

Narrative report for 2024

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Summary of the report

In 2024, we continued our intensive efforts to protect the right to information, strengthen transparency in public life and support civic engagement. One of the most important events was the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, which found that the refusal to disclose the meeting schedules of the Constitutional Tribunal constituted a violation of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. This ruling strengthened the position of civil society organisations as guardians of public debate and confirmed the obligation of authorities to disclose relevant information.

At the same time, we were involved in legislative work – we monitored proposals for changes to the Central Register of Contracts and continued our efforts to reform the law on access to public information. Together with a national and international coalition, we worked to counter SLAPP – proceedings aimed at silencing criticism of journalists and activists. We organised conferences and training sessions, and provided legal assistance in 12 cases. Our activities were supported by the “Fight SLAPP!” campaign, which helped us raise some of the funds needed to support victims of such actions.

As part of our legal advice service, we received a record number of 1,561 cases, and our citizen monitoring tool was used by various organisations to investigate the functioning of schools, environmental protection and the activities of public institutions.

We also actively participated in international initiatives (CEELI, Meijers Committee, CASE, K-Monitor) and in the work on Poland's accession to the Open Government Partnership.

We conducted extensive educational activities, including courses, workshops, local meetings, the Watchdog Initiative School, and rallies for people working for transparency and human rights. We travelled around Poland and met with residents as part of the "Transparency on the Road" initiative. We also strengthened our communication – we launched the “Okiem Watchdoga” (Through the Eyes of Watchdog) series, published over 260 articles, and developed our presence on social media.

Changes related to the mass use of artificial intelligence in 2023 opened up new opportunities for us. We used the experience gained in the Sprawdzamyjakjest.pl project, which was completed in 2024, and for a year and a half we invested in the introduction of solutions using artificial intelligence to analyse documents obtained through access to information.

The 1.5% campaign raised PLN 1,495,533.70, which was supported by over 6,300 people.

I. Aims of the Association

The aim of the Association is to promote and protect human rights and civil liberties, as well as activities supporting the development of democracy and monitoring and educational activities, in particular those undertaken by members of the Association and persons cooperating with them, in order to increase transparency and integrity in public life, including:

- 1) working for free access to public information;
- 2) working towards the effective, lawful, transparent and open management of public assets and public policies, subject to public scrutiny;
- 3) providing substantive and financial support to individuals and organisations in exercising civic control;
- 4) taking action to promote ethics in public life and activities aimed at preventing corruption.

II. Formal information about activities

In 2024, two General Meetings of Members (WZCC) of the Association were held - a reporting meeting on 8-9 June 2024 and an extraordinary election meeting on 1 December 2024 with supplementary elections to the Audit Committee. In addition, two planning meetings for members of the Association were held on 9-10 February and 16-17 March 2024.

During the June WZCC, for the first time in the history of the Association, a vote was taken on the appeal against the Management Board's resolution to remove a member. The WZCC rejected the appeal, with four abstentions. In addition, amendments were made to the statutes clarifying the criteria for admitting new members to the Association. Much time was devoted to working on a strategy for the coming years. The guidelines for the action plan for 2024-2028 were developed.

The Management Board, composed of Szymon Osowski, Katarzyna Batko-Tołuć and Marzena Błaszczyk, continued its work. The Audit Committee was composed of Jerzy Migduła, Zenon Michajłowski and Jakub Jaworski until 13 September 2024, when Jakub Jaworski resigned from the Association. On 1 December 2024, during supplementary elections, Adam Dobrawy was elected to the Audit Committee.

In 2024, the Ethics Committee consisted of Anna Cioch, Marcin Jaworski, Wojciech Paszkowski and Michał Zemełka. On 8 June 2024, Anna Cioch resigned from her position on the Ethics Committee, and since then the committee has been working with three members.

The Association has entrusted PRONGO.PL Sp. z o.o. with the accounting books for the 2024 financial year. In 2024, the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland had a contract with Inspektorzy ODO Spółka z o.o., based in Warsaw, for the provision of data protection officer services, for which Mr Patryk Łuczyński was appointed. The agreement includes, among other things, informing the Association and its employees about their obligations under personal data protection regulations, providing advice and consultation in this area, and

monitoring compliance with internal rules and regulations, including audits. It also provides for representing the Association before public administration bodies and law enforcement authorities in matters related to personal data protection.

III. Summary in figures

The most important events for the Association in 2024 in numbers:

1 - in 2024, we won our first case before the European Court of Human Rights.

8 – the number of experts forming the Association's legal advice team.

154 - the number of judgments handed down by administrative courts in 2024 in cases initiated by us and those to which we joined as a social organisation.

