PAWEŁ URBANIAK

Media accountability system
as a symptom of self-regulating mechanisms of media market shaping

KEYWORDS
deontology of media, self-regulation of media, Media Accountability System

ABSTRACT
The article is about self-regulating mechanisms of media market. The author refers to Claude Jean Bertrand's conception of Media Accountability Systems (MAS) formulated in the 90s of the last century. French scholar defined MAS as "any non-State means of making media responsible towards the public". The article describes the elements of MAS by showing instruments of self-regulation which contribute in different media systems to making journalistic messages more responsible. Next the article presents Polish Media Accountability System by the description of these not numerous instruments which have already started functioning on Polish media market.

Realization of public interests should be the main goal of democratic countries' media policy. One sure way to achieve that would be for media to gain a strong position within a state and to use it in a responsible way. According Denis McQuail, a media system serving public interests should be characterized by freedom of publication, media ownership plurality, diversity of information, opinions and cultures presented in media, support of public order and state security, wide range and high quality of cultural information presented, support of democratic political systems, respect for the individual and human rights, and protection of society and the individual from harmful content and one contrary to moral or ethical norms[1]. Meeting any of these goals can be carried out via various regulation mechanisms, based on legal regulations regarding the functioning of media. According to Karol Jakubowicz, regulation can regard both the process and the result. In the first case, both the goal and the

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[1] D. McQuail, *Teoria komunikowania masoweg* [*McQuail's mass communication theory*], Warszawa 2007, p. 177–179.

method of its achievement are delineated. In the second – the focus is the goal while the path is left to the process of self- and co-regulation[2].

In European literature on the subject of media, gaining popularity are opinions that traditional means of media regulation via state administration are becoming less effective and that is why states should strive to carry out their policy via the creation of favourable conditions for the realization of media goals through various forms of self- and co-regulation. Media regulation, according to authors of a report on co-regulation forms in EU states[3], is becoming ineffective for three reasons. Firstly, because it ignores the interests of the main subjects of regulation, that is media companies whose main goal is to maximize financial profits. Resulting is resistance instead of cooperation as media owners may wish to defy regulation or go around it. Secondly, states as media regulators often do not possess enough industry knowledge necessary to be an authority which imposes its own solutions onto all media market members. Thirdly, state authorities should not have direct control over autonomous systems such as the economy, education, or media, hence it is necessary to create forms of indirect regulation. However, this is insufficient. Modern forms of making media responsible are based on state authorities understanding that the best way to realize public interests by media is to allow them to be steered by different subjects and to make use of the knowledge which these media subjects possess. In other words, state authorities need to acknowledge self-regulation and co-regulation as valuable and necessary elements in the shaping of media responsibility.

Media self-regulation is based on publishers and broadcasters or other institutions connected to media delineating rules which put order into the functioning of the media market. Drawing up, controlling, executing and amending change is to be done by the subjects which are to take action freely and on their own initiative. Co-regulation means that state institutions are still responsible for supervision over the functioning of the system. The state is to create legal regulation which not only delineates media goals but which is, at the same time, the legislative regulation, rules of financing, control and sanctions for those who breach them. In co-regulation, the state cooperates with media subjects in drawing up the rules of

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[2] K. Jakubowicz, *Polityka medialna a media elektroniczne*, Warszawa 2008, p. 26.
[3] *Final Report. Study on Co-Regulation Measures in the Media Sector. Study for the European Commission, Directorate Information Society and Media, Unit 1 Audiovisual and Media Policies*, June 2006, http://ec.europa.eu/ avpolicy/info_centr/library/studies/index_en.htm [accessed: 17.08.2010].

media market functioning. It, however, remains the supervisory body in creating media policy effective in a given country[4].

Co-regulation seems to be more effective than regulation imposed by the state authorities. Rules and regulations which one co-created are easier to accept and follow than those created by someone from the outside[5]. In order words, we can assume that rules which one decided on will be easiest to abide by. This is, however, an idealistic assumption. Because we cannot count that all subjects will always respect all standards and ethical norms in the long run, all media systems that we know have regulation and co-regulation in effect. It seems that state control over media functioning is a necessity. Still elements of co-regulation and self-regulation can definitely influence and improve the quality of media.

