



**MY  
BODY  
IS MY  
OWN**

# Ciocia - The "anybody's Aunt" who advocates for the right to choose

Following the 2020 verdict of the Polish Constitutional Court decreeing abortion as 'unconstitutional', even in the case of severe foetus malformation, Polish women have been forced into a situation where they cannot access their right to choose parenthood or not. While abortion is recognised as a fundamental right that must be protected on a European level, after 2020 abortion in Poland was only possible when a woman's health was endangered or when the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest. Following the 2020 sentence, which should continue to prioritise the mother's health, women have not been helped by doctors on different occasions. In these cases, the doctors waited for the foetus to die before intervening, causing the deaths of several pregnant women.

In this context, where institutions have abandoned the citizens and citizens are faced with severe restrictions on their sexual rights, the Ciocia collective's work emerges as a good practice. Ciocia, which literally means "aunt" in Polish, is made up of a diaspora of Polish women who support other Polish women in accessing abortion in Poland's neighbouring countries. The collective has various locations: Czech Ciocia, Ciocia Basia (German Aunt), Ciocia Wienia (Aunt from Vienna) and Ciocia Frania (Aunt from Frankfurt). With the following actions, the collective aims to support women who want to have an abortion and who are often alone, stigmatised and criminalised.

- **Information:** Ciocia creates, publishes and disseminates informative material online and offline about abortion access in each of their locations and about how to reach facilities providing the service.
- **Mutual aid:** Ciocia organises the journeys for women, collects funds to support their travel costs and accompanies and emotionally supports women, who often don't have the language of the country where they will have an abortion.
- **Awareness-raising:** Ciocias raises awareness-raising and carries out advocacy actions to promote the full enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights in Poland and the world.

We consider Ciocia to be a good practice because it demonstrates how solidarity practices can restore dignity and freedom of choice in a context of where human rights are being threatened and denied. Furthermore, Ciocia highlights the importance of the

European community of free movement and underlines the need for a more homogenous and organic management of human rights in the EU that is agreed on and implemented by member states.

## **Strajk Kobiet - Women's strike**

The Strajk Kobiet movement was born in 2016, following attempts by the Polish government (led by the conservative party at that time) to completely eliminate the right to abortion in Poland.

The movement's protests were initially organised in response to the Conservative Party's law proposal. The protests involved all the country's main cities and effectively pushed the government to withdraw their bill. Following this episode, what emerged initially as spontaneous protests formed an organised movement with a non-hierarchical structure that is fuelled by bottom-up actions.

**The movement, to date, carries out the following actions:**

- **Protest and advocacy actions:** the movement organises strikes, roadblocks, demonstrations (such as those organised in 2020, on the occasion of the ruling of the Polish Constitutional Court to further reduce access to abortion). In addition, the movement has initiated signature collection campaigns to demand changes to laws that restrict access to abortion and threaten women's rights and health;
- **Awareness-raising and educational campaigns:** through online actions, the movement creates content to disseminate on social media and its own website. This content generates awareness about reproductive rights and the fundamental importance of defending them.
- **Mutual aid and support:** in cooperation with Ciocia organisations, the movement help Polish women who want to have an abortion access their right abroad and support them legally if they are prosecuted for having an abortion. They also provide a psychological support service;

We chose Strajk Kobiet as a good practice because it is the only entity in Poland that defends sexual and reproductive rights with a strong combination of direct action, educational, awareness-raising and advocacy actions. The movement is a true sentinel, a vigilant force of people and protest against the Polish government's continuous attempts to restrict Polish citizens' enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights. Their constant of sexual rights as human rights is also of paramount importance, since this notion crucially reaffirms the civil, political and social importance of sexuality and sexual health in a context where this is denied and repressed.

# Non è un veleno - It's not poison

In Italy, abortion is regulated by Law 194, which was passed in 1978. This law allows any woman to terminate a pregnancy within the first 90 days (12 weeks) for health, economic, social, or family reasons, based on the woman's own decision. However, after the first 90 days, abortion is only permitted for health-related reasons.

One of the most challenging aspects of Law 194 is that it upholds the right to conscientious objection. This means that, unless the woman's life is in immediate danger, medical staff can legally refuse to participate in any procedure related to abortion. In practice, the rate of conscientious objection in Italy is very high, with reasons ranging from professional, moral, emotional, or religious beliefs. Nationally, the percentage of doctors objecting to performing abortions reaches 67%, with even higher peaks in some regions—like Sicily, where it rises to 80%. This means that, on average, more than half of the abortion requests at public healthcare facilities are denied because of medical staff who refuse to perform the procedure on moral grounds.

