

**Analytical Report PHARE RAXEN\_CC  
Minority Education**

**RAXEN\_CC National Focal Point Poland  
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights**

EDUCATION OF THE NATIONAL AND  
ETHNIC INORITIES IN POLAND

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Polish legislation assures national and ethnic minorities the freedom to maintain and develop their own language, cultivate their customs and traditions and develop their own culture. They have the right to establish their own educational and cultural institutions as well as those that serve to protect their religious identity and participate in resolution of cultural identity issues. Public schools enable students to maintain their national, ethnic, language and religious identities, in particular, through the study of language and their own history and culture. Students belonging to national and ethnic minorities receive essentially the same education as other children. However, in accordance with applicable law, they may obtain education in their native language or additionally study the minority language, history, geography and culture. Such education is organised on a discretionary basis, meaning the school director is obligated to organise it when minority parents or students declare interest therein. The form of the education desired is presented when filing a declaration of interest. Polish law provides for the following possibilities:

- schools and preschools with the native language as the language of instruction,
- bilingual schools and preschools,
- schools with supplementary education of the native language for members of the minority,
- interscholastic sections with supplementary education of the native language for members of the minority.

The most popular form of organised minority education is schools with supplementary study of the native language. According to government data, out of a total of 612 schools that teach minorities, 34 have the native language as the language of instruction, 14 are bilingual schools, 528 provide supplementary study of the native language and 36 are interscholastic sections with supplementary study of the native language.

Education of national and ethnic minorities is financed through the state budget. Currently, members of the following minorities take advantage of the ability to learn in their native language or to learn the language as an additional subject in public schools: Byelorussian, Kashubian, Lithuanian, Lemki, German, Slovak and Ukrainian. The main problems encountered in the organisation of minority education are funding shortages (especially for small schools) and an insufficient number of curricula, school textbooks and teaching staff. Moreover, every minority deals with its own particular problems, arising from demographic, geographic, political and historical reasons.

Minority organisations are intimately involved in the process of organising minority education. They take active part in writing textbooks and curricula, organising additional activities as well as lobbying to improve the education situation.

The Roma minority is a specific case. There are no schools with the Roma language as the language of instruction and there are no educational facilities with supplementary instruction of that language. Roma education levels are generally very low (some Roma children do not attend school at all and the majority end their education at the elementary level or drop out after completing only a few grades). For the last few years, the state has

been undertaking activities to improve Roma education such as: training and employing Roma assistants and assistant teachers, organisation of remedial classes, equipping schools with teaching aids, paying for children's meals at schools, covering the costs of transportation and insurance, purchasing textbooks and school supplies, organising interest circles, school celebrations and trips with the participation of Roma children, organising camps and day camps, paying for preschool costs and financing kindergartens. These types of activities were mainly conducted within the Małopolskie province as part of the "Pilot government programme for the Roma community in the Małopolskie Voivodship for the years 2001-2003". NGOs, including Roma associations, got involved in this work. Currently, it is planned to expand the programme nationally.

The actual execution of the state policy in the realm of education occurs on the central authority / local authority / schools / national minorities and ethnic groups plane. The development of minority education depends on the "good will" of these four leading actors. In practice, this results in a certain dilution of responsibility; it is difficult point out responsible parties when specific programmes fail. The parties accuse each other of hindering cooperation, which at times results in their withdrawal from participation.

Above all, irrespective of steps taken to improve said cooperation (such as making local authorities aware of the minorities' educational needs), a precise register of schools conducting education of national and ethnic minorities should be prepared as the data possessed by the state do not reflect the actual situation. In continuing the programmes for the Roma, authorities should develop a more effective system for financing Roma assistants. Further, successive strategies for the development of education for particular minorities should be developed and all efforts should be made to maintain small schools, which teach national and ethnic minorities.

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### 3. INTRODUCTION

Poland is essentially a country that is ethnically and nationally homogenous. According to the most recent national census conducted in June 2002, 96.74% of the population declare Polish to be their nationality. The others identified through the national census are: Silesians, Germans, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Roma, Russians, Lemki, Lithuanians, Kashubians Slovaks, Jews, Armenians and Czechs [see *Appendix 1: National and ethnic minorities in Poland*]. Byelorussians, Kashubians, Lithuanians, Lemki, Germans, Slovaks and Ukrainians take advantage of minority schooling. The largest portion of this text is devoted to Lithuanian education, as it is the most advanced in development (both in terms of number of curricula and textbooks, as well as relatively – with respect to the population of the minority), as well as Roma education, due to the large number of activities undertaken to organise such.

In the *Legislation and policies* section we present the general principles under which education of ethnic and national minorities is organised, as well as institutions responsible for that education. The main directions of state policy in this realm are also outlined. The *Minority education* section describes the forms of minority education and its actual functioning. It notes the chief difficulties associated with organisation of minority education and specific problems of particular minority groups. The *Good practices* section sets out the activities undertaken for the purpose of improving Roma education. Finally, in the *Conclusions and critical remarks* portion, we turn our attention to the effects of local authorities' attitudes and the quality of their cooperation with national and ethnic minority organisations on the success of the state policy planned at the central level.