Media Accountability Systems

The concept of Media Accountability Systems (MAS) was formulated in the 1990s by Claude Jean Bertrand. He defined MAS as "any non-state means of making media responsible towards the public" [6]. The means were to be an antidote for the loss of trust toward state regulatory instruments, including weakening journalist conscience. According to Bertrand, in the past the law has too often been used to limit freedom of speech, hence, it has ceased to be a factor which could make media institutions interested in the realization of public interest.

MAS means various activity which have one goal in mind − making media more transparent, responsible and serving the public good. This system can include written documents delineating regulation on the media market, individual or group activity making up the media sphere, various meetings and long term projects as well as individual initiatives. Most often MAS tools are built in a way so that they can exert moral pressure on people who can influence media broadcasts. Their effectiveness can be enhanced by internal directives in effect in different media companies which can, aside from influencing journalist conscience, also have an influence on them via disciplinary or financial sanctions.

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[4] There are two types of co-regulation. One is full co-regulation in which the state and the non-state system have equal rights in taking part in all stages of the regulation system. The other is partial co-regulation in which the non-state organ can take part in only some of the stages of creating the regulation (for more see: K. Jakubowicz, *Polityka...*, p. 39).

[5] One example of co-regulation is the radio-TV advertising market in France. There is the state regulator (Conseil supérieur d'audiovisuel) and the Advertising Verification Bureau (Bureau de vérification de la publicité) made up of representatives of advertising agencies, businesses and media institutions which can ask for subsequent control, which is independent of the state.

[6] C.J. Bertrand, *Deontologia mediów* [*La déontologie des médias*], Warszawa 2007. Several years later Denis McQuail proposed a slightly different MAP definition, "voluntary and involuntary processes via which media directly or indirectly influence the quality of their publications and their social consequences" (see: D. McQuail, *Teoria komunikowania...*, p. 216).

Elements of media responsibility have, naturally, been in use before Bertrand formulated the concept of MAS. Attempts to put them into effect were made usually when recipients expressed their discontent with the media or when the journalist profession was losing people's trust – all in all, at times of crisis in media. Hence, interest in MAS was first observed in the 1960s. That is when established were local press councils and magazines on media. In Minnesota in 1971, set up was the first regional press council and two years later – the first American national press council. What was characteristic was that they were made up of all press market subjects – readers, publishers and journalists. As Bertrand notes, it was when publishers first allowed their staff and readers be heard[7].

MAS tools

The concept of MAS had its continuators who introduced their own improvements. For example, Stephan Russ-Mohl wrote about Media Accountability Instruments (MAI)[8], stating that Bertrand's concept is more about specific instrumental solutions in order to improve media rather than a system made up of diverse elements. The German researcher indicated that Bertrand's instruments can be divided into three basic groups. The first would include preventive measures to make journalist activity responsible, ethical and serving society. The second group is corrective and eradicative activity to get rid of unsuitable activity. The third are mechanisms created within particular media corporations.

Media accountability instruments can also be classified according to another criterion, in accordance with their specific character. Singled out can be different types of printed documents, those on radio and television, and Internet ones. Media quality can also be guarded by individuals, groups and institutions. Thirdly, among media accountability instruments pointed out can be developmental activity long term in character[9]. All in all, from both the classifications, distinguished can be nine groups of self-regulating tools, favourable to the creation of accountable and transparent media with high ethical standards and meeting quality norms.

Preventive documents

The most common example of preventive documents are different types of deontological codes. They are part of MAS when they are self-regulating in character, that is when they

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[7] Ibidem, p. 174.
[8] See: P. Russ-Mohl, *Journalismus*, Fraknkfurt am Main 2003.
[9] MAS tools cited after Bertrand (see: J.C. Bertrand, *Deontologia….*, p. 177–209).

have been created by media representatives, mainly journalists. Frequently, there is no possibility to influence journalist circles other than moral pressure. At times, though, there is institutional support. For example, in 1994 the Federation of Russian Journalists accepted a code upon signing which it enabled a journalist to receive a professional association card with access to information from press agencies or insurance coverage.

