



## CS2. Country case studies on critical junctures in the media transformation process in Four Domains of Potential ROs (2000–2020)

The aim of the second case study is to provide analysis of risks and opportunities concerning the diachronic changes in four domains defined by the project in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Excerpt:



#### An option for reference of this particular report:

Głowacki, M.; Gajlewicz-Korab, K.; Mikucki, J.; Szurmiński, Ł. and Łoszevska-Ołowska, M. (2022). POLAND. Critical junctures in the media transformation process. In: Country case studies on critical junctures in the media transformation process in Four Domains of Potential ROs (2000–2020). *Approaching deliberative communication: Studies on monitoring capability and on critical junctures of media development in 14 EU countries*, CS2, D-2.1, pp. 399–427. Mediadelcom. <https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-2/pol/>



# POLAND

## Critical junctures in the media transformation process

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### Executive summary

This report discusses the cultural conditions for media and democracy monitoring abilities considering Poland's critical junctures. Through an in-depth examination of the turning points in media technology, politics, and culture from 2000–2020, evidence of the cultural blend of political power and the media as a mismatch between democratic law-making (standards setting) and standards implementation (self-regulation included). The highly interwoven social layers of media transformations prove a high level of political parallelism, the multiplication of codes of journalistic and societal polarisation, the most critical risks in Poland's trajectory of media freedom.

Following the Mediadelcom methodology, opportunities and risks for media and democracy are analysed in connection with 1) Legal regulations and ethics, 2) Journalism studies, 3) Media usage patterns and 4) Media education and literacy. The report highlights the most critical knowledge share gaps, which include looking at media from the perspective of agency of change (actors + time) and collaboration between the media industry and scholars. To this end, this study calls for the cultural contexts alongside in-depth research on organisations (working conditions, workplace diversity, management systems and structures) and the culture of media and democracy stakeholders (people and their values, pride, satisfaction, and motivation).

## 1. Introduction

This report aims to illustrate critical cultural conditions for monitoring capabilities (research and data) and media stakeholders (researchers, policymakers, media industries, non-governmental organisations, and so on) to measure and secure democracy and media freedom in Poland. We begin with mapping the so-called critical junctures, our umbrella term for highly interwoven changes in technology, politics and society/culture in the period studied (2000–2020). Mapping media organisations and scholarly responses follow the key moments of media and societal transformation. The final part of the report presents findings on the agency of change, highlighting the role of critical stakeholders alongside risks and opportunities in each Mediadelcom domain; 1) Legal regulations and ethics, 2) Journalism studies, 3) Media usage patterns, and 4) Media education and literacy.

## 1.1. The Cultural Side of Research and Data Capabilities

Findings from the Mediadelcom project have mapped the potential of research and data as monitoring capabilities of media and democracy in Europe (see: Case Studies 1). Poland's database of 1000 publications from 2000–2020 has proven the orientations and expertise in changes in journalism and users' behaviours considering the digital and online-born media transformations (adaptation of the legacy media included). On the surface, there has been an observable development of media users and journalism research in the early 2010s and post-2015, reflecting changes in technology and politics alongside communications and media research autonomy and the community of scholars. This includes the clash of Polish society's liberal vs conservative visions (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013) and observable business parallelism to address the blend of politics and media ownership (Zielonka, 2015).

Findings from the scholarly database have proven the dominance of theory-driven and Western tools (and methodologies), with many studies mappings the potentials and pitfalls of implementing media and democracy in Poland. On the other hand, the mismatch of policy setting (freedom of speech, freedom of information, media law and media accountability) requires an in-depth examination of existing cultural practices and the cultural path dependencies of all the stakeholders involved.

Poland's Mediadelcom interviewees have argued for cultural research, highlighting people, values, and mindsets as prerequisites for healthy policymaking and professional journalism. This includes, above all, advancing monitoring capabilities regarding the rule of law, working conditions, workforce diversity (gender, age, class, and so on) and users' abilities (including users' ethics and media preferences). The existing knowledge risks and gaps further call for more academic engagement in supporting democratic media law and accountability and drawing potential solutions in high political parallelism and journalism (and societal) polarisation (media scholar, Gdańsk, September 23, 2022).

According to our experts, monitoring media and democracy require multistakeholder collaboration acting as the democratic checks and balances. One of the interviewees noted that the success and effectiveness of regulation and self-regulation depend on high-quality data and scholarship to support civic and media education:

*“Healthy democracy is based on two critical factors. Firstly, the quality and competencies of media as cultural institutions. Secondly, media literacy and education. So, the critical question is why don't we educate our kids as they do in the Nordic countries?” (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 23, 2022).*

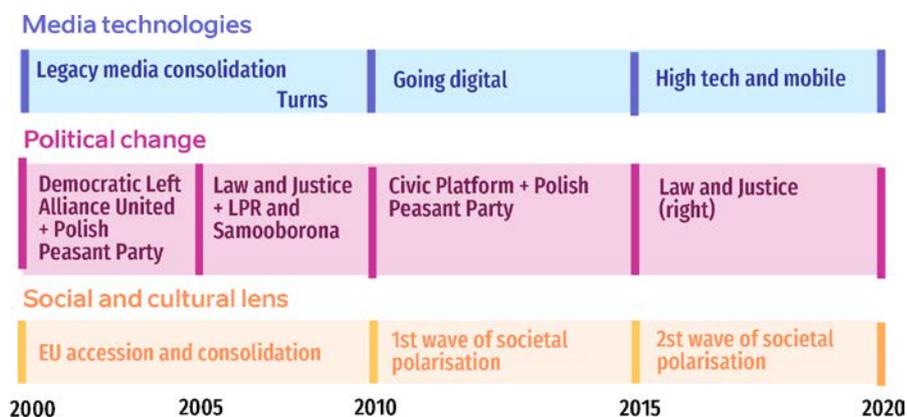
## 1.2. Methodology

This report builds on the state-of-the-art and the literature review in line with methodological Mediadelcom foundations (data from 2000–2020). We look at the agency of change via the proposal of critical cultural junctures of Poland's media and democracy (policymaking, media accountability and research). Four semi-structured interviews augment the potential of media regulation, self-regulation and scholarly contributions via the potential risks and opportunities in each Mediadelcom domain: 1) Legal regulations and ethics, 2) Journalism studies, 3) Media usage patterns, and 4) Media education and literacy. The interviews with media scholars, media managers and policymakers were conducted in September–October 2022. The interviews were anonymised and transcribed, with the authors' translation into English.

## 2. The Critical Junctures: Technology, Politics and Culture

The study of democracy and media transformations in Poland begins with identifying key moments of technological, political, and cultural change in the period studied (2000–2020). Figure 1 serves as a departure point to understand the fabric of media transformations in Poland alongside the risks and opportunities (in four domains). Poland’s Mediadelcom interviewees in Poland have widely argued that capturing media change in times of data-driven media, filter bubbles and societal polarisation call for joint action of media, policymakers, and scholars (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 23, 2022; media manager, interview in Sopot, September 23, 2022);

*“So, how do we react to a departure of democratic media models, preceded by extreme and radical societal and cultural polarisation. Which is also a subject to the economic influence of external media stakeholders” (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 23, 2022).*



**Figure 1. Critical Junctures in Poland (the proposed model)**

Source: Authors.

