

PUBLIC TELEVISION AS A FACTOR SHAPING ELECTORAL ACTIVITY OF POLES IN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Public television is an important source of electoral information in Poland. The scope of its duties is regulated by the Election Code and media regulations. The presented content can fundamentally influence electoral attitudes of Poles and shape their views in this respect. The analysis of the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) reports on the monitoring of public television and the analysis of the opinion polls' results carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) revealed that the key factor that determined a low turnout in the 2015 parliamentary elections was not the lack of information or knowledge on the voters' side, but more a disappointment in the quality of political life in Poland. In the local government elections of 2014, the phenomenon of insufficient provision of information indeed did occur, as the main media for informational and educational content were not nationwide but rather regional broadcasts with low viewership. The author used the following research methods to address the above issues: critical literature analysis, comparative and descriptive analysis, as well as analysis of legislation, documents and surveys.

KEYWORDS: *public television, parliamentary elections, local government elections.*

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Introduction

Problem. The electoral activity of citizens in a democratic state is one of the important indicators showing the level of civic awareness. It also indicates a low level of legitimacy of elected authorities (Markowski, 1993: 57; Czeźnik, 2009: 3–5). Unfortunately, voter turnout in Poland fluctuates around 50%. At the same time, data of the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS)² shows that Poles consider the media as the main source of information about elections and election campaigns. During the parliamentary election campaign in 2015, as many as 79% of the respondents obtained information about candidates and committees from television information and journalistic broadcasts, and 66% from spot and electoral advertisements which were broadcast, for example, on the television or radio (Feliksiak, 2015: 1). In the 2014 local government elections, the tendency was similar, as 61% of the respondents declared that they derived the election information from television broadcasts, and 55% from radio and television advertisements (Feliksiak, 2014a: 1). Moreover, it should be noted that in the case of audio-visual media, the Polish electoral law introduces some regulations for certain aspects of electoral broadcasts. Public media are obliged to fulfil special tasks in this field, as they have a statutory duty to provide airtime to candidates and their committees (Ustawa..., 2011),

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² All of the CBOS reports presented in the article were obtained by means of face-to-face computer-assisted interviews (CAPI), on representative random samples of adult citizens in Poland, the number of respondents varying from 936 to 1040.

as well as give information and disseminate civil education (Ustawa..., 1992). Their tasks include, among other things, organizing and broadcasting election debates in election campaigns for the Sejm, the European Parliament and the President of the Republic of Poland.

Purpose. The intention of this analysis is to make the political elite aware that free access to electoral information is a necessity in shaping election awareness, but not a sufficient factor to increase the voter turnout. The quality of political discourse is equally important as it can fundamentally influence voters' attitudes.

Object. The aim of this article is twofold: to determine whether a low voter turnout may be the result of lack of information on the side of the citizens due to lack of information in public television broadcasts, and whether there is any relationship between national and regional elections. To clarify these points, the following research hypotheses were raised: H1: A low voter turnout is the result of lack of information on the side of citizens; H2: The reason for this lack of information among voters is the lack of informational and educational broadcasts on elections and candidates; H3: Public television does not fully perform its tasks in shaping election awareness.

Methods. Critical literature analysis is used to demonstrate a theoretical problem. The author also uses descriptive and comparative research methods as well as analysis of legal acts, documents and surveys. In the paper the following material is analysed: legal acts on obligations of public media in election campaigns, results of monitoring of public television activities³ during the election period, and public opinion polls on the Poles' electoral activity presented by the CBOS.

1. Public television and its audience as research problem

Since the first free elections in 1990, there has been a debate in Poland on what factors influence the level of voter turnout (Korzeniowski, 1995: 154–155, Cześniak, 2010). With the development of marketing techniques and the mediating of elections, the impact of media coverage on the attitude of electorate is particularly analysed (Cwalina et al., 2006: 239–290, Michalczyk, 2010: 268–278, Jakubowicz, 1996, Jeziński, 2004, Furman et al., 2016), and especially the role of public television in this matter (Kolczyński et al., 2007: 222–223, Mielczarek, 2009: 361–370). The interest in the influence of public television on electoral attitudes is due to the fact that, on the one hand, it is the most attractive communication channel for candidates and their electoral committees (Kolczyński et al., 2007, Godzic, 2001: 47–68, Godzic, 2002: 62–81) and, on the other hand, its role and tasks in the presentation of election content is to a large extent governed by the Election Code (Ustawa..., 2011) and media law (Ustawa..., 1992), and it must therefore meet a number of conditions set by the legislature.