Publications on media can also be considered a type of preventive measure, such as trade periodicals on journalist practices or media sections in a paper, an Internet website or a deontological blog.

Critical publications and documents

Letters from readers printed by editorial staff are considered to be one of the oldest kinds of critical publications on media activity. They reflect readers' opinions on what has been published by a given paper. Nowadays popular, and somewhat similar in character, are Internaut comments included at the bottom of any article published via the Web. The advantage of those is that they are available immediately after they have been written, provided that they meet decency requirements. Meanwhile, it is always the editor's decision whether to print or not a reader's unfavourable assessment and perhaps unwelcome content.

Another possibility to express discontent with a level of content is via civic petitions sent to the editor in order to exert pressure on the publisher. Critical regarding media can also be media experts such as researchers who publish reports and academic papers on media and their shortcomings. Additionally, gaining popularity are Internet blogs with the goal to criticize media.

Internal documents

Highly effective are deontological documents in effect in different media corporations. They can be general circular letters reminding of ethical standards, cyclically sent out to the staff or assessment reports (i.e. after each published issue of a paper) or internal codes binding employees. Another specific type of self-regulation are surveys verifying journalist reliability, addressed to the people cited in a given article. Their goal is to identify possible journalist negligence.

Preventive measures

In the majority of media systems we can indicate individuals, organizations or institutions with a goal to improve journalist ethics. Frequently, their activity is preventive, such as by making media subjects aware of their responsibilities (both legal and moral). These include journalist associations which care about deontology and the prestige of the profession. There are also non-government organizations which are active so as to increase the quality of media products and fight their shortcomings, i.e. via quality control of various media broadcasts. One example of such organization is the Brazilian Agência de Notícias dos Direitos da Infância, in charge of supervising the way media treat young recipients.

Critical subjects

The most popular organizations active on the media market with a goal to improve local media deficiencies are press councils. They are local or national and they consist of journalists, media owners and recipients. What they do is investigate accusations made against a particular medium. Their members are often authority figures who can have a real influence on journalist circles, even though their only way to expose improper conduct is to publish articles about it.

Some press councils (such as in Holland, Finland or Switzerland) are made up of one subject, the so called ombudsman. He plays the function of a people's spokesperson who investigates issues and makes judgments, even if without any legal consequence. He may cooperate with press councils or be an independent subject.

There are also media research centers which play a role in exposing the shortcomings on media markets. These are generally located at universities and this way they can base on academic analyses prepared by their staff. Often, they use public opinion surveys and research to pinpoint and expose various media inadequacies.

Internal control

Some American newspapers (i.e. "The New Republic", "The Arizona Republic") have in their structures the so called *inhouse critic*. This person's job is to deliver to the editor critical assessment of their journalists' work. Most often, these positions are held by former media employees such as retired journalists whose comments are taken into consideration in future issues. Similarly, in Japan since 1922 established have been *shinshashitsu* committees present in large media corporations which assess content. There could also be deontological advisors who may be employed by the editor for a temporary period of time in order to bring to light

and discuss any ways of improving the quality of journalist work or to lead staff workshops with assessment of the created materials. In some countries such as the US or Great Britain, there are also editorial councils made up of select journalists whose job is to delineate binding ethical standards and to settle contentious matters of deontological nature.

Long term prevention

Undoubtedly, most effective is long term activity which results in journalists abiding by ethical standards. For instance, there are deontological courses as part of journalism studies at universities. Such courses on journalist ethics are taught all around the world. However, even if it can be said that they are a sufficient source of knowledge on journalist moral responsibilities, there is still a number of active journalists who do not possess formal journalist education. Hence, there is a constant need to remind people taking part in creating media content of their rules and ethical standards that should be followed in their work. That is why many media corporations decide to make available to their staff courses or workshops lead by media experts, non-government organizations or professional associations.