252 – that is how many articles we have published, **180** of which on siecobywatelska.pl and **72** on informacjapubliczna.org

1,561 cases – a record number of cases reported to the legal advice centre of the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland in 2024, of which 1,032 were reported by residents.

1,945 – the number of public information requests we submitted in 2024, of which 146 were sent directly (via email, traditional mail and ePUAP), and 1,799 via our Fedrowanie system (fedrowanie.siecobywatelska.pl) as part of our monitoring activities.

2,607 – the number of additional requests we sent in cooperation with our partners via the fedrowanie.siecobywatelska.pl system

5,029 – the number of requests for public information sent by other organisations using our fedrowanie.siecobywatelska.pl platform

IV. Leading topics and key methods of action

Strategic litigation

ECHR ruling

On 21 March 2024, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued a judgment on the complaint lodged by the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland against Poland (ref. 10103/20). The case concerned the Constitutional Tribunal's refusal to disclose the calendars of meetings of President Julia Przyłębska and Vice-President Mariusz Muszyński for the period from 1 January to 6 July 2017.

After exhausting domestic legal remedies, including the dismissal of the complaint by the Supreme Administrative Court, the Association lodged a complaint with the ECtHR in February 2020.

The Court found that the refusal to grant access to the meeting schedules constituted a violation of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression, including the right to receive information. The reasoning emphasised that this information was of significant importance for public debate and that non-governmental organisations play the role of "public watchdogs", monitoring the actions of the authorities and protecting democratic processes.

At the same time, the Court found no violation in relation to the refusal to provide access to the register of entries to the Constitutional Tribunal building, considering that the Constitutional Tribunal was not obliged to keep such a register.

The judgment of the European Court of Human Rights provides important guidance on the implementation of the right to information. It emphasises the special role of journalists and non-governmental organisations as guardians of public debate, to whom the authorities have a duty to provide information. The Court notes that the political context may give information significant public importance, which should be taken into account when considering requests. While accepting the possibility of refusing access to internal documents, the Court also points out that such a refusal must be proportionate and justified by an important public interest. Ultimately, a breach of this obligation by the authorities may lead to a violation of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Advocacy

Participation in work on changing the requirements for the register of contracts

In 2024, we continued our involvement in the process of creating a Central Register of Contracts. Following a series of meetings with the Ministry of Finance, initiated in 2023, it was not until 3 September 2024 that draft regulations aimed at creating the register were presented. The proposals included the creation of an ICT system for the register, the definition of the roles of data controllers and users, clarification of the scope of information to be disclosed in the register, and the postponement of the deadline for the publication of contracts from 14 to 30 days. At the same time, the threshold amount above which contracts are to be made available in the register was raised from PLN 500 to PLN 10,000. The proposal did not include a publication obligation for state-owned companies or municipal companies. In 2024, we monitored the process of drafting the regulations and participated in one meeting at the Ministry of Finance.

Laying the foundations for amendments to the Act on Access to Information

At the beginning of 2024, we continued our work on amending the Act on Access to Public Information. Szymon Osowski participated in a nationwide academic conference entitled "Access to public information and open data. Prospects and challenges", which took place on 29 February 2024 in an online format and was organised by the University of Łódź. During

conference, he gave a presentation entitled "Directions for changes in transparency – draft law on free access to information – main assumptions".

In 2024, the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland published a report entitled "Abuse of the right to information", which analyses the increasing number of cases of refusal to disclose public information on the pretext of alleged abuse of this right by applicants. The publication points out that although the concept of "abuse" does not appear in Polish law, it is used by authorities and courts to restrict access to information, which may threaten the constitutional right to information. The report contains an analysis of international standards, administrative court rulings and specific cases from our advisory practice, emphasising the need for caution and clear regulations in this area.

Throughout the year, we collected information and monitored various institutions for the second edition of the Report on the State of Transparency 2024. The report was published in January 2025.

Preparations for Poland's accession to the Open Government Partnership

In 2024, we became involved in efforts to have Poland join the international Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative. In March, we initiated meetings of civil society organisations interested in creating a coalition for the OGP in Poland. Then, on 22 April, we participated in the conference "How to effectively fight corruption?" at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, during which Minister of Justice Adam Bodnar publicly declared Poland's willingness to join the Partnership. This initiative involves the joint development of action plans for transparency and participation by the administration and civil society, which is in line with our goals. In May, the OGP sent an official invitation to the Polish government. In June, we continued the discussion during international talks in Vilnius, including a meeting with a representative of the OGP. Unfortunately, by the end of the year, the government had not taken any further concrete steps towards Poland's formal accession to the initiative.

Rule of Law Report

As in previous years, we collaborated with other organisations (the Stefan Batory Foundation, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Institute of Public Affairs and the National Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations) to prepare a contribution to the EU Rule of Law Report. In our part of the report, we focused on the need for changes to the law on access to public information.

