

**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**

**Research Report #10**

**The Belarusian Minority  
in Poland**

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### About the ENRI-East research project ([www.enri-east.net](http://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 dividing 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 Eastern 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](http://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 synopses 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:**

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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)

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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.

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## 1 BELARUSIANS IN POLAND: A BACKGROUND OVERVIEW

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*Konrad Zieliński / Magdalena Cześniak-Zielińska*

### 1.1 Polish majority and Belarusian minority relations

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#### 1.1.1 Historical overview

The Belarusians within the borders of contemporary Poland are an autochthonous population. The ancestors of the Belarusians in Poland began settling in the region of Białystok in the 14th century. Poland's borders extended far into modern-day Belarus following the 1569 Union of Lublin. Belarusian culture and identity developed slowly over centuries, while an increasing number of Belarusians became polonized. This process concerned the local-Ruthenian gentry and higher social class, while the peasants still defined themselves as Ruthenians or "local people". However, over time a part of the Belarusian peasants, under the pressure of the Catholic Church, changed their religion. Even if they did not define themselves as Poles, in common opinion "the Catholic" meant "the Pole". The significance of religion in forming identity was challenged by a distinctive Belarusian national consciousness only at the beginning of the 20th century. Even then, the elites (teachers, wealthy merchants, intelligentsia, clergy) were the only carriers of Belarusian national identity.

Białystok, the center of today's minority in Poland, came under first Prussian rule and then, after 1807, under Russian rule. The new political reality significantly weakened Polish influences, especially due to the fact that the Belarusians, like Poles, were forced to use Russian as the official language in public office and the army. The relations with the Polish neighbours were relatively good, especially after the January Uprising in 1863 when the possessions of many Poles were confiscated by the Russians and the old, social and economic conflict between Polish gentry and Belarusian peasants lost its *raison d'être*. Relations between Belarusians and the Polish peasants or poor gentry were rather good. Tsarist rule meant also repression against the Catholic Church and state support for the Orthodox Church (as a "Russian" religion), and, as a result, some Catholic Belarusians decided to convert to Orthodox or were forced to convert to the Orthodox Church.

Following the overthrow of the Tsarist, Prussian and Austro-Hungarian empires Poland reappeared on the map of Europe after 123 years, while Belarus became a republic of the Soviet Union. At the end of the Polish-Soviet war Belarusian territories were divided between Poland and the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1921. A disputed territory, known as Kresy (Borderlands), inhabited by both Belarusians and Poles, was included in Poland. Belarusians accounted for 3,1% of the population in inter-war Poland. In Eastern parts of the country they were, together with Ukrainians, in the majority.<sup>1</sup> After 1918 two tendencies with regard to national minorities dominated the Polish political scene: assimilation and expulsion. Slavonic minorities were, in general, treated as suitable for assimilation, the Belarusian minority in particular. In fact, in the case of many Belarusians it was impossible to talk about the national consciousness. Even as late as the inter-war period the majority of Belarusians still defined themselves as "Ruthenians" or

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<sup>1</sup> J. Żarnowski, 'Epoka dwóch wojen', in: *Spółczesność polskie od X do XX wieku*, ed. I. Ilnatowicz, A. Mączak, B. Zientara, J. Żarnowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza 1988), p. 632.

“the natives” (literally: “people from here”). To the question “what is your language?” they would sometimes answer: “Mówię po prostu”/ ”Mówię prosto” (“I say simply”).<sup>2</sup>

In the period between 1921 and 1926, Poland did not have a consistent policy towards its ethnic minorities. Belarusians elected three senators and eleven deputies to the Polish parliament in 1922 (in the elections of November 1922, a Belarusian party was a part of the National Minorities' Electoral Block).<sup>3</sup> The country's 3.5 million Belarusians were able to open their own elementary and high schools as well as teachers' colleges. The government supported the establishment of Belarusian schools by the Belarusian minority but subsidize them reluctantly. Belarusian schools therefore faced severe financial problems. By 1924, however, Poland's policy toward ethnic minorities had changed drastically. Most Belarusian schools were closed, and publications in the Belarusian language were banned under the guise of combating communism. At the same time the government encouraged Poles to settle in the Borderlands. The Belarusian region was very poor and became an agricultural appendage to a more industrialized Poland. Unemployment and famine in rural areas were widespread. Between 1925 and 1938, some 78,000 people emigrated from this part of Poland in order to find work, mainly to the Western Europe and America.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to underline that the politics of the Polish state were not the only barrier to the development of the Belarusian national movement. The second reason was social structure of the Belarusian minority. There was only a small Belarusian intelligentsia as the majority of the Belarusian population consisted of peasants. During the inter-war period, the large Belarusian minority in Poland published only few magazines and brochures in Belarusian. Most of them were published by one of the Belarusian political parties. However, some magazines and brochures, connected with the communist movement were smuggled into Poland from abroad (USSR) and distributed illegally. After World War II, significant regress was caused by the policy of the Polish authorities, which was unfavourable for the cultural development of national minorities.<sup>5</sup>

Although the majority of the population was loyal towards the state and the rule of law, many cultural and national activities organized by minority groups were regarded by the authorities as an attempt at collaborating with Bolshevik Russia. In 1927, when the Belarusian Peasants' and Workers' Union spearheaded a widespread protest against the government's oppressive policies in the Belarusian region, the regime arrested and imprisoned many of the Union's activists. Further governmental policies toward the so-called Eastern Territories were aimed at imposing a Polish and Roman Catholic character on the region.<sup>6</sup>

In 1935 Poland declared that it would no longer be bound by the League of Nations treaty on ethnic minorities, arguing that its own laws were adequate. That same year, many Belarusians in Poland who opposed the government's policies were placed in a concentration camp at Bereza Kartuska. Among them was Branislaw Taraszkievicz, a politician and linguist and a member of

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<sup>2</sup> G. Ioffe, 'Understanding Belarus: Questions of Language', „Europe-Asia Studies” 2003, Vol. 55, No. 7, p. 1039-1040; E. Mironowicz, Białoruś (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio 1999), p. 12-14, 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> H. Chałupczak, T. Browarek, Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce 1918-1995 (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 2000), p. 97-103; Z. Szybieka, Historia Białorusi 1795-2000 (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej 2002), p. 284.

<sup>4</sup> Chałupczak, Browarek, p. 114-115.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 110-112.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 105-110.



the underground Communist Party of Western Belarus in Poland. Taraszkiewicz was imprisoned for many years.<sup>7</sup> The Belarusians lost their last seat in the Polish Parliament after the general elections of 1935.<sup>8</sup>

In 1935, after the death of Pilsudski a new wave of repressions was unleashed upon the minorities. In particular the state involved itself deeply in religion. After centuries of competition between the Catholic Church (preferring Polish language) and the Orthodox Church (preferring Russian or “local”, Ruthenian languages), the Catholic Church, with significant help from the state, started to win. The state attempted to polonize the Orthodox Church and subordinate it to the government.<sup>9</sup> Many Orthodox churches were closed or turned into the Catholic churches. One more time Podlasie region become witness to change in the religious confession of its inhabitants.

The legislation that guaranteed the right of minority communities to have their own schools was repealed in November 1938. As a result, not a single Belarusian school survived until the spring of 1939, and only a few schools teaching the Belarusian language still existed in Poland at the beginning of World War II. At the beginning of World War II, as a result of the Hitler-Stalin pact (the so-called Ribbentrop-Molotov pact), the co-called Kresy were taken over by the Soviet Union. There were 470 Belarusian elementary schools in 1940 in the Bialystok Province under Soviet rule; this number was reduced after the outbreak of the Soviet-German War. Nevertheless, during the years 1942-1944 about 115 Belarusian schools still existed. After the liberation from the German rule, there were 93 schools in the borders of Poland.<sup>10</sup>

After the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact of August 1939 and the outbreak of World War II, almost all Belarusians previously living in Poland found themselves in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. A part of them welcomed the aggression of the USSR against Poland on 17 September 1939. However the attitudes of many changed after experiencing the brutality of the Soviet invasion. Shortly after entering the Soviet Union, many Belarusians, especially those who favored democracy and Belarusian independence, immediately faced violent repression from the NKVD.<sup>11</sup> The above mentioned Taraszkiewicz was one of the first victims and was executed as ‘a Polish spy’.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of World War II, the borders of Poland significantly changed. The majority of Polish Belarusians found themselves within the borders of the USSR. The bigger settlements of the Belarusian people within the borders of “new Poland” were located mostly in the North-Eastern part of the country. As early as in 1944 the Polish government and the Belarusian SSR arranged the replacement of around 38,000 Belarusians to the Belarusian SSR. However the majority stayed in their old homes. Some of them concealed their ethnic origins in the process.<sup>13</sup> Compared to other minorities, the politics towards the Belarusians was less severe, especially if compared with the

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/West\\_Belarus](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/West_Belarus) (01-12-2009)87-88, 94-96, 98-99, 297 (05-12-2009).

<sup>8</sup> Chałupczak, Browarek, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-1258.html> (15-11-2009).

<sup>10</sup> Chałupczak, Browarek, p. 105, 108.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111-131.

<sup>12</sup> Mironowicz, p. 297.

<sup>13</sup> K. Zieliński, ‘To Pacify, Populate and Polonize: Territorial Transformations and the Displacement of Ethnic Minorities in Communist Poland, 1944-1949’ [in:] Warlands. Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945-1950, ed. P. Gatrell, N. Baron, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2009), p. 188-209.

fate of the Ukrainian minority.<sup>14</sup> The ENRI-East study showed a problem of persecutions of Belarusians by the Polish underground, anti-communist army during World War II. It is very interesting for historians, however, so far, the knowledge on the subject among Poles is surely insufficient.

Nevertheless, shortly after World War II there were tensions between the Poles and the Belarusians, especially in the Podlasie region. In 1947/48 the Polish authorities liquidated the Belarusian school system under the cynical pretext that there were no Belarusians left in Poland. However in 1950 there were 39 Belarusian elementary schools in the Białystok Voivodship and the Belarusian language was taught in another 20 schools. There were also two high schools: in Bielsk Podlaski and Hajnowka. According to a special Act, the property of the Russian Orthodox Church was confiscated, and a Decree of 1953 allowed the authorities to control the nominations of clerical functions, which made it possible to use repressions against the “rebellious” priests and “elements” deemed reactionary. Also consent to teach religion in the schools for the minorities, among them the Belarusian ones, was withdrawn.<sup>15</sup>

After “the Polish October” of 1956 the Belarusian Social and Cultural Association (BTSK) was founded. It was controlled by the authorities and remained the only institution representing the interests of the Belarusian minority in Poland up to 1989. The government’s policy of building a homogenous socialist society in the 1970s intensified assimilation trends. Mixed marriages and mixed residential areas within Polish society, as well as the migration of Belarusians from villages to towns strengthened assimilation pressures and undermined the tradition of Belarusian national culture, particularly folk culture. The state exerted greater control over minority organisations and gradually removed the Belarusian language from school curricula. At the end of World War II, after the replacement of around 38,000 Belarusians to the Belarusian SSR, the number of Belarusians in Poland was estimated about 120,000-150,000. This number decreased in the post-war decades due to assimilation.<sup>16</sup>

In 1980-81 the free trade union “Solidarity” was born and rapidly gained support. These years brought the relaxation of censorship and party supervision over national minority organisations. During the first “Solidarity” Congress, the Bill on Minorities was passed. It underlined the right of the minorities to freely develop their national existence and cultivate their identities. After the introduction of the martial law in 1981, however, the activities of all organisations, among them minority organisations, were suspended. The measures of repression affected also some churches. Only after the suspension of the martial law, the organisational structures of some of the social and cultural societies were reactivated and the legal issues connected with the functioning of the religious unions were regulated. Only in the second half of 1989 the forcing of the assimilation policy was abandoned.<sup>17</sup> The Belarusian students, together with Ukrainian and Lithuanian students, created the All-Polish Cultural Council of Students of the National Minorities, which was part of the Polish Students’ Union.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 208-209.

<sup>15</sup> The similar policy was carried out towards the churches of other denominations: Chałupczak, Browarek, p. 113.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www2.mswia.gov.pl/portal.php?serwis=en&dzial=10&id=56#BELORUSSIANS> (25-11-2009).

<sup>17</sup> Chałupczak, Browarek, p. 293-295.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111.

### 1.1.2 Political overview

The situation of the Belarusian minority in Poland has improved after 1989 when responsibility for national minorities moved from full control and supervision by the Ministry of the Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Culture. The latter is responsible for all educational and cultural issues. As a result, the Belarusian minority has had greater freedom to undertake activities in order to develop and cultivate its culture and identity.<sup>19</sup> All Belarusian minority cultural institutions can apply for state support from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. For example, the Association of Belarusian Youth formed in 1991, receives funds from foundations and private sponsors, and, first of all, government institutions.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, due to the accession of the Polish state to the European Union, all organizations registered in Poland may apply for special grants from European funds.

Nowadays there are no barriers to the development of Belarusian culture. This improvement has been aided by the fact that there are no (open) conflicts between Poles and the Belarusian minority in Poland. The 70<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the destruction of the Russian Orthodox Churches by the Polish authorities in 1938 passed by with no repercussions. Occasionally, publications were issued and a few research conferences and seminars were organised, but they were not highly publicised in media.<sup>21</sup> However, assimilation is still the biggest problem for the Belarusian minority. It is mainly due to the lack of a national consciousness on the part of the Belarusians, including in Belarus, which hinders a lasting unification as a minority group.

There is no detailed data about Belarusian state support for the Belarusian minority in Poland. It is known, and ENRI-East project have shown that too, that Belarusian minority are reluctant to use such assistance, because of the nature of the regime in Belarus. On the other hand, the Belarusian minority has been strengthened as a result of the arrival of Belarusians who have experienced violations of their human rights at the hands of the Lukashenka regime. In particular voices of Belarusian students in Poland (many of them were expelled from Belarusian universities and colleges after protests in 2006 and 2007 and admitted by the Polish universities) express critical opinions towards the Belarusian government.<sup>22</sup> One important example of such criticisms of the Belarusian government concerns the taking over the Polish House in Iwieniec run by the Union of Poles by the Belarusian authorities in February 2010, who provided state recognition to a Polish organization loyal to the authorities. Public opinion and the Polish administration sympathise with the Union of Poles in Belarus led by Angelika Borys, and the attitudes of the Belarusian authorities towards part of the Polish minority are sharply criticised. There is a common opinion that the Union led by Borys is the only real representation of the interests of the Polish minority in Belarus. However, the Belarusian minority in Poland has not officially spoken out on this.

The financial support of European institutions for educational and cultural projects related to the preservation of minority identity and culture could be crucial in stopping the process of assimila-

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<sup>19</sup> See internet portal running by the Belorussian organizations in Poland, for example: [http://old.bialorus.pl/index.php?pokaz=polacy\\_bialorusini&&Rozdzial=polityka\\_mn](http://old.bialorus.pl/index.php?pokaz=polacy_bialorusini&&Rozdzial=polityka_mn) (26-10-2010); <http://www.slonko.com.pl/> (26-10-2010)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.slonko.com.pl/the-belarusian-youth-association.html> (26-04-2010)

<sup>21</sup> See for example: G. Kuprianowicz, 1938. Akcja burzenia cerkwi prawosławnych na Chełmszczyźnie i południowym Podlasiu (Chelm: Prawosławna Diecezja Lubelsko-Chełmska, Towarzystwo Ukraińskie w Lublinie 2008).

<sup>22</sup> <http://wyborcza.pl/1,86672,4051863.html> (25.04.2010)

tion. Another factor which may help to reverse assimilation is the policy of the Polish state towards neighbouring Belarus. A few years ago Polish TV decided to establish a special satellite canal for Belarusians in Belarus – Belsat. Although Belsat is addressed to Belarusians in Belarus and in opposition to the Lukashenka regime, the channel is watched by Belarusians in Poland too.

## 1.2 Demographic overview

### 1.2.1 The 2002 census

According to the census of 2002, Belarusians are a minority of 47,640 citizens of Poland. The only criterion used in the census of 2002 was the respondents' nationality declaration, which means that people from mixed marriages were forced to declare only one nationality. As a result many chose Polish though they feel themselves simultaneously Polish and Belarusian. This regulation was criticized by the minority organizations in Poland.<sup>23</sup> What is more, the exact determination of number of Belarusians in Poland is difficult because of various historical, social and economical reasons, which cause that open declarations of Belarusian identity are not common among the Belarusians.

### 1.2.2 Language Usage

The census does not provide data on the home language or mixed-marriages among ethnic Poles and Belarusians. However, it is widely recognised that migration from the country to the city accelerates the process of assimilation to Polish society among the Belarusian minority.

### 1.2.3 Age Structure

According to results of the census of 2002, Polish Belarusians on average are older than the Polish majority population. The percentage of people older than 60 years is much higher than in the case of the total population of Poland.

**Table: The age structure of Belarusian minority in Poland according to Nationwide Census of 2002.**

Group	Age (years)							
	%							
	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79
Polish citizens (total)	11,0	15,9	15,8	12,7	15,7	11,9	8,4	6,4
Polish citizens of Belorussian nationality	5,7	10,5	9,1	10,1	13,6	13,5	17,1	16,2

Source: G. Gudaszewski, 'Demograficzno-społeczna charakterystyka obywateli polskich deklarujących „narodowość niepolską” w Narodowym Spisie Powszechnym w 2002 roku' [in:] Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce w świetle Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego z 2002 roku, Warszawa 2006, p. 117.

### 1.2.4 Geographic Distribution

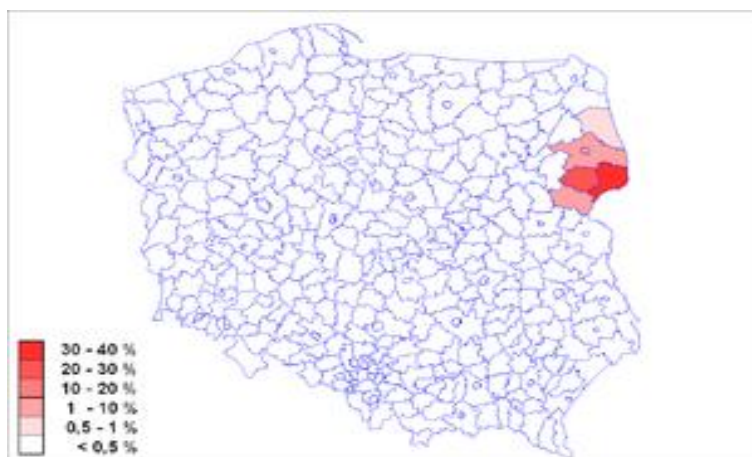
Belarusian Poles mostly reside in the Podlaskie province where they account for a significant percentage of the local population.<sup>24</sup> In the nationwide census of 2002 Belarusian nationality

<sup>23</sup>T. Czapko, Mniejszość białoruska w Narodowym Spisie Powszechnym z 2002 roku, „Facta Simonidis” 2009, nr 1, p. 75; M. Materńo, 'Liczebność, rozmieszczenie i struktura społeczna mniejszości żydowskiej w Polsce po 1989 roku' [in:] Wokół akulturacji i asymilacji Żydów na ziemiach polskich, ed. K. Zieliński (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS 2010), p. 178-182.

<sup>24</sup>Czapko, p. 79-89.

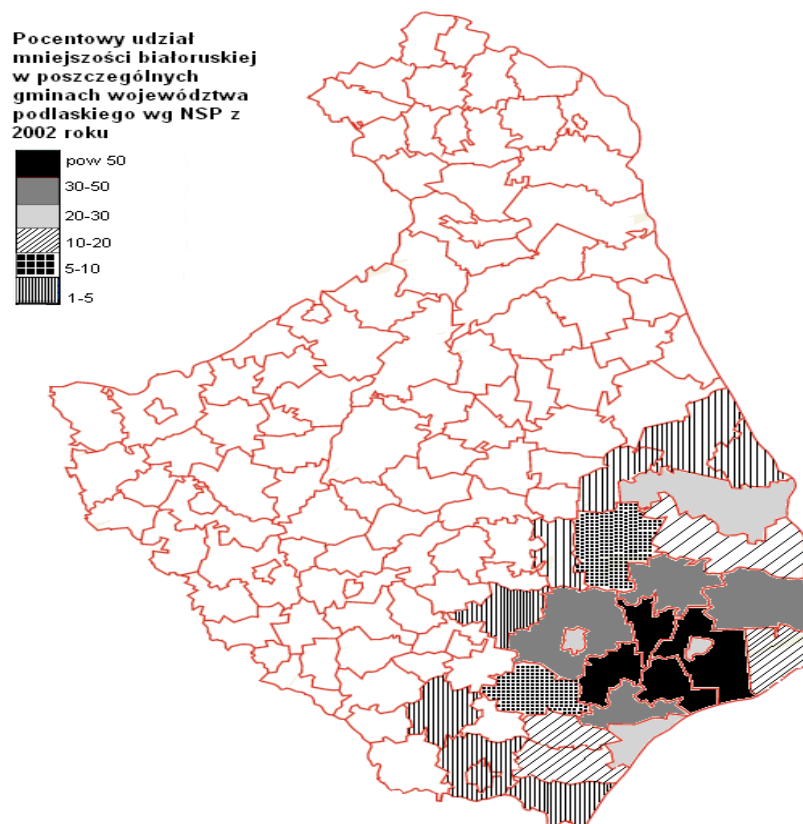
declared citizens of Poland resident in the Podlaskie province (46 041 people), Mazovia province (541), Warmia and Mazury province (226), Lublin province (137), Pomerania province (117) and Western Pomerania province (117).

The majority of Belarusians live in Podlaskie voivodship, north-eastern part of Poland. The map below illustrates distribution of Belarusians in Poland according to the Nationwide Census of 2002.



Source: [http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bia%C5%82orusini\\_w\\_Polsce](http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bia%C5%82orusini_w_Polsce)

The map below illustrates distribution of Belarusian minority in the Podlaskie voivodship according to the Nationwide Census of 2002.



Source: T. Czapko, Mniejszość białoruska w Narodowym Spisie Powszechnym z 2002 roku, „Facta Simonidis” 2009, nr 1, p. 85.

Most Belarusian-speaking inhabitants of the northern part of Podlasie, the historical homeland of the Belarusian minority in Poland, claim to be Belarusians.<sup>25</sup> In this region, the Belarusian and Polish dialects influence each other considerably. This entails a very complex dialectal situation in East Poland.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.2.5 Religious affiliation

There is no data on religion of the Belarusian minority in Poland. However, this minority is traditionally associated with the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church. According to the Church sources from 2008, the largest number of the faithful live in the Białystok-Gdańsk (220 700) and the Warsaw-Bielsko (182 800) dioceses.<sup>27</sup> In the national census of 2002 it turned out that that traditional way of identifying Belarusians with Orthodox Christianity should be considered with caution since only a relatively small number of Orthodox population in Podlasie voivodship decided to declare a non-Polish nationality.

### 1.2.6 Education

As a result of state policy and assimilation, the number of Belarusian schools decreased to the extent that by 1995 when the Belarusian minority did not have a single school with its own language. In the second half of the 1990s the number of students learning Belarusian and in the Belarusian language started to increase.<sup>28</sup> The Regulation by the Ministry of National Education increased educational subsidies to national minority schools by 20% and 50 % compared to other schools.<sup>29</sup> In 2009 the Belarusian language was taught to 3,174 school students in 41 public schools. Nearly all teachers are qualified to teach the Belarusian language. They are usually university graduates with degrees in philology.<sup>30</sup> During the school year 2008/2009 Belarusian language was taught in 24 primary schools, 14 lower primary schools and 3 high schools.<sup>31</sup> There are no Belarusian kindergartens or technical secondary and vocational schools. Belarusian language is taught at universities in a few Polish towns, usually as a part of Slavonic Philology faculties. Many Polish colleges and universities have agreements with similar institutions in Belarus, which result in research and student exchanges, usually in the humanities.

### 1.2.7 Employment

There is lack of specific information on employment structure of Belarusian minority in Poland. According to the census of 2002, 55.5% of Belarusians live in villages; thus, presumably, the majority of this population is employed in agriculture (on their own farms) and services linked to agriculture. The same tendencies we could observe in the case of the whole Podlaskie voivodship, which is one of the most rural regions in Poland, with relatively few towns and poor industrial and transport infrastructure.

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<sup>25</sup> [http://www.lemko.org/lvpro/pr\\_e.html](http://www.lemko.org/lvpro/pr_e.html) (25-11-2009).

<sup>26</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/archive/languages/langmin/euromosaic/pol1\\_en.html#12](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/archive/languages/langmin/euromosaic/pol1_en.html#12) (25-11-2009).

<sup>27</sup> Wyznania religijne. Stowarzyszenia narodowościowe i etniczne w Polsce 2006-2008, ed. G. Gudaszewski, M. Chmielewski, Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2010, p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> E. Pogorzała, 'Szkolnictwo białoruskie w Polsce po II wojnie światowej' [in:] Polska – Białoruś. Problemy sąsiedztwa, p. 147-148.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www2.mswia.gov.pl/portal.php?serwis=en&dzial=10&id=57> (12-11-2009)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www2.mswia.gov.pl/portal.php?serwis=pl&dzial=61&id=37#BELORUSSIANS> (19-11-2009).

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbr/gus/PUBL\\_oz\\_maly\\_rocznik\\_statystyczny\\_2009.pdf](http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbr/gus/PUBL_oz_maly_rocznik_statystyczny_2009.pdf) (26.04.2010)

### 1.3 Belarusian self-organisation in Poland

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#### 1.3.1 Political organisation

The Belarusian minority has been active in political life in Poland since 1989. The Belarusian minority was represented in the Polish Parliament by three MPs: Eugeniusz Czykwin, Aleksander Czuz and Sergiusz Plewa. All of them were connected with the left wing of the Polish political scene (social-democrats, Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej). At the moment Czykwin is the only member of the Polish parliament coming from Belarusian minority (member of the leftist Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – Democratic Left Alliance). However, the presence of Belarusian MPs in the parliament does not appear to be as important from the minority's point of view as the activity of Belarusian representatives in local self-government.

The Belarusian minority has representatives in local councils, mainly in the Podlasie province. In the 2006 elections to the Podlasie Sejmik [local self-government], the Białoruski Komitet Wyborczy (Belarusian Electoral Committee) received 7,914 votes (2.05%), however this was not enough to receive any seats in the Council. The most votes from this list were for Jan Czykwin (2,405), Eugeniusz Wappa (1,669) and Eugeniusz Mironowicz (1,119). When the local elections were repeated in the region on 20 May 2007, the Belarusians again submitted their own electoral committee in their region of Sejny and Punszk. For the first time the committee had several Lithuanians running on the list.<sup>32</sup>

In general, Belarusian minority traditionally sympathizes with the left-wing political parties in Poland. At the moment, social-democrats (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej) seems to be the most popular among this minority.

#### 1.3.2 Civil society organisation

There are three main types of Belarusian minority organizations in Poland: Orthodox youth group, students associations and folkloric groups. Cultural and educational organisations, mainly the *Belarusian Social-Cultural Association* BTSK, play a key role in preserving Belarusian culture and identity in Poland, particularly through singing groups and folk ensembles. According to Eugeniusz Mironowicz, the establishment of the BTSK in 1956 started “the renaissance of the Belarusian culture in Poland”.<sup>33</sup> The Association has its head office in Białystok as well as 7 local branches in Bielsk Podlaski, Hajnowka, Siemiatycze, Sokolka, Gdansk and Warsaw. The Association had 5207 members in 2008. The Association continues to enjoy a good material base for activity (buildings, reading-rooms etc.). However its role seems to have declined in recent years.<sup>34</sup>

Other influential organisations are the Belarusian Cultural-Education Centre in Poznan and, in Białystok, the Belarusian Historical Association, the Belarusian Union in Poland, the Belarusian Association of Students, the Belarusian Youth Association and the Association of Belarusian

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www2.mswia.gov.pl/portal.php?serwis=pl&dzial=61&id=37#BELORUSSIANS> (10-12-2009)

<sup>33</sup> E. Mironowicz, 'Białorusini' [in:] *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce po II wojnie światowej. Wybrane elementy polityki państwa*, ed. S. Dudra, B. Nitschke, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos 2010, p. 75.

<sup>34</sup> Wyznania religijne. Stowarzyszenia narodowościowe i etniczne w Polsce 2006-2008, ed. G. Gudaszewski, M. Chmielewski, Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2010, p. 212-217; E. Mironowicz, 'Mniejszość białoruska w Polsce wobec przemian ustrojowych po 1989 roku' [in:] *Narody i polityka. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Jerzemu Tomaszewskiemu*, Warszawa: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny – Instytut Historyczny UW 2010, p. 337-349.

Journalists.<sup>35</sup> At some universities there are literary, historical and travel societies as well as amateur theatre groups composed of both Poles, representatives of the Belarusian minority in Poland and students from Belarus.

### 1.3.3 Arts and culture

Belarusian is often used in traditional music, not in rock or pop music. Since 1996 the student theatre group Lublin-Warszawa has performed a play in Belarusian once or twice a year. There are, among other events, the following cultural events: the Belarusian youth music festival “Basowischtscha” (which aims at bringing together Polish and Belarusian adolescents and is organised by a Belarusian Students Organization); the festival Belarusian Song in Białystok, the Festival of the Belarusian Culture in Białystok; the Polish and Belarusian literature workshops “Biazmieschscha”; the poetry and prose competition “Debiut” and the Kupalle Holiday in Białowieża.<sup>36</sup>

Some members of the Belarusian minority in Poland have gained a permanent place in Polish culture: among them is Leon Tarasewicz, one of the most important personalities in modern Polish art<sup>37</sup>, and the young artist Małgorzata Dmitruk who won awards in many prestigious art competitions.<sup>38</sup> Also books by the writer and journalist Sokrat Janowicz are popular in Poland.<sup>39</sup> Poems by Nadzieja Artymowicz still find many readers.<sup>40</sup> Cultural and education societies and diplomatic posts in Poland are subscribed to Belarusian newspapers; philological departments at the universities subscribed mainly academic periodicals. Sporadically, articles on Belarusian art and culture, as well as culture of Belarusian minority in Poland, appear on the Polish press.<sup>41</sup> In Warsaw just finished exhibition of modern Belarusian art in Zachęta Gallery, one of the most prestigious art galleries in Poland<sup>42</sup>.

However, such undertakings, as well as artists, writers and poets, belong to an elite circle of art. Festivals organized by the Belarusian minority in Poland are more open and reach a wider audience, but, on the other hand, are usually local.

