



COMMISSION ON STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL  
NAMES OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND  
affiliated to the Surveyor General of Poland

# Minority Place-Names in Poland





# Act on minorities

In 2005 the Polish Parliament passed the ***Act on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages.***

The act became valid on 1 May 2005.

**141**

## **USTAWA**

z dnia 6 stycznia 2005 r.

**o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym**

### Rozdział 1

#### **Przepisy ogólne**

**Art. 1.** Ustawa reguluje sprawy związane z zachowaniem i rozwojem tożsamości kulturowej mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych oraz zachowaniem i rozwojem języka regionalnego, a także sposób realizacji zasady równego traktowania osób bez względu na pochodzenie etniczne oraz określa zadania i kompetencje organów administracji rządowej i jednostek samorządu terytorialnego w zakresie tych spraw.

- 2) w sposób istotny odróżnia się od pozostałych obywateli językiem, kulturą lub tradycją;
- 3) dąży do zachowania swojego języka, kultury lub tradycji;
- 4) ma świadomość własnej historycznej wspólnoty etnicznej i jest ukierunkowana na jej wyrażanie i ochronę;
- 5) jej przodkowie zamieszkiwali obecne terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej od co najmniej 100 lat;



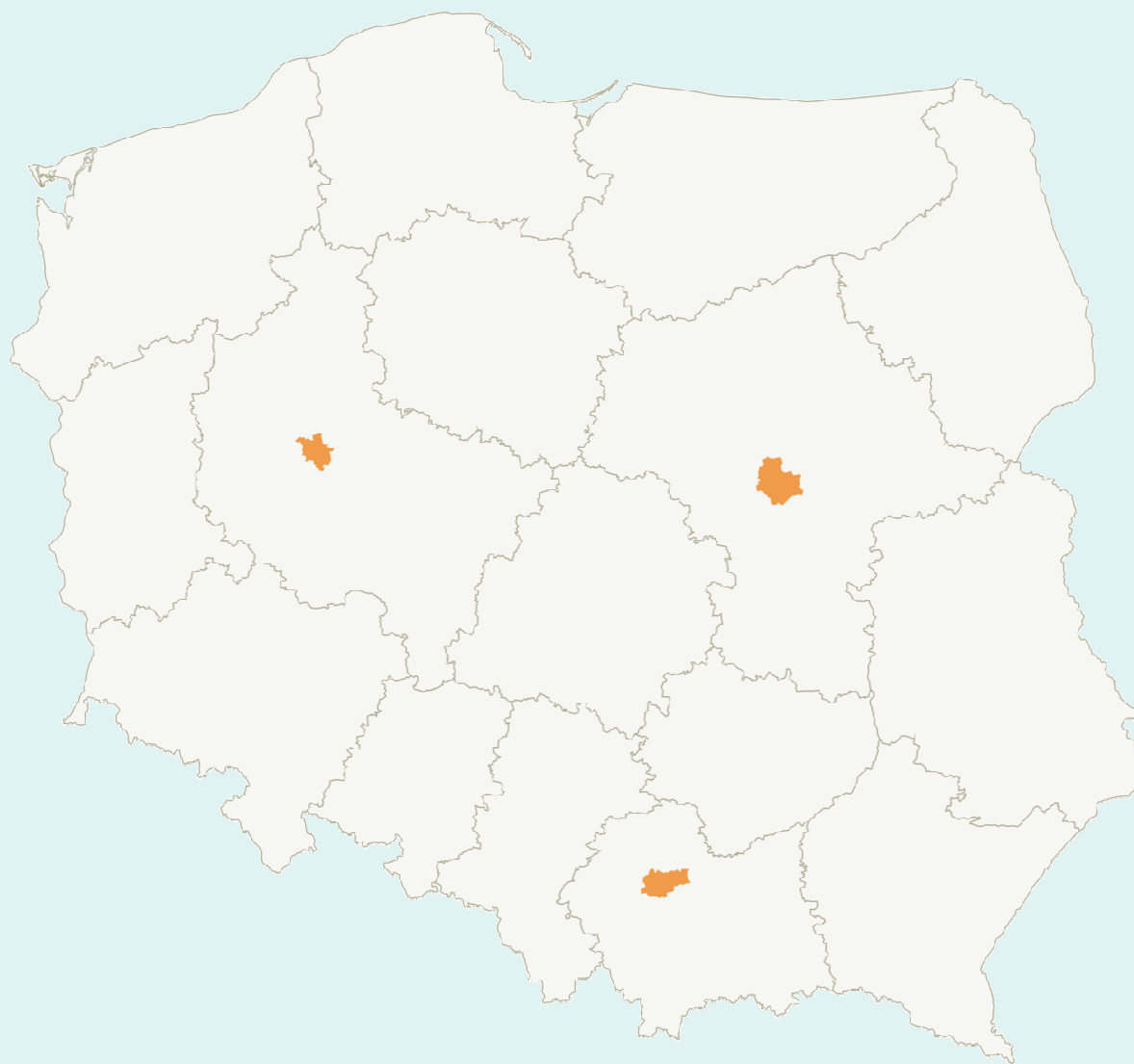
# National minorities

---

A national minority is a group of Polish citizens that meets all of the following requirements:

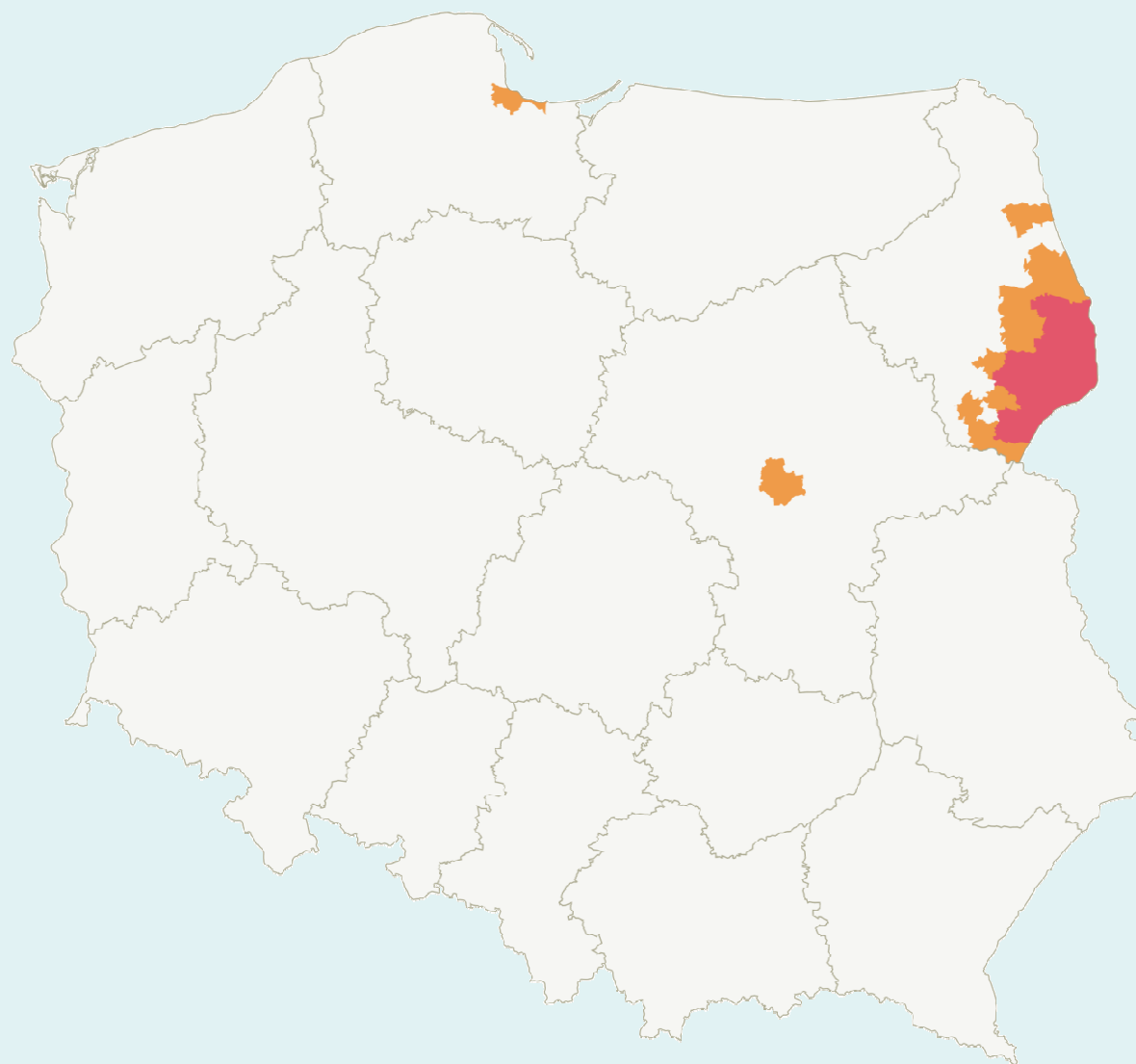
- is numerically smaller than the rest of the population of Poland
- differs substantially from other citizens by means of language, culture or tradition
- strives to preserve its language, culture or tradition
- is aware of its own historical and national bonds, and aims to express and preserve it
- its ancestors have inhabited the today's territory of Poland for at least the past 100 years
- identifies itself with a nation organized in its own state

