

**Interplay of European, National and Regional Identities:
Nations between States along the New Eastern Borders of the European Union**

Series of project research reports

**Contextual and empirical reports
on ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe**

Belarus
Germany
Hungary
Latvia
Lithuania
Poland
Russia
Slovakia
Ukraine

Research Report #4

**The Polish Minority
in Belarus**

Authors:

**David Rotman | Oksana Ivaniuto
Natalia Veremeeva**



Series Editors:

Hans-Georg Heinrich | Alexander Chvorostov

Project primarily funded under FP7-SSH programme



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area



SEVENTH FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME

Project host and coordinator



INSTITUT FÜR HÖHERE STUDIEN
INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES
Vienna

www.ihs.ac.at

About the ENRI-East research project (www.enri-east.net)

The Interplay of European, National and Regional Identities: Nations between states along the new eastern borders of the European Union (ENRI-East)

ENRI-East is a research project implemented in 2008-2011 and primarily funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. This international and inter-disciplinary study is aimed at a deeper understanding of the ways in which the modern European identities and regional cultures are formed and inter-communicated in the Eastern part of the European continent.

ENRI-East is a response to the shortcomings of previous research: it is the first large-scale comparative project which uses a sophisticated toolkit of various empirical methods and is based on a process-oriented theoretical approach which places empirical research into a broader historical framework.

The distinct ethno-national diversity in this region, along with the problems resulting from it was generated by dramatic shifts of borders, populations and political affiliation which have continued until today. The prevailing pattern of political geography of this part of Europe was the emergence and the dismemberment of empires, a process which created ethno-national enclaves within the boundaries of new nation states. These minorities were frequently drawn into inter-state conflicts and subjected to repression, ethnic cleansing and expulsion. The subjects of interests were ethnic minorities in the supra-region "Wider Eastern Europe", i.e. the region between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, along the current geo-political "East-West" division line. Estimated 8 to 10 millions of people are affected by "ethnic splits" or minority groups, whose ethnic compatriots would constitute a titular majority in another country, some of them even on each side of this contemporary geopolitical east-west diving border line.

The complex ENRI-East study was designed as a comprehensive set of theoretical, methodological, empirical and comparative work streams exploring the interplay of identities among the twelve ethnic minorities in the supra-region of Central and Easter Europe. These ethnic groups are: Russians in Latvia and Lithuania, Belarusians and Ukrainians in Poland, Slovaks in Hungary, Hungarians in Slovakia and in Ukraine, Poles in Ukraine, in Belarus and in Lithuania, Belarusians in Lithuania as well as Lithuanians in Russia (Kaliningrad oblast). The project includes also a case study of Germany, where our target groups were the ethnic Germans returning to their historical homeland after the centuries of living in other European countries as well as Jewish immigrants (so called "quota refugees" who had moved to the country since 1989).

ENRI-East addresses four general research themes. The first one deals with the interplay of identities and cultures by comparing 'mother nations' and their 'residual groups abroad'. The second theme is a cross-cutting approach which addresses the nations and the states: more exactly, the attitudes and policies of 'mother nations' and 'host nations' toward the 'residual groups' and vice versa. The third research theme comprise the reality of self organization and representation of "residual groups abroad" (ethnic minorities) along the East European borderland. Finally, the last research theme of the project deals with path dependencies, historical memories, present status and expected dynamics of divided nations in Eastern Europe.

The empirical data base for ENRI-East was generated through 5 sub-studies implemented in all or several project countries:

- ENRI-VIS (Values and Identities Survey): face-to-face formalized interviews with members of 12 ethnic minority groups in eight countries, 6,800 respondents;
- ENRI-BIO: qualitative, biographical in-depth interviews with members of 12 ethnic minority groups in eight countries (144 interviews);
- ENRI-EXI: semi-structured expert interviews with governmental and non-governmental representatives of ethnic minority groups in eight countries (48 interviews);
- ENRI-BLOG: online content analysis of weblogs and Internet periodicals run or maintained by ethnic minority group members;
- ENRI-MUSIC: special study on cultural identities and music; an innovative, multi-disciplinary pilot effort in Hungary and Lithuania.

The series of ENRI-East research reports (www.enri-east.net/project-results)

Main outcomes of the ENRI-East research program are summarized in the series of research papers and project reports as outlined below. The whole collection of papers will be publicly available on the project web-site by December 2011, while some papers can be accessed since September 2011.

Individual papers are written by ENRI-East experts from all project teams and the whole series is edited by the Coordinating Team at the CEASS-Center at the Institute for Advanced Studies under the guidance of the Principal Investigator Prof. Hans-Georg Heinrich and Project Coordinator Dr. Alexander Chvorostov.

Summarizing and generalizing reports

1. Theoretical and methodological backgrounds for the studies of European, national and regional identities of ethnic minorities in European borderlands (Edited by Prof. Claire Wallace and Dr. Natalia Patsiurko)
2. Interplay of European, National and Regional Identities among the ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe (main results of ENRI-East empirical program) (Edited by Prof. Hans-Georg Heinrich and Dr. Alexander Chvorostov)
3. ENRI-East Thematic Comparative papers and synopsizes of authored articles of ENRI-East experts (9 tender papers and further bibliography of project-related publications)

Contextual and empirical reports on ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe:

(edited by respective team leaders)

4. The Polish Minority in Belarus
5. The Slovak Minority in Hungary
6. The Russian Minority in Latvia
7. The Belarusian Minority in Lithuania
8. The Polish Minority in Lithuania
9. The Russian Minority in Lithuania
10. The Belarusian Minority in Poland
11. The Ukrainian Minority in Poland
12. The Lithuanian Minority in Russia (Kaliningrad oblast)
13. The Hungarian Minority in Slovakia
14. The Hungarian Minority in Ukraine
15. The Polish Minority in Ukraine
16. Special Case Study Germany

Series of empirical survey reports:

17. ENRI-VIS: Values and Identities Survey
 - Methodology and implementation of ENRI-VIS (Technical report)
 - ENRI-VIS Reference book (major cross-tabulations and coding details)
18. Qualitative sub-studies of ENRI-East project (methodological and technical reports)
 - Methodological report on Biographical Interviews (ENRI-BIO)
 - Methodological report on Expert Interviews and data base description (ENRI-EXI)
 - Methodological report on the pilot study on Musical cultures and identities (ENRI-MUSIC)
 - Methodological report and main findings of the Pilot study of web-spaces (ENRI-BLOG)

Disclaimer:

The treatment of historical, statistical and sociological data and facts, their scientific accuracy and the interpretations as well as the writing style are the sole responsibility of the authors of individual contributions and chapters published in the ENRI Research Papers. The positions and opinions of the project coordinator and of the editors of ENRI-East series of research papers as well as of the ENRI-East consortium as a whole may not necessarily be the same. By no means may the contents of the research papers be considered as the position of the European Commission.

ENRI-East research consortium and project details

ENRI-East Principle Investigator

Prof. Hans-Georg Heinrich (University of Vienna and ICEUR, Austria)

ENRI-East Project Coordinator

Dr. Alexander Chvorostov
and the CEASS-Center team
at the Institute for Advanced Studies Austria)
www.ihs.ac.at/ceass/



ENRI-East Project Partners

(Full details on and project partners and contacts can be found at <http://www.enri-east.net/consortium/project-partners/en/>)

- TARKI Research Institute Inc. (Hungary) (Team Leader Prof. Endre Sik)
- University of Aberdeen (UK) (Team Leader Prof. Claire Wallace)
- Osteuropa Institut Regensburg (Germany) (Team Leader Dr. Barbara Dietz)
- Lithuanian Social Research Centre (Vilnius, Lithuania) (Team Leader Prof. Arvydas Matulionis)
- Moscow State University (Russia) (Team Leader Prof. Sergei Tumanov)
- Belarusian State University (Belarus) (Team Leader Prof. David Rotman)
- East-Ukrainian Foundation for Social Research (Ukraine) (Team Leader Prof. Vil Bakirov)
- University of St. Cyril and Methodius (Slovakia) (Team Leader Prof. Ladislav Macháček)
- Oxford XXI (UK) (Team Leader Dr. Lyudmila Nurse)
- Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Lublin (Poland) (Team Leader Prof. Konrad Zieliński)

Third parties and consultants contributed to the ENRI-East project:

- Sociological agency FOCUS, Slovakia (Dr. Sylvia Šumšalová, Dr. Ivan Dianiška)
- Sociological agency GfK Polonia (Dr. Beata Steczowicz)
- Robert B. Zajonc Institute for Social Studies, Warsaw University (team led by Prof. Renata Siemienska)

ENRI-East International Advisory Board:

- Prof. Christian Haerpfer (Chair), University of Aberdeen
- Prof. Alexander Etkind, Cambridge University
- Prof. Ronald Inglehart, University of Michigan
- Prof. Leonid Ionin, Higher School of Economics, Moscow
- Prof. Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, University of Warsaw
- Prof. Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin
- Prof. Alexei Miller, Central European University, Budapest
- Prof. Robert Miller, Queens University Belfast
- H.E. Ambassador Karl-Erik Norrman, European Cultural Parliament
- Prof. Paul Robertson, European Cultural Parliament
- Prof. James Scott, Joensuu Karelian University, Finland
- Prof. Renata Siemienska, Warsaw University
- Prof. Stephen White, University of Glasgow

Project Website:

www.enri-east.net

Project funding:

Primary funding for the research project ENRI-East is provided by the European Commission through an FP7-SSH grant #217227.

For further information on the Socio Economic Sciences and Humanities programme in FP7 see:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ssh/home_en.html

http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/index_en.html

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
Abstract	7
Summary of the study.....	7
Summary of practical recommendations	13
1 POLES IN BELARUS: A BACKGROUND OVERVIEW	14
1.1 Belarusian majority-Polish minority relations	14
1.2 Legislative overview	20
1.3 Demographic Overview	22
1.4 Polish minority self-organisation in Belarus	26
1.5 Overview of existing surveys	28
1.6 Conclusions and generalizations.....	28
2 MAIN FINDINGS OF THE ENRI-VIS SURVEY (ENRI-VIS)	30
2.1 Ethnicity and ethnic identification, national identification	31
2.2 Family, households and corresponding ethnic aspects	40
2.3 Xenophobia, conflicts, discrimination.....	44
2.4 Social and political capital, attitude to the European Union	46
2.5 Conclusions.....	51
3 MAIN FINDINGS OF BIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEWS (ENRI-BIO)	54
3.1 Introduction.....	54
3.2 Brief description of the people interviewed and their life stories, and also from which districts/settlements they come.....	54

3.3	European Identity.....	61
3.4	National identity – attitude to the country of residence	64
3.5	National identity – attitude towards their homeland	68
3.6	Regional identity	72
3.7	Civic participation and participation in ethnic organizations.....	73
3.8	Ethnic conflicts and experience of discrimination.....	74
3.9	Summarizing matrix	78
4	MAIN FINDINGS OF EXPERT INTERVIEWS (ENRI-EXI)	82
4.1	Short description of the interviewed persons	82
4.2	Interview summaries.....	83
4.3	The main issues, connected with the polish minority in the country of residence	87
4.4	Relations with mother country	92
5	CONCLUSIONS	96
5.1	Research conclusions.....	96
5.2	Practical recommendations	97
	ABOUT THE AUTHORS	98

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abstract

In the frameworks of the international comparative research project ENRI-East, the Belarusian team studies the Polish ethnic minority that presents a «classical minority», that is a group, that did not migrate, but a «movement of borders» took place in historical context, when some territories belonged to various states in various periods. This study is aimed at studying how the European, national and regional identities are formed and realized, as well as at investigation of relations between individual and group identity among the representatives of the Polish ethnical minority residing in the Republic of Belarus. In the course of the project a variety of interrelated historical, cultural and institutional frameworks have been studied, inside which national identity of the Poles in Belarus is formed and realized; as well as the significance of the European, national and regional identities for the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus; self-identification criteria and ways of preservation of the Polish identity; attitudes of the Polish minority representatives towards the rest of the population in Belarus; living conditions and lifestyle of the Polish ethnic minority; migration potential, political participation of the Polish ethnic minority; state policy in relation to ethnic minorities in general and to the Polish ethnic minority, in particular, as well as the policy of the Polish Diaspora.

The project involves a detailed quantitative survey of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority, as well as qualitative studies applying such sociological methods as in-depth biographic interviews with representatives of the Polish ethnic minority and expert-interviews. In order to collect data about this specific group and for a detailed understanding of social context we created «Contextual Report and History of the Polish Ethnic Minority in Belarus», prepared in the course of desk research, including review of scientific literature, analysis of statistics, secondary analysis of sociological studies on the topic under study.

Summary of the study

In the frameworks of the project ‘The Interplay of European, National and Regional Identities: Nations between states along the new Eastern borders of the European Union’ Center for Sociological and Political Researches of Belarusian State University carried out a complex sociological study correlating and combining various methods of data collection and analysis of sociological information.

1. «Contextual Report and History of the Polish Ethnic Minority in Belarus» includes a historical background, analysis of official social-demographic statistics, a political review, issues of self-organisation of the Polish community in Belarus, we also investigated the opportunities to study the Polish language and to get education in the Polish language, access to the mass media published in Polish etc.

The main conclusions are the following. The Poles in Belarus represent a so-called «classical minority», that is a group, that did not migrate in general. Chronology of the events that influenced the ethnogenesis of the Poles residing at the territory of modern Belarus dates back to XIV century. During a long period the population, residing at the territory of modern Western Belarus experienced several opposite waves of Polonization and Russification.

At the present moment the Poles in Belarus are the third national group by their size after the Belarusians and the Russians. The Poles are settled at the territory of Belarus as a dense array in

Western and North-Western regions of the country, and mainly in rural areas. A large part of the Poles reside in Grodno region, where they constitute a fifth of the total population. In Grodno region there are areas with high relative density of the resident Poles. A share of the Poles from the total population of the republic has decreased during the last decades, mainly because of natural movement, assimilation processes and migration.

Absolute majority of the Polish ethnic minority representatives in Belarus refer themselves to the Roman-Catholic church. The Roman-Catholic church is one of the largest denominations in Belarus. It plays a significant role in religious life of the republic, being the second confession by the number of believers in our country.

The Polish minority in Belarus does not have its political party. The largest cultural association of the Poles in Belarus is the «Union of Poles in Belarus». The main aims of this organization, in accordance with its Statute, are: national renaissance, formation of public activity of the organization's members, popularization of the Polish language and culture. This non-governmental organization of the Polish ethnic minority organizes and carries out dozens socially significant events annually.

Representatives of the Polish ethnic minority have access to education in their native language at the levels of primary and secondary education, also it is possible to study the Polish language, literature and history both in the system of school and out-of-school education. The Belarusian system of university education also offers opportunities to study the Polish language.

Representatives of the Polish community in Belarus have access to printed mass media, published by the Polish non-governmental organizations, there are information programs broadcasted in the Polish language in the structure of the national state radio.

2. There was conducted a sociological survey with the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus. The aim of the survey was to study the ways of formation and realization of the European, national and regional identity, as well as interconnection between individual and group identity of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority residing at the territory of the Republic of Belarus. The survey was conducted in eighteen areas of three regions of the Republic of Belarus: in fifteen areas of Grodno region (areas of dense settlement of the Poles), in two areas of Minsk region, in one area of Vitebsk region. Thirty nine urban and rural settlements were covered in total.

Analysis of the data, received in the course of the quantitative study, carried out during the project, enables us to make the following major conclusions.

Most often ethnic self-identification of the Poles in Belarus takes place at the level of personal subjective feelings, when correlation of individual identity with ethnicity of ancestors takes place. In the hierarchy of social-demographic statuses significance of ethnic and denominational statuses is important for the Poles.

Catholic religion takes a special place in the cultural framework of ethnic consciousness of the Poles, Catholicism is an accumulator of national traditions and customs. This essential influence of religion on ethnicity and formation of solidarity of the ethnic community is explained by its in-depth links with mentality of the people, its spiritual grounds.

Ethnic identity of the Poles is connected not so much with real use of the Polish language by all the members of the Polish community in Belarus, but by the symbolic role of the Polish language in the processes of affinity formation with the ethnic group and in inter-group differentiation.

The overwhelming majority of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority are proud of their ethnicity and demonstrate an aspiration to preserve their national culture in their social environment.

Quite a lot of representatives of the Polish ethnic minority have access to the Polish speaking mass media, in particular, Polish mass media directly, what is especially typical for the residents of Grodno region bordering with Poland. The Poles in Belarus also address to the mass media of their ethnic minority (newspapers and magazines are published in the republic, there are radio and TV programs in Polish in the line-up of the regional and city mass media).

Social-demographic portrait of the Polish ethnic minority representatives, who participated in the survey, has the following typical features: the majority come from the Polish families and were born in the settlements situated at the territory of present Belarus. Everyone holds the Belarusian citizenship. Age and gender structure of the Polish minority is characterized by a high share of females and persons of older age groups. The majority of them are married (mainly officially registered), a fifth is made by widowers/widows (mainly older persons), comparatively small percentage of the respondents are divorced. The overwhelming majority of the respondents have children (as a rule, one or two children). The majority of the respondents have education (university, secondary vocational and secondary general), persons with primary education are usually old aged persons. Analysis of the employment structure of the Poles shows: the number of pension age persons is one and a half times less than the number of the able to work Poles, the percentage of the unemployed is small. The overwhelming majority of the working Poles are salaried employees. Average monthly income is comparable with the average monthly income in the country in the corresponding branches of economy.

Inter-ethnic and inter-denominational situations in Belarus are conflict-free and are characterized with low social tension. The data gained give evidence about ethnic tolerance of the Belarusian Poles and about absence of desire among them to get isolated from representatives of the other nationalities.

Describing social capital of the Belarusian Poles, in it worth mentioning quite close connections with the Poles in Poland (firstly, with relatives and friends). The Belarusian Poles are included in active communication with the Poles in the country of their mother country. Along with this the Polish community is not closed, what is supported by the fact that a lot of Belarusian Poles have friends from various ethnic groups. In general, the Poles show a high level of social tolerance, manifested not only in the trust to the representatives of their own community, but also to the other social groups. Quite a high rate of institutional trust is also recorded, what is partly explained by a relatively stable development of various social spheres and socially oriented state economic policy during the period under study.

Political participation of the representatives of the Polish community is characterized by high electoral activity and a comparatively low social initiative, what is testified by a low percentage of membership in NGOs.

The majority of the Belarusian Poles did not manage to describe their attitude to the European Union, and to assess the perspectives of Belarus to enter the European Union, correspondingly. A neutral attitude to the EU predominates among the Poles in Belarus. However, there are more Poles considering that the position of the Polish minority will improve in case Belarus joins the EU, they are more numerous than the ones who adhere to the opposite point of view. Quite a low rate of migration feelings is demonstrative for the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus.

3. A series of in-depth biographical interviews was conducted with representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus. The aim of these interviews is to study mechanisms of ethnic self-identification among the representatives of the Polish minority in Belarus, and how geopolitical changes in Eastern Europe are reflected on the process of their self-identification. Respondents selection criteria provided their representativeness by place of residence, gender, age, educational and social status.

Analysis of the data, gained in the course of biographical interviews, makes it possible to do the following conclusions:

Practically all the informants feel more or less European. The arguments of the majority is reduced to the following: if Poland is a European country, and they consider themselves to be Poles, so, they are Europeans, correspondingly. Some part of the informants consider themselves to be Europeans, because they reside in Europe.

The majority of the Belarusian Poles support and welcome the process of unification of Europe. The respondents remark the following positive moments, connected with this process: economic and cultural development, integration of peoples, opportunities for free movement, opportunities to choose the place of work and studies.

The Poles residing in Belarus are proud of their nationality and are aware that it is important for them. Absolutely all the informants feel attachment to the place where they were born and reside now.

In the opinion of the respondents, the fact that they were born at the lands that used to be the Polish territories and were inhabited by the Poles, influenced a lot formation of their Polish identity.

In many cases Polish self-identification gets activated when a person affiliates with the Catholic religion. In respondents' conscience there is a clear inter-relation between the Polish self-identification and the Catholic faith. The majority of the Poles residing in Belarus consider themselves to be religious people, visit services at Catholic churches regularly.

Symbolic value of their mother tongue is high for the residing at the territory of Belarus representatives of the Polish national minority. In the places of dense settlement of the Poles at the territory of Belarus, especially in the areas bordering with Poland, in small settlements communication among inhabitants takes place traditionally in a mixed language based on Polish. It helps preserve the language, culture and traditions of the Polish population. On the other hand, in spite of the fact that there are more opportunities to study and to preserve the Polish language, a trend of Russification of the speech of the residents of the "Polish" settlements at the territory of Belarus is observed at the present moment in comparison with the soviet times. An aspiration to preserve the Polish language and a necessity to transmit it to new generations is expressed quite vividly.

In the majority of the interviews the respondents note that the Belarusians and the Poles live in agreement, their lifestyles do not differ a lot. Quite often the notions «a Pole and a Belarusian» are substituted by the notions «an Orthodox and a Catholic». It appears, that assimilation of the Poles in the Belarusian society has been taking place gradually, herein, some difference in the mentality of the Poles and the Belarusians is remarked.

Virtually all the informants are connected via kinship with Poland, their relatives and friends live in Poland, everyone visited relatives in Poland at various times, what contributes to preservation of national identity and the language. The majority of the respondents feel some affinity with

Poland, feel comfortable there. Some of the representatives of the younger age group are even inclined to change their place of residents in due course (to move to Poland for good), some of them make specific actions for it: they study in Poland, are going to enter the Polish universities etc. Almost all older group respondents' families tried to emigrate to Poland during one of the emigration waves of the Poles, officially allowed by the USSR authorities (in 40-ies and 50-ies). Middle-aged group of the respondents expresses the least migration intentions and moods.

Almost all the informants are well-informed about activity of ethnic organizations. Some of them are active members of such organizations. The respondents having experience of participation in such organizations speak positively, with warmth about them, and consider their work to be useful and important.

At the present time the representatives of the Polish national minority in Belarus do not feel national discrimination. Almost all the mentioned cases of discrimination refer to the time, when Belarus was a USSR member. The situation changed to the better in this respect after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Belarus gained independence.

In the course of the interviews a lot of respondents mentioned the conflict related with the «Union of Poles», which was widely covered in mass media at that period. Informants' statements about the conflict show, that they do not perceive it as a conflict between the Poles and the Belarusians, or between the authorities of Belarus and Poland, but rather as an internal conflict of the members of this organization.

4. A series of in-depth interviews with experts was conducted. In-depth expert interviews were conducted to gain expert assessment of the situation in regards with the groups of ethnic minorities in Belarus in general and about the Polish ethnic minority, in particular. Civil servants of national level, representing executive and legislative branches of power acted as experts, we chose establishments dealing with ethnic minorities and policies aimed at ethnic minorities, as well as the non-governmental republic organization of cultural trend «The Union of Poles in Belarus».

Analysis of the data gained in the course of expert interviews, enables us to make the following major conclusions:

In Belarus there is Office of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus. The main tasks of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs are:

- Participation in the development and realization of the state policy in the ethnic-religious sphere;
- Provision of citizens' rights for freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, protection of their rights and interests in spite of the attitude to religion and religious affiliation, also the right for freedom of associating in religious organizations;
- Preparing suggestions on regulation of the issues related with the activities of religious organizations and non-governmental associations of citizens, referred to national minorities;
- Controlling the activities of religious organizations in terms of performance of the legislation of the Republic of Belarus and their statutes;

- Studying the issues, appearing in the sphere of mutual relations between the state and religious organizations, the state and non-governmental associations of citizens, referring themselves to national minorities;
- Participation in the development, organisation of execution and controlling conforming with the legislative acts of the Republic of Belarus, offering suggestions on enhancement of the legislation at the basis of generalization of the practice of its application;
- Protection and assistance in realization of the rights of the citizens of the Republic of Belarus of various nationalities in the spheres of culture, education, language, informational provision, rendering assistance in enlightening activity of the non-governmental associations of citizens, referring themselves to national minorities;
- Rendering assistance after the requests of religious organizations and non-governmental associations of the citizens, referring themselves to national minorities, in achieving agreements with governmental bodies, assistance in strengthening mutual understanding and tolerance among religious organisations of various faiths and representatives of national communities;
- Organization of assistance and help with satisfaction of national-cultural needs of the Belarusians and Belarusian nationals coming from Belarus, residing abroad, strengthening their connections with the Republic of Belarus;
- Studying and making prognosis about religious and ethnic-political situation, dynamics and trends in the national processes, international and inter-confessional relations, prevention of manifestations of religious exclusiveness and slighting attitude to religious and national feelings;
- International cooperation on the issues referred to its competence.

Work of this organization is carried out in three directions: confessional relations inside the country, relations with ethnic communities inside the country and relations with compatriots residing abroad.

The state, represented by the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs renders financial, organizational, methodic, informational support to ethnic associations in Belarus.

A number of non-governmental organizations of the Polish national minority exist and work actively in Belarus, and the «Union of Poles» covers the widest range of tasks.

A Standing Commission on Human Rights, National Relations and Mass Media acts at the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. The sphere of its competence includes legislative activities, considering citizens' addresses, issues of intentional cooperation, controlling authorities.

In the Republic of Belarus there is legislation, regulating inter-ethnic relations.

The experts remark that the same laws and regulations are applied to the Polish ethnic community as to all the other ethnic communities, which representatives reside at the territory of the republic. The Polish ethnic minority in Belarus receives government assistance equally with the other ethnic minorities. In accordance with the legislation (in particular, the Law «About Languages in the Republic of Belarus») a right of representatives of any nationality for upbringing and receiving education in native language is realized.

The experts commented on the conflict related with the non-governmental association the «Union of Poles in Belarus». The experts stress, that in principle the conflict did not touch the majority of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus, as far as there is no inter-ethnic tension in day-go-day life of the society. The experts state that there are no national conflicts in our country, neither between ethnic minorities, nor between the Polish minority and the majority – the Belarusians.

A significant target support of the Polish ethnic minority was realized before 2005 on behalf of Poland: financial support, building Houses of Pole, providing equipment, national costumes etc. After the conflict of 2005 and the split of the «Union of Poles in Belarus», the alternative «Union of Poles» is supported, when the activities of the official “Union of Poles” not only is not supported, but also is blocked by the Polish party.

The experts remark, that the EU offers a number of programs and grants, that cover ethnic minorities, and consider these programs to be quite effective and efficient.

Summary of practical recommendations

The data analyzed in the course of the project ENRI-East do not show sharp contradictions, related with the position of the Polish community in Belaus, thus, the recommendations, suggested here, are of general character.

1. The outcomes of the studies (quantitative and qualitative) should be presented to the bodies of state administration of various levels and to NGOs. It is important to inform the parties concerned not only about analytical reports, but also to present the empirical data, gained in the course of the project. Thus, representatives of the governmental and non-governmental structures will get an opportunity to analyze the results of the research independently and to take grounded professional governmental decisions.
2. Positive trends in inter-ethnic relations of any multy-national state are one of stability conditions, providing its progressive development. Along with that, historical and current experience shows that inter-ethnic relations can get aggravated because of totally unexpected reasons. It means that governmental structures and non-governmental organizations should monitor the situation in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations on regular basis. What makes it necessary to carry out sociological monitorings on regular basis, aimed at finding out problem situations, that can lead to an acute intensification of tension between representatives of various ethnic groups. The data, gained in the course of the monitoring, should be used as a basis of managerial political decisions taken immediately (in case it is necessary).

1 POLES IN BELARUS: A BACKGROUND OVERVIEW

Natalia Veremeeva / Oksana Ivanyuto / David Rotman

1.1 Belarusian majority-Polish minority relations

1.1.1 Historical overview

Chronology of the events, which influenced the ethno genesis of the Poles who reside at the territory of modern Belarus, dates back to August 14, 1385, when the Union of Krewo was signed. The Grand Duke of Lithuania and Rus' Jagiello signed a dynastic union with Poland. In accordance with this agreement, Jagiello contracted a marriage with Jadwiga the daughter of the Polish king, changed Orthodoxy for Catholicism and became a Polish king under the name of Władysław. After Jagiello became the King of Poland his cousin Vytautas became the Grand Duke of Lithuania in his place. In the Union of Horodło concluded on October 2, 1413 between Vytautas and Jogaila, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania remained independent, but at the same time the positions of the Catholic feudal lords were strengthened in the Grand Duchy.

As a result of the Union of Lublin signed in 1569, in the East of Europe the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (or 'Rzeczpospolita' in Polish) emerged as a single state of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania arranged as a federation. From the moment of its establishment, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth consistently carried out a policy of polonization of all state and public life in the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom, including in extrusion of the Old Belarusian language from the official usage and its substitution by Polish and Latin. The Church Council of Brest strengthened the Polish language creating the Greek Catholic Church (Uniat church) in 1596. After the decree of the Parliament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ('Sejm' in Polish) of 1696 the Belarusian language lost its status as the official language of clerical correspondence on all the territory of this state. As a consequence, it led to massive polonization of the Belarusian nobility (szlachta) and prosperous petty bourgeoisie, who changed over to Polish not only in official records, but also in their daily life, changing their self-conscience to the Polish one. Mainly peasants, artisans and part of the nobility still used the Belarusian language.

Russia took a number of serious steps in order to subdue Poland in the 1760s. In particular, in 1764 Russia managed to pull off the election of a favorite of Catherine the Great Stanisław Poniatowski to the Polish throne. The Treaty of Warsaw was concluded with Poland in 1768 under the pretence of protecting the Orthodox noblemen in Poland, and de facto established a protectorate of Russia in this country. In response to the Treaty of Warsaw the Polish nobility and clergy created a confederation (1768-1772) against the king and against the intervention of Russia in the affairs of Poland, which led to the arrival of the Russian troops in Poland, in its turn. Prussia was not satisfied with that, as it wished to annex the Polish lands. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774, fearing a dangerous rapprochement of Prussia with Austria, Russia had to accept the Prussian offers regarding the partition of Poland. A Secret Convention about preliminary conditions of partition was signed between Prussia and Russia February 06, 1772 in Saint Petersburg. Austria joined it later on, and the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth took place on July 25, 1772. The troops of three states occupied the Polish territories. Russia received Eastern Belarus.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth tried to consolidate, having lost a part of its territory. The first Polish government was created in 1775. But the relations between the king and the nobility

remained tense. The Polish Constitution was passed in 1791, and strengthened king's power. Offended nobility started seeking for support from Catherine II. The Russian troops soon made an inroad upon the country. The king sided with the rebels. The Polish government was overthrown, the Constitution was abolished. After the second partition of Poland between Russia and Prussia (March 1793) Russia received Right-bank Ukraine and the lands of central Belarus.