On 28 March 2024, we signed an appeal by 38 civil society, human rights, journalism and media support organisations operating in the European Union. We jointly called on the European Commission to make better use of and increase the effectiveness of the rule of law report. We drew attention to problems with systematic and transparent cooperation between the Commission and civil society organisations throughout the reporting cycle and the lack of detail in the recommendations prepared by the Commission, which makes them difficult to enforce.

In April 2024, we took part in an international advocacy meeting of organisations preparing contributions to the reports, explored the issues raised in the letter and met with representatives of Brussels institutions.

Enforcing accountability of officials

In 2024, a parliamentary commission of inquiry into postal voting was established. The commission received the data we had collected in previous years.

At the same time, we ensured that citizens had access to this information. Before the local elections in April 2024, together with the Committee for the Defence of Democracy, we launched a unique online search engine dedicated to "envelope voting". Every voter could check whether their municipality had handed over the electoral register to the Polish Post in 2020 in violation of the law.

Despite the 2022 abolition law, not all court cases initiated by our reports of crimes committed by commune heads, mayors and city presidents who transferred voter data to the Polish Post Office have been concluded. Of the 478 reports submitted by the end of 2024, 316 proceedings were still ongoing (including 267 as part of a single combined case).

Involvement in the preparation of legislation on SLAPP

In 2024, we were actively involved in an international and national coalition against SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) – lawsuits aimed at silencing criticism of individuals and organisations acting in the public interest. In February, we participated in a meeting organised by the CASE coalition at the Council of Europe, dedicated to work on recommendations to counter SLAPP. In early April, the Council of Europe adopted an official recommendation, which is an important reference point for member states. A few days later, on 16 April, the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive was published, which is another step towards building systemic protection for journalists and activists.

A particularly important event was the international Anti-SLAPP Conference, organised jointly by us, Agora, ARTICLE 19 Europe, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and the Prague Civil Society Centre, which took place on 25-26 April in Warsaw. The conference brought together representatives of civil society organisations, the media, academia and public institutions. Speakers included Prof. David Kaye, former Council of Europe representative Irena Guidikova, Minister Adam Bodnar and Matthew Caruana Galizia. Discussions focused on how to effectively implement European anti-SLAPP solutions at the national level, how to build effective mechanisms to protect those acting in the public interest, and how to overcome the chilling effect of such legal actions. The conference was an opportunity to exchange experiences and provided impetus for further advocacy and legal action in Poland. During the conference, Minister Adam Bodnar declared the decriminalisation of Article 212 of the Criminal Code.

We also regularly participated in weekly meetings of the Polish coalition against SLAPP, cooperating in the preparation of analyses and recommendations and planning

joint advocacy activities. On 12 November 2024, we issued an appeal from civil society organisations and the media calling for urgent changes and the decriminalisation of defamation. Our involvement also included educational and media activities, including the publication of articles and reports documenting cases of SLAPP in Poland.

Counselling

In 2024, the legal advice centre of the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland recorded a record number of 1,561 cases reported, which is a significant increase compared to 1,306 cases in 2023. The clinic, which has been operating since 2009, offers free legal advice on access to public information and influencing government decisions, mainly at the local level. The team consists of eight experts supported by a substantive supervisor. In 2024, the most questions concerned the functioning of public authorities (281 cases) and public finances (203). A significant number of cases (271) related to control and influence over local affairs, including those concerning councillors (77) and complaints, motions and petitions (52). In addition, 189 cases concerned the right to information, but were so specific that they could not be assigned to any category, and 133 cases fell outside the scope of the advice centre.

The most common problems reported by users included issues related to processed information (130 cases), doubts as to the nature of public information (132), incomplete or evasive responses to requests (124) and refusals to disclose information on grounds of privacy (66).

The advice centre collects and analyses the cases reported, which allows it to monitor the state of transparency in Poland and identify areas requiring intervention. In 2024, the largest number of cases concerned municipal offices (671), ministries, municipal companies and schools (around 60 cases each), courts (34), the police (33) and museums and cultural centres (32).

The advice centre was mainly used by citizens (1,032 cases), members of the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland (74), journalists (53), social organisations (79) and councillors (68). On average, one person reported 1.5 cases.

SLAPP cases in counselling

In 2024, we began providing assistance in SLAPP cases (i.e. legal action taken against participation in public debate) at our advice centre. We helped 15 people in 12 cases. We signed agreements with nine attorneys throughout Poland. Six cases concerned violations of personal rights, three concerned Article 212 of the Criminal Code, one was an employment case, one was a police interrogation, and one was a disciplinary case concerning professional liability. We submitted six amicus curiae briefs.