The goal of this study has been to indicate the main problems related to organisation of minority schooling. The appropriate methodology was used:

- various research tools. Thus, for this report, we performed an analysis of legislation concerning minority education, conducted in-depth interviews with central and local level officials responsible for minority education, teachers and representatives of NGOs. We also utilised the reports and activity of the government Team for National Minorities, bulletin published by National and Ethnic Minorities Commission of the Polish parliament, the Sejm, the report of the Bureau of Research of Chancellery of the Sejm, descriptions of government programmes for the Roma community, results of research regarding minority education conducted by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in mid-2002 and other works [see *Appendix 2: Selected bibliography*].
- identification of consecutive stages of analyses. Thus, the first step was the analysis of the legal framework for organising education for national and ethnic minorities in Poland. As a result the model outlook emerged. In the same time, we analysed the strategy of the state policy regarding implementation of this outlook (above all, using government reports and interviewing government representatives). Then, we examined functioning of minority schooling in practice (above all, using statistical data and interviewing the main actors). Following the comparison of state theoretical considerations with the practice, the main difficulties of minority schooling organisation appeared. The in-depth analysis of particular issues provided insight on the main problems.

## 4. LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

### 4.1. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Poland is a signatory to all significant international documents concerning the protection of human rights (e.g. International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, documents developed by OSCE) as well as those safeguarding national and ethnic minority rights (including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education, Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Central European Initiative Instrument for the Protection of Minority Rights). National minority issues are also one of the subjects of bilateral agreements signed by Poland with all of its neighbours and other states (Germany, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania), provision regarding minorities found their place in the treaties with Moldavia, Uzbekistan, Greece).<sup>1</sup> All these documents define the international standards for protection of the human rights of national minorities, including the right to maintain their national identity and the right to education.

Polish legislation contains a series of laws concerning the safeguarding of ethnic and minority rights and proscriptions against discrimination. However, due to the limited scope of this report, only laws directly concerning the issue of minority education will be cited. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland assures Polish citizens belonging to national and ethnic minorities the freedom to maintain and develop their own language, to maintain customs and traditions, and to develop their own culture. National and ethnic minorities shall have the right to establish educational and cultural institutions, institutions designed to protect religious identity, as well as to participate in the resolution of matters connected with their cultural identity [art. 35]. The Law on the System of Education dated September 7, 1991, provides that public schools enable students to maintain their national, ethnic, language and religious identity, especially in the study of language and their own history and culture. Moreover, in their didactic and rearing functions, public schools ensure the maintenance of local culture and traditions [art. 13]. Detailed regulations regarding education of national minorities are contained in a decree of the Minister of National Education and Sport dated December 3, 2002, regarding the conditions and manner in which schools and public facilities shall execute tasks enabling maintenance of the national, ethnic, language and religious identity of students belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Poland, Biuro Studiów i Ekspertyz Kancelarii Sejmu RP (2003) *Problemy dyskryminacji osób należących do mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych w Polsce (polityka państwa, regulacje prawne i nastawienia społeczne) [Problems regarding discrimination of persons belonging to national and ethnic minorities in Poland (state policy, legal regulations and social attitudes)]*, p. 8.

Students belonging to national and ethnic minorities receive essentially the same education as other children [see *Appendix 3: Educational system in Poland*]. However, in accordance with applicable law, they may learn in their native language or additionally study the minority's language, history, geography and culture. Such education is organised on a discretionary basis. It is based on a written declaration expressing the desire for that type of education filed with the educational facility's director by the children's parents, legal guardians, or by the children themselves if they attend grades above the elementary level. Such a declaration is filed once and remains effective until its express revocation or the completion of education. The director of the school has a duty to organise such education if the requisite number of declarations is received; at the elementary and middle school level this must be at least seven per one grade level, while in high school it is 14. When the number of willing students is lower than the required minimum, the teaching of the minority's language may be organised in the form of interdepartmental units (grouping students from various departments of the same class level). Again, in this case the number of students may not be lower than seven in elementary and middle schools and 14 in high schools, or interclass units (created from students at different grade levels if the number of students is between three and 14). When it is not possible to organise teaching of the native language at the school (e.g. due to an insufficient number of declarations or lack of an instructor) interscholastic sections are organised. When filing a declaration of the desire to learn a minority language, the form in which such studies are to be organised is described. The law provides for the following forms of minority education:

- schools and preschools in native language as the language of instruction,
- bilingual schools and preschools,
- schools with supplementary teaching of native language to members of minority,
- interscholastic sections with supplemental teaching of the native language to members of minority.

In addition, to the extent financial resources allow, public schools and facilities may organise additional activities for national minorities, e.g. art lessons. In organising education for minority students, the entities managing schools and school directors cooperate with national or ethnic minority organisations.

Polish law does not specifically regulate the access of graduates from minority schools to education in Polish institutions of higher learning – they may continue their studies in the same manner as other students, however, they may not take their entrance exams to said schools in their native language.

Elements of knowledge regarding minorities are being included in teaching conducted at regular schools. Framework curricula provide for the possibility of instruction in the history and culture of ethnic and national minorities and their presence within the social life of contemporary Poland in subjects such as Polish language, history, geography, citizenship education and courses devoted to regional and European education (decree of the Minister of National Education and Sport dated February 26, 2002). Such courses are primarily held in schools located in areas populated by minorities.

Education of national and ethnic minorities is financed through the state budget. Schools which teach minorities receive higher education subsidies by 20% per student than those which do not conduct such activity, and by 50% in the case of schools where the number

of students does not exceed 42 [decree of the Minister of National Education and Sport dated December 28, 2002, regarding the principles of allocating general educational subsidies to local government entities]. School textbooks and auxiliary teaching texts for students to the extent necessary to maintain national, ethnic, and language identity may receive additional financing from the state budget, from the portion thereof controlled by the minister appropriate to issues of education.

