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The autonomy on the media market as an element of journalistic culture

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The representatives of all media systems in democratic countries have been searching for methods of making activities of national media in conformity with ethical norms. Only ethical media are able to realize public interest. There are twofold results of these searches. In some media systems the conviction is present that external subjects which control activity of media, like for example the state, can be the most effective in control of its ethicality. In other systems the thesis which is dominating assumes that high ethical standards on individual media markets are better kept only thanks to environmental control, control within journalistic environment. In other words according to some observers of media phenomena the best protective instruments for the quality of media are the elements of various regulating systems, according to others more effective is self-regulation. The former are based on legal acts concerning media and can – as claimed by Karol Jakubowicz (2008) – concern either process or result. In the first case both goal and method of its achievement are determined. In the second only goal is determined, while the way to its achievement is left to mechanisms of self- and co-regulation. Self-regulation of media is the situation when publishers and editors or other subjects involved in media determine the rules which organize functioning of media market. The effort of drawing up, controlling, enforcing and introducing potential changes lies with subjects, which undertake them out of their own will and initiative.

Both ideas reach some kind of compromise in co-regulating solutions which are different from self-regulating mechanisms because in case of the former state-run institutions still remain responsible for the supervision of the functioning of the media market. The role of the state is to create legal norms and regulations, which not only define the aims for national media but also constitute basic legislative acts for people working in media and for media organizations (e.g. rules of funding, methods of control as well as sanctions for those whose actions violate legally stated frames).

In case of co-regulation the state allows different subjects which form media market to define the rules of its functioning, but at the same time the state remains the highest authority as far as creating media policy of the country is concerned[1].

The report prepared by the Hans Bredow Institut concerning the forms of co-regulation in the EU countries provides arguments explaining decreasing effectiveness of media regulation. Its authors point out that states as regulating bodies of media market often do not posses sufficient knowledge to be an omniscient authority which imposes its opinions and solutions on all the subjects of media environment. Moreover, government institutions often ignore the interests of main subjects of regulation, namely media companies, businessmen almost always aspiring to achieve financial profits. This situation gives rise to opposition instead of cooperation. And finally in the opinion of the authors of quoted report no authority should control directly autonomous systems, like economy, education, academic research or – perhaps first of all – media.

Modern methods of organizing media market and creating responsibility of media should be based on the state administration's acceptance of the fact that self-regulation and co-regulation are valuable and needful elements of shaping responsible media system. This is a very important step to the best realization of public interest by media because in these conditions the norms and rules concerning media people are determined by subjects which have the biggest knowledge about media mechanisms.

The concept of media accountability systems

Close to the conviction about a positive influence of self-regulating mechanisms on media market is the conception of media accountability systems, which was formulated by Claude Jean Bertrand in the 1990s. French scholar defined media accountability systems as "any non-state means of making media responsible towards the public" (Bertrand 2000: 108). They may be a remedy for a loss of confidence in regulating instruments used by the government and for diminishing power of individual journalists' conscience.

The concept of media accountability systems comprises various activities which have one common aim – making media more transparent, responsible and better for public interest. In these systems the following elements are present: both written documents, which determine a set of norm binding on a given media market, activities of individuals and groups creating media sphere, diverse meetings, long term projects as well as single initiatives. Most often the instruments of media accountability systems try to put moral pressure on people who have influence on the shape of media materials.

However, the effectiveness of these tools can be increased by internal regulations binding in particular media companies. Not only can they appeal to journalists'

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[1] We can distinguish two kinds of co-regulation. Firstly, there is full co-regulation, in which state body and nongovernment system participate on equal terms in all phases of regulating process, also in creating legal acts. Secondly, there is partial co-regulation, which means that non-governmental institution is allowed only to certain stages of constituting rules of functioning of media market (see more: Jakubowicz 2008: 39).

conscience but they can also wield influence through for example disciplinary or financial sanctions.

