

**2017
ANNUAL REPORT**



FEDERATION FOR WOMEN AND FAMILY PLANNING

WARSAW, 2018

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SUMMARY OF 2017

The year 2017 was yet another one dominated by the fight for reproductive rights and the consolidation of social forces. One of the most prominent events on the NGO scene and an initiative of the Federation, was the establishment of the Great Coalition for Equality and Choice, an informal initiative bringing together almost a hundred civic society organizations and informal groups that work for women's rights, especially their reproductive rights. The Black Protest and its success strengthened many organizations and groups, which invested much time and energy in the second round of collecting signatures under the "Save Women 2017" civic draft bill. The Federation's office was one of the permanent signature collecting places and eventually we delivered around 6,000 signatures to the Committee. Overall, almost 500,000 Polish citizens have signed the draft bill, twice as many as in the previous year, which constituted an enormous success for the pro-choice circles. Never before, had such a vast number of signatures in favor of liberalizing the abortion law managed to be collected. The Federation participated in conducting a widespread educational and informational campaign, thanks to which the Polish society received thorough and comprehensive knowledge on reproductive rights, as well as on the 1993 Abortion Act and its consequences for Polish women. As a result, the rate of the social acceptance for a better access to abortion has visibly risen. The newest polls paint a consistent picture – 70-80 percent of Poles are in favor of either relaxing the anti-abortion law, or of retaining the status quo.

However, that does not change the fact that the current political situation complicates any activities for the protection of reproductive rights and better quality services. The access to contraception is constantly restricted by the abuse of conscientious objection, or the reintroduction of prescriptions for the morning-after pill. At the same time, the standards of perinatal care are being breached and disregarded, and the lack of education and awareness in sexual health results in a rapid increase in sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, gonorrhea, or syphilis (until recently thought to have been eradicated). Women are denied prescriptions for contraception, prenatal testing, or the right to legal abortion, as the consequences of the abuse of the conscience clause. The clause is also illegally used by pharmacists, who simultaneously actively work on an official sanctioning of this right for their group. A sad finale can occur in 2018. The Analysis Office of the Sejm has issued a positive opinion on the proposal to introduce the conscience clause for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and pharmacy owners. That means that some kinds of medications, the use of which is contrary to the teachings of the Church, can soon disappear from pharmacies.

Schools were not spared when it comes to indoctrination. The new core curriculum in Family Life Education is based on Catholic values, the Church's teachings, the traditional division of gender roles, and homophobia, not on medical knowledge. We are witnessing another stages of language appropriation in the name of the fundamentalist struggle to deprive women of basic rights and dignity. Anti-abortion art contests for children and youth are organized at schools. In the streets of many Polish cities manipulative banners with a deceitful message of reasons for abortion and ways of performing it have appeared. Thanks to the data obtained from CSIOZ, the Federation exposed the lie that the majority of fetal impairment abortions are cases of fetuses with Down syndrome.

The decision-makers officially support the „Stop Abortion” draft bill, which in practice would introduce a total ban on abortion. They repeat the deceitful and manipulative arguments of the anti-choice groups. The Stop Abortion committee has collected over 800,000 signatures thanks to broad support from the Episcopate and churches all over Poland, priests encouraging people to sign the bill after their masses, or from an army of several thousand volunteers roaming the streets. The Polish government has also applied to the UN Human Rights Committee with a recommendation to restrict the right to abortion, remove the criminalization of women, and restore the death penalty. This fundamentalist approach stands in contradiction with many international documents signed and ratified by Poland. It violates women’s right to life and breaks the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment. The most prominent officials in the country engage in an anti-women campaign. The President of Poland calls to ignore the regulations of the Istanbul Convention (The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence), and the Ministry of Justice has cut funds for the anti-violence NGOs. Instances of this kind are numerous, since the backlash and the imposition of Catholic morality is present in every aspect of sexual and reproductive rights in Poland.

This political climate does not discourage many civic organizations, groups, or individuals engaged in the struggle for health and reproductive rights. In July a group of doctors established “Doctors for Women”, an informal network that helps women obtain a prescription for emergency contraception free of charge or for a nominal fee. Various groups are active both in the social media and in real life, reacting to the rights violations, informing about the law in force, and mobilizing the pro-choice community.

2017 was important for the Federation also for another reason. At the Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka Foundation’s awards gala the Federation was awarded with the Super Equality Glasses. As the jury put it – “for 25 years of organizing the fight for reproductive rights, social education, and the support of all women’s protests in 2016”. Apart from the Federation, the Super Equality Glasses were also received by the Center of Women’s Rights and Ewa Dabrowska-Szulc. We are thankful for this distinction and promise to work unwaveringly until reproductive rights in Poland are fully implemented and respected.

