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## Media relations - promoting scientific and research institutions in the media in Poland and Europe

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## MEDIA RELATIONS – PROMOTING SCIENTIFIC AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN THE MEDIA IN POLAND AND EUROPE

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### Introduction

Media are one of key intermediaries for dissemination of information and one of the most effective tools of promotion. They allow us to get our message across both to a broad group of recipients and a profiled recipient adequate for the subject, content and character of the provided message. The essence of information reaching the recipients through the media is the credibility, trust and impartiality attributed to it and thus its strength. For this reason building relations with the media is so important in public relations.

Taking into consideration the fact that media to a large extent form the awareness of their recipients, their opinions and knowledge, it is advisable or even necessary for scientific institutions and scientists to closely cooperate with journalists and the mass media. According to Wojciech Jabłoński „media are a necessary witness. If the world is supposed to learn about certain facts, the media have to witness them. If the press reports something, it means that this is important, that it exists”<sup>1</sup>. However, this is not all about the mere presence of information in the media but above all about its effect – achieving understanding, convincing, educating recipients, building the image of science, scientific institution, scientists. Mass media are thus not only an intermediary between scientists, scientific institutions and the society, not only a witness of events in the world of science, but also a partner in the process of carrying out a mission both sides have: showing the value and significance of science in the development of mankind.

In the promotion of scientific and research and development institutions media play a whole series of significant roles. The main role is informational, which focuses on providing information about conducted research projects and their results, achievements of scientists and research teams, activities of scientific institutions. What follows informing is the interpretation of particular situations based on current knowledge and scientific achievements. These two functions combine the persuasive function, which is supposed to raise trust, credibility and the recipient's belief in the presented issue, stimulate interest in a particular piece of information included in the message and make the recipient accept partially or in full its interpretation.

The persuasive function refers also to the exceptionally significant role of the media in the promotion of science and scientific institutions, which is the educational function. In literature on the subject with regard to the educational role of the media there is a distinction between activities aimed at populariza-

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<sup>1</sup> W. Jabłoński, *Kreowanie informacji. Media relations*, Warszawa 2007, p. 31.

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tion of knowledge and spreading the results of research. Professor Andrzej Paczkowski, who distinguishes between these two terms, describes the popularization of knowledge as presentation of a branch of science in specialist media targeted at experts and recipients interested in this particular area, however, not necessarily at specialists, scientists, researchers. At the same time spreading knowledge is associated with presenting events, achievements from the world of science in general media such as dailies or magazines covering social and political subjects.<sup>2</sup> Both these processes are supposed to raise the level of knowledge, awareness, education of recipients. Popularization and spreading knowledge are key goals in the process of medialization of science.

Media play a very important role in the public relations strategy with regard to crisis communication. Scientific information often provides a background for explaining to the recipients a situation, its conditions, confirming correctness or incorrectness of actions. The situation is similar in case of communicating risk. Explanations provided over the media, confirmed with scientific arguments may in a very convincing way influence the recipients in the process of raising awareness of all aspects of the threats they have to face or only feel.

Thanks to modern technologies shaping new quality of communicating, media have become a platform for building mutual, more dynamic contacts between science and the recipients. This also poses new challenges for public relations and media relations of science, due to the fact that the recipient of information is not passive any more and is becoming more and more often a participant of the discussion expressing his opinion and criticism.

An important function of the media is creating the image of science and research institutions and scientists themselves. Mentioning the name of a research unit or the name of a researcher in journalist materials creates in the consciousness of recipients a particular impression – positive or negative, it enables building their reputation and the position of an expert in a particular area or discipline.

### **Goals of the medialization of science**

The issue of medialization of science and activities of scientific and research institutions has been present for many years both in scientific discussions as well as in practical discussion engaging both sides – scientists and journalists. The dominant conviction is that the process is necessary, especially in the world of the 21st century, where information and knowledge constitute a key factor shaping contemporary society. Thanks to knowledge and awareness of contemporary scientific achievements it is possible to determine own and the society's direction of development. „Only aware people can consciously determine the path of development of the society by supporting solutions stimulating the development of mankind”<sup>3</sup> – professor Marek Kuś claims.

Popularizing and spreading knowledge is a process necessary for shaping the image of the contemporary world and the ongoing changes. Information concerning scientific achievements contribute to emphasizing the fact that the progress of civilization, technology is the effect of development in science

2 A. Paczkowski, *Nauka w mediach. Nieco luźnych uwag*, [in:] *Medializacja nauki*, Warszawa 2004, p. 10.

3 M. Kuś, *Niebezpieczeństwa medializacji*, op. cit., p. 32.

and the results of scientific work as well as of science and research institutions and scientists. For these reasons science and scientific institutions must be present in the media.

Another fact supporting the idea of medialization of science is social and economic in character. Many researchers emphasize the fact that it is necessary to present information about the achievements of institutions and people associated with science to justify spending public money. Gaining the favour of the society may at the same time constitute an argument supporting raising financial spending on science.<sup>4</sup>

Popularization of science by the media has great significance also for scientists themselves. The mode of presentation of information by means of mass media is much more dynamic than the process of disseminating research results by means of scientific publications, or conferences. Thus, the general media may to some extent – above all in the area of information - be supplementary for specialist media, mainly the press. They raise not only the awareness of actions taken by scientists, but also allow starting discussion and thus looking at a particular subject from a different, broader perspective. Media as a forum for exchange of information, scientists' opinions are an additional opportunity for the recipients to gain and expand knowledge.