End of advice on village funds

From October 2024, we will no longer provide advice on village funds.

Watchdog Fund

In 2024, we continued our cooperation with the Foundation for Poland/Ludwika and Henryk Wujec Fund in organising a competition for grants from the Watchdog Fund.

The Association transferred PLN 253,000 (from a 1.5% tax deduction) to the Fund for grants to watchdog organisations and delegated two experts to evaluate the applications. From the funds of both entities (the Foundation contributed PLN 90,000 to the Watchdog Fund and handled the competition and grants), the watchdog activities of eight initiatives were co-financed - the "World in Our Hands" Foundation; the Black Sheep of Mr. Cat Foundation; the Freedom Foundation; the Association for the Rule of Law in Schools "Association of Dead Statutes"; the Responsible Politics Foundation; the "Źródła" Centre for Environmental Action; the dO!Pamina Lab Association and the Benderowski Society.

Cooperation

Election coalition with the working name "Zaczyn"

The Zaczyn Coalition is a space for cooperation between social organisations that are jointly tackling the most important challenges facing democracy in Poland. It was established in 2022 to prepare civil society for the 2023 parliamentary elections. Since then, it has continued its activities, accompanying subsequent electoral processes and taking proactive measures against threats arising from state policy and dominant narratives. In 2024, the Coalition focused, among other things, on issues related to the integrity of electoral processes, the deteriorating state of civic space, and ways to effectively engage social organisations in the legislative process and public debate.

The Coalition was established as part of the project "From Atoms to an Organised Civil Society for the Rule of Law", implemented with a grant from the Active Citizens – National Fund programme, financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway from the EEA Funds. It is co-created by several dozen organisations from different parts of Poland with diverse profiles, ranging from watchdogs, educational and expert organisations to those working locally and for minority groups.

The coalition is co-managed by the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland (responsible for logistics, communication, grants and donor relations) and the 61 Association (mobilising new organisations, especially youth organisations, and proposing topics for discussion). The partners plan joint activities, consult each other and share resources. In 2024, weekly online meetings were held, and communication also took place via the WhatsApp group "Citizens in Elections" and the mailing list wybory@listy.siecobywatelska.pl.

Among the activities undertaken by the Coalition in 2024 were:

- sharing civic education materials about elections,
- cooperating on amendments to the electoral code,
- cooperating in advocating for changes to the electoral code.

An important achievement was maintaining a high level of engagement among Coalition members, both through regular attendance at meetings and joint initiatives. This made it possible to respond to current events, inspire each other and build a competent voice for civil society in the public debate. Together, we are learning to communicate better, divide tasks and draw on the experiences of other countries.

Activities around local elections

In 2024, the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland, in cooperation with the Responsible Politics Foundation, conducted nationwide monitoring of the use of public resources in the local government campaign. The aim of the activities was to document cases of abuse of power by incumbent candidates and to promote equal opportunities in elections. As part of the recruitment process, which ended on 27 February 2024, 83 people applied, of whom 78 were selected to participate in the monitoring. By 8 March, 44 people had signed cooperation agreements. Participants were trained in identifying and documenting cases of abuse of public resources in the election campaign.

The observers focused on practices such as:

- use of local government to promote incumbent candidates,
- organising events financed from the municipal budget to promote candidates running for re-election,
- using the social media of municipal offices and municipal companies for election campaigning,
- distribution of informational reminders for election, financed from public funds.

A special email address (wybory@siecobywatelska.pl) was set up for people outside the group of observers to report violations. In addition, educational materials were published, including a recording of a presentation on reporting violations by election committees. As part of the educational activities, citizens were encouraged to actively participate in the electoral process by observing the fairness of the campaign and monitoring the financing of election committees. The importance of equal elections and transparency of candidates' activities was emphasised. The data collected was used to develop recommendations for changes to electoral law aimed at increasing transparency and equality in the electoral process. The report on the monitoring results was prepared by the Responsible Politics Foundation.

Election observation in Georgia

Thanks to our long-standing presence in an international organisation, the Civil Society Forum (since 2011), we have contacts with organisations from countries within and outside the European Union. The forum focuses on civic issues. We have participated in the development of the Forum for many years, including as members of the Steering Committee from 2013 to 2015, then in the advocacy group, and for many years now we have been active in the solidarity group. In addition, we have been involved in the work of the working group on "Democratic Processes and Institutions" from the very beginning. One of the most important activities of this group is the issue of fair elections.

In 2024, as part of this working group operating within the Forum, but also as an act of solidarity, we participated in the observation of the exceptional parliamentary elections that took place on 26 October 2024 in Georgia.

