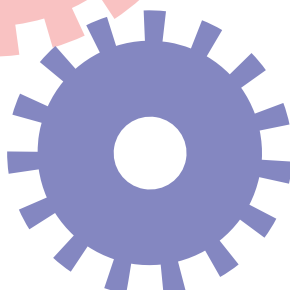
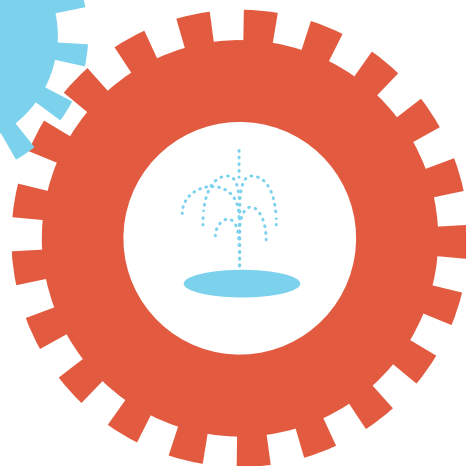
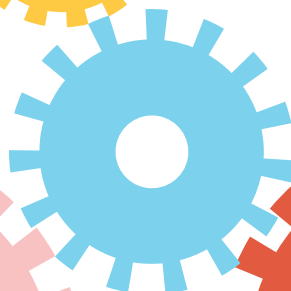
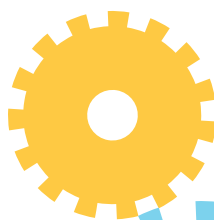
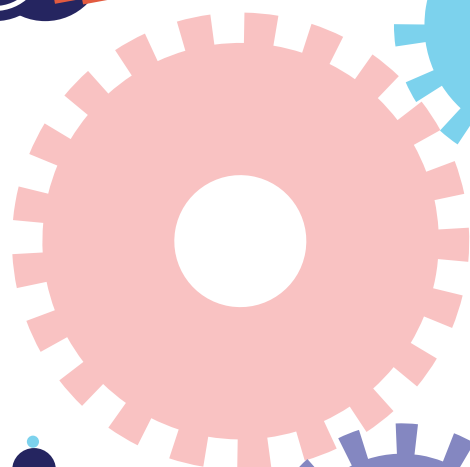




LEARN ABOUT...

Citizens for Democracy programme



Citizens for Democracy

www.ngofund.org.pl

NGO Programme, financed under EEA Grants.



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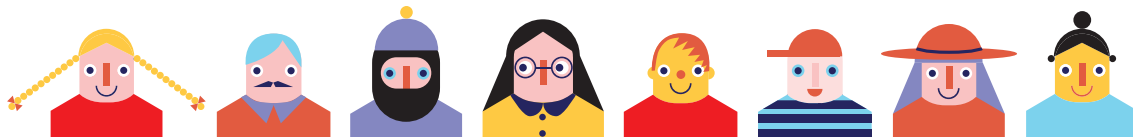
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Warsaw 2017



The Citizens for Democracy programme was implemented by the Stefan Batory Foundation in partnership with the Polish Children and Youth Foundation.

The programme was financed under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism (EEA Grants)¹. A part of the **EEA Grants** was dedicated to supporting **NGO Programmes** aimed at the development of civil society and increasing the participation of NGOs in building social justice, democracy and sustainable development.

The NGO Programmes place special emphasis on horizontal concerns such as: hate speech, extremism and hate crime, racism and xenophobia, homophobia, anti-Semitism, tolerance and multicultural understanding, Roma, sexual harassment, violence against women and trafficking.

€ 37 million was allocated for the Citizens for Democracy programme, implemented from **June 2013 to April 2016**.

The basic form of operation of the programme was to make grants available to projects implemented by non-governmental organisations. Grants were designed to: foster citizenship, promote democratic values, including human rights; develop advocacy and the watchdog role; empower vulnerable groups, promote the strengthened capacity of NGOs and an enabling environment for the sector, and developing bilateral relations with Donor States.

Complementary activities were also carried out within the programme such as: workshops for non-governmental organisations, events that serve to increase networking with entities from Donor States, and experience sharing among organisations implementing projects supported by EEA Grants in Poland and the 15 other EU countries. Initiatives that aim to counter-act hate speech, xenophobia and discrimination were also undertaken.

¹ EEA Grants are the contribution provided by **Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein** to 16 European Union Member States from Central and Southern Europe in order to reduce the economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area countries. Besides Poland, the beneficiaries of this support are: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain.



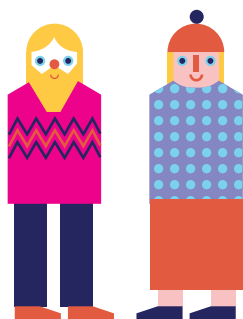
REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

- * **6 calls for proposals** were held in which **7,000 applications** were submitted;
- * applications were assessed by **115 experts**;
- * a total of **630 grants** worth **PLN 134.5 million** were awarded.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

- * **617 projects¹** of a total value of **PLN 131 million**;
- * projects were implemented by **667 Polish non-governmental organisations** (**471** leaders and **196** partners);
- * **338 projects** were implemented in partnership with Polish or international partners;
- * activities were implemented in **723 locations in Poland**;
- * **146 projects** were national in scope or dedicated to national institutions.

PARTNERS



- * **196** organisations and **212** institutions, companies and informal groups from Poland (**292** projects);
- * **72** organisations, institutions and companies from Donor States (**82** projects);
- * **17** organisations from other countries: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and Hungary (**11** projects).

¹ 10 organisations decided not to accept grants awarded to them, 3 organisations did not complete their projects.

GRANTS TO SUPPORT THE THREE TYPES OF PROJECTS WERE OFFERED TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS:

- ★ **Thematic Projects** designed to support project implementation in five thematic areas: public participation, public scrutiny, combating discrimination (including refugee assistance and integration), counteracting exclusion, and children and youth.

Applicant organisations could allocate a part of the funds to development and capacity building activities. Small organisations could apply for additional grants offered by the Batory Foundation to cover matching contributions.

In total, 6,437 applications were assessed, 547 grants were awarded and 536 projects were implemented. Furthermore, 396 organisations used some of the funds for capacity building and development, and 47 organisations received grants to cover matching contributions.

- ★ **Systemic Projects** were designed to support the capacity building and quality enhancement of the whole non-governmental sector and its sub-sectors.

Organisations that applied for these grants could use a part of the funds for capacity building.

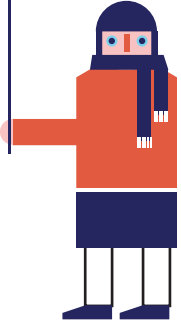
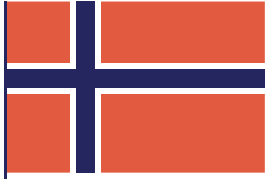
In total, 289 applications were assessed, 9 grants were awarded, 9 projects were completed, and 8 organisations used a part of the funds on capacity building and development.

- ★ **Bilateral co-operation:** activities designed to help establish working relationships with entities from Donor States and to develop joint thematic projects or activities designed to expand co-operation between the programme grantees and entities from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Request for project proposals to form new bilateral co-operation ties or to expand existing ones were submitted continuously between September 2013 and December 2015.

In total, 168 applications were assessed, 74 grants were awarded, and 72 projects were completed.





SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS AND THE EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE

- ★ **78 meetings and workshops** for applicants and grantees, attended by **1,977 individuals**;
- ★ **7 study visits to** Norway (6 visits) and to Iceland (1 visit), attended by **100 individuals**;
- ★ **7 NGO Forums** attended by **880 individuals** (including **55 individuals** from other countries).

COMBATING HATE SPEECH, XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION



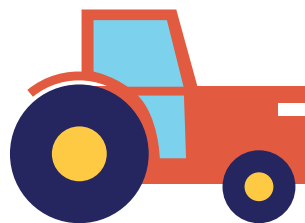
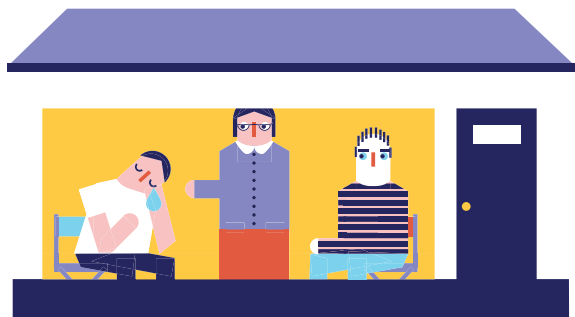
- ★ **60 young bloggers** took part in hate speech workshops;
- ★ **2.4 million individuals** were exposed to the #StopMowieNienawisci campaign;
- ★ **2 research reports** published about hate speech (2014 and 2016);
- ★ **36 organisations** hosted “Home without Hate” during the Woodstock Poland Festivals;
- ★ **244 events** across Poland in solidarity with refugees;
- ★ **514 082** users have read most popular post on uchodzczy.info fanpage on Facebook;
- ★ **173 projects** submitted in the “Topic: Refugees” journalism contest.



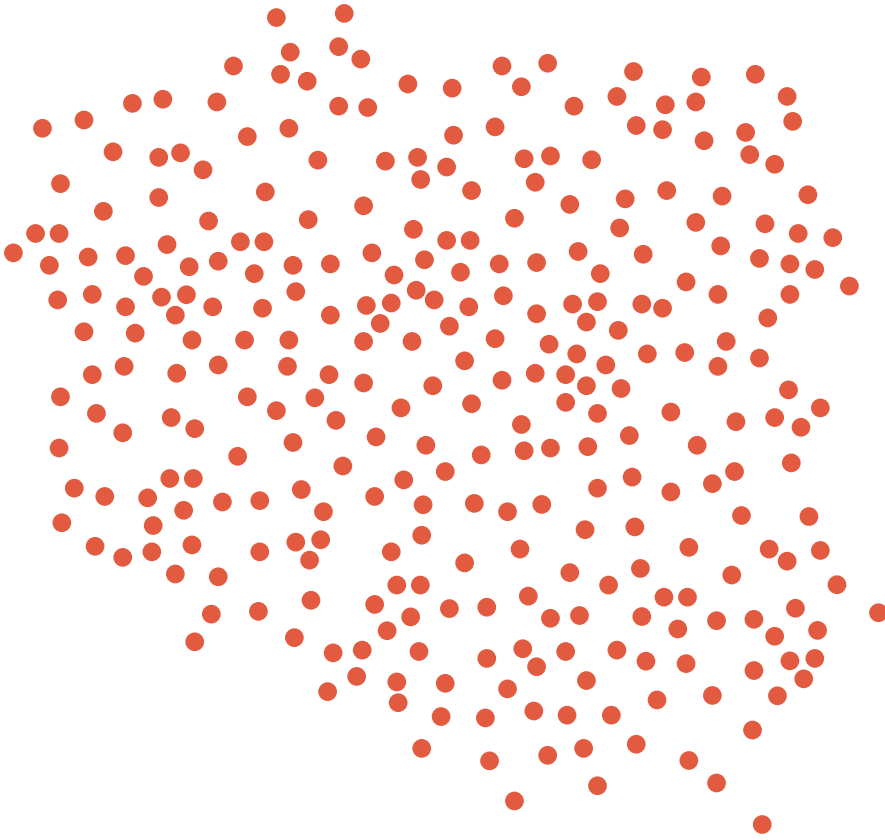
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS OF THE PROGRAMME:

- ★ **Meetings and workshops** for applicants and grantees, addressing such topics as project design and management, institutional development planning, communication and promotion, the practical application of horizontal policies (sustainable development, equal opportunities and good governance); and a series of meetings for organisations active in specific thematic areas to share expertise, exchange experience and to network.
- ★ **Study visits** and other events to create opportunities for Polish organisations to network, form partnerships and learn from the experience of Norwegian and Icelandic non-governmental organisations and public institutions. Study visits addressed such topics as: policies and strategies to integrate refugees and migrants, women's rights, gender equality and counteracting gender-based violence, education and integration opportunities for students of foreign origin, education for national and ethnic minorities, participation in policy and planning regarding public areas, civic education for youth.
- ★ **Non-governmental organisation forums** designed to exchange experience and debate about participatory, watchdog, anti-discrimination initiatives and about issues faced by refugees and migrants or about the promotion of activities dedicated to children and youth. Forums were developed in partnership with organisations active in specific fields.
- ★ Events and publications regarding **combating hate speech, xenophobia and discrimination**: workshops for young bloggers, the #StopMowieNienawisci (stop-hate-speech) campaign for people aged 15-18; the www.mowanienawisci.pl portal; „Home without Hate” during two editions of the Woodstock Poland Festival; a platform for NGOs during three editions of the Equality Parade; two research reports about hate speech against minority groups, publishing the Polish version of the Council of Europe manual *Bookmarks: Combating hate speech online through human rights education*.
- ★ Initiatives designed to **form friendly attitudes to refugees**: the uchodzcy.info portal (refugees.info), national refugees solidarity campaigns, a journalism contest for projects about refugees—“Topic: Refugees”. These initiatives were completed in partnership with other organisations who believe this is a priority theme.





PROGRAMME OUTCOMES



- ★ **133** projects (including **51** targeted at children and youth)
- ★ **390 locations** where activities were carried out
- ★ **668 NGOs** and **390 public institutions** engaged in dialogue
- ★ **56,000 participants** involved (including children and youth)
- ★ **273 publications** and **websites**
- ★ **144 solutions** supporting dialogue with local and national institutions
- ★ **116 citizens' recommendations** incorporated by decision-makers



FOSTERING CITIZENSHIP

Support was granted to activities designed to engage citizens and civil society organisations in public life, public policy and the decision-making processes affecting neighbourhoods, communities, cities and the country as a whole.

Altogether, 133 projects were completed (including 51 projects targeted at children and youth). Activities were implemented in 390 localities; 22 projects were national in scope.

Projects strongly varied in theme and size and ranged from national to local projects and those dealing with problems affecting small communities.

Education and training

Important project components included targeted education and training activities for both community members and officials (mainly local council members and local government staff) addressing such issues as local needs assessment techniques, running consultation meetings for community members, and the structure of local government. The training helped community members prepare for consultations and helped officials make adequate arrangements. Education activities for children and youth had a different focus. They were mainly designed to improve the knowledge and skills related to public participation and civic engagement. Young people learned how to organise work for volunteers, implement social projects and facilitate debates; they also attended a journalism workshop. In total, 14,642 individuals received training (including 6,605 children and youth).

Public consultations

Public consultations facilitated by non-governmental organisations in partnership with various institutions, mainly local government, often addressed such topics as local strategies (e.g. the development of local culture, sports, the regeneration of deprived areas, social policy), planning public space (e.g. consultations regarding local zoning plans or decisions regarding the future of specific sites such as a parks, local markets, neighbourhood centres), and participatory budgeting (process rules and regulations) or a specific issue of access to beaches for individuals with disabilities. Consultations were arranged in various forms and used a variety of techniques. They were mostly traditional open meetings, workshops and surveys. However, certain innovative techniques were also applied such as: consensus conferences, participatory mapping walks (to assess local needs) or online tools (when the public is consulted on public space planning or when projects are proposed in participatory budgeting). Consultation meetings and workshops took place in 160 communities.

Local community initiatives

Encouraged by non-governmental organisations, local residents also took part in activities benefiting the local community and launched grassroots initiatives to solve specific problems. Social recommendations or concepts were formulated and presented to local government. They addressed local facilities, social policy, amenities for pedestrians and cyclists. Moreover, children and youth were involved in community actions by holding debates regarding issues in the school and in the community and by volunteering in various projects (e.g. clearing the area around welfare centres), by organising social picnics, Paralympic games, multicultural festivals, and trips for children with disabilities.