### 2.1. Media Transformations

Poland’s media reform and market structure relate to the outcomes of post-1989 political and cultural democratisation (Price, Rozumilowicz, and Verhulst, 2002; Jakubowicz, 2006). The early transition from the authoritarian media regime toward democratic media in the 1990s resulted in the media market’s consolidation and democratic media law. Poland has guaranteed press freedom in the 1997 Constitution, followed by adopting human rights and democratic media policies via membership in the Council of Europe (since 1991) and the European Union (since 2004).

The abolition of censorship, followed by media policies of the early 1990s, opened a space for private investments in legacy media, such as the press and broadcasting (Szynol, 2016). The media law transformed state radio and television into public service media (PSM) to support human rights, democracy, and internal pluralism in the media (Klimkiewicz, 2017). However, 2000–2020 is full of examples of the clash between democratic media reform and counterreformation (illiberal turns) regarding policymaking, setting journalistic standards and corporate strategies (adaptation and media change). Dynamic political changes with media freedom and a high level of political parallelism (see the following paragraphs) are connected to rapid high-technologies development and changes in users’ behaviours.

The mid-1990s show the early signs of traditional press erosion and shrink in Poland's readership numbers (Filas, 2022). This tendency continued in the early 2000s, with the consolidation of broadcasting media and a noticeable shift towards social platforms and media in the following decade (2010s). Looking at the dynamics of media transformations, we observe critical stages concerning media users' and technology change:

- **Until 2010:** Market consolidation; the dominant role of broadcasting, the emergence of social media and a systematic shrink of the press.
- **2010–2015:** Legacy media adaptation towards digital production and content with the consolidation of internet-born media.
- **2015 onwards:** The rise of creative, high tech and data-driven industries (startups and SMEs), with accompanying dominance of digital TV, online and mobile media (and related struggles of the legacy media organisational change).

Similarly to other countries, one of the most critical moments for media transformations in the period studied has been the rise of digital and online media. Since 2005 Poland has experienced the rise of online news portals and social networking sites, both when it comes to national (naszaklasa.pl; grono.pl) and global internet companies (Google, Microsoft, Apple). Significantly, 2010–2020 has proven the importance of the digital era, which has been widely reflected in the scholarly traditions, analysing changes in communication and the outcomes of convergence, user-generated content, citizen journalism and information bubbles (Szpunar, 2018). Communication in this period has become multi and intermedial with time and place-shifting (VOD, IP, geolocation) as new strategies and offers of the Polish media firms. In the mid-2010s, we also observed the new era of non-linear services such as video on demand, Amazon Prime and Netflix, exemplified by mobile applications. A shift towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution or the 5G technology, the Internet of Things, and smart cities are still future critical points (Mikucki, 2021).

The stages of media transformations highlighted above naturally reflect organisational adaptation to digital and data-driven tendencies. On the one hand, Poland opened to online media and behaviours in the early 2000s. On the other hand, legacy media firms still adapt to user-driven co-creation alongside collaborative accountability and transparency practices that build on their hierarchical management structures and other potential barriers to organisational change (including strategies and mindsets).

For instance, Sehl, Corina and Nielsen (2016) have noticed the delays in the Polish public service media's user-driven practices compared to other European PSMs (including case studies of Finland, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom). Additionally, research by Głowacki and Jackson (2019) has evidenced late organisational response towards the organisational shift of the Polish PSM via the rise of entrepreneurial practices in high technologies and creative industries. On the surface, long-term post-industrial transformations toward an agile, entrepreneurial community (startups and SMEs) have not become a subject of a systemic investigation to date. Studies on media transformations in Poland tend to focus on external dimensions, covering the cultural dynamics of media and politics.

## 2.2. Political Change

There is widespread research on the impact of policies and politics at different stages of Poland's media transformation. In the transition stages of the early 1990s, political authorities played a significant role in setting freedom of expression standards as a part of the broader democratisation process (Jakubowicz, 2004). The path towards democratic media, launched and further supported by the first (June 1989–October 1991) and the second (November 1991–May 1993) terms of the Polish Parliament, led to the abolishing of authoritarian mechanisms, such as the Office for Press, Publications, and Performances. This move was followed by amendments to the Press Law of 1984, alongside the adoption of the Broadcasting Act (1992). The latter established the National Broadcasting Council (NBC) – the regulatory authority of electronic media – and further opened up for private cross-media conglomerates alongside the creation of the Polish Radio (Polskie Radio – PR) and the Polish Television (Telewizja Polska – TVP). Both PR and TVP joined the European Broadcasting Union in 1993.

The political change studies on Polish media transformations need to address a classical distinction between media policy and politics. On the one hand, understanding political change and its implications on Poland's media need to include the dynamics and ongoing interplay of democratic and illiberal reforms, as laid down in democratic theories and the Western-based normative models. On the other hand, what seems to be critical is highlighting the importance of politics and related cultural path-dependencies, such as the vision of media controlled by the Government, a mindset potentially inherited from the past (Głowacki, 2020; Donders, 2021).

The studies on media-political relations in Poland widely illustrate a high level of political parallelism alongside media Italianisation, typified by weak journalism culture and the importance of informal relationships (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012). The examples of clientelism, nepotism and the overall “mutual exchange of ‘favours’ between patrons and clients” (Bajomi-Lázár, 2019, p. 259) have been explained via the systemic path-dependencies where a country's system of Government is translated into a corresponding method of media policy and governance (Jakubowicz, 2008). In line with this, one of the interviewees recalled political bias and low journalistic professionalisation as the critical challenges for Poland's media and democracy:

*“(...) and solid journalistic solid polarisation aligns with political corruption. Today's journalists lack training, education, and a proper understanding of media accountability. And you can find them in the media defined as public services” (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 24, 2022).*

Polish media are prone to political interference and earthquakes after political elections (Głowacki, 2020). Bearing in mind that Polish media and related policies have never been entirely free from politics (Dobek-Ostrowska & Głowacki, 2015), we see the overall political change connected to conservative vs liberal power over the media. The clash of values in the Polish context can be illustrated in media change dynamics under the Law and Justice (right-wing conservative) and the Civic Platform (centre-liberal) Governments:

- **2005–2007:** The first Law and Justice Government (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS), changes in the National Broadcasting Council's appointment and related governance structures of the Polish PSMs, with the first wave of the media freedom decline.
- **20017–2015:** the Government of the Civic Platforms (Platforma Obywatelska – PO) and the People's Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – PSL) coalition, typified by the improvement of Poland's position in the global media freedom ranks.
- **2015 onwards:** The second and the third Law and Justice Governments (The United Right) with the controversial rule of law attitudes, governmentalisation of public service media (2015 onwards) and the policies of media repolonisation (2019 onwards).

