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A SUMMARY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF POLISH CANDIDATES IN THE 2014 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN IRELAND - A COLLECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES.

**CAMPAIGN
YOU ARE AT HOME, VOTE!**



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THIS PUBLICATION FORMS PART OF THE 2013-14 “YOU ARE AT HOME, VOTE!” CAMPAIGN IN IRELAND, AND CAME ABOUT THROUGH COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL FOR LEADERS ASSOCIATION, FORUM POLONIA – IRELAND, AND AROUND 70 OTHER POLISH COMMUNITY AND IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS, POLISH PARISHES, POLISH COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, SCOUT ORGANIZATIONS AND SEVERAL DOZEN LOCAL ACTIVISTS.

DUBLIN – WARSAW 2014

SUMMARY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF POLISH CANDIDATES IN THE 2014 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN IRELAND – A COLLECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

This following study is based on the experience of Polish candidates who stood in the local government elections in Ireland in 2014, and sums up the efforts of those who ran the election campaign. This valuable information was collected with a view to inspiring future candidates to get engaged in the political process, and to make it easier for them to run and succeed in future local elections in Ireland. We would also like to share our experience with regards to the running of the “Jesteś u siebie. Zagłosuj!” - JUSZ, 2013-2014). We also present profiles of the two elected councillors from minority groups - Elena Secas, the Labour Party candidate for Limerick, and Rotimi Adebari, an independent candidate who successfully ran for office in 2004 and 2009 elections for Laois County. The first part of the study

relates to the Irish electoral system and the scope of obligations and rights of councillors.

At this point we would like to thank all the candidates for providing us with invaluable information and insight, and would like to stress the importance of their input in the elaboration of this study.

Our appreciation also goes to the following:

Agnieszka Wieczorkowska

Lech Szczeciński

Marcin Czechowicz

Rafał Kornatka

Remi Sikora

Władek Hanczar

Sylvia Gołębiewska-Jakubas



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You are at home. Vote! campaign (JUSZ)

The aim of the Jesteś u Siebie. Zagłosuj! - JUSZ is to encourage the Polish minority in Ireland to take part in local government elections, both as voters and candidates. Local government elections provide the perfect opportunity to understand the main issues facing the local community. They allow the community to get actively involved in grass-roots issues and help foment a sense of empowerment at the local level. The JUSZ campaign also encourages people to vote and develop an interest in the everyday problems the local community faces.

„You are at home. Vote!” was launched in 2013 by the School for Leaders Association (Poland), Forum Polonia (Ireland) and the Polish City Club (United Kingdom).

The “You are at home. Vote!” campaign is without any political affiliation to either parties or candidates.

Among the partners of our coalition are a number of Polish community organizations from across the European Union, such as Vote-Głosuj! from Northern Ireland, Emigration Project from Belgium, Polska

Ludoteca Rodzinna from Italy, Polonia Nova from Hungary, CSR Polish Global Management from Spain, Les Polonaises from France and IDHEM from Holland.

The JUSZ campaign is joint-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Stefan Batory Foundation. It is actively supported by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Dublin.

Local government authorities in Ireland

With a population of approximately 4.5 million the Republic of Ireland has a relatively centralized administration. The local authorities are largely responsible for the provision of utilities and the monitoring of European fund spending in the region.

At the local level authority is exercised in thirty-one city councils and county councils. The local authority is responsible for:

- Housing policy
- Planning
- Road and sewage infrastructure
- Development strategy
- Environmental protection
- Leisure infrastructure
- Agriculture

- Education
- Health

The key role of the democratically elected local authority is to represent the local community. The 1999 amendment to the constitution established statutory local government elections, to be held every 5 years.

What can a councillor do?

The basic obligation of every councillor is to represent with dignity the interests of the people of his or her region, and provide a check to external bodies, principally central government, and reverse decisions that are seen to go against the interests of the local community. Councillors also strive to make the most important decisions for the region and provide social consultation to that end.

Local governments deal with a number of other relevant and important issues. For example, with regard to social housing, councillors estimate the needs of the region. They can launch investment projects and lease properties belonging to the city or county councils. They are also responsible for the

allocation of loans and grants for modifications to existing buildings as part of programs such as the “Housing Adaptation Grant for People with Disabilities” (grants to provide disabled access to buildings), and similar help with programs for the elderly and low-income families to insulate homes or provide cheap loans for property extensions.