At the same time, the extent to which public television fulfils the regulations is part of the discussion about: the quality of broadcasts, the scale of their politicization and the possible privatization (Jaskiernia, 2008: 129–131, Jakubowicz, 2007: 246–256, 2008: 15). According to Beata Ociepka, “public television, in the result of discussions around its programs, and especially during periods of electoral campaigns or high-intensity political conflicts, is a field of ideological conflict, for example, between the left and the right, the secular world and the Catholic Church – the object of the struggle for domination and hegemony in the belief that a viewer is a (...) mindless object of manipulation” (Ociepka, 2003: 178). Such an approach to viewers is erroneous not only because they constantly evaluate the media and their content, but also because these assessments affect their further use (Michalczyk, 2010: 47) and electoral activity.

The perception of a viewer as a mindless object of manipulation is also polemic with the postulate of shaping, through the public media, a conscious and active civic society as, according to Alicja Jaskiernia, “to enable mass media to play an assumed role in political education processes, which foster active attitudes (...) there must be participatory political culture (...). There is a need for the attitude of a “rational citizen”, who can participate in the active reception of the information content of the media” (Jaskiernia, 2008: 163). In this case, it would be appropriate for public media to fulfil the postulate of Jon Ellis, who suggests that public media should be the place where social antagonisms are discussed, but without indicating a clear direction (Ellis, 2000: 87), however, in practice, the implementation of this postulate seems to be extremely difficult (Godzic, 2001: 113–144).

³ During election campaigns, the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) commissioned monitoring of audiovisual media in terms of presenting the electoral content. Each study used a qualitative and quantitative method for content analysis. For information services, the analysis was conducted on a full sample of seven consecutive major releases of these services.

2. Parliamentary elections 2015

Depending on the type of election and the coverage of public television (TVP)⁴ programs, the electoral code envisages different time spans for the broadcast of election programs prepared by election committees. In the parliamentary elections, broadcasting of free electoral advertisements depends primarily on whether they are elections to the Sejm or to the Senate and the number of constituencies in which electoral committees registered their electoral lists. In elections to the Sejm, election committees are allowed free airtime on nationwide channels of public television if they have registered candidates lists in at least half of the constituencies. As for free airtime on regional channels, it is allowed to those committees which have registered a candidates list in at least one constituency. The total time of broadcasting free advertisements in nationwide TVP programs is 15 hours (including 3 hours by TVP Polonia), and 10 hours by regional TVP branches. Time in nationwide programs is equally distributed among eligible committees according to the information issued by the National Electoral Commission (PKW), and in the case of regional television, it is divided “between eligible electoral committees in proportion to the number of registered lists of candidates, on the basis of the information about the lists, provided by the district electoral commission appropriate to the area covered by the regional program” (Ustawa..., 2011).

In elections to the Senate, an election committee is allowed to broadcast free electoral ads on nationwide television if it has registered candidates for senators in at least half of the constituencies. The total broadcast time for all committees in nationwide programs is 5 hours and is equally divided among the committees. In regional branches, the right to broadcast free adverts is given to the committee which has registered at least one candidate for a senator. The committee may broadcast in the relevant regional program. Total advertising time in an individual TVP regional branch is 3 hours, and is “divided among eligible electoral committees in proportion to the number of registered candidates to the Senate in the constituencies covered by the given program” (Ustawa..., 2011).

In the elections to the Sejm and Senate, TVP may also broadcast paid ads but must make them available under the same conditions to all interested parties. Because there is no time limit for paid advertising, the committees which decide to broadcast paid ads depend primarily on the adopted marketing strategy and financial capabilities of the election staff. During the parliamentary elections in 2015, the main medium for paid ads on public TV were regional branches (*see* Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Emission time of paid electoral broadcast on public television (in minutes)

Election committee	TVP1, TVP 2, TVP INFO	REGIONAL TVP BRANCHES	Total
KW PRAWO I SPRAWIEDLIWOŚĆ	205	276	481
KW PLATFORMA OBYWATELSKA RP	177	168	345
KW KORWIN	0	3	3
KW POLSKIE STRONNICTWO LUDOWE	40	236	276
KWW ZJEDNOCZONA LEWICA SLD+TR+PPS+UP+ZIELONI	0	91	91
KWW „KUKIZ ‘15”	0	41	41
KW NOWOCZESNA RYSZARDA PETRU	0	18	18
OTHER COMMITTEES (together)	0	17	17
TOTAL	422	850	1 272

Source: Informacja..., 2015: 34.