The analysis of different Government and media-politics dynamics in Poland dates to 2005 when the right-wing-oriented PiS created its first conservative coalition and passed the Broadcasting Act of December 25, 2005. The new broadcasting law reduced the composition of the National Broadcasting Council from nine to five members. More importantly, the continuity of the institution's operation was interrupted, with the terms of office of NBC terminated. This step has widely opened the media for the governmental influence over supervisory and management bodies of PR and TVP, which were then naturally systemically reduced during the Government of the PO and PSL coalition. The Civic Platform (PO) won political elections twice, in 2007 and 2011.

PiS (in a coalition of two other parties) returned to power in 2015 with the majority Government coalition with two smaller political parties under the umbrella of the United Right movement. One of the first decisions undertaken by the new conservative majority was the amendment to the Broadcasting Act of 2016, which allowed the Government (The Ministry of Treasury) to appoint Director Generals of TVP and PR. The media policies, which – above all – resulted in selecting Jacek Kurski – a former PiS member, as the head of public service television, have been criticised by international organisations, such as the Council of Europe, Freedom House and the European Commission. Moreover, changes in the broadcasting regulation have resulted in more than 200 PSM employees leaving their jobs at TVP and PR due to politics and many anti-governmental manifestations.

The interplay between media and politics in Poland affects the founding models and entrepreneurial policies to support the press. For instance, the Governments of the PO and PSL coalition took relatively invisible and market-oriented policies toward the licence fee as a source of PSM funding. With the poor collection of the broadcasting fees (31% of the households in 2018), the PiS Government decided that public (state budget) funds need to compensate for the potential financial loss. The current estimations put the state-funded public service media compensation to 980 million PLN in 2018 to 1,95 million PLN in 2021 (Gajlewicz-Korab and Szurmiński, 2022).

At the same time, a challenge to democratic transformation in the aftermath of 2015 has been the Broadcasting Act of 2016, which established the Council for National Media (Rada Mediów Narodowych – RMN) to safeguard the governance and remit of the Polish PSMs. The RMN taking over the responsibilities concerning public service media from the NBC in dismissing members of the management and supervisory bodies of public broadcasters has been seen as contrary to the National Broadcasting Council competencies (Węglińska, Szurmiński, and Wąsicka-Sroczyńska, 2021). The interviewees noted that policymaking in the aftermath of the 2015 elections had been a significant turning point for the rule of law and multiplication of discourses regarding today's democracy (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 24, 2022; policymaker, interview in Warsaw, October 25, 2022).

The impact of the United Right Government policies and politics has gone beyond changes in the governance and funding systems, as laid down in the media regulation and law. Changes in PSM regulation alongside regulatory and supervisory media bodies, such as the National Broadcasting Council, the Council of National Media, and the Office of Electronic Communications, have impacted the rise of Poland's conservative societal agenda. For instance, the content analysis of news programmes in public service TVP privately-owned media has proven the dominance of the pro-governmental plan during the local 2018 elections (Kopeć-Ziemczyk, 2021). In addition, the conservative vision of public service media translated by the Government has resulted in supportive Catholic Church news reporting, with the women's rights and LGBT+ movements addressed as dangers for the traditional family foundations (Donders, 2021).

The second term of the United Right Government, launched in the Fall of 2019, has started to push the policies of media repolonisation. According to the Government agendas, limiting the

number of international media shares of the legacy media has been a way to improve ownership pluralism and protect the national public interest. In line with this, on December 7, 2020, the German-owned company Polska Press was sold to the state-owned ORLEN – the Polish tycoon on the fuel market, indirectly controlled by politicians from the ruling party. Taking control over the most influential local newspapers resulted in appointing several new editors-in-chief, representing mainly the pro-governmental and conservative agenda. Similarly to the earlier situations in public service media, many journalists from the local media decided to leave in a protest against media politicisation (Pacula, 2021).

At the same time, the Government has widely recalled its rhetoric on the negative impact of ‘internationally-owned media’; as noted during one of the interviews:

*“What matters in media and politics here is the international investments and the interplay of the free market and national business connections. Managing media has become insanely difficult, especially for those who criticise the ruling parties” (media manager, interview in Sopot, September 23, 2022).*

One of the most current controversies was the project of media law that would enable the Government to take control of TVN, Poland’s leading American Discovery-owned TV network. The so-called „Lex TVN” bill, which would result in the discontinuation of TVN as a non-European media enterprise, passed the Parliament in December 2021 and generated social protests calling for “free media” across the country. On December 27, 2021, President Andrzej Duda vetoed the controversial media law, framed by international organisations as a “fundamental threat to media freedom and pluralism in Poland” (Reporters Without Borders, 2021b).

### 2.3. Societal and Cultural Change

Naturally, media and political change reflect and are further supported by societal and cultural change. The social science scholarship is full of studies on the outcomes of cultural transformation from the authoritarian to democratic culture, what Jakubowicz (2006) called “Rude Awakening” and “Negotiated Democracy”. While the decade of the 1990s can be seen as a time of learning and adapting to democratic values and behaviours, the period of 2000–2010 can be named as a time of societal and cultural consolidation, strengthened by the accession to the European Union. Polish citizens remain supportive of the EU and European integration. Relations with the European Union, the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights have widely divided Polish society in response to the Law and Justice populist agenda (Stępińska, 2020). Mainly the second (2015–2019) and the third (2019 onwards) Law and Justice Governments revealed an observable divide between the conservative (pro-governmental) and liberal (opposition) opinions and views.

Kopeć-Ziemczyk (2021) argues that Poland’s societal divisions are both of political and ideological nature. Above all, the ongoing cultural clash is a blend of polarised opinions about policies, with the examples of the EU vs national politics, independence of courts and judiciary systems, alongside struggles for autonomy and plurality of the media. On the other hand, pro-governmental and anti-governmental supporters have different views on freedom as a social goal, with massive social protests and movements against the restriction of the abortion law, alongside activities to support immigrants and LGBT communities or those which continue supporting the separation of the state and church (Kopeć-Ziemczyk, 2021).

Poland’s Mediadecom interviewees have agreed on several sociopolitical divisions, starting with the classical West and East path dependencies and urban vs rural economic differentiations (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 23, 2022; policymaker, interview in Warsaw, October 25, 2022). As noted during one of the interviews:

*“Political struggles shall be placed in a broader cultural context, highlighting the significance of historical events. Media instrumentalisation is an interplay of historical arguments. Look at the examples of narratives of the WWII reparations and Volhynia in times of the ongoing war in Ukraine” (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 24, 2022).*

To this end, we argue that looking at the societal and cultural impact of media transformations requires the understanding of two waves of societal polarisation, identified here as potential critical junctures in the following phases:

- **Before 2010:** Consolidation of democratic media transformation with the dominance of external pluralism, weak media accountability and public service media as a subject of political captures.
- **2010–2015:** The first wave of media polarisation typified by the rise of conservative right media and filter bubbles in the online space through conflicting political and social ideologies.
- **2015 onwards:** The second wave of media polarisation characterised by the governmentalisation of public service media and the media tribes among journalistic communities.