# Armenian



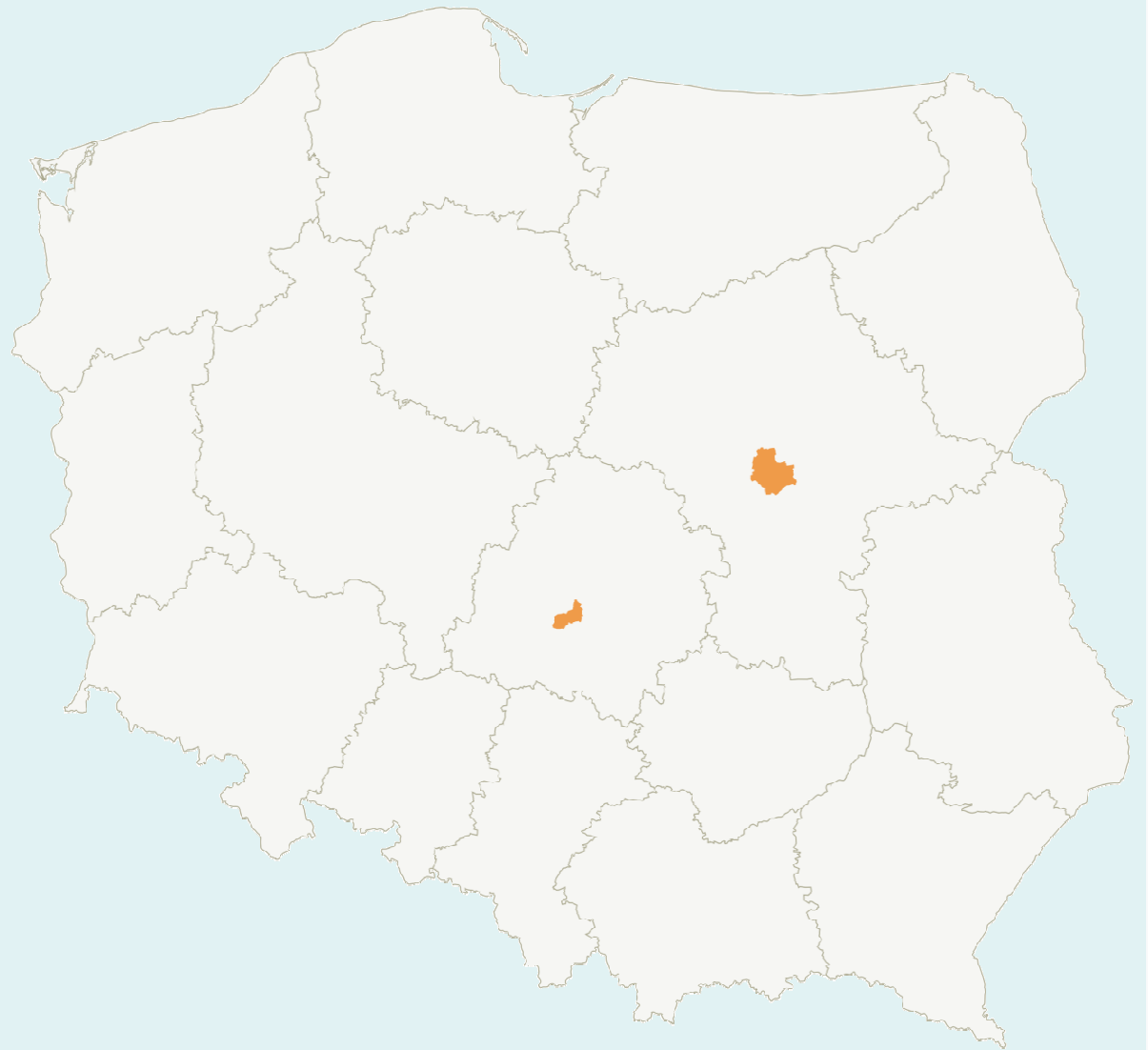
262 persons

# Belorussian



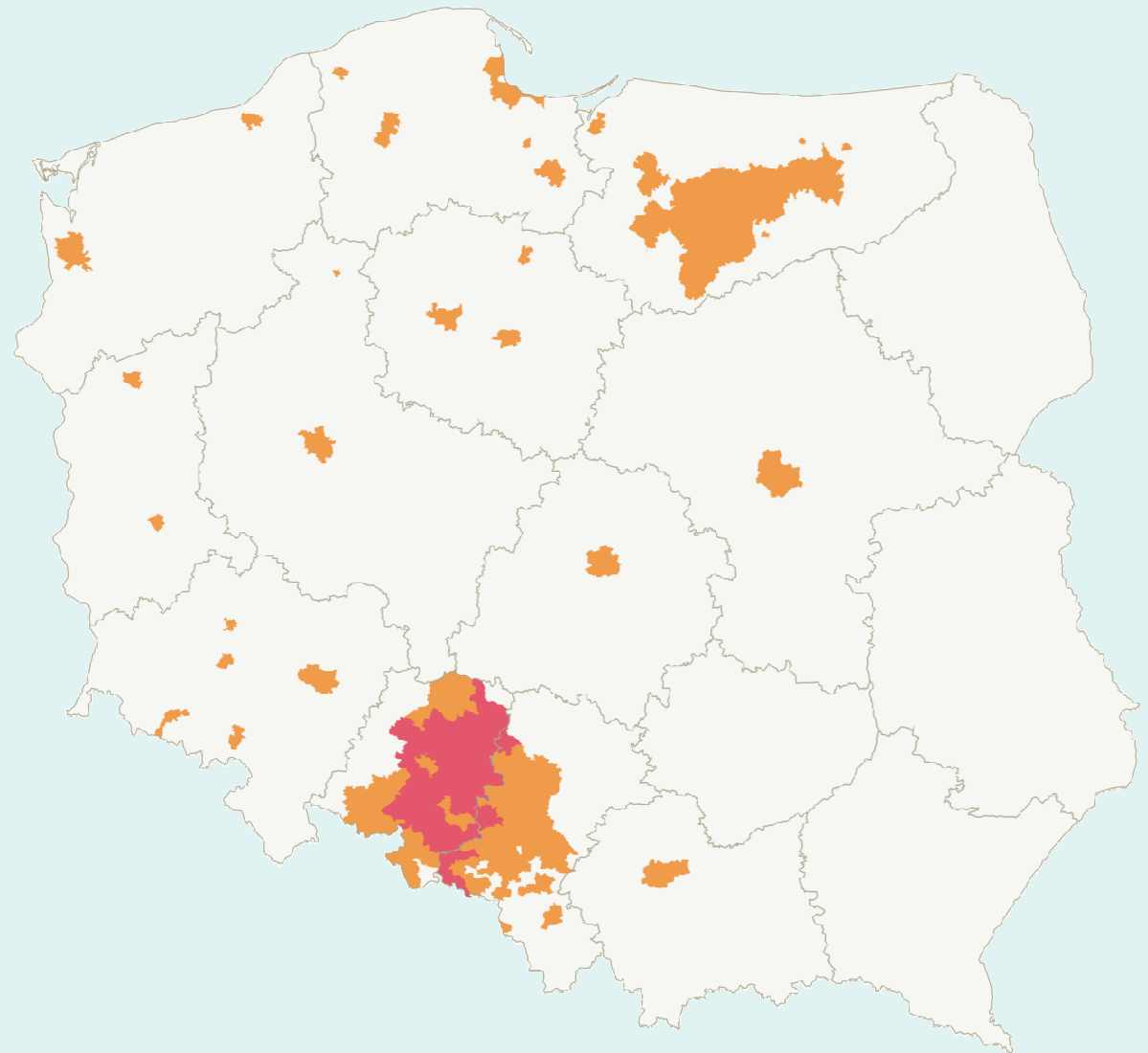
47.640 persons

# Czech



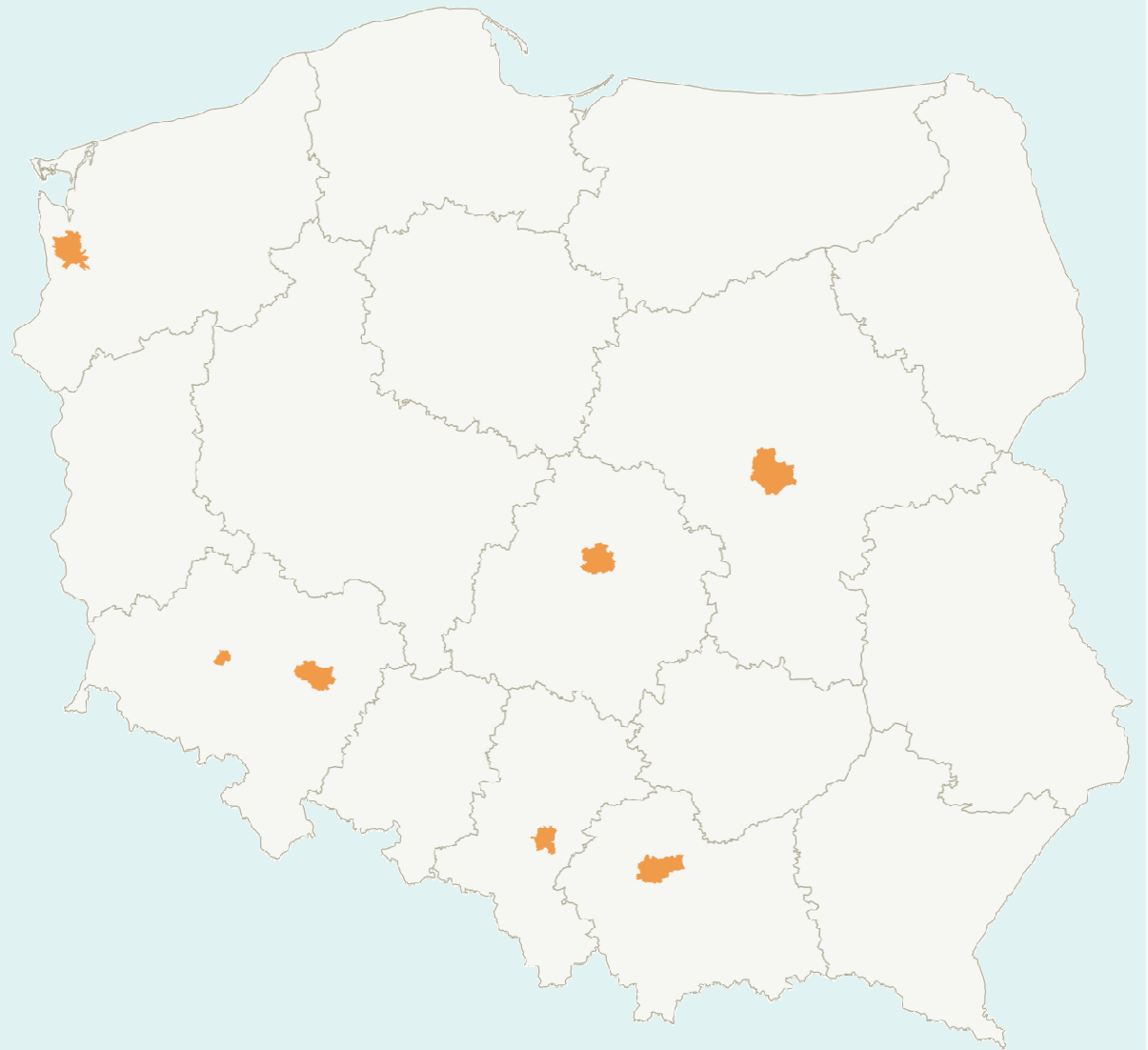
386 persons

# German



147.094 persons

# Jewish

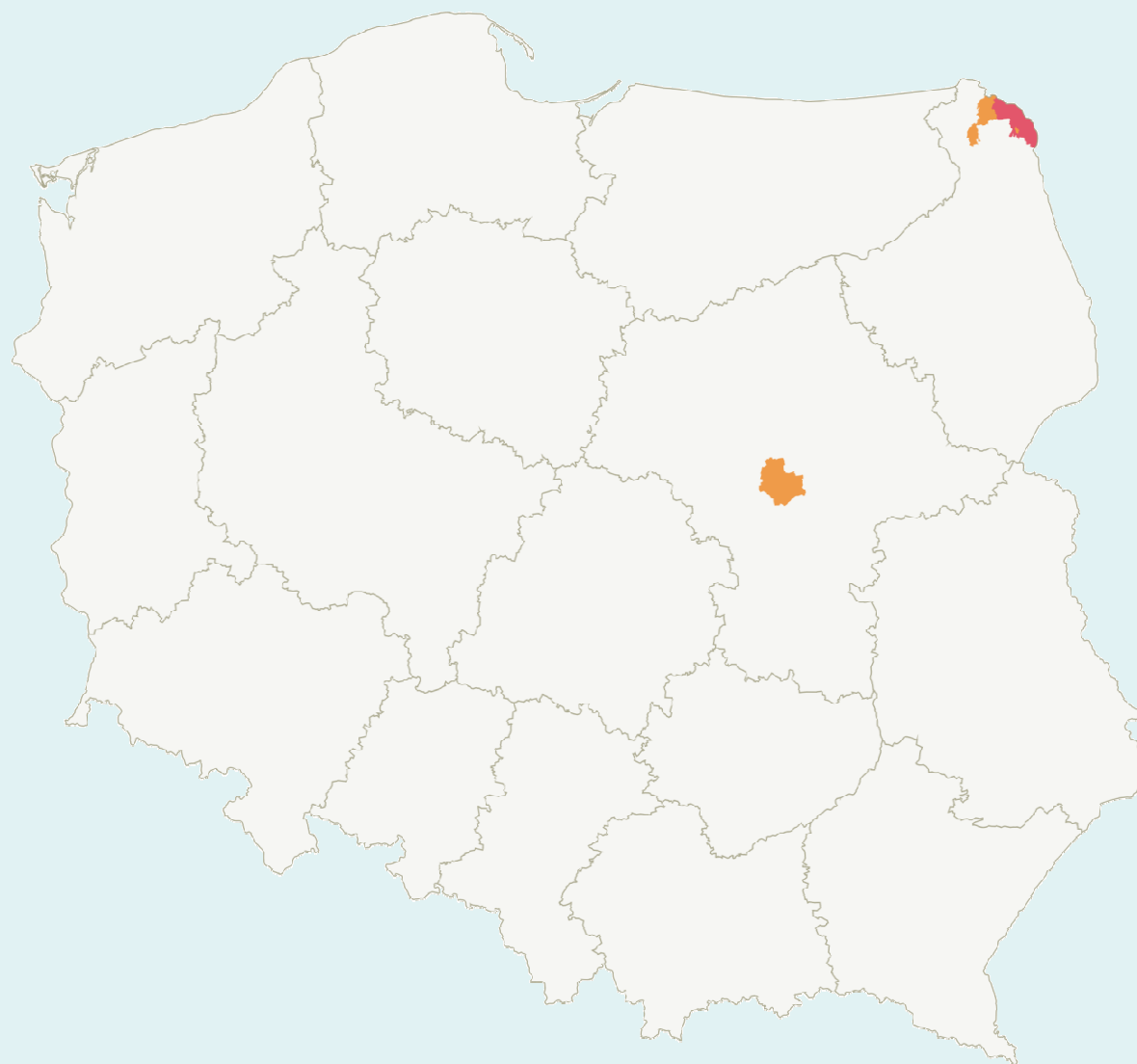