⁴ TVP has two free channels with general content which are broadcast throughout the country. It also has a news channel – TVP Info, and 16 regional channels, in which large part of the airtime is taken up by information broadcasts of local nature. In addition, viewers-voters can get information from a satellite station – TVP Polonia, which during the study period was also available in terrestrial multiplexes. TVP Polonia is directed at viewers living outside Poland, but it also broadcasts major news releases originally available on both TVP nationwide channels.

Table 2. Emission time of paid electoral broadcast on public television

	Emission time of paid electoral broadcast on public television
TVP1, TVP2, TVP Info	33.18%
Regional branches	66.82%

Source: Informacja..., 2015: 35.

Regardless of electoral advertising, TVP must present electoral information on the course of a campaign, various political parties and their programs. During the parliamentary elections in 2015, the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) commissioned monitoring of two major news programs of public television: “Wiadomości” broadcast on TVP 1 and “Panorama” broadcast on TVP 2. According to the report, between October 17th and October 23rd, both services devoted most of their airtime to the election campaign (see Tables 3 and 4). In the case of “Wiadomości”, the next point of its interest was the information about programs of various election committees, followed by scandals and controversies that arouse during the campaign. It is worth noting that in reports presented in “Panorama” there is a relatively large share of instructional materials concerning, for example, voting rules and ballot papers.

Table 3. Time share of content units – TVP1

	Time share of content units – TVP1
election campaign	69.39%
national policy	3.40%
committees programs	13.61%
linking materials	2.04%
humorous content	0.00%
scandals/controversies/protests	9.52%
instructions on voting	0.68%
other	69.39%

Source: Monitoring..., 2015a: 32.

Table 4. Time share of content units – TVP2

	Time share of content units – TVP2
election campaign	62.79%
national policy	8.14%
committees programs	2.33%
linking materials	4.65%
humorous content	1.74%
scandals/controversies/protests	5.23%
instructions on voting	5.81%
other	9.30%%

Source: Monitoring..., 2015a: 33.

According to the report, on TVP 1 “the percentage of time devoted to electoral issues increased from 28% on the first day of analysis to 83% on the last day before the electoral silence. The increase in the coverage of this topic was fairly steady, with the exception of 19 October when the coverage of electoral issues decre-

ased, and of 23 October when the electoral coverage rocketed” (Monitoring..., 2015a). As for “Panorama”, “the growth was really steady over the whole week of the study. In the first three days, the percentage of time devoted to electoral issues slightly exceeded 30%, in the next three days it increased to over 40%, and it reached the highest level, though not exceeding 50%, on the last day of the survey” (Monitoring..., 2015a). In total, both the news services allotted airtime to various electoral committees as follows: Civic Platform (PO) – 30 min. 28 sec., Law and Justice (PiS) – 27 min. 22 sec., Polish People’s Party (PSL) – 11 min. 23 sec., United Left – 11 min. 17 sec., Poland Together – 7 min. 29 sec., Korwin – 7 min. 16 sec., Modern of Ryszard Petru – 7 min., Kukiz’15 – 6 min. 25 sec., and independent candidates – 5 min. 26 sec. (Kto..., 2015).

In the case of news broadcasts, three nationwide public television programs were included in the monitoring: TVP 1, TVP 2 and TVP INFO, in the period between 10 October and 23 October 2015. A total of 81 broadcasts were analysed (TVP NFO – 69, TVP 1 – 10, TVP 2 – 2). Their focus was primarily on the course of the electoral campaign (*see* Table 5). Moreover, in these materials, the issues which were related to topics from areas of foreign policy and economy were an important element of discussion. At the same time, it should be noted that they lacked instructional content concerning, among other things, voting procedures, organization of the electoral process or parliamentary competences.

