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Journalism in change. Journalistic culture in Poland

KEY WORDS

journalism, professionalism, journalistic culture, journalistic autonomy, professional values

ABSTRACT

The research project “Journalism in change. Journalistic culture in Russia, Poland and Sweden” has started in 2011. The purpose of this project is to make comparative analysis of changes in the journalistic profession in three countries. Each research team collected 500 surveys. The article presents the results of the Polish research. The material was divided into six groups based on different research subjects: who is a journalist, the structure of the profession, journalists’ daily work, ideals and values, the autonomy in the journalistic work, the journalism in relation to society and politics. The analysis of these issues allowed to answer the main research question: has journalism undergone any changes?, and next – to indicate their direction and extent.

Until 1989 Poland was one of the few countries in the Soviet bloc where in-depth research on the journalists of nationwide media were conducted, chiefly at the Centre for Journalistic Research (Pol. *Ośrodek Badań Prasoznawczych – OBP*) in Krakow and at the University of Warsaw. The contribution of OBP, led for many years by Walery Pisarek, are immense in this regard. Paradoxically however, one of the most valuable comprehensive monographs on Polish journalists, *Poland’s Journalists. Professionalism and Politics*, was written not by a Polish author but by the American scholar Jane L. Curry¹. In the 1990s the area of media studies was sorely neglected, mainly due to the lack of funds for empirical research. Few authors made such efforts and therefore little is known about Polish journalists of the transformation period. The Krakow traditions of quantitative studies were upheld by Zbigniew Bajka². In the 1990s Jerzy Olędzki³ carried out questionnaire studies within the

¹ J.L. Curry, *Poland’s Journalists. Professionalism and Politics*, Cambridge 1990.

² Z. Bajka, “Dziennikarze (1981–1990). Komunikowanie masowe w Polsce – lata osiemdziesiąte” [Journalists (1981–1990). Mass communication in Poland – the 1980s], *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* 1991, No. 1/2, pp. 149–159;

framework of ‘The Global Journalists’ project, directed by David H. Weaver. After almost ten years, the gauntlet was picked up by Agnieszka Stepińska and Szymon Ossowski⁴ from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, within the framework of a project directed by the same American researcher.

Qualitative studies were undertaken by Stanisław Mocek⁵ and the scientific circle of Collegium Civitas⁶. On the turn of 2001–2002, forty four in-depth interviews were conducted within the framework of the “Autonomy of journalism in Poland: chances and risks” (*Niezależność dziennikarstwa w Polsce: szanse i zagrożenia*) project, which broadened the knowledge on the Polish journalist community.

In the period after 1989, several significant monographs and numerous articles and chapters in edited collections were published. Among the important publications which contribute many interesting observations regarding journalistic professionalism, one should rank the works by Walery Pisarek⁷ and Tadeusz Kononiuk⁸. The issue of journalist autonomy and ethical norms was examined by Lucyna Szot⁹. There are many valuable works on journalism and local press. It is there that the works by the experts on the issue from the University of Silesia, Marian Gierula¹⁰ and Marek Jachimowski¹¹, stand out. Studies by

idem, “Dziennikarze lat dziewięćdziesiątych” [Journalist of the 1990s], *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* 2000, No. 3/4, pp. 42–63.

³ J. Olędzki, “Polish Journalists: Professionals or Not?”, in: *The Global Journalist. News People Around the World*, ed. by D.H. Weaver, Cresskill, N.J. 1998, pp. 257–276.

⁴ A. Stepińska, S. Ossowski, “Dziennikarze w Polsce: wartości, priorytety i standardy zawodowe” [Journalists in Poland: values, priorities, and professional standards], *Studia Medioznawcze* 2011, No. 1, pp. 17–28.

⁵ S. Mocek, *Dziennikarze po komunizmie. Elita mediów w świetle badań społecznych* [Journalists after the Communism. The media elite in the light of social research], Warszawa 2006.

⁶ *Dziennikarstwo, media, społeczeństwo* [Journalism, media, society], sci. ed. by S. Mocek, Warszawa 2005.

⁷ W. Pisarek, “Kwalifikacje dziennikarzy w opinii redaktorów naczelnych” [Journalists’ qualifications in the opinion of chief editors], *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* 1994, No. 1/2, pp. 153–163.

⁸ T. Kononiuk, “Zawodowstwo w dziennikarstwie – wyzwania XXI w.” [Professionalism in journalism: challenges for 21st C], *Studia Medioznawcze* 2001, No. 3, pp. 15–22; *idem*, “Zasada przejrzystości w polskich mediach” [Principle of transparency in Polish media], *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* 1997, No. 1/2, pp. 7–14; *idem*, “Antynomie wolności słowa w społeczeństwie demokratycznym” [Antinomies of the freedom of speech in a democratic society], *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* 1996, No. 1/2, pp. 52–58.

⁹ L. Szot, “Main Professional Dilemma of Journalists in Poland”, in: *Comparative Media Systems: European and Global Perspectives*, ed. by B. Dobek-Ostrowska and oth., Budapest 2010, pp. 209–232; *idem*, *Wolność dziennikarzy w polskim systemie prawnym* [Freedom of journalists in the Polish legal system], Wrocław 2003.

¹⁰ M. Gierula, *Polska prasa lokalna 1989–2000. Typologia i społeczne funkcjonowanie* [Polish local press 1989–2000: Typology and social functioning], Katowice 2005; *idem*, “Dziennikarze współczesnej prasy lokalnej” [Journalists of the contemporary local press], in: *Media i komunikowanie w społeczeństwie demokratycznym. Szkice medioznawcze* [Media and communicating in a democratic society: Essays in media studies], ed. S. Michalczyk, Sosnowiec 2006.

¹¹ M. Jachimowski, *Regiony periodycznej komunikacji medialnej. Studium prasoznawczo-politologiczne o demokratyzacji komunikacji medialnej* [Regions of periodic media communication: A press and political study on democratic media communication], Katowice 2006.

Włodzimierz Chorążki¹², Ryszard Kowalczyk¹³, and Włodzimierz Pepliński¹⁴ should also be mentioned. The causes of the process of the deprofessionalisation of the profession in Poland may be brought to light, at least partially, by the report prepared by the Rzeszów circle on the education of journalists in Poland¹⁵. The problem of Polish journalists and their professional culture was also studied by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska¹⁶, who based her reflection mainly on the analysis of the content of the media.