Local governments also provide help in promoting culture and sport at the regional level, and are often responsible for maintaining such infrastructure as stadia, swimming pools, libraries and cultural centres. They are very much at the heart of cultural and artistic events and provide for the maintenance and care of historical sites and monuments.

Another important area of responsibility is the spatial planning of the region. Local councils grant or refuse planning permission for building projects, both commercial and residential. Every 6 years a ‘regional development plan’ is released, outlining the land development plan to be implemented during the term of office.

Local authorities also play a key role in the upkeep and expansion of the region’s infrastructure. They oversee the development of roads, bridges and sewage systems, and control sites that may present a danger to





locals, such as dilapidated or collapsed buildings. They also manage local cemeteries and run the local fire stations. In addition, local authorities administer paid parking zones, and in overseeing the licensing process for refuse collection and monitoring pollution levels they can be seen to play an important environmental role at the local level. Another type of commercial license granted by local governments is for street vendors. At the forefront of local authority activity is public healthcare and access to health services, and cooperate closely with primary healthcare trusts.

Polish candidates in the 2014 local government elections

Nine candidates of Polish origin stood in the local government elections in 2014. They ran as candidates in the following electoral districts:

Agnieszka Wieczorkowska	BALLYMUN	Dublin City Council
Rafał Kornatka	DUBLIN NORTH INNER CITY	Dublin City Council

Marcin Czechowicz	PEMBROKE-SOUTH DOCK	Dublin City Council
Lech Szczeciński	CRUMLIN-KIMMAGE HOWTH-MALAHIDE SWORDS	Dublin City Council Fingal County Council Fingal County Council
Grzegorz Zalewski	KANTURK-MALLOW	Cork County Council
Adam Zagórski	KILKENNY CITY EAST	Kilkenny County Council
Remigiusz (Remi) Sikora	KILKENNY CITY EAST	Kilkenny County Council
Władysław (Władek) Hanczar	KILKENNY CITY WEST	Kilkenny County Council
Sylwia Gołębiewska-Jakubas	DUNDALK-CARLINGFORD	Louth County Council

We interviewed seven of those Polish candidates:

- Agnieszka Wieczorkowska
- Lech Szczeciński
- Marcin Czechowicz
- Rafał Kornatka

Remi Sikora
Władysław Hanczar
Sylwia Gołębiewska-Jakubas

What persuaded the candidates to run for election?

The majority of the candidates had experience in social and political activities in Poland, from working with the disabled to active participation in student unions, trade unions, district councils and parties. The candidates transferred this energy to represent the interests of particular groups to Ireland. They are also active in Polish community organizations, district committees, trade unions or forums that promote integration, and often take part in local community events and actions.

The primary motive to run for office was to exert energy and influence to represent the interests of the district, including the minority communities, which the Poles formed part of. The candidates stressed the fact that this community did not have sufficient political representation. They believed that it would be positive for the Polish community in Ireland to enforce their civil rights and

have representation at the city or county council level. Running for office would be a clear sign that those building a new life in Ireland had a strong platform from which to participate in social and political life. They were encouraged stand by the members of their local communities and/or by friends who believed in them and motivated them to take up the challenge. Agnieszka Wieczorkowska described the JUSZ campaign and the people connected with it as a source of inspiration in her decision to run. Others were encouraged by incumbent councillors and political parties on the basis of their social engagement and/or achievements. An interesting example in this respect is Sylwia Gołębiewska-Jakubas who decided to do some “political shadowing”. She followed the work of the councillors, established a number of important contacts and captured the interest of the council with her energy and dedication to grass-roots activities. Sylwia received offers to run from two different political parties, but declined due to her personal views. However, she was encouraged to run as an independent by the incumbent councillor.

Some of the candidates did have some experience of politics in Poland, but had never run in the local elections. Only one of the Polish





candidates had participated before in the local elections in Ireland. For the rest it was a completely new experience.

Election campaign Better late than never

The candidates were given two timeframes for their campaigns. These were September-October 2013 or January-February 2014. However, nearly all admit they started the process too late, with a small number believing that any future campaigns would be launched right after the previous elections, even if only to intensify their involvement and carry out relevant social actions.

