

Wojciech Furman

Regional dailies on the activities by the Podkarpacie deputies to the European Parliament

Polityka i Społeczeństwo nr 7, 37-48

2010

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Wojciech Furman

**REGIONAL DAILIES ON THE ACTIVITIES
BY THE PODKARPACIE DEPUTIES
TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

The paper is focused on articles found in the dailies „Nowiny” and „Super Nowości”, published between 1 July and 31 December in 2008 that provided information on activities undertaken in the second half of 2008 by two euro-deputies representing the Podkarpacie region both in the European Parliament and in their constituencies. It aims to answer the question if and to what extent the activities by the deputies were reflected in publications by regional dailies. The research data basis contains information from the website of the European Parliament that will be subsequently compared to the contents of electronic archives of both of the dailies.

1. Types of the EP deputies’ activities

In the spring of 2004, during the, first ever held in Poland, election campaign to the European Parliament, candidates for euro-deputies revealed three main types of motivation that made them run for the mandate. They claimed that they would (1) duly represent our country, (2) fight for European funds for the region and (3) defend the Polish interests against any threat from the European Union (EU). They spoke much less about strengthening of the process of European integration or activities to be undertaken in the interest of Europe as a whole (Bobiński 2007: 10).

Polish euro-deputies proved to be the only ones in the European Parliament to establish a national parliamentary club – Klub Polski (Polish Club). As much as it was noticed that its name makes a reference to the names of the Polish parliamentary clubs that used to func-

tion within the parliaments of the states that had partitioned Poland, some advantages of the club's formula might be identified. It enables systematic consultations concerning bills, identifying in them issues that are important for Poland and negotiating a joint strategy of action. Successful cooperation of the Polish euro-deputies during the EP term of 2004–2009, could be illustrated by the impact that they exerted on the adoption of the patent directive as well as on the adoption by the EP of a resolution that critically evaluated the project of the Northern Gas Pipeline that is to be built under the Baltic. Conversely, the shape of the directive concerning the service sector that was to liberalize the market of services in Europe stands as an example of failed cooperation of EMPs within the Polish Club (Libicki, Szyrkowski 2008).

The euro-deputies are also present on the domestic political scene. In this respect, one could indicate three types of roles in which they engage (Ćwiek-Karpowicz, Kaźmierkiewicz, Pucyk 2007: 89–94):

- activists – clearly associated with their political parties by their functions and presence in the domestic political debate (for example Adam Bielan, Michał Kamiński);
- commentators – clearly profiled in terms of their professional competences, involved in presenting their viewpoints in the media (Wojciech Roszkowski, Konrad Szymański);
- experts – concentrated on selected areas of EU policies and active in the field (Jerzy Buzek, Jan Kułakowski).

Actions criss-crossing the listed types could of course happen. We assume initially that both of the Podkarpacie euro-deputies are active in the field, meaning that they follow the third of the listed types of roles.

During the campaign that preceded the EU accession referendum held in Poland in June of 2003, euro-skeptics mentioned a threat involving the return of the hegemony of external powers, while proponents of the European integration emphasized that Poland needed the European Union to be able to execute tasks that it could not carry out on its own, mainly in the domain of security and accelerated economic growth.

Let us recollect the main of the arguments put forward at the time by the proponents of the European integration: lowering of the unemployment rate; better living prospects for future generations; acceleration of economic development; freedom of movement and settlement; improvement of material living conditions; reinforcement of Poland's position in Europe and the world.

Euro-skeptics indicated the following significant threats: Poland would be bought out by foreign capital; European integration would be disadvantageous for agriculture; Poland was not prepared for the integration; we were threatened by the loss of national sovereignty; the Polish economy was too weak to stand up against the competition from the Union; the negotiated conditions on which the integration was to be implemented were disadvantageous (Ściegienny 2005: 61–62).