In addition to the high levels of conscientious objection among medical professionals, there is also a structural tendency to make abortion services less visible. Hospital websites and official information portals rarely provide clear details on how or when abortions are available, further complicating access to a service that is legally guaranteed.

This situation is worsened by civil society groups that propagate narratives aiming to stigmatise and shame women who seek abortions, often trying to dissuade them from the procedure.

For instance, these organisations have flooded public spaces with posters containing misleading information about abortion drugs, particularly RU486, the AIFA-certified (Agenzia Italiana del Farmaco) abortion pill commonly used in hospitals.

The "Non è un veleno" (It's Not Poison) campaign emerged in response to this context. It is an information campaign designed to offer accurate information about abortion and women's sexual and reproductive health from a transfeminist perspective.

Non è un veleno is no longer just an information campaign; today, the collective, which was born within Maghweb, carries out the following actions on a daily basis:

**Information and dissemination:** The collective produces informative material, interviews, and promotional content about available services in the area. This is shared both through their social media pages and via printed materials distributed in strategic locations such as schools and youth gathering points.

**Education:** With the support of various projects, Non è un veleno carries out educational activities with a transformative impact.

These include workshops targeting not only young people but also their key educational figures—parents and teachers—by providing practical tools for a joint educational approach.

**Consultations:** In collaboration with obstetricians, gynaecologists, and sex counsellors, Non è un veleno offers free consultations to improve sexual health. These consultations are available both at the office located in Palermo and throughout the region, thanks to itinerant on-the-spot events conducted via a van. This allows materials, activists, and healthcare professionals to travel to the most remote and underserved areas of Sicily.

**Networking among hospitals and sexual health clinics:** The collective works daily to create networks between sexual health clinics, hospitals, and patients. This action is essential to address the lack of communication between professionals working for different institutions, as well as the lack of up-to-date information on hospital and clinic websites about how to access their services.

We considered Non è un Veleno a best practice because access to healthcare is a fundamental human right, a right often neglected when it comes to sexual and reproductive health. Therefore, we believe that improving access to abortion services through the dissemination of accurate information is a way to protect a human right that, in Italy, is currently being restricted—and in some cases, denied.

## **Obiezione respinta - Objection rejected**

Founded in 2017, the collective Obiezione Respinta collects reports and experiences related to conscientious objection in Italy. Thanks to bottom-up, collective action, over the past seven years Obiezione Respinta has collected a number of reports on hospital wards to register the presence or absence of conscientious objectors. In some regions of Italy, the rate of conscientious objection is so high that access to abortion becomes completely denied. Given the tight timeframe in which women have to move to access abortion, Obiezione Respinta's work is particularly important because it allows them to have up-to-date feedback on a suitable hospital for the user. The map, which can be consulted on the collective's website, is constantly growing thanks to the testimonies they receive daily. Anyone can make a positive or negative report on any of the hospitals and further comments and details can be added by other people on the quality of the facility's service.

The collective's main objectives are the following:

- Make the conscientious objection phenomenon visible: One of the

main objectives is to highlight how the right to abortion, guaranteed by Law 194, is in fact limited due to the high number of doctors and health staff who refuse to perform abortion in public hospitals.

- Collecting data and testimonies: Obiezione Respinta collects data from citizens who have difficulties accessing abortion, creating an interactive map which shows the hospitals and sexual health clinics in which they are objector doctors, as well as the percentage of objection in each hospital.
- Raising public awareness: Through information and awareness-raising activities, the collective strives to make people understand how conscientious objection negatively affects access to abortion and, more generally, women's reproductive rights in Italy, especially as it is not regulated and has no limitations.
- Offering support to women who need and want an abortion: the map serves to provide practical information for women about where they can find facilities that offer the abortion service without obstacles and barriers. In addition to the map, the collective promotes mutual aid tools, e.g. it provides a telephone number to be contacted in case of emergencies.

We consider Obiezione Respinta a good practice because with simple actions and bottom-up initiatives, it has managed to create a simple, user-friendly and intuitive tool that can be consulted by those who need to access abortion. The collective has also initiated a data collection action that is particularly important if we consider the fact that the Italian government and public health facilities refuse to collect and disseminate data on conscientious objection, structurally preventing possibilities of measuring the accessibility of abortion in the country.

