

GAY IN POLAND?  
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INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to summarize the process of developing and implementing a social campaign and its major parts including graphics and films. Gay in Poland? is a social campaign against hate speech committed to raising awareness of what it might mean to be gay in Poland (we use the term “gay” to encompass those who identify as LGBT members). For someone who is not part of the LGBT community, the typical image they have of gays is through the lens of Pride Parade and other major community events. We aim to illustrate the multi-faceted experiences of gays in Poland through digital initiatives. Gay in Poland? believes in combating the injustices targeting individuals’ expressions of who they are. We aim to create a discussion challenging the way people think and talk about the Polish gay lifestyle, ultimately increasing awareness of hate speech towards LGBT people.

PROBLEM

The results of the most recent study conducted by the University of Warsaw Centre for Research on Prejudice and the Stefan Batory Foundation found that “a surprisingly high percentage of Poles accept hate speech.”<sup>1</sup> “In particular towards Jews, Romani people, and non-heterosexual persons –and see nothing offensive in it” the report states.<sup>2</sup> Yet, representatives of minorities agree such statements towards minority groups are offensive and must come to a stop.<sup>3</sup> The Centre for Research on Prejudice national opinion poll found 77% of youth respondents’ are exposed to hate speech towards LGBT people online.<sup>4</sup> The second highest response of youth’s exposure to hate speech directed at LGBT people was in a social setting when talking with friends.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the surveyed revealed 41% of Polish adults noticed hate speech exposure towards LGBT people via television.<sup>6</sup> 43% of adults expressed hate speech directed at LGBT people when talking with friends.<sup>7</sup> Hate speech and discrimination in Poland targeted at sexual minorities is a problem that must be addressed to reduce such intolerance.

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<sup>1</sup> Michał Bilewicz, Marta Marchlewska, Wiktor Soral, and Mikołaj Winiewski, *Hate speech in Poland –summary of the national opinion poll* (Warsaw: Creative Commons, 2014), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Bilewicz, Marchlewska, Soral, and Winiewski, *Hate speech in Poland*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Bilewicz, Marchlewska, Soral, and Winiewski, *Hate speech in Poland*, 4.

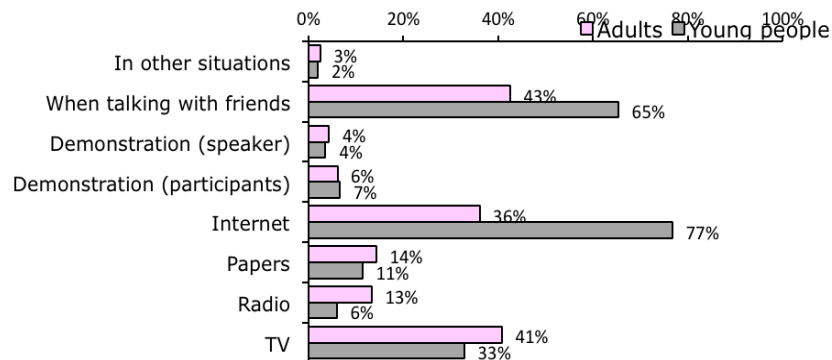
<sup>4</sup> “Presentation of Michał Bilewicz,” Citizens for Democracy, accessed June 20, 2015, slide 29, <http://www.ngofund.org.pl/no-hate-speech/report-hate-speech-in-poland-2014/>.

<sup>5</sup> “Presentation of Michał Bilewicz,” slide 29.

<sup>6</sup> “Presentation of Michał Bilewicz,” slide 29.

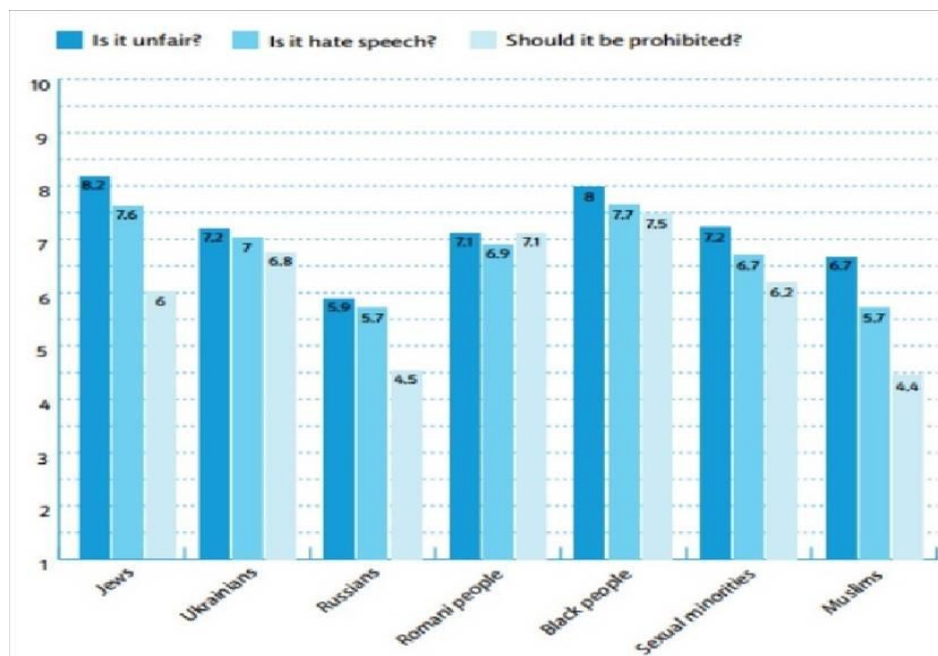
<sup>7</sup> “Presentation of Michał Bilewicz,” slide 29.