From the point of view of scientific and research institutions, currently treated as units active on the economic market, disseminating information about their activities and achievements by means of the media is an important element of marketing strategy. The message concerning projects or other scientific ventures and their results indirectly influences the process of commercialization of results of conducted works, possibly expanding the scope of works, development and attracting clients eg. industrial companies.

Medialization of science can also be regarded from the point of view of shaping the recipients' interests. On the one hand this may be developing purely amateur ambitions to learn more about a particular subject or area of science. On the other hand, for many recipients, information in the media constitutes first contact with a particular scientific subject, especially in case of young recipients. Thus, media and their reports may become a source of inspiration for starting professional work on a particular subject and for joining the future scientific community.<sup>5</sup>

In the end, medialization and promotion of science by the media is not only about building the image of a scientific and research institution, but also building national prestige. Awareness and appreciation for the value of activities pursued by scientists and scientific units is an element which contributes to the growth of identity and feeling of pride in the fact that we belong to a community capable of exceptional achievements. Science and promoting science are a very important element in creating the external image of a country. Promoting Polish science and culture was recognized by Polish students as the most important goal of Polish presidency in the European Union. Research carried out by professor Krystyna Skarżyńska and Kamil Henne from the Institute of Social Psychology of Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities shows that greater priority was attributed to this goal, than to fixing the finances of EU,

4 W. Niedzicki, *Szansa czy zagrożenie, [in:] Medializacja nauki, op. cit., p. 54.*

5 *Promocja w nauce. Poradnik dobrych praktyk, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Warsaw 2007, p. 13.*

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working out common international policy or preparing a strategy of stabilization for the world.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand scientists point to threats associated with medialization of science. Magdalena Bajer actually asks, whether media could deprave science and she highlights inevitable falsification of the image of the world, which is typical of the media. It is determined by the necessity to „make a rough selection” of information coming in in ever greater quantities.<sup>7</sup> The pace of activities of the media and broadcasting news forces them to choose more or less significant pieces of information. The choice is determined by the level of knowledge about the subject represented by the author of the message (eg. editorial office, editor, journalist), defining priorities, which neither scientists nor the recipients can influence.

According to M. Bajer, a much greater threat from the point of view of scientists is scientific journalism. Comments, assessments made by journalists, which are often biased and not necessarily supported with specialist knowledge, are most influential in terms of opinion-making and shaping the attitudes of recipients, which in turn may contribute to falsifying the actual situation.

A factor which may destabilize impartiality and the essence of information concerning events and scientific achievements is also whether particular people or institutions are more or less mediagenic. There is a threat that in a situation where some scientists and scientific institutions have better contacts with the media and are able to present themselves in the media, information about certain significant scientific achievements may be omitted due to more skillful presentation of other, less important information.

In case of science appropriate creation of information concerning all ventures associated with science is not easy and there are many obstacles hampering the creation of media relations. An obstacle for building relations between science and the media is, among others, weak communication between science and the media, lack of understanding and a common language, which often results in lack of interest of the media in scientific matters.

Differences in the perception of the results of scientific works by scientists and journalists have a substantial impact on the relations between science and the media. Achievements presented by scientists, often by means of cautious statements, expressing opinions, pointing to the necessity of long-term consultations, procedures of testing, confirming and approving the results of their works, often become unattractive for the media, which expect information about revolutionary changes, even controversial, extraordinary findings, indisputable achievements.<sup>8</sup>

Research by Sławomir Gawroński, Ph. D. has confirmed that the attractiveness of information (every piece of information) is one of the key criteria for its assessment by journalists, who also expect facts to be supported additionally with figures and that the new item itself will be short, substantial, complete and correct. It is also important to avoid making the message resemble an advertisement. The message

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6 *Studenci o priorytetach prezydencji: najważniejsza promocja nauki i kultury, source: PAP, 7 lipca 2011.*

7 M. Bajer, *Czy media deprawują naukę*, [in:] *Nauka*, nr 3/2010.

8 M. Kuś, *Niebezpieczeństwa medializacji i popularyzacji nauki*, [in:] *Medializacja nauki*, Warszawa 2004, p. 36.

shouldn't be too long and be written in a specialist, sophisticated language.<sup>9</sup>

These criteria are valid also in case of every piece of information concerning scientific issues or a scientific and research institution, which very often doesn't comply with these conditions, which will be discussed further in the article. Here, we need to pay attention to the fact that obviously the subject of a piece of information is what determines its attractiveness. Nevertheless, appropriate take on the matter, appropriate structure of the message, knowledge of rules of communication may raise interest in the message, draw attention, which results in transferring knowledge and raising the awareness of the recipients. One of the main reasons for building understanding and comprehensible communication between science and the media is the recipient of information. If [scientists] want to achieve the goal of reaching a broader audience, first they have to understand their recipients and the system of media that can interpret and disseminate their message<sup>10</sup> – Matthew Nisbet, professor of communication at the American University.

### Promoting science in the media – survey among journalists

The survey was carried out in October 2011. 55 journalists – radio, television and above all press journalists writing for local, national, specialist magazines and Internet websites of these magazines - responded to questions included in the survey. The purpose of the research was to find out how journalists assess their cooperation with scientific institutions and the promotion of science in the Polish media. In order to give an image of the actual position of science, especially Polish science, in the media, additionally, an analysis of the content of selected weeklies was carried out. The analysis focused on publications concerning subjects associated with achievements and scientific and research ventures. The analysis covered a segment of the press, which due to its characteristics, that is, the capacity to publish content larger in size and more detailed than in other means of mass media, where the type of perception of press releases allows more analytical and in-depth reception of content, credibility and still strong trust of the recipients in information in the press, is treated as the most efficient way of conveying messages concerning the sphere of science. The survey focused on a choice of socio-political weeklies as opinion-making magazines. The research covered two titles, that is, *Polityka* and *Newsweek Polska*, issues appearing from January till the middle of October 2011. Both weeklies contain in their structure a section called „Science”, which is included in every issue, as opposed to the „*Wprost*” weekly, where the „Science” section appeared only a few times in the surveyed period.