After 1989, however, no comprehensive empirical studies were carried out on journalists, their attitudes, or factors influencing their work and distorting their mission. This gap is partially filled by two important international projects, in which Polish teams take part. A crucial step in quantitative studies on Polish journalists was the research in the framework of the “Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe (MediaAcT)” project¹⁷. It was the first time that Poland participated in such a broad comparative project, which enabled to grasp the differences and similarities, the specifics of not only the media but, first and foremost, the journalists they employ¹⁸. In 2011 the realisation of another important international research project was launched, entitled “Journalism in change. Journalistic culture in Russia, Poland

¹² W. Chorążki, *Obraz niezależnej prasy lokalnej w Polsce w I połowie 1994 r.* [Image of independent local press in Poland in the 1st half of 1994], Kraków 1994; M. Gierula, *Dziennikarze współczesnej prasy...*, p. 83. The authors present their own estimations based on the research by W. Chorążki which included 586 and 210 editorial staffs in 1996 and 1997 respectively.

¹³ R. Kowalczyk, “Rola prasy lokalnej w kształtowaniu systemu politycznego (wybrane zagadnienia)” [Role of local press in the formation of a political system (selected problems)], in: *In the circle of media and politics*, ed. by D. Piontek, Poznań 2003, pp. 101–124.

¹⁴ W. Pepliński, “Zmiany w modelu funkcjonowania zawodu dziennikarskiego po 1989 r. (na przykładzie gdańskiego środowiska prasowego)” [Changes in the functioning model of the journalist profession after 1989 (on the example of the press community in Gdansk)], *Studia Medioznawcze* 2001, No. 3, pp. 47–60.

¹⁵ *Kształcenie dziennikarzy w Polsce. Opinie i oczekiwania środowiska naukowo-dydaktycznego* [Education of journalists in Poland: Opinions and expectations of the scientific and educational community], auth. by S. Gawroński and oth., Rzeszów 2009; S. Gawroński, “System kształcenia dziennikarzy w Polsce. Opinie i oczekiwania studentów” [System of education of journalists in Poland: Opinions and expectations of students], *Studia Medioznawcze* 2010, No. 4, pp. 11–21; *idem*, R. Polak, *Dziennikarstwo i komunikacja społeczna – nowe wyzwania. Kierunki zmian w kształceniu w zakresie dziennikarstwa i komunikacji społecznej* [Journalism and social communication: new challenges: Directions of changes in education in the field of journalism and social communication], Rzeszów 2010.

¹⁶ B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Polski system medialny na rozdrożu. Media w polityce, polityka w mediach* [Polish media system at the crossroads: Media in politics, politics in media], Wrocław 2011.

¹⁷ The European Community’s Seventh Framework Project “Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe” was realised in 2010–2013 by a team from the Department of Social Communicating and Journalism at the Institute of Political Studies of the University of Wrocław; for more information, see: www.mediaact.eu, www.mediaact.uni.wroc.pl; see also: P. Barczyszyn, M. Głowacki, A. Michel, “Projekt 7. Ramowego Programu Komisji Europejskiej (2010–2013) we Wrocławiu. Odpowiedzialność i przejrzystość mediów w Europie: MediaAcT” [Project of 7. Framework Programme of the European Community (2010–2013) in Wrocław: Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe: MediaAcT], *Studia Medioznawcze* 2011, No. 2, pp. 129–134.

¹⁸ More broadly in: M. Głowacki, “Dziennikarze polscy w świetle studiów porównawczych systemów odpowiedzialności mediów w Europie” [Polish journalists in the light of comparative studies on the systems of media accountability in Europe], *Studia Medioznawcze* 2013, No. 1, pp. 29–44.

and Sweden”¹⁹. Its realisation comprises two stages. Stage one, carried out in the spring and summer of 2012, consisted of a quantitative questionnaire survey performed on a sample of 1,500 journalists, 500 from each country. Stage two, a qualitative study in the form of 20 in-depth interviews with journalists and media managers, is scheduled for the spring of 2013.

Selection of the sample

The aim of this article is to present the results of quantitative research gathered during the stage one of the project. First an estimate of the number of journalists²⁰ employed in individual sectors of the media and freelancers was made. Next, a research sample was selected to reflect the structure of employment (Table 1). Observations for the statistical sample were based on quota sampling. The sampling frame was divided into separate groups (media sectors), then the research team distributed the quota of the questionnaires – anonymous and in proportion to the number of journalists employed in each sector. The differences between the percentage of employees, including freelancers, and the number of received questionnaires vary from –1.42% (magazines) to +2.90% (dailies), which lie within the limits of statistical error acceptable in social sciences (5%). In the case of freelancers, it was assumed they make up 10% of all media firm employees.

This article presents a small portion of data gathered in the quantitative research. The main research questions are: Have changes taken place in journalism? If so, what is the direction and depth of these changes? We have formulated the following two hypotheses:

¹⁹ The project “Journalism in change. Journalistic culture in Russia, Poland and Sweden” is scheduled for the period of April 2011–April 2014 and is funded by The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies. The coordinator of the project is Gunnar Nygren from the Södertörns University in Stockholm. The team of Russian researchers is led by Maria Anikina from the Lomonosov Moscow State University, and the Polish by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska from the University of Wrocław. See: <http://webappl.web.sh.se/p3;journalism-in-change.blogspot.com>; www.zksid.politologia.uni.wroc.pl/; www.id.uw.edu.pl/dzialy/badania/strona/zmiana-w-dziennikarstwie.

²⁰ This was based on the directory information regarding all media firms officially operating in Poland, i.e. registered titles of press and online media which had obtained concessions from the National Broadcasting Council (Pol. *Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji – KRRiT*), found in the *Almanach Mediów i Reklamy* [Almanac of Media and Advertisement] 2011/2012, published by “Media i Marketing” (Warsaw, September 2011). The figures regarding the number of employed journalists were obtained through various channels, directly from the media firms via email (included in the project documentation), from the official documents of these firms available in public circulation, lists of employed journalists published in the imprints of individual press titles or on their websites. It is therefore an estimated number, derived from the structure of the media market in Poland and the employment in its individual sectors. Establishing the number of freelancers proved to be the greatest difficulty for all members of the project. However, the consortium directing the project decided that this group should be included in the research. The number of 910 journalists in this category is an estimate based on the same methodology as employed with the other journalists, supplemented with interviews carried out with media communities and journalist associations.

