

FEDERA



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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PŁEKO
KOSIŁ



TO JEST
WOTNA

BOG WAS
ROZLIKZY
ZA NASZE

GNOMIE
PAMIĘTAJ, ŻE
HANKE M. TEŻ
POKONAŁ



BLIŹNIEGO
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RAGE, BREAKTHROUGH, AND HOPE. SUMMARY OF 2023

A lot happened in 2023 – from the daily fight for every person who sought support from us, to the victory of FEDERA’s lawyers in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. And all this in the shadow of elections and changes on the political scene that affect the lives of women in Poland, and therefore also our work.

Last year, abortion was one of the main topics discussed in public space. In June, the whole country was reeling with the shocking news of the death of Dorota from Bochnia, who died due to the Polish anti-abortion law and the actions of the medical staff of the hospital in Nowy Targ. Shortly afterwards, the stories of Joanna from Krakow and Ola from Warsaw, who survived their encounter with the system but were treated like criminals, were also publicized. Joanna was tried to be strip searched and was ordered to undress while bleeding after the abortion. Ola was interrogated when she was in hospital after a spontaneous miscarriage. At the same time, the prosecutor’s office was searching the septic tank of her home in search of the fetus. Joanna and Ola survived, but the trauma that the state inflicted on them is with them to this day. Both are under the care of FEDERA, and our lawyers support them at every step of the court proceedings.

In 2023, we also fought to improve the quality of prenatal care and the availability of contraception. We educated during workshops, webinars, conferences, meetings, and music festivals all over Poland. We acted on the national and international arenas, calling for a change in the Polish anti-abortion law and presenting further cases of human rights violations in our country. The news of FEDERA’s great victory reached us in December, when the European Court of Human Rights issued a judgment in the case conducted in Strasbourg by our lawyers. The 2020 judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal of Poland, which banned abortion on the grounds of fetal defects, was finally officially recognized as unlawful and therefore non-binding.

Last September, the election season began and will last until June 2024. During the October parliamentary elections campaign, we did our best ensure that demands regarding reproductive rights are highlighted in the election committees’ programs. The stakes were high -- for the

first time in years there was a chance to topple the right-wing government and restore the dignity of people living in Poland. Years of pent-up rage could finally be released. Thanks to numerous pro-turnout campaigns targeted at women, including the campaign organized by FEDERA and the Grand Coalition for Equality and Choice, women made the long-awaited political change happen. There was a breakthrough that gave us hope for more progress. However, this does not mean that we can rest. Electoral promises are not enough, today we need actual, measurable results. That is why we are entering 2024 with new plans and projects. We are going to keep an eye on the new authorities and demand solutions that will really improve the situation of women in the country. As always, we are here for every person who contacts the FEDERA Foundation. We will support access to abortion regardless of the reason, we will help you obtain emergency contraception, and we will find you a competent gynecologist. Because we are #AlwaysOnYourSide.

NATIONAL ADVOCACY

Antonina Lewandowska

Threat to woman's mental health officially recognized as grounds for a public hospital abortion

One of FEDERA's biggest advocacy victories of 2023 was the recognition of the so-called "psychiatric grounds" as meeting the statutory conditions for termination of pregnancy in a Polish hospital.

The "psychiatric grounds" is a solution developed by FEDERA that allows the termination of a pregnancy that threatens a woman's mental health. Our Legal Team stated that since the 1993 Act on Family Planning mentions the "threat to life of health" of the pregnant person as one of the grounds to obtain the so-called legal abortion, a certificate from a psychiatrist that the patient's mental health is endangered because of the pregnancy, and therefore it should be terminated is a document that entitles one to an abortion in a public hospital. This is a key solution, especially since in 2020 the pseudo-Constitutional Tribunal banned terminating embryopathological pregnancies.

This interpretation of the law was vigorously fought against – contrary to the international definition of health – by fundamentalist organizations. Despite this, our stance was supported first by the Patient's Rights Ombudsman, and then by the Minister of Health.

The recognition of the "psychiatric grounds" as meeting the statutory conditions for a public hospital abortion is a huge success. Today, it is the only way to terminate a abnormally developing pregnancy which has a negative impact on the pregnant person's health. Thanks to our efforts, many women have the freedom of choice and an alternative to going abroad.

Women wronged by the system and the fight for their rights Unfortunately, 2023 was also a year of huge scandals and trauma for more women who experienced the effects of the cruel anti-abortion law.

The case of Joanna from Kraków

Joanna, feeling that she was experiencing a mental crisis, contacted her psychiatrist to ask for help. During the conversation, she said that she had terminated her pregnancy a week earlier. The psychiatrist called the emergency number and, violating medical confidentiality, gave the operator information about Joanna's abortion. As a result, on the way to the hospital for a gynecological examination, Joanna was escorted by a group of policemen who tried to force her to undergo a strip search. A recording appeared online showing Joanna crying and begging the police to leave her alone. However, without the woman's knowledge, they searched her luggage and illegally confiscated her laptop and mobile phone.

FEDERA provided Joanna with free legal support. Kamila Ferenc, as her attorney, filed a complaint to the court against the seizure of the woman's belongings. The court found it unlawful, finding there was no basis to believe that the phone and laptop could constitute evidence, as there was no suspicion of third-party involvement in the case. Moreover, the Patient's Rights Ombudsman found that Joanna's rights had been violated, both by the police and the doctor who notified the services. With the help of attorney Ferenc, the woman will fight for compensation from the State Treasury.