EXPOSURE TO HOMOPHOBIC HATE SPEECH:<sup>8</sup>



Moreover, Pole responders were asked if such statements should be prohibited, the data below shows respondents do not think actions are necessary.<sup>9</sup>

HATE SPEECH OFFENSIVENESS, INTENSITY, AND POSSIBLE PROHIBITION:<sup>10</sup>



In addition, Lambda Warszawa, an organization committed to creating a space for positive LGBTQ identity, and who offers independent, professional help in difficult/crisis situations, states both physical and mental violence is a problem for Polish sexual minorities.<sup>11</sup> In 2011 research analyzing the situation of LGB persons in Poland, data showed approximately

<sup>8</sup> “Presentation of Michał Bilewicz,” slide 29.

<sup>9</sup> Bilewicz, Marchlewska, Soral, and Winiewski, *Hate speech in Poland*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Bilewicz, Marchlewska, Soral, and Winiewski, *Hate speech in Poland*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Borowska, Karolina, and Michał Pawłęga, “About Lambda Warszawa” (PowerPoint presented at Humanity in Action Poland 2015’s workshop *Other “Others” in the Polish Context: Cases of Roma, LGBTQ and Women*, Warsaw, Poland, June 8, 2015), slide 2.

65% of respondents experienced pushing, hitting, kicking or pulling on the grounds that they were known or suspected to be homosexual or bisexual.<sup>12</sup> Nearly 70% of perpetrators of such physical violence were strangers. Respondents stated schoolmates as the second highest perpetrator reaching nearly 40%.<sup>13</sup>

As for psychological violence, the 2011 research analysis results found nearly 45% of Polish LGB respondents (includes: male and female) had experienced harassment of some sort (not limited to: verbal harassment/aggression, insults, ridicule, threats, blackmail, vandalism, and others).<sup>14</sup> Similarly to physical violence, the highest perpetrators of psychological violence were strangers (59.3%) then schoolmates (36.6%) and followed by close relatives such as parents (11.3%).<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Michał Bilewicz, from the Centre for Research of Prejudice at the University of Warsaw, states the first step leading to hate speech is stereotypes, which can then lead to prejudice and discrimination, resulting in hate speech.<sup>16</sup> These causes describe our decision to focus our social campaign against hate speech on stereotypes that may typically be thought of as reflective of the Polish LGBT community.

### VISUAL WORK

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** Gay In Poland?'s focus is individuals who "are on the fence": persons who use hate speech without fully comprehending its meaning and impact. Our social campaign is not directed towards extremes that are openly homophobic. Our group's audience targets those who lack awareness regarding their usage of hate speech and behavior towards LGBT.

**GRAPHICS & FILMS:** Positive stereotypes exist regarding the LGBT community that sexual minorities lives are all about glamour and fun. While glamour and fun may be part of the LGBT community, they do not fully reflect what it might mean to be gay in Poland. Gay In Poland?'s graphics are designed to expose the various and different realities of gay life in Poland. Our social campaign focuses the following themes: Gay Parade and Drag Queen. The themes are meant to encourage the audience to reflect on their current perceptions of these situations and then think about them through a different perspective. Both the films and graphics are meant to turn the situations on their heads, exposing realities of the LGBT community different than what the viewer expects. Ultimately, raising awareness of hate speech targeted at LGBT.

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<sup>12</sup> Borowska and Pawłęga, "About Lambda Warszawa," slides 16, 23, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Borowska and Pawłęga, "About Lambda Warszawa," slide 25.

<sup>14</sup> Borowska and Pawłęga, "About Lambda Warszawa," slides 30, 31.

<sup>15</sup> Borowska and Pawłęga, "About Lambda Warszawa," slide 33.

<sup>16</sup> Michał Bilewicz, "Stereotypes and Prejudice: From basic intergroup biases to hate speech" (PowerPoint presented at Humanity in Action Poland 2015's workshop *Creating the "Other". Main Ingredients: Prejudices & Stereotypes*, Warsaw, Poland, June 1, 2015), slides 1-26.

GRAPHIC: #GAY PARADE<sup>17</sup>



GRAPHIC: #DRAG QUEEN<sup>18</sup>



INSPIRING CAMPAIGNS: Fuck Cancer is a registered Canadian nonprofit dedicated to prevention, focused on early detection and support for those affected by cancer.<sup>19</sup> This campaign “believes that people diagnosed with cancer, their families and support network should have equitable access to early detection, prevention and psychosocial support.”<sup>20</sup> The organization has a strong base for functioning, including operators who are passionate and committed to its mission. To have a team who is loyal and has expertise in the field, who is willing to follow the company’s mission through bright and gray days is worthy of admiration.

