

Journalists in Poland: Values, Priorities and Professional Standards

KEY WORDS

Polish journalists, professional standards, priorities, media tasks

ABSTRACT

The article provides the results of an extensive survey conducted within a group of journalists working for the media having nationwide coverage. The aim of the research was to acquire knowledge about the values, professional standards and priorities of Polish journalists. To achieve this goal, not only questions about their demographic profile were asked, but also questions regarding their sense of autonomy, structure of employment, membership of journalistic organisations as well as the main aspects of their professional activity, level of job satisfaction and functions of the media. The results prove, *inter alia*, that the vast majority of Polish journalists are young and well-educated. On the other hand, they seem not to be interested in any form of professional integration. Furthermore, the transformation of the media system highly influenced the structure of employment in some media sectors. As the results of the study show, the structure of employment often affects the manner in which journalists view their workplace.

Political, economic and social transformations of the media, observed in Poland since the 1990s, have been accompanied by profound changes within the journalistic environment. Hence, this group is the focus of researchers interested in the specificity of Polish journalism and the role of the local, regional and national media. However, the vast majority of previous analyses of the situation of journalism in Poland were either of a descriptive nature or carried out by means of qualitative methods. Furthermore, each subsequent survey research was conducted primarily among employees of the local and regional media, and only few included journalists working for the media of a national scope.

In the 1980s and 1990s, such studies were carried out by, *inter alia*, Zbigniew Bajka of the Jagiellonian University¹. Their results presented not only the demographic profile of journalists, but also career choice motives, expectations and values which guided them a decade ago. Meanwhile, the research on local journalists was focused mainly on identifying challenges and problems that

¹ Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze (1981–1990). Komunikowanie masowe w Polsce – lata osiemdziesiąte*, “Zeszyty Prasoznawcze” 1991, No. 1/2, pp. 149–159; idem, *Dziennikarze lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, “Zeszyty Prasoznawcze” 2000, No. 3/4, pp. 42–63.

they had to face at that moment².

This article contains results of surveys³ carried out within a group of journalists working for the media with nationwide coverage. Interviews were conducted between October and November 2009 by Pentor Research International Poznań on behalf of the authors of the paper herein presented. The questionnaire was constructed on the basis of a set of questions developed by the scientists centred around David H. Weaver and Wei Wu who, in 1998, published a collective work providing the results of research on journalists from 21 countries⁴.

The aim of our study is, on the one hand, to check the extent to which the journalistic environment has changed since the research of Bajka and, on the other hand, to gain knowledge about the values, professional standards and priorities of Polish journalists. Hence, in addition to questions concerning the demographic profile of journalists and their autonomy, the questionnaire also included queries concerning work experience, employment forms, membership of organisations and associations of journalists, the most important aspects of work, professional satisfaction and tasks of the media and journalists towards the society.

Research sample

The presented data are derived from interviews conducted among 329 journalists working for the media with nationwide coverage (newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, radio stations, TV channels, news agencies and the online media). Due to serious difficulties in determining even the estimated number of practitioners of a journalistic profession in Poland⁵, the sample was constructed on the basis of the data relating to the number of media organisations of a given type specified in “Media and Advertising Almanac” (“Almanach Mediów i Reklamy” 2007/2008). Assuming the percentage representation of different types of media as a principle, it was calculated that journalists of the daily printed press should constitute 12 per cent, journalists of weeklies – 23 per cent, journalists of monthlies – 23 per cent, television journalists – 15 per cent, radio journalists – 17 per cent, journalists working for the online media – 8 per cent and journalists working for news

² See, among others: M. Gierula, *Dziennikarze współczesnej prasy lokalnej*, [in:] *Media i komunikowanie w społeczeństwie demokratycznym. Szkice medioznawcze*, ed. by S. Michalczyk, Sosnowiec 2006; L. Pokrzycka, *Problemy lokalnego dziennikarstwa – analiza na przykładzie rynku prasowego Lubelszczyzny*, [in:] *Oblicza polskich mediów po 1989 roku*, ed. by L. Pokrzyckiej, B. Romiszewskiej, Lublin 2008; R. Kowalczyk, *Media lokalne w Polsce. Prasa – radio – telewizja – Internet*, Poznań 2008.

