Summary

The main research subject of the dissertation is the portrayal of the *Socio-political activity of the Lithuanian minority's organizations in Poland*. The study attempts to evaluate activities of the Lithuanian minority by analysing Lithuanian organizations functioning in Poland.

One of the reasons for choosing the research topic is the author's knowledge of the subject matter resulting from his experience of living in a Polish-Lithuanian border region in the past and the willingness to understand the Lithuanian minority and its activities in Poland more thoroughly. The attractiveness of the research into this topic is also connected with the historical changes in national relations set against the background of the changing borders between both countries. Another important element is the shape of Polish-Lithuanian relations. These include both direct contacts between representatives of the Lithuanian minority and the Polish majority in Poland, as well as the interest of the Lithuanian authorities in the situation of their compatriots in Poland.

It should be noted here that there are no existing scientific publications covering the topic of the presented dissertation. There is no monograph that thoroughly describes the significance and role of Lithuanian organizations in the processes of integrating the Lithuanian minority in Poland or assessing their social and political activities.

The following organizations were examined in detail: the Association of Lithuanians in Poland, the Community of Lithuanians in Poland, the Lithuanian Society of Saint Casimir in Sejny, the Lithuanian Ethnic Culture Association in Puńsk, The Foundationon of Bp. Antanas Baranauskas "Lithuanian House" in Sejny, the Jaćwiesko-Prusskie Association, the Association of Lithuanian Teachers in Poland and the Association of Lithuanian Youth in Poland.

The critique and analysis of scientific literature was applied as the primary method used to solve the undertaken theoretical research problems. The historical method was used to describe the origins of the presence of Lithuanians in Poland and the social and territorial changes that occurred as a result of political changes. A comparative approach was required in order to try to capture the similarities and differences in the activities of individual Lithuanian organizations in Poland. The behavioral method allowed for the assessment of the functions and significance of the analyzed organizations in the process of integration of the Lithuanian minority in Poland. This was based on the activities of its members. The institutional

and legal method allowed for the analysis of the formal and legal aspects of the protection of rights of national minorities in Poland.

For the sources obtained during empirical research, qualitative methods such as interview and observation were used. Formalized and free-form interview techniques were used. The interviews were conducted orally in a categorized manner. A questionnaire was used as a research tool. Two major observation techniques were used; engaged participant observation and non-controlled method. They were used to capture as many details as possible relating to the statements and behavior of the respondents in relation to the questions asked. They also made it possible to compare those answers/observations with the materials obtained from other respondents on the same topic.

Empirical research was conducted in the period spanning from July 2017 to April 2020 in the Sejny Poviat and the town of Suwałki in Podlaskie Voivodeship as well as in Warsaw, Olsztyn, Szczecin and Gdańsk. Twenty five respondents were interviewed – eight women and seventeen men.

The following research conclusions can be suggested. Representatives of the Lithuanian minority in Poland are engaged in political and local life in Poland. Since 1989, they have not had their representatives at the national level, though. This is understandable, especially taking into account their small number when compared to the entire Polish society. For years, however, Lithuanians have had their representatives in the local government in the Sejny region. Candidates successfully run from local Polish election committees, and some local government officials are actively involved in the activities of Lithuanian organizations.

Members of Lithuanian organizations in Poland represent the interests of their countrymen at the local, national and international forums. They also communicate problems faced by Lithuanians in Poland and suggest possible proposals for solving them to state authorities. It should be noted that Lithuanian diplomatic and consular missions are very active in their cooperation with the Lithuanian minority in Poland. The Ambassador in Warsaw, the Consul in Sejny and the Honorary Consuls intervene in problems encountered by the Lithuanian minority. To reach this end, they use their diplomatic tools and meet local and national authorities.

This study shows that Lithuanian minority organizations play an important role in the process of integration of Lithuanians in Poland. The associations regularly organize celebrations of the most important Lithuanian national holidays, care for the preservation

of culture and national identity among Lithuanians in Poland. In their activities, they also focus on cultivating Lithuanian cultural heritage and folk art. Their numerous initiatives are very popular among the local community, and are frequently attended by the guests of honour who represent local and state authorities of Poland and Lithuania. The influence of the surveyed organizations on maintaining the Lithuanian language and national identity among young Lithuanians living in Poland is also of no less importance, which is confirmed by the well-developed education system.

The empirical research conducted suggests that some of the possible rights of the Lithuanian minority in Poland are not used. Only few Lithuanians have decided to change the spelling of their names and surnames according to the rules of their mother tongue. However, this does not change the fact that the legal system in Poland allows for the free development and existence of the Lithuanian minority in Poland.

The possibility to participate in church services held in Lithuanian is an important element shaping the national identity of the Lithuanian minority in Poland. Lithuanians perceive the attempts to limit the use of the Lithuanian language in the Catholic Church as a threat to their identity and treat such changes as attempts at forced assimilation.

Lithuanians have free access to media. The Lithuanian community publishes its own magazines and maintains websites.

The Lithuanian minority in Poland is facing the process of assimilation. The process which is more significant in the regions further away from the Lithuanian border. There is also a noticeable decrease in the number of members and the activity of Lithuanian organizations. It may affect Lithuanians in the Sejny region in the future. That is why it is important to maintain their national identity, culture, language and history. It is possible thanks to the thriving organizations, schools and cultural centers. Statistical studies show that the number of people living in the municipality of Puńsk is decreasing every year, which suggests that the planned census in 2021 will show a decrease in the number of Lithuanians in Poland.

The presented outline of the surveyed national minority allows for their better understanding, especially their attitudes towards Poles and the shape of relations with local authorities. In the present reality, the Lithuanian minority faces many challenges. The future of this community depends on the state's policy towards it and on bilateral Polish-Lithuanian relations. It is important that the events that took place in the past do not have a negative impact on the present, which is why the role of national minority organizations in the process of shaping mutual relations is so important.