

The Pismo Foundation:
request for support.

MAGAZYN OPINII
Pismo.



Democracy in Poland - a major EU country - is deteriorating.

One of the most important EU countries and a #1 NATO frontline ally facing Russian aggression:



In the same time it's democracy deteriorates under autocratic conservative government:

- In 2021 *Democracy Index Report* (The Economist) Poland is rated as flawed democracy.
- In 2017-2021 recorded the biggest decline in democracy in CEE i Central Asia (Freedom House).
- In 2020 *Human Freedom Index* (the Cato Institute's) fell to 40th from a high of 21st in 2011.
- 2021 *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)* report finds Poland "most autocratizing country" in 2010-2020.
- EU blocked/delayed part of EU funds due to breaching democratic standards in Poland.

Free media are under significant political pressure...

World Press Freedom Index, 2022:

Poland has fallen to its **lowest position ever - 66th** out of 180 countries - from **18th** place in 2015.



Reuters Digital News Report 2022:

- Polish authoritarian government controls public TV and radio stations regional media (stated controlled oil giant Orlen took over Polska Press and in five months replaced 15 out of 16 editors).
- Government attempt to take over TVN, the second largest TV station; “Lex TVN” legislature forcing Discovery to sell blocked only after US pressure.
- 187 lawsuits or SLAPPs* against independent media and journalists between 2015 and 2021.

* SLAP: strategic lawsuit against public participation filed by individuals or entities associated with the state

... with the smaller independent media squeezed by the economical conditions and cut off from public funding...

The Inflation exceeding 17% in autumn 2022

puts a pressure on the financial stability of independent media like Pismo, both on the cost and the revenue sides of the P&L.

Increasing political pressure

Independent media

Lack/limited public and private funding

- Public funding channeled to the institutions supporting the current far-right government.*
- A growing reluctance in the private sector to support with the growing concern that this may lead to negative reactions from the government.
- Publicly controlled enterprises withdraw advertising from the “not aligned” media and redirect to those openly supporting the government.

* In June 2022 36 editorial offices signed a petition to the Ministry of Culture, calling for a more balanced, transparent, nonpartisan decision making process in grant program supporting small media. The National Freedom Institute (Narodowy Instytut Wolności), the major publicly funded institution supporting the development of the NGO sector in Poland, since 2015 vast majority of this funding has been directing to the organizations whose programs are aligned with the far-right-wing, nationalistic and catholic agenda.

... while the overall media landscape becomes increasingly partisan, polarized and untrusted.

Trust in media and their use as a main source of information falls down:

- Overall trust in media had fallen to 42% from 57% in 2015.
- Press is a source of news for only 13% of Poles (social media - 55%).



Polish media are highly polarized and partisan:

- Only 19% Poles see media as independent from undue political influences.
- Major TV, radio and press either state controlled or state friendly, or significantly opposing; only a handful of media claim to avoid a clear partisanship.

“Pismo. Magazyn opinii” (Pismo) is a unique non-profit initiative ...

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Our mission:

To shape current and future leaders of social, political and cultural life by exposing them to the most important issues and inspiring them to reflect on the trends shaping the future.

Who are we?

We are a team of people who believe in honest, reliable, high-quality journalism working for the public purpose.

Every day we strive to keep creating socially sensitive, in-depth and non-partisan content in an editorially independent environment.

Our values always come first and no financial gain would ever sway us to engage in sensationalized reporting or to instigate pointless partisan disputes.



... aiming to address these challenges.

“Pismo” stands for “writing” in Polish:

We believe that by offering Polish thought and opinion leaders access to in-depth, high quality, nonpartisan, fact-checked content we can contribute to opening and democratizing our society and to make it more resistant to autocracy and populism.

Pismo is distinctive on the Polish market:

- A non-profit monthly magazine publishing non-fiction (reportages, essays, portraits or interviews), fiction (short stories, poetry) and image (iconic covers, unique illustrations and photographs).
- As probably the only editorial team in Poland, it conducts diligent fact-checking of all content.
- From the start Pismo has been published in three formats – paper, digital and audio – and produces the first Polish non-fiction podcast series *Pismo Investigation*.



Although it has been published since 2018, Pismo has been nominated and awarded with major journalism prizes...

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Nominated to
international awards...

... and obtained several Polish (selected examples).



Twice for the
European Press
Prize



Grand Press
awards and
nominations



Several Sensitive
Festival's awards



True Story Award



Grand Press Photo
award



Good Journalism
award

... is recognized by independent media research and industry associations...

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**2019 Media & Marketing Polska
research on the Polish media awarded
Pismo for:**

*(...) uncompromised setting of
standards and reminding what the
essence of the press is.*



**In 2021 the Polish Chamber of Books
awarded Pismo for the promotion of
reading, emphasizing:**

*(...) [Pismo has] created an unusual formula,
innovative and attractive, which includes both
poetry and reportage. It is a magazine of
opinion emphasizing its independence from
partisan politics (...) it restores a balance and
encourages reflection on the surrounding
world.*

PIKOWY**LAUR**

... and praised for its innovative non-fiction podcast series...

