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A Vision of the European Union: A Study of Media Coverage of Polish Election Campaigns for the 2019 European Parliament Elections

Europos Sąjungos vizija: rinkimų į Europos Parlamentą kampanijų pristatymas Lenkijos spaudoje

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Abstract: The 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections coincided with the discussions about the need to change the European integration model. These discussions were forced by the refugee crisis and Brexit. In this article, the authors investigate the media representation of programs proposed by Polish political parties in the campaign for EP 2019 elections. The purpose is to determine how the media reported on these programs (media agenda). The research question required the supplementation of the study with an analysis of the political parties' programs. The research model is based on an agenda-setting theory. The empirical section presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of both media and political agendas, confirming the discrepancy between them.

Keywords: election campaign, European Parliament, Poland, agenda setting, political agenda, media agenda.

Summary: 2019 m. Europos Parlamento (EP) rinkimai sutapo su diskusijomis dėl Europos integracijos modelio reformos, kurias skatino pabėgėlių krizė ir „Brexitas“. Šiame straipsnyje autorės kelia klausimą, ar europiniai procesai atspindi nacionalinių partijų programose ir tiria Lenkijos politinių partijų 2019 m. rinkimų į EP programų reprezentaciją šalies žiniasklaidoje. Tyrimo tikslas yra atskleisti, kaip žiniasklaida pristatė šias programas (formavo žiniasklaidos darbotvarkę). Siekiant suprasti žiniasklaidos darbotvarkės išskirtinumą, atlikta politinių partijų programų analizė. Tyrimo modelis pagrįstas darbotvarkės sudarymo („agenda-setting“) teorija. Empiriniame skyriuje pateikiami tiek žiniasklaidos, tiek politinės darbotvarkės kiekybinės ir kokybinės analizės rezultatai, patvirtinantys jų tarpusavio neatitikimą.

Keywords: rinkimų kampanija, Europos Parlamento, Lenkija, darbotvarkės sudarymas, politinė darbotvarkė, žiniasklaidos darbotvarkė.

Introduction

Elections are a special time for the media, forcing a stronger media message that focuses on events occurring on the political scene. This

applies to elections at various levels, including the level of the only representative body in the European Union, the European Parliament.

The Poles have already elected their representatives to the EP four times – on June 13, 2004, June 7, 2009, May 25, 2014, and May 26, 2019. European elections preceded the national elections three times (the parliamentary elections in September 2005, presidential in June and municipal in November 2010, and parliamentary in October 2019). Such a timing in the electoral calendar meant that the European elections were perceived by the politicians, the media, and the society as dress rehearsals for national campaigns. For the incumbent ruling party, the elections became an opportunity to confirm support for the policies it was pursuing, while the opposition also attempted to discredit the government in respect of its domestic policy. However, the domination of domestic matters in the European campaign discourse, as well as a low voter turnout, seem to indicate that the European elections have been treated by Polish political actors as secondary to their national concerns thus far. The programs succeeded in mobilizing 13 647 311 out of 30 118 852 eligible voters to take part in the election. Around 1 377 621 voters did not get their representatives in the EP (the so-called wasted vote)¹. A total of 112 390 votes were invalid.

Six nationwide ‘electoral committees’ (meaning factions or coalitions of factions) were officially registered. Most of them were created shortly before the EP elections, but they included some of the 81 active parties. They were Konfederacja KORWiN Liroy Braun Narodowcy (KKLBN) – an alliance of Eurosceptic parties like KORWiN, Ruch Narodowy, Liroy i Skuteczni, Grzegorz Braun with supporters and pro-life movements; the center-left Robert Biedron’s Spring (Wiosna) operating in the Polish political scene from June 2018; the European Coalition (Koalicja Europejska–KE), which included long-established parties such as the broadly centrist Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska–PO), the agrarian and Christian Democratic Polish People’s Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe–PSL), the liberal Modern (Nowoczesna–.N), the pro-environment Green Party (Partia Zieloni–Zieloni), and the Social Democratic Alliance of the Democratic Left (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej–SLD); Left Together (Lewica Razem–LR) bringing together left-wing parties like Razem, Unia Pracy (UP) and Ruch Sprawiedliwości Społecznej (RSS). The others – Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość–PiS) and Kukiz’15 (K’15) – were formally registered in the same form as in the 2015 general elections.