Participants

The initiatives aimed at increasing civic engagement involved over 56,000 individuals (including children and youth). They took part in training, implemented local community initiatives and participated in public consultations; 668 non-governmental organisations took part in the activities (in the role of project leaders, partners or participants of consultations) as did 340 public institutions (government departments, local governments, community centres, forest authorities, welfare centres, and schools).

Documentation and promotion

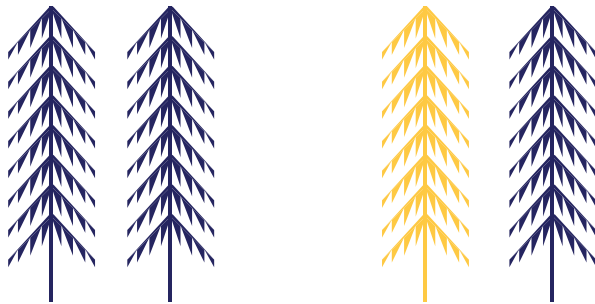
A total of 273 publications (consultation reports, civic recommendations and strategies, instructions and manuals) came out and websites were launched to document and promote participatory processes.

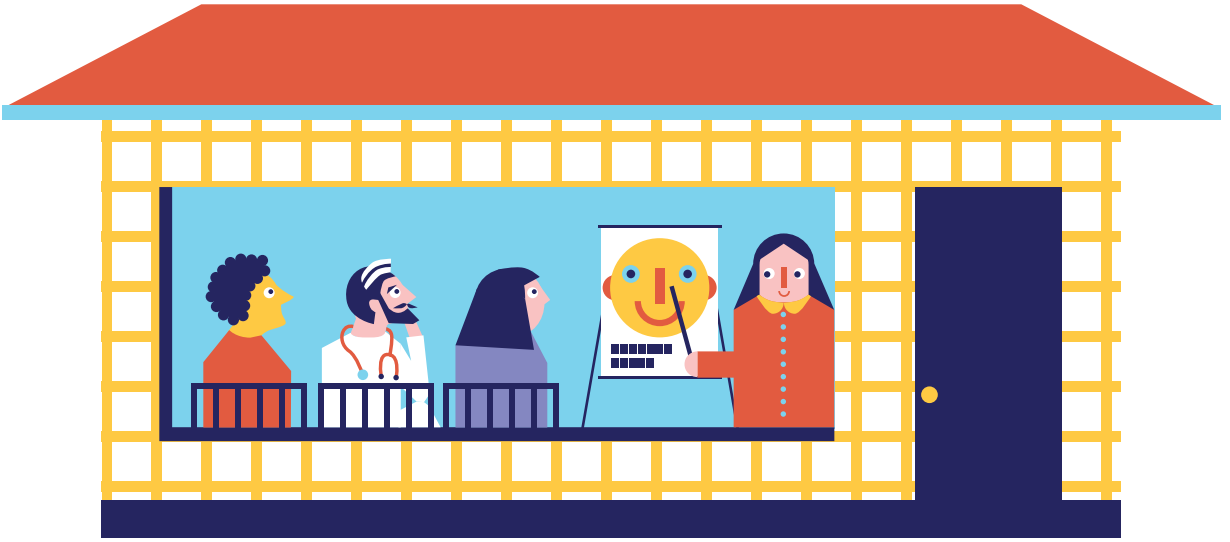
Solutions supporting social dialogue

The activities resulted in the launch of 144 solutions that support social dialogue with local and national institutions. They included participatory budgeting, public consultations' rules and regulations, and online platforms to facilitate consultations and communication with participating individuals and institutions. The most popular mechanisms of citizens' dialogue with authorities were: local youth councils in villages, neighbourhoods, towns and municipalities, senior councils and social dialogue committees (88 such dialogue bodies were established/strengthened).

Citizens' recommendations incorporated by decision-makers

During consultations or as a result of grassroots initiatives, 116 citizens' recommendations were incorporated by decision-makers at the local or national level. For example, there were recommendations that addressed national legislation regarding road signs that must be aligned with the needs of bicycle users, a concise local policy in support of better facilities for pedestrians in Lublin, upgrading three parks and squares (Jaworzno and Gdynia), local culture development strategies (Błażowa and Kleszczele), a sports strategy for the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Province, planning sustainable growth in Starogard County based on a low carbon economy, the regeneration of the town centres of Stary Fordon and Koszalin and the modification of traffic regulations in a residential area in Łódź. Concepts developed by children and youth were accepted in Warsaw (the regeneration of Konopacki Palace and the Florange factory) and in Toruń (plans to build an outdoor classroom and to upgrade the surrounding green areas of a school).





- ★ **152** projects (including **33** targeted at children and youth)
- ★ **305 locations** where activities were carried out
- ★ **37,000 individuals** (including children and youth) took part in educational activities
- ★ **341 publications**, reports, manuals, webpages related to different forms of discrimination
- ★ **2,770 interventions** in cases of human rights and equality violations
- ★ **91 notices and murals with hateful content** were painted over
- ★ **4,989 individuals** from vulnerable groups were supported



PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC VALUES, INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Support for activities designed to protect human rights including women's rights and fighting xenophobia, homophobia, racism, anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination.

Altogether, 152 projects (including 33 projects targeted at children and youth) were completed. Activities were implemented in 305 locations, 32 projects were national in scope.

Projects varied strongly and they addressed multiple forms of discrimination on the grounds of origin, ethnicity, religion/atheism, skin colour, sexual orientation and disability.

Influencing public opinion

Activities were designed to influence public opinion and raise the awareness of unequal treatment. Social campaigns were held using online portals, films, open meetings (e.g. collective painting of equality-themed murals in public areas, themed walks, sports events) and theatre shows. Many public events included elements of arts and interaction. This resulted in new themes being raised in public debate such as marital equality, the omnipresence of sexual violence and rape culture, hate speech, and discrimination against individuals living with HIV. Altogether, 102 such projects were implemented. The general reach of individual projects ranged from 10-20 people in an open meeting to 15 million in media campaigns.

Studies of discrimination

A range of studies of discrimination were completed to examine the nature of the phenomenon both from the perspective of groups experiencing discrimination (e.g. individuals speaking the Silesian language or women with basic vocational education) and the various manifestations of discrimination in specific areas (e.g. in field of education or justice). The scale of discrimination was assessed by monitoring discriminatory content on the internet and in press. Studies looked at the use of equality principle in the public sector and in media and the enforcement of anti-discrimination and anti-violence legislation. In total, 47 issues were studied and findings were published in 59 reports. The studies strengthened the understanding of specific manifestations of discrimination including socio-economic discrimination against women with basic vocational education, hostile language directed against individuals living in rural areas or the availability of ethics classes for non-Catholic children.



Educational activities

Educational activities were an important part of the projects. Workshops and training sessions addressed stereotypes and myths and targeted strategically selected audiences, e.g. officials, the uniformed services, doctors, the judiciary, i.e. individuals who are naturally the closest interface of the social environment of individuals discriminated against or who as professionals effect anti-discrimination practices. Education was also offered to teachers and youth. Teachers learned new techniques of teaching about discrimination (e.g. online games or drama) or expanded their knowledge in selected fields, e.g. the history of the local Jewish community. Students were encouraged to implement their own human rights projects, e.g. to organise a film marathon featuring films about the situation of individuals vulnerable to discrimination, or a human rights exhibition, and they were given the option to also design and stage campaigns against hate speech in schools. In total, 36,973 individuals took part in education activities, including 4,477 teachers and 14,290 students. In addition, a range of education tools (e.g. class scenarios, e-learning courses, manuals) were prepared. While some of them were dedi-



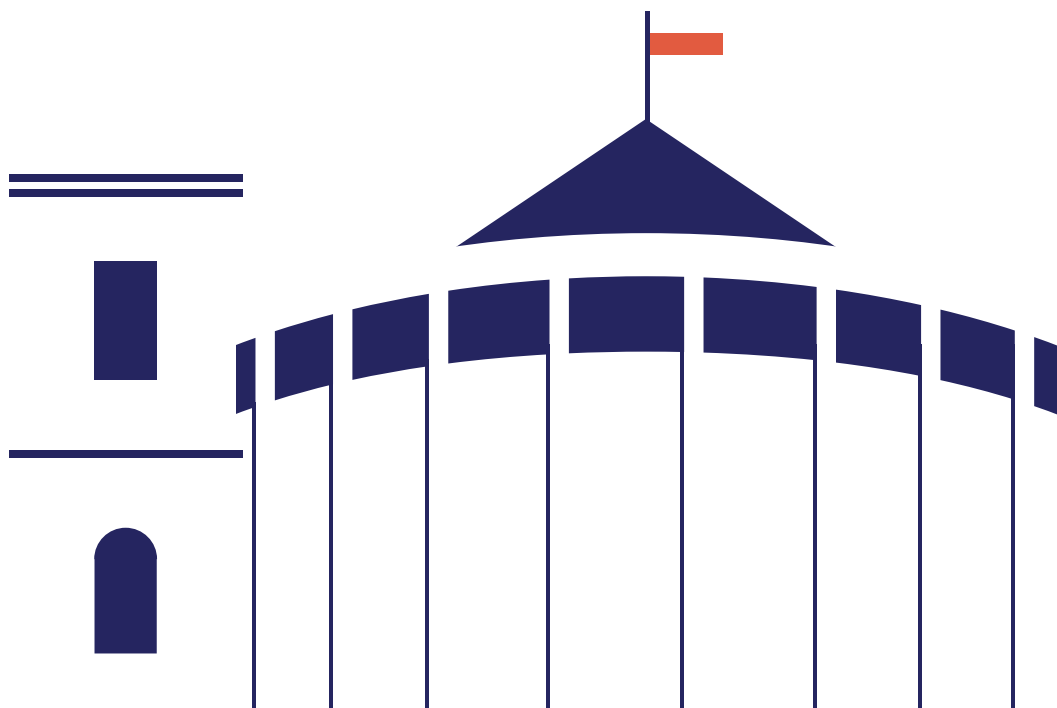
cated publications for specific professional groups, they bridged important gaps in the Polish market, e.g. *Equal Treatment of All Parties to Proceedings. Guidebook for Judges and Prosecutors* or *LGBT Health. Guidebook for Medical Professionals*.

Interventions

Intervention measures were designed to manage cases of human rights and equality violations and to protect individuals vulnerable to or experiencing discrimination. As a result of interventions, several hundred websites were taken down and more than ten thousand hateful posts were deleted. Altogether, interventions in 2,770 individual cases were taken and most of them were rights violations reported to enforcement agencies, i.e. the prosecution service (spreading hatred), the police (hate crimes) and regional education authorities (discrimination in schools); 91 notices and murals with hateful content were painted over in public areas. Youth played a vital role in counteracting hate speech by engaging in peer education and reacting to hate speech in their communities.

Support to vulnerable groups

Support was provided to 4,989 individuals from groups vulnerable to discrimination (e.g. foreigners, women experiencing violence, the Roma community, refugees) in the form of legal and mental health counselling, communication activities and empowerment workshops. Altogether, 28 activities designed to socially integrate foreigners and their children were completed.



- ★ **110** projects (including **3** targeted at children and youth)
- ★ **124** locations where activities were carried out
- ★ **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



DEVELOPING WATCHDOG AND ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

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

Altogether, 110 projects were completed (including 3 projects targeted at children and youth). Activities were implemented in 124 locations; 61 projects were national in scope or national institutions were targeted.

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

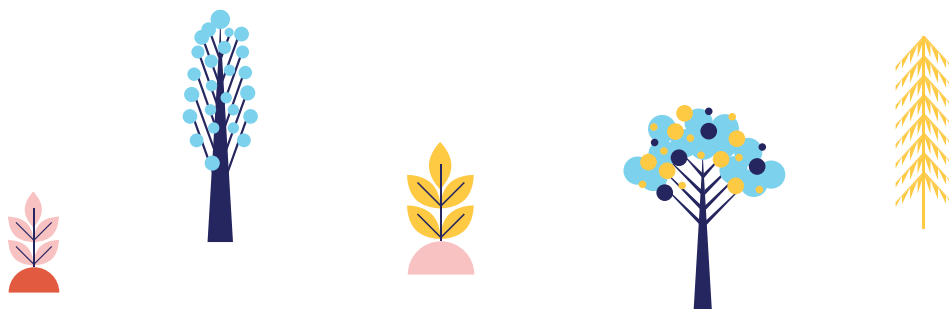
In total, 6,814 various types of institutions were monitored (e.g. government departments and other administration agencies, local government units, schools, universities, hospitals, courts), of which 2,567 cooperated with or responded to activities conducted by non-governmental organisations. Officials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



- ★ **143** projects (including **26** targeted at children and youth)
- ★ **42,500** individuals received support
- ★ **7,900** professionals improved their skills through training
- ★ **21** improvements in the system of service provision
- ★ **4,800** people participating in self-help, self-organising and volunteering initiatives (including 1,301 people from socially disadvantaged groups)
- ★ **219** locations where activities were carried out
- ★ **143** NGOs extended or improved the quality of service provision



EMPOWERING VULNERABLE GROUPS

Support was granted to activities designed to increase the scope and diversity of the support provided to socially vulnerable groups and to inspire these groups to engage in activities for their own and others' benefit.

Altogether, 143 projects were completed (including 26 projects targeted at children and youth). Activities were implemented in 219 locations, 22 projects were national in scope.

Projects were diverse both in terms of the type of socially vulnerable groups targeted and the forms and methods of engagement.

Supporting vulnerable groups

The activities were largely designed to provide support to individuals from groups vulnerable to social exclusion, for example people with disabilities and their families and friends, elderly people, children and youth from socially vulnerable communities, people with learning difficulties and mental disorders, families in crisis, inmates and convicts, individuals living with HIV/AIDS, homeless people, migrants, Roma, sex workers, victims of violence. Moreover, assistance was provided to groups previously rarely included in non-governmental support schemes, e.g. carers of disabled people or uniformed personnel suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. In total, 42,489 individuals received support and they used one or more of 181 various services.

Forms and methods of support

Conventional methods of support were applied, such as legal and mental health counselling, training and workshops designed to encourage activity and involvement (e.g. physical activities, arts and crafts, computer classes, financial education), physiotherapy, building social knowledge and skills (e.g. self-presentation, communication, psychoeducation workshops). Support activities for children and youth were accompanied by initiatives designed to remove barriers in their access to culture and education.

Innovative techniques and methods were also used to reach and support the individuals most severely challenged. Legal and mental health counselling was provided not only on the premises in organisations, as would normally be the case, and through mobile help-desks, but also by home visits to home-bound individuals and by visiting residents in nursing homes. Counselling was offered in sign language through Skype and ooVoo; an emergency sign language service was set up using phone cameras to assist in urgent situations where translation was needed. Individuals who tend to stay away from institutions and care facilities were given the option of accessing support directly from field workers. The Romanian Roma community in Wrocław was assisted through community work. Street workers and party workers distributed information and provided education to sex workers in Warsaw and encouraged them to visit the Bezpiecznik centre (a drop-in centre offering basic social support that is often the first step in a decision to use more substantial services, e.g. therapy). Street-working was used also by organisations working with people with addictions and children and youth from socially vulnerable communities. A hostel was set up for LGBT individuals suffering from hardships

and a hostel for individuals with addictions. Another innovative approach included a sexuality development workshop for individuals with physical disabilities.

The quality of support was enhanced with the use of innovative techniques of working with special needs groups, e.g. augmentative and alternative communication for people with multiple disabilities and cerebral palsy who are unable to speak, intervention visits to families in psychological distress, a new approach to problem solving, e.g. working with social networks (organisations and institutions that provide assistance in problem solving by co-designing public services to people in debt, family conferencing), the launch of new facilities or new programmes based on existing infrastructure (Child and Family Centres, local migrant integration policy), the development of new tools (response algorithms for teachers and health professionals in cases of suspected domestic violence, legal infographics for individuals with disabilities, a consumer bankruptcy qualifier).