Media accountability instruments are the part of journalistic practice binding on a given media market. The journalistic practice in turn is a consequence of journalistic culture, which can be understood as the set of norms and values as well as the patterns of behavior accepted by the whole journalistic environment of the country or region. Journalistic culture is under the influence of the following external factors:

a) media system understood as internally complex, autonomous whole, which is the part of considerably bigger body namely the state. The structure of media system comprises both media organizations (e.g. editorial offices, press agencies), as well as the results of their work;

b) media regulation, which can be defined as a set of legal acts, which organize the functioning of media market in a given country. Nonobservance of these rules results in legislative sanctions;

c) global trends in world journalism, namely various kinds of dominating phenomena and practices, which can have influence on changes in realization of journalistic profession;

d) development of technology having influence on the realization of journalistic function in social system. It can contribute for example to bigger effectiveness in finding, processing and transmitting information to listeners, viewers and readers.

Very important indication of the quality of journalistic culture is the level of professionalization of journalistic practices realized in a given media system. Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini list three basic indexes of the level of journalistic professionalization: the autonomy, separate professional norms and service for public interest (Hallin, Mancini 2004). The authors of *Comparing media systems* while defining the level of professionalization of journalistic cultures put emphasis on the independence of journalistic environment from external subjects, which are the elements of state administration. The bigger is this independence, both in defining the frameworks for people connected with media as well as in controlling them, the bigger – in Mancini and Hallin's opinion – is the level of professionalization.

This level of professionalization is, in turn, according to Hallin and Mancini one of the most important criteria of assigning European journalistic cultures to one of three basic models of media systems: to the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, the North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist Model as well as to the North Atlantic or Liberal Model.

Media systems which belong to each of the models are characterized by various level of professionalization of journalistic culture. The Mediterranean Model is distinguished by the smallest level of professionalization and – what is very important for our discussion – strong instrumentalization. Typical for the North/Central European Model is high professionalization and institutionalized system of self-regulation. Finally, the North Atlantic Model is marked by high level of professionalization however without

institutionalized self-regulating system (Hallin, Mancini 2004). So defined degrees of professionalization are of course directly connected with the shape of Media Account-ability Systems, which are present in a given media system.

Hallin and Mancini's analysis did not include countries from Central and Eastern Europe. We can try to determine affiliation of the countries of this region to three major models of media system described in Hallin and Mancini's book. The most important factor of affiliation to one of the models is for me the level of autonomy in media system but this factor is obviously insufficient to point out which model is the closest to the media systems of Central and Eastern European countries. Therefore, we can quote suggestions and arguments of Angelika Wyka (2008: 64) who revealed that majority of post communist countries from Europe have media systems, which have a lot in common with Hallin and Mancini's Mediterranean Model. As noticed by her both Southern European countries and the countries from Central and Eastern Europe show strong integration between political and media elites. Quoting Manicini and Hallin Wyka points out that in the Mediterranean Model the level of professional-ization is low and the level of both political and commercial instrumentalization is high while the features of media systems in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are among others characterized by: the lack of professional ethos, low standards of ethics, limited objectivity and fairness in reporting as well as underdeveloped jour-nalistic education and training. The most important in our discussion is the similarity between two models (the Polarized Pluralist Model described by Macini and Hallin and the model in Central and Eastern European countries) manifested in high position of state in organizing media market. According to Wyka in both models government institutions play an important role in terms of regulation, control and censorship.

Journalistic cultures in Central and Eastern European countries

The problem of media politicization is continuously present in media systems in Central and Eastern European countries. As claimed by András Lánczi and Patrick O'Neil this situation is typical for political and social reforms (Lánczi, O'Neil 1997: 83). A fight to assume control of media is a part of wander to democracy. According to Dobek-Ostrowska the phenomenon of media politicization is present in different countries with different intensity. For example in Poland and the Czech Republic, where printed media are privately owned, political elites have limited possibilities of interference (Dobek-Ostrowska 2002: 27). Private media are often free from these interferences. These are mainly public media that function under external influences. Firstly, the politicization of public media is perceptible in distributing posts in media organizations and institutions connected with media among specific people (for example in the Polish National Broadcasting Council, state organ competent to re-gard matters concerning radio and television). Secondly, the interferences influence program content. These two symptoms are sufficient proof of immaturity of political systems in post-communist countries. In mature democracy political elites should accept free media and their control function. However, politicians of majority of Cen-