³ Scientific paper financed with funds for science in 2008–2011 as a research project No. N N116 113534. This study was part of the project entitled *Foreign Information in Polish Television News Programmes*.

⁴ *The Global Journalist: News People around the World*, ed. by D.H. Weaver, Wei Wu, Cresskill N.J. 1998. At the moment, relevant preparations are being carried out to release a new edition of this publication, this time edited by D.H. Weaver and L. Willnat of Indiana University in Bloomington. One of the chapters in the planned book, titled *The Global Journalist in the 21st Century*, will contain the results of research on Polish journalists obtained by the authors of the article herein presented.

⁵ Z. Bajka states that in early 1990, the number of journalists was estimated at more than 11,000 and 10 years later – at approximately 18,000–20,000. See: Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze lat...*, p. 42.

agencies – 1 per cent. The initially expected number of interviews was 300. In view of the difficulties associated with the availability of television journalists, the data collected by Pentor contained only 5 per cent, instead of the assumed 15 per cent of the data on this group of media people. Therefore, the authors of the article contacted a group of 30 randomly selected television journalists asking them to complete the same questionnaire⁶. Owing to this step, the assumed composition of the research sample, representative of the environment of Polish journalists, has been achieved.

Results

In the course of the survey results elaboration, the main criterion of the division was the media type for which respondent journalists worked. In some cases, the data gathered were collated with the previous results obtained by Bajka. It enabled to seize the direction and intensity of changes occurring within the journalistic community over several subsequent decades. It should be noted here that the research sample, on the basis of which Bajka conducted his study at the end of the 1990s, was not fully representative as it was based on the Internet; hence, the group of 250 respondents was dominated by young journalists (53 per cent of respondents were under 30 years of age), not holding managerial positions at editorial boards⁷.

Demographic Profile

In the first place, it is worth exploring socio-demographic features of Polish journalists. Whereas women constituted only 35 per cent of journalists surveyed by Bajka, in the present study, they account for the total number of more than 41 per cent of respondents. Moreover, as the data presented in Table 1 indicate, these proportions vary depending on the type of the media. Thus, the greatest representation of women can be found in news agencies and monthlies while the smallest – in the online media and weeklies. These data reflect, to a certain extent, the market structure of the printed press: the most widely read magazines are dominated by titles addressed to women while the most widely read weeklies also comprise titles popular among men and edited largely by men (among others, “Angor”, “Newsweek”, “Auto Świat” or “Wprost”)⁸.

The research also proves that journalists working for television stations are the youngest group whereas those working for information agencies and monthlies are the oldest. Considering the data concerning age, the results pointing out that the shortest length of service is found among television journalists (3 years on average) and the longest – in the case of news agency employees

⁶ Within the mentioned group of 30 people, 1 refused to participate in the study.

⁷ See: Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze lat...*, pp. 47–48.

⁸ See: Readership of the press in April 2009, the Polish Readership Surveys (Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa), <http://media2.pl/badania/52527-pbc:-czytelnictwo-prasy-w-kwietniu-2009.html> [accessed: 9 April 2010].

(20 years on average) are not surprising. These differences may demonstrate the strength of television attractiveness with regard to young practitioners of journalism and the specificity of career paths of Polish journalists. It is therefore clearly discernible that information agency employees are those who have long work experience in the media and who probably have already worked for other media types (the average of professional experience indicated in Table 1 relates to the entire professional career).

