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9

Government communication in democratic Poland: 20 years after the collapse of communism

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The collapse of communism in 1989 in Poland and other Central European countries resulted in changes in many areas of social, political and economic life. The communist policy of censorship was replaced by the introduction of democratic institutions with the hope of creating suitable conditions for the emergence of a public sphere. Government communication was one of the most important areas of democratic change and, unlike the fields of political communication and electoral campaigns, has been little studied in Poland. This chapter offers an analysis of government communication during the transition from the communist regime and the consolidation of the democratic system in Poland.

Political and electoral systems after the collapse of communism

Curry claims that transformation out of communism in Poland led the way for the transition of the rest of what had been the Soviet bloc (2008, p. 165).

Poland was the first country in the region which had a non-communist government. The main aim of the new government was 'unmaking communist control' (Curry, 2008, p. 170). It was formed in September 1989 by Tadeusz Mazowiecki who was a Catholic journalist and advisor to the Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa. The Western-educated economist Leszek Balcerowicz, as a minister of finance and deputy prime minister, was responsible for the process of transition from state economy towards the free market. Poland was one of the poorest countries in the Soviet bloc but an economic reform – called 'shock therapy' (Curry, 2008, p. 171) – made rapid privatization and foreign investment possible. Poland's access to NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004 are crucial facts for Poles. The membership of both institutions was a symbol of Poland's turn to the West and a guarantee of its international position in Europe.

The present political system in Poland was created in 1992 by the 'small constitution' and was consolidated by the Constitution adopted in 1997 (Dobek-Ostrowska & Łódzki, 2008, p. 226). Legislative powers are held by the parliament, which has two chambers, the *Sejm* (the lower house of the Polish parliament) and the Senate, elected every four years. Executive powers reside with the president, elected every five years along with the government, which is appointed by the president (Godlewski, 2005). The political system in Poland is semi-presidential (Lisicka, 2002, p. 29). There are structures typical of a parliamentary model in which the government is accountable to elected members of parliament who can pass a vote of no confidence in the government and, additionally, ministers can take a seat in parliament or come from outside this body. On the other hand, there are structures typical of the presidential model such as an elected president who has the power to appoint the government.

A multiparty system, characterized by fragmentation, polarization and a lack of stability, took shape in Poland in the early 1990s. At the beginning of the political transformation in Poland, political parties were weak and conflict between them was common. The only parties which have been active for the whole two decades are the post-communist Left Democratic Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* – SLD) and the Polish Peasant's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* – PSL) (Sula, 2008, p. 324). Until 2005, the Polish party system was characterized by competition between the two blocs based on a strong axiological division: post-communist left party (SLD) versus post-Solidarity centre-right parties Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* – PiS) and Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska* – PO). However, during the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005, 2007 and 2011, an increasing level of competition emerged between the two post-Solidarity parties – the liberal Civic Platform and the conservative Law and Justice Party. Since the inception of political system reforms in Central and Eastern Europe, democracy

was accepted by all mainstream parties in Poland as an indisputable form of government for the country (Sula, 2011, p. 55). After the first decade of transformation, which was characterized by many changes of governments (three coalitions and eight prime ministers in seven years), a kind of stability was achieved in the second decade. However, only two governments and two prime ministers, Jerzy Buzek (1997–2001) and Donald Tusk (2007–11), saw out their entire terms. Four parties, the PO, PiS, SLD and PSL, played the most important role from 2001 to 2011.

Media landscape and journalism culture

In the early 1990s, the Polish media began to undergo a profound structural transformation from the media controlled by the Communist Party to an independent and free media market.

There are more than ten national daily newspapers (quality, business, tabloids and sport) associated with different ideologies, creating a pluralistic press market (see Table 9.1).

