



Adequate Information Management in Europe

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The Case of Poland

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1. Premises

After finalizing so called the round table negotiations, and especially after the parliamentary election on 4 June 1989, a deep transformation process was started in Poland and it resulted in creating institutions and structures specific for a democratic state (Sonczyk: 1999; Słomkowska: 1996). It was a crucial year not only for Poland, but also for other countries in the Central & Eastern Europe, which gradually were liberated from dependency on the regional leader – USSR, and also chose the way of democratic development.

It was tantamount to rejection of the obligatory model of party-state monopoly of authority, created on the basis of communist party governing in absolute way. The party-state had decisive influence on life of all the countries in the region and their citizens, and all social-political and economic processes were made under its careful watch.

This transition from a party-state monopoly to open-market pluralism was a revolutionary though bloodless process. For its beginning one can recognize the foundation of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union „Solidarity” (Solidarnosc) in the summer of 1980 – the first social organization in a country belonging to the Soviet bloc, which was not controlled by communist authorities.

A special role in this wide-spread process was played by the mass-media. Their transformation, which took place in Poland in the 90-ties of the last century was a model case in the European assessment. (Kopper & Rutkiewicz & Schliep: 1996). It started when the first non-communist government under Tadeusz Mazowiecki was formed, and it brought such important phenomena as the abolition of censorship present in Poland for more than 40 year after World War II, and as the liquidation of party-state supervision of mass-media, for which a special symbol was the break up of the RSW Prasa-Ksiazka-Ruch press consortium monopoly, fully controlled by the governing party PZPR – Polish United Workers’ Party (Słomkowska: 1995).

It is worth to remember that in the system of so called real socialism, all mass media institutions i. e. press, radio and TV were strictly supervised by party-state authorities, and the special tool was the institutional censorship of Main Office for the Control of the Press, Publications, and Public Performances (Główny Ur-

ząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk) together with its regional offices (Miernik: 1999). Only as a consequence of the liquidation the communist state structures started in 1989, mass media significantly extended the scope of free journalistic activity and statements (Adamowski: 2000). Information, which was earlier selected by a political decision-maker (regional agendas of the communistic party supervised by the adequate Department in the Central Committee of PZPR), now started to be a subject for free exchange, also on clearly commercial principles (Oledzki: 1991).

Characteristic of the modern market for mass information in Poland is its open, pluralistic nature. Reconstruction of social-economic system included this market, as well as the whole area of mass media, in the open-market structures. And though after almost 15 years of transformation, they are still far from stabilization, one can clearly see that this area positively proves the strength and depths of Polish democratic changes started with the birth of the first, independent of the communist party, social-labor movement – “Solidarity” (Bauer & Chudzinski: 1996; Sasinska-Klas & Hess: 2004).

Its pluralistic structure, containing many – more or less independent – press organization and publishers, radio and TV stations, information agencies, is characterized by almost full (complete) decentralization in the area of information management. In contradiction to the period before 1989, decisions concerning publication of this or that information were made not by the high authorities and not only inside of the political offices. Of course, still many negative phenomena in the area of the widely recognized social communication can be observed, i. e. sometimes too close connections between mass media and the world of politics or big business, or tendencies to re-birth of neo-censorship appearing here and there. In general, the principle of the mass media independency and freedom of journalistic statements is not questioned, and the media themselves do their best to act as the “fourth estate”, despite of tabloidisation – so characteristic for its present stage of development (Zalubski: 2002).

Alongside with Poland joining international organizations such as: the Council of Europe, NATO (Halizak: 2004) and starting negotiations for full accession to the European Union, problems concerning information management connected to the above mentioned subject appeared. There are three main centres in Po-

land generally responsible for information management concerning these issues: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych – MSZ¹, Office for the Committee for European Integration (Urząd Komitetu Integracji Europejskiej - UKIE)² and Office of the Spokesman for the Government³ being a part of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, which, in connection with issues connected to the implementation of foreign affairs policy, represents the position of the government (and especially the Prime Minister).

