

Analysis of the “National Programme for the Development of Humanities”

I would like to take a closer look at the “National Programme for the Development of Humanities” announced in June by Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education and put into effect on November 5th this year. Since it is hailed by the Ministry as **the** answer for the demands and expectations of Polish scholars and researchers working in the field of humanities, it will be of particular interest for me to analyze the way it defines this field, the way it divides it, the criteria it employs, as well as what does it pose as problems of Polish humanities and how does it intend to solve them (although, obviously, to a certain extent, the latter and the former are the same – posing a problem already points toward its possible solutions). I should just add that the entire annual budget of the project is approximately 50 million zlotys (what equals 12,5 million Euros).

When announcing the programme in June Polish Minister of Science Barbara Kudrycka pointed out that “humanistic research, particularly those which concern national culture, could to a lesser extent use the support of EU structural funds (oriented mostly for «bio, info, techno» research) and other foreign funds” which is why the humanities “need particular care from the State”. Let me just add that from the point of view of more general “National Programme for Scientific Research and Development” (introduced by the Ministry in October 2008) humanities were also almost invisible. The Programme main aim was “to intensify the role of the research society in shaping modern and long-term circumstances for society and economy development” and it encompassed “five interdisciplinary priority research areas: health, energy and infrastructure, modern technology for economy, agriculture and environment”. Alongside with the Programme The National Centre for Research and Development (NCBiR) was established, with the aim of “managing and implementing strategic scientific research and development programmes that translate directly into innovation development.” As claimed in its statement, “the tasks of NCBiR include support for commercialization and other forms of transferring the scientific research results to economy.”

As to the “National Programme for the Development of Humanities”, the aim of the Programme is expressed as follows – 1) to ensure the development of humanistic research **of fundamental meaning for preserving Polish national identity**, including national culture; 2) to support the **international dissemination of Polish research** results in the humanities; 3) to provide durable conditions for realization and financing of long term documentary, editing and research projects; 4) to provide conditions for the development of young researchers by supporting projects realized by PhD students and providing scholarships for PhD students and post-doctoral researchers.

The Programme also specifies scientific disciplines which it recognizes as “humanities” – history and archeology, linguistics and literary studies, philosophy and religious studies, art history, bibliology (meaning books, not Bible), archival science, cultural anthropology, musicology as well as “those scientific disciplines, research and projects, which involve humanistic content and use of humanistic methods”. We will get back to this. One immediately sees that (although there is a margin) the disciplines recognized as “humanities” are very coherent with the first general aim of the Programme.

The Programme is divided into three modules – 1) research; 2) support of young researchers; 3) dissemination of Polish research results. **Research** aims at 1) support of documentary, editing and research activities of **fundamental relevance for the Polish culture and heritage**; 2) support of interdisciplinary and international research collaboration. **Support of young researchers** aims at 1) support of research conducted by teams of PhD researchers in interdisciplinary, international and interinstitutional collaboration; 2) research grants for Post-docs researchers participating in relevant research projects in Poland or abroad. **Dissemination of Polish research results** 1) funding of translation and publication of research works of the highest scientific quality and substantial

importance to ensure their presence in the international research circulation; 2) support of electronic editions of the most important Polish journals in the humanities in foreign languages, most notably in English.

And two complementary remarks - the support will be provided to individual projects and not to institutions, which are not financed by any other source. All funding will be allocated based on the competitions. The funding will be complementary to already existing allocations made to the research in the humanities.

Part of the first module ("support of documentary, editing and research activities of **fundamental relevance for the Polish culture and heritage**") is to be managed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MNiSW), i.e. around 30% of the total allocation, and the remaining modules are to be implemented by the newly established National Research Centre. National Research Center is to be a counterpart for the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBiR). While the latter is responsible for applied research, the National Research Centre (NCN) will be set up to distribute funds for basic research, including social sciences and humanities, as well as to sign agreements on international research programmes. As it was put in one of the Ministry announcements, it will be "independent and professional agency" run by "scientists-managers".

As we can see, the Programme is based strictly on competitions. It's a part of a larger strategy of the Ministry, which, in its own words, wants "to change diametrically the way in which research and science institutions are financed. The government plans to reduce subsidies for the statutory activities of research organisations which are funds designed to cover their day-to-day expenses, maintain their research capacity as well as to carry out their «own research projects», which represent very fragmentary research without anchoring in any specific research programme. There has been no systemic evaluation of such activities so far. Only the best research centres will continue to receive such subsidies. After the reform, financial resources for research and jobs at research institutions will be distributed through competitions and the winners will be selected on the basis of their research results rather than academic degrees or titles. Funds will no longer be distributed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, but by beforementioned National Centre for Research and Development (NCBiR) and National Research Centre (NCN).

According to the Ministry, Minister Kudrycka on March 10 send a letter to the majority of Polish scholars and researchers in the field of humanities, requesting them to submit proposals for the Programme (unfortunately, it hasn't been announced how many of them actually answered the letter). The proposals were considered and assumptions prepared by a team which included professors Stanisław Mossakowski, Jerzy Axer, Grażyna Borkowska, Karol Modzelewski, Ryszard Nycz, Henryk Samsonowicz, Andrzej Szostek and Jerzy Wyrozumski.

Therefore, we can point out Scylla and Charybdis of humanities in contemporary Poland. The first one is humanities considered as a strictly conservative practice (also in the root meaning of the word – "to keep, preserve, keep intact, guard") and as such supported by the State. The humanist as a custodian, janitor of Polish national heritage (librarian, archivist, museum conservator). The second is humanities as a creative industry – competitive, easily evaluable, adaptive to the market current needs and focused on the final product (competition, evaluation, flexibility, graduate's skills are the key terms in the project of the reform of higher education).