There are four major newspapers, two qualities (*Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*) and two tabloids (*Fakt*, introduced in 2003 by Axel Springer, and *Super Express*). The crisis of readership has been noted in recent years. The circulation of all national and regional daily newspapers has fallen dramatically during the past six years. The distribution of quality newspapers fell by about 45 per cent (*Gazeta Wyborcza* from 444,989 copies in 2006 to 246,252 copies in 2012, *Rzeczpospolita* from 157,340 copies in 2006 to 85,088 copies in 2012), the tabloid *Fakt* by about 33 per cent (from 585,453 copies in 2006 to 391,652 copies in 2012) and the tabloid *Super Express* by about 24 per cent (from 215,583 in 2006 to 164,639 copies in 2012) (*Wszystkie dzienniki traca*, 2012). The two biggest quality newspapers (*Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*) dropped from 24.4 per cent of readership in 2007 (Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2008, p. 115) to 16.4 per cent in 2012 (Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2012, p. 80). The same trend is observed in the case of the two tabloids *Fakt* and *Super Express*: 26.4 per cent of readers in 2007 (Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2008, p. 115) and 17.7 per cent in 2012 (Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2012, p. 80).

The Polish opinion magazine market is also well developed and reflects considerable political diversity. As research has shown, (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011a, p. 143; 2011b, p. 194; 2012, p. 38), there are weekly magazines such as the left-wing *Polityka* and *Przekrój*, conservative *Uważam Rze*, *Pisane Inaczej*, neutral *Newsweek Polska* and *Wprost* and the Catholic *Gość Niedzielnny*. Those weeklies were read by 38.2 per cent of readers in 2007

TABLE 9.1 Daily newspapers and their readership

	Title	Owner	Type	Political preferences	Readership 2007 (%)	Readership 2012 (%)
1	Gazeta Wyborcza	Agora	Quality	Left	19.45	12.73
2	Fakt	Ringier Axel Springer	Tabloids	Conservative	18.10	12.35
3	Metro	Agora	Free tabloids	Neutral	8.41	5.85
4	Super Express	Murator	Tabloids	Neutral	8.33	5.43
5	Dziennik (2006–9)	Axel Springier	Quality	Conservative	7.27	–
6	Rzeczpospolita	Presspublica	Quality	Conservative	4.95	3.63
7	Przegląd Sportowy	Ringier Axel Springier	Aport	Neutral	4.64	3.20
8	Gazeta Prawna/ Dziennik Gazeta Prawna	Infor Biznes	Business	Neutral	2.35	2.25
9	Gazeta Podatkowa	Wydawnictwo Podatkowe	Business	Neutral	0.84	0.70
10	Sport	Ringier Axel Springier	Sport	Neutral	–	0.46
11	Puls Biznesu	Bonnier	Business	Neutral	0.52	0.33
12	Gazeta Giełdy Parkiet	Presspublica		Business	0.25	0.25

Source: Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2008, p. 115 and Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2012, p. 80.

(Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2008, p. 80) and 29.8 per cent in 2012 (Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa, 2012, p. 80).

Gazeta Wyborcza and *Rzeczpospolita* have no formal relations with any political party but the level of partisanship in both cases is high. Since its launch, *Gazeta Wyborcza* represented left-wing political and ideological values and supported specific politicians rather than political parties. The support of these newspapers tended to be what Blumler and Gurevitch regard as 'conditional' (1995, p. 65) and changed frequently in the past two decades: in 1990 it supported Tadeusz Mazowiecki and was against Lech Wałęsa; in 1995 it supported Lech Wałęsa and was against Aleksander Kwaśniewski; in 2000 it presented positive coverage of Aleksander Kwaśniewski (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011a, 2011c).

Until 2006 the editors of *Rzeczpospolita* tried to keep their distance from political parties. From 2006 to 2011 the newspaper was instrumentalized by the government of Jarosław Kaczyński and used by the right-wing Law and Justice Party (PiS) as a tool of political propaganda.

The dual model of commercial and public service broadcasting was established in 1994 by the Broadcasting Act. There are three broadcasters which dominate the radio market. The leading commercial station RMF FM is owned by the German media group Bauer (from 2006). It had 23.7 per cent of listeners in 2007 (Radio Track, 2008, p. 112) and 23.4 per cent in 2012 (Radio Track, 2012, p. 112). Radio ZET belongs to the Polish Eurozet company and it was listened to by 19 per cent of the audience in 2007 (Radio Track, 2008, p. 112) and 15.6 in 2012 (Radio Track, 2012, p. 82). The public Polish Radio with four stations had 32.8 per cent in 2007 (Radio Track, 2008, p. 122.) and 22 per cent in 2012 (Radio Track, 2012, p. 82). All these data show that a position of Radio RMF FM is stable but Radio ZET and public Polish Radio lost many listeners.