tral and Eastern European countries do not want to get rid of such important tools of political fight that media are. Therefore, the autonomy of media in media systems in these countries is rather limited with only basic self-regulating instruments present on these markets. The increase of autonomy of media institutions is described by Karol Jakubowicz (1995) as autonomization of media. This process leads to the state in which mass media are structurally free from economic, political and cultural bonds, are not the part of social classes, parties, regions or religious groups and hence are autonomous. Media as a long lasting element of democracy have to be autonomous, but autonomy of media can have various dimensions:

a) political – media are politically as diverse as different is a political scene in a given country;
b) economic – media break off economic bonds with institutions of political authority;
c) social – media are dependent only on their public, which in authoritarian systems is only a passive audience;
d) technological – media apply new technology as fast as possible.

Full autonomy, which realizes all the aspects described by Jakubowicz, is an ideal model which real media systems can only aspire to. The temptation to use media for political benefits and to influence the content of newspapers, TV and radio programs is typical not only of authoritarian systems, but is a phenomenon present in democracy, too even in democracy with long tradition. The good example is, Christian Wulff's (the president of Germany) attempt to stop publication of an article in "Bild" magazine. The article was supposed to concern strange low-interest loan, which Wulff received from his friend's wife. The level of autonomy of media organizations in old democracies is usually lower than in countries with a communist past. We must therefore remember, that all self-regulating instruments which occur in media systems in Central and Eastern European countries have very short history. They have all been created over last twenty years, after political changes in 1989 and 1990. The most developed media accountability systems in turn often have above hundred years tradition, although majority of contemporary media accountability instruments were set up after the second world war.

The autonomy of European media accountability systems

Hallin and Mancini rightly notice that nowhere and never journalism has reached the level of autonomy similar to the level achieved by lawyers or doctors. It stems from the fact that in majority of societies only doctors and lawyers are assumed to use some kind of mysterious knowledge (Hallin, Mancini 2004: 35). Media workers do not have such position in the society. As a result, they cannot count on such big autonomy in their actions. However, the level of this autonomy worked out by the representatives of various national media systems differs considerably, even if only the media systems of European democratic countries are taken into consideration. The systems from the Mediterranean model, for instance, are characterized by strong instrumentalization and the lack of ability to determine the rules of media functioning.

As far as Italian media system is concerned, majority of self-regulating mechanisms do not in fact fulfill the role of the instruments deciding about the shape of Italian media market. Hence they are the examples of quasi-self-regulating mechanisms which are actually inspired, controlled, and sometimes even realized by different institutions of government administration. Consequently, Italian media market is dominated by regulating and co-regulating mechanisms shaping the rules of media functioning.

Completely different is the situation in media systems belonging to the North/Central European and the North Atlantic Model whose characteristic features are higher level of professionalization and great achievements in creating Media Accountability System which is an attempt to make media accountable to the public with the use of non-governmental ways. In chosen European countries belonging to these two models different is the level of development of Media Accountability System. In the Netherlands, for example, one of the most developed system of self-regulating tools was worked out which in the spheres of creating media and control over them enabled often complete elimination of regulating instruments introduced by the governing bodies.

Quite unusual is also here, especially in comparison with other European countries, but certainly not absent in other countries belonging to the North/Central European Model (e.g. Scandinavian countries, Germany) such a big public and environmental trust in the institutions of Media Accountability System which in spite of inability to put legal pressure, often become the initiators of changes in media life in different countries.

Their opinions and decisions most often meet with general approval of national journalistic environments. In many countries classified by Hallin and Mancini into the Nort/Central European Model and the North Atlantic Model Media Accountability Systems are also created by really significant accountability institutions. The level of the acceptance of their decisions is, however, much smaller than in case of the Netherlands. Therefore, regulating actions undertaken by government bodies in these countries still play an important role in shaping media sphere.

Media accountability systems in chosen countries of Central and Eastern Europe

Media accountability systems in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are similarly to the systems in the Mediterranean Model at the initial phase of their development. Self-regulating instruments here are most often not effective enough to wield real influence on the situation of national media. Obviously, it results from the fact that these systems do not have a long tradition and have been developing only for the last two decades, since the fall of the communist regime.

