

Poland:

Waiting for the Citizens to Demand Online Media Accountability

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Poland: Waiting for the Citizens to Demand Online Media Accountability

Michał Kus

The concept of media accountability is a relatively new issue in Poland, both for Polish media researchers and journalists (media professionals), as well as for media users. Traditional institutions and instruments of media accountability are not very well developed (see Głowacki & Urbaniak, 2010). In this context, possible development of media accountability innovations online creates significant opportunities for fulfilling existing gaps in this area. A desk study and interviews conducted with Polish media scholars, experts and practitioners in the second part of 2010 have showed that this potential of innovations, offered by new technologies (especially the Internet) is, at the moment, only partially exploited. The paper analyses contextual factors of media accountability online practices in Poland, the level of journalistic professionalization, the effectiveness and legitimacy of existing media accountability and transparency institutions – but, above all, media accountability online practices initiated by media and outside media.

1. Context factors in the development of MA online practices

1.1. Media legitimacy and existing MA institutions

While Polish society is superficially aware of the need for media accountability (MA), the influence MA has on the quality of democracy is limited. Polish society bases its discourse about media performance on emotional arguments and ideological cleavages rather than on rational and analytical debate about issues of media accountability and transparency of media and their performance.

Results of media trust surveys are ambiguous and the public image of the legitimacy of media is not clear. Although the public's trust in media is not very high they are higher than the EU average. Public trust in the Internet is also relatively high. This situation is explained by researchers (e.g. social psychologist Janusz Czapliński, as an effect of the public's low trust in politics and public institutions (ETB 2009). Media, in revealing new scandals and bad practices in political and social life, are still treated by significant part of Polish society as a necessary watchdog and a remedy against abuses of power etc. Also the Internet is perceived often as a new, but very efficient tool of social control, especially over politics and public authorities. This phenomenon, at least partially, may explain why trust in the Internet in Poland is growing whilst in Western European countries it is decreasing (ETB 2009).

The last fully available survey about media trust occurred in 2003 (TNS OBOP 2003). Partial data for 2011 exists, but only for public media (see Table 1).

Table 1: Trust in media and media regulation bodies in Poland

	Level of Trust (%)		Level of lack Of trust (%)	
	2003*	2011**	2003*	2011**
Public radio	76	74	15	8
Private radio	69			18
Printed press	70			21
Public broadcast TV	65		29	
TVP 1		54		14
TVP 2		59		15
TVP Info		70		8
Average		61		12.3
Private TV	68		24	
National Broadcasting Council	32		51	

Source: * TNS OBOP (2003). ** Newsweek.pl (2011)

The prestige and authority of traditional media accountability institutions is very limited, especially because existing MA institutions are rather weak. Press council and press ombudsman, planned by the Press Act of 1984 as advisory bodies for the Prime Minister, have never been appointed (Głowacki & Urbaniak 2010). One of interviewed media scholars, Lucyna Szot, stated that the prestige and authority of traditional MA institutions (such as the Council of Media Ethics or the associations of journalists) is limited because these institutions are perceived to represent the older generation of journalists. Younger journalists generally do not want to have anything in common with these institutions and often openly oppose their activities.

The general opinion of Polish media practitioners is that existing MA institutions do not fit in the contemporary situation of the Polish media sector. Their presence online seems to confirm this opinion, although some positive development may be observed recently (new website of Association of Polish Journalists and their Facebook account – from January 2011, see Case 1).

Case 1: MA institutions online

National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) - www.krrit.gov.pl

- regularly updated, well developed site

Association of Polish Journalists (SDP) - <http://www.sdp.pl>

- from beginning of 2011, new (beta) version of website
- new developments and tools – daily updates, interviews with SDP members
- SDP on Facebook (January 2011) - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Stowarzyszenie-Dziennikarzy-Polskich/139455369447410>

Association of Journalists of the Republic of Poland (SDRP) - www.sdrp.eprasa.com