The Poles strived to restore the borders of Poland, and a rebellion under the leadership of Thaddeus Kosciusko started in 1794. Russia and Prussia brought their troops into Poland, as they were worried about a possible revision of the results of two partitions in case of rebels' victory. Catherine II suggested partitioning the remaining lands completely. The third partition took place in 1795 whereby Russia received Courland, Lithuania, Western Volhynia and Belarus up to Grodno. The Polish state no longer existed. At the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth partitions, the Uniat religion predominated on the Belarusian lands.

During the war of 1812, after Napoleon's incoming, the position of Belarus was characterized by a clash of interests of various groups. The Polish and polonized nobility hoped for restoration of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by Napoleon, including the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. When the war started, the adherents of the restoration of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania supported the French army.

An uprising of nobility broke out under the slogan of restoration of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1830-1831 on the territory of Poland, Lithuania and Belarus. After the rebellion was crushed, the activity of the Catholic Church was limited. The authorities also strove to liquidate the Greek Catholic (Uniat) church. A synod of Polotsk took place on February 12, 1839, where «The Synodic Act of Reunification of the Uniat Church with the Orthodox Church» was signed. The Church Union of Brest of 1596 was annulled. Orthodoxy was perceived as the Russian faith at that time, and Catholicism as the Polish one.

A new rebellion broke out in 1863, once again aiming at restoration of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the borders of 1772. It started in Poland and overtook all the territory of Belarus. After a crushing defeat of the rebellion, Polish cultural influence was restricted, teaching Polish in the Belarusian rural schools was banned and the Russian language was introduced at all educational and administrative institutions.

After the overthrow of the Tsarist Empire in World War One, and, as a consequence, the creation of a new Polish state, the Western lands of Belarus were a part of Poland. In the aftermath of the October revolution of 1917, the first All-Belarusian Congress of Soviets took place in Minsk in 1919. The congress took a decision to unite Belarus and Lithuania and create the Lithuanian-Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (LitBel) as a buffer state in order to avert war with Poland. The territory of the LitBel was occupied by the Polish troops in September 1919 during the Polish-Soviet war of 1919-1920. Poland gained Western Belarus (Grodno province (guberniya), Eastern districts of Vilnius province and Western districts of Minsk province) as a result of the Soviet-Polish war and the Treaty of Riga of March 18, 1921. A policy of polonization and introducing Catholicism was carried out there. The Polish government of the 1920s pursued an active policy of colonization of the Belarusian lands by settlers who were former Polish officers.

The next stage of the process of "the movement of borders" was entering of Western Belarus in the BSSR, after the USSR and Germany signed a nonaggression treaty on 23 August 1939 (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). The treaty was supplied by secret protocols, in accordance with them the territory of Poland was divided into the spheres of influence of the USSR and Germany.



Belarusian SSR on September 1, 1939

On 1 September, 1939 – Germany attacked Poland, and the Second World War started. The Red Army troops entered Western Belarus on September 17, 1939. The border was secured by the Treaty of Friendship and Border between the USSR and Germany of September 28, 1939. In October-November 1939, the Popular Assembly took a decision about affiliation of Western Belarus in the USSR and its reunification with the BSSR.



Belarusian SSR on March 1, 1940

The number and proportion of Poles in Belarus increased significantly. In 1940, however, the Soviet government started to exile Poles from the territory of Belarus. In accordance with the Treaty of 1944 between the USSR and Poland, 130 000 Poles were repatriated. In the following years the number of those repatriated reached 274,200. This number included many Belarusian Catholics who identified themselves as Poles.

Right after the warfare was finished on the territory of Belarus, the border problem appeared. The USSR insisted on the necessity of restoration of the border of June 1941 in its negotiations with allies. J. Stalin came to agreement with the USA and the British governments. However, the USSR Western border (and correspondingly, the BSSR's border) was specified several times

during 1944-1955. The majority of those “specifications” reduced to the movements of the border to the East. For instance, on 20 August 1944 the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR took a decision to pass over a larger part of Bialystok region to Poland, which is highlighted in green in the map below.

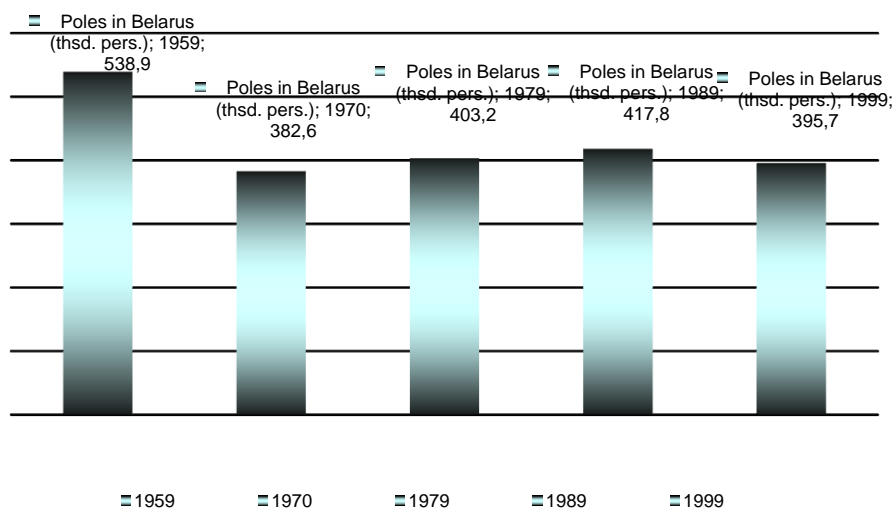


The Belarusian SSR in 1946

The Treaty of Repatriation of the Polish Population from Belarus and of the Belarusian Population from Poland was signed between the governments of the BSSR and the Polish Committee of National Liberation in September 1944 in order to regulate matters of contention. As a result, more than 274,000 people left the BSSR during 1945-1947. The majority of those who left were Poles. Also it is necessary to take into consideration that a lot of Poles were brought out to work in Germany by the German state during the occupation. They either stayed in the West or returned to Poland.

After the repatriation, 264,000 Poles and 287,000 Catholic Belarusians remained on the territory of Belarus. A new stage of repatriating Poles from Belarus took place during 1955-1959. It covered the Polish population of the Western regions of Belarus and Ukraine. According to the 1979 census, 403,200 Poles lived in Belarus. This figure rose to 418,000 a decade later, according to the 1989 census. 300,000 of them lived in Grodno region. According to the 1999 census, 395 700 Poles reside in Belarus.

The diagram presents the official statistical data



Source: www.belstat.gov.by

1.1.2 Political overview

Belarusian-Polish relations have a long and complicated history. During different periods they were characterized, on the one hand, by such definitions as unity of views, mutual understanding, friendship, and, on the other hand, by discord and distrust. But it is necessary to stress, that they have never reached open animosity. This is no accident: geographically Poland and Belarus are close neighbours; the same proximity is observed in culture, language, traditions and customs. The histories of the Belarusian and Polish peoples are closely intertwined and filled with the periods of upswings and downfalls. It predetermined the presence of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Belarusians residing on the territory of contemporary Poland and having its citizenship, and also about 400 thousand Poles – citizens of Belarus. There are not so many states in the world that have such close common historical links.

Recurrent disagreements and misunderstandings are mainly a reflection of versatility and inconsistency in the modern world, its unsettled and imperfect character. Foreign political obligations of Poland to the European Union have put a definite negative mark on the Belarusian-Polish relations. Being an EU member, the Polish government adheres to the common position of the alliance on the so-called “Belarusian issue”, what is traced repeatedly in the analysis of the Belarusian-Polish relations after Poland’s joining the EU.

Assessing foreign-political and foreign-economic connections of the two countries in general, it is worth remarking, that with all the side-effects they mainly qualify the requirements claimed to bilateral interstate relations. The Treaty of Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Poland and Belarus was approved on 2 March, 1992. The documents, still acting at present, were passed at that time. They are, in particular: Principles of Trans-border Cooperation Treaty; Agreement on the Issue of Frontier Crossing Points; Cooperation Agreement on Fighting Organized Crime; Good-Neighbourhood and Cooperation Treaty, etc.

The first meeting of the President of Belarus A. Lukashenko and the President of Poland A. Kwasniewski took place in 2003 in Saint Petersburg. During 2003-2005 meetings, negotiations of the Prime-Ministers, secretaries of Security Councils, Vice-Prime-Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, heads of the controlling bodies, other governmental top-executives of Belarus and Poland took place.

Development of parliamentary interaction acquired momentum also: on September 19, 2003 a meeting of the heads of the Higher Chambers of the Parliaments of the two countries took place for the first time during the whole history of the Belarusian-Polish relations. Meetings of Parliamentary Cooperation Groups of Belarus and Poland became regular. The results of these meetings were agreements about opening new border crossing points on the Belarusian-Polish border, decisions about the reconstruction of the Augustow Canal, and opening a monument to Adam Mickiewicz in Minsk.

It is logical and natural, that along with positive trends, disputable moments, including the political ones, can appear in the relations of neighbouring states. It happened just like this in the relations between Belarus and Poland. The crisis of 2005 that happened around the non-governmental association the “Union of Poles in Belarus” paralyzed, in fact, further development of the bilateral Belarusian-Polish political dialogue and deteriorated inter-parliamentary interaction significantly. In 2005 a dispute emerged over the public organization “The Union of Poles in Belarus”. The Belarusian authorities did not recognize the results of the V congress of “The Union of Poles in Belarus”, where Anzhelika Boris was elected as the chairwoman of the union. A group of the union members, led by A. Boris, tried to conduct the next conference, breaching

the order. The violations in running the candidates predetermined illegitimacy of the congress. A decision was taken to conduct the second congress, where the delegates elected a new leadership of the Union. Yuzef Luchnik was elected as the chair of the “Union of Poles in Belarus”. Thus, there are two public associations of Poles, acting in Belarus in parallel, that call themselves “the Union of Poles”.

A significant impact on further development of the Belarusian-Polish interaction virtually in all the directions of cooperation was exerted by the results of 2005 Parliamentary and Presidential elections in Poland, as well as by the outcomes of 2006 Presidential election in Belarus. Poland toughened its policy of “freezing” official contacts with the Belarusian authorities. The Belarusian party developed a “package of initiatives” with suggestions about normalization and development of relations in definite spheres of the Belarusian-Polish cooperation, offered to the Polish side. Along with that, it is necessary to mention the initiative of Poland and Switzerland concerned with negotiating an agreement about an association and creation of the new European economic area – the project “Eastern Partnership”, and its consequent proposition to the European Commission. The fact that its initiator was Poland tells about an observable positive shift in Belarusian-Polish relations.

The victory of the party “Civic Platform” in the early parliamentary elections in Poland in October 2007 and the formation of a new government headed by the party leader D. Tusk, did not lead to a revival of dialogue between the official structures of Warsaw and Minsk. The Polish authorities considered that activation of political contacts could be realized only after restoration of democratic standards in Belarus. However this position was unacceptable for the Belarusian government, as far as it was estimated as an intervention in the domestic affairs of the Belarusian state.

Carrying the law about the “Polish Identity Card”¹ into effect was not met with understanding in Minsk. This identity document grants certain rights and privileges to its holders. Citizens of any of the ex-USSR republic are entitled to apply for it. Potential holders should speak basic Polish and prove that their father, mother, grandparents or great-grandparents were Poles. The card holder is entitled to receive a long-term multiple entry visa, to work or study in Poland, and to gain some other additional privileges on the territory of Poland. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus protested that the document was enacted without any preliminary consultations with Belarus, and that putting the law into enactment could cause tension in the Belarusian society, and lead to a general mistrust among the Belarusian citizens of various nationalities. At the present moment a lot of citizens of the Republic of Belarus of Polish origin hold the Polish identity card.

The intensity of the Belarusian-Polish political dialogue increased noticeably in autumn 2008. At that time a Belarusian governmental delegation, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister A. Kobyakov, visited Poland, where delegation members took part in the XVIII Economic Forum in Krynitsa-Gurskaya. The Minister for Agriculture and Supplies S. Shapiro also visited Poland. During the same autumn a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Belarus and Poland took place at the Belarusian governmental residence “Viskuli” in Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park. The participants of the negotiations focused their attention on the opportunities for enlargement of the bilateral cooperation in the frameworks of the EU’s «Eastern dimension».

¹ The Law about the Polish Identity card was passed by the Polish Parliament on September 7, 2007. Legal changes to the Polish Identity card were enacted on October 24, 2008.

The outcomes of the next Parliamentary election in Belarus, that took place September 28, 2008, cooled down the enthusiasm of the Polish politicians about the perspectives of dialogue development with the Belarusian official structures. Official Warsaw estimated critically the results of the electoral campaign, considering it insufficiently democratic, but along with that it expressed its willingness to carry out a dialogue with Belarus and assist to the dialogue between Belarus and the EU.

It is possible to remark, that during 2008-2009 the Polish politicians started to show more interest in extending the dialogue with official structures in Minsk, but they appeared to be unprepared to reconsider drastically their approaches to carrying out interaction with Belarus. As a consequence, the intensity of the Belarusian-Polish dialogue did not manage to achieve the level of intensity that Belarus has with its other neighbours and EU member counties.

1.2 Legislative overview

The Constitution

The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and the legislation of the Republic of Belarus acknowledge existence of ethnic communities as a component part of the people of Belarus. In accordance with the article 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, the state regulates relations between social, ethnic and other communities at the basis of the principles of equality before the law, respect of their rights and interests. Article 15 provides that the state is responsible for preservation of historical-cultural heritage, free development of cultures of all the ethnic communities, residing in the Republic of Belarus.

Belarusian legislation on minority rights

Preamble to the Law of the Republic of Belarus “**About ethnic minorities in the Republic of Belarus**” says, that it is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, principles of international law in the sphere of human rights and ethnic minorities and is aimed at creation of conditions for free development of ethnic minorities, and also protection of rights and legitimate interests of the persons, referring themselves to ethnic minorities.

The citizens, who refer themselves to ethnic minorities, possess a complex of specific rights, which realization is provided in accordance with the regulations of the Constitution and of the laws of the Republic of Belarus. The regulations of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Belarus, which secure the indicated rights, present clearly the mechanisms of their realization, including various ways of participation of this category of citizens in taking decisions, concerned with their legal rights and interests.

It is necessary to note the following among the main rights of the citizens, who are referred to ethnic minorities, and their legislative realization.

Articles 14, 15, 22, 23, 36, 50 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus provide that the state regulates the relations between social, ethnic and other communities at the basis of the principles of equality before the law, respecting their rights and interests; the state is responsible for preservation of their historical-cultural and spiritual heritage, free development of cultures of all the ethnic communities residing in the Republic of Belarus; everybody is equal before the law and has rights to equal protection of rights and legal interests without any discrimination; nobody can use any advantages and privileges contradicting the law; everyone has a right for freedom of unions; everyone has a right to preserve his/her national identity, as well as no one can be forced to determine and indicate his/her national identity; insulting national dignity is persecuted by

law; everyone has a right to speak his/her native language, to choose the language of communication; the state guarantees the freedom for choosing the language of upbringing and education, in accordance with the law.

In conformity with the Law of the Republic of Belarus “**About ethnic minorities in the Republic of Belarus**”, belonging of the citizen of the Republic of Belarus to an ethnic minority is his/her personal choice, and its realization cannot bring any negative consequences for him/her. Any direct or indirect limitation of rights and freedoms of citizens for their belonging to an ethnic minority is not allowed, as well as attempts of assimilation against their will. Nobody can be enforced to determine and indicate his/her national identity, neither to prove his/her national identity, nor to refuse from it.

Article 13 of this law presupposes that the citizens of the Republic of Belarus enjoy the protection of the state on equal basis, irrespective of their national identity.

Any actions aimed at discrimination on ethnic grounds, creation of obstacles in realization of their rights by ethnic minorities, stirring up national hatred, entail liability in accordance with the legislation.

In line with article 6 of this law, the Republic of Belarus guarantees equal political, economic and social rights and freedoms to the citizens referring themselves to ethnic minorities. In this regard, the legislation of the Republic of Belarus provides equality of the persons, belonging to ethnic minorities without their division by the principle of residence prescription. Thus, in accordance with article 1 of the law, the persons who domicile at the territory of Belarus, hold its citizenship, who are different from the majority of the population of the republic by their origin, language, culture or traditions are understood as belonging to ethnic minorities.

Among the rights, enlisted in the article 6 of this law, there is the following: a right for creation of public associations and joining the acting public associations. The order of creation of public association of national character is realized in the order determined for all the public associations in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Belarus “**About Public Associations**”.

At the territory of Belarus there are no obstacles for stateless persons, citizens of the other states for participation in the activities of national cultural associations.

Awareness by the citizens of their belonging to a definite nationality causes a need to study one’s native language, to teach and bring up children in this language, to study and to conceptualize historical fates of ethnic groups, interact actively with the ethnic states, to follow ones traditions and customs, to revive and promote ones’ national culture. The legislation of the Republic of Belarus, created during the last decade, guarantees realization of such rights, both individually and in group form.

Article 2 of the law of the Republic of Belarus “**About Languages in the Republic of Belarus**” states that the Republic of Belarus takes care about free development and usage of all the national languages, spoken by the population of the Republic. Along with that, the legislation of the Republic of Belarus does not regulate linguistic performance in unofficial relations.

In accordance with article 3 of the abovementioned law, the citizens of the Republic of Belarus have a guaranteed right to speak their national language.

Article 6 provides that any privileges or limitation of personal rights by language criteria are inadmissible, and a public insult, discrediting of the state and other languages, creation of ob-

stacles and limitations in speaking them, propagation of enmity at the linguistic basis lead to statutory responsibility.

In line with article 7, acts of local government bodies and self-government bodies are accepted and published in the national language of the majority of the population in this or that area, when it is necessary.

Articles 11, 13, 14, 15, 18 provide that, when it is necessary, any languages can be the languages of congresses, conferences and other forums, services, legal proceedings, legal assistance.

In accordance with article 21 of this law, representatives of all the nationalities living in the country have a right for upbringing and receiving education in their native language.

In accordance with articles 22 and 23 of this law, it is possible to create pre-school establishments or separate groups for children, secondary general education schools or forms, where upbringing and education is realized in the language of ethnic minority or study of the ethnic minority language is organized.

Article 26 of the law “About Languages” also guarantees preservation and development of culture in the languages of the other peoples, whose representatives reside in the republic.

According to article 27 of the law of the Republic of Belarus “About Languages in the Republic of Belarus”, the language of any nationality, which representatives reside in the republic can be the language of mass media.

Article 6 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus “**About Education in the Republic of Belarus**” states, that at the places of dense residence of the citizens of one nationality the study of the language of this nationality is organized at educational establishments or institutions of upbringing, it is possible to create schools, groups or forms, where upbringing or education is carried out in the corresponding language.

1.3 Demographic Overview

1.3.1 The 1999 census

The Polish minority in Belarus numbers about 395,700 people (3,9% of the total population) in accordance with the results of 1999 census. In the course of the census the Belarusian citizens can only identify themselves as belonging to one nationality. After the Russian minority, the Poles form the second largest minority group in Belarus. Behavioural patterns of the Poles living in Belarus are not so much different from the behavioural patterns of the titular nation representatives. Most of them are Belarusian citizens and their manners, lifestyle, views are similar. However, there are some special cultural traditions, connected mainly with religious sphere. They celebrate the Catholic holidays and the way of celebration, the dates, the ceremonies are a little bit different.

1.3.2 Language Use

According to the 1999 census, the Belarusian Poles speak Belarusian and Russian predominantly in the home.

Population distribution by nationalities and languages in the Republic of Belarus in 1999

	Number of persons of this nationality, thsd. people	From the total number of persons of this nationality, in per cents			
		Consider the language of their nationality to be their native language	Indicated the language they usually speak at home		
			Belarusian	Russian	other languages
Poles	395,7	16,5	57,6	37,7	4,7

Source: <http://belstat.gov.by>

According to these statistics, 16.5% of the Belarusian Poles consider their native language to be Polish in the sense that it was the native language of their parents or grandparents, but only 4.7% of the Belarusian Poles actually speak Polish as their first language, and use it as a means of family communication.² By contrast, the majority of Poles in Belarus (57,6%) indicate Belarusian as the language they usually speak at home. These figures also highlight the level of assimilation not only to the Belarusian language of the titular state at the present moment, but also to the Russian language, due to russification carried out during the Soviet period: 37,7% speak Russian at home.

1.3.3 Age structure

The age distribution of the Poles is similar to the demographic structure and waves, typical for the general age distribution in Belarus.

Population structure of definite nationalities of the Republic Belarus by age, in %

Nationality	Totally	At the age of, years								
		younger than 6	6-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 and >
Poles	100	5,0	4,6	11,8	12,8	16,5	12,8	12,0	13,9	10,7
Belarusians	100	6,4	5,8	17,1	14,1	14,9	14,2	8,9	10,4	8,2

The largest number of the representatives of the Polish nationality is at the age interval 30-39 years compared to the other age cohorts, 16,5% of the Poles are in this age cohort.

1.3.4 Geographical distribution

The Poles are distributed on the territory of Belarus as a compact group in the Western and Northern-Western regions of the country. 45,6 % of the representatives of the Polish minority in Belarus reside in rural areas, the rest – in urban ones. A large part of the Polish minority (74,3%), almost 300 000 persons, are settled in Grodno region, where they constitute a quarter (24,8%) of the total population.

² It is logical to suppose that by other languages Polish is meant here.

Density of the ethnic minority among regional population of Belarus, in %

Region (name)	Density (%)
Brest region	1,8
Vitebsk region	1,5
Gomel' region	0,2
Grodno region	24,8
Minsk region	1,9
Mogilyev region	0,2
Minsk	1,0
Total country	3,9

Regional distribution of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus, in %

Source: National census of the population of the Republic of Belarus, 1999.

In Ivje, Grodno, Braslav, Zel'va, Voskovyssk, Lida areas they make more than a quarter of the population (from 25 % to 40 %), in Schuchin area – more than a half (51 %), and the overwhelming majority in Voronovo area - 83 %. Such a significant predominance of the persons of some nationality is an exceptional phenomenon for Belarus. These territories were a part of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth for a long time, and were under the power of Poland afterwards, which has had an impact on the ethnic self-consciousness of the people, settled at this territory.

A comparison of urbanization rate by national groups illustrates that both Poles and Belarusians in Belarus are disproportionately rural and less well educated. 67,4% of the Belarusians and 54,4% of the Poles live in urban settlements, while among the Ukrainians, Russians and Jews these figures are 78,0%, 85,2% and 97,8%, correspondingly. A comparison of the educational level by national groups reveals that for 1000 persons of the corresponding nationality there are 120 Belarusians with higher education, 261 Russians, 89 Poles, 221 Ukrainians and 405 Jews. The high proportion of Belarusians and Poles who reside in rural areas determines their higher share of participation in agriculture and forestry. The Polish minority, like the Belarusian majority, is therefore disproportionately concentrated in the countryside and this has a negative impact on the educational level and employment structure of its members.

1.3.5 Religious affiliation

The state census does not record religious affiliation of a person. It is only possible to provide figures for the number of Roman Catholics, which have been ascertained by sociological studies in their research of religious organizations. Thus, in accordance with the sociological study, conducted in 2006 by Belarusian State University within the contract with the Commissioner on Ethnic and Religious Affairs, 9,3 % of the citizens of the Republic of Belarus identify themselves with the Catholic denomination.

According to the ENRI-VIS data, the absolute majority of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus refer themselves to the Roman-Catholic church (97,8 %). There exists a clear correlation of the Polish nationality and the Catholic faith: the overwhelming majority of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus believe, that in order to feel a Pole, it is necessary to be a Catholic (87,7 %). For the majority of them, the Polish-Catholic religion is not just a belonging to some faith, but a way of life in some sense. The majority of the Poles, who participated in the study, consider themselves to be believers, go to religious services to Catholic churches regularly (several times a week - 11,7 % of the respondents, once a week – 42,9 %, once a month – 21,4 %, several times a year – 18,3 %).

1.3.6 Education

The Polish language is studied by more than 22 thousand people on constant basis. There are two establishments of secondary education with Polish as the main language of studies (all school lessons are in Polish), they are secondary general school № 36 in Grodno and № 8 in Volkovyssk, where 478 children study at present. Besides that, there are primary forms at school № 9 in Brest city, where teaching is provided in Polish. Mainly the children from the Polish ethnic minority families attend the schools, where teaching is provided in Polish. During 2008/2009 academic year the Polish language was studied by 5044 pupils of the Belarusian schools in various organizational forms (subjects, open classrooms, vocational courses, circles), and in 2009/2010 – by 5000 pupils. Children can also attend language courses outside school. Courses for children are organized at local, regional and national Houses of Youth and Children. Some offer them for free, others charge for them.

The educational system for ethnic minorities is integrated into the national system. Schools with full or partial education in ethnic minorities' languages (just like all the other schools) are under supervision of local educational committees. The funds necessary for the development of education of national minorities are allocated from the state and local budgets as an integral part of total educational expenses in the Republic of Belarus.

As mentioned above, for every 1,000 members of the Polish community, 89 Poles have higher education. While this is a comparatively low level of university education, compared to other nationalities in Belarus, the share of Poles with higher education has increased quicker over the last three decades, even quicker than among the Belarusian population.³

In the frameworks of university education, the Polish language is studied at 10 universities both in the capital and in all the regional centers of Belarus. Seven Belarusian universities have chairs of Polish Philology. Meanwhile, Grodno University has prepared 451 teachers of the Polish lan-

³ The national structure of the Republic of Belarus and distribution of languages. The results of the national census of the population of the Republic of Belarus, 1999, Minsk 2001. – (in Russian: Национальный состав Республики Беларусь и распространённость языков. Итоги переписи населения Республики Беларусь 1999 г., Минск 2001).

guage and literature since 1994. Grodno Pedagogical College trained more than 400 persons as «kinder-garden teacher with the studies of the Polish language, vocational classes or circle teacher of the Polish language». 32 persons graduated from Volkovyssk College at the speciality «primary school teacher entitled to teach the Polish language».

1.3.7 Employment

Among the heads (representatives) of power bodies and authorities of all the levels, including heads of institutions, organizations and enterprises (in percentage from the total number of the employed population of the corresponding nationality) the Poles constitute 8,5%, the Belarusians - 9,9%, the Ukrainians 13%, the Russians – 13,6%, the Jews – 24,3%. The picture is approximately the same with professionals of high qualification, that is the percentage is higher among the Jews, Russians and Ukrainians (35,3%, 23,3%, and 18,3% correspondingly), and it is lower among the Belarusians - 14,6% and the Poles – 13,0%. Additionally, the employment structure of the Belarusians and the Poles differs by a larger share of the qualified workers, employed in agriculture, forestry, hunt, fish-rearing: 5,3% and 7% correspondingly, and the shares of the Russians, Ukrainians and Jews are 2,8%, 5,2%, and 0,2%, correspondingly. In Grodno region the Poles constitute 17% of the heads of industrial and 23% of the heads of agricultural enterprises. Among the Poles residing in Belarus there are rectors of universities, famous scientists, people of culture, businessmen, medical doctors.

1.4 Polish minority self-organisation in Belarus

1.4.1 Political organization

There is not a separate political party of the Polish minority in Belarus. It is worth mentioning, that Belarus has a majority election system: at Parliamentary elections and elections for the local Councils candidates run from territorial districts (along with that, the candidates can be either members of political parties, or members of public voluntary associations, or they can be independent candidates also). Deputies elected from territorial districts at the places of dense residence of Poles (that is – in Grodno region) are often Poles, that is why Poles have their representatives both in the Parliament, and in the local Councils. Representatives of the Polish minority participate in governmental institutions of Belarus, including the Parliament. Thus, in Grodno region the deputies of the Polish nationality constitute 13% in the Regional Council, 18% – in the City and Area Councils and 23% – in Village and Rural councils.

1.4.2 Civil society organisation

The largest cultural association of the Poles in the Republic of Belarus is the “Union of Poles in Belarus”. It is mainly active in Grodno region. There the union has branch-offices in every district, town and in a significant number of villages. The union is also strong in Western parts of Vitebsk region, Minsk region and Brest region. At the present moment, 72 structural units of the “Union of Poles in Belarus” (UPB) are registered on the territory of Belarus, including: 8 subdivisions in Brest region; 7 subdivisions in Vitebsk region; 3 subdivisions in Gomel region; 36 subdivisions in Grodno region; 16 subdivisions in Minsk region and the city of Minsk; 2 subdivisions in Mogilev region. The Statute of the Union of Poles in Belarus describes the main aims of this organisation as the following: national revival, the formation of public activity by organisation’s members, and popularization of the Polish language and Polish culture.

In Belarus 16 Houses of Poles act as centers of Polish culture and education, together with more than 50 Polish choirs and dancing groups. The Polish art groups of Belarus take part in national and regional festivals of national cultures in the city of Grodno.

The most famous and active Polish societies in Belarus are the abovementioned “Union of Poles in Belarus”, the Fellowship of the Polish culture in Lida region, Polish folk singing and dancing group “Lechici”, Association of the Belarusian Poles of Grodno region, “Polska Miecz Skholna”.

1.4.3 Arts and Culture

Annually the Polish ethnic minority’s public voluntary organizations arrange and carry out dozens of socially important cultural-educational and sport events in Belarus. Among them there are Days of Polish culture in Vitebsk and Minsk regions, exhibition-fair of folk craftsmen «Kazjuki» in the city of Grodno, polonaise holidays in the town of Slonim and the «Night of Saint Jan» in Grodno area, the festival «The Augustow Canal in the culture of three peoples», literature-poetic evenings «Over the Neman» in the village Bogatyrevichi, Mostovskij area, devoted to the memory of the poetess E. Orzeszkowa.

The public association «Union of Poles in Belarus» is one of the founders of the Annual International Scientific Conference «Way to Reciprocity», which gathers academics, scientists, public officers and representatives of public non-profit making organisations. Historical and current problems in the mutual relations between the peoples of Belarus and Poland are discussed at this conference, as well as their language, literature, cultural connections.

Polish ethnic minority amateur talent groups take part in the events devoted to the state holidays, international and regional festivals, various cultural events, conducted both in the capital of Belarus and in the regions. Polish language competitions are regularly organized among the pupils who study the Polish language.

