

Position statement of the Polish Ethnological Society on expressions of xenophobia and intolerance in Poland

The Polish Ethnological Society, at its 91st General Assembly, held to commemorate the 120th anniversary of its founding in Lviv, would like to express its position on an issue that has been the subject of its members' research and educational activities since the organisation's inception — relations between people. Our decades-long professional activity and experience convince us of the need to take a decisive stand on this matter.

Over their history, the peoples of our region have been victimized, and individuals have suffered or lost their lives as the result of ideologically-driven intolerance and discriminatory practices directed against certain groups of people. Recent events associated with the so-called *refugee crisis* have sparked a wave of statements and actions that are incompatible with the values of humanism to which we adhere. Hate speech directed against people based on their race, ethnicity, religion or worldview has become widespread and acceptable. It is becoming rife at all levels of society, including, most regrettably, among opinion leaders, in the media, and in public places. This is being directed in particular at Muslims and national groups associated with this religion. We are dismayed by the widespread consent to these affronts on others by the citizens of our society, and at times, by organs of the state and the law. We warn that similar processes took place during the birth of a most horrible and openly dehumanizing system – fascism. These processes led to acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing. We need to prevent the dangers that arise from xenophobia, and for this reason, we call for efforts to combat it in all its forms, beginning with its expression in language and acts of verbal violence. We call instead for widespread expressions of social solidarity, a readiness to help the needy, openness and tolerance. We urge not only those in positions of authority, but also ordinary citizens, to take decisions and actions that represent concrete expressions of these values.

Polish Ethnological Society

Lviv, 25 September 2015