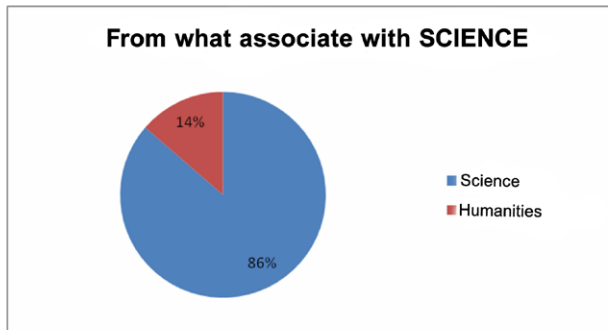
A starting point for the survey was to find out the journalists' understanding of the term „science”. A vast majority – 86 percent of respondents – associate „science” with exact sciences. It is necessary to remark here that the choice was limited to, it seems, most simplified division into exact and humanistic sciences, not adequate to the current regulation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, without distinguishing eg. legal sciences, natural sciences, technical sciences or medical sciences, which were

<sup>9</sup> S. Gawroński, *Współpraca z mediami. Teoria o oczekiwania dziennikarzy*, [in:] *Pracownicy i media w procesie komunikacji*, red. D. Tworzydło, T. Soliński, Rzeszów 2007, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> [bigthink.com/ideas](http://bigthink.com/ideas)

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placed in suggested categories by the respondents themselves.



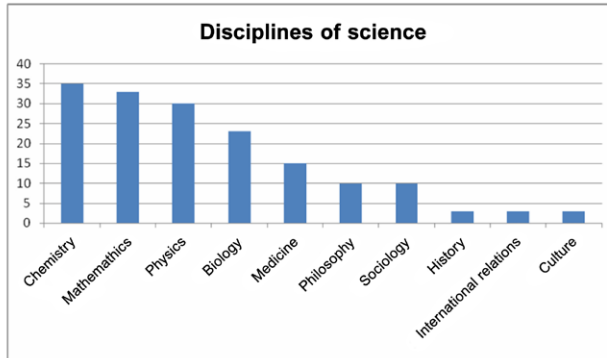
The fact that journalists associated science with exact sciences automatically results in building similar associations and perception of this term among the recipients of the media. Sections titled „science“, present in many media, above all, printed media, not only help the recipients, but actually impose on the recipients the definition and classification of the area which is covered by the message. Thus, sections titled „science“ usually promote knowledge and achievements from the area of physics, as it is regarded as a „real“ science, rather than from the area of eg. political sciences. Even if scientists and information concerning such areas as political sciences, linguistics are present in the media, they most often function as commentators of social reality and current events rather than as promoters of their research projects and achievements. According to a media expert from Chatham House, a British international affairs institute, the leading subject of activities of the institution draws journalists mainly with the events/meetings it organizes and with the names of its guests. This interest results in 35,000 media reports a year around the world (an average of 90 reports a day).<sup>11</sup>

To a large extent the perception of science in categories of exact sciences comes from the Anglo-Saxon distinction between „science“ and „arts“. For this reason in some media exact sciences are presented in sections called „science“ and other subjects are presented in separate sections like eg. „history“, „culture“ etc.<sup>12</sup> Among the surveyed socio-political magazines such a strong distinction between science and history is present in Polityka.

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<sup>11</sup> An interview with the communications director at Chatham House in London.

<sup>12</sup> A. Paczkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

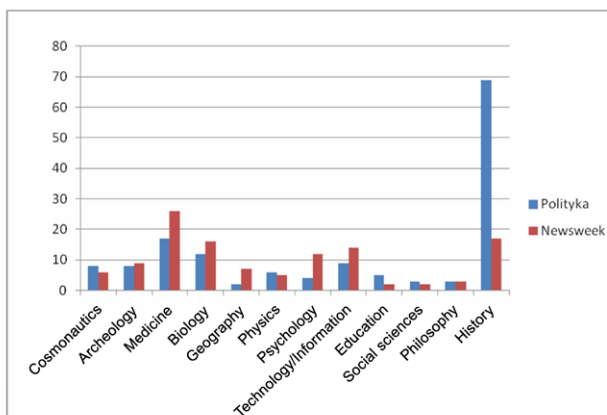


A good confirmation of the fact that science is usually understood as above all exact sciences, was the choice of areas the respondents associated with science. Most respondents, who had the opportunity to select three areas, chose chemistry (35 people), mathematics (33 people) and physics (30 people). Many respondents associate science with biology (23 people), much fewer people associate science with medicine (15 people).

Only 10 people pointed to philosophy as an area that could be associated with science. It was similar in case of sociology. Surprisingly, only three respondents chose history. Three people recognized international affairs and three people recognized culture/culture studies as branches of science.

It is worth pointing out here that, in case of some respondents, associating science with exact sciences or humanistic sciences didn't limit the choice to areas associated with them. Thus the „supporters“ of exact sciences recognized also sociology (2 people), philosophy (3 people), international affairs (2 people), and the supporters of humanistic sciences recognized: mathematics (2 people), biology (? people), medicine (2 people) as branches of science.