1.4.4 Religious organisations

The Higher Spiritual Catholic Divinity School opened in 1990 in Grodno. Training is carried out there in Polish only. A lot of Belarusian Catholic places of worship are both religious and also cultural-educational centers. Representatives of various nations and ethnic groups exercise the Roman Catholic religion in the Republic of Belarus, and a significant number of the Belarusian Catholics are Poles.⁴

1.4.5 Mass Media

Four newspapers are published in the Polish language: “Glos znad Niemna” (once a week), magazine “Slowo Ojczyste” (twice per month), “Ziemia Lidzka” (twice per month), magazine “Misericordia” (once per three months). The magazine «Magazyn Polski» is also published in Grodno (once per two months). These issues are of public-political and public-cultural direction. Their target audience is the Poles residing in Belarus.

According to the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus, there are no radio or TV channels in the Polish language registered in Belarus. There used to be some, though, up to 2002.

⁴ The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI gave an audience to the President of the Republic of Belarus A. Lukashenko 27 April, 2009 in Vatican.

In 2009 the TV-Radio company sent a letter to the Ministry of Information and the President Administration offering to re-activate such programs. This question is being processed now. In the structure of the Belarusian TV-radio company there is radio “Belarus”, broadcasting in five languages, including Polish. Radio “Belarus” broadcasts daily throughout the whole territory of Belarus. Grodno regional radio has daily informational and analytical programs in the Polish language (30 minutes daily).

1.5 Overview of existing surveys

Our organisation did not carry out especial studies of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus before ENRI-East project. As far as we are informed, the Polish minority was not studied so closely, with so many details before ENRI-East. That is why the project ENRI-East is unique and innovative.

1.6 Conclusions and generalizations

The Poles in Belarus represent a so-called «classical minority», that is a group, that did not migrate generally. “Movement of borders” took place in historical context, when definite territories belong to different states during various historical periods. Chronology of the events that influenced the ethnogenesis of the Poles residing at the territory of modern Belarus dates back to XIV century. During a long period the population, residing at the territory of modern Western Belarus (where more than 75% of the Poles reside now) experienced several opposite waves of Polonization and Russification, periods of Catholicism expansion, appearance and disappearance of the Uniat church, devastating wars.

At the present moment the Poles in Belarus are the third national group by their size after the Belarusians and the Russians. The Poles are settled at the territory of Belarus as a dense array in Western and North-Western regions of the country, and mainly in rural areas. A large part of the Poles reside in Grodno region, where they constitute a fifth of the population. In Grodno region there are areas with a high relative density of the resident Poles. A share of the Poles from the total population of the republic has decreased during the last decades, mainly because of natural movement, assimilation processes and migration.

Absolute majority of the Polish ethnic minority representatives in Belarus refer themselves to the Roman-Catholic church. The Roman-Catholic church is one of the largest denominations in Belarus by the number of registered communities. It plays a significant role in religious life of the republic, being the second denomination by the number of believers in our country.

The Polish minority in Belarus does not have its political party. The largest cultural association of the Poles in Belarus is the «Union of Poles in Belarus». The main aims of this organization, in accordance with its Statute, are: national renaissance, formation of public activity of the organization’s members, popularization of the Polish language and culture. Non-governmental organization of the Polish ethnic minority organize and carry out dozens socially significant cultural and sport events annually.

Representatives of the Polish ethnic minority have access to education in their native language at the levels of primary and secondary education, also it is possible to study the Polish language, literature and history both in the system of school and out-of-school education. The Belarusian system of university education also offers wide opportunities to study the Polish language.

Representatives of the Polish community in Belarus have access to printed mass media, published by the Polish non-governmental organizations, there are information programs broadcasted in the Polish language in structure of the national state radio.

2 MAIN FINDINGS OF THE ENRI-VIS SURVEY (ENRI-VIS)

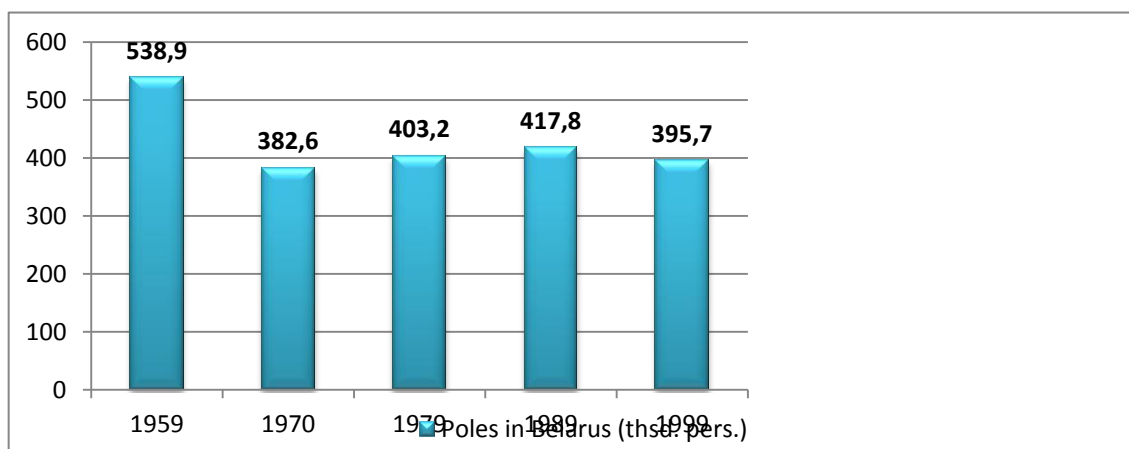
Natalia Veremeeva / Oksana Ivanyuto / David Rotman

International comparative report «Interaction of European, National and Regional Identities: Nations between States, along New Borders of the European Union» (ENRI-East) is focused on the analysis of social past and present of some national or ethnic groups that can be studied as specific examples of the «nations between states». In this project Center for Sociological and Political Researches of Belarusian State University carried out the study of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus.

The Poles in Belarus are a so-called «classical minority», that is a group that did not migrate generally. «Movement of borders» took place in the historical context, when some territories belonged to different states in various historical periods.

The Poles are spread at the territory of Belarus in compact massif in Western and North-Western regions of the country, in rural areas mainly. In accordance with 1999 census, 395,7 thousand persons of the Polish nationality lived in total in the republic. It is 22 thousand persons less than in accordance with 1989 census. Dynamics of changes in the number of the Poles, residing in Belarus, is presented in picture 1.

Picture 1 – Dynamics of changes in the number of the Poles, residing in Belarus, thsd. pers.



At the present time the Poles in Belarus are the third national group by quantity after the Belarusians and the Russians, and make up 3,1 % from the total population of the country. In accordance with the state census of the republic of Belarus, conducted in 2009, 294 549 Poles reside in Belarus. The share of the Poles in the total population has been decreasing constantly at the territory of the republic, mainly for the cost of natural movement, assimilation processes and migration.

The majority of the Poles reside in the Western region of Belarus. Table 1 presents regional distribution of the Poles:

Table 1 – Regional distribution of the Poles in Belarus (in %)

Region	Regional distribution
Brest region	5,9
Vitebsk region	3,7
Gomel region	0,7
Grodno region	78,4
Minsk region	6,1
Mogilev region	0,6
Minsk city	4,6

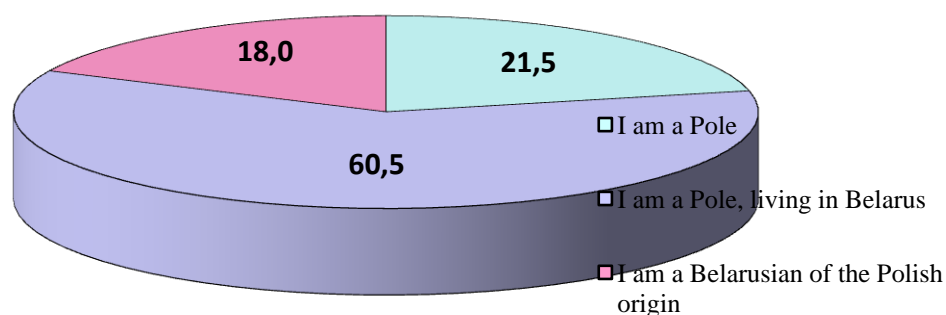
A large part of the Poles (78,4 %) reside in Grodno region, where they make up a fifth of the total population (21,5 %). Areas of compact settlement of the Poles exist in Grodno region. In the other areas of Belarus the Poles are settled diffusely mainly, except for some unique «Polish» villages with a high density of the Poles in Minsk, Vitebsk and Brest regions.

In 2009 in the frameworks of the project ENRI-East, Center for Sociological and Political Researches of Belarusian State University carried out a sociological survey of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus. The sample was 800 persons. The study included the areas with various density of Poles' settlement: we interviewed about a half of the respondents (47,4%) in the areas, where the Poles make up more than 30% from the total population; 46,8% of the respondents in the areas with settlement density from 20% to 30%; and 5,8 % of the respondents were interviewed in the areas with settlement density from 10% to 20%. The survey was conducted in 18 areas of three regions of the Republic of Belarus: in 15 areas of Grodno region, in 2 areas of Minsk region, in 1 area of Vitebsk region. Thus, 39 urban and rural settlements were covered.

2.1 Ethnicity and ethnic identification, national identification

At the basis of the analysis of the empirical data gained we will study some peculiarities of ethnic self-identification, as well as the ways applied by the Poles in Belarus to preserve their identity.

In the course of the quantitative study the respondents were offered to choose a statement, that best describes their own ethnic status, see picture 2.

Picture 2 – Ethnic status of the respondents, in %

More than a half of the interviewed (60,5 %) chose the statement «I am a Pole, living in Belarus», relating their own identity not only with the Polish nation, but with the country of residence also, and stressing their group belonging; the answer «I am a Pole» was given by 21,5 % of the respondents, demonstrating an absolute level of subjective identification with the Polish ethnic group; and «I am a Belarusian of the Polish origin» was answered by 18,0 % – this group of the respondents, calling themselves Belarusians, stressed their Polish origin.

A definition of their own status when describing themselves is demonstrative for the representatives of the Polish minority. The respondents chose the most important for them characteristics from the list of social-demographic statuses, see table 2.

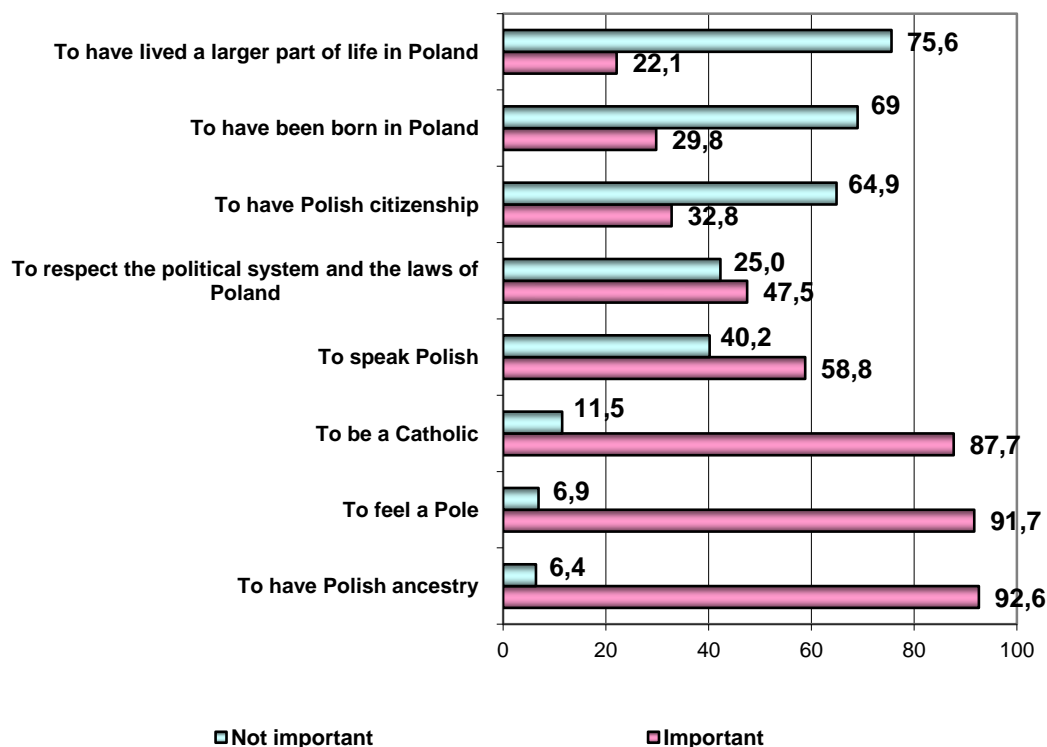
Table 2 – Hierarchy of social-demographic statuses of the respondents, in %

	1-st choice	2-nd choice	3-rd choice
a. My current or previous occupation	11,0	7,0	8,4
b. My gender (that is being a man or a woman)	15,6	12,8	11,3
c. My age group (that is, young, middle age, old)	6,5	6,0	7,1
d. My religion (or being agnostic or atheist)	23,1	30,1	12,8
e. Being a Pole	23,5	21,8	13,1
f. My social class (that is upper, middle, lower, working, or similar categories)	3,5	4,3	4,4
g. Coming from the settlement You live	5,0	7,5	17,9
h. My preferred political party, group or movement	0	0	0,5
i. Being a European	0,6	0,9	2,3
j. To be a citizen of Belarus	10,4	8,1	17,8

Ethnic and denominational statuses are called as the first choice with the highest frequency (23,5 % and 23,1 % correspondingly); the same statuses dominate in the second choice (21,8 % and 30,1 %); in the third choice the Poles refer themselves with the place where they live with the highest frequency (17,9 %) and stress the importance of the status «to be a citizen of Belarus» (17,8 %).

The researchers ask a question: what the representatives of the Polish ethnic community of Belarus consider to be the most important when defining a real Pole? The absolute majority of the respondents believe, that in order to be a Pole it is important to have ancestors Poles (92,6 %), to feel oneself a Pole (91,7 %), to be a Catholic (87,7%). More than a half (58,8 %) believe, that it is necessary to speak Polish for it. In the opinion of the respondents it is not so important to have lived a larger part of life in Poland in order to be a Pole (22,1 %), to have been born in Poland (29,8 %) or to have Polish citizenship (32,8 %). Thus, the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus single out the main criteria of the Polish identity (among the ethno-differentiating features) and this is ethnicity of ancestors, subjective self-awareness (a desire to feel a member of the ethnic group – a psychological criterion) and religious affiliation, in a lesser degree – speaking the Polish language. The share of those, who correlate the Polish ethnicity with the ethnic-territorial characteristics is significantly smaller, see picture 3.

Picture 3 – Criteria of the Polish identity, in %



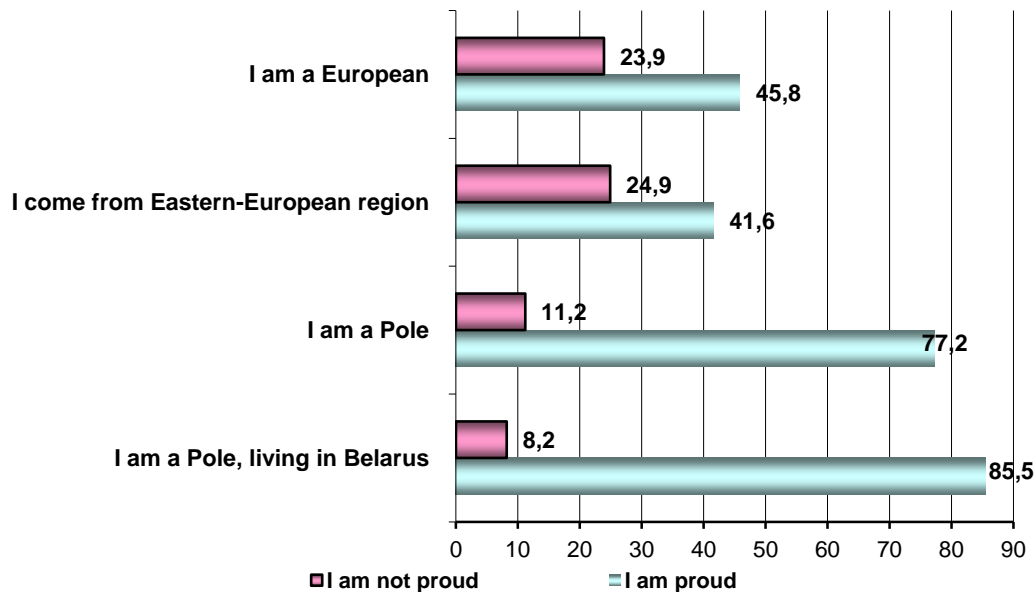
Studying the ways of formation and preserving ethnic identity in detail, we will explore the data, gained in the course of the quantitative survey.

As it has been remarked, the ethnicity of ancestry is one of the determining moments of self-identification for the Poles, residing in Belarus. As far as we are dealing with the ethnic minority here, and its representatives live in heterogeneous ethnic and cultural environment, an important role in preservation of the ethnic identity is played by inculturation (inter-family and inter-generational socialization). A strong conductor of the Polish ethnic identity can be called the family, where the key role belongs to the ancestry (parents and grandparents).

Ethnic identity is not only an awareness of your sameness with the ethnic community, but also its estimation, significance of membership in it, shared ethnic feelings. The opinion about ethnic community is manifested in the ethnic attitudes. Positive attitudes include satisfaction with membership in the ethnic community, a desire to belong to it, a pride for the achievements of your people.

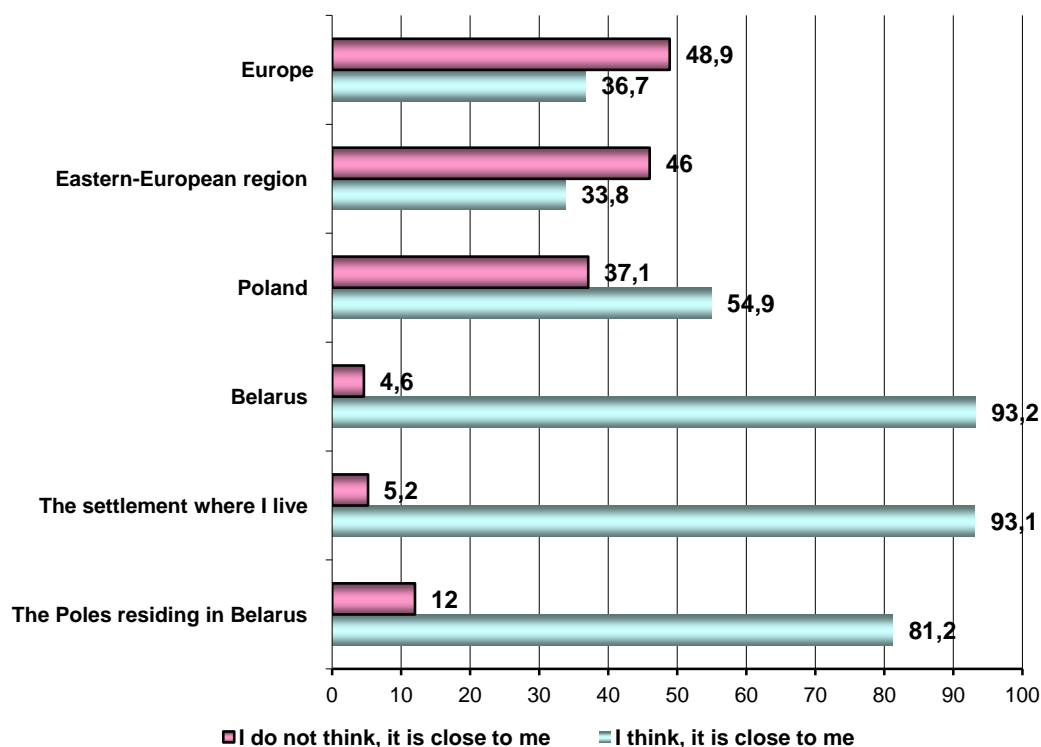
It is worth mentioning that the majority of the representatives of the Polish community, who participated in the quantitative survey (77,4 %) feel pride, being aware that they are Poles, and 85,5 % are proud that they are the Poles, living in Belarus. Significantly less respondents feel pride in regards with regional and European affiliation (41,6% and 45,8%, correspondingly) in comparison with the ethnic one, see picture 4.

Picture 4 – Feeling of pride expressed by the respondents in regards with their belonging to various groups, in %



Feeling of commonness with the place of their residence and the country of residence (its perception as a homeland) is expressed quite strongly by the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority – more than 90 % consider Belarus and the settlement where they reside to be close to them. A little more than a half of the respondents consider Poland to be close to them. The Poles residing in Belarus feel less affinity with Eastern-European region and Europe as a whole (about a third of the interviewed), see picture 5.

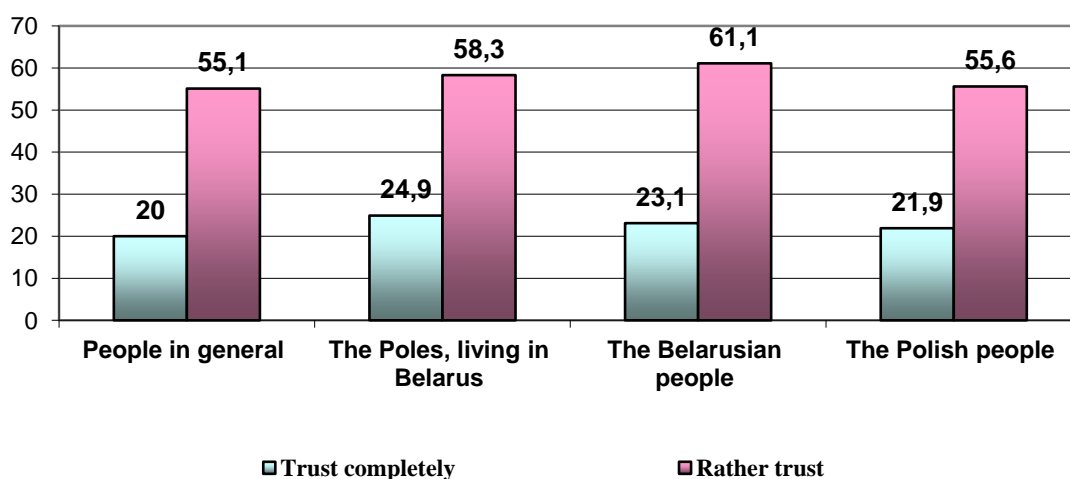
Picture 5 – Feeling of affinity, felt by the respondent in relation with their belonging to various groups and territories, in %



The feeling of ethnic group cohesion is also strong (81,2 % – consider the Poles residing in Belarus to be close to them).

A stable character of the ethnicity of the Polish minority representatives is manifested in a high trust rate to the Poles residing in Belarus - 83,2 % of the respondents trust «completely or rather trust» the people from their ethnic group. It is worth remarking that the respondents demonstrate a high level of social tolerance in general: three thirds of the respondents trust people in general, as well as the Belarusian and the Polish peoples, see picture 6.

Picture 6 – Trust rate to various groups of people, in %



Religion has been carrying out an ethnic consolidating function, especially among the Poles, who preserve the Catholic traditions, so far. The absolute majority of the respondents refer themselves to the Roman-Catholic church (97,8 %). There is a clear link between the Polish identity and the Catholic faith in the conscience of the respondents, as it has been noted above, the overwhelming majority of the respondents consider that it is necessary to be a Catholic in order to be a Pole (87,7 %). For the majority of the Catholic-Poles religion is not only confessional affiliation, but their lifestyle in some sense. The majority of the believers visit religious services at Catholic churches regularly: 11,7 % – several times a week, 42,9 % – once a week, 21,4 % – once a month, 18,3 % – several times a year, and the others – once a year and rarer, see table 5.

Table 5 – Frequency of visiting of religious services (except for funerals, weddings and christenings), in %

Frequency of visits	%
Every day	2,3
Several times a week	9,4
Once a week	42,9
Once a month	21,4
Several times a year	18,3
Once a year and less	4,3
Never	1,4

Catholicism is also an important channel and a stimulus for studying and preserving the Polish language among the Poles in Belarus.

Speaking about national self-awareness of the Poles, residing in Belarus, it is worth taking into account the specific character of the language situation developed in the country. The predomi-

nant means of communication is the Russian language in the republic. It is used in all the spheres by the overwhelming majority of the residents of the country of all nationalities. The contemporary language situation among the Poles is characterized by quite a high knowledge of the Polish language – 51 % of the respondents declare, that they can speak Polish. The link between the level of ethnic self-awareness and knowledge of the Polish language is presented in table 6.

Table 6 – Correlation between the level of ethnic self-consciousness and knowledge of the Polish language, in %

Languages used	«I am a Pole»	«I am a Pole, living in Belarus»	«I am a Belarusian of the Polish origin»
Polish	62,8 %	51,2 %	39,4 %

The data of our research show that the majority of the Poles use Russian, Belarusian or mixed languages in daily life. Only Polish is usually spoken at home, in the family by 4,6% of the respondents, Polish and Belarusian are spoken by 8 % of the respondents, «Trasyanka» – a mixture of Polish, Belarusian and Russian – by 15,5 % of the interviewed.

Table 7 presents language use in daily life in the family correlated with the level of ethnic self-awareness of the respondents 7.

Table 7 – Correlation between the level of ethnic self-awareness and language use in the family, in %

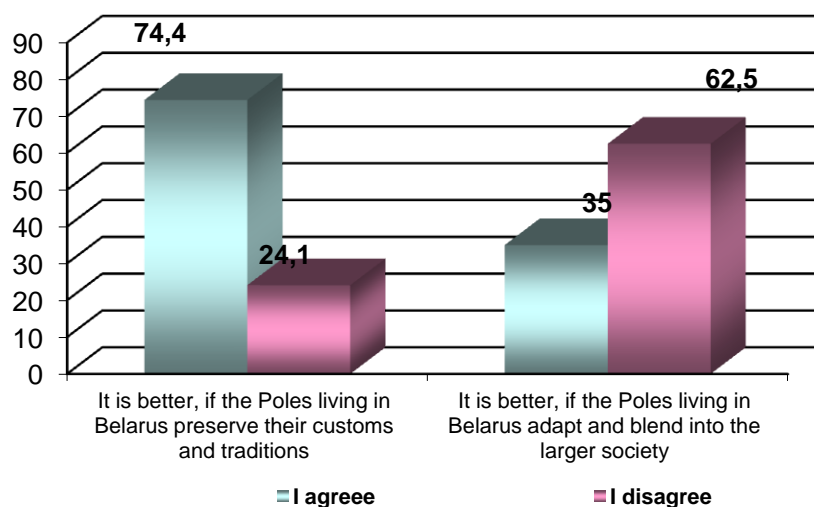
Languages used	«I am a Pole»	«I am a Pole, living in Belarus»	«I am a Belarusian of the Polish origin»
Polish	11,0	3,1	2,3
Polish and Belarusian	16,3	7,1	2,3
Belarusian	12,8	11,9	6,3
Russian	12,8	22,3	30,9
Russian and Belarusian	32,6	39,1	42,9
«Trasyanka»	12,8	16,6	15,4

A direct correlation exists between the level of national self-awareness and usage of the Polish language in daily life in the family.

The Polish language acts as one of the significant criteria of ethnic identity in spite of respondent's competence in it. Identity level correlates rather with language preference, and not with its real use. In the places of compact settlement of the Poles at the territory of Belarus, especially in bordering with Poland regions, in small settlements communication with the residents takes place in the mixed language based on Polish traditionally. In the environment of the Polish ethnic minority representatives Polish preserves its symbolic meaning as an ethno-complimentary component, and its practical meaning as a means of communication. Also a desire to preserve the Polish language and a necessity to transfer it to the new generations is expressed strongly enough.

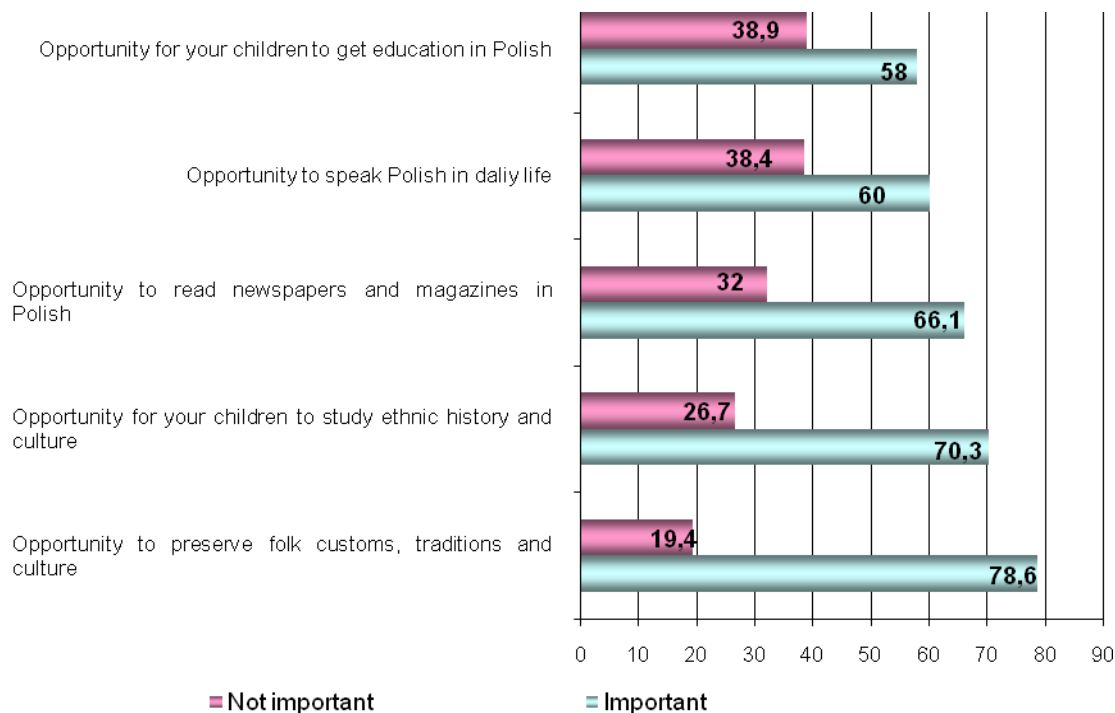
Peculiarities of national self-consciousness are expressed most vividly in the attitude to culture. An aspiration to preserve traditions of the Polish national culture is an important component in the development of the national self-consciousness, so, three thirds of the interviewed (74,4 %) believe that it will be better, if the Poles, living in Belarus, preserve their customs and traditions, than get assimilated with the rest of the population, see picture 7.