## 4.2 POLICIES

On the part of legislative authority, the issue of national and ethnic minorities is under the jurisdiction of the National and Ethnic Minorities Commission of the Polish Sejm. The commission is primarily composed of Sejm deputies who belong to national minorities or come from areas populated by the minorities.

The main executive body involved in education in Poland is the Minister of National Education and Sport. As part of this body, tasks concerning national and ethnic minority education are under the jurisdiction of the Department of General and Special Education and Social Prevention. On the province level, the bodies responsible for education are the province School Superintendents. The Superintendent's Offices have no statutory units/departments/positions for minority education. The superintendent delegates such matters to particular employees, usually visiting employees.

The Team for National Minorities appointed by the government also handles national and ethnic minority education issues. The team consists of the representatives of various state bodies, representatives of national and ethnic minorities as well as non-governmental organisations who participate in its work. The chair of the team is the undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, the vice chair is the undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Culture, and the secretary is an employee of Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration. The team has a subteam for National Minorities Education (formed in 2001 to replace the previously existing education group) and a subteam for Roma Issues (formed in 2002; education of the Roma minority has taken the leading role in this body's works). The first of the organisations has an expert status – representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration and Ministry of National Education and Sport along with education specialists participate in the group's meetings. The second subteam is a consulting-advisory body – in addition to government employees, representatives of Roma associations also participate.

In practice, the team for National Minorities is the most important state body shaping policy respecting minorities and setting the main directions of activity in that realm. Its goal is the development of systemic solutions for particular problems. The team's first major accomplishment was development of the "Lithuanian minority education development strategy" (in 2001), which arose from the need to reorganise the network of Lithuanian schools due to demographic changes, constant financial problems and a general national educational reform in 1998 [see *Minority schooling in practice*]. Currently, work has begun on a German minority education development strategy. However, it is worth mentioning that both Lithuanian and German education is relatively well developed with respect to education of other minorities. The fact that the task force's work focused on them was the result of effective lobbying by minority representatives.

Another issue in which the Team was involved was improvement of the financial situation of schools that teach minorities. The issue particularly concerned small schools. An increase of the subsidy was proposed for schools with fewer than 42 students and this idea was executed through an appropriate decree of the Minister of National Education and Sport. Because this did not satisfactorily solve the financial problems of schools that teach minorities, a one percent budgetary reserve was established at the Ministry of National Education and Sport from which the Minister could designate funds for ongoing needs if necessary (Lithuanian schools received additional funding in 2003).

Issues concerning education of Roma children are given extensive amounts of time in the work of the Team. However, it should be noted that education of children belonging to the Roma minority does not fall within the meaning of minority education provided for in art. 13 of the Law on the System of Education and decrees regarding the conditions and manner in which schools and public facilities execute tasks to maintain the national, ethnic, language, and religious identities of students belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups. The Roma are the least educated minority in Poland – a portion of Roma children do not attend school at all and the majority complete only elementary education or abandon it after completing only a few grades. Roma children often have problems with education from the very beginning. The numerous causes of this state of affairs include lack of familiarity with the Polish language and lack of pre-school preparation, the generally bad material situation of Roma families as well as cultural differences. In light of that, efforts of the Team for National Minorities were primarily directed toward developing a strategy for incorporating the Roma in the general educational system. They centred around creating better conditions for Roma children in schools, by both financing additional classes and providing social assistance. These tasks were executed as part of the “Pilot government programme for the Roma community in the Małopolskie province for the years 2001-2003”, for which improvement of Roma children’s education was a priority [see *Good practices* section]. Similar tasks concerning Roma children’s education were found in the Roma programme developed by the government, which is to be executed in 2004-2013 across all of Poland (“Programme for the Roma Community in Poland”). In addition, an article allowing schools to organise additional remedial courses for students of Roma origin was added to the decree of the Minister of National Education and Sport amended in 2002, regarding the organisation of education for national minorities and ethnic groups. As a result, schools with Roma students may receive additional financing as part of increased educational subsidies on the same terms as schools providing language instruction or instruction in a minority language.

To a large extent, the success of minority policies planned at the central level depends on the activities of local authorities that administer the educational subsidies, especially at the local government level. Thus, the bodies that manage the schools as well as school directors are actually responsible for implementing this policy – much depends on their attitudes and activity as well as their ability to cooperate with minorities.

## **5. MINORITY SCHOOLING IN PRACTICE**

### **5.1. 5.1 FORMS OF ORGANISING EDUCATION FOR MINORITIES**

Currently, the option of learning in a native language or studying a native language as an additional subject in public schools is being utilised by students belonging to the following minorities: Byelorussian, Kashubian, Lithuanian, Lemki, German, Slovak and Ukrainian. Appropriate preschools or adjunct preschools as part of elementary schools also function for these minorities. In addition, there are three private facilities that organise minority education; two schools that teach Hebrew (in Wroclaw and Warsaw) and an interscholastic section that teaches Greek (Wroclaw). There is no schooling for other minorities, due to the fact that they either have not declared such a will, or the number of willing students was not sufficient. A separate issue is the realisation of the right to education by Roma students – this question is discussed in the Good practices section.

