

Pismo: influencing
current and future
opinion leaders
and reaching the
new/press avoiders
in Poland.

MAGAZYN OPINII
Pismo.



Democracy and trust in media in Poland is deteriorating, share of new/press avoiders increases and independent media are under significant pressure.

Democracy in Poland deteriorates and independent media are under pressure:

- Independent reports indicate decline in the open, democratic society measures.
- In 2022 *World Press Freedom Index* Poland has fallen to lowest position ever, 66th from 18th in 2015.
- The surge of inflation in Poland of cumulative 34% in 2021-2023 period puts significant pressure on costs and revenues of independent media.



The trust in media declines, while the segment of “news/press avoiders” increases:

- There is growing segment of “news avoiders”, mostly younger, women and from lower socioeconomic classes. 50% of Poles access news on social media, only 10% in press.
- Overall trust in media had fallen to 39% from 57% in 2015. Only 19% of Poles see media as independent from undue political influences.



"Pismo. Magazyn opinii" (Pismo) is a unique non-profit initiative aimed to address these challenges.


Mission:

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

Vision:

Pismo is a role model for independent journalism working for the public purpose, uncompromising on quality, depth and reliability of content. Is a major source of in-depth knowledge about the world and people for Polish opinion leaders.

We believe that by offering Polish 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 media market.

- A non-profit (published by a Pismo Foundation) monthly magazine focused on developing **socially sensitive, long-read/listening, in-depth and non-partisan content.**
- Combines several forms: **investigative reporting** (reporter-at-large, narrative reportages, reportage podcast series) with **non-fiction** (essays, portraits or interviews), **fiction** (short stories, poetry) and **image** (iconic covers, unique illustrations, photo reportages and graphic stories).
- From the start Pismo has been published in **three editions**, paper, digital and audio, with unique focus on non-fiction, investigative podcast series.
- As one of a few, if not the only editorial team of regularly publishing media in Poland, it diligently **fact-checks all content.**



It provides insights on the most burning and complex issues.

Examples of the issues covered by Pismo include:



Climate change and environmental issues:

- Reporter-at-large (*Pismo Lens*) [Earth](#) series, awarded Grand Press for the best coverage of climate issues in 2022.
- [Addio pomodori. What will we lose in the climate crisis?](#) essay nominated to European Press Prize.
- [Water fake](#) investigative at-large piece covering the causes of the ecological disaster on the Odra river in 2022.

War in Ukraine:

- [Shelling](#) and [Bachmut. Ten months of battle for the city](#) photo reportages awarded Grand Press Photo awards.
- Reporter-at-large (*Pismo Lens*) [Home packed in one bag](#) on the fate of Ukrainian refugees in Poland and the integration challenges year after the aggression (2023).

Social justice, human rights, migrations:

- [Prisoners of the 4th floor](#) reportage nominated to European Press Prize, True Story Award.
- The reporter-at-large piece [Promised Land](#) received Polish Press Agency 2024 Award for the Best Text.
- Photo series [Human Rights](#) by renowned Polish photographers.
- Awarded reporter-at-large [Revolution hugs its daughters](#) about Syrian female refugees.

Open society, democracy, :

- Reporter-at-large (*Pismo Lens*) [Finally free. Faces of the Confederation](#) “deep story” on who are the people voting for the the Polish most right wing nationalists.

A selection of our work translated in to English is available at:
magazynpismo.pl/uphold-pismo

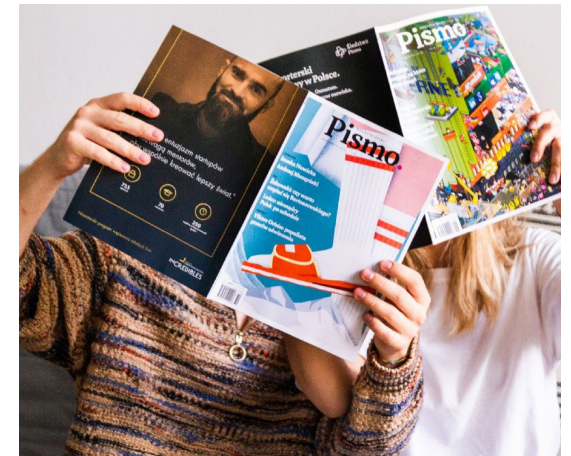
Impact: Pismo reaches Polish current and future opinion leaders.

