprise a significant minority. As the estimates show, their population may reach 30 000 people, which is 0.1% of the Polish society.

The arriving Muslims do not have easy relations with the Tatars. They blame the Tatars for polluting Islam with alien elements and deny their tradition. Competition can be observed as young new Muslims established the Muslim League in Poland, the Association of Muslim Students, and Muslim Brothers Association, all of which are composed of young devotees of Islam, including a small group of converts from Catholicism (Włoch 2009: 60). Educated Muslims disapprove of the folklore present in Tatar tradition and claim that 'Tatars often have little in common with more recent groups of Islam such as Arabs or converts, who are sometimes particularly radical' (Włoch 2009: 62). Inner boundaries among Muslim groups are becoming visible.

Recently, Chechens have become one of the most important Muslim groups in Poland. Many from the about 5 000 refugees who came to Poland after the first war in Chechnya have lived

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[20] Polish policy towards minorities still has a tendency to folklorise cultural and ethnic difference (Warmińska 2009: 37).

for a long time in twenty refugee camps, comprising a majority of refugee status applicants nationwide. However, the status is granted unwillingly, (which raises the applicants' protests[21]), even though most of them treat Poland as a transit country to the old EU states (Włoch 2009: 61).

Supervised by the Office of Refugees and living in camps, the Chechens appear in public discourse only during protests against Polish procedures and the poor quality of aid for refugees. They tend to be absent in debates about diversity, especially those concerning Muslims' presence in the society. The attitude towards them is ambiguous. One the one hand, they are perceived as victims of Russian oppression, and on the other, as radical Muslims that might cause problems. However, when the case of a woman, who in her attempt to cross the Polish border in the Carpathian mountains lost her three children and saved only one son, was made public, Poles reacted immediately and showed her sympathy and gave her help . She was even offered permanent housing by an individual family

All in all, Muslims are not an object of any particular attention of the public, authorities or the media, with some rare exceptions (see below). One can call the attitude towards them an 'indifferent tolerance.' Their religious associations are recognized by the state[22], and other Muslim organisations function as other NGOs. Muslim schools are non-existent, but educational authorities permit the use classrooms in public schools during the weekend for religious education. So far, there have been no conflicts related to the dress of Muslim women in schools or in any other context (Włoch 2009: 60).

3.4.2.2.1 Warsaw mosque[23]

Today there are five Muslim mosques in Poland. Two of them, situated in Kruszyniany and Bohoniki, are small wooden buildings of historic value, built between the 17th and 18th centuries in north-eastern Poland for Tatars inhabiting nearby villages. They do not raise any controversy and have become tourist attractions on the Tatar Trail[24] in the Podlasie region. There is also a brick mosque in Gdańsk, built in 1989, and a meeting place and prayer room in Poznań, which since 2006 also houses the Association of Muslim Students.

The fifth object is the meeting place of the Warsaw Muslims, located – as is the case of Poznań – in a private villa, adapted for this purpose in 1993. However, it is too small for the growing Warsaw community, which is now larger than 10 000 persons . The election of a new mufti, Tomasz Miśkiewicz, educated in Saudi Arabia, lent a new impetus to the issue of the construction of a mosque in Warsaw. The Muslim Religious Association is negotiating the return of a parcel confiscated by the communist government[25], where they want to build a

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[21] The latest protest was organized by a group of 200 Chechen and Georgian refugees who were trying to get to Strasburg to file a complaint against Polish authorities because of the negligence in the process of refugee status application, see:
http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1342,title,Uchodzcy-opuscili-juz-pociag-zatrzymany-w-Zgorzelcu,wid,11780551,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=1af02

[22] Poland was the second country in Europe to officially recognise Islam when it approved Muslim Religious association in 1936 (Włoch 2009: 60).

[23] Due to the recent nature of the issues raised and , this part will be based mainly on media reports.