The first period studied (2000–2010) and legacy media consolidation have proven several public service media politicisation cases, such as the aftermath of 2001, 2005 and 2007 political elections (Klimkiewicz, 2015; Zielonka, 2015). At that time, Poles and the Polish media unified for the EU accession referendum (2003) and in crucial national mourning, including the death of John Paul II in 2005 and the presidential plane catastrophe in Smolensk in 2010. On April 10, 2010, a delegation of Polish politicians was to attend the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the murder of Polish officers in Katyn, Russia. The plane crashed in Smolensk (Russia), killing Poland’s acting President, Lech Kaczyński, and 95 state officials from the delegation. While the whole country united during the times of mourning, the Law and Justice Party leader – Jarosław Kaczyński (twin brother of President Lech Kaczyński), soon accused the ruling Civil Platform Government of delays and the results of the catastrophe investigation.

Social scientists, including Łuczewski (in Leszczyński, 2018) and Dzieciołowski (2017), prove that the Smolensk tragedy was used as a tool to divide society and related media organisations. For instance, Polish media interviewees who participated in the Reuters Institute for Study in Journalism agreed that 2010 was a turning point for media polarisation. Dzieciołowski (2017: 10) notes that:

*“[i]n the post-Smolensk crash reality, right-wing publications, television and radio stations have begun to rise to prominence leading to polarization, more pluralism and political partisanship of the media outlets”.*

During this phase, PiS lost its ability to influence public service media content, speeding up the creation of conservative right-wing newspapers and weeklies, such as “Sieci” and “Uważam, Rze”. Jacek Karnowski – Editor-in-chief of “Sieci” – argued that the traditional media shift was of the outcomes of the 2010 events and the dominance of the liberal media agenda:

*“It was not that free Poland was created, and we had left- and right-wing media developing simultaneously. We had a dominant left-liberal camp in the media, and we reacted. Moreover, when you build something as a reaction, you build it differently. These media [right wing and conservative – Authors] rose from something different; they rose after Smolensk; they were founded on blood” (Dzieciołowski, 2017 p. 33).*

Poland's societal and media divisions continued to grow until 2015. With controversial judiciary and media reforms, the time of the United Right Government (2015–2019) has proven the second phase of societal and cultural polarisation. In terms of the media, reforms over PSM governance introduced in 2016 attempted to replace public service with that of 'sovereign national' (Jaskiernia and Pokorna-Ignatowicz, 2017), the government service (Donders, 2021) or propaganda tool of the conservative right-wing Government (Gajlewicz-Korab and Szurmiński, 2022). The PiS policy was deepened by social polarisation based on the 'we vs them' dichotomy, with private media (such as TVN) being the voices of political opposition. Research showed that PiS supporters prefer public television, while the voters of the Civic Platform watch TVN and TVN24 (wpolityce.pl, 2017).

In line with the post-2015 social reality, Głowacki and Kuś (2019) spoke about two layers of Polish media polarisation: the extreme level of political parallelism supported by systemic change and political influence over funding and governing the media. Głowacki and Kuś (2019) further proved that systemic modifications impact the behavioural side of media polarisation, typified by the so-called conservative vs liberal media tribes, framed as enemies – or opposed to each other. Moreover, pro- and anti-governmental supporters and media now claim sole proprietorship of the truth and media ethics, which makes information bubbles and societal polarisation even stronger. As a result of that:

*“Ideological and political divergence has resulted in a multiplication of ethical standards and norms, which have been adjusted and assigned by different journalistic communities as another tool to fight against each other” (Głowacki and Kuś, 2019, p. 112).*

### 3. Risks and Opportunities in Legal Regulation and Ethical Domain

#### 3.1. Development and Agency of Change

Poland introduced the freedom of speech principle alongside democratic broadcasting law, highlighting freedom of speech and media as the core principles. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland guarantees freedom of expression and media in line with global standards of human rights and related policy documentation (see, for instance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights) (Klimkiewicz, 2022). Overall, the Legal Domain of Poland can serve as a case study of a mismatch between democratic policymaking and its implementation (the cultural conditions). The agency of Legal Domain includes Poland's integration with the Council of Europe in 1991 and the European Union in 2004, the key players in setting in and monitoring standards in the media (Jakubowicz, 2009).

The changes related to legal issues concerning the Polish media system had direct connotations with the ongoing political changes and the process of media politicisation. As far as the 1990s are concerned, the most critical topics in the analyses were the implementation of regulations related to changes in the press law (1990), the performance of the Broadcasting Act (1992) and the copyright law of 1994. An important topic was ethics and good practices related to establishing the Media Ethics Council in 1995 (Murawska, Najmiec, 2006; Kononiuk, 2019). Research in this field focused on democratic models of regulation and self-regulation from Western media studies. At the same time, it emphasises the importance of the media in the democratic discourse and the independence and freedom of the press (expression), as defined in the Polish constitution and the related media law (Szot, 2010; Głowacki and Kuś, 2019) – the standard setting perspectives.

## 3.2. Freedom of Expression

While media researchers and policymakers have widely evidenced the normative foundations and limitations of press freedom, the critical risk regards an urgent response to online harassment, hate speech and defamation. The criminalisation of defamation has been considered to create risks for freedom of expression and a chilling effect on journalistic speech. Poland has a strong regulatory framework to criminalise defamation. There are specific articles in the Criminal Code Act that emphasise freedom of expression and responsible media (see the example of art. 212 and 216). The list of regulations further involves the Data Protection Act, the existence of the Data Protection Authority and the Press Law (1984), which protects the confidentiality of journalistic sources. At this stage, Poland is still in the process of implementing the Whistleblowers EU Directive. Although no specific laws have been issued to protect the ownership of media transparency, the data on media ownership is widely available across the media's portfolios and platforms.

## 3.3. Freedom of Information

The law on access to public information dates to 2001, with provisions reflecting European regulations. However, its effectiveness has recently been questioned, with the examples of media and journalists struggling for the response from the public and private institutions (policymaker, interview in Warsaw, October 25, 2022). The check and balances for both freedoms of expression and information require more in-depth cultural research on the daily practices considering an interplay of political discourses, the rule of law and the conditions for social and media polarisation.

## 3.4. Accountability System(s)

### 3.4.1. Development and Agency of Change

Most media accountability institutions initiated by journalists were introduced at the early stage of societal and political transformation. Some of them, including the Press Council and journalistic associations, were introduced before 1989. For instance, the Press Law of 1984 established the Press Council as a consultative body for the Prime Minister; members of the Press Council were appointed in 1985, and then its work was practically discontinued. Considering lower and lower ethical standards, low effectiveness in enforcing the provisions of the code created by the Media Ethics Council, and high polarisation of the journalistic environment (in this context, one can speak of tribal journalism), ethics enforcement issues were analysed mainly through the cross-border and comparative orientation (Jakubowicz, 2008; Dobek-Ostrowska et al., 2018).