Case of Ola from Warsaw

In June 2022, Ola was in the 18th week of a wanted pregnancy. While caring for her young child at home, she suffered a miscarriage. Bleeding, she rushed to the bathroom. She was trying prevent her baby from seeing the fetus, so she decided to cut the umbilical cord over the toilet. Later, an ambulance called to the scene took Ola to hospital.

In the meantime, someone informed the prosecutor's office about the situation, and immediately law enforcement officials were sent to Ola's house. While the woman was recovering in hospital, the septic tank in her house was pumped out in order to look for the dead fetus.

Ola's case is a story of the authorities' anti-abortion paranoia, and shows that even the current draconian law is not enough for them. The woman had a spontaneous miscarriage, but even if the abortion had occurred, Ola would not have committed a crime. No one in Poland can be punished

for terminating their own pregnancy when the fetus is unable to survive on its own.

Aftermath of Dorota from Bochnia's death

Last May, Poland was shocked by the news of the death of another woman who was not provided with access to a life-saving abortion. Dorota from Bochnia, separated from her loved ones, for several days was dying in a hospital in Nowy Targ.

FEDERA participated in a press conference organized by Action Democracy in front of the hospital in Nowy Targ, as well as and in a special meeting of the parliamentary group for reproductive rights, during which we recounted stories of women who are harmed every day in gynecological wards of Polish hospitals.

Parliamentary elections

The election campaign was a time of intense advocacy work for FEDERA. We contacted people running for parliamentary seats inquiring about their attitude towards abortion rights. We also conducted meetings, provided information, and sent letters to all political parties and coalitions asking for support for the decriminalization of abortion.

Moreover, FEDERA's Great Coalition for Equality and Choice created an SRHR-related questionnaire that election committees, as well as individual candidates were encouraged to fill out. All answers, containing valuable information for voters, were later published. The Coalition also ran a nationwide pro-turnout campaign called "Bierze Cię WK_RW?" ("Are you pis*ed off?"), which aimed to mobilize women and their allies to vote in the October elections.

Abortion guide for hospitals

We prepared a set of documents that constitute the legal basis for performing abortions in Polish hospitals and respecting the rights of patients. The "abortion guide" includes:

- letter from FEDERA's president;
- decision of the Patient's Rights Ombudsman regarding termination of pregnancy due to a threat to mental health;
- position of the Bioethics Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences no. 1/2023 on the protection of life and health of pregnant women;
- position no. 55/23/P-IX of the Presidium of the Supreme Medical Council;
- the position of FEDERA's Legal Team regarding the requests for access to public information sent to hospitals by the anti-choice Life and Family Foundation;
- FEDERA's leaflet for medical staff.

Our guides were sent both via traditional mail and via e-mail to all hospitals with gynecological wards contracted by the National Health Fund. In response, some facilities invited our Legal Team to conduct a training on sexual and reproductive rights in Poland for their medical staff.

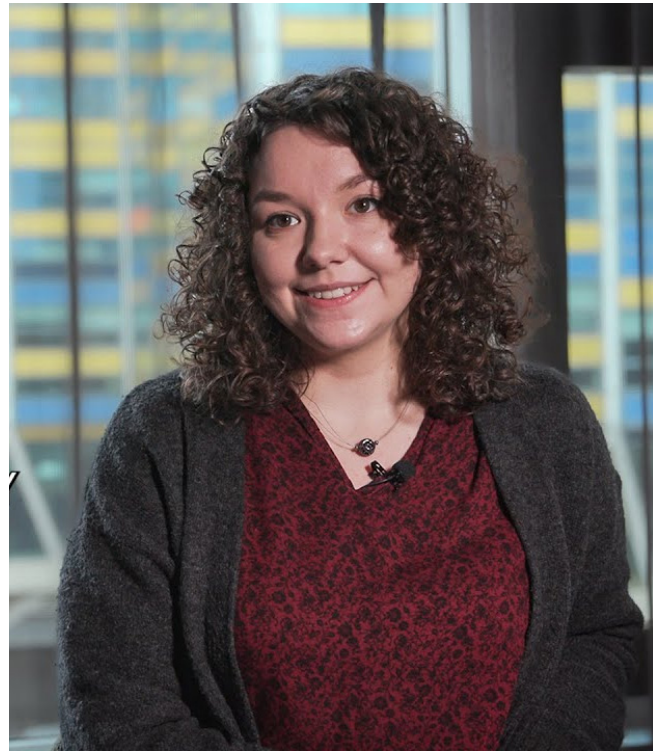
Women's stories and testimonies campaign

We decided to create a place that would collect the testimonies of all those women who, just because they live in Poland, could not decide about their lives and bodies, or were victims of institutional violence or neglect. Fortunately, many of these people found out about FEDERA and benefited from our support and help. The HISTORIE KOBIEC campaign and the accompanying website give a voice to everyone who wants to share their experiences with the Polish anti-abortion law, the lack of access to contraception, discrimination, humiliation, or even violence in doctor's offices or hospital wards.