Table 5. Time share of content with regard to stations

	POLSAT NEWS	TV TRWAM	TVN 24	TVP 1	TVP 2	TVP INFO	TV Publiczna (TVP 1 + TVP 2 + TVP INFO)
Election campaign	55%	22.2%	65.5%	29.1%	40.9%	62.5%	58.3%
general information on party programs	2.6%	2.2%	0.9%	5.1%	11.9%	1.2%	2.1%
national policy	1.8%	4.6%	6.1%	2.3%	0.0%	2.1%	2.0%
foreign policy	0.8%	18.5%	9.6%	2.6%	10.8%	11.2%	10.4%
social issues	15.2%	26.7%	4.8%	26.3%	24.7%	4.2%	7.3%
economy	9.6%	14.6%	3.4%	31.8%	10.8%	14.0%	15.4%
political system issues	3.8%	3.9%	2.8%	2.9%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%
scandals	6.1%	5.3%	6.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	2.8%
Others	4.5%	2.2%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.7%

Source: Monitoring..., 2015b: 18.

The total presentation time of individual electoral committees on TVP 1, TVP 2 and TVP INFO was respectively: PO – 3h 50 min. 21 sec., PIS – 4h 2 min. 30 sec., United Left – 3 h 5 min. 3 sec., PSL – 2 h 24 min. 44 sec., Modern of Ryszard Petru – 1 h 7 min. 10 sec., Kukiz’15 – 18 min. 45 sec., Party Together – 47 min. 6 sec., Korwin – 39 min. 54 sec., independent candidates – 1 h 6 min. 16 sec. (Kto bezstronny..., 2015).

Regardless of the information broadcasts, two electoral debates were analysed. The first, “Conversation on Poland”, which took place on 19.10.2015, was presented as an additional journalistic broadcast (not a debate), whose guests were Ewa Kopacz and Beata Szydło. It should be noted that it did not meet the basic condition contained in the KRRiT regulation of 6 July 2011 on the detailed rules and procedures for conducting debates by Polish Television JSC, namely providing all electoral committees with equal access to participation in a debate (Rozporządzenie..., 2011). At the same time, however, “it had numerous quality features strongly indicating that it played the role of an additional debate before parliamentary elections. These features include:

- imposed discussion formula and time frame;

- the broadcast was similar to a proper parliamentary debate;
- co-hosting by journalists from different stations, as in the case of a proper parliamentary debate;
- strong control of passive and active exposure, in a manner appropriate for electoral debates” (Monitoring..., 2015b).

The program clearly focused on the presentation of expressive silhouettes of the two candidates.

The other debate was held on 20 September 2015 and was organized by TVP and two commercial channels Polsat News and TVN 24. It was broadcast on four channels: TVP 1, TVP Info, Polsat News and TVN 24. The leaders of the eight electoral committees took part in it, and therefore formal criteria were met. It was also labeled on TV guide as an electoral debate.

In the thematic field, in contrast to the Kopacz-Szydło broadcast, “in the debate of the representatives of the eight election committees only questions about information were asked, which points to a higher focus on electoral programs and postulates of individual parties than in the debate of 19 October” (Monitoring..., 2015b).

Taking into account the above legal regulations in the field of advertising broadcasts and the involvement of public television in presenting the electoral content in news and journalistic broadcasts and debates, it can be stated that during the monitored period the degree of saturation with electoral content was high, and should satisfy at least basic information needs of voters. This is also reflected by the fact that only 1.8% of non-voters declared lack of competence or ignorance of parties, candidates and programs (Gwiazda, 2015: 4).

Another aspect of people’s ignorance that translates into high election absenteeism, which is not caused by the lack of access to information, was the attitude to electoral activity in general. The respondents who did not vote also declared: lack of interest in politics and indifference to the result of voting, non-participation in elections in principle and lack of sense of civic identity, expressing their conviction that their voice would not change anything (Gwiazda, 2015: 6). Such causes for absence were reported by 13.7% of the respondents.

What is especially disturbing in the declarations of Poles is the fact that as many as 32.2% of them were those “whose absenteeism is directly related to the assessment of a situation on the political scene and can be defined in terms of criticism or contestation of political reality. Among them, the most representative opinion is that ‘there was nobody to vote for’ (15.5% of all non-voters). Also those non-voters can be classified as ‘contestants’ who do not vote because of the inability to make an electoral decision (“I was not sure who to vote for”), declare a lack of faith in positive effects of their choices (‘it will not change anything’), question the motivation of candidates (“they care only for their money”), or the transparency of the electoral process (“all is set beforehand”). Arguments of a contesting nature include also the declared disappointment with the government of the PO-PSL coalition, and unwillingness to participate in the election due to PiS’s predicted victory” (Gwiazda, 2015: 5). Those who chose not to vote were also characterized by the highest level of political alienation. Their resignation from the participation in the election was not the result of lack of information and ignorance, but an expression of opposition and rejection of the world of politics and its rules (Roguska, 2015: 14, Boguszewski, 2015: 1–4).