The majority of the candidates ran their campaigns on their own or with the help of friends and family. Some organized campaign teams of 20-30 volunteers (mainly friends), actively engaged marketing, PR, photography, computer graphics, the distribution of leaflets and the organization of events. In Kilkenny, candidates pooled their resources and ran a joint campaign. They were also able to count on the support of the local Polish community. From time to time councillors or other independent Irish candidates would offer

substantial support during canvassing activity. They also received financial support from Irish citizens, who would contact the candidate and donate a modest sum of money for leaflets and posters. That said, all the candidates financed their campaigns and materials independently. The sums invested range from 200 to 4000 euros.

Independent or party?

All the Polish candidates ran in the 2014 elections as independents (i.e. unaffiliated to a party). Some mentioned that such a decision resulted from either a lack of initiative or simply a show of no interest from the party itself. Their personal views and the fact that they did not closely identify with the program of any Irish political party also had a bearing. Presently, political parties in Ireland are experiencing a trust deficit and voters tend to place more importance on the individual, their level of engagement and the program itself. Moreover, candidates themselves do not always trust the parties, with some fearing that they would merely become a puppet if they decided to run on a party ticket. Despite such resistance, candidates did

acknowledge that it was customary for party candidates to win local elections. Party affinity and tradition would therefore represent a greater chance of success. Another advantage of running on the party ticket is gaining access to a pool of talent and experience required to run and finance a successful election campaign. Such candidates can expect professional political marketing, alongside the know-how gained through an extensive network of party members. The candidates are as yet undecided as to whether to run in future elections but a significant number are open to such a possibility. The majority declared that they would remain faithful to their beliefs and run as independents, hoping to gain the trust of voters by running more social activities. As one of the interviewees said, an independent candidate is “for the people and from the people”, a person recognized by the local community and closely related to it. It is very much the person who counts in local government elections in Ireland. The remaining candidates were willing to run in the next elections on behalf of the party now that they are familiar with the manifesto.

Election marketing

Media

Traditional and social media, as well as canvassing (direct contact with voters) were at the forefront of election campaigning. The candidates spread information about their candidacies mainly by such electronic means as websites, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+ and/or blogs. A well-prepared website and social media plan went a long way toward facilitating contact with the candidate, not only for journalists but also for potential voters who were able to use the channel to address the candidate directly and push them on opinions and policy directions. Agnieszka highlights the importance of Twitter especially in her dealings with journalists, who still get in touch with her this way. The candidates also tried to reach out through traditional media, using local newspapers, radio and television. Local radio and television were particularly interested in the Polish candidates in and around small communities and areas outside of Dublin, and sought contact and interviews. One such case was Dundalk where the local radio station and RTE1 (national TV channel) contacted Sylwia. Remi, the candidate from Kilkenny, admitted that the interview on local radio had





a huge impact on his visibility among Irish citizens. In turn, Rafał, candidate for Dublin North Inner City, acknowledged that his Irish Times interview helped forge his image and increased social visibility. Another candidate from Dublin, Agnieszka, also stressed the importance of both the Irish Times article and her participation in the televised debate run by Vincent Brown on RTE3 in raising her profile.

One of the candidates (Lech) decided to address voters by mail, sending some 5000 letters outlining his program to registered voters, many of whom were immigrants.

Agnieszka mentioned the Independents Network platform (www.independentsnetwork.org) as another option for independent candidates to establish contact, exchange information and/or promote their candidature. The Network posted the profiles of independent candidates, including those of Agnieszka and Lech, on their website and organized training sessions and networking meetings for candidates.

Canvassing

However, nearly all the candidates pointed to direct contact with potential voters as

the core activity of the campaigning process. By knocking on doors candidates were able to present themselves personally, enter into discussion, talk about local problems, discern social mood and establish contact. Canvassing proved successful both in big cities and rural areas, where human contact largely consists of direct meetings and conversations. It was the most demanding and time-consuming method, and more so outside urban centres due to the scattered distribution of homes. The candidates agreed that visits were only effective when one engaged directly with individual voters. Dropping leaflets through the letterbox was simply not enough. Some candidates (Agnieszka and Rafał) suggested that campaigns would be more effective if canvassing took place a year before the actual vote. This initial contact could then be reinforced by canvassing one month before the elections. Of course, such a method would require considerable time and energy.

The candidates also stressed the importance of familiarising oneself with grass-roots issues beforehand. District meetings and local events offered a solid platform in this respect. Direct debate through open meetings were useful in presenting views and establishing the contact with voters.