Public appearances and expertise

Members of the FEDERA team took part in many public events, such as the debate on the rule of law organized by the National Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations on the anniversary of the June 4, 1989 elections, and the annual Poland of the Future Campus. During the summer, we set up our stand during the Open'er Festival, the Pol'and'Rock Festival, and the Warsaw Pride.

Our comments appeared many times in all major Polish newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations, as well as foreign and international media outlets (BBC, Le Monde, Deutsche Welle, Die Zeit, Al Jazeera, France 1, Reuters, and others).



Antonina Lewandowska in "HagueTalks portrait", September 28, 2023



Kamila Ferenc in "Facts after facts" TVN24, September 8, 2023.

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Mateusz Biezuński

As a result of the 15 October parliamentary elections the former democratic opposition took power. This change created an opportunity to improve the situation in the field of sexual and reproductive rights in Poland and to increase the possibilities of cooperation between international bodies and representatives of the Polish authorities.

In 2023, FEDERA continued its advocacy activities at the European Union and the United Nations. We also developed cooperation with other organizations in Europe and around the world.

Similar to 2022, last year, the situation of refugee women from Ukraine in Poland was an important element of our advocacy efforts.

United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva

52nd session (March).

In our statement on the need to legalize and decriminalize abortion, we mentioned the following cases: the conviction of Justyna Wydrzyńska for assisting in an abortion, the refusal of legal abortion to a person with intellectual disabilities, and the inspection of officers of the Central Anticorruption Bureau in a gynecologist's office in Szczecin. The second statement concerned the results of Poland's fourth Universal Periodic Review in relation to reproductive and sexual rights. The statement results from the report on the state of non-implementation of reproductive and sexual rights in Poland submitted by FEDERA and the Sexual Rights Initiative to the Human Rights Council for the fourth UPR, which took place in November 2022.

53rd session (June)

In 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and migration visited Poland. A report was prepared from the visit and discussed at the 53rd session. In our statement, we referred to the report's fragment on the consequences of the restrictive anti-abortion law for refugee women and the recommendation to the Polish government in this regard. We called for basic SRH care to be provided to women, including those in detention. We also drew attention to the discrimination in the treatment of women refugees from Ukraine compared to female migrants on the border between Poland and Belarus.

54th session (September)

Just before the October parliamentary elections in Poland, FEDERA's international advocacy coordinator delivered a statement that reminded about the importance of decriminalization and liberalization of abortion in Poland. The publicly known cases of women, who were bothered by the police after a miscarriage or because of taking abortion pills show how restrictive laws encourage abuse by the authorities and that Poland's persistent violations of international human rights standards in access to safe abortion create unbearable living conditions for women in our country.

Other UN agencies

FEDERA participated in the premiere of the new publication of the World Health Organization, "Medical care for women who have suffered violence in intimate relationships and sexual violence. Clinical guide", which took place at the University of Warsaw. The guide is useful both for doctors who want to educate themselves to best support and provide care for patients, and for patients who will know what kind of support they can expect from medical staff (including emotional and systemic support), the scope of care they are entitled to, as well as how a post-sexual violence examination should look like (e.g. forensic examination).



Urszula Grycuk at the UN Human Rights Council, March 2023

Council of Europe

V.M. v. Poland

FEDERA, together with the Center for Reproductive Rights, submitted an amicus curiae opinion to the European Court of Human Rights in the case of V.M. v. Poland (application no. 40002/22). The complaint concerns an Armenian citizen who had a miscarriage in the Center for Foreigners in Biała Podlaska while waiting for her application for asylum in Poland to be considered. In the legal opinion presented to the Court, we describe the obligations of states to guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health services for detained pregnant women under international law, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

European Union

“Care in Crisis” report

In June, in the European Parliament, the FEDERA Foundation and the Feminoteka Foundation, together with the Center for Reproductive Rights and partner organizations from Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary, presented the report “Care in Crisis: Failures to guarantee the sexual and reproductive health and rights of refugees from Ukraine in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia”.

FEDERA and Feminoteka took part in the in the portion of the research related to Poland for the report. The report’s conclusions are based on over 80 semi-structured interviews with refugees, experts, an individuals and organizations supporting refugees in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, conducted between July 2022 and April 2023. The report shows that many Ukrainian refugee women who need access to health services such as contraception, abortion care, and perinatal care are at risk of harmful delay, anxiety and fear, financial burden, institutional racism, and substandard care, which has direct consequences for their health and well-being.

During the event, a representative of our Foundation presented recommendations, the implementation of which would significantly improve the situation of refugee women.

Debate on Ukrainian refugees’ access to reproductive and sexual health and rights

In October, a European Parliament plenary debate on the situation of refugee women from Ukraine was held. The discussion focused on the serious barriers that Ukrainian refugees face in some Member States when they need sexual and reproductive health care. FEDERA was represented by the President of the Foundation, Krystyna Kacpura.



Krystyna Kacpura in the European Parliament, October 17, 2023

LEGAL ACTIVITIES

Kamila Ferenc, Justyna Faszczka

Strategic litigation

In 2023, FEDERA's Legal Team submitted four complaints to the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of Polish women regarding the lack of access to abortion in Poland for embryopathological reasons.