LEGAL ACTIVITIES

Legal Assistance Team

The Legal Assistance Team has been operating by the Federation since 2008. Last year, the Team actively monitored the Polish legal system, by issuing numerous statements, document templates, calls for action, and legal opinions:

- legal opinion on the petition submitted to the parliament by the Polish Federation of Pro-Life Movements;
- letter to the Petition Committee on the above-mentioned petition;
- the Federation’s statement on the ellaOne access restriction
- letter to the Ministry of Education on sexuality education
- complaint letter template on the pharmacy’s refusal to realize a prescription
- commentary on the judgement of the Supreme Court of 23 Feb 2017
- statement on the restriction of access to emergency contraception
- appeal to the President to veto the bill that restricts access to emergency contraception
- statement on the conscience clause

- statement on the manipulative anti-choice banners
- complaint letter template on the manipulative anti-choice banners
- notification letter template on disorderly conduct during anti-choice demonstrations
- legal opinion on the “Stop Abortion” civic committee draft bill
- statement on the false and slanderous fragments an article published by the Stop Abortion Committee
- letter templates in case of the Polish Post retaining mail
- statement concerning a bill on conscious motherhood proposed by the opposition party .Nowoczesna
- statement on the update of the Alternative Report to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, along with proposed problematic questions
- letter to the Members of Parliament on support for the “Save Women” draft bill on women’s rights and conscious parenthood and rejection of the “Stop Abortion” draft bill
- letter to a group of a hundred MPs on withdrawing the application submitted to the Constitutional Tribunal to check the constitutionality of one of the three reasons for abortion provided by the current law (serious and irreversible impairment of the fetus or its life threatening and incurable disease)

The legal positions and the Federation’s commentaries to the legal changes introduced by the parliament and the government administration were published on the Civic Observatory on Democracy’s website.

ADVOCACY

Activities within the UN framework

34th session of the Human Rights Council

During the March session in Geneva the Federation’s director presented our statement on the report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. In her speech, Ms. Kacpura emphasized the fact that “we are currently witnessing the growing trend of states and other actors using culture and religion as justification for violence”. She also urged states “to provide for and protect the separation of religion and state in order to allow those with different world views, minorities, and women to exercise their equal cultural rights.”

Read the Federation’s [statement](#).

Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

Jointly with the Sexual Rights Initiative, the “Birth with Dignity” Foundation, and the “Our Stork” Association for Infertility Treatment and Adoption Support, the Federation submitted a **report on the state of reproductive rights observance in Poland** to the UN Human Rights Council within the UPR. The report covered the issues of abortion, contraception access, IVF treatment, sexuality education, family planning counseling, and standards of perinatal care.

It also included results of monitoring processes conducted by the Federation, description of the imperfect legal status, instances of women’s rights violations and the corresponding actions of public authorities.

Read the UPR [report](#).

On 9 May 2017 the Polish government faced the UN Human Rights Council to report on the observance of human rights in Poland and the implementation of i.a. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Polish delegation referred to the recommendations of the working groups presenting facts selectively, ipso facto painting an image of a state providing access to abortion, contraception, and sexuality education. Therefore, the Federation, together with the Amnesty International Poland, the Trans-fusion Foundation, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Campaign Against Homophobia, Lambda Warsaw, and the Polish Association of Antidiscriminatory Law, took part in commenting the Polish government's report.

On 21-22 September, during the 36th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, reports from the 14th cycle of the Universal Periodic Reviews in human rights were accepted. During the debate on Poland, Krystyna Kacpura, the Federation's Director, delivered two statements on behalf of the Federation ([read](#)) and the Sexual Rights Initiative ([read](#)) that summed up the institutional violations of sexual and reproductive rights by the Polish state.

The report and the statements met with attention from the UN member countries taking part in the Review. These states recommended Poland to introduce changes in the field of health and sexual and reproductive rights protection.

The Polish delegation accepted the recommendations on reproductive rights, abortion access, and sexuality education. The Federation has no certainty however, whether the Polish authorities will implement them.

The video from the debate on Poland can be accessed [here](#).

On 25 September a **joint statement on the access to safe and legal abortion globally** was delivered in the Human Rights Council. It featured signatures of 285 organizations from all over the world – including the Federation for Women and Family Planning, ASTRA Network, and ASTRA Youth. They urged the HRC to oppose the human rights violations ensuing from the criminalization of abortion. The signatories expect governments all over the world to respect, protect, and realize the right to safe and legal pregnancy termination services and postabortion care. They also bring to mind the scale of the problem – 22 millions of life- and health-threatening abortions – and its social and financial costs.

The statement along with the list of signatories can be accessed [here](#).

[61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women](#)

The 61st session of the CSW took place on 13-24 March 2017 in the United Nations Headquarters in New York. This year's session's priority theme was "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work". The Federation was represented by the coordinator of ASTRA Network, who, together with representatives of women's organizations from all over the world, advocated for a resolution that would meet all aspects of women's empowerment and their human rights. Eventually, statements about the necessity of implementing reproductive rights and the role of sexual and reproductive health in achieving the full women's empowerment, which has a direct effect on their economic situation, were included in the final document. More information on the Commission on the Status of Women [here](#).

On March, 23 the Federation's representative was invited by the International Women's Health Coalition to be among the panelists in a discussion held at the US Congress. The speakers included Representative Jan Schakovsky (D-IL), and representatives of the IWHC, Whole Women's Health, and Center for Reproductive Rights. The purpose of the event was to discuss the activities and the mobilization in favor of reproductive rights in the face of growing political radicalisms on both sides of the ocean. The Federation's representative presented the situation of Polish women and their reproductive rights, as well as the background of the Black Protest. Other panelists focused on the situation of women in the United States under the presidency of Donald Trump, and also on the similarities between women's situation in the U.S. and in Poland in the light of the national movement and the Women's March on Washington.

Human Rights Committee

The Committee published the Draft General Comment on Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and opened the call for comments from research institutions, academics, NGOs, Member States, and UN organizations and agencies. The document referred to the different aspects of the right to life – abortion, euthanasia, suicide, self-defense, death penalty, genocide – at the same time specifying ways for the Member States to protect it. A total number of 172 statements were submitted to be analyzed by the 18-person Committee to agree on a final version of the General Comment before its second reading. The Federation and the ASTRA Network also participated in the consultation process by signing a [statement prepared by the Center for Reproductive Rights](#). Its authors highlighted the fact that the right to life is inseparably connected with the freedom from discrimination, torture, and inhuman and degrading treatment, and the right to privacy and equality before the law.