There is no precise data concerning schools providing minority education. The available government data collected by the Central Statistical Office [see Appendix 4: Teaching of a native language in school facilities for children and youth of national and ethnic minorities] does not accurately reflect the actual situation. Similarly, the majority of Voivodship School Superintendents do not possess complete information regarding minority education within their areas. This applies to both the number of schools and the form of education they provide. Problems especially arise in the categorisation of schools based on the form of teaching. As previously mentioned, Polish law provides for the following forms of organised minority education: schools and preschools that teach in the native language, bilingual schools and preschools, schools and interscholastic sections with supplementary instruction of the native language. Statistics most often confuse schools with supplementary instruction of the native language and interscholastic sections as well as bilingual schools with schools that teach in the native language (especially those which also have classes in Polish as well as the minority language). The imprecision arises, at least in part, from the fact that schools do not always maintain the form they theoretically represent.

#### **5.1.1. Preschools**

In preschools/preschool adjuncts at elementary schools with minority native language, all activities are conducted in the minority language. Polish lessons are introduced to the extent of four hours a week when children attain six years of age.

According to government data, there are a total of 28 such preschools/preschool adjuncts at elementary schools (for the German, Lithuanian and Ukrainian minorities).

### **5.1.2. Schools with native language as language of instruction**

In schools where the native language is the language of instruction, all activities are held in the minority language. The exceptions are Polish language, history and geography classes, which are held in Polish. In grades I-III, which have integrated teaching, i.e. without division into particular subjects, content concerning the Polish language is conducted in Polish. Teaching of the language, history and geography of the minority's country of origin or ethnic group takes place pursuant to curricula approved for school use by the Ministry of National Education and Sport. However, the final exams, consisting of two blocks – humanities and mathematics/natural sciences, are administered wholly in Polish, which presents problems to students who were taught the majority of subjects in their native language. In accordance with the decree of the Minister of National Education and Sport dated 11 September 2002, beginning in 2005 it will be possible to take these exams entirely in Polish or entirely in the minority language. In practice, this regulation may turn out to be troublesome, e.g. for schools using Lithuanian which decide that final exams after elementary school and middle school will be held in Lithuanian. In this case, students who are generally taught in Lithuanian, but are taught language, history and geography in Polish, will have to pass all subjects in Lithuanian – including those they were taught in Polish. The matriculation exam is administered in the minority language with the exception of the Polish language section.

Schools with the native language as the language of instruction are the most frequently chosen form of education by the Lithuanian minority. Among the 19 schools conducting teaching of that minority, eight are schools where the language of instruction is Lithuanian (they include schools where Lithuanian is the language of instruction in all classes as well as those where some classes are taught in Lithuanian and some in Polish). Further, according to government data, there are 14 schools with German as the language of instruction and 12 with Ukrainian. However, in practice, a portion of the activities in these schools takes place in Polish due to a shortage of teaching staff, textbooks and curricula.

### **5.1.3. Bilingual schools**

In bilingual schools, all subjects are taught in two languages of equal importance – in Polish and the language of the given minority. This means the first portion of the lesson is conducted in one language and the second in another. In practice, however, it often happens that certain subjects are taught in only one language (e.g. due to lack of funds or teachers). In bilingual schools, history and geography lessons may be expanded to include elements of history and geography of the country from which the minority originates.

There are 14 bilingual schools according to government data. It is primarily the German minority (5 schools) that takes advantage of this form of education.

#### **5.1.4. Schools with supplementary instruction of a native language to members of a minority**

Schools that teach a minority language as a supplementary language devote a few lecture hours to such instruction a week; in practice it is two to four hours, depending on the staffing and financial situation of the given facility. In accordance with the decree of the Minister of National Education and Sport dated December 3, 2002, the school director may, to the extent financially feasible, organise supplementary activities that serve to cultivate the tradition and culture of national minorities and ethnic groups (e.g. classes on the history or geography of the native country or art classes). In practice, such activities are organised relatively rarely.

Language instruction, especially in small schools, often takes place in interclass or interdepartmental groups. Aside from a few exceptions, they are usually voluntary classes, at times held as part of interest circles (e.g. for the Kashubians).

Teaching a minority language as a supplementary language is the most frequently organised form of education for minorities. According to government data, out of the total of 612 schools with minority teaching, 528 conduct their programmes in this form. All minorities utilise it, though in the case of Byelorussians, Kashubians and Lemki it is the sole form of teaching their native language.

#### **5.1.5. Interscholastic sections with supplementary teaching of native language to members of a minority**

Interscholastic sections are organised when the number of students interested in studying their native tongue at a given school is insufficient to organise a class, interdepartmental or interclass unit, or if there is no teacher available at the school to teach the subject. In such cases, school directors convey the list of students interested in such instruction to the body managing the schools and it has the obligation to organise an interscholastic section. According to regulations, anywhere between three and 20 students may study in an interscholastic section. Interscholastic sections are active and registered in one regional school with classes held onsite. In practice, the sections sometimes have their offices at churches or cultural centres and classes are held on Saturdays or Sundays and are combined with religious instruction. In such cases, the religious instruction is held in the minority language or the activities alternate: one week the children study religion and language the following week. At times the teachers work without pay, are financed by the parents or an association active on behalf of a given minority. Transportation to the locations where classes are held as part of interscholastic sections is organised socially and independently by the students' parents.

Government data indicate the existence of 36 such schools, in practice however, their numbers are most difficult to estimate due to the fact that they are not always active through schools.