1055 persons



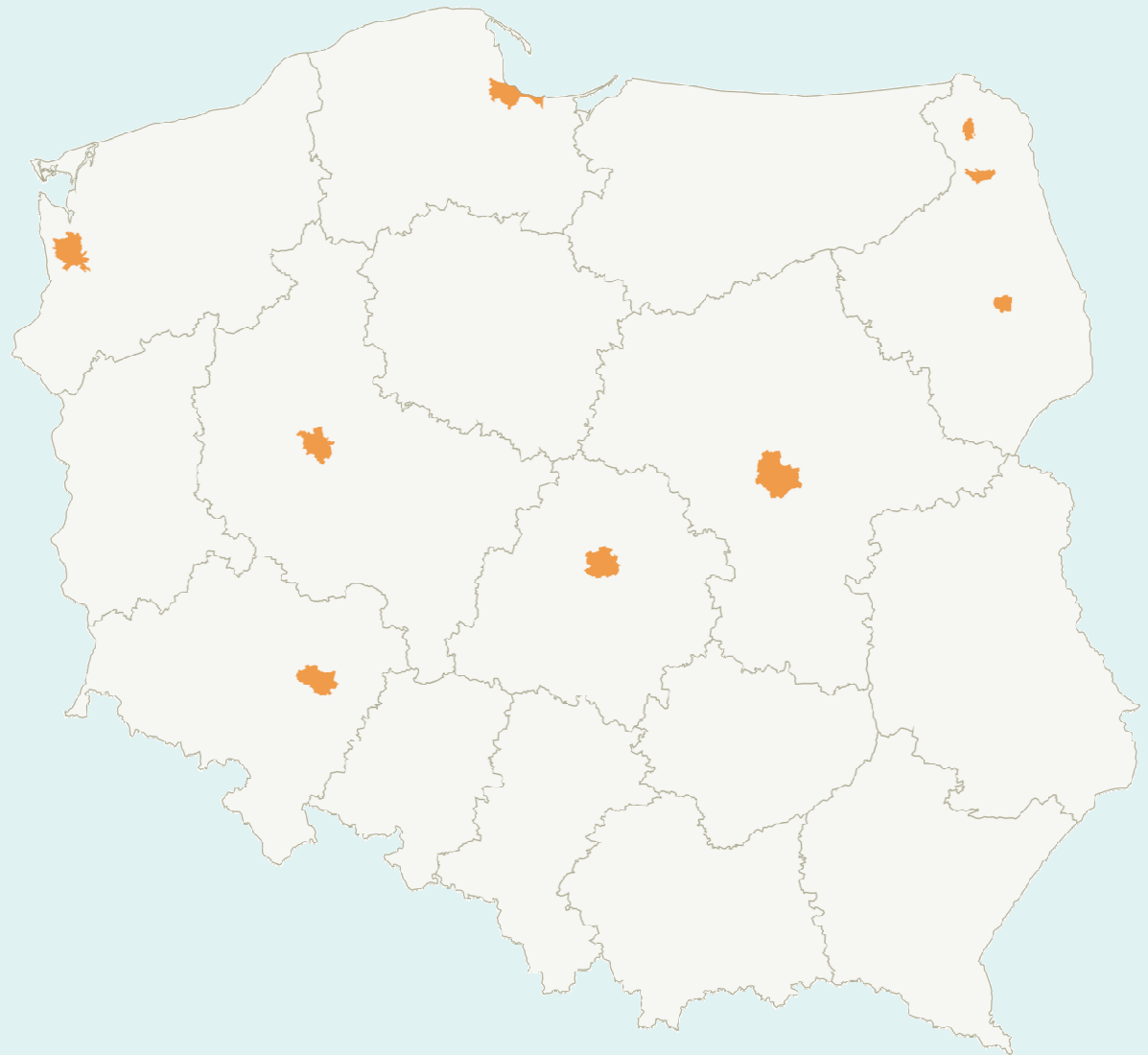


# Lithuanian



5639 persons

# Russian



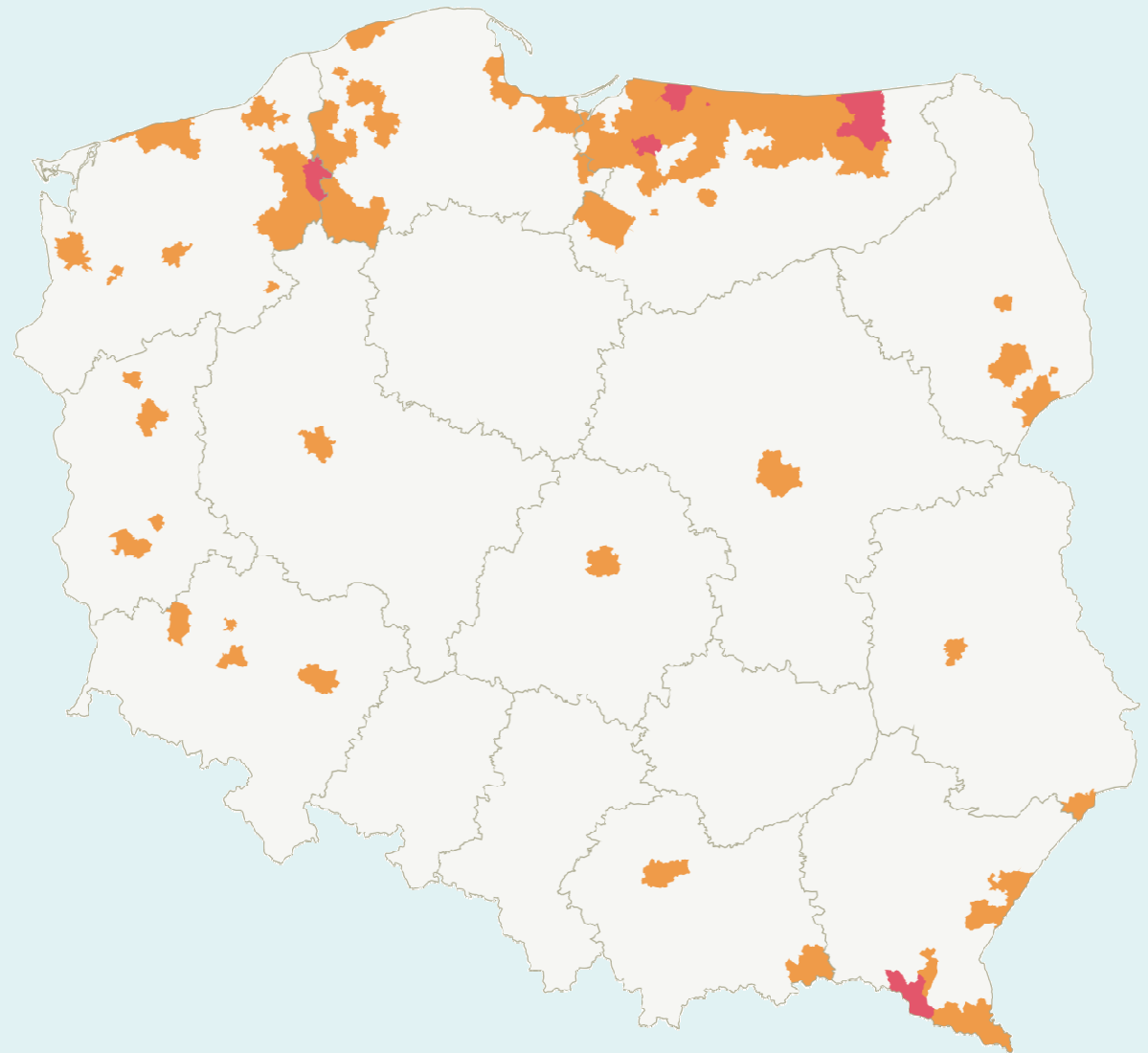
3244 persons

# Slovak



1710 persons

# Ukrainian



27.172 persons

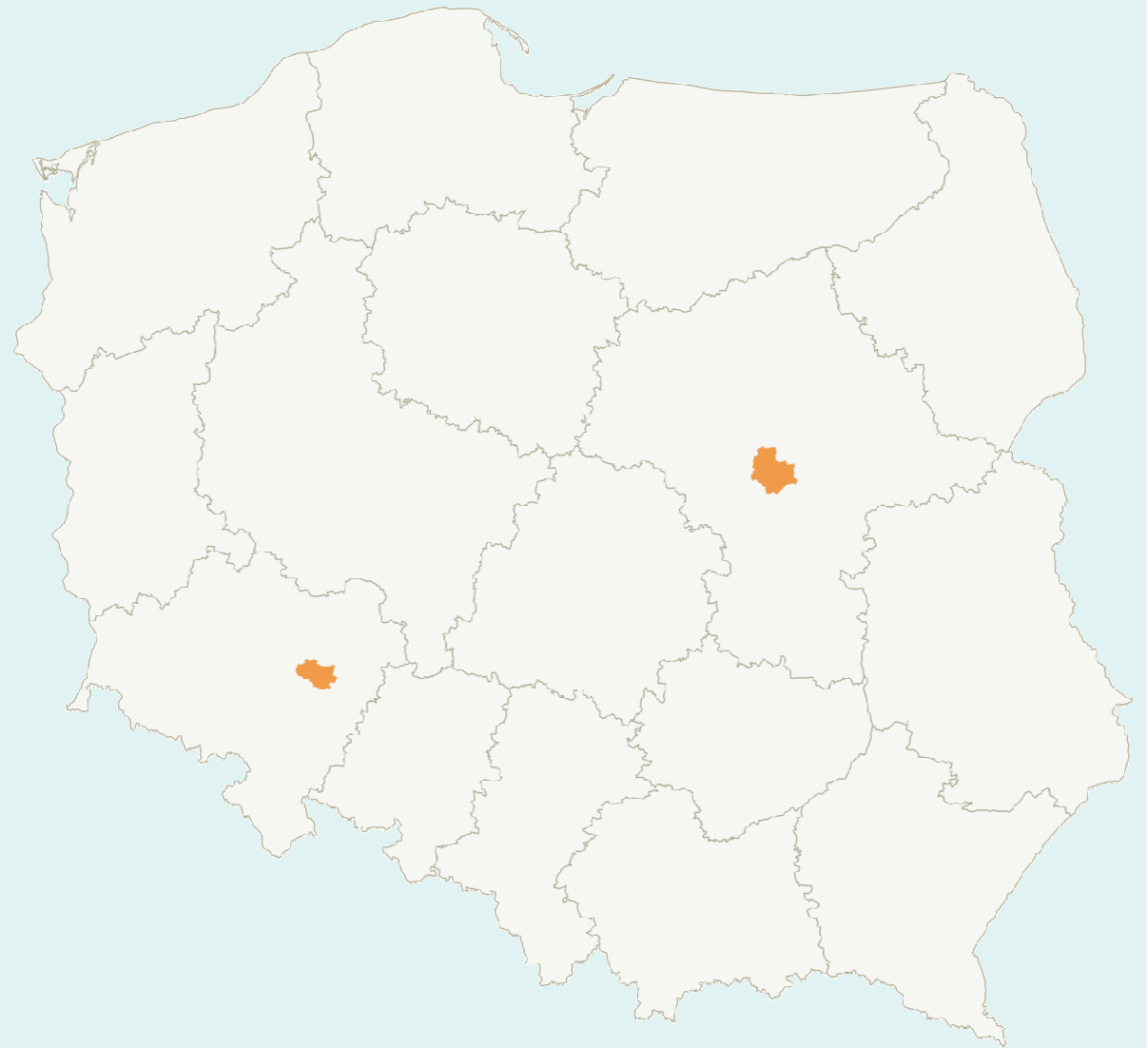
# Ethnic minorities

---



An ethnic minority is a group of Polish citizens that meets all of the requirements listed for national minorities, with the exception of the last one: does not identify itself with a nation organized in its own state.