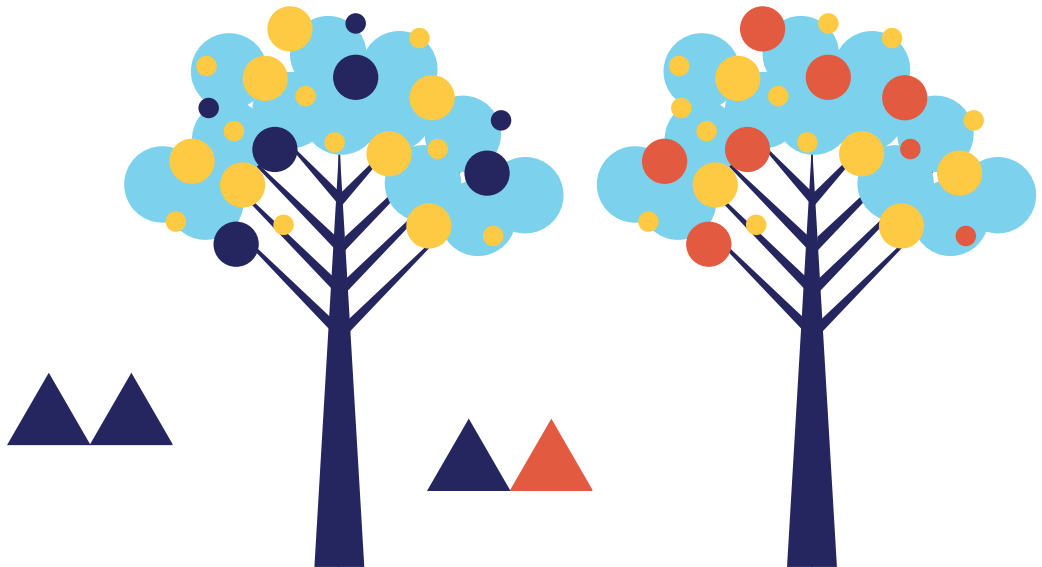
Training of professionals and improvements in the system of services provision

The quality of services was strengthened by induction training for a range of professionals about the application of innovative techniques. Therapists learned meta-cognitive training for individuals with schizophrenia and introduced it in their practice, librarians acquired skills to serve readers with autism, welfare centre employees gained the skills to enable them to act as financial educators for their clients, police officers improved their skills of communicating with deaf people, etc. Altogether, 7,897 professionals improved their skills through training. They were mainly staff in centres that offer support to individuals vulnerable to exclusion and government officials and uniformed services who routinely interact with socially vulnerable individuals.

Furthermore, some activities focused on upgrading existing facilities. For example, 17 centres for individuals with intellectual disabilities (small homes or day support centres serving some 330 individuals) developed and implemented quality standards. Altogether, the programme implemented 21 best practices to increase the efficiency of service provision including quality standards and new work practices using innovative tools.

Self-organisation and self-help

Finally, there were a few essential activities designed to empower individuals vulnerable to exclusion: they were encouraged to speak for themselves, support other individuals, engage in the community. A group of self-advocates from Jarosław (32 individuals with intellectual disabilities) developed an understanding of their inherent rights and obligations as well as social skills that allow them to represent themselves on issues that are relevant to them. One of the successes of this process was a project proposed in the participatory budgeting process. People who have experienced a mental health problem learned how to design and engage in public speaking situations which allows them to provide others with peer support and advocacy. Self-help groups were formed that involve homeless people, carers of dependent individuals and individuals experiencing abuse. Parents of individuals with autism planned to form a community group for their children approaching adulthood. Ukrainian women living in Warsaw and neighbouring communities formed a Ukrainian Women’s Club where they can meet and engage in joint activities. People who are vulnerable to exclusion (including youth from dysfunctional families) volunteered in social initiatives, e.g. food bank campaigns. Self-help, self-organising and volunteering activities attracted 1,301 people from socially disadvantaged groups. A total of 67 self-help groups and initiatives supporting various forms of self-organising and volunteering helped individuals vulnerable to exclusion.





- ★ **9** systemic projects
- ★ **3,000** NGO leaders were engaged in consultations on the Civil Society Road Map
- ★ **450** local NGOs were involved in the development of standards for public consultations
- ★ **45,000** NGOs made use of new resources and tools offered by the portals ngo.pl and mojepanstwo.pl
- ★ **3,060** 'sub-sectoral' NGOs gained support, new skills and tools
- ★ **400 NGOs** undertook capacity building activities j

NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR CAPACITY BUILDING

Support was granted for activities aimed at capacity building and quality enhancement of the entire non-governmental sector or its individual sub-sectors, i.e. groups of organisations that share the same profile. In addition, funds to support the development and capacity building of individual NGOs were made available.

Altogether, four systemic projects targeting the entire sector and five projects targeting its individual sub-sectors were completed. Moreover, 400 organisations used the available funds to further their development and capacity building (e.g. by developing new strategies or adopting new practices, raising the skill level of staff, improving communication, audits, buying equipment, building a membership base).

Activities targeting the entire sector

Some initiatives focused on public consultations and the capacity of non-governmental organisations to engage in these processes; some addressed new technologies, facilitating networking, building the space for debating sectoral issues and a position to affect public policy.

A strategic Civil Society Road Map (CSRM) was developed, i.e. the first ever document in Poland to define the mission of the third sector based on broad consultations with 3,000 NGO leaders, including participants of the NGO Forums organised in 16 provinces. Partnerships were formed between organisations across Poland to address issues highlighted in the CSRM. *[Activities implemented by the SPLOT Network and National Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations]*

Standards for public consultations at the national and local level were developed in partnership with organisations, institutions, and with community members at the local level. The consultations around standards actively involved 450 organisations. The standards were implemented in five national institutions and seven municipalities. Furthermore, additional tools were used to support the consultation processes (www.MamZdanie.pl) and a knowledge base was created for organisations and administrations about consultation techniques (www.konsultacjjezasadami.pl). *[Activities implemented by the Social and Economic Initiatives Foundation and the Shipyard Social Research and Innovation Lab]*

Non-governmental organisations may now use extended and upgraded online portals (www.ngo.pl and www.mojepanstwo.pl) to support many aspects of their operations, including communication and promotion with access to essential data, legislation and advice, social campaigning, raising support, and searching for new allies. The portals reached 45,000 organisations. Another edition of the research on the third sector in Poland was completed — this study is the main source of information about the non-governmental sector in Poland. *[Activities implemented by the Klon/Jawor Association (www.ngo.pl) and Third Sector Status Study] and the e-Państwo Foundation (www.mojepanstwo.pl)]*

Activities targeting 'sub-sectoral' organisations

These activities were designed for watchdog organisations, rural organisations, organisations focusing on addiction prevention and community archives and organisations cooperating with Food Banks. Their goal was to improve knowledge and skills, deliver tools, foster networking and provide education on regulatory and institutional change and to promote their projects and programmes among citizens.

In total, 171 watchdog organisations learned to build social support for their activities. Social campaigns and joint actions helped organisations improve their visibility and effectiveness in protecting the right to information and in raising funds from private donors. Local initiatives and organisations gained permanent access to legal advice. The new version of www.watchdogportal.pl has some 23,000 users who have access to courses for watchdogs, monitoring tools and a contact base. [*Activities implemented by the Watchdog Poland Association*]

Counselling, coaching, training, study visits and regional meetings helped 60 rural organisations develop systems to acquire additional revenue from 'thematic villages'. Specifically, 37 organisations tested products, of which 30 are ready to go to the market. A 'village' certification system was developed and a team of 9 business advisers was formed for rural organisations interested in making money using this format. The thematic village concept was promoted to other organisations at three regional conferences and the 1st Thematic Villages Congress. [*Activities implemented by the NIDA Nidzica Development Foundation*]

Training, consultations, a webinar and supervision assistance helped 263 organisations active in addiction prevention develop new skills and 1,003 organisations acquired new tools, i.e. a professional training programme for addiction prevention workers and an online portal www.profnet.org.pl which offers a comprehensive knowledge base. Recommended prevention programmes were presented to local decision-makers who are responsible for prevention. [*Activities implemented by the Praesterno Foundation*]

In total, 345 community archiving organisations improved their skills and received IT tools to secure, edit and digitise collections (Open Archiving System). As a result of advocacy efforts, a legislative amendment came into force in 2015 that mandates the Managing Director of State Archives to hold requests for proposals for community archives. This gave organisations access to public funds. [*Activities implemented by the Charter Centre Foundation*]

Online tools for food acquisition and distribution (a food registration system, a new portal www.bankizywnosci.pl, a volunteering app) were delivered to 2,164 local organisations collaborating with 32 Food Banks which contributed to increased amounts of food being donated to individuals in need from 47,000 tonnes in 2014 to 140,000 tonnes in 2015. These efforts helped increase the level of civic involvement and volunteering in local communities. [*Activities implemented by the Federation of Polish Food Banks*]

DEVELOPING BILATERAL CO-OPERATION

Support was provided to activities designed to foster bilateral co-operation with Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and events were held to support this objective.

Projects implemented by organisations

In total, 72 projects designed to help establish or expand partnerships with organisations from Donor States were completed: 38 initiatives aimed at forming relationships and developing joint thematic projects, and 34 activities which sought to expand or strengthen co-operation between programme grantees and entities from Iceland and Norway.

In 82 thematic projects, partnerships were formed with non-governmental organisations and informal groups, public institutions and companies from Iceland (26) and Norway (46).

Joint activities usually took the form of the exchange of experience: study visits, meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences. Altogether, 299 representatives of Polish non-governmental organisations took part in meetings and study visits to Norway and Iceland, and 182 individuals from Norway and Iceland visited Polish organisations.

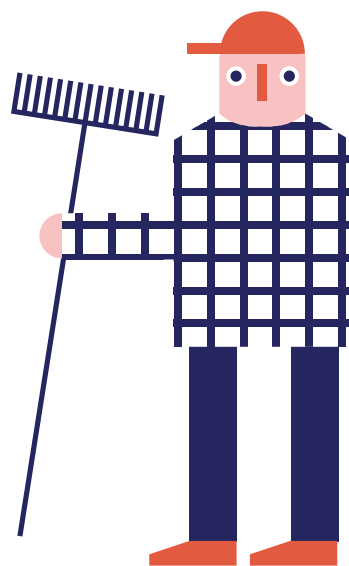
Most bilateral projects focused on children and youth. A number of meetings, training sessions and conferences were organised which were not single events but part of a long-term process of adapting new practices, e.g. upgrading existing playrooms by creating FabLabs, which helped combine technical and digital skills development with ongoing support provided to children and youth from dysfunctional families.

Bilateral co-operation was important for Polish organisations that concentrate on combating discrimination because they could gain specific expertise and new skills, e.g. learn innovative workshop techniques or engage in joint research methodologies, e.g. a Polish-Icelandic comparative study of gender equality in the field of sport. Study visits gave Polish organisations exposure to equality standards in these countries.

The experience of partners from Donor States proved instrumental in other areas as well: producing joint publications, e.g. a good practice manual for the use of social clauses in public procurement, or tools, e.g. online application for public consultations of plans regarding transport infrastructure. Norwegian and Icelandic partners helped make preparations for the implementation phase (e.g. workshops for street-workers providing support to sex workers), shared their expertise, and offered consultation during the project implementation process (e.g. introducing a quality management system in small homes for individuals with intellectual disabilities).

Events

Two networking events were organised in Warsaw at the start of the programme and they were attended by 26 individuals from Donor States. Seven study visits were then arranged (six to Norway and one to Iceland) that were attended by 100 representatives of Polish non-governmental organisations. Nine representatives of organisations and institutions from Norway and from Iceland facilitated sessions or workshops during meetings and NGO Forums organised in Warsaw.



ARTICLES ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

All the texts gathered below provide details about the projects and the initiatives implemented and financed within the Citizens for Democracy programme. Just a small part of the activities is presented, but it gives an idea of the diversity of programmes included. The texts were published between 2015 – 2016 on the ngofund.org.pl website.

OUTREACH WORKING AS A METHOD OF WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

NO YO

The Entrance

You make an appearance on a housing estate, in a yard, in the street. You spend half a day sitting on a bench. You stroll around, checking the place out. And the next day. And the next. Some time later, you are not the only watcher. You are being watched as well. From the next bench, from a gateway, from behind a curtain. Tension grows – until someone finally breaks the silence. A local senior citizen, usually. It's enough then to steer the conversation in the right direction. The older guy will know which kids live in the street, and which of them are just getting some air. You can actually make out the courtyard hierarchy yourself.

The Contact

You approach them, in daytime and in the open. A group rather than a solitary child. You say hi and introduce yourself. You are an outreach worker and will drop by once a week. Fancy a chat? If not, no problem. You will be back in a few days. Maybe then. Yes, your back is breaking under an enormously heavy skyrocket, but we really don't have to talk about it today.

The Relationship

You are "Karol" or "Karolina", and what you say to each other is "Good morning", or "Good afternoon". No "yo", no "dude", no "see you in hell", no "babe". No one will litter, smoke, drink, or hit anyone in your presence. No one should swear, either – but this is a lesson for later, you don't want to discourage them. And one more thing. Even if you are in your twenties, with curly hair and a charming smile, "Karolina the outreach worker" is what you will remain to them. It would be cool if the guys knew that. It's pointless to get yourself all worked up only to be disappointed.

The Minimum Plan

You are not out to save the world. You do what you can. Living in the streets is not the reason, it's the result. Of household violence, possibly, or of a complete lack of interest, or of parents who cannot handle their own lives either. You cannot change that. But you can integrate the kids, for example. The older ones will stop bashing the younger ones. Or maybe they won't, but the bashing will not be that bad. Someone will share their sandwiches. Or help a friend who overdid it on designer drugs. They will call an ambulance rather than just run away. You cut your losses. You show up once a week and give them a chance. One of the girls is being sexually abused, maybe, and wants to talk about it. Who will she talk to if not you?

The Sense

In Poland, children do not freeze to death like the Russian *bezprizorni*. They are not shot at, like in South American *favelas*. They usually don't fall as low as the children of Bahnhof Zoo. Occasionally, they are hungry, but they do not starve. Thus, when working with children, you rarely have to struggle for their existence – the purpose is rather to replace their current existence with a better life. You are there to give it meaning. To warn them of the danger. To give courage. To restore self-confidence. – “What is the point of you coming to see seeing us, we're just street kids?”, asks a ten-year-old from the Cracow Nowa Huta district. Well, that's exactly the point!

Better a Freak

The skyrocket travels around Nowa Huta by tram or on the backs of outreach workers of the New Centre Foundation (Fundacja Nowe Centrum). Two metres long, it has two straps and two modules. Every module conceals a chamber. Yet before the hidey-holes open, the rocket appears as if by magic in the street, and just sits there for awhile. It attracts attention, communicating that something is about to happen, that certain courtyard rules are in place for the next three hours, that everything is clear and anyone can join in. Anyway, someone apprehending kids with a skyrocket on his or her back is probably no murderer or paedophile with shady motives; they are a freak at worst. The adults visibly relax.

The Surveillance

In the yard, you are not someone who drops by for a high-five once a week. You are someone who helps get life back on track. You have to get to know the kids. To find out whose mum brings clients in to turn tricks, whose presence at school is the exception rather than the rule, whose life is moderately settled, and whose is leaning toward the street and its decadence. But be careful with the questions. If you overdo it, they will shy away. You will become a probation officer, a welfare centre official, or the fuzz – the police. Less talking, more listening. Take notes once you're back from the yard. And remember—you are their teacher, not an outdoor games animator. Though games are fun too, of course.