Referring to the World Health Organization data on the scale of abortions performed in dangerous conditions, the signatories of the CRR statement advocate for the liberalization of the abortion law as a result of women's right to life and autonomy in deciding about their bodies.

In the document we can find a call for the removal of barriers in the termination of pregnancy services (such as the conscience clause, consent of third parties, unjustified delays). The key importance of sexual and reproductive health for the right to life was highlighted, in order to substantiate the necessity to provide perinatal care, access to contraception, information, and gynecological consultation, especially in emergency situations.

The Federation also commented on the controversial statement on restricting the right to abortion, removing the ban to criminalize women, and the restoration of death penalty that the Polish government submitted to the HRC. [More here](#) (in Polish).

European Union

Informational visit to the European Commission “NGOs working for women's rights”

On 29-31 March the Federation's lawyer participated in a study tour to Brussels organized by the EC Representation in Poland. Together with other women's rights organizations she took part in meetings on reproductive rights, wage inequality, violence against women, and human trafficking. The civic organizations representatives met with Madi Sharma (member of the European Economic and Social Committee, Monika Ladmanova (adviser of Commissioner Vera Jourova), Gundi Gadesmann (Director of Communications in the office of the European Ombudsman), European Women's Lobby and

Amnesty International representatives (Irene Rosales and Berber Biala-Hettinga respectively), Szymon Pogorzelski and Aneta Sobotka (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion official, responsible for the European Social Fund), Piotr Szymański (Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology), dr Katarzyna Cuadrat-Grzybowska (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs), and Polish feminist organizations based in Brussels.

Meeting with the EP Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality delegation

On 23 May the Federation's representatives took part in a meeting with the delegation of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. The Committee, concerned with the situation of women's rights not being respected in Poland, spent a few days investigating the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and the state of observance of reproductive rights. After a number of meetings with representatives of the non-governmental sector, the FEMM delegation met with the Polish government officials. During the meeting the issue of ensuring full access to reproductive rights was brought up. The Committee representatives emphasized the fact that restricting access to legal abortion constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights.

European petition

The Federation got involved in supporting a petition for the right to abortion in Europe. It was an initiative of numerous European associations and movements that set up the "Abortion, women decide!" committee. The signatories of the petition advocate for the international unification of regulations on the deadline of a legal abortion service and for the total depenalization of pregnancy termination. The appeal, signed by almost 24,000 people, was submitted to the European Parliament on 28 September, which marks the International Safe Abortion Day, after the Brussels march of solidarity with European women. Access the document [here](#) (in Polish).

Meeting with the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights

On 5 December the Federation chaired a panel on reproductive rights during the Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muižnieks' meeting with the Polish NGOs that work for women's rights. The main topics discussed during the meeting included violence against women and domestic violence, reproductive rights, and equality and anti-discriminatory policies. The Commissioner also presented his most recent report - "Women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in Europe". The Federation's representatives provided a detailed account of the state of observance of sexual and reproductive rights in Poland, including the fact that the Polish state does not execute decisions of the European Court of Human Rights.

Great Coalition for Equality and Choice

Last year, the Federation supported many newly established women's and girls' initiatives by exchanging information and by mutual promotion. The Great Coalition for Equality and Choice, which had its official inauguration on 12 April, is an informal initiative of NGOs and informal groups advocating for the liberalization of the current abortion law and working for the increase of social awareness in this field. The Coalition's mission is based on solidarity - it joins the forces of Polish pro-women organizations and initiatives in order to lead a comprehensive fight for women's human rights, comprehensive sexuality education, good standards of perinatal care, reproductive rights, and the total elimination of violence against women.

Selected activities of the Coalition:

- **inaugural press conference and panel discussion** (12.04.2017) Watch the [video](#).
- **signing the petition** to object to the Ordo Iuris institute receiving the consultative status with ECOSOC - „[No to Ordo Iuris in the UN](#)” (in Polish)
- **“MY #BLACKPROTEST” literary contest** for the best short story about personal experiences of the 2016 Black Protest. The winning entries were chosen by a jury consisting of Kinga Dunin, Agnieszka Graff, Krystyna Kacpura, Paulina Reiter, and Kazimiera Szczuka, and later published by the Federation. Access the English version of the publication [here](#).
- **appeal to the President** to veto the publicly funded health care services bill, and some other bills that restrict access to contraception, thus violating the reproductive rights of Polish women. Access the document [here](#) (in Polish).
- **the “Free Polish women - Free Poland. All for one, one for all” demonstration** (24.09.2017) to support the “Save Women” civic initiative draft bill, join the International Safe Abortion Day, and the World Alliance for Citizen Participation “Let’s shout our rights!” campaign ([CIVICUS](#)). 2,500 people gathered in front of the Polish parliament to demand reproductive rights for all, especially the access to safe and legal abortion, comprehensive sexuality education, perinatal care, and regulations around the conscience clause. Representatives of organizations, initiatives, and political parties that were involved in collecting signatures under the “Save Women” draft, as well as special guests - actresses Maja Ostaszewska and Katarzyna Kwiatkowska - took to the stage to address the crowd and encourage to fight for fundamental women’s rights, such as the freedom of choice. The event was widely publicized by the media, including the mainstream outlets, and the three video recordings of the demonstration were watched over 131,000 times. More [here](#) (in Polish).
- **objection to the application** submitted to the Constitutional Tribunal to check the constitutionality of one of the three reasons for abortion provided by the current law (serious and irreversible impairment of the fetus or its life threatening and incurable disease). Access the document [here](#) (in Polish).
- letter to the Members of Parliament on **support for the “Save Women” draft bill** on women’s rights and conscious parenthood **and rejection of the “Stop Abortion” draft bill**.