The turn-out during the referendum was 58,85%, out of which 77% of the voters were in favor of Poland's accession to the European Union, whereas 23% were against it. Within the following four years, the share of those who supported the European integration rose to the level of 88%. The support for the accession is visible in all socio-demographic segments and within electorates of all of the political parties that enjoy the highest support by the society. Still, during the first two years following Poland's accession to the European Union, the claim that it was the states of the „old Europe” that had benefited more from the accession had prevailed. In 2007, for the first time, the majority of the surveyed population stated that Poland was the primary beneficiary of European integration. CBOS respondents listed an improvement in the economic dynamic, an increase in the export by Polish firms and an inflow of the Union's funds. In the society's opinion the European integration was most beneficial for Polish agriculture and private enterprises. Poland was perceived by the respondents as a secure state. The consequences of the European integration included in their view an improvement in the state of the natural environment, roads and infrastructure, an increase in the level of education and better enforcement of legal regulations (CBOS BS/66/2008).

2. The research method and the sampling procedure

The research includes the period starting on 1 July and lasting until 31 December in 2008. Therefore, it does not focus on any special period, such as the period of a campaign preceding the election to the European Parliament but rather on a „normal”, sufficiently long, phase of ordinary political life. This is justified by the fact that political attitudes are not shaped instantly, from one day to another but rather are molded over lengthier periods of time.

Within the segment of daily press, regional dailies belong to most frequently read media in the region of their circulation. The figures

listed in Table 1 indicate what percentage of the representative sample of respondents interviewed at their homes by the researchers declared that they read the given newspaper.

Table 1. The press readership in the region of Podkarpacie in the period between June and November of 2008

Title	Percentage of respondents
„Nowiny”	20,32
„Fakt”	13,73
„Super Nowości”	11,91
„Super Express”	8,35
„Anonse”	8,28
„Gazeta Wyborcza”	8,15
„Przegląd Sportowy”	3,81
„Rzeczpospolita”	3,22
„Echo Dnia”	3,01

Source: *Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa*, „Press” 2009, no 2, p. 97.

Two of the newspapers that had been selected for the purpose of further analyses differ in terms of ownership. „Nowiny” is one of the nine titles owned by the publishing group Media Regionalne which is itself being owned by the British media concern Mecom. „Super Nowości” belongs to the small group of regional dailies that are published by relatively small local corporations or private entrepreneurs. It gives rise to an additional research question which is whether or not there are any discernible differences between the contents published by the two newspapers.

Both of the dailies have the same – tabloid – format. They are issued counting between 24 and 28 pages, published from Monday through Thursday, increasing up to 36 pages in their weekend issues.

Table 2. The average number of sold copies in the period between June and November of 2008

Title	Sales
„Nowiny”	29 803
„Super Nowości”	15 937

Source: *Ranking sprzedaży dzienników regionalnych*, „Press” 2008, no 8, p. 68.

Our analysis will cover all of the journalist materials (with the exceptions of commercial, paid advertisements) concerning the European

Parliament and both of the euro-deputies elected in the region of Podkarpacie that appeared in the two analyzed dailies in the indicated period and were subsequently stored in the Internet archives of the newspapers. This analysis will be complemented by a survey of the activities undertaken by the two euro-deputies as documented on the website of the European Parliament. The analytical key will include the following categories of the euro-deputies' activities:

A. Activities within the European Parliament:

1. drafts of resolutions,
2. reports,
3. speeches made during plenary sessions,
4. interpellations,
5. opinions,
6. declarations expressed in the written form.

B. Activities within the regional constituency:

1. public utterances,
2. other activities.

We initially assume that the information concerning the euro-deputies' activities will be accompanied by interpretations, evaluations and forecasts related to the activities.

3. The activity of the two euro-deputies according to the information placed on the EP website

Not venturing a content analysis of the activities undertaken within the European Parliament by the two euro-deputies elected in Podkarpacie – which would require quite different research methods – in Table 3 we report on their activities basing on the information gleaned from the EP website.

