

DEVELOPING WATCHDOG AND ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Supporting public scrutiny over government and institutions of public trust to improve transparency and good governance.

110 projects (including **3** targeted at children and youth)

124 locations where activities were carried out

61 projects were national in scope or national institutions were targeted

6,814 institutions were monitored, 2,567 of them cooperated with NGOs

105 different issues and/or operational aspects of public institutions were monitored

517 reports and recommendations, analytical and review papers as well as websites were produced

2.4 million individuals informed about or involved in watchdog and advocacy activities

122 specific changes at the national and local level

Projects differed in their nature and scale and ranged from local initiatives addressing relevant local issues to projects that monitored public policy design and implementation at the national level.

Monitored issues

Watchdog and advocacy activities carried out by the organisations focused on a number of different areas, e.g. healthcare, the judiciary, education, the environment, access to public information, and transparency. Altogether, 105 issues and/or operational aspects of public institutions were monitored, for example: the transparency of local council sessions, respect for cyclists and pedestrians when designing infrastructure and services, environmental compliance, respect for the rights of children with disabilities in education, the recruitment process and funding for doctoral studies. Monitoring efforts also focused on the legislative process and the enforcement of laws and international conventions (e.g. the UN Convention on the Rights of Individuals with Disabilities).

Many projects addressed healthcare, a rare area on the radar of watchdog organisations to date. Organisations monitored regulations and the practice of oncological diagnostics, compliance with standards of perinatal care, sex education and the use of the right of conscience by doctors. The quality of patient services in out-patient clinics and hospitals was assessed; advocacy efforts were taken regarding the psychiatric care system in Poland.

Another important and new focus area was the judiciary system. Projects looked at the performance of court-appointed experts and work conditions in courts. NGO activists observed court hearings of cases that they feel are relevant, e.g. domestic violence or violence against animals. The monitoring was conducted by the trained volunteers who attended court proceedings as members of the public. Environmental performance was a frequent area of interest. Unlike in healthcare or courts, public scrutiny of environmental performance has a long tradition in Poland and there are a number of dedicated environmental groups that are regularly active in this field. This time they monitored natural heritage and nature conservation planning and management. They often performed inventory counts of plants and wildlife in protected areas in order to engage in evidence-based advocacy.

Monitored institutions

In total, 6,814 various types of institutions were monitored (e.g. government departments and other administration agencies, local government units, schools, universities, hospitals, courts), of which 2,567 cooperated with or responded to activities conducted by non-governmental organisations.

Officials from monitored institutions took part in consultation and promotional events, sometimes helped to organise them, and discussed proposed changes with non-governmental organisations.

Documentation and dissemination

A total of 517 reports and recommendations were produced: analytical and review papers, and websites that documented activities and disseminated their outcomes. While these reports and recommendations were mainly dedicated to monitored institutions, NGOs more than ever before focused on communicating their agenda and involving citizens. Over 700 such initiatives were undertaken, including open meetings for community members and online campaigns encouraging support for watchdog activities and advocacy, e.g. signing petitions and backing proposed changes. Approximately 2.4 million individuals were informed about and/ or involved in watchdog and advocacy activities carried out by organisations.

Implemented change

Watchdog and advocacy efforts resulted in 122 specific changes at the national and local level. These changes included the amendment of legislation (e.g. amendment of the Education System Law to ensure access to examinations for students with disabilities), improvements or modifications of public policies (e.g. adoption of an anti-smog resolution in Cracow), increasing the level of transparency in municipalities (e.g. webcasts of all committee sessions of Cracow City Council), solving major problems affecting community members (e.g. increasing the number of regional train services in several provinces).