It was supposed to be a choice between a European and a Russian direction of development. Since Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine, the ruling party, Georgian Dream, has begun to model itself on Russian legislation and narrative, both in terms of stigmatising organisations funded by international grants and calling them "foreign agents", as well as in relation to non-heteronormative people. Several opposition parties entered the race for power, planning to form a coalition after the elections. Civil society organisations were mobilised and prepared to observe the elections.

The opposition lost the elections, and mass protests continued even during the first months of 2025.

We conducted our observation together with other members of the Forum – the Czech AMO (Association for International Affairs), the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, the Polish Responsible Politics Foundation, and jointly under the auspices of the German European Platform for Democratic Elections.

Observation of the US elections

From 30 October to 10 November 2024, a representative of the Association took part in the prestigious Open World professional exchange programme organised by the United States Congress. The visit included two days in Washington, D.C., and eight days in Pensacola, Florida, where participants learned about the American electoral system "from the inside." The programme included meetings with representatives of local authorities and social organisations, as well as observations of the voter registration process and the work of election commissions. Particularly valuable were the discussions with employees of the Escambia County Supervisor of Elections Office, activists from the League of Women Voters and the founder of the local bilingual media outlet *La Costa Latina*. Participants also discussed the role of the media in democracy and countering disinformation with students and lecturers at the University of West Florida. The trip provided an opportunity to deepen knowledge about democratic practices and civic education, which may inspire activities carried out in Poland as part of the "Zaczyn" Coalition.

Monitoring activities – cooperation with other organisations

In 2024, several organisations and civic initiatives researching various areas of public life used our monitoring tool available on the fedrowanie.siecobywatelska.pl platform. The topics covered included the functioning of schools in the context of the rule of law, health and care for pupils, transparency of hunting organisations, nature conservation (in particular tree felling in road verges), the organisation of bicycle licence exams and sanitary procedures after animal bites. This monitoring served to obtain data necessary for conducting watchdog, advocacy and information activities.

Tour de Constitution

In 2024, we took part in the nationwide Tour de Constitution initiative, participating in events in Ustka, Lublin, Hajnówka, Kalisz, Częstochowa, Odolanów, Police and Pleszew. At each stop, we ran our own information stand, where we familiarised participants with the topic of the right to information and its importance for

democracy. Our presence was an opportunity to talk directly with citizens, share knowledge and promote the active use of citizen control tools.

International cooperation

ATI Community of Practice and TicTec Conference

In April 2024, we joined an international community of practitioners (*Community of Practice*) dealing with access to information, coordinated by the British organisation MySociety. This community brings together organisations from different countries that share their experience and strategies for developing platforms through which information requests can be submitted, and support each other in solving problems. Online meetings serve to exchange knowledge, build relationships between practitioners and reflect on common challenges and good practices in watchdog activities. On 12-13 June 2024, we took part in the TicTec conference in London organised by MySociety, where we talked about the use of artificial intelligence to analyse responses during our monitoring activities. We also took part in a full-day meeting of people from Europe and Brazil working on the right to information.

The Meijers Committee (De Commissie Meijers)

The Meijers Committee is an independent group of legal experts established in 1991 on the initiative of Prof. Herman Meijers to analyse European law in the context of democracy, transparency and the protection of civil rights. The Committee was established in response to excessive secrecy in the EU decision-making process, particularly around the Schengen Agreement and the so-called compensatory measures introduced without democratic control. Currently, the Committee focuses, among other things, on migration and asylum law, data protection, equality before the law, standards in criminal law and the state of the rule of law in the European Union.

In 2024, we participated in the work [on the Meijers Committee's commentary](#) on access to information in the European Union, in the context of the use of messengers and applications for official communication. Together with experts from Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the University of Wrocław, we presented our experiences and recommendations on the transparency of digital communication by EU officials in the light of Regulation 1049/2001.

CEELI

The CEELI Institute is an independent organisation based in Prague, founded in 2000 as a continuation of the American Bar Association's initiative to support the development of the rule of law in Central and Eastern Europe. The Institute focuses on strengthening the independence of the judiciary, combating corruption, building legal capacity and supporting civil society through training, networking and exchange of experience. In 2024, we participated twice in meetings on the right to information organised by the CEELI Institute in Prague. On 30–31 May 2024

we participated in an international expert meeting *entitled Using Access to Information as an Anti-Corruption Tool*. The meeting was devoted to the use of the right to information as a tool to combat corruption in Central and Eastern Europe. During the discussion, we presented the state of access to information regulations in Poland, talked about good practices, challenges related to the supervision of the implementation of the law, and the possibilities of using new technologies. The meeting was attended by experts and representatives of civil society organisations from the region. The meeting was part of the work on a report on the right to information in Central and Eastern Europe.