Table 1. Demographic profile of Polish journalists

	Daily press	Weekly	Monthly	Radio	TV	News agency	Internet	Total
Gender (percentage of men)	67.4	69.6	51.8	57.4	58.1	20	81.3	59.3
Age (in years)*	27 (40)	28 (34)	28 (36)	25 (32)	28 (29)	49	33	28 (34)
Marital status (percentage of the married)	60.9	60.9	64.3	37.7	44.2	60	56.3	55.3
Place of residence (percentage of those living in cities)	69.6	65.2	84.8	36.1	76.7	100	93.8	71.1
Professional experience (in years)	15.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	3.0	20.0	5.0	10.0
Percentage of those holding a university degree	91.3	84.8	90.2	70.5	79.1	80	87.5	84.2
Percentage of those holding a degree in journalism	32.6	30.4	30.4	21.3	44.2	40.0	43.8	31.6
N = 329	46	46	112	61	43	5	16	329

* The first number is the average and the number in parentheses is the median.

Source: All tables presented in this paper are based on the data obtained by Pentor Research International on behalf of the authors.

Furthermore, insofar as the entire research sample is dominated by married individuals, the majority of television and radio journalists are not married. For the sake of comparison, it is worth mentioning that in the 1990s, most of the journalists investigated by Bajka were unmarried (75 per cent) and had much less work experience (80 per cent of respondents worked in the media for less than 10 years). These discrepancies explicitly confirm the specificity of the test sample, what has already been mentioned earlier.

Additionally, since the research sample in this study consists of journalists working for the

media with nationwide coverage, the vast majority of respondents live in cities of more than 200,000 inhabitants. Radio journalists are the only exception, among which residents of smaller towns prevail.

It is as well worth emphasising that the majority of Polish journalists are characterised by a higher level of education (more than 80 per cent of respondents), even though only one third of them have a degree in journalism (graduate or postgraduate studies). In the 1990s – as the research results of Bajka showed – a smaller number of journalists had a university degree (78 per cent), however, a larger group graduated in journalism (undergraduate, graduate or postgraduate studies – a total number of 45 percent)⁹.

Interestingly, in 2009, the highest percentage of graduates in journalism or a related field of study was found among television journalists (44.2 per cent) whereas the lowest – within the group working for the radio (21.3 per cent), weeklies and monthlies (30.4 per cent each). Associating these results with the previously cited data on age and seniority leads to the conclusion that television work attracts the most numerous groups of those who have recently completed their studies in the area of journalism; meanwhile, other types of the media attract young people to a lesser extent or their labour market is limited.

Membership of journalistic associations

As it has already been stated, one of the challenges which the authors of this study faced was the assessment of the number of people engaged in the journalistic profession in Poland. Interestingly, even journalistic associations and organisations were not able to give at least estimated figures. In the 1990s, approximately 10,000 people, though 40 per cent of them were retirees, belonged to various organisations of journalists. However, it was then presumed that about 25 per cent of journalists were members of at least one organisation¹⁰.

Most recent studies show that only a few per cent of journalists belong to journalistic associations. The data collected in Table 2 indicate that primarily employees of the daily press, radio stations, the Internet media and news agencies are members of different associations. The juxtaposition of these data with information about the average age and work experience of employees of particular types of the media leads to the observation that notably senior journalists are members of associations: among people under 35 years of age, only 7 per cent of respondents belong to journalistic organisations while, among journalists over 35 years of age, nearly 21 per cent declare their membership of professional associations.

⁹ Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze lat...*, pp. 48–49.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

Table 2. Membership of journalistic organisations (percentages)

Place of employment	Yes	No	Do not know	Refuse to answer
Daily	17.4	80.4	2.2	0.0
Weekly	8.7	89.1	2.2	0.0
Monthly	11.6	88.4	0.0	0.0
Radio	18.0	80.3	0.0	1.6
TV	11.6	86.0	0.0	2.3
News agency	20.0	80.0	0.0	0.0
Internet	31.3	68.8	0.0	0.0
Total	14.3	84.5	0.6	0.6

Type of employment

One of the areas where the deepest changes, in comparison with the previous two decades, can be observed is the form of journalistic employment. While before 1989, the vast majority of journalists were permanent employees of editorial offices, nowadays, about 20 per cent of journalists in general and nearly 60 per cent of journalists working for television are employed under a contract of employment (contract of mandate or contract for a specific task).