3. Local government elections 2014

In the local elections, as in the parliamentary elections, candidates and their committees were legally guaranteed access to public media. Within free airtime allotted to the committees, the legislator determined the following distribution of the time on TVP depending on the type of local government:

1. Collegial organs (municipal council, powiat council, voivodeship assembly):
 - in nationwide TVP programs – 15 h;
 - in regional programs – 15 h in each TVP program.
2. Single organs (rural commune head, mayor, city president):
 - in regional programs – 2 h in each TVP program (Ustawa..., 2011).

Free airtime on nationwide channels was available to those committees which “registered the list of candidates in at least half of the constituencies in the elections to all voivodeship assemblies, including at least one list to each assembly” (Ustawa..., 2011). The committees which registered the list of candidates in at least one constituency could use the regional media free of charge. The division of time between committees “is made in proportion to the number of registered candidates in the constituencies, in the area covered by the regional program, based on the information of the district electoral commissions appropriate to the area” (Ustawa..., 2011).

In local elections, in the same regional program, the airtime allotted to committees might be combined if the committees registered a candidate for the head of a rural community (mayor, city president), “at the request of the electoral representative, with the electoral broadcasts time vested to the same committee, due to its participation in the election to the organs constituting the units of local government. The application for the merger of the time of election broadcasts should be submitted not later than 20 days prior to the election day to the director of the branch of Polish Television or the chairman of the board of Polish Radio Company responsible for the regional program in which the combined election broadcasts are to be disseminated” (Ustawa..., 2011).

The airtime is divided between the committees of the candidates for the head of a rural commune (mayor, city president) “in proportion to the number of registered candidates for heads of rural communes in the area covered by the regional program, on the basis of information provided by municipal election commissions appropriate to the area” (Ustawa..., 2011).

Paid electoral advertising, in accordance with the regulations of the Electoral Code, may be granted to both public and commercial broadcasters. However, they must ensure the same conditions for all electoral committees. In addition, charges for broadcasts “cannot exceed the rates charged for advertising and must be determined according to the price list being in force on the day of the announcement of the election order” (Ustawa..., 2011).

In the 2014 elections, only 2% of the paid electoral advertising were broadcast on public television during the entire time of their dissemination, the remaining adverts were broadcast accordingly: 95% on commercial cable television and 3% on terrestrial and satellite commercial television (Informacja..., 2014). At the same time, as many as 90% of paid advertisements purchased at TVP were broadcast at regional TV stations, and only 10% were broadcast in national programs (Informacja..., 2014). The committees which did not decide to buy advertising in the public media were: Komitet Wyborczy Demokracja Bezpośrednia, Komitet Wyborczy Wyborców Ruch Narodowy and Komitet Wyborczy Nowa Prawica Janusza Korwin-Mikke. All in all, most of the airtime in the regional branches of TVP was bought by the PO and the PiS electoral committees (see Table 6).

Table 6. Time of paid electoral broadcasts commissioned by the election committees on Polish Television S.A. (in minutes)

Election committees	Public television
POLSKIE STRONNICTWO LUDOWE	172
DEMOKRACJA BEZPOŚREDNIA	0
PRAWO I SPRAWIEDLIWOŚĆ	284
PLATFORMA OBYWATELSKA	382
WYBORCÓW RUCH NARODOWY	0
SLD LEWICA RAZEM	117
NOWA PRAWICA JANUSZ KORWIN MIKKE	0
OTHER COMMITTEES (together)	316
TOTAL	1271

Source: Informacja..., 2014: 5.