Leaflets and posters

The majority of the candidates invested in leafletting (around 5000-7500 pieces). Some invested in posters (50-500 pieces). Many claimed the leaflets to be an essential part of the campaign, particularly when canvassing. Only a few decided to use posters, noting that posters were more important in big cities, especially Dublin.

The candidates shared offered their advice on leaflets and posters. The two candidates from Kilkenny, who ran together, opted for a double-sided leaflet presenting both candidacies. Rafał thought it important to forge a consistent image on leaflets and/or posters, tailored locally to districts. When visiting homes and presenting himself to voters, he noted that some expressed a willingness to vote for him ,having now met him', and that the ,person on the leaflet' came across totally differently. The decision to put up posters ought to take into the account that they can be easily removed. This can be partly remedied by paying a second visit to the site to replace any missing posters. The city council website provided an invaluable source of information on the rules related to posters or leaflets. In bigger cities it made better

sense to put up posters on receiving permission (even the night before) as the best places were taken very quickly.

One of the candidates, Agnieszka, designed and sent Christmas cards to members of her local community. As such she reminded potential voters of her candidature at a time when it was still too early to distribute leaflets and posters.

Experience with regards to staying in touch with voters

The target groups to which the candidates addressed their messages were different. Some focused solely on electorates containing a Polish minority. Others took into account all the the immigrant communities, or tried to reach the wider electorate regardless of nationality or origin. The latter option aimed at the wider community, including Irish citizens, predominated.

The majority of candidates valued the experience of direct contact with potential voters. All saw a difference between Poles (and other minorities) and their Irish counterparts in attitudes toward and awareness of politics and local elections. The majority of candidates admitted that Irish citizens had much better





knowledge of political culture than Poles. They would more often engage in dialogue with candidates and would invite them into their homes during canvassing. Irish voters were also willing to talk, and would ask insightful questions and engage in debate. Włodek recalled being well received by young Irish voters, and he would be addressing them in future election campaigns. A couple of candidates noted that they had received more promises of votes from Irish citizens and the wider community than from Poles.

To a large extent Poles showed little or no interest in politics, with some even expressing a very negative attitude. They had “brought it with them” from Poland, along with a lack of feeling that local politicians in Ireland can make a big change. Many Poles commented that “they don’t care about politics”, “they won’t vote as they are not at home” and that “in Poland they wouldn’t vote, so they won’t vote here, either” or that “they won’t change anything, anyway”. They often did not know at all that local elections were taking place and that they were eligible to vote. Having found out about their right to vote, some decided to register, although it is not known how many of them actually voted. The majority

of the candidates did point out however that the Polish community in Ireland was becoming more socially and politically aware and that in forthcoming elections voters may well present a more positive attitude.

The candidates suggested that the main focus should be placed on the registration campaign and on raising awareness of voter eligibility, and the benefit of being a more active member of the community. The next step would then be to concentrate on the election campaign itself. Some candidates believed that the awareness campaign was insufficient, and that it did not reach many immigrants, especially those outside of Dublin.

Irish elections vs. Polish elections

One definite advantage of the Irish local election system is the possibility to run independently, without a party’s permission. Everybody has the right to become a candidate and to represent his or her community at the local level. Such a system favours the individual who contributes to the good of the community. As such, the candidates regarded the public counting of votes in Ireland as an important step in increasing community engagement in



the elections. Another advantage of the Irish voting cards are their transparency and the possibility to place the candidates' pictures on them. However, vote counting regulations provoked mixed reactions among the candidates. They regarded the Irish system as complicated and a little too transparent. The Irish system of "transfer" that hands over votes to other candidates is also complicated, though it is worth remembering that one should be prepared to fight for "number 2" votes, which may be very decisive in the final vote.

What had most impact on the election results?

When asked what had most influence on election success the candidates mentioned several things. Some believed that as independent candidates they had little chance from the very start, especially in the districts where only party candidates had been previously elected (e.g. Ballymun). Others put forward that Polish candidates were at a disadvantage (especially when one cannot count on the Polish vote) given that Irish candidates held a natural sway over the Irish

electorate. Although Ireland celebrates cultural diversity, one might ask the question whether it is a country open enough to choose a councillor of foreign origin. The candidates underlined that the most important factors other than nationality were trust and social visibility.