The research question raised in the article addresses the media’s presentation of the programs of the Polish political parties in the campaign for European Parliament (EP) elections in 2019. Attempts were made to identify the visions for the European Union outlined by the media as proposed by each of the political groupings. In addition, the media representations of the programs were juxtaposed with the programs defined by the parties’ program declarations. The attempt to reconstruct the vision of the European Union contained in the programs of Polish political parties and the manner of their presentation in the

media, as described in the article, supplements the previous analyses. Since the media are the central and most important source of information about politics, as argued by Adam Shehat and Jesper Strömbäck,² the findings regarding the knowledge they convey may constitute a starting point for research on the preferences of Polish voters. This issue is even more relevant as the events taking place in the European Union, such as Brexit or the preceding migration crisis, spur the redefinition of the vision of future integration by member states and the community itself.

The analysis aims to answer the following questions:

Q1. What visions (political agenda) of the European Union were included in the programs of Polish political parties in the campaign to the European Parliament elections in 2019?

Q2. What was the media agenda regarding the political programs of Polish parties in the campaign to the European Parliament elections in 2019?

Q3. To what extent did the media agenda coincide with the political agenda?

Q4. How were the political party programs evaluated and to what extent did the political sympathies of media entities influence the presentation/bias of such an evaluation?

In the analysis, an effort was made confirm the existence of media narrative construction patterns specified in previous studies. These patterns include personalization, tabloidization, simplification, de-ideologization, or the construction of information according to “criteria factors” (e.g. Jasper Strömbäck, Johann Galtung and Maria Holmboe Ruge).

The research assumptions are reflected in the structure of the article, which includes the presentation of theoretical assumptions, discussion of the research methodology, presentation and comparison of the political and media agendas, and the conclusion.

1. Media Coverage of the Electoral Process: Theoretical Basis

Analysis of media coverage of electoral processes is usually carried out in reference to four theoretical approaches: gatekeeping,³ agenda setting,⁴ information values⁵ or framing⁶. These approaches make it possible to explain the role of the media in the process of political communication⁷ and identify the specificities of an electoral campaign.

Among the theoretical approaches, agenda-setting and framing were important to the analysis of the relationship between the media agenda and the political agenda. Firstly, they directed the research in terms of the search for events, cases and information that were in the media’s scope of interest at that time. Secondly, they made it possible to indicate which of the topics of the party’s political programs in the elections to the European Parliament were covered by the media.

These concepts are frequently used in the analysis of media relations, although sometimes researchers do not agree on how to assess their mutual relations. For example, McCombs groups the setting and framing agenda under the same theoretical approach.⁸ The agenda-setting is considered crucial, and the framing only treats its second level as a complement. In this approach, agenda-setting means that the media can only tell the consumer *what* to think about, and framing allows the consumer to see that the media also influences the audience in terms of interpreting events, by telling the consumer *how* to think about them. Such an interpretation of agenda setting corresponds to constructivism, the research perspective the authors have adopted, in which it is assumed that social reality is actively constructed and not discovered by people.⁹

The analysis also uses four theoretical concepts: information values, mediatization, tabloidization and personalization. They are particularly helpful in analyzing and understanding the processes taking place in political communication, including during election campaigns. In the case of the analysis, they had a significant impact on the shape of the code key.

An important issue concerning the media image of politics is the choice of content. The theory of the value of information proposed by Johan Galtung and Mari Roug assumes that in order to become news, an event must meet certain criteria (12): it should be related to people, it should be unexpected, it should be as expected, or it should be negative. According to this concept, the more validity criteria an event meets, the more interesting it is for the media. The taxonomy proposed by Galtung and Roug has become the basis of numerous analyses regarding the manner in which the media reports events,¹⁰ and, despite critical voices, it is still considered a leading theory in media content research by classical media science theorists.¹¹

The mediatization of politics assumes that the media is an autonomous and competitive force striving to dominate the political sphere, which is manifested in the process of translating the principles and logic of media operation into the political system.¹² Research using the concept 'mediatization' of the world of politics treats it as a general approach,¹³ referring it to political actors,¹⁴ processes,¹⁵ institutions,¹⁶ or the reception of politics.¹⁷ This concept was chosen for the analysis because of the assumption that aspects of the program media image, political parties, and politicians influence election decisions, and that political entities construct this image in a way that is attractive to the media, leading to the personalization and conventionalization of the media image of politics, and also of politics itself. Mediatizing politics also results in the perception of the political system through the prism of the actions of political leaders, who become the main actors of media messages.

