

About the project

Wpisany przez Dorota Głowacka

Środa, 19 Luty 2014 11:06 - Zmieniony Środa, 19 Luty 2014 22:14

'**The Observatory of Media Freedom in Poland**' is one of the HFHR's legal programmes founded in 2008, specifically focused on increasing the protection related to freedom of expression in both traditional media and on the Internet.

The 'Observatory' undertakes legal actions with regard to **strategic cases** of Polish journalists and bloggers acting in the public interest, including the **monitoring of court proceedings**

,
preparation of the legal submissions

(such as amicus curiae briefs) both before national and international bodies. So far, the Programme have run around 40 individual cases providing legal aid, concerning inter alia issues such as criminal defamation, press law offences, protection of journalistic sources of information, the liability of the Internet service providers etc. In the course of the court proceedings, the 'Observatory' arranges also

professional pro bono legal assistance for journalists

who cannot afford regular legal aid.

The 'Observatory's lawyers have submitted numerous **applications to the ECHR** on behalf of the Programme's clients and represented them before the Court in Strasbourg (see for example recent cases: Kaperzyński v. Poland, Sroka v. Poland). What is more, the 'Observatory' is involved in promoting international freedom of expression standards within the domestic judicial system, including

ensuring the effective implementation of the ECHR judgments

(see for ex. our written submissions made to the CoE's Council of Ministers in the cases: Kubaszewski v. Poland or Wizerkaniuk v. Poland).

Moreover 'The Observatory' runs **monitoring activities** with regard to the legislative acts proposed on the issues related to the freedom of expression as well as monitors incidents that constitute threats to the free media. The 'Observatory' is also involved in the

advocacy

for the legal changes, undertaking actions aimed at modernization of the current media laws in Poland which – at the moment - do not correspond with the development of the on-line communication and the new media reality. The 'Observatory's lawyers prepare official statements, legal opinions on certain law proposals and are involved in the daily dialogue with public officials responsible for conducting the key legal reforms in the areas covered by the Programme's interest.

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Also 'The Observatory' focuses very much on **empowering the local media** in Poland which lack sufficient editorial and financial background and therefore are more vulnerable to the political or commercial pressure. Between 2008 – 2010 the 'Observatory' created a network of correspondents monitoring the freedom of media in all the 16 administrative regions of Poland and reported monthly on their activities to the Programme's team. In order to continue the correspondents' work, in the end of 2012 the 'Observatory' plans to start a

blog platform

and train 16 bloggers from across Poland who will monitor their local environments and publicly report on the perils to the free expression on the Internet.

Finally, the 'Observatory' engages in educational activities, inter alia by organizing regular **conferences and seminars**

on the most emerging issues related to the free speech. Furthermore, the Programme

publishes manuals, brochures and other publications

in order to support and train journalist, mainly on the legal aspects of their profession. In

September 2011 the 'Observatory' launched also a

social campaign

together with the associations of journalists and publishers aiming at decriminalization of a defamation called 'Let's delete Article 212 of the Criminal Code'. One of the main goals of the campaign is to obtain endorsement from as many policy-makers who opt for abolishing article 212 as possible to prepare grounds for a future advocacy. The initiative has been supported by prominent journalists, column writers, actors, lawyers and over 3.000 supporters in one of the social networks.

The '**Observatory's team** consists of 3 lawyers: Dominika Bychawska – Siniarska (Director), Dorota Głowacka (Programme Coordinator) and Adam Płoszka (Legal Assistant). The current partner organizations of the Programme are the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Warsaw and the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Lublin. We have been cooperating also with the Article 19 (London) and the Human Rights House Foundation (Oslo) which were the 'Observatory's' official partner organizations between 2008 – 2010.