- static website
- irregular updates

Catholic Association of Journalists (KSD) - <http://www.ksd.media.pl>

- dynamic website
- irregular updates

Council of Media Ethics - <http://www.radaetykimiow.pl>

- static website
- lack of updates

1.2 Internet user cultures

Increasing social penetration of the Internet in Poland is an undeniable reality, but at 57 per cent (Eurobarometer 2010) is still not at the level observed in most developed countries. This tendency has numerous consequences for both the Polish public debate and the Polish media

performance (both traditional and new media). The Internet has just become the space where public issues are discussed, but still a significant proportion of society is excluded from this platform of discussion. Even if we assume that this proportion of society has always been predominantly passive (in terms of involvement in public debate), it is still a problem that needs resolving, and the Internet may at best be a partial solution.

The number of Polish Internet users performing as active content producers seems to be limited, particularly in the context of the possibility to develop media accountability practices online (which generally requires strong public participation). Polish Internet users are relatively passive in the context of participation in content creation (7 per cent - Eurostat, December 2009) and giving feedback to the media. The proportion of social networks users is 43 per cent, with 26 per cent of them using social networks on a daily basis (Eurobarometer 2010).

This low level of Internet active use may be explained by the low level of new media literacy, but also by an infrastructural gap (in comparison with most developed economies). On the other hand, as Michal Gwiazdowski observed, the Internet mercilessly shows what media users find interesting for media users in that people are interested more in 'Idol' and 'Dancing with the Stars', than in news media performance.

The Internet also influences greatly the main directions of journalism development, because contemporary media are predominantly business oriented, looking to limit costs (tabloid news is cheaper to produce whereas, quality content is generally more expensive) and to maximize income (cheap tabloid news attracts more 'clicks' and advertising revenue than expensive quality content). It also means, that market pressure on media institutions and particular journalists is strong and Polish market is very good example of this tendency.

There is still a wide margin of improvement in terms of Internet use rates in Poland. But it must be stressed that each year brings significant increase in this context, such as the increase in Facebook users from 1.3 million in 2009 to 6.4 million in 2010 (Internet Standard 2010). Facebook may become a factor of media accountability instruments online development.

1.3 Professionalism in journalism and developments in online news

Existing studies underline the generally low level of professionalism in Polish journalism, particularly in MA and transparency. Research shows that while media owners often treat journalists only as a cost of their business, media businesses should treat journalists as their most important resource and owners should, therefore, invest in human resources development (Medeksza, 2010; Szynol, 2010).

Research into MA awareness has produced ambivalent conclusions with Medeksza (2010) suggesting that the level of accountability is higher in public media and Szynol (2010) arguing it

is higher in private media. Polish media generally early adopted for their daily routines online MA tools, which in some dimensions are comparable with Western European media, although generally they are not innovative.

Nonetheless, the Internet has clearly changed the reality of journalistic work in Poland. Almost all media outlets have launched websites and some new online-only media outlets have appeared. Traditional media journalists accepted the new rules and patterns of their performance on this new platform at a relatively late stage. This particularly applied to the older generation of journalists, with limited new media literacy that frequently had problems with these new developments (Hołdak, 2010). Research also indicates that although technological development is visible, there is still a lack of ethical and professional standards regarding journalists' performance online (Szot, 2010).

The number of journalist and media blogs in Poland is significant, but many of them have fallen into disuse. Although the number of media-specific blogs is limited their activity increasingly influences Polish media daily routines. Journalist-bloggers are recognized as an important element of the Polish blogosphere (Medeksza, 2010; Szynol, 2010).

Relations between journalists and blogosphere are perceived variously by different media practitioners. Medeksza (2010) expresses opinion that the relationship between these two spheres is ruled by cooperation, in that journalistic work influences blogging and vice versa. However, the current relationship reflects a stronger characteristic of conflict than of cooperation. Blogger Kataryna's identity case (see: Case 2) is very good example of this. This conflict seems to undermine the fostering of MA in the short term, but may be successful in the long term if the standards of bloggers performance could be set to match those of journalists in the traditional media. For example, while anonymous defamation would not be permitted, legal protection of sources through anonymity would apply for bloggers, online journalists and traditional media journalists.