Television is still the main source of information for Poles and the main channel of political advertising. Two commercial television channels TVN (ITI holding) and TV Polsat (Cyfrowy Polsat) are owned by Polish companies. Three public television channels (TVP1, TVP 2, TVP Info) which operate on the television market were leaders in the 2000s attracting the largest television audience. Research shows that 43 per cent of the audience watched public television in 2008 (*TVP1 ma*, 2008) and only 29.6 per cent in July 2012 (*Polsat w dół*, 2012).

There is no clear answer to the question about the level of professionalism of Polish journalists. Hadamik (2005, p. 222) claims that it is a kind of combination of 'the old and the new' elements of journalistic professionalism. On the one hand, values of the old journalistic culture still exist, such as 'publicist' journalism which is characterized by taking a point of view, presenting political preferences of journalists and the use of an aesthetic

and expressive writing style. On the other hand, this culture has evolved and modernized influenced by global development trends. Polish journalism, which is not an isolated island on the world map, is affected by global problems such as deprofessionalization, the lowering of journalistic standards due to commercialization, a trend towards tabloidization of political content, sensationalization and horse-race pattern coverage.

Content analysis of election news coverage conducted in 2005, 2007 and 2009 (Łódzki, 2011; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011c; Dobek-Ostrowska & Łódzki, 2011; Pilarska, 2011) showed that Polish journalistic professionalism is varied. There was no common pattern as to how journalists applied professional rules, ethics and values such as objectivity, neutrality, truth, factuality, reliability, honesty and balancing of sources (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011a).

The politicization of public service media in Poland both at the organizational and editorial levels have been widely discussed by journalists, politicians and researchers over the past two decades. State control of the media is linked to the activities of the National Broadcasting Council (NBC), a body appointed by parliament (the *Sejm*), which also nominates members of the governing bodies of the public service media organizations. Most members gain their position because of their identification with the ruling parties rather than because of their professional qualifications. Political influence has also been observed at the editorial level especially in news content (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011c, pp. 201–2; Łódzki, 2011, p. 231; Pilarska, 2011, p. 163; Piontek & Hordecki, 2011, p. 211).

Polish public service media, created by the Broadcasting Act in 1992 (although they did not start until 1994), face different types of crises related to the lack of sufficient funding, programming distinctiveness, lack of identity and technological development (Jakubowicz, 2007, p. 246). However, practice has shown that the ruling parties and successive governments in Poland have been concerned with gaining more power over public service media rather than with creating conditions for innovation and improving transparency in the public service. Journalists working in public radio or television stations have been hired according to their political preferences. A change in the stations' management and staff takes place after each election.

In contrast to public service broadcasting, commercial radio and television stations have more autonomy in covering politics. They follow what Mazzoleni calls 'commercial media logic' (1987). Their support for political parties is occasional, unpredictable and temporary and their approach to political actors can be defined as 'negativism' (see Farnsworth & Lichter, 2008) in which they take a negative, critical stance devoid of objectivity towards politicians.

Opinion polls show that public trust in all politicians is low (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011a, p. 234). In the 2006 polls, only few respondents (5%) considered

politicians a group that serves the public interest while 40 per cent stated that journalists serve the public interest and over 57 per cent defined them as honest, reliable and trustworthy (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011a, p. 53). Such a high regard for journalists and such a low one for politicians distinguishes Poland from other Western countries. It may also affect the way journalists themselves perceive political elites. Supported by the public, journalists feel entitled to be strongly critical of the whole political class, and especially of the government, and this negativism is attractive to audiences disappointed with politics.