As far as efficiency of the information management process is concerned it is a rather controversial solution. The three above mentioned governmental institutions, though they are formally under control of the Prime Minister, in reality run information policy, which sometimes can be duplicated (copied). Therefore numerous information activities undertaken in particular by the Committee for European Integration, were, especially in a period directly proceeding Polish accession to the European Union, criticised and their efficiency generally questioned. Therefore one must postulate to collect all the assignments in hands of one institution – in this case the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

An important source for information on the European Union and various aspects of Polish participation in its works is our diplomatic representation in the European Committee in Brussels and accredited correspondents from Poland. There are journalists representing Polish public television and radio, Polish Press Agency (PAP), main national dailies: „Gazeta Wyborcza” and „Rzeczpospolita” as well as prestige information weeklies: „Polityka”, „Wprost” and „Newsweek-Polska”. The Number of Polish press journalists accredited to the European Union is not very high (about 10 persons). A completely new thing is that self-governing territorial units, i. e. mainly representatives of regions and big cities as well as organizations representing selected environments and professional groups are creating their own representations in Brussels. Recently, it has become more and more popular opinion that, in order to efficiently bid for funds from the European Union, it is necessary to have own representation in the main EU’s institutions. These representations, while bidding for supplements from regional funds and from the budget assigned to the execution of other common policies (for example agriculture, industrial or environmental policies), at the same time are becoming an important

source for information on the European Union, as are Polish deputies for the European Parliament.

The information about the European Union is increasingly becoming a research subject in Poland. Many thesis about the European Union and our country’s place in it’s structures are being prepared, based on press publications. Those thesis are mostly the students’ BA and MA thesis - more rarely the Ph.D. thesis (Szymanska: 2004). Unfortunately time hasn’t come yet for more serious scientific research.

A kind of adversity (problem) of Polish media and mass communication sciences consists in not being a part of a list of official research fields prepared and approved by the Ministry of Scientific Research – The State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN), resulting in lack of possibility for using governmental funds for scientific researches. Secondly, media institutions in Poland (newspaper editorial offices, publishing houses, radio and TV stations) are not interested, as for now, in financing such activity (also because of its comparative economic and financial weakness). Finally, researchers loaded beyond measure, busy mainly with problems concerning everyday didactic activity, low-paid, are concentrated on their didactic activity as one bringing faster income growth (especially concerning educational boom in higher education on journalism). Research works for social sciences (and in particular for mass media and mass communication sciences) are conducted only in a very narrow scope supporting usually only needs of actual didactic (as for example a necessity to write a text-book for students).

2. Information/news management

Although the term information/news management is widely known and accepted in Polish mass communication sciences, yet it is neither generally discussed, nor has a leading place in researches. Furthermore, one can significantly notice a lack of researchers studying this field and any of Polish science and research institutions does not have a specialized unit (for example a chair) conducting researchers on this subject.

Some more attention (but still not very much) is devoted to information and news management on courses of higher studies on management and mar-

keting as well as during computer courses taught on engineering studies (universities of technologies) and economic studies.

The concept of „information management“ can be found in programs for computer studies and in some selected courses of economic studies (mainly connected to economic information) (Rokicka-Broniatowska: 2002). These are also the places where we can meet attempts of teaching based on solutions from this area, especially in postgraduate studies on Public Relations in the Warsaw School of Economics and a few private schools for higher education.

However, so far in Poland Public Relations is not a separate field of knowledge with its own place in the higher education system with approved so called basic program for course of studies. Thence its teaching, usually on the level of postgraduate studies, consists in very practical preparation to the profession, including also (but usually in a very residual scope) – information management.

A traditional area connected to information management is the analyses of election campaigns. Research on this subject is usually taken up by persons employed by Institutes of Political Sciences in universities (in Warsaw, Cracow, Wroclaw, Poznan, Lublin, Katowice and Gdansk). The authors of several works concerning those matters are mainly the scientists working at the Warsaw University (Pietrzyk-Zieniewicz: 1993; 2002; 2004), as well as in other academic centers: (Banasik: 2002; Sztumski & Kolczynski: 2003; Cichosz: 2004; Ignaczewski: 2003; Ozog: 2004; Słodowska: 2003, Stepinska: 2004).

Also some works on linguistics, mainly concerning language used during election campaign, are dedicated to this subject. This kind of research is regularly carried out in the Institute of Journalism in Warsaw University (Bralczyk & Gruszczynski & Majkowska: 1999).

This issue is covered only by individual researchers (and still in sporadic cases) from the biggest academic institutions educating journalists i. e. the Institute of Journalism, Warsaw University and the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University in Krakow (Adamowski: 1998). In particular, the latter unit, being a part of Faculty of Management and Social Communication, having right to confer Ph. D. degrees in management sciences, is

somehow forced to put more attention to this subject, especially in Ph. D. thesis of their students.