Table 3. Form of employment in the media (percentages)

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Radio	TV	News agency	Internet	Total
Full-time	69.6	78.3	69.6	72.1	27.9	100.0	56.3	65.7
Part-time	4.3	4.3	8.0	8.2	11.6	0.0	6.3	7.3
Contract of employment	23.9	.3	13.4	18.0	58.1	0.0	25.0	21.9
Volunteering	2.2	0.0	1.8	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2
Do not know	0.0	4.3	7.1	0.0	2.3	0.0	12.5	3.9

Most television journalists, as well as approximately one out of five radio, Internet and

newspaper journalists are not even employed on a part-time basis at the editorial office. Yet, as the data gathered in Table 3 indicate, the vast majority of journalists working for the printed press and radio are full-time employees. Further results of our study reveal that this fact has essential implications for the journalistic environment. The analysis of such issues as the level of job satisfaction, evaluation of the media organisation with which the journalist cooperates, a sense of autonomy and assessment of the importance of various aspects of the journalist's work uncovers crucial differences between the group of television journalists and journalists working for other types of the media.

Job satisfaction level

The data presented in Table 4 prove that the substantial majority of journalists seem to be very satisfied or, at least, satisfied with their work. It should be noted, however, that among television journalists – when compared to journalists of other types of the media – the number of very satisfied people is the lowest (only 4.7 per cent) whereas nearly 10 per cent of respondents within this group reported dissatisfaction with their work. Still, journalists working at news agencies, monthlies and weeklies tend to be the most satisfied.

Table 4. Level of job satisfaction (percentages)

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Radio	TV	News agency	Internet
Very satisfied	15.2	17.4	24.1	26.2	4.7	20.0	43.8
Satisfied	76.1	78.3	71.4	70.5	76.7	80.0	37.5
Dissatisfied	6.5	2.2	0.9	0.0	9.3	0.0	6.3
Very dissatisfied	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	2.3	0.0	6.3
Do not know	2.2	0.0	2.7	1.6	4.7	0.0	6.3
Refuse to answer	0.0	2.2	0.0	1.6	2.3	0.0	0.0

Television journalists are not only the least satisfied with their work, but also assess the level of providing public information by the media organisation for which they work as the worst. Table 5 summarises the responses of journalists working for different types of the media. They clearly imply that – in addition to television journalists – also professionals working for the online media and daily newspapers are the most critical of the level of fulfilling the task of delivering

information to the public opinion by their own organisation. In turn, as many as 17 per cent of journalists from monthlies and more than 15 per cent of journalists from weekly newspapers rate the level of public information provided by their title as ‘excellent’.

Table 5. Assessment of the media organisation: level of public information (percentages)

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Radio	TV	News agency	Internet
Excellent	8.7	15.2	17.0	8.2	7.0	0.0	12.5
Very good	58.7	43.5	45.5	52.5	41.9	80.0	56.3
Good	19.6	32.6	25.9	31.1	25.6	20.0	12.5
Average	13.0	6.5	6.3	4.9	23.3	0.0	18.8
Poor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Do not know	0.0	2.2	4.5	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Refuse to answer	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.6	2.3	0.0	0.0

Autonomy level

The survey contained also a question about the journalists’ sense of autonomy in raising topics for discussion. This is one of the aspects of work that an overwhelming majority of journalists consider fundamental (more than 90 per cent of radio journalists and employees of weeklies, more than 80 per cent of journalists working for the daily press and monthly magazines and 75 per cent of television journalists). The data presented in Table 6 suggest that employees of weeklies (nearly 59 per cent) and radio stations (52.5 per cent) declare having the greatest freedom in selecting presented issues while one in five TV journalists and 18 per cent working for monthlies pointed out the existence of certain restrictions on their autonomy. Thus, the vast majority of journalists are of the opinion that the degree of their freedom is fairly extensive and, thereby, the impact of publishers and editors-in-chief relatively small.

