

Report #Odzyskujemy Patriotyzm

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Phantom Refugees, Current Refugees, and Polish Uncertainty

The political panorama in Poland is getting more and more conservative and radical. While radicals and those who propagate hate speech on- and offline are very loud, a big portion of the population is ambivalent about migrants' issues: they are neither actively rejecting the arrival of refugees in Poland, but they are not necessarily the biggest supporters either¹. At the same time, while the media and the attention of the society focus on whether Poland should or should not follow its commitment of taking 7000 refugees in, currently there are already many migrants and refugees in Poland. The majority of Poles know very little, close to nothing about the matter². Many of the refugees that are already in the country and have created a life in Poland came from the prior Soviet Union and escaped persecution from authoritarian regimes (i.e. Chechnya). One of the focuses of our campaign is to show a glimpse of the actual situation of refugees in Poland: who the refugees currently living in Poland are, what they do and how Poles can help them.

There are many initiatives, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), and volunteers who work for the integration of migrants and refugees. Nevertheless, the latter is an isolated group that does not get enough media attention to reach the wider audience. Both in Poland and in the EU, Poland is portrayed as an increasing conservative country. The current governing party, PiS, ran their political campaign on the idea that refugees and migrants are disease carrying people who bring no contributes to the nation³. There is very limited attention given to those who are still fighting for a multicultural Poland. Even then, those who are fighting for a more inclusive Poland are taunted by other Poles claiming they are being ruled by political correctness and a "multi-culti" society. A factor we did not expect as people who did not currently live in Poland was that the youth tend to gravitate to the idea that refugees and migrants are less than or bad⁴. We believe that if the people working toward a more inclusive Poland and their work could get featured and gain more attention, this would generate a different point of departure for a debate about what Poland is and what these volunteers want Poland to look like in the future. We imagined that working from the analogy of Contact theory, but through a digital lens we would be able to reach a large range audience that included youth but their peers a few years older than just teenagers⁵.

¹ <https://www.politico.eu/article/politics-nationalism-and-religion-explain-why-poland-doesnt-want-refugees/>

² <http://news.gallup.com/poll/209828/syrian-refugees-not-welcome-eastern-europe.aspx>

³ <https://eu.boell.org/en/2017/06/14/poland-polish-taking-closer-look-polish-rejection-refugees>

⁴ <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21702770-global-church-trends-liberal-polish-church-not-following-cross-purposes>

⁵ <http://www.apa.org/monitor/nov01/contact.aspx>

We also aim at tackling the single narrative of what Polish patriotism looks like. The concept of Polish patriotism has become hostage of the right wing and the radicals to such an extent that, when talking about it, we immediately associate it with illiberal policies. In our campaign, we want to promote a different idea of what Polish patriotism looks like by portraying another version of patriots: people who work for the integration of migrants and refugees in Poland. At the same time, we hope to encourage more people who are ambivalent about accepting refugees, to challenge their knowledge of whom the refugees are and potentially become active in promoting a more multicultural Poland.

As the Ideas Started Pouring In

We created a Facebook page called Patriots of Poland. We felt that this title could interest conservative Poles alongside the ones already implementing inclusion on a daily basis. We wanted to spark the attention of people who would normally not want to watch stories of volunteers who work towards the integration of migrants in Poland.

The content of our page will consist of short videos and posts. We featured the stories of Poles who work with migrants and refugees in Poland.

Persuasive Content Present in All Short Videos:

- “My name is...”
- “For me to be a Polish Patriot means....”
- “My idea of Poland is...”
- “I work for a better Poland by doing xyz”
- “The people I am helping are...”
- “The impact of my work ...”

We may also feature simple posts with catchy citations from volunteers and a photo of them with the people they help.

If the page grows and attracts many people, we plan on asking people from all over Poland to send us a message so that we will feature their story on our page.

All in all, we hoped to create a positive space that promotes the integration of migrants and refugees while promoting those Polish folks who actively work towards a different and more multicultural Poland. At the same time, we hope that our page can be an inspiration for people to become more active and loud in promoting a different version of Polish patriotism.

Inspiration for our campaign came from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website: <http://www.unhcr.org/innovation/7-videos-guaranteed-to-change-the-way-you-see-refugees/>. These videos focus on centering refugees, or the possibility of anyone becoming a refugee, as well as inaction when people pass a sign asking to help refugees but angry individuals when they pass a sign saying, “refugees are scum”.