The Method

You can suggest a game. You spread the three-by-three canvas you brought in the skyrocket on the grass. You deal the special cards. Let the game begin. It is fast-moving and fun. Participants occasionally encounter “hidden” content. The image of a syringe, for example. It may be left unnoticed, but it may also lead to confidences being shared, about a drug problem at home, for instance, or the serious illness of a parent. You have to notice and come up with appropriate associations. But games are not only about a diagnosis, nor do they have to focus on difficult topics. The skyrocket also hides the *Continental Twister*, for example – a game designed by the Foundation to help kids learn the names of European countries and their capitals. *Transfusion* is an excuse to talk about health and practical exercises, in first aid, for instance.

You Are the Die

Games are also about excellent social training. Both failure and triumph have to be properly handled. You have to discuss rules, agree to accept them, and not break them. You are playing as well; in another game – whether you are the die or the pawn in the yard. Don't act all surprised if one day, a youngster throws a sweet wrapper on the ground and refuses to pick it up, looking you straight in the eye. – “What's this, we agreed we wouldn't litter?” – “It is what it is,” – the little guy will say, “And what are

you going to do?" You are going to do is nothing. You will stop the game and wait. The other kids aren't going to pick the wrapper up either. Moving a few metres away, they will start whispering, pointing with their fingers, mocking. To add insult to injury, adults will come running – the parents, the aunts. They will yell at you that their children are not binmen and will not clean up. Some irascible toughie will spill the entire contents of a public dustbin right next to your foot—you are humiliating the kids, right? And actually, just fuck off and die. But you will not. You have to wait, and peacefully. You will not emerge from any argument as the winner. If you leave before planned time, they will see you as running away. If you pick the wrapper up yourself, you will never be an authority to them again. You have to survive until the end of yard duty, calmly collect your stuff, say goodbye, and leave. Once you are back to the same Nowa Huta yard one week later, the kids will approach you themselves, mumbling an apology. And then you will know – you are the die.

The First Moment of Pride

Thanks to support offered by the Citizens for Democracy programme, the Umbrella Centre for Prevention and Social Education (Centrum Profilaktyki i Edukacji Społecznej "Parasol") opened a day care centre for street children in Cracow's Kazimierz district. Everyone was welcome; to join an activity or not. To have something to eat, prepare a meal for others. To clean up a bit. Street children usually like order. They also like regular chores – which they will or will not do, just like other kids. Most importantly of all, however, they love a place of their own.

Once they have such a place, they will be willing to go back to the street. Not because they have to, but because they develop an imperative to create. A need for a sense of influence and to show others they can do good as well. "They designed and created a play garden. We invited their parents, teachers, and neighbours to the opening," says Marcin Drewniak of the Umbrella Centre. – "For the first time in their young lives, these ten, eleven and twelve-year olds felt proud of what they were doing. And they saw the same pride in the eyes of their family and friends. That is invaluable."

The Pro Bono Publico Felony

Children from the Nowa Huta day care centre operated by the New Centre Foundation were proud as well. One day, they walked in with a loudspeaker. A very much needed loudspeaker – the old one was dead and gone. The problem was that they had nicked the device from a local electrical appliances supermarket. They were really surprised to learn that good intent is no excuse for theft. Now they know. They don't steal things anymore.

Yes to Mistakes, No to Mocking

Theft befell the Umbrella day care centre as well. An instructor's wallet went missing. While nobody was caught anyone red-handed, everyone knew who did it. The day care centre resident – of legal age already – was given an ultimatum: hand the wallet over, or we call the cops. He chose the cops, and served a short prison term. "A very sorry incident. But straying off for awhile is different to mocking the law and other community members. He could have simply given the wallet back," Marcin Drewniak explains. "We are not only in service to the kids and young people here; first and foremost, we are in service to society. Providing for us, society expects that we in return will help young people understand the rules and act accordingly. Had we turned a blind eye, the guy would have learned that he can go unpunished, even having broken the law."

The Reversed Maslow Pyramid

If ever you get to know street children, you will swiftly find that – however hungry they may be, however frozen and living in uncertainty—they are still children, full of curiosity about the world, aspirations, and dreams. It goes without saying that all these feelings are frequently hidden somewhere deep within. But they are there. Your job is just to help bring them out into the open. For example, the staff of the New Centre Foundation based in Nowa Huta take their charges to Cracow’s Old Town Market Square, showing them St. Mary’s Church and the Cloth Hall for the first time; youngsters are taken to the Wawel Castle, and shown old university buildings. What for? Isn’t it enough to feed them, and keep them warm? Possibly it is – but this is Cracow, a place where anyone can become a cardinal, or a Jagiellonian University professor, at the very least. If you do not know how to get to the Collegium Maius, the going gets more uphill. And street children have it uphill all the time anyway. “Outreach work addressing children – the work is hard and the responsibility huge, yet the joy and hope are an amazing payoff,” says Katarzyna Regucka, chairwoman of the New Centre Foundation and an outreach worker of just under 20 years.

Outreach Work

It’s not what you think.

By Michał Henzler

LOCAL WATCHDOG INITIATIVES

LOCALLY INQUISITIVE

An egg cracked in Lubartów. Upon colliding with Anna Gryta's first floor window. To warn her and her sister not to meddle in other people's business.

A municipality near Warsaw issued another kind of warning to a probing resident. The postman served her with an ultimatum: either she ceases inspecting and criticising a local authority, or she will end up paying a fine of PLN 200,000.

Yet another inquisitive resident of a yet another municipality was followed by a police car, day after day, with great diligence and greater patience. To apprehend the inquisitive citizen and check his ID. Just in case.

All these residents met in Pruszków near Warsaw, at a Watchdog Initiative Academy convention. Although several dozen people attended and each brought their own story, they were all connected by their common experience of fear and loneliness – as there are few people in small towns brave enough to keep an eye on the local authorities; people engaging in citizen auditing are usually lone wolves, and are referred to as watchdogs. "They are very different, very ambitious, and very independent," adds Katarzyna Batko-Tołuć of the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland. "They really need to meet, get trained, and support one another."

Check the Bursar, Check the Clerk, Check the Paymaster

"You don't just wake up one fine day with this mad need to go out and start inspecting people. It usually takes an impulse to set it off," explains Michał Stępnik from Fajslawice near Lublin. "In my case, it was all about plans to build a wind farm and power plant. The investment was supposed to benefit farmers renting out wind turbine footprint land, including many local councillors. It was a loss for everyone else." By pure chance, Stępnik discovered that – because of a so-called safe zone surrounding the structure – he would not be able to build a home on his own land. He took action, and effectively. The power plant was never built. He was left with a habit of rummaging around in official papers.

Some time later, when checking out municipal documents (just in case), he encountered a list of residents whose taxes had been waived by the local mayor. He was surprised to find that names of people truly in need – the unemployed, the sick, the widowed – were mixed in with those of prosperous business people and other local personalities. He posted the document on the web. A split second later, he became public enemy number one. Firstly, it turned out that half the locals knew about the case; secondly, they preferred to pretend they knew nothing; thirdly, people were convinced that by breaking his silence and a certain taboo, Stępnik was settling a private score, no reason for glory.

"I played it too harshly. People saw a hotbed for conflict rather than an act to the common good," Stępnik sums up, "I failed to earn their support."

Cold water – in the form of the resentment or indifference of locals – has been poured on many a watchdog; and this is far from being the only source of watchdog frustration. While Polish watchdog traditions are more than a quarter of a century old, they encounter constant problems with their stability and scale as part of the local landscape. External obstacles are an issue: people in charge of many municipalities break out in a nervous rash at the very thought of being under someone’s scrutiny; local communities undermine the watchdogs’ good intentions; to local journalists, they are competition or pettifoggers. Furthermore, they aren’t maturing quickly enough as a group—though their individual competencies are indisputably expanding, knowledge exchange has been poor for years. Many watchdog “careers” have taken off with rather clumsy fumbblings in the dark, the same omnipresent mistakes made over and over again.

“We have been supporting, training, and integrating watchdogs for years; but it was only once we received PLN 2 million from the Citizens for Democracy programme that we could actually tackle different issues in a more systemic manner,” Batko-Tołuć emphasises.

Hence the WATCHDOG ACTIVITIES: the Professional and Permanent in the Public Interest (STRAŻNICTWO profesjonalnie i trwale w interesie publicznym) programme, under way for nearly three years and operated jointly with the Helsinki Foundation of Human Rights (Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka), the Homo Faber Association (Stowarzyszenie Homo Faber), and the Court Watch Poland Foundation (Fundacja Court Watch Polska). It is more than an extensive training offer for watchdogs (such as the aforementioned Watchdog Initiative Academy); it comprises activities targeting society, such as a nationwide watchdog awareness radio campaign, competitions for journalists focusing on watchdog-related themes, and activities addressing teachers, with the Centre for Citizenship Education as a partner.

Watchdogportal.pl, an open source repository of citizen watchdog activities, was another systemic-approach project component. The repository includes educational materials and multimedia training sessions, with an option to choose from versions appropriate for watchdog beginners or watchdog experts. The formula of service creation is unique as well—upon registration and verification, all content is posted by the local watchdogs themselves. They publish activity descriptions, share good and bad experiences, and submit monitoring reports.

Problems with the Superstructure

“As part of the Citizens for Democracy programme, we completed two monitoring evolutions: of participatory (civic) budgets and of senior citizen policies in cities,” says Grzegorz Wójkowski of the Katowice-based Bona Fides Association (Stowarzyszenie Aktywności Obywatelskiej Bona Fides).

Monitoring activities are organisation- or individual watchdog-handled attempts to produce credible snapshots of reality fragments referencing specific standards, to analyse findings and, finally, to draw conclusions and offer recommendations.

Bona Fides researched the way participatory budgets are introduced and implemented in 18 locations and the municipalities of 9 voivodeships. The monitoring report leaves no doubt—changes are needed. While the ideological base of providing local residents with the right to decide on a part of the local government’s money is absolutely correct, the institutional superstructure and practice of project submission and selection are deeply flawed.

“Procedures (...) are largely based on competition (...). Diverse forms of community-level debating and reaching agreement on the priorities and individual tasks are an exception. And in cases where such pro-

ceedings have been applied (...) we find them to be sourced in cliques and coteries rather than communities (...). This is detrimental to true local impact (...)", the report reads.

The authors further believe that the moment has come to ask who participatory budget beneficiaries should truly include, and what role civic budgets should play in local public life. The practice of recent years shows that in a vast percentage of municipalities, related funds are "appropriated" by communities of young, active residents familiar with modern technologies (such as social media), and that tasks earmarked for implementation relatively rarely respond to issues concerning the majority of local communities (i.e. education, healthcare, or public transport). They usually focus on such matters as the leisure time offer for groups forming a relatively low share of the overall resident population.

Other undesirable yet common phenomena include that of stretching rather tight budgets over institutions or organisations serving large communities, such as schools or parishes. Usually those with a high number of votes win, with rivalry replacing dialogue.

The other report (concerning the monitoring of local policies for senior citizens) is another cause for concern. In numerous cities, senior citizen policies involve symbolic declarations or activities only. This would require change as well, and not least because the share of post-productive age citizens is growing in all communities.

"While our reports do tend to be critical, we are not in favour of anyone using them as a launching pad for an attack on authorities. The paper is to become the starting point for constructive co-operation. Any other form of using it (for purposes of conflict-stirring, for example) would only serve to prove the complete lack of comprehension of the very idea of joint management," Wójkowski says as a reminder. This is one of the reasons why nearly all of senior citizen policy monitoring, while co-ordinated by Bona Fides, was handled by the seniors themselves, duly recruited at locations under scrutiny. "They are the ones living there on a daily basis; they will have the option of co-operating with authorities."

The Force in the Detail, the Force of the Detail

It frequently happens that, at first glance, monitoring takes place... and then it ends. It reveals no scandal; nor does it in any way stimulate local public opinion. How, then, does it make sense? – As opposed to strictly academic research, a watchdog study modifies the status quo as well as describing it. A case in point: the monitoring of ten Lublin-based district councils by the Freedom Foundation (Fundacja Wolności). Monitoring tools included film footage of council sessions. "Initially, the opposition was tough. Councillors kept calling the city guards to have our cameraman removed from the conference room. They attempted to solve this by holding proceedings in a closed session," recalls Krzysztof Jakubowski of the Freedom Foundation. After one year of filming – once the monitoring exercise was over, the camera became something absolutely obvious to the majority of local councillors; they actually wanted it there. Filming council session proceedings has become standard practice also for non-monitored district councils.

Monitoring efforts revealed a number of minor and major issues. It was found for example that local council Facebook profiles were used for the purposes of councillors' election campaigns; and that some social media sites (Facebook pages included) described individual councillors rather than councils – once a councillor lost an election and was not re-elected, they would actually decide to delete profiles formerly visited by residents. It was further found that councils lack annual operational plans, bulletin boards, and/or options to publish documents in the municipal Public Information Bulletin.

Lublin watchdogs have also emphasised the rather obscure role councils play in the overall municipal system. Today, their competencies are limited – both as decision-makers and as bodies issuing opinions concerning draft decisions made by the local or municipal councils. The report’s authors have offered a number of recommendations.

The imperfections found, especially if analysed in isolation, will be of no interest to journalists, no source of shock for public opinion, no cause for a prosecutor to take action. That, however, is not the point.

Once they are collected in a report and submitted to the local authorities, they can take action to remedy them in collaboration with the local community. Furthermore, Freedom Foundation research proves that approximately one half of all Lublin residents had no idea that district councils existed. The fact that this period of unintentional conspiracy is over will definitely also be conducive to good change. “Not to mention the fact that Lublin pays over three hundred thousand zloty per annum for local councils and their operations, and it would really be great if that money brought more benefit to the city and its residents,” Jakubowski concludes.

The sisters from Lubartów – Elżbieta Wąs and Anna Gryta – are well-known in their neighbourhood. They blocked the construction of a waste processing plant. The cumbersome facility was erected considerably further away than its originally planned location along the town’s borders. They stopped the sale of the local square, claiming that Lubartów only has one and that “you don’t sell family treasures.” Most recently, in 2015, they pressed the local council to reveal all agreements signed and paid for from the public purse. Since 2014, they have also been responsible for managing the local *mamprawowiedziec.pl* (“I have the right to know”) website, an independent portal describing the work and initiatives of local councils and their executives. The site is supported by the Citizens for Democracy programme (www.lubartow.mamprawowiedziec.pl).

In the spring of 2016, they won the “Your Vote, Your Choice” statuette for the town, precisely for linking watchdog activities with keeping the local community informed, and for energising activist-local authority co-operation. They travelled to Warsaw alone to collect it. No municipal or executive council member found time to accompany them, and local websites began insinuating that the sisters are doing all that for money (considerable, and from murky sources), and that at the end of the day, they are a force for harm and damage. “I don’t care. I will go on working. Maybe eggs will finally be thrown at my windows as well, like they were at my sister’s. When only one sibling of the two is persecuted, the other feels frustrated...”, Elżbieta Wąs is being ironic. “You know what I mean?”

I do.

By Michał Henzler

MEDICAL CARE IMPROVEMENT

THAT THIRD SECTOR IS SICK!

Although medicine is relatively well developed in Poland, medical care is something of a disaster. The system is flawed and non-governmental organisations are making ever more frequent attempts to remedy the situation.

Poles spend in excess of PLN 100 billion zloty per annum on health care. While we – the citizens – are actually funding the system, we have practically no influence on how it works, or on what kind of treatment conditions we can expect. After all, how are we to know which hospitals are alright, and which ones should be avoided?

Let us take a look at the capital city. Here, residents have an option of choosing from among numerous hospitals. The university college hospital, for example, boasts a very low mortality rate (0.75% of patients within 30 days of discharge) and an efficient patient service—over 90.6% of persons appearing in admissions are seen in under four hours. In all probability, this is why as many as 95% of patients would be willing to recommend the facility to their next of kin. The problem is, this hospital is in London. Most interestingly of all, the point is not that the capital city of the United Kingdom has a top-quality clinic; the point is that such detailed data is freely available on the National Health Service website. This institution is the equivalent of the Polish National Health Fund and (to an extent) the Ministry of Health. Why is such data – even that most critical in nature – openly available?