A short tradition of media accountability systems in Central and Eastern Europe is only one of the reasons of immaturity of self-regulation and its limited influence on the media market.

Another important factor contributing to the situation that self-regulating forms on media markets in Central and East European countries are still at the initial phase of development is the fact of scattered and feuding character of the journalistic environment. The existence in some countries of more than one organization uniting journalists certainly does not encourage expansion and improvement of self-regulating instruments. In Poland, for instance, there are three journalistic associations: the Association of Polish Journalists, the Association of Journalists of the Republic of Poland and the Catholic Association of Journalists. Lack of strong integration within journalistic environment first of all weakens the effectiveness of putting pressure by media subjects on the state in order to force the latter to resign from some competences concerning defining the rules of functioning of media market and control over their realization. Secondly, it hinders working out common position in any important issues concerning functioning of media market. Therefore, despite the fact that media subjects on young markets functioning in Central and Eastern European countries posses self-regulating instruments, their effectiveness is doubtful because of inability to work out common position in a given case.

One of the basic indications of the autonomy of media markets is described above Media accountability system. Its strength and the level of development testify to state authorities' will to hand over significant part of their competences concerning the organization of media market to the organizations forming this market. In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe only basic instruments of media accountability are present and what is more their influence on shaping media sphere is limited. The multitude of deontological documents, institutions supposed to guard the morality, universality of publication (both cyclical as well as book ones) concerning media and also criticizing them is not enough, however, to realize the goal set for media accountability system. This goals is to make media materials of great quality with regard both to the substance and morality. Nevertheless, it is typical for young Media Accountability Systems to be of little effectiveness. The features of such systems will be analyzed below on the basis of the examples of chosen countries from Central and Eastern Europe.

The most common instrument of media accountability, present also in the systems of central and eastern European countries are ethical codes. In Estonia journalistic environment possesses The Code of Ethics for the Estonian Press which has been accepted by all the Estonian media organizations and two Press councils. With reference to Polish media, the most important deontological document is, established in 1995, the Charter of Media Ethics. The importance of this deontological document self-regulating journalistic environment stems from the fact that it was approved by all journalistic associations as well as some organizations of broadcasting institutions and editors. The members of these organizations are supposed to obey seven rules: of truth, objectivity, separation of information from the comment, honesty, respect and tolerance, the priority of interest of the public and finally freedom and responsibility for the content and form of the journalistic materials.

In Romania, in turn, the Code of Ethics has been functioning since 1999 when it was passed by the Romanian Press Club. Moreover, a few smaller deontological

documents have been established recently which attempt to influence the behavior of media people by putting moral pressure on them. Another document worth mentioning is the Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Convention of the Media Organizations in 2004. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is a part of the legal framework and constitutes an annex to the Labor Contract (Comon, Radu, Preoteasa, Paun, Badau 2011).

The second important category of media accountability systems are different kinds of bodies which evaluate the functioning of media and make their verdicts public. In Poland the Media Ethics Council is an example of such an organization. It is responsible for adjudicating in cases connected with obeying the rules of mentioned above the Charter of Media Ethics. Not equipped with any sanction instruments the council can only point to the violation of the rules, express opinions, adopt a stance in given cases and appeal. Although its verdicts are treated by the part of journalistic environment as opinion-forming assessments in media cases, and its assessments are requested by different institutions, among others courts, in general the council does not have a significant influence on the functioning of media in Poland. It has not achieved so far in the eyes of majority of media people the position of ethical authority which has the right to unambiguously adjudicate upon the morality of individual journalistic behaviors.

In Estonia in 2007 the Ethical Advisor for the Estonian National Broadcasting Company was appointed. The Ethical Advisor investigates complaints and grievances of the listeners and viewers as well as monitors the ethical standards of Estonian electronic media. The only sanction which can be used by this body, however, is the attempt to put moral pressure on the subjects forming Estonian media market.

In Romania, in turn, different types of self-regulating instruments are the strongest in case of public service television where an internal Commission for Ethics and Arbitration and an Ombudsman oversee the work of journalists. However, as claimed by Romanian media researchers, the decisions of these bodies do not influence significantly the improvement of the quality of media materials in their country (Comon, Radu, Preoteasa, Paun, Badau 2011).

