

# The Science and Research Concept of the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS for the Years 2021–2025

## WHO ARE WE?

The Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology (IESA) is one of the social science institutes of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) and is a prominent institution of ethnological, socio-anthropological, and religious research in Slovakia and Central Europe. It is formed by a team, balanced in terms of disciplines, gender, and age, of ambitious experts from various thematic areas of the institute's key disciplines.

## WHAT ARE WE AIMING FOR?

Our research focus is evenly distributed between basic and problem-oriented or applied research – we seek to contribute to the search for scientific answers to current, historical as well as timeless social issues. We place emphasis on interdisciplinary overlaps, and we also pursue the internal integrity of the key disciplines and constant refining of their subjects, approaches, and methods. In addition to field research in Slovakia, we conduct research also abroad – in Central Europe and elsewhere in the world. In domestic research, we seek to grasp the relationship to supra-regional as well as global contexts and trends.

## HOW DO WE WORK ON IT?

Unlike other historical and social sciences, we build mainly on field research and use intensive qualitative methods to obtain data: participant observation, in-depth and semi-structured interviews, detailed descriptive and reflective notes, audio-visual records or photo documentation, schematic recording of genealogies and maps and, more recently, online data collection through, for instance, (critical) observation of discussion forums on the studied topics. The research subject determines the type of applied methods: in addition to in-depth research (long-term and repeated qualitative and quantitative surveys), we also conduct short-term surveys by means of questionnaires at several locations to ensure the representativeness and contextualisation of potential regional data embeddedness. In the field of historical ethnography, we use critical work with archive sources and documents; we are experienced in oral history, textual or visual analysis; we work with discursive and content analysis; and apply statistical methods of processing for analyses of larger data corpuses. We also have experience in social laboratories that apply experimental research methods. Under visual-anthropological projects, we are involved in the production of ethnographic films.

## OUR GOALS:

- maintain **balance** between basic research and research oriented on current social issues;

- maintain **balance** between historical and social science trends;
- enhance the **visibility** of our research **outcomes** (increasing the number of open access publications and fulfilment of the National **Open Science** Strategy (*Open Data* and *Open Science*));
- increase the level of **internationalisation** (more intensive cooperation with partner institutions abroad, intensive involvement in international consortia and partnerships, intensified research mobilities);
- increase the **extent of cooperation** in domestic research (interdisciplinary research and interinstitutional cooperation);
- increase the share of **excellent research**, set up excellent teams at the workplace or joint external teams, programme orientation on quality, innovativeness, frontier research, and scientific syntheses;
- support systematic building of **scientific collections within digital humanities**, and involvement in EU infrastructures;
- consider the **gender dimension** in research design;
- take into account **environmental aspects** and challenges in research design in order to ensure environment and climate protection and sustainability;
- pay increased attention to the sensibilisation of the **ethics** of research design, data processing and publishing by complying with strict international standards, while taking into account the **scientific integrity** and individual character of each research project.

## **RESEARCH FOCUS for the period 2021–2025**

### **Thematic area 1: Continuity and transformation in the lives of people, groups, and society**

**Annotation:** family and inter-generational relationships; children and youth; elderly people; gender and gender identities; individual and social memory; individualisation, privatisation; intimacy, loneliness, love; value systems and life styles; research of religion and non-religion at present; new forms of spirituality, secularity, and atheism; the anthropology of religion and rituals; ethnic groups and communities, national minorities, identity, ethnicity, group images, stereotypes, prejudices and inter-group relationships in the context of social transformations of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries; active and engaged citizenship, civic participation; volunteering; new social movements; local and global activism; community life and community activities; the impact of the media on the emergence of hoaxes and conspiracy theories; conspiracy theories in the context of current ideological and inter-group conflicts; the role of value-based and life-long learning.

### **Thematic area 2: Sustainability of the cultural heritage**

**Annotation:** tangible and intangible cultural heritage (a critical analysis); collective memory; cultural heritage values; the role of traditions and their importance for the development of

current rural, urban, and regional communities, ethnic groups, and national minorities; new way of use of cultural heritage at present (adaptive heritage reuse and creative industry); misuse of cultural heritage in different historical periods and political regimes; holidays, festivities, rituals, and the eventisation process; current forms of narrative folklore; scenic folklorism; world cultural heritage (links to politics at the level of states and international actors – UNESCO, EU, CoE; authenticity; bearers' participation in the protection and use of the heritage), the role of cultural heritage in building resilience of local communities.

### **Thematic area 3: Challenges of the Anthropocene**

**Annotation:** Research on group inequalities in society based on various categories (ethnicity, age, gender, health and disability, social status, education, poverty, religion, spatial/social or other marginalisation) and possibilities of their elimination (inclusion/exclusion), ensuring the quality of life and sustainable social and economic development; population ageing (active ageing, ageism, quality of life); secularisation and disintegration of the traditional value system, experience- vs. knowledge-based society, research on mobility (internal/external) and migrations (voluntary as well as forced migrations from a diachronous/synchronous perspective); depopulation of the countryside; urbanisation/suburbanisation and new urban challenges (changes in the physical and symbolic appearance of cities, creation of public spaces, neighbourhoods and community, social groups in a city); xenophobia, racism, the social causes and consequences of pandemics, Covid-19; research on the new ways of life and life styles from the point of view of enhancing the sustainability and resilience of communities and society as a whole; exploration of the social causes, effects and impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss; environmentalism and environmental movements; the effects and risks of new technologies and artificial intelligence in daily life, ethnic, cultural, and social innovations as a result of digital revolution.

### **Thematic area 4: The history of the discipline, development of the theory and methodology**

**Annotation:** The history of the discipline, development of the theory and methodology of ethnological, anthropological, and religious knowledge, critical reflection of objects, methods, and approaches.

### **Links of the IESA SAS thematic research areas to important strategic documents**

The principal research areas of the IESA SAS are based on the programme document *Through Knowledge towards Prosperity – Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation of the Slovak Republic* (RIS 3) of 2013, new EU programme Horizon Europe (HEU), in particular Cluster 2 Culture, creativity and inclusive society, and UN Agenda 2030 (17 goals for sustainable development).