Additionally, academic centres play an imperative role in the shaping of deontological consciousness among media people. They cyclically organize academic conferences on journalist ethics.

Continuous criticism

Thanks to the Internet, there are more possibilities of contacting editors and even journalists. Many newspapers and magazines decide now to include not only the article author's name but also his e-mail address. This enables readers to contact them directly and/or immediately after reading the text. In the long run, journalists can obtain a better notion of what reactions their work incites in people. There may be more words of criticism but these are always a base for auto reflection on one's work.

Another example of long term care for ethical standards are the so called *town meetings* organized by editorial staff in the US. They are periodical meetings organized by local newspapers' editors with their readers. During these meetings those interested can put forward their reactions to the local medium's activity and their future expectations.

Long term editorial activity

Editors wishing to minimize deontological inadequacies in their activities are best to apply long term strategies. There are different tools available that can be used by media corporations. One of them is registration of errors made by their journalists. This is useful if the description of the violation is detailed, including its cause and effect, who is to blame, the consequences and possible solutions. Another effective tool may be sending out surveys to readers with the goal to identify journalist shortcomings. There is also the possibility of deontological audits carried out by outside experts who can diagnose problems of ethical nature and offer more long tem solutions.

Media Accountability System in Poland

In Poland, the dominant model of mass media functioning is based on the premise that media organizations abide by the rules delineated by legislative organs regarding the fulfillment of their public responsibilities. These responsibilities are determined by legislation and concessions defining the profile of radio and TV stations as well as the scope of their broadcasting, that is they are connected to Polish media policy[10]. The act of January 26, 1984 and the Broadcasting Act of December 29, 1992[11] have the biggest influence on the Polish media market. Elements of regulation which regard media responsibility are, among others, the obligation to mark programmes targeting different age groups, abiding by regulation regarding advertising, i.e. distinguishing it from other broadcasting or press material, and respecting the ban against advertising harmful products.

Polish legislation provides for the establishment of institutions responsible for the assurance of freedom of speech, media plurality and control over the functioning on the market of broadcasters and publishers. This would include the never appointed Press Council[12] "of consultative nature and petitioning with regard to press matters and their role in socio-political life"[13] as well as the established in 1993 the National Broadcasting Council (Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji – KRRiT) which "guards the protection of freedom of

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[10] "Media policy" is understood as "state activity in the shaping of conditions for the functioning of systems of mass communication" (B. Mierzejewska, *Polityka medialna*, [in:] *Media, komunikacja, biznes elektroniczny*, Warszawa 2001, p. 227).

[11] Journalists and media corporations are obliged to also follow other regulation such as the Act of 6 September 2001 on access to public information [Ustawa z dnia 6 września 2001 r. o dostępie do informacji publicznej, the Act of 22 January 1999 on protection of classified information [Ustawa z dnia 22 stycznia 1999 r. o ochronie informacji niejawnych], the Act of 29 August 1997 on the protection of personal data [Ustawa z dnia 29 sierpnia 1997 r. o ochronie danych osobowych] and Act of 7 October 1999 on Polish language [Ustawa z dnia 7 października 1999 r. o języku polskim].

[12] Members of the Council are appointed by the President of the Council of Ministers.

[13] The Act of 26 January 1984 – Press law, art. 17.

speech on radio and TV, broadcaster autonomy and public interests, and ensures a pluralist and open character of radio and television"[14].

Self-regulation on the Polish media market is in an early phase of development as present on the market are only basic instruments of media accountability. These include journalist organizations, ethical codes and the established in 1995 Media Ethics Council. Other elements of media accountability system which are present have less influence and limited scope of impact on journalist circles (these would include, for example, critical articles, industry press and academic conferences on media deontology)[15].

In Poland, there are presently several professional journalist associations. The three main ones are: The Polish Journalists Association (Stowarzyszenie Dziennikarzy Polskich – SDP), the Association of Journalists of the Republic of Poland (Stowarzyszenie Dziennikarzy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej – SDRP) and the Catholic Association of Journalists (Katolickie Stowarzyszenie Dziennikarzy – KSD). The first two possess their own professional codes. SDP has got the established in 2001 *Code of journalist ethics*[16] and SDRP has the *Journalist code of conduct*[17] set up in 1992.