H1: Important changes have occurred in Polish journalism, resulting in a shift in the source of pressure from the political to the economic field in the recent 5–10 years.

H2: The journalist profession is in the phase of decay.

Only six research problems were chosen for the analysis: socio-demographic profile of journalists (who is a journalist?), structure of the profession, working conditions, ideals and values, professional autonomy, and relations with the world of politics.

Who is a journalist in Poland?

We know from the research by Zbigniew Bajka²¹, whose results were published in 1991, that there were about 11,000 working journalists in the whole country at the time. Less than 10 years later, the number of people employed in the profession grew to some 18,000²². Calculations made by the University of Wrocław in 2011 for the project MediaAcT showed that the number of journalists employed full-time oscillated around 12,000²³. Each of these studies was an estimate performed using a different methodology; therefore, they do not have any significance from the viewpoint of statistics, although they may still constitute a kind of basis for researchers in media studies and aid in the description of the professional group of journalists.

Table 1. The structure of the population of journalists in Poland in 2011 (estimates)

Media sector	No. of employees	Employees without freelancers (%)	Employees including freelancers (%)	Number of questionnaires	Percentage of questionnaires
Daily newspapers including:	2,310	25.38	23.10	130	26
nation-wide	659	7.24	6.59		
regional	1,651	18.14	16.51		
Magazines	2,543	27.93	25.42	120	24
Public radio	1,157	12.71	11.57	55	11
Private radio	808	8.87	1.08	40	8
Public television	758	8.32	7.58	40	8
Private television	926	10.17	9.26	45	9
Online media	350	3.87	3.50	15	3
Press agencies	249	2.73	2.49	10	2
Total (without freelancers)	9,100	100			
Freelancers	910		9.00	45	9

²¹ Z. Bajka, *Dziennikarze (1981–1990)...*, pp. 149–159.

²² *Idem*, *Dziennikarze lat dziewięćdziesiątych...*, p. 42.

²³ See: www.mediaact.eu; www.mediaact.uni.wroc.pl.

Media sector	No. of employees	Employees without freelancers (%)	Employees including freelancers (%)	Number of questionnaires	Percentage of questionnaires
Total (including freelancers)	10,010	100	100	500	100

Source: All tables and charts were prepared by the authors on the basis of the research done for the project “Journalism in change” 2012.

Estimates made in the framework of the project “Journalism in change” in the spring of 2012 showed that the number of journalists, without freelancers, amounted to 9,100. It can be assumed, therefore, that the number of journalists is decreasing, which results from the economic crisis, among others. Media enterprises, facing decreasing profits, have reduced employment. Technological changes which occurred in media worldwide on the turn of the first and second decades of the 21st century have also contributed to it. Thanks to the new technologies, now one person can fulfil a task which used to require several journalists. This trend is confirmed by the results of the research as well. The journalists indicated that in the recent 5 years the number of employees in their media firm significantly (64.2% of answers) or slightly (11%) decreased. Thus it can be said that in the last 5 years there was a tendency to reduce employment in Polish editorial teams. This is felt increasingly acutely by the journalists, who are frustrated, as can be seen in the comment by one of the respondents: “My problem is that I am more and more depressed by what is happening in my trade and there is no day I do not think about changing my profession. My publisher begins layoffs today, which will take the following four months. In this situation I have nothing constructive or positive to say whatsoever”.

Almost half of the journalists worked for the printed media (23.10% and 25.42% for dailies and magazines, respectively), 11.57% were employed by public and 8% by private broadcasters, almost 17% worked for television (7.58% for public and 9.26% for private TV). Online media and press agencies employed 3.5% and 2.45%, respectively. The group of freelancers amounts to 10% of all employed in the media – they constituted 9% of all observations.

The “Journalism in change” survey included 57% of men and 40% of women (2.6% of journalists did not answer the question about sex). More than 57% of respondents are below 40 years of age. Asked where they would like to work in five years, more than a half (52.6%) indicated their present employer and 16.6% answered they would change their media firm. Only a small percentage (4.8%) would give up the profession. More than 70% of respondents

worked for less than 20 years, 25% of whom worked for 6–10 years. After 15 years of work, journalists gradually leave the profession and only a low proportion of them retire.

Structure of the journalist profession

The collected data showed that 53% of all respondents declared having some form of journalistic education (academic, non-academic, or professional training in a media firm). Such education at academic level was indicated by 38% of journalists and it was the lowest proportion of all the three countries participating in the project (56% and 72% of respondents in Sweden and Russia, respectively). About 11% of journalists received training in a media firm, and 4% declared to have journalistic education but not at academic level. As many as 41% of respondents had no journalistic education whatsoever. Higher journalistic education, according to the journalists, is not necessary to practice the profession, and even needless and hampering, which was expressed by a dozen or so respondents in the questionnaire.

Answering the question about the form of employment, 66% of journalists indicated permanent employment in a media firm (as many as 93% in Sweden), and 11% temporary employment. 9% of respondents were freelancers or self-employed persons, or having another form of employment (e.g. internship at a media organisation). However, permanent employment at a media company proved to be the prevalent form.

As the analysed data show, small editorial teams prevail in Poland. Almost one third of the respondents were employed at editorial offices in which the number of full-time journalists did not exceed 10 persons, and 10% in teams of up to 20 journalists. About 11% of respondents worked at large editorial offices employing more than 70 journalists. A significant percentage of the respondents (27%) did not answer this question (Table 2). Such a distribution of data results from the fact that almost half of the employed journalists works for the printed media, where small editorial teams of magazines predominate. Regional daily newspapers severely reduced employment as well.