Picture 7 – Aspiration to preserve traditions of the Polish national culture, in %



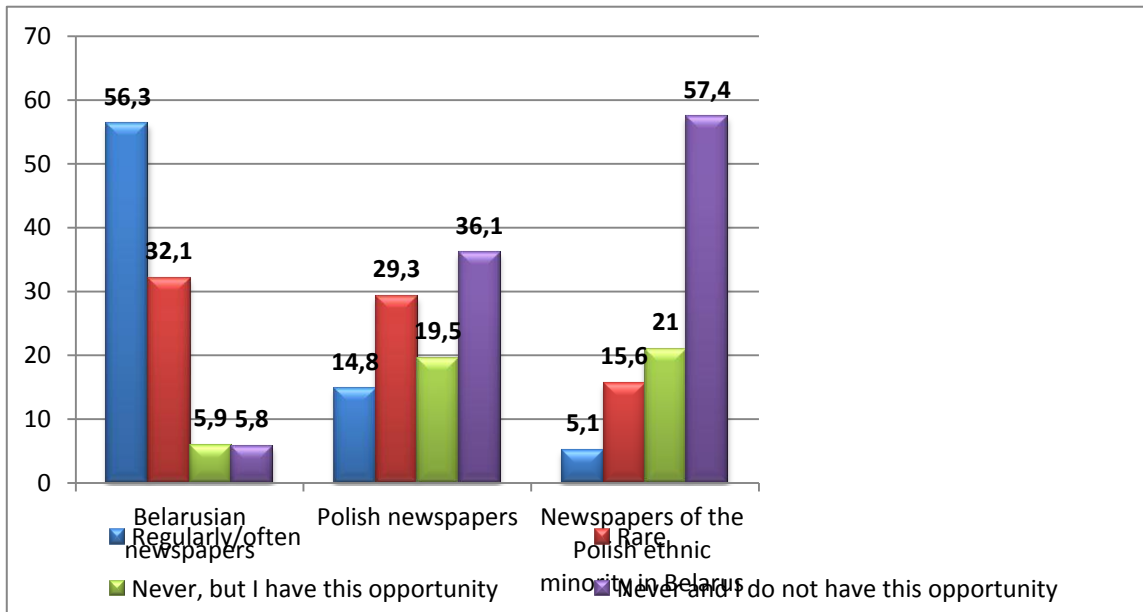
Representatives of the Polish minority in Belarus show adherence to the idea of preserving the traditions of their national culture. More than three thirds of the respondents (78,6 %) stress that it is important for them to have an opportunity to preserve folk customs, traditions and culture; 70,3 % of the respondents note that an opportunity for their children to study the ethnic history and culture is important; an opportunity to give education for their children in the Polish language is important for 58 % of the interviewed; and for 60 % of the respondents an opportunity to communicate in Polish in daily life is important also, see picture 8.

Picture 8 – Adherence to the idea of preserving traditions of the national culture, in %



As we can see from the data, presented in the chart, for the Belarusian Poles, striving to preserve their identity, it is important to have an opportunity to read printed media in Polish. Consumption frequency of various mass media is shown in picture 9.

Picture 9 – Consumption frequency of printed mass media, in %

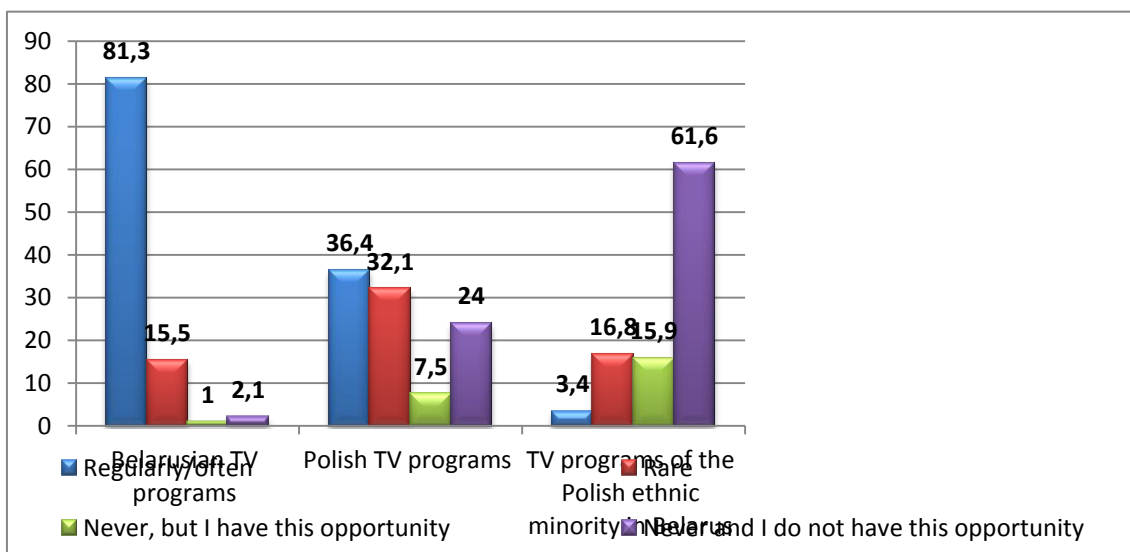


It is worth mentioning, that the majority of the respondents (63,6 %) have an opportunity to read Polish newspapers, and more than 40 % of the interviewed have access to the newspapers, aimed at the audience of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority and printed in Belarus. However, 14,8 % of the respondents read the Polish media often/regularly, the newspapers of the Polish ethnic minority are read by 5,1% of the respondents, and they are read sometimes by 29,3 % and 15,6 % of the interviewed, correspondingly.

Let’s address to the data, reflecting consumption of the electronic mass media by the respondents.

Television is the most popular and demanded mass media at present. This is television what determines a lot in information field development. Television surpasses radio, printed media and Internet by its popularity significantly. Among the Belarusian Poles, television is also the most popular source of information. Consumption frequency of various TV programs is presented in picture 10.

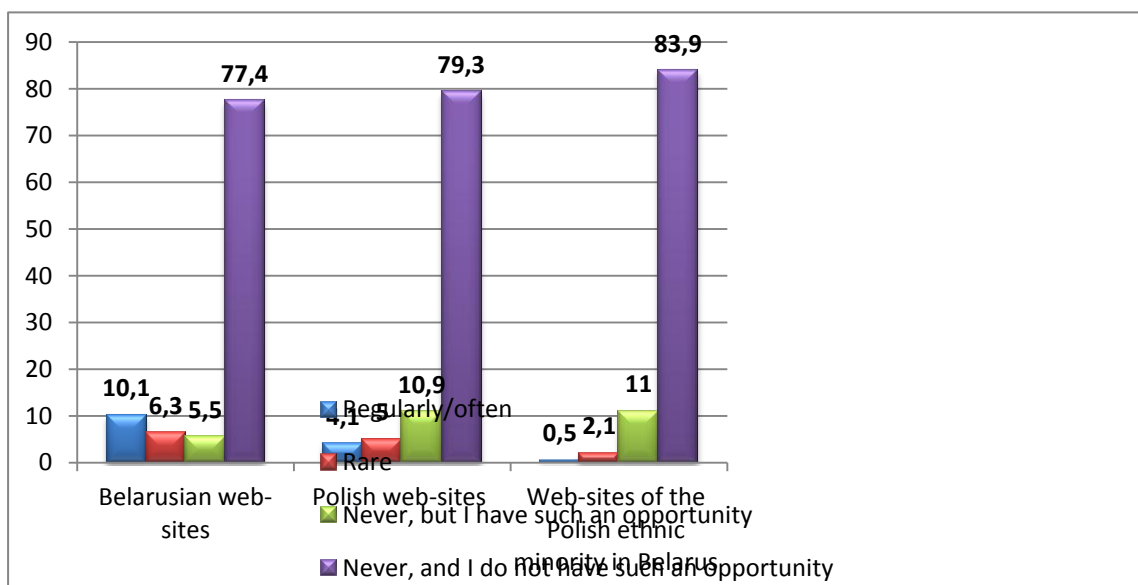
Picture 10 – Electronic mass media consumption frequency (television), in %



Three thirds of the respondents have an opportunity to receive the Polish TV channels (it involves the inhabitants of Grodno region, primarily), and more than 60 % of the respondents watch the programs of the Polish television with various frequency. A little more than a third of the respondents have an opportunity to watch TV-programs, aimed for the audience of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus, and a fifth of the interviewed watches such programs with various periodicity.

Significantly less respondents use Internet sources. It is worth mentioning, that this fact does not give evidence of unpopularity of this source, but is explained by a comparatively low access rate to Internet among the Belarusian Poles (22,4 % of the respondents have Internet access at home). Internet consumption frequency is presented by picture 11.

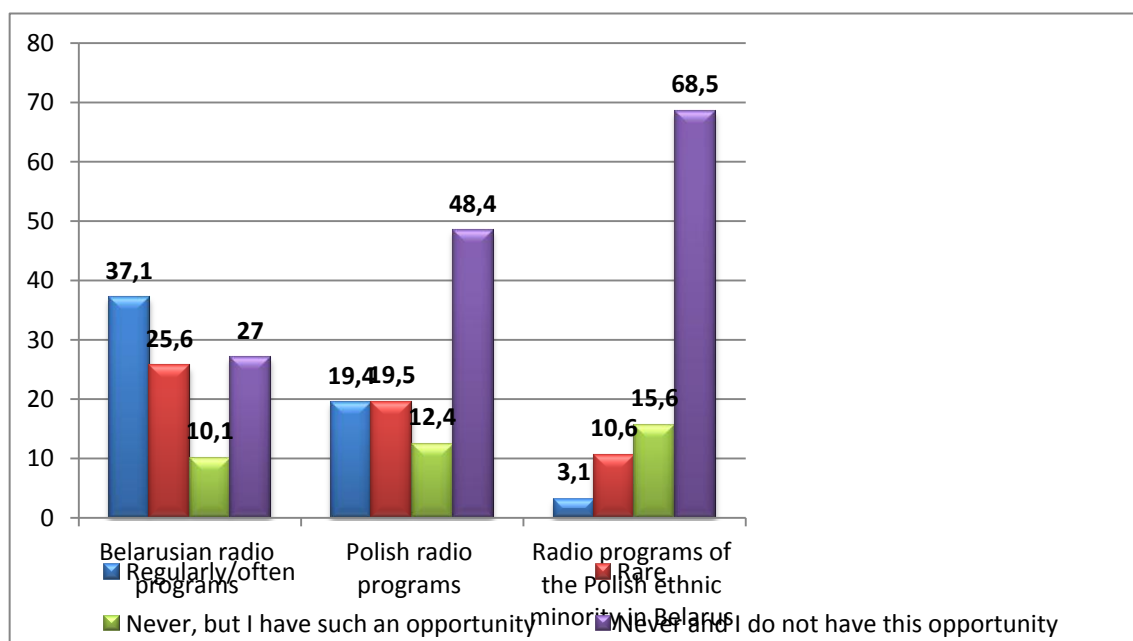
Picture 11 – Electronic mass media consumption frequency (Internet), in %



As we can see from the picture, the majority of the respondents do not have an opportunity to use this source of information, and 10-11 % of the respondents, having an opportunity to use the Polish web-sites or the Internet web-sites of the Polish ethnic minority, do not use Internet. Just a small part of the Poles, who participated in the survey, address to the Internet sources in Polish – they are young-aged people mainly.

Popularity of radio is not so high, as the popularity of television and printed media, it is typical for the whole population of the country. A half of the respondents have an opportunity to listen to the programs of the Polish radio and a third of the respondents have access to the programs aimed for the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus. However this opportunity is used by less number of the interviewed. Radio programs consumption frequency is presented in picture 12.

Picture 12 – Electronic mass media consumption frequency (radio), in %



About 40 % of the respondents listen to the programs of the Polish radio with various periodicity, and 13,7 % of the interviewed listen to the radio programs aimed at the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus.

2.2 Family, households and corresponding ethnic aspects

The empirical data received in the course of the quantitative study make it possible to create a social-demographic portrait of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority, who participated in the survey.

It seems also interesting to explore the social-demographic characteristics of the groups of Poles correlating them with their level of national self-awareness. The grouping is made applying the following indicator of the research tool: «Out of the following list, please, select the formula that best describes your ethnic status: 1) I am a Pole; 2) I am a Pole, residing in Belarus; 3) I am a Belarusian of the Polish origin; 4) I am a Belarusian». Three groups are singled out in the course of mathematical processing of the data gained. These groups correspond with the first three points of the scale quoted from the toolkit. It is worth mentioning, that there were not respon-

dents, who chose the point «4) I am a Belarusian» as an answer from the scale, what is quite logical, taking into account that a screening of the respondents by the main characteristic – acknowledging oneself as a Pole – had taken place before interviewing.

2.2.1 Demographic characteristics

So, from the total sample of 800 persons who took part in the study, there were 32,1 % males and 67,9 % females. The respondents are referred to the following age-groups: at the age of 18-29 years – 14 %; aged 30-44 years – 23,4 %; aged 45-59 years – 29,0 %; at the age of 60 years and over – 33,6 %. A direct correlation between the age of the respondents and their national self-awareness is traced, see table 8.

Table 8 – Correlation of the national self-awareness rate with the age of the respondent, in %

Age groups	«I am a Pole»	«I am a Pole, residing in Belarus»	«I am a Belarusian of the Polish origin»
18-29 years	2,3	16,7	18,8
30-44 years	14,0	22,6	34,3
45-59 years	26,7	27,8	34,3
60 years and over	57,0	32,9	12,6

As we can see from the data, presented in the table, more than a half of the people aged 60 and over show a high level of subjective identification with the Polish ethnicity, calling themselves Poles, these are the persons who were born at the time when the Western territories of Belarus were a part of Poland. Old-aged and middle aged groups of people dominate among those, who relate their identification not only with the Polish nation, but with the country of residence also. And two middle-aged groups of the respondents, who were born during the Soviet times, dominate still among those, who call themselves Belarusians of the Polish origin. As the gained data manifest, 99,9 % of the respondents have Belarusian citizenship and only one person, who participated in the survey, the citizenship of the other country.

2.2.2 Origin

82,1 % of the respondents were born in the settlements situated at the territory of Grodno region now, what gives evidence about the fact that the Belarusian Poles have been a part of the local population during a lot of decades. The data about ethnicity of respondents' parents are presented in table 9.

Table 9 – Parents' ethnicity, in %

Ethnicity		%
Father	Belarusian	6,7
	Pole	58,3
	Representative of the Polish ethnic group in Belarus	32,3
	Other or double	1,7
	I do not know	1,0
Mother	Belarusian	10,5
	Pole	55,7
	Representative of the Polish ethnic group in Belarus	31,0
	Other or double	2,7
	I do not know	0,1

Naturally, the majority of the respondents come from the Polish families.

Almost 90 % of respondents' fathers and mothers have (had) Belarusian citizenship, from 7 % to 8 % had Polish citizenship, 0,7 % – other or double citizenship, around 1,5 % did not know the answer about citizenship of their parents. Among those, who call themselves a «Pole», the share of parents with Polish citizenship is larger (17-18%).

2.2.3 Educational level

The data about education of the respondents are presented in table 10.

Table 10 – Education of the respondents, in %

University	14,1
University (bachelor)	2,8
Secondary vocational	37,5
Secondary general	25,8
Incomplete secondary (basic)	9,1
Primary	10,2
No education	0,5

More than three quarters of the respondents received education in higher, secondary vocational and secondary general establishments of education. A tenth of them have basic education, and the same part have primary education. It is worth mentioning that the respondents with primary education belong to the old-aged group mainly.

The data about the education of respondents' spouses/partners, officially married or cohabiting with the respondents, are presented in table 11.

Table 11 – Education of respondent's spouse/partner, in %

University	13,8
University (bachelor)	4,1
Secondary vocational	42,9
Secondary general	28,0
Incomplete secondary (basic)	5,9
Primary	5,1
No education	0,2

2.2.4 Social status, employment, income

Almost a half of the respondents work: 45,2% are employed in full rate, 0,9 % have part-time employment, 0,4 % of the respondents have accidental or temporary jobs. Among the unemployed respondents 1,3 %, are involved in household management, 2,1 %, are unemployed, 5,9 % are temporarily unemployed. More than a half of the respondents (39,4 %) are non-working and working pensioners. University students, and secondary general and secondary vocational school students make up 4,9 %.

More than a half of the working respondents are hired employees, 51,6 % are employed in non-manual jobs, 43,6 % are employed in manual jobs, 1,7 % are self-employed in various branches. An insignificant part of the respondents could not refer themselves to any position from the offered structure (about 3 %).

Estimating their own social status at ten-point scale, the main part of the respondents placed themselves in the interval of the scale from «3» to «6», see table 12.

Table 12 – Estimation of their own social status at ten-point scale, in %

Low status	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	High status	Dkn
2,1	7,1	14,5	19,6	33,5	10,4	6,4	2,5	0,4	0,4	3,1

Often the respondents link their own social status with the level of material income. Three quarters of the respondents (76,6 %) indicated personal income nominally, the others estimated it by a ten-point scale, see table 13. From the persons who indicated a monthly income after paying taxes, 1,5 % do not have any income (as usual, these are students, who pay for their studies at universities, who do not receive scholarships, and do not work). 17,8 % of the respondents refused to indicate their income, 5,6 % did not know what to answer about it. Monthly income less than 500 000 Belarusian rubles is received by 51 % of the respondents, from 500 000 rubles to 1 000 000 rubles are received by 18,5 % of the interviewed, from 1 000 000 to 2 000 000 rubles – by 5,6 % of the respondents.

Table 13 – Assessment of personal monthly income by a ten-point scale, in % (excluding those, who indicated income nominally)

Very low income	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very high income	Refusal to answer
0,9	1,4	4,0	4,9	6,4	2,3	0,8	0,4	0,5	0,3	1,5

It is useful to take into account property of various kind, when assessing material situation of a household (more expensive: from a summer cottage and a car, till more accessible such as a colourful TV-set or a washing machine). The number of owners of movable and immovable property is presented in table 14.

Table 14 – Number of the respondents – owners of movable and immovable property, in %

Item	%
Automatic washing machine	53,8
HIFI	5,4
Coloured TV	97,6
Any cars 4 years old or older	40,3
Any cars, younger than 4 years old	2,5
Personal computer or notebook	30,4
Dishwasher	0,6
Dacha, summer house	13,3
Internet access at home	22,4

As we can see from the data, presented in the table, almost every family has a coloured TV-set, more than a half have an automatic washing machine, a lot of them have used cars, almost a third have a personal computer or a notebook, and a fifth of the respondents have Internet access at home.

2.2.5 Family structure

More than a half of the respondents (60 %) live in officially registered marriage, 1,5 % live in unregistered marriage, 12,6 % are not married, 19,6 % are widows/widowers, 6,3 % are divorced. The overwhelming majority of the respondents have children, see table 15.

Table 15 – Number of children in the families of the Belarusian Poles, in %

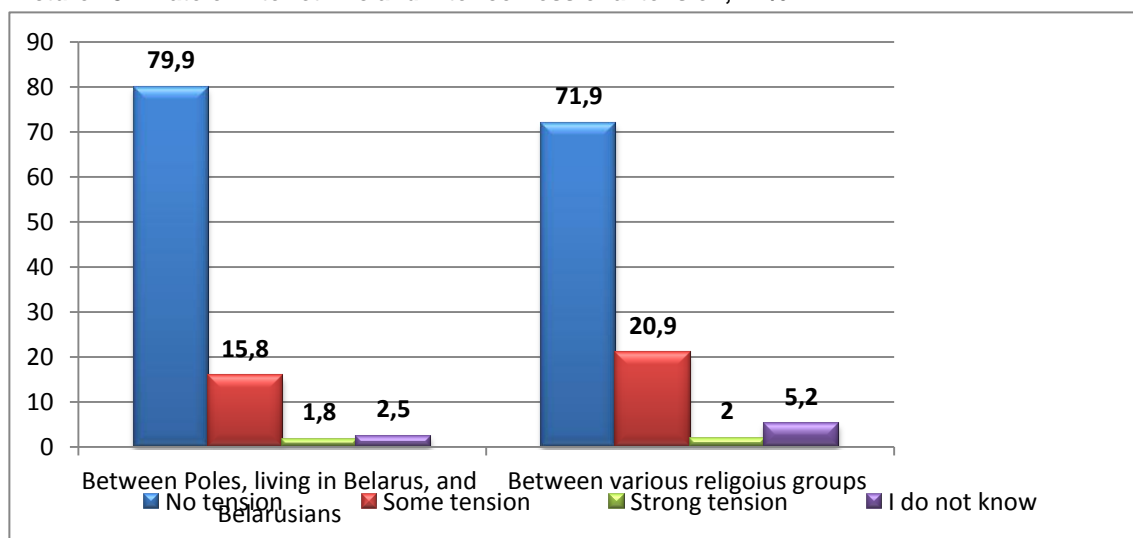
1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children	5 children	6 children	7 children	No children
20,1	45,4	13,8	2,4	1,0	0,5	0,1	16,8

In the majority of families of the Belarusian Poles there are 1-2 children, what is typical for the general European demographic situation.

2.3 Xenophobia, conflicts, discrimination

As the survey data show, inter-ethnic and inter-confessional situation in Belarus is characterized by absence of conflicts and a low level of tension. Let us have a look at the chart, see picture 13.

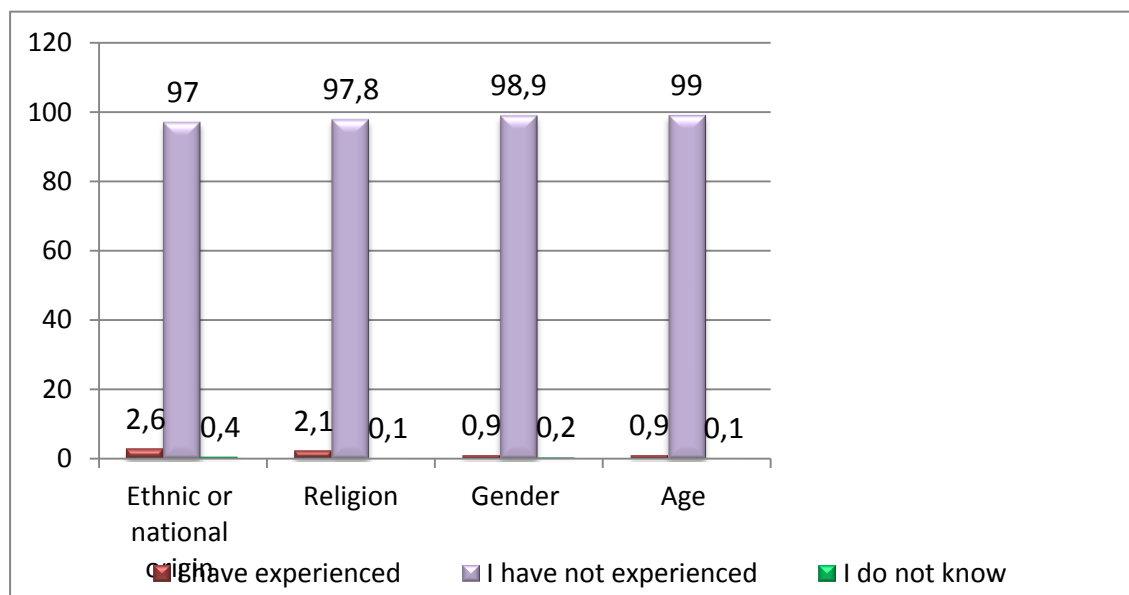
Picture 13 – Rate of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional tension, in %



The majority of the interviewed (almost 80 %) believe, that in our country there is no tension between the Poles living in Belarus and representatives of the titular nation. Only 15,8 % believe, that some tension exists in mutual relations of these ethnic groups. And a very small number of the interviewed (1,8 %) tell about strong tension. Approximately the same picture develops when studying respondents' estimations of inter-confessional relations: more than 70 % are sure, that the situation in this sphere is characterized with a complete absence of tension, a fifth of the respondents believe that some tension exists and 2 % of the interviewed believe that there is a strong tension in the relations of representatives of different religious confessions.

Presence or absence of tension in the relations between representatives of ethnic and religious groups appear when there are some facts of discrimination or biased attitude because of nation or religion. As the research data show, the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority face such facts extremely rare. The data about presence of discrimination or biased attitude on different grounds are presented in picture 14.

Picture 14 – Presence of discrimination or biased attitude on different grounds, in %



The overwhelming majority of the respondents did not feel discrimination or biased attitude because of any suggested reasons during the last twelve months. An extremely low percentage of those who did not know the answer is demonstrative in this context, what gives evidence that the respondents understood the sense of the question and gave a thoughtful answer.

The Belarusian Poles do not suffer from xenophobia. Some specific techniques for measuring social bias were applied in this study, in particular, the Bogardus scale (social distance scale). The concept of social distance is based on a metaphor: «distance expresses difference naturally». Social distance as a function is measured via the study of potential inter-relations, which people might have with representatives of the other groups. Structure of the Bogardus scale makes it possible to analyze both the total result for all kinds of contacts, and each of them. In case when distancing from cultural, ethnic or racial groups is measured, it is worth paying attention at distancing from the group as a whole, in spite of the social-economic classes it is divided into inside.

Distancing of the Poles from the following ethnic groups is measured in the course of the study: their own ethnic group, the Belarusians, the Russians, the Lithuanians. The respondents were offered a number of criteria for determining the acceptability rate of the representatives of the indicated nationality:

1. Accepting as close relatives via marriage.
2. Accepting as personal friends.
3. Accepting as neighbours, residing in my street.
4. Accepting as colleagues at work, having the same profession as me.
5. Accepting as residents of the same settlement.

Respondents' answers are distributed in the following way, see table 16.

Table 16 – Distribution of the answers for the question «Would you accept representatives of the following groups to be your close relatives, friends, neighbours, colleagues, residents of the same settlement ...», in %

Criteria	Poles		Belarusians		Russians		Lithuanians	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Close relatives, such a husband/a wife	99,8	0,2	86,6	13,4	80,3	19,7	62,1	37,8
Friends	100	0	98,5	1,5	93,9	6,1	77,8	22,1
Neighbours in your street	100	0	99,0	1,0	96,6	3,4	84,4	15,6
Colleagues at work	99,9	0,1	99,5	0,5	97,3	2,8	85,9	14,1
Residents of the same settlement	100	0	99,6	0,4	97,9	2,1	87,8	12,2

Percentage correlation of the answers by all five criteria demonstrate minimal social distance in regards with the representatives of their own ethnic group, what testifies an inter-group cohesion of the Belarusian Poles. The data, reflecting the attitude of the Poles towards the Belarusians, also gives evidence about positive feelings and about interest of the representatives of one nationality towards the other one. The indicators reflecting the attitude of the Poles to the Russians are somehow lower. The indicators reflecting the attitude of the Poles towards the Lithuanians are even lower (possibly, because very few Lithuanians reside in the places where the Poles are settled, and the Poles have very few contacts with the Lithuanians). Nevertheless, the data received give evidence about ethnic tolerance of the Belarusian Poles and about no desire to get isolated from the representatives of the other nationalities.

2.4 Social and political capital, attitude to the European Union

Social capital is formed when such mechanisms as social networks, common norms and believes, as well as trust function. In the opinion of the researchers of social capital (Woolcock, M. (1999), “Social Capital: The State of the Notion”, Paper presented at a multidisciplinary seminar on Social Capital: Global and Local Perspectives, Helsinki, April 15.), the closest links are typical for inter-family relations and relations in ethnic groups. Such close relations provide ethnic groups with a feeling of commonness and can become a basis for realizing group interests, facilitate social interaction inside the group.

The issues of inter-group trust, trust to the other social groups and people in general, institutional trust, the social networks, representatives of this minority are included in, and intensity of their network connections are studied in this survey.

Characterizing the social capital of the Belarusian Poles, it is worth paying attention on one element forming its structural basis – social networks. Horizontal social networks are the most significant for creation of social capital. Such institutional basis of social capital as belonging to a definite circle, membership in the group are developed at the basis of social networks. Social capital can be measured via inclusion into these or those social networks, and also via characteristics of these networks: their size and density, power and intensity of network connections.

Quite close links with the Poles in Poland are typical for the Polish ethnic group in Belarus. Thus, 67% of the respondents have relatives in Poland; 16 % of the respondents have friends there; and 7,5% of the interviewed have acquaintances or business partners there. The survey results show also, that a significant part of the respondents communicate with their Polish relatives, friends, acquaintances and business partners via various means (here we mean personal

meetings, communication by phone, post, Internet). Means of communication are presented in table 17.

Table 17 – Means of communication of the respondents with their relatives, acquaintances, business partners in Poland, in %

	By phone	By post	By Internet	At personal meetings
With relatives	50,7	42,2	6,3	59,4
With friends	61,4	38,6	21,2	70,4
With acquaintances or business partners	48,4	33,3	16,7	68,3

Table 18 presents the data, illustrating the frequency of communication of the Poles residing in Belarus with their relatives, friends, business partners living in Poland.

Table 18 – Frequency of respondents' communication with relatives, friends, acquaintances, business partners in Poland, in %

	Once a month and more often	One or several times a year	Once in several years	No contacts at all
With relatives				
By phone	7,8	21,3	21,6	47,9
By post	2,1	19,6	20,5	56,9
Via Internet	3,2	2,2	0,9	91,6
Personal meetings	1,7	17,0	40,7	40,5
With friends				
By phone	11,4	22,7	27,3	32,6
By post	3,0	18,9	16,7	55,3
Via Internet	7,6	12,1	1,5	71,2
Personal meetings	4,5	22,7	43,2	22,7
With other acquaintances or business partners				
By phone	11,7	16,7	20,0	48,3
By post	8,3	11,7	13,3	61,7
Via Internet	0	10,0	6,7	80,0
Personal meetings	5,0	20,0	43,3	28,3

A lot of Poles, living in Belarus, have friends, and the majority of the respondents (62,0 %) declare that their friends belong to various ethnic groups. A quarter of the interviewed (26,5 %) tells, that the majority of their friends come from the Poles residing in Belarus; 4,1 % that the majority of their friends come from the Belarusians; 2,3 % declare that their friends are of a different origin (the others did not know the answer or refused to answer).

Thus, the Belarusian Poles are included in quite active communication with the Poles in the kin country, at the same time the Polish community is not characterized with closeness, what is supported by the fact, that a lot of Belarusian Poles have friends belonging mainly to various ethnic groups.