Campaign Ideas and Implementation:

1. We began interviewing different Poles asking the following questions: What does patriotism mean to you, how do you implement it in your daily life, and what Poland do you dream of? As we progressed and reviewed the videos we made with 3 HIA fellows, we realized that the last question might be too difficult for people to phrase for a short video. We decided to conclude the videos with “My name is ____, and I am ____, and I am a Polish Patriot.”
2. As a group, we were able to volunteer during the open day at the Center for Foreigners and took photos of the volunteers from the For Freedom Foundation, as well as other Polish people who attended the event. There were various Polish members from the neighboring communities, even though the center was quite far from central Warsaw. We ended up showcasing a few photos on our page as a visual demonstration that people in the country are already helping refugees. The idea behind this is that people that may feel neutral about helping refugees may not feel that there is anyone else who is interested in doing this work and there may be a sense of alienation. Please see some photos below:





3. We decided that the best platform to showcase these videos would be Facebook and in addition to the video content we would also like to add quotes/ historical context of how Poland and Patriotism was not always what the radicals and conservatives are now depicting it. Please see below:

Odzyskujemy Patriotyzm
@odzyskujemypatriotyzm

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Odzyskujemy Patriotyzm
Published by Kuba Belina Brzozowski [?] · June 19 · 🌐

Kalina - "Mój patriotyzm realizuję poprzez edukację młodych ludzi. Przekazuję im, że mają wpływ na otaczający ich świat"
#patriotyzm #edukacja #odzyskujemypatriotyzm #polska

"I put my patriotism into practice by educating youngsters. I empower them to change the world around them" - Kalina

See Translation

 **Kalina - edukacja a patriotyzm**
#odzyskujemypatriotyzm
YOUTUBE.COM [Learn More](#)

👤 1597 people reached [Boost Post](#)

Active Boosts

Boosted on Jun 19
Audience: Poland, 20 - 65+
By Marilyn Alvarado Alvarez · Finished 171 days ago
[View Results](#)

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👤 Odzyskujemy Patriotyzm and 19 others

The image shows a Facebook post from the page "Odzyskujemy Patriotyzm". The page's profile picture is a red speech bubble with a white 'P' and a Polish eagle crest, with the hashtag #odzyskujempatriotyzm below it. The post is published by Ana Maria Szilagyi on June 19. It contains a quote in Polish: "W Polsce, w której chciałabym żyć, byłoby dużo więcej miejsca na prawdziwy dialog. Patriotyzm to dla mnie wychodzenie do ludzi różnych ode mnie i próba zrozumienia ich perspektywy" - Alicja. Below it is the English translation: "I'd like to live in a Poland that gives more space to dialogue. Patriotism, the way I perceive it, means reaching out to people who are different. It's about understanding their perspective." - Alicja. The post includes several hashtags: #patriotyzm, #odzyskujempatriotyzm, #dialog, #zrozumienie, and #zaangazujsie... There is a "See More" link and a "See Translation" link. The video thumbnail shows the same logo and hashtag as the profile picture. At the bottom, it indicates "3370 people reached" and has a "Boost Post" button.

- Our last idea was for people to create a poster with what they consider to be a vital part of their identity, take a selfie, and put our hashtag at the end. This part of the campaign is for people to feel as though they have some more ownership of what patriotism truly means for them and how it applies to their lives.



#odzyskujempatriotyzm

#odzyskujempatriotyzm

Final remarks

What was proven to be most successful?

We succeeded in producing the videos and memes, as well as get people to like it and engage with our page. Unfortunately, we only obtained 109 people to like our page. However, we did reach approximately 3,500 views on some posts. To our surprise there were some people who reacted rather well and really engaged and resonate with our material.

All of the videos feature people who are socially engaged, 3 out of 4 people work with migrants/refugees. To view more, please click on the following link:

<https://www.facebook.com/odzyskujempatriotyzm/videos/1111148349028808/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixd0FnTQOkM&feature=youtu.be>

What could be improved?

Most of the people we asked for the interviews refused to meet with us or give a statement on camera. This could have been a result of various factors. We realized that with the limited amount of time that we had, we were not able to accommodate the majority of people's schedules. Therefore, we were able to conduct only four interviews even though we had originally planned to conduct ten interviews.

We feel that we have chosen an important topic but at the same time, we were forced to recognize our time constraints. Another issue we encountered was managing non-profit organizations time constraints and already planned commitments. We had the opportunity to work with the For Freedom Foundation and were able to contribute to their community day. That day served as a wonderful moment for us to connect, have a humbling and humanizing day with people going through their immigration process in Poland. Some of the volunteers were the first bright and smiling faces they had seen in a while. The language barrier was difficult at first, but sharing food immediately brought us together. Communication through gestures and hand motions served as the best way to get through the day. The children in the center were just interested in playing games and enjoying their day, so we decided to follow their lead. The topic of patriotism in Poland is very complex and we would certainly need more preparation and longer span of time for the campaign itself to cover the issue at large effectively. Therefore, working on the campaign was quite a frustrating experience, but overall it showed us various valuable lessons. This campaign reminded us about the human experience that is often forgotten when debating about immigration policies and how to implement them.