On 20–21 October 2024, we took part in the launch of the report *Shining the Light on Corruption: Freedom of Information and Transparency in Central and Eastern Europe*, published by the CEELI Institute. The publication, authored by David Banisar, analyses the state of the right to information in the region and its importance for combating corruption. The report highlights, among other things, the need for access to information in areas such as public procurement, the justice system and healthcare. During the expert meeting accompanying the launch in Prague, we shared our experiences as a civil society organisation actively using the right to information in its watchdog and advocacy work.

CASE

In 2024, we continued our cooperation within the CASE (Coalition Against SLAPP in Europe) coalition. We participated in a conference in Strasbourg, promoted a competition against SLAPP and invited coalition members to participate in a Polish conference on SLAPP.

K-Monitor

On 21–22 November 2024, an international conference entitled “Local Democracy in Practice” was held in Budapest, organised by K-Monitor and devoted to challenges and good practices in the functioning of local democracy. The event was attended by representatives of civil society organisations, local governments and research institutions from Central and Eastern Europe. The Citizens Network Watchdog Poland was represented by a legal expert who participated in a panel on the use of the right to information as a tool for civic control and strengthening the transparency of local authorities. Participation in the conference was an opportunity to exchange experiences and establish new contacts in the region. The topics discussed, including participatory budgeting, access to data and relations between citizens and local governments, enriched our perspective on local activities in the European context.

European Youth Parliament

In August 2024, we took part in an event organised by the European Youth Parliament, where we ran an information stand and an educational workshop on transparency in public life and the fight against corruption in the European Union. Participants also had the opportunity to learn how civil society, including organisations such as ours, can combat corruption by using, among other things, the right to information, watchdog activities and cooperation with the media. Our presence at the event was an opportunity for us to raise legal awareness among young people.

Education

Transparency on the way

In 2024, the Association carried out the first edition of the "Transparency on the Road" project – a series of meetings with residents on transparency and issues important to the local community. We visited six towns: Mikorzyn, Ciechocinek, Falenty, Gdynia, Bytów and Olsztynek. Over the course of a week, the team travelled 2,694 km, talking about the right to information, the role of councillors and the activities of watchdogs. The topics of the meetings were tailored to local needs. The aim of the initiative was not only to educate and disseminate knowledge, but also to support and strengthen local activists.

Training for councillors, village leaders and officials

In 2024, we conducted educational activities in various parts of the country, aimed at representatives of local communities and the administration. During a meeting of village leaders and village heads in Mikorzyn, we conducted workshops on access to information and the role of residents in monitoring the activities of the authorities. In Smugi, we gave a presentation on "The attributes of a councillor" and discussed tools for the effective performance of their duties as part of a workshop for councillors and village leaders. In addition, in the autumn, we conducted two paid training courses for officials in Siechnice and Lichnowy on the information obligations of public administration.

Anti-burnout conferences

In 2024, we organised two anti-burnout meetings for socially engaged people, activists and employees of civic organisations. The initiative was a response to signals that, apart from knowledge and education, people increasingly need space to rest, regenerate and talk about their difficulties. During the meetings, participants were able to share their experiences, talk about the emotions associated with public action and learn simple tools to counteract burnout. The conferences showed how important it is to create a community based not only on common goals, but also on concern for mental well-being and mutual support.

Guardian Initiative School

As part of the recruitment process for the 7th edition of the Guardianship Initiative School, 151 applications were received, from which 22 participants from all over Poland were selected. The School's programme was implemented in a hybrid format, comprising an online course on human rights and access to information, a series of thematic webinars (including the rule of law, spatial planning, municipal budgeting, waste management and communication in social media) and three face-to-face meetings in January, March and May 2024. In addition, a meeting dedicated to the well-being and occupational health of citizen guards was planned. An important element of the programme was also the practical monitoring carried out by the participants. They presented the results of their work to those attending the Fanek and Fanów Jawności Rally in September 2024.

(No) hope for small and large municipalities

In 2024, the third edition of the course "(No) Hope for Small and Large Municipalities" was held, aimed at people active in local communities, such as municipal residents, councillors, village leaders and people interested in local government activities. Over 500 people signed up to participate. The course programme included eight webinars and an online course covering topics related to human rights, access to public information and the functioning of local government. Participants had access to training materials, could use a legal advice centre and participate in a closed discussion group. In the end, over 400 people from all over Poland took part in and completed the course.

Anti-SLAPP course – Solidarity against SLAPP

In 2024, we continued the training programme on SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) for lawyers and activists, which we had launched in September 2023 in cooperation with the Prague Civil Society Centre (PCSC). In December 2023, the training regulations were developed and the call for participants was announced. A total of 41 people were selected from 60 applications: 19 lawyers (including trainees and legal advisors) and 22 activists from all over Poland.