[24] http://www.mzr.pl/pl/info.php?id=3

[25] In 1934, in recognition of their services during WWI, Muslims received from the government a square in the centre of Warsaw) where they planned to build a mosque accommodating 400 believers, and a new religious and cultural centre for all Polish Muslims. Organisers failed to collect enough money, mainly because Muslim

larger mosque. The Warsaw municipal architect objected the mosque's project, proposing a building that would commemorate the long tradition of Muslim, i.e. Tatar presence in Poland. Since then, no progress has been made in this respect (Włoch 2009: 60).

In 2001, the Muslim League in Poland, led by Samira Ismail, was formed; it also attracts mostly immigrants from Arab countries (Stefaniuk 2010: 180). One of the organisation's main aims is to build a Muslim Community Centre in Warsaw. It will comprise a mosque, library and meeting space. The centre will serve not only religious, but also educational purposes, as well the purpose of popularising Islamic culture among Poles. Moreover, it will be used by Muslim charities, women and children, and other Muslim groups. It will also serve as a place for holding exhibitions Contacts with the media should help build bridges between the Arab-Muslims and Poles. Now, the construction is underway and it is expected to be completed in late autumn of 2010. The project is feasible thanks to the financial support from a Saudi sponsor. It became known because of the protests accompanying its completion.

The protest against the building of the mosque was organised by the Association of the Future of Europe. In March 2010, a demonstration was held at the mosque building site. Protesters claimed that the Muslim League in Poland represents a radical wing of Islam. Referring to the fact that the Saudi Arabian project sponsor is a follower of Wahhabi Islam (in Poland Sunni Islam is dominant), the association fears it may create a centre of radicalism and terrorism. The protest[26], attended by less than fifty people, was accompanied by a counter manifestation of an association protesting against intolerance towards religious, ethnic and cultural diversity.

In the spirit of constitutional provisions[27], the Common Council of Catholics and Muslims supports the mosque initiative in Warsaw. Since the protest, press comments and opinions of both the opponents and supporters of the mosque in Warsaw, the brunt of public discussion moved to the Internet. A website 'Mosque-ochota.pl'[28], where citizens express their opinions, has been established by a right-wing Warsaw councillor. What dominates in the comments, are concerns about the presence of followers of radical Islam in Poland, associated primarily with the terrorist attacks, and indiscriminate, superficial opinions on the values promoted by Islam .

3.4.2.2.2 **Poznań minaret**

A similar reaction, illustrating the attitude of Poles towards the symbolic aspects of the Muslim presence in Poland, was sparked by the project of Joanna Rajkowska[29]. She proposed an artistic installation that would make an old chimney in the city centre look like a Muslim minaret. The project was meant to raise discussion about Polish attitudes towards cultural distinction and was to be part of the Malta Theatre Festival, a huge annual cultural event that alludes to multiculturalism[30]. The project sparked a heated discussion that resulted in rejecting the idea by the city authorities. The Association of Polish Architects in Poznań did not

(Contd.) ————————

population in Poland was mostly poor at that time, and the initiative was interrupted by the WWII (*Polityka* 2010: 82).

[26] http://warszawa.gazeta.pl/warszawa/1,34882,7708462,Protestowali_przeciw_budowie_meczetu_na_Ochocie.html

[27] See: http://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/polski/2.htm

[28] http://meczet-ochota.pl/

[29] http://www.rajkowska.com/pl/minaret.php

[30] http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,8098807,Wychowanie_do_minaretu.html

recommend the proposal[31] on the grounds that it would constitute a culturally alien object. Although approved by Muslims as a symbolic item, the Association claimed that it would offend Muslims as it would be improperly located between the Jewish synagogue (which has been used as a swimming pool since WWII!) and a church building.