- *Śledztwo Pisma* (*Pismo Investigation*) is the first Polish non-fiction podcast series.
- Each of 3 seasons was nominated for Grand Press Awards (#1 Polish journalism awards), and Season 2 received the Grand Press for audio reporting in 2020. The Epilog of Season 1 was nominated for the 2022 Podcast of the Year.
- Over 300.000 unique listeners 1.7 million times downloaded or listened episodes of all seasons.



... and the reporter-at-large *Lens* format.

- *Soczewka Pisma* (*Pismo Lens*), launched in 2021, is a content format Polish press has not been publishing for years. The outstanding journalists are working for several months on in-depth reporting on specific national or international issues, writing the long read reporter-at-large articles, rigorously verified and enriched with photographs, illustrations and data journalism.
- The 4-part series of *Lenses* called *Earth* (published in the first half of 2022), covering the climate crisis challenges, was recognized with the 2022 Grand Press Award.



Pismo is reaching Polish current and future opinion leaders...

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- Pismo readers are interested in ambitious social, economic, science, geopolitical and cultural content; are dynamic and aspiring.
- 60% of regular readers are higher and middle managers, entrepreneurs, representatives of professional services, high school and academic teachers.
- 2/3 of our audience has less than 35 years, and over 20% is below 25.



... and has around 20.000 engaged readers and listeners...

About 20.000 people read and listen to Pismo every month:

- Its paper edition is published in 12.000 copies.
- 7.000 subscribe to the paper or digital editions.
- Digital version (at magazynpismo.pl, service only for subscribers and registered users) has close to 30.000 unique users per month.
- The content of the audio version and podcasts are listened to nearly 40.000 times monthly.
- 3 seasons of Pismo Investigation podcast series have been listened/downloaded 1,7 million times by over 300.000 users.

Pismo audience is very engaged:

it's Net Promoter Score (NPS) is almost 80%, which is considered world-class.

For a reference, "Gazeta Wyborcza", premier Polish daily newspaper, has a daily circulation of just over 50.000 (plus close to 300.000 digital subscribers); the no. 1 weekly, "Polityka", has weekly circulation of ca. 90.000; monthlies like "Forbes" and National Geographic" sell 21.000 and 16.000 copiers respectively (data from H2 2021).

... providing them with insights on the most burning issues like climate change and war in Ukraine...

Examples of our work:

(selected pieces are available in English at <https://magazynpismo.pl/uphold-pismo/>)

Climate change

- Reporter at large *Earth* series, awarded Grand Press for the best coverage of climate issues in 2022
- Reporter at large *Bełchatów. Just transformation?* on the future of a Polish power plant that is largest CO₂ emitter in Europe
- *Addio pomodori. What will we lose in the climate crisis?* essay nominated to European Press Prize
- Series of reportages *Climate change already is here* (educating Polish readers that effects are already visible in Poland) and *Expedition Hope* (positive examples of initiatives coping with the challenge in Poland)

War in Ukraine,
freedom rights in
Belarus

- *Shelling* photostory awarded Grand Press Photo award
- April '22 issue with *iconic cover by Wilhelm Sasnal*, one of the most renowned Polish artist
- Personal stories *We were born for this war* (by Ukrainian poet turned soldier) and *I'am living in a different Belarus* (after crash of mass protests against regime)

... in-depth coverage on human rights, open democracy and civil society...

Examples of our work:

(selected pieces are available in English at <https://magazynpismo.pl/uphold-pismo/>)

- Long reads on unequal treatment of women, incl. in science (*Matilda's Effect*) and IT (*Where are the female programmers?*)
- Series of reportages on women's reproduction rights in Poland and Ireland, Spain, Argentina, Thailand
- Photo series *Human Rights* by renowned Polish photographers, nominated to Grand Press Photo awards
- Awarded reportage on abuses in the local government *Habitat*
- Set of debates and essays on how to run public dialog in the era of polarization, incl. *Why do we vote against our needs?* and *Draw your democracy*
- In-depth interviews presenting both left/liberal and conservative sides of a public debate, like *Left-write love* nominated to Grand Press awards

... and on the other key issues like social justice, migrations or healthy digital sphere.

Examples of our work:

(selected pieces are available in English at <https://magazynpismo.pl/uphold-pismo/>)

- **Social justice:** *Prisoners of the 4th floor* reportage nominated to European Press Prize, True Story Award; Several reporting pieces nominated and awarded with Polish journalism awards, like the long reads *I raised 19 children* and *In old age a robot will pass you a glass of water*
- **Migrations:** Photo series *Migrations* by renowned Polish photographers; Reporter at large *Revolution hugs its daughters* about Syrian female refugees, presented with the award in the social journalism category at the 2022 Good Journalism Gala
- **Healthy digital sphere:** *How to fix internet?* series of essays, reportages and meetings, incl. *Pierce you bubble* and *Political fight with algorithms* by the leader of Panoptikon, a major European open digital sphere NGO; *Techno(R)evolutions* series of essays and meetings, like *Lights and shadows of metaverse*

Pismo has a strong and diverse leadership team...