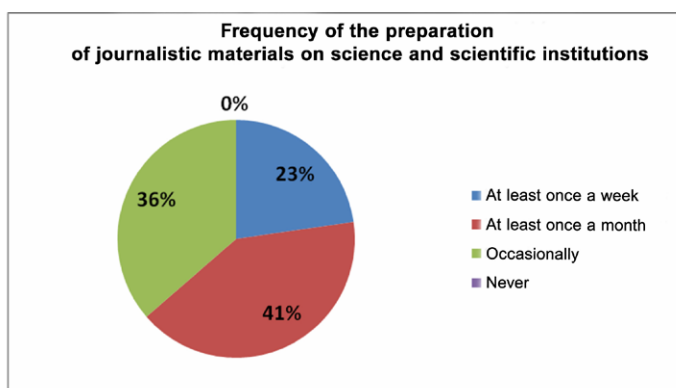
In comparison, on the following chart branches of science covered by publications in „science“ sections of the surveyed magazines are presented.



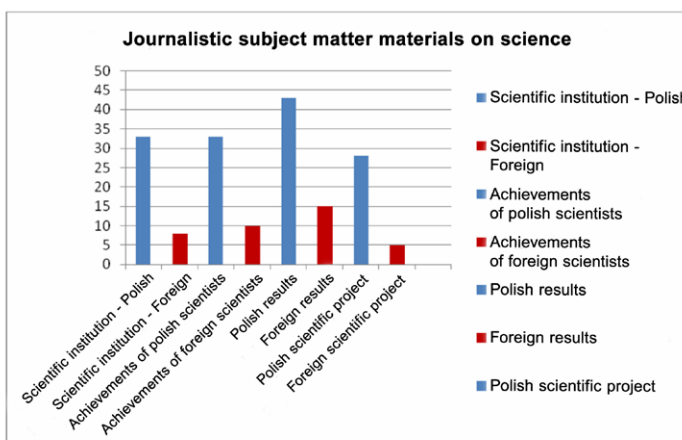


As can be seen, the results of analysis of the press comply with the opinions of journalists. In both magazines subjects concerning sciences described as exact sciences are dominant. Among these subjects are: cosmonautics, modern technologies, biology. Most publications discussed this issues of health and achievements in medicine. Among sciences described in the article as humanistic sciences most attention was given to history. However, it is necessary to point out here that the high number of articles in Polityka comes from the fact – as has already been mentioned – that historical issues are discussed in Polityka in a separate section which is always included in the structure of the weekly. In case of Newsweek, articles about history are published in the section „science”.

An important issue showing the interest of media in science is the frequency at which journalists prepare editorial materials concerning achievements, scientific projects, scientists or scientific institutions. The following chart presents the frequency of and cooperation with science, according to the respondents.



Almost a quarter of respondents declared that they deal with subjects associated with science at least once a week. Most of them – 41 percent – concluded that their materials present science at least once a month. A similar group describes its contact with scientific subjects as sporadic – limited to a few publications a year – 36 percent.

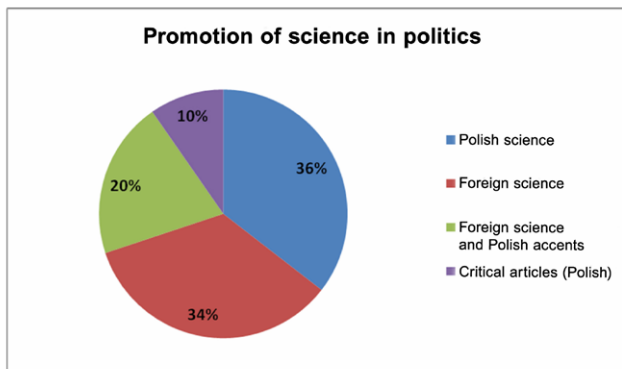


Respondents named the following areas associated with science, which are the subjects of journalist publications, as shown on the chart.

Answers to the question about the content of articles presented by the respondents shows that journalists are most interested in Polish science. 43 people concluded that the materials they prepare present the results of research conducted by Polish scientists and science and research institutions. Journalists also often present Polish scientific institutions and achievements of Polish scientists. 33 people pointed to each of these categories. Ongoing Polish research projects, understood as activities in progress (results are not known yet) enjoy slightly smaller interest – 28 people.

Taking into consideration exceptionally high frequency of presentation of the results and achievements of foreign scientists in the Polish media, the results of a survey among Polish journalists are rather surprising. Fifteen people declared that they work on materials concerning foreign research ventures, 10 and fewer respondents – materials concerning the achievements of foreign scientists, institutions and scientific projects.

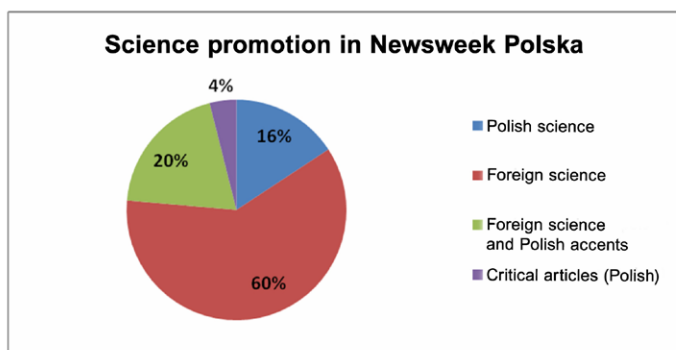
This divergence is confirmed by the analysis of content of the above-mentioned weekly magazines. The analysis of the content of the „science” section in 42 issues of Polityka and Newsweek shows that most subjects concern foreign achievements, research and projects and the presentation of scientists. However, it is necessary to point out here that some publications devoted to research projects carried out around the world are supplemented with statements or description of achievements of Polish scientists. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the appearance of the name of a Polish scientist or a scientific unit he represents is also a kind of promotion of Polish science. The following charts show the share of publications promoting Polish and world science in both surveyed magazines.