Internet forums were filled with disputes[32] and protest letters were sent to local authorities. Rajkowska was accused of promoting Islam, religious provocation and wasting public funds. The arguments concerning the spreading of the idea of radical Islam that pose a threat to the interest and values of the Polish, inherently Christian society, were as common as in the discussion about the construction of the mosque in Warsaw. Instead of a minaret, the city council has committed itself to supporting an educational project (lead by an anthropologist from Warsaw)[33] for high school students in Poznań, with classes on cultural differences and relativism, perhaps with special attention paid to Muslims.

3.5.2.3 Islamophobia without Muslims

The arrival of Muslims from Arab countries raised concerns about 'our Muslims'', i.e. Polish Tatars that are in danger of being influenced by radical Islamists or, at best, will deviate from their traditions facilitating coexistence with Poles. These comments indicate a generalised reluctance of most Poles to aliens and to 'incomprehensible' cultural practices, which are, in fact, known only through stereotypical images co-created by the sensation-greedy media. No special desire to learn more about 'otherness' and no sincere need for dialogue with 'the Others' can be observed. Beyond academic circles, debates about multiculturalism are practically absent. However, increasing migration and claims of Muslims in the country, together with foreign news about the 'war on terror', the involvement of Polish troops in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as cultural conflicts in Europe (e.g. over dress codes and minarets), cause this issue to be occasionally discussed – see both the Warsaw and Poznań cases (Weinar 2008: 14).

A comparison of the situation of the different groups of Muslims living in Poland and of the different attitudes towards them shows that the Polish discourse on diversity and tolerance focuses on racial and cultural differences, and, in this particular context, on religious matters only as a secondary issue . The example of the Tatars shows that their confession does not make them 'alien' and they are fully accepted, even boasted[34]. The negative attitude towards Muslims, mostly Arabs, of those questioned in opinion polls, (CBOS, 2010: 4), ensues from cultural and racial difference. Cultural distance is strengthened by western-centric islamophobia incited by the events of September 11.

Polish Muslims do not engage in spectacular political activities and avoid comments on current political events. Their distinction is above all demonstrated on religious grounds. Only exceptionally do Muslim leaders make statements addressing heated issues, such as terrorist

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[31] http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,6772198,Awantura_o_minaret_w_Poznaniu.html

[32] http://www.europa21.pl/wiadomosc/11862-Apel_Przeciw_minaretowi_w_Poznaniu

[33] It is planned to be implemented in September 2011.

[34] During celebrations of the year of immigration and multiculturalism, Polish authorities proposed to show miniscule Polish Tartar communities living on the border with Belarus as an example of harmonious cohabitation (Weinar 2008: 14).

attacks or the kidnapping of Polish citizens in the Middle East. Despite this low key presence, they have faced xenophobic reactions. In these apex moments, Poles seem to implicitly share Huntington's media-propagated thesis on the clash of civilizations and they present Islam as a religion of terrorists[35] (Stefaniuk 2010: 183-185).

Muslims face discrimination on the grounds of xenophobia, which may be called 'phantom Islamophobia' (Włoch 2009: 65) - a negative attitude towards the community, which, unlike in Western Europe, is not based on conflicts resulting from eye-striking and 'unacceptable' dissimilarities in cultural practices. This Islamophobia probably derives from the same source in which anti-Semitism is rooted . In Poland, both Jews and Muslims/Arabs barely exist and function as 'imagined communities' that threaten national and religious interests (Zgliszczyński 2008: 7; Robotycki 2010: 103).

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[35] 'Islamic terrorism' was directly addressed by Polish security agents only in 2004, when Yemeni imam was expelled on the grounds of his alleged contacts with terrorists. (see: http://poland.indymedia.org/pl/2004/06/7065.shtml)

4. Definitions of tolerance/acceptance in Poland

First, the basic assumptions of discourse on tolerance should be explained, especially that it tends to be departed from cultural reality and everyday practice.