Piotr Nesterowicz

Founder & CEO. PhD in Management, ex. McKinsey Asc. Principal and telecom CEO. Writer nominated to major Polish literature awards.



Magdalena Kicińska

Editor-in-Chief. Reporter, writer and poet. Awarded 2017 Grand Press for the best interview. Nominated author of several non-fiction and poetry books.



Kalina Wyszyńska

Chief Commercial Officer. Experienced executive with focus on press, online media and subscription based services.

... and transparent governance structure.

- Pismo is run by the non-profit Pismo Foundation.
- It is overseen by the Board of Foundation. It's non-executive members have background in business, professional services, media and NGO. Several of them are private donors of Pismo. Piotr Noceń, the Managing Partner of the private equity firm Resource Partners, is the President of the Board.
- Pismo's financial statements and reports are available on Pismo web site. From 2021 the results of Pismo are audited.



Pismo annual budget is close to EUR 800 thousand...

2023 Budget	
Total, EUR*	780 000
Team	46%
Content (paper, digital, audio)**	24%
Printing, distribution and postage	21%
Marketing, online store	6%
Administrative, accounting and other	3%

* Exchange rate 1 EUR = 4,68 PLN

** And related IT development costs

... which has been equally financed by the reader revenue and the support from private and institutional donors.

Pismo revenues structure

	2020	2021	2022	2023 Budget
Total, thousand EUR	615	503	624	686
Donations & grants**	58%	35%	56%	47%
Reader revenue***	42%	65%	44%	53%

* Exchange rate 1 EUR = 4,61 PLN (2020), 4,6 PLN (2021), 4,68 (2022), 4,68 (2023)

** Includes private and institutional donors, corporate sponsorship and grants

*** Includes revenues from subscriptions, retail sales of paper edition, online tore

There are international foundations among the donors supporting Pismo.

Selected examples of organizations supporting Pismo:



Initiative of 16 European foundations aiming to support democracy and solidarity. Among its programs Civitates runs a fund on public interest journalism, under which it selected 11 independent media projects from the whole EU, including Pismo, and awarded them with the 3-year institutional grants



Swiss-based foundation supporting literature. Since 2021 it has been supporting Pismo in the field of literature (poetry, short stories and essays).



US-based foundation aiming to build and accelerate the ambition of climate solutions around the globe. In 2021 it supported Pismo in the development of climate change related content.



Supports the development of relations between the two nations. Since 2019 supported Pismo through a set of grants related to the issues of Polish-German cooperation, development of pro-environmental initiatives, and the geopolitical issues in the light of Russian aggression on Ukraine.

The Strategy 2025 aims to secure a long term financial stability, double the readership and enhance quality content.

2025 key strategic drivers:

- Development of the audio and digital content (investments in content translating into the costs +65% v 2022) and distinctive content in the magazine (like the *Pismo Lenses*);
- 35k regular readers/listeners and close to 18k subscribers (+160% growth vs 2022);
- PLN 4,7 million (EUR 1m) of revenues (+60% vs 2022), with reader revenue covering 75% of the budget; stable fundraising approaching PLN 1.5 million (over EUR 300k);
- Investments in marketing and retention (budget +30% vs. 2022), and in IT development;
- Significant extension and strengthening of the team (investment translating into the salary costs increasing + 50% vs. 2022, in part also the effect of forecasted inflation).

The funding from private and institutional donors is crucial to support long term financial stability.

Financing Pismo's Strategy 2025:

- The fundraising revenues from the private and institutional donors will represent an important source of revenues in coming years.
- Institutional funding is key for the successful implementation of the Strategy 2025, being a main source of financing the investments in team, marketing activities, IT development and content enhancement.
- It will provide the mid-term stability (bridge) until the reader revenue objectives will be achieved.

Responding to the political and economic pressures on Polish independent media:

A stable, mid-term aid from the international donors through the multi-year institutional grants is of critical value for supporting Polish independent media working for the public interest and for the local healthy civil society and open democracy.



Request for support.

Pismo is looking for donors willing to support our mission-driven initiative. We believe international donor support is key to shape current and future leaders of the important European country which faces significant threats to democracy and free media, and to promote and nourish the non-partisan, in-depth, high-quality journalism that works for the public purpose.

We are especially interested in the institutional support that will co-finance Pismo's investments in the subscriber growth (the team, marketing and IT development, content enhancement), thus providing mid to long term financial stability.

We are also open to other formats of funding and donor's objectives, as long as they are in line with the mission and values of Pismo.



Pismo. Magazyn opinii:

A unique non profit media project aiming to shape current and future leaders of Polish social, political and cultural life by exposing them to the most important issues and inspiring them to reflect on the trends shaping the future.

It restores the faith in in-depth, reliable, non-partisan, high-quality journalism working for the public purpose.

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