

The present thesis applies the method of historical institutionalism to analyze the repatriation policies of Poland and the way they have worked in practice. It describes the development of repatriation from the territory of the former Soviet Union, starting from the First World War to present. It examines the institutional changes that contributed to the current Repatriation Act and puts these changes into a deeper context. The following section introduces the “Karta Polaka” (lit. The Pole’s Card), which according to the lawmakers, aims at materializing its holder’s moral commitment to Polonia. To ensure the proper working of the “Karta Polaka” in practice, it was also necessary to amend the Citizenship Act - the relevant components of which will be also discussed in the thesis. By describing the development of the institution of the “Karta Polaka”, my goal is to prove that the primary aim of helping the Polish diaspora in the East is no longer entirely true. In addition, thanks to the simple conditions for obtaining the “Karta Polaka”, as well as a series of amendments to the law, it rather serves the purpose of repatriation, as the holders of the card can apply for Polish citizenship after a year. Although both laws are aimed at a different group of people, the “Karta Polaka” is gradually taking over the role of the Repatriation Act, due to the failure of the latter. The neighboring states with a large Polish diaspora reacted differently depending on their interests, therefore their reactions are also included in the thesis.