The issues of inter-personal and institutional trust were studied in the course of the study. Trust creates communication and activates interaction at inter-personal level. Trust initiates common actions in the society, that is reproduces cooperative relations: cooperation, mutual assistance, support, participation, agreement. Personal and group connections become more stable, his or her

inclusion in the community becomes more complete. Trust is able to get accumulated both at personal and at social levels. As it has been explored in Part A of this report, a high trust rate is recorded for the Poles residing in Belarus: more than 80 % of the respondents «completely or rather» trust the people from their ethnic group and the Belarusian people; three thirds of the respondents trust people in general and the Polish people.

Trust rate to social institutions and power structures is presented in table 19.

Table 19 – Trust rate to social institutions and power structures, in %

Social institutions of the Republic of Belarus	Trust completely	Rather trust	Rather do not trust	Do not trust at all
Parliament	16,6	54,1	17,1	2,8
Mass media	15,3	47,1	28,1	3,6
Police	17,4	53,4	17,9	5,3
Government	19,5	54,9	15,9	2,9
Courts	15,4	57,5	13,9	2,1

On average a half of the respondents «rather trust» various social institutions, much less respondents «trust completely» (from 15 % to 20 %, depending on the social institute). From 20 % to a third of the respondents «Rather do not trust» or «Do not trust at all» the main social institutes and power structures. A part of the respondents did not know the answer. The data of this study give evidence about quite a high level of institutional trust, that is explained to some extent by relatively stable development of various spheres of social activity and socially oriented economic state policy during the period under study.

Political capital is viewed in total both as public recognition of merits of the subject of political activity, a rich array of interactions in social space, presence of public support and a deliberate platform in political activity.

In the context of our research it is rather worth speaking about political participation of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority and about forms of their political participation. One should remark, that social-political activity of the citizens of our country reduced significantly during the last 15-20 years. In particular, the share of people who are actively interested in political issues reduced (this trend is also observed in a lot of European countries). The interest rate in the politics of the country of residence, country of origin and politics aimed at the Polish minority in Belarus directly are presented in table 20.

Table 20 – Interest rate in politics, in %

Politics...	Very interested	Rather interested	Rather not interested	Not interested at all
in Belarus	15,8	36,5	26,5	20,5
in Poland	8,3	26,1	32,6	32,5
in Belarus, targeted at the Polish ethnic minority	7,9	23,8	30,0	36,8

A little more than a half of the respondents express interest to political life in Belarus in different degree, and approximately the same number of the respondents are not interested in the politics of the country of their residence. About a third of the Belarusian Poles are interested in the Politi-

cal life of Poland and politics of Belarus aimed at the Polish minority, and more than 60 % of the respondents are not interested in these issues.

Elections are the only mass form of citizens' political participation in our country. The representatives of the Polish ethnic minority are not an exclusion in this case. As we have mentioned above, 99,9 % of the respondents hold the Belarusian citizenship and, consequently, a Constitutional right to participate in elections. At the last national Parliamentary election (of 2008) 88,4 % of the respondents voted; 3,0 % of the interviewed did not vote, because did not have a voting right (as at the moment of the election they did not reach the age of 18 years); 5,6 % of the respondents did not vote, having this right; 2,9 % could not recall; one person refused to answer this question.

However the electoral activity of the Belarusian Poles (just as total population) is in a dissonance with their social initiative: NGOs do not enjoy active support and trust of the citizens still, probably, with the exclusion of the trade unions. Participation of the Belarusian Poles in various voluntary organisations is presented in table 21.

Table 21 – participation of the Belarusian Poles in voluntary organizations, in %

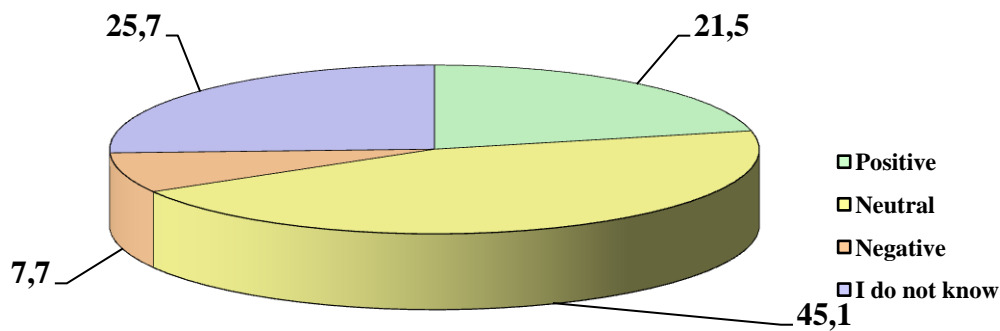
Type of organization	Belonging and status	%
Church or religious organization	I do not belong to	13,8
	An active member	24,8
	Not an active member	61,4
	I do not know	0,1
Sport organization	I do not belong to	97,1
	An active member	0,6
	Not an active member	2,3
	I do not know	0
Art, musical or educational organization	I do not belong to	96,9
	An active member	1,4
	Not an active member	1,8
	I do not know	0
Trade Unions	I do not belong to	59,3
	An active member	8,5
	Not an active member	31,9
	I do not know	0,4
Polish ethnic society	I do not belong to	94,9
	An active member	2,5
	Not an active member	2,5
	I do not know	0,1
Political party	I do not belong to	99,1
	An active member	0
	Not an active member	0,8
	I do not know	0,1

As the data presented in the table demonstrate, the largest number of the representatives of the Polish minority are church members (as a religious organization), Trade Unions take the second place by membership. There are very few people, belonging to sport, art, musical or educational organizations. Membership in the Polish ethnic society was declared by 5 % of the respondents. Support of political parties is extremely low among the representatives of the Polish minority (just as among population in general) – 99 % of the respondents do not belong to any political party.

A block of questions regarding the European Union is included in the research toolkit: attitude to the EU, estimation of the perspectives of entering the EU and the opportunities for the Polish ethnic minority connected with entering.

It is worth noting, that a quarter of the interviewed did not manage to describe their attitude to the European Union. Almost a half of the respondents express a neutral attitude, a quarter perceives the EU positively, and only 7,7 % of the interviewed spoke negatively about the EU, see picture 15.

Picture 15 – Attitude of the Poles, residing in Belarus, towards the European Union, in %



The opinion of the Belarusian Poles about the perspective of Belarus to enter the European Union is quite vague, it is not even discussed at the current moment. That is why, 40 % of the respondents did not manage to assess this perspective. A small part of the respondents (5,1 %) believe, that Belarus would win significantly from membership in the EU, and a quarter of the interviewed think that Belarus would rather benefit. The answer “rather would not benefit” – was given by 20,1 % of the respondents, and the answer “would not benefit at all” – by 8,3 %.

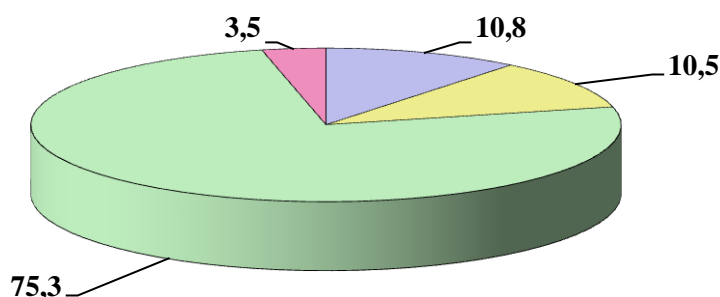
What concerns the changes in the position of the Polish minority in case of our country’s joining the European Union: a third of the respondents did not know the answer to this question; and another third thinks, that the situation would stay the same. The data are presented in detail in table 22.

Table 22 – Respondents' opinion about the changes of the position of the Polish minority, in case Belarus joins the EU, in %

From the point of ...	Will improve very much	Will rather improve	Will stay the same	Will rather worsen	Will worsen very much	Dkn
Participation of the Polish ethnic minority in taking political decisions	5,5	20,5	31,5	8,8	1,0	32,3
Acknowledgement of the culture of the Polish ethnic minority	7,4	19,1	33,3	7,5	1,3	31,0

There are much more Poles, who believe that the situation will improve (it is a quarter of the respondents), than those who support an opposite point of view (they are no more than 10%).

Quite a low level of migration moods is demonstrative for the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus, see picture 16.

Picture 17 – Migration moods of the Poles, in %

□ I would leave definitely □ Possibly, I would leave □ I would have never left □ I do not know

Among those who would move to the other country (a fifth of the respondents), a half chose Poland – 50,3 %. Others' preferences are quite evenly distributed among 20 countries, including the EU countries, the USA, Russia.

In general, the representatives of the Polish minority show quite a low rate of migration moods.

2.5 Conclusions

Thus, analysis of the data, received in the course of the quantitative research, carried out in the course of the project «Interaction of European, National and Regional Identities: Nations between States along the New Borders of the European Union» (ENRI-East) makes it possible to do the following conclusions.

The process of ethnic self-identification of the Poles in Belarus takes place most often at the level of subjective feelings of a person and correlation of his/her own identity with ancestors' ethnicity.

Ethnic and confessional statuses are important for a Pole in the hierarchy of social-demographic statuses.

Among the cultural basics of ethnic self-awareness of the Poles especial role belongs to the Catholic religion, what is an accumulator of national traditions and feelings. The significant in-

fluence of the religion on ethnicity, on formation of ethnic community's solidarity is explained by its deep connection with mentality of the people, its spiritual basics.

Ethnic identity of the Poles is connected not so much with real usage of the Polish language by all members of the Polish community in Belarus, but with its symbolic role in the processes of formation of the feeling of affinity with the community and group differentiation.

The overwhelming majority of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority are proud with their ethnicity and show an aspiration to preserve national culture in their environment.

Quite a large part of the Polish ethnic minority representatives, who participated in the survey, have access to the Polish-speaking mass media, in particular, to the Polish mass media directly, it is especially typical for the residents of Grodno region bordering with Poland. The respondents also address to the mass media of the Polish ethnic minority (newspapers and magazines published in Belarus, radio and TV-programs in the broadcasting of regional and city mass media).

Social-demographic portrait of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority, who participated in the survey, has the following typical traits: the majority come from the Polish families and were born in the settlements situated at the territory of Belarus at the present moment. Everybody holds the Belarusian citizenship. Gender and age structure of the Polish minority is characterized by a large share of females and old-aged persons. The majority are married (mainly officially registered), a fifth of the respondents are widows/widowers (mainly old-aged persons), a comparatively small part of the respondents are divorced. The overwhelming majority of the respondents have children (as usual, one or two). The majority of the respondents have education (university, secondary vocational and secondary general), persons with primary education are old-aged people. Analysis of the employment structure of the Poles shows a significant share of the working-age population in the structure, the number of retirees is one and a half times less than the number of the working-age Poles, the percentage of unemployed is not high. The overwhelming majority of the working Poles are employed workers. Average monthly income is comparative with the average in the country in the corresponding branches of economy.

Interethnic and inter-confessional situation in Belarus is conflict-free and is characterized with a low tension rate. The data gained give evidence about ethnic tolerance of the Belarusian Poles and about absence of desire to isolate from the representatives of the other nationalities.

Describing the social-capital of the Belarusian Poles, it is worth mentioning quite close connections with the Poles in Poland (firstly, with relatives and friends). The Belarusian Poles are included in active communication with Poles in the kin country, along with that the Polish community is not characterized with closeness, the evidence of it is the fact that a lot of Belarusian Poles have friends, mainly belonging to various ethnic groups. The Poles demonstrate a high level of social tolerance in general, what is expressed in the trust not only to the representatives of their own community, but to the other social groups. Quite a high level of institutional trust is also recorded, what is explained to some extent by a stable development of various social spheres and socially-oriented politics of the state during the period under study.

Political participation of the representatives of the Polish community is characterized with high electoral activity and a comparatively low social initiative, what is supported by a low percentage of membership in NGOs.

The majority of the Belarusian Poles did not manage to characterize their attitude to the European Union, and correspondingly, to estimate the perspectives of Belarus for entering the European Union. A neutral attitude to the EU dominates among the Poles. However, the share of the Poles,

who believe that the position of the Polish minority will improve in case Belarus joins the EU, is larger than those adhering to the opposite point of view. Quite a low level of migration intentions is demonstrative for the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus.

3 MAIN FINDINGS OF BIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEWS (ENRI-BIO)

Natalia Veremeeva / Oksana Ivanuto / David Rotman

3.1 Introduction

This national report for Belarus is one of the reports from the qualitative studies of the FP-7 project ENRI-East. It summarizes the outcomes of twelve biographic interviews conducted with the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus. The interviews were carried out applying the guide, mainly common for all the countries and territories, where this study has been realized.

The interviews conducted in Belarus:

Males			Females		
Young	Middle-aged	Old	Young	Middle-aged	Old
18 years (interview 2)	37 years (interview 4)	86 years (interview 11)	22 years (interview 1)	30 years (interview 12)	65 years (interview 8)
20 years (interview 3)	45 years (interview 5)	67 years (interview 9)	19 years (interview 7)	53 years (interview 10)	75 years (interview 6)
2	2	2	2	2	2

The respondents, residing in the following settlements were interviewed in the course of this stage:

- Grodno city – regional center, where the largest number of the Belarusian Poles reside;
- Settlement of urban type YYY in Grodno region, a place of dense settlement of the Poles, close to the Belarusian-Polish border;
- Minsk city (a pilot interview);
- Village XXX, Minsk region, before 1939 it used to be a part of Poland.

3.2 Brief description of the people interviewed and their life stories, and also from which districts/settlements they come

Katja (interview № 1)

She resides and works in the regional center NNN.

Katja was born in 1988, in the city of Minsk, is not married.

She comes from a family, where the mother and all her ancestors are Poles, and her father (who died when Katja was four years of age only) and all his relatives are the Orthodox Belarusians.

They communicate mainly in Russian in the family, but everybody speaks Polish with priests, during the services at Catholic church. Sometimes there happen such days when everybody in the family speaks Polish. The respondent also uses Polish when communicating with her friends and relatives from Poland.

She considers herself to be a Pole, she is a committed believer, was baptized at a Catholic church, goes to religious services regularly. Her brother, she is very close with him, studies at a seminary in Krakow (Poland).

When Katja was 2 years old, her brother was born, and in another two years her father died, and in 1992 the family moved from Minsk to a village in Grodno region (the place of compact residence of the Poles). It was there, where she was introduced to Catholicism, communicated a lot with representatives of the Catholic church, who cared about the family. In 1998 the family with the girl moved to the town of NNN, Grodno region. Her mummy got married for the second time, the second brother was born, the respondent has been taking an active part in his upbringing. Katja graduated from Belarusian State University, after that she moved to the city of Grodno, started working at Grodno museum of SSS.

She is very musical, sings very well, participates in competitions and festivals, draws very well, does sports.

Joseph (interview № 2)

Respondent's family (the parents) reside in the regional city NNN, the respondent studies at a university in Poland and visits parents on vacations. The respondent (18 years old, single, was born in the town of NNN), comes from a mixed family: the Polish roots are from his father, the Belarusian roots are from his mother. Respondent's granny, grandpa and father are Catholics, they used to speak Polish in the family, mother's relatives are Orthodox, they used to speak Belarusian in the family. In respondent's family they speak both Polish and Russian. The respondent speaks Belarusian and Russian with his Belarusian friends, and he speaks Polish with his Polish friends, in addition to it he speaks English and German.

The respondent considers himself to be a Pole, he is a believer, he was baptized in a Catholic church, he visits religious services on Catholic holidays mainly.

Joseph finished a gymnasium with extensive learning of mathematics and physics in the city of NNN. He studied the Polish language, history and culture, purposefully prepared for entering a university in Poland. At present he is a student of the Polish university, studies «software for navigation technologies».

After graduation the respondent would like to stay for permanent residence in Poland, he is attracted by the Polish culture and traditions, higher living standard, in his opinion.

In a perspective he would like to move to the USA for permanent residence, he believes, that there are good opportunities for professional self-fulfillment and for research there.

Joseph is interested in computers: he studies hardware himself, and does some repair-works of computers, creates web-sites in Internet, studies programming languages by himself. He is fond of going to hockey competitions, he used to go in for hockey for long, after that he went in for karate. The respondent plays the guitar, they created an alternative rock musical group with his friends, and write lyrics by themselves.

Peter (interview №3).

Respondent's family (the respondent, his parents, his younger brother) reside in the regional center NNN. The respondent (20 years old, single, was born in the city of NNN) comes from a mixed family, his father's ancestors were Polish, his mother's ancestors were Belarusian (his mother was Orthodox, but turned to Catholicism several years ago). His granny and grandpa by father's line were Poles, they lived in rural area (it used to be the Polish territory), all the residents were Poles in that village. Respondent's granny and grandpa by father's line were Catholics, they spoke only Polish in the family.

Mainly they speak Russian in respondent's family, the respondent speaks Polish with his father often, who speaks Polish fluently.

The respondent considers himself to be a Pole, he is a believer, was baptized at a Catholic church, visits religious services regularly.

The respondent studied at school and at college in technology of machine building in the city of NNN. He studied the Polish language, history and culture at «MMM» school. At the moment of the interview the respondent finished the college and passed exams for entering a university. He chose a university at a Belarusian city SSS, where he is going to gain a technical profession. He would like to move to Poland for permanent residence in future, where his father's relatives live, he considers that he will have more opportunities in Poland for professional self-realization and for travelling.

The respondent is fond of computers, he studies computer programs, connected with his profession, he likes reading original creative works by the Belarusian authors, prefers listening to the Belarusian rock, likes going to concerts.

Gennady (interview №4).

Resides in the regional center of NNN.

He was born in 1973 in the village of XXX, Grodno area, it used to be at the territory of Poland before 1939.

Respondent's ancestors (grannies and grandpas in both lines) lived in rural area at the territory of present Western Belarus (before 1939 it used to be the Polish territory). His grannies and grandpas used to speak Polish. He considers himself to be a Pole, all his ancestors were Poles, he is married to a Pole. He has two sons (school and pre-school age).

He can speak and speaks Russian, Belarusian, Polish daily.

Gennady is a Catholic, he goes to the Catholic church regularly, adheres to the religious customs, his children are also brought up in the Catholic faith and visits the Catholic church regularly.

He has higher education, graduated from Agricultural Institute. However he did not work by profession. Having found no job by training, he started working as a firefighter for the Ministry of Emergency, where he works at present.

He has travelled to Poland a lot of times, he has the Polish ID card. The respondent speaks about his city with pleasure, in his opinion, it is very beautiful and comfortable for living. Gennady has built a house and is attached to his native land strongly.

He is fond of history, reads a lot.

Vladislav (interview №5).

Respondent's family (the respondent and his wife) live in the regional center NNN, the respondent has a grown up daughter, who moved to Ukraine after marriage. The respondent (45 years old, married, was born in the town of NNN) comes from the Polish family, his father's and mother's ancestors were Poles. Several generations of respondent's ancestors resided in Western Belarus, his mother's ancestors lived in rural area, his father's ancestors – in the city of NNN. After the Second World war a part of the large family moved to Poland, thus the respondent has close relatives (uncles, aunts, cousins) in Poland. Respondent's parents, as well as his grandpas and grannies spoke Polish in the family and adhered to the Catholic religion.

They speak Russian in respondent's family mainly, Vladislav's wife is Russian, Orthodox, his daughter is also Orthodox.

The respondent considers himself to be a Pole, he was baptized at a Catholic church, he respects the Catholic and the Orthodox faiths equally, he visits religious services at the Catholic church, and together with his wife he visits religious services at the Orthodox church on holidays.

The respondent finished basic school and got a construction profession in the city of NNN, then he served in the Soviet Army at the territory of the Russian Federation, after the army he finished a college, then he worked as a worker at the plant and graduated from an institute getting education by distance learning, his higher education is in construction. He started his career at construction management as a foreman, and he has worked in construction for almost twenty years already.

Vladislav is fond of sports, he was a master of sports in Greco-Roman wrestling, he likes classical music and modern classics («Smokie», «Beatles», «Queen», Freddy Mercury). He is fond of fishing, likes active rest at nature with his family and friends.

Albina Genrikhovna (interview №6).

The respondent resides in the settlement of urban type NNN, XXX area, Grodno region.

She was born in 1935 in Grodno region at the border with Poland, in the village of XXX, before 1939 it was the territory of Poland. She is a widow, has two grown-up sons, one of them lives in Portugal, the second one is a successful and quite a famous economist and a public figure in Belarus, the respondent is proud for her younger son's successes very much, he also supports his mother financially.

She considers herself to be a Pole «from the blood and bone», as she puts it. All her and her husband's ancestors were the Poles, and she is very dissatisfied that her elder son is married to a Belarusian woman. Before that the family has never had mixed marriages.

She speaks a mixed variant of language at the basis of Polish in daily life. Polish has always been the main language of communication in the family. In accordance with her words, her children did not speak a word in Russian before school.

She is a committed believer, she visits religious services regularly, she is very negative about the fact that the services started to be conducted in Belarusian and in Russian in the Catholic churches. In her opinion, the services should be conducted in Polish only, as it used to be in the past.

She was born at the territory of Poland. After annexation of the territory where respondent's family lived, her father was dispossessed, what the respondent recalls with pain. In 1954 her father died, very soon (in 1956) her brother with his family moved for permanent residence in Poland. Albina Genrikhovna also intended to move to Poland, but stayed because of her ill mother.

After finishing basic school (8 years) she went to work to kolkhoz, finished secondary general evening school, got secondary general education. Then she finished a college of meat-milk industry in Minsk by distance learning. She got married (to a Pole), started working as a tester at a milk plant at the settlement of urban type YYY. From 1958 till pension she worked at the same place (at first as a tester, then as a head of the laboratory) at YYY milk processing plant.

She has been an active member of the public organization "Union of Poles" for more than 20 years. She has travelled a lot.

Angelina (interview №7)

Respondent's family (the respondent and her parents) reside in the settlement of urban type NNN, XXX area, Grodno region. The respondent (19 years of age, is not married, was born in the settlement of urban type NNN, XXX area, Grodno region) comes from the family of Poles.

Her ancestors (grannies and grandpas) lived in Western Belarus, in rural areas. The respondent has relatives in Poland (granny's sister by father's line with her children and grandchildren).

Respondent's grannies and grandpas spoke Polish, Angelina spoke Polish with her granny. They speak Russian in respondent's family. The respondent studied the Polish language and literature at school for 11 years.

The respondent considers herself to be a Pole, she is a believer, was baptized at the Catholic church, visits religious services regularly.

The respondent finished a general secondary school and graduated from a college getting a profession of an accountant (in the regional center NNN). At the moment of the interview the respondent is searching for a job and is getting ready for entering an Agrarian University in NNN for a distance learning course.

Being a school girl the respondent went in for singing, folk dances, she is fond of listening to modern pop-music.

Leokadiya Ijosiphovna (interview №8)

She resides in the settlement of urban type NNN, XXX area, Grodno region.

Leokadia Ijosiphovna was born in 1945 in Grodno region, at the border with Poland, in the village of XXX, it used to be the Polish territory before 1939. She is a widow, has four grown up children: two sons and two daughters. Two children's families live in Poland.

She is a Pole, her both parents were Poles, the respondent identifies herself as a Pole.

They spoke Polish in her parents' family and also Belarusian. She learnt Polish in the family. She speaks Polish, Belarusian and Russian very well.

The respondent is a Catholic, goes to Catholic church regularly.

Having finished school, she entered a university and gained profession of a teacher. She taught the Belarusian and Russian languages. In 90-ies she finished a training course in Poland, after that she taught Polish. At present she is on pension.

One of the main hobbies of her is organization and conducting cultural folk events. She writes scenarios of the holiday events herself, participates in amateur talent groups. During the interview she told a lot of interesting things about the Polish traditions and customs.

Mechislav Yanovich (interview № 9)

Respondent's family (the respondent and his wife) resides in the settlement of urban type NNN, XXX area, Grodno region. The respondent has a grown up daughter, who lives in Minsk. The respondent (67 years old, married, was born in the village of NNN, XXX area, Grodno region) comes from a Polish family. His ancestor (parents, grandparents – all used to live in Western Belarus in the same area).

They used to speak Trasyanka (a mixture of Belarusian, Russian and Polish) in his parents' family. The respondent has been seriously interested in the Polish language being an adult person and learnt Polish by himself.

They speak mainly Russian in respondent's family, respondent's wife is a Belarusian.

The respondent considers himself to be a Pole, he is a believer, was baptized in the Catholic church, visits religious services regularly, he participates in the church choir.

The respondent finished a 7-year school, tried to enter a musical vocational school in Grodno, did not enter, finished an evening secondary general school. Then he served in the Soviet Army at the territory of Belarus. After that he finished a training school of tractor mechanics, worked as a tractor mechanic at kolkhoz. Then he finished an agricultural college, gained a profession of agronomist-organiser. Respondent's work was connected with agriculture, he worked as an agronomist, retired at 61.

The respondent is an active citizen, he is a chair of the local Polish society «YYY». He participates in the folk amateur group «XXX», the group participates in various festivals regularly.

Viktoriya Frantsevna (interview № 10)

The respondent resides in the city of Minsk.

She was born in 1957 in Grodno region at the border with Poland, in the village Pochoboty, it was the Polish territory before 1939, her parents were born at the territory of Poland still. She is divorced, has two grown up daughters.

She is attached very much to her birth-place, to the village, where she spent her childhood, where her parents lived. She respects the Polish traditions.

The Polish kin, the respondent comes from, was started long ago, there is a family charter dated in 1555.

Both her parents were Poles, she identifies herself as a Pole and it is very important for her. She is sorry, that she was married to a Belarusian. In her opinion, unmixed marriages are much better.

She speaks Russian in daily life, but she can speak Polish, as far as they preserved the Polish language and traditions in her parents' family actively.

She is a Catholic, a committed believer, her children are brought up in the Catholic faith.

She finished secondary school in the village, where she was born. Then she entered a technical university in Minsk, became an engineer. She used to work as an engineer at a Design Office of precision electronic engineering for a long time.

When there were problems with work in 90-ies, she finished a training course of accounting and worked as an accountant for some period. At the end of 90-ies she graduated from a university and gained a higher education in economy by distance learning. She started her own business, and she is its director at the present moment.

In the past she used to be an active member of the «Union of Poles», but she does not work at the organization at present as she is too busy. She is sorry very much about the split in this organization.

She is civically active, has spoken a lot about the problems of the Belarusian society.

Pavel Gedeminovich (interview № 11)

He lives in the village of XXX, Minsk region.

Pavel Gedeminovich is 86 years old, was born at the territory of Poland (the village, where he was born and has been living, belonged to the territory of Poland before 1939). He is married, has two sons and a daughter, who lives in Argentina.

He is a Pole, both his parents were Poles. It is very important for him, that he is a Pole. He is sorry, that there is almost nobody to speak Polish with. He respects and preserves the Polish traditions.

He went to primary school at the time of Poland and was taught in Polish. He speaks a mixed language at the basis of Belarusian in daily life. He speaks Polish very well and speaks it with his relatives in Poland, and also when participating in religious customs.

He is a committed believer, a Catholic.

Respondent's education is limited by four years of primary school, that he finished at the Polish school before the Second World war.

After the war, he served in the army, finished a training course in driving. He worked as a driver at kolkhoz before pension. Practically all his relatives live abroad: his elder sister was driven away to Germany during the war, after the war she stayed in Belgium, where her children live at present. Another sister of him and her children moved to Poland when it was officially permitted by the USSR authorities in 1958. There are a lot of relatives in Poland, he visited Poland often, he maintains connections with his relatives. In 1958 he tried to move to Poland for permanent residence himself, but did not manage because of illness of his grandma.

He is attached to the place, where he was born and lived all his life, he is very sorry that the Polish national traditions have been lost at this territory. He is a keeper of the national culture: he knows and sings the national religious traditional songs wonderfully. He is respected by his villagers and by the people in the area a lot.

Lidiya (interview № 12)

Respondent's family (she and her husband) lives in Minsk. The respondent (30 years old, married, was born in the town of YYY, YYY area, Minsk region) comes from a Polish family. Her ancestors (parents, grandparents from her father's and mother's kin) come from Western Belarus, from Grodno region. Respondent's father comes from an ancient Polish kin of land-lords. The respondent has relatives in Poland via his mother's line.

Respondent's granny via her mother spoke Polish very well, and they spoke Polish at home for some period, it was her, who taught the respondent to speak Polish and introduced her to Catholicism.

They speak mainly Russian in respondent's family, her husband is a Belarusian.

The respondent considers herself to be a Pole, she is a believer, was baptized at a Catholic church, she visits religious services regularly, goes to Catholic church on religious holidays obligatory.

The respondent finished school, then a pedagogical college, and got a profession «teacher of primary classes, with extensive studies of art», after that she graduated from State Pedagogical University in Minsk in the same speciality. She worked as a primary school teacher in the village

AAA, YYY area, Minsk region. Having worked for two years as a teacher, she moved to Minsk and changed several places of work during the last years: she worked at editing and publishing houses of various mass media as a sales manager.

The respondent is fond of reading, her hobbies are floriculture and handwork.