### 3.4.2. Existing media accountability instruments and an evaluation of their effectiveness

#### *The National Broadcasting Council*

The regulatory authority for audiovisual media, the National Broadcasting Council, collects complaints regarding provisions laid down in the Broadcasting Act. Users might criticise the broadcasting programs concerning license fees and technical broadcasting issues through written correspondence or an online form. The National Broadcasting Council does not have formal competencies on media self-regulation and, in the case of ethical standards, can only ask a media enterprise to respond and explain. The website of the KRRiT offers contact details to issue criticism directly to radio and TV organisations (Głowacki and Kuś, 2019).

### *Professional Journalistic Associations*

Today Poland's professional associations strengthen the media polarisation of journalistic communities, which is also evidenced by strong relations between right-wing-oriented journalists and the so-called liberal ones. Previous research has evidenced that most Polish journalists (approximately 70%), although having clear political views, do not belong to any journalistic union or association. The largest age group of active members are 50+ years old, while young journalists in Poland refrain from any membership due to a lack of trust, benefits and political lines of professional associations (Głowacki, 2015).

### *Codes of Ethics*

There is a multiplication of journalistic standards and the rise of external pluralism with different journalistic groups claiming sole proprietorship of the truth and media ethics. While, the codes of journalistic standards relates to similar principles, the critical risk and challenge relates to their implementation based on the position in the 'we vs others' societal conditions.

## **4. Risks and opportunities in Journalism Domain**

### **4.1. Development and Agency of Change**

As highlighted above, there is widespread research and data on the transformation of press and broadcasting, with a set of timelines and proposals (Filas, 2000). The consolidation of democratic media and journalism has become essential for digitalisation and the Europeanisation of Poland's media (Jachimowski, 2003; Kowalski, 2001). Market stabilisation of the early 2000s was associated with implementing EU regulations, with an intensive westernisation of research and monitoring capabilities. At the same time, one of the challenges for media and democracy has been the rise of populism, with deep societal divisions uncovered after 2010.

Overall, sharp social divisions after the Smolensk tragedy influenced changes in approaching journalism values (Szot, 2015; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015a) with a significant increase in politicisation (and governmentalisation) of public service media (Jaskiernia and Pokorna-Ignatowicz, 2017). A significant threat to media pluralism in Poland seems to be the actions of the PiS government to introduce market restrictions in Polish media, particularly in reducing the share of foreign capital (Szot, 2017, Jas-Koziarkiewicz and Stasiak-Jazukiewicz, 2018). New technologies, algorithmisation, hybridisation, and data management have yet to become a systemic research and monitoring tradition.

### **4.2. Market Conditions**

One of the problems of the Polish media market and potential monitoring abilities has been the high degree of media concentration reflected in the amount of foreign capital. Media concentration is high in broadcasting, with risks for media pluralism in television (Palczewski, 2018). Moreover, internet platform concentration and competition enforcement indicate the highest risk among all areas (97%), mainly due to the strong position of the leading platforms (Google and Facebook) and the lack of more precise and publicly available data about online users and advertising (MPM, 2020).

The composition of the media market in Poland is similar to the EU average (with the dual broadcasting system) (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 23, 2022). The existing concentration law, particularly those connected with the foreign capital content on the Polish media market and repolonisation are among the critical risks for standard setting and monitoring media and democracy. The Media Pluralism Monitor study shows that:

*“The media ownership transparency index has an average risk of 63%. While the news media sector is not regulated by sectoral transparency legislation, some media rules apply in the broadcasting sector. In March 2018, Poland implemented the 4th edition of counteracting money laundering Directive introducing the obligation to inform beneficial owners to the Central Register of Beneficiaries Owners (CRBO)” (MPM, 2021).*

The list of market conditions shall be augmented with global trends, including the shrunk of traditional press and the newspaper industries. One of the critical moments was the launch of the German-owned tabloid “Fakt” (2003) to compete with “Super Express” and contribute to the yellow press practices (sensationalism, cheap information, and scandal). Daily “Fakt” is still the most widely read newspaper (PBC, 2021). The entry of the new press title on the market contributed to the pluralism of information, content and source, producing intense competition and tabloidisation of other media, including broadcasting and online-born entities. Strong tabloidisation causes hate speech, antagonistic social divisions, and brutalisation of social life (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 24, 2022).

### 4.3. Public Service Media

Public service media in Poland consists of three companies: “Telewizja Polska - Spółka Akcyjna” with headquarters in Warsaw and local branches in Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Katowice, Kielce, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Olsztyn, Opole, Poznań, Rzeszów, Szczecin, Warsaw and Wrocław; “Polskie Radio - Spółka Akcyjna” with headquarters in Warsaw; Regional radio broadcasting companies with offices in Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kielce, Kraków, Koszalin, Lublin, Łódź, Opole, Olsztyn, Poznań, Rzeszów, Szczecin, Warsaw, Wrocław and Zielona Góra. TVP employs 2889 people (Businessinsider, 2022).

Public media in Poland are financed by licence fees, advertising and state subsidies. The latter is highly controversial among the Polish public, as they have been very high in recent years of PiS rule (PLN 2 billion in 2022, 45 million more than the previous year) (Kozielski, 2021). According to KRRiT data, subscription revenues account for roughly 39 per cent of the cost of TVP’s mission programs (59 per cent from advertising) and 76 per cent for Polish Radio. Meanwhile, in the case of TVP, the operating costs of annual operations are PLN 2.5-3.0 billion, Polish Radio PLN 300-350 million, and the prices of regional radio companies PLN 200-250 million (KRRiT, 2018).

The challenges for today’s public service media in Poland are multilayered. They include a challenge of regulation, a challenge of journalism professionalisation and a challenge to regaining trust among the audiences. The announcement of changes in the functioning of public service media was the controversial “Little Media Act of December 2015” (amendment of the Broadcasting Act, which, among other things, shortened the term of office of public media authorities). In the following stages, the organisational structure of the public media was changed (e.g., a PiS politician, Jacek Kurski, became the Director General of Polish Television) and the program line of media content identified with the values and policies pursued by the ruling party (Szot, 2020; Jędrzejewski, 2017). Dynamic and radical political actions in media functioning, especially public media, had a significant impact on the restriction of freedom of speech in Poland and acquiescence to the use of negative techniques of influencing (manipulation, propaganda) the society (Szot, 2020).