Commercial media invite representatives of different political parties to comment on current affairs as a way of ensuring political pluralism. However, their selection is influenced by interviewees' popularity and attractiveness. Generally, journalistic interpretations and commentaries dominate in the news.

The private television channel TVN pays a lot of attention to political news, and tries to maintain high standards of journalism. Content analyses of election news coverage in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011 show that TVN is making attempts towards the development of honest and fair news coverage (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011b, p. 157). TV Polsat and radio station RMF FM are typical examples of commercial media, where the path of development is determined by profit and the standard of news programmes is rather low.

The main private media are in the hands of Polish owners such as ITI (TVN, portal *onet.pl*), Polsat (TV *Polsat*), ZPR (Radio Eska network, daily tabloid *Super Express*), Agora (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, Radio Agora networks, portal *gazeta.pl*) and Eurozet (radio ZET), differentiating Poland from other Central and Eastern European countries where commercial radio and television stations are owned by American (in Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania), German (Hungary) or Scandinavian companies (Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia). There are also German groups active in this part of Europe, such as Ringier Axel Springer (daily tabloid *Fakt*, weekly magazine *Newsweek Polska*), Bauer (Radio *RMF FM*, portal *interia.pl*) and Verlagsgruppe Passau (regional dailies).

According to the data provided by Eurostat 2011, 67 per cent of Poles are internet users, 31 per cent more than in 2006 (Pliszka, 2012, p. 14), so that Poland occupies the eighteenth position out of 27 European Union countries in terms of the percentage of internet users. In 2011 about 90 per cent of users were interested in information and political news (Zaczkiewicz, 2012, p. 24). The main portals are owned by the largest media and telecommunication companies operating in Poland namely, *onet.pl* by ITI (owner of TVN), *gazeta.pl* by Agora (owner of *Gazeta Wyborcza*), *interia.pl* by Bauer (owner of RMF FM), *wp.pl* by Orange. Despite the fact that every year the internet has more

users, Polish political actors are not interested in this medium and the internet has a rather limited position in political communication.

The question is how this pluralist media landscape serves communication between the government and the citizen. Do they explain policies, government decisions and motivations of the prime minister and government ministers? Do they attempt to help citizens to understand the governmental processes better?

The development of government communication

For the purpose of the analysis of government communication the past two decades can be divided into two periods: from 1989 until 2001 and from 2001 until the present day. These two periods are connected with the adoption of the Act on the Access to Public Information of 6 September 2001 (Dz. U. vol. 112, item 1198, with amendments). As a consequence, the transformation of government communication in Poland has taken place on both a normative and organizational level. On the normative level, the changes concerned the ratification of international laws and the introduction of new domestic regulations, whereas the changes concerning the organizational level affected the professionalization of management in government administration through the creation of the civil service corps and the introduction of new marketing communication tools.

Changes to government communication on the organizational level included a transition from an administration based on officials unconditionally loyal to the Communist Party to an administration based on a politically neutral civil service. Legislation introducing a system of a neutral civil service corps was finally adopted in 1996.¹ The reform of the civil service has resulted in two levels of posts in government administration – the political level, covering high state posts (ministries, secretaries and undersecretaries of state) and members of political cabinets (political advisers and assistants), and the civil service level. The civil service ensures the professional and politically neutral execution of state tasks and the continuity of the functioning of institutions independently of the current political situation and changes of government. Applicants are selected in open and competitive recruitment procedures. Advisers and assistants in political cabinets are employed only for the time in office of their political masters. Both groups of employees (members of the civil service corps and members of the political cabinets) participate in government communication. The main tasks of government communication are fulfilled by civil service corps and political assistants and advisors are the supporters of the persons occupying high state posts. This division is an effect of binding Polish legal regulations.