Table 3. The activity of the two euro-deputies within the European Parliament in the period between 1 July and 31 December 2008

Type of activity	Mieczysław Janowski	Andrzej Zapałowski
Drafts of resolutions	29	4
Reports	–	–
Speeches during plenary meetings	26	13
Interpellations	2	–
Opinions	–	–
Declarations in the writing	3	–

The drafts of the resolutions filed by a group of EP members that included M. Janowski concerned for example the situation in Zimbabwe and control over the rising energy prices. The drafts of the resolutions supported by A. Zapałowski were related to the situation in Georgia, the situation in Belarus, preparations for the EU – India summit and the already mentioned increase in the energy prices. The plenary interventions were for instance related to the presentation of the agenda of the French Presidency and the EU’s reaction to the global financial crisis (M. Janowski) or to the coordination of the social security systems and the reform of the Polish shipyards (A. Zapałowski). Both interpellations filed by the group of EP deputies that included M. Janowski concerned the declaration „Sumienie Europy a komunizm” [The conscience of Europe and communism]. The declarations made in the writing by the groups of EP deputies inclusive of M. Janowski pertained the issue of blocking a possibility of founding in the Netherlands the so called „pedophile political party”, the European Year of Volunteering and the issue of terrorist organizations active in Pakistan.

The comparison of the activities undertaken by the two euro-deputies in their regional constituencies – as evidenced by their personal websites – would be difficult since in the analyzed period only A. Zapałowski opened his personal website on which his activities in the regional constituency were registered. M. Janowski opened his website only at the end of 2008. Since the information covering A. Zapałowski’s activities that were placed on his website are to a significant degree congruent with the information published in the regional dailies, the contents of his website will not be included in our analysis on the assumption that this decision will not deteriorate the validity of the performed analysis in any significant degree.

4. The regional dailies on the activities of the EP and the two euro-deputies

In congruence with the principle of social responsibility of the media, it is one of journalists’ obligations to treat media readers as conscious citizens who should gain sufficient orienteering in current events in order to be able on this basis to take reasonable decisions concerning their electoral political choices following discussions with other citizens. Mass media provide material that is subject to such discussions

and debates. Moreover, they constitute an important, although not exclusive, forum within which such debates may take place.

4.1. The activities at the European Parliament

In each of the regional dailies that have been chosen for the analysis, the coverage of information exceeding the region's area occupies only one column in which domestic and foreign news are published. The modest service usually lacks space to include items concerning the activities undertaken by the European Parliament. This is probably why in the analyzed period only two pieces of information of the kind were found, both of which were published in „Super Nowości”. The first of them pertained the EP's decision to lower the charges for roaming using cellular phones (2 VII 2008), while the second – an announcement that milk's and milk products' consumption would be subsidized alongside fruit consumption by children at school (23 X 2008). The „Nowiny” did not publish any information related to the European Parliament.

The answer to the first question that involved a comparison of the coverage of the euro-deputies' activities as placed on the EP website with the contents published by the regional dailies, is therefore simple: the dailies did not publish any information concerning the activities undertaken by the deputies from Podkarpace in the European Parliament. Even in the case that the EP has taken decisions that are relevant from the citizens' point of view, it remained unknown if and to what extent the Podkarpace deputies had contributed to those decisions. None of the dailies asked any of the deputies, for example, to comment on the fact that charges for roaming were lowered just as no one asked them if any similar decisions were planned for the future. In the second case, when asked for a comment by „Super Nowości”, M. Janowski stated only that the program to increase the consumption of milk and fruit needed careful preparations and that it was worth implementing it with the beginning of the next school year.

4.2. The activities in the constituencies: „Nowiny”

The information concerning the activities of the two euro-deputies in their constituencies, as published by „Nowiny”, appears grossly unbalanced which is evidenced by Table 4. M. Janowski was almost never noticed; he was written about only twice, and each time only in the

passing. The first publication was titled *Europoseł – co robi dla Podkarpacia?* [Euro-deputy – what does he do for Podkarpacie?] (11 VII 2008). It contained estimated costs generated by the maintenance of the deputy offices and their remuneration, following which an opinion of a passer-by was added stating that the deputies seem not to do anything. Faced with a charge like that, M. Janowski responded in a not so convincing manner: „We play in a team and the team not always makes it, sometimes it plays a foul game, sometimes it gets out. Poles are only learning certain things but we are not to be ashamed of anything. We can fight for what is ours and we are able to show Europe our face sunny side up”. The editors did not demand any answer from A. Zapałowski or they were not able to get one from him – there is no way to know.

The second of the „Nowiny” publications was related to Dębica’s partner-cities (*Dębica zdobywa europejskich partnerów* [Dębica gains European partners], 5 XI 2008). In the last paragraph, a vague mention was made about a visit at the European parliament that was being prepared by M. Janowski.