“How about if we reverse the question: Why is such information not revealed? It is the citizens, after all, who are funding hospitals, trusting them with their life and health,” remarks Wojciech Wiśniewski of the Alivia Cancer Treatment Foundation (Fundacja Onkologiczna Alivia). “It’s nothing other than integrity”.

“... I hereby wish to inform that the Ministry of Health does not handle any research of public health service patient satisfaction levels; nor does it handle research concerning the quality of medical service or monitor it within the framework of the public healthcare system...” – I am brought right down to earth by an email message from our own Polish healthcare authority. The letter goes on to emphasise that the Ministry has no data available regarding the efficiency of treatment offered by individual cancer treatment facilities, or the success rate of organs transplanted by individual transplant centres.

Could it be that the ministry is driven by caution? Should such data be collected, organised, and revealed, it would turn out that the ranking of Polish hospitals features more than a podium of the three champions, that it also has a long list of the mediocre, the bad, and the worst. Citizens would begin holding authorities accountable for healthcare quality. Since specific hospitals are assigned to specific authorities (county, regional, and central) – complaints could be lodged with specific institutions. As it is, society can be kept in the secure bliss of ignorance, and believe that everyone has to endure identical mediocrity.

“This is why many people decide to be treated – even for cancer – by the hospital they live closest to. The county hospital. It is convenient for travelling, and for visitors too. The problem is, many such facili-

ties suffer of a shortage of surgeons with sufficient oncological experience, and of radiotherapy treatment options; diagnostic departments smack of the previous century”, Wojciech Wiśniewski explains. – “It goes without saying that we have high-quality small hospitals, and bad large ones as well. Yet not talking about it and failing to highlight specific facilities – good or bad alike – is simply unfair to people fighting for their lives.”

The Alivia Foundation received a grant of over PLN 650,000 from the Citizens for Democracy Foundation. The money was used to create the “Kolejkoskop” (Patient Queue Observer), and develop the “Onkomała” (Cancer Treatment Map) tools. The onkomała.pl website is more than a browser of all cancer treatment facilities; it is also a source of data concerning their standards of treatment and patient care. Patients rate facilities. They can also leave comments. There are thousands of them.

The kolejkoskop.pl website is another community service medium. It enables browsing and uploading information concerning the waiting time for imaging examinations. For example, a resident of Słupsk in need of a CT scan of the head will find out that they will have to wait around six months for the exam; but if they decide to travel to Koszalin or Człuchów (neither location at a great distance), the waiting time will be cut to 40 or a mere 19 days, respectively (October 2016 data).

“Both websites are up and running, both are undergoing continuous improvement, both are amazingly busy. But we were after something else as well. This is our attempt to empower patients. They can use our websites to make conscious choices. They also feel that the scores they give are truly important, that they are not in vain, and that they will – in time – contribute to a change in the system’s quality”, Wojciech Wiśniewski emphasises.

The “Non-Governmental Audit of Hospital Care in Poland – Pilot Project” realised by Urszula Jaworska’s Foundation (Fundacja Urszuli Jaworskiej) has also been focusing on hospital care quality, patient experience, and patient empowerment. A trial audit was held at five Warsaw-based hospitals. While they were scored quite (or very) well, the foundation is not releasing data concerning individual facilities. The point had not been to produce a hospital ranking. The purpose had been to develop sound research methodology. The foundation’s founder writes in her word of introduction, “Patients are ready to take a lot to receive a benefit, care, treatment, and a cure. They wish to save their lives, whatever the price. (...) are afraid to point to poor patient care standards (...). Even if responding anonymously, they do not always have the courage to tell the truth.”The project’s purposes included identifying a way of talking to patients to reduce the fear factor. Getting the Public Health Department students of the Warsaw Medical University on board as part of the research project was a major innovation as well. When handling the questionnaire-based interviews, many had their first-time opportunity for patient contact. After all, these students will – upon graduation – be managing healthcare facilities, or even the entire healthcare system. Remembering that the patient comes first might do them – and us – a lot of good!

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Empowering patients goes beyond the right to choose the hospital, obviously. It is also about the option of co-deciding what will happen, and what the course of events will be. Consider childbirth. Rarely an emergency, it is something expected, and usually threat-free. Childbirth can be planned. Yet nearly throughout the entire 20th century, obstetrics was a totalitarian system—the woman was an object, subject to a number of activities required to extract the child. Female dignity was of no value at all. Things began changing in Poland a mere 20-30 years ago. In 2011, the Minister of Health proclaimed Maternity Care Standards (MCS) in the form of an ordinance-level document. Conforming to WHO guidelines, these standards recog-

nise two values as identical in importance: human rights and patient rights, including her right to top-level medical care. “Far too often, births are still handled according to whims of individual doctors. Sometimes too much is done around women in labour; in other cases, too little, or not what is required,” says Joanna Pietrusiewicz of the Humane Birth Foundation (Fundacja Rodzić po Ludzku). – “Thanks to the support we received from the Citizens for Democracy programme in the years 2014-15, we have been able to implement a hugely comprehensive project, entitled Safeguarding Maternity Care Standards.”

The foundation analysed the extent to which the MCS had been implemented throughout the country, in dialogue with the medical community and all decision-makers. It brought about the creation of an interdisciplinary team responsible for the drafting of a realistic (this time round) plan of standards implementation, and a maternity care monitoring system. Furthermore, the foundation designed a number of recommendations for the minister, focusing on indispensable amendments to the published document. It also implemented a media campaign targeting women, informing them about what to expect during childbirth, and what they can demand. Moreover, the project extended to the situation of midwives, or – rather – to institutional and non-institutional obstacles preventing midwives from delivering on their fundamental rights and responsibilities, i.e. taking care of women during pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period. Today, while a midwife may monitor a pregnancy, the National Health Fund will not pay her to do it; the midwife cannot order an ultrasound, or even basic laboratory tests for a pregnant patient. “So, they know how to, but they don’t do it. But after all, midwives specialise in such care, and they have university degrees to prove it, not to mention all the internships and extra training they attend. And they continue to be classified as so-called mid-level staff,” Joanna Pietrusiewicz is clearly irritated. – “While some of them can indeed be seen as ‘mid-level’ in terms of their skills, most are really and truly excellent! In case of healthy pregnancies and natural births, they can do much more for a woman in labour than a mediocre doctor.”

The foundation’s appeal for the midwife care offered to pregnant patients to be extended goes beyond the contribution to the struggle to protect the rights of a particular group of professionals; it also carries systemic importance. Humane Birth Foundation statistics prove that gynaecologists are unable to secure proper care for all pregnant patients within the framework of the contracts they are assigned.

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Basically, the foundation should begin paying more attention to men’s underwear. It seems that the concern for loose briefs is to become a pillar of our state’s policy in the field of reproductive health. Anna Krawczak is a well-nigh incomparable expert when it comes to reproductive health. She used to be the director of the Our Stork Association for Infertility Treatment and Adoption Assistance (Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Leczenia Niepłodności i Wspierania Adopcji “Nasz Bocian”), and spent many years convincing one government after another that IVF treatment should be state budget-reimbursed. Once that happened, she secured a grant for the Association from the Citizens for Democracy programme, and organised an exercise in monitoring clinics offering treatment. Assisted by volunteers, the Association analysed treatment conditions at 35 facilities. While obviously some were better and others worse, basically all venues deserved a positive score and were doing their best to improve their patient care standards.

“We were concerned with everything. Our volunteers focused on whether clinics respected patient intimacy, if facilities were disabled patient-friendly, whether they were aesthetic and easy on the eye, if psychological aid was available, and whether contracts signed were sufficient in terms of the protection of patient rights. We collected more than thirty different pieces of information per clinic,” says Anna Krawczak.

In September 2015, the association published an online collective monitoring report; in October, very detailed data on each of the clinics. These publications became a source of information for couples interested in the procedure, as well as for the clinics themselves. They learned what they could and should improve. Our Stork was successful also in that even summaries containing critical comments did not spark any conflict.

Furthermore, the monitoring evolution changed the way people think about IVF reimbursing. The society stopped perceiving IVF reimbursement as a gift from the state one has to be uncritically enchanted with. It became a benefit, the quality of which may carry expectations.

Such normality – defined in terms of adapting benefits and patient care standards to contemporary medical knowledge – did not last long. In the wake of elections in the autumn of 2015, a new government took the reins. The government decided to close the IVF treatment reimbursement programme, even though hard scientific data prove that for many couples, this is the only chance for children of their own. IVF treatment is to be replaced with a series of other activities allegedly resolving infertility issues – such as the aforementioned concern with loose underwear for boys and men. Furthermore, other legislative changes have been announced, actually targeting the “gradual elimination” of commercial, non-reimbursed *in vitro* fertilisation.

“In the field of infertility treatment, the ratchet gear mechanism wherein a single success becomes a stable starting point for further improvement-fostering activities has been replaced with total collapse,” Anna Krawczak is openly pessimistic. “I am really sorry for couples who will lose hope for children of their own for ideological and political reasons.”

Any conclusion that such radical limitations to IVF accessibility may only last a single term of governmental office is incorrect. We will never go back to what we had four years ago. Time is merciless, as is biology. The forecast is increasingly gloomy for women who cannot conceive today – their chance of successful IVF treatment will be progressively shrinking.

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The issue of preventing HIV infections is a similar issue, in that it forces those in government to confront medical knowledge with their general beliefs and cherished values.

“The Polish law imposes an obligation to take preventive measures upon numerous public institutions and authorities: local governments, the central government, ministries, a variety of agencies,” says Cezary Fidor of the Public AIDS Committee (Społeczny Komitet ds. Aids).

Consider the Ministry of Sports and Tourism, for example. Consider the hundreds of thousands of young people residing year after year in large groups in dormitories during out-of-home training events, competitions, and meets. They are young, healthy, and of the opposite gender. In such circumstances, integration and interaction are obvious. Now consider finances. In 2014, the Ministry of Sports allocated PLN 8.00 per day to HIV/AIDS prevention—an amount sufficient to purchase three condoms. After all, sports can also be about illegal doping; doping is about steroids, with injections not necessarily involving disposable needles. Finally, consider major sports events. While not necessarily carrying a higher risk of infection, they are an excellent opportunity to reach thousands, millions of sports fans with a risk and prevention message. Will PLN 8.00 per day be enough?

There are good examples as well. From 2013-14, the Ministry of Justice spent approximately PLN 0.5 million per annum on prevention programmes targeting inmates of remand prisons, penitentiary units, correctional facilities, and facilities for juvenile delinquents. And things were actually done. The Ministry of National Defence had been serious about the subject as well – during the same period, approximately PLN 100,000 per annum was spent on prevention programmes for troops (education, mostly). But a monitoring evolution carried out by the Public AIDS Committee proves that the aforementioned good practices were usually exceptions to a bad rule.

A more extensive description of the underperformance by a variety of institutions was published as part of a report entitled Preventing HIV/AIDS Infections in Poland in the Years 2013-14. In the introduction, researchers point to the cardinal sin: a gross underfunding of prevention measures. Today, less than PLN 750,000 of budgetary funding per day is used to treat AIDS patients. As it turns out, during the selfsame 24 hours, a further 2-3 Poles learn that they have been infected, the cost of their long-term treatment reaching approximately PLN 1 million. In practical terms, future state payables are increasing by around PLN 2,000,000-3,000,000 a day. “Today, Poles with AIDS are offered top-quality treatment for free. If their numbers keep growing at such a terrifying rate, the state will no longer be able to afford it,” declares Cezary Fidor alarmingly.

Yet those in government would have to change their way of thinking to make prevention effective. They would have to recognise the fact that Polish people are sexual beings satisfying their needs outside official monogamous relationships, as often as not while teenagers. *“We will not succeed in forcing society into sexual abstinence; all we can do is minimise the risk of sexually hazardous behaviour,”* says the expert. It is a short way from a statement of this kind to the conclusion that reliable HIV/AIDS prevention is impossible without reliable sexual education at schools. The Polish third sector could assist those in power in the field as well, but this is where an entirely different story begins...

By Michał Henzler

THE THIRD SECTOR OF THE THIRD POWER

The constitution leaves no room for doubt: the judiciary shall be independent of other powers. Concurrently, our legal order allows a certain form of civic participation in the administration of justice. Furthermore, it seems that the non-governmental sector can also be a success story when it comes to reforming the Polish Themis. Organisations implementing their Citizens for Democracy programme projects report on whether and to what extent their “reform” has proven successful.

“Be seated. All rise. On behalf of the Republic of Poland, this court has ruled that...” Whether we like it or not, the dynamics of Polish courts occasionally resemble fast food justice stands. First, you queue up and wait. Then everything flies by. An express trial. A standard penalty. Hey-ho, let’s go. It’s enough that a court closes yet another of the 15 million cases per annum.

Public opinion polls prove that Poles are not very happy with the justice system; for example, more than 60% suspect that judges do occasionally cave in to different forms of pressure, forgetting their duty to remain autonomous. The list of charges is obviously very long. For example: “they protect their family and friends”, they accept bribes, they favour the rich while discriminating against the poor and minorities. Concurrently, a mere 20% of Poles experienced an actual court encounter over the last five years. And that group – who actually met Lady Justice in person – tend to have a slightly better opinion of the judiciary. “It seems that the Polish justice system suffers from an undeservedly poor reputation, forged by society by infamous scandals and tabloid reports,” says Bartosz Pilitowski, president of the Court Watch Poland Foundation (Fundacja CourtWatch Polska). – “We have been following court work for years. Nearly 2,000 foundation volunteers monitored just under 30,000 court trials.”

Constructive Audits

As part of the Civic Court Monitoring initiative, foundation volunteers check whether the trial took place at all and if it began at the pre-arranged time; in case of delay – whether the judge explained the reason; if the trial participants were treated courteously and whether no party to the proceedings was favoured over another; finally, how reliable the trial transcript is, and whether the prosecutor refrained from communicating with the judge during recess when others were requested to leave the courtroom. Monitoring results are published on a regular basis, and submitted to the community of judges.

The unequal treatment of parties to court proceedings or gross disrespect for defendants are extremely rare. Minor misconduct cases are much more frequent, and involve judges’ behaviour affecting the sense of dignity of people appearing before a court of law: no welcomes, no farewells, no clear justification of rulings, rushing witnesses during testimony. While none of these factors influence the actual trial result, they do contribute to a specific atmosphere, and are crucial to how society perceives the judiciary. “To a judge, a trial law is about the law and procedures – whereas to parties to legal proceedings, a trial is mostly about emotions: concerns and hopes. We want citizens to appreciate the judiciary, and courts

to fully deserve such appreciation”, explains Filip Gołębiewski of Court Watch Poland. – “Things have changed at the institutions frequently visited by our observers. Judge punctuality has improved; cases of equal treatment of parties to proceedings have become much more common.”

Poland has learned through the grapevine that the very presence of Court Watch observers is a recognisable value during a court trial. Requests for observers to be sent to trials have become common. In 2015, the foundation launched the Civic Case List (Wokanda Obywatelska), a web-based social network anyone can use to upload their own trial and invite an observer to attend. Although the site has not yet been widely advertised, it has been recording an average of one application per day.

“The case is an attempt to frame me for a traffic violation I never committed (...) I am willing to cover transportation costs for an observer from Poznań, i.e. the cost of fuel or a railway/coach ticket, and offer a meal or refreshments.” – a wokandaobywatelska.pl ad by a defendant from the western part of the Greater Poland province reads.

Eighty-Six Per Cent Impunity

He abused verbally and physically. He raped when he felt like it. He occasionally raped when he didn't feel like it – just to prove who's boss. He could do anything he pleased, as husbands are wont to do. Neighbours, on the other hand, are expected to stay away and mind their own business – and so they did. “We have a hit bit here”, she heard police officers say at the station. The trial, the ruling. On Sunday, she set the table, and offered chicken soup and the main course to her husband. And a dessert. To apologise for going to the police. He also said sorry, baby, I'm so sorry, it won't happen again.