Coalition for Equal Opportunities

Last year, the Federation, as one of the member organizations of the Coalition, actively engaged in its legal activities, supported its statements, participated in meetings of the Coalition and its working groups. Selected activities:

- [statement concerning attacks on the Ombudsman](#) (in Polish)
- statement concerning the update of the Alternative Report to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, along with proposed problematic questions
- participation of the Coalition’s representatives, including the Federation, in the Second Regional Meeting of Anti-Discrimination Coalitions "United for Equality: Strategizing and Communicating for Social Change. NGOs’ Achievements, Challenges, and Opportunities for Action" in Yerevan, 27.11-1.12.2017

I Have the Right Coalition

Both the Federation and the Ponton Group of Sex Educators are members of the Coalition. Its purpose is to provide the general public with access to reliable information on legal methods of contraception, with particular emphasis on emergency contraception, relying on scientific evidence and legal regulations in force in Poland and the EU.

Representatives of medical circles (sexologists, gynecologists) and non-governmental organizations working for women's rights, as well as lawyers and sexuality educators, were invited to become members of the Coalition.

Main activities:

- **19.01, The "Women say Enough!" debate** with the participation of a wide range of experts in health and reproductive rights. The discussion met with great interest from the media, as it tackled various aspects of women's rights, including: life without violence (including economic violence), birth with dignity, public funding of IVF, access to legal abortion, to contraception, and to the upbringing and education of children in accordance to one's conscience, the right to medical treatment and saving own life. During the meeting participants signed the [declaration of cooperation for the protection of women's rights in Poland](#).
- **3.03, The "Their bans, our rights" debate** on the problem of the non-observance of women's rights in Poland with the participation of: social activists, healthcare, law, and sociology experts, journalists and publicists, and Members of Parliament and non-parliamentary politicians. The issues discussed included: emergency contraception, childbirth and perinatal care, abortion, IVF, the Istanbul Convention, sexuality education, and the Blue Line. The Federation's lawyer talked about the abuse and misuse of conscientious objection by doctors and presented specific proposals to change regulations on the conscience clause, and on the access to abortion and contraception. [Video recording of the conference](#).

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY

Polish Abortion Project

On 11-12 January representatives of the Federation and the ASTRA Youth network traveled to Brussels within the Polish Abortion Project conducted by CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, ASTRA Network, ASTRA Youth, and YouAct. They met with Members of the European Parliament (Mary Honeyball, Lynn Boylan, Malin Björk, Marie Arena), attended an IPPF, EPF, and Women Deliver training on abortion advocacy in the EU, and an official launch of Elena Zacharenko's analytical study for policy makers on opposition to sexual and reproductive health and rights in Europe entitled "Perspectives on anti-choice lobbying in Europe".

"Health systems in practice" lecture for students from the University in Copenhagen and the Network on Humanitarian Action

On 14 February two representatives of the Federation conducted a lecture organized by the University of Warsaw and NoHA. They presented the Federation's activity and the current state of access to sexuality education, contraception and prenatal testing, as well as the legal aspects of reproductive health services. The lecture met with great interest, with the sections on abortion and law generating the most emotions and questions.

Meeting of the interministerial Team on the European Court of Human Rights

During the meeting, which was attended by representatives of all ministries, the police force and the prison service, as well as the director of the Council of Europe's Office in Warsaw, the Federation's lawyer spoke about the three judgements of the ECHR, highlighting the ineffectiveness in executing them.

International Convening on Conscientious Objection

On 2 August in Montevideo, Uruguay the Federation's representatives along with 50 other experts from 20 countries of Africa, both Americas, and Europe participated in the first international meeting on conscientious objection in relation to abortion. The organizers, Mujer y Salud en Uruguay and the International Women's Health Coalition, invited decision-makers, academics, health and law experts, and feminist activists. They jointly agreed that the objection to provide voluntary abortion services on moral or religious grounds is the main obstacle to legal abortion and threatens the lives of women. The final document stated that the refusal to perform legal abortion harms women all over the world and must be halted. Read the report [here](#).

9th Nationwide Congress of Women

In September, the Federation traveled to Poznań to participate in the 9th Congress of Women (9-10.09.2017) held under the slogan "Alert for women's rights". On the first day, we organized a discussion panel entitled "I get pregnant whenever I want to - the legal and the practical threats to reproductive rights". It was an opportunity to talk about the realization of the right to conscious motherhood in Poland and in Europe. The discussion was preceded by a screening of the "I'm calling, because..." play, which summarizes the realities of working at the Federation's Helpline and the interventions in cases of women patients' rights violations. Then the Federation's experts outlined the threats to reproductive rights in legal regulations and in practice. They also discussed the access to modern contraception and legal abortion, as well as the consequences of the lack of comprehensive sexuality education. As a comparison, they presented the threats to reproductive rights in Eastern and Central Europe, and examples of good practices in the countries of Western Europe. The panel was organized thanks to the support of the Polish Representation of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. More [here](#).