There is a deep-rooted conviction of the Polish public, instilled in peoples' minds already in elementary schools, and partly shared by academic experts, that the Nobles Republic, up until the partitions took place, was a multicultural, tolerant country, allowing for a peaceful coexistence of many diverse cultural groups (see part 3). This argument justifies the claim, repeated by politicians and journalists, that contemporary Poles are tolerant and keen on multiculturalism in their very nature, and that the Polish nation welcomes diversity (Tokarczyk 1979: 10). No serious study critically analysing the possible intellectual links between the concept of a multi-ethnic historical Polish state and today's state of mind and practices of Poles can be found. Moreover, demands to restore and nurture the *traditional Mythical* Polish tolerance, which were advanced after 1989, ignore a huge change in collective consciousness that occurred during the years of the partitions (e.g. the emergence of competing nationalisms), interwar nationalist politics, war radicalisation of nationalist re-sentiments, and more than 50 years of *Realpolitik* of the Communist authorities that skilfully utilised ethnic stereotypes (Robotycki 2010: 80).

4.1. Tolerance as public policy

Reluctance towards minorities demonstrated under communism, also influenced the attitudes of Poles, who constitute a decisive majority in the society, in the redefinition of mutual relations during the process of accession to European structures. The National Census of 2002 indicates a huge gap between the estimated size of minorities and the actual declaration in the polls. These results raised questions about census methodology and quality. Minority leaders complained that people did not understand the questions about their identity. Besides, we are dealing here with social mimicry, which occurs when members of minority groups hide their distinct identity fearing intolerance (Robotycki 2010: 82). This is interpreted as a direct consequence of the homogenising and assimilationist policy of the authoritarian regime before 1989 (Warmińska 2009: 37).

4.2. Parliamentary debates on difference

In 1989, a new chapter in the state policy towards national minorities was opened. The new authorities declared the will to break with the communist assimilationist policy (Łodziński 2005: 124) and grant every citizen civic rights secured by international conventions. They also wanted to change Pole's attitudes to minorities and redefine state – minority relations, aiming both at their integration and active participation in public life.

Parliamentary debates on the 'otherness' in Poland reveal that politicians perceive unified national identity as a fundament of the Polish state (Trapani 2009: 91). This unquestioned value must be protected by all means, and flaws on the monolith can undermine this unity. Minorities' claims aimed at strengthening their presence, are often viewed as endangering this integrity. This implies the dismissal of many claims and a sort of soft discriminatory policy. The Preamble to the Constitution, which is cited in Part 2, makes this attitude visible. Its message is clear: 'we are at home', and 'you are welcomed, but do not demand too much'.

Polish identity refers to the ethnic concept of a nation and cultural practices are considered Polish, provided that they can be legitimised as such. This means that the discourse on national identity is invariably based on cultural differences (Mach 2010: 248). Having Polish citizenship is insignificant in the identification of individuals as 'us', because cultural closeness decides about social inclusion.

The census of 2002 has facilitated the acceptance of the Law on National and Ethnic Minorities and the Regional Language, finally adopted only in 2005, partly due to the EU accession (Robotycki 2010: 82). Its main drawback is that the definition of minorities refers to the historical terminology from the period of the Commonwealth (see part 2). It prioritises historical roots and traditions of minorities and discriminates groups with a relatively short history of settlement in Poland. Thus Greeks, for instance, who came to Poland as political refugees after 1948 and still comprise a group larger than several other officially recognised national groups, do not have minority status (Pudło 1995; 1997). State legislation is not always efficiently implemented at the local level, and raises conflicts over the allocation of public funds. Apparently, official statements clash with popular images and social awareness of minorities' presence and rights.

Minority activists criticize the Law on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language because during the fifteen years of the process of negotiations, they did not feel they were treated like partners in a dialogue, but paternalistically (Łodziński 2005). They accuse authorities of merely fulfilling legal requirements of the EU and not meeting the actual need of minorities (Robotycki 2010: 83). Minority leaders pragmatically accept this law, but are pessimistic about its daily functioning, also in terms of obtaining financial support. All indicate a discrepancy between public discourse and social practices as well as between the legal set up and law implementation.