Our audience of opinion leaders is very engaged:

- Close to 50% of regular readers are higher and middle managers, entrepreneurs, representatives of professional services, high school and academic teachers, NGO leaders.
- Pismo's Net Promoter Score (NPS) exceeds 80%, which is considered world-class.

About 50k read and listen to Pismo every month*:

- 20k regular readers: ca. 10k read the print edition, 8k the digital edition, and 2k listen to the audio version.
- Over 9k subscribes the paper and digital & audio editions.
- Paper edition is published in 12k copies.
- Digital version (available behind the paywall) has 40k unique users monthly and the audio version and podcasts are listened to nearly 20k times per month.



* For reference, in 2023 "Gazeta Wyborcza", premier Polish daily newspaper, had an average daily circulation of 40k (plus close to 300k digital subscribers); the no. 1 weekly "Polityka" has a weekly circulation of 80k; monthlies like "Forbes" and "National Geographic" sell 22k and 15k copies respectively [PBC report]

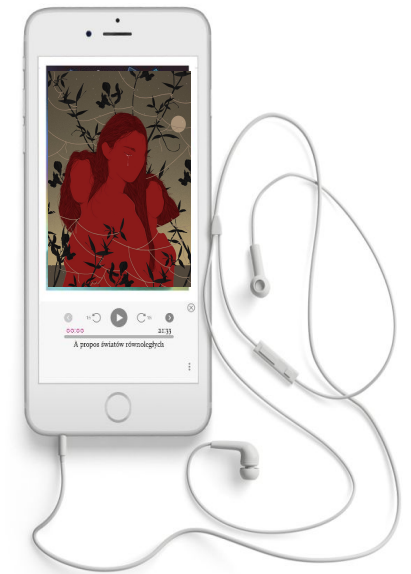
Impact: Pismo targets the growing segment of the “news/press avoiders” with the non-fiction podcast series.

Non-fiction narrative podcast serial is one of the most innovative and promising content formats.

It combines a reportage story (100% fact-based), a podcast (one of the fastest-growing content formats), and a serial (as format supporting storytelling of long, complicated stories provided in an attractive way). In other words, it is a documentary serial that is produced as audio instead of video/television.

All seasons (6 of *Pismo Investigation* plus 2 other new series) and have been listened nearly 2,4 million times by almost 350k listeners:

- The audience is very close to the profile of the “news/press avoiders”: primarily women (74% of the listeners) and young (67% <35 years, 15% < 24).
- Pismo reaches them with content covering complex and sensitive topics, like: issues in the foster care; physical and sexual violence faced by provincial youth; abuse of power and false solidarity of medical professionals; parental kidnappings and related failures of the justice system; stalking.



Impact: Although Pismo has only been published since 2018, it has been nominated/awarded with major journalism prizes.

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Nominated/short listed to international awards:



Twice to the European Press Prize



Twice to the True Story Award

Obtained several Polish awards (selected examples):



Grand Press awards and nominations



Grand Press Photo award



Several Sensitive Festival's awards



Good Journalism award

Impact: Pismo is recognized by independent research and industry organizations.

Media & Marketing Polska (media industry publication):

- In 2019 distinguished Pismo for: (...) *uncompromised setting of standards and reminding what the essence of the press is.*
- In 2023 awarded Magdalena Kicińska “Editor in-Chief of the Year”, justifying: *After five years of existence, "Pismo" in each issue confirms that calling it the Polish version of "The New Yorker" is not an exaggeration (...) is a rare commodity these days. (...) We are witnessing a deep crisis of the printed press (...) as well as the media's pursuit of not necessarily real, but "freshest" news and clickbait headlines. Pismo goes against trends (...) focuses on in-depth, solidly documented journalistic materials.*

Polish Chamber of Books:

- 2021 Award for promotion of reading, underlining: *It is an opinion magazine, emphasizing its independence from party politics. (...) The mainstream media fight for visibility and heat up the dispute, reacting mainly to each other. The 2021 PIK Laurel Award is given for boldness, perseverance and awareness of threats to the near and distant future (...) Pismo restores balance and offers a reflection on the surrounding world.*

Impact: Pismo is praised for its innovative non-fiction podcast series and the reporter-at-large *Lens* format.