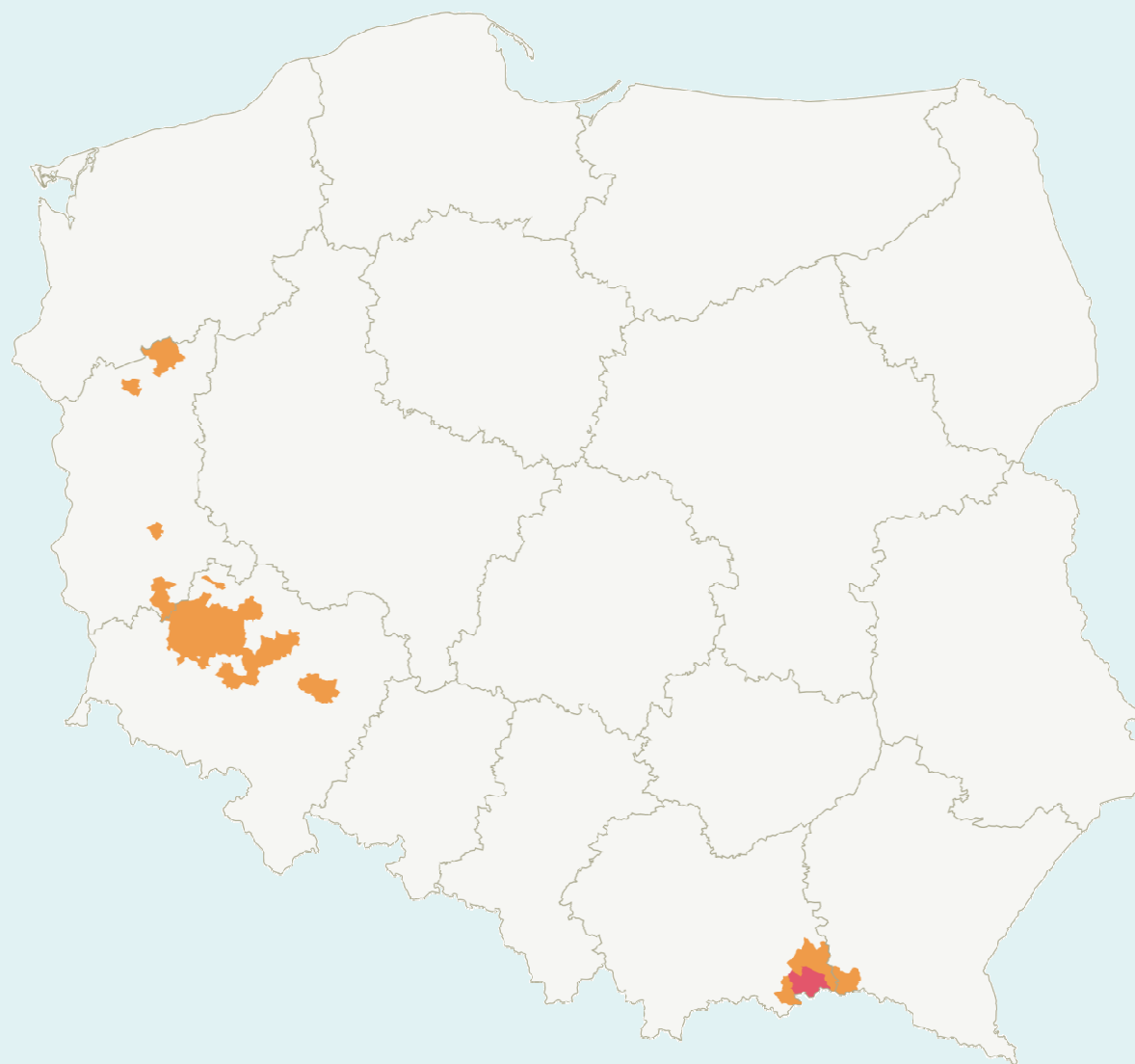
# Karait



43 persons

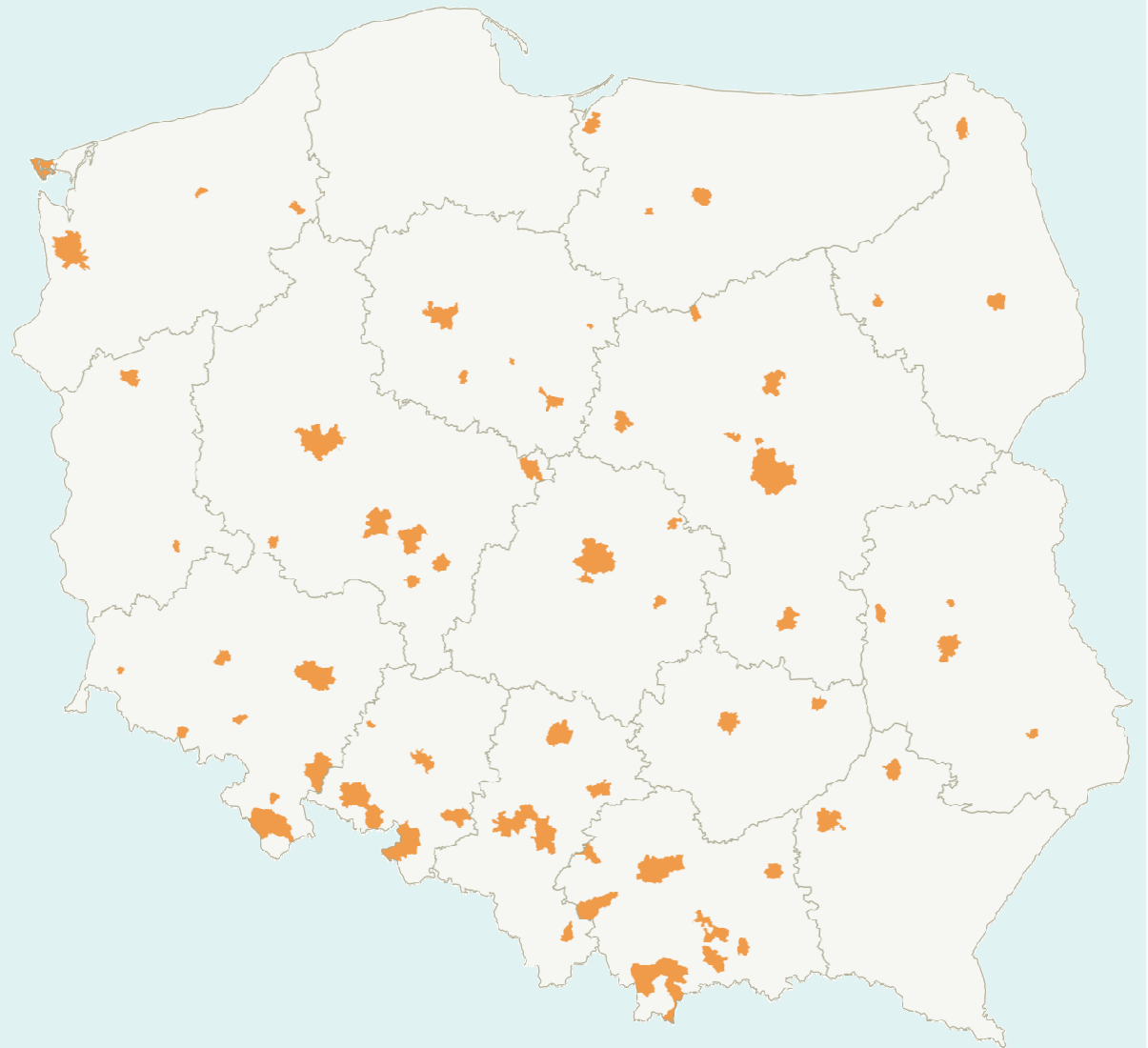


# Lemko (Rusyn)



5850 persons

# Roma



12.731 persons



# Tatar (Tartar)



447 persons

# Regional language

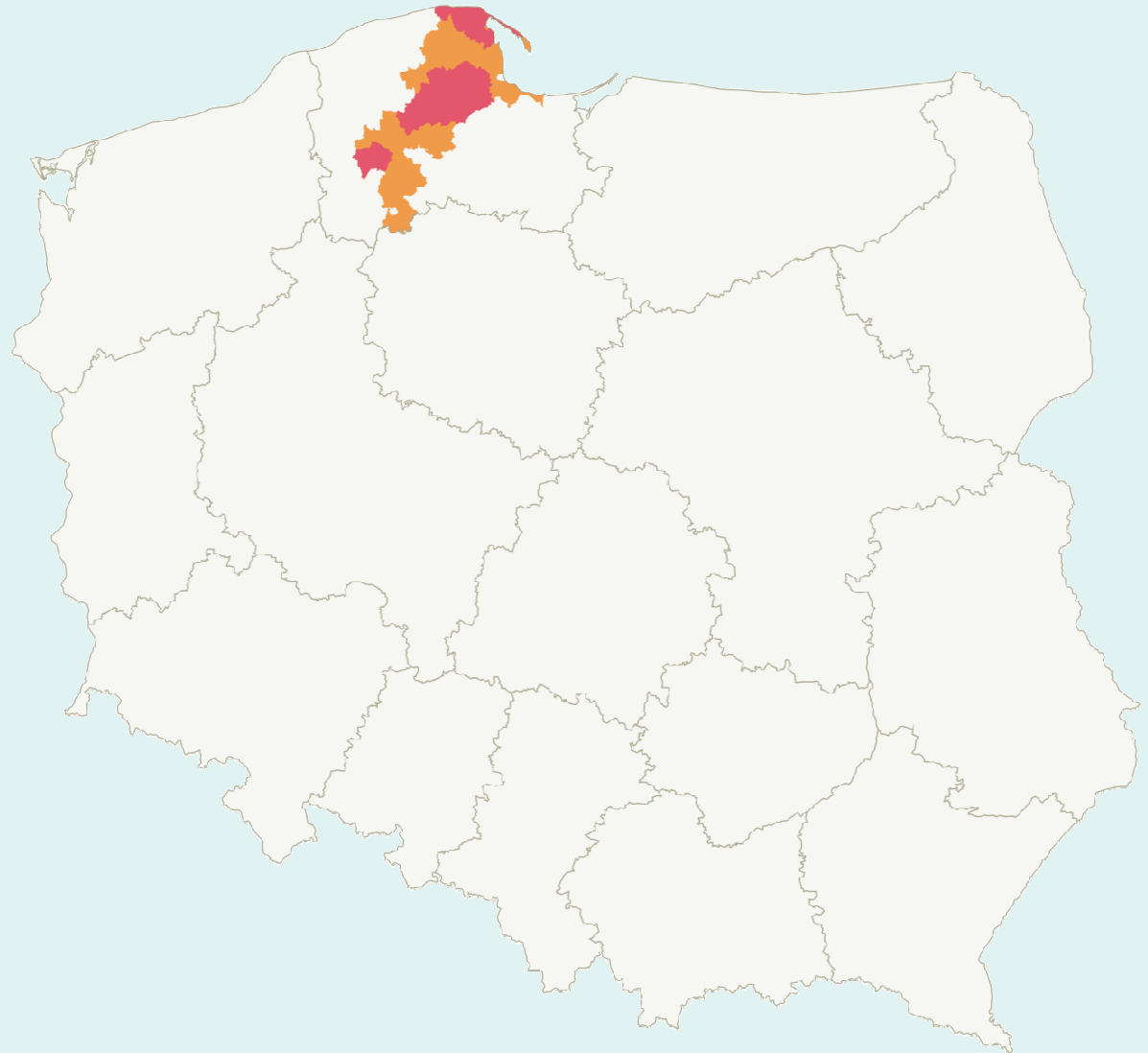
---



A regional language is a language:

- traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state, who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population
- it differs from the dialects of official language of that state
- it is different from the migrants' languages

# Kashubian language



52.665 persons



# Act on minorities

---

From the viewpoint of geographical names two of this Act's regulations are important.