Debate: „The nationalists and abortion narratives from the perspective of word ethics”

On 26 October, a representative of the Federation spoke during a debate with representatives of other NGOs and the academia around a book entitled „The nationalists and abortion narratives from the perspective of word ethics”. The participants discussed the issue of how to communicate ethically, especially in case of different views, and how to prevent the degradation of language of the public debate. Read [a report](#).

Conference: "The role of NGOs in establishing and monitoring standards of human rights and EU fundamental rights in terms of sexual and reproductive health - experiences, conclusions, perspectives"

How can non-governmental organizations strengthen and monitor human rights standards, including the reproductive rights? This question was the starting point of a conference that aimed to inspire NGOs, lawyers, and individuals to engage in advocacy with the use of the international law mechanisms. The event, held on 14 November, was organized by the Federation with the support of

the Warsaw office of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, and was based on the knowledge and experience of experts from various organizations, who defined the strengths and weaknesses of such mechanisms as the Universal Periodic Review within the UN Human Rights Council, the procedures of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, an individual complaint to the Human Rights Committee, and the special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council.

The experts also presented the, crucial from the perspective of sexual and reproductive rights, elements of the EU law, judgements of the Court of Justice of the European Union, and examples of advocacy and monitoring of the implementation of recommendations from treaty bodies in the activity of the Ombudsman.

The Federation had a chance to show the ways it uses international law instruments in its everyday work.

Conference materials, recording, photos, articles can be found [here](#).

Debate: "How to talk about abortion"

On 4 December, at the Congress of Secularity, the Federation's director participated in a debate about the abortion discourse. Prof. Paweł Łuków presented the bioethical aspect of abortion, and the Federation's director spoke about the use of language as a weapon in the war for truth about abortion and the recommended ways of communication and reacting to hateful attacks from anti-choicers. More [here](#).

Participation in national and international conferences

- Seminary "The Black Protest - perspectives of social movements and theories of resistance" in the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, 8.02.2017
- "How to react to the restriction of access to reproductive rights in practice" - the lawyer's duty hour in the Women's Commune organized by the Warsaw Gals for Gals, Warsaw, 7.03.2017
- International Women's Strike, organized by the Nationwide Women's Strike, Warsaw, 8.03.2017
- "Advocacy in Practice" training prior to the 50th session of the Commission on Population and Development, New York, 30.03-7.04.2017
- Regional Congress of Women in Koszalin, 22.04.2017
- Regional Congress of Women in Kołobrzeg, 23.04.2017
- "EU gender equality law" seminary in the Academy of European Law, Trier, 4-5.05.2017
- "On the rights of women patients without anesthesia" conference, The Supreme Bar Council, Wrocław, 27.05.2017
- "Representation of the Republic of Poland before the European Court of Human Rights - over two decades of experience of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" conference of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 30.05.2017
- The 2017 EuroNGOs Conference "Re:Frame. Promoting SRHR in a time of growing populism", Brussels, 27-28.09.2017
- 2nd Women's Congress of the Podkarpackie Region, Rzeszów, 7-8.10.2017
- Femmes Solidaires Congress, Paris, 11-14.10.2017

- FiLiA 2017 Conference, London, 14-15.10.2017
- 3rd Congress of Polish Women in Austria, Vienna, 21.10.2017
- “Euro-Med. Women’s Rights Civil Society” Conference organized by the Euro-Med Feminist Initiative, Cairo, 22-23.11.2017 ([read more](#))
- Second Regional Meeting of Anti-Discrimination Coalitions "United for Equality: Strategizing and Communicating for Social Change. NGOs’ Achievements, Challenges, and Opportunities for Action", The Eurasia Program and the Human Rights Initiative with the support of Open Society Foundations, Yerevan, 27.11-1.12.2017
- “Retrogression and Reproductive Rights in Central and Eastern Europe” debate and workshop organized by the Centre for Reproductive Rights, Center for Education, Counseling and Research, Zagreb, 29-30.11.2017
- “Fetal Rights” and Women’s Citizenship: Implications of the New Gender Ideology” seminary, Marrakesh, 28.11-2.12.2017

COUNSELING AND SUPPORT FOR WOMEN

Helpline

2017 marked the 26th anniversary of the Helpline (+48 22 635 93 92). On this occasion, the Federation strengthened the promotional activities around it, e.g. on violence-related websites and in psychological and health clinics. Experts working at the Helpline - sexuality educators, psychologist, lawyer, and gynecologist - held over 1200 conversations this past year. They provided advice on contraception, gynecology and pregnancy, psychology, law, sexuality education, and abortion. The callers most frequently asked about the available methods of contraception, possibilities of getting pregnant, gynecological examinations, psychosexual orientation. Relatively many calls regarded sexuality education (sexual initiation, masturbation, talking with partners about sex) and psychology (relationships, communication, support). As many as fifty percent of callers were men.

Matronages

Matronage over the "A hundred years of women's voice" project

The Federation took the matronage over a series of debates held under the slogan "A hundred years of women's voice". The purpose of the events was to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Polish women’s suffrage in November 2018. They evolved around the questions of how Polish women used this possibility and how it affected the change of their social position.

Matronage over the Women's March in Katowice

The Federation took the matronage over the event, which was held on 29 October by a local group of Young Greens. The purpose of the march was to remind citizens of Silesia how important women and their rights are. [More here](#).