The structure of government communication

Government communication structures are determined by the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers on the Organization and Tasks of Spokespersons in Offices of Government Administration Organs of 8 January 2002 (Dz. U. vol. 4, item 36). The tasks of government information policy concerning the individual ministers or *voivodes*² are executed by the minister's and *voivode's* spokespersons, respectively. Apart from the spokespersons for ministers and *voivodes*, spokespersons for different central offices can also operate within the government communication framework. The Ordinance states that the cooperation of spokespersons is the responsibility of the government spokesperson. The government spokesperson is a political post and appointed and recalled by the prime minister and subordinated to him or her. Since 1989, the function of the government spokesperson has been fulfilled by 18 people in 13 cabinets. The government spokesperson has a leading and coordinating role in the field of government communication, although there is no subordination between the government spokesperson and other spokespersons in ministries and other offices. The lack of subordination can cause some difficulties of coordination which are discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.

The spokespersons are organizationally supported by offices servicing the government administration body in which the spokesperson operates. The government spokesperson is served by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (CPM) and, within it, by the Government Information Centre (GIC).

The structure of government communication in Poland is based on four formally independent levels (see Figure 9.1). The first level is that of the government spokesperson and the CPM. The second level is that of spokespersons for ministers. The third level is that of spokespersons for the heads of central offices and their relevant bodies (e.g. the Central Statistical Office). The last structural level of government communication is that of the *voivodeship*.

The Ordinance No. 2 of the Head of the CPM of 18 January 2012 determines the scope of the responsibilities of those occupying high state posts in the Chancellery and establishes both the position of the government spokesperson and that of the Secretary of State, who is responsible for 'social communication strategy' (as it is called in the ordinance, although there is no explanation as to what this strategy is) and for the GIC. Thus, the GIC, managed by its director and three deputies, works for and answers to the government spokesperson and the Secretary of State.

The organization of government communication structures at the level of ministries has no uniform model that is binding for the entire administration. For example, the Minister of Economy has no spokesperson and its Press

FIGURE 9.1 *Structure of government communication in Poland*

Department³ is responsible for the Minister of Economy's communication. The Press Department is a unit of the Minister's Secretariat and is headed by the Chief of the Press Department. In the Ministry of Justice, the spokesperson responsible for government communication is directly subordinate to the minister and the Information Department is part of the minister's office, one of the ministry's organizational entities. In the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, government communication is the responsibility of the minister's spokesperson, a member of the civil service corps, answering to the minister's office. The Ministry of Environment is another example where the Press Bureau is an independent organizational entity cooperating with the politically appointed spokesperson. In the Ministry of Environment tasks pertaining to government communication are also implemented by other organizational entities such as the Bureau of the General Director and the Ecological Education Department. In the case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its spokesperson is serviced by a separate organizational entity, the Press Spokesperson Bureau. Moreover, government communication carried out by the Minister of Foreign Affairs also makes use of the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy and the European Information Department.

Government communication resources and tasks

The tasks and public services carried out by government communication bodies are defined in the Press Law of 24 January 1984 (Dz. U. vol. 5, item 24, with amendments), according to which spokespersons are obliged to provide journalists with information. All spokespersons working for the government provide information on government policy and execute the tasks defined in

the Act on the Access to Public Information. The tasks of the government spokesperson (in the CPM) include, in particular, the explanation of government policy, including public presentation of government activities, commenting on domestic and foreign events concerning government policy, responding to the press and ensuring cooperation of services responsible for government information policy. The tasks of the spokesperson for the minister or *voivode* include, in particular, explaining the activity of the minister or *voivode*. For example, in the Ministry of Economy (where there is no spokesperson), the tasks of the Press Department include contacts with the media, preparation and distribution of press information and official communiqués, organization of media events, including press conferences and briefings and preparation of responses for publication. The duties of the Press Department of the Ministry of Economy also include the preparation and implementation of information and promotional actions.

Human resources

As far as human resources in the CPM (where the government spokesperson is based) are concerned, 516 members of the civil service corps were working there in July 2011 out of a total of 589 of all CPM employees (15 persons of whom were members of the Chancellery's political management and 35 were political advisers and assistants). There are 32 employees (members of the civil corps) working in the GIC.

In the Ministry of Environment, government communication tasks were implemented by 21 persons in 2011, including 8 Press Bureau employees, a spokesperson and 6 employees from the Political Cabinet and 6 employees in the General Director Office and the Ecological Education Department. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the tasks were carried out by 22 persons, including a spokesperson, 12 persons in the Press Spokesperson Bureau and 8 in the ministry's Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy and 1 person in the Department of European Union Law. In the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, government communication tasks were implemented by 7 persons. On the whole, there are around 200 employees working in communication in all ministries.