Those who are members of the associations are obliged to abide by rules delineated in the codes. In case of breach, there are active colleague bodies (on the national and local level) which decide on the course of action to be taken.

Journalist members of the above mentioned three organizations are to abide by the *Media Ethics Charter*, in effect since 1995. This is an imperative deontological document self-regulating the journalist environment in Poland as it was accepted by all professional associations as well as some publishers and broadcasters[18]. Its signatories are obliged to abide

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[14] The Broadcasting Act of 29 December 1992, art. 6.

[15] Among valuable initiatives there is European Journalism Observatory, established in spring of 2004 as a Università della Svizzera italiana non-profit organization. In Poland, in charge of the Polish language version of EJO's website is the Department of Social Communication and Journalism, Institute of Political Science, Wroclaw University. Aside from Polish researchers involved in the project, there is also a group of journalists from Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and Austria. EJO, via observation and comparison of trends in journalism as well as analysis of research on media, wants to improve quality of journalism.

[16] SDP code obliges journalists to separate information from interpretation and opinion, not to disclose their source of information, to respect people, to care for quality of language, to avoid violence, to act in accordance with the law, not to infringe privacy, not to accept gifts, not to engage in marketing activity for any company and not to become involved in political activity.

[17] SDRP code includes a list of prohibitions including propagation of violence, pornography, offense to religious beliefs and human rights, acceptance of material gains for publication and for not publishing certain material as well as presumed innocence before proven guilty in the court of law.

[18] *Media Ethics Charter* was signed by presidents of SDRP, SDP, KSD, Trade Union of Journalists, TVP, Polish Radio, Union of Press Publishers, Association of Independent Film and TV Producers, and Association of Private Broadcasting, chairmen of Polish Journalists Syndicate, TV Journalists Trade Union, representatives of

by seven main rules – the truth, objectivity, separation of information from commentary, honesty, respect, tolerance, recipient interest priority, freedom of speech, and responsibility for content.

Upon passing the *Charter*, its signatories created a Polish Media Conference which then established, in 1996, the Media Ethics Council[19]. One of its responsibilities is to make sure the *Media Ethics Charter* is followed. The *Charter* is supplemented by the *Journalist Code of Conduct* from 2002, also passed by the Polish Media Conference. It includes a list of journalist, employers and media circles' duties toward recipients.

The Council does not impose any sanctions, it can only point out breaches, express opinions, take stances and make appeals[20]. Even though the Council is considered to be a consultative body whose opinions are sought by various institutions, including courts, all in all it is an institution which has little influence over the functioning of media. The majority of the people does not consider it an ethical authority which could have the right to adjudicate whether journalist activity was immoral or not.

Self-regulation mechanisms can also be found in the activity of public media. Established at TVP in 2006 was a seven member Ethics Committee. Its job is to adjudicate on journalist conduct according to TVP's internal document from 1996, *Journalists at TVP Ethical Rules – information, journalism, reportage, documentary, education*. It is also to proliferate among TVP journalists the notion that abiding by ethical standards is as imperative as their workshop, intellectual and professional qualities. The committee is irrevocable during its term and sovereign in presenting its opinions and judgments, after it examines evidence and all sides and witnesses have presented their case. The committee does not adjudicate any punishment. Drawing conclusions as far as organization or personnel reprimands is left up to supervisors who are informed of the assessment. Ethics Committee investigates complaints from TVP employees, other associates and viewers but also on its own initiative. Looking into

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Polsat, creative circles' priest and, two years later, also by chairman of National Reporters Club (which did not exist in 1995).

[19] See: P. Wojciechowski, *Sprawozdanie Rady Etyki Mediów*, „Forum Dziennikarzy" 1998, No. 10/11, p. 5.