In police speak, a “hit bit” is a victim of domestic violence, physical or mental (Article 207 of the Criminal Code). Hit bits are usually wives, common-law wives, mothers. Nearly exclusively female. According to Ministry of Justice data, approximately 100,000 Polish women per annum experience domestic violence. Yet research conducted by Professor Beata Gruszczyńska (Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialisation, University of Warsaw) proved that the actual annual number of victims totals 800,000 – 1,000,000 women. “We analysed the Article 207 cases tried by Silesian courts in the years 2012-2014. We collected statistics, we read more than five hundred rulings, we attended trials,” says Alina Kula, board member at the Foundation for Positive Change (Fundacja Pozytywnych Zmian). A report was compiled. The conclusions are shocking.

In Siemianowice Śląskie, for example, a district court found a man who had been abusing his wife physically and mentally for ten years – threatening to kill her, and raping her – guilty. Yet the defendant was not sentenced, but merely placed under probation and ordered to undergo treatment for alcohol addiction. Proceedings were conditionally discontinued.

In the years 2013-2014, similar rulings – allowing perpetrators to feel completely unthreatened – had been all too common. In the Silesian region, 2,423 of the 2,647 custodial sentences were suspended. National statistics tend to show similarities. Nationwide, suspended sentences comprise a staggering 86% share of all sentences. The perpetrator of violence goes right back to his home and family. Sometimes repentant; sometimes with a deep conviction that he has to punish his unruly wife.

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While in some courts of law, family abusers have been enjoying genuine impunity, perpetrators of crime against animals have also found before other courts that their actions can go unpunished.

Cracow's Mr Cat's Black Sheep Foundation (Fundacja Czarna Owca Pana Kota) joined forces with the Wrocław-based EcoWatch Association (Stowarzyszenie EkoStraż) to monitor proceedings against criminals and offenders as defined by the Animal Protection Act. Organisations collected data, including on cases tried by 146 randomly chosen district courts and 147 randomly chosen prosecution authorities, or one in three of these institutions in Poland. Furthermore, 32 observers were trained to participate in court trials of cases involving animal cruelty and to conduct a questionnaire-based research project. A report confronting diverse data sourced in various institutions and locations was compiled, proving that the entire Polish system is ailing. "This holds true for the police who are reluctant to accept reports of animal-related crime and offences, for prosecution authorities who have a record of refusing to initiate proceedings or of discontinuing them altogether, as well as for courts who are lenient in penalising perpetrators or don't sentence them at all," explains Joanna Wydrych, a board member at the Mr Cat's Black Sheep Foundation.

In the year 2013, for example, the district court in Olsztyn sentenced a man to four months in prison for slitting the throat of a cat named Luksus. The sentence was obviously suspended. Eighty-six percent of all custodial sentences in animal abuse and animal murder cases are suspended.

"The 86% figure is only one of the things we share with the Black Sheep," says Anna Chęć of the Foundation for Positive Change. – "In 2014, the Batory Foundation organised a meeting for various organisations active in analysing diverse social problems; this was when we discovered how much our projects have in common – ours, the domestic violence one, and the one focusing on animal cruelty."

Furthermore, the two organisations have adopted a similar approach to their research and reports; they believe them to be the correct starting point for amendments to criminal law policies. Perpetrators of the most serious crimes should be immediately imprisoned, while others should receive alternative punitive sentences, such as fines or unpaid work benefitting local communities. Additionally, judges should be more courageous in applying more specific measures. In the case of family abusers this should include eviction, restraining orders, and mandatory anger management course attendance. The Animal Protection Act also lists a number of other instruments available to courts, such as damages payable to animal protection societies, removal of animals from the care of offenders, and bans on animal possession.

"Such monitoring exercises and reports are comprehensive in their description and are hugely valuable to judges who are obliged by law to constantly improve their qualifications and attend annual training courses," Judge Waldemar Żurek, spokesperson for the National Council of the Polish Judiciary, declares. "While things are changing slowly but surely, training courses for the judiciary are something we would really appreciate."

Żurek points out that perpetrators of acts until recently considered reprehensible but not criminal are now brought to justice. Indeed, one generation ago, backyard pig slaughtering, canine ear cropping, and euthanasing excess kitten litters, were customary to certain communities and were not prosecuted. Changes to the legal system are largely due to action taken by non-governmental organisations. "Pioneer sentences of absolute imprisonment for perpetrators of the most serious crimes against animals have been passed already. This is hugely important: precedent rulings are always the hardest to pass," the judge explains.

The Non-Governmental Turnkey

Non-governmental organisations can audit courts, monitor the judiciary's operations in selected fields, and impact adjudication. In Toruń and Białystok, they have taken their duties to the next level: they assist the justice system in the enforcement process.

In co-operation with the Friends from the Block (Przyjaciele z Podwórka) and Patronage (Patronat) associations, Court Watch Poland set up Restorative Justice Centres. Local courts refer defendants with alternative limited freedom (community) sentences to Centres in Toruń and Białystok. While appropriately punitive, such sentences allow defendants to remain out of prison. Regrettably, not all of them do.

Should such a sentence be passed in the case of a defendant who had not worked a day in their life or of an alcohol abuser, developments can take on a dramatic turn. It is enough for such a person to neglect their duties – and start binge-drinking, for example – and the procedure to substitute community service for a term of imprisonment is launched. “While obviously nothing happens automatically, the first problems are usually a harbinger of further issues. Such people need help. Which is exactly what we at the Restorative Justice Centre provide,” says Bartosz Pilitowski.

Assistance kicks in at the introduction meeting. Centre staff talk to their client about their talents, preferences, lifestyle, and obligations. The point is, for example, for a single mother to be given the option of serving a sentence in daytime hours, while her children attend kindergarten. Or for an IT guy sentenced for hacking to run computer literacy classes for senior citizens rather than sweep streets. Community sentences should not be about public shaming or physical exhaustion – but rather about making up for an offence and true resocialisation. An individual approach to every client makes that possible. “Establishing our centres was no miracle. It was the effect of hard work we shared with local judges and court probation officers – and of mutual trust,” Bartosz Pilitowski emphasises.

While the judiciary can be reformed, the reform has to be founded upon mutual trust and the belief that only good people meet in court. Social activists. Judges with a wish to be good at their work. And good people who had the misfortune of breaking the law.

By Michał Henzler

OUTDOOR GAMES

Space – the Cartesian system of co-ordinates filled with content. The content is there, always. While good content attracts people, bad content turns space into emptiness. Fortunately, even emptiness can be colonised by NGOs ...

Space to Own

Fordon was made part of Bydgoszcz in 1973. This is what documents say, this is what maps show, this is what the Bydgoszcz public bus grid tells us. Yet the locals continue feeling isolated. They believe the incorporation of Fordon brought hardly anything but loss. The town even had to share its name with New Fordon (Nowy Fordon), a giant residential estate quarter which sprang up near the Bydgoszcz road.

Years passed. The turn of the century was not particularly favourable for Fordon. Local industry was on the decline, poverty and unemployment knocking on door after door. The number of windows boarded up, marking abandoned flats, shops, and craft workshops, was growing. Small-town pastoral morphed into suburban apathy. No, the Bydgoszcz authorities had not forgotten Fordon, choosing it as the venue for the largest night shelter for homeless men in the region. It goes well with the prison, which has been operating locally for over 160 years. These two institutions are keeping the Fordon market square alive. This is where the last cigarettes of the free were smoked (the penitentiary unit gate opens onto the market square), where a day pass was celebrated with a shot, where people were drinking since the break of dawn to sober up by the evening and lay their weary heads at the shelter. Only the locals sidestepped the square. A birch spread its branches nearby, slowly covering the roof of an abandoned synagogue.

“We were given the synagogue in 2012,” says Bogdan Kunach of the Foundation for the Casimir the Great University (Fundacja dla Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego). Shortly thereafter, the foundation began opening the historical monument to cultural events. Locals began popping in. It was becoming quite obvious that Bydgoszcz having incorporated Fordon remains a thorn in their side. That the space they have found themselves in – between a prison and a night shelter, between town and city – is, in a sense, diseased. That the synagogue in itself, regardless of how interesting its cultural offer might be, will chiefly remain an attraction for residents of Bydgoszcz proper, but will bring little benefit to them – the residents of Old Fordon. “And they were absolutely right. So we decided to do more,” Kunach continues.

As part of the Citizens for Democracy programme, the foundation completed three projects in the Old Fordon quarter. Fordon Together (Fordon Razem) was an attempt at taking junior high pupils out on a useful tour of the streets and alleys of the former old town, and helping them develop a sense of belonging to and with the local community. Young people created graffiti together, attended film workshops, and engaged in endless discussions about the district, its problems, and its future. An activities centre was opened in abandoned premises next to the market square, as part of the The Old Fordon Market Square – Meeting Again (Rynek w Starym Fordonie – powrót do spotkań) project. Free coffee was served at the new centre during meetings with Estate Council and City Hall representatives and space reclamation experts; a fixed schedule of local organisations and sports clubs meetings was drawn up. Anyone was welcome to join art

classes at any time. “Art took on a social purpose, becoming a pretext to spend time together,” explains culture animator Małgorzata Winter of the No Name Foundation (Fundacja “Bez Nazwy”). “To prolong meetings, I suggested embroidery. We began embroidering labels for compotes, preserves, and pickles to contribute to the venue’s identity. Fordon used to have a fruit and vegetable processing plant.”

The third Fordon project forming part of the Citizens for Democracy programme involved activities to open extra space for the town: space for dialogue and better understanding. A DIY workshop was set up and anyone interested, including the local homeless, were invited to join. Crafts instructors were recruited from among local penitentiary unit inmates. Guys from the three communities usually avoiding each other – local residents, inmates, night shelter guests – worked together to decide what was to be done. The Fordon Workshop produced, for example, giant flower boxes, tables, and benches. Small architecture was used to furnish a floral Art Garden on a derelict square adjacent to the synagogue, and the newly decorated space began attracting local residents. Some come here to relax. Others add plants, pruning, watering and keeping the place tidy.

Rekindled space – the garden, the synagogue, the café, the workshop – helps animate local communities and allows growing numbers of local residents to discover Old Fordon as a place they want to take care of. Which they do. And that was the point!

Space to Share

It could well be assumed that an endless and unfriendly void separates our workplace from the nearest shopping mall and the residential housing estate we live in. And that the only way of filling it is to cocoon yourself in private space. If not – how can we explain the phenomenon of Polish city residents being much more heavily addicted to their cars than the dwellers of Berlin, Paris, London, or Copenhagen? How else can we comprehend how every morning – no matter how much of a hurry we are in – we hit traffic-jammed streets to jam them up even further? Why do we fill cities to the brim with cars, causing the urban spirit itself to escape? Key city functionalities are slowly but surely shifting to distant suburban districts breeding metastasised and fully automotive-addicted secondary centres filled with shops, office buildings, cinemas, fitness centres, and water parks. And yet again—to get there, we join the traffic jam...

The process itself is nothing astonishing. It has been replicated in thousands of cities for dozens of years. Which is exactly why multiple remedies have been tried on the vast urban testing ground. Three seem to be particularly efficient, especially if applied simultaneously: limited motor vehicle traffic, the development of public transportation, and support for bicycle traffic. “On short distances, bicycles are the cheapest, most comfortable, and fastest mode of transportation – five-six kilometres can be managed by any reasonably fit person,” explains Cezary Grochowski of the Wrocław Cycling Initiative. “We can ride our own, leaving it in the suburbs before boarding a tram, or a public city bike for use in the city centre to reach a location the first tram cannot, without waiting for a connection.”

Polish city authorities no longer need such arguments. All of them have understood and are declaring their support for bicycle and public transportation. The problem is that goodwill alone does not suffice. Facts are what counts. For example, the share of bicycle trips in daily commuting across Wrocław remains below 6% (in Toruń, Poznań, Cracow, and Radom – 5%; in Szczecin – around 1%) – whereas in the majority of West European cities, the rate has been over 10-15% for years; in top cycling metropolises, such as Copenhagen or Amsterdam, it exceeds 35%. Double-digit bicycle traffic share has even been reached by the snowy and frosty city of Helsinki. All of this means that something is not quite right in Poland. Success is measured by the number of bicycles crossing the town and their role in the transportation system rather than by the total length of urban cycle paths. “The Citizens for Democracy programme allowed us to analyse the subject in ten large cities rather than in our own only,” says Cezary Grochowski.

The Wrocław Cycling Initiative carried out an audit of cycling policies (and of their implementation) in Bydgoszcz, Cracow, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Radom, Szczecin, Toruń, Warsaw, and Wrocław. While a different local cycling organisation was invited to join the co-operation scheme in each city, the overall methodology applied was the same: BYPAD, the European cycling policy research tool. The solution enables a comparison of cyclists' circumstances in individual agglomerations, as well as monitoring any future change.

The audits carried out prove that some problems are universal. For example, the implementation of cycling policies varies considerably at different locations. Moreover, no performance indicators have been drafted or monitored. As often as not, no reliable data on cycling traffic and changes thereto is even collected, not to mention cycling traffic distribution per route.

The lack of knowledge is accompanied by a lack of money. While millions of zlotys are spent on cycling infrastructure (cycle paths, mainly), the expenditure volume does not even come close to the expected overall result, at least in proportion to the actual share of bicycles in the transportation structure. For example, approximately 2-3% of Warsaw residents use bicycles for daily transportation purposes, while cycling infrastructure expenses do not exceed 0.5% of the amount allocated to transportation-related investments.

The exceedingly slow development of the main cycle paths conducive to making the system a single functional whole remains a common problem for the majority of the cities analysed.

The Cycling Network of Social Participation in Transportation Policy project was by no means limited to an audit. Advocacy activities were engaged in as well. Organisations were successful in, for example, enforcing a specific legislative change; consequently, new solutions have been introduced to Polish streets already: cycle lanes, advanced bicycle stop boxes at junctions, contra flow lanes, three-chamber traffic lights, and the legal admissibility of bicycle traffic against automotive traffic on one-way streets. "These are efficient, safe, and inexpensive methods of linking bicycle traffic to automotive, pedestrian, or city rail traffic," Cezary Grochowski emphasises. "We have to learn how to use the space together. Both the infrastructure and the mentality need change."

Space for Others, Which Means Space for Ourselves

Some space fosters truth – take beaches, for example. Once we take a closer look at the long strip of sand between the (holiday resort) towns of Świnoujście and Krynica Morska, we will discover that Poles are a nation with a love for beach screens and beer, and are astonishingly young and healthy to boot. We remain unaffected by old age or disabilities. – "The elderly and disabled simply have no chance of accessing the majority of our beaches," Sylwia Nikko-Biernacka of the Cracow-based Machina Fotografika Foundation (Fundacja Machina Fotografika) brings us down to earth. "The situation does, then, tell the truth, but rather about our lack of sensitivity. Even if a person in a wheelchair manages to cross a dune, at the foot of the dune they will stay. Access to the sea is blocked by a sea of sand."

Romantic walks along the shore by wheel chaired couples are the stuff of dreams only, as is watching the sunset together. Unless they set their wheelchairs up one behind the other, single-file. Obviously right up there where the beach begins, next to the lavatory and the lifeguard's toolshed. Not an inch closer. – "We asked the authorities of seaside municipalities about the simplest solution possible – rubber mats from beach entrance to the waterline, and in one of the directions to the side from the point of water access," says Sylwia Nikko-Biernacka. – "That's a no-go, we usually heard. Firstly, that's downright ugly. Secondly, mats would be in the way of the guys on their little tractors cleaning the beaches every morning."