Last year, the European Court of Human Rights also issued a judgment in the case of *M.L. v. Poland* (complaint no. 40119/21), in which the Complainant was represented by lawyers associated with the Foundation: Kamila Ferenc and Agata Bzdyń. The case concerned a Polish woman who was prevented from having access to an abortion despite documented fetal defects. [More here.](#)

So far, the Tribunal has communicated five more analogous cases in which letters were exchanged with the Polish government. We are currently waiting for the Court's judgments in these cases.

The Legal Team also submitted nine complaints to the Ombudsman for Patients' Rights and objections to the Medical Commission operating at the Ombudsman for Patients' Rights. The Ombudsman issued decisions stating the violation of patients' rights in matters regarding access to health services in the form of termination of pregnancy in case of a threat to mental health (RzPP-DPR-WPZ.431.362.2021.PS of March 13, 2023, 1 RzPP-DPW-WPI.431.626.2023 of November 10, 2023, 2 RzPP-DPW-WPII.431.3715.2023 of December 22, 2023). The decisions issued by the Commissioner as a result of the activities of the Legal Team also concerned the lack of appropriate treatment (conservative, surgical) of ectopic pregnancy (RzPP-DPR-WPZ.433.18.2023 of March 27, 2023) and the failure to provide the patient with accessible and understandable information about the need to perform invasive diagnostics (RzPP-DPW-WPI.431.612.2023 of December 21, 2023).

In 2023, attorney Kamila Ferenc legally represented Joanna from Kraków, whose case shocked the public opinion. Joanna informed her psychiatrist about her recent abortion. The doctor called the police and Joanna was taken to the hospital for a gynecological exam. The policemen forced the woman to undress, do squats, and cough, and Joanna's phone and computer were confiscated. Attorney Kamila Ferenc took numerous legal steps, including filing a complaint with the Patient's Rights Ombudsman, who eventually confirmed that Joanna's rights had been

violated. In 2023, attorney Ferenc also provided legal representation to Aleksandra, in whose case, after a natural miscarriage, the prosecutor ordered the septic tank on the property to be pumped out, looking for signs of assistance in an abortion.

Open letters, legal opinions, positions

In 2023, the Foundation and its Legal Team issued numerous positions, open letters, and legal opinions. Among others:

- A guide to statutory abortion, which was sent to hospitals providing public health services in the field of gynecology, perinatal care, and termination of pregnancy;
- Comment on the criminal charges brought against Dr. Maria Kubisa;
- An amicus curiae brief filed with the Center for Reproductive Rights in the case of *V.M. v. Poland* (application no. 40002/22);
- Letter to political committees taking part in the parliamentary elections regarding support for the decriminalization of abortion;
- An amicus curiae in the case of Justyna Wydrzyńska.

Counseling and interventions

The Legal Team provided free legal advice on medical law, access to health care services, social security, and criminal law in the context of reproductive health protection. The team also intervened in public hospitals in matters regarding patients' rights to terminate their pregnancies. In 2023, we provided free legal assistance to 66 people.

Trainings and workshops

FEDERA's Legal Team conducted four training sessions for medical staff on the applicable law in Poland regarding the provision of health services in the area of reproductive health, in particular termination of pregnancy and the conscience clause.

In addition, the Legal Team conducted ten training sessions on reproductive health and patient's rights regulations for refugee women from Ukraine.

Internal documents

In 2023, FEDERA adopted numerous regulations and procedures. Some of them were required by law, and some are intended to additionally support the Foundation's activities in the future.

The anti-mobbing and anti-discrimination policy emphasizes the absolute prohibition of mobbing and discrimination, including sexual harassment, within the Foundation. It also establishes a procedure for submitting reports of mobbing and discrimination and a procedure to follow in the event of receiving such a report.

The remote work regulations were adopted in connection with legal changes in the Labor Code. From April 2022, the Foundation adopted a hybrid mode of operation, under which employees can work remotely for part of the week. The Regulations specify the rules of cooperation outside the Foundation's office to ensure the effectiveness of our activities under the new rules.

The Code of Ethics is a formal expression of the values and principles that guide the Foundation in its work and the compliance it expects from its staff.

The Anti-Sexual Abuse Policy: Protection against Sexual Harassment and Abuse, Sexual Violence and Child Abuse is intended to protect people who come into contact with the Foundation from harm resulting from the actions of the Foundation or its staff. The document refers to preventing, reporting and responding to all reports and concerns regarding possible cases of harassment, sexual abuse, sexual violence, as well as child abuse in connection with the Foundation's activities.

The Standard Operating Procedures for Complaints and Feedback outline the procedures for submitting and managing reports regarding the activities of the Foundation or its staff. We have opened dedicated channels for submitting reports and sensitive reports (including reports regarding possible sexual abuse and corruption on the part of the Foundation's staff). A Report Coordinator (for the purpose of handling reports) and a Safeguarding Focal Point (for the purpose of dealing with sensitive reports) have been established.

The work regulations comprehensively define the rules of work at FEDERA, including the rights and obligations of the Foundation and its employees. It is fully adapted to applicable labor law regulations.

In 2023, the Council of the Foundation for Women and Family Planning also adopted a new Statute of the Foundation, corresponding to the activities and challenges the Foundation will face in the coming years.