In the case of the information broadcasts which could be seen on TVP 1 and TVP 2 from 8 to 14 November 2014, it could be observed that in the first of the programs ‘the dominant materials presented the election in a fragmented, anecdotal manner, or in reference to other political events (...). The other group consisted of cross-sectional materials presenting in short time (...) selected campaign episodes from across the country’ (Monitoring..., 2014a). The element that was lacking on TVP 1 was the educational and instructional content related to voting rules and election organization. TVP 2 broadcasts were characterized by the dominance of cross-sectional materials, while anecdotal materials were present to a less extent. A number of informative materials, showing in a cross-sectional and fairly extensive way local election campaigns, were also a positive element.

Journalistic programs were monitored on TVP 1 and TVP Info, and the analysis covered 38 materials released between 1 and 14 November 2014. Unfortunately, the subject matter of the election was shown here mainly by the prism and in the context of events such as current scandals, anniversaries and celebrations, and ‘substantial issues, beyond the scope of the campaign and referring to practical political problems at the local level, were dominated by general topics, unrelated to current political decisions at the level of local government’ (Monitoring..., 2014b). Moreover, as in the news broadcasts, there was a lack of educational and instructional materials. Generally speaking, in the journalistic materials, there was not a substantive discussion on the essence of local government elections and the role and principles of local government bodies, although local government elections are defined by the Poles as the most important of all types of elections (Feliksiak, 2014b: 3). Furthermore, the CBOS research in 2014 shows a significant correlation between the level of informing the respondents about the election and their declared participation in the election, ‘those respondents who did not receive enough information voted, as indicated, less often than those who during the campaign learnt a lot about the candidates from their constituency’ (Feliksiak, 2014a: 4) (see Table 7).

Table 7. Level of information and participation in elections

Did you, in general, get to know about the candidates running in your constituency?	On 16 November the first round of local government elections was held in Poland. Less than half of eligible voters participated. Did you take part in the elections?	
	yes	no
	In percents	
• a lot	77	23
• little	57	43
• I did not learn anything	31	69

Note: the answers “I don’t remember” and refusals to answer were excluded.

Source: Feliksiak, 2014a: 4.

In the case of local elections, however, special role should be played by regional branches of TVP, which are expected to reflect the specificity of elections in a given voivodeship and to become an important source of information on local election committees and their candidates. The monitoring of 67 journalistic broadcast, released by 16 regional TVP stations between 8 and 10 November 2014, showed that the interest in the election in the surveyed broadcasts was clearly differentiated and this seems to be their characteristic feature (see Table 8) (Monitoring..., 2014c).

Table 8. Time structure of content exposure

Branch	Local government policy	Electoral campaign	Foreign policy	Local investment	National policy	Specific local problems	Independence march
TVP Wrocław	16%	38%	0%	16%	7%	23%	0%
TVP Warszawa	14%	17%	0%	12%	0%	46%	10%
TVP Szczecin	0%	31%	0%	7%	0%	62%	0%
TVP Rzeszów	0%	21%	0%	33%	0%	46%	0%
TVP Poznań	0%	27%	0%	55%	0%	18%	0%
TVP Opole	17%	54%	0%	8%	0%	21%	0%
TVP Olsztyn	0%	34%	0%	36%	7%	23%	0%
TVP Łódź	0%	4%	0%	15%	0%	81%	0%
TVP Lublin	8%	8%	12%	10%	0%	62%	0%
TVP Kraków	14%	37%	0%	10%	0%	39%	0%
TVP Kielce	8%	32%	0%	5%	18%	37%	0%
TVP Katowice	3%	14%	0%	39%	0%	43%	0%
TVP Gorzów Wlkp.	3%	20%	0%	14%	0%	63%	0%
TVP Gdańsk	25%	23%	0%	34%	0%	18%	0%
TVP Bydgoszcz	40%	49%	0%	0%	5%	4%	2%
TVP Białystok	42%	12%	0%	22%	1%	22%	0%

Source: Monitoring..., 2014c: 21.

The thematic analysis of the broadcasts showed that they were “clearly geared to substantive aspects of local government elections (...), while the topics related to strictly electoral issues such as electoral campaign and its media representation, were highlighted to a fairly little extent. Moreover, in the case of the regional media agenda, the phenomenon of ‘covering’ the local government campaign with other topics (...) has not been identified, as in the case of nationwide broadcasts” (Monitoring..., 2014c). The main task of the regional programs was to inform voters and stimulate their participation and involvement in political activity. Regional programs also provided instructional materials on voting.