### 4.4. Production Conditions

The dynamic development of ICT technology has influenced the development of online services and, consequently, the grooming of media entities focusing on online content production; thus

dethroning the role of the press, radio and television talents and skills (Jędrzejewski 2003; Jachimowski, 2003). For example, publishers of TV news services must compete with each other and news portals daily. The Internet is absorbing the press and print journalists, but it still needs television as a compliment. Television's advantage over the Internet is that it has "personalities", journalists, and reporters, who are independent brands and build the station's image (Drogowska, 2013, p. 7).

Radio stations, TV channels and newspapers have moved into websites, portals, and social media (Drogowska, 2013). Despite the political course aimed at stopping democratisation processes in Poland, the society systematically improves digital competencies. Due to media digitalisation, the pluralism of opinions online appears to be both as risk and opportunities, supporting a diversity of voices and societal polarisation. New technologies, algorithmisation, hybridisation, data management and the impact of these developments and processes on journalistic studies and the market, also in the context of capital transformation, are new research trends that require a change in scientific paradigms (Baranowski, 2019; Szpunar, 2018; Głowacki, 2020).

#### 4.5. Agency of Journalists

Research on the number of journalists working in Poland needs to be updated and there are no systemic calculations. Referring to findings from 2011, the EU-funded MediaAct project estimated 11,989 news employees. According to the "Journalism in Change" comparative study, the number was estimated at 9100 (Baranowski, Michel, Barczyszyn-Madziarz & Dobek-Ostrowska, 2013). There is no obligation to register journalistic activities in Poland. An additional problem is the imprecise definition of the journalistic profession. In addition, there needs to be up-to-date data on freelancers. International projects dealing with journalistic culture, such as the "Worlds of Journalism", do not include the agency of journalists in Poland.

#### 4.6. Journalists' Working Conditions

The obstacles to determining the number of journalists in Poland are the same ones that make it challenging to decide on the main conditions of their work. A 2009 study conducted by Agnieszka Stępińska and Szymon Ossowski showed that at that time, 80% of the surveyed journalists had a university degree, and 45% of the respondents had graduated from journalism studies (research conducted on a sample constructed from data on the number of media organisations) (Stępińska & Ossowski, 2011). More recent journalism studies show that Polish journalism is an interplay of the watchdog role and high political parallelism, as in Spain and Greece, but also in Hungary or the United States (Mellado, 2020: 72).

According to the 2021 IPI report, journalists in Poland work in a hyper-polarized society where threats and insults occur with increasing frequency. The media have become embroiled in "culture wars", and journalists, regardless of political options, are harassed by society. However, the report pointed out that reporters are slandered and discredited by pro-government media or PiS (Law and Justice) politicians. Terms used against them were: "anti-Polish", "political activists", or "foreign agents" (IPI, 2021).

There is also a lack of data on job satisfaction in Poland and an ongoing call for deeper cultural investigation of organisations and people (policymaker, interview in Warsaw, October 25, 2022). Partial data on working conditions was conducted from a representative sample of 4,500 journalists registered with the PAP (Polish Press Agency), which concerned a pandemic. According to them, the employment rate by sector was as follows: (multiple answers can be selected, included in percentages): Online portal: 73.7; Newspapers 48.1; Radio 21.8; Tv 10.1; Internet Tv 4.7; Internet Radio 4.1. In addition, the research showed that more than three in five respond-

ents (61.4%) were employed by only one editorial office at the time of the survey. Working for two editorial offices was declared by 22.1% of respondents. In contrast, those working for three or more editorial offices (such as freelancers) accounted for 16.5% of the total sample (PAP, 2021).

#### 4.7. Intra-organisational Diversity of Human Resources

There is no systemic research on gender and media diversity, both regarding managing news and newsroom diversity. The Media Pluralism Monitor includes questions on women's media representation as a prerequisite of social inclusiveness (MPM, 2021). Data from the 2011 Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media shows there was still a glass ceiling for women at the senior management level over a decade ago. Women accounted for (41.9%) of editors-in-chief, news directors and other senior administrators, while the proportion of women above that level was deficient. A characteristic feature of Polish newsrooms in 2011 was that most women were employed as part-time regulars (64.6%). It is comforting to note that this year, the overall job security of women was relatively high (IWMF, 2011).

Research by Beata Klimkiewicz as part of the Media Pluralism Monitor shows that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of women in media executives in Poland. However, there still needs to be a regulation to ensure that both genders have equal access to these positions. There is also no constant oversight of this issue by regulators (Klimkiewicz, 2022). Głuszek-Szafraniec and Brzoza also point out the lack of gender equality regulations. The researchers point to the lack of statutory provisions with a detailed scope and omissions in self-regulation (Głuszek-Szafraniec and Brzoza, 2019).

#### 4.8. Professional Culture and Role Perception

Journalism studies are also developing in the direction of professional journalistic culture, which has advanced in Poland's recent media and democracy scholarship. Recent studies have been conducted in several international research groups enabling comparative, with research groups led by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska (see, for instance, Nygren & Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Kuś, Splendore, Eberwein, Porlezza, 2017) and Agnieszka Stępińska (see for instance Stępińska & Ossowski, 2012; Stępińska, Mellado, Marquez-Ramirez, Humanes, Mothes, Amado, Davydov, Mick, Olivera & Panagiotou, 2021).

In the aftermath of creating a majority Government by the conservative Law and Justice party (The United Right) in 2015, the attention has moved towards the illiberal turns (Połomska & Beckett, 2019), challenges to media pluralism and the evolution of public service towards the state broadcasting (Jaskiernia & Pokorna-Ignatowicz, 2017; Donders, 2021). The blend of Democratic Corporatist and Polarized Pluralist traditions (Jakubowicz, 2008; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2019) has been further evidenced in the previous comparative studies, calling for more in-depth research on risk factors and opportunities to determine the trajectory for free speech in Poland (Nygren & Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Donders, 2021).

## 5. Risks and opportunities of Media Usage Patterns domain

### 5.1. Development and Agency of Change

The late 1990s and early 2000s have been considered a time of market consolidation, with the dominant role of legacy media with the shrinks in newspaper readership (Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek, 2017). Changes in the radio and television sector in 2010–2015 focused on new production skills and organisational responses to market fragmentation (Filas, 2006; Konarska, 2008; Szpunar, 2009). The critical juncture has been the rise of digital and online-born media, with the rapid growth of internet infrastructures and usage (Table 1, Table 2).

**Table 1. Internet Usage and Population Statistics in Poland, 2000-2010**

Year	Users	Population	% Pop.
2000	3,700,000	38,181,844	9.7 %
2005	10,600,000	38,133,691	27.8 %
2007	11,400,000	38,109,499	29.9 %
2010	22,450,600	38,463,689	58.4 %

Source: Internet World Stats (Access date: 10.01.2022).

**Table 2. Share of households with internet access in Poland, 2011-2020**

Year	% Households
2011	67 %
2015	76 %
2017	82 %
2020	90 %

Source: Statista (Access date: 10.01.2022).