The first concerns the use of minority languages, the second geographical names in those languages.



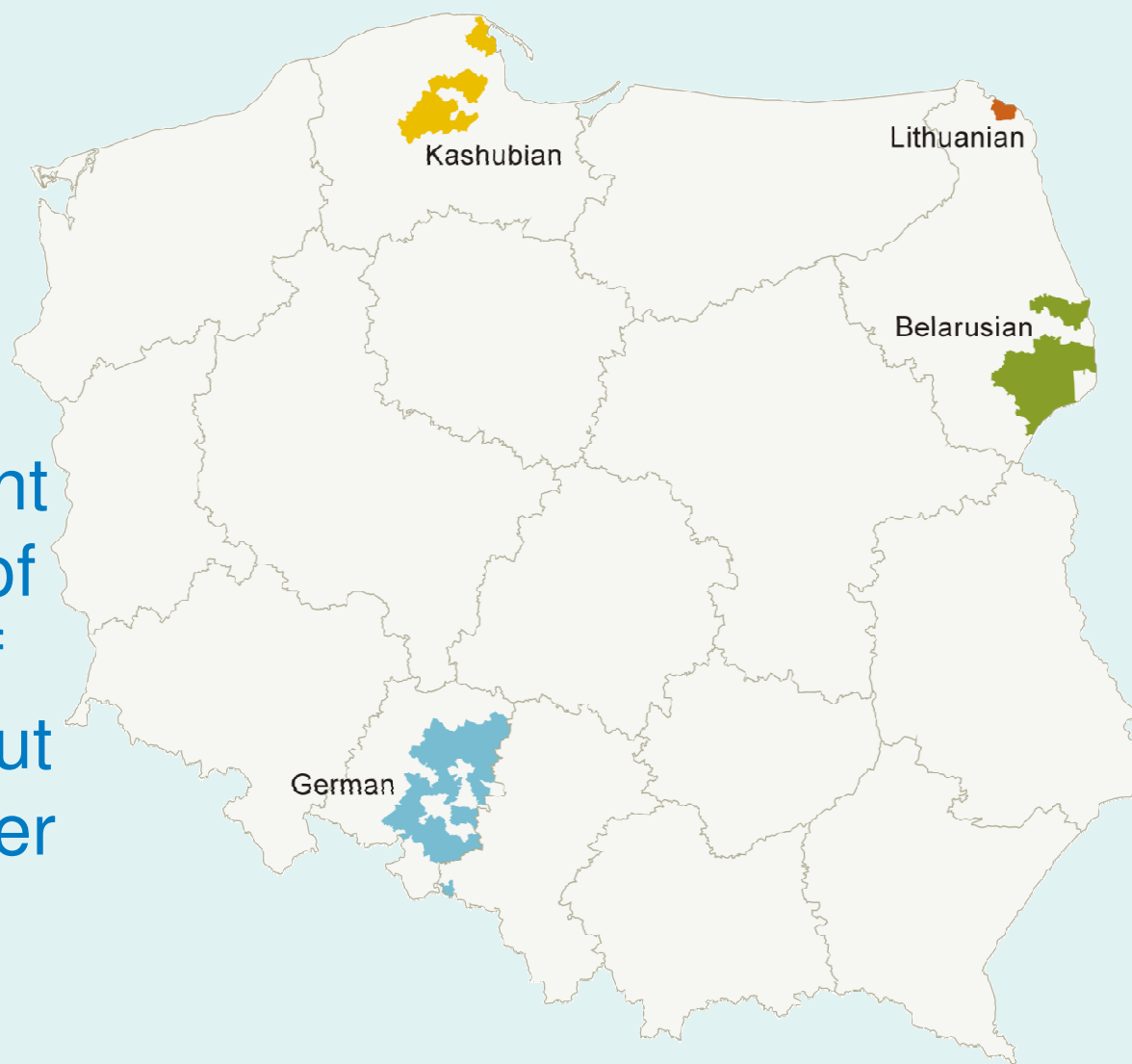
# Supporting language

---

The Act lays down that communes where persons belonging to a national, ethnic minority or using a regional language constitute at least 20% of the inhabitants can introduce a minority language as a “supporting language” used in contact with commune organs and in first-instance court procedures.

# Supporting language

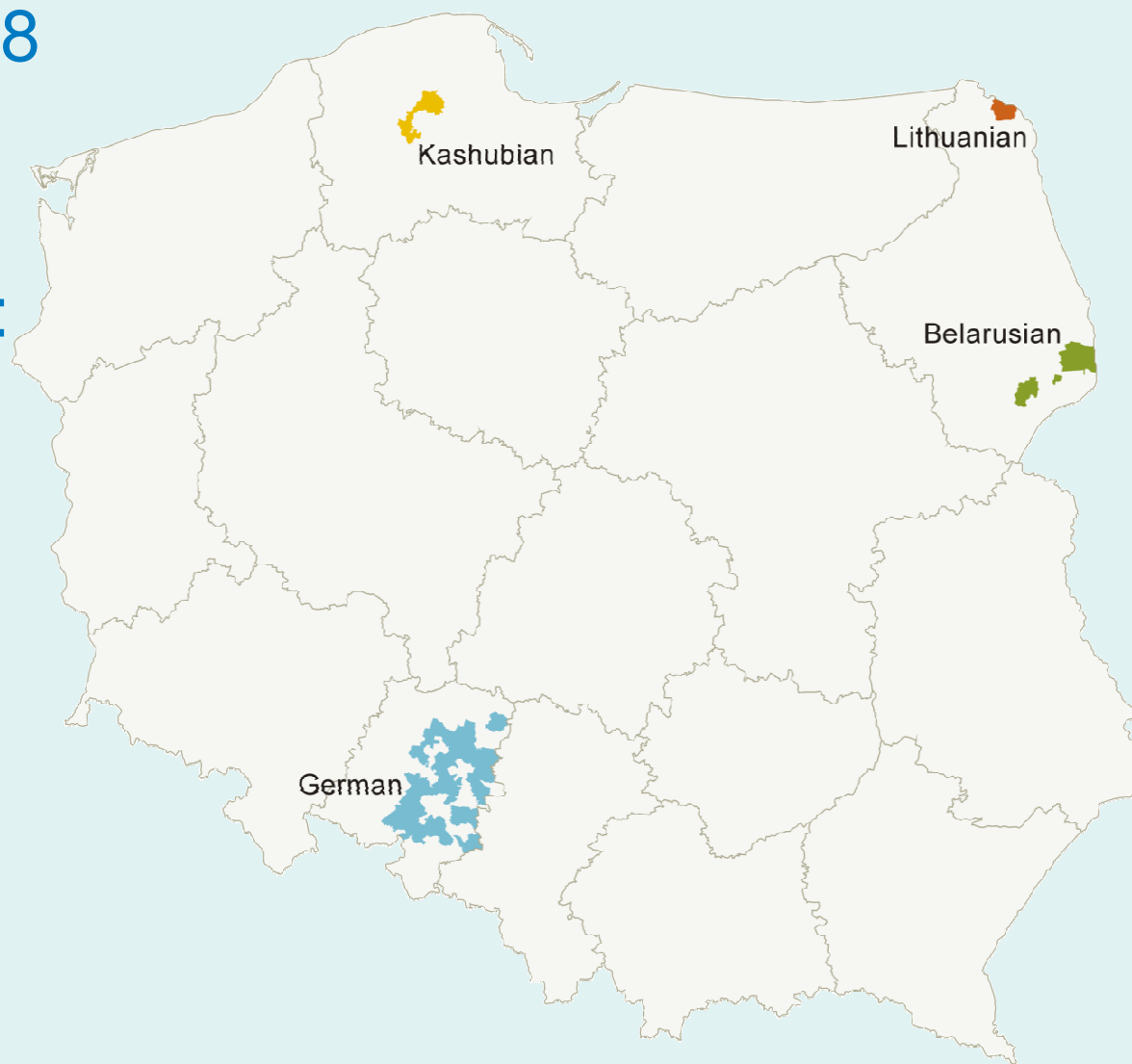
At present only four minorities (Belarusians, Kashubians, Lithuanians and Germans) account for at least 20% of the inhabitants of 51 communes (out of the total number of 2478)...