Polityka devotes quite a lot of attention to Polish science. It is necessary to remark here that in this comparison only the „science” section was taken into consideration and similar statistics for the „history” section is not presented. Over 1/3 of publications concern research projects carried out in Poland. Out of 33 articles, 5 were reports on exceptional achievements of Polish scientists. The leading subject of over a half of articles was world science, even though 20 percent of them included Polish accents eg. the above-

-mentioned statements and opinions of representatives of the Polish scientific community. In 10 percent of cases information presented in the „science” section was negative and critical about the presented state of affairs in Poland. Most often criticism concerned issues from the area of education and health.

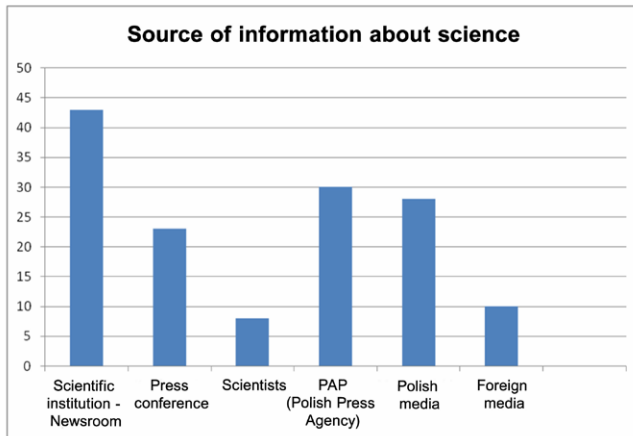
A vast majority of publications concerning science refer to world science. In up to 60 percent the focus is on the presentation of achievements, ventures and foreign scientists. An additional 20 percent are reports from the world with a comment or addition from scientists, which – as has already been mentioned – may be regarded to at least some extent as promotion of Polish science. The achievements of Polish scientists and scientific units constitutes the leading subject for just over one fifth of publications. Among presentations concerning issues associated with Polish science there are also negative reports – 4 percent – mainly concerning health.



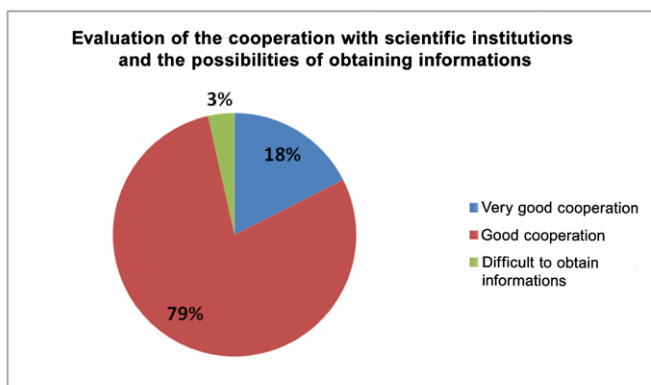
Among the most often mentioned sources of information about science there are scientific institutions themselves, or actually, their press offices or departments dealing with contact with the media – 43 respondents concluded that this is the most efficient channel for obtaining information. This suggests that science and research institutions pay ever more attention to the issue of communication and recognize the necessity to support their actions with professional public relations services. One of the tools implemented by, among others, press offices of scientific units, which are an important source of information for journalists are press conferences. Spokesmen and media relations specialists point out that press conferences, not only in the area of science, are not being called as often as a few years ago. This is a result of the expectation that messages provided this way are supposed to be exceptional and that’s why conferences should be organized occasionally. Second reason is that the Internet has become an exceptionally efficient channel of contact with journalists. For this reason it seems that the fact that 23 respondents pointed to press conferences as one of the main sources of information, shows the importance of this tool of building and implementing media relations.

Polska Agencja Prasowa (Polish Press Agency) is highly appreciated by journalists as an intermediary in providing journalists with information (it received 30 votes). It is also necessary to highlight the role of Informacyjna Agencja Radiowa (Radio Information Agency) which was mentioned by two respondents. Polish media also play a major role – 23 respondents mentioned them as their source of information about

activities in the sphere of science. In this category respondents rely the least on scientists themselves – only 8 respondents admitted that they receive information concerning their subject straight from scientists.



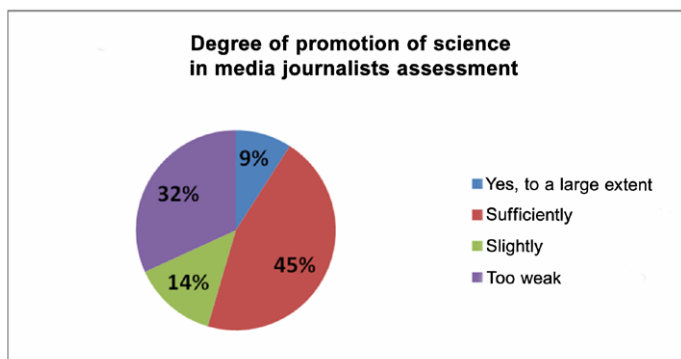
Over 80 percent of respondents confirmed that they keep in touch with scientific institutions. Only 18 percent admitted their contacts are occasional or even sporadic. Asked who usually initiates contacts on the plane of science and media, journalists responded that most often they are the active side – 82 percent of respondents answered this way. There is a certain divergence here between opinions on this subject expressed by journalists and specialists from scientific institutions dealing with contacts with the media. According to the specialists from scientific units, the level of interest of journalists in a scientific subject or a scientific institution varies depending on the popularity of a given subject – most often the subjects that have gained appreciation on the international market or concern innovations, are most attractive. In their opinion, in most cases it is the scientific unit that provides information and tries to draw the journalists attention to it. In case of more attractive subjects, information presented by the media generates further contacts with journalists expanding the coverage and reach of the output message.<sup>13</sup>



<sup>13</sup> Source: interviews with media specialists of scientific and research institutes in Poland and Europe.