3.3 European Identity

3.3.1 Feeling a European

In the course of the interview almost all the respondents remark, that they feel Europeans in this or that degree. Their arguments are mostly the following: if Poland is a European country, and they consider themselves to be Poles, so, they are European, correspondingly:

«Yes, anyway, I am a Western girl. Isn't it the same? Poland is a European country and... this is not Europe, but it [Poland] is a European country». Interview 1 (female, 22 years)

«As far as I am a Pole, it is possible to consider myself a European ...» Interview 1 (female, 22 years)

«In the first place, a European. As far as I have lived long enough in Belarus, I study in Poland ...». Interview 2 (male, 18 years)

«In the first place I am a Pole. A Pole, only a Pole. A European also» Interview 6 (female, 75 years)

A part of the interviewees consider themselves to be Europeans at the basis of the fact, that they reside in Europe:

«...A European, of course. Because Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine – they are European states, naturally. ...I am a European person, that is, I think as they do in Europe. Poland is in Europe and Belarusians are in Europe, and we are all Europeans, if one does not divide by nations» Interview №5 (male, 45 years)

«...I live in the center of Europe, as they say, naturally, I am a European. ... Well, if I am a European, probably, all Europe is for me... But, it is visibly, like this. Moreover, there is Schengen now, visas, so, here you are, we have opened a Schengen visa, ... I can go to all the countries of Europe with the Schengen visa. But if I am in the center of Europe like this, then all Europe is dear to me then». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

Two of the respondents mention the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, being nostalgic about the times when the Belarusians, the Poles, the Lithuanians were united in one powerful European state, considering themselves to be descendants of Litvins [citizens of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania]:

«So, with GDL (Grand Duchy of Lithuania – interviewer's remark) and RP (Rzeczpospolita – interviewer's remark). ...I was in Lithuania, in Poland and in Belarus, I was everywhere, and I consider, that it should be a single whole state. Certainly, it won't be, but it would be cool. Because, when we were the RP, we were the strongest in Western Europe and in Eastern ... Belarus, it is also considered to be, as if, a European country, it is situated in Europe, I consider that it should be in Europe, and not in Russia. ... I am a Polish European ... Certainly, rather a Pole ». Interview 3 (male, 20 years)

«...we are all ancestors of those Litvins». Interview 4 (male, 37 years)

Middle-aged females identify themselves with Europe in the least degree:

«I haven't seen Europe, ... and I wouldn't tell, that it is very close to me by spirit. ... For example, the Muslim countries already, they are really very far away, and if one compares, Europe is closer anyway. ... I feel rather a Pole!» Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

«...when I came to Minsk, I felt more European rather at that time, than now. ... Now ... I even do not know, what I am, because everything has mixed up, that my world has limited up somewhere, and hasn't increased till the European level. Or, may be, because I have already been to Europe once, and it doesn't seem so mysterious for me, as in the past». Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

3.3.2 Assessment of the European integration

The majority of the interviewees support and welcome the European integration:

«And the fact, that the European Union is common, I only welcome it, welcome. Probably, people will come to it once, to the situation, when the borders are abolished. Though it is hard to do, but, probably, humanity will come to it, one would like it to come sooner». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

The respondents remark the following positive aspects, related with this process:

- economic development:

«It has influenced the Poles a lot, as far as the Polish economy improved strongly for the cost of the EU. They matched Poland and Lithuania for their level, and they increased the level quite strongly, till the level of Germany, it is possible to tell like this. ... Interview № 2 (male, 18 years)

«Yes, I think that the countries' unification in the EU is positive. ...I think, that the European Union has become stronger at present, this is a positive moment ...» Interview № 7 (female, 19 years)

«The countries, that are included in the European Union, they equalized, the economy gets equalized and becomes more stable» Interview № 2 (male, 18 years)

- cultural development:

«The European Union is just some new branch in history, and it is really necessary. It is progress». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«Something can be borrowed from someone, some industry there, respect to one's ancestors, and respect of your culture, traditions – it is good». Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

«I think, that they became more intelligent – the Poles». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

- unification of peoples:

– «the Poles ... got closer to such a single, large community, that is necessary, I believe really. Awareness of belonging to the other European peoples appeared. And I was very glad, because I thought: here, Poland entered the European Union finally. It is possible to consider oneself a European». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«... it is unification of the countries, unification is always good. Especially by this principle, as they do there, nobody makes anyone a lot. As if, this is very positive. There are unlimited positive things there». Interview № 4 (male, 37 years)

- opportunity of free movement:

«Definitely it has given a lot to them, also the fact, that they can move without visas all over Europe. It is possible to enlarge the European Union ...till the borders of Russia ... I see nothing bad in entering (of Belarus)in the European Union, the country stays independent, just it will be easier for people to move». Interview № 2 (male, 18 years)

«All in all, it is excellent. Even travelling, to go far away, there, so, now cars, airplanes, trains, here, transport structure is so much developed. Going to have a look at Italy, Rome, coliseum there, a cradle of civilizations, a cradle of Christianity by and large. It would be so interesting. And the fact that it enlarges? Europe without borders is super». Interview № 4 (male, 37 years)

- opportunity to choose the place of work and studies:

«They can work also. And the Polish universities' diplomas, certificates are valued all over Europe». ... Interview № 2 (male, 18 years).

But, in the opinion of some respondents, the unification of Europe has a negative aspect also:

«It is globalization. It is so, not very good». Interview № 3 (male, 20 years)

«Everything is relative. Someone likes it, someone does not like it. So many people have so many opinions. Interview № 4 (male, 37 years)

Negative consequences of the European integration are also called:

- the citizens of the EU bordering countries have difficulties with travelling after introduction of Schengen visas:

«I think, that after creation of the European Union some barrier appeared between the countries situated at the EU border and the EU member states, because it has become very difficult to move, including having rest also». ... Interview № 2 (male, 18 years)

- in case conflicts appear, including the armed ones, not single countries would be involved, but the whole Europe:

«...the negative moments are the following: let's imagine, if one country has conflicts, France with some other third party, let's assume with China, it will mean, that the conflict is not only with France, but with whole Europe. That is, it appears, it is not only just France will be to blame for the conflict of whole Europe with whole China, let's tell, with a nuclear super-state – it is such a huge drawback». Interview № 3 (male, 20 years)

- the economic development of the EU member states varies a lot:

«Europe is made up, and it is practically impossible to reshape it. ... well, they went to Europe ... the Poles went, the Lithuanians, the Latvians, that is, they did not start living better because of it. They (EU) do not support the economy of these countries. They are new ones. ... There are positive moments, there are very, really negative. ... that is why everything is so complicated in Europe at the present time». Interview №5 (male, 45 years)

«Well, I can see nothing good. They dictate everything to them there». Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

- threat of loosing national identity and «brain drain » as a consequence of the European integration:

«Probably, it should not threaten (European integration), I am speaking about the older generation, who have lived all their life on these traditions, they will respect them. And what concerns the young ones, may be, something will happen, some erasing can take place. Take holidays, Valentines, here, it has come from somewhere, we did not have it? ... Yes, it is mixed up a lot. And you know, that some our custom, either Belarusian or Polish, or Hungarian, let's tell, it can disappear. And we would not like to use the alien ones, the alien customs should not supplant ours, one would not like it». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

«They, they also have various opinions there. They are different. Older people also think about it. As they told: «They have sold Poland». Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

«A lot of people go to Germany, Holland, the Netherlands, England, Ireland for earnings. So many high class specialists are in Germany, more than in Poland. Borders are open in Germany and there are no obstacles for travelling» Interview 3 (male, 20 years)

3.4 National identity – attitude to the country of residence

3.4.1 Feelings connected with the Polish identity

All the informants are proud of their nationality in this or that degree, and are aware that it is important for them:

«Yes, I am a patriot of my nation. I just want to be as I am». Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

«In the first turn, I am a Pole. A Pole, only a Pole». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«it is important for me. I'll tell like this. Important, it is important ... very important, that I am a Pole. ... My father was registered like this, that he was a Pole, so, I was registered in this way. I go to Poland, so, I speak Polish there». Interview № 11 (male, 86 years)

«I am proud, that I am a Pole. I am proud». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

In respondents' opinion, their birth at the Polish lands, the fact that those lands used to be the Polish territory and were inhabited by the Poles, has influenced a lot on formation of their Polish identity:

«It used to be just Poland here, so, and I am a Belarusian Pole, born in the Soviet Union. Well, as everyone here, here, who were born after the 39-th ». Interview № 4 (male, 37 years)

«But we accustomed them (children) to such ... patriotism, to the Polishness, you know. Well, it should be done, as it is all our, our roots. It doesn't matter that they have done Belarus here now!» Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

«and we were born, and our ancestors were born there, and we are not to blame, that the states decided to put the line directly, regardless of the population, that was left over the line»... Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

Initiation to Catholicism was related with awareness of oneself as a Pole for some respondents:

«...it appeared, that we started to build links with the other Catholics, and that was the way how our awareness of the fact that we were Poles increased». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«I did not think about it at all at school age. I did not think about it somehow at all, that I had a lot of relatives-Poles. Then I started recalling just the granny more often, that she taught us reading in Polish. We spent quite a lot of time with her in the village, and also, generally it was her, who taught us religion and the first prayers in the Polish language». Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

An opinion is expressed, that the Poles are distinct by especial solidarity:

«In NNN there are a lot of Poles, and if someone needs some assistance, there is such a mutual assistance among the Poles, even in respect of going to Poland. In respect of helping open visas, in respect of entering there. The Poles are connected by common interests, culture, religion here. In general, some events and holidays, various concerts are carried out here. And the older generation, they gather often even at the Polish school and just have a chat in between, discuss their problems, just having tea or coffee». Interview №2 (male, 18 years)

3.4.2 Language as a factor of the Polish national identity preservation

Analysis of the biographical interviews shows a high symbolic meaning of the native language for the representatives of the Polish national minority, residing at the territory of Belarus:

«Every nation should learn its language and speak». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

«There are almost ninety-eight percents of the Poles here, so, what can one say here, but it is impossible to forget one's own! Just as the Belarusians should speak Belarusian, so we, the Poles, should speak Polish». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

«Because for a Pole, who lives as if at the foreign land, the main thing for him is to have his language, this one ... it is very important. You greet in Polish, ask something, they respect you as a Pole. It is very important for them». Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

«And here they should know their own anyway, and that is all. Without your own roots, as they say, there will be no nation». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

All the informants can speak Polish more or less. Practically all the participants of the biographical interviews (especially the old aged and middle-aged groups) remark, that studying their mother-tongue started in their families. And the representatives of the older generation caught the times, when the Polish language was preserved naturally, was spoken in daily use:

«The parents spoke Polish all along, everything, everything». Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

«Me, well, as far as I know, I read, and spoke, and the parents taught me in the Polish language. And my granny, mama's mama, worked, was at school, there used to be a Polish school in her house once ». Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

«I won't tell, that we used to speak pure Polish at home, but there were no things like this, as we do now, we tell: «a cup», «a spoon» there and a lot of other things, they did not speak like this at that time. It was closer to the Polish language». [speaks Belarusian] Interview № 11 (male, 86 years)

«My grandparents did like that, spoke both Polish and Russian, and my great-grandparents, they did not speak Russian, neither Belarusian, as a matter of fact also. It used to be Poland here, so, everyone spoke Polish here». Interview № 4 (male, 37 years)

As for the representatives of the middle-aged generation, speaking Polish in families was almost the only opportunity to preserve their native language, because the politics of Russification was carried out at the territory of Belarus at the Soviet times, that is at the time of their childhood and youth, and there were not any other real opportunities to learn the language:

«They taught in the family, and even required, because it was necessary to preserve the Polish language in some way anyway. Because at the soviet times it was suppressed, infringed very much ... Well, we had purely Polish blood, that was why we tried to preserve the traditions, to preserve religion, to preserve the relations among the children, among people». Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

«Sometimes, coming home, mama told: «Today we speak the Polish language!» Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«When I got married, and came here, my husband told my mama in this way: «speak with me as you wish, but speak Polish with my child». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

All young people, who participated in the study, studied the language at conscious age, though they learnt some basics of the Polish language in the families, there is an opportunity to practice the language at home, but as a rule, the language of family communication is Russian or a mixed language, so-called Trasyanka:

«Granny spoke Polish, but it was a kind of mixed with Belarusian ... such ... with Old Belarusian»... Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«More at home, he does it somehow, and with the children, he, if he comes here, he speaks Polish with the sister, and in Polish there. At home he speaks Russian». Interview № 2 (male, 18 years)

«My father can speak Polish easily, and he offers me to speak Polish at home often». Interview № 3 (male, 20 years)

At the places of compact settlement of the Poles at the territory of Belarus, especially in the regions bordering with Poland, in small settlements communication among inhabitants is realized traditionally in the language based on Polish still. In the opinion of the respondents, it helps them preserve the language, culture and traditions of the Polish population:

«They all spoke mainly Polish, and they speak now. Only those, who came from the other villages, got married and so on, they already ... And they spoke Polish mainly. Well, of course, if one speaks about such pure Polish language, well, it is not like this, here. And it was such a mixed language. But they strived to make it closer to Polish». Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

«It was customary to speak Polish with our acquaintances at the territory of our area, in the village. That is, if I met a neighbor, I greeted him in Polish, asked, how he was, how his things were, it was an obligatory condition. So, it should have always been in Polish»... Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

On the other hand, it is remarked, that at the present time, in spite of the fact that there are really more opportunities for preservation and studying of the language, than at the soviet times, a Russification trend is observed in the speech of the residents of the «Polish» settlements at the territory of Belarus:

«In the past children went, I worked there, there was a secondary school there, along this road. And the children went from the Russian school, and they spoke Polish. Everyone, literally, they spoke. And now, listen, everything changed vice versa! Now children have ... In the past, we did not have a Catholic priest, there is a Catholic priest now, and nuns teach us religion, everything in the world, and the children go from the Catholic church and speak Russian. I do not know, how it is possible! Well, and now, there are such parents, they do not want, they tell: why do we need this Polish language? I do not know, such culture». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

In the areas, where the density of the Polish ethnic minority is less, community as a channel of preserving and maintaining the Polish language is absent, as a matter of fact:

«And there aren't any here, there is nobody to speak with! (to speak Polish) So, there is one granny ... And the youths – no ... they do not know already». Interview № 11 (male, 86 years)

«I speak worse. But, in principle, because there is no communication, as it is now, because I somehow ... connections with people got weaker, with my Poles, I see them very rare, because ... well, circumstances do not let me, so far». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

Catholicism is an important channel of spreading and a stimulus for studying and preserving the Polish language. A clear link between the Polish belonging and the Catholic faith exists in the awareness of the respondents. The majority of the respondents consider themselves to be religious people, they go to services at Catholic churches regularly, and the services used to be conducted in the Polish language until recently, so far. Especial schools act at the Catholic churches, where teaching is conducted in Polish also:

«One feels that you are united by all that Polish tradition, by the Polish faith. They pray in Polish only». Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

«You know, the Polish language appeared when we got acquainted with the Catholic nuns and Catholic priests after father's death. At that time we, visiting them... Certainly, they inculcated the

Polish language into us, we did our best to speak Polish, sometimes during the whole days. It was complicated, certainly, especially for small children »... Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«When we went to the Catholic church, there were lessons of religion at the Catholic church, that were organised by the nuns. Surprisingly quite a lot of children went there. Teaching was in the Polish language, no allowances were made for speaking Polish or not. But it appeared, that in principle, after the second class the children understood Polish». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

An aspiring to preserve the Polish language and a necessity to transmit it to new generations is manifested quite clearly:

«We should in the family ... As, our Polishness is left in our blood, so, we should live with all the peoples in peace, you know, but one can never forget one's language. And should teach your children obligatory, they should be able to speak Polish». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

«So, the Poles somehow, may be, they are more [inclined] to their language, they value it». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

3.4.3 Relations between the Polish minority and the Belarusians

In the majority of the interviews the respondents remark that the Belarusians and the Poles live in concord in Belarus, their lifestyles do not differ especially:

«Well, we communicate together, there is no difference: you are a Belarusian, I am a Pole, we are together. And that is all. We even call each other on holidays to each other's homes». Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

«I was born here, I grew up here. And the fact is that she is a Belarusian, a Russian, a Jew or someone else, all that is normal!»! Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

«That we will have a bad attitude towards ourselves? If someone there, I have unlimited number of friends, there are Russians, Poles here, and Belarusians ... Interview №4 (male, 37 years)

Often the notions «a Pole – a Belarusian» are substituted by the notions «an Orthodox – a Catholic»:

«In Belarus the Orthodox people, they live in agreement with the Catholics. It appears, that a half of the Population are Catholics here, a half are the Orthodox». Interview №2 (male, 18 years)

«Well, of course, everyone are very solidary, because, if I know, that the Orthodox neighbours have a holiday, I can quietly do something near the house, do something, but in the way for them not to see and not to hear it. So, I won't knock there, won't saw already – because the people have a holiday. And they have just the same attitude towards me. It is not a problem. So. Well, it should be like this, probably, shouldn't it? Interview №4 (male, 37 years)

In the opinion of some respondents, assimilation of the Poles in the Belarusian society is taking place gradually:

«There are clever and not very clever people both among the Poles, and among the Belarusians. Generally, we do not have this margin, we are, as if, all Belarusians. In fact, what can we divide? By and large, we are all relatives in 12-th generation in Belarus. What can we divide? There aren't any infringements, naturally ... Everything is normal from this part. Interview №4 (male, 37 years)

«It seems to me, not so many people will call themselves Poles now. Anyway, the percentage reduces with every decade. Just the people who could call themselves the Poles. Adaptation to the Belarusian culture is taking place, acclimatization, it seems to me, mainly the older age people are left, who just feel themselves Poles and who are proud that they are the Poles. Already starting from my generation, ...they do not think about it, in fact, they are less interested both in politics, and in culture. I do not think, that they will leave something from the Polish culture. ... More people

preserve their traditions in the villages, it will disappear quicker in the cities». Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

«They (Poles) live in the same way, they do not distinguish in any way, everyone speaks Russian easily mainly. Some of them speak Polish easily, of course, but they speak Russian and it is impossible just to understand that it is a Pole» ... Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

«I think, that people are very much alike, the Belarusians, the Poles and the Ukrainians. And the languages are very similar». Interview №2 (male, 18 years)

Some difference in the mentality of the Belarusians and the Poles is remarked:

«I can tell, that the Belarusians are more tolerant than the Poles. As history shows since old ages. The Belarusians are more tolerant, and the Poles are so ... they can stand up for themselves Interview №2 (male, 18 years)

– «Mentality. I have a lot of friends, why consider themselves to be just the Belarusians, and they, I can see, that they are somehow ... are different ... The difference is, that this is the principle of the people. The Belarusians have such a typical feature, let's tell like this: «it is none of my business, I do not know anything». ...And the Poles also have their pluses and their drawbacks». Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

«The Poles are very active people, proud, they look ahead always. They have such a feature, that ... they do not have a single aim, but several ones, and if they do not manage to achieve all these aims at once for some reason, they do not stop, do not get into some pessimistic mood, as it happens with the Belarusians, they are somehow active so much »... Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«I do not want to tell about the Belarusians, the Belarusians are also diligent people, but, probably, may be, the Poles are a little bit more, may be, a little bit more successful. And a distinctive feature, I am having a look at the traditions and culture, every people has something» Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

«I think that both the Poles and the Belarusians, and the other people happen to be different. But I think ... The Poles are inclined towards religion more»... Interview № 11 (male, 86 years)

Only one respondent notes, that the difference in mentality and lifestyle of the Poles and the Belarusians is felt, and it is reflected on relations:

«Belarus is divided, it is possible to say, into the West and the East, and cannot merge together, no way. Because ... something does not let it merge together. So, these two cultures ... I do not know why, they have always been in opposition, there are people who are very negative towards the West. Though I've noticed, that here (in Western Belarus), certainly, people are much more tolerant, much more «open»... They have always been on guard towards the Catholics and in general, if you speak, that you are from Western Belarus, if you are from somewhere from the West, at once, – and what about the influence of the European Union on you, the influence of Poland on you, that is, you have nothing of your own. They do not understand, that these are our roots, that, naturally, we communicate with the people, who reside outside the borders of Belarus. The most interesting thing is, and I am sorry, that people's attitude is of this kind not only in political respect, but in religious one also, certainly. The opposition between the Orthodoxy and Catholicism is felt a lot». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

3.5 National identity – attitude towards their homeland

3.5.1 Connections with relatives and friends

Practically all the informants are connected with Poland via relatives and friends, who live in Poland, everyone went to Poland several times, visiting their relatives, what contributes to preservation of the national identity and of the language:

«But I went all over whole Poland already, yes. Especially in childhood very often. Well, and Krakow stays such a favourite place for me always, where I am always ready to drop in. (Her brother lives in Krakow)» Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«Seven (relatives), ...my father's cousins live in Poland, great-grandfather was buried there. My grandpa's brothers live in Poland also». Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

«Naturally, we have a lot of relatives in Poland. My grannies, let's assume, so, they went to the market place in Kuznitsa (at the territory of Poland), it was closer than in Grodno». Interview № 4 (male, 37 years)

«There are enough relatives. ...In 50-ies it was possible to change the ethnic homeland, that is, it was possible to move away from Belarus, and they went away. ... yes, and we communicate, come, no questions there». Interview №5 (male, 45 years)

«And he (the husband) had a large family, seven persons. Visibly, some of them went away to Poland in the forty-seventh, and the others – in the fifty-sixth. Husband's kinfolk are in the town of Szczecin. Yes, my relatives, his (husband's) all kinfolk are there». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

«I have relatives, they live in Poland. Granny's sister lives there, her son, he is my godfather. ... I communicate with them». Interview №7 (female, 19 years)

«I have relatives in Poland, they are all my daddy's kin: all the kinfolks are there. Well, and they helped me». Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

«There are relatives, but they are quite distant already, because those aunts-uncles, whom I used to visit in the past, they are dead already. But their children stay, my fellows ... relatives stay in Warsaw, and here, at the borderland – Sukolka, Bialystock»... Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

«In Poland, a half of my kinfolks are there. There are enough kinfolks there!» Interview № 11 (male, 86 years)

«Her relatives (granny's via her mother), her sisters managed, left, left before for Poland. All-all her kinfolks are there, ... the granny lived in Poland for quite enough time also, but she came back to Belarus». Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

Only two from twelve informants do not have relatives in Poland, but they have some acquaintances, friends with whom they have contacts:

«No, I do not have relatives, acquaintances only. But there are acquaintances all over Poland, I invite them to visit me, and they invite me». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

«I have gone to Poland since childhood, have heard the Polish speech. It was always a holiday for me in childhood, a trip to Poland. With the parents to Warsaw, to Bialystock. ... Daddy has the friends, who live there». Interview № 2 (male, 18 years)

3.5.2 Impressions about Poland

The majority of the respondents consider, that Poland is positively different from Belarus by a number of things:

- cities, architecture:

«Krakow is in general a very ancient city, ex-capital of Poland, there are things to have a look at there. For example, we looked at the castles, where the kings used to live, then the mausoleum, where they were buried ... In general, if someone wants to spend time well, Krakow is a suitable place, as far as one won't be bored there». Interview № 2 (male, 18 year s)

«I like there. Certainly, it is better than in our Belarus. ... The cities are more beautiful, so, there are old castles, museums there. There are more such things there, than in Belarus. And all the

houses are such ... there are few such houses there, as we have multi-story blocks of flats, [and] the majority of houses are private there, cottages. It is very beautiful there». Interview №7 (female, 19 years)

«Oh, I travelled a lot, because I am such a patriot, you know. We were invited in all the cities. You know, Warsaw is a good city, but I liked Krakow a lot. Krakow and Torun. It is impossible to tell you, what a temple, that, that Catholic church is built! There is such a splendor there! Everything is done so there! I've forgotten already by now, they told, how much money they spent for all that. It is so, well, I won't be able to tell you!» Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

- culture:

«Well, I like everything in Poland: their culture is very much developed. What concerns culture, everyone is free in his choice there». Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

«I have been to Poland not once, I understand, that it declares itself quite worthily as a European country, really, that is, culture and public relations are at quite worthy level there». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«We went to Poland, had a look, went to a Catholic church, culture is totally different there. At that Catholic church small children tell prayers by heart, stand, they would go out not like ours do: «haa-a-a!», but stand quietly, and if you get in a bus, three persons would stand up to let an old person sit down, and here ... Nobody will give a place. You won't see anyone smoking outside, or throwing a cigarette there ». Interview № 11 (male, 86 years)

«We went to Poland with mama in 2000, went to the relatives. I had a look at the lifestyle in Poland in 2000. And at that moment, certainly, the break between Belarus and Poland in cultural respect, in cultural terms, the difference was very big». Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

- religion:

«The attitude to religion in Poland is with ... (respect), every Sunday the Poles, as far as I know, go to the Catholic church for services ...» Interview № 2 (male, 18 years)

«The atmosphere itself is different, it is possible to say. ... People are more religious there, Catholic churches are very beautiful there». Interview №7 (female, 19 years)

«Poland is the most religious country». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

- material situation:

«You know, it is like between heaven and earth there. Firstly, private property stayed there. There are no kolkhozes there. And you know, they go abroad, the houses are so large there in villages, you must see it! In Poland, You know! They all have an opportunity to go abroad, to earn money, both to America, and everywhere. Such large houses are in the villages, I cannot describe it! Well, and now, here, as I was going, the prices were half (less)! From the material point of view it is easier there, people live better. Yes, yes! It is not comparable». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

«I like their salaries». Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

However two participants of this interviews remark, that life is better in Belarus, and Poland does not differ especially:

«...I can tell, because I went to Poland, that is, well, nothing special is there ... Here, as if, it is a little bit simpler, it is a little bit more complicated there. ... Firstly, people are the same there, just like here». Interview №5 (male, 45 years)

«Oh, it is better at home! Whatever it is this Poland, but it is better at home, it is better at home. You know, though we are the Poles here, but he goes to Poland once, twice and no more, he does not want to go to Poland any more already. Even the young ones». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

«But so, if it were so much [better] in that Poland, you know, as they say, «a hen is not a bird, Poland is not abroad». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

The majority of the respondents feel some close relation with Poland, feel comfortable there:

«... always ... when you even ask, what you place first, I do not know why, but I wanted to say Poland. In spite of the fact, that I did not live there, but I wanted to say anyway. Because ... I perceive it so close, so, this my national attitude, that even, in spite of the fact, that I am not a citizen of Poland, but nevertheless, I consider these Polish lands to be my home». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«I feel comfortable there, cozily and pleasant there» Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

3.5.3 Migration moods

Three from four informants of the younger age group are inclined to change their place of residence in the course of time (to move for a living in the other country), some of them are making definite actions in connection with it: they study in Poland, are going to enter the Polish universities etc.:

«Poland attracts me more as a country, where I would like to live, because the Polish traditions and the Polish culture attract me more, than the Belarusian one. Equipment in Poland surpasses the Belarusian one far and away, it develops quicker. And I am attracted by such a country as the United States of America. It seems to me that it is possible to realize all your possibilities in this country...» Interview № 2 (male, 18 years)

«I want to live in Poland, I do not know, if I manage. I would like to stay for residence in Poland, and come here to my parents». Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

«Certainly, I would choose another country. ... It would be either Poland and more specifically Krakow, because I like it a lot in cultural terms, so ... and it is close to me in historical terms ... Well ... I feel this city. And secondly, may be, it is Rome, Italy, but it is closer in religious terms to mt». Interview №1 (female, 22 years)

Some of the respondents suppose, that they would be able to decide for moving for the other country when having some guarantees, work, benefits package:

«It is possible to leave, if some good, stable work were offered, and you knew for sure, that it would be possible to solve the issue of housing there – this is one thing. And when [you go] to total obscurity – it is a little different. It would be complicated already, it is a different mentality anyway, different people are already anyway, the other traditions. But it would be possible to try!» Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

«I would go, if everything were legal, if I could receive pension there. I would go to Poland, I have my kinfolks there, in Poland, a half of the kinfolks are there». Interview № 11 (male, 86 years)

Almost all older age-group respondents' families made attempts of emigration during the first or the second emigration waves of the Poles, officially permitted by the USSR authorities (in 40-ies and 50-ies):

«My daddy made documents once, when the sisters left, and he submitted documents in order to leave for Poland with the family. But there, because of some trifle, something was not written in his birth certificate, and in general, the documents were returned to him, and he did not submit for the second time already. And we stayed in this way». Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

«As for me ... we had a repatriation to Poland in the fifty-sixth year. The father died, and mama decided with my aunt, and we did not go. You know, if we went, certainly»... Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

«And I had a snag at that time. It happened like this. My granny was 95 years old, and she had an attack. When I started making the documents, she told me: «I won't go, I won't go to Poland». The documents arrived for going, and where could we leave her? Well, and that was all ...» Interview № 11 (male, 86 years)

The middle-aged age group representatives express the least migration intentions and moods:

«People, so, win, there, some Green cards, move to the other countries, there is always some there ... well, migration is present, but it is necessary to be a very strong person, may be. As for me, let's assume, I won't be able to do it like this, probably. There is also such a saying «he is needed, where he was born». Interview № 4 (male, 37 years)

«...I am also an alien person there, because all my roots are here, and these roots have been here at this territory from time immemorial, that is why, either you preserve all this culture here or just get pleasure over that side. Well, these are different things, because you have already got used to here, you cannot exist without it already. Probably, I would not be able to do it, so far. Everything is mine here, as if». Interview №10 (female, 53 years)

Representatives of the old age group do not consider it possible to decide for the step of changing the country of residence:

«As for me personally, a wish to leave forever, well, to go, to have a look – yes, but to leave away ... I got used somehow, so far, I am such a homebody»... Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

«... I am more dear here and the country is dear for me there, where I live. It is fine going everywhere, but living in the homeland, howsoever it were good in the foreign land». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

3.6 Regional identity

Absolutely all the informants feel attached to the place where they were born and live:

«NNN is a city, where I have grown up, was born, a lot of events in my life are connected with it, ... it is dear to me». Interview №2 (male, 18 years)

«NNN is a chef-d'oeuvre from everything I have seen, so far». Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

«You know, I like everything in it. ... the city is historical, everything is wafted ... The church heritage is left ... It is beauty simply! That is, it is our history, and one cannot get rid of it anyway, I think like this, that it is not necessary to get rid, I would tell like this, that is, it is necessary to increase it. ...I like very much. It is a European city, I would tell so... I am elated that I live here». Interview №5 (male, 45 years)

«I like ... I like the nature, people are also good. It is such an old town, I like it. I like more in the village, than in the city, it is so beautiful here...». Interview №7 (female, 19 years)

«Certainly, as every resident of the city or the place, where you were born, it is dear to him, dear to me also. ... You know, when every stone is known for a person, every bush and every ... and when he feels affinity with it, when you have lived for 30 years, he will be nostalgic, wherever he were». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

«The first memory, when it is pronounced «NNN», ...this is nature, nature is very beautiful there and these most beautiful places are recalled. Once again this Catholic church, it stands at such a high-high hill ... so white, beautiful, round church in Baroque style, sick walls and a river flows nearby». Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

«It is closer to me in terms of people, because I grew up in this part of Belarus, Western and the influence of the Polish culture is felt here. ... People are more open, and you find common language with people more often. And the nature is close to me here very much and the city, there

are a lot of temples, once again – this Polish influence, and one feels, just, as I studied at the faculty of history, as for me, I just come to Grodno and I feel my ancestors ... Because everything is permeated with this spirit somehow, with the influence of the Polish culture. And I feel at home here». Interview №1 (female, 22 years)

«This is the brightest impression I have. I want to come there, because the people who let me into life of the Polish small village, of the Polish culture are there. So far I cannot forget the moments, that took place with me at the age of five, four years ... When I slept in the catholic church on the back bench at nine o'clock in the evening, when I ran around the temple, as our first meetings with those people took place, as they told us about the attitude to them, to the Catholics, to the Poles. It seceded so brightly in my soul, that this place is, probably, for me, anyway ... that I would put in the first row, I would characterize myself with it» Interview №1 (female, 22 years)