Personalization, understood as increasing the focus on non-political features of individuals, can lead to the proliferation of information about personal pseudo-events. It reduces the presented social and political

reality to individual defeats and victories.¹⁸ As a result, politics is presented based on personal perspectives, while information on political programs of various factions is limited. We can also see coverage intimidation – which means ‘a mixing of the private and public spheres, intermingling of the two worlds—previously clearly separated in the public space.’¹⁹ The method of presentation, relations with sources and visual presentations, as well as the focus of journalistic material on social interactions in the private sphere, also create a kind of pseudo-intimacy.²⁰ Most journalistic materials from the period of the last European campaign analyzed in the empirical part of the article were affected by those ‘sins.’

We also see a tabloidization²¹ of the coverage of political events which, in the view of Frank Esser, can be perceived at the macro level ‘as a social phenomenon both instigating and symbolizing major changes to the constitution of the society.’²² It can lead to the highlighting of sensational, scandalous, and emotionally charged elements in the coverage. These trends inevitably bring with them negative effects for democracy.²³ According to Jasper Strömbäck, they are the outcome of the use of storytelling in the media narration and the application of certain techniques such as simplification, polarization, intensification, personalization, visualization, stereotyping, or the use of a competition framework in politics-related media reporting.²⁴ The aim of the media in conveying political issues in this way is to attract consumer attention.²⁵

2. Methodological Assumptions

The aim of the research is based on the theory and methodology of agenda-setting, the observation of the media agenda during the campaign for European Parliament elections in 2019, and the juxtaposition of strictly program-related problems with the so-called political agenda consisting of the election programs of the six committees. The comparative analysis allowed for the determination of the alignment of the media and political agenda. This made it possible to answer the question about the extent to which the media messages selected for the analysis reflect the program offer presented to voters.

The analysis of all election committee programs was used to formulate the political agenda. First, the focus was on establishing a list of documents containing the electoral program. Most of the registered election committees had an official program (Wiosna,²⁶ KE,²⁷ PiS,²⁸ Partia Razem²⁹ forming the backbone of LR, and K’15³⁰). The program framework of the other political factions KKLBN emerged in political spot ads and official remarks of their leaders and candidates. A content analysis of these documents enabled defining in the programs presented, to varying degrees, the views of different factions on the future shape of the EU and the policies they pursue currently, Poland’s position in

the organization and the international arena, as well as domestic political issues.

To determine the media agenda through an examination of journalistic material both qualitative as well as, to a limited extent, quantitative content analysis were applied. The aim of the triangulation of research methods was to ensure the greater accuracy and verifiability of findings. The authors chose a comprehensive approach to the news media agenda. There have been numerous analyses of Polish media content, many which were conducted over many years, including those by the authors of this article. They clearly indicate the existence of a phenomenon that can be described as a strong politicization, which is apparent in the biases displayed by the media.³¹ According to the five-degree politicization scale developed by J. Blumler and M. Gurevitch, we see the second highest degree of politicization, or a voluntary association of an outlet with a party, in most Polish news media, and the highest degree of politicization in the case of public broadcasters (radio and television), which the current ruling coalition has total control over.³²

Although the structure of the television audience is changing (people aged 55+ made up half of can be identified viewers in 2018), television remains the primary medium in Poland. Almost all households have a television set, 95.2% according to our data. The so-called 'big four' universal channels have the biggest share in the television market. Polsat – 10.23%, TVP1 – 9.73%, TVN – 9.38% and TVP2 – 8.16%. According to public opinion polls on media reliability conducted by CBOS in May 2019, it appears that 38% of respondents do not consider TVP news and programs on current affairs to be reliable. One of the most important reasons for this significant loss of credibility is the apparent politicization of content.³³

According to a report prepared by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ), the internet media (including social media) is already the main source of information. In 2019, it was mentioned by 86% of the surveyed Polish inhabitants, television, by 76%, and the press, by only 25%.³⁴ The most visited portals include onet.pl, wp.pl and interia.pl as well as online pages of the traditional media.