Table 2. Number of full-time journalists employed at editorial offices (percentage)

Number of employees	Percentage of indications
0–10	30
11–20	10
21–30	8
31–40	6
41–50	5
51–75	3

Number of employees	Percentage of indications
76–100	6
101–150	1
151–200	2
201–250	1
Above 250	1
No answer	27

To the question about income structure, most respondents (79% of journalists) answered that the income from being a journalist was sufficient to make the living. 23% among them declared they were able to save up. According to 28% the financial means were just about enough to buy everything that was necessary, 28% thought they could survive for the remuneration they received, and 19% that they could not (in the latter group, 13% had also other sources of income). In the opinion of the majority of polled journalists, it was possible to make a living on the income from journalistic work.

A small number, only 17%, declared they belonged to a journalistic association, 38% of respondents indicated lack of affiliation to any organisation of this type, while as many as 45% did not answer this question. It may be assumed that the latter group are journalists who do not belong to professional associations of journalists. It is worth adding that this situation is dramatically different than in the other countries participating in the project: in Sweden more than 80% declared they belonged to journalistic associations, and so did 60% in Russia. These data reveal not only the low level of interest in this kind of activity among Polish journalists, but also a negative evaluation of associations distrust of them, repeatedly expressed and commented on by the respondents.

Daily work practices

The analysis of the daily work practices of a journalist focused on two aspects. The first related to the formal traits of the journalist's work, such as the form of employment or the role played in the editorial team. The other was intended to show what the respondents think about the changes which came, or may come, to pass in their profession, in the process of the preparation of materials, and in the journalist's work itself.

Polish journalists stated that on average they worked for more than 41 hours a week, thus they worked longer than their Swedish colleagues (39 hours). This result is particularly interesting if we consider, that one fifth of the respondents in Poland work part-time.

Asked about the role they primarily play in the editorial team, almost half of the participants (46%) answered that they fulfilled the tasks of a reporter or correspondent. The function of editor-in-chief or manager was performed by 11% of respondents. It is worth emphasising that this question offered a multiple-choice, which shows that journalists combine managerial functions with routine journalistic work. This results from the predominance of small editorial teams, leading to the combination of various functions. The roles which were indicated least often were those directly related to the sphere of economy. The results also reveal that few journalists perform specialist functions which require additional costs, such as researcher or photographer. In principle, the respondents agreed that in the recent 10 years a considerable progress occurred in all areas of production of journalistic materials. Technological changes significantly contributed to the higher quality of graphics and photographs. Over 60% of respondents indicated progress in the area of material editing and layout, and 59% the improvements in researching and verifying of information. Almost half of the respondents said that the contact between journalists and recipients had improved. On the other hand, the journalists were concerned with the increasing pace of work and the pressure of time, because of which they had less and less opportunities to perform tasks in the field. It is why one fifth of them declared that the level of work outside the newsroom had deteriorated (in comparison, this amounted to as much as 41% in Sweden). These factors also influenced the assessment and discussion of materials within the editorial team, which had worsened according to 23% of Polish (and 42% of Swedish) journalists.

Within the framework of the project, attempts were made to study another important issue, which is the journalists' attitude towards multitasking or multifunctionality. This term relates to journalists who perform multiple functions at the same time, and consequently have many skills necessary fulfil them. An example of such a skill is employing modern technologies in the process of preparation and publishing of news. The collected data show that the phenomenon of multifunctionality is not unfamiliar to Polish journalists. A majority (66% of respondents) considered themselves to be multitasking journalists (in contrast, such a feeling was expressed only by 37% of participants in Sweden). Almost 80% believed that it was what their superiors expected from them. Similarly in Sweden and in Poland, more than 80% of respondents thought that multitasking is the direction in which their profession was developing. They agreed with the statement that in the future the number of such journalists will grow, which will be influenced by the decreasing level of employment and less numerous editorial teams. This in turn will result in increasing the number of responsibilities of an

individual journalist. Multitasking is reflected in yet another aspect of journalist’s work—in the thematic scope of produced materials. A whole 73% of respondents managed multiple thematic sections. Due to the various topics of the materials they prepared, the journalists needed to acquire miscellaneous knowledge. In practice, however, the journalists did not have enough time to thoroughly prepare themselves. This is why the skills of searching the internet for information or contact with information sources via the new technologies became so important. What is worth attention is that in spite of some positive facets of multifunctionality, such as a wider field for creativity, 43% of respondents think that it will lead to the deterioration of the quality of produced materials.

Journalistic ideals and values

Most journalists (68%) are proud of their profession. The same proportion of respondents see journalism as a mission. Almost 45% of respondents agreed with the opinion that this occupation offers an opportunity to begin a career in another profession, which is of a particular significance if we compare these declarations with the data concerning job seniority and the phenomenon of leaving the trade after 20 years of work.

In 45% of cases, respondents disagreed with the opinion that their chief motive to seek employment in the profession was remuneration. However, should we confront such an answer with the answers to the question about the most important factors in the choice of work, remuneration holds the 4th place with 74% of indications. Among the respondents, 60% said that work was not more important than family and leisure time.

The acquired data show that, according to the respondents, the most important factors in the choice of profession, were the following: professional development opportunities (85%), freedom at work (83%), atmosphere in the workplace (82%), next the remuneration mentioned above and serving the public interest (74% each). Further down the line, but still with large numbers of indications, were: editorial policy of the organisation (64%), job security (63%), and the opportunity to influence the society (59%). It was such factors as development opportunities, freedom and atmosphere in the workplace, which received more than 80% of indications and proved to be pivotal ones (Table 3).

Table 3. The importance of individual issues in the choice of the job of a journalist (percentages)

Factor	Definitely unimportant	Unimportant	Neither important nor	Important	Very important	I don't know
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			unimportant			
Salary	4	4	12	30	44	6
Additional benefits	12	15	19	23	19	11
Editorial policy of the organisation	5	7	15	31	34	9
Job security	6	6	15	26	37	10
Professional development opportunities	1	3	7	24	61	4
Atmosphere in the workplace	1	1	9	29	53	6
Serving the public interest and helping people	2	4	15	27	47	5
Freedom at work	1	2	10	28	55	5
Opportunity to build a career in journalism	1	5	16	29	43	7
Opportunity to influence the society	4	7	21	31	28	8
Other	1	0	4	2	4	89

A vast majority of the respondents (91%) thought it was important that a common set of ethical rules should be in force in a media firm. Political pressure over media was unacceptable for 76% of respondents, and 62% did not endorse collaboration with representatives of marketing and PR departments of other companies. For 59% of respondents, acceptance of gifts by journalists was seen as reprehensible. Therefore, the journalists were of the opinion that politics and economy should be separated from journalism, and editorial teams should have common ethical codes.