Case 2: Blogger Kataryna's identity

Example of conflict between journalism and blogosphere was attack of elements of mainstream media (especially the newspaper *Dziennik*) on the right-wing (but not radical) blogger Kataryna. *Dziennik* discovered and published information about Kataryna's identity, which started a confrontation between *Dziennik* and the bloggers' community (Medeksza, 2010; Szynol 2010). Kataryna's position was supported by Council of Media Ethics.

Generally, the issue of bloggers' anonymity was discussed. Traditional media, like *Dziennik* insisted that bloggers should obey the same rules of journalistic conduct as traditional media journalists: e.g. anonymous defamation on blogs cannot be acceptable. On the other hand, Polish law does not offer the same level of protection to bloggers and online journalists as enjoyed by journalists of traditional media (e.g. the former can be legally forced to reveal their sources personal data).

Sources (texts in English):

Piotr Wrzosinski's blog (about Kataryna's case)

<http://socialwebs.blogspot.com/2009/05/polish-political-blogger-kataryna.html>

<http://socialwebs.blogspot.com/2009/05/editor-in-chief-of-dziennik-newspaper.html>

Cafebabel.co.uk (interview with Kataryna)

<http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/article/35047/kataryna-poland-blogger-anonymousjournalism.html>

Tomasz Rychlicki's blog

<http://rychlicki.net/en/2010/10/26/5907/>

Regarding attitudes towards social media, Polish journalists are increasingly aware that social media have become important tools in their profession. This is particularly true of Facebook, being the largest social network in Poland from 2010 (Vincos 2010) but use of social media is generally still intuitive in many newsrooms (Medeksza, 2010).

There is still, however, a broad potential for improvement in terms of MA in Poland. Possibilities offered by the Internet (taking into account the public's high level of trust in Internet) and the inevitable dynamic development of access to the Internet in the near future could combine to be the prime catalyst in MA development.

Research suggests that main requirement related to MA processes and practices is the audience. Indeed, media practitioners see the role of the journalist in the future as a moderator and supervisor of audiences' activity rather than providers of information (Gwiazdowski, 2010; Medeksza, 2010). Almost all experts stress that the external pressure of audiences is necessary to stimulate change not only in newsrooms but also in the perspectives of media managers and owners.

Polish media and journalists have already accepted that they must have an online presence (IMM, 2010). But, in many cases, the pattern of representation is still more of a need to follow a fashion trend, and copying what others do, and not a strategic choice. As Medeksza (2010) states, journalists know that activity online is important but they do not actually know how to do

it effectively. This is more obvious in national public media than the more flexible commercial operators. Recently the situation has started to change with Polish Television and Polish Radio (national public broadcasters) launching their websites in 2010 (Wieczorkowski, 2010)

Polish journalists, mainly the older ones have difficulty in accepting their role in relation to media users has changed dramatically. In many cases, they do not want to accept that the flow of information has changed from the monologue from newsrooms to users to a dialog between media and users, and that the users' voice has become as important as their own (Hołdak, 2010).

Another issue is that many Polish newsrooms are not prepared to develop real dialogue with their audiences. The problem is often not in technology and infrastructure, but in their attitude towards new forms of interaction with users. Many Polish newsrooms are still unable to combine use of new technologies with daily routines. Thus, developed interaction with audiences is generally not achieved. Additionally, many journalists cannot position themselves in this new environment, so they tend to suspend their belief in technological evolution (despite knowing that change is inevitable). Evolution requires not only new skills, but also new attitudes in terms of the relationship between journalists and their audiences (Medeksza, 2010).

The principal goals of Polish newsrooms remain, even in the situation of developed interaction with audiences, major news coverage, and developing the loyalty of users and a users' community.

2. Practices initiated by the media

2.1 Actor transparency¹

Actor transparency involves practices where media organizations offer contextual information about their ownership and ethical codes, as well as about the journalists producing the news stories. The development of these practices is heterogenic. Information about media ownership is generally available (although not always on website of each media outlet and sometimes only on the website of the media group or company), but information about journalists and profiles of journalist are not common practice. Published mission statements or published codes of ethics are generally not observed practices in Polish media.