The change in media consumption has mainly affected the press, particularly daily newspapers. Despite a gradual decrease in circulation numbers, they continue to play a significant role in the process of shaping public opinion. According to CBOS, the most popular source of information about committees and candidates during the campaign preceding the vote for EP representatives were news and opinion program broadcasts on television (63%). The Poles also derived their knowledge from election advertising in radio and television (52%); from their friends and family members (39%); from leaflets, posters and billboards (35%); from radio broadcasts on political topics (34%), from information sources on the Internet (26%); from the press (22%); (5%) – from individual conversations with candidates (5%), and 3% – from election rallies and meetings they participated in. Internet sources were mostly

used by the Poles under 45, while those over 55 mentioned TV coverage as the main source of information.³⁵

Following the model of media consumption in Poland and CBOS data on the most popular sources of information about committees and candidates during the European campaign, the analysis covered journalistic material originating from the following:

- the main editions of news programmes broadcast in three nationwide TV stations – the public TVP 1 ('Wiadomości' at 19.30) and the private TVN ('Fakty' at 19.00) and Polsat ('Wydarzenia' at 18.50);
- three nationwide daily newspapers of general interest: Gazeta Wyborcza (GW), Gazeta Polska Codziennie (GPC) and Rzeczpospolita (RZ);
- four news portals: wiadomosci.onet.pl, fakty.interia.pl, wPolityce.pl, naTemat.pl.

As for the media type, the unit of analysis was a press article or a news piece in the case of news portals and television programs. All of them came from 13 days selected on the basis of a random stratified sample. The selection was made using the concept of a constructed week, which assumes a random choice of individual days of the week from among those identified in the period examined.³⁶ The draw was made from the outset of the 2019 election campaign, i.e. from February 25 to May 24 (electoral silence lasted from 00:00 on May 25 to 21:00 on May 26). Taking into account the specific character of the media – reporting events on consecutive days – it was decided that one week could only be drawn once. In addition, materials published on May 27 were included in the analysis – paper editions of daily newspapers are not published on Sundays, and the main editions of news programs conclude before the end of electoral silence – in order to maintain balance, and online media was analyzed on the 27th rather than on the 26th of May (See: Appendix 1).

The research assumptions influenced the analytical process by dividing it into two stages. The first stage included the separation of all news regarding the elections to the European Parliament published by selected media in the analyzed period, and the definition of central topics. The second stage included a qualitative analysis of media content pertaining to political party programs. The study was conducted using a code key (thematic categorization).

One thousand three hundred and two pieces of news (news reports, articles) were qualified as fulfilling research criteria for quantitative analysis. The categorization key was constructed based on the main topical threads of European campaign materials. This made it possible to determine the agenda of the news media on the selected days of the European campaign (Table 1). The media agenda is a list of topics which, according to the source of the message, should appear at the center of public interest, reaching the public opinion and being considered the most important among public issues.

Table 1
The news media agenda on the selected days of the EP campaign

Topic	The number of journalistic reports on the indicated topic in individual media outlets:											
	GW	GPC	RZ	Fakty TVN	Wiadomości TVP1	Wydarzenia Polsat	W Polityce	Na Temat	Wiadomości onet	Fakty interia	SUM	
Polls	2			6	3	5	3	25	20	14	16	94
Electoral lists and candidates	8	7	7	2	8	2	104	15	52	27		232
Political programmes including:	3	9	10	4	9	3	59	9	28	25		159
K'15												1
KE		2		2	4	1	21		7	7		44
KKLEN	1	1	1				2		1			9
PiS	1	6	7	2	4	2	24	8	18	13		86
Wiosna							11	1	1	1		14
LR							1		1	1		3
Comparison of a selected few			2									2
Comparison of all	1											1
Campaign progress and campaigning assessment	4	2	8	5	4	6	71	13	37	43		193
Reports on current events	3	5	3	9	9	5	111	7	44	39		235
Other	4	2	3	2	2	2	17		10	9		51
Campaign-time materials in total	24	25	37	25	37	21	445	73	185	159		1031
Election results	9	2	3	3	6	3	73	17	81	74		271
Total	33	27	40	28	43	24	518	90	266	233		1302

Source: Compilation by Marta Jas-Koziarkiewicz and Ewa Stasiak-Jazukiewicz.