Communication activities

A key role in government communication with the media is played by the GIC. It consists of a Monitoring Department, Content-Related Service Team, Media Servicing Team, Team for Press Servicing of the Polish Presidency in

the Council of the European Union and the Bureau-Administration Service Department.⁴

The responsibilities of the GIC Monitoring Department (seven people) include carrying out, based on the services of an external company, permanent daily monitoring of the press, electronic media and information agencies as well as maintaining the archive of radio and television broadcasts, press conferences and interviews as well as the preparation of media analyses. The Department also sends text messages on the current media reports to government members and the CPM management. The GIC in the CPM as well as a number of ministries use external media monitoring services. For example, the Foreign Ministry hires services to analyse Polish and foreign language media coverage of foreign policy.

Seven employees working for the GIC Content-Related Service Team are responsible for the preparation of press communiqués, press rectifications and analyses. The team is also responsible for the CPM internet services including updating of their content and cooperation with external contractors. The team is engaged in media relations for the prime minister's domestic and foreign visits. In 2010, the team prepared press releases concerning the prime minister's 65 meetings abroad or with foreign guests in Poland and in all, 500 press releases and background features were prepared. The Team for Content-Related Service also ensures press servicing for the Council of Ministers and prepares a press communiqué after each session of the Council of Ministers.

The GIC Media Servicing Team (six people) is responsible for the organization and logistics of the prime minister's and ministers' meetings with the media including press conferences and other media briefings. The team offers access to photographs in its free of charge archive on the CPM website.

The tasks of the Team for Press Servicing of the Polish presidency in the Council of the European Union (two persons) include cooperation with domestic and foreign media, the presidency's internal and external communication strategy, media monitoring, preparation of press releases and other documents connected with the Polish presidency.

A separate area of services provided by the GIC concerns the implementation of the Act on the Access to Public Information. Those tasks are fulfilled by the Bureau-Administration Service Department (six persons) which provides responses to applications for access to public information (sent by journalists, citizens and institutions) and manages the content of Public Information Bulletins of the Council of Ministers and the Chancellery (<http://bip.kprm.gov.pl>). In 2010, the GIC received 94 applications in letter form and 1,314 applications in electronic form to the bip@kprm.gov.pl and dziennikarze@kprm.gov.pl websites. The GIC administers the government website under

the www.premier.gov.pl and www.kprm.gov.pl domains. The new service premier.gov.pl started to operate in December 2009 and was updated in the first quarter of 2011. It consists of a greater number of multimedia links to social portals (Facebook, Twitter, Blip, YouTube) and more colourful graphics. The new service permits the viewing of online transmissions and video reports from the prime minister's announcements. There is a 'press centre' sub-website, with the contacts for GIC and spokespersons for ministers or *voivodes*, and also tools such as 'accreditations', 'applications for interview', or 'text messages' and 'write to the Prime Minister' form.

In the opinion of public relations and marketing experts (Macheta, 2009), the prime minister's website replicates the US White House website architecture and offers higher information content compared with its former version. Experts note, however, that the new service confirms, as in the case of the websites of other state offices, including ministries, a lack of definition regarding Poland's corporate identity.

The GIC uses five social media as government communication tools: Facebook (first post on 15 December 2009), YouTube, Twitter and Blip (first entry on 16 December 2009) and Flickr (launched in August 2009).

The premier.gov.pl website, like the services of ministries, is placed way down in all websites' ranking lists. According to the alexa.com list, the prime minister's website occupies 3,234th place in the ranking of Polish websites that receive most visits. In the United Kingdom, the British prime minister fares even worse. His website (number10.gov.uk) is placed 6,114th in the UK ranking, the website of the German Federal Chancellor (www.bundestkanzlerin.de) occupies 25,551st place in Germany and the French president's (elysee.fr) is in 5,508th place. On the other hand, Britain's www.direct.gov.uk providing services and information to its citizens was placed 39th in the national rankings. Among Polish ministries, the Ministry of Justice enjoys the highest position occupying 738th place, while the Ministry of Science and Higher Education is outside the ranking list.