The important role in the Belarusian cultural life before political transformation in 1989 played the Orthodox Church. For example, the Church choirs started an alternative form of cultural activity for the BTRSK controlled by the state. Although there is no statistical data, the Church organizations, choirs etc. still enjoy popularity among the Belarusians in Poland.

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.bialorus.pl/index.php?pokaz=organizacje\\_en&&Rozdzial=organizacje](http://www.bialorus.pl/index.php?pokaz=organizacje_en&&Rozdzial=organizacje) (05-12-2009).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.bialorus.pl/index.php?pokaz=sokrat\\_janowicz\\_zyc&&Rozdzial=kultura](http://www.bialorus.pl/index.php?pokaz=sokrat_janowicz_zyc&&Rozdzial=kultura) (01-12-2009).

<sup>38</sup> Die gegenwärtige. Der Wettbewerb um den Daniel Chodowiecki-Preis für Polnische Zeichnung und Druckgraphik. Preisträumer ausgezeichnete Teilnehmer aus den Jahren 1993-2007 (Sopot: Państwowa Galeria Sztuki 2009), p. 80-83.

<sup>39</sup> <http://ksiazki.wp.pl/katalog/autorzy/id,44740,autor.html> (01-12-2009).

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.wrotapodlasia.pl/pl/region/ludzie\\_podlasia/Nadzieja\\_Artymowicz.htm](http://www.wrotapodlasia.pl/pl/region/ludzie_podlasia/Nadzieja_Artymowicz.htm) (29-11-2009).

<sup>41</sup> See for example: E. Domanowska, Sztuka białoruska znana i nieznaną, “Arteon” 2011, nr 8 (136), p. 12-15.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*. The name of exhibition: “Otwierając drzwi? Sztuka białoruska dzisiaj” (Opening the door? Belarusian art today), May – August 2011.



### 1.3.4 Religious organization

No doubt, the religious organizations played important role in life of Belarusian minority. For decades, the life of this minority centered around the church. However, like some respondents pointed out, the ecumenical cooperation between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, would improve the situation of Belarusians in Poland and facilitate mutual understanding. This is important, because still problems between the Belarusian minority and Poles usually based on personal insults and reactins referring to stereotypes of backwardness.

### 1.3.5 Publishing and the press

After World War II, significant regress in publishing and press was caused by the policy of Polish authority, which was unfavourable for the cultural development of national minorities. In 2002 three books were officially published in Belarusian and in 2003 one book was published. There are no daily newspapers in the Belarusian language. The following periodicals, among others, are published in Belarusian on a weekly or monthly basis: “Czasopis” (since 1998), “Epoch”, “Annus Albaruthenicus” and “Bielski Hościniec”.<sup>43</sup> The most popular seems to be “Niwa”, originally linked with the Balarussian Social-Cultural Society which was established in 1956.<sup>44</sup> A literary magazine “Pravincyja” is intended to present contemporary Belarusian literature and art. The publisher of “Pravincyja” is the Belarusian Union, a national minority organization based in Białystok.<sup>45</sup> Press and publications in the Belarusian language, though few, seem to meet the needs of this minority.

### 1.3.6 The media

The public Polish radio station Radio Białystok broadcasts two weekly programmes for the Belarusian minority in Poland: “Pod znakami Pahoni” and “Pažadalnaja pieśnia”. There is also Radio Racja broadcasts programs for Belarusian minority In Poland.<sup>46</sup> In Białystok, the programme “O nas” [About us] is produced: it features information on the minorities of the Podlasie region including 10 minutes information on Belarusian. This TV station also broadcasts the programme “Sąsiedzi” [Neighbours] once a month, which deals with issues of the Belarusian minority in Poland. A few years ago Polish TV decided to establish Belsat, a special satellite canal, for Belarusians in Belarus. Although Belsat is addressed to Belarusians in Belarus and in opposition to the Lukashenka regime, the channel is watched by Belarusians in Poland too. ENRI-East respondents complain, however, that the Belarusian language programs are broadcast in unattractive parts of the day. However, programs in Polish are certainly more attractive, and offer information about daily life in Poland – the place where the Polish Belarusians live.

## 1.4 Overview of existing surveys

There are some empirical data sets about the Belarusian community in Poland. The best source is material gathered by the Main Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny). The Main Statistical Office provides basic data for 2008 and retrospective data on the number and structure of the population of Poland prepared on the basis of population balances publications on the web

<sup>43</sup> [http://pravincyja.setpro.pl/whatis\\_en.htm](http://pravincyja.setpro.pl/whatis_en.htm) (01-12-2009).

<sup>44</sup> <http://niva.iig.pl> (30-11-2009).

<sup>45</sup> [http://pravincyja.setpro.pl/whatis\\_en.htm](http://pravincyja.setpro.pl/whatis_en.htm) (01-12-2009).

<sup>46</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/archive/languages/langmin/euromosaic/pol1\\_en.html#12](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/archive/languages/langmin/euromosaic/pol1_en.html#12) (25-11-2009).

pages of GUS comprised. The last publication of the GUS dealt with religion and ethnic and national organizations in Poland in the years 2006-2008 and included data on all registered churches, religious associations and ethnic and national organisations. However, there is no statistical data on, for example, the number of Belarusians that belong to the Orthodox Church etc. (*Wyznania religijne. Stowarzyszenia narodowościowe i etniczne w Polsce 2006-2008*, ed. G. Gudaszewski, M. Chmielewski, Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2010).

Additionally, the National Population and Housing Census 2002 give information regarding education, marital status, citizenship and nationality, sources of income, disabled people, family and household structure as well as domestic and international migration ([http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840\\_3697\\_PLK\\_HTML.htm](http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840_3697_PLK_HTML.htm)). These data, however, concern population of given territories, voivodships, regions, not Belorussian minority exclusively. The data of census in 2002 were analyzed in research journals and press issued by the Belorussian minority in Poland.<sup>47</sup>

Basic information on the Belarusian minority in Poland one can find also on the web pages of the Ministry of Interior and Administration (Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji; <http://www.mswia.gov.pl/portal/en/>). Diocese and parochias of the Orthodox Church are in possession of more detailed and specific statistics and information. However, these statistics are not published.

In 1997, Centrum Badania Opinii Publicznej (CBOS), one of the biggest survey agencies in Poland, did research on the subject: “Russians and the Polish-Russian relations in the Polish public opinion”, where Belarusians were also mentioned.<sup>48</sup> In the report results two surveys were published, which showed the attitudes of Poles towards other nationalities (among the ethnic and national minorities included was the Belarusian minority) at the beginning of political transformation in Poland (1991 and 1992).<sup>49</sup> CBOS repeated similar surveys in the later years.

Probably the results of the nationwide census of population and housing 2011 will be known in the late autumn of this year.

## 1.5 Conclusions and generalizations

Belarusians in Poland, despite high concentration in north-east part of the country, are poorly organized minority. One of the most important determinants of their identity remains a religion, especially Orthodox Christianity (in this context, surprisingly, studies have shown relatively low turnout in the churches), and language. In fact, many respondents speak Belarusian at home, however, the highest percentage of those speaking only Belarusian at home were recorded among the elderly and people with the lowest education. The Belarusian has long been seen as a country, primitive, worse language. Its use was often a cause for shame. This situation is slowly changing, mainly due to young people who are starting to be proud of their nationality. What is more, some of them recognize that being bilingual is a kind of privilege unavailable to others. Enri-East respondents also declare strong attachment to their ethnic group. Nevertheless, lack of intellectuals

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<sup>47</sup> Czapko, p. 75-89.

<sup>48</sup> P. Boski, ‘Rosjanie i stosunki z nimi w ocenie Polaków’ [in:] *Stosunki polsko-rosyjskie*, ed. J. Marszałek-Kawa, Z. Karpus (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK 2008).

<sup>49</sup> J. Jasińska-Kania, ‘Transformacja ustrojowa a zmiana postaw Polaków wobec różnych narodów i państw’, *„Kultura i Społeczeństwo”* 1991, t. XXXV, nr 3, p. 153-167; B. Wilska-Duszyńska, ‘Swoi i inni’ – postawy studentów wobec etnicznie innych’, *„Kultura i Społeczeństwo”* 1992, t. XXXVI, nr 3, p. 99-107.

and leaders, who might guide the processes of strengthening of the Belarusian national identity, is still visible in the case of this minority.

What is interesting, many respondents stated that Belarusians should adapt and become a part of Polish society, but, on the other hand, they have negative attitude towards cultural homogenization. It seems that many share the opinion: if you live in Poland, your non-Polish national culture cherish at home. Although there is little danger of disappearing Belarusians from the map of Polish minorities, this approach certainly weakens them. It can also lead to loss of language or some folk, traditional customs. Taking into consideration that one of the most characterized feature of this minority is rural-urban migration, conducive to processes of assimilation, such danger seems to be quite serious.

In such context, the problem of regional identity seems to be very important. The respondents describe the issue of regional identity in two main dimensions: strong identification with the local community and "own people", which may be expressed as "being from here" without defining clearly the national identity; the second dimension refers to the emotional identification with the city, town or village as a place of living and/or birth.

It confirmed the strong, "historical" attachment of Belarusians to homeland, regardless of the conduct of the national and administrative boundaries. "I'm from here, the local" - is the answer to the question "Who are you." A similar response was heard long before the WWII, and, as it turns out, it happens today.

The situation of the minorities in Poland is regulated by several normative acts, of which the most important is act on national and ethnic minorities from 2005. It seems that the Act satisfied Belarusian side, although representatives of some Belarusian organizations complain that the policy of the Polish state to the Belarusians should be referred to as "do not help - do not disturb". In fact, the minority issue are discussed within the special governmental institutions and territorial 'niches', and are not subject of mainstream public debate. However, it seems that the fault also lies on the Belarusians themselves, who are a minority rather passive; this minority is sometimes unable to take advantage of financial opportunities that has created by, for example, Polish accession to the EU.

If we are talking about political life: despite the relatively high turnout in the election, exceeding the turnout among the ethnic Poles, Belarusians are actually not organized as a political force, neither on the local, nor on the central level. There is a low level of trust towards the Polish institutions (government, parliament, police, media etc.), however, the Belarusian minority does not differ in their opinion on the subject from ethnic Poles. As it was mentioned, the Belarusian minority sympathized rather with left-wing political parties, and, on the local level, with the Civic Platform, leading political force in nowadays Poland.

The Belarusian minority in Poland is trying to not maintain official contacts with Belarus. For many Belarus is not even a "mythical" homeland, and though they feel well there, but rather because of the Orthodox religion and a specific cultural code than the state itself. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the Belarusian minority does not want to be associated with post-communist regime. This minority, feeling weak ties with Europe, it almost does not feel ties with Belarus; in terms of state they identified themselves with Poland (as we are talking about historical tradition: reported by some NGOs, the idea of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the tradition of which Belarusians could appeal, seems to be not very popular). This attachment to Poland or place of residence is strong – these are locations that the respondents are familiar with, unlike the reality of Belarus.

The respondents rarely pointed to current or historical conflicts with the Poles. They pointed out rather competition with better-organized Ukrainians in Podlasie, who are trying to convince some Belarusians that they are – de facto – Ukrainians).

It seems that the closer cooperation between the Polish NGOs and Belarusian NGOs would help this minority out of the shadows, and, perhaps, to fight the stereotypical belief that Belarusian is a "simple, dark, backward peasant." What else, the Belarusian minority can not derive from the fact that art and Belarusian is counting on the cultural map of Poland, and recognized in Europe.

Summing up, the situation of the Belarusian minority in Poland has improved after 1989; however, still the biggest problem for the Belarusian minority is the rapid assimilation process that has happened over the past few years. It is mainly due to lack of national consciousness on the part of the Belarusians which impedes a lasting unification as a minority group. Polish accession to the European Union, taking into consideration the favourable cultural policy of the EU in strengthening European cultural diversity, could stop this process.

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

*Łukasz Widła / Anna Domaradzka*

### 2.1 Methodology and sample

Research was carried out on a sample of 399 respondents declaring to be of Belarusian origin, who have lived in Poland for at least one year. Selection of the research location was to ensure its representativeness – in total, the project was conducted in 14 locations, within the areas inhabited by a significant Belarusian majority (mainly podlaskie voivodship). Selection of respondents for the research project was conducted on the basis of the random route method, meaning that in the location selected, start points were drawn; when it was not possible to conduct the interview at the address drawn, another location was selected in accordance to a fixed rule (e.g. a house number greater by ten). Efforts were made to ensure representativeness of the sample in terms of gender and age. Research was carried out using the face-to-face structured interview on the basis of a questionnaire in Polish language. Field research was conducted by GfK Polonia company.

The material gathered was used to conduct frequency analyses, cross tables (taking into account gender, age, education and the fact of having children). In some justified cases, the results were supported by correlation analyses. Detailed results have been quoted in tables provided in the annex.

Analyses taking into account the size of the town/city of residence was not possible due to lack of such variable in the database. For the same reason, the education was analyzed only basing on the three level education variable (primary, secondary, tertiary).

**Table 1. Sample structure**

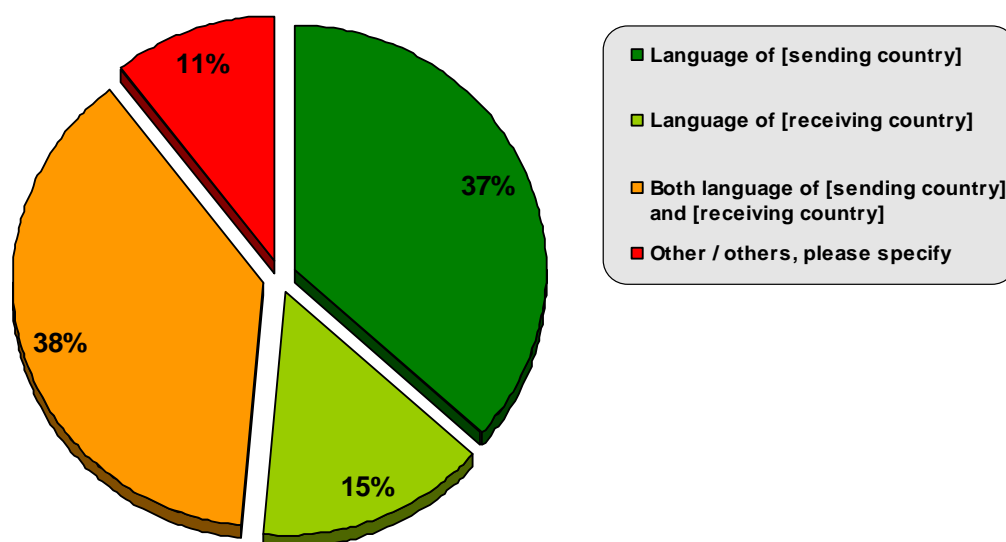
		N=	%
Total		399	100,0%
Sex of respondent	Male	167	41,9%
	Female	232	58,1%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	5,3%
	30-49	74	18,5%
	50 and more	304	76,2%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	2,5%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	7,3%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	128	32,1%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	2,8%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	11,3%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	176	44,1%
Education Levels	Primary	217	54,4%
	Secondary	168	42,1%
	Tertiary	14	3,5%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	58	14,5%
	1	57	14,3%
	2	159	39,8%
	3 or more	120	30,1%

## 2.2 Ethnicity and ethnic identity, national identity

### 2.2.1 Identity

One of the most significant, if not the single most significant factor influencing maintenance of identity, in particular, minority identity, is familiarity with the mother tongue. Most respondents speak Belarusian at home – either as the only language (36.6%) or alternately with Polish (38.1%). Polish as the only language is spoken only by 14.8% respondents. Higher percentages of those speaking only their mother tongue at home were recorded among the elderly (43.1%), particularly elderly women (almost one half of all women examined aged 50 or more used only Belarusian language at home). Use of this language is typical mostly for persons with the lowest education (46.5%) and those having more than two children.

**Chart 1. What language or languages do you speak most often at home?**



The respondents declare strong attachment to their ethnic group (45.6% declared very strong attachment), and a much weaker bond with Belarus as such (15.8% feel strongly attached to it). They declare much stronger attachment to Poland (51.6% expressing strong attachment); however, most of them are attached strongly to their place of residence (as many as 71.1% respondents declared very strong attachment in this category).

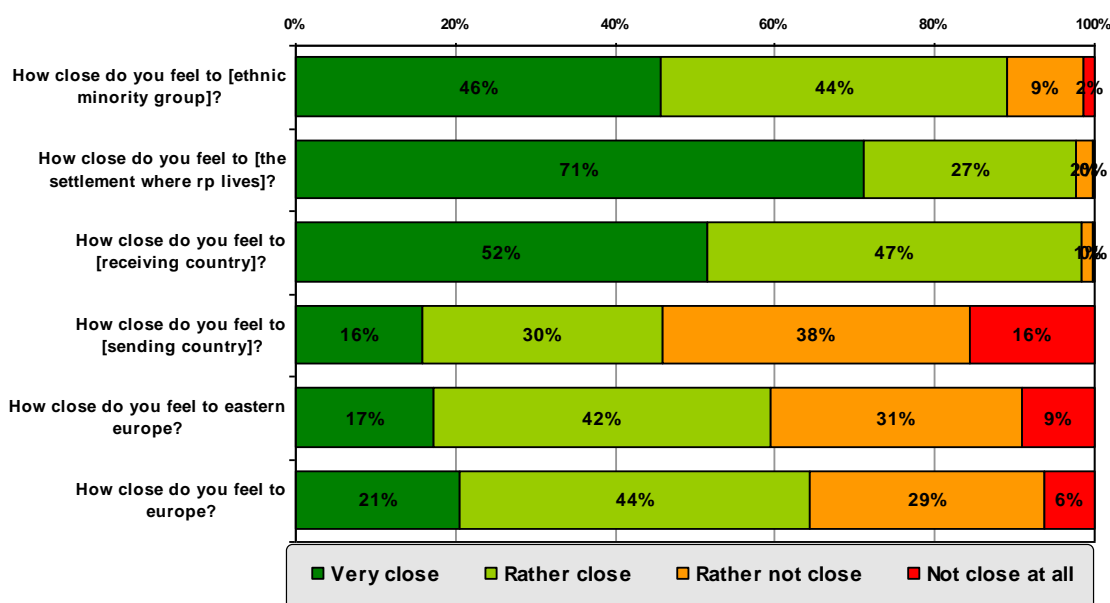
As for attachment to own ethnic group and the place of residence, it is stronger among women (49.6%). Stronger attachment to Belarus is declared by the youngest respondents; however, the results should be treated as uncertain due to the relatively small percentage base.

Attachment to own ethnic group does not change with age of the respondents: among young people, very strong attachment is declared by 47.6% respondents, and in the older group – by 47.4%. However, correlation analyses indicate a difference in the perception of ethnicity and the country of origin between the younger and older respondents – the  $R^2$  coefficient for the youngest respondents was as much as 0.75 for correlation between ethnic categorization and attachment to Belarus, while among the oldest respondents, it only amounted to 0.25. There is also a visible trend in the category of attachment to the place of residence and to Poland as such. While among

the youngest respondents  $R^2$  for these two variables amounted to 0.63. in the middle-age group, it was equal to 0.29. and in the oldest group – only 0.17. Once again, it is necessary to keep in mind the small number of the youngest respondents – if this group was larger, perhaps the differences between individual groups of respondents would be less visible.

Our respondents perceive their links with Eastern Europe and Europe as such as being quite weak. Those attached strongly to Eastern Europe constitute 17.2%, while attachment to Europe as such has been declared by a slightly larger group of only 20.5% respondents. It is worth noting, however, that these percentages are still higher in comparison with the sense of attachment to Belarus.

**Chart 2. How close do you feel to...**

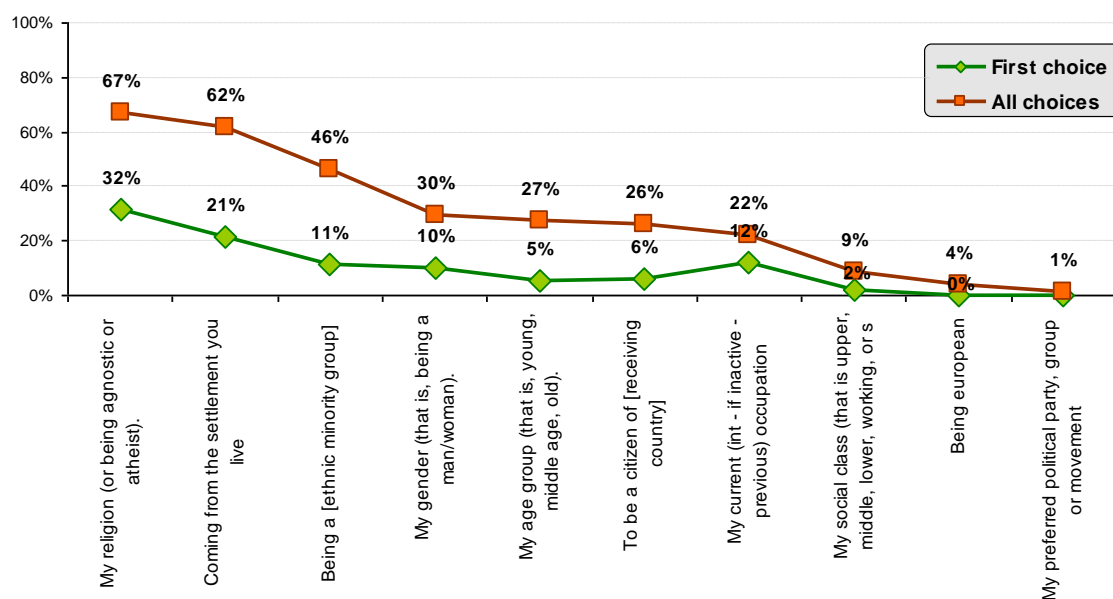


It seems that their relations with Belarus are perceived by the respondents as a quite distant past. A large part of Belarusians living in Poland are not the first generation living outside their homeland. Probably only a small percentage of respondents belonged to the most recent immigration waves. Lack of strong attachment to Belarus in this context should be analyzed not as much as lack of connection with own country, but as lack of attachment with the country of their parents or even grandparents. Thus attachment to Poland or the place of residence is much stronger – these are locations that the respondents are familiar with, unlike the reality of Belarus.

However, the most significant determinant of identity is religion – as many as 31.7% of respondents put it on the first place when describing themselves. Further places were occupied by: place of residence, occupation, and – on the fourth place – ethnic origin. The hierarchy of all key determinants is similar: religion occupies the first place (67.3%), then there is the place of residence (61.7%) and ethnic identity (46.2%). Of course, we cannot exclude the possibility that religiousness as the basic determinant has been selected due to the fact that almost 73% respondents belong to the oldest age group, which is traditionally most strongly attached to issues of religion.

Ethnic identity is the least significant determinant for young people (only 31.6% assigned to it one of the first three positions), and it is most significant for those with university education (61.5%).

Chart 3. Generally speaking which is the most important to you in describing...



The respondents were also asked about the significance of various traits associated with Belarus, its traditions, language or political institutions. The question pertained to the prerequisites that have to be satisfied for anyone to feel to be „truly Belarusian”.

Religion also plays the key role in this regard, as it is very significant for 61.2% respondents. The second position is occupied by the subjective sense of being Belarusian (56.3%). Ability to speak Belarusian language was mentioned by 45.3% respondents, and having Belarusian ancestors – by 40.3%. The least significant determinants are: the fact of being born in Belarus (9.1%), having the Belarusian citizenship (13.1%) or living in Belarus for most of one’s life (11.7%).



Table 2. How important do you think each of the following is to...

Answers "Very important"		Total	have been born in [SENDING COUNTRY]	have [NATIONALITY OF SENDING COUNTRY] citizenship	have lived in [SENDING COUNTRY] for most of one's life	be able to speak [LANGUAGE OF SENDING COUNTRY]	be a [religion]	respect [NATIONALITY OF SENDING COUNTRY] political institutions and laws	feel [NATIONALITY OF SENDING COUNTRY]	have [NATIONALITY OF SENDING COUNTRY] ancestry
Total		374	9,1%	13,1%	11,7%	45,3%	61,2%	18,1%	56,3%	40,3%
Sex of respondent	Male	162	8,6%	11,7%	9,3%	42,1%	52,7%	16,0%	54,9%	40,4%
	Female	212	9,4%	14,2%	13,4%	47,7%	67,6%	19,7%	57,3%	40,2%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	20	,0%	,0%	4,8%	23,8%	40,0%	21,1%	63,2%	15,0%
	30-49	73	2,7%	5,5%	11,1%	31,5%	49,3%	16,4%	62,5%	38,9%
	50 and more	281	11,4%	16,0%	12,3%	50,3%	65,6%	18,3%	54,3%	42,4%
41,4%	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	,0%	,0%	10,0%	10,0%	30,0%	22,2%	40,0%	22,2%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	3,4%	10,3%	7,1%	31,0%	48,3%	18,5%	67,9%	
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	123	10,6%	12,9%	9,8%	47,2%	55,6%	15,0%	53,2%	41,5%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	10	,0%	,0%	,0%	36,4%	50,0%	20,0%	88,9%	9,1%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	44	2,3%	2,3%	13,6%	31,8%	50,0%	15,0%	59,1%	37,2%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	158	12,0%	18,4%	14,3%	52,7%	73,2%	20,9%	55,2%	43,0%
Education Levels	Primary	195	13,3%	19,0%	17,3%	51,9%	66,0%	15,6%	47,3%	36,3%
	Secondary	166	4,8%	6,6%	6,0%	37,3%	57,3%	22,8%	65,7%	45,5%
	Tertiary	13	,0%	7,1%	,0%	42,9%	35,7%	,0%	76,9%	35,7%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	56	5,4%	7,0%	9,1%	31,6%	49,1%	18,9%	60,0%	39,3%
	1	54	13,0%	9,4%	9,3%	44,6%	54,5%	16,0%	58,2%	37,7%
	2	152	8,6%	11,9%	11,1%	45,8%	61,0%	20,4%	57,5%	42,5%
	3 or more	108	10,2%	20,0%	15,3%	53,4%	72,3%	16,2%	53,0%	39,5%

The hierarchy of values is different, when it comes to traits associated with Poland, or, specifically, traits that make one feel „truly Polish”. Here, the most significant factor is the subjective sense of being Polish (60.3%), the second trait mentioned was speaking Polish language (53.4%), and the third – having Polish ancestors (44.1%).

Almost one half of all respondents are definitely proud of being Belarusian (46.5%) and of belonging to an ethnic minority (48.3%). A much smaller percentage declares being proud of being Polish (27.4%). However, taking into account a broader category of being definitely proud + being rather proud, almost all respondents declare their pride of being members of an ethnic minority (97.4%), 88.5% respondents are proud of their Belarusian origin, and 88.9% respondents are proud of their Polish identity (if they admit having a sense of it).

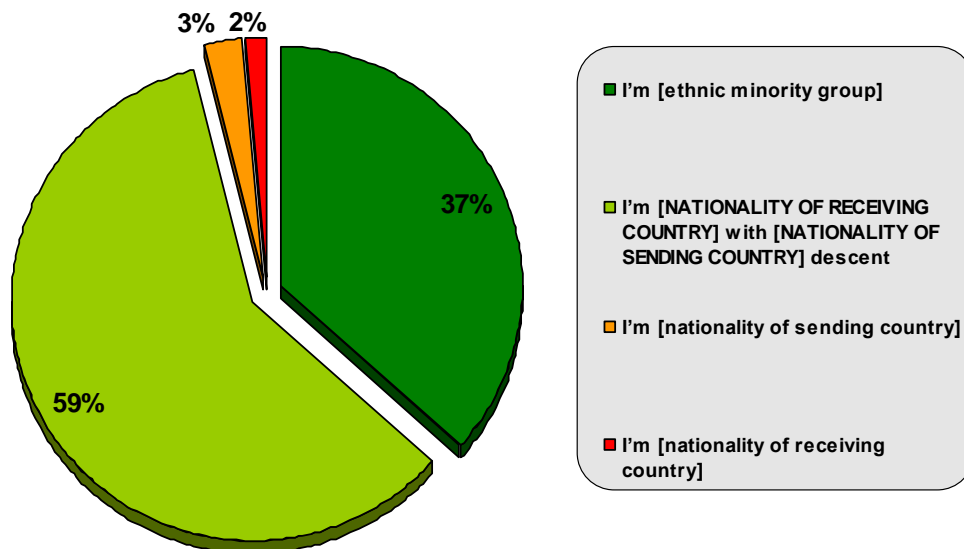
Similar percentages are recorded with regard to the sense of pride of being European: 23.4% respondents declare they are definitely proud of being inhabitants of Eastern Europe, and 22.9% – of being European; however, the analysis of answer „I am definitely proud + I am rather proud” indicates that 83.6% respondents declare they are proud to live in Eastern Europe, and 86.9% - to be Europeans.

Those, who declare no sense of pride associated with being Belarusian, are mostly middle aged persons (20.4% in this group in comparison with 11.5% overall), particularly women in this age group (28.1%), while little or no pride of their ethnic identity is declared by women belonging to the youngest age group (10.5% in comparison with 2.6% in the entire group) and persons with university education (15.4%).

### 2.2.2 Ethnic self-categorizations

Most respondents refer to themselves as „Poles of Belarusian origin” (59.3%). The second largest category is „Belarusian living in Poland” (36.6%), while the remaining two categories were selected sporadically: 2.5% respondents referred to themselves as Belarusians, and 1.5% - as Poles.