The significant difference between regional and nationwide broadcasts was the exposition period of the committees, as the regional branches tended to invite politicians and local candidates who did not belong to any parties. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the branches “inviting guests from different parties, willingly give the floor not only to them, but also to the politicians of the largest national parties. Politicians of small national parties remain in the relatively worst situation, because even if they are invited, they are relatively less exposed in an active manner, so they are less likely to have the opportunity to speak in the broadcasts they are invited to” (Monitoring..., 2014c) (see Table 9).

Considering the involvement of regional media in the process of educating and informing voters, it is puzzling that most CBOS respondents say that “during the election campaign they did not have sufficient information on candidates – nearly half (47%) claims that they have not learnt much, and one in six (16%) claim that they have not learnt anything. One-third of Poles (34%) are well informed” (Feliksiak, 2014a: 3). In this case, the lack of information about the election may be the result of their concentration on nationwide broadcasts (which, as the analyses showed, had a clear deficit of those contents), in contrast to regional broadcasts. It should be noted that since September 2013, information programs of the 16 TVP regional branches have been broadcast daily within TVP Regionalna in the same band from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. According to the data provided by Nielsen Audience Measurement, the viewership of these programs was low and fluctuated from 5.5% to 0.5% (Table 10). Another factor which is connected with the reception of electoral information is the interest in politics. The research shows that the less the respondents were interested in politics, the more of them declared that they did not use any sources of information about candidates and committees (Feliksiak, 2014a: 3).

Table 9. Exposure time with regard to parties

Election committees	Exposure time with regard to parties
INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES	11:15:36
PRAWO I SPRAWIEDLIWOŚĆ	03:54:57
SOJUSZ LEWICY DEMOKRATYCZNEJ	03:47:56
PLATFORMA OBYWATELSKA	03:43:42
KONGRES NOWEJ PRAWICY	02:44:51
POLSKIE STRONNICTWO LUDOWE	02:34:06
TWÓJ RUCH	01:50:24
OTHER PARTIES	01:47:29
RUCH NARODOWY	01:33:40

Source: Monitoring..., 2014c: 24.

Table 10. Average outcome of the 18.30–19.00 band

Lp.	Branch	Voivodeship	Audience in a voivodeship	Viewership in a voivodeship	Market share in a voivodeship
1	TVP Białystok	Podlaskie	59 932	5.50%	13.70%
2	TVP Rzeszów	Subcarpathian	51 623	2.60%	7.40%
3	TVP Lublin	Lubusz	44 519	2.20%	6.30%
4	TVP Gdańsk	Pomeranian	45 549	2.20%	5.70%
5	TVP Bydgoszcz	Kuyavian-Pomeranian	31 300	1.60%	4.00%
6	TVP Kraków	Lesser Poland	40 153	1.30%	4.40%
7	TVP Katowice	Silesian	50 126	1.20%	2.90%
8	TVP Wrocław	Lower Silesian	29 199	1.10%	3.20%
9	TVP Opole	Opole	10 070	1.10%	3.20%
10	TVP Olsztyn	Warmian-Masurian	13 076	1.00%	2.70%
11	TVP Łódź	Łódź	21 680	0.90%	2.40%
12	TVP Kielce	Świętokrzyskie	10 447	0.90%	2.40%
13	TVP Poznań	Greater Poland	25 482	0.80%	2.20%
14	TVP Szczecin	West Pomeranian	11 420	0.70%	1.70%
15	TVP Gorzów Wlkp.	Lubusz	6 192	0.70%	1.70%
16	TVP Warszawa	Mazovian	25 554	0.50%	1.40%

Source: Rutkowska, 2015.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to determine whether the low voter turnout in 2014 and 2015 was the result of lack of information on the citizens' side due to the lack of information in public television broadcasts, and whether there was any relation between national and regional elections in this regard. The analysis of legal acts showed that the legislator guaranteed the Polish voters access to electoral content by imposing on public television a number of obligations related to the presentation of candidates and election content. Moreover, the monitoring results of TVP broadcasts confirmed that the public broadcaster had accomplished the tasks

it had undertaken, and concluded that lack of information had not been a major reason for high electoral absenteeism. This finding was also confirmed in the parliamentary elections, by the results of surveys, which showed, for example, that in the declaration of non-voters only 1.8% of the respondents declared lack of electoral competence, and ignorance of parties, candidates and programs. In contrast, more respondents (32.2%) declared they did not participate in the parliamentary elections for reasons directly related to the assessment of a political situation and the controversy of political reality. It was as an expression of opposition and rejection of the world of politics and the rules in it. This is where the *purpose* presented in the introduction should be addressed, as these studies have clearly shown that the quality of political discourse must improve in order to increase the electoral turnout in the parliamentary elections.