**Table 4. „Nowiny” on the euro-deputies’ activities
in the period 1 July until 31 December 2008**

Type of activity	Mieczysław Janowski	Andrzej Zapałowski
Public utterances	1	12
Other activities	1	6

Source: www.nowiny24.pl

A. Zapałowski was mentioned in the „Nowiny” daily nine times as more often as M. Janowski. Five of the news concerned his involvement in the activities of the political party Naprzód Polsko [Forward Poland] that was just being created, four of them mentioned his interventions at the Voivod Office and at the Ministry of Infrastructure that were focused on the A4 highway and the S19 motorway (it was once mentioned that M. Janowski joined A. Zapałowski on this occasion). Four times he was mentioned while discussing the protest against the removal by the Przemyśl metropolitan police of an element of a monument to commemorate the victims of the Ukrainian Uprising Army [UPA] that had been added without getting permission from the city authorities; he was named twice as enquiring with the Minister of Finance about introducing limits on the amount of cigarettes that could be

brought duty-free across the eastern border and once on the occasion of protesting against the fact that the city authorities returned the garrison club to the owners to which a library – located so far in the so called Ukrainian House – was to be moved, which would enable the returning of the Ukrainian House to the Union of Ukrainians in Poland. The final two publications were related to the fact that A. Zapałowski sponsored visits to Brussels that were awarded to a schoolgirl who won the competition „Heroizm orląt przemyskich” [The heroism of Przemyśls „young eagles”] and to a boy who won an art competition for the disabled.

It is clear that in all of the publications the „Nowiny” journalists aimed at avoiding any interpretation and evaluation and limited themselves to providing simple information. Even if the published material appeared in the promising form, that is as a sequence of questions and answers (*Zapałowski: Nie będziemy zabiegać o przychyłność Radia Maryja* [Zapałowski: We will not beg for Radio Maryja’s support], 30 XI 2008), it was not really an interview but only a restatement of some previously given information.

4.3. The activities in the constituencies: „Super Nowości”

The overall number of publications by „Super Nowości” that pertained any of the euro-deputies is by half smaller than the number of such publications by „Nowiny” – nine as compared to twenty. However, the proportion of the articles devoted to each of the euro-deputies is in this case balanced, which is evidenced by Table 5. The table lists twelve items in total; three of them mentioned both of the euro-deputies. The three cases are marked in Table 5 with +.

All of the three articles are critical. In the first of them its author undermines the importance of the activities undertaken by the two euro-deputies stating that real power in the region rests at the level of voivodship and the district (*powiat*) (*Platformie pod rozważę* [For Citizens’ Platform to think it over], 18 VII 2008). The two remaining texts are related to a ranking list published by „Rzeczpospolita” daily that ranked the Polish euro-deputies according to their activities. Both of the Podkarpacie deputies were missing in this list since they were included in the list of 15 euro-deputies that proved to be the least active and least prominent. The information about the ranking results was entitled by the „Super Nowości” editors as *Lenie z Podkarpacia w Parlamencie Europejskim* [The sluggards from Podkarpacie in the European Parlia-

ment (1 VIII 2008). To make everything clear the message was accompanied by the photographs of the two euro-deputies. The text provided also information about their remuneration, travelling expenses and the costs generated by the maintenance of their deputy offices. Another text, entitled *Jak są oceniani europosłowie z Podkarpacia?* [How are the Podkarpacie euro-deputies evaluated?] (13 VIII 2008) was based on posts from the Internet forum of „Super Nowości”. It contained more balanced opinions – they mentioned, however, only M. Janowski. The activities by A. Zapałowski went apparently unnoticed by the readership of „Super Nowości”.

Table 5. „Super Nowości” about the euro-deputies’ activities in the period 1 July until 31 December 2008

Type of activity	Mieczysław Janowski	Andrzej Zapałowski
Public utterances	0	2
Other activities	3+3	3+1

Source: www.pressmedia.com.pl/sn

The remaining information published by „Super Nowości”, which covered the activities in the constituencies, in an equal degree pertained each of the euro-deputies. Each of them is mentioned in three brief pieces of news.