¹ The typology of practices has been defined by the research team in the Work Package 4 of the MediaAcT project. We reproduce an excerpt of the definitions in each section, but the reader is invited to see the introductory document for this collection of country reports for more details.

Case 3: Polskie Radio Wrocław journalists' profiles and "Polityka" journalists' profiles

Very good example of relatively developed journalist profiles section is website of *Polskie Radio Wrocław*, <http://www.prw.pl/>, a regional public radio, which provides photos and biographies (more or less developed) and contact information (e-mail, personal website etc.).

Example: Dariusz Wiczorkowski profile

<http://www.prw.pl/employees/view/48/Dariusz-Wiczorkowski>

Also the weekly magazine *POLITYKA* offers journalists profiles, with photos, a list of their publications and links to some of the journalists' blogs.

Example: Janina Paradowska profile

<http://www.polityka.pl/search?author=Janina%20Paradowska&propertyName=publishDate>

Table 2: Practices fostering actor transparency in Polish online news websites

Practice	Availability at online news websites (n=7*)
Bylines	7 (but usually not in every text)
Profiles of journalists	5 (basic information), 1 (full information)
Journalist blogs	5
Published mission papers	0
Published Code of Ethics (GJ)	0
News policy document, in-house code of ethics	0
Public information on company ownership	6

Source: * fakt.pl, wyborcza.pl, rp.pl, tvp.info, tvn24.pl, polskieradio.pl, wprost.pl

2.2 Production transparency

Production transparency denotes practices where media organizations disclose to users information about their sources and the professional decisions made in the process of producing news. Generally, there are still not any common (and institutionalized) rules of media performance on the Internet, in to the context, for example, of using external sources (links etc.) and quotations (Wiczorkowski, 2010). Thus, still many bad practices may be observed (e.g. direct using whole texts from press agencies on news portals).

Although stating the authorship of each story (byline) is still not common practice, putting precise references and/or links to sources in stories is becoming an increasingly common practice.

As mentioned before, relations between journalism and blogosphere in Poland are relatively strong. Polish media are generally strongly present in blogosphere (especially newspapers). In

the past, some newsrooms managers even forced journalists to start their own blogs, but only some of them survived (Szynol, 2010).

Newsrooms of the main national media generally offer the possibility to access blogs of journalists. In some cases, the blogs are 'affiliated' to the outlet (e.g. *Agora-Gazeta Wyborcza*), while others are officially treated as a particular journalist's professional blog (Gwiazdowski, 2010).

In effect, significant number of journalists write their (more or less related to their media outlet) blogs, but these blogs rather concentrate on comments. There are neither journalists' personal blogs nor newsroom blogs that discuss news production.

Case 4: Chamstwo w Internecie

Sometimes, blog entries generate wider discussion, e.g. where Jacek Żakowski's text from *Gazeta Wyborcza* (paper version) about the "dirty language of the Internet" ("Chamstwo w Internecie") was strongly criticized on Michał Olszewski's (also from "Gazeta Wyborcza") blog and wide discussion about the language of Internet users took place in the ensuing few weeks (Gwiazdowski, 2010).

Żakowski suggested that control over Internet forums and comments (on news websites) should be stronger (pre-publication moderation), in defense of morals and the dignity of certain people attacked by anonymous opponents. Olszewski and Wujec responded that Żakowski's proposal means a return to censorship. In their opinion, such a policy of news websites operators would also be the next stage of users' migration from 'traditional' news websites to other alternatives (e.g. social media), with negative consequences for the print media sector.