3. National journalism culture

In the light of a social debate in Poland about a role of mass media as a Fourth estate, mainly the following issues are discussed: social functions of mass media and functions and tasks for journalists in new social and political system in Poland (i. e. after the round table negotiations and political changes in 1989).

In Polish literature concerning media one can find very limited number of theoretical works on this subject, and the majority of research works are concentrated rather on different issues like for example: the influence of political transformation in Poland on the mass media system (Słomkowska: 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996), the legal aspects of mass media activity (Sobczak: 1999; 2000; 2001; 2001a; Bansinski & Rittler & Kolasinski: 2001) or the influence of new technologies on development of the media system in Poland (Goban-Klas & Sienkiewicz: 1997).

Polish journalistic culture is examined in various ways, both from a historical point and from contemporary view. Press and journalism always had a very important place in the social-political life of Poland and Polish people, during our lack of freedom, when Poland lost its independence i. e. between 1795-1918, as well as during German occupation (1939-1945) and after end of World War II, when Poland was in the sphere of Russian influence (Szyndler: 1993).

Analyses of the above mentioned problems were activated by changes in Poland after 1989, when Poland rejected authoritarian media system and started to build a liberal one (Adamowski & Jablonowski: 2001a).

Especially legal problems became of great significance, mainly in connection with the change of situation for the electronic media. Analysis of legal acts regulating their activity (Ociepka: 2003; Koziel: 2003; Skoczek: 2002; Adamowski: 2003) was a significant part of the research on problems of Polish mass media.

The great problem of Polish media studies is the lack of presence of this branch of science activity in the official research structure in the country (as a separate research branch). Even if teaching journalism and social commu-

nication is included as a separate sector in the high education structure (under the control of the Ministry of Education and Sports), media studies do not formally exist in Poland, as the Ministry of Science and Information Society Technologies doesn't include it in the list of official research branches. The media studies scientists actually working in our country are being connected to sciences, such as: history, social studies, economy or political studies, which are being financed – although very poorly – by the State Committee of Scientific Research (part of the Ministry of Science and Information Society Technologies) in order to run the scientific activities.

It is a paradox then, that journalism and social communication are accepted as a separate branch of education activity and it's teaching on universities is financially supported by the State, but media studies research is not financed from the same State budget, as it doesn't formally exist as a separated research branch.

Relatively weak in number and rather widely scattered environment of Polish mass media researchers is focused in its works also on this subject. In particular it refers to academic institutions other than Warsaw or Krakow. Researchers concentrated in these institutions, apart from conducting their didactic activities, conduct usually fragmentary researches concerning different aspects of regional and local mass media activities, since this subject for the research is rather easily approachable and does not need expensive financing (Kowalczyk: 2002; 2003; 2003a; Michalczyk: 2000; Furman & Wolny-Zmorzynski: 2001). Either Polish academies, struggling with serious material problems, or journalistic associations (weak and scattered in number) or organizations of press publishers and media conglomerates (still saving on such expenses and rather investing in their development) are not able (or for many reasons don't want) to finance or co-finance such researches.

Also comparatively small foreign funds assigned for researches on mass media reach Poland. Usually these are grants from West Europe funds (rarely – American funds) or, more and more often, funds from EU. However both are rather small amounts which cannot be the only source of living, therefore time devoted to scientific research is only a small proportion of the general working time of a media expert in Poland.

As it has been already mentioned, in connection with the high request for didactic works in academic jour-

nalism, most of the research works (and publications being their result) is connected to subjects lectured in universities or other academic level scientific institutions.

They cover the following main groups of problems:

1. history of media and journalism in Poland and in the world (Bladocha: 2003; Grzelewska & Habielski & Koziel & Osica & Piwonska-Pykalo & Skwierawski: 1999),
2. evolution and present form of a media system in Poland and in selected foreign countries (Golka: 2004; Stasiak-Jazukiewicz: 1999; Jaskiernia: 2002),
3. legal aspects of mass media activity in Poland and in the world (Sobczak: 1999; 2000; 2001; Mik: 1999),
4. journalism and mass media ethics (Kononiuk & Michalski: 1998),
5. selected sociological problems of journalism (Lis & Skowronski & Ziomecki: 2002)
6. the language of mass media and social communication (Bralczyk & Gruszczynski & Majkowska: 1999; Bralczyk & Mosiolek-Klosinska: 2000),
7. selected problems of the theory of mass media and social communication (Goban-Klas: 1999; Dobek-Ostrowska: 2003),
8. functions and tasks of regional and local mass media (Adamowski & Jablonowski: 2001; Kowalczyk: 2002; 2003; 2003a; Michalczyk: 2000),
9. trace number of publications refer to the subject which has just started to be more and more important in Poland, i. e. economic aspects of mass media activity in Poland (Kowalski: 1998).