Table 6. Freedom of topic selection (percentages)

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Radio	TV	News agency	Internet
Full freedom	47.8	58.7	36.6	52.5	30.2	60.0	50.0
Certain freedom	39.1	26.1	42.0	34.4	41.9	40.0	31.2
Certain restrictions	13.0	13.0	18.8	11.5	20.9	0.0	12.5
Lack of freedom	0.0	2.2	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.0	6.3

Do not know	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Refuse to answer	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	4.7	0.0	0.0

Considering the fact that the aforementioned studies of the 1990s carried out by Bajka indicated that there was a number of restrictions on journalistic freedom, these results may be regarded as rather surprising. As many as 42 per cent of those surveyed by Bajka indicated owners, editors-in-chief, station managers or their immediate superiors as the main source of limitations on freedom to express their opinions. Nearly 20 per cent of journalists also signalled the existence of censorship inside the editorial board, 11 per cent mentioned the phenomenon of self-censorship and 13 per cent claimed that the reason for restrictions is the pursuit of an attractive topic or taking into account expectations of special advertisers¹¹.

Assessment of the significance of individual aspects of the journalistic work

The subsequent part of the survey contained questions concerning both the material aspects of the journalistic work (wages, bonuses, awards) or employment security as well as working conditions (editorial policy, prospects for development and the scope of professional autonomy). Additionally, data on the type of relationship between the public opinion and journalists were collected.

The data obtained show that the amount of remuneration is of high importance for the majority of Polish journalists: 54.3 per cent of journalists working in daily newspapers identify salary as a very important aspect of their work; a similar view is shared by respectively 54.3 per cent of journalists working for monthlies, 67.4 per cent – in television stations and 67.2 per cent – in radio stations. A clear difference is visible only in the case of journalists working for weeklies, 80.4 per cent of whom identify salary as a very important aspect of their work.

However, the interest in bonuses and awards is relatively small, especially among television journalists. Various forms of *ex gratia* payments constitute a very important aspect of work for 34.8 per cent of daily newspaper journalists and 39.3 per cent of radio reporters. They are of greatest importance to journalists of weekly magazines – although, still, they are a very important aspect of work only for a half of them. In turn, among television journalists, only approximately 21 per cent indicate bonuses as a very important aspect of their job while 14 per cent explicitly state that it is not very important to them. The above attitude is probably a consequence of the structure of employment: since more than a half of the surveyed members of this group of media people are not permanent employees of media organisations, such forms of additional payment is simply not

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 55.

available to them.

Differences in attitudes to this form of appreciation of the media people's work are also reflected in the analysis of responses provided by people performing different functions in media organisations. Bonuses and awards are generally of greatest interest to chief editors – 50.4 per cent of them recognise this form as very important. Editorial secretaries are slightly interested in this way of remuneration – only 20.8 per cent of them recognise it to be very important. 36.2 per cent of ordinary journalists regard bonuses as very important; heads of divisions are of a similar opinion (36.1 per cent).

Journalists also do not seem to attach great importance to the security of their employment – it is very important to only 48 per cent of TV journalists, 52.3 per cent of journalists of daily newspapers and 56.6 per cent of those working for weeklies. Employees of monthlies (61.6 per cent) and radio journalists (68 per cent) are the most interested in employment stability. Interestingly, as many as 11.6 per cent of TV journalists refuse to answer this question. Considering the above, it can be concluded that it is a difficult issue for people who do not have full-time employment in media organisations.

On the other hand, prospects for development are very important to a significant majority of surveyed television and radio journalists (83.7 and 86.9 per cent correspondingly) whereas among journalists of other types of the media, such indications were slightly less frequent (80.4 per cent of those working for weeklies, 75.9 per cent – for monthlies and 71.7 per cent – for daily newspapers). Simultaneously, the prospect of promotion appears to be very important to 48.8 per cent of TV journalists, 42.6 per cent of radio reporters; it is much less important to representatives of monthlies (only 33 per cent) and respondents working for weeklies (32.6 per cent). Even fewer – only 26.1 per cent – daily newspaper journalists consider it very important and almost as many – 21.7 per cent – identify the prospect of promotion as not very important.

These results seem to indicate that, for journalists not working in media organisations under the contract of employment, both the development and promotion can be equated with the change to the employment status as people occupying higher positions within the organisation are, in fact, usually full-time employees.