Let's not get ahead of ourselves, though. Before Nikko began asking difficult questions of seaside authorities, she travelled the entire Polish coast on foot – all 440 kilometres of it. That was back in 2012, when a

kind of performance campaign had been her main point. She wanted to raise money for a prosthetic leg for an unknown woman. And she made it! One year later, she was following a twofold objective already, of raising a) funds to purchase a wheelchair, and b) the overall awareness of beach inaccessibility. She achieved both goals. She made an appearance on the Baltic shores in 2014 again, with yet another target. As part of the Citizens for Democracy programme, she implemented the Together – Beaches for Everyone (*Wspólne rozmowy – plaże dostępne dla wszystkich Talking*) project. The point was not to raise awareness of the problem itself, but rather to initiate talks with the authorities of ten seaside municipalities. Having joined forces with a team of specialists, she drafted architectonic recommendations for plans to modernise specific beach entrances, in a spirit of universal design.

“Universal design” is a phrase that has to be understood verbatim, the movement itself based upon a reflection that all of our needs are actually similar. What does this mean in practice? A person in a wheelchair needs an inclined plane leading to the beach. So do parents with a pram. So does a cyclist. A person in a wheelchair needs considerable space in a lavatory to manoeuvre. An overweight person would appreciate such extra space as well, as would a parent entering a cubicle with a small child. A person with visual impairment needs large, high-contrast markings for beach exits. We could all use some brighter lighting after dark, or when we lose our glasses in the sand. “Instead of designing infrastructure for individual user groups, it is much better to create it once and for all, meeting everyone’s needs,” Sylwia Nikko-Biernacka declares. “Such arguments seemed to be hugely convincing in our conversation with seaside authorities.”

Of the ten municipalities where the Talking Together – Beaches for Everyone project was managed, the authorities of nine declared that they would implement project-related recommendations once the time comes to modernise sea access inclines and beach infrastructure. Work is in progress in two municipalities already. Sylwia Nikko-Biernacka believes that a reasonable minimum plan should be that of modernising at least one sea access point in each seaside municipality. But is that truly worth investing in? Don’t the elderly and the disabled have more serious problems to worry about? They do – but this is a serious issue as well.

Every year, 6-7 million (rather) young and healthy Poles make their way to the Baltic seaside. The number can be supplemented with a population of several hundred thousand, if not over one million, senior citizens and disabled persons (the grandmas and grandpas of the young and healthy, for example). They cannot access the beach, which is why – as persons not meeting the requirements of such a holiday model – they frequently don’t go on holiday with their families at all, whereas a holiday trip is a special event building and fostering family and social relations. We plan and spend the holiday together, to then recall it for many months. Most of our joint photographs are actually holiday snaps. Beach inaccessibility similarly excludes young people on wheelchairs from such forms of social life. In Polish reality, beach-going is more than just entertainment: it is also a very serious social process. Notably, for many disabled persons a dip in the cold waters of the Baltic Sea is simply a dream you may not share, but which you should respect. Modernised inclines should be fitted with a beach wheelchair, specially designed for trips into the salty waves. “A guy called Sylwester was actually handling such a vehicle at Sopot beach. We were talking, when all of a sudden he cut our conversation short and went off at top speed. He had spotted a girl in a wheelchair, far away. And he had made it a point to welcome every person in a wheelchair warmly to the beach, and offer to take them into the sea, Sylwia Nikko-Biernacka recalls. “It was important for him. And it simply is important.”

In ten, twenty, or fifty years we will all be sick, old, or disabled. Accessible beaches will also be beaches for us. That’s the truth. Pure and simple.

By Michał Henzler

TRUST TAKES TIME

An estimated 18,000-20,000 individuals provide what is broadly understood as paid sexual services in Poland. Some sources quote as many as 150,000-160,000, and approximately 15,000 escort agencies. Demand breeds supply.

“Yet it is primarily the so-called sex workers who suffer the plight of stigmatisation rather than their clients. Sex workers are left to fend for themselves, and they find it difficult to apply for help,” says Robert Łukasik, President of the Union for People Living with HIV/AIDS Positive in Rainbow (Zjednoczenie na Rzecz Żyjących z HIV/AIDS “Pozytywni w Tęczy”).

Better Not to Provoke

While prostitution is legal in Poland, sex workers are wary when it comes to requesting psychological, legal, or medical assistance. Sometimes they believe that what they are doing is illegal – at other times they are simply ashamed of having fallen victim to theft, rape, or health problems. As often as not, due to unfortunate past experiences, they prefer not to provoke any discussion or draw any attention to themselves. Every confrontation with a specialist leads to a string of questions. This is why they are left to fend for themselves, even though they are exposed to a catalogue of hazards: physical violence, psychological and medical issues, exclusion, and stigmatisation.

“In 2015, we hit the streets and the clubs in an attempt to help these people. We began knocking on escort agency doors. We offered help,” Łukasik explains.

This is when the **Safety Net (Bezpiecznik)** project initiated by the Rainbow Positives Union started, with the purpose of engaging in outreach work and partyworking methodologies, and of reaching sex workers over the web. This was a pioneer project, given the vast array of multifaceted activities addressing sex workers. Furthermore, a dedicated centre was set up, allowing sex workers to seek relatively comprehensive support – from the use of a bathroom and/or laundry facilities to psychological or legal assistance. Warsaw did not have such an institution before.

Excuse Me, Are You a Prostitute?

The Rainbow Positives began co-operating with PION, a Norwegian organisation with more than 20 years of experience in protecting and supporting sex workers. One-half of PION’s staff are past or present sexual service providers, and individuals somehow related to the industry – such as former male escort agency owners. This is of huge importance, as the organisation is staffed by persons with hands-on experience and the best knowledge of the community’s issues. PION representatives trained 12 individuals in outreach work. Future outreach workers and partyworkers learned how to discuss subjects which frequently are not immensely difficult in a professional way and without undue emotion. They also developed skills of discussing sex and sexual behaviours, knowledge indispensable to the job. Sex

workers tend to be very mistrustful. They avoid human contact. They often disbelieve offers of cost-free help. How can they be reached? How can trust be built?

“So, you approach such a person, and then how do you begin? ‘Hi, how are you? Hey, I know you work in the streets, tell me about your problems.’ We had to learn how to earn their trust and how to discuss their work and safety,” says Robert Łukasik, President of the Rainbow Positives Union.

Furthermore, PION representatives shared their experience in working over the web. Such interaction allowed the Polish organisation to expand their activities to include sex service sites.

“You open an account, and contact a sex worker. ‘If you have problems you would like to discuss, we are here for you.’ Our site accounts were often taken down. We reopened them. It’s very difficult and strenuous work. It requires determination. We are happy to report that more than ten people actually came in to see us,” says Robert Łukasik.

This is how PION representative Morten Sortodden describes the Norwegian organisation’s early web days: “Sometimes six months went by without anyone responding, I had the impression that nobody needs my work and that I am all alone in the universe... the process was incredibly slow, but one day something clicked. Now, three years later, we are in touch with six hundred sex workers. A lot of water passed under the bridge before we formed any kind of relationship to speak of.”

Can We Do Anything for You?

The organisation’s success story is that the organisation managed to begin co-operating with ten agencies; fourteen months later, approximately one hundred agency sex workers remained in touch with the union. Twice a week over the entire project term, Rainbow Positives employees visited clubbing venues and worked the streets. They tried to make contact and encourage sex workers to take advantage of assistance offered by the organisation. They discussed safe sex, and circumstances which can lead to the contraction of HIV and other STDs. Sometimes they became the sex workers’ only confidants and interlocutors. Once the project had closed, Rainbow Positives have had to limit their activities due to funding shortages.

“We let the women working at the agency know. They asked if they could do anything for us so that we could keep on visiting them, write a letter maybe? When saying our goodbyes, we heard ‘Our doors will always be open’,” Basia, an outreach worker, recalls.

Project partners recommenced their work during a press conference in April in Warsaw. “You sent out a signal to these people, you made them feel worth something again, they opened up to you... keep up the good work, because you have done a lot of good already,” said Marcella Loyova of HIV Norge, an organisation which declared its will to co-operate with the union.

Furthermore, everyone concerned agreed that the project merely marks the beginning of a long road to building relationships with sex workers, earning their trust, and developing an awareness of a place that was created to support and help them.

By Karolina Szymańska, Stefan Batory Foundation

FORIGNERS AT POLISH SCHOOL

POLISH SCHOOLS: YOUNG FOREIGNERS FACE SCHOOL REALITIES IN POLAND

At first, I couldn't even find the toilet because I didn't know that a circle on the door stood for 'ladies' and a triangle meant 'gents'. I couldn't figure out which room the class was in or that I was supposed to bring separate sports clothes and shoes for the PE class.

YiQi (pronounce: Eessee) is a 2nd grade student in a middle school. She travelled with her parents from China to Poland five years ago and enrolled in the primary school in the community of Mroków. She did not understand a single word of Polish. Today, she speaks fluently about her first few weeks in the new country and about how to survive in a world where everything is different.

The School in Mroków

The local school in Mroków is very special. Ten percent of its students are of Chinese or Vietnamese origin. It is all because of the proximity of Wólka Kosowska, where a major wholesale hub is located that employs Chinese and Vietnamese people. Minority integration and student support projects have been available in the community for several years, but many Chinese and Vietnamese pupils still do not speak Polish one or two years after they start going to Polish schools. Here is the problem:

Foreign children are required to study all subjects in Polish right away. Biology, history, geography – all in a language that is totally incomprehensible to them. The result? I have recently spoken to one parent whose child will be held back for the third time. It means the boy has been stuck in the third grade in middle school ever since he arrived in Poland, **Michalina Jarmuż** of the World within Reach Foundation (Fundacja Świat na Wyciągnięcie Ręki) explains. Michalina has run a Mini Polish Phrasebook project in Mroków since October 2014.

However, language is not the only challenge faced by immigrant children in Polish schools.

I helped one Chinese boy with his maths homework once. The task was to develop a mathematical formula and was to do with the calendar. Nothing special, you'd think. The thing is, Poland and China have different calendars! So first I had to tell him about the Polish calendar, how many days it has and how you can structure them. The cultural context is noticeable in all subjects, and even in the sciences some problems to be solved have narrative descriptions so both hurdles at once form an insuperable barrier, says Jarmuż.

A Foreigner in a Polish School

According to Polish legislation, a foreign child who stays in Poland does not so much have the right to attend school but the obligation to. In addition, children of foreign descent have the right to an additional five hours of Polish classes per week. These five hours of language classes a week seem to be sufficient support for young migrants to pick up the language. The trouble is that these language classes are organised after the mandatory subject-matter classes.

These kids have stress-related symptoms after a whole day of listening to instruction in a language they do not understand – they have headaches and abdominal pains. As laconic as it may sound, the school nurse has confirmed they exhibit all the symptoms of anxiety and culture shock. Learning in such a state is extremely difficult, explains Jarmuż.

This is coupled by simple fatigue and the frustration of seeing that all your other classmates have long since gone home or are playing outside.

Solutions

Other countries in Europe where migrant populations are much higher than in Poland have been implementing policies to help young foreigners adapt to the local school environment for a long time. In Norway, where migrants account for 15% of the population, young students who speak languages other than Norwegian enjoy the right to additional language learning which lasts until they are ready to attend regular classes at school.

Students have the right to learn in their native language or in both languages. This approach applies to children who have recently arrived in Norway and children who have limited language skills in Norwegian because of foreign descent. Students can choose their native language as an additional foreign language in secondary schools, says Dag Fjæstad of the National Centre for Multicultural Education, who was invited by the Polish Children and Youth Foundation to attend a seminar for organisations that implement youth and anti-discrimination projects in the framework of the Citizens for Democracy programme.

Poland made a positive step towards the Nordic approach by introducing a transition period for students to learn the language before they begin regular education.

I myself attended a Polish school with French as the language of instruction. We spent the first year essentially learning French for 20 hours a week. After that year, we were truly prepared to study all other subjects in the language, recalls Aleksandra Ośko, President of the World within Reach Foundation.

However, schools like the one in Mroków are still relatively rare. The total migrant student population in Poland is one per cent of the whole, which means it is not seen as priority and some fail to recognise it at all. Municipalities and schools that face the challenge appear to be patching the holes in the system by engaging with non-governmental organisations.

Mini Polish Phrasebook

For example, Mini Polish Phrasebook is a project implemented in the school in Mroków by the STEP Education and Progress Association (Stowarzyszenie Edukacji i Postępu STEP) in partnership with the World within Reach Foundation and Project: Poland (Projekt: Polska).

Any type of support and assistance is important whenever young immigrants land in a Polish school.

The first few weeks were very hard. I was lucky to find a friend quickly, a Polish girl. At first, we communicated through drawings. I would draw things and she would tell me what these things were in Polish. Surely a phrasebook with basic Polish phrases, a survival dictionary of sorts, would have helped initially, concludes YiQi.

During a winter holiday workshop organised at the school in Mroków, young Polish, Vietnamese and Chinese students worked with photographer Marta Kotlarska to develop pinhole photography skills. They then used their photographs to produce a picture game that helps foreign students learn basic Polish.

We selected over 20 key sentences to help new students get by. We realise this tool is not going to solve all the problems. But it is likely to be the first positive thing that may encourage young foreigners to learn Polish, says Aleksandra Ośko.

The game will be published in five language versions: Polish, Chinese, Vietnamese, English and Norwegian. Besides the new tool, the workshop had another measurable outcome.

“Polish kids could at last see that their peers from China or Vietnam were also talented, could paint beautiful pictures, had maths skills and could tell complex stories. They had not had the chance to demonstrate this in regular classes. Further, Polish students happened to be a minority in work groups. They would rush to us crying: I am alone with all these Chinese children, I don’t understand anything, what am I supposed to do?! The experience of stepping into the shoes of foreign peers for a while made a huge impact on the Polish kids,” laughs Aleksandra Ośko.

By Katarzyna Dumańska, Stefan Batory Foundation

COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

VIOLENCE IS LIKE AN EPIDEMIC

16 Days Against Violence is a campaign initiated in New Jersey, USA, in 1991. Now it has been held 25 times in 180 countries...Is it still needed?

Agata Teutsch (Autonomia Foundation): Gender-based violence has always been justified by culture, custom, law and religion. It is still played down and ignored by legislators and institutions in a clear majority of countries. To answer the question — yes, it is still needed.

This is best illustrated by the recurrence of the issue in public debate. It is often raised by public officials, the judiciary, law enforcement, education, healthcare, welfare services and others. Research conducted by non-government organisations and institutions¹ has been continually contested or undermined as ‘incomplete’ ‘unreliable’ etc. Decision-makers have tried to convince researchers and activists focusing on violence against women and girls that further research is required. As a matter of fact, the picture is incomplete. It is true that even the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee call for reliable research. It is vital, however, that we recognise that we have sufficient information to make a difference for the victims of gender-based violence and to take preventive measures.

So what are the data telling us?

A.T.: Violence against girls and women and other types of gender-based abuse are among the most common and most serious issues faced by modern societies. Contrary to common belief, they fall under public policy rather than individual safeguards and remedies. The phenomenon has the characteristics of an epidemic. Statistically, 25% of women have experienced violence in the family but statistics are just the tip of the iceberg. The latest findings of a sexual abuse survey completed in Poland by the STER Foundation for Equality and Emancipation (Fundacja na Rzecz Równości i Emancypacji STER) reveal that 87% of women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime, 22% have been raped, and 23% report attempted rape.

This is a horrifying picture, isn't it? One in four women in Poland has experienced sexual violence?

A.T.: As a person involved in combating gender-based violence for several decades, I dare say women who have never directly faced gender-based violence are in fact a very tiny minority.

Are there groups that are more vulnerable?