Establishing internal policies and procedures is important, but not sufficient to achieve the desired results. For this reason, in 2023, the Foundation's staff was trained, among others, in the field of mobbing and discrimination and how

to counteract these phenomena, as well as in the policies and procedures applicable at the Foundation.

EDUCATION AND COUNSELING

Marcelina Kurzyk, Aleksandra Magryta

Helpline

FEDERA has been operating the Helpline continuously since November 12, 1991.

In August, a pharmacist joined the group of regular experts providing advice (psychologists, sex educators, gynecologists).

In 2023, experts on duty from Monday to Friday from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. held nearly 1,200 conversations. The majority of callers were women – 64.5%. Men constituted 35.2% and people outside the gender binary 0.3%. 89.4% of the callers were adults, teenagers accounted for 10.3%, and children for 0.3% of the callers.

Topics discussed and their percentage in the total number of calls:

PREGNANCY	39,1%
SEXUALITY	23,9%
PSYCHOLOGY	20,8%
HEALTH	19,4%
CONTRACEPTION	15,7%
RELATIONSHIPS	8%
OTHER	6,3%
LGBTQ+	3,2%
VIOLENCE	2,1%
LEGAL ISSUES	0,9%

Online counseling

Every day, we also answer e-mails sent to info@federa.org.pl mailbox, which is our mailbox dedicated to inquiries about abortion and contraception. Advice related to medical issues is provided by our gynecologists via ginekologzki@federa.org.pl.

In 2023, over 75% of the questions addressed to us concerned the procedure in the event of an unwanted pregnancy. In total, we responded to over 2,000 e-mails.

Educational and informational publications

„From the magic of youth to the power of maturity”

„From the magic of youth to the power of maturity”

Taking care of your health, understanding the functions of your body, and knowing what to expect at different stages of life are crucial to maintaining good physical and mental condition. In addition, knowledge on sexual and reproductive health help identify possible problems quicker and use specialized assistance more effectively. “From the magic of youth to the power of maturity” is a response to the dynamic development of medicine, social changes, and the growing demand for up-to-date information provided in an accessible form.



“Plan B in a pill. On emergency contraception”

The brochure discusses various methods of emergency contraception, including the “day after” pills available on the Polish market.

Brochure for Ukrainian refugees

The publication contains key information on medical services in the field of reproductive health in Poland and a database of contacts for adequate legal, medical, and state assistance. The brochure was published in Polish and Ukrainian.



Leaflets

- on access to abortion
- on access to contraception
- for doctors

WenDo workshops

From March to November, thanks to the support of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, 6 two-day WenDo assertiveness and self-defense workshops were held in FEDERA's Warsaw office.

In total, 228 people signed up, but only 65 could take part, as there was a limit of 12 people per workshop (a group larger than that makes it impossible for participants to benefit fully.) The youngest participant was 20 years old and the oldest was 55.



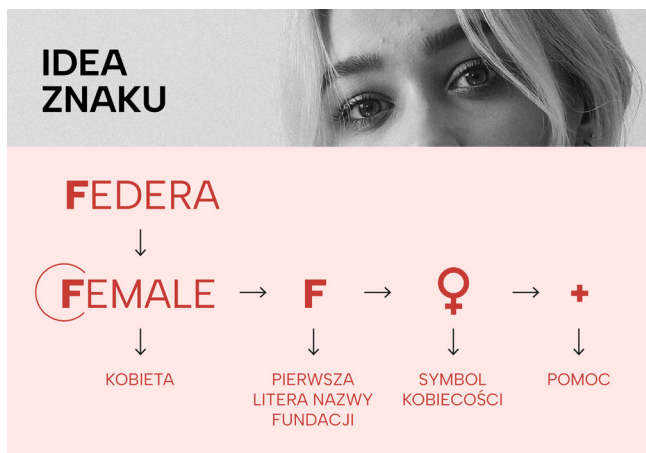
SOME Post presenting the Foundation's printed materials, November 2023



WENDO workshops at the Foundation's headquarters

PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

Julia Karwan–Jastrzębska



A fragment of the press release about rebranding prepared by the LOTNA agency

Rebranding

The year 2023 was particularly important for the Foundation's image – in April we unveiled FEDERA's new visual identity and communication strategy created by the LOTNA Agency. In the following months, the project was implemented, both in the content presented on social media, the website and in printed materials.

Excerpt from LOTNA's project description: "People are to play the main role in the Foundation's visual and verbal identity. Human emotions, human problems, actions, dreams and everyday life. Successes and failures. FEDERA deals with these human issues and they will be the main element of the brand's message. The main color of the brand is strong red – whose main task is to attract attention, stimulate action and inspire. Red combined with strong typography and emotions expressed in the key visual constitute the strength of the brand's message. The counterbalance to this strong mixture is a supporting color – delicate pink – a joyful color, associated with femininity and care, whose task is to calm communication."

In the marketing nomenclature, the Foundation's profile is defined as a:

- sage – intelligent, with expert knowledge and experience, precise, offering accurate advice,
- caregiver – empathetic, offering care to those around, preventing threats and unfavorable situations.

The new logo was created by combining a pictogram representing the female gender with a cross, associated with providing help, including medical assistance. The slogan

"Always on Your Side" was chosen as FEDERA's slogan, but it is also a leading theme in communication with our online followers – no matter what, FEDERA is always on women's side.