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Regardless of the divergence of opinions concerning the subject of initiating contacts between the media and scientific institutions, journalists generally assess cooperation with institutions dealing with scientific and research work and the possibility of obtaining information as rather good – 79 percent. Almost one fifth of respondents expressed the opinion that contacts and the way of providing information is very good. Only 3 percent of the surveyed journalists expressed an opposite opinion and concluded that they encounter problems in obtaining information.



Taking into consideration the role of the media and journalists in the promotion of science and considering the above opinions on involvement in the subject of science and the activities of scientific institutions, the assessment of promoting science in the media is rather ambiguous. Almost a half – 45 percent concluded that actions taken up till now are sufficient to promote science. At the same time 9 percent of the respondents concluded that the media promote science to a large extent. The second half of the respondents expressed a contrary opinion – out of this 14 percent described activities aimed at promoting science by means of mass media as weak and 32 percent as much too weak.

During the „Science and media” conference organized on the initiative of the Polish Foundation for Science Advancement, a member of the management of the foundation, professor Janusz Haman expressed the view that scientists and journalists are not prepared to communicate, which is one of the biggest problems in relations between science and the media.<sup>14</sup> This issue has been discussed in Poland for many years. The search for solutions to this situation, which to a large extent limits the possibility of presenting the achievements of Polish scientists and science and research institutions is still in progress.

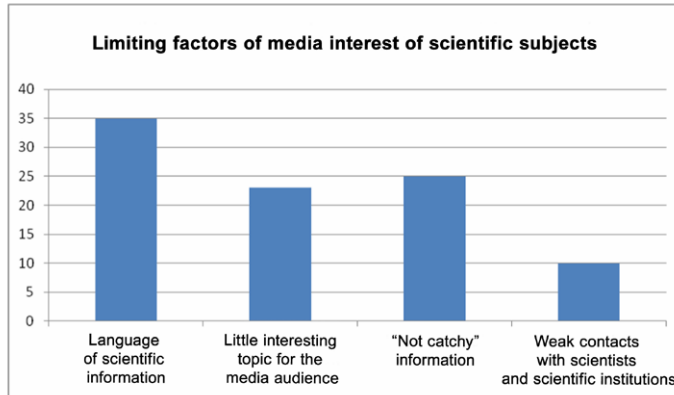
Participants of the survey named the language of scientific information – using specialist language and terminology making it hard for an unprepared recipient to understand the message - as the basic factor reducing the journalists’ interest in scientific issues. 35 respondents pointed to language as the main obstacle in communication with the scientific community.

Scientific information itself also constitutes a major problem. Almost a half of surveyed journalists concluded that news from the world of science don’t raise their interest, are not attractive in terms of content and don’t bear traits most important for the media – they are not innovative, inventive and extra-

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<sup>14</sup> <http://laboratoria.net/pl/aktualnosci/3624.html>

ordinary. Moreover, the provided news items often concern subjects uninteresting for a particular profile of recipients of mass media, which leads to automatic rejection of these news items – this is the opinion of 23 respondents. 10 participants of the survey pointed to weak contacts with scientists and scientific institutions as an additional factor disturbing the promotion of science by the media.



The survey carried out among journalists shows that the media are interested in promoting science, scientific achievements and scientific and research institutions, disseminating information concerning science among their recipients. An obstacle for carrying out this mission is the system of communication of journalists with scientists and scientific institutions. As much as it is becoming apparent that among scientific institutions there is a growing trend – presented earlier – to employ media relations specialists, still the problem of lack of common language hasn't been solved. This issue concerns both the terminology used by researchers and the way they formulate information, the skill of highlighting the most important points that could attract the attention of the recipients. „Mass media have to deliver information concerning research and scientific achievements in a simplified, brief and attractive way. It is only then that they can draw the attention of the reader or viewer“<sup>15</sup> – professor Jan Strelau claims. However, searching for attractive news is often not appreciated by scientists, who regard the role of journalists as nothing more than searching for sensation, exaggerating facts, ascribing false meaning to facts, evoking panic or unnecessary joy among the recipients. Scientists's lack of will or skills to provide information very often becomes a major obstacle in the process of building media relations, both in Poland and in Europe. "Among our scientists the dominant conviction is that promotion is a duty, not a chance. Only few think differently. They are the best interlocutors for the media"<sup>16</sup> – communication specialist from the Spanish Instituto de Biomecánica de Valencia concludes.

Discussions taking place in Poland over a few recent years constantly show there is a need to build a plane of communication between scientists and journalists. A plane on which both sides could learn to transfer, build and properly use media information. In case of scientific communities this boils down

<sup>15</sup> <http://laboratoria.net/pl/aktualnosci/3321.html>

<sup>16</sup> Source: interview with media relations and communications specialists.