4.3. Tolerance as a value

In most cases, tolerance as a value is addressed in terms of the above-mentioned assumption of a historically shaped Polish propensity to peaceful coexistence with culturally distinct groups. References to the 'golden age of tolerance' of the Nobles' Republic (see part 2; also: Berenger 2002; Tazbir 1973) are not accompanied by studies on a contemporary understanding of tolerance. Quite often, tolerance is discussed in general terms, and as being applicable elsewhere (cf. Posern-Zieliński 2004; Borowiak and Szarota 2004). It can be also presented as a postulate, a desired value necessary for changing social life. Political and media discourses are rather simplistic, probably due to the numeric insignificance of minorities in this homogenised population. Everyday interactions with minorities are not common and the assimilationist policy of the (post-)communist state has also affected the perception of the issue as socially unimportant.

Discourse on tolerance as a value focuses on the theoretical aspects of tolerance and its significance in the history in Europe since antiquity. These speculative considerations refer chiefly to the Enlightenment thinkers. They focus on philosophical writings and their possible applications in social life. Many of them are permeated with ideas put forward by religiously

inspired authors or religious authorities (Legutko 1997; Borkowski 2002; Patalon 2008), and have virtually no connection to contemporary social life in Poland[36].

Particularly before 2005, debates on multiculturalism barely existed. They reproduced the myth of peaceful coexistence and were mainly descriptive, as there was no particular need for debating multicultural policies: 1) national minorities were seen as miniscule and generally assimilated; 2) new minorities were not numerous and migrants treated Poland as a transit country; 3) the questions of belonging and citizenship were unjustified for those convinced of a national homogeneity. Neither the authorities nor the general public showed interest in problems related to increasing levels of cultural diversity (Weinar 2008: 3-5).

The discourse on tolerance in a modern sense of the word, i.e. as a concept applicable in social policy, is relatively recent in Poland. As such, it is absent in mainstream education, and seen as redundant from the point of view of the majority. One can associate its potential growth of importance for the ordinary people and for policy makers only in relation to the growing immigration and expanding activism of other social minorities, such as sexual minorities or physically challenged people. The increasing number of migrants arriving to Poland, according to some experts, simply asks for tolerance towards ethnic and religious minorities in the public domain (Patalon 2008; Czerniejewska 2005).

In the 1990s, cultural diversity was again presented by nationalistically minded scholars as a threat to the coherent Polish identity. Multicultural ideas were seen as alien concepts, trendy but unnecessary and inapplicable locally (Lenik 1994: 48). Similar fears can be found in right-wing discourses. They also ridicule 'political correctness' and resist 'indiscriminate tolerance' to any type of cultural distinction. Right-wing discourses are criticised by leftist and liberal intellectuals. Thus, public discourses on tolerance often take a bipolar shape: on the one hand, minority activists, young left-wing activists and liberal intellectuals speak and work for a secular, multicultural and diverse society, and on the other hand, right-wing thinkers, nationalist activists and conservative clerical circles fight for national and religious integrity and warn against alien cultural imports.

Minority rights in the fields of education and the cultivation of culture, for instance the organising of cultural events or preserving traditional crafts, do not raise objections. In this respect attitudes are fully tolerant and can probably be connected to the long-lasting 'folklorisation' of diversity present already in the Peoples Republic, and congruent, at least at the surface, with multiculturalist ideas. Actual problems appear when: (a) state or EU funding for cultural activities is considered; (b) appropriate legislation granting provisions for property confiscated by the state after WWII is considered; (c) issues of bilingualism in regions populated by minorities (e.g. street names), political representation and commemorations of historical events in the public are considered. Tensions arise between policy makers at all administrative levels and minority members and representatives (Łodziński 2005: 221-223). Poles eagerly accept 'strangeness' and 'otherness', provided that it is practiced in the private sphere or as an exotic custom, i.e. it implies activities that do not interfere with their image of the world and do not jeopardize the idea of a homogenous community and a sense of security based on cultural familiarity.