The first meeting took place on 2–3 February 2024 in Pruszków, and the classes were conducted by, among others, Dr Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska (PCSC), Marzena Błaszczuk, lawyers Anna Mazurczak and Krzysztof Pluta, Dr Mirosław Wróblewski (President of the Personal Data Protection Office) and Konrad Siemaszko (HFPC). On 27 March, an additional webinar was organised with the participation of a foreign guest, British lawyer and activist Charlie Holt, devoted to issues of ethics and the strategy of "naming & shaming", responding to the needs of the participants of the meeting.

The second conference took place on 19–20 April 2024 with the participation of lawyers, activists and local journalists. Among those sharing their knowledge were Dr Bychawska-Siniarska, Marcel Kiełtyka (fact-checking expert), Anna Mazurczak, Dr Małgorzata Kożuchowska (ethics expert), Dr Mirosław Wróblewski (UODO), Konrad Siemaszko (HFHR) and Szymon Osowski.

During the meeting, a procedure for handling SLAPP cases within the legal aid centre was developed, and participating lawyers were invited to cooperate on such cases. By the end of the project, four cooperation agreements with lawyers had been signed. In May, templates for framework cooperation agreements on handling SLAPP cases were also developed. By the end of the year, a total of nine agreements for assistance in SLAPP cases had been signed with attorneys.

A total of 56 people took part in the training and project activities, exceeding the target number of 40 participants. The project significantly contributed to strengthening the organisation's capacity to counter SLAPP, enabled the establishment of lasting cooperation with experts and practitioners, and its implementation coincided with the adoption of the EU directive and the Council of Europe recommendation on this issue, which increased its relevance and media coverage.

Third Meeting of Transparency Fans

On 28–29 September 2024, the third Rally of Transparency Fans was held in Pruszków near Warsaw, organised by the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland. The event was attended by over 100 people from all over Poland – activists, councillors, village leaders, journalists, local government officials, academics and residents interested in transparency and the right to information.

The rally lasted a day and a half and included a rich programme of lectures, panel discussions, workshops and presentations of monitoring activities carried out as part of the Watchdog School. Participants exchanged experiences and good practices and jointly considered how to build an environment supportive of transparency and what conditions are necessary for the further development of such initiatives. The meeting also provided an opportunity for informal discussions and integration.

The programme of the event was developed in response to the needs and suggestions of those interested in participating, as well as based on the organisers' experience from previous years. In addition, on the eve of the Rally, on 27 September, a full-day workshop entitled "How to communicate with the environment in which we operate" was organised, attended by 20 participants of the Rally.

The Rally was an opportunity to strengthen the community of people working for transparency in public life, as well as to build relationships and cooperation between various groups involved in promoting the right to information.

Human Rights Defenders Rally

On 29–30 November 2024, Warsaw hosted the third Human Rights Defenders' Rally, organised by the National Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations. One of the partners of the event was the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland, which organised a workshop entitled "How to defend yourself against disinformation? The ABCs of fake news and content verification tools".

The substantive part was led by experts from the Demagog Association: Dr Aleksandra Monkos (educational project coordinator) and Adam Maternik (senior analyst and deputy information verification coordinator).

The training was divided into four modules, including an introduction to the phenomenon of disinformation, a discussion of the most common mechanisms of manipulation and the reasons why people succumb to false narratives. Participants also learned the basic principles of fact-checking, tools to help verify information, and how to navigate the internet safely. The workshops included both theoretical and practical exercises based on real-life examples. The aim of the classes was to increase the awareness and competence of human rights defenders in recognising and countering disinformation, especially in the context of social and civic activism.

Communication and fundraising

Social media

In 2024, the Association consistently developed its presence on social media, increasing the reach and diversity of its communication channels. On Facebook, the number of followers increased from 48,000 to almost 50,000, and on Platform X (formerly Twitter) from 25,800 to almost 30,000. We saw dynamic growth on Instagram, where the number of followers exceeded 4,300, and on LinkedIn, where the profile is now followed by over 1,100 people. We have also significantly increased our presence on TikTok – from 295 to 759 followers and over 8,800 likes – and on YouTube, where the number of subscribers has grown from 641 to 880.

In February 2024, we launched a profile on Mastodon, which had 955 followers by the end of the year, and in November we started our presence on Bluesky, reaching 823 followers in less than two months. The decline in the number of followers on Wykop (from 3,395 to 3,363) was an exception to the overall upward trend. The data confirms that our content is increasingly tailored to different audiences and that we are also developing our communication on new, more decentralised social media platforms.