Communication

The FEDERA Foundation runs the federa.org.pl website and is present on social media: Facebook, Instagram, X, and YouTube. The published content is divided into:

- recurring – promoting our counseling offer,
- symbolic – created in the context of anniversaries and the like,
- advocacy – familiarizing followers with the Foundation's current activities,
- media – informing about press articles mentioning FEDERA, team members' media appearances and interviews,
- topical – in response to current events, statements by politicians and the like.

Collaborations

FEDERA collaborated online content with the PONTON Group, the Great Coalition for Equality and Choice, SEXEDPL, and the Feminoteka Foundation. Our content was shared by other organizations, politicians and political parties, as well as women's rights activists.

During "16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence", together with the PONTON Group, the Towrd Dialoge Foundation, the Autonomia Foundation, the Polish Migration Forum, and SEXEDPL, FEDERA participated in the CARE International campaign on informed consent. The campaign, which aimed to promote the concept of consent in the context of sexual relations, took place on social media and outdoors and included content in Polish, as well as Ukrainian.

Furthermore, FEDERA was invited to collaborate with SENSU.pl on creating a collection of unique feminist pins. The store allocates the entire profit from the pin sales as a donation to our Foundation.

THE PONTON GROUP.

SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Katarzyna Banasiak–Marszałek, Marcelina Kurzyk

Education

Workshops

After several years of difficulties caused by the pandemic and the campaign against sexual education, it is time for a positive change. Despite pressure from education superintendents, proposed projects limiting young people's access to classes conducted by non-governmental organizations and the activities of the Minister of Education, the number of workshops conducted last year exceeded the wildest expectations. We were invited by, among others: public schools, community and private schools, self-organized groups of parents, orphanages, foundations supporting youth, correctional facilities, organizations supporting refugees, groups of young mothers, scientific circles and non-governmental organizations. PONTON sex educators conducted 46 classes for over 900 people in various cities and towns across Poland. Participation in all meetings was free of charge, and the content was carefully adapted to the needs of a given group.

Thematic scope of youth workshops conducted by the PONTON Group:

- Puberty, changes taking place in the body
- Mental health (how to take care of it, how to deal with environmental pressure, where to seek help)
- Fertility (menstrual cycle, erection, pre-ejaculation, ejaculation, lust)
- Fertilization (what does it involve and in what situations is it possible)
- Sex drive (what is it and is it the same for everyone)
- Masturbation – what is worth knowing (does everyone masturbate, is it harmful, are there any standards)
- Relationships (how to build healthy relationships based on assertiveness, consent to sex, setting boundaries)
- Online contacts (safety, rules, grooming, sexting)
- Sexual orientation (what is it, types, where to seek support)
- Gender identity (what is it, types, where to seek support)
- Discussion of the external and internal genitalia
- What is hymen and the construct of “virginity”

- Sexual initiation – what does it mean for whom, what is it, how can you prepare for it, how not to succumb to peer pressure, how to make your own decision in this matter, how to assertively communicate your needs
- Sexual rights as human rights – discussion on sample stories, assessment of the characters' attitudes, comparison of the situation with the law in force in Poland
- Contraception – discussion of methods and means and their advantages and disadvantages, effectiveness, availability
- Sexually transmitted infections and how to protect yourself

During workshops for the parents the following issues are discussed:

- How and when to talk to children about sexuality and what kind of vocabulary to use,
- Where to get reliable knowledge on sexuality,
- What is worth knowing about human psychosexual development as a parent.

Online live broadcasts

- How to support transgender people and be their ally?
- Psychosexual education – when to start?
- IUDs
- Breast cancer prevention
- Cervical cancer prevention
- “Kegel muscles” – busting myths

Events

- Stands at Rozkosz Festiwal, Open'er Festival, and Pol'n'Rock Festival.
- Participation in “Child Rights Situation Analysis” meetings organized by Save the Children;
- Participation in meetings in the Senate of the Republic of Poland;
- FEDERA x PONTON stand at the Polska Przyszłości Campus;
- Stand at the TEDx Sopot SWPS conference.



PONTON group at Open'er Festival, July 2023.

Counseling

Online

PONTON received 544 inquiries via e-mail and social media channels (excluding messages with the same content sent multiple times).

Youth	59,2%
Adults	24,1%
Children	0,2%
Women	77%
Men	23,1%
Other	0,6%
First-time asker	74,4%
Frequent asker	25,6%

Helpline

As part of the FEDERA Helpline, sex educators from the PONTON Group held 549 phone conversations (without taking into account silent calls and repeated questions).

Youth	84,7%
Adults	12,8%
Children	0,5%
Women	51,2%
Men	48,5%
Other	0,4%
First-time asker	69,6%
Frequent asker	30,4%

Advocacy

Report on the state of sex ed in Polish schools

On June 1, the International Children's Day, the premiere of the PONTON Group's latest report took place. "WDŹ na dwóję" is a summary of the largest research project in the over twenty-year history of PONTON. By disseminating the survey on social media, educators collected opinions on the state of Polish sexual education from over 10,000 young people from all over the country. The information obtained concerns both school and home education – the report presents experiences and emotions related to the environments that most shape young people.