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[36] Discourse on tolerance seems to be the most lively in the area of sexual minorities and non-believers rights. Focus on ethnic and religious minorities in the project excludes discussion on issues most pertinent to tolerance in Poland.

4.4. Tolerance as a practice

Reports of international organisations monitoring the level of respect for the rights of minorities show that the situation of minority groups in Poland is improving, and that racial or ethnic offences are rather 'soft'. Legal standards are increasingly congruent with both the social reality and international instruments for equality and anti-discrimination. Despite these improvements, data on insufficient state action in many areas concerning support granted to culturally distinct groups appear repeatedly, particularly in relation to immigrants (the education of children belonging to minority groups; prolonged periods of document issuance, difficulties in conducting business and acquiring rights to social assistance).

Poland still lacks in-depth studies on the problem of racial discrimination and ethnically or culturally motivated crimes. It is difficult even to define the scale of the phenomenon and to specify its manifestations, which is crucial in creating programs and strategies to combat them. There is also a visible lack of organisations providing support for victims of such practices. This is an area to which attention has not been paid until recently, but it will be increasingly present in Poland, if only because of the increased inflow of foreigners to the country (Klaus and Wencel 2009: 43).

Polish law is now better adapted to the EU requirements, but there are still many unregulated issues. The only exception is the Labour Code, in which appropriate regulations can be found. However, there are many practical problems with its enforcement. In some spheres there are no government regulations established, such as the protection of health, or the very question of the lack of access to assets and services offered publicly (Bloch and Goździak 2010).

Poland still has not created appropriate anti-discrimination bodies. Although several institutions working in this area have been appointed (e.g. the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment, in the appropriate department in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ombudsman, the Panel on Racism and Xenophobia the Ministry of Interior), none of them (separately or together) meet the requirements derived from EU regulations[37] (Klaus and Wencel 2009: 44).

Concluding this part one can say that there is no visible discrimination against culturally/ethnically and religiously different communities in Poland, but there are certainly instances of behaviour and opinions conducted in public which require a proper response, taking into account respect for the civic rights of all people.

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[37] The main criticisms of these institutions relate to the lack of assistance in the formulation of complaints concerning culturally motivated violence as well as lack of independent research and expertise in the field of discrimination and xenophobia.

4. Concluding Remarks

Public opinion polls indicate that the reluctance of Poles towards people of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds residing in Poland is slowly decreasing, which can be treated as one of the premises indicating that the tolerance of cultural diversity in Poland is growing (CBOS 2010: 9). This is of great importance in the face of the influx of immigrants, from Asia to Eastern Europe, among others.

There is an interconnection between openness to 'others' and the financial status in the Polish socio-cultural conditions – along with the improvement in material status, decreases the tendency to intolerant and xenophobic attitudes, and, therefore, there is a good chance that Poland will increase the level of acceptance of difference, if economic performance of the country will prosper and thus contribute to a decline in the rates of poverty and unemployment (Jasińska-Kania 2009: 56).

Polish rationale of the cultural diversity debate, residual as it is, has many nationalist, xenophobic, and homogenising features (Trapani 2009: 93). However, thanks to liberal, anarchist, feminist and non-governmental circles, new elements and forces appear, which predicts constant improvements in the situation of minority groups in Poland, in spite of the slow development of the process.

The contemporary debate on tolerance in Poland refers constantly to the mythical tolerance of the Nobles' Republic, resulting in little social conscience on the real problems of minority groups and in a reluctance to revise traditional views. This situation is reinforced by the relatively low numbers of minority and immigrant populations, together with a still overriding importance of the ethnic and cultural component in the common representation of the nation/community.