The responsibilities of a journalist which were most often recognised as important included the following: objective presentation of information (93%), presentation of different opinions (also 93%), independence from specific interests (91%), and criticism of injustice (also 91%). Objectivism and pluralism were indicated, as well as the control function of the media. What was less important was concern with increasing the profits of media firm (41%) and providing entertainment (also 41%). The two latter categories clearly stood out from the rest and were not seen as important professional responsibilities according to most journalists (Table 4).

Table 4. The importance of journalistic responsibilities (in per cent)

Journalists should...	Per cent
Bring forward various opinions	93
Provide information objectively	93
Criticize injustice	91
Stand free of special interests	91
Control public authorities	88
Tell the truth regardless of the consequences	87
Educate the public	86
Investigate government claims	85

Represent diverse social groups	83
Simplify and explain	79
Be neutral reporters	78
Stimulate new ideas	76
Mobilize people to act	76
Influence public opinion	57
Provide entertainment	41
Ensure that media business does well	41

Only 29% of respondents thought that journalists in Poland fulfil their obligations towards the society. Slightly more, that is 32%, were of the opposite opinion. The largest group, however, proved to be those who did not give answer to this question (39% of respondents). It is difficult to tell what was the reason of the reluctance to answer the above question. It does not change the fact, however, that a third of respondents said that Polish journalists fulfil their obligations towards the society.

A majority of journalists indicated that the quality of journalism had deteriorated during the previous 5–10 years. Such opinion was given by 62% of journalists, according to 11% the quality had increased, and 18% said it remained the same. Thus, in the case of the quality of journalism, there is a strong downward trend, which has been noticed by the respondents. The deterioration of quality of journalism was only one of the crucial problems indicated by the respondents. Another was the abovementioned low level of fulfilling journalistic obligations to the society.

Professional autonomy

In this part of the research, the focus was on two key aspects of journalistic autonomy. The first pertained to the production of materials and the influence of specific factors on the choice of subjects or the structure of the material. The other issue was the influence of persons and external factors on the everyday work of a journalist.

The collected data show that it is the Polish journalists themselves who have the decisive influence on the production process and content of the materials. 58% of respondents almost always covered the topics they proposed. It is a higher score than in Sweden, where 45% of respondents chose this answer. Roughly one third of the journalists did not have such an opportunity as their proposals were rejected by their superiors. About 41% of respondents had never or almost never had the material they produced tampered with by the publishers. More than 40% of journalists occasionally had to cope with it. The publishers' influence

occurred at a similar level in Sweden as well, where these two categories were checked by a total of 79% of polled journalists, that is 3% less than in Poland.

Another factor which supports the hypothesis of autonomy of journalists in the preparation of materials is the influence of their interests on the topic selection. It was recognised as the most important factor by 75% of respondents. It was not the most frequent answer, however, since 82% indicated the interests of the public. Such a high score shows catering to the tastes and likes of the recipients, which eventually leads to the commercialization of Polish media. Both journalists and media owners realise perfectly well that a greater number of recipients attracts advertisers and increases profits. The problem of the indirect influence of advertisers on the prepared materials was noticed by 39% of respondents.

The occurring changes in journalistic autonomy regarding the process of preparing materials reveal answers to the question, what influence various factors had on the content of the media in the recent 10 years. More than one fourth of the participants said that the influence of journalists themselves on this content had decreased. Politicians and interest groups were of lesser importance as well. It was the influence of economic factors which grew significantly. The growth of the influence of advertisers was indicated by over 55% of respondents, of recipients by 44%, and of the owners of the media, who generally expect profits and returns, by 40%. On one hand, these data show a decrease in the scope of journalistic autonomy during the last decade, on the other, they testify to the growing commercialisation of the media.

The influence of external factors on the autonomy and work of the journalists was a separate research problem. The polled journalists most often (72%) indicated personal sources of information, or acquiring information directly from persons involved in and acquainted with the issue they described. Public relations activities were also of great importance. Journalists liked to attend press conferences, and 67% admitted that they used information obtained there. In the case of 60% of participants, the source of knowledge were pre-made materials they received from promotion departments and workers. The research shows that journalists approved of active PR and did not perceive it as a threat to autonomy.

The surveyed journalists indicated, which seems quite symptomatic, that they much more rarely encountered obstacles of political than economic nature. In the case of economic obstacles, financial interests of the media firm (28%) and advertisers (23%) were considered very frequent. The respondents were fully aware of the growing importance of the influence

of economic factors on the work of journalists. As many as 77% of them said that the owners' expectations regarding profits, as well as the influence of advertisers (64%), were a serious threat to journalistic autonomy (Chart 1).

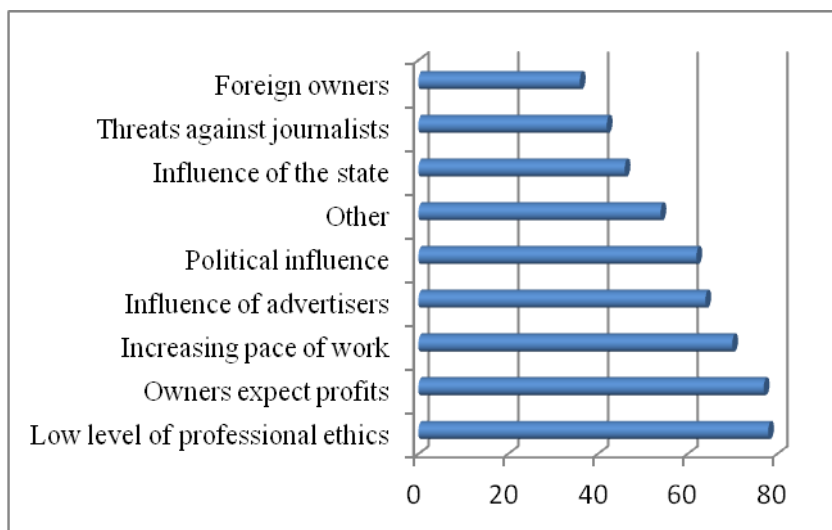


Chart 1. Factors threatening journalistic autonomy in the 21st C (percentages)

The low level of professional ethics was recognised as the greatest threat to the journalistic autonomy of the 21st century (78% of indications). An important factor having a negative influence on the quality of materials was the threat in the form of the growing pace of work, which was noticed by 70% of the journalists. The influence of foreign owners and threats against journalists were considered relatively harmless. The political influence, which is discussed below, occupied a farther position on the list. And yet, as it was indicated by 60% of respondents, it should be considered a serious threat.