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to learning skills above all in the area of tools of promotion and understanding the recipient's way of perceiving messages, which above all means applying a more comprehensible, simpler language. The assumption made by some authors of messages concerning scientific issues that simplifying the language of the message depreciates the value of the presented subject or topic is false. Communicating with the society makes sense only when the sender and the recipient use the same code, in this case language and phrases enabling proper reading and interpretation of the delivered message.

In course of the program „Opening the world of science” it was concluded that is exceptionally important for scientific institutions to train „internal PR specialists, who could talk to the media, organize press conferences, talk in a comprehensible way about the purpose of conducted research. Internal, because promoting science is difficult for someone who doesn't deal with it”.<sup>17</sup> On the basis of surveys on journalists it is possible to conclude that journalists themselves feel the need to cooperate with scientists and scientific institutions, which are familiar with the rules governing public relations. This refers to the issue of „translating” a piece of scientific information into media language comprehensible for someone who is not an expert in a particular area of knowledge and to formulating messages in such a way that they become attractive media messages at least in some respects: being up to date, concise and substantial, point to the consequences of taken actions, point to resulting benefits or threats associated with them.

On the other hand issues associated with the journalists preparation for cooperation with science has been discussed – substantial preparation, which often boils down to specializing in a particular area. Media relations specialists of scientific units often observe that journalists themselves are unwilling to engage in learning about and studying a difficult subject requiring adequate preparation, reading specialist literature. „Writing about science demands from a journalist slightly more knowledge than simple journalistic work and it requires greater skills of organizing own workshop”<sup>18</sup> – a spokeswoman of one of Polish scientific institutes concluded.

The cooperation between scientists, institutions and the media is a kind of compromise, which forces both sides to make concessions and learn the other side's rules of behaviour. For this reason it is not only that scientists should to some extent become journalists or specialists in public relations, but also that journalists should get acquainted with the presented branch of science, which can not only enrich the editorial material but also boost its credibility and trustworthiness.

### **Science and the media – cooperation of partners**

The cooperation of scientific institutions with the media, the dissemination of knowledge and information about scientific achievements, taking into consideration the priorities of the European Union, is becoming an exceptionally important goal in itself. Research, development, innovation are basic factors which are supposed to build a strong economic and social position of the European Community. Making the European Union the most competitive and dynamic economy based on knowledge is a goal included in the Lisbon strategy from 2000. Even though this aim hasn't been achieved, the will to strive for deve-

<sup>17</sup> PR nauki to biznes i ważna sprawa, [www.brief.pl/inbrief/wywiady/art109,pr-nauki-to-biznes-i-wazna-sprawa.html](http://www.brief.pl/inbrief/wywiady/art109,pr-nauki-to-biznes-i-wazna-sprawa.html).

<sup>18</sup> Source: interview with media relations and communications specialists.

lopment and innovation hasn't changed.<sup>19</sup> Intelligent development is one of key priorities of Europa 2020 strategy. Intelligent development means focusing on the development of the following areas<sup>20</sup>:

- education – encouraging people to work, study, raise qualifications,
- scientific research/innovations – creating new products and services that could boost economic growth and employment and that could help solve social problems,
- digital society – using information and communication technologies.

Striving to achieve this goal it is necessary to build up social awareness of the significance of research and science, its direction of development, transferring and delivering knowledge, which constitutes the foundation of the contemporary society based on knowledge. For this reason the role of the media as the most efficient and fastest means of delivering such messages and helping understand the changes taking place thanks to scientific achievements is so important.

One of main assumptions of cooperation of scientific institutions with the media, which are supposed to disseminate and popularize scientific achievements, educate recipients, arouse their interest in scientific projects and results, is partnership based on mutual understanding of goals and rules of functioning of both sides. Media are thus treated as one of stakeholders gathered around science, working on its development and above all on promoting it among various groups of recipients.

Building relations with the media in the area of science often resembles lobbying – convincing the mass media about the value of the delivered message, especially from the point of view of consequences of taking or abandoning further action, may result in joining complex activities aimed at, for example, introducing legislative changes. Raising social awareness by means of the media was, among others, the goal of measures taken by World Health Organization in cooperation with European scientific and research institutes on propagating the development and intensification of actions for the protection of health and the environment. Media treated as one of recipients of the system of communication and one of the stakeholders of the process of preparation and implementation of national strategies in this area were a key intermediary in contacts with the society.<sup>21</sup>

World Water Week organized cyclically by Stockholm International Water Institute is an example of a venture, which to a large extent engages media as a partner in the discussion and activities aimed at solving problems and implementing programs concerning the issue of water. According to the intentions of the initiators, inviting media to participate in this meeting is supposed not only to advertise the event, but above all spread a certain issue among journalists, and by means of the media, among broader group of recipients. In 2011 a rich program of events targeted at journalists, was supposed to not only make them participate in official meetings, but also build mutual relations, stimulate discussions of journalists involved in the subject, to provide journalists with knowledge on a given subject, and thus provide them

<sup>19</sup> *European Research and Innovation – 2020: What can the leading institutions of civil society do for Europe?*, AC.

*The Permanent Platform for European Excellence*, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> [ec.europa.eu/europe2020](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020)

<sup>21</sup> See J. Pruchnicka, *Środowisko a zdrowie – program krajowy I priorytety europejskie*, [in:] *Środowisko a zdrowie – 2005, VII Ogólnopolska Sesja Popularnonaukowa*, Częstochowa 2005, p. 5-15.