In total, the most numerous category was media reports on election results. The distribution was different in individual media outlets. Only GW and fakty.interia.pl devoted the most space to news within this category. The second most numerous topical thread was, as befits the news media, reports on current campaign-related events such as the backing which Frans Timmermans, the deputy head of the EC, extended to Wiosna; the lecture by Donald Tusk at the University of Warsaw, given in relation to the May 3rd Constitution Day; controversial speech by Leszek Jażdżewski given right before the speech of Donald Tusk, in which Jażdżewski claimed that the Polish Church is actually against the Gospel and Christ; the March for Europe – demonstrations of supporters of European integration; the March for Equality – whose participants demonstrated support for the rights of minorities, in particular sexual, and opposed to discrimination; predictions regarding a possible resignation of finance minister Teresa Czerwińska due to her reluctance to lend credence to the social promises made by PiS (the so-called Kaczyński Five – 500 plus for every child, thirteenth pension, lower PIT for the young, reduction in labor costs and the reactivation of bus services between smaller towns); used by the opposition in the pre-election campaign the teachers’ strike; compensation for heirless Jewish property – a controversial topic that is regularly mentioned in pre-election campaigns in Poland, and finally the dubious land deal of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, which was considered to be detrimental to the state treasury.

The third thread was the presentation of lists and candidates themselves. The number of materials on this topic confirms the personalization of not only the election campaign itself, but also the campaign coverage. For a similar reason, the campaign itself drew the interest of the media under examination – remarks of individual politicians and reporting on activities they undertook were an immanent part of covering conventions or meetings with voters. Down in the fifth place (out of seven categories) were materials on the main subject of

the paper – political programs. Only reports on the results of successive election polls (94) and reports on other election-related topics (51) like EP elections in other EU states and the EU's cohesion policy were less numerous. The main conclusion of the study concerns the coherence of specific media agendas. The small differences observed between relations resulted mainly from the defining characteristics of a particular type of media. For example, Internet portals, providing unlimited space, dealt with the subject more often and in a wider context. Printed journals, having more time to prepare their materials, analyzed the topics in depth, while the coverage of television news programs was the most superficial.

3. Media Agenda vs. Political Agenda

In order to compare the media agenda with the political agenda, the researchers applied content analysis, firstly to party programs or other documents, and secondly to 159 news items presenting party election programs.

The political program, i.e. a set of goals and projects of a given party and the candidates being representatives of each party, is a list of activities planned for implementation after election victory. For voters, it provides information as to which grouping or candidate will best meet their needs or expectations. Most of the election committees joined the campaign without specific programs. Individual points were presented only during the campaign. One of the reasons was the coalition nature of the committees formed by several parties that differ significantly in character, along with their adopted strategies, which were a reaction to the actions of the competition. The strategy also favored proposals aimed at attracting voters' attention over the presentation of a well-considered plan on the direction that EU development should take. The study identified 33 political topics in the analyzed programs from the following five areas: EU institutional reforms; community policies; the values on which the EU is founded; actions taken for the benefit of EU citizens and the role of Poland in the EU, as well as proposals concerning internal affairs (See: Appendix 2).

An analysis of six political programs shows that only two committees (PiS and Kukiz'15) presented the idea of reforming EU institutions. PiS proposed to strengthen the role of national parliaments in the decision-making process and called for the introduction of the so-called red card system for projects of EU legal acts. On the other hand, Kukiz'15 postulated strengthening the role of the EP at the expense of other institutions, especially the European Commission. All programs contained references to common policies. At the same time, leftist groups (Wiosna and LR) proposed their extension to new areas, such the harmonization of health care standards or a housing program for Europeans (Wiosna) and the reduction of working time, change of patent law, reduction of drug prices and integration of taxes for all companies in the EU (LR). The right-wing groups (PiS, Kukiz'15 and KKLBN) were in favor of limiting the current taxes. The values on which United Europe

should be founded were recognized to varying degrees. The category particularly differentiating the groups was the belief that Member States should maintain their sovereignty. Three committees (Wiosna, LR and EC) declared that some part of sovereignty could be relinquished to the EU, and other three declared the need for Member States to maintain or regain full sovereignty. KKLBN stood out by its unwillingness to grant gender equality and full rights to LGBT communities, perceiving it as an attempt to make socially undesirable civilization changes in Poland. The role of Poland in the EU was seen differently. The introduction of the euro currency in Poland was strongly opposed in two of the analyzed programs (Kukiz'15 and KKLBN). PiS expressed its consent to replace the national currency with a European one when Poland reaches an economic level comparable to that in Germany. The PiS program contained a developed social package, created for domestic needs.

The image of the European Union as proposed by political parties reaches voters through the media. According to theoretical assumptions, the media becomes a gate, or filter, determining not only what information is transmitted, but also how the issues are presented (agenda setting, framing, information value). This prompts the question of how the media presents party programs.