**Chart 4. Out of the following list, please select the formula that best describes your ethnic status**

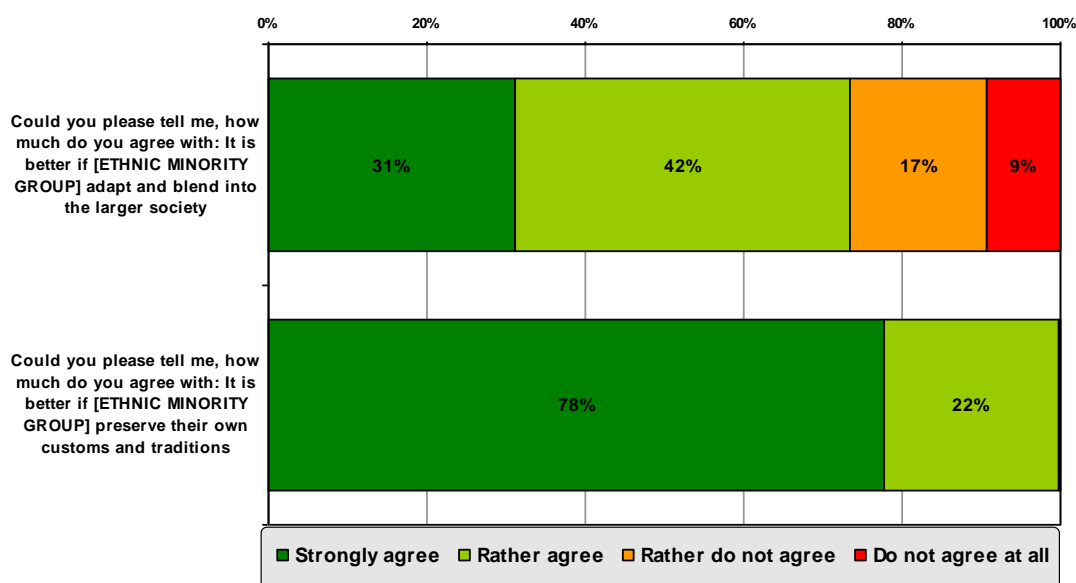


In general, there are no substantial differences between respondents in terms of self-categorization: middle-aged women (65.9%) and persons having at least three children (65.3%) slightly more often declared to be Poles of Belarusian origin. Middle aged men (48.3%) and respondents having no children (44.8%) were somewhat more eager to declare they were Belarusians living in Poland.

### 2.2.3 Coexistence of cultures and cultivation of tradition

There is a visible negative attitude towards cultural homogenization – the respondents have clear views on the „melting” of national minorities in the dominant culture and preservation of specific customs and traditions of their minority. In general, 31.1% respondents definitely agree with the statement that Belarusians should adapt and become a part of the Polish society. Support for this statement is observed even more often among persons with secondary education (37%) and those having one child (35.3%). However, on the other hand, there is a visible strong need for preservation of own traditions and culture – 77.7% definitely agreed with the statement that the Belarusian minority should preserve these. This thesis is supported in particular by persons with secondary education (86.7%) and by middle-aged men (86.2%).

**Chart 5. Could you please tell me, how much do you agree with...:**



According to the data gathered, however, it seems that persons supporting these two statements are often the same respondents. 27.3% of them agreed both with the statement that Belarusians in Poland should adapt and become a part of the dominant culture and with the thesis that the Belarusian minority should defend its traditions.

It seems that the respondents, as it has been mentioned before, came to Poland during the earlier waves of emigration, prior to the systemic transformation of the 80's/90's of the previous century. Perhaps their acceptance of the need to preserve tradition and to melt it in the pot of Polish culture at the same time is not mutually exclusive: living for a long time on the borderline of cultures, people cease to perceive the components of their own and alien culture as being mutual-

ly exclusive. Moreover, the definition of “Polish” culture to the respondents may be different from that applied by the Poles.

Moreover, the region, in which research was carried out, is known as Little Belarus; it is known that the area of Białystok is one of the few regions in Europe to have preserved Belarusian language in a good condition. From this point of view, it is understandable that components of Belarusian culture have been included in the cultural context to become a part of the national heritage – not Belarusian, but Polish, at least according to the respondents.

### 2.2.4 Cultivation of tradition

For 57.9% respondents, the possibility of cultivation of Belarusian customs and traditions is very significant. A large percentage also states that it is very significant to have their representatives in the parliament (47.4%). Speaking Belarusian in everyday life and the possibility of teaching children about history and culture of Belarus was significant to 40.2% and 39.3% respondents, respectively. The least significant factor was the possibility of teaching children in their mother tongue (27.3% respondents referred to it as very significant) and the possibility of reading newspapers in Belarusian (31%).

**Table 3. Could you please tell me, how much do you agree with:**

		Total	It is better if [ETHNIC MINORITY GROUP] adapt and blend into the larger society				It is better if [ETHNIC MINORITY GROUP] preserve their own customs and traditions			
			Strongly agree	Rather agree	Rather do not agree	Do not agree at all	Strongly agree	Rather agree	Rather do not agree	Do not agree at all
Total		373	31,1%	42,4%	17,2%	9,4%	77,7%	22,0%	,3%	,0%
Sex of respondent	Male	153	28,8%	37,9%	22,9%	10,5%	81,4%	18,0%	,6%	,0%
	Female	220	32,7%	45,5%	13,2%	8,6%	75,1%	24,9%	,0%	,0%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	20	25,0%	45,0%	15,0%	15,0%	68,4%	31,6%	,0%	,0%
	30-49	71	22,5%	39,4%	25,4%	12,7%	83,6%	16,4%	,0%	,0%
	50 and more	282	33,7%	42,9%	15,2%	8,2%	76,9%	22,8%	,3%	,0%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	9	22,2%	55,6%	11,1%	11,1%	75,0%	25,0%	,0%	,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	27	22,2%	22,2%	40,7%	14,8%	86,2%	13,8%	,0%	,0%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	117	30,8%	40,2%	19,7%	9,4%	80,6%	18,5%	,8%	,0%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	27,3%	36,4%	18,2%	18,2%	63,6%	36,4%	,0%	,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	44	22,7%	50,0%	15,9%	11,4%	81,8%	18,2%	,0%	,0%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	165	35,8%	44,8%	12,1%	7,3%	74,1%	25,9%	,0%	,0%
Education Levels	Primary	197	28,4%	53,3%	11,7%	6,6%	70,4%	29,1%	,5%	,0%
	Secondary	162	37,0%	30,2%	22,2%	10,5%	86,7%	13,3%	,0%	,0%
	Tertiary	14	,0%	28,6%	35,7%	35,7%	78,6%	21,4%	,0%	,0%
How many children all in all do you have, includ-	No children	55	27,3%	41,8%	21,8%	9,1%	73,2%	26,8%	,0%	,0%
	1	51	35,3%	43,1%	11,8%	9,8%	76,9%	23,1%	,0%	,0%
	2	154	31,8%	44,2%	15,6%	8,4%	77,1%	22,3%	,6%	,0%

ing the adopted ones?	3 or more	108	31,5%	39,8%	20,4%	8,3%	81,0%	19,0%	,0%	,0%
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Preservation of traditions and customs is most significant for those having at least one child, and activities aimed at actual preservation of Belarusian culture are most significant for those with university education (teaching children in mother tongue: 61.5%; teaching about culture and customs at school: 64.3%, reading newspapers and periodicals in Belarusian: 57.1%).

### 2.2.5 Belarusian language

In total, 66.5% respondents were educated in Belarusian language. Most of them learned to speak the language as early as in elementary school (65%), another 9.7% respondents – in secondary school. Only 0.5% were educated in Belarusian language during their university studies, which is associated with a small percentage of respondents with university education in the examined group.

**Table 4. Have you obtained education in Ukrainian language in...**

Answers "Yes"		Total	primary education	secondary education	higher education
Total		397	65,0%	9,7%	,5%
Sex of respondent	Male	164	64,6%	7,5%	,6%
	Female	233	65,2%	11,4%	,4%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	42,9%	28,6%	,0%
	30-49	74	56,8%	18,9%	2,7%
	50 and more	302	68,5%	6,1%	,0%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	30,0%	30,0%	,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	51,7%	17,2%	3,4%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	125	70,4%	3,3%	,0%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	54,5%	27,3%	,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	60,0%	20,0%	2,2%
Education Levels	Primary	214	62,6%	,0%	,0%
	Secondary	169	70,4%	19,5%	,0%
	Tertiary	14	35,7%	35,7%	14,3%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	58	55,2%	14,0%	,0%
	1	55	60,0%	13,0%	,0%
	2	160	69,4%	10,2%	1,3%
	3 or more	119	68,1%	6,0%	,0%

Only 7.5% respondents encountered Belarusian language during two stages of their education (e.g. in elementary and secondary school), while 0.3% respondents dealt with their mother tongue throughout the entire education process.

It is worth noting, however, that the survey did not specify the language issue precisely. At present, in Belarus, about 75% of the population use Russian in everyday life, and only one out of four Belarusians speak Belarusian at home. Thus the issue of usage of “mother tongue” is not defined as clearly as in the case of other national minorities in Poland.

### 2.2.6 The media

Most respondents have the opportunity to keep in touch with their homeland through the Polish media: 81.8% respondents can listen to radio in their language, 75.8% - to watch Polish TV programmes in Belarusian, 68.2% - to send their children to schools with Belarusian as the language of instruction, and 59.4% - to read newspapers in Belarusian.

The real media consumption data is somewhat less optimistic: while 32.9% admit they regularly read Polish newspapers, only 13.2% respondents having access to Belarusian press browse through it regularly. Newspapers of the Belarusian minority published in Poland have a little more readers; however, they are read only by 15% of those having access to press of this kind. This phenomenon can be explained in two ways: firstly, as it has been mentioned earlier, the respondents do not feel attached to Belarus, but rather to their place of residence, or to their ethnic identity, which is not strongly correlated with the Belarusian nation as such. Secondly, Belarusian newspapers, even if they are available, in general present only the non-democratic perspective of the regime of Alexander Lukashenka.

The situation is similar with other media: Polish TV is watched regularly by 87.8% respondents, but Belarusian channels or broadcasts of the Belarusian minority, offered by the Polish television, are much less popular (50.6% and 54.2%, respectively, of those, who are able to watch these channels or broadcasts).

A less visible disproportion is observed in the case of radio. 67.9% respondents listen to Polish stations; 48.6% - to Belarusian stations, and more than a half (52.9%) – to minority broadcasts on the Polish radio. It is worth noting that there are several broadcasting stations in Poland, functioning in Belarusian language, some of them supported officially by the Polish government, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Although these are jammed by the Belarusian authorities, it seems – and this has been confirmed by this research project – that these stations play a significant role in the life of the Belarusian minority in Poland.

**Internet use shows a similar pattern to the press. While Polish Web pages are visited by 45.8% Internet users, the Belarusians one are browsed through regularly by 9.1% respondents, and Web pages of the Belarusian minority are even less popular – these are visited by 5.5% respondents having Internet access.**

Table 5. How often do you...

Answers "Regularly / often" % if respondent has such an opportunity		read printed or electronic Polish news- papers	watch tv Polish programs?	listen on the radio Polish programs?	on the Polish websites?
Total		32,9%	87,8%	67,9%	45,8%
Sex of respondent	Male	31,3%	88,4%	67,3%	46,2%
	Female	34,0%	87,3%	68,3%	45,5%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	28,6%	81,0%	61,9%	53,3%
	30-49	47,9%	91,9%	79,2%	61,5%
	50 and more	28,9%	87,2%	65,5%	16,7%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	20,0%	80,0%	50,0%	57,1%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	44,8%	89,7%	82,1%	70,0%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	28,7%	88,8%	65,3%	11,1%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	36,4%	81,8%	72,7%	50,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	50,0%	93,3%	77,3%	56,3%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	29,1%	86,0%	65,6%	22,2%
Education Levels	Primary	20,6%	85,4%	58,2%	9,1%
	Secondary	42,9%	90,4%	78,7%	51,4%
	Tertiary	71,4%	92,9%	78,6%	63,6%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	30,9%	86,2%	58,9%	66,7%
	1	43,8%	88,9%	83,3%	30,8%
	2	34,5%	87,3%	70,1%	40,9%
	3 or more	25,0%	88,9%	62,3%	40,0%

Answers "Regularly / often" % if respondent has such an opportunity		read printed or electronic Belarusian newspapers	watch tv Belarusian programs?	listen on the radio Belaru- sian pro- grams?	on the Belaru- sian web- sites?
Total		13,2%	50,6%	48,6%	9,1%
Sex of respondent	Male	13,9%	47,6%	44,7%	8,0%
	Female	12,7%	53,1%	51,6%	10,0%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	6,3%	26,7%	33,3%	7,7%
	30-49	7,9%	43,8%	48,5%	11,1%
	50 and more	15,3%	53,9%	49,8%	6,7%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	,0%	14,3%	12,5%	,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	8,0%	39,3%	46,4%	10,0%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	16,7%	51,8%	46,7%	12,5%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11,1%	37,5%	50,0%	16,7%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	7,9%	47,2%	50,0%	11,8%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	14,3%	55,6%	52,1%	,0%
Education Levels	Primary	14,9%	50,9%	43,4%	9,1%
	Secondary	11,8%	50,7%	53,3%	8,6%
	Tertiary	9,1%	46,2%	61,5%	11,1%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	11,1%	33,3%	39,2%	6,3%
	1	10,3%	48,9%	48,9%	18,2%
	2	13,6%	50,7%	50,7%	4,8%
	3 or more	14,3%	60,6%	50,5%	16,7%



**Table 5. How often do you... (continued)**

Answers "Regularly / often" % if respondent has such an opportunity		read printed or electronic Belarusian minority newspapers?	watch tv Belarusian minority pro- grams?	listen on the radio Belaru- sian minority programs?	on the web- sites of the Belarusian minority?
Total		15,0%	54,2%	52,9%	5,5%
Sex of respondent	Male	14,1%	52,8%	47,5%	4,0%
	Female	15,7%	55,3%	56,8%	6,7%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	5,6%	37,5%	27,8%	,0%
	30-49	10,8%	45,7%	48,6%	11,5%
	50 and more	17,1%	57,6%	56,0%	,0%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	,0%	28,6%	12,5%	,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	11,1%	44,8%	46,4%	11,1%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	16,3%	56,5%	50,5%	,0%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11,1%	44,4%	40,0%	,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	10,5%	46,3%	50,0%	11,8%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	17,6%	58,4%	59,9%	,0%
Education Levels	Primary	17,0%	52,5%	50,3%	,0%
	Secondary	10,6%	55,6%	55,4%	5,7%
	Tertiary	41,7%	61,5%	58,3%	11,1%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	10,9%	35,4%	37,3%	6,3%
	1	12,5%	58,3%	56,5%	,0%
	2	16,2%	54,0%	54,9%	4,8%
	3 or more	15,7%	61,9%	56,7%	16,7%

It is thus clearly visible that in the case of all media, those offered in the Polish language are much more popular. It could seem that this is the issue of availability of Belarusian and Belarusian language media; however, these calculations apply to the percentage of respondents, who admitted having access to those.

Apart from the issue of the visible ideological subjectivism of the Belarusian media and the ethnic and national issues, it should be noted that the nationwide Polish media offer entertainment broadcasts, which more comprehensible for the viewers than the broadcasts offered by the regional media. Moreover, the Polish television provides more information on the reality, in which the respondents live, and thus it is a more useful source of everyday knowledge. Another issue is the cultural code – regardless of the quality of the Polish news broadcasts, TV series or movies, they are very popular; watching them allows the viewers to move more freely within the space of the Polish cultural code, which is particularly significant in the case of women knowing Belarus from the stories of their parents or from their own, distant childhood.

### 2.2.7 Religion

Asked about their religion, the respondents unanimously declared to be Orthodox – 99% of them indicated this choice.

The respondents visit church irregularly. Only 1/3 attend the church once a week, while almost 20% do it once a month, and another 20% - several times a year. This frequency is surprising in the context of the declared high significance of religion in the self-definition of the respondents' identity.

### 2.2.8 Relations with Belarus

As for relations with modern Belarus, these are sporadic – only 22% respondents have relatives in Belarus, 12% have friends on the other side of the border, and 3.3% simply keep in touch with someone from Belarus. In total, only 26.8% admit keeping in touch with their family, friends or colleagues living in Belarus.

**Table 6. Do you have...?**

Answers "Yes"		Total	relatives living in [sending country]	friends living in [sending country]	other acquaintances or business partners living in [sending country]
Total		400	22,0%	12,0%	3,3%
Sex of respondent	Male	167	25,7%	15,6%	5,4%
	Female	233	19,3%	9,4%	1,7%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	23,8%	9,5%	,0%
	30-49	74	25,7%	20,3%	4,1%
	50 and more	305	21,0%	10,2%	3,3%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	20,0%	10,0%	,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	31,0%	17,2%	10,3%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	128	25,0%	15,6%	4,7%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	27,3%	9,1%	,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	22,2%	22,2%	,0%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	177	18,1%	6,2%	2,3%
Education Levels	Primary	217	19,8%	8,8%	3,2%
	Secondary	169	23,7%	15,4%	2,4%
	Tertiary	14	35,7%	21,4%	14,3%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	58	20,7%	6,9%	1,7%
	1	57	21,1%	15,8%	3,5%
	2	160	25,6%	11,3%	3,8%
	3 or more	120	18,3%	13,3%	3,3%

Moreover, contacts with persons living on the other side of the border are hardly preserved: only personal meetings are present, at very irregular time intervals (once in a few years). In fact, none of the remote communication channels is used: e-mails, letters or telephones. Perhaps this is due to the poor telecommunication infrastructure – moreover, there is a possibility that this weakness can be observed on both sides of the border.

### 2.2.9 Summary

Factors that seem to be of the highest importance for preservation of minority identity are religion and the place of residence. Being a Belarusian in Poland is mainly the issue of religion and, to some extent, the language used; however, it seems that many respondents have had no encounters with the latter. For most respondents, the most adequate category turned out to be „Polish of Belarusian origin”. It also seems that no dichotomy exists, which would dictate selection of either full assimilation or preservation of own traditions and customs. For a large percentage of respondents, both are possible at the same time.

While the demand for preservation of tradition and culture declared is high, the low level of consumption of Belarusian and Belarusian-language media is surprising. The only exception is the

radio, which seems to be rooted in the Polish policy of providing Polish Belarusians with access to broadcasts in their mother tongue. It is difficult to tell whether poor consumption of other media is an issue of weakness of the local media or rather the strength of the nationwide broadcasts. It is possible that much more significant are personal relations with other minority representatives and the most popular meeting place, which is the Orthodox church.

Most respondents do not keep in touch with anyone on the other side of the border; moreover, most of them do not know anyone living in Belarus; only one out of five respondents has any relatives living there. Communication, if any, takes traditional forms: meetings. Other forms of communication are used sporadically.

The broad geographic categories seem to be of little importance for the respondents. Only a small percentage of respondents feel attached to Europe or Eastern Europe – however, their sense of attachment to Belarus itself is even weaker; it seems that the self-categorization selected by most respondents – „I am a Pole of Belarusian origin” reflects the actual situation quite well: among our respondents, relations with their homeland are sporadic and weak.

## 2.3 Family, households and related ethnic aspects

### 2.3.1 Households

Most respondents are married (54.9%), the sample also included many widows and widowers (30.1%). Almost one out of ten persons is single. Most households are families of one or two persons (in total, 65.8% of all households examined). Single-person households make up 28.8%. Households with 5 or more members constitute 8.3%. 53.5% respondents live with their partner, in 29.8% households, there are children as well. Only 8.5% respondents live together with their parents or parents in law.

**Table 7. What is your marital status?**

		Total	What is your marital status?				
			Single	Cohabiting / living with partner	Married	Divorced	Widowed
Total		399	9,8%	2,0%	54,9%	3,3%	30,1%
Sex of respondent	Male	166	16,9%	1,8%	61,4%	2,4%	17,5%
	Female	233	4,7%	2,1%	50,2%	3,9%	39,1%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	76,2%	4,8%	19,0%	,0%	,0%
	30-49	74	13,5%	4,1%	70,3%	10,8%	1,4%
	50 and more	304	4,3%	1,3%	53,6%	1,6%	39,1%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	90,0%	,0%	10,0%	,0%	,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	34,5%	3,4%	51,7%	10,3%	,0%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	127	7,1%	1,6%	67,7%	,8%	22,8%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	63,6%	9,1%	27,3%	,0%	,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	,0%	4,4%	82,2%	11,1%	2,2%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	177	2,3%	1,1%	43,5%	2,3%	50,8%
Education Levels	Primary	216	5,6%	,9%	49,1%	,5%	44,0%
	Secondary	169	14,2%	3,6%	60,4%	7,1%	14,8%
	Tertiary	14	21,4%	,0%	78,6%	,0%	,0%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	58	60,3%	1,7%	25,9%	3,4%	8,6%
	1	56	5,4%	5,4%	51,8%	5,4%	32,1%
	2	160	,6%	2,5%	65,6%	4,4%	26,9%
	3 or more	120	,0%	,0%	55,8%	,8%	43,3%

### 2.3.2 Ethnic composition

The respondents were asked about the ethnic origin of their household members. In the case of partners, the largest group is composed of Belarusians living in Poland (82.7%), 12.6% respondents declared their partner was of Polish nationality, 4.7% - of Belarusian nationality.

Proportions among the children are very similar: 79.8% children were referred to as Belarusians in Poland, 17.6% as Poles, and only 2.5% – as Belarusians. Analyses were also conducted for the parents/ parents in law living together with the respondent; however, in this case, the number of persons declared as Poles amounted to 8.8%. Others were declared to be Belarusians living in Poland (88.2%), and only 2.9% - as Belarusians. For the remaining persons living with respondents, no analyses of their ethnic origin was conducted due to their small number.

As for citizenship, all partners of respondents are Polish citizens. The same applies to the parents and parents in law. Only in the case of children, the situation a little different: 98.3% have the Polish citizenship, and only 1.7% - the Belarusian citizenship.

### 2.3.3 Ethnic homogeneity

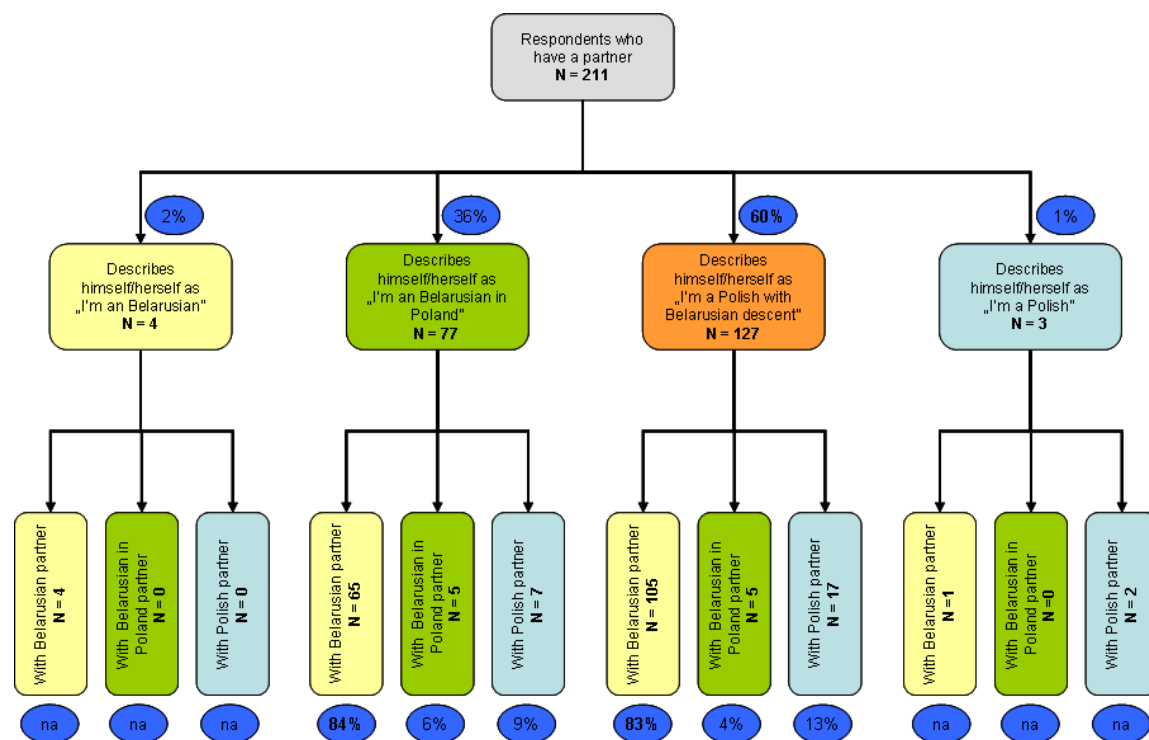
An analysis of ethnic homogeneity of respondents and their partners was also conducted. In total, 211 persons qualified for analysis (52.8%) – those, who had a partner and for whom two factors could be determined: their ethnic self-categorization and the ethnic categorization of their partner. Most persons declared to be „Poles of Belarusian origin” (60.2%). Among them, 84% declared their partner being of Belarusian origin, 9% – of Polish origin, and 6% selected the category “Belarusian in Poland”. The second most frequent self-categorization was “Belarusian in Poland” (36.5%). In this group, most respondents referred to their partners as being Belarusians (83%), the second place was occupied by the Poles (13%), and the third – by persons classified as Belarusians in Poland(4%).

Self-categorization „I am Belarusian” and „I am Polish” was encountered rarely. The first category encompassed only 2%, and the second – only 1% respondents.

When we compare the two middle self-categorizations, it is visible clearly that despite changes in self-categorization, selection of partners remains the same – regardless of self-categorization of the respondent, their partner is referred to as being Belarusian.

However, it is difficult to state how this analysis should be read: the fact of establishing a relationship with a person of specific origin may influence ethnic self-categorization on the other hand, it is the ethnicity that usually influences the selection of partners.

Chart 6. Ethnic homogeneity



### 2.3.4 Summary

Households of the examined minority mostly consist of the respondent, their partner (usually spouse; informal relationships are very rare) and at least one child. However, many of them are “abandoned nests”; moreover, there are many single-person households as well. The composition of the households examined is homogeneous: usually, we encounter persons referring to themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. On the other hand, in terms of self-categorization, a very frequent category is „a Pole of Belarusian origin”; it is not entirely clear whether the respondents perceive this category as different from that of an ethnic minority. However, if we analyze the choice of partners, it is usually the same, regardless of the respondent’s self-categorization – most partners are referred to simply as Belarusians. It is difficult to state, however, whether the choice of partners influences the ethnic self-categorization or vice versa.

## 2.4 Xenophobia, conflicts, discrimination

### 2.4.1 Attitudes towards other nations

The respondents were asked about their attitudes towards various nations that they have encountered. In Poland, they were asked about their attitudes towards the Poles, Belarusians, Germans and the Romani people. They were asked to indicate their acceptance for representatives of these nationalities in various contexts: as family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues from work.

In general, the respondents readily accepted the Poles and Belarusians in all four contexts: the level of positive answers did not drop below 98% in any case. Germans were assessed somewhat less positively, although here the lowest acceptance level (as a family member) was still high – 59.9% respondents believed it would not be a problem to accept a representative of this nation as their family member. In the remaining three categories, the percentages of positive answers were even higher.

Negative stereotypes were observed mostly in relation to the Romani: while 51.7% respondents did not perceive it as problematic to work with them, only 48.9% were eager to have them as neighbors, only 36.5% - as friends, and – 24.7% - as family members.

**Table 8. How would you feel about having a member of the following as a family member?**

... as a family member?		Total	Polish	Belarusian	German	Romani
Total		391	96,2%	99,7%	59,9%	24,7%
Sex of respondent	Male	160	94,4%	100,0%	58,7%	24,8%
	Female	231	97,4%	99,6%	60,7%	24,6%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	95,2%	100,0%	75,0%	29,4%
	30-49	73	98,6%	98,6%	67,2%	33,3%
	50 and more	297	95,6%	100,0%	56,9%	22,4%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	90,0%	100,0%	77,8%	28,6%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	28	96,4%	100,0%	60,9%	30,8%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	122	94,3%	100,0%	56,8%	23,3%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	100,0%	100,0%	72,7%	30,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	100,0%	97,8%	70,5%	35,0%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	175	96,6%	100,0%	57,1%	21,7%
Education Levels	Primary	211	94,3%	100,0%	50,0%	18,7%
	Secondary	166	98,2%	99,4%	70,1%	32,9%
	Tertiary	14	100,0%	100,0%	76,9%	27,3%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	55	96,4%	100,0%	66,0%	26,0%
	1	54	100,0%	100,0%	66,0%	37,3%
	2	159	95,0%	100,0%	66,2%	28,7%
	3 or more	118	95,8%	99,2%	47,1%	13,5%

## 2.4.2 Tensions

According to the respondents, tensions between individual ethnic groups in Poland are not a serious problem: only 3.1% respondents stated that there was a significant tension between Belarusians and Poles in Poland. In their opinion, more significant are the tensions between the rich and the poor (10.6%), believers of different religions (9.6%) or the young and the old (6.8%). Significant tension between the Belarusian minority and the Poles is indicated by persons with university education (15.4%), however, it is necessary to keep in mind the small percentage basis in this regard.

According to the respondents, the tension is much greater between the Poles and the Romani (as many as 28.8% referred to it as being serious).

**Table 9. In your opinion, how much tension is there between each...?**

Answers "a lot of tension"	Total	the poor and rich people?	the old people and young people?	the Belarusians in Poland and Polish	the Romani and Polish	the different religious groups	
Total	360	10,6%	6,8%	3,1%	28,8%	9,6%	
Sex of respondent	Male	153	10,5%	8,6%	2,5%	26,3%	11,5%
	Female	207	10,6%	5,4%	3,5%	30,8%	8,3%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	19	10,5%	5,0%	,0%	15,8%	5,6%
	30-49	72	6,9%	5,7%	5,5%	8,9%	14,1%
	50 and more	269	11,5%	7,2%	2,6%	34,4%	8,8%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	9	22,2%	10,0%	,0%	20,0%	10,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	28	3,6%	7,7%	3,6%	9,5%	17,4%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	116	11,2%	8,6%	2,5%	30,2%	10,4%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	10	,0%	,0%	,0%	11,1%	,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	44	9,1%	4,5%	6,7%	8,6%	12,2%
Education Levels	Female, 50 and more y.o.	153	11,8%	6,0%	2,7%	37,7%	7,6%
	Primary	180	8,3%	6,8%	1,1%	40,0%	6,6%
	Secondary	166	12,7%	6,7%	4,2%	16,3%	11,9%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	Tertiary	14	14,3%	7,1%	15,4%	14,3%	21,4%
	No children	53	9,4%	9,4%	,0%	21,3%	8,2%
	1	51	5,9%	,0%	,0%	31,7%	8,9%
	2	151	15,9%	10,0%	6,7%	30,5%	12,1%
	3 or more	100	6,0%	4,1%	1,0%	27,1%	7,5%

### 2.4.3 Discrimination

5.3% respondents declared having been discriminated against within the last 12 months due to their ethnic origin, and 6.8% – due to religion. At such low percentages, it is difficult to determine the circumstances of such discrimination – the phenomenon seems to be quite rare.

### 2.4.4 Summary

According to statements of the respondents, they do not find it problematic to accept Belarusians and Poles as their neighbors, family members or colleagues. Moreover, only a few persons stated that there was a strong tension in Poland between the Poles and the Belarusians. It seems that from the perspective of the respondents, a more significant tension can be observed between the Poles and the Romani people; the question of whether this is a working stereotype or an everyday observation remains open.