The publication reveals the image of the surveyed youth as resourceful people, able to find the information they need, but embittered by constant patronization and neglect from adults. A common theme in their statements was the treatment of sexual education as a "second-class subject."

During the launch of the publication, the authors of the report presented answers to the questions:

- What is the most missing thing for the surveyed youth in family life education lessons?
- What do they hear from teachers during classes?
- How do parents talk to respondents about sexuality?

"Comprehensive and reliable sex ed in schools!" petition

After the publication of the "WDŹ na dwóję" report, PONTON launched a petition that calls on the authorities and all political options to guarantee access to reliable sexual education in every school. Earlier, PONTON appealed to MPs to support the Group's demands, but unfortunately only a few of them responded, which shows the attitude of decision-makers towards the problems of Polish youth.

Lex Czarnek 3.0

In July, the PONTON Group loudly opposed yet another version of the draft amendment to the education law known as Lex Czarnek, which aimed to limit non-governmental organizations from visiting schools.

Cooperations

Durex (Reckitt Benckiser)

- “Protect yourself with the PONTON Group”

As part of the campaign, made possible thanks to the annual support of the Durex brand, every person in need who had the opportunity to visit our office in Warsaw could collect a supply of free condoms. The campaign also met with great interest from centers supporting people in the homeless crisis, where the prevention of sexually transmitted infections is particularly important.

- “Art without shame”

As part of the campaign, augmented reality was used to provide knowledge about safe sex, informed consent, sexually transmitted diseases and myths related to sexuality. The most famous images in Poland, penetrating the world of culture and education.

- “No excuses. Secure the equipment”

Poland remains last in Europe in the Contraception Atlas for the third year in a row, and the number of people with HIV has doubled over the last decade. The PONTON Group and the Durex brand have taken a unique initiative by creating the “No Excuses” campaign on the Discord platform, under which they offer advice on sexuality, answer any questions, explore troubling topics, and dispel doubts. The new version of the campaign is a project to combine a server gathering computer game fans with weekly counseling services in the field of sexual education.

- “Apprentices”

In 2023, PONTON continued cooperation with Agencja Studi (formerly Abstra) on co-creating the drama series “Apprentices”. The episodes were published on Durex’s “How to do it?” YouTube channel, which also promoted the PONTON Group.

The Periodic Coalition

The PONTON Group has been a member of Okresowa Koalicja (the Periodic Coalition) for several years. It is an association of organizations, activists, and experts advocating for the normalization of menstruation and everything around it. On June 14, the Periodic Coalition submitted the first Polish draft bill on menstruation to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland. The proposed legislation provides free access to sanitary pads and tampons in schools.

THE GREAT COALITION FOR EQUALITY AND CHOICE

Aleksandra Magryta

The Great Coalition for Equality and Choice (Wielka Koalicja za Równością i Wyborem, abbreviated as WKRW) has existed for 7 years and is one of FEDERA's flagship programs. The coalition is constantly growing, currently consisting of over 130 organizations, collectives, and activist groups that are part of the women's movement, and advocate for better access to SRHR, including abortion, contraception, sexuality education, IVF, as well as counteract violence against women. WKRW tries to work beyond divisions and gets involved wherever the loud voice of social organizations is needed, including in favor of the LGBTQ+ community.

In 2023, WKRW conducted a number of monitoring, advocacy, and educational activities, as well as activities aimed at strengthening its member organizations.

Pro-turnout campaign

The largest project of the Great Coalition implemented in 2023 was the pro-turnout campaign around the October parliamentary elections "Bierze Cię WK_RW?" ("Are you pis*ed?"). An IPSOS survey from March 2023 showed that only 55 percent of respondents aged 18–39 planned to vote. For this reason, but also because the issue of reproductive rights particularly concerns young women, WKRW's campaign was addressed to that social group.

As part of the campaign, videos of people of different ages, mostly women, talking about access to reproductive and sexual health services in Poland and the importance of election participation, were published on social media. Additionally, many illustrations animations were created and were widely shared by various accounts. In total, the campaign content was viewed almost 1.8 million times.

It was also important to reach people offline – the WKRW member organizations put up 14,000 campaign posters and nearly 900 stickers throughout Poland.

Another element of the campaign was monitoring election programs and researching candidates' statements regarding sexual and reproductive health. In addition, a questionnaire was sent to all committees for people running in the elections, in which they were asked about their views on abortion, contraception, sexual education, prenatal tests,

and IVF. Ultimately, the responses of 215 candidates who declared commitment to expanding access to reproductive and sexual health services were published.

The campaign, carried out with the support of the Stefan Batory Foundation, undoubtedly contributed to the turnout success during the elections of October 15. Over 70 percent of women eligible to vote took part, including as many as 77.3 percent women in the 30–39 age group (IPSOS data). This resulted in great support for political groups that include women's rights in their programs.

Monitoring

- protests after the death of Dorota from Nowy Targ;
- access to reproductive health services in Poland and abroad;
- cases of violations of women's rights and acts of gender-based violence;
- activities around the LGBTQ+ community and violations of its rights.

Advocacy

- an appeal to the Ministry of Health and the National Health Fund to respect the reproductive rights of women fleeing the war in Ukraine;
- collection of signatures for the FEDERA petition regarding Prof. Mariusz Dubiel;
- recommendation of MP Anita Kucharska-Dziedzic for the position of the Minister of Equal Treatment in Donald Tusk's government.