First, quantitative content analysis indicates that the committee programs did not enjoy equal media coverage. More than half of the news presenting political programs was about the proposals of PiS. The second object of media interest was the program of KE, the third – that of Wiosna. The programs of KKLBN, LR and K'15 were barely mentioned on the analyzed days. Those who believe in the powerful influence of the media can invoke this data – only three election committees, the programs of which were most often presented in the media, obtained the seats. Without stressing the impact of the disproportionate media coverage, the reasons behind the concentration of interest on those programs should still be listed. Undoubtedly, the factors mentioned above are significant in this regard (*criterial factors*). According to these factors, news items which relate to major actors in the political scene are prioritized. This approach perhaps dictated the overrepresentation of the ruling party (PiS) and the main opposition force (KE) in news items. Secondly, important thing was choices made regarding the relevance of news – dictated by limited broadcasting time, newspaper size, and the perceived capabilities of consumers. The outcome was that only information that was important for the consumer was presented and the risk of making information less attractive by the presentation of the full spectrum of points of view was not taken. According to Hans Bernd Brosius, Klaus Gotto, Dietmar Haak and Hans Mathias Keppler, apart from selecting information, the impact on the process of building the media agenda has a 'production' of pseudo-events.³⁷ The PiS and KE election calendar abounded with numerous conventions, picnics, marches, and events during which new program points were delivered, and which were successively reported on by the media. The phrase 'people are interested in something new, in surprise,' as emphasized by Tom

Harcup and O'Neill Deirdre, describes why potential voters may be interested in the new political grouping – Wiosna.³⁸ Thus, the results of the analysis confirm the findings made so far by researchers using the concepts of agenda-setting and the mediatization of politics (visible in tabloidization and personalization in media narration).

A reconstruction of the media image of the political programs offered to the Poles in the 2019 European campaign makes it easier to compare the political agenda and the media agenda (159 news referring only to the programs). In this case, the media agenda is understood in the traditional way, as a list of issues that the message sender believes should be at the center of public interest, reaching the public and being treated by the public as most important. Thirty-four issues were identified, one more than on the political agenda. An item titled political programme was added to the list of issues. That is because it happened repeatedly that media outlets restricted their coverage to determining whether the program existed or not. Objectivity is expected from the media in the separation of facts from opinions and commentary. Most of the analyzed news can be observed as being biased. This bias is manifested through original evaluative commentary and the use of emotionally marked phrases to reward certain political views. Its purpose does not facilitate rational decision-making by the voter.

The assumption that the presentation of a given issue translates into its perception by the recipients allowed the evaluation of cognitive and affective attributes of the issues through the content analysis. The study used a scale dividing issues into categories of 'critical,' 'apologetic,' and 'objective.'³⁹ In addition to media visibility, the impact of the report helps to define the importance of the topic and facilitates identification (See: Appendix 3).

The analysis leads to the conclusion that the programs of only three election committees – PiS, KE and Wiosna – could be pieced together from media presentations. The others (K'15, LR and KKLBN) were marginalized or even ridiculed, pointing to their reservations about Europe, Euroscepticism (KKLBN), or anti-establishment character (K'15).

The comparison of the media agenda to the political agenda leads to the following conclusions. First, the media agenda is shorter than the political agenda. The issues present in the political programs did not enjoy equal interest in the analyzed media. The most attractive trait was the fact that the group had an election program. Almost all of the analyzed media noted existence of the political programme of PiS and European Coalition, half of them noticed the presence of Wiosna program and only newspapers noticed programs of remaining election committees. The issue of guaranteeing rights for LGBT environments also frequently appeared in the analyzed news. The reasons for the concentration of news on this issue can be placed in a socio-political context. During the campaign, the mayor of Warsaw signed the LGBT Declaration, which became the subject of discussion among all political parties. This event also led to the rise of societal emotions, reflected in numerous equality

marches and counter-manifestations organized by social movements supporting 'traditional family values.' This issue guaranteed the media the desired dramatization of the message best achieved by the conflict framework.