## 2.5 Social and political capital, participation, attitudes toward EU

### 2.5.1 Trust

The respondents declared a slightly higher level of trust towards persons from their own ethnic group in comparison with the Poles, ethnic Belarusians or people in general. Absolute trust in the Belarusian minority was declared by 25.8% respondents, while in the case of Belarusians, this percentage amounts to 18.8%; absolute trust towards Poles is declared by 18.7% respondents, while 18.5% respondents declare absolute trust towards people in general. The highest level of

trust towards their own ethnic minority is indicated by persons with many children (33%) and older men (37.2%). The latter group is most eager to show trust in general: they indicate their full trust in ethnic Belarusians, the Poles or people in general more often than the entire group of respondents.

However, a much lower level of trust is observed towards the Polish institutions, such as the parliament, the media, the police, the government or courts. The lowest level of trust is declared in relation to the parliament and the government – absolute trust in these institutions has been declared by 2.2% and 2.3% respondents, respectively. The Polish media do not enjoy much trust of the respondents either - 6.0% of them expresses their absolute trust in them. The level of trust is slightly higher in the case of courts and the police, which are considered to be absolutely trustworthy by 8.6% and 10.1% respondents, respectively.

It seems that in this regard, the Belarusian minority in Poland does not differ much in their opinions from ethnic Poles, who also show a tendency to declare their distrust towards the legislative authorities, while their attitudes towards the court are somewhat more positive, and – traditionally – tend to distrust the media.

**Table 10. Could you tell me how much do you trust...?**

Answers "trust them completely "		Total	people in general	Belarusians in Poland	Polish people	Belarusian people
Total		389	18,5%	25,8%	18,7%	18,8%
Sex of respondent	Male	162	20,4%	30,6%	20,5%	21,0%
	Female	227	17,2%	22,5%	17,3%	17,3%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	4,8%	14,3%	9,5%	10,0%
	30-49	72	9,7%	14,9%	8,2%	8,5%
	50 and more	296	21,6%	29,5%	21,9%	22,0%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	6,9%	13,8%	6,9%	7,1%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	123	25,2%	37,2%	25,4%	26,1%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	9,1%	27,3%	18,2%	20,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	43	11,6%	15,6%	9,1%	9,3%
Education Levels	Female, 50 and more y.o.	173	19,1%	24,0%	19,4%	19,2%
	Primary	208	21,6%	27,8%	22,0%	21,9%
	Secondary	167	15,6%	23,2%	15,0%	15,4%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	Tertiary	14	7,1%	28,6%	14,3%	14,3%
	No children	58	15,5%	15,8%	12,1%	14,8%
	1	51	21,6%	28,3%	18,9%	21,6%
	2	158	18,4%	24,2%	18,6%	17,4%
	3 or more	117	19,7%	33,0%	22,6%	22,3%

### 2.5.2 Interest in politics

The respondents are slightly more interested in Polish (17.6%) than in Belarusian politics (10.9%), a bit more often turning their attention towards the policy concerning the Belarusian minority in Poland (15.3%). Similar levels of interest in various fields of politics are not surprising: in fact, there is a quite large group of persons interested in all three issues at the same time



(37.5%) and a slightly larger one, which is not interested in any of them at all (40.3%). Others (22.2%) are interested only in some aspects of politics.

Among those interested in all political dimensions, a particularly large group is that of men (47.8%), particularly those, who are middle-aged (51.7%). Most women, on the other hand, are not interested in politics at all (52.8%), which is declared, in particular, by the eldest female respondents (59.4%).

**Table 11. How interested would you say you are in...?**

Answers "very interested"		Total	politics in Poland?	politics in Belarus?	politics in about your ethnic minority group?
Total		397	17,6%	10,9%	15,3%
Sex of respondent	Male	164	26,2%	17,2%	21,6%
	Female	233	11,6%	6,5%	10,8%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	20	10,0%	5,0%	5,0%
	30-49	74	18,9%	6,8%	16,2%
	50 and more	303	17,8%	12,3%	15,7%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	9	,0%	,0%	,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	27,6%	13,8%	27,6%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	126	27,8%	19,2%	21,8%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	18,2%	9,1%	9,1%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	13,3%	2,2%	8,9%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	177	10,7%	7,4%	11,4%
Education Levels	Primary	215	12,1%	8,4%	10,7%
	Secondary	168	23,8%	13,8%	19,9%
	Tertiary	14	28,6%	14,3%	30,8%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	57	21,1%	10,5%	17,9%
	1	55	23,6%	14,5%	21,8%
	2	160	17,5%	11,3%	15,2%
	3 or more	120	13,3%	8,4%	10,9%

Despite the relatively low interest in politics, as many as 52.9% respondents having voting rights in Poland participated in the last election, which is a result similar to the general Polish attendance level, which was less than 54% during the last parliamentary election. The youngest respondents participated in the election the least often – only 41.2% of them. The highest percentage of voters was found among persons with university education – 84.6% among those having the voting rights participated in the election.

Among the voters, the most popular party was the Democratic Left Alliance (60.2% of all votes), outstripping the rivals: the Civic Platform, indicated as the second most popular party, attracted only 24.4% of voting respondents. The highest level of support for the DLA was declared by the oldest female respondents having three or more children and persons with elementary education.

However, the European Parliament election was attended by a higher percentage of respondents in comparison with the general Polish population. While the attendance level among them reached the level of 43.1% of those having the voting rights, among the Polish population, it was almost two times lower, amounting only to 24.5%. During the election for the European Parlia-

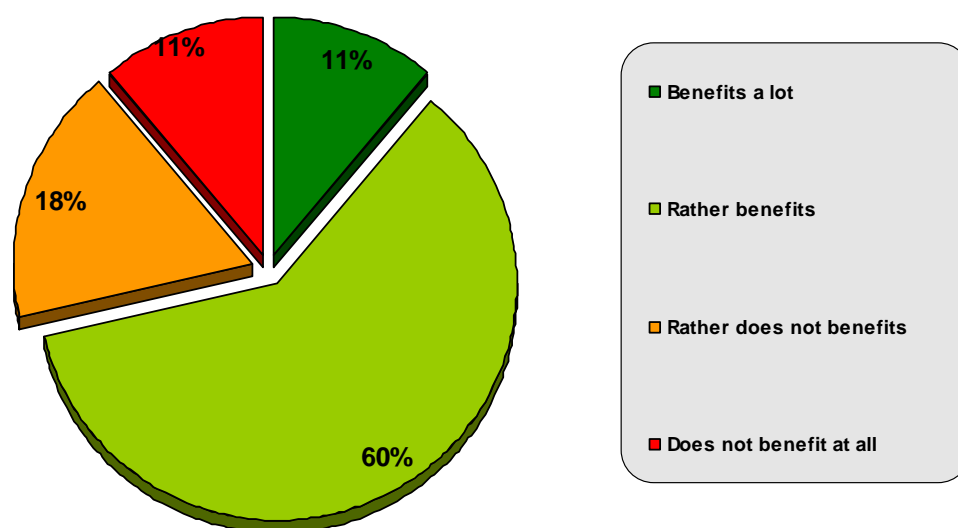
ment, the voters also tended to support the Coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance and the Labor Union (52.8%), less often voting for the Civic Platform (24.7%). Further positions were occupied by the Polish People's Party (9%) and Law and Justice (7.9%). It is worth noting, however, that we are comparing hard data on actual attendance with declarations of respondents – therefore, the data presented should be considered with some care.

### 2.5.3 The European Union

Attitudes of the respondents towards the European Union and its impact on Poland are neutral. Only 7.1% respondents assessed the impact of the EU as definitely positive, and another 33.3% – as being rather positive. However, the largest group of respondents declared its impact was neutral (46.6%). A negative assessment was declared by 13.3% respondents.

Apart from the quality of impact, the respondents generally agree that Poland benefits from its alliance with the European Union – although only one out of nine respondents believe that Poland gets substantial profits, as many as 60.2% respondents believe that there are some profits. In total, 28.7% respondents are of opinion that Poland does not benefit from being a member of the Community.

**Chart 7. Generally speaking, would you say that Poland benefits or does not benefit from being a member of the European Union?**



There are no significant differences between various groups of respondents in terms of their views of Poland's accession to the European Union.

According to the respondents, the situation of Belarusians in Poland has not changed substantially after the accession to the European Union. For 70.9% respondents, the opportunities of Belarusians to impact the political decisions in Poland have remained unchanged. The level of appreciation for Belarusian culture did not change, either: according to 70.4% respondents it remained the same as before the accession. In the case of both of these statements, the entire group as such shows a rather positive attitude: while changes for better are recognized by 24.8% (impact of Belarusians on politics) and 26.6% (recognition of Belarusian culture), critical voices are rather sporadic (4.3%; 3.0%).

### 2.5.4 Threats to tradition and culture

Few respondents declare a sense of personal threat of losing their identity and culture (13.1%), although it has to be noted that there is high diversity between various groups of respondents in this regard: young women are most afraid of losing their identity (20%). Their high percentage can be explained by the usual attachment of women to tradition, which is of key importance, when they are unable (or unwilling) to find a Belarusian partner.

It seems, however, that this is not the most significant threat on the list: as many as 51.1% respondents are afraid of organized crime and drugs. The second place is occupied by fear of worsening of the situation of minorities in Poland (20.1%). Fear of loss of social benefits is expressed by 18.7% respondents. Only 10.6% of them are afraid of losing their Polish identity and culture.

**Table 12. You - personally - are currently afraid of the loss of...?**

Answers "afraid of it"		Total	Belarusian identity and culture	Increase in drug trafficking and international organized crime	social benefits	Polish national identity and culture	more difficulties for ethnic and national minorities
Total		350	13,1%	51,1%	18,7%	10,6%	20,1%
Sex of respondent	Male	150	12,0%	52,1%	17,9%	10,3%	19,0%
	Female	200	14,0%	50,3%	19,4%	10,8%	21,0%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	19	10,5%	57,9%	21,1%	15,8%	15,8%
	30-49	70	11,4%	46,3%	13,2%	8,8%	16,7%
	50 and more	261	13,8%	51,9%	20,1%	10,7%	21,5%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	9	,0%	66,7%	22,2%	11,1%	11,1%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	27	7,4%	50,0%	8,0%	8,0%	12,0%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	114	14,0%	51,4%	19,8%	10,8%	21,4%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	10	20,0%	50,0%	20,0%	20,0%	20,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	43	14,0%	43,9%	16,3%	9,3%	19,5%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	147	13,6%	52,3%	20,3%	10,6%	21,5%
Education Levels	Primary	175	12,6%	47,4%	18,6%	11,3%	19,1%
	Secondary	161	14,9%	54,8%	20,4%	10,8%	21,7%
	Tertiary	14	,0%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	14,3%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	53	5,7%	52,1%	12,2%	6,0%	10,4%
	1	47	27,7%	51,1%	20,0%	14,9%	25,0%
	2	145	11,7%	53,3%	20,3%	10,7%	22,2%
	3 or more	101	11,9%	47,8%	19,8%	11,0%	20,5%

It could seem that the fear of losing their ethnic identity and of the possible worsening of the situation of the Belarusian minority in Poland, expressed by the respondents, should result in greater willingness to leave the country, if a good standard of living could be warranted elsewhere. This is not true: as many as 89.1% respondents are not willing to leave our country, even if they got a warranty of enjoying a decent standard of living abroad. This, in our opinion, is due to at least two factors: first of all, strong attachment to the "little homeland", one's place of residence, and secondly, the average age of the respondents. In a situation, in which almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  respondents are aged 50 or more, it is hard to expect a high level of – even declared – mobility.

Moreover, it is possible that the fear of worsening of the situation of ethnic minorities is due to painful experience of the past decades (still vivid in the memory of our respondents).

### 2.5.5 Summary

At the declarative level, the respondents showed a general trust towards individual nations, particularly the Poles and the Belarusians. The level of trust towards institutions, particularly the Polish government and the parliament, was lower, but it seems that the attitudes of respondents in this regard are similar to those of an average Pole. .

The respondents assess membership in the European Union as being neutral for Poland; at the same time, they do not perceive any differences between treatment of Belarusians or their own impact on the surrounding reality before and after Poland's accession to the Community.

Only 13% respondents are afraid of losing their tradition and culture, but 1/5 are afraid of worsening of the situation of ethnic minorities in Poland. Nevertheless, a very small percentage of all respondents declared their willingness to leave Poland if they had such opportunity. Moreover, it is not certain they would be willing to migrate to the east.

## 2.6 Annex: Tables

### How would you feel about having a member of the following..?

... as a friend?		Total	Polish	Belarusian	German	Romani
Total		395	98,2%	99,5%	68,1%	36,5%
Sex of respondent	Male	164	97,0%	100,0%	70,0%	40,9%
	Female	231	99,1%	99,1%	66,7%	33,3%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	95,2%	100,0%	85,7%	57,9%
	30-49	74	100,0%	97,3%	73,1%	36,2%
	50 and more	300	98,0%	100,0%	65,4%	35,1%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	90,0%	100,0%	90,0%	62,5%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	100,0%	100,0%	72,0%	44,4%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	125	96,8%	100,0%	67,8%	38,7%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	100,0%	100,0%	81,8%	54,5%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	100,0%	95,6%	73,8%	31,0%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	175	98,9%	100,0%	63,6%	32,5%
Education Levels	Primary	212	97,2%	100,0%	59,3%	28,6%
	Secondary	169	99,4%	98,8%	75,9%	45,2%
	Tertiary	14	100,0%	100,0%	92,9%	58,3%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	58	96,6%	100,0%	73,1%	40,4%
	1	55	100,0%	100,0%	68,8%	43,1%
	2	159	97,5%	99,4%	76,9%	43,7%
	3 or more	118	99,2%	99,2%	54,9%	22,8%

... as a neighbor on your street?		Total	Polish	Belarusian	German	Romani
Total		396	99,0%	99,5%	80,7%	48,9%
Sex of respondent	Male	164	98,2%	99,4%	78,8%	50,3%
	Female	232	99,6%	99,6%	82,1%	47,9%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	95,2%	100,0%	95,2%	61,9%
	30-49	74	100,0%	97,3%	88,2%	50,7%
	50 and more	301	99,0%	100,0%	77,8%	47,5%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	90,0%	100,0%	100,0%	60,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	100,0%	96,6%	84,6%	53,6%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	125	98,4%	100,0%	75,8%	48,7%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	100,0%	100,0%	90,9%	63,6%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	100,0%	97,8%	90,5%	48,8%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	176	99,4%	100,0%	79,2%	46,7%
Education Levels	Primary	213	98,6%	100,0%	73,3%	42,2%
	Secondary	169	99,4%	98,8%	88,1%	57,3%
	Tertiary	14	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	53,8%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	58	96,6%	100,0%	79,2%	50,0%
	1	55	100,0%	100,0%	85,7%	58,0%
	2	160	98,8%	99,4%	86,1%	54,6%
	3 or more	118	100,0%	99,2%	73,6%	38,1%

... as a working colleague?		Total	Polish	Belarusian	German	Romani
Total		395	99,0%	99,5%	82,1%	51,7%
Sex of respondent	Male	164	98,2%	99,4%	80,1%	55,1%
	Female	231	99,6%	99,6%	83,6%	49,3%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	95,2%	100,0%	95,2%	75,0%
	30-49	74	100,0%	97,3%	90,9%	52,2%
	50 and more	300	99,0%	100,0%	79,0%	50,0%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	90,0%	100,0%	100,0%	77,8%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	100,0%	96,6%	84,0%	60,7%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	125	98,4%	100,0%	77,6%	52,1%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	100,0%	100,0%	90,9%	72,7%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	100,0%	97,8%	95,1%	46,3%
Education Levels	Primary	212	98,6%	100,0%	73,8%	42,6%
	Secondary	169	99,4%	98,8%	90,4%	61,6%
	Tertiary	14	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	75,0%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	58	96,6%	100,0%	83,0%	53,8%
	1	55	100,0%	100,0%	87,8%	58,5%
	2	159	98,7%	99,4%	87,6%	58,9%
	3 or more	118	100,0%	99,2%	74,5%	39,5%

**In the past 12 months have you personally felt discriminated against or harassed in Poland on the basis of one or more of the following grounds?**

Answers "Yes"		Total	Ethnic or national origin	Gender	Age	Religion
Total		397	5,3%	1,3%	2,0%	6,8%
Sex of respondent	Male	165	6,1%	,6%	1,8%	7,3%
	Female	232	4,7%	1,7%	2,1%	6,5%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	21	9,5%	4,8%	4,8%	10,0%
	30-49	74	8,1%	4,1%	2,7%	8,1%
	50 and more	302	4,3%	,3%	1,7%	6,3%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	10	10,0%	,0%	,0%	10,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	6,9%	3,4%	,0%	6,9%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	126	5,6%	,0%	2,4%	7,1%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	9,1%	9,1%	9,1%	10,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	8,9%	4,4%	4,4%	8,9%
Education Levels	Primary	214	3,3%	,5%	1,4%	4,2%
	Secondary	169	7,7%	1,8%	2,4%	10,2%
	Tertiary	14	7,1%	7,1%	7,1%	7,1%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	58	5,2%	,0%	,0%	7,0%
	1	55	1,8%	1,8%	1,8%	3,6%
	2	160	5,6%	1,9%	2,5%	7,5%
	3 or more	119	6,7%	,8%	2,5%	7,6%

**Do you belong to a religion or religious denomination? if yes, which one?**

		Total	Catholic	Orthodox	Do not belong to a denomination
Total		396	,8%	99,0%	,3%
Sex of respondent	Male	164	,6%	98,8%	,6%
	Female	232	,9%	99,1%	,0%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	19	,0%	100,0%	,0%
	30-49	74	2,7%	97,3%	,0%
	50 and more	303	,3%	99,3%	,3%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	9	,0%	100,0%	,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	3,4%	96,6%	,0%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	126	,0%	99,2%	,8%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	10	,0%	100,0%	,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	45	2,2%	97,8%	,0%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	177	,6%	99,4%	,0%
Education Levels	Primary	215	,0%	100,0%	,0%
	Secondary	168	1,8%	97,6%	,6%
	Tertiary	13	,0%	100,0%	,0%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	56	1,8%	98,2%	,0%
	1	55	,0%	100,0%	,0%
	2	160	,6%	98,8%	,6%
	3 or more	120	,8%	99,2%	,0%

**Apart from funerals, christenings and weddings, how often do you practice your religion for example by attending religious gatherings, servings?**

		Total	Every day	Several times a week	Once a week	Once a month	Several times a year	Once a year or less often	Never
Total		390	0,0%	4,9%	35,1%	19,7%	30,0%	7,9%	2,3%
Sex of respondent	Male	161	0,0%	3,1%	19,9%	24,8%	35,4%	11,8%	5,0%
	Female	229	0,0%	6,1%	45,9%	16,2%	26,2%	5,2%	0,4%
Age of respondent - 3 categories	Up to 29	19	0,0%	0,0%	31,6%	15,8%	31,6%	21,1%	0,0%
	30-49	73	0,0%	5,5%	26,0%	26,0%	30,1%	11,0%	1,4%
	50 and more	298	0,0%	5,0%	37,6%	18,5%	29,9%	6,4%	2,7%
Age + Sex	Male, up to 29 y.o.	8	0,0%	0,0%	12,5%	37,5%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%
	Male, 30-49 y.o.	29	0,0%	6,9%	6,9%	31,0%	31,0%	20,7%	3,4%
	Male, 50 and more y.o.	124	0,0%	2,4%	23,4%	22,6%	35,5%	10,5%	5,6%
	Female, up to 29 y.o.	11	0,0%	0,0%	45,5%	0,0%	18,2%	36,4%	0,0%
	Female, 30-49 y.o.	44	0,0%	4,5%	38,6%	22,7%	29,5%	4,5%	0,0%
	Female, 50 and more y.o.	174	0,0%	6,9%	47,7%	15,5%	25,9%	3,4%	0,6%
Education Levels	Primary	211	0,0%	3,3%	38,4%	18,0%	32,7%	6,6%	0,9%
	Secondary	165	0,0%	6,1%	30,3%	21,2%	28,5%	9,7%	4,2%
	Tertiary	14	0,0%	14,3%	42,9%	28,6%	7,1%	7,1%	0,0%
How many children all in all do you have, including the adopted ones?	No children	55	0,0%	3,6%	21,8%	21,8%	29,1%	20,0%	3,6%
	1	54	0,0%	3,7%	37,0%	16,7%	33,3%	9,3%	0,0%
	2	159	0,0%	5,0%	36,5%	23,3%	28,3%	3,8%	3,1%
	3 or more	117	0,0%	6,0%	40,2%	15,4%	29,9%	7,7%	0,9%

### 3 MAIN FINDINGS OF BIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEWS (ENRI-BIO)

*Ilona Matysiak / Anna Domaradzka*

#### 3.1 Methodology and sample

To begin with, the 11 individual in-depth interviews cover three different generations of people of Belarusian origin, who were born and who live within the Polish territory. The interviewees declare their national identity to be Polish and/or Belarusian. Younger generations are represented by three respondents: two women aged 21 and one man, who is 18 years old. The middle generation consists of interviewees aged between ca. 30 (woman aged 29, woman aged 28 and man aged 31) and about 40-50 years of age (woman aged 44 and man aged 52). The oldest generation is represented by three respondents (two men and one woman), who have vivid memories of the difficult times of the second world war and the first years after the war, or even recall their personal experiences from so-called interwar period in Poland (1918-1939).

The group of respondents is also relatively diverse in terms of gender, level of education and the type of their place of origin and residence. 6 out of 11 respondents are women and 5 are men. One of the interviewed men of the older generation has elementary education, three of the youngest interviewees have graduated from secondary schools, but they have been continuing their education at the university. The remaining respondents have reached the tertiary level of education, however, associated with varying contexts in terms of educational institutions and individual life stories. Particularly in the group of the oldest respondents, their studies were accompanied by occupational activity or there were gaps between secondary school and university due to work, birth of a child, etc.

The respondents' life stories differ mostly according to age. Among the youngest interviewees, there are visible traits of individual development of national identity, as well as periods of ambivalence related to these issues. They discovered their roots mainly thanks to the influence of their grandparents and involvement in minority organizations, e.g. student or folkloric groups. For example, interviewee [By(PL)\_05], "Olga" started to be truly aware of her Belarusian identity when she left her family and hometown to enter university. Their point of reference with regard to life plans is the minority community – a professional career and a life within its boundaries [By(PL)\_02, "Anna"] or outside [By(PL)\_09, "Magda"]. Most of them graduated from secondary schools with the option of learning Belarusian language and decided to study in Warsaw or the city of B. The case of the youngest respondent [By(PL)\_06], "Jurek", shows that, interestingly, the city offers less possibilities to cultivate the minority's identity than smaller towns.

Interviewee [By(PL)\_01], "Adam", is an Orthodox priest of both Polish and Belarusian origin and provides interesting information about the Orthodox spirituality. The case of "Natalia" [By(PL)\_08] shows the importance of the bottom-up minority initiatives related to preservation of the awareness of Belarusian origins among the younger generations (The Association for Children and Youth Learning Belarusian Language „Ab-Ba”). The life story of interviewee [By(PL)\_10], "Jacek", is based on the process of social mobility from the position of a farmers' son to that of an insurance agent in the city, which was possible thanks to scholarships and opportunities of combining work with studies. Unlike the younger respondents, his first language was a Belarusian dialect spoken in his village; he learnt Polish later at school. This part of his life story is shared also by other older interviewees. However, their life stories differ significantly. As Among the older respondents from rural areas, there is a farmer with the elementary level of edu-



cation, which seems to be attached mostly to his home village and also to Orthodox faith [By(PL)\_03], “Piotr”. On the other hand, there is a former school teacher, who focuses more on the minority’s history and language. She started to work at school very early because of the urgent demand for employees among the institutions of the Polish Peoples’ Republic after the second world war [By(PL)\_04], “Irena”. As for the oldest interviewee [By(PL)\_07], “Andrzej” his story is that of an intellectual, coming from the rural environment to become a poet, editor and translator in the Polish Peoples’ Republic.

All respondents are from the region of Podlasie, which is located in north-eastern part of today’s Poland near the border with Belarus and Lithuania to the east. This region is the historical area of the Belarusian minority in Poland, which, according to the available estimates, is the most numerous here in comparison with e.g. Ukrainians or Lithuanians. In this area, the border between Polish Peoples’ Republic and USSR was shifting. During the Second World War, some of the settlements within Polish territory were assigned to USSR and then attached to Poland again in year 1949. It also has to be mentioned that Podlasie is the territory of the highest concentration of Belarusian national minority in Poland. Most interviewees come from villages (three of the older respondents still live there) or small towns in this region, which are characterized by a dominant or large population of Belarusian origin. 6 respondents migrated to the cities: B. in Podlasie and Warsaw to work or to study. It is worth noting that rural-urban migration is very typical for the Belarusian national minority in Poland. All interviewees mentioned that their grandparents lived in a village within the region, and it was typical for the next generation (middle-aged respondents or parents of the younger interviewees) to move to the town or the city in search for a better standard of living. Two respondents (men, aged 31 and 18) were born in the city of B., where the Belarusian minority is generally present, but less visible socially than in smaller urban or rural communities.

The fieldwork was conducted by Ilona Matysiak and dr Anna Domaradzka, the Robert B. Zajonc Institute for Social Studies, University of Warsaw.

### 3.2 European identity

The great majority of interviewees (8 out of 11) declared that they felt European in one way or another. However, it has to be mentioned that only few respondents expressed deeper and more reflective thoughts on the issue of European identity, e.g. pointing to the difficult question of what it means to be an European. Opinions of other respondents suggest that Europe, in fact, equals European Union. In consequence, they focused mostly on the advantages and disadvantages of the Polish membership in EU and its potential enlargement to the east and south of Europe. It has to be mentioned that the younger interviewees were relatively more reflective and interested in this subject than the older ones.

Among those most concerned about the issue of European identity was “Adam”, the Orthodox priest, who defines Europe in terms of its common Christian values:

I feel I’m an European. (...) It is significant to me, it is a problem, in fact, to answer the question what is Europe today and what Europe is at all. Because Europe is more than the European Union. I believe, in short that Europe is the mother of this civilization, (...) this is the cradle of culture, of light etc., which has grown mainly from the core of ethics and morality of Christianity (...).  
[By(PL)\_01]

Also, “Adam” refers to the interesting open question of whether the European identity would be a matter of emotional identification or rather a rational construct:

I feel European, the question is, and I haven't been able to answer it fully, whether I feel European in my heart and soul or only due to my origin. [By(PL)\_01]

Other younger respondent stated that the European identity was actually not a matter of choice as Poland was a part of the globalized world:

Do I feel European? I guess, whether I want it or not, I do feel I am one, because we live in this global village (...) I am a participant of the modern culture (...). [By(PL)\_05]

“Magda” feels European as well, but she underlines the difference between Europe and European Union as a set of bureaucratic structures:

I can tell you how I feel that I'm European. Absolutely not from the perspective of the European Union. To me, all those countries and politics, to me this is all fiction. (...) this is all about processing money everywhere. (...) I feel this touch of Europe, (...) but it's not the European Union, not at all. [By(PL)\_09]

For “Anna”, the lack of a link between the European identity and other, more regional or local identities, may be the source of the problem. From her perspective, different levels of identity are unnecessarily seen as being in conflict:

(...) this European identity is not, in fact, determined by local identities, there is this strong local and national identity, which has been shaped by me. In my opinion, in my case, there is no conflict between these, the broader and the narrow, local sense of identity. [By(PL)\_02]

Interestingly enough, the issue of European identity was connected by younger interviewees with the cultural region of south-eastern Europe, also in the context of Orthodox faith. Some of them pointed out that the common idea of Europe was typically western and excluded the strongly eastern cultural elements and eastern countries:

(...) you need to understand what Europe is. European, there is an association with the West here (...). So, it's something (...) that's not mine, I don't feel it, because, I'm rooted here. (...) when I think about going somewhere, abroad, I'd never go to the West, rather to the East, to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. [By(PL)\_05];

There's something strange about this, when people live in Poznan or Szczecin, they can go to Berlin in just two hours, and I can't go just like that [to the East]. And this hurts a bit. You have the border close by, and you can't visit them. [By(PL)\_11]

This kind of exclusion was defined also in terms of leaving the Balkan countries outside the European Union: The Balkan countries are underestimated. This is a great root of our culture. [By(PL)\_01]

“Julia” feels that the sense of being more or less European may strongly depend on the western or eastern context:

I mean, I don't [feel European], really, but I can see that, when I arrive in Belarus, I feel a bit like that. I feel it and they feel it. [By(PL)\_11]

In addition, especially the younger respondents (aged from 18 to 31) highlighted their general interest and the subjective feeling of being close and familiar to the countries of south-eastern Europe, especially those, where the Orthodox church is the dominant religion:

I feel great in Serbia, (...) I feel great in Greece, (...) there are Orthodox churches everywhere, and they are a majority, and there is this feeling, which I lack at home, of everyone being like me. [By(PL)\_01];

well, we are charmed by the Balkans, (...) they are somewhat close to us culturally. (...) completely different, but at the same time, very similar, thanks to this culture of the East. [By(PL)\_02]

“Adam” pointed out the common “spirituality” shared by eastern nations and societies:

I think that I have this way of thinking and approach to important matters, let's call them existential, moral issues, ethical, regarding interpersonal relationships, which is the same as that of Belarusians, or people of the East, these, let's say, the Ruthenian people. [By(PL)\_01]

However, “Jurek” mentioned traveling much more often to eastern countries primarily due to his activity associated with the Orthodox church and a Belarusian minority organization:

(...) the band is here, my friends are here, so, they go, I go, too. And I've been to several pilgrimages as well. Besides, the Orthodox church is more developed in the East. (...) Somehow I don't have the feeling that it's better in the East or something. I don't know, there's been no opportunity, perhaps. [By(PL)\_06]

Other interviewees, as „Natalia“ (middle-aged), „Magda“ and „Julia“ (young students) declared having travelled both to the east and west:

I feel European, absolutely, also because we travel a lot. We speak English. (...) Various directions. (...) we go to the south or to the west. [By(PL)\_08];

Well, I have travelled quite a lot. (...) In fact, I usually went south. Hungary, Turkey, Greece, Romania, and to the east, to Belarus and Lithuania. In fact, I went to the west, too. Germany, France, the Netherlands. [By(PL)\_09];

Yes. To the west. I also like to go south. Bulgaria, Turkey. And to the west, I go to Greece. [By(PL)\_11]

Actually, most of the respondents associated the idea of Europe with open borders and broad opportunities of travelling. Again, the opinions of this kind were more typical for younger and middle-aged respondents. An exception here would be the oldest respondent „Andrzej“, who used to travel a lot across Europe due to his editorial work and poetry:

I can go to Europe, I used to dream about traveling (...). [By(PL)\_07]

On the other hand, for one of the youngest interviewees, „Julia“, the open European borders are obvious:

You don't feel this anymore now. I think I was too young at the time, when there was this revolution, this Union. I just couldn't grasp it. And I don't feel anything like that. To me, this is something normal, there's no border, you simply get up and go. [By(PL)\_11]

As it was already mentioned, the majority of respondents of all age groups related the issue of European identity to the advantages and disadvantages of being a member state in European Union, also in terms of a more friendly and supportive policy toward national and ethnic minorities within the member states:

The European Union warrants the rights of minorities, various things etc. It imposes some greater obligations, education etc., so, as a minority, I look at the European Union with great hope. [By(PL)\_01];

(...) not pressure from the Union, but encouragement to provide some conditions for development of culture and education of the minorities. And the authorities should respect that and they do that. [By(PL)\_07];

I can see that they are even introducing [bilingual] names in some communes. There's great emphasis on diversity in the Union. [By(PL)\_10]

Two older respondents who live in villages, “Piotr” and “Irena”, limited their opinions basically to the financial support from the European Union, e.g. the importance of direct payments re-

ceived by Polish farmers. In addition, they both stated that European identity was an issue, which should concern rather the younger generations:

(...) I don't analyze this, I won't live long enough to have the time for politics. So, as they say in our language, we'll live, we'll see. But young people, I'm sure they benefit from it. [By(PL)\_04]

However, "Piotr" also expressed a certain distrust toward financial support from EU in general:

This is of no significance to me at all. If today Poland gets anything from the Union, well, how much does Poland pay the Union. And if something's wrong, if they say, return the money, we will be poor. It's not like they will keep giving us for free forever. There is nobody to give us anything for free. [By(PL)\_03]

As it was already mentioned, in general, the reflective opinions related to the abstract idea of the European identity were much less frequent than the more practical remarks about the Polish membership in the European Union and its consequences.