Journalism and politics

Relationships with the world of politics were the primary subject of the research by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, where political parallelism was one of the four dimensions of the media system²⁴. The results of the studies presented below may help to verify the hypothesis that Poland falls closer to the polarised pluralism (Mediterranean) model than to the model of

²⁴ D.C. Hallin, P. Mancini, *Systemy medialne. Trzy modele mediów i polityki w ujęciu porównawczym*, Kraków 2007 [originally published: *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*, Cambridge 2004]; *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*, ed. by D.C. Hallin, P. Mancini, New York 2012.

liberal or democratic corporatism²⁵. In this part of the discussion, the political preferences of journalists and their influence on the practice of the profession will be analysed.

Almost one third of the respondents (30.6%) admitted that they had left-wing (6.4%) or centre-left views (24.2%). Right-wing and centre-right values were important to 7.6% and 16.5% of respondents, respectively, which amounts to a total of less than one fourth of the participants (22.5%). Centre views were declared by 24% of respondents. Thus, there is a certain preponderance of persons with left-wing and centre-left preferences (a 6 and 8 percentage point advantage over centrist, and centre-right and right-wing views, respectively). It is thought-provoking that more than 21% of respondents answered “I don’t want to answer”, “I don’t know” or did not check any answer at all. The highest proportion of them were employed in the public media—as many as 31% of journalists of Polish Radio (*Polskie Radio*) and 37% of employees of Polish Television (*Telewizja Polska — TVP*). This may be a sign of lack of confidence in the employer who many times, in the situations of the change of political power, “rewarded” or “punished” for open declarations of political opinions. Therefore, this lack of answers may be a result of the adopted survival strategy (see Chart 2).

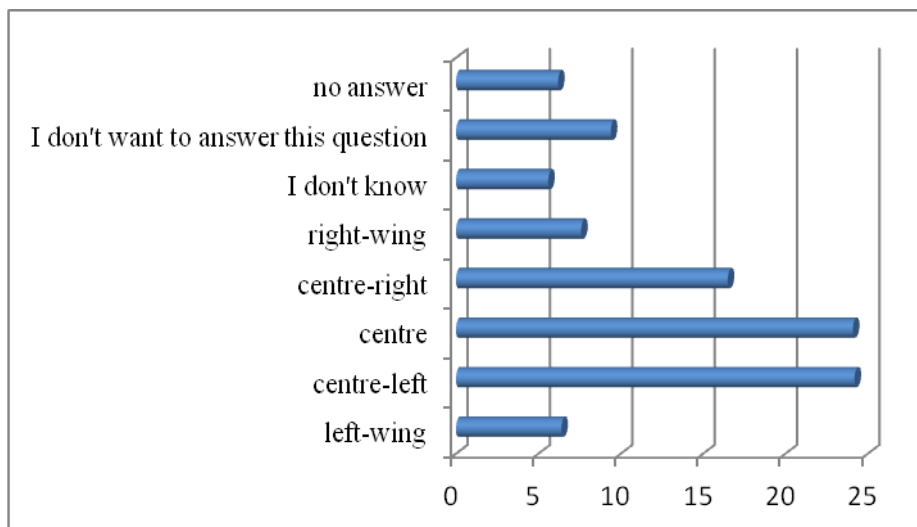


Chart 2. Political preferences of the journalists (percentages)

Journalists employed by the press were not afraid to reveal their views. The proportion of those who avoided answering was lowest in nation-wide daily newspapers (6%) and magazines (12%), that is in sectors which are traditionally characterised by external pluralism

²⁵ B. Dobek-Ostrowska, “Italianization (or Mediterraneanization) of the Polish Media System? Reality and Perspective”, in: *Comparing Media...*, pp. 69–108.

expressed in a clear programme policy, as well as the highest degree of politicization. Some of the nation-wide dailies, and many weeklies as well, direct their product to recipients with explicit preferences. In this context, having clear and publicly declared views is more of an advantage for a journalist. Moreover, the mechanisms which would cause the need to hide them (as they do in the case of the public media) are absent there. Left-wing and centre-left views were declared by 41% of respondents from daily newspapers and 35% of those working for magazines; in the case of right-wing and centre-right, it was 31% for newspapers and 28% for magazines. Thus it can be said that there is a balanced political pluralism in these two segments of the media. Journalists of differing views work for different publishers and do not normally see each other in the same newsroom.

Regional dailies set out from the background of nation-wide newspapers and magazines. A largest number of respondents employed there declared centre views (35%) and it was the largest proportion in this category among all media segments. The distribution between persons of left-wing/centre-left (25%) and right-wing/centre-right (22%) preferences was balanced. This can be explained by the fact that, as a rule, most voivodeships are monopolised by a single title, and political commitment might have a negative influence on the market position of a newspaper. In these circumstances, a single title should by definition find its way to all readers regardless of their ideological preferences. This is why the owners (Polskapresse and Media Regionalne) try not to become involved in politics and avoid supporting any political actor. Therefore it can be assumed that openly expressed political sympathies of the journalists employed by local titles, contrary to the situation in nation-wide newspapers, do not follow the expectations of their owners.

In the case of electronic media, no obvious overrepresentation of advocates of left-wing/centre-left or right-wing/centre-right views was observed, regardless of their ownership status. The largest difference, of 7%, appeared for private television, where 35% of respondents admitted having left-wing/centre-left views; this difference amounted to 5% in the case of public radio. Public television, where the proportion of journalists of right-wing/centre-right orientation was higher by 2%, was an exception.