Issues such as Poland's membership in the Eurozone, EU membership, the sovereignty of Member States, Christian values, and common policies (energy, climate and migration) have also proven to be attractive issues in the media. It may be surprising that the single market issue present in each of the analyzed programs has not found any reference in the news. In addition, the least attractive issue was free education at all levels (in the PiS program), the fight against corruption and protection of animal rights, and the protection of the elderly – all issues proposed by Wiosna. Other less attractive issues were the fight against organized crime (Wiosna), social solidarity present in the KE and LR programs, consumer protection proposed by PiS and LR, the uniform European passport (Wiosna), e-democracy and elements of direct democracy from the Kukiz'15 program, support for the media promoting democracy postulated by Wiosna, protection of the disabled (Wiosna and KE programs), and, finally, tax harmonization as proposed by Wiosna and LR (See: Appendix 3).

Secondly, the news were politically marked. The divisions between supporters of the authorities and the opposition were clear. No media entity surrendered the possibility of addressing only its proven recipients. Few news programs, especially election programs, were objective in tone, with the dominance of both positive and negative attitudes. These programs used the framework of struggle or war and a wide range of expression, such as journalistic commentary, confrontation of candidates for MEPs with past issues, or the selection of issues, leading to the elimination of some and over-representation of others.

Using the division proposed by Jay G. Blumler, some of the analyzed media advocating for the ruling majority served as government spokespersons.⁴⁰ Voters learned from PiS supporters media (GPC, Wiadomości TVP 1 and wPolityce.pl) that the party advocates a direction of European integration that provides Poland and the Poles with development opportunities in a solidarity-based Europe of Homelands holding Christian values which guided its Founding Fathers. The integration process is advanced enough, the organization itself does not require structural changes, only a fairer treatment of its member states. Those who can secure Polish interests are the candidates of PiS – the party focused on a fair distribution of wealth (social transfers). The KE Election Committee, according to those media, has no vision of the EU itself or Poland's role in the organization. Representatives of its component parties defend the interests of foreign countries (mainly Germany), consume (or plunder, to put it more bluntly) the wealth generated by the Poles. The ideologically hostile proposals of Wiosna, on the other hand, threaten the integrity of the family, the collapse of nation states, and devastation of traditional European civilization (See: Appendix 3).

KE media supporters (GW, Fakty TVN and naTemat.pl), referring to the program proposals of this election committee, painted a vision of deepening the process of European integration (e.g. new climate and health policies), building a strong EU where Poland would play a significant role. The other analyzed media (RZ, Wydarzenia, Wiadomości.onet.pl and fakty.interia.pl) tried to retain the appearance of objectivity, referring to all the program proposals with at least some distance, or even critically (See: Appendix 3).

Conclusions

A study of the political programs of Polish election committees shows that they lacked a vision for the direction of the development of the European Union. Postulates during the 2019 election campaign were formulated on an ad hoc basis and for the needs of domestic politics, as in references to LGBT. The few issues on which all election committees took a position were the question of the position of member states in EU structures (sovereignty) and Christian values. However, even in this case, these issues were presented through a narrow perspective, limited to the 'Polish backyard.'

Regarding the second research question, the presented analysis results confirm media logic well-documented in literature, characterized by the shallowness of the media discourse, manifested in the limitation of the spectrum of undertaken issues and creation of political information in reference to individual politicians, meaning personalization of relations. Result of the analysis confirms the findings of previous researchers, such as the definition of criterial factors (common news criteria), which include media attractiveness and the sensationalist character of information in a decisive role, as specified by Johann Galtung and Maria Holmboe Ruge.⁴¹

In addition, the similarity of the agendas of the analyzed media (such as insufficient information on program proposals of LR, Kukiz'15 or KKLBN) could deprive citizens of conscious participation in the election process.

The media image of the programs of Polish political parties during the 2019 EP electoral campaign was marked by a deficit of reflection on a comprehensive, long-term vision of EU development. In other words, on the basis of the analysis of media relations, it was not possible to reconstruct the vision of the development of the European Union proposed by the political parties. The media debate was dominated by ad hoc topics, often of secondary importance. The focus was on easy-to-cover proposals concerning domestic issues – mainly social promises. The widespread politicization of content was reflected in the selective presentations of program items, favoring the creation of biased images of the programs as well as of parties themselves and their representatives.

The verification of the third research question concerned the compliance of the vision of EU development contained in the programs of Polish political parties with the vision presented in media reports. The comparison of the media agenda to the political agenda concludes

that the media agenda is shorter than the political agenda. Furthermore, the media process was not conducive to providing a wide offer of political visions of the EU for Poles. This has important ramifications. The establishment of a media agenda inadequate to the political agenda during an election campaign may result in hasty election decisions. It also encourages political entities to limit their program proposals to those that will arouse media interest, sometimes even encouraging them to resign from the political program in favor of building election campaigns based on individual politicians. The obtained results of the analysis confirm the developing process of the mediatization of politics observed by media experts and political scientists.