### 3.3 National identity – relationship to Poland

As for the issue of the Polish national identity, three main attitudes may be identified among the respondents: declarations of a Polish nationality enriched by Belarusian origins and/or Orthodox faith; declarations of attachment to Poland as a homeland and due to citizenship, but not the national identity; statements, which describe the Polish national identity as a sort of a "negative" point of reference, which helps to answer the question "who I am if I am not Polish".

The first type of attitude mentioned above is represented by one older interviewee "Piotr" and one younger respondent "Julia". "Piotr" pointed out the importance of the Orthodox religion as an issue, which is seen as the main distinguishing trait between various groups of Poles:

I feel that I am a Pole. (...) I live in Poland, I am Polish, only of Orthodox faith. (...) Polish. And it's like that with everyone here, in our village. [By(PL)\_03]

According to other respondents, this kind of attitude is rather common among the people of Belarusian origin:

today many people of Belarusian descent, as well as Orthodox, say that they are Orthodox Poles. That means their bond to their religion is dominant, but nationality-wise they feel they are Polish. [By(PL)\_01]

In the case of "Julia", she describes herself as a Pole of Belarusian origin. Interestingly, the importance of Belarusian part of her identity becomes stronger in certain contexts related to the minority and its culture:

I mean, in everyday life, I feel that I'm Polish, but when the [Belarusian] festival starts, it's different. You could say that I feel among my own people. (...) But I wouldn't call myself Belarusian. [By(PL)\_11]

Polish language and culture are often described by interviewees as simply too dominant in everyday life. In general, Polish is the language of public institutions<sup>50</sup>, education system and also the public social relations, e.g. at a doctor's office, at the commune office etc. Under such circum-

<sup>50</sup> According to the Act of 6 January 2005 on National and Ethnic Minorities and on Regional Languages, the communes, where at least 20% of inhabitants belong to a national or ethnic minority, have the right to introduce the minority's language as the second, auxiliary language to be used in official contexts.

tances, Polish language may naturally become the first language of communication, as “Magda” states:

my parents don't speak the dialect every day, and I used to mind this a bit, why it was so, but now I understand them very well. (...) it's just difficult to (...) switch, taking into account that there's Polish everywhere, all around. [By(PL)\_09]

In addition, “Julia” mentioned that, despite the socially shared opinions and stereotypes, members of the Belarusian minority in Poland actually have much more in common with Poles than with Belarusians behind the eastern border:

People from central Poland may think we are all very Belarusian here. But it's not like that. We keep turning towards Poland, it's all about Poland, and not Belarus, although it's so close. [By(PL)\_11]

The second attitude, expressed by declarations of a relationship with Poland as a homeland and/or the country of citizenship, was most popular among the interviewees of all age groups. For example, “Adam” of both Polish and Belarusian origin feels that he is Belarusian in terms of his nationality and Polish in terms of his citizenship. Also, he calls Poland his homeland:

I am Belarusian, but I am Polish. (...) I feel I am a citizen of this country, this is my country. (...) Generally, it's accepted in Poland, most people believe that you can't be Polish and not be Catholic, or that you can be a good citizen of this country and feel a sense of responsibility towards this country, (...) be a Polish patriot though your nationality isn't Polish. I believe that this is most possible (...). [By(PL)\_01]

From his perspective, the Belarusian part of his identity seems to be much more primordial and emotional than the Polish one:

When dealing with matters, Polish is such an official language. When I get agitated, I think in Belarusian, in emotional situations, when there's something important, then I always think in my language and speak my language. [By(PL)\_01]

A young student, “Magda”, feels a strong attachment to the Belarusian minority and expresses her relationship with Poland as a homeland:

(...) I've adapted this strategy of saying that I'm Polish and Belarusian, and I think that's the closest [to truth], because I won't say I'm not Polish, I am, because of all those circumstances, being born here and so on. On the other hand, I'm Belarusian, too, because, considering everything, who my family is, the fact that my grandmas don't speak Polish at all, and I was raised in this culture, in this tradition, this is clear. [By(PL)\_09]

It has to be mentioned that some of the respondents, who clearly declared their Belarusian national identity, were also more likely to stress their relationship with Poland as a homeland:

Our friend has defined our nationality very well. I don't know if she came up with this on her own, or read it somewhere, but I agree with this, I'm Belarusian and my homeland is Poland. That's it. [By(PL)\_08];

Others seemed to focus on the less emotional aspect of the formal citizenship:

I'm a “zakalona” Belarusian. What does „zakalona” mean? Die-hard. True-born. That's all. Like the Poles are true-born, so am I. I have the right to be like that. (...) [the citizenship] It's Polish, because I live in Poland, but I'm Belarusian. It is not my fault that the border has been established in this place and not elsewhere. [By(PL)\_04]

Two respondents, “Adam” and “Piotr”, mentioned the importance of the citizens’ obligations toward their state, such as voting or paying taxes. To be more specific, they underlined their efforts to be “good Polish citizens”:

I vote. I live here, I pay my taxes and all. This is my country. I do various things, which, let’s say, like any citizen (...). [By(PL)\_01];

(...) I never missed the election. Never. As far as I can remember. [By(PL)\_03]

Apart from that, Poland is seen by all interviewees as a country, which is safe and more or less hospitable towards national and ethnic minorities, especially in comparison with Belarus as the mother country:

We feel good within the boundaries of the state of Poland. I think that there aren’t many people, who would like to emigrate to the East. [By(PL)\_02]

The third attitude, which describes the Polish national identity as a sort of “negative” point of reference, is represented by “Olga”, aged 29, and the middle-aged respondent “Natalia”. According to their experiences, the question “If I am not Polish, then who?” became sort of a starting point to become more reflective about the sense of their national identity:

Belarusian, of course. For sure. Surely not Polish. Perhaps that’s where I should start. So, if not a Pole, then who? [By(PL)\_05]

In the case of “Natalia”, dealing with practical problems actually enforced the clear declaration of national identity:

We never discussed the national issues at home. (...) To tell you the truth, I think I had to identify myself for the first time, when I was filling out the identity card application, where I had to enter my nationality. I knew I was not Polish, and I had to put it down somehow. Earlier, nobody asked me, there were no censuses that I remember. My parents didn’t really need, I think, to identify themselves very clearly. [By(PL)\_08]

According to the interviewees’ experiences and opinions, the processes of polonization of the Belarusian minority were supported by two main phenomena. First, the already mentioned intensive rural-urban migration in search for better life opportunities, which often meant being “uprooted” from the local environment, shaped by the Belarusian minority, and starting a new life among the dominant Polish majority in the city. It was stated by the young “Jurek” and the middle-aged “Natalia”, who both are children of migrants from the rural areas:

I think that here, in [the town] B.P., there is this national identity. They are sort of rooted here, they are the real Belarusians. And in [the city] B., it has disappeared. [By(PL)\_06];

(...) migration of people from the rural areas to cities, from small cities to large ones, if this goes on at this pace, and if “polonization” goes at this pace, then in a moment we will simply cease to exist. [By(PL)\_08]

It has to be mentioned that, especially among the older generation, there was a dominant idea of the Belarusian dialect being a language of the rural, often uneducated population, which doesn’t provide any opportunities in comparison with Polish – the official language of the state and society:

in the Polish People’s Republic, they convinced the population, saying, listen, where can you go with Belarusian language, you need your children to learn Polish language well, so they can go to university. [By(PL)\_07]

In the case of “Andrzej”, it resulted in writing his poems in Polish in order to be able to publish them:

I stopped writing in Belarusian. (...) Because there was nowhere I could publish. And as an adult, I wanted to publish my poems somewhere. Imagine, this is why I went to Polish language studies. I thought I would write in Polish. [By(PL)\_07]

The mentioned different images of Polish and Belarusian language resulting from stereotypes, but also real opportunities, and underlined the strategies of using Polish as a language of the “public sphere” and “private use” of Belarusian as a language of “fellow people and family”:

When you go somewhere further, to a real village, (...) you won't hear any other language. There's no such option. Although the people do speak Polish. When you go to a doctor or something, you know. But at home that's rare. [By(PL)\_11]

As “Irena” ironically states, there are also strategies of using the Polish identity as a kind of a practical “public costume”, especially among migrants, who become Belarusian again when they come back to the village:

As they come back here, they are as they used to be. Perhaps they used to pretend to be Poles there [in the city], but they don't do that here [in the village]. [By(PL)\_04]

Secondly, due to migration processes and the context of negative valorization of Belarusian origin, which affected especially the older and middle generations, the intergenerational continuity of the Belarusian national identity was disturbed. The sense of Belarusian origin, not always developed by older generations to become the national identity, used to be suppressed by the next generation – their children, who migrated to the cities. Therefore, the youngest generations often lacked the “base”, on which they could have developed the sense of their Belarusian origin and identity. For many of them, the main agents of socialization in Belarusian culture and language were their grandparents, but their influence was usually dominated by such means of socialization as the Polish schools and media. “Olga” and “Anna” stated:

I was brought up in this culture, but until I went to university, I only spoke Polish with everyone. I learned Belarusian in secondary school, but every day, I spoke Polish, definitely. [By(PL)\_05];

the dialect was there all the time. But, as you know, we spent more time at home with our parents. At home, at the kindergarten, so there was more of Polish. But when you went for vacations, or for the weekend, well, then you got to speak the dialect more, really. [By(PL)\_02]

Apart from that, the overall processes of secularization were identified also in relation to the Orthodox church. Interestingly, one of the younger interviewees, “Julia”, described this religion as distant and difficult to understand due to the use of the Church Slavonic language during the liturgy:

It was difficult to learn the letters to read in the Church Slavonic language. (...) When you know the Cyrillic alphabet... you grasp it. Reading is harder. There are abbreviations. There's a long word and there's an abbreviation. You had to study. It was not so easy to learn the prayers, either. [By(PL)\_11]

According to “Anna”, the Orthodox church implement rather unfair policy towards Belarusian minority by opposing the introduction of Belarusian language into its liturgy:

the Polish language is entering the Orthodox church, and this is due to the fact that more and more people, (...) decided that they simply want to understand what is being said to them in the church. So, in Warsaw and in B, there are masses in Polish, but I'm sorry to say there are no services in Belarusian. And this is associated strictly with a certain policy of the church. [By(PL)\_02]

In her opinion, such policy result in the distance between people and the Orthodox church, which doesn't play its important role related to integration and consolidation of Belarusian minority.

To sum up, the majority of respondents identify themselves as Belarusians and describe their relationship with Poland in terms of their homeland and/or citizenship. They point out the processes and tendencies, which weaken the Belarusian tradition in the face of the dominant Polish culture and language. It seems that the "lost generation" here would be the middle-aged people, whose attitudes had significant consequences on the sense of Belarusian identity of younger generations. This generational gap may be illustrated by the story of "Piotr", who described the cultural distance between himself and his granddaughter, who was born and brought up in the city:

(...) my granddaughter in G., when she came here, we spoke Polish to her. But between ourselves, we just spoke „simply". And she asked us many times, grandma, how long am I going to live in this Russia. And we explained it to her that we spoke the rural language, and you speak the urban language. [By(PL)\_03]

### 3.4 National identity - relationship to Belarus

As for the issue of Belarusian national identity, relations with Belarus as their country of origin, described by the respondents, express the three main types of attitudes: no reference to Belarus in general, a reference to Belarus understood as its people and culture and not the state, reference to Belarus as a source of the original Belarusian tradition and culture. It has to be mentioned here, too that none of the interviewees pictured Belarus in terms of their homeland ("real" or "mythical") or expressed the will to live there permanently. Such opinions didn't depend on the age group or the fact of having relatives in Belarus. For example, "Jurek" states:

No, honestly, (...) I wouldn't like to move there. It's because of the political situation in Belarus. As for the atmosphere, yes, surely, their views differ somewhat from ours. [By(PL)\_06]

In the case of "Jacek", his bonds with Belarus were based mostly on relations with his family members, and they disappeared almost completely after their death:

There are my mom's sisters (...). And as long as my mom was alive, they'd go there. They'd come over here, to visit us. When mom died, this link became [weaker]. [By(PL)\_10]

This kind of emotional bond may be based also on the memorization of ancestors:

I am waiting for the cross-border traffic legislation to come into force on April 1st, and when it comes into force, I promise I will go. (...) I guess we'll find my grandparents' graves there. [By(PL)\_10]

It is also worth mentioning here that, according to a younger respondent, "Anna", the negative image of Belarus as an authoritarian regime country makes the matter of identification in terms of Belarusian nationality more difficult:

Today, in the existing political situation, (...) it is difficult to say one is a Belarusian, because that is always associated in the first place with the evil Lukaszenko and a post-communist country and some strange, post-communist mentality. [By(PL)\_02];

the Lithuanians do not have a problem with that, the Ukrainians do not have a problem with that, the Germans do not have a problem with that, only the Belarusians have this problem. [By(PL)\_02]

In the case of "Adam", the general lack of the sense of connection with the motherland is also due to the current political situation in Belarus:



Why I have no connections and I feel neither sentiments, nor some moral-ethical, need of a bond with Belarus, of this kind or that kind, or that political situation. (...) they are in some sense close, since we speak a similar language, we have a similar culture and so on, but beyond that I don't feel any bond with them. [By(PL)\_01]

The absence of any emotional bond with Belarus in general also characterizes two older respondents, "Piotr" and "Irena", who visited this country during the times of USSR. "Piotr" and his wife have no relatives there and they went to visit their "pen friends", with whom they used to exchange letters:

I've been there once, so has my wife. But it was like being among strangers. And as I was leaving, I said I'd never go there again. [By(PL)\_03]

Due to her work, "Irena" participated in language courses for teachers in Belarus:

I went to a Belarusian language course. (...) First I was there in 1977, and then in 1985. I was lucky enough to go there twice. (...) People are people. (...) Nothing special. [By(PL)\_04]

Other interviewees see Belarus as a country, which is nice to visit because of the feeling of certain familiarity, as in the case of "Magda":

And there, it is different, when I go to Belarus, this is sort of close to me, it's something associated with the east. And it's just nice. (...) when I meet someone and speak Belarusian to them, for instance. [By(PL)\_09]

The middle-aged "Natalia" likes to go there as a tourist and to visit friends:

I mean, I have no family there. I think this is important information. (...) We have friends there. (...) Or we go as tourists. [By(PL)\_08]

However, travelling to Belarus became much more difficult due to the implementation of the Schengen system:

I have been visiting Belarus lately, but we don't go there too often, because the visas are really expensive. [By(PL)\_02]

According to the respondents, the border between Poland and Belarus may be described not only in the literal sense, but also in more psychological terms.

According to the experiences of the youngest respondent, "Jurek", Belarus is, first of all, a country of hospitable people:

I liked attitudes of the people. Everything there is, well, relaxed. (...) You feel like in a family. Some suppers together. There's a great atmosphere. (...) People that we went to, ordinary people. We'd sit down and they'd greet us and treat us with whatever they had. [By(PL)\_06]

In his opinion, travelling to Belarus to attend the quasi-ethnographic camps organized by Belarusian minority's structures can be described also as an exciting and inspiring adventure:

It's very interesting, because it was all very unpredictable. You go from village to village, you look for elderly women, who would like to sing. (...) We collect these songs, then we copy the lyrics. [By(PL)\_06];

our trips are not like, we go there, we get to the hotel or something, but we have to bring sleeping pads, sleeping bags, tents. (...) Surely, it's an adventure. There's always plenty to recall later. [By(PL)\_06]

The same type of experiences were behind the early activity of the Belarusian Student Association (BAS) in the eighties.

According to other interviewees, especially “Olga”, who is strongly involved in Belarusian traditional music groups, Belarus is the source of the authentic Belarusian culture and tradition:

there is this wealth of culture of Belarus, of Polesia, particularly, the folk culture, it is amazing, (...) to me it is a determinant, this folk culture. Because it's this original [culture]. [By(PL)\_05]

“Anna” points out the importance of Belarusian folklore art, especially as a way to attract children:

the Belarusian folklore (...) provides numerous opportunities, which are very creative, and I appreciate this very much, the Belarusian traditional patterns. (...) there are folk songs, various works of art (...). During all these workshops that we organize for children, (...) if you could only see how much they like it. [By(PL)\_02]

On the other hand, such image of Belarus may be too “romantic” or only half-true as Belarus has been intensively Sovietized:

I treat being Belarusian as a part of culture. And, in fact, there's no culture in Belarus. It's simply non-existent. Belarus has been very Sovietized. [By(PL)\_09]

This opinion is shared by the middle-aged respondent “Jacek”:

You feel a bit strange there, because of the language. Russian. (...) They've separated themselves from the language, from Belarusian. (...) A few more years will pass and there will be no way to do anything about it. [By(PL)\_10]

Apart from that, in the opinion of “Natalia”, the Belarusian traditions in Poland may be only artificially reproduced as they are no longer the part of everyday life:

But this is reproduction of the rites. They do not function in real life, even when you go to a wedding, there's just a few songs, played by the group, if the family requests that. There's nothing at all. All this is slowly becoming our past. This is no longer functioning, this is only our history. [By(PL)\_08]

As for the Belarusian national identity, its crucial elements are the language (Belarusian language and Belarusian dialects) and the Orthodox religion. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, their role usually differs depending on the respondent's age. As for the language, a childhood experience shared by all of the older respondents is learning the Belarusian local dialect as their first language, although they usually were able to understand Polish due to contacts with their Polish neighbors in the village or Polish officials. Such was the case of “Irena” and “Andrzej”:

I did, I did learn [Polish], starting from the second grade of elementary school. (...) It wasn't difficult, because I lived among Poles and Belarusians. (...) We all understood each other. [By(PL)\_04];

my first encounter with Polish language that was (...) when I went to school, because, other than that, well, you often heard the language, when the sequestrator came to collect taxes, or the policeman came (...). [By(PL)\_07]

For “Jacek” aged 52, the Belarusian dialect was the main base for construction of his national identity:

I only learned Polish after I went to school. And this is what this nationality is all about, the identity comes from the language. When you speak [the language], you identify yourself with it. To me, Polish was almost like a foreign language. [By(PL)\_10]

As it was already mentioned, younger respondents usually stated that Polish was their first language, although they were able to understand the Belarusian dialect perfectly thanks to their grandparents and, less frequently, to their parents:

In our home, in fact, it's half and half. Sometimes my parents speak „our” dialect, sometimes they speak Polish. When we go to grandma, it's different. They only speak „our language” there.  
[By(PL)\_06]

“Olga”, aged 29, pointed out that the possibility of maintaining sustainable and regular contacts with the grandparents was crucial in terms of direct transfer of the elements of Belarusian identity:

[The grandparents] kept talking to me in „our own” language. (...) I do remember my grandpa a little bit, but not much. I was five, when he died. (...) And my brother, on the other hand, he had lived with grandpa for a long time. (...) he also experienced a breakthrough, but earlier, and, well, for him it was a longer time. [By(PL)\_05]

In this context, “Magda” highlighted the importance of being aware of such important role of the grandparents:

(...) I thought I'd start visiting my grandma more often. I've even bought a recorder (...) you never know, perhaps she'll be there for one more month, or two years. And you would like to preserve this. (...) my grandmas are the basis of my Belarusian identity, they are the only persons that I know, who are perfectly familiar with the dialect that I have learned. This is really important to me. (...) They are my teachers, (...) my grandmas are like the direct source of everything that I would like to find out. [By(PL)\_09]

As for the Orthodox religion, according to the interviewees, it is the second, equally crucial element of Belarusian identity. Together with the language or dialect, the faith is the basic feature of differentiation between the Belarusian minority and the Polish majority (although there are also Poles of Orthodox faith but not of Belarusian, Ukrainian or Russian origin). As “Jacek” states, this differentiation may precede the reflection on national identity:

Perhaps not Belarusian, but Orthodox. (...) And [referring to myself] as Belarusian that came later. As for the language, it was Belarusian, in fact, this language of ours is very similar to literary Belarusian. (...) the nationality, to declare myself as a Belarusian that come later. The first thing was religion that was the equivalent. If you were Orthodox, you were not of Polish nationality.  
[By(PL)\_10]

For “Adam” and “Olga”, Orthodox religion is the key to understanding the culture code of eastern European nations. “Adam” defines it more in terms of the bond between these nations:

My grandmother never considered herself to be Belarusian or Ukrainian or Russian, they were those, several hundred years ago we would say, Ruthenian. (...) my grandmother, when she watches TV and, I don't know, they show Moscow, Kiev or Minsk, she says, “Hey, our people”.  
[By(PL)\_01]

“Olga” emphasized the deep relation between the Orthodox religion and the Belarusian folk culture:

our folk culture is rooted deeply in Orthodox religion. And if I was Catholic, some things would be strange to me. It's also a different kind of spirituality here, and this... [different] language of culture. And so you don't know this language, (...) it is an abstract idea that you cannot get into. So, it's a connecting link, which is very significant. A certain part of it will remain unattainable to you.  
[By(PL)\_05]

However, as it has been already stated, the Orthodox tradition is perceived by some younger respondents as distant and too mystic and sophisticated to understand:

Orthodox religion is something for people, who are very inquisitive, interested and all that. First, I had to understand what Orthodox religion was all about. There's really a lot of mysteries there, some secrets, first of all, it's not in Polish, you have to read about it and all that. [By(PL)\_09];

the Orthodox church in Poland also seems to be affected by general social processes of secularization: In our place, I have noticed that there is no pressure, really. I don't have many friends, who would go to Orthodox church. Really. [By(PL)\_11]

According to some interviewees' opinions, also the Belarusian music is significant in the context of feeling Belarusian, as "Jacek" stated:

We only listen to our Belarusian music. To tell you the truth, I like to have good time. When I hear our music, it's very lively, melodious. You can dance to it. Other kinds of music just don't make me want to dance somehow. [By(PL)\_10]

In the case of younger respondents, the majority of them was engaged in Belarusian folkloric dance or/and singing groups, e.g. at school. One of the most important events is the annual "Basowiszczka" festival – the set of open air concerts of rock and folk music performed by Belarusian bands from Poland and Belarus as well. In the case of "Olga", the festival was the important trigger of her personal search for her Belarusian roots:

I started to get to know this Belarusian culture, Belarusian in general, from „Basowiszczka”, from the people, who were involved in Belarusian culture, who promoted it, and this mobilized me somehow. [By(PL)\_05]

It is worth mentioning that establishment of a festival of this kind resulted from a conscientious strategy, which was to offer a modern alternative to traditional, folkloric music in order to attract more young people:

And the best thing is that the people, the event is mainly for young people from minorities. (...) In the nineties, they wanted to do something that would be modern and so on. [By(PL)\_09];

(...) there were attempts to destroy the image of these national cultures in Poland, and go away from this, the so-called Skansen museum, and move on to the more modernist culture. They have managed to do it. [By(PL)\_02]

Interestingly enough, it is possible to identify the more or less clear "turning points" in some of the life stories. These "breakthroughs" had a significant impact on the subjective sense of Belarusian national identity and often resulted in conscious efforts to develop it further. Such was the case of "Olga", who mentioned undergoing "a breakthrough" at the university, when she suddenly felt separated from the minority environment present at home:

I went to university. There was a breakthrough. I came and I started speaking "our own language". I just got into this milieu, somehow, I got separated from this, and I missed it, I felt as if I was no longer standing on firm ground. [By(PL)\_05]

A certain "breakthrough" was experienced also by the youngest respondent, "Jurek" aged 18, who developed a sense of a Belarusian national identity on the basis of his activity in the minority folkloric group:

if somebody had asked me if I felt I was Polish or Belarusian, I would probably had said Polish, I live in Poland, I speak Polish, I don't have much to do with Belarus. And then the transformation came. [By(PL)\_06];

There was something Belarusian about me, I mean, my grandma, my parents, they speak the dialect. (...) It's not like, I went to a workshop for one week and all of a sudden I'm Belarusian. No, but the workshop, and then the trips, performances, it all got deeper and deeper, a year, a year and a half, and then I got very much into this, into this culture. [By(PL)\_06]

According to life stories of younger interviewees, it is certain that cultivation of Belarusian identity within the existing system of support provided to national and ethnic minorities in Poland has in fact also some practical advantages, e.g. thanks to the university education possibilities. To be more specific, winning a competition in Belarusian language, just as any other subject competition for secondary school pupils on the national level, gives the laureate the right to enter the chosen studies without exams. Two respondents, "Anna" and "Magda", took advantage of this possibility:

The school also gave us another opportunity, which was very valuable for the most talented students – we had a subject competition in Belarusian language, which allowed the laureates to select university studies afterwards, (...) I just got to university, and, in fact, I selected a very prestigious field of study at the time. [By(PL)\_02];

(...) who would feel like getting up on Saturdays to start Belarusian lessons at eight o'clock. But it was worth it. (...) Starting from simple things, like, me being here at the university, because we participated in an inter-school contest of Belarusian language, this was not too difficult, (...) this gave me the possibility of getting into good university studies (...). [By(PL)\_09]

Moreover, the cultivated and manifested Belarusian identity may also somehow facilitate the professional and personal development within such minority institutions as schools with the possibility of learning Belarusian language or Belarusian media like radio or newspapers and magazines. A similar point of view was expressed by "Magda", who pointed out the certain, predictable "life pattern" of active and conscious Belarusians:

I've been thinking about it, how many people I know in the Belarusian community of B., who are active in some way, who are actively working in those Belarusian affairs, but who do not work in this community, I mean, they don't work for the Belarusian radio, or the newspaper, or as school teachers. And I realized I only knew two people, who were active and dealt with completely different things. [By(PL)\_09]

What is more, the great majority of respondents pointed out that their life partners were also of Belarusian origin, which seems to be a more general pattern:

There used to be, there are some mixed marriages, but not a lot. (...) Inside, yes, yes. Those from T., those from Bi., those from So., married. With their own girls. [By(PL)\_04]

As it was already mentioned in the previous chapter, the generation of today's middle-aged people may be described as "the lost generation" in terms of sustaining their Belarusian national identity:

It's only our grandparents, our parents don't speak the language very well. They rather use it, when they talk to the elderly. (...) I think that (...) my grandpa would say he was Belarusian, and so would my grandma. But my parents, well, my parents are in Poland. It's difficult for them. [By(PL)\_11]

As a result, today, many young people, their children, are not really aware of their origin and aren't interested in such issues:

The people are not conscious that's it. I could list people of my age, who are nineteen to twenty one, who are conscious, and this would be a very short list. Because others are like, this is cool,

there's some connection, because I come from there, I understand when they speak the dialect, but this is all. [By(PL)\_09]

In general, the Belarusian national identity within this minority in Poland is based primarily on the Belarusian language/dialect and the Orthodox religion. The reference to Belarus as the motherland doesn't play any significant role due to the current political circumstances:

It's all focused here. B. and its vicinity. Nothing else. (...) It's just history. (...) I'm closer to Belarus than to B. from my home. So, this is horrible. It's as if there was a huge gate, which you cannot pass. Even if you come five kilometers from the border, to the first town, it's a different world. You can see that. [By(PL)\_11]

### 3.5 Regional identity

According to the interviewees' opinions, the issue of regional identity is described in two main dimensions: strong identification with the local community and "own people", which may be expressed as "being from here" without defining clearly the national identity; the second dimension refers to the emotional identification with the city, town or village as a place of living and/or birth.