The research results also show that not all journalists express interest in the editorial policy pursued by the media. Its shape is very important only to 45.7 per cent of journalists of daily newspapers and weeklies, 55.8 per cent of journalists representing television and 59 per cent of radio journalists. Journalists from monthlies are only slightly more interested in it (61.6 per cent). What is crucial here, also in the case of this question, the highest refusal rate is recorded among television representatives: nearly 5 per cent of respondents in this group do not want to speak on this subject. Nevertheless, when analysing the surveyed journalists through the prism of the role

they play at the editorial board, we note that the editorial policy is of utmost interest to editorial secretaries and chief editors – 75 and 62.1 per cent of respondents from these groups respectively find it a very important aspect of their work; the same answer is given by 50.4 per cent of ‘ordinary’ journalists and 53 per cent of respondents belonging to the group of heads of divisions.

The questionnaire also included two questions on the relationship between journalists and the society. The first examined the importance attached to the help given to other people (public service) while the second explored the attitude of journalists to the possibility of shaping public opinion. Therefore, the possibility of helping other people is considered a very important aspect of work to 77 per cent of radio journalists, 73.9 per cent of the daily press employees, 69 per cent of those working for television and nearly 60 per cent of journalists from monthlies and weeklies. In turn, the possibility of shaping public opinion is regarded as a very important aspect to 77 per cent of radio journalists, 60.5 per cent of television employees, 60.9 per cent of those working at dailies, 60.7 per cent – at monthlies and 54.3 per cent – at weeklies. Interestingly, the largest group of respondents, for whom shaping public opinion is not very important, can be found among the employees of television stations – 11.6 per cent. The data quoted above suggest that both aspects of work are similarly important to Polish journalists.

Assessment of tasks that the media fulfil or strive to fulfil

Finally, respondent journalists were asked to comment on the basic functions attributed to the media, ranging from delivering information and controlling the authorities to providing entertainment. The data collected from journalists representing different types of the media did not show any significant differences between them; hence, the roles that respondents play in media organisations were additionally analysed. This step enabled to identify media’s tasks that are the most important to particular categories of journalists employed therein.

The survey results indicate that quick provision of information for recipients is crucial to the majority of people working for the media. It is considered to be a very important task of the media by: 85 per cent of journalists; 84 per cent of heads of divisions; slightly less, though still 74 per cent of editors-in-chief; and ‘only’ 67 per cent of editorial secretaries. Thus, according to journalists, providing information is a primary function of the media regardless of, as it may be presumed, the type of the represented editorial board – after all, not all journalists work for the typically informational media. Only editorial secretaries do not attach so much importance to it what probably results from their more administrative and organisational functions at the editorial office.

A lower percentage of respondents attribute significance to explain various problems to recipients. The provision of explanations and the analysis of complex problems are regarded as a very important task of the media by 63 per cent of journalists, 59 per cent of heads of divisions, 62.5

per cent of editorial secretaries and as many as 74 per cent of chief editors. Interestingly, 7 per cent of journalists felt that explaining problems is not a very important task. In this context, it is not surprising that an even smaller percentage of respondents are interested in explaining international affairs which, by nature, are the most complicated and require journalists to have a comprehensive knowledge. Only 38 per cent of journalists recognise offering explanations and analyses of international issues as a very important task assigned to the media. This view is shared by 32.5 per cent of heads of divisions and 37.5 per cent of editorial secretaries. In the light of the above, chief editors constitute a distinct group as 52 per cent of them attribute great importance to this role of the media.

62 per cent of journalists perceive focusing on issues that are of interest to the largest possible audience as a very important task of the media. A similar belief is shared by 60 per cent of heads of divisions, 58 per cent of editorial secretaries and ‘only’ slightly more than a half of editors-in-chief. Employees of the media attach even less relevance to the delivery of entertainment. Merely 40 per cent of journalists identify the provision of entertainment and relaxation as a very important task of the media. 30 per cent of heads of divisions and only 14 per cent of editorial secretaries are of the same opinion. Editors-in-chief value the importance of entertainment to a greater extent – 41 per cent of them consider it an extremely important task. Simultaneously, 20 per cent of journalists, 24 per cent of heads of divisions, 25 per cent of editorial secretaries and 22 per cent of chief editors find offering entertainment and leisure to recipients not to be a very important task.