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with materials. In order to make the media get involved as partners and participants, the following events were organized, among others:

- journalist workshop titled: „Transforming water into news“, the purpose of the event was to allow journalists to exchange experiences concerning their presentation of subjects associated with water,
- a meeting aimed at establishing mutual contacts between communication specialists and journalists,
- press conference,
- interviews with participating mayors from Mayor’s Panel,
- press briefing,
- awards ceremonies.

Moreover, for the whole World Water Week journalists had a press office at their disposal. Social websites were used for exchange of information and facilitating communication – in form of World Water Week Social Media Hub, which contained all updates from websites like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, the website of the Stockholm Institute. All actions addressed to the media were presented in Press Kit, which constituted a kind of a guide for journalists. It contained both the schedule of events and meetings and a list of publications and reports, short presentations of various regions of the world in the context of the subject of the meeting, as well as a list of 15 experts assigned by the organizer the task of providing information and giving interviews.<sup>22</sup>

The above mentioned actions and tools are evidence of a thought-out strategy of delivering information and building media relations by the organizers of the meeting. An exceptionally important role is played here by experts chosen as the most competent source of information, as direct contacts are still the most efficient way of communicating with the media, especially during such meetings and a conversation with an expert is a credible source of information.

Popularizing science and European research and making them attractive for the audience and useful for business is a goal of the Atomium Culture project, which was started in 2009. This venture constitutes a constant platform for exchange of information concerning achievements in science and research between three groups of stakeholders: leading academic units, enterprises and journals of Member States of the European Union. The permanent Atomium Culture Platform was established based on the assumption that active participation and cooperation between main pillars of the civil society are necessary for the development of society based on knowledge, which in turn depends on the growth of pace of creation of new knowledge and transferring it through education (the role of universities), its development and utilization through new industrial processes (the role of enterprises, business) and disseminating it by means of credible messages (the role of the press). Transfer of knowledge between various sectors, institutions, states will lead to diminishing differences in communication and constantly informing Europeans about groundbreaking research projects and scientific achievements.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Press Kit, *Media Services & Events, Story Ideas, Experts for Interviews, The 2011 World Water Week in Stockholm.*

<sup>23</sup> *Atomiumculture.eu.*

Poland is represented in the project by the Jagiellonian University, Telekomunikacja Polska SA and Rzeczpospolita.

In course of the project much attention is paid to the promotion of science by means of the media. Apart from the Polish daily Rzeczpospolita, the following European journals were invited to the project: Der Standard – Austria, Le Soir – Belgium, Postimees – Estonia, Helsingin Sanomat – Finland, Le Monde – France, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung – Germany, Kathimerini – Greece, Népszabadság – Hungary, Irish Times – Ireland, Il Sole 24 Ore – Italy, Luxemburger Wort – Luxembourg, Publico – Portugal, SME – Slovakia, El País – Spain, Svenska Dagbladet – Sweden and The Independent – Great Britain.

Permanent platform as a forum for exchange of important information about scientific progress taking place in countries of the European Union constitutes a source of knowledge and news for press outlets participating in the project. The role of the media is to pass this information on to their readers. It could be assumed that thanks to publications in journals participating in the project, information about the results of European scientific projects is being disseminated by other mass media.

The involvement of media in the area of dissemination of knowledge within the framework of the project assumes pursuing the following goals:

- maintaining high quality and credibility of the transferred contents and making accessible the results of scientific works conducted by the most renowned European research units, picked by an impartial Scientific Committee,
- creating and raising the awareness of the society, especially in the context of growing importance of research, innovation and culture through presentation of the most interesting achievements of the best scientific centers in Europe,
- innovative and dynamic approach to science, special attention is paid to young scientists chosen by universities participating in the project, supported by the Scientific Committee of Atomium Culture – the goal of the media is to present their findings, achievements and prospects,
- using new tools of communication allowing publication and dissemination of information, for this purpose within journals participating in the project, Atomium Culture sections were established in order to handle and publish articles, also in Internet search engines.<sup>24</sup>

The Atomium Culture project is supposed to not only contribute to enlivening European research activities, but also bring about a qualitative change in the way the society perceives science. „I believe this initiative makes sense, because it creates relations, I would call horizontal relations, which allow Europe to develop better as a community of knowledge. Not through political institutions, but through cooperation of science, business and the media”<sup>25</sup> – honorary head of the project, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, assessed its assumptions. This venture very well shows the significant role of the media, which become a link between sides. The role of the media is to present and explain difficult scientific issues so that they are comprehensible for any recipient. Moreover, science can become popular, interesting, common and properly understood by the contemporary society thanks above all to the media.

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>25</sup> A. Słojewska, *Mariaż nauki i mediów, Rzeczpospolita, 22.11.2009.*

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Atomium Culture project is an example of an initiative building close cooperation between science and the media for the purpose of popularizing the achievements of European research units, taken up by the involved sides themselves. This shows strong conviction that in this respect only cooperation can bring the desired effects. It is obvious that a society based on knowledge cannot develop and function without access to science and latest news from the area of science. Contemporary communication technologies provide additional opportunities, giving constant, current access to information. This is also a chance for the media which have a special mission in the development of a society based on knowledge.

In case of Polish science this mission is of utmost importance. Taking into consideration the analysis of the section „science” in the surveyed magazines, presented in this article, it is necessary to point out that there is a need to work out a model that would boost the presence of Polish science in the media. This model should make the media promote the achievements of Polish science to at least the same extent as the achievements of foreign scientists. This requires effort – both of scientists and journalists – for the purpose of building a common plane of communication, founded on the understanding of needs and expectations of both sides and where the common denominator of joint action is the recipient of media messages concerning science.

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