Assistance and education

- support for refugee women from Ukraine with sanitary packages in cooperation with organizations forming WKRW;
- sending several thousand brochures on sexual education, abortion, contraception, and sexually transmitted diseases to organizations supporting refugee women;
- organization of legal training on access to abortion and contraception for refugee beneficiaries of the WKRW organizations.

Promotion, communication, and internal activities

- inauguration of the new visual identification of WKRW;
- promotion of member organizations' activities;
- new organizations joined the coalition;
- launch of WKRW's advocacy on TikTok;
- election of a new WKRW Council;
- update of the Coalition's regulations;
- 5th meeting of the WKRW member organizations' representatives (September, Warsaw)

ASTRA Network is a coalition of non-governmental organizations from the Eastern European region and Central and Central Asia, working together for health and reproductive and sexual rights. The network, founded in 1999 at a regional meeting organized by FEDERA's predecessor – the Federation for Women and Family Planning, currently brings together 41 organizations from 20 countries (full list here). The secretariat of ASTRA is located in the Warsaw office of the FEDERA Foundation.



5th Congress of the Great Coalition for Equality and Choice, September 2023.



Example of the campaign "Are you pis*ed?", October 2023.



Example of the campaign "Are you pis*ed?", October 2023.

ASTRA NETWORK

Ewa Szymera

Meeting of member organizations

The annual meeting of ASTRA network member organizations took place on December 13 and 14 in Warsaw, gathering over 20 activists for sexual and reproductive health and rights. The meeting agenda included: a self-defense workshop, lecture on the latest abortion guidelines, exchange of best practices between organizations, regional updates on gender equality trends and initiative, panel on women's civic and political involvement in the context of the parliamentary elections in Poland, workshop on activist-burnout prevention, and a workshop on fundraising.

Regional advocacy

In October, ASTRA and FEDERA issued an official position on the results of last year's parliamentary elections in Poland, which were characterized by a historic turnout of 74%, with over 73% participation of women. On October 15, 2023, the democratic opposition won, giving hope to improve the situation of women in Poland. Despite political changes, FEDERA, focused on women's rights, prioritizes the need to decriminalize abortion and proposes legislative measures to improve sexual and reproductive health services. In the face of other challenges, including judicial and environmental issues, FEDERA emphasizes the need for continued vigilance to ensure that women's rights remain a priority.

On October 17, a plenary debate was held in the European Parliament on the situation of refugee women from Ukraine, including access to sexual and reproductive health and their rights in this regard, in which Krystyna Kacpura took part. The president of the FEDERA Foundation presented the situation of many women with experience of rape who have been coming to Poland since the invasion of Ukraine. According to the European Commission's Temporary Protection Directive, they should have access to all medical care, but in fact they still often do not receive it. EC representatives emphasized the importance of the obligations of Member States under the directive and emphasized that full respect for the Charter of Fundamental Rights should be guaranteed when implementing European Union legislation and obligations. According to a research report conducted by a group of nine national and international human rights organizations, including FEDERA, the impact of ob-

stacles to access to health care faced by refugee women is serious. The Care in Crisis report highlights that many women decide to temporarily return to Ukraine due to the enormous difficulties in gaining access to care in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

Also in October, at the UN headquarters in Geneva, Daniela Draghici represented ASTRA, FEDERA, and Romanian non-governmental organizations during the CSO consultation on population and development entitled "Ensuring Rights and Choices in Preparation for the UNECE Regional Conference on ICPD30".

At the end of October, ASTRA was expanded by the Hungarian organization EMMA Egyesület.

In November, the network coordinator and representatives of two member organizations participated in the MEGAPHONE conference, organized by TechSoup Europe. This two-day international event provides a space for brainstorming and discussion to exchange experiences, learn from each other and strengthen bonds between activists and experts.

In December, ASTRA participated in the Center for Reproductive Rights' information campaign on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which for the first time defined fundamental human rights that must be universally protected, including equality and dignity. We also celebrated the 16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence campaign.

In addition, the ASTRA network secretariat kept up to date information about events in the region via social media, including a newly established Instagram profile.

Bulletin

As every year, ASTRA closely monitored the state of sexual and reproductive rights in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The bulletin summarized the news it collected and remained an important source of information on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the region for over three thousand subscribers and social media followers. The information contained in the bulletin was cited by, among others, the Center for Reproductive Rights and the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion.

In 2022, we decided to expand the activities of the FEDERA Foundation and launch a health center – a place where

we will be able to directly help people, providing them with access to decent, free medical care based on the latest medical knowledge. We devoted 2023 to preparations for the opening of our Center. We rented premises in the very center of Warsaw, hired an architect and a construction team, and then started the renovation. We have adapted the space to the requirements of the Sanitary and Epide-



Meeting of member organizations, December 2023

CENTRUM ZDROWIA REPRODUKCYJNEGO I SEKSUALNEGO

Julia Borkowska

miological Station and the needs of people with disabilities. At the same time, we introduced appropriate changes to the Foundation's statute in order to be able to provide medical services. We also started creating appropriate procedures that will be applicable in our medical facility, as well as a mission statement that will guide us when running our new business. The Center's opening is planned for late spring 2024.