# Supporting language

...among which 28 introduced supporting languages by 20 September 2009:

- Belarusian in 3 communes
- Kashubian in 2 communes
- Lithuanian in 1 commune
- German in 22 communes



# Minority place-names

---



The Act also lays down that traditional names in a minority language for localities, physiographic objects and streets may be used as “additional names” alongside geographic names established in the Polish language.





# Minority place-names

---

The names of uninhabited localities, physiographic objects as well as streets, squares etc. in minority languages may be established only for communes in which the minority constitutes at least 20% of the inhabitants.

In the case of inhabited localities, minority names may be set also for communes that do not satisfy the quantitative requirement of minorities residing therein (20%). For such places an additional name in the minority language may be introduced if in consultations more than a half of its residents were in favor of the establishment of an additional name.



# Minority place-names

---

Names of localities and physiographic objects in minority languages may be introduced throughout a whole commune or its part.

Names in minority languages may not be used independently and must also appear following the official name in Polish. Contradictory to names in Polish, names in minority languages are not official names but only “additional names” (“auxiliary names”).



# Minority place-names

---

Names in minority languages must not refer to names between 1933 and 1945 granted by the Third German Reich or the Soviet Union.

All names proposed by Commune Councils must receive the approval of the Commission for Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects.



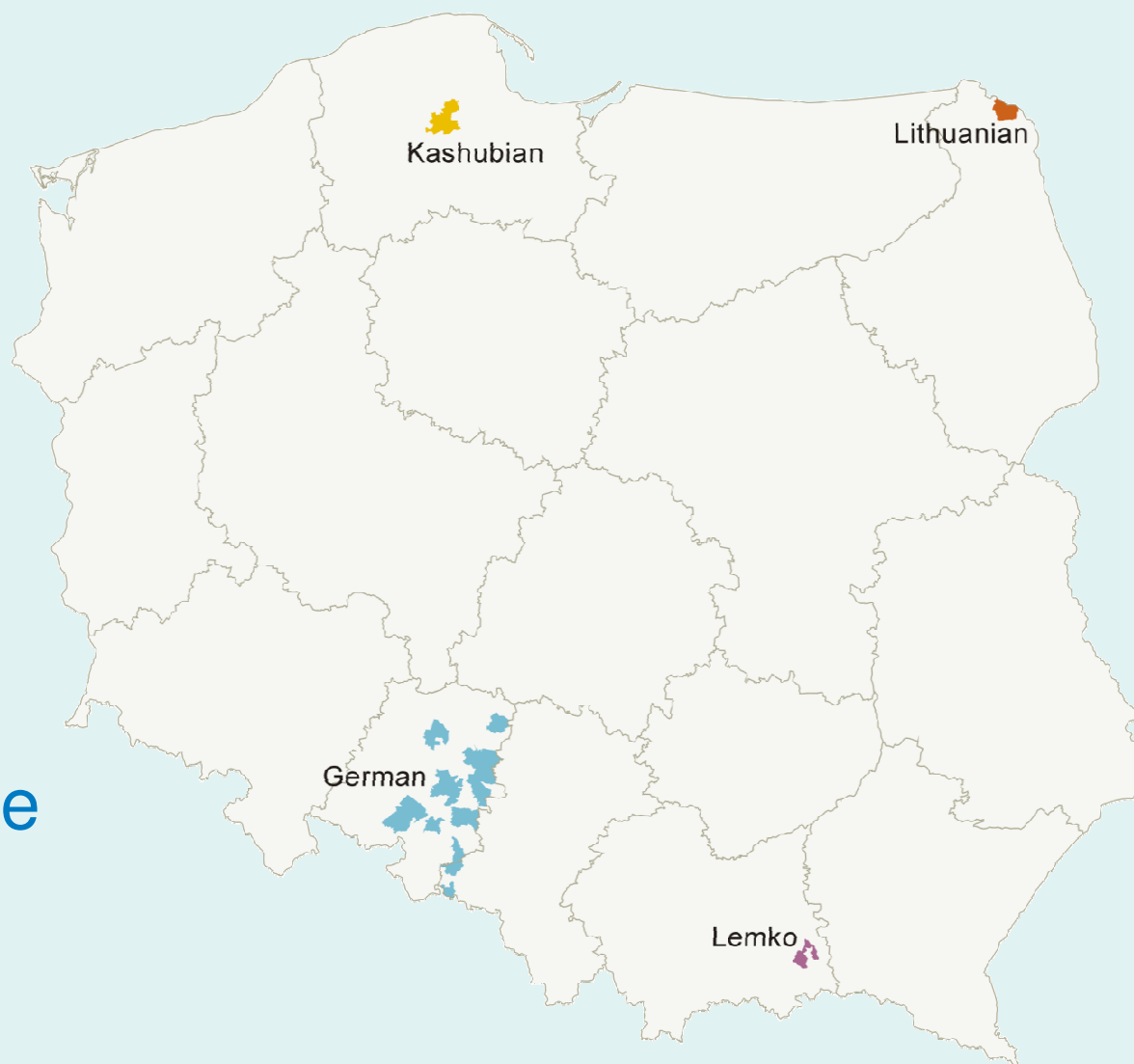
# Minority place-names

---

Until 20 September 2009, 314 names in four languages were introduced for localities in 21 communes:

- 6 German names of towns
- 233 names of villages (31 Kashubian names, 29 Lithuanian, 1 Lemko, 172 German)
- 59 names of parts of villages (43 Lithuanian names, 16 German)
- 16 names of hamlets and its parts (12 Kashubian names, 1 Lithuanian, 3 German)

