

## “So What?”: You’ll Only Need to Care for a Few Minutes!

### I. Background: LGBTIQ+ Community in Poland

#### A. Obstacles and Hate Speech

In Poland, the Sexual and Gender Diversity Community (hereinafter referred to as the *LGBTIQ+ Community*) continues to face widespread discrimination. A large sector of Poland’s population continues to hold intolerant views of same-sex relationships. According to an opinion poll conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (abbreviated *CBOS* in Polish) in 2013, over two-thirds (exactly 68 percent) of Poles rejected the idea of allowing same-sex couples to publicly express their relationship.<sup>1</sup> Although the *LGBTIQ+ Community* has held an annual equality parade in Warsaw since 2001 to manifest their desire for more inclusive public policies, negative public opinion has not been significantly reduced. On the contrary, many public officials have inhibited the *LGBTIQ+ Community* from exercising its right to organize. Fortunately, the European Court of Human Rights ruled—in the 2007 case known as *Bączkowski vs. Poland*—that Polish officials could not ban LGBTIQ+ pride parades because such actions infringed on the freedom of assembly under Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these modest legal advancements, hate speech and prejudices from large sectors of the Polish society remain major problems facing the *LGBTIQ+ Community*. According to researchers mgr Anna Stefaniak and dr hab. Michał Bilewicz, from the Center for Research on Prejudice at the Faculty of Psychology of University of Warsaw, a large proportion of Polish society considers that offending homosexuals and other gender minorities is socially acceptable.<sup>3</sup>

#### B. Existing Research/Campaigns

Before developing our own campaign, our team researched existing campaigns addressing LGBTIQ+ issues. First, we looked at international campaigns such as the *Human Rights Campaign*, the *It Gets Better Project*, the *All Out Campaign*, and the *Rainbow Campaign*. Although these international projects were more developed, it was important for our team to look at the different campaign strategies utilized in their own activism.

Next, our team looked at local campaigns and projects. For example, we recalled the presentation given by the Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH)—a local *LGBTIQ+* civil society organization, to the Humanity in Action Fellows. During the presentation, several campaign ideas were highlighted and served as inspiration for our own campaign designs. Our team also identified local bloggers (KaDo) that we listed as possible allies for our own campaign.

### II. Process of Development

#### A. Mission and Vision of Campaign

After considering Poland’s particular shortcomings and various existing campaigns, we decided to launch our own social campaign—coined *So What?* Our team visualized a Polish society in which same-sex relationships were not ostracized. We also imagined a society in which all relationships—including same-sex relationships—would be treated as normal human

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<sup>1</sup> CBOS. Komunikat Badan: Warszawa, luty 2013. [http://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2013/K\\_024\\_13.PDF](http://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2013/K_024_13.PDF)

<sup>2</sup> Equality Rights Trust. [http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Baczowski%20and%20Others%20v.%20Poland%20\\_assembly\\_.pdf](http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Baczowski%20and%20Others%20v.%20Poland%20_assembly_.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> *Poland on the Move*. Humanity in Action Poland: 2014. Pg. 78

interactions that would not require unnecessary attention. In essence, we crafted our vision to be a society in which all relationships are treated with equal respect and dignity.

In order to make small but important steps towards our long-term ideal vision, we developed a clear mission for the *So What? Campaign*. The campaign was geared at promoting the idea that all relationships are normal, meaning that none of them require any special attention since they are mainly private interactions; they simply need to be tolerated in public spaces.

We decided that our target audiences should include youth and other users of social media in Poland, which does encompass heterosexual individuals. Since our long-term vision requires a massive change of attitudes within the entire Polish population—most of which consists of heterosexual individuals—we decided to have this broader target group. We also considered the platform that we would use (Social Media) and our time frame (one week).

## B. Social Media

The main platform for the *So What? Campaign* is the official Facebook page (see link: <https://www.facebook.com/sowhat.campaign/>). The page, which is in both English and Polish, provides the following detailed description of our social campaign: “Same-sex relationships should not get more attention than heterosexual ones because they are equal. Simple! In public spaces, same-sex couples should not receive unnecessary attention like surprised glances or snarky remarks. When people with prejudices try to have you mock same-sex couples in public, you should just tell them one short phrase—“so what”—to imply that they are like other

couples.” The page also features the following short description: “If you agree with us, then join us to show that you ‘don’t care’ too.”