[20] Among opinions presented by the Media Ethics Council there are two that are good examples. In 2010, Tomasz Lis was criticsed for this programme (at TVP2) from December 2009 in which he hosted attorney Maciej Slusarek and two celebrities discussing the issue of media infringing people's privacy. They quickly came to the conclusion that courts are too lenient with regard to publishers. No representatives of media were invited to defend their case. Additionally, at the same time Lis was suing one tabloid for infringing his privacy and Slusarek was his attorney. The other case was regarding Ewa Stankiewicz and Jan Pospieszalski's film *Solidarni 2010* which included quotations of people from in front of the Presidential Palace after the Smolensk disaster. They majority of opinions cited were those in which people stated that the catastrophe was not an accident, that perhaps it was an attack, or were full of accusations against Russians and political opponents of Lech Kaczynski Media Ethics Council decided that the film infringed the *Charter'*s rule on objectivity, respect and tolerance.

TVP's activity within the last several years, it can be said that the Committee is only supposedly a body whose job is to make TVP more accountable. In reality its work is of little consequence since TVP's ethics are increasingly more questionable.

Another internal deontological code at TVP is a document from 2005 entitled *TVP Journalist Code of Conduct during election campaigns and elections.* It obliges TVP employees to refrain from comments which could be viewed as political campaigning for or against a particular party or candidate. The document also includes instructions regarding footage material in election reports according to which it is forbidden to use effects or shots which would show representatives of different parties in more favourable light while others – in less.

Polish Radio also possesses its own Ethical Committee, established in 1997. Its main task is to adjudicate whether PR journalists act in accordance with rules delineated in the *Polish Radio rules of professional ethics*, signed by Polish Radio Board Management in 2004. According to its guidelines, PR's main goal is serve the public good via offering society pluralist, objective, balanced, independent, innovative and high quality programmes.

Ethical codes at TVP and PR emphasize the public character of these media and their obligation to offer society diversified programmes which would be considered valuable and interesting to different groups of viewers, as delineated in art. 21 of the Broadcasting Act[21]. Another common characteristic of these committees is that their negative assessment of an employee's activity is considered to be an infringement of that employee's responsibilities. The committee's ruling can be a basis for taking action regarding the employee's work contract. Unlike the Media Ethics Council, in this case it is not just about pronouncing judgment on journalist and media activity as there could be sanctions for those involved.

Another self-regulating initiative was the signing, in 1999, of the *Agreement of Polish TV Broadcasters "Friendly Media"* by representatives of the largest media corporations on the Polish market[22]. Its goal is to commence effective activity for the protection of children and youth against programmes which could threaten their development. One of its actions was, for example, the introduction of a uniform system signaling viewers programme content, including inappropriate content for various age groups[23].

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[21]Additionally, guarding the realization of public media's mission are TVP and PR Programme Councils with the task of representing public interests with regard to programmes broadcasted by public media. In practice, the realization of the above goal is hindered by the fact that these media are politicized.

[22] They are: TVP, Polsat, TVN, Nasza Telewizja, Telewizja Niepokalanów, CANAL+, Polska Telewizja Kablowa and Wizja TV.

[23] The text of the Agreement is included in "Zeszyty Prasoznawcze" 1999, No. 1/2, p. 185–198.

Aside from codes created by organizations directly tied to the journalist trade, there are also codes not by or for journalists but ones regarding the functioning of media in Poland These include the *Code of Good Practices* established in 2005 by the Chamber of Press Publishers (Izba Wydawców Prasy – IPW)[24]. It regulates the relations between press and readers, between publishers, their associates and other publishers, and between publishers, chief editors and their staff. Its enforcement is guarded by IWP's internal body.

In Poland, self-regulation regarding advertising present in media is guarded by the Advertising Council which includes representatives of businesses, advertising agencies and media[25]. The self-regulation system is based on the *Advertising Ethics Code* which forbids, for example, discrimination based on sex, religion or nationality, content which encourages violence or which takes advantage of viewers' trust, their lack of experience or knowledge.