Increasing pluralisation of the Polish society, including increasing visibility of the so-called social minority groups (people with disabilities, sexual minorities, etc.) and their struggle to gain equal access to universal rights and a place in the public space, is increasingly influential in the revival of the debate around the acceptance of diversity and the redefining of notions of the homogeneity of the Polish state. Significant achievements in this process are initiated by non-governmental organisations representing minority groups because the authorities have no special interest in intensifying the dialogue with minority groups, focusing on the introduction and implementation of European directives and trying to align with international standards, rather than recognising the minorities' actual problems and situation. Nascent debate about tolerance and acceptance should be a grassroots attempt to involve minority groups in a dialogue with the state.

As the number of culturally distinct citizens within the Polish society increases, it can be expected that changes in attitudes towards every-day contact with different cultural practices will evolve, thus changes in educational programs and public education campaigns are necessary in order to alter the social disposition towards cultural diversity of the majority of Poles.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Main national and ethnic minorities in Poland and immigrant populations

Minority	Number (declared during Census of 2002)	% of the total population	% of the non-Polish population	Status
Silesian	173 153	0,45 %	37 %	Minority not recognized by the state
German	152 897	0,39 %	32 %	National minority
Belarussian	48 737	0,13 %	10 %	National minority
Ukrainian	30 957	0,08 %	6,5 %	National minority
Roma	12 855	0,03 %	2,7 %	Ethnic minority
Russian	6 103	0,016 %	1,3 %	National minority
Lemko	5 863	0,015 %	1,2 %	Ethnic minority
Lithuanian	5 846	0,015 %	1,2 %	National minority
Kashubian	5 062	0,013 %	1 %	Group using regional language, not recognized by the state as a distinct minority
Slovak	2 001	0,005 %	0,4 %	National minority
Vietnamese	1 808	0,004 %	0,3 %	Migrant population
French	1 633	0,004 %	0,3 %	Migrant population
American	1 541	0,004 %	0,3 %	Migrant population
Greek	1 404	0,003 %	0,2 %	Migrant population
Italian	1 367	0,003 %	0,2 %	Migrant population
Jewish	1 133	0,002 %	0,2 %	National minority
Bulgarian	1 112	0,002 %	0,2 %	Migrant population
Armenian	1 082	0,002 %	0,2 %	National minority
Czech	831	0,002 %	0,1 %	National minority
English	800	0,002 %	0,1 %	Migrant population
Hungarian	579	0,001 %	0,1 %	Migrant population
Dutch	540	0,001 %	0,1 %	Migrant population
Canadian	513	0,001 %	0,1 %	Migrant population
Tartar	495	0,001 %	0,1 %	Ethnic minority
Arab	459	0,001 %	0,1 %	Migrant population
Serbian	442	0,001 %	0,09 %	Migrant population
Austrian	346	0,0009 %	0,07 %	Migrant population
Croat	336	0,0008 %	0,07 %	Migrant population
Romanian	328	0,0008 %	0,06 %	Migrant population
Syrian	312	0,0008 %	0,06 %	Migrant population
Macedonian	286	0,0007 %	0,06 %	Migrant population
...				
Karaim	45	0,0001 %	0,009 %	Ethnic minority

Source: GUS 2002

Figure 2: Diversity challenges

Dimensions of difference	Racial	Ethnic	Religious	Cultural	Linguistic
ETHNIC MINORITIES					
Roma		X		X	X
Lemko		X	X		X
Tartar		X	X		
Karaim		X	X		
NATIVE MINORITIES					
German		X			X
Belarussian		X	X		X
Ukrainian		X	X		X
Russian		X	X		X
Lithuanian		X			X
Slovak		X			X
Jewish		X	X		X
Armenian		X			X
Czech		X	X		X
Other					
Silesians					X
Kashubians					X
IMMIGRANTS					
Vietnamese	X	X	X	X	X
Greek		X	X	X	
Arab	X	X	X	X	X
Macedonian		X	X	X	