The biggest amount of research subjects (and connected publications) is realized in the Institute of Journalism, University of Warsaw, that has its own scientific quarterly "Studia Medioznawcze" („Media Studies"). Another important centre, which conducts research on media and journalism state in Poland is Institute of Journalism and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University in Krakow. There is in its structure, a very distinguished for Polish media science, institute: the Centre for Press Research (Osrodek Badan Prasoznawczych) with its own quarterly "Zeszyty Prasoznawcze". However the research activity of this institution significantly went down (in connection to the lack of funds), especially in the last years.

Another important centre on the university level, preparing personnel for mass media institutions, is Insti-

tute of Political Science and Journalism, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, also conducting a very strong publishing activity. Works published in this institute mostly cover the following subjects: history of printed media, significant persons of Polish journalism, legal aspects of mass media activity, and local and regional mass media in so called Great Poland (i. e. the region, which capital is Poznan).

Small amount of works dedicated to mass media and main problems of journalism profession is also published in other Polish main university centers, that have either separated chairs of journalisms or within other faculties (such as for example Polish language study, political sciences or bibliology) they organized training for journalists (as an internal specialization). In these places publications concerning mass media, mainly on theory of social communication and mass media language are also published (Wroclaw University – Institute of Political Sciences and the Chair for Journalism and Social Communication, Faculty of Philology), main functions of local and regional media (Institute of Political Sciences and Journalism, University of Silesia, Katowice), religious press (Journalism Section, Social Sciences Faculty, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw), the mass media language (Journalism Section, Faculty of Humanities, Maria Curie Skłodowska University, Lublin). Moreover, individual researchers are working in other centers training journalists, including private academies (according to estimated data, this kind of activity is conducted in Poland, in total, by more than 40 institutions of a high academic level). However conducted researches refer only to local and regional mass media as well as history of Polish mass media and journalism.

4. European public sphere(s) (EPS)

Significantly different situation is connected to the field of the European public sphere research in Poland. The research concentrates on topics regarding the economy, especially ones concerning the results of Poland's accession to the European Union for its economical system. In a lesser way, it regards the consequences of Polish membership in the UE for our relationships with the outside world. Here we have much a situation of a much higher balance between governmental science institutions (such as universities and other higher academies i. e. economic acad-

emies) and private research institutions, mostly of a foundation status. As far as media and journalism research field is, at the moment, not covered by any significant private institution (at the beginning of the 90ties The Press Centre for Central and Eastern Europe Foundation was rather active unit, but already from some time almost any activity cannot be observed; as for the Institute for Local Democracy it has already been closed) – except the Stefan Batory Foundation (which due to financial reasons significantly reduced its activity), as for researches for public sphere one can notice some more active institutions. These are for example: The Institute of Public Affairs (Instytut Spraw Publicznych), Center for International Relations (Centrum Stosunków Międzynarodowych), Center for Social and Economic Research (Centrum Analiz Społeczno-Ekonomicznych - CASE), Institute for Market Economics Research (Instytut Badan nad Gospodarka Rynkowa), Robert Schumann Foundation, or the above mentioned Stefan Batory Foundation (de facto G. Soros Foundation).

These are institutions acting mostly thanks to grants achieved from abroad, sometimes they have rather strong political affiliation and consequently they are supported by political forces (political parties) connected to them (and which are for example being in power at the moment). The significant majority of the institutions is located in Warsaw, however sometimes they are outside of the capital – as for example the Center of Strategic Studies in Cracow or the Institute for Market Economics Research in Gdansk. These institutions have expert and analytical functions, give all kinds of opinions and diagnosis, and sometimes publish works of their employees.

Their scientific and research potential is however significantly smaller than for governmental universities, although one must say that they have much higher initiative and flexibility with searching for foreign funds for realization of all different kind of research projects.