Additionally, the candidates pointed to time constraints and a delayed campaign launch, claiming that that future activities would have to be launched much earlier so as to give voters a chance to get to know them. Some also pointed to a lack of funds to orchestrate a professional campaign. However, the majority believed that it was not a key factor, and that it was indeed possible to run a successful low-cost campaign, although that would require considerable engagement and time.

Others signalled a lack of experience in running in elections, as well as insufficient knowledge of cultural nuances and the concomitant problem of addressing voters of different nationalities.

The biggest challenge

All the candidates who used canvassing admitted that it was the most difficult part of the campaign, both in terms of time and energy. Paying home visits was not only demanding in



terms of time and physical effort, but also in terms of the mental strain. The candidates who came up against strong attitudes and reactions tried not to lose heart. Another challenge was the lack of time (especially when balancing work commitments) and limited funds.

Recommendations

We asked the Polish candidates about their conclusions “for the future” and any important tips in running for office.

The most often repeated tip was to **launch the campaign as early as possible, possibly right after previous elections**. Action should focus mainly on the construction of a reputation among local voters. All of them underlined the importance of an honest and **consistent approach to social activity and a deep engagement in local issues**, including familiarity with the community. The candidates, especially those who ran as independents, should definitely become known locally and gain the trust of the community they purport to represent. This can be achieved by taking an active role in local associations or district committees

and participating in events and social actions. Cooperating with organizations and the city council can also go a long way towards building a positive and robust reputation. Some candidates even added that it was sensible to ignore personal gains and bet on **honesty and authenticity**. They confirmed that it was valued and resulted in more votes.

One suggestion was to run a community survey in a particular district in order to **get familiar with the local needs, problems and expectations**. In knowing voters better, Agnieszka believes that candidates can tailor the content and distribution channel of the manifesto accordingly.

Others drew the attention to the fact that the proposed **election program should be real and trustworthy**. One should be fully aware of the fact that it is easy to challenge local councillors and hold them to account, and Irish voters are accustomed to asking insightful questions to candidates.

Spreading canvassing duties out over time, preferably in two shots, would be worthwhile. The latter round would need to start at least a month before the elections were held. Leaflets would continue to be an essential tool to staying in touch with voters.



The majority of candidates felt it a mistake to restrict the electorate only to Poles or particular national minorities. They would extend the campaigns **to represent all inhabitants**. With regard to ensuring the support of Poles and other immigrants, candidates could count on more votes if they were to carry out an extensive information campaign to register. In well-organised communities it is perhaps best to avoid the risk of is a risk of having to many minority candidates by pooling resources to run a primary election to aggregate votes.

Success can also be brought about by an **organized election team** consisting of volunteers **elaborating a clear strategy** spread over time. If somebody plans to run on a party ticket, they can count on campaign help, in which case it would be advisable to join the party much earlier. **Contacts, alliances and cooperation with other candidates and councillors** can also turn out to be helpful in this respect. All the candidates agreed that the most important thing is the **persistent work of the candidate**, supported by a strong belief in what they are doing.

The advantages of running

One advantage the candidates mentioned was the opportunity to get to know wonderful people and to establish a list of contacts that can pay dividends in the future. All of them talked about gaining huge experience, both professional and personal, that would be used in the future. For a great number of them it represented a chance to practise and verify their skills, as well as increase self-confidence and self-development. Others admitted that campaigning allowed them to verify their views on different issues. Agnieszka, for example, underlined the importance of being inspired by others to run. The campaign was a huge challenge for all candidates, and to that end they would not recommend the experience to everybody.

Votes obtained by the Polish candidates in the 2014 local elections in Ireland

Candidate	Number of votes	Region
Agnieszka Wieczorkowska	338	Dublin City Council



Rafał Kornatka	91	Dublin City Council
Marcin Czechowicz	44	Dublin City Council
Lech Szczeciński	70 56 104	Dublin City Council Fingal County Council (Swords) Fingal County Council (Howth-Malahide)
Grzegorz Zalewski	141	Cork County Council
Adam Zagórski	30	Kilkenny County Council
Remigiusz (Remi) Sikora	40	Kilkenny County Council
Władysław (Władek) Hanczar	139	Kilkenny County Council
Sylvia Gołębiewska-Jakubas	71	Louth County Council

Profiles of councillors coming from migrant communities - Rotimi Adebari and Elena Secas

Rotimi Adebari twice won the elections as an independent in 2004 and 2009, becoming the councillor of Laois County. Elena Secas won the elections in 2014 and became the Labour Party councillor for the city of Limerick. They both agreed to share their experiences with us. Born in Nigeria, **Rotimi Adebari** stood for election for the first time in 2004. At the time there were few candidates engaged in politics, and Rotimi, a political science graduate, could boast only theoretical knowledge of of the subject. After arriving in Ireland he got involved in various social activities and the local community persuaded him to represent them in the elections. Rotimi recalls that he realised that the immigrants were not represented and the only way to ensure their legal rights and fight against racism was to become a voice for the people. It was with such motives he decided to start his career as a politician.