Pismo Investigation and other audioserials:

- The first Polish non-fiction podcast series combining investigative journalism with series storytelling in the podcast format,
- Each of six seasons was nominated for Grand Press and/or Podcast of the Year, Audionomia and Best Stream awards,
- The 2nd season received the Grand Press Award for audio reporting, Season 5 became 2024 Podcast of the Year.
- In August 2024 a new series *Saami. Scandinavia's remorse* premiered, being a first step in the expansion of the format beyond current franchise.

Pismo Lens:

- Long-read, reporter-at-large format that Polish press has not been publishing for years, result of several months of in-depth reporting, rigorously verified and enriched with photographs, illustrations and data journalism.
- The 4-part series of *Lenses* called *Earth* (published in H1 2022), covering the climate crisis challenges, was recognized with the 2022 Grand Press, while *Promised Land* received the Polish Press Agency 2024 Award for the Best Text.



Pismo, published by the Pismo Foundation, has a strong and diverse leadership team and a transparent governance.

Board of Foundation

- Oversees the Pismo activities, incl. budgeting, reporting, executive team composition. Includes non-executive members with background in business, professional services, media and NGO. Several of them are private donors of Pismo.
- **Piotr Nocoń**, President of the Board, is a Managing Partner of the private equity firm Resource Partners.

Management Board

- **Urszula Kifer**, Chairwoman of the Board and Editor-in-Chief. Senior editor with many years of experience in the biggest Polish print and online media, as well as independent investigative outlets like Front Story and VSquare.
- **Inez Jaworska**, Growth & Marketing Manager. She worked in fundraising for non-governmental organizations such as the Polish Humanitarian Action and the DKMS Foundation, was the vice president of the Polish Fundraising Association.

Team

- 13 team members, 10 women, 8 in the editorial team

Historically, Pismo budget of ca. EUR 900k has been financed mainly by individual Polish donors and subscriptions.

2024 Costs:

Total, EUR*	908 000
Team	51%
Content & digital	24%
Print, post & distrib	17%
Marketing & admin	8%

2024 Revenues:

Total, EUR*	997000
Donations & grants	47%
Sponsorships & ads	11%
Content licensing	6%
Reader Revenue	36%

Mainly large individual Polish donors (first round of financing 100% private), some corporate sponsorships, and international grants (like Civitates, European Media and Information Fund, Journalismfund, Jan Michalski Foundation, Zeit Foundation, Purpose Climate Lab).

Mainly subscription revenue plus retail sales.

* Exchange rate 1 EUR = 4,3 PLN

Pismo proved its overall resilience to major external developments pressuring the existence of independent media.

Declining trust in media & growth of news/press avoiders

Pressure on Polish media: layoffs, content cuts, titles discontinuation

Inflation (cumulative 34% in 2021-2023) driving up costs, slowing down new sales and increasing churn

Despite these pressures and in contrast to several Polish media outlets, Pismo invested in team, content, IT solutions, and marketing, assuming that consistent investments in these areas will generate positive payback.

Growth in reach:

- 38% UV increase 2023 vs 2020; +85% in 2023 only
- 80% increase of listenings of podcast series 2020-2023; +282k in 2023

Subscriber growth:

- 27% subscriber growth 2023 vs 2020, +22% in 2023
- 64% increase in digital subscriptions 2020-2023

Revenue growth:

- 22% growth of the overall revenues since 2020
- 30% increase in subscription revenues 2020-2023

Looking forward, Pismo focuses on developing distinctive content and driving reader revenue as a main source of income.

Pismo mid term strategic objectives (2024-2027):

- Substantially enhance unique content.
- Grow the audience reach.
- Achieve financial stability with the growth of subscriptions.
- Further develop distinctive content, especially the non-fiction podcast series like *Pismo Investigation* and investigative reporting and the reporter-at-large formats like *Pismo Lenses*.
- Increase number of engaged readers and users to over 70k monthly, and more than double the current base of the podcast series listeners (300k new) and listenings (2 mln new).
- Double the subscription base.
- Reach reader revenue representing 70%.

Pismo is looking for donors willing to help influencing current and future Polish opinion leaders and nurture a healthy civil society.

- The fundraising revenues from the private and institutional donors are key for the successful implementation of this strategy.
- It will be a main source of financing the investments in team, content enhancement, marketing and IT development.
- It will also provide a financial bridge until the reader revenue objectives will be achieved.



We believe international donor support is key to shape current and future leaders of the important European country facing 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.

It will also allow us to reach the larger audience of news/press avoiders with in-depth, reliable, and engaging storytelling on complex issues.

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.

Contact:

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