They include the already mentioned vague information about the European Union’s agenda that was started in Cyprus in order to increase the consumption of milk, milk products and fruit by school-children (23 X 2008). It was complemented with a three-sentence long comment by M. Janowski. He ascertained that the program needed careful preparation. Another small item of news was related to a modest scope of operation carried out by the regional office of Podkarpacie in Brussels (11 XII 2008). On this occasion a proposal by M. Janowski was mentioned. The point was to buy the building that was being evacuated by the Polish embassy at the EU in Brussels and turn it into a joint seat of the offices of all of the Polish regions. „Super Nowości” referred also to M. Janowski’s negative opinion concerning a brawl that one of the MPs supposedly made at the airport in Jasionka (9 XII 2008).

A. Zapałowski appealed in turn to the Podkarpackie Voivod to influence the course of the A4 highway (16 IX 2008). He asked the Minister of Finance to explain why the amount of cigarettes allowed to be

carried duty-free across the eastern border had been limited (11 XII 2008). Moreover, asked by the „Super Nowości” editors to share his memories of the period when the marshal law had been introduced in Poland, the euro-deputy stated that at that period he was an activist of the independent Polish scout movement (12 XII 2008). His appeal to the Voivod was labeled by the „Super Nowości” journalists as forcing an open door and an attempt to earn political capital. Simultaneously, the newspaper stated that the recommendation concerning the southern part of the A4 highway had been issued by the ministry in charge already in 2000. That solution was advantageous for the inhabitants of Przemyśl and Bieszczady as well as being cheaper since the northern route of the highway would have to cut several times across overflow areas along the San River and its tributaries.

In contrast to the more guarded publications by „Nowiny”, the texts appearing in „Super Nowości” were much more emotional and to a greater degree included evaluative judgments and interpretations of both of the euro-deputies’ activities that were described by the daily.

5. Conclusions

The activities of the two euro-deputies from Podkarpacie were not appreciated by the two regional dailies. In this respect there was practically no difference between the analyzed newspapers. The small differences that did exist concerned the manner in which each of the dailies informed about the activities of the EP: „Nowiny” omitted this type of news consistently, while „Super Nowości” noticed that the European Parliament took decisions that spelled serious consequences for the citizens.

There were also differences in the manner in which the activities undertaken by the euro-deputies in their constituencies were presented. Information given by „Nowiny” was guarded and concentrated exclusively on the activities by A. Zapałowski. Those activities were more typical of a representative of a small, extremist political party who sought publicity than of a member of the European Parliament. Information dispatched by „Super Nowości” was more emotional and included superficially critical remarks about each of the euro-deputies. At the same time, the texts included more substantial interpretations of their activities, too.

If one was to assume that each of the euro-deputies represented a type of expert active in their respective constituencies, the information concerning the expert undertakings – as appearing in the two regional dailies – was modest. This does not promise a high turnout during the coming election to the European Parliament.

Bibliography

- Bobiński K., 2007, *Słowo wstępne* [in:] J. Ćwiek-Karpowicz, P. Kaźmierkiewicz, M. Pucyk, *Polscy posłowie do Parlamentu Europejskiego. Aktywność i wpływ na krajową scenę polityczną*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa.
- Ćwiek-Karpowicz J., Kaźmierkiewicz P., Pucyk M., 2007, *Polscy posłowie do Parlamentu Europejskiego. Aktywność i wpływ na krajową scenę polityczną*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa.
- Libicki M., Szykowski S., *Polskie głosy i głosiki w Parlamencie Europejskim*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 23 IX 2008.
- Polskie Badania Czytelnictwa*, „Press” 2009, nr 2.
- Ranking sprzedaży dzienników regionalnych*, „Press” 2008, nr 8.
- Ściegienny J., 2005, *Opinia publiczna. Polacy wobec integracji europejskiej* [in:] M. Fałkowski, J. Kucharczyk (eds), *Obywatele Europy. Integracja europejska w polskim życiu publicznym*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa.

Internet sources

- Bilans czterech lat integracji Polski z Unią Europejską. Komunikat z badań*, CBOS, BS/66/2008, www.cbos.pl/PL/Trendy/trend_06.shtml
- www.europarl.europa.eu/members/
- www.nowiny24.pl
- www.pressmedia.com.pl/sn