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Appendix 1. The research sample – constructed week.

Day of the week	Campaign week number	Date
Monday	9	22 April
Tuesday	4	19 March
Wednesday	2	6 March
Thursday	3	14 March
Friday	11	10 May
Saturday	10	4 May
Sunday	6	7 April
Monday	5	25 March
Tuesday	13	21 May
Wednesday	8	17 April
Thursday	7	11 April
Friday	1	1 March
Saturday	12	18 May
Monday	14	27 May

Source: Authors’ compilation (Marta Jas-Koziarkiewicz).

Appendix 2. The political agenda in the election programmes.

Political issues	Wiosna	LR	KE	PiS	K'15	KKLBN
Political issues	Wiosna	LR	KE	PiS	K'15	KKLBN
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reform of EU institutions				limited	limited	
Common policies including:						
the single market	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	exclusively
Regional development and the cohesion fund	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	No
Agricultural	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	No
Energy	yes	yes	Yes	limited	no	No
Climate	yes	yes	Yes	limited	no	No
Migration	yes	yes	Yes	no	no	No
Security	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	No
Rule of law	yes	yes	Yes			No
Support for media promoting democracy	yes					
Health care	yes		Yes			No
Consumer protection				yes		
Protection of the disabled	yes	yes				
Protection of the elderly	yes	yes				
Animal rights protection	yes					
Tax harmonisation		yes				
Equal working conditions (working time, minimum wage)		yes				
fighting corruption					yes	
fighting organized crime					yes	
The values a united Europe should be based on including						
Sovereignty of member states	partial	partial	partial	full	full	full
Christian values	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	Yes
Gender equality	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	No
LGBT + rights	yes	yes	Yes			No
Social solidarity		yes				
Pro-citizen actions including:						
Supporting the youth	yes	yes	Yes			
Protecting the right of parents to raise their children				yes		
Single passport	yes					
Elements of direct democracy					yes	
E-democracy					yes	
Poland in the EU including:						
Membership	yes	yes	restoring position	yes	yes	conditional
Membership in the eurozone	yes	yes	yes	yes	own currency	own currency
Domestic issues including:						
Social package				yes		
Free education at all levels				yes		

Source: Authors' compilation based on the data given in footnotes 4–8.

Appendix 3. Presence of political agenda issues in 159 news coverage by individual media outlets, broken down into election committees with attributes given to each of the

Source: Authors' compilation.

Notes

- 1 Data from: Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 27 maja 2019 r. o wynikach wyborów posłów do Parlamentu Europejskiego przeprowadzonych w dniu 26 maja 2019 r., online, protokół dostępu: <https://pkw.gov.pl/pliki/1558966697_Obwieszczenie_Panstwowej_Komisji_Wyborczej_z_dnia_27_maja_2019>, sierpień 2019.
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- 35 CBOS, Odbiór kampanii wyborczej i aktywność polityczna w internecie przed wyborami do Parlamentu Europejskiego [Perception of the EP Election Campaign and the Internet Activity before the EP Election], 86/2019, p. 1 and 3.
- 36 Riffe D., Aust Ch. F., Lacy S. R., "The Effectiveness of Random, Consecutive Day and Constructed Week Sampling in Newspaper Content Analysis", *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 70 (1), 1993, p. 134.
- 37 Kepplinger H. M., Gotto K., Brosius H. B., Haak D., *Der Einfluss der Fernsehnachrichten auf die politische Meinungsbildung*, Freiburg, Breisgau, 1989.
- 38 Harcup T., O'Neill D., "What is News? Galtung and Ruge Revisited", *Journalism Studies* 2/2, 2001, p. 261–280.
- 39 Critical material – the author uses unfavorable words, is critical, uses adjectives with a negative connotation; apologetic material – the author of the text uses phrases containing approval and acceptance, incl. positive adjectives; neutral material – the author reports on an event, presents information in an emotionally unmarked way.

- 40 Blumler J. G., McQuail D., Political Communication Scholarship: The Uses of Election Research, Katz E., Warshel Y. (eds.), *Election Studies: What's Their Use?*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001, p. 125.
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- 42 In many cases, several issues were addressed in one material.