In highly developed media accountability systems press councils constitute their important element. As far as Poland is concerned, the possibility of its appointing is regulated by one of the most important documents controlling Polish media market, namely the Press Act of 1984, in which the Press Council as a consultative body for the Prime Minister was defined. In practice, however, over last twenty years the Press Council has not been formed.

In Estonian tradition press council was accepted in a more permanent way. The first Press Council, Estonian Press Council, was established in 1991 under the umbrella of the Estonian Newspaper Association. Because of the lack of agreement in journalistic environment the second Press Council was set up by the Estonian Newspaper Association. It is supposed to adjudicate unethical behaviors on media market as well as investigate the complaints of the media audience.

Another element belonging significant instruments of media accountability is media journalism to belongs which concerns media and often undertakes the role of the ethical assessor of media people's behavior. This media sector, is not, however, well developed in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In Estonia it actually does not exist and materials concerning media can be found only in newspapers and magazines of general subject matter. The situation in Romania is quite similar. Rare are also the examples of media journalism in Poland with the exception of the monthly 'Press' which is fully devoted to the subject matter of media. In a way it fulfills the controlling role over the journalistic environment criticizing unethical behaviors and deviations from the standards of quality.

Conclusions

The autonomy on media market is manifested first of all by the strong and well developed media accountability system which obviously can contribute to the improvement of the quality of journalistic materials. Deontological rules set and described by certain environments one belongs to are usually more motivating to ethical actions than imposed rules. The latter, being external, meet with strong opposition and are often rejected by those who are supposed to obey them despite the fact that they are right in their conception. Therefore, it seems that the most effective solution in shaping mature and responsible media market is limiting the forms of state regulation in favor of self-regulating tools worked out by the subjects forming media market and building as a result media accountability system. Its different elements always have a common goal, namely to restore the prestige of media, to improve the quality of media services and to enable journalists to be independent which could make them important subjects in promoting democracy.

Building media accountability systems in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is certainly in its initial phase. Their systems include first of all different kinds of ethical codes describing journalists' duties. However, since journalists' courts functioning in occupational organizations as well as commissions guarding obeying the rules included in these ethical codes do not possess the tools of putting pressure, apart from the right to announce their verdicts, their effectiveness is limited. Because of the sanctions for not keeping to the rules, the ethical codes introduced in certain media companies are often more effective. These type of documents are, however, not very popular in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They refer only to the journalists of public media while announcing deontological regulations in private media is very rare.

Media accountability systems developed over last twenty years in central and eastern Europe consist of many commonly used instruments supposed to make media valuable and ethical (codes of conduct, bodies guarding journalists ethical behaviors, publications concerning media). They are, however, not sufficient to realize the aim ascribed to media accountability systems. In case of self-regulating tools on Central and Eastern media markets, what can be observed is the discrepancy between inten-

tions of their authors and actual power to wield influence on the reality. Most of the documents and majority of institutions supposed to ensure quality of Polish media in fact have only insignificant influence on the practice of creating press, radio, television and internet materials. Hence, in spite of the existence of media accountability system, media markets in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are characterized by low journalistic culture, common signs of disobedience to the rules of journalistic ethics, negative influence of political spheres on the functioning of editorial offices as well as by instrumentalization and commercialization of media. It is confirmed by the authors of the report about the tools of media accountability in Romania who noticed that what is typical of Romanian media accountability system is 'underdeveloped professionalization' and the fact that "jouranlist's autonomy is often limited". Moreover, the characteristic feature of Romanian media market is the situation of "the state playing a role as an owner and as regulator, through the National Audioovisual Council of Romania" (Comon, Radu, Preoteasa, Paun, Badau 2011).

In order for media accountability systems and ethical codes to be effective in shaping professional conduct of people working in media, they have to be accepted as binding and well known to journalists circles. Hence, organizations which create these deontological systems have the difficult task of promoting responsibility in media and the proliferation of regulation included in these documents on ethics. The state can play an imperative role in this sphere. It should not only dispose of some of the traditional media regulation tools in favor of self-regulating ones but also financially support organizations responsible for the building of media accountability systems.

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