Sources:

Jacek Żakowski (Polityka), „Chamstwo hula w Internecie”

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75515,6910142,Chamstwo_hula_w_internecie.html

Michał Olszewski i Paweł Wujec (Gazeta.pl) "Cenzura nie łagodzi obyczajów w internecie"

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75515,6910135,Cenzura_nie_lagodzi_obyczajow_w_internecie.html

Violetta Ozminkowski (Newsweek) "Wirtualny lincz"

<http://www.newsweek.pl/artykuly/wydanie/0/wirtualny-lincz,42200,1>

<http://internetbezchamstwa.pl/>

Social media activity of Polish media is still in the phase of development and professional standards are not set, as they are not in the context of production transparency. There is still lack of established rules of journalists' performance in social media (both in the newsroom but also on private profiles). Research occasionally finds a set of unofficial rules, related to general rules of journalistic activity in an analyzed media institution (Hołdak, 2010; Gwiazdowski, 2010; Wieczorkowski, 2010). A general overview also indicates that there is still no strategic thinking about social media activities, and Polish newsrooms rather pretend to 'go with the flow' and wait for future outcomes. The newest development, in 2010, is the recommendation system, linked to

microblogs such as Twitter and Polish Blip and Facebook accounts (Gwiazdowski, 2010). But, for the moment neither the use of Twitter accounts and Facebook pages (of journalists or the newsroom) for discussing production of stories nor strategies for collaborative story writing with citizens (based on wiki-like or other tools) have been observed.

Table 3: Practices fostering production transparency in Polish online news websites

Practice	Availability at online news websites (n=7*)
Link to original sources	4
Newsroom blogs	0
Presence in Facebook	7
Presence in Twitter	3
Collaborative news production	0
Citizen journalism, initiated by the news media	2

Source: * fakt.pl, wyborcza.pl, rp.pl, tvp.info, tvn24.pl, polskieradio.pl, wprost.pl

2.3 Responsiveness

Responsiveness denotes news organizations' reactions to feedback from users related to news accuracy and journalistic performance. Online instruments create a significant number of new possibilities in terms of dialog between media and their audiences. Polish media use these new tools in different degrees.

The use of social media is an increasingly common practice in Polish media, although some experts states, that it's often more of a kind of fashion (Wybranowski 2010) than a real and strategic choice. The most popular forms are Facebook² or Nasza Klasa accounts. Less popular are microblogs' accounts, as Twitter³ or Polish Blip. *Gazeta Wyborcza* is good example of developed activity on this field.

Comments in news are usually allowed and generally moderated (usually post publication moderation). Ombudsperson with online presence is not observed.

Tools designed to report errors in stories are still not common practice, even in the most developed media systems⁴. Some media in Poland already use error report tools, e.g. national newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* (wyborcza.pl)⁵.

² <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/wyborcza>;
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Gazeta-Wroclawska/365397839014>
 ; <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/FAKTY-WROCLAW/111365015551594>

³ <http://twitter.com/wyborcza>

⁴ MediaBugs (2010). *Best Practices in Error Reporting and Corrections*. <http://mediabugs.org/pages/best-practices-in-error-reporting-and-corrections> (10.12.2010).

⁵ <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/Pomoc/3372461,97955.html?sv=http://wyborcza.pl/0,0.html>

Case 5: Facebook and Twitter accounts used to debate with the audience

Facebook

Gazeta Wyborcza

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/wyborcza>

- few updates daily
- very active users (in comments)

Gazeta Wrocławska

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Gazeta-Wroclawska/365397839014>

- about 10 updates daily
- users activity - medium

TVP Wrocław

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/FAKTY-WROCLAW/111365015551594>

- 701 followers
- few updates weekly
- usually no comments on entries

Twitter

Gazeta Wyborcza

<http://twitter.com/wyborcza>

- 744 followers (29.03.2011)
- 20-30 tweets daily

Case 6: Nowa Trybuna Opolska

Some media strongly cooperate with their audience preparing new products and services. Regional newspaper *Nowa Trybuna Opolska* launched a website following numerous suggestions by readers. Special forum for website users was created

<http://www.nto.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20101228/NTO/39059656>

and *Nowa Trybuna Opolska* newsroom strongly encouraged the audience to cooperate in creating the website, e.g. the format of photos was changed because a majority of active users expressed such a wish.

This may suggest that some media outlets treat very seriously every kind of signals and suggestions from their audience. Online tools are very important part of implementing such a policy.