<sup>17</sup> Visual imaged developed with the help of Graphic Designer Kasia Gerula.

<sup>18</sup> Visual imaged developed with the help of graphic designer Kasia Gerula.

<sup>19</sup> Fuck Cancer, accessed June 22, 2015, <http://www.letsfcancer.com/>.

<sup>20</sup> “About,” Fuck Cancer, accessed June 22, 2015, <http://www.letsfcancer.com/>.

Another mind-blowing campaign is FCKH8.com, a “for-profit T-shirt company with an activist heart and a passionate social change mission: arming thousands of people with pro-LGBT equality, anti-racism and anti-sexism T-shirts that act as “mini-billboards for change” inspired Gay In Poland? to take launch.<sup>21</sup> This company is particularly empowering because it arms individuals with activist statements to wear in public for all of society to encounter.<sup>22</sup> It challenges peoples’ mindsets right there on the spot, a perfect catalyst for discussion and engagement in the topic of hate speech towards LGBT people. In addition, FCKH8.com has developed an innovative strategy of counteracting hate speech in various countries and settings. For example, their T-shirts’ statements are in English, a language that at the moment is used all over the world in business, politics, education, fashion and more. The Equality Parade June 13, 2015 of Warsaw, Poland is proof of this campaign’s success as you could find parade participants wearing FCKH8 T-shirts.

### IMPLEMENTATION

**GROUP WORK:** The concept that working as a team can be challenging vividly came to life throughout this mini social campaign, particularly when under pressure. We had to learn and understand each other’s strengths and weaknesses quickly all the while advancing the campaign. We are all “leaders” but a leader for the group was not chosen to lead the project, which held us back as we needed leadership to continue forward with the assignment. This seemed to be because we are all capable of leading, at the same time we did not know how and perhaps did not want to lead in a project where we had no expertise, no experience, and no visual skills –we needed guidance among ourselves and we lacked it.

**CAMPAIGN:** The most difficult part in developing a social campaign may be the idea (some may call this the message) itself. Coming up with an original idea that has a strong foundation for implementation that will be sustainable in the long run is hard work, especially when the expertise, experience, and skills are lacking. We went through one idea after another, after another. At times it was because we got held up on details and could not come to an agreement about the execution regarding the campaign, but it was also because great ideas we brainstormed had already been implemented. This being said, our group started from scratch multiple times.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** Our group decided to launch a Facebook page for the social campaign.<sup>23</sup> It was launched June 19, 2015 and has been up and running for approximately four days. We promoted our page through Facebook’s advertisements, which helped us have a total reach of 5,765. The ads did not help much with getting Likes; we received a total of 119 Likes with and without the ad. Also, we did not receive an active social media response. Perhaps with time, there could have been a stronger reply.

**TRAINING TEAM:** Our group met with Creative Director Marek Dorobisz, Faith Bosworth from Peng! Collective Berlin, and HIA Poland Senior Fellow Kasia Gerula. We fully implemented their suggestions into the campaign. They were a tremendous help, so much that they were the key turning points in our one weeklong process of testing various visual ideas – they were the leadership (who had experience, expertise, and skills) we lacked. Without their advice we would have remained stuck, discouraged, and our campaign would have been much

<sup>21</sup> “About Us,” FCKH8.com, accessed June 22, 2015, <http://fckh8.myshopify.com/pages/about-us>.

<sup>22</sup> FCKH8.com, accessed June 22, 2015, <http://fckh8.myshopify.com/>.

<sup>23</sup> “Gay In Poland?” last modified June 23, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Gay-In-Poland/839266666167289?fref=ts>.

more difficult to implement. We highly suggest and encourage that future HIA Poland fellows meet with both professionals for feedback on their projects.

### CONCLUSION

What our group forgot and which we encourage future HIA fellows to do with their projects is to have fun with it. This may seem an odd concept as social campaigns are about hard work, commitment, and implementation. Yet, in order to do all of that, fellows need to not stress too much about it, let certain things go, and have fun. Fellows must remember this is an experience to learn from – this requires patience and not getting lost in the details, you have to stick to the bigger picture. Focusing on the bigger picture will help in transforming the campaign ideas into sustainable long-term activities. It will help build a solid foundation from which the project can grow strong. This will require, as Simon Sinek’s TED talk ‘Start With Why’ states, a Why that encompasses peoples’ profound ideals about the world.<sup>24</sup> Something that connects them to your mission in a way that they will move with you in sweat and tears because it’s what they believe for themselves not necessarily for the organization, but for themselves.<sup>25</sup> If this is achieved people will join in and assume responsibility to develop initiatives further, ultimately reaching the goal of the campaign, which is change.

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<sup>24</sup> “Start With Why –Simon Sinek TED talk,” YouTube, accessed June 18, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sioZd3AxmnE>.

<sup>25</sup> “Start With Why – Simon Sinek TED talk.”

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