The dynamic spread of the Internet in Poland can be seen between 2011 and 2020 (Świerczyńska-Głownia, 2010; Mielczarek, 2014). According to the CBOS report, only 17% of respondents used the Internet at least once a week in 2002, while in 2020 it was already 68% (Using the Internet, CBOS, 2020). CBOS further argues that 49% of respondents are online, receiving information and responding to messages regularly (in 2018, this percentage was 30%). In contrast, 51% generally only run web apps for a specific purpose (in 2018, the percentage was 70%). Respondents under 35 (especially those aged 18 to 24) generally declare a constant online presence. In contrast, among those over the age of 44, there is a prevalence of “going online” on an ad hoc basis for a specific purpose (Using the Internet, CBOS, 2020).

The widespread access to the Internet in Poland, including mobile Internet, has contributed to the popularity of social media (Kowalik, 2016), the development of mobile communication devices (e.g., smartphones), and, consequently, mobile applications (Kopecka-Piech, 2013). Thus, the development of social networks and the benefits and risks of their use have become an object of scientific interest for many Polish researchers (Kowalik, 2013; Szpunar, 2010). The development of research on new media and social networks has influenced the paying attention to the developing culture of participatory communication and citizen journalism (Doliwa, 2012).

Another field of research in the online sphere that has gained importance is journalistic responsibility in professionalisation, political parallelism and communication channels (Głowacki and Kuś, 2012). At the same time, we cannot forget the general strengths and threats arising from the development of new technologies, such as algorithm-based media, digital data collection and analysis or the evolution of the Internet towards the Internet of Things (Goban-Klas, 2020).

## 5.2. Access to News and Other Media Content

Although steady declines in press readership (Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek, 2017) television continues to be critical; in 2020 TVP1 (9,67%) was the market leader, followed by Polsat (8,35%), TVN (7,51%) and TVP2 (7,51%) (Havas Media Group for [wirtualnemedi.pl](http://wirtualnemedi.pl), 2020). In 2020, 72.1% of Poland's population aged 15-75 listened to the radio 3.5% less than the previous year (RadioTrack Kantar Poland, 2021). The average daily radio listening time was 4 hours and 23 minutes daily. Radio listening time has been practically unchanged for years. The most popular among listeners are the four universal national programs: RMF FM (29.3%), Radio ZET (12.5%), Programs 1 (5.2%) and 3 of Polskie Radio (3.8%). Nationwide thematic programs have a smaller market share: social-religious Radio Maryja (1.4%) and classical music broadcaster Program 2 (0.4%).

The primary device for connecting to the Internet is the smartphone - used daily to browse the web by an average of 24.4 million and 26.1 million users at least once a month. Computers are used to consume Internet content by 24.1 million users but are no longer the first-choice device (GUS, 2020). 25.9 million people use social media. The statistical Pole (aged 16-64) spends six h 44 min daily online, including two h on social media. For comparison - we watch TV for about three h 15 min and read online and printed press (combined) for one h 16 min. The most popular social media includes YouTube (92.8% of users), followed by Facebook (89.2%), Messenger (76.5%), Instagram (60.6%), WhatsApp (48.2%), Twitter (37.5%), Snapchat - 8 (28.9%), TikTok (28.6%) and LinkedIn (24.6%) (Digital News Report, 2020).

## 5.3. Relevance of News Media

Data on the functioning of the media market and its use in Poland is collected and analysed by entities such as Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa (data on readership), RadioTrack (for radio), the Nielsen Media Research (for TV) and Gemius online audience research (for online-born media). Other entities that collect statistics on public opinion about media use are Ośrodek Badania Opinii Publicznej (Public Opinion Research - OBOP) and Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (Public Opinion Research Center - CBOS). Especially freely available public reports created by OBOP and CBOS are a reference for Polish audience research. Between 2000 and 2020, we see a clear shift from mass media research to new media usage. This is caused by paying attention to the rise of the user's generated content and a need for constant online discussions with the digital public.

According to a CBOS report, most respondents (65%) believe that the media in Poland are pluralistic: they present different views and opinions. The survey shows Poland's belief in media pluralism is dominant in all socio-demographic groups. The CBOS noted that those who identify with the right (65 per cent) and left-wing sympathisers (73%) are mostly convinced that the media present different points of view and a plurality of opinions (CBOS, 2021).

In terms of the share of audiences, there has been a significant increase in thematic news channels during the time pandemic, with the following data for the key organisations: TVP Info (4,83%), TVN24 (5,36%) and Polsat News (2,03%) (Gemius/PBI, 2020). The report by IBIMS (Instytut Badań Internetu i Mediów Społecznościowych) and IBRIS (Instytut Badań Rynkowych i Społecznych) evidenced 62% of respondents admit that their primary source of information is online portals such as Wirtualna Polska or Onet (IBIMS/IBRIS, 2021). The news portals are more often used by men (66.3% vs 58.4%), with men more likely to opt for sources with a more conservative profile. Women account for 29% of the radio audiences, with a higher number of weeklies and magazines' consumption. The age group of social media users are as follows: 1) 18-29 - 57.5% of respondents, 2) 30-39 - 46.7% of respondents, 3) 40-49 - 34,7% of respond-

ents. In other age groups, social media is less relevant 60-69 (13.1% of respondents) and 70+ (9.2% of respondents), respectively.

## 5.4. Trust in Media

The Digital News Report (2020) showed that in 2020 only 49% of Poles trusted the media content. The total percentage of Poles trusting information reported in the media was 42 per cent, down six percentage points compared to the previous year (Digital News Report, 2022). RMF FM radio has been considered the most trustworthy source of information on the radio, while TVN ranked highest among TV broadcasters, as indicated by CBOS in 2022. The same CBOS report highlighted the worst result for trust in TVP, with 49% of those surveyed considering public service media unreliable. The data on trust towards the press and online includes the examples of "Gazeta Polska" (27%) and "Super Express" (29%), as well as Onet.pl (45%), WP.pl (42%) and Interia.pl (42%) (Digital News Report, 2022).

A survey by IBRiS and IBiMS on Poles' trust in individual social media channels indicates that more than half of Poles do not trust social media (42.9%). While 40% of those aged 18-29 trust Twitter, Facebook is trusted mainly by respondents aged 50-59 and over 70. The study by IBRiS and IBiMS (2021) proves the correlation between media distrust and education, something of potential value for media literacies and related skillsets.

## 6. Risks and Opportunities of Media-related Competencies Domain

### 6.1. Development and Agency of Change

The dynamic development of the media, mainly technological, has given rise to enormous needs related to media users' competencies and training. While media literacy has been a subject of systemic monitoring by the National Broadcasting Council, Poland's media interviewees have further called for the development of both theories and practical tools as media and civic literacy evolves (media scholar, interview in Gdańsk, September 24, 2022; policymaker, interview in Warsaw, October 25, 2022). Grzegorz Ptaszek (2019) speaks about three periods of media literacy, called, respectively, media literacy 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0, as the development of agency of change (See Table 3).