## **Clube ESR True Colours - ESR True Colours Club - the transversal Sexuality Education Community**

Founded in 2018, the "ESR True Colours Club" is an educational club at Ramada High School in Lisbon. The club, run by activist students within Ramada's High School, has created a grassroots educational community and safer space where students can discuss and learn about sexualities and relationships from an inclusive, LGBTQIA+ perspective. The club is committed to promoting and maintaining human dignity, human freedom and human rights within the educational environment through a consistent series of grassroots educational activities, run by young people (in collaboration with educators) for young people.

## **The school club's main objectives are:**

- Creating a safer school environment that is consciously inclusive of all gender identities and sexualities. This objective is realised through: the creation and implementation of a 0 tolerance homophobia and transphobia policy among school students; increased representation of LGBTQIA+ figures on the walls and in the classrooms of the school; the introduction of pronoun culture in new school social environments and classroom environments; the dissemination of sex positive LGBTQIA+ materials about sexualities and relationships and consent in school social spaces.
- Fostering the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ perspectives in educational content at school on a historical and contemporary level. This objective is realised through the implementation of: rights-based and LGBTQIA+ focused sexual education activities; the active celebration of LGBTQIA+ history month; regular dialogues, debates and brainstorming sessions between the true colours collective and teachers about how to change the heterosexual dominant perspective of school social subject curricula; the creation of opportunities for members of the true colours collective to hold non-formal educational activities about inclusive sexual and reproductive rights and activities within social subject classrooms.
- Offering support and solidarity to people with diverse gender identities and sexualities within the school: one to one safer space sessions in which LGBTQIA+ students can express issues to older, more senior members of the school population and feel recognised and listened to; regular support groups in which LGBTQIA+ people can talk openly about their identities and sexualities in confidential, group, solidarity sessions after school.

We think ESR True Colours Club is a good practice because it has created a healthy, safe and dynamic model with which students can make meaningful changes to the social environment within their schools so that sexuality and relationships education becomes a holistic daily practice within which students have agency and a voice. It is also a good practice for inclusion, as instead of approaching inclusion in a "tag on" that adds LGBTQIA+ rights discourse to the mainstream information around sexualities and relationships, it approaches inclusion with true equality, by promoting sexuality and relationships education and awareness in the school directly from a diversity perspective.

# Project FAZ DELETE

The project "Faz Delete" is a good practice in the field of sex education, especially in the digital context, for several reasons. Firstly, the project aims to diagnose, raise awareness of and prevent image based sexual abuse (IBSA), a growing form of abuse that involves the non-consensual dissemination of sexually orientated images. The project, coordinated by Rede de Jovens para a Igualdade (the Youth Network for Equality), brings an innovative and essential approach to combating this type of violence, particularly against young women. The main activities carried out by Faz Delete include the creation of educational campaigns for schools, seminars and a study, all aimed at raising awareness of IBSA and promoting digital responsibility. These activities include the training of young people, professionals and educational organisations, as well as the publication of materials that teach how to identify and combat this form of violence.

One of Faz Delete's greatest legacies was the production of the first guide in Portugal dedicated exclusively to preventing and combating IBSA. This guiding document, developed in partnership with other organisations working in the fields of youth, education and women's rights, proposes concrete actions to protect victims, such as training professionals, including content on gender equality in school curricula and creating specialised support services for victims. This guide is an essential tool for training a new generation of educators and young people, informing them about the risks and legal measures associated with IBSA. Another important aspect of the project is that it has brought to public discussion a sharp critique of the concept of 'revenge porn', questioning the terminology that often insinuates victim blaming. The project proposes an approach that places responsibility on the aggressor and seeks to change the legal framework of the issue in Portugal, so that VSBI is treated as a crime of sexual violence, and not just as a violation of privacy. This change in narrative is fundamental to combating victim-blaming and strengthening legal protection.

REDE de Jovens has drawn up a legal opinion justifying its position on the typology of the IBSA offence and was heard by the Portuguese Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs, Rights, Freedoms and Guarantees during the discussion of various bills on the subject. The legal document drawn up by the REDE is public on Parliament's website, along with other opinions sent by other organisations.

Thus, Faz Delete not only provides essential educational tools, but



also stimulates structural changes, both in legislation and in the collective mentality, by positioning digital sexual violence not only as a crime, but also as a matter of violation of the human rights of women and girls. These actions make the project a benchmark in digital sex education and the fight against image-based violence in Portugal.



Funded by  
the European Union