Texts and "Watchdog's Eye"

In 2024, we continued our intensive information and education activities on our online channels, publishing content that strengthens citizens' knowledge of the right to information, local government, and social control. In January 2024, we began publishing videos in the series "Through the Eyes of Watchdog", in which we briefly summarise the most important events at the end of each week. In 2024, our videos and podcasts were viewed 34,500 times on YouTube. We published 252 articles – 180 on siecobywatelska.pl and 72 on informacjapubliczna.org.

A series of articles on the informacjapubliczna.org portal devoted to access to data contained in public registers (including KRS, CEIDG, land and mortgage registers, CRBR) and practical aspects of the right to information, such as the anonymisation of applicants and the concept of processed information, attracted particular interest. On siecobywatelska.pl, the most popular topics included the local government election campaign in the local media, abuses in local government, the blocking of citizens on social media by the authorities, and landmark court rulings, such as the ECtHR judgment in our case. These texts not only educated, but also commented on current events, showing the practical application of the right to information in the everyday lives of citizens.

At the same time, we developed our Watchdog podcast series, *Zajawka*, with the most popular episodes focusing on the work of councillors, the tasks of local government, reports on the state of municipalities, and the role of village leaders.

The most read texts on siecobywatelska.pl in 2024
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- [Finance election](#) [Election](#) – a short guide (guest article by the Responsible Politics Foundation)
- [The Whistleblower Protection Act is now in the Journal of Laws](#)
- [What councillors should know before their first session – frequently asked questions](#)
- [Transparency removed from the screen](#)
- [Credit of trust](#)
- [Election campaign in the "government newspapers"](#)
- [Ice cream on the Baltic coast \(and elsewhere\)](#)
- [Candidate for mayor – on the misuse of public resources in local government campaigns](#)
- [Blocking on social media – how to fight it?](#)
- [Watchdog wins before the European Court of Human Rights!](#)

Most read articles on informacjapubliczna.org in 2024

1. [Public information in publicly available sources - National Court Register \(KRS\)](#)
2. [Public information in publicly available sources - Central Register and Information on Economic Activity \(CEIDG\)](#)
3. [Public information in publicly available sources – Electronic Land and Mortgage Register. part 2.](#)
4. [Information about disciplinary action taken against an employee of a public authority – is it subject to disclosure?](#)
5. [Processed information – a practical guide](#)
6. [Public information in publicly available sources - Electronic Land and Mortgage Register. part 1. Land and mortgage register number in the context of the provisions of the Act on Access to Public Information.](#)
7. [Anonymous request for access to information](#)
8. [Who is a person performing public functions?](#)
9. [Information public in publicly available sources – Central Register of Beneficial Owners](#)
10. [Is correspondence between councillors public information?](#)

Most popular podcasts

1. [What should a councillor know before their first session?](#)
2. [Listen to a podcast about local government](#)
3. [Rate your councillor! - listen to the latest podcast](#)

- [New episode of Zajawka - about village leaders and village councils](#)
- [Podcast about the Small Community](#)

1.5% campaign

In 2024, as part of our annual fundraising campaign, we raised PLN 1,495,533.70. These funds were donated by 6,300 people who decided to support our efforts to promote transparency in public life. The theme of our 2024 election campaign was "We care about Orzeł". We drew attention to the illegal use of local government media, public property and budget funds to promote specific candidates, reminding everyone that democracy is based on honesty, transparency and equal opportunities.

Fundraiser for SLAPP suits

In 2024, we launched a special fundraiser called "Fight SLAPP!" to raise funds for legal aid and organisational support for individuals and entities affected by lawsuits aimed at silencing criticism (SLAPP). Thanks to the campaign, we drew public attention to the growing scale of this phenomenon in Poland and the need for systemic support for journalists, activists and civil society organisations.

Closure of the Sprawdzamy Jak Jest (We check how it is) platform

On 30 October 2024, we officially ended the [Sprawdzamyjakjest.pl](https://sprawdzamyjakjest.pl) project, a website for social analysis of public data. We started working on the project in mid-2018. In November 2018, through a vote by the Wykop community, we selected the project's logo and domain name. In April 2019, we launched the first tests of the website with the participation of people from outside the project team.

Over the past few years, with the active participation of users, we have carried out several campaigns on topics such as nutrition in hospitals, the functioning of courts, reports on the state of municipalities, remote council sessions, so-called envelope elections, forest protection (in cooperation with the Lasy i Obywatele Foundation) and the activity of politicians on social media (in partnership with the Pravda Association). As part of the project, we jointly analysed over 18,000 documents, and the reports from the analyses remain available on the project website (<https://sprawdzamyjakjest.pl/#!/annotations/missions>).

The project created a unique tool using machine learning models and gamification elements to engage users and conduct educational activities. The project was made possible thanks to the support and commitment of our partners and the Gerere Foundation.

Warsaw, 22 April 2025.