At the same time, the use of a comparative method has made it possible to find out that in the local government elections, as many as 47% of the respondents did not have enough information about the candidates, and, moreover, 16% of the respondents did not get any knowledge. This suggests that in the local elections the effect of lack of information for citizens occurred not due to the absence of electoral broadcasts, but rather due to the fact that they were broadcast on regional channels, which have significantly lower viewership than national channels.

Taking into account the above given conclusions, the first hypothesis, in which it was assumed that the low voter turnout was the result of lack of information among citizens, was confirmed only partially and mainly concerned the local government elections. On the other hand, it was not confirmed that the reason for the lack of information lay in the lack of informational and educational broadcasts on elections and candidates; neither was confirmed the assumption that public television does not fully perform its election-related tasks. Of course, in order to achieve a more complete picture of the impact of public television on the Poles' electoral activity, these observations should be continued in subsequent election campaigns, which will allow a more in-depth analysis of this phenomenon.

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VISUOMENINĖ TELEVIZIJA KAIP LENKŲ RINKĖJŲ ELGSENOS NACIONALINIUIOSE IR REGIONINIUIOSE RINKIMUISE FORMAVIMO VEIKSNYS

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Santrauka

Visuomeninė televizija yra svarbus rinkimų Lenkijoje informacijos šaltinis. Jų atsakomybės apimtis šiuo klausimu reglamentuoja rinkimų kodeksas ir žiniasklaidos taisyklės. Pateiktas turinys gali iš esmės paveikti lenkų rinkėjų požiūrį ir formuoti jų nuomonę šiuo klausimu. Iš Nacionalinės transliuotojų tarybos ataskaitos apie visuomeninę televiziją ir nuomonių apklausos, kuri atlikta Viešosios nuomonės tyrimo centro, analizės galima daryti išvadą, kad rinkėjai 2015 metų Parlamento rinkimuose mažai dalyvavo ne dėl informacijos stokos, o dėl nusivylimo politinio gyvenimo Lenkijoje kokybe. Tuo tarpu 2014 metų mažas rinkėjų dalyvavimas vietos valdžios rinkimuose išties buvo nepakankamos informacijos padarinys, nes pagrindiniai informacijos šaltiniai buvo ne valstybiniai, o regioniniai kanalai, kurių žiūrovų skaičius yra nedidelis. Tiriant minėtus klausimus taikyti šie metodai: kritinė literatūros, lyginamoji ir apibūdinamoji, aktų dokumentų ir tyrimų analizės.

Teisės aktų analizė atskleidė, kad įstatymų leidėjas garantavo Lenkijos rinkėjų prieigą prie rinkimų informacijos, įpareigojant visuomenines televizijas pristatyti kandidatus ir pateikti rinkimų informaciją. Be to, TVP kanalo transliacijų tyrimas atskleidė, kad visuomeninis kanalas savo įsipareigojimus įvykdė, taigi informacijos stoka negalėjo būti mažo rinkėjų aktyvumo priežastis. 32,2 proc. pareiškė, kad Parlamento rinkimuose nedalyvauja dėl priežasčių, kurios susijusios su politine situacija ir bandymu kovoti su politine realybe. Tai buvo protesto ir opozicijos balsas. Straipsnyje aprašyti tyrimai aiškiai atskleidė, kad būtina gerinti politinio diskurso kokybę, siekiant didinti rinkėjų aktyvumą per Parlamento rinkimus. Taikytas palyginimo metodas leido pamatyti, kodėl vietinės valdžios rinkimuose net 47 proc. respondentų pareiškė neturintys pakankamai informacijos apie kandidatus, 16 proc. teigė negavę jokios informacijos. Tai leidžia daryti išvadą, kad vietinių rinkimų atveju informacijos stoka priežastis ne informacijos stoka dėl rinkiminės informacijos transliacijų trūkumo, o tai, kad ši informacija pateikta regioniniuose, o ne nacionaliniuose televizijos kanaluose.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: visuomeninė televizija, Parlamento rinkimai, vietinės valdžios rinkimai.

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