Rotimi stood as an independent in the elections. He admits that in 2004 none of the parties were interested in nominating him as their candidate, yet on winning all the parties

became interested in his candidacy for the 2009 elections. However, he decided to remain an independent candidate. When asked about his campaigns he recalls that they were launched too late for both elections (i.e. 2-3 months prior). However, he had been running social activities for a long time. Being well recognised by the local (mainly immigrant) community he dedicated the majority of time to canvassing Irish citizens. Rotimi suggests that the candidates should conduct detailed research in order to find out where their “safe” votes come from, and then focus on attracting new voters. He knew that in his case he could count on the votes of immigrants, so he dedicated 75 percent of his time to address Irish citizens, and he believes that it was mainly their votes that he received in 2004. During both campaigns Rotimi did not put up any election posters. Even though he decided to have them in 2014 he is still not in favour of using them too generously. He admits that he could have used social media to a larger extent but thinks that social activity and canvassing are more effective. So why did he lose in 2014? He recalls that the social and political landscape had changed as a result of the recession. Moreover, he

had shared votes with another immigrant candidate, who obtained only 109 votes (Rotimi gained 980 votes). This potentially “lost him” his 88 votes - the number of votes he had fallen short by to become Councillor for the third time. Rotimi claims that this was a lesson for the whole community. They should have consolidated to avoid splitting the votes between candidates of similar profiles. He suggests that future candidates should analyse the voting patterns and plan how to reach the target group in the next elections. What else would he advise to future candidates? The three most important tips: “start now – get engaged in grass-roots activities, get to know your community and its aspirations and problems, and don’t give up!” Originally from Moldova, **Elena Secas** has been living in Ireland since 2001. She has stood twice as a candidate in local elections in Ireland. In 2014 she was the Labour Party candidate for Limerick. She had been engaged in the party’s activities since 2006. Elena decided to stand because she wanted to represent the voice of the whole community, and decided to stand on behalf of the party so as to obtain more professional support. She launched her campaign right after making