In summary, Polish media have been widely present on the Internet since 2000, when the online services of biggest Polish newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza* (gazeta.pl) started. In the beginning, media treated their online versions only as a “*paper version, but put on the Internet*”; since then the situation has changed a lot (e.g. comments from readers appeared in 2002/2003) (Gwiżdowski, 2010). Many forms of online activity of media are present in Poland, but level of their development is diversified. Online instruments are used by media in Poland rather as

tools of building users community, than as tools of fostering their own accountability and transparency.

In this sense MA and transparency are not the most important, direct reasons for developing activities on the Internet, although development in MA and transparency often and indirectly affects community building.

Table 4: Practices fostering responsiveness in Polish online news websites

Practice	Availability at online news websites (n=7*)
Feedback form and tip-offs	6
Correction buttons	0
Online news comments	4
Audience blogs	0

Source: * fakt.pl, wyborcza.pl, rp.pl, tvp.info, tvn24.pl, polskieradio.pl, wprost.pl

3. Practices outside media

The general passivity of Polish Internet users is not a factor that may improve MA and transparency, is reflected in the interviews with Polish media practitioners as well as recent studies showing that only 2,1 per cent of Polish Internet users write blogs (Internet Standard 2010).

Case 7: Provision of new services and applications under pressure from users

1. *Rzeczpospolita* started using a Facebook account* after numerous signals from website users. *Rzeczpospolita*'s readers suggested that Facebook account would be very useful tool for helping them stay in contact with the newsroom (Hołdak, 2010)

* <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/dziennikrzeczpospolita?v=wall>

2. *Polskie Radio Wrocław* released an application for iPhone** under pressure from listeners. Many people emigrated from the region of Lower Silesia region, where *Polskie Radio Wrocław* is the most popular news-oriented regional radio station, after EU accession in 2004. There is, however, a significant number of so called 'old emigration' who are still interested in regional news. Some of them listen to *Polskie Radio Wrocław* via the Internet. After the Apple iPhone release some people also suggested that an iPhone application would enable mobile access to *Polskie Radio Wrocław* (Wieczorkowski, 2010)

** <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/radio-wroclaw/id370377352?mt=8#>

On the other hand, Polish Internet users (and media users generally) are increasingly educated and demanding. There are visible examples of pressure from audience, e.g. in terms of introducing new products, services or functionalities, which may be treated as positive

developments in terms of possible future influence in MA. At present, Polish media users develop more as consumers than as citizens.

From about five years, the Internet has in some situations influenced traditional media performance. Yet in 2004, when the tabloid *Super Express* released photos of the corpse of Waldemar Milewicz (a famous public TV journalist) on the main page (Iraq war), the Internet became an arena of an anti-*Super Express* campaign, with numerous online comments against the paper, defending the dignity of the deceased (e.g. the press release of Association of Polish Journalists against *Super Express*).

Case 8: Radio Channel 3 listeners movement

We may also find a significant example of audience involvement in media activity, when listeners of Channel 3 (public radio) organized themselves against director Jacek Sobala and his political involvement. Jacek Sobala gave a speech during a political meeting for Jarosław Kaczyński, before the Presidential election. Listeners were critical of the general political bias of Sobala's activity and lack of journalistic impartiality in Channel 3's broadcasts. The listeners started a website against Sobala*, organized protest manifestations next to Channel 3 venue etc. and made a complaint to National Broadcasting Council. Finally, Sobala was sacked, and although it was not directly related to the listeners' protests, they had weakened his position.

* <http://www.przyjacieleetrojki.org.pl/#strona-glowna>

3.1 Media bloggers

Typical media watchblogs scene is not very lively in Poland. Existing blogs⁶ concentrate on technological developments, media marketing etc. rather than on MA and transparency issues. Also media journalism websites⁷ generally do not concentrate on MA issues, concentrating rather on media sector development, economics, etc. However, media criticism is also present there, especially when any scandal related to the media occurs.