Respondents working for online media show some interesting characteristics. Only a little more than 4% (which was the lowest percentage in this category) represented centrist views, and over 48% (and it was the highest percentage in this category) declared left-wing/centre-left preferences. The difference between the left-wing and centre-left on one hand, and the right-wing and centre-right on the other, was more than 20%. The structure of

political preferences of journalists working for online media constituted a significant departure from that of journalists employed in other sectors, and may be of a surprise. While the differences observed for traditional media can be explained, this one is not unambiguous for researchers (Table 5).

Table 5. Political preferences of journalists in different media sectors (percentages)

Segment of the media	Left-wing	Centre-left	Centrist	Centre-right	Right-wing	I do not know	I do not want to answer	No answer
National daily newspapers	4.2	36.7	22.4	18.3	12.2	2	4.2	0
Regional daily newspapers	6.13	18.51	34.56	16	7.4	7.5	7.5	2.4
Magazines	9.5	25.19	25.19	15.74	12.59	7.87	0.78	3.14
Public radio	4.68	18.75	26.56	15.62	3.12	7.81	23.46	0
Private radio	7.5	15	30	22.5	5	2.5	15	2.5
Public television	2.17	21.73	13	17.39	8.69	4.41	23.92	8.69
Private television	5.8	27.5	21.6	27.5	0	4	7.8	5.8
Online media	11.1	37	7.4	22.3	3.7	3.7	11.1	3.7

According to 86% of respondents, a journalist should not become involved in politics during of his work in the profession, and almost 76% said that political influence on a media firm should not be accepted. 58% of journalists asked about the influence of political connections on the operation of the media firm where they were employed answered that it was small or neither small nor big; 61% held a similar opinion about the influence of external political actors. More than 72% had never in their professional careers encountered any pressure of political actors from outside the company, and 71.2% of respondents had never had any problems at work which resulted from the political interests of media owners. It is also significant that over 17% and 23% of respondents did not answer the questions about the political connections of the firm and the influence of strong external political actors, respectively.

Nevertheless, if we confront the answers of all respondents with the opinions of journalists from different sectors, concerning the connections of the media firm with political actors, that is, politicians and parties, the picture will not be so unambiguous. The existence of connections between a media organisation and the world of politics was indicated to the largest extent by journalists from magazines and daily newspapers (31.6% and 29.1% respectively). Yet again, the online media journalists constitute an interesting example, as

33.3% among them indicated a high, and 43% a low degree of political connections (Table 6). A comparison of these results with the political preferences of the journalists provides yet another confirmation that, in the case of these sectors, the political involvement of the medium and the political views of the journalists are related. The answers of the journalists employed by the public radio and television are thought-provoking: they indicated that the connection between their media and the world of politics was weak, which is rather contrary to the results of the analysis of the content of information programmes in the last decade.²⁶

Table 6. Political connections of media companies (percentages)

Sector	Low	High
National daily newspapers	27	29.1
Regional daily newspapers	44	9.8
Magazines	33.3	31.6
Public radio	37.7	27.8
Private radio	30.7	28.2
Public television	29.5	27.5
Private television	39.5	12.5
Online media	42.8	33.3

Roughly one third of respondents judged that the influence of politicians on media remained unchanged in the last decade (above 30%) or did not increase (15%), while 23.4% observed its growth and, interestingly, over 25% did not answer this question. However, as soon as we compare these assessments with the answers to the question about the influence of politicians on a media firm in the sector in which the respondent was employed, a somewhat different picture appears. The increase in influence of politicians was noted by more than 18% of journalists employed by nation-wide newspapers (10% more than those of the opposite view), and more than 30% employed by magazines (almost 20% more than those who said this influence decreased). The results regarding these two sectors confirmed yet again the existence of close-knit connections between the worlds of politics and media, as well as high political involvement of the editors. The same conclusions may be drawn concerning the public television: more than 18% of indications of the increase, and only 2% of the decrease of influence (Chart 3)

²⁶ B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Polski system medialny...*, pp. 131–166.

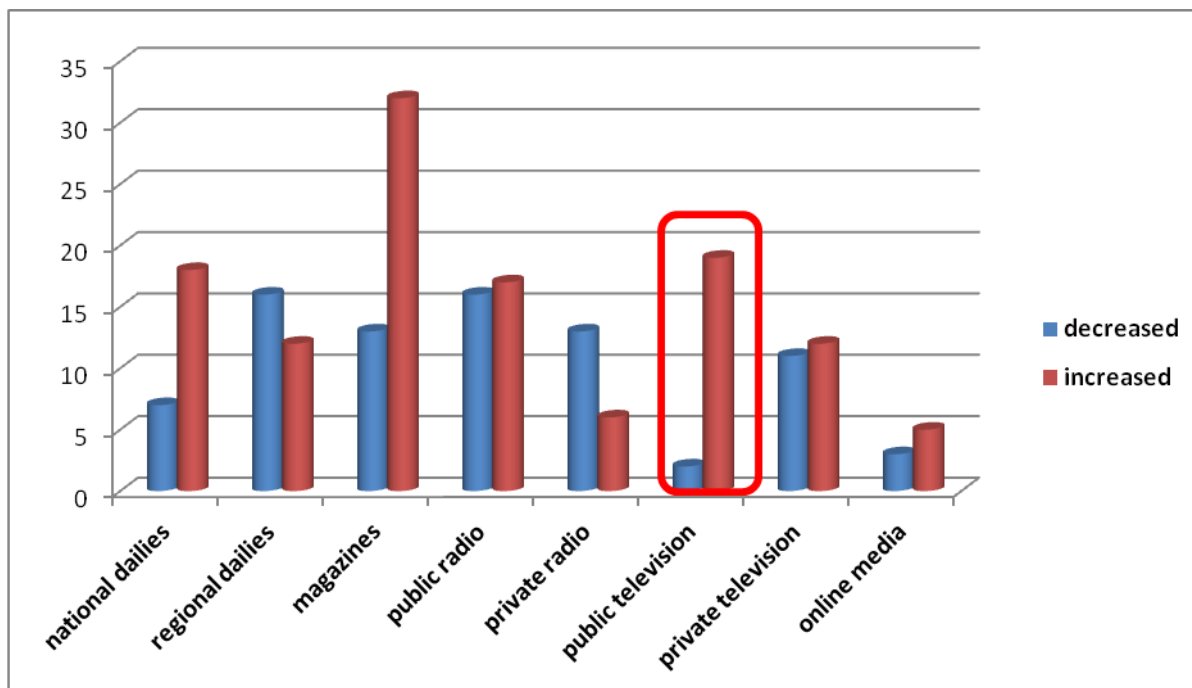


Chart 3. Changes in the influence of politicians in the recent 5–10 years in the media companies (percentages)

