

Poparcie międzynarodowych i zagranicznych organizacji dla przywrócenia etnologii jako dyscypliny

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WAU, IUAES i WCAA

November 10, 2018

Dr Jarosław Gowin

Minister of Science and Higher Education

Hoża 20 00-528 Warszawa

Dear Mr. Deputy Prime Minister,

As Co-Chairs of the World Anthropological Union (WAU), the world-wide organization of anthropologists and ethnologists as well as anthropological and ethnological associations, we are writing this letter to express our serious concern about the discipline of anthropology/ethnology in your country and to give strong support for our Polish fellow anthropologists and ethnologists who are requesting to recover “anthropology/ethnology” on the list of officially recognized disciplines in Poland. The reasons for this request are given in a series of letters and protests written jointly by the Committee of Ethnological Sciences (KNE) and the Polish Ethnological Society (PTL), which are supported by Departments of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in your country, as well as in the letters issued by Departments of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and at Jagiellonian University in Cracow. The rationale provided in these letters for maintaining anthropology/ethnology as a distinct discipline is very sound, rational and substantial.

Derived from the Greek anthropos, anthropology is dedicated to the study of humanity in all its facets and it was already established as an academic discipline in the 19th century. It was Bronisław Malinowski, born in Cracow and widely recognized as the founder of modern anthropology, who developed the method that shaped the discipline globally and provided uncontested legitimacy in academic and scientific knowledge. The discipline is now internationally recognized and practiced, notably by the OECD countries, and departments of anthropology feature in all major universities across the world. We see no legitimate reason for excluding anthropology/ethnology from Poland's recognized academic disciplines.

Our Polish colleagues are very active and valued members of the pivotal international organizations, such as the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) as well as the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF). Among many others, we highlight Michał Buchowski who acted as the President of EASA between 2009 and 2011 and the Chair of the WCAA between 2012 and 2014; Hana Cervinkova who served as the Deputy President of EASA in the years 2013-2016; and Ewa Klekots who is currently a member of the SIEF board. We fear that veiling the discipline of anthropology/ethnology behind the label of “Studies of Culture and Religion,” a classification which is not used anywhere else in the world, will make the discipline unidentifiable and will hinder not only the appreciation of the work of Polish anthropologists and ethnologists but also the active international collaboration. In practice, the change of the label may require the revision of many agreements governing international academic cooperation, leading to the isolation and segregation of the vibrant Polish scientific community that had recovered after years of suppression.

We thereby ask you to recognize “anthropology/ethnology” in the classification of domains (dziedziny) and disciplines (dyscypliny). We sincerely hope that our appeal will be heard.

Sincerely,

Junji Koizumi, President of IUAES, Professor Emeritus, Osaka University, Auditor, the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU), Japan

Carmen Sílvia de Moraes Rial, Chair of WCAA, Professora Titular, Dep. Antropologia Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brasil

[Pobierz list w pdf](#) [1]

SIEF

Dear Mr. Deputy Prime Minister,

SIEF (Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore/International Society of Ethnology and Folklore) wants to express its deepest concern about the situation of the discipline of ethnology in Poland. We are an international organization that has been facilitating and stimulating cooperation among scholars working within European Ethnology, Folklore Studies, Cultural Anthropology and adjoining fields for over half of a century. Also, we are an expert non-governmental organization accredited with the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Polish ethnologists and anthropologists have always played a significant role in our activities. We feel prompted to protest, having learned that, according to the new lists of academic disciplines issued by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, ethnology has been officially denied the status of academic discipline.

The discipline of ethnology has been an important part of European academic heritage, present in scientific research and university curricula for almost two centuries, both under its Continental name of ethnology, as well as under the name of cultural/social anthropology, used more often in the Anglo-Saxon academic tradition. From its early beginnings, Polish scholars have been contributing to the development of the discipline, with one of the founding fathers of its research methodology being a Pole, Bronisław Malinowski. Ethnology is an academic discipline fully recognized by OECD classification. It is internationally acknowledged as crucial in researching questions of the highest importance for contemporary and future societies in Europe and worldwide, such as identity, heritage, migration, sustainable cultural development on local levels, etc.

Therefore, we strongly appeal to reconsider your decision and to include ethnology in the official list of academic disciplines binding for scholars working in Polish academic institutions. Excluding the discipline and labelling it as ‘Studies of Culture and Religion’ would make the discipline unidentifiable and would hinder the appreciation of the work of Polish ethnologists and active international collaboration, also related to the Erasmus programme, which might lead to the isolation of the Polish scientific community.

We hope that our appeal will be heard and that ethnology again will be recognized as an academic discipline.
Sincerely,

Dr. Nevena Škrbić Alempijević President of SIEF
Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Zagreb Zagreb, Croatia

Dr. Sophie Elpers Executive Vice President SIEF
Meertens Institute, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences Amsterdam, The Netherlands

[Pobierz list w pdf](#) [2]

CNRS

November 20, 2018

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Dr Jarosław Gowin
Minister of Science and Higher Education
ul. Hoża 20 00-528 Warszawa

Dear Mr. Minister,

Section 38 (Social Anthropology and Comparative Study of Contemporary Societies) of the National Committee at the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research), in France, expresses its deep concern following the decree passed by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education on September 20, 2018, which effectively removes anthropology and ethnology from the list of recognized scientific disciplines and fields of study. Anthropology and ethnology will disappear under the new label, "Sciences of Culture and Religion", which has no equivalent anywhere else in the world.

A renowned Pole, Bronisław Malinowski, was one of the founding fathers of modern anthropology. He founded ethnography, a method which durably anchored anthropology and ethnology in the empirical sciences. This method is now shared by anthropologists and ethnologists from all over the world, and more largely by other disciplines within the social sciences and humanities. Anthropology and ethnology constitute a firmly established discipline within the social sciences and humanities dedicated to the study of human societies. In a context where governments promote a society of knowledge, in a world whose diversity is a precondition for development as much as it is a challenge to be met, this discipline cannot disappear without entailing serious consequences.

The first consequence will be to deprive our Polish anthropologist colleagues of the recognition of their country without which they cannot develop strong scientific collaborations at an international level. Yet Polish teachers and researchers play an active role in international associations, such as the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA), and the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF). The second consequence will be to prevent academics from other countries from identifying the colleagues in Poland with whom to develop teaching, research and supervision activities.

We fear that the explicit deletion of ethnology and anthropology from the classification of scientific disciplines in Poland will have an impact on the functioning of international calls for proposals, such as those launched by the European Research Council, whose high quality is guaranteed by the possibility of using the best experts from all countries, including Poland. The "Sciences of Culture and Religion" label will neither meet the needs in terms of intellectual and scientific teaching, nor support international collaborations essential to bring about the society of knowledge that European countries encourage.

Section 38 (Social Anthropology and Comparative Study of Contemporary Societies) of the National Committee at the National Center for Scientific Research brings together renowned academics in anthropology. Aware of the history and the importance of this discipline in Europe and beyond, its members invite the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education to restore anthropology as an autonomous discipline in the classification of sciences in Poland. We hope this request will be heard.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the members of Section 38

La Présidente de la section

Nathalie Luca

[Pobierz list w pdf - PL](#) [3]

[Pobierz list w pdf - ENG](#) [4]

[Pobierz list w pdf - FR](#) [5]

Powiązane materiały [protest przeciwko likwidacji „etnologii” jako dyscypliny -PAN i PTL](#) [6]

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