Governmentally ruled universities, as it was mentioned above, are quite often overloaded with actual didactic activity (number of students in Poland in the last 10-12 years increased almost 5 times, when at the same time the number of university teachers increased only by 20-25 %). Moreover the financial activity of the state is significantly going down. Only less than 0, 5 % of the whole budget is allocated to

the science, but additionally, the significant part of the financial means is devoted to the applied sciences researches (physics, chemistry, biology, medicine etc.) and not to social sciences, therefore these environments are forced to look for financial means for development of expanded didactic. However it means that professors and other scientists working in the field of social sciences and realizing increased number of didactic activities (it is rather common, that academic teachers are working in several places, the most often in parallel at the governmental university and at one or more private high schools, that very rarely conduct any scientific researches. This multi-employment plus permanent lack of funds for researches, means that scientific-research activity of the governmental universities in the field of social sciences is rather low.

All the above mentioned problems also refer to researches on the European public sphere. Scientists, low-paid in their mother universities, forced that way to work in several other places, looking for a quick and reliable income (which mostly come from the didactic activity) are not very active in a research field what in consequence results in relatively low number of publications (books and scientific articles).

The only lighter points on this rather grey background are state-owned universities, having an income coming from their educational (didactic) activity higher than others, can afford to spend some, however still not very high, amount on researches. In particular it refers to rather old universities of developed traditions, well-known and socially credited and respected. Most of all the following must be mentioned: Warsaw University, Jagiellonian University in Krakow and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan as well as other academic educational institution (of non-university level) like Warsaw School of Economics (SGH – former SGPiS), Social – Economic College and Academy of Economics, the Chair of European Studies (in Cracow). Moreover it is worth mentioning that in the structure of Ministry of Work and Social Policy still exists the Institute of Social and Work Activity Research, searching some basic and important problems like the job market or unemployment (in Poland as well as in EU countries).

The great variety of European subjects in Polish media is rather easy noticeable, especially in the period directly preceding Polish accession to the European Union. The highest interests received such problems

as: position of Polish agriculture in the EU, freedom of movement of people looking for a job in the countries of the „old” EU, possibilities of using structural funds or influence of the EU’s membership on price of food, houses, cars, air tickets and others. Concerning political issues, the greatest attention was put on a new European constitution, the process of appointing a new Commission and the election to the European Parliament. Great amount of press coverage was dedicated to new members of the EU, i. e. countries accessing the Union together with Poland.

The attention shall be drawn to some more specific problems connected to place of individual Polish subjects, or whole sectors i. e. selected part of production, in the European Union (especially in fragmentary markets). The media also tried to bring the mechanisms ruling the EU and its main institutions closer to the Polish people.

Research was mainly concerned with electronic media, for which the presence of Poland in the European Union means a significant change of legal situation, liquidation of previous limitations (up to 33 %) for their potential share-holders from the EU members, the attention was also drawn to the great role of public media in presentation of European subjects (Ociepka: 2003; Banasinski & Rittler & Kolasinski: 2001; Bartoszcze: 1995; Mik: 1999)

5. Conclusion

A dissipation of information management is characteristic for Poland, and it involves not only the information regarding the European Union. It’s worth underlining though, that quite many research centers, both public and private are being run in the country. Crucial weakness of Polish research on the European Union lies in its rather wide dispersion. Essential part of the environment engaged in the EU subject is constituted by individual researchers working in scientific centers of a non-specialized character. These are rather didactic than research centers, located in the structure of high schools, usually state-own ones. Only recently, together with creating a new specialization called “European Studies”, university units are coming into existence, profiling their scientific and research activity from this point of view, at the same time servicing this specialization from the didactic side. Polish admission to the EU will make the proc-

ess of creating such units much stronger, and strong interest of young people in the European Studies can be rather important impulse for their development.

Especially researches on the European Public Sphere are rather poorly advanced, only a few strong (taking their personnel into consideration) university institutes (Warsaw, Krakow, Poznan, Wroclaw) recently have undertaken activities in order to activate such researches, and among private institutions only Institute of Public Affairs and Institute for Market Economics are busy with this subject..

Without allocating some significant funds scientific research in the field of information/news management an European public sphere, there will not be any vital changes in this domain. One should not rather await that more funds from the budget will be assigned for this purpose due to an increasing number of social and economic problems the state has to face. Research activity could be stimulated by the European Union funds unless they are transferred to Poland with clear instructions concerning the object of the research and will not be sent to the common state scientific research budget. Otherwise they will be assigned for other (probably applied sciences) purpose. And finally – there is no doubt that information/news management and EPS will gain systematically on meaning and will become even more active in the next few years in Poland and other post-communist countries. But this sphere of the research needs financial and organizational support.

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¹ <http://www.msz.gov.pl/>

² <http://www.ukie.gov.pl/>

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