**Table 3. Three Periods of Media Literacy**

<b>Media literacy 1.0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Developing critical thinking skills towards the media alongside critical attitude and autonomy;</li> <li>✚ Discovering the coded and hidden meanings of the news;</li> <li>✚ Highlighting contexts and the sender → receiver relationships.</li> </ul>
<b>Media literacy 2.0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Associated with the rapid development of the Internet and social media;</li> <li>✚ Based on the knowledge share in the online space;</li> <li>✚ Recognising a need for fact-checking and news verification.</li> </ul>
<b>Media literacy 3.0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Associated with convergence, deep mediatisation;</li> <li>✚ Extended to the digital data and algorithms practices;</li> <li>✚ Recognising hidden and intelligent mechanisms for managing attention, content, information and knowledge.</li> </ul>

Source: Based on Ptaszek (2019).

## 6.2. Overview of Media-related Competencies in Policy Documents

The first two decades of the study period were mainly related to using media as an additional tool for education. In recent years, special attention has been paid (mainly by social and educational organisations) to the need for regulation in this area, which primarily covers media literacy (including defence/protection against threats). At the end of the last century, public pressure led the Ministry of Education to introduce an optional curriculum path, "Reading and Media Education", which was limited to only a few hours of teaching at school. According to Ptaszek, the significant role of the third sector is due to the lack of systemic solutions for creating a national media education program. There was no consensus among policymakers who must agree on progressive and supportive education policies (Ptaszek, 2019, p. 120).

## 6.3. Information About the Media Literacy Programs in Formal and Non-formal Education

While there is no systemic discussion on media education in the elementary school curriculum, the existing research and data call for well-designed, permanent and competent media competence teaching programs from early schools onwards (Drzewiecki, 2010). In the early 2000s, the National Broadcasting Council developed the Report on the State of Media Education in Poland with "Drogowskaz Medialny" [The Media Signpost] – an online database for media literacy discussions. At the time, the KRRiT pointed out the inadequate state of media education research. In November 2021, the KRRiT, state bodies and public institutions signed a declaration to coordinate activities for media education in Poland. Subjects related to media literacy are mainly handled by non-governmental organisations, including the Foundation for Support of Sustainable Development, which published the Media Competence Handbook as part of the "Network for Culture" project.

## 6.4. Actors and Agents of Media-related Competencies

There is little state policy, limited to public consultations with broadcasters and the research community and implementation of the EU recommendations. Much more extensive and more professional are the activities of research institutions and third-sector organisations. Their work consists of monitoring the functioning of media education in Poland (few activities) and mainly of educating adults, children and young people in this area. Among the most important are the following:

- Polish Society for Media Education, academia, conducting periodic meetings of researchers and cooperating with educational institutions (<http://ptem.org.pl/>);
- Media Education, a project of the Modern Poland Foundation (you can find a catalogue of media competencies on their website). An initiative that has developed a complete media education program for schools, including ready-made lesson templates (<https://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/>);
- Digital Poland Foundation creates reports on web usage and promotes digital support for various areas of the economy, including education (<https://digitalpoland.org/>);
- The "NGO School of Digital Responsibility" project is a venture of the Institute of Discourse and Dialogue and the Demagogue Association. The authors of the project provide knowledge and skills in the field of media education, critical thinking, verifying information sources, safe functioning in the Internet space, digital competence, as well as opposing media propaganda (<https://socngo.org/>);
- The "I Care About My Reach" Foundation is dedicated to educating the public about digital hygiene and e-addiction prevention among children, adolescents, and adults. Their activities focus on education, research and training (<https://dbamomozasieg.pl/>)

- SOS Children's Villages Association in Poland is an organisation whose side activities are prevention programs dedicated to children and their caregivers (parents, teachers, etc.) Focused mainly on the dangers of using the web. The largest nationwide program was "Invisible Violence" dedicated to the dangers of hate-speech among children (<https://wioskisos.org/niewidzialna-przemoc-sos-wioski-dzieciece-z-nowa-kampania-spoleczna-o-cyberprzemocy-wsrod-nastolatkow/>);
- FOMO (UW), a study initiated by a group of researchers at the University of Warsaw (<https://www.wdib.uw.edu.pl/images/fomo2021.pdf>).

## 6.5. Assessment of Media-related Competencies Among Citizens

Most KRRiT media literacy initiatives target initiatives young people and seniors. The activities of both NGOs and government organisations are focused on the protection of minors in the data-driven and online space. The second main domain is educating adults and senior citizens to expand their media competence. While studies on Polish audiences approach education as a context in media usage and journalism, the sociopolitical divisions, including the level and quality of education, would require additional qualitative research.

## 7. Conclusions

This report aimed to identify critical junctures for media and democracy development, alongside risks and opportunities for monitoring abilities in the period studied. In the systemic media and democracy studies, Poland has shared characteristics of late democratic institutions development, traditionally understood in line with high political parallelism and weak journalistic professionalisation. While the country seems to follow the global trends in media change, our research has proven that the most critical junctures for media have connected with politics and culture. Overall, we argue that the mismatches between democratic standard setting and policymaking and journalism practice need to be widely understood via the cultural lens and the current clash of values, which has the origins – and is strongly supported – by societal and media polarisation.

Firstly, media capture and political power over the media need to be regarded as both the cultural path dependency and the current cultural context of interpreting media and democracy (and media regulation) to fully evaluate the data and monitoring capabilities. While media law and accountability systems have been introduced in line with Western standards, cultural practices have proven the mismatch between vision and implementation due to competing political interests and the conditions of a divided society. The effectiveness of media regulation and media accountability practices needs to include the multiplication of narratives over today's democratic institutions and media plurality, with the media tribes in both private and public service media alongside liberal and conservative journalistic unions and associations. While the existing studies have gone a long way in explaining the content of professional codes and ideological contradictions between journalistic communities, research on alternative self-regulatory instruments is rare. The ongoing discussion on the potential of establishing the Press Council for Poland and the possibility of internet and data-driven platforms to hold media into account generates a knowledge gap and call for more collaboration between scholars, policymakers, media managers and journalists.

Secondly, we see several risks for monitoring capabilities in journalism, mostly connected to the focus on Western values and standards rather than the daily newsroom and policymaking practices. The knowledge of organisations, their structures, cultures, and working conditions are rare and calls for understanding people's and organisational values, motivation systems, pride and related behaviours. One of the most critical points here is the lack of studies on workforce

diversity, with only a few examples of the Polish public service media and managing newsroom diversity from a comparative point of view. Similar challenges apply to users' competencies and the media usage domains, which take the holistic and systemic view of news and media consumption, with a need to understand the human dimension. This study also calls for more expertise in civic and media literacies, something of potential value for future research and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

The data presented in this report will now be used for the fsQCA calibration to assess the importance of critical junctures and the effectiveness of monitoring media and democracy. We hope the forthcoming Mediadelcom comparative studies will further explain the nature of democratic law-making and implementation alongside the cultural conditions for sharing and advancing the monitoring capabilities.

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