These declarations contradict the results of analyses of media content, which indicate the progressive tabloidisation of the media as a result of the increasing competition in the market and, thus, seeking formulas and themes that help to achieve the widest popularity among recipients. Hence, the obtained results should be treated as an expression of conscious self-presentation of journalists or the view on what their work should involve, rather than the reflection of an actual state of affairs.

At the same time, journalists state that they are only slightly interested in tracking the government’s activity. The research shows that this function of the media is very important only to 43 per cent of journalists. The same is said by 45 per cent of editors-in-chief; however, only 37.5 per cent of heads of divisions and merely 25 per cent of editorial secretaries share this standpoint. Concurrently, as many as 21 per cent of chief editors unequivocally claim that following governmental actions is insignificant. Meanwhile, 66 per cent of journalists consider keeping the distance towards the authorities to be very important. A similar viewpoint is expressed also by 72 per cent of heads of divisions, 71 per cent of editorial secretaries and as many as 78 per cent of editors-in-chief.

Moreover, relatively few journalists are interested in domestic policy. Namely, 49.5 per cent

of journalists (as well as 40 per cent of heads of divisions, 37.5 per cent of editorial secretaries and 46 per cent of chief editors) recognise commenting on and analysing internal affairs on a regular basis as a very important task.

When examining the above data, it is worth remembering that the surveyed journalists came not only from the news media dealing with socio-political issues. Nevertheless, the low percentage of journalists interested in fulfilling one of the classical roles of the media – the role of a watchdog, i.e. controlling actions undertaken by the three main powers (legislative, executive and judicial) of the state – is rather disturbing. What draws our attention is also the fact of differences existing between responses to the question about the need to distance oneself from the government provided by journalists and other categories of media employees. Even though all categories of employees decidedly declare giving a high priority to this issue, as a matter of fact, their percentage is the lowest among ‘ordinary’ journalists.

What emerges from the results presented up to this stage is a picture of journalists focused primarily on providing current information and, only to a lesser extent, interested in explaining various issues and controlling the authorities. Therefore, several functions of the media towards the public should be further examined. The results of the study reveal that media people wish to show cultural events and influence the society’s cultural development. As many as 75 per cent of journalists recognise the cultural and intellectual development of society as a very important task of the media. The above stance is shared by 71 per cent of heads of divisions, 75 per cent of editorial secretaries and 78 per cent of chief editors.

Furthermore, the majority regards identifying social problems that require a solution as vital. 61 per cent of journalists claim that indicating areas that need to be closely investigated is a very important task of the media. The same conviction is expressed by 57.5 per cent of heads of divisions, 54 per cent of editorial secretaries and as many as 69.5 per cent of editors-in-chief. What is more, a significant percentage of media employees want to suggest the manner of solving problems to their recipients. Such view is shared by 60 per cent of journalists, 64 per cent of heads of divisions, 58 per cent of editorial secretaries and 65 per cent of chief editors.

Simultaneously, more than a half of respondents believe that motivating ordinary people to be active in the public sphere is a very important task of the media (55 per cent of journalists, 56 per cent of heads of divisions, 54 per cent of editorial secretaries and 62 per cent of chief editors). Meanwhile, allowing ordinary people to express their opinions is considered very important by 66 per cent of journalists, 67.5 per cent of heads of divisions, 50 per cent of editorial secretaries and 57 per cent of editors-in-chief. Thus, according to the surveyed journalists, after providing information and contributing to the cultural development of society, the third consecutive main task of the media involves creating opportunities for ordinary citizens to express their views.