## C. Graphics

Graphics were very important for our online campaign. Our logo (depicted on the left) is the principal image for our campaign. The design is reminiscent of the green logo used for Whatsapp, a very popular social media network. This small allusion, coupled with the simple—but attractive—question (so what?), makes the logo very powerful and marketable for our target groups.

Other graphics, such as photographs taken during our campaign, always feature our logo to attribute the work to the *So What? Campaign*. Since the campaign’s main platform is Facebook, images have been indispensable for promoting the mission and vision previously described.

Other forms of graphics, such as images promoting like-minded campaigns/events, were also featured on the Facebook page but with full acknowledgments to their respective creators and/or designers.

## III. Implementation

### A. Timeline

- 1) **June 15:** Our team started by brainstorming and gaining inspiration from other social campaigns (See section above: “Existing Research/Campaigns”).

- 2) **June 16:** Our group convened to set up the official Facebook page<sup>4</sup> and to develop the campaign's official logo (See section above: "Graphics").
- 3) **June 17:** After sending official invitations on the campaign's Facebook page, the members of our team took photographs of various relationships in public spaces. The event—titled "Camera, Action"—took place near the Polin Museum, where several local civil society organizations were hosting a day of diversity. We took photographs of same-sex couples, heterosexual couples, and even platonic relationships in the same public spaces to demonstrate that all these interactions can coexist peacefully and naturally. Some of these photographs were later shared on our Facebook page.



After taking the photographs, our team was able to interview the members of *KaDo* (picture left), a very popular Polish LGBTIQ+-related blog. The *KaDo* team has an extensive network of followers, including over three thousands Facebook followers. Thus, this interview was an important way of promoting our campaign and forming alliances with like-minded groups. Finally, we concluded the day by speaking to several representatives from the civil society organizations participating in the diversity event. We were able to distribute some of our stickers and take photographs of several

members that agreed to support the campaign by wearing the sticker.



4) **June 18-19:** Our team uploaded several new photographs with the hash-tag #sowhat to continue the promotion of our campaign. These photographs included some featuring relationships in public and others depicting community leaders wearing the campaign's stickers (see picture on the left).

5) **June 20:** On the campaign's Facebook page, our team published a photo album that featured some of our Humanity in Action Fellows wearing our campaign's stickers. This album has served as a prototype for others that we intend to include in our campaign. On this day, we also prepared our group's materials (visual presentation, report, blog, etc.) that would be featured on June 21, 2016 for the public presentation

of our initial campaign results.

## B. Modifications

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<sup>4</sup> See link: <https://www.facebook.com/sowhat.campaign/>

Prior to the composition of this report, our team aimed to upload a video related to our mission. However, we decided to postpone this campaign element in order to focus on photography and other components.

#### IV. Results and Reflections

##### A. Reaction from Social Media Users

During the first week of the campaign, our Facebook page received nearly 200 likes from different social media users. We also received positive feedback in the comment sections of our posts and in public spaces. We expect to reach our target goal of 300 likes by the end of the month of June 2016.



##### B. Lessons Learned/Advice

During this campaign, our team learned two very important lessons. First, we learned about the importance of having clear plans before launching a social campaign. We advise future fellows to dedicate a significant amount of time to planning because the most effective campaigns have clear visions (goals) and missions (steps required to achieve those goals).

Second, our team learned about the importance of teamwork. Sometimes we faced miscommunications, but we managed to resolve these issues by asking for help from our colleagues and advisors. Thus, we suggest future fellows to ask for help from their peers, even those who are not part of your campaign group. You will be able to improve your group dynamic and create stronger bonds necessary for successful projects.

##### Summary

The main question of our campaign "So what?" is a manifesto in support of homosexuals who want to freely express emotions and feelings with their partners in public places. Most of the social actions aim to break the passive attitude of people in relation to specific situations and trigger some form of re-actions and thinking. Our campaign against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity encourages passivity. "Passiveness" in this context takes on a new meaning and is an expression of acceptance and respect.

**We believe that world where lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people can live openly without discrimination and enjoy equal rights and the freedom of expression is possible.**

**Bibliography**

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