The former attitude is typical mainly for older generations and it is present in the respondents' memories of their grandparents or grand-grandparents, as e.g. in the case of "Jacek":

As far as I remember, my father, we even found his military service book. (...) And the nationality entered in the book is "local". Not Belarusian nationality, but Orthodox faith, local nationality. So, then, you don't think [of yourself] as Belarusian but as a local. [By(PL)\_10]

Interestingly enough, "Adam" pointed out that, in the case of the older generations, the basis of their local/regional identity might have been developed later, not only as a Belarusian identity but also as an Ukrainian one:

(...) they are our countrymen, and these processes, like nationality, this was shaped later, (...) my dad identifies himself with Belarus, and (...) his neighbors that were brought up together with him, they believe to be Ukrainians in a sense that it is rather in this direction, they represent Ukrainian identity. [By(PL)\_01]

According to the respondents, some types of Belarusian dialect are also in fact a mixture of Belarusian, Ukrainian and Polish expressions, which could make the issues of identity even more complex:

(...) we speak our own language, the Belarusian dialect, although some say it's the Ukrainian dialect. The Belarusian-Ukrainian... there are some influences of Polish, because this is not a grammatical language, it is rather a language of simple people (...). [By(PL)\_01]

As for the second dimension of the regional identity, it has to be mentioned that older interviewees, who live in rural areas, "Piotr" and "Irena", identify very strongly with their villages. They describe this environment in terms of the Belarusian minority being a majority there now or in the past:

In our village everyone is Belarusian. (...). Always only a Belarusian village. Further from here, the villages are mixed. And here, it was a Belarusian village, S., T., there were three villages like that, without a single Catholic family. [By(PL)\_03];

There are only Belarusians here. (...) Well, there are several families now, after all these years, they sell a lot of houses, but usually it's our people who buy them. But there are several strange, Polish families. [By(PL)\_04]

Apart from that, they firmly highlighted the historical dimension of settlement of Belarusians in this area, also referring to former generations of their own families:

My mother and my father came from this very village. (...) And so did my wife. [By(PL)\_03];

My parents? Well, from N. All the time. Generation to generation. And who would move at the time, nobody would move. Wherever you were born, you lived. [By(PL)\_04]

On the other hand, a strong bond with the town of their origin is typical also for younger respondents, especially those, who declare a sense of their Belarusian identity and are locally active, like “Olga” or “Magda”:

I spend most of my time in Warsaw. But (...) my home is in G. There's my parents, my grandmas, I just like to come home, it's peaceful and quiet. (...) In fact, I plan to return. (...) I really feel a very strong tie with G. [By(PL)\_09]

Other interviewees describe their regional identity also in terms of the specificity of the region, which is much more ethnically heterogeneous in comparison with the central part of Poland. According to “Anna”, it is comfortable to live in a place, in which the minority sometimes becomes a majority:

A distinguishing feature of the city is that about three fourths of its inhabitants are Orthodox church believers, which to some extent describes the specific character of the place, in which I was brought up. (...) nobody in my community felt a stranger in a country, in which we are a minority, because, in fact, in our town, we are a majority. So, this gave us some sort of emotional comfort. [By(PL)\_02]

In the case of “Adam”, there is a sense of being a descendant of the historically primordial inhabitants of this region, where the Catholics used to be a minority in the past:

Because here I am at home. This is my place. (...) the village B, where my parish is, is a place older than [city] B. It's five hundred and fifty years old. Here until '45 there was only one Roman-Catholic family, which was very respected by everyone, but there was only one, and today we are most definitely a minority. (...) That's why I cherish B, because people here are used to it, we've lived here for years and I am here, I have a right to be here, (...) I don't have to prove anything to anyone. [By(PL)\_01]

On the other hand, some respondents, like e.g. “Jacek”, pointed out that awareness of existence of the Belarusian national minority, which is typical for the region of Podlasie, may also have its “dark side” to it. To be more specific, the Polish majority here is more sensitive to their presence, especially in the public sphere:

Here, in B., well, sometimes you feel that it bothers somebody. But, perhaps, now it's less like that. It used to be worse. [By(PL)\_10];

I have encountered this, one [man] said to me, hey, you're Belarusian, then go to Belarus. Excuse me, I was born here. My grandparents, my ancestors have been here from time immemorial. Where am I supposed to go? (...) I am not some immigrant, I've been here, from time immemorial. [By(PL)\_10]

In general, the interviewees share the opinion that the region of Podlasie is the historic homeland of their national minority:

Yes, well, but where can we go. We were raised here, we have lived here for generations, so why leave. [By(PL)\_02]

Certainly, this choice was clear also shortly after the Second World War, when only a small number of Belarusians decided to leave Poland:

But in the Polish People's Republic, in 1946, they announced the repatriation of Belarusians. (...) And the authorities thought that the Belarusian population would leave. But the Belarusian people knew the kolkhozes and they were really discouraged by that. In kolkhozes, people were forced to join, and the people, who were so much attached to the land, who always fought and struggled for the land, even between neighbors. So, nobody wanted to go. [By(PL)\_07]

Resistance to the so-called repatriation was partly based on practical reasons, but also on the sense of local attachment.

### 3.6 Civic participation and ethnic organization

To begin with, according to respondents from various age groups, the Belarusian minority in Poland is rather poorly organized, despite the relative concentration of this population in the territory of Podlasie. According to "Anna", the size of the Belarusian minority should have resulted in winning of more minority rights, especially those related to education:

When it comes to the Belarusians, as a nation, well, let's say, not really eager to demand its rights and caring for all dimensions of identity, it's like this – we only have the two secondary schools, (...) and we only get four hours a week of our language in such school. [By(PL)\_02]

Apart from that, "Natalia" sees the psychological problem of Belarusians in Poland, who were not able to establish a significant alternative to the dominant stereotype of Belarusian as being farmers with no education:

Well, I think, with Belarusians, it's mostly like, we have a problem with ourselves, with building of our sense of value not only as individuals, but also as individuals, who are different. (...) many of us have complexes, we often have a lowered sense of self-esteem, which, of course, is rooted in the past. [By(PL)\_08]

As for the political activity, according to "Natalia", the minority has never succeeded in establishing any local Belarusian committee:

In B., in Podlasie, there were attempts to establish a Belarusian committee, but I think we are not good politicians in general, because we've never managed to achieve anything. [By(PL)\_08]

However, in the case of the last local election in year 2010, despite the lack of minority committees, the people of Belarusian origin joined the lists of the Civic Platform, which is a leading and well established Polish political party. In all local lists in Podlasie, the representatives of Belarusian minority were assigned position number three. As a result, a significant number of Belarusians were elected to commune and municipal councils. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents declared that the candidate's competences and experience were more important than their national identity.

As for the details of interviewees' life stories, older respondents, aged between 52 and 86, were usually active within the organizational structures of the minority, established by the state during the Polish Peoples' Republic or/and participated in activities organized by the Orthodox church parishes. The former were set up after the year 1956, when the communist regime in Poland became less oppressive, also in terms of its policy towards minorities. The strategy of the communist party at the time was to create the organizational structures of cultivation of minority culture and tradition in order to control these groups and avoid formation of "underground associations". The Belarusian Social and Cultural Society was established and it reached not only the cities but also the rural areas, as "Irena" states:

There was so much money, in 1956, the Belarusian Social and Cultural Society was established. And the activists of this society, those, who organized, they would travel around the villages, es-



establish societies. And here, this society was very active. (...) We did performances in Belarusian, and we had a choir, we would sing. [By(PL)\_04]

Along with the Society, also other institutions were set up. Their activities were aimed at the Belarusian minority, as e.g. magazines. Religious organizations were mentioned by “Piotr”, aged 76:

I used to be in the church council. [By(PL)\_03]

For “Jacek” aged 52, his activity on behalf of the Orthodox church enabled him to integrate better with the Belarusian and Ukrainian communities:

I went to the Orthodox church, and then I got to know many, many people. We'd meet often, the priest did a lot to get people integrated. There were Ukrainians, too, and we had parties together. That's how I met my wife, too. (...) There was the Orthodox Youth Brotherhood. (...) we travelled a lot, (...) visited Orthodox churches. [By(PL)\_10]

In his case, the social networks established within the framework of these activities have survived until today:

Well, New Year's eve, we celebrate. Two weeks later. (...) We have a group, almost fifteen people now. It's from the Orthodox Youth Brotherhood. [By(PL)\_10]

As for younger interviewees aged between 44 and 18, the majority of them were or are still involved in the activities of three main types of minority organizations: Orthodox youth groups, student associations and folkloric music and/or dance groups. The already mentioned Orthodox Youth Brotherhood played a significant role in the case of the youngest respondent “Jurek”, whose identification as a believer of Orthodox religion was primarily to the development of Belarusian national identity. Such activity was crucial also for young student “Magda”:

And I started to attend (...) the meetings of the Orthodox Youth Brotherhood, I went to the Orthodox church with my grandma. As long as I was in G., this really shaped me. This was something like, it was like a small Orthodox community, which was bound together by the Orthodox church. [By(PL)\_09]

It is not surprising that also the interviewee, who is an Orthodox priest, used to be strongly involved in the activities of the Brotherhood. However, of course not all Orthodox parishes organize such activities. For example, one of the oldest respondents, “Piotr”, stated that his local Orthodox church didn't offer any activity of this kind:

[Our priest] doesn't organize anything. Nothing. (...) He just does what he has to do and that's it. [By(PL)\_03]

According to the interviewees, one of the most important minority organizations is The Belarusian Student Association (BAS). As “Natalia” recalls, it was formed within the overall social movement triggered by the establishment of “Solidarity” in year 1980. At first, BAS was an informal group within the independent movement of Polish students and initiated the legendary trips and camps related to searching for Belarusian origins and integrating the people:

there was this informal Belarusian Student Association, in 1981 they tried to register it, but, of course, this was impossible. Informally, of course, the organization was active, they organized some treks, lectures. And I realized that I just felt at home there. And then everything became very simple. [By(PL)\_08]

“Natalia” joined this movement and become a member of its board in early 90s, when the first “Basowiszczka” festivals were organized. The Association developed quickly after its formal registration and it has been operating mainly in the region of Podlasie and Warsaw:

I just joined one of those treks, and then it all became simple, as I've said, there were more and more initiatives, there was a group from B., there was a group from Warsaw. (...) In 1989, the organization was finally registered, so, some initiatives emerged, this was all becoming more intense. [By(PL)\_08]

What is important, according to another former BAS activist "Olga", this organization was actually crucial in terms of shaping the whole generation of conscious Belarusians, who later became leaders in various local environments:

thanks to these treks, we had this core formed, let's say, of the medium-aged generation intelligentsia, of forty something, fifty something, which is now active in Podlasie. [By(PL)\_05]

Her point of view is clearly reflected in the life story of "Natalia", a strongly committed former BAS activist, who now forms the core of another interesting Belarusian minority organization, Association for Children and Youth Learning Belarusian Language „Ab-Ba”:

(...) with the same friends, who were no longer students, who started their adult life, we decided to establish a [Belarusian] kindergarten in B. And we did that. Sixteen years ago, thinking about our children, of course. (...) Then, our children finished the kindergarten, so we organized elementary education, then grammar school, then secondary school. [By(PL)\_08]

Two young students, "Magda" and "Julia", are actually the current BAS activists, who became strongly involved in organizing the annual "Basowiszczka" festival. Their activities are focused mostly on this event, which is still seen as a chance to undermine the negative stereotypes of the Belarusian minority, especially among youth:

We want to show that calling yourself Belarusian does not mean being from the rural areas, it does not mean a wooden hut, some dresses and folk songs, but we try to do things, which would show that no, it's not a reason to be ashamed, quite the opposite, it gives you a reason to be proud. [By(PL)\_09]

Interestingly, in the case of "Julia", her involvement in the association seems to be not only due to ideological reasons but also practical ones. For her, being involved in organizing such complex event as an open air music festival provides useful skills, which may be needed in any aspect of her future life:

You learn a lot of formal, administrative stuff. How to deal with things, sign agreements, deduct taxes. (...) I have dealt with permissions to organize the festival. [By(PL)\_11];

I've learned a lot, I have to admit this much. (...) I can feel it and I know that this will give me a lot for the future, all the things that I'm doing now. [By(PL)\_11]

The third type of minority organizations, which were quite frequently reflected in the respondents' life stories, are Belarusian music and/or dance groups. Two younger interviewees, "Magda" and "Julia" pointed out that activities of this kind were organized at schools in order to attract children to Belarusian language and culture:

We performed a lot with this Belarusian teacher. We went to various contests, with folk dresses. (...) I wanted to release this energy, you had to learn your role in a foreign language, go out there and speak this language. [By(PL)\_11]

As for "Olga", she leads a Belarusian folkloric singing group herself and consider this activity to be an important part of her life:

I perform. (...) And these are young people from secondary school, from grammar school. We sing folk songs. (...) we are interested in tradition, traditional culture, I mean, traditional songs in traditional style. [By(PL)\_05]

As it has already been mentioned, in the case of the youngest interviewee “Jurek”, such activity was crucial for the subjective and conscious recognition of his Belarusian national identity. Belarusian folkloric groups operate also within the structures of “Ab-Ba” Association. In the case of other respondents, such activities were described more as a hobby than an ideological project, for example, “Anna” states:

You know, apart from what I do, I also sing from time to time as a hobby, which also determines the rhythm of my life sometimes, when we plan a concert, a trip, things like that, these are big things. [By(PL)\_02]

It is worth mentioning here that the great majority of the respondents’ previous and actual civic activity is performed within the Belarusian or Orthodox structures. An exception here would be “Piotr”, whose civic engagement is rather typical for rural local activists during the period of Polish Peoples’ Republic:

(...) there used to be the Association of the Polish Youth here. (...) Since 1948, I was the leader. And this youth organization sort of got me into welfare work. [By(PL)\_03];

For the entire time, I was in the [voluntary] fire service, either the head or the master, all the time. (...) I was also the council member. In the commune. I was a member of the commune governing body. For five years, I was a social worker, taking care of old people. [By(PL)\_03]

On the other hand, some respondents pointed to a crisis of civic engagement within the Belarusian minority, which seems to be typical also to the Polish society in general. Such opinions were related e.g. to the Belarusian Student Association:

Well, there used to be many [members]. It used to be thriving, now it's all dying out. There are a few people doing anything, really. Only a few. People don't feel like it. Besides, it's all charity work, you could say. In fact, you keep losing money, your time, your nerves. [By(PL)\_11]

“Olga” states that Belarusian minority organizations lack new and fresh initiatives, which could attract more people. For example, the core activities of BAS, such as quasi-ethnographic treks and camps, should be enriched somehow or new projects should be developed:

the times changed, all organizations face the same problem, (...) People are no longer interested in such social activity. (...) The treks, all that, it used to be a great attraction. And now there is no enthusiasm. Everything is fresh at the beginning, it evokes enthusiasm and it stirs energy. And now, the organizations have been shaped, they have settled, and it is just running, based on whatever was established earlier (...). [By(PL)\_05]

As it has been already mentioned, all respondents declared participating in the national and local elections, although they hardly saw the latter as a way to establish a representation of Belarusian minority’s interest in terms of local politics. Also, Belarusians in Poland are actually not organized as a political force, neither on the local/regional level, nor on the central one.

### 3.7 Ethnic conflicts and discrimination experiences

In the region of Podlasie, there are Belarusians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Russians as national minorities and also the Romani and Tatars, representing ethnic minorities. According to the interviewees, there are no open conflicts between these groups, at least within this territory. However, there are some tensions between Belarusians and Ukrainians, which probably emerge from shared elements of some local dialects and the Orthodox religion. It has already been stated that some of the “local people” there may feel mostly Belarusians, while their neighbors, who actually share similar characteristics, may feel rather Ukrainians. Therefore, one of the older respon-

dents, “Irena”, expressed a certain anxiety related to the expansiveness of better organized Ukrainian minority, which might dominate the Belarusians:

Now, as there was a picnic, the Ukrainians, my God, Ukrainians. As long as I've been alive, and my parents and my grandparents, there had never been any Ukrainians here, and now - here they come. They come, because they know that Belarusians are quiet and calm people, and good, and they want to conquer us. [By(PL)\_04]

However, it has to be emphasized that opinions and declarations regarding other national and ethnic minorities were not frequent in general. Apart from that, specific examples of cooperation between different minorities were also rarely mentioned. One of such projects was implemented within the “Ab-Ba” Association:

We had a very fine adventure with Lithuanians from Płońsk, we worked together on a project, “The Grand Duchy of Lithuania – our common heritage”. (...) we learned history of the Grand Duchy, seen through the eyes of Belarusians, Poles and Lithuanians. [By(PL)\_08]

As for the broadly understood discrimination experiences, the most striking and tragic examples are related mostly with the times of the First and then Second World War. The impact of the First World War resulted in so-called “bieżeństwo” – the massive exodus of the Orthodox population from the western parts of the Russian Empire further to the east. These events took place in year 1915 and were forced primarily by the aggressive Russian propaganda. “Beżeństwo” affected significantly the Belarusian and Orthodox population in Poland. The traumas of the Second World War are related to violence of the Polish Army toward Belarusians, who often were seen as the “natural” supporters of the Red Army. The shared memories of these events are reflected e.g. in the statements of “Olga”:

Well, this “biezenstwo”, it was a great tragedy for the nation, I mean, we lost a lot because of it, and the population surely diminished, too. (...) the houses were burned and there were surely some things happening that were not nice, and people left. After the second world war, there were problems here with the underground movement, the Home Army. They pacified several villages here. (...) people were killed, simply, because of their faith and nationality. (...) it remained in people's memory, a lot. [By(PL)\_05]

As “Olga” stated, in some cases the violence performed by Poles was especially cruel and drastic:

And it was like a wound. (...) Even in our family, through some relations, there was this case in Z. here, in the village (...) everyone there is Orthodox, and these villages were pacified, and I think there was this situation, a mother with children was burnt in a shed... And she was pregnant. [By(PL)\_05]

One of older respondents, “Irena”, was a child then and still remembers the atmosphere of terrible fear:

going back to the Home Army. There are villages here, in which they really destroyed a lot, a lot of our [houses]. And they took my friend's father away. [By(PL)\_04]

Other interviewee, the middle-aged “Natalia”, mentioned the tragic experiences of her father, who was personally affected by the violence of Polish Army:

And in 1946, (...) the squads of „Bury” burned several villages in the region of B. My dad's village was among these. My dad's house was among those houses. He was not even nine years old (...). [By(PL)\_08]

In his case, the fear, which emerged in those times, has never disappeared and is still present in his way of thinking:

(...) he believes I have reasons to be afraid. He still tells me not to get into anything, because they will get me sooner or later. I hear it every time, when he hears somewhere, in the radio or on TV that I did something: "You will regret this". They are still alive, he says, and if not them, their children. I say: "Dad, listen, the times have changed, these people no longer even think of doing something like that". He won't listen. [By(PL)\_08]

Apart from these traumatic, complex and violent conflicts, the coexistence of Belarusians and Poles before the Polish Peoples' Republic was described by the interviewees as rather peaceful and friendly, especially between Polish and Belarusian neighbors in specific local communities. For example, in villages, where Belarusians were a majority, Poles usually also spoke the local dialect.

In the first years of the Polish People's Republic, there was a firm state policy related to the image of Poland as a country, which is homogenous in terms of ethnicity. Such political strategy had to do much with control of different groups within the society:

Because there was this policy in Poland, all national minorities were disregarded, it was declared that Poland was a country of a single nation. (...) if they declared they belonged to a minority, they could be Belarusian, but they could not get a backing of any community. [By(PL)\_07]

As it was already mentioned, after the political changes of year 1956, minority structures and organizations were established and started to operate under control of the state. However, due to the state policy, which created the "niches" that enabled the cultivation of minority culture and tradition, but of course didn't support these minorities in terms of empowerment, the Polish identity was seen as the one that offers more life possibilities. Apart from that, the Belarusian minority was settled mostly in rural areas and suffered from lack of intellectuals and leaders, who might guide the processes of strengthening of the Belarusian national identity. As a result, open and clear declarations of Belarusian identity started to be seen as a life strategy, which would be not useful in such circumstances. "Natalia" states that her parents didn't talk to her in Belarusian dialect in order to broaden her future life chances:

Well, I think that my generation, (...) we have been raised so that not to hurt us. So, we were taught to speak Polish at home. My parents always spoke Belarusian, they addressed their parents in Belarusian. This language was everywhere, in a way. But they addressed us in Polish. [By(PL)\_08]

According to "Anna", such strategies were typical for the generation of her parents (middle-aged people):

(...) my parents spoke Polish at home. (...) It was typical for everyone leaving the country and moving to the city, the generation of the seventies and the eighties, when the state was passive, when it came to activity of these minority groups. Well, they just tried to secure the future of their children by teaching them proper Polish and teaching them to cope in the Polish reality. [By(PL)\_02]

In relation to this issue, older respondents experienced some negative reactions of the Poles towards them while speaking Belarusian dialect in public, e.g. on the street, on a bus or in other public places. Such situations were mentioned by "Irena":

In situations like that, yes, many times, when I went to the MPK [Municipal Transport Authority – Researcher's Annotation] in B., when I went there and I spoke in my own way, if anybody com-

mented on it, [I would say], what's wrong, and they'd fall silent. What, are you going to prohibit me? How come? Well, such small things. [By(PL)\_04]

Similar experiences were mentioned by "Andrzej":

In the street, I met my friend, we are speaking Belarusian. A man approaches us: "Where did you come from?" I say: „We're from here”. „What do you mean, from here?” „Well, from here.” „Not from Belarus?” „No.” „And where do you come from?” „From the region of B.” „So you live in Poland?” „Yes, we live in Poland.” „Well, it's time you learn to speak Polish then”. [By(PL)\_07]

Another unpleasant thing happened to him also on public transport, while reading the Belarusian magazine "Niwa":

Some man come over to me and he said, "Drop this rag, we know what „Niwa” is, (...) he added something very painful to me, „You need Piłsudski here to kill you all.” And even though I am a peaceful man, I wanted to confront this man, but my wife held me back saying "Listen, nobody is going to help you here, everyone will defend him." [By(PL)\_07]

The middle-aged respondents mentioned negative reactions of the Poles towards the Orthodox faith and church. Basically, the interviewees were insulted with disrespectful remarks related to irrational stereotypes:

I have to say that apart from some children's fights in the street, when our neighbors, (...) called us „Katzaps”, at first I wanted to ask my mom what it means. (...) Well, „Russian”, „Ruthenian”, I guess. [By(PL)\_08];

sometimes, they called me "Katzap", that's, well, these are things that happen even now. [By(PL)\_10];

(...) earlier I think it was much worse, (...) it happened that we were put down in school because we were Orthodox. (...) that was the standard that we that we're Russkis and so on. Some parents forbade their children to play with us (...). [By(PL)\_01]

Still, such incidents weren't described by the respondents in terms of ethnic discrimination.

However, under these circumstances, some members of the Belarusian minority decided that lack of open manifestations of any visible signs of their Belarusian identity, especially in terms of language, would be the safest and most useful life strategy. Such situations were mentioned e.g. by "Jacek" and "Andrzej" in relation to their friends and colleagues:

(...) when I meet with my friends, some of them speak a language, which is more similar to Polish, and I say, why do you speak Polish, speak „your own dialect”. (...) I don't know, what is there to be ashamed of? [By(PL)\_10];

Many of my colleagues, who graduated from university in Warsaw, who live in Warsaw with their families, never disclosed their nationality. [By(PL)\_07]

Attitudes of this kind were also mentioned by "Adam" aged 31, who represents the younger generation:

Many people decide to keep it for themselves that they are Orthodox or Belarusian. [By(PL)\_01]

Referring to the present times, a great majority of the respondents declared never having personally experienced any ethnic discrimination because of their Belarusian identity. However, they still encounter some "incidents", especially insults, which are related to Orthodox faith. Such experiences were mentioned also by the youngest interviewee "Jurek":

Well, there are some individual cases like this, sometimes somebody will call you a "Russki", because you are Orthodox, this has happened to me, even in secondary school. [By(PL)\_06]

He also pointed out some examples of discrimination, which are experienced by pupils of Orthodox faith at school, when they are a minority in the class:

Well, there is this dilemma concerning Orthodox holidays, it's a problem in Podlachia. Ten persons cannot come. There are some teachers, who tell you to take tests in this period. [By(PL)\_06]

“Julia” mentioned the nature of ethnic stereotypes, which are still vivid, but, on the other hand are seen as more and more irrational:

This word, „Ruthenian”, I don't really understand that. What does it mean? [By(PL)\_11]

Also, the opinions and stereotypes related to the rural and parochial character of the Belarusian minority are somehow still vivid. “Magda” relates them to her own childhood:

One of the typical traits of my childhood was that, when I went to my grandma, (...) she spoke the dialect and I spoke Polish and I was always embarrassed, because we lived with the conviction that being Belarusian was a reason to be ashamed among the young people. [By(PL)\_09]

She believes that such attitudes are actually still shared by the Belarusian youth:

I think that most of this going away from being Belarusian is mainly because people consider it to be parochial, because there's an association like this here, we're like from the rural areas. (...) there is this association with the East. [By(PL)\_09]

However, on the other hand, being bilingual or of a different origin turns nowadays into one's advantage. Interestingly, there is also a certain curiosity about national and ethnic minorities, especially in central and much more homogenous parts of Poland. The interviewees often mentioned the specific character of Warsaw, which, like all big cities, is in general more cosmopolitan and open to differences:

There, they approach you with interest, because it's something different, something new, unique, something that nobody has ever encountered. [By(PL)\_05];

(...) only in Warsaw I learned one basic thing that what I have is a great treasure and the people here envy me simply. [By(PL)\_09]

In general, Poland is perceived by the respondents as a country, which is basically safe and comfortable to live in. On the other hand, “Natalia” states that all this support for national and ethnic minorities which is guaranteed now, also thanks to the Polish access to the European Union, simply appeared too late, especially in the case of Belarusians, who were very vulnerable to the processes of polonization:

The Council [of Europe] even encourages to use the language, when the people would rather forget about it and want to be left alone. They make them install the information boards and the communes are bilingual. And they don't want anything anymore. They want to forget. (...) there was a time, when people wanted a lot, but they were afraid, (...) and now, this generation has been completely polonized (...). [By(PL)\_08]

Also, in the opinion of “Adam”, the previous, consistent policy of creating the image of Poland as a homogenous country resulted in low awareness of minority issues in the Polish society in general. For various historical reasons, emphasis was usually put on issues, which somehow unified the Polish nation, not on its diversification:

Only Poland always suffered and so on, but it will save the world and we know, and of course the feeling that only a Catholic can be Polish that's first of all, secondly that it's not possible that in essence ethnic minorities can't exist in Poland and so on that it's a terrible matter. [By(PL)\_01]

In addition, according to “Anna”, even the Polish state itself is not really interested in strengthening its national and ethnic minorities because of financial reasons. In other words, the minorities are surely not oppressed, their rights are guaranteed and respected, but it would be better if they didn’t get too strong and numerous:

On the other hand, as I work and I see what is going on at various levels of administrations, I get the impression that the state policy, despite the declarations, is rather negative. (...) the state policy depends upon the number of members of a minority. The solutions proposed, which are to be introduced thanks to the national census, will not contribute to increasing the minority population. (...) And this changes the percentage share in the communes and such. [By(PL)\_02]

In the opinion of “Adam”, the attitude of certain disinterest may be seen also in relation to the Orthodox church. He states that Poland needs a systematic policy and projects, which would facilitate the ecumenical cooperation between the Catholic and Orthodox church, also in terms of giving the Polish majority more opportunities to become more familiar with the Orthodox religion:

(...) young people have, in their catechesis books, some lessons, on comparative ethnology, something about the Orthodox faith, and it’s very nicely described, but ninety percent of the Catholic students have never been inside an Orthodox church (...). [By(PL)\_01]

In general, according to the opinions expressed by the interviewees, Poland is definitely not a country of open or aggressive discrimination towards the Belarusian minority. The minority rights are guaranteed and respected, and activities of the minority are supported financially. However, there is no clear and systematic state policy or programs, which would be focused on increasing the awareness of minority issues in the Polish society on one hand, and mitigating the stereotypes on the other. Problems between the Belarusian minority and the Polish majority usually assume a form of personal insults or negative reactions, which are based on stereotypes of backwardness.



### 3.8 Summarizing matrix

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

Respondent	Sex	Age	Education	Occupation	European identity	National identity (PL)	National identity (BL)	Regional identity	Organization	Languages
By(PL)_01 "Adam"	Male	31	Tertiary	Orthodox priest	Adam feels he is European in terms of common values based on Christianity. He identifies himself strongly with the south-eastern part of Europe because of the Orthodox tradition.	Adam has Polish citizenship and Polish identity as his mother is Polish.	Adam declares Belarusian identity.	Adam identifies strongly with the Podlasie region and the city of B., where he was born and where he lives.	Brotherhood of Orthodox Youth	Polish at home with his wife, in everyday's situations. Belarusian with his father and his family, Belarusian friends and parishioners. Serbian while studying in Belgrade. Church Slavonic during the mass.
By(PL)_02 "Anna"	Female	28	Tertiary	Journalist	Anna feels European. She identifies herself especially with the south-eastern countries. She likes travelling.	Anna has a Polish citizenship and feels that Poland is her homeland.	Anna declares Belarusian national identity.	Anna identifies herself with the region and the city of B., where she lives and works in the Belarusian local media.	Belarusian Student Association in the past, Belarusian Association in the Republic of Poland now.	Both Polish and Belarusian at home and also at work.
By(PL)_03 "Piotr"	Male	76	Primary	Retired (farmer)	Piotr doesn't admit having a sense of being European. He has never been to western countries.	Piotr states his identity is a Pole of Orthodox faith	Piotr is of Belarusian origin.	Piotr declares a strong local identity related to his village.	Association of the Polish Youth in the past), Voluntary Fire Service in the village.	Belarusian (dialect) at home and in the village, Polish in the city. Piotr understands Russian.
By(PL)_04 "Irena"	Female	73	Tertiary	Retired (teacher)	Irena doesn't express having a sense of being European. She has never been to western countries.	Poland is Irena's homeland and she has a Polish citizenship.	Irena declares Belarusian national identity.	Irena identifies with her village, where she works and lives and it's local context.	Belarusian Social and Cultural Association (in the past).	Belarusian (dialect) at home, in the village and with anyone who speaks or understands this language. Polish with Poles, in everyday's life.
By(PL)_05 "Olga"	Female	29	Tertiary	Librarian at school	Olga feels European. She has never been to western countries, she likes to travel to south-eastern Europe.	Olga doesn't feel Polish, she has a Polish citizenship.	Olga declares Belarusian national identity.	Olga identifies with the region of Podlasie, especially with her hometown.	Belarusian Student Association (in the past), NGO which runs the small museum of Belarusian culture, Olga runs the singing group.	Belarusian at home, with friends from NGO and singing group, at work both Belarusian and Polish.