The question concerning ethical aspects of the journalistic profession, i.e. question about the necessity to verify obtained information prior to its publication, also appeared in the survey. It turns out that Polish journalists, even when they cannot confirm facts, do not avoid reporting a given topic. The issue of skipping topics for which factual information cannot be determined or confirmed is found very important by only 35 per cent of journalists, 41 per cent of heads of divisions, 37.5 per cent of editorial secretaries and 32 per cent of chief editors. In this case, however, it can be assumed that part of respondents did not fully understand the question as more than 16 per cent responded 'do not know' to this question.

The above presented data imply that 'ordinary' journalists consider quick provision of information for recipients, cultural development of society and dissemination of opinions and views of its representatives to be the most crucial. In turn, cultural development of society, maintaining distance towards the authorities and providing information for recipients seem to be the most essential for chief editors. Heads of divisions have similar priorities as editors-in-chief although, like journalists, they put the informative function of the media in the first place. Meanwhile, editorial secretaries, whose task involves primarily coordination of the work of editorial boards rather than making decisions concerning the form and content of the presented materials, tend to be least interested in most of the aforementioned tasks. Interestingly, though reluctant to admit it, journalists and heads of divisions are the most aware of the need to take into consideration the expectations of recipients – exactly these two groups of media employees are directly accountable to chief editors, publishers and owners of media organisations for the popularity results of a given company.

Special attention should also be paid to several features that are evaluated differently within the same category of media employees. Depending probably on the specificity of issues dealt with by a particular editorial board, its editor-in-chief either attaches high importance to exploring the activities of government and maintaining distance towards the authorities or perceives this aspect as not very important. The same applies to heads of divisions and their attitude to the current analysis of internal policy.

Summary

Lastly, it is worth juxtaposing the collected data with the conclusions formulated by Zbigniew Bajka on the basis of his research carried out in the 1990s. Firstly, in comparison with the 1980s and 1990s, the number of journalists holding university degrees has increased although the number of journalism graduates has declined. Hence, we can still speak of the *heterogeneity of the journalistic environment, which comprises both people properly qualified to practise this profession*

as well as others¹². The quoted scholar deliberated upon political sympathies and ‘political assignment’ of a considerable part of the media executives¹³. Meanwhile, this study disregarded questions relating to political preferences; hence, it is impossible to verify this view.

The research discussed here confirms the dispersion of the journalistic environment as far as its organisational aspect is concerned. Whereas, in the opinion of Bajka, the lack of cooperation among main associations of journalists and the multiplicity of professional organisations was the major problem, the 2009 survey results point out that the principal problem concerns a rather low level of membership of organisations uniting journalists, especially among young journalists. On the one hand, the lack of involvement of journalists in the activity of any association entails very few opportunities to exert any influence on them (e.g. with regard to creation and observance of ethical standards); on the other hand, however, it weakens the position of media employees in the relationship with their employer (owner of the media organisation) and the legislative branch. The survey has also confirmed progressing rejuvenation of editorial teams and the increase in the number of women practising the journalistic profession.

Meanwhile, the data relating to the form of employment prove that the phenomenon described 10 years ago by Bajka, i.e. avoiding employing journalists on the basis of a contract of employment, nowadays affects even a larger group of media people, especially those associated with television.

Interestingly, once again over the past two decades, there has been a change in the perception of journalistic tasks by those practising this profession. Insofar as in the 1970s and 1980s, the possibility of helping others, criticising and fighting against shortcomings were pointed out as the main areas of journalistic activity (and thereby reasons for the choice of profession), in the 1990s, the primary concern of journalists involved meeting interesting people, becoming familiar with new places and things, and having a general understanding of what is happening in the world; the opportunity to help others and to speak on one’s own behalf to a wider audience were much less relevant. In the 1990s, journalists believed in their mission to a much lesser extent than previously (fewer opinions concerned the chance of criticising and fighting against deficiencies)¹⁴.

The survey commissioned by the authors of this paper reveals that, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Polish journalists wish to believe (or reckon they should think of themselves in this manner) that their main task is a rapid delivery of information and cultural development of society. Simultaneously, for many of them, the watchdog role of the media or the function of an analyst and commentator on domestic and international events is not a priority.

¹² Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze lat...*, p. 61.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 52–53.