Matronage over the feminist photography contest

The Federation took matronage over the PhotoChallenge 2017 photography contest for students for the best photo with the caption “Girl Power”. The contest was organized by Jak&Jil and aimed to promote debate and reflection on topics important for the public. It stimulates students’ engagement

in projects that use photography as the main form of social, political, and cultural expression. The winner received €2,700, and the equivalent amount was donated to a chosen civic organization. [More here.](#)

CAMPAIGNS AND PROMOTIONS

Communication strategy

The strategy was based on the following assumptions: the policy of “open door”; strengthening the image of an expert, opinion-forming organization, active in the international arena, equipped with tools for legal intervention. The website underwent thorough refurbishment of the graphic layout and was enhanced with new sections such as the Library, which is supposed to be a source of knowledge on various aspects of sexual and reproductive rights. The look of the “I Have the Right” Bulletin was also modernized, and it is now distributed via the Freshmail system, which allows for its integration with the Federation's other channels.

Social media

The Federation's Facebook page was the most actively used communication channel. Apart from news on the implementation of reproductive rights and the Federation's activities, a number of informational and educational campaigns were published. Last year, the number of likes increased by almost thirty percent - currently the Federation's page has over 16,600 fans. Most of them are 25-34 (36 percent) and 35-44 (22 percent) year olds. Besides Facebook, the Federation posts regularly on Twitter and YouTube.

[Facebook page](#), [Twitter profile](#), [YouTube channel](#)

Website

In a week, the Federation website is visited by around 2,000 people. The most popular were articles on abortion and the Federation's statements. The information were published both in Polish and English. Halfway through the year, the website changed its structure and layout, thanks to which it is more intuitive, graphically attractive and improves the visibility of various activities of the Federation, as well as news articles on reproductive rights in Poland and the world. Another new feature is the Library section, ran in cooperation with the Równość.info website. Reports, articles, legal acts and documents, media, data and statistics, and glossary that are published there, appear simultaneously on both sites, increasing the number of potential readers. The Federation's website also allows for signing up for the bulletin, contacting the office, and learning ways to get involved in SRHR advocacy. Visit the Federation's [website in English](#).

Meme campaigns

Various meme campaigns were very popular in the social media:

- “Facts on emergency contraception”
- „Facts on sexuality education” (in cooperation with Warsaw Gals for Gals),
- „Facts on abortion”
- „#StopManipulation” on fetal defects and abortion on the grounds of a serious and irreversible impairment of the fetus

All of them can be accessed in the gallery of the Federation's [FB page](#).

A detailed concept of a series of educational videos as part of the "You Have the Right" campaign - about the access to abortion, the conscience clause, the criminalization for reproductive health actions, and the women patient's rights.

Educational campaign in favor of access to legal abortion (www.terminacjaciazy.pl)

The website terminacjaciazy.pl devoted to the rights of patients who decide to terminate their pregnancy has been active since July 2016. The aim of the campaign was to describe the three situations when the Polish law allows for abortion, and the procedures that go with it.

#16ProChoiceTips campaign

Within the annual international anti-violence campaign "16 Days" the Federation got involved in activities aiming to raise awareness on the stigmatization of abortion and ways to counteract it. Because the stigmatization of women who have terminated a pregnancy or those who are planning to do it, is often accompanied by a form of violence. Therefore, the purpose of a joint social media action under the slogan "16 Days of Activism" was to spread practical advice for women close to us, and for people from the public sphere such as politicians, religious leaders, or representatives of the administration of justice. The simple message directed at i.a. parents, employers, doctors, friends, shows how to treat women with respect and support them in their decisions. Posts and memes in English, Spanish, French, Polish, and Swahili were published with the hashtag #16ProChoiceTips on Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels. [See the Polish memes.](#)

PUBLISHING ACTIVITY

„MY #BLACKPROTEST”

The Federation published a collection of 13 stories that had been awarded in a literary contest organized by the Great Coalition for Equality and Choice. The winning entries were chosen by a Jury consisting of Kinga Dunin, Agnieszka Graff, Krystyna Kacpura, Paulina Reiter, and Kazimiera Szczuka. Kinga Dunin and Kazimiera Szczuka also authored the introduction.

The stories in this volume describe contemporary Poland mostly from the perspective of medium-size cities and small towns. The authors, one of whom is a man, present the moment when they questioned the ordinary scheme of everyday life, the moment when the personal became political. Rebellion was born. Poland as seen by the contributors to this book is, above all, a land of hypocrisy. The Black Protest was a unique time when this hypocrisy was unmasked and rejected. The truth was finally stated – shouted out, in fact – about what it means to live one's life in a country chosen by religious fundamentalists for an experimental battleground, the first stage of their effort to "re-Christianize Europe".

The official launch of the English version of the publication took place during the annual EuroNGOs conference in Brussels on 28 September 2017, which also marks the International Safe Abortion Day. Access the publication [here](#).

"I Have the Right" Bulletin

Each month close to 1,000 people receive the "I Have the Right" Bulletin, which has been issued by the Federation constantly for 16 years. In 2017 ten issues of the bulletin were published. They tackled: the

state of implementation of reproductive rights in Poland and in the world, the Federation's activity, medical and legal knowledge issues, and reproductive rights literature recommendations. Each issue of the bulletin is promoted in the social media and on the ngo.pl website.

Access the [archived issues](#) of the Bulletin.

Informational and educational publications

Due to great interest in reproductive rights, the Federation decided to update and reprint the leaflet that refers to the two specific cases of limiting access to reproductive rights - the refusal to perform legal abortion and to issue a prescription for contraception.

Access the leaflet [here](#).

FEDERATION IN THE MEDIA

It was a busy year for the Federation. In 2017 our representatives were present in the Polish and international media outlets numerous times. The most popular topic, in the context of the proposed changes to the 1993 abortion act (the restrictive "Stop Abortion" and the liberalizing "Save Women") were issues related to pregnancy termination. A considerable amount of interest was also devoted to emergency contraception and the conscience clause.