A.T.: Violence is about power relations and inequality and this is why gender-based violence is such a high risk for girls and women from minority groups heavily dependent on government institutions and officials: migrants, asylum seekers, stateless women, ethnic or national minorities, women with disabilities, women with medical conditions, women of pre- and post-reproductive age (young girls and elderly women), unattended girls, institutionalised women and girls (e.g. in psychiatric clinics, prisons, refugee shelters, orphanages), women living in poverty, poorly educated, non-heterosexual (lesbian, bisexual, transgender) etc.

¹ Women's Rights Centre, Feminoteka Foundation, Positive Change Foundation, STER Foundation, Anti-discrimination Education Society, Education Research Institute, Fundamental Rights Agency.

Has anything changed since the launch of the campaign?

A.T.: Yes, it has. I believe the biggest success of the campaign was the qualification of violence against women as a human rights violation. That was in 1993 at a Human Rights Conference in Vienna. It was a breakthrough. Today, I, and many women I talk to in workshops and training sessions, can hardly imagine things were different before.

Anything else?

A.T.: Other major visible changes include the expansion of activists' engagement across the world, building collaborative and information exchange networks, increasing pressure on governments to amend legislation, change enforcement practices and the creation of the necessary frameworks to ensure protection against continued violence. The concept of restraining orders has been adopted in national legislation and applied to the perpetrators of domestic violence. Shelters for victims of violence have been opened. Correction and education programmes have been designed for the perpetrators of violence. All these measures have directly or indirectly resulted from the efforts taken by lawyers and activists. Finally, resources have been allocated to support this cause. They are far from sufficient but are certainly not negligible.

You said you had been involved in combating violence against women for several decades. You may easily be the longest serving and the most consistent person to promote the campaign.

A.T.: I think so. I have made a point of getting involved in the campaign each and every year, and have worked with various organisations and groups that I had the opportunity of forming a close relationship with wherever I happened to live. I was involved in the campaign for the first time in 1999. I worked at the Women's Communities Information Centre known as OŚKa (*pronounce: Oshka*) in Warsaw. OŚKa was committed to promoting the campaign to women's groups. We made presentations about the campaign, we published leaflets and postcards, we published a book about women's rights understood as human rights. One of the issues of our magazine was exclusively dedicated to this topic.

The Women's Rights Centre (Centrum Praw Kobiet) in Warsaw was quite active. The Crisis Intervention Society (Towarzystwo Interwencji Kryzysowej) was a regular contributor, too. It was particularly focused on the challenges faced by female refugees and migrants and was the first organisation to involve men in taking a stance against violence. When I lived in Poznań I worked with the KONSOLA Women's Association (Stowarzyszenie Kobiet KONSOLA). We organised street events, poster campaigns and meetings. There was a time when we were involved with the campaign in the framework of an informal group called Sister Street (Ulica Siostrzana). We have continued as part of Autonomia ever since I established this foundation with Monika Serkowska in 2007.

The campaign was staged in 44 communities in 2016. Who was involved?

A.T.: The campaigns were very local at the beginning, but since 2009 we would be going round training local leaders and engaging with more and more women and men, not only from non-governmental organisations. Today, the campaign attracts quite a large number of teachers, educators, heads of educational establishments, social workers etc. We regularly work with dozens of individuals across Poland. We have implemented activities in about 60 villages, communities and cities to date. In total, training workshops, meetings, sessions, classes, talks and video screenings, conferences, marches, street performance shows and other events were attended by over 6,000 individuals! We reached over 3 million people with our anti-violence commercial spots using electronic media, on-board tram TV etc.

Do you see changes? Particularly in women?

A.T.: Definitely, I do! An increasing number of girls and women have no intention of submitting to discrimination and violence. Workshops such as WenDo help many women realise how many myths and stereotypes have formed around violence such as 'women provoke men to pump up testosterone and rape them' or 'violence is a form of caring'. An increasing number of women realise they have been enmeshed in maintaining a system of oppression and are now breaking free. Women support other women, speak out about the violence they have experienced and show solidarity in fighting against it. They care about educating their children so that they never get trapped in gender roles which produce perpetrators and victims of violence, they demand change in education systems and practices in courts, the police and other institutions.

We have been speaking mainly about women as victims of violence so why the name for the campaign – against gender-based violence?

A.T.: If I remember correctly, the campaign was originally called a 'campaign against violence against women'. This has changed. The language we use to discuss this type of violence has changed, also among feminists. This is not a cosmetic change, it is strategic and it has a bearing on its effectiveness. By speaking of gender-based violence we make a reference to a wider group of individuals vulnerable to violence. We make a distinct statement about the culture and gender roots of the problem. We demonstrate that gender-based violence, i.e. mainly violence against girls and women, is violence that is motivated by prejudice and hatred towards a specific gender, or misogyny. This is the sort of violence that is applied against individuals because of their gender. Over 90% of gender-based violence in all the countries of the world is violence of men and boys against women and girls. Violence motivated by gender prejudice may also affect individuals who are not women but who fail to adhere to the expected and dominant standard of masculinity, those who are 'effeminate' or who otherwise resist gender expectations.

What is the role that men could or should play in such campaigns?

A.T.: I spoke to an Afghan woman living in Poland the other day (she was attending a WenDo workshop) and she said she was surprised to see so little anti-violence effort that actually involved boys and men. Without men taking the responsibility for change we will continue to suffer from violence. It is essential that we engage in violence prevention. Efforts must be made by men, each and every one but especially by those who pass and enforce laws, design budgets and decide on spending, and are responsible for education programmes.

What message would you like to convey to women? What do you say to women you work with or meet in your work?

A.T.: We can be strong, brave and we can show solidarity. Let's not shy away from expressing our disapproval and resistance to injustice and violence. We have the right to say 'enough is enough!' We have the right to go on strike. Let's break free from shame and a sense of guilt. Shame on those who resort to violence. Let us make ourselves and each other strong, let us give strength to boys to make an effort to turn away from the patterns of control and violence against others.

Asked Karolina Szymańska, Stefan Batory Foundation

ICELAND AND GENDER EQUALITY

EQUALITY MADNESS

“I was hugely impressed by the form and manner of creating new legislation, their innovation and the assumptions included. The purpose of mandatory parental leave for both parents was to comply with the child’s right to be taken care of by both parents, and to balance the women’s and men’s labour market opportunities,” says Natalia Sarata from Women’s Space Foundation (Fundacja Przestrzeń Kobiet) talking about her experiences from a study visit in Iceland concerning gender equality policies implemented there.

I visited Iceland for the first time in October 2009, at the beginning of what was later recognised as an economic crisis. I was attending a seminar on parental leave law which Iceland had drafted and implemented. I was hugely impressed by the form and manner of creating new legislation, their innovation and the assumptions included. The purpose of mandatory parental leave for both parents was to comply with the child’s right to be taken care of by both parents, and to balance the women’s and men’s labour market opportunities. Feminist communities had probably been the only ones considering such legislative assumptions in Poland at the time. I couldn’t help wondering whether – in the light of the economic crisis – the gender perspective would remain a criterion considered for the purposes of sound system solutions, or whether the market downturn would push it onto a back burner. In June 2015, during a study visit to Reykjavik organised by the Stefan Batory Foundation as part of the Citizens for Democracy Programme, I was given an opportunity to seek an answer to my question.

The visit focused on the gender equality policies implemented by Iceland at the government, local authority, and non-governmental levels. Representatives of more than ten Polish feminist organisations and institutions active in gender equality joined the visit. Among the representatives we met were those from the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and the Icelandic Women’s Rights Association, and a member of the WOMEN Women of Multiple Ethnicity Network. We were also received in a Shelter for Women and at Stigamot, a support centre for individuals with experiences of sexual violence. We met an activist representing Stelpur Rokka – an organiser of music camps for girls and transgender youth. We visited the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Finance, as well as the Human Rights Bureau of Reykjavik City Hall.

During these meetings, I personally found certain experiences hugely important and inspiring, including the observation that all parties to systemic and local changes (not only social initiative activists) share the belief that gender equality and freedom from discrimination and violence are of paramount importance to society and its development. At the ministries and magistrates’ courts of Reykjavik, the officials who received us used the most important arguments fostering gender equality. At similar meetings held in Poland, such words remain in the domain of feminist activists. In Iceland, gender equality is an undeniable and fundamental assumption, indisputable in confrontations with public officials and requiring no justification. Upon hearing one particular comment by a high-ranking civil servant of the city authorities, contrasting with what I usually hear at my local City Hall in Cracow, I reacted with something akin to incredulity. The Icelandic official firmly declared that equality policies are an obvious responsibility of local

authorities, as discrimination is experienced by many members of the community. “Use the argument when communicating with your own authorities”, she said. (Well, I have).

It was also emphasised in the course of many meetings that social research is a fundamental component of equality-fostering change. Recent data concerning gender-related budgeting results was quoted alongside diagnosed processes involving the migration experience; the consequences of the new gender-related violence prevention programme were compared to statistics over time; the effects of an in-depth assessment of the implementation results for a number of equality projects were presented. As proven by the Icelandic experience, all data, analyses, and credible issue diagnoses – staying in touch with what occurs in society – is of paramount importance to the entire process of legislative solution planning. I believe this is not only due to the fact that the Icelandic population is tiny when compared to Poland (Iceland has an approximate population of 330,000, 122,000 of whom are in Reykjavik), making it relatively simple to extend social research to everyone inhabiting the country. I am deeply convinced that the fundamental purpose is to approach the very serious tasks of community management and the accountability for creating the conditions for a good life in a possibly equal society. Iceland’s progress in equality-fostering action is striking. Nevertheless, local feminist organisations still have a lot to do, which translates into extensive recommendations for the government and local authorities alike. Urgent problems highlighted by local feminist movement activists and persons active in human rights causes include gender-related violence, as well as the circumstances of the disabled, of intersexual individuals, and of migrants. Despite considerable challenges ahead, Iceland remains a place which may well trigger a sense of equality deficit madness, not to mention the conviction that an abyss separates Poland from the “land of ice”. On the other hand, the Icelandic experience may well become a source of hope that change is possible.

Thus, in light of the visit, energy expending seems to be a matter of key importance. Once the majority of (or all) parties acting to support equality recognise the need to counteract discrimination and violence, considerable energy could be saved and used for the purposes of new ideas, more effective activities, and work of merit. Feminist activists are aware of the kind of determination required to bring down the wall of misunderstanding feminist demands. The resistance of decision makers and a lack of political will may lead to a gross waste of social energy and real chance for equality-based reality.

What about my question about the gender equality policies I encountered in 2009? Since 2009, the year of Iceland’s economic crisis, the country has been securely holding on to first place. According to the annual Global Gender Gap Index study: Iceland remains the country with the highest gender equality index in the world (having previously ranked fourth for a long time). Let that be the answer.

By Natalia Sarata, Women’s Space Foundation

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORWAY

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

How is it possible to be effective in engaging and motivating young people – potential local activity participants? How can joint projects be developed with local residents to build a sustainable civic society? Such questions were on the table during each and every meeting organised as part of a five-day study visit of NGO representatives to Oslo and Norwegian organisations supporting children and young people.

The Norwegian Key to Success

It turns out that the answer to the question is not at all intricate. Three issues are of key importance to success in work to support local communities: the simplicity of solutions, co-operation, and passion. However, definitions in themselves are no guarantee of success; they are merely a foundation upon which further action may be developed. The aforementioned simplicity of solutions involves close attention being paid to the needs of local Oslo district residents, and the implementation of projects responding to actual needs thus identified. Co-operation is about joint work by organisations and groups of people affected by a given project. Last but not least, the passion apparent in the work of people representing these organisations. Yes, their work is their passion.

Anyone who has ever had the opportunity to work in the non-governmental sector knows that the effort involved is extremely demanding, with new challenges appearing daily. This is why the visit to the Deichmanske Bibliotek in Oslo's Tøyen district of was so interesting. The manager of this amazing place said, "This place is for people, not only a library." It is indeed a place created with true passion. Its friendly space encourages visitors to spend time there – in a group, alone, to read, to talk, or just to enjoy a break.

This extraordinary library includes space designed exclusively for youngsters – the BIBLO TØYEN – open to children aged 10 to 15 only. The place is a simple response to needs voiced by children precisely of that age as there had been no offer they could take advantage of before. The solution was designed as a follow-up to numerous conversations with children, with such questions as "What do you enjoy?", "What makes you happy?", "How do you spend your free time?" Upon having analysed such conversations, adults decided to create a place which would become more than a library – a place where kids could read books, take part in workshops and meetings, play games, play with friends, or enjoy quiet time. The actual design of BIBLO TØYEN responds to children's needs as well. They helped create the venue. It was built thanks to them. They feel responsible for it, and love visiting it.

This example goes beyond the simple solution of using local space – it has been created jointly with local residents, and in response to their local needs.

The Children's Voice Matters

BIBLO TØYEN is an interesting example of children's participation in organisational activities. Grete Vandvik of Save the Children Norway declares that the key component of getting children involved in projects involves an individual approach – only then is it possible to move to considering children as a broader community. Every child should feel that individual activities are specifically targeting them, that they have been tailored to meet their needs. This is how adults can influence children – and how children's activities affect decisions made by adults.

Engaging and motivating local residents to act and develop local space requires direct contact. It is important to reach all age groups. The simplest way is to organise a meeting at a school, and talk to children and young people. In their attempts to reach local adults, representatives of a number of organisations went to places where people live, work, and spend time every day. Conversations took place at the seats of local authorities, for example, and at kindergartens, or during local events. You need to talk to residents about what community means to them, what they would like to do, what they find important, and what they find interesting.

Doesn't It Seem Simple?

When it comes to co-operation between local and regional authorities and the non-governmental organisations' sector, it takes place at a number of levels. The SALTO prevention programme is a very interesting example; it involves Oslo the authorities co-operating with the Norwegian police with the goal of preventing crime and alcohol and drug addiction in the children's and young people's community in the capital city. The target group includes young people as well as Oslo city authority officials, the police, schools, parents, and leaders of organisations acting to support children and young people. Their mutual and frequently complementary activities are vital to project success. This is why multi-dimensional co-operation with varying stakeholder groups remains hugely important.

As the Norwegians are wont to emphasise, success requires constant listening and talking. Why? Because the target group keeps changing and shifting incessantly, alongside its membership, needs, and experience. What was operational several years ago may no longer be applicable today. It is important that local residents have a sense of being able to have an impact on their environment, and form the space they inhabit. As often as not, such circumstances help identify social leaders – persons willing to assume responsibility for the creation and efficient operation of the given local community. One such organisation, the Tøyen Sportsklubb, operates a dedicated leadership programme – the Tøyenakademiet – for people aged 15 to 23. Leadership school graduates are charged with the task of becoming the proliferators of activities benefitting the local community, and initiating work at a local sports club or with other organisations.

In the course of our meetings, we learned how to become successful in engaging citizens in social activities. It might seem that the Norwegian model is universal and would thus be applicable anywhere. However, Norwegian non-governmental organisations do suffer from the occasional problem with reaching certain social groups – such as people aged 29 to 40 – and are therefore continuously searching for new solutions. Moreover, Norwegian social activists are constantly emphasising that patience is required – the effects are by no means immediate. It does happen that the entire process takes over ten years, yielding long-term results only.

The study visit brought numerous benefits – Poland has become an increasingly concerned listener to the potential beneficiaries of the project; needs are analysed in dialogue with future project recipients. This is why it was so important to be able to take a glance at how others operate. This is how we can become better at our own activities back home. It goes without saying that Polish non-governmental organisations are created by people of passion. Yet we lack well-developed co-operation between organisations, and a good practice sharing mechanism of the kind encountered in Oslo. In Norway, numerous programmes are implemented at the government level. This actually translates into “forced” co-operation at a number of levels. The Norwegians are calm when talking about the threats and opportunities carried by their projects – they are simply satisfied with their activities.

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ABOUT CITIZENS FOR DEMOCRACY PROGRAMME	1
PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	7
ARTICLES ABOUT THE PROGRAMME	29



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