## **5.2. MAIN PROBLEMS**

### **5.2.1. Financing**

The most important problem in minority education is lack of funding. Educational subsidies do not suffice to cover all expenses associated with organisation of such teaching. Difficulties faced by the minority schools primarily arise from the fact that far fewer students study in schools teaching in a native language than in facilities where Polish is the language of instruction, while schools' fixed costs, not associated with additional activities for minorities (school administration and maintenance, fees for power, renovation, etc.), are just as high as for other facilities. Moreover, schools which provide bifurcated instruction, where in some of the classes the language of instruction is Polish and in the others it is the minority language, have higher maintenance costs as compared to single-language schools due to the expanded offer of classes. Schools for geographically dispersed minorities have particular financial difficulties, where there is the additional need to organise transportation or set up dormitories. There are also insufficient funds to organise additional classes. The increased subsidies, from 20% to 50% for schools with fewer than 42 students, do not suffice to satisfy all needs. What is more, conditioning the subsidy on the number of students, results in the situation where acceptance of one more student in a given school year causes a drastic drop in the subsidies, back to the 20% level (the Lithuanian minority had to deal with such a situation).

### **5.2.2. Curricula and textbooks**

Another problem for minority schooling is the lack of a sufficient number of teaching curricula adapted to the educational reform carried out in 1998 and the requisite number of textbooks to carry them out (both textbooks teaching a native language as well as other subjects taught in the native language). In accordance with the current educational system, curricula are developed by the schools based on a programme established by the Ministry of National Education and Sport. Formulated curricula, along with two reviews regarding their didactic applicability and qualitative suitability, are permitted for use by the Ministry of National Education and Sport after their prior receiving positive evaluations from a team of consultants. Minority teachers or academics develop the minority curricula. However, the small number of specialists causes the work on new programmes to last longer.

In the case of certain minorities, establishing a version of history satisfactory to both sides is problematic. That is why a portion of school textbooks concerning history and literature are the subject of evaluation by joint commissions appointed pursuant to bilateral agreements. As a result of the work of the Polish-Israeli commission, recommendations concerning history and literature textbooks for Poland and Israel were issued in 1995. In 2001, the work of the Polish-German commission resulted in the development and publication of guidelines and methodological teaching materials entitled "Poland and Germany in the 20<sup>th</sup> century." Two conferences devoted to using these materials in the didactic process were organised in 2002. Two other commissions, Polish-

Ukrainian and Polish-Lithuanian, began to formulate recommendations concerning history and geography textbooks.

Work on the preparation of new textbooks has been ongoing since implementation of educational reform. Textbooks are developed by specialists from the respective minority and are permitted for use after being approved by reviewers from the Ministry of National Education and Sport. However, in the opinion of minority representatives, the system for reviewing textbooks written in the minority language or used to teach it is so burdensome and lengthy that it often prevents actual publication. The Ministry of National Education and Sport purchases and publishes textbooks and then provides them to minority students. However, there have been cases where the process of providing minority students with textbooks lasted nearly a year, and thus the students received their textbooks near the end of their school term. Some minorities receive additional textbooks from their countries of origin as gifts from foreign institutions or private parties.

According to the list of textbooks published by the Ministry of National Education and Sport, as of 10 March 1999, 101 textbooks and auxiliary study books for national and ethnic minorities had been approved. The large majority of these are language instruction books and workbooks; there are a small number of textbooks for other subjects written in minority languages. In some schools, teachers use textbooks that are outdated or brought from abroad, which makes executing the required curriculum difficult. There are also shortages of teaching aids such as language scrambles, dictionary games, orthography and grammar boards, as well as dictionaries, press and literature in the minority languages.

### **5.2.3. Teachers**

Another important problem for minority education are staffing shortages, especially teachers who teach mandatory subjects in schools where the native language is the language of instruction as well as in bilingual schools. There is less of an issue with language teachers since they have been able to study German, Lithuanian, Byelorussian, Ukrainian and Slovak in teacher's colleges and foreign universities for years. The Kashubians and the Lemki face a more difficult situation because such teachers are only now being educated. Teachers of the Kashubian language were trained through courses organised by the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, in the Post-graduate Pomeranian Studies department at the University of Gdansk as well as the Regional and Alternative Education Study active at the Pedagogical Institute of the Gdansk University. In 2000, the Lemki Association, with the support of the Ministry of National Education and Sport and the Batory Foundation, organised a course to train Lemki language teachers. The Pedagogical Academy in Krakow has been teaching the Lemki language at the Russian Philology Faculty beginning with the 2001/2002 academic year. In some cases, priests teach the native language due to the shortage of qualified teachers (this applies to the Lemki and Ukrainian minorities).

## **5.3. SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF PARTICULAR MINORITIES**

In the realm of education, national minorities face problems specific to their groups. They differ in scale of needs and demands as well as in their ability to react to financing and systemic shortages.

Generally speaking, the situation of minorities originating from an existing country (Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Germans, Slovaks and Ukrainians) is better. They possess a base of support, which may be used in cases of shortages in lecturers (by training teachers at their universities, amongst other). They can also usually count on material assistance, e.g. in the form of textbooks and other teaching aids, as well as favorable scholarship offers. An important factor not to be discounted is political support provided by the country of origin. Kashubians and Lemki are deprived of such privileges. However, with respect to the Kashubians, despite a lack of numerous years of experience in the educational realm (the Kashubians, much like the Lemki, have been organising their language education only since the 1991/1992 school year), in recent years they have been able to educate a cadre of qualified teachers and the number of students being taught in Kashubian is on the rise.

Minorities concentrated in one geographical area are also in a relatively better position. In such case, organisation of the teaching does not present additional problems (e.g. logistic), cooperation among schools and between minority associations is also easier. Superintendents' Offices with a higher number of minorities within their territories devote more attention to their education issues. In that respect, the situation of the Ukrainian and Lemki minority seems to be the most difficult.

