

Poland – contextual human rights issues



The purpose of this summary is to provide a high-level overview of documented human rights issues in a particular country and how they could intersect with TV production. It aims to prompt further consideration and planning by production teams where appropriate. Not all issues will be relevant for all TV productions and, conversely, there may be aspects not yet covered that are relevant.

Human rights issue	Description of context	How this could intersect with TV production	Suggested mitigations	Resources
Discrimination - LGBTI	Government rhetoric and legislative moves have targeted LGBTI people, with many areas declaring themselves “LGBT-free zones”. There continue to be documented attacks and harassment against LGBTI people, and rights defenders have faced criminal and civil proceedings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crew and talent may experience or witness homophobia • Local LGBTI crew may be hiding their identities or living in fear • Local crew may exhibit homophobia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive security practices • Establish culture where everyone can raise concerns • Wellbeing and support resources 	Aide Memoire for Inclusive Personal Safety on Location Inclusive security risk management Toolkit: Getting the culture right
Discrimination – race and ethnicity	Poland is a relatively homogenous country ethnically and racially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crew and talent may experience or witness racism 		
Reproductive rights	In January 2022, a Constitutional Tribunal decision virtually banning access to legal abortion, went into effect. In September 2022, a new bill that would criminalize people who have abortions with up to 25 years in prison was introduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female crew and talent may not be able to access reproductive healthcare they need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put together a plan should anyone need reproductive healthcare 	
Conflict and security	Poland borders both Belarus and Ukraine. In November 2022, missiles landed in Poland. In September 2023, Russian-led forces staged joint military exercises in Belarus near the border with Poland and Poland deployed additional troops to the border.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productions near the Belarussian and Ukrainian borders face additional safety and security risks from conflict overspill and from Polish security forces • Production could (unwittingly) exacerbate conflict or unrest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess risks from encountering or being required to work with public security forces in risk assessments • Conduct conflict assessment 	FCDO travel advice: Safety and security Heightened Human Rights Due Diligence for Business in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Guide Security and human rights knowledge hub and toolkit

Vulnerability of migrant workers to exploitation	The number of illegal foreign workers significantly exceeds the number of foreigners employed legally in Poland. Their employment conditions are below those of Polish nationals and they are vulnerable to exploitation. (Human Rights House). Traffickers recruit Romanian men, women, and children, particularly from the Roma population, for forced begging in Poland; persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable. (US TiP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers of ancillary services (e.g. hospitality, cleaning, security) could be employing illegal foreign workers or trafficked workers • Productions may also encounter such workers in hotels and venues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due diligence on suppliers of ancillary services • Direct engagement with and checks on ancillary workers during production 	Production pack: protecting the most vulnerable workers Toolkit: Vetting suppliers appropriately Toolkit: Supporting ancillary workers directly Toolkit: Category Management Due Diligence HRDD Displaced Workers Guidance
Refugees	More than 3m refugees from Ukraine, predominantly women and children who are fleeing Russia's war on Ukraine, have crossed the Polish border seeking sanctuary and are vulnerable to trafficking. (US TiP) Refugees and migrants reaching the country via the Belarusian border continue to face official hostility. Border guards have used violence and unlawful force to compel people to leave.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productions near the Belarusian border may encounter Polish security forces or witness mistreatment of refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put together plan to protect witnesses and any evidence (e.g. video footage) and report any incidents to relevant international bodies (e.g. Amnesty International, Global Witness) 	ACOS Alliance resources and training Committee to Protect Journalists: Safety Kit
Freedom of the media (including local media and local producers supporting international teams)	The Polish government has previously targeted independent media, with smear campaigns and lawsuits against journalists and media outlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State surveillance or harassment of journalists / documentary teams • Covert or overt smear campaigns against journalists or media organisations • Legal action against journalists or media organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal agreement for duty of care towards local media support workers • Enhanced training, risk assessment and resources for teams covering controversial or politically sensitive issues • Social media monitoring • Adequate legal support including for local media workers 	Committee to Protect Journalists: Safety Kit
Protection of cultural heritage	Places of remembrance, graves, monuments and historical symbols can be extremely sensitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location planning • Sensitivity to historical context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location due diligence • Work closely with local experts able to advise on navigating sensitive issues 	Databases of local experts, e.g. World Fixer

Have further insights? Please share suggested issues, intersections with TV, mitigations and resources with amelia.knott@tvhumanrights.org