3.2 Social media

Social media activity of media users is still not very well developed. The most significant case of users influence, related to social media, was the Facebook group "Polsat zabił Święta - w tym roku nie będzie "Kevina" (Polsat killed Christmas – there will be no "Home Alone" movie this year)⁸. Over 45,000 Facebook users joined in an ironic protest against the absence of the "Home

⁶ www.kominek.tv; mediafun.pl

⁷ wirtualnemedial.pl; mediarun.pl; <http://mediamikser.pl/>; <http://mediafm.net/>

⁸ <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/pages/Polsat-zabil-Swieta-w-tym-roku-nie-bedzie-Kevina-protest/125674450826266>

Alone” movie on the private TV channel Polsat during Christmas. In the 1990s Polsat traditionally broadcast this movie at Christmas). Finally, Polsat changed their decision and “Home Alone” was broadcast. Clearly, this initiative may be only partially treated as a form of MA.

Other initiatives based on social media and related to MA did not gather significant numbers of followers, e.g. a Facebook protest against the removal of a Polish Radio Channel show dedicated to electronic music, which accumulated 933 users⁹. The limited activity means that social media potential in terms of fostering MA (especially involving media users) is still not discovered in Poland.

3.3 Mediawatch initiatives - NGO's and academia

Academic or activist mediawatch sites are neither numerous¹⁰ nor very influential and the relationship between academia and journalistic practice is still too wide. As already mentioned, there is not much space for longlife training in the journalistic profession, because media owners generally do not treat journalists as their most important resource. On the other hand, media practitioners perceive media researchers, as well as journalism education, as being far from the reality of existing media institutions (Hołdak, 2010; Wiczorkowski, 2010). Academic experts also observe that journalistic education institutions must increasingly take into account dynamic developments in the area of media technology, not only in strictly technological aspect (new skills, technical training), but also in the context of new challenges related with ethical and professional standards (Szynol, 2010; Szot, 2010).

From NGO initiatives, the activity of the Batory Foundation should be emphasized. The Batory Foundation regularly assesses, on the basis of quantitative research, public media performance during election campaigns.

3.4 Citizen journalism

Citizen and alternative news sites¹¹ development is assessed as weak (Szynol, 2010; Szot, 2010). Polish media practitioners are also sceptical, e.g. if collective content creation by journalists and their audiences is possible, the existing level of Internet users involvement in creating content in Web is too low. This is not only a problem of the Internet and media sphere, but also of

⁹ <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/pages/Protest-przeciwko-usunieciu-audycji-red-Jerzego-Kordowicza-z-Trojki/108532685881056>

¹⁰ <http://pl.ejo.ch/>

¹¹ <http://www.wiadomosci24.pl/>; <http://kontakt24.tvn.pl/>; <http://poland.indymedia.org/>; <http://gazetawirtualna.pl/>

participation in the public sphere and public debate. Public participation still needs to be improved in the context of the everyday life of Polish society (Gwiazdowski, 2010).

4. Conclusion

The current and future development of media accountability in Poland seems to be strongly dependent on development of innovative, online MA tools. Why?

First, Polish media practitioners and media researchers are convinced that development of MA in Poland depends rather on external pressure from outside media, especially on audiences' influence and pressure. Online instruments offer new possibilities in this context and these possibilities are increasingly exploited by media and their users.

Second, traditional MA institutions are relatively weak, in terms of their influence on daily practices of Polish media, although the need for MA is recognized by media practitioners and media users.

Self-regulation is also perceived as an important factor of improvement in this area. Polish media generally are ready to react, if basic rules of journalistic conduct are disturbed. This was the case, when the tabloid newspaper *Super Express* published on the cover page photos of the corpse of journalist Waldemar Milewicz after he had been murdered in Iraq. The *Super Express* editor-in-chief and newsroom were strongly criticized by other media.

Polish media practitioners and media researchers are not unanimous, when they analyse the potential of public and private media, in terms of MA instruments development. The same occurs in regard to national, regional and local media. Szot (2010) notes that in some aspects audiences of local media have more tools to keep 'their' media accountable, because journalists, media owners and managers are frequently their neighbors, living in the same local community. Such a possibility does not exist in the context of national or even regional media (Szot, 2010).

In any case, chances offered by new technologies, especially the Internet, in terms of MA development, are still not 100 per cent perceived and utilized by Polish media and Polish media users. The barriers to overcome are mainly technological but also psychological.

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