## 6. GOOD PRACTICES

This section concerns activities taken with respect to the Roma minority, the educational level of which is extremely low. There are no schools with Roma as the language of instruction nor do the Roma learn their language as a supplemental subject. Some of the Roma do not attend school at all and the majority drops out of school after completing only a few grades. This impacts the situation of the entire minority – lack of education is associated with general unemployment amongst the Roma and the lack of skills to function in a civil society. Thus, efforts by the state have been primarily directed toward inclusion of the Roma into the general educational system. Other institutions are also involved in these activities, such as the Ombudsperson, NGOs and the church. Funds from abroad have been used numerous times toward that end.

Several attempts at solving the problem of educating Roma children have been made. At the outset of the 1990s, experimental Roma classes began to be formed (mainly in the former Nowosądeckie province, but also in Radom, Olsztyn and Przemyśl). Information provided by Father Opocki, the National Roma Priest and one of the initiators of such education, indicates that as of 1998 there were about 30 Roma classes formed with nearly 430 children enrolled. Teaching in such classes was in Polish based on special curricula. They did not include teaching the Roma language or any issues concerning the Roma history and culture. The Roma classes engendered significant controversy. They were criticised for having a lower teaching level adapted to less skilled students, which closed the road to further education to Roma children. It was argued that they *de facto* led to racial segregation. On the other hand, supporters of Roma classes felt they enabled many children to at least obtain the foundations of an education, improved the attendance of Roma children in schools and enhanced the contacts of parents with educational facilities. A few of such classes continue to exist until today – they are attended by children who,

due to their age and interruptions in their education, cannot continue their educations in the regular manner. Currently, however, the goal is to eliminate the Roma classes and teach the Roma in regular classes.

When writing about Roma classes it is worth noting the phenomenon of the Roma school active in the Suwałki region since 1992. This school conducts only initial elementary education (grades I-VI) with the assumption that the children will continue schooling in regular schools. To make this possible, classes are held at the school directed at levelling the rearing and social differences among Polish and Roma children. An educational and development association functions at the school in which there are a number of interest-oriented clubs, field trips are organised, as are visits to theaters, museums and cinemas. The school's activity centre also organises preschool education. As a result of the experience gained from many years of practice, the school's director has developed a methodological guide for middle school teachers entitled "Roma – close encounters", with basic information regarding the Roma and lesson plans about their culture. What is interesting, although many accusations have been made against Roma classes (incl. segregation of children), the Roma school in Suwałki is viewed as a very positive initiative – various institutions and NGOs willingly fund its activities.

The most complex project for improving Roma education is the "Pilot government programme for the Roma community in the Małopolskie Voivodship for the years 2001-2003". The programme as a whole aimed to improve the Roma's general situation, however, education was deemed a priority. It was found that the following are necessary to improve the existing state of affairs:

- employment of Roma assistants, whose task it would be to get the children to school, provide them with assistance during their time at school and act as an intermediary between the school and parents. In the initial period of education, the assistants would also play the role of translators when the children's Polish language skills are weak;
- additional financing: for preschools education with the possibility of extending it by one year; purchase of textbooks, teaching aids and school supplies; additional meals for children at school; insuring children against accidents;
- establishment of activity centres in which children could spend time under teacher supervision;
- introduction of remedial classes with the purpose of making up for missing work and enabling completion of homework assignments under teacher supervision;
- organisation of interest clubs that expand on common knowledge about the world that Roma children lack;
- encourage children to take part in contests, school Olympics and sporting events as well enabling Roma children's participation in camps and winter trips;
- organisation of psychological and pedagogical assistance for Roma parents and children;
- organisation of educational courses for adult Roma and professional courses for youth and adults;
- organisation of meetings with parents regarding the school obligation and the children's education obligation;
- introduction of activities devoted to Roma culture and tradition and educational and integration activities for Polish children and youth, who will promote an attitude of tolerance and enable the Roma's adaptation to a new environment, as

well as organisation of a summer integration trip for Roma and Polish children in a Roma Caravan.

The government programme did not succeed in implementing all these ideas in all the towns. To a large extent, this resulted from a shortage of funds (project implementation occurred at a time of the state's budgetary crisis) and faults of the programme's financing system [more on that issue in the *Conclusions and critical remarks* section]. The activities undertaken most often were training and employment of Roma assistants and assistant teachers, organisation of remedial activities (including speech therapy and tutoring in Polish), equipping schools with teaching aids, paying for children's meals at school, covering the costs of busing to school and insurance, purchase of textbooks and school supplies, organisation of interest circles, school festivities and trips involving Roma children, organisation of camps and day camps, covering the costs of preschools, financing kindergartens. The success of the programme largely depended on the initiative and activity level of local authorities and NGOs. For example, the Education Society for Małopolska in cooperation with the Gypsy Association in Nowy Sącz Area organised trainings for Roma assistants (out of the 24 Roma trained, 18 later found employment in schools), and the Stefan Batory Foundation is providing funds for school textbooks and teaching aids.

The activities undertaken as part of the pilot programme undoubtedly contributed to the improvement of Roma education. School attendance increased, as did the level of discipline during classes. In individual cases, children began to attain improved educational results. According to teachers, remedial classes, employment of Roma assistants (especially in preschools where children demanded additional assistance), equipping children with textbooks and school supplies made the greatest contributions.