International media

December:

Krystyna Kacpura about the introduction of the anti-abortion act in an Italian article entitled "Poland will be saved by women"

<http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2017/11/30/news/la-polonia-salvata-dalle-donne-1.315238>

November:

Coverage on the battle for the reproductive rights of Polish women, contexts of the Black Protest, and the gradual restriction of the access to abortion, (emergency) contraception, abortion pills, with reference to Polish activists and organizations, including the Federation

https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/nov/30/how-polands-far-right-government-is-pushing-abortion-underground?CMP=tw_t_gu

October:

The Federation's director about the Black Protest for the Swedish Association of of Sexual Education

[http://www.rfsu.se/sv/Sex--relationer/Sexpodden/Sexpodden/RFSU-dokumentar-Den-svarta-mandagen-/](http://www.rfsu.se/sv/Sex--relationer/Sexpodden/Sexpodden/RFSU-dokumentar-Den-svarta-mandagen/)

The Federation's Promotion Coordinator speaks to a German magazine Edition F. about the Black Protests

<https://editionf.com/abtreibung-polen-czarny-protest>

July:

The Turkish media about the restriction of access to emergency contraception in Poland with the commentary of the Federation's lawyer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMHKnBtpkkl>

May:

POLITICO about the Polish protests.

<http://www.politico.eu/article/women-in-black-fight-poland-health-rights-bill-law-and-justice/>

The Federation's commentary about the implementation of the "For Life" bill

<http://www.euronews.com/2017/05/05/poland-s-right-to-life-bill-raises-the-question-what-kind-of-life>

March:

The history of the Polish fight for reproductive rights as told to the Guardian by the Federation's director.

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/08/feminist-battle-women-activists-campaigns?CMP=share_btn_fb

Polish media

December:

<http://nieplodnirazem.pl/boje-sie-ze-18-najwiekszych-lekow-kobiet-w-ciazy-rozwiej-wszystkie-swoje-obawy/9/>

<https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/polska-i-swiat-antykoncepcja-hormonalna-zwieksza-ryzyko-raka-piersi,797182.html>

http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,22731058,1-5-tys-zl-dla-gimnazjalistow-za-obronę-zycia-od-poczecia.html?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=SM&utm_campaign=FB_Warszawa_Wyborcza

November:

<https://mamzdanie.radiozet.pl/tematy/zwierzece-kampanie-ministerstwa-zdrowia-marnowanie-pieniedzy>

<https://oko.press/farmaceuci-katolicy-forsuja-sejmie-klauzule-sumienia-dla-aptekarzy-maja-poparcie-biura-analiz-sejmowych/>

<http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,22702341,ordo-iuris-ujawni-swoich-darczyncow.html>

<http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/7,115167,22685848,poczta-polska-niedostarcza-przesylek-z-lekami-do-aborcji-farmakologicznej.html>

<http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,22626050,trzy-lata-za-aborcje.html>

<https://fakty.tvn24.pl/ogladaj-online,60/kontrowersje-wokol-kampanii-ministerstwa-zdrowia-z-krolikami,788489.html>

October:

http://www.polsatnews.pl/wideo-program/rozmowa-polityczna-krystyna-kacpura-marian-pilka_6454771/

<http://wyborcza.pl/TylkoZdrowie/7,137474,22532443,koniec-badan-prenatalnych.html>

<https://www.tvn24.pl/polska-i-swiat,33,m/polska-i-swiat-polski-rzad-pisze-do-onz-w-sprawie-aborcji,781942.html>

<http://www.chcemybycrodzicami.pl/klauzula-sumienia-a-prawa-reprodukcyjne/>

<http://www.polskieradio.pl/9/301/Artykul/1874542,Czarny-wtorek-Demonstracje-i-zbiorka-podpisow-w-calej-Polsce>

September:

http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,22441919,ordo-iuris-lewicowi-aktywisci-skolonizowali-struktury-onz.html?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=SM&utm_campaign=FB_Gazeta_Wyborcza

<https://strajk.eu/w-obronie-praw-kobiet-pod-sejmem-mysle-czuje-decyduje/>

<http://www.polskieradio.pl/9/302/Artykul/1859160,Czy-w-Polsce-jest-problem-z-dostepem-do-antykoncepcji>

<https://oko.press/kobieta-pije-ciazy-rzecznik-dziecka-zamknac-ja-szpitalu-prawnicy-absurdalne-nieskuteczne/>

<http://www.dzienniklodzki.pl/strona-kobiet/tu-zyje/a/wiecej-aborcji-na-nfz-w-lodzkich-szpitalach-na-nielegalna-aborcje-do-niemiec-slowacji-i-austrii,12466578/>

<http://wyborcza.pl/10,82983,22336604,stacja-warszawa-gdy-lekarz-odmawia-przepisania-recepty-na-antykoncepcje.html>

<http://nieplodnirazem.pl/leczenie-nieplodnosci-a-kodeks-pracy-sprawdz-na-co-mozesz-liczyc/>

<http://www.gs24.pl/strona-kobiet/tu-zyje/a/ratujmy-kobiety-w-obronie-praw-zeby-bylo-jak-w-wiekszosci-krajow-europy-wideo-zdjecia,12422816/>

August:

<http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/1716062,1,lekarze-kobietom-czyli-walka-o-antykoncepcje-trwa.read>