«There is unlimited number of pluses here. It is both comfortable and beautiful. Well, and the plus is that the homeland is here, is nearby anyway, whatever one may say. Grandparents and great-grandparents are buried, it also tells something». Interview № 4 (male, 37 years)

«I like my area, my place, and it seems to me, it is possible to live well only here. That is why I always say: «Good is everywhere, where we are not». And in general, the best place is where we are». Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

«... it attracts, and some energy exists somewhere, you come there, and you charge energetically somewhere really. And it is very pleasant, that these people are around you, and you are dear to them, and everyone approaches, and asks, gets interested. And everyone's attitude is somehow very positive». Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

«I've chosen this city for myself, I like it for its rhythm. I need to feel life, everything should boil around, people, – this is my life. I feel fine then»... Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

3.7 Civic participation and participation in ethnic organizations

All the informants are well informed about activity of ethnic organizations. Some of them are active members of such organizations:

«I am in the Union of Poles now, for twenty years already, and we do not have any politics there, absolutely! Only to promote culture, to leave something at this lands after ourselves, that Poland was here. You know, we just promote our culture, for this Polishness not to disappear here. Because, you know, we carry out purely cultural-educational work in this Union». Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

«I am a chair of the local Polish society «YYY», here, but, that is why I have to speak Polish myself, have to know the Polish traditions ...». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

Two of the informants used to be members of the «Union of Poles», but left it after the split. By the way, one of them cannot understand the essence of the conflict. Only their deep sorrow is felt, that the organization that used to be united and necessary for the Poles in Belarus, happened to be in such a situation:

«It used to be a cultural-enlightening society: there was a choir, songs there. We gathered in the evening, recalled poets, read poems, devoted evenings to composers, poets. That is, as if, we tried to introduce our young generation, in order to preserve this Polish culture ... Well, to rise spirit among our children, they should understand the Polish culture better, they will know some basics of this Polish culture at least ... And so, we sent the children to Poland to summer children camps. That is, it was positive, was beautiful, and everyone was pleased, it seems to me. Nobody felt aggrieved about anyone, and everyone was grateful to our state, and then ... what changed there, I do not know»... Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

«We used to have the Union of Poles in the past. We worked not to the detriment of anyone, worked, normally: and taught Polish, and made various events. Then this split took place. Well, I do not know why the split was, and how it happened. And now I do not think that we work together, live together. Just I do not know, how it happened, that one part went against the other. It appeared as if a «home war». And how it will be now, I do not know ... Well, the only thing I want to say, that when you hear already, as they will start telling then, that they oppress there, and so on. Well, I think, I haven't felt this oppression so far. And that is why I think like this, everyone takes his own portfolio. And that is why I do not adhere to this or to that part. We do our way: we will perform, will sing, we sing songs there and this. Well, and, and like this, I do not know, how it is here, and where it will lead to, and what it will be?». Interview № 8 (female, 65 years)

The young informants of the biographic interviews are more or less interested in the activity of the ethnic organizations, but they are not members of a single organisation, explaining it by a number of reasons: lack of time, necessity to change place of residence often etc.:

«I do not participate. No. ... I had a wish ... My friends told me, that it was very cool ... But I do not participate. ... Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

«you know, it appears just, that I move somewhere constantly, circumstances develop like this ... I had a desire to enter some communities, for the youths also, an not once, but it appeared, that I could not stay for long at this place, and as a result I could not confirm my permanent membership. But there is such a moment, that we are in contact with the people from such various communities that exist. And if they travel somewhere and if some festivals take place or something else, they always call me, and I come, whatever club or organization organize it. I performed for various organizations, though I am not a member of any organization». Interview №1 (female, 22 years)

«My daddy is a member of the Union of Poles. Sometimes he goes to the events. Me too, but I go to the events, that are connected with the Polish school more often». Interview №2 (male, 18 years)

The informants, who used to participate in the work of organizations in the past, recall their activity with warmth, consider their work as useful and important:

«For some period I participated in «XXX», in general, I remember, that the people were very positive there, with very positive energy. They approached education very correctly, in order to explain, to tell, to capture, to get interested. There was an opportunity to go to Poland there and to get acquainted closer with this organization, that acted at the territory of Poland. ... The people with the Polish roots came mainly, who wanted». Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

«It is such an interesting piece of life, we learnt old national songs. And the language gets developed along with it, and culture is preserved. Well, we just have to pass something to our children, without taking new things only. We need some traditions, because any life is built on traditions generally». Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

Only two from twelve informants do not express any interest to the activity of ethnic organisations:

«We have the Union of Poles in Belarus, but I am not its member, because being a member or not, it won't make me a Pole». Interview №4 (male, 37 years)

«No, I do not participate. No...rather no, I did not have a wish. The youths are not very interested in it». Interview №7 (female, 19 years)

3.8 Ethnic conflicts and experience of discrimination

The majority of the respondents note that the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus do not feel any discrimination because of their nationality at the present moment:

«Generally, it has not happened with me personally. I think, that national minorities should be out of politics. And some fragmentation among the Poles, it should be deleted ...inside the Polish community foremost, may be, some pressure is realized from the Belarusian authorities. But some fragmentation exists inside the Polish community also». Interview №2 (male, 18 years)

«Me personally? You know, I have not declared that I am a Pole, [I mean] have not gone out with a signboard .If I declared that I am a Pole, may be, there would be something negative, possibly. But I did not do it». Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

«You know, so, in general, it has never been in Belarus definitely and it could not be. Never, never and it cannot be! ... I do not know such cases at all. That is, everyone feels OK». Interview №5 (male, 45 years)

«It was not in Belarus, I mean after the break down of the Soviet Union, it hasn't been. If I am a Pole and a Belarusian, and [we] do the same work at any enterprise, they won't pay less money to me, as I am a Pole. And these discriminations ... Someone has invented this phrase: discriminations. But you should ask the one who has invented it, how they discriminate, probably he won't answer». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

«I have never felt and haven't seen people of the other nationality being discriminated somehow, that is why I have never been interested in it, in fact. The fact that they gave equal rights really, and nowhere when employing and when rendering services in polyclinics – they never ask: «What is your nationality?» And do not send to any other queue, that is, there isn't anything like this!». ... Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

Almost all the cases of discrimination mentioned during the interviews are referred to the time, when Belarus was a republic of the USSR:

- a ban for religious ceremonies

«At the Communists ... it was at that time, that religion was banned. It was forbidden to go to the church, you were a Komsomol member or you were a pioneer, they stood by the church, looked and noted down, then gave the papers to school, and spoke about it at the line ... But now it hasn't existed after the breakup of the USSR. You can see yourself, the Orthodox churches are opened, the Catholic churches are opened, the other ones are opened, either a synagogue, everything of this kind is opened after the disruption of the USSR. And there isn't any discrimination. Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

«Church wedding was also forbidden, for example. Though I had a church wedding with my husband, we were not just registered as officially as having done a church wedding. And when we had our children born, we also baptized them secretly, also it was not permitted. It is now already, all that is allowed now already, and at that time, well». Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

- a ban for using the Polish language, absence of opportunities for studying the Polish language:

«Before the ninety-second year it was forbidden to use the Polish language. For example, our director told: «They are coming from Grodno today, don't speak Polish!» And don't go to the Catholic church. They called for that bureau, or how it was ...» Interview № 6 (female, 75 years)

«The Polish language was not so much allowed to be used, and moreover at schools, – there wasn't even a thought about it, that a Polish school could be at the territory of Belarus». Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

- repressions:

«You know, may be, there was something at that time. ...May be, there was something once. So, take the shooting in Katyn', I mean, there was something, you see, there was something in the atti-

tude to the Poles, well. May be, after the war, in 40-ies, up to 50-ies. But after that I remember the 60-ies well already, there wasn't anything of this kind». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

«My granny's fate was complicated enough, she suffered from the Soviet power strongly enough ... when they declared the territory of Poland ... to be Belarus ... She was an ardent Pole, of course, she really had pure Polish roots from her side. Her relatives, her sisters managed to leave for Poland. All her kinfolks are there now, she ... it happened like this, that she returned ...and after her return, they indicted her. She spent several years, either about five or about seven years in the places not so remote [in jail]. She worked there, lost her health, lost her eye-sight. ...Only her religiousness saved her». ... Interview № 12 (женщина, 30 лет)

After the disruption of the Soviet Union, when Belarus gained independence, the situation changed to the better in this respect, and the majority of the respondents remark it in the course of their interviews:

«yes, everyone has equal rights, certainly, in comparison with the Soviet Union a progress is observed very much ». ... Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

«And it is just thanks to the fact, that the Soviet Union got disintegrated, that Gorbachev took this decision, that Shushkevich supported all that then, and the Polish nation, and the others, everyone, who lives here, the Jews felt some relaxation here also, these problems disappeared. Naturally, all that led to some solidarity of people, everyone was very grateful at that time, everyone supported at the election»... Interview № 10 (female, 53 years)

Just a few cases of conflicts on national or religious grounds are mentioned at the present time:

«...a procession with a cross walked, visiting churches. We were tired, sat down a little, and people there ... I was touched so much by a person who told, so: "The Polota (a disparaging name for the Poles) are celebrating something". I had such a look, I thought: "Well, we are celebrating. Are you disturbed or what?" Such an attitude. Certainly, this is single case. There are clever and not clever people everywhere». Interview № 4 (male, 37 years)

«There was such a thing, that once I came to an Orthodox church, and crossed myself as the Catholics do, and started telling a prayer, and an Orthodox priest noticed me, and expelled me, because I crossed myself in the wrong way». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

«I face with it at work and at studies. I was affected by the fact very much, that some adults could not explain to me surely enough, why they were so much against my nationality. Some people get deep into history in order to support their point of view, manipulate with some dates, with some events in history. And somebody tells simply, that he does not like the Poles, so, that is all. And why - "I do not know"». Interview № 1 (female, 22 years)

In the course of the interview a lot of respondents mention the conflict connected with the «Union of Poles», widely presented in mass media at that time. Informants' statements about the conflict, tell us that they do not perceive it as a conflict between the Poles and the Belarusians or between the authorities of Belarus and Poland, but rather as an internal conflict of the organization members:

«You know, in the past, when everything ... started – everything was beautiful. Then, once again, two-three Poles come, they are different, and tug-of-war starts. But once again simple people suffer. And those stay by the apparatus once again, as if, once again with monetary investments. You see, money destroy people and nothing goes further on for them. ...I consider, that the «Union of Poles» should be involved not in earning money, but promotion of our ... roots, get to know, where these Pole's roots are. ... So, this problem was voiced there on radio and on television. All that is called provocative, as if, you see, in the past people lived and did not hear anything like that». Interview №5 (male, 45 years)

«I have heard, that there were deals of various kind, they showed on TV, that Anzhelika Boris should be “closed”. She did not satisfy the present powers, lets’ tell like that. But they did not «close» her, if I am not mistaken, she teaches at «Polonik» until now and is a director of «Polonik»». Interview №3 (male, 20 years)

«It would be desirable to have one «Union of Poles». This is my first wish. To have one, because the situation as it is now, probably, it is unprofitable for everybody. Though, may be, it is profitable for somebody in financial respect, probably. ... You know, when we are divided, I am getting back to the Union of Poles once again, divided, and they walk and do not greet each other, because they are in one company, and the others – in the other. You know, it is very bad, not good». Interview № 9 (male, 67 years)

«It seems to me, that the scandal, that was a pair of months ago because of the Polish minority, the Belarusian Poles here. That is, it seems to me, that here ... all that provocation goes more from the side of some Polish forces and political movements ... These are political games. Political games, undoubtedly. It seems to me, that there is no fault of our Belarusian government, that it happened to be like this». Interview № 12 (female, 30 years)

3.9 Summarizing matrix

Table presenting individual respondents in rows and a description of key variables in separate columns.

Respondents	Place of residence	Gender	Age	Education	Employment	European Identity	National Identity (residence)	National Identity (country of origin)	Regional identity	Relations with minority's organization	Languages
Interview № 1 Katja	Regional center NNN	F	22 years	University	Museum worker	European identity is vividly expressed	Considers herself a Pole, is very proud of it, she is a Catholic	Her brother lives and studies at seminary in Krakow, she is very close with him and maintains close relations with him.	In the first turn, she relates herself with the village, where she spent her childhood, where she was introduced to Catholicism, became aware of her national identity.	She is not a member of any organizations, but she participates in various festivals and folk art competitions	She speaks Belarusian at work, Russian and Belarusian – when communicating with friends, Russian and Polish – in parents' family
Interview № 2 Joseph	Regional center NNN	M	18 years	Secondary general	Student of LLL University (in Poland)	European identity is vividly expressed, he studies in Poland	Considers himself a Pole, he is a believer, baptized in a Catholic church, comes from a mixed family, his father's ancestors were Poles, mothers' kin is Belarusian.	Considers Poland to be close, it is the country, where he would like to live. The respondent is attracted by the Polish culture and traditions, living standard, that is higher in Poland, in his opinion.	The respondent associates himself with the place of residence clearly, NNN – it is the city, where he was born, has grown up.	He is not a member of any ethnic organization.	Polish and Russian – in the family, Belarusian - with friends. Besides that he speaks English and German.
Interview № 3 Peter	Regional center NNN	M	20 years	Secondary vocational	Temporarily unemployed, finished a college, at the moment of the interview he passed exams for entering a university	A «Polish European», but rather a Pole, nevertheless.	Considers himself a Pole. He is a believer, a Catholic, comes from a mixed family, the Polish roots are from his father's kin, the Belarusian roots are from his mother.	Considers Poland to be very close to him, he has a lot of relatives there, he visited Poland frequently. He is attracted by the culture and history of Poland, he would like to live in Poland.	The respondent loves his city, he considers that NNN is a chef-d'oeuvre, undoubtedly. It is a tidy, cozy city, where there are a lot of historical monuments.	He is not a member of any ethnic organization.	Russian and Polish are spoken in the family, Russian – at college.

Respondents	Place of residence	Gender	Age	Education	Employment	European Identity	National Identity (residence)	National Identity (country of origin)	Regional identity	Relations with minority's organization	Languages
Interview № 4 Gennady	Regional center NNN	M	37 years	University education	A fireman – an employee of the Ministry for Emergency	Considers himself to be a descendant of Litvins	Considers himself to be a Pole, all his ancestors were Poles, he is a Catholic	He was born in the village, that had been at the territory of Poland before 1939. He has friends in Poland, travelled to Poland several times, has a Polish ID card.	The respondent speaks about his city with love, in his opinion, it is very beautiful and comfortable to live. He is closely attached to his homeland.	He does not enter any ethnic organisation because of his principles, believing, that he won't become a Pole because of membership.	He speaks Russian, Belarussian, Polish and uses them in daily life.
Interview № 5 Vladislav	Regional center NNN	M	45 years	University education	He works as a vice-director at construction management office.	He considers himself a European, as far as our country, along with the neighbouring countries are European countries; believes that he thinks as a European does.	Considers himself to be a Pole, was baptized at a Catholic church.	The respondent remarks that he used to like in Poland, he visited it, as he has relatives there. Now Poland attracts him less, as life changed there, and here in Belarus.	The respondent likes his city very much, considers it to be a European city, he is very tremulous about his home city and advocates preservation of its historical heritage.	He is not a member of any ethnic organization.	He speaks Russian in his family, with friends, and Polish – with his relatives in Poland.
Interview № 6 Albina Genrikhovna	Settlement NNN, XXX area, Grodno region	F	75 years	Secondary vocational	A pensioner, used to work as a head of the laboratory at a milk processing plant before pension	In the first place, she considers herself to be Polish, but as far as Poland is a European country, she considers herself a European.	Believes that she is a Pole «from the blood and bone». All her ancestors were Poles, she is very dissatisfied with the fact that, her elder son is married to a Belarussian woman. She is a committed Catholic.	She is attached to Poland, has a lot of relatives and contacts there, visits Poland often. She believes that living standard and culture are higher in Poland in comparison with Belarus.	She notes that Western territories of Belarus, where the settlement of her residence is situated at, compare favourably from the Eastern lands.	She has been a member of the «Union of Poles» for more than 20 years, an active member of this organisation.	She uses a mixed language at the basis of Polish in daily life. According to her, her children did not know a word in Russian before school.
Interview № 7 Angelina	Settlement NNN, XXX area, Grodno region	F	19 years	Secondary vocational	She is looking for a job and is getting ready for entering Agrarian University of NNN for a distance learning course.	She does not identify herself with Europe	She considers herself to be a Pole, she is a believer, was baptized at a Catholic church.	The respondent likes being in Poland more than in Belarus, she has relatives there, she communicates with them personally and by phone regularly. She considers that people are more religious in Poland.	The respondent is attached to the place where she lives, she likes the local nature, the people, her native ancient town. She likes living in the village more than in the city.	The respondent is not a member of any ethnic organization and she does not have a desire to join. She believes, that the youths are not so much interested in such things.	She speaks Russian in her family, at studies, with friends, Polish – with her granny and relatives in Poland.

Respondents	Place of residence	Gender	Age	Education	Employment	European Identity	National Identity (residence)	National Identity (country of origin)	Regional identity	Relations with minority's organization	Languages
Interview № 8 Leokadia Jiosifovna	Settlement NNN, XXX area, Grodno region	F	65 years	University education	She is a pensioner at present, before pension she used to work as a teacher of Belarusian, and Polish.	She does not welcome the entering of Poland into the European Union, she rather associates herself with the place of her residence than with Europe.	Both her parents were Poles, she is clearly aware of herself as a Pole	A lot of her relatives reside in Poland, including the families of her two adult children (from four of her children), she has professional connections with Poland as far as she used to work as a teacher of Polish before pension.	The respondent is attached to the place where she resides, she considers that «it is good there, where we live».	She used to be a member of the «Union of Poles». After the split she quitted this organization.	She speaks Belarusian, Russian, Polish fluently.
Interview № 9 Mechislav Yanovich	Settlement NNN, XXX area, Grodno region	M	67 years	Secondary vocational	Pensioner	He considers himself to be a European, as far as Belarus is a European country, and in his words, Europe is dear to him.	He considers himself a Pole and is very proud of it, he is a believer, was baptized at a Catholic church.	The respondent has friends in Poland, whom he visits as a guest. He speaks positively about Poland, but remarks, that it would be good to visit a lot of places, but it is better to live in the homeland nevertheless.	The respondent associates himself with his native locality, first of all, where everything is very close and dear to him.	The respondent is a chair of the local branch of the Polish ethnic organization «YYY».	He speaks Russian in the family, Polish – when communicating with the members of the Polish ethnic society, and with his friends in Poland.
Interview № 10 Viktoriya Frantseva	Minsk	F	53 years	Two university educations (in engineering and in and economics)	A director of her own business firm	In the opinion of the respondent, she has associated herself with Europe less lately, than in the past.	She is Polish, her both parents were Poles, she identifies herself as a Pole, and it is very important for her, she comes from an ancient Polish kin.	There are relatives in Poland, she visited Poland several times. In the past she considered a variant of moving to Poland for permanent residence, but these intentions have disappeared recently.	She is very much attached to her birthplace, to the village at the border with Poland, where her childhood passed and her parents lived.	She used to be an active member of the «Union of Poles», but she hasn't worked for the organization recently because she is very busy at work.	She speaks Russian in daily life. She can speak Polish.

Respondents	Place of residence	Gender	Age	Education	Employment	European Identity	National Identity (residence)	National Identity (country of origin)	Regional identity	Relations with minority's organization	Languages
Interview № 11 Pavel Gedeminovich	Village XXX Minsk region	M	86 years	Primary education	A pensioner at present, before pension he used to work as a lorry driver at kolkhoz	There is no a clear identification as a European, but he has a lot of contacts with Europe. His elder sister lived in Belgium, almost all his relatives are in Poland, his daughter lives in Argentina	He is a Pole. His both parents were Poles. He was born at the territory of Poland (the village where he was born and has been living, was referred to Poland before 1939). A Catholic.	He has a lot of relatives in Poland, he visited Poland frequently, and maintains links with his relatives. In 1958 he tried to move away for Poland for permanent residence, but he did not manage to because of a sudden illness of his granny. He believes that living standard and culture are high in Poland.	He is attached to the place where he was born and lived for all his life, he is respected a lot by his villagers and by the people in the locality.	He is not a member of any national organization.	He speaks a mixed language at the basis of Belarusian in his daily life. He speaks Polish well.
Interview № 12 Lidiya	Minsk	F	30 years	University education	She works at a magazine editorial office as a sales manager.	She does not identify herself with Europe, though she is interested in the European culture and art, she likes the European values	She considers herself to be a Pole. She is a believer, was baptized at a Catholic church, she visits services regularly, she became aware of her Polish identity when she was an adult already, she comes from an old Polish kin.	She speaks about Poland positively, where she has relatives, she is interested in history and culture of Poland, its modern politics and news.	She associates herself with her birth place, in the first turn. She likes her native place, she likes the nature, visits it often.	She was a member of the Polish ethnic organization «YYY» before moving to Minsk, when she used to live in the village.	She speaks Russian in the family, at work, with friends, Polish – with relatives in Poland.

4 MAIN FINDINGS OF EXPERT INTERVIEWS (ENRI-EXI)

Natalia Veremeeva / Oksana Ivanuto / David Rotman

4.1 Short description of the interviewed persons

Interview № 1

- Expert № 1: (male, 42 years old, university education) represents a non-governmental Polish cultural organization.
- Organisation represented by the expert: non-governmental organisation the "Union of Poles in Belarus". Office of this organization is situated in Minsk.
- Expert's position: vice-chair of the non-governmental association the "Union of Poles in Belarus", chair of Minsk regional office of the non-governmental association the "Union of Poles in Belarus".
- Expert's competence: the expert holds the second position in the national non-governmental organisation of Poles in Belarus.

Interview № 2

- Expert № 2: (male, 41 years old, university education) is a governmental official, representing the executive power.
- Organisation represented by the expert: Office of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus. Office of this organization is situated in Minsk.
- Expert's position: an advisor of the Department on the Issues of Nationalities and Legal Work of the Office of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.
- Expert's competence: the expert deals with the issues of minorities inside the country, provides information and advice on legal issues, concerned with the national minorities in Belarus.

Interview № 3

- Expert № 3: (male, 38 years old, university education) represents the legislative power.
- Organisation represented by the expert: the Chamber of Representatives at the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. Office of this organization is situated in Minsk.
- Expert's position: Chair of the Standing Commission on Human rights, National Relations and Mass Media of the Chamber of Representatives at the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus.
- Expert's competence: Expert's activities include legislative activity, issues of international cooperation, realization of the controlling authority, processing of citizens' addresses.

4.2 Interview summaries

4.2.1 Organisation, represented by the experts and how it is organized

Interview № 1:

Title of the organisation: non-governmental association the "Union of Poles in Belarus".

The main aims: in accordance with the statute and the program, the Union of Poles in Belarus defends the interests of the second largest ethnic minority in Belarus coherently, creates centers for studying the Polish culture and the Polish language, supports cultural, religious connections with Poland:

«The Union of Poles in Belarus is a non-governmental organization, it is one of the very first organizations, as we consider it, of such a trend, in this national trend, that is directed at revival of national culture in the Republic of Belarus. And, apparently, it was one of the most numerous organizations for a long time, as far as quite a significant number of Poles reside in Belarus, it is known, the third place by quantity after the Belarusians, the Russians, and then the Poles go. Well, and the goals, just as any voluntary organization of this direction, it is revival of the national culture, studying the language as a carrier, the main carrier of culture, preservation and supporting the Polish traditions, historical heritage... these are memorials ... Well, here, approximately such ... these are the main goals of our organization».

Interview № 2

Title of the organisation: Office of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.

Structure of the organization: Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs is appointed at the position and is dismissed by the President of the Republic of Belarus after the suggestion by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus. Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs realizes functions of the state governmental body and obeys the government. The activities of the Office of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs are provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs. The employees of the Office of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs are government officials, except for technical and service personnel.

The main aims of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs and of his Office are:

- Participation in the development and realization of the state policy in the ethnic-religious sphere;
- Provision of citizens' rights for freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, protection of their rights and interests in spite of the attitude to religion and religious affiliation, also the right for freedom of associating in religious organizations;
- Preparing suggestions on regulation of the issues related with the activities of religious organizations and non-governmental associations of citizens, referred to national minorities;
- Controlling the activities of religious organizations in terms of performance of the legislation of the Republic of Belarus and their statutes;

- Studying the issues, appearing in the sphere of mutual relations between the state and religious organizations, the state and non-governmental associations of citizens, referring themselves to national minorities;
- Participation in the development, organisation of execution and controlling conforming with the legislative acts of the Republic of Belarus, offering suggestions on enhancement of the legislation at the basis of generalization of the practice of its application;
- Protection and assistance in realization of the rights of the citizens of the Republic of Belarus of various nationalities in the spheres of culture, education, language, informational provision, rendering assistance in enlightening activity of the non-governmental associations of citizens, referring themselves to national minorities;
- Rendering assistance after the requests of religious organizations and non-governmental associations of the citizens, referring themselves to national minorities, in achieving agreements with governmental bodies, assistance in strengthening mutual understanding and tolerance among religious organisations of various faiths and representatives of national communities;
- Organization of assistance and help with satisfaction of national-cultural needs of the Belarusians and Belarusian nationals coming from Belarus, residing abroad, strengthening their connections with the Republic of Belarus;
- Studying and making prognosis about religious and ethnic-political situation, dynamics and trends in the national processes, international and inter-confessional relations, prevention of manifestations of religious exclusiveness and slighting attitude to religious and national feelings;
- International cooperation on the issues referred to its competence.

Organisation's work is carried out in three directions: relations among denominations inside the country, relations with national communities inside the country and relations with the Belarusian nationals, residing abroad.

Interview № 3

Title of the organisation: the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, the Chamber of Representatives.

Structure of the organization: the Parliament – the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus consists of two Chambers, the Chamber of Representatives, consisting of 110 deputies and the Council of the Republic, consisting of 64 persons. The main aim, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, is legislative activity, realized both by passing new codes and laws, and introducing alterations and additions in the current regulations. The Chamber of Representatives deals with developing and passing laws. Deputies of the Chamber of Representatives are elected via direct, secret ballot of the total population. The upper house of the Parliament is the Council of the Republic – it acts as a legal collective expert when considering the bills, passed by the Chamber of Representatives, from the point of view of their correspondence with the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, international legal acts, legislation in general, and state interests, society, territories and some layers of the society. 14 Standing Commissions act at the Chamber of Representatives. The expert is a Chair of the Standing Commission on Human Rights, National Relations and Mass Media of the Chamber of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus.

4.2.2 History of organisations' establishment

Interview № 1

The Union of Poles in Belarus was created in 1988 by the union of all the Polish cultural-educational societies, acting in Belarus:

«...we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the organization already, ...so, it means, it started to arise in... about 1987, correspondingly, it was incorporated as an organization in 1988. It was in Lida [Belarusian town], Lida area, then in Grodno, such an organization appeared in Minsk simultaneously ... And the wave passed somehow, this ... at that time, and we consider it to be the datum point, starting from 1988. That is, so, the organization was 20 years old in 2008 already. Well, it is one of the very first organizations, as we consider it, of such a trend, in this national trend, directed at revival of national culture in the Republic of Belarus».

The Union of Poles in Belarus was one of the largest national organizations in the republic for a long period:

«And, apparently, it was one of the most numerous organizations for a long time, as far as quite a significant number of Poles reside in Belarus, it is known, the third place by quantity after the Belarusians, the Russians, and then the Poles go».

In 2005 a split took place in the «Union of Poles»:

«A regular convention of the Union of Poles took place in 2005..., where new management was elected. Well, the conventions are carried out at regular times, in accordance with the statute of the organization. But, as it appeared to be, the convocation was carried out with a lot of violations of the statute, and, in general, a significant part of the delegates and some active nucleus saw significant violation of the statute in it, and they addressed with a request to annul the decisions of this convocation. Well, what was done: a decision was taken approximately during a month, that the convocation had taken place with violations, that the decision of that convocation was not accepted, though the acknowledgement of the results took place during that time ... but if the Ministry of Justice recalled the judgment, so we had to carry it out at our territory, at least, and the Polish territory did not agree with it. So, and the split started».

Since that time two organizations have existed at the territory of Belarus de facto: the officially registered «Union of Poles in Belarus» and the unregistered in accordance with the Belarusian legislation Union of Poles chaired by Anzhelika Boris, though only one organisation exists under this title de jure:

«No, well, two do not exist in fact: one exists, just as it existed, if you mean our legislation, and as it should be. That is, the «Union of Poles» is a registered organization. Yes, it is our organization. This is the intention of the people to be in the Union. I understand it like this: if, well, they (the unregistered Union of Poles) showed some wish, or, so, it came to a merging or joining, or, possibly, if there were some fundamental disagreements there, before registration of the new organization, but, naturally, there is the «Union of Poles» already, and if the organization is new, it is necessary to change the name in some way».

Interview № 2

The organisation Commissioner on Religious and Ethnic Affairs is quite young, but not new, its sources date back to the USSR times:

«...when at the Council of Ministers there existed a definite structure dealing with the issues of nationalities, denominations, the issues about compatriots did not appear at that time».

Then this structure was reorganized several times: in 1993 a special structure at the Council of Ministers was created, it dealt with the issues of compatriots abroad, nationalities and denominations inside the country, it was the State Committee on Religions and Nationalities.

«And since then, here, till the present day, the structure has existed, has existed practically with the same functions and competencies ... That is, they deal with the issues of building politics, coordinating state policy concerning denominations, nationalities, compatriots abroad. ... The only thing that changed, it was, in some cases the numbers of the organization and its name. ... I came to work to the State Committee on the Issues of Religions and Nationalities, then the Committee was transformed into the Committee on the Issues of Religion and Nationalities at the Council of Ministers, up to date there is such a structure as the Commissioner on the Religious and Ethnic Affairs and its Office is at ... Commissioner's Office».

Interview № 3

From 1937 till 1996 one chamber parliament – the Supreme Council of the Belarusian State Soviet Republic – was the highest legislative body in the Republic of Belarus, then it was the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus. After the national suffrage at the Republic National Referendum November 24, 1996 changes and additions were introduced in the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus of 1994. In accordance with them, the new Parliament started working in 1997 — the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, consisting of two houses: the Chamber of Representatives and the Council of the Republic.