A total of about 500 Roma children were provided assistance through the programme.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS AND CRITICAL REMARKS**

The minority education policy outlined at the central level aims to establish systemic solutions. It is disturbing, however, that the state is attempting to develop such solutions without precise data concerning the number and types of schools that provide minority education. In addition, due to the specifics of particular minorities, the proposed systemic solutions do not always satisfy the needs of all groups. A good solution is to develop strategies for the education of particular minorities. Currently, however, such a strategy has been developed only for the Lithuanian minority, to some extent due to their own activism.

Undoubtedly, the state's efforts for the Roma are worthy of note. The tasks executed as part of the "Pilot government programme for the Roma community in the Małopolskie province for the years 2001-2003", have contributed to the improvement of Roma children's education. The continuation and expansion of such activity to a national scale is planned. However, the success of these projects depends on financial capabilities, and the funds provided by the state do not suffice to cover all costs. It would thus be worthwhile if donor institutions got further involved in their execution.

Execution of state planned policy has met a series of difficulties at the executory level. The resolution of particular problems depends to a large extent on the activities of local authorities. For example, this applies to administration of general subsidies of which educational subsidies are a part. The money intended for minority educational purposes is not always used in that manner. In the event of financial shortages for activities related to minority education, local authorities may assign additional funds from their own resources or seek additional financing from other sources. For example, Lithuanian schooling is concentrated in two gminas [administrative regions] – Puńsk and Sejny. In the Puńsk Gmina, where the population is 80% Lithuanian and Lithuanians fill local posts, the education of that minority receives far greater care than in the Gmina of Sejny. In the face of financial shortfalls, the local authorities of Puńsk each year seek additional financing for Lithuanian schools within their jurisdiction from the state budget. Meanwhile, Lithuanian education in the Gmina of Sejny is deteriorating; Lithuanian classes were merged with Polish classes to lower costs at a certain Sejny middle school and additional classes teaching Lithuanian were eliminated in the town of Łumby. Other classes and schools, especially small ones, also face the threat of being closed. Members of the minority emphasise that in rural areas such schools are the only minority cultural centres, which serve not only the students, but the entire community. These are places where minority culture and traditions are passed down and cultivated. In this situation, the Lithuanians are suggesting the establishment of a Lithuanian education centre in Sejny. However, in their opinion, this idea has not engendered the interest of local authorities. It seems that on the whole, cooperation among local Gmina Sejny authorities and Lithuanian organisations is not proceeding smoothly.

A similar dependence between the attitude of local authorities and execution of policies concerning minorities could be seen during activities taken on behalf of Roma education. As previously mentioned, Roma assistants were hired in thirteen gminas included in the pilot programme. Paying for their work turned out to be a problem. Initially, they were financed from budget resources earmarked for the pilot programme. However, complications arose because the school year and fiscal year (same as calendar year) are not concurrent. The money provided by the state budget would run out in December while the school year continued. The procedure for awarding money for the successive calendar year takes a few months, so at the outset of January, the bodies administering the schools faced a dilemma of whether to continue employing the assistants by “putting up” money from their own funds and count on reimbursement, or wait until it arrives from the state budget. The government attempted to solve this problem by providing additional education subsidies for schools holding supplementary classes for the Roma (as is the case for schools teaching the minority language or holding instruction in the minority language). However, that solution is not satisfactory as the additional funds are not adequate to pay the Roma assistants. In addition, assistants working in preschools may not be financed from those funds as the subsidy may only be designated for education in schools, not preschools. The constant shortages of money mean that Roma assistants are hired for defined periods of time and not employed at all during interludes in teaching (holiday periods, vacations, winter breaks, and in some periods in the period between the Christmas holidays and the winter break). Thus, there is a proposal to place the Roma assistants on the list of professions and employing them upon terms similar to that of teachers. Meanwhile, in other cities local authorities took their own initiative to improve Roma education. For example, Roma assistants were hired in some cities not covered by the pilot programme with their salaries being paid from the cities’ own funds (Wrocław, Zabrze).

The organisation of education for national and ethnic minorities has been essentially based on the principle of discretion. Parties who belong to minorities decide themselves whether to undertake such education and its form as well as whether to take examinations. On the other hand, many issues are left within the province of the schools (e.g. organisation of remedial classes for the Roma, organisation of activities serving to maintain tradition and culture, their nature and number of hours). However, local authorities are the bodies that administer schools, and it is they who administer the education subsidy. The actual execution of the state policy in the realm of minority education thus occurs on the central authorities / local authorities / schools / national minorities and ethnic groups plane. The development of minority education depends on the “good will” and cooperation among these four leading actors. In practice this results in a certain dilution of responsibility; it is difficult point out responsible parties when specific programmes fail. The parties accuse each other of hindering cooperation, which at times results in their withdrawal from participation.

# APPENDIX 1

## NATIONAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN POLAND

Polish law does not define the concept of “national/ethnic minority.” A new definition is developed each time in the course of drawing up particular documents. In ratifying the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Poland declared it deems national minorities to include national minorities living within the Republic of Poland, whose members are Polish citizens. According to the most recent National Census of the Population and Housing conducted in June 2002, the Polish population totals 38,230,000 people of which 96.74% declare Polish as their nationality. Others identified in the census are:

NATIONALITY	POPULATION
Silesians	173,200
Germans	152,900
Byelorussians	48,700
Ukrainians	31,000
Roma	12,900
Russians	6,100
Lemki	5,900
Lithuanians	5,800
Kashubians	5,100
Slovaks	2,000
Jews	1,100
Armenians	1,100
Czechs	800

A total of 471,500 (1.23%) persons declared a national affiliation other than Polish. National affiliation could not be determined for 774,900 (2.03%) people.

