



POLSKIE TOWARZYSTWO
PRAWA ANTYDYSKRYMINACYJNEGO

Report on the educational activity „Legal community as guardians of human rights”

In May and June 2020, PSAL, together with the Human Rights Commission at the National Bar Council of Attorneys at Law, organized a series of webinars entitled “Legal community as a guardian of human rights”, devoted to counteracting discrimination in various life situations. The event was extremely popular in the legal community. About 150 people took part in each of the three meetings!

The selection of topics was not accidental. It was about choosing issues that were still little explored from the perspective of applying the law, but also responding to current social needs, due to their politicization or omission in the public debate, to the detriment of the well-being of many people living in Poland.

The first meeting on "Abortion, sex education and other reproductive rights in the practice of legal professions" was held on May 27. With the lawyer of the Federation for Women and Family Planning trainee advocate Kamila Ferenc we answered such questions as: What are reproductive rights? Is there discrimination about access to legal abortion? Does Poland implement international obligations to implement sex education? The expert gave practical advice on how to enforce access to these rights using available tools of national law, as well as on how to prepare a case. She talked about issues of evidence, the specifics of the issue due to the frequent stigmatization of those who want to perform abortions, or the most frequent misuses on the part of public authorities / officers.

The next meeting took place three weeks later - on June 17. This time, adv. Anna Mazurczak from PSAL met with a member of the Expert Committee on Homelessness at the Ombudsman dr. Adam Ploszka, who presented the topic "Discrimination on the grounds of socio-economic status". The topic discussed during the webinar was not explicitly expressed in the provisions of Polish anti-discrimination law. Non-governmental organizations such as PSAL are receiving more and more signals about cases of refusal to provide services to the homeless or the poor - refusal to use the laundry or purchase a meal. More and more problems in unequal access to health services have been highlighted by the coronavirus pandemic. During the webinar, the expert discussed possible legal protection measures against discrimination and ideas for precedent-setting court proceedings in this area.

Our cycle was closed by a webinar on "The human right to a healthy environment - from theory to practice", which took place on June 24. During the meeting Irmina Kotiuk, an expert of the ClientEarth Foundation from Brussels, discussed international environmental law taking into account human rights standards, as well as the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, regarding environmental protection in relation to the rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, i.e. the right to life or the right to privacy and family life. At the invitation of our guest the webinar was also attended by attorney Zuza Warso from the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, and ClientEarth expert in Poland responsible for strategic litigation in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe – attorney-at-law Agnieszka Warso-Buchanan. The experts discussed the concepts of environmental protection and selected national case law and proceedings against Poland that are pending before the Strasbourg Tribunal regarding the right to clean air.

All three meetings were attended by both people practicing the profession of attorney at law and advocate, as well as a judge, those in the course of legal training or studying law, and also representing the academic community. Our goal was to enable a deeper analysis of the presented topics, but also to encourage active action for social change. By passing on the knowledge packet, we aimed to strengthen the thinking that, as legal practitioners, we have special resources that we should share with the rest of society, whether conducting pro bono cases or preparing bills.