Conclusions

Establishment of a well designed and developed system of media accountability will definitely result in better quality of journalist materials. Delineated deontological rules which are co-created by journalists are more likely to be followed than rules imposed from the outside. Those enforced by others, even though they may be just, are often rejected by those who need to abide by them. It seems that the best solution to create a mature and responsible media market is to minimize state regulation and maximize self-regulation tools agreed upon by the subjects involved. Its different elements are to have as main goals – to bring back media prestige, to increase the quality of services offered and to assure journalist autonomy as it is an imperative tool in promoting democracy.

Building of Polish media accountability system is still in an early phase of development. It includes different ethical codes in effect which delineate journalist responsibilities, protect young recipients against harmful content and regulate advertising in media.

Most popular in the industry are codes created by journalist associations and other organizations which associate media subjects. They have internal bodies and committees which oversee abiding by the rules but which can only offer assessment and

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[24] IWP, established in 1996, is a press publishers self-government organization. Among its tasks there are: " to represent business interests of its member entities, to define and disseminate rules of professional conduct in publishing, and particularly draw up and improve the standards of fair play in business".
[25] For more see: A. Gruhn, *Skargi do Rady Reklamy (2007–2008) jako przejaw demokracji konsumentów w Polsce*, „Studia Medioznawcze" 2011, No. 1, p. 81–96.

do not possess any tools to enforce their judgments. More effective are internal codes, adopted by some media corporations, which include sanctions for infringing regulation. These types of codes, however, are not popular among staff. They are in effect for public media journalists while most private media do not have their own deontological codes. One exception is "Rzeczpospolita's ethical code obliging its journalists.

Most regulation included in Polish ethical codes regards press, radio and television. There are only some rules which also apply to Internet media (i.e. general journalist obligations for objectivity, autonomy, etc.) and it seems that there is urgent need to regulate the Polish Internet sphere in terms of ethical functioning. There are issues such as developing civic journalism, Internauts' vulgar comments below articles or the general low quality of materials included on websites which require quick and effective means to regulate these new and complex media phenomena.

The Polish media accountability system is comprised of various popular instruments with the goal to make media valuable and ethical. It does not differ much from systems in other countries with a more advanced journalist culture. However, the existing deontological documents, institutions guarding morality and critical publications on media activity are not enough in order to realize the main goal of media accountability systems, that is to make media broadcasts valuable and of high quality, substantially and morally. One characteristic trait of young MAS systems is their low effectiveness. In case of self-regulation tools on the Polish market, there is a clear divergence between creators' intentions and their factual influence on reality. The majority of deontological documents and institutions guarding the quality of Polish media in reality have little influence on journalist practices in the press, on radio, television or the Internet. That is why, despite the existence of media accountability systems, the Polish media market can be described as one with low journalist culture and with frequent examples of breaching the rules of journalist ethics. Moreover, present is the negative influence of the world of politics on media functioning as well as media commercialization and instrumentalization.

In order for media accountability systems and ethical codes to be effective in shaping professional conduct of people working in media, they have to be accepted as binding and well known to journalists circles. Hence, organizations which create these deontological systems have the difficult task of promoting responsibility in media and the proliferation of regulation included in these documents on ethics. The state can play an imperative role in this sphere. It should not only dispose of some of the traditional media regulation tools in favour

of self-regulating ones but also to financially support organizations responsible for the building of media accountability systems.

Mature media accountability systems have been created with the support, inspiration and some control of academic circles. In Poland, so far there has not been any in depth research on self-regulation tools of MAS systems. Well researched have been more traditional elements of media accountability systems, i.e. ethical codes and consultative institutions in charge of creating binding moral standards for people in media. On the other hand, there is a lot less on innovative and less popular instruments of media accountability. For example, it is hard to determine how many bloggers there currently are who spend their time on systematic control and criticism of Polish media. We do not know what commercial media's ethical standards are like and how many of them have them. We also do not know what influence all of the above activities have on the work of Polish journalists. In other post-Communist countries in Europe the situation is similar, there has been little research carried out on self-regulating media market mechanisms. In Western Europe, in countries such as Germany, Holland, Great Britain and in Scandinavia where more MAS instruments are used in practice, there is also more advanced research on the topic carried out by media experts.