The above data concerning minority population seem understated as compared to estimates by experts and the minorities themselves.

## APPENDIX 2

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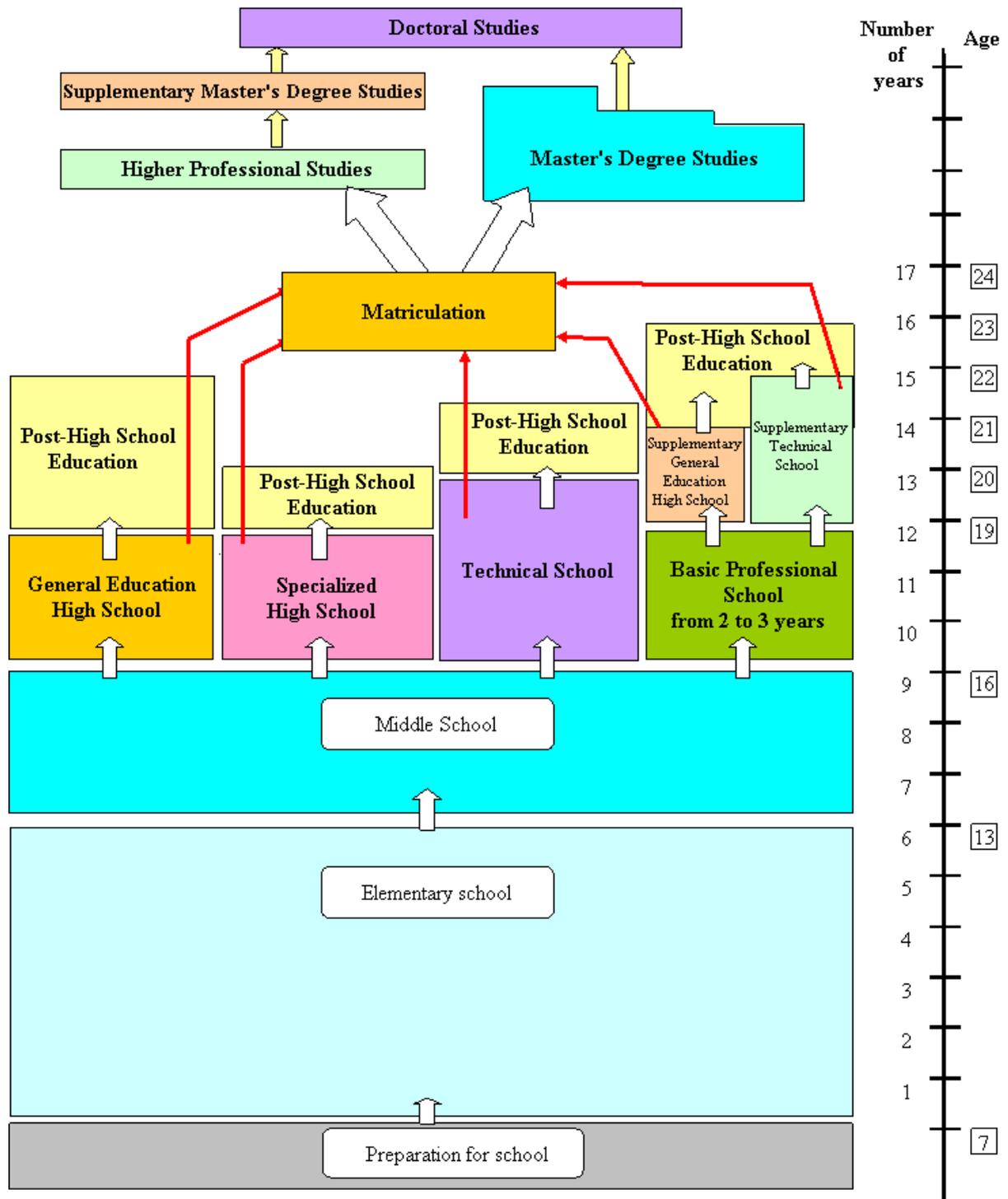
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# APPENDIX 3

## EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN POLAND



Source: <http://www.menis.gov.pl/>, (21.03.2004)

## APPENDIX 4

### TEACHING OF A NATIVE LANGUAGE IN SCHOOL FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF NATIONAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

The statistical data below was made available by the Ministry of National Education and Sport based on information collected by the Central Statistical Office and applies to the 2002/2003 school year.

	<b>B</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>Ge</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>Le</b>	<b>Li</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Elementary schools with the native language as the language of instruction			11				5		3	<b>19</b>
Bilingual elementary schools			2				2	1	1	<b>6</b>
Elementary schools with supplementary education of the native language	24	1	248	1	48	13	6	5	59	<b>405</b>
Middle schools with the native language as the language of instruction			2						5	<b>7</b>
Bilingual middle schools			3				2		1	<b>6</b>
Middle schools with supplementary education of the native language	12		58		8	6	1	4	27	<b>116</b>
High schools with the native language as the language of instruction			1				2		4	<b>7</b>
Bilingual high schools									2	<b>2</b>
High schools with supplementary education of the native language	2				3			1		<b>6</b>
Basic professional schools with the native language as the language of instruction							1			<b>1</b>
Bilingual basic professional schools										<b>0</b>
Basic professional schools with supplementary education of the native language					1					<b>1</b>
Interscholastic sections						2			34	<b>36</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>612</b>

*B – Byelorussians; G – Greeks; Ge – Germans; J – Jews; K – Kashubians; Le – Lemki; Li – Lithuanians; S – Slovaks; U – Ukrainians*