<http://wyborcza.pl/TylkoZdrowie/7,137474,22218278,dymisja-za-aborcyjina-mentalnosc.html>

July:

<https://oko.press/aborcja-przyczyna-raka-ministerstwo-zdrowia-wolnosc-wypowiedzi/>

<http://nieplodnirazem.pl/prawa-kobiet-po-poronieniu-sprawdz-co-ci-przysluguje-oraz-co-powinnas-zrobic/>

April:

<https://oko.press/o-dostep-antykoncepcji-polki-powalcza-unii-europejskiej-nowacka-polsce-nawet-rozmowy-o-prawach-kobiet/>

<http://krytykapolityczna.pl/swiat/bedzie-europejska-inicjatywa-ustawodawcza-na-rzecz-praw-i-godnosci-kobiet>

<http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/1700152,1,nie-wszyscy-ginekologzy-chca-wypisywac-srodki-antykonieczne.read>

<http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kolejna-antyaborcyjna-inicjatywa-obywatelska-federa-kobiety-znow-wyjda-na-ulice-6108763542251137a>

March:

<http://wyborcza.pl/7,75248,21514226,klauzula-sumienia-w-prywatnej-przychodni-lekarz-nie-wypisal.html>

<http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,21466037,dzien-kobiet-rzad-z-nas-kpi-rzad-nas-policzkuje-musimy-solidarnie.html>

<http://www.tvn24.pl/czarno-na-bialym,42,m/czarno-na-bialym-rodzic-po-lekarsku,721099.html>

<http://www.tvn24.pl/czarno-na-bialym,42,m/minister-zadziwil,720056.html>

February:

<https://parenting.pl/prof-chazan-opracuje-standardy-opieki-okoloporodowej>

<https://fakty.tvn24.pl/oglada-online,60/minister-zdrowia-odmowilby-tabletki-dzien-po-ofierze-gwaltu,717972.html>

<http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,21378802,ellaone-tylko-na-recepte-rzad-utrudnia-dostep-do-awaryjnej.html>

<https://fakty.tvn24.pl/oglada-online,60/to-przywrocenie-normalnosci-minister-zdrowia-broni-swojej-decyzji,716135.html>

http://fakty.interia.pl/polska/news-federacja-na-rzecz-kobiet-przeciwko-ograniczaniu-dostepu-do_nId,2353888

<http://wp.tv/i,dziejesie-1830,mid,1997909,cid,2303743,klip.html?ticaid=61920e>

<http://www.dziennikwschodni.pl/lublin/poronilas-albo-urodzilas-martwe-dziecko-dostaniesz-ankiete-czy-chcesz-porozmawiac-z-osoba-duchowna,n,1000194019.html>

<https://oko.press/antykonieczna-gorsza-handlu-ludzi-mi-men-tlumaczy-wybor-ekspertki-wychowania-zycia-rodzinie/>

BOARD

Four board meetings were held last year. They concerned the following issues: the office's report from 2016, current events, projects implemented by the Federation, and the organization of the general meeting of the Federation's members. The meeting was held in two parts - the reporting part on 12 October 2017, and the one devoted to developing a strategic plan for the next five years and completing the board line-up on 24 November 2017.

In the reporting period the Board had an active role in the realization of the Federation's program and mission. Its representatives participated in the conferences, meetings and seminars organized by the office, as well as in conferences organized by other pro-women and human rights organizations.

SPONSORS

- Open Society Foundation (Women's Rights Program)
- International Women's Health Coalition

- Center for Reproductive Rights
- Global Fund for Women
- Sigrid Rausing Trust
- CIVICUS
- Rosa Luxemburg Foundation
- Mama Cash
- Open Society Institute - Budapest

PLANS FOR 2018

In 2018 the Federation is going to focus on:

Strengthening the coalition of pro-choice women organizations and initiatives. At the Coalition's convention we are going to talk about the strategy of actions and communication and will establish the mode of internal cooperation. The Federation will continue to serve as the Coalition's secretariat, ensuring the exchange of information, networking and creating synergy.

Legal activities and monitoring the implementation of the current law and instant reaction to any proposed changes in the area of women's rights, with particular emphasis on reproductive rights. Therefore, we will carry on and expand the cooperation with the Federation's Legal Assistance Team, promote statements and legal opinions and complaints templates, promote the assistance provided by the Federation in terms of patient's rights, as all as intervene in cases of these rights being violated. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Family Planning Act, the Federation plans to conduct a special meme campaign focusing on the effects of this law being in force.

Building an image of the organization as an expert in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights. We are going to widely distribute our materials and inform the general public about crucial events and publications in the field of SRHR, and try to frequently appear in the media. We are going to actively support new women initiatives and organizations through providing education and assistance in implementing their projects.

Expanding and strengthening the current ways of helping and supporting women, i.a. through the Helpline, the "I Have the Right" Bulletin, workshops, debates, and meetings.

Publishing activity: brochures and leaflets, handbooks, and reports concerning the implementation of reproductive rights and the social and health effects of the current law. We are going to target the "I Have the Right" Bulletin, as an important source of information and a forum of discussion, at new groups of women.

Participation in and co-organizing demonstrations, protest actions, public debates;

Activity in the United Nations and European Parliament we are going to actively use the opportunity to cooperate with the UN as an organization with the ECOSOC status, through sending out our

statements, periodic reports, and direct participation in important conferences and debates on health and reproductive rights of women on both the European and the international forum.

These are just the selected activities that the Federation is going to undertake in 2018. Many actions will be taken spontaneously, according to the current situation in the field of reproductive health and rights.



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