

## **A Nationalising State and Liberal Democracy**

Ethnic policy is the public policy that regulates ethnic relations in the state. In practice, we often limit thinking about it to the issue of protecting national and ethnic minorities. We see it as a system of solutions, incentives and laws to ensure the cultural security of non-dominant groups. Thus, we often forget that ethnic policy itself also regulates the problem of recognition, that is, it determines which group is counted as a minority, why this is so and what follows from it. And it is these general norms that are of paramount importance for maintaining diversity, preserving distinct cultures of different ethnic groups and ensuring that individuals are fully protected, especially against discrimination.

Moreover, in nation-states, also in Central Europe, we are often confronted with the existence of a dominant ethnic group, considered to be the 'core' of the state. The culture of this ethnic group thus becomes the national culture, presented as a legitimised culture and setting cultural norms. Many times we do not question this state of affairs. For example, we often fail to consider why the term 'cultural policy' only applies in practice to activities related to the culture of the dominant group, while activities related to the cultures of other groups are classified as 'ethnic policy'.

We also very rarely realise that we are dealing with competing claims for the protection of the cultural security of different ethnic groups (dominant group and minority group or minority groups between themselves). It seems that in the public debate or in the legislative process we have not even developed a language and a model for weighing these claims and assessing their effects on the different groups. Actions are taken from case to case and often result from the implementation of solutions to which the Polish state is obliged under international treaties. Unfortunately, this does not always mean that these solutions are implemented in a well-considered manner.

The aim of the project is to examine relations between the majority and non-dominant groups in the Republic of Poland. The theory of nationalising state is employed to explain strategy of the state in regard to ethnic policy. Also, the boundary-making process which determines how national and ethnic groups are defined is analysed. Then, the politicisation of ethnicities and demands made by representatives of those ethnicities are studied as a part of the ethnic-bargaining process. In the end, the capacity of the political system to accommodate various interests of minority groups is examined.

The study is to include an analysis of data from the 2021 census. In addition, an analysis of the discourse between non-dominant groups and the dominant group, in which the boundaries of ethnic groups and the extent of protection that the state is willing to provide to them, is applied. The political behaviours and other actions of non-state and public actors taken in relation to the state's ethnic policy are also analysed. The main focus of the research is ethnic policy and the ethnic structure of the Polish state. However, the project employs also comparative elements showing how similar issues are dealt with in other states of Central Europe.