

November 28, 2018

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

SUBJECT: Restore “Anthropology / Ethnology” to the Classification of Domains and Disciplines

Honorable Mr. Deputy Prime Minister,

We are writing to add the voices of our 10,000 Association members in support of our Polish colleagues who ask that your government restore the designation of “anthropology / ethnology” as distinct and not hidden behind the more general category of “Cultural and Religious Studies.” We understand that “anthropology / ethnology” was consolidated into this more general category for administrative purposes. While we are sympathetic to the need for administrative efficiency, we share our Polish colleagues’ belief that this administrative consolidation makes the field invisible to the public, and, in the long run, its importance will be deeply discounted, if not dismissed altogether.

That is unfortunate, especially at this historical moment, as anthropology is the one discipline of scholarly pursuit dedicated to making the world safe for cultural differences. Anthropology is essential in our globally connected world. An anthropologist runs the World Bank, and the United Nations Framework for Climate Change. The Prince of Wales – next in line to become the King of England – is an anthropologist, as is the democratically elected president of Afghanistan. President Obama’s mother was an anthropologist, and his upbringing contributed significantly to his intercultural sensibility. And the former Prime Minister of Poland, Ms. Beata Szydło, is formally trained in ethnology. In addition to its global profile, anthropology promotes the understanding of our common ideals, enduring civic values, and shared cultural heritage.

Our Polish colleagues have outlined a persuasive argument in favor of enhancing the visibility of the fields of “anthropology / ethnology,” through a series of letters prepared 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 Poznan and at Jagiellonian University in Cracow.

As others have noted, Polish anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski, born in Cracow and widely recognized as the founder of modern anthropology, is often credited with developing the method that shaped the discipline globally and provided uncontested legitimacy in academic and scientific knowledge. The discipline has been internationally recognized and practiced for more than a century, notably by the OECD countries. Anthropology departments are prominent in all major universities across the world.


Our Polish colleagues are very active and valued members of the pivotal international organizations, including our Association, as well as the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) and the Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF).

Among many prominent international collaborators, we highlight Prof. Michal Buchowski, who served as the President of EASA between 2009 and 2011 and the Chair of the WCAA between 2012 and 2014; Prof. Hana Cervinkova, who served as the Deputy President of EASA in the years 2013-2016; and Prof. Ewa Klekot, who is currently a member of the SIEF board.

The "Studies of Culture and Religion" classification is not used anywhere else in the world. Polish anthropologists and ethnologists will be more difficult to locate for the purposes of international collaboration, and may further lead to the isolation and segregation of the vibrant Polish scientific community that had recovered after years of suppression. We respectfully 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,



Edward Liebow, Executive Director



Alex W. Barker, President

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