In contrast to the model applied in the GIC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs oversees the running of 32 internet services. The number of visitors of Ministry of Foreign Affairs websites varies from 1.4 million to 4,000 annually. Independently of the internet services, the ministry also takes advantage of the popular social media including Flickr, Blip, Twitter and YouTube since 2009, Facebook since 2010 and *Goldenline* and *Nasza klasa* since 2011.

Apart from websites, portals and social media, an important government communication tool is the Public Information Bulletin (PIB) aimed at making public information available to all interested parties. However, PIB websites are used only as 'notice boards' because they do not conform to a uniform IT standard. They are not searchable by means of data search and aggregation tools and access to information through PIB website is difficult due to the

lack of uniform structure and layout. Furthermore, PIB website and public administration websites duplicate information. This is due to the fact that around 90 per cent of public administration bodies run their own websites and they usually contain more information and tools for communication between the state and the citizen than the PIB does (Hofmokl J., et al, 2011, p. 8).

Conclusion

Poland has travelled a long and difficult path from the days of the communist regime to achieving a consolidated democratic system. The Democracy Index 2011 classified Poland as a flawed democracy and only the Czech Republic was determined as a full democracy in the region (*Democracy Index*, 2012). Polish democracy's defects included a low voter participation rate in elections (less than 50%), low levels of trust in government, parliament and political parties, little knowledge of the activities of public institutions and, finally, the weak condition of civil society, especially in regard to the participation in NGO activities. For example, in 2011, only 15 per cent of Poles were members of organizations, associations, parties, committees, councils, religious groups and unions. A 16 per cent were engaged in activities for their communities and 23 per cent participated in a public meeting not at work (Czapiński & Panek, 2011).

The Press Freedom Index places Poland in twenty-second position and in third place among post-communist countries (*Press Freedom Index*, 2013). It is worth mentioning that every year this position improves. Little by little, the public sphere, civil society and political culture develop and this is also reflected in government communication.

The analysis of communication sources, structures, tools and activities of Polish governments allow us to argue that the development, importance and role of government communication has been weak and underestimated by Polish ruling parties and coalitions. In practice, those responsible for this area of government activities have been frequently changed, occupying secondary positions and playing still an unsatisfying role in the process of communication. It seems that the government should pay more attention to government communication.

The development of government communication in Poland is influenced by the implementation of new technologies and new legal regulations together with dynamically developing strategies and tools for commercial marketing. The development of new technologies has contributed to the advancement and popularization of useful tools allowing the government administration to make use of social media. The adoption of new legal regulations has resulted

particularly in more accurate rules concerning government activity in the field of access to public information for citizens and journalists.

The Act on the Access to Public Information exacted new standards of direct government communication with citizens and through the media. The Act also obliges the administration to provide public information to society. In addition, the development of private electronic media was a factor that changed the standards of communication between governments and citizens in Poland after 1989. In 2001 the first television channel broadcasting 24 hours a day was created. This channel has created new possibilities and obligations for the government in terms of quicker, direct and online television communication.

The analysis of government communication in Poland shows there is absence of both central management in government communication as well as clear structures and managerial rules for this communication. Such unified rules (necessary but still non-existent) for government communication could apply not only to staff and management structure but also to financial and operational aspects of government communication. They should apply to norms as well as practice, which would enable the differentiation between public government communication and political communication of the ruling parties.

Notes

- 1 The currently binding act of 21 November 2008 came into force in 2009.
- 2 A *voivode* (Polish: *wojewoda*) is a governor of a Polish province – *voivodeship* (Polish: *województwo*) appointed by the prime minister. There are 16 *voivodes* in Poland and 16 *voivodeships*.
- 3 The departments responsible for government communication in each office and ministry are named differently – Press Department, Press Bureau, etc.
- 4 Data is from 1 January 2012.

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