# Minority place-names



Communes where  
additional names  
were introduced

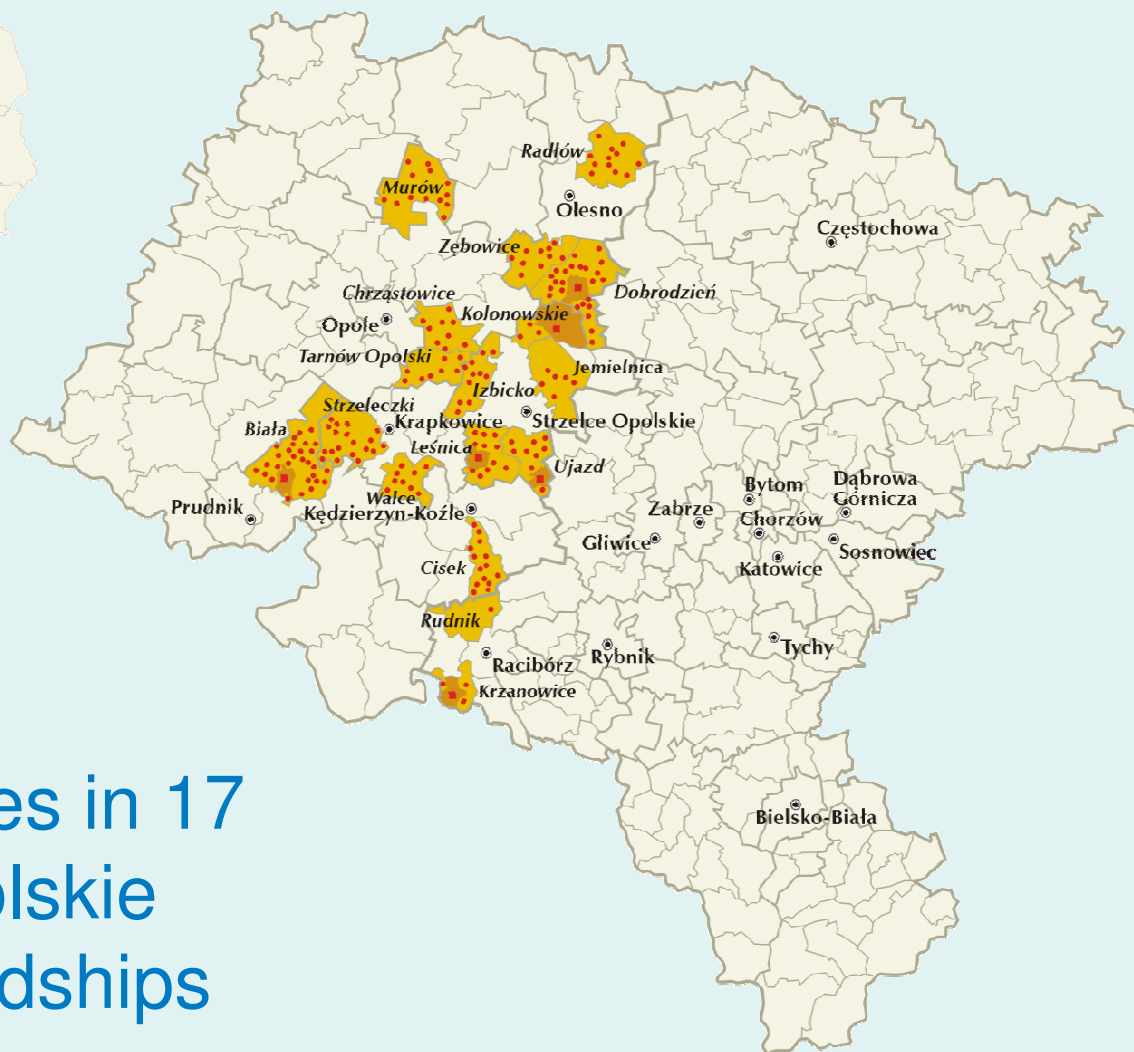
# Minority place-names

---



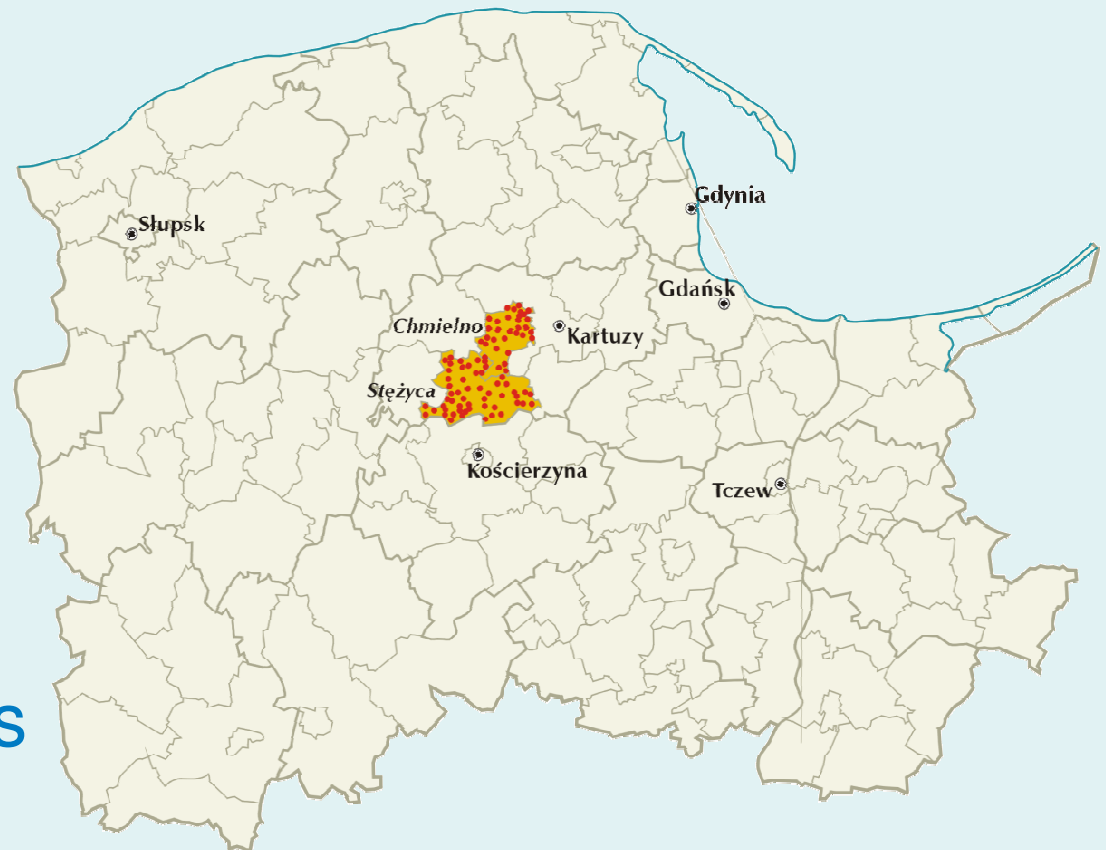
Additional names in minority languages also appear on road signs, due to multilevel and complicated procedures however the introduction of these signs is a long process.

# German place-names



197 German names in 17  
communes in Opolskie  
and Śląskie Voivodships

# Kashubian place-names



86 Kashubian names  
in 2 communes in  
Pomorskie Voivodship



# Lithuanian place-names



30 Lithuanian names in  
1 commune in  
Podlaskie Voivodship

# Lemko place-names



1 Lemko (Rusyn) name in  
commune in Małopolskie  
Voivodship

# Minority place-names

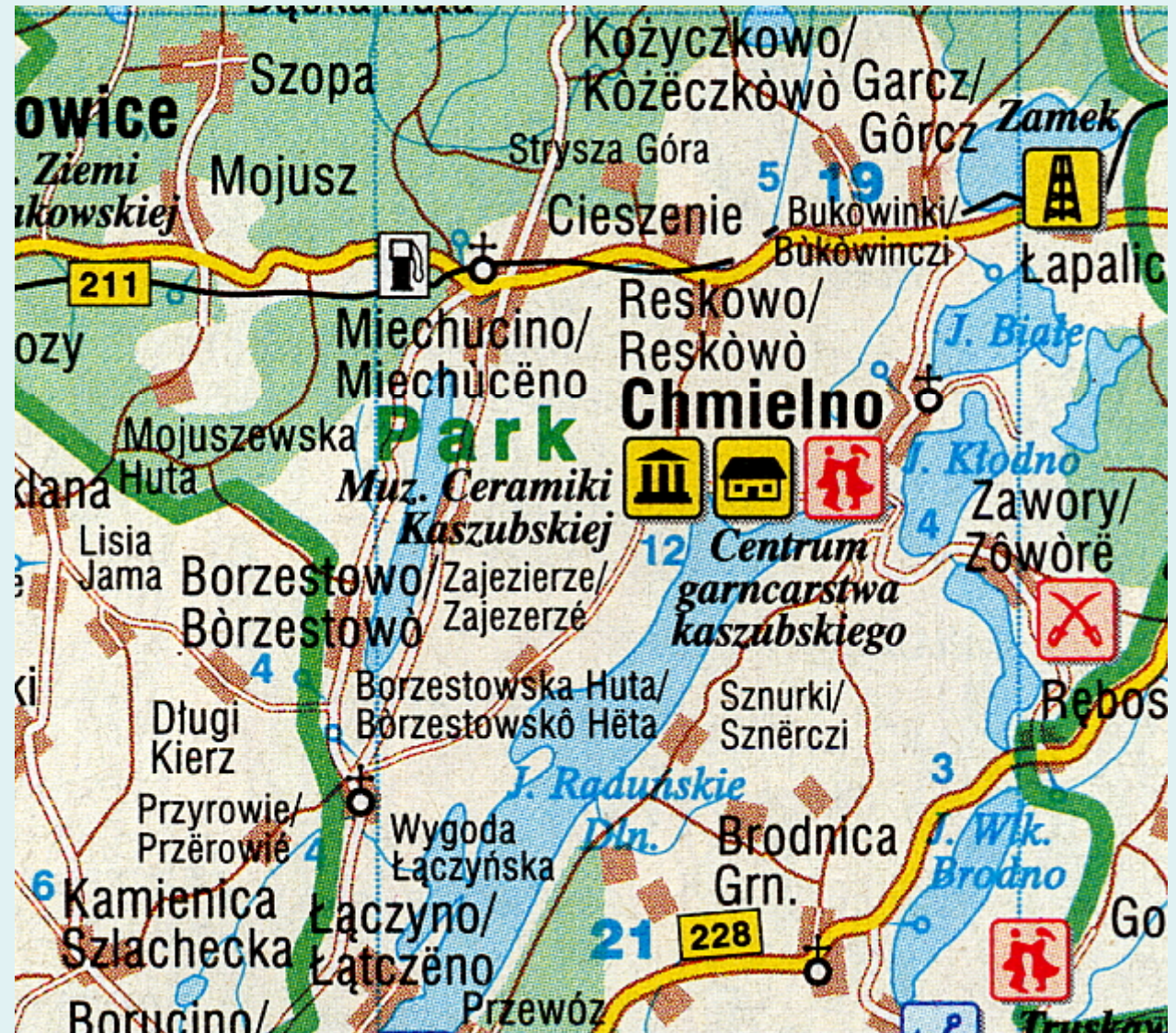
---



Approved place names are also starting to appear on maps published by private companies. At present they are not shown on topographic maps in Poland. The reason for this situation is the lack of funds for actualizing existing topographic maps and for preparing new ones.

# Minority place-names

Part of map of Poland with additional Kashubian names published by private company





**COMMISSION ON STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL  
NAMES OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND**  
affiliated to the Surveyor General of Poland

**Thank you  
for your attention**