Respondent	Sex	Age	Education	Occupation	European identity	National identity (PL)	National identity (BL)	Regional identity	Organization	Languages
By(PL)_06 "Jurek"	Male	18	Secondary	Secondary school pupil	Jurek feels European. He used to travel to eastern Europe due to his activity within the church and singing group.	Jurek feels that Poland is his homeland, he has a Polish citizenship.	Jurek acquired a sense of being Belarusian recently.	Jurek doesn't declare a strong regional identity.	Brotherhood of Orthodox Youth, the Belarusian singing group.	Polish at school and in everyday life, Belarusian with friends from singing group, at home both Polish and Belarusian.
By(PL)_07 "Andrzej"	Male	86	Tertiary	Retired (poet, translator, editor)	Andrzej feels European. He has been to western countries for several times, also during the times of the Polish People's Republic.	Andrzej perceives Poland as his homeland, he has a Polish citizenship.	Andrzej declares Belarusian national identity.	Andrzej doesn't declare a strong regional identity.	Belarusian Social and Cultural Society (in the past), Association of Polish Writers, Association of Writers of Belarus, Belarusian Literary Association of Białowieża.	Belarusian at home and at work (poems and translations), Polish in everyday life.
By(PL)_08 "Natalia"	Female	44	Tertiary	Doctor	Natalia feels European, she likes travelling.	Poland is Natalia's homeland, she has a Polish citizenship.	Natalia feels she is Belarusian in terms of national identity.	Natalia feels very attached to the city of B., where she lives and works.	Belarusian Student Association (in the past), Association for Children and Youth Learning Belarusian Language „Ab-Ba”.	Belarusian at home, Polish at work. English when travelling.
By(PL)_09 "Magda"	Female	21	Secondary	Student	Magda feels European. She likes travelling both to eastern and western European countries.	Magda feels Polish as she was born in Poland and it's her homeland, she has a Polish citizenship.	Magda declares Belarusian national identity.	Magda feels very attached to her hometown.	Belarusian Student Association.	Both Belarusian and Polish at home, Polish at university, Belarusian with members of the Association.
By(PL)_10 "Jacek"	Male	52	Tertiary	Insurance agent	He feels European in terms of more opportunities to travel.	Jacek is a Polish citizen and Poland is his homeland.	Jacek declares Belarusian national identity.	Jacek feels attached to the village, which he comes from.	Brotherhood of Orthodox Youth (in the past).	Both Polish and Belarusian at home and at work, Polish in everyday life.
By(PL)_11 "Julia"	Female	21	Secondary	Student	Julia feels European when she travels to Belarus. She likes to travel to western and southern European countries.	Julia feels Polish in everyday's life, she has a Polish citizenship.	Julia feels Belarusian from time to time, but she doesn't declare such national identity.	Julia doesn't declare any regional or local identity.	Belarusian Student Association.	Polish at university and everyday life, Belarusian with grandparents and friends from the Association.

## 4 MAIN FINDINGS OF EXPERT INTERVIEWS (ENRI-EXI)

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*Ilona Matysiak / Anna Domaradzka*

### 4.1 Methodology and sample

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According to the criteria defined for the project, the three experts interviewed were to represent the Polish state institutions (of the regional or national level), Polish NGOs and also the Belarusian minority's structures. In consequence, three different perspectives from various institutional levels were compared.

The Polish regional-level state institutions are represented by the proxy of the provincial governor for the affairs of national and ethnic minorities in the region of Podlasie [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]. He has occupied the position since 2008 and he simultaneously works as a sociologist at the university. Since the 70's, he has conducted many scientific research projects regarding national and ethnic minorities in this territory. The category of Polish non-governmental organizations, which act, among others, on behalf of the Belarusian minority, is represented by Mrs. Danuta Kuroń [Exi\_By(PL)\_03] - the president of the management board of Jacek Kuroń Foundation for Education, which runs the Jan Józef Lipski Open University in Teremiski, a village in Podlasie. She basically described her responsibilities as dealing with finances, settlements, agreements and correspondence, coordination of the programme of the Foundation and its implementation. The respondent is a historian and she strongly emphasized the issue of historical presence of Belarusians and Lithuanians in the territory of Podlasie. The Foundation is engaged in extensive cooperation with the inhabitants of Teremiski, Belarusian minority organizations and it implements projects, which include Poles, Belarusians and Lithuanians. Last but not least, the minority perspective is represented by the female executive of the Belarusian Student Association (BAS) [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]. Her main responsibilities include filling out balance sheets, settlements with the revenue office, paperwork and finances. The Association addresses the youth through popularization of the modern minority culture, e.g. rock music. BAS has its roots in social movements, which were triggered by "Solidarity" in the early 80's and involved also the students. The respondent is enrolled at the Interdisciplinary East-Slavic Studies at the University of Warsaw. She originates from a village in Podlasie characterized by a significant number of the Belarusian population.

As for the main socio-demographic characteristics, the group of experts consists of two women and one man. Except for the student, they have a university degree. Nevertheless, they belong to three different age groups. The student aged 20 may be seen as a representative of the young generation of Belarusian activists. The remaining two Polish respondents are between the middle and older age groups, [Exi\_By(PL)\_02] aged ca. 50 and [Exi\_By(PL)\_03] aged 61. The BAS activist [Exi\_By(PL)\_01] actually lives in Warsaw because of her studies. Mrs. Kuroń [Exi\_By(PL)\_03] divides her activities between Teremiski and Warsaw, while the capital is the place of her origin and permanent residence. However, other activists of the Jan Józef Lipski Open University have moved to Teremiski and live there permanently. The proxy of provincial governor has lived in Podlasie for many years. It has to be mentioned that Podlasie is considered to be the most diversified Polish province in terms of ethnicity. There are four national minorities here: Belarusian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Russian. As for ethnic minorities, there are Tatars and the Romani people. Apart from that, there are also regional offices of two Jewish organizations, which have their headquarters in Warsaw.

The fieldwork was conducted by Iлона Matysiak, the Robert B. Zajonc Institute for Social Studies, University of Warsaw.

## 4.2 Description of the interviewees' organizations

As for [Exi\_By(PL)\_02], according to the act on national and ethnic minorities and on maintaining the regional language, a provincial governor is not obliged to appoint a proxy. In the case of Podlasie, this institution has been operating since year 2005. The main responsibilities of the proxy here are as follows: coordination of activities of various state institutions, which, among others, address national and ethnic minorities; watching the minorities' rights and counteracting discrimination; supporting minority organizations and associations, lobbying; giving official opinions and statements about the current minority issues, coordination of activities within the special state program for the Romani people and supporting organizations and the local self-government in implementing these activities. However, the legal framework and resources, which shape these actions were described by interviewee as rather narrow. As a result, the proxy's initiatives take the form of lobbying in favor of minority interests on the central level (e.g. relevant ministries, Parliament), monitoring of minority issues in Podlasie and responding to current problems:

The first type is the direct contact with specific minorities, when any problems emerge, which require solving, maintaining good relations with organizations. The second type is on the occasion of various events organized, and there's quite a lot of these. (...) The third type of contact is through the Government and National and Ethnic Minorities Joint Commission. (...) I attend the meetings as an observer just to know what is going on here.

[Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

The category of Polish NGOs is represented by the Jacek Kuroń Foundation for Education, which was established in year 2004. Its president, the respondent [Exi\_By(PL)\_03] described the organization as follows:

an autonomous social organization. What does this mean? It means that we define independently the objectives, ways of achieving objectives, the methods of work, and the language of description, the rules that we follow, the cultural traditions and civilization patterns that we use.

[Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

The Foundation runs two basic institutions of educational and cultural purpose: the Jan Józef Lipski Open University and the Theater in the village of Teremiski. Their main activities are as follows: the programme of cultural education "Oikoumene", singing and drama workshops (e.g. the Szczodraki performance, which has become a part of the Orthodox-Catholic Christmas dialogues tradition of Podlasie), performance of the "Tales of Teremiski", which was a spectacle written on the basis of tales of the inhabitants of Teremiski, the virtual Museum of Teremiski, the "Chronicles of Podlasie". Almost all their initiatives are deeply rooted in the local community, but also refer to the idea of Poland as a historic homeland of various nations and ethnic groups. The organization itself does not consist of too many participants, and is based on a small group of family members and friends.

As for Belarusian minority organizations, the Belarusian Student Association (BAS) was established in the early 80. by the committed students of Belarusian origin, who wanted to feel free about their identity, search for their roots and cultural heritage. Interestingly enough, the structures of BAS are now the domain of their children, who have formed the next generation of activists:

(...) it can be said that this group of young people, they had children, and now the next generation is taking over. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

Today, the Association consists of about 30 students of Belarusian origin. BAS operates mostly in the region of Podlasie, where most of its events take place. However, the significant number of its activists study in Warsaw. It seems that achievement of a certain level of professionalization is one of the current goals of the Association:

Education in terms of application, of all European Union initiatives, the funds, (...) to do something professionally, (...). [Exi\_By(PL)\_01];

We will see if we can get anything more out of "Bas" [„Basowiszczka” festival – researcher’s annotation], any economic activity, because right now, we cannot collect money for rental of shopping stands during the festival, because we have not registered economic activity. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

Their main aim is to continue with organization of cultural events, especially the famous “Basowiszczka” festival, which is the set of open air concerts of modern rock and folk Belarusian music. It is worth mentioning that BAS avoids being associated with radical opposition in Belarus: It’s because we start to be perceived in a political context, we get a label, we are seen as oppositionists.

(...) they are viewed as being a bit crazy, and it’s a problem with the money and all, people do not want to identify themselves with an organization of this kind, which has any political character. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

### 4.3 Main issues associated with Belarusian minority in Poland

The interviews shows that the main issues associated with the Belarusian minority in Poland refer to its poor recognition in the Polish society. Basically, these problems are caused by: the low awareness of historic minorities, the limitation of activity of minorities to their own “niches” and also the increasingly “private” character of Belarusian national identity, mostly due to negative stereotypes. Apart from that, the respondents raised the problem of tensions between Belarusians and Ukrainians in Podlasie. Also, they mentioned the basic problems of Belarusian minority.

First, according to the president of Jacek Kuroń Foundation for Education and the executive of BAS, it happens quite often that the Poles, especially from more homogenous parts of Poland, automatically associate people of Belarusian origin with Belarus:

(...) the guests of the University, hearing Belarusian language at the table in Teremiski, ask us kindly: “You came from Minsk or Grodno?” “From Bielsk Podlaski”. So, another question: „But to Bielsk Podlaski you came from Minsk or Grodno?” [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

Apart from that, in many cases, issues of Belarusian minority in Poland are mixed up with issues of migrants:

Perhaps it is worth mentioning here that there’s little awareness in Poland that historic national minorities and minorities of immigrants are two different things. [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

What is more, if there is a recognition of national identity, which is different than Polish, it is often assumed that, the one’s identity should be double: Somebody mentioned the posters with photographs of persons saying: „I am Jewish – I am Polish”; „I am Lithuanian – I am Polish”; somebody asked why there was no poster saying „I am Belarusian – I am Polish”. I. K., who was present during the Symposium, said: “Because we didn’t agree to have a poster like that. I am not Belarusian and I am not Polish. I am Belarusian, and Poland is my homeland.” [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

In the opinion of the proxy of the provincial governor, such situations partly emerge from “the policy of social uniformization” implemented in the period of the Polish Peoples’ Republic:

(...) until 1989 it was being said that Poland was an ethnically uniform country, in practice, there were some dummy organizations operating under the auspices of the government, like the Belarusian Social and Cultural Society. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

On the other hand, the president of Jacek Kuroń Foundation sees the cause of this problem also in the current Polish education system, where history lessons fail to stress the importance of ethnic diversification:

Perhaps this is because of how history is being taught in school, this lack of knowledge that in Podlasie, the Belarusians are at home, and we, from the Kingdom of Poland, Silesia or Greater Poland, are the ones, who came there later on, not vice versa. [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

Secondly, in the opinion of the proxy of the provincial governor, we are facing a situation, in which the great majority of activities aimed at minorities are, in fact, implemented by these minorities. What is more, such activities are usually conducted on the local scale, and their main recipients are people, who are already familiar with the ethnic diversity, mostly the minorities themselves. In consequence, the chances of popularization of cultural heritage of the minorities on a larger scale decrease significantly. This seems to be the case of Belarusian minority as well, which usually concentrates its events and activities in the region of Podlasie:

there are many minority music groups and it's all focused in the areas, in which minorities live. This is due to the fact that the only funds that they can obtain is from cities with minorities, such as Białystok, Bielsk Podlaski, Hajnówka (...). Therefore, naturally, we're observing a closing of minorities in specific areas. They are no longer open. And there's no popularization of the cultural heritage, which could allow for selling it outside the community. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

According to the proxy, this situation is also associated with the dependence of minority organizations on state financial support, while the opportunities of applying for external funds are rather rarely sought:

there's no effort made by the minority to search for the funds, to participate in the contests (...) to get the EU money. (...) On the other hand, it's always comfortable here, the paths are familiar, some money will surely be available, so, why make the effort. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

These problem is also related to the fact that the state funds are obviously not sufficient for more extensive and regular popularization of minority issues. As a result, the activities of minorities and for minorities take place mostly within the social and cultural “niches”, which are accessible only to a certain part of the Polish population.

Thirdly, the fact that the Belarusian identity is becoming a “private” issue, has been mentioned by all three respondents, e.g. the proxy of the provincial governor described it as follows:

if we compare the seventies, (...) [you] could hear this “simple language” everywhere (...). You don't hear it any more now. And, in fact, this has been closed in private houses. (...) because this language was treated as something worse. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

Other interviewee stated:

I haven't heard it at the commune office, or at the post office, the school or the kindergarten. (...) Belarusian is used widely at the bus stop and at the marketplace in Hajnówka. [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

Such processes have their roots in negative stereotypes commonly associated with the Belarusian minority:

Perhaps, somewhere, deep inside, they haven't got rid of the stereotype, of the popular opinion that Belarusian is an inferior language of the rural population that it's not a language but "speaking our own way" and it may have a negative impact on the opportunities of their children in life. [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

According to the executive of BAS, such ideas are much more vivid among older generations in the rural areas:

going to the rural areas, we can see that people are ashamed, they are afraid that if they speak to the children in their „own dialect”, (...) the child will have a hard time in school, other children will laugh at them, (...) there will be problems with the teachers, (...) this is outdated, the old people speak like that, it's rural, (...) let's keep as far from it as we can. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

On the other hand, the Belarusian language / dialect is in fact hardly used in the city due to the "defensive" attitudes of migrants from rural areas, who preferred not to manifest openly their Belarusian origin and didn't pass this identity on to their children. Apart from that, according to the president of Jacek Kuroń Foundation, the Belarusian language / dialect is still strongly associated with folklore, a bit of a relic from the past:

history and language are preserved as a part of culture, instead of turning everything into folklore. That's because this is not folklore, but the main stream of culture of the Belarusians of Podlasie. (...) the peasant language, which is a foundation for their literary language. [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

As for the tensions between Belarusian and Ukrainian minorities, the mutual distance mentioned by the respondents emerges from the different versions of the history of both nations and the Belarusians' feeling of being dominated by the better organized Ukrainians. According to the proxy of the regional governor, Belarusians find it particularly offensive that Ukrainians somehow question their origin as a separate nation:

The Ukrainians say that the Belarusians, in fact, are rooted in the Ukrainian nation that the Belarusian nationality is something artificial that it was established by someone once upon a time, and it all has Ukrainian roots. The discourse on this never stops, whenever they meet. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

Such discrepancies lead to current conflicts, e.g. related with the bilingual information boards in the mixed communes:

Orla commune is planning to introduce them, but there's a dispute (...) between the Belarusian and the Ukrainian minority, about the signs that should be made, the language, in which the names should be written. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

Also, there is some anxiety among Belarusians that Ukrainians are better organized and more invasive in stimulating the awareness of being of non- Polish origin:

The Ukrainian children here, who now learn Ukrainian, used to learn Belarusian. They talk people into joining them (...). [Exi\_By(PL)\_01];

(...) they walk from house to house, they talk to people, as I've told you, they are a bit like Jehovah's witnesses. They sometimes force people to listen to them. They leave their newspapers. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

The interviewees pointed out that there are opinions among Belarusian minority that the Ukrainians are more effective in attracting people to their activities and institutions:

I have heard such opinion in Hajnówka: "Our young people go to study in Lublin as Belarusians, and they come back as Ukrainians." It means that the stronger academic center is able to draw attention, but there is a Polish-Ukrainian college in Lublin. [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

Nevertheless, according to the executive of BAS, there is no cooperation between Belarusian and Ukrainian minorities in Podlasie:

Not together, but next to each other. They appear on the same stages. (...) one group sings in Belarusian, and the other – in Ukrainian. They have nothing to do with each other, they simply sing their songs. (...) somehow we cannot manage to cooperate (...). [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

According to the president of Jacek Kuroń Foundation, such discrepancies and tensions indeed have their roots in historic processes. To be more specific, both nations have had different trajectories of development:

The Ukrainians have a long, uninterrupted tradition of organizing and a strong ethos of intelligentsia. They didn't have a state, but they had some freedom of action in Galicia, and after the war, they had strong emigration in Paris or in Canada. Now they have a strong association and a great power of attraction. Belarusians are in a different situation. Generation after generation, their intelligentsia was killed, and they had no border, through which they could smuggle books or literary periodicals. [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

According to the proxy of the regional governor, the Belarusian minority in the region doesn't raise any serious problems of discrimination or infringement of the minority's rights. However, all the respondents mentioned examples of unpleasant "incidents", which referred to the differences in terms of language or/and faith:

There are conflicts sometimes, but rarely. The last serious conflict was, I think, in R., like on the Easter Monday, an Orthodox farmer took manure to the field and he was passing by a Church, and there was a morning service. There was a huge conflict because of that. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

It has to be mentioned here that there are attempts of standardization of the Orthodox and Catholic calendars.

Other important issues pointed out by the respondents were: lack of presence of the Belarusian minority in the Polish mainstream media and polonization of Belarusians, especially the younger generations, e.g. due to the university studies, where only certain language studies provide lectures in Belarusian language. In relation to the education system in Poland, the executive of BAS mentioned situations, in which some schools opposed the introduction of Belarusian language in others. In fact, schools with Belarusian classes and language groups may be seen as unfairly privileged rivals:

In our class, everyone was a laureate in Belarusian language, and this improved greatly the position of our school in the ranking. Because, how many laureates are there in a normal school? A few. Five, six. (...) if you get a Belarusian group, you double that number. (...) there are huge difficulties with that. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

Last but not least, the executive of BAS mentioned also the difficult and uncomfortable situation of the Belarusian minority in the context of its motherland. On one hand, according to this interviewee, the support of the Belarusian state is rather limited:

Well, all we get from the Belarusian state is a free visa to Belarus for the children once a year. (...) Sometimes, the [Belarusian] consul provides books (...) at the end of the year, when they graduate from primary school, grammar school and secondary school. (...) I got a beautiful book, and that's all. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

On the other hand, the population of Belarusian origin actually doesn't want to be supported by Belarus in order to avoid the negative associations with the postcommunist regime, which could strengthen the already existing stereotypes. However, according to the proxy, official Belarusian agencies sometimes support financially or offer patronage of minority events.



#### 4.4 Description of the policies introduced and the associated problems

According to the interviewees, the existing Polish state policy towards its national and ethnic minorities is shaped mostly by the provisions of the act on national and ethnic minorities and on maintaining the regional language. This act warrants minority rights, like e.g. the possibilities of usage of minority languages or dialects as the additional official languages or the presence of minorities in the public media. Also, it defines the framework of the state financial support for minority organizations and institutions. Such recognition of interests of diverse ethnic groups has its roots in the processes of transformation, commenced in year 1989:

(...) as a result of the Round Table agreement, (...) Jacek [Kuroń] established the Sejm Commission for Minorities and he became the chairman. This meant that the free Poland would engage in solving of problems of its minorities with all due respect. [Exi\_By(PL)\_03] Apart from that, there are also the bilateral conventions and agreements with the neighboring countries. These affairs were not free from problems: the Polish Charter, which has had a very negative impact on our relations with our neighbors, (...) there was escalation of conflict, when it comes to our minorities in relation to the majority. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

In the opinions of all three interviewees, the act on national and ethnic minorities itself is an important document, which is sufficient for now. However, according to the proxy of the provincial governor, the Belarusian minority doesn't really take advantage of the opportunities guaranteed by this act, especially in terms of language

As for the additional language, it's been introduced in four communes so far, I think. In six communes. As for the affairs, the applications filed in these languages, (...) [there] has been one case in one commune, and in one commune I think there were two applications filed in the language of the minority. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

On the other hand, from the perspective of the executive of BAS, the regulations are usually implemented, but not always in the most satisfactory way, for example in the case of the Belarusian programs broadcasted by the Polish public TV channels:

There's the Belarusian programme that's right, what time is it broadcasted? Sunday at eight. What do people do on Sunday at eight? They either go to church or sleep. (...) there was this Orthodox program, „Center of Faith”, it was at this [hour], they kept changing the hour. (...) or it was [broadcasted] like „Na dobre i na złe” [one of the most popular Polish soap operas – researcher's annotation] (...). [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

In her opinion, the Polish state is characterized by a certain ambivalence towards its national and ethnic minorities. To be more specific, the actual policy is more like “no interference” than an offer of systemic and large scale support:

The state allows us to develop, (...) it neither cut off the hand nor extend the hand that we have. It will take care of us as much as it is obligated to. (...) Nobody will help us too much and nobody will hurt us. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

For example, the issue of additional language probably should be promoted and popularized more systematically:

This is a different world. Sometimes people don't even know about it, they are like, „my language is so simple, I'd rather [speak] Polish”. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

As for financial support provided by the state, it is within the framework of competences of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, Department for Denominations and National and Ethnic Minorities

In practice, it's ten million, or eleven million in relation to our budget, which is several billion. It's not a lot of money. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

The funds are distributed annually among the minority organizations and institutions on the basis of their applications submitted through competition. In consequence, those groups, which are better organized and able to initiate more activities, usually receive more money:

As for the Romani people, (...) the community itself is divided and there's no such activity here, locally, which would allow for popularization of its heritage. There are no groups, or bands, things like that, (...) there are two or three events per year. As for Lithuanians, you practically get one each month. (...) It's the same with the Belarusians. The Association of Ukrainians is also very active. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

Paradoxically, more active minorities are provided with less funds for each particular project, as they submit more applications in total. Therefore, such system may in fact prevent the implementation of more large scale, long term and expensive initiatives. Apart from that, the actual mechanisms of distribution are not perceived as transparent:

(...) I would like it to be defined in advance. For instance, (...) at the budget level, let's say, 00.1 (...) of the entire budget, a certain pool. To have this defined, for instance, for the Belarusian, Ukrainian minority, depending on their numbers, or equally to all registered minorities. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

As for the issue of the regional policy towards minorities in Podlasie, according to the proxy of the provincial governor, there is no such systematic policy due to limited access to funds and institutional tools

one of the basic problems is that the provincial governor's offices do not have the money for support (...). So, these possibilities are, mainly, about direct impact, convincing people, talking to them, but there are no instruments that could really shape the policy for minorities. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

However, there are clear cases of direct cooperation between the provincial governor and minorities, for example, joint work on the priorities, which could be enforced on the central level:

I planned that for the annual meeting of the provincial governor with minorities, I would invite the director of our television and our radio. (...) to discuss all things at the regional level and to formulate a clear stance on, for instance, any possibilities of obtaining, through (...) the Joint Commission and the Parliamentary Commission, (...) any additional funds for our media for minority programmes. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

Another example of direct and important, though incidental, support for minorities was as follows

We, as the provincial governor's office, have some property. (...) A large building, which was granted by the provincial governor to the city, under the condition that they would provide an office there for minorities. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

It seems that the Polish state institutions of the regional level are ready to respond to problems raised by minorities, but don't really implement any regular and systematic policy.

The issue of potential impact of minorities on policymaking on different levels is strongly related to their political representation. Although the Belarusian minority has no political structures or committees, the people of Belarusian origin joined the lists of established parties and were elected to the commune councils in last election, especially in regions, in which the number of Belarusians is significant. According to the executive of BAS, there were campaigns imple-

mented by certain minority organizations to increase the awareness that the political representation was important:

(...) we joined the [Civic] Platform [the leading party in Poland of central-rightist orientation – researcher’s annotation], (...). They did a nice thing. (...) we are all on the third position in all communes. (...) this really worked very well, because the people knew it was number three. Some reasonable people got in. (...) In Bielsk Podlaski, they printed the entire election books, on how to vote for the leader of the BYA, the Belarusian Youth Association. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

The central level representation is related to the Parliament and its Commission for National and Ethnic Minorities, where the deputy chairman is a Belarusian minority representative. According to the previously quoted interviewee, [he] really does a lot, (...) he fought for the act, for Orthodox religion in schools. Well, there are some changes that I can actually feel. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

Another opportunity is offered by the Joint Commission of Government and National and Ethnic Minorities, which is the advising institution of the Polish prime minister. This Commission includes representatives of Polish state, as well as specific minority organizations. Despite the fact that the latter seems to operate more on the basis of dialogue and discussion, it also provides some limited space for influence on minority issues:

(...) lately, there was the issue of broadcast time in the media. (...) It was resolved that a permanent representative of the national council would be delegated to cooperate with the Joint Commission (...). He is to participate in all meetings of the commission. If anything emerges, he will solve issues associated with the media. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

As for the third sector, it has been already mentioned that cooperation between different national and/or ethnic minorities is rather rare. What is more, there is almost no cooperation between minority organizations and Polish NGOs:

As far as I know, there are no such relations. In fact, the authors of specific projects, cultural or social events, are minority organizations, and sometimes the local governments are involved. (...) I haven’t heard of anything like that. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

Interestingly, the issue of the representation of immigrant interests and problems remains unsolved and it is hardly ever discussed:

in fact, the minority organizations have nothing to do with that. This is because it is up to specific employers, offices, like our office, when it comes to residence permits, work permits and so on. (...) the minority is not a party to such matter. It is not a party in any disputes. (...) It is known that some of these people work on the grey market. (...) Automatically, they cannot get anyone involved in their affairs. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

Nevertheless, minority issues in Poland are rarely the subject of the mainstream public or political debate. It seems that they are rather “canalized” and discussed within the mentioned institutional and territorial “niches”. According to the proxy of the provincial governor in Podlasie, it would be difficult to change this situation due to the relatively small number of these minorities:

I mean, this will never be subject to debate, due to the fact that the minority populations are quite small. (...) So, if you take the total of that, it is .... About a million and a half, not more. (...) Looking at the Polish society, this isn’t much (...). [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

#### 4.5 Relations with European events and organizations

As for the relations with European events and organizations, the interviewees rarely elaborated more on this subject. To some extent, an exception here was the proxy of the provincial governor, who referred to the European Commission as a warrantor of minority rights in the EU mem-

ber countries. In his opinion, Poland was positively evaluated by this institution mainly due to the act on national and ethnic minorities

(...) in the last report of the Commission we were assessed very positively. (...) We got a credit for having the act on minorities and so on. (...) the number of problems reported by minorities is much smaller, and they can all be solved easily, because there are regulations and you know what can be done and what cannot, it's all clear. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

However, he mentioned also the cases of intervention of the European Commission, which were evoked by the disturbing ideas of some local government representatives. These ideas proposed the “eye for eye” type of policy towards national minorities that would depend on the situation of Polish minority in the neighboring countries:

(...) this has been brought up by the European Commission, (...) that representatives of local governments sometimes want to establish a minorities policy depending on the way it is shaped in relation to the Polish minorities abroad. In particular, this is about the Polish minority in Lithuania, there are the well known issues of education and naming of streets, let's say, the issue of naming of towns, spelling of surnames. [Exi\_By(PL)\_02]

As for the European initiatives aimed at the eastern European countries, just the Eastern Partnership was briefly mentioned.

In the case of Jacek Kuroń Foundation and the Belarusian Student Association, the interviewees didn't mention any activities or cooperation on the European level, participation in European organizations, networks, etc. The European Union was associated with the warranty of minority rights and also with significant additional funds for organizations and other groups, e.g. farmers. Interestingly, the executive of BAS referred to the issue of European identity as a solution chosen by people, who actually feel neither Belarusians nor Polish:

I have a friend (...) at the university. She won't tell me she's Polish, because she has no grounds to do that. She won't tell me she's Belarusian, either, because she believes it's something worse, it's backwardness, from beyond the eastern border. (...) she says simply, „I'm European”. She's sort of attracted by a certain cosmopolitan attitude, because she is unable to identify herself with anything. [Exi\_By(PL)\_01]

In the similar context, the president of Jacek Kuroń Foundation pointed out the historic example of the Great Duchy of Lithuania as an important and meaningful component of heritage:

This is also significant for building of the European identity, as this is the area, in which, in the 16th century, a multinational state was built not on the basis of conquest, but as a voluntary federation. [Exi\_By(PL)\_03]

## 5 MAIN FINDINGS OF WEB-ANALYSIS (ENRI-BLOG)

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*Hans-Georg Heinrich / Olga Alekseeva*

### 5.1 Methodology

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ENRI-East is an interdisciplinary project which employs different methodological approaches. In the framework of the project, Content Analysis of Internet Resources uses internet websites attributable to ethnic minorities in order to analyse the identity-related cultural, social and political activity of minorities. The study analyses the situation of twelve minorities: Russians in Latvia and Lithuania, Ukrainians in Poland and Hungary, Belarusians in Poland and Lithuania, Poles in Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania, Hungarians in Ukraine, Hungarians in Slovakia, and Slovaks in Hungary. Lithuanians in Russia, who were polled in the ENRI survey, were excluded due to linguistic problems. Instead, Ukrainians in Hungary were included.

Internet can be assumed to provide valid sources of information, because it is a modern and flexible means of communication. Analyzing the presence of minorities in the internet, the study can be expected to yield insights into actual concepts of identity. The internet research helps to understand not only special opinions and media activities of minorities, but also how the concept of ethnic identity evolves within new media like internet. Internet provides a forum for the democratic exchange of information, a free and unrestricted domain to escape the limits of political participation in real politics. The World Wide Web can be the communication medium of groups which are politically underrepresented. Among flows of information in the internet, such new patterns of social communication are observable as forums, live journals, or blogs that have an authentic nature and help to restore the public discourse in the most objective way.

The data base of the content analysis consists of online resources attributable to ethnic minorities, such as periodicals, organisations, blogs, forums, personal websites, and commentaries to articles. Collection of empirical resources from the internet has been carried out in two steps: selection of online resources and selection of text fragments within the online resources. Internet resources were identified by employing search engines like [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) for different languages and countries using key-words combinations, or checking websites which contain catalogues of resources like <http://kamunikat.org/>. Individual text fragments within a resource were selected for processing according to the criterion of theoretical relevance.