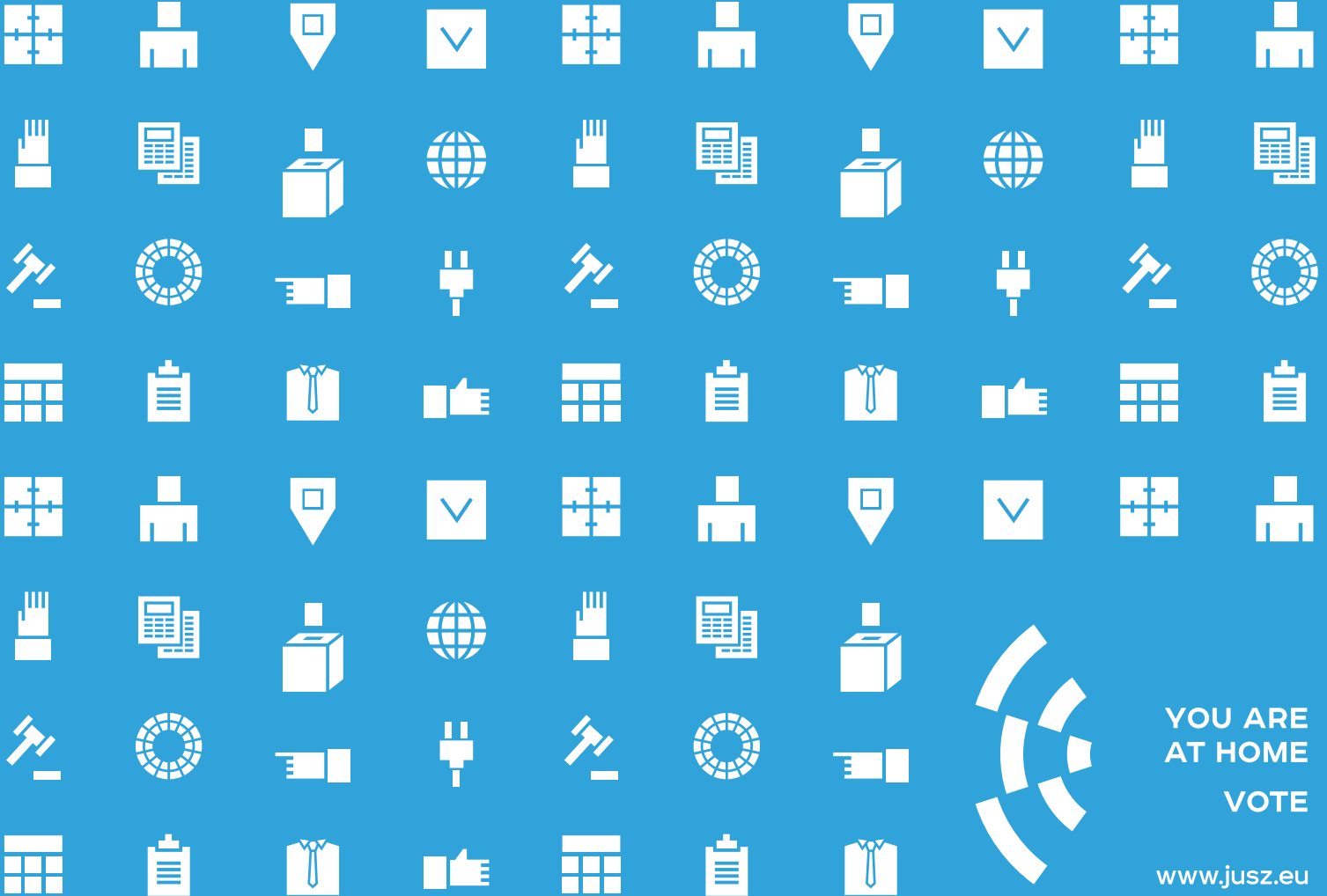




her candidacy public in October 2013. Elena planned the election campaign together with the head of the election team. She used leaflets, posters, social and traditional media. She participated in numerous meetings with voters and did a lot of canvassing. She believes that if the campaign is well planned from the beginning, everything should work well. During the campaign one can then observe what works best and dedicate more time and energy to that. Elena claims that campaign success requires the engagement and support of the group. It is combination of Party support, the help of family and friends and, most importantly, the hard work and dedication of the candidate himself. The biggest challenge for her this year was to stand as the Labour Party candidate at a time when people are not happy with the work of the current government. When asked about the reason for her success she put it down to her tireless work in the life of her local community, and a determination to defend their interests. When asked about tips for candidates, Elena claims that community problems and issues should be top of the list of priorities for somebody running in local elections. A successful candidate

will actively represent local interests with passion and conviction. She believes that one should not run for the sake of personal or professional profit, and underlines that it is valuable experience regardless the result, and one can find out a lot about themselves and gain broader understanding of the real world.

The voting statistics in the district of Elena Secas: population - 40 268 inhabitants, 25 614 registered to vote, 12 114 voted. Elena Secas obtained 1165 votes.



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The “You are at home, vote!” campaign was launched in 2013 by the School for Leaders Association in Poland, Forum Polonia in Ireland and the Polish City Club in the UK, in substantial cooperation with the “Your vote. Your choice” campaign.

We have been encouraging Poles living abroad to vote in the 2014 European parliamentary elections, and to stand as candidates or to vote in the local government elections.

The “Your vote, your choice!” campaign is politically neutral. We do not offer any particular political or candidate allegiance. We give information on how to vote in the elections to the European Parliament when living in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Italy, France or Hungary.

Among our coalition partners are a dozen or so Polish community organizations from across

the European Union, e. g. Vote-Głosuj! from the Northern Ireland, Emigration Project from Belgium, Polska Ludoteka Rodzinna from Italy, Polonia Nova from Hungary, CSR Polish Global Management from Spain, Les Polonaises from France and IDHEM from Holland.

We are open to cooperation and encourage Polish community organizations to join the coalition to help mobilize and encourage Poles to participate in the elections.

If you would like to cooperate with us to further the political and social engagement of Poles living outside of Poland, within the EU, please write to us at:

stowarzyszenie@szkola-liderow.pl



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