4.2.3 Sphere of competence

Interview № 1

The work of the organisation is the following:

«... we create conditions for realization of the directions. I've told about... creating conditions for the children or parents to be able to study the Polish language at their will – yes, we strive to it, we trace these processes, we initiate creation of manuals, their reissuing. And somewhere we initiate and support opening open classrooms, Polish classes at schools, well, and so on ... Two schools, where teaching is provided in Polish, work in the republic thanks to our initiative, the Polish language is one hundred per cents there. They are in Grodno and in Volkovysk [the Belarusian towns]. All the subjects are in the Polish language there».

Except for the «Union of Poles», the other organisations of the Polish national minority exist in Belarus, but the Union of Poles covers the widest scope of tasks:

«Well, the organization is not the only one. For example, another organization appeared soon enough after the organization of the «Union of Poles», the so-called the «Polska matezh shkolna», well, the other organizations exist today. How do they differ? The goals are approximately close, the goals are approximately close, so, I've told the goals in general. But, there can be such, so, but the bias can be somewhere ... For example, as the «Matezh shkolna» carries our quite a lot of various competitions among school children, among the youths. There are language competitions, essay competitions, so, something in this respect, so, they get organized. There are sport organizations. Then, it is clear, the heel is taken somewhere in this direction. Well, and we are as a general organization, as an organization that covers the widest scope of tasks, that the organizations face with».

Interview № 2

The sphere of competence of the Office on Religious and Ethnic Affairs includes denominational relations inside the country, relations with national communities inside the country and relations with compatriots, residing abroad. Expert's sphere of competence includes the issues of national minorities inside the country, national communities:

«We work practically with all the public associations of various national directions, registered in the country. Up to date they amount to about 25. These are those, that work really actively».

The state represented by the Commissioner on Religious and Ethnic Affairs renders financial, organisational, methodic, information support to the ethnic associations in Belarus.

The Department on Religious and Ethnic Affairs carries out controlling functions also:

«Checks of work are carried out at the places and extrinsically in the regions every year, about execution of organisation's statutory activities by the ethnic non-governmental organisations. ...if the statues are violated, two questions appear: either bringing the Statue in balance and changing the form of the organization, – already not the public one, but the public-political, or if the organization starts running business activities, also bringing it in the Statue, or stopping this activity. That is, the law, the order should correspond with what the organization was oriented at initially... That is, a law is a law, and the law applies to everyone, it is necessary to observe it».

Commissioner's office realizes international cooperation, supports relations with the same structures in the other countries.

Interview № 3:

The sphere of competence of the Standing Committee on Human Rights, National Relations and Mass Media at the Chair of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus includes legislative activity, issues of international cooperation, carrying out controlling authorities, studying citizens' addresses.

«In general the Standing Committee on Human Rights, Ethnic Relations and Mass Media, supervises the issues, including the related with national minorities, that reside in our country and ... their representatives are the citizens of our country, and in general, thus, we face with it. We deal with the issues of national relations in our country. ... We also have a structure at the level of the Republic of Belarus – it is the Commissioner on the Issues of Religions and Nationalities, and also there are directorates at the level of Regional Executive Committees, rather departments. At every Executive Committee of the regions and at the City Executive Committee of the city of Minsk there are departments, that are called: Department on the Issues of Religion and Nationalities. So, these civil servants deal with the work, contact with representatives of the ethnic minorities and ethnic non-governmental organizations directly»

4.3 The main issues, connected with the polish minority in the country of residence

4.3.1 Legislative issues and realization of ethnic minorities' rights, including the Polish ethnic minority

In the Republic of Belarus there is a legislative base, regulating inter-ethnic relations.

Expert № 2:

«... the most important law – the Law about the National Minorities of the Republic of Belarus, then, as far as it is concerned with the national communities, the Law about Languages, that regulates it. Also the majority of the Codes of Laws of the Republic of Belarus foresee some regulating

groups, positions, that cover the issues either about violation of the national rights, or about violation of the rights of cultural self-identification, or some other groups of issues, let's tell, stirring up racial hatred, xenophobia and so on and so forth, that entails criminal, administrative or other responsibility. That is, these issues are regulated in some group of enactments somewhere, if not directly as in the Law about the National Minorities. Once again the basic law of the Republic of Belarus – the Constitution – there are a number of enactments stipulated in particular rights, duties, powers and etceteras, concerned with the national minorities. It is developed at the basis of international law already, that guarantees and secures rights of national communities, minorities, in particular, and human rights in general».

Expert № 1:

«Well, several laws, the main laws that we adhere to in our activities, and adhered to at registration: it is the Law about voluntary public organizations, I cannot call literally, but the last edition, in my opinion, the Law about voluntary public organisations, ...naturally, the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. That is why, naturally, we should carry out and adhere to the law in our activities».

Expert № 3:

«In 2004 a new statutory wording of the «Law about National Minorities» was passed, and all our work is developed in accordance with this Law. Also the Law about Religion and Denomination. However, if one speaks about legislation, concerning nationalities, national relations, national minorities in our state, one should start with the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, that guarantees, first of all, equality of national communities and respect of the rights and interests of all the national communities. And the state is responsible, it is committed to writing in the Constitution, it is a state responsibility for preservation of historical and cultural heritage, and everyone in our country has a right to preserve his or her nationality, and also everyone has a right to use his mother tongue».

The experts remark that the same laws and regulations are applied to the Polish ethnic minority as in case with all the other ethnic communities, which representatives reside in Belarus:

Expert № 1:

«Well, we as citizens, it does not matter: all are citizens, both the Poles, the Russians, the Ukrainians – it is also a national society. But we keep with, even do not keep with, we obey the laws of the Republic of Belarus in all other respects, and the law applies to everyone, as far as I understand, in my opinion, we do not have such a distinction ... in comparison with the others».

Expert № 2:

«Absolutely the same as for any other (national community). That is, there is no difference for the law in this case, who you are – a Pole, a Ukrainian, a Russian, someone else».

Expert № 3:

«These guarantees are committed to writing in the Constitution ... The law «About Languages in the Republic of Belarus», the Law «About Education», which secures that at the places of dense residence, and it exists, including the Polish minority, schools and classes are created for educating in the language of their nationality... They, the representatives of national minorities, are our citizens, that is why all our legislation covers them».

The Polish ethnic minority in Belarus is rendered state support equally with the other ethnic minorities:

Expert № 1:

«Well, naturally, any activity, it requires some costs, yes, of various kinds. Well, starting from material, some organizational moments, and so on. Just like this for, without having resources, it is either complicated to do something or totally impossible... The sources of income of the public organization are determined both in the law and in the statute of the organization, that these are membership fees, donations, help and so on. These are very insignificant sources of income, that is why the state supports national associations here. Thus, there is a definite budget article, a yearly budget article, that is allocated for the development in this direction. How is it distributed? There is a Coordination, and it is also called a Consultative Board at the Office of the Commissioner, where the members of this board meet once a quarter at least, when the discussion of financial affairs goes on for the next quarter, and that is all, they decide altogether, friendly, by voting. Applications are submitted. Here, for example, I need to tailor costumes for some group, and I need to carry out some event, and I need to publish a newspaper or a magazine, it is necessary to spend. And these questions are settled collegially. The money, well, such normal, let's tell, money, there were more than 130 millions for this official year, the eleventh year. But we, as the most numerous nation, for example, the Polish one, so, we received the most significant assistance in this direction by the results of this year».

Expert № 2:

«It differs only in the degree, that the Polish ... The Union of Poles in Belarus is the most numerous organization, that exists at the territory of Belarus. That is why as they are more numerous, naturally, the support rendered to this organisation is larger in total sum. They have the Polish Houses, that everyone [else] has nothing like. There are some houses, well, let's put it like this, the Jewish, the Lithuanian, the Russian ones, but they are significantly less numerous, but they receive favourable taxation for the land just like these ones, they receive favourable rent rate for their rooms. As for the rest, the support is practically the same. There is more support here, certainly, but as they (the Poles) are much more numerous by number... In this case everything depends on the desire and activity of the organization itself. In the other cases financial approaches, organisational ones, others are absolutely identical».

In accordance with the legislation (in particular with the Law «About Languages in the Republic of Belarus»), the right for upbringing and getting education in mother tongue is realized for the representatives of all nationalities:

Expert № 2:

«At present in the Republic of Belarus there are four schools with ethnic-national component, where subjects are studied in Polish and in Lithuanian. Also 120 establishments of general education [provide it] in various forms, such as vocational classes, open classes... about five thousand of pupils study the language, the Polish language is studied by 4671 persons, Jewish by 262, Ukrainian by 52, Lithuanian by 15. At pre-school establishments there are groups of about 40 children, where they study Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Jewish languages. Seventeen circles with the same component are opened, and 212 children visit them. These are only the ones functioning at the basis of the state establishments, without taking into account, that there are Sunday schools, schools at the Catholic churches and so on».

4.3.2 Political discussions existing in the society

The experts comment on the conflict connected with the non-governmental association the «Union of Poles in Belarus».

Expert № 1:

«This discussion about the Union of Poles continues. I consider, and the majority, at least, in our organization consider that a lot of questions are blown up artificially. If there is no a problem, well, it is necessary to create it... Yes, there is a part from the Polish organization, a part of the people, who, well, withdrew, split, who write themselves as the Union of Poles, but it is not in accord with our legislation. We are always open for any dialogue with anyone, who agrees or fulfills our statute. But why should we run violation of our laws, of our statute? And that is why there are discussions of this type, certainly, they are carried out, and so, this support by the Polish party of that very part, I haven't told, that they [Poland] are closed [focused] on that very part... But the Polish party strives to pass over a significant part, yes, and I think, that it is not completely right. Well, the Polish party contributes somehow to weakening of the Polish movement in Belarus thereby. May be, someone needs it, yes. Here, to weaken the Polish movement in Belarus. May be, it was too numerous, and too ... But it is a different thing then, then some other aims are set for this organization. And we, as the Polish society, would not like to make such processes politically loaded. Certainly, let's tell, there is always a protest part of the population. ... But for some reason, just only this part is taken, and the rest are not taken into account at all. This is all already. Is it neither necessary to consider them, nor to think about them, nothing? ... The same thing is today, so, Europe listens to some insignificant part, yes, I don't want to make judgments about rightness or wrongness even, there, naturally, each stands on his own positions... But speaking about it, it is necessary to listen to all around, that is, to see a general picture, but not to overstress [not to bias] this very picture, yes, so only one side. That is why, some complex approach is necessary, a balanced approach... me, as a leader of the non-governmental organization, I should not reason on some political issues (though, why?)... but as a person, yes, so, I dislike so, I don't accept such just exactly narrow approaches, and it seems to me, that it verges on some double standards somewhere, with the double approaches».

Expert № 2:

«There existed even a conflict in connection with those Houses of Poles, that were basically present in the property of one organization. Up to date there is an organization, that received the majority of voices and which board was elected. And they (legitimate organisation) use all these houses, and the rest, they kicked up a racket that it was ineligible. We had several meetings, inviting the representatives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that is, conciliatory commissions, and such a form was offered, as «finding a compromise», for these two groups, the one that... does not want to concede, and the one that exists legally, to have a meeting together and to carry out a new ... uniting congress. That is, they would meet, everybody would express his point of view, and all the present would decide, who is right, who is to blame, or would just elect some board composed of the representatives of this part, of the other part. But, in spite of such suggestions, unfortunately, there are no such advancements from Anzhelika Boris, who used to head it. Every leader understands responsibility for his actions himself.... That is why, certainly, we expect, that everything will develop somehow in due course, anyway this conflict has subsided already, let's tell, and the moral is, that, may be, in the near future it will come to the result, that must be, when people understand, that there is no sense in dividing something, if you do one common thing».

«As far as a large influence took place both for the cost of also informally handed resources and via a large financial support of the Poles in Belarus, that went from Poland. And at that time that split took place, when the small group, that used the major advantages, appeared to be out of the access, irrelevant».

The experts stress that the conflict does not involve the major part of the Polish ethnic minority in Belarus, in principle, as far as there is no inter-ethnic tension in the society in daily life.

Expert № 2:

«As a rule, both at the level of some large national conflicts or international ones, these are political questions most often. If the issues of the country are solved, so, nationalities become engaged already here, and all that is covered by some racial or other dislike. But, in fact, if all conflicts are dug out, they all look for the reason. The reason should be grounded, that is why they tell, aha, this is a religious conflict, aha, this is a national conflict, aha, this is some other different conflict. But in any case, politics stands behind it everywhere. That is, the achievement of economical most often, or territorial, or some other powerful aims. If one takes away these aims, the sense of the conflict is lost, but it is always necessary to ground it. That is why, these conflicts are grounded by these things most often».

Expert № 3:

«... there is one problem there – the problem of responsibility and the problem of having one Union of Poles and a desire to create an alternative Union of Poles. And it is not so much the problem of our state there, but, in my opinion, the problem of Poland, as far as the activists of the Belarusian Union of Poles, for some reason the entrance is forbidden for them to the territory of Poland, for some reason they are considered to be as near as enemies of Poland, if the actions are so. Though they are common citizens of our country, in general, in accordance with our laws they are absolutely law-abiding, they do not have anything special against Poland, in general, and it is just absurd to make them such zealous enemies of Poland. The only thing, that a lot of them speak the Polish language, are Catholics, and consider themselves to be ethnic Poles. And they are members of the Belarusian Union of Poles. This is their main guilt, it turns out. Certainly, if they followed Missis Boris, and blew up that conflict, that the Polish minorities are oppressed here, possibly, they would have received some preferences on behalf of Poland. But in general, this incident is totally over at the present moment. Because barely only about forty persons initiated this conflict, from almost four hundred thousand of the Belarusian Poles residing at the territory of our state, I've already told about it. Nevertheless, understanding the importance of this problem, our state and Poland created a common task force, that included the top executives and, in general, the ways of solving these problems were found as a result of the work of this group».

Expert № 1:

«Well, the answer is evident. There aren't such conflicts. And have a look at mixed families, at least. Everything is mixed here. I am not telling about nationality already, probably, it is rather possible to tell by denomination in some way. You are an Orthodox, you are a Catholic, because the Poles are Catholics in the majority of cases, in the absolute majority of cases, as the leading creed in Belarus is the Orthodoxy. And by nationality, well, I do not know, well, there isn't anything from the conflicts, ...thanks Goodness, it does not exist, so far. And it is not necessary to blow it up. ...as politics is carried out here, equal politics in relation to everybody, in my opinion, we do not have any grounds, there aren't grounds for such conflicts».

The experts state that there are no conflicts on national grounds in our country, neither among the ethnic minorities, nor between the Polish minority and the majority – the Belarusians.

Expert № 3:

«In our country, there are no such (problems) laid on some public tapis, there is no any tension in this issues. Let's tell like this, we have, the national minorities are fully integrated in the Belarusian society, we do not have a division by nationality, there is no division by faith. We do not have any obstacles, let's tell, on the issues connected with holding ... or not holding some public offices, both the Poles, and the Tatars, and the Azerbaijanians hold state positions, and in general there are not any problems in all these issues, because it is not the main question for us, the question of any nationality. The main thing is that you are a citizen of the Republic of Belarus, and that is all with it».

Expert № 3:

«The Belarusians are such, I believe, the greatest nation, that they just amaze all the world with their calmness in general. And that is why, I was even told by the representatives of some countries, who initially studied in Peter [St. Petersburg], in Moscow, and they had to move to study in the city of Minsk or to other our regional cities, because of the complicated international situation there [in Russia], and in general, they remark, that ... they have found their second home here. ...And in general, the citizens that reside at the territory of our state, there aren't such conflicts or such tension... may be, there are some small conflicts, but, generally ... thanks Goodness, they do not have such a mass character».

4.4 Relations with mother country

4.4.1 Discussing the status of ethnic minorities in bilateral relations

One of the experts tells that the position of ethnic minorities is discussed in the negotiations between the representatives of the Belarusian party with the mother countries of various ethnic minorities:

Expert № 2:

«These agreements, that are signed, they act on permanent basis. Developing them, every year we sign cooperation and support programs on the most topical projects aimed at support of the national minorities, let's tell, of the Belarusians there and the representatives of this nationality here. We sign them interchangeably either at our territory or at the territory where this community comes from. But it is ineligible to stipulate any especial status of a definite nationality – it is ineligible, as far as it is forbidden to single out some group of population with the background of the other population. It will also cause a conflict, discomfort of the others and so on. They are the same citizens of the country, just as all the others».

The experts give examples of political discussion, concerned with the Polish ethnic minority at the international level:

Expert № 3

« when we meet with foreign delegations (PM of the other countries), it has never been a single time, well, except for Poland, of course, some acute problems of some Diaspora that stay here, have never been touched upon... because they do not exist. Concerning Poland, so, our Commission has never received any addresses or complaints, nothing. The only thing, when I faced with this issue, was when I came to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and there, generally, this issue was forced artificially in many ways there. Then it was acknowledged finally, that there is not such a question in the national trend, in fact, yes, and that it is not the question of national minorities, but rather, the question of freedom of associations. ...and, it was sounded by the lips of several ambassadors, including... It is not the national question any more, it is the question of freedom of associations, and the freedom of associations here, that is, non-governmental organizations, this is the issue of our national legislation, and our state acts just in the frameworks of our legislation. May be, it is not perfect, but it is such until now and, it yields fruit, generally. And we do not have various, so, let's tell like this, destructive forces, including, let's tell, satanic direction, I mean, such extreme radicals».

Expert № 2:

«It is the interest of every state, to lobby some of its interests via Diaspora, but openly, when something was manifested so openly, probably ... probably, no. Though, this very conflict at the basis of the Polish community, was basically provoked on this very background... Up to date it does not depend on the fact that someone has some advantages, no. Any organization, even the

smallest one, if they have some violations somewhere, a resolution of the Ministry of Justice is made, that there are violations, they should be corrected».

Expert № 1:

«So, in connection with it, I would like to recall the Polish issue. A year has not passed so far, when it was very actively blown up in mass media, and by the Polish party, unfortunately. That ... well, so, the Belarusian-Polish question, well, speaking generally, and if one speaks more specifically, what is the essence of the Polish issue? That the Poles are in unequal conditions in comparison with the other nationalities. Well, it is possible to try thinking like this or looking for examples: well, where are the Poles in unequal conditions? How is it manifested? And in my opinion, it is of no possibility to find such examples. Aren't the Poles represented in the authorities? If one takes Grodno region, more than a half of the Poles are heads of the departments there, at the Regional Executive Committee and so on, and so forth. Well, so many Poles are in the Parliament ... Well, that is, in this respect ... Well, I do not know such examples, when they employ you and ask: «What is your nationality?» It does not matter there, if it is a Pole, a Russian, a Tatar or someone else».

4.4.2 Support of the ethnic minority by the mother country

Expert № 2 remarks that in the case with the Polish ethnic minority, a significant purposeful support of the Poles in Belarus was carried out until 2005 by Poland: construction of the Houses of Pole was financially supported, equipment was made available, as well as national folk costumes etc. After the conflict of 2005 and the split of the «Union of Poles in Belarus», the support is directed to the alternative «Union of Poles»:

«Up to date, the support is intrinsic for the groups, that are critical, that is, the illegitimate, so-called, Union of Poles. They receive support still, either for events, or for something else, both on the part of the Consulate and the Embassy. The same organizations, that are members of the «Union of Poles in Belarus», often undergo some screening, discrimination, or you can call it anything to please».

Expert № 3 tells that in our country a lot of ethnic minorities have such support from their mother country, in particular, the Polish minority:

«Well, a lot of the support. A lot of them support. And, it was unexpected for me in some way, the representatives of Syria came here several years ago, and we could not find an interpreter. We conducted this event in the frameworks of public organizations, we could not find an interpreter. So, we addressed to the Syrian Diaspora, and they met them. They even told, that they were informed about that delegation, that it was coming, and they were even going to meet them, so, certainly, they helped us, and even organized a dinner. So. And that was why, they are in a constant contact, they communicate with each other constantly, some of them represent some structures of their political parties at the territory of Belarus even. That is why ... that is why, certainly, there is such a connection... I have already told earlier, that some such preferences on the part of the mother country, they even make the position of the representatives of these minorities even better than the position of the citizens of the Republic of Belarus even. At the example of the Poles, that they can travel easily, communicate, bring goods and go to the Polish hypermarkets once a week, not to the Belarusian hypermarkets. And they can communicate with relatives, have rest there, and there aren't any problems with it. Yes, the Polish ID card, and all the rest».

Expert № 1 speaks about significant material assistance, that the Polish minority in Belarus used to receive from Poland:

«... namely about the Polish organization, there were large, good, positive connections. And the strive for it was just on behalf of Poland, in particular, it is clear, the Poles, the neighbouring country, Poland is nearby, so. And so, this Polish movement was supported by the Polish party, and not

only in moral respect, but in material respect, and substantial financing took place. So, from the programs, the educational programs ... Some material conditions were created for it, the Polish Houses were bought, now there are 16 such Houses at the territory of the Republic, that is except for such moral support, Poland rendered substantial material support. And our Poles, who reside in Belarus, the citizens of Belarus – they also had some look there, to Poland ... A lot of people have their relatives, living there, and those buried, with all these processes. That is why, the looks were directed there, certainly».

After the conflict of 2005 and the split of the «Union of Poles in Belarus», only the alternative «Union of Poles» is supported, and the activity of the official Union of Poles in Belarus is not supported at all, and is even blocked by the Polish part sometimes:

Expert № 1:

«...the approaches of the Polish official party towards the Polish movement in Belarus changed significantly after the split. ...the Poles, Poland divided its attitude to the Union of Poles, and towards the unofficial union, more exactly, to that group that split off. The official Union is not supported by Poland, and moreover, there have been such periods, they have not finished, yet, when the activists of this movement were banned to enter Poland. So, it is not completely clear. Judging by the fact, how Europe and Poland, including, as a member of the European Union, promote the principles of democracy, so, limiting freedom for the people who think somehow differently, yes, and express their opinions differently, in my opinion, it is not compatible with these principles. We do not support these principles. We feel on ourselves, that, how, let's tell, the Union of Poles, well, the «official» one, as if, [experiences] not something like support, but obstacles in this direction sometimes. Why the number of the members of the Union of Poles reduced. I've told, that in our palmy days there were twenty thousand there, and now there are about 7-8 thousand there, I am telling. Yes, because there has been this policy of the recent years, since the fifth year, it pushes off the people somewhere from it. That is, so, entering the Union of Poles today means making some problems for yourself, do you see? ...But the other thing is, that the Union of Poles, that will work in political field somewhere, yes, the Poles will support here. That is why, we do not welcome such one, as if, the regulation of the activity of the Union of Poles. If one speaks about the Union of Poles, it should be an independent organization. Independent both from the Belarusian authorities, that is, this organization should be regulated by the law, and that is all, and all the rest is an internal issue of the organization. The same is applied to the Polish party. And trying to direct it in this way, well...»

4.4.3 Connection (if any) with the European events and organizations

The experts point out that the EU offers a number of programs, projects, grants, aimed at national minorities, and consider them to be quite effective:

Expert № 1:

«we have been living in a little different reality already – it is the European Union already, for how many years already. Europe unites in this respect. There are common approaches to the situation already, both to the national minorities in Belarus, not only to Poland, so, we, as Poles, we feel it, but ... Poland is a common approach already – the European Union. And certainly, there are a lot of positive things in this respect from what is offered by the European Union, the programs that are offered, grants of various kind, that are allocated. That is, how do we perceive it? Positively, yes».

Expert № 2:

«...there are five programs, the European ones and the other ones, that act in regards with the other nationalities. Using such grants, some strong creative groups of various nationalities went to Europe with performances. The Armenians went to Great Britain, the Azerbaijanians went some-

where also with their group, I cannot tell at once. That is, there are such grants, when they win, ours, and they go with performances, concerts somewhere».

«We are also invited and we support the project called «By the roads of Mnemosina» – this is a project, that is supported by the Belarusian association of UNESCO clubs, it is a child, rather a youth project, targeted at the children of various nationalities, the youths, students who will show how they live, their interests, traditions».

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Research conclusions

1. **National Identity.** Most often ethnic self-identification of the Poles in Belarus takes place at the level of personal subjective feelings, when correlation of individual identity with ethnicity of ancestors takes place. Catholic religion takes a special position in the cultural framework of ethnic consciousness of the Poles, Catholicism is an accumulator of national traditions and customs. This essential influence of religion on ethnicity and formation of solidarity of the ethnic community is explained by its in-depth links with mentality of the people, its spiritual grounds. Ethnic identity of the Poles is connected not so much with real use of the Polish language by all members of the Polish community in Belarus, but rather by the symbolic role of the Polish language in the processes of affinity formation with the ethnic group and in inter-group differentiation. The overwhelming majority of the representatives of the Polish ethnic minority are proud of their ethnicity and demonstrate an aspiration to preserve their national culture in their social environment.

2. **Regional Identity** of the Belarusian Poles is quite vividly expressed, what is shown by the feeling of commonness with the country of their residence and pride in regards with regional affiliation, attachment to their birth place and place of residence. Characterizing relations of the Belarusian Poles with their mother country, it is worth mentioning that a lot of them consider Poland to be close to them, and have quite tight relations with the Poles in Poland (firstly, with relatives and friends). The Belarusian Poles are included in active communication with the Poles in the country of their origin, along with that the Polish community is not closed. Representatives of the Polish community demonstrate a high level of social tolerance, expressed in the trust not only to the representatives of their own community, but also trust to the other social groups.

3. **European Identity.** A definite part of the Polish community feels European in this or that degree, relating their feelings rather with geographical and cultural aspects. A significant part of the Belarusian Poles do not know how to characterize their attitude to the European Union, and, correspondingly, to assess the perspectives of Belarus to enter the European Union. A neutral attitude to the EU dominates among the Belarusian Poles.

4. **Position of the Poles in Belarus.** Legislation regulating inter-ethnic relations exists in the Republic of Belarus, as well as governmental bodies, rendering financial, organizational, methodic, informational support to ethnic associations in Belarus. The same laws and regulations act in regard to the Polish minority, just as in relation to all the other ethnic communities, which representatives reside in Belarus. The Polish ethnic minority in Belarus enjoys state support equally with the other ethnic minorities.

Representatives of the Polish ethnic minority have opportunities to study the Polish language at the educational establishments, providing primary, secondary and university education in the republic. Representatives of the Polish ethnic minority have access to the mass media of the Republic of Poland, as well as opportunities to use the Belarusian mass media targeted at the representatives of the Polish community in Belarus.

Inter-ethnic and inter-confessional situation in Belarus is conflict-free and is characterized with low tension rate. The data gained give evidence about ethnic tolerance of the Belarusian Poles and about their indisposition to isolation from the representatives of the other nationalities. Representatives of the Polish minority do not feel discrimination on ethnic grounds. There are no

conflicts on national grounds in Belarus, neither between national minorities, nor between the Polish minority and the majority – the Belarusians. The situation with the «Union of Poles in Belarus» is perceived by the representatives of the Polish community neither as a conflict between the Poles and the Belarusians, nor as a conflict between the authorities of Belarus and Poland, but rather as an internal conflict among the members of this organization.

5.2 Practical recommendations

The data analyzed in the course of the project ENRI-East do not show sharp contradictions, related with the position of the Polish community in Belarus, thus, the recommendations, suggested here, are of general character.

1. The outcomes of the studies (quantitative and qualitative) should be presented to the bodies of state administration of various levels and to NGOs. It is important to inform the parties concerned not only about analytical reports, but also to present the empirical data, gained in the course of the project. Thus, representatives of the governmental and non-governmental structures will get an opportunity to analyze the results of the research independently and to take grounded professional governmental decisions.
2. Positive trends in inter-ethnic relations of any multi-national state are one of stability conditions, providing its progressive development. Along with that, historical and current experience shows that inter-ethnic relations can get aggravated because of totally unexpected reasons. It means that governmental structures and non-governmental organizations should monitor the situation in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations on regular basis. What makes it necessary to carry out sociological monitorings on regular basis, aimed at finding out problem situations, that can lead to an acute intensification of tension between representatives of various ethnic groups. The data, gained in the course of the monitoring, should be used as a basis of managerial political decisions taken immediately (in case it is necessary).

5.2.1 Suggestions for future research and follow-up studies

The events of the last two decades, starting from collapse of the Soviet Union and creation of New Independent States at the ex-soviet territory, emergence of the European Union, gave an impetus to appearance and development of a new geopolitical reality at the European continent. The project ENRI-East took a shot at a large-scale investigation of peculiarities of formation and development of identities of various levels. The information gained in the course of the research is not only the main data for application of modern approaches in realization of the European policy, but also a theoretical basis for putting forward new presuppositions and hypothesis for advanced further in-depth study of the issue under study. The subject of research of the further studies should be specified, and, possibly, divided into two: 1) all national minorities, residing at their historical territory; 2) groups of migrants, residing in receiving countries.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Prof. David G. Rotman is director of the Center for Sociological and Political Researches of Belarusian State University (CSPR-BSU). Professor Rotman is one of the leading specialists at the NIS territory in techniques of organisation and conduct of sociological research. He is an author of the conception of operative sociological researches, created a number of original techniques of electoral sociological research. Professor Rotman is an author of a number of scientific works in the sphere of sociology of politics, sociology of electoral behaviour, sociology of deviant behaviour, sociology of international relations, sociology of cross border relations. He has published almost 300 papers in peer-reviewed journals and he is an author and editor of twenty books. His research has been financed by the Ministry of Education of Belarus, Ministry of Public Health of Belarus, Department of National Affairs of Belarus, Department on Youths Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus, Commissioner for Ethnic and Religious Affairs, INTAS, World Bank. He has been a team leader of the majority of the international projects conducted by the CSPR.

Oksana Ivaniuto is a researcher at the Center for Sociological and Political Researches of Belarusian State University. She graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of Leningrad State University named after A. A. Zhdanov in 1988. Oksana Ivaniuto specializes in qualitative methodology, application of qualitative methods in sociological researches, sociology of mass media, sociology of politics, sociology of youths. She is an author of more than 40 scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals, a participant of a number of collective monographs.

Natalia Veremeeva is a researcher at the Center for Sociological and Political Researches of Belarusian State University. She graduated from the Department of Philosophy of Belarusian State University. Natalia Veremeeva specializes in qualitative methodology, application of qualitative methods in sociological researches, sociology of mass media, sociology of politics, sociology of youths. She is an author of more than 50 scientific publications, participated in a number international INTAS projects, as well as in FP-5 and FP-7 research projects, she is a contributor of several collective monographs.