The freedom of the press in Poland in the last decade received much better grades from the respondents. About 30% of them said that it increased, 25% that it dropped, and 33% that it remained the same. It is worth comparing these data with Poland's rank in the *Press Freedom Index*, which was very much unstable during the last decade (29th in 2002, 58th I 2006, 24th in 2011–2012, and 22nd in 2013²⁷. It should be emphasised here that in 2006 it was the lowest and in 2013 the highest place that Poland has ever been ranked.

Conclusion

Initially, two hypotheses were formulated: that there had been important changes in Polish journalism, which led to a shift of the source of pressure from the political to the economic field, and that the journalistic profession was in the state of decay. In order to verify them, research results pertaining to the following six problems were compared: who a journalist is, the structure of the profession, working conditions, ideals and values, professional autonomy, and relationships between media and politics.

²⁷ *Press Freedom Index 2002*, http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=297; *Press Freedom Index 2006*, http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=35; *Press Freedom Index 2011–2012*, http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=1043; *Press Freedom Index 2013*, <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html> [accessed: 8.02.2013].

The research unequivocally confirmed a tendency to reduce employment in the profession and the lack of stability, revealed the frustration of many journalists who realise that their profession does not guarantee them either certainty for the future or work until retirement, that they either have to leave themselves or will be dismissed. In spite of the fact that most journalists are permanently employed in media companies, there has been a tendency seen in the last 5 years to reduce the number of employees in Polish editorial offices. This is first and foremost the case of printed media – national and regional daily newspapers, undergoing an economic crisis and a drop in readership, and, as a consequence, a decrease in profits. Economic troubles of media companies are reflected in the conditions and effects of journalists' work. They not only result in the decrease of employment but also cause a serious lowering of working standards and professional ethics, enforce multitasking, make journalists work under a pressure of time. The journalists did not try to conceal their quite pessimistic views of the future of the profession. Among them there were 37% of respondents who said that the journalistic profession will turn into another form of activity, while 14% of participants opined it was going to decline. 28% of journalists believed in the development of their profession. According to 11%, it would not change. It can be acknowledged, therefore, that a decisive majority of journalists was convinced that journalism is facing imminent changes, but they did not present a unified vision of the direction in which these changes will follow. Arguments can be found here which confirm Hypothesis 2.

The research segment pertaining to the ideals and values leaves no room for doubt. A great majority of the respondents indicated that in the recent years the quality of journalism in Poland had deteriorated, and only a tenth of them was of the opposite opinion. Thus there is a certain downward trend observed by the polled journalists. The deterioration of the quality of journalism was only one of the crucial problems pointed out by the participants. The aforementioned low level of fulfilling the journalist's obligations to the society was another one. This part of the research confirms the Hypothesis 2.

The part of the study related to autonomy shows that journalists still enjoy much freedom in the preparation of materials, even though their autonomy has suffered from a process of gradual reduction for the last ten years. As the cause of the present state of affairs, the respondents indicate mainly the economic factors—the interests of the owners and the pressure of the advertisers. The influence of the recipients on the content of the media has grown significantly. It is a result of economic calculation, however, since higher viewership brings greater profits. The data confirm that economic pressure is of much greater importance

and consequence in the everyday work of a journalist than political pressure. This part of the research provided arguments to support both hypotheses.

The relations between the media and journalists and the sphere of politics have changed fundamentally. Along with the deepening commercialization and growing competition on the market, increasingly often it is not the political factors which decide the future of a profession and the way it is practiced but the business ones. Economic calculation – profit and loss – is a more important advisor for a media owner than contacts with political actors, as well as the suggestions and guidelines they offer, although there are noticeable difference in this matter between the individual sectors of the media. Printed media are characterised by external pluralism, with the exception of regional daily newspapers, which have adopted a strategy of escapism from the political sphere, forced on them by economic factors. Journalists employed by the radio, television, and online media noticed the increase in the level of the freedom of the press in Poland to a greater extent than those who work for the printed media. An increase in political pressure in the last decade was observed by the journalists employed by national daily newspapers, magazines, and the public television. Painful experiences regarding the politicization of the Polish Radio and TVP in 2006–2010 must have made the journalists working there reluctant to reveal their political preferences. About 60% of respondents did not notice any connections of the medium where they were employed with political parties and strong political actors. The journalists did not approve of becoming involved in politics while practicing the profession, either.

The political pressure was not, however, the greatest threat to the identity of the profession according to our respondents. It was the pressure of economic factors that they felt more strongly. The interests of the owners and the business world, chiefly the advertisers, revealed themselves to the greatest extent in the magazines and online media. The issue of the pressure of foreign owners was emphasised the most by the journalists employed in the sectors dominated by foreign media companies, that is, regional daily newspapers and magazines (chiefly by German publishers, e.g. Bauer, Verlagsgruppe Passau GmbH), as well as online media (mainly Ringier Axel Springer, Bauer). This part of the analysis revealed much evidence verifying both hypotheses.

The data collected and presented above confirm the assumptions made in the beginning. They leave no illusions regarding the economic pressure which influences the quality of Polish journalism and largely contributes to the decay of journalism. One should be

aware, however, that these processes occur on a global scale and that Poland constitutes no exception here.

The limited form of the article did not allow to present the whole of the collected results. Only a portion of quantitative research was presented here, and the researchers participating in the project are still looking forward to the qualitative studies. It should be hoped that the project “Journalism in change” will contribute to obtaining a more accurate diagnosis and evaluation of the processes occurring in this profession and allow a better knowledge of the journalistic community.