The research discovered a large number of different resources of ethnic minorities. In the study, 154 online resources were randomly identified, from which 350 text fragments<sup>51</sup> were collected and analyzed. Qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the text fragments was conducted using *simstat/wordstat6.2.1*. The data analysis consisted of the description of a resource or a text fragment according to formal criteria like “title”, “author”, or “intention”, as well as according to the content of text fragments. The former data were ordered and coded in a *simstat* data base. The data of the qualitative content analysis were generated by assigning single cases (usually combination of words or parts of sentences) to categories (keywords) which constituted the *wordstat*

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<sup>51</sup> The notion “text fragment” in this study indicates a unit of analysis in the *simstat/wordstat* program. These can be single texts like articles from websites of periodicals, blogs or organisations without postings of readers or with readers’ postings. Apart from that, a “text fragment” can be called a number of single short texts under particular title as represented by dialogues on internet forums.

dictionary. On the basis of simstat/wordstat data, research results were generated in form of figures which in turn have been qualitatively interpreted.

During the analysis, 69 categories could be created. 8 categories among them belong to the main categories: “cultural heritage”, “images of Europe”, “history”, “cultural encounter”, “minority rights”, “style”, “politics”, and “socio-economic situation”. These main categories include further categories (sub-categories). The following data presentation describes however only those categories, which represent the majority of coded cases within text fragments, measured in %. All other categories, which cover less than 5% of cases were left out in the presented study.

## 5.2 Description of internet resources

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In comparison with the collected internet resources of other minorities, *Belarusians in Poland* take the fourth place under ethnic minorities with 15 resources. Belarusians in Poland have 2 periodicals, 4 news/broadcasting portals, 4 organization websites, 2 blogs, 2 forums, and 1 resource containing articles/blogs with postings. The periodicals “Czasopis” and “Niva” set up by nationally oriented journalists and editors provide a broad number of analytical materials. News portals like “Bialorus.pl”, the broadcasting portal Belarusian Service of the Polish Radio for Abroad or radio “Racyya” cover the news in Poland and Belarus as well as events relating to Belarusian minorities. In comparison to periodicals and news portals, the number of organizations here is limited to the youth organization “Sonca.org”, the Belarusian Association in Kraków, “Wolna Białorus” which is opposing the Belarusian regime and “Belarusian National Memory”.

The periodical “Niva” (<http://niva.iig.pl/>) is registered in the region of Białystok and introduces itself as “the Belarusians’ Weekly in Poland”. It is a nationally orientated newspaper which is devoted to the problems of Belarusian ethnicity in the region of Podlasie which is densely populated by the ethnic Belarusian population. The website offers a great deal of information and links to the Belarusian national/oppositional organizations as well as to the resources of the Belarusian internet. Next to the archive going back to 1998, the periodical advertises a number of editions – monographs, poetry, publicist essays – issued under the authorship of the Program Council of the “Niva” weekly. In comparison to “Niva”, the website “Czasopis” (<http://czasopis.pl/>) represents not just a periodical but a broader forum or a platform to exchange views on cultural issues of the Belarusian ethnicity. Representing a forum for ethnic intellectuals, “Czasopis” contains, however, a small number of life opinions from the periodical’s audience. The self-reflection of Belarusians as national group prevents large-scale activities to open to and communicating with a broader public. The archive of the periodical is quite limited and goes back to the end of 2008.

The website of the news portal “Bialorus.pl” (<http://www.bialorus.pl/>) is operated by the Centrum for Citizens’ Education Poland-Belarus. The aim of the portal is informing the Belarusian and Polish citizens about the socio-political, cultural life as well as about the citizens’ initiatives and the development of the civil society in both countries, Poland and Belarus. The *Belarusian Service of the Polish Radio for Abroad* (<http://www.radyjo.net/>) has been established immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992. The broadcasting and electronic news service was originally committed to informing the citizens in Belarus about social and political processes in Poland as well as about activities of the Belarusian diaspora in Poland and of the Polish minorities in Belarus. After the change of political regime in Belarus, the information policy was modified towards the informing the public in Poland and worldwide about the situation in Belarus in order to influence the policy towards this country. The team of the Belarusian Service consists of

the representatives of the Belarusian minorities in Poland. The editor and some of the journalists studied Belarusian philology at Warsaw University. The independent trans-border Belarusian radio for Belarus “*Racyya*” (<http://new.racyja.com/>) started in Poland 1999 on initiative of the Belarusian Union in Poland and the Belarusian Association of Journalists (Belarus). The broadcasting of radio “*Racyya*” was extended from the territory of Białystok and Warsaw to the areas around the Belarusian-Polish border and the cities like Grodno and Brest. This radio station carries independent information with a critical stance towards the human rights situation in Belarus.

The website “*Sonca.org*” (<http://slonko.com.pl/>) is operated by the Belarusian Youth Association in Poland. The website is richly designed, very informative and detailed. It informs in full about the social life of young Belarusians in Poland, about their cultural, social, and political life. The diversity of headings and topics discussed suggests that Belarusian youth in Poland is very well organized and has lots of social initiatives. The organization “*Wolna Białorus*” (<http://www.wolnabialorus.org/>) or the Union of Support of Democracy in Belarus was founded by the most active representatives of Polish citizens as well as by Belarusians with strong civic positions who live in Poland. Apart from the distribution of information, it organizes political actions to draw the attention on the political regime in Belarus. The website concentrates not on analysis but rather on action and visual information through photo archives, videos and collage pictures. The language of the website can be described as politically “expressive” with the particular objective to overthrow the Belarusian regime. “*Belarusian National Memory*” (<http://b-n-p.org/>) organizes socially active youth who is concerned about the national memory of the Belarusian culture and history. The activists find inspiration with the name of the Belarusian national hero Kastus’ Kalinoŭski. Criticised are the Belarusian authorities who prefer the Soviet history to the national Belarusian, the latter contributed in the opinion of website activists to the national independence of Belarus.

### 5.3 Results of content analysis of internet resources

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#### 5.3.1 Dictionary

The highest frequency in the text fragments attributable to the Belarusians in Poland have the following categories (keywords), here in the alphabetic order:

##### Bilingualism

In the context of the ethnic politics, “bilingualism” means the introduction of the minority language as the second language in the country, where minorities constitute a sufficient part of the population. The politics of bilingualism is a much debated issue in the countries with “unsettled” ethnic problems.

##### Civil Activity

The category “civil activity” refers to political engagement and involvement of the representatives of ethnic minorities in non-governmental organizations and unions regarding different socio-political matters and human rights issues. This category examines the development of deliberative democracy and the ability of the members of ethnic minorities to influence the political process concerning the matters of their own community and to take part in the negotiation process at the local and regional level of governance.

### Communication, Criticism Representatives

The term “communication” denotes the relationship between the members of the same ethnic minority. It can be a relation of partnership as well as a relation of conflict and criticism, especially based on different political interests.

### Cultural Heritage

The category “cultural heritage” refers to concepts like art, architecture and folklore of an ethnicity and its ethic-moral and educational values, democratic and political contents of ethnic art, experiment art, esthetic reception and perception of the authentic ethnic culture. The category “cultural heritage” summarizes the cultural tradition of a minority as part of history and recent experience and relates to the narratives about national poets, writers, musicians and scientists.

### Host Country Critical

The category “host country critical” represents the views of an ethnic minority on the socio-political situation in the host country. Especially critical views shall be considered, how the members of an ethnic community position themselves towards official politics. According to such perception modes, the image and political views of an ethnic minority can be identified and the self-awareness as social group closely observed. The majority of ethnic groups share position of criticism towards the host country concerning the discrimination of their rights. However the politics of dialogue are typical especially when the host country supports the cultural programs of the minority.

### National Consciousness Pos

“National consciousness pos” means the ability of individuals to share feelings of belonging to a particular cultural tradition, historical and cultural heritage, to a group for which particular value system is typical. A political debate goes on between those who apparently share the values of belonging to a collective body and those whose collective identity is not sufficiently developed.

### Nationalism

The term “nationalism” in this study means a forceful proclamation and protection of national rights on the one hand and declaration of the superiority of a nation on the other. It becomes explicit if the national rights are enforced with legal, linguistic or physical means. “Nationalism” is a highly controversial category as it is based on values and ideological positions and depends on the personal point of view of observers of particular events. Apart from that, “nationalism” can have a positive and negative connotation. To judge whether a particular utterance is an expression of nationalism is not an easy task. For example, to suggest, that the Latvian government acts nationalistically when it disregards the national memory of the Russian minority and prohibits to wear Soviet war medals in public or to organize demonstrations “in Socialist style”, is a highly controversial matter. The category “ethnic and national conflict” provides a more or less solution to this problem as it points only at existing conflict without looking for those who is guilty in this conflict.

### Native Country Critical

The relation to the mother country can have different aspects. On the one hand, the minority can be closely connected to the mother country and receive a positive support from it. On the other hand, this relation can be an alienated one when the minority criticizes the native country for its



politics. The representatives of minorities, who understand themselves as part of the national opposition in their mother country like the Belarusians in Poland, demonstrate critical attitudes if human rights in the mother country are violated.

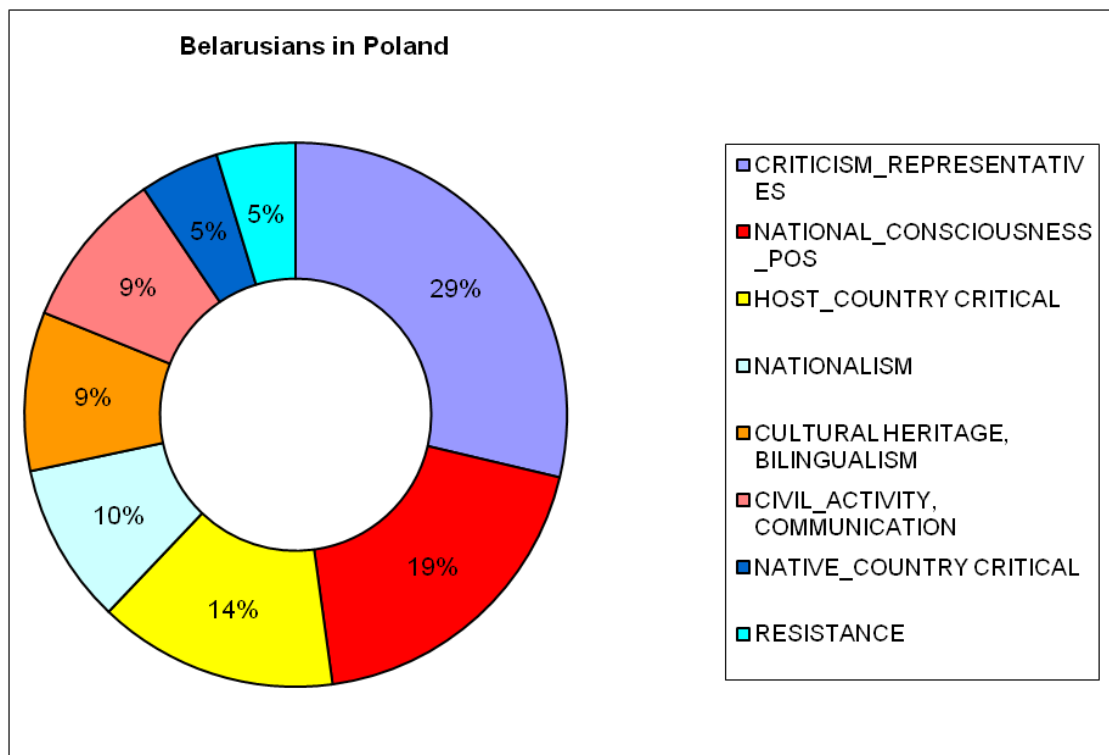
### Resistance

“Resistance” is a part of national renaissance. Resistance means national civil or military action against an oppressive regime as undertaken by the political opposition, through cultural dissent as well as by means of demonstrations, strikes and revolutions. It can be a military resistance during the wartime occupation, or a military or civil national opposition movement against imperialist politics.

### 5.3.2 Practical Realization

**Figure 1 demonstrates keywords/categories distribution according to the % of coded cases for the Belarusian minority in Poland.**

Figure 1: Keyword Frequency, % of Cases



The keyword/categories distribution in Figure 1 in relation to the analyzed cases demonstrates that the Belarusians in Poland have a distinctively developed community life. According to an established opinion among the Belarusians in Poland, the Belarusian ethnic culture could not find supporters among the Belarusian citizens in the home country, but this support could be found instead among the Belarusian initiatives abroad (NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS POS, 19%).

A big attention, which the Belarusians in Poland pay to the national consciousness coincides with the fact, that in the majority of cases of the Belarusian resources in Poland the criticism is made explicit toward the members of the Belarusian ethnic group (CRITICISM REPRESENTATIVES, 29%). Especially the representatives of the Belarusian minority, who claim to be national intellectuals, have damaged reputations. According to a standing critical comment of fellow Belaru-

sians, Belarusian “pseudo” intellectuals, who are more interested in Western grants, are not even able to use the Belarusian language properly.

A critical attitude toward the lack of the national consciousness among the ethnic Belarusians in Poland is expressed by Sakrat Yanovich, a representative of the national Belarusian intellectual thought in Poland, in the following quotation:

- Poles become those who have a weak character or lack of education. To become a Pole is more simple, no big intellectuality is needed nor expression of will.  
Translation from Belarusian: Палякамі ў нас робяцца тыя, у каго слабы характар або недавучанасць. Стацца палякам прасцей, не трэба столькі інтэлігентнасці ані праяваў волі.
- The process of assimilation stops at the threshold of the national intellectuality. Dirty Van'ka from King's Stable won't be proud of what he has, because his life is difficult without Belarusianhood.  
Translation from Belarusian: Працэс асіміляцыі спыняецца на парозе нацыянальнай інтэлігентнасці. Замурзаны Ванька з Каралёвага Стойла не будзе ганарыцца сваім, бо ў яго і без беларускасці цяжкі лёс.<sup>52</sup>

Belarusian minorities criticize the host country Poland for not paying attention to the rights of the Belarusian community and for not caring for the representation of the ethnic communities in the governmental bodies (HOST COUNTRY CRITICAL, 14%). The Belarusian minority which the Belarusian resources in Poland describe as “colonial population” of the main nation is not able to influence social life in its region. The people show resignation in official politics and about the fact that it became difficult to influence something in real politics.

The resources of the Belarusian minorities in Poland try to create a narrative about the existence of the Belarusian people (NATIONALISM, 10%). In their opinion, the Belarusians have their national historical symbol, namely the day of the foundation of the Belarusian National Republic on 25 March 1918. Many generations of the nationally conscious Belarusians had been fighting for the national and state independence (RESISTANCE, 5%). However Belarusian national statehood has been realized, the long Communist period has prevented the full development of the Belarusian national culture until now.

The representatives of national Belarusian thinking try to legitimize the existence of the Belarusian history, culture, traditions, and language which goes hand in hand with a strong support of the bilingualism (CULTURAL HERITAGE/BILINGUALISM, 9%). Although the Belarusian language in Poland is still being used in daily life by some parts of the population, the tendency is that the Belarusian language will survive, at the end of the day, only at the philological faculties of the universities. Only a minority of ethnic Belarusians have declared that they use the Belarusian language actively, and that they are not going to give up their nationality and their language which they inherited from their parents and grand parents.

The importance of the language for the development of the national consciousness illustrates the following quotation from the periodical “Niva”:

- It follows from the analysis of the census data that Belarusian consciousness was preserved by the population of those regions where the schools remained where at least the Belarusian language was taught.

<sup>52</sup> Yanovich, S. (without date) «Без моладзі няма нацыі» (There is no nation without youth), Sonca.org (Belarusian Youth Association), internet WWW-Site at URL: <http://sonca.org/biez-moladzi-niama-nacyi.html>.

Translation from Belarusian: З аналізу даных перапісу вынікае, што беларускую свядомасць захавалі жыхары тых мясцовасцей, дзе ператрывалі школы, у якіх прынамсі вывучалася беларуская мова.<sup>53</sup>

As follows from the Belarusian resources in Poland, the collapse of communism, democratization and intensified communication between countries on a par with the introduction of the institute of private property had decisive impact on the development of the Belarusian nation as modern European phenomenon. The Belarusian youth movement in Poland undertakes artistic, cultural and educational initiatives devoted to the national memory, Belarusian traditions and political issues (CIVIL ACTIVITY/COMMUNICATION, 9%). Organisations like the Belarusian Youth Association can be described as traditionally and conservatively oriented aiming at discovering and popularising of the famous and forgotten historical names and events from the Belarusian history. The changing mindset of the Belarusians is suggested by a number of political youth organizations in Poland like “Mlody Front”, “Mloda Bialorus” or “Mlodzi Demokraci” etc., who set themselves the goal to protest against the political regime in Belarus (NATIVE COUNTRY CRITICAL, 5%).

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<sup>53</sup> Miranovich, Ya. (2004) «Асіміляцыя беларусаў Беластоцчыны» (Assimilation of the Belarusians of Białystok), Niva (periodical), (4) 25 January, internet WWW-Site at URL: <http://niva.iig.pl/>.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

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### 6.1 Research conclusions

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The main findings of the ENRI-VIS Survey (ENRI-VIS) cover the following issues: ethnicity, ethnic identity and national identity; family and households; xenophobia, conflicts and discrimination; social and political capital, participation and attitudes towards European Union.

Factors that seem to be of the highest importance for preservation of minority identity are religion and the place of residence. Being a Belarusian in Poland is mainly the issue of religion and, to some extent, the language used; however, it seems that many respondents have had no encounters with the latter. For most respondents, the most adequate category turned out to be „Polish of Belarusian origin” (59.3%), the second largest category is “Belarusian living in Poland” (36.6%). The composition of the households examined is homogeneous: usually, we encounter persons referring to themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. It seems that no dichotomy exists, which would dictate selection of either full assimilation or preservation of own traditions and customs. For a large percentage of respondents, both are possible at the same time.

While the demand for preservation of tradition and culture declared is high, the low level of consumption of Belarusian and Belarusian-language media is surprising. The only exception is the radio, which seems to be rooted in the Polish policy of providing Polish Belarusians with access to broadcasts in their mother tongue.

The respondents declare strong attachment to their ethnic group (45.6% declared very strong attachment), and a much weaker bond with Belarus as such (15.8% feel strongly attached to it). They declare much stronger attachment to Poland (51.6% expressing strong attachment); however, most of them are attached strongly to their place of residence (as many as 71.1% respondents declared very strong attachment in this category). Most respondents do not keep in touch with anyone on the other side of the border; moreover, most of them do not know anyone living in Belarus; only one out of five respondents has any relatives living there.

The broad geographic categories seem to be of little importance for the respondents. The respondents perceive their links with Eastern Europe and Europe as such as being quite weak. Those attached strongly to Eastern Europe constitute 17.2%, while attachment to Europe as such has been declared by a slightly larger group of only 20.5% respondents. However, their sense of attachment to Belarus itself is even weaker.

According to statements of the respondents, they do not find it problematic to accept Belarusians and Poles as their neighbors, family members or colleagues. Moreover, only a few persons stated that there was a strong tension in Poland between the Poles and the Belarusians. It seems that from the perspective of the respondents, a more significant tension can be observed between the Poles and the Romani people. Only 13% respondents are afraid of losing their tradition and culture, but 1/5 are afraid of worsening of the situation of ethnic minorities in Poland. Nevertheless, a very small percentage of all respondents declared their willingness to leave Poland if they had such opportunity. Moreover, it is not certain they would be willing to migrate to the east.

At the declarative level, the respondents showed a general trust towards individual nations, particularly the Poles and the Belarusians. The level of trust towards institutions, particularly the Polish government and the parliament, was lower, but it seems that the attitudes of respondents in this regard are similar to those of an average Pole. The respondents assess membership in the European Union as being neutral for Poland; at the same time, they do not perceive any differ-

ences between treatment of Belarusians or their own impact on the surrounding reality before and after Poland's accession to the Community.

The results of quantitative research are supported by the findings of individual biographical interviews (ENRI-BIO), which cover the following issues: European identity, national identity in relation to Poland and Belarus, regional identity, civic participation and ethnic organization, ethnic conflicts and discrimination experiences.

The great majority of interviewees declared that they felt European in one way or another. However, it has to be mentioned that only few respondents expressed deeper and more reflective thoughts on the issue of European identity, e.g. pointing to the difficult question of what it means to be an European. Opinions of other respondents suggest that Europe, in fact, equals European Union. It has to be mentioned that the younger interviewees were relatively more reflective and interested in this subject than the older ones. Some of them pointed out that the common idea of Europe was typically western and excluded the strongly eastern cultural elements and eastern countries. Most of the respondents associated the idea of Europe with open borders and broad opportunities of travelling.

As for the issue of the Polish national identity, three main attitudes may be identified among the respondents: declarations of a Polish nationality enriched by Belarusian origins and/or Orthodox faith; declarations of attachment to Poland as a homeland and due to citizenship, but not the national identity; statements, which describe the Polish national identity as a sort of a "negative" point of reference, which helps to answer the question "who I am if I am not Polish". Polish language and culture are often described by interviewees as simply too dominant in everyday life. In general, Polish is the language of public institutions, education system and also the public social relations, e.g. at a doctor's office, at the commune office etc.

As for the issue of Belarusian national identity, relations with Belarus as their country of origin, described by the respondents, express the three main types of attitudes: no reference to Belarus in general, a reference to Belarus understood as its people and culture and not the state, reference to Belarus as a source of the original Belarusian tradition and culture. According to one of younger respondents, the negative image of Belarus as an authoritarian regime country makes the matter of identification in terms of Belarusian nationality more difficult.

The crucial elements of Belarusian identity are the language (Belarusian language and Belarusian dialects) and the Orthodox religion. As for the language, a childhood experience shared by all of the older respondents is learning the Belarusian local dialect as their first language, although they usually were able to understand Polish due contacts with their Polish neighbors in the village or Polish officials. Younger respondents usually stated that Polish was their first language, although they were able to understand the Belarusian dialect perfectly usually thanks to their grandparents. According to the respondents, Orthodox religion is the important distinctive feature of Belarusian minority. However, the Orthodox tradition is perceived by some younger respondents as distant and too mystic and sophisticated to understand.

The issue of regional identity is described in two main dimensions: strong identification with the local community and "own people", which may be expressed as "being from here" without defining clearly the national identity; the second dimension refers to the emotional identification with the city, town or village as a place of living and/or birth. The former attitude is typical mainly for older generations and it is present in the respondents' memories of their grandparents or grand-grandparents. Other interviewees describe their regional identity in relation to the strong bond

with a place of residence and also in terms of the specificity of the region, which is much more ethnically heterogeneous in comparison with the central part of Poland.

According to the interviewees' experiences and opinions, the processes of polonization of the Belarusian minority were supported by two main phenomena. First, the intensive rural-urban migration in search for better life opportunities, which often meant being "uprooted" from the local environment, shaped by the Belarusian minority, and starting a new life among the dominant Polish majority in the city. Secondly, due to migration processes and the context of negative valorization of Belarusian origin, which affected especially the older and middle generations, the intergenerational continuity of the Belarusian national identity was disturbed. Therefore, the youngest generations often lacked the "base", on which they could have developed the sense of their Belarusian origin and identity.

According to respondents, the Belarusian minority in Poland is rather poorly organized, despite the relative concentration of this population in the territory of Podlasie. Older respondents were usually active within the organizational structures of the minority, established by the state during the Polish Peoples' Republic or/and participated in activities organized by the Orthodox church parishes. As for younger interviewees, the majority of them were or are still involved in the activities of three main types of minority organizations: Orthodox youth groups, student associations and folkloric music and/or dance groups.

Poland is definitely not a country of open or aggressive discrimination towards the Belarusian minority. The minority rights are guaranteed and respected, and activities of the minority are supported financially. Referring to the present times, a great majority of the respondents declared never having personally experienced any ethnic discrimination because of their Belarusian identity. However, they still encounter some "incidents", especially insults, which are related to Orthodox faith and Belarusian dialect. Also, the opinions and stereotypes related to the rural and parochial character of the Belarusian minority are somehow still vivid.

According to the findings of expert interviews (ENRI-EXI), the main issues associated with the Belarusian minority in Poland refer to its poor recognition in the Polish society. Basically, these problems are caused by: the low awareness of historic minorities, the limitation of activity of minorities to their own "niches" and also the increasingly "private" character of Belarusian national identity, mostly due to negative stereotypes. The existing Polish state policy towards its national and ethnic minorities is shaped by the provisions of the act on national and ethnic minorities and on maintaining the regional language. This act warrants minority rights, like e.g. the possibilities of usage of minority languages or dialects as the additional official languages or the presence of minorities in the public media. Also, it defines the framework of the state financial support for minority organizations and institutions. However, there are no clear and systematic programs, which would be focused on increasing the awareness of minority issues in the Polish society on one hand, and mitigating the stereotypes on the other.

## 6.2 Practical recommendations

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As it was already mentioned, the main issues associated with the Belarusian minority in Poland refer to its poor recognition in the Polish society. Basically, these problems are caused by the low awareness of historic minorities, which partly emerge from "the policy of social uniformization" implemented in the period of the Polish Peoples' Republic. After the political changes of year 1956, minority structures and organizations were established and started to operate under control of the state. However, due to the state policy, which created the "niches" that enabled the cultiva-

tion of minority culture and tradition, but of course didn't support these minorities in terms of empowerment, the Polish identity was seen as the one that offers more life possibilities. In consequence, today we also face the limitation of activity of minorities to their own "niches" and also the increasingly "private" character of Belarusian national identity, mostly due to negative stereotypes. It happens quite often that the Poles, especially from more homogenous parts of Poland, automatically associate people of Belarusian origin with Belarus. Apart from that, in many cases, issues of Belarusian minority in Poland are mixed up with issues of migrants.

### **6.2.1 Recommendations for civil society organizations**

It is surprising, that, as for the third sector, the cooperation between different national and/or ethnic minorities is rather rare. In this context, the cooperation between the Jacek Kuroń Foundation for Education, The Association for Children and Youth Learning Belarusian Language „Ab-Ba” and The House of Lithuanian Culture from Puńsk should be considered as a good practice. These institutions worked together on the project “The Grand Duchy of Lithuania – our common heritage”, which involved Belarusian, Lithuanian and Polish children. However, such examples of cooperation were rarely mentioned by our respondents. Therefore, the successfully implemented joint projects of various national and ethnic minorities should be highly promoted among the actors of the broadly understood third sector.

As it was already mentioned, the state funds are distributed annually among the minority organizations and institutions on the basis of their applications submitted through competition. More active minorities are provided with less funds for each particular project, as they submit more applications in total. Therefore, such system may in fact prevent the implementation of more large scale, long term and expensive initiatives. These tendencies might be possibly overcome by the open cooperation between the organizations of different ethnic groups, in frame of which individual events could be seen as parts of larger, multicultural joint project, e.g. promoting the multicultural historical heritage of Podlasie. It would be recommended to create the open and interactive on-line platform of national and ethnic minorities in Poland, which will encourage the exchange of information, experiences and good practices between the organizations of various national and ethnic groups. Except for religious structures, we deal with only separate portals and webpages of different groups and their organizations.

What is more, the contacts between minority organizations and Polish NGOs are rather rare. It seems that they do not consider each other as potential partners. The cooperation might be useful for minority organizations, as Polish NGOs are usually more experienced in applying for various external funds. In exchange, such cooperation would enrich also the activities of Polish organizations, which, due to the available funding, often focus only on immigrants.

### **6.2.2 Recommendations for governmental bodies and officials at local, regional, national and supra-national levels**

According to the Act of 6 January 2005 on National and Ethnic Minorities and on Regional Languages, the communes, where at least 20% of inhabitants belong to a national or ethnic minority, have the right to introduce the minority's language as the second, auxiliary language to be used in official contexts. According to some respondents, the officials of communes and municipalities, where the share of Belarusians reaches or exceeds this percentage, should promote this possibility on a larger scale and encourage the practical use of this solution by the minority.

As for the regional level, it seems that the regional governmental bodies in Podlasie don't really implement any regular and systematic policy on national and ethnic minorities. It would be rec-

ommended to provide such institution as the proxy of the provincial governor with more significant funds and tools, which will enable not only responding to the problems raised by minorities, but also creating more long term policy. The preservation and popularization of cultural and historical heritage should become one of the most significant priorities on the regional level, especially in such historically multicultural areas as Podlasie.

Both local and regional governmental bodies could also contribute to the issue of cooperation between different national/ethnic groups and Polish organizations. One of possible solution might be promoting of such partnerships in frame of distribution of public funds to non-governmental organizations. For example, the applications submitted by partnership would obtain more points or a higher rank. The institutional rules of such competitions should be carefully prepared and discussed with all interested actors in order to avoid the domination of stronger organizations or “paper partnerships”.

As for financial support provided by the state on the national level within the framework of competences of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, Department for Denominations and National and Ethnic Minorities, the communication between the state institutions and their beneficiaries should be improved as the representants of minority organizations consider the procedures of funding slightly unclear.

In general, it seems that the long term and systematic policy of “national and ethnic minority mainstreaming” should be implemented in Poland. It is related to the fact, that most of the problems between the Belarusian minority and the Polish majority usually assume a form of personal insults or negative reactions, which are based on stereotypes of backwardness. The “social visibility” of minorities on one hand and the higher awareness and sensitivity among the Poles on the other, might be accomplished by broadly understood and multidimensional education. Firstly, the presence of the Belarusian minority in the Polish mass media should be improved. This process might be implemented by using various forms of expression, from documentary movies to Belarusian characters in popular soap operas. Secondly, there is a need of improvement of Polish education system, that should put more stress on the issues of cultural diversification of Poland, especially in terms of historical national and ethnic minorities. The focus on this subject would be highly recommended especially in the most homogenous parts of central Poland. Thirdly, Poland needs a systematic policy and programs, which would facilitate the ecumenical cooperation between the Catholic and Orthodox church, also in terms of giving the Polish majority more opportunities to become more familiar with the Orthodox religion.

### 6.2.3 Suggestion for future research and follow-up studies

According to the respondents, it is possible to identify the more or less clear “turning points” in some of the life stories. These “breakthroughs” had a significant impact on the subjective sense of Belarusian national identity and often resulted in conscious efforts to develop it further. For example, one of younger respondents mentioned undergoing “a breakthrough” at the university, when she suddenly felt separated from the minority environment present at home. Other young respondent also experienced a certain “breakthrough” and developed a sense of a Belarusian national identity on the basis of his activity in the minority folkloric group. In this context, it would be extremely interesting to explore more deeply the personal motivations, social incentives and other processes, which underlay these “breakthroughs”, especially in relation to younger generations, which occur to have the most complex “trajectories” of the development of identity. What is more, their experiences are worth investigating also in the context of well-discussed issues of fragmented and multidimensional identities. Other interesting aspect to investigate more in-deep



could be the structure and changes of social networks based on the ethnicity, the advantages and disadvantages of participation of such networks and their influence on the identities.

## 7 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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