



A brief recount of the event "Pro bono for equality" - 1st of March 2019 - White & Case Warsaw Office

This year PSAL decided to bring together an extraordinary array of professional "Pro Bono" program lawyers and civil society activists active within the informal platform "Coalition for Equal Chances", (also coordinated by PSAL). The meeting was aimed at increasing the interest within the sector of barristers and legal counsels towards their possible further future involvement in terms of pro bono activity, which benefits human rights advocates and discriminated individuals. Professional lawyers could also witness up close - thanks to the interactive formula of the event - how such activity benefits them in return.

The event began with an introduction by legal counsel Karolina Kędziora, PSAL 's president, and legal counsel Michał Subocz , a partner at the White & Case Warsaw Office. Barrister Mikołaj Pietrzak, Dean of the Warsaw Bar Association, followed with his lecture " Human rights - a joint responsibility of civil society organisations and bar associations". The Dean himself remains a key figure for PSAL, seeing as he is engaged with the organisation's activity since 2012. It was thanks to his support that the first lawyers have decided to sign up to the Pro Bono program to start providing legal aid to those most in need. Today PSAL has around 60 lawyers on its pro bono list nationwide.

The first panel consisted of professional lawyers exchanging information about good practices concerning the cooperation between civil society and bar associations. These practices were developed also in due course by PSAL during the implementation period of the project "[Lawyers for equality. Local collaboration platforms](#)". The expert voices in this panel included : legal counsel Magdalena Witkowska, legal counsel Anna Kluczek-Kollar (both from the Gdańsk Legal Counsel Association) and legal counsel Filip Czernicki, who shared his experiences as the Pro Bono Project Coordinator of the Warsaw Legal Counsel Association.

The following panel focused on the topic of "Legal aid is worth it - cooperation between pro bono lawyers and civil society". PSAL's most prominent cases of the passing year were presented by pro bono lawyers who took it upon themselves to become their leading legal representatives. Both barrister Emilia Barabasz and barrister Weronika Papucewicz shared their experiences and opinions on their work. Mrs Dorota Ngyren, PSAL's client - a journalist who was degraded at her workplace for refusing to provide the public with the ethnicity of a person present in one of her press releases - spoke of her perspective as an individual who gained pro bono legal support in a case of discrimination via



association. Anton Ambroziak, an oko.press award-winning journalist on the other hand expressed how important civil society-legal sphere cooperation proves to be from the viewpoint of independent media and its task of providing information on cases of discrimination. The panel was facilitated by legal counsel Karolina Kędziora.

The event ended with a panel surrounding the subject of "Civil society in times of the degradation rule of law - legal support during hard times", which focused on current difficulties of civil society organisations which are active in the human rights and antidiscrimination sector in Poland. After an insightful presentation of examples of concrete cases, provided by barrister Maria Sankowska-Borman, Ewa Kulik-Bielińska, the head of the Stefan Batory Foundation and Draginja Nadazdin, the head of Amnesty International Poland, Weronika Czyżewska-Wagłowska, vice-president of the National Federation of Polish NGOs and Eliza Rutynowska, PSAL's advocacy officer, concluded with the panel with their first-hand experience and viewpoints on the topic. The panel was facilitated by PSAL's board member - barrister Anna Mazurczak.

The entire event was made possible thanks to the generosity of the White & Case Warsaw Office, which welcomed PSAL into their premises and also provided the catering. PSAL would like to use this possibility to express its heartfelt gratitude for this display of support for its activity.

PSAL would like to invite all to take a look through the photographic recap of the meeting and the enclosed short video clips. All those interested in starting their own cooperation with PSAL and its Pro Bono legal aid program are encouraged to contact Eliza Rutynowska (erutynowska@ptpa.org.pl) or legal counsel Karolina Kędziora (kkedziora@ptpa.org.pl).